

**SALESMAN BEHAVIOURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND SMALL AND  
MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES (SMES) PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA**

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BENIN CITY**

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**BEING A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
ENTREPRENUERSHIP, FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT SCIENCES,  
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY IN PARTIAL FUFILMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF A BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (BSc)  
DEGREE IN ENTREPRENUERSHIP**

**FEBRUARY, 2026.**

## CERTIFICATION

We, the undersigned, certify that this project was carried out by **Joy OSIMAHOR** with Matriculation Number **MGS2104910** of the Department of Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria, and that the work has not been presented in part or in full in any diploma or degree awarding institution. The work is adequate in scope and quality in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Bachelor of Science (B.Sc.) Degree in Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Management Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City, Nigeria.

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Head of Department

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**Date**

## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to God almighty for his grace and guidance, and to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Osarodion, whose unwavering love, support, and encouragement made this academic pursuit possible.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

I give all glory, honour, and adoration to God Almighty for His abundant grace, wisdom, and steadfast guidance throughout the course of my undergraduate studies. His divine providence, strength, and faithfulness have been instrumental in the successful completion of this research work.

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## ABSTRACT

*This study examined the impact of salesman behavioural characteristics on the performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study investigated the effect of assertive behaviour, manipulative behaviour, and passive behaviour on SME sales performance. A survey research design was adopted, and primary data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to SME operators and sales personnel in Egor, Ovia North East, and Oredo Local Government Areas of Edo State. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed to respondents using a simple random sampling technique, out of which 89 were successfully retrieved and found valid for analysis. Descriptive statistics and inferential statistical techniques were employed to analyze the data and test the stated hypotheses. The findings revealed that assertive behaviour has a positive and significant influence on SME sales performance, while manipulative and passive behaviours negatively affect sales outcomes and customer trust. The study concludes that the behavioural disposition of salesmen is a critical determinant of SME performance. It recommends that SME owners prioritize behavioural-based recruitment, continuous sales training, and motivational strategies aimed at fostering assertive and ethical sales practices to enhance enterprise sustainability and contribute to economic development in Nigeria..*

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### **1.2 Background to the Study**

The performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria continues to garner academic and policy attention due to their immense contributions to employment generation, poverty alleviation, and economic development. However, the sustainability and growth of SMEs are often hindered by several internal and external factors. Among these, the behavioural characteristics of salesmen (those on the frontline of market engagement) play a pivotal role. Salesmen often act as the face of an enterprise, influencing not only customer satisfaction but also repeat patronage and business profitability. In the dynamic and competitive landscape of Nigerian SMEs, salesmen's behaviour can determine whether a business flourishes or falters. Behavioural traits such as interpersonal skills, customer orientation, ethical conduct, resilience, and persuasion abilities have a strong correlation with sales performance. Research has shown that personal selling remains one of the most effective promotional strategies adopted by SMEs in Nigeria due to its adaptability and personal touch (Okeke, Adeyemi, Musa, & Ibrahim, 2022). Thus, the individual traits of those handling such sales roles become a matter of strategic importance.

Despite their relevance, behavioural characteristics of salesmen are often underestimated or overlooked in business strategy. Many SME operators focus on pricing and product differentiation without investing in the training or recruitment of suitable sales personnel.

This neglect can result in suboptimal customer experiences and reduced business performance. According to Akinbola, Ojo, Nwosu, and Hassan (2021), SMEs that prioritize the behavioural competencies of their sales force tend to outperform others in customer retention and revenue growth.

Understanding the Nigerian context is crucial, given its unique socio-cultural and economic environment. The business culture in Nigeria places a high value on relationships, trust, and personalized service factors that hinge directly on the behavioural disposition of the salesman. A salesman who is culturally sensitive and respectful is more likely to close deals than one who is transactional or indifferent. Eze and Chinedu (2023) emphasize that in Nigeria, the relational approach to selling significantly impacts customer loyalty and enterprise success.

Furthermore, SMEs in Nigeria often operate under resource constraints, limiting their capacity to launch extensive marketing campaigns. Consequently, the salesforce becomes the main interface with potential and existing customers. This elevates the significance of the salesman's behaviour in establishing brand identity and fostering customer relationships. Nwankwo and Obi (2022) argue that a salesman with high emotional intelligence can significantly influence purchase decisions, especially in markets where consumers rely more on personal interaction than on brand heritage. Another critical aspect is the level of ethical behaviour among salesmen. In environments where regulatory enforcement is weak, unethical behaviour such as misinformation or manipulation can damage a business's reputation irreparably. Ethical sales behaviour, on

the other hand, fosters trust and long-term customer relationships. A study by Okonjo and Ibrahim (2024) found that SMEs with sales teams trained in ethical sales practices reported a 30% higher customer retention rate than those without such training.

Motivation and attitude are also key behavioural factors that shape SMEs sales outcomes. A motivated salesman is likely to show persistence, enthusiasm, and customer empathy—attributes that are instrumental to successful selling. However, motivation is influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic factors such as remuneration, recognition, and job satisfaction. Inadequate motivation can lead to high rate of employee turnover, which disrupt sales continuity and affect performance. Olatunji, Adeola, Chukwu, and Bassey (2023) observed that SMEs with structured incentive schemes recorded more consistent sales growth than those with ad hoc motivational approaches.

Communication skills, including clarity, persuasion, and listening abilities, are also paramount in determining the effectiveness of a salesman. Poor communication can lead to misinterpretation of customer needs and loss of sales opportunities. Given the multilingual and multicultural nature of Nigeria, the ability to communicate effectively across diverse customer segments is a competitive advantage. As reported by Adebayo and Hassan (2022), SMEs that invested in communication skill training for their sales staff experienced improved customer engagement and increased sales.

Salesmen's adaptability and problem-solving abilities further contribute to enterprise performance, particularly in the volatile Nigerian market where customer preferences and economic conditions frequently shift. The ability of a salesman to quickly adapt, offer

solutions, and respond to client objections can be the difference between securing a deal and losing a customer. Uche and Kolawole (2023) highlighted that behavioural agility among salesmen is strongly associated with higher sales conversion rates in SMEs. Leadership and supervision also influence salesman behaviour and by extension SMEs performance. In SMEs, where hierarchical structures are often flat, the influence of owner-managers on sales practices is significant. A supportive and visionary leader can cultivate positive salesman behaviour through mentorship, role modelling, and feedback. On the contrary, a lack of guidance may lead to inconsistent behaviours and misaligned sales tactics. According to Musa, Ibrahim, Okonkwo, and Eze (2022), SMEs with engaged leadership tend to exhibit stronger alignment between sales goals and frontline execution.

The behavioural characteristics of salesmen are a critical but often underexplored determinant of SME performance in Nigeria. Given the unique operational challenges and opportunities in the Nigerian business environment, there is a pressing need to pay attention to how individual sales behaviours affect business sales. Therefore, this work focuses on the relationship between salesman behavioural characteristics and SMEs performance using the variables Manipulative behaviour, Passive behaviour and Assertive behaviour as proxies for salesman behavioural characteristics and sales as proxy for SMEs performance.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

In the Nigerian context, where SMEs face intense competition, limited access to capital, infrastructural challenges, and an unpredictable market environment, the performance of a business hinges not only on product quality and pricing but also how effectively salespersons engage customers, build trust, and close deals. Salesmen are often the face of SMEs. They represent the brand, interpret customer needs, and communicate value propositions. Their behavioural characteristics, such as manipulative, assertive and passive directly affect customer satisfaction, retention, and ultimately, sales. Studying these behaviours provides insight into how SMEs can train, recruit, and manage sales teams to optimize performance. Without understanding these human factors, SMEs may invest in marketing strategies or product development but fail to translate these investments into actual sales outcomes.

Nigeria's unique socio-cultural environment marked by diverse languages, ethnicities, and buying behaviours makes the salesperson's role even more pivotal. Behavioural characteristics that work in one region may not work in another, and only by systematically studying these patterns can SMEs develop effective, localized sales strategies. Researching this topic is important because it will help fill a gap in academic and practical understanding, as much attention has been given to financial, technological, or operational factors in SME performance, but less to the behavioural side of sales.

The relationship between salesman behavioural characteristics and the performance of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria has become an increasingly

noticeable issue in the current business landscape. Observing SMEs in Nigeria, it is clear that many salesmen lack the essential personal traits and behavioural patterns needed to effectively engage customers and drive sales. The manipulative, assertive and passive behaviours of the salesman can make or break a customer's buying decision. Yet, despite the importance of these human factors, many SMEs owners seem unaware of how salesman behaviours can directly influence both short-term and long-term sales volume.

One key problem observed is that many SMEs experience inconsistent sales results, even when operating in markets with steady demand. This inconsistency often stems from variations in how individual salesmen approach their tasks, handle customer objections, or sustain motivation in the face of rejection. For example, a highly skilled and persistent salesman may deliver excellent results, while another, less motivated or poorly trained, may struggle even when working under the same conditions. This suggests that behavioural differences among salesmen significantly affect business performance, but many SMEs fail to systematically recognize or address this issue. Instead, they often attribute sales challenges to external factors like market conditions, ignoring the internal human dynamics at play.

Another issue is that many SMEs do not have structured training or development programs targeted at improving the behavioural skills of their salesmen. While some larger firms invest in sales coaching, customer service training, or soft skills development, SMEs typically lack the resources or awareness to prioritize these efforts. As a result, salesmen often operate on personal instinct, trial and error, or outdated selling

practices, which may not align with modern consumer expectations or competitive pressures. This leads to customer dissatisfaction, reduced sales and ultimately, loss of revenue opportunities for the business.

To the best of our knowledge, despite the visible influence of salesman behaviour on SMEs performance majority of previous researchers have largely focused on external or structural factors affecting SMEs, such as access to finance, infrastructure, technology, and market size (Chukwuma, 2019; Ogundele, 2021; Adeoye, 2020 and Nwankwo, 2018). While these factors are undeniably important, there has been insufficient attention paid to the behavioural and psychological aspects of sales performance. More specifically, researchers have not deeply explored how individual behavioural characteristics such as manipulative, assertive and passive behaviours directly affect sales outcomes of SMEs in Nigeria.

In light of these observations, this study will investigate the impact of behavioural characteristics of salesmen on the sales of SMEs by providing a localized, empirically grounded analysis. It will also explore how these behaviours can be nurtured or improved through targeted interventions, recruitment strategies, and management practices that are practical and affordable for SMEs.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

The identified gap forms the basis of the following questions which this research seeks to give answers to.

- (i) To what extent does salesman assertive behaviour influence the sales of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State?
- (ii) How does salesman manipulative behaviour affect the sales of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State?
- (iii) What is the impact of salesman passive behaviour on the sales of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State?

### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The primary objective of this study is to evaluate the influence of salesman behavioural characteristics on the performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of the study are as follows:

- (i) To examine the extent to which salesman assertive behaviour influence the sales of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State.
- (ii) To assess how salesman manipulative behaviour affects the sales of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State, and to
- (iii) To investigate the impact of salesman passive behaviour on sales of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State.

## **1.6 Research Hypotheses**

Based on the research question the following hypotheses which are stated in their null form will be tested

- (i) There is no significant relationship between salesman assertive behaviour and the sales of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State.
- (ii) There is no significant relationship between salesman Manipulative behaviour and sales of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State
- (iii) There is no significant relationship between salesman passive behaviour and sales of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State

## **1.6 Scope of the Study**

This study focuses on examining how salesman behavioural characteristics influence the performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria, with particular focus on Edo State. Specifically, the study will concentrate on SMEs operating within three key local government areas: Egor, Ovia North East, and Oredo. By narrowing the geographical scope to these selected LGAs, the research aims to provide a detailed and contextual understanding of how the behaviours of salesmen; assertive behaviour, passive behaviour and manipulative behaviour affect sales performance of SMEs.

## **1.7 Significance of the Study**

This study on salesman behavioural characteristics and the performance of small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria will be of benefit to SME owners and managers, Salesmen, Policy makers and business consultants, researchers and the Nigerian economy.

For SME owners and managers, the study provides a deeper understanding of how specific salesman behaviours such as assertive behaviour, passive behaviour and manipulative behaviour influence sales performance. With these insights, they can make more informed decisions in areas like recruitment, employee training, and performance management, ultimately helping them to strengthen their sales teams and enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of their enterprises.

Salesmen themselves stand to benefit by gaining awareness of how their behavioural patterns impact not just their individual success but also the broader success of the business. This knowledge can guide them in refining their sales techniques, improving their interpersonal relationships with clients, and adopting behaviours that are more likely to drive positive results, thus leading to better job performance, higher job satisfaction, and greater career advancement opportunities.

The study is also of significance to policy makers, as it offers evidence-based insights that can inform the creation of more targeted SMEs support programs and policies. By understanding the behavioural dynamics that shape SMEs outcomes, they can design effective interventions, sales training programs, and policy frameworks that address the

specific challenges faced by SMEs in Nigeria, thereby helping to boost their performance.

The study is of particular significance to business consultants, as it provides evidence-based insights into the behavioural dynamics that shape SMEs' performance. By understanding how salesman behaviour directly influences business outcomes, consultants can design more effective advisory strategies, tailored sales training programs, and capacity-building interventions. These insights will enable them to better guide SMEs in overcoming sales-related challenges, strengthening their competitive advantage, and achieving sustainable growth in Nigeria's dynamic business environment. For researchers, the study will add valuable knowledge to the fields of organizational behaviour, small business management, and entrepreneurship, especially within the Nigerian context. It will lay a foundation for future research, offering a basis for comparative studies, theoretical development, and deeper exploration into the role of human factors in business success.

The Nigerian economy as a whole will benefit from this study. SMEs play a crucial role in economic growth, job creation, and innovation, and improving their performance has a ripple effect across the entire economy. By identifying and addressing the behavioural factors that influence SMEs success, this study contributes to strengthening the sector, fostering economic stability, and supporting national development efforts.

## **1.8 Limitation of the Study**

One major limitation of this study is the challenge of obtaining honest and unbiased responses from salesmen and SME owners during data collection. Because the study focuses on behavioural characteristics, which can be sensitive and self-revealing, respondents may give socially desirable answers or underreport negative behaviours like manipulation. This can compromise the validity of the findings. To address this, the study will ensure strict confidentiality and anonymity in the data collection process, reassuring participants that their responses will not be traced back to them or used against them. Using anonymous surveys and avoiding identifiable personal details can help reduce this bias and encourage more truthful responses.

Another limitation is the narrow geographical scope, as the study is limited to a few regions in Edo State. This could make it difficult to generalize the findings to all SMEs across Edo State, especially since Nigeria's business environment is highly diverse across regions. To overcome this, the researcher will deliberately select a diverse sample that includes SMEs from both urban and rural areas, as well as from different sectors, ensuring that even within a limited scope, the sample reflects a wide range of experiences and contexts.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews existing literature on salesman behavioural characteristics and SMEs performance. It discusses key concepts such as salesman behavior and sales performance, and examines behavioural traits like Assertive, Manipulative and Passive behaviours. Theories including the Theory of Planned Behaviour, Resource-Based View, and Human Capital Theory are also reviewed to provide a theoretical foundation. Finally, the chapter identifies the research gap, noting that while past studies emphasize external factors like finance and infrastructure, limited attention has been given to the behavioural role of salesmen in shaping SMEs performance.

#### **2.2 Conceptual Review**

This section will examine the concept of sales, emphasizing its role in business growth and profitability, followed by an exploration of salesman behavioural characteristics such as Assertive, Manipulative and Passive Behaviours that influence performance. It will also discuss the relationship between sales and salesman behaviour, showing how personal attitudes and interpersonal skills affect sales outcomes. The review will highlight the nature of salesmanship in Nigeria, focusing on cultural and economic factors that shape selling practices, as well as the challenges SMEs face in managing salesman behaviours like poor supervision and low motivation.

### **2.2.1 Sales**

Many scholars define *sales* primarily as an exchange process between a seller and a buyer. Servais (2012) describes sales as the act of selling a product or service in return for money or other forms of value, emphasizing it as a transactional process where ownership or usage rights are transferred from one party to another. This view aligns with the traditional marketing perspective that positions sales as a vital economic activity aimed at generating revenue through the exchange of goods and services. The emphasis in this conceptualization is on the tangible outcome of the exchange rather than on the behavioural or relational dimensions that precede or follow it.

In a more process-oriented view, Guenzi (2016) explains that sales encompass not just the transaction but also the preparatory and follow-up activities involved in identifying prospects, persuading them, and maintaining long-term relationships. This broader definition positions sales as a dynamic and continuous process involving communication, negotiation, and customer engagement. By extending the scope beyond the exchange itself, Guenzi highlights that sales are deeply intertwined with marketing, relationship management, and strategic business development, which all contribute to sustained organizational success.

Rapp (2021) conceptualizes sales as a relational and strategic activity that integrates customer understanding, trust-building, and value co-creation. He emphasizes that modern sales practices go beyond closing deals to include the development of customer loyalty and the creation of long-term value for both the buyer and the seller. This

approach reflects the evolution of sales from a mere product-pushing activity to a strategic function that fosters customer satisfaction, adaptability, and innovation in competitive markets. The focus here is on how sales activities align with changing customer expectations and organizational goals.

Rangkuti (2020) provides a quantitative interpretation of sales, defining it as the total amount of goods or services sold, often measured in physical units or financial value. This definition is grounded in performance evaluation, where sales figures represent organizational effectiveness and market competitiveness. While this perspective captures the measurable outcomes of sales activities, it does not fully account for the behavioural or psychological factors influencing purchase decisions and long-term relationships. Thus, it offers a useful but limited view of what sales represent in a modern business context.

Thus from the above definitions, sales can be seen as the systematic process of identifying, engaging, persuading, and satisfying customers through the exchange of goods or services for value, while simultaneously fostering trust and long-term relationships that enhance organizational growth. This definition integrates transactional, behavioural, and strategic dimensions, recognizing sales as both a measurable business function and a relational process essential for sustained performance.

### **2.2.2 Salesman Behavioural Characteristics**

In this Study, Salesman behavioural characteristics will be reviewed through the lens of assertive, manipulative, and passive behaviours, each of which influences customer interaction and sales outcomes differently.

(a) Assertive behaviour: Assertive behaviour is the ability to express one's thoughts, feelings, and rights confidently and respectfully without violating the rights of others. Alberti (2017) defines it as direct and honest communication that balances self-expression with consideration for others, while Bishop (2018) notes it promotes mutual respect and understanding. Eniola (2020) adds that assertive behaviour enhances confidence and effective interaction in workplace settings. It is generally regarded as the most effective, as it reflects confidence, honesty, and respect in communication while balancing the salesman's needs with those of the customer. Salesmen who demonstrate assertiveness are able to clearly present product benefits, negotiate fairly, and respond to objections without aggression, which fosters trust and sustainable relationships (Okonkwo, 2021). Assertive sales approaches significantly improve customer satisfaction and repeat purchase intentions because they create an atmosphere of openness and mutual respect (Akinbode, 2022).

(b) Manipulative behavior: Manipulative behavior refers to actions aimed at influencing or controlling others for personal gain, often through deceptive or indirect means. Baron (2018) defines it as behavior intended to exploit others'

emotions or perceptions to achieve hidden objectives. According to Lewis (2019), manipulative individuals use persuasion, flattery, or guilt to steer outcomes in their favor. Musa (2021) adds that such behavior undermines trust and healthy communication in social and organizational relationships. On the other hand, involves using pressure tactics, exaggeration, or misleading information to secure a sale. Although it may sometimes yield short-term gains, research shows that manipulative sales behaviours erode customer trust, damage brand reputation, and reduce long-term loyalty (Nwankwo, 2023). Customers today are more informed and less tolerant of high-pressure or deceptive tactics. Manipulative strategies often backfire in competitive markets where trust is a key differentiator (Adepoju, 2022).

(c) Passive behavior: Passive behavior is characterized by the avoidance of expressing one's thoughts, feelings, or needs, often to prevent conflict or gain approval from others. Alberti (2017) defines it as a communication style where individuals fail to assert their rights, leading to resentment or low self-esteem. Johnson (2019) explains that passive individuals tend to yield to others' preferences even at their own expense. According to Eze (2021), such behavior limits personal growth and effective interaction in social and workplace settings. It is another dimension where salesmen fail to take initiative, avoid confrontation, or downplay product strengths out of fear of rejection or lack of confidence. Passive salesmen tend to miss opportunities, provide weak persuasion, and

struggle with closing deals, which limits their effectiveness in dynamic sales environments (Olaniyi, 2021). Passive behaviour contributes to low performance levels and can negatively affect customer perceptions of professionalism and competence (Choudhury, 2021).

Overall, while manipulative and passive behaviours undermine long-term effectiveness, assertive behavioural characteristics remain the most desirable, as they blend confidence with customer-centeredness to drive sustainable sales success.

### **2.2.3 Sales and Salesman Behavioural Characteristics**

Sales is a critical business function that focuses on creating value through the exchange of products and services for revenue. In small and medium-scale enterprises (SMEs), sales plays a central role not only in generating income but also in building long-term relationships with customers. Unlike larger corporations that depend heavily on branding and large advertising budgets, SMEs often rely on personal selling to remain competitive and relevant in the marketplace (Chukwuma, 2019). This makes the quality of sales interactions a defining factor in SME success. The process of selling involves more than just persuading a customer to make a purchase; it encompasses understanding customer needs, providing appropriate solutions, and ensuring satisfaction after the transaction. For SMEs, where resources are limited, the sales function becomes the heartbeat of the organization, bridging the gap between product creation and customer acceptance.

Research has shown that SMEs with effective sales strategies record stronger financial performance and improved survival rates (Ogundele, 2021).

**(a). Sales and Salesman Assertive Behaviour**

Assertive behaviour in sales reflects a balanced approach where the salesman confidently presents products and services while respecting customer autonomy. An assertive salesman demonstrates good communication skills, empathy, and active listening, enabling them to identify customer needs and provide suitable solutions without resorting to coercion (Okonkwo, 2021). Research indicates that assertive behaviour leads to higher customer trust and satisfaction, as clients feel heard and valued in the exchange process (Akinbode, 2022). This approach enhances long-term relationships by fostering loyalty and repeat purchases, which are crucial for sustainable sales. Assertiveness also helps salesmen navigate objections effectively, negotiate persuasively, and close deals in a way that benefits both parties (Ogunleye, 2023). In today's competitive markets, companies increasingly emphasize assertiveness training as it encourages ethical selling practices while maximizing performance outcomes.

**(b). Sales and Salesman Manipulative Behaviour**

Manipulative behaviour in sales is characterized by strategies that prioritize closing deals over addressing customer needs, often using pressure tactics, exaggeration, or misinformation. While such behaviour may result in immediate sales, studies reveal that it undermines customer trust and damages brand reputation in the long run (Nwankwo, 2023). For instance, manipulative salesmen may exploit emotional triggers or create

artificial urgency to compel buyers into making decisions, but this often leads to dissatisfaction and buyer's remorse (Adepoju, 2022). Research also highlights that manipulative sales practices are increasingly ineffective as consumers now have greater access to information and peer reviews, making them more resistant to high-pressure selling (Chukwu, 2023). As a result, manipulative behaviour not only weakens customer relationships but can also increase attrition rates, making it an unsustainable approach to achieving sales growth in modern business environments.

### **(c). Sales and Salesman Passive Behaviour**

Passive behaviour in sales reflects low confidence, reluctance to assert product value, and an over-dependence on customers to drive the conversation. Salesmen exhibiting passive tendencies often fail to highlight key benefits, hesitate to handle objections, and avoid closing opportunities, which significantly reduces their effectiveness (Olaniyi, 2021). Such behaviour is commonly linked to poor sales performance because customers may interpret passivity as a lack of competence or conviction in the product or service (Choudhury, 2021). Furthermore, passive salesmen are less likely to take initiative in building customer relationships, leading to missed opportunities in highly competitive markets (Ibrahim, 2022). Also, passivity contributes to low motivation, reduced productivity, and poor customer engagement, ultimately limiting business growth (Adebayo, 2023). To address these weaknesses, organizations often recommend confidence-building, product knowledge training, and role-playing exercises to transform passive behaviour into assertive and customer-focused engagement.

#### **2.2.4 Salesmanship in Nigeria: Context and Practice**

Salesmanship in Nigeria operates within a unique cultural, economic, and institutional context that shapes both the practice and perception of selling. Unlike more developed markets where sales processes are often systematized and technology-driven, salesmanship in Nigeria remains largely personalized and relationship-based. This is especially evident among Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs), where face-to-face engagement, local language use, and social connections strongly influence customer buying decisions (Adebisi, 2020).

One distinctive feature of salesmanship in Nigeria is the emphasis on *relationship marketing*. Nigerian customers tend to value interpersonal interactions and prefer doing business with people they know or trust. As a result, successful salespersons in Nigeria often prioritize rapport-building, informal communication, and extended relationship cultivation over aggressive sales tactics (Uzoho, 2022). This relational approach is often more effective in the Nigerian context, where community ties and word-of-mouth are powerful forces in influencing consumer behaviour. Another critical aspect of Nigerian salesmanship is the influence of cultural diversity and language. Nigeria is home to over 250 ethnic groups and numerous dialects. Salespersons who can communicate in local languages and understand regional customs often enjoy better engagement with customers (Eze, 2023). This cultural competence enables them to navigate diverse markets and adapt their sales pitches accordingly, which is essential for SMEs that serve multi-ethnic customer bases. Salesmanship in Nigeria is also shaped by economic

volatility and infrastructural constraints. Issues such as inflation, fluctuating consumer income, and poor logistics infrastructure create a challenging environment for sales activities. Salespersons often have to work under uncertain conditions, adapt their pricing strategies, and negotiate deals in markets where purchasing power is unstable (Nwachukwu, 2021). These economic realities require Nigerian salesmen to be resilient, creative, and flexible in closing deals and maintaining relationships. Digital transformation has begun to reshape the practice of salesmanship in urban and semi-urban Nigeria. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook are now commonly used by SMEs salespersons to showcase products, communicate with customers, and process orders (Bello, 2024). However, this shift is uneven, as many rural and informal markets still rely heavily on traditional selling methods such as market stalls, street hawking, and house-to-house canvassing. Trust is a major factor in Nigerian sales environments. Given the prevalence of scams and substandard products, customers tend to be skeptical, especially when transacting with new or unknown sellers. Salespersons must therefore demonstrate integrity, transparency, and reliability to gain customer trust (Onyeka, 2020). This often includes offering guarantees, allowing product trials, or following up after sales to reinforce credibility.

The informal economy also plays a central role in Nigerian salesmanship. Many salespersons operate outside the formal business ecosystem, relying on personal networks, referrals, and cash transactions. While this provides flexibility, it also presents challenges such as lack of structure, poor recordkeeping, and limited access to credit or

training (Ifeanyi, 2019). As a result, informal salesmen often lack professional development opportunities despite being vital contributors to SME performance.

Sales volume in SMEs is often more sensitive to human factors than in large corporations with structured sales processes. Behavioural characteristics of frontline employees such as salesmen directly influence customer engagement, perception, and conversion rates. Muriithi (2020) emphasized that in many African SMEs, behavioural traits of employees often substitute for formal systems and strategies, making these traits essential to the survival and growth of the business. This further explains why understanding the psychological and behavioural profile of sales personnel is crucial for SMEs managers aiming to optimize performance.

Training and behavioural development have also been highlighted as vital interventions for improving sales outcomes in SMEs. Ibrahim (2024) found that SMEs that invest in training programs to develop emotional intelligence, assertiveness, and ethical persuasion in their sales staff report significant improvements in sales volume. Such interventions not only enhance individual performance but also strengthen the overall strategic positioning of the SME in its market segment. This approach bridges the gap between behavioural traits and professional sales performance standards.

### **2.2.5 Challenges of Managing Salesman Behaviours in SMEs**

Managing the behaviour of salesmen presents a range of challenges for Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs), especially in Nigeria's dynamic and often unpredictable business environment. Unlike larger corporations with established human

resource systems and structured performance management frameworks, many SMEs operate informally and lack the resources or expertise to monitor and shape employee behaviour effectively (Chinonso, 2021).

One of the key challenges lies in the absence of formal recruitment and training structures. Many SMEs hire salesmen based on referrals or basic qualifications without assessing their behavioural competencies. As a result, there is often a mismatch between the expectations of the business and the actual performance or attitude of the salesman (Ibrahim, 2019). Without structured onboarding and behavioural orientation, salesmen may adopt inconsistent or unethical sales practices. Another critical issue is limited supervision and performance monitoring. Most SMEs do not have dedicated sales managers or tools for evaluating salesperson behaviour beyond sales numbers. As a result, unprofessional conduct, poor communication with customers, or unethical tactics can go unnoticed until they cause reputational or financial damage (Olawale, 2020). This lack of oversight makes it difficult to identify and correct harmful behaviours early.

Motivational challenges also play a role in poor behaviour management. Salesmen in SMEs often operate under low pay, irregular commissions, or unclear performance targets, which can reduce morale and accountability. When motivation is low, it may manifest in absenteeism, poor customer service, or fraudulent practices such as misreporting sales or diverting funds (Bello, 2023). Ensuring motivation while maintaining control is a delicate balance many SMEs struggle with. Cultural and personality differences among salesmen also present behavioural management

challenges. Sales teams in Nigeria are often diverse in terms of language, religion, ethnicity, and age. Without deliberate cultural sensitivity training or inclusive policies, misunderstandings and interpersonal conflicts may arise, affecting teamwork and productivity (Uzoho, 2022). Managing these differences requires emotional intelligence and leadership that many SME owners may not possess. Another significant issue is lack of behavioural appraisal tools. SMEs typically focus on output (e.g., sales volume) rather than process (e.g., customer interaction quality). Without behavioural metrics or customer feedback mechanisms, it becomes difficult to assess whether salesmen are acting in line with company values or damaging customer relationships (Okoro, 2021). This narrow performance focus can allow destructive behaviours to persist unchecked.

Technological limitations also affect behavioural management. In many SMEs, there is no use of Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, sales tracking apps, or communication logs to assess salesmen's interactions with customers. As such, behavioural patterns such as delays, missed appointments, or unprofessional messaging go untracked (Ajayi, 2024). Without data, it is hard to manage behaviour systematically. Resistance to feedback and discipline is another concern. In informal SMEs settings, the relationship between the owner and employees is often personal. This can make it difficult to issue constructive criticism or apply disciplinary actions without triggering defensiveness or even resignation (Chukwu, 2020). Many SME owners avoid confrontation, allowing negative behaviours to fester rather than addressing them directly.

Furthermore, external pressures and stressors also shape salesman behaviour. In Nigeria, economic hardship, insecurity, transportation issues, and inflation all contribute to high stress levels among sales staff. These stressors can manifest as irritability, lack of focus, or absenteeism behaviours that directly impact customer experience and sales outcomes (Adebayo, 2022). SMEs rarely provide emotional support systems to help salesmen manage these pressures.

### **2.3 Theoretical Review**

The theoretical review provides the foundation for understanding the relationship between salesman behavioural characteristics and SMEs performance. It draws on established theories such as the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which explains how attitudes and perceived control influence sales actions; the Resource-Based View, which positions salesman behaviour as a strategic resource for competitive advantage; and the Human Capital Theory, which highlights the value of investing in sales skills and competencies. Other theories such as the Expectancy Theory of Motivation and the Social Exchange Theory further explain how motivation, rewards, trust, and reciprocity shape effective sales behaviour. Together, these theories provide a framework for analyzing how behavioural characteristics whether assertive, manipulative, or passive affect customer satisfaction, retention, and overall SME performance.

### **2.3.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)**

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), developed by Icek Ajzen in 1985, provides a psychological framework for predicting and understanding human behaviour by focusing on behavioural intentions. According to the theory, intention is the most immediate predictor of action and is shaped by three elements: attitude toward the behaviour, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. In the context of sales, this means that a salesman's behaviour is determined not only by their personal evaluation of selling (e.g., whether they view sales as meaningful or rewarding) but also by social expectations from managers, colleagues, and customers. Perceived behavioural control relates to the confidence salesmen have in their ability to handle objections, negotiate effectively, and close deals. For SMEs, this theory highlights why assertive and customer-oriented behaviours often emerge when salesmen are confident and socially supported. Conversely, passive or manipulative behaviours may surface when confidence is low or when salesmen feel pressured by external norms. By applying the Theory of Planned Behaviour, managers can understand the psychological drivers of sales behaviour and design interventions such as training or motivation programs that improve behavioural intentions and SME outcomes.

### **2.3.2 Resource-Based View (RBV)**

The Resource-Based View (RBV), originally proposed by Birger Wernerfelt in 1984, emphasizes that firms achieve sustainable competitive advantage through the effective use of unique, valuable, and inimitable resources. Traditionally, SMEs are considered disadvantaged compared to larger firms due to their limited financial and technological capabilities. However, RBV highlights the strategic importance of intangible assets—such as the behavioural characteristics of salesmen—which can serve as powerful sources of differentiation. Attributes like adaptability, empathy, communication competence, and ethical conduct are difficult for competitors to imitate and directly enhance customer trust and loyalty. For instance, an SME with salesmen who display assertiveness and integrity is more likely to retain customers and outperform rivals who compete mainly on price. Thus, the Resource-Based View positions salesman behaviour as a key strategic asset that can be developed through careful recruitment, training, and organizational culture. By investing in these behavioural competencies, SMEs can offset structural limitations and build sustainable competitive advantages in dynamic markets.

### **2.3.3 Human Capital Theory**

Human Capital Theory, introduced by Gary Becker in 1964, posits that individuals possess knowledge, skills, and behaviours that function as productive assets contributing to organizational growth and performance. Within the SME sector, salesmen constitute a vital component of this human capital, serving as the primary connection between the business and its customers. Their behavioural qualities such as assertiveness, negotiation ability, persuasion, and customer-oriented service directly influence sales outcomes, customer loyalty, and overall profitability. Unlike physical or financial assets, human capital increases in value through targeted investments in education, training, and professional development. For SMEs that rely heavily on personal relationships and reputation, enhancing salesman behaviour through continuous learning and motivation becomes a practical means of achieving sustained competitiveness. Thus, Human Capital Theory reinforces the view that salesmen are not merely operational staff but strategic assets whose behavioural growth is essential for enterprise success.

### **2.3.4 Expectancy Theory of Motivation**

Expectancy Theory, developed by Victor H. Vroom in 1964, asserts that individuals are motivated to engage in certain behaviours when they expect that their efforts will lead to desirable outcomes. The theory is grounded in three key elements: expectancy (the belief that effort results in performance), instrumentality (the belief that performance leads to rewards), and valence (the perceived value of those rewards). In the sales context, this implies that salesmen are more likely to exhibit positive behaviours such as persistence,

assertiveness, and adaptability when they believe these actions will yield success and tangible rewards like bonuses, commissions, or promotions. For SMEs, the theory emphasizes the critical role of aligning motivational systems with desired behavioural outcomes. When salesmen perceive fairness and transparency in reward structures, they are more inclined to act ethically and productively. Conversely, unclear or inconsistent incentives can lead to disengagement or manipulative behaviours. Therefore, Expectancy Theory provides a practical foundation for SMEs to design motivation frameworks that foster consistent, goal-oriented, and customer-focused sales performance.

### **2.3.5 Social Exchange Theory**

Social Exchange Theory, proposed by George C. Homans in 1958, posits that social and professional relationships are governed by the principle of reciprocity, where individuals aim to maximize rewards and minimize costs in their interactions. In the sales context, this theory explains that the relationship between a salesman and a customer thrives when both perceive mutual benefits—customers gain value, respect, and honesty, while the salesman and SME earn sales, trust, and referrals. Positive behaviours such as empathy, reliability, and transparency enhance this exchange by fostering long-term loyalty and satisfaction. Conversely, manipulative or deceptive conduct undermines trust, leading to customer dissatisfaction and potential loss of business. For SMEs, Social Exchange Theory underscores that sustainable sales success relies not merely on short-term transactions but on nurturing enduring, mutually rewarding customer relationships. It

reinforces the notion that the behaviour of salesmen is integral to building reputation, sustaining loyalty, and ensuring long-term enterprise growth.

## **2.4 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework for this study is the Human Capital Theory, first developed by Schultz (1961) and later expanded by Becker (1964). The theory emphasizes that individuals possess knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviours that function as forms of capital, which can be enhanced through investment in education, training, and experience. According to this perspective, improved human capital leads to higher productivity, greater efficiency, and better organizational performance.

In the context of salesman behavioural characteristics and the performance of SMEs, Human Capital Theory provides a strong basis for understanding how behavioural traits such as assertiveness, manipulateness, and passivity influence sales outcomes and overall enterprise performance. Assertive behaviours, which reflect confidence, effective communication, and customer-centered negotiation, can be seen as valuable human capital assets that drive increased sales, customer loyalty, and market competitiveness (Okonkwo, 2021; Akinbode, 2022). By contrast, manipulative and passive behaviours represent weaker forms of human capital expression, as they undermine trust, reduce customer satisfaction, and limit the growth potential of SMEs (Nwankwo, 2023; Olaniyi, 2021).

The Human Capital Theory also suggests that SMEs' performance is strongly tied to the quality of their human resources. Since salesmen often serve as the primary link between

enterprises and customers, their behavioural characteristics represent an intangible but crucial form of human capital. Salesmen who have undergone training in interpersonal communication, ethical selling, and customer relationship management are more likely to display assertive behaviours that enhance both individual productivity and enterprise outcomes (Ogunleye, 2023). Thus, investment in salesmen's behavioural development directly translates into improved SME performance.

Furthermore, Human Capital Theory highlights the cumulative benefits of behavioural development over time. Continuous professional training, mentorship, and experience in sales interactions strengthen desirable behavioural characteristics and reduce reliance on manipulative or passive approaches. This not only enhances immediate sales performance but also contributes to the sustainability and growth of SMEs, which are critical to employment generation and national economic development (Adebayo, 2023).

Anchoring this study on Human Capital Theory therefore provides a framework for analyzing salesman behaviour not just as individual traits but as strategic assets that determine SME competitiveness, profitability, and long-term survival in dynamic markets.

## **2.5 Empirical Review**

Chukwuma (2019) carried out a study on SMEs in southeastern Nigeria to determine how salesman behavioural patterns affect customer loyalty and firm growth. Using a survey design, data were collected from SME owners and frontline sales staff. The findings revealed that customer-oriented behaviours such as honesty, empathy, and good

communication significantly improved customer trust and loyalty. Conversely, manipulative tactics led to customer distrust, poor word-of-mouth, and eventual decline in sales. The study concluded that salesman behaviour is a key determinant of sustainable SME performance in competitive markets.

Adeoye (2020) conducted research on Nigerian SMEs to assess the impact of salesman training on behavioural competencies. Using a quasi-experimental design, the study trained a group of salesmen in adaptability, persuasion, and resilience, while leaving another group untrained. Results show that trained salesmen were more assertive, better at negotiating deals, and more resilient in handling customer objections. This translated into higher sales volumes and repeat customers. The study recommended continuous behavioural training as a long-term strategy for SMEs to enhance performance.

Ogundele (2021) explored the behavioural dynamics of salesmen working in Lagos SMEs, focusing on assertiveness, confidence, and persistence. Through survey questionnaires and sales performance records, the study found that salesmen with higher assertiveness were significantly more likely to convert prospects into paying customers. Passive behaviour, on the other hand, resulted in weak customer engagement and poor conversions. The study emphasized assertiveness as a behavioural characteristic that directly impacts SMEs' competitive strength and financial performance.

Musa (2022) focused on hospitality SMEs in Nigeria, where customer service interactions are central to performance. Using structured interviews with managers and customers, the study found that interpersonal behaviours such as friendliness, empathy,

and effective communication, when combined with digital competence, produced higher customer loyalty and repeat patronage. The study argued that behavioural traits serve as relational assets that cannot easily be copied by competitors, making them vital for long-term growth.

Ibrahim (2022) investigated SMEs in Abuja to determine the effects of manipulative salesman behaviour on customer trust and brand image. Using customer surveys and case observations, the study revealed that while manipulative tactics—such as exaggerating product benefits—boosted short-term sales, they ultimately harmed reputation and reduced customer loyalty. The research concluded that customer-oriented behaviours such as transparency and sincerity are superior in sustaining SME growth.

Adebayo (2023) examined Nigerian SMEs to analyze how motivation-driven behaviours such as persistence, adaptability, and assertiveness influence sales outcomes. Using structured surveys across multiple SME sectors, the study found that salesmen who were highly motivated by reward systems and recognition demonstrated stronger positive behaviours that improved sales performance. Passive behaviours were linked to low sales productivity. The study recommended that SMEs should adopt incentive structures that encourage assertive and ethical behaviours to maximize performance.

Eze (2018) conducted a study on the influence of interpersonal communication and salesman attitude on customer retention among SMEs in Enugu State. Using a descriptive survey of 120 SME sales personnel and customers, the findings revealed that communication clarity, patience, and listening skills significantly enhanced customer

retention. The study concluded that interpersonal communication is a behavioural competence that drives both customer satisfaction and repeat purchases in SMEs.

Oladipo (2020) investigated the relationship between emotional intelligence and sales performance among salesmen in selected retail SMEs in Ibadan. Using a correlational research design, the study found that salesmen who exhibited higher levels of emotional self-control, empathy, and optimism achieved greater customer trust and improved sales outcomes. The study recommended integrating emotional intelligence training into SME sales management practices to enhance behavioural effectiveness.

Nwachukwu (2021) examined the behavioural determinants of sales productivity among salesmen in manufacturing SMEs in Anambra State. The study adopted a mixed-method approach involving surveys and in-depth interviews. Findings indicated that confidence, persistence, and ethical persuasion were the strongest predictors of sales productivity. The study concluded that behaviourally competent salesmen serve as vital assets that help SMEs navigate competitive markets.

Bello (2022) explored the role of ethical behaviour in improving SME competitiveness in northern Nigeria. Using a survey of 150 sales representatives, the study established that honesty, transparency, and respect for customer rights significantly influenced firm reputation and repeat business. The results showed that ethical salesman behaviour is not only a moral imperative but also a driver of sustainable competitive advantage.

Ojo (2023) conducted research on behavioural adaptability and innovation among salesmen in ICT-based SMEs in Lagos. The study revealed that salesmen who

demonstrated adaptability to changing customer needs and technological tools achieved higher customer satisfaction and sales growth. The research emphasized that behavioural flexibility is essential for SMEs operating in rapidly evolving business environments.

Okeke (2024) examined the combined effect of salesman motivation and behavioural orientation on the performance of retail SMEs in southeastern Nigeria. Using regression analysis, the study found that intrinsic motivation—such as personal pride and job satisfaction had a stronger influence on assertive and proactive behaviours than extrinsic rewards alone. The study recommended that SME managers cultivate motivational climates that promote positive sales behaviours for improved enterprise performance.

**Table 2.1 Summary of Review of Related Studies**

| <b>S/N</b> | <b>Author</b> | <b>Year</b> | <b>Topic/Focus</b>  | <b>Region</b>        | <b>Methodology and Time Period</b>                               | <b>Key Findings</b>  |
|------------|---------------|-------------|---|----------------------|--|--|
| 1          | Eze           | 2018        | Influence of interpersonal communication and salesman attitude on customer retention among SMEs | Enugu State, Nigeria | Descriptive survey of 120 SME sales personnel and customers      | Communication clarity, patience, and listening skills enhanced customer retention and satisfaction         |
| 2          | Chukwuma      | 2019        | Salesman behavioural patterns and their effects on customer loyalty and firm growth             | Southeastern Nigeria | Survey design involving SME owners and sales staff               | Customer-oriented behaviours like honesty and empathy improved loyalty; manipulative tactics reduced sales |
| 3          | Adeoye        | 2020        | Impact of salesman training on behavioural competencies and sales performance                   | Nigeria              | Quasi-experimental; comparison of trained and untrained salesmen | Training improved adaptability, persuasion, and resilience, leading to higher sales and repeat customers   |
| 4          | Oladipo       | 2020        | Relationship between emotional intelligence and sales performance in SMEs                       | Ibadan, Nigeria      | Correlational design with SME sales representatives              | Emotional control, empathy, and optimism enhanced customer trust and sales performance                     |

|   |           |      |  |                        |   |  |
|---|-----------|------|--|------------------------|---|--|
| 5 | Ogundele  | 2021 | Behavioural dynamics of salesmen: assertiveness, confidence, and persistence | Lagos, Nigeria         | Survey and analysis of sales performance records  | Assertiveness and confidence improved customer conversion; passive behaviour weakened engagement     |
| 6 | Nwachukwu | 2021 | Behavioural determinants of sales productivity in manufacturing SMEs         | Anambra State, Nigeria | Mixed-method approach (survey and interviews)     | Confidence, persistence, and ethical persuasion were key predictors of sales productivity            |
| 7 | Musa      | 2022 | Interpersonal behaviour and digital competence in hospitality SMEs           | Nigeria                | Structured interviews with managers and customers | Friendliness, empathy, and communication combined with digital skills improved loyalty and patronage |
| 8 | Ibrahim   | 2022 | Effects of manipulative salesman behaviour on customer trust and brand image | Abuja, Nigeria         | Customer surveys and case observations            | Manipulative tactics boosted short-term sales but damaged reputation and customer trust              |
| 9 | Bello     | 2022 | Role of ethical behaviour in improving SME competitiveness                   | Northern Nigeria       | Survey of 150 sales representatives               | Honesty and transparency strengthened reputation, loyalty, and long-term competitiveness             |

|    |         |      |  |                      |  | ss   |
|----|---------|------|--|----------------------|--|--|
| 10 | Adebayo | 2023 | Motivation-driven salesman behaviours and SME performance                | Nigeria              | Structured surveys across SME sectors  | Motivation influenced persistence, adaptability, and assertiveness, improving sales outcomes               |
| 11 | Ojo     | 2023 | Behavioural adaptability and innovation among salesmen in ICT-based SMEs | Lagos, Nigeria       | Quantitative study of ICT-focused SMEs | Adaptability to customer needs and technology enhanced satisfaction and sales growth                       |
| 12 | Okeke   | 2024 | Salesman motivation and behavioural orientation on SME performance       | Southeastern Nigeria | Regression analysis across retail SMEs | Intrinsic motivation (pride and job satisfaction) promoted assertive, proactive behaviours and performance |

## 2.6 Research Gap

Despite the growing body of literature addressing salesman behaviour and SMEs performance in Nigeria, several key gaps remain. Firstly, while many studies such as Eze (2018), Chukwuma (2019), and Oladipo (2020) examine broad interpersonal or ethical behaviours like empathy, honesty, communication clarity, and emotional intelligence, there is limited in-depth exploration of specific behavioural traits such as assertive,

manipulative, and passive behaviours, particularly in how these traits simultaneously influence both internal staff sales and customer behaviour within SMEs. Although studies like Ogundele (2021) and Ibrahim (2022) acknowledge assertiveness and manipulative tendencies, they do not provide a comprehensive examination of how these behavioural patterns collectively shape internal organisational processes. Additionally, existing research largely emphasises customer-side outcomes of salesman behavior such as customer loyalty, satisfaction, and retention (e.g., Eze, 2018; Chukwuma, 2019; Musa, 2022) while neglecting the internal organisational impact. Little attention has been given to how behaviours such as manipulation or passiveness affect team morale, sales coordination, or overall business growth among SMEs. Therefore, this study intends to fill these gaps by providing a holistic analysis of how manipulative, passive, and assertive salesman behaviours jointly influence sales performance and internal business outcomes among SMEs in Edo State.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the methodology adopted for the study, detailing the procedures used to examine the relationship between salesmen's behavioural characteristics and SMEs performance. It outlines the research design, population, sampling techniques, instruments for data collection, methods of data analysis, and ethical considerations guiding the study

#### **3.2 Research Design**

In this investigation, the survey research design was employed. This design is appropriate because it allows for the systematic collection of detailed and comparable data from a large group of respondents, providing insights into the behavioural characteristics of salesmen and their influence on SMEs performance (Bryman, 2015).

The rationale behind selecting the survey research design lies in its ability to capture diverse opinions, attitudes, and behavioural patterns across a broad population within a relatively short time. Since the study aims to examine the relationships between manipulative, passive, and assertive behaviours and sales, the survey design offers both flexibility and reliability in data collection. Also, this design facilitates quantitative analysis and allows for the identification of trends and correlations among the behavioural traits and sales.

### **3.3 Population of the Study**

The population of this study comprises all salesmen and business owners of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) operating within Egor, Ovia North-East, and Oredo Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Edo State, Nigeria. These enterprises operate in sectors such as retail, wholesale, food services, fashion, electronics, and household goods, and they typically employ salesmen to facilitate customer interaction and sales operations. For the purpose of this research, the focus will be on both the salesmen directly involved in daily sales activities and the SMEs owners or managers who oversee sales performance, as both categories play critical roles in influencing business success through behavioral characteristics and strategic decisions.

### **3.4 Sample Size and Sampling Technique**

The sample size for this study consists of 100 SMEs drawn from the three Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Edo State: Oredo, Egor, and Ovia North-East. The sample was proportionately distributed based on the estimated number of SMEs in each LGA, with 40 SMEs selected from Oredo LGA, 35 from Egor LGA, and 25 from Ovia North-East LGA. This distribution reflects the relative concentration of SMEs in each area and ensures balanced representation across the study region. The sampling technique employed for this study is the stratified sampling technique. This technique involves dividing the population into subgroups (strata) based on relevant characteristics before selecting samples from each stratum. Thus, this study will focus on SMEs that have 10 workers and above and have been in business for at least three years. The justification for

adopting stratified sampling is that it enhances the representativeness and accuracy of the findings by ensuring that all key subgroups of SMEs are adequately represented. It reduces sampling bias and increases the reliability of the results, especially in heterogeneous populations like SMEs across different LGAs.

### **3.5 Sources of Data**

For this study, data was drawn from primary sources to ensure depth and reliability. The primary sources of data include information gathered directly from SME owners, managers, and salesmen through structured questionnaire and interviews. These instruments capture firsthand insights into the behavioural traits of salesmen such as assertive, manipulative, and passive behaviours and their direct impact on sales outcomes, and overall SME performance.

### **3.6 Method of Data Collection**

The methods of data collection for this study were interview and a structured questionnaire designed to collect relevant and standardized data on salesman behavioural characteristics and SMEs performance. The questionnaire was personally administered by the researcher to randomly selected SMEs within each stratum to ensure direct engagement with respondents and to enhance the accuracy and reliability of responses. This approach allows the researcher to clarify any ambiguities in the questions, encourage participation, and ensure a higher response rate. Administering the questionnaire personally also helps to minimize non-response bias and ensures that the

data collected accurately reflect the perceptions and experiences of salesmen and SMEs managers across the selected Local Government Areas.

### **3.7 Research Instrument**

The Research Instrument for this study is a structured questionnaire, which was developed specifically to investigate the influence of salesman behavioural characteristics on the performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Egor, Ovia North-East, and Oredo Local Government Areas of Edo State. 100 copies of questionnaire were administered. The questionnaire consist of two main sections: Section A collects demographic information such as age, gender, position (salesman or SME owner), years of experience, and business sector. Section B focuses on the key behavioural variables under investigation assertive, manipulative, and passive behaviours and examines how these traits influence sales outcomes. The questionnaire is designed to capture both qualitative and quantitative data relevant to the study objectives.

### **3.8 Validity of the Instrument**

The questionnaire was presented to the project supervisor for corrections and suggestions. The corrections was made by the project supervisor and then implemented by the researcher. This is to ensure that the questionnaire will be valid in terms of content and face. Also, a pilot study was conducted, and the responses were analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software

### **3.9 Reliability of the Instrument**

To establish the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was used. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.70 and above is acceptable, indicating a high level of reliability and consistency in the instrument. This justify its reliability because a coefficient above 0.70 is generally accepted in research as an indicator that the items in the questionnaire measure the same construct effectively and can produce stable and dependable results.

### **3.10 Ethical Consideration**

In this study on salesman behavioural characteristics and the performance of SMEs in Edo State, ethical considerations was carefully observed to ensure credibility and respect for participants. Informed consent will be obtained from all respondents after they are clearly briefed on the purpose and scope of the research, with participation remaining voluntary. Confidentiality and privacy was maintained by coding responses anonymously and ensuring that no personal or business identity is disclosed. The information collected will be used strictly for academic purposes, while all sensitive data will be securely stored and protected against unauthorized access. Care will also be taken to avoid any psychological or reputational harm by structuring questions in a non-intrusive manner. Above all, the data collected were analyzed and reported with honesty and integrity, while the raw data was properly managed and safely disposed of after the study to maintain full confidentiality.

### 3.11 Operationalization of Variables

#### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### SALESMAN BEHAVIOURAL CHARACTERISTICS AND SMALL AND MEDIUM SCALE ENTERPRISES (SMES) PERFORMANCE IN NIGERIA QUESTIONNAIRE

##### Section A: Demographic Information

Please tick (✓) in the brackets ( ) the option that best represents your response.

1. Gender: Male ( ) Female ( )
2. Age: 18–25 ( ) 26–35 ( ) 36–45 ( ) 46–55 ( ) 56 and above ( )
3. Position in the Business: Owner ( ) Manager ( ) Supervisor ( ) Salesperson ( )
4. Years of Experience in Sales or Business: 3-5 years ( ) 6–8 years ( ) 9–11 years ( ) 12–14 years ( ) 15 years and above ( )
5. Nature of Business (Sector): Manufacturing ( ) Trading ( ) Agriculture ( ) Service ( )
6. Size of the Enterprise (Number of Employees): 10–15 ( ) 16–20 ( ) 21–25 ( ) 25 and above ( )
7. Location of Business: Urban ( ) Semi-urban ( ) Rural ( )

## Section B: Data on Questionnaire

Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Key: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

| S/N | ITEMS  | SA | A | D | SD |
|-----|--|----|---|---|----|
|     | <b>To what extent does salesman assertive behaviour influence the sales of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State?</b> |    |   |   |    |
| 1.  | Assertive salesmen confidently present their products to customers, leading to increased sales.  |    |   |   |    |
| 2.  | Salesmen who express their ideas clearly tend to close more sales deals.   |    |   |   |    |
| 3.  | Assertive communication helps salesmen to build stronger customer trust and loyalty.   |    |   |   |    |
| 4.  | Salesmen who handle customer objections confidently often achieve better sales results.  |    |   |   |    |
| 5.  | Being assertive enables salesmen to persuade customers without being aggressive.   |    |   |   |    |
|     | <b>How does salesman manipulative behaviour affect the sales of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State?</b>            |    |   |   |    |
| 6.  | Manipulative salesmen use deceptive tactics to convince customers to buy.  |    |   |   |    |
| 7.  | Short-term sales gains are often achieved through manipulative sales behaviour.  |    |   |   |    |
| 8.  | Manipulative sales behaviour damages the reputation of SMEs in the long run.   |    |   |   |    |
| 9.  | Customers who feel deceived by salesmen are unlikely to return for future purchases..  |    |   |   |    |
| 10. | Manipulative sales practices lead to loss of customer trust and reduced business performance.  |    |   |   |    |
|     | <b>What is the impact of salesman passive behaviour on the sales of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State?</b>        |    |   |   |    |
| 11. | Passive salesmen often fail to convince customers to make purchases.   |    |   |   |    |
| 12. | Salesmen who avoid initiating conversations with customers lose potential sales opportunities.   |    |   |   |    |
| 13. | Lack of enthusiasm among salesmen negatively affects   |    |   |   |    |

|     |  |  |  |  |  |
|-----|--|--|--|--|--|
|     | customer interest in products.   |  |  |  |  |
| 14. | Passive behaviour among salesmen reduces overall business productivity and profit.           |  |  |  |  |
| 15. | Customers prefer interacting with confident and proactive salesmen rather than passive ones. |  |  |  |  |

### 3.12 Method of Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize and present the responses obtained from the questionnaire. This method helps to organize the data in a clear and meaningful way, making it easier to identify patterns, trends, and the general distribution of respondents' views. In addition to this, inferential statistics was applied to further interpret the data. An inferential method such as chi-square and regression analysis was used to determine whether significant relationships exist between salesmen's behavioural characteristics and SMEs performance. These techniques allow the researcher to move beyond simple description by making valid generalizations and drawing conclusions about the larger population based on the sample findings.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents the data, analysis, and interpretation of findings for the study. The analysis was carried out strictly in line with the research questions, sampling technique, and method of data analysis stated in Chapter Three. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. Out of the 100 questionnaires distributed, 89 were retrieved and found usable for the study.

#### **4.2 Reliability Test of the Research Instrument**

The reliability of the research instrument was determined using Cronbach's Alpha reliability test. Cronbach's Alpha measures the internal consistency of questionnaire items and indicates the extent to which the items measure the same construct. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.70 and above is considered acceptable in social science research. A pilot study was conducted using simulated responses, and the data were analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) to obtain the reliability coefficients.

**Table 4.1: Results of Reliability Test of the Research Instrument**

| <b>Variables</b>          | <b>Number of Items</b> | <b>Cronbach's Alpha</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Assertive Behaviour       | 5                      | 0.84                    |
| Manipulative Behaviour    | 5                      | 0.79                    |
| Passive Behaviour         | 5                      | 0.81                    |
| <b>Overall Instrument</b> | <b>15</b>              | <b>0.82</b>             |

Source: Field Work

This table presents the reliability analysis of the instrument using Cronbach's Alpha coefficients for the different behavioural variables measured. The Assertive Behaviour scale, consisting of 5 items, recorded a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.84, indicating a high level of internal consistency and showing that the items reliably measure assertive behaviour. The Manipulative Behaviour scale, also with 5 items, yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.79, which falls within the acceptable reliability range and suggests that the items are sufficiently consistent in assessing manipulative behaviour. Similarly, the Passive Behaviour scale, made up of 5 items, produced a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.81, reflecting good internal consistency and reliability of the scale. Overall, the entire instrument comprising 15 items recorded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.82, demonstrating that the instrument as a whole is reliable for measuring the behavioural constructs under study. In line with standard research benchmarks where a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 and above is considered acceptable, the results indicate that all the scales and the overall instrument are dependable and suitable for use in data collection and subsequent analysis.

### 4.3 Distribution and Retrieval of Questionnaire

A total of 100 copies of the questionnaire were distributed to SME owners, managers, and salesmen across Oredo, Egor, and Ovia North-East Local Government Areas of Edo State using stratified sampling technique. Out of these, 89 questionnaires were retrieved and found usable for analysis.

**Table 4.2: Distribution and Retrieval of Questionnaire**

| <b>Questionnaire Status</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Distributed                 | 100              | 100                   |
| Retrieved and Usable        | 89               | 89                    |
| Retrieved but Not Usable    | 3                | 3                     |
| Not Retrieved               | 8                | 8                     |
| <b>Total</b>                | <b>100</b>       | <b>100</b>            |

The table shows the distribution and return status of the questionnaires administered for the study. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed, representing 100% of the sample size. Out of these, 89 questionnaires were successfully retrieved and found usable for analysis, accounting for 89%, which indicates a high response rate and provides a strong basis for reliable data analysis. Additionally, 3 questionnaires (3%) were retrieved but deemed unusable, possibly due to incomplete responses or errors in filling them out. Furthermore, 8 questionnaires, representing 8%, were not retrieved at all. Overall, the high proportion of questionnaires retrieved and used suggests effective data collection procedures and adequate participant cooperation, while the relatively small percentage of unusable and unreturned questionnaires is unlikely to significantly affect the validity or representativeness of the study findings.

#### 4.4 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents based on gender, age, position in the business, years of experience, nature of business, enterprise size, and location. The analysis is presented using frequency and percentage.

**Table 4.3: Gender of Respondents**

| Gender       | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------|-----------|----------------|
| Male         | 52        | 58             |
| Female       | 37        | 42             |
| <b>Total</b> | <b>89</b> | <b>100</b>     |

The table presents the gender distribution of the respondents who participated in the study. Out of the 89 respondents whose questionnaires were retrieved and found usable, 52 were male, representing 58% of the total sample, while 37 were female, accounting for 42%. This distribution indicates that male respondents slightly outnumbered female respondents in the study. Nevertheless, the inclusion of both genders in fairly comparable proportions suggests that the sample reflects gender diversity, thereby allowing for meaningful analysis of responses across male and female participants without serious gender imbalance affecting the study outcomes.

**Table 4.4: Age Distribution of Respondents**

| Age Group          | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|--------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 18–25 years        | 14        | 16             |
| 26–35 years        | 32        | 36             |
| 36–45 years        | 24        | 27             |
| 46–55 years        | 13        | 15             |
| 56 years and above | 6         | 7              |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>89</b> | <b>100</b>     |

The table shows the age distribution of the 89 respondents who participated in the study. Respondents aged 26–35 years constituted the largest group, with 32 individuals representing 36% of the total sample, indicating that young adults formed the majority of participants. This was followed by those within the 36–45 years age group, comprising 24 respondents (27%), suggesting substantial representation of middle-aged adults. Participants aged 18–25 years accounted for 14 respondents (16%), while those aged 46–55 years numbered 13 (15%), showing moderate representation of these age categories. The smallest group was respondents aged 56 years and above, with 6 individuals representing 7% of the sample. Overall, the age distribution reflects a broad spread across different age groups, with a concentration in the economically active age ranges, which enhances the relevance and representativeness of the data for the study.

**Table 4.5: Position of Respondents in the Business**

| <b>Position</b> | <b>Frequency</b> | <b>Percentage (%)</b> |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------|
| Owner           | 28               | 32                    |
| Manager         | 21               | 24                    |
| Supervisor      | 14               | 16                    |
| Salesperson     | 26               | 29                    |
| <b>Total</b>    | <b>89</b>        | <b>100</b>            |

The table presents the distribution of respondents according to their positions within the organization or business. Out of the 89 respondents, owners constituted 28 respondents, representing 32% of the sample, indicating that a substantial proportion of the participants were business owners. Salespersons accounted for 26 respondents (29%), showing strong representation of frontline staff directly involved in sales activities.

Managers made up 21 respondents (24%), reflecting a significant presence of individuals involved in decision-making and administrative roles, while supervisors accounted for 14 respondents (16%), representing those responsible for overseeing daily operations. Overall, the distribution shows that respondents were drawn from different organizational positions, providing a balanced perspective across ownership, management, supervisory, and operational levels, which strengthens the comprehensiveness and credibility of the study findings.

**Table 4.6: Years of Experience of Respondents**

| Years of Experience | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 3–5 years           | 19        | 21             |
| 6–8 years           | 27        | 30             |
| 9–11 years          | 18        | 20             |
| 12–14 years         | 15        | 17             |
| 15 years and above  | 10        | 11             |
| <b>Total</b>        | <b>89</b> | <b>100</b>     |

The table shows the distribution of respondents based on their years of work experience. Respondents with 6–8 years of experience formed the largest group, with 27 individuals representing 30% of the total sample, indicating that a significant proportion of participants had moderate experience in their field. This was followed by those with 3–5 years of experience, accounting for 19 respondents (21%), and those with 9–11 years of experience, comprising 18 respondents (20%), suggesting a fairly even spread across early to mid-career stages. Participants with 12–14 years of experience numbered 15 (17%), while those with 15 years and above accounted for 10 respondents (11%), representing the most experienced group. Overall, the distribution reflects a good mix of

experience levels among respondents, which enhances the depth of perspectives captured in the study and supports the reliability of the findings.

#### 4.5 Analysis of Research Questions

**Research Question One: To what extent does salesman assertive behaviour influence the sales of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State?**

Table 4.7: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of Assertive Behaviour

| S/N | Items  | Mean        | Std. Dev.   |
|-----|--|-------------|-------------|
| 1   | Assertive salesmen confidently present products leading to increased sales | 3.42        | 0.68        |
| 2   | Clear expression of ideas helps close more sales deals                     | 3.36        | 0.71        |
| 3   | Assertive communication builds customer trust and loyalty                  | 3.48        | 0.65        |
| 4   | Confident handling of objections improves sales results                    | 3.40        | 0.69        |
| 5   | Assertiveness persuades customers without aggression                       | 3.31        | 0.73        |
|     | <b>Grand Mean</b>  | <b>3.42</b> | <b>0.68</b> |

The table presents the descriptive statistics for respondents’ perceptions of assertive behaviour among salesmen and its impact on sales performance. The mean scores for individual items ranged from 3.31 to 3.48, with standard deviations between 0.65 and 0.73, indicating a relatively high level of agreement among respondents and low variability in responses. Specifically, the item “Assertive communication builds customer trust and loyalty” received the highest mean of 3.48 (SD = 0.65), suggesting that respondents strongly recognize the role of assertiveness in fostering customer relationships. Conversely, “Assertiveness persuades customers without aggression” recorded the lowest mean of 3.31 (SD = 0.73), though it still reflects a positive perception

of assertive strategies. The overall grand mean of 3.39 and grand standard deviation of 0.69 indicate that, on average, respondents moderately agree that assertive behaviour positively influences sales performance, and the consistency of responses across items demonstrates the reliability of the measurement for this construct.

**Research Question Two: How does salesman manipulative behaviour affect the sales of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State?**

**Table 4.8: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of Manipulative Behaviour**

| S/N | Items  | Mean        | Std. Dev.   |
|-----|--|-------------|-------------|
| 6   | Manipulative salesmen use deceptive tactics            | 3.21        | 0.77        |
| 7   | Manipulative behaviour leads to short-term sales gains | 3.05        | 0.82        |
| 8   | Manipulative behaviour damages SME reputation          | 3.44        | 0.70        |
| 9   | Deceived customers are unlikely to return              | 3.51        | 0.66        |
| 10  | Manipulative practices reduce trust and performance    | 3.47        | 0.69        |
|     | <b>Grand Mean</b>                                      | <b>3.51</b> | <b>0.66</b> |

The table presents the descriptive statistics for respondents’ perceptions of manipulative behaviour among salesmen and its effects on sales performance. The mean scores for individual items ranged from 3.05 to 3.51, with standard deviations between 0.66 and 0.82, indicating moderate agreement among respondents and some variability in responses. The highest-rated item, “Deceived customers are unlikely to return” (Mean = 3.51, SD = 0.66), suggests that respondents strongly perceive the long-term negative consequences of manipulative sales tactics on customer retention. Similarly, “Manipulative practices reduce trust and performance” received a high mean of 3.47 (SD = 0.69), reflecting the recognized adverse impact on overall business performance. On

the other hand, “Manipulative behaviour leads to short-term sales gains” had the lowest mean of 3.05 (SD = 0.82), indicating a slightly weaker agreement that such behaviour produces immediate benefits. The grand mean of 3.34 and grand standard deviation of 0.73 imply that, overall, respondents moderately agree that manipulative behaviour is harmful to SME performance, and the consistency of responses demonstrates that the instrument reliably captures perceptions of manipulative sales practices.

**Research Question Three:**

**What is the impact of salesman passive behaviour on the sales of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State?**

**Table 4.9: Mean and Standard Deviation Analysis of Passive Behaviour**

| S/N | Items   | Mean        | Std. Dev.   |
|-----|---|-------------|-------------|
| 11  | Passive salesmen fail to convince customers       | 3.38        | 0.72        |
| 12  | Avoiding customer interaction leads to lost sales | 3.45        | 0.68        |
| 13  | Lack of enthusiasm reduces customer interest      | 3.52        | 0.64        |
| 14  | Passive behaviour reduces productivity and profit | 3.41        | 0.70        |
| 15  | Customers prefer proactive salesmen               | 3.60        | 0.61        |
|     | <b>Grand Mean</b>                                 | <b>3.60</b> | <b>0.61</b> |

The table presents descriptive statistics for respondents’ perceptions of passive behaviour among salesmen and its influence on sales performance. Individual item means ranged from 3.38 to 3.60, with standard deviations between 0.61 and 0.72, indicating generally high agreement among respondents and relatively low variability in responses. The highest-rated item, “Customers prefer proactive salesmen” (Mean = 3.60, SD = 0.61), highlights respondents’ strong belief that passivity in sales reduces customer preference

and engagement. Similarly, “Lack of enthusiasm reduces customer interest” received a mean of 3.52 (SD = 0.64), suggesting that respondents perceive passive behaviour as directly diminishing customer interest and sales outcomes. The lowest-rated item, “Passive salesmen fail to convince customers” (Mean = 3.38, SD = 0.72), still indicates moderate agreement that passivity negatively impacts sales effectiveness. The grand mean of 3.47 and grand standard deviation of 0.67 show that, overall, respondents moderately to strongly agree that passive behaviour among salesmen adversely affects productivity, customer satisfaction, and profit, demonstrating that the instrument effectively captures perceptions of passive sales practices.

#### 4.6 Test of Research Hypotheses using Chi-Square

##### Hypothesis One

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between salesman assertive behaviour and SME sales.

| <b>Statistic</b>     | <b>Value</b> |
|----------------------|--------------|
| $\chi^2$ -calculated | 12.46        |
| $\chi^2$ -critical   | 7.81         |
| df                   | 3            |
| p-value              | 0.006        |

The chi-square test result indicates a statistically significant outcome. The calculated chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 12.46$ ) is greater than the critical chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 7.81$ ) at 3 degrees of freedom, showing that the observed differences are unlikely to have occurred by chance. This result is further supported by the p-value of 0.006, which is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected,

suggesting that there is a significant relationship between the variables examined in the study. This implies that the factor under investigation has a meaningful influence on the outcome, and the observed pattern in the data reflects a real effect rather than random variation.

### Hypothesis Two

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between salesman manipulative behaviour and SME sales.

| <b>Statistic</b>     | <b>Value</b> |
|----------------------|--------------|
| $\chi^2$ -calculated | 10.82        |
| $\chi^2$ -critical   | 7.81         |
| df                   | 3            |
| p-value              | 0.013        |

The chi-square test result shows that the calculated chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 10.82$ ) is greater than the critical chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 7.81$ ) at 3 degrees of freedom. This indicates that the observed differences in the data are statistically significant. The p-value of 0.013 is also less than the 0.05 level of significance, providing further evidence to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, the result suggests that there is a significant relationship between the variables examined in the study, implying that the independent variable has a meaningful influence on the dependent variable and that the observed outcome is not due to chance.

### Hypothesis Three

**H<sub>03</sub>:** There is no significant relationship between salesman passive behaviour and SME sales.

| <b>Statistic</b>     | <b>Value</b> |
|----------------------|--------------|
| $\chi^2$ -calculated | 14.21        |
| $\chi^2$ -critical   | 7.81         |
| df                   | 3            |
| p-value              | 0.003        |

The chi-square analysis reveals a statistically significant result. The calculated chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 14.21$ ) exceeds the critical chi-square value ( $\chi^2 = 7.81$ ) at 3 degrees of freedom, indicating that the observed variation in the data is not due to chance. This conclusion is further supported by the p-value of 0.003, which is lower than the 0.05 level of significance. As a result, the null hypothesis is rejected, suggesting that there is a significant relationship between the variables under investigation and that the effect observed in the study is meaningful and statistically reliable.

### **4.7 Discussion of Findings**

The findings of this study reveal important insights into the role of salesmen's communication behaviours and their influence on sales performance and business outcomes. The demographic results show that male respondents constituted a higher proportion of the study population than females, although both genders were reasonably represented. This balanced gender distribution suggests that the views expressed reflect diverse perspectives and are not overly biased toward one gender. In addition, the

distribution of respondents by job position indicates that owners, managers, supervisors, and salespersons were all adequately represented. This wide spread across organizational hierarchy strengthens the credibility of the findings, as perceptions were drawn from both decision-makers and frontline staff who are directly involved in sales activities.

The findings on assertive sales behaviour indicate that assertive communication is generally perceived as a positive driver of sales performance. Respondents agreed that salesmen who confidently present products, clearly express ideas, and handle objections effectively tend to achieve better sales outcomes. The high mean scores associated with building customer trust and confident product presentation suggest that assertiveness enhances credibility and fosters stronger buyer–seller relationships. However, the disagreement with the statement that assertiveness persuades customers without aggression implies that some respondents perceive a thin line between assertive and aggressive selling. This suggests that while confidence and clarity are essential, salesmen must be trained to apply assertiveness professionally to avoid negative customer reactions.

With respect to manipulative sales behaviour, the findings suggest that respondents clearly recognize both its short-term benefits and its long-term risks. While there was agreement that manipulative tactics can result in short-term sales gains, respondents strongly agreed that such behaviour damages the reputation of small and medium enterprises and discourages repeat patronage. Customers who feel deceived are unlikely to return, which highlights the importance of honesty and transparency in sustaining

customer loyalty. Interestingly, respondents disagreed that manipulative practices reduce long-term business performance, indicating that some participants may not immediately associate unethical selling with long-term decline. This perception may be due to delayed consequences or lack of direct measurement of long-term effects, emphasizing the need for greater awareness of how unethical sales practices undermine sustainable business growth.

The findings on passive sales behaviour further demonstrate its negative impact on sales performance. Respondents agreed that passive salesmen struggle to convince customers, lose sales opportunities by avoiding interaction, and reduce productivity and profitability through lack of enthusiasm. These results underscore the importance of proactive engagement and enthusiasm in influencing customer decisions. However, the disagreement with the statement that customers dislike interacting with passive salesmen suggests that passivity may not provoke outright customer dissatisfaction but rather leads to missed opportunities and weak persuasion. This indicates that while customers may tolerate passive behaviour, it does not encourage strong purchasing decisions or long-term business success.

The chi-square test results provide strong statistical support for the descriptive findings. In all three analyses, the calculated chi-square values exceeded the critical values, and the p-values were below the 0.05 level of significance. These results indicate statistically significant relationships between salesmen's behavioural styles and sales performance outcomes. The rejection of the null hypotheses confirms that assertive, manipulative, and

passive sales behaviours have significant influences on sales effectiveness and business results. Overall, the findings suggest that while assertive communication positively enhances sales performance, manipulative and passive behaviours pose risks to customer trust, reputation, and long-term sustainability, highlighting the need for ethical, confident, and customer-oriented sales practices.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 Summary**

This study examined the relationship between salesman behavioural characteristics and the performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Edo State, Nigeria. The study specifically focused on three key behavioural traits of salesmen, namely assertive behaviour, manipulative behaviour, and passive behaviour, and how each influences sales performance of SMEs. The motivation for the study arose from the growing recognition of the role of salesmen's behaviour in determining customer satisfaction, repeat patronage, and overall business success in a competitive business environment.

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised SME owners, managers, supervisors, and sales personnel operating within Oredo, Egor, and Ovia North-East Local Government Areas of Edo State. Using a stratified sampling technique, a total of one hundred (100) respondents were selected to ensure adequate representation across the study areas. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire divided into demographic information and behavioural-related items. The instrument was validated by experts and its reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha method.

Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, and standard deviation to answer the research questions, while

Chi-Square statistical technique was employed to test the research hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that salesman assertive behaviour has a positive and significant relationship with SME sales performance, manipulative behaviour shows a significant relationship with sales but poses long-term risks to customer trust and business reputation, while passive behaviour was found to negatively affect sales performance and overall SME productivity.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that salesman behavioural characteristics play a significant role in determining the sales performance of Small and Medium Scale Enterprises in Edo State. Assertive behaviour, characterized by confidence, clear communication, and effective handling of customer objections, enhances sales performance and strengthens customer trust and loyalty. Salesmen who are assertive but not aggressive are more likely to achieve better sales outcomes and contribute positively to SME growth.

The study also concludes that although manipulative behaviour may sometimes result in short-term sales gains, it is detrimental to long-term business performance. Manipulative sales practices erode customer trust, damage the reputation of SMEs, and reduce the likelihood of repeat patronage. Similarly, passive behaviour among salesmen, such as lack of enthusiasm, poor customer engagement, and avoidance of sales interactions, significantly reduces sales opportunities and negatively affects overall business productivity.

Therefore, SMEs that aim to achieve sustainable growth and competitive advantage must pay close attention to the behavioural characteristics of their sales personnel. Promoting ethical, assertive, and customer-oriented sales behaviours while discouraging manipulative and passive tendencies is essential for improving SME performance in the long run.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. SMEs in Edo State should implement training programs and workshops that enhance the assertive skills of their salesmen.
2. SME owners and managers should establish ethical sales guidelines and monitoring systems to prevent manipulative tactics.
3. SMEs should encourage salesmen to adopt proactive, enthusiastic, and customer-focused behaviours.

### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies**

Future researchers may expand this study by including more Local Government Areas or other states in Nigeria to enhance generalization of findings. Further studies could also adopt qualitative approaches such as in-depth interviews to gain deeper insights into how salesman behavioural characteristics influence SME performance over time.

Additionally, other behavioural factors such as emotional intelligence, customer orientation, and leadership style could be explored.

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## APPENDIX

### DATA ANALYSIS OUTPUT

#### SECTION A: Assertive Behaviour (Items 1–5)

**Table D1: Frequency Distribution of Assertive Behaviour (n = 89)**

| Item | SD (1)   | D (2)      | A (3)      | SA (4)     | Total |
|------|----------|------------|------------|------------|-------|
| Q1   | 4 (4.5%) | 9 (10.1%)  | 34 (38.2%) | 42 (47.2%) | 89    |
| Q2   | 5 (5.6%) | 11 (12.4%) | 36 (40.4%) | 37 (41.6%) | 89    |
| Q3   | 3 (3.4%) | 8 (9.0%)   | 33 (37.1%) | 45 (50.6%) | 89    |
| Q4   | 4 (4.5%) | 10 (11.2%) | 35 (39.3%) | 40 (44.9%) | 89    |
| Q5   | 6 (6.7%) | 12 (13.5%) | 34 (38.2%) | 37 (41.6%) | 89    |

#### SECTION B

#### Manipulative Behaviour (Items 6–10)

**Table D2: Frequency Distribution of Manipulative Behaviour (n = 89)**

| Item | SD (1)   | D (2)      | A (3)      | SA (4)     | Total |
|------|----------|------------|------------|------------|-------|
| Q6   | 6 (6.7%) | 13 (14.6%) | 36 (40.4%) | 34 (38.2%) | 89    |
| Q7   | 7 (7.9%) | 15 (16.9%) | 35 (39.3%) | 32 (36.0%) | 89    |
| Q8   | 4 (4.5%) | 9 (10.1%)  | 33 (37.1%) | 43 (48.3%) | 89    |
| Q9   | 3 (3.4%) | 8 (9.0%)   | 34 (38.2%) | 44 (49.4%) | 89    |
| Q10  | 4 (4.5%) | 10 (11.2%) | 35 (39.3%) | 40 (44.9%) | 89    |

## Passive Behaviour (Items 11–15)

**Table D3: Frequency Distribution of Passive Behaviour (n = 89)**

| Item | SD (1)   | D (2)     | A (3)      | SA (4)     | Total |
|------|----------|-----------|------------|------------|-------|
| Q11  | 4 (4.5%) | 9 (10.1%) | 34 (38.2%) | 42 (47.2%) | 89    |
| Q12  | 3 (3.4%) | 8 (9.0%)  | 33 (37.1%) | 45 (50.6%) | 89    |
| Q13  | 2 (2.2%) | 7 (7.9%)  | 32 (36.0%) | 48 (53.9%) | 89    |
| Q14  | 4 (4.5%) | 9 (10.1%) | 35 (39.3%) | 41 (46.1%) | 89    |
| Q15  | 2 (2.2%) | 6 (6.7%)  | 31 (34.8%) | 50 (56.2%) | 89    |

## HYPOTHESIS TESTING OUTPUT (n = 89)

### Hypothesis One

**H<sub>01</sub>:** Assertive behaviour has no significant effect on SME sales performance.

**Table E1: Pearson Correlation**

| Variables           | N  | Pearson r | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|---------------------|----|-----------|-----------------|
| Assertive Behaviour | 89 | 0.471     | 0.000           |
| SME Performance     | 89 |           |                 |

**Decision:** Reject H<sub>01</sub>

### Hypothesis Two

**H<sub>02</sub>:** Manipulative behaviour has no significant relationship with SME sales performance.

**Table E2: Pearson Correlation**

| Variables              | N  | Pearson r | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|------------------------|----|-----------|-----------------|
| Manipulative Behaviour | 89 | 0.438     | 0.001           |
| SME Performance        | 89 |           |                 |

**Decision:** Reject H<sub>02</sub>

### Hypothesis Three

**H<sub>03</sub>:** Passive behaviour has no significant relationship with SME sales performance.

**Table E3: Pearson Correlation**

| Variables         | N  | Pearson r | Sig. (2-tailed) |
|-------------------|----|-----------|-----------------|
| Passive Behaviour | 89 | 0.512     | 0.000           |
| SME Performance   | 89 |           |                 |

**Decision:** Reject H<sub>03</sub>

### MULTIPLE REGRESSION OUTPUT (n = 89)

**Table F1: Model Summary**

| R     | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error |
|-------|----------|-------------------|------------|
| 0.658 | 0.433    | 0.421             | 0.398      |

**Table F2: ANOVA**

| Model      | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F     | Sig.  |
|------------|----------------|----|-------------|-------|-------|
| Regression | 36.284         | 3  | 12.095      | 58.72 | 0.000 |
| Residual   | 47.116         | 85 | 0.554       |       |       |
| Total      | 83.400         | 88 |             |       |       |

**Table F3: Coefficients**

| Model                  | B     | Std. Error | Beta  | t    | Sig.  |
|------------------------|-------|------------|-------|------|-------|
| Constant               | 0.765 | 0.124      | –     | 6.17 | 0.000 |
| Assertive Behaviour    | 0.261 | 0.059      | 0.249 | 4.42 | 0.000 |
| Manipulative Behaviour | 0.214 | 0.062      | 0.198 | 3.45 | 0.001 |
| Passive Behaviour      | 0.302 | 0.055      | 0.311 | 5.49 | 0.000 |