

## **Impact of Entrepreneurial Orientation and Customer Orientation on Tour & Travel Firms' Performance in Abuja.**

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### **Abstract**

The advent of globalization, rapid adoption of new technologies such as the internet and dynamic customers taste have immediate and far-reaching impacts on tourism activities and service providers in Abuja. Hence, this study investigated the impact of Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and customer orientation on tour and travel firms' performance in Abuja. Three hypotheses were developed and tested at  $P < .05$  level of significance. Previous related studies were reviewed to position the work in existing literature conceptually, theoretically and empirically. A quantitative approach was employed for the study with survey method. The target population was 155 firms registered with Nigeria Association of Tour Operators (NATOP). The unit of analysis was at the firm level. Random sampling technique was adopted with questionnaires served on 112 sampled respondents. A firm-level five points likert-scale questionnaire which was administered through web survey and complemented with drop and pick method was used. PLS-SEM 3 software was employed to test the hypothesized relationships. The study found that the three relationships were statistically significant. The mediating effects of customer orientation was found to have significant effect on the model. It was concluded that EO has a significant positive impact on tour and travel firms in Abuja. Thus, the study recommended that tour operators should emphasis on innovativeness which seems to lead to higher firm performance rather than adopting the five dimensions of the entrepreneurial orientation.

**Keywords:** Customer; Orientation; Entrepreneurial; Performance; Tour and Travel.

### **Introduction**

Tourism is a multifaceted service industry that has a rich history and exciting future marked by many challenging opportunities. The career opportunities created from serving the needs of travelers are almost limitless. The prospects for the future of the tourism industry and employment in Nigeria are bright. Projections from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) indicate that tourism will remain the world's largest "industry" through the year 2020 with travel and tourism sales growing at the rate of 4.1% a year. Employment opportunities in countries such as Australia, Brazil, China and the United States of America appear to be especially positive. Unfortunately, Nigeria is still ranked outside of the top ten international tourist arrivals in Africa despite the abundance of tourist sites and scenic natural beauties at Olumo rock, Yankari game reserve, Obudu mountain resort and Zuma rock at Abuja. Besides, the world economic forum scores Nigeria 2.8 on the scale of 1-7 and 129<sup>th</sup> in the world on its travel and tourism competitiveness index. About 20 years ago, a travel agency may have about 10 to 20 workers who canvass for customers, booking and

sensitize would be traveler in and out of the country. Bigger travel agencies had more numbers of workers and travel agencies that dotted the major cities in their thousands with full bloom in Lagos, Kano, Port Harcourt, Ibadan and Abuja. But today, thousands of those workers have been lost, firms closed down due to technology and toxic competitive business environment. Insecurity challenge has become so pervasive in Nigeria that other nations warn their citizen of the dangers involved in visiting Nigeria.

Realizing the significant role tourism plays in everyone's future, stakeholders should all attempt to understand how it functions. Meeting the needs of travelers by providing tourism-related goods and services has proven to be an attractive form of economic development. In this context, entrepreneurial orientation (EO) has been viewed as a panacea for all ills of the firms and should have a significant effect on tour firm's performance. Although the influence of EO on firm performance is affected by firm size and national culture (Rauch *et al.*, 2009), the customer orientation could also play significant role in enhancing firm performance (Wang, 2016). Therefore, this study investigates the effects of the EO and customer orientation on tour operating firms' performance in Abuja, Nigeria.

### **Conceptual Clarification**

Previous related studies are hereby reviewed to position the study in existing literature conceptually and empirically. The concepts used requiring clarification are explained below.

#### **Entrepreneurial orientation**

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) refers to the specific organizational-level behaviour to perform risk-taking, autonomous activities, engage in innovation and react proactively and aggressively to outperform competitors in the marketplace. EO has experienced multiple reformulations since its original inception. This way, the first author to refer to entrepreneurial orientation was Miller, for whom EO can be understood as a company's behavior characterized by innovation, pro-activeness, and risk-taking (Miller, 1983). Later on, some authors completed this definition indicating that EO depends on the degree to which change, innovation, risk-taking, and aggressive competence are favoured (Odumeru, 2013; Wiklund, 1999). But also, we can link the EO of a company to its capacity to undertake activities related to innovation, risk-taking, and being pioneers in new actions (Eggers *et al.*, 2013). Certainly, EO must be understood as a decision process that affects the company's willingness to innovate, be more proactive, dispense autonomy, demonstrate aggressiveness than its competitors and take risks (Miller, 2011; Rauch *et al.*, 2009; Lumpkin & Dess, 2006; Covin & Slevin, 1991).

In this study, travel today is more than just adventure, and it has spawned an entire group of service industries to meet the changing needs of tourists all over the world. Therefore, innovation is conceived as a tourist firms' capacity to support new ideas and experimentation, introduce new products and utilize creative processes (Agarwal & Braguinsky, 2015). We can state that pro-activeness is the capability to involve the resources to introduce new products and services that fascinate the tourist to be glued to the firm's products before competitors do (Rauch *et al.*, 2009; Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005). Moreover, in tourism, the consumer is nearly always moved to the product as opposed to a product being moved to the consumer (which is the case with most other services). The tourism product and the consumer are usually separated by geography, as they may be situated in the opposite sides of the world.

Taking risks implies the creation of audacious actions that involve significant levels of resources which may or may not be attractive to the fun-seekers (Kraus, 2013). Autonomy indicates an independent action by an individual tour agent or team aimed at bringing forth a business concept or vision and carrying it through to completion (Lumpkin & Dess, 2006; Rauch *et al*, 2009). Finally, competitive aggressiveness indicates an intense effort to outperform tourism industry rivals. It is characterized by combative posture or an aggressive response aimed at improving position or overcoming a threat in a competitive marketplace (Lumpkin & Dess, 2006; Rauch *et al*, 2009).

Similarly, tour operating firms with limited resources usually serve a relatively certain group of customers providing market information, tour guide, booking, ticketing in respect of airline, bus, rail, road, cruise ship, and car rental companies. Eggers *et al* (2013) found that SMEs with scarce financial resources tend to be more customer oriented. Due to the scarcity of resources, it will be difficult and costly to change their main services or locations. Such group of customers and local market, which are the main source of market information and revenue, are critical to small enterprises most especially Tour and travel firms. Small entrepreneurial tour firms can develop and differentiate products or services to meet the needs of the niche markets which are neglected by large firms. They also can devote their full attention to serve a group of customers that can remain stable and loyal.

### **Customer Orientation**

Customer orientation is the extent to which an organization commits its efforts to meet the customers' needs and expectations in respect to the quality of services provided. Being customer focused includes gathering information from customers in order to fully understand their needs and eventually satisfy such needs (Salleh & Ibrahim, 2013). Customer orientation as an organization management strategy is widely adopted by businessmen (Appiah-Adu and Singh, 1998; Nakata & Zhu, 2013). Customer orientation that stresses the sufficient understanding of customers' needs and the complementation of such ideology is consistent with the main purpose of small businesses in Nigeria. In view of the cultural attitude toward customers, small enterprises with few employees have a simple organization structure and cohesive culture, thus it is easy to introduce and share collectively a 'customer focus' ideology. From the perspective of organizational behaviour, small enterprises can jointly devote their limited resources and attentions to serve the needs of target customers. A small enterprise with a customer orientation will focus on their current and future customers' needs and find out how to serve customers efficiently. Previous studies empirically investigated the relationship between market orientation and firm performance. Most studies support a positive relationship between market orientation and firm performance (Kumar *et al*, 2008; Narver & Slater, 2011). Therefore, as the core component of market orientation, the customer orientation is positively related to the firm performance (Appiah-Adu & Singh, 1998 & Zhou *et al*, 2017). Collectively, small enterprise with customer orientation focuses on their current customers and intends to find out how to satisfy their customers efficiently. In a limited local market, a customer emphasis will improve a small enterprise's incomes and may attract 'customer response'.

However, in order to empirically understand the ensuing relationship between EO and the mediating effect of customer orientation and tour operating firms performance the three hypotheses formulated to guide the study are explained below.

## Hypothesis

The following hypothesis is used to direct the focus of the study;

H<sub>01</sub> There is no relationship between Customer orientation and firm performance is significant.

H<sub>02</sub> There is no relationship between Entrepreneurial Orientation and firm performance is significant.

H<sub>03</sub> The Customer Orientation does not mediate the relationship between EO and firm performance.

## Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey design to study the impact of entrepreneurial orientation and customer orientation on travel and tour firm's performance in Abuja, Nigeria. The target population for this study was the tour operating firms in Abuja, Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The database consisting of 155 members of Nigeria Association of Tour Operators (NATOP) was taken as the population frame. In order to derive the sample for the study, Krejcie and Morgan (1970) formula was used to determine the sample size of 112 randomly selected for the study. A firm-level five-point Likert scale structured (1= strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) questionnaire indicating varying degrees of agreement to statements about the research variables such as EO dimensions, customer orientation and tour operating firms' performance was designed and distributed to the firms through their association along with a cover letter introducing and explaining the purpose of the study, stressing the confidentiality of responses and enlisting the response of the participant. The five EO dimensions were measured by adapting indicators suggested by Lumpkin and Dess (1996). Eight items were adopted from (Cuevas-Vargas, 2016) to measure customers' orientation. Meanwhile, tourist firms' performance indicators were adapted from Li *et al.* (2008) & Keh (2007). The final instrument was tested within a group of ten similar companies to test whether the questions were clearly and rightly framed. A few modifications were made to improve the questionnaire quality. This study adopted both online and offline channels to reach the respondents. The questionnaire research survey was conducted from December 2020 to February, 2021.

## Measurement model

To empirically examine the theoretical framework illustrated in Fig 1 below, partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) technique was used to statistical analyze the data for the model indicators. The study has a quantitative and descriptive design using the statistical technique of the statistical software Smart PLS 3.2.6 Ringle *et al* (2015) in which the estimation of the measurement model was first considered and then the structural model was assessed as a model of hierarchical components Cuevas-Vargas (2016). In this sense, the model was measured using the indicator repetition approach Ringle *et al* (2012) which is necessary to run higher order models in PLS-SEM. It should be noted that few independent variable items (Inn\_5; Risk\_4 & 5; Proa\_5; Aut\_1 & 5; Aggr\_5; Cusr\_1 & Cusr\_2) had a loading less than the desirable cut-off of 0.7 and the average variance extracted was below 50%. The removal of these two items improved the variance extracted to above 50%.

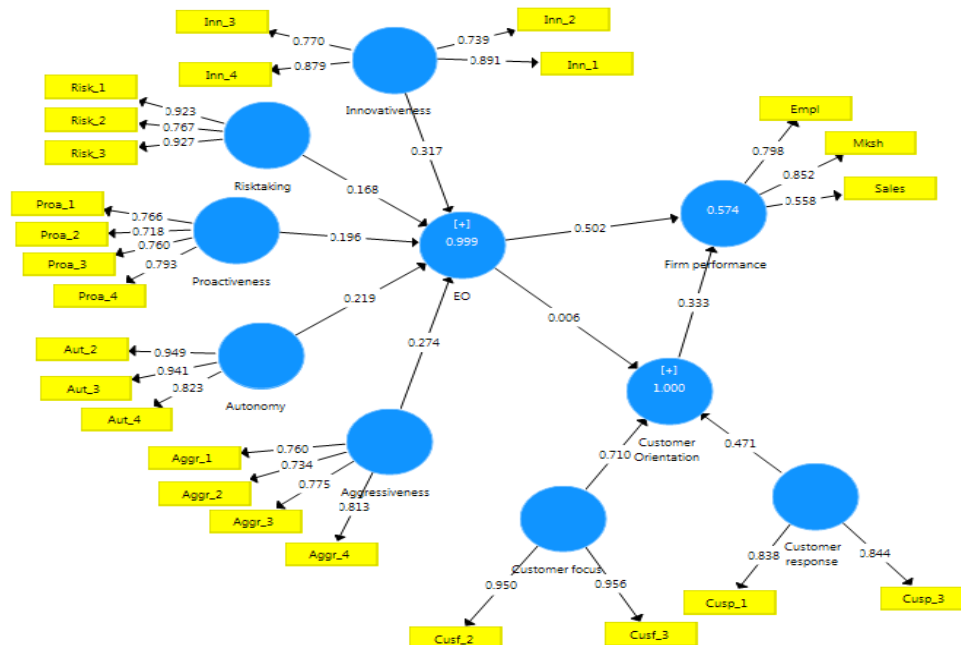


Fig. 1: PLS Structural model for EO-CO-FP

### Outer Model Evaluation (Reliability and Validity)

To assess reliability and validity, the measurement model was estimated using the PLS 3.2.6 statistical software (Ringle *et al*, 2015). In this sense, based on the results obtained and shown in Table 1, the study highlighted the internal consistency of all reflective lower and higher order constructs of the measurement model, as the composite reliability that represents the part of the variance between the group of observed variables and the underlying constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981), exceeds the value of 0.7 recommended by Hair *et al* (2017). In addition, the Cronbach's alpha for each of the constructs is higher than 0.7 as suggested by Hair *et al* (2012) and finally, exceeds the AVE (Average Variance Extracted) value of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair *et al*, 2012). Likewise, it has been found that the reliability of the indicator is higher than 0.5, as its corresponding standardized factor loading is higher than 0.708, and are statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). This guarantees the commuality of each indicator; and having obtained AVE values higher than 0.5, it is guaranteed that each of the scales used has convergent validity. The study also shows that the formative construct of EO has convergent validity as the redundancy analysis was above 0.7. Similarly, the indicators did not present problems of collinearity because the VIF value of every single indicator was under 5. Finally, with respect to the significance of the outer weights (relative importance), as some of them were not significant, their absolute contribution represented through the outer loadings had to be analyzed, and all of them were higher than 0.5 and statistically significant. With respect to the evidence of discriminant validity, as indicated in Table 3, the square root of AVE (indicated in the diagonal) of each construct is greater than the highest correlation it shares with any other latent construct. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981) discriminant validity is therefore established. Based on these analyses, it can be concluded that these studies' data are clearly reliable and valid to prove the hypotheses with PLS-SEM. It therefore

indicated that Entrepreneurial Orientation second order construct with five distinct dimensions and two dimensions of customer orientation are supported.

Table 1: Measurement Model

	Items	Loadings <sup>a</sup>	AVE <sup>b</sup>	CR <sup>c</sup>	Rho_A <sup>d</sup>
Innovativeness	INN_1	0.891	0.677	0.893	0.941
	INN_2	0.739			
	INN_3	0.77			
	INN_4	0.879			
Risktaking	Rsk_1	0.923	0.767	0.907	0.84
	Rsk_2	0.767			
	Rsk_3	0.927			
Proactiveness	Pra_1	0.766	0.577	0.845	0.868
	Pra_2	0.718			
	Pra_3	0.76			
	Pra_4	0.793			
Autonomy	Aut_2	0.949	0.821	0.932	0.79
	Aut_3	0.941			
	Aut_4	0.823			
Aggressiveness	Agg_1	0.76	0.594	0.854	0.781
	Agg_2	0.734			
	Agg_3	0.775			
	Agg_4	0.813			
Customer	Cuf_2	0.95	0.909	0.952	0.902
Focus	Cuf_3	0.956			
Customer	Cur_1	0.838	0.707	0.829	0.716
Response	Cur_3	0.844			
Firm	Emp	0.798	0.558	0.786	0.759
	Performance	Mks			
	Sales	0.558			

\*Items removed: Indicator items are below 0.5: Inn\_5, Rsk\_4, Pra\_5, Aut\_1, Agg\_5, Cuf\_1 & \_4, Cur\_2.

- All loadings > 0.5 indicates indicator Reliability
- All Average Variance Extracted (AVE) > 0.5 as indicates Convergent Reliability
- All Composite Reliability (CR) > 0.7 indicates Internal Consistency
- All Cronbach's Alpha > 0.7 indicates Indicator Reliability

Table 2: Discriminate validity (Fornell & Larcker Criterion)

	Aggr	Auto	CO	Cusfoc	Cusresp	EO	Firperf	Inno	Proa	Rskt
<b>Aggress</b>	<b>0.971</b>									
<b>Auto</b>	0.531	<b>0.966</b>								
<b>CO</b>	0.576	0.487	<b>0.956</b>							
<b>Cusfocus</b>	0.360	0.412	0.900	<b>0.953</b>						
<b>Cusresp</b>	0.667	0.406	0.758	0.398	<b>0.841</b>					
<b>EO</b>	0.626	0.748	0.632	0.443	0.662	<b>0.792</b>				
<b>Firm perf</b>	0.616	0.565	0.650	0.575	0.504	0.712	<b>0.747</b>			
<b>Innovative</b>	0.604	0.507	0.615	0.382	0.717	0.619	0.618	<b>0.723</b>		
<b>Proactive</b>	0.532	0.780	0.431	0.400	0.306	0.749	0.559	0.507	<b>0.710</b>	
<b>Risktaking</b>	0.659	0.416	0.479	0.293	0.561	0.654	0.512	0.654	0.450	<b>0.676</b>

\*The diagonals are the square root of the AVE of the latent variables and indicates the highest in any row

## Result of the findings

Table 3: Hypothesis testing

Hypo	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	T-value	Decision	f2	q2	2.5%	97.5%
H1	CO -> FP	2.333	2.104	3.189**	Supported	0.053	0.029	3.122	3.520
H2	EO -> FP	3.508	3.096	5.201**	Supported	0.175	0.090	4.314	5.691
H3	EO->CO->FP	0.002	0.002	0.934**	Supported			0.000	0.008

\*\*P<0.01, \*P<0.05

\*R<sup>2</sup> (EO = 0.998, Customer orientation = 1.000, Firm performance = 0.574)

\*Effect size impact indicator are according to Cohen (1988) f<sup>2</sup> Values: 0.35 (large), 0.15 (medium), and 0.02 (small)

\*Predictive relevance (q<sup>2</sup>) of predictor exogenous latent variable as according to Henseler et'al (2009) q<sup>2</sup> values: 0.35 (large), 0.15 (medium), and 0.02 (small).

## Inner Model Evaluation

The starting point for evaluating inner model is the determination of strength of each structural path and the combined predictiveness (R<sup>2</sup>) of its exogenous constructs (Chin, 1998). Falk and Miller (1992) suggest that R<sup>2</sup> for endogenous variables should be greater than 0.1. As indicated in Fig. 1 R<sup>2</sup> for model EO-CO-FP are 0.998, 1.000 and 0.574 respectively. Therefore, the estimated model, fits the survey data. After computation of path estimates, a bootstrap analysis was performed to find out the statistical significance of the structural paths. The first hypothesis tests showed the path coefficient for CO-FP (0.333) with t-value of 3.189 is significant as it is within the confidence interval bound (3.122, 3.520). It is concluded that customer orientation influences firm performance. The second hypothesis test revealed the path coefficient EO-FP with a t-value of (5.201) is positive and highly significant as it falls within the confidence interval bound of (4.314, 5.691). Therefore, it can be inferred that entrepreneurial orientation significantly and positively predict tour and travel firms' performance. The mediation path coefficients (EO-CO-FP) from EO (independent variable) to CO (mediator) is 0.002 and significant at (p < 0.0001) as it is within the confidence interval (0.000, 0.008). Therefore, the model involving path EO-CO-FP meets the criteria of Baron and Kenny's (1986) partial mediation and CI-CO-FP indicates the case of partial mediation (Baron & Tang, 1986). Table 3 also reveals that the Q<sup>2</sup> values are greater than 0, therefore the model has predictive relevance (Geisser, 1975; Stone, 1974). From the above discussion the criteria for mediation have been established.

## Conclusion

The study investigated the relationship between strategic orientation and the performance of tour operating firms which are central link between tourists and their holiday destinations in and out of Abuja. Entrepreneurial and customer orientations both obtained their roots from the strategy making process related literature and research based on early indications from firms' internal and external environments suggested that EO can expedite a firm's action and thereby aid them to be ahead of the competition. According to prior studies, the core concept of customer orientation is customer focus, which emphasises on anticipating, acknowledging and satisfying customers' needs and wants. Entrepreneurial orientation which stems from entrepreneurship has five dimensions, namely innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, autonomy and competitive aggressiveness. Previous studies proposed the positive relationship between strategic orientations and firm performance. The study investigated these two



strategic orientations jointly based on the survey of the tour and travel operating firms in Abuja and the findings is consistent with the extant literature that tour operating firms' adoption of strategic moves leads to firm performance and ultimately a peaceful society. Moreover, the continued growth in tourism and, more specifically, international travel may well make tourism the world's peace industry. As people travel and communicate in ever increasing numbers, they discover that most people, regardless of their political or religious orientation, race, or socioeconomic status, want a peaceful world in which all are fed, sheltered, productive, and fulfilled.

### **Recommendations**

The study extends empirical support to the notion that the role of EO is overarching as it has significant effects on tour and travel firm performance. The following recommendations are predicated on the empirical findings of the study:

- i. Firstly, the key implication for Tour and travel operating firms' is to invest more on innovativeness and be more proactive to anticipating and meeting customers' expectations. The outcome of the factor analyses clearly demonstrated that this dimensions are more predictive of their firm performance.
- ii. Moreover, the study has indicated that EO influences the performance of sampled tour firms in Abuja. Tour firms should therefore invent channels of gathering enough resources for research and development. This will enable the tour firms to offer novel services and products that meet the changing needs and preferences of their clients. Research and development is one of the keys to unlocking firms' profitability and thus high performance.
- iii. Furthermore, due to liability of smallness, small enterprises may not have enough resources to devote to extensive innovation compare to their big counterparts. They can take advantage of their smallness and fill a niche that appeal to customers' emotions and needs in order to enhance their competitive strategy.
- iv. Finally, the most relevant conclusion of the study is that the joint impact of these five dimensions on tour operating firms' performance exceeds the individual reach of each of the considered dimensions. In short, the thesis proposed by Miller (1983), Covin and Slevin (1989), and Covin and Miller (2014), Abdulwaheed (2021) among others, is corroborated.

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