# SME's Marketing Mix Strategies and Corporate Performance during Covid-19 Lockdown: Focus on Adamawa State, North-East Nigeria

**Ja'afaru Alhaji Umaru, Bello Kamarudeen Babatunde**

*Abstract*— **The unanticipated emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resultant efforts of governments around the world to control its spread has no doubt affected business operations in several ways, thus necessitating research into its effect on specific aspects of business. The current research examined the contributions of SMEs' marketing mix strategies towards firm performance during the COVID-19 induced pandemic, with specific focus on SMEs' in Adamawa State. Drawing from previous literature, a structured questionnaire was developed to measure the four components of the marketing mix (product, price, promotion and place) and firm performance. A set of 50 valid responses were obtained from SME managers, and analysis was conducted using multiple regression analysis via SPSS v.20. Results revealed that product (B = 0.405, t = 2.430, P<0.05) and price (B = 0.247, t = 2.173, P< 0.05) mix strategies had significant positive influences on performance, while promotion (B = 0.134, t = 0.731, P>0.05) and place (B = 0.187, t = 1.054, P>0.05) strategies were shown not to have significant effects on performance. The paper thus recommends that SMEs in Adamawa State should endeavor to revise their promotion and place strategies to conform to the realities of the pandemic and prepare them for similar challenges that may occur in future.**

*Index Terms*— **SME's Marketing Mix Strategies, Socio-Economic Implications, Social Distancing, Community Lockdown, and COVID-19.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Emergence of the COVID-19 virus and its subsequent declaration as a pandemic generated a lot of fears and apprehension for the entire humanity, and affecting every sphere of human endeavor. The index case for the virus was reported at Wuhan Province in China, with patients presenting signs of chronic pneumonia. Subsequent laboratory tests led to the naming of the ailment as the novel corona virus disease 2019, or COVID-19 for short. Following the rapid spread of the virus beyond the shores of China, most communities and countries adopted the lockdown strategy as a means of curbing the virus spread and limit its devastating consequences, which include death.  The lockdown led to severe negative consequences for the business and the economic sector in general, due to unprecedented shutdowns of business activities. The manifest consequences of interruptions in business activities presented in the form of supply shortages and subsequent increases in the prices of food, beverages and other essential supplies, travel restrictions leading to loss of business opportunities, and the general fall in crude oil prices in the global market.

Nigeria, like most countries has recorded cases of the Covid-19 virus in virtually all states of the federation. In response, authorities have adopted the WHO recommended measures in tackling the scourge. At different times, restriction have been placed on social and religious gatherings, just as bars, night clubs and recreational centers have had to shut down till further notice. Despite these efforts, incidences of Covid-19 infection have continued to rise, and the country is already experiencing the second wave of the virus based on reports from the NCDC. In specific terms, as at 20 Dec, 2020 Nigeria has confirmed 77,933 cases of, with 67,784 discharged and 1,218 deaths. Expectedly, the pandemic and the control measures put in place have further compounded the economic challenges of the country occasioned by the after effects of the 2014 oil price shock, declining GDP and rising debt profile.

Among the states in Nigeria, Adamawa was the 25th to be exposed to the disease, as the index case of COVID-19 was recorded on 23rd April, 2020.  As a result, the state government announced a lockdown of the state for two weeks in the first instance. By the lockdown order, virtually all the highways linking Adamawa to neighboring states were closed, with security posts mounted at strategic points to prevent entry or exit of persons to/from the state.  In the same vein, businesses, schools and recreational facilities are closed, except for essentials like grocery stores, food canteens, and pharmaceuticals. Similarly, international and domestic flights were shut down and people were ordered to stay at home throughout the lockdown period. Although, the lockdown was not sustained for long in the state, and social and economic activities gradually returned to normal after some time, the initial lockdown had taken its toll on the socio-economic lives of the people in the state. This is evidenced by incessant complaints of disruptions and loss of sales/patronage and revenue voiced by business persons and concerns in the state.

No doubt, the SMEs sector remains one of the most affected concerns in the state, as in most economies. SMEs by their nature depend heavily on patronage from the general populace whose income and livelihood have been disrupted by the pandemic. This fact has created an avenue for research on how the pandemic and the control measures taken by

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authorities have impacted on the on the SMEs, particularly in terms of marketing and related activities. A few researchers have responded to this challenge by conducting studies on the effect of the pandemic on business and socio-economic lives of the people. For example, Hambolu, Agnes Taiwo (2020) examined the influence of covid-19 pandemic on women entrepreneurial success in Oyo State; and they found out the acute shortage of finance of most women entrepreneurs in private organizations. Similarly, Bouey (2020) assessed Covid-19's impact on small and medium-sized Enterprises. The study reported that at the end of February, 2020 only 30% of SMEs able to sustain their business and most of them losses their business in a few months after the outbreak of the epidemic. Another paper by Imanche et al (2020) on the "effect of COVID-19 pandemic on small and medium scale businesses in Nigeria" reported that the cumulative effects of restricted movements, dwindling consumer income and drastic reduction in imports have negatively impacted SMEs in the country.

While the foregoing studies have pointed out the negative impacts of the pandemic on SMEs and livelihoods of individuals, the current study observes the near absence of studies specifically focused on COVID-19 and marketing mix strategies. To this end, this study intends to fill the gap by focusing on SMEs marketing mix strategies and how they have impacted on their overall performance while the COVID-19 control measures were in place in Adamawa state, north-eastern Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study are to:

i. examine the relationship between products development strategies and SMEs' performance during COVID-19 lockdown.
ii. assess the relationship between price marketing strategies and SMEs' performance during COVID-19 lockdown.
iii. ascertain the influence promotion marketing strategies on SMEs' performance during COVID-19 lockdown.
iv. evaluate the influence of places marketing strategies on SMEs' performance during COVID-19 lockdown.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### a) The Economic Costs and Effect of COVID-19 Epidemic on SME'S Business Activities

Several studies have found that negative human health issues such as mortality due to infectious disease like COVID-19, Ebola, and HIV is absolutely connected to economic welfare and growth (Bhargava, 2001; Bloom, 1998; Cuddington, 1994; Pritchett, 1996). The economic costs of illness on business manifest both directly and indirectly. For example, cost of earnings and period of time spent by SME's and nonstop spending on health treatment and other secondary services are additional expenses on individuals as well as community economy. The viruses like Ebola, HIV/Aids, Lassa Fever and COVID-19 affects SMEs' costs and also distress households through increased cost of raw materials to industries, altered of work supply decision, effectiveness of

work and domestic returns and increasing business costs and public expenditure (Haacker, 2004). The impact of mysterious deadly disease like COVID-19 may bring about high level of pressure to business activities for over a long period of time (Hyams et al., 2002).

One of the problems almost all SMEs face has to do with sourcing and competence in handling finance for their businesses (Freeman, Hannan, & Carroll, 1983). It shows that the smaller business has less resource to control while large business has more resources at their disposal, this creates vulnerability to its internal and external measures, such as an outbreak of disease like covid-19, decreasing of funding opportunities, high competition with revelry firms or crisis in global economy and sometime due to a critical condition employee quit their job. The responsibility of smallness frequently overlaps with a responsibility of modernism (Freeman et al., 1983). Larger organizations are more advantageous than smaller ones in handling risk in their businesses, because of advantages of well-known business representations (Stinchcombe, 1965). Because of their small size, SMEs are affected when the business environment is affected by unexpected shocks such as the pandemic.

Moreover, Smaller SME owners take quick decision because their customers and other members are closer to them (Eggers, 2012). This will help SME'S owners with important market information so that they can strategies whenever they since crises in their business. Unexpectedly, we find ourselves living in a period of major uncertainty; nobody has a perfect decision in to the effect of COVID-19 on the global economies. We are exhausted in keeping our families, people or communities harmless. Yet SME'S cannot wait to plan and act on their businesses. We don't have an indication when this virus COVID-19 will come to an end or when the expected harshness of the approaching global recession will be fix. This is a moment no SME'S has any expectation for it. The global epidemic and the deepening economic impacts are developments of historic proportions, yet without clear historic precedence. Leaders will need courage and imagination in the coming months to forge ahead in their businesses, (KPMG; COVID-19: 2020).

### b) Socio-economic implications of COVID-19 social distancing and community lockdown

The socio- economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in open market are observed through rapidly rising of costs of foodstuff and other essentials, lack of raw materials, lockdown directives, negative consequences of enforcement of social distancing among people and forceful decongestion exercise in the business environment. However, SMEs owners have expressed different views regarding the effect of these measures on their business activities. In light of unstable economic conditions, SME's considered their business as source of livelihood (Beek, 2017; Lindell, 2017; &Sowatey 2018). Moreover, during the period of movement restriction, SME'S acknowledged economic hardship as earlier indicated. All services in the value chain of production and distribution were restricted except pharmaceutical and other essential small retailers around the town. Many studies have emphasized that lack of SMEs' activities in an economy will cripple the business and result to low income, poor

saving and inability to deliver immediate daily family needs; thus leading to severe negative Psycho-social effects on owners and operators of SME (Asante and Helbrecht, 2019). Kazeem, (2020) highlighted that for small retailers that engage in daily activities to earn a living; long periods of lockdown extending up to a week or more will cause them severe financial problems. Major studies have indicated that SME's in most of the countries in Africa, are victims of strict rules of governments by the people on authority in the past years (Lindell, 2009; ObengOdoom, 2013; OwusuSekyere, 2016).

### c) Market strategies and Sales Performance

According to Doyle (2009) strategy can be defined as a cohesive, widespread and assimilated design that narrates the planned benefits of the business to the context of the location, and that is aimed to certify that the plain purposes of the SME's are attained through appropriate implementation by the business. The authors further noted that marketing strategy plays a crucial role in business because it serves as the bridge linking the firm to its customers by communicating the benefits of their goods and services, not just to the direct consumers, but to the entire community. This fact has been acknowledged in by previous studies who have established the positive influence of marketing strategies in enhancing the organization's sales and overall business performance. Santos-Vijande (2012) specifically noted that an enterprise's previous market performance and their contribution on the performance of business and marketing capabilities have significant and direct positive effect on the levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty, leading to enhanced marketing performance metrics, such as increased sales, enlarged market share, and higher profit margins.

Speaking in the same vein, Luostarinen (2006) is of the opinion that business strategies may be applied to have an edge over competitive rivalry in order to upgrade the business performance, and adjust to specific business circumstances. The type of strategy required during out-break of disease like COVID-19 will depend on a set of factors, prominent amongst which include size of business, fiscal position, business strengths, man power and number of rivalry around the environment including influences of government in that location.

### III. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Grönroos (1994) notes that the origination of the Marketing Mix theory can be attributed to the works of Borden (1964), and the theory has continued to remain relevant in formulating marketing strategies till present day. The marketing mix theory establishes a set of components which companies combine together to form a 'mix' for the companies' marketing strategy used to penetrate and capture their target market. The components of the marketing mix include the Product, Promotion, place and price (4Ps) which the company tinkers with bearing in mind the peculiarities of its operating environment. Marketing Mix Strategies agenda is very important and useful in initial time of the marketing awareness, when raw materials symbolize a greater portion of the economy (Gronroos et Al; 1994). Over the years, several researchers have made propositions for a review and extension of the traditional 4Ps, especially as they appear to be more suited for tangible goods. Notwithstanding this limitation, the use of these 4 Ps remains very prominent in most marketing texts, and several global companies have applied it in formulating their marketing strategies, plans and day-to-day activities.

Drawing on the above explanation of the marketing mix theory, the current study presents a conceptual framework of the relationships between independent variables and dependent variable of interest. As can be seen in figure 1, the independent variables are Marketing Mix Strategies which includes; Product development strategy, Promotion strategy, Pricing strategy and Place strategy, while the dependent variable is the SMEs' performance during the COVID-19 control measures.
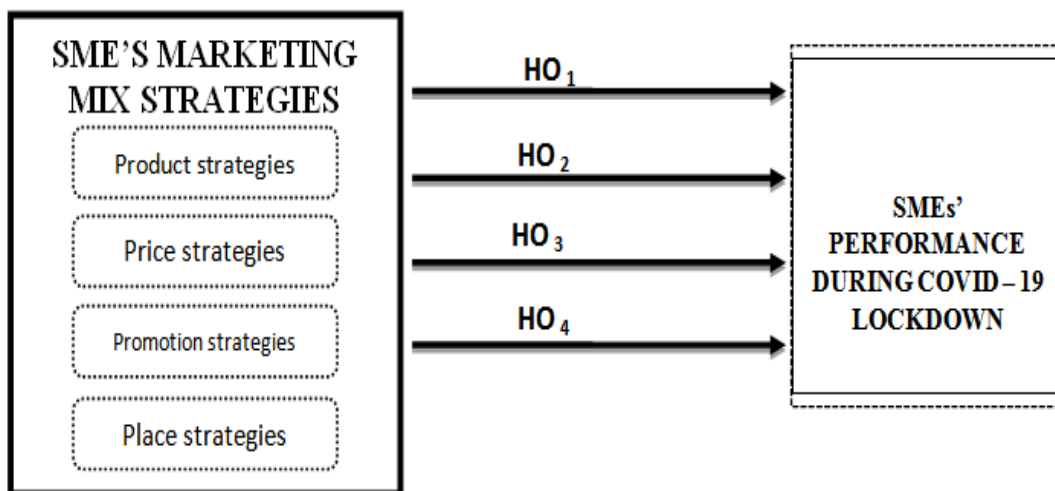


**Figure 1:**Modified Conceptual framework based on McCarthy, (1964) 4Ps Model of Marketing Mix Strategies.

## IV. HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT:

a) Product development as a component of marketing mix strategies and the performance of SME'S during COVID-19

Kotler and Armstrong (2010) defined product as anything of value (tangible or otherwise) that is offered to a target market to attract attention, encourage acquisition, use, or consumption that might satisfy a want or need. Generally, consumers decide on product to patronize by weighing the quality, quantity brand and price of competing alternatives in the market. Mohammad, Wang, &Sunayya (2012) noted that customers may decide to purchase a product based on the advertisement of the product in the store, and it can attract the customers through physical appearance of the product, packaging and how the product is labeled. Hence, it is of great importance for business to strategize continuously and plan activities base on action so that it can exceed the preference of customers. Cavusgil and Zou (2009) conducted an empirical study on product validation, and it was later reveal that product adoption related to sale growth, and it was discovered that product adaptation is also related to financial performance of an enterprise such as investment and return on profit. Therefore, the Product development as a component of marketing mix strategies adaptation is mostly important, especially when anSME's are effected with an outbreak of disease like COVID-19 in their geographically area. In view of the aforementioned, it can be concluded that on a general note,

**H01: -** *Products Marketing Mix Strategies have not significantly affected SMEs' performance during the COVID-19 lockdown.*

b) Price as a Component of Marketing Mix Strategies and the performance of SME'S on COVID-19

Opinion varies that marketing practice has direct relationship with marketing mix strategies which always bring good output. Earlier research suggests that pricing adaptation allows a firm to adjust to local competitive conditions, thus enhancing its ability to position itself in the market, resulting in export success by Louter, 1991 is of the view that, there is strong relationship between pricing strategies and the performance of business, it indicated that overall performance and price strategy has a positive relationship as analyses from it empirical review. Market can determine price strategy based on the location and reasons associated with the PESTEL model (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environment and Legal forces). However, the forces that enhance control on marketing strategy comprises the following; effects on marketing, transport cost and distribution. Taking into account market structure and demand, out-break of disease like coronavirus, Ebola, Spanish flued etc also affect the pricing of commodity in the market. The Restrictions that have been placed on Social economies and Business places, eg bars, Night clubs and recreational centers who are shut down till further notices entirely have major effect on the pricing strategy. Consequently, it is based on COVID-19 restrictions on social economies lockdown and social distances that make SME's

reduce production and low patronage of their product in the market. In that context and those as elaborated above hypothetically we can conclude that there are no significant relationships between the variables to arrive that our Ho$_4$ assumption as stated below:

**Ho2: -** *Price Marketing Mix Strategies have not significantly affected SMEs' performance during the COVID-19 lockdown.*

c) Promotion strategies as a component of marketing mix strategies and the performance of SME'S during COVID-19

Promotion in marketing is concerned with communication often through multiple channels between the company and its stakeholders, particularly consumers. Due to its importance in marketing, companies often deploy a blend of tools such as advertising, personal selling, sales promotion, public relations and direct marketing to direct flow of information to the public (Kotler, 2007). Mostly promotion done by enterprises are connected to highly populated area were as the government has forceful restrict overcrowding movements due to Covid-19 disease in other to enforce social distance among business places and also order people to be self-isolated.Gupta (2007) acknowledge that, the aim of promotion is to invite new clients, in order to attract new customers, while loyal customers should be given incentives and also to increase the size of the business by advertising the important of the entire product to the customers. As the product undergoes the production possibility curve, the more managers spends on promotion and packaging of the product. Same applicable to product of lower price, the influence of SME's is high when it comes to product price and promotion.

**H03: -** *Promotion Marketing Mix Strategies have not significantly affected SMEs' performance during the COVID-19 lockdown.*

d) Place strategies as a component of marketing mix strategies would influence the performance of SME'S during COVID-19

Place as a component of Marketing Mix strategy is concerned with ensuring that products get to customers where and when they are required; and in the right condition. As such place decisions in marketing usually relate to physical distribution and channels of distribution, which often have direct and indirect influences on companies' sales volume and ultimate profit. Findings from a meta-analysis conducted by Louter, (1991) confirmed the validity of this assertion to the extent that distribution strategy positively impacts SME's performance in terms of sales and profit level. The model of this study focus on a particular channel of distribution that can be determined by the condition of markets, the situation of the country economy, distribution structure and outbreak of disease. Findings from Keegan (1999) revealed a positive correlation between distribution channel and sales performance. In addition, significant findings on delivery time which is a result of distribution structures put in place by the industries were also observed to be related to sales volume, export proportion of sales, and certain composite performance measures. In view of the above a null hypothetical assumption is implored which will be proven

after subjecting the research to empirical analysis.

***H0₄: -** Place Marketing Mix Strategies have not significantly affected SMEs' performance during the COVID-19 lockdown.*

## V.   METHODOLOGY

This study is basically a descriptive survey research and therefore required the use of survey method of investigation. The reason for choosing descriptive research design is because it seeks to provide an accurate description of observations of the phenomena.Research framework is based on conceptual framework and includes two main variables and four dimensions: The Independent variable is COVID-19 and the dependent variables is Marketing Mix Strategies which includes; Product marketing mix strategies, Promotion marketing mix strategies, Pricing marketing mix strategies and Place marketing mix strategies in small and medium enterprises (SME'S) focus on Adamawa State, North-East Nigeria. The instrument used for data collection was a structured, self-administered questionnaire developed from literature (Wesso 2014; Naidu, 2009). The questionnaire was administered on sample of 50 managers of SMEs' within the state.

## VI.   MODEL SPECIFICATION

This study designed its proposed model based on the conceptual framework of the research. The model was to measure the influence of the independent variable (Effects of covid-19 on socio-economic implications of social distancing, community lockdown) on dependent variable (SME's marketing mix strategies). The model is given by:

$Y = \alpha + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \beta_4 x_4 + ei$

$Y$ = dependent variable.
$\alpha$ = constant
$\beta$ =Independent variable
$x$ = Coefficient
$X_1$ = Product Strategies
$X_2$ = Price Strategies
$X_3$ = Promotion Strategies
$X_4$ = Place Strategies
$ei$ = Error term

## VII.   RESULTS

### Table 1: ANOVA of Predictors and Dependent Variable

**ANOVA[b]**

| Model | | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Regression | 2319.562 | 4 | 579.890 | 21.629 | .000[a] |
| | Residual | 1206.458 | 45 | 26.810 | | |
| | Total | 3526.020 | 49 | | | |

a. Predictors: (Constant), PLACE-MS, PRICE-MS, PROMOTION-MS, PRODUCT-MS

b. Dependent Variable: SMEs' performance

### Table 2:  Coefficients Output of Hypothesis of Dependent Variable

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | | | 95% Confidence Interval for B | | Correlations | | | Collinearity Statistics | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | T | Sig. | Lower Bound | Upper Bound | Zero-order | Partial | Part | Tolerance | VIF |
| (CONSTANT) | 3.392 | 4.083 | | .831 | .411 | -4.832 | 11.616 | | | | | |
| PRODUCT_MS | .405 | .167 | .359 | 2.430 | .019 | .069 | .741 | .750 | .341 | .212 | .349 | 2.868 |
| PRICE_MS | .221 | .102 | .247 | 2.173 | .035 | .016 | .425 | .649 | .308 | .189 | .588 | 1.701 |
| PROMOTION_MS | .135 | .185 | .134 | .731 | .468 | -.237 | .507 | .708 | .108 | .064 | .228 | 4.390 |
| PLACE_MS | .182 | .173 | .187 | 1.054 | .297 | -.166 | .530 | .714 | .155 | .092 | .242 | 4.139 |

a. Dependent Variable: SME Performance

From Table1 above represent ANOVA output details of four independent variable PRODUCT_MS, PRICE_MS, PROMOTION_MS, and PLACE and respectively. Initial null hypothesis of ANOVA said that X1 = X2 = X3 = X4, while alternate hypothesis shows that at least one of the value Xi's (where I = 1, 2, 3, 4) is not equal to zero. Getting the (F) value as high as 21.629, shows that there are more chances of the null hypothesis being rejected and alternate hypothesis being accepted, which shows that at least none of the Xi's is not equal to zero, this means that the independent variables are

related. On the other hand, the significance of 0.000, means that (1 − 0.000 = 1) shows 100% confidant of alternative hypothesis is accepted, therefore, independent variables (PRODUCT_MS, PRICE_MS, PROMOTION_MS, and PLACE_MS) are related and they affect the dependent variable SMEs' performance.

From the results presented in Table 2 above, the regression equation can be written as:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2 + \beta_3 x_3 + \beta_4 x_{4\ldots\ldots ei}$$
$$Y = 3.392 + 0.405X_1 + 0.221X_4 + 0.135X_2 + 0.182X_3$$

Moreover, in other to know the collinearity of the data, the variance inflation factor (VIF) and Tolerance (TOL) for each of the independent variables have to be determined. Therefore, variance inflation factor (VIF) measures the increase of the difference of the variables of regression measurement and it is expected to be less than ten (10) while Tolerances measures the proportion of the difference variables with smaller values that indicate stronger relationship or variables that are too closely related. In this case, variable inflation factor (VIF) and Tolerance (TOL) for the data used were predicted as shows in table 2 above. The result showed that Product Marketing Mix Strategies (PRODUCT_MS) Collinearity (VIF = 2.868, Tolerance = 0. 349), Promotion Marketing Mix Strategies (PROMOTION_MS) Collinearity (VIF = 4.390, Tolerance = 0. 228), Place Marketing Mix Strategies (PLACE_MS) Collinearity (VIF = 1.701, Tolerance = 0. 588), Price Marketing Mix Strategies (PRICE_MS) Collinearity (VIF = 4.139, Tolerance = 0. 242). This result shows that all the VIF obtained were less than ten (10), and also Tolerance for independent variable were also greater than 0.1. Therefore, the data for the regression analysis passed the collinearity test.

## VIII. TEST OF HYPOTHESIS

**H01: -** *Products Marketing Mix Strategies have not significantly affected SMEs' performance during the COVID-19 lockdown.*

The result of findings in Table2 reveal that the coefficient value (B = 0.405, t = 2.430, P<0.05), which implies that Products Marketing Mix Strategies (PRODUCT_MS) has significant effect on SME's performance, hence rejecting the null hypothesis that stated that there is no positive effect Product Marketing Mix strategies on performance during COVID19 in Adamawa State.

**H0₂: -** *Price Marketing Mix Strategies have not significantly affected SMEs' performance during the COVID-19 lockdown.*

The findings in Table 2 reveal Price Marketing Mix Strategies (PRICE_MS) has B = 0.247, t = 2.173, P< 0.05 indicating a non-significant influence on performance, thus leading to the acceptance of the null hypothesis which state thatthere is no significant relationship between Price Marketing Mix Strategies and SMEs' performance during the COVID-19 in Adamawa State.

**H03: -** *Promotion Marketing Mix Strategies have not significantly affected SMEs' performance during the COVID-19 lockdown.*

The result in Table 2 illustrates that B = 0.134, t = 0.731, P>0.05, as a result of regression analysis revealed that there is significant influence of promotion marketing mix strategies (PROMOTION_MS) on SME's Performance in Adamawa State, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis which stated that there is no positive relationship between Promotion Marketing Mix strategies performance of SME'S in Adamawa State during the COVID19.

**H04: -** *Place Marketing Mix Strategies have not significantly affected SMEs' performance during the COVID-19 lockdown.*

The consequence of findings in Table 2 show that the measurement value of place marketing Mix strategies (PLACE_MS) reveals that B = 0.187, t = 1.054, P>0.05. It implied that place marketing Mix strategies has no significant effect on SME's performance, hence accepting the null hypothesis that stated that, there is no significant relationship between place marketing Mix strategies and SMEs' performance during COVID-19.

## IX. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

According to Otieno (2015) managers or SME's have a duty to acquire knowledge of the ever changing business environment so as to be able to implement improvement on product, method of directions, returns to gain opportunities which will help in providing alternative income when need arise. The study discovered that, two out of the four dimensions of Marketing Mix Strategies were vital in influencing overall firm performance. Importantly, SMEs' performance during COVID-19 is influenced by Product Marketing Mix Strategies and Price Marketing Mix Strategies; while Promotion Marketing Mix Strategies and Place Marketing Mix Strategies were not significant in influencing performance. This finding thus suggest the need and importance for SMEs' to implement adjustments in their promotion and place strategies so as to improve their chances in coping with unanticipated events such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the associated control measures.

The study findings further underscore the need for synergy between government (state and federal) and the SMEs in solving issues relating to marketing communication and distributional activities of business during periods of crisis leading to restrictions in movements. Specific to the scope of the current study, the findings further draws attention on the need for the Adamawa State government to provide emergency funding programs that target SMEs with lower interest rates, tax waivers, or easier lending policies could also help SMEs stay afloat during the period of low market demand.

## X. CONCLUSION

The control measures against the pandemic (i.e., community lockdown, social distance, movement restrictions and travel ban) have had severe social-economic implications on the general economic environment. For many companies, the pandemic has caused a led to decreased or outright stoppage of production, which could have negative effects on their business performance. The immediate and direct

consequences of these effects will lead a significant numbers of SME's to cut salaries and emoluments, or in extreme cases, out rightly lay-off staff. These no doubt would be of immense negative implications for the economy at large.

## XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. SMEs in Adamawa State should endeavor to revise their promotion and place strategies to conform to the realities of the pandemic and prepare them for similar challenges that may occur in future.

2. For government and development partners it is highly essential to support these vital and also vulnerable SMEs in order to ensure they remain in a position which would provide imperative supply chain in the future.

3. It is recommended that, the Government of Adamawa State should provide a comprehensive package of financial support for SMEs. This can in the form of grants or short-term low-interest loans to meet up with their critical needs, prevent liquidation, and support investment in production post-lockdown.

4. The Adamawa state government should allow free movement of foods, medicine, beverages and also permit the retailers to open their small businesses across the state, but encourage the stores to put measures in place to avoid crowding and unnecessary waiting.

5. The government of Nigeria should provide grants to banks in other to facilitate them waive loans that SME's was granted from them and also can inject capital into SME's business in other to support them stay floating.

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