

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN STRATEGIC ORIENTATION AND WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE NORTH WEST OF NIGERIAN SMES

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between strategic orientation and women entrepreneurship in the northwest region of Nigeria. To determine this, data was compiled from five hundred and eleven (511) randomly selected SMEs, using both cross-sectional and cluster design method. Subsequently, questionnaires were proportionately administered to the listed respondents through face-face, and retrieved likewise afterwards the completion. Eventually, results(s) from the study revealed that there exists a positive relationship between strategic orientation (SO) and women entrepreneurship SMEs and that majority if not all of the SMEs in the region rely on residual factors like consumer and marketing orientation to improve and enhance their entrepreneurship and competitive advantage. Factual as this, literature is not closed ended but open to further investigation. It is hoped that the result elicited from the study will add value to existing knowledge as well as serve as a referred source to policy makers, concerned owners/managers of SMEs within and outside the region and future researchers on the subject matter.

Keywords: Women entrepreneurship, strategic orientation, consumer, marketing orientation

1.0 Introduction

It is a known fact that women are an integral part of every society. They play key roles in the economic growth of their countries and of their families through participation, ownership and management of small-scale enterprises and businesses (Ekpe et al., 2010). In countries like the U.S.A, Indonesia and Malaysia, the

contribution of women entrepreneurship SMEs to their national gross domestic product (GDP) and employment opportunities is profound. In the USA, Indonesia and Malaysia women's yearly contribution to both GDP and employment generation is past 50%, 54%, 75% and 55% and 44% and 56%, respectively (SMEDAN, 2012).

However, in Nigeria this fact was until recently a far cry. The contribution of women entrepreneurship SMEs to the national GDP and employment generation is between 25% - 35% and 24% respectively. This is because of their paltry participation and ownership of SMEs which stands at 23% compared to ownership by men which stands at 77% implying that statistically only 10% of women owner's partake in the nation's economic decision making which also invariably explains their low-rate contributions to Nigerian economy, community and family development; quite detrimental to the nation's economy as well as responsible for the increased rate in poverty.

This being the case, the government and other institutions in the country have evolved strategies for alleviating poverty and for promoting women empowerment through the creation of financial services, social capital development, skill support to stimulate women involvement in micro enterprises. There is no doubt that the combined efforts by the government and the institutions have helped to alter the diametric of women to business.

In any case, since there are now an improved number of women owners of SMEs in the nation as well as in the Northwest region, there are indications that women entrepreneurs are experiencing highly competitive pressure hence, left with no appealing alternative but the adaptation of strategic orientation to help them improve their capacities for competitiveness. Thus, the aim of this study is to determine whether there exists a gap between strategic orientation and women

entrepreneurship SMEs in the Northwest region of Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Lack of women entrepreneurship competitiveness in Nigeria SMEs has triggered the need for the government, researchers and practitioners to come up with measures on how to deal with the issue strategically.

There had been several policies, programmes and projects designed to assist women, especially low-income women in their bid to achieve economic independence and to improve their participation in public life and the decision-making process. To achieve this, the federal government established the National Economic Entrepreneurship and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2004 which is largely a poverty reduction strategy document. It aims to address 4 targeted areas: (1) creation of wealth, (2) job creation, (3) poverty reduction, and (4) value added direction.

The purpose of the initiative is to address issues of gender gap, gender equality and women's entrepreneurship. The measure was to ensure equitable representation of women in all aspects of governance and the affirmative action of proportionate representation of not less than 30% representation is to be pursued where feasible. This measure has become necessary since the path of women entrepreneurship in Nigeria is noted to have been vulnerable by a number of obstacles. Vulnerability factors such as environmental, economic, social and political are more common in Northwest.

Environmental vulnerability comprises lack of infrastructure, bad governance, poverty, insecurity, group terrorists, banditry, etc. (Banerjee & Jackson, 2017).

Lack of strategic orientation is one of the main causes of women low-rate empowerment entrepreneurship in Nigeria particularly the SMEs. In a country like Nigeria, women entrepreneurs need dynamic capabilities such as strategic orientation in order to ensure their firm's strategic decisions on matters dealing with competitiveness, maintaining competitive advantage and improving performance (Teece, 2007; Teece, et al., 1997). Strategic orientation has the capacity to enhance the capability of women entrepreneurs and help them to sustain competitive advantage as well as enhance their operations effectively (Abiodun, 2014; Awoyemi, 2011).

Therefore, this study intends to fill the missing gap in existing literature concerning the impact of strategic orientation (marketing orientation and customer orientation) on women-entrepreneurship and how this can help to improve SMEs competitiveness and increase their competitive advantage in the Northwest of Nigeria.

Based on the above, the research questions of the study has been tailored to focus on the following

- Is there any relationship between strategic orientations and women entrepreneurship in Nigeria?
- What is the relationship between marketing orientation and women entrepreneurship?

What is the relationship between consumer orientation and women entrepreneurship?

To answer these research questions, this study will consider the following objectives

- To examine the relationship between strategic orientation and women entrepreneurship in Nigeria.
- To study the relationship between marketing orientation and women entrepreneurship SMEs in the Northwest.
- To investigate the relationship between consumer orientation on women entrepreneurship SMEs Northwest.

2.0 Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1 The Concept of Women Entrepreneurship

The defining feature of entrepreneurship in today's global economy is the focus on change in women's lives, particularly political and economic empowerment that translates into access to financial resources, increased opportunity for education and training, power to affect decision in their communities and independence in personal life choices.

Empowering women is the practice in which women obtain unrestricted access to different resources, which boosts the women's intervention or the capability to define life opportunities in an evolving economic, social, political, and developmental framework (The United Nations Goal, 2016). The women's proficiencies involve the capacity to control resources, express one's strategic decisions,

and make changes in positions in light of evolving limitations, reflecting women's mindfulness of the ability to accomplish objectives.

Women in Nigeria constitute almost 50% of the population, but their participation in economic and social activities is far below the country's potential. This is underscored when it is considered that their position is quite essential in the upholding of family structure and society. Their contribution is very vital to increasing local economic and social activity, enable competition, and improve cultural and public development.

Although studies have been undertaken on the significance of women entrepreneurship, women careers, women social well-being, women employment (Hala, 2012; Zeidan & Bahrami, 2011; Tlaiss, 2014; Hayfaa & Tlaiss, 2013; Faisal et al., 2017; Afza & Rashid, 2009; Bastian & Zali, 2016), none of these studies were conducted in Nigeria particularly in Northwest of the country.

2.2 Strategic Orientation

Strategy is a set of decisions and actions that managers take to attain superior performance compared to their rivals (Parthasarthy, 2007). Strategies are substantial in explaining variations in organizational effectiveness such as efficiency, profitability and long-term performance (Beard & Dess, 1981).

Strategic orientations are the guiding principles that influence an organization's marketing and strategy-making activities. They represent the elements of the organization's culture that guide interactions within marketplace, both with

customers and competitors (Charles et al., 2002). Studies in marketing have focused almost entirely on maintaining a market orientation, established on the acceptance and implementation of the marketing concept. A market orientation is not the only viable strategic orientation, though, many successful organizations have detailed or relied or fall back to a production orientation, established on the belief that production competences, cost minimization, and mass distribution can be used to effectively deliver quality product (goods and services) to the consumer at smart prices.

There are studies that emphasize on selling orientation, holding the view that consumers will purchase more products (goods and services) if aggressive sales and advertising methods are employed. This approach emphasizes short-term sales maximization over long-term relationship. Apart from studies conducted on the role of the market/product orientation, little is done to examine the role of the strategic orientation (marketing & consumer) and its effects on women entrepreneurship SMEs in the Northwest of Nigeria.

2.3 Marketing Orientation and Women entrepreneurship

A basic advantage of being market oriented is to maintain the creation of superior customer value and continuous superior performance of the business (Slater & Olson, 2001). The relationship between market orientation and firm performance has been explored by means of a wide range of methodologies, contexts, and measures of market orientation (Chin et al., 2013). Several studies have found support

for the fundamental market orientation performance relationship. For example, Nwokah (2008) shows that market orientation has a positive and significant relationship to a range of performance measures, including marketing effectiveness, sales growth, market share, and profitability.

A few general observations can be derived from the broad body of performance-based market orientation research. It appears that the fundamental link between market orientation and women entrepreneurship has yet to be fully explored and supported. Issues of perception, varying results perhaps due to context, and differences in measurement and methodology have created a set of findings that is rich and interesting but somewhat lacking in clearly established grounding from which to advance knowledge. This study proposes to explain fully how women perceived market orientation and how it helps to empower their entrepreneurship in the northwest of Nigeria.

2.4 Consumer Orientation and Women entrepreneurship

In recent time, consumers have come to pay less attention to fewer real product differences and showed less brand loyalty, and are rather becoming more quality sensitive in their search for value. Consider what consumers have today that they did not have yesterday. The key goal of marketing is to develop deep, enduring relationship with consumers and organizations that could directly or indirectly affect the success of the business activities. To be successful, an entrepreneur must identify new customer benefits from

the customer's view, utilizing core competencies from the business domain and selecting and managing business partners from its collaborative networks. In other words, the main task of entrepreneurship is to devise marketing activities and assemble fully integrated programs to create, communicate and deliver value for consumers.

In entrepreneurship research, consumer orientation has been found to have a positive impact on firm performance. Firms with high levels of consumer orientation tend to constantly scan and monitor their customers in order to find new opportunities and strengthen their competitive advantage

Despite this, it is unfortunate that with the exception of few researches like (Johnson & Kuehn, 1987; Brush, 1992; Cooper et al., 1995; Butler et al., 2000), most researchers on women entrepreneurship have not thought on the need to explore on the importance of consumer information utilization. Based on the existing literature, there are less empirical studies on the consumer orientation of women entrepreneurship. Therefore, this study would explain how women perceived consumer orientation toward empowering their entrepreneurship in the northwest of Nigeria.

3.1 Methodology

This research has opted to employ the use of descriptive and causal research, since the main objective of the study is to examine the relationship between strategic orientations on women entrepreneurship SMEs. Descriptive research will help to

This study will equally be seen to have also employed the quantitative survey method of using questionnaire as instrument for data collection. This method was also chosen because it was found to be the most appropriate method for this study.

3.4 Population and Sample Size

The target population for this study was 2,903 SMEs, registered in North-West of Nigeria, operating in Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara states (NBS & SMEDAN, 2017). This number of SMEs were selected and considered appropriate for the study's sample size and to represent the entire population of SMEs (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013) since they share the same characteristic. The sample size for this study, which ranged from 2,900 to 3,000 is therefore 341 (Sekaran 2013). However, 50% of the actual sample were added to avoid sample error or issues of non-response. As such 511 questionnaires were eventually distributed to SMEs (Bartlett et al., 2001).

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

Data collection is the processes of gathering data for a survey using both primary and secondary sources (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). The primary source of data is required if the secondary data is unable to help in achieving the objectives of the research. This may be qualitative or quantitative; and may comprise observation, questionnaires, and interviews or focus group (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). The study employed the method of self-

administered questionnaire for data collection among SMEs in Kebbi, Sokoto and Zamfara states all located in the Northwest region of Nigeria.

4.1 Data Presentation

The data used for this study were collected from owners and managers of SMEs in Nigeria. 511 questionnaires were personally administered to the sampled SMEs. 325 questionnaires were returned, signifying a 75% total response rate. However, out of 387 questionnaires, about 62 questionnaires were found to be a significant part of those questionnaires not completed by the respondents or rejected from further analysis. Leaving the researcher with 325 usable questionnaires for analysis, representing a 63% of the valid response rate.

In conducting a statistical analysis, data screening is essential. Preliminary analyses were performed to help the study identify any potential violations of the key assumptions concerning an application of multivariate procedures of data analysis (Hair et al., 2010).

4.1.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Specifically, the demographics characteristics examined in this study include; position, gender, the level of education, ownership type, the number of employees, business location, the age of the business, and stage of the business. The Table 1 below shows the frequencies and the percentages of the participants.

highlight the characteristics of the population, variability and characteristics of the organizations; while hypotheses testing and correlation methods will be used to determine the relationship among the variables.

The study has also considered the use of a cross sectional research design. Data will be gathered at one point in time to meet the study requirements (Creswell, 2012). The importance of this approach is that, it is more economical and it takes little time unlike the longitudinal study approach.

3.2 The Research Framework

In view of the number of literatures reviewed and suggestions filtered from many studies, this study has opted to work along one framework, which is to carry out an investigation on the relationship between strategic orientation and women entrepreneurship SMEs in North west of Nigeria. The research framework has two independent variables as represented by the strategic orientation of the firm’s management viz: Marketing orientation, consumer orientation. The dependent variable is represented by women entrepreneurship SMEs. The conceptual framework for the study is therefore shown as thus.

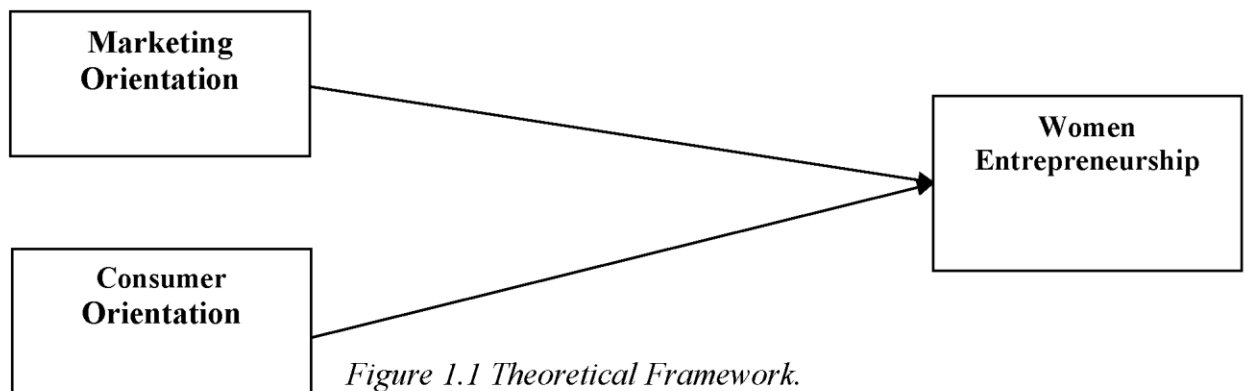


Figure 1.1 Theoretical Framework.

3.3 Research Design

This study has considered the forgoing facts and thus adopted the survey research design. The aim is to assess beliefs, positions and judgments about a given situation through the collection of primary data from respondents (Creswell, 2012). This aside this method was chosen because it allows the researcher to collect quantitative data and provide explanations

on the basis of statistical evidence amassed. It allows the researcher to discover the possible reasons for a particular relationship between variables, as suggested and the models of the relationship generated (Saunders et al., 2009). Therefore, survey research was chosen because it is efficient, fast and provides an accurate assessment of information about a given population.

Table 1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Items	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Job position in the firm	Owner	64	19.80
	CEO	140	43.20
	Manager	53	16.40
	Others	67	20.70
Gender	Male	211	65.10
	Female	113	34.90
Education Qualification	SSEC/DIP	42	13.00
	ND/NCE	142	43.30
	HND/Degree	108	33.30
	PGD/Master	19	5.90
	PhD	13	4.00
Type of Business	Sole proprietorship	56	17.30
	Partnership	162	50.00
	Joint venture	91	28.10
	Limited liability	14	4.30
Number of Employees	10-49	217	67.00
	50-99	84	25.90
	100-199	23	7.10
Business Office	Kebbi	83	25.60
	Sokoto	165	50.60
	Zamfara	76	23.50
Years Operation	1-5	133	41.00
	6-10	116	35.80
	11-15	63	19.40
	16+	12	3.70
Business Stage	Introduction	121	37.30
	Growth	117	36.10
	Maturity	51	15.70
	Decline	35	10.80

Measurement Model Analyses

To determine the individual constructs measures validity and reliability, the two-step modelling approach was used as

recommended by Henseler et al., 2009). Firstly the study started with measuring the convergent validity and reliability, followed by discriminant validity. Below Table 2

indicates the internal consistency and reliability. As seen the rule of thumb, construct validity was used to determine if the loadings of each item are greater than 0.7; composite reliability also is greater than 0.7; average variance extracted should be greater than 0.5 (Henseler et al., 2014).

In order to meet the threshold of CR 0.70 and above, and AVE 0.50 and above, the following items were deleted Consumer Orientation 4 items, Marketing Orientation

3 items, Women Entrepreneurship 1 item, as recommended by (Sarstedt et al., 2016). In this study CR value for all the constructs were above the threshold value, the CR range from 0.851 to 0.882, this indicates the reliability of the measurement model. The convergence validity of the constructs, where the constructs explain half of the variance of their indicators, the result indicates the AVE values ranging from 0.573 to 0.649; this concludes that the convergent validity is established.

Table 2 Measurement Model Analyses

Constructs	Items	Loadings	CR	AVE
Consumer Orientation	CO_1	0.744	0.882	0.630
	CO_2	0.824		
	CO_3	0.807		
	CO_4	0.828		
	CO_5	0.796		
	CO_6	0.761		
Marketing Orientation	MO_1	0.740	0.851	0.573
	MO_4	0.745		
	MO_5	0.759		
	MO_6	0.811		
	MO_7	0.744		
	MO_9	0.738		
Women Entrepreneurship	WMEP_1	0.795	0.864	0.649
	WMEP_2	0.836		
	WMEP_3	0.748		
	WMEP_4	0.871		
	WMEP_5	0.772		

Discriminant validity was measured to see the uniqueness of each construct (Sarstedt et al., 2016). The study measured discriminant validity using Fornell-Larckert criterion Sarstedt et al., 2016),

and Henseler’s heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) of correlation as recommended by Henseler et al., (2014). Thus, the discriminant validity was measured by comparing the square root of the AVE

for each construct with the correlation presented in the matrix. Table 3 below presents the results of the Fornell-Lerckert.

Also supported by HTMT result presented in Table 4, thus, discriminant validity is established with HTMT0.90.

Table 3 Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Lackert Criterion)

Constructs	1	2	3
Consumer Orientation	0.794		
Marketing Orientation	0.592	0.757	
Women Entrepreneurship	0.506	0.549	0.806

Table 4 Discriminant Validity (HTMT Criterion)

Constructs	1	2	3
Consumer Orientation			
Marketing Orientation	0.572		
Women Entrepreneurship	0.625	0.675	

Hypotheses Testing

The structural model (bootstrapping) specifically analyzed the effects of Strategic Orientation (Customer orientation and marketing Orientation) on women entrepreneurship hypotheses H1: Consumer Orientation is significantly related to women entrepreneurship. H 2: Marketing Orientation is significantly related to women entrepreneurship.

The interpretation of the hypotheses analysis is summarized in Table 5. The H1 indicates that Consumer Orientation has a

significant positive effect on Women Entrepreneurship, the result indicates ($\beta =0.277$; $t=4.522$, $p>0.000$). Thus, H1 is supported. The finding is consistent with the previous studies of (Fadahunsi & Kargwell, 2015; Eggers et al., 2013). Also, the H2 reveals that there is a significant positive influence of Marketing Orientation on the Women Entrepreneurship, the result indicates ($\beta =0.389$; $t= 6.531$, $p>0.000$) and the result of this study is consistent with the findings of (Chin et al., 2013; Lamore et al., 2013). Therefore, the hypothesis H2 is supported.

Table 5 Hypotheses Testing

Hypo	Relationship		Beta	STD Error	T value	P value
H 1	Consumer orientation --> Women Entrepreneurship		0.27	0.062	4.522	0.000
H 2	Marketing Orientation --> Women Entrepreneurship		0.38	0.059	6.531	0.000

The study assessed the effect size (f^2) using the Cohen's (1988) formula as the stated rule of thumb, where the effects f^2 values of 0.02 indicates small, 0.15 stands for medium and 0.35 represents a large effect. This is unlike the case of direct relationships model where there is only one

endogenous construct (Women Entrepreneurship). The effect size of this model is therefore concerned with one endogenous latent construct (Women Entrepreneurship). Below are the results as presented in Table 7

Table 7 Effect Size

Latent Constructs	R ² included	R ² Excluded	f ²	Effect Size
Women Entrepreneurship	0.352			
Consumer orientation		0.078	0.423	large
Marketing Orientation		0.148	0.315	medium

5.1 Discussion

The main objective of this study is designed to examine the effect of strategic orientation (Consumer and Marketing Orientation) on the Women Entrepreneurship SMEs in Nigeria. To meet this objective, hypotheses were proposed and tested using PLS- SEM 4.0 bootstrapping method (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Analytically, the objective was achieved. Specifically, to meet this determination hypotheses H1 and H2, were structured to examine the relationship between Consumer orientation and Marketing Orientation on Women Entrepreneurship. All the hypotheses were tested and the result indicates there is relationship between strategic orientation and Women Entrepreneurship.

The result of this study confirms the impact of strategic orientation on the Entrepreneurship of Women SMEs in Nigeria. The findings of this study focused on the previous studies, which acknowledged the influence of firm's Consumer orientation and Marketing

Orientation. The present study found that 63% of SMEs in Northwest of Nigeria acknowledged the importance of strategic orientation of firm's resources to improve competitiveness and enhance women entrepreneurship.

H1 indicates that Consumer orientation has a significant impact on SME women entrepreneurship. The result shows that Consumer orientation was able to explain 28% of on women entrepreneurship. The result of this study is consistent with the previous studies such as (Eggers et al., 2013). H2 point out that 39% of Marketing Orientation has more significant influence on women entrepreneurship. This result agrees with the earlier studies (Lamore et al., 2013).

5.2 Conclusion

The finding of this study has established empirical evidence on the need of Women Entrepreneurship to create and adopt a strategic orientation as well as decision in determining competitiveness and increase performance measurements. In struggling to

create effectiveness, improve competitive advantage and enhance Women Entrepreneurship, Owners-managers of SMEs may consider the current model and the findings of this study to affiliate customer and marketing orientation as a guide to reflect its strategic orientation in a competitive environment. In essence, the results of this study recommends that firm's

strategic orientation and market competitiveness are extremely important as they would help women entrepreneurship strategically, in matter relating to consumer orientation and then rebuilding of its strategies to create a sustainable competitive advantage and enhance women entrepreneurship in the Northern Nigeria.

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