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IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP STYLES AND MARKET ORIENTATION BEHAVIOUR ON SMALL FIRMS PERFORMANCE IN BOTSWANA

OLUMIDE OLASIMBO JAIYEoba

Botho University, Botswana

olumide.jaiyeoba@bothouniversity.ac.bw

BROWNHILDER NENEH

University of The Free State, South Africa

NenehBN@ufs.ac.za

CHUX GERVASE IWU

Cape Peninsula University of Technology, South Africa

iwuc@cput.ac.za

JOSEPHINE S. MOETI-LYSSON

University of Botswana

Josephine.Moeti-Lysson@mopipi.ub.bw

ABSTRACT

This study primarily investigated leadership and market orientation behaviours which influence Botswana's small firm's performance. Snowball sampling was used to select 262 owner managers of small firms in Gaborone and Francistown. In addition, factor analysis, correlation coefficient, and regression analysis were used to examine the data collected. It was found that there is a positive relationship between laissez fair, transformational, democratic leadership behaviour and market orientation. Inter-functional coordination and competitor orientation were found to be positively related to business performance and customer orientation, as well as competitor orientation on employee commitment and customer consequences for small firms in Botswana. This paper contributes to the extant literature by extending the strategic research direction, which provides small firms' managers and policy makers with a more understandable guide to leadership behaviour and market oriented activities in the context of small firm's performance in Botswana.

Keywords: Leadership behaviour, Market orientation, Small firms' performance, Botswana

INTRODUCTION

Leadership styles and expected leadership behaviour as well as market orientation culture and owner manager characteristics vary across countries (Cheng and Li, 2013). Therefore, in order to improve employee commitment, customer satisfaction and business performance of small firms in today's global and dynamic work environment, managers need to understand the preferred leadership style(s) in different contexts or countries. Eisenberger et al (2010) thus contend that in today's competitive and dynamic landscape, leadership metric is one of the key contributing antecedents that influence economic and non-economic performance and market orientation (MO) culture amongst firms. Consequently, Piccolo et al (2012) posit that most studies in extant literature have looked into the nomological web between leadership behaviour and performance of large firms in developed economies. However, literature pertaining to the nexus among leadership styles, MO behaviour and performance among small firms in an emerging economy such as Botswana is acutely scarce.

This study thus intends to (1) examine the relationship between leadership styles and MO on one hand and leadership styles and performance on the other; and subsequently (2) generate literature that deepens an understanding of this relationship. These will be tested using two hypotheses.

The necessity of a study of this nature in an emerging economy such as Botswana cannot be overemphasized. For instance, Pansiri and Temtime (2010) argue that over 80% of small firms fail or collapse in the first five years of operation owing to several managerial and entrepreneurial problems. Also, considering the structure of small firms, which is mostly informal, it is justified to try to understand the fundamental indicators of effective leadership and MO culture such as motivation, team spirit, inter-functional coordination, satisfaction and performance. Previous studies (such as the ones by Jaiyeoba, Kealesitse and Marandu, 2015, and Zebal and Goodwin, 2011) bear evidence of the significance of understanding MO and small firm performance in emerging economies.

Two other studies provide additional evidence of a link between top management behavior and market orientation. First, in a major study of the antecedents and consequences, Jaworski and Kohli (1993) hypothesize that the more emphasis is placed on top management with regard to market orientation and the lower the risk aversion of top managers, the greater the level of market orientation. Ogbonna and Harris (2001) noted a strong statistical association between top management emphasis and all aspects of market orientation. However, the study of Harris and Piercy (1999) reveals a rather interesting position with respect to the link between management behavior and market orientation. Their findings indicate that management behavior which is formalized, conflictual or politically motivated is negatively associated with the extent of market orientation. Much of Harris and Piercy's (1999) thesis is that the recurring theme in most literature on leadership and MO point in the direction of management behavior holding the key to market orientation in small firms. However, while some advances have been made in this area, a key limitation of extant research is that existing studies overlook or ignore the potential impact of leadership style on market orientation with implications on firm's performance most especially in an emerging economy such as Botswana. Hence, this study seeks to unravel the extent of the nomological web among market orientation, leadership styles and performance of small firms in Botswana.

The population of Botswana is about 2 million. The most common parameters used to categorise small firms in Botswana are annual turnover and number of workers. Despite the nearly impressive performance of small firms in Botswana, they face severe challenges as stated by the Local Enterprise Authority (LEA) (2009). The constraints are more pronounced on two fronts namely (1) a lack of clear understanding of how to implement a marketing concept, and (2) the inability to apply appropriate leadership style(s) or behavior needed to realize improved performance.

MO is described as a mixture of three activities namely intelligence generation, dissemination and responsiveness (Kohli and Jaworski 1990). Narver and Slater (1990) view MO as the organizational culture that best motivates the necessary behaviours in the context of customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter-functional coordination for the creation of superior value for customers in a dynamic environment that requires managerial leadership, competencies and processes for small firm's management. Perhaps taking a cue from Narver and Slater (1990), Dauda (2010) notes that effective leadership capability is influenced by globalization, privatization, deregulation of markets, aggressive competition and ever-increasing expectations of customers. Hence, to promote understanding and conceptual developments of leadership styles or behaviour, MO behaviour and how it manifests itself, the underlying factors that engender leadership and MO perceptions and behaviour in small firms are important first steps. This study thus makes an important contribution by unraveling factors that drive or inhibit small firm's performance. The study may also benefit policy makers,

academicians, and small firms' owner managers in understanding leadership MO culture in Botswana.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

According to Gil et al (2005), traditionally, leadership research was primarily based on classic bifactorial models such as task and relation oriented leadership until the last three decades when leadership metrics such as charismatic, transactional, transformational, visionary and new leadership began to gain traction. But, Hussain, Ismail and Akhtar (2015) noted that recent studies have begun to link leadership and MO behaviour most especially among small firms making it a research priority. The contention of Herath and Mahmoud (2013) is that MO is characterized by an organisation's disposition to continuously deliver superior value to its customers that in turn results in superior performance. This assertion resonates with Chao and Spillan's (2010) position which contends that to effectively create and deliver superior customer value, market-oriented organizations need to continuously make structural and system changes that give off a befitting culture. Literature is replete with several prescriptions of leadership styles that deliver customer value. For instance, McMurray, Islam and Pirola-Merlo (2012) suggest both transactional and transformational leadership styles owing to their different attributes and capacities to impact different circumstances. In fact, both Avolio et al (2003) and Bodlaj (2010) argue that transformational leaders are more apt to orienting employees towards excellent customer value. Kivipold and Vadi (2010) thus contend that collective ability of leadership to detect and cope with changes in the external environment comes from systems theory, where organisations could be understood and analysed using basic principles of their behavior, which is centred on cognitive, social and sensor domains of organizational leadership.

Cheung and Wong (2011) thus conclude that transformational leadership exhibits support for the subordinate and is positively related to employee creativity. Consequently, Dubhilela (2013) and Vieira (2010) are of the view that MO is influenced by internal factors (such as top management emphasis, centralization, formalization, political behaviour, interpersonal connectedness and interpersonal conflict) and external factors (such as competitive intensity, technological orientation, market turbulence and general economy). Yang and Islam (2013) provide parallel support by stating that effective leadership in general impacts on intrinsic and extrinsic as well as overall job satisfaction of the follower. We thus hypothesize that:

H1: Effective leadership behaviour is significantly and positively related to MO behaviour of small firms in Botswana.

Aziz and Yassin (2010) contend that market oriented managers seek information from customers, competition and regulatory or liberalized environment in order to ensure superior business performance. After all, Mesu, Riemsdijk and Sanders (2013) postulate that the survival of small firms depends on their ability to respond swiftly to competition, customer needs and the need for a proactive leader who inspires and motivates people to perform beyond expectations. This study thus seeks to investigate how MO behaviour influences performance of small firms. Two theoretical perspectives are implicitly linked to this objective and they are those of Narver and Slater (1990) and Kohli and Jaworski (1990). In fact, Bodlaj (2010) is of the view that the two conceptualizations of MO (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990) and the perspectives of Narver and Slater (1990) demonstrate strong similarities in that customers feature significantly in their definitions. Sanjaya, Vasudevan and Gaur (2011) affirm therefore that for small firms to achieve competitive advantage, there is a need for leadership and MO behaviour that resonates with market sensing and customer as well as employee linking capabilities for improved small firms' performance. And recently, Mahmoud and Hinson

(2012) added that a market oriented approach may remain elusive unless the firm manages to effectively communicate the values of leadership and MO behaviours towards customers and employees. We thus hypothesize that:

H2: MO behaviour is significantly and positively related to performance of small firms in Botswana.

METHODS

The study employed a snowball sample of managers and business owners in Gaborone and Francistown. The reason for opting for non-probability rather than probability sampling was that the sampling frame of the key informants was not available. In addition, the study was confirmatory in nature in order to improve the understanding of the impact of leadership behaviour and MO behaviour in Botswana context. The final pool of small firms to whom questionnaires were sent totaled 350. Eventually, only 262 (constituting over 75% response rate) usable questionnaires were returned by the respondents.

The questionnaire was pretested and respondents were asked to identify items they found unclear, ambiguous or confusing. As a result of the pretest, minor adjustments were made to the questionnaire. The respondents were managers, accounting for about 50% of the total. This suggests that the respondents were sufficiently experienced to provide meaningful response to broader policy issues relating to leadership and MO metrics. After comparing the responses of the early and late respondents, on a number of characteristics, no significant difference was found suggesting that the sample was free from response bias. The sample size and the response rate are consistent with related studies (Zebal and Goodwin, 2011; Mahmoud and Hinson 2012)

The questionnaire and scale measures were adopted from Kreitner and Kinicki (2010) as well as Narver and Slater's (1990) constructs. The items in the questionnaire were measured with the aid of a five point Likert type scale. Reliability analysis was conducted on all the multi-item scales to check the internal consistency of the scales. This study adopted a cut off score of 0.7 for Cronbach's Coefficient following Nunnally (1988). The coefficient alpha values for customer orientation, and inter-functional coordination were 0.73, 0.70, and 0.69. The factor loading values ranged from 0.50 to 0.85, while the KMO and Bartlett's test were satisfactory. Also, the Eigen values were greater than 1 thus explicating competence of the factor structure.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As shown in Table 1, MO behaviour of small firms is significantly and positively related to participative leadership ($r=0.275$, $p<0.01$), democratic leadership ($r=0.255$, $p<0.01$), transformational leadership ($r=0.381$, $p<0.01$) and transactional leadership ($r=0.195$, $p<0.01$). However, MO behaviour of small firms is negatively associated with laissez-fair ($r=-0.204$, $p<0.01$) leadership behaviour. Autocratic leadership is not associated with MO behaviour for small firms.

As shown in Table 2, transformational leadership ($\beta=0.252$, $t=3.255$) and democratic leadership ($\beta=0.110$, $t=0.1480$) behaviour are significantly and positively related to MO behaviour of small firms while laissez-fair ($\beta=-0.206$, $t=-2.500$) is negatively associated with MO behaviour of small firms in Botswana. However, participative leadership, autocratic leadership, and transactional leadership are not significantly and positively associated with MO. The leadership behaviour of small firms also accounted for 18.7 % variation in MO behaviour of small firms in Botswana.

TABLE 1
Correlation Showing Association Between Leadership Styles and MO

		MO	Participative	Autocratic	Democratic	Laissez - Fair	Transformation	Transactional
MO	Pearson Correlation	1	.275**	-.088	.255**	-.204**	.381**	.195**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.196	.000	.003	.000	.004
	N	217	217	217	217	217	217	217
Participative	Pearson Correlation	.275**	1	-.153*	.372**	-.231**	.461**	.344**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.021	.000	.000	.000	.000
	N	217	229	229	229	229	229	229
Autocratic	Pearson Correlation	-.088	-.153*	1	-.053	.577**	-.124	.058
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.196	.021		.420	.000	.061	.379
	N	217	229	229	229	229	229	229
Democratic	Pearson Correlation	.255**	.372**	-.053	1	.057	.442**	.383**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.420		.392	.000	.000
	N	217	229	229	229	229	229	229
Laissez - Fair	Pearson Correlation	-.204**	-.231**	.577**	.057	1	-.173**	.179**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000	.000	.392		.009	.007
	N	217	229	229	229	229	229	229
Transformation	Pearson Correlation	.381**	.461**	-.124	.442**	-.173**	1	.392**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.061	.000	.009		.000
	N	217	229	229	229	229	229	229
Transactional	Pearson Correlation	.195**	.344**	.058	.383**	.179**	.392**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.000	.379	.000	.007	.000	
	N	217	229	229	229	229	229	229

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

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The collinearity statistics shows that the leadership metrics fulfill the assumption of lack of multicollinearity in this study. Hypothesis H1 is thus partially supported in this study. We reiterate Mesu, Riemsdijk and Sanders (2013) argument that the survival of small firms depends largely on a proactive leader who inspires employees to urgently meet customers' needs as well as the competitive practices in the market. In short, proactive leaders rely on information from various sources – customers, competition and regulatory environment - in order to make business decisions. Basically, being market-oriented means maintaining close relations with customers and employees (Mahmoud and Hinson, 2012).

Also, as shown in Table 3, with respect to the impact of MO behaviour on business performance, competitor orientation ($\beta = 0.211$, $t = 3.021$) is significantly and positively related to business performance of small firms in Botswana while inter-functional coordination ($\beta = -0.142$, $t = -2.157$) is significantly and negatively associated with business performance. Customer orientation is however not significantly associated with business performance. The tolerance levels and variance inflation factor levels also fulfill lack of multicollinearity assumptions in this study. The MO behaviour metrics account for 10 % variation in business performance. Hypothesis H2 is thus partially supported in this study. Hence, Eisenberger et al

(2010) contend that leadership metric is one of the key contributing antecedents that influence economic and non-economic performance and MO culture amongst firms in today's competitive and dynamic landscape.

TABLE 2
Regression Coefficients Showing the Impact of Leadership Behaviour on MO

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	8.369	.847		9.881	.000	6.699	10.039		
	Participative	.132	.180	.055	.731	.465	-.223	.486	.678	1.474
	Autocratic	.106	.110	.074	.962	.337	-.111	.324	.655	1.526
	Democratic	.247	.167	.110	1.480	.140	-.082	.577	.700	1.428
	Laissez - Fair	-.311	.125	-.206	-2.500	.013	-.557	-.066	.568	1.760
	Transformational	.580	.180	.252	3.225	.001	.226	.935	.633	1.580
	Transactional	.147	.172	.064	.854	.394	-.192	.487	.698	1.433
a. Dependent Variable: MO										

In Table 4, customer orientation, ($\beta = 0.123$, $t = 1.731$) and competitor orientation ($\beta = 0.158$, $t = 2.239$) are significantly and positively related to employee commitment while the inter-functional coordination ($\beta = -0.093$, $t = -1.400$) is significantly and negatively associated with employee commitment of small firms in Botswana. The MO metrics also account for 9 % variation in the employee commitment for small firms in Botswana. Hypothesis H2 is also supported in this empirical study. This confirms Piccolo et al's (2012) assertion that there is a nomological relationship between leadership and the performance of large firms in developed economies. Interestingly, this study has identified the role of leadership in meeting the needs of its various constituencies even in small firms. Essentially, to deliver high level customer service relies on leadership effectiveness in coordinating organizational systems to meet customer needs and expectations.

Finally, in Table 5, customer orientation ($\beta = 0.249$, $t = 3.640$) and competitor orientation ($\beta = 0.167$, $t = 2.448$) are significantly and positively related to customer satisfaction for small firms in Botswana, while inter-functional coordination metric is not significantly related to customer satisfaction of small firms. The MO metrics account for 12 % variation in the customer satisfaction propensity of small firms in Botswana. Hypothesis H2 is again supported in this study. This particular finding affirms that keeping an eye on competitor activities and also addressing customer issues lead to an understanding of how best to improve firm performance. Therefore, providing appropriate leadership by engaging employees will strengthen organizational commitment to the needs of customers. Thus, a market-oriented approach utilizing effective communication of organizational values translates to effective MO behaviours in favour of small firms (Mahmoud and Hinson, 2012).

TABLE 3
Regression Coefficients Showing the Impact of MO on Business Performance

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	16.040	1.732		9.259	.000	12.625	19.454		
	Customer orientation	.387	.311	.087	1.244	.215	-.226	.999	.878	1.139
	Inter-functional coordination	-.568	.263	-.142	-2.157	.032	-1.087	-.049	.991	1.009
	Competitor orientation	.843	.279	.211	3.021	.003	.293	1.393	.881	1.135
a. Dependent Variable: BP										

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTION

Although this study provides relevant and interesting insights into the understanding of the role of leadership styles and MO on business performance among small firms in Botswana, it is important to recognise the limitations associated with the study. When investigating the relationship among leadership styles and MO and firm performance, future studies should also consider different performance measures, such as market share, return on investment, with data collected from multiple informants. In spite of the claims of other researchers that no significant differences exist whether single or multiple respondents from one organization is utilized, it would be interesting if future studies employ multiple respondents within organizations. As this study was limited to Botswana, it would be interesting to conduct cross-cultural studies in the future in different developing countries for comparison purposes. Subjective or perceived data were used in this study for measuring the business performance because of the confidentiality of the actual performance data.

For future leadership and MO studies in Botswana, it is suggested that alternative data from documentary sources such as trade and other publications be used in addition to subjective or perceived data. Another research direction is to probe into the difference between large companies and small and medium sized firms. This could be a very insightful and interesting theme in future research. Another limitation associated with this research concerns the context and environment of the study (i.e., Botswana) which limits the generalizability of the findings to other contexts and environments. However, it should be noted that the use of a country outside the traditional research stream of the developed world might be seen as an attempt to increase the scope of the understanding regarding how MO is practiced, especially in a developing country. This may assist in demonstrating the robustness of leadership behaviour and MO constructs in different environments (developed and developing countries).

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study examined the relationship among leadership behaviour, MO behaviour and small firm performance in Botswana. Findings indicate that democratic, transformational and laissez-fair leadership behaviour are significantly and positively related to small firm's MO

behaviour in Botswana. Furthermore, competitor orientation, customer orientation and inter-functional coordination metrics of MO behaviour were found to be significantly and positively related to small firms' economic and non-economic performance in Botswana. The findings thus create a platform for scholarly theory and small firms' workplace practice with respect to enabling context for delivery of leadership and MO behaviour in Botswana. The findings may thus assist leaders and managers to better understand the importance of MO and leadership impact in the organizational context for focusing on the achievement of collective performance goals. Market orientation and leadership metrics therefore provide small firms with ways to connect with the market, customers, and employees in order to improve organizational growth and profitability which are required for their competitiveness and survival.

TABLE 4
Regression Coefficients Showing the Impact of MO on Employee Commitment

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	9.442	1.138		8.299	.000	7.199	11.685		
	Customer orientation	.353	.204	.123	1.731	.085	-.049	.756	.878	1.139
	Inter-functional coordination	-.242	.173	-.093	-1.400	.163	-.583	.099	.991	1.009
	Competitor orientation	.410	.183	.158	2.239	.026	.049	.771	.881	1.135
a. Dependent Variable: EMPLC										

Based on the aforementioned, an examination of studies of the process of market orientation development finds repeated references to the importance of management behavior in the implementation of marketing concept (Kivipold and Vadi, 2013). However, a limitation of current theory is the lack of research into the relationship among leadership style, market orientation and firm performance. This gap in theory is surprising given a broader body of literature in organizational theory as argued by Kivipold and Vadi (2013). The findings of the study, thus, contribute to empirical verification that leadership and market orientation are significantly related to small firms' performance in Botswana.

The concentration on the tangible impediments to market orientation and leadership behavior has been to the detriment of the study of less intangible metrics as acknowledged by Bass and Avolio (1993) and Kivipold and Vadi (2013). It could thus be concluded that the identification of systems and structures provides a platform for managers in the understanding of how and why certain leaders are able to transform their organizations and inculcate implementation of marketing concept in an era of environmental munificence and market turbulence.

This is consistent with the findings of leadership theorists including Howell and Avolio (1993) and Kivipold and Vadi (2013) who suggest that the presence of certain leadership styles may significantly influence employee motivation and business performance.

TABLE 5
Regression Coefficient Showing the Impact of MO on Customer Satisfaction

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	12.218	1.205		10.142	.000	9.843	14.592		
	Customer orientation	.787	.216	.249	3.640	.000	.361	1.213	.878	1.139
	Inter-functional coordination	-.212	.183	-.075	-1.159	.248	-.573	.149	.991	1.009
	Competitor orientation	.475	.194	.167	2.448	.015	.093	.857	.881	1.135

a. Dependent Variable: CSL

Based on the aforementioned, management including marketers, entrepreneurs as well as aspiring business managers should focus on encouraging a conducive leadership behaviour that facilitates the implementation of marketing concept bearing in mind that competitiveness, market turbulence and managerial orientation are crucial for small firms' performance in Botswana. This study thus suggests the need for training and development of managers in order to improve efficiencies and effectiveness of small firms in Botswana.

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