Market Orientation in MSME: A Qualitative Case Study of MSME in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

In different sectors and countries, the importance of market orientation has been widely recognised in improving organisational performance in large organisations. However the concept of market orientation is being misunderstood by the Micro Small and Medium Enterprises particularly from developing countries context. These misunderstandings led to this study which mainly focused on examining the understanding of market orientation, antecedents and consequences of market orientation by Micro Small and Medium Enterprises operating in the wood and metal furniture manufacturing industry of Zimbabwe. The research was more qualitative in nature and used face to face interviews to gather insights into the market orientation practices, antecedents and consequences in Micro Small and Medium Enterprises. The study's results revealed that Micro Small and Medium Enterprises lack greater understanding of the market orientation concept, its antecedences and consequences. This has been revealed by the majority of MSME's top management not having full support of market orientation and not being risk takers. MSMEs confessed not having marketing budgets, research and development teams, marketing plans and they do not see its importance to the success of their businesses. These enterprises are operating more informally and concentrate on methods of increasing products purchase, increasing market share and customer retention. Basing on these findings, the paper provides some managerial implications, limitations of the study and recommendations for future researches.

Keywords: Market orientation, Qualitative, Micro Small Medium Enterprises, Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

The literature about antecedents and contribution of market orientation to organisational performance has acquired more space within the field of marketing and strategic management. Narver and Slater (1990), Shapiro (1998), Kohli and Jaworski (1990), Ruekert (1992), Deshpande´ et al. (1993), Day (1994b) have developed some generally accepted theories and models that are widely used in explaining market orientation, its antecedents, consequences and its essentiality in Small and Medium Enterprises' business performance. Some scholars agree that market orientation improves organisational performance, provides an organisation with a vital strategy used to understand the market. However, despite its enhanced managerial importance, it seems there is still misunderstanding of the concept of market orientation by micro small medium enterprises business owners.

Studies on market orientation have confirmed the positive relationship between market orientation and SMEs performance (Shehu and Mahmood, 2014; Pelham & Wilson, 2001; Agarwal & Dave, 2003; Kirca, Jayachandran and Bearden, 2005; Kelson, 2012; Wilson, Pereprlkin, Zhang & Vachon, 2014). However, most market orientation studies have centered on large scale organizations in developed countries, very few in developing countries and in Micro Small Medium Enterprises. Notably, few studies on market orientation in SMEs were conducted in developed western countries of Europe and the USA (Keskin, 2006). Even within the developed western countries, there is lack of consensus on the appropriateness of the market orientation construct and its research models, tested principally on studies of large organizations to small businesses. More over there are also variations in the ways in which MSMEs are defined in the context of developing countries and developed countries. There is also no clear definition of market orientation, the antecedence to market orientation and how MSMEs perceive the importance of market orientation.

2. Micro Small and Medium Enterprises as the Context of the study

Micro Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) play an important role in the world economy and contribute substantially to income, output and employment (Meghana etal 2007). Within the Zimbabwean context, these enterprises have been recognized as the engines through which the country's growth objectives can be achieved (Manyani etal, 2006) and they constitute potential sources of employment, poverty reduction and income for the majority in Zimbabwe. There are 5 800 000 MSMEs operating in Zimbabwe, directly and

indirectly benefiting the majority of the populacy (Finscorp, 2012). It is recognized that approximately 80% - 90% of economic growth of the country comes from the MSMEs sector, with the largest contribution coming from those in agriculture, trade and transport (Finscorp, 2012).

The importance of MSME's in Zimbabwe increased as a result of the effects of ESAP (1990-1996), rising unemployment due to company closures, liberalisation of the economy and the 1997- 2008 economic meltdown (Ndlovu, 2015). Moreover the government of Zimbabwe embarked on the indigenization policy with the major objectives of empowering the disadvantaged Zimbabweans and to enable them to have access to means of production. This led the Zimbabwean government to indiginise the country, where foreigners are allowed to own not more than 49 % of shares in companies operating in Zimbabwe with capital above US $500 000 and major shareholding being owned by Zimbabweans. This was also followed by the land reform which created a large number of small holder farmers (Ndlovu, 2015). These two policies led to capital flight and major closure of large corporates creating high unemployment in the country. Between 2013 and 2015 more than 55 000 people were retrenched after 4 610 companies had closed operations (2015 Budget statement). The trend is still an ongoing process where companies are continuing to close down.

There has been a relatively long history of government initiatives to promote and finance the activities MSMEs in Zimbabwe. The Government made policies to promote MSMEs development such as establishing SEDCO, Empretec, Affirmative Action Group, Indigenisation department under the Office of the President and Cabinet (Ndlovu, 2015) and the creation of the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises Development in 2002 to support MSMEs.

Furthermore, universities in the country are churning out more than 10 000 graduates every year with thousands more coming from polytechnics and other tertiary institutions. These graduates together with the retrenched found themselves unemployed and hence resorting to MSMEs as safety nets. The majority are now selling second hand clothes, cell phones, belts, fruits and foodstuffs along cities and town streets. This has increased street vending and the informal sector at large.

Moreover, in Zimbabwe, the Ministry of Youth and Economic Empowerment was established with the objective of providing financial and technical assistance to newly established and existing MSMEs emanating from youth. Government's concern for this business group intensified and resulted in the formation of the youth fund. Despite the easy access of capital by the youth, the majority of the loans accessed are now deemed non-performing. MSMEs are also faced with a mirage of challenges which include limited formal education, lack of access to and use of new technologies, limited market information, and limited access to credit from the banking sector. Again, management skills are weak, thus inhibiting the development of strategic plans for sustainable growth. There is a general consensus in Zimbabwe that this target group experiences extreme working capital volatility and that lack of technical know-how and ability to acquire skills and modern technology impede growth opportunities (Chaderopa etal, 2015). Micro Small and Medium Enterprises owners are usually reluctant to open their businesses to outsiders. Zimbabwean MSMEs are badly in need of technical services like accounting, management, marketing, strategy development and the establishment of business linkages. Zimbabwean Micro Small and Medium Enterprises businesses management and support services are perceived to be cost prohibitive and non-value adding. Moreover, the environment is stiffened by globalisation which exposes Micro Small and Medium Enterprises to competition. This situation requires Micro Small and Medium Enterprises to exploit and enhance managerial benefits of marketing by adopting the market orientation philosophy.

3.0 Literature Review
3.1 Market Orientation
Recent literature has attempted to develop a distinct definition of market orientation and to identify the characteristic of market orientation. 'Market orientation' refers to the implementation of the marketing concept; hence a market oriented organisation is one whose actions are consistent with the marketing concept (Kohli and Jaworki, 1990a). The implementation of the marketing concept enables organisations to create superior value for customers and consequently achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. An organisation which implements the market orientation concept normally has the market orientation behaviours from employees. Narver and Slater (1990) defined market orientation as the organisational culture that most effectively creates the necessary behaviours for the creation of superior value for buyers and continuous superior performance for business. Narver and Slater (1990) identified three behavioural constituents of a market orientation namely customer orientation, competitor orientation and interfunctional coordination which involves the activities of gathering market information and disseminating the information to create customer value.

Kohli and Jaworski (1990a) also came up with the definition which is consistent to the definition from Narver and Slater (1990). They defined market orientation as the organisation-wide generation of market intelligence pertaining to current and future customer needs, dissemination of the intelligence across departments and organisation wide responsiveness to it. This definition of market orientation together with the Narver and

Slater definition allow for the facilitation of the marketing concept without ignoring external factors of the firm and imply market orientation to be viewed as a continuous rather than a dichotomous construct (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990a)

Earlier in 1988, Shapiro had conceptualized market orientation as an organisational decision-making process starting from information gathering and dissemination and proceeding to execution. This definition relies heavily on the strong commitment by top management in sharing information interdepartmentally and practicing open decision making between functional and divisional employees. Shapiro (1988) positioned that markets and customers must be understood, information needs to permeate into every corporate function, firm's ability to make strategic and tactical decisions is important, there must be an open decision-making process, decisions must be well coordinated, and strength and weaknesses of competitors must be understood.

Ruekert (1992) saw market orientation as a business strategy, as the degree to which a strategic business unit obtains and uses information regarding its customers, develops a strategy using the obtained information regarding customers' needs satisfaction, and implements that strategy to meet those specific needs and wants. This perspective focused on the business unit in an organisation rather than the whole organization or individual market as the unit of analysis. Moreover, it emphasised strategy development and implementation in responding to the customer needs and wants.

Deshpande *et al.* (1993) developed customer orientation concept. They proposed that, companies should put customer's interests first while not excluding other stakeholders. This enables organisations to be profitable ventures. They noted that market orientation is part of the culture of the organisation.

As discussed above, it is clear that market orientation is part of the organisational culture, processes of the organisation and strategies of the organisation. Thus, given that market orientation is part of an organizational culture (Narver and Slater, 1990; Deshpande et al., 1993), or processes (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993), organisational factors affect its development and implementation (Antecedents).

3.2 Antecedents to market orientation
Very few empirical investigations have been done to determine the antecedence to market orientation in MSMEs of developing countries and particularly Zimbabwe. Of the few studies conducted the majority of the studies were more quantitative in nature. Factors such as organisational systems and structures have been identified as the major antecedents of market orientation culture. Structures include top management's emphasis on market orientation, attitude towards risk taking, interdepartmental conflicts and connectedness and the systems include centralisation, formalisation, departmentalisation and rewards (Philemon 2008, Kohli and Jaworski 1990).

3.2.1 Top management's influence and emphasis on Market orientation
Top management's support and influence towards market orientation is very critical towards the development of market orientation (Felton 1959, Hambrick and Mason 1984, Webster 1988, Kohli and Jaworski 1990). Empirical studies from other countries indicated important roles played by top management in influencing market orientation. Winston and Dazdie (2002) on their study on top management's emphasis on market orientation, discovered that the origin of the firm, owner ship status, competitive intensity, incidence of sellers markets and age of the manager influence top management's emphasis on market orientation. In a related study, Jaworki and Kohli (1993) conducted a research to determine the effects of market orientation and business performance and the role of environmental variables in moderating market orientation and business relationship. Their results confirmed that top management's emphasis on market orientation influences market intelligence generation, dissemination and responsiveness. The study also confirmed that rewards systems influences market orientation. While examining the effects of perceived environmental turbulence and organisational factors on market orientation of service firms in Tanzania using a sample of 178 service firms through personal interviews using top management as key informants, Philemon (2008) concluded that perceived technological turbulence, market turbulence and competitive intensity influence the development of market orientation of firms. On the same research, she observed that organisational factors such as reward systems, interdepartmental connectedness influence positively the firm's market orientation while interdepartmental conflicts and top management's risk aversion influence negatively the market orientation of service firms. Formalisation and centralisation was found having no influence on the development of market orientation. With the zeal to identify the impediments to market orientation, Harris (1998) carried out a research focusing on 88 shop floor workers as key informants of the research using interviews. Results reviewed that apathy, instrumentality, limited power; short termism, task compartmentalisation, ignorance and weak management support are the barriers to market orientation development. However these results contradict with Jaworki and Kohli (1998), who observed spirit de corps and commitment as the results of market orientation. Harris found that compartmentalisation of a task restricts development of market orientation as it restricts interfunctionally coordination (Narver and Slater ,1990), and intelligence dissemination Kohli and Jaworki ,1991).

In China, Qu and Ennew (2005) conducted a research examining the challenges of developing market orientation in transition economies using two samples from hotels and travel services. Results indicated that

government policies influence the development of market orientation and managerial actions were found to be important. No important relationship was noticed between market orientation and structure. In a related study Mahmoud M.A (2011) concluded that market orientation is influenced by the attitudes of owners or owner managers in their study of market orientation business performance in Ghanaians SMEs. In Zimbabwe, Mutongereni etal (2014) discovered that lack of understanding of marketing, lack of commitment and skills is the major barrier to market orientation.

3.2.2 Employees' attitude towards market orientation

The activities of organisations are executed by employees and hence their attitude towards market orientation influences the degree at which the organisation will be market oriented. Attitudes towards market orientation are represented by market orientation behaviours (Perrinjaquet A.C.L 2007). Market orientation behaviours are composed of external representation, internal influence and service delivery. Bowen and Schneider (1985) depicts that external representation is portrayed by an employee being an ambassador of the organisation to outsiders while internal influence is represented by taking individual initiatives to improve service delivery. In a related study in Zimbabwe, Mutongereni etal (2014) pointed out that the attitude and actions of staff is the major obstacle to market orientation. In their study, they found that indifferent and negative attitudes to marketing are a major obstacle to market orientation. Drystadale (2000) also acknowledges that people and organisational structures are the obstacles to market orientation. Harris (1998a) pointed out that shop floor worker' beliefs, attitudes and actions act as impediments to the development of market orientation. He further suggests that shop floor workers beliefs and attitude and actions may be symptoms of organisational level problems. Harris (1998a) recommends for further studies on culture perspective. Wilson (2001) confirmed that the beliefs, norms and values influence the actions of employees.

3.2.3 Organisational System's influence on market orientation

Mwankow (2002) reported that macro environment; bank management and bank customers are the barriers to market orientation. These results came from the study they conducted on the market driven transformation in the banking industry in Tanzania using a case study method consisting of five managing directors and six senior management. In their observation, the socialist hangover, weak socio-economic infrastructure, centralisation, no linkage between rewards and performance, customer attitude and culture and low income of customers as the major impediments to market orientation development. Harris (2000) on the study of retail stores confirmed that allocation of tasks is the impediment in developing a market orientation. Human resource practices that are complementary to marketing objectives are instrumental to achieving superior organisational outcomes (Jaworki and Kohli, 1993).

3.2.3 Interdepartmental dynamics and market orientation

Interdepartmental dynamics such as conflict and departmental connectedness are barriers to market orientation. Interdepartmental conflict is one of the antecedents to market orientation. Jaworski and Kohli (1993) defined interdepartmental conflict as the tension among departments arising from incompatibies of responses. Market orientation is affected by interdepartmental connectedness, which means the direct formal or informal contact between employees. Researchers confirm that connectedness facilitates interaction and exchange of information as well as utilisation of information (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993). Connectedness therefore influences exchange of information and hence leading to market orientation (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). Interdepartmental conflict lowers communication flow within the departments and hence thus affecting the organisation's market orientation. On connectedness, Jaworki and Kohli (1993) found that limited connectedness and high centralisation are barriers to market orientation while departmentalisation and formalisation were found having no significant influence on market orientation.

3.3 Marketing, Market Orientation and Small Businesses

It is recognised that the basic principles of marketing are equally valuable and applicable to both large and small businesses (Blankson and Cheng, 2005); however, it is difficult for small businesses to do conventional marketing as large ones do (Verhees and Meulenberg, 2004; Blankson and Stokes, 2002; Gilmore *et al.,* 2001; Carson, 1990), as they are influenced significantly by the environment (Avlonitis and Gounaris, 1999). There are still inconclusive arguments regarding the application of market orientation constructs developed and tested principally on studies of large organizations to small businesses (Gilmore *et al*., 2001; Blankson and Stokes, 2002 Keskin, 2006).

Small businesses are inhibited by factors mainly ignorance of market orientation, limited resources, short term focus, lack of competitive strategy, lack of innovation, failure to understand the customer and being dogmatic to the status quo. (Harris, 1998), Gilmore *et al* (2001) highlighted that due to the nature of small businesses, marketing in small businesses is likely to be haphazard, informal, loose, unstructured, spontaneous and more reactive than proactive. McCartan-Quin and Carson (2003) supported that by pointing out that high failure rates of small firms are as a result of poor financial management, poor marketing strategies, limited resources, technological incompetence, and dependence on small numbers of customers and suppliers and

focusing on operations. The marketing activities of Small Medium Enterprises tend to suit their unique situation (Carson and Gilmore, 2000). They are informal, unplanned and heavily relying on the owner/ manager (Stokes and Blackburn, 1999). Due to their smallness, it is difficult to engage complex marketing theories, formal marketing approach and normative models of marketing practice (McCartan-Quinn and Carson 2003; Carson and Gilmore 2000). Blankson *et al.* (2006) conducted a study on the marketing practices of small businesses in Michigan, USA and results revealed the appropriateness of the market orientation framework for small businesses. Findings included a distinctive "marketing style" (strong emphasis on customer care and employee welfare; motivation; and market intelligence) related to size of the firms surveyed, the personality of the owner-manager, the available resources and the nature of the operating environment. He also contended that despite absence of a formal approach to market research and marketing planning, this "style" was found to have a positive effect on margins and market share of the small businesses.

In a related study Blankson and Cheng (2005) demonstrated quantitatively that market orientation is appropriate for all businesses regardless of size. This is contrary to the findings of Harris (1998) and Stokes (2002). An analysis review that these findings are from Small businesses operating in advanced western economies different from economies of developing countries. With different environmental contexts, it will be misleading to import these findings to a developing country like Zimbabwe. For instance, within the Zimbabwean context, the Small and Medium Enterprises Act Chapter 24:12, Third Schedule Section 2 defined MSMEs according to legality, number of permanent workers, and annual turnover and gross value of assets excluding immovable property. Table 1 below shows how MSMEs are defined in Zimbabwe.

Table 1: Definition of MSME in Zimbabwe

	Number of Permanent Employees	Annual Turnover	Value of Assets Excluding fixed Assets
Micro	Up to 5	Up to 30 000	Up to 10 000
Small	6-30 (except for those in mining, construction, energy and transport with up to 40)	500 000 (except those in mining-1500000, construction-1 000 000)	250 000 (except for mining-1000 000, manufacturing-500000, construction and energy-1 000 000
Medium	31 up to 75	1 000 000 (except those in mining -3000 000 and construction-2 000 00)	500 000 (except for those in mining and construction- 2 000 000, Manufacturing and energy -1 000 000

Source: Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprise Development Chapter 24.12 Third Schedule.

The definition is quite different from the definitions given in developed countries and hence a blanket approach may not be necessary.

4.0 Methodology
4.1 Research Design
In this research the researcher used the case study as it was the most applicable to the problem at hand. It is therefore the nature and the scope of the problem under study that dictated the type of the research design to be used

4.1 The Case Study Strategy
This study used a case study of MSMEs in the wood and metal manufacturing industry of Chinhoyi in Zimbabwe to gather data on understanding the market orientation and its consequences and importance on business success. A case study approach was used since it allowed for the development of the detailed and intensive knowledge about a case with a view to establish generalisations about a small section of a wider population (Robson, 1999). Bell (1987) stated that a case study approach gives an opportunity for one aspect of a problem to be studied in some depth within a limited time scale. Eisenhardt (1989) suggested that case-studies are particularly well suited in areas where existing theory appears inadequate. The literature review demonstrated that there is insufficient theory and understanding of market orientation within the context of MSMEs in general and MSMEs in Zimbabwean businesses in particular.

4.2 The Sample
Snowball sampling method was used in this study in the capital city of Mashonaland West province (Chinhoyi) where MSMEs were asked to recommend other respondents to participate. Thirty owners/managers of MSMEs businesses in Chinhoyi town were selected as the sample for this case-study because they are the key informants on this study. Twenty (20) out of the thirty (30) expected interviews were conducted, six (6) could not avail themselves within the specific time frame because they claimed tight business schedules. Thus, the sample and response rate are favourable in comparison with other qualitative studies

4.3 Data Collection
4.3.1 Research approach
Interviews were used to gather data in this study as they were flexible and allowed the researcher to probe for more information. Ambiguous questions and answers were clarified through probing. Through observation of facial expression, additional information on the respondents' characteristics and true opinion were obtained. Interviews with owners and managers were informal, but important and conducted for the purpose of not only verifying the earlier observed marketing practices, but also to gain insight into the study's research questions. These interviews were conducted with the owners/ managers during their normal working hours. Each interview took approximately 20 minutes to complete. Following the recommendations of Saunders et al. (2000), interviewees were briefed on the subject matter prior to interviews, thereby helping to promote validity and reliability through enabling them to gain an understanding of the information being requested. All interviews were captured with a smart phone recorder to assist with the analysis of data generated.

4.4 Construct Measurement and Data Collection Technique
The market orientation construct developed by Blackson and Stoke (2002) was used in this study. This is a refined version of Kohli and Jaworki's construct. Kohli *et al.* (1993) argue that it is important to refine market orientation construct to suit specific contexts. Kohli and Jaworki (1993) construct has been replicated in various studies and has proved to be valid. The researcher want to state that for the present study in Chinhoyi, Zimbabwe, it was decided to assess the antecedents of market orientation and whether the market orientation concept is understood and adopted in the micro small medium enterprise businesses. In this regard, no causality was carried out between market orientation and business performance among these MSME firms in Zimbabwe but rather the extent to which market orientation was practiced.

5. Presentation and Discussion of findings
5.1 Demography
The MSMEs in this study were from wood and metal furniture manufacturing businesses in Chinhoyi town. These MSMEs concentrated in manufacturing wardrobes, chairs, tables, kitchen units and cabinets. Chinhoyi town was chosen for its uniqueness in terms of attracting all kinds of customer groupings including those in retail businesses across all districts in Mashonaland West Province. The interviewees comprised of owner-managers and supervisors. Out of the twenty four (24) interviewees, twelve (12) were owners, eight (8) were managers and four (4) were supervisors.

5.2 Antecedent in Developing Market Orientation Culture
5.2.1 Employee Involvement
Several studies confirm that for an organisation to be market oriented, employees of the organisation must be highly involved and in support of the mission and vision of the organisation. MSMEs involved in the study confessed having staff that are committed and in full support of organisational vision and mission. MSMEs indicated that this is reflected in their communication, customer service, and endurance to the harsh economic environment affecting the organisation as well as enjoying cordial working relationships. Of the interviews conducted all MSMEs confirmed the commitment level of their employees to be extremely high. Majority of MSMEs confessed having employees who are hardworking, provide good customer care, endure with the enterprises in difficult times and have good working relationship. Furthermore, they confirmed having employees who continuously innovate, who carry research and development and aim at providing superior quality and benefits to their customers. This shows that the majority of MSMEs are being driven towards market orientation. This is supported by Narver and Slater (1990), Kohli and Jaworki (1990) who also confirmed employee involvement as an antecedent to market orientation. However few MSME confessed having some employees who are not supportive of vision and mission of their enterprise, they believed that some employees exist in organisations because they want to get paid and do not have organisations at heart. It can be deduced that it is because of poor salaries which are being paid by MSMEs as enterprises interviewed indicated paying salaries between $50 to $400. This is far beyond the poverty datum line of the country which is pegged at $495. From the study findings, it can be concluded that commitment and involvement of the employees is regarded as a major step towards developing a good market orientation culture.

5.2.2 Interdepartmental Dynamics and Organizational Systems
The study revealed that the majority of MSMEs have no clear defined departments and major functions are done by top management. The MSMEs revealed that there exist connectedness between members of the enterprises and this facilitates information sharing among employees and this is important towards building a market oriented organisation. Employees of MSME confessed that they share information regarding prices, needs of customers and the trends in the furniture industry. This is supported by Kohli and Jaworki (1993) who pointed out that interdepartmental connectedness is one major antecedent to market orientation. Furthermore, employees

confirmed that the environment does not promotes spirit decorps.

5.2.3 Systems and Structures

The study revealed that some structures to solve organisational challenges exist in MSME. Within the MSME, they confirmed solving some organisational problems through staff meetings. These findings confirm the same as the findings from Blankson et al (2006) as far as communication and relationships among small businesses are concerned. Similarly, some MSME confessed solving staff problems through informal and formal open communication.

All the surveyed enterprises confessed having better team work than their competitors. This was attributed to the interpersonal relationship among the staff and the organizational climate created by the owners of the enterprises. This confirms with Armstrong (2009) and Dwivedi (2008) in their assertions of the role of organizational climate in fostering unity and team work among employees. The surveyed MSME indicated the presence of a form of incentive system for the staff of their enterprises. The incentives indicated included salary increments, breakfast and share option schemes, bonuses in December, best performers awards, free holidays for best performers, free accommodation and personal praises. However other MSME did not have any kind of reward system because of exodus of liquidity challenges they were facing.

Regarding structures, results revealed that the structures were not proper for customer orientation. This is because the front-line staffs were not empowered to solve problems they encountered. According to Kotler and Keller (2009), it is advisable to empower front-line staff because they are the customer encounter employees and this will ensure quality service delivery. Empowering them will ensure the delivery of services and products that are in the interest of customers without necessarily passing through cumbersome procedures and structures (Rangkuti, 2010). Thus, the traditional organizational structure of top management on top, followed by middle management and then front-line people before customers should be changed to customers on top, followed by front-line people and then middle management with top management at the bottom. In this manner, customers gain the right attention and focus.

5.2.3 Top management commitment

All the surveyed MSMEs indicated that top management is not committed towards development of market orientation. This is shown by all MSME confessing that they do not have marketing budgets, research and development budgets and marketing plans. Employees of the sampled MSME indicated that the owners of the enterprises are not risk taking. They confirmed that the owners are comfortable in making employees continue producing furniture they have been producing long ago. They are comfortable with the status quo. They do not want to change. They are not risk taking. This shows that top management commitment is an inhibitor of the development of market orientation in MSME in Zimbabwe.

5.2.4 Environmental Scanning and Analysis

The study confirmed that all MSME somehow do environmental scanning and analysis of which it is a major antecedent of market orientation. It enables the enterprise to take advantages of opportunities in the environment whilst planning for threats. This enables firms to remain focused to the needs of customers. They confirmed scanning the environment to determine changes in economic factors such as price, competition, political environment and the physical environment. All the 24 enterprises believed the current situation was a difficult environment for all businesses. It is believed, the socio-economic environment has reduced the confidence of businesses due to delays in government disbursement of salaries to civil servants and quasi- government and grant aided institutions. All MSME confirmed that Chinhoyi town depends on Chinhoyi University of Technology employees and Civil servants and hence their delay in being paid salaries and bonuses heavily affects their MSME; a comment made by one of the interviewees: "Business is slow, it's difficult to meet operational expenses and break even, because civil servants have not been paid yet.

5.2.5 Centralisation and formalisation

All the surveyed respondents indicated that there is more centralisation of power and authority in MSME. They confessed that all decisions are made by the owner and it is one man decision. There is no room for debate which is a barrier to market orientation. The key informants interviewed confirmed that there is high degree of informality in MSME since the owner wants to be involved in every section of the business and also wants to evade taxi.

5.3 Market Orientation

A market oriented organisation is an organisation which delivers superior value and quality to its customers (Narver and Slater 1993). It is an organisation with systems which support market orientation (Kohli and Jaworki, 1990). Market oriented organisations conducts market research to monitor the changing needs of customers, tastes and preferences of customers and the trend in the marketing environment. All this will enable the organisation to be competitor oriented; customers oriented and have interfunctional coordination of activities which will result in customers' satisfaction, improvement in product innovation and quality, and implementation of strategies that could make the company competitive. This shows that marketing research is essential for

MSME's operating in Zimbabwe. Notwithstanding the important role played by market research in market orientation of small firms, few of the interviewed enterprises make use of marketing research of some sort. MSME's do not go through the actual rudiments of marketing research processes but they employ ways of identifying changes in customer needs. The MSME's indicated that they belong to a Ministry of Small Medium Enterprise which gives them information about new trends in the industry. For instance, MSME in the wood and metal furniture manufacturing industry in Chinhoyi confessed gathering information on new furniture sometimes from customers who bring pictures and magazines of furniture they wanted. They also confirmed gathering information from their friends. Thus some sort of competitive orientation is being practiced by these firms involved in this current study. This market intelligence technique informs them about the kind of furniture to manufacture.

Other MSME's centred their entire information gathering on prices of similar goods and services by their competitors. Some do not undertake marketing research whilst others have no idea. The few that do not apply marketing research rely on data gathered by their wholesalers and other institutions as their sources of information for business decision making. Results of the study indicate that marketing research is very low and not a formal well structured issue among MSME's in Zimbabwe.

6. Managerial Implications

A study of Micro Small Medium Enterprises in Chinhoyi Zimbabwe has enabled us to understand the market orientation practices, antecedents and consequences in Micro Small Medium Enterprises. The analysis of the research findings indicates that market orientation is lowly being appreciated and formally employed. MSME's seem to possess some knowledge about market orientation and it shows that marketing is being practised but informally without clear structures and systems, budgets, marketing plans and well laid down marketing strategies. The majority of the informants interviewed believe market orientation entails employing actions, practices and procedures focusing on the customer.

The study revealed some deficiencies in MSME which hinders them from being market oriented. These include lack of managerial skills, marketing skills and funding which are key ingredience in making an organisation market oriented. This is supported by Harris (1998) who stated that the key factors that prevent small businesses from focusing on market trends and needs include contentment with the status quo, ignorance of market orientation, limited resources and lack of competitive differentiation. Revelations from the study indicated that matured MSME outsource their marketing activities from consultancy. MSME however need to understand that consultancy is more expensive and do not have full knowledge of their business and can divulge their business to competitors. MSME need to appreciate that market orientation is a continuous process, it is not an event that is done once and hence there is need to have it as part of the organisation.

Revelations from the study shows that top management is lacking in MSME. This is a major ingredient in driving an organisation towards market orientation.

7. Conclusions and Recommendations

Basing on the findings of the study, the study concludes that there is less understanding of market orientation in MSME. The antecedents to market orientation are still very low. Therefore the following recommendations are relevant for effective and efficient market orientation culture among Zimbabwean MSME.

Universities, vocational training centres and polytechnic colleges should offer marketing training to MSMEs in their respective areas as community service to enhance their skills. It is also highly recommended that the Ministry of Small Medium Enterprises should work hand and glove with higher institutions of learning to come up with training programmes to assist MSMEs.

Secondly Policy makers and NGOs should consider organizing seasonal courses and training workshops to owners and managers of MSMEs on the use of marketing strategies in gaining competitive advantage.

Funding is a major issue in MSME in Zimbabwe and this is one of the inhibitor towards market orientation. The government should enhance access to funding to MSMEs at affordable interests rates. The funding should be non conditional but attached to performance and evaluations on the use of the funds to reduce non performing loans.

The tax system should be economical so that this can incentivise MSMEs to be more formal. Currently the majority of MSME are operating informally because they want to evade tax. Putting in place economical and convenient way of paying tax will encourage them to become formal.

In the Zimbabwean context, MSMEs should resolve employee's problems formally. There is need to be more formal, use democratic leadership styles and allow employees to participate in decision making. This helps MSMEs towards market orientation. Zimbabwean MSMEs should be transparency in the way they operate their businesses. This boosts confidence of workers and workers become more motivated. In order to attain a purely market orientation of MSMEs in Zimbabwe, delegation of authority, responsibility and accountability

must be passed down the organisational hierarchy. It must not rest on the owner.

An appropriate legal framework should be considered to protect the Zimbabwean MSMEs from the importation of manufactured goods, notably from Botswana, Zambia, Tanzania and South Africa. The study also recommends further studies into the extent of readiness of Zimbabwean MSMEs to the design and use appropriate market orientation strategies to gain competitive advantage, since marketing is crucial to the survival and development of any business. Such work should consider increasing the sampling frame and size to cover all segments of industry and regions of the country. Differences in readiness among geographical regions and industries can then be analyzed using quantitative methods such as analysis of variance (ANOVA), Structural Equation modelling (SEM). More over the antecedence which influences market orientation needs to be ascertained.

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