

The Obstacle Challenging SMEs Performance in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract:

This study presents a conceptual framework for determining the effects of Market Orientation, Entrepreneurial Orientation, and Information Technology on the performance of small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) in Nigeria. The resource-based value theory was used to explain the elements affecting SMEs' performance. Furthermore, this study's conceptual framework is based on the data derived from a newly constructed questionnaire. 130 copies of the questionnaires were distributed to the CEO / director and managers of SME organisations in Ogun State, Nigeria. Out of the 210 questionnaires, half or 105 were returned and analysed. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyse the empirical data. It was found that the performance of SMEs organizations is significantly influenced by two factors, market orientation and entrepreneurial orientation, while there is no significant relationship between information technology and SME performance. This study provides valuable input for SMEs organisations by helping them to strategise future operational plan in various industries, including the education sector. The main limitation of this study is that has a limited sample size, and it did not include external performance indicators outside of procurement. As these indicators could provide additional insight into the success of SMEs, future research could consider including them as variables.

Keywords: Market Orientation, Entrepreneurial Orientation, Information Technology, Performance of SMEs.

1. Introduction

Successful SME ventures has far-reaching repercussions for a country's economy and socioeconomic well-being. It was found that SMEs aid in the economic development of individual countries while also encouraging the flow of trade and investment across different nations in the AEC region (Nasir, 2013).

The growth of SMEs has far-reaching repercussions for national economy and socioeconomic development. Studies have found that SMEs aid the nation's economic growth and encouraging the flow of trade and investment across the nations in the AEC region (Nasir, 2013). In developing countries, SMESs offer unique products and services which subsequently fuel economic growth. In this regard, SMEs become an important part of the developed and developing economies. Effiom and Edit (2018), SMEs have become a key

source of employment and offer future growth potential in many countries. In this sense, that SMEs not only contribute to a country's economic development, but also serve as a barometer of government policy effectiveness in encouraging entrepreneurial culture. In light of this importance, many countries have come out with policies to encourage the growth of SMEs. Singapore, introduced the SME Master Plan in 1989, as a well-rounded policy to promote entrepreneurship. Through this policy, the Singaporean government provide supports in form of business development offering technology adaptation, tax incentives, financial assistance, and marketing to SMEs. (Deng, Hofman & Newman, 2013; Eniola & Entebang, 2015). Moreover, as mentioned by the African Economic Outlook, (2017), the Africa Economic Cooperation (AEC) is urging its members to prioritise supports for SMEs.

In Nigeria, SMEs are classified by the Small and Medium Enterprise Corporation Nigeria or SME Corp. Nigeria, based on several classifications, including the number of full-time employees and annual sale turnover.

Meanwhile, SMEs' performance of small businesses could be determined based on their capacity to create employment and revenue as well as the survival and sustainability of these businesses. (Moorthy, Tan, Choo, Wei, Ping & Leong, 2012; Eniola & Entebang, 2015). In this light, similar to other countries, The SME sector in Nigeria plays an important role in the development of the national economy by encouraging business development, creating employment opportunities and increasing economic output (Igwe, Ogundana, Egere, & Anigbo, (2018). It was reported that SMEs in Nigeria positively contribute to the development of the Nigerian economy and help Nigeria to fulfil its aspiration to become a high-income nation in 2020. As SMEs growth directly and positive influence every aspect of economic development in developed and developing countries such as in Nigeria (Mahmud & Hilmi, 2014). Hence, the success of Nigerian SMEs is paramount in the effort to transform Nigeria into a high-income, knowledge-based economy. The significant impact of SMEs growth to the prosperity of the local economies indicates the need to analyse factors affecting their performance.

There are many past studies have focused on identifying strategic orientations affecting business performance. As discussed in Nasir (2013) and Abebe, (2014), these orientations comprise customer orientation, innovation orientation, market orientation, entrepreneurial orientation competitor orientation, cost orientation, interaction orientation, learning orientation and employee orientation. There are various studies across different fields of study that focused on Nigerian SMEs from different angles. For instance, Mahmud and Hilmi (2014) discussed problems related to SME performance and theories, specifically Total Quality Management (TQM). Meanwhile, Daud & Yusoff (2010) explored the link between knowledge management and firm performance among SMEs while Hakimpoor, Tat and Arshad (2011) examined the direct relationship between strategic planning and the performance of Nigerian SMEs.

On the other hand, there is a lack of studies that focused on factors affecting the performance of SMEs in Nigeria; Igwe, Ogundana, Egere and Anigbo, (2018) highlighted that lack of empirical study on performance of SMEs in Nigeria has called for further investigation. Furthermore, Ahmad, Zabri and Omar (2015) found that there are limited studies on the factors influencing SME performance in Nigerian SMEs. The small number of previous studies have found that market orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and information

technology have the greatest effect on the performance of SMEs (Arshad, Rasli, Arshad & Zain, 2014) while Ahmad, Zabri and Omar (2015) found that SME performance is largely influenced by market and entrepreneurship orientation. In the meantime, Cacciolatti, Fearne, and McNei (2011) and Mahmoud (2011) claimed that there is still a lack of study on the effects of market skill towards the performance of SMEs. Moorthy, Tan, Choo, Wei, Ping and Leong (2012) found that there is a lack of study on the intention and opportunities to use technology to enhance the performance of SMEs while Aremu, Shahzad and Hassan, (2019) highlighted that while information technology is considered as factors that affect the performance of SMEs most SMEs do not understand how information technology, such as the ERP system, could be used to improve their performance. Evidence has also suggested the need for the more investigation on entrepreneurial orientation to improve the performance of SMEs (Arshad, Rasli, Arshad & Zain, 2014; Naala, (2016).

The discussion above shows the gap in the existing literature, hence there is a need for further research on this aspect. Thus, study will look into the factors influencing the success of Nigerian SMEs and to identify the most significant factors. Consequently, this study will present concrete evidence to fill in the gaps and rectify the contradictions in past studies.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Performance of SMEs

In Nigeria, SMEs can be further grouped into several categories based on their size. First, micro businesses are those that employ 10 or less employees, and have the operating costs and working capital, not including land cost of five million Naira or less (SMEDAN, 2013). Meanwhile, small businesses employ between ten to forty-nine workers and have operating cost working capital, besides land cost of five to fifty million naira. Lastly, medium businesses are firms with fifty and one hundred and ninety nine staff on its payroll and have the total operating cost and working capital of fifty to five hundred million Naira, excluding land cost.

There are several past studies that highlighted SME performance from the management and marketing perspectives. The authors evaluated the literature on SMEs performance, specifically in the field of finance (Devinaga & Tan, human resource (Klewitz & Hansen, 2014), management (Idar & Mahmood, 2011), 2012) and Knowledge and Management (Calvo-Mora, Navarro-García, Rey-Moreno & Periañez-Cristóbal, 2015; Eniola & Entebang, 2015; Naala, 2016) to construct a theoretical foundation for this study.

In general, SME performance is measured through their turnover. However, there are studies that use other measurements to determine SME performance (Eniola & Entebang, 2015). For instance, in Selase-Asamoah (2014), performance was measured based on a composite variable combining turnover and profitability. Similarly, Naala, (2016) posited that the growth of SMEs positively contributes to the local and national economy growth. The study reflects that the significant use of turnover increase in measuring growth. Meanwhile, there is still a lack of evidence on the effects of the growth of specific SMEs.

In terms of SME growth, according to Ebitu, Glory and Alfred (2016), while some owner-managers do not consider fostering growth as a personal choice, their business decisions are

mostly based on prospective business growth. Furthermore, a study by Eniola & Entebang (2015) found that marketing is a primary approach to higher business growth. Nonetheless, most studies have only focused on SMEs seeking growth as they will directly contribute to local and national economies. In this regard, policy makers are more concerned on companies that focused on growth as lesser progressive companies will not contribute to national economic growth.

2.2. Entrepreneurial Orientation

The meaning of the word ‘entrepreneur’ should be clarified to define the concept of entrepreneurial orientation. The term comes from the French word, entrepreneur, or ‘undertaker’. It refers to people choose to be self-employed for an unspecified benefit. The term was first used by Richard Cantillon in the 1730s (Naala, 2016).

In literature, entrepreneurship is mostly used to describe entering a new market, starting a new business, venture or new product development (Tajudin, Aziz, Mahmood & Abdullah, 2014). While there are many interpretations of what ‘entrepreneurship’ entails and the role of entrepreneurs (Nasir, 2013), perhaps the most apt definition entrepreneurship for this study could be derived from Venkatraman who described entrepreneurship as a way to find how possibilities to bring ‘future’ goods and services into existence are identified, produced, and utilised, by whom, and its outcomes.

As argued by Naala, (2016), this definition moves away from French meaning of ‘entrepreneur’ and reflects a more technical definition as used in literature.

In recent years, entrepreneurship has been viewed as a strategic economic thrusts in developed and developing. It is known as a key generator of employments, inventions, and corporate diversification (Nasir, 2013). Due to the significance of entrepreneurship on SMEs, this study focuses on utilizing entrepreneurial orientation in enhancing the performance of Nigerian SMEs.

As argued in Naala (2016), entrepreneurial orientations are key determinants for performance. They have the ability to could new business development, accelerate product invention, and revamp old operations. Moreover, entrepreneurship is linked to significant organisational outcomes like innovation and strategic flexibility (Shehu & Mahmood, 2014).

Studies have found the positive link between education level, size and other demographics of SME teams with their success (Talaia and Mascherpa, 2011). Another study by Shehu and Mahmood (2014) found that being proactive and entrepreneurial are linked with good business performance. Furthermore, entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance have been found to be positively linked Naala (2016) discovered that entrepreneurial orientation could be used to predict a company’s success. As a result, research on entrepreneurial orientation has amassed a substantial body of evidence on entrepreneurial orientation’s positive impact on organizational outcomes. However, it is also important to note that the body of research on the impact of entrepreneurial orientation to SMEs performance in Nigeria is still scarce. Based on this argument, the first hypothesis is;

H1: There is a significant relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance of SMEs.

2.3. Market Orientation

Apart from manufacturing, product, selling, and social marketing, marketing have generated interest among business scholars (Gupta & Batra, 2016). The marketing concept refers to businesses' efforts to

better meet their customers' requirements ahead of their competitors (Gupta & Batra, 2016). Thus, market orientation was conceptualised based on the importance of marketing in the business world. Market orientation describes a firm's actions and tactics in establishing good market. In this regard, Amin, Thursamy, Aldakhil, and Kaswuri (2016) acknowledged that the marketing concept has a significant impact on market orientation.

In the same vein, market orientation was described by Shehu and Mahmood (2014) as the commitment to utilise the most fruitful marketing tactics and principles. Gupta and Batra (2016) further acknowledged the profitability of firms with market orientation. They asserted that firms that keep that and respond to clients' needs and wants could perform better as they are able to provide higher quality services.

Studies have found that market orientation has a variety of effects on business performance, in both developed and developing countries (Lechner & Gudmundsson, 2014). In the US, market orientation has been found to have positive impact on performance, while in the United Kingdom and other developing nations, market orientation has been found to have mixed impact on business performance (Nasir 2013).

Meanwhile, some studies argued that a market-orientated strategy could help SMEs to manage the business changes. In this light, as some market-orientation research models were developed for large-scale firms, their application and implication might differ in the context of SMEs (Amin, Thursamy, Aldakhil, & Kaswuri, 2016). The study posited that SMEs using organised marketing data optimally have a better chance of expanding their operations. A study by Shehu and Mahmood (2014) found that SMEs with a stronger market orientation often report a higher performance. This is corroborated by Gupta and Batra (2016) which study identified a link between information use and business performance, and Shehu and Mahmood (2014) that discovered a link between market orientation and SMEs performance.

Small businesses with more organised marketing data have been found to have better chances in expanding. Shehu and Mahmood (2014) also found that SMEs with a stronger market focus perform better. This is corroborated by Gupta and Batra (2016), who identified a link between information use and business performance, and Shehu and Mahmood (2014), who discovered a link between market orientation and SMEs' performance. Alizadeh, Alipour, and Hasanzadeh (2013) discovered a strong, positive link between market orientation and organisational performance. Thus, in Nigeria, market orientation should have the similar impact on SMEs performance. Thus, it is hypothesised that,

H2: There is a significant relationship between market orientation and performance of SMEs.

2.4. Information Technology

Over the years, we have seen a robust development in technology, including ICT. Advances in ICT have far-reaching ramifications for how businesses operate, structure, and strategize themselves. (Aremu, Shahzad & Hassan, 2018). In recent years, globalization has driven many SMEs to adopt ICT as a way to compete with large organizations and survive the present competitive world (Makori & Osebe, 2016). ICT has been widely adopted by a wide range of enterprises around the world, not only to decrease costs and improve productivity, but also to streamline customer service (Makori & Osebe, 2016). Akanbi (2016) posited that

ICT could be used to improve, coordinate, and control the operations of various businesses, as well as boost the adoption of management systems. Aremu, Shahzad, and Hassan (2019) further mentioned, technological innovation could help SMEs to expand faster.

ERP stands for enterprise resource planning system, a new technology that has given business and customers new ways to store, process, disseminate, and exchange data (Aremu, Shahzad & Hassan, 2019). According to Aremu, Shahzad, and Hassan (2018), SMEs can gain competitiveness advantage by implementing ICT technology such as ERP. As shown, research has demonstrated that ICT adoption is a key challenge in the business performance of SMEs in Nigeria.

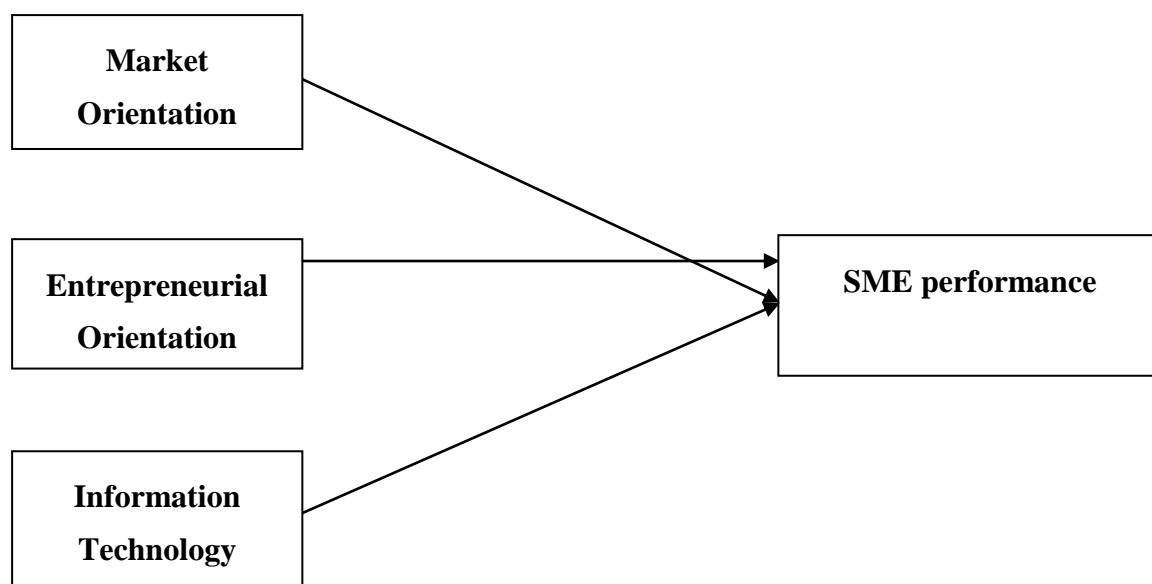
Thus, this study hypothesises that,

H3: There is a significant relationship between information technology and performance in SMEs.

3. Research Method

3.1. Theoretical Framework

The factors influencing SMEs' performance in Nigeria are investigated in this study. The study's theoretical underpinning is the Resource-Based View. In this light, extending the Enterprise Resource-Based View, will encourage the creation of resource typology. This allows diverse resources to be grouped and tested as factors affecting SMEs' performance. Figure 1 depicts the proposed research framework. The independent variables comprise market orientation, entrepreneurship, and information technology, while the dependent variable is the performance of Nigerian SMEs.



Framework

3.2. Population and Study Sample

The current study's theoretical framework was put to the test using data from a freshly constructed survey. The study's sample size was determined according to Krejcie and Morgan (1970). In Nigeria, the (small and medium businesses development agency of Nigeria) or SMEDAN is the foremost authority for SMEs in Nigeria. Hence, the data on the sample were gathered from its website. According to SMEDAN (2013), there are 1794 registered SMEs in Ondo state. Hence, based on the guidelines specified by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), 105 medium-sized enterprise firms were selected for data collection.

3.3. Measurement

The items used a 5- points Likert scale and all respondents were asked to respond to the questions based on the scale. All items were adapted from established studies (Nasir, 2013; Naala, 2016).

3.4. Data Collection

The data were collected from managers and higher management staff (CEO/MD) of the selected SMEs that are based in Ondo state, Nigeria. They were selected as the study's key responders because they have the most experience in SME operations. The selected respondents were contacted via phone calls. After obtaining their consent, the final survey questionnaire were posted to managers of the firms selected. An introductory letter was also attached with the questionnaire to provide a brief information about the study. In all, 210 copies of the questionnaire were sent to managers, CEOs, or MDs of SMEs of the selected firms. However, the researcher only received 119 copies back while 14 more were excluded due to data errors. 105 questionnaires were retained for the final analysis using SPSS.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1. Reliability Measurements

"Reliability" reflects a scale's accuracy and precision (Dunn et al., 1994). Dunn et al (1994) asserted that Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha is the most popular measure of reliability. The Alpha coefficient range less than 0.6 indicates a poor reliability coefficient score. Furthermore, the coefficient range 0.6 -0.7 is considered as fair, 0.7 -0.8 moderate, 0.8 -0.9 very good, and above 0.9- excellent. (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2010). Moreover, any item with the Alpha coefficient of 0.95 or higher should be double-checked to confirm whether that they are measuring various aspects of a concept (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 1 *Cronbach Alpha Result (reliability)*

constructs	item	loading	Cronbach Alpha
Market Orientation (Mo)	MO 1	0.727	0.847
	MO 2	0.848	
	MO 3	0.803	
	MO 4	0.783	

SMEs Performance (SMEsP)	MO5	0.776	0.821
	SMEsP1	0.811	
	SMEsP2	0.805	
	SMEsP3	0.806	
	SMEsP4	0.804	
Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO)	SMEsP5	0.590	0.865
	EO 1	0.829	
	EO 2	0.822	
	EO 3	0.791	
	EO4	0.763	
Information Technology (IT)	EO5	0.821	0.826
	IT1	0.901	
	IT 2	0.812	
	IT 3	0.869	

Although Cronbach Alpha is one of the most frequently use criteria to assess the reliability (Nunnally, Bernstein & Berge, 1967), it has been articulated that Cronbach Alpha may understate reliability (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Hence, some scholars recommended the use of composite reliability as an alternative way to assess the reliability. Table 1 indicates that each construct of the study has achieved an accepted level of reliability with values that is greater than 0.70, which further confirms the fitness of the data for the intended measurements.

4.2. Correlation

The discriminant validity demonstrates how items are separate from each construct developed. Basically, it demonstrates that each item used to measure the different construct is not equal. In other words, although the constructs are correlated with each other, they should measure different ideas. As described by Compeau, Higgins, and Huff, (1999), after determining the discriminant validity, the researcher could observe the variance shared between the construct design, rather than the distinctions between each construct. For this study the Fornell and Larcker (1981) approach was used to determine the discriminant validity. The AVE square root for all the constructs developed were put in the place component of the correlation matrix. It was found that the askew constructs are placed higher than the other constructs on the same line and the column where they are found. The result affirms the discriminant validity of the external model. Having built up the develop validity of the external model, it is accepted that the results relating to the hypotheses testing should be reliable.

Table:2 Correlations

constructs	EU	OB	PU	SP
Market orientation	0.788			
SMEs performance	0.687	0.768		
Entrepreneurial orientation	0.753	0.731	0.806	
Information technology	0.657	0.479	0.585	0.861

4.3. Regression Analysis Technique and Hypothesis Testing

Regression analysis is a statistical technique that is designed to examine the relationship between dependent variables with one or more independent variables (Field, 2009). The regression procedure is often used to identify independent variables that are related to the dependent variable. The regression technique estimates the magnitude of the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable (Tabachnik and Fidell, 2007). In this light, the hypothesis testing will show the relationship between the variables and its dependent variable.

Regression analysis statistically examine the connection between one or more independent variables and dependent variables (Field, 2009). The regression process is mostly used to determine which independent variables are connected to the dependent variable. The regression method calculates the how much the independent variables affect the dependent variable (Tabachnik and Fidell, 2007). Thus, the hypothesis testing will reveal the relationship between the factors and the dependent variable. The path coefficient results will show whether the variable is supported to explain the study, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table: 3 Hypothesis Test

	RELATIONSHIP	Std.Beta	Std Error	T-Value	P-Value	Decision
H1	market orientation ->SMEs performance	0.331	0.058	5.737	0.000	Support
H2	entrepreneurial orientation (EO) ->SMEs performance	0.500	0.051	9.844	0.000	Support
H3	information technology (IT) ->SMEs performance	-0.031	0.050	0.632	0.264	Non-Support

*:p>0.1; **:p>0.05; ***:p>0.01

The path coefficients determine the significance of a variable in explaining the research or rejecting it from explaining the dependent variable (DV). As shown in Table 3, market orientation has a significant effect on SMEs performance (= 0.331, t=5.737, p0.01). The result supports hypothesis 1 (H1). Similarly, H2) was supported with (= 0.500, t=9.844, p0.1) for the effect of entrepreneurial orientation (E on SMEs performance. The result indicates a positive correlation between entrepreneurial orientation and SMEs performance. On the other

hand, (H3) was not supported as $\beta = -0.031$, $t = 0.632$, $p < 0.264$). The result reflects no significant link between information technology and SMEs performance.

5. Conclusion, Discussion and Recommendations

The purpose of this study is to see how entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation and information technology affect SME performance in Nigeria. It was found that market orientation has a significant positive link with SME performance. This study's finding is in line with other studies, for instance, Nasir (2013) discovered that market orientation has a direct impact on SMEs' performance, while Lechner and Gudmundsson (2014) and Naala (2016)'s finding on market orientation has a positive impact on SMEs' performance.

The study observed a substantial, positive relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and Nigerian SMEs performance. This finding is consistent with previous studies. These include Talaia and Mascherpa (2011) finding on the positive correlation between entrepreneurial orientation and Nigerian SME performance, as well as Naala (2016)'s finding on the strong impact of entrepreneurial orientation on SMEs' performance in Nigeria. Moreover, the finding is supported by Wang, Hermens, Huang, and Chelliah (2015) which reported a positive relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and SMEs' performance in Nigeria at the significance level of 5% .

ICT, on the other hand, has negative impact on SMEs' performance in Nigeria. Past findings have been contradictory. Studies like Karadal and Saygin (2011) and Albeshier and De Coster, (2012), reported that ICT does not predict SMEs' performance. In contrast, Berisha-Shaqiri (2014) discovered that ICT has a positive impact on Nigerian SMEs' performance. This contradictory result necessitates further research into this topic.

The steady growth of SMEs in Nigerian has called for SMEs to improve the adoption of ICT by creating better trust and privacy. In this regard, some SMEs are reluctant to use ICT due to safety and privacy issues. This leads to the lack of interest in the use of ICT to improve SMEs performance in Nigeria, despite the fact that ICT can be used to cut operational cost and save time. Hence, the issue of security should be addressed to increase the level of ICT adoption among SMEs.

of study on the factors affecting the performance of SMEs in Nigeria. This is because most entrepreneurial studies have largely examined SMEs development and advantages. This study provides a novel insight to fill the gap in literature and contribute to new knowledge on factors affecting SME performance. In this regard, the study has found that perceived usefulness could improve the use of ICT by SMEs. Consequently, the finding of this study could show SMEs managers that the use of ICT could enhance SME performance in Nigeria. This finding could motivate SMEs' intention to use ICT, as it has been shown as a significant factor that could impact the performance of SMEs in Nigeria.

This study's is restricted to factors that influence SMEs performance Nigeria, specifically in Ogun State. One major limitation is the short time allocation to carry out the data collection and the small sampling size. The result from the study may not be similar or comparable to other studies done in any other countries as the study's location is limited to Ogun State, Nigeria. Due to time constraints, the sample was limited to 105 respondents.

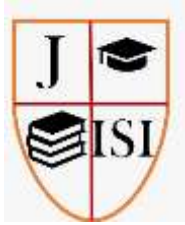
This study examined the factors that affect SMEs performance in Nigeria. Future studies should look into qualitative methods for more comprehensive result and focus on aspects like the satisfaction of SMEs towards the use of information technology. Future researcher could also focus on the use of technology by SMEs to boost economic development in Nigeria. This study will provide useful inputs for SMEDAN and other business agencies. SMEs should embark on innovation and understand the factors behind it. SMEs can perceive the use of technology to improve their performance through diversifying their market orientation and reducing operational time and cost.

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