



DOMINANT INNOVATIONS OF SUCCESSFUL CONSTRUCTION MICRO, SMALL, AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES (CMSMES) IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

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Micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)/ construction micro, small, and medium enterprises (CMSMEs) are reported to be responsible for considerable number of innovations across the world. However, the predominant types of innovations among surviving and successful CMSMEs, and the impacts of such innovation(s) on the success of the CMSMEs is unclear. This paper aims at exploring the predominant types of innovations among the successful construction micro, small, and medium enterprises in northern Nigeria. The research employed qualitative research method to exploratively determine the types of innovations. Recorded interviews constituted the research data from 17 CMSMEs spanned through 14 states out of the 19 states constituting northern Nigeria. While semi-structured interview with opened ended questions were used to collect data through judgemental and snowballing sampling technique at stage 1 and 2 respectively. Data were transcribed, open and axial coded and analysed. The result reveal product innovation as the predominate type of innovation among other types of innovation and mostly responsible for the success of the CMSMEs studied. The result of the research enriches body of knowledge in respect of common types of innovations within CMSMEs and implies that successful CMSMEs in Northern Nigeria pay more attention to product innovation to trigger their success and other forms of innovations. Furthermore, the result of the research suggested failing CMSMEs can survive when they concentrate on product innovation.

Keywords: CMSMEs, success, types of innovation

INTRODUCTION

The construction industry is increasingly facing changes in its products and services. Coupled with rapidly growing competitive pressures on construction micro, small, and medium enterprises (CMSMEs) to respond quickly to the market environment in respect of its innovativeness. Thus, making innovation a critical factor for CMSME success within a competitive market. Unfortunately, there is no clear articulation of the specific types of innovation required for CMSMEs to succeed, and the actions needed by the CMSMEs remain unclear. This remains a

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key impediment to the success of many CMSMEs (Kuratko, Covin and Hornsby, 2014: 648; Arundel, Bloch and Ferguson, 2019: 789). Complexity renders the evaluation and quantification of innovation in CMSMEs and construction difficult, as innovations developed through interaction between construction companies, consultants and clients are often not picked up (Orstavik, Dainty and Abbott, 2015:3). Although innovative capabilities are considered the pivot on which the companies' business stands, their contributions to CMSMEs' survival are poorly understood (Yan, 2015:6). Aouad et al. (2010: 1) confirm that there is a gap in the body of knowledge of different types of innovation and their relationship to the success of CMSMEs.

Innovation may take place in CMSMEs externally and/or internally. External innovation entails developing new products and/or services. Internal innovation may encompass new processes, organisational structures and culture (Li, Salguti, Siddiqi & Sideridis, 2009: 293). More than 95% of enterprises in the world can be categorised as MSMEs (Heslina et al., 2016: 41). In 2013, Nigeria had about 36,994,578 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), with 731,303 CMSMEs - about 1.99% of the total number of MSMEs in the country (Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria; National Bureau of Statistics, 2013: 26). However, 50% of CMSMEs in Nigeria become extinct within their first five years of existence, consequently, only about 10% of Nigerian CMSMEs survive, thrive, and grow to maturity. Enterprises failing within so short a time portend a huge problem surrounding innovation (Oduyoye, Adebola & Binuyo, 2013: 33). A survey result further indicates that over 70% of CMSMEs are not creative. This suggests further innovation challenges (Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria; National Bureau of Statistics, 2013: 6). The challenges and development of CMSMEs can be overcome and achieved through innovation (Kennedy & Moore 2003: 2). CMSMEs need to engage in innovative activities as a competitive strategy and to undertake innovation as an important part of organisational competitiveness, survival and growth (Yoon, Lee & Schniederjans, 2016: 4). The large number of CMSMEs in most economies provides a basis for reviewing various aspects of their operations and growth (Janeska-Iliev & Debarliev, 2015: 3). While the construction industry is mostly dominated by CMSMEs and are considered the engine of economic growth; they promote equitable development in Nigeria through the main advantage of the sector - its employment potential at low capital cost (Ayanda & Laraba, 2011: 201). In addition, it is hard to overstate the importance of construction to the economy. Construction is one of the largest employers of labour in many countries.. Innovation is as vital for the continued prosperity of this industry (Goodland, Lindberg & Shorthouse, 2015: 1). The research question therefore is, what are the predominant types of innovations and their impact among surviving and successful CMSMEs in Nigeria. The aim of this paper is to explore the predominant types of innovations among surviving and successful construction micro, small, and medium enterprises in northern Nigeria, with the view of recommending those to failing CMSMEs.

A major argument supporting CMSMEs innovation is that more innovation generates more growth which promotes job creation. Whereas innovation is a means by which knowledge is transformed into economic growth. A common position is that CMSMEs and a nation that innovates, leads to growth and development (Colombelli, Haned and Le, 2013: 14). An excellent example of this is

to understanding the innovation types that drive growth of CMSMEs in Nigeria (Dalitz, 2016:200). Successful firms have been able to make a range of different organisational, managerial or technological innovations to overcome their limitations (Reichstein, Salter and Gann, 2005: 631). The future lies with the CMSMEs that can innovatively respond more quickly to changes and customer requirements (Burke, 2006:14) because of their fast decision-making, flexibility, and innovation (Gecse, 2012:10).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Nigerian definition of MSMEs/CMSMEs

The introduction of the National Policy on MSMEs addressed the issue of finding a definition of what constitutes micro, small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. The definition adopts a classification based on the dual criteria of employment and assets, excluding land and buildings (Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria; and National Bureau of Statistics, 2013:10). This definition constitutes the working definition for this research. Table 2.8 below shows the criteria:

Table 1: Classifications of MSMEs/CMSMEs in Nigeria.

S/N	Size Category	Employment	Assets (=N= Million) (excl. land and buildings)
1	Micro enterprises	Less than 10	Less than 5
2	Small enterprises	10 to 49	5 to less than 50
3	Medium enterprises	50 to 199	50 to less than 500

Source: (Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria; and National Bureau of Statistics, 2013:10).

Furthermore, in other countries MSMEs/ CMSMEs are generally defined based on either quantitative or qualitative variables. Quantitative variables are expressed as the size of enterprises and their market share, and in monetary terms such as available finance, capital, turnover, asset value, profit, as well as quantitative indices like the number of employees. However, in Nigeria, MSMEs/ CMSMEs are only categorised based on their number of employees and total assets, excluding land (Etuk et al., 2014: 657).

Construction Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (CMSMEs) in Nigeria

There is growing recognition of the important role Construction Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (CMSMEs) play in economic development. They play a pivotal role through several pathways that go beyond job creation. They are growth-supporting sectors that not only contribute significantly to improving living standards, but they also bring substantial local capital formation and they handle driving innovation and competition in developing economies. Governments at all levels have undertaken initiatives to promote the growth and development of CMSMEs. The general perspective is that CMSMEs accelerate the attainment of broad socio-economic objectives. These include poverty reduction, employment generation and wealth creation. (Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria; National Bureau of Statistics, 2013: 5). However, poor innovation are negatively associated with the operations of some CMSMEs in

Nigeria (Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria; National Bureau of Statistics, 2013: 7)

Innovation

The working definition of innovation in this study: innovation is the use, application, or commercialisation of inventions, discoveries, creativities, new ideas, processes, products, or procedures that benefit individuals, groups, organisations, or societies (Cefis & Marsili, 2006: 7; Janeska-Iliev & Debarliev, 2015: 5). Moreover, innovation can be classified at, international, national, regional, firm or project levels (Aouad, Ozorhon & Abbott, 2010: 374). The innovative ability of CMSMEs is tested during the turbulence periods of new entry to and exit from the market, or turbulence in the market and the economy (Cefis & Marsili, 2006:8; Janeska-Iliev & Debarliev, 2015: 6). During the last thirty years, innovation has become a synonym for the development of nations, technological progress, and drivers of business success. Innovation is not simply the "creation of something new" but it is also a potential veritable panacea to CMSME problems, since problems points to lack of innovative solution or the need for creative responses (Kotsemir & Abroskin, 2013: 3). Hence, The benefits of innovation are realised by fully understanding the components of the whole innovation process, based on knowledge acquisition, transformation, and diffusion (Aouad, Ozorhon and Abbott, 2010: 389). Hence, the development of CMSMEs in each country should be pursued with efforts to improve the innovative capability and capacity of CMSMEs and to eliminate or reduce their constraints (Shakantu, 2012:265).

Success

There is no specific meaning or definition of a surviving and successful or growth-oriented business. However, percentage increases in revenue or the market share are considered as success (Doub, Edgcomb & Circle, 2005: 12). Success is often equated with the achievement of clearly defined and measurable goals and objectives in a business, firm or all sectors of human life (Komppula, 2004: 2). Similarly, business growth or success is defined as increases in business revenue or sales (Doub, Edgcomb & Circle, 2005: 11). Firm success is defined as the growth and financial performance of a firm measured in volume growth, relative change in net turnover value growth and relative change in equity. As a side condition, profit margins must be positive for a company to be classified as successful (Lingegård & Sandström, 1990: 3). Generally business success is said to be continued viability or longevity (Rogoff, Lee & Suh, 2004: 365).

METHODOLOGY

Two stage non-probabilistic sampling was adopted, comprising judgemental and snowballing sampling for stage one and two respectively. In stage one, participants were drawn by the researcher judgementally based on their innovation(s) and as indicated by the research working definition and in stage two, the sample size was expanded, using a snowballing sampling technique where the participants in stage one suggested other participants who had also been innovative. The data used for the research is basically qualitative primary data, collected from innovative CMSMEs through recorded interviews with structured open-ended questions, from 17 CMSMEs spanning 14 of the 19 states of the north. Data such as interviewees' profiles, firm profiles, and types of innovation were determined and developed

from the interviewee’s responses and based on deductive codes earlier developed from literature. Data were transcribed, open and axial coded. ATLAS.ti was used to code innovation types into percentage occurrence. The code occurrences were determined and categorised, and themes were developed. These themes were then subjected to analysis and interpretation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysed results of the innovative CMSMEs studied that have survived and succeeded over 3 to 41 years located in the northern region of Nigeria are presented below:

CMSME innovations

Working definitions adopted for the research include: innovation is the successful introduction of new technologies, products, services or procedures into the market or use (Goodland, Lindberg & Shorthouse, 2015: 2-3); innovation is the usage of or commercialisation of invention, creativity discovery or ideas (Massa & Testa 2008: 394). In addition, commercialisation, in particular, is known to be a critical part of the innovation process and a phase in which most innovations fail, (Aarikka-Stenroos, Sandberg & Lehtimäki, 2014: 365). Using these definitions, the results of data analysed shows (figure 5.10 and figure 5.11) that the predominate types of innovation among the CMSMEs in northern Nigeria are product innovation, management innovation and service innovation, with 11, 9, and 4 occurrences among the CMSMEs studied respectively. These represent 32%, 26% and 12% of the innovation occurrences apiece. Other innovations identified include, technological application innovation, incremental service innovation and logistics innovation with each type having 2 occurrences, representing 6% apiece, while customer co-creation innovation and process innovation each have 1 occurrence, representing 3% of the total occurrences.

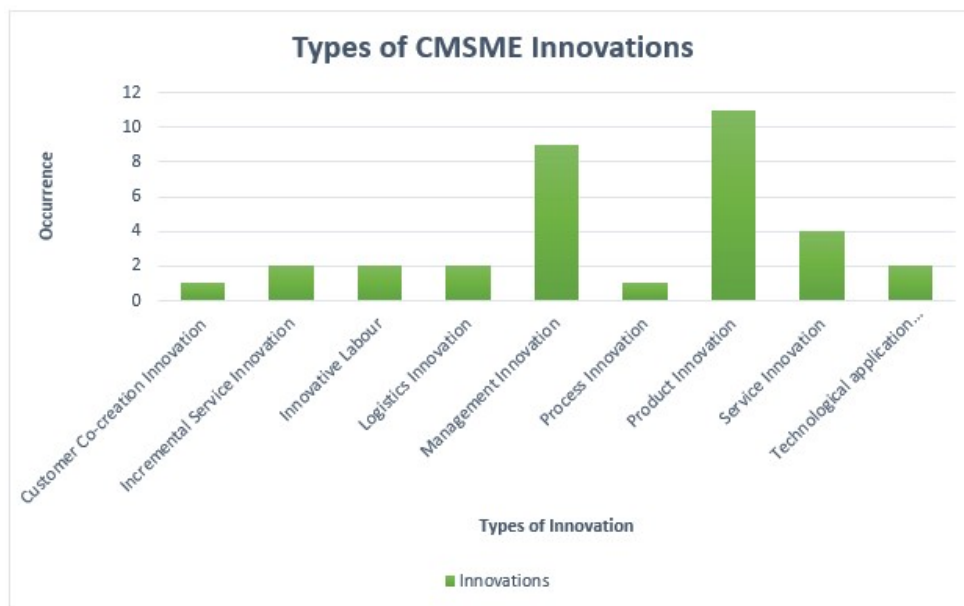


Figure 1: Types of CMSMEs Innovation
Source: Researcher's Field Survey

Interpretation of results

This section gives constructive meaning to the data analysed above in respect of the aim of this research as stated. The following interpretations can be reasoned from the data:

CMSMEs' Innovation

Data analysed presents Product Innovation as the most dominant type of innovation among the CMSMEs in northern Nigeria with a 32% occurrence. It is therefore inferred that Product innovation as part of and the most dominant type of CMSME innovation is consequentially the likely cause of logistic innovation and service innovation. While management innovation, process innovation, and technological application innovation are innovation outcomes that are associated with product innovation. This means that product innovation is not just dominant but the driver of all other forms of innovation in the CMSMEs in northern Nigeria. It is therefore safe to induce that innovations within the northern Nigeria CMSMEs are product-focused and product-driven. It therefore follows that CMSME activities and success are hinged on how innovatively they provide the product they offer their customers. Hence, failing CMSMEs that redirect their attention to product innovation are most likely to survive and succeed.

Discussion of findings

Findings from the analysed research data reveal the following types of innovations as predominant within the innovative CMSMEs studied located in the Northern part of Nigeria. The CMSMEs studied have their ages ranging from 3 to 41 years.

Product Innovation

Product innovation is a successfully developed, introduced, diffused and used product (Egmond, 2012: 188). The results from the analysed data reveal product innovation as the most dominant type of innovation within the studied CMSMEs located in the Northern part of Nigeria. This result is consistent with a study conducted by Haugbolle, Forman & Bougrain that draws data from five case studies from three different countries: Denmark, Sweden and France. From the cases studied, the research found the existence of product innovations in an industrial housing concept development firm and at Rockwool (Haugbolle, Forman & Bougrain, 2015: 128). Similarly, a research study in Finland by Koukkari & Orstavik found that product innovations were evident in all the ten construction companies studied (Koukkari & Orstavik, 2015: 192-194).

It has been postulated that construction production and production processes have a great deal to do with product innovation as it creates values (innovative products) along the processes of its production (Orstavik, 2015: 18). Hence, the quest for more efficient products and services and the pursuit of competitive advantages through novelty and innovation have shaped most construction businesses (Orstavik, Dainty & Abbott, 2015: 1). Consequently, product innovation (production) is typically carried out in enterprises whose survival depends on offering products for which alternatives may be available from a range of other competitors (Orstavik, Dainty & Abbott, 2015: 1). As a result, product innovation, characterised by innovatively creating novel values through waste and price reduction, becomes essential within competitive environments for enterprises to survive and flourish. (Orstavik, Dainty & Abbott, 2015: 1). In addition, product

Innovations further take place in the manufacturing of building materials, tools and equipment and the production of the built environment (Orstavik, 2015: 25).

Management innovation

The research results indicate that management innovation is among the most important types of innovation within the CMSMEs located in the northern part of Nigeria. This result is corroborated by the position of Orstavik, Dainty & Abbott in which they state that new business and management models, new ways of designing built structures and materials are emerging, demonstrating that much creative problem solving and innovations are taking place in the construction sector (Orstavik, Dainty & Abbott, 2015: 3). Similarly, Haugbolle, Forman & Bougrain found the existence of organisational innovations, which are closely related to management innovation, in industrial housing concept development firms, Kitchen Solutions, Accor Hotels and at Rockwool from their cases studied (Haugbolle, Forman & Bougrain, 2015: 128).

Service innovation

The result from the analysed data reveals service and incremental service innovation as one of the common types of innovation within the studied CMSMEs, located in the Northern part of Nigeria. This outcome validates the position of Egmond who postulated that the common types of innovations in the construction industry are incremental innovations (Egmond, 2012: 202).

Logistic innovation

The results indicate the occurrence of logistic innovation among the CMSMEs located in the Northern part of Nigeria. This result is in agreement with the research findings of Bygballe and Ingemansson which reveal that construction firms innovate comparatively often in the areas of planning and managing projects, construction process organisation and the handling of materials, workers and clients (Bygballe & Ingemansson, 2014: 521).

Technological application innovation

The research outcomes also identify Technological Application Innovation to be among the averagely prevalent types of innovation occurring within the existing CMSMEs in the northern part of Nigeria. This research outcome is further validated by the position of Egmond, where he induces that a considerable percentage of the construction innovations in developing countries entails new technologies adopted from somewhere and tailored to fit the local requirements and conditions (Egmond, 2012: 203). Further, studies have found that the capacity and the capability to innovate and rapidly adopt new technology is strongly correlated with the successful production and performance of a project and of a business (Egmond, 2012: 193).

Customer Co-Creation Innovation

Customer Co-Creation Innovation was found to be among the averagely existing types of innovation within the CMSMEs in northern Nigeria. Supporting this outcome is the position of Rose & Manley who argue that clients play a leading role in promoting product innovations in the construction industry through their behaviour and project expectations, and by adopting new products for their strategic value (Rose & Manley, 2015: 146). Similarly, clients are said to serve as catalysts that foster the diffusion of innovations in the construction value chain

(Wamelink & Heintz, 2015: 154). Hence, in a project, the client is a major driving force behind innovation and sometimes co-Innovation (Egmond, 2012: 202)

Process innovation

Process innovation is a successfully developed, introduced, diffused and used process (Egmond, 2012: 188). In the current study, process innovation was found to be among the low occurring types of innovation within the studied CMSMEs in northern Nigeria. This research outcome is consistent with the findings of Haugbolle, Forman & Bougrain who draw data from five case studies from three different countries: Denmark, Sweden and France. They found the existence of process innovations in a kitchen solutions' firm from among the construction firm cases studied (Haugbolle, Forman & Bougrain, 2015: 128). Process innovation was also identified by Fransen in his research (Fransen, 2013: 17)

CONCLUSION

This study has reached the conclusion that the predominant type of innovations within CMSMEs in the northern part of Nigeria are product innovations, management innovations and service innovations. These innovations are responsible for the CMSME success periods, sources of success and have made a significant contribution to their success over the years. This finding, therefore, implies that failing (closing shop) CMSMEs could focus on product innovativeness, management innovativeness and service innovativeness to boost their chances of survival and eventual success. Furthermore, product innovation is considered the likely trigger of other forms of innovations within CMSMEs, since other types of innovations are necessitated by product innovation as revealed by the study.

However, the researcher acknowledges any variation in the research design, research method, sampling technique, scope of data, source of data, data collection instrument and method of data analysis could result in altering the findings and the application of the findings in this research and hence, limit the research. Furthermore, the study is delimited to only the identification of types of innovations and not the characteristics and nature of the individual innovations. Hence, its limitation.

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