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Effect of Entrepreneurial Orientation on Organizational Performance among Agro-Based Firms in Abia State, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on organizational performance among agro-based firms in Abia State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised owners, managers, and employees of selected agro-based firms in Abia State, from which a sample size was determined using Yamane's formula. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale. The validity of the instrument was established through expert review, while reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded values above the acceptable threshold of 0.70, indicating high internal consistency. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (simple regression analysis) with the aid of SPSS. The findings revealed that all dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation-innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking have a positive and significant effect on customer satisfaction. Specifically, proactiveness emerged as the strongest predictor of customer satisfaction, while risk-taking had the least, though still significant, effect. The study concluded that entrepreneurial orientation is a critical driver of organizational performance in agro-based firms, as it enhances

customer satisfaction and competitive advantage. Based on these findings, the study recommended that agro-based firms should invest in innovation, adopt proactive strategies and take calculated risks to improve performance outcomes.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Orientation, Customer Satisfaction, Organizational Performance, Agro-Based Firms, Abia State.

1.0 Introduction

The modern business environment is characterized by rapid technological changes, globalization, intense competition, and changing consumer preferences (Aremu & Adeyemi, 2023). These developments have compelled organizations to adopt innovative and strategic approaches capable of improving organizational performance and ensuring long-term sustainability. One of the strategic approaches that have received considerable attention among scholars and practitioners is entrepreneurial orientation (EO). Entrepreneurial orientation refers to the processes, practices, and decision-making activities that encourage organizations to become innovative, proactive, and willing to take calculated risks in pursuit of business opportunities and improved organizational outcomes (Abodunde, 2024).

Entrepreneurial orientation has become an important determinant of organizational success in both developed and developing economies. Organizations that possess strong entrepreneurial orientation are often more capable of identifying market opportunities, responding to environmental changes, introducing innovative products, and achieving competitive advantage. Entrepreneurial orientation is commonly measured through dimensions such as innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking, which collectively influence organizational growth and performance (Nson, 2025). Firms that encourage entrepreneurial practices are more likely to improve profitability, customer satisfaction, market share, and operational efficiency.

The agro-based sector is a critical contributor to economic development, employment generation, and food security in Nigeria, particularly in states such as Abia State where agricultural activities and agro-processing enterprises are

widespread. Agro-based firms are expected to play a major role in value addition, rural development, and industrial growth through activities such as cassava processing, palm oil production, poultry farming, fish farming, and other agricultural value-chain operations. Despite this importance, many agro-based firms in Abia State continue to experience poor organizational performance, reflected in low profitability, weak market share, inadequate customer satisfaction, and slow business growth. However, many agro-based firms in Abia State still operate with traditional business approaches that are characterized by low innovation, reactive decision-making, and reluctance to take calculated risks. This situation limits their ability to compete effectively in both local and regional markets.

Empirical studies have shown that entrepreneurial orientation can significantly improve organizational performance; however, most of these studies have focused on small and medium enterprises or manufacturing firms, with limited attention given to agro-based firms in Abia State. This creates a contextual and empirical gap, as the specific relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and organizational performance within agro-based enterprises in the state remains underexplored.

In addition, there is inconsistency in findings from previous studies regarding the extent to which different dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation influence performance outcomes. While some studies emphasize the importance of innovativeness and proactiveness, others suggest that risk-taking and competitive aggressiveness may not always yield positive results depending on the business environment. This lack of consensus further necessitates empirical investigation in the context of agro-based firms in Abia State.

It is against this backdrop that this study seeks to examine the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on organizational performance of agro-based firms in Abia State, Nigeria. The study aims to provide empirical evidence on how entrepreneurial orientation dimensions influence performance outcomes, thereby contributing to both academic literature and managerial practice in the agro-based sector.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

2.1 Entrepreneurial Orientation

The strategic position of a company that emphasizes its propensity for innovation, risk-taking, and proactive pursuit of opportunities is known as entrepreneurial orientation (EO). It reflects a company's readiness to engage with market dynamics. Wales et al. claim that (2020) EO is especially important to small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) because it has a significant impact on their capacity to establish and maintain a competitive advantage, thereby improving their overall performance. Companies that have a strong EO orientation are more likely to lead markets with novel solutions, whereas businesses that don't have this orientation may have trouble adapting to the demands of industries that are changing quickly. The advantages of a strong EO are profound and multifaceted. According to research, businesses with a high EO are better able to improve overall performance because they are able to innovate, respond quickly to changes in the market, and respond to pressures from competitors (Wales et al., 2020). These businesses typically see an increase in their share of the market as a result of pioneering new products and services that they launch ahead of their rivals to meet the needs of the market (Khan et al., 2022). According to Rezaei & Ortt (2018), EO also makes it easier to build long-term competitive advantages by allowing businesses to develop unique skills that are hard for competitors to duplicate. Covin and Slevin (1989) identified three core dimensions that characterize EO: innovativeness, risk-taking, and proactiveness, but this work was limited to innovativeness and proactiveness only.

2.2 Innovativeness

An organization's innovativeness is its capacity to develop and implement novel concepts, products, procedures, or services that add value and boost performance (Khan et al., 2022). It plays a pivotal role in helping firms gain a competitive advantage and achieve long-term success, especially in markets that are evolving rapidly (Rezaei

& Ortt, 2018). Organizations can reap numerous benefits from being innovative. First and foremost, it gives companies a competitive advantage by helping them stand out from their rivals, strengthen their position in the market, and build customer loyalty (Khan et al., 2022). Consistent innovators are regarded as industry leaders and frequently emerge as the preferred brands for cutting-edge goods and services. According to Rezaei & Ortt (2018), the introduction of novel products or services has the potential to increase revenue by gaining access to new market segments and generating new revenue streams. Companies are able to swiftly adjust their strategies and offerings in response to shifts in consumer preferences, technological advancements, or competitive pressures when innovativeness fosters adaptability (Sofik et al., 2023).

2.3 Proactiveness

The disposition of individuals or organizations to anticipate future challenges and opportunities and to take the initiative to address them prior to their emergence is referred to as proactivity. A forward-thinking approach that involves actively shaping the environment rather than passively responding to external stimuli distinguishes this trait (Sofik et al., 2023). According to Abbas et al. (2023), proactiveness entails not only recognizing new challenges but also coming up with and putting into action innovative strategies and strategic solutions to improve overall outcomes. In essence, proactive behaviour reflects a commitment to driving change rather than merely reacting to it. Organizations that prioritize proactiveness often experience enhanced performance as a result of their ability to innovate and adapt to changing market conditions (Huang et al., 2023). Proactive businesses can gain and maintain a competitive advantage by anticipating shifts in market trends and positioning themselves ahead of rivals (Abbas et al., 2023).

2.4 Organizational Performance (Based on Customer Satisfaction)

Customer satisfaction, which is the focus of this study, refers to the degree to which customers feel that a product or service meets or exceeds their expectations. It is considered a critical performance indicator because satisfied customers are more likely to make repeat purchases, develop loyalty, and recommend the firm to others. According to Suchánek & Inalová (2024), customer satisfaction serves as both an outcome of organizational activities and a measure of organizational success. In today's digital and competitive environment, organizations increasingly rely on customer feedback, experience, and satisfaction metrics to evaluate their performance and make strategic decisions (Abdullah, 2025). Because agricultural products and services are sensitive to quality, timeliness, and dependability, customer satisfaction is especially important in the context of businesses that are based in the agricultural sector. Firms that consistently meet customer expectations in terms of product quality, availability, and service delivery are more likely to achieve higher performance levels and sustain competitive advantage.

2.5 Empirical Review

Studies have examined the impact of entrepreneurial orientation on various aspects of business performance. They include:

A study by Ballerini et al. (2026) revealed that entrepreneurial orientation has a non-linear relationship with organizational performance, particularly in digital SMEs. The study found that proactiveness and risk-taking significantly enhance long-term performance outcomes when properly managed, especially in dynamic and technology-driven environments.

Ayetigbo et al. (2025) studied entrepreneurial orientation and SME performance in Nigeria with emphasis on organizational culture. The study found that entrepreneurial orientation significantly improves performance, especially when

supported by a strong organizational culture that encourages innovation and customer responsiveness.

Oyebisi and Oyeleye (2025) investigated SMEs in South-West Nigeria and found that entrepreneurial orientation positively affects business performance. The study further revealed that EO improves operational efficiency and customer satisfaction through innovation and strategic risk-taking.

Anekwe (2025) also found that entrepreneurial orientation significantly influences SME growth in Anambra State, particularly through innovation and proactiveness. The study emphasized that EO enhances customer retention and satisfaction in competitive markets.

Dwumah et al. (2024) investigated SMEs in Ghana and found that innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking, and competitive aggressiveness significantly improve firm performance. The study also emphasized that entrepreneurial orientation enhances customer satisfaction through improved service delivery and market responsiveness.

Similarly, Aloulou (2024) examined entrepreneurial orientation and innovation performance in Saudi firms and found that EO significantly enhances innovation capability and overall organizational performance through improved absorptive capacity and innovation processes. The study concluded that entrepreneurial orientation is a key driver of customer value creation in competitive markets.

In another study, Nasution et al. (2024) investigated entrepreneurial competence and orientation in MSMEs and found that entrepreneurial orientation positively influences business performance through competitive advantage. The study highlighted that EO improves customer satisfaction by enabling firms to deliver better-quality products and services.

Ishaya et al. (2024) examined entrepreneurial orientation and SME performance in Maiduguri and found that innovativeness, proactiveness, risk-taking,

autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness significantly influence business performance. The study concluded that EO enhances competitiveness and customer satisfaction in SMEs.

According to the reviewed studies, an entrepreneurial mindset generally improves organizational performance and customer satisfaction. However, most of the existing studies focus on SMEs, manufacturing firms, or general agribusiness sectors, with limited attention given specifically to agro-based firms in Abia State.

In addition, a lot of studies look at organizational performance in general and don't focus on customer satisfaction as a key performance metric, especially in the agro-based industry. There is also a lack of empirical evidence regarding how customer satisfaction is affected by all three aspects of entrepreneurial orientation simultaneously in agribusinesses in Abia State. By examining the impact of entrepreneurial orientation on customer satisfaction in agro-based businesses in Abia State, Nigeria, this study aims to fill a clear contextual and conceptual gap. Based on the aforementioned gap, the primary goal is to investigate the impact of an entrepreneurial orientation on the organizational performance of agro-based businesses in Abia State, Nigeria; the specific goals are to:

I. examine the effect of innovativeness on consumer satisfaction

i. examine the effect of proactiveness on consumer satisfaction

The hypotheses were stated in null forms thus:

$H0_1$: innovativeness does not have any significant effect on consumer satisfaction

$H0_2$: proactiveness does not have any significant effect on consumer satisfaction

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory served as the basis for this work. One of the most relevant theoretical foundations for explaining the connection between entrepreneurial orientation and organizational performance in agro-based firms in

Abia State is the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory. Barney (1991) developed this theory, which holds that a company's superior performance and competitive advantage are derived from its internal resources and capabilities, particularly those that are valuable, rare, unique, and non-substitutable (VRIN framework). Entrepreneurial orientation is viewed in this study as a strategic internal capability that enables agro-based businesses to efficiently utilize their resources to improve organizational performance and customer satisfaction. Firms that possess strong entrepreneurial orientation are able to deploy their resources more creatively and efficiently, leading to better innovation, responsiveness, and competitiveness.

Each entrepreneurial orientation dimension represents a strategic intangible resource from the RBV perspective: A company's innovativeness is the capacity to create distinctive goods and services that competitors cannot easily duplicate. - Proactivity is a dynamic capability that enables businesses to anticipate and respond to changes in the market earlier than rivals. - Taking risks indicates a strategic willingness to invest resources in opportunities that are uncertain but potentially lucrative. Agro-based businesses need these entrepreneurial resources because the industry is highly competitive, uncertain about the environment, and driven by customers. In this study, customer satisfaction is used as a key indicator of organizational performance. Firms with an entrepreneurial orientation are more likely to improve customer satisfaction. In addition, RBV explains why, despite operating in similar external conditions, some agro-based businesses in Abia State perform better than others. The difference lies in how effectively they utilize their internal entrepreneurial resources to create value for customers. Internal capabilities can be turned into a competitive advantage by businesses with a strong entrepreneurial orientation, resulting in increased customer satisfaction.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This section presents the research design and procedures adopted in conducting the study on the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on organizational performance (customer satisfaction) of agro-based firms in Abia State, Nigeria. The study adopts a descriptive survey research design. This design is considered appropriate because it enables the researcher to collect data from respondents in agro-based firms and describe the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and organizational performance. It also allows the use of structured questionnaires to obtain quantifiable data suitable for statistical analysis. The study is conducted in Abia State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprises managers, supervisors, and employees of agro-based firms operating in Abia State. These individuals are selected because they are directly involved in decision-making, production, marketing, and customer relations within the firms. The population is considered finite but large; hence, an accessible population was used based on registered agro-based firms in the state. The study adopted a stratified random sampling technique. Agro-based firms were grouped into strata based on their type of operation (e.g., cassava processing, poultry farming, palm oil production). Respondents were then be randomly selected from each stratum to ensure equal representation and reduce bias. The study utilized primary data. Primary data was collected through structured questionnaires administered to respondents. The main instrument for data collection is a structured questionnaire which was divided into two sections: Section A: Demographic information (age, gender, position, years of experience, firm type); Section B: Items measuring: Entrepreneurial Orientation (innovativess and proactiveness) and Organizational Performance (customer satisfaction). The questionnaire was structured on five point likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree (5) to Neural (1). The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity through expert review by specialists in marketing and research methodology. Their feedback ensured that the instrument adequately covers all relevant variables. Test-re-test reliability was conducted in the study with fifty (60) respondents to assess

the clarity and reliability of the questionnaire. Based on the feedback received, minor modifications were made to improve the questionnaire's validity and reliability. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's Alpha, which measures internal consistency. The coefficients obtained (α = 0.812, 0.845, 0.887) indicate that the instrument is reliable. Innovativeness (0.812) indicates good internal consistency among its items, Proactiveness (0.845) shows strong reliability, customer satisfaction (0.887) demonstrates a very high level of internal consistency. Data collected were analyzed using simple regression analysis. However, the decision rule was to reject null hypothesis if the P-value is less than 0.05 and we accept the alternate hypothesis, but where P-value is greater than 0.05, we accept the null hypothesis and reject the alternate hypothesis.

4.0 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Three hypotheses were projected for this study and were tested as follows:

Test of Hypothesis 1

Test 1 is based on hypothesis 1 projected in null form thus:

$H0_1$: innovativeness does not have any significant effect on consumer satisfaction

This test was executed using the simple (regression) linear model. The result is shown on table 3 below:

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.245	0.243	-	5.12	0.000
Innovativeness	0.678	0.047	0.732	14.47	0.000
Dependent variable: consumer satisfaction					

In order to examine how innovativeness affected customer satisfaction, this study used innovativeness as the independent variable. According to table 3, consumer satisfaction rises by 67.8% when innovativeness increases by one unit. The

significance level of the p-value is less than 0.05, which indicates that the innovativeness has a significant impact on customer satisfaction. We came to the conclusion that innovativeness has a significant effect on consumer satisfaction after rejecting the null hypothesis, which stated that innovativeness has no effect on customer satisfaction.

4.1 Discussion

In agribusinesses in Abia State, the study found that innovativeness significantly improves customer satisfaction. This suggests that businesses are more likely to achieve customer satisfaction if they introduce novel products, enhance production procedures, and foster creativity. This finding is consistent with the study of Dwumah et al. (2024), who reported that innovativeness significantly enhances SME performance and customer satisfaction. In a similar vein, Aloulou (2024) discovered that an entrepreneurial-oriented innovation capability enhances organizational outcomes. According to the Resource-Based View theory (Barney, 1991), this result also agrees with the idea that distinctive internal capabilities like innovation can provide a competitive advantage.

Test of Hypothesis ii

Test ii is based on hypothesis ii projected in null form thus:

$H0_2$: proactiveness does not have any significant effect on consumer satisfaction

This test was executed using the simple (regression) linear model. The result is shown on table 4 below:

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.112	0.223	-	4.98	0.000
Proactiveness	0.701	0.045	0.756	15.45	0.000
Dependent variable: consumer satisfaction					

In this study, proactiveness was used as the independent variable to examine its impact on customer satisfaction. According to table 4, consumer satisfaction rises by 70.1% when proactiveness increases by one unit. The significance level of the p-value is less than 0.05, indicating that proactiveness has a significant impact on customer satisfaction. We came to the conclusion that proactiveness has a significant effect on consumer satisfaction after rejecting the null hypothesis, which stated that proactiveness has no effect on customer satisfaction.

4.2 Discussion

According to the findings, one of the most significant aspects of entrepreneurial orientation is proactiveness, which has a strong and significant impact on customer satisfaction. Nasution et al. (2024), who discovered that proactive businesses are better positioned to anticipate customer needs and effectively respond to market changes, concur with this finding. In a similar vein, Lin and Chung (2023) emphasized that proactiveness improves a company's overall performance as well as its responsiveness to the market. According to the AIDA model, proactive strategies assist businesses in attracting attention and maintaining the interest of customers, ultimately leading to satisfaction. Overall, this study's findings demonstrate that agro-based businesses in Abia State with an entrepreneurial focus significantly increase customer satisfaction. All three dimensions—innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-takingwere found to have positive and significant effects. These results are in line with previous empirical studies (Lin & Chung, 2023; Ngo, 2023; Dwumah et al., 2024), which emphasize that an entrepreneurial mindset improves organizational performance in a variety of settings. The Resource-Based View theory, which asserts that internal capabilities like innovation and proactiveness are crucial drivers of competitive advantage and performance, is also supported by the findings.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Using customer satisfaction as the primary performance indicator, this study looked at the impact of an entrepreneurial orientation on organizational performance among agro-based businesses in Abia State, Nigeria. Based on the findings from the analysis, it is concluded that entrepreneurial orientation plays a significant and positive role in enhancing customer satisfaction and overall organizational performance. More likely to meet and exceed customer expectations are businesses that employ innovative practices, anticipate market needs, actively compete, and empower employees. The study further concludes that entrepreneurial orientation serves as a strategic capability that enables agro-based firms to effectively utilize their internal resources, adapt to environmental changes, and create value for customers. This supports the argument of the Resource-Based View theory that firms achieve superior performance through the effective deployment of unique internal capabilities.

Overall, the study shows that agro-based businesses that want to increase customer satisfaction should stay competitive and grow sustainably in a fast-paced business environment and must adopt an entrepreneurial mindset.

Based on the findings of the study, the following specific recommendations are made:

i. Agro-based firms should continuously invest in innovation by developing new products, improving existing ones, and adopting modern production technologies.
ii. Managers should use proactive business strategies to anticipate customer needs, keep an eye on market trends, and react quickly to changes in the environment. Companies will be able to stay ahead of their rivals and increase customer satisfaction as a result of this.

6.0 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of this study provide practical insights for managers of agro-based firms in Abia State on how to improve customer satisfaction through the effective application of entrepreneurial orientation.

First, the results imply that managers should embed innovation into core business operations. This entails allocating resources to the creation of new products, implementing more effective processing methods, and continuously upgrading service delivery systems. Innovation ought to be a regular strategic activity that aims to meet changing customer expectations rather than an occasional event.

Second, the strong influence of being proactive suggests that managers need to move away from making decisions in the past and toward the future. This involves conducting regular market research, tracking customer preferences, and acting ahead of competitors. Customers are more satisfied with proactive businesses because they are better able to provide timely and relevant value.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

UGURU, Precious Chetachi conceived and developed the research idea, identified the research problem, and designed the overall framework of the study. The author conducted an extensive review of relevant literature, developed the research objectives, questions, and hypotheses, and prepared the research instrument.

ADINDU, Chidinma Peace. Ph.D contributed to the conceptualization and methodological design of the study. The author provided academic supervision throughout the research process, reviewed the literature for theoretical and empirical relevance, assisted in the administration of questionnaires and data collection, validated the research instrument, and ensured the appropriateness of the statistical procedures employed. She critically evaluated the interpretation of the findings, provided constructive intellectual input, and extensively reviewed and edited the manuscript to improve its academic quality, clarity, and coherence.

Mmanwaoke, O. Vincent. Ph.D participated in the development of the research instrument. In addition, he reviewed relevant literature, verified references and citations, and contributed to editing and proofreading the manuscript to ensure consistency and accuracy.

ADINDU, Ogbonna Michael Ph.D provided critical comments that improved the overall quality of the manuscript, assisted in the administration of questionnaires and data collection. assisted in formatting the paper according to the journal's guidelines, reviewed the language and presentation of the manuscript, and ensured compliance with ethical and publication standards before submission.

All four authors contributed substantially to the conception, design, execution, analysis, interpretation, and preparation of the manuscript. They jointly reviewed the final version of the manuscript, approved it for publication, and agreed to be accountable for all aspects of the work, ensuring that any questions related to the accuracy or integrity of the research are appropriately investigated and resolved.

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