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SME's MARKETING PROBLEMS: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

The paper sets a platform discussing the barriers hindering the marketing activities and plans of the Small Medium Enterprise. The small firms possess certain characteristics, which serve to differentiate them from the large organization. The study discussed the characteristic of Small Medium Enterprise and differentiates them from the larger organization. Many observed problems stemmed from businesses failing to practice marketing or produce marketing strategy and plans. The classical management concepts are unsuitable for application in a Small Medium Enterprises context, with research suggesting non-implementation of theoretically based marketing practice is the rule rather than the exception in the small firm. This paper reviews issues pertaining to marketing practice of strategy and planning in the small firm, acknowledges inherent weaknesses with regard to marketing in small firms, reviews marketing practice in the context of small firm characteristics, and considers the roles of owner/managers in improving small firm's marketing practice. The researcher used the desk study reviewing previous studies in the related field. The finding of this paper is that the marketing function in Small Medium Enterprises is hindered by constraints such as poor cash flow, lack of marketing expertise, a lack of strategic expertise, business size, and tactical customer related problems. The recommendation done through the analysis is that Small business marketing can be done through the use of Small Medium Enterprises marketing toolkit that guide and help to develop and to implement their marketing efforts. Small Medium Enterprises must focus on being closer to the customers in every sense since thus were where most of their strength and possibilities exists and a well-planned and well implemented marketing strategy helps Small Medium Enterprises to present strong value proposition that build customers loyalty.

KEYWORDS

SMEs, marketing, SME marketing, marketing barriers, role of marketing.

INTRODUCTION

Scholars debate that mainstream marketing theories is focusing on planning, marketing research, advertising and the implementation of marketing mix (4Ps and 7Ps). These theories are more designed for large organization where financial resources and marketing expertise are readily available (Kotler, et al., 2008; Jobber, 2009). However, in the existing literature the large organizational models applied to the small firms setting has been criticised (Gilmore, et al., 2001). Whereas, writers such as Kotler define marketing as "a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and values with others" which may not necessarily apply to the small firm context (Kotler et al., 2008:7). The Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have their own unique characteristics, with their marketing activities which is often restricted by limited resources and marketing expertise (Walsh and Lipinski, 2009). The marketing within SMEs is an important business activity, which could contribute to their growth, therefore there is a need for further research to identify what marketing means and how it is practised within the small business sectors (Blackson and Stokes, 2002). Hence this paper aims to examine the marketing barriers in SMEs and suggest the possible solutions to the barriers, by understanding how SME owners perceive and practise marketing within their different business contexts and outline the role of marketing in SMEs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE**CHARACTERISTIC OF SMEs**

Small Medium Enterprise (SMEs) do not behave in the same way as large organizations especially in responding to the dynamic business environment, experiencing resource constraints how the organisation is structured, and management style adopted (O'Dwyer, et al., 2009). The fundamental difference is that the presences of SME owners / managers are in the business because they are responsible for both the ownership and managerial functions (Reijonen, 2008). On the other hand, the decision making of SME owners / managers' responsibility and the visions of SME owners / managers are often embedded into the organisational characteristics and business operations (Walsh and Lipinski, 2009). However, the management culture of SMEs is more creative, because the small firms setting are relatively simple and less unbending, innovative, and entrepreneurial than large organisations (Carson, 2003). The business environment of an SME is also more flexible, adaptive and change oriented, focused on problem-solving and action oriented compare to large organisations (Thorpe et al., 2006). According to O'Dwyer, et al., (2009) the characteristic of SMEs are driven by the owners / managers' management style; their personality and traits. SMEs owners are risk takers and characterize of being opportunistic, visionary and proactive (Deakins and Freel, 2009). Hence, it is common to find SME owners/managers using "self-marketing" to promote their organisations. Self-marketing is "varied activities undertaken by individuals to make themselves known in the marketplace" (Shepherd, 2005, p.590), which is also closely linked to the concept of personal branding and the importance of branding is crucial to any businesses. According to Peters, (2007) the CEOs of their own companies in today business, the most important job are to be the head marketer for the brand called "You". Writers further emphasises that SME owners/managers represent their organisation and their brands, they focus upon the firms' wellbeing; they tend to be highly motivated in setting individual goals and achieving business growth (Reijonen, 2008). However, SME owners/managers like to have internal locus of control, which provides them with self-confidence and ensures that they have direct control of their own destiny (Delmar, 2009).

OBJECTIVES OF THE PAPER

The major objective of the study is: to examine the barriers of marketing in SME and set up a conceivable suggestion in breaking up the marketing barriers among the SME and also explore the role of marketing in SMEs by understanding how SME owners perceive and practise marketing within their different business contexts.

METHODOLOGY

The paper relies heavily on secondary data. The author review previous studies on marketing of Small Medium and Enterprises, marketing theories and trying to get the thoughts from different school of thought and researchers. The paper set up a platform to debate on the different understanding SME marketing problems and possible solution to problems. The paper discusses on the marketing theory, SME marketing and marketing barriers of SME.

SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (SMEs)

SMEs are non-subsidary, independent firms which employ less than a given number of employees and the number varies across countries. The European Union define SMEs as:

TABLE 1: SME DEFINITIONS USED BY EUROPEAN UNION

Company category	Employees	Turnover	or	Balance sheet Total
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ € 50 million		≤ € 43 million
Small	< 50	≤ € 10 million		≤ € 10 million
Micro	< 10 or 5	≤ € 2 million		≤ € 2 million

Source: OECD 2005

However, some countries set the limit at 200 employees, while the United States considers SME to include firms with fewer than 500 employees (OECD, 2005). Moreover, a discussion of SMEs among officials of the multilateral development institutions, each thinking within the context of the official definition of his or her own institution, the maximum size criteria for SMEs are presented as (Gibson T. & Van der Vaart H. J. 2008):

TABLE 2: SME DEFINITIONS USED BY MULTILATERAL INSTITUTIONS

Institution	Maximum # of Employees	Max. Revenues or Turnover (\$)	Maximum Assets (\$)
World Bank	300	15,000,000	15,000,000
Multilateral Investment Fund (MIF) – Inter-American Development Bank (IADB)	100	3,000,000	(None)
African Development Bank	50	(None)	
Asian Development Bank	No official definition. Uses only definitions of individual national governments.		
UNDP	200	(None)	(None)

Source: Brookings global economy and development, Gibson & V/D Vaart, September 2008

The characteristics of disparities among these definitions are the substantial difference and whatever explains this disproportionality between the definitions, it is unlikely to be a scientific distinction. However, none of these institutions set a minimum definition for SMEs, which gravely compromises any conclusion that can be made. Indeed, the experience with SME entrepreneurs that whether their firm is classified as a “small” or “medium” in size, most entrepreneurs have in mind a future in which they have sales equivalent to hundreds of thousands or even millions of U.S. dollars, and in which their businesses are not “micro” by anyone’s imagination. Therefore, the ambition with respect to the magnitude of their businesses is within neither the imagination nor the foreseeable capacity of any but the rarest of micro entrepreneurs, and certainly such an insufficient number of them as to preclude the expectation of any natural continuum from micro to SME (Gibson, T. & Van der Vaart, H. J. 2008).

MARKETING THEORY

The authors define marketing as “a social and managerial process by which individuals and groups obtain what they need and want through creating and exchanging products and values with others” and this apply to the small firm context due to their unique characteristics (Kotler et al., 2008). The Existing literature has emphasised a need to develop and refine existing marketing models, which can be used to profile the marketing practices in small firms (Moriarty, et al., 2008). However, marketing theories and concepts in our days it has been dominated by large organization and it could be argued that the conventional textbooks marketing definitions theories and models, which are developed based on studies of large organization, may not apply to the context of small firms (Stokes and Wilson, 2010). As a result, the unique characteristics and constraints of SMEs, including the inherent characteristics of SME owners/managers, the dynamic business environment and the lack of resources within SMEs it is inappropriate to assume that SMEs can adopt the same or similar marketing approaches as large organisations (O’Dwyer, et al., 2009a).

According to Gilmore and Carson, (1999) SMEs simply do not adapt to the marketing carried out in larger organisations. However, the marketing theories drawn from conventional textbooks continue to focus primarily on marketing planning, marketing research and the implementation of marketing mix such the 4Ps (price, place, product, promotion) which are more appropriate for large organisations (Jobber, 2009; Kotler, et al., 2008). Moreover, it is believed that marketing is practised by small firms, although the degree of activities varies according to the nature of the industry (Simpson, et al., 2006).

In addition, the research conducted by Blankson, et al., (2006) they point out that small firms do not practise textbook marketing because of their distinct marketing style. Likewise, Gilmore, et al., (2001) and Hill and McGowan, (1999) also state that the marketing characteristics of SMEs are different from the conventional ones of marketing textbooks and that the need to conduct research, which is adapted to the unique characteristics of small firms is apparent.

However, in the earlier decades marketing concept was introduced in the literature in the 1950s that it offered an alternative to sales, production and product concepts. The starting point of marketing concept is customers’ needs and wants (Lusch & Laczniak, 1987; Svensson, 2001). Whereas, according to various writer’s sales concept, a firm aggressively looks for exchange partners for established offerings while the production concept focuses on low production costs and, thus low prices through standardisation and mass production and according to the product concept, it focuses on quality and product development (Duus, 1997).

The marketing concept has been seen as a business philosophy, an ideal or a policy statement and it is said to articulate an ideology that offers a framework for business success (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). On the other hand, marketing concept is a prescription of how a firm achieves its goals. Houston (1986, pp 85) states “an entity achieves its own exchange determined goals most efficiently through a thorough understanding of potential exchange partners and their needs and wants, through a thorough understanding of the costs associated with satisfying those needs and wants, and then designing, producing, and offering products in light of this understanding”.

The marketing concept could be seen from a traditional perspective or through a new interpretation. Furthermore, the traditional marketing concept assumes that offerings should be created after the information about the market needs have been gathered in order to meet the demand, whereas the new interpretation suggests that the focus should be on developing new resources and capabilities through which offerings satisfying future needs could be created (Duus, 1997).

Slater’s and Narver’s, (1998) define the marketing concept that it concurs with that of Houston, (1986) but with an additional competitive dimension. While also assumed the marketing concept as an organisation’s purpose to find out needs and wants in its target markets and then to satisfy those needs more effectively and efficiently than its competitors.

Researchers have identified three repeated themes in the various definitions of marketing concept which relate to customer focus, coordinated marketing efforts and profitability, that the customer is the fulcrum of business operations and, thus, the focus should be on obtaining information about customers’ needs and wants and taking actions based on this information in order to satisfy such needs and wants (Turner, et al., 1997). However, to be able to satisfy these needs entails an organisation-wide integrated effort and, consequently, the implementation of the marketing concept is not the responsibility of a marketing department but the whole organisation. Moreover, the marketing concept can be regarded as a means to achieve long-term objectives and its often suggested consequence is profitability (Turner, et al., 1997). Therefore, the application of the marketing concept is seen to lead to the enhancement of sales figures, new product success, product quality, market share, esprit de corps and overall business performance (Nakata & Sivakumar, 2001).

Nakata and Sivakumar, (2001) examined how organisations root themselves in the marketing concept. These writers, state that this takes place through three steps. During the *first step*, interpretation, a firm determines what the marketing concept is by formulating some notion of it and attaching meanings, values and beliefs to it. The *second step*, adoption, entails determining if and when the firm should commit to institutionalising the marketing concept. The *last step* is implementation where a firm determines how it should execute the concept via specific activities.

MARKETING BARRIERS OF SMES

Since the 1960s to date, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have been given due recognitions especially in the developed nations for playing very important roles towards fostering accelerated economic growth, development and stability within several economies. They make-up the largest proportion of businesses all over the world and play tremendous roles in employment generation, provision of goods and services, creating a better standard of living, as well as immensely contributing to the gross domestic products (GDPs) of many countries (Stojanovski M. and Marjanova T. J).

However, beside the positive contribution to the above in many countries, the special characteristics of small firm marketing are considered to result from various limitations (O'Dwyer et al., 2009). According to the literature, marketing functions in SMEs are seen to be hindered by: the lack of resources, limited finances (or poor cash flow), a lack of strategic expertise, lack of marketing expertise, business size and strategic customer-related problems, and the fact that the power and decision-making is concentrated solely in the owner-manager (Hausman, 2005). Further disadvantages include a limited customer base, limited access to competitive markets, a lack of formal and strategic planning, and decisions made without a logical analysis of opportunities and the environment, but instead determined by the personal preference of the owner-manager or owner-manager's decision-making and inherent skills and abilities (O'Dwyer, et al., 2009). On the other hand, it is argued that marketing in small firms is related to the owner-manager's attitudes to, experience of and expertise in marketing because these are essentially those of the firm itself (McCartan-Quinn & Carson, 2003). However, marketing is often misunderstood and underutilised by owner-managers and they do not always appear receptive to marketing if there is no need e.g. for growth or expansion (Hogarth-Scott, et al., 1996).

Hill, (2001) as cited by O'Dwyer, (2009) in his research he mentions that it is expected that SME marketing differs from marketing in larger organisations. Furthermore, O'Dwyer, (2009) in his research he indicates that the understanding of marketing concepts and theory by SME owner/managers is limited to sales or a basic level of marketing orientation; yet, these companies successfully use marketing to generate sales. Additionally, he argues that alternative marketing concepts are moving from the traditional marketing paradigm, which emphasises the management of the 'four P's' (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion), and has been deemed inappropriate for a dynamic business environment (O'Dwyer, 2009). On the other hand, Stokes (2000b) stated that owner-managers spend considerable time and resources on marketing, but they may call it by another name. The need for marketing is recognised, but often an ad hoc, reactive approach is adopted and, for example, the traditional way of looking at marketing with the 4P's is not given much attention (McPherson, 2007). O'Dwyer, et al., (2009) stated that there are specific variables and influences according to which marketing is formulated in a way that maximises benefit for a SME. They argued that marketing activities in SMEs are shaped through a process where competitors, customers, the business environment and the limited resources are taken into account. According to Siu and Kirby, (1998), there are four approaches that try to explain the role of marketing in small firms: the stages/growth model; the management style model, the management function model and the contingency model (as per the Table below). On the contrary each of these approaches is criticised although something it contributes to the research of marketing, the writers still fail to give a comprehensive picture of marketing in small firms (Siu and Kirby, 1998).

TABLE 3

Marketing approach	Description	Critique
Stages/growth model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> describes the development of a firm through several stages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> low predictive power limited value as a framework for detailed analysis and planning
Management style approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> marketing behaviour is related to the motivation, belief, attitude and objectives of owner-managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ignores e.g. organizational structure, owner-manager's marketing decision process and behaviour
Management function approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> acknowledges marketing as an important function and essential concept for small firm growth, survival and strategic development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> too much or too little emphasis is put on the limitations and constraints of small firms when applying disciplinary foundation of marketing
Contingency approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> tries to find balance between the limitations of small firms and marketing as a discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> variables are not clearly defined, are arbitrarily selected or cannot be measured effectively is an outcome model, not a process model

Source: Table: Four approaches to marketing in small firms according to Siu and Kirby (1998).

The study by Sashittal and Jassawalla, (2001) found out that the implementation of marketing in small firms consist of day to day improvisations and adaptations in marketing strategy and activities. However, the nature and extent of marketing improvisations and adaptations determine the level of market orientation, growth and strategic effectiveness. Sashittal and Jassawalla also argued that marketing planning and implementation interact strongly and this shapes the market behaviours of SMEs and affects the strategic outcomes.

On the other hand, the research by Carson, (1993) as cited in the same research by O'Dwyer confirm that the relationship between SMEs and marketing is either growth-or survival-oriented, as with larger companies, SMEs must generate sales to survive, but need to market their products to generate sales SME growth stems from engaging in some form of marketing activity, which will focus on attaining and retaining competitive advantage by engaging in marketing practice, that addresses market share, market development, product promotion, product pricing, product differentiation and distribution. The most successful companies recognise the importance of comprehensive situation analysis and simple marketing structures, which enable them to target their market effectively thus increasing company success (O'Dwyer, 2009).

The review of literature as cited by O'Dwyer, Carter and Tzokas, (1999) found that academics and practitioners accept the intrinsic value of marketing to business, although there are SMEs for whom marketing is perceived to be peripheral. Those companies that do not recognise the value of marketing, there is sufficient evidence that small business failure can result from either a lack of marketing, or poor marketing practice and that they may be more vulnerable to competitive threat.

MARKETING IN SMES

Marketing is relevant to both Large and small organizations and the basic marketing principles apply to both of them (Reynolds 2002). While at the same time it's also recognised the small firm marketing has unique characteristics that differentiate it from that of large organisations. Fillis, (2002) state that small firm marketing has been characterised by attributes such as haphazard, informal, loose, unstructured and spontaneous, that compared to "textbook marketing seem to have somewhat negative connotations. In addition, small firms appear to have specific weaknesses with regard to pricing, planning, training and forecasting (McCartan-Quinn & Carson, 2003). On the other hand, it is argued that a great part of marketing in SMEs is driven by innovation. Moreover, small firms are seen to operate close to their customers, to be flexible and to respond quickly to the changing needs of customers (O'Dwyer et al., 2009). Some SMEs place strong emphasis on customer care, concern for employees' welfare and reliance on intuition and awareness of the environment in their marketing (Blankson et al., 2006).

In addition, marketing in SME context has no one single definition but emerged as a focus on the customer through engagement, positive word of mouth and networking. Marketing is "satisfying out customer needs profitably" and "marketing was finding out what your customer wants and needs are"; "the majority of business comes from client referral- therefore, word of mouth, is the best form of marketing". Furthermore, marketing is defined as personification of the owner and his/her role in the business interface with the customer suggesting that. Therefore, the marketing of each SME is depending on industry where he/she is involved with and will always defer from each other eg. a restaurant owner described his/her marketing as "selling yourself" and beauty salon owner described marketing as "the plan that he/she put together on how he/she want to increase different elements of the business" according to various authors the idea of self-marketing by the owner presents problems when the SME experience growth. (<http://marketing.conference-servces.net>).

SMEs are recognised for their unique and particular characteristics affecting the way in which they approach marketing (Hill, 2001). Indeed, the marketing styles of SMEs have been referred to as simplistic, informal, reactive, and haphazard (Fuller, 1994).

A study by Hogarth-Scott, et al., (1996) found that small business owners were often generalists as opposed to specialists and thus complex marketing models may not be appropriate for SMEs. Yet, SMEs are also considered to be significant sources of innovation, arguably due to their smaller and flatter structures, and the absence of bureaucracy which improves communication, knowledge sharing, and collaboration (Laforet and Tann, 2006). Furthermore, it includes flexibility and rapid ability to respond to environmental needs, their ability to satisfy rapidly changing customer needs, and their potential for close relationships with customers (Simpson et al., 2006). SMEs develop their own innovative product/services market, untapped niche market which provides them with the opportunity to create competitive advantages, because they often find it difficult to make an impact in large, competitive markets with established players (Walsh and Lipinski, 2009). Additionally, in terms of survival, one of the most vital marketing activities for SMEs is selling (Stokes, 2000), which consequently involves developing relationships with customers (Reijonen, 2010).

However, Small and medium sized Enterprises marketing simply means marketing strategies that benefit small businesses. In this time of global recession, small companies should be exceptionally proactive in keeping sales up. While the underlying principles of marketing are equally applicable to large and small firms alike, a lack of sophisticated marketing is perceived to be problematic for smaller firms. Moreover, the internet is currently considered to be one of the marketing tools that can be used to enable small firms to effectively compete with larger organisations "on the same ground". It is a mechanism through which small firms within specific niche markets will be able to access the "critical mass of customers necessary for success" (Cromie, S., 1991, p.3).

Additionally, Some marketing characteristics of small firms include: the fact that small firms are faced with different market and competitive circumstances; are believed not to (in general) engage in marketing or innovative practices, although their organic organisational structure should facilitate innovation more readily than the more bureaucratic structure of many larger firms (Cannon, T., 1991); have inherent production and pricing flexibility, but generally lack strong brand names and market power; have less goal conflict, various sorts of flexibility, an imbalance between production and marketing, and are ineffectual in the use of marketing techniques (Brannen, W. H., 1983). Small firms typically are flexible and can respond more quickly than large organisations to changing market requirements, this flexibility forming a vital competitive strength (Heathfield, P., 1997, pp.233-235).

Furthermore, given the constrained resources of the small firm, marketing tools suitable for utilisation by smaller firms must be welcomed if they can be effectively used to enhance marketing practice of these smaller organisations. Small firms typically have different requirements with respect to marketing, with their inherent characteristics impacting upon the willingness/ability of the owner/manager to use conventional and/or contemporary marketing tools. The problems of a definition of firms' failure and consequential inaccuracy in determining failure rates persists, but there is no doubt that small firms are considerably more vulnerable than larger businesses, largely through undercapitalisation and inadequacies in marketing (Job D. D., 1983, pp. 69-83). This paper recommends that improving marketing practice in the small firm can be achieved through education of small firm owner/managers, given their omnipresence within the organisation. Marketing education in particular for small firm owner/managers is inherently problematic. These problems should be acknowledged and addressed by marketing educators endeavouring to use marketing education as a means of improving small firm marketing practice.

THE ROLE OF MARKETING IN THE PROMOTION OF SMEs

Conventional wisdom suggests that marketing's role is to manage the relationship between customers and a firm, because customers are the important contributor to a firm's financial performance. Therefore, the department responsible for management of customer relationships should be viewed as an important force; thus, the marketing department that assumes this management function should be deemed important and influential (Walsh, M.F. and Lipinski, J., 2009).

The study contacted by Homburg et al., (1999) showed that the marketing function is to be a significant influence in large firms, and the marketing share influence the general management and sales on most marketing issues. Thus suggest that the marketing as a function and influence in business is not as well developed for smaller firms compared with their larger brethren. On the other hand, the sales function has a slightly greater influence over marketing on all issues outside of advertising (customer satisfaction measurement, customer satisfaction improvement, expansion into new geographic markets, strategic direction of the firm, choice of strategic partners, new product development, design of customer service and support, and pricing and major capital expenditures). Therefore, decisions regarding advertising are the only issue where marketing enjoys significant and sole influence found in larger firms.

RECOMMENDATION/CONCLUSION

The review of this paper established that the marketing function in SMEs is hindered by constraints such as poor cash flow, lack of marketing expertise, a lack of strategic expertise, business size, and tactical customer related problems. However, further advantage is limited customer base, limited access to competitive markets, a lack of formal and strategic planning, and decisions made without a logical analysis of opportunities and the environment.

SME needs marketing that is in compatible with the Small medium enterprises characteristics and which is acceptable to the small firm owner/manager. The existing marketing theories offer little practical use in day to day marketing activities, because many firms are unnecessarily defenceless through inadequacies in their marketing practice. Therefore, educators need to establish the need for small firm owner/manager from marketing in general, and from marketing education in particular, and how this can best be delivered.

SME marketing is innovative, risky, and proactive, focuses on opportunities and can be performed without resources currently controlled and it can be implemented irrespective of firm size, after a standard set of measures is defined. The measure would have to include the best practices as well as appropriate theory which can be distributed to small companies' managers/employees through courses, workshops, etc.

Furthermore, small business marketing practice can also be done through the use of SME marketing toolkit, which will offer comprehensive easy use guides to help SME to develop, implement and manage their marketing efforts such as: Market Assessment, Marketing Plan, Branding, Public Relations, Advertising, Marketing Collaterals, Digital Marketing, Promotions, Leads and Sales.

Marketing is essential part of the existence phase of a firms' life cycle, which is especially important for small firms, thus they have a vast mortality rate which can be avoided merely with companies' growth and further development. It is acknowledged that SMEs (small to medium-sized enterprises) cannot do conventional marketing because of the limitations of resources which are inherent to all SMEs and also because SME owner/managers behave and think differently from conventional marketing decision-making practices in large companies.

However, Good marketing supports sales and expansion, contributes significantly to the growth of market share in competitive markets. To determine the competitive advantages and the type of position to take in the market the knowledge of customer and its behaviour needs to be considered in relation with the product. Therefore, SME should focus on being closer to the customer in every sense since this is where most of their strength and possibilities exists. According to Cooper, (1994, pp. 60-76) an in-depth understanding of customer needs and wants, the nature of the market and the competitive environment are vital for success, still they are often missing.

A market driven approach is more important for micro enterprises than for larger companies since they are more dependent on the market situation due to often limitations in size and resources (Cooper, 1994). A well-planned and well-implemented marketing strategy helps SMEs to present strong value propositions that build customer loyalty. Most SMEs understand the importance of marketing and how it can add more value, but some of the above issues have stopped SMEs looking into marketing over sales. Many authors have asserted that a market - oriented approach to business will result in better corporate performance and many studies have found a positive association between market orientation and performance.

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