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## ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION AND PERFORMANCE OF DAIRY MICRO & SMALL ENTERPRISES IN KIAMBU COUNTY: KENYAN PERSPECTIVE

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### Abstract

The main objective was to ascertain how entrepreneurial orientation affect the performance of dairy micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in Kiambu County. The current study was anchored on positivistic paradigm. The investigation followed a cross-sectional descriptive survey. The target population involved all 175 licensed Dairy Micro and Small Enterprises selling milk from milk dispensers and milk bars within the three regions of Nairobi West, Nairobi Central and Thika regions. A total of 120 survey questionnaires were delivered to respondents who were managers /owners of micro or small enterprises dealing in sale of milk and its products and registered by the Kenya Dairy Board. The sample size for the analysis was determined using Cochran's formula. Inferential statistics comprised simple regression analysis). The study unveiled that entrepreneurial orientation had a significant influence on performance of Dairy MSEs in Kiambu County. The study recommended that entrepreneurs should continue being innovative in presenting new items in the market and in the business models. Enterprises should be aggressive and make competitive moves that keep them ahead of the competitors.

**Key Words:** Entrepreneurial Orientation, Firm Performance, Dairy MSEs, Kenyan perspective

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## Introduction

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and its association to the performance of enterprise has achieved a substantial traction in the last few years of study. The argument advanced by Leitoa and Franco (2011) is that enterprises perceived to be entrepreneurial oriented take more risks compared to others and are able to identify better and more opportunities in the emerging markets. In their explanation of EO, Covin and Lumpkin (2011), term Entrepreneurial Orientation as a process of pursuing innovative business opportunities regardless of resources available in an enterprise. According to Okeyo, Gathungu, and K'Obonyo (2016), firms with a high EO have the potential to leap ahead of competitors to the market and hence achieve higher success than firms with low EO values. The degree of control of internal locus, autonomy, competitiveness and innovativeness is exhibited by entrepreneurial firms and individuals (Chen, Du & Chen, 2011).

Inventiveness, individuality, proactivity, risk-taking, and competitive aggression are among the components of entrepreneurial orientation (EO), which Mickiewicz, Sauka, and Stephan (2010) claim enable organizations to stay ahead of the competition and increase success. The EO has become a significant construct in entrepreneur-related literature when it comes to comprehending entrepreneurial processes. In fact, according to Covin and Miller (2014), EO is one of the few areas of entrepreneurship research that has generated a significant volume of research. The term "entrepreneurial mindset" refers to the strategies, procedures, and styles of making decisions that owners and managers employ while acting according to the entrepreneurship. It represents how a company creates value, independent of what entrepreneurial activity it engages in (such as new market entrance) (Mickiewicz, Sauka & Stephan, 2010).

The orientation of entrepreneur has come out as the main establishment in literature of

entrepreneurship when dealing with knowing better procedures of entrepreneurship. In reality, EO is a field in research of entrepreneurship where a growing framework of study is noticeable (Covin & Miller, 2014). The establishment of EO represents the techniques, activities and style of making decisions that owners or managers apply to run their work accordingly. It shows how a company works in creation of value concerning the activities of entrepreneurship (Mickiewicz, Sauka & Stephan, 2010).

The dairy MSEs in Kiambu County are crucial in employment creation, provision of food and income to the enterprises involved. There has been a continuous upward demand for safe and high-quality milk hence increased investment in the subsector (Kenya Dairy Board, 2014). Although other factors such as availability of milk and infrastructure impact these MSEs in this subsector, performance is crucial because it measures how well an enterprise can survive in an ever-changing external environment (Awino, 2009). The location of the study was the County of Kiambu. This location is unique because of its proximity to Nairobi, a city with a growing population hence high demand for milk and milk products. Other studies carried out on MSEs indicate that the county has good infrastructure, availability of business information, finance accessibility and training (Kamunge *et al.*, 2014). The Kiambu county government in its development plan is committed to funding various sectors key among them being the dairy subsector (County Government of Kiambu, 2018). There are number of dairy processors in Kiambu County including Palmhouse Dairies, Githunguri Dairies, Limuru Milk Processors, Ndumberi Dairies among others (County Government of Kiambu, 2018). This is confirmation that the market for dairy is expanding. This subsector has received limited local focus by studies that aim to establish the subsector performance which depends on how the enterprises involved can align their entrepreneurial orientation and

resources with an external environment that is ever changing.

### **Research Problem**

Hakala and Kohtamaki (2010) aver that characteristics of entrepreneurial orientation enable entrepreneurs to conceive new ideas and enter new markets in anticipation of performance through traits such as innovation, autonomy and risk taking. Knight (1921) in arguing out entrepreneurial orientation theory opined that all activities carried out in an enterprise are related to its performance. Smart and Conant (1994), however, found no remarkable link between performance and entrepreneurial orientation.

In Kenya, the MSEs in the dairy subsector have received focus due to their potential for employment generation, incomes, food and contributed KES 176 billion to the GDP (GoK, 2016). Other benefits of micro enterprises in the dairy subsector in Kenya include creation of economic progress, prosperity, new products and services creation, results and processes for use by manufacturers and customers. This is echoed in a study of the dairy subsector in Tanzania (Alexopoulou, 2011) which reported that the subsector plays a role in creating jobs, reducing poverty and income distribution. In Albania, MSEs employ 71.3% of the total employees in the nation with 54% of the firms being in retail and services sector (Dushku & Pilahar, 2013). The result of a study in Norway on entrepreneurial orientation of farm businesses (Veidal & Flaten, 2014) postulated that business performance might be improved by the ability of owner/manager of an enterprise rather than entrepreneurial orientation.

Previous studies done both globally and locally on performance of enterprises as a function of different variables have made a substantial contribution in the field. A study by Fauzul, Takenouchi and Yukiko (2010) on EO and SMEs' enhancement in Sri Lanka found that entrepreneurs with good mindset will automatically steer their firms to achieve better

results. An investigation by Chen, Du and Chen (2011) linking the behaviour of entrepreneurs and entrepreneurial orientation concluded positive and significant relationship. From the cited studies, an investigation of EO on performance of dairy MSEs has not been sufficiently tackled, thus the current study seeks to close the gap in the Kenyan context. Consequently, the major question that this investigation addresses therefore is: What is the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance of Dairy MSEs in Kiambu County?

### **Materials**

#### ***Theoretical Foundation***

This study is guided by Entrepreneurial Orientation Theory (EOT). Entrepreneurial orientation theory (EOT) falls within the broader field of entrepreneurship theory which is a general theory that overarches entrepreneurship-based theories (Acs & Audretsch, 2003; Nybakk, 2012). The assumptions underlying the theory are that the relationship between entrepreneurial individuals and how they organize factors of production, maximizing utility function, in which money wealth and income are created, among the many disparate variables can lead to firm performance (Nyasetia, 2013). The entrepreneurial orientation theory is advanced by Knight (1921) and defined as practices, processes and activities involved in making decisions that an enterprise undertakes to enhance performance. Cantillon (1755) defined an entrepreneur as an individual who makes decisions and takes risks for economic development.

Schumpeter (1934) described entrepreneurs as agents of innovation who always seek for change and opportunity exploitation. The entrepreneurial orientation dimensions are: autonomy which reflects independent action of a business to ensure ideas are implemented (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996); proactiveness which shows how an enterprise anticipates and exploits opportunities (Kirzner, 1973; Covin &

Lumpkin, 2011); risk-taking that directs to the way to spend both pecuniary and non-pecuniary resources to actions whose outcome is uncertain; innovativeness which represents a tendency by an enterprise to go beyond the status quo (Schumpeter, 1934), and competitive aggressiveness which refers to an enterprise intensity to deal with competition (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996).

This theory has been criticized as being an oversimplified argument and that an individual's traits/characteristics alone may not make an entrepreneur (Shapiro & Sokol, 1982). Other research studies have argued that small enterprises need to develop managerial and entrepreneurial skills to ensure the survival of their enterprises (Peljhan *et al*, 2012; Mappiagu & Agussalim, 2013). The entrepreneurial orientation theory is significant to the research as it clarifies different measurements of entrepreneurial orientation and how they link with growth.

### ***Empirical Review***

Entrepreneurial orientation is listed among the most researched areas of entrepreneurship (George & Marino, 2011). Innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness are the most frequent behavioural dimension methods in EO, according to Linton (2019). Covin and Slevin (1989) also agreed with this viewpoint. Two new entrepreneurial orientation elements as the entrepreneurial orientation idea evolved, namely autonomy and competitive aggressiveness were proposed (Saha *et al*, 2017).

These behavioural characteristics, according to Covin and Slevin (1989), have been tasked with capturing the entrepreneurial standards and procedures that exist in a firm. The amount of independence shown by entrepreneurs is seen to be important to firm's success. Independence includes notions such as independence, autonomous action, and decisions taken in presenting or executing ideas or visions until they are completed (Lumpkin & Dess, 2015).

Entrepreneurs have more flexibility when it comes to combining and organizing resources. The researchers identified two forms of autonomy in the context of strategy creation when it comes to entrepreneurship (Lumpkin & Dess, 2015). The former relates to the autonomy of commercial operations and decision-making at lower levels of the company, while the latter refers to a definitive choice in which the vision is accomplished via individual leadership. These forms of autonomy, according to (Lumpkin & Dess, 2015), are compatible with the idea of leadership orientation. The degree of independence in a company may be established by the company's size, overseeing conduct, or ownership. Independence refers to property rights in businesses when the owner/manager is the primary decision maker (Lumpkin & Des, 2015).

Entrepreneurship, according to Lumpkin and Dess (2015), necessitates an autonomous attitude. Employees and owners/managers can practice independent ideas and processes for the firm in this research, which looks at independence from an entrepreneurial viewpoint. It looks at the employee's power and making decisions duties, and the owner/role managers in process of making decision. Individual leadership drives the vision; thus, autonomy entails critical decisions. Personal autonomy, it is widely agreed, allows for entrepreneurship and decision-making in lower-level initiatives. The amount of autonomy varies depending on the size and ownership of the management style, according to an examination of ideas of independence. Property rights, according to Lumpkin and Dess (2015), imply independence in businesses when the owner/manager is the primary decision maker. The amount of independence is examined from the standpoint of the owner/manager, who takes decisions regarding the business activities in which the firm will participate. This is in accordance with (Lumpkin & Dess, 2015), who argue that the propensity toward independence and sovereign

action is a necessary constituent of EO. Some scholars have studied independent behaviour measurements and feel that autonomy is a trend.

Autonomy is considered as a key factor in deciding to work for oneself. According to Korman and Stöckmann (2014), offering autonomous work is fundamentally more motivating than employment that is not. It has been proven that having a high amount of work autonomy improves job satisfaction and motivates job performance. Employee independence may be defined as granting workers autonomy and allowing them to choose the methods by which they will attain their objectives, rather than the objectives themselves. Employees who demonstrate their ability to think creatively are frequently praised for their freedom. Employee self-motivation, which has been proven to be a significant element in encouraging employee creativity, may benefit a free and autonomous workplace. Organizational structure can sometimes contribute to an increase in lesser degrees of autonomy. Employees, teams, supervisors, and independent teams may all contribute to the success of a company.

Proactiveness, according to Marsick and Watkins (2015), refers to the ability to take action when the circumstance calls for it. It has a forward-thinking attitude, with a proclivity to look for new possibilities to provide new goods and services in predicting future demand, helping the company to acquire a competitive advantage. Proactiveness is the firm's willingness to support the creation and implementation of innovations ahead of time, allowing for growth and improved performance. It is one of the most crucial entrepreneurship aspects since it revolves around recognizing opportunities (Hu, Wang, Zhang, & Bin, 2018). As a strategic stance, it adopts a forward-thinking approach in which it searches out and recognizes potentially significant societal concerns, and then invests in initiatives that assist society limit harm (Onishi, 2013). Certainly, previous studies on

entrepreneurial orientation have used the above mentioned in the measurement of the variable by incorporating research indicators that emphasize continuous improvement in the operation of social enterprises from operational methods to quick response to social needs and long-term social impact (Tepthong, 2014). Another important aspect of proactiveness in firms, according to Helm and Anderson (2010), is that it is a requirement of leadership in these businesses. The leader is viewed as a change agent who will instigate behaviour changes that will enable for quick action to take advantage of the current market scenario. As a result, its leadership may be used as a proxy for proactiveness.

Fatoki (2014), in a survey of small firms in the South African retail market, shows that small businesses may introduce new production lines of inventiveness and alter production lines, but they have inadequate research and development activities and risks. It entails training the entrepreneurial skills to innovate, and businesses are eager to explore new concepts and gain creative experience (Engelen et al., 2014). It also includes the urge to innovate between the want to try new goods or services and the duty to be at the cutting edge of existing state-of-the-art practice. Supporting new ideas and experiments, addressing issues, inventing solutions, and producing new goods and services are all examples of this (Hong et al., 2013). Perceptions of market changes and competition are taken into account, and necessary action is taken to stay competitive.

Freel (2015) provides novel approaches to the introduction of new goods or materials, the search for new raw material sources, the creation of new markets, the organization of new businesses, or the development or acceptance of new commodities, or processes. Furthermore, the entrepreneurial orientation innovation concept is consistent with the findings of (Autio, Sapienza, & Almeida 2016) on corporate innovation as a means for businesses to innovate, generate new ideas, or embrace innovation. The notion of innovation

in entrepreneurial orientation has a long history in the literature on innovation.

Anwar (2018) has shown that among Pakistani SMEs, an innovative strategy is a significant element of competitiveness and performance. Evolving markets are known for being volatile, chaotic, and unpredictable (Alam et al. 2019). Innovativeness remain a strategic resource that a company may use to deal with internal and also external changes. It is critical to invest in innovativeness in order to get a competitive edge and achieve high performance in a chaotic environment. Innovativeness aids SMEs in improving their performance and surviving in volatile marketplaces (Kraus et al. 2012). However, creativity alone may not be sufficient. Entering a new market, establishing a new brand, and developing new products all need a significant level of risk-taking (Brettel, Chomik & Flatten, 2015). Empirical data suggests that top management who are more risk averse add more value to their companies (Danso et al. 2016; Ferris et al. 2012). Furthermore, risk-taking inclination is particularly important for proprietors and management of SMEs that compete in emerging markets, as risk-taking activities improve financial success in these markets (Danso et al. 2016).

According to Nonaka & Toyama (2007), most managers in the Western world are still baffled by Japanese corporations. Not because they are very effective or inexpensive. However, it has gradually improved, and its position in the international market and competitiveness of environment is unquestionably improving. Their success is based not on their employees and management of their production concepts, such as seniority systems, low-cost sources of capital, employees, and customer cooperation relationships, but on their ability to create organizational knowledge and experience. It entails a one-of-a-kind and original strategy that is carried out in a systematic, progressive, and logical manner (Nonaka & Toyama, 2007). Customers, rivals, government agencies, and analysts acquire knowledge about the future

through external and market forecasts, technology, products, changes in competition, problematic and troubled times, to engage in innovation and adaptation to accomplish continuous innovation. Work experience and training refers to the information and abilities gained through time in a certain profession (Sai Manohar & Pandit, 2014).

Existing studies argue in the reviewed literature context that a link is established within the entrepreneurial orientation and growth aspects in a firm. According to Zainol and Daud (2011), EO constructs including proactiveness and innovativeness have impact on firm performance. Further, it is argued by Westberg and Wincent (2008) that efficiency in the entrepreneurs' undertakings and also the experience as far as the external developments are concerned greatly affects the survival of a firm. In support of argument Gathungu *et al.* (2014), conclude that orientation in an entrepreneurial way and performance index of any organization relate in a positive manner. A study by Kristianen *et al* (2003) reported that variables gender, age and individual upbringing have an impact on firm performance.

Freiling and Lütke Schelhowe (2014) investigated the influence of entrepreneurial approach on internationalization performance and speed. This was based on a survey of 346 well-established businesses. The empirical data for this study was collected in 2004 and 2005 as part of a collaborative research effort on the internationalization process of businesses. First, structured in-depth interviews with industry representatives were performed to gain a better knowledge of the somewhat novel structures and to choose a realistic collection of things. Second, the quantitative dataset was created using a structured questionnaire. The findings demonstrate that the broadly defined entrepreneurship construct is a key driver of business success, and that all aspects, regardless of whether they are exploratory or exploitative, have a role. Entrepreneurship accounts for 39% of total worldwide performance. In terms of the second dependent

variable, the entrepreneurial construct has a minor impact on growth. The very strong influence of entrepreneurship on performance as well as the comparatively minor effect on growth are both novel findings in the field of entrepreneurship research. It is possible that this is due to a broader definition of entrepreneurship. Because of the extra exploitative elements, the influence of entrepreneurship on performance may be greater than in earlier research.

Shan, Song, and Ju (2016) assessed entrepreneurial motivation and performance. The study gathered data from 153 new enterprises to test the suggested theoretical model. While this study finding show that faster innovation leads to better performance, the actual data contradicts popular belief. Innovation speed rises, not decreases, as a result of creativity. Risk-taking slows down, not speeds up, invention. Finally, proactiveness has an upside-down U-shaped impact on the rate of innovation.

Many studies exist on entrepreneurial orientation in developed economies but minimal documented attention has been given to developing economies such as India, Russia, sub-Saharan Africa and other countries (Lan & Wu, 2010; Shirokova *et al*, 2013). Even though there is empirical evidence linking entrepreneurial orientation and positive outcomes, there are few studies on performance of dairy MSEs in developing nations resulting in inconclusive evidence to support or contradict such study findings. In the same

vein, some of these studies have only emphasized an entrepreneur's characteristics as the only factors that influence growth. The current investigation endeavoured to clarify whether the link that revolves around entrepreneurial orientation of an enterprise is in agreement or is in contradiction to the above findings.

### Methodology

The study used a descriptive cross-sectional survey design and positivist philosophy, and its target population was 175 dairy MSEs in Kiambu County. Primary data was acquired via semi-structured questionnaires. To investigate the importance of the correlations between the variables and test the hypotheses, the data were analyzed at a 95% confidence level using inferential statistics specifically simple regression analysis. To make the analyzed data easier to understand, tables were used to present it.

### Results

The objective was to establish the effect of Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) on performance of Dairy MSEs in Kiambu County. The formulated hypothesis was  $H_{01}$ : *Entrepreneurial Orientation has no significant influence on performance of Dairy MSEs in Kiambu County*. The derived statistical results from a simple regression analysis are presented in Table 1.



**Table 1: Regression Results for the Effect of Entrepreneurial Orientation on Performance**

**Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.769 <sup>a</sup>	.591	.587	.40392	.591	148.999	1	103	.000	1.720

a. Predictors: (Constant), Entrepreneurial Orientation

b. Dependent Variable: Firm Performance

**ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	24.309	1	24.309	148.999	.000 <sup>b</sup>
1 Residual	16.805	103	.163		
Total	41.114	104			

a. Dependent Variable: Firm Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Entrepreneurial Orientation

**Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.349	.235		1.485	.140
1	Entrepreneurial Orientation	.950	.078	.769	12.207	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Firm Performance

A significant positive correlation between entrepreneurial orientation and business performance was concluded by the study (R=.769). According to the coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = .591$ ), entrepreneurial orientation accounts for 59.1% of the variance in business performance. (F=148.999,  $p < 0.05$ ). The model was statistically significant. The coefficient table's t-value ( $\beta = .950$ ,  $t = 12.207$ ,  $p < 0.05$  further demonstrates the substantial link. As a result, the hypothesis that there is no significant association between entrepreneurial orientation and firm performance is rejected. This illustrates that entrepreneurial orientation is essential in determining the success of MSEs

in the dairy sector. Therefore, the hypothesis,  $H_{01}$  is rejected

The simple regression model changed to:

$$Y = .349 + 0.950X_1$$

Where Y = Firm performance,  $X_1$  = Entrepreneurial orientation

The equation shows that in absence of entrepreneurial orientation, firm performance is 0.349 and when entrepreneurial orientation is introduced by one unit firm performance changes by 0.950. This implies that entrepreneurial orientation is a good predictor of firm performance

## Conclusions

The study found that entrepreneurial approach has an impact on business performance. According to the study, there is a significant link between an entrepreneurial mindset and business performance. According to the coefficient of determination, entrepreneurial orientation accounted for 59.1% of the variation in business performance. The F value also showed that the overall model was significant. The substantial t-value in the coefficient table provided more evidence of the significant association. As a result, the hypothesis that entrepreneurial orientation has no discernible effect on the performance of Dairy MSEs in Kiambu County is rejected. Instead, this illustrates that entrepreneurial orientation is essential in determining the firm performance of Dairy MSEs in the county.

## Recommendations

From the study findings it was evident that EO has a positive and significant effect on the performance of Dairy MSEs. This therefore implies that Dairy MSEs can enhance the aspects of EO in a bid to improve their performance. Dairy MSEs as well as the Kenya Dairy Board can adopt policies that will encourage the Dairy MSEs to adopt strategies that will increase the autonomy of their employees. The policies should also lead to strategies that increase the firms' pro-activeness and aggressiveness. Further as per the findings that EO has a positive and substantial effect on the performance of Dairy MSEs it would be prudent for managers of Dairy MSEs to put more emphasis on the entrepreneurial orientation practice in their day-to-day activities. Ensuring that the employees are not limited on how they perform their tasks and that they are free to try on new ways of doing things without the fear of risk would lead to a better performance of the Dairy MSEs. More so managers who have the ability to compete aggressively is an added advantage to the Dairy MSEs.

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