Social Entrepreneurship as a Vehicle for Social Change in Selected SMES in Rivers State

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Abstract: This study explored the relationship between social entrepreneurship and social change in selected SMEs in Rivers State. The research focused on a population of 1,200 SMEs, and the sample size of 291 was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. Simple random sampling was employed to select participants. Data were collected through personally administered questionnaires. The validity of the instrument was evaluated using convergent and discriminant validity measures, while Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess the instrument's consistency. Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was utilized for data analysis. The results revealed a significant and positive relationship between the dimensions of social entrepreneurship and social change. This study concluded that social entrepreneurship is positively correlated with social change among SMEs in Rivers State. It is recommended that efforts be made to enhance social vision, sustainability, social networks, and innovation to promote social change within SMEs.

Keywords: Social entrepreneurship, Social vision, Sustainability, Social networks, Innovation, Social change

1.0 Introduction

Small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) hold significant potential for driving social change due to their adaptability, community connections, and innovative capabilities. Integrating social change into their operations is crucial as it enhances community well-being, drives innovation, attracts talent, opens new markets, builds resilience, and promotes ethical business practices. As SMEs recognize and harness this potential, they will play an increasingly vital role in shaping a more sustainable and equitable future. The benefits of integrating social change extend beyond financial gains, impacting the broader community and economy positively.

SMEs are often deeply rooted in their local communities, giving them a unique understanding of the social challenges and needs of the people they serve. By addressing these challenges, SMEs can significantly contribute to the overall well-being and development of their communities. Initiatives aimed at improving local education, healthcare, or environmental sustainability can profoundly enhance the quality of life in surrounding areas (Bacq & Janssen, 2011). Additionally, social change initiatives encourage SMEs to innovate as they seek new ways to solve social and environmental problems. This innovation can lead to unique products, services, and business models that distinguish these enterprises from their competitors. Companies that effectively integrate social responsibility often experience enhanced brand loyalty, customer trust, and a stronger market position (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

A strong commitment to social change can also make SMEs more attractive to potential employees, particularly those motivated by purpose-driven work. Employees increasingly seek employers who align with their personal values and make a positive societal impact. By fostering a culture of social responsibility, SMEs can attract and retain talented individuals passionate about their work, leading to higher levels of employee satisfaction and productivity (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012). Moreover, engaging in social change can open new markets and attract investors interested in supporting socially responsible businesses. Consumers and investors increasingly prioritize sustainability and ethical practices when making purchasing and investment decisions. By aligning their strategies with these values, SMEs can gain access to new customer segments and funding sources, driving growth and sustainability (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010).

Furthermore, integrating social goals within business operations can enhance the resilience and competitiveness of SMEs. By aligning with the values of socially conscious consumers and investors, these enterprises can build stronger brand loyalty and access new markets (Porter & Kramer, 2011). The emphasis on social responsibility also attracts talent motivated by purpose-driven work, fostering a committed and innovative workforce. The transformative potential of social entrepreneurship in SMEs extends beyond immediate social benefits, promoting a culture of ethical business practices and encouraging a long-term perspective on success (Nicholls, 2006; Martin & Osberg, 2007). Despite numerous studies, there is a lack of empirical research on the influence of social entrepreneurship as a vehicle for social change in selected SMEs, particularly in regions like Rivers State. This study aims to bridge this gap and demonstrate that profitability and social impact can coexist, inspiring a new generation of entrepreneurs to pursue ventures contributing to the greater good.

Statement of the Problem

Small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) face numerous challenges in integrating social change into their business operations, often hindering their potential to drive meaningful social and environmental impact while maintaining economic viability. One of the primary issues is the lack of resources and expertise. Unlike larger corporations, SMEs often operate with limited financial and human resources, making it difficult to invest in social projects or hire experts in social entrepreneurship. This resource constraint hampers their ability to design, execute, and sustain impactful social initiatives (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012).There is often limited awareness and understanding of the benefits and practices of social entrepreneurship among SME owners and managers. Without a clear understanding of how integrating social change can enhance their business and community impact, many SMEs fail to adopt socially responsible practices. This knowledge gap prevents them from leveraging social entrepreneurship to address pressing social and environmental issues effectively (Bacq & Janssen, 2011). Furthermore, SMEs frequently encounter challenges in measuring and demonstrating the impact of their social change initiatives. Unlike financial performance, social impact is often harder to quantify and communicate to stakeholders. This difficulty in measuring impact can discourage SMEs from pursuing social entrepreneurship, as they may struggle to justify the investment and effort required for such initiatives (Mair & Martí, 2006).

Regulatory and policy barriers also impede the adoption of social entrepreneurship in SMEs. In many regions, there is a lack of supportive policies and frameworks that encourage or incentivize

social entrepreneurship. Regulatory complexities and bureaucratic hurdles can deter SMEs from engaging in socially responsible activities, limiting their potential to contribute to social change (Hockerts & Wüstenhagen, 2010). Additionally, many SMEs operate with a short-term focus and a profit-driven mindset, prioritizing immediate financial gains over long-term social and environmental benefits. This approach can lead to resistance in adopting social change initiatives that may require upfront investment and longer time horizons to realize returns. Shifting this mindset towards a more balanced perspective that values both profit and social impact is a significant challenge for many SMEs (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

Lastly, SMEs often lack access to networks and collaborative opportunities that can support their social change efforts. Collaboration with other businesses, non-profits, and governmental organizations can provide SMEs with the resources, knowledge, and support needed to implement effective social entrepreneurship initiatives. However, limited access to such networks can isolate SMEs, making it harder for them to engage in impactful social change (Nicholls, 2006). Addressing these problems requires a concerted effort to promote social entrepreneurship within SMEs. By overcoming resource constraints, enhancing awareness and understanding, developing robust impact measurement tools, addressing regulatory barriers, shifting mindsets, and fostering collaboration, SMEs can effectively integrate social change into their operations, driving meaningful social and environmental impact while achieving sustainable business success (Martin & Osberg, 2007).

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to examine the association between social entrepreneurship and social change of the SMEs in Rivers State. The specific objectives are to:

1. Investigate the bond between social vision and social change of the SMES in Rivers State.
2. Examine the association between sustainability and social change of the SMES in Rivers State.
3. Assess the relationship between social networks and social change of the SMES in Rivers State.
4. Determine the relationship between innovation and social change of the SMES in Rivers State.

Research Questions

1. How does social vision relate with social change of the SMES in Rivers State ?
2. What is the association between sustainability and social change of the SMES in Rivers State?
3. How does social networks relate with social change of the SMES in Rivers State ?
4. What is the relationship between innovation and social change of the SMES in Rivers State ?

Research Hypotheses

The following research hypotheses are tentative answers to the research questions;

Ho_1: There is no significant relationship between social vision and social change of the SMES in Rivers State.

Ho_2: There is no significant relationship between sustainability and social change of the SMES in Rivers State.

Ho_3: There is no significant relationship between social networks and social change of the SMES in Rivers State.

Ho_4: There is no significant relationship between innovation and social change of the SMES in Rivers State.

2.0 Review of Related Literature

This study is founded on The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) Theory. The Triple Bottom Line (TBL) theory, proposed by John Elkington in 1994, is highly relevant to social entrepreneurship in small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs). TBL expands the traditional business focus to include social and environmental performance alongside financial performance, emphasizing the importance of people, planet, and profit. By integrating TBL, SMEs can address local social challenges, implement sustainable practices, and maintain economic viability. Social entrepreneurs within SMEs can leverage their community connections to co-create solutions for pressing social issues, such as education and healthcare, thereby enhancing social capital and fostering inclusive growth. Additionally, by adopting eco-friendly practices, SMEs not only reduce their environmental footprint but also meet the growing demand for sustainability among consumers and investors, thus building a reputation as responsible corporate citizens. John Elkington's TBL theory provides a comprehensive framework for SMEs to achieve balanced growth that benefits all stakeholders. By focusing on people, planet, and profit, SMEs can create sustainable value, increase customer loyalty, enhance employee satisfaction, and attract investor confidence. This holistic approach aligns economic success with social and environmental responsibility, making TBL a powerful tool for SMEs aiming to drive meaningful social change and contribute to a more equitable and sustainable future.

Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurship is an approach to business that prioritizes the creation of social value alongside financial profit. It involves identifying and addressing social problems through innovative, sustainable, and scalable solutions. Social entrepreneurs leverage entrepreneurial principles to develop, fund, and implement initiatives that bring about positive change in society, often focusing on areas such as education, healthcare, environmental sustainability, and poverty alleviation (Dees, 2018). They are primarily mission-driven, seeking to improve the quality of life

for communities through creative approaches that traditional methods may overlook. Unlike traditional non-profits, social enterprises aim to be financially sustainable by generating revenue through their operations, allowing them to reinvest in their social missions and scale their impact (Bornstein & Davis, 2010).

Social entrepreneurship focuses on creating blended value, combining social, environmental, and financial returns (Emerson, 2003). This holistic approach ensures that ventures benefit all stakeholders, including the communities served, employees, and investors. Examples include microfinance institutions like Grameen Bank, which provide small loans to underserved populations, and companies producing eco-friendly products, addressing environmental concerns while generating profit (Yunus & Lehmann-Ortega, 2010). Social entrepreneurship drives systemic change and fosters a culture of responsibility and ethical business practices, contributing significantly to sustainable development and inspiring others to pursue ventures that prioritize the greater good (Mair & Martí, 2006).

Social change refers to the significant alteration of social structures and cultural patterns over time, encompassing changes in societal norms, behaviours, laws, institutions, and relationships. This transformation is driven by various factors, including economic development, technological advancements, social movements, political shifts, and environmental factors. Social change aims to improve the overall well-being of a community or society by addressing issues such as inequality, injustice, and other social problems (Macionis, 2017). It is a multifaceted and continuous process that can occur gradually or rapidly, often resulting from collective efforts by individuals, groups, or organizations advocating for change. Historical examples include the Civil Rights Movement, which sought to end racial segregation and discrimination in the United States, leading to significant legal and societal reforms (Della Porta & Diani, 2006).

The impact of social change is profound, leading to improved quality of life, greater social justice, and enhanced opportunities for individuals and communities. Technological advancements, such as the digital revolution, have transformed communication, work, and access to information, significantly altering social interactions and economic activities (Castells, 2011). Similarly, environmental movements have increased awareness and action on issues like climate change, resulting in policy changes and shifts toward sustainable practices (Dunlap & Brulle, 2015). Despite its benefits, social change can also bring challenges, such as resistance from those benefiting from the status quo and unintended consequences that require further adjustments. Understanding and facilitating social change is essential for addressing systemic inequalities and creating a more inclusive and equitable society (Giddens, 2013).

Social Vision
Social vision refers to a shared understanding and commitment towards a future societal state that aligns with collective values and aspirations. It involves a comprehensive outlook that seeks to address and solve social issues through collaborative efforts and strategic planning. Social vision is crucial for fostering unity and direction within communities, enabling them to work towards common goals such as social justice, equality, and improved quality of life. It often encompasses long-term objectives and requires the integration of diverse perspectives to create a cohesive plan for societal progress (Westley et al., 2017). The success of social vision depends heavily on the

involvement and cooperation of various stakeholders, including governments, non-profit organizations, businesses, and individuals.

Sustainability

Sustainability focuses on meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2024). It encompasses environmental, economic, and social dimensions, ensuring that resources are managed and utilized efficiently to maintain ecological balance, economic stability, and social equity (RMIT University, 2017). Sustainable practices involve reducing waste, conserving natural resources, and promoting renewable energy sources. Businesses and governments worldwide are increasingly adopting sustainability initiatives to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change, protect biodiversity, and ensure long-term prosperity. Sustainability is not just an environmental concern but a holistic approach that requires the collaboration of all sectors of society to achieve enduring progress.

Social Networks

Social networks refer to the structures of relationships and interactions among individuals, groups, or organizations (Miguel et al., 2013). These networks play a critical role in shaping social dynamics, facilitating communication, and influencing behaviour. In the digital age, social networks have expanded beyond personal connections to include online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, which enable individuals to connect, share information, and collaborate across vast distances (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social networks are instrumental in disseminating information, mobilizing social movements, and fostering innovation by allowing ideas to spread rapidly and widely. They also provide support systems that can enhance individual and collective well-being.

Innovation

Innovation involves the creation and implementation of new ideas, products, processes, or services that result in significant improvements or advancements. It is a key driver of economic growth and competitiveness, enabling organizations to adapt to changing market conditions and meet evolving customer needs (Schilling, 2020). Innovation can occur in various forms, including technological advancements, business model innovation, and social innovation. It requires a supportive environment that encourages creativity, experimentation, and collaboration. In today's fast-paced world, continuous innovation is essential for sustaining long-term success and addressing complex global challenges.

Social Change

Social change refers to significant alterations in the social structure and cultural patterns over time. It can result from various factors, including technological advancements, economic shifts, political movements, and cultural transformations. Social change often involves the reorganization of societal institutions, changes in norms and values, and the emergence of new social behaviours (Tilly, 2004). It can be driven by collective action and social movements that seek to address inequalities, promote justice, and improve living conditions. Understanding the mechanisms of social change is crucial for effectively addressing social issues and creating a more equitable and sustainable society.

Social change is not a linear process; it often involves periods of rapid transformation followed by stability or even regression. Various theories attempt to explain the dynamics of social change, including conflict theory, which posits that societal change results from conflicts between competing interests, and functionalist theory, which sees change as a process that enhances societal stability and cohesion (Harper & Leicht, 2018). Grassroots movements and technological innovations frequently serve as catalysts for social change, challenging existing power structures and introducing new ways of thinking and living. For instance, the digital revolution has significantly altered communication patterns, social interactions, and access to information, thereby reshaping social norms and behaviours. The impact of social change is profound, affecting all aspects of life, from individual identities to global systems, and it underscores the importance of adaptability and resilience in navigating an ever-evolving social landscape.

Empirical Review

Mair and Marti (2006) highlighted that social entrepreneurs innovate by creating new products and services that address societal needs, thereby improving the quality of life for marginalized communities. This article presents social entrepreneurship as a process that drives social change and meets critical social needs, prioritizing social impact over direct financial gains for the entrepreneurs. Unlike traditional entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship focuses more on creating social value and development rather than solely on economic profits. To encourage future research, the authors propose the concept of embeddedness as a key intersection of theoretical perspectives for examining social entrepreneurship.

A study by Littlewood and Holt (2018) investigated the extension of training and development programs to women running small-scale businesses in Ghana, particularly in the Dansoman Market of Metropolitan Accra. This research was driven by the observation that many women business owners, often single mothers or primary breadwinners, tend to lose their profits and capital due to imprudent spending habits. Such expenditures include purchasing land and flashy vehicles, which could be financed through long-term credit rather than depleting their liquidity. A qualitative approach was employed, utilizing stratified random sampling to select traders from various product segments within the market. Purposive sampling was used to gather information from financial institutions in the area that conduct business with many of these traders. The findings revealed that most women traders lacked training in financial, marketing, and human resource management, instead relying on practices observed from others and advice from friends. This study on social enterprises in South Africa revealed that these enterprises played a crucial role in community upliftment and economic development.

In Nigeria, social entrepreneurship is emerging as a transformative force for social change. Research by Omorede (2014) investigates the motivations driving individuals to establish social enterprises in Nigeria and their persistence throughout the entrepreneurial journey. By introducing an emergent model, the study aims to shed light on why certain individuals dedicate their efforts to addressing persistent issues and inefficiencies in their communities. The findings reveal that local factors, such as widespread ignorance and unscientific beliefs, along with an individual's deliberate mindset, significantly influence the decision to start a social enterprise. Moreover, it is suggested that the interplay between local conditions and an intentional mindset ignites a passion

for the cause. This passion is further sustained by support from social networks, which is crucial for enduring the often-challenging path of a social entrepreneur.

Seelo and Mair (2005) study investigated the impact of basic amenities on the socioeconomic development of rural areas in Benue State, Nigeria. It specifically assessed the effects of primary healthcare, pipe-borne water, education, and rural electrification on the socioeconomic progress of these regions. Utilizing a survey research design, data were collected through structured questionnaires. The study's population comprised 1,023,000 individuals from three selected local government areas in Benue State: A sample size of 400 was determined using Taro Yamane's formula. The collected data were analyzed using inferential statistics, specifically regression analysis. The findings revealed that primary healthcare, pipe-borne water, education, and rural electrification significantly influence the socioeconomic development of rural areas in Benue State, Nigeria.

3.0 Methodology

This study utilized a cross-sectional survey design, targeting SMEs in Rivers State, Nigeria. The population consisted of 1,200 SMEs, and a sample size of 291 was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire featuring both close-ended and multiple-choice questions. The predictor variable, social entrepreneurship, was assessed using measures of social vision, sustainability, social networks, and innovation. Each dimension—social vision, sustainability, social networks, and innovation—was evaluated with five items each, all directly related to social change. Social vision was measured with 5items (e.g. Our organization has a clear social vision that guides our mission and activities.), sustainability was measured with 5items (e.g. Our organization implements sustainable practices that ensure long-term viability and minimal environmental impact), social network was measured with 5items (e.g. Our organization effectively utilizes social networks to build strong relationships and leverage opportunities) and innovation was measured with 5items (e.g. Our organization fosters innovation by continuously developing new ideas, products, and processes). Social change itself was measured with five items (e.g. Our organization actively contributes to positive social change within our community). Responses were gauged on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 4 (Strongly agree). The instrument's validity was confirmed through convergent and discriminant validity, while reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha, with a threshold of 0.7. Data analysis was conducted using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient with the aid of SPSS version 25.0.

4.0 Result and Discussion

Out of the 291 questionnaires distributed, 255 valid responses were received, resulting in an 87.6% response rate. Hypotheses were tested at a 95% confidence interval, following the decision rule: reject the null hypothesis if $P < 0.05$ and accept the null hypothesis if $P > 0.05$.

Table 1: Correlations Between Social vision and Social change

Correlations

			Social vision	Social change
Spearman's rho	Strategic Alignment	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.822**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	255	255
	Social change	Correlation Coefficient	.822**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	255	255

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

The results in Table 1 reveal a significant positive relationship between social vision and social change. The rho value of 0.822**, observed at a significance level of 0.000, is well below the alpha level of 0.05. As a result, the null hypothesis (Ho_1) is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis (Ha_1) is accepted. This indicates a strong positive association between social vision   and social change
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Table 2: Correlations Between Sustainability and Social change .

Correlations

			Sustainability	Social change
Spearman's rho	Sustainability	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.764**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	255	255
	Social change	Correlation Coefficient	.764**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	255	255

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

In Table 2, the rho value is 0.764** with a significance level of 0.000, which is below the alpha level of 0.05. Consequently, the null hypothesis (Ho_2) is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis (Ha_2) is accepted. This shows a strong positive association between sustainability and social change.

Table 3: Correlations Between Social networks and Social change
Correlations

			Social networks	Social change
Spearman's rho	Social networks	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.790**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	255	255
	Social change	Correlation Coefficient	.790**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	255	255

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Source: SPSS Output, 2024.

The rho value in Table 3, representing the relationship between social networks and social change, is 0.790** with a significance level of 0.000, which is below the alpha level of 0.05 established for this analysis. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho$_3$), which posits a no significant relationship between social vision   and social change , is rejected. Conversely, the alternate hypothesis is accepted, indicating a strong positive relationship between social vision   and social change.

Table 4: Correlations between Innovation and social Change
Correlations

			Innovation	Social change
Spearman's rho	Innovation	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.712**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	255	255
	Social change	Correlation Coefficient	.712**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	255	255

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

In Table 4, the rho value is 0.712* with a significance level of 0.000 is below the alpha level of 0.05. Therefore, the null hypothesis (Ho$_4$), which asserts no significant association between innovation and social change, is rejected, and the alternate hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion of Findings

Based on the statistics provided, social entrepreneurship—encompassing social vision, sustainability, social networks, and innovation—has a significant relationship with social change. Each hypothesis is elaborated upon below.

Social Vision and Social Change

The data analysis results in Table 1 reveal a highly significant positive correlation between social vision and social change. With a P-value of 0.000, this relationship is statistically significant, indicating a very low probability that the observed relationship is due to chance. The rho value of 0.822 suggests a strong positive correlation, implying that improvements in social vision are associated with advancements in social change, and vice versa. This finding underscores the importance of aligning strategic initiatives with managerial capabilities to achieve organizational success. The results align with that of Mair and Marti (2006) which highlighted that social entrepreneurs are key factors in driving positive societal change.

Sustainability and Social Change

The analysis presented in Table 2 indicates a significant relationship between organizational readiness and social change. With a P-value of 0.000, the relationship is statistically significant, suggesting it is highly unlikely that the observed correlation occurred by chance. The rho value of 0.764 demonstrates a strong positive correlation, indicating that higher levels of organizational readiness are associated with greater social change. This implies that enhancing organizational readiness can positively impact managers' competence, contributing to improved organizational performance. These findings are consistent with Seelo and Mair (2005) which posited that social entrepreneurship drives and enhances societal change.

Social Networks and Social Change

The analysis in Table 3 confirms a positive and significant correlation between social networks and social change. The P-value of 0.000 reinforces the statistical significance of the relationship, ensuring the reliability of the results. The rho value of 0.790 suggests a strong positive connection, indicating that improvements in social networks are associated with advancements in social change. This implies that managers with a strong understanding of industry trends and future developments are likely to exhibit higher competence, leading to better strategic decision-making and organizational success. These findings of Omorede (2014) which maintained that social entrepreneurship is emerging as a transformative force for social change.

Innovation and Social Change

The analysis in Table 4 indicates a significant relationship between innovation and social change. With a P-value of 0.000, this relationship is statistically significant, suggesting it is unlikely to have occurred by chance. The rho value of 0.712 demonstrates a high positive correlation, indicating that greater insight into consumers/customers is associated with higher levels of social change. This implies that managers with a deep understanding of customer needs and behaviors are likely to be more competent, leading to better decision-making and enhanced organizational performance. This finding concurs with Seelo and Mair (2005) which maintained that social entrepreneurship is needed in enhancing the societal basic amenities and in boosting their societal wellbeing.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has comprehensively explored the dynamic association between social entrepreneurship and social change among SMEs in Rivers State. The specific objectives aimed to investigate the

bond between social vision, sustainability, social networks innovation and social change within the SMEs. The findings indicate a highly significant positive correlation between social vision and social change among SMEs in Rivers State. SMEs that have a clear and compelling social vision are more likely to drive meaningful social change. This bond emphasises the importance of strategic direction and alignment in achieving social objectives, reinforcing that a well-defined social vision is crucial for fostering sustainable community impact.

The analysis revealed a significant relationship between sustainability practices and social change. SMEs that prioritize sustainable practices are better positioned to contribute positively to social change. This association highlights that environmental and economic sustainability are not only beneficial for the long-term viability of the SMEs but also essential for achieving broader social objectives and community welfare. A strong positive correlation was found between the effective use of social networks and the level of social change achieved by SMEs. The ability to leverage social networks allows SMEs to build robust relationships, gain industry insights, and harness opportunities, all of which are instrumental in driving social change. This relationship demonstrates that social capital is a vital resource for SMEs aiming to create significant social impact. The study also identified a significant relationship between innovation and social change. SMEs that foster innovation by developing new ideas, products, and processes are more adept at effecting social change. This relationship underscores the critical role of innovation in addressing societal needs and enhancing organizational performance, thereby contributing to the social and economic development of Rivers State. The study highlights that social entrepreneurship, characterized by a strong social vision, sustainable practices, effective use of social networks, and continuous innovation, is a powerful driver of social change among SMEs in Rivers State. These findings suggest that fostering these elements within SMEs can significantly enhance their capacity to contribute to social and economic development, ultimately leading to a more resilient and progressive community. It was recommended that;

1. SMEs should develop and articulate a clear social vision that aligns with their core mission and activities and this vision should be communicated effectively to all stakeholders, including employees, customers, and the community to ensure that their efforts are consistently directed towards achieving meaningful social change. likewise regular training and workshops should be conducted to reinforce the importance of the social vision and how it translates into actionable goals.
2. SMEs should adopt and integrate sustainable practices (reducing waste, conserving energy, and using eco-friendly materials) into their business models. Furthermore, and engage in community sustainability projects and partnerships that promote environmental stewardship to foster a culture of sustainability within the organization.
3. SMEs should actively build and leverage their social networks to enhance their impact on social change and engage with local communities, industry groups, and other stakeholders to share knowledge, resources, and opportunities to strengthening their connections, amplify their social change initiatives and access a broader range of resources and expertise.
4. SMEs should create an environment that encourages creativity and experimentation by investing in research and development, adopting new technologies, and encouraging employee participation in ideation processes.

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