

The Influence of Environmental Sustainability, Market Orientation and Organizational Governance on Sales Force's Performance

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Abstract

The attention that Market Orientation (MO) and the Environmental Sustainability Orientation (ESO) continues to receive from both academicians and executives is proved by the abundant literature on this topic. In the same order, the governance approach is considered as a very important factor sustaining superior performance and contributing to the firm development. However, the relationships between those three concepts have received little empirical development in previous research. This research highlights the concepts of (MO), (ESO), good Governance and Sales Organizational approach that affect the Sales Force (SF) effectiveness performance. Based on an inventory of previous research on the determinants and the consequences of Market Orientation, this paper provides a conceptual framework that presents the evoked constructs. Quantitative research was conducted with small and medium enterprises in the Northern Border Area in Saudi Arabia to carry out the determinants of the sales force performance (SFP) and particularly those related to the market orientation, the organizational governance, and the environment sustainability orientated. This research provides deep insights into the relationship between (MO) and (ESO) of the firm and governance for better understanding the variables that could impact the (SF) Management. The results of this research are useful for both academicians and executives.

Keywords: *Environment Sustainable orientation; Market orientation; Corporate governance; Sales force's performance; Small and Medium Organizations; MENA.*

1. Introduction

Social Responsibility was developed by many authors such as Constantine (2015) ; Lourenço and Branco, (2013) ; Campbell, (2007) and Dangelico, and Pujari (2010). It was conceptualized in two dimensions: Paternalistic Social Responsibility and Consultative Social Responsibility. We can deduce that the organization's awareness of its social are interconnected with the management effectiveness and the good governance.

This research examines the determinants of the Sales' Force Performance and efficiency (SFP). The recent literature highlighted the relationships between some

of those constructs such as Good Governance or Market Orientation and Superior Performance. Nevertheless, the effects of the above announced constructs haven't been tested empirically in Middle East contexts and especially in Saudi Arabia marketplace.

From a marketing perspective, this research examines how the three constructs: Market Orientation (MO), Environment Sustainability Orientation (ESO), as well as the Organization Governance (OG) affect the Sales' Force Performance and efficiency (SFP).

To address this research problem, we started by developing a conceptual framework explaining the main constructs of our research and their interrelation. An empirical study (both qualitative and quantitative) was conducted to test the research hypotheses and confirm the model in the Saudi Arabia context. The data was collected from employees from different companies in the Northern Border Area.

1. Literature Review

2.1. Sales Force Performance (SFP)

Although the notion of individual performance has been studied in several disciplines such as Human Resources Management, Organizational Behavior, Organizational Psychology and more recently, in Marketing, it has not been well conceptualized.

Researchers such as Campbell (2007) have developed the notion of individual performance at work. Motowidlo (2003) assess this concept as the value expected by managers through discrete behaviors (achievement of the prescribed objectives, skills in the tasks) of the employee during a period. Indeed, we believe that organizational values that employees behave should contribute to achieving the objectives of performance, innovation, profitability, and quality and customer satisfaction. However, it seems interesting to consider the contextual factors in

the assessment of employee performance. Campbell's multi-factorial model developed in 2007 identifies universal behavioral dimensions that are critical to work performance. He proposes eight dimensions that measure this performance: skills in job duties, skills in non-job-related tasks, communication, work effort, discipline at work, team's contribution to performance, ability to influence employees through direct interactions, ability to optimize resource allocation, and monitoring and control at work.

Sales Force Performance is considered as a set of behaviors creating value for the organization. We consider that measuring this construct could contribute to monitor the sales force to improve its performance (Kyvik, 2018) and to improve the organization profit (Cravens, 1995). The concept of "sales force performance" has been addressed in the marketing literature but little research has focused on the relational performance in the encounter Sales Force/Clients.

The Performance has been conceptualized as a process (Durif et al., 2013) or as a result measured at the individual or organizational level (Liao and Chuang, 2004; Matsuno et al, 2002).

Several studies have procured measurements of the Sales Performance (SP). Munshi and Hanji (2014) have developed a multidimensional subjective scale. They proposed an exclusive list of various tasks and duties of retail sales force which seemingly reveals their sales performance and, through a factor analysis, identifies among them the determinant indicators of sales performance of retail salespeople. According to Munchi and Hanji (2014), Sales Force Performance is composed of five dimensions: customer service, sales enhancement ability, store management ability, product knowledge and presentation and team work. Kenneth et al. (2012) proposed three dimensions to measure Sales Performance (SP): the customer satisfaction, market share growth, and sales growth.

2.2. Environment Sustainability Orientation (ESO)

Morelli, J. (2011) consider Environment Sustainability as "meeting human needs without compromising the health of ecosystems." Thus, the organization Environment Sustainability Orientation (ESO) expresses the connection of social actions, environmental structures and ecological health. The Environment Sustainability constitutes a lever to

ensure the perennial performance of the organization activities. The Environment Sustainability Orientation (ESO) should be considered than as a key factor of success for firms, especially in emerging markets such as the Saudi case. We plan to conduct an empirical study on Small and Medium Organizations (SMO) in the Northern Border region in Saudi Arabia.

Roshima et al. (2009) prove that the organization which has an advanced understanding of the importance of sustainability and governance can solve effectively and efficiently its problems. Dangelico and Pujari (2010) highlight the importance of the Environmental Sustainability to penetrate markets. Then, firms should integrate sustainability in their business strategy (Gangi et al., 2018). Zeeshan et al. (2018) and Gavana et al. (2017) have confirmed the interaction between the corporate governance and social, environmental, and economic sustainability. In the same sense, Haniffa and Cooke (2005) asserted that manager might stimulate the implementation of the sustainability disclosure to improve his company performance. Therefore, Lourenço et al. (2013) highlighted that the corporate sustainability supports higher level of performance. In addition, this study attempts to investigate the interrelations of this concept with organizational governance and market orientation and its effects on the Sale Force Performance (SFP).

Hypothesis 1: (H1). The Environment Sustainability Orientation (ESO) has a positive effect of on the Sales Force Performance (SFP).

2.3. Organizational Governance (OG)

According to The Institute of Governance, Edgar et al. (2006) consider governance as "the process whereby societies or organizations make their important decisions, determine who has voice, who is engaged in the process and how account is rendered". The authors highlighted that governance is not an instantaneous decision nor a final goal, it is a long process that accumulate modifications and improvements during the whole process of decisions executions. Governance is a concept that has attracted the attention of several researchers last years. An attention that can be explained by the need for good governmental or corporate management in order to reach diverse micro-goals or societal well-being. The first well-known person to speak loudly

about this emerging concept was the Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, when he states that “good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development” (cited in Graham et al, 2003). Since then, a multiplicity of studies started to keep talking about governance and especially to bring answers to many questions like what is governance. Is it universal? Could it be applied similarly regardless the cultural differences? What are its principles?...

According to the definition given by the OECD Report (2004) and Mtiraoui (2015), corporate governance involves “a set of relationships between a company’s management, its board, its shareholders and other stakeholders. Corporate governance also provides the structure through which the objectives of the company are set, and the means of attaining those objectives and monitoring performance are determined. Good corporate governance should provide adequate incentive for the board and the management to achieve goals that are of interest to the company and its shareholders ...’ (OECD Report, p. 8).

Conferring to Corporate governance includes the way of defining strategic objectives of an enterprise, the means of attaining those objectives and methods for monitoring performance, as well as defining relationships between the key interest groups and the enterprise itself Matić & Papac (2014). Moreover, when evoking governance, it is important to know that it plays in different areas as follows. Global governance refers to the governance of the whole globe as taken into consideration by the United Nations or any other worldwide organization that cares about human, political and economic issues ; National governance that states to several areas of interest such as national, provincial, indigenous, urban or local problems within the same country ; Community governance encompasses all the decisions within a small community like a tribe without having compulsorily a legal status and finally, Organizational governance that defines the governance process within companies -either private or public- like hospitals, schools and universities.

Accordingly to Graham et al (2003), many players are involved in good governance. The authors present a typical case of governance which is « the national or societal governance » where four main players do interact to meet the challenges:

government, civil society, private sector and media. Graham et al (2003) stated that the role of each player depends on the country, the political system, the freedom degree given to media and other civil society organizations.

Edgar et al, (2006) report five principles of the governance given by The United Nations Development Program (UNDP Governance and Sustainable Human Development). The first principle is legitimacy and voice that mean participation of all men and women in decision-making, either directly or through legitimate intermediate institutions that represent their intentions. Such broad participation is built on freedom of association and speech, as well as capacities to participate constructive. The second principle is direction that expresses strategic vision. Leaders and the public have a broad and long-term perspective on good governance and human development, along with a sense of what is needed for such development. There is also an understanding of the historical, cultural and social complexities in which that perspective is grounded. The performance principle refers the responsiveness-institutions and processes try to serve all stakeholders. Effectiveness and efficiency-processes and institutions produce results that meet needs while making the best use of resources. Also, the accountability principle refers to decision-makers in government, the private sector and civil society organizations are accountable to the public, as well as to institutional stakeholders. This accountability differs depending on the organizations and whether the decision is internal or external. The transparency is built on the free flow of information. Processes, institutions and information are directly accessible to whom concerned with them, so enough information is provided to understand and monitor them. Finally, the fairness principle integrates equity of all men and women that have the opportunity to improve or maintain their wellbeing. The rule of Law-legal frameworks should be fair and enforced impartially, particularly the laws on human rights.

Accordingly, Zubeltzu-Jaka et al. (2018); Garas & ElMassah (2018); Hellman (2000), Özbürak (2021), Öncel and Turkan (2021), Pereira et al. (2021), Lee et al. (2018), Kuckertz and Wagner. (2010), Abderzag (2021). and Alrubaiee (2013) highlight the positive effect of the organizational governance (OG) on the financial performance.

Hypothesis 2: (H2). There is a positive influence of the Organizational Governance (OG) on Sales Force Performance (SFP).

Hypothesis 2.1.: (H2.1.): There is a positive influence of the board composition on sales force performance.

Hypothesis 2.2.: (H2.2.): There is a positive influence of the transparency and auditing on sales force performance.

Hypothesis 2.3.: (H2.3.): There is a positive influence of the disclosure on sales force performance.

2.4. The Market Orientation (MO)

The most consistent definition of Market Orientation (MO) was given by Narver and Slater (1990) and Slater and Narver (1994). The authors conceptualize the MO into three dimensions: Customer Orientation, Competitor Orientation, and Innovation Orientation. Matsuno et al. (2002) and Noble et al. (2002) have confirmed that Market Orientation is very important to assess the Company strategic vision.

Previous research asserted that integrating Market Orientation in the organizational strategy leads to better managerial performance (Charles et al., 2002; Deshpande and Farley, 1998). Matear et al., (2002) and Langerak (2001) have revealed that Market Orientation have a significant effect on the organization profitability. In the same order, Grinstein (2008) and Charles et al. (2002), based on several empirical studies, have confirmed the significant correlation between the market orientation and the corporate performance in several organizational circumstances.

Interestingly, Kohli and Jaworski (1990; 1993) asserted that a Market-oriented Organization is able to satisfy its customers by following and responding to their needs and expectations and consequently can achieve higher organizational performance. Frösén et al. (2016) have confirmed that the Market Orientation leads to the marketing performance in general.

Market Orientation (MO) can also be seen as a means of competitiveness and performance. Charles et al. (2012). In the same sense, Lio et al. (2010) found, in a study conducted on 36 articles (items) that market orientation impacts organizational performance.

Hypothesis 3: (H3). The Market Orientation (MO) has a positive effect on Sales Force Performance (SFP).

3. Methodology

Our survey was conducted in the Northern Border Area of Saudi Arabia. The data was gathered from employees in several firms and their consumers in this region.

3.1. The Data collection

The sampling and surveys were established in Northern Border region of Saudi Arabia. The data was gathered from employees in several firms and their consumers in this region. The empirical procedure follows a two-step approach. We attend to elaborate quantitative studies in our empirical research. Thus, we have administrated two samples. The first sample consist of 200 employees from different Small and Medium Organizations in the Northern Border region to purify the measurements by the use of SPSS software. The second sample contain 312 employees from the same population with convenience face to face administration of the survey (the mode of administration). Then, we aim to test Hypotheses and validate the research model by AMOS software with the data provided by the second sample (Toukabri et al, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2021, 2022).

Interviewees were asked to give their opinion on a five-point *Likert* scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

3.2. The measurements

To measure the Environment Sustainability Orientation (ESO) we use the scale of Kuckertz, M. Wagner (2010) that proposed 6 items (Table 1).

We retain the scale of Market Orientation (MO) developed by Hooley, G.J. et al. (2005), in one dimension with 7 items (Table 1).

The Organizational Governance (OG) was operationalized using the scale of Gul et al. (2017) that validated three dimensions: board composition, transparency and auditing, and disclosure (Table 1).

Finally, we retained the Charles's Sales Performance (SP) scale with 6 items (Table 1).

We have selected the above evoked measurements because they were have been confirmed their reliability and validity in the cited literature review.

4. Results

4.1. The measurement's reliability and validity

The SPSS outputs have shown an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) superior to 0.5 for each construct. Moreover, the Cronbach Alpha (α), for the dimension composite reliability (CR) is above 1.96 and Jöreskog's rho (ρ) exceeds 0.70 for all dimensions of the research model (Toukabri and Ibrahim, 2016). Consequently, we can confirm the internal reliability and convergent validity, under the conditions recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981) (Table 1).

Table I constructs Scales

| Variable | Dimensions | Scale | Author | Average Variance Extracted (AVE) | Cronbach Alpha (α) | Jöreskog's rho (ρ) |
|---------------------------|--|--|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| Corporate Governance | Board Composition | Percentage of Independent Non-Executive Directors (firm's) on board | Gul et al. (2017) | 0.71 | 0.73 | 0.75 |
| | | Presence of Independent Chairman | | | | |
| | | Size of board | | | | |
| Transparency and Auditing | Is the role of Chairman and CEO split? | Number of board meetings held during the year | Gul et al. (2017) | 0.75 | 0.76 | 0.81 |
| | | Percentage of total director's attendance at board meetings | | | | |
| Disclosure | Independence of audit committee Chairman | Percentage of board meetings attended by firm's Minority shareholders representation on board | Gul et al. (2017) | 0.73 | 0.76 | 0.82 |
| | | Gender diversity on board | | | | |
| | | Board and individual directors performance evaluation | | | | |
| | | Does the company have an audit committee? | | | | |
| | | What percentage of audit committee constitutes firm's? | | | | |
| | | Independence of audit committee Chairman | | | | |
| | | Whether a system is in place to protect whistle blowers | | | | |
| | | Does the company disclose board members biographies? does it list the other boards its directors sit on? | | | | |
| | | Policy for handling conflict of interest | | | | |
| | | Code of ethics for all directors and employees? | | | | |
| | | Attendance record of each director at committee meetings | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|----------------------------|------|------|------|
| Environment Sustainability Orientation (ESO) | <p>Organizations should take an internationally leading role in the field of environmental protection. Organizations that are environmentally oriented have advantages in recruiting and retaining qualified employees.</p> <p>The environmental performance of a company will in future be considered more and more by financial institutions.</p> <p>Corporate social responsibility should be part of the foundations of each company.</p> <p>I think that environmental problems are one of the biggest challenges for our society.</p> <p>I think that entrepreneurs and companies need to take on a larger social responsibility.</p> | Kuckertz and Wagner (2010) | 0.72 | 0.74 | 0.75 |
| Market Orientation (MO) | <p>Our commitment to serving customers is closely monitored. Objectives and strategies are driven by creation of customer satisfaction. Competitive strategies are based on understanding customer needs. Functions are integrated to serve market needs.</p> <p>Strategies are driven by increasing value for customers. Customer satisfaction is systematically and frequently assessed.</p> <p>Managers understand how employees contribute to value for customer</p> | Hooley, G.J. et al. (2005) | 0.78 | 0.81 | 0.89 |
| Sales Force's Performance (SFP) | <p>Percentage of sales generated by new products last year relative to major competitors was</p> <p>Our business unit's sales growth relative to major competitors last year was</p> <p>Our business unit's market share growth in our primary market last year was</p> <p>Our business unit's overall performance relative to major competitors last year was.</p> <p>Our business unit's return on sales (ROS) relative to major competitors last year was.</p> <p>Our business unit's return on assets (ROA) relative to major competitors last year was.</p> <p>Our business unit's return on investment (ROI) relative to major competitors last year was.</p> | Charles et al. (2012) | 0.81 | 0.83 | 0.85 |

4.2. Structural model adjustment

The RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) of our research measurement model

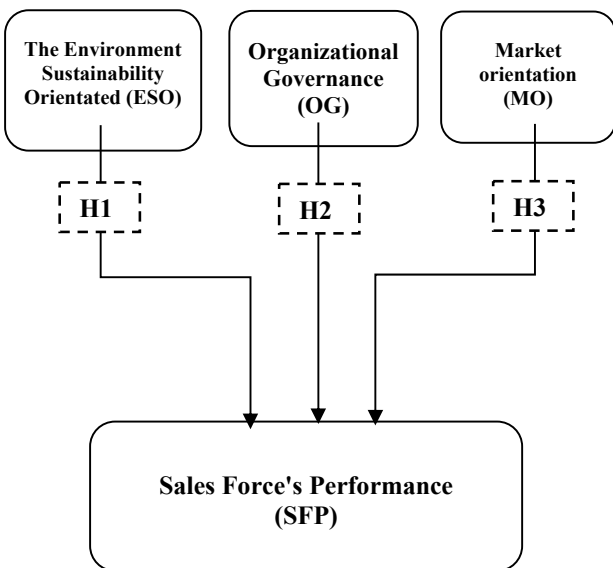
(0.03) is less than 0.05 which was accepted by Bagozzi and Yi (1988). Also, the GFI (goodness of fit index) and AGFI (Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index) were respectively 0.93 and 0.94 more than 0.90 stipulated as tolerable model fit (Toukabri et al., 2021 and Browne and Cudeck, 1992). Thus, we confirmed the model Absolute Fit Indices.

Moreover, the CFI (Comparative Fit Index), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and Bentler-Bonett Normed Fit Index (NFI) were respectively 0.98, 0.99 and 0.94 that exceed 0.90 and indicated an acceptable Relative Fit Indices to the data (Toukabri, 2019 a,b). The Parsimonious Fit Indices also was validated when PGFI (based on the GFI), PNFI (based on the Normed Fit Index), PNFI2 (based on Bollen's Incremental Fit Index),and PCFI (based on the CFI mentioned below) were more than 0.9 (Toukabri and Ghali, 2017 and Bollen, 1990). Thus, we can confirm the structural adjustment and support the research hypotheses (Figure 1 and Table 2).

Table II. Model adjustment

| Adjustment indexes | Incremental index | Parsimony index |
|---------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| GFI = 0.93 ≥ 0.90 | NFI = 0.94 ≥ 0.90 | PGFI = 0.95 |
| AGFI = 0.94 ≥ 0.90 | TLI = 0.99 ≥ 0.90 | PNFI = 0.92 |
| RMSEA = 0.03 < 0,05 | CFI = 0.98 ≥ 0.90 | PCFI = 0.96 |

Figure1 Conceptual model



4.3. Hypotheses test

The student test indicated a t-value superior to 1.96 and p-value less than 0.05 for all relationships between Sales Force's Performance and Environment Sustainability Orientation, Sales Force's Performance and Board Composition and Sales Force's Performance and Transparency and Auditing (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1995). Therefore, the hypotheses H1, H2.1. H2.2. and H3. are supported, while H2.3. about the relationship between Sales Force's Performance and disclosure is rejected (Table 3).

Table III Hypotheses check

| Hypotheses | C.R. | P | Test of the hypothesis |
|---|-------|-------|------------------------|
| H1.: Sales Force's Performance (SFP) ← Environment Sustainability Orientation (ESO) | 3.27 | 0.02 | Supported |
| H2.1: Sales Force's Performance (SFP) ← Board Composition | 2.91 | 0.004 | Supported |
| H2.2.: Sales Force's Performance (SFP) ← Transparency and Auditing | 2.02 | 0.005 | Supported |
| H2.3.: Sales Force's Performance (SFP) ← Disclosure | 1.48 | 1.02 | Rejected |
| H3.: Sales Force's Performance (SFP) ← Market Orientation (MO) | 4.077 | 0.001 | Supported |

5. Conclusion

The most important conclusion of our survey is that the Sales Force Performance in the firms we studied is impacted by the Top Management policy encompassing the processes, standards, rules, and practices in the organization, the Firm's Market and Sustainable Orientation that offers a suitable climate encouraging Sales Force employees to interact with customers, commitment to the company, teamwork, collaboration and communication, achievement of a common goal.. Thus, according to the literature background the mentioned elements are determinant but, from the research findings, it is shown that that these elements may not be enough to ensure superior performance without the support and the commitment of Top Management.

The research suggests some theoretical and managerial implications. First, through this research

we intend to enrich the literature by investigating the concept of the Sales Force Performance of Small and Medium Organizations, its dimensions and its antecedents. Little is known about the effects of Market Orientation, Environmental Sustainability Orientation and Organizational Governance on the Sales Force Performance in Small and Medium Enterprises (SME).

This research allowed us to propose and validate a model integrating constructs that not been studied before in the literature review and specifically in the Middle East Region .

The Managerial contribution includes the significant role of Market and Sustainable Orientation in the Sales Force Performance. This result is consistent with the findings of Hooley & Greenley (2005) and Hooley et al. (2005). Then, Managers should pay a particular attention to their customers in their market targeting policy.

On the other hand, Managers should seize the opportunity to concentrate on the Environmental Sustainability Orientation that lead to the durability of the company activities. Actual competition resides in the companies' ability to maintain and develop its market share and continue to deliver value-added activities. Moreover, manager have to maintain a close relationship not only with customers but also with the target public i-e tqskforces. Therefore, the Key Factor of Success for every company is its ability to implement Sustainability Orientation in the corporate development process. In the same sense, the governance with its three dimensions studied in our research represents a big challenge for the organization.

This research, revealed a significant effect of the two dimensions the Board Composition, and transparency and auditing on Sales Force's Performance. Thus, the governance can improve the company's Sales Force's Performance and systemic innovation that many previous research have confirmed such as that of Leiblein et al (2002).

The study presented certain limitations. The most important of the limitations was the limited literature on the determinants of Sales Force Performance and especially those related to Firm Governance and Market Orientation. Most of the available literature deal with the impact of Market Orientation and Governance on The Organizational Performance. Also, there were no publications available specifically on Sales Force Performance in

the Saudi Marketplace. Furthermore, due to time constrains and the unavailability of employees, a small sample of participants took place. The limited size and diversification of companies from the Saudi marketplace makes it difficult to have a general idea of the Sales Force Performance of different companies.

Future research examining studied constructs with widest and /or longitudinal data could provide a richer and better understanding of the effects of Market and Sustainable Orientation on the Company's Sales Force Performance.

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