
ENTREPRENEURIAL MARKETING AND HOSPITALITY BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY IN POST COVID-19, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing and hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. It was hypothesized that entrepreneurial marketing has no significant effect on hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State. A survey research design was adopted in the study. The population of the study was 1,880 while the sample size was 330 determined through Taro Yamane formula. The questionnaire was the main instrument used in data collection. The instrument recorded 78% response rate. Data analysis was done with multiple regressions. Findings of the study showed that entrepreneurial orientation (Beta =3.138, $t=3.017$, $p<0.05$) had the greatest influence on hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State; customer orientation (Beta 1.003, $t=2.143$, $p<0.05$) was second and innovation orientation (Beta =1.064, $t=2.011$, $p<0.05$) came third. It was concluded that entrepreneurial marketing had a significant influence on hospitality business sustainability, hence, can predict hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State. It was recommended that hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom State (AKS) should improve upon their customer orientation through interacting more with them; work upon their entrepreneurial orientation through taking calculated risks and work towards improving their innovative orientation through continuous innovation so as to bring newness to their business and customers that will facilitate continued operations and sustainability.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial marketing, Hospitality business sustainability, Customer orientation, Entrepreneurial orientation, Innovation orientation and Akwa Ibom State (AKS).

1.0 INTRODUCTION

In present-day business environment characterized by increased dynamism and heightened competition, the capacity of businesses of all classes to ensure their long term success and performance constitutes a serious challenge. Akpan and Uford (2023) opine that business

sustainability and performance is dynamic, and should be measured based on the unique nature of business. Thus, all classes of businesses should have the ability to formulate appropriate marketing practices that can bring about a differentiation of its strategy deployed in the achievement of high and sustained performance so as to engender its continuity in business. However, Nigussie (2014) posits that so many businesses face several specific marketing challenges that cannot be addressed with general marketing tools but by the right mix of entrepreneurial mindset, innovation, characteristics and approaches which are attributes of entrepreneurial marketing.

Entrepreneurial Marketing is associated with marketing activities of firms that are resource constrained, making such firms to rely on creative and often unsophisticated marketing tactics that make heavy use of personal networks (Naelati, and SobrotulImti, 2014). Jones and Rowley (2011) conceptually modeled entrepreneurial marketing to comprise four key variables namely market orientation, customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and innovation orientation. This philosophical standpoint is operationalized through focus on ‘orientations’. Furthermore, Rodríguez, Gómez and Ortiz (2019) conceptualized entrepreneurial marketing as an orientation with three variables; risk-taking, innovativeness and pro-activeness orientations. Following the thoughts of these authors and the need to settle for variables that constitute the key themes in entrepreneurial marketing literature, three variables namely; customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and innovation orientation were selected in this study.

Entrepreneurial dimension of market orientation deals with how the business uses marketing intelligence in responding to developments in the market. The customer orientation dimension is focused on creating products and services that possess superior value. The entrepreneurial dimension is concerned with the risk taking posture of the business. The innovation orientation dimension deals with how innovative the business is. These practices may have implication on business sustainability.

Business sustainability has been variously defined. Colbert and Kurucz (2007) identify the colloquial definition of sustainability as being to keep the business going with its operations. Boudreau and Ramstad (2005) see it as achieving success today without compromising the needs of the future. In recent times, businesses sustainability has been defined as the development which satisfies the present consumer needs without threatening future generations’ opportunities to satisfy their own needs (Kuznetsova & Balabash, 2015). Business sustainability would therefore, be desirable in all sectors of an economy. In view of its importance, one area of the economy that would require entrepreneurial marketing is the hospitality business.

The hospitality business has emerged as a driver of the economy in most countries of the world (Uford, Effiong & Charles, 2023). This is in agreement with Etuk and Ekong (2016) that posit that organisations in high-end hospitality strive to meet the immense expectation of the customers they serve. However owing to the recent outbreak of Covid-19, the economic

meltdown that ensued had the hospitality industry as one of its biggest casualties of low operational activities and resulting low returns on marketing investment, losses on revenue, high labour turnover and low market shares. This generated a strong need for hotel owners and managers to embark on aggressive entrepreneurial marketing towards business recovery that may facilitate its operational sustainability.

The conventional marketing practices have been applied in quite a number of instances to recover businesses from total collapse. However, increasing environmental hostility and dynamism seem to weaken the effectiveness of such practices, calling for rethinking strategies that would meet changing business realities. In a post COVID-19 era, businesses are operating in an increasing turbulent environment that may not likely be successfully approached with traditional marketing (Uford, Charles & Ekong, 2022). It is no wonder that quite a number of businesses across different business sectors have not been able to realize their set goals. For instance in the hospitality business, some hotels in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria have lost frequent patronage, experienced a drop in high market shares, recorded low returns on their investment and generally experience serious threat to their continued operations.

While some studies have been conducted in this area, quite a number of them were focused on large companies and in developed countries of the world. As at date, not much have been done in this research area in Nigeria; in particular, the hospitality business, in spite of its contributions to the country's economic activities, is yet to receive the kind of research attention that it deserves in this emerging research area. There is a pressing need to conduct a similar study in Nigeria; this may broaden knowledge of entrepreneurial marketing as an orientation with implications on the hospitality business sustainability. It was hypothesized that entrepreneurial marketing has no significant effect on hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State.

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 Entrepreneurial Marketing

Entrepreneurial marketing is seen as an area in marketing with concepts and disciplines that create interrelationships between marketing and entrepreneurship. This implies that these two concepts have the capacity of influencing each other. At present, entrepreneurial marketing lacks a generally agreed definition. Ionitã (2012) defines entrepreneurial marketing as proactively identifying and exploiting opportunities for the acquisition and retention of profitable customers leveraging on innovative approaches to the risk management resource leveraging and value creation. Itodo (2015) opines that entrepreneurial practices should also involve a process by which firms can develop strategies which would empower them to anticipate as well as respond to business environment changes in an innovative manner. It is believed that such an effort would result in improving business competitiveness and performance. Another definition of the concept is as offered by Schindehutte and Morris (2010)

who in their opinion see entrepreneurial marketing as comprising the total integration between marketing and entrepreneurship. The authors believe that the possession of higher entrepreneurial marketing capabilities would result in improvement in business development and sustainability.

2.2 Elements of Entrepreneurial Marketing

Jones and Rowley (2011) are of the view that entrepreneurial marketing elements should be operationalized through a focus on four 'orientations'. These orientations constitute the elements of entrepreneurial marketing.

i. Customer Orientation

The Customer Orientation element of entrepreneurial marketing has its roots in early services marketing literature. This was an era where the importance of customer-focused employees was seen as a tangible sign of quality for businesses and services rendered by it (Gronroos, 1982). Ever since, the concept of customer orientation has attracted quite a number of research interests. Indeed, some authors view customer orientation, as the 'pillar of marketing' (Slater and Narver, 1995). Having customer orientation requires sufficient understanding to create products or services of superior value.

ii. Entrepreneurial orientation

Entrepreneurial personality traits that are identified in the body of entrepreneurship literature largely inform the entrepreneurial orientation constructs. Therefore, the dimensions of risk taking, pro-activeness and innovation are often incorporated (Covin and Slevin, 2011). These authors propose that researches in entrepreneurial orientation should include culture, innovation, risk taking and pro-active-ness. For Khandwalla (2013), sub-constructs of entrepreneurial orientation should include innovation and pro-activeness, entrepreneurial proclivity and a propensity for risk taking.

iii Innovation orientation

Entrepreneurship literature has identified a relationship between innovation and performance of business (Hills and Hultman, 2011; Ekong, Mfon and Ibok, 2023).

The authors propose that the practice of continuous innovation remains an ever-present element of entrepreneurial marketing. The author sees an in-depth approach to entrepreneurial marketing as taking into account, the characteristics of the entrepreneur, whereby marketing and entrepreneurship are seen to have three areas of interface: change focused; opportunistic in nature; and innovative in their approach to management. Kelson (2014) describes an entrepreneur as 'an innovator or developer who recognizes and seizes opportunities, converts those opportunities into workable/marketable ideas, adds value through time, effort, money or

skills, assumes the risks of the competitive marketplace to implement these ideas and realizes the rewards from these efforts’. Hills and Hultman (2011) describe entrepreneurial marketing characteristics of innovativeness to reflect such activities as ‘a flexible, customization approach to market’ and ‘innovation in products, services and strategies.

iv. Market Orientation

Market Orientation has been established to have a positive influence on business performance. Some researchers found this from their studies (Narver and Slater, 1999). The literature on market orientation has provided a variety of definitions of market orientation; however, Kohli and Jaworski (1990) adopt a behavioural perspective, using marketing intelligence rather than a customer focus as the central element. In contrast, the definition by Narver and Slater (1999) is based on a cultural perspective, identifying three behavioural components: customer orientation; competitor orientation; and inter-functional coordination. These authors hint that both models are rigorously tested for reliability in large firms research but opinion remains divided as to which is the more suitable. In the business environment, a lot of developments take place on a daily basis. These development impact on business operations and should be monitored.

2.3 Business Sustainability

Business sustainability captures programs, initiatives and actions by an entrepreneur aimed at the preservation of a particular resource. In extant literature, sustainability has three key variables; social, economic and environmental sustainability. Human sustainability aims to maintain and improve the human capital in the society. Social sustainability is concerned with preserving social capital by investing and creating services that constitute the framework of the society. Social sustainability focuses on maintaining and improving social quality with concepts such as cohesion, reciprocity and honesty and the importance of relationships amongst people (Diesendorf, 2010). Economic sustainability aims deals with maintenance of capital intact and also improves the standard of living. It entails efficient use of assets to maintain company profitability over time (Benn et al., 2014). Environmental sustainability targets improvement of human welfare through the protection of natural capital.

2.4 The Research Model

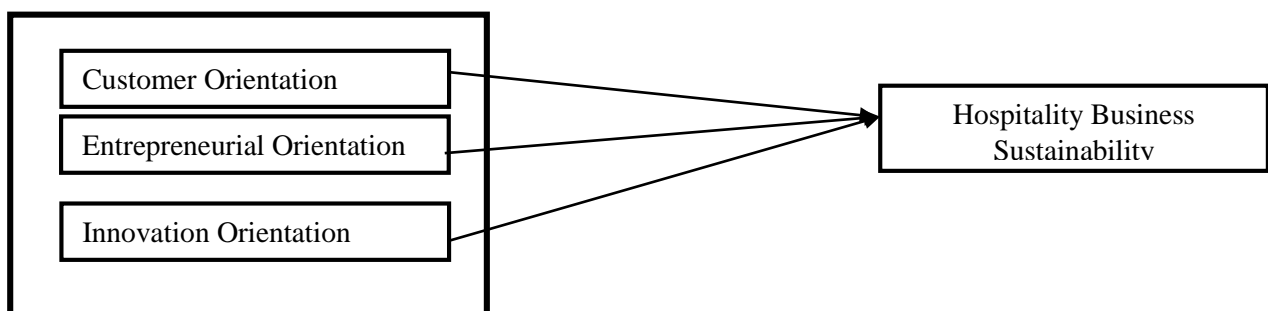


Figure 2: The Research Model

Source: Researcher's Conceptualization (2022)

3.0 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The conduct of this study was guided by two theories, Entrepreneurship Innovation Theory and Marketing Orientation Theory.

i. Entrepreneurship Innovation Theory

The Entrepreneurial Innovation Theory is credited to Schumpeter (1939). According to this author, entrepreneurship is the fourth factor of production; it is a catalyst of economic performance and revitalization in an economy. The author reasons that an entrepreneur is someone who is innovative, creative as well as foresight. Innovation and enterprise are concerned mainly with producing new combinations. This theory argues that entrepreneurs introduce innovativeness to their business; that entrepreneurs swim against the stream so as to bring about newness in terms of new products and methods, develop markets, look for other raw material sources, re-organize the market. The work of an entrepreneur increases survival rate of businesses (Schumpeter, 1939).

ii. Marketing Orientation Theory (Narver and Slater, 1990).

This theory was conceived to show how businesses interact with its customers as well as its competitors; or put differently, how businesses deal with its external environment. Hills and Hultman (2011) were able to establish that marketing processes in entrepreneurial marketing were different from traditional marketing mix variables. This implied that entrepreneurial marketing was different in its approach to marketing mix elements of price, place, promotion, and product. However, these authors considered entrepreneurial marketers as living continuously with the market, and their vision; with customer preferences in their minds; and that they also constantly think ways of improving customer value. As reasoned by Jones and Rowley (2011), as a concept, marketing orientation has emerged as a key contributor to business performance. The authors are of the opinion that there is an on-going interaction taking place among entrepreneurship, innovation and marketing which translates into improved business performance and competitive advantage. The use of Entrepreneurship innovation theory and Market Orientation Theory in this study was considered proper since it captures critical issues in business survival and sustenance, particularly, those of customers, competitors, and innovation and generally the external environment.

4.0 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

Olannye and Edward (2016) carried out an investigation on entrepreneurial marketing and competitive advantage of quick service restaurants in Asaba, Delta State, Nigeria and found

that entrepreneurial marketing had a significant influence on competitive advantage. Kamau (2016) was interested in the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing orientation and competitive advantage of mobile service providers in the context of Kenya with entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation; strategic orientation and resource leveraging as sub-variables of entrepreneurial marketing. Results showed that entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation; strategic orientation had a significant relationship with competitive advantage while resource leveraging did not.

Hamali et al (2016) surveyed entrepreneurial marketing and innovation and its impact on marketing performance and financial performance of wearing apparel small industries in Indonesia and established that entrepreneurial marketing impacted innovation and that working jointly with innovation, both significantly determined the performance of businesses. Rodríguez, Gómez and Ortiz (2019) in their investigation found that risk taking orientation and innovation orientation of entrepreneurial marketing had a significant influence on performance; a third variable, pro-activeness orientation did not have an influence on performance. Hamali (2015) evaluated how entrepreneurial marketing impacted small business performance in the garment industry in Indonesia. Findings of this study indicated that all investigated variables, value creation, resources leveraging, pro-activeness and customer intensity can predict the performance of firms in the Indonesian garment industry.

Furthermore, Becherer et. al.(2012) in their study on entrepreneurial marketing and business success revealed that proactiveness, leveraging, opportunity focused, risk taking, innovativeness, customer intensity, and value creation, all elements of entrepreneurial marketing influenced business success differently. Again, Lekovic and Maric (2015) who investigated entrepreneurial marketing and business success found the existence of correlation between subjective and objective performance indicators of success such as; survival, growth, profitability and development. Also, Hacıoglu, et al. 2012 who carried out a study on entrepreneurial marketing and innovative performance, established that pro-activeness, innovativeness, customer intensity, resource leveraging dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing were positively related with innovative performance. in Turkey. Furthermore, Fabian, et al. 2022 in their research on entrepreneurial marketing and SMEs growth in post COVID-19 era, revealed that need-oriented marketing and technology-driven marketing are pivotal to the growth and sustainability of SMEs in the post-Covid-19 era. Again, Anetohetal (2022) found that entrepreneurial marketing had a significant and positive influence on sustainability of plastic manufacturing firms.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

The survey research design was used in this study and this involved gathering information from hotels on entrepreneurial marketing and hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19, Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. The Population of this study consisted of all the employees of the registered hotels in the three senatorial districts (Eket, Uyo and Ikot Ekpene) of Akwa Ibom

State of Nigeria. There are twenty one (24) registered hotels across the three senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom State, obtained from the database of registered hotels (AKS Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment, 2022). According to the database of registered hotels in the three senatorial districts of Akwa Ibom State, there are 1,880 employees, including the marketing managers. Thus, the population known for the study is 1,880.

In determining the sample size for this study, Taro Yamen's (1967) model was used and this resulted in 330 as sample size. A multiple stage sampling technique was used in the study. In selecting the 330 respondents, the simple random sampling method was employed.

The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire which had two sections, (section A and B). Section 'A' contained the demographic data of respondents, while section 'B' elicited information from the main variables; entrepreneurial marketing and hospitality business sustainability. The variables were measured using Five-point Likert-type scale of Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) and Undecided (UN) to which values 5, 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively were assigned.

A proportionate stratified random sampling was subsequently adopted to select seven (7) hotels in Uyo city (Amity, K-Orbit Galaxy hotel, Summit Hotel G, Monty Suites, Davok, Uranus, and De-castle hotels), representing (58.33%); three (3) hotels (Eden, Jerrycare and Royalty) in Eket city, representing (25%), two (2) hotels (Grand Decent and Fresh Spring) in Ikot Ekpene, representing (16.67%). Cities with higher number of hotels were accorded a higher number of sampling. In selecting the 330 respondents, the simple random sampling method was employed. In this method, a hat-and-draw method was adopted, where pieces of paper were numbered and wrapped and the respondents were asked to pick at random in each of the twelve hotels selected for this study. Each element of the frame thus had an equal probability of selection. This allowed all staff to have equal chance of being selected without bias.

The face and content validation of the instrument was done by three experts selected from different fields. The observations and suggestions of the experts were put into consideration in the final draft of the instrument. To determine the internal consistency of the instrument, a reliability estimate test was conducted by administering copies of the instrument to 30 employees of hotels outside the ones that took part in the final survey. Their responses were collected and data analyzed using Cronbach Alpha, as recommended with a threshold of 0.70 by (Etim & Uford, 2019). A coefficient of 0.81 was obtained which is considered reliable for the study. Out of 33 copies of the questionnaire administered, 258 (78.2%) were returned. Mean and standard deviation were used to analyze descriptive data. Regression analysis was used to test formulated hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

5.1 Model Specification

The hypothetical variables that show the causal effect of entrepreneurial marketing and hospitality business sustainability was estimated using the specified model.

$$HBS = B_0 + B_1CSO + B_2ENO + B_3INO + e \dots \dots i$$

Where

HBS = Hospitality Business Sustainability (the dependent variable)

B₀ = the intercept

CSO= Customer Orientation

ENO= Entrepreneurial Orientation

INO= Innovation Orientation

b₁- b₃ = the coefficients

e =error

6.0 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

Test of Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant combined influence of elements of entrepreneurial marketing, customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and innovation orientation on hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State.

Table. 1: Multiple-Regression Analysis Result on the combined influence of elements of entrepreneurial marketing, customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and innovation orientation on hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State.

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.886 ^a	.785	.707	1.91143

Goodness of Fit^a

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	216.221	4	261.324	82.137	.000 ^b
	Residual	331.034	255	.309		
	Total	547,255	256			

Coefficients^a

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	2.163	.352		1.033	.000
CO	1.003	.468	1.413	2.143	.000
EO	3.138	1.040	3.381	3.017	.001
IO	1.064	.529	.096	2.011	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, innovation orientation

b. Dependent Variable: Hospitality Business Sustainability

Source: *Researcher's Computation (2022).*

Table 1 presents the combined influence of elements of entrepreneurial marketing, customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and innovation orientation on hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State. The analysis at $R=0.886$ indicates a significant positive relationship between elements of entrepreneurial marketing and hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State. The generalized model summary showed an adjusted R^2 of 0.707. This implies that about 70.7% of the variables of entrepreneurial marketing (customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and innovation orientation) studied when combined will result in about 70.7% changes in hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State. A further implication is that other variables not studied in the current research would contribute about 29.3% to hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State. The model also showed significant goodness of fit (p -value <0.05), this shows that when joined; there would be a linear relationship as stated in the model. Customer Orientation (CO), Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and Innovation Orientation (IO) were all significant.

It was also revealed that in terms of relative importance, among entrepreneurial marketing variables studied, entrepreneurial orientation (Beta =3.138, $t=3.017$, $p<0.05$) would have the greatest influence on hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State; customer orientation (Beta 1.003, $t=2.143$, $p<0.05$) would be second and innovation orientation (Beta =1.064, $t=2.011$, $p<0.05$) would have the third important influence on hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State. In line with these results, the null hypothesis which was that there is no significant combined influence of elements of entrepreneurial marketing, customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and innovation orientation on hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State was rejected. The implication of this outcome is that when combined customer orientation,

entrepreneurial orientation and innovation orientation can predict hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State. Thus, entrepreneurial marketing has a significant influence on hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 era in Akwa Ibom State.

7.0 DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings of the study indicate that all the independent variables of entrepreneurial marketing studied namely, Customer Orientation (CO), Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and Innovation Orientation (IO) have significant influence on hospitality business sustainability in post COVID-19 Akwa Ibom State. In their study in Mexico conducted by Rodríguez, Gómez and Ortiz (2019) conducted on entrepreneurial marketing and performance; it was found that two of the variables, risk taking orientation and innovation orientation influenced performance while a third, pro-activeness orientation had no influence. Furthermore, Becherer et al. (2012) in their study on entrepreneurial marketing and Business Success revealed that pro-activeness, leveraging, opportunity focused, risk taking, innovativeness, customer intensity, and value creation, all elements of entrepreneurial marketing influenced business success differently. Again, Lekovic and Maric (2015) who investigated entrepreneurial marketing and business success found the existence of correlation between subjective and objective performance indicators of success such as survival, growth, profitability and development. Furthermore, Hacioglu, et al. (2012) carried out a study on entrepreneurial marketing and innovative performance, He established that pro-activeness, innovativeness, customer intensity, resource leveraging dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing were positively related with innovative performance in Turkey. Furthermore, Fabian, et.al.2022 in their research on entrepreneurial marketing and SMEs growth in post Covid-19 era, revealed that need-oriented marketing and technology-driven marketing are pivotal to the growth and sustainability of SMEs in the post-Covid-19 era. Again, Anetoh, et al. (2022) found that entrepreneurial marketing had a significant and positive influence on sustainability of plastic manufacturing firms.

Going by the results of analysis conducted in this study, it is safe to conclude that these findings imply that entrepreneurial marketing is a good predictor of hospitality business sustainability in a post Covid-19 Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria. Accordingly, hospitality firms particularly, the hotels can recover lost grounds in their business, improve upon their performance and position themselves properly to guarantee their survival and sustainability.

The study was carried out in hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria and as such, the results obtained cannot be generalized. Future studies should expand its scope to cover other states of Nigeria to support generalizations.

In line with the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. That hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom State should improve upon their customer orientation through interacting more with them and by paying more attention to developments in their business environment to be able to respond with appropriate strategies that support their sustainability.
- ii. That hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom State work upon their entrepreneurial orientation through taking of calculated risks, being innovative and being proactive in their business operations in order to boost their performance and sustainability.
- iii. That hospitality firms in Akwa Ibom State work towards improving their innovative orientation through continuous innovation so as to bring newness to their business and customers that will facilitate continued operations and sustainability.

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