

Gaining Performance among Tobacco Sector Small and Medium Enterprises through Market Orientation

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Abstract

Market orientation is somehow followed by the small and medium enterprises, however, in this study only tobacco sector small and medium enterprises have been chosen. Another focus of the study was that research on small and medium enterprises has mainly focused tobacco sector operating in throughout the country. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to focus on small and medium enterprises operating in the tobacco sector have been studied. The data was collected from the tobacco sector SMEs operating in Pakistan. The data has been collected with the help of an adopted structured questionnaire with Likert Scale of seven. After ensuring the outer model, inner model has been analyzed by applying structural equation modeling. The findings are showing a significant impact of both the dimensions of market orientation over the performance of tobacco sector small and medium enterprises. The findings have significance for the policy makers as they should focus on providing trainings to the owners of tobacco sector small and medium enterprises to learn market orientation for better performance. Though the concept of market orientation has been well researched before, however, the current study is Pioneering in measuring the concept of market orientation with two dimensions in tobacco sector SMEs.

Keywords: Performance, SMEs, market orientation, entrepreneurship

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Introduction

This study is developed to find out the impact of market orientation over performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). SMEs are the backbone of any underdeveloped or developing country (Asad, Chethiyar, & Ali, 2020). SMEs are

essential for the growth of any country and Pakistan has no exception to it. One of the fastest growing businesses with maximum closure rate is tobacco shops. In almost all the big cities of Pakistan tobacco shops business is growing rapidly, however, several shops outperform and are closed because of inability to follow the market needs. Thus, a blooming sector is essential to support the economy of Pakistan especially in the current era where the economy is declining and unemployment is increasing (Asad, Ahmad, Haider, & Salman, 2018).

Tobacco shop SMEs are founded by people who can recognize and exploit market opportunities, yet they fail to cater the market orientation. Highly skilled entrepreneurs, whether resident or foreign, help a country to increase its economy by developing new methods of doing business and putting ideas to innovative realities (Asad, Shabbir, Salman, Haider, & Ahmad, 2018). In innovative culture processes are organized because innovative processes allow efficiency and effectiveness that play a key role in gaining sustainable competitive advantage (Frishammar, Kurkkio, Abrahamsson, & Lichtenthaler, 2012; Asad, Shabbir, Salman, Haider, & Ahmad, 2018).

SMEs with high level of market and entrepreneurial orientation float the businesses which make sector even stronger (Migliori, Pittino, Consorti, & Lucianetti, 2019). Gaining success in this atmosphere is clearly complex because of involvement of several factors. Prevailing atmosphere and conditions are immaterial, but the solution for standing and fighting with these conditions is the new idea, which balance firms or industry, to compete in a sustainable way (Khalil, Asad, & Khan, 2018). Such critical business functions can enable sustainable performance and profitability (Alkhuzaie & Asad, 2018). These strategies help to bloom in the locations where markets or selling new products would otherwise be impossible (Andjelkovic & Imaizumi, 2012; Asad, Shabbir, Salman, Haider, & Ahmad, 2018).

Tobacco sector of Pakistan and especially the SMEs are not performing very well as compared to other sectors of SMEs, this decline can be seen in declining sales and growth of the sector (Bushra & Wajiha, 2014). This decline is due to lack of support by the management and lack of innovation (Bamfo & Kraa, 2019). A few years back the SME sector of Pakistan was considered as one of the fastest growing sectors. Tobacco sector because of its potential in the economy cannot be ignored. Its potential can never be doubted, but Pakistan has faced a continuous decline in the growth and performance of the sector even though sector a significant proportion of population who are the customer of the sector (Bushra & Wajiha, 2014).

One of the main reasons that Pakistan lagged behind in this struggle is being less market oriented and entrepreneurially oriented (Asad, Chethiyar, & Ali, 2020), because we adopted that path which was chosen by our forerunner, we usually discourage struggle (Narula, 2017). The advanced industries succeed in the world and make progress because of having highly innovating and developing ideas, which gave them competitive advantage. According to global competitive index Pakistan stands at a number 115 out a total of 138 nations which indicates it is a clear back bencher (Schwab, 2017). It's a pity that Pakistan was ranked at 113 out of 127 countries in the 2017 report of the Global Innovation Index which is basically because of lack of motivation and support by the government and lack of market orientation (Global Innovation Index, 2017).

This declined position and the declining position of tobacco sector SMEs provides sufficient grounds to conduct study in tobacco sector SMEs, that need to be market oriented and must continuously identify the new marketing strategies to remain competitive over others. Furthermore, market orientation is very important especially for the tobacco sector SMEs whereas, Pakistani tobacco sector SMEs lack market orientation (Rashid, Kalyar, & Shafique, 2020). Thus, this study is intended over the tobacco sector SME of Pakistan to understand the significance of market orientation dimensions for getting high performance. The study is significant for the practitioners as well as policy makers for developing the policies in the light of the findings of the study. Theoretically, the study is going to support Resource Based View (RBV) by further explaining the role of resources in gaining high performance in a sector which has hardly been addressed in the context of Pakistan despite its significant contribution especially among small businesses.

Literature Review

The literature reviews mainly focused on the performance of SMEs and the need for market orientation for gaining competitive advantage and success by tobacco sector SMEs. Performance is related to functions and processes, whereby industry seek to acquire and build upon their distinctive competence. Thus, innovativeness according to market need, being the most essential part of entrepreneurial orientation, is necessary component of the corporate strategies for several reasons, to perform better in the market. Therefore, innovation without proper market information is worthless.

Market orientation reflects capability of the enterprises to expedite activities for gaining competitive advantage over competitors especially in industries where the product lifecycle is short (Asad, Shabbir, Salman, Haider, & Ahmad, 2018). Market oriented activities are a new-fashioned behavior with the help of which enterprises exploit market opportunities which others fail to notice or do not pursue aggressively (Parida, Westerberg, & Frishammar, 2012). Market orientation means seeing opportunities in one's area and feeling undeterred by fear of failure because of having good knowledge of the market circumstances (Bamfo & Kraa, 2019).

Market orientation is strongly related with all the efforts of seeking, procedures, mechanisms, systems etc. to promote customer satisfaction, information sharing, coordination, collaboration, learning, and innovativeness (Asad, Haider, & Fatima, 2018; Haider, Asad, & Fatima, 2017). The innovation capacity based on market information being the part of entrepreneurial orientation allows a country to stand carefully in one step ahead in global competition (Asad, Shabbir, Salman, Haider, & Ahmad, 2018).

Market and entrepreneurial orientation are the belief that the entrepreneur perceives and understands about a particular market situation to organize new products which are "worthwhile" and "feasible" (Asad, Sharif, & Hafeez, 2016). Market opportunities include the circumstances which are quite good for the introduction of new product to serve the customer in a better way considering the environment and social responsibility (Frishammar, Kurkkio, Abrahamsson, & Lichtenthaler, 2012).

Market orientation is all about considering and understanding consumer requirements as top priority which results in getting high performance in any customer-oriented industry (Jogaratnam, 2017). The existing literature over market orientation and performance showed mixed results. Recently Souisa (2018); Udriyah, Tham, and Azam (2019); and Tajeddini, Martin, and Ali (2020) claimed a positive impact of market orientation over performance, however, Hassim, Asmat-Nizam, and Bakar (2011) and Kasim, Ekinici, Altinay, and Hussain (2018) claimed a negative impact, whereas Wei, Zhao, and Zhang (2014) pointed out a U-shaped impact, but Martinez, Serna, and Guzman (2018) identified an insignificant impact. Thus, the literature has certain inconsistencies which calls for further research on market orientation and identifying those reasons that causes these inconsistencies.

The literature in the field of entrepreneurship has mainly focused on market orientation in SME sector, however, a particular focus on tobacco SMEs is missing. Secondly, market orientation for the tobacco SMEs is a bit different from market orientation for the SMEs in general. Lastly, majority of the studies have studied market orientation as uni-dimensional construct, but this study will consider market orientation as a multi-dimensional construct having two dimensions namely, customer orientation and competitor orientation. Thus, this study is going to fill the same gap in the body of knowledge by addressing market orientation for the tobacco sector SMEs.

Market information is the key resource; therefore, Resourced Based View (RBV) was chosen as a theoretical lens for this study. In the study performance of SME refers to how well it performs in the market (Asad, Chethiyar, & Ali, 2020). The RBV identifies that resources that can provide competitive advantage are valuable, rare, and inimitable. For tobacco sector SMEs knowledge is one of the major sources of competitive advantage. Considering the importance of market orientation as one of the keys behind achieving high performance and using the theoretical foundations of RBV following framework has been drawn.

Methodology

This study aims to examine the impact and the relationship between market orientation dimensions and performance, in tobacco sector SMEs. Survey research method was used, and data was collected with the help of an adopted questionnaire. To test the hypotheses, respondents were chosen by targeting SMEs in the tobacco sector of Pakistan. Tobacco sector SMEs are the unit of analysis. Primary data has been collected due to unavailability of secondary data. Tobacco sector SMEs were chosen on convenient sampling basis because of unavailability of lists of the tobacco shops and tobacco



Figure 1 Proposed Framework

businesses. The instrument for market orientation has been taken from (Liu, Ke, Wei, & Hua, 2013) Liu, Ke, Wei, and Hua (2013) and the scale for performance has been taken from Asad, Chethiyar, and Ali (2020). Seven points liker’s scale has been implemented to measure the variables. In the scale ‘1’ refers to strongly disagree and ‘7’ corresponds to strongly agree, whereas ‘4’ refers to neutrality. Because of the use of no-probability sampling partial least square has been applied. To run Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) the statistical technique employed include conformity factor analysis and structural equation modeling to check validity of the model.

Data Analysis

While conducting the analysis initially demographics of the respondents have been calculated. The descriptive analysis of demographics including age, gender, qualification, and work experience of the respondents has been shown in table 1. The descriptive analysis showed that majority was male. Majority of the people belong to age group of mid-careers i.e., 25 to 45. And majority was having masters followed by few having bachelor’s degree. Descriptive of respondents are mentioned in table 1.

Table 1 Demographics

Gender		Age		Work Experience		Qualification	
Category	No.	Category	No.	Category	No.	Category	No.
Males	82	25 to 30	29	5 years	31	Bachelors	33
Females	18	30 to 40	44	10 years	21	Masters	67
		40 to 45	27	15 years	12	Ph.D.	0

For generalizability of the findings normality of the data has also been analyzed (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). Descriptive statistics of independent and dependent variables have been calculated after measuring the descriptive of respondents, to check the normality of the collected data. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics of Variables

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Customer Orientation	5.2925	0.658	1.215	0.323
Competitor Orientation	5.4733	0.526	1.325	0.458
Performance of SMEs	5.2686	0.598	1.264	0.293

After ensuring that skewness and kurtosis are below 3 and 8 respectively the reliability and validity of the instrument has been checked. To data analysis, initially, factor loadings have been checked and items having factor loading below 0.7 have been removed from the analysis. The results of item loadings are mentioned below in table 3. All the variables even after deletion were having more than minimum acceptable items. The results of reliability, validity, and discriminant validity are also mentioned in table 3.

Table 3 Construct Outer Loadings, Reliability, and Discriminant Validity

Matrix	Competitor Orientation	Customer Orientation	Financial Performance of SMEs
COMP1	0.88		
COMP2	0.889		
COMP3	0.95		
CUS1		0.782	
CUS2		0.686	
CUS3		0.911	
CUS4		0.835	
SMESP1			0.74
SMESP2			0.844
SMESP3			0.813
SMESP4			0.848
SMESP5			0.806
SMESP6			0.727
SMESP7			0.774
Cronbach's Alpha	0.892	0.819	0.902
Composite Reliability	0.933	0.881	0.923
Average Variance Extracted	0.823	0.652	0.631
Discriminant Validity			
Competitor Orientation	0.907		
Customer Orientation	0.588	0.808	
Financial Performance of SMEs	0.713	0.614	0.795

The instrument was reliable because the calculated values of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, and average variance extracted was above the threshold level of 0.6, 0.7, and 0.5 respectively (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013). After getting satisfaction that data is fit for analysis SEM was applied to establish the significance of market orientation over the

performance of SMEs. Initially path coefficient has been checked through algorithms and to ensure the significance bootstrapping has been conducted. The findings are mentioned in table 4 below:

Table 4 Path Coefficients

Relationship	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Competitor Orientation->Performance	0.538	0.532	0.078	6.918	0.000
Customer Orientation->Performance	0.298	0.305	0.085	3.521	0.000

From table 4 it is obvious that both the independent variables have a significant impact as the P values are below 0.05. To be sure about the predictive power of the model blindfolding has been conducted. The results of predictive relevance are mentioned in table 5.

Table 5 Predictive Relevance

	SSO	SSE	$Q^2(=1-SSE/SSO)$
Financial Performance of SMEs	700.000	463.361	0.338

The predictive relevance of the model is also very good as it is above 0.3. in the next section detailed discussion has been made.

Discussions

The main purpose of the research was to find the significance and importance of market orientation on the performance of tobacco sector SMEs. To meet the objective of the study, initially, a comprehensive literature has been reviewed. Based on the reviewed literature, theoretical framework has been developed. Because of absence of the secondary data primary data has been obtained with the help of a structured questionnaire which was adopted from previous studies. This study mainly fills the contextual gap by analyzing the significance of dimensions of market orientation for the tobacco sector SMEs operating in Pakistan. According to the results of structural equation modeling competitor orientation has a positive impact on the performance of tobacco sector SMEs ($\beta = 0.538$, $t = 6.918$, $P = 0.000$). Likewise, customer orientation also has a positive impact on the performance of tobacco sector SMEs ($\beta = 0.298$, $t = 3.521$, $P = 0.000$). Both the dimensions of market orientation have been found to have a significant impact over the financial performance.

The overall model revealed that market orientation is highly significant for the performance of tobacco sector SMEs. The findings of the study are in consistence with prior literature (Bamfo & Kraa, 2019) Bamfo and Kraa (2019) where it is claimed market orientation has a significant impact over the performance of SMEs (Souisa, 2018; Tajeddini, Martin, & Ali, 2020; Kasim, Ekinici, Altinay, & Hussain, 2018; Martinez, Serna, & Guzman, 2018; Masa'deh, Al-Henzab, Tarhini, & Obeidat, 2018). The major importance and contribution of the study was that significance of the market orientation has been tested by several researchers for getting performance of SMEs but the literature as per the limited knowledge of the researchers was scarce over tobacco sector SMEs (Bamfo & Kraa, 2019; Migliori, Pittino, Consorti, & Lucianetti, 2019; Rashid, Kalyar, & Shafique, 2020) that have a major contribution towards the GDP of developing and low income countries.

Conclusions Limitations and Recommendations

Examining the relationship between market orientation and performance of SMEs is not new, however, identifying the impact over the performance of tobacco sector SMEs especially in the developing countries is unique. The objectives were developed on the prior theory of resource-based view; however, the contribution is mainly contextual that guides that market orientation is very significant for getting high performance or better performance of SMEs involved in tobacco businesses. Developing countries, due to their low training facilities (Haider, Asad, Fatima, & Abidin, 2017), ill legal

system (Asad, et al., 2021), untrained labor (Asad, Haider, & Fatima, 2018), and cheap labor cost (Haider, Fatima, Asad, & Ahmad, 2016) are very attractive for the multinationals of developed countries. Several developed countries prefer to open businesses in the low income and developing countries. Thus, the findings create an opportunity for the tobacco sector SMEs to behave in market-oriented way to gain maximum business.

Even though majority of the owners of tobacco sector SMEs were very supportive, yet we faced several challenges which were difficult to avoid. The main issue associated with SMEs especially in the developing countries is informality. The data was purely based on perception of the respondents rather than audited reports. Secondly, in countries like Pakistan where tax evasions are common, several respondents do not show their actual performance. Thirdly, the current prevailing political and economic conditions caused decline in performance which was not addressed in the study.

Considering the findings and limitations the future researchers are strongly guided to incorporate economic and political conditions in their research. Furthermore, researchers are guided to understand the dimensionality of the market orientation and they should identify special performance indicators for tobacco sector SMEs. In this regard qualitative studies are also suggested over tobacco sector SMEs. More efforts will contribute to further theoretical development in the field of tobacco sector SMEs to identify, measures, and explore the underlying processes associated with the performance of tobacco sector SMEs.

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