

Social Amenities and Marketing Performance of Industrial Firms in South East, Nigeria

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Abstract: *Social amenities are public services and facilities that contribute to the quality of life and well-being of a community. These amenities are essential for supporting the social, cultural, and recreational needs of people living in an area. They are typically provided by the government, local authorities, or community organizations, though some can also be privately managed. Social amenities are vital for creating vibrant, healthy and sustainable communities. The study focused on the effects of social amenities on marketing performance of select industrial firms in South-East, Nigeria. Improved marketing performance of industrial firms in south east, Nigeria will also improve the contribution of industrial firms sector to the gross domestic product of the economy. This will also imply increased tax payment by the firms to government, which will in turn make revenue available for societal development. The objectives of the study were to examine the effect of social amenities on sales growth of select industrial firms in south east, Nigeria and to ascertain the effect of social amenities on competitive advantage of select industrial firms in South-East, Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design. The population of the study was 10,450 selected industrial firms in South-East, Nigeria. A sample size of 385 (Three hundred and eighty-five) was drawn from the population using Taro Yamani statistical formula. The content validity*

of the instrument was ascertained by a questionnaire review panel that did objective assessment of the questions. The reliability estimate of the study was calculated using Cronback's Alpha (α) technique and the reliability index of 0.84 was obtained. Two hypotheses were formulated and tested with Simple Linear Regression model.. The major findings in the study showed that: there is a significant effect of social amenities on sales growth and competitive advantage of select industrial firms in South-East, Nigeria. We concluded that the quality of the support programmes rendered by the government should be dynamic and in line with the growth-path of the clusters. We, therefore, recommended that Government, at all levels- local, state and federal should provide the business sector with social amenities like good access roads, telecommunication services, etc for their effective and efficient business operations, among others.

Key words: social amenities, marketing performance, sales growth and competitive advantage

INTRODUCTION

In modern times, the citizens demand from their leaders' basic social amenities that would not only guarantee their happiness and welfare but also promote the security and socio-economic development of the nation or state (Servin, 2019). Reflecting on the dividends of nationhood, how has the provision of social amenities propelled economic development and national growth? To be sure, by social amenities, we refer to such basic social amenities critical to human existence and societal growth as well as economic upliftment which are best served by government through taxes by the citizenry (Schmitz,2020). They include good roads, railways, waterways, housing, potable water, power, security and job creation. A cardinal objective of the Nigerian government since the commencement of the 4th Republic was to leverage on its immense natural and human capital endowments as a leading African nation to join the league of the 20 largest economies. To give fillip to this objective which was inherited from the past government, subsequent government introduced the transformation agenda with the promise of massive growth and development in key sectors of the economy including roads, rail, water and air transportation, power and oil and gas among others (Wills,2020). Regrettably, the bold initiatives and huge financial investment of the government in fast tracking socio-economic growth, which had also led to significant improvements in key sectors of the economy, have been undermined by insecurity, fuelled by poverty and unemployment. .It is sad that while the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been on the increase in recent times, poverty and unemployment have not been effectively addressed (Tsai,2020). A recent report by the National Bureau of Statistics showed that Nigeria's relative poverty measurement stood at 69 per cent (or 112,518, 508 Nigerians). According to the report, North-West and North-East geo-political zones had the highest poverty rate in Nigeria with 77.7 per cent and 76.3 per cent respectively. In essence, the present security challenges in the country have a lot of economic undertones. Where there is pervasive youth unemployment and poverty, ready-made battalions of potentials are made available for use by extremists (Servin,2019). It therefore requires immediate and long-term economic policies that would actually impact on the citizens because growth and GDP is not enough. Wills (2020) opined that good social amenities

attract businesses, residents and tourists, contributing to local economic growth. They play a crucial role in the development and cohesion of communities, fostering social interaction and engagement.

The above situation formed the motivation for this study which seeks to:

- i. examine the effect of social amenities on the sales growth of select industrial firms in the South East, Nigeria,
- ii. ascertain the effect of social amenities on competitive advantage of select industrial firm in South East, Nigeria.

The research questions of the study are:

- i. what is the effect of social amenities on sales growth of select industrial firms in South East Nigeria?
- ii. what is the effect of social amenities on competitive advantage of select industrial firms in South East Nigeria?

The null hypotheses formulated to guide the study are:

- i. there is no significant effect of social amenities on sales growth of select industrial firms in South East, Nigeria.
- ii. there is no significant effect of social amenities on competitive advantage of select industrial firms in South East, Nigeria

Conceptual framework

Social Amenities

Social amenities are public services and facilities that contribute to the quality of life and well-being of a community (Alao,2019). These amenities are essential for supporting the social, cultural, and recreational needs of people living in an area. They are typically provided by the government, local authorities, or community organizations, though some can also be privately managed. Social amenities are vital for creating vibrant, healthy and sustainable communities (Adeoti, 2020). Social amenities enhance the overall quality of life by providing essential services and recreational opportunities (Flur and Oltra,2020) and they play a crucial role in the development and cohesion of communities, fostering social interaction and engagement. Akinbinu (2020) opined that good social amenities attract businesses, residents and tourists, contributing to local economic growth. Access to healthcare, clean water and recreational facilities promotes better physical and mental health. The examples of social amenities are (Lai, 2020): parks and recreational facilities, healthcare services, educational facilities, transportation infrastructure, public safety services, cultural and social centres, sanitation and utilities, and housing and shelters. According to Sampler (2021), the following social amenities should be provided by the government;

Job creation: The constitution of a 31-member presidential board for the creation of three million jobs appears to be an urgent response to the grave unemployment situation in the country. Coming only months to an election year, the altruistic content of the move may have been tainted by expected electoral dividends. Regardless, three million jobs within 12 months as projected by previous government, if achieved will go a long way in pulling out a substantial number of the unemployed, especially the vulnerable youth from joblessness to gainful engagement. But beyond the cosmetics, Nigeria needs an enabling environment for job creation and government will need to provide a coordinated platform for the employment of Nigerian youths. Furthermore, the granting of tax holidays, well-tailored financial support scheme and waivers for imported machinery for production will enable the private sector meet the employment needs of Nigerians. It is also needful for government to encourage and patronize local products through laws compelling government agencies and private sector to patronize locally produced goods to encourage local manufacturing and employment generation, this will discourage Nigerians from seeking investment opportunities outside the country but to rather invest in Nigeria.

Potable water: This is a basic social amenity which has remained inadequate through the 64 years of Nigeria's independence. Official Federal Government position today is that 33 per cent, representing 52.8 million Nigerians lack potable water. The figure could be much higher. Presenting a three-year scorecard recently, the then Minister of Water Resources, expressed belief that access to potable water has increased to 67 percent from 58 per cent but in the actual view there are still work to be done. However, in major state capitals and rural communities, the proliferation of water boreholes, the growing population of 'Mai Ruwas' and the huge investment of states like Rivers in water schemes indicate that much more need to be done to address the potable water issue. There is the need for the Federal Government to ensure efficient and effective utilization of the nation's water resources. There is the need to complete on-going dams, irrigation, water supply and other critical projects. River Basin Development Authorities d to be strengthened for improved performance, especially for grassroots development.

Electricity: The power sector is one of the most important of all that moves the economy of any state, as low-capacity utilization in manufacturing industries resulting from inadequate power supply has led to closures and relocation of many industries to neighbouring countries with more reliable power supply. With an estimated 180 million population, Nigeria generates a meagre 4,000 megawatts of electricity. As a result, small and medium scale industries, which are the bedrock of economic growth, cannot flourish while bigger industries are shrinking and "manufacturing" unemployment. The problem of the power sector is compounded by the lack of qualified engineers. This follows the sacking of 60 per cent of workers of the defunct Power Holding Company of Nigeria by private investor managers who took over the firm. However, the then Minister of Power assured that a meeting soon to be summoned with generating and distributing firms and other stakeholders will consider the Indian model that transformed that country's power sector. Furthermore, the Federal Government has resolved to commit \$1 billion to improve gas infrastructure in other to stimulate power generation and supply but the question is 'is Gas the only

way of power generation?’ What about coal, solar, hydrogen and others?.It is hoped that these initiatives will culminate in the attainment of 10,000 megawatts of electricity if keyed in to revive dead companies and attract more investors.

Housing: The population of Nigeria has grown tremendously without a corresponding growth in houses for the teeming population. Many of the political parties that have been in government had made housing a campaign promise without exerting the political will to deliver such promises. The cumulative effect is that, if nothing is done urgently, an estimated 24.4 million Nigerians will be homeless by 2015. Nigeria today also needs a minimum of N56 trillion to be able to bridge a deficit of 17 million housing units. The housing deficit, which is expected to be on the rise is an indication that government’s housing policy is not working as expected. Nigeria’s home ownership rate is currently put at 25 percent which is very low compared to housing situation in some developing and developed countries. Experts are of the view that until the relevant authorities are able to bring down interest rate to a single-digit level so as to enable low income earners access mortgage loan, housing deficit will continue to rise.

Roads: The government has recorded tremendous success in the restoration and modernization of the nation’s road network, which was achieved through the public-private partnership in road sector development designed to provide better and safer road. The Federal Government says it has constructed a total of 2,000km of road, by 2013 and plans to increase same from about 52 per cent (17,742 km) to over 43 per cent (28,320 km). However, a major federal link road, awarded in 2006 remains uncompleted. The East-West Road awarded at a cost of N349 billion now stands at 77 per cent completion according to the government. Niger Delta Affairs Minister has said that the road, which leads to the nation’s two major refineries in Eleme in Rivers State, is now in such a terrible state that it is causing accidents, deaths and high transportation cost to commuters along the Eleme Junction-Akpajo axis.

Marketing performance.

The management of many manufacturing firms are faced with the challenge of improving their marketing performance and dealing with the changing competitive market environment (Nerkar and Roberts,2020). Manufacturing firms have an important role in our daily lives, and successful firms are a key ingredient for developing nations like Nigeria. Academics and practitioners endeavour to understand and explain the differences in marketing performance in the face of the complexity of the market, competitive pressures and uncertainties. Firms must be able to cope with the increasingly number of challenges from the business environment, in order to increase their ability to adapt (Ojing, Weijing and Wenhui,2020)). The concept of performance of a business firm is based upon the idea that an organization is the voluntary association of productive assets, including human, physical, and capital resources, for the purpose of achieving a shared purpose (Sheng, Zhou and Li, 2020). Marketing performance is one of the most relevant constructs in the field of strategic management; a construct commonly used as the final dependent variable in the field of marketing (Tadajewski and Jones, 2021). It is believed that the essence of marketing

performance is the creation of value, therefore, value creation, as defined by the resource provider, is the essential overall marketing performance criteria for any organization (Flur and Oltra, 2020). Continuous marketing performance is the focus of any manufacturing firms because only through marketing performance are firms able to grow and survive (Gourlay and Seaton, 2021). The concept of marketing performance has been viewed by different authors from various perspectives, and consequently there is no consensus on a particular definition. Hence, it has been variously defined by various authors. According to Smith and Prieto (2019) marketing performance is complex, and is characterized by the firm's ability to create acceptable outcomes and actions. According to Tadjewski and Jones (2021), a firm is said to achieve an effective marketing performance if it makes use of its resources to attain high level of performance. They also affirmed that a business firm is effective if it attains its sales or market share goals which depend on efficiency. Wang (2020) defined marketing performance in terms of how well an organization is managed and the value the organization delivers to customers and other stakeholders. In the view of Lai (2020), marketing performance is "the ability of an object to produce results in a dimension determined a priori, in relation to a target". Jirayuth, Nabi and Dornberger(2020) defined marketing performance as the measure of how managers utilize resources of the organization in an effective and efficient manner to accomplish goals and satisfy stakeholders. While Lyer (2020) also cited in Mori, Nikishimi and Smith (2019) see marketing performance as real output against expected output which they categorized into financial performance, product market performance and shareholders return. They summarized marketing performance as an approach that is used in assessing the progress made towards achieving goals, identifying and adjusting factors that will limit the progress of the organization in the environment. Morris and Stevens (2020) also stated that a productive organization achieves its goals by transforming inputs into output at the lowest costs. An organization that is capable of doing this can be said to be performing. They concluded that performance can include survival, profit, return on investment, sales growth and a number of employees. Marketing performance reflects how the organization understands the needs and expectation of customers. Performance measurement is best achieved by using multiple organizational variables (Vaara and Durand 2022). In this study, two indicators were used to measure firm performance - sales growth and competitive advantage. These two measures give a standardized account of how firms perform.

Sales growth

Sales growth refers to the increase in sales revenue of a business over a specific period, such as a quarter or a year. It is a key performance indicator (KPI) that helps businesses measure how well their sales strategies are performing and how much the business is expanding. Sales growth is typically expressed as a percentage and can be calculated using the following formula: $\text{Sales Growth} = (\text{current period sales} - \text{previous period sales}) / \text{previous period sales} * 100$ (Akinbinu, 2021; UNCTAD, 2015). Sales growth provides a clear picture of a company's ability to generate revenue over time and it is crucial for long-term success. Sales growth is of great value to most firms and it is a key dimension used to measure marketing performance. Sales growth in business firms is of widespread interest in economics and business research, but the drivers of such growth

remain a source of debate (Albaladejo 2020).. Sales growth targets play a major role in the perceptions of top managers (Lai, 2020). Sales growth is an important indicator of a firm's health and ability to sustain its business. Iyer (2020) reported that planning systems generally begin with sales targets. An emphasis on sales growth also provides a useful and visible benchmark to motivate managers.. Sales growth as a key element of business growth is important; hence selling of products/services is one of the two ways to increase firm profits (Narver & Slater, 2020). Sales growth enables one to know the general health of the business; it aids in identifying if one is meeting ones target. With sales growth it will be evident to investors that the business is successful. Factors that influence sales growth range from; promotion, internal motivation, retaining of talented employees, implicit opportunities for investments in new technologies, and equipment in the production process (Potter and Watts, 2020). They further said sales growth ought to be measured within the context of industry conditions and trends as well as local, regional and national economies

Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage evolves from the comparative advantage theory by the classical economist, David Ricardo, which was centred on primary production of assets. Michael Porter developed the concept of cost leadership with focus on cost leadership and differentiation in product (Wikipedia, 2019). Porter (2003) defined "competitive advantage as superior differentiation and/or lower costs by comparison with the marginal (breakeven) competitor in the product market". A firm is seen to have a competitive advantage over its competitors if it creates more economic value than the marginal competitors in its product market. Competitive advantage simply means having an edge over the competition (Ehmke, 2020). by offering customers great value, whether through lower prices or by providing additional benefits and service that justifies similar or possibly higher prices". Thus, "a firm is said to have competitive advantage when it is engaging in activities that increase its efficiency or effectiveness in ways that competing firms are not, regardless of whether those other firms are in a particular firm's industry". According to Porter (2003), there are four major components that are needed in order to maintain competitive advantage in firms. They are; the ability to respond as an organization; the ability to compete at a low cost; having an effective supply chain management; and the ability to differentiate and innovate products as needed. Porter (2003) proposed cost leadership, differentiation and niche strategies as strategies to be adopted to have a competitive advantage over rivals. Tsai (2020) further added nine more strategies for competitive advantage, thus, growth strategy; alliance strategy; innovation strategy; operational effectiveness strategy; customer-orientation strategy; time strategy; lock in customers or suppliers' strategy; and increased switching costs strategy. These will translate into higher margins, higher returns and superior performance...For a firm to create a competitive advantage its resources should be used in the most appropriate manner to achieve the organization's mission. Ehmke (2020) supported by stating that a firm can gain a competitive advantage over its rivals either by having sufficient lower cost structures in an industry or creating a unique image in minds of customers that the firm or its products are superior to those of its competitors. Smith and Prieto (2019), Mugendar and Mugendar(2019) argued that firms must use and renew their tangible and

intangible resources and capabilities to achieve and sustain a competitive advantage. To build competitive advantage, strategic managers ought to understand the needs of the market (customers) and devise a strategy that will make use of available resources to set the business apart from the competition.

Resource Based Theory – Barney, (1991)

The resource-based view (RBV) emphasizes the firm's resources as the fundamental determinants of competitive advantage and performance. It adopts two assumptions in analyzing sources of competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). First, this model assumes that firms within an industry (or within a strategic group) may be heterogeneous with respect to the bundle of resources that they control. Second, it assumes that resource heterogeneity may persist over time because the resources used to implement firms' strategies are not perfectly mobile across firms (i.e., some of the resources cannot be traded in factor markets and are difficult to accumulate and imitate). Resource heterogeneity (or uniqueness) is considered a necessary condition for a resource bundle to contribute to a competitive advantage. The argument goes "If all firms in a market have the same stock of resources, no strategy is available to one firm that would not also be available to all other firms in the market". Like the Chicago School tradition, the RBV is an efficiency-based explanation of performance differences (Barney, 1991; Peteraf and Barney, 2003). Performance differentials are viewed as derived from rent differentials, attributable to resources having intrinsically different levels of efficiency in the sense that they enable the firms to deliver greater benefits to their customers for a given cost (or can deliver the same benefit levels for a lower cost (Peteraf and Barney, 2003). The assumed heterogeneity and immobility are not, however, sufficient conditions for sustained competitive advantage. According to Barney (1991), a firm resource must, in addition, be valuable, rare, and imperfectly imitable and substitutable in order to be source of a sustained competitive advantage. Peteraf and Barney (2003) presented four conditions underlying sustained competitive advantage: superior resources (heterogeneity within an industry), ex post limit to competition, imperfect resource mobility and ex ante limits to competition. Peteraf and Barney (2003) made it clear that Barney's (1991) and Peteraf's (1993) frameworks are consistent once some terms are unambiguously defined. The RBV has developed very interesting contributions, among others, with regard to imitation with the concepts of isolating mechanisms, time compression diseconomies, asset mass efficiencies, and causal ambiguity. Recently, much resource-based research has focused on intangible assets, which include information and dynamic capabilities (SAMPLER, 2021).

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey design method because its approach provides a holistic and in-depth investigation of the phenomena and is compatible with a critical interpretive research paradigm.. Survey approach allowed the researcher to solicit information that can be aggregated and quantified. The population of the study was 10,450 as seen in table 1 below which comprised of industrial firms in select industrial clusters in South East Nigeria. The content validity of the

instrument was ascertained by a questionnaire review panel that did objective assessment of the questions and ensured their relevance to the issues at stake and coverage of the entire study. In establishing the reliability estimate, the pilot test was conducted and the sample of the study was calculated using Cronback's Alpha (α) technique and the reliability index of 0.84 was obtained for use in the conduct of this study. Data generated for the study were analyzed using both Descriptive and Inferential statistics. Descriptive tools used are tables, percentages and frequencies while inferential tool used was Simple Linear Regression for the two stated hypotheses. All the null hypotheses were tested at 0.05% level of significance.

Table 1; Population distribution of the SMEs in selected Industrial clusters in south east, Nigeria

| S/N | LOCATION/ADDRESS | APPROX.NO.OF PRODUCERS/SHOPS | APPROX.MINIMUM NO.OF EMPLOYEES | TOTAL NUMBER |
|-----|----------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| | ABA LEATHER CLUSTER | | | |
| 1 | Power line | 650 shops | 5 | 3250 |
| 2 | Shoe plaza | 1230 shops | 4 | 4920 |
| 3 | Bakassi | 200 producers | 4 | 800 |
| 4 | Nwaogu | 300 shops | 2 | 600 |
| | ONITSHA PLASTIC CLUSTER | | | |
| 5 | Osakwe Industrial Cluster, Awada | 88 Industries | 10 | 880 |
| | Grand Total | | | 10450 |

Source: Development facility phase II (2018), Ihediora (2006) and Onwuchekwa (2017).

Sample size Determination.

To obtain the sample from the population, Yamane sample size determination formula was used. The population of the study as stated above was 10,450 and using the Yamane's formula, **the sample size was thus;**

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e^2)}$$

Where n = sample size

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N = Total population

e = error (0.05)

Note: Here, the researcher assumed a 5% level of significance (95% confidence level).

$$\text{Thus } n = \frac{10450}{1 + 10450(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{10450}{1 + 10450(0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{10450}{1 + 26.125}$$

$$n = \frac{10450}{27.125}$$

n = 385 respondents.

Therefore, a sample size of 385 respondents were used for the study.

The Bowley's proportional allocation formula is given as;

$$n_h = \frac{nN_h}{N}$$

$$\text{Power line} = \frac{3250}{10450} \times 385 = 120$$

$$\text{Shoe plaza} = \frac{4920}{10450} \times 385 = 181$$

$$\text{Bakassi} = \frac{800}{10450} \times 385 = 30$$

$$\text{Nwaogu} = \frac{600}{10450} \times 385 = 22$$

$$\text{Osakwe} = 880 \times 385$$

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10450 = 32

Total = 385 respondents.

Data Analysis

Table 2:. Government provision of social amenities for the selected firms in South East, Nigeria

| Questions | SA | A | N | D | SD | TOTAL |
|--|------------|------------|------------|----------|-------------|-------------|
| 1. Your firm strongly emphasizes on granting of tax holidays and well tailored financial support scheme. | 150 39% | 200 52% | - 30 8% | 5 1% | 385 100% | |
| 2. There is need for political stability to encourage people to invest in the country. | 100 26% | 250 65% | 5 1% | 30 8% | - - | 385 100% |
| 3. There is great need for security of lives, properties and businesses of potential investors | 70 18% | 300 78% | - - | 15 4% | - - | 385 100% |
| 4. Your firm requires provision of Good access roads, water and reliable power supply. | 170 45% | 190 49% | - - | 20 5% | 5 1% | 385 100% |
| 5. Your firm should have government waivers for imported machinery for production | 80 21% | 300 78% | 5 1% | - - | - - | 385 100% |
| 6. Your firm requires government to make loans/grants available to them when need arises | 185 48% | 200 52% | - - | - - | - - | 385 100% |
| 7. Government should enact laws compelling government agencies and individuals to patronize locally produced goods | 100 26% | 285 74% | - - | - - | - - | 385 100% |

Source: FieldSurvey, 2024

Table 2 contains responses on the provision of social amenities by government for the select studied firms in South East Nigeria. It was revealed that 39% of the respondents strongly agreed that selected firms in the South East Nigeria should be granted tax holidays and well-tailored financial

scheme, 52% agreed to the same item, none was neutral to the same item, 8% disagreed to the same item, while 1% strongly disagreed to the same item. This will enable the private sector meet the employment needs of Nigerians. It was revealed in Table 2 that 26% of the respondents strongly agreed that there is need for political stability to encourage people to invest in the country, 65% agreed to the same item, while 1% was neutral to the item while 8% disagreed to the same item. This proves that there exists an urgent need for the political stability of the country to encourage people to invest. Table 2 also revealed that 18% of the respondents strongly agreed that there is great need for security of lives, properties and businesses of potential investors in the select studied firms in South East Nigeria, 78% agreed to the same item while 4% disagreed to the same item. This shows that there is great need for the security of lives, properties and businesses of potential investors in South East Nigeria. Table 2 also revealed that 45% of the respondents in the studied firms strongly agreed that there is need for provision of infrastructural amenities such as good access roads, telecommunication services, etc to enable them improve on their marketing performance, 49% agreed to the same item, 5% disagreed to the item, while 1% strongly disagreed to the item. This shows that the inadequacy of these social amenities would lead to closure and relocation of many industries to neighbouring countries with more reliable stated amenities. It was revealed further in Table 2 that 48% of the respondents strongly agreed that the select studied firms in South East Nigeria believe in the assistance of government in making loans / grants available to them when need arises and 52% agreed to the same item. This implies that firms in South East Nigeria are venture-some and would like government to make loans/grants available to them to enable them improve on their marketing performance. Table 2 also showed that 26% of the respondents strongly agreed that the studied select firms in the South East Nigeria share strong desire for government to enact laws compelling government agencies and individuals to patronize locally produced goods, 74% agreed to the same item. This will encourage local manufacturing and employment generation and discourage Nigerians from seeking investment opportunities outside the country but to rather invest in Nigeria.

Table 3: Marketing performance in the selected studied firms in South East Nigeria

| ITEMS | 0-20% | 21-40% | 41-60% | 61-80% | 81-100% |
|--------------------------|-------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 1. Sales growth | - | 65 | 80 | 150 | 90 |
| | - | 17% | 21% | 39% | 23% |
| 2. Competitive advantage | - | 70 | 90 | 140 | 85 |
| | - | 18% | 24% | 36% | 22% |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 3 contains responses on marketing performance of firms in the select studied firms in South East Nigeria. It was revealed that 17% of the respondents said that their firm's sales growth between

2016 and 2018 was within 21% - 40%, 21% of the respondents said that their firm's sales growth between 2016 and 2018 was within 41% - 60%, 39% of the respondents said that their firm's sales growth between 2016 and 2018 was within 61% - 80%, while 23% of the respondents said that their firm's sales growth between 2016 and 2018 was within 81% - 100%. This shows that most of the select studied firms in South East Nigeria had high sales growth between 2016 and 2018. It was also revealed that 18% of the respondents said that their firm's competitive advantage over competing firms between 2016 and 2018 was within 21% - 40%, 24% of the respondents said that their firm's competitive advantage over competing firms between 2016 and 2018 was within 41% - 60%, 36% of the respondents said that their firm's competitive advantage over competing firms between 2016 and 2018 was within 61% - 80%, while 22% of the respondents said that their firm's competitive advantage over competing firms between 2016 and 2018 was within 81% - 100%. This shows that the select firms in the South East Nigeria had strong competitive advantage over competing firms between the years of 2016 to 2018.

Test of Hypothesis

HO1: Social amenities do not have significant effect on sales growth of select industrial firms in South East Nigeria

HA1: Social amenities do have significant effect on sales growth of select industrial firms in South East Nigeria

Table 4: Regression on the effect of social amenities on sales growth of select industrial firms in South East Nigeria

| Model | Coefficient | Std. Error | t-value |
|------------------|-------------|------------|---------|
| Constant | 1.735 | 0.336 | 7.351 |
| Social Amenities | .0.702 | 0.297 | 3.235** |
| F-statistic | 35.210 | | |
| R | 0.646 | | |
| R ² | 0.417 | | |
| N | 385 | | |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Note: ** Regression significant at 5% probability level

Table 4 shows the effect of social amenities on sales growth of select industrial firms in South East Nigeria. From the simple regression analysis table, social amenities was found to be statistically significant at 5% and with a positive figure. This implies that an increase in social amenities will result to an increase in sales growth of firms in South East Nigeria. The R square value of 0.417 shows that 42% of the variation in sales growth of firms in South East Nigeria was accounted for by social amenities. Similarly, the f-ratio value of 35.210 indicates that the model specification was correct while significant at 5%. This assertion is at the 95% confidence level. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that social amenities do not have any significant effect on sales growth of

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firms in South East Nigeria is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. It can be concluded that social amenities do have significant effect on sales growth of firms in South East, Nigeria.

HO1: Social amenities do not have significant effect on competitive advantage of select industrial firms in South East Nigeria

HA1: Social amenities do have significant effect on competitive advantage of select industrial firms in South East Nigeria

Table 5: Regression on the effect of social amenities on competitive advantage of select industrial firms in South East Nigeria

| Model | Coefficient | Std. Error | t-value |
|------------------|-------------|------------|---------|
| Constant | 1.635 | 0.236 | 7.251 |
| Social Amenities | .0.802 | 0.217 | 3.335** |
| F-statistic | 36.230 | | |
| R | 0.746 | | |
| R ² | 0.556 | | |
| N | 385 | | |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Note: ** Regression significant at 5% probability level

Table 5 shows the effect of social amenities on competitive advantage of select industrial firms in South East Nigeria. From the simple regression analysis table, social amenities was found to be statistically significant at 5% and with a positive figure. This implies that an increase in social amenities will result to an increase in competitive advantage of firms in South East Nigeria. The R square value of 0.556 shows that 56% of the variation in competitive advantage of firms in South East Nigeria was accounted for by social amenities. Similarly, the f-ratio value of 36.230 indicates that the model specification was correct while significant at 5%.. This assertion is at the 95% confidence level. Therefore, the null hypothesis stating that social amenities do not have any significant effect on competitive advantage of firms in South East Nigeria is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. It can be concluded that social amenities do have significant effect on competitive advantage of firms in South East, Nigeria

FINDINGS

It was revealed in the study that social amenities have significant and positive effect on the sales growth and competitive advantage of firms in the studied industrial clusters in South East Nigeria.. It was also revealed in the study that there is need to patronize locally produced goods by government agencies and individuals, the need to grant tax holidays and well-tailored financial

support scheme to the business sector, the need for the business sector (private)to be socially responsible and gainfully employ people with the requisite knowledge and qualifications, the need for the political stability of the country to encourage people to invest in the country and the need for granting the business sector waivers for imported machinery for production.

CONCLUSION

The industrial clusters in South East, Nigeria, however, have not reached a high level of dynamism, and some depend on low technology and low skills. For productive industrial clusters to become drivers of regional integration which enhances trade, and fosters the transfer of knowledge and skills, formal political and legal institutions that enforce contracts and reduce transaction costs have to be put in place. Adequate infrastructure and investment in knowledge and technology, that will enable firms to redirect their profits to improving the quality of their goods and being competitive is also needed. Furthermore, for enhanced regional integration, transport and communication infrastructure that will encourage the movement of knowledge, information, goods and services across countries is pertinent. The business clustering should be made viable, encouraged and strengthened through government investment in business cluster development, giving tax holidays to the younger investors, relaxing the laws governing the importation of some raw materials, as this will have positive impact on productions. Financial aids should be given to cluster players in form of loan and or grants while the collateral securities should be made affordable for the investors. Assistance, in form of subsidy should be given to the investors. Government interventions for firms operating in industrial clusters in South East, Nigeria will position them to compete with their foreign counterparts. Furthermore, the quality of the support programmes rendered by the government should be dynamic and in line with the growth-path of the cluster

Recommendations

In a digital age, it is expected that firms key into online platforms to promote visibility, improve information and global appeal. Such approach is necessary to enable individual firms to reposition themselves to meet up with a changing environment. , There is a need for firms to upgrade their activities relating to cost efficiency, quality, variety/diversification, responsiveness, acceptance of entrepreneurial risks, and a positive attitude towards change and innovation. These factors alone do not give a competitive advantage, but represent prerequisites for surviving in a globalized market. In view of the above facts, we, therefore, recommended that:

- i. Government, at all levels- local, state and federal should provide the business sector with social amenities like good access roads, telecommunication services, etc for their effective and efficient business operations.
- ii. Government should ensure political stability which encourages people to invest in the country.

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- iii. Government should also ensure the security of lives and businesses of potential investors,
- iv. Government should improve the country's international image by curbing the activities of fraudulent members of the society.,
- v. Government should make loans / grants available to the business sector when the need arises and making far-reaching strategic policies which will help the private sector do proper planning and forecasting.
- vi. Government should enact laws compelling government agencies, private sector and individuals to patronize locally produced goods
- vii. .Government should grant tax holidays and well tailored financial Support scheme to the business sector.
- viii. The business sector (private) should be socially responsible and gainfully employ people with the requisite knowledge and qualifications,

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