



CUSTOMER PERSPECTIVE AS A DETERMINANT OF PERFORMANCE IN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES. A CASE OF ELGEYO MARAKWET COUNTY, KENYA

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluates Customer perspective as a determinant of Performance in Small and Medium Enterprises. The objectives of the study are; to evaluate the effects of customer perspective on performance. The study was informed by Balance Score Card theory and a survey research design was used. A population of two thousand small and medium enterprise business persons in Elgeyo Marakwet County was assessed. A sample size of 95 from the target population was used. The study employed a stratified sampling technique for the sub-county and then simple random sampling. Data was analyzed by multiple regressions. The study found out that the County Government did not support to SMEs in giving loans and these retarded their sales growth in my SME continuously. This was therefore an implication that there was no revenue growth, no increased market hare in my SME and little increased return on investment in my SME. Correlation results revealed a significant and positive relationship. Customers were satisfied on how staff respond to their grievances in my SME .Finding from objective three found to be less significant to the performance SMEs, as the county working environment was not aware of their conducive for SME, it was found out that Electronic commerce system were not used by SME in the County and neither did achieve any social economic goals and that SME did not increased process capacity. It was found out that H_{01} : on relationship between customer perspective and performance and the hypothesis was therefore not supported, therefore the hypothesis result was rejected ($\beta = 0.299$, $p < 0.009$). The study made the following recommendations: - There is need for increased product quality in my SME, maintain customer loyalty, increased customer satisfaction pertaining to staff:- customer relationship in my SME and on time deliveries to customers are valued by my enterprise. The study suggests that other study be done to analyze, future research could verify the dimensions developed in this study and to enhance the generalizability of the research findings, future inquiries could employee more diversified samples across genders and diverse international customer environments.

Key Words: Strategic Planning, Organization's performance, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs).

Introduction

Customer perspective captures the ability of the organization to provide quality goods and services, the effectiveness of their delivery, and overall customer service and satisfaction. . In the governmental model, the principal driver of performance is different than in the strictly commercial environment; namely, customers and stakeholders take preeminence over financial results. In general, public organizations have a different, perhaps greater, stewardship/fiduciary responsibility and focus than do private sector entities. Customers' concerns tend to fall into four categories: time, quality, performance and service, and costs (Kaplan and Norton 1992). Time refers to measuring time leaking when companies receive orders from customers to deliver the products and services to the customers. Quality refers to product defect level as perceived by the customers. Performance and services look at how the company's products create values for the customers. Costs refer to the extent the customers perceived the selling prices of the products and services as value for money invested. Firms frequently use account teams to better engage with their business customers. Customer account teams typically consist of an account manager responsible for the overall customer relationship and revenues, and a number of functional specialists with deep technical and/or product expertise. For example, a turbine manufacturer's key account team for a utility customer may include a key account manager, a finance specialist with expertise in leasing, a supply chain and manufacturing specialist with expertise in plant reconfiguration, an information technology (IT) specialist with expertise in tracking real-time turbine performance, and a service specialist with expertise in maintenance and support. Thus, key account managers work with several functional experts to better serve their customers. The main idea underlying the use of account teams is that an account manager can focus primarily on tracking customer developments and building customer relationships, and at the same time use deep technical expertise as needed from functional specialists in the account team. We propose, paradoxically, that the more an account manager invests in learning about and developing his or her customer makes transaction specific investments in the customer the more the account manager becomes concerned about opportunism by functional specialists in his or her own account team. We refer to this "threat from within" as internal opportunism. We propose that concern about internal opportunism leads an account manager to block specialists from the customer to the detriment of performance with the customer. This suggests the ability of one function (e.g., sales and marketing) to truly traverse a firm's internal boundaries to better serve a firm's customers may be more challenging than previously thought.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Performance

Performance is a measure of how well a mechanism/process achieves its purpose. In enterprise management, Moullin (2003) defines an organization's performance as how well the organization is managed and the value the organization delivers for customers and other stakeholders. Srinivasan, Woo & Cooper (1994) indicates performance as the act of performing; of doing something successfully; using knowledge as distinguished from merely possessing it. Researchers (Lau, Zhao & Xiao 2004; Prajogo & Sohal 2003; Rahman & Sohal 2001) identified a positive relationship between best business practices and business performance. Furthermore, a study by Pushpakumari and Wijewickrama (2008) in which County, relating to both large firms and SMEs, constantly emphasizes the relationship between business practices, management activities and firm performance on time of the study. Mandal, Venta and El-Houb (2008) note that best business practices produce best performance. This study also explains that there are several ways through which business practices can be established in specific areas, which can lead to outstanding business performance. Measuring performance is a multi-dimensional

concept. Effectiveness and efficiency are the two fundamental dimensions of performance; this is emphasized by Neely, Adams *et al.* (2002) effectiveness refers to the extent to which stakeholder requirements are met, while efficiency is a measure of how economically the firm's resources are utilized when providing a given level of stakeholder satisfaction. To attain superior relative-performance, an organization must achieve its expected objective with greater efficiency and effectiveness than its competitors (Neely 1998). To illustrate efficiency, effectiveness, and the value delivered, multi-measures should be used. Though their forms vary widely, financial indicators are traditionally used; Neely (1998) further expounded upon manufacturing performance measures, suggesting that Performance measurement five key-dimensions should be assessed: quality, delivery speed, delivery reliability, price (cost), and flexibility. By measuring all of these factors, performance is thus balanced and multi-dimensional, better reflecting stockholder interest.

Performance is the perfect opportunity to address long-term goals that may not be on the everyday to-do list. Not only does this provide the employee with an opportunity to be of greater use to an organization, the employee feels pleased and valued. Lighting the way toward a successful career path inspires loyalty and stability and can improve the bottom line, especially when the employee's first concern is the health of the business, and subsequently, her career. Celebrating a job well done is the easy part of the performance appraisal. Areas of improvement are not so easy, nevertheless, no one is perfect, and the performance appraisal is an ideal time to diplomatically highlight areas that need improvement. Even the most valuable employee could benefit from additional training, while those who are on the cusp of dismissal need the heads-up. When a company has detailed information on employee performance, business decisions become easier. Filling open positions with existing staff strengthens the organization and promotes loyalty. Knowing which employees display what strengths improves the speed with which projects can be assigned. Appraisals also provide a framework when making decisions about compensation and layoffs. If the organization becomes the unfortunate party to a lawsuit, the performance appraisal can refute or support claims. As a result, the effective use of performance appraisals helps an organization operate efficiently and with focus.

Customer Perspective

Customer perspective captures the ability of the organization to provide quality goods and services, the effectiveness of their delivery, and overall customer service and satisfaction. In the governmental model, the principal driver of performance is different than in the strictly commercial environment; namely, customers and stakeholders take preeminence over financial results. In general, public organizations have a different, perhaps greater, stewardship/fiduciary responsibility and focus than do private sector entities. Customers' concerns tend to fall into four categories: time, quality, performance and service, and costs (Kaplan and Norton 1992). Time refers to measuring time leaking when companies receive orders from customers to deliver the products and services to the customers. Quality refers to product defect level as perceived by the customers. Performance and services look at how the company's products create values for the customers. Costs refer to the extent the customers perceived the selling prices of the products and services as value for money invested. Firms frequently use account teams to better engage with their business customers. Customer account teams typically consist of an account manager responsible for the overall customer relationship and revenues, and a number of functional specialists with deep technical and/or product expertise. For example, a turbine manufacturer's key account team for a utility customer may include a key account manager, a finance specialist with expertise in leasing, a supply chain and manufacturing specialist with expertise in plant reconfiguration, an information technology (IT) specialist with expertise in tracking real-time

turbine performance, and a service specialist with expertise in maintenance and support. Thus, key account managers work with several functional experts to better serve their customers. The main idea underlying the use of account teams is that an account manager can focus primarily on tracking customer developments and building customer relationships, and at the same time use deep technical expertise as needed from functional specialists in the account team. We propose, paradoxically, that the more an account manager invests in learning about and developing his or her customer makes transaction specific investments in the customer the more the account manager becomes concerned about opportunism by functional specialists in his or her own account team. We refer to this “threat from within” as internal opportunism. We propose that concern about internal opportunism leads an account manager to block specialists from the customer to the detriment of performance with the customer. This suggests the ability of one function (e.g., sales and marketing) to truly traverse a firm’s internal boundaries to better serve a firm’s customers may be more challenging than previously thought.

Babalola (2009) suggests that SMEs cannot avoid the modern global economy and its demand for innovative business as a precondition for competitiveness. Given their small size and related pool of professionals, SMEs need to work very hard on members’ innovation and related personal traits. Making a SME successful must be considered as an invention-innovation-diffusion process that tackles: the businesses mix of the given size, the SME as an entrepreneurial achievement, and entity of values/culture/ethics/norms (Georgellis, Joyce & Woods, 2000). Thus all preconditions concerning both the content and the process of innovation must be considered, which requires the holism and therefore systemic rather than one-sided thinking/behavior of the usual specialists. Hence, values/culture/ethics/norms of owners, entrepreneurs, SME’s members must also be innovated along with their knowledge.

The focus on internal opportunism in this research contrasts with much of the extant literature on opportunism. It is well known that account managers and firms that make transaction-specific investments (TSIs’) in customers run the risk of opportunistic behavior by their customers, the targets of the investments (Jap and Anderson 2003, Wathne and Heide 2000). This is because if the account managers/firms do not accede to potential opportunistic demands of customers, they stand to lose their locked-in investments in the customer Hwang (2006). In the present study, we argue that in addition to the risk of opportunistic behavior by customers, account managers are also concerned about opportunistic behavior by the functional specialists in their own teams, even though they are not targets of the investments. The phenomenon of opportunistic behavior by non targets of investments within a firm making transaction-specific investments has been largely ignored in the literature. To our knowledge, this is the first study to explore the phenomenon and its behavioral and performance implications. It is likely that prior research has focused less on internal opportunism because of the presumption that a firm can control it through monitoring or fiat (Williamson 1975). A few scholars, however, suggest that internal opportunism may be present and perhaps even pervasive (Baker *et al.*, 1994, Eccles and White 1988, Ghoshal and Moran 1996, Moschandreas 1997). In an account team context, there may be several Motivations for functional specialists to engage in opportunistic behaviors. For instance, in the case of the turbine manufacturer’s key account team discussed earlier, the finance specialist could encourage a customer to opt for a lease option that the firm’s finance department wants to push, but is not in the best interest of the customer. Similarly, the technical specialist could promise an unrealistically quick installation schedule simply to win the customer’s business so as to be able to put benched technicians and specialist) level. Interestingly, however, we argue that in addition to the risk of opportunistic behavior by customers, account managers are also concerned about opportunistic behavior by the functional specialists in their own teams, even though they are not targets of the investments. The phenomenon of opportunistic behavior

by non targets of investments within a firm making transaction-specific investments has been largely ignored in the literature. To our knowledge, this is the first study to explore the phenomenon and its behavioral and performance implication

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between customer perspective and performance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out among the business persons who live in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The research employed survey research design and according to Sanders and Thorn ill, (2007) is a research that involves data collection from members of a sample for the purpose of estimating one or more population parameters. Survey design is appropriate for this study as it provides description and accounts of business events and objects of research in their natural setting and thus portrays the actual picture. The study targeted Small and Medium Enterprises (SME'S) in Elgeyo/ Marakwet County totaling 2000. Sample is a subset of the population being studied. It represents the larger population and is used to draw inferences about that population. It is a research technique widely used in the social sciences as a way to gather information about a population without having to measure the entire population.

The sample of this study was obtained from a formula of Nassiuma (2000)

$$S = \frac{N (CV^2)}{CV^2 + (N-1) e^2}$$

Where

S= desired sample

N= population

CV= coefficient of variation (take 0.5)

e= tolerance at the desired level of confidence (take 0.05 at 95% confidence level) substituting the constants in the relationship above.

$$S = 0.25 \times 2000 / 0.2 + (2000-1)0.0025 = 95$$

Sample size = 95 representing 4.75% of the population.

The study adopted stratified sampling and sampling technique where the County was sub divided into 4 sub counties namely; Marakwet East, Marakwet West, Keiyo North and Keiyo South. The simple random Sampling technique will be used to pick respondents from each sub county. Each sub county is expected to generate 22 respondents which will total to 88 and 7 from county Government who will be used as a control totaling to 95.

RESULTS

Customer Perspective and Performance of SMES

The study sought to evaluate the effects of customer perspective on performance of SMEs and frequency tabulation was used by the researcher to present the findings in the table below:-

Table 4.1: Customer Perspective on Performance of SMES

Customer Perspective	SD		D		UD		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
There is Increased product quality in my SME	0	0.0	0	0.0	17	19.0	43	38.6	42	46.2
Customers are satisfied on how staff respond to their grievances in my SME	8	8.3	3	3.8	17	19.7	43	47.0	19	21.2
I maintain Customer Loyalty	9	10.6	2	3.0	33	36.4	27	30.3	18	19.7
My SME have reduced number of Complaints	0	0.0	0	0.0	21	23.5	37	40.6	32	36.2
There is increased Customer Satisfaction pertaining to staff-customer relationship in my SME	0	0.0	0	0.0	8	9.1	35	38.6	47	52.3
My SME looks for new markets for the products	7	8.3	7	8.3	19	21.2	32	28.5	37	32.6
New products are ordered for the customers	0	0.0	6	6.8	23	25.0	41	45.5	27	29.5
My SME maintains new customer records	7	7.4	9	8.3	26	29.7	19	21.2	30	33.3
Customer Service is maintained in my SME	5	5.2	4	4.4	25	27.3	27	29.7	29	32.6
My employees are more efficient in serving customers	1.8	0.0	0	0.0	11	12.1	29	32.3	48	53.8
There is average time to process orders for customers in my SME	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	48	53.8	42	46.2
My organization handles returned orders with utmost good faith	0	0.0	0	0.0	8	9.1	34	38.6	47	52.3
On time deliveries to customers are valued by my enterprise	0	0.0	6	6.8	23	25.0	40	45.5	27	29.5

Source :(Survey data, 2015)

The study sought to evaluate the effects of customer perspective on performance response on There was increased product quality in my SME, the response were as follows: - majority of 46.2% of the respondent strongly agreed, 38.6 % disagreed and 19.0% were undecided. Further results showed that customers are satisfied on how staffs respond to their grievances in my SME, the responses were as follows: - majority of 47.0% of the respondent agree, 21.2% strongly agreed, 19.7% were undecided, 17.4% Undecided and only 12.1% disagreed. The SMEs also tried to maintain customer loyalty, the results were as follows: - majority of 36.4% of the respondent were undecided, agree 30.3% strongly agreed, whereas 13.6 disagreed. When SMEs were asked on whether it had reduced number of Complaints, majority of 40.6% of the respondent agree, 36.2% strongly agreed, 19.7% were undecided and 23.5% Undecided. This therefore implied that there was increased Customer Satisfaction pertaining to staff-customer relationship in my SME, the responses were as follows: - majority of 52.3% of the respondent agreed, 52.3% strongly agreed, and Undecided and only 9.1% agreed. SME looked for new markets for the products, the responses were as follows: - majority of 32.6% of the respondent strongly agreed, 28.5% agreed, 21.2% were undecided and only 16.6% disagreed. As the

customers ordered for new products, the responses were as follows: - majority of 45.5% of the respondent strongly agree, 29.5% agreed, 25.0% were undecided and 6.8% disagreed. My SME maintains new customer records, the responses were as follows: - majority of 33.3% of the respondent disagree, 21.2% strongly disagreed, 19.7% were undecided, 17.4% Undecided and only 8.3% agreed. This implied that due to small capital in nature, keeping records was not a priority and it was further observed that their families and dependants consumed whatever income they were generating. Customer Service is maintained my SME, the responses were as follows: - majority of 32.6 % of the respondent strongly agree, 29.7% agreed, 27.3% were undecided whereas 5.2% of the respondent disagreed. My employees are more efficient in serving customers, the responses were as follows: - majority of 53.8% of the respondent strongly agree, 32.3% agreed, 12.1% were undecided, 1.8 disagreed. There is average time to process orders for customers in my SME, the responses were as follows: - majority of 53.8% of the respondent agreed, 21.2% strongly disagreed, 19.7% were undecided, 17.4% Undecided and only 8.3% agreed. My organization handles returned orders with utmost good faith, the responses were as follows: - majority of 52.3% of the respondent strongly agreed, 38.6% strongly disagreed and 9.1% undecided. Finally on time deliveries to customers are valued by my enterprise, the responses were as follows:- majority of 45.5% of the respondent agreed, 29.5% strongly agreed, 19.7% were undecided whereas 6.8% Undecided.

From the above findings the, it was clear that majority of the SMEs had tried hard to Babalola (2009) suggests that SMEs cannot avoid the modern global economy and its demand for innovative business as a precondition for competitiveness. Given their small size and related pool of professionals, SMEs need to work very hard on members' innovation and related personal traits. Making a SME successful must be considered as an invention-innovation-diffusion process that tackles: the businesses mix of the given size, the SME as an entrepreneurial achievement, and entity of values/culture/ethics/norms (Georgellis, Joyce & Woods, 2000). Thus all preconditions concerning both the content and the process of innovation must be considered, which requires the holism and therefore systemic rather than one-sided thinking/behavior of the usual specialists. Hence, values/culture/ethics/norms of owners, entrepreneurs, SME's members must also be innovated along with their knowledge.

Correlations

Table 4.2 Association of variables

		Customer Perspective	Performance (SMEs)
Customer Perspective	Pearson Correlation	.025	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.779	
	N	90	90
Performance (SMEs)	Pearson Correlation	.027	.249**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.758	.004
	N	90	90

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

Source :(Survey data, 2015)

To establish the relationship between the study variables (strategic planning as a determinant and performance in Small and Medium Enterprises) and firm performance. The correlations revealed the level of strength and significance of the relationships between the study variables and the independent variable. From the above table were at 99% level of confidence, 1% change in

customer perspective leads to 24.9% change in Performance (SMEs). From our finding it clearly indicates customer perspective has high level of association between mobile banking and service quality as compared to other independent variable variables. The results show that the regression weights of one of the independent variables were significant. This means that two of the postulated hypotheses were not supported while one was supported. Thus customer perspectives are predictor variables for as a determinant of performance in Small and Medium Enterprises. The standardized coefficients indicate the corresponding change in the dependent variable when a change of one unit is effected in the independent variable.

Thus, a 1% improvement of customer perspective would lead to a 29.9% performance in Small and Medium Enterprises.

Table 4.3 Regression

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
1 (Constant)	1.087	.448		2.424	.017
Customer perspective	.368	.138	.299	2.668	.009

Source :(Survey data, 2014)

$$Y=1.087 + 0.299x$$

Where y = performance in SMEs,

x= Customer perspective

From the results on model summary R= 0.261, R- square = 0.068, adjusted R- square= 0.039, and the SE= 0.55874. Multiple correlation R coefficients indicate the degree of linear relationship of performance in SMEs with all the predictor variables, where as the coefficient of multiple determinations R-square shows the provision of the total variation in performance in Small and Medium Enterprises that is explained by the independent variables customer perspective in the regression equation. The R-square gives us the coefficient of determination between the variables the results from the regression analysis give an R-square value of 0.068, which means that 6.8% of the independent variables cause the change on dependant variable (performance in SMEs).

Table 4.4 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.261 ^a	.068	.039	.55874

Source :(Survey Data, 2015)

a. Predictors: (Constant), customer perspective.

The significance of the regression model was tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Table 4.4 presents the results of this test.

Significance of the Regression Model

Table 4.5 ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	2.905	4	.726	2.326	.060 ^a
Residual	39.648	127	.312		
Total	42.553	131			

Source :(Survey data, 2015)

a. Predictors: (Constant), customer perspective

b. Dependent Variable: performance in Small and Medium Enterprises.

As shown from the table, $F = 2.326$, $p < 0.060$

The F test provides an overall test of significance of the fitted regression model. The F value of 2.326 indicates that all the variables in the equation are important hence the overall regression is significant. Since the level of confidence was 99%.

DISCUSSIONS

Customers' concerns tend to fall into four categories: time, quality, performance and service, and costs (Kaplan and Norton 1992). Performance and services look at how the company's products create values for the customers. It is well known that account managers and firms that make transaction-specific investments (TSIs) in customers run the risk of opportunistic behavior by their customers, the targets of the investments (Jap and Anderson 2003, Wathne and Heide 2000).

CONCLUSIONS

The study concluded that the SMEs in Elgeyo Marakwet County had tied to increased product quality, customers were satisfied on how staff respond to their grievances in SME, they had maintained customer loyalty and this had reduced the number of Complaints, this had led to increased customer satisfaction pertaining to staff- customer relationship in SME.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recommendations on customer perspective on performance SMEs, employees need to be more efficient in serving customers, there is need for increased product quality in my SME, maintain customer loyalty, increased customer satisfaction pertaining to staff-customer relationship in my SME and on time deliveries to customers are valued by my enterprise.

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