

Relationship Between Entrepreneurial Competencies of Bottle/Sachet Water Firm Owners/Managers and Performance in Minna metropolis: A Conceptual Review

By

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Abstract

The brain behind the successful performance of an enterprise is the entrepreneur. The prevalence business failure especially in the small and medium enterprises sector is on the increase. Therefore, entrepreneurial competencies become significant factors to investigate in attaining desire firm performance. Hence, the paper adopts a conceptual review of scholarly articles from reputable database on the variables with the aim of stating valid propositions in line with theoretical perspectives. The study centered on Resource Based View (RBV). A conceptual framework outlining the relationship between variables reviewed was established. Through the application of the conceptualized domain of entrepreneurial competencies firm owners/managers is offered an insight on how to achieve firm competitive advantage in relation to performance of sachet/bottle water firms. This study contributes to the existing literatures on relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and firm performance. However, there is need for empirical studies to test the proposed relationships.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Competencies, Firm Performance, SMEs, Competitive advantage, Entrepreneur.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Commercially bottled/packaged water is mainly produced for human consumption. In Nigeria, it come in two forms, that is in the plastic containers or in small nylon sachets. The sachet forms are mostly referred to as pure water and are cheaper than the plastic container ones hence it enjoys higher patronage than the plastic container ones by majority. (over half of the population of Nigeria) Simon, Nweze, Onyebuchi, Obioma, Njoku and Chikwedu, 2015). However, due to globalization, SMEs has been facing severe business difficulties in achieving performance (Kraus, Rigtering, Hughes and Hesman, 2012). SMEs in many countries of the world have suffered mystery of business failure due to lack of understanding of how to develop essential competencies required to achieve firm competitive advantages over their competitors (Greer, Carr and Hipp, 2016; Bamiatzi and Kirchmaier, 2014). The survival, growth and profitability of any firms depends largely on competencies which indicate the skills, education, experience and attitudes of employees and business owners/managers (Johara, Yahya and Tehseen, 2017). This ideology therefore leads to the assessment of relationship in the competency of firm owners/managers towards performance.

Rezaei-Zadeh, Hogan, O'Reilly, Cleary and Murphy (2014) defined competency as the abilities of the person that enable him/her to demonstrate the appropriate entrepreneurial behaviour. Mitchelmore and Rowley (2013) state

that identifying and developing entrepreneurial competencies, namely, idea generation, innovative skills, envisioning opportunities, risk taking and creativity possessed by entrepreneurs may support the development of potential businesses. Firm performance is seen as the long-term wellbeing of a business compared to those of competitors. Performance explains the degree of fulfillment of business practices and output realized at specified business period (Mitchelmore and Rowley, 2010). It is also termed as the significant outcome from the competence of a firm survival, growth and contribute to the employment and poverty alleviation (Leonidou, Christodoulides, Kyrgidou and Palihawadana 2017; Ahani, Rahim and Nilashi, 2017; Chinomona, 2013).

Entrepreneur is commonly regarded as most important factor which can influence organizational performance, it is a widely held belief that the competences of the firm owners/managers of entrepreneurial ventures have a greatest bearing on the performance of those firms (Iskamto, Ghazali and Aftanorhan, 2020). Furthermore, other factors hindering the attainment of business or organizational success includes amongst other, insufficient entrepreneurial competencies, difficulty in accessing technology and low productivity, inappropriate and inefficient utilization of firm resources (Rauch and Hatak, 2016; Hussain, Ismail and Akhtar, 2015). Largely, the performance of a firm can be influenced by various strategic factors, thus the need for entrepreneurial competencies become necessary as it proffer practical solutions to these business downfall (Grimmer, Miles, Byrom and Grimmer, 2017). On this note, competency is defined as a set of related knowledge, attributes and skills that give an individual the capability to perform an activity or task within a particular function or job (Paulienè, 2017), this implies that competence is behavioural, observable and partly intra-psyche and therefore, offers strong relationship between individual differences and firm outcomes. Therefore, the success, growth and performance of a firm/SMEs are largely dependent on the competencies of the owners/managers who are the major actor in the firm (Mitchelmore, Rowley and Shiu, 2014; Schneider, 2017). Thus, this study adopts the Resource Based View (RBV) which offered that firm makes progress on the basis of valuable resources to distinguish itself from its competitors and create sustainable comparative advantage (Barney, 1991). However, most of the studies reviewed were carried out in foreign countries only few studies were carried out in Nigeria and to the researcher knowledge no prior study have used the context of this study of this study and no previous study has done on a conceptual review in Minna, Niger State, this study therefore conceptualized entrepreneurial competencies as firm valuable and intangible resources in achieving firm success. Based on the above prior studies, it is evident that there is a gap of conceptual review. It is against this back drop that this study assesses the relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and performance of bottle/sachet water firms and develops a conceptual framework which could be adopted by firms in achieving a sustainable firm performance through the various domain of competencies.

2.0. Conceptual Review

2.1. Firm performance

Performance is one of the most significantly dependent variables in the management field which does not have a generally accepted definition, its definition however depends on the area and specialties of the person defining it (Aminu and Shariff, 2015). Correspondingly, it is referred to as the process of quantifying actions of a business/firm that leads to attainment of goals and objectives, from business perspective, firms achieve their objectives when they profitably satisfy their stakeholders' needs more than their competitors, achieving this demand adequate and diligent planning and commitment (Shehu and Mahmood, 2014). An evaluation of all activities carried out in order to fulfil organizational goals, which can be financial and non-financial or a combination of both is termed performance (Tehseen and Ramayah, 2015; Muniady. Mamun, Mohamad, Permarupan and Zainol 2015). Firm performance is view as an organizational capacity to achieve appropriate behaviour and outcomes (Iskamto *et al.*, 2020; We, 2017). Dijkhuizen, Gorgievski, van Veldhoven and Schalk. 2018) Mentioned that business success can be described as "the value of the entity delivers to consumers and delivers to other stakeholders" and "how well the enterprise is well run". Additionally, success can also be viewed as an organization's capacity to achieve appropriate behavior and outcomes (Iskamto *et al.*, 2020; We, 2017).

Financial measures are connected to monetary instruments from the firm accounting record (Lassala, Apetrei and Sapena 2017; Muniady *et al.*, 2015). Financial parameters like profitability, return on investment, Sales increase, market share and so on are used to measure firm performance (Eluyela, Akintimehin, Okere, Ozordi, Osuma, Ilogho and Oladipo, 2018; Gupta and Batra, 2016). On the other hands non-financial performance uses non-monetary instruments to measure how the firm performs, non-financial instruments consist of product quality, customer satisfaction, customer preference, customer loyalty, customer service, product/service innovation, patronage, competitive position, and market size (Eluyela, Akintimehin, Okere, Ozordi, Osuma, Ilogho and Oladipo, 2018; Singh, Darwish and Potočnik, 2016)

2.2. Entrepreneurial Competencies

Business development requires series of resources which are varies from financial to behavioural resources (Barazandeh, Parvizian, Alizadeh and Khosravi 2015). Since entrepreneurs are the major actor in the running of a firm, it is therefore required of owners/managers as the case may be to possess the acquire the competencies, skills, knowledge and resources to successfully run their businesses, this resources which include both tangible and intangible are important for all businesses. Intangible resources that are internal are perceived as the most important for the success of an entrepreneurial firm.

The concept of entrepreneurial competencies has been described by (We, 2017) as a related cluster of abilities, responsibilities, knowledge and skills that allow an individual to perform well in a given job diligently. Similarly,

Minello and Scherer (2014) referred to competencies as the individual ability to solve problems and to achieve set goals. That is, competencies are a set of knowledge, skills and attitudes required to perform work. Thus, competency arose from the action and does not exist before it. (Paulienè, 2017) oblique competency as a set of related knowledge, attributes and skills that give an individual the capability to perform an activity or task within a particular function or job. The underlying characteristic of a person that is causally linked to a higher job performance (Megahed, 2015). Therefore, (Sarwoko *et al.* 2013) conceptualized entrepreneurial competency as individual characteristics including attitude and behavior, which allow the entrepreneur to achieve business success. (Minai, Raza, Hashim and Khosravi, 2018) considered it as individual skills, traits and self-image. It is also viewed as “individual characteristics such as specific skills, self-images, social roles, knowledge, motives and traits which outcome in survival or growth of the firm” (Hashim *et al.*, 2018). Equally be regarded as creative and innovative activities used by entrepreneurs who establish and develop the firms, through launching new products or offering services, by way of revamping the existing production or services techniques. Thus, the “entrepreneurial competencies” are the main planned elements which make a firm more successful and ensure its “sustainable competitive advantage” as well (Mohsin, Binti, Halim, Ahmad and Farhana, 2017).

There are many classifications of competencies proposed by different authors which are in clusters or groups with specific behaviours attached to them. This present study, however, in conceptualizing entrepreneurial competencies, relies on the six distinctive competency constructs used by Wickramaratne, Kiminami, and Yagi (2014).

Table 2.1 The Characteristics of Entrepreneurial Competencies

Entrepreneurial Competencies	Behavioural focus	Preliminary Elements
Opportunity Competencies	Competencies related to recognizing market opportunities through various means	Opportunity recognition Opportunity seeking, development
Organizing Competencies	Competencies related to the organization of internal and external human, physical, financial and technological resources	Organizing, Planning, Controlling and Leading
Relationship Competencies	Competencies related to person-to person or individual-to-group-based interactions	Communication, Relationship building, Networking
Strategic Competencies	Competencies related to setting, evaluating and implementing the strategies of the firm	Visioning, Strategic thinking Goal setting
Conceptual Competencies	Competencies related to different conceptual abilities which are reflected in the behaviours of the entrepreneur	Analyzing, Problem solving and decision making, Innovating, Risk taking

Table 2.1 – entrepreneurial competencies
Source: Authors (2020)

3.0 Literature Review

3.1 Relationship between Entrepreneurial Competencies and Firm Performance

Academicians and stakeholders are concerned with firm performance because it is a major outcome of any business entity (Hashim, Raza and Minai, 2018). We (2017) described competency as a cluster of related abilities, responsibilities, knowledge and skills that allow a person (or organization) to efficiently perform well in a job. (Kabir, Ibrahim and Shah, 2017), viewed entrepreneurial competencies as individual skills, traits and self-image that is highly regarded to firm performance.

From the entrepreneurship perspective, entrepreneurial competency (ies) is regarded as the birth, survival and long run performance of the entrepreneurs (Tehseen and Ramayah, 2015). Furthermore, it is quite an evidence as shown in the previous studies that firm performance, growth and profitability are resultant of the entrepreneurial competencies (Nakhata, 2018).

To date prior studies have proven entrepreneurial competencies as a holistic approach as shown in the majority of empirical studies.

Sánchez (2012) conducted research to study on the effect of entrepreneurial competencies on the SMEs in Spain and develop a causal model, the findings from the study indicates that entrepreneurial competencies play an important role in enhancing firm performance. Similarly, the study by Irene (2017) who interviewed 128 female entrepreneurs in South Africa. The findings revealed that entrepreneurial competencies were relevant for firm success.

(Kabir *et al.*, 2017; Tehseen, 2017; Nasuredin, Halipah and Shamsuddin, 2016; Mitchelmore and Rowley, 2013), have also confirmed its significant impact on firm performance, Additionally, (Shehnaz and Ramayah, 2015) found that entrepreneurial competencies are positively related to firm performance after examined the effect/role of entrepreneurial competency on business performance.

Sarwoko, Surachman and Hadiwidjoj, (2013) reported that entrepreneurial competencies mediate the relationship between entrepreneurial characteristics and business performance and that entrepreneurial competencies have a significant positive influence on business performance.

Yazdanfar, Abbasian and Hellgren (2014) conducted a study in Sweden, the study investigated the relationship between performance and competence development among micro firms, with the latter being measured by the number of hours per person a company allocated annually to competence development. The study concluded that competence development programmes were positively related to four performance variables of micro firms, namely, job satisfaction; organizational improvements; increase in the number of employees, and exports.

Nasuredin *et al.*, (2016) conducted a study on the mediating role of dynamic capabilities in the relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and performance of selected SMEs in Malaysia. The finding shows that dynamic capabilities represent one of the important predictors in enhancing the relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and performance of SMEs in Malaysia. It was argued that entrepreneurial competencies enhance firm performance. However, most of the studies reviewed were carried out in foreign countries only few studies were carried out in Nigeria and that include:

Bello, Robot and Illiyasu, (2015) determined the effect of entrepreneurial skills management (ESM) and funding on SMEs performances at the local government level in northern Nigeria, descriptive survey design was adopted for the study, questionnaires were administered to a random sample of three hundred (300) SMEs was from the manufacturing sector in three (3) states of northern Nigeria it was therefore concluded that ESM and funding are key drivers of SMEs' performance in northern Nigeria. Both factors may therefore be considered as the pivot that can be used to drive SMEs performances in this region.

(Aliyu, 2017), studies examined the impact of entrepreneurship competencies on the performance of SMEs in Zaria local government area in Kaduna state, Nigeria. Survey research design was used and questionnaire has the primary source of data the study found that skills competencies have significant positive impact on the performance of SMEs in Zaria local government area of Kaduna state.

Ango and Solomon (2018) examined impact of entrepreneurial competencies on the performance of small and medium enterprises in Kaduna metropolis, Nigeria. Primary data was used for the study. Population of the study was 313 and out of which a sample size of 176 was drawn, the study found that entrepreneurial competencies have a significant impact on the small and medium scale enterprises performance.

Nevertheless, all these studies confirmed significant positive relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and firm performance. Based on the RBV, entrepreneurial competencies are considered as a valuable resource that enhances firm performance and obtains a sustainable competitive advantage (Tehseen and Ramayah, 2015; Sánchez, 2012). The comprehensive review of the literature reveals that the competencies of the entrepreneurs are valuable resource of the firm that determine the firm performance (Kabir *et al.*, 2017).

4.0 Theoretical Background

The Resource-based view (RBV) originated from the work of Penrose (1959) which described a firm as a combination of resources.

Resource Based View (RBV) theory is a way of getting/achieving competitive edge against competitors that was developed in the 1980s and 1990s. It is argued that these resources must be valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable (VRIN) resources (Barney, 1991). In distinction, the resource-based view argued that sustainable competitive advantage derives from developing superior capabilities and resources.

Barney (1991) provided a better description of RBV, defining a firm's resources as assets, capabilities, procedures, characteristics and knowledge that can be used by the firm to formulate and implement competitive strategies. He further describes the resource-based view (RBV) as a managerial framework used to determine the strategic resources a firm can exploit to achieve sustainable competitive advantage Barney (1991). The theorists of RBV have observed that entrepreneur's competencies are key resource of the firms that are valuable as well.

To be specific, the RBV emerged as the theory that explains firm performance, which is driven by resources that are heterogeneous rather than market power. According to Penrose (1959), business firms are bundle of resources that give the firm a competitive advantage. Competitive advantage is defined as the firm's ability to adopt strategies that are value-creative and not simultaneously used by competitors or potential entrants (Barney, 1991).

Using RBV as an underpinning theory and in line with studies of Ahmad, Suseno, Seet, Susomrith and Rashid, *et al.* (2018) and Mitchelmore *et al.* (2014), we thus argue that there is a significant relationship between entrepreneurial competencies, namely, opportunity, organizing, relationship, strategic, conceptual competencies and firm performance. A number of existing studies have also related entrepreneurial competencies to RBV (Ahmad *et al.*, 2018; Tehseen and Ramayah, 2015; Tehseen *et al.*, 2015; Rahman *et al.*, 2015).

5.0. Development of proposition

Opportunity competency: (Man, Lau and Chau, 2002; Rahman, Amran and Ahmad. 2014) consider this as that competency related to the ability to search, recognize and evaluate market opportunities through various means. And is operationalized by measuring various behaviours such as identifying the services or products needed by the customers, perceiving unmet needs of the customers, looking for valuable product and services to be offered to the customers, and availing the best opportunities. Entrepreneurial creativity and opportunity recognition are the major determinants of entrepreneurs' behavioral posture in the new venture process (Chen, Chang and Pan, 2018)

It represents a critical ability for the recognition and exploitation of the opportunity (Rahman *et al.*, 2015). Studies that found opportunity competency significantly related to performance includes: (Nasuredin *et al.*, 2016; Mohsin, 2015).

Proposition 1: There is a significant positive relationship between opportunity competency and firm performance.

Organizing competencies: Kaur and Bains, (2013), opined that the capacity of the entrepreneur to direct, lead, delegate, encourage, plan and schedule work, develop program and prepare the finances of the firm. Umeze and Ohen, 2015 refer to it as related to managerial competency. It is related to managing both internal and external plans of the organization, (Wickramaratne, Kiminami, and Yagi, 2014).

Proposition II: There is a significant positive relationship between organizing competency and performance of sachet/bottle water firms.

Relationship competencies: This competency demonstrates how the entrepreneurs interact with different categories of people, which include the customers, employees, suppliers, competitors, stakeholders, and even government authorities in the course of their business operations (Man *et al.*, 2002). Relationship competencies have been found to be critical, especially for entrepreneurs operating at SMEs level, due to its advantage to the business in the long run. In the view of the researcher, satisfied customers are always repeated and loyal customers. In fact, satisfied customers can comfortably introduce other new customers to the firm (Gupta, 2010).

Proposition III: There is a positive linkage between relationship competency and performance of sachet/bottle water firms

Strategic competencies: The ability of entrepreneurs to set goal, assess and execute plans for achieving firm success (Rahman, Amran and Ahmad, 2014). The strategic competency dealt with turbulent market characterized by unpredictable customers' demands and expectations, which in turn may result in competitive edge for firm (Hanson, Hitt, Ireland, and Hoskisson, 2014; Simon, Parker, Stockport and Sohal, 2017). However, many studies have either conceptualized or found the positive relationship of strategic competency for achieving firm performances (Nakhata, 2018; Suhaimi, Al Mamun, Zainol and Nawi 2018; **Umar and Ngah**, 2017; Yusuff, Bakar and Ahmad, 2016; Mohsin, 2015; Tehseen and Ramayah, 2015).

Proposition IV: There is a significant positive relationship between strategic competency and performance of sachet/bottle water firms.

Conceptual competency: According to Man *et al.* (2002) this area involves different conceptual abilities that are reflected in the behaviour of the entrepreneur which include analyzing, innovativeness, risk taking, decision making, problem solving, observing and understanding complex information. conceptual abilities involve risk-taking, decision skills, innovativeness, as well as understanding and observing complicated information (Yusuff *et al.*, 2016; Yusoff, Ahmad and Halim., 2015). Several studies have found a positive impact of conceptual competency in achieving superior firm's performances they include: (Nakhata, 2018; Quagraine, 2018; Suhaimi *et al.*, 2018; Stephen *et al.*, 2017; Umar and Ngah, 2017; Yusuff *et al.*, 2016; Mohsin, 2015).

Proposition VI: There is association between conceptual competency and performance of sachet/bottle water firms.

6.0. Research Framework

The conceptual framework depicting the relationships between entrepreneurial competencies and performance of sachet/bottle water firms. In brief, the relationships amongst the predictors and the outcome variables are depicted graphically in Figure 1.

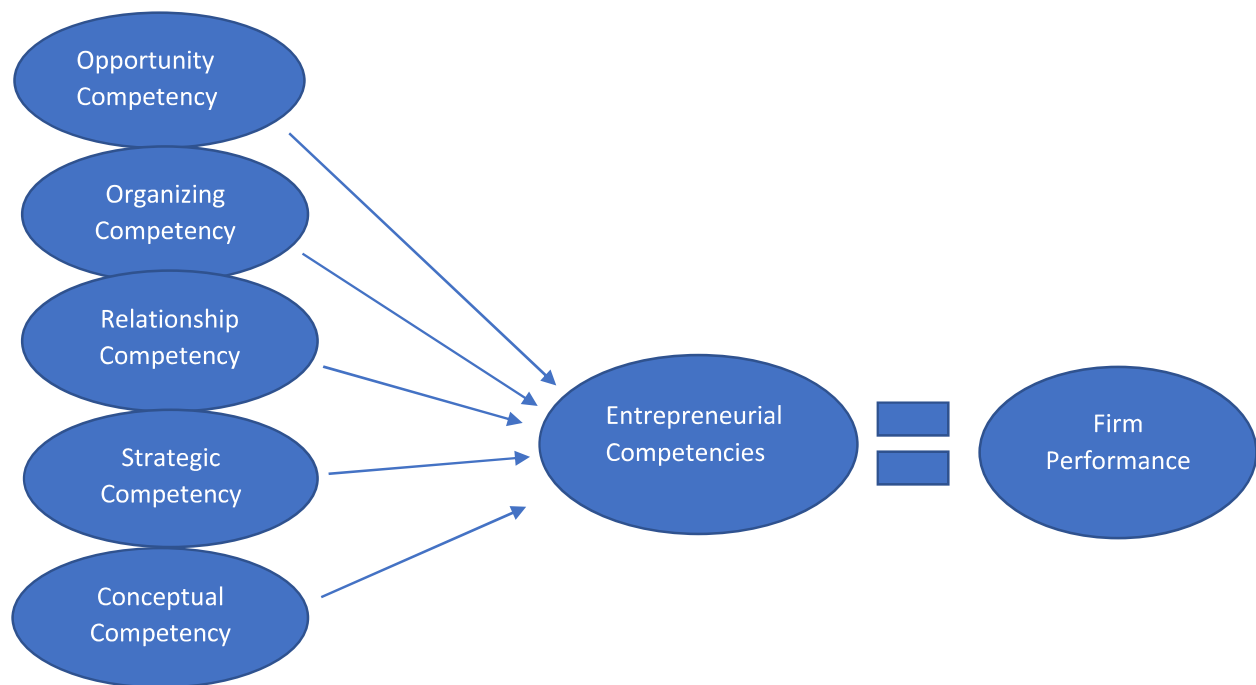


Figure 1
Source: Authors (2020)

7.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper has described the conceptual framework regarding the relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and firm performance. This is just a conceptual paper; it suggests that the research propositions should be empirically tested. Future researchers can also look forward to studying the statistical relationship by implementing empirical study. Lastly the conceptual framework should be used to assess the relationship between entrepreneurial competencies and performance of bottle/sachet water firms in Niger state and other states, local government areas in Nigeria.

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