

Entrepreneurship Orientation and Practices among University Campus Business Operations in Rivers State

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ABSTRACT

This study examined entrepreneurship orientation and practises among university campus business Operations in Rivers State. The study adopted a descriptive survey design. Two research questions and hypotheses were formulated and posed in line with the objectives of the study. The population of the study comprised 1,000 university business operators from the three public universities in Rivers State, namely the Rivers State University, the University of Port Harcourt, and the Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Taro Yamane's formula was used to determine the sample size of 286 small-scale business operators. An instrument titled "Entrepreneurship Orientation and Practises among University Business Operators Questionnaire" (EOPUBOQ) was used for data collection. A weighted mean was used to answer the research questions, while standard deviation and z-test statistics were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 confidence level. The findings of the study revealed, among others, that the nature of business permits flexibilities that make new ideas meet business objectives. It was recommended, among others, that entrepreneurs operating small-scale businesses endeavour to utilise their innovative abilities so as to boost the performance of their businesses.

Keywords: *Entrepreneurship, Orientation, creative and innovative, Risk Taking*

INTRODUCTION

The heightened globalisation and increasing competition among entrepreneurs have caught the attention of countries, intergovernmental organisations, states, public and private organisations, and individuals. Thus, researchers from various disciplines such as economics, sociology, psychology, management, marketing, and finance have given emphasis to the subject of entrepreneurship. The reason for this is that entrepreneurship is very important for creating jobs, reducing unemployment, fueling economic growth, vitalizing business growth, and creating wealth for individuals and society at large.

The term "Entrepreneur" is derived from the French word "entreprendre" which means to "undertake". The widespread focus, popularity, and importance attached to entrepreneurship by governments, non-governmental organisations, scholars, and practitioners alike as a dependable fulcrum for the promotion of business and economic activities would largely be attributable to the early works of Australian economist Joseph Schumpeter. Other scholars who have made noticeable impacts on and contributions to the development of entrepreneurship include, but are not limited to, David McClelland, Frank H. Knight, and Peter Drunkard, among others.

Amaewhule (2014) avers that there are certain dispositional factors that give rise to entrepreneurship endeavours. He, therefore, identified the following positions of scholars on who an entrepreneur is:

- A man or woman who started a business when there was none before.
- Individuals and groups that possess the ability to visualize and assess latent business opportunities, assemble the necessary resources so as to reap the advantages accruing from business.
- An individual who brings land, labour and capital together and managing them productively to produce a product or service.
- A person that utilize the opportunity of instability, turbulence, lack and change to produce something new or modifies and existing one of profit motive.
- An individual who surveys his potential business environment, identifies opportunities to improve it, marshals resources and acts to maximize operational opportunities (pp. 36-37).

Commenting on the entrepreneur, Joseph Schumpeter emphasised that innovation is a cardinal and critical factor in entrepreneurship and that innovation must be reflected with respect to new production methods and technology and new methods of ideological and philosophical transformation (Igwe, 2009). In consonance with these facts, entrepreneurship is principally a practical endeavour or activity that involves converting the inherent qualities of a person, an idea or piece of information, a construct or invention, or a combination of all or many of those and other resources into products or services that are capable of giving the consumer value and stratification for his money.

The notion of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is closely linked to strategic management and the strategic decision-making process that provides organisations with a basis for entrepreneurial decisions and actions (Lumpkin & Dess, 2001; Rauch et al., 2009). Specifically, this construct" may be viewed as the entrepreneurial strategy-making processes that decision makers use to enact their firm's organisational purpose, sustain its vision, and create competitive advantage" (Rauch et al., 2009). The origins of the EO construct can be found in Miller and Friesen (1982). They initially identified eleven strategy-making process dimensions and operationalized the EO construct through three dimensions: innovation, risk-taking, and proactiveness. In particular, innovativeness refers to the pursuit of creative or novel solutions to challenges confronting the firm, including the development or enhancement of products and services, as well as new administrative techniques and technologies for performing organisational functions (Knight, 2017).

Proactiveness in an "opportunity-seeking, forward-looking perspective characterised by the introduction of new products and services ahead of the competition and acting in anticipation of future demand" (Rauch et al., 2009). While "risk taking involves taking significant resources to venture into the unknown, borrowing heavily, and/or committing other acts, Covin and Slevin (1986) proposed a linkage between the entrepreneurial orientation of the firms and the taxonomies of the suggested strategies by specifically stating that entrepreneurial firms are those in which their TMTs are inclined to take business-related risks to favour change and innovation, thus gaining a competitive advantage for the firm, as well as competing aggressively with other firms. This kind of entrepreneurial orientation, according to them, is similar to that of prospector firms and entrepreneurial organisations. Whereas the conservative firms are those in which the TMTs styles are risk-averse, non-innovative, and reactive. This type of strategic orientation is common in defence firms organisations.

Entrepreneurial business owners enjoy shaping their environment and kick off processes of 'creative destruction, which unbalance the market structures and allow new players to enter. In our context, innovative orientation implies that one has a positive mindset towards new ideas with regard to products, services, administration, or technological processes. New ideas are not necessarily absolute novelties but should be new to the relevant group, market, and environment (Harcourt et al., 2020; West & Farr, 1990). While, for example, empowered work teams are rather common in Western firms, they are quite unusual in African societies, where patriarchal structures, power distance, and traditionalism are generally higher. Such teams would, therefore, be innovative in the African context.

Being entrepreneurial and venturing into new fields unavoidably involves errors and a certain degree of risk and speculation; assume a relationship between risk-taking and success. Up to this point, there is little and inconsistent empirical evidence for that relationship (Kayii & Akpomi, 2022; Rauch et al., 2009). They reiterated that successful owners probably take calculated risks. While taking calculated risks reduces the probability of failure, a generally positive attitude towards risk-taking is mandatory in an environment where risks are inevitable. A positive orientation towards risk-taking should encourage the owner to take on unavoidable (and often sought-after) challenges and risks.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The promotion of entrepreneurship in the areas of job creation, incentive provision, youth development, and enterprise creation is the focus of the government. This is more pronounced in the problems faced by most practising entrepreneurs in Rivers State, Nigeria. This attention is due to the fact that entrepreneurship has become an important policy issue. At one level, enterprise creation is recognised as important for employment growth and affecting structural change; at another, there is a concern to encourage existing firms to become more entrepreneurial as a means of enhancing international competitiveness. Thus, the study seeks to determine how risk-taking and innovativeness can be used for making strategic decisions by business owners to promote business growth in the businesses of entrepreneurs on university campuses in Rivers State, Nigeria.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study was to examine the extent small business operators in Rivers State University Campuses are able to imbibe / apply entrepreneurship practices/ orientation. Specifically, the objectives were:

- i. To examine the extent to which small scale business operators in Rivers State University Campuses are creative and innovative in their practices.
- ii. To examine the extent to which small scale business operators in Rivers State University Campuses are willing to take risk in their daily business operations.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were answered in this study:

1. To what extent are small scale business operators in Rivers State University Campuses creative and innovative in their practices?
2. To what extent do small scale business operators in Rivers State University Campuses take calculated risk in their business?

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses were tested in this study at 0.05 confidence level:

- Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of experienced business operators in Rivers State University Campuses and their less-experienced counterparts in innovativeness ability.
- Ho₂: There is no significant difference between experienced business operators in Rivers State University Campuses and the less-experienced counterparts in their mean scores in respect of ability to take moderate risks.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey design with a population of 1000 (RSU 335, IAUE 102, and UPH 563) university business operators. The sample size comprised 286 (RSU 93, IAUE 36, and UPH 157) university business operators. The researcher's 13-item "Entrepreneurship Orientation and Practises among University Business Operators Questionnaire (EOPUBOQ)" was a validated tool for gathering data. Its reliability coefficient was established at 0.80 using Person r. 286 copies of the questionnaire were administered, out of which 280 copies (experienced business operators 134 and less-experienced business operators 146) were retrieved. Data collected were analysed using weighted mean to standard deviation to answer the research questions, while standard deviation and z-test statistics were used to test the null hypotheses at a 0.50 confidence level. The weighted mean score of 2.50 served as the criterion mean. Items above the criterion mean were tagged agreed.

RESULTS

The results obtained in this study after data analysis were presented and analyzed below:

Research Question 1: To what extent are small business operators in Rivers State University campuses creative and innovative in their practices?

Table 1: Responses to Innovation Orientation

S/N	Innovative Orientation	Experienced Operators N=134 X_M	Less-Experienced Operators N=146 X_F	Means Set $\frac{\bar{X}_M + \bar{X}_F}{2}$	Remarks
1.	The nature of your business permits flexibilities that make your new ideas meet your business objectives	3.58	3.53	3.56	Very High Extent
2.	You have an orientation that makes you to stay creative and ensure generation of new ideas in you.	3.21	2.68	2.95	High Extent
3.	In your business, you are engaged in innovative behavior and activities	3.05	2.69	2.87	High Extent
4.	Innovative orientation implies that you have a positive mind-set toward new ideas with regard to products and services.	2.87	2.76	2.80	High Extent
5.	Your approaches to ensuring risk accomplishment are always renewed with changing times	3.27	3.64	3.50	Very High Extent
6.	You ensure that work processes used are considerable re-engineered to ensure value added products.	2.81	2.87	2,84	High Extent
	Aggregate means	3.13	3.03	3.09	

Source: Researcher's desk, 2018

The data on Table 1 showed that items 1-5 have weighted mean scores above the criterion means of 2.50 and were agreed to a very high extent as innovative orientation. Items 2,3,4 and 6 have weighted mean scored above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were agreed to a high extent as innovative orientation by the respondents.

Research Question 2: To what extent do small scale business operators in Rivers State University Campuses take calculated risk in their business?

Table 2: Responses to Risk-Taking Orientation.

Table 2: Responses to Risk-Taking Orientation

S/N	Innovative Orientation	Experienced Operators N=134 X_M	Less-Experienced Operators N=146 X_F	Means Set $\frac{\bar{X}_M + \bar{X}_F}{2}$	Remarks
7.	You take bold and wide-ranging acts to achieve your business objectives	3.41	3.63	3.52	Very High Extent
8.	Your business involves risk taking behavior.	2.31	2.19	2.25	Very Low Extent
9.	Your business had a strong proclivity toward moderate risk projects.	3.51	3.48	3.50	Very High Extent
10.	You always ensure that you critically analyze the business environment to enable you choose amongst options	3.53	3.61	3.57	Very High Extent
11.	You allocate your resources to areas where you are certain about the expected outcome	2.87	2.82	2.85	High Extent
12.	A positive orientation towards risk taking helps you to take unavoidable challenges.	3.60	3.58	3.59	Very High Extent
13.	Being entrepreneurial means that you venture into new fields involving certain degree of risk and speculations.	2.64	2.87	2.76	High Extent
	Aggregate means	3.12	3.17	3.15	

Source: Researcher's desk, 2018

The data on Table 2 showed that items 7,9,10, and 12 have weighted mean scores above the criterion mean of 2.50 and were agreed to a very high extent as risk-taking orientation. Items 11 and 13 have weighted mean scores above the criterion means of 2.50 and were agreed to a high extent as risk-taking orientation. Item 8 have a weighted mean score of below the criterion mean score of 2.50 and was agreed to a very low extent as a risk-taking orientation by the respondents.

Hypothesis 1

Ho₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of experienced business operators in Rivers State University Campuses and their less-experienced counterparts in innovativeness ability.

Table 3: Summary of z-test analysis on the difference between mean scores of experienced business operators in Rivers State University Campuses and their less-experienced counterparts in innovativeness ability.

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Experienced operators	134	3.13	0.94	278	0.87	1.96	Ho ₁
Less-experienced operators	146	3.03	0.96				Accepted

Table 3 showed a mean score of 3.13 for experienced business operators and 3.03 for less-experienced business operators. The z-test statistics calculated and used in testing the hypotheses stood at 0.87 while the z-critical stood at 1.96, using 278 degree of freedom at 0.05 confidence level. Since the calculated z-value was less than the critical z-value, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between the mean scores of experienced business operators in Rivers State University Campuses and their less-experienced counterparts in innovativeness ability was therefore accepted by the researcher.

Hypothesis 2

Ho₂: There is no significant difference between experienced business operators in Rivers State University Campuses and the less-experienced counterparts in their means score in respect of ability to take moderate risks.

Table 4: Summary of z-test analysis on difference between experienced business operators in Rivers State University Campuses business operators and the less-experienced counterparts in their mean scores in respect of ability to take moderate risks.

Respondents	N	\bar{X}	SD	Df	z-cal	z-crit	Decision
Experienced operators	134	3.12	0.94	278	-0.47	1.96	Ho ₂
Less-experienced operators	146	3.17	0.88				Accepted

Table 4 showed a mean score of 3.12 for experienced business operators and 3.17 for less-experienced business operators. The z-test statistics calculated and used in testing the hypothesis

stood at -0.47 while the z-critical stood at 1.96, using 278 degree of freedom at 0.05 confidence level. Since the calculated z-value is less than the critical z-value, the null hypothesis of no significant difference between experienced business operators in Rivers State University Campuses and their less-experienced counterparts in their mean score in respect of ability to take moderate risks was therefore accepted by the researcher.

Discussion of Findings

To the extent small-scale business operators on Rivers State University Campuses engage in innovativeness as a part of their normal orientation in their business operations, this study's findings revealed that the nature of business permits flexibilities that make new ideas meet business objectives; there is an orientation that makes one stay creative and ensure the generation of new ideas; and people are engaged in innovative behaviour and activities. These findings are in line with West and Farr's (1990) assertion that an innovation orientation implies that one has a positive mindset towards new ideas with regards to products, services, administration, or technological processes. New ideas are not necessarily absolute novelties but should be new to the relevant group, market, and environment.

The findings of the study also revealed that innovative orientation implies that one has a positive mind-set towards new ideas with regard to products and services; one's approach to ensuring task accomplishment is always renewed with changing times; and one ensures that work processes used are considerably re-engineered to ensure value-added products. In support of these findings, Hamel (2000) and Henry (2009) averred that entrepreneurial orientation can have positive performance implications that are universal. A general tendency in today's business environment is the shortening of product and business model life cycles.

On the extent small business operators in Rivers State University Campuses take calculated risk in their business, the findings of this study revealed that people take bold and wide-ranging acts to achieve their business objectives; their businesses have a strong proclivity towards moderate risk projects; they always ensure that they critically analysed the business environment to enable them choose amongst options; they allocate their resources to areas where they are certain about expected outcome; a positive orientation towards risk-taking helps them to take on unavoidable challenges; and being entrepreneurial means venturing into new fields involving certain degree of risk and speculations.

In support of these findings, Ranch et al. (2009) asserted that successful business owners probably take calculated risks. Taking calculated risks reduces the probability of failure; a generally positive attitude towards risk-taking is mandatory in an environment where risks are inevitable. A positive orientation towards risk-taking should encourage the owner to take on unavoidable challenges and risks.

The findings of this study revealed in Tables 3 and 4 that there were no significant differences between the mean scores of experienced business operators on Rivers State University Campuses and their less-experienced counterparts in innovativeness ability or between experienced business operators and their less-experienced counterparts in their mean scores in respect of their ability to take moderate risks.

Conclusion

Deriving from the results of the tested hypotheses, it was very clear that effective entrepreneurial orientation has a great impact on the practices in the business sector. The study equally observed that variables and the nature of business of the entrepreneurs determine the extent to which entrepreneurs engage in innovativeness. Firms with high levels of entrepreneurial orientation tend to venture into new fields involving certain degrees of risk.

Recommendations

Deriving from the findings, the researcher recommended as follows:

1. Entrepreneurs operating small scale businesses should endeavor in their innovative ability to as to boost the performance of their business.
2. Entrepreneurs operating small scale businesses should improve on their innovative ability in order to promote the performances of their entrepreneurship practices.
3. Small scale business operators should develop the ability of risk taking so that new products can be developed and brought to the market.
4. Entrepreneurs operating in the university campuses should risk taking ability as one of the orientations that is required for improved business performance.

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