Influence of Mse-Characteristics on Growth of Wood-Based Micro and Small Enterprises in Nigeria

[1]Muhammad Baba Musa & [2]Dr. Patrick Karanja Ngugi
[1&2]*Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology,
Nairobi, Kenya.*

Abstract

This study focused on the influence of MSE-Characteristics on the growth of wood-based Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in Nigeria. Three sub-variables were investigated: Longevity; Legal form of enterprise; and Location. MSEs have not performed creditably well and they have not played expected significant roles in economic growth. One research question, converted to null hypothesis was formulated and tested at .05 alpha levels. Descriptive survey design method was used for the study. An open and structured questionnaire developed by the researcher was the major instrument used for data collection. Trial testing was utilized to determine the tool validity and reliability. The tool reliability index is 0.84 computed using Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient methods. Sample size of 346 MSE owners/managers were sampled using stratified random sampling technique across four strata of the accessible Population. The data was analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics of ANOVA, Regression and Trend Analysis. The results indicated that MSE-Characteristics of Longevity, Legal form of enterprise, and Location were significant predictors of growth of wood-based MSEs. In view of the critical role of longevity and business location, entrepreneurs in wood-based MSEs must be well focused and exhibit endurance and secure advantageous location. These would eventually pay off in enterprise sustenance, profitability and growth.

Keywords: *Wood-Based MSEs, MSE-Characteristics, Growth, Nigeria.*

Background to the Study

This study focused on the influence of MSE-Characteristics on growth of wood-based Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in Nigeria. The role of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in employment and income generation is increasingly recognized and has become a major playing field for policy makers and donors with dual objective of enhancing growth and alleviating poverty (Gebreyesus,2007). MSEs are widely recognized as the key engine of economic development. As a result of this recognition, a central issue dominating policy debates around the world and Africa in particular has been how to stimulate economic growth through the development of MSEs (Robson, Haigh&Obeng, 2009). Both developed and developing nations focus on MSEs because it is believed that they bring great economic benefits in terms of employment creation and income generation (King &Heshmati, 2008). According to Mead and Liedholm (1998), MSEs have been recognized in many countries as a major source employment and income generation. They noted that detailed surveys in a number of countries suggest that as many a quarter of all people of working age are engaged in MSE activities. Yet, in Nigeria, the sectors have stagnated and remain relatively small in terms of its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or gainful employment (Aiyedun, 2004).

The catalytic roles of micro and cottage businesses have been displayed in many countries of the world such as Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, Zambia, and India among other countries. They contribute substantially to the Gross Domestic product (GDP), export earnings and employment opportunities of these countries. Micro and small scale enterprises (MSEs) have been widely acknowledged as the springboard for sustainable economic development. Apart from the fact that it contributes to the increase in per capital income and output, it also creates employment opportunities, encourage the development of indigenous entrepreneurship, enhance regional economic balance through industrial dispersal and generally promote effective resource utilization that are considered to be critical in the area of engineering economic development ((Oboh, 2004; Odeh, 2005).

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency (SMEDAN) (2010), defined MSEs in Nigeria relative to the overall size and structure of the domestic economy as those employing less than 10 employees, with assets (excluding land and building) of less than five million naira (N5,000,000,000). Whereas, small enterprises are those employing between 10 and 49 employees, with assets (excluding land and building) of five million naira and above, but less than 50 million naira (N50,000,000.00).

Aiyedun (2004), defined growth or expansion of enterprise as involving increase in size (number of employees), strength and quality. Enterprise growth can be classed as internal, where diversification leads to the creation of more departments, and external where it leads to acquisition of additional branches and expansion of business network (Chete&Adenikinju, 1995). However, Daniels (1995) explained that the indicator most frequently used to measure expansion is the change in the number of workers in the

enterprise. The different components of change are subject to different forces and determinants. Economic growth is critical to the existence and indeed the survival of any economy and by implications any nation. Hence it is a good indicator for assessing the potential of productive or real sectors of the economy (Nigeria, 2009). In advanced economies, the SME sector is acclaimed as the engine of economic growth and development, however against international best practices, Nigeria is poorly rated (Babajide, 2012).

According to Osotimehin; Jegede; Akinlabi; and Olajide (2012) Micro and small scale enterprises (MSEs) in Nigeria have not performed creditably well and they have not played expected significant role in economic growth. They equally have not influenced apprentice training so as to accelerate employment and poverty alleviation in order to foster Nigerian economic development. They noted that in spite of the fact that micro and small scale enterprises (MSEs) have been regarded as the bulwark for employment generation and technological development in Nigeria, this subsector is faced with enormous challenges.

The Nigeria wood products sector has traversed a variety of circumstances. From being a buoyant sector in the 1960's to the early 1970's, the sector is now a shadow of its former self. Nigeria used to be a major producer of exotic furniture for export in the 1960's to 1980's in view of concrete investments in wood processing industries made by both the private investors, federal and state governments (Ogunwusi, 2012) . He further noted that the over exploitation of the wood resources has impacted negatively on the development of the wood products industry. These, coupled with several other factors such as old age of equipment, etc; has resulted in the dwindling fortune of the country's wood industry. In general, the Nigerian wood industry is gradually declining in performance, efficiency and productivity due to the reasons already highlighted. High quality saw logs and veneer logs are limited with 97% of log production factoring into the lesser used wood species (Arowosoge, 2010).Various studies (RMRDC, 2003; Aribisala, 1993, and Oriola, 2009) have reported a decline in the performance of the wood industries in Nigeria. Thus, there is the need for constant assessment of forest industries in Nigeria in order to promote initiation of policies that will lead to rejuvenation of the sector.

Literature Review
The key characteristics of MSEs that are likely to survive and grow, according to Liedholm (2002), include age, initial size, and location among others. In trying to establish a relation between age and the growth of MSEs, Jovanovic (1982), proposes a *Learning Model* in which enterprise owners discover their efficient sizes of operation gradually. This theory predicts that a firm will expand quickly at first, then taper off its growth as the firm approaches its optimal size (Nichter & Goldmark, 2005). Similarly, the *Life Cycle Model* is defined as an organization development approach where time is viewed from the perspective of a focal organization, and therefore, age represents accumulated experience (Pereyi, Selvarajah&Muthaly, 2008). The *Classical Economics Theory* emphasized the linear nature of firm growth based on *Gibrat's Law*. The law

incorporates two aspects: firm growth rate of a given period is independent of firm size; and the probability of firm growth rate is industry-specific phenomenon (Becchetti & Trovato, 2002). Therefore, the growth or otherwise of wood-based MSEs cannot be attributed to firm size and age.

Longevity and MSE Growth
William and Jones (2009) described business longevity as the duration (age) of the business, that is, time elapsed since the firm started operation. According to Lee et al. (2005) in the research literature on entrepreneurship and organization, business longevity is discussed with in the concept of business survival, success and performance. Business longevity can be used synonymously with business survival. In order for a business to remain solvent, it has to sustain itself. Longevity can be interpreted as a measure of success (Lubinski et al. 2011). Business longevity is associated with a firm's life cycle. For a business to be in existence for a long time, it must have passed through the initial stages of the firm's life cycle. Business longevity is a measure of organization's ability to sustain its continuity (Montuori 2000; Bianchi and Winch 2012). An alternative definition of business success is longevity. The longer one can survive and prevent involuntary exit, the more successful one is (Van Praag 2003)

The relationship between firm age and small firm growth in developing countries is particularly robust (Nichter & Goldmark, 2009). Studies in both Africa and Latin America show that young MSEs are more likely to show high rates of growth compared with MSEs that have been in existence longer (Mead & Liedholm, 1998; Parker, 1995). An IDB study reveals that the major expansion of dynamic enterprises occurs during their third year of operation (Kantis et al., 2004), and other studies suggest that the average growth rate of firms decreases with age (e.g., Burki & Terrell, 1998). In a recent study, Fatoki (2013), the results indicated six factors that can contribute to the longevity of micro enterprises. These are the entrepreneur's personal characteristics, customer satisfaction, management knowhow, finance and resources, strategy and networking.

Legal Form and MSE growth
Informality refers to businesses that are unregistered but derive income from the production of legal goods and services (Schneider, 2002). TheILO (2004),reports that the informal economy's share of the nonagricultural workforce has reached 55% in Latin America, 45–85% in Asia, and nearly 80% in Africa. Although small, informal MSEs may be able to circumvent government regulations and taxation, as they grow they risk becoming more visible, creating disincentives to expand beyond a certain size (Snodgrass & Biggs, 1996). Informal firms may therefore need to "keep their heads down," ruling out large size and rapid growth as well as close relations with formal firms (Winter, 1995). For these and other reasons, informal MSEs tend to grow more slowly than do their formal counterparts.

Location and MSE Growth

Location can play a central role in determining MSE survival. MSEs located in urban or commercial areas are more likely to survive than their counterparts in rural areas. Dahl and Sorenson (2007) note that location also impacts on the market potential and growth opportunities of enterprises. Geographical proximity to either critical buyers or suppliers produces a form of enhanced environmental scanning that enables new firms to more easily identify and exploit growth opportunities in the market. Geographical location has implications for access to markets and other resources such as finance, skilled labour and infrastructure. Gilbert (2008) points out that the geographical area where the firm is launched has implications for its access to markets and resources. Firms located in metropolitan areas may therefore have higher chances of success than those located in rural areas. William and Jones (2009) find that the location of the firm is a significant factor that influences longevity. Firms in rural areas are expected to have a longer life than firms in urban areas. This could possibly be reasoned that in urban areas, the level of competition is very intense. On the other hand, in rural areas, competition is less intense due mainly to the lower concentration of businesses in these areas. However, in Liedholm's profile, over half of the enterprises operate in rural areas. Those that operate in commercial districts or on roadsides typically show greater growth rates than those that are based in the home, although Liedholm points out that this can vary at the country level (USAID, 2006).

Objectives of the Study

This study was intended to investigate the determinants of growth of wood-based Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs) in Nigeria.. In specific terms, the study intended to:

Determine whether MSE-Characteristics of longevity, legal form, and location influence the growth of wood-based MSEs.

Research Question

The following research question was formulated so that answers could be provided:

To what extent did MSE-Characteristics of longevity, legal form, and location influence the growth of wood-based MSEs?

Study Hypothesis

The research question was translated into a hypothesis and tested at .05 level of significance in this study:

There is no significant relationship between MSE-Characteristics and the growth of wood-based MSEs.

Methodology

Research Design: The study was carried out using descriptive survey design. Research design is a plan or blue print which specifics how data relating to a given problem should be collected and analyzed (Nworgu, 1991). The descriptive survey design is considered

appropriate for this study because the objective was to investigate the determinants of growth of wood-based MSEs. A descriptive survey attempts to picture or document current conducts or attitudes, that is, to describe what exists at the moment (Tayie, 2005).

Population and Sample of the Study: The population of this comprises all the wood-based MSEs in, Nigeria. Thus, the target population comprised of 3,460 registered wood-based MSEs in Kaduna State, Nigeria (SMoC, 2010). A sample size of 346 wood-based MSEs owners/managers were sampled which represented 10% of the study accessible population. Providing justification, Kerlinger (1986) indicated that a sample size of 10% of the target population is large enough so long as it allows for reliable data analysis and allows testing for significance of differences between estimates. Stratified random sampling technique was utilized to select the samples spread across the four strata of sawmill, timber marketing, furniture making and carpentry/joinery enterprises.

Instrument for Data Collection: The study employed open and structured questionnaire designed and developed by the researcher as the major instrument for data collection. According to Gall et al (2007), the questionnaire is more commonly used in educational research because it is standardized, highly structured in design and compatible with quantitative methods. The tool is made up of two sections. Section A collected data on the demographic profile of the respondents while section B elicited responses based on the research constructs. To ascertain the validity and reliability, the items were critically examined by three experts in Vocational and Technical Education and Measurement and Evaluation for its content and face validation. The tool was later subjected to trial testing. Cronbach's Alpha technique was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The computed Coefficient yielded indexes ranging from 0.6 to 0.84 which were considered adequate (Victor, 2014). The services of trained and competent research assistants were sourced and utilized in the distribution and collection of the copies of the questionnaire.

Statistical Analysis: Three (300) hundred copies of the questionnaire were finally edited, coded and found suitable for data analysis. The data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics of ANOVA, Simple Linear Regression, and Trend Analysis. This was facilitated with the help of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 2s0.

Data Analysis and Discussion
Linear Regression model of Growth of Wood Based MSEs and MSE Characteristics
The linear regression analysis models the relationship between the criterion (dependent) variable which is the Growth of wood – based MSEs and the predictor (independent) variable is MSE Characteristics. The coefficient of determination (R^2) and Correlation Coefficient (R) shows the degree on association between MSE characteristics and growth of wood – based MSEs in Nigeria. Table 1 shows the results of the linear regression indicating that $R^2 = .385$ and $R = .620$.

Table 1: Model of Wood – Based MSEs Growth/MSE Characteristics

Model Summary	
R	R. Square
. 620	. 385

This is an indication that there is a linear relationship between MSE Characteristics and Growth of Wood – Based SME in Nigeria, for this variable alone can explain up to 39% of the variation in the dependent variable, growth of wood – based MSEs.

Furthermore, Table 2 shows the results of ANOVA test which revealed that MSE Characteristics have significant effect on the growth of wood – based SMEs. Since the P value is equal to .000, which is less than .05 level significance, this then demonstrate that the model is statistically significant F (1.298) = 186.56, P<.01.

This can be shown by linear regression model $Y = BO + B_1 X_1 + E$ where X_1 is the MSE Characteristics.

Table 2: ANOVA for Wood – Based MSEs Growth/MSE Characteristics

Model	Growth Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sign
Regression	32.334	1	32.334	186.555	.000
Residual	51.650	298	.173		
Total	83.983	299			

a   Dependent variable: Growth of Wood – Based MSEs
b.   Predictions: (constant), MSE Characteristics

Table 3: Model for MSE Characteristics

Model	Coefficients		Sign
	B	Std Error	
1 (Constant)	.737	.054	.000
MSE Characteristics	.738	.054	.000

Using the summary presented in Table 3, a linear regression model can be fitted thus:
Y = 0.737 + 0.738 (MSE Characteristics)

Based on the empirical result presented in table 2, the null hypothesis is hereby rejected and the conclusion reached is that MSE Characteristics have a statistically significant role in the growth of wood – based MSEs in Nigeria. With respect to the three sub-variables under this specific objective, individual trend analysis was conducted on them as well Pearson Chi-square on response cross tabulation on the independent variable to determine the rate of contribution of each sub-variable.

Longevity

The *Trend Analysis* indicated in Figure 1 shows a positive relation between longevity and growth of MSEs, which corroborates with the findings of Nichter&Goldmark (2009), as cited earlier. For the following years of operation, kindly indicate the average profit on investment in percentages. - Mean data obtained:

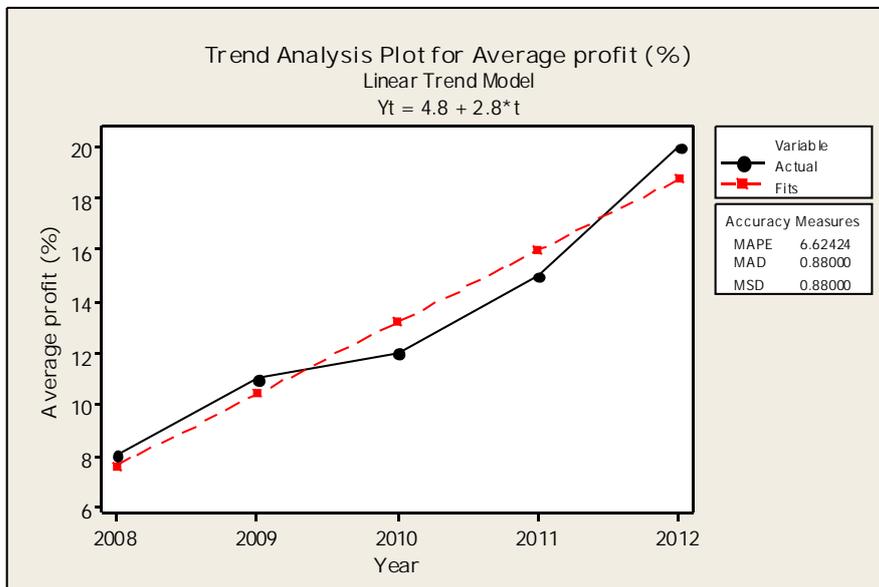| Year	Average Profit (%)
2008	8
2009	11
2010	12
2011	15
2012	20

Figure 1: Trend Analysis of Profit Growth Influenced by Longevity

These findings are in agreement with Nichter&Goldmark (2009), who asserted that the relationship between firm age and small firm growth in developing countries is particularly robust, the findings failed to corroborate those of Mead&Liedholm (1998) and Parker (1995) who reported that in both Africa and Latin America, young MSEs are more likely to show high rates of growth compared with MSEs that have been in existence longer. This study views these varied positions as normal, going by the dynamics of the business environment occasioned by increased influence by technology.

i)   Legal form of business

The *Trend Analysis* in Figure 2 indicates that a positive relation exists between legal form of business and employee growth. This goes contrary to the descriptive data but agrees with the position of Winter (1995) that informal MSEs tend to grow more slowly than

their formal counterparts. For the enterprise sustainability, as a result of annual turnover, indicate the number of employees in the past three years. Mean of responses:

Year	No. of Employees (Mean value)
2011	5
2012	8
2013	13

Trend Analysis Plot for No of employees
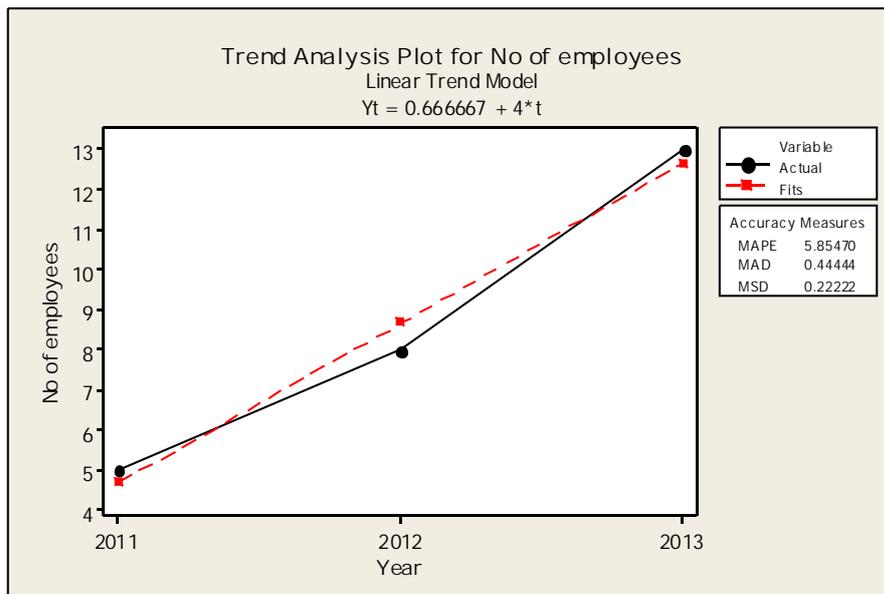Linear Trend Model
$Yt = 0.666667 + 4*t$

Figure 2: Trend Analysis of Employee Strength Influenced by legal form of Business

The findings in this study agree with other previous studies such as Snodgrass & Biggs (1996), who noted that, although small, informal MSEs may be able to circumvent government regulations and taxation, as they grow they risk becoming more visible, creating disincentives to expand beyond a certain size. Similarly, Winter (1995), noted that informal firms may therefore need to "keep their heads down," ruling out large size and rapid growth as well as close relations with formal firms. For these reasons, informal MSEs tend to grow more slowly than do their formal counterparts.

Location
The analysis contained in Figure 3 indicates that business location positively influences profitability (growth) of MSEs as the five years period shows. These findings are similar to those of Liedholm (2002), that the key charcteristics of MSEs that are likely to survive and grow include age, initial size, and location among others. Please indicate how location has enhanced your profitability as a percentage on investment in the following years. Mean responses:

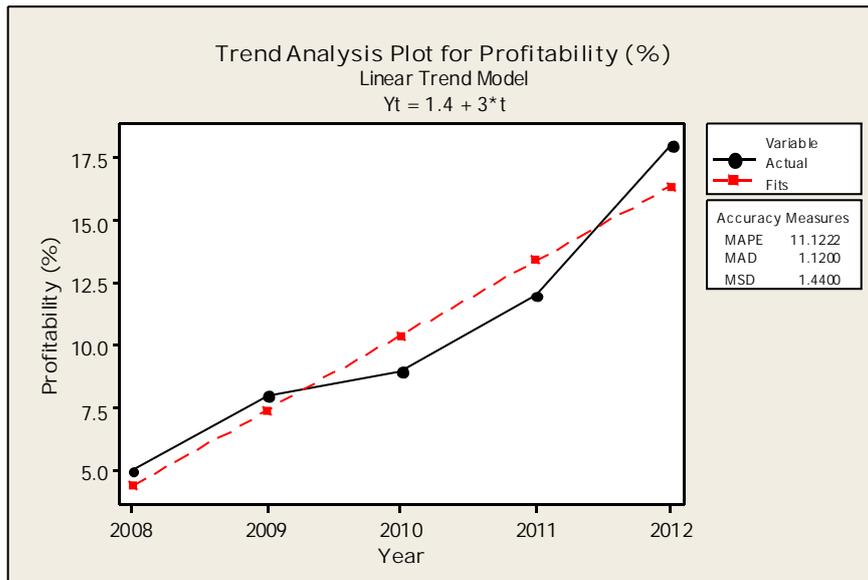| Year	Profitability (%)
2008	5
2009	8
2010	9
2011	12
2012	18

Figure 3: Trend analysis of MSE profitability as influenced by business location

These findings are similar to those of Liedholm (2002), that the key characteristics of MSEs that are likely to survive and grow include age, initial size, and location among others. Location can play a central role in determining MSE survival. MSEs located in urban or commercial areas are more likely to survive than their counterparts in rural areas. However, in Liedholm's profile, over half of the enterprises operate in rural areas. Those that operate in commercial districts or on roadsides typically show greater growth rates than those that are based in the home, although Liedholm points out that this can vary at the country level (USAID, 2006).

Conclusion

The main focus in this study was to explore the influence of some selected determinants on the growth of wood – based of MSEs in Nigeria. Based on empirical studies, these determinants were expected to exert positive relation in the growth of wood – based MSEs in Nigeria. The output of the research findings revealed that there is a positive significant relation between the determinants: MSE-Characteristics of longevity, legal form, and location with growth of wood – based MSEs. The findings clearly demonstrated that the key characteristics of MSEs that are likely to survive and grow

include age, initial size, and location among others.It can therefore be concluded that MSE characteristics of longevity, and enterprise location positively influence growth of wood-based MSEs.

Recommendations
Specifically, the study puts forward the following recommendations:
1. In view of the critical role of longevity and business location, entrepreneurs in wood-based MSEs must be well focused and exhibit endurance and secure advantageous location. These would eventually pay off in enterprise sustenance, profitability and growth.
2. Much as the findings of the study did not portray the legal form of an enterprise as growth influencing, evidence abound that informal firms are less favored in lucrative jobs. It is therefore recommended that government policies should encourage enterprises to obtain formal status.

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