



ENTREPRENEURIAL DESIGN THINKING AND MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE FIRMS IN PORT HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE

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ABSTRACT: *The study examined the relationship between entrepreneurial design thinking and marketing performance of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. This study adopted a correlational research design, with the population of the study comprising 25 food and beverage firms in Rivers State. Sequel to the population of the study, which is 25 food and beverage firms, the study adopted a census study with a focus on the managerial staff (production manager, quality control manager, marketing manager, and procurement manager). The questionnaire was distributed in a frame of four (4) copies per firm. A total of one hundred (100) copies of the questionnaire were distributed. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's alpha test and it stood at 0.88, higher than the benchmark of 0.7. The data collected for this study were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Technique was employed to test the various hypotheses formulated. The empirical results of this study confirmed that all the dimensions of entrepreneurial design thinking (creativity, and problem solving) were found to be significant predictors of marketing performance as measured by sales growth. Since all the dimensions of entrepreneurial design thinking are significant predictors of marketing performance, it is therefore concluded that entrepreneurial design thinking has the potential of improving marketing performance of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. Based on the findings and conclusions, the study recommends that: food and beverage firms should come up with creative designs, novel products and services that will catch the customer's attention and improve marketing performance. Also, food and beverage firms, especially those facing different challenges, should adopt a problem solving approach to enable them to improve their sales growth.*

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurial design thinking, creativity, problem solving and marketing performance.



INTRODUCTION

Every great product acts as a benchmark for efficient design thinking procedures. This explains why product design is now an essential component of the production process in manufacturing businesses. Similar to this, an effective entrepreneurial response to customer wants must be planned so that the entrepreneur is well-versed in consumer needs and is therefore positioned to see into the brains of the target clients. Since it is generally said that "he who wears the shoe knows where it pinches," this method of thinking equates the entrepreneur to the person who wears the same shoe of the customers and can therefore envisage the ideal product to fulfill their expectations. Hence, applying entrepreneurial design thinking raises the likelihood that the process will produce the intended product required to satisfy a particular demand (Henry, 2022). Due to the iterative nature of the design process, problems and potential solutions are regularly framed and reframed to consider different options (Dorst, 2011; Kolko, 2013).

The method by which designers address a design problem has been referred to as entrepreneurial design thinking (EDT) (Val et al., 2019). EDT presents a problem-solving methodology that is both human-centered and solution-based. Its use in educational contexts has generated a number of advantages, including an improvement in knowledge and comprehension of designs. EDT uses a variety of investigation techniques with the ability to shed new light on issues and suggest workable, client-focused solutions (Robbins, 2018). Design thinking, according to Kolko (2015), aids in the discovery of perfect solutions based on the actual requirements of actual people. Design thinking is crucial to the success of businesses since it aims to create value for customers.

Design thinkers exhibit curiosity and empathy in their efforts to interpret how target populations engage with their world. They deploy various investigative techniques that have the potential to illuminate problems in new ways and indicate effective client-focused solutions (Robbins, 2018). While entrepreneurs are committed to creating products to satisfy needs, they also seek to meet their needs through entrepreneurial activities and the returns they expect from the sale of their products. To this end, they expect their entrepreneurial actions to improve their business performances.

Marketing performance is the result of an organization's operational activity, including the achievement of internal or external goals (Lin & Peng, 2008). They went on to say that marketing performance is the achievement of an organization's goals in terms of sales growth, profit, and market share. A company's marketing performance can be used to determine how customers react to its product offerings. A good marketing performance indicates that customers are happy with the products offered, and vice versa.

Measuring marketing performance is critical for food and beverage companies' growth and survival. When a company consistently increases its sales and market share from year to year, it will be able to make more profit and expand its operations. However, if the company's performance is poor in all aspects (low customer patronage, low sales, and a decrease in market share), it will struggle to grow and sustain in its industry (Samwel, 2018).

Olson and Slater (2002) asserted that performance measurement is visible in the success of new products, which is measured by the percentage of sales resulting from new product sales or new customers, market development, and sales or market share growth, characteristics



from the innovation and learning perspectives. Sin et al. (2006) explained that business performance is measured in seven aspects: sales growth, customer retention, return on investment (ROI), market share, trust, customer satisfaction, and return on sales (ROS). Moreover, Sharabati et al. (2010) measured performance using the dimensions of productivity, profitability, and market assessment. Najib and Kiminami (2011) measured performance with three indicators: sales volume, profitability, and market share. The term "business performance" is used as an effort to develop performance in order to describe market aspects and financial aspects. To this end, this study adopted sales growth and market share growth as its measures of marketing performance.

Entrepreneurial design thinking is an essential approach that can help improve the marketing performance of food and beverage firms. Volkova and Jkobsone (2016) examined design thinking as a business tool to ensure continuous value generation. It was concluded that design thinking plays critical roles in adding value to customers and fostering management thinking in the face of chaotic fluctuations in external turbulence, allowing for long-term order in actions. Similarly, Jenkins (2019) examined design thinking for business success. It was concluded that "design thinking helps businesses create user-centric products and services by discovering insights into user needs, applying these insights to their business model, and generating innovative ideas." It is against this backdrop that this study examines the relationship between entrepreneurial design thinking and marketing performance of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Statement of the Problem

Particularly in the previous ten years, the size of the food and beverage markets in Port Harcourt has significantly increased. In order to stay up with the quickly shifting consumer demands, this industry has undergone significant change with innovations in its procedures, goods, and services. However, because of a shift in consumer preferences, food and beverage companies have seen poor sales growth. In order to maintain their health, customers' eating habits have undergone a paradigm change, favouring items that are fat and sugar-free.

The rise in food-related diseases has prompted people to make necessary changes to their diets and lifestyles. As a result, people are increasingly attracted towards buying meals without additional preservatives and sweeteners that might negatively impact one's health. This has prompted food producers to make a number of adjustments to the current manufacturing method. Yet, it is still unclear whether these adjustments have enhanced the marketing performance of the food and beverage firms.

Entrepreneurship design thinking is mainly thought to greatly enhance the manufacturing processes of food and beverage companies and lower the amount of preservatives and sweeteners, which will increase consumer preferences and boost sales growth. It is against this backdrop that this study examined the relationship entrepreneurial design thinking and marketing performance of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Conceptual Framework

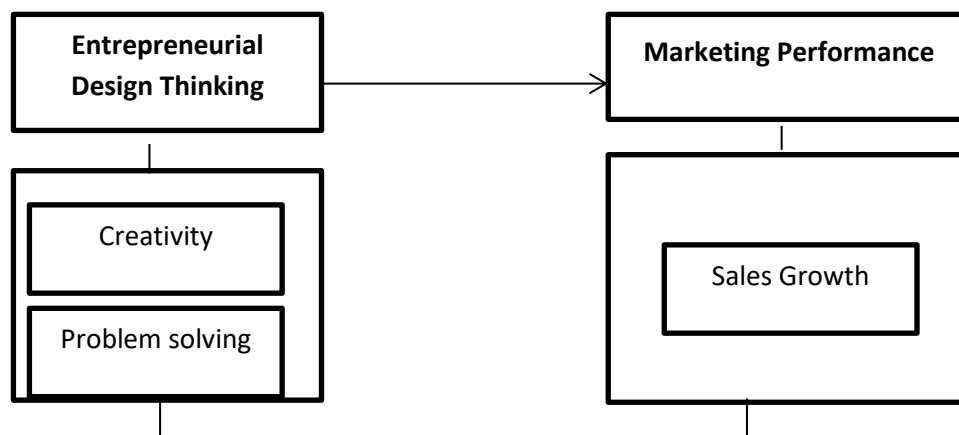


Fig.1.1: Conceptual framework showing the relationship between entrepreneurial design thinking and marketing performance.

Source: *Dam & Siang (2020); Henry (2022).*

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The study examined the relationship between entrepreneurial design thinking and marketing performance of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The specific objectives of this study are as to:

- i. determine the relationship between creativity and marketing performance of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
- ii. find out the relationship between problem solving and marketing performance of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Research Questions

The following research questions were postulated to address the objectives of the study:

- i. To what extent does creativity relate with marketing performance of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?
- ii. To what extent does problem solving relate with marketing performance of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State?

Research Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated to guide this study:

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between creativity and sales growth of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between problem solving and sales growth of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.



REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Concept of Entrepreneurial Design Thinking

Entrepreneurial design thinking is a blend of entrepreneurship and design thinking. The term entrepreneurship is widely used and often encompasses different concepts within various contexts. From a lexicographic perspective, entrepreneurship is derived from the French word entrepreneur (pioneer) and it is defined as the ability of a person to make an additional effort in order to achieve an objective or a goal. Additionally, it is also described as an individual who organizes or operates in any field of business. In Gartner (1990), the definition of entrepreneurship is associated with an individual setting up innovative organizations that have the potential to create value, which may refer to a profit or other forms of value. Stevenson and Jarillo (1990) argued that entrepreneurship could be defined as “a process by which individuals – either on their own or inside organizations – pursue opportunities without regard to the resources they currently control.” Bruyat and Julien (2001) proposed a constructivist artifact and their definition of entrepreneurship incorporates the entrepreneur, the newly created value, the environment, the entrepreneurial process itself and the links between these constructs over time. Shane and Venkataraman (2007) argued that entrepreneurship does not necessarily imply the creation of new organizations; it can also occur in existing ones.

Based on these definitions, the term could be used to denote two distinct levels of skills. First, we identify cognitive-related skills that include opportunity identification, assessing business ideas, business development, value creation, venture set up and strategy growth. Secondly, non-cognitive entrepreneurial skills include personal development, creativity, self-reliance, lateral thinking, and translating ideas into actions.

Design Thinking

Design Thinking is the cognitive process that designers use while working on a project (Cross et al., 1992; Eastman et al., 2001). In contrast to engineering design methods, Design Thinking approaches problem solving from a Human Centered perspective. Problems are visualized in a more holistic manner; real-world "wicked" problems are addressed through a "open" problem-solving process (Rittel & Weber, 1973).

The concept of Design Thinking as a "way of thinking" in science dates back to 1969 (Simon, 1996). The 1987 book, *Design Thinking* by Peter Rowe, which described methods and approaches used by architects and urban planners, was a significant early usage of the term in design research literature and focused on Design Thinking as a method of creative action.

Recently, the concept of Design Thinking has expanded and transcended its domain boundaries. Brown (2009) and Martin (2009) have made significant contributions to the reconfiguration of Design Thinking through their books (2009). Although these authors define and describe design thinking in different ways, they both emphasize its role and potential in organizational change and innovation. As a result, design thinking is increasingly being recognized as a valuable asset in fields other than design. It has gained popularity in the business, leadership, and management sectors, among others, as a means of dealing with increasing complexity and serving as a catalyst for innovation and business success (Davis, 2010; Dorst, 2011; Fraser, 2007; Glen et al., 2014; Hassi & Laakso, 2011; Royalty et al., 2015). Today, design thinking is understood as a complex thinking process for imagining



new realities and expressing the incorporation of design culture and methods into fields, such as business and innovation.

Dimensions of Entrepreneurial Design Thinking

Creativity

Creativity is defined as the act of turning new and imaginative ideas into reality (Naiman, 2014). “Creativity is characterized by the ability to perceive the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns, to make connections between seemingly unrelated phenomena, and to generate solutions” (Naiman, 2014, p. 25). Creativity involves two processes: thinking, then producing. Technology has changed the business game tremendously. These days, all it takes is a good idea to turn an organization’s fortune from nothing to a million dollars. It is common now thanks to technology. Apps can be installed on thousands of devices simultaneously, internet marketing can reach millions of people and shopping can all be done online.

The reason why creativity is important for starting and running a business is that it helps explore completely new and unknown territories which results in the increase of production of that organization (Sokolova, 2015); to encourage creativity, new businesses need to give their employees the chance to be creative. Google, the multibillion dollar search engine company, for example, encourages creativity by implementing different communication channels like Google cafes, which are designed to encourage interactions between employees across teams (He, 2013).

Problem Solving

Problem solving is the ability to effectively plan and organise creative thinking, innovative and inventive and more likely to devise new ways of doing things that add value to the work environment; thinking critically and logically to evaluate situations, solve problems and make decisions. Saygili (2017) noted that problem solving is a process of moving towards a goal when the path to the goal is uncertain. Saygili further explained that in order to be effective at problem solving, one is likely to need some other key skills, which include: creativity, researchable skills (because defining and solving problems often requires research), team work skills, emotional intelligence, risk management and decision making.

Concept of Marketing Performance

Marketing performance is a marketing concept which is often used as a dependent variable. According to Raza (2014), marketing performance is frequently investigated in most marketing research while other strategic issues in marketing are correlated to it. The term “marketing performance” refers to the marketing outcomes of a firm which can be measured through sales growth, market share, competitive advantage, customer satisfaction and loyalty (Jayapal & Omar, 2017). Marketing performance is also defined as the behaviour of a valuable asset in the marketplace (Jayapal & Omar, 2017). Sarker et al. (2001) defined a firm’s marketing performance in terms of sales growth, market share, market development and product development. Similarly, Ritala (2012) posited that a firm’s marketing performance is the rate at which its products or services are patronized by customers in the market (sales) and the portion of the market which the firm has been able to capture (market share).



A firm can use its market performance to ascertain how consumers react to its product offerings. A higher market performance is an indicator that the consumers are satisfied with the products/services rendered and vice versa. Hence, every company wants to increase its market performance since it is the only way to improve financial performance and achieve its desired goals of the organization (Ogunnaike et al., 2014).

Sales Growth

Sales growth is the increase in the amount of goods sold by a company over a period of time (Bertuzzi, 2015). Dion (2003) defined sales growth as an increase in the quantity or amount of goods sold by a company over a given period of time. Companies often measure their sales growth rate periodically. Burke (2005) stated that sales growth of a company can be determined by comparing the amount of sales made by the company on a yearly basis. Roberge (2014) stated that sales growth is usually calculated in percentage and the percentage increase is often referred to as the “sales growth rate.” Although some companies, especially large ones, determine their sales growth on a yearly basis, studies have shown that small companies measure their sales growth on a daily or weekly basis (Banat & Wandebori, 2012). A company is said to have experienced sales growth if the amount of goods sold this year exceeds the amount of goods sold last year. When a company experiences a significant growth in sales, it means more profit for the business and when the profit for the business increases, the company can then expand its operations and achieve business growth.

Entrepreneurial Design Thinking and Performance

Kolko (2015) stated that design thinking helps to find ideal solutions based on the real needs of real people. To this end, design thinking is aimed at value creation for customers and is thus critical to business success. Similarly, Dunne (2018) explored how design thinking can be implemented by organizations in all sectors of the economy by exploring organizations' goals in adopting design thinking coupled with the challenges they encounter, and the strategies they employ in dealing with the challenges. Results showed that unclear goals, the need to build legitimacy, cultural resistance, and leadership turnover can compromise the work of design programs. The remedies include the employment of technological and collaborative platforms, as well as the extension of design thinking into the implementation process.

Theoretical Review

This study was anchored on the theory of creative individual action.

The theory of creative individual action was developed by Ford in 1996. The theory states that an individual's creativity is a function of three characteristics, namely sense making, motivation, and knowledge and ability (Ford, 1996). Sense making is the process whereby a person reads meaning to his or her experience. It involves making an interesting point when addressing an issue of concern (Ford, 1996). Motivation is a state or condition of being induced to act in certain profitable ways to actualize predetermined goals or objectives (Abah & Nwokwu, 2016). Knowledge refers to the awareness, familiarity or understanding of something such as facts, skills or objects while ability is the state of being able to do something (Ford, 1996). These three characteristics determine whether an individual engages in creative or habitual action. The theory argues that if these three characteristics are



observed in an individual, they will propel the individual to either engage in creative or habitual action at any given situation.

The theory of creative individual action believes that every individual's creativity behaviour is influenced by sense making, motivation, and knowledge and ability. The theory holds the view that at any given time, an individual can exhibit creative behaviour to address issues arising. The theory believes that people sometimes find themselves in situations which require them to develop new ideas and take action to address the issue and produce the desired result.

The theory of creative individual action is relevant in explaining the importance of entrepreneurial design thinking in improving the marketing performance of companies. The theory believes that entrepreneurial design thinking is a function of sense making, motivation, and knowledge and ability. These three factors determine whether an entrepreneur engages in creative or habitual action. The theory argues that if these three characteristics are observed in an entrepreneur, they will propel him to take creative actions at any given situation.

Empirical Review

Volkova and Jākobsone (2016) examined design thinking as a business tool to ensure continuous value generation. It was concluded that design thinking plays critical roles in adding value to customers and fostering management thinking from chaotic fluctuations in external turbulence and thus enables sustainable order in actions.

Jenkins (2019) examined design thinking for business success. It was concluded that “design thinking helps businesses to create user-centric products and services by discovering insights into user needs, applying these insights to their business model and generating innovative ideas.”

Ghosh (2018) investigated the role of design thinking and creative cognition in the growth of digital entrepreneurship. The purpose was to find out the attributes related to design thinking and creative cognition that can stimulate innovation as well as ascertain the nature of the interrelationships between these attributes. The qualitative methodology was employed. Grounded theory formed the specific methodology while the research design was a survey. A sample size of 30 students was used and the research instrument featured open-ended questions. Results linked business model creation to creative intelligence and other attributes like productive risk-taking and navigation through complexity, communication, empathy, and emphasis on process as well as deep user understanding and prediction.

Weinzimmer et al. (2011) empirically examined the relationship between creativity and firm-level performance. Their study adopted the quantitative research approach and the descriptive survey research design. The researchers collected their data from managers and employees of engineering firms in Sweden using questionnaires. After analyzing the data collected using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation, percentage and frequency tables and influential statistics like regression analysis, the researchers found out that employee creativity has a significant positive relationship with profitability of engineering firms. The study found a significant relationship between employee creativity and firm growth. The study concluded that employee creativity is a significant predictor of firm-level performance. The relationship between creativity and firm-level performance were found to be moderated by action orientation.



Boso et al. (2017) carried out a study to determine how organizational creativity drives market performance. The researchers employed the survey research design and used a structured questionnaire to collect data from 92 managers in 26 software companies in the United States. After analyzing the data collected using percentage and frequency analysis, mean, standard deviation, bar chart, pie chart, and the SPSS version 23.0, the researchers discovered that organizational creativity has a significant positive relationship with market performance. The study also reported that firm resources significantly moderate the relationship between organizational creativity and market performance of software companies.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a correlational research design, with the population of the study comprising 25 food and beverage firms in Rivers State culled from www.directory.org.ng. Sequel to the population of the study, which is 25 food and beverage firms, the study adopted a census study with a focus on the managerial staff (production manager, quality control manager, marketing manager, and procurement manager). The questionnaire was distributed in a frame of four (4) copies per firm. A total of one hundred (100) copies of the questionnaire were distributed. The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach's alpha test with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23, and it stood at 0.88, higher than the benchmark of 0.7. The data collected for this study were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics. The Spearman Rank-Order Correlation Technique was employed to test the various hypotheses formulated with the aid of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0.

Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion

This chapter presents the data acquired from the field exercise. It analyzed the data with a view of making meaning out of them.

Questionnaire Distribution and Retrieval

Issued Questionnaire	Returned	Useful
100	90	85

Source: *Survey Data, 2024.*

The table above shows the data distribution and retrieval of the questionnaire. From the above table, the researcher issued 100 copies of the questionnaire and from consistent visits, retrieved 90 copies aggregately and 85 copies were found useful.

Gender Details of Respondents

Gender	No. of Respondents	% of Respondents
Male	55	65
Female	30	35
Total	85	100

Source: *Survey Data, 2024.*



The above table shows the gender of respondents as a means of ensuring that both males and females are represented in the study. 55 (65%) of the respondents were males and 30 (35%) were females. This shows that the majority of the respondents were males.

Bivariate Analysis

Hypothesis One

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between creativity and sales growth of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

			creativity	sales growth
Spearman's rho	creativity	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.921**
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.001	.001
		N	85	85
	sales growth	Correlation Coefficient	.921**	1.000
		Sig. (2 tailed) N	.001	.001
		N	85	85

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2 tailed)

Source: SPSS-generated Output, 2024.

The table shows the correlation result between creativity and sales growth of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The result indicates that creativity is positively correlated to sales growth ($\rho = .921^{**}$ p value < 0.05) and significant at 95% confidence level. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is a positive and significant relationship between creativity and sales growth of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

Hypothesis Two

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between problem solving and sales growth of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

			problem solving	sales growth
Spearman's Rho	problem solving	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.572**
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.003	.003
		N	85	85
	sales growth	Correlation Coefficient	.572**	1.000
		Sig. (2 tailed)	.003	.003
		N	85	85

**Correlation is significant at 0.01 levels (2 tailed)

Source: SPSS-generated Output, 2024.



The table contains the result of the correlation between problem solving and sales growth of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The result shows that problem solving is positively correlated to sales growth ($\rho = .572^{**}$ p value < 0.05) and significant at 95% confidence level. Hence, the third hypothesis which was stated in null form is rejected and the alternate hypothesis is accepted. This means that there is a significant relationship between problem solving and sales growth of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

- i. There is a significant relationship between creativity and sales growth of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.
- ii. There is a significant relationship between problem solving and sales growth of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Creativity showed a strong positive relationship with sales growth of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State with a coefficient value of 0.921; thus, the study rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between creativity and sales growth of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The result of the finding is in line with the study of Sokolova (2015) who stated that the reason why creativity is important for starting and running a business is that it helps explore completely new and unknown territories that results in the increase of production of that organization.

Problem solving showed a moderate positive relationship with sales growth with a coefficient value of 0.572; thus, the study rejects the null hypothesis and accepts the alternate hypothesis which states that there is a significant relationship between Problem solving and sales growth of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The result of the finding is in line with the study of Henry (2022) who submitted that the positive and statistical significance of problem definition to entrepreneurial design thinking is suggestive that part of the problem definition stage may be concentrated on understanding the target users. Thus, the significance of problem definition is a reflection of the perceived degree of involvement.

CONCLUSION

From the foregoing analysis, it was obvious that entrepreneurial design thinking has the potential of improving marketing performance of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The empirical results of this study confirmed that all the dimensions of entrepreneurial design thinking (creativity, and problem solving) were found to be significant predictors of marketing performance, as measured by sales growth. Since all the dimensions of entrepreneurial design thinking are significant predictors of marketing performance, it is



therefore concluded that entrepreneurial design thinking has the potential of improving marketing performance of food and beverage firms in Port Harcourt, Rivers State.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

- a) Food and beverage firms should come up with creative designs, novel products and services that will catch customers' attention and improve marketing performance.
- b) Food and beverage firms, especially those facing different challenges, should adopt a problem solving approach to enable them to improve their sales growth.

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