EFFECT OF MARKET ORIENTATION ON SMES PERFORMANCE: THE MODERATING ROLE OF TECHNOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

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ABSTRACT

The poor performance of SMEs in Nigeria has led to many calls to investigate the factors. This study aimed to investigate the moderating role of technological orientation on the relationship between market orientation and SMEs performance in Lagos State. The study employed survey research design. Primary source was used to collect data from the SMEs owner-managers in Lagos State using self-administered questionnaire with the aid of simple random sampling technique from the sample of four hundred and nine (409) SMEs. The data collected were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 and Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) version 3.0. The result of the study revealed that market orientation has positive and significant effect on SMEs performance. In addition, technological orientation was found to positively and significantly moderate the relationship between market orientation and SMEs performance. Therefore, the study recommends that SMEs should emphasize much on developing strong market orientation and technological orientation since they are very important in increasing SMEs performance.

Keywords: Market Orientation, Technological Orientation, SMEs Performance

1.0 Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs) has been well recognised as the most important drivers of economic growth and development of a nation (Ringo, Tegambwage & Kazungu, 2022; Ali, Hao & Aijuan, 2020). They assume a crucial role in creating jobs, develop new business models and goods, minimize poverty, increase gross domestic product (GDP), solve the issue of balance of payments and promote innovation (Devkota et al., 2023; Maneesha, 2020).

In developing countries, 70% of employment opportunities are generated by SMEs and self-employed individuals (International Labour Organisation [ILO], 2019). Therefore, the contributions of SMEs sector in the area of employment creation to improvement of GDP usually determine the level of economic development and growth of both developing and developed countries. For example, SMEs in UK account for 99.9% of businesses in the economy, contributing 36% to employment and 61% to the country's GDP (UK Business Statistics Report, 2021). Similarly, SMEs in Ghana account for 92% of businesses in the economy, contributing 49% of the country's GDP (United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, [UNIDO], 2018). While in Nigeria, SMEs sector has not been performing in the country as expected. According to Small and Medium Enterprises Development Agency of Nigeria [SMEDAN] (2021), between 90 to 95% of all enterprises in Nigeria is within the nano, micro, small and medium enterprise (NMSMEs) and contributes less than 10% to the non-

agricultural GDP. This contribution to GDP is considered very low compared to other developing countries.

Similarly, empirical studies (Aliyu, Ahmad & Nordin, 2019; Naala, Nordin & Omar, 2017; Ibrahim & Shariff, 2016) identified lack of market orientation and technological orientation as the main attributing factors to the low performance of SMEs in Nigeria. In addition, many studies that investigate the effect of market orientation and SMEs performance found inconsistency in their findings (Al-Asheq, Tanchi, Kamruzzaman & Karim, 2021; Hassen & Singh, 2020; Solikahan & Mohammad, 2019). These mixed findings of previous studies between market orientation and SMEs performance provides the basis for introducing a moderator as suggested by many scholars (Hayes, 2017; Baron & Kenny, 1986). Precisely, technological orientation was proposed to play a moderating role between market orientation and SMEs performance. In this regard, the objectives and hypothesis of the study are formulated below.

1.1   Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the moderating role of technological orientation on the relationship between market orientation and SMEs performance in Lagos State. The specific objectives are as follows;

i.   To determine the relationship between market orientation and SMEs performance in Lagos State.
ii.   To determine how technological orientation moderate the relationship between market orientation and SMEs performance in Lagos State.

1.2   Hypotheses of the Study

H01:   Market orientation does not significantly relate to SMEs performance in Lagos State.

H02:   Technological orientation does not significantly moderate the relationship between market orientation and SMEs performance in Lagos State.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows; section one; introduction, section two; literature review, section three; methodology, section four; result and discussion, section five; conclusion and recommendation.

2.0   Literature Review

2.0.1   SMEs Performance

The term performance is operationally defined from different perspective by different scholars. For example, Penrose (1959) defined performance as the achieving goals and objectives which measure how well a firm is. Therefore, a firm's ability to use its resources effectively and efficiently can be related to the firm's performance (Tseng & Lee, 2014). Hence, Lebas and Euske (2002) defined performance as doing today what will lead to measured value outcomes tomorrow. Similarly, SMEs performance is defined as the abilities of the SMEs to integrate and utilize various internal and external resources with timely and right reconfiguration to achieve targeted set of objectives. Therefore, SMEs performance in this study is define as the ability of the SMEs to effectively and efficiently utilize the available resources in order to record success using certain indicators that include market share, volume of sales, profit, employees and customer increase.

2.0.2   Market Orientation and SMEs Performance

The notable idea of market orientation has originated with Narver and Slater (1990) and Jaworski and Kohli (1993); where all of them conceptualized market orientation as affecting business firm's overall performance. In addition, Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Slater and Narver (2000) were the first to investigate business orientation and promote academic study based on three main sub-dimensions: extensive market information related to customer needs; sending these data vertically and horizontally; and respond to information from the entire company, including product and service design and selection, manufacturing, sales and advertising. The second approach to conceptualizing market orientation from a cultural perspective was suggested by Narver and Slater (1990), who introduce market orientation as the corporate culture that most successfully develops the essential behaviours for the generation of higher value for buyers," and as a result, the company's performance continues to improve. In this study therefore, market orientation is defined as the organizational culture that focuses on discovering and meeting the needs and desires of customers by the SMEs through the activities of customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination.

Previous empirical studies that examined the relationship between market orientation and SMEs performance found mixed result. For instance, Solikahan and Mohammad (2019) found positive and significantly influence between market orientation and SMEs performance in Karawo. Likewise, Al-Asheq, Tanchi, Kamruzzaman and Karim (2021) found that e-marketing orientation have a statistical and significant impact on online SME performance. On the other hand, there are scholars that found insignificant relationship between market orientation and SMEs performance. For example, Hassen and Singh (2020) were not found positive and significant effect between market orientation and SMEs performance. Similarly, Aliyu, Ahmed and Utai (2015) reported a negative relationship between market orientation and business performance. These mixed findings of previous studies between market orientation and SMEs performance provides the basis for introducing a moderator, and hence was used in this current study.

2.0.3   Technological Orientation as the Moderator

Technology orientation is one of the core features of strategic orientation that indicate how firms can achieve competitive advantage by offering better products to their target market through the continuous development of new and improved existing products and also investing heavily in research and development (Tariq, Lazim & Iteng, 2019). They also argued that firms having a strong level of technology orientation are more likely to be R&D oriented, and also adopts sophisticated technology for the development of new product (Gatignon and Xuereb 1997). In this regard, Hurley and Hult (1998) state that achieving business goal lies in the ability of the firm to welcome new ideas and quick adaptation of new technologies. Although, adopting some technology by firm especially SMEs is very costly in this present day. As such, firm that are not technological oriented has more chance of performing poorly in their business operation. On the other hand, firm that are technological oriented is more likely to outperform its competitors and achieve better performance (Ali, Mad Lazim & Iteng, 2019). In this regard, technological orientation was introduced as a moderator on the relationship between market orientation and SMEs performance. Therefore, this study argued that despite SMEs have market orientation, they need to be technological oriented in order to achieve competitive advantage and superior performance in this present days. In fact, technological orientation is the major contribution of this study because it offered more explanation on how SMEs that are market oriented can achieve the performance.

2.1   Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

In line with the review of empirical studies, the conceptual framework of this study (See figure 1) was developed to specifically investigate the moderating role of technological orientation on the relationship between market orientation and SMEs performance.
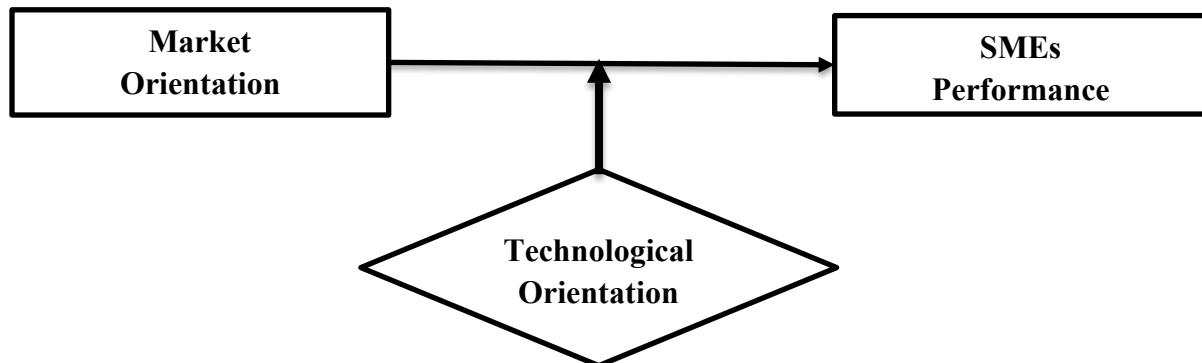

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Resource based view (RBV) theory was used to explain the relationship between market orientation, technological orientation and SMEs performance. The theory was originated from the work of Penrose (1959) which describes a firm as a combination of resources. Later, Barney (1991) provided a better description of RBV, defining a firm's resources as assets, capabilities, procedures, characteristics and knowledge that can be used by the firm to formulate and implement competitive strategies. Barney (1991) argued that applications of these resources may lead to competitive advantage and if it is sustained will improve firm performance.

Specifically, market orientation is a unique resource that enables the firm to understand and respond to customer needs through inimitable marketing strategies (Zhou, Brown & Dev, 2009). Furthermore, it was known as the firm's internal capability, and it aided in the generation of a long-term advantage (Sorama, Viljamaa & Varamäki, 2018; Zhou, Li, Zhou & Su, 2008). According to RBV, market orientation is a critical organizational capability and a strategic asset that has helped organizations improves their business performance (Al Marzooqi & Abdulla, 2020; Kiessling et al., 2016). Moreover, technological orientation can provide a competitive advantage in two ways through the development of new products and efficient production processes; or through product innovations (Salavou, 2010). Cho and Pucik (2005) opine that due to the rapid changes in technology, short product life cycles and increase in competition technological orientation is among the primary sources of a firm's sustainable competitive advantage and also higher performance.

3.0   Methodology

Cross-sectional survey design was employed in this study to collect data from SMEs in Lagos State using self-administer questionnaire. A sample of 371 was obtained from the population of eleven thousand six hundred and sixty-three (11,663) SMEs from all sectors operating in Lagos State using the formula developed by Dilman, Smyth and Cristian (2014) below.

$$n = \frac{(N * p * q)}{(N - 1)\left(\frac{MoE}{z}\right)^2 + (p * q)}$$

Where;

n = complete sample size needed for desired level of precision

N = size of population

p = the population proportion expected to choose among the two response categories is 0.5

q = *1 − p*

MoE = the desired margin of sampling error at 0.05 (5%)

z = the z-score or critical value for the desired level of confidence at 0.05 is 1.96

Therefore, the sample size of this study is determined as follows:

$$n = \frac{(11{,}663 * 0.5 * 0.5)}{(11{,}663 - 1)\left(\frac{0.05}{1.96}\right)^2 + (0.5 * 0.5)}$$

$$n = \frac{2{,}915.75}{(11{,}663 - 1)(0.0255102041)^2 + (0.25)}$$

$$n = \frac{2{,}915.75}{(11{,}663 - 1)(0.000650771) + (0.25)}$$

$$n = \frac{2{,}915.75}{7.839291402}$$

$$n \approx 372$$

In order to minimize the low response rate and also take care of incorrect filing of the questionnaire by respondents, the sample size of 371 was increased by 40% as suggested by Salkind (1997). Therefore, the 40% of 371 is 148 plus the computed sample size of 371 give the total of 519 samples of SMEs to be use in this study. Moreover, simple random sampling technique was used in drawing the sample. In simple random sampling, each and every element of the population gives equal opportunity of being selected (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

3.1   Measure of Variables

The variables of this study were adapted from previous studies. Precisely, SMEs performance was measured by six (6) items adapted from Suliyanto and Rahab (2012). In addition, market orientation was measured by thirteen (13) items adapted Suliyanto and Rahab (2012). Lastly, technological orientation in this study was measured by ten (10) items adapted from the study of Gatignon and Xuereb (1997). Hence, 5 point liker scale (1 = "strongly disagree", 2 = "disagree", 3 = "neutral", 4 = "agree", and 5 = "strongly agree") was used for all the measures of the study

4.0   Result and Discussion

4.1   Response Rate

A total of 519 questionnaires were distributed to SMEs owner-managers operating in Lagos State. Specifically, 438 questionnaires was return representing 84% of the total questionnaires distributed was return. Then, 29 questionnaires was remove due to outliers and leaving the study with 409 valid questionnaire representing 78% for the final analysis. According to Sekaran (2016) a cross-sectional study may accept a rate of 30%. Therefore, this study has 78% valid response which considered adequate for the analysis.

Table 1: Response Rate of the Questionnaires

Response	Frequency/Rate
Number of Distributed Questionnaires	519
Returned Questionnaires	438
Returned and Usable Questionnaires	409
Returned and Excluded Questionnaires	29
Questionnaires Not Returned	81
Response Rate	84%
Valid Response Rate	78%

Source: Survey, 2024.

However, to validate the instrument and test the hypotheses of the study stated in the previous section, this study applies the partial least square structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) technique through SmartPLS 3.0. This analysis technique is increasingly used in business and entrepreneurship research (Becker, Cheah, Gholamzade, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2023). It was also selected considering its flexibility in estimating complex models involving independent variable, moderator and the dependent variable and for normality violations of data distribution (Hair, Hult, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2017). As this point, the study follows the procedures outlined by Hair et al. (2017) to assess the PLS-SEM. These are (1) measurement model, and (2) structural model.

4.2   Measurement Model

The assessment of measurement model involved assessing the individual item reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity or all the constructs. For the individual item reliability, Hair et al. (2017) suggested 0.40 outer loadings, composite reliability value of 0.70, 0.50 or above for average variance extracted and 0.85 HTMT value for individual item reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity and discriminant validity respectively. Therefore, the result is presented below.
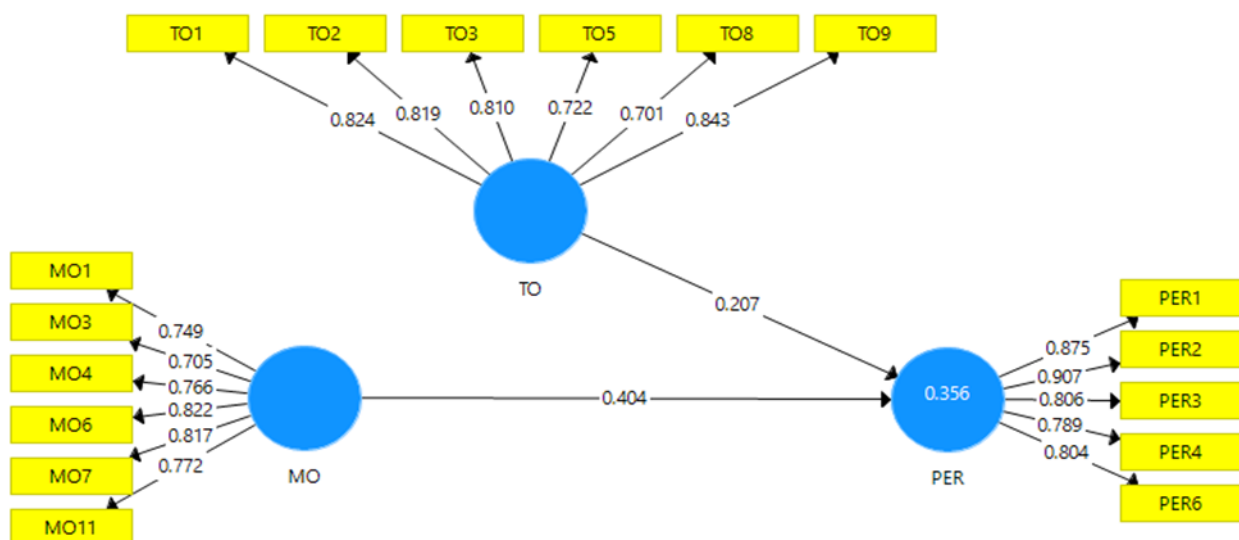

Figure 2: Measurement Model

As shown in figure 2 above, out of 29 items of all the construct of this study, 12 items (i.e., MO2, MO5, MO8, MO9, MO10, MO12, MO13, TO4, TO6, TO7, TO10 and PER4) were deleted because they had outer loadings lower than the suggested threshold and leaving the study with 17 items which was consider valid in context of this study.

Table 2: Internal consistency reliability and convergent validity for reflective construct (n=409)

Variables	Code	Loadings	CR	AVE
Market Orientation	MO1	0.749	0.899	0.598
	MO3	0.705		
	MO4	0.766		
	MO6	0.822		
	MO7	0.817		
	MO11	0.772		
Technological Orientation	TO1	0.824	0.907	0.622
	TO2	0.819		
	TO3	0.810		
	TO5	0.772		
	TO8	0.701		
	TO9	0.843		
SMEs Performance	PER1	0.875	0.921	0.702
	PER2	0.907		
	PER3	0.806		
	PER4	0.789		
	PER6	0.804		

Note: CR = Composite Reliability and AVE= Average Variance Extracted

As shown in table 2, study has CR of 0.807, 0.899 and 0.899 for MO, TO and PER respectively which are all above the threshold of 0.7 and thus indicating adequate internal consistency reliability. On the other hand, the convergent validity of this study was achieved because all the constructs had AVE value of greater than 0.50 [i.e., MO (AVE = 0.598), TO (AVE = 0.622), and PER (AVE = 0.702)].

Similarly, the study used HTMT technique to assess discriminant validity which consider superior compared to the traditional cross loading and Fornell-Larcker criterion as proposed by (Henseler, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2015). Therefore, the result of discriminant validity of this study presented in table 3 showed that the HTMT values of all the constructs are less than the threshold value of 0.85, hence signifying adequate discriminant validity.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)) (n=409)

Variables	MO	PER	TO
MO			
PER	0.636		
TO	0.350	0.596	

4.2   Structural Model

The assessment of structural model entails assessing the significant and relevance of path coefficient, model's explanatory power and models predictive power (Hair et al., 2017). Therefore, the present study specifically used PLS bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 bootstrap sample and 409 cases to compute the bootstrapping mean values, standard errors, t values, and p values (5% significance and 95% confidence levels) of all the path coefficients.
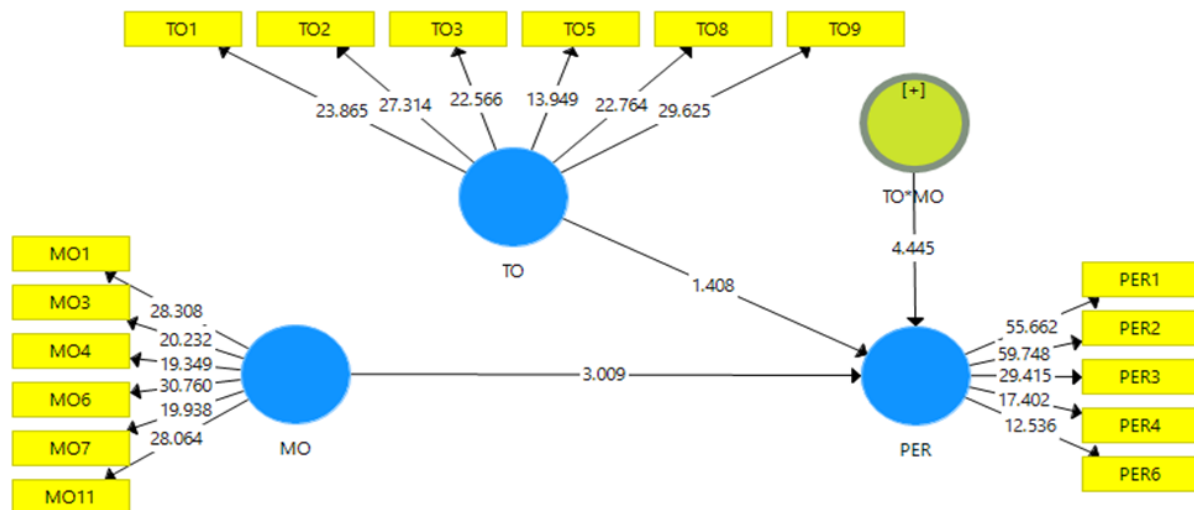
Figure 3: Structural Model

Table 4: Path Coefficient for Direct and Moderation Relationships

Hypothesis	Relationship	Beta	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values	Decision
Ho1	MO -> PER	0.376	0.125	3.009	0.003	Rejected
Ho2	TO*MO -> PER	0.101	0.023	4.445	0.000	Rejected

As shown in table 4 above, the direct relationship between market orientation and SMEs performance is positive and significant at 5% as confirm from the beta coefficient of 0.376 and P value of 0.003. It means that market orientation considered as very important factor for SMEs PER and thus provides the basis of rejecting the Ho1 which state that market orientation does not relate to SMEs performance in Lagos State. The result is consistent with the work of Al-Asheq et al. (2021); Solikahan and Mohammad (2019) which found significant relationship between market orientation and SMEs performance. The finding is also align with the assumption of RBV theory.

Similarly, the moderation relationship between technological orientation and market orientation on SMEs performance is positive and significant at 5% as can be seen from the beta coefficient of 0.101 and P value of 0.000. This signifies that technological orientation and market orientation interact to significant influence SMEs performance and hence providing the basis for rejecting the Ho2 which state that technological orientation does not moderate the relationship between market orientation and SMEs performance in Lagos State.

5.0   Conclusion and Recommendation

Based on the findings of this study, it's concluded that technological orientation and market orientation are important to performance of SMEs in Lagos State, Nigeria. In other word, the study concluded that SMEs need both technological orientation and market orientation for higher performance. Therefore, the study recommends that SMEs should emphasize much on

developing strong market orientation and technological orientation since they are very important in increasing SMEs performance.

Limitation and Direction for Future Studies

Despite the significant contribution of this study, several limitations were highlighted and suggested the need for further studies to address them. First, this study used market orientation as unidimensional and suggested further investigation of all three dimensions (i.e., customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter-functional coordination) with the moderating role of technological orientation against SMEs performance. Second, the study is limited to only market orientation as the independent variable with technological orientation as the moderator on SMEs performance which resulted to 35.6% variance explained. It is suggested for future researches to look at other independent variables like learning orientation and or innovation capability with the moderating role of technological orientation.

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