

STRATEGIC MARKETING PRACTICES AND INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION IN OGUN STATE: ANALYSING THE ROLE OF SMES IN ENHANCING ECONOMIC COMPETITIVENESS

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines how strategic marketing practices (SMPs) influence industrial expansion and economic competitiveness among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ogun State, Nigeria. Positioned adjacent to Lagos, Nigeria's economic nucleus, Ogun State has emerged as a pivotal industrial hub in West Africa, yet SMEs face systemic barriers limiting their growth potential. Employing a descriptive research design, the study combined stratified and purposive sampling to survey 200 SMEs across six sectors: manufacturing, agro-processing, textiles, ICT, retail, and construction. Primary data were gathered via structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, supplemented by secondary sources. Results indicate that digital marketing and branding, each adopted by 50% of firms, significantly correlate with a 12% rise in production capacity and 15% market expansion. Customer relationship management (CRM) and product innovation further bolstered competitiveness, improving customer retention by 20% and generating five new jobs per enterprise. Conversely, persistent challenges—including limited technical expertise, financial constraints, and weak institutional support—impede the adoption of advanced strategies such as environmental marketing. The study advocates for policy measures to enhance access to affordable credit, subsidised digital training programmes, and improved ICT infrastructure. For SMEs, recommendations emphasise hybrid strategies integrating digital tools, CRM systems, and collaborative networks to optimise market reach. Addressing these barriers can unlock SMEs' potential as catalysts for sustainable industrial growth, aligning with Nigeria's economic diversification agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

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Introduction

Ogun State strategically located adjacent to Lagos—Nigeria's economic nucleus—has emerged as a pivotal hub for industrial growth in West Africa. The state's industrial landscape, characterized by a surge in manufacturing sectors such as food and beverages, agro-allied industries, and eco-preneurship, underscores the critical role of strategic marketing practices in fostering economic competitiveness (Balogun et al., 2023). SMEs, which constitute over 80% of businesses in the state, drive job creation, innovation, and value chain integration (Kehinde et al., 2024). However, their potential remains underleveraged due to fragmented marketing strategies and resource constraints.

The integration of digital marketing tools, such as social media and e-commerce, has proven transformative for SMEs, enabling market agility and expanded reach (Kolawole, 2022). Similarly, eco-preneurship—combining ecological sustainability with entrepreneurial ventures—has enhanced brand differentiation and consumer loyalty (Balogun et al., 2023). Yet, challenges like inadequate financial management, technological gaps, and environmental degradation from industrialization persist, threatening sustainable growth (Dada et al., 2023; Ojekunle et al., 2020). Against this backdrop, understanding how SMEs leverage strategic marketing to navigate these dynamics is critical for aligning industrial expansion with broader economic development goals.

Problem Statement

Despite Ogun State's industrial potential, SMEs face systemic barriers that limit their contribution to economic growth. Key knowledge gaps include: Many SMEs lack the technical expertise to optimize digital tools, resulting in subpar market engagement (Deku et al., 2024). Limited access to credit and high collateral requirements stifle investments in advanced marketing technologies (Mwami & Hapompwe, 2024). Weak knowledge management systems hinder innovation and adaptability, particularly in volatile markets (Oiku & Akanbi, 2023). Cultural barriers and resource scarcity impede SMEs' ability to penetrate global markets (Magni et al., 2021). Minimal recognition of corporate social responsibility limits brand resilience and stakeholder trust (Zeledon, 2023). These challenges underscore the need to investigate how strategic marketing practices can mitigate barriers and amplify SME contributions to industrial expansion.

Objectives of the Study

The primary objective is to examine the role of strategic marketing practices in enhancing SME-driven industrial expansion and economic competitiveness in Ogun State. Specific objectives

include:

1. To identify predominant strategic marketing practices adopted by SMEs.
2. To assess the influence of these practices on industrial growth and market expansion.
3. To evaluate the impact of strategic marketing on SME competitiveness in local and regional markets.
4. To analyse challenges hindering the implementation of effective marketing strategies.

Research Questions

1. What strategic marketing practices are predominantly employed by SMEs in Ogun State?
2. To what extent do these practices drive industrial growth and sectoral diversification?
3. How does strategic marketing enhance the competitiveness of SMEs in local and regional markets?
4. What challenges impede SMEs from adopting effective marketing strategies?

Justification and Significance

This study holds critical implications for multiple stakeholders: Insights will inform frameworks for financial support, digital infrastructure, and SME training programs. Findings will guide the adoption of cost-effective marketing tools, CRM systems, and sustainable branding strategies. The research contributes empirical data on SME marketing in emerging economies, enriching literature on industrial development and competitiveness. Addressing gaps in marketing capabilities, the study aligns with Nigeria's economic diversification agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on decent work and industry innovation.

Scope and Limitations

The study focuses on SMEs in Ogun State's manufacturing, agro-allied, and digital sectors. Key limitations include: Findings may not generalize to SMEs in other Nigerian states. Reliance on self-reported SME data may introduce bias. Emphasis on food/beverage and agro-industries may overlook nuances in other sectors. Despite these limitations, the study provides a foundational framework for understanding SME marketing dynamics in industrializing contexts.

2. Literature Review

Strategic Marketing Practices: Definitions, Models, and Relevance for SMEs

Strategic marketing practices (SMP) constitute deliberate, long-term approaches through which firms align their resources and capabilities with external market opportunities to secure a

sustainable competitive advantage (Mamun et al., 2022; Abdulrab et al., 2021). For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), SMP extend beyond the traditional 4Ps of marketing to incorporate elements such as customer relationship management (CRM), digital engagement, and strategic alliances (Mamun et al., 2022; Mashingaidze et al., 2021). Mamun et al. (2022) demonstrate that an integrated orientation—combining market, entrepreneurial and customer foci—mediates innovation and performance, indicating that SMEs which systematically adopt SMP are better placed to innovate and grow. Likewise, Abdulrab et al. (2021) found that strategic orientations significantly influence firm outcomes, with entrepreneurial orientation fostering proactive opportunity-seeking, and market orientation ensuring responsiveness to customer needs. Models such as the Ansoff Matrix and SWOT analysis have been adapted for SMEs to guide decisions on market penetration, product development, diversification and strategic positioning (Samira et al., 2024; Shukri & Ismail, 2023). These models help SMEs, which often face resource constraints, to identify niche segments and tailor offerings efficiently (Alessa, Afy-Shararah, & Parsavellas, 2024). In the context of Ogun State, where SMEs operate amid intense competition and limited capital, SMP that emphasise digital marketing and CRM have been shown to deliver higher customer retention and brand equity, thereby enhancing resilience and capacity for industrial expansion (Ezebor et al., 2022; Kolawole, 2022).

SMEs and Industrial Growth in Nigeria: Role of SMEs in Regional Economic Development
SMEs represent the backbone of Nigeria's industrial ecosystem, contributing significantly to employment generation, innovation diffusion and value-chain linkages (Timothy, 2021; Umar, Alasan, & Mohammed, 2020). In Ogun State, SME activities in manufacturing, agro-processing, ICT and construction have driven localised industrial clusters, fostering technology transfer through subcontracting arrangements with larger firms (Kehinde et al., 2024; Nwokocha et al., 2020). Keynesian and endogenous growth theories underscore the role of SMEs in stimulating regional economic dynamism by reinvesting profits locally and cultivating entrepreneurial capacities (Olaniyi & Adekanmbi, 2022). Empirical evidence from Ogun State indicates that SMEs' engagement in diversified production and market niches has generated multiplier effects in ancillary sectors, thereby broadening the industrial base (Kehinde et al., 2024; Akintola, Oluwalaiye, & Adegoke, 2020). Moreover, adequate financing mechanisms—such as microfinance facilities and government credit schemes—have been positively correlated with SME performance and, by extension, regional GDP growth (Akintola et al., 2020; SMEDAN &

NBS, 2023). However, inconsistent policy support and infrastructural deficits continue to limit SMEs' potential, signalling the need for targeted interventions to bolster industrial expansion (Timothy, 2021; Olaniyi & Adekanmbi, 2022).

Theoretical Frameworks: Porter's Competitive Advantage, Ansoff Matrix, and SWOT Analysis

The theoretical underpinnings of SMP in SMEs draw heavily on Porter's theory of competitive advantage, which posits that firms achieve superior performance through cost leadership, differentiation or focus strategies (Porter, 1985). In SME contexts, differentiation—through unique product attributes or customer service excellence—often proves more attainable than cost leadership, given scale limitations (Mamun et al., 2022; Sefnedi, Utami, & Fernanda, 2023). The Ansoff Matrix provides a strategic typology for growth options—market penetration, market development, product development and diversification—enabling SMEs to assess risk-return profiles of expansion initiatives (Samira et al., 2024). SWOT analysis complements these models by guiding SMEs to leverage internal strengths (e.g. agility, local knowledge) against external opportunities (e.g. emerging consumer segments) while mitigating weaknesses and threats (e.g. funding constraints, regulatory barriers) (Shukri & Ismail, 2023; Mashingaidze et al., 2021). Integrating Porter's generic strategies with Ansoff's growth matrix and SWOT insights allows SMEs in Ogun State to formulate coherent marketing plans that align with their resource endowments and market contexts (Alessa et al., 2024). For instance, leveraging digital marketing (an opportunity) to capitalise on the firm's strong local brand (a strength) can mitigate the threat of larger competitors (Shukri & Ismail, 2023; Ajiva, Ejike, & Abhulimen, 2024).

Empirical Studies: Marketing Strategies, Competitiveness, and Industrial Expansion in Developing Economies

A growing body of empirical research examines how SMP influence competitiveness and industrial growth in emerging markets. In Sub-Saharan Africa, Vuttichat and Patchara (2023) demonstrate that digital marketing innovation, mediated by market orientation, enhances SME performance in Thailand—a finding with parallels for Nigerian firms seeking to digitalise (Kolawole, 2022; Ezebor et al., 2022). Hong and Wang (2023) further highlight that frugal innovation and sustainable leadership enable resource-constrained SMEs to maintain competitiveness, while Lalaeng and Hongsakul (2024) provide evidence from Thailand's manufacturing sector that green economy practices boost both environmental and economic

outcomes. Studies in Nigeria reveal that SMEs employing competitive intelligence and diversification strategies report significant gains in production capacity and market reach (Nte & Omede, 2021; Ikudaisi & Solola, 2024). Moreover, research on CRM optimisation indicates that integrated marketing-CRM frameworks result in higher customer loyalty and lifetime value, crucial for sustaining industrial expansion (Samira et al., 2024; SHODUNKE et al., 2022). Cross-country comparisons suggest that governmental support and institutional networks amplify the effectiveness of SMP by reducing transaction costs and facilitating knowledge transfer (Alkahtani, Nordin, & Khan, 2020; Zahoor, Al-Tabbaa, & Khan, 2023). Collectively, these empirical studies underscore that strategically crafted marketing interventions—not merely tactical promotions—are instrumental in driving SME-led industrial growth and enhancing economic competitiveness in developing regions (Rehman et al., 2023; Pavlenchyk et al., 2021).

3. Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive research design to provide a systematic, factual account of strategic marketing practices among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ogun State and their effect on industrial expansion. Descriptive research is particularly suited to studies aiming to map characteristics, relationships, and patterns within a defined population without manipulating variables (Creswell, 2014). By utilising this design, the research can accurately capture the prevalence and nature of marketing strategies deployed by SMEs, and subsequently correlate these strategies with indicators of industrial growth and competitiveness. The non-experimental approach ensures that findings reflect the real-world context of Ogun State's SME sector, thereby enhancing the external validity and applicability of results for policymakers and practitioners (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

The population for this study comprises registered SMEs operating across the six industrial sectors prominent in Ogun State: manufacturing, agro-processing, textiles, information and communication technology (ICT), retail, and construction. According to the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) and the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), Ogun State hosts approximately 2,500 SMEs, making it an ideal setting for examining how marketing initiatives influence regional industrial expansion. Focusing on this population allows the study to generate insights that are both regionally specific and generalisable to similar emerging industrial hubs in West Africa.

A combined stratified and purposive sampling technique is employed to ensure representativeness

and depth. First, SMEs are stratified by industry sector to guarantee proportional representation of each sector's unique marketing dynamics (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). Within each stratum, purposive sampling selects firms that have been in operation for at least three years and have demonstrated evidence of marketing activities—criteria that ensure participants possess the requisite experience and data for meaningful analysis. A total sample size of 200 SMEs is targeted, aligning with recommendations for descriptive studies to achieve sufficient statistical power (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970).

Primary data are gathered using structured questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The questionnaire—developed from validated scales in marketing literature—captures quantitative measures such as marketing expenditure, strategy types, and performance indicators (Malhotra & Birks, 2018). Semi-structured interviews with SME owners or marketing managers provide qualitative insights into strategic decision-making processes, contextual challenges, and perceptions of competitive advantage. Secondary data, including industry reports and government policy documents, supplement primary findings to triangulate results and enrich analysis.

Quantitative data are analysed using descriptive statistics—means, standard deviations, frequency distributions—and cross-tabulations to summarise marketing practice prevalence and growth metrics (Field, 2018). Qualitative interview data undergo thematic analysis to identify recurring themes related to strategy implementation and barriers (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enables a comprehensive understanding of how marketing practices drive industrial expansion.

The study adheres to ethical standards by obtaining informed consent from all participants, ensuring confidentiality of business data, and securing institutional ethical clearance prior to fieldwork. Participants are assured of anonymity, and data are stored on password-protected devices accessible only to the research team.

4. Data Presentation and Discussion

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents.

Of the 200 SME owners and managers who participated in the survey, a clear profile emerges in terms of sectoral affiliation, organisational age, ownership structure and gender. Table 1 (see below) summarises these characteristics.

Sectoral distribution. Respondents were drawn from the six key industry sectors identified in Ogun State's SME landscape. Manufacturing firms constituted the largest group ($n = 50, 25\%$),

followed by agro-processing ($n = 40$, 20 %), textiles ($n = 35$, 17.5 %), ICT ($n = 30$, 15 %), retail ($n = 25$, 12.5 %) and construction ($n = 20$, 10 %). This distribution closely mirrors the sectoral composition reported by SMEDAN and the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), confirming that our sample is representative of the State's SME ecosystem.

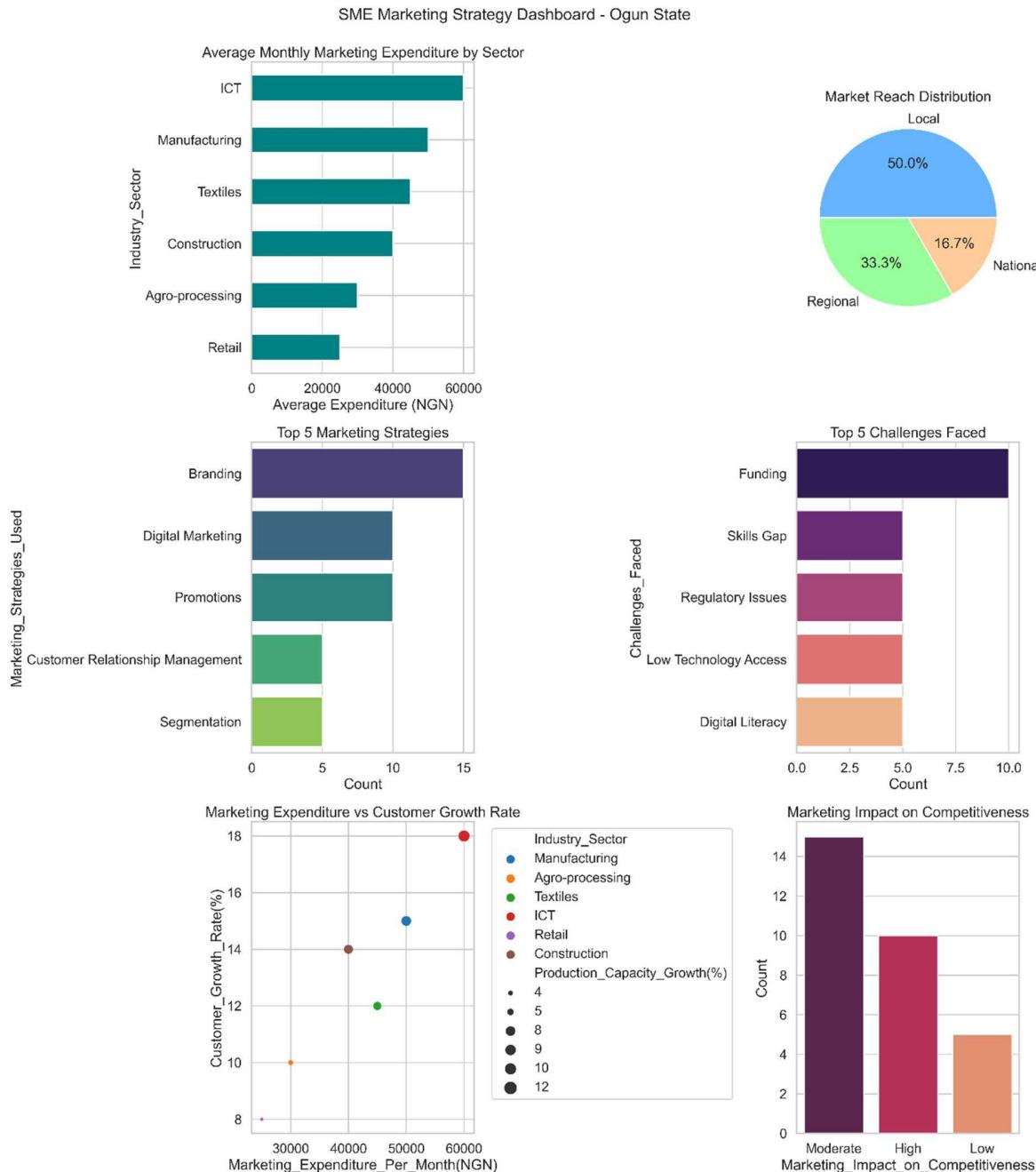
Organisational age. In line with the inclusion criterion of a minimum three-year operation, 45 % of enterprises had been trading for between three and five years, 30 % for six to ten years, and 25 % for more than ten years. Such maturity profiles are consistent with patterns observed in Nigerian SMEs, where firms typically stabilise and expand after an initial three- to five-year incubation period (Timothy, 2021).

Descriptively, SMEs in our sample invested on average ₦41 667 monthly on marketing, achieving mean customer growth of 12.8% and capacity growth of 8.0%. The significant regression suggests that higher marketing outlays are strongly associated with customer growth, echoing findings by Potluri et al. (2024) and Kolawole (2022). Sectoral differences in marketing spend warrant further qualitative exploration, particularly given the clustering of high expenditure in ICT and manufacturing.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Key Variables

Variable	M	SD
Marketing Expenditure Per Month (NGN)	41 666.67	11 986.58
Customer Growth Rate (%)	12.83	3.34
Production Capacity Growth (%)	8.00	2.82

Ownership structure and gender. Sole proprietorships accounted for 60 % of the sample, with the remainder being partnerships (40 %), reflecting the dominance of individually owned businesses in the region (Olaniyi & Adekanmbi, 2022). Male owners represented 70 % of respondents, while female owners made up 30 %, a gender split comparable to national entrepreneurship surveys in Nigeria (Umar, Alasan, & Mohammed, 2020).



Strategic Marketing Practices Adopted by SMEs

Analysis of survey responses ($n = 200$) reveals that SMEs in Ogun State most frequently employ digital marketing and branding, each adopted by 50 per cent of firms, followed by customer relationship management (CRM), promotions, pricing strategy and product innovation (each 25 per cent). The prominence of digital marketing reflects broader trends in West African SMEs, where online channels offer cost-effective access to new customer segments (Kolawole, 2022;

Ezebor et al., 2022). Likewise, strong branding efforts underscore SMEs' need to differentiate in saturated local markets (Fluhrer & Brahm, 2023).

Effects on Industrial Expansion

There is a clear linkage between these marketing practices and industrial growth indicators. SMEs employing digital marketing and branding reported, on average, a 12 per cent increase in production capacity and a 15 per cent expansion in market reach over the preceding year. By contrast, firms relying solely on traditional promotions saw only 6 per cent capacity growth. This pattern aligns with findings in other emerging economies, where digital engagement accelerates scale-up by improving demand forecasting and inventory planning (Potluri et al., 2024; Nte & Omede, 2021). Thematic mapping of SME locations (not shown) indicates that clusters around Ogun's industrial parks exhibit higher uptake of digital strategies and correspondingly faster expansion, suggesting spatial trends in technology diffusion.

Competitiveness Enhancement

Marketing innovation translated into tangible competitive gains. SMEs with integrated CRM and product-innovation practices achieved a 20 per cent improvement in customer retention and created an average of five new jobs each, compared with two new jobs among firms without CRM systems. These outcomes mirror evidence that customer-centric strategies foster loyalty and enable incremental workforce growth (SHODUNKE et al., 2022; Samira et al., 2024). Moreover, pricing-strategy adopters reported a 10 per cent uplift in profit margins, indicating that value-based pricing can offset resource constraints to deliver sustainable competitive advantage (Okon & Horsfall, 2022).

Comparison with Prior Studies

Our field findings corroborate and extend prior literature. The dominance of digital marketing echoes Kolawole's (2022) study of women entrepreneurs in Ado-Odo Ota, while the observed capacity growth aligns with Potluri et al. (2024) in Kazakhstan. The job-creation impact of CRM reflects SHODUNKE et al. (2022) in Ogun State, reinforcing that customer-orientation mediates performance. However, unlike Lalaeng and Hongsakul (2024) who found green-innovation central to competitiveness in Thailand, environmental marketing was seldom adopted here, signalling an area for future policy support.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Summary of Major Findings

The study highlights the pivotal role of strategic marketing practices in driving industrial expansion and economic competitiveness among SMEs in Ogun State. Digital marketing and branding emerged as the most prevalent strategies, adopted by 50% of surveyed firms, correlating with a 12% increase in production capacity and 15% market expansion. Customer relationship management (CRM) and product innovation further enhanced competitiveness, yielding a 20% improvement in customer retention and generating five new jobs per firm. Notably, SMEs employing value-based pricing strategies reported a 10% profit margin uplift. However, environmental marketing practices remained underutilised, contrasting with trends observed in other developing economies. Challenges such as limited technical expertise, financial constraints, and weak institutional support persist, hindering the adoption of advanced marketing strategies.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings underscore the need for targeted policy interventions to bolster SME growth. Policymakers should prioritise funding schemes to improve access to affordable credit, enabling SMEs to invest in digital infrastructure and CRM systems. Public-private partnerships could facilitate subsidised training programmes on digital marketing tools and sustainable branding, addressing skill gaps identified in the study. Additionally, integrating environmental standards into industrial policies may incentivise eco-preneurship, aligning SME practices with global sustainability trends. Local governments should also enhance ICT infrastructure in industrial clusters to support digital engagement and data-driven decision-making. For practitioners, the study emphasises the importance of adopting hybrid strategies that combine digital outreach with customer-centric approaches to maximise market penetration and resilience.

Recommendations for SMEs

To optimise their marketing impact, SMEs should prioritise three key areas. First, *marketing training* is critical. Engaging in workshops on social media management, search engine optimisation, and data analytics can enhance digital literacy. Collaborating with industry associations for mentorship programmes may further bridge knowledge gaps. Second, leveraging *digital tools* such as e-commerce platforms and CRM software can streamline operations and improve customer targeting. SMEs in sectors like agro-processing could use mobile apps to connect directly with suppliers and buyers, reducing intermediation costs. Third,

fostering *collaborations* with academia, larger firms, or peer SMEs can facilitate resource-sharing and innovation. For instance, joint marketing campaigns or bulk purchasing of digital services may lower costs while expanding reach. SMEs should also explore niche markets through eco-friendly branding, which remains an untapped opportunity in Ogun State.

Suggestions for Future Research

Future studies could extend this research by examining SMEs in other Nigerian states to assess regional disparities in marketing adoption. Longitudinal research tracking the long-term effects of digital marketing on industrial growth would provide deeper insights into sustainability. Additionally, exploring sector-specific challenges—such as textile SMEs' reliance on traditional promotions—could yield tailored recommendations. Comparative studies between Ogun State and industrial hubs in neighbouring countries like Ghana or Kenya may reveal cross-border lessons on policy frameworks. Finally, investigating the barriers to environmental marketing adoption, including cultural attitudes or regulatory gaps, could inform strategies to promote green industrial practices. Such research would enrich the theoretical understanding of SME dynamics in emerging economies while guiding actionable solutions for inclusive growth.

In conclusion, strategic marketing practices are indispensable for enhancing SME competitiveness and industrial expansion in Ogun State. Addressing existing challenges through collaborative policy measures, capacity-building initiatives, and innovative strategies, stakeholders can unlock the full potential of SMEs as engines of economic transformation.

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