

Exploring the Traits of Entrepreneurs in Artisanal Building Materials Sector: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This study explored the traits of entrepreneurs in the Nigerian artisanal building materials sector using extant literature review approach. The review establishes that entrepreneurs in the artisanal building materials sector are defined by need for achievement, desire for responsibility, preference for moderate risks, perception of probability of success, stimulation by feedback, energetic activity, future orientation, skill in organizing, and attitude toward making money to improve the society. Hence the study concluded that such traits are capable of enhancing Artisanal entrepreneurs success.

Keywords: Artisanal, Building Material, Focused group, Need for achievement

Introduction

The artisanal building materials sector plays a crucial role in the global construction industry, providing essential materials such as blocks, bricks, tiles, interlocking and stones. This sector is characterized by small-scale, labor-intensive production methods that often rely on traditional techniques and local resources. In many developing countries, the artisanal building materials sector is a significant source of employment and income for millions of people. It contributes to the local economy by creating jobs, supporting small businesses and promoting the use of locally available materials. However, the sector also faces numerous challenges, including limited access to modern technology, inadequate infrastructure and regulatory constraints (Gambo, 2023).

In Nigeria, the artisanal building materials sector is a vital component of the construction industry, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas (Osuizugbo & Ojelabi, 2020). The sector provides affordable building materials to meet the growing demand for housing and infrastructure development. Nigerian artisans are known for their craftsmanship and ability to produce high-quality materials using locally sourced raw materials. Despite its importance, the sector is often overlooked in policy discussions and lacks adequate support from the government and financial institutions. This has resulted in a fragmented industry with limited capacity for growth and innovation.

Entrepreneurs in Nigeria's artisanal building materials sector exhibit several key traits that contribute to their success. These traits include resilience, resourcefulness, and a strong work ethic. Nigerian entrepreneurs are adept at navigating the challenges of the informal economy, such as limited access to credit, fluctuating demand, and competition from larger, more established firms. They are also skilled at leveraging their social networks to secure resources, market their products, and expand their businesses (Imran et al., 2019). Additionally, many entrepreneurs in this sector possess a deep understanding of local market dynamics and consumer preferences, which enables them to tailor their products to meet the specific needs of their customers.

Artisanal firms are typically characterized by having limited human and financial resources (Jimenez et al., 2021), informal strategies, flexible structures, which reduce their resilience and put them at risk from increased competition. Thus, companies must maintain a competitive advantage (Kotler and Keller, 2009). Pressure from competition compels the entrepreneur to innovate (Zohar and Al-Tabbaa, 2020). Competitive advantage focuses on an organisation's long-term survival, which is dependent on the implementation of appropriate strategies and better plans. An organisation's core goal is to achieve peak performance (Kotler et al., 1998).

Furthermore, while drawing a nexus between poverty and housing crisis in Nigeria, Abegunde (2024), observes that multi-dimensional poverty, unemployment and high construction cost, amongst other factors, are responsible for the housing deficit and unavailability of affordable housing in Nigeria. The housing deficit as at 2022 stood at 28 million housing units. Thus, addressing poverty and unemployment through the production of artisanal building materials could be one the avenues to address housing deficit in Nigeria. The housing sub-sector is part of the construction industry which contributes 3% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which is about \$10billion (Afolabi et al, 2016). The Nigerian construction industry has a multiplier effect on the Nigerian economy (Bala, 2021). The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2021) expatiates on this assertion. According to the Bureau, the Nigeria construction industry contributed 10.17% to Nigeria nominal GDP in the first quarter of 2021, higher than the 7.94% it contributed a year earlier and the 8.40% contributed in the fourth quarter of 2020 (Ihedigbo & Jimoh, 2022).

The problem facing the artisanal building materials sector in Nigeria is multifaceted. In practice, artisans often struggle with limited access to modern technology and equipment, which hampers their productivity and ability to compete with larger firms. The lack of formal training and education opportunities further exacerbates this issue, as many artisans rely on traditional knowledge and skills passed down through generations (Okokpujie et al., 2020). In the literature, scholars have highlighted the need for greater support and investment in the sector to enhance its capacity for innovation and growth (Unegbu et al., 2022). However,

there is a lack of comprehensive studies that examine the specific challenges faced by these entrepreneurs as a result of lacking certain entrepreneurial traits.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to inform policy and practice in the artisanal building materials sector in Nigeria. By exploring the traits of entrepreneurs and how it can be developed to reduce the challenges they face, this research can provide valuable insights for policymakers, development practitioners, and financial institutions. Policymakers can use the findings to design targeted interventions that address the specific needs of the sector, such as improving access to credit, providing technical training and promoting the use of modern technology. Development practitioners can leverage the insights to develop programmes that support the growth and sustainability of artisanal businesses, while financial institutions can tailor their products and services to better meet the needs of entrepreneurs in this sector. Ultimately, this study aims to contribute to the economic development of Nigeria by enhancing the capacity and competitiveness of the artisanal building materials sector.

Based on the identified issues, this study explored the traits of entrepreneurs in the artisanal building materials sector in Nigeria.

Literature Review

Artisanal Building Materials

Artisanal building materials refer to construction materials that are crafted using traditional methods and techniques, often by skilled artisans (Walter et al., 2017). These materials are typically produced on a small scale, using locally sourced raw materials and sustainable practices. The concept of artisanal building materials has gained renewed interest in recent years, as architects, builders, and homeowners seek to incorporate sustainable and culturally significant elements into their projects. The use of artisanal building materials not only supports local economies and preserves traditional craftsmanship but also promotes environmental sustainability by reducing the carbon footprint associated with construction (Unegbu et al., 2022).

Historically, artisanal building materials have been an integral part of construction practices in various cultures around the world (Aniekwu, 1995). In many regions, traditional building techniques and materials have been passed down through generations, reflecting the unique cultural heritage and environmental conditions of each area. For example, adobe bricks, made from a mixture of clay, sand, and straw, have been used for centuries in arid regions such as the Middle East and North Africa. Similarly, timber framing and thatch roofing have been common in many parts of Europe and Asia. These materials and techniques have stood the test of time, providing durable and resilient structures that are well-suited to their local environments (Iheme et al., 2011).

In recent years, there has been a growing recognition of the value of artisanal building materials in modern construction (Shehu & Wang, 2020). As concerns about climate change

and environmental degradation have intensified, the construction industry has increasingly turned to sustainable practices and materials. Artisanal building materials, with their low environmental impact and emphasis on local sourcing, offer a viable alternative to mass-produced, industrial materials. For example, rammed earth, a traditional building technique that involves compacting layers of soil to create solid walls, has seen a resurgence in popularity due to its thermal efficiency and minimal environmental footprint. Similarly, natural plasters and paints, made from ingredients such as lime, clay, and plant-based pigments, are being used as eco-friendly alternatives to synthetic coatings.

The use of artisanal building materials also has significant social and economic benefits (Yıldız et al., 2020). By supporting local artisans and craftspeople, these materials help to preserve traditional skills and knowledge that might otherwise be lost. This, in turn, contributes to the cultural richness and diversity of communities. Additionally, the production of artisanal building materials often involves small-scale, community-based enterprises, which can provide employment opportunities and stimulate local economies. In many cases, these materials are also more affordable than their industrial counterparts, making them accessible to a wider range of people (Gao et al., 2019).

Despite the many advantages of artisanal building materials, there are also challenges associated with their use. One of the main obstacles is the perception that traditional materials and techniques are outdated or inferior to modern, industrial alternatives. This can make it difficult to gain acceptance and support for projects that incorporate artisanal materials. Additionally, the small-scale production of these materials can result in limited availability and higher costs, particularly in regions where traditional building practices have declined. To address these challenges, it is important to raise awareness about the benefits of artisanal building materials and to promote policies and initiatives that support their use (Iheme et al., 2011).

The concept of artisanal building materials encompasses a wide range of traditional construction materials and techniques that are crafted by skilled artisans using sustainable practices (Sacks et al., 2020). These materials offer numerous environmental, social, and economic benefits, making them a valuable addition to modern construction practices. By preserving traditional craftsmanship, supporting local economies, and promoting sustainability, artisanal building materials contribute to the creation of resilient and culturally significant built environments. As the construction industry continues to evolve, the integration of artisanal building materials can play a key role in shaping a more sustainable and inclusive future (Xie et al., 2022).

Entrepreneurial Traits

Entrepreneurial traits refer to the characteristics and qualities that are commonly found in successful entrepreneurs (Altınay et al., 2022). These traits enable individuals to identify opportunities, take risks and innovate, ultimately leading to the creation and growth of new businesses. The concept of entrepreneurial traits has been widely studied and discussed in the

fields of business, psychology, and economics, as researchers seek to understand what makes entrepreneurs successful and how these traits can be cultivated (Thai & Mai, 2023).

Historically, the study of entrepreneurial traits can be traced back to the early 20th century, when scholars began to explore the psychological and behavioral aspects of entrepreneurship. One of the earliest and most influential theories was proposed by Joseph Schumpeter, who emphasized the role of innovation and creativity in entrepreneurship. Schumpeter argued that entrepreneurs are individuals who drive economic development by introducing new products, processes, and business models (Mamun et al., 2021). This focus on innovation and creativity has remained a central theme in the study of entrepreneurial traits.

In the mid-20th century, researchers began to identify specific traits that are commonly associated with successful entrepreneurs (Charehzehi et al., 2017). One of the most widely recognized traits is risk-taking propensity. Entrepreneurs are often willing to take calculated risks in pursuit of new opportunities, even when the outcome is uncertain. This willingness to embrace risk is seen as a key factor in their ability to innovate and create value. Another important trait is self-confidence (Olowa et al., 2020). Successful entrepreneurs typically have a strong belief in their abilities and are confident in their capacity to achieve their goals. This self-confidence enables them to persevere in the face of challenges and setbacks.

Other traits that have been identified as important for entrepreneurial success include proactivity, resilience, and adaptability (Falahat et al., 2021). Proactive individuals are able to anticipate and act on opportunities before they become apparent to others. Resilience refers to the ability to bounce back from failures and setbacks, which is crucial in the often unpredictable world of entrepreneurship. Adaptability is the capacity to adjust to changing circumstances and pivot when necessary, allowing entrepreneurs to navigate the dynamic business environment (Sarwoko & Nurfarida, 2021).

In recent years, the concept of entrepreneurial traits has been expanded to include social and emotional intelligence (Hu et al., 2022). Social intelligence involves the ability to build and maintain relationships, communicate effectively, and navigate social networks. Emotional intelligence refers to the ability to understand and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. These skills are increasingly recognized as important for entrepreneurial success, as they enable entrepreneurs to build strong teams, negotiate effectively, and create a positive organizational culture (Taleb et al., 2023).

Current views on entrepreneurial traits emphasize the importance of a holistic approach that considers both individual characteristics and the broader context in which entrepreneurship occurs. While certain traits may predispose individuals to entrepreneurial success, environmental factors such as access to resources, social networks, and supportive policies also play a critical role. Additionally, there is growing recognition that entrepreneurial traits can be developed and nurtured through education, training, and experience. Programs that focus on building skills such as creativity, problem-solving, and leadership can help

individuals cultivate the traits needed for entrepreneurial success (Jimoh, 2022; Rovelli & Butticè, 2020).

Entrepreneurial traits encompass a wide range of characteristics and qualities that are commonly found in successful entrepreneurs (Kumar et al., 2023). These traits include risk-taking propensity, self-confidence, proactivity, resilience, adaptability, social intelligence, and emotional intelligence. While certain traits may predispose individuals to entrepreneurial success, environmental factors and the ability to develop these traits through education and experience are also important (Imran et al., 2019). By understanding and cultivating entrepreneurial traits, individuals and organizations can enhance their capacity for innovation, value creation, and business growth.

Theoretical Assumptions

System theory: According to Deakins and Freel (2009) observe that “many of these entrepreneurial characteristics are management skills and they emphasize that in practice, many entrepreneurial characteristics are those associated with any successful manager. This implies that the producers of the artisanal materials do not operate in a vacuum; they operate in system. The enterprises are part of the external environment: the construction industry, the economic system and the society generally. The artisanal entrepreneur receives inputs, transforms them, and sends the outputs to the environment. Thus, in line with Boody (2005) and Stoner et al. (2009), entrepreneurship will be considered based on the systems approach to management. Additionally, the great person theory predicated on the intuitive ability of the entrepreneur opines that entrepreneurs are born not made just like the belief by some that leaders are borne not made. It is assumed that without this trait the person will be like any other mortal. These are people willing to take risks to change their lives for the better. These people are entrepreneurial because they take advantage of the opportunities to change their lives. The true entrepreneur is the person who is constantly changing and growing. Having positive attitude and healthy self-image are essential for all entrepreneurs. Examples of these are Aliko Dangote and Bill Gates of Microsoft. In the built environment industry, a good example is Donald Trump, the President United States, as an entrepreneur who always thinks big and “won’t take no for an answer”. “Great Persons” believe most people who are not entrepreneurial think small because they are afraid of success, afraid of making decisions, and afraid of winning. Thus, according to Trump (1999), “this gives people like me a great advantage”.

McClelland (1961 cited in Emmanuel, 2015) opines that there are traits, motives and personalities that are major factors that instill the entrepreneurial spirit in the producers of artisanal building materials. Need for achievement, desire for responsibility, perception of probability of success were the inner urge or force that makes the artisanal entrepreneurs to change their status or position. In addition, the social context plays a role in line with the

works of Kilby (1968) and Reynolds (1991) cited in Emmanuel, (2015). To the sociologist, a person's environment is a major motivating factor for entrepreneurship and that ideas, traits and motives are not enough for entrepreneurship to manifest. Social networks can act as a push factor in the social context of entrepreneurship. In support of this, the work of Kilby (1968) becomes relevant as entrepreneurship stems from adaptation and to be an entrepreneur, a person must be able to adapt to their environment. He contends further that adaptation is the factor for environmental analysis which assists in identifying a business opportunity, a gap, problem or need in an environment. Without adaptation, no matter how sound and profitable an idea is it might not be turned into reality.

Change models for artisanal entrepreneurs

It is worthy of mention that organisations, like artisanal entrepreneurs, need to continually design and implement changes. These are new methods and technologies to improve performance and ensure operational excellence (Errida and Lofti, 2021). Producers of artisanal materials have two broad categories of change models to adopt as the need arises: processual and descriptive (Errida and Lofti, 2021). A processual model determines the steps for conducting and managing change E.g. Lewin's three Stage Model of change and Kotter's eight Step Model. A descriptive model specifies the main variables and factors that affect organizational performance and organizational change success

Processual models

Lewin's three-stage model is considered the theoretical foundation of planned change. This model entails three fundamental steps: unfreezing, transition and refreezing. "Unfreezing" consists of destabilizing the status quo by creating the need and the buy-in for change and preparing for the upcoming change. "Transition" involves moving to the desired future state. "Refreezing" takes place after the implementation of the change, resulting in a new culture, behaviours and practices (Errida and Lofti, 2021). Artisanal entrepreneurs could leverage on this model when planning for change. Kotter's hypothesis is the second notable change management processual model. There are eight steps to ensure a successful change process:

- i. Establish a sense of urgency about the need to achieve a change;
- ii. Create a guiding coalition;
- iii. Develop a vision and strategy;
- iv. Communicate the change vision;
- v. Empower broad-based action;
- vi. Generate short-term wins;
- vii. Consolidate gains and produce more change;
- viii. Anchor new approaches in the corporate culture

Source: (Errida and Lofti, 2021).

Kotters model can come in handy for artisanal entrepreneurs if there is a need to change due internal or environmental upheavals.

Strategies to Improve Entrepreneurial Skills

Characteristics are in-born. However, it is believed that people can go for training so as to develop their management skills with particular reference to planning, organizing and leading in their enterprises. Entrepreneurs can develop the following skills: commitment to see things through, networking capacity, strategic thinking, negotiation capacity, selling/persuasive capacity, keeping abreast of changes across the whole of the business, maintaining a top level view, paying attention to details, incremental risk-taking, identifying the key people to be influenced in any development, building the know-how and where to look for answers, and constantly getting feedback from customers and other stakeholders.

Abdullajanovich & Halimjonogli (2023) propose means to increase the efficiency of construction materials production enterprises by improving the decision-making process. This can be achieved with modern information technologies. Relevant, accurate and timely information is a pre-requisite for making high-quality management decisions. There are tasks necessary to achieve maximum value addition in construction materials production enterprises. Broadly, this entails the formulation of enterprise development strategies and precise determination of the stages of its implementation. Specifically, artisanal entrepreneurs (*artisanapreneurs*) can apply innovative technologies that ensure increase in production and labour efficiency as well as guaranteeing high quality products and environmental control.

In the process of efficiency management, the entrepreneurs should consider a number of issues:

- i. Determination of the mission of the artisanal entrepreneurs;
- ii. Assessment of management activity retrospectively;

Taking into account the multi-dimensional nature of management and forming the expected results of the activity.

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the review of extant literature the study concluded that the artisanal entrepreneurs are motivated by their need for achievement as well as the social context which is a force that inspired the artisanal entrepreneurs to generate ideas and energized them to pursue ideas until they become a reality in their various places hence, developing and sharpening their characteristics such as networking capacity, strategic thinking, negotiation capacity, selling/persuasive capacity, keeping abreast of changes, identifying key people to be influenced in any development, building the know-how and where to look for answers and

constantly getting feedback from customers and other stakeholders are important. Based on the review and the conclusion, the following recommendations are made:

- i. The government should devise means of enhancing need for achievement as it is capable of motivating artisanal entrepreneurs to pursue the profession logically thereby reducing employment
- ii. Policy makers should more enabling environment to restructure the social context as it capable of inspiring the artisanal entrepreneurs to generate ideas and energized them to pursue those ideas until they become a reality

Policy implications

This research proposes a framework that may be used by the government as a policymaker in the national strategic plan, facilitating artisan entrepreneurship in developing local products. Furthermore, the government must foster creativity in all aspects of need for achievements as well as social context to foster motivation and creativity to artisan products in order to reduce unemployment.

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