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Exploring the Critical Determinants of Market Orientation of Cocoa Farmers in Ghana

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Abstract

Despite the impressive strides made in the cocoa sector, it is still faced with decent deficits. The study was therefore aimed at determining the factors that influence the market orientation of cocoa farmers in Ghana. The factors considered in this study were entrepreneurial proclivity, innovation factors, socio-economic factors and farm characteristics. With a descriptive survey design, 370 cocoa farmers were selected. Data collected was analysed using inferential statistics (ordinal logistic regression model). The results found that entrepreneurial proclivity, the innovation characteristics of the farmer business school, farmer characteristics (gender, age, tribe, religion) and farm characteristics (farm size, yield, source of labour and training of workers) were the factors that influenced the market orientation of cocoa farmers. A revision of the farmer business school is essential for growth in the cocoa sector. The study provides empirical information for considering the various factors that influence the market orientation of cocoa farmers in Ghana. These factors are critical in ensuring that the Farmer business school which was introduced in Ghana can be sustainable.

Keywords: Agricultural Extension, Cocoa Management, Farmer Business School, Innovation Development, Rural Development.

1. Introduction

Many scholars, practitioners and academics have recognised the role market orientation play in contemporary marketing and business activities. They see it as a way of enhancing competitive advantage and dominance for superior performance of organisations. This is enhanced by the tastes and preferences of consumers, advances in technological activities and the capacity for enhanced market opportunities (Achrol, Kotler, 1999). Organisations are expected to expect, regulate and provide customer fulfilment to their set markets, be up-to-date with emerging market trends, monitor the actions of their opponents and amend their products, services and administrative structures and operate efficient and effective resources than their competitors. This can only be achieved by the active engagement of market orientation (Kohli, Jaworski, 1990). Market-oriented firms are very much educated about their target markets and can utilize the information they have at their disposal to make an unrivalled incentive for their clients (Slater, Narver, 1995).

Kohli and Jaworski (1990) defined market orientation as the organisation-wide age of market insight relating to current and future client needs, the spread of the knowledge across divisions,

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and association-wide responsiveness to it. It is the degree of allocation of resources to the production of agricultural products that are meant for sale. According to Harris (2002) and Deshpande and Webster (1989), the general concept of market orientation is that it connects the organisation to its operational environment by gathering market information and spreading it inside the organisation with the sole purpose of creating superior value. According to Kotler (2003), organisations that operate according to the dictates of market orientation create maximum profits through their customer satisfaction strategies, competitive strategies and access to timely and superior information. This explains the reason some firms can achieve better performance outputs over those who compete with them (Van Raaij, Stoelhorst, 2008).

Market orientation has been the subject of many studies. Many have focussed on measuring the market orientation of manufacturing companies or corporate bodies and how it influences their performance and productivity (Agarwal et al., 2003). Very few have focussed on the determining factors of market orientation. This study belongs to the latter category which focuses on significant characteristics, or the factors associated with the market orientation of cocoa farmers. Such knowledge is important because it can be used to formulate specific policies and/or target specific groups of producers to promote this concept in the cocoa industry, especially in Ghana. There is no specific agreement in the literature as to what specific factors influence market orientation. However, four general categories of factors that influence the market orientation of cocoa farmers have been posited. These particularly fit the context of marketing of cocoa products in Ghana; the characteristics of the innovation (farmer business school) in question, the characteristics of the farmer, the farm characteristics and entrepreneurial proclivity.

The theory of adoption of innovation by Rogers (2003) visualizes the entry points for potential adopters and the diverse reactions of farmers vis-à-vis the innovation and it could be a way of explaining the issues that influence market orientation. This is because the cocoa farmers were introduced to a set of ideas within the Farmer business school module. Their use of the practices is expected to help them become more market-oriented. As such, the theory helps to clarify the fact that not all cocoa farmers can adopt the market orientation principles at the same time as well as not every cocoa farmer might even find the farmer business school programme worth adopting. Therefore, the factors that influence the market orientation of cocoa farmers are of great concern to all; cocoa farmers, extension organisations, policymakers, researchers etc.

The following objectives were set for the study;

1. To determine the extent to which entrepreneurial proclivity influences the market orientation of cocoa farmers in Ghana.
2. To determine the innovation factors that influence the market orientation of cocoa farmers in Ghana.
3. To determine the socio-economic factors that influence the market orientation of cocoa farmers in Ghana.
4. To determine the farm characteristics that influence the market orientation of cocoa farmers in Ghana.

2. Materials and methods

For this study, the area of interest was Ghana but with a specific focus on the six Cocoa Regions. The study population consisted of all cocoa farmers in the country. According to the report of the Ghana Statistical Service (2014), the number of cocoa farmers is estimated at 350,000. In total, 600 cocoa farmers were sampled from all the six Cocoa Regions in Ghana; Ashanti (100 respondents), Brong Ahafo (100 respondents), Central (100 respondents), Eastern (100 respondents), Volta (50 respondents) and Western (150 respondents). The multi-stage sampling technique was employed to select the cocoa farmers. The first stage involved the selection of Cocoa Districts. Two districts from each of the regions except for Western Region (3) and Volta Region (1) making a total of 10 districts were selected using the simple random sampling technique. Out of each district, three communities were selected through the simple random sampling technique. The final stage involved the simple random selection of the cocoa farmers to make up the sample size of 600 farmers. Questionnaires were the research instruments used for the collection of data. Data collected was analysed using inferential statistics (ordinal logistic regression model).

In this study, market orientation was operationalised as a function of six indicators; cocoa farmers' customer orientation, competitor orientation, inter-functional co-ordination (Narver, Slater, 1990; Slater, Narver 1994), intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination and market responsiveness (Jaworski, Kohli, 1993; Narver, Slater, 1990). Adopting the scales used by different authors such as Narver and Slater (1990), Slater and Narver (1994) and Jaworski and Kohli (1993), the following scales were used: 1=low; 2=moderate; 3=high to determine the level of market orientation of the cocoa farmers.

To determine the factors influencing the market orientation of cocoa farmers, the ordinal logistic regression model was used to describe and explain the relationship between the dependent nominal variable (level of market orientation - Y) and the continuous independent variables (innovation characteristics, entrepreneurial proclivity, farmer characteristics, farm characteristics- X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4).

The explicit form of the function is specified as follows;

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + e.$$

β = The coefficient of the parameters.

e = The error term.

Y = Dependent variable as defined (Likert scale=1-low, 2-moderate, 3-high).

X_i = A vector of explanatory variables (innovation characteristics) for participant cocoa farmer defined, X_{i1} =Compatibility [1 (very low)-5 (very high)], X_{i2} =Complexity [1 (very low)-5 (very high)], X_{i3} = Observability [1 (very low)-5 (very high)], X_{i4} = Trialability [1 (very low)-5 (very high)], X_{i5} = Relative Advantage [1 (very low)-5 (very high)].

X_2 = A vector of explanatory variables (entrepreneurial proclivity) for farmer, X_{21} =Innovativeness [1 (very low)-5 (very high)], X_{22} = Risk taking [1 (very low)-5 (very high)], X_{23} =Risk taking [1 (very low)-5 (very high)].

X_3 = A vector of explanatory variables (farm characteristics) for farmer defined, X_{31} = Training (Yes=1, No=0), X_{32} = Farm Size (1=low, 2=medium, 3=high), X_{33} = Age of Farm (1=0-7years, 2=8-30years, 3=>30years), X_{34} = Farm Labour (Paid=1, Unpaid=0), X_{35} = Land Tenure (Outright purchase=1, Others=0), X_{36} = Farm Registration (Yes=1, No=0), X_{37} = Farm Credit (Yes=1, No=0).

X_4 = A vector of explanatory variables (farmer characteristics) for farmer as defined, X_{41} = Age (1= < 40 years, 2=50-60 years, 3= > 60 years), X_{42} = Gender (Male=1, Female=0), X_{43} = Farming Experience (1=1-10years, 2=11-20years, 3=21-30years, 4=31-40years, 5=Above 40years), X_{44} = Educational Level of Farmers (1=Formal Education, 0=No Formal Education), X_{45} = Marital Status (1=Married, 0=Single), X_{46} = Household Size (1=1-5, 2=6-10, 3=11-15, 4=16-20), X_{47} = Off-farm Income of Farmers (Yes=1, No=0), X_{48} = Ethnicity (Akan=1, Migrant=0), X_{49} = Religion (Christian=1, Others=0), X_{410} = Use of Mobile phone (Yes=1, No=0), X_{411} = Farmer Group (Yes=1, No=0), X_{412} = Leadership Position (Yes=1, No=0), X_{413} = Status (Indigene=1, Migrant=0); X_{414} = Farm size (1=4.4ha, 2=4.4-8ha, 3=>8ha).

3. Results and discussion

Table 1 describes the ordinal logistic regression model that was used to test the factors that influence market orientation.

Table 1. Model Fitting Information

Model	-2 Log Likelihood	Chi-Square	df	Sig.
Intercept Only	2173.657			
Final	1945.812	227.85	110	0.00

Source: Field Data

Link function: Logit

In Table 1, an ordinal logistic regression was conducted to test for the factors that influence the market orientation of cocoa farmers. The results ($p < 0.05$) indicate that it is statistically significant. This means that there are factors that significantly influence the market orientation of cocoa farmers. Table 2 describes the parameter estimates of the ordinal logistic regression.

Table 2. Parameter Estimates

	Estimate	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Market Orientation=3	9.26	4.07	5.17	1	0.02	1.28	17.25
Entrepreneurial Proclivity=3	0.81	0.34	5.57	1	0.02	0.14	1.48
Innovation=2	-4.58	2.38	3.70	1	0.04	-9.25	0.09
Gender=Male	-0.54	0.24	4.96	1	0.03	-1.02	-0.07
Age=Adults	1.27	0.56	5.16	1	0.02	0.18	2.37
Tribe=Akans	-0.61	0.27	5.18	1	0.02	-1.13	-0.09
Religion=Christian	0.58	0.28	4.29	1	0.04	0.03	1.12
Farm Size=Low	-3.39	0.90	14.07	1	0.00	-5.16	-1.62
Farm Size=Mod	-3.01	0.97	9.57	1	0.00	-4.91	-1.10
Participation=1	0.43	0.27	5.82	1	0.01	0.25	1.32
Yield=1	1.47	0.70	4.46	1	0.04	0.11	2.85
Yield=2	1.54	0.61	6.41	1	0.01	0.35	2.73
Yield=3	2.54	0.60	17.94	1	0.00	1.37	3.72
Yield=4	2.29	0.59	15.02	1	0.00	1.13	3.44
Yield=5	1.59	0.63	6.27	1	0.01	0.34	2.83
Labour=1	0.70	0.26	7.26	1	0.01	0.19	1.21
Training=1	-1.86	0.31	35.37	1	0.00	-2.47	-1.25

Source: author's construct

Table 2 represents the statistic of the significant parameters used in the measurement. The results show that entrepreneurial proclivity, innovation characteristics, gender, age, tribe, religion, farm size, participation in the farmer business school, yield, source of labour and training of workers were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Thus, they are significant predictors of the market orientation of cocoa farmers.

Entrepreneurial Proclivity and Market Orientation

The results show that entrepreneurial proclivity was significant ($p < 0.05$) as a factor in influencing the market orientation of cocoa farmers. It was found that a moderate level [and beyond] of entrepreneurial proclivity influences the market orientation of cocoa farmers. This result is confirmed in a study by Acheampong (2012) who found a positive relationship between entrepreneurial proclivity and market orientation. An entrepreneurial cocoa farmer can display three major characteristics; innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk-taking. These characteristics help in taking long term decisions that can produce an effective market orientation design (Weerawardena, 2003).

This also means that the cocoa farmers have dynamic objectives whereby they merge inventive intuition to distinguish marketplace opportunities and needs and new open doors with the capacity to oversee, secure assets and adjust to the environment to accomplish desired

outcomes while accepting some segment of danger or risk for the activity. It makes them more proactive than competitors towards new market openings (Wiklund, Shepherd, 2003).

Innovation Characteristics and Market Orientation

The result also shows that the innovation characteristics were significant ($p < 0.05$) as a factor in influencing the market orientation of cocoa farmers. It was found that the farmer business school when perceived at a low level of relative advantage, compatibility, observability, complexity and trialability, is likely to influence the market orientation of the cocoa farmers. The implication is that the farmer business school module needs to be revised to make it fit the context of the country and fully tailored into the market orientation of the cocoa farmers.

On the off chance that market orientation as instructed at the farmer business school is considered as an innovation, the adoption of market orientation standards can be clarified by Rogers (1983). Rogers inferred that the pace of selection of innovation is an element of that innovation's attributes and that people differ notably in their probability of attempting new advancements. Rogers (2003) characterized relative advantage as how much an idea is seen as being better than the thought it supplants. He further showed that it is decidedly associated with the pace of selection of the innovation. Compatibility is how much innovation is seen as consistent with the current qualities and values, past encounters and needs of expected adopters. Consequently, the more noteworthy the similarity with the felt needs, the more prominent the dispersion or diffusion rate (Mndzebele, 2013).

Complexity characterizes the degree to which advancement can be considered generally hard to comprehend and utilize, for example, ease of use (Rogers, 2003). Pulendran et al. (2000) asserted that the absence of usability of innovation negatively affects the perception of the innovation which leads to a decrease in adoption. Rogers (2003) characterized observability as how much the consequences of advancement are visible to other people. As indicated by Rogers (2003), trialability is how much an innovation might be explored on a limited basis. It additionally portrays how effectively potential adopters can investigate an innovation. Potential cocoa farmers would need to perceive what the innovation can do and give it a try before focusing on it.

Farmer Characteristics and Market Orientation

It is generally agreed that the personal characteristics of farmers can influence their decision to make use of an innovation as the best course of action available or the decision that individuals make each time they consider taking up an innovation (Chand et al., 2011). Therefore, an understanding of personal characteristics that influence innovation adoption and integration is relevant.

Gender was found as a significant ($p < 0.05$) factor in influencing the market orientation of cocoa farmers. It was found that the male cocoa farmers were likely to be more market-oriented as compared to their female counterparts. Female cocoa farmers can be targeted in programmes aimed at improving the market orientation of cocoa farmers. Using financial knowledge as a proxy for market orientation, Akoto (2015) found that male cocoa farmers were more likely to be knowledgeable than female farmers. Mandell (2008) and Cole and Fernando (2008) also confirmed this assertion. The reason is that men mainly make the household's economic decisions. They are more interested in the issues of finance, personal investment and marketing and so they tend to seek more information about these topics than their female counterparts. This makes the women less financially literate than the men.

The study also found that age was significant ($p < 0.05$) as a factor in influencing the market orientation of cocoa farmers. It was found that the adult cocoa farmers as compared to the youth and the aged were more likely to be more market-oriented. Cole and Fernando (2008) also established a non-linear effect on the financial literacy of farmers. These were peaked at age 40 in India and age 45 in Pakistan. In Akoto (2015), the age of cocoa farmers was also explored as an important factor in predicting the likelihood of farmers' literacy. These results contradict the work of Worthinton (2004) who found that among the Australians, those aged between 50 to 60 years are less likely to be financially literate.

The results show that tribe was significant ($p < 0.05$) as a factor in influencing the market orientation of cocoa farmers. It was found that the Akans who formed the majority of the respondents were found to be more likely to be market-oriented than those from the other tribes.

Lusardi and Mitchell (2006) also argued that a person's race or tribe is an influential factor in their level of market orientation.

Also, religion was significant ($p < 0.05$) as a factor in influencing the market orientation of cocoa farmers. It was found that the Christians who also formed the majority of the population were more likely to be market-oriented than those from other religions. Since religion has a way of forming the values and behaviours of people, it is expected that individuals who are more attached to their religious persuasions usually have higher motivation to adopt technologies than their counterparts who are not. They tend to be independent in their thoughts and actions. Therefore, there is the possibility of a relationship between religiosity and the innovativeness of an individual. There is a positive relationship for the sample of Jews, Catholics and Protestants selected for a study. However, in Asian countries and especially among Muslim consumers, a negative relationship was found since they were significantly different in terms of ideology and religious philosophy (Sari, 2015). Participation in the Farmer business school was significant ($p < 0.05$) as a factor in influencing the market orientation of cocoa farmers.

Farm Characteristics and Market Orientation

The results show that farm size was significant ($p < 0.05$) as a factor in influencing the market orientation of cocoa farmers. It was found that the cocoa farmers with farm sizes less than 21 acres were more likely to be market-oriented. This means that the cocoa farmers with small farm sizes were more likely to be highly market-oriented. It is rather expected that cocoa farmers with very large sizes of the farm were to be more market-oriented because they worked purposely for business reasons. This is confirmed by Akoto (2015) who indicated that cocoa farmers with farm sizes that are more than 40 acres were more knowledgeable than farmers who had farm sizes of less than 40 acres. However, the reason for subsistent cocoa farmers to be more market-oriented may be that their main concern was to feed their families with the income from their sales, hence, they will be aggressive in searching for ways to improve their productions.

The results show that yield was significant ($p < 0.05$) as a factor in influencing the market orientation of cocoa farmers. It was found that all the levels of yield were significant in influencing the market orientation of the cocoa farmers. With positive estimates, it implies that the higher the yield, the higher the likelihood of the farmers' level of market orientation. The results show that the source of labour was significant ($p < 0.05$) as a factor in influencing the market orientation of cocoa farmers. It was found that the cocoa farmers that paid for labour were more likely to be more market-oriented. Aneani et al. (2012) found that hired labour was significant and had a positive coefficient of 0.023 because it became a tool for intensifying the adoption of cocoa innovations. This was also confirmed by Ben-Houassa (2011) who observed that farms with a larger supply of labour are more likely to also introduce innovations. This is done so far as farmers can allocate sufficient time to implement new technologies and management practices. In addition, there is a greater level of labour specialisation on larger farms, including labour allocated to long-term business development and technological change. Here, labour was measured as the total weeks worked by family and non-family labour (Schneider, 2016).

The training was found to be significant ($p < 0.05$) as a factor in influencing the market orientation of cocoa farmers. It was found that the cocoa farmers that engaged in training activities are more likely to be market-oriented. This goes to emphasize the fact that those who participated in the farmer business school were more likely to be more market-oriented than those who did not. Adult learners usually have little time to learn because they have specific objectives. In their training sessions, they expect huge benefits from such activities, else, they feel they have wasted their time (Talukder, 2012). The difference that training makes is that given two groups of people exposed to the same innovation, the group that has been trained in the usage of the innovation are more likely to adopt than those who were not trained (Kundu, Roy, 2010). This point is reemphasised by Talukder (2012) who asserts that attendance to training programmes promotes greater knowledge and understanding, a favourable attitude and better skills in the use of multiple innovations.

4. Conclusion

Entrepreneurial proclivity, innovation characteristics, gender, age, tribe, religion, farm size, yield, source of labour and training of workers were found to be the factors that influence the

market orientation of cocoa farmers. The study recommends that activities that will enhance the entrepreneurial proclivity and boost the innovative capacity of the cocoa farmers must be promoted by extension agents through the Ghana COCOBOD.

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