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Artificial Intelligence and Entrepreneurial Marketing Innovation as Drivers of National Economic Development: Evidence from Food and Beverage SMES in Port Harcourt

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Abstract

The rise of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has fundamentally changed marketing approaches, transforming how organizations connect with consumers, assess markets, and foster new ideas. This research investigates the impact of AI and entrepreneurial marketing creativity as catalysts for national economic development, specifically focusing on food and drink small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The study was anchored on the resource based view theory which posits that firm specific resources such as AI capabilities and marketing knowledge create sustainable competitive advantage that translates into economic growth. A descriptive survey approach was employed, targeting a selection of food and drink SMEs operating within the Port Harcourt metropolitan area. The population comprised 120 registered food and beverage SMEs operating in Port Harcourt as obtained from the Rivers State ministry of commerce and industry database (2025). Since the population was relatively small and accessible, a census approach was employed meaning that all 120 firms were included in the study. Structured questionnaires were distributed to one key managerial or marketing personnel across the firms, and 110 valid responses were successfully retrieved and analyzed, representing a response rate of 91%. The information was processed using descriptive statistics and inferential statistics using Pearson product moment correlation and results indicated that AI-powered marketing activities such as automated customer interaction, forecasting analytics, and customized promotion significantly improve entrepreneurial marketing success among SMEs. The research concludes that Artificial Intelligence acts as a vital facilitator of entrepreneurial marketing creativity and national economic development, particularly in emerging economies like Nigeria, where SMEs are the core of industrial expansion. It advises that government organizations, industry oversight bodies, and financial providers support the development of digital skills, offer AI-related funding opportunities, and encourage technological alliances to boost SME competitiveness and national development.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence; Entrepreneurial Marketing; National Development; Resource Based View Theory; Food and Beverage SMEs*

Introduction

The collective improvement in a nation's ability to produce, technological advancement, creation of jobs and general standard of living is known as national economic development (Coccia, 2019). It includes a consistent rise in a country's real per capita income fueled by innovation, industrialization, and effective use of its resources (Haraguchi, et al, 2019; Rodrik, & Stiglitz, 2025). Nigeria and other developing countries have been working to achieve consistent economic growth over the years, but a number of structural obstacles still exist, including low productivity, weak industrial ties, and a lack of widespread adoption of new technologies. The inventiveness and productivity of their entrepreneurial sectors, particularly small and medium-sized businesses, play a major role in how resilient and growing national economies are (Dias, et al 2022).

It is impossible to exaggerate the significance of national economic development. In addition to improving income generation and job opportunities, a robust economy also promotes social stability and technological advancement (Silalahi, & Walsh, 2023). Due to their substantial contributions to GDP, industrial diversification, and export growth, SMEs in Nigeria are essential to reaching these developmental objectives (Umar, Mukhtar, & Aziz, (2024). SMEs have the potential to promote sustainable development, but they face obstacles like low operational efficiency, limited access to modern technology, and poor marketing innovation, especially in the food and beverage industry (Prasanna, et al 2019). Thus, it has become a national and scholarly concern to understand how entrepreneurial marketing innovation and technological advancements, particularly Artificial Intelligence (AI), can spur economic growth.

Significant progress has been made in this field by earlier researchers. AI-driven systems boost productivity, optimize resource allocation, and create new business models that can boost national economies, according to studies by Abrokwah-Larbi, and Awuku-Larbi, (2024); Obschonka, and Audretsch, 2020). In a similar vein, Bickley, et al (2025); Tam, et al (2024); and Anser, et al (2024) emphasized the importance of entrepreneurial marketing innovation in determining firm competitiveness and market adaptability in emerging economies. Researchers like Adamu, et al (2020); Ukpabio, et al (2019); Ekong, et al (2023) and Bari, et al (2022) looked at how marketing innovation affected SME performance in Nigeria, but they found little evidence linking these practices to macroeconomic outcomes like national development. Despite these realizations, there is still a dearth of context-specific research that examines the ways in which SME operations in Port Harcourt's vibrant but little-studied food and beverage industry relate to the adoption of AI and innovative entrepreneurial marketing to the country's economic development.

The growing digitization of international markets and the discernible discrepancy between Nigeria's degree of technological integration and its entrepreneurial potential serve as the driving forces behind this study. The Port Harcourt food and beverage SMEs are a strategic focus since they account for a sizeable portion of local employment and consumer spending, but they frequently find it difficult to use data-driven technologies for strategic growth, marketing, and innovation. This study looks at how AI tools (like demand forecasting, chatbot marketing, and predictive analytics) interact with entrepreneurial marketing strategies in an effort to identify ways that these innovations can spur economic change.

The identified gap in the literature is the lack of empirical research that combines national economic development, entrepreneurial marketing innovation, and artificial intelligence in the context of SMEs in Nigeria. The majority of earlier research has addressed these factors separately, either concentrating on the use of AI in big businesses or looking at marketing innovation without making a connection to macroeconomic growth (Mitrache, et al 2024; Drago, et al 2025). This leaves a gap in our knowledge of the theoretical and empirical relationships between these constructs in emerging economies. The current study proposes entrepreneurial marketing innovation and artificial intelligence as predictor variables that can close this gap. It makes the case that SMEs may improve productivity, customer

interaction, and market flexibility by incorporating AI-driven decision-making into marketing innovation strategies. This will, in turn, greatly aid in the growth of the national economy. In order to show how digital transformation and entrepreneurial marketing can act as catalysts for inclusive and sustainable economic growth in Nigeria, the study presents empirical data from the food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt.

Statement of the Problem

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) make up a significant portion of Nigeria's GDP and create jobs, but their influence on the country's economic growth is still below ideal. A significant section of Port Harcourt's SME landscape is made up of the food and beverage industry, which still faces issues like low marketing creativity, ineffective production systems, poor market analytics, and limited technological integration. These issues limit the sector's capacity to spur widespread economic growth and impede competitiveness. While many countries are using entrepreneurial marketing innovations and artificial intelligence (AI) to achieve sustainable development and industrial efficiency, Nigerian SMEs are still in the early stages of implementing these game-changing technologies.

Due to their excessive reliance on manual decision-making and traditional marketing, the majority of food and beverage SMEs continue to have low levels of customer satisfaction and competitive advantage. Data-driven marketing tactics, consumer behaviour analytics, and AI-enabled systems that can predict demand, customize marketing messages, and optimize pricing decisions are not widely available to entrepreneurs. Businesses are unable to scale effectively and make a significant contribution to national productivity because of this technological lag. Because of this, the Nigerian economy is not fully benefiting from the knock-on effects of innovation, which include increased job creation, export expansion, and technological diffusion. As a result, the connection between enterprise-level innovation and the growth of the national economy is still poorly understood.

According to empirical research, marketing innovation and artificial intelligence (AI) can greatly improve company performance and market responsiveness (Abrokwah-Larbi, & Awuku-Larbi, 2024; Wu, & Monfort, 2023). However, there is very little evidence from emerging contexts like Nigeria, and the majority of these studies have been carried out in developed economies. Even within the Nigerian research landscape, the majority of the works that are currently available tend to concentrate on marketing innovation as a determinant of firm performance or on the adoption of AI in technology-based firms, without making any connections between these concepts and the larger framework of national economic development. This leaves a crucial knowledge gap about how AI-powered entrepreneurial marketing innovations can work together to boost economic growth by improving the performance of SMEs.

Conceptual Framework

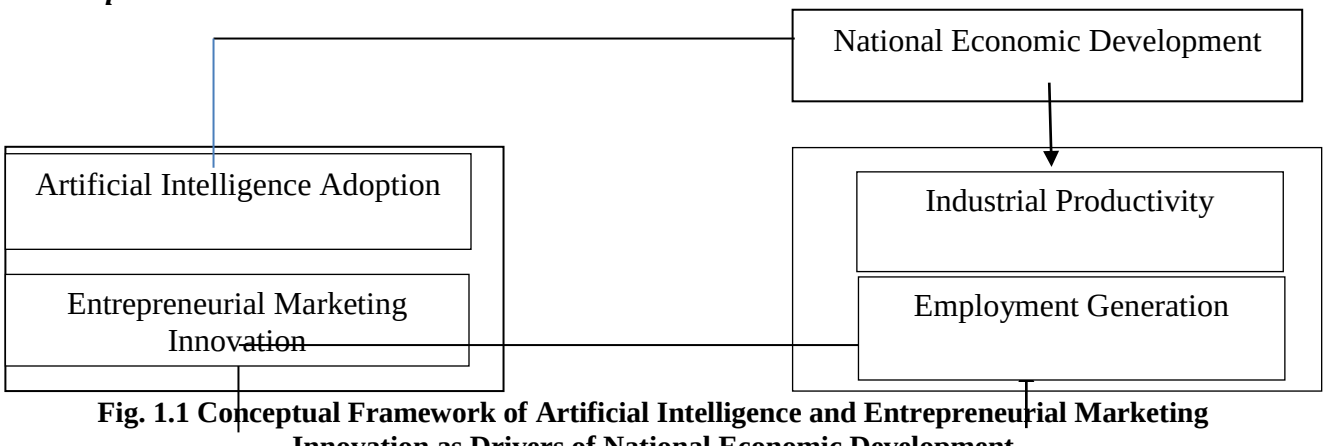

Fig. 1.1 Conceptual Framework of Artificial Intelligence and Entrepreneurial Marketing Innovation as Drivers of National Economic Development

Source: Olan et al. (2022); Sadiku-Dushi et al., (2019); Magaji, Musa, & Gombe, (2022).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to investigate the empirical relationship between artificial intelligence and entrepreneurial marketing innovation as drivers of national economic development, with specific evidence from food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt. The specific objectives are to:

i. Examine the extent to which artificial intelligence adoption influences the industrial productivity of food and beverages firms in Port Harcourt.
ii. Ascertain the extent to which artificial intelligence adoption influences the employment generation of food and beverages firms in Port Harcourt.
iii. Determine the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing and industrial productivity of food and beverages firms in Port Harcourt.
iv. Determine the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing and employment generation of food and beverages firms in Port Harcourt.

Research Questions

In line with the stated objectives, the study seeks to provide answers to the following research questions:

i. To what extent does artificial intelligence adoption influence the industrial productivity of food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt?

ii. What is the relationship between artificial intelligence adoption and employment generation of food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt?

iii. What is the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing innovation and industrial productivity of food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt?

iv. To what extent does entrepreneurial marketing innovation influence the employment generation of food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt?

Hypothesis of the Study

H_{01}: There is no significance relationship between artificial intelligence adoption and industrial productivity of food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt.

H_{02}: There is no significance relationship between artificial intelligence adoption and employment generation of food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt

H_{03}: There is no significance relationship between entrepreneurial marketing innovation and industrial productivity of food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt

H_{04}: There is no significance relationship between entrepreneurial marketing innovation and employment generation of food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt

Review of Related Literature

Artificial Intelligence Adoption: According to Olan et al. (2022), artificial intelligence (AI) is the process of acquiring and expressing information, with the main goal being to enable machines to reason and carry out associated tasks including learning, problem-solving, and decision-making. According to Ebuka et al. (2023), it is the capacity of machines to perform tasks that intelligent humans can. Similar to this, Arakpogun, Elsahn, Olan, and Elsahn (2021) contend that artificial intelligence (AI) is a group of

communication and information technologies that mimic human intelligence. It makes it possible for robots to carry out cognitive tasks that were previously limited to human minds (Rai, Constantinides, & Sarker, 2019). It is thought to be a machine model technology that may easily enhance human intelligence by carrying out technological tasks ranging from basic to sophisticated and complex (Dellermann et al., 2021; Chamorro-Premuzic, Polli & Dattner, 2019). AI's implementation and applications in business are felt in a variety of ways. Business applications such as automation, data analytics, and natural language processing make extensive use of it (Kabir, 2025). According to Basri (2020), Chan et al. (2019), Verma et al. (2024), Alam & Shabbir (2022), Doe & Smith (2025), and others, it can be used to track user habits, make recommendations, improve customer purchasing decisions and search results, communicate media, increase trade sales, improve organizational performance, and reduce costs. It enhances content marketing, optimizes decision-making, and improves user experience (Verma et al., 2024).

Entrepreneurial Marketing Innovation: Since its introduction in 1982, the notion of Entrepreneurial Marketing (EM) has been defined by a number of academics (Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019). According to Daniela (2012), entrepreneurial marketing (EM) is a set of procedures used to generate, convey, and provide value while employing extremely unstable business conditions and sound reasoning. EM is also linked to opportunities, according to Becherer et al. (2012), who defined it as a business's marketing strategy that looks for opportunities under unpredictable market conditions, frequently with little resources. Both definitions draw attention to the unpredictability that businesses encounter when marketing. Another viewpoint stresses stable conditions in addition to uncertainty. According to Morrish and Jones (2020), entrepreneurial marketing is a set of activities that result from entrepreneurial decisions and actions to pursue business goals in both stable and volatile environments. It combines opportunity-seeking behaviour, resource organisation, and risk acceptance to create value for multiple stakeholders. An assortment of creative, proactive, and daring activities might also be considered entrepreneurial marketing. Consumers, marketers, companies, partners, and society at large can all benefit from its creation, communication, and delivery of value (Whalen et al., 2016).

National Economic Development: There are qualitative as well as quantitative aspects to the concept of economic growth. Quantitative features reveal shifts in the quantity of products and services produced, reflecting the dynamics of these shifts, while qualitative characteristics highlight the economic system's potential to meet society's expanding needs (Musa, Ismail & Magaji, 2024). Due to the dynamic and non-static nature of the process, it always has a numerical index for a given date. Economic growth is defined by a number of processes, including GDP, national income, gross national product (GNP), and other absolute macroeconomic measures. Economic growth is defined by quantitative measurements such as GDP per capita, per capita disposable income, and per capita indices of consumption, savings, and investments among the population (Magaji, Musa, and Salisu 2022). Indicators of economic efficiency, such as labour productivity, are also taken into consideration, together with the rates of increase in industrial production overall and for the primary industries and product kinds (Magaji, Musa, & Gombe, 2022).

Living standards and quality of life metrics determine the qualitative component of economic growth (ElYaqub, Musa & Magaji, 2024). The level of services development (the number of doctors per 10,000 people, the number of hospital beds per 1,000 people, etc.); the state of the labour forces (average life expectancy, level of education, share of education expenditure in GDP, etc.); the consumer basket, cost of living, GDP structure by use, and other factors are used to estimate the living standard. The quality of life is reflected in the surroundings, the way social institutions operate, the amount of work and leisure activities, and more (Ibrahim & Sule, 2023). According to Todaro & Smith (2015), economic growth is the ongoing process by which the economy's productive capacity is increased over time to produce higher levels of national production and revenue.

Industrial Productivity: Industrial productivity is the measure of how well provides like labor, capital, energy, and raw materials are turned into outputs in manufacturing and other industrial activities. Labor

productivity, and multifactor productivity indices (Ahmed, & Bhatti, 2020) are all common ways to measure it. Productivity growth is widely acknowledged as a fundamental factor influencing industrial competitiveness, economic expansion, and sustained development (Vîrjan, et al., 2023).

Employment Generation: Creating new jobs in an economy is what employment generation means. This lets people do useful things and make money that will last. A main goal of economic development policy is to reduce unemployment and underemployment, which are still big problems in developing countries (Ajayi, Musa, & Ismail, 2024). Creating jobs is closely linked to economic growth, the growth of industries, and the growth of entrepreneurship.

Theoretical Foundation:

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory: Wernerfelt (1984) and Barney (1991) developed the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which offers a fundamental framework for comprehending how businesses acquire and maintain a competitive edge by means of their internal resources and capabilities. According to the RBV, a company's unique resources those that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) have a significant impact on its long-term performance and organizational success (Sun, et al 2024). Businesses are able to create unique competencies that are difficult for rivals to imitate thanks to these strategic resources. The RBV provides an effective theoretical explanation for how food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt can use internal resources technological, human, and intellectual to spur innovation, competitiveness, and ultimately, national economic development in the context of artificial intelligence (AI) and entrepreneurial marketing innovation (Edobor, & Agbadudu, 2024). According to the RBV viewpoint, SMEs' capacity to successfully use AI is dependent on both their integration and exploitation skills as well as their availability of technology. Businesses that invest in developing AI competencies like digital literacy, data analytics, and innovation management create internal resources that are rare (few competitors have them), valuable (they increase efficiency and profitability), unique (they require complex and path-dependent knowledge), and non-replaceable (they are hard to replace by other means) (Alzaghal et al, 2024; Jorzik, et al 2023). These features allow businesses to provide customers with better value while increasing productivity and profitability, which makes AI-driven marketing capabilities a source of long-term competitive advantage.

Empirical Review

Igani, (2023) studied artificial intelligence and customer patronage of food and beverages firms in Port Harcourt. The study's primary goal is to determine how artificial intelligence (AI) and consumer preference for Port Harcourt's food and beverage businesses relate to one another. Twelve Port Harcourt-based food and beverage businesses made up the study's population. The correlational research design was employed. Pearson product moment correlation was used to assess the hypotheses, and SPSS version 21.0 was used as an additional tool. The findings showed a strong correlation between artificial intelligence and the patronage of Port Harcourt's food and beverage businesses.

Taiwo, Adesoba, and Kayode, (2024) studied the digital technology adoption and performance of small and medium enterprises in food, drink and beverages industries in Ondo state, Nigeria. Using a multi-stage sampling technique, the study was conducted in the majority of Ondo State's highly concentrated business districts. Four hundred (400) questionnaires were given to the employees and owner-managers of the chosen Food, Drink, and Beverages SMEs. Three hundred and fifty (350) of the questionnaires that were sent were deemed useful for the study, accounting for 88% of the total. Frequency tables, percentages, and mean scores were used to code and analyse the data, and the non-parametric statistical test (ANOVA) was used to test the hypothesis. According to the study, there is a substantial correlation between the performance of SMEs in Ondo State, Nigeria, and the use of digital technology, and the latter has a beneficial effect on the performance of a subset of these businesses.

Therefore, it suggests that in order to encourage the growth of ICT in the contemporary corporate world, the three levels of government should establish an enabling environment by providing basic necessities.

Amadi, and Abule, (2024) investigated digital innovation and sales performance of food products manufacturing SMES in Nigeria. To answer the study's goals, six (6) research questions and hypotheses were created. The study used a correlational research design and positivist research philosophy. The 2,763 manufacturing SMEs in Nigeria that engage in e-commerce made up the study's population. This study used a sample size of 349 SMEs. The Taro Yamene formula was used to calculate the sample size. The entrepreneurs of the chosen food product manufacturing SMEs that engage in e-commerce made up the sample unit. The method of purposive sampling was used. Data was obtained from the respondents using a standardized questionnaire. The acquired data was statistically analyzed, and the hypotheses were tested using the Spearman Rank Order Correlation Coefficient (rho). SPSS version 24 was used to help with the correlation analysis. The results showed that the growth in sales volume and sales income of SMEs in Nigeria that manufacture food goods is significantly correlated with artificial intelligence. Therefore, it is advised that Nigerian SMEs who manufacture food goods embrace digital innovations like cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and the internet of things since these will boost their sales.

Makinde, Ayodeji, Olubiyi, & Akinlabi, (2025) studied enhancing SME performance through artificial intelligence in Africa. With 2,603 owners-managers of manufacturing SMEs in Lagos and Ogun States, Nigeria, this study used a survey research design. The Cochran formula was used to determine a sample size of 436. The sampling method was multi-stage. Data was gathered using a standardized and organized questionnaire. The constructions' Cronbach's alpha coefficients varied from 0.726 to 0.900. The percentage of responses was 88.30%. Multiple and hierarchical regression were used to analyze the data. The results showed that artificial intelligence greatly mitigated the impact of disruptive technology on performance, while disruptive technology had a major impact on the performance of a subset of manufacturing SMEs. Therefore, it is advised that managers and owners embrace technology, especially artificial intelligence, to improve performance.

Methodology

Our study is categorized as a quasi or non-experimental research because the researcher collected information through the issuance of structured questionnaire. A descriptive survey approach was employed, targeting a selection of food and drink SMEs operating within the Port Harcourt metropolitan area. The population comprised 120 registered food and beverage SMEs operating in Port Harcourt as obtained from the Rivers State ministry of commerce and industry database (2025). Since the population was relatively small and accessible, a census approach was employed meaning that all 120 firms were included in the study. Structured questionnaires were distributed to one key managerial or marketing personnel across the firms, and 110 valid responses were successfully retrieved and analyzed, representing a response rate of 91%. The structured questionnaire items underwent reliability testing to assess the level of consistency among the measurement scales. A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or higher was deemed acceptable for assessing reliability, signifying that the instrument consistently evaluated the constructs of interest. The instrument's validity was confirmed via face and content validity assessments. Experts in business management and research methodology looked over the questionnaire to make sure that the questions were clear, relevant, and appropriate for measuring the study variables. The Pearson product moment correlation was used to analyze the study's data and test its hypotheses with the help of SPSS version 25.0.

Data Analysis and Results

Artificial Intelligence Adoption and National Economic Development

H_{01}: There is no significance relationship between artificial intelligence adoption influence the industrial productivity of food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt

H_{02}: There is no significance relationship between artificial intelligence adoption and employment generation of food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt

			Artificial Intelligence Adoption	Industrial Productivity	Employment Generation
Pearson Rho	Artificial Intelligence Adoption	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.835**	.884**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	110	110	110
	Industrial Productivity	Correlation Coefficient	. 835**	1.000	.893**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	110	110	110
	Employment Generation	Correlation Coefficient	. 884**	. 893**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	110	110	110

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

The association between artificial intelligence adoption and measures of national economic development such as industrial productivity and employment generation are experiential to be significant at a Pv < 0.05 in the hypotheses. The result shows that artificial intelligence adoption has a strong significant relationship and positively correlates with industrial productivity at a Rho = 0.835 and a Pv = 0.000 and artificial intelligence adoption further contributes strong and positive correlation towards employment generation at a Rho = 0.884 and a Pv = 0.000. Therefore, we reject null hypotheses one relating to artificial intelligence adoption of industrial productivity and employment generation, because the Pv (0.000) <0.05 level of significance.

Entrepreneurial Marketing Innovation and National Economic Development

H_{03}: There is no significance relationship between entrepreneurial marketing innovation and industrial productivity of food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt

H_{04}: There is no significance relationship between entrepreneurial marketing innovation influence the employment generation of food and beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt

			Entrepreneurial Marketing Innovation	Industrial Productivity	Employment Generation
Pearson Rho	Entrepreneurial Marketing Innovation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.886**	.896**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000
		N	110	110	110
	Industrial Productivity	Correlation Coefficient	. 886**	1.000	. 813**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000
		N	110	110	110
	Employment Generation	Correlation Coefficient	. 896**	. 813**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.
		N	110	110	110

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: SPSS Output, 2025

The association between entrepreneurial marketing innovation and measures of national economic development such as industrial productivity and employment generation are experiential to be significant at a Pv < 0.05 in the hypotheses. The result shows that entrepreneurial marketing innovation has a strong significant relationship and positively correlates with industrial productivity at a Rho = 0.886 and a Pv = 0.000 and entrepreneurial marketing innovation further contributes strong and positive correlation towards employment generation at a Rho = 0.896 and a Pv = 0.000. Therefore, we reject null hypotheses relating to entrepreneurial marketing innovation of industrial productivity and employment generation, because the Pv (0.000) <0.05 level of significance.

Discussions of Findings

According to the results of the study Artificial Intelligence and Entrepreneurial Marketing Innovation as Drivers of National Economic Development: Evidence from Food and Beverage SMEs in Port Harcourt, adopting new technologies and using creative marketing techniques can boost firm performance and advance the macro economy.

The findings showed how artificial intelligence (AI) has transformed small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in the food and beverage industry by impacting their strategic decision-making, customer engagement, and marketing effectiveness. According to the analysis, businesses that implemented AI-driven technologies like chatbots, data-driven marketing automation, predictive analytics, and CRM systems saw increases in customer satisfaction, productivity, and operational efficiency. These findings corroborate the assumptions of the RBV viewpoint, that SMEs' capacity to successfully use AI is dependent on both their integration and exploitation skills as well as their availability of technology. Businesses that invest in developing AI competencies like digital literacy, data analytics, and innovation management create internal resources that are rare (few competitors have them), valuable (they increase efficiency and profitability), unique (they require complex and path-dependent knowledge), and non-replaceable (they are hard to replace by other means) (Alzaghal et al , 2024; Jorzik, et al 2023).

The study also discovered that innovation in entrepreneurial marketing contributes to the competitiveness and performance of businesses. AI is typically used more successfully by entrepreneurs whose marketing strategies exhibit innovation, initiative, and a willingness to take risks. These businesses use technology as a strategic asset in addition to a practical tool for creating new goods, breaking into unexplored markets, and customizing customer experiences. The results are consistent with the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, which highlights that important factors influencing competitive advantage are internal capabilities and distinctive resources, such as managerial experience, creative marketing abilities, and technological know-how. Adoption of AI improved the strategic resources of numerous SMEs in Port Harcourt by facilitating data-driven decision-making, lowering information asymmetry, and improving market intelligence.

Conclusion

Using data from Port Harcourt's food and beverage SMEs, this study investigated the role of entrepreneurial marketing innovation and artificial intelligence (AI) as major forces behind national economic development. The results unequivocally show that SMEs' performance, competitiveness, and sustainability are greatly improved by the inclusion of AI technologies and creative marketing techniques, all of which support overall economic expansion. SMEs can boost decision-making, enhance customer satisfaction, and streamline operations by implementing AI tools like digital marketing platforms, predictive analytics, and automated customer engagement systems. These actions all result in higher productivity and profitability. The study's empirical findings showed that SMEs in the food and beverage industry that successfully incorporated AI technologies outperformed those that didn't in terms of growth, customer retention, and operational efficiency. These advancements have a cascading effect on indicators of national development like the creation of jobs, the spread of technology, and higher industrial productivity. But the study also found a number of barriers to the adoption of AI, such as high implementation costs, a dearth of digital infrastructure, and a lack of technical know-how. These obstacles highlight the necessity of increased institutional assistance and governmental action to establish a supportive atmosphere for the digital transformation of SMEs. In conclusion, innovative marketing strategies and artificial intelligence have become crucial pillars of contemporary corporate success and the growth of the national economy.

Recommendations

In alignment with the findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proffered.

i. It advises that government organizations, industry oversight bodies, and financial providers support the development of digital skills, offer AI-related funding opportunities, and encourage technological alliances to boost SME competitiveness and national development.
ii. SME owners ought to foster an environment that encourages innovation, experimentation, and creativity. It is important to support entrepreneurs in taking measured chances and utilizing AI insights to investigate new marketing approaches that will foster national development.

Suggestions for Further Studies

i. Future research should go beyond Port Harcourt to include SMEs in other parts of Nigeria or even compare various states or geopolitical zones.
ii. Future studies could examine additional factors that mediate or moderate the connection between economic development, entrepreneurial marketing innovation, and AI adoption.

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