

CRITICAL FACTORS FOR SUCCESS OF SMALL-ENTERPRISES IN TANZANIA: A CASE OF VEGETABLES AND FRUITS VENDORS IN FIVE REGIONS.

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ABSTRACT

Institutional Theory has become important concept of interest in the field of entrepreneurship. This paper examines the critical factors contributing to the success of small business enterprises of supplying vegetables and fruits in a developing country (Tanzania). Data were collected from five regions in Tanzania and evaluated using Multiple Regression analysis. The results show that the independent variables (i.e. customer services, marketing accessibility, reputation of personal branding, reliable services, and government support services) contribute to the success of small enterprises of vendors for vegetables and fruits in Tanzania.

Keywords: customer services, marketing accessibility, reputation of personal branding, reliable services, government support services.

1.1 Introduction

In recent years, many studies have acknowledged the role of entrepreneurship in the poverty reduction, job creation, and the substantial contribution to economic development [14], [50]. The literature on entrepreneurship has noted that entrepreneurs (sometimes mentioned as owner-managers) usually are working in an unstable environment, and are persistently looking for the means of mobilising scarce resources [8], [29], [56] to exploit more identified opportunities. In this regard, entrepreneurial knowledge is strategically developed, adequate business operations are extensively improved [20] and innovative plans are expeditiously formulated to overcome internal and external obstacles for enterprise success motives [17]. As a result, small enterprises are regarded as flexible business form that can adapt quickly to changing business environment to generate employment, to help diversifying economic activities [30], [49] that contribute to higher success than large businesses [9], [24].

The majority of the entrepreneurs in informal economy are found in Sub-Saharan Africa where a large group of them undertake economic activities through the small enterprises [1], [19], [37]. The small entrepreneurs are estimated to contribute 38.4 percent of the

Growth Domestic Products (GDP) in Sub-Saharan Africa [19], [47] while in Tanzania it ranges between 35%-45% [6]. This means that entrepreneurs with small enterprises is a significant economic group in developing countries that accommodate increased population [22]. Because of the importance of small enterprises in the development of the Tanzanian economy, different policies and programmes such as Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) policy and Small Industries Development Organisation (SIDO) were respectively developed to recognise the need for supporting small enterprises, to promote entrepreneurial activities, to increase employment rate and improve the strength of sector [54]. In 2013 the Tanzanian government reviewed the SME policy to address the challenges facing the small enterprises in terms of technology, human resources, marketing, policies and regulations, infrastructure and financial services [55]. Similarly, entrepreneurs from the small enterprises are supported by the Tanzania development vision 2025 which insists on a “human development through hard work, entrepreneurship, creativity, innovativeness, promotion of information and technology.....”. [52].

Despite the efforts of creating conducive environment in Tanzania, studies on entrepreneurship noted that it is not currently known whether the previous efforts have supported the small enterprises to the point of sustainability [1], [27]. One of the reasons could be that most entrepreneurship studies have not addressed the success factors and challenges of small enterprises in terms of acquired knowledge to overcome external business environment [4], [31], [35], [38], [45]. As a result, the existing literature has not fully explored the institutions that contribute to the success of small enterprises [23], [39]. And, little knowledge is gained on questions such as why few small enterprises manage to succeed while the majority do not [25].

Previous studies have shown that more than 70% of the small enterprises fail to grow in Sub-Saharan Africa including Tanzania [12], [33]. This means that the existing literature on entrepreneurship has not fully explored the factors contributing to success of small enterprises in the context of the SSA such as Tanzania. Thus, the majority of the subsistence entrepreneurs create and operate small enterprises without adequate knowledge that ensure sustainability. Similarly, policy-making personnel are lacking enough knowledge on success factors that could improve policies on entrepreneurship and small enterprises in Tanzania. Thus the study is guided by the following research question;

RQ1. What are the critical factors that contribute to the success of small enterprises in Tanzania.

1.2 Literature review

Institutional theory postulates that what mostly provide tremendous pressures to the success of small enterprises is the external business environment [7], [32], [57]. The uncertainty dimension which arises from external business environment presents both risks and opportunity to respectively frustrate and enhance performance of small enterprises [11]. In the efforts to ensure the risk of small enterprises failure is substantially reduced, researchers have come up with divergent findings that contribute to small enterprise success. The research findings as far as institutional theory is concerned focused on government policies, microfinance institutions, access to resources [13], [39]. However, the increase in government policies, mushrooming of microfinance institutions and unspecified nature of resources have created frustration to entrepreneurs. Such institutions are regarded as general factors of which their absence may still lead to business success, while their presence do not guarantee success [3].

Thus, the research argue that studies on institutional factors have to be specific on the bases of economic activities and the target group. Additionally, there is a constant need to investigate the factors that have not been much of interest of entrepreneurship domain in developing countries irrespective of several efforts to encourage young generation to participate in entrepreneurship. Amongst the external business environment that currently contribute to the success of small enterprises include: customer services, marketing accessibility, reputation of personal branding, reliable services, and government support services [3], [6], [40]. These factors contribute to the success of small enterprises in advanced economies between 20 percent and 66 percent [44]. Ideally, entrepreneurs enhanced with knowledge on customer services, market accessibility, brand reputation, reliable services and government support services have shown long term results on the business sustainability [2], [10]. What lacks in the literature is whether customer services, marketing accessibility, reputation of personal branding, reliable services and government support services contribute to the success of small enterprises in the developing countries in this case Tanzania.

1.2.0 Hypotheses development

There is no consensus among scholars on the factors that contribute to the success of small enterprises [16]. In this regard, our study focuses on specific factors i.e. customer services,

marketing accessibility, reputation of personal branding, reliable services and government support services instead of broad factors. The selected factors are consistent with business environment of developing countries in this case Tanzania due to the fact that most of the entrepreneurship training conducted by higher learning institutions, universities, and government entities concentrate on how to take care of customers, creation of brand, availability of products and services and support from the government in terms of permanent market place, and affordable rent. Hypotheses for this study have been developed from the reviewed literature to be discussed further in the next pages. Below is the development of hypotheses.

1.2.1 Customer services

Customer services have become an area of interest of entrepreneurship studies on small enterprises these days. For example, [36] classified the dimensions of customer services to be empathy (listening and understanding the customer needs); assurance (courtesy-treating customer as the first priority); responsiveness (serve and apologise quickly when mistake arises). That is, the improved quality of customer services lead to customer satisfaction and attracts more customers in the future for enterprise success [51]. The hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H1: Excellency customer service contribute to the success of small businesses

1.2.2 Marketing accessibility

Marketorientation enhances understanding of the needs, and maintain the relationship with customers. The small entrepreneurs use door to door marketing and sometimes sell vegetables and fruits on credit for collection in the following day. In this way the small entrepreneurs attracts more customers, gain more information from the local market and sale the vegetables and fruits on the needs of the customers for enterprise sustainability [43], [46]. The hypothesis is formulated as follows.

H2: Market accessibility contribute to the success of small business

1.2.3 Reputation of personal branding

One of the most branding technique used by the majority of subsistence entrepreneurs in developing countries such as Tanzania is personal branding. Personal branding offers specialist knowledge of self-promotion of vegetables and fruits to achieve visibility in the market place [48]. In turn, personal branding play a crucial role in influencing customers'

decision-making process [3]. Generally, personal branding tend to increase the market share and enhance the success of small business over extended period of time [3]. The hypothesis is formulated as follows.

H3: personal branding contribute to the success of small business.

1.2.4 Reliable services

Unlike big companies, entrepreneurs from small enterprises tend to consistently deliver the vegetables and fruits at minimum variance [18]. The consistence is maintained when the vegetables and fruits are dependable, available and accurately meet the intended quality [41]. Provision of reliable services shape the entrepreneurial experiences and ability to find solutions and alternative in their operations for making needed vegetables and fruits available for business success [42], [58]. The forth hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H4: services delivery contribute to the success of small business

1.2.5 Government support services

Governments must support small enterprises for future success. Due to the nature of entrepreneurship activities, which are full of uncertainty, multifaceted, indeterminate and ambiguous dimensions [56], the government support in the form of entrepreneurship training, amnesties and facilities, reliable power and security, regulated rents are important for success of small enterprises [21]. The fifth hypothesis is formulated as follows:

H5: government support contribute to the success of small businesses

1.2.6 Business success

The term small enterprise success can be defined as the performance of a firm measured using financial and non-financial criteria [15], [34]. The mostly used criteria for small enterprise success is financial criteria which include survival, return on investment, sales growth, number of personnel employed, and profits [28].

Although scholars argue that financial performance are limited with the ability to explain future outcomes, however, current studies have revealed its importance for the measurement of enterprise success [26], [28]. Several researchers have suggested the use of financial performance over non-financial performance for small enterprises [5], [52] from the fact that it is easy to get financial indicators such as sales, sales growth, profit from business operations and the indicators are mostly used in Tanzania environment [26]. In short, this study will use financial measures such as sales, profits to assess the success of small enterprises in Tanzania.

2.0 Research method

2.1 Research design

This study adopts probability sampling where population will be established from owner-managers operating vegetables and fruits in Dar es Salaam, Mbeya, Singida, Mwanza, Dodoma, Arusha and Tanga regions (Tanzania). These regions were selected on the bases of the number of entrepreneurs from small enterprises registered with local municipal councils and accessibility of the vegetables and fruits vendors.

Prior to the actual fieldwork, focus group discussion and expert interviews was conducted to potential stakeholders in Dar es salaam, Dodoma, Mwanza and Mbeya. The interviews included officers from: Training Institutions, to gain more understanding about success factors and claims from entrepreneurs on policies and regulations. Similarly, government financial institutions like CRDB, NMB and Dar es salaam Community Bank, and Non-government financial institutions such as PRIDE, Promotion and Rural Initiative and Development Enterprise Ltd, Finance Ltd were interviewed. These financial institutions were selected to provide feedback on challenges they face from entrepreneurs in the course of their operations, and the claims from entrepreneurs about the regulations and financial barriers imposed by some of the institutions.

2.2 Data sources

Having obtained enough information from training institutions, government entities, financial and non-financial institutions, a questionnaire was prepared in English and translated into Swahili, before the two versions to be sent to National Kiswahili Council (BAKITA) for editing. Later, the corrected Swahili version was sent to a sample of 30 entrepreneurs of the vegetables and fruits businesses for pre-testing clarity, comprehension, consistency and appropriateness of items (Validity and reliability).

The actual field work of 500 small enterprises operating in 5 regions on vegetables and fruits businesses was conducted in the period between January and June 2022. In Dar es Salaam, Mbeya, Mwanza, Singida, Tanga, Arusha and Dodoma. The sources of data for the study included owner-managers operating small enterprises for 5 years or more in business sector. Out of 500 small enterprises surveyed, 400 responded and filled the questionnaires. The questionnaires were filled on the face to face approach.

The research independent variables were measured by a five Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (fairly agree), 4 (agree), and 5 (Strongly agree). On the dependent variable the measurement on five Likert scale ranging were 1 (strongly

decrease), 2 (decrease), 3(moderate), 4 (increase) and 5(strongly increase). The scale dependent variable which determine success of small businesses was adopted from Isaga, 2019.

3. Results and Analysis

Regression analysis was conducted to assess whether the independent variables (customer services, marketing accessibility, reputation of personal branding, reliable services, and government support services) contribute to the success of small enterprises determined by dependent variable (sales).

Multiple regression analysis determined in Tables 1 below show that the model is significant at $p < 0.05$, R square (adjusted coefficient) is 0.868 and collenarity testing, VIF is statistically below the cut off of 5.

Table 1: Results of Multiple Regression analysis

Independent Variable	Beta	Significance	VIP
Customer services	0.611	0.000	1.31
Marketing accessibility	0.510	0.002	1.27
Reputation of personal branding	0.204	0.001	1.38
Reliable services	0.628	0.005	1.16
Government support services	0.459	0.008	1.12
F= 306.160; p = .000 (p < 0.05)			
R= 0.932			
R square = 0.868			
Adjusted R square = 0.865			

Similarly, the results of multiple regression analysis show that the all the independent variables are statistically significant, meaning that they contribute to the success of MSMEs in Tanzania.

3.1 discussion

Taking a closer look on the success factors the micro entrepreneurs (vendors of vegetables and fruits) in Tanzania implementing the customer services in an excellent way. Vendors

serve their customers with customer care embedded with empathy, listening, consideration, good language and smiled welcoming which contribute to the success of micro businesses.

Similarly, the significant results on marketing accessibility are supported by the habit of visiting customers home in the early morning and then shifting to the market place to serve for those customers who were not attended. In this way the marketing base is increased for the success of micro businesses.

With regard to reputation of personal branding, the micro entrepreneurs of vegetables and fruits tend to promote themselves through recording short nice words which are used to publicise their products. Some of the slogans include “buy the fresh vegetables and fruits”. The slogan attract the customers and thus contribute to the success of micro businesses.

Consistent with literature, the reliable services is connected with availability of vegetables to meet customers need. Most of the micro entrepreneurs purchase vegetables and fruits from distinct locations of farmers to meet the demand and thus, success of micro businesses.

In regard to government support, it can be concluded on the approval of by municipal by laws which permitted open markets in each ward on specific day. The open market provide an opportunity for the micro entrepreneurs an easy access customers for the whole day.

4.0 Conclusion

The contribution of this study was to answer a research question whether the success factors (customer services, market accessibility, reputation of personal branding, reliable services and government support services contribute to success of MSMEs in developing countries such as Tanzania. On the bases this study all the success factors contribute to the success of MSMEs. Therefore, the hypotheses can in this respect be accepted.

In the light of the above, future studies could focus on three areas. First, the scope of the study focus can be extended to other areas of businesses in LDCs. Second, the statistical sampling like random sampling should be applied in future research to minimise sampling bias. Finally, the use of moderating effect exploring the relationship between success factors and success of MSMEs to understand a deeper view of success.

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