The Relationship between Market Orientation and Business Performance of Nigerian SMEs: The Role of Organizational Culture

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Abstract

This study is aimed at examining the association between market orientation and business performance of Nigerian small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Even though their associations have received substantial scholarly interest, few studies have been conducted among Nigerian SMEs. However, this study seeks also to examine the mediating role of organizational culture between market orientation and business performance relationship. SME is essential to economic growth of Nigeria, and they are considered as a major source of job creation, poverty reduction and significantly contributes to the gross domestic products. Based on theoretical consideration, a framework was developed to investigate these relationships. The model was tested on a sample of 640 firms through self-administration of a questionnaire survey. The result from correlation analysis established a good relationship between market orientations, organizational culture and business performance. However, regression results established no relationship between market orientation and SME performance, whereas, the mediation test was not supported. The study's implications also discussed.

Keywords: market orientation, business performance, organizational culture, SMEs

1. Introduction

MO is reported to be a major source of competition in many managements and marketing researches (Hult & Ketchen, 2001; Jowarski & Kohli, 1993). In the modern business environment, competition among the business firms has reached an extraordinary level and obtaining bearable competitive advantage has become a key to survival for most of the firms. Empirical evidence has shown that MO is a vital player in the SME business performance (Pelham & Wilson, 2001; Agarwal & Dave, 2003; Kirca, Jayachandran and Bearden, 2005; Kelson, 2012; Wilson, Pereprlkin, Zhang & Vachon, 2014). Market orientation also provides an organization with a strategy and is a vital approach to understanding markets (Vorhies, Morgan and Mason, 2009). Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Narver and Slater (1990) are the proponents of the market orientation concept. It is stated that MO provides better understanding of the environment, and business that adopts Market orientation adequately meets the customer needs in a better way (Grainer & Padanyi, 2005). There is a number of literature supporting a positive and significant association between Market orientation and organizational performance (Tajeddeni, Trueman & Larsen, 2006; Dauda & Akingbade, 2010). Firms with sound market orientated culture perform better in understanding their customers and other competitors (Hult & Ketchen, 2001; Lings & Greenly, 2009). Proper MO culture result in better customer relationship which can enhance performance outcomes as sales, growth, market share and profits (Crosby, Evans and Cowls, 1990; Morgan and Hunt, 1994).

Moreover, many researchers have concluded that Market orientation has a robust impact on performance (Deshpande, Farley and Webster, 1993; Jaworski and Kohli, 1992; Ruckert, 1992). Literature review available on the market orientation indicated that there seems to be a very significant positive correlation between Market orientation and superior corporate performance, but much of the evidence remains subjective (Beverly, Michael & Richard, 2012; Oyedijo, Aliu & Idris, 2012). Although the importance of Market orientation has commonly accepted, and it is also assumed to have a direct relation to performance, the conflicting findings on the nature of Market Orientation-performance relationship somewhat shortened its value for managers (Au & Tse, 1995; Greenly, 1995).

2. Problem Statement

The poor performance of Nigerian small and medium enterprises (SMEs) is an issue of serious concern to all Nigerians and other stakeholders (Ibru, 2013). The present chief executive officer (CEO) SMEDAN, Nadada (2013), admitted the following problems facing SMEs in Nigeria to include, among others poor market orientation, inadequate knowledge of managing firms, poor marketing skills, low entrepreneurial spirit. Several studies conducted on the MO – performance relationship, but there exists a mixed finding. Some of the studies that reported a positive and significant relationship between the two constructs includes Hooley, Cox, Fahy, Shipley, Beracs and Fonfara (2000), Shoham and Rose (2001). Au and Tse (1995) and Demirbag, Lenny Koh, Tatoglu and Zaim (2006) reported a negative association between market orientation and business performance. Hence, market orientation to performance relationship studies is inconclusive. However, Herath and Mahmood (2013) suggested the inclusion of the mediator on strategic orientation to the business performance relationship. Therefore, this study attempt to extend the MO- business performance relationship with a mediating variable of organizational culture.

3. Theoretical Background

3.1 Resource-Based View

Barney (1991) posited that firm's sustainable performance advantage by securing rare resources of economic value and the ones that competitor and other rivals cannot easily copy, imitate or substitute. As such, firms with rare resources should be able to leverage them for their own peculiar benefit. Amit and Schoemaker (1993) stated that resources are organizational assets that are processed through ownership or control, while capabilities are referring a firm's capability to combine resources and adequately use them. RBV collected works established that firms could obtain economic benefit as the basis of unique business assets that are of value, uncommon, hard to replicate and non- harmonious with other resources (Barney, 1991). RBV identifies that some posessions may lead to attainment of organizational goals, while others do not. Therefore, the fundamental challenge is for the organizations to identify those resources that will lead to goal realization of the overall performance (Wade & Hulland, 2004).

Hence, RBV tries to build on internal competence of organizational resources for such an organization to achieve competitive advantage. Barney (1991) posited that firm's sustainable performance advantage by securing rare resources of economic value and the ones that competitor and other rivals cannot easily copy, imitate or substitute. As such, firms with rare resources should be able to leverage them for their own peculiar benefit. The underlying characteristics by Barney (1991) go with the following: 1) resources that are valuable; 2) resources that are rare; 3) resources that are imitable; and 4) resources that are non-substitutable. Based on the above, the entire construct under investigation possesses the above named features. Market orientation is an organizational strategy with a commitment toward continuously creating greater customer products which can improve performance. The emphasis here is attracting customers by considering their needs through improvement in both quantity and quality. Therefore, a good market-oriented strategy can be rare, valuable, imitable and non-substitutable, hence the need for RBV. Organizational culture is regarded as the unique way of life of a group of people and their comprehensive way of life; hence a sound culture of an organization can give that organization an edge over and above other organizations and can help achieve a competitive advantage.

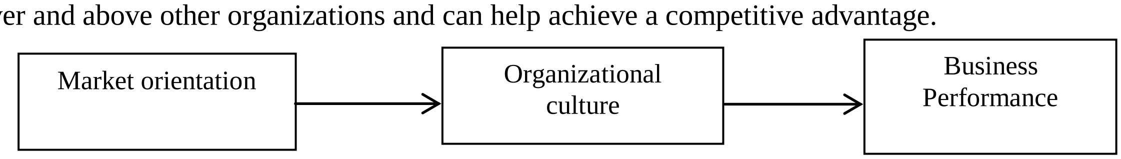

Figure 1: Research Framework

3.2 Business Performance

Olosula (2011) explained the performance concept as an ability to assess the level of success of a business organization is it small or big. SMEs can be evaluated in terms of employment level, firm size, strength in working capital as well as its profitability. According to Shariff, Peous and Ali (2010) measures of performance can be seen from an objective perspective that is more about the financial assessment to organizational performance such as return on equity, return on assets and sales growth. Minai and Lucky (2011) further opined that performance in small firms is viewed from two perspectives: the monetary (financial) and the non-monetary (non- financial) measures.

Some studies have some inclination in using financial performance measures as an indicator of overall firm performance (Murphy, Trailer & Hills 1996). On the other hand, other studies prefer the subjective measure performance. For example, Ittner and Lacker (2003) opined that subjective measures help owner/managers to determine the level of success or otherwise of their respective SMEs, while Davood and Morteza (2012) viewed performance as the ability of a firm to create acceptable outcome and actions. Hence, firm performance is a central issue in business activities that need adequate planning and commitment. Trkman and McCormack (2009) asserted that measuring performance is important for all firms because it helps the organization to attain the level of organizational success or failure and also serve as a yardstick for achieving significant improvement in the overall organizational activities.

3.3 Market Orientation and Business Performance

MO influence on firm performance has been studied for over a decade in SME literature. Studies by Slater and Narver (2000), Shoham and Rose (2001), Pelham and Wilson (2001), Agarwal and Dave (2003), Jain and Bhati (2007), Lings and Greenly (2009), Kelson (2012), Jaiyeoba (2014) reported the direct impact of market-orientation on firm performance. According to Pelham and Wilson (2001), a market-oriented firm, which has a sound market information gathering and handling abilities, can predict the necessities and changes in markets accurately and quickly, allowing them to respond quickly and appropriately. Thereby enhancing their competitive advantage. In this regard, it has been asserted by scholars in the SME literature that MO offers small firm's with a possible viable benefit. Oyedijo, Idris and Aliu (2012) investigated the influence of marketing practices on small firm performance. Their sample made up of five hundred and forty - five businesses/ senior staff in Lagos-Nigeria, using a questionnaire survey and analysis of variance (ANOVA) as a method of analysis. The finding of their study indicated a link between marketing practices and overall firm performance. However, the study of Jaiyeoba (2014) established a significant influence relationship on MO behavior of service firms. Similarly, Webster, Hammond and Rothwell (2014) examined the effect of MO on business performance of business schools that register with the association of advance collegiate schools of business in the US. One hundred and sixteen educational vice presidents and one hundred and thirty - one deans were the respondents. The finding from their study indicated a positive influence between market orientation and performance.

However, other studies with a negative finding on the MO- business performance, relationship include Au, and Tse, (1995) employed hotels as sample with marketing managers as respondents. The results indicated no significant association between market orientations and hotel performance. Demirbag, Lenny Koh, Tatoglu and Zaim, (2006), conducted a study on market orientations impact on SMEs performance, using structural equation modelling for the interpretation, with one hundred and forty one SMEs operating in the Turkish textile industry. They found no association between market orientation and organizational performance, the only relationship established was between market orientation and organizational performance with the mediation of total quality management. However, the study of De luca, Verona and Vicara (2010) examined market orientation and research and development effectiveness in high – technology firms. The finding from the study reported a mixed result. Micheels and Gow (2011) employed a sample from Illinois beef producers, a total of one thousand five hundred and sixty - eight constitute the population, whereas, three hundred and forty - seven represent the sample. The finding indicated that trust and commitment, positive influence market orientation, while, market orientation and organizational learning are found to be significant contributors to firm performance. Ghani and Mahmood (2011) examined the factors influencing performance of microfinance firms in Pakistan using a quantitative survey and multiple regressions for data analysis. The finding of the study shows that market orientation, was negatively associated with micro-finance performance. Based on this argument, we proposed:

H1: There is a significant association between market orientation and business performance

3.4 Organizational Culture and Business Performance

Studies of organizational culture and performance have conducted, and some of the findings reported a significant relationship between the two constructs, others negative while there are mixed findings. Berson, Oreg and Dvir (2005) investigated chief executive officers values and performance of twenty - six companies. The finding indicated that the organizational culture is a good mediator on CEO values and organizational performance. Similarly, the study of Liu (2009) assessed the relationship between culture of the organization and new service delivery performance, using a face – to – face interview with one hundred and ninety-two business managers.

Correlation analysis used for data analysis, a finding reported that there are strongly complementary relationships among innovative cultures, supportive culture, market orientated culture, learning culture, customer communication with new service delivery performance.

The study of Eker and Eker (2009) investigated the association between the culture of organization and performance of the Turkish manufacturing unit. A Sample of one hundred and twenty - two manufacturers of the top five hundred firms was used, with logistic regression for data analysis. The finding shows that firms with flexible culture tend to be non – financial performance, while firm through control tend to use performance measurement system for monitoring. Ezirim, Nwibere and Emecheta (2010) investigated the role of organizational culture on performance with regression methods for data analysis. Organizational culture to performance relationship was found to be significant. Competitive, entrepreneurial and consensual organizational culture was found to be significantly positive to profitability, sales volume and market share. Bureaucratic culture was negatively related to organizational performance. Mujeeb and Ahmad (2011) empirically tested the association between organizational culture component and performance management practices, and reported substantial and positive association between the two constructs.

Sakro (2012) argued on organizational culture, motivation and performance. Managers of automobile companies operating in Ghana considered as a sample. Semi – structured questionnaire survey used. They reported that the organizational culture has a direct impact on motivation and indirectly on organizational output. The better the organizational culture, the higher the motivational level of employees. Yazici (2011) examined the culture of the organization and business performance, using seventy - six US firms, with four hundred projects professional and partial least square method for data analysis. The finding indicated that clan or group culture significantly affects business performance. Nwibere (2013) investigated the effect of corporate culture dimensions (competitive, entrepreneurial, bureaucratic and consensual cultures) on managerial leadership style (democratic, autocratic and laissez – faire), using seven major oil development companies. They reported mixed findings competitive, entrepreneurial and consensual corporate cultures have a significant and positive influence on democratic leadership style. Similarly, entrepreneurial and consensual corporate cultures have a significant and positive influence on laissez – faire leadership style. Bureaucratic and consensual organizational values were found to have significant and positive influence on autocratic leadership style. In the same vein, bureaucratic organizational culture has a negative relationship with democratic and laissez – faire leadership styles. Competitive organizational culture was reported to have a negative association with autocratic and laissez – faire leadership styles; entrepreneurial organizational culture has a negative correlation with autocratic leadership styles. The study of Acar and Acar (2014) examined the dominant cultural types of hospital in Turkey. A Survey questionnaire was used with five hundred and twelve employees from ninety - nine hospitals as respondents. The finding indicated organizational culture significantly affects performance. Based on this argument, this study seeks to propose:

H2: Organizational culture mediates the relationship between market orientation and business performance in Nigerian SMEs.

4. Methodology

4.1 Measurement

Measurement of the study rooted from different sources. Performance measurement from Suliyanto and Rahab (2012) was used to measure business performance and market orientation with reliability values of.828 and .799. The Business performance and market orientation scales is measured a uni – dimensional with six and twelve items respectively. As regards to organizational culture measurement, was adopted from Al – Swidi and Mahmoud (2012), with the reliability value of .759. This scale consists of eighteen items.

4.2 Population and Sampling

The data collection employed questionnaire survey, which was administered through hand delivery to 1829 SMEs in Kano. A systematic sampling technique was utilized to select samples in which every sample was selected randomly as a starting point and then picking every Kth component in the sampling frame (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson & Tatham, 2006). Kriejcie and Morgan (1970) table for sample size determination employed, the sample size of 320 selected. Hair, Ortinal and Wolfinbarger (2008) suggested the distribution of twice of a sample size. Thus, 640 questionnaires were finally distributed.

5. Results

Data was collected through self - administration of the questionnaire to 640 small and medium enterprise owner/managers operating in Kano, the northwestern part of Nigeria. However, 511 questionnaires were returned representing 79.8 percent response rate. A response rate of 79.8 percent was considered good (Sekaran, 2003). Responses keyed into SPSS version 20.

Construct validity was tested using factor analysis for the entire variable in the study. The suitability of this test was subjected to the utilization of Kaiser – Meyer – Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of Sphericity. Therefore, KMO value greater than 0.6 and the Bartlett's test is large and significant ($p<0.05$) (Coakes, Stead & Ong, 2009; Hair, et al., 2010), factorability is then considered possible. Items with factor loadings of more than 0.3 will be accepted to represent the factor since it is regarded as a threshold to meet the minimum level for interpretation of the structure (Sekaran, 2003; Hair, et al., 2006: 2010).

Table 1. Provides the result of factor analysis for business performance. It shows that all the items were loaded onto a single factor with eigenvalue greater than 1.0. Single factor is extracted 59.636% of the total variance explained.

Table 1: Result of the Factor Analysis for Business Performance

	Items	Component 1
Per02	Product sales	.855
Per01	Wider market	.780
Per05	Increase in employees	.777
Per06	Increase in customers	.737
Per04	Customer complaint	.704
	Eigenvalue	2.982
	Percentage of variance	59.636
	KMO	.733
	Bartlett's Test of Spheriticity	986.367
	Significance	.000

Table 2. Provides the factor analysis conducted on market orientation. Ten items were used to measure the construct loaded onto single factor with eigenvalue greater than 1.0. Single factor is ecxtracted31.158% of the total variance explained.

Table 2: Result of the Factor Analysis for Market orientation

	Items	Component 1
MO07	Respond to competitive action	.736
MO08	Competitor orientation	.727
MO09	Product competitiveness	.726
MO10	Coordination	.696
MO01	Value added customer products	.652
MO02	Customer orientation	.623
MO03	Customer satisfaction	.520
MO11	Cooperation in formulating strategies	.491
MO05	After sales service	.470
MO12	Customer added value creation	.433
	Eigenvalue	3.816
	Percentage of variance	38.158
	KMO	.811
	Bartlett's Test of Spheriticity	1462.880
	Significance	.000

Table 3. Shows the factor analysis conducted on MO. Sixteen items were used to measure the construct loaded onto single factor with eigenvalue greater than 1.0. Single factor extracted is 35.813% of the total variance explained.

Table 3: Result of the Factor Analysis for Organizational culture (Mediator)

	Items	Component 1
OC17	Employees understanding of what need to be completed	.593
OC16	Good mission that gives direction and meaning	.577
	Systematic organization of jobs	
OC04	Capabilities are treated as a source of competitive	.524
OC06	values	.514
OC05	Changes in marketing practice	.491
OC12	Customers decisions are very important	.471
OC18	Excitement and motivation for employees are the	.465
OC08	result of vision development	
OC03	Acceptable code of conduct	.453
OC07	Emphasis on team work	.450
OC01	Clear set of values	.435
OC10	Employee involvement in work	.429
OC02	Respond to competitor actions	.428
OC15	Information sharing	.417
OC14	Invention and risk taking are encouraged	.413
	Disappointment as a chance for learning and	.389
OC13	improvement	
	Encourage direct contact with customers	.384
	Eigenvalue	3.510
	Percentage of variance	21.937
	KMO	.796
	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	738.547
	Significance	.000

Reliability examination was conducted to ascertain the existence of an internal consistency of items after the conduct of factor analysis. It found that all the study variables possess an acceptable level of internal consistency ranging from .828 (BP), .799 (MO), .759 (OC). All the variables, therefore, meet the minimum threshold as recommended by Hair et al., (2010) and Nunally (1983).

Table 4. Below shows the inter – correlations of all the variables in this study at a significance level of 5% (0.05) (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The correlation analysis results indicated that all the predicting variables are significantly related to BP at ($r = .300$, $p<.01$), and ($r = .147$, $p<.01$) respectively. Thus, H1 and H2 are supported. However, it can be understood that business performance of Nigerian SMEs had a strong relationship with market orientation and organizational culture.

Table 4: Correlation Analysis Result of the Variables

	Variables	BP	MO	OC
1	Business performance	1		
2	Market orientation	.300**	1	
3	Organizational culture	.147**	.364**	1

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 5. Indicated the result of the association between the predicting variable and the criterion variable. Based on the result of the R2 (R2 =.177, F =.31.818, p< .756), it indicated that MO had no significant impact in explaining business performance.

Table 5: Multiple Regression Result of the Effect of Market Orientation on Business Performance

Independent variable				Business Performance (Dependent variable)			
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta	T	sig	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	7.418	1.320		5.620	.000		
MO	-.011	.037	-.014	-.311	.756	.873	1.145
R^2	.177						
Adj. R^2	.171						
F	31.818						
Significance of F	0.000						

Mediating role of organizational culture on the association between MO and BP. Regression analysis was conducted and provided that R2 = .177, t = -.311, P<.756. The direct relationship of MO and BP was found to be insignificant (β = -.311, P<.756) this shows that step one for the Baron and Kenney (1986) mediation test was found to be insignificant. Hypothesis 2 was, therefore, rejected as the first step not fulfilled. Figure 2 depicts the direct relationship of MO and BP.

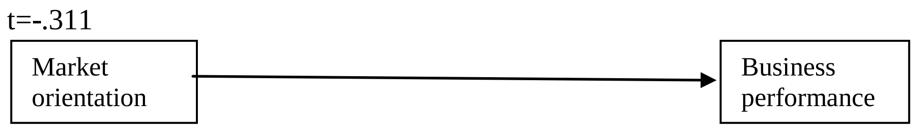

Figure 2: The Direct Relationship between MO and BP

6. Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study is to investigate the association between MO and BP of Nigerian SMEs, and whether the organizational culture mediates the association between MO and BP. Based on the result of Pearson analysis, significant correlations exist among market orientations, organizational culture and business performance. This finding supported the previous findings of Daud, Remli and Muhammad (2013) found a significant positive relationship between market orientation dimensions and organizational performance. The study of Ogbonna and Ogwu (2013) established positive association between MO and corporate performance. The previous studies of Shah and Dubey (2013) on MO and BP of financial institutions of United Arab Emirates, using a convenience sampling of two hundred marketing executives. Their findings indicated a significant association between market orientation and organizational performance. The study of Hartano (2013) was in line with the present study where a market orientation is established to be a good performance. Additionally, the study of Alizadeh, Alipour and Hasanzadah (2013) on MO and BP among SMEs found a significant relationship between MO dimensions of customer, competitor and inter – functional coordination and BP. Arising from this, Liu (2009) assesses the association between organizational culture and new service delivery performance, using qualitative interview and correlation for data analysis. The finding reported strong complementarity associations among innovative cultures, supportive culture, market orientated values, learning culture, customer communication culture and new service delivery performance of service firms. Ezirim et al., (2010) investigated the role of culture on organizational performance; they reported a significant and positive association between the constructs.

The result of regression shows no significant association between MO and BP of Nigerian SMEs (β = -.014, t = .311, p = .756), this was in line with the previous findings of Au and Tse (1995). Demirbag et al., (2006) reported a similar result that MO was not a predictor of SME performance. However, the result of mediation reported that the culture of the organization will not mediate the association between MO and BP, as the first step for mediation suggested by Baron and Kenney (1986) was found to be insignificant (β = -.014, t = -.311). Hence, Li et al., (2006) in their study on the integrated effect of MO culture and marketing strategy on firm performance. The results show that market orientated cultures do not significantly affect firm performance.

Drawing after the RBV on intangible possessions, the model confirmed here provides a theoretical framework for understanding how SME owner/managers engaged in market-oriented and organizational culture behavior for them to achieve competitive advantage. The study projected that market orientation may be a predictor of SME business performance through the finding not supported, but the low R2 indicated that other variables might serve as a predictor of performance of Nigerian SMEs.

This study provides a good foundation for policy makers and other government agencies such as the Small and medium enterprise development agency of Nigeria to look for ways of enhancing SME business performance.

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