



## The Influence of Idea Generation on Business Growth: Evidence from Ibadan, Nigeria

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### Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Authors FKO and OJA designed the study. Author FKO wrote the protocol and author OJA wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author FKO did the thorough editing of the work and arranged the references. Authors OJA and FKO managed the literature searches. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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### ABSTRACT

Idea generation (ideation) is at the root of creative and innovative endeavours as creative ideas lead to innovative outcomes. Identifying creative ideas is a function of knowledge and practice, whether individually, in a group or outside of those sources. Entrepreneurial practice reveals that ideas can be sourced from entrepreneurs, their employees and customers thus impacting business growth, especially in an emerging entrepreneurial society like Nigeria. This study aimed to reveal how three different sources of idea generation influence business growth in Ibadan North Local Government Area of Oyo State, Nigeria. The survey purposively sampled 195 entrepreneurs, 71 males (36%) and 124 females (64%), judged to engage in creative businesses. The age range is as follows: 20-25 years (14), 26-30 years (69), 31-35 years (52), 41-45 years (18), 46-50 years (4) and 51 years and above (3). Data analysis involved descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Results revealed a significant number of the sample agreeing that there is a significant influence between individual, corporate and customer-centred ideation on business growth of the sampled entrepreneurs and consequently seek ideas from these sources. This study suggests the creation of awareness of the import of ideational skills among current and budding entrepreneurs and their employees through training to engender continuous creative and innovative growth in Nigerian businesses. Government and policy makers are to provide incentives and policies for business growth around the power of ideation. Limitations are also discussed.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Every business began with an idea pursued to the point of its realisation as a business venture. Such an idea was sustained and formed the basis on which more ideas for business success were built. Idea generation is the lifeblood of entrepreneurship [1]. This implies that idea generation is critical to the success and growth of an enterprise. Generating ideas for business success must, however, be a constant activity of the entrepreneur. A creative idea and an average idea can be the difference between an entrepreneur's success or failure. For any entrepreneur to be successful, they must possess the ability to continually generate and exploit creative ideas, which will lead to innovative business ideas. Developing creative and high-quality ideas is hinged to effectively recombine various pieces of knowledge and connect the seemingly unconnected [2]. Idea generation involves systematically searching for new approaches to solving problems and bringing into existence something new that might consist of a process, product, technology or service. That is why "in today's innovation-driven economy, understanding how to generate great ideas is one of the most important managerial priorities" [3]. A critical examination of ideas is, therefore, central to effective innovation [4].

Entrepreneurship is a complex process that involves several cognitive and behavioural steps to lead new ventures into success [5]. From an entrepreneurial viewpoint, idea generation involves discovering a business idea or developing a feasible business concept [6]. The quality of information at the disposal of an entrepreneur also determines the probability of generating an idea that involves creating, developing, and communicating new business ideas. However, entrepreneurs do not necessarily need to come up with new venture ideas. Recombining existing ideas and transforming them into something new has become a shared research interest [7,8]. Identifying what is to be combined is also a creative activity that all entrepreneurs do not possess. With the advent of digital technologies, there is a growing trend among entrepreneurs to copy innovative ideas and launch new business ventures in their countries [9]. This particularly holds in developing countries where entrepreneurs copy innovative ideas and transform them to suit their local communities [8]. Entrepreneurs face many significant new

business opportunities and options when considering new technologies. However, these opportunities go along with excessive competition, thereby creating a need to be innovative to stand out [10]. Good ideas are often judged as creative to the extent that they are a novel and appropriate, useful, correct, and valuable response to a task or a solution to a problem [11]. That is why such ideas can develop into successful innovations. Therefore, the need to be creative to generate innovative ideas and develop a successful startup cannot be ignored. This also implies that creativity and idea generation cannot be separated.

Creativity is the product of quality ideas that are judged useful and valuable. Implementing these quality or creative ideas lead to innovation. Various scholars [12,13] have shown the direct relationship between creativity and entrepreneurship. Even so, Obialo [12] argued that creativity and innovation must be deliberately nurtured for entrepreneurial success. Determining if creativity is essential for entrepreneurship and whether creative thinking enhances entrepreneurial activities have led to continuous research over the years [14,15,16,13]. In sum, creativity is highly connected with entrepreneurial pursuit and success because novelty and usefulness are the hallmarks of creative ideas, which underscores the strong connections between creativity and entrepreneurship. To succeed, entrepreneurs need to generate valuable ideas for new products and services attractive to identifiable markets. The ability of entrepreneurs to exploit ideas for success leads to business growth. Business growth is significant to the creation of jobs, wealth and a key contributor to the economy of nations.

Small and Medium Enterprise Development Agency of Nigeria (SMEDAN) reported that 80% of small and medium scale enterprises in Nigeria do not survive beyond five years [17]. This number is alarming and could lead to despair on the part of those seeking to become entrepreneurs. Furthermore, Wurim [18] observed that indigenous entrepreneurs have a scorecard of failure and losses, culminating in complete closure or epileptic operations of businesses. Wurim goes further to lament that while their counterparts from other parts of the world who operate side-by-side the indigenous entrepreneurs succeed in leaps and bounds, Nigerian entrepreneurs always appear confused,

frustrated and dejected, counting their losses. Over the years, Nigerian businesses' failure has been attributed to many factors [19,20,21,12,22]. Yet, there is a dearth of studies on the influence of idea generation on business growth and success in Nigeria. For instance, Wurim [23] investigated the relationship between opportunity recognition and business idea generation as a foundation for entrepreneurial businesses in Central Nigeria. He found that business opportunity and idea generation are significantly absent in these businesses' formative days, and the lack of these processes are responsible for the absence of formidable and successful business outfits in Central Nigeria. Olokundun, Ogbari, Obi and Ufua [24] examined the relationship between business incubation and university students' idea validation. They found that business incubation activities significantly influence validating business ideas generated by the subjects. Extant literature suggests that there seems to be a paucity of literature on the impact of ideation on business growth in Nigeria. This leaves room for more investigation into the impact of idea generation in business success in Nigeria. Therefore, this study enriches extant literature by examining the relationship between idea generation and growth of businesses in Ibadan North Local Government of Oyo State, Nigeria, with specific reference to micro, small and medium enterprises.

### 1.1 Research Objectives

The specific objectives that guided this study are as follows;

1. To analyse the relationship between Individual Ideation and business growth in Ibadan North Local Government, Oyo State.
2. To examine the relationship between Corporate Ideation and business growth in Ibadan North Local Government, Oyo State.
3. To determine the connection between Customer-Centred Ideation and business growth in Ibadan North Local Government, Oyo State.

The preceding gave rise to the following hypotheses:

H<sub>01</sub>: Individual ideation has no significant relationship with the growth of a business.

H<sub>02</sub>: There is no significant relationship between corporate ideation and business growth in Ibadan.

H<sub>03</sub>: There is no significant relationship between customer-centred ideation and the growth of business enterprise in Ibadan.

## 1.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1.2.1 Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship

For Dawson and Andriopoulos [16], the intangible nature of creativity does not allow easy definition. They contend, however, that it is an asset for people and organisations. Creativity for them is "the process through which new and useful ideas are generated" (p. 61). They further explain that novel and useful ideas are produced by individuals in organisations employed within settings that may be favourable or otherwise to facilitate the cognitive process that enables the production of these novel ideas. Some authors perceive creativity as a process. Kao [25] conceives creativity as "a human process leading to a result which is novel(new), useful (solves an existing problem or satisfies an existing need), and understandable (can be reproduced)". From this set of definitions, there is an attempt to define creativity from the organisational perspective. Woodman [26] delineates organisational creativity as "the creation of a valuable, useful new product, service, idea, procedure or process by individuals working within a complex social organisation". Dawson and Andriopoulos [16] argue that creating new ideas is not the essence but translating them into realisable products and services. An entrepreneur must not leave their creativity to chance. This is because there can be no innovation if there is no creativity. Every entrepreneur must, therefore, pursue deliberate creativity to arrive at innovation [12]. This fact additionally deduced that a fundamental relationship between creativity and entrepreneurship exists [27]. This relationship between creativity and entrepreneurship can be regarded as a reciprocal relationship. On the one hand, there is the assumption that creativity has a positive effect on entrepreneurship. On the other hand, entrepreneurship promotes creativity [27]. In particular, the impact of creativity on business activities, despite the two processes' clear, precise delimitation, is necessary to illustrate the actual influence [27]. The above fact brings the discourse to innovation.

Innovation is the answer to an increase in competitive intensity. Developing and implementing innovations is closely linked to a company's competitiveness [28,29]. Shorter

product life cycles and new technologies, especially in the growth sectors, stress the need for innovation. Just as the continued increase of available knowledge, the decreasing half-life of knowledge, i.e. the time in which knowledge is valid and applicable, increases the pressure to innovate [30,31,32]. Without using the term innovation, Schumpeter [33], defined innovations like the new combinations, with which companies should leave the extended tracks of the stagnant economy. However, new knowledge or creative ideas cannot yet be described as innovations until implemented in whatever form. Thus, innovation is only an innovation when ideas are transferred to new products or services and also applied and have penetrated a market [34,35]. Innovation management involves systematic support during the entire innovation process, from new ideas to their implementation. There are numerous models for describing innovation processes, which involve the activities needed to move from an idea to its realisation stage [34,28]. According to these processes, the phase of idea generation and evaluation is closely linked to creativity [11,30]. In addition to the existing information sources, creativity techniques are used to generate ideas in the innovation process [36,37,38]. Thus, creativity is crucial for innovation in an entrepreneurial venture.

Baregheh, Rowley and Sambrook [39], argue that "Innovation is the multi-stage process whereby organisations transform ideas into new/improved products, services or processes, in order to advance, compete and differentiate themselves successfully in the marketplace". For Dawson and Andriopoulos [16], "Innovation involves the utilisation of ideas in solving problems, developing processes and improving the way we do things in creating new products, services and organisations". Entrepreneurs, therefore, manage change by generating and choosing ideas, translating ideas into innovations and facilitating organisational growth by meeting the ever-changing demands of the dynamic business environment. Ideas are the ingredients for creativity and innovation. They cannot be helpful in themselves until someone utilises them to achieve some goals which would lead to innovative products or services. As long as the entrepreneur engages creativity and innovation to drive their business, entrepreneurship is promoted. When creativity and innovation reign, value is created not only for the individual entrepreneur or business person but also for society and their nation's economy. Entrepreneurship thus defines the process by

which individuals, groups or organisations identify and pursue entrepreneurial opportunities without being overly inhibited by the resources available [40]. How the entrepreneur deploys creativity and innovation determines the ability to manage these resources for entrepreneurial success.

### **1.3 Theoretical Framework**

#### **1.3.1 Investment theory of creativity**

Consistent with several other creativity theories [41,42,43], loosely rooted in economic theories, Sternberg and Lubart [44] constructed their investment theory of creativity to explain why some people are more creative than others. Using investment as a metaphor, the investment theory of creativity holds that creativity is like investing, except that one invests in ideas. Just like the fundamentals of investing, the investor buys low and sells high. The potential for maximising gains is in taking the risk of identifying and buying an undervalued stock with high growth potential. Consequently, "Buying low means actively pursuing ideas that are unknown or out of favour but that have growth potential. Selling high involves moving on to new projects when an idea or product becomes valued and yields a significant return" [44]. Buying into unproven novel ideas is essentially what creative individuals, innovators and entrepreneurs do by defying conformity pressures and investing their efforts, energy and financial resources into ideas with unproven value or acceptance [12]. Creative individuals persist despite this resistance and, ultimately, sell high, moving on to the next new or unpopular idea. The investment theory of creativity contends that there are six resources for creativity: intelligence, knowledge, intellectual styles, personality, motivation, and environment. The first five resources are person-centred, whereas the final one is context-centred. This theory leads to the issue of ideation or idea generation for business growth. In this context, it is appropriate to contend that to seek ideas is cheaper and wiser especially when the entrepreneur has become habituated in idea generation. Such an entrepreneur who has invested in seeking ideas, arrives at creative ideas cheaply either individually, from customers or among their employees without necessarily paying for them. These creative ideas are exploited thereafter for the intentions of the entrepreneur which brings profit to the business and ultimately leads to business growth.

### 1.3.2 An overview of idea generation

The ability to generate ideas presents the possibility of coming up with ideas tagged creative and, eventually, innovative. This is true for anybody seeking to live a more meaningful and productive life. The capability to generate ideas becomes even more relevant for an entrepreneur to grow their business, especially in a highly competitive business environment. Nevertheless, there is a need to distinguish between ideas that will be termed creative and those that may not qualify. Puccio, Cabra and Schwagler [13] posit that: "If creativity is a process that leads to original and valuable propositions, then our conception of creative thinking needs to be broadened to encompass a fuller and more complete process" (p.47). They contend that idea generation is a quarter of the creative process and that it is crucial to possess knowledge about the context or situation within which a person wants to produce a creative outcome before idea generation. To be effective, therefore, ideation must respond to some challenge. For Dawson and Andriopoulos [16], increasing the number of generated ideas increases the possibility of coming up with a worthy idea that would be pursued. The objective of seeking quantity is to free the mind from prejudiced beliefs, knowledge or ideas. It suffices to mention that there are several models developed to aid individuals and groups in ideation.

### 1.4 Individual Ideation

Succeeding in a competitive business environment requires that founders and operators be energetic, internally motivated and passion-driven. High-quality ideas and the people who generate them are critical to the success of any organisation. Thus, entrepreneurs fall or rise by their capacity to create ideas. Creativity comes in several guises and may not necessarily concern the invention of totally new services and products but may reconfigure resources and other inputs to develop, modify or customise existing commercial products or services for better use. An essential skill for entrepreneurs is to do old things in new ways, thereby satisfying their customers. An entrepreneur's failure or success depends on the difference between having a good idea and a bad one. Scholars argue that the capability for developing creative and high-quality ideas depends on the ability to effectively recombine various pieces of knowledge [2]. Idea generation is the first critical step in the journey

of ideas, and it is a central function in any entrepreneurial venture [45]. During this stage, a creative or innovator is tasked with generating numerous ideas. One or a few are eventually considered for implementation. A growing body of literature suggests that two mechanisms play a critical role at this stage. Perry-Smith and Mannucci [45] summarised these as access to non-redundant knowledge and the cognitive flexibility to recombine disparate knowledge into new associations.

The success or otherwise of idea generation in innovation usually depends on the best opportunities identified. Most innovation organisations would prefer 20 bad ideas and one outstanding idea to 21 merely good ideas because good is the enemy of great. In the world of innovation, the extremes matter, not the average or the norm [46,47]. When generating ideas, an entrepreneur makes choices by intention or default about its creative problem solving capacity. There are two commonly suggested organisational forms for idea generation. The first involves creating and evaluating ideas by individuals working together as a team at the same time and space. The team approach is widely used in organisations [48]. Despite its wide usage, hundreds of experimental studies have criticised team processes as relatively ineffective [49,50]. The second approach concerns individuals working independently for some fraction of the allotted time and then work together. Such a hybrid process, also known as the nominal group technique, has been suggested and studied to combine the merits of individual and team approaches effectively [51,52,53]. These researches find that the hybrid approach leads to more ideas and higher satisfaction than the participants' process.

#### 1.4.1 Customer-based ideation

A pearl of popular wisdom asserts that: The customer is king! Communicating with customers in the form of feedback will allow entrepreneurs to evaluate how their products and services meet customers' expectations and vice versa. It will facilitate the cross-fertilisation of ideas and increase the possibility of innovation because the interaction will lead to more and better ideas from where creative and innovative outcomes are produced [16]. Businesses that pursue this route to idea generation encourage their employees to socially interact with outsiders by visiting and observing how their clients use their products or how their competitors' products fare with

customers. They visit retail outlets or exhibitions to gather information on the latest trends in different industries. These interactions with customers provide opportunities for creativity and innovation [16]. Any organisation that desires to succeed and endure must tap into understanding their customers, products and services that appeal to them and how they want them, thereby building a product or service around it. Researchers in product development agree that one of the critical considerations in new product development is determining clients' needs and incorporating them into the new product design [54,55,56]. Technology-driven firms have organisational processes and infrastructures that facilitate the capture of customer requirement information and its integration into the new product's design. However, most of these processes and infrastructures are designed for products in the latter stages of their lifecycle or are incremental and continuous innovations [57]. The innovation model of Design Thinking takes care of this customer-centred innovation.

### 1.5 Group Ideation

As individuals generate ideas, groups also ideate. Some of these ideas become creative and innovative and are used to grow and succeed in business ventures. However, Dawson and Andriopoulos [16], argue that for group ideation to work in any business, there must be a culture that supports the free sharing of ideas by all employees, whether at staff meetings or through other means. They assert that: "The components of organisational culture (shared values, beliefs and behavioural norms) are key in promoting the generation and implementation of novel and useful ideas" (p. 357). Employees learn both formally and informally what behaviours are accepted or valued. These values include creative behaviour as exemplified in idea generation. If the business' management practices and structure reflect a tolerance for ideas, such a value system inspires everybody to develop novel and valuable products [58]. If not, the system will stifle creativity and innovation. The majority of the work done in an organisation involves knowledge work, idea or information acquisition, exchange or application of information or knowledge [59]. These activities constitute an essential part of interaction in diverse contexts such as meetings, boardroom, lounge, intellectual workgroups or teams [60]. These idea exchanges give rise to the development of new products and services or proffer new solutions.

Nevertheless, businesses encounter difficulties in effectively communicating ideas among individuals and groups. A very successful model for group ideation for creativity and innovation is Brainstorming. This model was developed by Osborn Alex Osborn, an advertisement expert, to allow all employees at staff meetings to contribute their ideas to the progress of their business [16]. This model encourages group members to generate as many ideas as possible without judging their ideas' quality. They are also encouraged to build on other people's ideas. Eventually, many ideas are generated, and since all these ideas cannot be used, they are screened, and the best of these ideas used. "It is better for participants to be trained for a brainstorming session" [61].

### 1.6 Business Growth

Growth is a critical measure of the success of any business. It is common knowledge that growth is a significant facilitator of wealth, employment and economic development for Small and Medium Scale Enterprises (SMEs) globally. The implication is that when SMEs grow, they potentially become giant corporations and consequently add value to the economies of their respective countries through wealth and employment creation. Unfortunately, not all SMEs desire growth. [62] established that SME owners are more interested and troubled about their survival than growth.

Further, [63] observed that achieving growth is challenging and requires determination. If entrepreneurs do not mean to grow their businesses, their businesses will not likely grow, and the growth intention will likely not materialize. The implication is that those who desire growth for their businesses will do all in their power to grow them, while those unmotivated to grow theirs will not bother. Furthermore, growing one's business is deliberate. However, studies depict that many SMEs do not want growth or willingly avoid growth, prompting the concern about what occurs to the businessperson's growth intentions consequent to the start of a business [64].

Levie [63] revealed that accomplishing growth is very difficult and entails effort. Further, and if entrepreneurs do not mean to grow their businesses, their businesses will not likely grow, and the growth intention will less likely occur. They classified the factors that affect SME growth and growth intention into individual,

business and environmental characteristics. In the same token, investors, business employees, customers and suppliers are affected by the entrepreneur's ability to facilitate business growth. Understanding the determinants of business growth, which may vary over time, will have significant consequences for anyone interested in any growing business. As mentioned earlier, when SMEs grow, the economies of nations grow. Therefore, governments and their agents take business growth seriously because of the value they add to the growth and development of their respective economies and nations.

### 1.6.1 Business growth and idea generation

Tantau [65] studied the influence of idea generation on business growth in the Romanian banking industry by using the number of ongoing projects as measure of business growth. They found that the number of projects depended not only on the group of methods but also on each type of method belonging to each group. They concluded that the group methods were the most effective because they accounted for the biggest number of projects. Business incubators are products of ideation. They create value by merging the entrepreneurial spirit of start-ups with the assets that are usually available to new businesses. This combination adds to entrepreneurship development. Working on factors that contribute to entrepreneurial development in Pakistan, [66] found that business incubators play an effective mediating role in providing capital support, networking services, and training programs to individuals and entrepreneurs engendering entrepreneurship development. This study underscores the importance of ideation for business growth even if warehoused in business incubators. One of the implications of this is that the skill of creativity and innovation will assist entrepreneurs to cultivate tactical idea generation skills for the sustenance of their businesses in the highly competitive business environment. [67] in an experimental study in Portugal, to explore how the generation of an idea and the possibility of another investor adopting a rejected investment opportunity, affect the decisions of innovators and entrepreneurs. They found that people who generate business ideas are biased in evaluating the economic potentials of ideas, whether theirs or someone else's. However, they are overoptimistic about the value of their own ideas and more likely to invest in them. Surprisingly, they found that the threat that another investor

can appropriate a declined investment opportunity increases willingness to invest. This seems to support the investment theory which encourages buying cheap and selling big. This means that the sample found it cheap to buy other people's cheap ideas to make gains out of them later. This practice will definitely contribute to business growth.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Sampling

The study employed a self-reporting questionnaire that was first trial- tested on a sample of 30 randomly selected entrepreneurs in a similar population in Yaba, Lagos State. The questionnaire was structured to elicit information on how individual ideation, corporate ideation and customer-centred ideation determine business growth. The researchers validated the instrument and got a reliability coefficients of the subsets as shown in Table 1. Eventually, the population for the study comprised entrepreneurs in Ibadan North Local Government of Oyo State, Nigeria. The sample size was determined using the Epi-Info sample size calculator. The minimum sample size is 132, increased to 150 to accommodate non-responses and cross-tabulation. After that, industries engaged in creative activities were purposively selected in Ibadan North Local Government of Oyo State, Nigeria. Seven industries were selected (fashion, photography, accessories, beauty, graphic designers, interior designer, cake and confectionary). Two hundred questionnaires were randomly administered to entrepreneurs. The questionnaires were administered to owner-managers who were actively involved in the daily business operations. Owner managers were used because the researchers believed their perceptual measures could validly establish the sources of idea generation that affect the business growth of SMEs. In all, one hundred and ninety-five (195) questionnaires were returned, 71 males (36%) and 124 females (64%). The age range is as follows: 20-25 years (14), 26-30 years (69), 31-35 years (52), 41-45 years (18), 46-50 years (4) and 51 years and above (3).

### 2.2 Instrumentation

The researchers designed a questionnaire with a six-point modified rating scale: Strongly Agree (S.A.); Agree (A); Partially Agree (P.A.); Partially Disagree (P.D.); Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (S.D.). [68] submits that the modified

scale type is a rating technique used widely to measure personal characteristics and reflect the extreme positions on a continuum, enabling the respondents to indicate their opinion on a structured statement freely. The instrument measured individual ideation, corporate ideation, customer-centred ideation and business growth. The reliability analysis results are presented in Table 1.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Test of Hypotheses

H<sub>01</sub>: Individual ideation has no significant relationship with the growth of a business.

Table 2 presents information on entrepreneurs' responses to individual ideation. Their responses indicate that majority of the entrepreneurs agree that a business owner should seek for various ways to generate ideas for the growth of their business. These diverse ways provide numerous sources of ideas that will eventually contribute to the growth of their business. Table 2.1 presents information on entrepreneurs' responses on the relationship between individual ideation and business growth: "The business has experienced growth in the last six months due to new ideas" (Strongly Agreed=142(72.8%), Agreed=43(22.0%), Disagreed =5(2.6%), Strongly Disagreed=5(2.6%), Undecided=0(0%). The inference from the above is that individual ideation of entrepreneurs in Ibadan North Local Government of Oyo State, Nigeria, lead to their business growth. This result corroborates the position of Drucker [33], who argued that successful entrepreneurs deliberately search for innovative opportunities instead of waiting for opportunities to come to them. Searching for ideas or opportunities that will lead to innovation is also a function of the knowledge that exposure to different ideation forms will assist entrepreneurs who need to grow their businesses within a highly competitive Nigerian and global economies. Data analysis shows that the entrepreneurs individually engage in ideation. It, therefore, means that as entrepreneurs engage in ideation and utilise novel or creative ideas, they will record more growth in their businesses. Also, an increase in Individual Ideation will lead to an increase in the growth of business enterprises. Further, Table 2.2 shows a significant relationship between individual ideation and business growth in Ibadan ( $r = .454$ ,  $n = 195$ ,  $p (.0001) < .05$ ). Hence, individual ideation enhances business growth in the study. The hypothesis H<sub>01</sub> is thus rejected.

H<sub>02</sub>: Corporate Ideation Has no Significant Relationship with Growth of Business.

Table 3 presents information on entrepreneurs' responses to corporate ideation. Their responses reveal that majority agree that ideas for business growth are encouraged from their staff. This practice indicates that there is a culture of corporate ideation among majority of the businesses sampled. Table 3.2 shows that there is a significant relationship between corporate ideation and growth of business enterprise in Ibadan ( $r = .595$ ,  $n = 195$ ,  $p (.0001) < .05$ ). Hence, corporate ideation enhanced the growth of business enterprise in the study. The hypothesis H<sub>02</sub> is rejected. Further, it means that when corporate organisations engage in ideation and utilise value-oriented ideas, they will experience more business growth. This finding corroborates Kumbhar's [61] study, which revealed that corporate ideation has a substantial impact on business growth and not just on the business' growth but also on its idea-generating and problem solving processes. Thus every generated idea is recorded and considered a solution to a problem by the enterprise. Further, [69] found that it was significant for managers to offer an environment and work practice that would inspire employees to develop new ideas that would be practicable.

H<sub>03</sub>: Customer-Centred Ideation Has no Significant Relationship with Growth of Business.

Table 4 presents information on entrepreneurs' responses on corporate ideation. Their responses are as follows: "Customers rarely help in idea generation" Strongly Agreed=82(42.0%), Agreed=73(37.4%), Disagreed=31(15.9%), Strongly Disagreed=8(4.1%), Undecided=1 (0.5%); "Satisfying a customer's need doesn't help generate ideas" Strongly Agreed=78(40.0%), Agreed=78(40.0%), Disagreed= 30(15.3%), Strongly Disagreed=9(4.6%), Undecided=0 (0%); "Paying attention to the needs of a customer usually leads to new product" Strongly Agreed=105(53.5%), Agreed= 71(36.4%), Disagreed=8(4.1%), Strongly Disagreed =10(5.1%), Undecided=1 (0.5%); "Consumers' need informs me of the next product to create" Strongly Agreed=95(48.7%), Agreed=84(43.1%), Disagreed=10(5.1%), Strongly Disagreed=6(3.1%), Undecided=0 (0%); "Customer's readiness for feedback helps in generating ideas." Strongly Agreed=101(51.7%), Agreed=83(42.5%), Disagreed=9(4.6%), Strongly



**Table 1. Instrument validity and reliability**

Sub Scale	No of Items	Mean	SD	(r <sup>KK</sup> )
Individual Ideation	5	9.23	1.43	0.79
Corporate Ideation	5	13.56	1.76	0.81
Customer- centred ideation	5	12.45	1.64	0.87
Business growth	5	11.01	1.23	0.91

*Cronbach's Alpha (r<sup>KK</sup>) Coefficient reliability analysis results*

**Table 2. Individual ideation for business growth**

Individual Idea generation		SA	A	D	SD	U
1.	There is a need for a business owner to look for ideas to grow their business	102 52.3%	62 31.8%	21 10.7%	9 4.6%	1 0.5%
2.	For the progress of a business, the owner needs to produce ideas in a conducive environment	99 50.7%	78 40.0%	11 5.6%	7 3.6%	0 0%
3.	Shopping helps individuals generate ideas	85 43.6%	81 41.5%	19 9.7%	10 5.1%	0 0%
4.	Reading books on idea generation helps the creative skill of a business owner	113 57.9%	67 34.3%	10 5.1%	5 2.6%	0 0%
5.	A business owner should deliberately encourage and promote ideas for her business growth	79 40.5%	89 45.6%	7 3.6%	20 10.2%	0 0%

**Table 2.1. Individual Ideation and Business Growth**

Business Performance and Growth	SA	A	D	SD	U
The business has experienced growth in the last six months due to new ideas	14272.8%	4322.0%	52.6%	52.6%	00%

**Table 2.2. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the relationship between individual ideation and growth of business enterprise in Ibadan**

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	p-value	Remarks
Individual ideation Growth business enterprise			195	.454*	.0001	Sig.

*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)*

**Table 3. Corporate ideation**

<b>Corporate Idea Generation</b>		<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>U</b>
1	Openness to co-worker's suggestion aids idea generation	100 51.2%	81 41.0%	9 5.1%	5 2.6%	0 0%
2.	Discussing ideas with co-workers is a waste of time	74 37.9%	101 51.75	17 8.7%	3 1.5%	00%
3.	Multiple ideas are generated in groups	91 46.6%	82 42.0%	11 5.6%	10 5.1%	1 0.5%
4.	Co-workers rarely come up with a good idea when together	67 34.3%	96 49.2%	22 11.2%	9 4.6%	1 0.5%
5.	Staff meeting creates room for idea generation	96 49.2%	83 42.5%	8 4.1%	8 4.1%	00%

**Table 3.1. Corporate Ideation and Business Growth**

Ideas from staff have immensely helped the growth of the business	86 44.1%	93 47.6%	11 5.6%	5 2.6%	00%
The business performance has been encouraging with group idea generation	71 36.4%	81 41.5%	33 16.9%	10 5.1%	00%

**Table 3.2. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) Showing the Relationship Between Corporate Ideation and Business Growth in Ibadan North Local Government**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Dev.</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>p-value</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Corporate ideation Growth business enterprise			195	.595*	.0001	Sig.

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Table 4. Customer-centred Ideation for Business Growth in Ibadan North Local Government**

<b>Customer Centred Ideation</b>		<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>U</b>
1	Customers rarely help in idea generation	82 42.0%	73 37.4%	31 15.9%	8 4.1%	1 0.5%
2.	Satisfying a customer's need doesn't help generate ideas	78 43.0%	78 40.0%	30 15.3%	9 4.6%	0 0%
3.	Paying attention to the needs of a customer usually leads to new products	105 53.8%	71 36.4%	84.1%	105.1%	10.5%
4.	Consumers need to inform me of the next product to create	95 48.7%	84 43.1%	105.1%	63.1%	00%
5.	The customer's readiness for feedback helps in generating ideas.	101 51.7%	83 42.5%	94.6%	84.1%	10.5%

**Table 4.1. Customer centred ideation and business growth**

1.	Creating a product based on customers need has helped in the growth of the business	63 32.3%	102 52.3%	24 12.3%	6 3.1%	0 0%
2.	Reliance on customer feedback has impacted positively on my business	96 49.2%	79 40.5%	16 8.2%	3 1.5%	1 0.5%

**Table 4.2. Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) showing the relationship between Customer-Centred Ideation and Business Growth in Ibadan North Local Government**

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	N	R	p-value	Remarks
Customer-centred ideation Growth business enterprise			195	.591*	.0001	Sig.

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Disagreed=8(4.1%), Undecided=1 (0.5%); Table 4.1 presents information on entrepreneurs' responses on corporate ideation and business growth. They responded thus: "Creating a product based on customers need has helped in the growth of the business" Strongly Agreed = 63(32.3%), Agreed = 102(52.3%), Disagreed = 24(12.3%), Strongly Disagreed = 6(3.1%), Undecided = 0 (0%); "Reliance on customer feedback has impacted positively on my business" Strongly Agreed=96(49.2%), Agreed = 79(40.5%), Disagreed = 16(8.2%), Strongly Disagreed=3(1.5%), Undecided=1 (0.5%). Table 4.2 shows that there is a significant relationship between customer-centred ideation and growth of business enterprise in Ibadan ( $r = .591$ ,  $n = 195$ ,  $p (.0001) < .05$ ). Hence, customer-centred ideation enhanced growth business enterprise in the study. Thus, the hypothesis  $H_{03}$  is rejected. Furthermore, the strong relationship attests to research findings that customers possess the answer to business growth through better decision making [70] and competitive advantage [71]. Besides, if entrepreneurs bring to birth the ideas originating from customers, these customers will patronise such entrepreneurs and this will in turn lead to increased patronage and business growth.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study documents the vital role of ideation in the success and continuous sustenance of business ventures. However, these ideas must be creative to impact these businesses positively, thereby leading to innovative outcomes for small and medium scale entrepreneurs. Idea generation must be incorporated into entrepreneurial practices in Nigeria. Efforts must be channelled towards mustering tolerance for ideation on the part of business owners in Nigeria from their employees and customers. A deliberate culture of seeking ideas that will ultimately generate creative and innovative solutions to entrepreneurial challenges must be developed. If Nigerian entrepreneurs foster such a culture, they will enjoy the possibility of responding creatively and innovatively to the unstable and highly competitive Nigerian business climate. Moreover, the government should encourage ideation for business growth by providing incentives for entrepreneurs that come up with creative and innovative solutions for business growth, while such ideas should become templates for small and medium scale enterprises in the country. Such training will inculcate the need to also

develop growth intentions in the entrepreneurs which will manifest in their skills to deliberately pursue creative ideas that will grow their businesses. Policy makers must therefore formulate policies that will foster ideation among entrepreneurs. The study revealed that not all entrepreneurs are motivated to pursue growth of their businesses. Government can change the narrative by providing incentives such as tax rebates, low interest loans, infrastructures and expertise to entrepreneurs interested in the growth of their ventures. This is because business growth of SMEs will add value to the economy of Nigeria and when there is growth, jobs and wealth will be created in an already depressed economy.

#### 5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This work is limited due to sample size and the period of data collection due to the global lockdown occasioned by the covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the improvement and gradual return to normal should inspire further research with larger samples using diverse analysis. Further, there is no indication of how ideas were evaluated and selected by the entrepreneurs. Optimal solutions which lead to creative outcomes are only possible through idea selection and evaluation [72].

#### CONSENT

As per international standard or university standard, respondents' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

#### COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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