

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

**EXAMINING THE EFFECTS OF SUPPLIER ORIENTATION ON
BUSINESS PERFORMANCE-THE MODERATING ROLE OF TRUST**

BY

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MARKETING**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this is the result of my own research and has not been presented by anyone for any academic award in this or any other University. All references used in the work have been fully acknowledged.

I bear sole responsibility for any shortcomings.



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CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this thesis was supervised in accordance with procedures laid down by the University of Ghana.



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DEDICATION

To my dear wife, Mrs. Velma Peace Asiedu and my lovely daughter, Mikayla Nayra Asiedu, I dedicate this piece of academic work to you for your prayers, support and encouragement.

I cannot forget to mention Emefa Dzamefe, my classmate in Secondary School who encouraged me not to give up.

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research mainly is to investigate the relationship between Supplier Orientation and Business Performance (BP) in the mobile telephony industry in Ghana and also to examine the moderating role of trust on the relationship. The study identified three key characteristics of supplier-oriented firm namely, buyer-seller relationship, commitment to relationship and communication. It also identified other measurements of trust such as credibility and benevolence. Other dimensions like quality service, market share, customer satisfaction and employee satisfaction were used to measure business performance to access the assertion that supplier orientation has a positive relationship with business performance as well as a sustained relationship. A sample of three hundred and five (305) mobile phone dealers were selected for this study. The data analysis technique chosen for this study was Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with Amos. After descriptive statistics was presented, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and a Structural model results were obtained. A moderation analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis of the study. Two theories: RBV and SET were used in clarifying how SO and its dominant variables of trust impacts on BP. The study revealed that there is a positive relationship between the dimensions of SO and business performance, with buyer-seller relationship emerging as having the strongest effect. Trust, a strong component of relationship builder was found to moderate the relationship between SO and BP.

Even though the marketing mix, which comprise product, price, place, promotion, are in place, in order to outwit competitors or remain competitive, it is crucial that firms invest in the improvement of trust with their suppliers and channel partners whilst intensive training programmes need to be embarked on to sharpen the skills of staff.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Conventional marketing wisdom postulates that better understanding of customers leads to customer satisfaction and improved firm performance. However, in recent times, organisations are becoming aware that focusing only on customers leads to a certain kind of inertia, hence they need to reorient towards their suppliers by understanding and building long lasting relationships with them (Vijayaraghavan, 2016). This is corroborated by Min, Mentzer and Ladd (2007) who admit that firms that desire to maintain long lasting relationships with their suppliers must necessarily possess supplier orientation. Indeed, the extant literature reveals that supplier orientation provides the foundation on which firms are able to effectively build supply chain management (Tinney, 2012).

As Wagner (2010) puts it “such a strategy helps firms to conserve resources, share risks, gain new competencies, and move faster into new markets”. Not surprising, many firms are leveraging on supplier’s distinct capabilities to attain significant operational, economic and productivity benefits through supplier orientation (Vijayaraghavan, 2016). Literature espouses that close co-operation with suppliers influences costs of operation, develops longer-term relationships and provides quality at lower cost (Tinney, 2012). Moreover, organisations that are attempting to gain competitive advantages do so effectively by adopting supplier orientation (McIvor, 2003). Supplier Orientation (SO) describes firm exertions or philosophy that is essential for creating an environment where buyers and suppliers cooperate through relationships (Shin, Collier & Wilson, 2000).

According to Mentzer, Min and Zacharia (2001), “SO unswervingly influences business performance through the development and sustainment of ‘behaviour elements’ that allow a firm to build relationships with their supply chain partners”. Elaborating on this, Min and Mentzer (2004) refer to “supplier orientation as credibility, benevolence, commitment, norms, organisational compatibility and top management support that firms make available to their suppliers in order to enhance their relationships”. “Supplier orientation has become imperative because many organisations are concentrating on their core competences and moving away from vertical integration to gain a competitive edge from the supply side of their operations” (Vijayaraghavan, 2016; p. 4). In effect, Tagger and Giri (2011) suggest that smart organisations benefit from values that SO provides through strong partnering relationships. In assessing the role of supplier orientation, Wagner (2010) finds a significant effect of supplier orientation on new product efficiency and innovativeness to positively impact performance (i.e. profitability, market share, and growth).

Business performance is measured subjectively or objectively. In studying the “effects of supplier market orientation on distributor market orientation and the channel relationship”, Siguaw, Simpson and Baker (1998) objectively operationalised business performance as cash flow, return on shareholder equity, gross profit margin, net profit from operations, profit to sales ratio, return on investment, sales volumes and capability to fund business growth from profits. On the other hand, Agarwal, Erramilli, and Dev (2003) use “five items including service quality, customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, gross profit margin, and market share to measure firm performance”. Business performance in this study is operationalised objectively as increases in sales volumes.

In Ghana, the liberalisation of the telecommunication industry has opened new avenues and platforms upon which mobile telephony companies compete. This means that firms within the industry need to develop marketing strategies in an effort to create a competitive marketplace (Kuada & Buatsi, 2005). Supplier orientation (SO) is one strategy that players in the industry are employing to maintaining a competitive advantage. Essentially, most mobile telephony organisations make use of a myriads of supplier associations characterised by diverse degrees of involvement, considering that the telecommunication industry is characterised by extensive outsourcing of activities such as assembly operations, manufacturing, research, logistics and design (Tagger & Giri, 2011). Indeed, with a mobile phone penetration rate of 73% in Ghana, there are suggestions that more attention should be given to building relationships between suppliers and mobile telephony entities (Sankaran, Naillon, Nguyen, Chang, Hilde & Chadwick, 2011). It is thus imperative to understand how supplier orientation could influence the performance of mobile telephony firms in Ghana. Supplier orientation is conceptualised in this study as all efforts made to improve the relationship between mobile telephony firms and their suppliers, including “credibility, benevolence, commitment, norms, organisational compatibility and top management support”. Thus, this study is positioned to examine the effect of supplier orientation on business performance in the mobile telephony sector in Ghana.

1.2 Problem Statement

Extant literature proves the existence of a market orientation-performance nexus. For instance, Mahmoud (2011) in studying market orientation and business performance among SMEs in Ghana, propose that the higher the level of market orientation, the greater the level of performance in Ghanaian SMEs. Building on this finding, Mahmoud, Blankson, Owusu-Frimpong, Nwankwo and Trang (2016) further report a significant correlation between the

constructs of market orientation, learning orientation and bank innovativeness and conclude in line with Slater and Narver (1995) that market orientation is the “underlying set of organisational values from which a learning orientation is developed”. Moreover, Greenley (1995, p.10) notes that “an increased level of market orientation should ensure the effectiveness of new marketing operations, which should lead to higher performance in the long term”.

Despite these studies, there are calls to study market orientation in different contexts. Thus, Slater and Narver (1995) call for the inclusion of suppliers and other stakeholders to understanding market orientation. Similar positions are offered by Matsuno and Mentzer (2000), and Crittenden, Crittenden, Ferrell, Ferrell and Pinney (2011), proffering that market orientation should not take into account just one stakeholder group such as consumers but all groups to whom the business is related. Responding to such calls, Terawatanavong, Whitwell, Widing and O’Cass (2011) studied supplier orientation and revealed that the advanced the heights of supplier orientation of a firm, the greater the firm’s financial returns are. In the same vein, literature proposes that firms that manage their relationship with their suppliers are better positioned to maximise their performance (Shoham, Rose & Kropp, 2005). What is lacking in these studies is whether trust, an important ingredient in relationships (Berndt & Tait, 2012), can mediate the relationship between supplier orientation and firm performance. Trust, accordingly, is expressed as the “assurance between parties in a transaction that no one will be hurt or put at risk by either party’s actions (Berndt & Tait, 2012; p, 25). Put simply, trust is the preparedness to depend on a business partner in whom one has confidence.

The need for this study is founded on the paucity of empirical studies that investigate clearly the dimensions of supplier orientation and measure the association between supplier orientation and business performance in the mobile telephony industry as well as assess the moderating role of trust on the relationship. This study argues that a firm's performance is improved when trust moderates a firm's embedded SO activities. Precisely, the study examines the effect of supplier orientation on business performance in the mobile telephony sector in Ghana.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Many empirical studies prove that there is significant relationship between market orientation and firm performance. However, despite calls to study market orientation in different context, studies assessing the effect of supplier orientation on firm performance are virtually silent on the moderating role of trust. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of supplier orientation on firm performance in the mobile Telephony sector in Ghana, with trust as a mediator.

1.4 Objective of the Study

- i. To investigate the relationship between Supplier Orientation and firm performance in the mobile telephony sector in Ghana
- ii. To examine the moderating role of trust on the relationship that Supplier Orientation has on firm performance in the mobile telephony sector in Ghana

1.5 Research Questions

- i. What is the relationship between supplier orientation and firm performance in the mobile telephony sector in Ghana?
- ii. What is the moderating role of trust on the relationship that supplier orientation has on firm performance in the mobile telephony sector in Ghana?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The implication of this study is in three strands: research, practice and policy. In relation to research, this study goes beyond the current investigation on market orientation by examining the dimensions of supplier orientation for firm performance in a developing country context. Furthermore, the mediating role of trust on the relationship is examined. This will contribute to literature and improve knowledge on supplier orientation as an aspect of market orientation. Regarding practice, the study will serve as a guideline to inform best practices for industry players to focus on when incorporating supplier orientation in their marketing activities. This will go a long way to improve firm supplier relationships. Finally, the study will also inform policy makers such as the National Communication Authority (NCA) on how mobile telephony players can improve their relationship with suppliers.

1.7 Organisation of the Study

The study is organised into six chapters. Chapter one covers the background of the study, problem statement, purpose of the study, research objectives and research questions, the scope of the study as well as significance of the study and chapter outline. Chapter two focuses on reviewing relevant literature concerning the study. Here, theories are also be reviewed to be able to conceptualise supplier orientation. Chapter three covers the context within which the study is situated (i.e. the mobile telephony sector in Ghana). Chapter four

deals with research methodology and design and details sampling procedure, data collection process and instruments as well as data analysis methods. Chapter five covers data analysis, interpretation, data presentation and discussion of results. Chapter six provides the summary of the research findings, conclusion and as well as providing recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.0 Introduction

This section of the study discusses the telecommunications industry globally and locally. It further examines mobile phone penetration globally and in the African sub region. It further examines the trends in the cell phone sector in Ghana, with specific emphasis on the usage of cell phones among the Ghanaian populace.

2.1 The Global Telecommunication Industry

Telecommunication is defined “as, any transmission, emission or reception of signs, signals, writings, images and sounds or intelligence of any nature by wire, radio, optical or other electromagnetic systems” (International Telecommunications Union, 2001). Telecommunication facilities may depend on one technology or multiple technologies (International Telecommunication Union, 2010). Odyzko (2001) asserts that the word telecommunication was originally used to denote wire telephone system. Previously, telecommunications technologies comprised pictorial signals (Ajisola & Awodun, 2014). Other forms of ancient telecommunications consist of coded drum beats, lung-blown horns and loud whistles (Ajisola & Awodun, 2014). Contemporary telecommunications technologies consist of electrical and electromagnetic telecommunications technologies.

Up until the 1980s, the telecommunications subdivision was regarded as a monopoly, as a result of extremely high infrastructure investment (Ajisola & Awodun, 2014). This led to the charging of outrageous fees to gain abnormal profits, and this raised the need for price regulation (Griffiths, Jensen, & Webster, 2011). This brought about the establishment of

state-owned monopolies that provided telecommunications services (Waverman & Sirel, 1997). State owned companies faced numerous challenges, which led to their reorganisation through restructuring and privatisation (Waverman & Sirel, 1997).

The United States of America championed the reformation of state-owned monopolies with the restructuring of its telecommunication giant AT & T in the 1980s (Bowman, Singh, Useem, & Bhadury, 1999). This caused the dissection of the company into a number of smaller companies (Bowman et al., 1999). It also led to the liberalisation of the telecommunication sector, and this allowed other companies to participate in the provision of telecommunication services (Bowman et al., 1999). Private businesses were also offered the chance to start-up in the broadcast and communication market concurrently (Waverman & Sirel, 1997). Later on, the United Kingdom restructured its telecommunication giant British Telecom. Other European countries followed suit by liberalising their telecommunications sectors (Bressie, Kende, & Williams, 2005).

As at 2008, the universal mobile telecommunications service income generation stood at US \$912.1 billion, overtaking key sectors like the pharmaceutical and semi-conductor sectors (Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority, 2009). Although dealers in the software and services sector made more income than the mobile telecommunication sector, the mobile telecommunication segment gained the highest growth, and it was the only sector that achieved a double-digit growth of 17.4% between 2007 and 2008 (Cagemini, 2011).

The telecommunication sector is a major income generating sector for many economies across the globe (Mahadevan, 2000). Data from the International Telecommunication Union (2014) indicates that fixed telephone penetration has been declining for the past five years.

It is expected that cell phone subscribers globally will total about 8.5 billion getting to the close of year 2016 (Mobithinking, 2014).

2.2 The Telecommunication Industry in Ghana

The maiden telegraph line in Ghana was installed between the Cape Coast and Elmina Castles (Allotey & Akorli, 2000). This telegraph line extended over a distance of 2.5 miles (Salifu & Yeboah, 2014). It was laid between Christianborg and Accra (Salifu & Yeboah, 2014). Around 1887 and 1889, the telegraph lines were extended to serve key coastal towns like Prampram, Accra and all colonial forts and castles as well as commercial ports and fishing centres (Allotey & Akorli, 2000). In 1886, these telegraph lines were extended to the Southern and Northern parts of Ghana (Huq, 1989). In order to improve communication, the first manual telephone exchange, made up of seventy telephone lines, was fixed in Accra in the year 1892. An additional manual exchange comprising thirteen lines was set up in 1904 in Cape Coast (Salifu & Yeboah, 2014). In the colonial period, telecommunication infrastructure was extended to boost social, economic and political administration (Overa, 2006). As at the end of 1912, one thousand four hundred and ninety-two (1492) telegraph lines had been created to connect forty-eight (48) telegraph offices all over the nation. As at the commencement of the First World War, there were about one hundred and seventy telephone subscribers in Ghana (Allotey & Akorli, 2000).

By 1930, the entire quantity of telephone lines had increased to one thousand five hundred and sixty and this connected the coastal, central and northern sectors of the country (Salifu & Yeboah, 2014). The worldwide recession after World War Two reduced the development of the communications sector in Ghana (Allotey & Akorli, 2000). The first automatic

telephone exchange with two hundred (200) lines was mounted in Accra around 1953, and it substituted the manual ones created sixty-three years ago (Allotey & Akorli, 2000).

Ghana launched a seven-year development plan after it achieved independence in 1957, and this led to innovation in the telecommunication industry (Aryeetey, Harrigan, & Nissanke, 2000). This resulted in the rapid finishing of a novel automatic exchange in Accra in 1957 (Allotey & Akorli, 2000). Around 1963, Ghana had sixteen thousand (16,000) telephone subscribers and the fast surge in commercial activities in the agricultural sub-sector resulted in the development of new manual exchanges in Ho, Sunyani, Swedru, Kumasi and Tamale (Allotey & Akorli, 2000).

Falch and Anyimadu (2003) assert that in 1975, the Post and Telecommunication Department began negotiating loans from multi-lateral and bilateral financial institutions in order to modernise and boost communication in Ghana. The project was called the First Telecommunication Project (FTP). This project was planned to last from 1975 to 1979, and it cost seventy-six million dollars that was raised by the government of Ghana, the World Bank, Japan, the Africa Development Bank and Canada (Falch & Anyimadu, 2003). The key achievement of the project was that it raised Ghana's telephone line capacity by 50% (Salifu & Yeboah, 2014).

Ghana's idea to have a long-term telecommunication development project led to the introduction of the eight years Second Telecommunication Project (STP) in 1987, which was targeted at reformation of the Post and Telecommunication Department (Frempong, 1996). This project cost Ghana an amount of one hundred and seventy-three million dollars. The execution of the Second Telecommunication Project (STP) resulted in the reform of the satellite earth station and the cable networks in parts of Accra (Frempong, 1996). It also

boosted subscriber circuit in the rehabilitated areas and reduced fault rates significantly (Haggarty, Shirley, & Wallsten, 2003). Furthermore, it increased the total number of direct exchange lines from sixty percent in 1987 to eighty-nine percent in March 1992 (Haggarty, Shirley, & Wallsten, 2003). The Second Telecommunication Project resulted in the development of the International Direct Dial in twelve exchange areas and encouraged international business (Haggarty, Shirley, & Wallsten, 2003). These rapid changes in the telecommunications sub-sector resulted in more utilisation of satellite technology (Boateng, 2009).

Osiakwan and Foster (2005) indicate that in the latter part of 1990, Ghana opened up the telecommunication industry to draw investments from both indigenous and overseas companies and to enhance competition. Around 1996, the telephone density for Ghana stood at 0.26%, which implied that there were 2.6 telephones for every one thousand people (Osiakwan & Foster, 2005). Around that same time, Ghana had thirty-five pay phones, out of which thirty-two were located in Accra (Osiakwan & Foster, 2005). Data from the National Communications Authority (2017) suggests that as at 2009, sixty-five percent of Ghanaians had access to voice or data communication. The substantial improvement in the telephone density was partially as a result of the formation of the National Communication Authority in 1996 and the deregulation of the telecommunication sector, which attracted private operators (Alhassan, 2003). This had a positive impact on the progress of wireless telephony (Alhassan, 2003).

The implementation of the Accelerated Development Programme resulted in the restructuring of the telecommunication sector and, consequently, enormous progress in the sector (Frempong & Atubra, 2001). The telephone density moved from 0.26 lines per every

one thousand inhabitants in 1996 to 1.16 lines per every one thousand in 2000 (International Telecommunication Union, 2001). The programme also led to significant alterations such as the partial privatisation of Ghana Telecom, the formation of the National Communications Authority in 1996 and the liberalisation of the telecommunications sector (Alhassan, 2003). The liberalisation of the telecommunications sector augmented the progress of the mobile telecommunications sector (Alhassan, 2003).

In 1990, a group of Ghanaians were given a license to start a mobile cellular company with a brand name Mobitel (Dowuona, 2014). It was the maiden mobile cellular company in Ghana that operated an analogue system. Sending a text message under the analogue network was not possible (Zachary, 2004). In 1993, license was granted to another Ghanaian to start a mobile cellular company known as Celltel Limited (Dowuona, 2014). Celltel limited operated an Advanced Mobile Phone System, which was an analogous network and was converted to Code-Division Multiple Access (CDMA) around 2005 (Dowuona, 2014).

In 1995, a Global System for Mobile Communications (GSM) license was given to Scacom Limited, and it was the first to start a GSM service, which was named Spacefon (Dowuona, 2014). In the same year, Ghana Telecom got a mobile cellular license and started its GSM network in the year 2000 under the name Onetouch (Dowuona, 2014). However, around 1998, the Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) collaborated with a US-based Western Wireless and acquired a license for the Wireless Local Loop (WILL) and International Gateway (Dowuona, 2014). They formed a company called Western Telesystems Limited (Westel) (Bramah & King, 2006). The company offered services in the fixed line and International gateway sector (Dowuona, 2014). The government of Ghana purchased the company and acquired a GSM mobile license but commenced no GSM

service (Dowuona, 2014). Zain bought 65% shares of the company and commenced a GSM service in 2008 (Dowuona, 2014). The company was bought by Bharti Airtel in 2010. A GSM license was issued to Globacom Limited in 2008, and the company launched its GSM operations in Ghana in 2012 (Dowuona, 2014).

2.3 The West African Mobile Market

The West African sub region accounts for 320 million mobile connections, and as at the end of the year 2016, there were 172 million unique subscribers in the sub region (GSMA, 2017). The 2016 Mobile Economy Report reveals that the subscriber penetration rate in West Africa stood at 49%. This figure was slightly higher than that of the wider Sub-Saharan Africa Region, which was at 47%. It is estimated that in four years, West Africa will see an average subscriber growth of 6%, which is one of the fastest growth rates globally, and this will lead to a surge of an additional 45 million subscribers by the year 2020 (GSMA, 2017). It is also estimated that the biggest market in the sub region, Nigeria, will account for two thirds of this growth whereas about a quarter will come from Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, Niger and Senegal (GSMA, 2017).

The findings of the GSMA (2017) Mobile Economy Report revealed that macroeconomic trends across the sub region affected revenues from the mobile phones sector, and it is expected to continue to decline.

2.4 The Mobile Phones Market in Ghana

A study conducted on mobile phones and non-formal traders and their commercial practices in Ghana revealed that the acceptance of modern technology improves the building of trust in networks trading (Overa, 2006). Waverman, Meschi and Fuss (2005) assert that the

positive impact of cell phones on the growth of economies in developing countries may double that of advanced countries. In 1994, Ghana deregulated its telecommunications sector, during that period of 1994, about 0.3 land lines were available for each hundred residents (Overa, 2006). The first cellular phone service provider was Mobitel in the year 1992 and around that period 19,000 people in Ghana had cell phones (Dadzie & Boachie-Mensah, 2011). By 1998, the total number of people with cell phones in Ghana had risen to 43,000, representing an increase of over a 100%.

In 1999, the number of mobile phone users rose to 68,000. The figures almost doubled to 132,000 by the end of 2000, and by June 2008, mobile subscriptions in Ghana was 9.4 million (Dadzie & Boachie-Mensah, 2011). Records from the National Communications Authority (2017) indicate that the total mobile voice subscriptions as at September 2017 stood at 37,445,048, while the penetration rate within that same period was 130.91%.

2.5 Huawei

Founded in 1987 in Shenzhen in China, Huawei Technology Co., Ltd. started its business at the market of Mainland as a sales agent for the Hong Kong company producer of the user switches (PBX). With the opening up policy of China and the rapid development of the global ICT industry over the past three decades, Huawei took advantage of these policies and developments to gain remarkable achievements with the telecommunication industry. Over the years, Huawei has increased its sales volumes and can be classified as one of the top world enterprises. Approximately, it can be said that the company has grown from a small private enterprise to one of the top world 500 enterprises. The sales volume of the company keeps increasing tremendously. It is evident that with an initial capital of only RMB 21,000 (about USD 3,000), the company's sales volumes have increased to

USD75,103 million as at 2016. Now, 170 and more countries can mention their benefits from Huawei's "telecom network equipment and solutions, the IT equipment and solutions, and the personal intelligent terminal equipment" which have been installed in wide range of and regions around the world (Yang, 2016, Huawei annual report & Huawei official website).

Huawei is in the business of transmitting information, processing, storing, and presentation. The company in 2011 grouped its operation into three segments based on customer categories, thus, Operators, Business Customers, and Consumers. With this categorisation, Huawei realised more revenue from its Operators Businesses, which include wireless network, fixed network, network energy, services, software and their core network. This accounts for more than "30% of the market share of the global mobile communication equipment, and this segment has already entered the mature period". Though in its initial stages, the business customer category of Huawei has greater potentials of developing in future with the advent of internet technology. It includes three parts, i.e. "the Enterprise Network Architecture, the Enterprise Unified Communications and Collaboration, and IT (the cloud computing and data centre)". In their quest to increase their share of the market, Huawei continues to enlarge its business of solutions and services into "mobile phones, tablet computers, Mobile Broadband, Home Terminals, Home Media Terminal Products and Modules, Wisdom of the enterprise, etc." (Yang, 2016; Huawei official website, 2017; Huawei annual report).

After chalking some success in the European market for eight to nearly nine years, the company decided to venture into the business of smartphones. The year 2005 saw the signing of a global equipment supply agreement with one multinational telecommunication

operator in UK, Vodafone. This led to the further increase of the size of the company's market within Europe. At the end of 2007, companies like "Telenor, Orange, Telfort and other major mobile operators" also signed agreement with Huawei (Huawei official website).

2.6 Tecno

In 2008, the then Mobile Zone Limited, which became Tecno in 2010, partnered Tecno Mobile from China, a premium mobile phone brand of Transsion Holdings which was established with its operations as a retail business. Techno is a retailer that deals in several brands of small keypad phones. As the first dual-SIM handset supplier in Ghana, "Mobile Zone has dedicated to transforming all its efforts into Transsion Holdings Products under the guideline of its Vision statement – "Being the leading Mobile handset and Accessories and Devices Distributor in Ghana and West Africa sub regions".

In Ghana, Tecno has gained popularity as evident from the numerous awards received by the company in the mobile phone industry since 2013. The company has won several awards consecutively in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016, ranging from "Mobile Phone distributor of the year award, Smart Phone of the Year award, Most Promising Brand Award and the Most Popular Brand Awards of the Year".

2.7 Huawei SO practices

This giant in the telecommunication industry cannot ignore the supplier orientation concept in its dealing in the quest to remain competitive in the ever-changing business environment in which it finds itself. As a result, the firm continues to embrace the SO concept and practice it during their business activities.

Huawei also strive at growing its business by creating mutual satisfying long-term relationship with its suppliers and other stakeholders. This relationship is strengthened with the constant interaction and provision of instant feedbacks with each other. Additionally, the trust and credibility component in business dealings is not left out of the equation. Huawei performs a background check on their suppliers to ensure the existence of credibility and provision of quality materials.

Communications with stakeholders and suppliers is also catered for by Huawei during their business dealings. There is a strong commitment and communication relationship between Huawei, its customers and suppliers. Showing kindness to all their partners is a strategy Huawei adopts to enhance relationships and its core values.

CHAPTER THREE

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.0 Introduction

The chapter two presents a thorough review of erudite discussions on supplier orientation and its effect on business performance. The chapter also reviews works on trust, which acts as a moderating factor that can affect this relationship and empirical investigation which supports the study. The chapter ends by providing a conceptual framework, which serves as a guide for the study.

3.1 Supplier Orientation

In today's fragmented and enormously competitive market, the optimum approach suitable for drawing and maintaining business is understanding the supplier orientation concept, thus the creation of buyer-seller relationship, where the buyer, in this case, is the business patronising from a supplier (Sheard, 2010). A commonly accepted principle is that "enhanced associations that exist between the buyer and supplier are enormously required, as well as forward-thinking organisations are coming to the realisation that developing and retaining such relationships is an operational way of uplifting the efficacy level of the entire supply chain" (Burnett, 2004). That notwithstanding, Lonsdale and Watson (2008) "pointed out that in business, the structure of the commercial outcome and the relations between both parties are the two very significant questions regarding buyer-supplier relationships".

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3.2 Dimensions of Supplier Orientation

3.2.1 Buyer-seller relationship

Buyers and supplier association play a very vital role in the control of diversity and utilisation of knowledge, resource mobilisation and coordination. In other words, the perspective of the marketing as well as logistics, which implies the buyers and supplier relationship, have been identified as having a significant influence on buyer satisfaction and is of a significant size to anticipate the sustainability of the business relationship” (Najib, Kartini, Suryana, & Sari, 2017, p.568). In the findings of Yen and Hung (2017), “buyer-supplier relationship has a positive influence on the administration of the company’s competitiveness”. Additionally, Asare et al. (2013) mentioned in an empirical study supported by market-based assets framework that buyers and supplier relationship has a positive influence on market processes, which will in turn have an effect on a company’s performance.

According to Duffy and Fearn (2004), the relationship that exists between buyers and suppliers enhances the better control of a supply chain. So, Zaremba, Bode, and Wagner (2017, p. 45) revealed that “the buyer-supplier relationship reflect recognition by the buyer and the supplier that for certain purchases, cooperation is more important than the competition, because of [*sic*] the possibility can be mutually beneficial”. According to Joshi, Verma, Bhasin, Kharat, and Kharat (2016, p. 97), buyer-supplier relationships are “economic relations, partnerships of many commercial transactions, and they are based on mutual trust for both parties who participated in this economic exchange”.

In the ideology of Rajagopal and Rajagopal (2009, p. 315), some key dimensions of buyer-supplier relationship include “long-term relationships, communication, cross-functional teams, and integration suppliers followed at different levels of transactional processes”.

Furthermore, Terpend et al. (2011), Ketkar et al. (2012), and Prior (2012) proposed that the buyer-supplier relationship includes “trust, commitment, communication, dependence, information exchange, and adaptation”.

3.2.2 Commitment to relationship

According to Egan (2004), commitment is said to be vital and central to relationship creation and its strength needs to be understood by parties involved in the relationship. During supplier orientation, the commitment dimension is very important and seen as an imperative variable for achieving success and long-term relationships. Just like trust, commitment is very important when it comes to understanding relationships, and it also acts as a measure for relationship continuity among partners (Wong & Sohal, 2002). Rauyyruen and Miller (2007, p. 25) identify commitment as “a psychological sentiment of the mind through which an attitude concerning continuation of a relationship with a business partner is formed”.

Roberts–Lombard and Du Plessis (2012, p. 158) are of the view that supplier and buyers build commitment with each other as a result of “trust, shared values and the belief that partners will be difficult to replace”. Gummesson (2006) mentioned that relationships that parties deem important and rely upon call for the partners’ commitment for the relationships to survive. At the commitment stage, partners continue to pool resources together to get their businesses to survive. Contemporary works on commitment suggest that commitment has two distinctive elements; first, commitment is a persistent force and second, it directs independent behaviour of other drivers and attitude (Rego, Carvalho, Friere, & Vieira, 2004).

Mahmoud, Hinson, and Adika (2018, p. 259) believe that “commitment motivates partners to co-operate in order to preserve the relationship investments”. A taxonomical review of extant literature (Read, 2009) indicates that partners who tend to receive more value from a relationship are more committed than those who do not. According to Tu, Liu, and Chang (2015), through commitments, partners (supplier-buyer) tend to be impressed with their existing relationships and will intend to continue the relationship for a long time.

3.2.3 Communication

Sin, Tse, Yau, Lee, and Chow (2002, p.25) define communication “as informal exchanging and sharing of meaningful and timely information between buyers and sellers”. Communication within the supplier orientation deals with the provision of trusted and timely information that can aid in rapid decision making or problem-solving initiatives (Ndubisi & Wah, 2005). Communication is seen as an interactive process as it takes place during the purchasing process, which involves the phases of pre-selling, selling, buying, overwhelming and post consuming. Communication as a two-way process, also demands creating the necessary conditions for the relay of information from customers to service firms. Communication also focuses on the exchange or sharing of information between buyers and sellers to aid them in the understanding of both party’s intentions and abilities (Kucukkancabas, Akyol, & Ataman, 2009).

Narteh et al. (2013) see communication as a major factor in building a trusting relationship, leading to stability in relationship. According to Khojastehpour and Johns (2014), using an updated information is achieved through communication effectiveness. According to aforementioned scholars, the exchange of useful and sufficient information between partners on a regular basis is a sure way of enhancing communication.

This current study conceptualises supplier orientation as being composed of buyer-seller relationship, commitment to relationships, communication and cooperative norm.

3.3 Business Performance (BP)

Citing Venkatraman and Ramanujam (1986), Lucky (2011) stated that “performance is a difficult construct to premise holistically, since that may refer to different aspects of how effective the business is”. Bourne et al. (2003, p. 4) defined BP measurement as “the use of a multi-dimensional set of performance measures for the planning and management of a business”. Also, Tonesakulrungruang (2009) defined the measurements of business performance from a financial and non-financial perspective.

In gaging business performance in financial terms, some scholars used objective indicators like “profits, market share, growth, market survival, return on investment, number of employees” (Haber & Reichel, 2005; Beaver, 2007; Kumar & Sharma, 2011). Aside the financial measure for BP, non-financial indicators such as “customer satisfaction (Ittner & Larcker, 1998); employee participation (Moriarty, 2010); duration of business operation for few years (Littunen, 2000); increase in self-sufficiency and reduction of dependence (Dzisi, 2008); high self-esteem and a tendency to enjoy attaining success is also found to be vibrant in explaining BP” (Shane, 2008; Kyro & Hyrsky, 2008).

3.4 Measuring BP

3.4.1 Service Quality

Service quality (SQ) research commenced in the 1980s (Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry, 1985), accentuating its strong impact on “business performance, lower costs, customer satisfaction, and customer loyalty” (Gurau, 2003; Sureshchander, Rajendran &

Anantharaman, 2002). Lewis and Booms (1983) forged SQ research, defining it as a “measure of how well the service level delivered matches the customer’s expectations”. This was further advanced by Parasuraman et al. (1985), who conceptualised SQ as “the gap between consumers’ expectations and perceptions of the actual service performance”. To date, considerable attention has been devoted to defining, modelling, and measuring service quality. Notably, Seth, Deshmukh, and Vrat (2005) identify 19 different service quality models since the 1980s. In addition, some scholars of services have suggested that SQ is a multi-dimensional construct, ranging from two (Mels, Boshoff & Nel, 1997), three (Rust & Oliver, 1994), to five (Parasuraman et al., 1985) and even ten dimensions (Parasuraman et al., 1988).

Lewis and Booms (1983) “were one of the first to define quality in terms of services, defining SQ as a measure of how well the service level delivered matches customer’s expectations”. Following that, Asubonteng, McCleary, and Swan (1996) define SQ as “the extent to which a service meets customers’ needs or expectations”. The varying stances of scholars on SQ show that there is no general consensus between academics with regard to a definitive definition of SQ. However, one theme that seems to be dominant despite the apparent confusion on the definition of SQ is with regard to expectations and perceptions.

3.4.2 Market Share

O’Regan (2002) “defines market share as a company’s sales in relation to total industry sales for a certain period”. Pearce and Robinson (2003) also adapted a similar definition, indicating that market share is a firm’s sales relative to those of other competitors in the market. Thus, market share is typically used to prompt competitive position. “It is also generally accepted that increased market share can be equated with success whereas

decreased market share is a manifestation of unfavourable actions by firm and usually equated with failure” (O’Regan 2002).

3.4.3 Customer Satisfaction

In Angelova and Zekiri’s (2011) opinion, “satisfaction is a person’s feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing a product’s performance outcome in relation to his or her expectation”. Walsh and Beatty (2007) also opine that CS is “an attitude-like judgment following a purchase act or a series of consumer product interactions”.

Accordingly, Yuksel, Yuksel, and Bilim (2010) argue that “consumer satisfaction comprises three basic components including the type of response (cognitive, affective); the centre of interest or the subject on which the response is focused; and the moment in time at which the evaluation is made”. However, Kuo, Wu, and Deng (2009) posit that “literature concerning the difference between quality and satisfaction is unclear, leading to satisfaction been viewed as a post consumption experience comparing quality perception with quality expectation”. Scholars such as Mahmoud, Hinson, and Anim (2018) and Ladhari, Souiden and Dufour (2017) conceptualise CS as “a response to an evaluation of perceived product or service performance, based on the customer’s judgments of the value that has been created for them”.

3.4.4 Employee Satisfaction

Satisfying employee on the job for greater organisation performance has been the focus of many organisations in recent years (Kaplan & Norton, 2011). Researchers have opined that generally, satisfied work force deliver better services, and empirical studies prove that there is a positive correlation between employee job satisfaction and customer satisfaction,

leading to general performance of the organisation (Deng, Lu, Wei & Zhang, 2010; Siddiqi, 2011). This is particularly true in the service industry, due to the intangible nature of the services, making employees the most crucial element in the value generation process of service organisation. Literature on employee satisfaction suggests that organisations will be highly competitive in the quality of their service delivery to customers if their employees feel satisfied and are in sync with the organisational vision (Dabholkar & Abston, 2008).

Employee gratification has been distinct in diverse ways, but the underlying factor for all the definitions is that, satisfaction is a state of a psychological process which affects both mental and physical wellbeing of the employee (Hwang & Chi, 2005). Employee satisfaction on the job is based on the nature of the job, job environment, how they feel emotionally and their reaction (Grenway, 2008). Some researchers believe that employee satisfaction is an attitudinal consideration, relating to likes and dislikes of an individual's job, a reflection of how an employee feels about his job (Hwang & Chi, 2005; Grenway, 2008). Martín, Schneider, Macey, & Barbera (2009) emphasised that satisfaction of employee depends on recognition, motivation, promotion and achievement of goals which lead to employee feeling fulfilled.

3.5 Trust Defined

A considerable number of studies have identified trust to be imperative in developing relationships with buyers, employees, and suppliers (Roberts-Lombards, 2011; Narteh et al., 2013). According to Wilson (1995), most conceptualisation of trust believes that relationship partners act in the best interest of each other. In the opinion of Liang and Wang (2006, p. 120), trust is "the perceived level of confidence in transaction partners' reliability

and honesty”. Similarly, Ndubisi (2007) explains trust as the inclination to rely on a partner in whom poise is entrusted.

Based on this definition, Sauers (2008) proposed that trust is based on repeated reliable interactions and following through expected behaviour. Buttle (2004, p. 12), however, defines trust as “one party believing that the other party will act in his best interest, that the other party is credible and that the other party has the necessary experience”. Wong and Sohal (2002) further explain the role of trust in relationship by arguing that trust indicates the extent to which each party in a relationship can consider the other person’s promise. “Trust is seen as a component of every relationship” (Iyer & Bejou, 2004). Morgan and Hunt (1994) and Castaldo et al. (2010) also studied trust as a key component of relationship creation strategy, where they found trust as enhancing relationships between the customers and firm.

Dwyer et al. (1987) concluded on trust as the dominant emotion in relationships. According to Moorman *et al.* (1993), trust is an inclination to depend on an exchange partner in whom confidence has been developed. Trust is further iterated as the perceived security and reliability in interactions, believing that exchanges due to the creation of a relationship will act in their best interests of the partners (Akrou, Diallo, Akrou, & Chandon, 2016). Trust is primarily considered an antecedent of relationship creation and continuity. To illustrate, it is expected that trust precedes the formation of a relationship, and hence any form of exchange (Luhmann, 2018).

3.6 Moderating effect of Trust

Trust is selected as a moderating variable between supplier orientation and business performance. The consideration of trust in the assessment of Supplier orientation has received attention especially in the relationship marketing (Moorman et al. 1993) literature and more recently, in some engagement and business performance literature. Having established a direct relationship between SO and BP in extant literature, this study makes a departure by examining whether the trust element can change the relationship that exist between SO and BP within the telecommunication industry in the Ghanaian context. Most of the studies described trust as both an antecedent variable and sometimes as a consequence (Boateng & Narteh, 2016), and some studies suggest that there is a significant role played by trust in increasing exchange relationships and knowledge amalgamation (Swift & Hwang, 2013). Trust has been explained as the willingness of partners within a relationship to depend/rely on the each other believing that each partner would be honest to themselves (Chellappa & Sin, 2005).

3.7 Theoretical Framework

A theory can be described as “any coherent portrayal or explanation of observed, experienced, or documented phenomena” (Gioia & Pitre, 1990). It has also been defined as “a statement of constructs and their interrelationship that shows how and why a phenomenon occurs” (Corley & Gioia, 2011). Theories help researchers to: “(1) organise our thoughts and ideas about the world; (2) generate and explain relationships and interrelationships among individuals, groups, and entities; (3) improve our predictions and expectations about people, groups, and organisations; and (4) achieve better understanding of the world” (Hambrick, 2007, p. 1347). The identified gaps emphasised the need to develop a

theoretically grounded and practically-oriented understanding of how supplier orientation influences the performance of firms in the telecommunication industry.

The theoretic underpinning of this study is founded on the two influential theory: Resource Based Theory (RBT) and social exchange theory (SET). The RBT and SET have been predominantly used by most scholars in literature.

3.7.1 Resource Based Theory (RBT)

Generally, resources are needed for productive activities to form the basic unit of analyses in economic activities. They include capital, equipment, software, skills of personnel, patents, supplier relationships etc. The resource-based view has been developed to elaborate how firms attain justifiable competitive edge (Atalay & Anafarta, 2011) from the use of these resources. Resource Based Theory has been noted as one of the most significant and well-cited theories in management theorising (Atalay & Anafarta, 2011).

Conferring to the theory, businesses gain competitive edge and higher performance via the acquisition, holding and subsequent use of strategic assets (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984). This view is in line with Penrose's (1959) assertion that when there is an interaction between two kinds of resources of a firm, it affects the productive service accessible from each resource. Therefore, from a resource-based perspective, there is an inherently high risk to a firm from failing to establish and nurture stakeholder relationships. The theory's proposition to the study is that the major determinant of the type o supplier-buyer relationship strategies is the available resources in the organisation.

The basic premise of RBT is that organisations strive on the basis of their mix of resources and capabilities (Peteraf & Bergen, 2003). In essence, different lists of firm's elements that may be considered as resources exist (Doherty & Terry, 2013). From marketing perspective, resources such as supplier-buyer relationship, technical skills, information and organisational process and operation are described as key strategic resources to identify, deploy and coordinate marketing innovations. Business's resources may also include all assets, organisational processes, attributes, information and knowledge to conceive and implement strategies to develop, manufacture, and deliver products to customers (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984).

The significance of the resource is similarly obvious in Teece, Pisano and Shuen (1997), who note the difficulty that competitors would have in replicating a competitive advantage based on a blend of valued firm-specific resources, because these blends largely arise from a structural process that is casually vague, path dependent and socially complex. Resource-based theory emphasises that an asset or resource must be "valuable, rare, inimitable and non-substitutable" for it to empower a firm to build and maintain a competitive advantage (Atalay & Anafarta, 2011).

3.7.2 The Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Emerson (1976) postulated that with SET, parties involved in a relationship (i.e. supplier and buyer) do have something valuable to exchange which will be beneficial to each other. The parties therefore take a decision to do the exchange in their own accepted quantities. Resources exchanged during the relationship can be economic or social. In the economic direction, exchanges can be in the form of goods, money, assets, information, advice, or services. With social exchanges, items may include social amenities, friendship, and

prestige. However, according to some scholars including Blau (1964), in social exchange relationships, the most rewarding outcome is not dependent on material or monetary value but on a relationship between two parties (i.e. supplier and buyer) that focus on building respect, social approval and many others among partners.

As postulated by Blau (1964, 1968), SET holds that partners (supplier-buyer) tend to reciprocate their feelings and behaviours in a positive direction to one another when they tend to benefit from the relationship created. In the ideology of Rousseau (1989), SET focuses on performing obligations where both parties within a relationship benefit from each other both now and in the future. Partners under SET strive at obtaining equilibrium within their created relationships. However, in situations of any imbalances, both parties contribute equal efforts at solving the issue through balance restoration (Hollebeek, 2011). The theory's preposition to the study is that the supplier-buyer relationships should be highly prioritised during the formulation of any strategy, because it is a key resource to firms, and it can enhance firm performance.

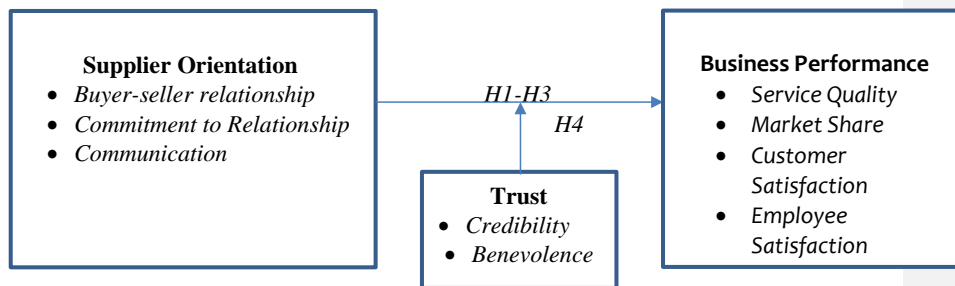
3.8 Conceptual Framework

Crossan et al. (1999) postulate "three principal requirements that a good framework or model should fulfil. These are: (1) it should identify the phenomenon under investigation; (2) Key assumptions behind the model/framework should be clearly stated; (3) the relationship among the elements of the model/framework should also be clearly described".

The figure 2.1 below shows the conceptual framework which explains the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, being affected by a moderating variable. The conceptual model assumes that supplier orientation is made up of

three-dimensional variables comprising buyer-seller relationships, commitment to relationships and cooperate norm. The conceptual framework also considered business performance as an aggregated component. The direct relationship between the three dimensions of supplier orientation and business performance was examined. Furthermore, the moderating effect of trust in this link was assessed.

Figure 3.1: Conceptual Framework



Source: Author's own construct, 2019

From the conceptual framework, this study proposed the following hypotheses

H1: Buyer-seller relationship positively impact on business performance

H2: Commitment to Relationship has a positive and significant relationship on BP

H3: Communication has a positive and significant relationship on BP

H4: Trust moderate the relationship between supplier orientation and BP

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology adopted by the researcher for the study. The research method is described in terms of the research paradigm, the design, the targeted population, the sample size used, data sources and the instruments used to collect them, the management of data, challenges and limitations encountered on the field as well as the ethical considerations.

4.1 Research Paradigm

Research paradigm basically denotes a set of certain beliefs, techniques, values and norms that are usually shared by a particular scientific community and act as a guide to what and how research problems are addressed and the explanations that is acceptable within that particular scientific community (Kuhn, 2012). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), research should be directed by a philosophy that epitomises the researcher's particular belief about the nature of data collection, analysis, and how phenomena are to be perceived and interpreted. That not said, scholars like Saunders et al. (2011) argued that there is a philosophy that allows the researcher to think critically about the enhancement of knowledge. The concept of paradigm can therefore not be overlooked but seen as critical to the research process within a study.

Generally, all academic research has been noted to be established on a paradigm or philosophical perspective (Blaikie, 2010; Proctor, 2005; Holden & Lynch, 2004). The most common among these research paradigms includes positivism, interpretivist, realism,

relativism and critical realism (Chan, 2015) which have their own arrangement of epistemology, ontological and methodological proposition that clarify and separate them from each other.

Epistemological assumptions are concerned with what kinds of knowledge are possible; how we can know these things; and what criteria exist for deciding when knowledge is both adequate and legitimate. Ontological assumptions are concerned with the nature of social reality. These assumptions make claims about what kinds of social phenomena do or can exist, the condition for their existence, and the ways in which they are related (Blaikie, 2010). Methodology on the other hand refers to the outline used to conduct research, within the context of a particular paradigm (Wahyuni, 2012). The latter can be juxtaposed with a research method (characterises the set of specific tools and techniques used to gather and analyse the data specified by the research methodology) which is independent from methodologies and paradigms (Sarantakos, 2012; Blaikie, 2010). Thus, methodology becomes a more specific manner in which both empirical and logical work is performed (Creswell, 2014).

Interestingly, for this research, a positivist methodological paradigm is adopted to test the hypotheses. This research paradigm was adopted because it involves formulating research questions, hypotheses and testing them empirically under carefully controlled settings (Boateng, 2014). According to Boateng (2014), this research paradigm is mostly based on deductive reasoning.

4.2 Research Design

Research design is a framework for conducting marketing research (Malhotra, 1996). Thus, it describes a plan that guides the researcher in data collection and analytical phases of the research work. According to Dobson (2002), the research design becomes a guideline that clearly depicts the strategy of inquiry suitable for a particular research.

That notwithstanding, Zikmund, Babin and Griffin (2012) define a research design as “a detail blueprint used to guide the implementation of a research study towards the realisation of its objectives”. The above definition of research design also emphasises on the methods and techniques for gathering and analysing data. Consequently, a research design is mainly about deciding on a best research approach or methodology to obtain data. It is therefore a blueprint of a detailed plan on how the research was completed. The research design in this study basically focuses on such issues particularly with reference to research paradigm, research purpose, research strategy, research approach, and data collection methods (including sample size determination, sampling techniques adopted in this work, sources of data, and survey instrument).

With regard to the discussions in the preceding chapters as well as the supporting research question, the logical assumptions for this study follows the positivist perspective. This is because the researcher examines this study from an objective point of view, where the responses to the research questions are expected from the gathered and objective responses of the sampled respondents. The research questions and hypotheses have been formulated from literature and have been tested empirically under carefully controlled circumstances. For this study, an explanatory scheme is adopted, as the researcher purports to study a phenomenon by explaining the correlations among some constructs (Saunders, Lewis &

Thornhill, 2011). Also, the study is quantitative in nature and adopts a survey research approach involving the use of structured questionnaires, which were designed to obtain information from respondents (Zikmund et al., 2012). The research problem was formulated based on existing theory, and the intention was to create more knowledge about specific factors and their relationships among one another (Creswell, 2014; Yin, 2009).

Intuitively, to draw a general inference and collect optimum valid results, a significant sample was needed for this study. For this reason, a deductive approach was adopted in this study; the theories examined needed some empirical test to make appropriate analysis (Creswell, 2014). The study is cross-sectional in nature and previous cross-sectional studies have mainly employed the survey strategy (Easterby-Smith et. al., 2012; Bughin et al., 2010). The choice for this research design therefore became necessary not only due to the explanatory nature of the study but also because it has been suggested to be suitable for analysing such phenomena, situations, and problems by considering a cross-section of the population at one point in time (Litvin et al., 2008; Hakim, 2000). Yet again, the suitability of using the survey strategy in this study is to help the researcher to identify and explain statistically, the relationship that exists among supplier orientation and firm performance.

4.3 Research Approach

To arrive at a valid statistical result, it is pertinent for a study to employ the right research approach. These approaches are the plans and procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis and interpretation (Creswell, 2014). Usually, research method can either be quantitative (deductive) or qualitative (inductive); sometimes a mixture of both methods (Blaikie, 2009; McGivern, 2009). When conducting any kind of research, these two approaches may be considered

when deciding on how to carry out the research in the most efficient and effective manner. According to Alvesson and Sköldböck (2009), the key difference between the two types of research approaches is commonly the number of participants and the way data is analysed.

4.3.1 Qualitative Research

According to Flick (2014), qualitative research approach is a distinctive way to describe an alternative to the 'quantitative research', and the term was coined against the background of a critique of the latter and especially the development it had taken in the 1960s and 1970s. Qualitative research emphasises on getting close to the subject(s) of study and assuming the role of a participant to describe a social reality from the perspective of the subject rather than observer. Bryman (2006) described qualitative research as an "approach that studies the social world and seeks to describe and analyse the culture and behaviour of humans and their groups, from the point of view of those being studied". It is also concerned with rich and detailed description, understanding and insight rather than measurement (McGivern, 2009). In qualitative research, methods of in-depth interviews or focus group discussions are usually used to explore the attitudes, behaviour and experiences of research participants. Often, the number of participants is few, but the contacts with the participants normally tend to last for a longer period (Creswell, 2014). Qualitative research normally emphasises on the relationship between contextualised elements in relation to a relatively few cases.

4.3.2 Quantitative Research

According to Creswell and Clark (2007, p.4), "a quantitative research is a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables. These variables, in turn, can be measured typically on instruments, so that numbered data can be analysed using statistical procedures". Quantitative research can be viewed as an extreme of empiricism

according to which theories are not only justified by the extent to which they can be verified but also by an application of facts acquired (Amaratunga et al., 2002). Quantitative research is also used as a measurement of how people feel, think or act in a particular way, and it seeks to quantify data and apply some statistical analysis which is often formalised, well-structured, and data is usually obtained from large samples (Tull & Hawkings, 1990). Commonly, quantitative researchers emphasise on the use of numbers. These numbers often represent values and levels of theoretical constructs and concepts, and the interpretation of the numbers is viewed as a strong scientific evidence of how a phenomenon exists or works. Some common quantitative approaches include survey methods, laboratory experiments, formal methods (e.g. econometrics), and numerical methods such as mathematical modelling (Myer, 2000; Straub et al., 2004).

Using a quantitative method, the number of variables studied is often few, but it is studied on several number of units. Now, the participants usually take part in a large-scale survey in the form of either a questionnaire or a structured interview. This method studies a larger sample of the population which makes it possible to draw general conclusions, but the contact with those people is shorter than in the qualitative method. Quantitative research typically focuses on the relationship between several defined elements concerning many cases. The emphasis on quantification during gathering and analysis of data depends much on a certain group of the population (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Results from such groups are deemed to be very relevant in providing generalised assumptions on the entire population.

4.3.3 Mixed Method

It is imperative to note that the use of mixed methods involves the collection, analysis and mixing of both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or a series of studies

(Creswell & Clark, 2007). It involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either quantitative or qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). Thus, a mixed method research has been classified in various ways such as triangulation (concurrent use of both quantitative and qualitative methods); embedded (one type of method is supplementary to the other); explanatory (sequential use with quantitative preceding qualitative); and exploratory (sequential use in the reverse order). That said, some scholars have even contended that mixed methods research constitute a third methodological movement (with quantitative and qualitative research being the other two) which should be seen as a normal, and perhaps, necessary part of knowledge generation rather than as a special type (Blaikie, 2010; Johnson et al., 2007).

4.3.4 Justification for the Choice of a Quantitative Research Approach

The study is fixated on quantitative research in order to establish the relationships between various constructs (Novelty seeking, Cultural Experience, Ego Enhancement, Escape, Rest & Relaxation, Education/Learning) within the telecommunications industry in Ghana. The study used the quantitative approach because this method enabled the researcher to use a questionnaire to collect data from a larger number of participants for analysis. Similarly, choy (2014) posits that quantitative studies can be carried out quickly as responses can be analysed within a short period as compared to the qualitative and the mixed methods approaches. In order for the researcher to establish, confirm or validate relationships, and to develop generalisations that will contribute to theory, the quantitative approach was considered appropriate for this study.

4.4 Research Strategy

According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), “research strategy is a road map or an overall plan for undertaking a systematic exploration of a phenomenon of interest”. Within the social sciences, Yin (2009) identified five major research strategies: “experiments, surveys, archival analysis, histories, and case studies”. Saunders et al. (2011) also identified seven research strategies that can be adopted for a study, thus, “experiment, survey, case study, action research, grounded theory, ethnography, and archival research”. Each of these strategies can be used for the purposes of explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory studies. It is worth noting that these strategies are either suitable for the inductive or deductive schools of thought. Rather than viewing one strategy as superior to the other, the emphasis should be on the strategy that helps the researcher to achieve the desired research objectives of the study. According to Saunders et al. (2011), these strategies should not be thought of as being mutually exclusive but rather seen as complementary to each other.

4.4.1 Experiment

Experiment strategy is usually adopted in situations where the researcher can control the samples (Saunders et al., 2011). According to McGivern (2006), this strategy is essentially relevant in finding out the existence of causal relationships, leaving out the effect of other variables, and creating time sequence of events. Additionally, Saunders et al. (2011) mention that this strategy is usually functional in laboratories and are used in answering questions relating to “how” and “why” in research. In addendum, the aforementioned scholars postulate that although experimental research appears to be strong in most social science research, it is highly indebted to the natural sciences.

4.4.2 Survey

The use of survey in research is very relevant; scholars such as Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) have reputed surveys as very effective in sampling opinions, attitudes, and descriptions, as well as cause and effect relationships. Though seen as a common and popular strategy used in most research, Saunders et al. (2011) mentions that survey is used in answering the “who”, “what”, “where”, “how much” and “how many” questions in business and management research. Saunders et al. (2011) additionally posit that the survey strategy is frequently linked to the deductive approach, thus, explaining quantitative data as being analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

4.4.3 Case study

A case study strategy involves the study of a happening in its actual situation (Saunders et al., 2011). According to Robson (2002), the case study strategy is used to conduct research that involves practical examination of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, using multiple sources of evidence. Yin (2011) posits that a case study strategy allows researchers to explore individuals or organisations simply through complex interventions, relationships, communities, or programmes. Inferences drawn from this definition show that researchers looking for a good understanding of a given situation must view a case study strategy as more appropriate (Morris & Wood, 1991). Again, Saunders et al. (2011) opine that in finding answers to questions relating to “why”, “how” and “what”, even though generally associated with a survey strategy, a case study strategy will be supportive.

4.4.4 Action research

Action research is adopted or considered appropriate to help develop a close association between researchers and practitioners (Saunders et al., 2011). Extant researchers (Bogdan & Bilken, 1997; Stringer, 2013) are of the view that action research involves the process of logical analysis of inquiries about developing social issues troubling the lives of people. According to Meyer (2000), with the focal point of producing answers to realistic problems and involving practitioners in successive development, the strength of action research can be felt.

4.4.5 Grounded theory

In the view of Saunders et al. (2011), the grounded theory strategy is generally used by researchers with the primary focus of generating series of observational data. It is explained as a type of research that assists in forecasting and explaining behaviours and is geared towards developing and building theory (Goulding, 2002). According to Lingard, Albert and Levinson (2008), the main thrust is to generate theories regarding social phenomena.

4.4.6 Ethnography

This strategy believes that the social world within reach is ethnography. Traced from anthropology field and deeply rooted in the inductive approach (Saunders et al., 2011), Creswell (2014) posit ethnography to involve the study of the meaning of behaviour, language, and relations among members of a culture-sharing group. Viewed as a naturalistic research method, this strategy expects the researcher to immerse into the everyday life of a cultural-sharing group through observations and interviews (Saunders et al., 2011).

4.4.7 Archival research

As the principal source of data collection, archival research strategy involves the analysis of administrative records (Saunders et al., 2011). Using this strategy, researchers are able to ask pertinent questions concerning the past and changes over time. However, Saunders et al. (2011) posit that the nature of the administrative records and documents usually constraint the ability to answer questions. In effect, researchers adopting this study must establish and design the study in such a way that data is mostly available (Saunders et al., 2011).

4.4.8 Justification for the Choice of a Survey Research Strategy

Based on the above discussions, this current study employed the survey strategy to gather primary data, using questionnaires from suppliers and retailers of Huawei and Tecno who are based in Accra. This study adopted the survey strategy because of the cross-sectional nature of data collected, and cross-sectional studies usually employ the survey strategy (Easterby-Smith et. al., 1991). Saunders et al. (2007) is of the view that this strategy is a popular, common and frequently used approach in business and management research to answer “who”, “what”, “where”, “how much”, and “how many” questions. Survey is usually associated with a deductive approach and explanatory research. Additionally, as this study examines cause and effect relationships, the excellent and most appropriate strategy that can be adopted is a survey. Thus, the survey strategy was taken on to statistically ascertain the relationship between supplier orientation and firm performance. It must therefore be mentioned clearly that the researcher deems the survey strategy to be appropriate for this study.

4.5 Study Population

Population is the target group that the researcher is interested in gaining information and drawing conclusions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Target population of a study, according to Malhotra (2007), is the collection of elements or objects that possess the information sought by the researcher and about which inferences are made. Dillman (1994) observed that a prerequisite to sample selection is to define the target population as narrowly as possible and that sample selection depends only on the population size and its homogeneity, as well its cost and the degree of precision required. A distinction has been made between a target population and a survey population. A target population is the population from which the results are required whereas the survey population is the population actually covered by the research (Moser & Kalton, 1971). Therefore, the actual population can then be any size and are usually referred to as the target.

4.6 Sample Frame of Study

Denscombe (2014) argue that researchers in the social sciences are frequently restricted with regard to the collection of data from everyone within the research unit under study. This problem arises due to the difficulties faced concerning the easy sampling and convenience of the total target population. Wallen (2006) postulates that to save time, money and research effort, defining the population as narrowly as possible is encouraged, resulting in what is termed as the sampling frame. The solution to this problem is to rely on a portion of the target population, hoping that they are a true representation of the entire population. Hence, this study seeks to gather data from suppliers and retailers of Huawei and Tecno within the Greater Accra region.

4.7 Sample Size of the Study

After specifying the sample population, the sample size is determined. The sample size is a subset of the larger population (Saunders et al., 2011). There are many different methods of determining the sample size. Academics such as Osborne and Costello (2009), and Field (2009) postulate that in order to conduct a reliable factor analysis, the sample size needs to be big. For this study, 305 suppliers and retailers of Huawei and Tecno in Accra were considered as the sample size. This sample size selection was informed by Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham (2010) who assert that the minimum sample size for SEM analysis should be 100 and above. Supporting this assumption, Garver and Mentzer (1999) and Hoelter (1983) have also recommended that for a sample to be representative and acceptable for a quantitative study, a sample of 150 is considered fair and 200 and above as good. In addendum, the selection of the sample size was also based on Bradley et., al (2001) argument, which states that many sample sizes for research studies are defined by the researcher's time and money available for data collection. Hence, the researcher sampled 305 respondents based on the cost basis approach (Burns & Bush, 2000) and also because a sample of 200 and above is deemed fit for a structural equation modelling analysis (Hair et al., 2014).

4.8 Research Sampling Technique

Commonly, two broad choices are available for a sampling technique, thus, probability and nonprobability sampling (Malhotra, 2011).

4.8.1 Probability sampling

The kind of sampling in which every element in the population has a non-zero chance of being selected is known as probability sampling (Stuart, 1984). Saunders et al. (2011)

outline four generally accepted probability sampling techniques: random sampling, systematic sampling, stratified random sampling, and cluster sampling.

4.8.2 Non-Probability Sampling

Non-Probability Sampling is quite the opposite of probability sampling which offers an equal chance of selecting respondents. A non-probability sampling empowers the researcher to make own conclusions in the selection of sample elements. In support of this, Malhotra & Birks (2007) makes it clear that this sampling technique does not depend on chance-based selection but on researchers' own judgment. Some earlier academics (Saunders et al., 2011) list some examples of non-probability sampling techniques to include purposive or judgmental sampling, convenience sampling, quota sampling, and snowball sampling.

4.8.3 Justification for the choice of a Non-probability Sampling Technique

The non-probability sampling technique was adopted for this study. Specifically, the researcher used convenience sampling technique for selecting the respondents for the study. This method was deemed appropriate due to the difficulty of getting a sample frame for the study. Additionally, this sampling method was considered suitable since it was less time consuming and inexpensive. Three Hundred & Forty (340) suppliers and retailers who were available and willing to participate were included in this study. The researcher drew these respondents from people (Accra) that access these business site. Out of the 340 respondents, 305 were found to be well administered hence could participate in this research study. The remaining 35 were either not returned or not well administered.

4.9 Data Collection

In this study, data collection involved a series of systematically planned activities. These activities include the decisions regarding the type of data to be collected, selection of an appropriate source, preparation and design of research instrument, data collection procedures, data analysis techniques, quality criteria and ethical considerations. The following sub-sections are explained into details next.

4.9.1 Types of Data

Identification of the data type required was the first step in the data collection process. Corbin and Strauss (2008) support this assertion and cautioned that failure to define appropriate data may lead to inadequate results. Generally, there are two accepted types of data used in research: primary and secondary data (Ghauri & Gronhaug, 2005). Thus, data obtained by a researcher for the specific purpose of addressing the present research is what Malhotra and Birks (2007) normally call primary data. Secondary data can be explained as data that have been gathered and assembled for any purpose other than the current research work but have some significance and usefulness to the current study (Hair et al., 2010). For this study, primary data was collected from suppliers and retailers of Huawei and Tecno in Accra, Ghana.

4.9.2 Data collection instrument

According to Malhotra and Briks (2007), four (4) instruments can be used to gather primary data. Thus, participant observation, personal interviews, telephone interviews and self-administered questionnaires. Due to the quantitative methodological approach selected for this study, self-administered questionnaire was deemed appropriate as a data collection instrument. Accordingly, Hair et al. (2010) and Saunders et al. (2011) posit that the

consistent character of self-administered questionnaires aids in the assessment of unrelated responses of participants.

4.9.2.1 Questionnaire Design

Critical to every survey research is the attainment of quality data. Quality data can only be obtained through the design of high-quality questionnaires. For this thesis, the researcher designed a closed ended questionnaire to gather primary data from research participants. The introductory part of the research questions was designed in such a way that the purpose of the research was clearly spelt out to respondents, together with assurances of confidentiality. Next, the questionnaires captured the respondents' demographics, thus, gender, age, educational qualification, purpose of visit and how they got to know about the destination. The second part of the questionnaire captured the major constructs of the conceptual framework presented in chapter 2. Six (6) variables in all were addressed in this research.

4.9.3 Pilot test of questionnaires

In social research, there is the possibility that written questionnaires will be misunderstood and interpreted differently by different people. To overcome this problem, the researcher carried out a pilot-testing of questionnaires, following the recommendation of Hair et al. (2010) and Devellis (2003). Thus, the appropriateness of the wording of both modified and newly created scales was evaluated using panel of academic experts who have extensive knowledge on the subject being studied. From the feedback obtained from the pre-test, certain sections of the questionnaires were modified to address all ambiguity or difficulty concerning clarity, relevance and instructions. Again, the questionnaires were subject to critique by the researcher's supervisors who had vast experience and knowledge on the

quantitative nature of this study. Useful insights were derived to further shape the research instruments, thereby escalating the quality of the questionnaire designed (Saunders et al., 2011).

4.9.4 Data Collection Procedures

After piloting the questionnaire, the researcher proceeded to the next phase of the study to administer the questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed to suppliers and retailers of Huawei and Tecno in Accra. The process of collecting data started with the explanation of the purpose of this study to respondents included in the study, while giving them the assurances of utmost confidentiality of information provided for the study. This was done in conformity with the suggestion of Dillman (1994). There after the questionnaires were administered to respondents who qualified for the study. Only participants who agreed to assist in the research were given a copy of the questionnaire to fill. The process of data collection lasted for a period of six (6) weeks.

4.10 Mode of Data Analysis

Techniques used in data analysis for this study is extensively discussed in this section. The researcher used SPSS version 22.0 and Amos 20.0 as the analytical tools for this study. This software has been widely used by researchers who focus on quantitative data analysis. SPSS was used for the preliminary coding and inputting of the raw data as well as for data cleaning and exploratory factor analysis, before onward transferal to Amos for further analysis. Checking the data set for errors is an essential prelude to data analysis. In order to avoid errors that will likely have an influence on the results during the analysis, a thorough data screening process is highly necessary. According to Pallant (2011), it is recommended to do

data coding, screening and cleaning. The coded data was checked for outliers, missing values or scores that might be out of range and wrong inputs for further analysis.

4.10.1 Factor Analysis

Literature presents two main approaches to factor analysis, thus, exploratory and confirmatory. Exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is often used in the early stages of research to gather information about (explore) the interrelationships among a set of variables. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), on the other hand, is a more complex and sophisticated set of techniques used later in the research process to test (confirm) specific hypotheses or theories concerning the structure underlying a set of variables (Pallant, 2011; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Data for the current study was assessed using EFA at the initial stage. According to Hair et al. (2010), EFA can be used to examine the underlying patterns or relationships for a large number of variables and to determine whether the information can be condensed or summarised in a smaller set of factors or components. Drawing on Pallant's (2011) view, three main steps were followed in carrying out EFA, thus, "(1) Assessment of the suitability of the data for factor analysis, (2) Factor extraction, and (3) Factor rotation and interpretation". After EFA, a CFA was performed.

4.10.2 Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

SEM is a statistical procedure for testing measurement, functional, predictive, and causal hypotheses (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). SEM is also referred to "as causal modelling or analysis of covariance structures" (Ullman 2006, p.35). SEM is "a statistical method that takes a confirmatory approach to estimate a series of separate, but interdependent, multiple

regression equations simultaneously with the considerations of measurement errors of latent variables” (Jöreskog et al., 1979, p.45).

SEM was applied in examining the structural paths among the constructs (i.e. to test the various hypothesis proposed in this research). Two stage approaches, thus, one stage approach and two stage approach exist in the performance of SEM analysis and have been widely used by scholars. In this research, the two-stage approach is used to test the research model; the first stage was carried out in the exploratory phase while the second stage continues in the confirmatory phase. Researchers such as Anderson and Gerbing (1988) have posited that the two-stage approach avoids interaction that is unnecessary between constructs during testing of the structural model as compared to the one stage approach. Kline (2015) maintains that a test of the measurement model needs to be conducted because all of the correlations between constructs must be estimated before testing the structural model. In addition, the measurement model can assess whether the constructs meet the requirements of validity and reliability (Byrne, 2013). The measurement model for this study was tested through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), where all constructs involved were assumed to covary with each other (Kline, 2015).

4.10.3 Testing Model Fitness

Assessing model fitness involves the interpretation of how well the conceptualised model fits the empirical research. The process is comparative in nature because it involves choosing between numerous fit indices that subjectively indicate whether the data fit the theoretically postulated model (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012; Hair et al., 2010; Schumacker & Lomax, 2004). Researchers have proposed a number of fit indices. Nevertheless, there are at least two main conventions for the assessment of model fit that are apparent in literature,

thus, the assessment of the absolute fit of the model and the assessment of the comparative fit (Tanaka, 1993). Model fit criteria commonly used in absolute fit are chi-square (χ^2), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), root-mean-square residual (RMR) and Root-Mean-Square-Error of Approximation (RMSEA). These criteria are based on differences between the observed and model-implied correlation or covariance matrix (Hair et al., 2014). Comparative fit deals with whether the model being considered is better than a competing model in accounting for observed data. Comparative fit assessment is based on the examination of a “baseline” model in comparison with theoretically derived models (Kelloway, 1998). Some criteria in this category include normed fit index (NFI), comparative fit index (CFI) and the relative non-centrality index (RNI).

The following fit indexes were used to evaluate how well the measurement model fit the data collected, with each one having conventionally acceptable values: $RMSEA \leq 0.08$, $GFI \geq 0.90$, $NFI \geq 0.90$ and $CFI \geq 0.90$ (Hair et al., 2014; Bagozzi & Yi, 2012; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The sufficiency of the theorised model’s creation of a covariance matrix is evaluated by the χ^2 goodness-of-fit value; it also estimates coefficients compared with the observed covariance matrix. However, since the value of χ^2 is affected by the sample size, a large number of participants can cause χ^2 to be inflated when assessing model fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Many scholars have applied the method that divides the value of χ^2 by degrees of freedom instead of relying only on the overall χ^2 and its associated test of significance. It is typically suggested that a Normed Chi-square of less than 3 is favourable for a large sample. These fit indices were employed to assess the strength and acceptability of the construct measurements. The selection of these fit indices was based on the classification proposed

by Kline (2015) and Byrne (2013), as being the most commonly accepted criteria in social sciences.

4.11 Quality Criteria

Extra cautiousness is usually required for a research of this nature so as not to compromise the quality of the study. The utilisation of various measures of reliability and validity provides the potency to achieve this goal (Yin, 1994). Researchers such as Golafshani (2003), Read (2013), and Roberts, Priest and Traynor (2006) explain that the methods of evaluating the soundness of a measurement to ensure that they are free of bias and distortion is termed as reliability and validity. According to Hair et al. (2014), questionnaires are considered dependable and suitable when the results given are alike when repeated. Thus, the study would yield the same results if replicated.

4.11.1 Reliability

In the opinion of Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005), measuring the stability of a proposed measure is termed as reliability. Saunders et al. (2011) have stated that reliability is a sign of accuracy, precision and consistency of a measurement. There are scholars like Zikmund, Babin, Carr and Griffin (2012) who are of the view that reliability is an indicator of a measurement of internal consistency, as well as, how appropriate items on the test measure the same construct or idea. In accordance with earlier researchers, Hinkin (1998) and Guy (1987) are of the view that ensuring consistency and stability of measurement over time is achieved through reliability measures. This means that, regardless of environmental factors, reliable item scale will not change.

Malholtra and Briks (2007) have mentioned test-retest, alternative-forms, and internal consistency reliability approaches as three ways through which reliability can be accessed. However, Cronbach alpha coefficient is generally tested through the use of the internal consistency measurement scale items (see Hair et al., 2014; Pallant, 2011). In the opinion of Malholtra and Briks (2007), the easiest way of computing the internal consistency of a scale is using the split-half reliability. However, Cronbach alpha is the most commonly used test (Guy, 1987). This is because, consistency of an entire scale is assessed by measurement of reliability coefficient (Cronbach, 1951). Several scholars have continuously reiterated that achieving a reliability range of 0.5 to 0.6 is considered adequate when testing reliability of constructs, even though a Cronbach alpha is usually estimated to be over 0.6. Conversely, scholars such as Dawson (2002) and Hair et al. (2014) have used a more stringent rule of thumb cut-off of 0.7 to examine the sufficiency of reliability. Churchill and Iacobucci (2006), Hair et al. (2014), and Peter (1979) point out that in computing the Cronbach alpha value, inter-correlations that subsist between samples of items must range between 0 and 1. In this study, reliability of the research instrument was tested and confirmed using Cronbach alphas, composite reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Composite reliability is a measure of the overall reliability of a collection of heterogeneous but similar items. The AVE on the other hand illustrates the amount of variance the items share with the construct it purports to measure.

4.11.2 Validity

Zikmund et al. (2012) explain validity as the correctness of a measurement or the extent to which a score honestly represents a concept. Supporting this assertion, Burns and Bush (2014) reiterate that validity refers to the appropriateness of the measurements to assess the variable it claims to measure. The main types of validity espoused by research scholars are

content validity, criterion validity and construct validity (Streiner, 2013). Content validity refers to the adequacy with which a measure or scale has sampled from the intended universe or domain of content. Criterion validity concerns the relationship between scale scores and some specified, measurable criterion. Construct validity involves testing a scale not against a single criterion but in terms of theoretically derived hypotheses concerning the nature of the underlying variable or construct. Construct validity comprises two (2) sub-types: convergent validity and discriminant validity. In the study of Rezaei (2015), and Rezaei and Ghodsi (2014), discriminant validity was used in identifying the extent to which a construct is different from other constructs, while the convergent validity was used to ensure that the constructs identified are truly reflected by their indicators. In the works of Kim, Hwang, Zo and Lee (2016), and Rezaei (2015), discriminant validity was applied using construct correlations and cross-loading criterion, while convergent validity was applied using Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and factor loadings. In this research, content and construct validity were used to confirm the research instrument. Content validity was ensured by allowing senior marketing experts (both academia and practice) to peruse the scales used in the study; an initial test for convergent and discriminant validity employed in this research was an EFA (Anderson & Gerbing 1988). Constructs used in this study were subject to both EFA and CFA. The final measurement model was subjected to a SEM process in the analysis section to examine the various structural propositions postulated in the conceptual framework for the study. Results for both reliability and validity measures are presented in Chapter 5.

4.12 Ethical Consideration

In any research, ethics is one of the most important issue researchers must consider and not overlook (Malhotra & Birks 2007). In accordance with this, the researcher took steps to

ensure that no participant in this research work was harmed in any way. Potential ethical issues were therefore considered in the collection of data, analysis, and presentation of findings. This study process was guided by three ethical principles adopted from Denscombe (2014). These principles suggested that participants' interest was protected. The researcher avoided deception or misrepresentation and ensured that the participants provided their informed consent.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The preceding chapters of this study were devoted to the holistic review of literature concerning the constructs in this study. As a result, the appropriate hypotheses were formulated and also methodology for collecting data was laid bare. This chapter presents the results of the analysed empirical data collected which is characterised by six key areas. First, the demographic characteristics of respondents is provided, followed by the descriptive statistics of the measurement variables. Next, the study presents the results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) for the latent variables as stipulated in the conceptual framework. This is followed by the results from the structural model, where the study tested the theorised hypotheses by examining the individual dimensions of supplier orientation and their effect on business performance. Finally, the study presents the findings of the moderation tests as evidenced in the proposed conceptual framework.

5.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The study participants have been profiled according to “gender, age, marital status, educational level and nationality”. Table 5.1 presents the findings.

Table 5.1: Demographic Profile of Respondents

	Response	Freq.	%
Gender	Male	211	69.3
	Female	94	30.7
		305	100
Age	18-30	93	30.4
	31-40	141	46.3
	41-50	59	19.3
	50+	12	4
		305	100
Marital Status	Single	116	38.1
	Married	154	50.4
	Separated	26	8.5
	Divorced	7	2.3
	Widowed	2	0.7
		305	100
Educational Level	High School Certificate	191	62.6
	Bachelor's Degree	84	27.5
	Post Graduate	30	9.9
		305	100
Nationality	Ghanaian	277	90.7
	Foreigner	28	9.3
		305	100

Source: Field Data, 2019

From Table 5.1, males represented the majority of respondents indicating 69.3% of the total sample. The remaining were females who represented 30.7% of the total sample. In finding out their age categories, the results showed that of the three hundred and five (305) respondents used for the analysis, the majority of the respondents representing 46.3% of the

total population fell within the ages of 31 to 40 years. 30.4% of the respondents fell within the ages of 18 to 30 years. 19.3% of the respondents fell within the ages of 41 to 50 years, while the minority of the respondents representing only 4.0% of the total population were above 50 years. With respect to their marital status, majority (50.4%) of the mobile phone dealers included in the study indicated that they are married and living with their spouses. The next populated category mentioned that they are single, representing 38.1% of the total sample. 8.5% of another group of respondents claimed to be separated from their spouses while 2.3% of the respondents indicated divorced as their marital status. A minority of 0.7% respondents indicated that they were widowed. In assessing the educational level of the respondents included in the study, majority of the respondents, representing 62.6% of the sample had high school certificates. This was followed by another group of 27.5% respondents who claimed to have a Bachelor's Degree, while 9.9% of the respondents mentioned that they had Post Graduate degree. The results indicate that virtually all the respondents sampled for the research have some level of education which puts them in a condition that can enhance their level of understanding regarding the basics of reasoning and sound judgment, especially one that can help them go about their business successfully. Finally, the researcher probed further to find out the nationality of the respondents included in the study. Responses elicited from respondents showed that 90.7% of the respondents were Ghanaian nationals while the remaining 9.3% were foreigners.

5.3 Descriptive Statistics

Some scholars (Pallant, 2016) suggest that prior to conducting any statistical analysis, it is critical to subject the data collected to descriptive analysis before any data validation is done. The descriptive statistics comprise measures of central tendency such as the mean and standard deviation as well as skewness and kurtosis. Table 5.2 presents the descriptive

analysis of the various scales which indicate the extent to which the participants disagreed or agreed with each of the statements in the questionnaire. The highest mean recorded from the Table was 3.96 (In this business, we meet our suppliers regularly to find out what product or services are in the offering as well as those that will be needed in future), while the lowest was 2.01 (Supplier orientation has reduced our employee turnover rate). This means that respondents included in the study do have a strong relationship with their suppliers, however, that has no impact on the rate at which their employees turnover from their jobs.

Table 5.2: Descriptive Statistics

Factor	Scale Items	Variable Codes	Mean	Std. Dev.
Buyer-Supplier Relationship (Viio & Grönroos, 2016).	In this business, we meet our suppliers regularly to find out what product or services are in the offing as well as those that will be needed in future	BSR1	3.96	1.98
	My supplier is quick to detect changes in our product preference	BSR2	3.12	0.76
	My supplier is slow to detect fundamental shifts in the industry (e.g. competition, technology, regulation etc.)	BSR3	3.55	1.11
	My supplier periodically reviews the likely effect of changes in our business environment	BSR4	3.42	1.42
	My supplier and I periodically review our product development efforts to ensure that they are in line with what our customers want	BSR5	3.10	0.91
	When my supplier finds out something important about competitors, he is quick to alert us	BSR6	3.08	1.23
	My supplier disseminates information on customer satisfaction to me regularly	BSR7	3.11	1.01
Communication (Kim, Choi, & Skilton, 2015).	There is easy flow of information between us and our suppliers	COMM1	3.26	0.78
	We interact frequently with our suppliers	COMM2	3.19	0.65
	Our suppliers are prompt in updating us with latest productions all the time	COMM3	2.27	1.11
	We get frequent messages from our suppliers through social media platforms all the time	COMM4	3.36	1.63
	In situation where we do not understand something, we are able to get our suppliers explain to us within the shortest possible time	COMM5	3.38	1.54
Commitment to the Relationship (Anderson & Weitz, 992).	We defend this supplier when outsiders criticize the company	CMR1	3.13	0.98
	We are continually on the lookout for another supplier to replace or add to our current supplier	CMR2	2.23	0.76
	If another supplier offer us better incentive or support, we would most certainly engage them, even if it means dropping the current supplier	CMR3	2.11	0.62
	We are patient with this supplier when they make mistakes that cause us trouble	CMR 4	3.42	1.17
	We are willing to dedicate whatever people and resources it takes to grow sales for this supplier	CMR5	3.33	1.32
Trust: Credibility (Wilson 1995)	My supplier has been frank in dealing with me/us	TCR1	3.17	0.91
	The promises made by my supplier are reliable	TCR2	2.34	1.01
	My supplier is knowledgeable regarding his/her products	TCR3	3.16	1.23
	My supplier is open in dealing with me/us	TCR4	3.09	1.44

	My supplier does not make false claims	TCR5	2.19	1.07
	I can talk freely with my supplier about the difficulties my business is encountering and know that he will listen	TCR6	3.37	0.75
	My supplier and I do only talk about commercial issues	TCR7	3.39	0.87
	I am sure that my supplier will always make me his best offer	TCR8	3.07	1.12
	I feel very at ease in my relationship with my supplier	TCR9	3.21	0.76
	If I could no longer work with my supplier, I would feel that I have lost a personal relationship	TCR10	3.11	0.87
	The idea of working with my supplier strengthens me	TCR11	2.88	0.89
Trust: Benevolence (Ganesan 1994)	My supplier has made sacrifices for us in the past	TBN 1	2.66	0.88
	My supplier cares for us and at times incur some cost	TBN 2	3.31	1.1
	In times of shortages, my supplier has gone out on a limb for us	TBN 3	2.69	0.78
	My supplier is like a friend	TBN 4	2.72	0.66
	I feel my supplier has been on my side	TBN 5	3.38	0.65
	Supplier orientation has improved our service quality	BPERF1	2.98	0.64
Business Performance	Supplier orientation has enhanced customer satisfaction	BPERF2	3.04	1.67
	The supplier-wholesaler relation has enhanced my gross profit margin	BPERF3	3.32	1.45
	The supplier-wholesaler relation has led to employee satisfaction	BPERF4	2.58	1.34
	The supplier-wholesaler relation has accrued my market share	BPERF5	3.14	0.97
	Supplier orientation has reduced our employee turnover rate	BPERF6	2.01	0.65
	Supplier orientation is sales booster	BPERF7	2.89	1.01

The 40 items presented in Table 5.2 represent the three (3) main constructs illustrated in the conceptual framework presented in an earlier chapter of this study. These constructs are Supplier Orientation (SO), Trust (T) and Business Performance (BP). However, it must be noted that out of these 3 major constructs, the construct of supplier-orientation (SO) is decoupled into three (3) sub-variables representing the individual dimensions.

5.4 Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

The measurement scales were all extracted from literature and as a result of this, conducting a reliability and validity check to confirm the appropriateness of the constructs was an important step. Thus, as a first step to any structural equation modelling analysis (SEM), the study conducted a confirmatory factor analysis to ascertain whether all the measures were true indicators of the latent variables (supplier orientation, represented by four constructs; trust; and business performance) used in this study (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). In conducting the reliability and validity test, this study used Amos and the maximum likelihood estimation procedure to examine all the items in a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

In assessing model fit, the criteria commonly used in absolute fit are “chi-square (χ^2), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), root-mean-square residual (RMR) and Root-Mean-Square-Error of Approximation (RMSEA), normed fit index (NFI), comparative fit index (CFI) and the relative non-centrality index (RNI)”. The above listed “fit indexes were used to evaluate how well the measurement model fit the data collected, with each one having conventionally acceptable values of χ^2 (Normed Chi-square) of less than 3, RMSEA \leq 0.08, GFI \geq 0.90, NFI \geq 0.90 and CFI \geq 0.90” (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012).

With respect to validity and reliability, research scholars have indicated that in a situation where the chosen scales do not measure their intended construct, the specified theory must be modified before the structural model can be tested. Following Hair et al. (2010), three main criteria were used to assess the measurement model, (1) convergent validity; (2) Reliability; and (Discriminant validity).

Convergent validity of the measures was evaluated using the outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) (Schreiber, Nora, Stage, Barlow & King, 2006). With respect to the outer loadings, Koo, Chung and Kim (2015) opined that one approach to modifying a model would be through deletion of items that do not load well on their respective constructs. The initial results for the measurement model did not have a good model fit ($\chi^2/df = 3.24$; GFI = .882; NFI = .705; TLI = .668; CFI = .741; RMSEA = .092), hence, the model was subjected to some modifications (Bagozzi & Yi, 2012). Out of the 40 items, 14 (BSR6, COMM3, CMR2, CMR3, TCR2, TCR5, TCR11, TBN1, TBN3, TBN4, BPERF1, BPERF4, BPERF6 and BPERF7) were dropped in order to improve the measurement model's fitness. The plausible explanation for most of the business performance items dropping even though they were all adopted from previous studies could be as a result of issues regarding context as the respondents in the Ghanaian context do not think some of the statements are important to them. After eliminating the residual errors with high variances and low loadings from the model, 26 out of 40 items were left, which improved the model fit. As can be observed from Table 5.3, all the factor loadings exceeded the acceptable threshold value of 0.6 as recommended by Chin (1998). Hence, the loadings provided support for convergent validity (Hair et al., 2010). In addition, the AVEs were within the range of 0.66 and 0.76, which are above the minimum required cut off level of 0.50 recommended by Fornell and Lacker (1981), thus, demonstrating convergent validity for all the constructs.

Composite reliability (internal consistency) values which show the extent to which the indicators reflect the latent construct ranged between 0.76 and 0.96, exceeding the minimum required level of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). In sum, the values for AVE, composite reliability

(CR) as well as the factor loadings are above the acceptable satisfactory levels of ≥ 0.50 ; ≥ 0.70 ; and ≥ 0.60 respectively. Thus, confirming reliability and convergent validity (Fornell & Lacker, 1981) (see Table 5.3 below for the results of the measurement model).

Table 5.3: CFA Results for Final Measurement Model

Factor	Variable Codes	Factor Loadings	AVE	CR			
Buyer-Supplier Relationship	BSR1	0.81	0.76	0.96			
	BSR2	0.77					
	BSR3	0.68					
	BSR4	0.78					
	BSR5	0.73					
Communication	BSR7	0.76	0.67	0.89			
	COMM1	0.68					
	COMM2	0.65					
	COMM4	0.63					
	COMM5						
Commitment to the Relationship	CMR1	0.79	0.69	0.91			
	CMR 4	0.73					
	CMR5	0.61					
Trust: Credibility	TCR1	0.69	0.67	0.78			
	TCR3	0.6					
	TCR4	0.71					
	TCR6	0.63					
	TCR7	0.77					
	TCR8	0.68					
	TCR9	0.72					
	TCR10	0.64					
	Trust: Benevolence	TBN 2			0.63	0.68	0.76
		TBN 5			0.67		
Business Performance	BPERF2	0.67	0.66	0.86			
	BPERF3	0.72					
	BPERF5	0.81					

Note: $\chi^2/df = 1.396$, GFI= 0.956, CFI= 0.961, RMSEA= 0.045, PCLOSE= 0.892

5.5 Correlation Analysis

In addition to testing the reliability of the measured items, the study also conducted a correlation analysis using the discriminant validity test to verify if each construct was unique and captured different but theoretically connecting variables (Duarte & Raposo, 2010).

Fornell and Lacker (1981) recommend Average Variance Extracted (AVE) threshold value above 0.50. Table 5.4 presents the correlation analysis.

Table 5. 4: Discriminant Validity (Pearson Correlations)

Factors	BSR	COMM	CMR	T	BPERF
BSR	0.92				
COMM	0.74	0.79			
CMR	0.63	0.61	0.89		
T	0.62	0.54	0.71	0.68	
BPERF	0.59	0.51	0.65	0.59	0.69

Note: The square root of the average variance extracted (AVE) is in italics on the diagonal. Correlations are off-diagonal.

5.6 Structural Model

The structural equation modelling technique was chosen over regression analysis because interrelationships between latent constructs can be tested, and since that is the focus of the study, regression analysis was not a suitable alternative, hence the researcher’s choice. According to scholars such as Bagozzi and Yi (2012) and Byrne (2013), SEM is the most suitable analytical approach because it allows the “control of the measurement errors, tests multiple relationships simultaneously and also provides information on the degree of fit of the tested model”. The structural paths were estimated to test some hypothetical propositions based on the theorised model consisting of supplier orientation (buyer-seller relationship, communication, and commitment to relationship), trust and business performance. Specifically, the first four hypotheses addressed the direct relationships between buyer-seller relationship (H1), communication (H2), and commitment to relationship (H3) and the dependent variable business performance.

Table 5.5: Structural Model Assessment Results- Direct Paths (H1-H4)

Hypothesis	Hypothesised Relationship	β Estimate	T- Value	P- Value	Outcome
H1	Buyer-Seller relationship ----->Business Performance	0.78	9.87	***	Supported
H2	Commitment to relationship ----->Business Performance	0.71	8.66	***	Supported
H3	Communication ----->Business Performance	0.69	4.21	0.001	Supported

Note: $\chi^2/df = 1.26$, GFI= 0.98, CFI= 0.98, NFI= 0.94, TLI= 0.95, RMSEA= 0.04

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .05$ * $p < .01$

As indicated in Table 5.5, the findings reveal that among the individual constructs, the relationship between buyer-seller and Business performance was the most significant ($\beta=0.78$, t-value= 9.87, $p < .001$). The next significant relationships were between commitment to relationship and business performance ($\beta=0.71$, t-value= 8.66, $p < .001$) as well as communication and business performance ($\beta=0.69$, t-value= 4.21, $p < .01$). Thus, H1, H2, and H3 were all supported in this study.

5.7 Confirmatory Analysis of Direct relationship

The study further modelled one second-order construct namely, supplier orientation, representing three dimensions (buyer-seller relationship, communication, and commitment to relationship) to determine their collective impact on business performance. The findings reveal a statistically significant relationship between supplier orientation and business performance ($\beta = 0.86$, t-value= 10.62, $p < 0.01$). For this study, the R^2 value for supplier orientation on business performance was 23%. The R^2 value indicates that supplier orientation could have a moderate predictive capacity in determining business performance.

Table 5.6: Structural Model Assessment Results- Direct Paths (H1-H4)

Hypothesis	Hypothesised Relationship	β Estimate	T- Value	P- Value	Outcome
	Supplier Orientation ----->Business Performance	0.86	10.63	***	Supported

Note: $R^2 = 0.23$, $X^2/df = 1.26$, GFI= 0.98, CFI= 0.98, NFI= 0.94, TLI= 0.95, RMSEA= 0.04

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .05$ * $p < .01$

5.8 Validation Test of the Structural Model

Most notably, some research scholars (Vieira, 2011; Blunch, 2008) have outlined some key issues of interest that need to be considered when assessing the structural model: “(i) whether the directions of the association between the constructs are the same as hypothesised (by looking at the signs of the path coefficients), (ii) the strength of the hypothesised paths represented by the estimated parameters should be at least significant (i.e., the t-values are expected to be greater than or equal to 1.96) as well as (iii) the amount of variance in the dependent variables explained by the independent variables which is reflected by the squared multiple correlations (R^2) for the regression equations”.

The results of this current research reveal a chi-square value of 17.67 and degree of freedom value of 14 (normed chi-square value: $X^2/df = 1.26$); GFI= 0.98. With regard to the incremental fit measures, CFI value was 0.98. The results indicate that the model appears to have established an acceptable fit.

5.9 Moderation Test

This study also tested the moderating role of trust on the supplier orientation and business performance relationship. It is worth noting that all the four dimensions of supplier

orientation were combined to make supplier orientation a second-order construct (Aiken, West & Reno, 1991). The theoretical argument is that when conducting a moderation test the interaction term should not only change the direction or the strength of the relationship between the constructs but should also be a statistically significant predictor (Sarstedt et al., 2011). Thus, this research followed Ping's (1995) suggestion for creating product terms for the latent variables through the multiplication approach. To avoid multicollinearity issues associated with interactive terms, all the items involved in creating the interaction terms were standardised as proposed by Ping (1995). Table 5.6 displays the results of the moderation test. As indicated in the results in Table 5.6, the study found support for hypothesis 4, since trust significantly moderated the relationship between supplier orientation and business performance (Supplier Orientation_X_Trust→ Business Performance) ($\beta= 0.99$. t-value = 4.86, $p < 0.001$).

Table 5. 7: Results of Moderation Test

Relationship	β Estimate	T-Value	P-Value
Buyer-Seller relationship ----->Supplier Orientation	0.58	5.35	***
Commitment to relationship ----->Supplier Orientation	0.49	4.56	***
Communication ----->Supplier Orientation	0.38	3.39	***
Supplier Orientation ----->Business Performance	0.84	2.35	***
Supplier Orientation _x_ Trust----->Business Performance	0.99	4.32	***
Trust ----->Business Performance	0.03	3.12	***

CMIN (X²)= 60.42 DF= 24 X²/df= 2.52 RFI= 0.91 TLI= 0.94, CFI= 0.96 RMSEA= 0.07

5.10 Discussion of Findings

5.10.1 The relationship between SO dimensions and BP

The study sought to test the relationship between SO dimensions and BP. Three (3) dimensions of SO were conceptualised in this study; buyer-seller relationship, communication and commitment. After the analysis of data, it was found that in the context of the study, all three (3) variables had a positive and significant relationship with BP. Amongst these three variables, buyer-seller relationship had the most significant effect on BP, suggesting that building a better relationship with suppliers is likely to enable a firm to perform better. Thus, this finding suggests that firms that are able to develop a mutually satisfying relationship with their suppliers are likely to perform better. This was confirmed by the statistical results obtained: ($\beta = 0.78$, $t\text{-value} = 9.87$, $P < 0.001$), providing support for Hypothesis 1. Apart from buyer-seller relationship, commitment to relationship ($\beta = 0.71$, $t\text{-value} = 8.66$, $P < 0.001$) and communication ($\beta = 0.69$, $t\text{-value} = 4.21$) also had significant impact on the dependent variable BP, supporting hypothesis 2 and 3. This finding suggests that those mobile phones dealers who are committed to the relationship built with their suppliers and constantly communicate with them are more likely to perform better or achieve good performance results. The means in table 5.2 further confirm that the issues of buyer-seller relationship, commitment to relations and communication are critical to firm success.

These findings are consistent with the findings of other scholars such as Anderson and Weitz (1992), Viio and Grönroos (2016) and Kim, Choi, and Skilton (2015) who aver that firms who demonstrate strong buyer-seller relationship, better commitment and are involved in regular communication with suppliers perform better, especially in the midst of a competitive environment.

Whipple, Wiedmer and Boyer (2015) advised firms to pay critical attention when building strong relationships with their suppliers, so that it does not weaken their firm performance. Other scholars such as Najib, Kartini, Suryana, and Sari (2017); Aboelmaged (2018); Bettinazzi and Zollo (2017) affirm that firms that practice or adopt an SO mindset equip themselves to perform better than those who do not. SO has been viewed as a form of resource that when deployed allows firms to perform better (Jajja, Kannan, Brah, & Hassan, 2017). The findings of this research thus lend itself to the confirmation of prior existing empirical studies which vouch for SO as a key to increased competitive advantage amongst firms and for that matter telecommunication firms.

In addition, this study further examined the relationship between the second-order construct namely, SO representing a combination of the three dimensions (of buyer-seller relationship, commitment to relations and communication) to determine its collective impact on BP. The findings reveal a statistically significant relationship between SO and BP ($\beta= 0.86$, $t\text{-value}= 10.63$), which is consistent with the works of Ağan, Kuzey, Acar, and Açıkgöz (2016); Bettinazzi and Zollo (2017) and Tajeddini and Ratten (2017).

5.10.2 Moderating role of Trust on SO and BP

The second objective and fourth hypothesis of the study sought to determine whether trust moderates the relationship between SO and BP. The results from the analysis reveal that Trust moderated the relationship between SO and BP ($\beta= 0.99$, $t\text{-value} = 4.86$, $p < 0.001$). This finding also implies that firms that pay more attention to the development and implementation of trust in their relationship with their suppliers are likely to perform better in their business activities. The finding that Trust moderates the relationship between SO

and BP also strengthens the need for the mobile phone dealers to pay attention to trust issues in building a relationship with their suppliers.

This finding further supports prior studies which speculate the role that Trust can play in enhancing firm performance. For instance, Micheels and Gow (2011) found that the practice of trust moderates the nexus between market orientation, value discipline clarity, and firm performance. Similarly, Gualandris and Kalchschmidt (2016) found that the buyer-supplier trust does have a positive influence in firm performance. This finding was further highlighted by Douglas and Zivnuska (2008) who also discovered that trust in leaders and relationships does influence the better performance and activities of firms. Thus, previous studies have confirmed the role that trust plays as a moderator in enhancing the performance of firms. The results of this research conform and prove that this assertion is true.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

6.0 Chapter Overview

The previous chapter examined and discussed the findings of the study obtained after a thorough process of data analysis in the earlier chapter. Having discussed the findings of the study, this chapter presents a summary, conclusion and recommendations based on the findings. This chapter is the final chapter of the thesis and brings to a close this research effort on supplier orientation and business performance.

6.1 Research Summary and Major Findings

This research was anchored on the principal goal of examining the impact of supplier orientation dimensions on business performance. The study, based on a review of extant literature, discovered that scholars had conceptualised supplier orientation differently, and as such, there was a lacking coherence with regard to what could be regarded as being supplier oriented. It was also revealed that in studies on supplier orientation, researchers often chose a few of the elements of supplier orientation. The study identified three key characteristics of supplier-oriented firm: buyer-seller relationship, commitment to relationship and communication. These constructs have been largely ignored by researchers in the composite measure of supplier orientation over the years. This glaring gap paved the way for further examination of the concept of supplier orientation in an attempt to identify the individual and aggregate impact of the six supplier orientation dimensions on business performance.

In order to gain further appreciation, the study then proceeded to discuss the theoretical pillars, paying attention to both the Resource Based View (RBV) and the social exchange Theory (SET). These two theories were discussed in relation to how supplier orientation could become a valuable, rare and inimitable resource to firms, whilst engaging in a fruitful exchange. After a discussion on the theoretical framework for the study, a comprehensive literature review ensued, with discussions on supplier orientation, the dimensions of SO, Trust and BP. The review resulted in the development of a conceptual framework to measure the impact of SO on BP, influenced by Trust as the moderating variables. Based on these theorisations, the first objective of the study sought to identify the impact of SO dimensions on export performance which yielded 3 hypotheses, the second sought to identify the moderating role of trust on the relationship between SO and BP. After introducing the issues underpinning this thesis and extensively reviewing literature, the context of the study was examined. The Telecommunication industry in Ghana was discussed, with particular attention paid to Huawei and Tecno. This was the focal context of the study: to examine how SO affected BP of Huawei and Tecno within a developing economy such as Ghana.

A questionnaire was developed based on existing scales, and the methodology for the study was designed to provide a sound basis for the empirical conduct of this thesis. An explanatory research design, survey strategy and quantitative methodology were used for this study. The research adopted a positivist paradigm in view of the need to statistically test the impact and relationship of SO on other prescribed variables in the research framework. A sample of three hundred and five (305) mobile phone dealers was selected for this study. The data analysis technique chosen for this study was Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) with Amos. The descriptive statistics and the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were presented, after which the Structural model results were presented, as well as moderation

analysis which were conducted to test the hypothesis of the study. From the findings, a positive relationship was found between the dimensions of SO and business performance with buyer-seller relationship emerging as having the strongest effect. This was followed by commitment to relationship and then communication. Additionally, Trust was found to moderate the relationship between SO and BP.

6.2 Contributions and Implications of the Research

The study has made some contributions in the domain of SO and BP literature. Firstly, the study contributes to literature on SO by assessing the application of SO in three dimensions: buyer-seller relationship, commitment to relationship and communication. Out of these three dimensions, the study found that buyer-seller relationship dimension of SO strongly predicted BP, followed by commitment to relationship, and then communication as far as the Ghanaian context is concerned, with focus on the telecommunication industry. This suggests that enhancing the relationship between a buyer and seller, being committed to a relationship and having constant communication are likely to enable a firm to perform better than those who ignore these factors.

The study also used two theories in explaining how SO and the intervening variables of trust impact on BP. The integration of the RBV and the SET were applied to test how SO and Trust impact on BP. The use of these two theories enabled the researcher to highlight how SO could be successful as a firm's resource, making theoretical contribution to literature. By proving that the development of SO is a resource that firms can leverage on to achieve greater performance, the study has also shown that successful exchanges can influence firms' activities significantly, hence the need to focus more on leveraging on resources and building beneficial exchange relationships.

The study also contributed to literature from a developing country perspective, specifically an African and Ghanaian context. The study also contributed a research framework that can be modified and applied in other contexts to test the veracity of results obtained and how they may change/remain the same in other contexts.

6.3 Conclusions and Study Limitations

This research on SO, Trust and BP concludes on the notion that SO enhances the possibility of the success of a firm. The specific conclusion of this research is that firms that practice higher degrees of communication, buyer-seller relationship and commitment to relationships are likely to perform better. The study found that these three dimensions of SO are critical for better business performance amongst telecommunication firms in developing economy setting.

The study also concludes that trust needs to be inculcated amongst mobile phone dealers and their suppliers in Ghana. The findings of the study pointed out that trust, when harnessed, can contribute positively and significantly to business performance.

In terms of limitations of the study, the researcher selected sample from only the mobile phone dealers in Ghana, being Huawei and Tecno. The study did not include other sectors like the services. Furthermore, the study chose a quantitative approach due to the confirmatory nature of the study. A qualitative or mixed methods approach could have helped this research. These limitations notwithstanding, due diligence was followed through to ensure that the study produced the best possible outcome.

6.4 Recommendation

The findings of the study have resulted in the need to make a number of recommendations. The study established three major dimensions of supplier orientation (buyer-seller relationship, commitment and communication) that are very effective in influencing business performance. With the competition becoming more intense and keen each day among mobile phone dealers, it is recommended that as they intensify and invest heavily in their marketing activities, it becomes equally vital for them to critically build strong relationships with suppliers, be committed in their business dealings and ensure effective communication with their suppliers.

It is also recommended that firms invest in the development of trust which will enable them outperform their competitors. Even though most firms perform basic marketing functions such as product, pricing, advertising, the need to build trust among buyers and sellers need to be given critical attention.

To management and owners within both manufacturing and service sectors, there is the need to constantly embark on training programmes to develop and sharpen their skills and ability of employees to successfully build and nurture strong and long-term relationships with their suppliers and customers. This is a strategic move that can lead to the increase in the performance of firms, for which mobile phone operators are not an exception.

6.5 Further Studies

Based on the findings of the study, there are rich grounds for future researchers to consider as far as the concept of supplier orientation is concerned. Firstly, it must be a priority for future researchers to reconsider the variable SO and develop a consistent and comprehensive

scale that can measure the concept across economic borders: developed, emerging and developing economies.

SO is an important construct that has the potential to provide ground breaking capabilities and resources for firms, and as such researchers must focus on how to unify and settle on an acceptable conceptualisation of SO, perhaps extending beyond the three (3) dimensions proposed and tested in this thesis and covering other variables which may not have been considered.

Future researchers can also explore the use of other theories such as the resource-advantage theory or the signalling theory to investigate how SO and Trust influence and contribute to enhanced BP. The need for further theoretical examinations is crucial given the fact that only three of the theorised SO dimensions were explained in this thesis.

Again, future researchers are advised to consider multiple contexts in order to enrich comparative ability; this study only considered the developing economy setting. Future studies can consider using developed countries in Europe or America, as well as from emerging economies such as India or Brazil. The collection of such data can facilitate multi-group analysis which could further enrich the domain of SO with its findings. In addition to the above, future research could be directed at the other sectors.

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APPENDIX: QUESTIONNAIRE

UNIVERSITY OF GHANA BUSINESS SCHOOL DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Examining the Effect of Supplier Orientation on Business Performance: The Moderating Role of Trust

The researcher is a final year MPhil student at the University of Ghana Business School (UGBS). He seeks to examine the effect of supplier orientation on business performance while assessing the moderating role of trust on the model. This is in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the award of Master of Philosophy degree in Marketing. Hence, the information provided will be solely used for the purpose of research and confidentiality is assured. In this regard, kindly take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire.

Section A: Demographic Information of Respondents

1. Age: 18-30 [] 31-40 [] 41-50 [] above 50 []
2. Gender: Male [] Female []
3. Marital Status: Single [] Married [] Separated [] Divorced [] Widowed []
4. Educational level: Primary [] High School [] Graduate [] Post graduate []
5. Nationality: National [] International []

SECTION B:

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. Tick the appropriate number on the scale, with 1= Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly agree.

Scale Item Codes	Buyer- Seller Relationship	SD	D	N	A	SA
		1	2	3	4	5
BSR1	In this business, we meet with suppliers regularly to find out what product or services are in the offing as well as those that will be needed in future					
BSR2	My supplier is quick to detect changes in our product preference					
BSR3	My supplier is slow to detect fundamental shifts in the industry (e.g. competition, technology, regulation etc.)					
BSR4	My supplier periodically review the likely effect of changes in our business environment					
BSR5	My supplier and I periodically review our product development efforts to ensure that they are in line with what our customers want					

BSR6	When my supplier finds out something important about competitors, he is quick to alert us					
BSR7	My supplier disseminates information on customer satisfaction to me regularly					
	Communication	SD 1	D 2	N 3	A 4	SA 5
COMM1	There is easy flow of information between us and our suppliers					
COMM2	We interact frequently with our suppliers					
COMM3	Our suppliers are prompt in updating us with latest productions all the time					
COMM4	We get frequent messages from our suppliers through social media platforms all the time					
COMM5	In situation where we do not understand something we are able to get our suppliers explain to us within the shortest possible time					
	Commitment to the Relationship	SD 1	D 2	N 3	A 4	SA 5
CMR1	We defend this supplier when outsiders criticize the company					
CMR2	We are continually on the lookout for another supplier to replace or add to our current supplier					
CMR3	If another supplier offer us better incentive or support, we would most certainly engage them, even if it means dropping the current supplier					
CMR4	We are patient with this supplier when they make mistakes that cause us trouble					
CMR5	We are willing to dedicate whatever people and resources it takes to grow sales for this supplier					
	Trust-Credibility	SD 1	D 2	N 3	A 4	SA 5
TCR1	My supplier has been frank in dealing with me/us					
TCR2	The promises made by my supplier are reliable					
TCR3	My supplier is knowledgeable regarding his/her products					
TCR4	My supplier is open in dealing with me/us					
TCR5	My supplier does not make false claims					
TCR6	I can talk freely with my supplier about the difficulties my business is encountering and know that he will listen					
TCR7	My supplier and I do only talk about commercial issues					
TCR8	I am sure that my supplier will always make me his best offer					

TCR9	I feel very at ease in my relationship with my supplier					
TCR10	If I could no longer work with my supplier, I would feel that I have lost a personal relationship					
TCR11	The idea of working with my supplier strengthens me					
	Trust- Benevolence	SD	D	N	A	SA
		1	2	3	4	5
TBN1	My supplier has made sacrifices for us in the past					
TBN2	My supplier cares for us and at times incur some cost					
TBN3	In times of shortages, my supplier has gone out on a limb for us					
TBN4	My supplier is like a friend					
TBN5	I feel my supplier has been on my side					
	Business Performance	SD	D	N	A	SA
		1	2	3	4	5
BPERF1	Supplier orientation has enhanced customer satisfaction					
BPERF2	The supplier-wholesaler relations has enhanced my gross profit margin					
BPERF3	The supplier-wholesaler relations has led to employee satisfaction					
BPERF4	The supplier-wholesaler relations has accrued my market share					
BPERF5	Supplier orientation has reduced our employee turnover rate					
BPERF6	Supplier orientation is sales booster					
BPERF7	Supplier orientation has enhanced customer satisfaction					

Thank You!!!