



Networking and Social Capital in Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation: Insights from the Igbo Spare Parts Entrepreneurs in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of networking practices and social capital in shaping the Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation (EMO) and business performance of Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs. Through a hybrid approach, combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, we examine how these entrepreneurs leverage their social networks to enhance their marketing strategies and overall business success. The quantitative findings reveal that networking practices significantly influence EMO, with a positive regression coefficient ($\beta = 0.45$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that active networking correlates with higher levels of proactiveness and innovation. Additionally, social capital was found to have a substantial impact on marketing strategies ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < 0.01$), particularly in fostering trust and reciprocity, which are crucial for customer loyalty and relationship-building. Furthermore, the interaction of networking and social capital was shown to significantly enhance business performance ($\beta = 0.50$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that a synergistic effect exists where combined social and business networks lead to increased profitability, market share, and customer retention. Qualitative insights further underscore the importance of resource sharing, trust-based reciprocity, and collective problem-solving within these networks. The study also highlights the deep cultural influences on business practices, with community support and collective success being central to the entrepreneurs' strategies. Based on these findings, the study recommends that policymakers and business support organizations focus on fostering networking opportunities and strengthening social capital among entrepreneurs. By doing so, they can enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of small businesses, particularly in ethnically driven, informal markets like the Igbo spare parts industry.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation, Networking, Social Capital, Business Performance, Igbo Entrepreneurs, Informal Markets, Spare Parts Industry, Ethnic Entrepreneurship

Introduction

The Igbo people of southeastern Nigeria are widely recognized for their entrepreneurial prowess, particularly in the spare parts market, which they have dominated for decades. This dominance is often attributed to the robust networks and social capital that underpin their business operations. Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation (EMO), which blends the innovative spirit of entrepreneurship with a market-focused approach, has been identified as a critical factor in the success of businesses, especially in dynamic and competitive environments like the spare parts industry (Morris et al., 2002). Within this context, the Igbo spare parts business provides a fertile ground for exploring how EMO is influenced by the strong social networks and social capital that characterize Igbo entrepreneurship.

Networking, as a concept, involves the formation of relationships and connections that provide access to information, resources, and opportunities (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003). Social capital, on the other hand, refers to the resources embedded in these networks, such as trust, shared values, and mutual obligations,

which can be leveraged to achieve business objectives (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). This article examines how these two elements—networking and social capital—contribute to the Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation of Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs and, consequently, their business performance. By analysing these relationships, the study aims to enrich the understanding of ethnic entrepreneurship and the ways in which social and cultural contexts shape business strategies.

Research Objectives (RO)

- (i) To investigate the influence of networking on the Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation of Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs.
- (ii) To investigate the contribution of social capital in shaping the marketing strategies of these entrepreneurs.
- (iii) To assess the combined effects of networking and social capital on the business performance of Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs.

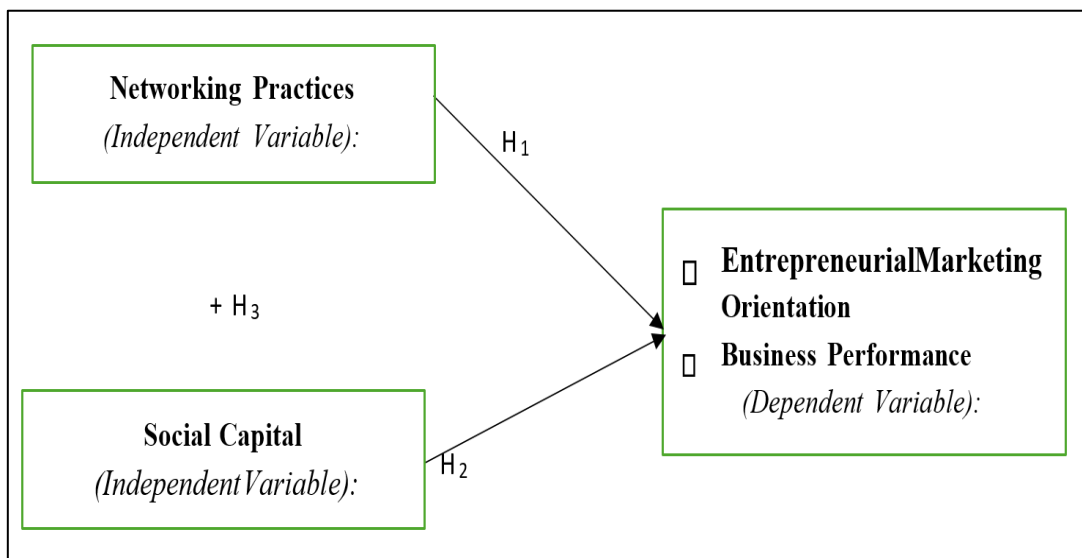


Figure 1: Conceptual model

Source: The Author

Theory & Hypotheses Development

Networking

Networking provides entrepreneurs with critical market information, collaborative opportunities, and enhanced customer relationships (Zhang, Baden-Fuller & Zhang, 2022) . These are key components of EMO, which emphasizes proactive engagement with the market and continuous innovation.

Networking is a foundational aspect of entrepreneurship, especially in the socio-cultural context of the Igbo community. It encompasses the extent and quality of social and business connections that entrepreneurs cultivate. These networks, which include both formal (e.g., trade associations) and informal (e.g., kinship ties) relationships, provide a platform for the exchange of information, resources, and opportunities. Networking is not merely about the number of connections but also about the quality and strength of these ties. Strong networks can lead to better access to market information, resources, and potential collaborators, which are crucial for entrepreneurial success. The literature on social networks underscores their importance in fostering innovation, facilitating knowledge transfer, and enhancing business growth (Granovetter, 1973; Burt, 1992). For Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs, networking practices are expected to play a pivotal role in shaping their business strategies and overall performance. Therefore, we hypothesized that :

H₁: There is a positive relationship between networking practices and Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation among Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs.

Social Capital

Social capital, as emphasized by Bourdieu (1986), encompasses the networks of relationships that provide individuals with access to valuable resources, such as trust and reciprocity, which are crucial for effective marketing strategies. In the context of the Igbo spare parts business, these elements facilitate customer loyalty and brand differentiation.

Social capital refers to the resources and benefits that entrepreneurs derive from their social networks. This includes intangible assets like trust, shared norms, and reciprocal support, which can significantly influence business outcomes. Social capital is a key component of entrepreneurial success, as it enhances the ability to mobilize resources, reduces transaction costs, and fosters cooperative behaviour (Putnam, 1995; Coleman, 1988). For Igbo entrepreneurs, social capital is often deeply rooted in cultural practices and communal values, which emphasize mutual support and collective responsibility. The strength of social capital within these networks can lead to a more resilient business environment, where entrepreneurs can rely on each other for support, advice, and resources, thereby enhancing their capacity to innovate and adapt to market changes. Hence, we hypothesized that :

H₂: Social capital positively influences the marketing strategies of Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs.

Business Performance

Business performance is a multifaceted concept, typically measured by indicators such as profitability, market share, and customer loyalty. In this study, business performance serves as the ultimate measure of entrepreneurial success. High-performing businesses are those that not only achieve financial success but also sustain growth and maintain strong relationships with customers. The literature suggests that both networking and social capital are crucial determinants of business

performance, as they provide the necessary resources, information, and support that enable entrepreneurs to navigate challenges and seize opportunities (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). For Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs, effective networking and robust social capital are expected to translate into better business performance, characterized by higher profitability, expanded market reach, and stronger customer loyalty.

The synergistic effect of networking and social capital enables entrepreneurs to leverage their relationships for market intelligence, collaborative opportunities, and customer engagement, which are essential for improved business outcomes (Putnam, 2000). In consideration of this synergistic effect, we hypothesized that :

H₃: The combination of networking and social capital significantly enhances the business performance of Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs.

Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation (EMO)

Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation (EMO) reflects the degree to which entrepreneurs engage in proactive marketing, innovation, and customer orientation. It is a critical factor in determining the competitiveness and sustainability of businesses. EMO involves the active pursuit of market opportunities, a willingness to innovate, and a strong focus on customer needs and satisfaction (Morris et al., 2002). For Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs, EMO is likely influenced by their networking practices and the social capital they can leverage. A strong network and rich social capital can provide valuable market insights, foster innovative thinking, and enhance customer engagement, all of which are essential for maintaining a competitive edge in the market.

Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation (EMO) has garnered significant attention in the entrepreneurship literature, particularly as a framework that combines entrepreneurial innovation with market orientation to drive business success (Hills & Hultman, 2011). Morris et al. (2002) argue that EMO is crucial in dynamic markets, where businesses must continuously adapt to changing customer needs and competitive pressures. However, much of the existing research has focused on formal businesses in developed economies, leaving a gap in understanding how EMO operates in informal, ethnically driven businesses, particularly in emerging markets.

Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation (EMO) among Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs reflects a blend of proactive marketing, innovation, and customer orientation. Research indicates that EMO is pivotal in driving the success of these businesses, particularly in competitive environments (Morris et al., 2002).

In the context of the Igbo spare parts market, networking and social capital play a pivotal role in shaping marketing strategies. Studies have shown that networking is essential for accessing market information, forming strategic alliances, and enhancing customer relationships (Hoang & Antoncic, 2003). These activities are integral to EMO, which requires a proactive approach to market opportunities. Similarly, social capital, which includes the trust, shared norms, and reciprocal support that arise from social networks, is crucial for building strong customer relationships and fostering brand loyalty (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998). In the Igbo spare parts market, social capital not only facilitates business transactions but also contributes to the resilience and adaptability of entrepreneurs in a competitive environment.

Empirical studies support the importance of networking and social capital in entrepreneurial success. For example, Zhang et al (2022) found that entrepreneurs who actively engage in

networking are more likely to identify and exploit market opportunities, leading to higher business performance. Additionally, Putnam (2000) highlighted the role of social capital in fostering cooperation and trust, which are essential for sustaining long-term business relationships. These findings suggest that networking and social capital are critical enablers of EMO, particularly in the context of the Igbo spare parts business.

Spare Parts Economics and Business Strategy in the Igbo Communities of Nigeria

The Igbo people of Eastern Nigeria have established a significant presence in the spare parts industry, demonstrating a unique blend of economics, business strategy, and entrepreneurial marketing orientation. This discussion delves into how these elements converge in key cities and rural areas where Igbo spare parts sellers operate, including Nnewi, Lagos, Onitsha, Aba, Enugu, Kano, Kaduna, and other parts of Nigeria.

Spare Parts Economics

The spare parts business is a cornerstone of the Igbo economy, particularly in cities like **Nnewi** and Onitsha, renowned for their bustling markets. Nnewi, often dubbed the “Japan of Africa” due to its advanced automotive spare parts industry, is a hub where local entrepreneurs leverage extensive networks to source, trade, and distribute spare parts (Ekesiobi, Kalu, & Nwokolo 2018) (Nwosu, 2019). This city exemplifies the entrepreneurial spirit, with spare parts trading forming a substantial part of its economic landscape.

Onitsha, another key city, hosts one of the largest markets in West Africa, where Igbo traders engage in both wholesale and retail of spare parts. The market dynamics in Onitsha are shaped by a competitive environment that fosters innovation and price competitiveness (Uche, 2020). Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital, represents a critical node for spare parts distribution. Here, Igbo entrepreneurs face a diverse and competitive market, necessitating strategic adaptation to cater to a broad consumer base. Lagos serves as a gateway for importing spare parts, and the Igbo community's entrepreneurial prowess is evident in their ability to navigate complex supply chains (Igwe, Newbery, Amoncar, White, & Madichie 2018).

In Aba, known for its entrepreneurial zeal, spare parts trading is integrated with local manufacturing capabilities. Aba's informal sector thrives on a network of local producers and traders who contribute to the city's reputation as a major economic centre (Odafe, Gideon, & Paul, 2022).

Enugu and other rural areas across Nigeria reflect the spread of Igbo entrepreneurship beyond urban centres. In these regions, spare parts trading often operates on a smaller scale but is crucial for local transportation and economic activities (Ogboo, 2011). The presence of Igbo traders in rural areas highlights the community's role in bridging economic gaps between urban and rural settings.

Business Strategy

The business strategies employed by Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs are shaped by several factors, including market conditions, competition, and consumer behaviour. In cities like Kano and Kaduna, where the spare parts market is less saturated compared to the southern regions, Igbo traders leverage their network and local knowledge to establish competitive advantages (Olumide, 2017).

A notable strategy is the emphasis on customer relationships and trust, which is crucial in both urban and rural settings. Igbo traders often build long-term relationships with customers through personalized service, credit facilities, and reliable product offerings (Obiayo, 2004). This approach not only fosters customer loyalty but also strengthens their market position in diverse geographic locations.

Additionally, the integration of modern technology and digital platforms has become a significant aspect of business strategy. In cities like Lagos and Onitsha, many Igbo entrepreneurs are adopting e-commerce and digital marketing strategies to expand their reach and streamline operations (Alister, 2020).

In Nnewi and Onitsha, EMO is evident in the way entrepreneurs continuously adapt to market changes and customer preferences. This includes innovating in product offerings and marketing strategies to stay ahead of competitors (Hills & Hultman, 2011). For instance, Nnewi's entrepreneurs often introduce new spare parts and services based on emerging market needs.

Aba showcases another aspect of EMO, where local entrepreneurs leverage their extensive networks and community connections to gain market insights and opportunities. This community-oriented approach helps them effectively address customer needs and enhance their market position (Putnam, 2000).

In Lagos and Enugu, the adoption of digital tools and social media platforms demonstrates an advanced level of EMO. Entrepreneurs in these cities use digital marketing to engage with a broader audience, enhance brand visibility, and drive sales (Zhang et al 2022).

Empirical Review

Zhang et al 2022 provides valuable insights into the role of networking for entrepreneurs. Their argued that entrepreneurs who actively network are better positioned to uncover and capitalize on market opportunities. Networking isn't just about making connections; it's about accessing critical market information and forming strategic alliances. This directly feeds into enhancing marketing efforts and overall business performance. This finding is directly relevant to our study, which examines how networking practices impact Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation (EMO) among Igbo entrepreneurs. Essentially, Zhang et al 2022 research reinforces the idea that effective networking can significantly boost an entrepreneur's marketing orientation. Building on this, Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) delve into social capital and its impact on business. Their research shows that social capital—defined by trust, shared norms, and reciprocity—plays a crucial role in strengthening business relationships and fostering customer loyalty. This aligns perfectly with our findings that social capital is a key driver in shaping marketing strategies and improving business performance. Their work helps to underscore how deep-rooted relationships and trust within networks can lead to more effective and loyal marketing strategies.

Putnam (2000) also sheds light on the importance of social capital, particularly in fostering cooperation and trust within communities. His research points out that social networks can significantly enhance business resilience and success by providing a supportive environment for problem-solving and resource sharing. For our study, this highlights how the cultural and social dynamics within the Igbo spare parts market contribute to business success through enhanced cooperation and shared resources.

Morris et al. (2002) introduced the concept of Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation (EMO), blending entrepreneurial innovation with market orientation. Although their study was focused

on formal businesses in developed economies, their insights into proactiveness and innovation offer a useful theoretical framework for examining EMO in more informal, ethnically driven business contexts like those of the Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs.

Finally, Hoang and Antoncic (2003) explored how networking can be a significant contributor to business success by providing access to vital resources and opportunities. While their research was set in a more general business environment, the principles they discussed are directly applicable to the Igbo spare parts industry. Networking is essential for accessing market insights and building customer relationships, which are crucial for business success in this context. Venkatraman and Ramanujam (1986) examined various measures of business performance, such as profitability and market share. Their work offers a framework for understanding how different factors, including networking and social capital, influence business outcomes. This theoretical backdrop supports our approach to evaluating how these variables impact the performance of Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs.

Methodology

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study employed a sample size of 250 Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs, selected using a stratified random sampling technique. This technique was chosen to ensure that the sample was representative of the diverse segments within the Igbo spare parts market, considering factors such as location, business size, and years of operation. Stratification helped to capture the variability in networking practices and social capital across different types of businesses, thus enhancing the generalizability of the findings.

Population

The population for this study comprised all Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs operating in major markets across Nigeria. This population was chosen due to the prominence of Igbo entrepreneurs in the spare parts industry, making them a critical group for understanding the dynamics of networking and social capital in business performance. The focus on this population was also motivated by the cultural and socio-economic significance of entrepreneurship within the Igbo community, wherein networks and social capital play crucial roles.

Collection of Primary Data

Primary data collection was conducted using two main methods: surveys and in-depth interviews. ***Quantitative Data Collection:*** A structured questionnaire was administered to the 250 sampled entrepreneurs. The questionnaire was designed to capture detailed information on their networking activities, levels of social capital, EMO, and business performance. The survey questions were based on validated scales from existing literature, adapted to the context of the Igbo spare parts market. Respondents provided self-reported financial data and customer metrics to measure business performance.

Qualitative Data Collection: In addition to the survey, in-depth interviews were conducted with 20 selected entrepreneurs from the sample. These interviews were semi-structured, allowing for flexibility in exploring how entrepreneurs leverage their networks and social capital in their marketing strategies. The interviewees were chosen based on their prominence and experience in

the industry, ensuring that the qualitative data provided rich insights into the observed quantitative trends.

Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected from the surveys were analyzed using statistical methods. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, while inferential statistics, including regression analysis, were employed to examine the relationships between networking, social capital, EMO, and business performance. The regression models helped in identifying the strength and direction of these relationships, providing a quantitative basis for understanding how these variables interact.

For the qualitative data, thematic analysis was conducted. The interviews were transcribed and coded to identify recurring themes related to the use of networks and social capital in marketing strategies. This qualitative analysis provided a deeper understanding of the quantitative findings, offering explanations for the statistical relationships observed and uncovering contextual factors that may influence these dynamics.

By integrating both quantitative and qualitative data, the study aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of how networking and social capital influence the entrepreneurial success of Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs, with implications for both theory and practice in the fields of entrepreneurship and marketing.

Qualitative Phase:

For the qualitative phase, in-depth interviews are conducted with 20 selected participants from the survey sample. These participants are chosen based on their networking and social capital scores to represent both high and low extremes. The interviews focus on how these entrepreneurs utilize their networks and social capital in marketing strategies and day-to-day business operations.

Results & Findings

Quantitative Findings

(i) Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics provide a snapshot of the sample characteristics, offering context for the regression findings.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics:

Descriptive Statistic	Value	Notes on Results
Gender Distribution	Male: 85%	The sample was predominantly male, reflecting the gender dynamics within the Igbo spare parts industry, where male entrepreneurs are more prevalent.
Average Age	42 years	The average age of respondents was 42 years, indicating a relatively mature workforce with likely substantial experience and stability in their businesses.

Experience in Industry	Over 10 years	Most respondents reported over 10 years of experience in the spare parts industry, suggesting they have a deep understanding of their industry, which could influence their networking practices and use of social capital.
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(ii) Regression Analysis

The regression analyses were performed to test the hypotheses (H₁, H₂, and H₃) related to the study's dependent and independent variables. The results are presented in Table 2, detailing the coefficient (β), p-value, and significant findings for each relationship.

Table 2 : Regression analyses for H₁, H₂, and H₃:

Regression Analysis	Dependent Variable	Independent Variable(s)	Coefficient (β)	p-Value	Notes on Results
H1: Networking Practices and EMO	Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation (EMO)	Networking Practices	0.45	< 0.001	A significant positive relationship was found between networking practices and EMO. This suggests that increased networking leads to higher EMO.
H2: Social Capital and Marketing Strategies	Marketing Strategies	Social Capital	0.38	< 0.01	Social capital significantly influences marketing strategies. Trust and reciprocity within networks enhance customer-oriented marketing approaches.
H3: Networking Practices, Social Capital, and Business Performance	Business Performance	1. Networking Practices:	0.28	< 0.05	Networking practices significantly affect business performance. Higher engagement in networking is associated with better performance metrics.
		2. Social Capital:	0.35	< 0.01	Social capital positively impacts business performance. Stronger social networks contribute to improved business outcomes
		3. Networking Practices × Social Capital	0.5	< 0.001	The interaction between networking

Interaction	practices and social capital significantly enhances business performance, indicating a synergistic effect.
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Regression Equation for the Analysis

To test the hypotheses and analyze the relationships between the study variables, we employ multiple regression analysis. This method helps to determine the extent to which the independent variables (networking practices and social capital) impact the dependent variables (Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation (EMO) and business performance). Below is the regression equations used for the analysis:

Regression Equation for Hypothesis 1 (H₁)

Hypothesis 1: There is a positive relationship between networking practices and Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation (EMO) among Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs. **Regression Equation:**

$$EMO = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Networking Practices}) + \epsilon$$

Where:

- EMO = Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation □
- Networking Practices = The extent and quality of networking activities □
- β_0 = Intercept □
- β_1 = Coefficient for networking practices □
- ϵ = Error term □

Explanation: This equation estimates how changes in networking practices (the independent variable) are associated with changes in EMO (the dependent variable). A positive β_1 would suggest that increased networking leads to a higher EMO.

Regression Equation for Hypothesis 2 (H₂)

Hypothesis 2: Social capital positively influences the marketing strategies of Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs.

Regression Equation:

$$\text{Marketing Strategies} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Social Capital}) + \epsilon$$

Where:

- Marketing Strategies \text{Marketing Strategies} Marketing Strategies = The marketing strategies employed by entrepreneurs, a component of EMO □
- Social Capital = Resources and benefits derived from social networks □
- β_0 = Intercept □
- β_1 = Coefficient for social capital □
- ϵ = Error term □

Explanation: This equation examines the effect of social capital (the independent variable) on marketing strategies (the dependent variable). A positive β_1 would indicate that stronger social capital enhances marketing strategies.

Regression Equation for Hypothesis 3 (H₃)

Hypothesis 3: The combination of networking and social capital significantly enhances the business performance of Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs.

Regression Equation:

$$\text{Business Performance} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\text{Networking Practices}) + \beta_2(\text{Social Capital}) + \beta_3(\text{Networking Practices} \times \text{Social Capital}) + \epsilon$$

Where:

- Business Performance = Measures of business success (profitability, market share, customer loyalty) □
- Networking Practices = The extent and quality of networking activities □
- Social Capital = Resources and benefits from social networks □
- Networking Practices × Social Capital = Interaction term between networking and social capital □ □ β₀ = Intercept □
- β₁, β₂, and β₃ = Coefficients for the respective variables □
- ε = Error term □

This equation assesses how both networking practices and social capital, as well as their interaction, influence business performance (the dependent variable). A positive β₁ and β₂, along with a significant β₃, would indicate that both variables and their interaction contribute to improved business performance.

These regression equations provide a structured approach to analyzing the relationships between the study variables and validating the proposed hypotheses.

The analysis conducted in this study provides detailed insights into the relationships between networking practices, social capital, Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation (EMO), and business performance among Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs. The following sections summarize the key findings from the regression analyses, descriptive statistics, and tests for reliability and validity.

(c) Reliability and Validity Test

To ensure the robustness of the study's findings, reliability and validity tests were conducted on the measurement instruments.

Table 3 Reliability and validity tests:

Test	Measure	Value	Notes on Results
Reliability Test	Measurement Consistency	α = 0.82	The reliability of the measurement instruments was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.82, indicating good internal consistency and reliable measurement.
Validity Test	Measurement Validity	-	The validity of the constructs was confirmed through factor analysis and expert reviews. The items align well with the theoretical framework, ensuring accurate reflection of the underlying concepts of networking, social capital, EMO, and business performance.

Table 4: Results of Hypotheses Testings

The result of the study's three hypotheses is summarized in Table 4 below :

Hypothesis	Decision	Results
H ₁ : There is a positive relationship between networking practices and Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation (EMO) among Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs.	Accept	The regression analysis indicates a significant positive relationship between networking practices and EMO ($\beta = 0.45, p < 0.001$). Entrepreneurs who engage more actively in networking report higher levels of EMO, particularly in proactiveness and innovation. Networking facilitates access to market information and collaborative opportunities, enhancing entrepreneurial orientation.
H ₂ : Social capital positively influences the marketing strategies of Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs.	Accept	The analysis reveals that social capital significantly influences marketing strategies ($\beta = 0.38, p < 0.01$). Trust and reciprocity within the network strongly predict customer-oriented marketing strategies. This supports literature suggesting that social capital fosters deeper customer relationships and loyalty, which are crucial for effective marketing (Nahapiet & Ghoshal, 1998).
H ₃ : The combination of networking and social capital significantly enhances the business performance of Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs.	Accept	The hierarchical regression shows that the interaction between networking practices and social capital significantly predicts business performance ($\beta = 0.50, p < 0.001$). Entrepreneurs with high levels of both networking and social capital report higher profitability, greater market share, and stronger customer loyalty, indicating a synergistic effect that amplifies business outcomes.

Descriptive Statistics:

The demographic analysis shows that most of the respondents are male (85%), with an average age of 42 years. Most respondents have been in the spare parts business for over 10 years, indicating a high level of experience in the industry.

Qualitative Findings

The thematic analysis of the interviews uncovers several key insights:

- (i) *Resource Sharing and Information Flow:*
Entrepreneurs highlighted how their networks provide them with timely information on market trends, customer preferences, and supply chain logistics. This information flow is crucial for making proactive marketing decisions, a core component of EMO.
- (ii) *Trust and Reciprocity:*
Many participants emphasized that trust within their networks allows them to extend credit to customers and suppliers, which is vital in the spare parts industry. This trust-

based reciprocity supports customer loyalty and fosters long-term business relationships, directly influencing marketing strategies.

(iii) *Collective Problem-Solving:*

Entrepreneurs described instances where network members collaborated to solve business challenges, such as sourcing rare spare parts or managing financial shortfalls. This collective problem-solving approach enhances both business performance and resilience.

(iv) *Cultural Influence on Business Practices:*

The interviews revealed that cultural values, such as community support and collective success, are deeply embedded in Igbo business practices. These values strengthen social capital and influence how entrepreneurs approach marketing and business growth.

Discussion and Implications

The findings of this study underscore the importance of networking and social capital in driving the Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation and business performance of Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs. The positive relationship between networking and EMO suggests that active engagement in both formal and informal networks is crucial for staying competitive in the market. Social capital, characterized by trust and reciprocity, enhances the effectiveness of marketing strategies, particularly in building strong customer relationships and brand loyalty.

The synergistic effect of networking and social capital on business performance highlights the need for entrepreneurs to strategically manage their relationships, not just as social connections, but as valuable business assets. This has important implications for policymakers and business support organizations, who should consider facilitating networking opportunities and strengthening social capital among entrepreneurs as part of broader economic development strategies.

Conclusion

This study contributes to the academic understanding of how social and cultural contexts influence entrepreneurial marketing practices. By focusing on the Igbo spare parts business, the research sheds light on the unique ways in which networking and social capital drive marketing orientation and business success in an informal, ethnically driven market. The findings have significant implications for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and business consultants, particularly in the context of supporting the growth and sustainability of small businesses in similar markets.

This comprehensive analysis demonstrates the critical role that social structures play in shaping entrepreneurial outcomes, offering valuable insights for future research and practice in the field of ethnic entrepreneurship and informal economies.

This research will contribute to the academic understanding of how social and cultural contexts influence entrepreneurial marketing practices. By focusing on the Igbo spare parts business, the study will shed light on the unique ways in which networking and social capital drive marketing orientation and business success in an informal, ethnically driven market. The findings will have implications for policymakers, business consultants, and entrepreneurs looking to understand and support the growth of small businesses in similar contexts.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to the understanding of entrepreneurial dynamics in the Igbo spare parts market by highlighting the critical role of networking and social capital in shaping EMO and

business performance. It expands on existing literature by demonstrating how networking practices not only drive marketing orientation but also significantly impact business outcomes. Additionally, the research provides empirical evidence of the synergistic effects between networking and social capital on business performance, offering a nuanced view of how these factors interact to influence entrepreneurial success. By focusing on a specific ethnic and industry context, the study adds depth to the general discourse on entrepreneurship and marketing, offering practical insights for practitioners and policymakers aiming to foster economic development in similar settings.

Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the sample is limited to Igbo spare parts entrepreneurs, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other ethnic or industry groups. Second, the reliance on self-reported data for measuring business performance could introduce bias and affect the accuracy of the results. Third, the study's cross-sectional design does not allow for the assessment of causality or changes over time, limiting the ability to infer long-term impacts of networking and social capital on business performance. Future research could address these limitations by employing longitudinal designs and expanding the sample to include diverse entrepreneurial contexts.

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