

Strategic Improvisation and Brand Image of Selected Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises in Lagos State, Nigeria



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ABSTRACT: SMEs in Nigeria have shown immense potential for driving economic growth and employment. However, they often grapple with several challenges that undermine their performance and long-term sustainability. These issues range from operational ineffectiveness and a lack of growth capacity to poor coordination among different aspects of the business. Additionally, many Nigerian SMEs seem resistant to adopting innovative practices that could ensure their sustainability. The foregoing, underscores the need for strategic improvisation. This study examined the relationship between strategic improvisation and brand image of selected small and medium-scale enterprises in Lagos State, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design. The population study comprised the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that are registered and operational in Lagos State and identified as members of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). The total population of the study was estimated at 42,067, which represents the overall count of registered SMEs affiliated with Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). A sample size of 510 participants was obtained using Cochran's sample size formula (1977). The study utilized multiple regression analysis to explore how all measures of strategic improvisation collectively predicted brand image. Findings revealed that strategic improvisation has a significant effect on brand image (brand image ($R = 0.536$, $\text{Adj}R^2 = 0.279$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). The study concludes that strategic improvisation has a significant effect in enhancing SME brand image of selected small and medium-scale enterprises in Lagos State, Nigeria. Consequently, the recommends that SMEs should foster a work environment that encourages creativity, experimentation, and risk-taking. This can be achieved by encouraging employees to think outside the box, generate new ideas, and propose innovative solutions to business challenges.

KEYWORDS: Strategic Improvisation, Strategic Flexibility, Effective Communication, Leadership, Team Work and Digital Capabilities, Brand Image.

INTRODUCTION

SMEs in Nigeria face challenges in maintaining a positive brand image due to deficiencies in their practices. These issues persist despite SMEs' efforts to enhance their brand image (Yakubu, 2019). The Nigerian economy's turbulence, with the oil sector contributing only about 10% of the national GDP (Ndayako, 2021), exacerbates the poor practice of strategic improvisation. Factors contributing to SMEs' negative image include inadequate planning and implementation, technical and bureaucratic obstacles, infrastructure deficits, and insufficient knowledge among owner-managers (Akpa et al., 2020). Furthermore, poor management skills, lack of financing, inadequate preparation, and limited understanding of the sector and its value chain (Osibajo et al., 2019) result in failures and collapses that harm the brand image. The pandemic has underscored the significance of strategic improvisation, as SMEs unable to adapt have experienced negative consequences on their brand image.

Although many studies, including those by Ibrahim et al. (2018), Bari and Arshad (2020), Liu (2021), Hilmersson et al. (2020), Chege and Gakobu (2017), and Munyeki and Were (2017), have explored the relationship between strategic improvisation and brand image across various contexts and organisations, a literature gap exists concerning the connection between strategic improvisation, digital capabilities, and the brand image of Nigerian SMEs. To address this gap, this study builds upon prior research by Villar and Miralles (2019), Kraśnicka, Głód, and Wronka-Pośpiech (2018), Adigüzel et al. (2020), and Kumar and Krupanandhan (2019), highlighting the significance of strategic flexibility, effective communication, leadership, teamwork, and digital capabilities in examining the relationship between strategic improvisation and brand image within the context of Nigerian SMEs.

Brand Image

According to Lee et al. (2020), a company's brand image encapsulates the mental representation that individuals hold about the company, its products, and its services. In parallel, Hussain et al. (2020) assert that the marketing team plays a pivotal role in crafting the company's image, employing various strategies to convey a sense of authority and importance. Furthermore, Alam & Noor (2020) emphasize that the overall brand image of a company is meticulously constructed through the content of commercials, their interactions with the target audience, and their placement within the broader advertising campaign. The authors Lee et al. (2020) and Yasin (2020) concur that the objective of a brand image is to establish a favorable perception of the product or service, fostering trust among prospective investors and employees.

Expanding on this perspective, Huo et al. (2022) underscore that a company's brand image embodies the essence of its identity, reflecting its values, personality, and position within the market. This intangible asset is cultivated through a blend of visual, emotional, and psychological elements that resonate with customers, setting the firm apart from its competitors (Hassan & Salem, 2022). It is imperative to note that a robust brand image maintains consistency across all touchpoints, including logo, color scheme, messaging, and the overall customer experience, thereby forming a cohesive perception in consumers' minds (Rasheed et al., 2015). Furthermore, Hong and Huang (2021) highlight that a brand image nurtures trust, credibility, and loyalty, fostering enduring relationships with customers and augmenting brand equity. Ultimately, Narteh and Braimah (2020) posit that a well-crafted brand image not only shapes consumer perceptions and expectations but also serves as a strategic instrument propelling the company's growth and success in the marketplace.

Considering the profound advantages elucidated, a corporation's brand image significantly influences its success, as Kim et al. (2020) contend that it deeply impacts customer behavior. In a fiercely competitive landscape, establishing and maintaining a strong and favorable brand image is a challenging feat, given the difficulty in recovering it once tarnished. A brand image serves as a crucial indicator of a company's prominence, informing individuals about the organisation and aiding in the retention of its core principles (Ali, 2020). Özkan et al. (2020) stress the importance of adopting strategies to ensure a brand's authenticity and prevent it from being perceived solely as a profit-driven entity. Businesses must continually strive to cultivate a brand image that is contemporary, persuasive, and beneficial to both their consumers and other stakeholders (Syah & Olivia, 2022). This brand image contributes to brand awareness and reputation in the market (Balmer et al., 2020) and can even facilitate the expansion of a company's reach to entirely new audiences (Narteh & Braimah, 2020). A favorable brand image not only enhances sales but also attracts investors, business partners, and customers, as evidenced by the efforts invested by many companies beyond mere revenue generation (Hong & Huang, 2021; Mainardes, Melo, & Moreira, 2021).

Strategic Flexibility

In accordance with the work of Burger et al. (2017), organisations that exhibit flexibility possess an inherent quality that makes them less vulnerable to unexpected external changes or more capable of adeptly responding to such changes. Within this context, flexible businesses demonstrate a diverse array of strategic responses and can swiftly transition between different strategies, as indicated by Angeles et al. (2022). Al Haraisa (2018) and Miroshnychenko et al. (2020) provide definitions of strategic flexibility, emphasizing its significance in enabling companies to promptly adapt to evolving competitive conditions and environmental settings. This capacity encompasses the ability to restructure internally and maintain a responsive connection with the external environment, as highlighted by Zhao & Wang (2020). Notably, this definition underscores that strategic flexibility takes into account both internal and external factors, demanding a comprehensive evaluation of all considerations related to the organisational environment for businesses seeking to cultivate this capability, as mentioned by Beraha et al. (2018). Strategic flexibility extends to a company's ability to rapidly adapt to shifting technological and market opportunities through the introduction of new products, expansion of product lines, and enhancement of product development speed, as articulated by Beraha et al. (2018). It closely correlates with environmental dynamism, given that the evolving competitive landscape compels enterprises to outpace their competitors in terms of agility to thrive in a dynamic market, as suggested by Xiu et al. (2017). Research demonstrates that strategic flexibility significantly influences corporate success by enhancing a company's ability to respond efficiently to environmental changes, monitor activities, and improve control, especially in the production of technically advanced products amid uncertainty, as discussed by Adim & Unaam (2022).

Effective communication

According to Ajayi and Mmutle (2020), communication, as of the year of publication, refers to the intricate process of sharing ideas, opinions, knowledge, and data to ensure that the message is received and comprehended with precision and purpose. It holds a pivotal role in all employment sectors, whether public or private, manifesting itself through both written and oral means (Rodríguez-Fernández & Vázquez-Sande, 2019). Oral effective communication encompasses face-to-face conversations, telephone dialogues, and meetings, while, as indicated by Prasetyo et al. (2021), it encompasses the internal and external transmission of

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information between an organisation's leadership and its workforce. Lantara (2019) further elaborates on effective communication, describing it as an interactive process wherein individuals within an organisation acquire information, form perspectives, make decisions, and align their actions with the organisation's goals and objectives. It is a system comprising two somewhat interrelated networks: the formal communication network and the informal communication network, as suggested by Lannes (2021). All these definitions converge on the notion that organisational effective communication serves as the conduit for conveying ideas, concepts, policies, and procedures within an organisation to realize its objectives (al Basyir et al., 2020).

Effective communication is indispensable for organisations, as it promotes a comprehensive understanding among both internal and external stakeholders, facilitating comprehension and ensuring the successful execution of plans (Haroon & Malik, 2018; Lannes, 2021; Nwata et al., 2021). It forms a critical component of a company's execution strategy, aiding in the dissemination of movements and strategies to diverse stakeholders. It also influences organisational success by setting expectations among stakeholders during plan execution (Oliveira et al., 2021; Suzuki et al., 2019). Organisational rules and regulations dictate the flow and acquisition of information, as well as the actions to be taken in the face of emergent issues (Moyo, 2019).

Leadership

Leadership can be defined in various ways depending on the perspective being considered. According to Kremer et al. (2019), leadership is the process of persuading people to understand what needs to be done and how to do it effectively. Hassan and Uzma (2020) suggest that leadership is the process through which one person, or occasionally a group of people, influences the actions of others to achieve specific goals in a particular context. Other scholars describe leadership as the act of convincing others to achieve what they never thought possible or did not want to undertake (Horchani et al., 2022; Taylor et al., 2019). Leadership responsibilities encompass a leader's strategic use of direction, planning, execution, and motivation for their team (Madanchian & Taherdoost, 2017; Omanwar & Agrawal, 2022).

Leadership plays a pivotal role in the success of a business, involving communication, guidance, enabling, motivation, and inspiration of team members to work diligently toward achieving organisational goals (Chhotray et al., 2018). Wang et al. (2017) define leadership as the development of ideas and concepts, the assumption of responsibilities, and the pursuit of the trust of others. Providing timely feedback to employees on their job performance is also an essential aspect of leadership, as it allows employees to understand their contributions and identify areas for improvement (Eluwole et al., 2022). However, leaders who do not provide feedback or employees who do not consider improving their performance can negatively impact an organisation (Javed et al., 2018).

Teamwork

In accordance with O'Neill and Salas (2018), a team within an organisation can be described as a collective of individuals working together to accomplish shared goals and objectives. Such a team typically consists of two or more socially interconnected individuals with common aims, brought together to undertake crucial organisational activities, demonstrating interdependencies in processes, objectives, and outcomes, and holding distinct roles and responsibilities (Mohanty & Mohanty, 2018). Moreover, these teams are situated within a broader organisational structure, encompassing boundaries, connections, and a larger systemic context and work environment (Febryandoko et al., 2021). It is essential to view a team as a group of interconnected individuals striving toward a common objective, which is a fundamental element of an organisation's effective functioning (Weimar et al., 2017). Additionally, as Phina et al. (2018) suggest, a team constitutes a small group of individuals committed to a shared goal and strategy while mutually holding each other accountable. The utilization of teams has become increasingly prevalent in establishing robust and efficient operations, with executive teams capable of enhancing performance and promoting workplace satisfaction (Qing et al., 2020).

Teamwork possesses numerous characteristics that can positively impact an organisation. As Hamid et al. (2022) propose, team members can gain knowledge from one another, provide social support for complex tasks, discover innovative approaches to functions, and promote greater cooperation among members. When team members are dedicated to the team's objectives, they are more likely to excel in their performance and meeting attendance, ultimately leading to increased productivity. Furthermore, the diverse skills within a team often result in more effective problem-solving solutions compared to individuals working in isolation (Khan et al., 2022).

Digital Capabilities

Digital capability, as defined by Sjodin et al. (2016), is a company's capacity to harness intelligent, connected products, and data analytics to support the creation and delivery of unique services and products. Most existing research frames digital capability within the context of dynamic capabilities. For example, digital capability comprises three key components: data collection capability, connect capability, and analytical capability, as outlined by Ajaegbu (2020). These components encompass the ability

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to collect valuable data, facilitate information exchange within a service network, and process data to provide insights for service providers (Zhen et al., 2021).

Digital capability is characterized by three fundamental dimensions: product, business relationship, and software development (Vasconcellos et al., 2021). Lyytinen et al. (2016) emphasize that digital capabilities are self-contained digital systems capable of generating innovative outcomes and structures independently, without relying on third-party players or deliberate system design. These capabilities are closely aligned with the core aspects of dynamic capabilities: sensing, capturing, and resource reconstruction (Chinakidzwa & Phiri, 2020). Successful digital product creation, as noted by Aslan et al. (2022), relies heavily on effective digital technology management. Furthermore, Ellström et al. (2022) highlight the critical role of expertise and skilled individuals at every stage of digital innovation, from technology acquisition to the creation of new digital solutions.

Empirical Review

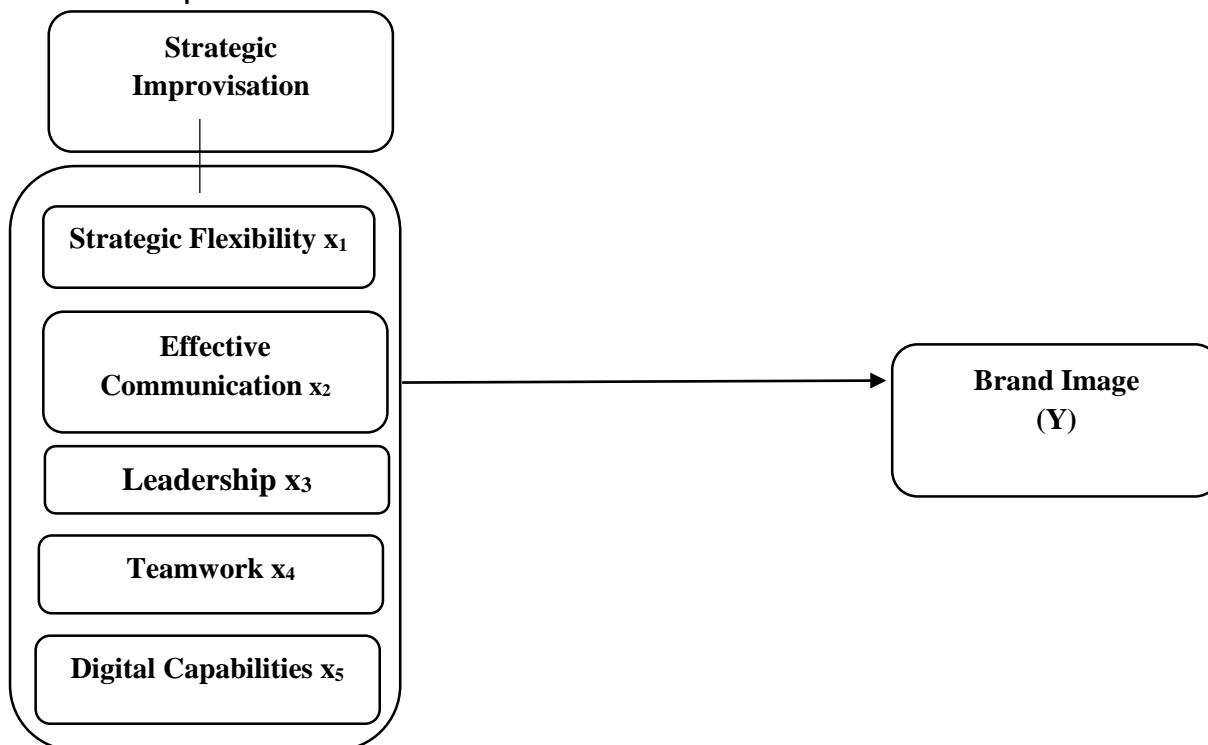
Abd-Ali and Lafta (2021) discovered a highly positive association between strategic improvisation in general and the sustainability of an organisation and its many characteristics, one of which is the brand image. In addition, having more brand awareness is the end consequence of having strategic flexibility in conjunction with a high degree of internal consistency (Shalender & Sharma, 2022). It was also observed that strategic flexibility was more crucial for greater levels of brand recognition and profits than it was for lower levels of brand recognition and expenses (Han & Zhang, 2021). According to the findings of another research conducted by Sivendra (2022), effective communication has a major influence on the image of a company. In their empirical study, Gómez-Rico et al. (2022) demonstrate that brand effective communication and brand image both have comparable positive impacts on brand choice and that brand image acts as a mediator in the link between brand effective communication and brand preference. In their research, Rim and Nabil (2021) found that word of mouth as a means of effective communication is connected to the picture of the brand that the customer has in their head.

Another research, conducted by Dhyani and Sharma (2022), found that corporate social responsibility (CSR) effective communications had a favourable association with the brand image of a company. The findings of Andreini et al. (2021) showed that the leadership of a company's CEO affects both the company's brand image and its advertising. According to the findings of another piece of research, the proactive personality of the CEO has a favourable influence on the image of the company (Kiani et al., 2021). According to the findings of their investigation, Mustapha, Zaccai, and Agbavboa (2021) identified six characteristics (three of which stemmed from the development of stable teamwork and adequate management systems) as the most significant factors influencing the development of construction contractors in the Cape Coast Metropolitan Area. These factors included: Both of these aspects were recognised as important growth indicators for building firms. AlArafat and Doblas (2022) provide evidence that the benefits of cooperation and high employee performance are significant in the context of Bahraini teleeffective communications companies. In addition, the results indicate that the qualities of collaboration, such as good effective communication, a degree of trust, interpersonal skills, and team cohesion, have a significant impact on employee performance in the companies that provide teleeffective communications services in Bahrain. In particular, it was shown that firms might improve their digital innovation and organisational agility by increasing their digital capabilities (Kare & Soriano, 2021).

From a different perspective, Kim et al. (2017) found that strategic flexibility had no significant impact on brand image. They conducted a survey of 1000 consumers and found that while strategic flexibility was correlated with brand image, the relationship was not statistically significant. Similarly, a study by Lee and Park (2018) found that effective communication had no significant effect on brand image. They conducted an experiment with 200 participants and found that while there was a positive correlation between effective communication and brand image, the relationship was not statistically significant. On the other hand, a study by Kang et al. (2019) found that leadership had a negative effect on brand image. They conducted a survey of 500 employees and found that while leadership was correlated with brand image, the relationship was negative. Teamwork has also been found to have a mixed effect on brand image. A study by Kim and Lee (2020) found that teamwork had a positive effect on brand image, while a study by Park and Kim (2021) found no significant effect. Digital capabilities have also been found to have a mixed effect on brand image. A study by Lee et al. (2022) found that digital capabilities had a positive effect on brand image, while a study by Kang and Park (2022) found no significant effect.

H₀₁: Strategic improvisation (strategic flexibility, effective communication, leadership, teamwork, and digital capabilities) has no significant effect on the brand image of SMEs in Lagos State Nigeria.

Research Conceptual Model



The figure above presented the conceptual model based upon the review of literature and it showed the effect of strategic improvisation (strategic flexibility, effective communication, leadership, teamwork, and digital capabilities) has no significant effect on the brand image of SMEs in Lagos State Nigeria.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model (strategic improvisation and brand image)

Source: Author's Research Model (2023)

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Dynamic Capabilities Theory

Teece, Pisano, and Shuen proposed the dynamic capabilities theory in 1997. They advocated that three dynamic capabilities are necessary for an organisation to meet new challenges: the ability of employees to learn quickly and to build new strategic assets; the integration of these new strategic assets, including capability, technology, and customer feedback, into company processes; and lastly the transformation or reuse of existing assets which have depreciated (Devi et al., 2021; Zighan et al., 2021). The idea of dynamic capabilities, also known as DCs, is an extension of the resource-based view (RBV) and was developed to improve the RBV's capacity to adapt to the fast pace of technological development (Gupta et al., 2019). Teece (2018) maintains that DCs includes the sensing, seizing and transforming abilities that are needed to upgrade the ordinary capabilities of an enterprise and direct them through developing and coordinating the firm's resources to address and shape changes in the marketplace or the business environment. The understanding is that the dynamic capabilities theory is an extension of the resource-based view of the firm (Deng et al., 2020). The ideology is that it is not only the bundle of resources that matter, but the mechanism by which firms learn and accumulate new skills and capabilities, and the forces that limit the rate and direction of this process (Murphy & Wilson, 2022). In this way, they propose an interesting definition of dynamic capabilities as follows: the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments.

Dynamic capabilities theory has received support from different authors given its relevance to the operations of an organisation. Today's businesses must react quickly, flexibly, and creatively to market and technology developments (Arranz et al., 2020). They must possess the capacity to alter and reinvent themselves. Dynamic capabilities are the particular skills and competencies that allow businesses to maintain their competitive edge in the face of quickly changing surroundings (Wang et al., 2021). They are vitally essential to the long-term success of a company. Thus, with dynamic capabilities, firms can innovate, integrate and make necessary impacts in the business place given the resources that they have at their disposal (Liu & Zhao, 2021).

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METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey research design. The population study comprised the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that are registered and operational in Lagos State and identified as members of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). The total population of the study was estimated at 42,067, which represents the overall count of registered SMEs affiliated with Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). A sample size of 510 participants was obtained using Cochran's sample size formula (1977). The study utilized multiple regression analysis to explore how all measures of strategic improvisation collectively predicted brand image.

Table 1: Reliability of the Research Instrument

S/N	Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Remark
1	Strategic Flexibility	5	0.92	0.92	Accepted
2	Effective communication	5	0.94	0.94	Accepted
3	Leadership	5	0.92	0.92	Accepted
4	Teamwork	5	0.91	0.92	Accepted
5	Digital Capabilities	5	0.91	0.91	Accepted
6	Brand Image	5	0.869	156.772(<0.001)	0.72

Source: Pilot Results, (2023).

Model Specification

Functional relationship $Y = f(x)$ and Regression models for the study.

X-Independent variables (strategic improvisation) $X = (x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5)$

Y – Dependent variable (Brand Image)

Hypothesis

$$y_2 = f(x_1, x_2, x_3, x_4, x_5)$$

$$y_2 = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \beta_4 x_4 + \beta_5 x_5 + \mu_i \dots \dots \dots \text{Equation}$$

A prior expectation

The result from the statistical analysis assisted in explaining the degree of effect between the dependent and independent variables, also the expected outcome of the relationship between the sub-variables of both the dependent and independent variables was stated as follows.

A priori Expectations and Decision rule

S/N	Models	Expected Results
H ₀	$y_2 = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \beta_4 x_4 + \beta_5 x_5 + \mu_i$	Reject H ₀ If α_0, β_{1-5} is not = 0

Source: Author's Computation (2023)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher distributed 510 copies of questionnaire to the respondents of which 422 copies of the distributed questionnaire were duly filled and returned and was used for the analysis. This represents a response rate of about 82.7% of the population employed in the study, which was considered an excellent response rate according to (Hendra & Hill, 2019).

H₀₂: strategic improvisation has no significant effect on brand image of selected small and medium-scale enterprises in Lagos State, Nigeria.

Table 2 Summary of multiple Regression of strategic improvisation and brand image of selected small and medium-scale enterprises in Lagos State, Nigeria.

N	Model	B	Sig.	T	ANOVA (Sig.)	R	Adjusted R ²	F (5,417)
	(Constant)	4.833	.000	3.708	0.000 ^b	0.536 ^a	0.279	33.598
	Strategic Flexibility	.291	.000	5.478				
	Effective	.075	.197	1.293				
	Communication							

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422	Leadership	.122	.026	2.228				
	Teamwork	.150	.007	2.726				
	Digital Capabilities	.101	.017	2.398				
	Predictors: (Constant), Strategic Flexibility, Effective Communication, Leadership, Teamwork, Digital Capabilities							
	Dependent Variable: Brand Image							

Source: Researcher's Findings, 2023

Interpretation

Table 1 presents the results of the multiple regression analysis assessing the relationship between strategic improvisation components and brand image within selected small and medium-scale enterprises in Lagos State, Nigeria. The analysis reveals several key findings:

Strategic Flexibility ($\beta = 0.291$, $t = 5.478$, $p < 0.05$), Leadership ($\beta = 0.122$, $t = 2.228$, $p < 0.05$), Teamwork ($\beta = 0.150$, $t = 2.726$, $p < 0.05$), and Digital Capabilities ($\beta = 0.101$, $t = 2.398$, $p < 0.05$) all show a positive relationship with brand image. These factors display a statistically significant influence on enhancing the brand image of the studied small and medium-scale enterprises. Effective Communication ($\beta = 0.075$, $t = 1.293$, $p > 0.05$) appears to have a positive relationship with brand image, although the relationship is not statistically significant at the conventional level of $p < 0.05$. This suggests that effective communication might have an influence on brand image, but further investigation or a larger sample size might be necessary to establish its significance.

The overall model's R value of 0.536 indicates a moderate positive relationship between strategic improvisation components and brand image in these enterprises. The Adjusted R-squared value of 0.279 signifies that approximately 27.9% of the variation in brand image can be explained by the included components of strategic improvisation. The remaining 72.1% of the changes in brand image may be attributed to other factors not considered within this model.

The regression equation derived from these results is:

$$BI = 4.833 + 0.291SF + 0.075ECOM + 0.122LD + 0.150TW + 0.101DC + U_i \text{ (Predictive Model)}$$

This equation indicates that, while holding other variables constant, an increase in strategic flexibility, leadership, teamwork, and digital capabilities would lead to a positive change in the brand image of these small and medium-scale enterprises.

Moreover, the F-statistics result ($df = 5, 417$) = 33.598 with a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) suggests that the overall model significantly predicts the effect of strategic improvisation components on brand image. Therefore, it is recommended that small and medium-scale enterprises in Lagos State, Nigeria focus on enhancing strategic flexibility, leadership, teamwork, and digital capabilities to improve their brand image. Consequently, the null hypothesis (H_{02}) that strategic improvisation has no significant effect on the brand image of selected small and medium-scale enterprises in Lagos State, Nigeria is rejected based on these findings.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The assessment of the impact of strategic improvisation on the brand image of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Lagos State, Nigeria, involves a comprehensive exploration of empirical evidence from diverse studies, presenting a mosaic of findings that elucidate the multifaceted relationship between various factors and brand image. The relevance of this link is shown by the fact that the null hypothesis (H_{02}) was rejected, which indicated that strategic improvisation does not have a meaningful influence on brand image. The substantiation of this finding through empirical evidence from studies like Abd-Ali and Lafta (2021), Shalender & Sharma (2022), Han & Zhang (2021), Sivendra (2022), Gómez-Rico et al. (2022), Rim and Nabil (2021), Dhyan and Sharma (2022), Andreini et al. (2021), Kiani et al. (2021), Mustapha, Zaccai, and Agbavboa (2021), and AlArafat and Doblas (2022) supports the positive correlation between strategic improvisation and brand image. These studies provide insight on the ways in which elements like as strategic flexibility, effective communication, leadership skills, workgroup dynamics, and digital capabilities may have an impact on the enhancement of brand image in a variety of different industrial situations.

Nevertheless, the finding negates the provisions of some literature, such as Kim et al. (2017), Lee and Park (2018), Kang et al. (2019), Kim and Lee (2020), Park and Kim (2021), Lee et al. (2022), and Kang and Park (2022), which indicate results that are conflicting or mixed. The findings of these research demonstrate situations in which the anticipated beneficial links between aspects of strategic improvisation and brand image did not exhibit statistical significance or, in some circumstances, revealed negative associations. These nuanced results provide light on the intricate interaction of contextual elements that have the potential to alter the influence that strategic improvisation has on brand image in a variety of organisational contexts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The comprehensive analysis conducted in this study sheds light on the critical elements that significantly influence the success trajectory of businesses. Notably, strategic flexibility, effective communication, adept leadership, cohesive teamwork, and robust digital capabilities emerged as pivotal factors shaping various dimensions of organisational success.

- i. SMEs should foster a work environment that encourages creativity, experimentation, and risk-taking. This can be achieved by encouraging employees to think outside the box, generate new ideas, and propose innovative solutions to business challenges.
- ii. SMEs should foster a culture that encourages adaptability and agility in responding to market changes. Encourage an open dialogue where employees feel empowered to share innovative ideas and suggestions.
- iii. SMEs should develop training programs focusing on adaptive leadership and problem-solving can be instrumental in nurturing a proactive workforce. Provide tools and platforms for quick decision-making at various organisational levels to facilitate prompt responses to market shifts.

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