



Flexible Organizational Boundaries and Customer Satisfaction: a Survey of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in Niger State

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Abstract

The rigidity of operational boundaries in many organizations poses a significant challenge to delivering timely and effective responses to customer needs, stifling innovation and open communication, and ultimately threatening customer satisfaction and loyalty. However, this study investigates the relationship between flexible organizational boundaries and customer satisfaction in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Niger State. To accomplish this investigation, a survey research design was adopted with a sample size of 400 micro, small and medium enterprises drawn from a population of four hundred and fifty-four thousand (454,000) MSMEs in Niger State. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. It was found that a remarkably strong positive correlation exists between flexible organizational boundaries and customer satisfaction ($r = 0.999$, $p < 0.001$), thereby rejecting the null hypothesis and providing strong support for the hypothesis that flexible organizational boundaries have a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction in micro, small, and medium enterprises in Niger State and was concluded as such. It was recommended that owners of MSMEs in Niger should adopt flexible organizational boundaries to drive customer satisfaction by receiving feedback, identifying and rewarding entrepreneurial initiatives, encouraging entrepreneurial work behavior, and implementing customer loyalty and reward programs.

Keywords: Flexible, Organization, Boundaries, Customers, Satisfaction

1.0 Introduction

There is complete unanimity about disruptive nature of the ongoing change in business environment though its intensity is different for different sectors of Nigeria economy. While some of industries do not get much affected by change, there are some like the micro, small and medium enterprises, which has got short end of this dynamism stick. As observed

by most scholars (Asemokha, et'al., 2019), the era of globalization has brought about unprecedented changes in the micro, small and medium enterprise sector of the economy, and as a result, organizations of all sizes and structures are searching for strategies to improve performance without sacrificing quality. MSMEs sector today not only struggles to keep up with the pace of the change but also finding it hard to retain and grow its customer base (Bakti, et'al., 2020). However, fast changing environment of today has made it mandatory to have organizational flexibility in order to survive and compete

effectively. Micro, small and medium enterprises should be flexible enough to employ customer-focused people at every level of the organization and build processes that are not only simple to execute but also flexible enough to change with changing times (Afande & Maina, 2015). Though the observation is crucial for the survival of any organization; its implications possess much more significance. In line with enhanced turbulence, MSMEs have witnessed the increased importance of flexibility for customer satisfaction and marketing performance (Bakti, et'al., 2020). With empowered customers and knowledgeable stakeholders, more and more organizations are embracing flexibility to improve and sustain their competitiveness. Organizational flexibility is one effective measure and its integration is required to enhance its effectiveness in giving value to the customers. This increased dynamism in the business environment has even made it more mandatory to have flexibility aspect. Therefore, in the context of newly evolved business paradigm, this paper investigates the impact of flexible organizational boundaries on customer satisfaction.

In all over the world, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) operating flexible organizational boundaries have barrier-free structures that strive for coordination and resource sharing to assess, select, and use innovations (Akinmulegun & Oluwole, 2014). The balance of tight and loose control systems allows entrepreneurial activities throughout the organization (Moruff, et'al 2019). This flexibility is one of the most remarkable features that distinguish micro, small, and medium enterprises from large firms and the source of many of their principal advantages, such as response speed, innovation, and adaptability. This flexibility comes from a competitive market and a focus on innovation, but it also affects organisational design by forcing MSMEs to change their structure (Anjani & Yasa, 2019). Unfortunately, micro, small and medium enterprise owners in Niger State believe in operating rigid organisational boundaries instead of flexible boundaries. This has deterred higher level of customer satisfaction. However, given the current pressure on the government of Niger State to create jobs, particularly in the private sector, and support existing enterprises, this study contributes to the understanding of organizational flexibility and customer satisfaction in the context of MSMEs by answering the research question (RQ) stated as what is the nature of the relationship between flexible organisational boundaries and performance of micro, small and medium enterprises in Niger State? and testing the research hypotheses (RHo) at 5% level of significant and on the strength of data gathered which was stated as adopting flexible organizational boundaries do not have significant positive relationship with performance of micro, midsize, and medium enterprises in Niger State.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Review

The concepts supporting the research constructs have been reviewed in the following sections.

2.1.1 Flexible Organizational Boundaries

Flexible organizational boundaries refer to the absence of barriers within an organization, enabling the pursuit of coordination and collaboration based on the incentive value of business enterprises (Anjani & Yasa, 2019). This concept involves the sharing of

resources to evaluate, select, and implement innovations, thereby facilitating organizational adaptability (Bakti, et'al 2020). Organizational boundaries are essentially the demarcation of an enterprise's social structure, defining the limits within which activities are conducted (Alhakimi & Mahmoud, 2020). Furthermore, organizational boundaries encompass the arrangement of workflow relationships, communication, and authority within an organizational context, as posited by Asemokha, et'al., 2019).

Organizational boundaries are defined as the delineation of resource allocation within an organization, shaping its growth trajectory (Donkor et al., 2018). Alternatively, Galagedara and Samarakoon (2020) conceptualize organizational boundaries as the demarcation of an organization's sphere of influence, encompassing its impact on external forces and degree of control within the industry. Flexible organizational boundaries facilitate entrepreneurial activity by enabling the seamless flow of information between internal and external environments, as well as across business divisions (Galagedara & Samarakoon, 2020). This type of boundary is designed to optimize workflow, communication, and the selection and implementation of innovative ideas by administrative authorities. Various techniques exist for determining organizational boundaries, including hierarchical architecture borders and functional team borders (Laddawan et al., 2020).

The determination of organizational boundaries is contingent upon the diverse skill sets of employees across various departments. Consequently, altering these boundaries necessitates corresponding modifications to departmental structures or employee capabilities (Ringberg et al., 2019). However, organizational boundary changes often encounter resistance from employees, as they require individuals to venture out of their comfort zones and adapt to new roles and responsibilities. The implementation of flexible boundaries can lead to significant organizational changes, impacting culture, coworker dynamics, and management practices, which can result in heightened levels of discomfort and challenging situations for employees of micro, small and medium enterprises. This, in turn, may lead to turnover or withdrawal of incentives, as employees struggle to cope with the changes (Ringberg et al., 2019).

The establishment of flexible organizational boundaries is widely recognized as a crucial factor in fostering and managing entrepreneurial activities, while optimizing resource allocation to facilitate innovation (Shaher & Mohd, 2020). Effective knowledge transfer between employees from diverse departments enhances innovative activities and creativity, as social connections play a pivotal role in driving innovation. The implementation of corporate entrepreneurship necessitates organizational boundaries that are sufficiently flexible to permit increased communication and collaboration among individuals, departments, and companies (Shaher & Mohd, 2020). While the adoption of flexible organizational boundaries may present challenges, such as the erosion of

traditional operational standards, it is not too late for micro, small, and medium-sized business operators to implement this approach, despite the potential for slow progress and associated issues.

2.1.2 Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction has long been a paramount concern for businesses, as understanding and exceeding customer expectations is crucial for their survival and success (Yen et al., 2008). Customer-centric organizations prioritize gaining a deeper understanding of consumers' needs and desires, enabling them to deliver tailored experiences that meet customer demands (Wroe, 2012). Customer satisfaction is a critical outcome of the cognitive and affective evaluation process, where actual performance is assessed against a comparison standard (Hartanto & Noor, 2012). Research has shown that customers experience satisfaction when perceived performance exceeds expectations, dissatisfaction when it falls short, and indifference when expectations are merely met (Sung et al., 2013; Waithaka et al., 2014). Enhanced customer satisfaction is positively correlated with increased customer retention rates, driving repurchase behavior and ultimately contributing to firm profitability.

Customer satisfaction with a business's products or services is widely regarded as a critical determinant of long-term success and competitiveness (Wendy & David, 2009). In the context of relationship marketing, customer satisfaction has emerged as a fundamental framework for monitoring and management (Wisdom, 2012). Satisfaction is defined as a short-term emotional state resulting from the comparison between a customer's expectations and their evaluation of a single product or service interaction (Wendy & David, 2009). Alternatively, Wisdom (2012) conceptualizes customer satisfaction as an individual's experience of joy or dissatisfaction arising from the comparison between a product's perceived performance and their expectations. Bello and Aina (2015) distinguish between two conceptualizations of satisfaction: transactional satisfaction and cumulative satisfaction. Transaction-specific satisfaction refers to a customer's evaluation of their experience and reactions to a specific service encounter, whereas cumulative satisfaction encompasses a customer's overall evaluation of their total consumption experience (Bello & Aina, 2015). The significance of customer satisfaction has been a prominent area of inquiry in consumer and marketing research for nearly two decades, with a recent paradigm shift from transactional marketing to relationship marketing refocusing attention on this critical aspect (Adeniran et al., 2015).

Relationship marketing encompasses a comprehensive range of marketing activities designed to establish, develop, and maintain successful relational exchanges (Afande & Maina, 2015). Customer satisfaction, an emotional state of contentment, fosters a global perspective on service quality, implicitly grounded in internal expectation standards. As a key predictor of purchase behavior, customer satisfaction plays a vital role in marketing

(Barkham et al., 2009). Moreover, customer satisfaction significantly influences economic success, underscoring the importance of businesses prioritizing satisfaction levels (Barkham et al., 2009). At the microeconomic level, customer satisfaction impacts market share and profitability (AMA, 2013). Notably, customer satisfaction correlates with increased return on investment (ROI), productivity, market value added, shareholder value, and stock market performance (Hoonsopon & Guntalee, 2012).

Maintaining elevated customer satisfaction levels is crucial for fostering loyalty and mitigating the impact of intensifying price competition. The primary objective of customer satisfaction studies is to evaluate a company's product or service performance based on customer perceptions. Customer impressions are vital, regardless of their accuracy or alignment with actual performance. In the new economy, knowledge serves as both a resource and a product, enabling businesses to gain competitive advantages through continuous innovation, enhanced customer targeting, and additional services (Wood, 2006). However, these strategies are ineffective in non-arm's length consumer relationships. Consequently, the greater the innovation and service component, the greater the customer's influence. Nevertheless, customer dissatisfaction often arises from inadequate or absent access to timely information regarding customer requirements, particularly concerning supply volume and quantity.

2.2 Theoretical Review

To further elucidate the relationship between flexible organizational boundaries and customer satisfaction in Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs), this study draws upon the theory of dynamic capability as its foundational framework. A comprehensive review of existing literature reveals that the theory of dynamic capability provides the most suitable underpinning for this research, offering a robust conceptual basis for examining the interplay between flexible organizational boundaries and customer satisfaction in MSMEs.

2.2.1 Theory of Dynamic Capability (TDC)

The dynamic capabilities theory, introduced by Teece and Pisano (1994) as an extension of the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm proposed by Barney (1991), focuses on the ability of firms to rapidly coordinate and reconfigure externally acquired capabilities to achieve short-term competitive advantage and organizational development (Ambrosini & Bowman, 2009). This theory emphasizes the importance of adapting to changes and innovations in the business environment, developing strategic assets for competition, and transforming existing assets to align with changes in the business environment to enhance business performance (Danneels, 2002). Dynamic capabilities are viewed as firm-specific processes, activities, or routines, and the imitability of a firm's ability to construct and reconfigure its resource base is crucial for achieving competitive advantage (Danneels, 2002). The Dynamic Capabilities hypothesis highlights a company's capacity

to manage and reconfigure externally sourced competencies while maximizing internal resources (Dong et al., 2016). Additionally, dynamic capabilities theory considers digital, information, and network economics, as well as the reduction of transaction costs associated with specialized services (Efrat et al., 2018). A key assumption of this theory is that organizations should leverage their core competencies to create short-term competitive positions that can be transformed into long-term competitive advantage (Fitz-Koch & Nordqvist, 2017).

The dynamic capabilities theory is primarily concerned with addressing the challenges of competitive survival in today's rapidly changing business environment (El Akremi et al., 2015). This theory aims to provide entrepreneurs with solutions to adapt to disruptive and discontinuous changes while maintaining minimum capacity standards for competitive survival (Prange & Verdier, 2011). For instance, when a new technology emerges, entrepreneurs must adapt their routines to maximize the value of existing resources while planning for future process changes as resources depreciate.

However, critics argue that the theory lacks specificity (Swoboda & Olejnik, 2016), failing to explain when and why change is necessary (Tang & Gudergan, 2018; Rua et al., 2018). Furthermore, the theory overlooks the costs of change and the equilibrium point at which change can be implemented without negatively impacting organizational performance (Maes & Sels, 2013). Additionally, the theory's definitional boundaries have been criticized for lacking clarity and rigidity (Kumar & Yakhlef, 2014). Nevertheless, Samsudin and Ismail (2019) suggest that the theory allows for the manifestation of dynamic capabilities at operational, environmental, and strategic levels.

2.3 Empirical Review

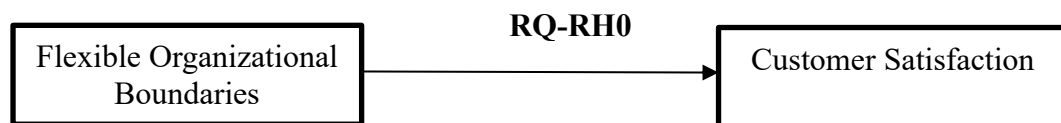
The relationship between flexible organizational boundaries and customer satisfaction has garnered significant attention in the literature, with most studies conducted in developed economies revealing a positive correlation (Bierwerth et al., 2015; Bouchard & Fayolle, 2017; Demirkan et al., 2019). For instance, Gunday et al. (2011) found a positive association between flexible organizational boundaries and customer satisfaction measures in the United States. In the Nigerian context, Akinmulegun and Oluwole (2014) discovered that operating flexible boundaries had a substantial impact on customer satisfaction and financial success. Similarly, studies in developing economies have shown that corporate entrepreneurship (CE) positively affects firm performance (Julius et al., 2018; Patrick,

2018; Gabriel, 2019; Moruff et al., 2019). However, researchers argue that developing economies face unique challenges, such as corruption and weak legal environments, which hinder the growth of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) (Oyedokun, 2015; Olubiyi et al., 2019). The entrepreneurship ecosystems of developed and developing economies differ significantly in terms of institutional environment, government support, technological advances, cultural influences, socioeconomic

conditions, and entrepreneurial characteristics (Kozubková et al., 2017; Aroyeun et al., 2019). Studies have highlighted that operating flexible organizational boundary is crucial for enhancing customer satisfaction and firm performance. However, more research is needed to understand the specific challenges and opportunities faced by MSMEs in developing economies, particularly in Nigeria and Niger State. Moreover, to improve on current business performance from the previous studies reviewed above, micro, small and medium-sized enterprise owners should adopt flexible organization boundary practices from the developed and developing economies, including the practices tenable in successful Nigeria enterprises. Nevertheless, we must not deny the fact that the empirical analysis reveals a dearth of studies assessing the influence of flexible organizational boundaries on performance of MSMEs in Niger State and Nigeria at large.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

The framework below was developed in accordance with the related research concepts in the foregoing sections.



Source: Researcher's Conceptualization, 2024

The conceptual framework above is built on the theory of dynamic capability, which suggests that organizational performance is influenced by the fit between flexible boundaries and customers satisfaction. The RQ-RH0 framework provides a logical sequence for developing a research study. RQ - Research Question is a specific question that guides the investigation and helps to focus the research effort. While, RH0 - Research Hypothesis is a tentative statement that predicts the expected outcome of the study.

3.0 Methodology

The target population for this study comprises 454,000 owners of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Niger State (Niger State Government, 2022). This population is of particular interest due to their significant contribution to the economic vitality of Niger State. The selection of Niger State as the study location is justified by the high concentration of MSMEs and its strategic position in the North Central region of Nigeria. To determine the sample size, the Yamane (1967) formula was employed, with a 5% precision/error margin. This formula is given as:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (454,000)

e = precision/error margin (0.05)

By utilizing this formula, the study aims to achieve a high level of precision and confidence in the results. Thus:

$$n = \frac{454,000}{1+454,000(0,05)^2} = \frac{454,000}{1+454,000(0.0025)} = \frac{454,000}{1+1,135} = \frac{454,000}{1,136} = 399.6$$

The sample size was rounded to 400 to avoid the impracticality of selecting a fraction of a human participant. A multistage sampling technique was employed, incorporating stratification due to the categorization of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Simple random sampling was utilized as not all listed MSMEs were accessible. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure respondents' attitudes, ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). The Likert-type questions assessed the respondents' perceptions regarding flexible organizational boundaries and customer satisfaction with MSME services in Niger State. The instrument's reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha test in SPSS, yielding values of 0.864 and 0.854 for flexible organizational boundaries and customer satisfaction, respectively. These results indicate excellent reliability, exceeding the threshold of 0.70 (Bolarinwa, 2015).

To analyze the responses to the research questions, a mean score of 3.0 was manually calculated and established as the benchmark for agreement with the statement. This benchmark was derived by averaging the Likert scale responses (1+2+3+4+5/5 items = 15/5 = 3.0). Scores above this benchmark indicate a higher level of agreement, while scores below the benchmark signify a greater degree of disagreement. To test the hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was employed. The justification for using PPMC lies in its ability to effectively establish the direction and strength of the relationship between variables, as posited by Kutner et al. (2019). All statistical analyses and tests were conducted using SPSS version 26.0.

4.0 Results and Discussion

4.1 Data Presentation

Data collated and analyzed have been presented and interpreted in the following sections.

Table 4.1 Rate of Response by the respondents

S/NO	Response	Respondents	Percentage (%)
1	Returned	400	100
2	Not Returned	0	0
Total Distributed		400	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4.1 presents the distribution of questionnaires administered and responses received from the participants. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed, and remarkably, all 400 were returned, yielding a response rate of 100%. This exceptional response rate can be attributed to the assurance of anonymity, as participants were not required to provide identifiable information. Furthermore, any damaged or misplaced questionnaires were

promptly replaced by the research assistants, ensuring the achievement of a perfect response rate.

4.2 Respondents Demographic Information

The following table is a descriptive analysis of demographic information of the respondents.

Table 4.2: Descriptive Analysis of Demographic Information of the Respondents

S/NO	Variables	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage%
1.	Gender	Male	194	48.5
		Female	206	51.5
		Total	400	100%
2.	Age	Below 35 years	136	34.0
		35, below 45years	99	24.8
		45 below 55years	78	19.5
		55 years and above	87	22.8
		Total	400	100%
3.	Marital Status	Single	198	49.5
		Married	103	25.8
		Divorce	53	13.3
		Widow	46	11.5
		Total	400	100%
4.	Educational Status	SSCE	190	47.5
		OND/NCE	109	27.3
		HND/B.Sc.	59	14.8
		Master Degree	31	7.8
		Ph.D.	11	2.8
		Total	400	100%
5.	Years in Business	1-5 years	187	46.8
		6-10 years	96	24.0
		11-15 years	63	15.8
		16 years and above	54	13.5
		Total	400	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4.2 presents the descriptive analysis of the respondents' demographic characteristics. The results show that 48.5% (n = 194) of the micro, small, and medium enterprise owners in Niger State are male, while 51.5% (n = 206) are female, indicating a slight dominance of female entrepreneurs in the sector.

In terms of age distribution, 34% (n = 136) of the respondents are below 35 years old, 24.8% (n = 99) are between 35-45 years old, 19.5% (n = 78) are between 45-55 years old, and 21.8% (n = 87) are 55 years old and above, suggesting a significant presence of youthful entrepreneurs.

Regarding marital status, 49.5% (n = 198) of the respondents are single or single parents, 25.8% (n = 103) are married, 13.3% (n = 53) are divorced, and 11.5% (n = 46) are widowed.

The educational background of the respondents reveals that 47.5% (n = 190) have Senior School Certificates, 27.3% (n = 109) have OND or NCE qualifications, 14.8% (n = 59)

have HND or BSc degrees, 7.8% (n = 31) hold master's degrees, and 2.8% (n = 11) hold Ph.D. degrees or professional doctorates.

The number of years in business shows that 46.8% (n = 187) of the respondents have been operating their businesses for 1-5 years, 24.0% (n = 96) for 6-10 years, 15.8% (n = 63) for 11-15 years, and 13.5% (n = 54) for 16 years and above.

In summary, the descriptive analysis reveals that female entrepreneurs dominate the micro, small, and medium enterprise sector in Niger State, with a majority of youthful entrepreneurs having secondary school education and relatively shorter business operation periods.

4.3 Restatement of research question on the relationship between flexible organizational boundary and performance of micro, small and medium enterprises in Niger State.

Research Question: What is the nature of the relationship between flexible organizational boundaries and performance of micro, small and medium enterprises in Niger State?

Table 4.3: Descriptive Analysis of Flexible Organization Boundaries

S/N	Items Measuring Flexible Organization Boundaries		SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean
1	I operate a barrier-free business enterprise based on the value of business enterprise stimulus to strive for coordination	Freq	68	84	85	94	69	
		Perc	17.0	21.0	21.3	23.5	17.3	2.970
2	Flexible boundaries promote business activities by fostering information flow between customers and enterprise owners.	Freq	22	71	63	187	57	
		Perc	5.5	17.8	15.8	46.8	14.2	2.535
3	Organizational boundaries, is measured by the extent to which employees perceive flexibility exists within the enterprise limits.	Freq	137	161	53	26	23	
		Perc	34.3	40.3	13.3	6.5	5.8	3.908
4	Flexible organizational boundaries promote high level of personal interaction with others in the business enterprise.	Freq	92	180	39	58	31	
		Perc	23.0	45.0	9.8	14.5	7.8	3.610
5	I do allow employees to act freely to be able to explore new ideas that can create competitive advantage.	Freq	57	68	77	110	88	
		Perc	14.2	17.0	19.3	27.5	22.0	2.740
Grand Mean								3.1526

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Results, (2024)

Table 4.3 presents the descriptive analysis of items related to flexible organizational boundaries. The results indicate that:

17.0% (n = 68) of respondents strongly agreed that their business operates with barrier-free boundaries based on the value of business stimulus for coordination, while 21.0% (n = 84) agreed, 21.3% (n = 85) were neutral, 23.5% (n = 94) disagreed, and 17.3% (n = 69) strongly disagreed.

5.5% (n = 22) strongly agreed that flexible boundaries promote business activities by facilitating information flow between customers and enterprise owners, while 17.8% (n = 71) agreed, 15.8% (n = 63) were neutral, 46.8% (n = 187) disagreed, and 14.2% (n = 57) strongly disagreed.

34.3% (n = 137) strongly agreed that flexible organizational boundaries are determined by employees' perception of the existence of flexibility within the enterprise, while 13.3% (n = 53) were neutral, 6.5% (n = 26) disagreed, and 5.8% (n = 23) strongly disagreed.

23.0% (n = 92) strongly agreed that flexible organizational boundaries promote a high level of personal interaction with others in the business enterprise, while 45.0% (n = 180) agreed, 9.8% (n = 39) were neutral, 14.5% (n = 58) disagreed, and 7.5% (n = 31) strongly disagreed.

14.2% (n = 57) strongly agreed that flexible organizational boundaries allow employees to freely explore new ideas that can create a competitive advantage, while 17.0% (n = 68) agreed, 19.3% (n = 77) were neutral, 27.5% (n = 110) disagreed, and 22.0% (n = 88) strongly disagreed.

These results provide insights into the respondents' perceptions of flexible organizational boundaries in their businesses.

Table 4.4: Descriptive Analysis of Customer Satisfaction

S/N	Items Measuring Customer Satisfaction		SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Mean
6	I always provide quality goods and service to my customers	Freq	60	84	90	94	72	
		Perc	15.0	21.0	22.5	23.5	18.0	2.915
7	Most time I experience decrease on customer complaints	Freq	17	76	63	187	57	
		Perc	4.3	19.0	15.8	46.8	14.2	2.523
8	In the last few weeks, effective management of quality products and services help me attain consumers' satisfaction	Freq	140	158	53	26	23	
		Perc	35.0	39.5	13.3	6.5	5.8	3.915
9	My customers always express satisfaction on	Freq	97	175	39	58	31	
		Perc	24.3	43.8	9.8	14.5	7.8	3.623

	growth in value added productivity							
10	Overall, I am satisfied with my marketing strategies	Freq	62	66	74	110	88	
		Perc	15.6	16.5	18.5	27.5	22.0	2.760
Grand Mean								3.1472

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Results, (2024)

Table 4.4 presents the descriptive analysis of items measuring customer satisfaction. The results indicate that:

5.0% (n = 20) of respondents strongly agreed that they always provide quality goods and services to their customers, while 21.0% (n = 84) agreed, 22.5% (n = 90) were neutral, 23.5% (n = 94) disagreed, and 18.0% (n = 71) strongly disagreed.

4.3% (n = 17) strongly agreed that they often experience a decrease in customer complaints, while 19.0% (n = 76) agreed, 15.8% (n = 63) were neutral, 46.8% (n = 187) disagreed, and 14.2% (n = 57) strongly disagreed.

35.0% (n = 140) strongly agreed that effective management of quality products and services has helped them achieve customer satisfaction, while 39.5% (n = 158) agreed, 13.3% (n = 53) were neutral, 6.5% (n = 26) disagreed, and 5.8% (n = 23) strongly disagreed.

24.3% (n = 97) strongly agreed that their customers always express satisfaction with the growth in value-added productivity, while 43.8% (n = 175) agreed, 9.8% (n = 39) were neutral, 14.5% (n = 58) disagreed, and 7.8% (n = 31) strongly disagreed.

15.6% (n = 62) strongly agreed that they are satisfied with their marketing strategies, while 16.5% (n = 68) agreed, 18.5% (n = 74) were neutral, 27.5% (n = 110) disagreed, and 22.0% (n = 88) strongly disagreed.

Comparing the responses between Tables 4.3 and 4.4 reveals a significant positive relationship between flexible organizational boundaries and customer satisfaction, with grand means of 3.1526 and 3.1472, respectively, both exceeding the minimum benchmark of 3.0. This supports the achievement of research objective four and answers research question. The hypothesis will be further tested below.

4.4 Test of Hypothesis

Restatement of hypothesis on the relationship between flexible organizational boundaries and performance of micro, small and medium enterprises in Niger State.

Hypothesis (Ho): Flexible organizational boundaries do not have significant positive relationship with performance of micro, midsize, and medium enterprises in Niger State.

To test the hypothesis, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis was conducted. The data on flexible organizational boundaries were compiled from the combined scores of questionnaire items 1-5 in Table 4.3, while the data on customer satisfaction were compiled from the combined scores of questions 6-10 in Table 4.4. The results of the correlation analysis are presented in Table 4.18, which provides a summary of the findings.

Table 4.5: Pearson product moment correlation on the relationship between flexible organizational boundary and customer satisfaction

		Flexible organizational Boundary	Customer Satisfaction
Flexible organizational Boundary	Pearson Correlation	1	.999**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	400	400
Customer Satisfaction	Pearson Correlation	.999**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	400	400
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Source: SPSS Version 26.0 Output (2024)

4.4.1 Discussion

Table 4.5 presents the results of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis conducted to test Hypothesis Four. The analysis reveals a remarkably strong positive correlation between flexible organizational boundaries and customer satisfaction, with a correlation coefficient of 0.999. This relationship is statistically significant at the 0.01 level of significance ($p < 0.001$), indicating a highly significant positive association between the two variables. The findings suggest that the adoption of flexible organizational boundaries has a profound influence on customer satisfaction in micro, small, and medium enterprises in Niger State. Specifically, the results indicate that higher levels of adoption of flexible organizational boundaries are associated with higher levels of customer satisfaction, providing strong support for the hypothesis.

Based on the results of the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis, the null hypothesis (H_0) stating that flexible organizational boundaries do not have a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction in micro, small, and medium enterprises in Niger State is rejected at the 0.01 level of significance. This rejection implies that there is a statistically significant positive relationship between flexible organizational boundaries and customer satisfaction.

Consequently, it is concluded that flexible organizational boundaries have a significant positive effect on customer satisfaction in micro, small, and medium enterprises in Niger State. This finding underscores the importance of implementing flexible organizational boundaries as a strategic approach to enhancing customer satisfaction in businesses of all

sizes in Niger State and Nigeria as a whole. By adopting flexible organizational boundaries, enterprises can improve their responsiveness to customer needs, foster innovation, and ultimately drive business growth and competitiveness.

The findings of this study align with previous research, which has highlighted the importance of flexible organizational boundaries in enhancing customer satisfaction and business performance (Laddawan et al., 2020; Vanacker et al., 2017). For instance, flexible organizational boundaries have been shown to promote staff commitment and creative thinking (Laddawan et al., 2020), as well as high performance and a sense of accomplishment in innovative activities (Vanacker et al., 2017).

Additionally, studies have found a positive relationship between flexible organizational boundaries and staff and customer satisfaction in small and medium-scale enterprises (Ambad & Wahab, 2016), and a strong association between flexible organizational boundaries and manufacturing firms' performance (Ahu, 2015).

Furthermore, flexible organizational boundaries have been identified as essential factors for creating a corporate entrepreneurial work environment that enhances competitiveness in small and medium-sized enterprises (Ahmedova, 2015). Overall, these studies support the notion that adopting flexible organizational boundaries is crucial for promoting customer satisfaction and overall business performance.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

This section presents the conclusion and recommendations logically based on the findings.

5.1 Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between flexible organizational boundaries and customers satisfaction among micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Niger State, Nigeria. The findings reveal a significant and positive correlation between flexible organizational boundaries and customers satisfaction among micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in Niger State, Nigeria. This is contrary to our previous assumption that flexible organizational boundaries and customers satisfaction are not mutually exclusive. In reality, flexible organizational boundaries serve as effective tools for enhancing customers satisfaction in MSMEs in Niger State and Nigeria as a whole.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusion above, the study recommends that owners of micro, small and medium enterprises in Niger adopting should adopt flexible organizational boundaries to be able to receive feedback from internal and external environments and help in driving ultimate customers satisfaction and in so doing they should strive to identify and reward entrepreneurial initiatives, encourage entrepreneurial work behavior, and implement customer loyalty and reward programs.

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