

Marketing Strategies for Sustainability among Small and Medium Enterprises (Smes) In Plateau State

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ABSTRACT

In Plateau State, the integration of sustainability into marketing strategies among SMEs is vital for fostering long-term business success and environmental stewardship. This study draws upon the Stakeholder Theory to understand the complex web of relationships and expectations businesses navigate, and the Triple Bottom Line Theory to support the operationalization of sustainability in business practices. The research aims to explore how SMEs in Plateau State can effectively incorporate sustainable practices into their marketing strategies to achieve environmental, social, and economic benefits. Objectives include identifying key sustainable marketing practices, assessing their impact on business performance, and recommending actionable strategies for SMEs. Hypotheses focus on the positive relationship between sustainable marketing practices and business performance. Employing a positivist methodology, the study analyzes data from 526 SMEs using regression analysis to identify patterns and impacts. Findings reveal that SMEs adopting sustainable marketing strategies experience enhanced brand reputation, customer loyalty, and operational efficiencies. Recommendations emphasize the importance of stakeholder engagement, transparent communication, and

innovative sustainable practices for SMEs to thrive sustainably.

Keywords: Marketing, Strategies, Sustainability, Small-Scale Business.

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, there has been an increasing focus on sustainability in business practices worldwide. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a vital role in the economic development of Plateau State, Nigeria, and it is crucial for them to adopt sustainable marketing strategies. SMEs, or Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, are enterprises with a limited number of employees and relatively low revenue compared to larger corporations. In Nigeria, SMEs are defined based on their number of employees and assets. According to the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN), SMEs are enterprises with fewer than 250 employees and an annual turnover below a certain threshold (SMEDAN, 2020).

Globally, SMEs have been recognized as significant contributors to economic growth and employment generation. According to the World Bank (2020), SMEs account for approximately 90% of businesses worldwide and contribute to more than 50% of employment. In Africa, SMEs play a crucial role in poverty reduction, job

creation, and economic development (Adeleye et al., 2021). Similarly, in Nigeria, SMEs contribute significantly to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and provide employment opportunities for a large segment of the population (Ezeanya et al., 2020).

Marketing strategies serve as a predictive tool for sustainability among SMEs by highlighting how businesses can align their market offerings with sustainable development goals while ensuring economic viability (Smith & Taylor, 2021). These strategies help SMEs anticipate shifts in consumer preferences towards sustainable products, evolving regulatory environments focused on environmental preservation, and emerging market opportunities. By identifying these trends early, SMEs can adapt their business models, product lines, and marketing communications to align with sustainable practices, thereby securing a competitive edge in the market. Smith and Taylor (2021) suggest that the integration of sustainability into marketing strategies enables SMEs to navigate the market more effectively, positioning themselves for long-term success by meeting the growing demand for environmentally conscious products and services.

Furthermore, marketing strategies that incorporate sustainability principles empower SMEs to build a loyal customer base and enhance brand reputation among eco-conscious consumers (Johnson, 2022). By promoting their commitment to sustainability through targeted marketing campaigns, SMEs can differentiate themselves, attracting consumers who prioritize environmental and social values in their purchasing decisions. Johnson (2022) emphasizes that this differentiation not only fosters brand loyalty but also encourages a sustainable business model that can thrive over time, as consumer preferences increasingly shift towards supporting responsible businesses.

Marketing strategies directly contribute to the sustainability of SMEs by encouraging the adoption of green practices and communicating these efforts to consumers effectively (Williams & Lee, 2020). Through strategic marketing efforts that highlight their commitment to sustainability, SMEs can appeal to a broader audience, driving consumer preference for products and services that contribute positively to the environment. Williams and Lee (2020) argue that this not only helps in attracting a segment of the market that values sustainability but also motivates businesses to integrate sustainable practices into their operations, creating a positive feedback loop that benefits both the environment and the economy.

The relationship between marketing strategies and sustainability among SMEs is evidenced by how marketing can drive internal changes within a company, promoting sustainability from within (Kumar & Sharma, 2023). Marketing strategies focused on sustainability can lead to innovations in **product design, packaging, and operations** that reduce environmental impact. Kumar and Sharma (2023) highlight that businesses that effectively communicate these innovations through their marketing can enhance their market position, demonstrating that a strong commitment to sustainability can also drive business success.

In Plateau State, there is a significant gap in research regarding the role of marketing strategies in promoting sustainability among SMEs (Dogo, 2022). Many SMEs in the region lack the knowledge and resources to effectively utilize marketing to communicate their sustainability efforts or to influence consumer behavior towards more sustainable practices. Additionally, Dogo (2022) points out that there is a need for more localized studies that consider the unique challenges and opportunities for sustainability that SMEs in Plateau State face, such as consumer attitudes towards sustainability and the availability of sustainable resources. Another gap identified is the integration of traditional marketing channels with digital platforms to reach a wider audience interested in sustainable products and services (Bello & Abdullahi, 2024), suggesting that SMEs in Plateau State may not be fully leveraging the potential of digital marketing to promote their sustainability efforts.

Sustainability issues on the Plateau, such as deforestation, soil erosion, and water scarcity, directly impact the operational capabilities and sustainability commitments of SMEs in the region (Okeke & Idris, 2023). These environmental challenges not only threaten the natural resources that businesses depend on but also affect consumer perceptions and behaviors towards the environmental practices of local SMEs. Okeke and Idris (2023) argue that addressing these sustainability issues through effective marketing strategies can help SMEs mitigate the impacts on their operations while also contributing to environmental conservation.

The justification for studying marketing strategies for sustainability among SMEs in Plateau State lies in the unique intersection of environmental challenges and economic opportunities present in the region (Ahmed & Musa, 2021). Understanding how SMEs can leverage

marketing to enhance their sustainability practices is essential for promoting economic development that is both environmentally responsible and socially inclusive. Ahmed and Musa (2021) emphasize that such a study would provide critical insights into bridging the gap between sustainability efforts and market success, offering a roadmap for SMEs in Plateau State to achieve sustainable growth and resilience in the face of environmental challenges.

II. THEORETICAL REVIEW

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder theory was propounded by R. Edward Freeman in 1984. It emerged as a response to the traditional shareholder-centric approach, emphasizing the importance of considering the interests and needs of all stakeholders in organizational decision-making processes. It has since gained significant recognition and has been widely applied in various fields, including marketing. Stakeholder theory assumes that organizations have a responsibility to consider the interests of all relevant stakeholders, including customers, employees, suppliers, communities, and the environment. It assumes that stakeholder relationships are mutually beneficial, and organizations can create long-term value by meeting the expectations and needs of their stakeholders. One of the limitations of stakeholder theory is the challenge of identifying and prioritizing stakeholders. Different stakeholders may have conflicting interests and varying levels of influence, making it difficult to effectively engage with all of them. Additionally, stakeholder theory may not provide clear guidance on how to reconcile conflicting stakeholder interests, especially in situations where trade-offs are necessary.

Stakeholder theory has significant relevance in shaping marketing strategies for sustainability in SMEs. By identifying and understanding the needs and expectations of various stakeholders, SMEs can develop marketing strategies that align with their interests. For example, SMEs can engage with customers to understand their preferences for sustainable products or services and design marketing campaigns that highlight the environmental or social benefits of their offerings. By taking into account the concerns of employees, SMEs can develop internal marketing strategies that promote a positive work environment and employee well-being. Similarly, SMEs can establish partnerships with environmentally conscious suppliers or engage in community initiatives to enhance their

reputation and contribute to sustainable development.

Stakeholder theory is highly suitable for the topic of marketing strategy for sustainability in SMEs. It provides a comprehensive framework for SMEs to consider the interests of various stakeholders and develop marketing strategies that align with sustainability goals. By adopting stakeholder-centric approaches, SMEs can build strong relationships with their stakeholders, enhance brand reputation, and contribute to long-term sustainability. Stakeholder theory recognizes that the success of SMEs is closely tied to the well-being of their stakeholders, making it a valuable tool for achieving sustainability in marketing strategies.

Triple Bottom Line Theory

The concept of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) was initially propounded by John Elkington in 1994. It introduced the idea of measuring organizational success not only based on financial performance but also on social and environmental impacts. The TBL framework has since gained traction and has been widely applied in various industries, including marketing. The Triple Bottom Line theory assumes that organizations have a responsibility to consider the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental. It assumes that these three dimensions are interconnected and that organizations should strive to create value in all three areas simultaneously. The theory also assumes that sustainable business practices can lead to long-term success and competitiveness.

One of the limitations of the Triple Bottom Line theory is the challenge of measuring and quantifying social and environmental impacts. While financial performance can be easily measured using monetary metrics, social and environmental impacts are often more subjective and difficult to quantify. Additionally, the theory may not provide clear guidance on how to balance trade-offs between the three dimensions, as organizations may face conflicting priorities and limited resources.

The Triple Bottom Line theory is highly relevant to shaping marketing strategies for sustainability in SMEs. By considering the economic, social, and environmental impacts of their marketing activities, SMEs can develop strategies that align with sustainable goals. For example, SMEs can incorporate social responsibility into their marketing campaigns by promoting ethical sourcing, fair trade practices, or

community engagement. They can also focus on environmental sustainability by highlighting eco-friendly features or engaging in recycling initiatives. By integrating sustainability into their marketing strategies, SMEs can enhance brand reputation, attract socially conscious customers, and differentiate themselves in the market.

The Triple Bottom Line theory is well-suited for the topic of marketing strategy for sustainability in SMEs. It provides a holistic framework that encourages SMEs to consider the economic, social, and environmental impacts of their marketing activities. By adopting TBL principles, SMEs can align their marketing strategies with sustainability goals, create value for multiple stakeholders, and contribute to long-term success. The theory recognizes that SMEs have the potential to make a positive impact on society and the environment through their marketing efforts, making it a valuable tool for achieving sustainability in marketing strategies.

Stakeholder theory provides guidance for SMEs to identify and engage with stakeholders who have a vested interest in sustainability. By

considering the needs and expectations of stakeholders, SMEs can develop marketing strategies that address their concerns and create shared value. The triple bottom line theory enables SMEs to integrate economic, social, and environmental considerations into their marketing strategies. By adopting sustainable practices, SMEs can enhance brand reputation, attract environmentally and socially conscious consumers, and contribute to the overall well-being of society.

Both stakeholder theory and the triple bottom line theory are highly suitable for the topic of marketing strategy for sustainability in SMEs. Stakeholder theory emphasizes the importance of stakeholder engagement and relationship building, which is crucial for SMEs to gain a competitive advantage in the market. The triple bottom line theory provides a holistic framework for SMEs to consider the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of sustainability in their marketing strategies. These theories complement each other and enable SMEs to develop sustainable marketing strategies that align with stakeholder interests and contribute to long-term success.

III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Marketing strategy

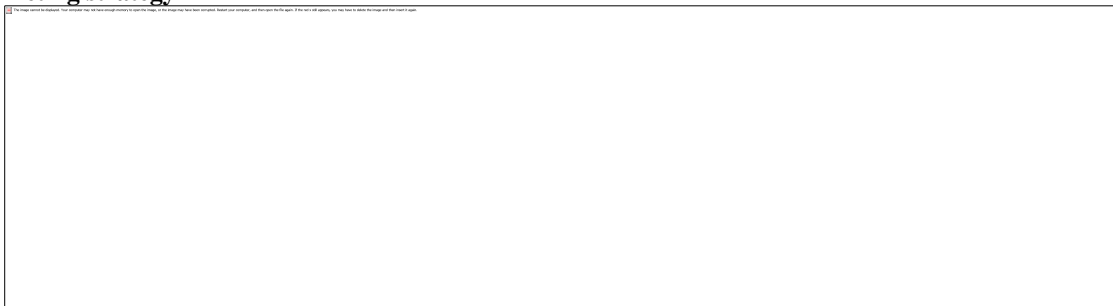


Fig 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Authour's compilation from conceptual review (2024)

CONCEPTUAL REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS Sustainability among Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a critical role in the economic development of Plateau State, Nigeria. Understanding the factors that influence the growth and success of SMEs is essential for policymakers and stakeholders. SMEs in Plateau State share common characteristics that distinguish them from larger enterprises. These characteristics include limited resources, a small number of employees, flexible organizational structures, and a focus on serving local markets

(Musa et al., 2020). The size and nature of SMEs make them agile and responsive to market demands, but they also face unique challenges.

SMEs in Plateau State encounter various challenges that affect their growth and sustainability. These challenges include limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, lack of skilled labor, bureaucratic hurdles, and limited market access (Abdullahi et al., 2021). Additionally, SMEs often struggle with issues related to marketing, technology adoption, and compliance with regulatory requirements (Dauda et al., 2022). Understanding these challenges is

crucial for developing strategies to support SMEs in Plateau State.

Several factors influence the performance of SMEs in Plateau State. These factors encompass both internal and external elements. Internal factors include entrepreneurial skills, managerial capabilities, access to resources, and innovation (Yahaya et al., 2023). External factors include market dynamics, government policies, economic conditions, and industry competition (Adamu et al., 2024). Understanding these factors and their interplay is essential for enhancing the performance and competitiveness of SMEs in Plateau State.

Hypothesis 1: Target audience marketing strategy has no significant influence on the sustainability of small and medium-scale business in Plateau State.

Marketing strategies

Marketing strategies play a crucial role in the sustainability of businesses. In today's dynamic and competitive business environment, organizations need to develop effective marketing strategies to not only attract customers but also to ensure long-term sustainability. This conceptual review will explore key concepts related to marketing strategies for sustainability, including the importance of sustainability in marketing, different marketing strategies, and their impact on organizational sustainability.

Sustainability has become a critical factor in the success and reputation of businesses. Consumers are increasingly demanding environmentally friendly and socially responsible products and services. Therefore, integrating sustainability into marketing strategies is essential for organizations to meet customer expectations, gain a competitive advantage, and contribute to a more sustainable future (Jones et al., 2020). Sustainable marketing involves incorporating environmental, social, and economic considerations into all aspects of marketing activities.

There are various marketing strategies that organizations can employ to promote sustainability and enhance their long-term viability. Some of these strategies include:

1. **Green Marketing:** Green marketing involves promoting products or services that have minimal negative impact on the environment. This strategy focuses on communicating the environmental benefits of the products or services to attract environmentally conscious consumers (Smith et al., 2022).

2. **Socially Responsible Marketing:** Socially responsible marketing emphasizes the organization's commitment to social causes and ethical business practices. This strategy involves aligning marketing efforts with social issues and communicating the organization's social responsibility initiatives to build trust and loyalty among consumers (Brown et al., 2021).

3. **Relationship Marketing:** Relationship marketing focuses on building long-term relationships with customers based on trust, loyalty, and mutual value creation. By developing strong relationships with customers, organizations can increase customer loyalty, reduce customer churn, and foster sustainable business growth (Kumar et al., 2023).

Hypothesis 2: Product development marketing strategy has no significant influence on the sustainability of small-scale business in Plateau state.

MARKETING STRATEGIES AND SUSTAINABILITY OF SMES

Marketing strategies for sustainability are equally important for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in Plateau State, Nigeria. SMEs play a crucial role in the economic development of the region and can contribute significantly to sustainable practices. This conceptual review will explore key concepts related to marketing strategies for sustainability specifically in the context of SMEs in Plateau State. It will discuss the importance of sustainability for SMEs, challenges they face, and potential strategies they can adopt to promote sustainability.

Sustainability is vital for the long-term success and growth of SMEs. By incorporating sustainability principles into their marketing strategies, SMEs can gain a competitive advantage, enhance brand reputation, and attract environmentally and socially conscious consumers. Sustainable marketing practices can also lead to cost savings through energy efficiency, waste reduction, and responsible resource management (Oladejo et al., 2020).

SMEs in Plateau State face several challenges when it comes to implementing sustainable marketing strategies. Limited financial resources, lack of awareness and knowledge about sustainable practices, and inadequate infrastructure are some of the common barriers. Additionally, SMEs may also face resistance from traditional marketing practices and a need for capacity

building to effectively integrate sustainability into their marketing efforts (Aliyu et al., 2021).

Despite the challenges, SMEs in Plateau State can adopt various marketing strategies to promote sustainability. These strategies include:

1. Collaborative Partnerships: SMEs can form partnerships with local organizations, suppliers, and community stakeholders to promote sustainable practices collectively. Collaboration can lead to shared resources, knowledge exchange, and increased awareness of sustainable products and services (Adeyemi et al., 2022).
2. Customer Education and Engagement: SMEs can focus on educating and engaging customers about the environmental and social benefits of their products or services. This can be achieved through effective communication channels such as social media, online platforms, and community events. Engaging customers in sustainability initiatives can create a sense of loyalty and support for the SMEs (Onuoha et al., 2023).
3. Government Support and Policies: SMEs can advocate for government support and policies that promote sustainable practices. This can include incentives for adopting sustainable technologies, access to funding for sustainability projects, and regulatory frameworks that encourage responsible business practices (Oladejo et al., 2021).

Hypothesis 3: Ethical sourcing marketing strategy has no significant influence on the sustainability of Small-scale business in Plateau state.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey descriptive research design. The population of the study comprised of management of 526 Small-scale enterprises (SME's) that registered with National Association of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (NASME), Plateau state. The researchers adopted Total Population Sample where the entire population (526) was used for the study. The instrument for data collection was adopted questionnaire. The questionnaire was adopted from the study of Rijgut (2012) structured in 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), 4 points;

Agree (A), 3 points; Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 points and Disagree (D), 1 point. The instrument contained 70 items. The instrument was validated by three experts and pilot tested using 30 management staff of Small-scale business in Plateau state. A Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.925 was obtained. The instrument was found to be reliable as suggested by Hair, (2010) who opined that internal consistency of at least 0.70 should be considered satisfactory for survey study. Direct contact was used for the administration of the research instrument. The researchers visited each of the target respondents in their business premises of the respondents. This enabled the researcher to retrieve 487 out of 526 copies of question distributed. The exercise lasted for three (3) weeks. The data collected from the study were entered into Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS), version 25. The package was employed to run Linear Regression which was employed to test the research hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. In the test of the hypotheses, when the p-value is found to be less than the alpha value (0.05) the hypothesis was rejected and when the p-value was found to be greater than the alpha value, the hypothesis was retained.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

Research Hypothesis One

Target

audience Marketing strategy has no significant influence on the sustainability of Small-scale business in Plateau State. The outcome of data used to test null hypothesis one in Table 1 disclosed the Standardized Coefficients Beta value of .941. The t-value stood at 59.500 with R-square of .941 and R-square value indicated that Target Audience Marketing Strategy (TAMS) has 88.5% influence on sustainability of Small-scale business in Plateau state. The .000 p-value indicated that target audience marketing strategy has significant influence on sustainability of Small-scale business in Plateau state. The hypothesis was rejected.

Table 1: Regression Analysis on the Influence of Target Audience Marketing Strategy on the Sustainability of Small-scale Business in Plateau State.

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	P-value	Remark
1	.941	59.500	.941 ^a	.885	.885	.000	HO1 Rejected

- a. Dependent Variable: Sustainability
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Target Audience

Research Hypothesis Two

Product development marketing strategy has no significant influence on the sustainability of Small-scale business in Plateau state. The output of regression analysis on the test null hypothesis two documented in Table 2 unveiled the Standardized Coefficients Beta value of .945 with the t- value of 62.150. The R=.945 with R-square of

89.4%. The obtained value of R-square indicated that Product Development Marketing Strategy (PDMS) has 89.4% influence on sustainability of Small-scale business. This is also seen in the p-value of .000 indicated that the independent variable has significant influence on dependent variable. The hypothesis was rejected.

Table 2: Regression Analysis on the Influence of Product Development Marketing Strategy on the Sustainability of Small-scale Business in Plateau State.

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	P-value	Remark
1	.945	62.150	.945 ^a	.894	.894	.000	HO2 Rejected

- a. Dependent Variable: Sustainability
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Product development

Research Hypothesis Three

Ethical sourcing marketing strategy has no significant influence on the sustainability of Small-scale business in Plateau state. The statistical evidence documented in Table 3 reveals that the standardized coefficients beta value of .892 with t=42.273. The R-value stood at .892 with the R-square of .796. The

obtained R-square indicated that the independent variable has 79.6% influence on the dependent variable. This is also obtained in the p-value of .000 suggested that Ethical Sourcing Marketing Strategy (ESMS) has significant influence on sustainability of Small-scale business in Plateau state. The hypothesis was therefore rejected

Table 3: Regression Analysis on the Influence of Ethical Sourcing Marketing Strategy on the Sustainability of Small-scale Business in Plateau State.

Model	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	P-value	Remark
1	.892	42.273	.892 ^a	.796	.795	.000	HO3 Rejected

- a. Dependent Variable: Sustainability
- b. Predictors: (Constant), Ethical Sourcing

VI. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this conceptual review highlight the importance of marketing strategies for sustainability in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Plateau State. The review identified that integrating sustainability into marketing practices can provide SMEs with a

competitive advantage, enhance brand reputation, and attract environmentally and socially conscious consumers. However, the review also identified various challenges faced by SMEs in implementing sustainable marketing strategies, including limited financial resources, lack of awareness and knowledge, and inadequate infrastructure.

The review suggests that SMEs in Plateau State can overcome these challenges by adopting specific marketing strategies for sustainability. Collaborative partnerships with local organizations and stakeholders can provide SMEs with shared resources and knowledge exchange, enabling them to promote sustainable practices collectively. Customer education and engagement, through effective communication channels, can help SMEs to educate their customers about the environmental and social benefits of their products or services. Furthermore, advocating for government support and policies that promote sustainable practices can also be beneficial for SMEs.

The result of research null hypothesis one disclosed that target audience Marketing strategy has significant influence on the sustainability of Small-scale business in Plateau State. The finding agreed with the report of Shinkle et al., (2013) who opined that, when a multiple or mixed-strategy approach is beneficial is in a transition economy with low market orientation the focus should be the target audience. Similarly, Bendekovic (2014) reported that adaptation of the marketing strategies improves the competitive advantage, performance and sustainability of business organizations. The authors maintained that, understanding the intricacy and importance of Marketing Strategy is very imperative for the management of the company if it wants to accomplish its long-term and short-term goals in a successful way with great consideration of target audience. According to online guide (2019) product development marketing strategy which is an umbrella term covering a set of strategies, techniques and tactics to fulfill business and customer goals by using the most relevant product to serve, attract, convert, retain and engage customers in a trustworthy and valuable way has influence on business sustainability. According to Dave (2019) product marketers is very essential for business success and sustainability. The findings of null hypothesis two indicated that, product development marketing strategy has significant influence on the sustainability of Small-scale business in Plateau state. The outcome of the study is in line with the submission of Mburu (2015) study found out that marketing strategies constitute one of the key functional of Small-scale business and product development is the core value. The study of Anas, Adamu and Bala (2020) also reported that effective adoption of marketing strategies helps companies to achieve its goals aligned with segmentation, target market, positioning and the marketing mix

elements to satisfy customer requirements most especially the product element. Also, Babandi (2017) opined that effective product development has significant role of business sustainability. In line with this, Umar (2018) study shows that is a significant relationship between business strategies adopted and the performance of SMEs in Nigeria.

The outcome of null hypothesis three suggested that ethical sourcing marketing strategy has significant influence on the sustainability of Small-scale business in Plateau state. The finding is in line with that of Awotadi and Ojeka (2012) who reported that the failure of small businesses in Nigeria to ethically source for both human and capital resources affect their sustainability. Awotadi and Ojeka further argued that, marketing strategies is very essential for achieving competitive advantage and sustainability of business enterprises but must align with the ethical issues. The authors added that integration and adoption of marketing strategies in business environment has the potentials of promoting and sustaining business organization. Equally, Adebisi and Gbegi (2013) reported that inappropriate use of marketing strategies has negative influence on Small-scale business. The study of Oyebamiji, Kareem and Ayeni (2013) also discovered that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria have not performed creditably well because of inability of utilizing appropriate marketing strategies.

VII. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the integration of sustainable marketing strategies is crucial for the long-term success and growth of SMEs in Plateau State. By adopting these strategies, SMEs can differentiate themselves in the market, attract environmentally and socially conscious consumers, and enhance their brand reputation. However, it is essential to address the challenges faced by SMEs, such as limited financial resources and lack of awareness, through collaborative partnerships, customer education, and government support. The outcome of the study suggested that effective marketing strategy has positive influence on sustainability of small-scale business in Plateau state. This therefore indicated that adoption of appropriate marketing strategy will help to reduce the mortality rate of small-scale business in the area and improves its success and sustainability.

CONTRIBUTION

Theoretical Contribution

The integration of marketing strategies for sustainability in SMEs in Plateau State contributes to the theoretical understanding of stakeholder theory and the triple bottom line theory. The application of stakeholder theory in the context of sustainable marketing strategies for SMEs in Plateau State emphasizes the importance of considering the interests and needs of various stakeholders, including customers, employees, suppliers, local communities, and the environment. By adopting sustainable marketing strategies, SMEs can align their business practices with the expectations and values of these stakeholders. This theory provides a framework for SMEs to engage in mutually beneficial relationships with their stakeholders, leading to long-term sustainability and success.

The triple bottom line theory focuses on the three dimensions of sustainability: economic, social, and environmental. By implementing marketing strategies for sustainability, SMEs in Plateau State can contribute to the achievement of these three dimensions. From an economic standpoint, sustainable marketing strategies can enhance brand reputation, attract new customers, and increase profitability. Socially, these strategies can address social issues and create positive impacts on local communities. Environmentally, sustainable marketing strategies can reduce the ecological footprint of SMEs, promote resource efficiency, and mitigate environmental risks. The application of the triple bottom line theory in the context of SMEs in Plateau State highlights the importance of considering the broader impacts of business activities beyond financial performance.

Practical Contribution

The practical contribution of marketing strategies for sustainability in SMEs in Plateau State lies in their ability to create tangible benefits for businesses, stakeholders, and the wider society.

Business Benefits: Implementing sustainable marketing strategies can provide SMEs with a competitive advantage in the market. By differentiating themselves through sustainability, SMEs can attract environmentally and socially conscious consumers who are willing to pay a premium for sustainable products or services. This can lead to increased sales, customer loyalty, and enhanced brand reputation. Additionally, sustainable marketing strategies can drive operational efficiency, reduce costs, and improve

resource management, resulting in long-term financial sustainability for SMEs.

Stakeholder Benefits: Sustainable marketing strategies prioritize the interests and needs of stakeholders. By engaging with stakeholders and addressing their concerns, SMEs can build trust, strengthen relationships, and create shared value. This can lead to positive social impacts, such as job creation, community development, and improved quality of life for local communities. Furthermore, by adopting sustainable practices, SMEs can contribute to environmental conservation, reduce pollution, and promote sustainable resource management, benefiting the environment and future generations.

Societal Benefits: The implementation of marketing strategies for sustainability in SMEs in Plateau State can have broader societal benefits. By promoting sustainable consumption patterns and educating consumers about the environmental and social impacts of their choices, SMEs can contribute to raising awareness and driving behavior change towards sustainability. This can result in a more sustainable and responsible society as a whole.

Overall, marketing strategies for sustainability in SMEs in Plateau State contribute both theoretically and practically by aligning business practices with stakeholder expectations, addressing the triple bottom line dimensions of sustainability, and creating tangible benefits for businesses, stakeholders, and society.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this conceptual review, the following recommendations are provided for SMEs in Plateau State to effectively implement marketing strategies for sustainability:

- 1. Increase Awareness and Knowledge:** SMEs should invest in training and capacity building programs to enhance their understanding of sustainable marketing practices. This will enable them to effectively integrate sustainability into their marketing strategies.
- 2. Foster Collaborative Partnerships:** SMEs should actively seek collaborative partnerships with local organizations, suppliers, and community stakeholders. These partnerships can provide access to shared resources, knowledge exchange, and support in promoting sustainable practices collectively.
- 3. Engage and Educate Customers:** SMEs should focus on educating and engaging their customers about the environmental and social benefits of their products or services. This can be achieved through

effective communication channels such as social media, online platforms, and community events.

4. Advocate for Government Support: SMEs should actively advocate for government support and policies that promote sustainable practices. This can include incentives for adopting sustainable technologies, access to funding for sustainability projects, and regulatory frameworks that encourage responsible business practices.

5. Monitor and Measure Impact: SMEs should regularly monitor and measure the impact of their sustainable marketing strategies. This will help them identify areas of improvement, refine their strategies, and communicate their sustainability efforts to stakeholders.

By implementing these recommendations, SMEs in Plateau State can effectively integrate sustainability into their marketing strategies, contribute to sustainable development, and gain a competitive advantage in the market.

IX. LIMITATIONS

The study is only restricted to Plateau State– Nigeria. Further research could be conducted to cover all the States in the North-Central region of Nigeria. Also, this study employed the cross-sectional approach. A longitudinal approach should be employed to study the trend over a period of at least five years. Finally, the three (3) dimensions identified as predictors of marketing strategies may not be sufficient enough in explaining the phenomenon. Hence, there are other factors that may contribute to influencing marketing strategies impact on sustainability of SMEs in Plateau state that were not part of this study.

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