

Assessment of the Application of Advertising Strategies for the Growth of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States

Emmanuel Ukeyima Akumun & Bem Joshua Dagba

Faculty of Communication and Media Studies,
Nasarawa State University, Keffi
Corresponding author: akumunemmanuel@gmail.com

Abstract

This study on the Assessment of the Application of Advertising Strategies for the Growth of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States was carried out to examine the application of advertising strategies and the influence they have on the growth of small and medium scale enterprises in the two states. The study was anchored on Yale's Persuasion Theory and the AIDA Model. The survey research method was adopted, using questionnaires as the data collection instrument. Data was generated from a sample of 792 respondents drawn from a total population of 2,760 registered SMEs in Benue and Nasarawa States. Findings showed that there is a high level of knowledge and awareness regarding the relevance and use of advertising strategies among SME managers in Benue and Nasarawa States. However, findings also showed that despite the high level of awareness, managers have been adopting only a few of the strategies. It was concluded that the marketing communication tools of advertising are only being moderately applied in fast-tracking the growth of SMEs in Benue and Nasarawa States. As a result, the positive impacts that could have accrued to SMEs in these states have not been as visible as one would expect. It was therefore recommended that managers of SMEs should increase their utilization of advertising strategies, building on their existing knowledge of their relevance and use, through deliberate budget allocations to ensure a holistic engagement with Integrated Marketing Communication Strategies.

Keywords: Assessing, application, advertising strategies, small and medium scale enterprises.

Introduction

The application of advertising strategies in managing the growth of small and medium scale enterprises have attracted attention among scholars in the field of marketing communications and mass communications generally. According to Nwosu (2011), this issue seems to even bewilder managers of small and medium scale enterprises who may reason that they do not need advertising especially at the early years of their businesses. Nwosu (2011) maintains that such managers may think it is only when their enterprises grow bigger that the thought could be given on the application of advertising in managing their businesses. By doing so, positive influences that may have accrued to such businesses through the application of advertising strategies are lost.

It is a known fact that in modern marketing-driven and competitive global business practices, the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) remains the bastion of hope for the economic and sustainable human development of countries that are developing, including Nigeria. This position is well acknowledged by Nwosu (2011), that it was the SMEs which offered the solid base for rapid growth of what has become known in business parlance as the Asian Tigers such as Taiwan, Japan, and China, among others.

The efforts of Nigeria to survive the onslaught of global economic slide in the 21st Century imply that the country must necessarily become one of the leading economies in the world within some years ahead. This especially becomes expedient if the country is to translate her much touted economic slogan, Vision 20-20-20, into reality. The Vision 20-20-20, an economic 1 plan, simply mirrors the desire of Nigeria to be ranked among the world's twentieth leading economies by the Year 2020. But for this to become practically attainable, Nigeria must develop both applied and theoretical knowledge in key areas such as science, technology, marketing communications, the social sciences and other associated learning disciplines.

The growth and development of the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria is, therefore, a part response and efforts to Nigeria's quest in becoming one of the 20 economic leaders by the Year 2020. The contributions of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises to the industrialization process of some leading world economies have been widely acknowledged and properly documented in academic literature.

According to Azende (2011), small and medium scale enterprises may look quite small and inconsequential but are actually the foundation of any economically stable nation. Their potential benefits as pointed out by Azende (2011) include contribution to the economy in terms of output of goods and services, creation of jobs at relatively low capital cost, provision of a vehicle for reducing income disparity, development of a pool of skilled and semi-skilled workers as a basis for future industrial expansion, among others. In a developing country like Nigeria, the commitment to the development of SMEs is an effort towards the development of the whole economy.

Establishing the rationale for the existing SME subsector, Sanusi (2003) points out that the establishment of SMEs was informed by the lingering problems of the dearth of long-term funding and poor business management skills which have inhibited the realization of the potentials of the small and medium scale industries as the engine of growth in the Nigerian economy. The poor business management skills talked about by Sanusi (2003) could well include those of marketing communication in which advertising is viewed as a necessary business tool in 2 the promotion of business growth. Promotional strategy is important to the small scale business in that it is used in order to gain awareness, increase awareness, and foster positive thoughts and opinions about an organization, product, service or issue. Newson, Turk, and Kruckberg (2004, p. 400) have maintained that promotion "involves special activities or events designed to create and stimulate interest in a person, product, organization or cause".

Broadly speaking, promotion occurs in a competitive environment. In a competitive environment, the strategies of promotion that can be utilized are in advertising. But not in an exclusive manner though. The possession of advertising skills by business managers will be an added impetus for growth of small and medium enterprises in any competitive economy. To further underscore the importance of SMEs in our economy, Nigeria's former Minister of State for Trade and investment, Dr. Samuel Ortom, is quoted to have expressed belief and confidence in the contribution of SMEs to Nigeria's development. The minister reiterated at a meeting with the Director General of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN) Mohammed Nadada Umar according to Momoh (2011,p.30) thus: SMES worldwide were key to development and that in spite of the challenges facing Nigeria's small businesses; the sector remained a veritable platform for the socio-economic turnaround: That wealth creation, job creation, security and other dividends of good government that Nigerians are entitled to would be elusive without the development of small business in the country.

In the Nigerian economic climate, both the government and other vital sectors such as the Bank of Industry, the Central Bank of Nigeria, and commercial banks among others seem to have embraced the SMEs movement in theory or principles and have not been able to do much in translating the various discussions in seminars, conferences and the mass media regarding SMEs into practical actions that will help the sub-sector to grow in order to aid Nigeria's rapid economic and sustainable development.

Reasons are often adduced for the poor or slow growth of the SMEs which have made many of them to remain small in terms of scope and operation. This state of affairs may simply be explained that the small scale businesses have failed to popularize themselves through the use of marketing communication forces of advertising. In a globalized economic system, what a company produces in one part of the world could be of interest to investors and useful to a market in another part of the world. It is when a company makes use of opportunities inherent in advertising that this can be made possible. Ekezie (1996) added ignorance of institutionalized incentives, shortage of skill, or lack of trained personnel, restricted market, lack of good advice, lack of efficiency among others.

As part of solution to these problems, Nwosu (2007, p. 188) avers that "start small and think big" philosophy of the SMEs definitely includes the use of advertising for business growth and development, a strategy that compels the SMEs to start with small strategies of advertising which are many and grow along to the use of bigger and more sophisticated forms or strategies of advertising because the success of any business organization depends to a great extent on how well its corporate communications strategy is organized, executed and managed. It seems therefore, that SMEs in Nigeria are not adequately sensitized about the potential role of advertising in their growth. There is also a lack of studies that focus deeply on advertising for SMEs in Nigeria. There appears to be a gap in the application of advertising as a strategic promotional tool for small scale enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States and by extension Nigeria.

Advertising has been recognized as an important tool of corporate communications amongst businesses. These are sometimes deployed in the realm of marketing communications. The basic way of promoting the growth of small and medium scale enterprises is for the enterprise to advertise themselves, their products and services. Advertising will render to these small businesses the needed public recognition and high profile visibility stance even in the midst of competition. The rationale for the use of advertising by businesses is aptly captured by Fritz (1989, p. 106) that: Today's marketers recognize advertising as an important part of the promotional mix. Companies advertise to communicate with their customers and prospects. Advertising is essentially the voice of marketing. As such, it is just one of the many marketing tools that can help move goods or services from the company to its target market. It is in recognition of the imperatives of using advertising in strategic business management on one hand, and the seemingly lamentable state of their application by the small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria, on the other, that this study takes credence on.

Theoretical Framework

This study will be anchored on Yale's Persuasion Theory and supported by the AIDA Model. Yale's Persuasion Theory is relevant to this study because it establishes how persuasive advertising messages can be used to influence people's behaviors and attitudes. This theory is important to understanding the process of persuasion and how managers

of small and medium scale enterprises can utilize advertising in growing their businesses through persuasive advertising. The principles of this theory will guide the present study in determining the level at which advertising persuades and influences people into changing their behaviors and attitudes particularly as it relates to patronizing businesses or purchasing certain products and services.

The AIDA Model is relevant to this study because it is a behavioral model that has a mandate to make sure that an advertisement raises awareness, stimulates interest, and leads the customer to desire and eventually action. The model is seen as highly persuasive and is said to often unconsciously affect people's thinking. The principles of this theory will guide SME managers on how best to package effective advertising messages that spur their enterprises to grow.

Empirical Studies

A number of studies have been carried out in the area of small and medium scale enterprises globally. Some of the related studies concerning the topic under review were as follows:

Effective Management of SMEs in Nigeria connotes that contribution to a book titled "Growing the Economy and Achieving Poverty Reduction in Nigeria: The Crucial Role of MSMEs." Pp. 145-152 the major objective of this research study was to identify those strategies that are adopted for effective management of SMEs in Nigeria. The researcher worked with both primary and secondary data Uduji (2007). The primary data were sourced through oral interview to extract information from the Nigerian Association of Small and Medium scale Enterprises (NASME) while the secondary source comprised both published and unpublished materials from texts, NASME and the world association of small and medium scale Enterprises (WASME) documents, libraries, federal office of statistics and the CBN. The major findings from this study are as presented below:

It was discovered that feasibility study is of paramount importance to effective management of SMEs in Nigeria. According to the results, feasibility studies are essential to entrepreneurs in the area of product or service, market potentials, sales forecasts, financial resources, organizational capabilities, and competition. The reason for feasibility studies according to -fingers provides conclusive answer to the basic issue listed above (i.e. market potentials, sales forecasts, financial resources, organizational capabilities, and competition.

Thus Uduji's study shares certain similarities with the present research in the subject matter. However, the methodology of the Uduji work differs with the present study. Whereas Uduji's study concentrated on only identifying the strategies that were effective in the management of small and medium scale enterprise in Nigeria, the present study broadly set out to determine the manner, nature and extent many business communication strategies have been utilized by the small and medium scale enterprise in Benue and Nasarawa States to engender influence on their growth.

Nwosu, (2007): Advertising Strategies for Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Nigeria. Contribution to a Book titled "Growing the Economy and Achieving Poverty Reduction in Nigeria: The Crucial Role of MSMEs". The problem upon which this study emerged was the author's observation that the use of advertising as a promotional strategy was often neglected especially by the small and medium scale enterprises operators in Nigeria. As such, the SMEs which the author clearly recognized as the bedrock of Nigeria's economic and industrial growth have not reaped the benefit that should have made them record more growth if they were using advertising strategies to promote their business.

The key things in the study include the fact that small and medium scale enterprises must start to advertise at the early stage if they hope to grow in Nigeria and even to compete internationally. The study was also clear in explaining the meaning of advertising, its process, type of advertising and the various media of advertising as well as the various strategies of advertising for use by small scale business operators. The study concludes that, the adoption rate of advertising for business promotion by SMEs is relatively poor compared to the benefits that they could have enjoyed from utilizing them. It therefore recommended early involvement in the usage of advertising by SME managers as an important tool for business growth.

The link between Nwosu's study and the study in which it is being reviewed lies in the fact that both studies are similar in their conceptualization and objectives. In addition to that fact, it is a similar problem situation that has encouraged both studies. The various advertising strategies that can be used by small scale businesses are clearly established in both studies.

There is, however, a marked difference between Nwosu's and the one in which it is being reviewed. Whereas Nwosu's study is qualitative in nature, and the one in which it is being reviewed used population samples for purposes of data collection. As a result, data in the present study were presented using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The use of statistical methods is employed in the current study, a component and differences the previous study is seen as suitable for the purpose of review.

Nwaizugbo, (2007) says that creating bigger and more Profitable Marketing Opportunities for SMEs through Strategic Partnership and Alliances". Contribution to a book titled "Growing the Economy and Achieving Poverty Reduction in Nigeria: The Crucial Role of MSMEs". Pp. 161-168. The focus of the research by Nwaizugbo was to examine the potential of marketing for contributing significantly to the development of the nation, Nigeria. This major objective was premised against the backdrop of the problem which the author stated in summary that Nigeria particularly has not as a matter of policy directed attention towards promoting marketing as an instrument of development.

The author of the paper further reported a research by the German Development Institute as published in Business Day of August, 2007, with title "Why developed Nations' SMEs Surpass the Poor". According to the author, it was noted in the research report that, "in many developing countries, only a small proportion of micro and small firms grow beyond a certain threshold due mainly to lack of specific management and/or marketing skills". Also, the report went further to remark that many developing countries fail to exploit the advantages of large firm-small firm integration and the opportunities this presents for complimentary specialization, multiple interactions and the transfer of a wide range of resources, skills and technologies.

Azende (2011) on the topic: corporate social responsibility in Nigerian Banking System: The Development of small and medium scale enterprises. The major objectives of this study according to the author is to know how socially responsible the banking system is responding to this vital development issue. Given that Small and Medium Enterprises Equity Investment Scheme (SMEEIS) is an umbrella under which banks came together to supposedly attend to this problem.

To achieve the stated objectives in the study, the researcher adopted the survey research design and empirical method making use of paired sample t-test. The t-test was used to measure the

significance of the loans to SMEs by banks who contribute to SMEs funds. In the course of the study, the following findings were made.

From 1993-2011, there was a steady decline in the ratio of loans to SMEs to total banks' credit. The most remarkable decline was from 1996 when the abolition of 2020 mandatory credit to SMEs took effect.

Banks have not earned a reputation in the development of SMEs. This is seen in the weak performance of SMEEIS which is an umbrella of banks. The commitment of CSR in this regard would have earned them this reputation.

Stringent conditions of SMEEIs may prevent SMEs from accessing the funds under the scheme. In conclusion, the researcher emphasized that the success of any economy of a country depends largely on the role and performance of its banking system. And the SMEs which are a sub-sector of the economy of a country are dependent on the finances from the banks to survive and grow. Therefore, the weak performance of the financial houses like banks would spell doom to the existence of SMEs. Thus, the author recommends as follows:

- i. There are many banks in Nigeria; an umbrella like SMEEIs that brings together all the banks is a step to the right direction. Banks annual contribution to the scheme should rather be increased to 20% of their pre-tax profit. This is borne out of the fact that their capital base is not more than what it was when they were to contribute 10%.
- ii. For reasons of being socially responsible, the SMEEIs fund should have a relatively liberal condition for accessing the fund. A 5% loan interest should be maintained for all SMEs requiring funds from it.
- iii. Banks that are committed to CSR should issue an annual economic impact assessment and submit the same to the government for approval. This will help focus on activities that impact the society more economically. If this was the case, SMEs will stand out for above sports tournaments that banks sponsor in the name of CSR. iv. Banks, by their nature and in line with their objectives, do try to minimize risk, while SMEs, on the other hand, are inherently risky. Consequently, the government and the banks should mutually agree on a credit guarantee.
- iv. Scheme that will incorporate risk-sharing arrangements as a way of encouraging banks to channel funds to SMEs.
- v. A legal framework should be introduced by the government if banks cannot voluntarily subscribe to funding SMEs. This will help improve their finances. Azende's study shares a similarity with the current one in the sense that they both sought to find out how two different industries (banking and SMEs) are utilizing a glaring opportunity to their advantage. While Azende's study sought to find out how the banking industry in Nigeria was utilizing Corporate Social Responsibility to their advantage by providing loans to SMEs under the auspices of the Small and Medium Enterprises Equity Investment (SMEEIS), the current study seeks to find out how SMEs are using advertising strategies to grow their ventures. The two studies are however dissimilar in the sense that, while the current is concerned with the application of advertising strategies to the growth of SMEs, the former was concerned with Corporate Social Responsibility in the Nigerian Banking System.

Methodology

The research design employed in this study was a quantitative research method. For the quantitative design, the researcher employed the survey with the use of a structured questionnaire. Wimmer and Dominick (2011, p. 186) have maintained that the survey is an important research design that is common among mass media researchers that can produce

reliable and useful information. Inherent pay-offs of the survey as pointed out by other scholars such as Ohaja (2003, p. 73) Osuala (2001, p. 253-254) and Babbie (1977, p. 259) include the fact that surveys measure people's attitudes and orientations, discover the relative incidence, distribution and interrelationship of sociological and psychological variables. In addition, survey research collects data from only a fraction depending on the purpose of the study, available resources, and time at the disposal of the researcher and the level of the expected precision. This study lends itself to survey because it is people's options, attitudes and orientations concerning the use of advertising and the influences these have on the growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States that the study sought.

The population of the study is 2,760 registered SMEs in Benue and Nasarawa states. This figure was drawn from the Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN) and National Bureau of Statistics' (NBS) collaborative survey (2017) which puts the total number of registered SMEs in Benue State at 1,156 and 1,604 in Nasarawa State.

A sample size of seven hundred and ninety-two (792) was chosen for this study. The sample size was statistically determined using Taro Yamane's formula for determination of sample size. According to Okwando (2004, p.130), in determining the sample size from a heterogeneous population, we can use taro Yamane's formula as shown below:

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

Based on the statistical formula as shown in appendix, the sample size for the study was seven hundred and ninety-two (792)

The sampling technique used in this study was the stratified sampling technique. Stratified sampling was used in the study because the sample population was segmented into two (2) different states. The first stratified population sampled was SMEs in Benue State. Here, a sample of three hundred and ninety (390) SMEs were purposely drawn among SMEs managers in Gboko and 48 Makurdi. The purposive selection of these major areas was based on the large nature of concentration of SMEs in the areas, as well as the nature of economic significance these Two (2) local government areas have in the state. The second stratified population sampled on the other hand was SMEs in Nasarawa State. Here, a total of four hundred and two (402) SMEs were sampled from Lafia and Karu LGAs. Again, the reason for selecting these Two (2) local government areas was based on their level of commercial significance to the state. They comprise a large number of SMEs and this makes them suitable for the study. This brought the total number of SMEs sampled to seven hundred and ninety-two (792). In all, a total of seven hundred and ninety-two (792) SMEs were drawn from the population of study to constitute the sample size. This sample was considered appropriate for the study. Wimmer and Dominick (2006, p. 92) have argued that the fact that a sample is large does not mean it includes the correct respondents or elements. The duo therefore maintains that "a large sample can be as poor, in terms of quality, as a small sample. A large number of people or elements do not automatically make the sample good". Defleur (2006, p. 185) also maintains that modern sampling theory has shown that accurate results can be applied in a nationwide survey with few respondents, if they are properly selected. Based on the authorities and the inherent characteristics of the population, the sample for the study was considered as being adequate.

Analysis

Table 1: Whether Advertising Strategies are relevant to the growth of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Response Option	Benue	Nasarawa	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	516	516	516	100
No	NIL	N IL	NIL	NIL
Total			516	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Information was sought on table 1 to establish respondent knowledge about advertising strategies and as well their opinions on whether such concepts are relevant to the growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States. As shown in the raw data, the total numbers of 516 (100%) respondents sampled all expressed in their opinions that the strategies were relevant in the growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States. It is obvious from the above table that all the respondents are knowledgeable about the use of advertising strategies.

Table 2: Whether SMEs Managers are aware that Advertising Strategies can influence the growth of SMEs in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Response Option	Benue	Nasarawa	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes, they are fully aware	194	243	437	85
No, they are not aware	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
They are partially aware	35	44	79	15
Undecided	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Total			516	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The objective of table 2 was to find out whether small and medium scale enterprise managers had full awareness that advertising strategies can influence the growth of small and medium scale enterprises in the states under study. Out of the 516 respondents sampled, 437 (85%) expressed the view that they are fully aware. However, 79(15%) other respondents said they are only partially aware.

Table 3: How Advertising Strategies are relevant to the Growth of SMEs in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Response Option	Benue	Nasarawa	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Bring more public recognition on the Emprise's brand	12	16	28	5
Aid patronage of enterprise by customers And consumers	14	18	32	326
Contribute to successful marketing of Enterprise's product, service or idea.	7	11	18	4
Stimulate more demand on enterprise Product service or idea	6	8	14	3
Distinguish enterprise their product and Servicefrom that of competitors	4	6	10	2
Contribute to the marketing strategy Of the enterprise	2	3	5	1
All of above	187	222	409	79
None of the above	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total			516	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The objective of table 3 was to know the ways or areas in which respondents felt advertising strategies are relevant to the growth of small and medium enterprise in the two states. As shown in the result on the table, 28 (5%) managers said advertising strategies are relevant in the growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States, as they bring more public recognition, on the enterprises' products and services. Other 32 (6%) managers and advertising strategies aid patronage of enterprise by customers and consumers. In addition, 18 (4%) other managers said advertising contributes to successful marketing of enterprise products, service, and ideas. Moreover, 14(3%) other managers said advertising stimulates more demand on enterprises' products, services and ideas, while another 10 (2%) sample managers said advertising distinguishes enterprises, their products and services from other competitions. Again 5 (1%) number of managers said advertising strategies do contribute to the marketing strategy of the enterprises to the marketing strategy of the enterprises while 409 (79%) majority of the sampled managers said advertising strategies do influence the growth of small and medium scale enterprise in the two states through all the ways identified by other business owners as stated above.

Table 4: Whether there are known Advertising Strategies that can influence Growth of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Response Option	Benue	Nasarawa	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	516	516	516	100
No	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Total			516	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4 shows respondents' option data on whether there exists known advertising strategies that can influence growth of small and medium scale enterprises in the two states. As displayed on the table, a total of 516 (100%) respondents attested that there are known and existing advertising strategies that can surely influence growth of small and medium scale enterprise in the two States.

Table 5: Table showing the Advertising Strategies that are mostly adopted by SMEs Managers in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Response Option	Benue	Nasarawa	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Commercial Announcements	104	100	204	40
Direct mail advertisements	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Use of testimonial Advertisements	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Internet advertising	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Use of posters	25	73		18
Use of electronic and print billboards	20	38	58	11
Print and broadcast media advertisements	7	13	20	4
Product and corporate stickers	12	18	30	6
Transportation, bodily inscription of vehicle	45	61	106	21
All of the above				
None of the above	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total			516	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 5 is a presentation of data showing respondents' (managers) knowledge of the advertising strategies that are mostly adopted by small and medium enterprises in the two states under study. As shown on the table, 204 (40%) managers said they do embark on commercial announcements, 98 (18%) other managers said they use posters, while 58(11%) majority of sampled respondents said they go on electronics and print billboards, as well as sign-post. Again 20 (4%) respondents (managers) said they do adopt the print and broadcast media advertisements, while 30 (6%) other managers said they engage in the use of products and stickers. However, 106 (21%) managers said they usually embark on transport advertising-bodily inscription of vehicles, while none of the managers mentioned use of direct mails, testimonies, the internet and social media of communication.

Table 6: How suitable advertising Strategies are in Influencing Growth of SMEs in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Response Option	Benue	Nasarawa	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very Suitable (70% - above)	155	213	368	75
Suitable (60-69%)	48	80	128	25
Not very suitable (50- 59%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Not suitable (40-49%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Undecided (0- 39%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total		516		100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Data sought on table 6, was to determine respondents' views on the extent of the use of suitable advertising strategies and their influence on the growth of small and medium scale enterprises in the two States. It is shown on the table that, out of 516 respondents sampled, 388. (75%) majority opined that advertising strategies were very suitable (70%- above) while 128 (25%) respondents in minority also felt that advertising strategies were just suitable (60% - 69%). However, no respondent was found to view advertising strategies to be unsuitable or were undecided.

Table 7: Whether SMEs Managers in Benue and Nasarawa States have been using Advertising Strategies to influence the growth of their businesses.

Response Option	Benue	Nasarawa	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes	516	516	516	100
No	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Do not know	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Total			516	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The aim of table 7 was to find out whether managers of small and medium scale enterprises in the states under study do deploy advertising strategies to influence the growth of their businesses. As could be viewed from the raw data, a total of 516 (100%) respondents all agreed that they do deploy advertising strategies in order to influence growth in their various businesses. None of the respondents however rejected this position.

Table 8: How effective the Uses of Advertising Strategies are in influencing the growth of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Response Option	Benue	Nasarawa	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Very effective (70% - above)	8	12	20	4

Effective (60-69%)	14	22	36	7
Not very effective (50- 59%)	182	190	372	72
Not effective (40-49%)	64	24	88	17
Undecided (0- 39%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total			516	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Information was sought on table 8 to know and ascertain respondents' opinions on the level or extent to which effective use of advertising strategies have influenced the growth of small and medium scale enterprises in the two states under study. As shown on the table, 20 (4%) respondents opined that advertising strategies have very effective influence of about 70% and above on the growth and development of small and medium scale enterprise while 36 (7%) other respondents felt that influence is just effective on a 60-69% rate. However, 372 (72%) glaring majority of respondents disclosed in their opinions that the influence of both strategies is not very effective, as it hangs precariously within a range of 50 – 59%. Also, 88 (17%) other respondents in slight majority opine that, the influence of advertising strategies, is not effective on growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States at all.

Table 9: The Quality of use of Advertising Strategies by Managers to Influence the Growth of SMEs in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Response Option	Benue	Nasarawa	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Excellent (70% - above)	9	12	21	4
Good (60-69%)	10	14	24	5
Fairly (50- 59%)	183	206	389	75
Low (40-49%)	36	46	82	16
Poor (0- 39%)	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total			516	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The aim of table 9 was to determine respondents' opinion or assessment of the quality of advertising strategies' application by managers, so as to achieve significant influence in the growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States.

The result of the data shows 21(4%) respondents in minority who said the quality of advertising strategies used by managers in small and medium scale enterprises is excellent on a rate of 70% - above while 24 (5%) other slight minority respondents also felt the quality of use both strategies is good on a rate of 60%-69%. However, 389 (75%) majority of respondents opined that the quality of use of both strategies is fairly good at a rate of 50-59%. While 82 (16%) slight majority of respondents disclosed that, the quality of use of advertising strategies by small and medium scale enterprises is low on an average rate of 40%-49%.

Table 10: The Nature of Influence of Advertising Strategies on the Growth of SMEs in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Response Option	Benue	Nasarawa	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Positive	516	516	516	100
Negative	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Undecided	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Total			516	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

As a follow-up of table 10, data was sought on table 19 to know the direction to which the use of advertising strategies by managers have influenced growth of small and medium scale

enterprises in the two States. The result from the raw data revealed that all the 516 (100%) respondents unanimously agreed that the use of advertising strategies had a positive influence on the growth of small and medium scale enterprises in the two states.

Table 11: The Positive Ways in which advertising Strategies have influenced the growth of SMEs in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Response Option	Benue	Nasarawa	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Stimulated sales of products and services	72	96	186	33
Accorded high public visibility to the Enterprises	5	7	12	2
Created good image of the enterprises	10	20	30	6
Contributed to market objectives of enterprises	12	15	27	5
Created more public recognition of enterprises	40	62	102	20
Opened up more business opportunities for enterprises	7	20	27	6
Helped the enterprises to compete both nationally and internationally	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Attracted skilled manpower to the enterprises	3	4	7	1
Helped the company to be run profitably	65	78	143	27
All of the above	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
None of the above	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total			516	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 11 is a display of data, showing managers' responses on the positive ways they feel advertising strategies have influenced growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States. It can be seen from the table that 168 (33%) sampled respondents attested that the influence of advertising strategies on growth of small and medium scale enterprises is felt in the stimulation of sales of products and services of most enterprises. 12 (2%) respondents said, the influence is felt in the high public visibility accorded most of the enterprises by the use of the strategies. More so, 30 (6%) other respondents opined that, the influence was felt in the good image most of the enterprises acquire due to the application of the strategies while 27 (5%) other respondents attested that, the influence was felt in the attainment of many market objectives of the various enterprises. Apart from that 102 (20%) respondents disclosed that the influence was effective as the Local enterprises gained public recognition. While 27 (6%) other respondents thought the strategies influenced the opening up of business opportunities for the local enterprises. Not only that, 7 (1%) respondents also had their opinion that the influence was felt as more and skilled manpower was attracted to the local enterprises and 143 (27%) respondents lastly said the strategies influenced most enterprises in running profitably continually and consistently.

Table 12: Whether there is a positive relationship between the use of Advertising Strategies and their Influence on Growth of SMEs in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Response Option	Benue	Nasarawa	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Yes, there is a positive relationship	516	516	516	100
No, there is no negative relationship	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Not sure there is a relationship at all	NIL	NIL	NIL	NIL
Total			516	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The thrust of table 12 was to find the opinions of respondents on whether there was a positive relationship between the use of advertising strategies in the significant growth of small and medium scale enterprises in both states. It is clearly shown on the table that a total of 516 (100%) respondents sampled all attested that there was a positive relationship between the use of advertising strategies and their influence on small and medium scale enterprises in the two states.

Table 13: The Possible Challenges in the Use of Advertising Strategies to Influence Growth of SMEs in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Response Option	Benue	Nasarawa	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Not recognizing that advertising can be used by the enterprise	8	9	17	3.3
The use of non-advertising professional	5	3	8	1.6
The cost of advertising may be prohibitive	5	7	12	2.3
Poor choice of advertising strategies	5	4	9	1.7
Poor choice of media avenues to publicize Strategies	8	6	14	2.7
Absence or research in appropriate strategies to adopt	12	9	21	41.
The unsuitable environment of location (economic, political & above)	7	4	11	2.1
Poor identification of the right stakeholders	9	7	16	3.1
To communicate with through advertising.				
All of the above	225	183	408	79.1
None of the above	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total			516	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Information sought on table 13 was to identify the possible challenges being observed by managers in the course of their application of advertising strategies in influencing growth of small and medium scale enterprises in the two States. It is indicated from the result on this table that 17 (3.3%) respondents identified non recognition of advertising use by management of small and medium scale enterprises in the two states. 8 (1.6%) of the other respondents observed the possible challenge to be the use of non-advertising professionals while 12 (2.3%) other respondents revealed that the cost of advertising practice is a major hindrance in the use of such strategies. Apart from that 14 (2.7%) other respondents attributed the poor choice of media avenues in publishing advertisements as a possible challenge. Again, 9 (1.7%) meagre respondents described that the poor choice of advertising tactics was a possible challenge in ensuring effective growth of small and medium scale enterprises in the two states.

Aside from the challenges identified by respondents above, another 21 (4.1%) respondents opined that the absence of research in appropriate adoption of strategies was a possible challenge too. In addition, 11 (2.1%) respondents identified the possible challenge from the economic, political and social perspectives (i.e. the unsuitable environment of location). More so, 16 (3.1%) other respondents pointed out poor identification of ideal stakeholders to communicate with, through advertising as a possible challenge to the use of the strategies by small and medium scale enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States. However, 408 (79.1%) majority of the respondents said, all the challenges mentioned by other respondents above were the possible challenges of advertising use by managers of small and medium scale enterprises in the two States.

Table 14: Way of tackling the challenges encountered in the use of Advertising strategies by SMEs Managers in Benue and Nasarawa States.

Response Option	Benue	Nasarawa	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Adoption of advertising philosophy by enterprises	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Provision of tangible resources for advertising activities	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Cultivation of strategic management of advertising in enterprises	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Rightful placement of advertising professionals.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Use of research for market stakeholders, product, media, purpose, etc.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Use of smaller, but affordable advertising strategies.	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Conducive location of enterprise where advertising activities will be carried out	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Partnership and networking among Enterprises in developing marketing strategies	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
All of the above	516	516	516	100
None of the above	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
Total			516	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024.

Table 14 reveals the various suggestions made by respondents on ways of tackling the challenges in the use of advertising strategies by small and medium scale enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States. Data on the table shows 516 (100%) respondents who all suggested that the various enterprises should be in the vanguard of adopting advertising philosophy and provision of tangible resources for advertising professionals. Other suggestions made by all the respondents were, cultivation of strategic management of advertising in the enterprises, rightful placement of advertising professionals, use of research for market stakeholders, product and media purposes, use of smaller but affordable advertising strategies, conducive location of enterprises where advertising activities will be carried out and partnership and networking among enterprises in developing marketing strategies.

Findings

Based on the data gathered and analysis made, the following findings have emerged from the study:

- i. The level of awareness and knowledge about the relevance and use of advertising strategies among small and medium scale enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States to achieve growth was relatively high (71%). The high awareness is also reflected as most managers (79%) had demonstrated such knowledge by enumerating the various ways in which advertising strategies were relevant and can be used to influence growth of small and medium scale enterprises in the two States.
- ii. It was also found that small and medium scale enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States often engage in the application of advertising strategies to ensure their growth. However, the level of application of such strategies among small and medium scale enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States have been insignificant as shown by respondents' views as most of them (60%) disclosed that lack of finance have restricted them from deploying more promotional tools in their businesses.
- iii. Another finding of this study was that although the level of awareness in the use and relevance of advertising strategies among small and medium scale enterprises was high, managers have however been adopting few of the strategies such as commercial announcements and word of mouth out of the many that are deemed relevant to their growth .
- iv. Lastly, it is found in the study that there were lingering challenges in the application of advertising strategies experienced by the small and medium scale enterprises and such challenges had significant negative influences on their growth. Some of the major challenges were that of lack of finance as well as the nonchalant attitude in ensuring a holistic and quality implementation of affordable promotional strategies by most enterprises.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this investigation, the study concludes that:

The communication tools of advertising strategies have only been averagely applied to managing growth of small and medium scale enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States. As a result of this, significant positive influence was not seen as one would expect tremendous growth among Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Benue and Nasarawa States.

The high awareness demonstrated by Small and Medium Scale Enterprises managers about the use and relevance of advertising strategies was not significantly leveraged for significant positive growth among Small and Medium Scale enterprises in the two States.

There are several impeding factors such as: not recognizing that advertising can be used by the enterprise, the use of non-advertising professional, the cost of advertising, poor choice of media and poor choice of advertising strategies which are associated with the use of advertising and they have not been properly managed by Small and Medium Scale Enterprises Managers in Benue and Nasarawa States to ensure the desired positive growth of their enterprises.

Recommendations Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made;

- i. Managements of small and medium scale enterprises should improve their utilization of their already existing knowledge and awareness of advertising strategies.
- ii. Small and medium scale enterprises should develop management policies that should always ensure a total and holistic development of the promotional tools so as to influence their growth.
- iii. In order to manage the challenges involved in the use of advertising strategies to their barest minimum, management of small and medium scale enterprises should endeavor to make policies on possible budget and possible sources of funds for effective engagement in

business promotions, as this will enable them to effectively utilize the promotional strategies and record positive result on a long term.

- iv. Since lack of finance has been identified as a major challenge to business levels and growth, business owners should always find alternative means of providing finances that will be used in engaging the promotion of their enterprises.

References

- Azende, T. (2011). *Corporate social responsibility in the Nigerian banking system: The development of small and medium scale enterprises*. World Journal of Social Sciences, 1(5), 12–27.
- Babbie, E. (1977). *Survey research methods*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.
- Defleur, M. L. (2006). *Fundamentals of human communication: Social science in everyday life*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Ekezie, E. S. (1996). *The elements of banking: Money, financial institutions and markets*. Onitsha: Africana-FEP Publishers Ltd.
- Fritz, W. (1989). *Advertising and promotion: An integrated marketing communications perspective*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Momoh, I. (2011). *SMEs and Nigeria's economic growth*. Business Day, August Edition, p. 30.
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2020). *Statistical bulletin: Small and medium enterprises in Nigeria*. Abuja: Author.
- Newson, D., Turk, J. V., & Kruckeberg, D. (2004). *This is PR: The realities of public relations (8th ed.)*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth/Thomson Learning.
- Nwaizugbo, C. (2007). "Creating bigger and more profitable marketing opportunities for SMEs through strategic partnership and alliances". In I. E. Nwosu (Ed.), *Growing the economy and achieving poverty reduction in Nigeria: The crucial role of MSMEs* (pp. 161–168). Nsukka: Institute for Development Studies.
- Nwosu, I. E. (2007). "Advertising strategies for small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria". In I. E. Nwosu (Ed.), *Growing the economy and achieving poverty reduction in Nigeria: The crucial role of MSMEs* (pp. 187–204). Nsukka: Institute for Development Studies.
- Nwosu, I. E. (2011). *Marketing communications management and media in Nigeria*. Enugu: Precision Publishers Ltd.
- Ohaja, E. U. (2003). *Mass communication research and project report writing*. Lagos: John Letterman Ltd.
- Okonkwo, R. (2004). *Introduction to research methodology*. Enugu: Academic Publishing Company.
- Osuala, E. C. (2001). *Introduction to research methodology (3rd ed.)*. Onitsha: Africana-FEP Publishers.
- Sanusi, J. O. (2003). *Overview of the government's efforts in the development of SMEs and the emergence of small and medium industries equity investment scheme (SMIEIS)*. Paper presented at the Seminar on Small and Medium Enterprises Development for FICAN, Lagos.
- Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) & National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2017). *SMEDAN and National Bureau of Statistics collaborative survey report on micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in Nigeria*.

- Uduji, J. I. (2007). *“Effective management of SMEs in Nigeria”*. In I. E. Nwosu (Ed.), *Growing the economy and achieving poverty reduction in Nigeria: The crucial role of MSMEs* (pp. 145–152). Nsukka: Institute for Development Studies.
- Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2006). *Mass media research: An introduction (8th ed.)*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Wimmer, R. D., & Dominick, J. R. (2011). *Mass media research: An introduction (9th ed.)*. Boston: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.