# EFFECT OF BUSINESS DEFINITION AND THE GROWTH OF MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN KARU AND KEFFI LOCAL GOVERNMENTS OF NASARAWA STATE

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***Abstract***
*In Nigeria, as with other developing countries, the entrepreneurial activities of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) aid in revitalizing the economy. However, the ability of SMEs to define their business is essential to achieving the desired growth and economic development. It is line with the above argument that this paper examined the relationship between SME's understating of explicit business definition and its effect on the growth of SMEs. The paper adopted descriptive survey as research design. The population of the study comprised of registered bakery and water production SMEs in Karu and Keffi Local Government of Nasarawa State. Through non-probability sampling technique of purposive sampling, 25 SMEs were selected as sample size of the study. The paper depended on data from primary sources through questionnaires. The Cronbach alpha test for DCUTGRP, IDCUSTNDS AND BUSGROT indicated 0.9541, 0.9091 and 0.8984 respectively. The paper adopted ordinary least square regression model to test the relationship between the variables in business definition measured by defining customer groups (DCUTGRP) and identifying customer needs (IDCUSTNDS) as the independent variables and SMEs business growth (BUSGROT) as dependent variable. The paper concluded from the findings of the study that SMEs ability to define their customer group has an insignificant negative relationship with SMEs growth while identifying their customer needs have a significant positive impact on SMEs growth. The study recommended among others that businesses should define their vision and mission statements in line with business objectives and businesses should succinctly identify the needs of customers before embarking on the business to facilitate growth.*
***Keywords***: *Business Definition, Business Growth, And Small and Medium Enterprises*

## INTRODUCTION

Globally, a good business definition is paramount for any business organization. A Business enterprise, be it large, medium, small or micro, must be proactive and strategic in order to gain a market share for survival and growth. Medium-sized enterprises play a significant role in driving economic growth, innovation, and job creation in many economies worldwide. These businesses often operate in dynamic and competitive environments, facing various challenges and opportunities as they strive to grow and succeed. One crucial factor that influences the growth trajectory of Medium-sized enterprises is their business definition the clear articulation of their identity, purpose, target market, and competitive positioning (Hitt et al. 2022). The concept of business definition encompasses the strategic framework that guides an organization's operations, decision-making processes, and resource allocation. It defines the scope of the business, identifies its core competencies and value proposition, and sets the direction for future growth and development. A well-defined business definition serves as a roadmap for SMEs, helping them align their strategies, activities, and investments with their overarching goals and objectives (Barney & Hesterly, 2021). According to Hitt et al. (2019), the proxies of Business definition includes defining customer focus and identifying customer needs. Defining customer focus entails adopting a customer-centric mindset and organizational culture that prioritizes the continuous gathering of customer feedback, insights, and data to inform decision-making, innovation, and strategy development, with the ultimate goal of delivering personalized, relevant, and impactful solutions to customers (Armstrong, 2021). Defining customer focus is essential for the growth of SMEs as it informs targeted marketing and sales efforts, drives product and service innovation, improves the customer experience, fosters market differentiation, and enables agility and adaptability in a competitive landscape.

Furthermore, identifying customer focus involves identifying and understanding the desires, preferences, and requirements of target customers, which serve as the foundation for developing products, services, and experiences that meet or exceed their expectations (Nagle et al. 2020). Identifying customer focus allows SMEs to develop products or services that are tailored to meet those needs effectively. By offering solutions that address specific customer pain points or desires, SMEs can differentiate themselves in the market and attract a loyal customer base, thereby driving growth through increased sales and market share (Nagle et al. 2020). The growth of medium enterprises encompasses various strategies aimed at expanding their operations, increasing market share, and enhancing profitability (Gupta & Batra, 2020). This growth can be achieved through investments in technology, diversification into new markets, product/service innovation, operational efficiency improvements, and strategic partnerships (Cantarello et al., 2022). Additionally, nurturing talent, implementing effective management practices, and maintaining financial stability are essential elements for sustaining growth in medium enterprises (Coad et al., 2021).

Most of the studies conducted focused on identifying the causes of business failure without investigating the basis upon which the business was formed. People go into business without identifying the needs which the business will potentially service or even identifying their customer focus. These variables are considered key to the growth of any business. The research articles are, however, scattered across business, management, financial, psychology, entrepreneurial and many other journals, and no proof could be found that these investigations have ever been comprehensively reviewed. The health of a firm in a highly competitive business environment is dependent upon its capability of achieving profit and financial solvency. This can only be achieved through the production of goods and services that will satisfy the needs of the target market. When a firm loses competence to maintain profit and financial solvency, it becomes unhealthy, or deteriorates to the point where it is in danger of suffering business failure.

Due to the significant role SMEs play in the economic development especially during economic recession, business definition is essential to the growth of SMEs in the competitive and rapidly changing environments. There is need therefore, for SMEs to acquire and improve their strategic capabilities in defining the business to achieve the desired growth and economic development. In the view of this puzzle and limitations, this study investigated the effect of identifying customer needs and focus on the growth of SMEs in keffi and karu Local Governments of Nasarawa State.

**Objectives of the Study**

i. To ascertain the effect of defining customer focus on the growth of medium enterprises in Keffi and Karu local governments.
ii. To assess the effect of identifying customer needs on the growth of medium enterprises in Keffi and Karu local governments.

**Statement of Hypotheses**

**Ho1:** Defining customer focus has no significant relationship with medium enterprises growth in Keffi and Karu local governments.

**Ho2:** Identifying customer needs has no significant relationship with medium enterprises growth in Keffi and Karu local governments.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Concept Business Definition

A business definition is a strategic framework that defines the fundamental identity and purpose of an organization. It encompasses its core values, mission, vision, and strategic objectives, providing a roadmap for decision-making and resource allocation to achieve long-term success (Hitt et al. 2022). A business definition is a comprehensive description of an organization's scope of operations, market positioning, and value proposition. It encapsulates the organization's purpose, target customers, competitive advantages, and differentiation strategies, guiding its strategic direction and market positioning Hill et al. 2021). According to Wheelen and Hunger (2021) business definition is a formal statement that outlines the products, services, markets, and customer segments targeted by an organization. It serves as a guide for strategic planning, resource allocation, and performance evaluation, ensuring alignment between organizational objectives and market opportunities

This research viewed Business definition as a strategic framework that articulates the fundamental identity and strategic direction of an organization. It encompasses the organization's mission, vision, values, goals, and core competencies, providing a foundation for decision-making and resource allocation.

**Defining Customer Focus**

Defining customer focus requires a holistic understanding of customer needs, preferences, and behaviors across various touchpoints and interactions. It involves creating customer personas, mapping customer journeys, and implementing feedback mechanisms to ensure that businesses continuously deliver value and exceed customer expectations (Solomon et al. 2019). Defining customer focus entails the organization's commitment to understanding and addressing the evolving needs and expectations of customers. It involves actively listening to customer feedback, analyzing market trends, and adapting strategies to deliver personalized solutions and experiences that resonate with target customers (Hollensen, 2020). The working definition of defining customer focus is the process by which an organization identifies, understands, and prioritizes the needs, preferences, and expectations of its target customers. This involves gathering insights through various methods such as market research, customer feedback, and data analysis to gain a comprehensive understanding of customer segments, behaviors, and pain points.

**Identifying Customer Needs**

Identifying customer needs entails, a thorough analysis of customer pain points, challenges, and aspirations to uncover unmet demands or opportunities for innovation, thereby informing product development, marketing strategies, and value propositions (McDonald & Wilson, 2021). Identifying customer needs refers to the comprehensive understanding of customer expectations, preferences, and motivations through active listening, observation, and data analysis. It entails identifying both stated and unstated needs to uncover opportunities for innovation and differentiation in the marketplace (Hollensen, 2020). Identifying customer needs entails a comprehensive understanding of the functional, emotional, and social dimensions of customer preferences and requirements. It involves recognizing the diverse and evolving nature of customer needs and adapting strategies and offerings accordingly to deliver superior value and satisfaction (Jobber, & Ellis-Chadwick, 2020). This research defines identifying customer needs as the process of systematically identifying, analyzing, and prioritizing the specific requirements, expectations, and preferences of target customers.

**Growth of Medium Enterprises**

The growth of medium enterprises involves an increase in turnover, employment, and profitability, often accompanied by expansion into new markets or product/service diversification (Storey, 2021). Growth of medium enterprises refers to the process of expanding the scale of operations, achieving higher levels of sales and revenue, and developing organizational capabilities to adapt to changing market dynamics (Creswell, 2019). According to Hisrich and Peters (2022) The growth of medium enterprises entails the systematic increase in market share, enhancement of competitiveness, and expansion of product lines or service offerings, often through strategic investments and alliances. The growth of medium enterprises is characterized by the progressive development of internal systems, external networks, and market presence, resulting in increased operational efficiency, customer satisfaction, and financial performance (Casson, 2018). As a working definition this study defines the growth of medium enterprises as the sustained expansion of their operations, market presence, and financial performance, typically characterized by increasing revenue, profitability, and market share.

**Empirical Review**

Muhammad et al. (2022) evaluated the impact of defining customer group and identifying customer needs on the growth of MSEs in Pakistan, as MSEs are the most vulnerable group in the country and throughout the world. Moreover, this study also identified the mediating role of social and psychological capital in enhancing the productivity of microfinance services for MSEs. 770 respondents from metropolitan cities in Pakistan were contacted for the survey, and the response rate was 64%. After screening the data, only 357 questionnaires appeared to be completed in all respects, so they were initially fed into the computer spread and then imported for further analysis. Structured questionnaires were used to collect the data from 357 micro and small enterprises operating in the developing market of Pakistan. Derived hypotheses were verified through Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) using AMOS 21. The study's findings revealed that defining customer group and identifying customer needs have an essential role in promoting MSE growth in Pakistan. A replication of this study in the Nigerian context is imperative due social and economic disparities between Pakistan and Nigeria.

Friday et al. (2022) examined the influence of identifying customer needs on employee performance at African College of Commerce and Technology in South western Uganda. The major data collection instruments were, Interviews, questionnaires, group discussion, document analysis (reports) with the target population of 150 from which the sample size of 100 was derived. A descriptive correlational, cross-sectional and expost-facto design were used. Data analysis was done using frequencies, percentages, pie charts, means, and Pearson linear correlation ecoefficiency (PLCC). The findings indicated identifying customer needs has positive significant on employee performance at African College of Commerce and Technology in South western Uganda. The study focused on the education sector in Uganda while the current study focuses on the Medium Scale Enterprises in Nigeria.

Uche et al. (2021) examined the effect of defining customer group on the growth of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in Nigeria. The study adopted survey research design. Micro and small-scale enterprises in South-East and South-South geopolitical zones in Nigeria formed the population of the study. The study made use of primary data. Questionnaire was the instrument for data collection. A sample size of 384 was adopted using Bill Godden sample size formula. Proportional stratified random sampling technique was employed to distribute this 384 to MSEs. The data were tested using percentages, mean, and standard deviation, while the hypotheses were tested using regression analysis and analysis of variance. Multicollinearity test was conducted to determine the collinearity of the two independent variables. According to the findings, defining customer group have significant effect on MSE growth in Nigeria. The current study focused on selected states in North Central Nigeria.

***Customer Perceived Value Theory***

This study is based on Customer Perceived Value (CPV) theory to underpin the research, the theory was propounded by Zeithaml (1988) and it focuses on the subjective assessment made by customers regarding the value they receive from a product or service relative to the costs associated with obtaining it. The theory suggests that customers do not make purchase decisions solely based on the product's features or price but rather on their perception of the overall value proposition. CPV theory emphasizes that value is perceived differently by different customers based on their unique needs, preferences, and experiences. It acknowledges that customers evaluate value subjectively, considering factors such as quality, benefits, convenience, and emotional appeal. According to CPV theory, customers weigh the benefits they receive from a product or service against the costs incurred to obtain it. These costs include not only the monetary price but also time, effort, and any other sacrifices made by the customer.

CPV theory identifies various factors that influence customers' perception of value, including product features, brand reputation, service quality, and the overall shopping experience. These value drivers shape customers' assessments of whether a product or service meets their needs and provides satisfactory benefits relative to the costs. Customer Perceived Value theory underscores the importance of understanding customers' subjective evaluations of value and aligning marketing strategies, product offerings, and customer experiences to enhance perceived value and drive customer satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately business success.

Customer Perceived Value (CPV) theory is used to underpin this study because with the effect of business definition on the growth of medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). By understanding and leveraging their business definition to deliver superior value to customers, SMEs can differentiate themselves, drive innovation, foster customer loyalty, and achieve long-term success in the marketplace.

## METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study included twenty-five (25) registered consumer goods in Nasarawa State. The criteria used for selection was that the medium enterprise must have operated for more than five years. The study adopted census sampling technique which entails using all the study population as sample size. A total of twenty-five (25) questionnaire were issued to the owners/managers of the medium enterprises, A well-constructed five-point Likert scale questionnaire ranging from strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree and strongly disagree was used to elicit the opinions of the selected respondents. Each item in the questionnaire was developed to address the research questions of the study. This approach was used since closed-ended questions are easy to code and analyse. This approach was also preferred as adopted by other studies and tested for validity and reliability. The reliability test result using Cronbach alpha indicated that customers' needs, customer focus and business growth have an alpha value of 0.9541, 0.9091 and 0.8984 respectively. Given that the acceptable threshold was placed at 70% it was concluded that the scales used for the study were reliable to capture the independent variables.

Then multiple regression technique was employed to examine the effect of the predictor variables on the criterion variable. The study adopts a linear regression model to test the relationship between the variables in business definition measured by defining customer focus and identifying customer needs as the independent variables and medium enterprises growth with at least five (5) years in business as the dependent variable. The model for the study is specified thus:

***MEG = f (DCF and ICN)***

The above equation can be written in more detail form as follows:

$$\boldsymbol{MEG = \beta 0 + \beta 1 DCf_i\ ICN + U_i}$$

Where;
MEG = Medium Enterprise Growth
DCF= Defining Customer Focus
ICN = Identifying Customer Needs
β0 = intercept/constant term
β1, β2, = coefficients of determination
$U_{it}$ = error term

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The number of questionnaires distributed was twenty-five (25) out of which twenty-two (22) were appropriately completed and returned. The results of the response rate are as displayed below.

**Table 1: Response Rate**

| Response | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|
| Returned | 22 | 98 |
| Unreturned | 3 | 2 |
| Total | 25 | 100 |

**Source: Author's Compilation, 2024**

The results in Table1 showed a total positive response rate of 98%. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003) a response rate of above 50% is sufficient for a descriptive study. Babbie (2004) also posited that response rates of above 50% are considered adequate for analysis and publication. He concluded that 60% is considered good, 70% very good while 80% and above is excellent. Built on these affirmations from well-known scholars, 98% response rate is considered appropriate for the study.

**Table 2: Correlation Coefficient Matrix**

| | MEG | DCF | ICN |
|---|---|---|---|
| MEG | 1.000 | | |
| DCF | 0.794 | 1.000 | |
| ICN | 0.932 | 0.855 | 1.0000 |

Source: Author's Compilation, 2024

The table 2 presents the result of correlation coefficient among the variables to examine the possibility of presence of multicollinearity. The result of pearson correlation coefficient showed absence of multicollinearity among the variables as all the figures are below the threshold of 0.9 or 0.8. The table also showed that there is positive correlation between credit management and liquidity and profitability. Hence, the regression analysis using OLS would not provide bias result.

**Table 3: VIF and Tolerance Values**

| Variables | VIF | 1/VIF |
|---|---|---|
| DCF | 3.73 | 0.268272 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ICN | 3.73 | 0.268272 |
| MEAN V/F | 3.73 | |

Source: Author's Compilation, 2024

Similarly, the result of VIF and its inverse indicate the absence of multicollinearity. Table shows that VIF and tolerance value as all the variables had VIF of less than 10 and tolerance of higher than 0.5 since the values were the benchmark of 10 for VIF and above 0.10 for tolerance. Having established the absence of multicollinearity in time series next section considers the presentation and interpretation of OSL results on the potential impact of trade credit management on the liquidity and profitability of consumer goods in Nigeria.

**Table 4: Summary of Regression Result**

| Variables | Statistics | P-values |
|---|---|---|
| R Square (overall) | 0.8694 | |
| Adj. R square | 0.8646 | |
| F-Statistics | 183.04 | 0.0000 |
| Prob>F | 0.0000 | |

Source: Author's Compilation, 2024

The table above presented the summary of the result for the model of the study. This is used to predict the relationship between the dependent and independent variables and to further test the strength of the relationship. The overall R Square indicated 0.8694 which evidences a statistically strong relationship. The result of the adjusted R Squared indicate 0.8646, this business growth can be forecasted using these variables. Based on the above evidence, together with result of multicollinearity which proved the absence of the problem of heterogeneity (that is, a constant variance that exists in the panel), the OLS regression model is chosen and used in the analysis and hypotheses testing.

The results from the table indicate that the independent variables (customer need and customer focus) explained for 86% of the variations in the dependent variable, business growth in karu and keffi local governments (adjusted R2 value of 0.8646). The table also shows that the model is fitted as evidenced by the F-Statistics of 183.04 which is significant at 5% level of significance (P-value 0.0000).

**Test of Hypotheses**

In this section of the chapter, the study tested the hypotheses formulated for the study; Table 5 presents the coefficients of the variables of the study from which the hypotheses are tested.

**Table 5: Regression Coefficients**

| Variables | Coefficient | P-value |
|---|---|---|
| Defining Customer focus | -0.0070254 | 0.917 |
| Identifying Customer needs | 0.0017855 | 0.000 |

Source: STATA Output, 2024

**Ho1: Defining Customer Focus has no significant effect on the growth of medium enterprise in Karu and Keffi Local Governments**

The results in Table 5 shows that defining customer focus (DCF) has a statistically insignificant negative relationship with business growth in Karu and Keffi local government as indicated by the coefficient of -0.0070254 which is significant at 5% level of significance (P-value 0.917). That is, defining customer focus can insignificantly decrease the growth of businesses in keffi and karu local governments. Based on this, the study accepts the null hypothesis one (H01) which state that, defining customer focus has no significant relationship with business growth in keffi and karu local governments. Therefore, the study infers that defining customer focus has no significant relationship with business growth in the area covered.

**Ho2: Identifying Customer Needs has no significant effect on the growth of medium enterprise in Karu and Keffi Local Governments**

The results in Table 5 shows that identifying customer needs has a statistically significant positive relationship with business growth in Karu and Keffi local government as indicated by the coefficient of 0.8235386 which is significant at 5% level of significance (P-value 0.000). That is, defining customer focus can significantly increase the growth of businesses in Keffi and Karu local governments. Based on this, the study rejects the null hypothesis two (H02) which state that, identifying customer needs has no significant relationship with business growth in Keffi and Karu local governments. Therefore, the study infers that defining customer focus has a positive significant relationship with business growth in the area covered.

*Discussion of Results*

Marketing concepts focus on the need to understand potential customers before designing and manufacturing a product or service. With the customer's wants and needs incorporated into the design and manufacture of the product, sales and profit goals are far would be met. Ability of SMEs to define and identify their customer need and group is key to the organization, the need to understand the customer is highly important. The paper seeks to examine the relationship between SME's understating of explicit business definition and its impact on the growth of SMEs.

The findings from the study reveal that SMEs ability to define their customer group has an insignificant negative impact on business size and growth. This finding supports the study of Majava et al. (2013). The study concludes that for SMEs can go into business were feasibility studies indicate they can survive because the economic world is dynamic and contingent on factors sometimes beyond human control. You can identify a group today but that does not make your business to automatically grow.

The finding from the paper also reveals that SMEs ability to identify their customer needs has a significant positive impact on business size and growth. This finding is in tandem with the study conducted by Huck (2011) Customer needs often correlates with the customer's values and behaviour. A deep understanding of needs helps when selecting the best technology and features for products and services.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The paper seeks to examine the relationship between SME's understating of explicit business definition and its impact on the growth of SMEs. The study concludes from the findings of the study that SMEs ability to define their customer groups has insignificant negative effect and identifying customer needs have a positive significant effect.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings and conclusions of the paper, the following recommendations are made:

i. Small and Medium Enterprises should strive to identify their customer need and satisfy their consumers by creating a convenient complain opportunity for customers since most dissatisfied customers hardly complain so as to know when and how to provide better products and services.

ii. In is also recommended that Small and Medium Enterprises should have a close relationship with their customers to enable them work on their complaints and needs in order to maintain their customers. It will also be a way of attracting new prospects by showing their commitment in listening to their complaints needs.

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## Appendix
## Research Questionnaire

**Key: Strongly Agree = SA, Agree= A, Undecided =U, Disagree = U, Strongly Disagree =SD**

| **Defining Customer Focus** | ***SA*** | ***A*** | ***U*** | ***D*** | ***SD*** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Our enterprise has a clearly defined understanding of our target customers' needs and preferences | | | | | |
| Our enterprise regularly conducts market research and analysis to identify and understand customer segments | | | | | |
| Our enterprise has developed customer profiles to better understand the demographics preferences of our target customers | | | | | |
| Our enterprise regularly conducts market research and analysis to identify and understand market trends | | | | | |
| Our enterprise uses customer feedback and insights to adapt and improve our products or services to better meet customer needs | | | | | |
| **Identifying Customer Needs** | ***SA*** | ***A*** | ***U*** | ***D*** | ***SD*** |
| Our enterprise actively identifies and understands the specific needs and preferences of our target customers | | | | | |
| We regularly gather customer feedback and insights to better understand their changing needs and expectations | | | | | |
| Identifying customer needs has helped our enterprise differentiate ourselves from competitors and attract new customers | | | | | |
| The focus on identifying customer needs has contributed to the overall growth and success of our enterprise | | | | | |
| Our enterprise uses customer data and analysis to tailor our services to better meet customer needs | | | | | |
| **Growth of Medium Enterprise**s | ***SA*** | ***A*** | ***U*** | ***D*** | ***SD*** |
| Our medium-sized enterprise has experienced steady revenue growth over the past three year | | | | | |
| Our SME has expanded its market presence and reached new customer segments in the past year | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| We have successfully launched new products that have contributed to the growth of our medium-sized enterprise | | | | | |
| Our medium-sized enterprise has increased its workforce and invested in employee training | | | | | |
| The profitability of our medium-sized enterprise have improved consistently over the past three years | | | | | |