

Effect if Entrepreneurial Capability and Sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East Nigeria

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Abstract

The study evaluated the effect of entrepreneurial capability and economic sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria. The study adopted simple random sampling technique in selecting the sample unit and the sample size for the study which was, 266 staff out of a total population of 863 of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria derived with the use of Ferund Williams formula. A total of 238 employees returned the questionnaire accurately filled, which gave 89 percent response rate. Data were presented and analyzed using mean score and standard deviation using Sprint Likert Scale. The hypotheses were analyzed using the Z – test. The findings indicated that Creativity had significant positive relationship with waste reduction $Z = 6.223 < 8.686, p. >. 05$. Leadership Skills had significant positive relationship with cost maintenance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria. $Z = 7.163 < 9.691, p. >. 05$. The study concluded that creativity and leadership skills had significant positive relationship with waste reduction and cost maintenance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria. The study recommended among others that to enhance the sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in South East Nigeria, the entrepreneurs should prioritize fostering creativity within their businesses.

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1. Introduction

In ancient times, trade and commerce were vital, with early entrepreneurs emerging as merchants and traders in civilizations like Mesopotamia and Egypt. During the middle Ages, guilds formed in Europe, allowing craftsmen and traders to collaborate and setting the stage for collective entrepreneurial efforts, and was further shaped by the Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers advocating for economic freedom. The Industrial Revolution brought significant changes, creating opportunities for entrepreneurs like Henry Ford and Andrew Carnegie. In the post-WWII era, startups surged, especially in technology, with globalization expanding markets. The 21st century has seen a digital revolution, emphasizing social impact and sustainability, while diverse perspectives and emerging technologies continue to influence entrepreneurial practices. Overall, entrepreneurial capability has evolved alongside societal and technological changes. Even 20,000 years ago, tribes were exchanging goods. Evidence exists of basic trading of volcanic rock which could be used to create hunting weapons being exchanged for other goods. In its simplest form, this is about finding something which someone else wants. Not so different to today's entrepreneur who is trying to find and solve a customer problem that has not yet been addressed. If you have something that people need, you can exchange it – in the modern case, for money, (Jooris, 2021).

Entrepreneurial capability refers to the blend of skills, knowledge, and attributes that enable individuals to identify opportunities and create successful ventures. It involves recognizing gaps in the market and developing innovative solutions to meet those needs. Entrepreneurs must be adept at managing risks, balancing potential rewards with uncertainties. They need to mobilize resources effectively, including funding, talent, and technology, and apply strategic thinking to plan for long-term success while remaining adaptable to market changes. Leadership plays a crucial role, as entrepreneurs inspire teams and foster positive organizational cultures. Entrepreneurial capability, defined as the entrepreneurs' special skill or experience, helps entrepreneurs seize business opportunities, leads the entrepreneurial team, and creates business value to successfully achieve the entrepreneurial goals (Xie and Huang, 2014; Ge and Zhao, 2021).

Sustainability in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) refers to the practices and strategies that enable these businesses to operate in an environmentally and socially responsible manner while ensuring economic viability. Sustainability in SMEs encompasses environmental, social, and economic dimensions. By integrating sustainable practices into their operations, SMEs can contribute to broader sustainability goals while enhancing their competitiveness and resilience in the marketplace. Sustainability of SMEs depends on various factors, which can broadly be categorized as external or internal factors. External environmental factors are forces, which are beyond the control of the SMEs. This means that they must control internal environmental factors to ensure that they remain competitive in the market. Sustainability of SMEs can be achieved by using internal strengths and managing its weaknesses to capitalize on market opportunities while taking care of threats (Bansal, & Clelland, 2004).

Entrepreneurial capability and sustainability in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is particularly significant. Entrepreneurial capability in SMEs involves the ability to identify opportunities, innovate, and effectively manage resources. This capability is essential for implementing sustainable practices that can lead to long-term success. The relationship between

entrepreneurial capability and sustainability in SMEs is interdependent. Entrepreneurial skills enable SMEs to identify and exploit sustainable opportunities, innovate, manage risks, build partnerships, and foster a positive organizational culture. Together, these elements contribute to the long-term viability and success of SMEs in a rapidly changing business landscape.

Based on this, the study aimed to evaluate how the entrepreneurial capabilities of SMEs influence their economic sustainability practices. It focused on skills such as opportunity recognition, innovation, and resource management, examining their impact on the long-term viability of these enterprises. The research also explored how effective risk management and strategic thinking enable SMEs to adopt sustainable practices that address environmental and social responsibilities. Additionally, the study looked at the role of networking and collaboration in promoting sustainability, as well as the overall benefits of a sustainability-oriented approach on business performance and community relations. (Somwethee, et al, 2023).

1.2 Statement of Problem

Entrepreneurial capability plays a crucial role in the sustainability of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). The success and long-term viability of SMEs are highly dependent on the entrepreneurs' ability to adapt, innovate, and manage the various challenges that arise in a competitive and often volatile business environment. Entrepreneurial capability helps SMEs adapt to market changes, whether through shifting consumer preferences, technological advancements, or new regulatory frameworks. Entrepreneurs who possess strong capabilities can adjust their business models, products, or services to stay relevant. Entrepreneurs with high capabilities are better at navigating economic downturns, supply chain disruptions, or unexpected crises. Their ability to pivot and make swift decisions can help SMEs survive challenging times.

However, several challenges hinder their ability to thrive in the long term. SMEs often face difficulties in securing financing, particularly from traditional sources like banks. The lack of capital hinders their ability to invest in sustainable business practices, innovation, and scaling their operations. The inability to make informed decisions, particularly around cost control, investment in sustainable practices, or long-term strategic planning, can lead to inefficient operations and eventual business failure. There are lacks of entrepreneurial capability that limit the ability of SMEs to compete effectively, innovate, manage finances, and grow sustainably. The inability to develop entrepreneurial skills in areas like leadership, strategic thinking, financial management, creativity and innovation hinder the long-term survival and success of SMEs.

Lacks of such capabilities lead to inefficiencies and an inability to handle growth, stifling potential expansion. Without the ability to create compelling value propositions, SMEs may struggle with effective marketing and branding, limiting their ability to capture customer attention or build a loyal base. Lack of entrepreneurial vision often results in weak organizational culture, which can affect productivity, increase high waste and cost maintenance, and long-term employee commitment. Base on this, the need to evaluate the effect of entrepreneurial capability and economic sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The main objective of the study was the Effect of entrepreneurial capability and economic sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- i. Examine the relationship between Creativity and waste reduction of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria
- ii. Ascertain the relationship between Leadership Skills and cost maintenance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

1.3 Research Questions

The following Research Questions guided the study

- i. What is the relationship between Creativity and waste reduction of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria?
- ii. What is the relationship between Leadership Skills and cost maintenance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria?

1.4 Statement of Hypotheses

The following Hypotheses guided the study

- i. Creativity has relationship with waste reduction of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria
- ii. Leadership Skills has relationship with cost maintenance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Conceptual Review

2.1.1 Entrepreneurial

Entrepreneurial refers to qualities, traits, or activities associated with entrepreneurs; Individuals who create, manage, and take risks to start new businesses or ventures. This term encompasses characteristics like innovation, risk-taking, problem-solving, and a strong drive for success. Entrepreneurial activities often involve identifying market opportunities, developing new products or services, and navigating the challenges of starting and growing a business. Overall, being entrepreneurial is about thinking creatively and being proactive in pursuit of opportunities. Entrepreneurial skills can encompass a broad range of various skill sets like technical skills, leadership and business management skills and creative thinking. Because entrepreneurial skills can be applied to many different job roles and industries, developing your entrepreneurial skills can mean developing several types of skill sets, (Hirschauer, 2021).

2.1.2 Capability

Capability refers to the ability or capacity to perform a specific task or function. It encompasses the skills, resources, and competencies that enable individuals or organizations to achieve their goals. A capability is the collective mix of skills, knowledge, tools, processes and behaviors that, when combined, help to deliver organizational outcomes. They can be both job-specific or organization-wide, (Acorn, 2023). A capability is a high-level description of what an organization can do to achieve its goals and deliver value to its stakeholders. A capability is not tied to any specific technology, process, or resource, but rather expresses the potential or ability of an organization to perform a function, (Austen, 2024).

2.1.3 Entrepreneurial capability

Entrepreneurial capability refers to an individual's or organization's ability to identify opportunities, innovate, and effectively mobilize resources to create and manage a business venture. It encompasses a range of skills and traits, including creativity, risk-taking, problem-solving, and strategic thinking. Additionally, it involves the capacity to adapt to changing market conditions, leverage networks, and execute business plans successfully. Overall, entrepreneurial capability is essential for driving growth, fostering innovation, and achieving sustainable success in competitive environments. Entrepreneurial capability can be defined as a distinct set of individual and organizational capabilities and skills as well as actions, practices, and routines that aim to explore, integrate, and exploit untapped business opportunities within an instituted market context. (Alijani, 2024)

2.1.4 Component of entrepreneurial capability

2.1.4.1 Creativity

Creativity is the process of making something new whether its art or a technical solution. For many people there is a belief that people are either born creative or they aren't. The reality is that this isn't true at all, there are people with greater aptitude for creativity in different areas, but the overall process is the same. Creativity is made of many smaller skills and while the emphasis on skills will vary from artistic to technical there are a variety of processes that contribute to creativity, (Leung, 2023) Creativity is defined as the tendency to generate or recognize ideas, alternatives, or possibilities that may be useful in solving problems, communicating with others, and entertaining ourselves and others. Creativity is the ability to see new relation to reduce unusual ideas and to deviate from traditional patterns of thinking. Some psychologists think that, in presence of creativity person can present a new series or arrangement in the environment, (Kumar, 2023).

2.1.4.2 Leadership Skills

Leadership skills are the abilities and the capabilities that an individual demonstrates while leading a team, a situation, or life. These skills help them supervise processes, guide initiatives, and help their employees achieve their goals, (Bhasin, 2021). Leadership skills are the strengths and abilities individuals demonstrate that help to oversee processes, guide initiatives and steer their employees toward the achievement of goals. Leadership skills are an essential component in positioning executives to make thoughtful decisions about their organization's mission and goals, and properly allocate resources to achieve those directives. (Yasar & McLaughlin, 2024)

2.1.5 Economic Sustainability

Sustainability refers to the ability to maintain or preserve resources and the environment for future generations while meeting the needs of the present. It encompasses a broad range of concepts and practices aimed at promoting ecological balance, social equity, and economic viability. Sustainability refers to the ability to maintain or support a process continuously over time. In business and policy contexts, sustainability seeks to prevent the depletion of natural or physical resources, so that they will remain available for the long term, (Mollenkamp, 2023).

2.1.6 Component of economic sustainability

2.1.6.1 Waste reduction

Waste reduction is the practice of minimizing the amount of waste generated in the first place. It involves strategies like designing products that use fewer materials, encouraging the reuse of items, and promoting recycling. The goal is to conserve resources, reduce pollution, and lower disposal costs, leading to a more sustainable environment. Instead of just managing waste after it's created, waste reduction focuses on preventing waste from being produced at all. Waste Reduction: The process of minimizing the amount and impact of waste generated by human activities. It aims to prevent the creation of waste at its source rather than dealing with its consequences. Waste reduction is not just about getting rid of rubbish in an eco-friendly manner; it's a proactive approach towards conserving resources, saving energy, and mitigating the impact on the environment. It involves a series of actions that individuals, businesses, and governments can take to ensure that less waste is produced in the first place, (Vaia, 2024).

2.1.6.2 Cost maintenance

Cost maintenance refers to the ongoing expenses associated with maintaining an asset, system, or service over time. This can include a variety of costs such as repairs, regular servicing, upgrades, and the overall management of an asset's lifecycle. Effective cost maintenance aims to ensure that assets operate efficiently, extend their lifespan, and minimize unexpected breakdowns or expenses. Understanding cost maintenance in business helps in budgeting and forecasting, ensuring that companies allocate sufficient resources for upkeep without compromising their operational capabilities. It's a crucial aspect of financial planning, as neglecting maintenance can lead to higher costs down the line due to equipment failure or the need for more extensive repairs. Cost maintenance refers to the expenses incurred to keep assets in good working order. This includes routine upkeep, preventive measures, repairs, and replacements to extend the asset's lifespan and avoid costly breakdowns or inefficiencies. It's essentially the investment in preserving the value and performance of an asset over time, (Gemini, 2024).

2.1.7 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are businesses whose size falls within specific limits defined by factors such as the number of employees, annual revenue, or total assets. Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) play a vital role in economies around the world, contributing to job creation, innovation, and economic growth. Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) are businesses whose personnel numbers or financial assets fall below certain limits. These

thresholds vary by country and industry, but Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) typically have fewer employees and lower revenue than larger firms. SMEs play a vital role in the global economy by fostering innovation, creating jobs, and contributing to economic growth, (Faisalkhan, 2024).

2.1.8 Conceptual Framework

Fig: 2.1 Conceptual model of the study

Source: Author's Model, 2024

The diagram above shows the linkages between the various components of Entrepreneurial capability and economic Sustainability. The aim of the diagram is to show how improvements in these Entrepreneurial capability components and variables translate into improvements in the sustainability of the selected SMEs. The diagram shows that creativity has a high chance of improving the waste reduction of the SMEs, thereby increasing productivity ratios and Leadership skill on fulfilling the needs within the organization which will lead to greater cost maintenance of the SMEs. The end product of these will culminate in the improved organizational productivity.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The following theories guided the study

1. Resource-based view (RBV) by Barney (1991)
2. The Dynamic Capabilities Theory, proposed by David J. Teece, Gary Pisano, and Amy Shuen in 1997.

The study was anchored on the resource-based theory which seeks to explain the importance of a entrepreneurial capability resources in order to remain competitive. The aim of most business organizations is profit making, and to do that, resources must be efficiently managed. This is the proposition of the resource-based theory, and why the current study was anchored on it.

2.2.1 Resource-Based View

The theory holds that not all resources to the firm are important to enable it to achieve competitive advantage. However, in order to have a sustained competitive advantage, these resources must be valuable, inimitable, non-substitutable and non-transferable. Wiklund and Shepherd (2003), after studying the significant relationship between resources, entrepreneurial orientation and performance, posits that firm's performance should be based and measured on a wider dimension, namely organizational & procedural knowledge; innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking; net profit, sales growth, cash flow, product & process innovation, product & service quality & variety, and customer satisfaction. They further argue that resource-based view (RBV) research focuses mainly on the characteristics of resources, paying less attention to the relationship between these resources and the way firms are organized.

2.2.2 The Dynamic Capabilities Theory

The Dynamic Capabilities Theory proposes that sustainable competitive advantage in dynamic markets stems from an organization's capacity to continuously create, extend, update, protect, and keep relevant its unique asset bases (Teece, 2007). This theory is particularly relevant in the context of entrepreneurial capability, where technological advancements and market disruptions are constant. For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) navigating the complexities of entrepreneurial capability, the Dynamic Capabilities Theory suggests that success lies not just in adopting entrepreneurial capability, but in developing the organizational capabilities to effectively leverage these technologies and adapt to the changing business landscape (Warner & Wäger, 2019).

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Creativity and waste reduction

Woodard, (2021) *Waste Management in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): Compliance with Duty of Care and implications for the Circular Economy*”. It is estimated 30.8 million tons of waste is generated by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in England, more than is generated by households. Despite this there is surprisingly limited research nationally and internationally on the management of waste from SMEs. In England businesses have a Duty of Care to ensure that their waste is managed in a responsible way and it is illegal for them to use household waste services. This paper presents the results from semi-structured interviews and site visits with 100 SMEs to assess levels of compliance with Duty of Care. It also presents the results of analysing 3.8 tonnes of household waste to identify levels of waste from SMEs illegally entering the household stream. The author believes this is the first study which attempts to estimate levels of business waste abuse of household services through undertaking waste composition analysis. With policy makers increasingly focusing on the Circular Economy the research is the first to estimate levels of resource leakage of recyclable and biowaste from SMEs into the household waste stream. 25% of SMEs interviewed were found to be illegally using household services for their waste, and 38% for their recycling. Waste composition analysis of household waste found that 6% of the waste sampled was from SMEs and that 77% of this waste was biowaste or dry recyclable materials that could have been diverted from disposal through recycling programmes. The paper considers the implications of these findings and presents recommendations to improve the management of the SME waste stream.

Castillo-Vergara, Garcia-Perez-de-Lema,& Madrid-Guijarro, (2021) Creativity has been recognized as a critical factor in innovation development companies. Small companies find it more difficult to develop creative activities and achieve innovation, thereby affecting their competitiveness significantly. In this study, we examine the barriers to creativity in a sample of 154 manufacturing small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Chile. The barriers related to the environment, managers, and employees, which limit the development of creativity, were examined. Besides, the moderating role of institutional networks was studied. Results show that (1) creativity positively affects innovation in SMEs; (2) environmental barriers impact barriers related to on both managers and employees; (3) managers' barriers influence employee barriers; and (4) employee barriers negatively impact creativity, although this negative effect is diminished by the moderating effect of developing activities with institutional networks, such as higher

education institutions, research centres or business associations. These results have important implications. Managers should encourage greater cooperation between companies and universities and be mindful of their impact on their employees. Government policies that encourage and support collaboration with SMEs can enable companies to be competitive and develop innovation, directly impacting employment and economic growth in a country

Rustiarini, Bhagawati, and Mendra,(2022) The environmental damage phenomenon is a challenge for businesses today, including for small and medium industries in developing countries, such as Indonesia. Green innovation is a solution to answer public concerns over global environmental issues. However, the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) sector generally still focuses on achieving their economic performance. Green innovation is a strategic step for SMEs to increase sustainability and financial performance in the global market. This study aimed to holistically identify the antecedents and consequences when implementing green innovation in SMEs. This study also analyzed the role of green innovation as a mediator in the relationship between intellectual capital, sustainability performance, and financial performance. The survey was conducted on 336 SMEs in Bali, Indonesia. The questionnaire was directly distributed to owners or managers of SMEs over three months. This study proved that intellectual capital positively increased green innovation, SME sustainability, and financial performance. Green innovation was also considered as a mediating variable in the relationship between intellectual capital, sustainability performance, and financial performance. Thus, the implementation of green innovation directs entrepreneurs to fulfill not only social and environmental responsibilities but also encourages SMEs to achieve their economic benefits.

Rodrigues, and Franco, (2023) Thus, this study aims to understand how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) adhere to green innovation activities in the management of their business. To answer this objective, the qualitative approach (case study) was used with recourse to interview three SME owner-managers as data collection. From a content analysis, the results obtained show that green innovation is a focus of concern for managers but its operationalization has not proved easy. So two of the SMEs studied here have only implemented measures to recycle the waste produced by their daily activity, although they consider their transition to a green and sustainable business model to be important. The current macroeconomic scenarios reveal the urgent need for SMEs to change their traditional business models to a more sustainable model that involves their managers' commitment to sustainable development objectives, supported by the green and circular economy, which requires reduction, reuse, and recycling that, as has been shown, still falls far short of expectations. This means that all business stakeholders must understand the reason for adopting green innovation.

Muafi., (2024) The purpose of this study is to examine and analyze the relationship pattern between green creativity, green innovation, green competitive advantage, and sustainable SME performance moderated by digital empowerment. Digital empowerment is a crucial aspect in the current era because creative SMEs are currently faced with a very varied and innovative digital market. The population of this study is natural-colored batik SMEs in two provinces, namely: Special Region of Yogyakarta and West Java. These two provinces have natural-colored batik SMEs and have been able to survive until now. This quantitative study analyzed questionnaire data

from 225 batik SME owners in Indonesia using PLS-SEM to examine how green creativity and innovation influence competitive advantage and performance, with digital empowerment as a moderator. The results showed green creativity and innovation had significant positive effects on green competitive advantage and SME performance.

2.3.2 Leadership skills and cost maintenance

Uchenwamgbe, (2013) The study examined effects of leadership styles on organizational performance in small and medium scale enterprises in Lagos state. The main objective was to examine the effect leadership styles on the performance of SMEs in Nigeria. The study adopted the descriptive survey design using percentages and chi-square (χ^2) on hypothesis and questions formulated. The findings of the study revealed that good leadership style enhances employee morale and that there is what is known as participatory leadership style of management where both employers and employees take decisions that have positive impact on the growth of the organization and good welfare facilities for the employees.

Nguyen, Huynh, Lam, Le, & Nguyen, (2021) This research empirically examines the effect of entrepreneurial leadership, entrepreneurial orientation, and technological innovation capability on SMEs' performance. Interestingly, this study investigates the mediating effects of internal organizational factors such as entrepreneurial orientation, team creativity, dynamic capabilities, and competitive advantage on the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and SMEs' performance. The consistent PLS-SEM approach was applied to analyze valid data collected from 182 small and medium IT enterprises operating at QuangTrung Software City, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The empirical results reveal that entrepreneurial leadership via the full mediators of team creativity, dynamic capabilities, and competitive advantages can enhance the performance of IT SMEs. While entrepreneurial orientation does not influence SMEs' business performance, technological innovation capabilities can provide some benefits. Besides, entrepreneurial orientation plays no mediation role in the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and SMEs' performance. Finally, the results allow us to provide meaningful insights and recommendations to manage and promote better entrepreneurial inspiration.

Alu, & Daniel, (2022) The performance of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs) has been a subject of continual interest to both researchers and practitioners. This study examined the relationship between leadership styles and Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs) performance. Leadership is a key factor for improving the performance of any organization. The objectives of the study are to: examine the effect of autocratic leadership style on SMEs performance; examine the impact of transformational leadership style on SMEs performance; examine the impact of democratic leadership style on SMEs performance and to examine the impact of transactional leadership style on SMEs performance. A survey research was adopted for the study. Questionnaire was the major instrument of data collection. Pearson Moment Product Correlation Coefficient and Regression analysis were utilized. The finding shows that transactional leadership style does have a significant impact on the SMEs performance and autocratic leadership style has a negative impact on SMEs performance. In conclusion, democratic leadership style has a significant positive impact on SMEs performance. It was recommended that the right leaders with high capability be identified at all levels of SMEs, especially in Abuja.

Valderrama, Santillán, & Arce, (2023) Business leadership in small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) is essential to guarantee commercial success, optimal working conditions, as well as the impact it generates on work performance; This can be achieved by applying tactics such as leadership training, effective communication, active participation, clear setting of expectations, promoting a positive work environment, recognizing and valuing employee effort, monitoring and evaluating performance. Job satisfaction surveys also represent a valuable tool to improve the work environment in SMEs. It is essential to emphasize that business leadership must adapt to the specific needs and peculiarities of each organization to be truly effective so that the organization's collaborators identify with it, since leadership, business culture, human resources management and other factors can influence how SMEs manage and optimize the performance of their employees. The objective of the study was to determine the relationship between efficient business leadership in SMEs and the work performance of employees. The methodology used was descriptive and field and a hermeneutic method.

Ibrahim (2023) This study was on The Impact of Leadership Style on Employee Performance of Sme's in Nigeria a Case Study of Total Facilities Management Limited in Abuja. Three objectives were raised which included: To Identify the dominant leadership style(s) used by Adamawa Beverages Limited Yola, examining the relationship between leadership style and employee performance in, Adamawa Beverages Limited Yola, to Assess the factors that influence the choice of leadership style in Adamawa Beverages Limited Yola and to Evaluate the effectiveness of the leadership style(s) used by Adamawa Beverages Limited Yola, in enhancing employee performance. A total of 77 responses were received and validated from the enrolled participants where all respondents were drawn from selected from Adamawa Beverages Limited Yola. The hypothesis was tested using Chi-Square statistical tool (SPSS).

3. Methodology

This chapter describes the various methods and procedures of collecting information and generating data for the study, as well as the statistical methods for analyzing the data collected.

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted survey research design given the fact that it involved the assessment of phenomenon without any attempt to maneuver the study variables and is characterize by the selection of random samples from population to obtain empirical knowledge of contemporary nature.

3.2 Area of the Study

The study was carried out in the selected Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in South East, Nigeria under the List of registered Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the five southeastern states of Nigeria. The area of the study was including: Abia State - Durex International Company Ltd, 95 Jubilee Road Abia state, Anambra state: Asamma Foods & Beverages Limited, Km 10, Onitsha-Owerri Express Way, Onitsha. Ebonyi State: Vital Industries Nigeria Limited, 8, Ojeowere Street, Abakaliki, Enugu state. Roban stores, Bisalla Road, Independent Layout. Enugu;

Imo State -PEZE Products Limited, Plot 1 Lake Marlinda Drive, Owerri. These firms were chosen due to high number of employees and ethical standard.

3.3 Sources of Data

Sources of data collection included primary and secondary sources.

3.2.1 Primary Sources

Primary data refer to original data collected basically for the purpose of the study. In collecting primary data for this study, the staff or employees of the studied organizations were used.

3.2.2 Secondary Sources

Secondary data were obtained from facts already documented by others which are considered valid for the study. The secondary source of data for the study includes textbooks, internet, journals, articles and unpublished works.

3.4 Population of the Study

The target population of the study consists five(5) selected firms registered under Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the five southeastern states of Nigeria.

The total population for the study was eight hundred and sixty three (863). Therefore, the study was limited to the population of all employees of each of these organizations, namely:

Table 3.1 Population Distribution

Firms		Employees	
		Percent	
1.	Durex International Company	175	20
2.	Asamma Foods & Beverages	237	28
3	Roban stores	192	22
4.			
5.	Vital Industries Nigeria		
	PEZE Products Limited	113	
		146	13
		17	
	Total	863	100

Source: Administrative desk office, 2024.

Table 3.1 study shows that five (5) firms which was selected from the South East, Nigeria which the researcher deemed to be representative of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

3.5 Sample Size Determination

The actual population was eight hundred and sixty three (863) employees. The study was drawn from the employees in these organizations under study using a stratified sampling method. To determine the adequate sample size, the study used Freund and William's statistical formula as quoted by (Uzoagulu, 2011).

$$n =$$

Where n = Sample Size

N = The population

p = Probability of success/proportion

q = Probability of failure/proportion

Z = Standard (error of mean) normal deviate

e = Limit of tolerable error (or level of significance)

$$N = 863$$

$$p = .5$$

$$q = (1 - .5) = .5$$

$$Z = 95 \text{ percent} = 1.96$$

$$e = 0.05 \text{ percent}$$

$$=$$

$$= 265.649 \quad 266.$$

Bowley's (1976) proportional allocation formula for stratified sampling was used to allocate the samples:

$$n_h =$$

Where:

N_h = Group population from each stratum

n = overall sample size

N = the overall population

n_h = sample size from each stratum, in this case each state.

Table 3.2 Computation/Allocation of Sample Size

S/N	Names of SMEs	Sample Size	Total
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1	Durex International Co.		
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		175 x 266	
--	--	-----------	--

			863
--	--	--	-----

			54
--	--	--	----

2	Asamma Foods & Bev.		
---	---------------------	--	--

		237 x 266	
--	--	-----------	--

			863
--	--	--	-----

			72
--	--	--	----

			3
--	--	--	---

	Roban stores		
--	--------------	--	--

		192 x 266	
--	--	-----------	--

			863
--	--	--	-----

			59
--	--	--	----

			4
--	--	--	---

	Vital Industries Nigeria		
--	--------------------------	--	--

		113 x 266	
--	--	-----------	--

			863
--	--	--	-----

			36
--	--	--	----

5	PEZE Products Limited		
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		146 x 266	
--	--	-----------	--

			863
--	--	--	-----

			45
--	--	--	----

	Total		266
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Source: Field Survey, 2024

3.6 Sampling Techniques

A stratified random sampling procedure was used for selecting the participants in this study. This technique was employed to ensure a fairly equal representation of the variables for the study. Within each section, selection of staff was by simple random sampling. This was achieved by writing out the names of the staff in piece of paper which was folded and put in a basket. After thorough reshuffling, the researcher selects an element, records it and puts it back in the basket until the required number is obtained. That is, study applied sampling with replacement.

3.7 Instrument for Data Collection

The instruments for data collection issued in the study include the structured questionnaire, Questionnaire: The main data collection instruments employed in the study was questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two parts (A and B). Part A, provides general information about the respondents while part B focuses on the research questions. One type of questionnaire (structured) was designed and used forth is study. The basic questions in the questionnaire centered on the main issues raised in the objectives as derived from problem statement and reflected in the research hypotheses.

3.8 Methods of Data Analyses

The analyzed data were presented in frequency distribution tables and bar charts for ease of understanding and analysis. Data from the questionnaire were collected and analyzed using simple percentages, mean and standard deviation, Z- test statistic tool was used to test the hypotheses.

Z –Test

Z –

Where;

= Population mean

= Sample mean

= Sample Standard deviation

= Sample size

The questionnaire was structured in a five point Likert scale. The likert scale grading follows:

Strongly Agreed	-----	5
Agreed	-----	4
Neutral	-----	3
Disagree	-----	2
S.Disagree	-----	1

Decision Rule

If Mean > 3.0, the respondents agree

If mean 3.0, the respondents disagree

4. Data Analysis

The section presents and analyzes the data collected for the study. The presentation and interpretation of data were based on the responses of the respondent's of the firms understudy in South East Nigeria. The questionnaire were administrated to the staff of the organizations under study

4.1 Distribution and returned Questionnaire

The table below shows the data distributed and returned for the study

Firms Distributed No

Returned percentNo not

Returned Percent

Durex International Co. 54 50 19 4 2

Asamma Foods & Bev. 72 68 26 4 2

Roban stores 59 55 20 4 2

Vital Industries Nigeria

PEZE Products Limited 36

45 33

32 12

12 3

13 1

4

Total 266 238 89.0 28 11.0

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4.1 shows that Two hundred and sixty six (266) copies of the questionnaire were distributed and two hundred and thirty eight (238) copies of the questionnaire were returned representing eighty nine percent (89%) while twenty eight(28) copies of the questionnaire were not returned representing eleven (11) percent. This shows a high rate of the respondents.

4.2 Data presentation

4.2.1 The relationship between Creativity and waste reduction of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria

Table 4.2.1.1: Responses on the relationship between Creativity and waste reduction of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria

	5		
SA	4		
A	3		
N	2		
DA	1		
SD	$\sum FX$	-	
X	SD	Decision	
1	Creative thinking often leads to innovative approaches for reducing waste		480
96			
40.3	120		
30			
12.6	201		
67			
28.2	16		
8			
3.4	7		
7			
15.5	824		
238			
100%	3.59	1.434	Agree
2	By harnessing creativity, there is more effective and engaging ways to tackle waste reduction		670
134			
56.3	120		

30

12.6 117

39

16.4 10

5

2.1 30

30

12.6 947

238

100% 3.98 1.398 Agree

3 Businesses that foster a culture of creativity often explore sustainable innovations, leading to products and practices that reduce environmental impact 580

116

48.7 120

30

12.6 174

58

24.4 6

3

1.3 31

31

13.9 896

238

100% 3.83 1.390 Agree

4 Creativity plays a vital role in up cycling, where waste materials are transformed into new products 630

126

52.9 208

52

21.8 99

33

13.9 14

7

2.9 20

20

8.4 971

238

100% 4.08 1.242 Agree

5 Applying design thinking principles encourages designers to consider the entire lifecycle of a product that use fewer resources and generate less waste. 670

134

56.3 188

47

19.7 66

22

9.2 12

6

2.5 29

29

12.2 965

238

100% 4.05 1.363 Agree

Total Grand mean and standard deviation

3.906 1.3654

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4.2.1.1, 126 respondents out of 238 representing 52.9 percent agreed that Creative thinking often leads to innovative approaches for reducing waste with mean score 3.58 and standard deviation of 1.434. By harnessing creativity, there is more effective and engaging ways to tackle waste reduction 164 respondents representing 68.9 percent agreed with mean score of 3.98 and

standard deviation of 1.398. Businesses that foster a culture of creativity often explore sustainable innovations, leading to products and practices that reduce environmental impact 178 respondents representing 61.3 percent agreed with mean score of 3.83 and standard deviation of 1.390. Creativity plays a vital role in up cycling, where waste materials are transformed into new products 178 respondents representing 74.7 percent agreed with mean score of 4.08 and 1.242. Applying design thinking principles encourages designers to consider the entire lifecycle of a product that use fewer resources and generate less waste 181 respondents representing 76.0 percent agreed with a mean score of 4.05 and standard deviation 1.363.

4.2.2 The relationship between Leadership Skills and cost maintenance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

Table 4.2.2.1: Responses on the relationship between Leadership Skills and cost maintenance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

	5	
SA	4	
A	3	
N	2	
DA	1	
SD	$\sum FX$	-
X	SD	Decision
1	Leader's decisions on resource allocation and prioritization influence cost efficiency.	
	535	
107		
45.0	252	
63		
26.5	54	
18		
7.6	18	
9		
3.8	41	
41		
17.2	900	
238		

100% 3.78 1.479 Agree

2 A strong leader will identify areas for cost savings without compromising quality 560

112

47.1 340

85

35.7 57

19

8.0 4

2

.8 20

20

8.4 981

238

100% 4.12 1.154 Agree

3 Effective leaders foster a culture where team members are accountable for their budgetary responsibilities. 685

137

57.6 252

63

26.5 54

18

7.6 18

9

3.8 11

11

4.6 1020

238

100% 4.36 .970 Agree

4 Strong leaders implement systems for monitoring costs and provide regular feedback.
580

116

48.7 216

54

35.3 39

13

5.5 6

3

1.3 22

22

9.2 863

238

100% 4.13 1.189 Agree

5 Leaders with a long-term perspective prioritize sustainable practices that may involve
upfront costs but lead to greater savings in the future. 460

92

38.7 396

99

41.6 39

13

5.5 16

8

3.4 26

26

10.9 934

238

100% 3.94 1.250 Agree

Total Grand mean and standard deviation
4.066 1.2084

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4.2.2.1, 170 respondents out of 238 representing 71.5 percent agreed that Leader's decisions on resource allocation and prioritization influence cost efficiency with mean score 3.78 and standard deviation of 1.479. A strong leader will identify areas for cost savings without compromising quality 197 respondents representing 82.8 percent agreed with mean score of 4.12 and standard deviation of 1.154. Effective leaders foster a culture where team members are accountable for their budgetary responsibilities 200 respondents representing 84.1 percent agreed with mean score of 4.36 and standard deviation of .970. Strong leaders implement systems for monitoring costs and provide regular feedback 170 respondents representing 84.0 percent agreed with mean score of 4.13 and 1.189. Leaders with a long-term perspective prioritize sustainable practices that may involve upfront costs but lead to greater savings in the future 191 respondents representing 80.3 percent agreed with a mean score of 3.94 and standard deviation 1.250.

4.3 Test of Hypotheses

4.3.1 Creativity has relationship with waste reduction of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Creative thinking often leads to innovative approaches for reducing waste By harnessing creativity, there is more effective and engaging ways to tackle waste reduction Businesses that foster a culture of creativity often explore sustainable innovations, leading to products and practices that reduce environmental impact Creativity plays a vital role in upcycling, where waste materials are transformed into new products Applying design thinking principles encourages designers to consider the entire lifecycle of a product that use fewer resources and generate less waste.

N	238	238	238	238	238
Uniform Parameters ^{a,b}	Minimum	1	1	1	1
	Maximum	5	5	5	5
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.403	.563	.487	.529
	Positive	.155	.126	.130	.084
	Negative	-.403	-.563	-.487	-.529
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	6.223	8.686	7.519	8.167	8.686
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed).	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

a. Test distribution is Uniform.

b. Calculated from data.

Decision Rule

If the calculated Z-value is greater than the critical Z-value (i.e $Z_{cal} > Z_{critical}$), reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis accordingly.

Result

With Kolmogorov-Smirnon Z – value ranges from $6.223 < 8.686$ and on Asymp. Significance of 0.000, the responses from the respondents as display in the table is normally distributed. This affirms the assertion of the most of the respondents that Creativity had significant positive relationship with waste reduction of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria

Decision

Furthermore, comparing the calculated Z- value ranges from $6.223 < 8.686$ against the critical Z-value of 0.000 (2-tailed test at 95 percent level of confidence) the null hypothesis were rejected. Thus the alternative hypothesis was accepted which states that Creativity had significant positive relationship with waste reduction of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

4.3.2 Leadership Skills has relationship with cost maintenance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria

One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

Leader's decisions on resource allocation and prioritization influence cost efficiency. A strong leader will identify areas for cost savings without compromising quality. Effective leaders foster a culture where team members are accountable for their budgetary responsibilities. Strong leaders implement systems for monitoring costs and provide regular feedback. Leaders with a long-term perspective prioritize sustainable practices that may involve upfront costs but lead to greater savings in the future.

N	238	238	238	238	238					
Uniform Parameters ^{a,b}				Minimum	1	1	1	1	1	
	Maximum	5	5	5	5	5				
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute				.464	.578	.628	.590	.553	
	Positive	.172	.084	.046	.092	.109				
	Negative	-.464	-.578	-.628	-.590	-.553				
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z				7.163	8.913	9.691	9.107	8.524		
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed).	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000				

a. Test distribution is Uniform.

b. Calculated from data.

Decision Rule

If the calculated Z-value is greater than the critical Z-value (i.e $Z_{cal} > Z_{critical}$), reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis accordingly.

Result

With Kolmogorov-Smirnon Z – value ranges from $7.163 < 9.691$ and on Asymp. Significance of 0.000, the responses from the respondents as display in the table is normally distributed. This affirms the assertion of the most of the respondents that Leadership Skills had significant positive relationship with cost maintenance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria

Decision

Furthermore, comparing the calculated Z- value ranges from $7.163 < 9.691$ against the critical Z-value of 0.000 (2-tailed test at 95 percent level of confidence) the null hypothesis were rejected. Thus the alternative hypothesis was accepted which states that Leadership Skills had significant positive relationship with cost maintenance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

4.4 Discussions of findings

4.4.1 Creativity has relationship with waste reduction of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria.

From the result of the hypotheses one, the calculated Z- value ranges from $6.223 < 8.686$ against the critical Z- value of 0.000 which implies that Creativity had significant positive relationship with waste reduction of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria. In the support of the result in the literature review, Castillo-Vergara, Garcia-Perez-de-Lema, & Madrid-Guijarro, (2021) Effect of barriers to creativity on innovation in small and medium enterprises: Moderating role of institutional networks. Results show that (1) creativity positively affects innovation in SMEs; (2) environmental barriers impact barriers related to on both managers and employees; (3) managers' barriers influence employee barriers; and (4) employee barriers negatively impact creativity, although this negative effect is diminished by the moderating effect of developing activities with institutional networks, such as higher education institutions, research centres or business associations. These results have important implications. Managers should encourage greater cooperation between companies and universities and be mindful of their impact on their employees. Government policies that encourage and support collaboration with SMEs can enable companies to be competitive and develop innovation, directly impacting employment and economic growth in a country. Muafi, (2024) The Effect of Green Creativity and Green Innovation on Green Competitive Advantage and Performance of Sustainable SMEs: The Moderation Role of Digital Empowerment. The results showed green creativity and innovation had significant positive effects on green competitive advantage and SME performance. Additionally, digital empowerment

strengthened the relationships between green creativity, innovation, competitive advantage, and performance.

4.4.2 Leadership skill Leadership Skills has relationship with cost maintenance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria

From the result of the hypotheses two, the calculated Z- value ranges from $7.163 < 9.691$ against the critical Z- value of 0.000 which implies that Leadership Skills had significant positive relationship with cost maintenance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria. In the support of the result in the literature review, Uchenwamgbe, (2013) The study examined effects of leadership styles on organizational performance in small and medium scale enterprises in Lagos state. The findings of the study revealed that good leadership style enhances employee morale and that there is what is known as participatory leadership style of management where both employers and employees take decisions that have positive impact on the growth of the organization and good welfare facilities for the employees. Nguyen, Huynh, Lam, Le, & Nguyen, (2021) This research empirically examines the effect of entrepreneurial leadership, entrepreneurial orientation, and technological innovation capability on SMEs' performance. The empirical results reveal that entrepreneurial leadership via the full mediators of team creativity, dynamic capabilities, advantages can enhance the performance of IT SMEs. While entrepreneurial orientation does not influence SMEs' business performance, technological innovation capabilities can provide some benefit

5. Findings, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of findings

i. Creativity had significant positive relationship with waste reduction of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria. $Z = 6.223 < 8.686$, $p. > .05$.

ii. Leadership Skills had significant positive relationship with cost maintenance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria. $Z = 7.163 < 9.691$, $p. > .05$.

5.2 Conclusions

The study concluded that creativity and leadership skills had significant positive relationship with waste reduction and cost maintenance of Small and Medium Enterprises in South East, Nigeria. The entrepreneurial capability of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in South East Nigeria plays a pivotal role in ensuring their sustainability. The ability of entrepreneurs to adapt to changing market conditions, innovate, and make strategic decisions significantly influences the long-term viability of these businesses. Furthermore, a strong entrepreneurial mindset contributes to overcoming challenges such as limited access to finance, infrastructural deficits, and regulatory barriers. However, despite the potential, SMEs in this region face significant obstacles, including inadequate policy support and a lack of skilled labor, which hampers their growth and sustainability.

5.3 Recommendations

- i. To enhance the sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in South East Nigeria, it is recommended that entrepreneurs prioritize fostering creativity within their businesses. This can be achieved by encouraging a culture of innovation, where employees are empowered to think outside the box and contribute fresh ideas.
- i. To foster better sustainability in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). "It is essential that SME leaders invest in leadership training that focuses on emotional intelligence, strategic decision-making and effective team management to foster a more resilient and sustainable business environment.

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