

**SIMON DIEDONG DOMBO UNIVERSITY OF BUSINESS AND  
INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (SDD-UBIDS), WA**

**EFFECTS OF MARKET ORIENTATION ON SMES SUSTAINABILITY IN  
UPPER WEST REGION OF GHANA**

**PATRICK FOLITSE**

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**(PGO223822)**

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF MARKETING  
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## DECLARATION

### *Candidate's Declaration*

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree at this University or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name: Patrick Folitse

### *Supervisor's Declaration*

I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised following the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the SD Dombo, University of Business and Integrated Development Studies. (SDD-UBIDS)

Supervisor's Signature: ..... Date: .....

Name: Dr Isaac Akologo Gumah

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis work to the Almighty God who has seen me through the period of my studies in this great institution.

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effects of market orientation on the sustainability of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the Upper West Region of Ghana. Market orientation, defined as a strategic approach focused on understanding and responding to customer needs, is identified as a critical determinant of SME success. The research explores how market-oriented strategies enhance SMEs' adaptability, innovation, and competitiveness while addressing challenges such as resource constraints, limited access to market data, and socio-economic barriers. The study employs a positivist research philosophy and adopts a quantitative research design. The data were collected through the self-administration method from 91 SMEs in the Upper West Region using structured questionnaires. A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents, ensuring representation across various sectors. Statistical tools, including Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and Smart PLS is used in the data analysis, which reported a significant and positive relationship between innovation, market orientation and business performance of SMEs. Reliability and validity tests were conducted to ensure the robustness of the findings. Key findings reveal that market orientation significantly improves SME sustainability by fostering customer satisfaction and business resilience. However, its adoption is hindered by environmental and socio-economic factors unique to the region. The study emphasizes the need for tailored strategies that align with local conditions to overcome these barriers. This research provides actionable insights for policymakers, SME owners, and stakeholders to support sustainable business practices in resource-constrained environments. By highlighting the importance of market orientation, it offers a framework for enhancing SME competitiveness and long-term growth in the Upper West Region of Ghana.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>DECLARATION.....</b>	<b>I</b>
<b>DEDICATION.....</b>	<b>II</b>
<b>ABSTRACT.....</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>IV</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS .....</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>LIST OF TABLES .....</b>	<b>VIII</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>IX</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATION.....</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.0 Background of The Study .....	1
1.1 Problem statement.....	4
1.2 Purpose of the Study .....	7
1.3 Objectives of the Study.....	7
1.4 Research Questions .....	7
1.5 Significance of the Study .....	8
1.6 Organization of the Study .....	9
<b>CHAPTER TWO .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW .....</b>	<b>10</b>
2.0 Introduction.....	10
2.1 Conceptual Review .....	10
2.1.1 Market Orientation.....	10
2.1.2 The Concept of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprise (SME).....	11
2.1.3 Customer Orientation.....	13
2.1.4 Competitor Orientation .....	14

2.1.5 Inter-functional Orientation .....	15
2.1.6 Gaining Information .....	15
2.1.7 Business Innovativeness .....	16
2.1.8 Customers Satisfaction .....	18
2.1.9 Business Sustainability .....	20
2.2 Theoretical Review .....	22
2.2.1 Market Orientation Theory .....	22
2.2.2 Resource-Based View (RBV) theory.....	24
2.3 Empirical Review.....	26
2.3.1 The Effects of Market Orientation on Sustainability of SMEs.....	26
2.3.2 The challenges faced by SMEs in adopting a market orientation strategy .....	29
2.3.3 How SMEs can improve their sustainability through market orientation. ....	33
2.4 Conceptual Framework.....	37
<b>CHAPTER THREE .....</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>40</b>
3.0 Introduction.....	40
3.1 Research Design.....	40
3.2 Philosophical Underpinning.....	41
3.2.1 Positivist philosophy .....	41
3.3 Study Area .....	45
3.4 Population of the Study.....	45
3.5 Sampling .....	46
3.5.1 Sample Size: .....	46
3.5.2 Sample Techniques .....	46
3.5.3 Methods for Data Collection.....	47
3.6 Method of Data Analysis .....	48

3.7 Validity and Reliability .....	50
3.8 Ethical Considerations .....	51
<b>CHAPTER FOUR.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS .....</b>	<b>53</b>
4.0 Introduction.....	53
4.1 Demographic Data Respondents.....	53
4.2 Market Orientation.....	55
4.3 Innovation. ....	57
4.4 Performance .....	58
4.5 Structural Equation Model (Formal Analysis).....	62
4.5.1 Measurement Model .....	63
4.5.2 Internal Consistency Reliability.....	63
4.5.3 Indicator Reliability .....	64
4.5.4 Convergent Validity.....	64
4.5.5 Discriminant Validity .....	66
4.6 Structural Model .....	69
<b>CHAPTER FIVE .....</b>	<b>78</b>
<b>CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION .....</b>	<b>78</b>
5.0 Introduction.....	78
5.1 Conclusion .....	78
5.2 Recommendation .....	80
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>APPENDIX.....</b>	<b>100</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Market Orientation.....	55
Table 4.2 Innovation .....	57
Table 4.3 Performance .....	58
Table 4.4: Constructs Reliability and Validity .....	63
Table 4.5: Measurement Items, their R-Squares and VIF's.....	65
Table 4.6: Discriminant Validity using the HTMT and Fornell and Larcker's Techniques .....	67
Table 4.7: Discriminant Validity using Cross Loadings.....	69
Table 4.8: Model Fit .....	70
Table 4.9: Regression Estimates .....	74
Table 4.10: R-Squared .....	74

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 The Map of Upper West Region which is the study, Area.....	45
Figure 4.1: Distribution of Respondents' Demographics .....	53
Figure 4.2: Distribution of challenges in adopting market orientation strategies, perception of sustainability practice and challenges that SME's face in integrating sustainability practices. ....	62
Figure 4.3: Structural Equation Plot .....	72
Figure 4.4: Simple Slope Analysis plots of Gender on the relationships between MO, PF and IN.....	76
Figure 4.5: Simple Slope Analysis plot of Gender on the relationship between IN and PF.....	77

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATION**

AVE:	Average Variance Extracted
CFA:	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
CFI:	Comparative Fit Index
CR:	Composite Reliability
HTMT:	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio
IN:	Innovation
MO:	Market Orientation
PF:	Performance
RMSEA:	Root Mean Square Error of Approximation
SEM:	Structural Equation Model
TLI:	Tucker–Lewis Index

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Background of The Study

In recent decades, there has been a notable shift in the global business landscape towards market-oriented strategies, representing a pivotal approach for achieving sustainable growth and gaining competitive advantage. The viability of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), the backbone of many regional economies, depends critically on this change. The Upper West Region in recognition for their pivotal role in the economic development of nations, SMEs significantly contribute to employment generation, innovation, and overall economic growth (Acs & Preston, 1997; Wennekers & Thurik, 1999). Within the context of the Upper West Region, these SMEs are integral to the local economy, providing essential goods and services while fostering entrepreneurship and community development. Despite their crucial role, the sustainability of SMEs in this region is subject to various internal and external factors, with market orientation emerging as a particularly critical determinant.

Globally, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are essential for promoting innovation, creating jobs, and accelerating economic growth. The sustainability of SMEs has drawn more attention in recent years due to its inherent link to long-term economic performance as well as its effects on the environment. Adopting a market orientation focus on comprehending and satisfying consumer needs is one important factor that determines the longevity of SMEs (Gherghina et al., 2020).

A company approach known as "market orientation" focuses on finding sustainable and lucrative ways to satisfy customers' requirements and wants. Despite being significant drivers of economic expansion and development, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) face significant challenges in sustaining their operations. A

corporate concept known as "market orientation" prioritizes determining the wants and preferences of customers and satisfying those needs and desires with goods and services (Udriyah, et al., 2019).

There is ample evidence in the literature (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Narver & Slater, 1990) that market orientation has an influence on SMEs. Given that the majority of these studies concentrate on large corporations, there is an increasing need to investigate the complex consequences of market orientation, particularly in relation to SMEs that operate in areas with unique market and economic conditions (Jenkins & Varum, 2014). Recent studies (Fakhreddin, et al., 2021; Hernández-Linares, et al., 2021; Alhakimi, & Mahmoud, 2020) are certain that businesses should follow market orientation since it helps them to accomplish long-term competitive advantage. As a means of highlighting the significance of prioritizing the demands of the customer in operations and strategy, market orientation is understood as an organization's capability, special, and valuable resources that are difficult to duplicate (Mostafiz, et al., 2021; Polat & Mutlu, 2012).

Market orientation entails obtaining data on clients and rivals, evaluating that data, and applying it to develop goods and services that satisfy client requirements. Organizations must continuously adapt to changing client wants and market developments to be market-oriented. The ability of small and medium-sized businesses to continue operating over time is referred to as sustainability. Sustainability in all three areas financial, social, and environmental is included. SME operations are significantly hampered by a lack of resources, fierce rivalry, and legal restrictions.

Market orientation, defined as a strategic approach emphasizing a profound understanding of customer needs, competitors, and the overall market environment, involves aligning the organization's activities to meet these demands (Narver & Slater,

1990). This strategic orientation holds particular relevance for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) operating in dynamic and competitive environments, facilitating their ability to adapt swiftly to changing market conditions and evolving customer preferences (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). In the distinctive socio-economic and cultural dynamics of the Upper West Region, SMEs are required to be agile and responsive to market demands to ensure their sustainability.

While research on the effects of market orientation on SME sustainability has been conducted in various contexts, providing valuable insights into the relationship between market-oriented strategies and business performance (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Matsuno, Mentzer, & Özsomer, 2002), a noticeable gap exists in the literature regarding the specific challenges and opportunities faced by SMEs in the Upper West Region of Ghana. Understanding how market orientation influences the sustainability of SMEs within this specific geographical and cultural context is deemed essential for the formulation of targeted policies and strategies. These measures aim to enhance the competitiveness and resilience of SMEs in the Upper West Region, recognizing the need for context-specific approaches in addressing the unique challenges posed by the region's business environment.

The exploration of market orientation's impact on the sustainability of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) has emerged as a critical area of research in the field of business management. Market orientation is a strategic approach that emphasizes a firm's responsiveness to market needs, customer-centric practices, and its ability to adapt to dynamic market conditions (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). As SMEs constitute a vital segment of economies worldwide, understanding the nuanced relationship between market orientation and sustainability becomes particularly relevant.

Extensive literature has delved into the multifaceted dimensions of market orientation, often with a focus on its implications for SME performance. Notably, studies by Narver and Slater (1990) and Kohli and Jaworski (1990) have posited that a strong market orientation positively influences a firm's profitability and competitive advantage by fostering a keen understanding of customer needs and market dynamics. This customer-centric approach is argued to drive innovation, enhance product quality, and improve overall business performance (Narver & Slater, 1990; Sinkula, 1994). However, the literature also acknowledges challenges associated with implementing and sustaining market orientation, particularly for SMEs. Factors such as resource constraints, limited managerial expertise, and environmental uncertainties have been identified as potential barriers to the successful adoption of market-oriented strategies in smaller enterprises (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Slater & Narver, 1995). This dichotomy in findings underscores the need for context-specific investigations, considering the unique challenges and opportunities that SMEs face in different regions.

### **1.1 Problem statement**

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Ghana play a crucial role in the country's economic development, but they face significant challenges in achieving sustainability in a competitive environment. Despite their potential to drive economic growth and create employment opportunities, many SMEs in the region struggle to compete in the market and generate enough revenue to sustain their businesses. One potential factor contributing to this challenge is a lack of marketing orientation among SMEs in the region. Without a customer-focused approach to business, SMEs may struggle to meet the changing needs and preferences of their customers, identify new market opportunities, and develop innovative products and services.

The existing literature on the effects of market orientation on the sustainability of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) offers valuable insights into the potential benefits and challenges associated with adopting market-oriented strategies. While studies such as those by Narver and Slater (1990) and Kohli and Jaworski (1990) highlight the positive impact of market orientation on business profitability and competitive advantage, other research, including works by Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Slater and Narver (1995), underscores the impediments faced by SMEs in implementing and maintaining market-oriented approaches.

Despite these contributions to the broader understanding of market orientation, there is a significant gap in the literature concerning its application and consequences specifically in the context of the Upper West Region of Ghana. The Upper West Region, characterized by its unique economic structure and entrepreneurial landscape, presents an unexplored landscape for investigating the relationship between market orientation and SME sustainability.

The study addresses the gap and comprehend the intricacies of market orientation within the specific socio-economic and cultural context of the Upper West Region. While general findings from existing literature offer valuable insights, their applicability to this region remains uncertain due to the lack of empirical evidence from the area. The challenge is to discern how market orientation practices, which have shown varying degrees of success in other contexts, align with the specific challenges and opportunities faced by SMEs in the Upper West Region, Ghana. By conducting a region-specific analysis, the research aims to contribute nuanced findings that can inform not only academic discussions but also practical strategies for SMEs operating in this distinctive economic environment.

The existing literature on market orientation and SME sustainability is rich with insights. Scholars like Jaworski and Kohli (1993) have emphasized the significance of market intelligence, dissemination, and responsiveness in achieving a market-oriented approach. The positive relationship between market orientation and organizational performance has been reinforced by studies such as one conducted by Sinkula (1994), highlighting the importance of market information processing and organizational learning.

However, challenges associated with the adoption of market-oriented strategies for SMEs, as pointed out by Kohli and Jaworski (1990) and Slater and Narver (1995), include resource constraints, managerial expertise, and environmental uncertainties. These challenges may vary in their intensity based on the specific characteristics of the business environment.

The absence of empirical studies focusing on market orientation and SME sustainability leaves a crucial knowledge gap. The region's distinctive economic landscape, cultural influences, and government policies may introduce unique factors that influence the dynamics between market orientation and SME success. To comprehensively address these regional intricacies, it is imperative to conduct a focused investigation that aligns with the specific challenges and opportunities prevalent in the Upper West Region.

In the context of the Upper West Region of Ghana, characterized by its predominantly agrarian economy and a growing entrepreneurial spirit, there is a paucity of research on how market orientation influences the sustainability of SMEs. This region-specific context may introduce unique variables, such as cultural influences, information access, and the role of government policies, that can significantly impact the dynamics between market orientation and SME sustainability.

This study endeavors to fill the existing gap in the literature by conducting a thorough investigation into the effect of market orientation on the sustainability of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the Upper West Region, Ghana. By expanding upon the foundations laid by prior research and considering the specific challenges and opportunities inherent in this region, the study aims to offer insights that can contribute to both academic discourse and the formulation of practical strategies to enhance the long-term viability of SMEs in this unique economic context.

### **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of market orientation on the sustainability of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the unique context of the Upper West Region, Ghana.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

1. To examine the effects of market orientation on the performance of SMEs in Upper West.
2. To identify the challenges faced by SMEs in adopting a market orientation strategy in Upper West.
3. To examine how SMEs in Upper West can improve their sustainability through market orientation.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

1. What is the effect of market orientation on performance of SMEs?
2. What are the challenges influencing market orientation and sustainability among SMEs in Upper West?
3. How can SMEs in Upper West improve their market orientation to enhance their sustainability?

## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study lies in its potential to provide tailored insights into the relationship between market orientation and the sustainability of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in the distinctive setting of the Upper West Region, Ghana. By addressing the identified research objectives and hypotheses, this study seeks to contribute to both academic scholarship and practical implications for businesses and policymakers. First and foremost, the findings of this research will advance our understanding of the specific impact of market orientation on SME sustainability in the Upper West Region, offering empirical evidence that is currently lacking in the literature. This nuanced understanding is critical for SMEs seeking to navigate the challenges of this region and for scholars aiming to enrich the broader discourse on market orientation in diverse economic contexts.

Moreover, the identification and analysis of challenges faced by SMEs in adopting market orientation strategies in the Upper West Region hold practical significance. Recognizing these challenges will enable businesses to develop targeted strategies to overcome obstacles unique to the region, enhancing the effectiveness of market-oriented practices. This, in turn, can contribute to the sustainability of SMEs, thereby fostering economic growth and resilience in the Upper West Region.

The study's recommendations, grounded in empirical evidence, will provide actionable insights for SMEs in the Upper West Region. Business leaders can leverage these recommendations to refine their market orientation strategies, potentially leading to improved sustainability. Policymakers can benefit from understanding the specific needs of SMEs in the region, informing the development of policies that create an environment conducive to the adoption and success of market-oriented approaches.

In summary, the significance of this study extends beyond academic curiosity. Its outcomes have the potential to inform strategic decision-making for SMEs in the Upper West Region, offering a pathway to enhance their sustainability and contribute to the economic development of the region. Furthermore, the study contributes to the broader literature on market orientation by enriching our understanding of its dynamics in a unique and underexplored business environment.

### **1.6 Organization of the Study**

The study is organized into five chapters. Chapter one presents the background that comprises general knowledge linked to the subject matter. The objectives of the study, problem statement, research questions, definition of terms and significance of the study are also provided in this chapter. In chapter two, a literature review is carried out to cover relevant theories, concepts and empirical works that are significant to the study. Chapter three presents the methodology that comprises the method of data analysis, data source, target population as well as a data collection tool. The results and discussions are presented in chapter four. Chapter five presents a summary, conclusions and recommendations of the study, with suggested areas for further research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

In chapter two, scholarly papers were examined to assess the relationship between market orientation and the sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This analysis was conducted based on the themes derived from the research goals. The literature examined the concept of market orientation, various models of market orientation, the role of innovation, and the importance of company sustainability. As a critical component of this study, this review aims to examine the current state of knowledge, identify gaps in the literature, and offer insights for further investigation.

#### **2.1 Conceptual Review**

##### **2.1.1 Market Orientation**

Market orientation is a strategic business approach that revolves around understanding and fulfilling the needs and preferences of customers. Organizations embracing market orientation prioritize the collection and analysis of market information, allowing them to anticipate customer demands and tailor their products, services, and strategies accordingly (U-Tantada & Yolles, 2020). This customer-centric approach emphasizes the establishment of long-term relationships with customers, the delivery of superior value, and the continuous improvement of offerings based on market feedback (Nuseir & Aljumah, 2022).

At the core of market orientation lie various activities aimed at gaining insights into the market landscape. These activities include comprehensive market research to understand consumer behavior, preferences, and trends. Through customer

segmentation, businesses identify distinct groups of customers with specific needs and preferences, allowing for targeted marketing efforts and product customization (D'souza et al., 2022). Additionally, competitor analysis enables organizations to assess market dynamics, identify potential threats and opportunities, and refine their competitive strategies accordingly (Baker & Sinkula, 2009).

Moreover, market orientation encompasses product development initiatives geared towards addressing identified customer needs and preferences. By aligning product features and attributes with customer desires, organizations can enhance product relevance and appeal in the marketplace (Nuseir & Aljumah, 2022). Pricing strategies are another critical component of market orientation, with businesses carefully setting prices based on market demand, competitive positioning, and perceived customer value (Samanta et al., 2020). Furthermore, promotional efforts play a key role in communicating product benefits and value propositions to target audiences, thereby stimulating demand and fostering brand loyalty (Dubihlela & Dhurup, 2014).

Businesses that exhibit a strong market orientation are inherently more responsive to market changes, competitive pressures, and evolving consumer trends (Asheq et al., 2019). By continuously monitoring and adapting to shifts in customer preferences and market dynamics, these organizations enhance their competitiveness and sustainability in the marketplace. Moreover, a robust market orientation fosters a customer-centric culture within the organization, aligning all functions and processes towards the singular goal of delivering superior customer value (Asad et al., 2020).

### **2.1.2 The Concept of Small and Medium-Scale Enterprise (SME)**

Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs) represent a vital segment of the business landscape, distinguished by their modest size, operational flexibility, and

typically leaner workforce compared to large corporations(Jabeen & Mahmood, 2015). These enterprises serve as pivotal engines of economic growth, contributing significantly to job creation, fostering innovation, and aiding in poverty reduction efforts across diverse global contexts. While the precise definition of SMEs may vary from one country to another, they are generally classified based on criteria such as the number of employees, annual turnover, or asset value. SMEs encompass a wide array of businesses spanning multiple sectors, including manufacturing, services, agriculture, and technology startups, thereby reflecting their diverse and dynamic nature (U-Tantada & Yolles, 2020).

Despite their importance, SMEs encounter a host of challenges that impede their growth and sustainability. One notable challenge is the limited access to finance, which inhibits their ability to invest in expansion, research and development, and innovation initiatives. Additionally, SMEs often face stiff competition in the marketplace, particularly from larger corporations with greater financial resources and established market presence. Moreover, regulatory burdens pose significant hurdles for SMEs, as compliance with complex regulations can be time-consuming and resource-intensive, diverting their focus away from core business activities(Amegbe et al., 2017).

Furthermore, SMEs may grapple with management capacity issues, including limited access to skilled talent and managerial expertise, which can hinder their ability to navigate competitive markets and seize growth opportunities (Wahyuni & Sara, 2020).

In light of these challenges, governments, policymakers, and industry stakeholders recognize the importance of supporting SMEs to unlock their full potential as drivers of economic development. Initiatives aimed at enhancing access to finance, such as microfinance programs, venture capital funding, and targeted loan schemes, can

help alleviate financial constraints and facilitate SME growth (Amegbe et al., 2017).

Additionally, measures to improve market access and competitiveness, such as providing training and capacity-building support, fostering innovation ecosystems, and streamlining regulatory processes, are essential for bolstering SME resilience and competitiveness in the global marketplace (Ullah & Danish, 2020).

In summary, SMEs play a crucial role in fostering economic development, job creation, and innovation, making them indispensable contributors to sustainable growth and poverty reduction efforts worldwide. While SMEs face myriad challenges, concerted efforts to address these challenges through targeted interventions and supportive policies can unlock their full potential and drive inclusive economic prosperity.

### **2.1.3 Customer Orientation**

Customer orientation refers to the cultural practice of prioritising the interests of customers and necessitates a comprehensive comprehension of client requirements in order to provide goods or services of exceptional value (Fader, 2020). Market-oriented businesses use various strategies to enhance value and advantages for customers, particularly in terms of cost reductions and the utilisation of their services. This approach enables businesses to gain a durable competitive edge (Ismail, 2023). Businesses consistently assess these options to see how they may have the most significant impact and provide enduring value for existing and prospective consumers. Hence, in order to attain optimal performance and sustain long-term capacity, it is essential for organisations to prioritise market orientation, which fosters a mutually advantageous connection with customers. Businesses should strive to gather precise and reliable consumer information to effectively cater to the requirements and desires of their target audience.

Customer orientation is widely regarded as a strategic approach used by firms to effectively provide desired value to their customers (Morales Mediano & Ruiz-Alba, 2020). The primary objective of customer orientation is to establish a strong basis for acquiring information about existing and potential clients, which can then be used to inform strategic decision-making. This approach aims to create enhanced value for the customer base by leveraging sufficient customer-provided information (Arslanagic-Kalajdzic et al., 2020). Kühl et al. (2020) posited that customer orientation refers to the extent to which a company collects and applies consumer information inside its operations and by its business unit.

The management literature and studies in strategic management consistently emphasize the pivotal role of customer orientation in business operations (Eggert, Ulaga & Gehring, 2020). It is inaccurate to claim that consumers are the only reason for a business's existence. However, it is crucial for management to prioritise information that will provide value to customers. Customer orientation should not be overlooked, since it plays a crucial role in providing value to customers.

#### **2.1.4 Competitor Orientation**

In order for organisations to maintain a competitive edge, it is essential for them to possess knowledge about their rivals' shortcomings, strengths, skills, and actions. Collecting information about rivals enables the company to strategically adjust its offerings in order to ensure the long-term existence of the organisation (Chatzoudes et al., 2022). Competitor orientation, a component of market orientation, is seen as an organisational approach aimed at fostering a business's efforts to enhance the quality of the items it offers to clients. It is crucial to understand that rivals will not remain indifferent but rather compete for the same set of clients. Businesses must actively pursue information on their rivals in order to enhance their service offering.

The purpose of competitor orientation is to establish a solid knowledge base about present and prospective competitors in order to inform strategic decision-making. These rivals are seen as firms that provide replacement products that fulfil the same client needs (Eibe Sørensen, 2009). The business's present and future rivals may be found in organisations that own either unique or non-unique production technology platforms. There is a need to get a deep understanding of the actions taken by rivals in order to influence the firm's operations.

### **2.1.5 Inter-functional Orientation**

Inter-functional orientation refers to the need for all departments of a corporation to effectively collaborate and synchronise their activities across all aspects of the business operations. Inter-functional orientation refers to the strategic alignment of a firm's resources with the goal of enhancing customer perception and achieving superior performance (Vaikunthavasan, 2021).

Market orientation acknowledges that all departments and workers understand the importance of employees' attitude towards both internal and external customers. The coordinated integration of resources is closely linked to the customer and competitor, since it enhances the customer experience across departments (Mathafena & Msimango-Galawe, 2023). Hence, it is important to synchronise the operations related to the daily administration of the company in order to fully use the firm's potential and optimise its performance.

### **2.1.6 Gaining Information**

Researchers have emphasized the crucial role of market intelligence in facilitating the achievement of strategic objectives. The primary motivations for enterprises to use market information are rooted in rivalry, client requests, and ambiguity in requirements (Al-Adwan et al., 2022). An effective strategy for managing

the ever-changing business environment is for businesses to gather and use market information (Hajli et al., 2020). Knowledge-based information is acquired by employees via the adoption of new skills and particular technical expertise. This is facilitated by their everyday interactions with clients, as emphasized by Chowdhury et al. (2022).

One effective method of adapting in business practice is to get a certain degree of intelligence to stay up-to-date with technology advancements by using information systems via both official and informal channels (Zafar, 2020). Small firms often forgo conventional market research but instead rely on collected knowledge to inform their company strategies (Carson, O'Connor & Simmons, 2020). Notably, huge technical organisations possess valuable insights on client preferences and current industry trends. Consequently, SMEs are urged to acquire information in order to improve their development and progress.

### **2.1.7 Business Innovativeness**

Innovation is crucial for enhancing the performance and consumer satisfaction of a company unit. The objective of introducing innovation into the company is to enhance the performance and competitiveness of the business (Farida & Setiawan, 2022; Fitriatia et al., 2020; Sumiati, 2020). An innovation might manifest as the introduction of novel products, advanced manufacturing technologies, or fresh strategies pertaining to staff who were not previously used by the organisation (Caballero-Morales, 2021). Innovation is defined as the process of being exposed to novel ideas and incorporating them into the established practices of an organisation (Dahlander, Gann & Wallin, 2021). The corporation also employs proactive strategies to explore new developments instead of relying only on its present capabilities to produce its products and services (Hofmann & Jaeger-Erben, 2020).

Innovation is seen by others as a kind of management and organisational involvement that proposes novel approaches to enhance corporate responsibility by reestablishing the connection between organisations and their consumers (Suchek et al., 2021). Companies are inclined to engage in innovation as a result of external pressures, such as competition, industry deregulation, limited resource availability, and increased consumer expectations. It may also arise from internal organisational choices such as acquiring distinctive capabilities, pursuing greater ambition, and enhancing the degree of quality service delivery (Gupta et al., 2020).

The driving force behind business innovation is to enable adaptive behaviour, wherein shifting trends within the company boost and elevate performance levels (Nudurupati et al., 2021). It is argued that market orientation and business innovativeness should be mutually reinforcing, and market orientation, whether proactive or responsive, should provide a solid basis for a firm's innovative endeavours (Wang & Liu, 2020; Kolbe, Frasquet & Calderon, 2022).

An important concern about market orientation is the business's capacity to incorporate a responsive market orientation into its strategy, therefore introducing something innovative. Companies that embrace a responsive market orientation prioritise understanding and valuing the specific demands of their customers in the sectors or markets they service. They also strive to continually improve their company processes in innovative ways (Buratti, Profumo & Persico, 2021).

Innovation entails the use of technological expertise to enhance existing tactics (Oduro, 2020). The processes necessary for firms to create innovative success include the collection, diffusion, and creative execution of knowledge (Karakara & Osabuohien, 2020; YuSheng & Ibrahim, 2020). There is a strong agreement that corporate entrepreneurship, learning atmosphere, and innovation are closely connected

and have a significant correlation (Tumaku & Agbeko, 2024). Corporate entrepreneurship plays a vital role in fostering innovation by emphasising risk-taking, experimentation, proactive adaptation to changes, and inventive engagement (Urbaniec & Żur, 2021).

Successful organisations often provide better offerings that effectively address consumer demands and desires. They also use robust marketing intelligence and skills in all their actions (Hendar et al., 2020). The suggestion is that enterprises that take proactive measures by exploring new chances instead of only relying on their present capabilities are considered crucial, since their endeavours have the potential to greatly satisfy consumers (Madhani, 2020). It may be inferred that companies who are embracing innovation are heading in the correct direction for growth and enhancing their performance.

### **2.1.8 Customers Satisfaction**

Customer satisfaction is a pivotal concept in business, reflecting the extent to which customers find value in a company's products, services, or overall brand experience (Chowdhury, 2020). It serves as a key metric for gauging business success and sustainability, as satisfied customers are more likely to exhibit behaviors such as repeat purchases, positive word-of-mouth recommendations, and long-term loyalty (Mittal & Kamakura, 2020).

Primarily, customer satisfaction hinges on meeting or surpassing customer expectations across various touchpoints (Luo & Homburg, 2021). When customers perceive that their needs and desires are fulfilled, they are more likely to feel content with their interactions with the company (Kotler et al., 2020). This satisfaction can stem from factors such as product quality, customer service, pricing, convenience, and the overall shopping experience (Szymanski & Henard, 2021).

Businesses typically measure customer satisfaction through a range of methods, including surveys, feedback forms, online reviews, and social media interactions (Li & Kannan, 2020). By collecting and analyzing this data, companies gain valuable insights into customer preferences, identify areas for improvement, and track changes in satisfaction levels over time (Kumar & Reinartz, 2020). This information is critical for making informed strategic decisions and enhancing the overall customer experience (Reichheld et al., 2021).

Furthermore, customer satisfaction is intricately linked to customer loyalty and retention (Bolton et al., 2020). Satisfied customers are more likely to develop strong emotional connections with a brand and remain loyal over time (Verhoef et al., 2021). They also tend to act as brand advocates, spreading positive word-of-mouth and contributing to the company's reputation and growth (Ranaweera & Prabhu, 2020).

In today's fiercely competitive marketplace, where consumers have abundant choices and access to information, prioritizing customer satisfaction is paramount for business success (Dagger & Sweeney, 2021). Companies that embrace customer-centric strategies and invest in delivering exceptional experiences are better positioned to differentiate themselves, build lasting customer relationships, and drive sustainable growth (Frow & Payne, 2021).

In conclusion, customer satisfaction plays a central role in shaping customer perceptions and behaviors, ultimately influencing business outcomes (Saeidi et al., 2020). By focusing on meeting customer expectations and delivering superior experiences, businesses can cultivate loyalty, foster advocacy, and thrive in today's dynamic business landscape

### **2.1.9 Business Sustainability**

The concept of business sustainability has garnered considerable focus in modern organisational management. It signifies the recognition of the interdependence of commercial activities, environmental conservation, and societal obligations. The notion of corporate sustainability covers a multitude of interpretations. Elkington (1997) proposed the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) paradigm, which encourages firms to consider the economic, social, and environmental aspects concurrently. Hawken et al. (1999) introduced the concept of Natural Capitalism, which highlights the need of aligning commercial activities with natural ecosystems in order to generate economic value. The Circular Economy concept, advocated by Geissdoerfer et al. (2017), promotes a regenerative approach to the utilisation of resources and the management of waste.

Organisations are driven to embrace sustainable practices due to both internal and external incentives. Internal motivations may include the goals of increasing operational efficiency, decreasing expenses, managing risks, and strengthening brand image and interactions with stakeholders (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Corporate sustainability strategies are influenced by external factors such as governmental obligations, customer preferences, investor expectations, and stakeholder advocacy (Sharma & Henriques, 2005).

Notwithstanding the increasing awareness, organisations have difficulties in efficiently adopting sustainable practices. The challenges include opposition from internal stakeholders, conflicting priorities, budgetary limitations, insufficient knowledge or experience, and intricate supply chain dynamics (Lozano, 2015). To effectively address sustainability challenges, it is necessary to use a comprehensive and forward-thinking approach, as advocated by Sterman (2000).

Empirical research demonstrates that sustainable practices have a beneficial effect on organisational performance. Research indicates that there is a connection between sustainability activities and improvements in brand reputation, staff happiness, consumer loyalty, and competitive advantage (Eccles & Serafeim, 2013). Addressing sustainability concerns in a proactive manner enables organisations to anticipate market changes and regulatory requirements, so reducing risks and assuring long-term survival (Kiron et al., 2012).

Sustainable Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs) represent a burgeoning sector of businesses that prioritize environmental, social, and economic sustainability in their operations and decision-making processes. These enterprises go beyond mere profit-making goals and instead integrate sustainability principles into their business models, strategies, and practices, aiming to minimize negative environmental impacts, contribute to social welfare, and ensure long-term financial viability (Ullah & Danish, 2020).

One of the hallmarks of sustainable SMEs is their adoption of a wide array of sustainable practices aimed at reducing their ecological footprint and promoting social responsibility. These practices include resource efficiency measures to minimize resource consumption and waste generation, the use of renewable energy sources to reduce carbon emissions, and the adoption of ethical sourcing practices to ensure fair treatment of suppliers and workers (Tuyon et al., 2012).

Sustainable SMEs prioritize fair labor practices, ensuring decent working conditions, fair wages, and opportunities for professional development for their employees. They also engage in community outreach and collaboration, investing in local communities and fostering partnerships with stakeholders to address social challenges and promote inclusive growth (U-Tantada & Yolles, 2020).

Transparent governance structures and ethical business conduct are integral to the operations of sustainable SMEs, ensuring accountability, integrity, and trustworthiness in their dealings with stakeholders. By embracing sustainability, SMEs can enhance their reputation and credibility, attracting environmentally and socially conscious consumers, investors, and partners (Asad et al., 2020).

Sustainable practices offer tangible benefits to SMEs beyond ethical considerations. By improving resource efficiency, SMEs can reduce operational costs and enhance their competitiveness in the marketplace. Additionally, sustainable practices help mitigate risks associated with environmental regulations, market volatility, and supply chain disruptions, thereby safeguarding the long-term viability of SMEs (Widayati et al., 2023).

Sustainable SMEs gain access to new markets and business opportunities by aligning their products and services with growing consumer demand for sustainable goods and services. They also attract financing from socially responsible investors who prioritize environmental and social impact alongside financial returns.

In summary, sustainable SMEs play a pivotal role in advancing sustainable development goals, fostering resilience, and promoting inclusive growth in economies worldwide. By integrating sustainability into their core business strategies and practices, SMEs contribute to environmental conservation, social equity, and economic prosperity, paving the way for a more sustainable future.

## **2.2 Theoretical Review**

### **2.2.1 Market Orientation Theory**

The most suitable theory to explain the research topic of the effects of market orientation on SME sustainability is the Market Orientation Theory. Market Orientation Theory emphasizes the importance of understanding and meeting customer needs and

preferences to achieve organizational goals and competitive advantage (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). This theory posits that organizations that are market-oriented focus on gathering and analyzing market information, anticipating customer demands, and adapting their strategies and offerings accordingly.

In the context of SME sustainability, Market Orientation Theory provides a framework for understanding how SMEs can enhance their long-term viability and success by aligning their business practices with market demands. By adopting a market orientation strategy, SMEs prioritize customer-centricity, innovation, and responsiveness to market dynamics, which are crucial elements for achieving sustainability in today's competitive business environment.

Market Orientation Theory emphasizes the importance of customer satisfaction, loyalty, and retention as key drivers of sustainable growth and profitability (Narver & Slater, 1990). By understanding and fulfilling customer needs and preferences, SMEs can build strong relationships with their customer base, leading to repeat business, positive word-of-mouth referrals, and enhanced brand reputation.

Market Orientation Theory highlights the role of market intelligence and competitor analysis in identifying and capitalizing on market opportunities (Day, 1994). By continuously monitoring market trends and competitor actions, SMEs can proactively adjust their strategies and offerings to maintain competitiveness and seize new business opportunities, thus contributing to their sustainability.

Market Orientation Theory emphasizes the importance of innovation and product development in driving differentiation and enhancing competitiveness (Slater & Narver, 1995). By soliciting and incorporating customer feedback into product design and development processes, SMEs can create offerings that meet evolving

customer needs and outperform competitors, leading to sustainable growth and profitability.

Market Orientation Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how SMEs can achieve sustainability by adopting a customer-centric approach to business strategy and operations. By aligning their activities with market demands and focusing on customer satisfaction, innovation, and competitiveness, SMEs can enhance their long-term viability and success in today's dynamic and competitive business landscape.

### **2.2.2 Resource-Based View (RBV) theory**

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory is a strategic management framework that underscores the significance of internal resources and capabilities in attaining sustainable competitive advantage. Proposed by scholars such as Jay Barney and Birger Wernerfelt, RBV redirects strategic analysis from external market conditions to internal factors. It suggests that firms should introspect to identify and capitalize on their distinctive strengths rather than solely relying on market opportunities or industry trends.

RBV posits that not all resources are created equal; they vary in terms of value, rarity, imitability, and substitutability. Resources that meet these criteria, termed strategic resources, constitute sources of sustained competitive advantage. These resources can be tangible, like physical assets, or intangible, such as intellectual property and organizational culture. RBV recognizes the importance of both types in driving firm performance.

Furthermore, RBV emphasizes the significance of organizational capabilities and competencies. Capabilities refer to a firm's ability to deploy resources effectively

to achieve strategic objectives, while competencies denote the firm's proficiency in performing specific tasks or activities better than competitors.

Additionally, RBV underscores the dynamic nature of resources and capabilities. They evolve over time through investments, learning, and organizational adaptation. Firms must continually develop and renew their resource base to sustain competitive advantage in evolving market environments.

Strategically, RBV has profound implications. It advises firms to focus on leveraging their unique resources and capabilities to create value for customers, differentiate themselves from competitors, and achieve superior financial performance. This may entail investments in human capital, technology, innovation, and strategic alliances to enhance resource-based competitive advantage.

In the realm of "Effects of Market Orientation on SMEs Sustainability in Upper West Region," the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory offers pertinent insights into how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can attain sustainable competitive advantage by leveraging their internal resources and capabilities.

Market orientation, integral to SME operations, denotes the degree to which a firm focuses on understanding and meeting the needs and preferences of its target market. Recent studies by Nguyen et al. (2020) and Kim et al. (2021) underscore the importance of market orientation in SME success, emphasizing its role in enhancing customer satisfaction and market responsiveness.

In line with RBV, market-oriented SMEs in the Upper West Region can harness internal resources to gain a competitive edge. These resources, as identified by Li and Guohong (2019), encompass tangible assets like infrastructure and machinery, as well

as intangible assets such as brand reputation and customer relationships. For instance, an SME that invests in market research to understand local consumer preferences and tailors its products accordingly can create a valuable resource that contributes to its competitive advantage.

Moreover, RBV underscores the dynamic nature of resources and capabilities. As posited by Wang and Niu (2022), SMEs must continuously adapt and invest in developing new resources and capabilities to maintain competitiveness. In the Upper West Region context, this may involve investing in digital marketing tools and technologies to enhance market sensing capabilities and respond effectively to changing market dynamics.

Furthermore, RBV highlights the importance of organizational capabilities and competencies in driving firm performance. Recent research by Zheng et al. (2023) emphasizes the role of capabilities such as innovation and flexibility in SME sustainability. For SMEs in the Upper West Region, building capabilities such as customer relationship management and product innovation can enhance market responsiveness and foster long-term sustainability.

## **2.3 Empirical Review**

### **2.3.1 The Effects of Market Orientation on Sustainability of SMEs**

The long-term sustainability of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) is becoming increasingly intertwined with the concept of market orientation, which centers on comprehending and fulfilling customer needs amidst the complexities of market dynamics (Jaworski & Kohli, 2020). Scholars have conducted extensive research into the impact of market orientation on SMEs, revealing that businesses adopting this approach tend to prioritize customer-centric strategies. Such SMEs invest

significant efforts in understanding and meeting the diverse demands of their customer base (Eriksson & Sharma, 2021). This emphasis on customer satisfaction not only establishes strong rapport but also cultivates loyalty among customers, which in turn becomes a cornerstone for the enduring success of these enterprises (Jaworski & Kohli, 2020).

The findings from these studies underscore the pivotal role of market orientation in shaping SME sustainability. By placing customers at the forefront of their operations, market-oriented SMEs demonstrate a commitment to tailoring their products or services to precisely match customer preferences and needs (Eriksson & Sharma, 2021). This customer-centric approach fosters a deeper understanding of consumer behavior and creates opportunities for businesses to forge lasting connections with their clientele. In essence, market-oriented SMEs build a reputation for reliability and responsiveness, thereby solidifying their position in the market landscape over time (Jaworski & Kohli, 2020).

Furthermore, the research highlights how market orientation influences the strategic direction of SMEs, particularly in terms of resource allocation and decision-making. Businesses that adopt a market-oriented mindset are more inclined to invest resources in activities that directly contribute to enhancing customer satisfaction and maintaining competitive advantage (Eriksson & Sharma, 2021). This strategic alignment enables SMEs to optimize their operational efficiency and capitalize on emerging market opportunities, thereby bolstering their sustainability in an ever-evolving business environment (Jaworski & Kohli, 2020).

Furthermore, recent studies, such as the work by Biloslavo et al. (2022), have illuminated how market orientation serves as a catalyst for fostering innovation and adaptability within Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). These studies reveal

that market-oriented SMEs exhibit a propensity for continuous evolution of their products or services, driven by a keen awareness of shifting market conditions and evolving customer preferences. This adaptability is deemed crucial for SMEs operating in dynamic environments, enabling them to not only survive but also thrive amidst rapid changes (Eriksson & Sharma, 2021).

Market-oriented SMEs are also characterized by heightened market responsiveness, as underscored by research findings (Jaworski & Kohli, 2020). These enterprises proactively monitor market trends and solicit feedback from customers, allowing them to swiftly recalibrate their strategies and offerings in response to emerging market dynamics. This proactive approach to market responsiveness mitigates the risk of market obsolescence and bolsters the competitive standing of SMEs (Biloslavo et al., 2022).

Moreover, recent research findings, as evidenced by Eriksson and Sharma (2021), shed light on how market orientation serves as a catalyst for conferring a competitive edge to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). By embracing market orientation, SMEs are empowered to differentiate their offerings based on deep insights into customer preferences and behaviors. This strategic alignment enables SMEs to carve out unique positions within the market landscape, setting themselves apart from competitors and attracting a loyal customer base (Jaworski & Kohli, 2020). Furthermore, the empirical evidence suggests that market orientation facilitates efficient resource allocation within SMEs, contributing to their long-term sustainability. Studies by Biloslavo et al. (2022) indicate that market-oriented SMEs demonstrate a propensity for prioritizing investments that are closely aligned with prevailing market opportunities. This strategic approach optimizes operational efficiency and enhances financial performance, thereby fortifying SMEs' resilience and

growth potential in a fiercely competitive business environment (Eriksson & Sharma, 2021).

Finally, it is worth noting that market-oriented Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) demonstrate a distinctive long-term perspective, prioritizing sustainable value creation over immediate gains, as observed by Jaworski and Kohli (2020). These enterprises place a strong emphasis on nurturing enduring customer relationships and fostering a culture of continuous innovation. By doing so, they establish a solid foundation for sustained growth and relevance in the marketplace.

The research findings of Biloslavo et al. (2022) echo this sentiment, highlighting how market-oriented SMEs invest in activities that contribute to long-term value creation. Rather than focusing solely on short-term profits, these SMEs recognize the importance of building lasting connections with their customers and stakeholders. Through ongoing innovation efforts and a commitment to meeting evolving market needs, market-oriented SMEs position themselves for longevity and success in competitive business environments.

In summary, market orientation plays a crucial role in enhancing the sustainability of SMEs, driving customer-centricity, innovation, adaptability, responsiveness, competitive advantage, efficient resource allocation, and a long-term orientation towards value creation. Embracing a market-oriented approach equips SMEs with the tools needed to thrive amidst evolving market dynamics, securing their position in the competitive business landscape (Eriksson & Sharma, 2021).

### **2.3.2 The challenges faced by SMEs in adopting a market orientation strategy**

The adoption of a market orientation strategy indeed presents several challenges for Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs), which can hinder their ability to effectively implement and sustain such an approach. One of the most significant

challenges stems from resource constraints commonly faced by SMEs. These limitations encompass financial, human, and technological resources, which are crucial for executing various aspects of a market orientation strategy (Robb & Stephens, 2021). Financial constraints represent a major hurdle for SMEs aiming to adopt a market orientation. Unlike larger corporations with substantial budgets allocated to market research, data analysis, and strategic planning, SMEs often operate with limited financial resources. As noted by (Robb & Stephens, (2021), this constraint can impede SMEs' ability to invest in the necessary tools, technologies, and expertise required for effective market orientation. For instance, conducting comprehensive market research surveys or investing in advanced data analytics software may be financially prohibitive for many SMEs, limiting their ability to gather and analyze market information effectively.

Moreover, human resource constraints pose another significant challenge for SMEs seeking to implement a market orientation strategy. Unlike larger firms with dedicated marketing departments staffed with specialized personnel, SMEs often rely on a small team or even a sole entrepreneur to handle marketing functions. This lack of human resources can significantly limit SMEs' capacity to develop and execute sophisticated marketing strategies, including market segmentation, targeting, and positioning. As highlighted by (Shehu & Mahmood, (2014) SMEs may lack the necessary expertise and market knowledge to navigate the complexities of market orientation effectively, further complicating the adoption process.

Furthermore, technological constraints represent an additional barrier to the successful implementation of market orientation by SMEs. In today's digital age, access to advanced technological tools and platforms is essential for gathering, analyzing, and leveraging market data effectively (Udriyah et al., 2019). However, many SMEs may

lack the infrastructure and technological capabilities required to harness the full potential of market orientation. For example, investing in customer relationship management (CRM) systems or marketing automation software may be beyond the reach of many SMEs due to cost or technical complexity, limiting their ability to effectively manage customer relationships and personalize marketing efforts.

As noted by (Ullah & Danish, 2020), overcoming resistance to change within SMEs often requires strong leadership, effective communication, and a clear vision for the future.

Without access to timely and accurate market information, SMEs may struggle to make informed decisions about product development, pricing, distribution, and promotion (Dubihlela & Dhurup, 2014). This can result in missed opportunities, suboptimal resource allocation, and ultimately, diminished competitiveness in the market.

SMEs typically operate with limited manpower and face competing demands on their time and resources (Samanta et al., 2020). Consequently, they may prioritize immediate operational concerns over longer-term strategic initiatives such as market research and product development, thus impeding their ability to build sustainable competitive advantages and adapt to evolving market conditions.

The short-term focus driven by time and resource constraints can have significant implications for SMEs. While immediate operational tasks are essential for day-to-day business operations, neglecting strategic initiatives like market research and product development may result in missed opportunities and decreased competitiveness in the long run. As highlighted by Chaston (1998), SMEs may struggle to allocate sufficient time and resources to activities that do not yield immediate returns, such as gathering market intelligence or investing in new product development.

The inherent uncertainty and risk associated with strategic initiatives can further deter SMEs from investing in market orientation. SMEs often operate in highly competitive and dynamic markets where the outcomes of strategic decisions are uncertain. This risk aversion may lead SMEs to prioritize short-term profitability and stability over long-term growth and innovation, thereby hindering their ability to adapt to changing market conditions and exploit new opportunities.

Despite these challenges, overcoming time and resource constraints is crucial for SMEs to succeed in adopting a market orientation strategy. Strategic allocation of resources, including financial, human, and time resources, is essential to prioritize activities that contribute to long-term competitiveness and sustainability (Udriyah et al., 2019). This may involve investing in employee training and development to enhance market research capabilities, fostering a customer-centric organizational culture that values continuous learning and improvement, and leveraging technology to streamline and automate repetitive tasks.

SMEs can benefit from collaborating with external partners, such as industry associations, research institutions, or consulting firms, to access specialized expertise and resources that may not be available internally. By outsourcing certain activities or forming strategic alliances, SMEs can overcome resource constraints and gain access to valuable market intelligence and insights.

In summary, while market orientation offers numerous benefits for SMEs, its adoption presents several challenges that must be addressed proactively. By recognizing these challenges and taking steps to overcome them, SMEs can unlock the full potential of market orientation and achieve sustainable growth and success in today's dynamic and competitive business environment.

### **2.3.3 How SMEs can improve their sustainability through market orientation.**

Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs) stand to significantly enhance their sustainability by embracing a market orientation strategy, which emphasizes understanding and fulfilling customer needs and preferences. By integrating market orientation principles into their operations, SMEs can bolster sustainability across multiple dimensions.

One critical aspect of sustainability that market-oriented SMEs can address is environmental sustainability (Kazemian et al., 2016). By prioritizing eco-friendly practices such as utilizing sustainable materials, minimizing energy consumption, and implementing waste reduction measures, SMEs can actively contribute to environmental preservation (Ghanavati, 2014). For instance, a small manufacturing firm may opt for recycled or biodegradable materials in its product packaging, adopt energy-efficient manufacturing processes, and implement recycling programs to minimize waste generation.

Furthermore, market-oriented SMEs can align their product offerings with the growing consumer demand for sustainability. With increasing awareness of environmental issues, many consumers are seeking products and services that are eco-friendly and socially responsible. By developing and marketing sustainable products or services, SMEs can attract environmentally conscious customers and differentiate themselves in the market (Akhtar et al., 2021). For example, a small fashion brand may focus on producing clothing lines made from organic cotton or recycled materials, catering to consumers who prioritize sustainability in their purchasing decisions.

Moreover, market-oriented SMEs can foster social sustainability by building strong relationships with customers, suppliers, and local communities. By prioritizing customer satisfaction and engagement, SMEs can cultivate loyalty and trust, leading to

repeat business and positive word-of-mouth referrals(Rashid et al., 2020). Additionally, SMEs can support local suppliers and communities by sourcing materials and services locally, contributing to the economic development of the region.

Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs) can prioritize social sustainability by actively engaging with local communities, supporting community initiatives, and promoting fair labor practices, as suggested by Saeidi et al. (2015). By demonstrating a genuine commitment to social responsibility, SMEs can build trust among consumers, employees, and stakeholders, thereby enhancing their long-term viability and reputation.

Engaging with local communities allows SMEs to establish meaningful connections and contribute to the well-being of society. This involvement can take various forms, such as sponsoring local events, participating in community service projects, or supporting charitable organizations (rahaman et al., 2021) . By aligning their activities with community needs and priorities, SMEs can demonstrate their dedication to social sustainability and strengthen their relationships with local stakeholders.

In addition to social sustainability, SMEs can achieve economic sustainability by focusing on customer value creation and long-term profitability, as emphasized by Hill & Wright (2000). Through market orientation, SMEs can gain a deep understanding of customer needs and preferences, enabling them to develop innovative products and services that address market demand effectively.

By delivering superior value to customers, SMEs can build strong customer relationships and loyalty, driving repeat business and positive word-of-mouth referrals. Additionally, market-oriented SMEs can enhance competitiveness through effective pricing strategies and cost management practices(Asad et al., 2020). By optimizing

pricing to reflect the value perceived by customers and implementing efficient cost control measures, SMEs can improve profitability and ensure long-term economic sustainability.

Furthermore, market orientation enables SMEs to identify new market opportunities, adapt to changing market conditions, and stay ahead of competitors. By continuously monitoring market trends and customer feedback, SMEs can innovate and evolve their offerings to meet evolving customer needs and preferences. This adaptability and responsiveness are essential for maintaining competitiveness and achieving sustained growth in today's dynamic business environment. This proactive approach to innovation enables SMEs to stay ahead of the curve and maintain a competitive edge in the marketplace.

Market orientation fosters strong customer relationships through personalized communication and attentive customer service, as emphasized by (Guleş et al., 2015). By understanding customer needs and preferences, SMEs can tailor their communication strategies and service offerings to meet individual customer requirements effectively.

For example, a local bakery that adopts a market-oriented approach may engage with customers through social media channels, solicit feedback on new product ideas, and offer personalized recommendations based on past purchase history. This personalized interaction not only enhances the customer experience but also strengthens the bond between the SME and its clientele(Guleş et al., 2015).

By addressing customer needs and concerns promptly and effectively, market-oriented SMEs can cultivate loyalty, repeat business, and positive word-of-mouth referrals. Satisfied customers are more likely to become advocates for the SME's brand, spreading positive recommendations to friends, family, and colleagues. This organic

form of marketing can significantly contribute to sustainable growth and profitability for SMEs(Guleş et al., 2015).

Collaborative partnerships with suppliers and business partners play a crucial role in enhancing sustainability for Small and Medium-Scale Enterprises (SMEs) by strengthening supply chain resilience and minimizing risks, as highlighted by Ciliberti et al. (2008). By establishing close relationships and collaborative arrangements with suppliers, SMEs can foster transparency, trust, and mutual accountability throughout the supply chain.

One way in which collaborative partnerships contribute to sustainability is by promoting ethical sourcing practices and quality control(Samanta et al., 2020). By working closely with suppliers, SMEs can ensure that materials and resources are sourced responsibly, adhering to social, environmental, and labor standards. This not only mitigates the risk of reputational damage associated with unethical practices but also enhances the overall sustainability of the supply chain.

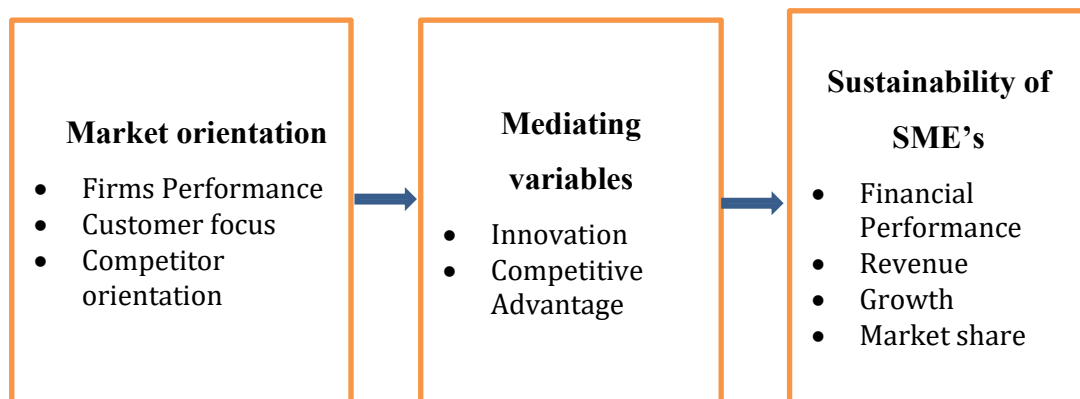
Collaborative partnerships enable SMEs to build resilience against disruptions and unforeseen events. By diversifying their supplier base and maintaining open lines of communication, SMEs can respond more effectively to changes in market conditions, regulatory requirements, or natural disasters. This flexibility and adaptability are essential for sustaining operations and maintaining business continuity in times of uncertainty.

Lastly, market-oriented SMEs embrace a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation in response to changing market dynamics, as noted by (Samanta et al., 2020). This proactive approach enables SMEs to identify new opportunities, address emerging challenges, and remain competitive over the long term.

By staying attuned to market trends, customer feedback, and competitor actions, market-oriented SMEs can anticipate shifts in consumer preferences, technological advancements, and industry developments. This enables them to innovate, differentiate their offerings, and seize opportunities for growth. Additionally, by fostering a culture of continuous learning and improvement, SMEs can empower employees to contribute ideas, experiment with new approaches, and drive innovation from within the organization.

In summary, SMEs can significantly enhance their sustainability by adopting a market orientation strategy and focusing on environmental, social, and economic considerations. By aligning their business practices with customer needs, fostering innovation, building strong customer relationships, and collaborating with suppliers and partners, SMEs can contribute to sustainable development and long-term success in the marketplace.

## 2.4 Conceptual Framework



Through the incorporation of important mediating factors like innovation and competitive advantage, the conceptual framework elucidates the complex relationship that exists between market orientation and the long-term viability of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). According to Jaworski and Kohli's 2020 research, market

orientation is the most important aspect of this paradigm. It encompasses a variety of characteristics, including market intelligence, customer focus, and competition orientation. In order to do this, it is necessary to not only collect and examine market data, but also to prioritize the requirements of customers and comprehend the techniques used by rivals. After doing research, Eriksson and Sharma (2021) concluded that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who have effective market orientation plans are able to adjust their strategies depending on market insights and input from customers, all while keeping a close eye on the activities of their rivals. Within the context of this approach, innovation plays a significant part as a mediating force, serving as a bridge between market orientation and sustainability. Studies conducted by Biloslavo et al. (2022) suggest that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are focused on the market are more likely to innovate, making use of their knowledge of the dynamics of the market to produce unique goods, services, or business models. These businesses improve their competitiveness and flexibility by continuously innovating in response to the needs of the market. As a result, they are able to support sustainability in situations that are characterized by dynamic market conditions.

Similar to the last example, competitive advantage appears as an additional important mediating component. Market-oriented small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have the ability to carve out unique advantages over their rivals by drawing on their market information and customer focus. The provision of better goods, the provision of great service, or the achievement of cost savings might all contribute to this competitive advantage. Having a competitive edge, according to Jaworski and Kohli (2020), helps small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to distinguish themselves in the market, therefore gaining and keeping clients while maintaining profitability.

When small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are taken into consideration, financial performance emerges as an important criterion. As a result of capitalizing on possibilities discovered via market intelligence and customer insights, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are focused on the market are better positioned to achieve solid financial performance. Market-oriented small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) tend to enjoy better revenue growth rates and increased market share, according to research conducted by Eriksson and Sharma (2021). This reflects the effectiveness of their market-oriented strategies in helping to improve sustainability.

In a nutshell, the conceptual framework emphasizes how market orientation affects the sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) via the interaction of a number of different elements. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have the potential to improve their financial performance, achieve sustainable development, and strengthen their competitive position in the market provided they demonstrate a commitment to market orientation and make use of mediating factors such as innovation and competitive advantage. In the end, a deep grasp of the dynamics of the market, together with strategic adaptation and innovation, is essential for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are looking for long-term success and resilience.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

All research endeavor adheres to a certain procedure and considers particular methodological considerations. The research techniques are important because they describe the steps that may be taken to approach a research topic. This chapter, which comprises the study's methodology, describes the specific methods used in the study. Specifically, the chapter will expatiate the research approach, research design, description of the study population, sample procedure, sources of data, data collection instruments and procedure, data processing and analysis and ethical considerations.

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The capacity of a quantitative research approach to give exact numerical data and create statistical associations makes it especially well-suited for the investigation of the impacts of market orientation on the sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Upper West Region. With this in mind, market orientation and the sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are both multidimensional concepts that may be quantified via the use of a wide range of indicators and metrics.

A quantitative study strategy was used by the researcher in order to collect quantitative data on the degree of market orientation that exists among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that are functioning in the Upper West Region. The researcher has the ability to evaluate the level of market responsiveness, customer orientation, and competitive analysis that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) engage in.

After that, the researcher will be able to demonstrate quantifiable links between market orientation and the sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) using statistical analysis. The degree of link between market-oriented tactics (such as customer-centric policies and market research expenditures) and a variety of sustainability indicators may be determined via the use of correlation analysis. As long as possible confounding factors are considered, regression analysis may be used to further discover the unique influence that market orientation has on several elements of the sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

### **3.2 Philosophical Underpinning**

#### **3.2.1 Positivist philosophy**

A philosophical and epistemological stance known as Positivist philosophy lays a focus on empirical evidence and scientific techniques in the process of knowing the cosmos. Positive philosophy is a philosophical and epistemological position. It is possible to trace its origins back to the works of Auguste Comte, which were published in the nineteenth century. In its most fundamental form, positivism is predicated on the notion that knowledge ought to be built on observable facts and occurrences rather than on speculative or metaphysical reasoning (Turner, 2019). This emphasis on empiricism places a strong emphasis on the idea that the most fundamental sources of knowledge are the observations and experiences that are gained from sensory experience. Positivists, as stated by Bryman (2016), are of the opinion that a more thorough understanding of reality may be attained by the use of systematic techniques such as experimentation and observation.

The commitment to scientific methodology, which puts a focus on methods such as experimentation, measurement, and observation, is a key component of positivism at its heart. This particular approach to science is known as the scientific method. In

accordance with Blaikie (2010), these methodologies are subjected to severe conditions of objectivity, systematicity, and replicability in order to ensure that the findings drawn from the investigations may be relied upon. One of the goals of researchers who subscribe to the positivist ideology is to strive for objectivity in their work. They do this with the intention of limiting the influence of personal biases and subjective judgments. According to Sayer (1992), these people claim that scientific study ought to be built on observable facts and logical deductions, rather than depending on the views or opinions of humans.

When it comes to positivism, verifications serve as the basis. In accordance with this idea, relevant statements are those that are capable of being proved or rejected via the use of experimental evidence (Durkheim, 2014). The theory that underpins positivism is this one. The significance that is put on empirical testing is a vital component that is taken into consideration when determining whether or not scientific statements are trustworthy. In addition, positivism uses a nomothetic approach, which implies that it aims to develop general rules or principles that are relevant in a range of circumstances (Bryman, 2016). Positivism is driven by the need to provide systematic explanations of the world that is all around us. This is accomplished via the construction of rules and ideas. The shedding of light on patterns and regularities in occurrences is the means by which this is done.

When doing research on the influence of market orientation on the long-term sustainability of small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) in the Upper West Region, positivism offers a useful philosophical and methodological framework that may be used. This framework can be utilized in the context of conducting research. Turner (2019) asserts that positivism, which was established in the 19th century with the works

of Auguste Comte, puts a focus on the relevance of empirical evidence and scientific techniques in the process of interpreting observations of occurrences. This is because positivism was built on the idea that this is the best way to understand the world. With regard to the need of doing empirical research into the relationship between market orientation and the sustainability of small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) in the specific context of the region, this philosophical perspective agrees with the necessity of conducting such study.

According to Bryman (2016), positivism is a philosophical school of thought that advocates for the methodical collecting of observable facts via the use of methods such as surveys, interviews, and statistical analysis. Rather than relying on speculation, positivism puts a greater focus on direct, actual data. In order to establish the impact that certain qualities have on the long-term survival of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in the Upper West Region, researchers are able to collect data on a variety of topics, including market responsiveness, customer orientation, and competitive analysis, amongst other things. This method is used in the research that investigates the effects of market orientation on the long-term viability of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs).

As stated by Blaikie (2010), the scientific methodology is considered to be one of the most significant principles of positivism. This methodology puts a focus on the use of rigorous research processes that are objective, systematic, and repeatable. In the process of conducting research on the connection between market orientation and the long-term viability of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs), it is possible to assure the reliability and validity of the findings by adhering to scientific standards. Researchers have the ability to objectively measure the level of market orientation

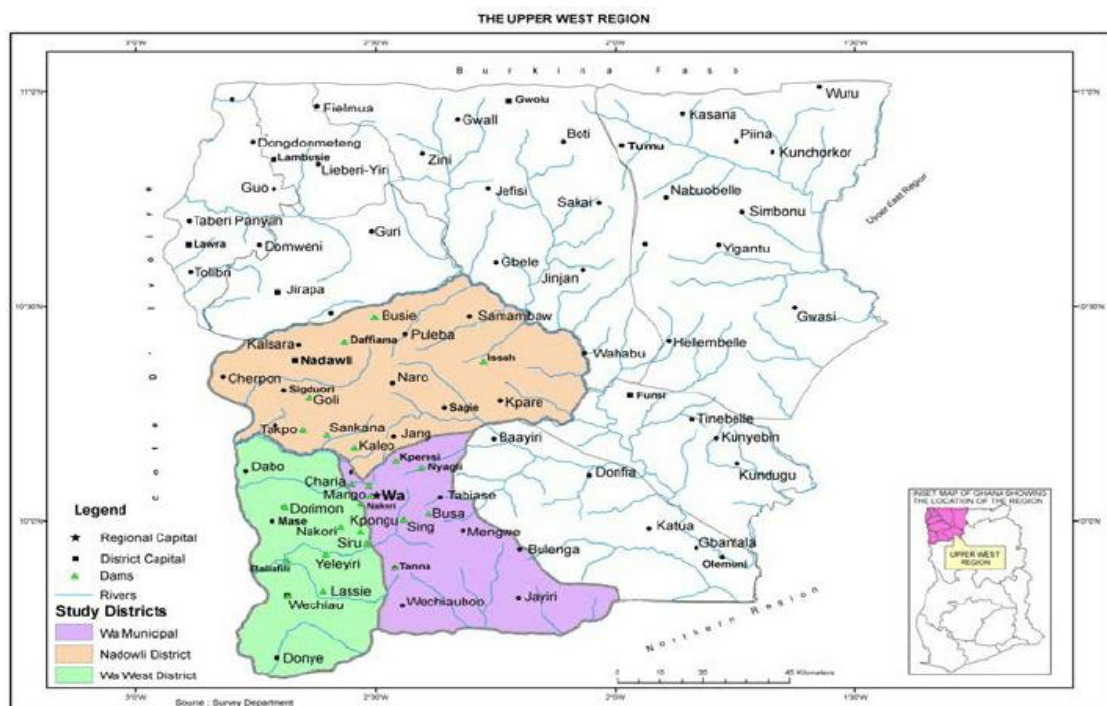
within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and its effect on various metrics of sustainability, such as financial performance, innovation adoption, and market share. This can be accomplished through the utilization of structured questionnaires or longitudinal studies while the researchers are conducting research.

The importance that positivism puts on verifications is particularly pertinent when it comes to the investigation of market orientation and the long-term viability of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs to be more specific). According to Durkheim (2014), researchers are able to develop substantial links between market-oriented strategies and sustainable business practices by first trying to empirically test or falsify hypotheses regarding the relationship between the two. This allows the researchers to establish significant connections between the two. By doing statistical analysis and employing hypothesis testing, researchers are able to get a better knowledge of the degree to which market orientation has a positive impact on the resilience and longevity of small and medium-sized firms (SMEs) operating in the Upper West Region. This is because the researchers are able to determine the extent to which market orientation has a positive effect. Despite the fact that positivism provides a rigorous framework for examining the influence of market orientation on the sustainability of small and medium-sized firms (SMEs), it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of positivism. Positive theory has been attacked for its ability to neglect the complex socio-economic dynamics and contextual aspects that have an influence on the actions and outcomes of small and medium-sized firms (Smith, 2019). This is true since positive theory has the capacity to ignore these factors. As a consequence of this, researchers who use a positivist perspective are required to augment quantitative data with qualitative observations in order to get a comprehensive understanding of the

complex interaction that exists between market orientation and sustainability in the Upper West Region (Archer, 2013).

### 3.3 Study Area

Bordering Cot d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso is Upper West Region. Located in the extreme northwest of Ghana. It lies between longitudes 1°25'W and 2°50'W, and between latitudes 9°35'N and 11°N. The region covers a geographical area of 18,476 sq. km, constituting 12.7% of the total land area of Ghana (Blench, 2006).



**Figure 1.1 The Map of Upper West Region which is the study, Area.**

Source: Kpieta et al., (2013)

### 3.4 Population of the Study

The target population for this study comprises all SMEs operating within the Wa municipality of Upper west region of Ghana. These SMEs represent the primary units of analysis for investigating internal control practices and organizational effectiveness. Based on the data collected from Registrar General's Department (RGD), the total number of SMEs in Wa municipal is 1031. Out of this, a sample will be taken.

### 3.5 Sampling

#### 3.5.1 Sample Size:

The sample size for the study will be decided using Yamane formulas. The Yamane formula is mathematically defined as  $n = \frac{N}{1+N(e^2)}$  where **n**=sample size, **N**=sample frame and “**e**” represents the margin of error.

$$n = \frac{1031}{1+1031(0.1^2)} = 91.11$$

In light of this 91 SMEs will participate in the study.

#### 3.5.2 Sample Techniques

Systematic approach was used in the process of determining the sample size for the research. This will be done in order to guarantee that the results are both representative and reliable. The first step in the process will include determining the appropriate degree of confidence and margin of error. This will be done by taking into consideration the characteristics of the population that will be targeted, such as the total number of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Wa municipality.

For the purpose of the research, a method known as simple random sampling was used to collect the required sample size. By using this method, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are chosen at random from the population without any preconceived criteria being used. This ensures that every SME has an equal chance of being included in the sample. The sample will have a greater chance of properly representing the population if it is selected using a straightforward random sampling method. This will reduce the possibility of selection bias and increase the generalizability of the results.

The process for simple random sampling will involve steps below:

1. **Define the Population:** The researcher begins by clearly defining the target population, which in this case would be all SMEs in the Wa municipality.
2. **Determine Sample Size:** Based on considerations such as desired level of confidence, margin of error, and characteristics of the population, the researcher determines the appropriate sample size using the Yamane formular.
3. **Assign a Unique Identifier:** Each SME in the population is assigned a unique identifier. This will be a numerical code that distinguishes one SME from another.
4. **Random Selection:** Using a randomization technique, such as the lottery method, the researcher randomly selects the required number of SMEs from the population.
5. **Contact Selected SMEs:** Once the sample SMEs are identified, the researcher contacts them to request their participation in the study. This could involve sending out invitations to participate or making direct contact via phone or email.
6. **Data Collection:** After obtaining consent from the selected SMEs, the researcher collects the necessary data for the study. This could involve conducting surveys, interviews, or collecting secondary data, depending on the research objectives.

### **3.5.3 Methods for Data Collection**

Structured surveys will be delivered to a selection of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Wa municipality in order to gather data. For the purpose of collecting data via structured surveys that will be conducted to chosen small and

medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the Wa municipality, a methodical approach was used to collect information directly from the participants. The first step in the process will be the development of a structured questionnaire that will contain pertinent questions about market orientation and other elements of the sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). For the purpose of eliciting quantitative replies that are in line with the goals of the study, these questions will be written. This will ensure that there is clarity and concentration in the process of obtaining precise information. replies from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are gathered throughout the process of administering the survey. These replies pertain to market-oriented practices and sustainability activities. In order to guarantee the dependability of the information that is gathered, quality control methods are put into place via the verification of the completeness and correctness of the survey replies.

### **3.6 Method of Data Analysis**

The employment of quantitative data analysis methods will be utilized in order to carry out the study of the data that has been gathered. Discovering patterns, trends, and correlations within the dataset is made much easier with the help of these methodological approaches. In order to begin, descriptive statistics was used in order to offer a full account of the features that are present within the sample. The occurrence of various answers or variables within the dataset will be shown via the use of measures such as frequencies and percentages. These measures will provide insights into the distribution and prevalence of various aspects. In addition, measures of central tendency, such as the mean, the median, and the mode, will be computed in order to offer a sense of the typical or average value of variables. This will further enhance our knowledge of the features of the sample.

Beyond descriptive statistics, inferential statistical approaches will be applied in order to conduct a more in-depth investigation into the connections that exist between market orientation and the sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). For the purpose of determining the nature and magnitude of the connection that exists between these two variables, a correlation analysis plan will be implemented. The findings of this study will give significant insights into whether or whether changes in market orientation coincide with changes in SME sustainability measures, and to what degree these correlations exist. Through the process of assessing the degree of linkage between market-oriented practices and sustainability results, correlation analysis will assist in shedding light on possible links and patterns that are present within the dataset.

In addition, regression analysis was used in order to investigate the connection between market orientation and the sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in more depth, while also considering any possible confounding factors. Through the use of regression analysis, it is possible to investigate how changes in one variable (for example, market orientation) might predict changes in another variable (for example, the sustainability of SMEs) while simultaneously controlling for the impacts of other variables that are pertinent. The researcher is able to determine the precise influence that market orientation has on the sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by using regression analysis. This allows the researcher to determine whether or not certain market-oriented tactics are related with better sustainability results.

The combination of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis will, in general, give a thorough and nuanced knowledge of the link between market orientation and the sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises

(SMEs). In the context of the Wa municipality, these quantitative data analysis methodologies will make it possible for the researcher to get relevant insights from the dataset, which will in turn facilitate the discovery of critical variables that influence the sustainability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

### **3.7 Validity and Reliability**

A research instrument is said to be valid when it measures what it is supposed to measure. Face validity is in relation to the misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the question. This will be checked by way of employing pretesting method.

Content validity refers to the capacity of the instrument to provide adequate coverage of a topic. Adequate preparation of the instrument under guidance of the supervisor, expert opinion and pre-testing of the question will help establish the content validity (Haynes, Richard & Kubany, 1995).

Construct Validity: A measure of construct validity determines how well it captures the underlying theoretical construct or idea that it is designed to measure. It entails analyzing the measure's interactions with other variables or measures in a way that is compatible with theoretical predictions (Cronbach & Meehl, 1955).

Convergent validity evaluates the degree of correlation between an assessment's results and those of other measures that are hypothesized to be related (DeVellis, 2016). Discriminant validity evaluates the extent to which results on one measure do not correspond to results on other measures that one would anticipate to be unrelated (DeVellis, 2016). It proves that a measure is measuring something other than just reflecting other constructions.

Face validity describes the degree to which a measure seems to evaluate the construct it is meant to evaluate based on its seeming value or outward features. It is frequently evaluated using subjective assessment and offers little proof of validity, but

it can increase participants' acceptance of the measure (DeVellis, 2016)

Reliability testing on the other hand is a crucial step in the research process that aims to ensure the consistency and stability of the survey instrument's results. This testing is conducted to determine whether the survey instrument yields the same outcome across various measures, either within the same population or with similar populations when the survey is repeated. As emphasized by Creswell (2017), the reliability of the instrument will be assessed using the Cronbach alpha coefficient, which is a commonly used measure in the field of research. This coefficient provides valuable insights into the reliability of the instrument, with different ranges indicating varying levels of reliability. According to George and Mallery (2010), an excellent reliability coefficient is typically observed when it is approximately 0.9, indicating a high level of consistency and stability in the survey instrument's results. A good reliability coefficient is generally around 0.8, suggesting a reliable and dependable instrument. An adequate reliability coefficient, on the other hand, falls around 0.7, indicating a reasonable level of consistency but with room for improvement.

Furthermore, a questionable reliability coefficient is typically observed when it is approximately 0.6, suggesting a need for further investigation and potential revisions to enhance the instrument's reliability. A poor reliability coefficient, which is around 0.5, raises concerns about the instrument's consistency and stability. Lastly, an unacceptable reliability coefficient, which is less than 0.5, indicates a significant lack of reliability and renders the survey instrument unreliable for research purposes.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

Ethical considerations will be paramount throughout the research process. Prior to data collection, ethical approval will be sought from relevant institutional review boards or ethics committees. Bryman and Bell (2007) have concurred that ethical

consideration stands as one of the most pivotal and momentous facets of conducting research. The concept of ethics pertains to the extent to which the researcher's conduct aligns with the fundamental rights of the individuals who become subjects or are impacted by the focal point of the research study, as asserted by Saunders et al. (2009). Informed consent will be obtained from participants, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality of responses. Participants will be assured of the anonymity of their responses, and data will be handled and stored securely in compliance with ethical standards and data protection regulations. Any potential conflicts of interest will be disclosed, and research findings will be disseminated transparently and accurately.

# CHAPTER FOUR

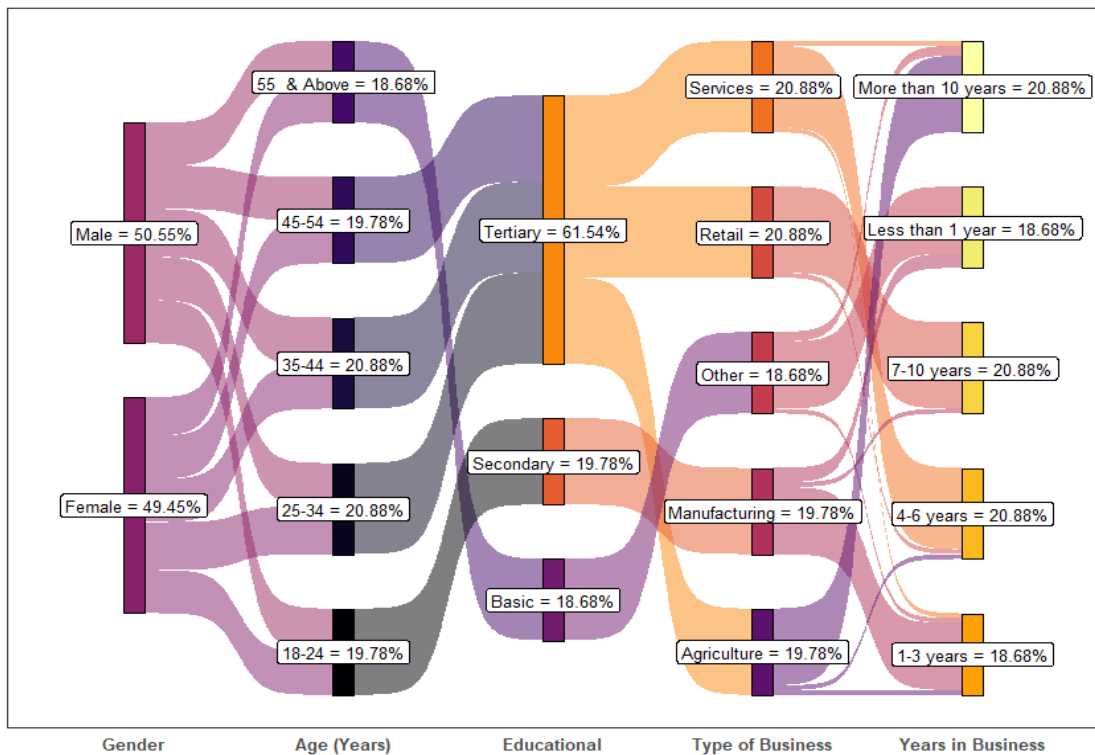
## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter of the study presents and discuss the findings from the field of the study. The presentation of the findings as well as its discussions is based on the results

### 4.1 Demographic Data Respondents

Figure 4.1 presents the distribution of respondents' demographics. The demographic data of the respondents revealed a nearly equal representation of genders, with 46 males constituting 50.55% and 45 females representing 49.45% of the sample. This balanced distribution indicates that the data collected reflects the perspectives of both male and female participants almost equally.



**Figure 4.1: Distribution of Respondents' Demographics**

In terms of age, the respondents varied widely, with the largest age group being those aged 45-54 years, accounting for 22 respondents or 24.175% of the sample. The

next largest group was individuals aged 35-44 years, making up 23.07% of the respondents. Those aged 18-24 years represented 20.88%, while participants aged 25-34 years made up 16.4%. The smallest group was those aged 55 years and above, comprising 15.38% of the respondents.

Regarding educational levels of respondents, the distribution was not uniformed. Majority of respondents were literates, thus, approximately 61.5% of respondents had tertiary education. Although majority of respondent were literates (had tertiary education), there approximately 18.7% of respondents had basic education. Hence, this study was biased towards respondents with higher learning (literate).

The respondents' businesses were evenly distributed across four sectors: manufacturing, retail, services, and agriculture. Each sector represented nearly a quarter of the respondents, with manufacturing, retail, and services each accounting for 25.27%, and agriculture slightly less at 24.18%.

When examining the duration of business operations, the respondents showed a range of experience. Those with more than 10 years in business constituted the largest group at 24.17%. Businesses in operation for 1-3 years made up 21.9%, followed by those in operation for less than 1 year at 20.88%. Respondents with 4-6 years in business accounted for 17.5%, while those with 7-10 years of business experience made up 15.38% of the sample.

Table 4.1 presents result on market orientation, innovation and performance. Understanding customer needs is a priority for many businesses, as evidenced by 48 out of 91 respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement. This indicates a strong emphasis on customer-centric approaches, essential for maintaining competitiveness and fostering customer loyalty (Kotler & Keller, 2020). For example, Amazon's success can be largely attributed to its relentless focus on understanding and

meeting customer needs, which has helped it become a market leader (Dudovskiy, 2022).

## 4.2 Market Orientation

**Table 4.1 Market Orientation**

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderate	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our business prioritizes understanding customer needs.	15	16	12	30	18
Our business regularly collects feedback from customers to improve its products and services.	10	17	13	12	39
Our business responds quickly to changes in customer preferences.	13	17	18	17	26
Our business monitors competitors' actions to remain competitive.	13	18	11	12	37
Our business allocates resources to market research and analysis.	17	11	13	31	19

*(Field survey, 2024)*

Regular collection of customer feedback is a common practice among these businesses, with 51 respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. This practice highlights the importance placed on continuous improvement based on direct input from customers. For instance, Starbucks frequently gathers customer feedback through its mobile app and social media channels to refine its offerings and improve customer satisfaction (Gallo, 2020).

The ability to respond quickly to changes in customer preferences is recognized by 43 respondents, suggesting that agility in addressing customer needs is valued among these businesses. In today's fast-paced market environment, the capacity to adapt swiftly to customer preferences can provide a significant competitive advantage

(Grewal et al., 2020). For example, Zara's fast fashion model allows it to respond quickly to changing fashion trends, keeping its offerings relevant and appealing to customers (Ferdows, Lewis, & Machuca, 2020).

Monitoring competitors' actions to remain competitive is acknowledged by 49 respondents, indicating that competitive intelligence is a key component of their market orientation strategy. By keeping an eye on competitors' activities, businesses can stay informed about industry trends, emerging threats, and new opportunities (Porter, 2008). For instance, PepsiCo regularly monitors Coca-Cola's marketing and product strategies to adjust its own tactics and maintain its market position (Mourdoukoutas, 2019).

Allocating resources to market research and analysis is supported by 50 respondents, demonstrating the importance of staying informed about market dynamics to make strategic decisions. Investing in market research enables businesses to gather critical data on customer behaviours, market trends, and competitive landscapes (Malhotra, 2019). For example, Google's extensive market research efforts help it develop and refine products like Google Search and Google Ads, ensuring they meet user needs and stay ahead of competitors (Rosenberg, 2020).

Innovation practices within the surveyed businesses reveal a strong emphasis on fostering creativity and new ideas. Encouraging employees to develop new ideas and solutions is significant, with 44 respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. This indicates that many organizations value and promote an innovative culture, where employees are motivated to think creatively and contribute to the development of novel solutions (Amabile & Pratt, 2016). For example, Google's "20% time" policy allows employees to spend 20% of their work hours on projects of their choice, which has led to the development of successful products like Gmail and Google News (Steiber & Alänge, 2016).

### 4.3 Innovation.

**Table 4.2 Innovation**

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderate	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our business encourages employees to develop new ideas and solutions.	19	15	13	10	34
Our business invests in new technologies to enhance its operations.	13	19	13	14	32
Our business frequently launches new products or services.	15	18	17	15	26
Our business encourages collaboration and knowledge sharing among employees.	30	19	10	15	17
Our business stays ahead of industry trends by being innovative.	14	14	11	16	36

(Field survey, 2024)

Investment in new technologies to enhance operations is supported by 46 respondents. This commitment to leveraging technology underscores the importance of staying technologically advanced to improve efficiency, productivity, and competitiveness (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). For instance, Tesla's significant investments in electric vehicle technology and battery innovation have positioned it as a leader in the automotive industry (Mangram, 2012).

The frequent launching of new products or services is recognized by 41 respondents, suggesting a proactive approach to innovation and market responsiveness. Regularly introducing new offerings helps businesses meet changing customer needs and stay relevant in the market (Brown & Anthony, 2011). For example, Apple's regular product launches, such as the annual release of new iPhone models, keep the company at the forefront of consumer technology (Finkle & Mallin, 2010).

Encouraging collaboration and knowledge sharing among employees appears to be less emphasized, with only 32 respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. This indicates a potential area for improvement in fostering a collaborative work environment. Collaboration and knowledge sharing are crucial for driving innovation, as they enable the exchange of ideas and expertise across the organization (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Enhancing these practices can lead to more comprehensive and innovative solutions. For instance, Pixar's open office design and regular "Braintrust" meetings encourage collaboration and creative problem-solving, contributing to its success in producing hit animated films (Catmull & Wallace, 2014).

Staying ahead of industry trends through innovation is supported by a majority, with 52 respondents indicating their businesses actively pursue innovative practices to maintain a competitive edge. This proactive stance allows organizations to anticipate market shifts, adapt to new technologies, and capitalize on emerging opportunities (Christensen, Raynor, & McDonald, 2015). For example, Amazon's continuous innovation in logistics and delivery, such as the use of drones for package delivery, keeps it ahead of competitors in the e-commerce space (Stone, 2013)

#### 4.4 Performance

**Table 4.3 Performance**

Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Moderate	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our business has seen an increase in profitability over the last year.	17	13	19	32	10
Our business has experienced growth in market share.	16	10	38	14	13
Customer satisfaction has improved in our business.	42	13	10	11	15
Our business has achieved its strategic goals over the past year.	18	26	14	14	19
Our business has improved its operational efficiency.	11	30	17	19	14

(Field survey, 2024)

The performance data reveal that a significant number of businesses have seen an increase in profitability over the last year, with 42 respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing (see Table 4.3). This suggests that many organizations have experienced financial growth and success, which can be attributed to effective business strategies and practices (Porter, 2017). For example, Netflix's strategic investments in original content have driven subscriber growth and increased profitability (Tanner, 2019).

Growth in market share is acknowledged by 27 respondents, indicating that a significant number of businesses have been able to expand their presence in the market. This growth could result from successful marketing strategies, product innovation, and improved customer satisfaction (Kotler & Keller, 2020). For instance, the aggressive expansion and marketing strategies of Uber have significantly increased its market share in the ride-hailing industry (Stone, 2017).

Improvement in customer satisfaction is noted by 26 respondents. While this is a positive trend, the relatively low number indicates that customer satisfaction remains a challenging area for many businesses. Ensuring high levels of customer satisfaction is essential for retaining customers and fostering loyalty (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 2017). Businesses may need to focus more on understanding and addressing customer needs to enhance satisfaction levels further. For example, Zappos' dedication to exceptional customer service has led to high levels of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Hsieh, 2014).

Achievement of strategic goals over the past year is reported by 33 respondents, suggesting that these businesses have been successful in meeting their long-term objectives. Achieving strategic goals reflects effective planning and execution, which are vital for organizational growth and development (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). Businesses that can consistently meet their strategic objectives are better positioned to

navigate market challenges and capitalize on opportunities. For example, Microsoft's successful transition to a cloud-first strategy has helped it achieve its strategic goals and drive growth (Smith, 2018).

Improvement in operational efficiency is acknowledged by 33 respondents, indicating that many businesses have enhanced their internal processes to operate more effectively. Operational efficiency leads to cost savings, increased productivity, and improved service delivery (Davenport, 2018). By optimizing their operations, businesses can enhance their overall performance and competitiveness in the market. For example, Toyota's implementation of lean manufacturing principles has significantly improved its operational efficiency and product quality (Liker, 2017).

These detailed discussions highlight the significant impact of market orientation, innovation, and performance practices on the surveyed businesses. Each theme reveals specific areas of strength and potential improvement, providing valuable insights for businesses aiming to enhance their strategies and achieve sustained success.

Figure 4.2 represents distributions of challenges in adopting market orientation strategies, perception of sustainability practice and challenges that SME's face in integrating sustainability practices. Challenges in adopting market orientation has been categorized into eight groups, namely; regulatory constraints, poor access to information, limited financial resources, limited distribution channels, lack of skilled personnel, lack market knowledge, inconsistent demand, and high competition from larger firms.

The distribution of challenges in adopting market orientation strategies was not uniformed; majority of respondents admitted that high competition from larger firms is the greatest challenge in adopting market orientation strategies for SMEs in the Upper

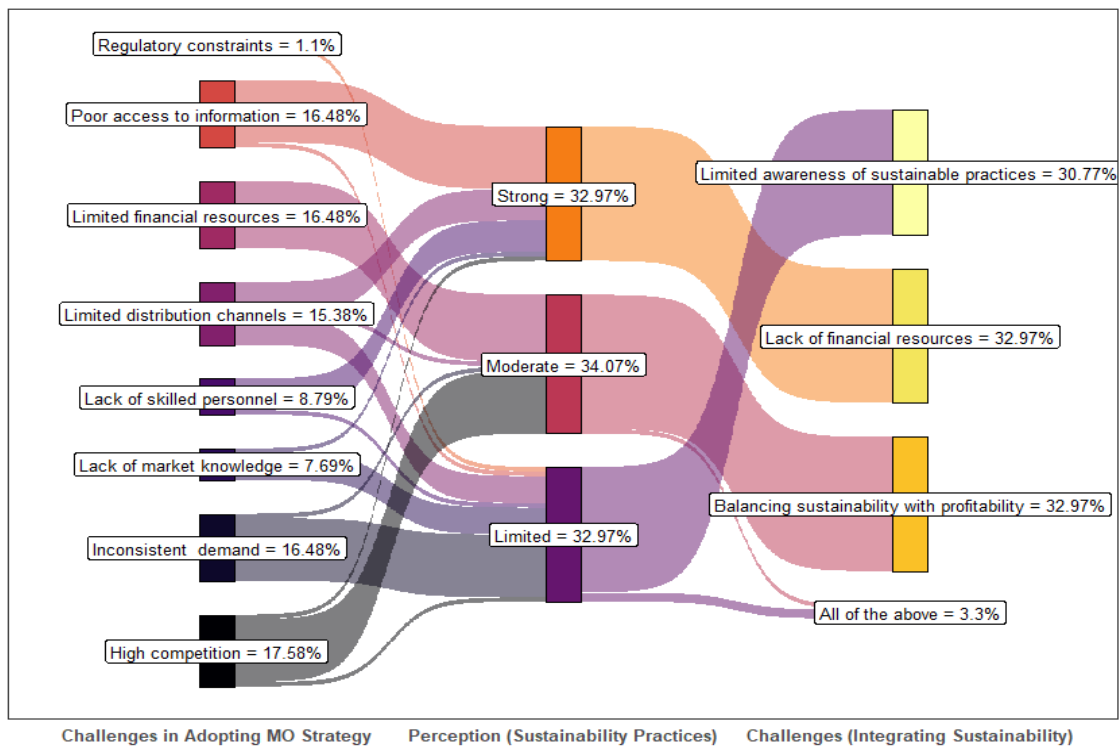
West region of Ghana (i.e., representing approximately 17.6% of the entire sample). Poor access to information, limited financial resources and inconsistent demand were the next challenges (in adopting market orientation strategies) with the highest response (i.e., they represented approximately 16.5% each of the entire sample)

Furthermore, limited distribution channels, lack of skilled personnel, and lack market knowledge followed in a chronological order with approximately 15.4%, 8.8% and 7.7% of the entire sample. On the other hand, the least captured challenges in adopting market orientation strategies this survey was regulatory constraints. It also represented 1.1% of the entire sample.

The next distribution under consideration is the distribution of respondents' perception of sustainability practice. It can be seen that the distribution was fairly uniformed, however, it was a little biased towards who responded "moderate". Thus, majority of respondents admitted that moderate efforts are being made towards the sustainability practice of SMEs in the Upper West region (representing approximately 34.1% of respondents). On other hand, respondents who admitted that strong commitment and limited focus are being made towards sustainability practice of SMEs were 32.97% each of the entire sample.

The last distribution to consider is the challenge SMEs face in integrating sustainability practices. Although the distribution is not uniformed, it is interesting to note that percentages recorded for three out of the four categories were fairly at par. Thus, 30.77%, 32.97% and 32.7% of respondents acknowledged that challenges SMEs face in integrating sustainability practices were limited awareness of sustainable practice, lack of financial resources and the difficulty in balancing sustainability with profitability respectively. However, there approximately 3.3% of respondents who

acknowledged that the three aforementioned challenges are the setbacks SMEs face in integrating sustainability practices.



**Figure 4.2: Distribution of challenges in adopting market orientation strategies, perception of sustainability practice and challenges that SME’s face in integrating sustainability practices.**

#### 4.5 Structural Equation Model (Formal Analysis)

This section of the study presents the structural equation analysis. It focuses on the results from the measurement model through to the structural equation model. Firstly, the validity and reliability of the measurement model will be thoroughly discussed to affirm its acceptability. Secondly, the model fit measures used in this study will also be investigated to ascertain how the hypothesised models differ from the baseline (null) models. Thirdly, the statistical significance of the various hypotheses will be thoroughly investigated.

### 4.5.1 Measurement Model

This aspect of the structural equation model (SEM) assesses the relationships between latent variables and their various measurement items. Thus, assessing construct reliability and validity. The Smart PLS 4 and the R statistical software were used for this analysis; note that the validity and reliability of the measurement model were assessed by

- internal consistency reliability
- indicator reliability
- convergent validity; and
- discriminant validity.

The results garnered for the aforementioned measurement model indicators are presented in the following subsections.

**Table 4.4: Constructs Reliability and Validity**

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
IN	0.768	0.852	0.594
MO	0.808	0.872	0.633
PF	0.755	0.835	0.505

### 4.5.2 Internal Consistency Reliability

The measurement model in this study can confirm satisfactory internal reliability. A measurement model is said to have a satisfactory internal consistency reliability when the composite reliability (CR) of each construct exceeds the threshold value of 0.7. The evidence can be found in Table 4.4(presents the values of Cronbach's Alpha, composite reliability and the AVE of each construct). Notice that the CR recorded for IN, MO and PF are 0.852, 0.872 and 0.835 respectively. These results

garnered imply that the measurement items used to represent the constructs poses satisfactory internal consistency reliability.

#### **4.5.3 Indicator Reliability**

The second and third columns in Table 4.5 present factor loadings and the p-values of the CFA model. It can be observed that all items are all statistically significant (i.e., p-value <0.05), which indicates that they reflect their underlying latent constructs. Note the indicator reliability of a measurement model is assessed by examining the factor loadings of items. A measurement model is said to have a satisfactory indicator reliability when factor loadings of items are 0.7 and above. Per the results garnered in our analysis, all items in the measurement model had factor loadings exceeding the threshold (0.70) with the exception of three items, IN5, MO1, PF1 and PF3 which recorded factor loadings of 0.604, 0.668, 0.683 and 0.652 respectively. Notice that the factor loadings of these items are very close to the threshold (0.70); in view of this these items will not be excluded from the analysis (Hair et al., 2019). However, measurement items IN1 and MO2 were not seen as reliable indicators to measure IN and MO respectively (i.e., they recorded very low factor loadings of 0.461 and 0.485 respectively).

#### **4.5.4 Convergent Validity**

The presents of adequate convergent validity are evident in the measurement model (see Table 4.4); note that convergent validity of a measurement model is assessed by average variance extracted (AVE) of the constructs. A measurement model is said to have an adequate measurement validity when the AVE value of each construct is greater or equal 0.50. It can be observed from Table 4.4 that the AVE values of the constructs are greater than the threshold (0.50). Thus, the AVE values recorded for IN, MO and PF are 0.594, 0.633 and 0.505 respectively.

**Table 4.5: Measurement Items, their R-Squares and VIF's**

<b>Constructs and their Respective Items</b>	<b>Factor Loadings</b>	<b>P-Values</b>	<b>VIF</b>
<b>IN [R<sup>2</sup> (0.263); R<sup>2</sup> Adjusted (0.255)]</b>			
Our business encourages employees to develop new ideas and solutions. [IN1]	0.461 (Dropped)	1.129	0.001
Our business invests in new technologies to enhance its operations. [IN2]	0.83	1.695	0.000
Our business frequently launches new products or services. [IN3]	0.764	1.61	0.000
Our business encourages collaboration and knowledge sharing among employees. [IN4]	0.859	2.004	0.000
Our business stays ahead of industry trends by being innovative. [IN5]	0.604	1.231	0.000
<b>MO</b>			
Our business prioritizes understanding customer needs. [MO1]	0.668	1.372	0.000
Our business regularly collects feedback from customers to improve its products and services. [MO2]	0.485 (Dropped)	1.135	0.000
Our business responds quickly to changes in customer preferences. [MO3]	0.763	1.711	0.000
Our business monitors competitors' actions to remain competitive. [MO4]	0.879	2.071	0.000
Our business allocates resources to market research and analysis. [MO5]	0.856	2.046	0.000
<b>PF [R<sup>2</sup> (0.216); R<sup>2</sup> Adjusted (0.199)]</b>			
Our business has seen an increase in profitability over the last year. [PF1]	0.652	1.38	0.000
Our business has experienced growth in market share. [PF2]	0.789	1.526	0.000
Customer satisfaction has improved in our business. [PF3]	0.683	1.467	0.000
Our business has achieved its strategic goals over the past year. [PF4]	0.768	1.672	0.000
Our business has improved its operational efficiency. [PF5]	0.648	1.412	0.000

#### 4.5.5 Discriminant Validity

In this study, three discriminant validity criteria are used to assess the validity of the measurement model; the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio (HTMT), the Fornell and Larcker's (1981), and the cross loadings techniques. The Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) technique is one of the best the approaches to determine discriminant validity between constructs. The HTMT technique assesses the ratio of between-trait correlations to within-trait correlations of two constructs. Thus, it examines the correlations of indicators across constructs to the correlations of indicators within a construct. Note that the formulators of the technique indicated that discriminant validity is established between two reflective constructs given that the HTMT value is less than 0.90 (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2015). In view of this, our measurement model has adequate discriminant validity using the HTMT technique. Thus, all values in the multi-trait matrix are less than 0.90. Henseler et al. (2015) introduced HTMT as a superior alternative to traditional methods (e.g., Fornell-Larcker). They argue that HTMT better detects discriminant validity issues by comparing correlations between different constructs (heterotrait) to those within the same construct (monotrait). Values below 0.90 (or 0.85 for conservative thresholds) confirm constructs are distinct.

The second discriminant validity measure to consider is the Fornell and Larcker's technique. This technique is centred on the AVE in relation to the correlation of the latent variable. Thus, for a measurement model to have an adequate discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE of each latent variable must exceed its correlations with the other latent variable we are measuring. Fornell & Larcker (1981) established this benchmark, emphasizing that a construct should share more variance with its indicators than with other constructs in the model. This ensures each latent variable is empirically distinct. Franke & Sarstedt (2019) highlight that HTMT is more sensitive

to discriminant validity issues than Fornell-Larcker, especially in complex models. Discriminant validity ensures constructs are theoretically distinct and not measuring the same phenomenon. Without it, relationships between variables may be conflated, leading to biased conclusions.

Pairing both techniques strengthens validity claims.

With this criterion too, we can firmly establish that our measurement model has adequate validity. It can be noticed that all off-diagonal values are less than the diagonal values in their corresponding rows and columns. Thus, the square roots of the AVE's (diagonal elements) exceed inter-correlation value between latent variables (see Table 4.6). The last discriminant validity measure we employed is the cross loadings. This technique examines all items and assesses the relationships (correlations) between them all latent variables under study. Voorhees et al. (2016) emphasize that poor discriminant validity can invalidate model interpretations, particularly in marketing and management research. Discriminant validity ensures constructs are theoretically distinct and not measuring the same phenomenon. Without it, relationships between variables may be conflated, leading to biased conclusions.

**Table 4.6: Discriminant Validity using the HTMT and Fornell and Larcker's Techniques**

<i>Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio</i>			
	<b>IN</b>	<b>MO</b>	<b>PF</b>
<b>IN</b>			
<b>MO</b>	0.614		
<b>PF</b>	0.57	0.401	
<i>Fornell and Larcker's Criterion</i>			
<b>IN</b>	<b>0.771</b>		
<b>MO</b>	0.513	<b>0.796</b>	
<b>PF</b>	0.453	0.322	<b>0.711</b>

For a measurement model to achieve adequate validity, items must have higher loadings on the latent variable they are measuring as compared to other latent variables in the study. Hair et al. (2022) emphasize that cross-loadings analysis is essential for confirming discriminant validity. Items with higher loadings on their intended construct Gefen & Straub (2005) argue that cross-loadings differences  $\geq 0.10$  (i.e., an item's loading on its parent construct is at least 0.10 higher than on other constructs) empirically validate discriminant validity ensure constructs are distinct.

On the other hand, if a particular item correlates more to other latent variable other than its latent variable (parent construct), then the measurement model is not valid. It can be seen clearly in Table 4 that all the measurement items correlate higher with their parents constructs as compared to the other constructs. This technique (cross loadings) also confirms that our measurements model has adequate validity. In a nutshell, the reliability and validity tests conducted on the measurement model are satisfactory. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR)  $\geq 0.70$ . Nunnally & Bernstein (1994) established these thresholds, stating that values  $\geq 0.70$  indicate acceptable reliability. This indicates that measurement items used in measuring the latent constructs in this study are reliable and valid; hence appropriate for estimating parameters in the structural model.

Anderson & Gerbing (1988) advocate a two-step approach: validating the measurement model before testing structural relationships. Hair et al. (2022) warn that poor measurement validity can lead to biased structural path estimates. Hulland (1999) highlights that such results confirm constructs are empirically distinct and free from redundancy. Meeting reliability (Cronbach's alpha/CR), convergent validity (AVE), and discriminant validity (cross-loadings, Fornell-Larcker, HTMT) thresholds ensures your measurement model is robust.

**Table 4.7: Discriminant Validity using Cross Loadings**

Measurement Items	Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) $\geq 0.70$ .		
	Nunnally & Bernstein (1994) established these thresholds, stating that values $\geq 0.70$ indicate acceptable reliability.		
	<b>Constructs</b>		
	<b>IN</b>	<b>MO</b>	<b>PF</b>
<b>IN2</b>	0.83	0.466	0.39
<b>IN3</b>	0.764	0.408	0.252
<b>IN4</b>	0.859	0.434	0.426
<b>IN5</b>	0.604	0.236	0.31
<b>MO1</b>	0.314	0.668	0.156
<b>MO3</b>	0.295	0.763	0.226
<b>MO4</b>	0.528	0.879	0.307
<b>MO5</b>	0.436	0.856	0.301
<b>PF1</b>	0.324	0.195	0.668
<b>PF2</b>	0.427	0.195	0.78
<b>PF3</b>	0.221	0.163	0.677
<b>PF4</b>	0.334	0.289	0.777
<b>PF5</b>	0.252	0.304	0.639

#### 4.6 Structural Model

To investigate the structural model aspect in SEM (i.e., assess the relationships between latent variables), it is prudent to check the model fit. Table 4.8 presents model fit statistics for the structural model. Six model fit measures were employed, viz; the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), Chi-Square, and R-squared. Though the analysis has so far been performed with the Smart PLS 4 statistical software, the RMSEA, the CFI and TLI values were obtained by using the R software (i.e., the Smart PLS 4 does not generate the aforementioned model fit

measures). Note that the RMSEA is an absolute fit index; thus, it examines how different a hypothesized model is from a perfect model. On the other hand, the CFI and the TLI compare the fit of a substantive model to a null model. Thus, they are incremental fit indices that compare the fit of a hypothesised model to baseline model. All these model fit indicators show that the structural model is acceptable. Thus, the SRMR value was 0.064 (a value less than 0.08 is considered as a good fit) which is less than the threshold of 0.08 (Henseler et al., 2014). Also, a model is considered to fit well if its RMSEA is less or equal to 0.05. In this analysis, the value recorded for RMSEA is less than 0.05 (see Table 4.8). Furthermore, the value recorded for CFI and TLI (values closer to 1 better fit) indicate that the model is acceptable. It worth noting that the problem of multicollinearity was not found in the model.

**Table 4.8: Model Fit**

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Values</b>
Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)	0.062
Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)	0.03
Comparative Fit Index (CFI)	0.915
Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI)	0.901
Chi-Square (P-value)	0.000

The VIF recorded for each measurement item was less than 5, this is an indication that the model is free from the problem of multicollinearity (see Table 4.5). Hair et al. (2022) state that VIF values below 5 suggest acceptable levels of multicollinearity, while values  $\geq 5$  imply problematic correlations between predictors. O'Brien (2007) confirms that VIF thresholds of 5–10 are considered "moderate to high," warranting further investigation. Your model's VIF  $< 5$  demonstrates robustness against collinearity issues.

The R-squared (coefficient of determination) is a very vital indicator when it comes to measuring model. It measures the amount of variance in a response variable that is explained by the model. Note that the higher the R-squared value the better the predictive ability of the structural model. It can be observed that the MO explains 26.3% of the variance in IN (see Table 4.10). Thus, a little more over 26% of the variability in the IN is explained by MO. Falk & Miller (1992) argue that  $R^2 \geq 0.10$  is acceptable in exploratory social science research, as even small effects can be meaningful. Your  $R^2$  values (22% for PF, 26.3% for IN) exceed this threshold.

Furthermore, the R-squared recorded for the main dependent variable (PF) is approximately 22%. This also indicates that approximately 22% of the variation in PF is explained by both MO and PF.

MO accounts for 26.3% of the variance in IN. This aligns with Cohen's (1988) "medium" effect size ( $R^2 = 0.13-0.26$ ), suggesting MO has a meaningful influence on IN.

Explained Variance in PF (22%):

MO and other predictors explain 22% of PF's variance. While modest, this is consistent with studies in organizational behavior and marketing, where  $R^2$  values often range from 10% to 30% due to complex, multi-causal phenomena.

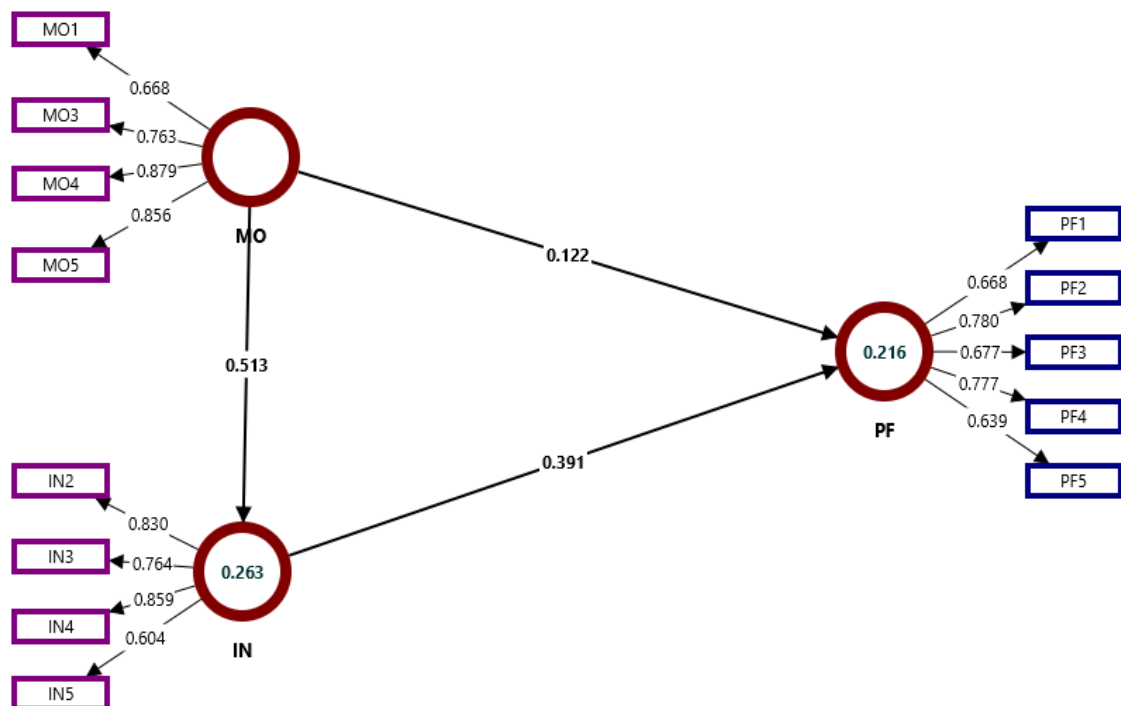
Thus, more than 20% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the model.

Since our structural model is acceptable, we will now dive into assessing our hypotheses. Below are the hypotheses we want to investigate.

- H<sub>1</sub>: MO relates positively with PF
- H<sub>2</sub>: MO relates positively with IN

- H<sub>3</sub>: NI relates positively with PF
- H<sub>4</sub>: IN mediates the relationship between MO and PF
- H<sub>5</sub>: Gender moderates the relationship between MO and PF
- H<sub>6</sub>: Gender moderates the relationship between MO and IN
- H<sub>7</sub>: Gender moderates the relationship between IN and PF

The first hypothesis seeks to examine whether marketing orientation positively influences business performance. It can be observed that the estimate recorded for MO on PF is positive. Although the estimate recorded for the relationship between MO and PF is positive, market orientation of a firm has no significant impact on their performance. Thus, the p-value recorded for the relationship between MO and PF was more than the threshold of 0.05. This indicates that market orientation of a firm does not influence their performance at 5%.



**Figure 4.3: Structural Equation Plot**

The second hypothesis also assessed whether market orientation by companies positively relates to business innovations. However, the narration is different from H<sub>1</sub>; it can be noticed that the estimate recorded for MO on IN is positive and statistically significant at 0.1%. This also implies that business innovations are expected to increase by 0.51% when there is a percentage increase in marketing orientation. Liao et al. (2003) found similar positive relationships between market orientation and innovation in the context of new product development. The 0.51% increase in business innovations for a percentage increase in market orientation quantifies the practical impact of this relationship. Thus, all other things being equal, the innovations of businesses will upsurge if companies provide good marketing orientation. Kohli & Jaworski (1990) argue that market orientation enhances a firm's ability to generate and disseminate market intelligence, which is crucial for innovation. Han et al. (1998) found that market orientation fosters a culture that encourages innovation by focusing on customer needs and competitor activities

Furthermore, the third hypothesis also examines whether there is a positive relationship between the business innovations of firms and their performances. The narration is not different from the preceding hypothesis (H<sub>2</sub>). The estimate recorded for IN on PF is also positive and statistically significant at 1%. Thus, the model recorded a p-value that was less than 0.05 and an estimate 0.391. These values indicate that the relationship existing between the business innovations of firms and their performance is positively significant. Thus, the performance of businesses is expected to increase by approximately 0.4% if business innovation of firms increases by one percent.

The fourth hypothesis leads us to performing a mediation analysis (i.e., H<sub>4</sub>: In mediates the relationship between MO and PF). It can be seen from Table 4.9 that the direct relationship between MO and PF is not statistically significant at 5%. However,

the p-value recorded for the indirect relationship is less than 0.05, indicating a statistically significant relationship. Note also that the relationships between the mediating variable (IN) and both the dependent (PF) and the independent (MO) variables are all statistically significant. Zhao et al. (2010) discuss how a non-significant direct effect can still support mediation if the indirect effect is significant.

The p-value for the indirect relationship is  $< 0.05$ , indicating that IN mediates the relationship between MO and PF. Preacher & Hayes (2004) emphasize that a significant indirect effect confirms mediation, even if the direct effect is non-significant. Given the aforementioned results, we can affirm that there is a complete mediating role of IN in the relationship between MO and PF. Thus, business innovations of firms completely mediate the relationship between market orientation and business performances.

**Table 4.9: Regression Estimates**

Hypotheses	Estimates	Standard Error	P-Values	Remarks
IN -> PF	0.391	0.114	0.001	Supported
MO -> IN	0.513	0.105	0.000	Supported
MO -> PF	0.122	0.132	0.356	Not Supported
MO -> IN -> PF	0.2	0.079	0.012	Supported
Gender x MO -> IN	0.061	0.218	0.781	Not Supported
Gender x MO -> PF	0.112	0.258	0.665	Not Supported
Gender x IN -> PF	-0.305	0.24	0.203	Not Supported

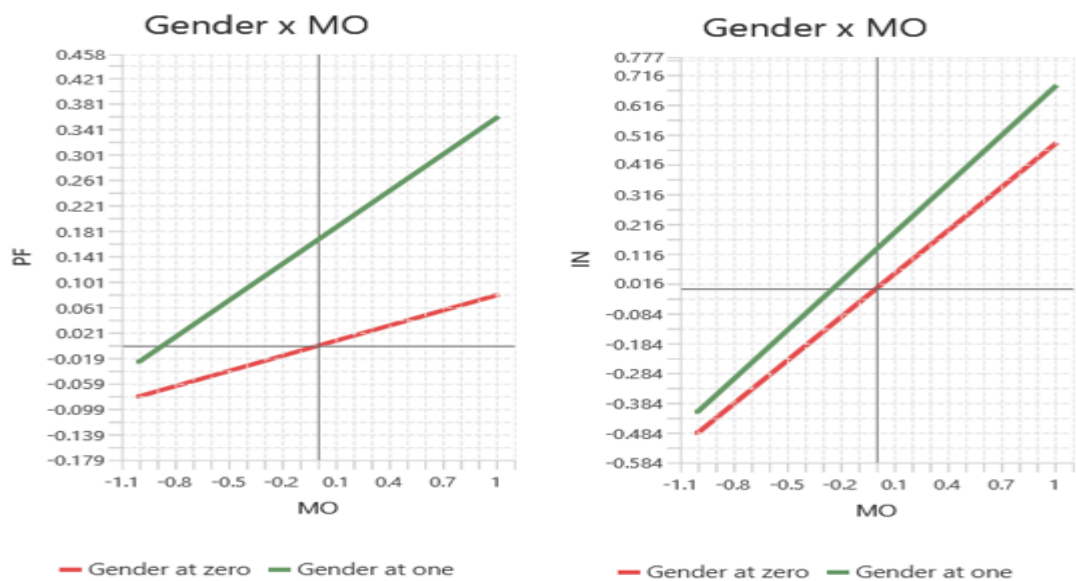
**Table 4.10: R-Squared**

Without Interaction		With Interaction	
Hypotheses	R <sup>2</sup>	Hypotheses	R <sup>2</sup>
IN -> PF	0.216	Gender x IN -> PF	0.24
MO -> PF	0.216	Gender x MO -> PF	0.24
MO -> IN	0.263	Gender x MO -> IN	0.268

The hypothesis 5 seeks to examine whether gender moderates the relationship between MO and PF. In moderation analysis, the R-squared, the interactive plot/slope analysis plot and significance level of the moderation effect are used to assess the moderating variable. Notice that without the moderating effect (Gender\*MO) the R-squared of the dependent variable (PF) was 0.216 (see Table 4.10). Thus, approximately 22% of the variation in the PF is explained by the model. However, with inclusion of the moderating effect (Gender\*MO) the R-squared increased to 0.24 (i.e., a difference of 0.024). This indicates that the inclusion of the moderating variable (Gender) has increased the variability in the dependent variable by approximately 2.4%. Furthermore, the statistical significance of the interactive term was also analysed (see Table 4.9). The results garnered revealed that the estimate recorded for the interactive term was positive (0.112), indicating that gender moderates the relationship between MO and PF. However, the p-value recorded for the interactive term is more than 0.05; this indicates the moderating variable is not statistically significant at 5%. Hence, the moderating variable (Gender) does not have any impact on the relationship between the market orientation of a firm and the business performance. The interactive plot clearly says otherwise, it can be seen clearly from the graph (see the left diagram of Figure 4.4) the two-coloured lines are not parallel to each other (i.e., the green line represents female whilst the red line also represents male). Notice also the all the lines have a positive slope (i.e., moving from the left bottom to the top right of the diagram). This implies that the effect is positive and impactful. The relationship between market orientation and firm's performance is more strengthened for females as compared to males. Thus, the green line is steeper than the red line.

Furthermore, the estimate recorded for the relationship between Gender\*MO and IN were also not statistically significant at 5%. As earlier indicated, the R-squared, the interactive plot/slope analysis plot and significance level of the moderation effect are used to assess the moderating variable. Although the significance level of the moderation effect suggests that gender is not impactful in moderating the relationship between marketing orientation and business innovation, the R-squared and interactive plot analysis suggest otherwise. Notice that

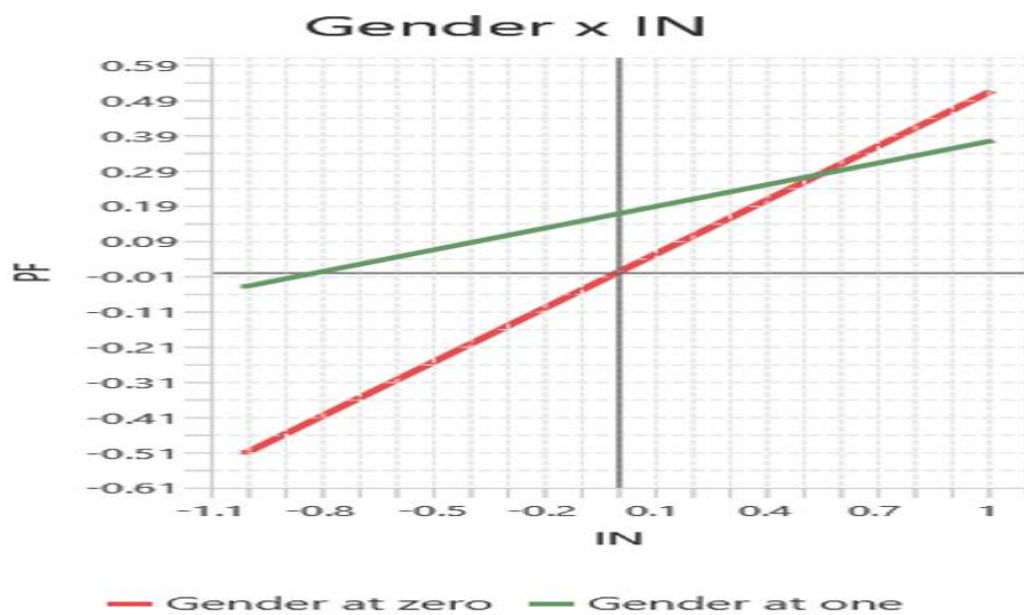
without the moderating effect (Gender\*MO) the R-squared of the dependent variable (IN) was 0.263 (see 4.10). Thus, approximately 26% of the variation in the IN is explained by the model. Nevertheless, with the inclusion of the moderating effect (Gender\*MO) the R-squared increased to 0.268 (i.e., a difference of 0.005). This indicates that the inclusion of the moderating variable (Gender) has increased the variability in the dependent variable by approximately 0.5%. Furthermore, interactive plot analysis (see the right-side diagram on Figure 4.4) indicates that the moderating variable (Gender) is impactful since both lines are not parallel to each other. Like the hypothesis 5, females strengthen the relationship between market orientation and business innovations of firms as compared their male counterparts.



**Figure 4.4: Simple Slope Analysis plots of Gender on the relationships between MO, PF and IN**

In a similar manner to hypotheses 5 and 6, the estimate recorded for the relationship between Gender\*IN and PF was also not statistically significant at 5% for hypothesis 7. However, the R-squared and interactive plot analysis suggest that gender is impactful in moderating the relationship between business innovations and firms' performances. With regards to the R-squared recorded, the one without the moderating effect (Gender\*IN) was 0.216 (see Table 4.10). Thus, approximately 22% of the variation in the PF is explained by the

model. However, with inclusion of the moderating effect (Gender\*IN) the R-squared increased to 0.24 (i.e., a difference of 0.024). This indicates that the inclusion of the moderating variable (Gender) has increased the variability in the dependent variable by approximately 2.4%. More so, the graphical evidence in Figure 4.5 also indicates that the gender of an employee positively moderates the relationship between business innovation of a firm and business performance. The two lines (green line indicates female employees whilst the red line also indicates male employees) in Figure 5 had upward slopes (positive slope). Notice that the red line is very steeper as compared to the green line. This implies that the effect of business innovation on firm's performance is more strengthened by males as compared to females.



**Figure 4.5: Simple Slope Analysis plot of Gender on the relationship between IN and PF**

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

#### 5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents summary of the findings from the analysis in the previous chapter. It also provides recommendations based on the findings to improve the performances of advertising agencies in Ghana.

#### 5.1 Conclusion

The information garnered from the analysis indicates that the age distribution was fairly uniformed. Thus, there was a fair representation of all age categories in field of SME; indicating that rich and fair information was captured for this study. Furthermore, the gender distribution was also fairly uniformed. This also indicates that there was fair representation of gender in this study. Thus, ideas of SMEs from the Upper West region of males and females were fairly captured. In a similar fashion, the distribution regarding the type of SME businesses was fairly uniformed. Thus, SMEs in the fields of agriculture, services, retailing, manufacturing and others were fairly captured. On the other hand, the educational level of respondents was not uniformly distributed; it was biased towards the literate class. Thus, majority of respondents we sampled had tertiary education (i.e., a large majority of over 60% of respondents). This result indicates that the literacy level in these SMEs in the Upper West is high.

Regarding the main objective (i.e., assessing the impact of the market orientation on the performances of SMEs in the Upper West region of Ghana), it was established from our analysis that all the items used in measuring our constructs (latent variables) were statistically significant. Thus, all items are correlated with their respective constructs. Also, the p-values of some the paths/relationships were less than

0.05, indicating that there exist relationships between each of these independent variables and the dependent variable (SMEs performances). Thus,

- Market orientation positively improved the innovations of SMEs in the Upper West region.
- Innovations positively improved the performance of SMEs in the Upper West region.
- Innovation completely mediates the relationship between market orientation the performance of SMEs the Upper West region.

Per our data, it was also established that the direct relationship between market orientation and SMEs performance was not statistically significant at 5% (see Table 6). This indicates that the market orientation does not have any impact on the performances of SMEs in the Upper West region of Ghana.

With regards to the moderating effects, we used the R-squared, the interactive plot/slope analysis plot and significance level of the moderation effect were used to assess the moderating variable. Using significance level to assess the moderating effects of gender on the relationships between MO and PF, MO and IN, IN and PF, gender was not impactful. However, the moderating variable (gender) was impactful using the R-squared and interactive plot approach. Thus,

- The relationship between market orientation and firm's performance is more strengthened for females as compared to males.
- Females strengthen the relationship between market orientation and business innovations of firms as compared their male counterparts.
- The effect of business innovation on firm's performance is more strengthened by males as compared to females.

## 5.2 Recommendation

### 1. Strengthen Market Orientation

- **Enhance Customer Feedback Mechanisms:** Given that a significant number of businesses already collect customer feedback, it is crucial to formalize this process. Implementing structured feedback tools, such as surveys and focus groups, can provide deeper insights into customer needs and preferences.
- **Invest in Market Research:** Allocate resources to conduct regular market research to understand industry trends and customer behavior better. This investment can help businesses stay competitive and responsive to market changes.

### 2. Foster Innovation

- **Encourage a Culture of Creativity:** Organizations should promote an innovative culture by encouraging employees to share ideas and collaborate on projects. Initiatives like brainstorming sessions or innovation workshops can stimulate creativity.
- **Leverage Technology:** Businesses should invest in new technologies that enhance operational efficiency. This could include adopting digital tools for operations, customer engagement, and data analysis.

### 3. Address Challenges in Adoption

- **Develop Strategies for Competitive Intelligence:** Since high competition from larger firms is a significant challenge, SMEs should develop strategies to monitor competitors effectively. This could involve analyzing competitors' marketing strategies and product offerings to identify gaps and opportunities.

- **Enhance Skills Development:** To combat the lack of skilled personnel, SMEs should invest in training programs for employees. Collaborating with educational institutions for skill development can also help bridge this gap.

#### **4. Improve Sustainability Practices**

- **Increase Awareness of Sustainable Practices:** Conduct workshops or seminars to educate SMEs about sustainable practices and their benefits. This can help improve their commitment to sustainability.
- **Balance Profitability with Sustainability:** Encourage businesses to adopt practices that integrate sustainability into their core operations without compromising profitability. This could involve optimizing resource use or implementing eco-friendly technologies.

#### **5. Monitor Performance Metrics**

- **Regularly Review Performance Indicators:** Establish a system for regularly reviewing key performance indicators (KPIs) related to market orientation, innovation, and customer satisfaction. This ongoing assessment can help businesses adjust strategies as needed.
- **Focus on Customer Satisfaction:** Since improving customer satisfaction is a noted challenge, businesses should prioritize understanding customer expectations and enhancing service delivery through targeted training and process improvements.

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## APPENDIX

### RESEARCH TOPIC: EFFECTS OF MARKET ORIENTATION ON SMES SUSTAINABILITY IN UPPER WEST REGION

#### INTRODUCTION

My name is Patrick Folitse, a final year master's student of the Department of Marketing and Entrepreneurship, SDD-UBIDS. I am Conducting a study into effects of market orientation on SMES sustainability in upper west region. You have been selected as one of the respondents from whom data was used collected. All responses was used kept confidential. Any information we include in our report does not identify you as the respondent. Remember, you are not obliged to talk about anything you do not want to.

#### SECTION A: Demographic Data

1. Gender: a) Male b) Female
2. Age: a) 18-24 years b) 25-34 years c) 35-44 years d) 45-54 years e) 55 years and above
3. Educational Level: a) Primary school or below b) Secondary school c) Diploma/Associate degree d) Bachelor's degree e) Master's degree or higher
4. Type of Business: a) Manufacturing b) Retail c) Services d) Agriculture e) Other (please specify: \_\_\_\_\_)
5. Years in Business: a) Less than 1 year b) 1-3 years c) 4-6 years d) 7-10 years e) More than 10 years

**SECTION B: TO EXAMINE THE EFFECTS OF MARKET ORIENTATION  
ON THE PROFITABILITY OF SMES IN UPPER WEST.**

Each statement is rated on a scale from 1 to 5:

- 1 = Strongly Disagree
- 2 = Disagree
- 3 = Neutral
- 4 = Agree
- 5 = Strongly Agree

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Market Orientation</b>	Our business prioritizes understanding customer needs.					
	Our business regularly collects feedback from customers to improve its products and services.					
	Our business responds quickly to changes in customer preferences.					
	Our business monitors competitors' actions to remain competitive.					
	Our business allocates resources to market research and analysis.					
<b>Innovation</b>	Our business encourages employees to develop new ideas and solutions.					
	Our business invests in new technologies to enhance its operations.					

	Our business frequently launches new products or services.					
	Our business encourages collaboration and knowledge sharing among employees.					
	Our business stays ahead of industry trends by being innovative.					
<b>Performance</b>	Our business has seen an increase in profitability over the last year.					
	Our business has experienced growth in market share.					
	Customer satisfaction has improved in our business.					
	Our business has achieved its strategic goals over the past year.					
	Our business has improved its operational efficiency.					

**SECTION C: TO IDENTIFY THE CHALLENGES FACED BY SMES IN ADOPTING A MARKET ORIENTATION STRATEGY IN UPPER WEST.**

1. What are the main challenges you face in adopting a market orientation strategy for your small business in Upper West?
2. How do you see the level of market competition for your small business in Upper West? a) Low competition b) Moderate competition c) High competition d) Unsure
3. What problems do you face in gathering market information for your small business in Upper West?
4. What internal challenges stop you from implementing a market orientation strategy in your small business in Upper West?
5. How do you see the level of customer engagement and feedback for your small business in Upper West? a) High level of engagement and feedback b) Moderate level of engagement and feedback c) Low level of engagement and feedback d) Unsure
6. What external factors make it hard to adopt a market orientation strategy in Upper West for your small business? a) Unpredictable market demand b) Limited access to distribution channels c) Regulatory constraints d) All of the above
7. How ready is your small business to adopt a market orientation strategy in Upper West? a) Very ready with dedicated resources and leadership support b) Moderately ready with some initiatives in place c) Not very ready due to resource constraints or company culture d) Unsure
8. What resources or support would help you the most in adopting a market orientation strategy in Upper West for your small business? a) Financial help for market research and implementation b) Training programs for employees c) Access to mentorship or consulting services d) All of the above

9. How do you see the role of government policies and programs in supporting small businesses in Upper West to adopt market orientation strategies? a) Very supportive b) Somewhat supportive c) Not supportive d) Unsure
10. What strategies have you tried or thought about to overcome the challenges of adopting a market orientation strategy in Upper West for your small business? a) Working with other local businesses for market insights b) Using digital marketing tools for customer engagement c) Participating in industry-specific events or trade shows d) All of the above

**SECTION D: TO EXAMINE HOW SMES IN UPPER WEST CAN IMPROVE THEIR SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH MARKET ORIENTATION.**

1. What is your perception of sustainability practices among SMEs in the Upper West region? a) Strong commitment to sustainability b) Moderate efforts towards sustainability c) Limited focus on sustainability d) Unsure
2. What challenges do you believe SMEs in the Upper West region face in integrating sustainability into their operations through market orientation? a) Limited awareness of sustainable practices b) Lack of financial resources for sustainable initiatives c) Difficulty in balancing sustainability with profitability d) All of the above
3. How do you perceive the importance of market orientation in enhancing the sustainability of SMEs in the Upper West region? a) Critical for long-term sustainability b) Somewhat important for sustainability efforts c) Not very significant for sustainability d) Unsure
4. What strategies do you think SMEs in the Upper West region can implement to improve their sustainability through market orientation? a) Conducting market

research to identify eco-friendly consumer preferences b) Incorporating sustainability criteria into product/service development c) Communicating sustainability efforts to customers through marketing channels d) All of the above

5. How do you assess the level of collaboration among SMEs in the Upper West region regarding sustainability initiatives? a) Strong collaboration and knowledge-sharing b) Limited collaboration with occasional joint efforts c) Minimal collaboration and information exchange d) Unsure
6. What role do you believe consumers play in driving sustainability initiatives among SMEs in the Upper West region? a) Significant influencers of sustainable business practices b) Moderate influence on sustainability efforts c) Limited impact on sustainability initiatives d) Unsure
7. How do you perceive the influence of government policies and regulations on sustainability practices among SMEs in the Upper West region? a) Strong motivators for sustainability compliance b) Moderate impact on sustainability initiatives c) Limited influence on sustainability practices d) Unsure
8. What specific resources or support do you think SMEs in the Upper West region need to enhance their sustainability through market orientation? a) Access to funding for sustainability projects b) Training and capacity-building on sustainable business practices c) Networking opportunities with sustainability-focused organizations d) All of the above
9. How do you assess the level of awareness and education on sustainability issues among SMEs in the Upper West region? a) High awareness and understanding of sustainability concepts b) Moderate awareness with some gaps in

understanding c) Limited awareness and knowledge of sustainability principles  
d) Unsure

10. What barriers do you believe hinder SMEs in the Upper West region from fully embracing sustainability through market orientation? a) Perceived cost of sustainability initiatives b) Lack of clear guidance on sustainable business practices c) Limited access to sustainable resources and technologies d) All of the above