



BUSINESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY OF SMALL AND MEDIUM-SCALE ENTERPRISES IN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH-SOUTH, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT: *This study investigated business management strategies for sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. Two specific objectives questions translated into two research questions and were used to formulate to hypotheses to guide the study. Descriptive survey research was adopted for this study. The study population consisted of 1,137 business education final-year students in public universities in South-South Nigeria. The sample size consisted of 400 business education final-year students. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The research instrument was content validated by two experts, one in the Department of Business Education and one in Measurement and Evaluation, all in Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Cronbach alpha reliability method yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.84 was used to test the instrument. Out of 400 copies of the questionnaire given to business education final year students, 390 copies were properly filled and return. This constituted approximately 96% return rate. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research question, while the hypotheses were tested using independent t-test at the 0.05 significance level. The findings revealed that to a high extent business evaluation strategy and customer relationship management strategy are required by business education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. The findings also revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of business education students on the extent to which business evaluation strategy and customer relationship strategy are required by business education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. Based on the findings and conclusion drawn, it was recommended among others that Business education curriculum planners should provide for content capable of ensuring that business education lecturers should help their students to acquire knowledge and skills for the development of business evaluation strategy capable of enabling them sustain businesses at the small and medium scale after graduation from public universities in South-South, Nigeria.*

KEYWORDS: Small and Medium Enterprise, Strategy, Business Evaluation Strategy and Customer Relationship Management Strategy.



INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMSEs) can be regarded as means or engines through which economic growth and rational, credible and virile development in any developing economy is attained. This is because the relatively small size of the business makes it highly personalized and controlled by the owner(s). Leveraging on this form of business to drive development is also driven by the fact that owners can start it with personally sourced capital and manage its growth in order to enjoy the profits as well as contribute to immediate environmental development using the proceeds of the business. In line with the above assertion, Egbri and Owenvbiugie (2021) explained that small scale businesses are enterprises set up to make the owner self-employed and self-reliant.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by their descriptions are enterprises employing between one to one hundred workers with low annual turnover. Ekwe and Abuka (2014) described SMEs as businesses whose personnel number and capital falls below certain limits. Cecelia (2015) defined SMEs as enterprises with an asset base range between N1.5 million and N200 million naira including working capital, excluding cost of land, and whose work force falls within eleven to three hundred workers. Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) (2010) viewed SMEs as enterprises that have asset base (excluding land) of between N5million –N500 million and labour force of between 11 and 300. Whatever definition adopted for SMEs, it is important to note that its sustainability and growth depends largely on effective management of its human and material resources.

Sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises is an act of building businesses in a way that ensures they survive and thrive over a long term (Prasad, 2012). Sustainable business operation is the continuing commitment of a business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development, while improving the quality of life of the workforce, their families, local communities, the society and the world at large, as well as future generations. Babandi (2017) viewed sustainable business operation as the examination of how to discover, create, and exploit opportunities to bring into existence future goods and services. Therefore sustainability in business operation lays emphasis on longevity, assuring long lasting goods, values for services, preserving current resources for future generations and developing unique solutions not only for the long run but with great positive impacts on small and medium scale enterprises (Iwala, 2014). For Small and Medium scale businesses to be sustained, there is need to device certain business strategies to enhance their operations. This is based on the fact that functional business management strategies will in no small measure guarantee sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises.

Business management refers to the act of overseeing and supervising business operations, processes, and resources to achieve organizational goals and objectives. It involves planning, organizing, directing, and controlling resources, including people, finances, materials, and technology, to efficiently and effectively achieve the desired outcomes. Business management involves coordinating organizational activities to achieve its objectives and goals. This is done through functions such as planning, organizing, directing and controlling various aspects of operations, including finance, marketing and human resources. Business management is distinct from business administration in that while business administration focuses on the day-to-day operations and administrative tasks within an organization, business management takes a broader view, encompassing strategic planning, leadership and decision-making processes



that drive the organization forward (Daniel, 2017). Business management strategies refer to techniques used in business control and direction to achieve the set goals.

Strategy, which is a fundamental management tool in any organization, be it small and medium scale business is a multi-dimensional concept that various authors have defined in different ways. It is the match between organizations resources, skills and the environmental opportunities as well as the risks it faces and the purposes it wishes to accomplish. Freedman (2013) defined strategy as a pattern or a plan that integrates organization's major goals, policies and actions into a cohesive whole. Richards (2017), strategy is seen as the company's game plan, which results in future-oriented plans interacting with the competitive environment to achieve the company's objectives. Strategy, therefore, is a long term plan of action designed to achieve a particular goal, most often winning. Strategies are very pertinent because the business world has entered a new frontier composed of rapid, unpredictable change and substantial uncertainty that are transforming the nature of competition. Success in today's business world requires new managerial mindsets that emphasise global markets, strategic flexibility, and the ability to tolerate and harness change (Nnadi, 2014). The modern business setting requires new forms of managerial thinking and organizational structures, global mindsets, considerable strategic, structural flexibility and innovativeness so as to bring about the rise of new industries, change how businesses compete, and transform how businesses are managed thereby enhancing sustainable practices (Ukpong & Eyo, 2016). Therefore, there is a serious need to bring about total turnaround on SMEs operations and for that desired change to be possible, the right strategies must be adopted. There are many strategies for the operations of small and medium-scale businesses for sustainability. These business management strategies encompass various aspects such as marketing, operations, finance, and human resources.

Thus, for the growth and sustenance of SMEs, Dim and Ezenekwe (2024) argued that business management strategies like business evaluation strategy, regular market research strategy, discount management strategy, financial management strategy, human resources management strategy, inventory management strategy, customer relationship management strategy, risk management strategy, and innovation and growth strategy are crucial for SMEs to thrive in a competitive market. Corroborating the foregoing, Adetiloye (2022) emphasized that business management strategies are essential for SMEs to not only survive but also to achieve sustainable growth and success in today's dynamic business environment. Nevertheless, despite the existence of numerous business management strategies for successful SMEs' operations, some strategies are keys to the business sustainability, hence within the context of this study only business evaluation strategy and customer relationship strategy were investigated with regards to their contribution to sustainability of the businesses.

Business evaluation strategy refers to a systematic approach to assessing the performance and efficiency of a business in achieving its objectives. This strategy involves analysing key metrics, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and making informed decisions to improve overall business operations (Sunday & Nimota, 2019). By implementing a robust business evaluation strategy, SMEs can gain valuable insights into their performance, identify areas for improvement, and make data-driven decisions to drive growth and success in the competitive market landscape.



Customer relationship management (CRM) strategy refers to a comprehensive approach of managing interactions with current and potential customers, focusing on building long-term relationships and maximizing customer satisfaction). By implementing an effective CRM strategy, SMEs can improve customer retention rates, increase sales, and ultimately achieve a competitive advantage in the market (Jaja & Gabriel, 2024).

Extant literatures exist on business strategies and various aspects of SMEs lifecycle. Amiri and Hassan (2014) revealed that customer relationship management (CRM) has a positive and significant impact on customer loyalty in Parsian Hotel. Angamuthu (2015) reported that execution of CRM practices like customer relationship upgrading capability, customer orientation strategies, customer value, customer interaction management practices, customer contact programmes and CRM technology positively connected with customer satisfaction in the hotel sector. Ifekwem and Adedamola (2016) revealed that there is a statistically significant relationship between survival strategies and SMEs' sustainability. Bashir (2017) revealed that suitable execution of CRM increases the number of customer satisfaction or make long term healthy relations with the current or potential customers through managing information or improve the performance of services that assist customer retention. Adeyemi et al. (2017) reported that Strategic Management practices significantly assist SMEs to gain competitive advantage in customers' continuous patronage. Diboye-Suku and Onuoha (2019) reported significant relationship between managerial strategy competence and sustainability of SMEs. Abdulrahman (2020) reported that management strategy competencies possessed by female entrepreneurs vary based on the line of business activity, type of venture and the attributes of the entrepreneur. Dike and Chukwuanu (2021) revealed that relationship exist between customer relationship development, complaint handling, and technology adoption, and continuous patronage.

It is important to note that despite the existence of studies relating business management strategies to aspects of SMEs sustainability, none of the earlier studies have actually considered the essences of business management strategies for sustainability of SMEs in south-south, Nigeria among graduating students of business education. Thus, the present study was conceived to bridge this gap in existing literature.

Statement of the Problem

Literature generally agrees that SMEs hold the keys to unlocking and improving global socioeconomic prosperity. For a nation to prosper, the development of SMEs must be their priority and must not take with levity hands. One of the objectives of introducing entrepreneurship education to business education students is to equip them with practical business management skills and strategies that will enable them set up their own businesses upon graduation. Graduates of business education are required to be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and implement business management strategies that prioritise sustainability to ensure the long-term success of SMEs in Nigeria. However, researches have proven that some of these graduating youths who are able to start their own business, 20% of them would be out of business by their first year of activity because of the business strategies they apply in operations. It has also been reported by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) that 80% of small and medium scale enterprises do not sustain the business beyond 5 years. Based on the foregoing, it seems there is a disjoint in business management competencies of graduate youths which may be due to



poor acquisition of business skills or strategies needed to own business and operate and sustain for decades such as business evaluation strategies, market research strategies and customer relationship strategies. Hence, the need for this research to determine the essences of business management strategies for sustainability of small and medium scale enterprises in public universities in South-South Nigeria.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

This study investigated the business management strategies for sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study sought to:

1. Ascertain the extent to which business evaluation strategy required by Business Education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria.
2. Determine the extent to which customer relationship management strategy is required by Business Education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. To what extent is business evaluation strategy required by Business Education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria?
2. To what extent is customer relationship management strategy required by Business Education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were formulated and tested at a 0.05 level of significance to guide this study:

1. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students on the extent to which business evaluation strategy is required by business education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria.
2. There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students on the extent to which customer relationship strategy is required by business education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria.



METHODOLOGY

Descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The design was considered appropriate to enable the collection of data capable of enabling the researcher to determine the link between business management strategies required by business education students and sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in universities.

This study was carried out in the South-South Zone of Nigeria. The population of this study consisted of 1,137 business education final-year students in public universities in South-South Nigeria. The participants were drawn from different universities across the states in South-South to ensure a diverse representation of business education students in the region. The population was deemed appropriate because only final year students must have gained enough experiences after four years study Business Education programme, participating in industrial attachment and interacted with SMEs managers on the types of business management strategies required for sustainability of SMEs in universities in South-South, Nigeria.

The sample for the study consisted of 400 business education final-year students. The sample comprises of final-year students from universities in the study area. Taro Yamane sampling formula was used in deriving the sample size. The sample size of this study was selected through a stratified sampling technique.

The instrument for data collection was entitled: “Business Management Strategies Required for Business Sustainability Questionnaire (BMSRBSQ)”. The questionnaire was made up of 21 items, consisting 7 items to elicit data to answer each of research questions posed. The items of the questionnaire were rated on a four-point Likert scale, with responses ranging thus: Very High Extent (VHE) = 4 points; High Extent (HE) = 3 points, Low Extent (LE) = 2 points; and Very Low Extent (VLE) = 1 point, with a mean criterion of 2.5.

The research instrument was content validated by the researcher’s supervisor and two experts, one in the Department of Business Education and one in Measurement and Evaluation, all at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. The instrument was scrutinized by the experts based on wording, content, and ambiguity. The corrections and observations made by the experts were taken into consideration before the final copy of the instrument was produced.

The reliability of the instrument for data collection was ascertained using Cronbach's alpha reliability method. The instrument for data collection was pre-tested once on 30 Business Education Final year students from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Anambra State, who are not part of the study. Their responses were subjected to statistical analysis. The entire length of the instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.84.

The administration of the copies of the questionnaire was carried out by the researcher with the support of recruited research assistants. Nevertheless, out of 400 copies of the questionnaire given to business education final year students, 390 copies were properly filled out and returned. This constituted approximately a 96% return rate.

The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using an independent t-test at the 0.05 significance level. The data analysis was carried out using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The null hypothesis was accepted where the p-value was equal to or greater than 0.05; it was



rejected where the p-value obtained was less than 0.05. This judgment for acceptance and rejection of the null hypothesis was because the computation was done using SPSS.

Results/FINDINGS

Research Question 1: To what extent is business evaluation strategy required by Business Education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 1: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the Extent to which Business Evaluation Strategy is Required by Male and Female Students for the Sustainability of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises in Public Universities

S/N	Items	Male Students N = 176			Female Students N = 214			Mean Set	SD
		Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision	Mean	Std. Dev.	Decision		
1	Assessing the strength, weakness, opportunity and threat to SMEs is required to ensure sustainability	2.59	0.96	HE	2.70	0.82	HE	2.65	0.89
2	Market research to understand customers' preference and need are required for sustainability of SMEs	2.80	0.76	HE	2.67	0.69	HE	2.74	0.73
3	Financial analysis for assessing financial health of SMEs are needed for their sustainability	2.96	0.87	HE	2.90	0.85	HE	2.93	0.86
4	Competitors analysis for understanding the activities of competitors are required for SMEs sustainability	2.98	0.88	HE	2.96	0.92	HE	2.97	0.9
5	Innovation success analysis that enables SMEs to know how their innovation lead to product/service meeting customers need are required for SMEs sustainability	2.98	0.87	HE	2.99	0.74	HE	2.99	0.81
6.	Risk assessment to assist SMEs identify and mitigate risk are required for the sustainability of SMEs	2.55	0.68	HE	2.53	0.71	HE	2.54	0.71
7.	Performance evaluation to enable SMEs track key performance indicators are required for their sustainability	2.73	0.66	HE	2.63	0.81	HE	2.68	0.74
Grand Mean & Std Deviation		2.80	0.81		2.77	0.79		2.79	0.81

Source: Field Survey, 2024



Table 1 shows that the respondents from both male and female in public universities in South-South, Nigeria opined the to a high extent, assessing the strength, weakness, opportunity and threat to SMEs, market research to understand customers' preference and need, financial analysis for assessing financial health of SMEs, competitors analysis for understanding the activities of competitors, innovation success analysis that enables SMEs to know how their innovation lead to product/service meeting customers, risk assessment to assist SMEs identify and mitigate risk, and performance evaluation to enable SMEs track key performance indicators are required by male and female students for the sustainability of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. The mean rating of male students are: 2.59, 2.80, 2.96. 2.98, 2.98, 2.55 and 2.73. On the other hand, the mean rating of female students are: 2.70, 2.67, 2.90, 2.96, 2.99. 2.53 and 2.63, respectively. In the same vein, the grand mean scores of 2.80 for male and 2.77 for female had standard deviation scores of 0.81 and 0.79. It can be concluded that male and female students opined that to a high extent, a business evaluation strategy is required by Business Education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Research Question 3: To what extent is customer relationship management strategy required by Business Education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria?

Table 2: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation Scores on the Extent to which Customer Relationship Management Strategy is Required by Business Education Students for the Sustainability of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises in Public Universities

S/N	Items	Male Students N = 176			Female Students N = 214			Mean Set	SD
		Mean	SD	Decision	Mean	SD	Decision		
1	Implementing customer loyalty programme to reward repeated business transaction is required for sustainability of SMEs	2.53	0.48	HE	2.99	0.12	HE	2.76	0.3
2	Personalized communication through sending emails or messages to customers on their preferences is required for the sustainability of SMEs	2.52	0.44	HE	2.58	0.49	HE	2.55	0.47
3	Utilizing social media platforms to engage with customers and gather feedbacks is required for the sustainability of SMEs	3.00	0.00	HE	2.54	0.43	HE	2.77	0.22
4	Offering exceptional customer service through training of employees to be responsive to customer needs is required for SMEs sustainability	2.77	0.63	HE	2.52	0.43	HE	2.65	0.53



5	Using data analytics to track customer behaviour and preference for target marketing campaign is required for SMEs sustainability	2.53	0.50	HE	2.52	0.47	HE	2.53	0.49
6	Offering incentive to encourage referrals from satisfied customers is required for sustainability of SMEs	2.61	0.28	HE	2.64	0.39	HE	2.63	0.34
7	Seeking continuous feedback from customers through surveys to improve products is required for SMEs sustainability	2.69	0.83	HE	2.77	0.39	HE	2.73	0.61
Cluster mean and standard deviation		2.66	0.45		2.65	0.39		2.66	0.42

Source: *Field Survey, 2024*

Table 2 reveals that both business education male and female students opined to a high extent implementing customer loyalty programme to reward repeated business transaction, personalized communication through sending emails or messages to customers on their preferences, utilizing social media platforms to engage with customers and gather feedbacks, offering exceptional customer service through training of employees to be responsive to customer needs, using data analytics to track customer behaviour and preference for target marketing campaign, offering incentive to encourage referrals from satisfied customers, and seeking continuous feedback from customers through surveys to improve products are required by business education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. The mean ratings for male students are: 2.53, 2.52, 3.00, 2.77, 2.53, 2.61 and 2.69. On the other hand, the mean ratings for female students are: 2.99, 2.58, 2.54, 2.52, 2.52, 2.64 and 2.77, respectively. Similarly, the grand mean scores of 2.66 for males and 2.65 for females had standard deviation scores of 0.45 and 0.39. It can be concluded that both male and female students opined that, to a high extent, customer relationship management strategy is required by Business Education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students on the extent to which a business evaluation strategy is required by Business Education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria.



Table 3: Summary of Independent t-test on the difference between the Mean Rating of Business Education Students on the Extent to which Business Evaluation Strategy is Required for the Sustainability of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises in Public Universities

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	Std Error	t-cal	t-critical	Decision
Male students	176	2.80	0.81	388	0.08	0.38	1.96	Upheld
Female students	214	2.77	0.79					

Level of Significance = 0.05

Table 3 shows that the calculated t-value is not statistically significant at the .05 level of significance ($t\text{-cal} = 0.38$; $Df = 388$; $p > 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected at the .05 level of significance. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students on the extent to which a regular evaluation strategy is required for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and Female Business Education students on the extent to which customer relationship strategy is required by Business Education Students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria.

Table 4: Summary of Independent t-test on the difference between the Mean Rating of Business Education Students on the Extent to which Customer Relationship Strategy is Required for the Sustainability of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises in Public Universities

Respondents	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	df	Std Error	t-cal	t-critical	Decision
Male students	176	2.66	0.45	388	0.0437	.224	0.023	Upheld
Female students	214	2.65	0.39					

Level of Significance = 0.

Table 4 reveals that the calculated t-value is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level of significance ($\text{Cal } t\text{-value} = .224$; $Df = 388$; $p > 0.05$). Thus, the null hypothesis is not rejected. Therefore, there is no significant difference in the mean ratings of male and female Business Education students on the extent to which customer relationship management strategy is required for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria.



DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study were discussed under each of the specific objectives they addressed as follows:

Business Evaluation Strategy by Business Education Students for the Sustainability of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises

The results relating to this specific objective revealed that business education students opined to a high extent business evaluation strategy is required by business education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. The results of the test of the hypothesis related to this specific objective also revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of business education students on the extent to which a business evaluation strategy is required by business education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. This finding emanated from the fact that Business education students in public universities in South-South, Nigeria opined to a high extent, assessing the strength, weakness, opportunity and threat to SMEs, market research to understand customers' preference and need, financial analysis for assessing financial health of SMEs, competitors analysis for understanding the activities of competitors, innovation success analysis that enables SMEs to know how their innovation lead to product/service meeting customers, risk assessment to assist SMEs identify and mitigate risk, and performance evaluation to enable SMEs track key performance indicators are required by Business Education students for the sustainability of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. The finding of this study is supported by the position held by Saasongu (2018), who posited that the evaluation strategy is crucial in identifying risks early, allowing management to take proactive steps to mitigate potential threats to the sustainability of operations and the success of the business. In agreement with the view of Saasongu, Kawugana (2021) depicts that a business's ability to regularly evaluate its strategy can make it stay agile and responsive to external factors that may affect its business sustainability. The finding suggests the need to help Business Education students acquire the ability to develop and utilize a business evaluation strategy so that they can sustain businesses started on a small or medium scale basis after graduation. The findings of this study and those of earlier studies suggest that Business evaluation involves assessing the performance of a business, identifying areas of improvement and developing strategies to address these areas. Effective business evaluation is essential to Business Education students as it enables them to improve performance, make informed decisions, enhance competitiveness and achieve sustainability.

Customer Relationship Management Strategy by Business Education Students for the Sustainability of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises

The results relating to this specific objective revealed that business education students opined to a high extent that customer relationship management strategy is required by business education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. The results of hypothesis testing related to this specific objective revealed that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of business education students on the extent to which customer relationship strategy is required by business education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public



universities in South-South, Nigeria. This finding emanated based on the fact that business education students opined to a high extent implementing customer loyalty programme to reward repeated business transaction, personalized communication through sending emails or messages to customers on their preferences, utilizing social media platforms to engage with customers and gather feedbacks, offering exceptional customer service through training of employees to be responsive to customer needs, using data analytics to track customer behaviour and preference for target marketing campaign, offering incentive to encourage referrals from satisfied customers, and seeking continuous feedback from customers through surveys to improve products are required by business education students for the sustainability of small and medium-scale enterprises in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. The finding of this study is supported by the finding of Bashir (2017), who reported that there is a high positive relationship between customer relationship management (CRM) and customer satisfaction, which could translate into higher patronage and sales for the sustainability of the business. In agreement with the view of Bashir, Okoro and Egbunike (2017), when they affirmed that implementing an effective CRM strategy that combines technology with a customer-centric approach, improves customer satisfaction, retention rates, and ultimately drives long-term success in today's competitive market. The finding suggests the need to equip business education students continuously with the ability to design and implement a robust CRM strategy in order to sustain their customer base and the opportunity to continue operations when running businesses after graduation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that to a high extent, business management strategies such as business evaluation strategy and customer relationship management strategy are required by business education students for the sustainability of SMEs in public universities in South-South, Nigeria. It can also be concluded that since there is no significant difference in the mean responses of business education students on their need for the earlier outlined business management strategies for the sustainability of SMEs, proactive measures need to be taken to help them acquire and develop these strategies before and after graduation from public universities in South-South, Nigeria.

IMPLICATION OF THE FINDINGS

The findings of this study have implications for education because it revealed the need to sensitise business education curriculum planners on the need to develop content akin to providing the students with competencies for the development of business management strategies. The findings also have implications for educating business education students on the need to develop and implement learning activities capable of assisting their students to acquire competencies for the development of relevant business management strategies, development and implementation in a real business context. The findings also have implications for educating business education students using activity-related methods and strategies to enable them try their hands on the development and implementation of business management strategies for business sustainability.



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and the conclusions made, the following recommendations are put forward for implementation:

1. Business education curriculum planners should provide for content capable of ensuring that business education lecturers help their students to acquire knowledge and skills for the development of a business evaluation strategy capable of enabling them to sustain businesses at the small and medium scale after graduation from public universities in South-South, Nigeria.
2. Business education lecturers saddled with the responsibility of implementing marketing courses with content of customer relationship management should endeavour to design and implement learning activities related to a robust CRM strategy for business sustainability to enable students acquire competence for this marketing effort before graduation.

FUTURE RESEARCH CONSIDERATION

This study and its findings suggest the need for further research into the application of business management strategies by graduating students of business education and their effect on the actual sustainability of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises. Consequently, future researchers should consider this area to expand knowledge and promote the growth of SMEs.

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