Business Information Management Practices Adopted by Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Ebonyi State

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Abstract

The study was carried out to determine business information management practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State. The study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The population of the study was 2,433 small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State, whose businesses were registered with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria. The sample size of 344 small and medium scale enterprises was used for the study. A structured questionnaire containing 29 items entitled "Information Management Practices Adopted by Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (IMPSMSEQ)" was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three (3) experts. The Cronbach Alpha Reliability coefficient was 0.92. Three hundred and forty-four (344) copies of instrument were distributed, while 321 copies representing 93% were successfully retrieved from the respondents. Mean x and Standard Deviation (SD) were used for finding answers to the research questions. The null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test statistical tool. The findings showed that business information management practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State are toning to business news on radio broadcasts, watching business advisement on television broadcasts, watching business video on YouTube, posting sales promotion on Face book, uploading business videos on YouTube, displaying bill board with vital information and chatting with the customers on WhatsApp. The hypotheses tested showed that gender, years of experiences and location of small and medium scale enterprises operators did not differ significantly in their mean responses on information generating management, information processing practices management adopted by small and medium enterprise in Ebonyi State. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended, among others, that Government agencies and other bodies serving small and medium scale enterprises should set up a module on business information management on its website to enable small and medium scale enterprises owners to generate information for effective management of their business enterprises. The educational implication is that business education teachers should while teaching small scale business courses teach and make more emphasis on the benefits of the utilization of information management practices to promote business activities.

Background to the Study

Small and medium scales enterprises are seen as the backbone of all economic activities and are the key source of economic growth in Nigeria. It occupies a significant position in the economic development of every nation, especially in developing countries like Nigeria. Since the rise in their popularity, small and medium scales enterprises have consistently grown and generated interest from a wide range of stakeholders including governments, researchers, donors and non-governmental organizations because of their roles in tackling the employment challenges, stimulating innovations and advancement and achieving sustainable Development (World Bank, 2020). As a result, both the developed and the developing countries are actively engaged in and continue to seek pragmatic ways of improving the activities of small and medium scale enterprises.

The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) has, through its various circulars and intervention fund programmes generally defined small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) as entities with assets base of N5m and not more than N500M excluding land and buildings with employees between 11 and 200 (CBN, 2017). Momba (2013) saw a small-scale enterprise as an enterprise with 5-49 employees and a medium scale enterprise with 50-99 employees. Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN, 2021) categorized small scale enterprises as business ventures with a minimum of 10 and maximum of 49 employees with assets within the range of five to fifty million Naira (excluding land and buildings), while medium scale enterprises are business ventures with employee number of between 50 and 199; while asset base (excluding land and building) is put at between N50 million and N500 million. However, defined, small and medium enterprises are a productive activity either to produce or distribute goods and or services, mostly undertaken in the informal sector.

Small scale and medium scale enterprises are business organizations set-up by individuals or group of individuals, known as business operators, for the main purpose of providing goods and services. The capital to operate the business is supplied by only one person or by a few people who are the managers of the business. It is usually a sole proprietorship, a partnership, or a family owned company. Small scale and medium scale enterprises, according to Olufemi (2017), exist in the form of sole proprietorship and partnership, though some could be registered as limited liability companies and characterized by: simple management structure, informal employer/employee relationship, labour intensive operation, simple technology, fusion of ownership and management and limited access to capital. Their classification into small and medium enterprises depends on the scale or size of business operators' control. Furthermore, small scale and medium scale enterprises engage in different types of activities ranging from construction, agro-allied, information technology, manufacturing, educational establishments, business services, tourism and leisure among others.

In Ebonyi State, the small and medium scale enterprises have continued to thrive even before the creation of the state in 1996. About 80% of all the economic activities in Ebonyi State are purely small and medium scale enterprises (Nwusulor, 2016). This accounts for their (SMEs) huge contributions to the greater outputs of the Ebonyi State economy. According to

SMEDAN (2022) collaborative National Survey of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Ebonyi State has 2,433 small and medium scale enterprises. They bring employment generation, poverty reduction and diversification of the economy etc, these small and medium scale enterprises are located in different strategic positions of the State (Ebonyi) especially in the capital territory (Abakaliki). They operate in different dimensions as water production, cassava processing, rice milling, provision stores, hair dressing, fruit juice making, computer centers, shoe making, palm oil production, vehicle repairs and maintenance, laundry and dry-cleaning services, bookshops, transport service/companies, carpentry, electronics repairs and accessories, poultry farms, restaurants and fast food centers, saloons (haircuts/plaiting), fruits and vegetable vendors, cosmetics shops, etc. These enterprises have been struggling resiliently to survive on their own even when the State Government has not shown enough interest to promote them. To a reasonable extent they have contributed immensely to the economic growth of the State.

Though small scale and medium scale enterprises are making positive contributions to economic growth and development in Ebonyi State, the rate of failure is high. According to West and Wood (2012), 90 percent of all these business failures result from lack of experience and knowledge about the market. In this information age, business information is a valuable asset. It is most powerful as it aids management decision making and can give business owners a competitive edge over their rivals. According to Igwe (2020), no business is without competitor. Gathering information about competitors is critical. Igwe (2020) added that in the business environment where knowledge is power, those who own the best information about customers and market trend and use it most effectively control the market. It provides the means to predict the actions of both customers and the competitors. For many businesses, the information they hold on their customers, market and competition is considered as their most valuable resources to business owner/managers.

Business owners, according to Okolo in Ogbu (2023), are people who have the ability to see and evaluate business opportunities, put together the necessary resources to take advantage of them and to initiate appropriate actions to ensure success. The business owners employ and contract the managers to oversee the running of their businesses. A manager can be seen as a person who is responsible for the realization of management processes, which make plans and decisions, organizes, supervises and controls human, financial and information resources of business enterprises. Gorgievski, Ascalon and Stephan (2011) defined a manager as the person employed in an administrative position, who has comprehensive knowledge necessary for leading people and managing an organization in order to achieve optimal realization of set tasks in confined conditions. Thus, the manager of a small-scale business is the person who is employed by the owner of the venture to oversee the management of the business which includes the management of the material and human resources on his behalf.

Business information is information that holds meaning, value or significance for businesses. Information management practices refer to the processes and tools used to collect, store, organize and share information within an organization. It is the collection, storage, management and maintenance of data and other types of information. It involves the

gathering, disseminating, archiving and destruction of information in all its forms. Igwe (2020) describes information management as the collection, organization and maintenance of data, including document, images, knowledge, bases, code and other types of virtual media. Information management is a vital aspect of data driven business that allows the owner to make better decision and achieve business goals and objectives. Utilization of information management in business operations can help the owner of a business to use, protect and store information and to operate more effectively.

Information management is the key to success for any organization. It can help organizations achieve efficient operation by effectively managing information lifecycle. It also helps them avoid security breaches and data loss which could lead to financial loss or other consequences. Effective information management ensures that information is available to the right people at the right time, enabling better decision making and improved productivity. Information management ensures that data and information are collected, stored, processed, and disseminated in a way that supports the organizations objectives. It involves managing data as a valuable asset and applying best practices for data governance, security, and quality to support decision making processes. According to Umar and Umar (2021), the key area of information management in the business environment which small and medium scale enterprises need to adopt includes information generation practice and information processing as the basis for better business decisions and for improved productivity.

Information generating practices means all the information created as a result of research and development activities (for example, tangible materials, data, software, research products, and information first produced by the parties in the performance of the statement of work) (Umar & Umar 2021). Information is usually generated through such modes as observation, thought process, deliberation or imagination, experimentation, processing of data, the happening of various events, and so on. Generating information about business is a critical resource for making decision and exercising control over small and medium scale enterprises. Mchombu (2020) found information generating practices as a necessary business strategy required of operators of small and medium scale enterprises for success in business environment. Moorthy (2022) noted that business information practices adopted by business operators to includes toning to business news on radio broadcasts, watching business advisements on television broadcasts, watching business video on YouTube, checking sales invoices, accessing the Internet, checking customer billing statements, reading sales analysis reports and discussing with business colleagues. Cacciolatti, Fearne, and McNeil (2021) noted that small and medium scale enterprises that make good use of business information presents higher probability of growth. Hatega (2017) noted that insufficient access to business information makes Small and Medium scale enterprises less aware of business opportunities. Enete, Amusa, and Eze (2009) opined that the ability of small and medium scale business operators to generate business information is very essential for the success of business venture. Dalton (2019) contend that managers in small and medium scale enterprises generate business information from the following sources: Personal contact, for example, established entrepreneurs and friends; newspapers; printed sources, for example trade literature, journals and reports; solicitors; mass media such as television and radio; seeking for advisory services

from business consultant; frequent visitation of information centers; and sources available on the Internet such as Facebook, Wikipedia, YouTube, LinkedIn, Skype, Twitter blogs, among others. O'Hare (2017) stated that to improve small and medium scale enterprises, managers/owner can generate different information about the market and customers by reading various sources of business information which includes company reports, share price data, profiles on executives, company directories, business statistics, credit ratings, market research reports, country profiles, trade journals and other related information materials and attending business conferences. Shokane (2013) posits that business managers could generate information through personal sources of information (colleagues and friends); newspapers; printed sources (trade literature, journals and reports); mass media (television and radio); information centers; advisory services and the Interne. However, Igwe noted that many small and medium scale enterprises exist without the knowledge of how to generate good information about the market and customers for their business to thrive.

Information processing, according to House and Sigler (2019), refers to the recording and refinement of data to make it more meaningful and useful. Similarly, Okoro (2015) stated that processing information is the refining of data to make it more useful and more understandable. According to Odiari (2018), processing information includes compiling information, categorising information (placing it in categories, such as accounts), sorting information (alphabetically, numerically, by weight, by date, and so on), ranking information (by Naira value, size, ability, and the like), and other operations that refine information, making it more useful. The author also added that processing may also include formatting the information. Mgbodile (2016) stated that effective processing of information could be determined by considering the following strategies: browsing the internet with the computer; through appropriate utilization of the company's equipment; use of the manual system of information; use of electronic media of information; training and retraining of business operators. World Bank (2015) found that business information processing is one of the major problems of small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria. It also found that most small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria do not maintain and practice complete information processing in their business venture.

Small and medium-scale business is not the exclusive activity of men. It involves different gender such as men and female. In this study, the first demographic characteristics are gender. It is referring as the physical differences between people who are male, female or intersex. Gender is also defined as the different biological and physiological characteristics of males and females. Turner and Akinremi in Ucha (2021) noted that the gender of owners/operators of small and medium scale enterprise may influences the way one thinks and behaves. Study conducted by Akujo (2019) shows that female makes use of information management more than men in carrying out their business activity. To Akujo, female use more of information channel such as Facebook, Wahsapp and Youtube in sharing business information more than men. This may also be the same with the small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State.

Experience in business is a factor that may determine the outcome of this study. Experience refers to the knowledge and skills that one gains through doing something for a period of time.

Hornby in Ucha (2021) noted that experiences have influence the way one thinks and behaves. Small and medium-scale business operators have various experiences depending on the years of operation of their businesses. Their years of experience have been organized into two clusters for the purpose of the study. The first cluster is 1–10 years of experience, adjudged by the researcher as lowly experienced, and the second is 11 years and above, adjudged as highly experienced. According to Boden and Nucci (2019), where a business owner has four or more years of experience, the business is more likely to prosper. This may also be connected to the use of information management by small and medium enterprise in Ebonyi State. These views, however, are either theoretical in nature or have not been empirically proven to affects small and medium scale business operators utilisation of information management practice in Ebonyi State. It is against this background that the researcher empirically determined the modern information management practice adopted by small and medium-scale business enterprises in Ebonyi State.

Statement of the Problem
Small and Medium scale Enterprises have dominated the investment landscape of Ebonyi State. It plays significant roles in economic development of Ebonyi State because they employ greater percentage of the active working population and contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of the State. The problem is that the great number of small and medium scale enterprise (SMEs) springing up on daily bases keep folding up leaving little or no significant impact on the economic development of the State. According to Nwusulor (2016), 70 percent of business failures are as a result of low experience and knowledge about the utilization of business information by the manager. The researcher is worried that the business failure on the part of small and medium scale enterprise operators may be due to lack of information management practices. This is because business information is the key element in the success of any business whether small or big. It assists operators of small and medium scale enterprises to know how their markets are developing, how labour markets are changing, what the economy is doing and what new laws are being passed that might affect the way of its operation. Without reliable information, small and medium scale enterprise operators may have no idea on where it stands in its market, it's financial and sale figure or how to stay ahead of its competitors. However, in Ebonyi State, no empirical evidences to ascertain the actual situation regarding the information management practices by small and medium-scale enterprises operators. The concern of this study therefore is that there appears to be failure in business on the part of small and medium scale business operators which can be attributed to their inability to make use of information management practices effectively. This study was carried out to determine the information management practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State

Purpose of the Study
The major purpose of this study was to determine the business information management practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State. Specifically, the study sought to:
1. Determine the information generating management practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State.

2. Determine the information processing management practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State.

Research Questions
The following research questions were raised to guide the study
1. What are the information generating management practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State?
2. What are the information processing management practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State?

Hypotheses
The following null hypotheses were formulated to guide the study and were tested at 0.05 level of significance
1. There is no significant difference between male and female operators of small and medium enterprises in the mean ratings of information generating management practices adopted by small and medium enterprises in Ebonyi State.
2. There is no significant difference between small and medium scale enterprises operators in the mean ratings of information processing practices management adopted by small and medium enterprises in Ebonyi state based on their years of experience.

Methodology
The study adopted descriptive survey research design. The study was conducted in Ebonyi State. Ebonyi State is one of the five states in the South East Geographical Zone of Nigeria the population of the study is 2,433 SMES whose business is registered with Small and medium enterprise development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN). A sample size of 344 SMEs was used for the study. Yaro Yamane formula was used to determine the sample size. The instrument for data collection was structured questionnaire designed by the researcher titled: Information Management Practices adopted by SMEs. The instrument contained 29 items arranged in five clusters with four-point rating scale of Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The instrument was validated by three experts, two from Business Education and one from Science Education Department. The instrument was administered to the sample of 30 SMEs in Enugu State for trial testing. Data collected from them was analyzed using Cronbach Alpha reliability co-efficient. The value obtained in each cluster were cluster 1 (0.83) and 2(0.76), while the entire instrument yielded a reliability index of 0.82. 344 copies of the questionnaire were administered to the respondents with help of four research assistants. However, out of 344 copies of the questionnaire administered only 321 representing 93% was retrieved and used for data analysis while 21 copies were not returned. The collected from the respondents was analyzed using Mean, Standard Deviation and t-test statistic at Alpha level of 0.05 significance. Any items with mean of 2.50 was taking as one of the information management practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises, while a mean value below 2.50 shows that the respondents disagreed on the item as one of the information management practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises. The result of hypotheses tested with t-test was accepted when the calculated p-value is greater than the selected level of significance

at 0.05 and rejected when the calculated p-value is less than the selected level of significance at 0.05.

Results

Research Questions One: What is the information generating practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State?

The data providing answers to the above research question are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Information Generating Practices Adopted by Small and Medium Scale Enterprises

S/N	Items	N	Mean	Std.	Decision
1	Checking report of other business enterprises	321	1.96	0.63	Disagree
2	Toning to business news on radio broadcasts	321	3.44	0.64	Agree
3	Watching business advisement on television broadcasts	321	3.38	0.73	Agree
4	Checking daily trade report publication on the Internet	321	1.83	0.78	Disagree
5	Watching business video on YouTube	321	3.31	0.76	Agree
6	Sending messages through e-mail	321	1.98	0.80	Disagree
7	Checking sales invoices record	321	3.38	0.77	Agree
8	Observing customer's quotation	321	3.35	0.76	Agree
9	Accessing the Internet	321	3.13	0.93	Agree
10	Checking customer billing statements	321	3.33	0.69	Agree
11	Reading sales analysis reports	321	3.32	0.69	Agree
12	Discussing with business colleagues	321	3.38	0.72	Agree
13	Conducting market survey	321	3.28	0.74	Agree
14	Chatting with customers on WhatsApp	321	1.81	0.78	Disagree
15	Checking purchase requisitions	321	2.08	0.97	Disagree
16	Use of General Ledger	321	3.42	0.65	Agree
17	Accessing tax information	321	3.52	0.63	Agree

The results displayed in Table 1 revealed that the small and medium scale business operators' agreed on 12 items (2, 3, 5 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16 and 17) with mean scores between 3.13 and 3.52 which are above the cut-off point of 2.50 as the information generating practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State and disagreed with five items (1, 4, 6, 14, and 15). The respondents agreed that the information generating practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State are turning to business news on radio broadcasts, watching business advisement on television broadcasts, watching business video on YouTube, checking sales invoices record, observing customer's quotation, accessing the Internet, checking customer billing statements, reading sales analysis reports, discussing with business colleagues, conducting market survey, use of General Ledger and accessing tax information.

Research Questions Two: What are the information processing practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises operators in Ebonyi State?

The data providing answers to research question two are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean Ratings of Respondents on the Information Processing Practices Adopted by Small and Medium Scale Enterprises

S/N		N	Mean	Std.	Decision
1	Processing customer's quotation	321	3.41	0.78	Agree
2	Preparing daily sales report	321	3.36	0.71	Agree
3	Analyzing daily trade publication	321	1.50	0.68	Disagree
4	Sorting of correspondences	321	3.40	0.61	Agree
5	Arranging of documents	321	3.48	0.56	Agree
6	Reading of documents	321	1.58	0.76	Disagree
7	Analyzing questionnaire responses from customers	321	3.14	0.85	Agree
8	Rechecking calculated sale figures	321	3.49	0.61	Agree
9	Preparing of statistics	321	3.09	0.96	Agree
10	Writing of invoices/statements	321	3.36	0.69	Agree
11	Endorsing of correspondences	321	1.43	0.60	Disagree
12	Recording of stock	321	3.44	0.56	Agree

Data in Table 2 revealed that items 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27 and 28 have mean scores between 3.09 and 3.44 which are above the cut-off point of 2.50 and standard deviations of 1.00, 1.01, 0.99, 0.99, 0.99 and 1.48 respectively. They were items of information processing practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises operators. On the other hand, items 20, 23, and 28 have mean values of 1.50, 1.58 and 1.43 which are below the cut-off point of 2.50 and were disagree by the small and medium scale business operators. The respondents agreed that processing customer's quotation, preparing daily sales report, sorting of correspondences, arranging of documents, analyzing questionnaire responses from customers, rechecking calculated sale figures, preparing of statistics, writing of invoices/statements and recording of stock are the information processing practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State.

H$_{01}$: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female small and medium enterprises operators on information generating management practices adopted by small and medium enterprises in Ebonyi State.

Table 3: Independent t-test of Mean Ratings of Responses of Male and Female Small and Medium Scale Enterprises operators on Information Generating Management Practices Adopted by small and Medium Scale Enterprises

Items	Gender	N	Mean	Std.	Df	t-cal	Alpha	p-val.	Decision
Item1	Male	188	1.89	.625					
	Female	133	2.03	.644	319	1.933	0.05	.054	Not significant
Item2	Male	188	3.46	.623					
	Female	133	3.41	.664	319	.751	0.05	.453	Not significant
Item3	Male	188	3.45	.711					
	Female	133	3.30	.758	319	1.827	0.05	.069	Not significant
Item4	Male	188	1.82	.811					
	Female	133	1.85	.750	319	.367	0.05	.714	Not significant
Item5	Male	188	3.26	.781					
	Female	133	3.36	.731	319	1.162	0.05	.246	Not significant
Item6	Male	188	2.06	.856					
	Female	133	1.87	.707	319	2.036	0.05	.043	Significant
Item7	Male	188	3.31	.828					
	Female	133	3.47	.691	319	1.820	0.05	.070	Not significant
Item8	Male	188	3.34	.802					
	Female	133	3.36	.712	319	.261	0.05	.794	Not significant
Item9	Male	188	3.29	.861					
	Female	133	2.91	.992	319	3.607	0.05	.000	Significant
Item10	Male	188	3.33	.700					
	Female	133	3.33	.684	319	.041	0.05	.967	Not significant
Item11	Male	188	3.35	.734					
	Female	133	3.27	.631	319	.927	0.05	.355	Not significant
Item12	Male	188	3.46	.696					
	Female	133	3.26	.757	319	2.438	0.05	.015	Significant
Item13	Male	188	3.32	.751					
	Female	133	3.22	.744	319	1.229	0.05	.220	Not significant
Item14	Male	188	1.83	.813					
	Female	133	1.78	.742	319	.598	0.05	.551	Not significant
Item15	Male	188	2.08	.943					
	Female	133	2.09	1.02	319	.046	0.05	.963	Not significant
Item16	Male	188	3.47	.615					
	Female	133	3.35	.709	319	1.615	0.05	.107	Not significant
Item17	Male	188	3.54	.597					
	Female	133	3.51	.681	319	.436	0.05	.663	Not significant
					319	**1.240**	**0.05**	**.369**	**Not significant**

The result of the t-test analyses presented in Table 3 indicated that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female operators of small and medium

enterprises on information generating management practices adopted by small and medium enterprises operators. This is because data in Table 3 shows that the p-values for fifteen items (item 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17) ranged from 0.058 - 0.934, which is greater than 0.05. Only three items 6, 9 and 12 had a p-value of .000, 0.043 and 0.015, which is less than 0.05. The grand total of P-value is 0.369 which greater than 0.05., this implies that the null hypothesis that stated that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female operators of small and medium enterprises on information generating management practices adopted by small and medium enterprises in Ebonyi State is not rejected.

H0$_2$: There is no significant difference in mean responses of small and medium scale enterprises operators on information processing practices management adopted by small and medium enterprises in Ebonyi state based on their years of experience.

Table 4: Independent t-test of Mean Ratings of Responses of the Respondents on Information Processing Management Practices Adopted by small and Medium Scale Enterprises Operators Based on Years of Experiences

Items	Gender	N	Mean	Std.	Df	t-cal	Alpha	p-val.	Decision
Item18	0-10years	198	3.38	.827					
	11years above	123	3.46	.716	319	.881	0.05	.379	Not significant
Item19	0-10years	198	3.38	.701					
	11years above	123	3.32	.729	319	.778	0.05	.437	Not significant
Item20	0-10years	198	1.48	.688					
	11years above	123	1.53	.668	319	.662	0.05	.509	Not significant
Item21	0-10years	198	3.41	.629					
	11years above	123	3.39	.583	319	.224	0.05	.823	Not significant
Item22	0-10years	198	3.49	.540					
	11years above	123	3.46	.604	319	.486	0.05	.628	Not significant
Item23	0-10years	198	1.63	.805	319	1.407	0.05	.160	Not Significant
	11years above	123	1.51	.705					
Item24	0-10years	198	3.10	.897					
	11years above	123	3.19	.785	319	.906	0.05	.366	Not significant
Item25	0-10years	198	3.55	.565					
	11years above	123	3.39	.685	319	2.346	0.05	.020	Significant
Item26	0-10years	198	3.07	.958	319	.536	0.05	.592	Not Significant
	11years above	123	3.13	.974					
Item27	0-10years	198	3.38	.701					
	11years above	123	3.33	.685	319	.633	0.05	.527	Not significant
Item28	0-10years	198	1.42	.615					
	11years above	123	1.43	.602	319	.139	0.05	.890	Not significant
Item29	0-10years	198	3.41	.570	319	1.052	0.05	.294	Not Significant
	11years above	123	3.48	.563					
					319	.837	0.05	.468	Not Significant

Summary of result on Table 4 indicates that eleven (11) out of twelve (12) items have their P-values ranging from 0.160 to 0.890 which are greater than 0.05 indicating no significant difference between small and medium scale enterprises operators on information processing practices management adopted by small and medium enterprises in Ebonyi State based on their years of experience. While only item 25 has P-value of 0.025 which is less than 0.05 indicating a significant difference between small and medium scale enterprises operators on information processing practices management adopted by small and medium scale enterprises operators in Ebonyi State based on their years of experience. The grand P-value 0.468 is greater than 0.05, indicating that the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference in mean responses of small and medium scale enterprises operators on information processing practices management adopted by small and medium enterprises in Ebonyi State based on their years of experience is not rejected.

Discussion
The results of the study shows that the small and medium scale enterprises operators agreed that the information generating practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State include toning to business news on radio broadcasts, watching business advisements on television broadcasts, watching business video on YouTube, checking sales invoices, observing customer's quotations, accessing the Internet, checking customer billing statements, reading sales analysis reports, discussing with business colleagues, conducting market surveys, use of general ledger and accessing tax information. These findings are in line with Mchombu (2020) who found information generating practices as a necessary business strategy required of operators of small and medium scale enterprises for success in business environment. The findings of the study is also similar with Moorthy (2022) who found that business information practices adopted by business operators to includes toning to business news on radio broadcasts, watching business advisements on television broadcasts, watching business video on YouTube, checking sales invoices, accessing the Internet, checking customer billing statements, reading sales analysis reports and discussing with business colleagues. On the same note, the finding is supported by Cacciolatti, Fearne, and McNeil (2021) who noted that Small and Medium scale enterprises that make good use of business information presents higher probability of growth. This finding is in accordance with Hatega (2017) who noted that insufficient access to business information makes Small and Medium scale enterprises less aware of business opportunities. The findings of the study are also similar with those of Enete, Amusa, and Eze (2009) who opined that the ability of small and medium scale business operators to generate business information is very essential for the success of business venture.

The finding of this study is also in consonance with Dalton (2019) who contend that managers in small and medium scale enterprises generate business information from the following sources: Personal contact, for example, established entrepreneurs and friends; newspapers; printed sources, for example trade literature, journals and reports; solicitors; mass media such as television and radio; seeking for advisory services from business consultant; frequent visitation of information centers; and sources available on the Internet such as Facebook, Wikipedia, YouTube, LinkedIn, Skype, Twitter blogs, among others. The findings is also

supported by O'Hare (2017) who stated that to improve small and medium scale enterprises, managers/owner can generate different information about the market and customers by reading various sources of business information which includes company reports, share price data, profiles on executives, company directories, business statistics, credit ratings, market research reports, country profiles, trade journals and other related information materials and attending business conferences. The finding is in accordance with Shokane (2013) who also posits that business managers could generate information through personal sources of information (colleagues and friends); newspapers; printed sources (trade literature, journals and reports); mass media (television and radio); information centers; advisory services and the Internet.

The test of null hypothesis 1 indicated that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of male and female operators of small and medium scale enterprises on information generating management practices adopted by small and medium enterprises in Ebonyi State. The findings of the study contradict the findings of Turner and Akinremi in Ucha (2021) who found that the gender of business owners/operators of small and medium scale business operators influences the way one thinks and behaves.

The findings of this study with respect to the table 2 identified the information processing practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprise in Ebonyi State. The findings of the study indicate that the owners of small and medium scale enterprises agreed that processing customer's quotation, preparing daily sales report, sorting of correspondences, arranging of documents, analyzing questionnaire responses from customers, rechecking calculated sale figures, preparing of statistics, writing of invoices/statements and recording of stock are the information processing practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State. The finding is supported by Mgbodile (2016) who stated that effective processing of information could be determined by considering the following strategies: browsing the internet with the computer; through appropriate utilization of the company's equipment; use of the manual system of information; use of electronic media of information; training and retraining of business operators. Contrarily, World Bank (2015) found that business information processing is one of the major problems of small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria. It also found that most small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria do not maintain and practice complete information processing in their business venture.

The test of null hypothesis 2 indicated that there was no significant difference in mean responses of small and medium scale business operator on information processing practices management adopted by small and medium enterprises in Ebonyi state based on their years of experience. The findings of the study agree with Boden and Nucci (2019) who found that where a business owner has four or more years of experience, the business is more likely to prosper. Thus, experience might influence business owner's knowledge on the adoption of information management practice.

Conclusions

This research focused on the information management practices adopted by small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State. Based on findings of this study, it was concluded that small and medium scale enterprises in Ebonyi State adopt information management practices in carrying out their businesses. Based on the findings of the hypotheses tested, it was concluded that gender, years of experiences and location of small and medium scale operators did not significantly influence the mean responses on information generating management, information processing management, information disseminating management, information storage management and retrieval management practices adopted by small and medium enterprise in Ebonyi State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it was recommended that:

1. Government agencies and other bodies serving small and medium scale enterprises should set up a module on business information management on its website to enable small and medium scale enterprises owners to generate information for effective management of their business enterprises.

2. Small and medium scale enterprises operators should always read newspapers, magazine, brochures, catalogues, turning to radios and watching televisions in order to be able to generate business information to support their business matters. It is through all these methods that SMEs could be aware of changes in customer needs, sources of supplies and new legislation by government as it affects SMEs and specific businesses.

3. Small and medium scale enterprises operators should adopt the use of computer information processing system in processing their business information for the improvement of information management practices in their business venture.

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