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UNLOCKING SUCCESS: HOW LEARNING ORIENTATION BRIDGES ENTREPRENEURIAL DRIVE AND PERFORMANCE IN GHANA'S AGRO-PROCESSING SMES

Charles Mawuena Gates[1*], Mengyun Wu[1,2], Samuel Atingabili[3]

[1]*School of Finance & Economics, Jiangsu University, Zhenjiang, Jiangsu 212013, PR China*
[2]*School of Accountancy, Shanghai Lixin University of Accounting and Finance, Shanghai 201209, PR China*
[3]*School of Management, Jiangsu University, Zhenjiang, Jiangsu 212013, PR China*

Abstract

This study examines strategic orientations in agro-processing small and medium enterprises operating in resource-constrained emerging economies, specifically addressing how entrepreneurial and learning orientations interact to influence firm performance in challenging business environments. The main objective is to investigate whether learning orientation mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance outcomes among agro-processing small and medium enterprises in Ghana.
Using data from 300 firms collected through structured questionnaires, the study employs Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling to test four interrelated hypotheses regarding these strategic relationships. The findings reveal that entrepreneurial orientation significantly enhances learning orientation, with both orientations positively impacting firm performance. Notably, learning orientation partially mediates the entrepreneurial orientation-performance relationship, demonstrating that innovation, proactiveness, and risk-taking achieve effectiveness when supported by continuous learning and knowledge-sharing cultures. Internal capabilities, rather than external factors like firm size or age, emerge as key performance drivers.
Theoretically, these results refine the Dynamic Capabilities Perspective by demonstrating that in resource-constrained contexts, learning orientation functions as a necessary mediating mechanism rather than merely a complementary capability. Practically, findings offer actionable insights for managers seeking to strengthen performance through institutionalized learning practices and inform policy initiatives promoting small and medium enterprise development through capability-building interventions rather than solely financial support. The study concludes that dual strategic orientation combining entrepreneurial initiative with strong learning practices is essential for sustained growth and competitive resilience in emerging market agro-processing sectors.

Key words: agro-processing, dynamic capabilities, entrepreneurial orientation, learning orientation, SMEs innovation performance

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* Author to whom all correspondence should be addressed: E-mail: 5103221218@stmail.ujs.edu.cn