

Innovations

The Nexus between Marketing Mix Strategy and Performance of Small and Micro Enterprises: The Case of Jimma Town

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Abstract : *Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are increasingly recognized as a crucial platform for development and to enhance the overall progress. The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of marketing mix strategy on performance of small and micro enterprises in Jimma town. Questionnaire is used to collect the primary data. 117 target respondents were randomly selected. The finding of the study shows that product, pricing, promotion, and distribution strategies have statistically significant positive linear relationships with the performance of manufacturing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The study recommend Micro and small manufacturing enterprises (MSEs) should prioritize the production of goods characterized by innovative designs, enhanced features, and a diverse array of options, while also being capable of offering supplementary services.*

Keywords: *SMEs, Marketing Mix, Strategy, Performance*

1. Introduction

In today's dynamic landscape, marketing has evolved from its traditional roots of simply making a sale—often characterized by the old adage of “telling and selling”—to a more profound mission: genuinely satisfying the diverse needs of customers. It is no longer just about pushing products; it's about deeply understanding and responding to what consumers truly desire, forging connections that resonate beyond the transaction. If marketers understand consumer needs and create products that offer greater customer value while effectively pricing, distributing, and promoting them, these products will sell successfully. (Philip Kotler, Gary Armstrong, 2017).

A robust small and medium enterprises (SME) sector significantly boosts a country's economy by contributing to the gross domestic product (GDP), decreasing unemployment and poverty, and encouraging entrepreneurial activities (Hoque, 2016). Small and medium enterprises are responsible for creating two-thirds of all

jobs globally (ILO, 2015) and account for approximately 60% of the GDP in developing countries.

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are increasingly recognized as a crucial platform for development in numerous African countries, owing to their substantial contributions and potential to enhance the continent's overall progress (Kanana, 2019). As noted by Ofusaa et al. (2015), SMEs play a vital role as engines of social and economic development across Africa.

In Ethiopia, the government has a history of promoting the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), particularly those that are growth-oriented, through various policy measures. For example, in 1997, the government developed a national strategy for the development and promotion of micro and small enterprises, aiming to create a supportive environment for this sector.

The government of Ethiopia has acknowledged the substantial role that small and medium enterprises play in the advancement of the nation's economy. These enterprises serve as a critical foundation for job creation, poverty alleviation, the utilization of local raw materials, and the capacity for swift transitions to medium and large-scale operations. SMEs were also central to the first industrial policy strategy introduced in 2002. The advancement and growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have been a fundamental focus in the government's five-year economic development initiatives. This commitment is particularly evident in the Growth and Transformation Plans (GTP) I and II, which outline specific strategies for enhancing the capacity and competitiveness of SMEs. These plans aim to create a favorable business environment by providing financial support, improving access to markets, and offering training programs to develop entrepreneurial skills. By prioritizing SMEs, the government seeks to stimulate innovation, generate employment opportunities, and foster sustainable economic expansion.

According to the Central Statistics Agency (2006), small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Ethiopia contributed 3.4% to the country's GDP and accounted for 90% of employment opportunities. The agency's survey indicated that many citizens rely on SMEs for job opportunities. However, despite their significant role in employment, the contribution of these enterprises to GDP remains low, suggesting that the sector is not effectively promoting national economic growth. To enhance their impact on the economy, SMEs need to develop tailored marketing strategies, as government intervention alone is insufficient for improving their contribution.

Marketing strategy has become a crucial focus for organizations and serves as a tool for improving overall firm performance. Research conducted by Zayede (2018) found that the elements of the marketing mix—namely promotion, price, and product—have a positive and significant relationship with the performance of small and medium manufacturing enterprises. Conversely, the study revealed a significantly negative relationship between the element of place and SME

performance. The research recommends that SMEs develop innovative products with new designs, features, and varieties, set affordable prices, and implement tailored promotional strategies. (Designs, features, varieties) products, charge affordable prices, and disseminate tailored promotions.

Several studies conducted by Desalegn (2017), Gizaw (2018), Beyene (2018), Abayneh (2019), Haftu (2019), and Television (2019) have analyzed the impact of marketing mixes on the performance of specific firms in Ethiopia. Understanding the relationship between the attributes of marketing mixes and the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is essential for informing effective corrective measures. However, there remains limited insight into the empirical cause-and-effect relationship within this context. Consequently, research on the influence of marketing mix strategy on SME performance in developing countries such as Ethiopia is lacking, with no studies specifically conducted in Jimma Town.

Hence, this research harnesses up-to-date data to illuminate and bridge the existing gap in understanding how marketing mix strategies influence the performance of micro and small enterprises in the vibrant community of Jimma Town, Ethiopia. By exploring this dynamic relationship, the study aims to provide valuable insights that can empower these businesses to thrive in a competitive landscape.

2. Review of Literatures

A marketing mix constitutes a dynamic amalgamation of essential elements and strategic solutions aimed at addressing customer needs and facilitating the achievement of organizational objectives (Pruskus, 2015). The marketing mix comprises a toolkit of tactical marketing instruments known as controllable variables. These variables—product, price, place, and promotion—form the foundational elements of marketing strategy, collectively referred to as the 4 'P's. These 4 'P's play a crucial role in shaping the customer experience and driving business success, creating a harmonious interplay that guides businesses in captivating their audience.

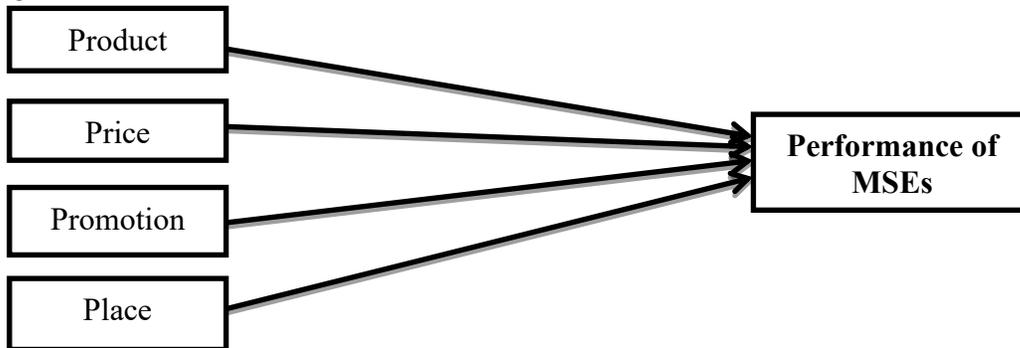
A marketing approach is a cohesive framework that could guides an organizational decision about its marketing activities. It specifies the activities to undertake, the methods for executing them, and how to allocate resources across different markets and segments. The primary aim is to create, communicate, and deliver a product that offers value to customers, thereby allowing the organization to achieve its specific goals (Abratt & Bendixen, 2019).

The link between marketing approach and organizational performance is distinctly apparent, unfolding across both organizational and functional levels (Walker, 2004). This relationship highlights how carefully crafted plans can drive success within entire companies, as well as influence individual departments in achieving their

specific goals. Researchers have uncovered a variety of overarching strategic approaches that serve as a robust theoretical framework, allowing for a clearer distinction of strategic groups within various industries. These approaches detailed the pathways through which companies navigate competitive landscapes, helping to categorize and analyze the diverse tactics employed by firms striving for success.

2.1. Research Model and Hypothesis Development

Figure 1: Proposed Research model



Source: Adapted and edited from (Pokubo, 2019)

2.2. Hypothesis

H1: Product mix strategy has statistically significant and positive effect on performance of micro & small enterprises

H2: Price mix strategy has statistically significant and positive effect on performance of micro & small enterprises

H3: Promotion mix strategy has statistically significant and positive effect on performance of micro & small enterprises

H4: Place mix strategy has statistically significant and positive effect on performance of micro & small enterprises

The study used regression analysis to examine the effect of independent variable such as product, price, promotion, and place on dependent variable (performances of SMEs). It is expressed as $Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \epsilon$, based on the study's objectives and empirical review. The model represents the relationship between the dependent variable (Y) and the independent variables (X) where: Y = performance of MSEs, X1 = Promotion, X2 = Price, X3= Place , X4 = Product, β_0 = Constant , $\beta_1 - \beta_4$ = Regression Coefficients and ϵ = Error terms.

3. Methodology of the Study

3.1. Research Approach

The quantitative approach is characterized by postpositive claims to develop knowledge concerning the cause-and-effect relationships among known variables of interest (Creswell, 2009). Consequently, this research adopts a quantitative methodology.

3.2. Research Design

The study employed an explanatory research design methodology, which entails conducting initial quantitative research, followed by the analysis of the results, and subsequently elaborating on these findings through qualitative data. This approach is deemed explanatory as it provides a deeper understanding of the preliminary quantitative results through qualitative insights. Furthermore, it is sequential in nature, as the quantitative phase is succeeded by the qualitative phase (Creswell, 2014).

3.3. Types and sources of data

The researcher employed primary data for this study. Information was collected through a closed-ended questionnaire that the researcher developed. The data were gathered from a sample of micro and small enterprise managers in Jimma Town, Ethiopia. The information obtained through the questionnaires constituted the primary data source. Additionally, journal articles, written documents, and various online resources were utilized as secondary sources. The primary data collection utilized a five-point Likert scale questionnaire.

3.4. Target Population and Sampling technique

The focus of this study is on a group of 165 Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs), each officially registered with the Micro and Small Enterprises Authority office. To ensure a fair representation of this diverse array of businesses, a simple random sampling technique was meticulously applied to select the respondents for this research.

3.5. Sample Size Determination

To effectively manage the population of respondents, the researcher applied Yamane Taro's (1967) sample size determination formula to establish a representative sample size. Consequently, 117 respondents were randomly selected from a total of 165 micro and small enterprises (MSEs).

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Demography		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	77	68.1
	Female	36	31.9
	Total	113	100
Marital Status	Married	65	57.5
	Single	35	31
	Divorced	9	8
	Widowed	4	3.5
	Total	113	100
Age	<25 Years	26	23
	26-35 Years	49	43.4
	36-45 Years	37	32.7
	≥46 years	1	0.9
	Total	113	100
Education Status	Primary	47	41.6
	Secondary	16	14.2
	Certificate	24	21.2
	Diploma	23	20.4
	Degree	3	2.7
	Total	113	100

Source: Researcher own Survey

Among the respondents were male respondents, 77 (68.1%), while female respondents comprised 31.9 percent (36). The survey results show that 65 (57.5%) of respondents are married, 35(31.0) percent of the respondents are single, and 9 (8.0%) are divorced. The results obtained portray that 43.4% of the manufacturing enterprise owners were from the age of (26-35); this age range accounts for the majority of the respondents, while the age group from 36- 45 years old accounts 32.7% while the age group of young’s under 25 years old accounts 23.0% and the eldest respondents from the age 46 years and above account for 0.9%. Moreover, the majority of 47(41.6%) of the respondents had primary school status; 24(22.2%) of the respondents had a certificate education level while 23(20.4%) of the respondents had a diploma, and 16 (14.2%) secondary, 3(2.7%) degree education level.

4.2. Descriptive Statistics

The survey results unveil an insightful picture of consumer perceptions. For the product itself, respondents reported a mean value of 3.405829, paired with a standard deviation of 0.879337, highlighting a consistent level of satisfaction or preference among the participants. When it comes to pricing, the survey reveals a mean value of 2.781314, which illustrates a general acceptability or expectation among consumers, complemented by a standard deviation of 1.361437 that suggests some variance in individual responses.

Promotion efforts garnered noticeable attention, with a mean value of 2.809114 reflecting the effectiveness of these strategies and a standard deviation of 1.021357, indicating variability in consumer engagement. Furthermore, the results for place yield a mean of 3.509486 and a standard deviation of 0.788316, suggesting a good balance in accessibility and convenience for consumers. Lastly, in terms of performance, the mean value of 3.67260 speaks to the overall effectiveness of the product, while a standard deviation of 0.782613 indicates differing levels of satisfaction among users.

The survey result shows that for product the respondents mean value and standard deviation is 3.405829 and 0.879337 respectively. Also, the response result for price shows that 2.781314 of mean value and 1.361437 of standard deviation. The survey result shows that promotion has 2.809114 and 1.021357 mean value and standard deviation respectively. Finally the study result shows that place (mean=3.509486 and standard deviation=0.788316) and performance (mean value=3.67260 and 0.782613).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	S. Deviaton
Product	3.405829	0.879337
Price	2.781314	1.361437
Promotion	2.809114	1.021357
Place	3.509486	0.788316
Performance	3.672600	0.782613

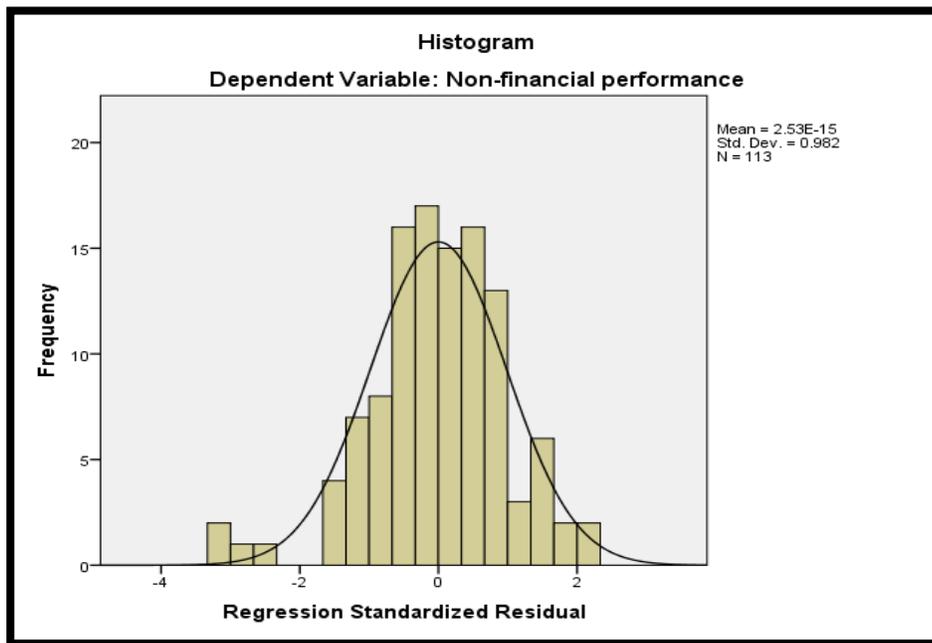
Source: Researcher own Survey

4.3. Assumption Testing for Regression Analysis

Normality

Multiple regression analysis necessitates that the independent variables exhibit a normal distribution. According to Brooks (2008), it is imperative that the normality assumption is fulfilled in order to perform hypothesis testing concerning the parameters of the model.

Figure 2: Histogram for data Normality



Source: Researcher own Survey

In addition to the normality test mentioned earlier, the assessment of normal distribution can also be conducted through skewness and kurtosis statistics, which offer additional confirmation that the residuals or errors follow a normal pattern. According to Kim (2013), the evaluation of normality is based on the absolute values of skewness and kurtosis.

Table 3: Data Normality Test using Univariate Analysis (N= 117)

Variables	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
		Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Product strategy	113	-0.034	0.227	0.441	0.451
Price strategy	113	0.51	0.227	-0.782	0.451
Promotion strategy	113	-0.045	0.227	-0.482	0.451
Place strategy	113	-2.105	0.227	5.018	0.451
Non-financial performance	113	-0.576	0.227	0.873	0.451

Source: Researcher own Survey

Multicollinearity

The multi-collinearity test result of the variance inflation factor (VIF) for all factors was less than 1.204, showing no multi-collinearity problem. As a rule of thumb, a serious multi-collinearity problem may occur if the VIF value is greater than 10 (Kline, 2011). However, for this particular study, as presented in Table 4, the VIF value ranges from 1.007 to 1.204, which confirms that there was no issue of co-linearity among the predicting variables.

Table 4: Multicollinearity

Variables	Collinearity Statistics	
	Tolerance	VIF
Product strategy	0.83	1.204
Price strategy	0.993	1.007
Promotion strategy	0.836	1.197
Place strategy	0.981	1.019

Source: Researcher own Survey

4.4. Multiple Regression Analysis

Table 5 indicates an R² value of 0.422, meaning that 42% of the variation in the non-financial performance of manufacturing SMEs is explained by the regression on the optimally transformed predictors: pricing, product, promotion, and place. The remaining 57.8% of the variation is attributed to variables not included in this model. The Multiple R value of 0.65 suggests that the model demonstrates strength when all predictor variables are combined appropriately. Additionally, the Durbin-Watson statistic indicates no serial correlation among the residual errors, with a value of d=1.712, which is approximately close to two.

Table 5: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.650 ^a	0.422	0.401	0.47277	1.712

Source: Researcher own Survey

4.5. Model Test Results

Table 6: Model test on marketing strategies on performance (Coefficients)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-value	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.295	0.418		0.706	0.482
Product strategy	0.331	0.092	0.289	3.597	0.000
Price strategy	0.097	0.042	0.170	2.309	0.022
Promotion strategy	0.212	0.074	0.235	2.865	0.000
Place strategy	0.583	0.082	0.523	7.109	0.000

Source: Researcher own Survey

4.6. Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: Product mix strategy has statistically significant and positive effect on performance of micro & small enterprise.

The results of multiple regressions, as presented in Table 6, illustrate the statistically significant effect of product mix strategy on the performance of the enterprise with a beta value of 0.289 at a 95% confidence level. From this, the researcher concluded that the alternative hypothesis that product strategy will have a statistically significant and positive effect on the performance of the enterprise is supported by the data. This result is consistent with the findings of Ebitu (2016), Langat (2016), Ishar (2017), Bintu (2017), Zayede (2018), Momoh (2019), Pokubo (2019), Chinweoke., et al. (2020) and Garba A., (2020) investigated product strategy had a significant effect on the business performance of MSEs. Lastly, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Hypothesis 2: Price mix strategy has statistically significant and positive effect on performance of micro & small enterprise

The results of the multiple regressions, as shown in Table 6, indicate that pricing strategy has a strong, positive, and significant effect on enterprise performance, with a beta value of 0.17 at a 95% confidence level. This finding is consistent with studies conducted by Ebitu (2016), Langat (2016), Ishar (2017), Bintu (2017), Thabit et al. (2018), Zayede (2018), Abayneh (2019), Kanana (2019), Momoh (2019), Pokubo (2019), Zewdie (2019), Chinweoke et al. (2020), and Garba (2020), all of which report that pricing strategy significantly affects business performance. However, this study contrasts with Beyene (2018), who suggested that the effects of product pricing and branding are statistically insignificant in influencing customer brand

preference. Therefore, the researcher concludes that pricing strategy has a statistically significant and positive effect on the performance of micro and small enterprises.

Hypothesis 3: Promotion mix strategy has statistically significant and positive effect on performance of micro & small enterprises

As shown in Table 6, the promotion strategy has a positive and statistically significant effect on the performance of SMEs, with a beta value of 0.235 at a 95% confidence level. Hence, the findings of this study are consistent with previous research by Desalegn (2017), Mustapha (2017), Tha bit et al. (2017), Abayneh (2019), Kanana (2019), Pokubo (2019), and Zewdie (2019), all of which indicate a significant positive relationship between promotion strategy and the performance of SMEs. However, this study contradicts the results of Langat (2016), Gizaw (2018), Momoh (2019), Garba (2020), and Chinweoke et al. (2020), which found that promotion had a significantly negative effect on SME performance. Therefore, the researcher concludes that the promotion strategy has a statistically significant positive effect on the performance of MSEs.

Hypothesis 4: Place mix strategy has statistically significant and positive effect on performance of micro & small enterprise

The results in Table 6 demonstrate a strong positive and statistically significant effect of place strategy on enterprise performance, with a beta value of 0.523 at a 95% confidence level. This finding aligns with Ebitu (2016), Langat (2016), Ishar (2017), Bintu (2017), Thabit et al. (2018), Abayneh (2019), Kanana (2019), Momoh (2019), Pokubo (2019), Zewdie (2019), Chinweoke et al. (2020), and Garba (2020), all of which found that place strategy significantly impacts business performance. In contrast, the study contradicts the findings of Zayede (2018) and Girmachew (2019), who reported a significantly negative relationship between place strategy and SME performance.

Table 7: Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relation ship	Results	Decision
H1	Product strategy and SMEs performance	Positive and Significant	Accepted
H2	Price strategy and SMEs performance	Positive and Significant	Accepted
H3	Promotion strategy and SMEs performance	Negative and significant	Accepted
H4	Place strategy and	Positive and	Accepted

	SMEs performance	Significant	
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Source: Researcher own Survey

5. Major Finding

The study examined the impact of marketing mix strategies on the performance of micro and small enterprises in Jimma Town, Ethiopia. It was found that most respondents were male. In terms of marital status, the majority of respondents and owners of manufacturing enterprises were married, followed by single, divorced, and widowed individuals, respectively.

The age group most represented in the study was 26 to 35 years old, followed by those aged 36 to 45, under 25, and those over 46. Regarding education level, primary education was the most common among respondents, followed by those with certificates, diplomas, and finally, degrees.

A correlation analysis was conducted on the study variables, which revealed a positive correlation between the performance of micro and small manufacturing enterprises and the strategies of product, price, promotion, and place. The correlation coefficients were as follows: product (.332**) at a significance level of 0.00, price (.212*) at 0.024, promotion (0.135) at 0.558, and place (.557**) at 0.000. Although the promotion strategy is positively correlated with enterprise performance, it is statistically insignificant, leading the study to not reject the null hypothesis.

The R-squared value obtained was 0.422, indicating that 42.2% of the variation in the non-financial performance of micro and small enterprises can be explained by the regression analysis of the optimally transformed predictors: product, pricing, promotion, and place.

The study revealed a positive and significant effect of product strategy on the performance of SMEs, with a β -value of 0.289 and a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Similarly, the pricing strategy also had a positive and significant impact on SME performance, reflected in a β -value of 0.170 and a p-value of 0.022 ($p < 0.05$).

Interestingly, while the promotion strategy positively affected the performance of micro and small enterprises, this relationship was not statistically significant, with a β -value of 0.235 and a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). In contrast, the place strategy demonstrated a moderately strong positive and significant effect on SME performance, with a β -value of 0.523 and a p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$).

6. Conclusions

This study aimed to evaluate the impact of marketing mix strategies on the performance of micro and small enterprises in South Western Ethiopia, specifically in Jimma Town. The research revealed that pricing, product, promotion, and

distribution (Place) strategies significantly influence the performance of manufacturing enterprises in the area.

The performance of micro and small scale enterprises is closely linked to the management's ability to effectively utilize marketing strategies to enhance their operations in Jimma Town. While product pricing has a moderate impact on the performance of these enterprises, it is not as influential as product and distribution strategies.

Overall, the study successfully achieved its objectives. It found that product, pricing, promotion, and distribution strategies have statistically significant positive linear relationships with the performance of manufacturing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Therefore, it is essential to emphasize the need for implementing effective pricing, product, distribution, and promotional strategies to foster growth in the manufacturing sector.

7. Recommendations

Micro and small manufacturing enterprises (MSEs) should prioritize the production of goods characterized by innovative designs, enhanced features, and a diverse array of options, while also being capable of offering supplementary services. In conducting their business operations, MSEs must adopt pricing strategies that are not only competitive but also consider customer perceptions of value. This includes the implementation of reasonable prices and strategic discounts that resonate with consumers.

Moreover, it is imperative for enterprise owners and managers to reevaluate their promotional strategies. Although the primary objective of promotion is to inform customers about new and existing products and services, an excessive promotional approach may lead consumers to associate heavily marketed products with inferior quality or clearance items. Consequently, it is recommended that the management of micro and small-scale enterprises in Southwest Ethiopia enhance their promotional initiatives to improve overall business performance.

Additionally, the owners and managers of MSEs should earnestly consider the development and execution of comprehensive strategies encompassing product, pricing, promotion, and placement. Policymakers should also take into account the specific marketing mix strategies applied by enterprises when formulating relevant policies. It is advisable for local governments and educational institutions to initiate and facilitate timely training programs that focus on marketing strategies for business enterprises.

8. Suggestions for Future Research

This study establishes a strong foundation for future research. Researchers are encouraged to investigate the impact of various marketing mix elements on the performance of different sectors within micro and small enterprises (MSEs). Furthermore, the scope of research can be enriched by evaluating MSEs performance through a combination of financial and non-financial indicators, providing a more holistic view of their success and resilience.

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