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Influence of Innovativeness on the Performance of Small-Scale Enterprises in Selected States of North-West Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
This paper investigates the influence of innovativeness on the performance of small-scale enterprises (SSEs) on selected states in Northwest Nigeria. In recent years, small-scale enterprises have emerged as vital contributors to economic growth, employment generation, and poverty reduction. However, sustainability, and growth, particularly in dynamic and increasingly digitalized markets. Innovativeness is the capacity of firms to develop new ideas, improve processes, and adapt to market changes has been identified as a critical driver of business success. To empirically assess this relationship, the study employed a quantitative survey research design. The target population comprised 3,007 registered small-scale enterprises operating across key states in Northwest Nigeria. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a sample size of 388 enterprises was determined. Data were gathered through structured questionnaires anchored on a 5-point Likert scale, and a stratified random sampling technique ensured representation across different sectors and states. The data were analyzed using linear regression analysis with the aid of SPSS version 26 to test the formulated hypothesis. The findings reveal a statistically significant and positive relationship between innovativeness and the performance of small-scale enterprises in the study area. Specifically, enterprises that actively engaged in innovative practices such as product innovation, adoption of new technologies, and creative problem-solving demonstrated higher levels of growth, profitability, and market reach. Based on these findings, the study recommends that government agencies, non-governmental organizations, and business support institutions prioritize the promotion of innovation among small-scale enterprises. This can be achieved through the regular organization of targeted training programs and workshops focused on enhancing creative thinking, product development, utilization of digital tools, and adoption of modern business practices. By fostering a culture of innovation, these interventions can help small-scale enterprises become more competitive, resilient, and sustainable in the long term.

Keywords: Small-Scale Enterprises, Business Performance, Northwest Nigeria, SPSS version 26.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In today's global market, small-scale enterprises (SSEs) play a pivotal role in the socio-economic development of developing nations. They serve as key drivers of business development, employment generation, innovation, and the revitalization of local economies. In Nigeria, small-scale enterprises operate across both the formal and informal sectors, contributing significantly to economic growth and poverty reduction. This role is particularly crucial in the Northern states, where high levels of unemployment and destitution persist, and economic opportunities remain limited.

A central factor influencing the performance and sustainability of small-scale enterprises in today, is highly competitive and technologically driven business environment, innovativeness is defined as the ability to develop and apply new ideas, products, processes, or marketing strategies. For small-scale enterprises, especially those operating in regions facing structural and business challenges, innovativeness is not merely a competitive advantage but a necessity. Innovative enterprises tend to be more adaptable, efficient, and resilient, enabling them to improve productivity, respond effectively to market changes, and expand into new markets.

However, Small-scale enterprises face numerous challenges that hinder their ability to innovate and perform successfully. These include limited access to finance, poor infrastructure, weak institutional frameworks, limited capacity, and poor access to foreign markets, inadequate managerial skills, and pervasive insecurity, (Edeh et al. (2024). These constraints are further exacerbated by limited digital penetration, and limited access to technology and underdeveloped support systems. Although innovativeness has the potential to mitigate many of these challenges, its specific role and influence in this context remain poorly understood, (Peace et al.,2025).

A notable limitation in the existing literature is the regional imbalance in research focus. Most studies on innovativeness and enterprise performance in Nigeria have concentrated on the southern and central parts of the country, such as Augustine's (2020) study on the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on business performance in Ogun State, and Cosmas's (2022) research on agro-processing small-scale enterprises in Anambra State. These studies have paid minimal attention to the Northern states, often generalizing findings across Nigeria while overlooking the distinct socio-economic, cultural, and institutional factors affecting small-scale enterprises in the Northwest. Furthermore, the informal sector, which dominates Northwest regions, has been largely neglected in academic inquiry. Key dimensions of innovativeness such as product, process, technological, and market innovation have also received limited empirical attention in this context.

This neglect has resulted in a critical knowledge gap regarding how innovativeness influences key performance indicators such as productivity, market share, customer satisfaction, and employee satisfaction, all of which are crucial for the sustainability of small-scale enterprises in the North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria. In response to this gap, the present study aims to investigate the influence of innovativeness on the performance of small-scale enterprises in selected states in Northwest Nigeria. The study seeks to provide relevant, evidence-based insights that can inform policy formulation, support development initiatives, and guide enterprise operators in enhancing performance through innovation. Thus, the main objective of this study is to examine the influence of innovativeness on the performance of small-scale enterprises in selected States in Northwest Nigeria.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

This section provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature relevant to this study, organized into three main subsections: the conceptual underpinnings of innovativeness, an empirical review of prior studies, and the theoretical framework guiding the research.

2.1.1 Concept of Innovativeness

The concept of innovativeness is rooted in the Latin word "*innovere*," meaning "to renew or change" (Stenberg, 2017). At its most fundamental level, innovation is defined as the act of doing something different or introducing novel approaches (Farniha et al., 2016). Expanding on this, Baskaran and Mehta, (2016) describe innovation as a comprehensive process involving new methods and technologies aimed at

accessing new markets, developing new product methodologies, and identifying previously untapped customer segments. This conceptualization positions innovation as a strategic tool for market expansion and diversification.

Innovativeness, as a related but distinct construct, refers to the organizational or individual capacity for innovation. Wathanakom et al., (2020) define it as the process through which an individual or entity not only willingly accepts change but also actively contributes to the creation of new ideas, objects, or practices. This proactive engagement with change enables organizations to adapt enthusiastically to evolving environments. From a strategic perspective, innovativeness is frequently linked to competitive advantage. Kreiser et al., (2010) emphasize how entrepreneurs' support for change provides firms with a marketplace edge, particularly through the development of new products, services, and technologies (Fan et al., 2021).

Schlaegel et al., (2021) further conceptualize innovativeness as a predisposition toward creativity and systematic experimentation, often manifesting through research and development activities that yield new processes, products, and services. This view is complemented by Breznik (2017, 2021) who focuses on the individual level, describing innovativeness as an individual's propensity to engage in creative endeavors that result in novel products, services, or production methods, thereby emphasizing its role in creating strategic advantage.

The psychological dimensions of innovativeness are highlighted by Efrata et al., (2021) who identify it as a fundamental psychological trait that drives entrepreneurial intention. They posit that it is the most crucial component of a business strategy for gaining a competitive edge over rivals. At the organizational level, Du et al., (2022) define innovativeness as a firm's capacity to leverage innovation to influence and enhance its existing human resources, capabilities, and strategic, marketing, and technological resources. This aligns with the view of Anjani and Yasa (2019, 2023), who describe it as the tendency of firms to participate in and support new ideas that may culminate in new technological products, services, or processes. McDowell et al., (2023) offer a knowledge-centric perspective, describing innovativeness as a firm's ability to exploit existing knowledge to generate new products, services, and processes.

In synthesis, innovativeness can be understood as the procedures, abilities, and tendencies of an individual, organization, or system to generate and implement new ideas, methods, or products. It reflects a mindset that embraces creativity, experimentation, and a calculated willingness to take risks to achieve progress or improvement. In both personal and professional contexts, innovativeness is a key driver of growth and adaptability, allowing entities to respond to dynamic environments, solve complex problems, and maintain competitiveness. It involves not only the ideation of original concepts but also their effective implementation. High levels of innovativeness are consequently associated with visionary thinking, openness to change, and a proactive approach to challenges.

2.1.2 Empirical Review

This subsection examines previous empirical studies that provide a foundation and context for the current research, highlighting geographical and methodological gaps this study aims to address.

Kassimu et al., (2022) investigated the effect of innovation orientation on the performance of small-scale manufacturing enterprises in Ghana. Their study assessed the influence of various innovation orientation dimensions on firm performance. Employing a probability sampling technique, specifically simple random sampling, they achieved an 81% response rate from a sample of 346. Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), their analysis revealed that market innovation was a significant predictor of small-scale enterprise performance. This study provides a valuable regional perspective from West Africa; however, its focus on Ghana and its use of PLS-SEM present a methodological and geographical divergence from the current study, which is conducted in Northwestern Nigeria and utilizes SPSS for regression analysis. This contrast underscores the contextual uniqueness and contribution of the present research.

Focusing on Nigeria, Nnorom et al., (2023) examined the impact of innovativeness on the competitiveness of selected small-scale enterprises in Lagos State. Drawing from a population of 8,396 owners and managers, a sample of 471 was selected using stratified random sampling. Data analyzed via

multiple linear regression revealed that innovation variables had a significant combined effect on competitiveness ($R = 0.379$, $Adj.R^2 = 0.136$, $p < 0.05$). Specifically, product innovation ($\beta = 0.222$; $p = 0.033$), process innovation ($\beta = 0.478$; $p = 0.023$), and market innovation ($\beta = 1.028$; $p = 0.015$) were all significant predictors. The study concluded that innovation is crucial for sustaining the competitiveness of SMEs in Lagos. A key observation is that this study was confined to Lagos, a single state in Southern Nigeria, whereas the current research encompasses three states in the Northwestern region, offering a broader geographical scope and enhanced contextual relevance.

Further contributing to the evidence from Southern Nigeria, Akintunde et al., (2023) explored the impact of innovativeness on the performance of small-scale enterprises in Lagos. Their survey research, which employed purposive and simple random sampling to gather data from 400 respondents, utilized Pearson correlation analysis. The findings demonstrated a significant impact of marketing innovation dimensions: product innovation (89.8%), promotion innovation (73.6%), and pricing innovation (90.5%) on enterprise performance. This further confirms the significant relationship between marketing innovation and performance in the Lagos context. Again, the singular focus on Lagos contrasts with the multi-state, Northwestern approach of the present study, which provides a more comprehensive and comparative perspective on the research problem within a different socio-economic landscape.

Georgewill, (2024) explored the relationship between entrepreneurial innovativeness and business success, measured by market share and sales growth, of small-scale enterprises in Rivers State, Nigeria. Utilizing a cross-sectional survey design, the study collected primary data from a sample of 1,658 owners and managers, with a final sample of 313 determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. After data cleaning, 99 responses were analyzed. The instrument demonstrated good reliability (Cronbach's Alpha > 0.70). The results confirmed a positive correlation between entrepreneurial innovativeness and business success. This study, while robust, is also situated in the South-South region of Nigeria, reinforcing the identified research gap concerning the Northern States and justifying the focus of the current inquiry on the Northwest.

Based on the available literature reviewed the following hypothesis developed.

Hypothesis:

HO: Innovativeness has no significant influence on the performance of small-scale enterprises in selected States in Northwest Nigeria.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which provides a robust framework for understanding how internal firm resources drive performance and competitive advantage. The RBV is particularly appropriate for this research as it emphasizes internal capabilities, such as innovativeness, as primary drivers of firm performance, especially in resource-constrained environments.

The foundational premise of RBV, as articulated by Barney, (1991) is that for a firm to achieve and sustain a competitive advantage, it must possess and leverage resources that are Valuable (V), Rare (R), Inimitable (I), and Non-substitutable (N) the VRIN framework. These resources encompass both tangible assets (e.g., technology, finance) and intangible assets (e.g., knowledge, skills, organizational culture, and innovative capacity). Critically, the theory posits that it is not merely the possession but the effective utilization and strategic configuration of these resources that enable a firm to achieve its objectives and outperform competitors.

In the context of small-scale enterprises in Northwestern Nigeria, characterized by emerging markets, limited infrastructural development, and significant socio-economic challenges, the RBV provides a powerful lens for analysis. These conditions force small-scale enterprises to rely heavily on their internal competencies for survival and growth. Innovativeness, defined as the ability to develop and apply new ideas, products, processes, or marketing strategies, is positioned here as a critical intangible capability. It can be nurtured and leveraged as a strategic VRIN resource within the RBV framework.

Small-scale enterprises in this region operate under severe resource constraints, including limited access to finance, technology, and skilled labour. In such an environment, innovativeness becomes a critical differentiator. For instance, firms that adopt low-cost production techniques, utilize locally available

materials in novel ways, or develop creative customer engagement strategies can gain a significant market edge. From an RBV perspective, these innovative practices represent firm-specific capabilities that are socially complex and causally ambiguous, making them difficult for competitors to replicate. This inimitability is particularly potent in less developed markets. Consequently, these innovative efforts directly contribute to improved performance metrics, including productivity, market share, and customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, the RBV theory underscores the importance of internal learning and dynamic capabilities the ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal resources to address rapidly changing environments. In Northwestern Nigeria, where external support systems like R&D institutions and mature entrepreneurial ecosystems are underdeveloped, the ability of small-scale enterprises to learn, adapt, and reconfigure internal resources is vital. An enterprise that iteratively refines its products based on customer feedback or creatively integrates traditional practices with modern business techniques is effectively applying the principles of RBV through innovativeness.

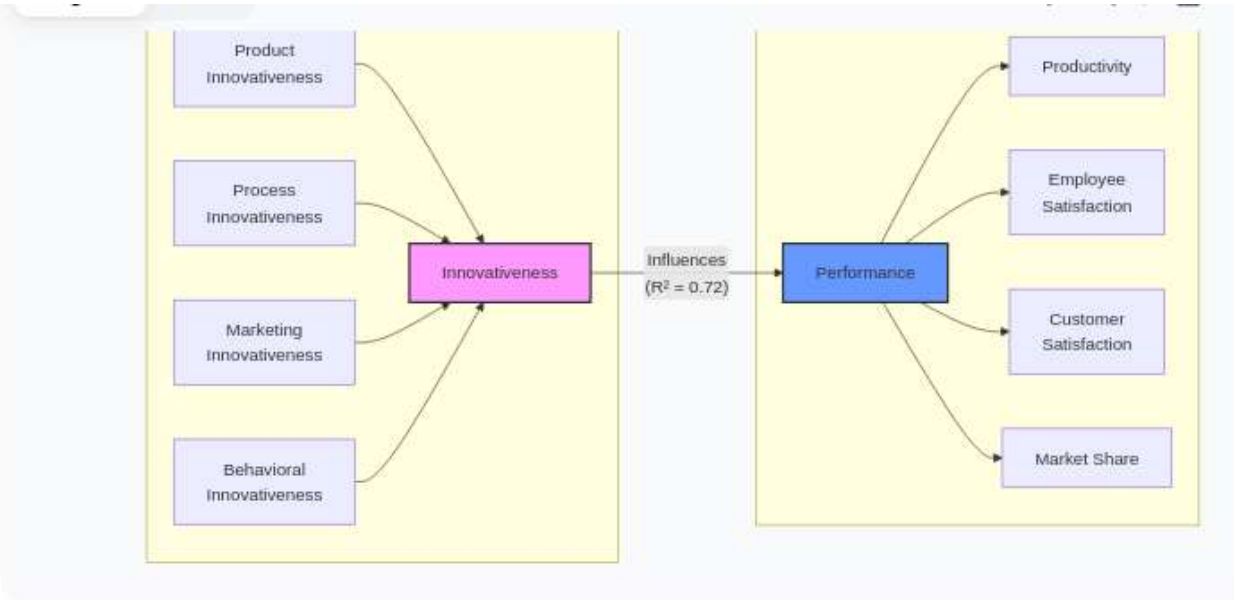
Empirical studies have consistently shown a positive correlation between innovativeness and business performance, particularly among micro and small enterprises in developing economies. When applied to the unique contexts of Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara States, this relationship is of paramount importance. Small-scale enterprises that invest in developing their innovative capacity through training, informal learning, and experimentation are more likely to navigate environmental uncertainties, respond adeptly to changing customer needs, and enhance their long-term viability. These outcomes directly reflect the core RBV premise that strategic resources, when properly managed, lead to sustainable competitive advantages and superior firm performance.

In conclusion, the Resource-Based View offers a compelling theoretical framework for examining how innovativeness influences the performance of small-scale enterprises in Northwestern Nigeria. Given the environmental challenges and scant external support, the internal capability of innovativeness serves as a critical asset for enterprise growth and survival. By conceptualizing innovativeness as a VRIN resource, this study elucidates how *small-scale enterprises* can leverage their unique strengths to achieve competitive advantage and contribute meaningfully to local economic development.

3.1 METHODOLOGY

This section delineates the methodological framework adopted for this study, detailing the research design, population and sampling procedures, data collection instruments, and the operational definitions of variables. It further presents the demographic profile of the respondents and the statistical techniques employed for data analysis and hypothesis testing.

3.1.1 Research Framework



Source: Adapted from JERAMS (2025).

3.1.2 Research Design and Study Area

This study employed a survey research design, a methodological approach well-suited for collecting data from a sizeable population to describe, explain, and explore phenomena through statistical inference. The research targeted owners and managers of small-scale enterprises across three selected states in Northwestern Nigeria: Sokoto, Kebbi, and Zamfara. These States were chosen purposively based on their pronounced similarities in socio-economic structures, cultural characteristics, and developmental challenges. This homogeneity makes them an ideal context for a comparative analysis, as it helps to control for extraneous regional variables that could confound the results. Furthermore, these states exhibit a high concentration of small-scale enterprises, which are crucial engines for local employment, income generation, and economic sustenance. Despite being focal points for various government and non-governmental organization (NGO) interventions aimed at entrepreneurial development, these regions suffer from a significant paucity of empirical research. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this critical knowledge gap and generate evidence-based insights that can inform more inclusive and effective policy formulation for the region.

3.1.3 Population, Sample Size, and Sampling Technique

The study population, as derived from the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN, 2025), consisted of 3,007 registered small-scale enterprises across the three states, distributed as follows: Sokoto (1,420), Kebbi (805), and Zamfara (782).

Given the finite nature of this population, the study utilized the Taro Yamane (1967) formula to determine a statistically representative sample size. This formula is particularly recommended for determining a minimum sample size from a finite population with a desired level of precision. The application of the formula is detailed below:

N = Total population size = 3,007

e = Margin of error (level of precision) = 0.05

n=1+N(e)2N

n=1+3007(0.0025)3007

n=1+7.51753007
n=8.51753007
n=353

The calculation yielded a minimum sample size of 353. To account for potential non-response and ensure the robustness of the data, the sample size was increased by 10%, following the recommendation by Israel (1992). Thus, 10% of 353 (35.3) was added, resulting in a final sample size of 388 enterprises.

To ensure a fair and proportionate representation of the diverse population across the three States and various enterprise types, a stratified random sampling technique was employed. The population was first divided into homogeneous strata based on the primary criteria of geographical location (State: Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara) and secondary criteria of socio-economic status and sector. Subsequently, a proportional number of respondents were selected randomly from each stratum. This method enhances the precision of the results by reducing sampling bias, improving the comparability across subgroups, and preventing the underrepresentation of smaller or marginalized segments of the population (Kalton, 1983; Thompson, 2012; Gbenga, 2022).

3.1.4 Data Collection Instrument and Procedure

Data collection was executed using a structured, self-administered questionnaire. The instrument was designed using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) Strongly Disagree to (5) Strongly Agree, to measure the constructs under investigation. Despite the comparatively higher costs and logistical demands, the self-administered (hand-delivered) method was preferred over alternatives like mail surveys. This approach offers significant advantages, including a higher response rate, the ability to collect completed questionnaires within a relatively short timeframe, and the opportunity for research assistants to provide immediate clarification on any questions respondents found ambiguous. This interaction helps to improve data quality and motivates respondents to participate honestly and completely (Ndagi, 1999). A total of 306 questionnaires were distributed. Of these, 299 were returned, yielding a high return rate of 97.7%. After data cleaning, 6 questionnaires were deemed invalid due to incomplete or inconsistent responses, resulting in 293 usable questionnaires for analysis, representing a final effective response rate of 95.4%. This response rate is considered substantial and robust for reliable statistical analysis and generalization (Kraus et al., 2012).

3.1.5 Demographic Profile of Respondents

The demographic analysis provides a clear picture of the typical small-scale enterprise operator in the study area. As presented in Table 4.2, the vast majority of respondents were owners (76.1%) rather than managers (23.9%), reflecting the owner-operated nature of most small-scale enterprise in Northern Nigeria. The gender distribution showed a significant disparity, with males constituting 73.0% and females 27.0% of the sample, a trend indicative of the prevailing socio-cultural and religious norms that can limit women's participation in the business sphere. Marital status data revealed that most respondents were married (82.9%), suggesting that marital stability is often associated with credibility and trust in business contexts.

In terms of age distribution, the largest cohort was between 31-40 years (44.0%), followed by those aged 18-30 years (32.1%). This indicates that entrepreneurship in the region attracts both young individuals seeking alternative livelihoods amidst high unemployment and slightly older individuals with more experience and financial stability. Educationally, a high level of attainment was observed, with most respondents holding a BSc/HND (60.8%) or a postgraduate degree (26.6%), underscoring the importance of formal education in modern entrepreneurial ventures. Regarding ownership structure, sole proprietorship was the dominant model (67.2%), highlighting a preference for autonomy and full control. Finally, most businesses had been operational for 6-10 years (37.5%), pointing to a recent and growing wave of entrepreneurial activity, likely fueled by economic conditions and support initiatives.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n=293)

Characteristics	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Position	Owner	223	76.1
	Manager	70	23.9
	Total	**293**	**100.0**
Gender	Male	214	73.0
	Female	79	27.0
	Total	**293**	**100.0**
Marital Status	Married	243	82.9
	Single	50	17.1
	Total	**293**	**100.0**
Age Group	18-30 years	94	32.1
	31-40 years	129	44.0
	41-50 years	49	16.7
	Above 51 years	21	7.2
	Total	**293**	**100.0**
Level of Education	Postgraduate Degree	78	26.6
	BSc/HND	178	60.8
	Diploma/NCE	32	10.9
	School Cert. & Below	5	1.7
	Total	**293**	**100.0**
Type of Ownership	Sole Proprietor	197	67.2
	Partnership	96	32.8
	Total	**293**	**100.0**
Years of Operation	1-5 years	86	29.4
	6-10 years	110	37.5
	11-15 years	79	27.0
	Above 15 years	18	6.1
	Total	**293**	**100.0**
***Source**: Field Survey (2026)*			
Note: Percentages for "Level of Education" have been corrected to reflect the actual frequency count. The original text contained an error (Diploma/NCE was listed as 20.9% instead of the correct 10.9%).			

3.1.6 Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

To test the hypothesis, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26. This statistical technique was appropriate for modeling the relationship between a single independent variable (innovativeness) and a continuous dependent variable (performance). The results of the regression analysis are summarized in Table 4.1.

Table 2: Summary of Regression Analysis for the Influence of Innovativeness on Performance

Model Summary		**ANOVA**		**Coefficients**		
R	**R^2**	**F**	**Sig.**	**Variable**	**B**	**Sig.**
0.849	**0.720**	748.95	0.000	(Constant)	1.959	0.000
				Innovativeness	0.730	0.000
a. Dependent Variable: Performance						

The regression output reveals an R-value of 0.849, indicating a very strong positive correlation between innovativeness and the performance of small-scale enterprises. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.720, signifying that approximately 72.0% of the total variance in firm performance can be attributed to

variations in innovativeness. This implies that innovativeness is a dominant and paramount factor explaining the success of small-scale enterprises in this context.

The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results show a statistically significant F-statistic of 748.95 with a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). This robustly confirms that the regression model is an excellent fit for the data and that the relationship between innovativeness and performance is statistically significant.

The coefficient analysis provides further insight. The constant (1.959) represents the predicted value of performance when innovativeness is zero. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for innovativeness is 0.730 with a significance value of 0.000. This indicates that for every one-unit increase in the composite innovativeness score, the performance of small-scale enterprises is expected to increase by 0.730 units, holding all other factors constant. This substantial coefficient further underscores the powerful effect of innovativeness.

Findings: Therefore, based on these results, the null hypothesis (Ho: Innovativeness has no significant influence on the performance of small-scale enterprises in selected States in northwest Nigeria) is resoundingly rejected. The study finds that innovativeness has a very strong, positive, and statistically significant effect on performance, accounting for the majority of its variance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides powerful empirical evidence that innovativeness is the paramount predictor of performance for small-scale enterprises in Northwestern Nigeria. The statistically significant relationship ($p < 0.001$) is exceptionally strong ($R^2 = 0.72$), establishing innovativeness not merely as one contributing factor, but as the central internal capability driving performance. It is the principal determinant in enhancing key metrics such as productivity, customer and employee satisfaction, and market share. While external factors like access to finance and infrastructure remain relevant, the overwhelming explanatory power of innovativeness suggests that small-scale enterprises can achieve significant competitive advantage and resilience primarily by cultivating and leveraging their innovative capacities, even within challenging environments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study's findings, government agencies, NGOs, and business support institutions should prioritize promoting innovation among Small and Small-scale Enterprises (SSEs). Innovation is essential for enhancing competitiveness, productivity, and long-term sustainability. Targeted training programs and workshops should focus on creative thinking, product development, digital tools, and modern business practices. These efforts should also foster an entrepreneurial mindset and adaptability. A culture of innovation helps Small and Small-scale Enterprises respond to market changes and economic disruptions. Such initiatives support employment, resilience, and poverty reduction. In developing economies, where Small and Small-scale Enterprises are critical, this is especially vital. Promoting innovation should be a strategic development priority.

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