



## Enhancing Small Firms' Growth through Marketing Orientation: the Case of Women Home-Based Businesses in a Young Market

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### Abstract

*Women home-based entrepreneurship is a worldwide phenomenon. However, in Nigeria, the businesses are mostly engaged in a relatively underperforming sector, characterized by low growth, low profit, and high discontinuity rates. One of the predominant issues confronting women home-based businesses is poor marketing. Thus the purpose of this study was to examine the effect of marketing orientation on the growth of women home-based businesses. The study was conducted in the Gombe and Akko metropolis of Gombe State, Nigeria. The study adopted the quantitative research design using cross-sectional studies. 86 questionnaires were distributed and 79 were found useful for analysis. The unit of analysis were women home-based entrepreneurs. Multiple regression was used to analyze the data, with the aid of the statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS). The results found that customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination are significant predictors of firm growth. The major limitation of the study is the focus on the informal sector whose database is not available. Secondly, due to lack of database on women home-based businesses in the study area, convenience and snowball sample were employed in a quantitative study. This study is significant to both the theory and practice. It extend the model of marketing orientation to WHBBs. It will also benefits women entrepreneurs who aspire to grow their businesses. This is the first empirical study to investigate the effect of customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination on sales growth in an emerging market of Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Marketing Orientation, Customer Orientation, Competitor Orientation, Interfunctional Coordination, Firm Growth.

**JEL Codes:** M31, M21

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### 1. Introduction

Business growth is one of the fundamental indicators of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) performance. Every firms irrespective of size or type has growth aspiration and aims to grow faster and stronger than competitors. The concept of growth especially the adage 'grow or die' fascinates or frightens business owners

(Schwab, Gold, Kunz, & Reiner, 2017). It is fascinating because growing firms attract customers and build reputation. Small firms which aspire to grow are more innovative. Growth can improve firms' competitiveness. Growth aspirations is also associated with the aptitude to survive environmental shocks (Wolff, Pett, & Ring, 2015). Businesses which grow employ more people, decrease

poverty, pay taxes, and improve Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Despite the importance of firm's growth, conflicting findings have been reported for SMEs. For example, Wolff et al. (2015) reported that while firm growth influences profit performance, there are instances where there is no or there is even negative relationship between growth and profitability. Nonetheless, lack of growth can make SMEs to remain stagnant and in the long run disappear. This type of debates call for further attention on variables affecting firm growth. Small firms do not only need collaboration or networks, better infrastructure, financial capital, new mentoring and coaching, and more employees to grow. They also have to understand the marketing perspective that will make them satisfy the needs and wants of customers and satisfy them better than competitors (Dalborg, 2015).

Within the context of micro and small enterprises, this paper is interested in the growth of women home-based businesses (WHBBs). Although research into home-businesses has existed for some time, a specific interest in the growth of WHBBs has emerged only recently. Women constitute 49.34% percent of the Nigeria's over 180 million population in 2016, and they owned and manage about 40% percent of the country's registered businesses, and mostly operating from the home (Halkias et al., 2011). The homes serve as commercial offices, as well as incubators where women entrepreneurs test their business ideas. It is now common to come across women firms especially in many homes in developing and masculine countries like Nigeria. Some of them view home-based businesses (HBBs) as a hobby (a lifestyle businesses) while others view it as a source of secondary income (Al-Roomi & Ibrahim, 2004). However, growth remains a major issue for WHBBs in Nigeria, because as the businesses are started, many close down quickly.

The types of WHBBs in Nigeria include animal husbandry, poultry, fish farming, nursing services, internet cafes and business centres. Others include hairdressing and beauty salon services, bakeries, fashion design and tailoring services, education, restaurant, retailing of food stuff, and bits making. These businesses contribute to GDP, job creation, innovations and societal welfare (Modarresi, Arasti, Talebi, & Farasatkah, 2017). Other benefits include gender economic empowerment, wealth creation, family income, community vitality, and economic development at a local and regional level (Dwelly, Maguire, & Truscott, 2005; Walker, Webster, & Walker, 2006). However, the firms growth aspirations are challenge by limited capital, small size, inexpensive location, narrow knowledge about customer needs and competitor strength and weaknesses, as well as less predisposition towards rapid growth (Newbery & Bosworth, 2010). As such, studying the growth of WHBBs is complex but topical.

Business growth is not easy. Some small businesses experience rapid or even meteoric growth, some grow slowly, while others do grow or even decline. It takes many years to witness growth. For example, Dalborg (2015) shows that today's large corporations have been established in the early 1900s. Long before large, most businesses were established as small firms. Most of today's large businesses grow by being resilient. However, a paradox was suggested for WHBBs – 'they remain micro even if they survive'. Besides, the firms are most likely to employ only its founder. May be, the myth that women-owned businesses are not concern with growth is true. However, Bogren, Friedrichs, Rennemo, and Widding (2013) argued that business growth is not connected to gender.

Although many factors can stimulate the growth of WHBBs, research involving marketing factors that stimulate WHBBs' is

not adequately investigated. This research identifies marketing orientation (MO) as one an important factor influencing firm growth. MO describes how a firm relates to its markets (Huhtala, Sihvonen, Frösén, Jaakkola, & Tikkanen, 2014). MO will support WHBBs to satisfy customer needs better, and to understand competitors' strengths and weaknesses. Researches have suggested that MO influences SMEs learning (Keskin, 2006), innovation capability (Huhtala et al., 2014; Kibbeling, Bij, & Weele, 2013), as well as growth and performance (Hardeep & Raina, 2016).

This paper is motivated by four issues. The first is a concern over the slow growth rates of WHBBs. Modarresi, et al. (2017) suggested that many WHBBs do not experience growth. This indicates that women firms have a high turnover rate per annum. Poor growth will make WHBBs smaller affecting their contributions towards job creation, gender empowerment, wealth creation, and economic growth. These assertions are discouraging for the growth aspirations of WHBB entrepreneurs. As such, a marketing philosophy capable of enhancing the growth of WHBBs need to be explored. This philosophy is herein argued as marketing orientation.

Secondly, the bulk of the new venture growth literature concentrates on understanding the motivations, the barriers, and the successes of WHBBs (Loscocco & Smith- Hunter, 2004; Holmes, Smith, & Cane, 2004). There are also concentrated studies on why some ventures grow more than others, while neglecting the marketing perspectives of the growth. Although Breen and Karanasios (2010) pointed that marketing skills make WHBBs grow, most of firms have a restricted outlook and non-aggressive attitudes toward the market. Modarresi et al. (2017) revealed that most women do not know the market, do not understand the customer nor the competitor. These make it challenging to sell what is

produced. Thus there is a need to depart from Breen and Karanasios (2010) marketing skills approach to integrate marketing orientation with business growth. This may help WHBBs to understand their customers and competitors.

Thirdly, previous research investigated the effect of learning and entrepreneurial orientations on SMEs growth (Farja, Gimmon, & Greenberg, 2016; Wolff et al., 2015). Similarly, Reijonen, Pardanyi, Tuominen, Laukkanen, & Komppula (2014) found that market orientation influences women firms' growth in Finland. There are also studies in the Western countries (Walker, Wang, & Redmond, 2008), and Islamic societies (Modarresi, Arasti, Talebi, & Farasatkah, 2016). However, the role of marketing orientation among WHBBs in Nigeria, and specifically in a young market of Gombe environs is unclear. In order to cover the identified gaps, this paper aims to explore the effect of marketing orientation on the growth of WHBBs.

#### *Home-based businesses*

A home-based business has been defined as "any business entity engaged in selling products or services into the market operated by a self-employed person, with or without employees, that uses residential property as a base from which they run their operation" (Mason, Carter, and Tagg, 2011). A HBB is perceived to be smaller, more informal, less professional, and often operated by a self-employed person /sole proprietor who works from a private residence and selling commodities or services in the market or within the home (Holmes, et al., 2004; Sayers & Monin, 2005). Instead of using commercial premises, business operations are conducted using family residential property. Thus there is savings in public transport and rent payment. The home may also serve as an "administrative base" but sales could take place in a market away from the home (Modarresi et al., 2016).

Women preferences for self-employment in HBBs occur due to push and pull factors. The push factors include the desire to balance work and family chores, to ease frustration, to achieve financial security, to lessen poverty, diminish the difficulty of women entry into the workforce (Holmes et al., 2004). Other push factors are to avoid overheads associated with rented premises, to reduce perceived lack of opportunity for advancement, to avoid low-paid occupations, and to reduce psychological risks (Walker et al., 2008). The pull motivation includes the desire to test the market first (Walker et al., 2008), to achieve more with less seed capital (Loscocco & Smith- Hunter, 2004), to be independent, a need for personal development, and job satisfaction (Walker et al., 2006).

Some of the barriers to HBBs include lack of business financing, lack of skills and experience, low physical ability, family responsibilities, family members' disapproval, and lack of concentration and repeated work interruptions. Other obstacles are lack of sufficient space, no place to sell the products, negative attitude of the society toward HBBs (the perceptions that HBBs are associated with poor quality), lack of support services (Modarresi, et al., 2017), lack of stability of income, no privacy in the home, and poor social networking (Holmes et al., 2004). In addition, poor recordkeeping, low demand for products or services, multiple tax burdens, and unfair competition can add to the barriers. According to Doern (2011), barriers could stop owner-managers from intending to grow; undermine intentions to grow; add to the ambivalence around intentions to grow; provide incentives to grow; postpone intention realization; and slow down the process of realizing intentions to grow. Therefore, these barriers should be reduce in order to enhance the growth of WHBBs.

#### *Small Business Growth*

Venture creation and business growth are of interest to many stakeholders including prospective and current business owners. Business growth was originally defined as 'an increase in amount; e.g., in output, export, sales or an increase in size or improvement in quality as a result of a *process* of development from one period to another' (Penrose, 1959). Thus the major indicators of firm growth include sales/turnover, revenues, number of employees, market shares, profitability, net worth, company value, and assets growth. Other measures include subjective entrepreneur's satisfaction, and increase in customer and target market (Reijonen, et al., 2014). A firm cannot survive being static and stagnant, and it is not correct to assume that firms which are not dynamic are not growing.

Many factors affect the growth ambitions of small firms. Some of the critical factors include communication technology (Newbery & Bosworth, 2010), capital and financial support (Modarresi et al., 2017), balance between family obligations and work commitments (Ramadani Hisrich, and Gërguri-Rashiti, 2015), gender perceptions, cultural norms, and societal values (Welter, Brush, and De Bruin, 2014), networking or social capital, and managerial experiences. Others factors are human resources, age of firm, infrastructure of a country, and legal or regulatory structures (Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013).

#### *Marketing orientation and business performance*

Market orientation is defined as an "organization's purpose to identify needs and wants in its target markets, and then to satisfy those needs more effectively and efficiently than its competitors" (Narver & Slater, 1990). MO is a philosophy or a shared belief which implies that a firm should focus on its customers, competitors and internal functions. It is therefore, a

firm's internal driving force employ to obtain information from customers and competitors in order to develop and implement a customer and competitor oriented marketing approach. Thus, MO is essentially a market-driven insights aims at offering superior value to customers and achieving competitive differentiation and advantage (Newman, Prajogo, & Atherton, 2016; Pehrsson, 2016). Narver & Slater (1990) conceptualized market orientation as a combination of customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination. The three interconnected dimensions of MO vary in their performance implications (Huhtala et al., 2014).

Customer orientation is a behavioural aspects that described a shared set of beliefs and willingness to understand and consider the customer's interest first and satisfy the needs and wants. Putting the customer first is a major determinants of business success. Therefore, firms should stay close to the customer, and produce products and services that will satisfy the needs and want of target markets more effectively and efficiently than competitors. Firms with a high degree of customer orientation will acquire higher market intelligence, build close customer relationships, and obtain customer feedback on a regular basis (Newman et al., 2016). Correspondingly, businesses that are customer-oriented delight customers by developing quality products or services,

respond promptly to customer complaints and queries; and deal sensitively with community issues.

Competitor orientation is when a firm generates information to reassess and understand the marketing strategies, actions, capabilities, strengths and weaknesses of current and potential competitors relative to its own (Narver & Slater, 1990; Newman et al., 2016). Analysis of current and potential competitors will help a WHBBs to understand their rivals' technology capability, production efficiency, human resource functions, employee retention, pricing methods, on-time delivery systems, customer satisfaction, innovation, and market share.

Interfunctional coordination refers to the alignment of organizational subunits to a firm's market-oriented vision and objectives. This can be achieved through a strong collaboration between marketing and other functional areas with the needs and wants of customers (Luca, Verona, & Vicari, 2010). The goal is to coordinate all business resources and activities to create superior value for target customers, which will improve financial and non-financial performance. Based on the marketing orientation concept above and based on the insights of Narver & Slater (1990), the research model of this study is presented in Figure 1.

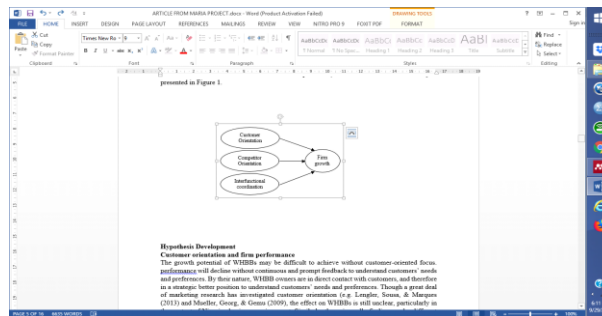


Figure 1: Market orientation and firm growth

## 2. Hypothesis Development

### *Customer Orientation and Firm Growth*

The growth potential of WHBBs may be difficult to achieve without continuous and prompt feedback to understand customers' needs and preferences. By their nature, WHBB owners are in direct contact with customers, and therefore in a better position to understand customers' needs and preferences. Though a great deal of marketing research has investigated customer orientation (e.g. Lengler, Sousa, & Marques, 2013; and Mueller, Georg, & Gemu, 2009), the effect on WHBBs is still unclear, particularly in the context of Nigerian business environment. Apart from this, there are mixed results. CO has a significant relationship with SMEs performance in the Mangaung Metropolitan Municipality in the Free State province of South Africa (Neneh, 2017). However, Sorensen (2011) suggested a negative effect. In addition, while the relationship between CO and sales is positive, it is negative on firm profit (Lengler et al., 2013). Today, WHBBs are facing stiff competition from SMEs and large enterprises. Therefore, engaging in customer-oriented behaviour is imperative for their growth, survival and performance. Since the relationship between customer orientation and performance of WHBBs is not clear, there is to understand the nature of the association in a young market. Hence, it is postulated that:

H1: If customer orientation goes up, the performance of WHBBs will go up as well.

### *Competitor Orientation and Firm Growth*

Customer focus only may not be enough to enhance SMEs growth. Therefore, a need to balance customer and competitor orientation is critical for success. Competitor-oriented firms understand the strengths, weaknesses, capabilities and strategies of key rivals. However, it has been noted that firms which

assess and understand their competitors are likely to copy their rival's marketing mix, making only incremental improvements to the values they offer (Newman et al., 2016). Nevertheless, it is also clear that continuous evaluation of competitors' actions will trigger firms to think ahead of their competitors' and to win market share (Lengler et al., 2013). Besides, empirical evidence reveals that while competitor orientation is positively related to a firm's market share (Sørensen, 2009) and profit, it is insignificant on sales (Lengler et al., 2013). The inconsistency in findings lead to the following hypothesis:

H2: There is a significant relationship between competitor orientation and firm performance

### *Interfunctional Coordination and Firm Growth*

It is not possible to use customer and competitor orientations without interfunctional coordination. A business must integrate its internal functions effectively to create superior value for buyers. Hence, interfunctional coordination focuses on the entire business and not merely on a single department. Even with few employees and low seed capital, firms which coordinates their internal functions with customer and competitor focus are more likely to perform better. Hence, the following hypothesis:

H3: There is a significant relationship between interfunctional coordination and firm growth

## 3. Research Methodology

This study employed the quantitative research design based on cross-sectional survey strategy. The population of the study consists of women owned home-ventures in Gombe metropolis. The unit of analysis was the female entrepreneurs of these ventures. Gombe and Akko metropolis are the two largest cities and commercial hubs of Gombe State. Due to the absence of a database of

women entrepreneurs in Gombe State, convenience and snowball sampling techniques were adopted for this study. Through a snowball counting in each ward (Designated clustered area), the researcher and 3 assistants counted 110 WHBBs in the city (Snowball counting, 2017). Convenience sample enabled the researcher to collect data directly from women entrepreneurs in the two cities. Based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the sample size of the study was 86. The 86 respondents were selected based on simple random sampling technique.

Questionnaires were distributed and collected. Thus, the questionnaire is the primary source used to collect the data in this study. Questionnaire is a useful option to consider when conducting a survey. Questionnaire administration was adopted because it is cheaper than personal interview. It is also faster and quicker if the sample is large or widely dispersed. Furthermore, the measurement instruments of all the variables were adopted and modified from reliable academic articles. For example, while the measurement items of market orientation (customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination) were adopted and modified from Narver and Slater (1990) as well as Ledwith and Dwyer

(2009), that of firm growth were selected from measurement of firm performance as used by Murphy and Callaway (2004), and Murphy, Trailer, and Hill (1996). The measurement items of the questionnaires were measured on five-point Likert type scales from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Data was analyzed based on descriptive and inferential statistics (multiple regression) with the tool of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

#### 4. Data Analysis

The information collected from the questionnaires collected was presented and analyzed. Out of the 86 questionnaires distributed all were returned. This success was as a result of the face-to-face methods of data collection and the resiliency of the researchers and their assistants. However, 7 of the questionnaires were not filled appropriately and therefore, have not been used. This means 79 questionnaires were found useful. The results of the respondents' profiles were presented in Table 1.

##### Respondent Profiles

This section analyses the frequency data on gender, educational qualification, and years of doing business. Table 1 shows that all the 79 respondents are women. This is in line with the intent of the study.

Table 1: Socio-demographic profiles of respondents

S/No	Profiles	Categorization	Frequency	Per cent
1	Gender	Female	79	100
2	Certificate	Certificate/diploma	64	81
		HND/Degree	15	19
3	Years in Business	≤ 10 years	37	46.8
		≥ 10 years	42	53.2

Table 1 shows that 64 of the respondents representing 81 per cent hold certificate and diploma while 15 of the owners are holders of Higher National Diploma and University Degree. This means that all the respondents have formal knowledge. Formal education is seen as providing the necessary cognitive

skills to become familiar to business management. Education is a source of knowledge, skills, discipline, motivation and self-confidence for success of entrepreneurial venture. Highly educated entrepreneurs are more skillful at identifying

opportunities and are better likely to obtain a higher return.

The Table also shows that 37 representing 46.8 per cent of the women-owned businesses have operated between 1 and 10 years. Similarly, 43 representing 53.2 per cent of the firms have been in business for more than 10 years but less than 20 years. Firm age has been considered to be the determinants of firm growth. Younger firms will have higher growth rates, as they have less understanding of the costs related to their activities and of how these change with the passage of time. For this reason, the 37 firms are more likely to witness higher growth rates, while older firms will be better at maximize their levels of efficiency. Therefore young firms are likely to make less efficient use of resource than older firms, because older firms have had the opportunity to experiment with different types of resources and select the ones that best fit their demands.

*Descriptive Results: Mean, Standard Deviation, Factor Loading, and Cronbach's Alpha*

Factor analysis is a multivariate statistical analysis for interpreting self-reporting questionnaires. The purpose of factor analysis is to identify and categorize underlying dimensions and their manifest items which accounts for larger explanation

of the variance of a variable (Arbuckle, 2010). In order to uncover the underlying dimensions of the construct (marketing orientation), exploratory factor analysis was performed. Based on the results, it can be concluded that the output of EFA can be used for further analysis. EFA has uncovered four underlying dimensions with total variance explained of 40.9%. The items and the corresponding 4 dimensions are provided in Table 2. Based on the items under each factor (dimension), the names of the different factors are: Factor 1 – customer orientation; factor 2 – competitor orientation; factor 3 – interfunctional coordination; and factor 4 – financial performance. The items have acceptable loading ranging from 4.32 to 9.45.

Correspondingly, reliability is the internal consistency of an instrument. The popular method of measuring reliability is the Cronbach's alpha. First, reliability of the four constructs was assessed based on Cronbach's  $\alpha$  above 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). Table 4 shows that the reliability values of all variables surpassed the 0.4 threshold and therefore, satisfied the requirement for reliability. Sometimes alpha might be so low either because you have a negative question or the items have serious measurement errors.

Table 2: Factor Loading and Reliability

Variables and measurement items	Factor loading				Reliability
	COO 1	CPO 2	IFC 3	FP 4	
<i>Customer Orientation</i>					
My business aims at increasing customer value	.784				.736
Understanding customers' needs is a priority	.756				.694
I frequently measure customer satisfaction	.755				.707
My business is driven by customer satisfaction	.540				.690
<i>Competitor orientation</i>					
I respond quickly to competitive actions		.729			.708
My employees knows how to obtain competitors' information		.707			.717



Variables and measurement items	Factor loading				Reliability
	COO 1	CPO 2	IFC 3	FP 4	
I try to satisfy my customers more than competitors		.553			.736
I consider my competitors' strength and weaknesses in my decision		.432			.778
<i>Interfunctional coordination</i>					
I regularly visit my customers			.921		.754
Information about customers is freely communicated to employees			.775		.718
I give more attention to marketing as compared to other sectors			.896		.714
My firm has strong internal coordination for serving customers			.645		.700
<i>Financial and nonfinancial performance</i>					
I experience remarkable market growth				.793	.470
My Business sales volume is increasing				.728	.417
My revenue has increased over the last few years				.720	.531
My business is becoming more profitable				.701	.453
My cost of operation is decreasing				.945	.532
My Business provides jobs				.830	.488
Employees are satisfied with my firm				.821	.507
My firm trains workers to be self-employed in the future				.712	.469
Last year I had a higher number of employees than my competitors				.553	.423

*Regression Results*

The R-square in the model summary shows the amount of variance in the dependent variables that can be explained by the independent variables. Thus, the independent variables (customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination) account for .409, of the variance in the

dependent variable (firm performance). The adjusted R square adjusts for bias in R<sup>2</sup> as the number of variables increase. Table 3 shows that the construct "marketing orientation" has significant relationship with firm performance ( $r = .639, p < .01$ ). It means that when marketing orientation goes up 1, firm performance goes up by .639.

Table 3: Multiple Regression Results of the Model

Relationship	Standardized Beta	t	R <sup>2</sup>	P	Remarks
Customer orientation and FP	.261	2.636		.010	Significant
Competitor orientation and FP	.210	2.031		.046	Significant
Interfunctional coordination and FP	.395	4.196		.000	Significant
Overall: Marketing orientation and FP	.639	5.499	.409	.000	Significant

Table 3 shows the extent at which the independent customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination predict the performance of women-owned

enterprises in Gombe. The Unstandardized coefficients B column gives the contributing coefficients of the independent variables. The standardized beta column showed the contribution that the individual independent variables make to the model. The t test were performed to test the two tailed hypothesis that to confirmed whether the beta values are significantly higher or lower than zero. The t test enable researchers to determine which predictors is more significant.

#### *Discussion*

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between marketing orientation and growth of WHBBs in Gombe and Akko. From the results of the study, it was found that marketing orientation is a significant predictor of firm growth. Thus the aim and the specific objectives of the study have been achieved. The significant relationship between market orientation and firm growth is consistent with the work of Ledwith and Dwyer (2009) who found significant relationships between market orientation and organizational performance.

Hypothesis 1 was tested based on the data in Table 3. The results shows that customer orientation is a significant predictor of the growth of WHBBs. The statistics indicates that there is a 99 per cent confidence of accepting this hypothesis. Thus, the relationship is statistically explained as ( $r=.261$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Therefore, if customer orientation goes up by 1 standard deviation, firm growth will increase by .261 standard deviation. The decision rule here is to reject the null hypotheses and accept the alternate hypotheses. This finding is consistent with This finding is consistent with Neneh (2017) who suggested showed that customer orientation had a significant positive association with SMEs performance, thus supporting the calls for probing the relationships between customer orientation and firm performance.

Hypothesis 2 states that “there is significant relationship between competitor orientation

and growth of women home-based enterprises. Data in Table 3 clearly suggests that competitor orientation is a significant determinant of the growth of women home-operated enterprises. The significant level is statistically explained as ( $r=.210$ ,  $p<.005$ ). Therefore, if competitor orientation goes up by 1 standard deviation, firm growth is predicted to go up by .210 standard deviation. The decision Rule is accept that competitor orientation has a significant predictor of the growth of WHBBs. This result is similar to the study conducted by Ledwith and Dwyer (2009) who found that competitor orientation is a significant factor predicting financial performance of small firms.

Lastly, the test of hypothesis 3 also revealed a promising result. It is found that interfunctional coordination has a strong relationship with the growth of WHBBs. This finding is statistically explained as ( $r=.395$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Therefore, if interfunctional coordination goes up by 1 standard deviation, WHBBs will grow by .395 standard deviation. The decision rule is to accept the alternate hypotheses which states interfunctional coordination has significant relationship with the performance of women-owned enterprises in Gombe. This finding is supported by Katharina and Hofer (2015) who found that interfunctional coordination had positive effect on firm performance.

#### **5. Conclusion and Recommendation**

##### *Conclusion*

This study has brought to light the need to promote and support the growth of WHBBs. Women home-based entrepreneurs have been recognized during the last decade as an untapped source of economic growth. Notwithstanding, women entrepreneurs are creating new jobs for themselves and others, while also helping to solve social and economic problems of the society. This study has both theoretical and practical value. Theoretically, this study has the potential of

adding a new knowledge to the field of gender entrepreneurship. It brought the model of market orientation into the context of the growth of WHBBs in Nigeria. To this end, this study will provide insights into how female entrepreneurs who are largely discriminated by gender, culture norms, and religion values can enhance the growth of businesses operated from the homes.

Practically, this study will help WHBBs to increase sales, grow market share, and improve profit. In addition, the growth of the firms will enhance job creation, wealth creation, tax collection, and economic growth. Nonetheless, these benefits shall be attained if WHBBs are driven by customer focus, customer needs, customer values, and customer satisfaction. WHBBs should also be proactive, and respond to competitive pressures effectively by seeking relevant information about competitors' strategies, strengths and weaknesses. Equally important is the coordination of internal processes with marketing objectives. By their interpersonal relationship and contact with customers, home-based women entrepreneurs should leave the comfort zone and visit customers, share information in a way to enhance future values. The results of this study will also be use by policy makers interested in promoting women empowerment, poverty alleviation and job creation.

#### *Limitations and Recommendations*

One of the major limitation of the study is the determination of the population of WHBBs. There is no formal nor informal database on this type of businesses. This signifies the lack of attention given to the micro and small business sector. The researchers and assistant had to visit numerous wards to determine the population and sample size. This lack of databases led to the identification of small population and thus small sample size. Therefore future research should be combine the neighboring state capitals of the north-east Nigeria in order to arrive at a larger population and

sample size. This comprises of Gombe, Bauchi, Yola, Damaturu, Jalingo, and Maiduguri. Secondly, although marketing orientation is a starting point for the marketing success of WHBBs, there is need for further studies about the use of social media marketing and advertising. Another limitation is the quantitative and cross-sectional nature of the research, where factors of marketing orientation had been identified to predict firm growth. Future studies should can explored the phenomenon through an in-depth or focus group interview technique.

Social media is a wide range of online, WhatsApp, word-of-mouth forums and repository of consumer information including blogs, company-sponsored discussion boards and chat rooms, consumer-to-consumer email, consumer product or service ratings websites and forums, Internet discussion boards and forums, moblogs (sites containing digital audio, images, movies, or photographs), and social networking websites (Parveen, Jaafar, & Ainin, 2016). Social media is good for micro and small business marketing as it is cheap and connects to consumers widely and globally. It helps to enhance organizations' market presence, knowledge sharing, and build social network and customer relationships with the online public. Other benefits of social media include ability to influence consumer attitude and behavior, and education and training (Ngai, Moon, Lam, Chin, & Tao, 2015). Scholars have suggested that social media has significantly impacted marketing communication (Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, & Fuller, 2013). Organizations that take advantage of the latest social media technologies outperform their competitors and delight the customers (Parveen et al., 2016). Thus, social media can play an important strategic role as an efficient marketing tool to enhance the growth and performance of WHBBs. There is also a practical recommendation. First, accurate

and thorough information about customers the competition is a foundation of all successful business ventures. Therefore, WHBBs should conduct periodic market research to gather, interpret information about their product or service.

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