

## **ASSESSING THE EFFECT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL MARKETING STRATEGIES ON CUSTOMERS' PATRONAGE OF RESTAURANTS IN DELTA STATE, NIGERIA**

**STANLEY AKPEVWE ONOBRAKPEYA**

*Department of Marketing, Federal Polytechnic Orogun, Delta State*

*akpevwstanley@gmail.com*

*onobrakpeya.akpevwe@fepo.edu.ng*

*+2347037230846*

### **ABSTRACT**

The study assessed the effect of entrepreneurial marketing strategies on customers' patronage of restaurants in Delta State, Nigeria. The research design method that was adopted for this study is the cross-sectional survey research design. The population of the study was limited to customers of restaurants in Delta state Nigeria. The Cochran formula was used to determine the sample size of 384 participants for the study. The study employed the judgmental sampling technique. The data used for this study were basically obtained from the primary source using a structured questionnaire. The research instrument was tested using internal consistency reliability. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Findings indicated that when restaurants prioritise customer centricity, innovativeness, proactiveness, and resilience, they can stay competitive, adapt to changing market conditions, and thrive in an increasingly complex and dynamic market. The study concluded that restaurant owners can allocate resources confidently towards developing and implementing entrepreneurial marketing strategies, knowing that these efforts are likely to yield significant returns in terms of increased customer patronage. The study recommended amongst others that restaurants should develop a culture of resilience and adaptability, prioritize supply chain diversification and risk management. Stay flexible and willing to pivot in response to changing market conditions or customer preferences.

**KEYWORDS:** Entrepreneurial Marketing Strategies, Customer-Centricity, Customer Patronage, Innovativeness

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** M13, M30, M31

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The restaurant industry is a dynamic and ever-changing sector that adapts to meet the increasing needs of consumers. Successful restaurants adjust their offerings to cater to changing preferences in order to maintain a competitive edge. In the present corporate world, there is intense competition for customers and resources. Consequently, companies have to devise creative ways to overcome these problems and achieve a competitive edge (Alqahtani & Uslay, 2020; Soares & Perin, 2020). Restaurants have a dual purpose by not only providing nourishment but also facilitating social interactions, showcasing cultural heritage, and promoting economic development. Understanding the role restaurants play in an economy highlights the commitment required to create unforgettable dining experiences. Research highlights the significance of distinctive marketing abilities in attaining exceptional organisational performance and increased returns on assets (Martin *et al.* 2020). Marketing techniques that are effective allow organisations to enter new markets, produce

profits that can be maintained over time, and establish themselves as leaders in their sector (Sudirjo, 2023).

In light of the emergence of food delivery services and evolving customer demands, restaurants must consistently adjust and introduce new ideas to succeed in a dynamic industry. Abah and Abah (2023) asserted that entrepreneurship, like any other entity, cannot thrive without the seamless collaboration of all its systems. However, key strategies for achieving sustainable development and success involve prioritising customers, embracing innovation, adopting proactive measures, and fostering resilience. To effectively navigate the dynamic business landscape, companies must implement effective entrepreneurial marketing techniques that improve their ability to quickly and accurately meet customer demands. In the modern business environment, entrepreneurial marketing plays a vital role by allowing companies to rapidly adapt, efficiently utilize resources, prioritize customer needs, foster innovation, embrace digital advancements, support growth, and establish robust brands (Amjad *et al.* 2020; Arshi *et al.* 2023). Entrepreneurial marketing strategies encompass inventive and proactive methods employed by firms to find, create, and capitalise on possibilities in the marketplace. This marketing approach is distinguished by its adaptability, inventiveness, and ability to navigate ever-changing and unpredictable business environment. Emphasising customer satisfaction is crucial for developing a market-oriented approach, promoting innovation, and achieving strong financial results (Santos *et al.* 2020). Without a doubt, prioritising the needs and preferences of customers is considered a crucial strategy in achieving success in the market. The capacity to focus on customers' needs can serve as a catalyst for financial growth and a competitive edge (Islam & Zhe, 2022). The adoption of a customer-centric approach not only improves financial growth and competitive edge, but also contributes to sustained profitability (Andreou *et al.* 2022).

In order to maintain competitiveness within the sector and make the most of limited resources, it is crucial to prioritise innovation (De Massis *et al.* 2018). Innovation entails the alteration of preexisting knowledge or practices in order to effectuate change (Azizah, Solichin, & Susilowati, 2023). Firms in developing countries, such as Nigeria, need to embrace competitive and proactive strategies in order to achieve strong performance and overcome profitable obstacles (Sirajuddin, Arif & Jayadi, 2017). Forward-thinking companies exert control over their surroundings by predicting and tackling obstacles in advance, hence preserving a competitive edge (Eggers *et al.* 2020). Business resilience, as defined by Ortiz de Mandojana and Bansal (2016), refers to the capacity of a business to foresee, prevent, and adjust to unexpected disruptions in the environment. Proactiveness refers to a company's ability to anticipate and respond to changes in the business environment in order to effectively meet the needs of consumers and markets. This includes taking action before a change occurs (Otika, Nwaizugbo, & Olise, 2019). A proactive attribute enables a company to promptly respond to market changes and demands, so gaining a competitive advantage as an early adopter. Effective implementation of entrepreneurial marketing strategies can result in a high degree of customer patronage for the firm. Restaurant customers' patronage is the habitual act of persons attending or supporting a specific restaurant for meals. Excellent customer service, tailored experiences, and unwavering quality all contribute to cultivating loyal patronage. Therefore, there is need to assess the effect of entrepreneurial marketing strategies on customers' patronage of restaurants in Delta State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to establish the effect of customer-centricity, innovativeness, proactiveness and resilience on customers' patronage of restaurants in Delta State, Nigeria. This study examined essential strategies that restaurants can use to promote customer centricity, innovativeness, proactiveness, and resilience, ultimately leading to long-term success and sustainability. The study also explored the marketing implications

of these techniques and offered suggestions for restaurants aiming to establish a devoted customer base and maintain a competitive edge in this ever-changing business.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Restaurants face challenges in retaining consumers, resulting in a perpetual need to acquire new customers to compensate for those who have been lost. Menus and services become outdated, no longer satisfying changing customer preferences and tastes. Many restaurants tend to react to problems rather than proactively anticipating and mitigating them. Restaurants are vulnerable to external influences such as economic recessions, shifts in consumer behaviour, and heightened rivalry. Some restaurants sometimes face the challenge of having constrained marketing and advertising resources, which hampers their ability to attract new consumers and establish a prominent brand image. However, SMEs have continually propelled economic progress, fostered innovation, and generated wealth in developing countries, such as Nigeria (Ngutsav & Ijirshar, 2020). Abdulkadir and Bugaje (2023) emphasised that the SMEs sector in Nigeria has exhibited poor performance, as indicated by the significant number of failures among these enterprises. Nigeria was ranked 131st out of 190 countries on the "Ease of Doing Business" index in the World Bank's 2020 report. This ranking highlights the considerable difficulties faced in initiating and maintaining firms, which in turn contribute to the high rates of business failure.

Although there is a substantial amount of study on entrepreneurial marketing, for instance Alshagawi and Mabkhot (2024) examined the impact of strategic entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial marketing, and entrepreneurial value on the performance of small and medium firms in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. Ouragini and Lakhali (2024) investigated the effect of entrepreneurial marketing education on the factors influencing students' ambition to become entrepreneurs in Tunisia. Mohammed and Teklu (2021) investigated the impact of entrepreneurial marketing on company performance in Ethiopia. Ayiku and Grant (2021) studied the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing skills and the performance of small-scale businesses in Ghana. There is a dearth of studies that particularly examine the use of entrepreneurial marketing strategies in the Nigerian restaurant business. This study attempts to offer practical recommendations based on theoretical foundations for implementing actionable strategies effectively in restaurants.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Conceptual Review**

#### **2.1.1 Entrepreneurial Marketing Strategies**

Entrepreneurial marketing is a constantly changing and dynamic discipline that demands entrepreneurs to possess adaptability, creativity, and a willingness to embrace risks. Entrepreneurs can use cutting-edge marketing approaches and strategies to develop a distinctive brand identity and gain a competitive edge in the market (Alshagawi & Mabkhot, 2024). An essential tenet of entrepreneurial marketing is the capacity to discern and focus on specialised markets. Engaging in risk-taking and focusing on customer needs are crucial elements of entrepreneurial marketing. Due to the constraints of limited resources, entrepreneurs must employ creativity and innovation in their marketing endeavours. Abdul (2020) opined that entrepreneurial marketing involves a series of activities aimed at creating, communicating, and delivering value to deserving customers in a timely manner. It also involves managing customer relationships in a professional manner that benefits the customer, the company, and its stakeholders. Figure 1 illustrates the entrepreneurial marketing approaches that influence the patronage of customers.

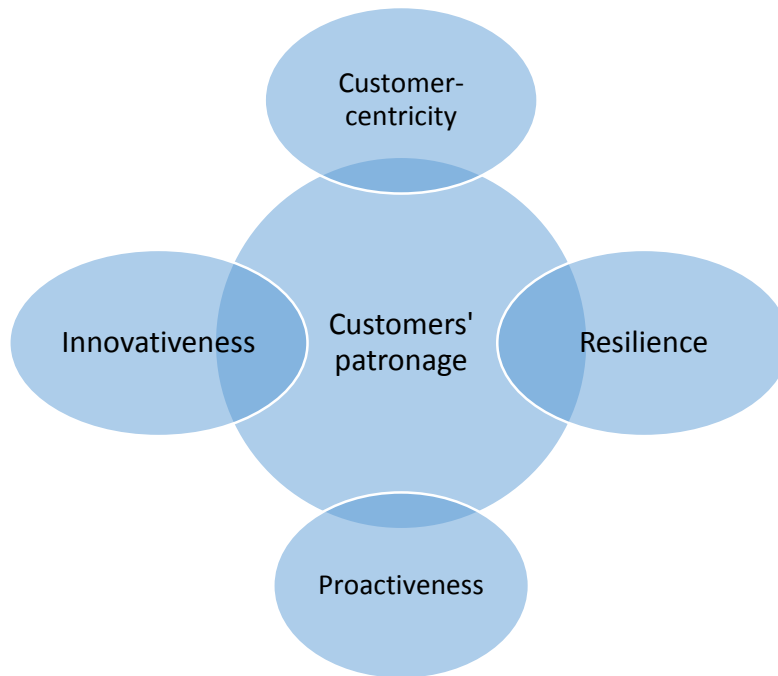


Figure 1. Entrepreneurial Marketing Strategies

Source: Desk Research (2024)

### 2.1.3 Customer-Centricity

Customer-centricity is a strategic business approach that prioritises the customer by making them the focal point of all decision-making processes and activities inside an organisation. Customer-focus entails understanding and meeting the demands and expectations of existing and new consumers by gaining a complete understanding of their needs and delivering perceived value to them (Islamgaleyev *et al.* 2020). The expected outcomes of implementing a customer-centric approach include the generation of customer value, leading to increased customer loyalty and improved business performance for the organisation (Madhani, 2020). A customer-focused approach motivates customers to engage in behaviours that result in distinctive and valuable customer experiences (Madrakhimova, 2021). The primary objective of customer-focus is to fulfil consumer expectations (Han *et al.* 2021). A culture and practices that prioritise the needs and preferences of customers leads to improved performance of a company in terms of customer satisfaction, sales, market share, and profitability, as well as the establishment of a competitive edge.

### 2.1.4 Innovativeness

Innovativeness is the capacity and tendency of a company to create and execute new ideas, products, processes, or services that bring about value or resolve problems in a creative way. Nevertheless, when entrepreneurs exhibit innovation, they can effectively compete with rivals within the global market. Olise, Aworinde, and Ajibola (2023) stated that achieving the necessary level of growth requires a revival in entrepreneurial activities and increased economic globalisation. Innovation improves the ability to compete and adds value for customers, while also creating new sources of revenue (Farida & Setiawan 2022).

### 2.1.5 Proactiveness

Proactiveness refers to a firm's capacity to anticipate and initiate change, rather than simply reacting or defending itself in its strategic approach. Proactiveness encompasses the capacity to influence the company landscape and address competitive challenges by taking initiative, leveraging existing strengths (Zhang *et al.* 2021). Proactiveness is a strategy to actively foresee and exploit opportunities for developing and introducing new products, as well as implementing modifications to its present plans (Al-Mamary & Alshallaqi, 2022). Proactive strategic managers possess a forward-thinking mindset and actively seek out possibilities to use for growth, enhanced performance, and the establishment of a competitive edge (Onyenma & Hamilton, 2020).

### 2.1.6 Resilience

Resilience is the ability of a firm to successfully adjust, recover, and rebound from difficult situations, obstacles, or failures. Resilience refers to an organization's capacity to endure external disruptions and prevent harm from occurring (Kurtz & Varvakis, 2016). An organisation that is resilient has the ability to consistently take calculated risks and obtain the benefits that come with them (Aldianto *et al.* 2021). Resilience is characterised as the capacity of a SME to effectively handle and navigate through disruptions, endure periods of instability, and maintain ongoing business operations (Hadi, 2020). Enhancing the competitive edge of an enterprise in the global market can be achieved by improving efficiency and fostering resilience (Musa, 2021).

### 2.1.7 Implementation of Entrepreneurial Marketing Strategies

Figure 2 explored the key strategies and their implementations that can propel restaurants towards long-term success and customer satisfaction.

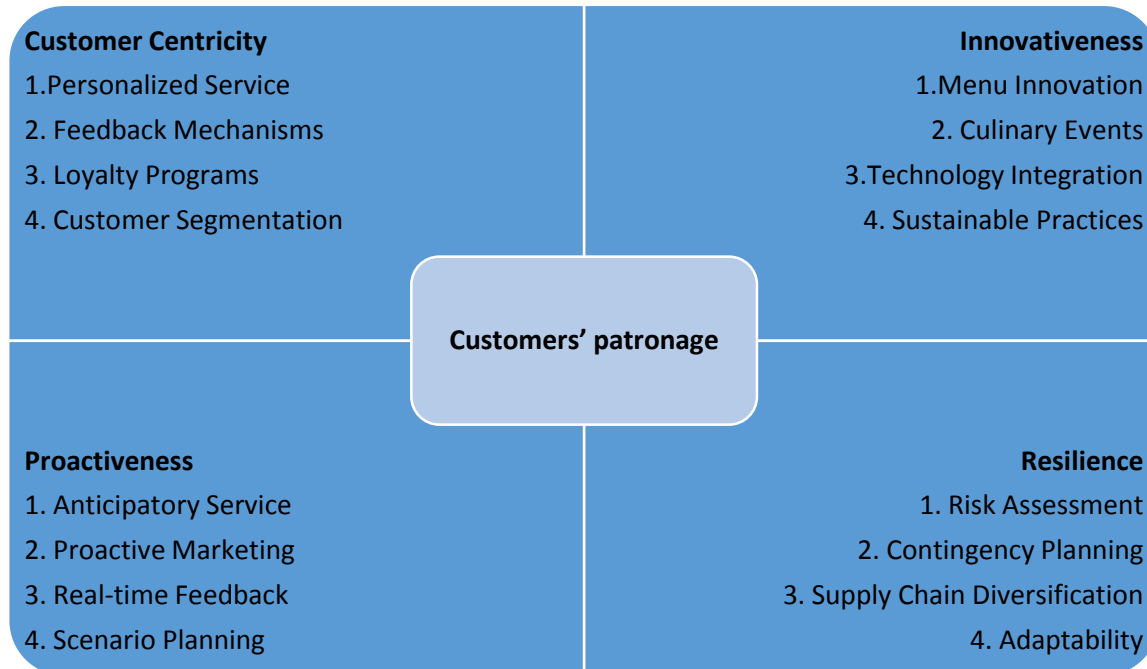


Figure 2. Implementation of Entrepreneurial Marketing Strategies

Source: Desk Research (2024)

Customer centricity in restaurants is achieved through personalized service, feedback mechanisms, loyalty programs, and customer segmentation, with staff training to recognize regular customers' preferences and implementing robust feedback systems to inform decision-making. Innovativeness is essential, with menu innovation, culinary events, and technology enhancements like mobile apps and online ordering, as well as sustainable practices, all contributing to a competitive edge. Proactivity involves anticipatory service, data-driven marketing, real-time feedback loops, and scenario planning to meet customer needs and adapt to trends effectively. Resilience focuses on thorough risk assessments, mitigation strategies, contingency planning, supply chain diversification, and adaptability, enabling restaurants to manage risks and navigate uncertainties, ensuring operational continuity and long-term success.

## **2.2 Theoretical Review**

The resource-based view aims to understand why firms grow and diversify, originating largely from Penrose's (1959) study, which identifies unused managerial resources as the primary driver of growth. The resource-based view (RBV) theory focuses on how organizations achieve sustainable competitive advantage by leveraging unique and valuable resources and capabilities. Key principles include resource heterogeneity, where organizations possess a variety of tangible and intangible resources contributing to their competitive edge, and the VRIO framework, which stipulates that resources must be valuable, rare, inimitable, and organized to sustain competitive advantage. Additionally, RBV highlights the importance of dynamic capabilities, which are an organization's ability to adapt, innovate, and reconfigure resources in response to market changes. In the context of entrepreneurial marketing strategies, RBV is particularly relevant as it encourages entrepreneurs to identify and utilize unique resources and capabilities to differentiate their offerings and build sustainable, hard-to-replicate competitive positions.

## **2.3 Empirical Review**

Ouragini and Lakhal (2024) investigated the impact of entrepreneurial marketing education (EME) on factors influencing students' entrepreneurial intentions. They surveyed 285 Tunisian Entrepreneurship Master Students and found that EME positively influenced the determinants of students' entrepreneurial intentions. Specifically, exposure to technology in marketing, strategies and practices for electronic media, networking, and interactions with entrepreneurs positively influenced the perceived desirability (PD) and perceived feasibility (PF) as drivers of entrepreneurial intention (EI).

Abrokwah-Larbi (2024) delved into the impact of customer-centricity on the operational effectiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) within a developing economy in West Africa. Utilizing a survey method, data were gathered from 255 participants listed by the Ghana Enterprise Agency in the eastern region of Ghana. The study revealed that pivotal factors influencing customer retention, including co-creation, networking links, consumer insight, and artificial intelligence marketing, significantly contribute to enhancing the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises.

Ogundare and Van-der (2024) investigated the impact of competitor orientation and proactiveness on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises in Nigeria, specifically in terms of competitive advantage. The sample consisted of 100 owners and managers of SMEs. The study

found that having a focus on competitors and being proactive had a substantial impact on the performance of SMEs.

Alshagawi and Mabkhot (2024) investigated the influence of strategic entrepreneurship (SE), entrepreneurial marketing (EM), and entrepreneurial value (EV) on the performance of SMEs. The study employed a sample size of 188 small and medium-sized firms situated in the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia. The findings indicated a positive association between environmental management, environmental value, and the performance of small and medium-sized firms.

Kotsios (2023) investigated the factors contributing to the resilience of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Through survey research involving 266 Greek and Polish business owners and managers, primary data were collected. The study highlighted that personal characteristics and values were deemed most important and adequately demonstrated. Specifically, qualities such as reliability, integrity, and work ethics were identified as crucial for ensuring the long-term sustainability of a corporation when faced with unforeseen situations.

Widianingsih *et al.* (2023) explored the relationship between innovation and risk-taking, focusing on its impact on company performance. Their analysis of 3955 firm-year observations from 548 publicly traded companies listed on the Indonesian stock exchange between 2012 and 2021 revealed that the correlation between innovation and company performance negatively affects risk propensity. Consequently, company performance can mitigate the risks associated with innovation.

Azizah *et al.* (2023) investigated the influence of innovation strategy on the performance of Indonesian SMEs. They collected data via questionnaires from SMEs in Central Java, Indonesia. Their findings indicated that a culture promoting innovation correlates with greater success in generating innovative ideas and outcomes. Additionally, they noted that government support enhances the impact of an innovative culture on innovation performance.

Arshi *et al.* (2023) investigated the potential of entrepreneurial marketing (EM) to provide startups and small businesses distinct resource advantages and offset the effects of delayed market entry. Data was gathered from 509 fast-food establishments in Kuwait. The study indicated that market penetration strategies that prioritise customer needs had a role in connecting the time a product has been in the market with its market share.

Chaithanapat *et al.* (2022) examined the potential correlations between customer knowledge management, knowledge-oriented leadership, innovation quality, and firm performance in 283 SMEs in Thailand. The results indicated that the quality of innovation acts as a mediator in the connection between customer knowledge management and the performance of the company.

Messabiala *et al.* (2022) investigated the encounters of entrepreneurs who own SMEs in the food service industry amongst the COVID-19 pandemic. The study conducted semi-structured interviews with restaurant proprietors in the Outaouais region of Quebec, Canada. Findings indicated that in order to surmount the challenges faced by entrepreneurs, they exhibited resilience, inventiveness, and strategic management.

Hanaysha and Al-Shaikh (2022) investigated the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing aspects and the success of small and medium firms. Data was collected through a well-organized survey from 153 SMEs that are functioning in Saudi Arabia. The findings indicated that the level of customer engagement and the ability to generate value have a positive impact on the overall

performance of the company. There is a positive relationship between innovativeness and resource leveraging and the performance of a corporation.

Mohammed and Teklu (2021) investigated the impact of entrepreneurial marketing on company performance, specifically focusing on the moderating influence of entrepreneurial awareness in Ethiopia. A total of 160 SMEs owners were surveyed in two cities located in the Somali Region of Ethiopia to gather data. Findings showed that proactive development and marketing of new offerings, along with innovative use of resources, promotes the short-term goal achievement of SMEs.

Ayiku and Grant (2021) studied the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing skills and the performance of small-scale businesses in Ghana. The findings suggest that by providing entrepreneurs with marketing abilities, they are more equipped to handle unpredictable consumer demands. Essential marketing abilities facilitate understanding of the market, development of innovative marketing strategies, and the creation of products and services that meet customer demand.

Adam and Alarifi (2021) study examined the survival strategies of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) during the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasizing the role of external support. They surveyed 259 SME managers in Saudi Arabia and found that the implementation of innovative practices in response to COVID-19 positively affected both company performance and survival likelihood. Additionally, they noted that external support strengthened the positive impact of SMEs' innovative strategies on survival, rather than performance alone.

Olaniyan *et al.* (2017) examined the impact of entrepreneurial marketing on the growth of SMEs in Oyo State, Nigeria. The study employed a survey research design to investigate the potential correlations between the variables. The findings of this study indicate a notable correlation between the approach of SMEs to adaptability and the use of business strategy as a means of fostering SME growth in Oyo state.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

The research design method that was adopted for this study is the cross-sectional survey research design. The justification for using the cross-sectional survey research design is its efficiency in capturing a snapshot of a population at a single point in time, allowing for the analysis of the prevalence and characteristics of various phenomena.

#### 3.2 Population and Sample Size

The population of the study was limited to customers of restaurants in Delta state Nigeria. This provided a more specific focus for the study. The total population of the study is unknown to the researchers. The Cochran (1977) formula is usually used for determining sample size in studies with an unknown population size. The formula for the Cochran sample size calculation is as follows:

$$n = z^2(PQ) / e^2 \dots \dots \dots (1)$$

Where:

n = sample size



$z$  = z-score corresponding to the desired level of confidence

$p$  = estimated proportion of the population with the characteristic or behavior of interest

$q = 1 - p$

$e$  = level of precision desired (margin of error)

$$n = \frac{1.96^2 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.05^2}$$

$$n = \frac{3.8416 \times 0.5 \times 0.5}{0.025}$$

$$n = 384$$

### 3.3 Sampling Technique

The study employed the judgmental sampling technique. One reason for using the judgmental sampling technique in the study is its ability to ensure the selection of specific subjects who possess particular characteristics or expertise relevant to the research objectives.

### 3.4 Sources of Data

The study's data were primarily obtained through a structured questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale response format. The study's objective and the need for reliable information were explained in a covering letter. A pilot study was conducted, distributing 12 copies of the questionnaire to a sample in a selected restaurant in Anambra state to pretest the instrument and address any issues. The pilot study enabled the performance of face and content validity tests, ensuring the questionnaire appropriately measured the intended concepts. Additionally, internal consistency reliability was assessed to ensure the items consistently measured the same construct, leading to reliable and stable results, with high internal consistency indicating well-correlated items that cohesively measure the concept being studied.

**Table 1. Reliability coefficients of study variables**

S/N	Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Customer-centricity	4	0.755
2	Innovativeness	4	0.725
3	Proactiveness	4	0.745
4	Resilience	4	0.736
5	Customers' patronage	4	0.724

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 1 shows that each variable's Cronbach's alpha exceeds 0.6, indicating that all indicators used to measure the variables are reliable.

### 3.5 Methods of Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics employed simple percentages to analyze respondents' demographic profiles. Inferential techniques included Pearson Correlation to measure the strength and direction of linear relationships between

continuous variables, and Multiple Regression Analysis to assess the effect of multiple independent variables on a single dependent variable. Analyses were conducted using SPSS for Windows, version 25.

### 3.6 Model Specification

The following model specification was developed for the study:

$$Y = F(X) \dots \dots \dots (2)$$

$$CP = F(CC, INV, PA, RSL) \dots \dots \dots (3)$$

The model below shows the study hypotheses formulation:

$$CP = \beta_0 + \beta_1CC + \beta_2INV + \beta_3PA + \beta_4RSL + \varepsilon \dots \dots \dots (4)$$

Where:

$\beta_0$  = Constant Coefficient

$\beta_1$ -  $\beta_4$  = Coefficients

CP = Customers' Patronage

CC = Customer-Centricity

INV = Innovativeness

PA = Proactiveness

RSL = Resilience

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This section focused on the analyses of data collected from the respondents.

**Table 2. Response rate**

S/N	Description of Response	Number	Ratio (%)
1	Total questionnaires administered	384	100
2	Questionnaires retrieved	376	97.9
3	Questionnaires rejected	4	1
4	Questionnaires analyzed	372	96.9

Source: Field Survey (2024)

Table 2 shows a response rate of 97%, enhancing the data's reliability and validity. High participation ensures the data accurately reflect the target population's views and experiences, leading to more credible results.

**Table 3. Sample Demographics**

Variable	Category	Number	Ratio (%)
Gender	Male	154	41.4
	Female	218	58.6
Age	18-28	92	24.7
	29-38	83	22.3
	39-48	85	22.9
	49-58	62	16.7
	59-68	50	13.4
Marital Status	Single	185	49.7
	Married	178	47.9

	Divorced	9	2.4
Education level	SSCE	46	12.4
	OND	95	25.5
	HND/ B.Sc.	186	50
	Postgraduate degree	45	12.1

n= 372

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 3 shows that 41% of the respondents were male and 59% female. Age distribution was as follows: 25% were 18-28, 22% were 29-38, 23% were 39-48, 17% were 49-58, and 13% were 59-68. Half were unmarried, nearly half were married, and a small percentage were divorced. Half of the respondents had an educational background of HND/B.Sc.

**Table 4. Entrepreneurial Marketing Dimensions**

Predictors	Standardized Coefficients		Collinearity Statistics			ANOVA <sup>a</sup>		Model Summary	
	Beta	T	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF	F	Sig.	R Square	Adjusted R Square
						108.206	.000 <sup>b</sup>	.541	.536
1(Constant)		-3.037	.003						
Customer-centricity	.313	7.937	.000	.805	1.243				
Innovativeness	.101	2.650	.008	.854	1.171				
Proactiveness	.303	7.195	.000	.704	1.421				
Resilience	.340	9.141	.000	.904	1.106				

a. Dependent Variable: Customers' patronage

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 4 indicates that customer-centricity ( $\beta = 0.313$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), innovativeness ( $\beta = 0.101$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), proactiveness ( $\beta = 0.303$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and resilience ( $\beta = 0.340$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) all have significant positive effects on customers' patronage. No multicollinearity was detected, with VIF values below 10 and tolerance levels above 0.1. The model was statistically significant ( $F = 108.206$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ), and the dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing explained 54% of the variations in customers' patronage (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.536$ ).

**Table 5. Relationship between the variables**

S/N	Predictors	CC	INV	PA	RSL
1	Customer-centricity	1			
2	Innovativeness	0.117*	1		
3	Proactiveness	0.423**	0.367**	1	
4	Resilience	0.225**	0.183**	0.265**	1
5	Customers' patronage	0.530**	0.312**	0.563**	0.509**

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 5 shows that customer-centricity ( $r=0.530$ ), proactiveness ( $r=0.563$ ), and resilience ( $r=0.509$ ) have strong positive correlations with customers' patronage, while innovativeness ( $r=0.312$ ) has a moderate positive correlation.

#### **4.1 Discussion of Findings**

The study examined the effect of entrepreneurial marketing strategies on customers' patronage of restaurants in Delta State, Nigeria. The study, focused solely on restaurant customers, found that customer-centricity significantly enhances customers' patronage ( $\beta = 0.313$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and correlates strongly positively with it ( $r = 0.530$ ). The findings are consistent with Abrokwhah-Larbi (2024) research, showing a strong positive correlation between customer-focus and various aspects of performance. Similarly, Arshi *et al.* (2023) found that market penetration strategies focusing on customer needs positively influenced market share over time, with advanced CRM systems mitigating the impact of market entry timing. Prioritizing customer centricity in restaurants can foster loyalty, positive word-of-mouth, and brand reputation, leading to enhanced customer retention, repeat business, and revenue growth.

The study revealed that innovativeness significantly boosts customers' patronage ( $\beta = 0.101$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and correlates moderately positively ( $r = 0.312$ ) with it. The findings align with Adam and Alarifi (2021) research, indicating that SMEs' innovative responses to COVID-19 positively impact performance and business survival. Additionally, Chaithanapat *et al.* (2022) showed that innovation quality mediates the link between customer knowledge management and company performance, with competitive intensity moderating this relationship. This suggests that innovativeness enables restaurants to stand out, attract new customers, and maintain competitiveness, leading to enhanced brand awareness, engagement, customer satisfaction, and loyalty.

The study also revealed that proactiveness significantly contributes to customers' patronage ( $\beta = 0.303$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and shows a strong positive correlation with it ( $r = 0.563$ ). Mohammed and Teklu (2021) study highlighted that innovative resource usage, proactive new offering development, and effective marketing contribute to SMEs' short-term success. Similarly, Azizah *et al.* (2023) found that proactive and growth-oriented risk management techniques foster an innovative culture. Proactiveness in restaurants enables anticipation of customer needs, risk mitigation, and adaptation to market changes, ultimately enhancing customer satisfaction, loyalty, retention, and brand reputation.

Additionally, the study demonstrated that resilience significantly impacts customers' patronage positively ( $\beta = 0.340$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and exhibits a strong positive correlation with it ( $r = 0.509$ ). The findings resonate with Olaniyan *et al.* (2017) research, showing a significant correlation between SME adaptability methods and business strategy for promoting growth. Likewise, Messabaa *et al.* (2022) found that restaurant owners overcame challenges through resilience, inventiveness, and strategic management. Resilience in restaurants enables them to navigate crises, adapt to change, and ensure long-term sustainability. This fosters enhanced brand reputation, trust, loyalty, as well as improved marketing ROI and efficiency.

#### **5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study concluded that restaurant owners can allocate resources confidently towards developing and implementing entrepreneurial marketing strategies, knowing that these efforts are likely to yield significant returns in terms of increased customer patronage. When restaurants prioritise

customer centricity, innovativeness, proactiveness, and resilience, they can stay competitive, adapt to changing market conditions, and thrive in an increasingly complex and dynamic market. These strategies can help restaurants build a strong brand, drive customer engagement and loyalty, and achieve long-term growth and success. Based on the study findings and conclusion the study recommended that restaurants should:

- i. Prioritize customer satisfaction by training staff to be customer-focused and empower them to enhance the customer experience.
- ii. Stay updated with new technologies and menu trends to remain competitive. Consider partnering with food delivery services to expand reach and convenience.
- iii. Anticipate and fulfill customer needs proactively while having contingency plans for unexpected events.
- iv. Foster a culture of resilience and adaptability within the organization. Prioritize supply chain diversification and effective risk management. Be flexible and ready to pivot in response to changing market dynamics or customer preferences.

## REFERENCES

- Abah, P.O. & Abah, O.N. (2023). Entrepreneurial ecosystem in North Central Nigeria: a strategy for sustainable development. *Journal of Economics and Allied Research*, 8(2), 31-48
- Abdul, K (2020). The rewards and challenges of entrepreneurial marketing in SMEs. *British Journal of Management and Marketing Studies*, 3(4), 19-36.
- Abdulkadir, A. & Bugaje, I.B. (2023). Mediation role of social media adoption on the organizational innovativeness and SMEs performance in North-Western Nigeria. *Journal of Economics and Allied Research*, 8(4), 189-206.
- Abrokwah-Larbi, K. (2024). The impact of customer-focus on the performance of business organizations: evidence from SMEs in an emerging West African economy. *African Journal of Economic and Management Studies*, 15(1), 31-59.
- Adam, N.A. & Alarifi, G.(2021). Innovation practices for survival of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the COVID-19 times: the role of external support. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 10(15), 1-22.
- Aldianto, L., Anggadwita, G., Permatasari, A., Mirzanti, I. R., & Williamson, I. O. (2021). Toward a business resilience framework for startups. *Sustainability*, 13(6), 3132.
- Al-Mamary, Y.H. & Alshallaqi, M., (2022). Impact of autonomy, innovativeness, risk-taking, proactiveness, and competitive aggressiveness on students' intention to start a new venture. *Journal of Innovation and Knowledge* 7(4), 100239.
- Alqahtani, N., & Uslay, C. (2020). Entrepreneurial marketing and firm performance: Synthesis and conceptual development. *Journal of Business Research*, 113, 62–71.
- Alshagawi, M. & Mabkhot, H. (2024). The impact of strategic entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial marketing, entrepreneurship values on small and medium enterprises' performance: evidence from Saudi Arabia, *Cogent Business and Management*, 11:1, 2316947.
- Amjad, T. Rani, S. H. B. A. & Sa'atar, S.B. (2020). Entrepreneurial development and pedagogical gaps in entrepreneurial marketing education, *The International Journal of Management Education*, 18(2), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2020.100379>.

- Andreou, P.C., Lambertides, N., Trigeorgis, L. & Tuneshev, R. (2022). Customer orientation and financial performance during crisis period. *SSRN*, 1-35.
- Arshi, T.A. Pleshko, L.P. Begum, V. & Butt, A.S. (2023). Can entrepreneurial marketing compensate for late market entry? A moderated mediation analysis. *Heliyon*, 9, 1-13.
- Atikur, R.M., Fatema, L.K., Lin, P.Z., Saiyedul, I.M. & Mobarak, K.M. (2021). Do risk-taking, innovativeness and proactivity affect business performance of SMEs: A case study in Bangladesh', *The Journal of Asian Finance, Economics and Business* 8(5), 689–695.
- Ayiku, A. & Grant, E. (2021). Entrepreneurial Marketing Skills and Small-Scale Business Performance: The Case of Ghana. *Journal of Comparative International Management*, 24(1), 43–60.
- Azizah, S.N. Solichin, M. R. & Susilowati, I. (2023). Impact of innovation strategy on performance: A Study of Indonesian SMEs. *Migration Letters*, 21(2), 39-53.
- Chaithanapat, P. Punnakitikashem, P. Oo, N.C.K.K.K. & Rakthin, S. (2022). Relationships among knowledge-oriented leadership, customer knowledge management, innovation quality and firm performance in SMEs. *Journal of Innovation and Knowledge* 7, 1-10.
- De Massis, A., Audretsch, D., Uhlaner, L., & Kammerlander, N. (2018). Innovation with Limited Resources: Management Lessons from the German Mittelstand. *J. Prod. Innov. Manag.* 35, 125–146.
- Eggers, F., Niemand, T., Kraus, S., & Breier, M. (2020). Developing a scale for entrepreneurial marketing: Revealing its inner frame and prediction of performance. *Journal of Business Research*, 113, 72-82.
- Farida, I. & Setiawan, D. (2022). Business strategies and competitive advantage: The role of performance and innovation. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 8, 163.
- Hadi, S. (2020). New perspective on the resilience of SMEs proactive, adaptive, reactive from business turbulence: a systematic review. *J. Xi'an Univ. Arch. Technol*, 12, 1265-1275.
- Han, S., Reinartz, W. & Skiera, B. (2021). Capturing retailers' and customer focus. *Journal of Retailing*, 97, 582-596.
- Hanaysha, J.R. & Al-Shaikh, M.E. (2022). An examination of entrepreneurial marketing dimensions and firm performance in small and medium enterprises. *Sustainability*, 14, 1-17.
- Islam, M.Z. & Zhe, Z. (2022). The effect of customer orientation on financial performance in service firms: the mediating role of service innovation. *Management Science Letters*, 12, 101-116.
- Kotsios1, P. (2023). Business resilience skills for SMEs. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 12(37), 1-22.
- Kurtz, D.J. & Varvakis, G. (2016). Dynamic capabilities and organisational resilience in turbulent environments. In *competitive strategies for small and medium enterprises*; Springer: Cham, Switzerland, 19–37.
- Madrakhimova, M.S. (2021). Customer-oriented approach as a development strategy of a tourism enterprise. *Middle European Scientific Bulletin*, 12, 311-314.
- Martin, S. L., Javalgi, R. G., & Ciravegna, L. (2020). Marketing capabilities and international new venture performance: The mediation role of marketing communication and the moderation effect of technological turbulence. *Journal of Business Research*, 107, 25–37.
- Messabaa, N. Fomi, P. & Kooli, C. (2022). Managing restaurants during the COVID-19 crisis: Innovating to survive and prosper. *Journal of Innovation and Knowledge* 7, 1-9.

- Mohammed, E.A. & Teklu, A.D. (2021). The effect of entrepreneurial marketing on firm performance: the moderating role of entrepreneurial alertness. *Horn of Africa Journal of Business and Economics*, 4(2), 42–61.
- Musa, A.U. (2021). An evaluation of a value chain approach of technical efficiency of rural entrepreneurship: A Case Study of Jerky Beef (Kilishi) production in Katsina State, Nigeria. *Journal of Economics and Allied Research*, 6(3), 118-130.
- Ngutsav, A. & Ijirshar, V.U. (2020). SMEs as drivers of economic recovery and sustainability during Covid-19 and beyond in Nigeria. *Journal of Economics and Allied Research* 4(4), 234-274.
- Ogundare, J.A. & Van der M. S. (2024). The role of competitor orientation and proactiveness in competitive advantage for small- and medium-sized enterprises performance', *Southern African Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business Management* 16(1), 1-11.
- Olaniyan, T., Ogbuanu, B., & Oduguwa, A. (2017). Effect of entrepreneurial marketing on SMEs development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Business Strategies and Management*, 5(2), 48-60.
- Olise, K.K. Aworinde, O.B. & Ajibola, O. (2023). Economic globalization, entrepreneurship and inclusive growth in African oil exporting countries. *Journal of Economics and Allied Research*, 8(4), 220-238
- Onyenma, O.U. & Hamilton, D.I. (2020). Proactiveness and performance of small and medium enterprises in Rivers and Bayelsa States of Nigeria, *American Research Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(9), 29–35.
- Ortiz-De-Mandojana, N., & Bansal, P. (2016). The long-term benefits of organizational resilience through sustainable business practices. *Strategic Management Journal*, 37(8), 1615–1631.
- Otika, S.U., Nwaizugbo, I. & Olise. C.M. (2019). Entrepreneurial marketing practices and competitive advantage of small and medium size enterprises in Nigeria. *European Journal of Business and Innovation Research* 7: 1–30.
- Ouragini, I. & Lakhal, L. (2024). The effect of entrepreneurial marketing education on the determinants of students' entrepreneurial intention. *The International Journal of Management Education*, 22(1), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2023.100903>.
- Santos, M.J., Perin, M.G., Simões, C. & Sampaio, C.H. (2020). Customer orientation and financial performance relationship: the mediating role of innovative capability. *Gestão & Produção*, 27(4), 1-20.
- Soares, M. d., & Perin, M. G. (2020). Entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance: an updated meta-analysis. *RAUSP Management Journal*, 143-159.
- Sudirjo, F. (2023). Marketing strategy in improving product competitiveness in the global market. *Journal of Contemporary Administration and Management*, 1(2), 63–69.
- Widianingsih, Y. P. N., Doddy S., Aryani, Y.A., & Gantowati, E. (2023). The relationship between innovation and risk taking: the role of firm performance. *Risks* 11(144), 1-13.
- World Bank Group (2020). Doing Business: Comparing business regulation in 190 economies. Washington, DC: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank.
- Zhang, M.J., Law, K.S., & Wang, L. (2021). The risks and benefits of initiating change at work: Social consequences for proactive employees who take charge. *Personnel Psychology* 74(4), 721–750.