

A Synthesis of Entrepreneurial
Orientation and Entrepreneurial
Marketing to Enhance the
Effectiveness of Approaching the
Market by SMEs in Periods of
Economic Transition

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Abstract

Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) make a significant contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) and employment in every economy. However, in transition economies (TEs) they often struggle to approach the market effectively. This study extends theoretical understanding of the interface between entrepreneurship and marketing. The study identifies Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and Entrepreneurial Marketing (EM) as key to the success of these SMEs. It proposes a synthesis of the two concepts, and the practices they describe, as a basis for better understanding and improving SME approach to market in economies experiencing the disruption of transition.

The overall aim of the study is to assist SMEs in approaching the market more effectively, especially in TEs. Its specific objectives are threefold. First, to identify the antecedent behaviours that underlie EO. Second, to scope the components that interlink the concepts of EO and EM. Third, to propose marketing strategies that are especially applicable to SMEs in general and, in particular, to SMEs operating in a TE context. These objectives are informed by phenomenologically oriented analysis of twenty-nine (n29) semi-structured interviews with entrepreneurs who manage or own an SME in Saudi Arabia in various sectors including SME consultants.

Their reports of their lived experience suggest seven antecedents of EO ordered according to their perceived importance. In addition, two elements that interlink EO and EM are identified; these are human capital and access to market information. Thus, and contrary to previous academic practice, this study treats EO and EM as essentially interrelated nature and explores how market engagement is more effective when SMEs embrace both in their practice. Finally, the study evaluates different marketing strategies and tools generated at the EO-EM interface, that can be most effective for SMEs in TEs. The study concludes with managerial implications, suggestions for policy makers and directions for further research.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|------|
| Abstract..... | II |
| Acknowledgments..... | III |
| Declaration..... | IV |
| Table of Contents..... | V |
| List of Tables | XII |
| List of Figures | XIII |
| List of Abbreviations..... | XIV |
| Chapter 1: Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1. Background..... | 1 |
| 1.2. Research Problem | 5 |
| 1.3. Research Aim | 6 |
| 1.4. Rationale of this Research..... | 7 |
| 1.5. Identification of the Research Gap..... | 8 |
| 1.6. Objectives of the Research..... | 12 |
| 1.7. Justification for the Research..... | 14 |
| 1.7.1. Theoretical Justification..... | 14 |
| 1.7.2. Methodological Justification | 16 |
| 1.7.3. Contextual Justification | 17 |
| 1.8. Summary of the Research Contribution..... | 18 |
| 1.9. Thesis Structure..... | 20 |
| Chapter 2: Literature Review | 21 |
| 2.1. Introduction | 21 |
| 2.2. The Concept of Entrepreneurial Orientation | 23 |
| 2.2.1. Background | 23 |
| 2.2.2. Entrepreneurial Orientation Dimensions..... | 27 |
| 2.2.3. Entrepreneurial Orientation and Firm Performance..... | 29 |

| | | |
|-----------------------------|---|----|
| 2.2.4. | Entrepreneurial Orientation in SMEs | 33 |
| 2.2.5. | The Importance of Addressing Issues Related to EO in this Study 40 | |
| 2.2.6. | Summary..... | 42 |
| 2.3. | The Concept of Entrepreneurial Marketing | 43 |
| 2.3.1. | Background | 43 |
| 2.3.2. | Entrepreneurial Marketing Dimensions | 47 |
| 2.3.3. | Entrepreneurial Marketing and SMEs..... | 50 |
| 2.3.4. | The Relationship between Entrepreneurial Orientation and Entrepreneurial Marketing | 54 |
| 2.3.5. | Summary..... | 57 |
| 2.4. | Entrepreneurship in Transition Economies | 58 |
| 2.5. | Characteristics of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises | 60 |
| 2.5.1. | Barriers to Marketing for SMEs | 61 |
| 2.5.2. | Existing Marketing Models for SMEs..... | 64 |
| 2.5.3. | Summary..... | 75 |
| 2.6. | Entrepreneurial Orientation and Entrepreneurial Marketing Synthesis 76 | |
| 2.6.1. | Preface..... | 76 |
| 2.6.2. | Commonalities | 80 |
| 2.6.3. | Differences | 84 |
| 2.7. | Chapter Summary..... | 87 |
| Chapter 3: Methodology..... | | 89 |
| 3.1. | Introduction | 89 |
| 3.1.1. | Chapter Structure | 89 |
| 3.2. | Research Philosophy | 91 |
| 3.2.1. | Research Paradigm..... | 95 |
| 3.3. | The Purpose of the Research..... | 97 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 3.4. Research Approach | 99 |
| 3.5. Research Method of Enquiry | 101 |
| 3.6. Data Collection | 106 |
| 3.6.1. Semi-structured Interviews..... | 108 |
| 3.6.2. Justifications of the Choice of Language..... | 112 |
| 3.6.3. Interview Recording..... | 113 |
| 3.6.4. Interviews Settings | 113 |
| 3.6.5. Sampling Strategy | 115 |
| 3.6.6. Sample Size | 118 |
| 3.6.7. Development of the Interview Questions..... | 120 |
| 3.7. Research Context | 121 |
| 3.7.1. Nature of SMEs in Saudi Arabia..... | 121 |
| 3.7.2. National Development Plan 2030, and the Contribution of the Sector | 124 |
| 3.8. Data Analysis..... | 127 |
| 3.8.1. Phenomenological Data Analysis..... | 127 |
| 3.8.2. Thematic Analysis | 129 |
| 3.8.3. Coding..... | 131 |
| 3.9. Ethics in this Research | 132 |
| 3.10. Reflexivity | 135 |
| 3.11. Trustworthiness of the Results | 137 |
| 3.12. Chapter Summary | 138 |
| Chapter 4: Findings - The Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Orientation..... | 140 |
| 4.1. Introduction | 140 |
| 4.1.1. Participants Information..... | 141 |
| 4.2. The Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Orientation..... | 142 |
| 4.2.1. “Passion” Underlies Entrepreneurial Orientation | 142 |

| | | |
|--|---|-----|
| 4.2.2. | Relevant Work Experience and Background..... | 145 |
| 4.2.3. | Volunteering and Social Serving formulates Entrepreneurial Orientation..... | 147 |
| 4.2.4. | “Need” As A Component | 149 |
| 4.2.5. | Working in areas of your interest..... | 151 |
| 4.2.6. | Other Behavioural Elements | 152 |
| 4.2.7. | Essential Soft Skills..... | 153 |
| 4.3. | Entrepreneurial Dimensions during Transition Economies | 156 |
| 4.4. | Restrictions of Successful Enterprises..... | 159 |
| 4.5. | Cultural Influences on Formulating Entrepreneurial Orientation | 161 |
| 4.5.1. | Entrepreneurship Culture before the Transition Period | 161 |
| 4.5.2. | Entrepreneurship Culture after the Transition Period | 163 |
| 4.5.3. | Main Cultural Topics..... | 166 |
| 4.6. | Entrepreneurial Orientation as a Driver for Entrepreneurial Marketing 171 | |
| 4.6.1. | The case when entrepreneurs are not able to apply marketing effectively | 172 |
| 4.6.2. | Entrepreneurs with a Reasonable Knowledge of Marketing..... | 175 |
| 4.7. | Summary | 178 |
| Chapter 5: Findings - Entrepreneurial Marketing in Practice..... | | 180 |
| 5.1. | Introduction | 180 |
| 5.1.1. | Marketing during Transition Periods..... | 181 |
| 5.1.2. | Flexibility and Decision-Making in Marketing in SMEs | 185 |
| 5.1.3. | Restrictions of Applying Entrepreneurial Marketing..... | 187 |
| 5.2. | Practical Tools for Entrepreneurs to Apply during Transition Periods 190 | |
| 5.2.1. | General Practical Tools | 191 |
| 5.2.2. | Technology as a Useful Tool..... | 193 |

| | | |
|------------|---|-----|
| 5.2.3. | Big Data Utilisation | 195 |
| 5.2.4. | Digital Marketing | 198 |
| 5.3. | Important Marketing Strategic Positions for SMEs during Periods of Transition Economies | 203 |
| 5.3.1. | Giving Consumers Fewer Choices is Better Nowadays | 204 |
| 5.3.2. | Brand Engagement | 206 |
| 5.3.3. | The Dilemma of Quality | 208 |
| 5.3.4. | Franchising or Self-investing | 211 |
| 5.3.5. | Market Research | 213 |
| 5.3.6. | Leveraging Overall Cost to Support Marketing Activities..... | 213 |
| 5.4. | Conceptualising Entrepreneurial Marketing for SMEs in Transition Economies..... | 218 |
| 5.4.1. | Dimensions of EM in Transition Economies | 219 |
| 5.4.2. | Most Applied Marketing Strategies for SMEs in Transition Economies..... | 221 |
| 5.4.3. | Most Utilised Tools by SMEs in Transition Economies..... | 223 |
| 5.5. | Summary | 226 |
| Chapter 6: | Discussion..... | 229 |
| 6.1. | Introduction | 229 |
| 6.2. | The Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Orientation..... | 230 |
| 6.2.1. | Primary Antecedents Underlying EO..... | 232 |
| 6.2.2. | Secondary Antecedents Underlying EO | 237 |
| 6.2.3. | Re-defining Entrepreneurial Orientations | 245 |
| 6.2.4. | Summary..... | 249 |
| 6.3. | Entrepreneurial Orientation in SMEs in Saudi Arabia | 251 |
| 6.3.1. | Overview | 251 |
| 6.3.2. | Different Interpretations of EO Dimensions | 253 |
| 6.3.3. | Religion and EO | 260 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 6.3.4. Summary..... | 262 |
| 6.4. Entrepreneurial Orientation Precedes Entrepreneurial Marketing... | 262 |
| 6.5. Entrepreneurial Marketing for SMEs in Transition Economies..... | 267 |
| 6.5.1. Customisation and Serving a Niche | 268 |
| 6.5.2. Dealing with Competition in SMEs in Transition Economies | 269 |
| 6.5.3. Brand engagement..... | 272 |
| 6.5.4. Standardisation of Quality | 274 |
| 6.5.5. Expansion Strategy | 276 |
| 6.5.6. Dealing with Market Research | 278 |
| 6.5.7. Digital Marketing | 281 |
| 6.5.8. Strategies in Utilising Big Data | 285 |
| 6.5.9. Digital Technology Adoption..... | 288 |
| 6.5.10. Summary..... | 290 |
| 6.6. The Impact of these Findings on the Resource Dependency Theory and the Resource-Based View | 291 |
| 6.7. Chapter Summary..... | 292 |
| Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations | 296 |
| 7.1. Preface | 296 |
| 7.2. An Outline of the Research Gaps | 297 |
| 7.3. Theoretical Contributions | 299 |
| 7.4. Methodological Contributions..... | 304 |
| 7.5. Managerial Implications | 306 |
| 7.5.1. Key Issues for SMEs in Transition Economies..... | 308 |
| 7.6. Implications for Policy Makers | 310 |
| 7.7. Limitations of the Study | 313 |
| 7.8. Further Research..... | 314 |
| 7.8. Summary | 316 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| References | 320 |
| Appendices: | 354 |
| Appendix. 1: Differences between Traditional Marketing and Entrepreneurial Marketing (Morris et al., 2002, p. 6)..... | 354 |
| Appendix. 2: The Research ‘Onion’ (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 108)..... | 355 |
| Appendix. 3: Major Differences Between Deductive and Inductive Approaches to Research (Cited from Saunders et al, 2009, p. 127) | 356 |
| Appendix. 4: Goals of Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia | 357 |
| Appendix. 5: Interviews Question Guide..... | 359 |
| Appendix. 6: SOWT Analysis for SMEs in Saudi Arabia..... | 365 |
| Appendix. 7: Empirical Themes, Codes, Theoretical Constructs | 369 |

List of Tables

| | |
|--|-----|
| Table 3. 1. The Most Common Two Approaches in Social Science Research, Author's Summary (2020) | 90 |
| Table 3. 2. Classification of the Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, The General Authority of SMEs in Saudi Arabia (2016) | 123 |
| Table 4. 1. Classifications of participants, Author (2020)..... | 141 |
| Table 6. 1. Entrepreneurial Orientation Dimensions during Transition Economies, Author (2020) | 260 |

List of Figures

| | |
|---|-----|
| Figure 2. 1. A Model of SME Marketing, Carson and Gilmore, (2000) | 65 |
| Figure 2. 2. A Model of Antecedents and Outcomes of Entrepreneurial Marketing, Morris et al., (2002) | 68 |
| Figure 2. 3. Conceptual Model for Innovative Marketing in SMEs, O'Dwyer et al., (2009)..... | 71 |
| Figure 2. 4. Conceptual Framework of Entrepreneurial Orientation, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) | 72 |
| Figure 2. 5. The SME entrepreneurial marketing orientation (EMO) conceptualised Model, Jones and Rowley, (2011)..... | 74 |
| Figure 2. 6. Key dimensions and variables associated with entrepreneurial marketing in SMEs. Mário et al., (2014)..... | 75 |
| Figure 2. 7. Common and Distinct Dimensions of EO and EM, Author (2020) | 79 |
| | |
| Figure 4. 1. The Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Orientation, Author (2020) | 155 |
| Figure 4. 2. Entrepreneurial Orientation Dimensions during Transition Economies, Author (2020) | 159 |
| | |
| Figure 5. 1. Entrepreneurial Marketing Tools and Strategies during Transition Economies, Author (2020) | 225 |
| | |
| Figure 6. 1. The Relationships of the Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Orientation, Author (2020) | 245 |
| Figure 6. 2. Human Capital and Market Information in Addition to Dimensions of EO Underlies EM Orientation in SMEs, Author (2020)..... | 264 |
| Figure 6. 3. Linking Entrepreneurial Orientation and Entrepreneurial Marketing in SMEs, Author (2020)..... | 266 |
| | |
| Figure 7. 1. The Synthesis of Entrepreneurial Orientation and Entrepreneurial Marketing in SMEs in Transition Economies, Author (2020) | 319 |

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|-------------|---|
| SMEs | Small and Medium Sized Enterprises |
| EO | Entrepreneurial Orientation |
| EM | Entrepreneurial Marketing |
| TE | Transition Economy |
| TP | Transition Plan |
| KPIs | Key Performance Indicators |
| KSA | Kingdom of Saudi Arabia |
| SA | Saudi Arabia |
| MO | Market Orientation |
| CO | Customer Orientation |
| IO | Innovation Orientation |
| EMO | Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation |
| RA | Resource Advantage Theory |
| IPA | Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis |
| Vision 2030 | Saudi Arabia's National Development Vision 2030 |
| GEM | Global Entrepreneurship Monitor |
| GDP | Gross Domestic Product |
| TQM | Total Quality Management |

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background

SMEs operate in highly competitive and rapidly changing environments. These enterprises are resource-constrained, and they frequently have issues with marketing (Chaston, 2015). In addition, marketing remains a key concern in SMEs and entrepreneurship research (Martin, 2009; Westerlund and Leminen, 2018) due to the fact that not every entrepreneur is a good marketer. Therefore, it is vital for researchers and practitioners to create a link between both disciplines, entrepreneurship and marketing, in order to assist entrepreneurs when approaching the market.

The interface between marketing and entrepreneurship has long been the focus of research (Hansen and Eggers, 2010). Similarly, marketing for SMEs is itself a growing area of research as SMEs are considered an important sector that requires sustainability and growth in all developing and developed economies. Hills and LaFroge (1992) argue that the underlying philosophies of entrepreneurship and marketing are related to each other. They have much in common, yet they are considered distinct disciplines. Carson (2010) observes that they both incorporate notions such as proactiveness, opportunity-focus, creativity, innovativeness, flexibility and are, of course, market-driven. Therefore, marketing and entrepreneurship offer essential capabilities for sustainability and development of new ventures and SMEs (Morris et al., 2002; Hall et al., 2010).

The concept of entrepreneurial orientation (EO) has emerged within the entrepreneurship literature. EO *“refers to the top management’s strategy in*

relation to innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk taking" (Cools and Broeck, 2007/2008. p. 27). Firms with higher EO are more able to exploit opportunities than others (Miller,1983). EO is believed to have a positive impact on firms' performances (Covin and Miller, 2014; Wales et al., 2013; Wiklund, 1999) and growth (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005; Covin and Lumpkin, 2011; Su et al., 2011).

On the other hand, the concept of entrepreneurial marketing (EM) has been identified as a useful tool to differentiate between conventional marketing and SMEs' marketing (Hills et al., 2008). EM is defined as "*a proactive identification and exploitation of opportunities for acquiring and retaining profitable customers through innovative approaches to risk management, resource leveraging and value creation*" (Morris et al., 2002. p. 5). EM seeks to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage, by encouraging dynamism and creative behaviour. EM works as a moderator for calculated risk-taking and it allows active participation between a firm and its customers (Srivastava et al., 1998; Morris et al., 2002).

Scholars have emphasised different dimensions of EO and EM. However, the most commonly used framework outlines three dimensions of EO as identified by Miller (1983) and Morris and Paul (1987) with two additional ones identified by Lumpkin and Dess (1996). That makes a total of five dimensions of EO, namely innovativeness, pro-activeness, risk-taking, competitive aggressiveness and autonomy. On the other hand, EM consists of seven dimensions, which are proactive marketing, innovative marketing, calculated risk-taking, value creation, resource leveraging, opportunity recognition and customer intensity (Morris et al., 2002). However, drivers,

variables and dimensions of EO and EM extend beyond the elements mentioned above. There are always newer and relevant variables and dimensions which shape entrepreneurial behaviour. This is why scholars have urged researchers to explore the antecedents, drivers and other dimensions further, which reflect the entrepreneurial behaviours in firms (Covin and Lumpkin, 2011; Randerson, 2016; Wales, 2016).

EO and EM have been investigated separately in a large number of studies in the field of Entrepreneurship and Marketing (Covin and Wales, 2012; Hill and Wright, 2000; Hills and Hultman, 2013; Kilenthong et al., 2015; Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Miles and Arnold, 1991; Slevin and Terjesen, 2011). Studies show that both EO and EM have a positive impact on the strategic learning capabilities of organisations (Anderson et al., 2009; Miles and Darroch, 2006) and therefore on the formation of better strategies, which make the firms able to respond more effectively to market changes. The relationship between EO and other variables such as performance has been studied extensively according to Rauch et al. (2009). However, the link between EM and performance has rarely been investigated (Sullivan Mort et al., 2012). In addition, it is also worth noting that there is still a lack of exploratory research in EO (Wales, 2016) and EM (Hansen and Eggers, 2010). Hence, a qualitative approach will provide more insight in terms of understanding the process that underlies both concepts. Thus, it will clarify the relationship between EO and EM and the socio-cultural aspects that affect the applicability of both concepts. The context which this study explores is one that has special social and cultural aspects when the economy is passing through a once-in-a-lifetime transition period and that is Saudi Arabia (SA).

The overarching aim of this thesis is to contribute to the literature broadly discussed as marketing for SMEs, and in particular to show how the concepts of EO and EM can enhance the effectiveness of approaching the market by SMEs in TEs. Despite the increasing number of significant studies concerning issues of marketing for SMEs, the situation on the ground is hardly impacted and many SMEs still, arguably, more in favour of the 'trial and error' methods when they approach the market (Marchesnay, 2011; Centeno et al., 2013) due to their less developed capability in future forecasting. This approach is not necessarily wrong, but it consumes time, effort and resources where, for most SMEs, they are in short supply. This might be due to a lack of marketing experience. This study focuses on synthesising the concepts of EO and EM in order to enhance the effectiveness of approaching the market by SMEs. The marketing approach in this study is defined as recognising and taking advantage of opportunities, creating value, retaining customers and leveraging costs associated with marketing activities.

This study concerns a lack of marketing strategies, their planning and execution in SMEs in SA. SMEs are being asked to contribute more to the GDP of SA as currently their contribution is below 20%, which is considered fairly low compared to other developing economies. By contrast, SMEs in developing countries such as South Africa contribute around 50% to GDP (Ramukumba, 2014). Therefore, there are two main reasons for the importance of addressing this issue for SMEs. Firstly, the country has the goal of increasing the contribution of SMEs to GDP by another 15% according to Vision 2030. Secondly, the country is experiencing a once-in-a-lifetime transition period for the economy as it aims to reduce its dependency on oil and diversifies its

income. This is through many means such as introducing taxes and fees mainly for businesses, the utilisation of under-used resources such as tourism sites and maximising the use of the location of the country by promoting it as a central hub that brings the East and West closer. Despite all of these changes, the challenges for SMEs will increase and the need to understand how to approach the market will be necessary to be sustainable in the period of TE.

1.2. Research Problem

Studies have noted the number of SMEs in SA which have struggled or failed during the implementation of the country's transition plan. One of the main reasons for failure was identified as the inability to approach the market effectively (Jeddah Chamber of Commerce, 2016). An effective marketing approach was identified as recognising and taking advantage of opportunities, creating value, retaining customers and leveraging costs associated with marketing activities. Some of these enterprises were indeed unsuccessful at the time when the economy was healthy and so the possibility of them failing is likely to be higher when the economy slows as the country is experiencing a once-in-a-lifetime transition period for the economy.

From an academic perspective, these observed outcomes are reflected in the inconsistency of the theoretical understanding of the relationship between entrepreneurship and marketing, and more specifically between EO and EM. In addition, EO and EM have rarely been considered together in one study (Kilenthong et al., 2015). Therefore, there is still a clear need to explore the antecedents that underlie EO (Randerson, 2016; Wales, 2016). Moreover, the

interlinking elements between both concepts are not clear and need further exploration. Therefore, the synthesis approach of EO and EM, which is considered in this study, will offer a clear link between both concepts. In addition, it will assist in obtaining systematic and reliable response to enhance the strategic approach for SMEs when planning marketing. So, the central research question is: How might a synthesis of entrepreneurial orientation and entrepreneurial marketing enhance the effectiveness of marketing approach of SMEs in TEs?

1.3. Research Aim

Given the research problem identified above, several reports demonstrate an ineffective approach to market in Saudi SMEs and, indeed, different perspectives in studying the interface between entrepreneurship and marketing. The main focus and contribution of this thesis will be in the context of the marketing and entrepreneurship interface literature. It will help in better understanding the nature of this interface and will explore certain areas that lack exploratory research in the literature.

This study will also explore the marketing operations of SMEs and, in particular, opportunities for their enhancement in TE periods. The focus is on the behaviours of individuals as evidenced in their personal accounts of their orientations and practices. In essence the concern is with how individual entrepreneurs respond to the challenges of approaching the market effectively. Thus, the overall research aim is to assist entrepreneurs, who run SMEs, in approaching the market more effectively especially in TEs. This will be achieved

through understanding the entire process that leads to EO and then exploring the interlinking elements between EO and EM. To achieve this, the study must follow three stages as discussed in the rationale below.

1.4. Rationale of this Research

The rationale of this study follows three different stages. In the first stage, I will clarify my use of the term 'entrepreneurship' and who is to be considered as an entrepreneur. In addition, I will review the typical behaviour and skills of entrepreneurs and the concept of EO. My review of the EO literature highlights several gaps that need to be addressed. The one related to this study is that entrepreneurial behaviour should not be limited to the five dimensions of EO (Wales, 2016). Hence, there is an identified need to explore other elements or behaviours that are considered entrepreneurial. Moreover, other literature highlights that the antecedents that lead to EO are still not clear (Randerson, 2016).

The second stage of this research was to identify the link between EO and EM. Many studies have categorised EM as one of the most applicable concepts to marketing for SMEs. Thus, it overlaps with the concept of EO in several dimensions. However, the level and type of influence that EO has on EM is still relatively unknown. Therefore, the identification of the components that link EO and EM is also needed as the literature currently does not show explicitly these components.

In the final stage, the sample of participants who fit the proposed selection criteria are investigated to explore and evaluate skills, behaviours and

marketing skills employed in SMEs in TEs. This is through identifying the most effective marketing strategies for SMEs to follow in TEs. In addition, recognising the tools that assist in achieving best outcomes for these strategies will result in a set of recommendations or framework that will assist SMEs in enhancing their marketing approach in TEs. This will also result in more sustainable businesses during downturn economies and the possibility of growth under healthy economic conditions. This rationale was built after careful inspection and synthesis of the literature and identification of the gaps, in light of the study's aims.

1.5. Identification of the Research Gap

Although EO is a concept that has been extensively researched for the last three decades, the research on the drivers or antecedents of EO is scarce (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005; Covin and Lumpkin, 2011; Randerson, 2016; Wales, 2016). Through careful inspection of the literature of EO it was clear that there is a need to explore different variables, dimensions and antecedents of EO. This should extend theoretically the concept of EO and will offer different horizons for further quantitative research and hypothesis development. In addition, it will advance previous attempts in the literature to identify the antecedents or the motivations of EO (e.g. Pittino et al. 2017). Practically, identification of the antecedents of EO will assist entrepreneurs in enhancing certain behaviours and skills in order to sustain when faced with challenges.

Moreover, vast number of qualitative studies in the entrepreneurship domain have been conducted covering a wide range of topics. For example,

qualitative studies have explored entrepreneurship culture (e.g. Hayton et al., 2002), entrepreneurial process (e.g. Jack and Anderson, 2002), strategic entrepreneurship (e.g. Kraus et al., 2011), and business history perspective in entrepreneurship (e.g. Da silva Lopes et al., 2019). However, it was argued by Suddaby et al. (2015) that research on entrepreneurship has more often relied on quantitative methods and it has failed to develop any indigenous theory. The same case applies to the research on EO. The use of a quantitative method has produced a solid fixed concept, resistant to any further development. According to Wales (2016) researchers have repeatedly called for qualitative research on the topic of EO (e.g. Miller, 2011; Covin and Miller, 2014). However, there is still a clear lack of such research. Therefore, exploratory research is required in order to explore drivers of EO or alternative dimensions of the concept (Covin and Lumpkin, 2011). Hence, this study adopts a qualitative method in order to extend the concept of EO and explore any emerging dimensions, variables and drivers with current and emerging salience.

The literature of EO and EM have also discussed the few studies of both concepts in developing and emerging economies. For instance, Covin and Lumpkin (2011) urged researchers to explore alternative dimensions of EO, which might be possible by exploring the concept in a new context. In addition, Adam et al. (2017) noted that entrepreneurial behaviour is a subject that is worth exploration in different economies. In fact, exploring these concepts in an economy such as Saudi Arabia will add to the literature in different ways. It will shed light on different social and cultural factors that affect the application of EO and EM. In addition, it will explore both concepts in a different economy especially as the country is passing through a transition period.

Furthermore, it was noted in the literature that entrepreneurship and marketing are two compatible disciplines (Hills and LaFroge, 1992). In addition, in some studies, EO was found to have a positive impact on market orientation (MO) (e.g. Buli, 2017). Moreover, market-oriented and entrepreneurially-oriented strategies have indicated a positive performance in emerging economies (Gruber-Muecke and Hofer, 2015). In addition, together they are considered a driver for product innovation (Boso et al., 2013). However, MO is defined differently from EM. MO is more related to linking an organisation's actions consistently with marketing concepts (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). On the other hand, EM is a process related to how entrepreneurs deal with changes in the market (Hills et al., 2010).

This study argues that whilst EO and EM are two distinct concepts they both have a positive impact on SMEs' performance (Keh et al., 2007; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019). This study has the aim of synthesising both concepts and to identify the interlinking components between them. The interlink between both concepts has not previously been verified. However, there are few studies that have investigated the impact or the influence of certain behaviours on the relationship between EO and other marketing elements such as market orientation, marketing information and customer orientation (e.g. Matsuno et al., 2002; Keh et al., 2007; Merlo and Auh, 2009; Kwak et al., 2013; Thourmrunroje et al., 2013). In addition, identifying such an interlink will provide the first step towards examining the influence of EO on EM. It is also worth noting that one recent study revealed that EO dominates EM (Kilenthong et al., 2015). The same researchers highlighted in another study that the relationship

between EO and EM is systematic and could not happen randomly (Kilenthong et al., 2016).

Finally, it was noted by Kumar (2017) that the gap between academia and practice is broadening. In addition, Jones and Rowley (2011) argue that the decision-making process related to the aspects of marketing strategies in SMEs is not clear. Therefore, research that integrates theory and practice is required (Skálén and Hackley, 2011; Kumar, 2017). Consequently, this study explores this link through evaluating and linking the most applicable marketing strategies that are used in periods of economic transition and comparing them with what exist in theory. Nevertheless, this evaluation will require identification of these strategies and tools, and this will offer a clear model that could assist SMEs when planning to approach the market in TEs.

To summarise, the present study will address these three main gaps. Firstly, the antecedents that lead to EO are still unclear. Moreover, the behaviours to be considered as entrepreneurial are still questionable (Wales, 2016; Randerson, 2016). Secondly, only one study has revealed that EO dominates EM (Kilenthong et al., 2015). Therefore, this study is an attempt to create a synthesised approach to EO and EM. In addition, it will clarify the interlinking components and the level of mutual influence when applied together. Thirdly, As the gap between academic research and practice is broadening, researchers, especially in the marketing discipline, have been encouraged to integrate theory and practice for better results and examine the impact of academic research (Skálén and Hackley, 2011; Kumar, 2017). This study is the first to create a list of the most effective marketing strategies and tools that are most applicable to SMEs in order to sustain in TEs.

1.6. Objectives of the Research

The main aim of this study is to synthesise the concepts of EO and EM in order to overcome the difficulties faced by SMEs in approaching the market. It should be clear that the research at the marketing/entrepreneurship interface has taken a large step in the last twenty-five years (Gilmore, 2010). Now, many scholars perceive that traditional marketing would not be adequate for SMEs due to their limited capabilities to compete in highly competitive and dynamic environments (Collinson and Shaw, 2001; Morris, Schindehutte and LaForge, 2002; Hills, Hultman and Miles, 2008; Kilenthong et al., 2015). Thus, many studies illustrate the relationship between EO and many other marketing elements, such as evidence of EO as a source of creativity, competitive advantage and performance. This ultimately shows the positive impact of these concepts on SMEs' sustainability and growth. Therefore, the research objectives of this study have been identified using two lenses, theoretical and practical and they are as follows:

- To explore the antecedents that lead to EO.
- To determine the level of influence that EO has on EM in SMEs.
- To identify the components which link both concepts of EO and EM.
- To highlight the main factors which affect the application of EO, as well as the influencers that affect EM behaviour in SMEs in Saudi Arabia.
- To explore effective marketing strategies and tools for SMEs in TEs through the lens of EM and its dimensions.
- To offer a synthesised model that includes dimensions of EO and EM to assist SMEs in approaching the market more effectively.

- To determine gaps that would direct future research into both concepts in TEs which have never been investigated before.

Scholars potentially have not considered addressing these gaps because of the following reasons:

- 1) EO and EM have rarely been considered together in one study.
- 2) EO and EM have been investigated in many developed countries but not as many in developing ones, especially Saudi Arabia.
- 3) Antecedents and consequences have not been explored enough in similar studies such as the present one. Pittino et al. (2017) is one of the rare examples in the literature. In fact, scholars have attempted to verify and validate certain dimensions or behaviours against entrepreneurial behaviour, However, the exploratory nature of this study will explicitly identify the antecedents that lead to EO.
- 4) Having the context of Saudi Arabia in the current condition of transformation has made this study unique as few previous studies have been able to explore entrepreneurship and marketing for SMEs in such an economic condition.
- 5) The synthesis approach, which this study used, has brought the distinct concepts of EO and EM into one orientation. In addition, that helped in the identification of the components that link both concepts.
- 6) The identification of marketing strategies in this study is also unique as the literature lacks similar explicit identification. However, scholars have evaluated and verified several strategies against the performance and growth of SMEs. This study instead, has identified

different marketing strategies and tools that are applicable and effective for SMEs in TEs.

1.7. Justification for the Research

To understand the EO and EM concepts and marketing for SMEs, an extensive review of the literature was conducted. Most studies favoured a causal relationship and the testing of hypotheses. For instance, both concepts have been studied in terms of many variables such as performance and growth and they have provided several outcomes (Casillas and Moreno, 2010). They have also been investigated in different contexts and in different sizes and ages of organisations, in SMEs as well as large firms (Covin and Miller, 2014; Wales et al., 2013; Wiklund, 1999). However, little attention has been given to exploratory research of EO and EM. In addition, less consideration has been given in terms of investigating EO or EM in different contexts such as Saudi Arabia. Therefore, due to the lack of such empirical evidence, a theoretical, methodological and contextual justification which distinguishes this study, is given below.

1.7.1. Theoretical Justification

The debate relating to the drivers and consequences of EO is still ongoing (Miller, 2011; Pittino et al., 2017). In addition, Wales (2016) notes that the factors that stimulate the entrepreneurial behaviour in a firm are still a fruitful area of research. Hence, they call for more qualitative research on EO. Moreover, Randerson (2016) argues that the antecedents that lead to EO are

still not clear. In addition, despite general consensus concerning the three or five common dimensions of EO, a recent study supports a position that views innovativeness, risk-taking and proactiveness as individually distinctive and separate entrepreneurial postures (Linton and Kask, 2017). This view puts forward a third perception of EO, as it used to be seen as either a concept that works uni-dimensionally or multidimensionally, while this view makes every dimension a separate entrepreneurial posture which might be separately categorised as an EO. Therefore, the exploration of new dimensions, variables and drivers of entrepreneurial behaviour is required in the first stage of this study.

The second stage required identifying the link and determining the effect of EO on EM. In fact, many studies have investigated EO within the array of different marketing elements or concepts. For instance, a study by Buli (2017) found that EO and market orientation (MO) lead to superior performance especially in turbulent environments. However, MO is different from EM as MO is more related to linking an organisation's actions consistently with marketing concepts (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990) and EM is a processual approach to marketing entrepreneurially. However, only one study claimed that EM behaviour is practised systematically by firms and it does not happen by chance. This systematic relationship was indeed found with EO as firms with a higher level of EO engage more in EM behaviour than firms with a lower level (Kilenthong et al., 2015). However, the level of influence is still unclear and the interlinking components have still not been identified.

The first two stages were essential in order to understand what underlies EO and how this concept affects the EM behaviour in SMEs. Hence,

identification of marketing strategies and tools will be more constructive and systematic. From the literature, many studies have discussed the impact of certain marketing strategies for SMEs (e.g. Piercy, 2016; Alfalah, 2017; Pomeroy, 2017). However, there was no evidence to show what the different and various strategies that SMEs can follow in TEs are in order to achieve sustainability during such periods. Therefore, this study is an attempt to identify several strategies and tools which can be utilised by SMEs in TEs in order to sustain during such periods. This will also offer a good link between practice and theory to respond to several calls in the marketing literature which encourages studies that provide this link (e.g. Kumar, 2017).

1.7.2. Methodological Justification

This thesis explores several elements related to EO and EM. It adopts an inductive approach to theory and a qualitative research design. Qualitative research can facilitate in-depth understanding and deep insights. Despite the existing number of qualitative studies related to the concept of EO (e.g. Lumpkin et al., 2013; Miller, 2015), researchers are nevertheless being urged to conduct yet more exploratory research in order to fill certain gaps related to the concept. Therefore, this study responds to calls such as the one by Wales (2016) in which he notes a virtual absence of qualitative research in EO. A similar gap was observed in the EM and marketing for SMEs literature. For instance, Jones and Rowley (2011) urged researchers to explore the decision making process related to aspects of marketing strategies in SMEs by employing the concept of EM. Whilst, the qualitative literature in EM and SME marketing is substantial

(e.g. Bjerke and Hultman, 2004; Gilmore, 2011; Morrish and Jones, 2020), the need for further and more nuanced research is evidenced in the literature.

The study adopts semi-structured interviews as a data collection technique and the data analysis method is thematic analysis. The interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA) in interviewing and analysing data allows dictation of a detailed exploration of individual meaning and their lived experience (Smith, 2015, p. 25). This approach contributes to the literature and uses an interpretive phenomenological method in entrepreneurship research. In fact, it was noted by Hlady-Rispal and Jouison-Laffitte (2014) that there is a lack of phenomenological research in EO. Chapter 4 provides more details on the methodology and it addresses issues of reflexivity and the trustworthiness of the data.

1.7.3. Contextual Justification

In many developing countries SMEs play a significant role in their economic development plan (Latha and Murthy, 2009) especially when a critical component of the plan is predicated on the transition away from dependence on a dominant extractive industry and towards the establishment of a more broadly based, widely distributed and sustainable economy. SMEs can typically play a pivotal role in generating clusters of economic activity serving the needs of a developing domestic market. SA has its own specific cultural context and is one such economy which has explicitly committed through its Vision 2030 to a programme of diversifying from its dependence on oil extraction towards a more balanced base of economic activity where key players will be indigenous

SMEs. However, SME establishment and growth are being impacted by governmental fiscal policy which is increasing costs and investment risk. At the same time there has been a downturn in consumer demand. Thus, there is clearly an environment in SA which merits close exploration of entrepreneurial practice among SMEs given SA's explicit policy focus and current economic conditions which demand entrepreneurial agility, creativity and market focus if SMEs in the kingdom are to survive and thrive.

This situation is having a direct impact on SMEs. This is what made SMEs in SA in this period of transition a very appropriate sample for this study. Given that these enterprises are facing many challenges including marketing, they are evidencing more innovative approaches to marketing to self-sustain during the transition. In addition, it was perceived that entrepreneurial behaviour is more apparent during downturn economies, where behaviours such as dedication, persistence and determination are clearer compared to economies in healthy conditions. In addition, marketing activities receive more attention and require more intensive planning in order to obtain benefits from them. Thus, entrepreneurs displaying dimensions such as innovation and creativity can make a difference in the market and their enterprises gain more visibility and attention. Therefore, choosing a country in such a period for this research can be perceived as positive in terms of obtaining fruitful results and positive insights.

1.8. Summary of the Research Contribution

This thesis contributes to the literature of entrepreneurship and marketing for SMEs in several ways. To the best of the researcher's knowledge,

this is the first study that provides a synthesised approach in employing the distinctive concepts of EO and EM together for SMEs.

Secondly, this thesis contributes to the EO literature by identifying explicitly the antecedents that lead to EO. This identification is a response to several calls to explore these antecedents (e.g. Randerson, 2016). In addition, the exploratory nature of the study means a revisit to both EO and EM and their existing dimensions which also responds to several calls in the literature (e.g. Covin and Lumpkin, 2011; Wales, 2016). From a practical point of view, this identification will allow entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs to strengthen these functional and psychological behaviours in order to sustain their enterprises in TEs. Additionally, this thesis advances studies on EO and EM in a new context in a rare condition which is a transition period in an economy.

Thirdly, this thesis will contribute to the current body of literature in the interface between entrepreneurship and marketing. Specifically, it will identify the interlinking components between EO and EM which will then elucidate the level of influence that EO has on EM.

Fourthly, the results will reveal the most effective marketing strategies for SMEs to follow in TEs. In addition, an identification of the tools that assist in achieving the best outcomes from these strategies will also be explained. Finally, the thesis will add to the Resource Dependency Theory (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) and the Resource-based View (Barney, 1991) in different ways. From a practical point of view, the results work as a model that should assist entrepreneurs who own or run SMEs to approach the market more effectively and therefore to sustain in a period of economic transition.

1.9. Thesis Structure

This thesis is structured as follows. This chapter has described the problem of the research based on the gaps in the literature. In addition, it has identified the research objectives and their potential contributions to theory and practice. The second chapter reviews the literature on the concepts of EO, EM and marketing for SMEs. The aim is to highlight the areas of commonalities between both EO and EM in order to offer a synthesised approach that can assist SMEs in TEs. Chapter Three describes the methodology used in collecting and analysing data for this study, including ethical considerations. In addition, a detailed evaluation of the context of this study is provided. The fourth and fifth chapters demonstrates the findings in a narrative form, by highlighting the potential contributions and supporting them with citations from a number of participants. Chapter six provides the discussion, where links, evaluations and arguments from previous literature are discussed. The seventh chapter provides a conclusion for the whole thesis and summarises its theoretical and practical contributions and suggests propositions for future research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship and marketing are two distinct fields of research that nevertheless have similar underlying philosophies considering both are market- and customer-oriented (e.g. Hills and LaForge, 1992). Therefore, both concepts cross refer as they both have significant interrelations (Morris and Paul, 1987). These two fields of research are often interrelated when scholars investigate or explore issues related to firms' performance (e.g. Rauch et al., 2009; Choi and Williams, 2016); characteristics of nascent entrepreneurs and small enterprises (e.g. Eggers et al., 2012); SMEs (e.g. Avlonitis and Salavou, 2007; Bettiol et al., 2012; Buli, 2017); internationalisation (e.g. Martin and Javalgi, 2016); and more importantly their effect on enterprises in TEs (e.g. Hooley et al., 2003; Nguyen et al., 2015). Therefore, studies concerning the interface between entrepreneurship and marketing should enhance the decisions related to marketing by entrepreneurs. Both fields incorporate concerns for innovative approaches to management, opportunistic intervention and they focus on change (Collinson, 2002).

Researchers from the field of entrepreneurship have introduced the concept of EO (Miller, 1983; Covin and Slevin, 1991; Lumpkin and Dess, 1996) in order to describe the entrepreneurial process (Miller, 1983). In so doing, they distinguish firms that display entrepreneurial behaviour from others which do not (Mintzberg, 1973). On the other hand, the interface between entrepreneurship and marketing has provided the EM concept (Morris et al., 2002; Miles and Darroch, 2006; Hills et al., 2008), which embraces aspects of

entrepreneurship, relationships, innovation and customer engagement (Jones and Rowley, 2011). EO and EM have been categorised as two separate concepts that have positive impacts on SMEs (Hills et al., 2008; Moreno and Casillas, 2008; Presutti and Odorici, 2019). The present study has employed both concepts in order to understand how EO can affect EM and then to explore how EM can enhance the marketing strategies for SMEs in TEs to approach the market more effectively.

This chapter will provide an extensive review of the existing literature relating to the concepts of EO and EM. Thus, how both concepts affected SMEs in previous studies of similar economic conditions.

The chapter is divided into five sections. Following this introduction, an illustration of the concept of EO will be provided including its historical development and its unique dimensions. In addition, the section will emphasise the importance of applying this concept to SMEs to increase financial sustainability and ensure future growth. The following section will provide a review of the EM concept and its emergence and historical development. In addition, it will demonstrate how this concept is one of the most effective approaches to marketing for SMEs. The next section offers a discussion of the main characteristics of SMEs, which distinguish them from other types of organisations. Moreover, the section highlights and discusses several marketing models available in the literature to strengthen the input of strategic marketing implementation for better performing SMEs. The final section will demonstrate the link between both concepts of EO and EM by indicating commonalities and differences between them in order to produce a framework for SMEs to better perform in TEs.

2.2. The Concept of Entrepreneurial Orientation

2.2.1. Background

Entrepreneurship as a field of research has passed through many different stages, beginning with early attempts to define entrepreneurship (e.g. Schumpeter, 1934; Cole, 1968). It has now reached a stage at which it is being described as one of the most dynamic, vital and relevant fields in management and social science research (Wiklund et al., 2011). The term entrepreneurship goes back to the 18th century with no exact consensus among scholars about a common definition. Other proposals include: “bringing goods and services into existence by discovering and exploiting new opportunities” (Shane and Venkataraman 2000); “the process of working in uncertain and ambiguous environments to extract profit from an innovative, unique, and valuable combination of resources” (Amit et al., 1993, p. 817). Entrepreneurship can also take a more general perspective by considering Low and MacMillan’s (1988 p. 141) definition as simply the “creation of new enterprises”. That includes the process from early stages, starting with the idea (innovation) and its implementation (pro-activeness and risk-taking).

Audretsch (2012) conducted a detailed study which distinguished three different approaches to entrepreneurship which are: organisational context entrepreneurship, which refers to the organisational status in general which would not only reflect the firm’s size but also its age; entrepreneurship as a behaviour which generally refers to the level of innovation and growth which exists within a firm; and entrepreneurship based on performance criteria which refers to the ability to discover and act on opportunities. That ability originates from an individual’s understanding of the entrepreneurial process which results

from previous education or training or even from past insight of previous experience or involvement in any entrepreneurial activities. These three approaches could work together or independently depending on what orientation the firm adopts. However, scholars such as Wales et al. (2011) argued that it is clear that the way the concept of entrepreneurship is operationalised in research is heterogeneous and differentiated.

With regards to EO, the concept emerged within the entrepreneurship literature. It was first introduced by Miller (1983) proposing that firms with higher EO are more able to exploit opportunities than others. He described entrepreneurial firms as those which bring innovations and undertake risky orientations. Over the past thirty years, EO has received further attention from researchers in the field of management and entrepreneurship in particular, as EO is believed to have a positive impact on firms' performances (Wiklund, 1999; Wales et al., 2013; Covin and Miller, 2014). EO has become an important topic when scholars study a firm's growth and performance (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005; Covin and Lumpkin, 2011; Su et al., 2011; Rezaei and Ortt, 2018). In addition, an organisation's growth is positively associated with EO which exists within the firm and more precisely, the growth which is considered a consequence of applying EO dimensions, namely; risk-taking, pro-activeness and innovativeness (Brown et al., 2001; Moreno and Casillas, 2008).

Soininen et al. (2013) stated that EO emerged in the 1980s as a key concept within the strategic management and entrepreneurship literature. It is a firm-level strategic notion (Covin and Selvin, 1991) which emerges from the strategic choice perspective, as a response to either environmental or organisational stimuli or both (Child, 1972; Murray, 1984). Strategic choice

perspective describes how certain strategic leaders can introduce a new strategic approach and lead the organisation to that direction (Child, 1972). Many studies have highlighted the link between strategies and environments where the outcome was the impact on performance (Covin and Slevin, 1991; Madsen, 2007; Miller and Friesen, 1983; Smart and Conant, 1994; Zahra, 1993). Nevertheless, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) stated that EO has developed from the literature of strategic management. They find this concept dominating the interests of scholars who conduct research in the field of entrepreneurship as illustrated by data showing a significant increase in the amount of research conducted on the topic of EO (Covin and Lumpkin, 2011). However, other scholars studied EO as a dependent variable to better understand the emergence and the development of the concept of EO (e.g. Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005). This study will try to follow this approach as EO seems to be a main factor in entrepreneurs' behaviour towards marketing, to ensure SMEs sustainability in transition periods.

EO is one of the most studied theories in the field of entrepreneurship (George and Marino, 2011). It has been defined differently depending on the perspective of each study. Morris and Paul (1987, p. 251) defined EO as "*the propensity of a company's top management to take calculated risks, to be innovative, and to demonstrate pro-activeness in their approach to strategic decision making*". Moreover, Miller's (1983, p. 771) definition of an entrepreneurial firm is somewhat similar. He defines it as "*a firm that engages in product market innovation, undertakes somewhat risky ventures, and is first to come up with 'proactive' innovations, beating competitors to the punch*". Lumpkin and Dess' (1996, p. 138) definition was more practical. They defined

EO as “*the processes, practices, and decision-making activities that lead to a new entry*”. They explained a new entry as an essential act of entrepreneurship. This study will employ the latter definition as it is exploring the antecedents that lead to EO and it is believed that EO in SMEs is more about process and actions. Many actions could fall under the concept of new entry, for example but not limited to, entering a new or current market with a new or existing product or service. It may also take the form of launching a new venture either by an existing firm or a start-up (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996).

Another viewpoint is that EO is an organisational resource from the perspective of the resource-advantage theory (Hunt, 1995). With this resource an organisation could be strategically differentiated from competitors and that could result in wealth creation and economic dynamism for the firm (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). In a nutshell, this study perceives EO as central to the work of the top management team enabling them to discover and act upon new opportunities and to strengthen the position of the firm in the market. Thus, if new ventures applied the five dimensions of EO effectively, it would lead to a greater competitive advantage and better performance as argued by Li et al. (2009).

Before moving on, it is important to distinguish between three types of organisational strategies. Firstly, entrepreneurial strategy (Covin and Slevin, 1991; Murray, 1984), which refers here to the strategic position represented by the firm in several dimensions, namely, the propensity for risk-taking, the ability to act aggressively in the face of competition in a proactive manner, and frequent and extensive innovation of product and services (Covin and Slevin, 1991). Secondly, strategy for growth (Ansoff, 1965; Child, 1972), which is

related to the corporate level and their strategies and frequently links the success of the firm to the effectiveness of its organisational structure and environment with resulting impact reflected in the firm's performance.

Ansoff (1965) has identified different strategy dimensions for the growth of SMEs which are: (1) growth through applying new technology or inventing a new product; and (2) growth through the identification of new needs or exploring new markets. Whatever the growth strategy, it is crucial to identify at least one to be used as the firm's road plan. (3) strategy for differentiation and sustainability (Miller, 1986; Porter, 1980), which are business-level strategies that seek to obtain sustainable profitability and competitive advantage. It is vital to present these differences as the strategy of a firm works as an intermediate variable between EO and performance since a higher EO develops practical and specific strategies which lead to different rates of growth (Moreno and Casillas, 2008). Therefore, to overcome potential confusion in measuring performance and/or growth it is important at the first stage to distinguish between these strategies.

2.2.2. Entrepreneurial Orientation Dimensions

EO harnesses the ability of the firm to behave entrepreneurially, primarily by implementing these dimensions: innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk-taking (Miller, 1983; Covin and Slevin, 1989; Morris and Paul, 1987). Innovativeness represents a firm's creativity level and its tendency to engage with new ideas, experimentations and processes which eventually result in the creation of new products/services or technological processes (Jantunen et al.,

2005). Innovations can vary between different firms but still it is an important dimension of EO because it reflects the firm's ability to take on new opportunities (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). Proactiveness is usually related to searching for new business opportunities (Mintzberg, 1973). It aims to adopt and act in response to market changes to create and develop new methods or techniques (Lee et al., 2001). Risk-taking is the level of uncertainty that every new innovation has before entering the market (Lee et al., 2001). It refers to a firm's willingness to invest in projects that are high in profits or losses (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). The above three dimensions are collectively the main factors which contribute to the strategic learning capabilities of a firm¹ (Anderson et al., 2009). However, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) added two more dimensions; autonomy and competitive aggressiveness. They argue that autonomy is an essential factor which refers to the ability of an individual or an organisation to take actions that brings an idea to fruition. Moreover, competitive aggressiveness refers to the action a firm takes to establish strong competition initiatives to strengthen its position among other competitors.

From a different perspective, a more recent study suggests that EO is a multidimensional concept that consists of two essential dimensions, entrepreneurial behaviour and managerial attitude towards risk. Innovativeness and pro-activeness come under entrepreneurial behaviour and the risk-taking element comes under managerial attitude (Anderson et al., 2015). Apart from Lumpkin and Dess (1996)'s viewpoint, most studies seem to agree on the three main dimensions, however, a difference arises over whether it is a

¹ Strategic Learning Capability: is the firm's proficiency at generating and acting on the strategic knowledge from the previous strategic actions.

unidimensional or a multidimensional concept (Martens et al., 2016). This study treats EO as a unidimensional concept as Miller (1983) suggests that for a firm to be considered entrepreneurial, it needs to have high level across all dimensions of EO.

2.2.3. Entrepreneurial Orientation and Firm Performance

The existing literature on EO agrees on the positive impact of EO on firms' performance (Covin and Slevin, 1991; Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Wiklund, 1999; Madsen, 2007; Presutti and Odorici, 2019). A vast number of studies shows to some extent that high levels of EO tends to provide firms with new opportunities and a stronger competitive position in the market (Smart and Conant, 1994). In addition, many recent studies show that the recent approach in researching EO and a firm's performance includes some other variables, specifying a certain industry or even distinguishing whether the implications for performance is based on financial or non-financial earnings (Zehir et al., 2015). This section reviews the existing literature which studied the impact of EO on performance.

When considering performance and EO, a study by Keh et al. (2007) tested a causal model based on data obtained from Singaporean entrepreneurs. Results showed a significant effect of EO on a firm's performance. It suggests EO plays a fundamental role in the utilisation and acquisition of marketing information, which results in better marketing decisions, in particular those decisions related to promotion and place. In addition, it was found that firms with higher and improved EO are better able to target top segments in the market, charge higher prices, and are ahead of

competitors in scanning the market (Zahra and Covin, 1993). Smart and Conant (1994) found that the link between EO and a firm's performance and marketing competencies is positively and significantly correlated.

Another study investigated the mediating role of innovation performance and the strategy of differentiation on the relationship between EO and performance. The study took place in Turkey among 331 middle and large operating manufacturers. Results of the survey of 991 middle and senior managers showed that both innovation performance and differentiation strategy mediate the relationship between EO and the performance of the firm in addition to the mediating effect of differentiation strategy on the relationship between EO and innovation performance (Zehir et al., 2015). So, referring back to the agreement by the majority of scholars on the positive implications of EO on a firm's performance, results obtained from Turkey extends the attempt to prove the positive impact of EO on developing successful business strategies and innovations to a different geographical context.

Moreover, EO also shows a significant positive relationship with performance and this relationship increases over time. A longitudinal study by Madsen (2007) of 168 Norwegian enterprises between 2000 and 2003 was conducted with the aim of assessing the significance of EO on a firm's performance. The study showed that a change in EO over an extended period would be of importance for a firm's performance. Hence, focusing on a long-term EO provides a beneficial outcome. In addition, competitors with a lower EO appear to have inferior performance compared to firms which have developed EO over time. Wiklund (1999) stated that there is indeed a positive relationship between EO and performance over an extended period. In addition,

investing in EO is worthwhile over time as his study showed an increase in the relationship over a longer period. Therefore, it is assumed that EO is a sustainable approach and has a long-term effect on performance as well as short-term positive impact.

From a different perspective, Su et al. (2011) argued that the empirical findings into the relationship between performance and EO are inconclusive. They conducted a study in two different contexts; new ventures and established firms. Established firms are enterprises with a well-known product/service and consistent sales growth. New ventures are those firms which suffer the “liability of newness” (that is the risk of dying at the early days which often decreases overtime), and a lack of strategic resources. They studied 223 firms in China in different geographical areas. The findings were specific to the extent that the relationship between EO and performance was positive in the established firms and inversely U-shaped in the new ventures. In addition, the new ventures suffered from the “liability of newness”, which made the performance implication of EO unconditional. They also found that resources, social ties, legitimacies and formalisation are elements which moderate the EO performance linkage.

Other important implications of EO such as helping firms to contribute in value creation in the firm and at the social level (Moreno and Casillas, 2008) are also important to consider. Within the firm, Schumpeter (1934) suggested five behavioural characteristics that an entrepreneur enhances in the firm including, introduction of a new product or service, introduction of new production procedures, opening new markets, the foundation of new sources of supply, and the ability to reorganise the industry (Smart and Conant, 1994). Moreover, an empirical study was conducted by Anderson et al. (2009) of 110

manufacturing firms studying the effect of EO on strategic capability. The result shows the direct effect of EO on the capabilities of generating strategic knowledge and encouraging strategic change by implementing EO's dimensions. In addition, support is found for a causal relationship between structural organicity² and strategic learning capabilities while both structural organicity and market responsiveness³ contribute to a strategic formation process by firms' entrepreneurial behaviour.

On the other hand, it is not always the case that EO has positive implications for a firm's performance. It might be subject to other factors (Choi and Williams, 2016). It has also been noted that the impact of EO on performance is context-specific and the variance of the external environment of every firm affects the relationship (Madsen, 2007). In addition, it has been argued that the EO approach to strategy is resource-consuming which requires a great deal of investment (Covin and Slevin, 1991). These resources play a critical role in the performance implications of EO (Su et al., 2011). Moreover, the essential role of formalisation to achieve the value of EO is of extreme importance (Lin and Germain, 2003). Sine et al. (2006) argued that despite a firm's high level of innovativeness and pro-activeness, it is possible not to take advantage of opportunities if the firm suffers low formalisation as this constrains the decision-making and implementation process (as cited in, Su et al., 2011).

Therefore, despite large number of scholars having indicated the positive relationship between EO and firms' performance, firms still require additional

² Structural organicity is defined as "the extent to which a firm's organisational structure is organic or mechanistic in nature" (Burns and Stalker, 1961) as cited in, Anderson et al., (2009).

³ Market responsiveness is defined as "the extent to which a firm reacts quickly to changing market conditions" (Day, 1994) as cited in, Anderson et al., (2009).

elements to achieve high performance such as strategic resource management (e.g. Ireland et al., 2003), certain external conditions (e.g. Lumpkin and Dess, 2001) or other internal variables such as the process of strategic decision-making (e.g. Covin et al., 2006). In support of this argument, this study suggests that exploring the antecedents of EO should improve understanding of the wider context in which the concept is embedded. In addition, it should identify certain relationships between EO and the antecedents that underlie it, which will result in enhancing the impact of the concept on SMEs' performance.

To summarise, although some scholars found an ambiguous relationship between EO and a firm's performance (Covin and Slevin, 1991; Hunt, 1995), the majority agree on the positive effect on performance. It is also clear that most studies consider different mediating or moderating variables and different dimensions of performance (Casillas and Moreno, 2010). Accordingly, results on the impact vary between different studies depending on factors such as size, structure and age of every enterprise. Moreover, it is clear that both external and internal environments also have an effect on shaping the level of the EO impact on performance. Nevertheless, EO contributes positively to strategic knowledge creation which results in more developed differentiation strategies, better market positioning and increased competitive advantage. This leads to better performing firms, which makes the concept of EO applicable to this study.

2.2.4. Entrepreneurial Orientation in SMEs

The existing literature on entrepreneurship has implicitly assumed that EO plays a major role in the growth and sustainability of SMEs (Moreno and

Casillas, 2008). This section will summarise previous studies which examined the role of EO in the growth of SMEs in addition to identifying several practices through which the concept is applied within the firm. In doing so, the applicability of this concept for SMEs is clarified.

Entrepreneurship is an essential behaviour which directs SMEs towards future growth (Wiklund, 1998). A study by Wang and Yen (2012) investigated 267 SMEs in China with the basic aim of measuring the impact of each of the three dimensions of EO (innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk-taking) on a firm's performance. Results identified the positive association of every dimension of EO on the performance of these SMEs with varied results. This appears to agree with findings from studies in North America (Covin and Slevin, 1989; Lumpkin and Dess, 1996), albeit in a different geographic context. Another study of 413 small enterprises by Wiklund et al. (2009) supported previous findings as it showed a consistent relationship between performance and EO. This relationship appears strong and exerts a direct effect on growth. In addition to the direct effect, the study highlighted the effect of EO on other variables. These included the environment, workforce attitude and resources. In effect, EO works as a channel between all of these variables to ensure future growth.

Another study by Moreno and Casillas (2008) aimed to understand the influence of the EO of an SME firm on its growth. They built on the approach of Stevenson (1983) as he connected the entrepreneurial culture of the firm to its growth orientation and the supportive view by Brown et al. (2001) which identified the firm's orientation towards growth as one important dimension of its EO. By studying 434 SMEs in Spain, Moreno and Casillas (2008) found that

EO and a firm's growth are positively related but this relationship is somewhat complicated. With the use of a complex causal predictive model (PLS), the study confirmed that strategic behaviour is the driver of growth. Accordingly, innovation as an EO dimension has the greatest influence on the selection of an expansion strategy which is used by a firm to encourage new product or technology development. However, to attain rapid growth, a firm requires a stable environment and availability of appropriate resource.

From another perspective, EO seems to have a stronger impact on firms working in emerging economies (Bello et al., 2016; Le Roux and Bengesi, 2014; Su et al., 2011; Wang and Yen, 2012). Due to the pressure coming from the policy of the open market, competition for local SMEs is strong. Data was collected from interviews with managers of SMEs in Tanzania drawn from different sectors: manufacturing, service and retail. They were tested on three dimensions of EO, namely, competitive aggressiveness, pro-activeness, and risk-taking. Le Roux and Bengesi (2014, p. 621) found that "*pro-activeness and competitive aggressiveness are positively related to SME performance, respectively*". They suggested that in emerging economies it is important to react pro-actively with some aggressive competencies to time effectively the seizure of emerging opportunities. In addition, the opportunities which are created as a result of the shift to open market economies require a risk-taking and pro-active approach.

Moreover, results of a study investigating SMEs in India by Gupta and Batra (2016) indicate that Indian SMEs have benefited from EO, especially when competition level is low and demand is high. A different study investigating SMEs in the service sector in an emerging economy concluded

that SMEs are required: 1) to continuously offer highly innovative and quality services; 2) to sustain competitive advantage to achieve overall objectives; and 3) to develop and secure intangible resources such as expert employees. These are said to be the main factors for SMEs who work in the service sector to maintain better performance (Bello et al., 2016).

This review should not overlook the family business category, an important component of the SME sector in many economies. Family businesses have unique characteristics: they are usually conservative and controlled by one member of the family who sometimes shows a lack of knowledge and skills in one function or another. Employees in this category tend to follow strategies set by top management and there tends to be an absence of creativity and innovativeness unless the top management team has encouraged this behaviour within the firm. There is disagreement among scholars concerning the effect of these characteristics on the strategic position of family businesses because of the lack of knowledge about these firms' strategic orientations (Short et al., 2009). Growth in most family businesses is affected by uncertainty and unpredictable changes in the market and their success is often measured by transgenerational wealth transfer (Craig and Moores, 2006). Accordingly, these firms can sometimes show a lack of consideration for the EO-Performance relationship.

The significance of considering family business as a distinct category is due to the fact that many of the medium sized enterprises in SA are family owned. However, many of them clearly lack EO characteristics. This might be due to the fact that they are currently managed by the third or the fourth generation with inter-generational shifts in entrepreneurial orientation. Thus, it

is not possible that the entrepreneurial behaviour remains the same after succession due to different determinants that motivates each successor (Porfirio et al., 2020). The literature relating family business and entrepreneurship is vast (e.g. Aldrich and Cliff, 2003; Sharma et al., 2014; Randerson et al., 2015). However, it is not the goal of this study to explore this part of the literature, because it does not align with any of the study's objectives. Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting the vast body of literature concerning family business and entrepreneurship.

In addition, the literature on EO in the context of family businesses has increased in the last fifteen years. For instance, a study in India has noted that the EO for the family businesses is likely to be affected during environmental uncertainty (Chakrabarti and Mondal, 2018). This might be an issue when the controlling family members are risk averse and are unable to follow entrepreneurial strategies aiming to protect wealth (Cherchem, 2017). Therefore, the results of this study would benefit managers and entrepreneurs in this category by clarifying the entrepreneurial behaviours that may allow them to achieve sustainability in TE.

In the same vein, a study comparing the effect of the EO dimensions on the performance of family and non-family businesses has found that the EO-performance relationship is consistent with all other scholars' findings but the mechanism of applying EO is different in a family business context. The same holds for growth but with differential impact when family and non-family businesses are compared (Stenholm et al., 2016). These results contradict to some extent what is assumed about family businesses in terms of the non-

implementation of EO. This finding has also been considered in this study as many of the medium-sized businesses in Saudi Arabia are family businesses.

Furthermore, by comparing results from different national/social contexts a study carried out by Semrau et al. (2016) of 1,248 SMEs from seven different countries revealed that the positive impact of EO on a firm's performance is evident but varies between different countries. Accordingly, it can be argued that social structures and culture have a considerable effect on the level of EO in every national context. In addition, the analysis also found that the relationship between EO and performance is higher in societies that have a high-performance based culture. Thus, Batjargal (2010) argued that local settings, social norms, culture, and personality are factors which control the entrepreneur's behaviour towards growth and performance. So, it can be said that entrepreneurial behaviours and their antecedents are somewhat different in different research contexts and they can be influenced by the values and beliefs of every nation.

One important factor which affects the level of impact of EO on SME's performance is the external environment such as working in an unstable market as a result of economic deficiencies. The instability of the market may have a significant impact on the viability of the firm. SMEs experience more difficulties as a result of these factors such that an entrepreneurial mind-set becomes more crucial to attain a sustainable competitive advantage (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2003).

In this vein, a study of 164 SMEs in the Netherlands following the economic crisis of 2008 conducted by Kraus et al. (2012) aimed to investigate

the impact that EO had on the performance of these enterprises during the crisis. Results confirmed that SME firms exhibiting proactive behaviour had more positive performance outcomes. However, the study did recommend reducing the number of innovative projects which were too risky irrespective of the market circumstances. Risk-taking negatively affected the level of performance of the sample studied and this may be due to the fear of the crisis and concern over the future of the firm.

These results align with the findings of Hughes and Morgan (2007) in their study examining EO's five dimensions in early high-technology firms during their development phase. Their results showed a positive influence on performance by pro-activeness and innovativeness but risk-taking had a negative effect. The two further dimensions by Lumpkin and Dess (1996) were tested and the results revealed no business performance implication due to competitive aggressiveness and autonomy at this stage of a firm's growth. So, it is crucial for the SME to work proactively and innovatively during an economic downturn and to take very calculated risks. Another study of 163 Finnish and Russian SMEs showed the same positive relationship and a direct association between a firm's performance and its EO. However, the external environment variables usually configure and shape this relationship. The study illustrates that a firm operating in a growing and highly hostile market usually achieves a superior performance whereas, performance is low when adopting EO in a low hostility and high growth market (Shirokova et al., 2016). That aligns with previous literature on the effect of environmental characteristics on the level of impact of EO on a firm's performance.

The review of the existing literature above has briefly shown the emergence of the concept of EO from the literature relating to entrepreneurship. In addition, it has illustrated studies that positively linked the concept of EO to superior firm performance. It has also demonstrated the different dimensions of EO which have been identified over the past thirty years. Moreover, it has shown how the concept is instantiated in SMEs in different cultures and different types of economy. However, the literature has also identified several gaps related to the concept. The section below will outline some of these gaps and will illustrate the relevance of this concept to the present study.

2.2.5. The Importance of Addressing Issues Related to EO in this Study

As noted earlier in this chapter, entrepreneurship and marketing are two distinct fields which are compatible with each other (Hills and LaForge, 1992). In addition, the rationale of this study is based on an attempt to enhance the understanding of the concept of EO in order to enable SMEs to approach the market more effectively. It is assumed that highlighting the significant elements and the gaps in the literature in terms of the concept of EO is key to better understanding the concept. In particular, it is necessary to explore what the possible drivers or antecedents of EO are and what its possible consequences or outcomes are. In addition, an understanding of the influence of EO on marketing approaches in SMEs is required.

Firstly, as was demonstrated in the previous sections, EO is an established concept in entrepreneurship and organisation research (Covin and Lumpkin, 2011). However, entrepreneurial behaviour in organisations is more

than the existing dimensions of EO. Therefore, restricting the research to this concept only will limit the richness of effective insights concerning entrepreneurial processes (Randerson, 2016). This was the reason behind researchers encouraging exploration of antecedents of EO (e.g. Randerson, 2016; Wales, 2016). For instance, Covin and Lumpkin (2011) urged researchers to explore alternative dimensions of EO, which might be possible by exploring the concept in a new context. In addition, Wales et al. (2013) encouraged researchers to investigate the theoretical grounds of EO by exploring its antecedents in less studied areas such as leadership and organisational learning. Therefore, it is clear that researchers have not yet reached a conclusion on the antecedents that lead to EO.

Secondly, EO was initially defined by Miller (1983) as a concept that constituted three dimensions namely, innovativeness, risk-taking and pro-activeness. Lumpkin and Dess (1996) have extended the concept with two more dimensions namely, competitive aggressiveness and autonomy. Since then, researchers of EO have limited research to these five dimensions. It is clear that given the current dynamic environment and the advancement of technology, existing EO dimensions might usefully be reconsidered. In addition, conducting the study in a transition economy will assist in achieving a clearer sense of the potential impacts of the existing and any emerging dimensions of EO on SMEs.

Finally, the link between EO and marketing seems to be integral. For instance, EO has identified strong relationships with many different marketing elements such as market orientation, marketing information and customer orientation (Matsuno et al., 2002; Keh et al., 2007; Merlo and Auh, 2009; Kwak

et al., 2013; Thoumrungroje et al., 2013). In addition, it has been argued that EO dominates and has a positive impact on EM behaviour (Kilenthong et al., 2016). The latter study has identified the direct impact of three dimensions of EO on EM, namely, innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk-taking. However, the interlinking elements between EO and EM still require further exploration. Therefore, this study has identified EM as an appropriate marketing concept that is able to enhance the marketing approach for SMEs in TEs. The concept is supported by the dimensions of EO. Therefore, the synthesis of both concepts, EO and EM, will provide a better strategic positioning for SMEs in terms of marketing in TEs.

2.2.6. Summary

This section has highlighted the emergence and the development of the concept of EO by reviewing the existing literature. In addition, it presents previous evidence that shows the positive impact of EO on firms' performance in different circumstances and with varied outcomes. It is clear that scholars have not yet reached a conclusion on the antecedents that lead to EO (Randerson, 2016; Wales, 2016). In addition, there is still a lack of investigations of the concept of EO in emerging economies (Wales et al., 2013) such as Saudi Arabia. The section concerning the concept of EO in this study aims to add to the literature by: firstly, identifying the antecedents that lead to EO; secondly, reconsidering the existing dimensions of EO in SMEs in a TE; and, finally, examining the nature of EO in the context of Saudi Arabia. In addition, the majority of previous studies relating to EO have followed a causality approach to collecting and analysing data by looking at the impact of

one or more dimensions on the performance in a certain context. However, there is still a need for more exploratory research into EO (Wales, 2016), which will uncover the links between an individual's behaviour, cultural background and specific external environmental factors and the specifics of how EO is shaped within the firm. As a result, the synthesis of both EO and EM will have a solid theoretical foundation so SMEs can better approach the market in TEs.

2.3. The Concept of Entrepreneurial Marketing

2.3.1. Background

Entrepreneurial marketing is a field of knowledge which has been developed as an interconnection between two disciplines – marketing and entrepreneurship – over more than two decades (Sullivan Mort et al., 2012). In order to provide more clarity, it is important to offer the definition of the term “Marketing”, as happened in the previous section, with the term “Entrepreneurship”. According to the American Marketing Association, 2013 marketing, is defined as *“the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large”*. EM is a combination of attributes from both entrepreneurship and marketing as both disciplines shape this concept. Morris et al. (2002) argue that EM seeks to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage, it allows dynamism and creative behaviour, it works as a moderator for calculated risk-taking and it allows active participation between a firm and its customers. Further details of the contrasts between traditional marketing and entrepreneurial marketing have been listed by Morris et al. (2002) (Appendix. 1).

As a result of a meta-analysis study, Ioniță (2012) stated the most recent and commonly used definition of EM as “*proactive identification and exploitation of opportunities for acquiring and retaining profitable customers through innovative approaches to risk management, resource leveraging and value creation*” (Morris et al., 2002). For the purpose of this study this definition will be used as it includes the three dimensions of EO which are, innovativeness, risk-taking and pro-activeness and elements from marketing such as creation of value, customer focus and opportunity focus.

EM synthesises aspects from entrepreneurship and marketing to help firms act entrepreneurially by applying appropriate marketing activities (Morris et al., 2002). More precisely, market-oriented entrepreneurs uncover alternative communication competences, develop more speedily than their competitors, have more capability in finding alternative methods of distribution, have a competency in developing anticipated products, and have the capacity for building a unique form of relationship with customers (Hamel and Prahalad, 1996).

EM has been used frequently in relation to marketing activities for small and resource-constrained firms (Miles et al., 2015). However, Morrish et al. (2010) noted that the concept became wider to enable it to be applied to many organisations of different size and resource. Murray (1981) noted that marketing is the natural “home” of the entrepreneurial process, despite the unique perspective of marketing in elements such as customers, products and competition. According to Lehman et al. (2014) a personalised management style would be a possible result of EM as it motivates key decision makers to shape forms of marketing entrepreneurially. Therefore, the literature initially

states that EM is more applicable to entrepreneurs who are marketing-oriented and managing a resource-constrained firm.

Research on EM has not arrived at a conclusive rationale (Sullivan Mort et al., 2012). In fact, Morris et al. (2002, p. 4) stated that the concept of EM has been used loosely and viewed in various ways illustrating different perspectives of EM. For instance, some studies present EM as marketing practices which are specifically adopted for new or small sized enterprises where these enterprises experience constraints in resources (Hill and Wright, 2000). Other scholars view the concept as an association between the theory of conventional marketing and entrepreneurship (Collinson and Shaw, 2001). Another view emphasised that the concept of EM is substantially different from the theory of conventional marketing (Hills et al., 2008). Results from interviewing forty entrepreneurs showed significant differences between marketing practices applied traditionally and entrepreneurially. What is meant by 'entrepreneurially' is a shift in the focus onto elements such as innovation and risk-taking before gaining customer feedback (Stokes, 2000). This view aligns with the view of Hills et al. (2008) as well as the overview taken prior to this research which states that EM, as defined by Morris et al. (2002), along with EO, both positively affect SMEs performance.

From another viewpoint, researchers gathered in Charleston, USA in 2010 to discuss the interface between entrepreneurship and marketing when studying EM. They concluded that the entrepreneurship discipline is dominant, and marketing comes secondary to the interface. They advised researchers to consider the different perspectives of EM research. These are, to focus on the commonalities between the marketing and entrepreneurship disciplines, to look

at the entrepreneurial ways of doing marketing, to consider looking at the unique aspects of the entrepreneurship and marketing interface, and the last perspective is to look at the application of marketing to entrepreneurial settings (Hansen and Eggers, 2010).

Another perspective views EM as a process that is more entrepreneurial-centric rather than marketing-centric (e.g. Deacon, 2002; Miles and Darroch 2006). This view refers to any strategic approaches of the entrepreneur or the owner manager of the organisation. However, Morrish et al. (2010) conclude that EM is both customer-centric and entrepreneur-centric; both are equally important to achieve a competitive advantage. This means that the marketing strategy, tactics and the overall culture of the organisation plays an equal role that is related to both the entrepreneur and the customer (Morrish, 2011). Another viewpoint is that EM embodied in the successful individual entrepreneur who possesses a deep understanding of traditional and corporate marketing (Martin, 2009). However, the latter view limits the EM approach to a small number of expert marketers who have a certain level of knowledge of marketing, promotion and communication.

Finally, in a comparison to a market orientation (MO) approach, EM describes marketing in resource-constrained firms that work in uncertain market conditions in order to exploit and pursue opportunities (Hills et al., 2008; Collinson and Shaw, 2001). It is a conceptual approach that reflects consistent evaluation of the external environment creating behaviours that revolve around the external market (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Matsuno et al., 2002). Whilst MO is more related to linking an organisation's actions consistently with marketing concepts (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990), EM is a complex process

relating to how the entrepreneur deals with changes in the market (Hills et al., 2010). Considering this perspective EM can be defined as *“a spirit, an orientation as well as a process of passionately pursuing opportunities and launching and growing ventures that create perceived customer value through relationships by employing innovativeness, creativity, selling, market immersion, networking and flexibility.”* (Hills and Hultman, 2011, p. 3).

In summary, EM is a concept that works better in uncertain conditions and in resource-constrained firms. It emerged as a concept that replaces conventional marketing strategies and tactics. It reflects a firm's innovative orientation, ability to seek opportunity, propensity for risk-taking, proactiveness, value creation and intensity of customer engagement in order to achieve competitive advantage. Morrish et al. (2010) argue that EM is considered a concept that has unique aspects, not merely a combination of elements of MO and EO. Firms that possess EM are less hierarchical than firms using conventional marketing. Consequently, EM firms are more dynamic and far more adaptable to changes that occur in the external environment and, therefore, are more able to become a source of competitive advantage (Morrish et al., 2010).

2.3.2. Entrepreneurial Marketing Dimensions

From the literature, it is hard to come up with a settled consensus on the dimensions of EM and its definition. However, it is clear that EM is noticeably different from traditional marketing. Some of these differences have been highlighted in studies such as Hills et al. (2008) and Morris et al. (2002). For

instance, Collinson and Shaw (2001) identified six competences of EM. These are: networking, informality, shorter decision-making process, innovation, change-focus and intuition. From another perspective, Morris et al. (2002) listed seven dimensions: these are innovativeness, calculated risk-taking, proactive orientation, opportunity recognition, value creation, resource leveraging and customer intensity. However, Hills and Hultman (2011) have listed six dimensions that underlie EM: innovativeness, creativity, selling, market immersion, networking and flexibility. Finally, and most recently, Fiore et. al. (2013) have investigated EM on a scale relevant to small and independently owned enterprises. They verified that EM is a multidimensional concept that is, value-focused, risk-oriented, proactive-oriented, opportunity-driven, customer-centric and innovation-focused.

From the above, it becomes clear that the dimensions identified by Morris et al. (2002) are the most comprehensive set of dimensions in their representation of the nature of the EM concept. Thus, it is the framework most often cited and used in research in the area of EM (Fiore et al., 2013). Finally, none of the other proposals have provided frameworks offering particularly distinct variation. Therefore, this study employs the seven dimensions of EM identified by Morris et al. (2002) to explore how SMEs in TEs take decisions when attempting to approach the market more effectively.

Morris et al. (2002) argued that EM consists of seven dimensions which function as an umbrella covering many marketing practices. Four of these dimensions are purely from marketing and the other three are more related to entrepreneurship. The dimensions related to EO are pro-activeness, risk-taking and innovativeness. The dimensions from marketing are, value creation,

resource leveraging, opportunity recognition and customer intensity. Hills et al. (2008) agree that these dimensions differentiate EM from conventional marketing. These seven dimensions are not independent. They work together and the marketer or the entrepreneur employs the most appropriate dimension(s) each time giving them the ability to gain competitive advantage. These dimensions are explained as follows.

‘Opportunity recognition’, or ‘expeditionary marketing’ as proposed by Hamel and Prahalad (1991), is the ability to scan the external environment to identify trends and approach them using creative processes obtained from customer insight (Hansen et al., 2011). ‘Value creation’, or in other words ‘pro-active marketing’ as found in work by Davis et al. (1991), is the process of creating a unique combination of resources to produce value through discovering untapped sources of customer value. This process entails an exploration of values through elements of the marketing mix. In fact, sustainable value creation could be a possible measure of performance when researching EM rather than using the standard financial measure as it allows for the diversity in the goals that entrepreneurs have (Hansen and Eggers, 2010).

The third dimension is ‘resource leveraging’ for marketing related activities which is basically doing more with less. This refers to the ability of the marketer to develop creative capacity in stretching resources, recognising a resource is not being used optimally, combining resources explicitly aimed at dual goal achievement, and creating new ways of obtaining other resources. Sometimes referred to as ‘guerrilla marketing’ as in Levinson (1998), resource leveraging focuses more on a tactical rather than strategic approach of marketing. Finally, there is ‘customer intensity’ which reflects the visceral

relationships, customer orientation and the emotional dimension to the firm's marketing efforts (Morris et al., 2002). As a result, customer intensity embeds customers in a firm's operations and planning by getting very close to clients (Jones and Rowley, 2007).

It is important to highlight that Sullivan et al. (2012) have identified a new dimension called 'legitimacy' which enables small and unknown firms to bring their products into the market successfully. Their study found legitimacy to be integral to the success of small international firms. However, due to little evidence relating to the legitimacy dimension, the perspective taken in this study is to explore how entrepreneurship behaviour and attitude affects the shaping of marketing activities which lead to a better performance by SMEs. Thus, this study's focus is on the dimensions of EM identified by Morris et al. (2002), which are value creation, customer intensity, resource leveraging, opportunity recognition, innovative marketing, proactiveness and calculated risk-taking.

2.3.3. Entrepreneurial Marketing and SMEs

Marketing foundations and principles are relevant to SMEs as well as other types of organisation. However, the distinctive characteristics of SMEs, which basically depend on the characteristics of the entrepreneur or the owner manager, often determine the nature of marketing in SMEs (Carson and Gilmore, 2000). According to Hills et al. (2008, p. 100), financially successful entrepreneurs in SMEs can use marketing to create a competitive advantage based on differentiating their marketing programme, through leveraging their

superior knowledge of markets, customers and technologies. The EM concept is evident in SMEs and early stage firms because these firms display high levels of entrepreneurial behaviour (Kilenthong et al., 2016).

EM is a term that is often related to marketing activities and tactics in small and resource-constrained enterprises (Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019). Some scholars such as Beverland and Lockshin (2004) and Becherer et al. (2012) have considered EM to be the adoption of marketing theory aimed at the unique needs of small firms. In addition, Becherer et al. (2012, p. 7) defined EM as the marketing process considered by resource-constrained firms pursuing opportunities in uncertain market conditions. Stokes (2000) found that entrepreneurs pay little regard to overall plans or formalised strategies, but they use marketing tools to satisfy the immediate needs of their customers. Moreover, it is believed that EM activities enhance the impact of the marketing practices in organisations (Morrish and Deacon, 2011). Therefore, entrepreneurial behaviour is essential to allow SMEs to adopt efficient marketing activities in response to market changes with the little resources they have.

Regardless of SMEs' size and resources, Carson et al. (2001) suggests that marketing is an ongoing activity for SMEs (as cited in Beverland and Lockshin, 2004) and that the traditional theory of marketing and its 4 Ps would never be applicable for all marketing situations nor to every market as argued by Gronroos (1994). The concept of 4Ps was first introduced by McCarthy (1960) with an identification of four variables which are essential for marketers when developing a marketing strategy. These four variables are: price, product, place and promotion. Since then, the concept is central in marketing studies.

However, with the rapid change in consumer behaviour, the change in economic settings and the technological development it is clear that these variables remain valuable to any marketing plan with different ways of implementation. This is where the entrepreneurial marketer can distinguish themselves and their enterprises in the highly competitive environment with regards to their decision-making process. Morris et al. (2002. P. 4) argued that EM is an integrative approach for marketing in a time of complexity, chaos, change, and diminishing resources. In the case of this study, it is perceived that SMEs usually face more concerns as well as opportunities compared to large organisations. As such, they require adoption of appropriate marketing and entrepreneurial approaches to respond quickly and effectively to these changes in the market.

From the literature, it is clear that EM is often related to SMEs studies when exploring marketing activities within SMEs. For instance, a longitudinal study by Beverland and Lockshin (2004) supports the view that constant marketing action is required for better positioning and commitment for SMEs in order to respond to day-to-day market changes. Without the application of EM this would not be possible. This is further support for what EM could provide for SMEs to create value and take advantage of opportunities faster than competitors. Another study of 217 SMEs in Kosovo revealed that not all dimensions of EM are positively related to a firm's performance. However, in combination they affect the overall SME's performance (Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019). They attribute this impact mainly to value creation, resource leveraging and opportunity recognition. Moreover, in a study of 171 SMEs in Ethiopia, results revealed that EM contributes to a superior performance which leads to

survival in institutionally complex environments and uncertain economies (Buli, 2017).

In addition, EM enhances the use of networking in marketing by entrepreneurs, facilitating the gathering of information and the discussion of different business ideas with peers in similar fields. A case in point is that identified by Zontanos and Anderson (2004). They devised a framework consisting of four very different Ps: practices, purpose, person and process. These four elements were evolved from the development of marketing related aspects; culture, strategies and tactics in the SME context (Diane, 2009). They work as analytical tools to create purpose and effective practices through understanding people and processes (Zontanos and Anderson, 2004, p. 234). This is in accordance with literature which identifies networking as a useful tool for the entrepreneur (Gilmore, 2011; Rocks et al., 2005) as the successful implementation of the above 4 Ps are mainly based on the effective networking of the entrepreneur. In addition, the concept of relationship marketing is defined as *“attracting, maintaining and building customer relationships”* (Berry, 2002). Therefore, both relationship marketing and the four different Ps are necessities when attempting to increase awareness and develop customer loyalty for what is known as *“long-term customer engagement”*. This applies in implementing EM dimensions within SMEs. More specifically, dimensions such as, value creation, opportunity recognition, customer intensity and proactive marketing which ultimately reduce the risk inherent in any marketing activity. These approaches are achievable through the effective use of entrepreneur networking.

To summarise, EM is the form of marketing that takes place in SMEs to replace the marketing function using relatively simple and creative marketing initiatives (Bettiol et al., 2012). It has been noted by Morrish et al. (2010) that firms that adopt EM tend to be innovative and proactive based on the definition by Morris et al. (2002). Evidence has shown that EM is a good source of innovations (Morrish and Deacon, 2011). For better and more rapid development of these inventions, firms are asked to produce and promote them before a competitor does. Stokes (2000) found that SMEs which apply EM have a better competitive position in which they are closer to the customer and are more flexible in responding to their needs. This close relationship gives them the ability to be responsive in innovative ways compared to large firms. Hence entrepreneurial-oriented behaviour in SMEs is essential for long term growth and a sustained competitive advantage based on innovative marketing practices (Covin and Miles, 1999; Franco et al., 2014). In this way, EM provides a variety of approaches to create market value through different strategies that satisfies the needs of the firms' customers (Fiore et al., 2013).

2.3.4. The Relationship between Entrepreneurial Orientation and Entrepreneurial Marketing

A great deal of empirical work has demonstrated the significant relationship between EO and marketing and an organisation's performance (e.g. Kraus et al., 2009; Keh et al., 2007; Matsuno et al., 2002; Miles and Arnold, 1991). For instance, the first definition of the concept EO, which was proposed by Miller (1983, p. 771), classified an entrepreneurial firm as one which *“engages in product-market innovation, undertakes somewhat risky ventures,*

and is first to come up with proactive innovations, beating competitors to the punch.” According to this definition, it is clear that entrepreneurial firms are associated with product-market orientation, proactive orientation and competitive orientation, and that all of these elements are related to marketing. In addition, Matsuno et al. (2002) and Covin and Lumpkin (2011) argue that EO is an influential strategic orientation and the firm’s market orientation is a determinant of the firm’s performance and also its strategy (Morrish, 2011). Therefore, the strategic marketing position of the firm is associated with its general strategic orientation. Thus, both EO and marketing have an equal influence on the strategic posture of the firm and its activities.

Furthermore, as argued by Shane and Venkataraman (2000), EO fits with the resource advantage theory. On the other hand, Morris et al. (2002) state that EM also fits consistently with Hunt’s (1995) resource-advantage theory (R-A theory). The theory of R-A “stresses the importance of the resources, tangible and intangible, that are available to the firm to enable it to produce efficiently and effectively a market offering that has value to some market segments” (Hunt, 1995, p. 318). In addition, R-A theory has been linked to the proactive and reactive approaches of innovation. As a result, it could provide the firm with a better approach to compete in the market by determining the most relevant market segment for the firm, analysing the firm’s bundle of resources and analysing external environmental factors (Hunt and Madhavaram, 2012). Therefore, as the R-A theory recognises, organizational resources based on the entrepreneurial capabilities of the organisation and the entrepreneurial skills of its people, as argued by Hunt and Morgan (1996, p. 109), are consistent with this theory. Therefore, it is an indication that both EO

and EM are compatible with each other and they can be conceptualised in one extended framework to assist SMEs in approaching the market more effectively in TEs.

Some scholars argue that the relationship between marketing, in particular market orientation and EO, is incompatible. For instance, Baker and Sinkula (2004) argue that EO takes a generalised approach that leads to 'learning for exploration'. However, market orientation takes a more adaptive approach, known as 'learning for exploitation', and so they differ with respect to aimed for learning outcomes. However, the majority of scholars consider both EO and EM compatible. For instance, based on their definition and dimensions both are considered proactive approaches (e.g. Morris et al., 2002; Miller, 1983). Although it is apparent that SMEs approach the market reactively based on some events which have occurred, this should not apply to their overall marketing strategy.

In addition, given the fact that EM and EO are proactive in nature, the characteristics of the entrepreneur determine the level of EO and EM. Results from a study of 1,228 Korean SMEs showed that the availability of marketing talents and the entrepreneurial team characteristics, such as social and human capital, determine the level of EO (Yoon, 2018). On the other hand, EM was also identified as a concept that relies on the ability of an individual to adopt traditional marketing principles to suit the specific needs of his/her own enterprise (Gilmore and Carson, 2007).

From the literature, it appears that EO and EM are two separate concepts that are related to each other (Kilenthong et al., 2016). They both

show positive results in SMEs with issues related to marketing (e.g. Morrish et al., 2010; Kraus et al., 2009; Moreno and Casillas, 2008; Morris et al., 2002). Therefore, this study perceives that it is important to address the EM concept when reviewing the literature on EO and SMEs' performance as both concepts are evidence of positive SMEs' performance. Moreover, the growing body of literature on the positive effect of marketing on a firm's success (Gruber, 2004) has also led to the inclusion of this concept in this study.

2.3.5. Summary

There is little doubt that EM will provide firms with something different from the competitors within the context it operates. Moreover, a central element in the literature of EM is the role which entrepreneurs have in the strategic formulation of firms' marketing practices and initiatives (Bettiol et al., 2012). However, social and cultural elements will impact the level to which society values these entrepreneurial activities (Thornton et al., 2011). Moreover, elements such as individual behaviour and experience also affect the implementation of EM practices. Other elements, such as entrepreneur networks and the availability of market information also play a role in the level of efficiency in the application of these marketing practices.

Unlike EO, research in EM is still heterogeneous, and scholars have not yet reached a conclusion on the nature of the concept, its dimensions or its definition. However, it is clear that EM is a concept that underlines the core marketing practices that are augmented by entrepreneurship, innovativeness and opportunity-driven approaches (Morrish et al., 2010). Researchers have similarly defined EM based on the ability of the organisation to deliver and

create value, build and manage a consistent relationship with customers, create market opportunities, accept risk and be innovative. The heterogeneity between scholars appears when attempting to identify approaches used in the process of EM (Miles et al., 2015). Finally, it has been seen from the literature that EO and EM are correlated and the entrepreneur in an SME is personally involved in the whole process of marketing, starting with promoting innovative products to the relevant segment of clients to the optimal use of resource leveraging for communicating and promoting them (Stoke, 2000).

2.4. Entrepreneurship in Transition Economies

The number of studies concerning entrepreneurship and TEs has increased over the last two decades. This is due to the fact that TEs are constituting a major part of the worldwide economy (Peng, 2001). According to Ahlstrom and Bruton, (2010, p. 531) “*a transition economy is one that is changing from a centrally planned economy toward freer markets and increased entrepreneurship*”. In transition economies, the level of uncertainty increases and so does the level of competition. In addition, the traditional way of doing business become unsettled (Chakrabarti and Mondal, 2018). Although, the overall goal behind considering a transition plan by policy makers may seem positive, it can cause negative impacts on every aspect of the economy including SMEs. The context of this study is SA in which the government started a transition plan to enable the country to become a diverse economy that is less dependent on oil.

According to various researchers (e.g. Bohatá and Mládek, 1999; González-Corzo, 2015), the number of challenges that could face enterprises

during TEs are many. First, low purchasing power among consumers. Second, less availability of a qualified and talented workforce. Third, limited access to facilities. Fourth, limited availability of cash flow as credit sales transactions become popular during these periods. Therefore, intangible resources such as brand, knowledge and know-how, become critical for enterprises to successfully compete in TEs (Obloj et al., 2010). While SMEs are always short on such resources, they are encouraged to work more in identifying and developing them.

On the other hand, it was noted by Chari and David (2012) that the level of competition increases in such economies due to the changes in the laws and regulations. Nevertheless, workforce and market improvements can reduce sustainability and hinder profit growth. Therefore, SMEs must be aware that in such an economy they are not only dealing with common challenges such as limited resources and lack of marketing skills, they also have to deal with the rapid external challenges which are a consequence of institutional developments (Thai and Chong, 2013).

The role that entrepreneurship and SMEs have during TEs is critical. For instance, they create jobs, especially those enterprises at launch and development stages. In addition, they reinforce innovation with innovative and dynamic entrepreneurs creating new enterprises that offer goods and services to meet the growing demands of the population. The previous two factors ultimately result in economic growth (Aidis and Sauka, 2005). In addition, Zahra (1999) noted that the ability to seize opportunities by entrepreneurs in TEs is considered an indicator of the country's global competitiveness. At the same time, SMEs have to face the external environment challenges.

It is also worth noting that Baumol (1990) indicated a significant expansion of Schumpeter's theoretical model by identifying the different social implications of entrepreneurship activities within societies. These are encapsulated in the terms 'productive, unproductive and destructive entrepreneurship'. Their implications are influenced by the way society responds to such activities. According to Baumol (1990), productive entrepreneurship refers to the new or improved activities that provide benefits to the society i.e. innovation. However, unproductive entrepreneurship refers to the forms of activity which do not provide any benefits to the society i.e. rent seeking. The latter is considered an exploitation of legal loopholes as noted by Hall and Rosson (2006). Finally, destructive entrepreneurship refers to criminal activities that lead to social loss. So, the policy context is always a major determinant of productive entrepreneurship within the society.

2.5. Characteristics of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises

This section will identify the characteristics that distinguish SMEs as a unique sector. The vast majority of scholars generally agree that SMEs have unique characteristics which tend to affect the way they function (Ghobadian and Gallear, 1996; Gilmore et al., 2000). Resnick et al. (2016) recognise that the key difference between SMEs and large firms is the responsibility that the owner holds for both managerial functions and ownership. This responsibility develops a close relationship between employees and the owner/manager/entrepreneur of the enterprise. Therefore, employees are easily influenced by his/her entrepreneurial characteristics and managerial

approach. This approach produces a creative, innovative and entrepreneurial culture (Hill, 2001) if employees have enough space for that.

In addition, SMEs are less standardised than large firms and that creates an informal working environment that makes them more flexible and therefore able to change according to the environmental situation (O'Dwyer et al., 2009). In practice, employees in SMEs tend to follow the direction which the manager/owner provides which results in less application of the entrepreneurial dimensions. In Saudi Arabia, the situation is almost the same. Most SMEs face the same marketing barriers which are listed in the section below, and they share the same managerial characteristics detailed above. The section describing the research context of this study will elaborate more by outlining the nature of SMEs in SA and a SWOT analysis of the sector is also available in Appendix. 6. Following are the common barriers faced by SMEs as described in the literature.

2.5.1. Barriers to Marketing for SMEs

SMEs usually face common barriers which can prevent them from growing or even sustaining. Among these barriers are those which are related to marketing and advertising. Chaston (2015) argues that SMEs do not only have limited access to resources. Other limitations are also identified and they can be seen in several elements; for example, limited knowledge in the market, limited skills of marketing, limited capabilities in market research, difficulties in accessing new finance, limited expertise and resources for research and development, limited ability to develop strong relationships with suppliers, and

an overall limited breadth of expertise in managerial issues in general and marketing aspects in particular.

Another viewpoint is presented by Dubihlela and Dhurup (2013). They identify marketing barriers due to administrative errors in emerging economies. The empirical study took place in South Africa and examined 350 SMEs selected randomly from different business sectors. Results indicate three main factors restricting marketing in SMEs. These were: technological turbulence, centralisation and formalisation and competitive intensity. These factors are explained as follows: (1) technological turbulence, which relates to the level to which the firm values and adopts different sorts of technology to overcome market uncertainty; (2) centralisation and formalisation, which represents the level of bureaucracy in the firm. This can be seen from the decision-making power which usually rests on one point in the organisation. Verhees and Meulenberg (2004) argue that centralisation leads to interdepartmental conflicts, communication breakdowns and delays in decision-making; (3) competitive intensity, which reflects the ability of an organisation to better design satisfactory offers based on customers' needs and before its competitors (Lamb et al., 2010 as cited in Dubihlela and Dhurup, 2013). This requires a good understanding of the competition and insights into competitors' strategies and tactics.

Moreover, one key issue is the inability of SMEs to enter new markets due to their lack of ability in identifying the social and economic elements of foreign markets (Rahman et al., 2017). Some barriers of internationalisation are often related to marketing elements such as a lack of ability in distinguishing different social approaches (Barkema and Vermeulen, 1997) which usually

results in failing to enter the market. A case in point could be offering Fairtrade products at high prices compared to other products in a society that pays little attention to this matter.

In addition, a lack of research and development resources affects the ability of a firm to develop a product, service or process in the foreign market (Gunaratne, 2009; Yam et al., 2011). Two rationales lie behind highlighting the importance of identifying barriers to SMEs' internationalisation. These are: (1) the rapid and growing literature relating to international entrepreneurship (Yamakawa et al., 2008) and, (2) the economic transition that the Kingdom is currently experiencing during which the economy is coming to rely more on the private sector in general and SMEs in particular. One very important contribution, which was highlighted in the kingdom vision 2030's report, concerns SMEs increasing export activity which contributes directly to the GDP as a non-oil source.

Barriers to the market negatively affect brand image and customer loyalty, and therefore customer satisfaction, which leads to poor performance (Ellis, 2006). In addition, it has been noted that organisations which are less market-oriented tend to experience employee dissatisfaction (Gatignon and Xuereb, 1997). On the other hand, the ability to overcome the market barriers indicates the level to which a firm is able to identify its strengths and weaknesses (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010). Notwithstanding the general knowledge they acquire, entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs usually face market changes according to the level of knowledge they actually have (Jones and Rowley, 2011) when asked to respond effectively and pro-actively (Hills et al., 2008). Strategies from EM should provide these enterprises with guidance

and support in order to tackle market changes and to overcome marketing barriers. Most of these strategies are associated with the EO of the entrepreneur. That results in pivotal behaviour which assists in identifying new opportunities, exploring new markets, anticipating changes in the market, undertaking risky and proactive decisions and seizing opportunities ahead of competitors. The following section discusses existing attempts in the literature to conceptualise marketing for SMEs.

2.5.2. Existing Marketing Models for SMEs

Many scholars have attempted to come up with a model or a framework that assists SMEs in approaching the market effectively. These attempts have varied from considering one dimension such as self-branding (Resnick et al., 2016), or innovation (O'Dwyer et al., 2009), or taking a wider perspective by including dimensions of EO or EM in the model such as (Carson and Gilmore, 2000; Morris et al., 2002). Another attempt was the work by Moreno and Casillas (2008) which created a causal model that assists SMEs to grow by analysing the impact of EO dimensions on such firms. In fact, these attempts have succeeded in one or more contexts and here this study is not evaluating the success of these frameworks. This section will highlight the most applicable frameworks from the literature which help in advancing the conceptualisation between EO and EM for a better formation of marketing strategies in SMEs. All dimensions of these frameworks will be considered. In doing so, it should identify the similarities and differences between EO and EM and as a result will help shape the final synthesis approach which this study provides.

Carson and Gilmore (2000) offered one of the earliest models for SME marketing that combined dimensions from EO and EM (Figure. 2. 1). It is clear that this model has considered the unique context of SME marketing; particularly the limitations of resources, the inherent influence of the managers of these firms and the industry in which they operate. With dimensions, such as adapting the marketing frameworks, it shows the extent to which the entrepreneur or the manager of the firm is able to adopt marketing based on the specific market needs rather than on what the traditional theory of marketing states. Competency marketing considers what the marketing function entails. These competencies are analytics and creativity which shape the outcome of the marketing job. Competencies are the way of doing business as stated by Carson and Gilmore (2000) which involves experience, knowledge, communication and judgment. Other dimensions such as innovative marketing (innovation) and network marketing (resource leveraging) are compatible with dimensions from EO and EM. Although this model offers a pragmatic approach to SMEs marketing, it is quite an old model that does not use up-to-date tools or take into account challenges that firms currently face.

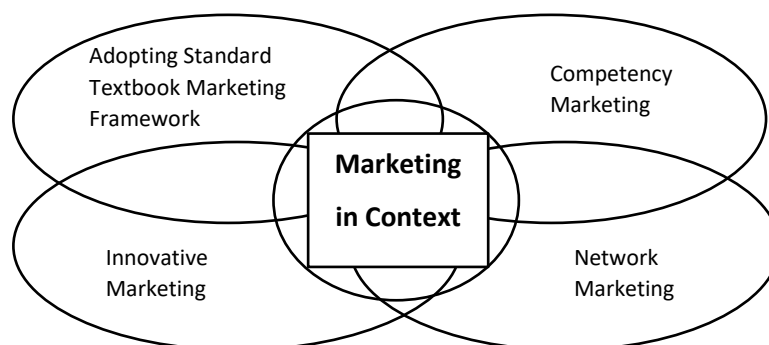


Figure 2. 1. A Model of SME Marketing, Carson and Gilmore, (2000)

From another perspective, Morris et al. (2002) provided a conceptual model that delineates antecedents and outcomes of EM as seen in figure. 2. 2. The model begins with the external environmental conditions which include variables such as demand and supply, the bargaining power of suppliers, the aggressiveness of competitors, the nature of policies in the market and the volatility of the economic conditions. These external influencers directly affect three main internal aspects of the firm: the marketing orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and organisational climate variables. Market orientation is characterised by the firm's approach to customer orientation, competitor orientation and inter-functional coordination. Entrepreneurial orientation reflects the firm's ability to innovate, be pro-active and take risks.

Morris et al. (2002) argue that marketing should take responsibility for introducing a greater level of entrepreneurship when the external environment is turbulent. In addition, another internal variable is the organisational climate which influences the marketing approach of the firm. This includes how the firm is functioning and what the internal culture of the organisation looks like. This culture must value empowerment and innovation. In addition, the control system must work with the principle of accountability of outcomes by rewarding achievements and questioning deficiencies. Finally, human resource development must take place by encouraging creative approaches to problem solving, accepting change and demanding discretion of employees.

The core aspect of the model is the outcome of the internal organisational environment and that is the organisational approach to marketing. Morris et al. (2002) suggest that the more marketing is decentralised, the more of an entrepreneurial approach the divisions and

individual will take. In addition, the higher the levels of specialisation within the marketing function, the more likely the firm is to foster EM. Moreover, marketing should be less functionally isolated, more independent but integrated with other departments' goals and it should be accountable according to the number of communications or the increase in sales.

Finally, these efforts are expected to affect the outcomes of the organisation in both financial and non-financial terms. The introduction of a new product, service, or process, more loyal and satisfied customers, enhancing the value proposition and creating new effective networks outside the firm would represent the non-financial outcomes. However, enhanced profitability, higher revenue rates and growth of assets are representations of financial outcomes. The feedback loop indicates that EM could redefine environmental conditions rather than simply respond to them.

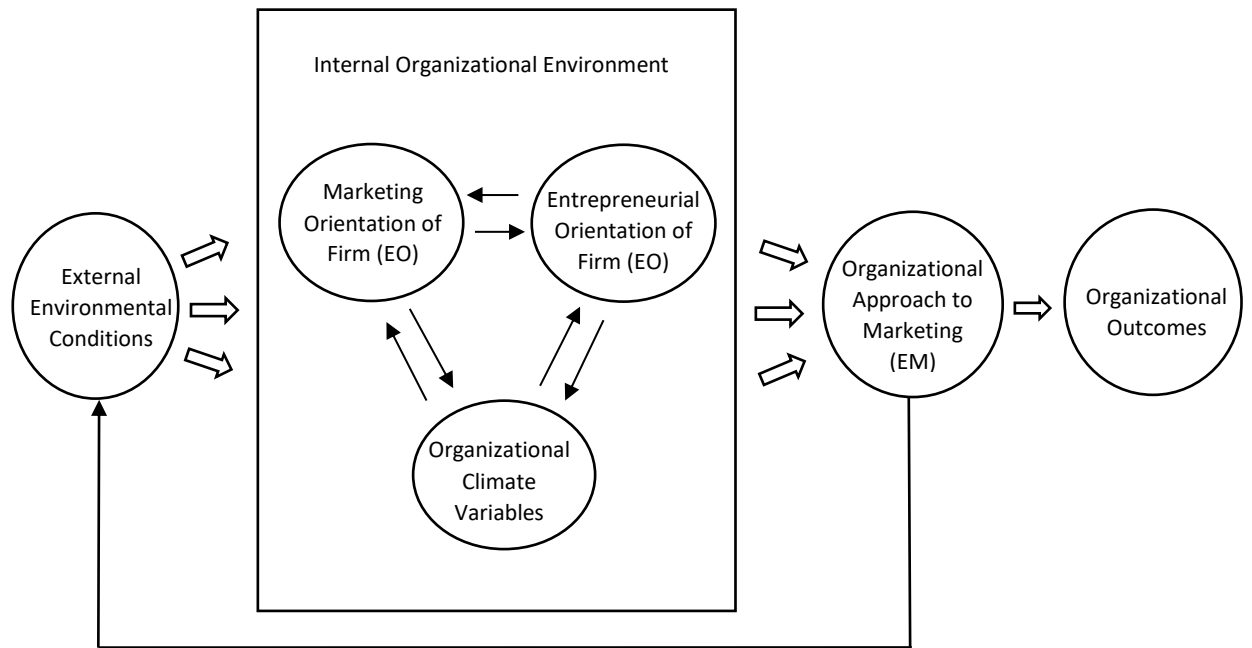


Figure 2. 2. A Model of Antecedents and Outcomes of Entrepreneurial Marketing, Morris et al., (2002)

Based on the literature review carried out for this study, the research conducted by Morris et al. (2002) is one in few that considered both concepts of EO and EM in one framework among other variables. Although the flow of the framework is quite reasonable, it can clearly be seen that EO is only considered an organisational internal element. Hence this study argues that EO is a concept that has an impact from both sides, internal (in the form of managerial behaviour impact on EO) and external (in the form of impact of culture and society on EO). In addition, this framework did not provide a detailed determinant of every dimension of EO and EM on the performance of these SMEs. Moreover, it misses two dimensions of EO which have been suggested by Lumpkin and Dess (1996), which are autonomy and competitive aggressiveness. It can be said that this framework has provided the initial attempt to conceptualise EO and EM. Thus, this study would benefit from this

model and it would provide a more specified framework for SMEs considering the important variables that affect EO.

From a different standpoint, O'Dwyer et al. (2009) offered a pioneering conceptualisation by identifying SMEs' innovative marketing variables and creating a model based on this identification (Figure. 2. 3). The model consists of six key characteristics that enable SMEs to differentiate their products and services from those of larger firms. These characteristics are:

(1) Marketing variables – these include elements such as enhancement of products, marketing mix alternations and distribution channel alternations. In this vein, it has been found that innovative marketing in SMEs is the effective response to different marketing requirements by the alternation of marketing activities, instead of simply limiting marketing innovation to the creation of new products or processes (Cummins et al., 2000).

(2) Modification – this includes elements of pro-action and change, by which marketing innovation for SMEs lies in the adaptation of marketing practices to a specific context.

(3) Customer focus – this component highlights the significance of impacting customer satisfaction which will reflect in positive performance.

(4) Integrated marketing – this entails continued development of the product or service. What makes it innovative is the use of ad-hoc strategies and the ability to gather information about the market informally.

(5) Market focus – this include elements of vision, market-centred and profit. By considering these elements, SMEs address their marketing objectives based on their financial goals, customers' expectations and the vision of the firm.

(6) Unique proposition – this component is derived from the perception that innovation has three main characteristics which are uniqueness, newness and unconventionality (Stokes, 2000). These are the innovative approaches in business which formulate the innovative marketing approach in SMEs based on their special characteristics.

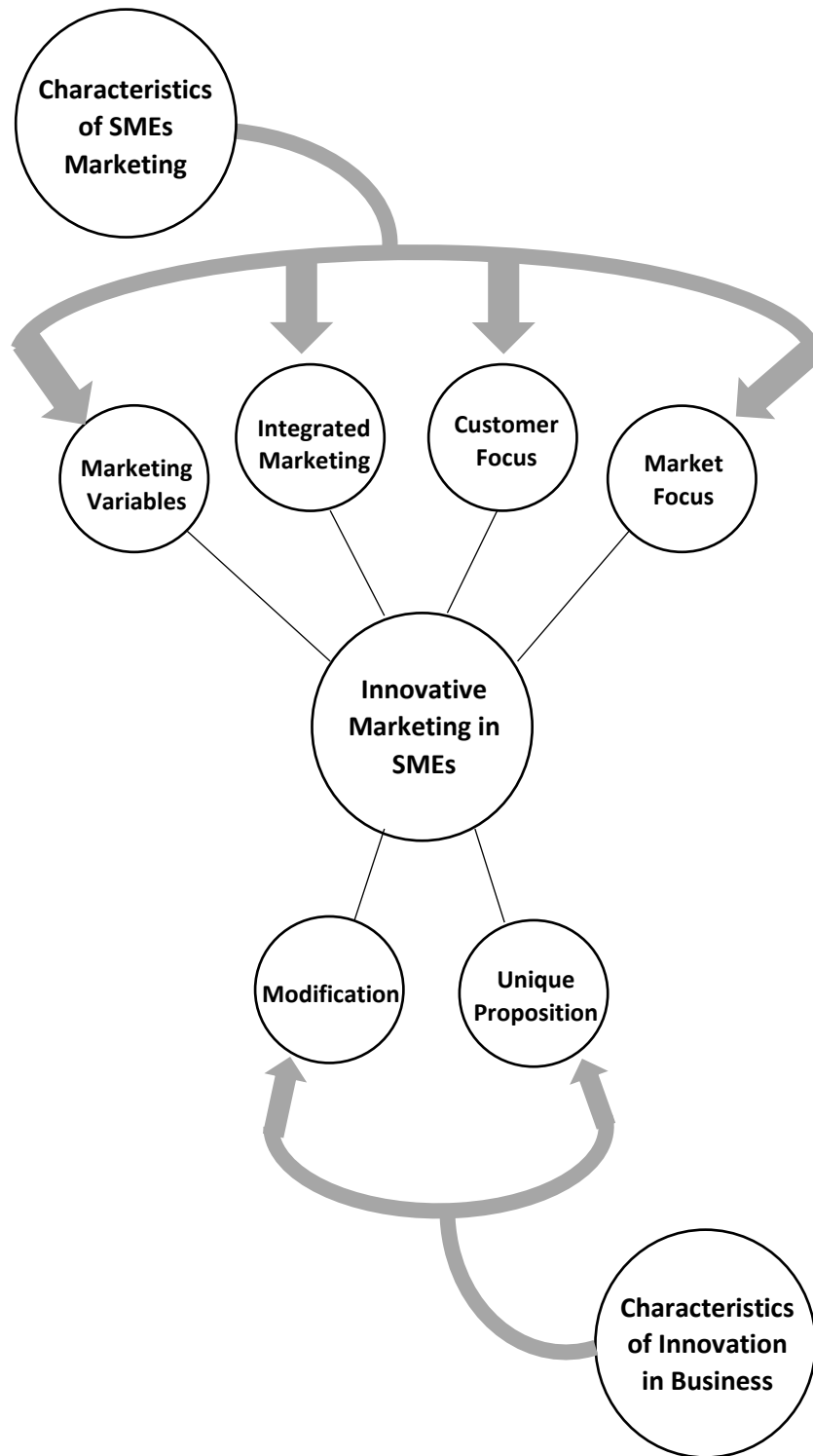


Figure 2. 3. Conceptual Model for Innovative Marketing in SMEs, O'Dwyer et al., (2009)

From an overall view of entrepreneurship and performance, EO has been independently demonstrated by Lumpkin and Dess (1996) in a conceptual framework linking it to performance. The framework consists of four main

aspects which are entrepreneurial orientation, environmental factors, organisational factors and performance, and offers two directions of influence as seen in figure. 2. 4 below. Both environmental factors and organisational factors affect the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation, and its dimensions, on the performance. The first section of the literature review highlights Lumpkin and Dess's approach to EO.

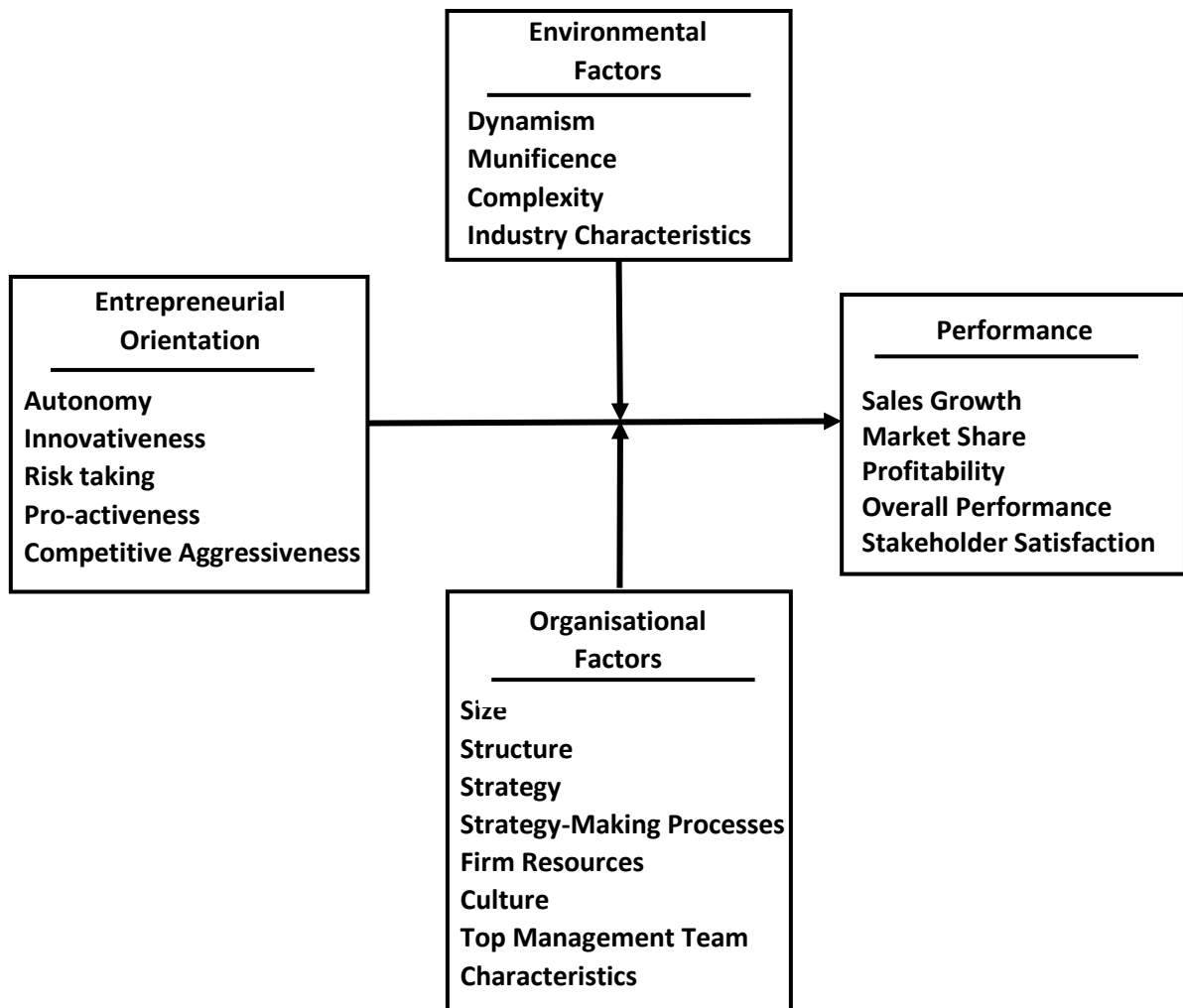


Figure 2. 4. Conceptual Framework of Entrepreneurial Orientation, Lumpkin and Dess (1996)

However, Jones and Rowley (2011) have introduced a new framework namely, the conceptualised model of entrepreneurial marketing orientation (EMO). The model aims to identify the components impacting EM and to

indicate the overlaps between the four orientations in different areas. These orientations are what the model consists of: customer orientation (CO), entrepreneurial orientation (EO), innovation orientation (IO) and market orientation (MO). The EMO model has identified a set of key dimensions within each orientation. The model suggests that SMEs' marketing is intertwined with different behaviours and activities within the enterprise. It argues that understanding the context, specifically the elements related to innovation, entrepreneurial and marketing approach and customer engagement is essential in order to understand marketing in SMEs. Although the model has clarified the wider conceptual base of these orientations, it requires further exploration in terms of the relationships between all the orientations and their dimensions. Thus, the main objective of this framework was towards developing the EM paradigm.

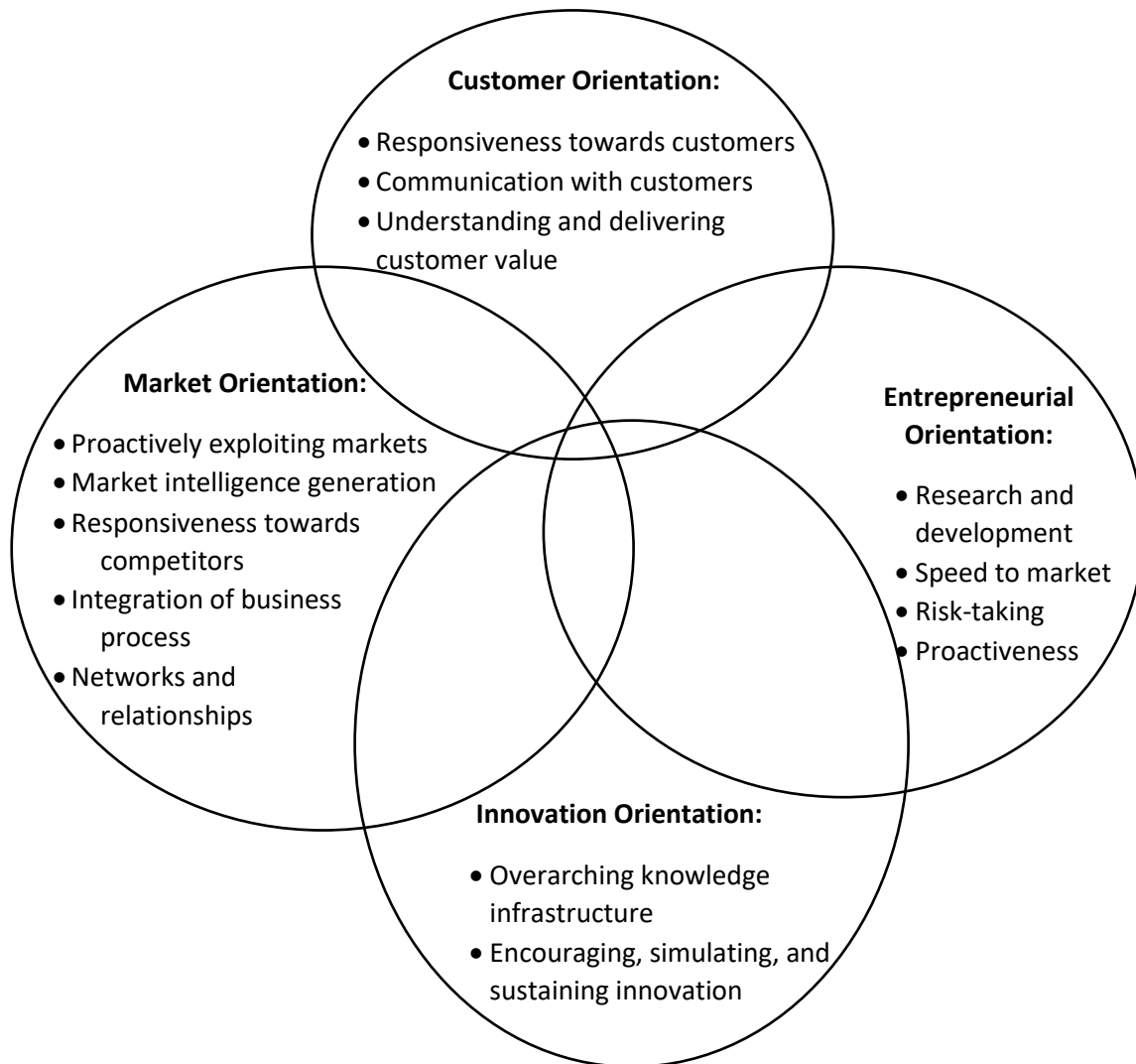


Figure 2. 5. The SME entrepreneurial marketing orientation (EMO) conceptualised Model, Jones and Rowley, (2011)

Finally, Mário et al. (2014) have developed a framework consisting of the key dimensions and variables associated with EM in SMEs. The framework proposed was integrative and holistic in terms of identifying elements that allow SMEs to adopt different levels of EM dimensions. In addition, it shows the influence that the founder-entrepreneur and the owner manager have on marketing of these enterprises with relation to constructs such as communication and networking. Thus, the model shows the role that the founder/manager can have in developing EM activities. The most important elements are knowledge

of marketing, experience, motivations for creating a business and the entrepreneur's abilities and skills. However, this framework was specific to only two case studies which is not sufficient to drive conclusive assumptions.

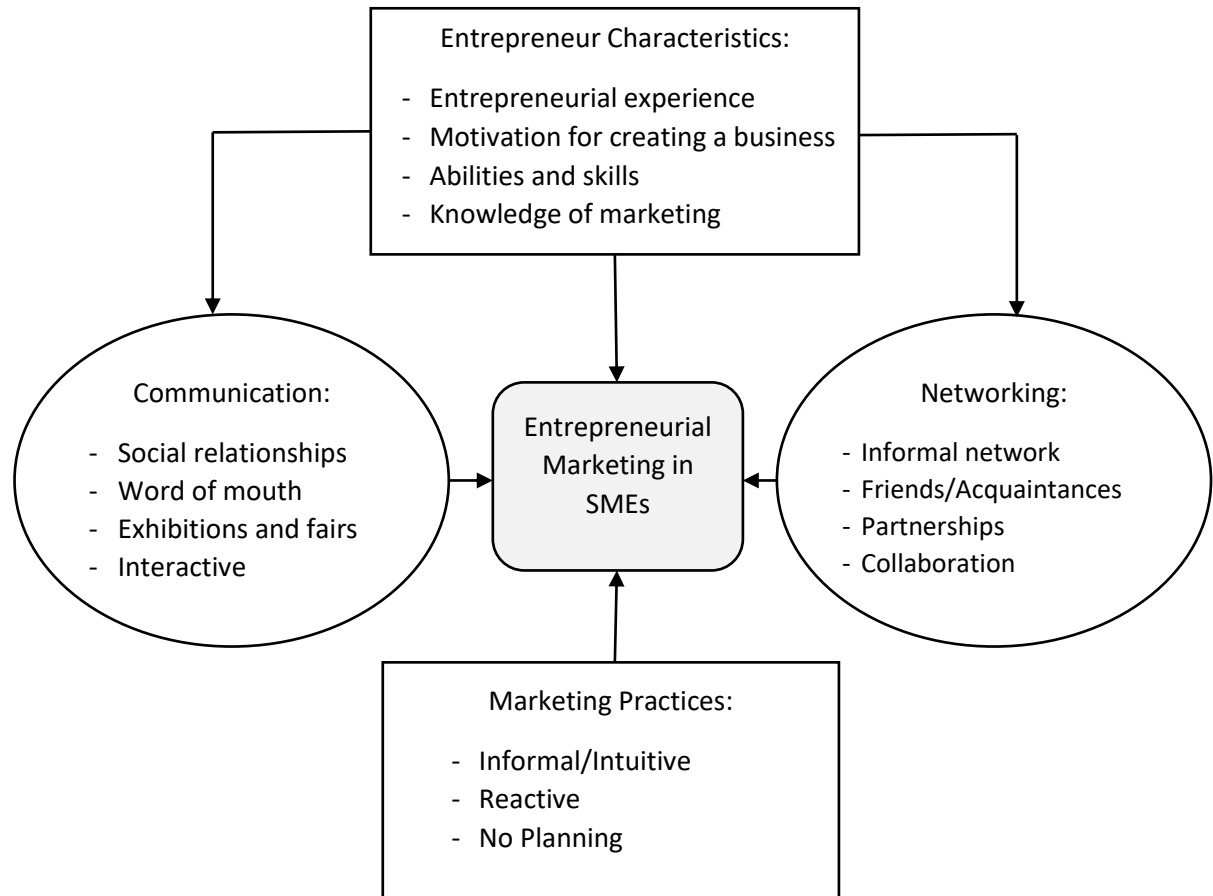


Figure 2. 6. Key dimensions and variables associated with entrepreneurial marketing in SMEs. Mário et al., (2014)

2.5.3. Summary

This section has identified the unique characteristics of SMEs. In addition, it has listed the barriers that prevent SMEs from marketing. Moreover, the section has demonstrated various attempts to identify the most effective approach to marketing for SMEs in different contexts and within different market conditions. In addition, the section has demonstrated different models related

to marketing for SMEs, some based on EO and others on EM. To summarise, it can be said that exploration of effective approaches to marketing for SMEs is mainly context-based. Therefore, it is an on-going topic for researchers to explore. The next section will describe in detail the synthesis between EO and EM by outlining the commonalities and differences between them.

2.6. Entrepreneurial Orientation and Entrepreneurial Marketing Synthesis

2.6.1. Preface

This study argues that SMEs in the current dynamic market are required to adopt both EO as well as EM. Both should be of equal importance. According to Morrish (2011), the traditional strategy of an entrepreneur catering to customer demands and making them the centre of every decision is no longer a sustainable strategy for SMEs. Therefore, to achieve better performance and sustainability, firms need to take a strategic posture that pursues a balance between being both entrepreneur and market oriented (Miles et al., 2015), so they are both market-driven and market-driving. In addition, it was noted in the literature that EM works as a bridge between EO and MO to allow the effective utilisation of the valuable competencies of both orientations (Alqahtani and Uslay, 2020). Based on this, and in order to achieve a better position in the market and obtain competitive advantage, SMEs are encouraged to use both EO and EM when planning to approach the market. As noted earlier, a marketing approach in this study is conceived as recognising and taking advantage of opportunities, creating value, retaining customers and leveraging costs associated with marketing activities. Certainly, applying dimensions from both concepts will allow SMEs to face the high number of challenges that affect

them in the current dynamic market (Morrish, 2011) and more specifically in TEs.

Studies show that both EO and EM have a positive impact on the strategic learning capabilities of organisations (Miles and Darroch, 2006; Anderson et al., 2009) and therefore on the formation of better strategies able to respond more effectively to market changes. Strategic learning capability describes the organisation's proficiency in developing a systematic capability in deriving knowledge from the ongoing strategic actions and to utilise this knowledge in future strategic decisions (Thomas et al., 2001). Moreover, both EO and EM incorporate common themes such as pro-activeness, innovation, creativity, opportunity-focus and risk orientation and both are market driven and process based approaches (Miller, 1983; Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Morris et al., 2002; Hills et al., 2008).

In addition, both concepts share some characteristics; therefore, they meet at many different points. For instance, EO has identified strong relationships with many other marketing elements such as market orientation, marketing information and customer orientation (Matsuno et al., 2002; Keh et al., 2007; Merlo and Auh, 2009; Kwak et al., 2013; Thoumrungrroje et al., 2013; Wahyuni and Sara, 2020). The importance of considering both EO and EM in one study is to enhance the strategic posture for SMEs' marketing practices. Thus, the study seeks to identify the essential marketing strategies that SMEs should consider when planning to approach the market in TEs. This issue is considered one of the main obstacles that hinders the survival of SMEs in SA according to the report by Jeddah's Chamber of Commerce, 2016.

The synthesising of EO and EM has its foundations in the theoretical synthesis of the concept of EO and many other business and marketing-related subjects. For instance, market orientation (Buli, 2017), marketing information (Keh et al., 2007), strategic marketing (Martin and Javalgi, 2016) or more broadly strategic orientation (Laukkanen et al., 2013). Many of these studies measured the outcome of the relation between EO and the other practices on the performance of SMEs. Moreover, the importance of understanding the relationship between EO and marketing has been highlighted in several studies which question the nature of the interface between both EO and EM. This interface has become even more important these days (Hansen and Eggers, 2010; Hills and Hultman, 2013; Kilenthong et al., 2015). It has been argued by Lehman et al. (2014) that the connection between entrepreneurship and marketing helps to understand how SMEs practice marketing. This study claims that both EO and EM together can provide SMEs with better marketing strategic positioning and therefore better marketing practices and firm performance.

Previous studies determine the level of correlation that EO has with different strategic marketing postures. For instance, Morris and Paul (1987) suggested that both entrepreneurial and marketing orientations work hand in hand to respond to the growing complexities of business competition. They received 116 responses out of 200 mails sent to medium sized enterprises. Results indicate that companies with proper marketing functions and marketing personnel – even if it was one marketing practitioner – are better able to exploit entrepreneurial opportunities as they already have the necessary skills. Therefore, incorporating both EM and EO concepts should lead an SME to engage in more dynamic and effective production and marketing practices.

Consequently, firms that adopt EM and EO are more likely to seek new opportunities and implement new marketing strategies more frequently than others (Morrish et al., 2010).

Various studies suggest that both concepts are strongly related, as evidenced in three dimensions that they both share. These are risk-taking, innovation and pro-activeness (Figure. 2. 7). The figure shows the distinct and common dimensions for every concept. The following section will elaborate on the relationship between EO and EM based on their shared and distinctive dimensions. Although both concepts seem to function similarly in that they are both entrepreneurial approaches, many studies have found differences between both concepts. The following sub sections will highlight commonalities and differences between EO and EM from different perspectives.

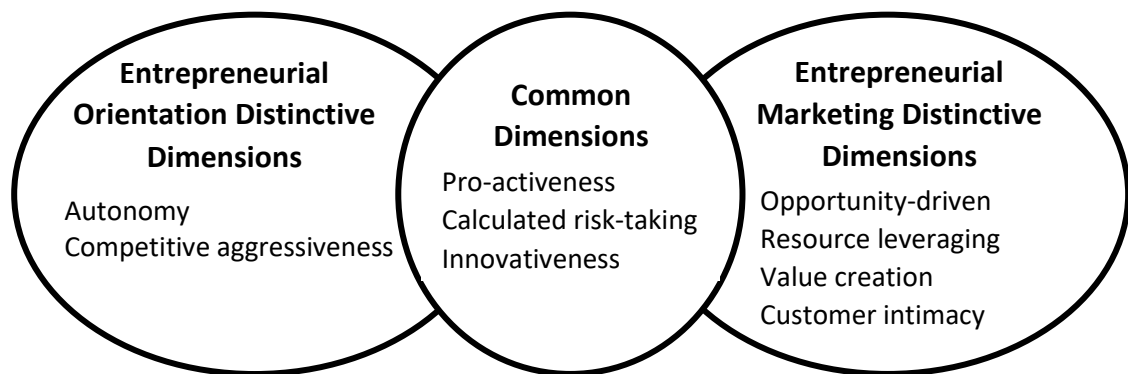


Figure 2. 7. Common and Distinct Dimensions of EO and EM, Author (2020)

2.6.2. Commonalities

Both EO and EM are involved in entrepreneurship activities (Covin and Slevin, 1991; Morris et al., 2002). Theoretically both were found to be complementary to one another and EO was seen as the dominant influence on EM (Kilenthong et al., 2015). In addition, they have been highlighted as good practice for SMEs to better performance (Gilmore, 2011; Shirokova et al., 2016). EO and EM share several dimensions as described below.

2.6.2.1. *Shared Dimensions*

As shown in figure. 2. 7 about common dimensions between EO and EM, both concepts share three dimensions. These are, pro-activeness, calculated risk-taking and Innovativeness. EO and EM scholars have provided nearly similar definitions for these three dimensions. Innovativeness refers to identifying original, unusual and creative solutions to problems or needs. Calculated risk-taking is the ability to pledge resources to tackle opportunities that have a chance of failure, but with creative approaches to leverage the cost of various risks. Pro-activeness is the ability to make things happen irrespective of currently available means (Covin and Slevin, 1991). In addition, it is worth noting that EO has been found as an antecedent of EM behaviour in firms (Kilenthong et al., 2015). For example, an entrepreneur who is willing to take a risk in expanding the business will be reflected in their intentions in performing marketing activities.

2.6.2.2. *Unidimensional and Multidimensional Operationalisation*

Debate on whether EO acts as a unidimensional or a multidimensional concept is still continuing. For instance, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) suggested that dimensions of EO could occur differently and be contingent on available

opportunities, external environment and organisational context. Hence it is not necessary for all dimensions to act at the same level at one time. Similarly, with EM, it is still unclear how the concept functions. Morris et al. (2002) indicate that for EM to happen it is not necessary that all dimensions of EM operate at the same time. Empirical studies on EO and EM had included many aspects and sometimes testing them on one dimension only. Therefore, it can be argued that both EO and EM can operate as a multidimensional approach.

On the other hand, Covin and Slevin (1991) studied EO as a unidimensional concept by developing a framework to measure the impact of EO on performance. That framework used an average score of three dimensions of EO, which are innovativeness, pro-activeness and risk-taking. In addition, it has also been suggested by Rauch et al. (2009) that an accumulative score of EO dimensions could be a reasonable method for exploring the performance of the firm. On the other hand, there is still a lack of evidence on whether EM has been shown to operate as a unidimensional concept. Therefore, it is clear that EO is able to support both levels of operation and is seen to operate as a multidimensional and a unidimensional approach. However, EM was only shown to operate as a multidimensional concept. Despite the insignificant amount of evidence that supports the unidimensional operation of EM, it does not affect the objectives of this study and nor will it affect the findings.

2.6.2.3. Applicability to SMEs

As argued above, EM and EO are both more applicable to resource-constrained firms and SMEs. According to Morrish et al. (2010) firms employing EM are less hierarchical than firms utilising traditional marketing, therefore they

are more adaptable and dynamic in the face of the rapid changes of the twenty-first century. Moreover, EM was described as the marketing activities carried out by entrepreneurs of entrepreneurial ventures using different tactics from those in the traditional marketing textbooks (Stoke, 2000; Carson and Gilmore, 2000). On the other hand, growth and performance in SMEs are found to be positively and directly related to EO (Moreno and Casillas, 2008; Soininen et al., 2012). Therefore, it can be said that EO and EM are two entrepreneurial approaches that are applicable to SMEs given the fact that marketing and entrepreneurial activities are of equal importance in SMEs (Morrish, 2011).

2.6.2.4. Impact on Performance for SMEs

Positive impact of EO on SMEs' performance has been identified in many studies (e.g. Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005) but the nature of this impact might differ depending on mediating and the moderating variables (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). In addition, contributions of EM to enhanced performance of small firms has been found in a study by Sullivan Mort et al. (2012) based on effectuation approach. Although several studies have investigated the influence of each individual dimension of EM on performance, research on identifying the impact of EM as a unidimensional concept influencing performance is still limited. Moreover, Hacıoglu et al. (2012) noted that analysis of several studies revealed that innovativeness, pro-activeness, customer intensity and resource leveraging are positively related with innovative performance. To conclude, the impact of EO and EM on performance has been highlighted in different studies and by different approaches. Some studies used dimensions separately, others have identified different mediating and moderating variables. Overall, it can be

said that both are acknowledged to have a positive impact on the overall performance of SMEs.

2.6.2.5. Impact on Growth for SMEs

Growth is one indicator of performance which can be identified by the increase in sales, assets or employment. Studies on the impact of EO on growth is limited as argued by Casillas and Moreno (2010). They highlighted that EO has an impact on growth based on the family nature of the firms' behaviour. Moreover, it has been said that the most significant consequence of EO is growth (Miller, 1983). Thus, Moreno and Casillas (2008) argue that the relationship between EO and firm growth is positively related but the nature of this relationship is complex. Similarly, research examining the impact of EM on growth is very limited. A multiple case study in Portugal has shown the importance of EM instead of traditional marketing for firms' growth and sustainability (Mário et al., 2014). Thus, marketers/entrepreneurs usually think ahead to achieve long-term objectives aiming for sales growth (Kilenthong et al., 2015-b). What distinguishes entrepreneurial firms from normal firms is the entrepreneurial intention of the marketer to grow and grow even further.

2.6.2.6. Impact on Strategic Development

Studies show that both EO and EM have a positive effect on the organisation's strategic formation and development. For instance, both EO and EM have a positive impact on the strategic learning capabilities of organisations (Miles and Darroch, 2006; Anderson et al., 2009). In addition, considering the resource-based view, EO is seen as a set of unique resources that improve market approach by developing new products that respond to market changes (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2003). The resource-based view perceives the

organisation as a collection of tangible and intangible resources which include assets and capabilities. Every organisation, through its unique resources, should achieve a required and sustained competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Whilst there is no evidence in the literature that the resource-based view affects EM in principle both are intended to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. Therefore, this study perceives that dimensions of EM, as an intangible resource, affects the firm's competitive position in the market.

2.6.3. Differences

Although the link between EO and EM appears firmly based and strong, it is necessary to highlight some differences between both concepts. The final report of the "Charleston Summit" suggest that EM is indeed much more than the commonalities between entrepreneurship and marketing (Hansen and Eggers, 2010). The first difference pertains to the definitions of both concepts. EO has been defined as "*the propensity of a company's top management to take calculated risks, to be innovative, and to demonstrate pro-activeness in their approach to strategic decision making*" (Morris and Paul, 1987). However, EM is defined as the "*proactive identification and exploitation of opportunities for acquiring and retaining profitable customers through innovative approaches to risk management, resource leveraging and value creation*" (Morris et al., 2002). From the definitions, it can be said that both concepts are firm-level and top management approaches. However, EM concerns more dimensions about operational and processual aspects as of the marketing function.

2.6.3.1. Organisational-Level Versus Functional-Level

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, EO is an organization's strategic orientation and therefore it is a central concept of strategy making at the organisational-level (Covin and Slevin, 1991). However, EM is a departmental-level concept that focuses more on tactics. Nevertheless, it has certain roles at the organisational level as well. According to Kraus et al. (2009, p. 26) EM is "an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders and that are characterized by innovativeness, risk-taking, pro-activeness, and may be performed without resources currently controlled". From this definition and many other perspectives around EM, it can be argued that EM has a role at both the organisational and departmental levels, however, EO operates mainly at the organisational and strategic level.

2.6.3.2. Distinctive Dimensions

Lumpkin and Dess (1996) have added two more dimensions to the three which the majority of scholars are agreed on. These are autonomy and competitive aggressiveness. They argue that they are essential for EO approach and support for this view has been found in some other studies (Lumpkin and Dess, 2001; Boso et al., 2017). Therefore, these two dimensions are considered distinctive to EO. Autonomy refers to the ability of the firm to bring the idea to completion. However, competitive aggressiveness is the initiative which the firm takes to strengthen its position among competitors (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). On the other hand, a majority of scholars have agreed on the seven dimensions of EM which have been presented earlier in

this chapter. Four of them are highlighted as distinctive to EM when comparing both concepts. These are opportunity driven, value creation, resource leveraging and customer intensity. Thus, it can be argued that in terms of dimensions, both concepts are able to be synthesised across their common and distinctive dimensions which each concept subsumes.

2.6.3.3. Level of Domination and Influence

Researches such as Martin (2009) have noted that “entrepreneurial organisations” are influenced primarily by the personal characteristics and the orientation of the owner manager or the entrepreneur. However, few studies have attempted to explore the influence and the domination level that EO has on EM or vice versa (e.g. Hills et al., 2010; Kilenthong et al., 2016). For instance, in their study exploring the determinants of EM behaviour, Kilenthong et al. (2016) conclude that EM behaviour is systematically related to the level of EO in the firm and this does not happen randomly. In addition, they found that each dimension of EO can independently affect the level of EM behaviour in the firm.

On the other hand, given the fact that EO is a proactive approach and market orientation (MO) is a reactive one, they have been considered as distinct concepts that complement each other (Baker and Sinkula, 2009). In addition, Hills et al. (2010) highlighted that there is a need to further investigate EM as a differentiated concept that represents the fusion of marketing and entrepreneurial behaviours. Moreover, considering that EO is the precondition for EM, with EM being a separate proactive concept designed to deal with marketing issues as stated by Fiore et al. (2013). Despite these reasons,

arguably EO dominates the level of EM behaviour in the firm and thus it works as an antecedent of EM.

To summarise, it is clear that the concepts of EO and EM meet at different points and do not at others. The main meeting points are that they share some dimensions, they work as unidimensional approaches, they both are applicable to SMEs, are applicable to firms working in turbulent environments, they both have impact on strategic development and they both positively affect growth and performance of SMEs. On the other hand, the review has identified several differences. Specifically, EO has been identified as an organisation-level concept whilst EM has a role at both organisational and departmental levels. In addition, as noted above, although they share some dimensions, they have their unique ones as well. Finally, EO was found to dominate and influence EM and therefore EO works as an antecedent of EM behaviour. Therefore, based on this identification it can be said that EO and EM are two complementary concepts which act together more effectively in terms of marketing for SMEs.

2.7. Chapter Summary

This chapter was divided into five main sections. The first section analysed the literature of EO and provided the background to the emergence of the concept. Then, it demonstrated the unique dimensions of EO and reflected on the development of the concept based on a variety of viewpoints. Then, the section showed the impact of EO on firms' performance and more specifically on SMEs. The final part clarified the importance of addressing

issues related to EO in this study, including how the study perceived the link between EO and EM.

Similarly, the second section analysed the literature relating to EM and offered a historical background of the concept's development. The unique dimensions of EM were identified providing different viewpoints. Then, the section demonstrated the impact of EM on SMEs. Finally, the perceived relationship between EO and EM in the literature was discussed.

The third section was concerned with the characteristics of SMEs including the barriers identified in the literature. Moreover, an extensive analysis of previous attempts to conceptualise marketing in SMEs was provided. That assisted in clarifying the position of SMEs' marketing reach and what variables and themes are already considered in the literature. The final part is the grid used in the study and it focused on synthesising EO and EM to attain better strategic marketing postures for SMEs. The synthesis approach, which was employed in this study and when reviewing the literature, has shown that EO and EM are two distinctive entrepreneurial approaches. However, they share some dimensions and characteristics. For SMEs to undertake optimal marketing, it is vital to consider both EO and EM when planning approaches to the market. In summary, this study supports the view of EM as a unified and uniquely distinct concept and is not limited to what is common between entrepreneurship and marketing (Hansen and Eggers, 2010).

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction

The purpose of undertaking any research project is to contribute to existing knowledge. Contribution to knowledge usually takes two main forms; either new theory creation or existing theory refinement through extension and/or variation of condition and variables. This chapter will provide the philosophical ideas that underpin the research methodology. It will outline the study's methodological framework, the research philosophy, the selected research paradigm, its research design and method. It will also elaborate on the data collection and analysis techniques which were geared towards answering the research questions and to achieve the objectives of the thesis. The chapter also discusses how this study addresses the relevant ethical considerations. By the end of this chapter the link between theory and the process of obtaining data and creating knowledge for this study should be clear.

3.1.1. Chapter Structure

The research process involves several steps as presented by Saunders et al. (2009, p. 108) in the well-known framework entitled "the research onion" (Appendix. 2). This chapter begins with a brief introduction followed by the research philosophy which underpins this study including the ontological, epistemological bases and research paradigm. The next section concerns the choice of methodology used. A qualitative inductive approach is taken as reflected in the technique chosen for the data collection which is semi-structured interviews. The following section is the data analysis which used

thematic analysis. The last section concerns the ethical considerations in qualitative semi-structured interviews in general and the relevant ethical considerations considered in this study in particular. The literature concerning the methodology of social science research has identified two general approaches and they are summarised in the table below (Table. 3. 1). The following section provides a justification of the choice of research philosophy.

| | | |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| The Research Ontology | Subjective | Objective |
| The Research Epistemology | Interpretive | Positivist |
| Research Paradigm | Radical Humanist, Interpretivist | Radical Structuralist, Functionalist |
| Research Purpose | Exploratory | Explanatory |
| Research Approach | Inductive/Abductive | Deductive |
| Research Method | Qualitative | Quantitative |
| Data Collection Technique | Interview, Observation, case studies, focus group | Survey, Questionnaire |
| Data Analysis | Thematic, discourse content and grounded theory analysis. | Hypothesis testing, statistical analysis |

Table 3. 1. The Most Common Two Approaches in Social Science Research, Author's Summary (2020)

3.2. Research Philosophy

When developing methodologies, researchers are often influenced by their ontological understanding of reality, their background and their epistemological assumptions (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). According to Burrell and Morgan (1979) this determines what is known as the 'research philosophy'. However, research philosophy has been defined as a "research paradigm" by Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 97). It has also been seen as a particular view of the researcher concerning the nature of knowledge and the relationship between that view and the process of developing that knowledge (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 108). All of these definitions lead us along the same path ultimately reflected in the ontological and epistemological positions taken in this research. This section will clarify the ontological and epistemological stances adopted and will provide details of the paradigm which is most fitted to the purposes of this study.

Ontology refers to the philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality and existence, while epistemology refers to the researcher's view of what constitutes knowledge in a certain area of study (Saunders et al., 2007). Burrell and Morgan (1979) note that ontology is the reality and the existence and therefore the assumptions related to it concern the essence of the phenomenon under investigation. However, epistemology concerns the nature of knowledge and the processes involved in achieving this knowledge, therefore the epistemological assumptions concern the basis of the knowledge and how the individual begins to establish and communicate it. According to Clough and Nutbrown (2012) ontology is a theory of what exists and how it exists and

epistemology is a related theory of how can someone come to know about that existence.

In social sciences, researchers often carry out research from two main perspectives: one is objectivism and the other is subjectivism (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) sometimes referred to as constructivism. Each of these perspectives embodies a different research philosophy, strategy, methods and techniques for collecting and analysing the data. A subjective perspective in research is based on the researcher's understandings, feelings, emotions and interpretations. However, an objective perspective takes little account of the emotions and personal feelings of the researchers. It is based on externally verifiable and observable facts subject to numerical and quantifiable measures (Saunders et al., 2009). To achieve the aim of this study, the perspective adopted is subjective as all of the required data will be gathered through interviews and analysed on the basis of researcher interpretation. Constraining researcher influence and possible distortion in the collection and analysis of the data is clearly an issue and will be addressed.

After identifying the research perspective, it is also crucial to distinguish between two main ontological strands which were presented by Burrell and Morgan (1979), namely Nominalism and Realism. Nominalists argue that there is no real structure to the world apart from human categorisation of its elements and their relationships through language. On the other hand, the realist position assumes that the external social world is made up of causally interacting elements and structures existing independently of any human attempt to name and describe them. Researchers from within the subjective tradition mostly follow the nominalist position. This study takes a subjectivist position and a

nominalist ontology. It views EO and EM as essentially, and indeed context-based concepts, social constructs. As such the approach fits the needs of a study of Saudi Arabia in order to improve the marketing strategy outcomes for SMEs in its period of TE.

Once the research path is clear to subjectively based exploration the next step is to consider the epistemological position and related methodology (Cole et al. 2011). Two main epistemological positions identified by Burrell and Morgan (1979) are positivism, and anti-positivism, this latter position more often called interpretivism or social constructivism. These two contrasting positions describes approaches to the conduct of social science research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Positivism refers to “*an epistemological position that advocates the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality and beyond*” (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 28). Positivist research often looks at causality and relationships between variables and their constituent elements. On the other hand, interpretivism refers to “*an epistemological position that requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social action*” (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 29). Research in this position is relativistic and is often understood from the individual’s point of view. These individuals should be directly involved in the activities under investigation. The advocates of this approach argue that it is important to understand the frame of reference of these individuals in order to obtain valid interpretations (Burrell and Morgan, 1979, p. 5).

The social constructivist approach was introduced by Berger and Luckmann (1966) followed by a similar view in Burr (1995). Other scholars such as Cameron and Price (2009) and Creswell (2003) have also considered the

same approach. Advocates of social constructivism believe that individuals develop subjective meanings in their interpretation of society and work. Four assumptions were identified by Burr (1995) as underpinning the social constructivist approach. Firstly, there is no take-for-granted perception of the world, therefore researchers should always challenge and remain critical. Secondly, the historical and the cultural context of the research and the language of the researcher must be considered when interpreting the data. Thirdly, knowledge is in continuous flux and generated through the social interactions of daily life and experiences. Fourthly, social actions and phenomena affect one another.

Furthermore, an assumption identified by Crotty (1998) when discussing the constructivist approach is that the social and historical background of the researcher plays a major role in interpreting qualitative data. Thus, researchers using a qualitative approach seek to live the experience in order to understand the context and gather valid and reliable data. In this study, the researcher's background helps in understanding the situation and developing the themes of the interviews based on his own experiences. This results in a number of interviews with entrepreneurs and consultants being conducted in a discussion mode on a shared knowledge basis rather than using a question and answer format assuming prior knowledge of context. The interviews should help in understanding the context and the practical aspects of applying EO and EM in Saudi Arabia, especially in this period of economic transition. As a result, the epistemological position which underpins this study will be interpretivism (social constructivism), reflective of the nature which is exploratory in its intent. The

following section will identify the research “paradigm” based on the ontological and the epistemological stance of this research.

3.2.1. Research Paradigm

Scholars have agreed to some extent on their definitions of the notion of a research paradigm. For instance, Saunders et al. (2009, p. 118) define a research paradigm as “*a way of examining social phenomena from which particular understandings of these phenomena can be gained and explanation attempted*”. In the same way, it has been defined by Bryman and Bell (2015 p.35) as “*a cluster of beliefs and dictates which for scientists in a particular discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done and how results should be interpreted*”. It can be said that a research paradigm is a set of shared beliefs and shared understandings of social reality by researchers in the same field.

In social science research there is still a lack of agreement on defining and classifying the types of research paradigms (Mkansi and Acheampong, 2012). However, in this study I consider the classificatory system of Burrell and Morgan (1979) in which they identify four research paradigms which can underlie social research processes. These are functionalist, interpretative, radical humanist and radical structuralist. Some of these paradigms are more commonly used in business and management research (Saunders et al., 2009). Specifically, the functionalist paradigm and the interpretative paradigm. Burrell and Morgan (1979) have identified the basic differences between all four paradigms as follows.

The functionalist paradigm follows an objectivist ontology and it is one within which most business and management research operates (Saunders et al., 2009). It supports a problem-oriented approach and offers practical solutions to practical problems (Burrell and Morgan, 1979) based on the identification of cause and effect relationships between variables. The interpretative paradigm combines a subjectivist ontology with an interpretivist epistemology. Researchers using this approach usually focus on elucidating complexities rather than focusing on finding discrete issue solutions (Creswell, 2014). In this paradigm, researchers often attempt to understand and explain situations rather than achieve change (Saunders et al., 2009). The radical humanist paradigm adopts a subjectivist ontology and a critical perspective. Burrell and Morgan (1979) note that research in this paradigm is concerned with changing an existing situation. The radical structuralist paradigm assumes an objectivist ontology. Research in this paradigm recognises objectively real social entities and is concerned with achieving changes based on interventions which disrupt patterns and relationships (Saunders et al., 2009).

The purpose of this study is to better understand how EO and EM are feature of entrepreneurial practice in a geographical context previously not subject to systematic investigation i.e. Saudi Arabia. I propose that an interpretive paradigm is best suited to that purpose since it will be informed by the meanings of the situation constructed by the significant actors within that situation.

Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) note that the social constructivist (interpretative) approach allows a better understanding of how people make sense of the social realities they live, i.e. what social constructs mean to them.

In addition, it provides the ability to adjust the research process in response to emerging context and insight. On the other hand, Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) have listed some weaknesses of the approach. For example, data collection and analysis can take a great deal of time and resources. Indeed, qualitative research can be difficult to plan and implement in accordance with fully predetermined timelines. Most crucially, the essentially subjective nature of the primary data can lead to uncontrollable variability and consequent scepticism regarding the significance and credibility of findings. Care needs to be taken to arrange for an early interview schedule and to communicate in advance with the potential interviewees. In addition, setting a fixed number of interviews which represents a feasible sample is indispensable as is careful design of themes and questions (Yin, 2015).

3.3. The Purpose of the Research

A clear research purpose is a critical element in any study. It requires clear objectives and well-defined research questions. Nevertheless, some studies can combine one or more research purposes based on a study's objectives and questions. According to many scholars such as Robson (2002) and Saunders et al. (2007) there are three different types of research purpose: exploratory, explanatory and descriptive. Exploratory research has been defined as a valuable means of exploring what is happening, generating new insights, asking questions and assessing phenomena in a new light. It is also considered a tool to generate ideas and hypotheses for future research (Robson, 2002, p. 59). In contrast, explanatory research aims to explain patterns associated with the phenomenon under investigation. It is useful in

identifying relationships between different aspects of the phenomenon. Overall, explanatory research tends to explain causal relationships between different variables in a certain situation or for a particular problem (Robson, 2002). On the other hand, a descriptive purpose seeks to provide an accurate profile of a situation or an event. This approach requires extensive background and previous knowledge about the researched issue or situation (Robson, 2002). Following are the justifications of the choice of purpose for this study.

It is believed that exploratory research is appropriate for the purpose of this study as the country is facing a once-in-lifetime TP. Creswell (2014) noted two important reasons for exploratory research. First, it assists the researcher in building understanding and drawing conclusions from what has been said by the participants. Second, in cases where little has been written about the topic being studied, exploratory research provides more insight into the topic or the population under investigation. In addition, exploratory research is primarily concerned with theory generation and discovery (Jupp, 2006) and that complies with the inductive research approach which will be used in this study. Therefore, exploratory approach will be very useful in generating insight into what underlies EO and the question of how EO stimulates EM behaviour in SMEs in TE. It will also help in exploring which factors are most relevant in the application of both concepts. Finally, it will provide an insight into how SMEs approach the market currently and how both concepts can assist them better in the future in order to survive in periods of economic downturn and to grow in periods of economic growth.

3.4. Research Approach

The research approach is the strategy for linking theory and research before moving forward in any study. It clarifies theory and how it informs data collection and analysis the way it is approached, before collecting and analysing the data (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Therefore it underpins every choice within the research process (Cameron and Price, 2009). There are two main approaches to theory; (1) the deductive approach and (2) the inductive approach. In short, the deductive approach is simply “testing existing theories” by seeking confirmation of theory’s predictions whereas, the inductive approach is “developing new theories” by observing regularities in a data set and proposing a theory to account for them. The deductive approach has been defined as “*a research approach that involves the development of a theoretical proposition with designing a research strategy that is specifically for the purpose of testing that proposition*” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 124), and is predominantly used in quantitative-based studies. On the other hand, the inductive approach “*involves the development of a theory based on the observation of empirical data*” (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 126), and it is usually used in qualitative-based studies.

An inductive approach allows alternative explanations of what is going on, therefore it helps the researcher to generate more debate around the theory in variant contexts. It also allows the exploration of the application of concepts in different cultures and backgrounds. Thus, it sheds light on issues and areas that might need more investigation and it also helps to improve the theory by generating data from other contexts and different cultures and backgrounds (Saunders et al., 2009). This is through enabling the researcher to make

interpretations of the data obtained to generate a new theory. The topic of this study and the theoretical bases are not new, however, the context chosen and the exploration of the theory in that context and that culture emerged recently. It can be said that the existing literature focused on the concepts of EO and EM does not include any studies conducted in Saudi Arabia. In addition, the main contribution of this research is the development of a processual model that could assist SMEs to approach the market. In effect this study can also be considered as an attempt to inform the emergent of new theory as a result of investigating EO, EM and marketing elements regarding SMEs in a TE.

Some weaknesses of the inductive approach were identified by Saunders et al. (2009) which are: firstly, the researcher lives with the fear of not obtaining useful data patterns, so that may be reflected in the development of the theory. Secondly, the data collection and analysis process in this approach is protracted. In practice, this research began with the introduction of the theory and the elements associated with it so that the framework is partly developed but awaiting modification and improvements as a result of the empirical data. In addition, the researcher planned the interviews and communicated the potential participants to save time during the data collection stage. A back-up list was also drawn up and names of replacement participants were considered in case any of the original potential participants should withdraw. Saunders et al. (2009, p. 127) summarised the major differences between the inductive and deductive approaches as shown in Appendix. 3.

This study follows a phenomenological research perspective which has been described by Husserl (1960) as the 'science of subjective' as cited in Carson et al. (2001, p. 16). Phenomenological research was defined by

Sokolowski (2000, p. 185) as "*the science that studies truth*". According to Creswell (2014) phenomenological research describes the essence of individual experience. It aims to understand, in detail, everyday experiences that people face in order to understand the application of the phenomenon under investigation (McLeod, 2011). In addition, it has been noted that phenomenologists attempt to see the world from the participant's point of view in order to grasp the individual behaviour towards the phenomenon (Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 30). Furthermore, phenomenological research seeks to investigate how individuals view themselves and how they explain the world around them (Robson and McCartan, 2016). In this study, the phenomena are related to the concepts of EO and EM within SMEs. This study is phenomenological in approach using semi-structured interviews with themes informed by, but not limited to, those identified via a review of the literature. Creswell (2014) states that the approach typically involves interviews and it has a firm philosophical basis. The use of the phenomenological approach should help in clarifying entrepreneurs' experiences in terms of their perception, description, feelings, judgment, explanation and sense-making (Patton, 2002) towards both concepts within the context of a TE.

3.5. Research Method of Enquiry

The choice of the method of enquiry in any research is one of the most important steps in the research process. It must be based on what method or methods of data collection and analysis could better answer the research questions and meet the study objectives. Research methods and techniques are the process and tools for collecting research data, analysing them and

reaching a conclusion from them (Easterby-Smith et al., 2015). Choosing between quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods must follow a logical procedure and should match the philosophical assumptions of the researcher and also align with the choice of research approach. Following is an explanation of each of the three different research methods and a justification of the chosen method which was considered appropriate for the purpose of this study.

As noted earlier, quantitative research mostly follows a realist ontology and positivist epistemology (Saunders et al., 2009). Quantitative research primarily follows an explanatory approach based on quantifiable implications of hypotheses (Creswell, 2014). The advantages of using quantitative methods include increasing the precision of results as it deals with quantifiable measures. It also increases reliability and validity in virtue of direct replicability. In addition, results obtained from a quantitative study can be generalised. Furthermore, quantitative research is less susceptible to researcher influence in the analysis of data as compared with qualitative approaches (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

Qualitative research, on the other hand, follows an interpretivist epistemology and nominalist ontology (Saunders et al., 2009). Qualitative research is mostly used to explore and generate insights concerning opinions or behaviours towards a social or human problem (Creswell, 2014) and it is used predominantly in exploratory approach studies (Stebbins, 2001). Qualitative-exploratory research in this context offers multi-perspectival insights into individual experiences in a given social setting (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). The advantages of using a qualitative method are several. It helps in understanding human beings in a social context through interacting with them

in their natural settings. It assigns value to context, researchers and other participants who are involved in the research, and as a result, its inherent reflexivity is valued (Robson and McCartan, 2016).

Qualitative research is difficult to define clearly (Ritchie, et al., 2014). One of the most detailed definitions is the one given by Denzin and Lincoln (2011, p. 3) where they propose “*qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world*”. To the best of my knowledge this definition provides the most extensive features of qualitative research and they align with the choice of every methodological process in this study.

Finally, the mixed methods approach uses both approaches, qualitative and quantitative, in data collection and analysis. The two approaches may be simultaneously or consecutively applied (Saunders et al., 2009). This combination must follow a logical philosophical basis and the appropriate techniques for collecting and analysing data must be applied. In fact, two or more techniques may be used in this approach for collecting and analysing the data with an integration of two philosophical assumptions in one study (Creswell, 2014). The mixed methods approach has several advantages. It strengthens the research by allowing for the triangulation of results. Furthermore, the two methods can complement each other with one method filling the gaps left by the other method. Finally, it provides the opportunity to use different methods for different purposes in one study (Bryman, 2006;

Saunders et al., 2009). The choice of method in this study was based on which would work better in order to maximise the value of the data generated so as to answer the research questions and to meet the study objectives and so the qualitative method was selected.

The primary interest of this study is to explore the process of EO and understand how SMEs currently approach the market. To meet this interest and to achieve the main aim and objectives, qualitative research method was chosen. Qualitative research in this sense will allow exploration and aid understanding of the individual's view in a certain setting, as stated by Creswell (2014). It will also provide a detailed insight into the situation under investigation. In addition, it offers a more detailed view of the context being investigated (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Denzin and Lincoln (2011) note that qualitative research focuses on how social experience is created. They add that researchers using this approach consider the context and the associated given meanings of the social interactions, behaviours and events. Therefore, a qualitative approach is required to generate this type of exploration and insights in order to better understand the contextual data related to the concepts in this particular context.

Qualitative research is a very appropriate method for marketing research especially when attempting to explore issues of personal orientation towards forms of social practice such as EO and EM. Aaker et al. (2011) note that qualitative methods in marketing research are used for exploratory purposes. It is useful in order to obtain initial feelings about a problem before moving on to more analytical investigations. In addition, it helps in exploring behaviours and thoughts and that is one element of what this study is attempting to investigate.

Carson et al. (2001) state that qualitative interpretivist research into marketing practice provides an in-depth understanding of phenomena with respect to managers, consumers and contexts.

In practice, qualitative exploratory research has been previously used, either as a single method or in a mixed-methods approach, in EO and EM studies. However, Wales (2016) notes the paucity of qualitatively based EO focused research. The methodological approach taken in this study is similar to few other studies with respect to both concepts. For instance, Vora et al. (2012) made use of qualitative research methods to explore the applicability of the dimensions of EO to medium sized firms which were competing in a specific market. Another study by Franco et al. (2014) explored the importance of EM in SMEs by using qualitative techniques for data collection and analysis. Therefore, using this research approach to explore EO and EM in the context of a TE is applicable and it extends and develops current knowledge to and within a different geographic, economic and cultural context.

From another perspective, Hlady-Rispal and Jouison-Laffitte (2014) reviewed study of 111 qualitative articles from three leading journals of entrepreneurship to guide qualitative researchers in this field. They suggest that first, qualitative researchers should be more explicit in their ontological, epistemological and methodological choices. Second, justifications of the choice of techniques used in data collection, sampling strategy and more importantly data analysis should be more transparent. Finally, robust argumentation of how the selected approach will present innovative and different results should be provided. These issues have been addressed throughout this chapter.

Qualitative research has also earned some criticism from social science scholars. Some of these criticisms as illustrated by Bryman and Bell (2015). Firstly, it is too subjective due to its dependency on the researcher's own perspective and sometimes unsystematic view about what is considered important or significant. Secondly, findings from qualitative research are often restricted to a specific setting and that causes problems when attempting to generalise the findings. Thirdly, the difficulties in establishing how a researcher arrived at certain conclusions is frequently seen as a lack of transparency in this method. In addition, Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) note practical and ethical issues; the problem of gaining access to participants and the ethics of certain data collection practices.

However, this study has considered these criticisms and will attempt to overcome them. First, the study develops a systematic procedure for the creation of the theoretical framework and for generating the interview themes. Second, the study minimises the problems related to generalisation by developing a strict sampling strategy to create a balanced subject cohort. Meticulous forward schedule planning will optimise participant access. Finally, regarding the problem of transparency, the study will include a specific section on reflexivity which addresses the issue of the influence that the researcher has on the study. The next section will explain the techniques used in this study to collect and analyse the data, including the sampling strategy.

3.6. Data Collection

Considering this study's objectives, questions and methodology, the use of the semi-structured interviews technique to collect data seems the most

appropriate. Interviews took place in Saudi Arabia in three major cities, namely; Riyadh (the capital city and the financial hub), Jeddah (the main port of the Kingdom and the entry point for pilgrims) and Dammam (the region that is the location of the main oil fields and the home of the Saudi Oil Company, Aramco).

The intention was to develop themes based on the literature review which was carried out before the collection of primary data. Participants were selected carefully and systematically identified based on criteria which are given in detail in the sampling strategy section. This section begins with an explanation of the logic behind selecting participants from the three main cities only. This is followed by a justification of the selected data collection technique, which is semi-structured interviews, and some other practical issues for carrying out successful interviews.

The rationale behind the choice of the context was based on the perception of some researchers who encourage studies on entrepreneurial behaviour in new contexts to develop theory by exploration of new dimensions and variables (e.g. Covin and Lumpkin, 2011). In addition, the choice of these three cities was systematic based on five reasons. Firstly, they are well developed and modernised cities compared to other cities in the country. Secondly, most well-known entrepreneurs and consultants are located in these three cities. Thirdly, these three cities are home to the three largest Chambers of Commerce in the country and as a result they host more events and offer more support to entrepreneurs compared to other cities. Fourthly, the level of competition is very high in these three cities due to the variety of choices and different tastes and experiences that citizens of these three cities have. Finally, according to a report by the General Authority for Statistics in Saudi Arabia

(2018), these three cities collectively have 64% of the total number of enterprises in the country, the report is available at (<https://www.stats.gov.sa/>). As a result, carrying out the field work in these three cities should provide a fair assessment of the marketing approach and the EO used by SMEs in Saudi Arabia. In addition, there is a high level of competitiveness in these three markets which requires a dynamic strategic posture which can clearly be seen in these three cities.

3.6.1. Semi-structured Interviews

The field work conducted in this study considers Crotty's (1998) view that participants in qualitative research can share their own views through the use of open-ended questions. The technique used in this study to collect data is semi-structured interviews based on the intention to gather data from different respondents who should provide a series of perspectives with regard to the researched concepts. 'Semi-structured interview' is a term that covers a wide range of interview types and is based on themes that have already been decided prior to the interview. These themes are then used as an interview guide based on the progress of each interview (Saunders et al., 2007). According to Bryman and Bell (2015) semi-structured interviews allow the researcher to keep an open mind about the concepts which are under investigation, and as a result, theories and concepts can emerge or develop from the data accordingly.

Aligning with the methodological approach of this study there is a strong link between semi-structured interviews and phenomenological research.

According to Smith (2015) semi-structured interviews are classified as the exemplary method for interpretative phenomenological analysis. In this sense, the phenomenological interviews will allow the exploration of individual personal perception concerning an object or a concept (Smith and Osborn, 2008). On the other hand, semi-structured interviews also align with the objectives of the inductive approach to theory generation (Bryman and Bell, 2015). In addition, semi-structured interviews provide the in-depth information which is required to address the gaps around the application of the concepts of EO and EM in SMEs in TEs. Carson et al. (2001) note that in-depth interviews align with the inductive reasoning and the interpretivist paradigm. It discloses participant meanings and can elucidate questions concerning the *how* and *why* of participants behaviours (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). The technique of semi-structured interviews also has several other advantages and some disadvantages as discussed below.

In semi-structured interviews, the researcher is able to establish a rapport with the interviewees. Researchers tend to give less importance to the ordering of the questions; rather they probe novel points that arise during the interview, and this produces rich insights (Smith and Osborn, 2008). Furthermore, questions based on this technique are to some extent more general than those found in structured interviews. A semi-structured interview also allows the interviewer to ask further questions and to request more detailed explanations in response to significant replies (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The plan was to conduct face to face in-depth semi-structured interviews with entrepreneurs and managers who deal with marketing issues in SMEs in SA.

Before conducting the interviews, the intention was that every interview would take between thirty and forty-five minutes based on the progress of the interview. In practice, every interview took an average of sixty minutes. The questions guide and the themes were also written prior to the interviews being conducted (Appendix. 5). Interview outcomes were intended to inform the research objectives. Firstly, to explore the antecedents that lead to EO in SMEs. Secondly, to reveal the interlink between the concepts of EO and EM. Thirdly, to evaluate the main factors which affect the application of EO, as well as the influencers that affect EM behaviour in SMEs in SA in TE. Fourthly, to identify effective marketing strategies and tools for SMEs in TEs through the lens of EM and its dimensions. The outcomes should feed into the main goal of creating a model that could assist SMEs in understanding how to overcome the problem of approaching the market by applying EO to enhance the EM behaviour in SMEs.

On the other hand, interviews in general and semi-structured interviews in particular have received some criticism. One of the most critical issues that arises in less structured interviews is the various responses to the same question. For example, some participants may give shorter answers than others when the researcher requires more detailed answers. According to Easterby-Smith et al. (2015) researchers should deal with this issue by making the choice about which questions are to be explored more and which are to be discarded, and that requires a prepared topic guide. In addition, Robson and McCartan (2016) state that interviews are time-consuming and require careful preparation. From a marketing perspective, Aaker et al. (2011) note two main concerns in relation to using semi-structured interviews. First, people

sometimes dislike tape recordings and therefore having no recording makes it very difficult to remember their answers. Second, interviewers often want short interviews and that may impact the quality of the data obtained.

From another perspective, when considering applying interview technique on entrepreneurship and marketing studies, some researchers have employed this technique in their field work. According to the literature, interviews have been a less popular choice as a data collection technique when exploring issues related to entrepreneurship phenomena (Suddaby et al., 2015). However, they have been used in several studies to explore meanings associated with theories and concepts related to entrepreneurship such as EO and entrepreneurial opportunity. For instance, a study by Jennings et al. (2015) used interviews to extend theorising about the antecedents and consequences of entrepreneurial emotions. Another study by Peters and Kallmuenzer (2015) concerned the family SME firms in the hospitality industry. They employed in-depth interviews to explore the effect of entrepreneurial behaviour on the performance of these enterprises. The purpose of this study is concerned with similar issues and aims to gain insights into the antecedents and the application of the concept of EO to enhance marketing strategies by SMEs in a TE.

On the other hand, interviews as a technique of data collection is quite common in marketing research. Aaker et al. (2011) note that the use of interviews in marketing research enhances the quality of the information given by participants. They categorise semi-structured interviews as an effective tool for interviewing busy managers and thought leaders. This type of interview also allows access to unexpected facts which may arise during the discussion, to identify them and to put more emphasis on them. In marketing research, the

outcome of this type of interview includes insight about the market such as market trends, market demand, competitive activities and legislations (Aaker et al., 2011, p. 166). This study seeks in-depth insight regarding how entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs react entrepreneurially to market opportunities taking into consideration dimensions from EO and EM provided in the literature.

Here are some examples of studies which used a similar method of data collection to explore EM behaviour in organisations. A study was conducted by Hills et al. (2008) to determine the implication of EM in a cross-cultural context between the United States and Sweden. They employed the semi-structured interview technique with almost sixty firms to identify their marketing behaviours. Another study by Kocak and Abimbola (2009) used interviews to investigate the effect of EM on the internationalisation strategy of newly born firms in emerging economies. Considering these examples and many more in the literature, it seems apparent that interviews, in particular, semi-structured ones, are very useful for the purpose of this study.

3.6.2. Justifications of the Choice of Language

The interviews took place in Saudi Arabia as mentioned above. Therefore, there was a choice to be made in regard to the decision of which language to use for the interviews. The choice between Arabic and English was critical as the country's first language is Arabic and the literature which relates to the investigated concepts is mainly in English. The decision was made to carry out the interviews in Arabic as the interviewees speak the local language

fluently (Walsham, 2006). In addition, the transcripts of all interviews will be translated into English before moving forward to the analysis stage. To ensure the validity of the translation, a re-translation of a random selection of texts has been carried out before starting the analysis.

3.6.3. Interview Recording

Many scholars have stressed the importance of taking a full record of the interviews (e.g. Robson and McCartan, 2016) for the purpose of referring back to them when there is a need to do so. The record can take two forms, one is a tape recording and the other is notes. In this study, the tape recording took place in all the interviews using a smartphone device. Before each interview, a written consent from every interviewee was obtained. The process was initiated by sending an invitation containing a detailed description of the interview including the venue, date, time, length and the privacy policy associated with it to each interviewee by email. The consent form was attached to the invitation email in which the interviewee should be aware of the tape recording in good time before we met for the interview. The record of the interviews was stored on an external device and the cloud storage provided by the University of York which was available to the main researcher. That also was applied to any other form of data generated.

3.6.4. Interviews Settings

This section discusses the important elements which were considered before and during the conduct of the interviews. Before conducting the

interviews, the researcher sent an email stating all elements related to interview settings. This covered location, date, time, permission for recording, and some important points for the interviewee that clarified his/her rights to withdraw and the data protection plan. In addition, preparing the interview venue before starting the interview was also important. King and Horrocks (2010) suggest building trust to create a comfortable atmosphere for the interviewee. In addition, introducing the topic and self-presentation are also crucial even though that had taken place in written form previously. By doing that, the researcher builds a rapport and confidence before the start of the interview. The researcher managed to perform all the interviews in either the entrepreneurs' or the consultants' own offices or at a quiet and safe public zone such as the quiet rooms in libraries.

During the interviews, King and Horrocks (2010) stress that the researcher should be fully conscious, be careful about body language and maintain this for the duration of the interview. In addition, Carson et al. (2001) also provide some rules for good interviews including asking non-directive questions, avoiding the use of academic terms, deciding on the dialogue order based on the respondent's interest, never interrupting an interviewee during their response, never introducing their own ideas in an interview and never evaluating an answer. All of this advice has been considered at the time of the interviews. The next section clarifies the choice of the sampling strategy which was decided before moving on to the field work.

3.6.5. Sampling Strategy

The research aim heavily influences the choice of sampling strategy. Generally, there are two main sampling techniques for social science research, probability sampling and non-probability sampling. As in the case of this study, qualitative research in general is categorised under the non-probability sampling technique (Ritchie, et al., 2014). This technique provides five different types of sampling strategies which are, quota sampling, purposive sampling, snowball sampling, self-selection sampling and convenience sampling (Saunders et al., 2007). In non-probability sampling, the probability of having a participant from each case is not known, instead, every participant must fit within certain characteristics and that is the aspect distinguishing the non-probability sampling (Ritchie, et al., 2014). The choice of the sampling strategy used in this study was based on evaluating the five different strategies of the non-probability sampling.

To start with, quota sampling is normally operative in interviews. It ensures the sample represents specific characteristics from the chosen population (Saunders et al., 2007). However, it is a tool which is used more effectively with larger populations and it entails a process of identifying a population and then dividing it into sub-groups which seems inappropriate for this study. The second strategy is purposive sampling or in other words judgmental sampling. This type of sampling enables the researcher to judge the number of participants and to evaluate which case to consider. Purposive sampling is more useful in cases of small samples such as case study research or informative research (Neuman, 2011). Although this type leaves the choice

of participants to the researcher, it does not seem very appropriate given the objectives of this study as it is not considered a case study.

The third strategy is snowball sampling and this is commonly used when the researcher faces difficulties in identifying participants (Saunders et al., 2007). According to Aaker et al. (2011) it is an appropriate strategy to use to reach a specialised small population. However, this strategy may result in a homogeneous sample which creates a considerable level of bias due to the difficulty of identifying an accessible sampling frame (Bryman and Bell, 2015). The fourth strategy is self-selection sampling where individuals identify their desires to take part in the study. This is achieved through publicising posts to invite participants either through the appropriate media channels or by asking them directly to take part. This strategy, especially when asking people to take part, will ensure each participant will fit the criteria presented below. This can reduce the level of homogeneity and increase the selection quality of the participants. Finally, convenience sampling refers to the selection of participants according to convenience for the researcher in terms of accessibility and closeness. One of the most important drawbacks of this technique is the high level of uncontrolled bias. However, it is one of the most widely used techniques in non-random sampling strategy (Saunders et al., 2007). Following is an illustration of the criteria for selecting participants for the interviews followed by the choice of the sampling techniques employed in this study.

The reason behind introducing these criteria was to ensure that interviewees were selected carefully and systematically. The criteria show the basis of the selection process and help to ensure the validity of the outcome.

The researcher ensured that all participants fit with these points. First, all entrepreneurs and managers were selected from firms which have been operating for five years or more which was an indication of the sustainability of the firm in this study for two reasons. (1) Five years' operation should identify the firm's strengths in facing threats and competition. The country of Saudi Arabia has experienced an economic downturn which began in the middle of 2015 that, without doubt, forced many SMEs to either exit the market, change strategy or to merge with others. (2) According to the report by the Chamber of Commerce (2015), two years is the average age of firms when they fail and exit the market in Saudi Arabia, therefore five-years is a very reasonable age for a sustainable business which has survived. Second, the selection of small and medium sized firms was based on the classification of the General Authority of SMEs in SA, which is illustrated in the table below (table 3. 2.). Third, this study is not considering any firms that have either been acquired or have merged. That is because this study intended to explore the marketing response of these firms when facing challenges, not their general strategic approach. Fourth, this study did not identify any particular industry as it aims to generate a holistic insight into the process of EO and the impact of EO on the formation of the marketing strategies used by SMEs.

To conclude, it was very important that the participants provide rich data within the studied context. However, it was very challenging to adhere to one sampling strategy only. Therefore, it seemed very appropriate to use two sampling strategies which both match the criteria identified in the previous paragraph. Bryman and Bell (2015) note that it is quite common to use snowball sampling with another sampling strategy. The chosen strategies were therefore

snowball sampling and self-selection sampling. Both are compatible with qualitative methods and they align with the data analysis techniques which are presented later in this chapter. In addition, combining both strategies and the selection criteria have ensured a minimised level of bias and the trustworthiness of the data generated is high. The next section demonstrates the sample size and the industries from which the participants were selected.

3.6.6. Sample Size

The decision relating to the sample size varies between different research approaches and research types (Marshall and Rossman, 2011). Therefore, it is made in conjunction with the choice of data collection method. Identifying the rationale for the size of the sample is a key element in any research. In qualitative interpretative research, the intention is usually to recruit individuals who are able to provide useful insights into the research topic (Remenyi et al., 1998). Therefore, the sampling strategy for this study aligned with the aim to provide rich insight into the phenomena under investigation. Moreover, in qualitative research we do not seek a representative sample, rather we seek deep insight or understanding of a certain issue. This is why representativeness in qualitative research is a term used in a loose sense but it means to cover the social category that the researcher intends to explore (Symon and Cassell, 2012). So, the focus here is that the sample does not need to represent a specific group, but participants should be selected systematically based on pre-identified criteria. Thus, it is difficult to say that the sample could provide us with a genuine representation of the entire population. However, it

should allow us to achieve this study's aim and objectives, and to answer its questions.

In this study, the selection criteria were identified to ensure that participants will be able to provide different thoughts and overviews of the concepts of EO and EM. In addition, they should be able to respond to questions related to marketing within SMEs. To achieve this, the researcher considered three main decisions regarding the sample size. First, was the decision of selecting participants from three main cities. Second, every participant must fit with the criteria that was explained in the previous section. Third, participants should be selected from different business industries, for example, food, tourism, retail and business consultants, preferably those who dealt with SMEs. In fact, representation of particular industrial sectors was not relevant given the study's focus on the lived experience of individuals. Of course, reference to the individuals' domain of activity serves to enrich understanding of the individual's perception of their experience.

In addition, it was important that the number of participants was also considered before moving to the interviews, as it is a challenge to set up an end point in qualitative research according to Easterby-Smith et al. (2015). To overcome this concern, this study supports the view of Warren (2002) who states that, in general, for a qualitative interview study to be published, the required number of interviews seems to fall between twenty and thirty. The sample size in this study therefore was thirty participants, ten from each city mentioned above. Those ten were made up of seven entrepreneurs or managers of SME firms and three marketing consultants who dealt with any SME within the last five years. Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007) made an

interesting point about sampling in qualitative research. They recommend that the sample size should not be so small that it is possible to reach data saturation and theoretical saturation. At the same time, it should not be so large that it is impossible to undertake deep analysis (cited in Bryman and Bell, 2015, p. 436). The following section discusses the development process of the interview questions and themes.

In practice, a sample of 30 was chosen so as to secure a spread of response in relation to the variables of interest whilst maintaining practicability of participant identification and engagement. In practice, it was possible to meet thirty participants, however, the valid responses were from 29 interviewees only. The left-out evidence did not add anything to the objectives of the study, so the decision was made to remove his response. Then a question was whether or not to replace him and that was left until I would carry out the rest of interviews. The remaining interviews were useful, and I did not need to add any more responses. It can be said that the data saturation was reached after I finished the 25th participant interview. The rest was to validate and to check if there will be any novel observations from remaining participants. This justified omission of the final interview from the data set.

3.6.7. Development of the Interview Questions

The interview questions were developed from the relevant literature based on pre-identified themes and the dimensions of the EO and EM concepts. These questions were modified from previous studies in EO and EM such as; Hills et al. (2008), Jennings et al. (2015) and Peters and Kallmuenzer (2015).

This was to ensure that the questions fit well with this study's aim and objectives. Four questions were fixed for all interviewees. These are:

- 1) Tell me about the process of initiating this business?
- 2) How do you face the competition?
- 3) How do you catch market opportunities?
- 4) How would you describe the entrepreneurial behaviour in the firm?

In addition, during the dialogue the dimensions of EO and EM were raised by mentioning them and asking follow-up hidden questions. So, that would lead to explanations of their entrepreneurial behaviour towards marketing opportunities. These dimensions are, innovativeness, risk-taking, pro-activeness, autonomy, competitive aggressiveness, opportunity recognition, resource leveraging, value creation and customer intensity. Appendix. 5 shows in detail the interview question guide. The assumption was that this would lead to some valid responses regarding their application of EO and EM in recognising market opportunities. The following section explains the nature of SMEs followed by the culture of doing business in the studied context.

3.7. Research Context

3.7.1. Nature of SMEs in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia has specific economic and social environment characteristics which differentiate it from any other Arab or Western country. In fact, due to its conservative and stable socio-economic nature over the last four decades, Saudi people are less likely to welcome changes in routine daily life. In addition, figures reveal that the number of Saudis working in the

governmental sector accounts for one-third of all Saudi workers in both the private and public sector (Al-Kibsi et al., 2015). Despite the economic slowdown and the reduction in the number of jobs available for two years before the initiation of the transition plan between 2015 and 2016, the number of public sector employees remains a burden on the budget as it accounts for at least 35% of the Kingdom's annual budget (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Annual Budget Report, 2016).

On the other hand, almost 60% of the total number of employees in the private sector, as per 2016's report of General Organization for Social Insurance, are Saudis. These facts are not healthy for an economy like SA and they will not help in achieving the vision 2030 which is already introduced. As a result, the private sector in general, and SMEs in particular, are attracting more attention these days from the government as they want to increase their GDP and employment rate contribution. In spite of the fact that they are responsible for generating most of the employment in developed and developing countries (Ayyagari et al., 2007). Reports from the Ministry of Finance declare the SME sector accounts for more than one million organisations working inside the country, 90% of them are failing or barely surviving due to obstacles such as, bureaucracy, financial restriction and failure in marketing (Chamber of Commerce Report, 2015). It can be said that the infrastructure for a developed private sector has already existed for a decade, but it needs more development and improvements.

On the other hand, the identification of SMEs is different from one country to another (Ayyagari et al., (2007). In SA, the definition of SMEs has been unclear for the past three decades due to the absence of regulations and

authority for these enterprises. In October 2015, the decision was made by The Saudi Council of Ministers, to establish the General Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises with a legal personality which would enjoy financial and administrative independence. The first meeting of this Authority was held in December 2016 and a decision was made to define SMEs as follows and this study has considered this categorisation when implementing the empirical work.

| Category | Number of Employees | | Annual Revenue (million Saudi Riyals) |
|---------------|---------------------|----|--|
| Micro | 1 – 5 | OR | 0 – 3 |
| Small | 6 – 49 | | < 3 – 40 |
| Medium | 50 – 249 | | < 40 – 200 |

* In the absence of revenue data, the number of full-time employees is the standard

Table 3. 2. Classification of the Small and Medium Sized Enterprises in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, The General Authority of SMEs in Saudi Arabia (2016)

The role which the General Authority for SMEs will have includes reviewing regulations, removing obstacles by facilitating access to finance, and helping young people and innovators to market their products. They also seek to establish more business incubators, training institutions and venture capital funds especially for young entrepreneurs' skills development. The Authority also holds the responsibility for encouraging and supporting national SMEs to export their products through various channels of distribution but mainly through e-marketing (National Development Plan 2030 Report, 2017. P: 36).

The General Authority for SMEs has undertaken a SWOT analysis study that identify this sector's internal strengths and weaknesses as well as its

external opportunities and threats. According to Humphrey, (2005) identification of the SWOT elements assist in planning ahead and achieving objectives. The report was published in January 2017. Further details on the most significant conclusions are presented below in Appendix. 6.

3.7.2. National Development Plan 2030, and the Contribution of the Sector

The government of SA has initiated a national development plan entitled “Vision 2030”. The vision is based on the strength that the Kingdom has in its geographic position and its economic status. It consists of 24 major goals (Appendix. 4) and every ministry is responsible for achieving one or more goals. The progress is monitored by the Supreme Council for Economy and Development led by the Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman. These goals are published in the official report of the Vision 2030 and it is available at (<http://vision2030.gov.sa/en>). Most of these goals are economic-oriented, however, they still comply with other social, cultural, health and lifestyle objectives. Among these goals are those which relate particularly to the SME sector such as lowering the rate of unemployment from 11.6% to 7%, increasing SMEs’ contribution to GDP from 20% to 35%, increasing women’s participation in the workforce from 22% to 30% and moving from our current position as the 19th largest economy in the world to be among the top 15.

However, some other goals are not very impactful to the sector, but they create potential opportunities for SMEs to contribute to reaching these goals, for instance, increasing the Kingdom’s capacity to welcome Umrah visitors from 8 million to 30 million every year. This goal focuses on expanding the infrastructure to receive pilgrims, which appears to relate more to the state’s authority, but it will also result in the creation of accompanying businesses and

employment opportunities to serve the visitors. Another example is the goal to increase household spending on cultural and entertainment activities inside the Kingdom from the current level of 2.9% to 6%. This is a barely new sector to operate in SA as previous initiatives have been implemented by individuals or local authorities. Now it has a more governmental perspective and many SMEs could benefit by providing such activities.

To achieve these objectives the Council for Economy and Development has devised a four-year programme aligned with these objectives called the National Transformation Programme 2020. This programme was developed to help accomplish the “Vision 2030” goals and to identify any economic or development challenges faced by the ministries and governmental bodies when attempting to achieve the vision. The programme entails key performance indicators (KPI) for more than 24 governmental bodies to measure and monitor performance. The KPI in the programme is defined as the numerical value which measures the extent to which the entity has succeeded in achieving its strategic objective. By setting up initiatives, time frames and budgets in advance, the government believes it will be an efficient start to achieving the Kingdom’s vision. The programme also considers the key performance target which refers to the achievement of each desired aim and has a benchmark that compares each target to other leading countries’ achievements in the same content (<http://vision2030.gov.sa/en/ntp>).

Many of these initiatives are associated with different ministries which are assumed to have an impact on the SME sector. However, what seems to be more important to highlight are three main initiatives related to the Ministry of Commerce and Investment. First, to increase the number of established

entities (limited liability companies) from 50 thousand to 104 thousand by 2020. This supports the main goal of vision 2030 which is to increase the culture of entrepreneurship. Second, to increase the percentage contribution of SMEs to the non-oil GDP by 1% by 2020. This objective aligns with the main goal to increase the contribution of SMEs to the GDP. Third, to increase the percentage of employees in the SMEs versus total employees in the public and private sectors by 2% by 2020. This objective is to assist in achieving the main goal of creating more job opportunities in SMEs.

To conclude, it is clear that the country of SA, which is the context of this study, has a great deal of potential. Being a country that is passing through a once-in-a-lifetime economic transition period provided a promising context producing new insights. These new insights are related to the way entrepreneurs perform business and how social and cultural elements affect that process. In addition, more insights were obtained with regards to applying EM in SMEs, in particular to the aspects related to decision making process and marketing strategies in SMEs. This study considered the view that EO and EM can be more effective and clearer in periods of economic transition. According to Becherer et al. (2012), studies relating to EM are more effective when the environment is changing and the resources of the firm are limited. Therefore, having explored SMEs and entrepreneurs in this period of TE and employing the dimensions of EO and EM has provided rich insight with regards to the study aim and objectives. The following section will explain the data analysis technique which was considered suitable for the type of data generated.

3.8. Data Analysis

A subjective perspective is common in interpretivism and social constructivism research approaches. This philosophical position is concerned with how individuals and groups understand and interpret social events and social settings. For this reason, interpretation in qualitative research is a very important element especially when considering data analysis (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016).

According to Carson et al. (2001, p. 64) interpretative qualitative research is considered valuable due to the in-depth understanding that this method brings to the phenomena especially in the domain of marketing and management. Therefore, data obtained from semi-structured interviews should provide this in-depth insight. This can be done through various means of analysis, one of them is thematic analysis. The thematic analysis approach of this study is under the framework of the phenomenological analysis methods. Phenomenological analysis offers two methods which are widely used namely, Giorgi's method (1985) and Smith's Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 1996). The next sections demonstrate the link between the phenomenological analysis procedure of semi-structured interviews and the thematic analysis technique.

3.8.1. Phenomenological Data Analysis

According to King and Horrocks (2010) phenomenological interviews can be analysed using two main approaches which are the Giorgi's method (1985) which seeks to provide the researcher with a process that describes the

essential characteristics of a particular phenomenon that is experienced by the research participants. Giorgi's process of analysis entails four stages namely; first, reading through the transcript; second, defining meaning, which is the stage in which the transcript is divided into meaningful units; third, transformation, this stage allows the researcher to assess what each of the previously identified units tells about the phenomena under investigation; and fourth, structural description, in which the researcher writes about the studied phenomena (King and Horrocks, 2010).

On the other hand, Smith's IPA (Smith, 1996) is defined as "*the approach that is dedicated to the detailed exploration of personal meaning and lived experience*" (Smith, 2015, p. 25). Smith and Osborn (2007) argue that in IPA analysis there is a two-stage interpretation. First, participants interpret their actual lived experience to provide the interviewer with their account of it. Second, the researcher interprets the participants' accounts in order to construct the final summary. Therefore, the advantages of implementing an IPA approach in this research are several. It helped in building a strong relationship with the participants. In addition, it provided deep understanding of the participants' lived experience as it gave them the opportunity to share their stories in the way they saw most appropriate. According to Alase (2017) IPA approach increases the advantageous elements of qualitative research four times compared to other approaches. The following is an illustration of the practical process of dealing with the data through the thematic analysis technique.

3.8.2. Thematic Analysis

IPA analysis uses thematic techniques through four steps which are: familiarisation with the data, identifying themes, clustering themes and constructing a summary (King and Horrocks, 2010). Thematic analysis is the most common technique used in data analysis in qualitative research (Bryman and Bell, 2015). It refers to “*A form of analysis which has the theme or category as its unit of analysis, and which looks across data from many different sources to identify themes*” (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016, p. 331). According to Guest et al. (2011) thematic analysis moves beyond counting frequencies of word repetitions to disclose the implicit and explicit ideas within the data. It is well employed with the IPA method of phenomenological analysis (King and Horrocks, 2010).

Before moving to the practical-side explanation of the empirical work, a clarification must be provided about the difference between codes and themes. Themes tend to be longer phrases or sometimes a sentence whereas codes are short words and a precise unit of analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001). This study considers this perspective of codes and themes. The researcher applied codes for the analysis process of the data to group the outcomes into meaningful paragraphs. However, themes were used to build connections, extract and explain explicit and implicit meanings from the categorised paragraphs. However, some themes were identified before the interviews were conducted and used as guided notes to direct the interviews. The newly emerged themes were identified during the process of coding as discussed in the next section.

In practice, twenty-nine (n29) interviews were conducted and then transcribed. Three of them were conducted in English and the remaining were

in Arabic. Then, the Arabic transcriptions were translated into English. The applied themes, used for the data collection, were also identified as the main themes in the first stage of data analysis such as, dimensions of EO and EM, process and antecedents of EO, impact of TE and dealing with marketing in TEs. However, more themes and codes emerged during the data analysis process. A complete list of the categories, themes and codes involved in the data analysis stage is available in Appendix. 7. The intention was to initially employ the five dimensions of EO and the seven dimensions of EM as the main codes to highlight how frequently themes appear in the transcripts. In this way, the researcher was able to separate the existing themes, which were identified in the literature, from other themes which emerged in the interviews.

The researcher listened to every audio recording and read through every transcript several times. The purpose was to identify core themes related to the antecedents of EO, and to evaluate the different overviews of the participants. The researcher utilised the conceptual frameworks for EO and EM from the existing literature. As such, specific themes such as antecedents, processes, elements and underlies were considered. In addition, other codes related to the interlink between EO and EM were included. The researcher also considered the unique findings that were related to the context and made a separate category for them. Finally, the researcher looked for coherent and effective examples for application of EM in TEs to provide an understanding of the decision-making process for SMEs in relation to their marketing strategies. With this approach, the researcher did not intend to count words only, but to provide a clear synthesis between the concepts of EO and EM in SMEs. This is through evaluating the context in which each existing or new theme appears. Thus, it

leads to a practical evaluation of how EM is being applied successfully within SMEs to assist in approaching the market in TEs.

3.8.3. Coding

Coding is one of the starting points for analysing qualitative research (Bryman and Bell, 2015). According to Huberman and Miles (1994) the way the qualitative data is displayed is considered a key element of the analysis process. In addition, Coffey and Atkinson (1996: p. 27) note that coding should assist in processing, organising and analysing the qualitative data. They continue, it can be used as a tool to link our data with our thoughts about these data. Therefore, it seems important to think critically about coding and the process associated with it. Bryman and Bell (2015) provide several considerations to bear in mind before and at the time of coding which are; (1) Code as soon as possible. (2) Read through the transcripts twice to become familiar with the data. (3) Revise the previously identified codes. (4) Consider generating more theoretical ideas that are related to the data and the codes. (5) Coding is a continuous process, so it is important to keep it under review during the process of data analysis.

For this study, after reading the transcripts through several times, the citations were classified under each theme and linked to the most relevant code. This assisted in grouping and finding networks between participants' ways of thinking and behaving. Moreover, to ensure the reliability of the data analysis (Montgomery and Crittenden, 1977), a multiple coding process was implemented by the researcher and another peer-reviewer, as an independent

coder, who took random samples and identified almost similar codes. After that, the list of codes was revised and checked through with the transcripts and a final list was identified. After coding, the final stage was to extract and interpret the meanings out of the text and to write the findings chapter. The chapter of findings was separate from discussion, as it is perceived that displaying the results in a narrative form separate from discussion should enhance the coherence and reduce the length of the chapter.

To summarise, in this study, the use of the IPA approach within a thematic analysis technique seems more appropriate. This approach assists in arriving at the aim to explore and interpret entrepreneurs' and managers' lived experiences concerning the concepts of EO and EM in a TE. In addition, this aids evaluation of how these effective concepts and their dimensions affect the marketing outcomes of SMEs. By applying these methods of analysis in-depth insight was obtained through an interpretation of participants' views. This has allowed the objectives of this study to be reached in terms of understanding and exploring the nature of these concepts in a TE. The next section demonstrates the ethics associated with this research and how the researcher ensured all ethical considerations were identified and addressed before moving to the field work.

3.9. Ethics in this Research

There is no single rule or definition of ethics in research. For instance, in research into sensitive subjects where the privacy of individuals is highly recognised, issues of confidentiality are more critical. On the other hand, other research such as assessing customer preference, where the issue of sensitivity

is less important, will not focus to such an extent on the issue of confidentiality; rather, obtaining consents is more important. As a general rule, according to the Research Ethics Framework (REF) which was developed by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), ethics are designed to protect the rights of the researcher and the researched subjects. Different definitions of ethics in research have been provided by scholars. Silverman (2010, p. 434) defines ethics as the *“guidelines or principles relating to good professional practice”*. Saunders et al. (2007, p. 610) define it as *“the appropriateness of the researcher’s behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of a research project, or who are affected by it”*. It is clear that what is important with ethics is the process followed by the researcher to ensure certain codes of ethics are followed at all points in the research process.

Many scholars and academic bodies have introduced different codes of ethics, conduct or principles for the researchers to follow. For example, Easterby-Smith et al. (2015, p. 122) identify ten key principles for research ethics. The first six are to protect informants and research subjects and the last four are to protect the research community and research accuracy. The first six principles include ensuring no harm comes to participants, respecting their dignity, obtaining their informed consent, protecting their privacy, ensuring their confidentiality and protecting the anonymity of organisations and individuals. The remaining four principles are avoiding any misleading findings, ensuring transparency and honesty when communicating about the research, declaring any affiliation or funding bodies and avoiding deception.

Four main ethical issues were considered for this research; 1) obtaining approval from the ethics committee at the University of York; 2) obtaining

informed consent from the participants; 3) ensuring that interviews take place in safe places and; 4) ensuring data confidentiality. The University of York follows certain procedures relating to ethics approval. The application entails information about the research context, type of methods, time frame, nature of participants and many other important issues related to the research. Therefore, this study in the first stage follows the University of York code of ethics, and therefore an application was required to obtain their approval.

Informed consent is an important ethical element in this research. According to Saunders et al. (2007) informed consent is an achieved position where the participant knows clearly their role in the research, nature of the research, the research purpose and consent that is freely given. The consent form copy was sent as an attachment to the invitation email and a signed copy was obtained from all participants before conducting the interviews. It is also worth noting that this study did not ignore the issue of anonymity as the obtained consent clarified each individual's decision whether or not to disclose and discuss about his/her business in this research.

The last element related to ethics is data confidentiality. This refers to the type of information that the researcher is able to access and whether or not to disclose information about the firm (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This research involved two main elements. First, all participants remained anonymous, and therefore, they were identified by their initials. The second element relates to the data collected which is the responsibility of the researcher to store safely. The collected data was either in written or audio recorded format. The researcher ensured that all the required actions took place to satisfy and meet all aspects of the codes of ethics. Written documents were stored safely in a

place that no one knows about except the researcher. In addition, no names were attributed to the transcripts so that they remain anonymous. With regard to the audio recorded files, they were safely stored and password-encrypted in the cloud space drive provided by the University of York to their students. The next section is about the researcher's role in this study and how this role affected the research at different stages.

3.10. Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a term linked to social science research including the field of business and management research (Cunliffe and Jun, 2005; Hardy et al., 2001). According to Brannick and Coghlan (2006, p. 143) it refers to the identification of the connection between the researcher and the researched objects. Therefore, it is common in research that the researcher highlights these links in comments about the research process and the role which he/she has at every stage of the research. The importance of these comments varies between different projects and sometimes they require more attention especially when the research approach is more subjective, and the researcher has a major influence on it.

The researcher influence comes within three main stages: first, the stage of selecting the appropriate phenomena and concepts of the study, mainly in the literature review; second, the stage of data collection and participant selection; third, the stage of data analysis and the interpretations of the outcome. Strauss and Corbin (1998) argue that researchers are an active part of the research process. Therefore, they cannot ignore their interests and inputs when analysing and interpreting the outcome. For this reason, Glaser (2002)

argues that the researcher's personal preferences must be treated as a variable as it is an element which could bias data interpretation.

For this study, this research began with the intention of providing assistance to SMEs in approaching the market in TEs. The first perception was thought of by involving the marketing consultants' recommendations and related literature. However, at the stage of the literature review the researcher found many concepts that could assist, among all, the concepts of EO and EM were more practical and appropriate to consider and investigate. This is because both concepts have been found to be effective in increasing the performance and the outcome of SMEs (e.g. see Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Stokes, 2000). Therefore, every firm can increase its own marketing outcome without any of the associated costs of advice from consultants. For this reason, this study changed its aim to investigate both concepts to be applied to assist SMEs to approach the market more effectively.

At the data collection and participant selection stage, the researcher introduced criteria to select participants. These criteria were discussed in detail in section 3.6.5. the sampling strategy. In short, the researcher implemented two sampling strategies, snowball sampling and self-selection sampling in order to ensure that the selection of participants was based on a rationale. A combination of both strategies and the selection criteria ensured a minimised level of bias and the trustworthiness of the data generated is high. Finally, within the data analysis stage, the researcher identified the approach of the analysis and listed the general themes and codes before starting the classification of citations. This was also discussed in detail in section 3.8. concerning data

analysis. All these steps were designed to reduce the involvement of the researcher and to increase the trustworthiness of the obtained results.

3.11. Trustworthiness of the Results

Trustworthiness is the criterion that some scholars use to assess the quality of the qualitative research (Bryman and Bell, 2015). According to Carson et al. (2001) gaining validity in qualitative research is based on the dimensions of the term trustworthiness which are credibility, dependability and conformability. However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) added one additional dimension which is transferability. In qualitative interviews, these terms address a number of issues. Credibility which is related to data sufficiency, in which data should represent logical links between the claim and the method of data collection (Silverman, 2010). Dependability which is concerned with showing that the process undertaken in the study is logical, traceable and documented (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). Transferability reflects the notion of generalisability within qualitative research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In this sense, Denscombe (2010) uses the term transferability to show the extent to which application of the same research process will lead to similar findings. Conformability is related to linking the data with the findings and interpretations in a meaningful way (Eriksson and Kovalainen, 2016). These dimensions were apparent in this research and the process that this study used has met these dimensions at the different stages of the research.

Many steps have been taken to increase the trustworthiness of the data collection and analysis in this study. Initially, the researcher began with a clear aim and objectives for this study which can reflect the possible outcome of the

data. In addition, a separate section on reflexivity and the role of the researcher is also available. The reflexivity section illustrates every different action or change in the process which has been taken by the researcher in order to overcome issues faced during the research process. In the data collection stage, the researcher ensured strict listing of participants before moving to the empirical work. Finally, a transparent procedure was demonstrated for data analysis and the coding system which have been applied.

3.12. Chapter Summary

This chapter has explained the methodological approach which has been followed in this thesis. It began by demonstrating the philosophical approach which underpins this study. Specifically, it has highlighted and justified the choice of selecting the subjective dimension, interpretivist epistemology and the inductive reasoning approach to theory formation. Moreover, this chapter has emphasised the methods used in the field work. For example, the method of inquiry was qualitative, and the data collection technique was semi-structured interviews. This chapter has also identified other practical issues such as, sampling strategy, interview settings and the development of the interview question guide was also demonstrated.

In addition, the chapter also explained the rationale behind selecting the context of the research. In short, the country of Saudi Arabia is passing through a once-in-a-lifetime transition period to enable the country to become a diverse economy that is less dependent on oil. This has made the context promising for deriving new insights about EO and EM in such periods. Moreover, the data analysis technique was clarified and a thematic analysis was considered as an

effective technique to analyse the interview transcripts. The chapter also identified the ethics associated with this research, its inherent reflexivity and the trustworthiness of the data. Each selection in the methodology process has been justified by using similar examples from previous work or utilising arguments from the literature. The next chapter will present the findings from the semi-structured interviews which were conducted on a one-to-one basis with entrepreneurs, managers and marketing consultants of SMEs in SA.

Chapter 4: Findings - The Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Orientation

4.1. Introduction

The findings from the empirical work carried out in this study are divided in two main chapters. This chapter will demonstrate the main findings related to the antecedents of EO. In addition, it will evaluate other behavioural elements that are considered entrepreneurial in SMEs during transition periods. Then chapter 5 will provide some practical elements related to EM in SMEs during transition periods and suggest how these practices could enhance SMEs' effectiveness when approaching the market.

Twenty-nine (n29) entrepreneurs were interviewed separately from four different sectors. These were retail, food, services and business consultation. The sample was split between the three main cities in Saudi Arabia, which are Riyadh, Jeddah and Damam. Participants were carefully selected based on the criteria mentioned in the methodology chapter. Interviews were conducted face to face and voice recorded. Then every interview was transcribed word by word and analysed based on themes and categories. Classifications of participants were as follows.

4.1.1. Participants Information

| Sector | Business Type | Name | Category | Years on this Business |
|--|-----------------------|------|-----------------|------------------------|
| Service | Media | A.A | Small | 5 Years |
| | Media | T.S | Medium | 11 Years |
| | Technology | M.O | Small | 5 Years |
| | Technology | F.F | Medium | 18 Years |
| | Gym | B.S | Medium | 13 Years |
| | Hospitality | N.M | Small | 6 Years |
| Food | Restaurants | F.T | Medium | 5 Years |
| | Restaurants | A.T | Small | 8 Years |
| | Restaurants | M.S | Medium | 8 Years |
| | Restaurants | T.H | Small | 5 years |
| | Restaurants | M.B | Small | 7 Years |
| | Cafes | H.Q | Medium | 9 Years |
| | Restaurants | E.H | Small | 5 Years |
| | Cafes | B.J | Small | 5 Years |
| | Deserts | A.M | Small | 5 Years |
| Retail | Optical | H.N | Medium | 18 Years |
| | Flowers | A.D | Medium | 5 Years |
| | Furniture | T.R | Medium | 10 Years |
| | Clothing | L.N | Medium | 13 Years |
| | Building Materials | H.B | Medium | 6 Years |
| | Restaurants Materials | M.S | Small | 5 Years |
| Business and Marketing Consultation | Business | M.M | Private/small | 8 Years |
| | SMEs | T.K | Governmental | 10 Years |
| | SMEs | M.J | Governmental | 20 Years |
| | Marketing | H.K | Private/small | 8 Years |
| | Data Specialist | E.K | Private/small | 10 Years |
| | Business | A.T | Private/ Medium | 8 Years |
| | Marketing | H.A | Private/ Medium | 20 Years |
| | Marketing | A.G | Private/small | 10 Years |

Table 4. 1. Classifications of participants, Author (2020)

As identified in chapter 3, semi-structured interviewing was used to collect data based on several themes which had been identified earlier from the literature. These themes mainly considered terms around the areas of marketing for SMEs, entrepreneurial orientation, entrepreneurial marketing, transition economies and marketing as practice.

The structure of the findings and analysis chapters are as follows. Following this introduction, section 4.2. will illustrate the antecedents and other related behaviours that lead to EO. After that, section 4.3. will classify the entrepreneurial dimensions required in TEs. The following section will highlight several restrictions of successful enterprises. After that, section 4.5. will demonstrate some contextual findings and other cultural elements that have an influence on the formulation of EO. Section 4.6. will evaluate 'how' and 'which' entrepreneurial behaviours can enhance marketing activity outcomes for SMEs and what factors affect their application. Then, Chapter 5 will follow, and it will determine and evaluate actual examples of EM for SMEs in TEs. Finally, the second part of data analysis will follow in Chapter 6 which is the discussion part, where linkage, evaluation and synthesis between existing literature and the empirical findings will be demonstrated in detail.

4.2. The Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Orientation

4.2.1. "Passion" Underlies Entrepreneurial Orientation

It was clearly seen that 'passion' is one of the bases of entrepreneurial behaviours and it is the first component to consider as an antecedent that leads to EO due to the emphasis that this element has from the participants. It has been mentioned by twenty-two (n22) entrepreneurs and four (n4) consultants

and categorised as a major component that underlies EO. For example, a serial entrepreneur who owns several enterprises nowadays said:

“At the beginning anything you want to do you have to believe in it. That belief builds passion and dedication because if you don’t have this belief, you would easily give up at the first problem you face. In fact, passion and belief goes parallel” (F. F.)

It was also seen as a source of consolidating ideas and inventions in the mind of the entrepreneur. For example, L. N. initiated a successful idea to redefine thobes (the traditional dress in the region). His idea was seen as a very strange move within society when he established his first boutique ten years ago. People used to consider only one design of thobe with no variations. He declared:

“You need to follow your passion and not hesitate or feel embarrassed. Maybe the idea you have will become a famous product or service one day. So, follow your passion and work in a field that you love. Forget about any social influence.” (L. N.)

“Insistence, passion and loving what I’m doing are the factors which help me in generating new marketing ideas. Because you are following a certain path, you see many new things, you learn, you fail, and you succeed. So, this is how I generate new ideas in marketing or in the market.” (M. B.)

“The idea came to me because this is something that I’m passionate about. If you are passionate about something, you will become creative at it in every stage of its process.” (M.S.)

Apparently, the need for passion arises when economies fluctuate. The reason for this appears to be that entrepreneurs need more dedication to work during such periods. Adomako et al. (2016) suggest that it is the most valuable resource in dynamic environments. One of the participants declared:

“There is nothing that supports your business these days, you have to face all the obstacles by yourself. You have to have passion and faith in the path you’ve decided to follow.” (M. B.)

However, too much passion and optimism can create several problems and could cause the firm to lose money. An entrepreneur who owns a media agency worked on a project with a famous airline, spending too much effort and money aiming to sign a worthy contract with them based on their request. They ended up cancelling the campaign and he could not sue them because he did not want to lose such a potentially important client in the future. He said:

“Passion is important if you are a business owner, but too much passion is wrong.” (A. A.)

“Disappointment is one factor that often pulls an entrepreneur back. I’m a very positive person and this is one of the traits that I have but it might also result in negative outcomes as well. But overall you need to be optimistic and have that balance to distinguish to what extent you need to be optimistic but not stupid. If you cannot manage to attain this balance yourself, you should look for a partner who is not very optimistic, so he can compensate for your optimism” (L. N.)

So, the entrepreneur should strike a balance between passion and too much passion to secure the financial status of the firm. This could be in the form of overlooking or overthinking an opportunity or even by overestimating or underestimating one.

4.2.2. Relevant Work Experience and Background

Another very important component which was cited by entrepreneurs is work experience and background. In their meta-analysis, Unger et al. (2011) concluded that entrepreneurial success is positively related to human capital. The attributes of human capital in this regard include, experience, knowledge, skills and education. Gabrielsson and Politis (2012) found that the breadth of functional work experience allows individuals to generate new business ideas. These two components have been mentioned in every interview as being important. Their importance is related to the overall experience of doing a job inside the market, so the individual becomes more familiar with how work is performed, what the legal issues are surrounding businesses and how the market is shaped.

“After 20 years’ experience, I know exactly how to do things with lower cost, minimum liabilities and with the greatest impact.”
(F.F.)

“I worked for 8 years in the engineering field, and a similar period in human resources. Then I decided to work full time on something that I really liked and was passionate about, which is restaurants and food.” (E. H.)

It is also important to gain some experience in the field that you are going to work in. Many entrepreneurs have noticed this including a partner with four others who have a business that did not get to succeed after many attempts, he highly values experience by saying:

“We decided to open our business after doing all the necessary research, but I think we made mistakes. Firstly, there were four partners with financial and business development backgrounds but none of us came from the food industry. We did everything correctly in theory, but it seems that there was a lot of experience that needed to be learned and understood clearly from the food industry. Secondly, we could not figure out what sort of competency we have so we can try and emphasis on, to encourage customers to come again. This includes taste, atmosphere, price and product, we couldn’t figure it out.” (A. T.)

Others have said that with experience you can sustain your business by not making mistakes that inexperienced investors make. This experience includes every detail in the process of running the business.

“I spend lots of time learning about the dirty work in this business. I believe that for any entrepreneur to succeed they must know everything about their business. Yes, no one can know everything, but they must have sufficient knowledge to enable their business to grow successfully.” (M.S.)

“I feel that whoever has experience in our sector can really benefit because in service, especially in hospitality, you have not to make mistakes.” (N.M.)

4.2.3. Volunteering and Social Serving formulates Entrepreneurial Orientation

Eight (n8) entrepreneurs have mentioned the role that voluntary and social work plays in formulating their EO. They are basically the intention of the entrepreneur to work for the society voluntarily to improve the status of other people who face problems in certain areas of their lives. They believe that this has an impact on their personality in two main aspects. Firstly, it trains them to be patient, as they spend time and effort without generating any tangible rewards. Secondly, it teaches them to make use of their time as they need to organise their work time and time for other social activities, they are involved in, plus any other family commitments. They believe that had an impact on their way of thinking when they opened their own businesses especially in the early days when they worked without generating many sales.

“Many people think that any business owner must have certain managerial skills and a plan. But I realised that one very important part of formulating an entrepreneur mindset is engaging in social activities and voluntary work. An individual, by working in these sectors, develops patience because they work for free.” (A. A.)

“I do believe that voluntary work has strengthened my entrepreneurial orientation for example, by being patient,

accepting risks and also networking. But, this might also be a reason why I am careful about conducting a marketing campaign because voluntary work has taught me a lot and by knowing all the wrong-doings happening in society including bad driving and bad behaviour etc... it is not easy to discard your social responsibility and not to include a message through your marketing campaign to raise awareness in areas like driving or positive manners.” (A. T.)

Another group of entrepreneurs formed a consultation group to provide mentoring and advisory services for new ventures to assist entrepreneurs in overcoming difficulties in the early days. They think this is part of their entrepreneurial obligations to provide this sort of assistance.

“We identified a problem recently that most new initiatives are struggling with a lot so, me and my partners and some friends who have experience in SMEs and new ventures decided to organise bootcamps in three or four cities around the Kingdom. We did sort of mentoring and advised the participants, which we consider them as potential entrepreneurs, to plan and work more effectively. It is absolutely free, and I think it is part of our entrepreneurial obligations to help and guide them.” (M.O.)

“I believe in one thing and that might be because of my Islamic background, I don’t know if this is right or wrong, I think entrepreneurs play a major role in delivering social values and activities for the sake of others because they are good at such things given the fact that they have their own successful

businesses. I mean here the successful ones. So, for me, one very important basics of successful entrepreneurs must be his/her level of social engagement.” (M.S.)

4.2.4. “Need” As A Component

According to Plato the Greek philosopher, necessity is the mother of invention. It is clear that intention towards entrepreneurship increases when need is high or when there is a problem that needs to be solved. Need might come about in different ways, social requirements, financial need, employment or even internal desires. This component was clearly observed during the empirical work of this study. Before the transition period, jobs were available, government support for unemployed was offered, and the economic status in general was healthy. Since April 2016, when the government initiated its transition plan, things have changed. According to the Saudi Patent Office, the number of new patents registered at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), has increased to 664 in 2017 compared to previous years which was 517 in 2016, 341 in 2015, 281 in 2014 and 219 in 2013. In addition, the number of new enterprises has remained almost the same in the last three years at around eighty thousand new enterprises per year. Despite the aggressive implementation of policy and the introduction of new fees and a new taxation system, and the closure of many illegal or what known as ‘shadow enterprises’, it is clear that “need” is a major component that leads to EO (n9). According to H. N. who owns an optician boutique which managed to expand to 18 branches in ten years, he used to face a problem when he was a child. He declared:

“The reason behind this business is that my peers at school used to make fun of me because of my glasses. After I grew up I realised that there is not much choices if you want to purchase a pair of glasses. Obviously, this realisation developed my passion to explore more about the optician business and I used to visit every shop when I travelled abroad with my family.”

(H.N.)

Another example is to achieve an internal desire, such as personal success. For instance, two separate entrepreneurs (n2) resigned from executive level jobs and gave up a high salary to realise their internal desires to establish their own businesses. They said:

“I worked for 15 years as an employee. My salary was higher than the return I got in the first three years when I established my own business. My standard of living went down because of the step I took. But this was all about my desire, I like to take risks to satisfy my desires, this is my personality even when I travel I go to unusual places and do unusual activities.” (E. H.)

“I never regretted my decision to leave my job. It's true that I was mentally and psychologically comfortable when I was an employee but now I feel proud of myself for achieving this success.” (F.T.)

Financial need was not among the top factors identified by participants especially in a country where people value jobs and make sustainable incomes from them. However, it was mentioned by three (n3) entrepreneurs who came

to explore their ability after passing through financial hardship. The following account is an example of a successful entrepreneur who owns an enterprise that manages electronic payments and deals with major retailers in the country.

“I was a student in New Zealand in 2008. My sponsorship came to an end and I wanted to stay to complete my studies. I found myself without an income and I decided to work on applications development. I worked with a New Zealand partner and we formed a small company. I worked there for five years then I decided to come back home. I established this enterprise without any hesitation within one year of my arrival.” (M.O.)

4.2.5. Working in areas of your interest

Successful entrepreneurs often work in areas they are interested in because they believe it allows them to be more creative. According to E. H. who owns a couple of restaurants and who used to have a high position as a director of Human Resource Department in a big international company said:

“For any entrepreneur to succeed, I always advise people to work on something that they really love, and that people like.”
(E. H)

In addition, working in an area which entrepreneurs are interested in provides a level of confidence because they are familiar with every aspect of that area. This level of confidence reduces the potential risks and increases the aggressiveness towards the market. F. F. declared this by saying:

“We didn’t have any concerns about who our target customers were because we believed in the idea and we were familiar with what was required for the business to succeed.” (F. F.)

So, it is as important as any other element for an entrepreneur to work in the area they see themselves as an expert in. There are also some other behavioural components which were identified by many of the participants.

4.2.6. Other Behavioural Elements

Participants have also mentioned other behavioural elements such as self-confidence and self-commitment. These behavioural traits allow entrepreneurs to overcome any difficulties in periods of slow economic growth. Self-confidence, which is also called self-efficacy, has been defined in this domain as the entrepreneur’s perception of their abilities and skills to either establish their own business or to innovate throughout an existing business’s life (Wilson et al., 2007). In addition, Fink et al. (2008, p. 430) define self-commitment as “the willingness of individuals to commit to cooperation with a partner without the safety net of controls or sanction mechanisms”. Other behavioural elements were also noted by other entrepreneurs including discipline and patience. Discipline is defined as being able to identify a clear path and strategy for the business and to invest every effort to achieve it. It also means punctuality and the ability to fulfil every obligation and promise.

“I think self-confidence, which means total belief in what you are doing, is the main thing that could help you in overcoming any setbacks or downturns in the early days.” (L. N.)

“An individual who wants to succeed as an entrepreneur should have three main characteristics: 1) commitment, 2) discipline and 3) patience...” (A. A.)

4.2.7. Essential Soft Skills

As nations are different, educational systems are also different between one country and another. These differences are due to economic status, the national resources of the country, beliefs, and many other issues. Therefore, differences in education systems directly affect the professions of the people within the country. Consequently, the required soft skills for entrepreneurs are different in different countries and sometimes between different regions within the same country. In a study of EO in five different nations, Lee et al. (2011) suggest that EO is strongly influenced by different cultural contexts.

This section will identify the common management soft skills that are essential for entrepreneurs. However, it is worth noting that not every individual can easily gain the required knowledge that allows him/her to maintain their business. According to Lee et al. (2011) individuals with EO are people who often have sufficient knowledge on various subjects. As a result, entrepreneurs should acquire sufficient knowledge to enable them to run their businesses effectively. A. A. identified four skills which seem to be general requirements for any entrepreneur to succeed:

“...1) commitment, 2) discipline and 3) patience...These three points must be backed up with four skills; 1) you have to be a good salesperson, 2) you have to know the basics of finance, 3)

you have to at least know your market position and 4) you also have to know the governmental rules and regulations.” (A. A.)

EO was also seen by some experts in the field as an approach that can be learned. However, that is based on the individual’s ability to accept the challenges related to it. M. J. who is an SME business consultant, and has spent more than 20 years in the field, said:

“Having the initial idea is one part, and it might be small. To build a business, first you must have a saleable product. Then to sustain the business, you need other soft skills like, marketing, leadership, HR, purchasing, etc. So, it is not just about the initial idea. The big effort comes after the idea.” (M. J.)

“An entrepreneur must be a problem solver, designer, thinker, negotiator, a people person and must have what we call grit, which is a combination of perseverance and patience and some other elements. Number six is that they must be stingy. What I mean by this is that they must not spend money unless they really have to.” (T.K.)

Another element was stated by three (n3) entrepreneurs who seem to have a sustainable firm in this period. They believe this element has brought commitment and reduced their financial liabilities. This element was the ability of the entrepreneur to form a team.

“When we started our business, we split the whole entity into shares, so everyone, whether an investor or an employee, had a share in the company. That brought about a sense of

responsibility in every individual working in the company. I think this was one of the most important factors that lies behind our success. This has also helped in this period because we need to exert more effort, so we all do. We also need to reduce the financial liabilities on us and we have this, because you know we share profit and loss based on our shares.” (M.O.)

All the above-mentioned components, which have been highlighted as antecedents that underlies EO for the individual entrepreneurs, are essential. The framework below (Figure 4.1.) is a summary of these antecedents that leads to EO and consists of two components based on perceptions provided by participants. The following section identifies some applied and practical skills that were also considered essential techniques for entrepreneurs to overcome transition periods.

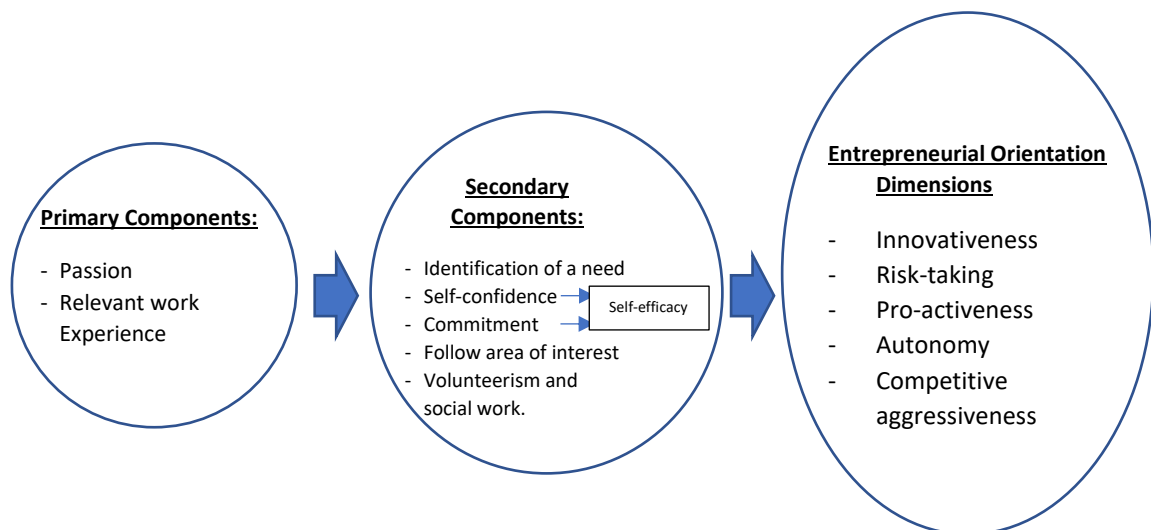


Figure 4. 1. The Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Orientation, Author (2020)

4.3. Entrepreneurial Dimensions during Transition Economies

Governmental transition plans often disturb and reshape existing and stable markets. The context used for this study was Saudi Arabia as it is experiencing one of the biggest transformation periods in its history. This transition is resulting in many changes including, regulations, social and economic. Entrepreneurs in such periods are required to utilise certain skills to assist them in overcoming such periods. The main two skills are flexibility and the ability to adapt promptly to the changes happening in the market.

It is clear that the ability to adapt and be dynamic or flexible in the face of change is often attributed to successful entrepreneurs. Those are the ones who are able to adapt to the frequent changes which are caused by the government or by the market. These consequences are mostly negative and have been identified by participants as fluctuations in sales, and the introduction of new policies and taxes. As a result, customers' behaviour is changing, and their purchasing power has been reduced. Therefore, entrepreneurs in periods of unstable economies - which is in this case a cause of a transition plan - must adapt to these changes very quickly and appropriately.

“The market was in a state of prosperity, and the prevailing perception was rapid income. Now the situation has changed and many entrepreneurs have closed their businesses because they do not know how to adapt to the new market conditions.” (A. T.)

“Because of the frequent and rapid changes in the regulations, we are not only working with suppliers and focusing on satisfying

our clients. We also need to make great efforts to try and adapt to these changes.” (A. A.)

Ability to adapt promptly was also seen as a source of new ideas and inventions. These new ideas might be in the product or the service themselves or within the process of producing and delivering them.

“In this period, the dynamism of the entrepreneur is the only factor that could create inventions: inventions in products and services, cost reductions, or adoption of new technology, many things.” (H. K.)

The framework below shows the differences between EO dimensions which have been identified by scholars and the dimensions required in TEs. All participants (n29) have emphasise the importance of being flexible during this period. This flexibility can be seen in their attempts to adapt promptly to the continuous and rapid changes made by policy makers. However, entrepreneurs also show risk averse behaviour during this period due to many reasons such as a shortage of cash and uncertainty. For instance, F.T. who owns a breakfast restaurant that expanded to five branches around the country, among eleven others (n11) has explicitly shown risk averse orientation during this period.

“I’m definitely a risk taker, I know that, but the most difficult part when you take a risk is to know when you should step back or wait for a while. For example, there is a lot of potential in this period and I have a very established and sustainable business but given the fact that the economy is slowing down due to the

transition plan effect, I should also slow down to see what happens.” (F.T.)

In addition, all entrepreneurs (n21) have shown less competitive aggressiveness behaviour by never mentioning competition and also by presenting some examples of strong collaboration with competitors to leverage the overall costs associated with operation and logistics. An example of this is an entrepreneur who failed in three businesses and is now having a successful soft opening for his fourth one. He mentioned that aggressive orientation in the market will most probably lead to failure by saying.

“I came to this conclusion after having three failed businesses. It is not always wise to try to be the first to take advantage of an opportunity before others do. The most important thing is to establish your business properly with the least possibility of failure so that you know exactly what you are doing. I think there is always an opportunity that is related to your idea but try not to be rash, think, plan very well, study the market properly and then open even if it takes a longer time.” (M.S.)

“Entrepreneurial dimensions are important, and they come together in the first days of the business. But you know in this period what you need more is to reshape and restructure the firm from inside. You don’t need to take any risks, you must not be aggressive with competitors because you are all in the same boat - you want to survive. In our business it is difficult to become automated because creativity is never going to be automated so

different stages of the business require different dimensions.”

(T.S.).

The framework below (Figure 4. 2.) compares between the dimensions of EO as defined by scholars with the dimensions required in TEs as identified by the participants.

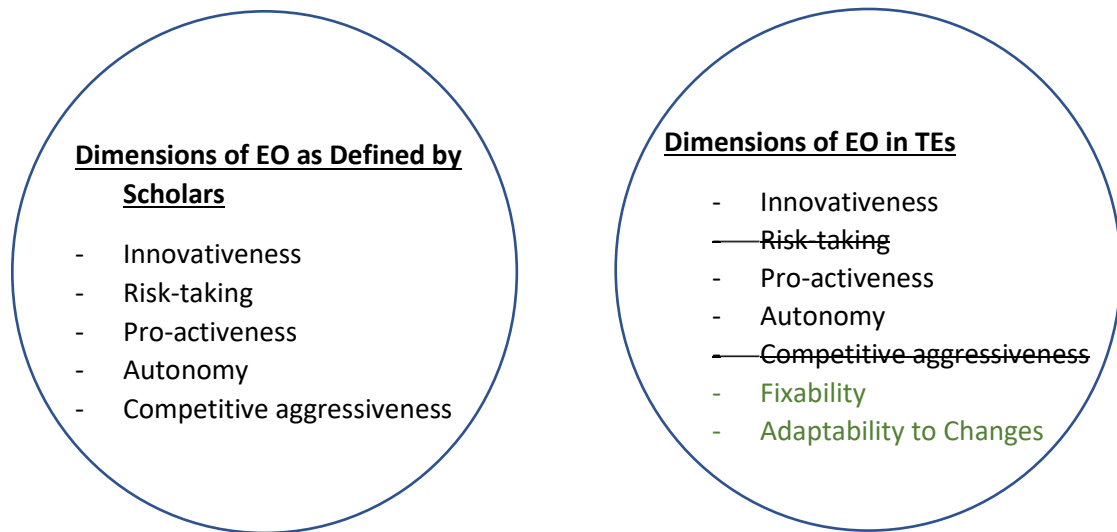


Figure 4. 2. Entrepreneurial Orientation Dimensions during Transition Economies, Author (2020)

4.4. Restrictions of Successful Enterprises

Although many practical elements were identified by participants to sustain SMEs in downturn economies, it is also vital to determine what restricts these enterprises from success. Identifying such elements can lead to a better understanding of what required by entrepreneurs when they seek growth and sustainability in their enterprises. One very important element is that the entrepreneur must become totally free to run the business.

“I opened the first store while I was an employee for another company. I realised in the first six months that the work would

never continue like this because you need to think and work on everything by yourself. After the first six months I decided to resign from my job and make myself free to manage the store. Now, after almost 18 years, that business turned into a company that owns 14 stores in the Kingdom and until now we are the best optician boutique in the market.” (H. N.)

“I opened my first branch while I was an employee in a bank. In fact, if you do this you will certainly reach a point where you should leave the job and turn all your efforts towards your own business. Otherwise, the business will not proceed.” (F.T.)

One of the participants shares the same thoughts but gives a solution for being an employee and owning a business. His solution is to become a silent partner by investing money and providing some advice without taking an active role.

“It is impossible to be both an employee and have your own business, unless you are a silent partner. But there must be a fully dedicated person in the business who shares the same interest as you.” (E. H.)

Furthermore, another important constraint for SMEs to sustain is that entrepreneurs always think about diversifying their capital and this seemed wrong based on the view of many entrepreneurs (n14). Two reasons were behind some of them taking this approach before. Firstly, they thought it was a safer approach to secure themselves if one of the businesses went bankrupt. Secondly, the wrong perception of profit and that is to gain fast returns by

having two or even three business units. However, this appears to be not so effective especially in such periods of TE.

"I know many people are diversifying their capital, including myself, I have three business units. But, diversifying your business into more than one project is the biggest mistake these days. The market now requires speciality and our efforts need to be focused in one direction to succeed." (M. B.)

"I think what restricts entrepreneurs is their belief relating to diversifying their capital. I know why people think this but imagine you open a burger restaurant and then you gain some profits and you use them to set up a breakfast lounge. Claiming that you are good at restaurants. It shouldn't be like this, I believe if you are good at something, try to improve it and work on strengthening your position in the market." (M.S.)

4.5. Cultural Influences on Formulating Entrepreneurial Orientation

4.5.1. Entrepreneurship Culture before the Transition Period

The culture of doing business in Saudi Arabia before the transition period was to some extent different from many other economies in two main aspects. Firstly, people used to establish their own businesses while they were employed elsewhere. So, they combined a paid job with running a private enterprise. That led to the second aspect where they used to hire people to run their businesses, mostly foreigners, as they did not have sufficient time to manage their enterprises. This had many disadvantages in the overall economy

of the country in terms of lower quality of products and services, a high unemployment rate and overall a shadow economy. A 'shadow economy' means a high number of enterprises that produce very little output in the overall economy. Many entrepreneurs experienced both periods including L. N. who has been in the market for 18 years:

"I think we live in two different times, totally different. The economy before had many distortions. Perhaps the noticeable one was the shadow economy, an example of this is a business set to work in a certain sector and behind the curtain the owner works in another one. Some of these businesses were illegal and some were fine. Despite the legality of some of them it was damaging the economy to a great extent." (L. N.)

Another participant also stated some general attitudes relating to what people feel they deserve to be given by the state. In fact, this perception is gradually disappearing.

"We have reached a point where people think it is their right to get a house, a good life with their family, a decent job and a high salary without putting in any effort. That just made us dependent on the state and discouraged us from building and inventing for our country. Now it is different, people have started to believe that, based on your work and effort, you will gain what you deserve." (H. N.)

This culture has produced few creative entrepreneurs and business owners. An absence of competition has led to less creativity and fewer

innovations in marketing activities in general and product/service development in particular. A. T. among many others have emphasised this by saying:

“Before, what we used to do was just open a store in any new mall and customers will come straight away. As I told you there was not much competition and people used to spend a lot. Now competition is stronger, and people are more financially aware.”

(A.T.)

Another important element which is considered crucial in this study is marketing, which used to gain less attention from entrepreneurs in the period before transition. It was considered important but high sales covered areas which needed to be developed and improved. An entrepreneur who owns a fast food chain which grew rapidly until he owned five restaurants during the pre-transition period said:

“We didn’t consider these steps, brand revamping and franchising, because the market before this period didn’t reach that level of professionalism. Now everything has changed, we must do everything correctly or we are out.” (M. B.)

4.5.2. Entrepreneurship Culture after the Transition Period

Saudi Arabia’s transition phase has caused many changes in the culture of doing business. Entrepreneurs think they live in two different eras, businesses were mostly doing traditional trading nothing more. This was noted by many of the participants (n8).

“We as Saudi citizens are now going back to the correct path, in terms of social and economic aspects. At a certain point in time, we got fat and lazy and we lost innovation and developments. We relied only on trading and that’s it. So, we need to go back to normal and work hard as every other nation is doing.” (H. N.)

Another participant emphasised more by saying:

“You must be aware of how most business owners here conduct business, they don’t like to do the dirty jobs in their businesses. But now they have to, they need to revise their business model and be involved in all aspects of the business, get their feet back on the ground and start correcting the situation.” (T. S.)

Another important element for entrepreneurs these days is that the economy has become fairer, and so is the competition. Corruption and networks used to play major role in success or failure before.

“One of the best things happening in the market is what most business owners are expecting which is that new players are coming into the market in every sector. Corruption was everywhere before and it was not easy to start a business without connections, now things are better.” (A. A.)

One participant who is a partner in a small scalable business which has expanded into 20 cities within the last six months also owns a firm that offers digital marketing solutions based on live and instant data analysis. He called the current period “disruptive” and he summarised the changes that are happening socially and culturally these days by saying:

“I think the young generation, which makes up more than 70% of the total population of the country, will make a big change and have a huge influence on the market trends. They are more aware now and more technologically oriented, less conservative and less financially capable than the older generation. Also, the plan of empowering women and making the country open to foreign investment and international tourism is also changing our cultural perception. All of these points have led us into this period which I call “disruptive”. Many businesses will die, and many others will appear. My advice to every business owner is to consider technology as a first element because the new generation is addicted to technology and they will be your future customers.” (H.K.)

Having all of this happening in the economy has led to more cautious behaviour on the part of entrepreneurs and business owners in the country. Examples of cost efficiency and quality improvement are being noticed these days. Most of the participants (n22) are noticing these elements and trying to consider them in their daily base operations. H. N. is one among them who shut down four branches after the transition plan due to cost and service delivery issues. He said:

“The treatment on the economy now is radical, the government used to implement temporary treatment plans, but this one is different. I know for sure many will suffer, including myself but it is the best choice, the sooner the better. At least business owners nowadays have started to think more about cost

efficiency and other factors that raise quality and reduce waste.”

(H. N.)

“Me as a business owner literally changing my skin; this word could summarise many things. I’m changing the procurement method, changing some employees, the accounting system, and I’m also revamping the brand. This is all to face the storm which I think has still not reached its peak.” (M. B.)

4.5.3. Main Cultural Topics

4.5.3.1. *Different Meanings to Entrepreneurial Dimensions*

Some findings are suggesting that entrepreneurial dimensions seem different between different economies. These differences might be due to social, economic and cultural reasons. The majority of scholars have agreed on five entrepreneurial dimensions which are innovativeness, risk-taking, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness and autonomy (Miller, 1983; Covin and Slevin, 1989; Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). During the interviews it was observed that entrepreneurs in economies such as Saudi Arabia, which are considered religious, conservative and wealthy economies, have different perspectives on some of these dimensions. For instance, entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia do not risk food or shelter but social status. So, entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia cannot be compared with entrepreneurs from poor economies who have no choice but to rely on their enterprises to survive. This perspective might be a consequence of many cultural factors as listed below.

4.5.3.2. *Governmental Support*

The government of SA initiated the ambitious Vision 2030 in 2016. One of the major objectives is to empower SMEs and to raise their contributions to the GDP. The government has initiated many initiatives that should make this goal achievable. One of them was the initiation of the General Authority for SMEs as a separate entity to deal with their issues. They provide support through financing, mentoring, assisting with legal processes, training and guidance towards making SMEs achieve the internationalisation of their products and brands. Many SMEs have benefited recently from these initiatives. There is a strong move now towards empowering SMEs and increasing their contribution to the overall economy. This case might be separate and cannot be seen in many other economies apart from the Gulf region due to the capability of the governments to support and provide such initiatives.

“The government is very advanced and supportive now. Before we used to take too much time in finishing any governmental related issue. But now we can do almost everything online. This helped me a lot in minimising the costs related to these issues and in speeding up some other jobs as well.” (E. H.)

However, entrepreneurs are still facing uncertainty from the government side as they believe the overall changes are very severe on them. Thus, the economy cannot afford all of these changes at once.

“To be honest, I can’t see anything promising in the market. We are entering two years, 2019 and 2020 which I think will be the

worst in the economic history of the country. More taxes are coming and more changes in policies, basically leading to economic instability.” (M. B.)

“We still need more changes especially in the court system. As you know our law is based on Sharia law (Islamic law) and most of our judges are not fully aware of commercial issues and conflicts. They either need to teach them some real time examples or they need to have a different system for judges who deal with commercial issues. We are in the middle of a case that has until now taken us more than four years and we are not able to have access to our money that we invested because of this issue. So, our commercial court system is still not sophisticated enough to understand the nature of commercial cases.” (A. T.)

These contradictory views were general perceptions that most entrepreneurs have. Therefore, top authorities including ministries really need to consider the case of SMEs nowadays as they face a substantial drop in sales and extra fees are frequently being introduced. They need to communicate and present their initiatives to support SMEs as most of them are not aware enough about these initiatives.

4.5.3.3. Tribal Society

Saudi Arabia consists of tribes and extended families. Social ties are a very strong component in the Kingdom. This has helped entrepreneurs in two main ways. Firstly, entrepreneurs gain support from their families or tribes in

terms of purchasing their products or using their services regardless of the price or quality. The other way is through funds and financial support to entrepreneurs from within their immediate families or from closer relatives. A. T. explains how his approach to the market using these social ties helped him succeed.

“The decision was made fast, I came up with the idea of establishing a fine dining burger restaurant with a local entity. All of the raw materials come from local farmers and people of the same city. They are all close relatives and know each other. Even when I expanded into other cities like Hail and Madinah, I stressed this concept to local people. So, they knew it was a good restaurant for sure but the most important position that gave me the edge is the perception that when you purchase from my restaurant then you are helping one of your cousins or relatives who are the local producers.” (A. T.)

“I felt this in our culture, once they see a local person working by himself on his/her enterprise, the community gives them full support and encouragement to help them to succeed.” (T.S.)

4.5.3.4. *Spiritual Links of Success or failure to God “Allah”*

Saudi Arabia is a 100% Muslim country and people there have strong faith in God “Allah”. Many entrepreneurs have linked their success or failure to God’s will. When they fail and have no explanation for the failure they say, “Allah didn’t want this to be continued”, when they succeed they say, “All praise goes to Allah”. So, in many cases people do not investigate their success or failure because they attribute it to Allah. However, successful entrepreneurs have

shown detailed explanations of how they succeeded or failed. This has had a major impact on establishing a proper ecosystem for entrepreneurs that could be built on through past examples of success and failure. One of the participants is the first to adapt “Le Churro” the Spanish dessert in the city of Jeddah and in the rest of the country. What is meant by adapting the idea is that he brought the machines that produce the outer layers of the dessert then he modified the fillings based on customers’ preferences in the region. He said:

“I don’t know what to say, I think all praise goes to Allah. We had our first store and then expanded into more than three branches in the city. Also, we opened our first branch in the city of Makkah and another branch even in another country, Jordan. I can’t really explain this success. Is it because of the taste, the product itself or something different?” (A. M.)

Another entrepreneur has linked his success primarily to “Allah” and some other principles of good manners based on Islamic teachings, he said:

“I think our success and increase in sales while most enterprises are facing troubles, is because we have been so fortunate and blessed by Allah. Plus, we built our model based on honesty and customer satisfaction.” (E. H.)

Although the issue of linking success or failure to faith has been noticed in many interviews, some entrepreneurs these days are trying to identify practical explanations if they succeed or fail. Here it is possible to distinguish between entrepreneurs who have enough knowledge to run the business and those who don’t have it. In addition, it classifies entrepreneurs who made use

of new regulations and technologies to support their enterprises and those who surrendered and linked their failure to faith.

4.6. Entrepreneurial Orientation as a Driver for Entrepreneurial Marketing

Entrepreneurs often think that they always consider the most applicable decision when planning their marketing, apparently this is not always the case. Almost twelve entrepreneurs (n12) stopped marketing activities during this period due to a lack of knowledge about marketing and the tactics to avoid any financial risks associated with its activities. This has been clearly noticed in the second part of each interview. Participants tend to show positive behaviour and a strong approach towards marketing. This was clear in the first section when the dialogue was general about EO and marketing activities. However, this orientation starts to get lower when approaching the second section of the dialogue, which is about EM in practice during transition periods. Only nine (n9) entrepreneurs out of twenty-one (n21) have shown strong and successful approaches to marketing during this period. The rest of the entrepreneurs gave up their marketing activities. Some of them have been using “social media influencers” for the sake of boosting sales regardless of any focus on the content or any calculations of ROI.

One of this study’s propositions is that marketing during hard times like transition periods is an exact assessment of entrepreneurs’ orientation towards marketing. This is because cash is low, policies are changing, purchasing power is low and usual marketing activities do not pay back. Therefore, successful practices of marketing must be present during these periods. In this

vein, a study revealed that EO dominates EM when EO acts as a multidimensional construct (Kilenthong et al., 2015). However, the study did not consider external environmental influencers such as the economic situation. This section will demonstrate findings about the relationship between EO and EM. By having entrepreneurs from SMEs in a context of a TE, the nature of this relationship is explored in-depth. The section begins with evaluating several cases of entrepreneurs who are not able to use marketing and the reason behind it.

4.6.1. The case when entrepreneurs are not able to apply marketing effectively

Marketing in SMEs is critical because most of these enterprises face difficulties in applying the appropriate strategy to reach out to customers. Transition periods, on top of this, affect the overall financial position of the firm as well as the purchasing power of its current and potential customers. As shown by more than half of the entrepreneurs, they have an adverse behaviour towards marketing activities during this period. The reason was basically because they do not have sufficient knowledge to deliver a successful marketing campaign from beginning to end. They also may fail in one or more steps when designing or executing the campaign. The participants have shared many examples such as a project which failed after three years in the market without gaining any returns on top of paying its financial obligations because the correct product was not chosen.

“I noticed that, there are some products that cannot be a standalone product for a business - even if you fully meet all marketing requirements.” (A. T.)

Another entrepreneur who thought having a branch inside a busy shopping mall would save him the cost of marketing the brand said.

“I opened my first branch inside a shopping mall in the food court. I thought by doing this I would be able to minimise the cost and to build the brand as shopping malls have a lot of traffic compared to street shops. But things did not go as expected.” (M.B.)

Although many entrepreneurs have approached the market with different strategies, they only succeed for a short period because they made their marketing plan without linking it to the overall strategy of the product. Many entrepreneurs have noted different examples of this as shown below.

“I failed twice because I don’t think I planned my marketing from day one. Marketing must start at the beginning because it is not possible to repair the damage by a single marketing campaign you conduct as a reactive response. You may reduce the impact but for a very short period.” (M.S.)

“Entrepreneurs tend to execute marketing campaigns through promotions or any other type, but they fail, they might succeed for some time, but this will never last long. The right thing is to refer back to your strategy and try not to go against your values and brand position.” (E. H.)

“One day we sponsored an event related to a famous team here. I think we did an excellent brand awareness campaign but when we looked at sales figures they had barely gone up. I think the reason for this was that we didn’t have enough stores because you know coffee shops are about convenience.” (H.Q.)

“We have a problem in executing marketing campaigns. Last week I had a call from a person who works in a big hospital. They did an SMS campaign for their newly established cosmetic clinic and they didn’t get the impact they aimed for. You know when I went to see how they executed the campaign, I found that they had sent SMSs to everyone in the data-base including the deceased.” (A.G.)

Another entrepreneur who diversified his capital into three different businesses, following the old saying ‘Don’t put all your eggs in one basket’. He regrets this approach of not concentrating his marketing on a single business by saying:

“For sure diversification affected me negatively. If I had saved money and effort to market just one of the three businesses, its market and financial position would be much better than having the three-combined projects.” (M. B.)

Even though many entrepreneurs knew the impact of marketing in general and during these periods in particular, they try to push sales in order to circulate cash as much as possible. A participant who owns a local fast food chain realised the importance of marketing recently and said:

“Unfortunately, I didn’t think about marketing properly. I realised the importance of marketing recently. I draw up a detailed yearly plan and a five-year overall plan now for marketing and we work on more cost driven marketing activities. I cannot think of innovative ideas because they are costly, now I concentrate on repetitive ones but with lower cost.” (M. B.)

In summary, entrepreneurs from different backgrounds who did not perform marketing in the past appeared to freeze their marketing activities during periods of transition. This has been noticed by twelve (n12) entrepreneurs who stopped thinking of marketing because of the impact they faced in terms of sales.

“In this period, we think mostly about increasing our sales from every existing point of sale. We cannot expand or even invest more in marketing because the future is still unpredictable.” (M.B.)

4.6.2. Entrepreneurs with a Reasonable Knowledge of Marketing

The other group of entrepreneurs have a proper marketing background. This group thinks marketing is one important function that assists in overcoming such periods and their consequences. Overall, entrepreneurs who conducted marketing and have had previous experience in marketing think it is essential and it is the way to survive during such periods. For example, a marketing consultant who receives calls on a daily basis from SME owners seeking help in marketing said:

“Lots of entrepreneurs find marketing difficult and they get zero return because they understand marketing as promotions only. Yes, we have a problem of understanding ‘Marketing’. Entrepreneurs don’t understand how to create the need, how to deliver value to customers at a profit and how to obtain the insight about the market and about their customers. This is why most entrepreneurs struggle with marketing.” (H. K.)

Good marketers do not only consider delivering the appropriate product or service. They go beyond this by creating the need for them. This need is created and publicised through a well-planned marketing strategy in parallel with other elements such as the strategy of the product, the firm’s vision and values.

“You don’t need to just create a product or a service, you should create a need for them first then build your business model and marketing plans based on this.” (L. N.)

“The most important aspect is that, you should know what the exact product or service is that you are promoting and what problems they are going to solve for customers.” (F.F.)

In addition, marketers should not believe in sales figures only, they often consider customer feedback and continued improvements. Five of the participants (n5) think that these two elements grant the firm a competitive edge.

“Whenever your sales increases, don’t think you are safe, try always to obtain customer feedback and undertake activities that make them engage with your brand.” (A. T.)

“I don’t over think competition. I’m aware of my competitors but I don’t think about them very much. I believe that, the continued improvements I make will give me the competitive advantage I’m looking for.” (E. H.)

Nevertheless, some entrepreneurs are making use of social media inappropriately. They gain awareness and they obtain some increase in sales after they execute some campaigns. However, they do not consider ROI, brand values, product strategy and appropriate content that serves the purpose of the campaign. This move was criticised by two entrepreneurs who managed to gain and maintain a strong position on social media. They said:

“One thing I’ve noticed is that, when people open their businesses, or they have some sort of hype (traffic), they forget the main values and goals. Instead they try to maintain their famous status on social media. By doing this they will sustain their business for some time but not for long, and they will soon go out of business. So, you need to think only about the core business because this is what will give you sustainability.” (F.T.)

“Influencers are a tactic, it should not come as a marketing strategy and this is what most entrepreneurs are unable to understand. Influencers will never create brand awareness, nor will they add any marketing value.” (A.G.)

In brief, it was clear that entrepreneurs with a reasonable amount of knowledge about marketing perform better during transition periods. This knowledge provides them with a level of confidence compared to others who are from different backgrounds such as finance or engineering. Despite both groups facing similar situations in terms of a drop in sales and changing policies, entrepreneurs with a marketing background have provided a more detailed explanation of marketing. Thus, they share some very interesting approaches towards the market which will be discussed in the next chapter. Therefore, it is certainly clear that EO may dominate EM but with certain components that interlink this relationship.

4.7. Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to demonstrate the first section of the findings provided by entrepreneurs. The intention was to present results in a narrative that could answer the research questions. The first section concerned the antecedents that leads to EO. Participants identified several components that could be included in the process. These components were characterised in two categories, one is the primary components category and the other is the secondary components category. This categorisation was based on the level of emphasis that entrepreneurs put on every component. For instance, passion, and experience are two components that were mentioned by every entrepreneur. On the other hand, self-confidence, self-commitment, identification of an internal need and working in an area of interest were components mentioned by different entrepreneurs but not by everyone.

The second section evaluated the effect of cultural influences on formulating EO. Participants shared their experiences between the two different periods, pre- and post-transition. This approach has assisted in developing a clear picture of the way entrepreneurs used to conduct business and how that changed after the introduction of the transition plan. In addition, this section identified some important cultural issues that are related to the studied context and how they affect, in a positive or negative way, entrepreneurial behaviour. Moreover, having all of this to hand has helped in identifying the most important dimensions that are relevant to entrepreneurs during economic transition periods. In the case of this study, two main dimensions were identified by entrepreneurs and they were firstly, flexibility, which means the extent to which entrepreneurs are able to change either the full strategy of the enterprise or part of it in order to be compatible with the changes occurring in the economy. Secondly, adaptability, which means the ability of the enterprise to make a correct and prompt change that responds to the changes in the market.

The last section of this chapter determined the extent to which EO works as an antecedent of EM. This was achieved through identifying and evaluating the number of successful marketing practices during transition periods and finding the link to their success. It was found that entrepreneurs who have a reasonable amount of knowledge of marketing or have undertaken marketing in their previous jobs had a more positive orientation towards it. Others who were more uncertain about what marketing could provide suspended their marketing activities. The next chapter concerns EM in SMEs where many of its practices are evaluated and verified.

Chapter 5: Findings - Entrepreneurial Marketing in Practice

5.1. Introduction

EM as a theoretical concept is a subject that has emerged in the literature to illuminate the interface between entrepreneurship and marketing studies (Sullivan Mort et al., 2012). It has been defined as the “*proactive identification and exploitation of opportunities for acquiring and retaining profitable customers through innovative approaches to risk management, resource leveraging and value creation*” (Morris et al., 2002). This definition was the outcome of several years of exploration of various possible dimensions and variables related to the concept. Linking this to practice has rarely featured in the academic literature. Nevertheless, any links between practice and theory should provide more clarity concerning the concept. Thus, this link should assess the effectiveness and weakness of some of its elements from a practical point of view.

This study responds to several calls from journals to develop the approach of linking practice and theory in marketing research (Kumar, 2017; Skálén and Hackley, 2011). Results in this section were constructed around a practice-based orientation with participants. This perspective was intended to explore the application of EM dimensions within SMEs in the studied context mainly by evaluating some actions related to marketing in these enterprises in terms of the impact created. Based on the above, this section will demonstrate the link between EM as a theoretical concept and its use in practice. It will evaluate EM and its dimensions from a practice-based perspective using the many responses given by entrepreneurs who participated in this study.

The section will begin with offering an explanation of what marketing looks like during transition periods. Then, a discussion is offered on the common and newly emerging dimensions of EM. The following section will highlight the restrictions of applying EM. Sections 5.2 and 5.3 will demonstrate essential marketing tools and strategies that need to be considered by entrepreneurs when overcoming the problem of approaching the market in transition periods of economies. Finally, a conceptualisation of the EM concept in SMEs in TEs is offered. To begin with, the first section below will demonstrate some practices of marketers in SMEs during transition periods.

5.1.1. Marketing during Transition Periods

Marketing during transition periods and downturn economies faces many obstacles such as a massive decrease in budget. Scholars have defined TEs as those economies which are changing from a centrally-planned system with a limited number of private enterprises to a system with more private ownership and a freer market (Kornai, 2000). In such economies, sales often fluctuate due to uncertainty, which requires intelligent marketing activities that stimulate purchasing. These activities must consider issues such as cost, campaign impacts and the capacity of the firm to deliver. Some may ask where elements such as product strategy or brand engagement lie. In such periods, not all participants have considered these factors. Some of them noted that product strategy and brand engagement require long term planning and a stable economy therefore they do not take them into much consideration. However, in transition periods sales drop dramatically and entrepreneurs often consider activities that can raise sales to inject some cash into the business.

Some entrepreneurs who conducted partnership campaigns where they provide their products or services in return for marketing activity offers a good example of the utilisation of resources during transition time. This example was seen from entrepreneurs who have good knowledge of marketing and who know how to negotiate and close deals.

“We are working nowadays on an activity program with our clients. We know that the economic situation is poor. Many companies are trying to maintain their relationships with their employees. So, we came up with an idea to bring employees from 10 -12 companies to a corporate event. In fact, these corporations paid a subscription fee to cover the cost of the event. I do not pay any costs; the worst scenario is that I will just cover my expenses. This will enable me to market my products without any costs. It has many benefits, public relations, networks, brand awareness, making use of waste resources - and it is also an additional source of income.” (A. A.)

“No one can ignore the drop in sales, I’m facing an almost 30% drop. But when it comes to marketing, I’ll give you one recent example. We became a platinum sponsor for a famous event that is worth 200 thousand Saudi Riyals. I didn’t pay a single Riyal. We made a partnership deal where I give them products (thobes) coupons in return, I believe they used these coupons as gifts. What I gained from this is that I killed two birds with one stone. I did a prestigious brand positioning campaign, I tried to solve some low production issues, I got a campaign worth 200

thousand SR for 1/3 of its price and that was the production cost of the products given away in exchange of the coupons.” (L. N.)

Other entrepreneurs (n9) are optimistic during this period and they have started to plan marketing and brand positioning for the next decade. It is true that sales figures are low but that allows the entrepreneurs to focus more on revamping their marketing and brand position. A couple of entrepreneurs who have stable sales have mentioned that they needed this period to make the required changes to the overall strategy, and marketing in particular. They think that with high sales and a healthy economy, SMEs rarely consider these longer-term options.

“I believe this is an excellent time to plan our next ten-year overall vision and our brand position in parallel with the governmental changes and the transition plan.” (L. N.)

In addition, seven entrepreneurs (n7) have raised a very important point with regards to marketing elements such as price, promotion and place. They think in this period it is not necessary to consider these elements, rather to work more on adding value through quality and excellent service.

“Marketing for SMEs is different from considering place, promotion, product and price. We are now talking about added value, speed of service and quality. Price is always an issue as well as how to promote our competencies to potential customers.” (T.S.)

On the other hand, as in the case of Saudi Arabia and maybe some other young economies, 70% of the total population are below 35 years of age.

Participants have emphasised the importance of looking at the overall split of age between people. By knowing this, entrepreneurs will be able to measure the tendency of adapting new ideas or products to potential customers. Almost every participant (n24) mentioned that the majority of the Saudi population are young, and they are able to adapt to any new ideas. Therefore, they consider this situation as a huge opportunity to approach the market in a new way where marketers who are able to create impact will succeed. But not every entrepreneur is able to bring something impactful.

“I think the younger generation, which makes up more than 70% of the total population of the country, will bring about a big change and will be a huge influence in terms of market trends.”
(H. K.)

“Digital and e-commerce are taking an increasing share of everything, advertising, trading etc... the adoption of this trend is easier in our economy because the majority here are below 35 years of age.” (F. F.)

In addition, creating the need for a product or service is critical, and this is where most entrepreneurs fail. Need must be considered when creating and executing marketing campaigns. Therefore, potential customers need to be made aware of what benefits this product or service would provide for them.

“I’m good at long term planning. I’m good at executing plans using the (MVP) minimum viable product model to ensure how to create and market the product with the minimum costs to satisfy the exact needs of my customers.” (F. F.)

“The first and the most important thing that marketers of SMEs need to be aware of is how people make their purchasing decisions. If they are able to identify this, then everything would follow on, including awareness, engagement, etc...” (H. K.)

Finally, successful examples of EM are when entrepreneurs go back to revise their brand position in the market. They then try to redefine their approach to marketing based on the changes which have occurred.

“After working ten years in the market, the gap is now very narrow with our competitors. So, we need to redefine our value proposition and our brand position to distinguish ourselves again.” (L. N.)

“If you look at our business model, we are basically wholesalers, without any warehouses, and our partners are the distributors whom we use as the warehouses. But having such a model, an application which sends happiness to people, changes the view of the business. Now we sell our products based on the service we provide, private, delivered, three clicks and your gift is sent. That is through the chain of partnerships we have created with flower shops around the country. In the end we all gain.” (F. F.)

5.1.1.2. Flexibility and Decision-Making in Marketing in SMEs

Flexibility and decision-making are two associated and very important practical elements that must be considered by SMEs in the transition period of economies. In TEs, government policy and operational cost are two

unpredictable elements due to frequent changes by policy makers. These changes cause high levels of uncertainty and have a profound effect on SMEs. The reason why both flexibility and timely decision-making are associated according to the participants is that, being flexible alone is not enough, flexibility requires decisions to be made rapidly in order to adapt promptly to the changes happening in the market. One entrepreneur thinks that the transition plan brought an opportunity which made it compulsory for them at that time to change the software they were using, which did not pay them back the amount invested.

“We changed our software twice; the first change was 6 years ago and the second was after the announcement of the transition plan. Because when we built our business model it wasn’t scalable, when we decided to expand we changed the business model and that required a change of software that fits our new vision.” (F. F.)

Another entrepreneur thinks that making a decision is not easy especially when it comes to staff redundancy or the closure of a branch, but it has to be made. He also thinks that not every person can make similar decisions, because people are not similar in their behaviours, emotions and mindsets.

“Sometimes these decisions are hard, it is like when you send one of your children to an orphanage, but you have to make your choice to survive. Two decisions were very difficult for me, but they had to be made. The first was the closure of three

branches and the second was as a result of this closure and involved the firing of ten employees.” (M. B.)

Finally, flexibility in providing customers with instant discounts also frequently appears. However, this requires a good knowledge of the market and the competition which seems to be challenging for many entrepreneurs.

“We have to be very flexible when customers ask for discounts because this is the main thing they ask for in this period before they make their purchase decision. So, flexibility in terms of discounts and promotions is very important.” (H.B.)

5.1.3. Restrictions of Applying Entrepreneurial Marketing

This section identifies what places restrictions on the application of EM notwithstanding the fact that entrepreneurs consider marketing is much easier these days in terms of access and costs. The rationale is that, when considering a practice informed approach in research, it is important to identify what restricts the application of EM in order to be aware of those restrictions. Solutions to these constraints have been provided by participants and they are illustrated below.

Fifteen participants (n15) said that marketing tools are more accessible these days mainly because of how affordable they are and how few resources are required in some digital and social media campaigns. However, the challenge always appears to be in terms of delivering an impactful campaign.

“Marketing has become easier these days, but the challenge is how to design an effective campaign that makes an impact. This is what most SMEs fall short of here in Saudi Arabia.” (E. H.)

On the other hand, most entrepreneurs (n21) referred to the cost and availability of cash as a main constraint. This does not contradict the point that the context of this study is a wealthy economy; however, it was clear that the cost of marketing campaigns is higher compared to other countries in the region. This demonstrates two points. Firstly, pricing by marketing firms is set based on the standard of living rather than the actual cost of the marketing campaign itself. Secondly, this could be a consequence of the paucity of, and high demand for, marketing talent which was a point mentioned by almost all participants.

“In this period, it is very difficult to come up with a marketing campaign that has a very low probability of failure. Either you plan a successful one or not because with the decrease in sales you cannot afford to pay out for something extra that has no impact.” (H.B.)

“These days all SMEs and also big firms are pushing for sales as much as possible. They have almost stopped everything else.” (T.S.)

The crucial and pervasive constraint is the absence of marketing talent. All participants (n29) agreed that the country is short of marketing talent. This has affected the marketing orientation of SMEs which do not have sufficient knowledge about marketing. It also limits innovative marketing ideas even if

marketing activities were planned intelligently, the quality of implementation might be low due to this issue.

“There is also another problem which is the absence of talent in the country. Although many graduates came back from abroad with higher degrees, not all of them want to make an effort. They think their certificate entitles them to higher positions and a secure future, this includes many marketers.” (A. A.)

“Marketing here follows this chain, entrepreneurs think marketing is communication, communication means advertising, advertising means social media and social media means influencers. This is a very limited mindset and I think this reflects the shortage of marketing talent in our market.” (H. K.)

The issue of a shortage of marketing talent has also affected the cost of the implementation of marketing campaigns. Even if the idea comes from the entrepreneurs themselves or it was partially copied from somewhere else, the cost of implementation is high in comparison to other countries in the region. Apparently, the shortage of talent increases the price of the service provided by whoever is providing it.

“The main restriction in marketing these days is the cost. Although the idea comes from me, the implementation cost is very high, and it doesn't have that real impact in terms of ROI. This is what makes me use different skills across borders, for example, Egypt and India. Both countries can provide a better service with way cheaper prices.” (M. B.)

Moreover, the length of time required by entrepreneurs in SMEs to execute a campaign is another constraint. Five participants (n5) stated that they often value fast execution of campaigns even if it does not reach the highest possible quality. Due to their desire to exploit available opportunity, they tend, on some occasions, to avoid fulfilling the complete requirements of the campaign.

“We could identify a need, but we cannot identify the target customers specifically. You might ask why we do not survey people. In small and some medium sized businesses, it is too difficult to carry out a survey for many reasons. Firstly, due to budget and resource constraints and secondly we need to exploit the opportunity before others do.” (F. F.)

5.2. Practical Tools for Entrepreneurs to Apply during Transition Periods

When constraints are clear it becomes easier to overcome them. The application of EM comes up against many limiting restrictions in the whole process of planning and executing an effective marketing campaign in the studied context. These restrictions are generally common in every enterprise. For instance, a lack of knowledge of marketing, difficulties in identifying customers, a low cash flow, problems of customer retention and many others. However, there is always a solution to avoid or to minimise the effect of these restrictions, so that an effective marketing campaign can be delivered. The following four sections will illustrate some practical tools that are essential for entrepreneurs in SMEs to utilise in order to assist them in approaching the

market effectively. In this way, they minimise the impact of the pre identified restrictions which face SMEs in periods of TEs.

5.2.1. General Practical Tools

Participants have suggested some practical tools for entrepreneurs in SMEs to use during transition periods. These tools vary from the ability to utilise public resources, to attending events, being very close to customers and potential customers and the ability to analyse market reports.

“Your experience in the market, your ability to analyse market reports, your networks, your ability to discover needs from your surroundings, your capability to make use of every piece of information you come across and attending event, these are the points I consider when deciding to approach the market these days.” (M. B.)

“One of the very essential tools is meeting people frequently, especially your clients, who always have problems which need to be solved. From these discussions we identify opportunities and try to meet them.” (A. A.)

Another very important practice is being able to adapt to the frequent changes happening in the market. In TEs it is common to face changes in policies, fees and taxes that will have an impact on the purchasing power of customers as well as on their behaviour. Therefore, entrepreneurs are required to adapt to these rapid changes fast and to take advantage of them. Clearly this

is not an easy practice but indeed it is one of the most important in facing and addressing the consequences of transition.

“Because of the frequent and rapid changes in the regulations, we are not only working with suppliers but also on satisfying our clients. We make huge efforts to try and adapt to these rapid changes.” (A. A.)

“It is not possible to build a marketing plan that never needs correction. But being smart enough to execute it at the correct time with the available resources is the challenge. Adjustments to the plan will follow as long as your business exists, and you are dynamic enough to cope with the changes. because if you don’t execute it at a certain time, you will never do so, planning could take forever.” (H. K)

Finally, in planning their marketing activities, SMEs must not forget the unique elements that distinguish them from their competitors. These elements might be cost, product strategy, objectives, the firm’s values, and logistics. While the period seems very challenging, it is essential never to compromise on any of these elements.

“For me, marketing needs a proper plan attached to the overall firm’s plan. Plus, the content needs to be intentional content and finally the financing of the campaign must not exceed 3% of your overall sales.” (A. T.)

“Entrepreneurs always complain about the outcomes of their marketing plan and its effectiveness. Sometimes they

implement a marketing plan that doesn't fit their business model. In other cases, I see entrepreneurs create a proper marketing plan, but they can't solve the logistics issues. So, I think the problem starts at the beginning, they devise a plan that doesn't fit with the overall strategy of the firm and the strategy of the product or service they provide." (H. K.)

It is worth noting that all of these practical tools are not beyond the capabilities and resources of SMEs because they were identified themselves by the entrepreneurs who own or manage SMEs. Following are some tools that can be utilised and accessed by entrepreneurs in these firms.

5.2.2. Technology as a Useful Tool

Technology has had an enormous impact on the way business is conducted. All participants (n29) agreed that technology has affected businesses in all sectors. Marketing as a function within SMEs is also being influenced by technology. All participants agreed, with varying emphasis, on the usefulness of technology as a tool to assist in approaching the market. This difference in perception is apparently due to differences in the capability to utilise this tool. For instance, two successful entrepreneurs have expanded their businesses in one year over 20 cities. Others know exactly what their customers' preferences are, so they keep them loyal. The less adaptable group to technology also emphasised its importance but did not make any use of it. Many stories have been shared by the SME entrepreneurs such as:

“Technology can ease many aspects of the business nowadays. It helps you to scale up your business and serve in different cities without paying any investment amount. But that is a challenge in itself, how to make your product or service a scalable one.” (F. F.)

“Our business model is very simple. We use active application and we made contracts with flower shops in every city in the Kingdom. So, we didn’t need a huge amount of investment to start with. Similarly, with marketing we pay nothing, we have a strong digital platform, we know our active users and we only use our application to send marketing materials.” (H. K.)

Nevertheless, technology can assist in identifying new opportunities and new segments through knowing the sectors that are already being influenced and transformed by technology. Therefore, identifying opportunities has become easier because the impact of the transformation can initiate a chain reaction. For instance, when Uber entered the market, many logistic companies copied their business model to serve their business objectives and they have succeeded.

“If you make use of technology you can easily predict the opportunities. Technology is the major influence nowadays for transforming sectors. Based on this transformation, many opportunities have become available in the market.” (H. N.)

In addition, technology helps in spreading the word when planning to internationalise the brand. An entrepreneur of a non-profit virtual course provider that works through a website and a mobile application noted:

“We are planning and executing our marketing campaigns based on and through our 80 ambassadors from all over the globe. Members of this group are registered on our platform, so all communications are through our portal. It is a group of geek learners and they have become like a grass roots movement to our service. We basically don’t pay anything for marketing, they implement everything.” (F. F.)

5.2.3. Big Data Utilisation

Kumar (2017) has noted that there is still a lack of academic engagement towards providing comprehensive guidelines in exploring big data issues. Living in this day and age without employing big data and benefiting from the available access to them is a great loss. Entrepreneurs can easily collect and analyse data with the new technologies at very reasonable costs. The participants have experienced the great benefits of using big data despite using it fairly conservatively. Ten participants (n10) agreed that in transition periods of economies the need for utilising the benefits of data is rising. Some have noted that it is one of the most important tools for SMEs to survive.

“I can assure you that making use of data is the way to survive in transition periods. I think it should be the starting point for SMEs who want to survive.” (A. G.)

“I have an example with a small business that uses an application to sell fruits and vegetables. We analysed every shopping basket and we noted common products. Now the data will be used for marketing obviously, but as well as this, it will help in the supply chain. They can bring better deals for these products from the wholesalers because they practically know the exact amount of demand from their customers.” (M. O.)

There is no doubt that data has had a considerable effect on the way firms' function. In SMEs it is quite challenging, because not every entrepreneur who manages this type of enterprise has sufficient knowledge to use them. Nevertheless, the financial capabilities during transition periods to outsource to an expert in data is fairly low. However, SMEs can exploit this opportunity through many tactics such as coalition programs, loyalty schemes and professional machines and software. These practical tactics can assist in collecting and storing data, making use of them and increasing the sales to and loyalty of existing customers.

“We try to monitor our retention rate through the loyalty program resources we have. We manage to maintain a 40% retention rate, and this is good in our type of business.” (E. H.)

“The POS system is important, this is CRM, you are linking customer relations in real time. When you have this system and have a coalition program, you have access to all the available data for advertisements. So, you reduce the cost of the

campaign, you don't need to print paper coupons, you already have the app to send them offers.” (E. K.)

The practical implementation of data as a resource also has several issues which limit their utilisation in the best way possible. The main issue is the cost despite the fact that not every entrepreneur has the ability to mine and discover patterns from data. Another important element is time. Most SMEs are owned and operated by individuals who dedicate their time to accomplish other operational tasks. Even if some entrepreneurs show sufficient knowledge to explore and dig deep into data, they do not have the time to perform this task.

“After running our business for several years now, I can say that we have enough data to use for focused marketing campaigns. I know we are a bit late in thinking about this, but we had no time to consider this before.” (E. H.)

“Quite simply, I think creativity in marketing comes through data and what makes it very creative and new is the analysis process.” (A.G.)

A marketing consultant offered a solution to this by encouraging SMEs to align in partnership and coalition programs.

“Coalition programs are the best way for SMEs to survive in this period. You may ask why it would be better. The answer is: no cost in operation, no cost in system. What they pay is the cost of the reward which is a slight margin of course.” (E. K.)

5.2.4. Digital Marketing

Digital marketing is one of the most useful tools for entrepreneurs in SMEs these days. All entrepreneurs declared that they have an account on one or more digital platforms, particularly on the internet. Other forms of digital marketing such as radio advertising are less used by SMEs nowadays and especially during TEs because the cost is very high. Therefore, entrepreneurs tend to leverage the cost of conventional digital marketing platforms and move into web-based or application-based platforms to create publicity. An entrepreneur who owns a media agency has noted several points related to the conventional digital platforms such as radio and TV.

“Now digital is also difficult for SMEs, it is costly as well, you have to pay for the content, design, posting, copy writing, etc... and you cannot guarantee a positive impact.” (A. A.)

Exceptionally, one entrepreneur made use of an opportunity that was provided by a TV program. The program is meant to support SMEs by providing the initial investment or expansion investment to their enterprises. Every individual with an idea comes and presents it in front of some big investors who take shares from the enterprise in return for injecting cash for the purposes mentioned above. He utilised the opportunity very well and he made an effective brand awareness campaign at no cost.

“Do you know the Shark Tank program? I did a presentation to them on Rotana channel on TV. You know I did it for two reasons, one is to find an investor to help me expand and it didn't happen. The other reason, which was the main, was to

market the brand. It took 12 minutes in total speaking about my business and my products all free on one of the most highly watched TV channels in the region at zero cost. The impact was massive especially for raising brand awareness. I didn't get any luck with the investors on the program but after that I received twenty franchising requests." (A.M.)

Yet, marketing through the internet has gained a great deal of attention in the last two decades. The situation changed considerably after the development of smart phones and applications ten years ago. However, according to many participants, having professional websites remains the main tool that publicises the identity of the firm. Professional websites seem the most important tool to consider because they work as an identification of the firm.

"Our websites give us the image we pitch for. It is basically our identity." (A. A.)

Nevertheless, posts including video posts are among the best methods to communicate a message to any existing or potential customers. Posts need to have clear objectives and the right content which distinguishes any message from the competition. In digital content marketing strategy, communication is a key component. However, it is not limited to the content of the message, it also has a powerful impact on building and maintaining brand awareness (Tiago and Veríssimo, 2014). Therefore, the message should consist of some elements such as what the product is, what problem it solves and where to find it. In addition, entrepreneurs must clearly identify elements such as the promotion channels, tools for analysing the impact, the frequency and the planned brand

perception, by customers, about the product or the service (Baltes, 2015). Marketing through posts, especially on social media, is currently among the most effective tools for SMEs. This is declared by many participants who shared their experience in this study.

“We have a short video that explains everything about us, these tools can increase the awareness of your product or service big time. The only important issue is to choose the right content which can touch peoples’ emotions.” (F. F.)

“I think we are in a disruptive mode nowadays because of the number of messages we come across every day. So, I think if you are capable enough and you have the resources you should act likewise. You should send many messages to get people’s attention and then try to increase their loyalty, which I think is not easy in this type of market. You can do this maybe more easily and cheaply through digital marketing.” (H. N.)

On the other hand, social media tools have changed the way people spend their time online. People are more engaged with social media news and communications than before. Due to the continued improvement on the platforms and applications by providers of social media, users tend to accept these forms of communication more than conventional tools. Many SMEs have started to utilise these tools due to their ease of access and low costs. However, the challenge appears to be in how to develop content that raises awareness and reaches out to people effectively. In practice, all SMEs are using or have used social media as a marketing communication tool, but few have shown

positive outcomes in terms of raising the required awareness or increasing sales.

“It is not easy for SMEs to use agile marketing properly, but they need to understand its principles because it enables them to be more adaptable to change than the big corporations. This must also come in line with the availability of real and immediate data management which has become easier to collect and process after social media and its related analysis tools.” (H. K.)

The concept of agility originated as an industrial concept. When companies are agile, they are able to make various products to fulfil small scale needs but with no compromise on quality and at no extra costs. The concept of agility is now applied to marketing when companies are able to develop a reconfigured strategy when it is required, even at short notice so that companies are able to exploit increased opportunities and notify customers at short notice (Poolton et al., 2006). In fact, one of the entrepreneurs had the idea for his business through a hashtag he started on Twitter. He used to post pictures of himself preparing breakfast or pictures of breakfast restaurants abroad. He managed to collect 70 thousand followers and they started to put pressure on him to open a breakfast restaurant. He started by creating recipes and obtaining feedback. He opened his first branch in 2014 and increased to six branches by 2018.

“Our business model was quite different, you know we used to plan and execute marketing campaigns after having the idea and planning the start. However, the idea of this business came

from our engaged customers, people followed me on Twitter and pushed me to open this breakfast restaurant. I used to post different pictures of my cooking and they wanted to try the recipes, and this is where I got the strong customer base before I even started.” (F. T.)

Utilising data and digital resources is quite challenging even though they have become easier to exploit. However, customers' behaviour nowadays has changed in terms of dealing with social media. For instance, waiting in a line to enter a place has become a habit for many people nowadays as waiting allows them time to create stories and posts on social media.

“Many people used not to like waiting in line to enter a restaurant. Nowadays, it is different because of the experience they are engaging in. They actually use their waiting time for publicity. For example, look where I am and include a post of a famous place. This is common these days, you know some people love waiting.” (E. H.)

In practice, social media does not do the whole marketing job for the firm. It creates a level of awareness so that people know there is something going on in this place. However, it does not measure customer satisfaction after the first trial. So, it does not guarantee a positive reputation and customer retention. What a campaign needs to do is assist in maintaining a strong customer relationship after the first trial. So, social media works as a key or entry point to other marketing activities.

“We were very active on social media but was that enough to get people engaged with our products? I don’t think so. I believe our plan for social media marketing was successful in terms of what it did, what it was meant to do. It created the hype, so people came for the first time but again I couldn’t pinpoint with complete certainty what the problem was of them not making repeat visits.” (A. T.)

In summary, SMEs must consider digital marketing tools and make all the amendments in their marketing strategy according to its requirements. A successful example, among several others, showed someone using social media effectively with the eventual outcome being that he ended up not paying anything for marketing because customers were doing this job for him.

“Do you know that there is a technique for decorating restaurants called Instagram trap. So, you need to consider this when you set up your restaurant or business. You should also bear in mind that these bloggers, or anyone who posts a photo of your place, is a source of marketing. This is why you need to think about it carefully. In my place I didn’t pay a single Riyal for marketing, my customers do that for me.” (E. H.)

5.3. Important Marketing Strategic Positions for SMEs during Periods of Transition Economies

Knowing the practical tools which can assist SMEs in approaching the market more effectively is essential. However, utilisation of these tools, while in

a strong strategic position which enhances the firm's overall function, is key. Thus, aligning the marketing activities of the firm in order to deliver the overall strategy is crucial so that the firm functions in the best way possible. Here are the main strategic positions that were taken by SMEs in a TE to overcome the consequences of this period. These strategies should not limit the choices available, but they provide practical examples for marketers to follow in similar periods.

5.3.1. Giving Consumers Fewer Choices is Better Nowadays

Regardless of the sector, entrepreneurs who participated in this study are directing their small or medium enterprises towards customisation. Products and services are clearly showing more detailed specifications, which was not seen before the implementation of the TP. For instance, an owner of a media company who is working as an intermediary between advertisers in soccer fields and the owners of these fields, outsources everything other than direct mediation services, including design and production, accounting and delivery. This type of very deep and detailed customisation was never available before. Switching to this approach after the TP was easier for him compared to larger enterprises because he was very dynamic due to the lower level of liability he has compared to big corporations. It is also important to note that his sales went down because of the customisation decision, however, the overall profit went up compared to his previous gross net.

Without doubt, customisation provides a certain level of focus and expertise by delivering a very specific product or service. The intention before

transition was the complete opposite to this where everyone was prepared to do many things or sometimes everything and still achieve break even or profit. Recently, SMEs have started to show a certain level of customisation and specialisation in selling certain products, for instance, speciality coffee, where they sell certain types of beans and a couple of dessert choices. Another example is a restaurant which offers only one type of meat cooked in different ways, providing no more than five dishes on the whole menu. The owner claims that this is far better than having too many choices, which increases the overheads and the operational costs and decreases perception of professionalism of his brand.

“I believe that product customisation is the survival method for the next decade at least. We built this restaurant based on this idea, we are one of a kind and we don’t have too many multiplications. It is the same idea as the hotel in front of us which follows the boutique concept. I would want to expand more and open more branches but in different cities and countries, so I don’t damage the concept I follow.” (E. H.)

“Innovative ideas such as making people passionate about coming to your store by offering shorter opening hours and less available space should definitely be accompanied by an excellent product and service. Many stores are doing this right now and they are succeeding. By doing this you will reduce the operational costs by half as well as gaining more attention.” (M.S.)

Most entrepreneurs accept that giving consumers fewer choices is a better idea these days. This approach, as they perceive it, helps in different ways. Firstly, it reduces the liabilities to the least amount possible and that can be seen in the lower amount of wastage in terms of inventory, time and logistics. Secondly, it helps in creating a good level of customer retention, based on delivering a customised product/service to the end users which fulfils their exact needs with the highest quality possible. Thirdly, it enhances the competitive edge of the firm especially if they are the best known for selling such products or providing such services. Fourthly, as a result it works as a source of value creation to the end users and it helps in sustaining the business during transition periods.

5.3.2. Brand Engagement

Working on raising brand engagement is an important element for SMEs in every stage of their business life cycle. However, the importance of considering brand engagement as an essential strategy for SMEs becomes critical in TEs. Brand engagement is derived in two main ways, the first is trust, the second is reputation. An increase in trust should be as a result of different values that are delivered to satisfy the customers. Being dynamic in fulfilling customers' needs is another key to engaging them with the brand. Then reputation is gained and this gradually develops over time. It is vital to consider brand at every step the enterprise is making because it permeates and can impact on all entrepreneurial functions both positively and negatively.

“As an SME owner you should focus on two main things, you must be dynamic to face changes in this period. This should be in every aspect of the business. The second thing is to get your customers engaged with your brand. This is how you reach perfection in this time.” (H. K.)

“We used not to think of marketing our products. We went beyond this by presenting the story behind our products, all the hard times and criticism that we have been through so that when people think of purchasing a thobe, they directly identify our brand in their mind.” (L. N.)

“Brand engagement is very important. We try to be the first gym that springs to the mind of any customer who wants to join one, in terms of brand positioning. We try to publish everywhere, including, B2B, events, newsletters and social media. But all of them must have an objective and we try our best to measure the impact, but it is not easy.” (B.S.)

Trust cannot drive brand engagement on its own, it must be associated with reputation. Sources of positive reputation can be found through many practices such as, social and emotional attachments. These two elements, as has been mentioned in the EO section above, are two crucial elements in the studied context. Many entrepreneurs have made use of them in order to strengthen their brand position. This approach has worked effectively in the period of a TE with several entrepreneurs.

“Our local concept has helped us a lot in terms of brand engagement. You know how people are socially attached here especially in small towns, so we held the local concept where people know that we employ locals and we purchase every ingredient from local producers. This is how I believe people became loyal to us.” (A. T.)

“Marketers don’t consider emotional values, they often present products and services only, they focus on their functionality and quality. I thought about it from a different angle, I tried to build a story in almost every breakthrough I achieved and that helped a lot, I realised that people got emotionally attached to the brand big time.” (L. N.)

5.3.3. The Dilemma of Quality

What level of quality should I deliver? Shall I change the raw materials used in my product? Shall I make lots of promises so I can get customers easily? These are common questions that appear in the minds of entrepreneurs managing SMEs. It was clear that entrepreneurs are often worried about the level of quality they deliver to customers and how customers will perceive it because customers are more aware these days as they are globally exposed through social media and internet blogs. Therefore, it has become more dangerous for any enterprise to try to fool people or to provide low quality in a product or a service that is provided better elsewhere. Customers are always keen on finding the best quality which they can afford. They are more aware of

the different products and they can do research about other products instantly through their phones.

Given these facts, product/service standardisation becomes a very important element when thinking about what quality to deliver to customers. What is meant by standardisation is the extent to which SMEs are able to repeat the same satisfactory experience that their customers have had. Messeghem (2003) noted that a high level of standardisation is a reflection of strong EO in SMEs. One of the participants declare that.

“In (he mentioned the company’s name) we cannot promote any bouquet without ensuring its availability with all partners we deal with and that is in around 20 cities. I think if we didn’t do this we would not gain our competitive edge.” (F. F.)

“Standardisation is crucial, this is what I’m working on in my new branches in Riyadh and Makkah nowadays. I have to ensure that the same experience is delivered in every branch of ours. Not only this, I’m also ensuring the same overall experience to customers in every visit in terms of taste, price, atmosphere and service. This is very important for maintaining the retention rate.” (E. H.)

In addition, especially in services, it is not appropriate to give customers promises that the entrepreneur cannot fulfil nor provide an inferior service compared to what customers received before.

“In service businesses you shouldn’t over promise about what you are delivering. The most important element is commitment.”

(A.A.)

As a consequence of all the facts above, SMEs can differentiate themselves by working in a niche market that has not been touched yet. This approach should make them different from other firms which compete in the same sector. Quality is a major driver for being different and with the standardisation approach, the quality increases.

“SMEs need to reposition their products and services and work more on standardisation and differentiation.” (M. J.)

“SMEs in downturn economies should focus on exploring lucrative niche markets that are not reached by big firms. This is the appropriate penetration method these days which brings differentiation to them through providing better quality.” (M. B.)

Finally, quality is the main method for sustaining the business in terms of ensuring customer retention. Monitoring customer retention in relation to sustained quality levels can help decrease the number of dissatisfied customers. It goes beyond this by enabling the entrepreneur to establish the exact cost of the process of delivering a product or service. This should assist in maintaining an average operational cost and having a justified selling price for customers.

“You need to maintain the standard of quality you deliver, not only maintain but even develop because the moment your

customers leave you, they will never come back especially in this period when people are more financially aware.” (H. K.)

5.3.4. Franchising or Self-investing

Entrepreneurs are always encouraged to try to build products or services that reflect strong brands and meet international standards. As a result, they are able to acquire different opportunities at the national level or over the globe. In addition, internationalisation as an approach for SMEs has become very common these days, which is due to the exposure that some firms have obtained even before thinking of going abroad, thanks to social media. On the other hand, granting a franchise is another efficient approach which can be used to exploit these opportunities. Most of the participants entrepreneurs, with the exception of just two, consider that franchising is a better and more efficient way of expanding internationally or even domestically. The most important reason behind this preference is that they do not have the capability to go overseas or sometimes to another city to operate, due to their limited resources. These resources are mainly financial, daily work operation, manpower and above all limited knowledge of the potential market. Therefore, entrepreneurs consider that franchising is the best method to expand during TEs.

“Local brands need to think about franchising, international franchisers have become very expensive for investors. Thus, in the previous 7 years many local brands have opened franchises, which can compete at an international level. Nevertheless, SMEs don’t have the capability to expand due to

many restrictions, both financially and operationally. We also need to mention that the government structure has improved a lot and it can now absorb these approaches as they have the legal framework for them.” (M.B.)

In practical terms, deciding whether to franchise or to self-invest is not an easy decision for entrepreneurs. This decision must be aligned with the overall strategy of the firm and the product. It also requires a considerable amount of legal work to make the process easier and to protect the rights of the franchisor. In addition, it requires some flexibility from the entrepreneurs who are granting franchises to those who are buying them in order to provide the franchisees with the best training possible to start and to sustain the business, because it is a win-win situation, and this is what makes it challenging.

“One of my early strategies was to sell franchises, yes I want to own the two branches in Jeddah and Riyadh but I’m able to franchise as well. The Ministry for Trade has put the legal policies in place to facilitate this step for us and I’m using it. Our first franchisee will open their branch in Makkah soon. Entrepreneurs should do this otherwise they will never be able to expand.” (E. H.)

“I worked on an expansion strategy through granting franchises to compensate for the decrease in sales and I think we are doing well.” (A.M.)

“Based on our experience with many franchisees, it has enabled us expand into many cities and countries in the region. I would

never have undertaken this expansion if we had intended to do it by ourselves.” (M.S.)

5.3.5. Market Research

SMEs always seem to undervalue market research. The reason behind this is clear and that is because of the limited resources available to them and, in several cases, their lack of knowledge about its impact. Nevertheless, some entrepreneurs are of the opinion that considering market research could make them lose an opportunity or in some way compromise the idea they came up with. However, some entrepreneurs have shown successful implementation of market research where they carry out the research correctly and in a well-studied time frame. It has seemed to work effectively for them and it has given them the competitive edge that they were looking for.

“I came across this opportunity after I researched the market. I think the reason behind my success is just because I was there alone when no one else was there.” (H. N.)

“Risk related to any marketing campaign is always there. What minimises this risk is the effective market research you carry out before the execution.” (H. K.)

5.3.6. Leveraging Overall Cost to Support Marketing Activities

Leveraging overall costs is crucial for sustaining businesses particularly in transition periods. Entrepreneurs within SMEs shared their thoughts

regarding this dimension and how cost leverage gave them the ability to conduct better marketing activities. The first example is of four entrepreneurs who initiated something called 'share resources' where they merged the small enterprises owned by each of them into a big holding company. The owner of each enterprise remains the owner of his/her own firm and gives a 5% share to the other three members. They all work in the media sector. One firm focuses on commercial issues, another works in production, the third one is mainly sales and the fourth firm focuses on design. By doing this, four small enterprises share the same interests and work in the same sector to become a bigger firm. The results were very effective for them and they minimised the overall cost of manpower by almost 35%. For instance, every enterprise used to have a driver now there is only one driver for all of them and likewise with accounting and human resources. In addition, this approach gave them the opportunity to share ideas about marketing to produce more effective campaigns. Most importantly it gave them the ability to save cash for any downturns and for their future marketing activities.

“The best way for SMEs to survive in this period and to be able to use marketing better is to utilise the cooperative method, similar to what farmers do when they consolidate their crops and then become an individual entity. By doing this, they can get better discounts and payment facilities from wholesalers. Secondly, SMEs must revise their business model and modify it because margins are going down. Technology is also becoming a major tool, so they need to leverage the cost as much as possible. Finally, they should try to include extra

services related to the business - this might be home delivery, in-house repairs, etc..." (H.A.)

Another form of leveraging of overall costs is partnering in marketing activities. Two or more SMEs can create a partnership where they combine different aspects to perform an activity or to create a campaign that has a return for all of them. In practice, two firms can create a partnership deal where both of them mutually benefit from providing products or services which are already being produced by them without using too many of their financial resources. A good example of this might be the fashion boutique which sponsored a high profile event and gave the organisers hundreds of coupons to be redeemed from his boutique.

"I'll give you one recent example with regards to marketing. We became a platinum sponsor for a famous event that is worth 200 thousand Saudi Riyals. I didn't pay a single Riyal, we made a partnership deal where I give them product (thobes) coupons in return, I believe they used these coupons as gifts. What I gained from this is that I killed several birds with one stone. I did a prestigious brand positioning campaign, I tried to solve some low production issues, I got a campaign worth 200 thousand SR for a 1/3 of the price and that was the production cost of the coupons." (L. N.)

In addition, general costs such as large office spaces and suppliers seemed to be an issue that constrains marketing activities. Some entrepreneurs have a negative experience related to not planning their future costs when the

economy was healthy four years ago. They realised the consequences of such decisions after experiencing the impact of the TP. In fact, business owners tend to expand and take on costs to show their sustainability and professionalism, but they do not tend to future proof for unexpected events very well. Some good examples were also given.

“Advice for SMEs in this period includes, eliminate the use of middlemen so that you get a good price from the main supplier, reduce the overhead costs and act very fast for instance in the case of extra office space, try to present the strong position your firm has in the market, and do not over optimise any step as it might have drawbacks when the market shrinks.” (T.S.)

“The national transition plan has forced us to re-organise our firm internally. We have formulated new KPIs for each job, we automated some of our processes, we reduced our production costs by 5% by splitting the production process and reducing costs at every step on the production line but without reducing our quality or betraying our values.” (L.N.)

“I know a woman who works in fashion. She has a very nice model which is based on loyalty. She already has the database, she knows her customers and she is in a continuous engagement with them. What she did after the changes in policies and fees is very simple, she closed down the shop and she is working from home now. She wanted to avoid extra costs such as the cost of the premises and other taxes which have

been brought in by the government recently. The only problem she faces right now is that she won't be able to expand, and this is fine for her at this stage" (A.G.)

Moreover, costs related to manpower can prevent SMEs from planning any marketing campaigns. Participants have shown an aggressive approach to this issue, where they started to reduce the number of employees in order to survive. Some of them consider that either some employees leave, or the business fails, and this resulted in them reducing their workforce by, on average 20%, replacing them with outsourced services such as, accountants, designers, analytics, and producers. Other entrepreneurs who have better networks went abroad and reaped the benefits of lower priced services from other countries in the region. These countries provide the same services at at-least half the price of the same services in SA.

"You need to come up with a business model that can reduce the costs and liabilities. On the other hand, this business model should maintain the sales channels and its figures. So, by doing this, every employee must put more effort in to adapt to and overcome the drop in sales. I call this a horizontal sales expansion, so we do not spend more to expand but we mitigate different resources such as cars to expand sales." (A.D.)

"You must calculate each step in such situations and go for it: relocate, reduce the number of employees, reduce salaries, negotiate contracts, etc. It is an important method, but you must

not be arrogant. Sometimes you must take bold and aggressive decisions and this is the time for them, no emotions at all.” (F.T.)

“We are now in survival mode. If entrepreneurs do not have survival instincts their businesses are going to die. That means no emotions and only thinking of ways of pushing back the business. It also means that the entrepreneur has to have the same passion for their business. One of the main points is to be on top of your business, you need to dig very deep into every process to survive.” (T.R.).

5.4. Conceptualising Entrepreneurial Marketing for SMEs in Transition Economies

Considering all the experience and interpretations of entrepreneurs given above, it can be seen that EM as a concept has various dimensions in different economic contexts. Nevertheless, the choice of better marketing strategies in TEs is apparently not the same when contexts and environmental factors are different. In addition, despite the fact that many different technological tools have become easily accessible, not many of them are being utilised effectively. This section will attempt to conceptualise EM for SMEs in TEs taking into account what the dimensions of EM are, the most utilised marketing strategies and the most popular tools that have been mentioned by participants.

5.4.1. Dimensions of EM in Transition Economies

The existing literature has identified seven dimensions for EM which are innovative marketing, risk-taking, pro-activeness, customer intensity, value creation, opportunity recognition and resource leveraging (Morris et al., 2002; Hills et al., 2008). However, in transition periods these dimensions vary to some extent. For instance, all participants valued the role that marketing plays in overcoming such periods, but only few of them presented some innovative marketing campaigns which had a strong impact. This might be due to a lack of knowledge of marketing on the part of the entrepreneurs, as has been mentioned in section 4. 6. above. On the other hand, entrepreneurs have shown risk-averse behaviour towards marketing in this period whether by implementing a total freeze on marketing activities or by greatly reducing its budget.

Similarly, with pro-activeness, entrepreneurs are now more likely to make deals with their competitors rather than showing aggressive behaviours towards them. Considering that pro-activeness is a form of taking an opportunity before competitors do, these deals could bring mutual benefits to both firms in the short run. This is to be contrasted with the previous approach which was every firm trying to deliver everything by themselves when the economy was healthy. In this regard, whilst pro-activeness is still clear, SMEs are employing it differently in this period. It can be said that entrepreneurs are still being pro-active but in a less competitive way, which allows them to be perceived positively by their competitors.

Managing customer intensity is a confusing point in TEs. Firms are keen to have customer intensity, but because of the economic status they do not

receive the number of customers they are aiming for. Nevertheless, this dimension is still required by SMEs but with careful coordination and management of supplies, logistics, operation and marketing as, if the firm does not succeed in coordinating all these aspects, it will lose customer confidence and that will affect its value proposition.

In terms of value creation, which is an aspect that has been stressed by all entrepreneurs, SMEs in such periods must focus more on quality and adding value to the end users so they build a more loyal customer base. On the other hand, opportunities are considerable in TEs, especially in the context of this study. Every participant has raised this point repeatedly. Some of the entrepreneurs estimate that the market is 95% untapped and this shows how many opportunities are there. This might also be another reason for firms not being pro-active against competitors. With regard to opportunities, SMEs need to explore and exploit new opportunities from niche segments that have not been served by other firms.

The final dimension is resource leveraging. This is clearly apparent in a context such as Saudi Arabia where social attachments and tribal norms have influenced the way businesses perform. This can be clearly seen in two main forms, partnering or marketing through networks. As has been mentioned above in this chapter and the previous one, social ties have a major influence on businesses in Saudi Arabia. For instance, social attachment and networks brought several enterprises success in the studied context. In the next section, the most utilised marketing strategies that are seen to be applicable for SMEs in periods of economic transition will be discussed.

5.4.2. Most Applied Marketing Strategies for SMEs in Transition Economies

Several strategies were used by entrepreneurs managing SMEs in periods of economic transition. It is important to note that SMEs can go beyond these strategic choices. However, entrepreneurs who participated in this study agreed that these marketing strategies are the best choices for SMEs to enable them to survive the consequences of this period of economic transition, most importantly to cope with the decrease in sales figures.

To begin with, product/service customisation was among the most effective strategies that all entrepreneurs preferred in this period. Customisation evolves from another strategy, namely differentiation, which involves serving a niche segment which was not being served by other competitors. In addition, customisation should assist in increasing the ability of the company to provide standard products/services to customers and that leads to the third strategy which is standardisation. As a result of the three strategies above, customers become more engaged with the brand and they also become a strong source of marketing for instance, by using word of mouth, social media posts and blogs. Brand engagement is the fourth strategy that was recommended by entrepreneurs.

Finally, with regard to expansion during transition periods and in downturn economies, all entrepreneurs apart from two showed positive intention towards franchising as a more effective choice for them to expand. They showed less preference in terms of self-investing as they cannot afford the costs or deal with other logistical issues related to this move especially during transition periods. Identifying these different strategies in this order does

not mean that any one of them is better than the others, but collectively they provide better results.

Here are some citations from successful entrepreneurs who are managing SMEs in this period and who have adapted very well to the prevailing conditions. They provide some advice for entrepreneurs in terms of sustaining their businesses in this period based on the five identified marketing strategies mentioned above.

“The main point is to try to identify your competitive advantage, so it is clear for you and for the people who deal with you as well. Then you never compromise on your competitive advantage. For me, I think my competitive advantage is that I consider every detail like for example I use different cheese for the pizza if it is cooked in the oven compared to the pizza I cook over the woodfire.” (M.S.)

“Competition is always there and will never disappear. It is all about how you maintain the relationship with your customers in terms of the standard of your service and products and the new offers that should attract them. I always try to adapt ideas from abroad and match them to our culture and taste.” (F.T.)

“Entrepreneurs in this period need to work more on increasing consumer confidence by emphasising the values that the brand provides and its reputation as well.” (T.R.)

“Do not always think of price reductions or pricing issues in general, instead think about the value proposition you can provide

with the price you aim for. Pricing is not a major issue with me when I decide on the price of the meals.” (T.H.)

“What is also important for SMEs is to look at what exactly customers love about their product or service. Try and develop it more so it becomes their competitive advantage.” (E.K.)

“There are some other psychological factors you must take into consideration. For example, in my Lu Churro business I know chocolate has that influence psychologically and customers will become addicted to the products if they love them so, I tried my level best to make an excellent product for them and I think I have succeeded after five years.” (A.M.)

5.4.3. Most Utilised Tools by SMEs in Transition Economies

Another very crucial means of assisting in conceptualising EM in TEs is by identifying the most utilised tools as mentioned by entrepreneurs in this study. Firstly, entrepreneurs widely agreed on digital marketing being the most important tool and specifically the employment of social media for marketing campaigns. Yet digital marketing also includes activities such as websites as a source of identifying the firm and posting introductory materials to the website presents the product/service to potential customers.

Secondly, all participants, regardless of the sector, were very much in favour of using big data. This behaviour came from a strong belief in the benefits they could provide, but a lack of analytical knowledge remains a major constraint for entrepreneurs. Around twelve enterprises have already utilised

big data and this has had a positive impact on the customer retention rate, which they term 'loyalty'.

Thirdly, digital technologies are one of the critical tools that can assist in marketing for SMEs. For instance, a smart and affordable point of sales device can help in storing data and show valid patterns of consumer behaviour which might assist SMEs in planning their short-term operations based on actual data. Another very common example is moving to smartphone application platforms, which has helped many SMEs to scale up their businesses and avoid any costs related to location setups.

Other practical tools are those which are required by entrepreneurs to overcome the consequences of transition periods. These practical tools can assist in delivering more effective marketing campaigns for SMEs in this period. The first is partnering, whereby entrepreneurs form a partnership that delivers more effective marketing activities. The second is adaptability in terms of marketing-related activities, which relates to the entrepreneur's ability to adapt to the frequent changes and costs which are incurred during transition periods. An example of this is exploiting an opportunity that is available and easily approached, which requires a rapid decision to be made. The final point is the ability to perfectly manage the logistics related to any marketing activity which includes the management of customer intensity as a first priority and any other associated commitments to deliver the best value they require. The following framework is the conceptualisation of the concept of EM in transition economies, considering the most applied dimensions, the most appropriate marketing strategies and useful tools based on participants' viewpoint.

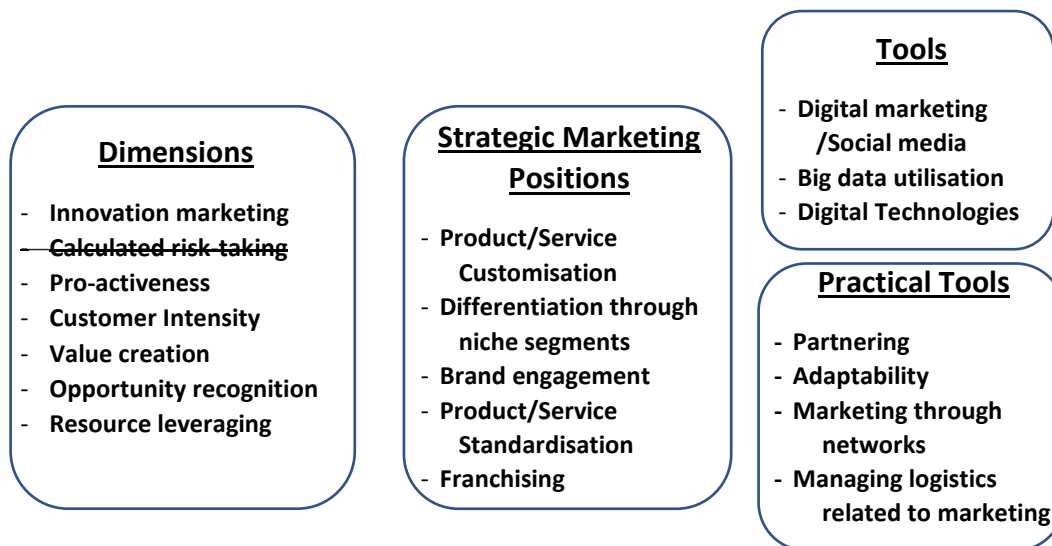


Figure 5. 1. Entrepreneurial Marketing Tools and Strategies during Transition Economies, Author (2020)

Following are some citations from successful entrepreneurs who made use of the available tools in order to sustain their businesses in this period.

“When I came to this company, they used to have 400 external distributors and around 50 were the most active. The others caused problems and brought in much less profit. So, I decided to cancel as many contracts with those less effective distributors and to focus more on the active ones so, they could represent my brand very effectively. According to today’s figures we have fewer than 100 very active distributors and I’ve become the sales manager because the previous one didn’t want to make this change, and we are performing better than before.” (H.B.)

“One of the best things I’ve managed to introduce lately is a crisis management simulator. It means that every manager of the function must provide and be ready for any crisis in our firm including marketing, finance, security, etc... I think we have very

good ideas which are shared with our employees. I let everyone contribute to this by the way. I think this has made us ready to adapt to any change fast.” (B.S.)

“What helped me a lot with regard to marketing was that I tried to be present on social media, I have informal meetings with my clients very frequently and I do many workshops, training and brainstorming sessions with my clients, business acquaintances and my colleagues in this firm. We have a formal set meeting every quarter and also other random meetings in between.” (T.S.)

“You must obtain all feedback possible from your customers; this is how we improved our brand position. We considered every comment and suggestion and we value all feedback, especially the constructive comments” (F.T.)

“Partnership campaigns are the most effective ones if you are stable now because no one wants to spend on marketing and advertising. They’d rather find another firm to create a campaign that brings mutual benefits to both partners.” (M.S.)

5.5. Summary

The two findings chapters have demonstrated the findings from interviews with entrepreneurs and were intended to address the research questions and its objectives. They were developed as a narrative which focused on four main topics. Firstly, exploring the antecedents that underlies EO and thus, what other behaviours could also be categorised as entrepreneurial. It can

be clearly seen that passion is a vital component that underlies EO. Background and relevant work experience were also two important antecedents. In addition, social serving, working on the area that interests the entrepreneur also determines EO. Nevertheless, identification of a need, self-confidence and self-commitment were also raised repeatedly by participants. Considering EO dimensions, it can be said that entrepreneurs can succeed without inventing new ideas but through the adoption of pre-existing ones. In a context like Saudi Arabia I cannot consider risk-taking as a major component because people there do not risk shelter or food compared to other poorer economies. However, the risk they take is more specifically related to their social status.

Secondly, culture has a strong influence on shaping EO and that was clear in this context. Entrepreneurs have benefited from elements such as strong social ties and tribal norms. Recently, everything is beginning to change, as noted by many participants. In Saudi Arabia, the economy is passing through a disruptive mode and SMEs are trying to survive the consequences. Two main skills participants have identified to survive transition periods of economies are flexibility and adaptability. Both skills must be associated and not considered as separate because without prompt adaptation to the changes which occur in the market, flexibility is not worth anything.

Thirdly, this study has shown that EO does not mean successful marketing implementation. A small number of studies have identified that EO dominates EM (e.g. Kilenthong et al., 2015), while the picture is seen differently in this context. The rationale was to determine how entrepreneurs deal with marketing in periods of TEs because this is a period when creative ideas and success-oriented behaviours dominate. Entrepreneurs have shown different

behaviours towards marketing in this period. It was clear that entrepreneurs who had dealt with marketing before and had enough knowledge about its strategies and tactics are delivering successful marketing activities in transition periods. On the other hand, entrepreneurs who lack knowledge about marketing either freeze their marketing activities or they use social media influencers and that is never cost effective. Therefore, EO may dominate EM but with certain components that interlink this relationship.

The final part of this chapter was intended to provide a practical approach to marketing for SMEs in TEs. In this regard, entrepreneurs showed different behaviours when approaching the market. Some of them were conservative; others have planned and succeeded with their marketing activities. The section emphasised different marketing strategies and tools to assist entrepreneurs who manage SMEs to approach the market more effectively. This was through a narrative based on the common findings and many successful examples as well as some unsuccessful ones. The rationale was to provide a clear view of what restricts or encourages marketing during transition periods and to offer many possible approaches for SMEs to market during this period. The next chapter will identify the links, a synthesis and theoretical bases of these findings. It offers a clear link between theoretical precepts and the evidence to the empirical study.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1. Introduction

This study has addressed several significant issues relating to EO and EM in SMEs in TE. The study has explored four main areas. These are: the antecedents to, and facilitators of, EO; the nature of the interactions between EO and EM within SMEs; the application of practice derived intervention to enhance marketing activities for SMEs striving to gain sustainability in an economy going through a period of transition; and the viability of a practical and theoretical synthesis of EO and EM as useful concepts to support the efforts of SMEs in approaching the market more effectively in a TE context.

First, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) defined EO as “the process, practice and the decision making activities that lead to new entry”. The concept of EO is well-researched (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Covin and Wales, 2012; Hills and Hultman, 2013). However, the antecedents that lead to EO are still unclear (Miller, 2011; Wales, 2016). Thus, what behaviours should be considered as entrepreneurial are still questionable (Randerson, 2016). Therefore, this study has identified several psychological and functional antecedents that lead to EO in order to provide a wider perspective of entrepreneurial behaviour in SMEs. Second, this study has evaluated the factors that affect the interrelation between EO and EM in SMEs in order to enhance the impact of EO on marketing activities for SMEs in TE. Third, the study is the first to use an applied approach in terms of marketing for SMEs in TE in order to improve their approach to the market in this period. This is done through evaluating the related literature and comparing it to the empirical findings from entrepreneurs

in Saudi Arabia who have experienced the economic transition period. Fourth, this study offers a conceptualisation of the two concepts of EO and EM which explicitly involves a synthesis of dimensions from both concepts from a theoretical as well as a practical point of view. So, this chapter discusses the findings presented in the previous two chapters and relates them to the relevant literature. It will answer the research questions which were identified earlier and were constructed around the main research aim which is to enhance the effectiveness of market approach by SMEs in TE.

The chapter is divided into five main sections. Section 6. 2. will discuss the existing and evolving dimensions of EO including an explanation of the antecedents that lead to EO. Section 6.3. will identify some unique cultural elements that affect application of EO in SMEs in Saudi Arabia. In addition, this section will demonstrate the dimensions of EO that are most applicable in TE, compared to what we already know from the literature. Section 6.4. will illustrate how the concept of EO positively influences EM behaviour in SMEs by identifying the main elements that interlink in this relationship. Section 6.5. will evaluate the most effective marketing tools and strategies that must be considered by SMEs in TE.

6.2. The Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Orientation

Researchers of entrepreneurship and EO have shown considerable interest in exploring why some firms are entrepreneurial and others are not (e.g. Bird, 1988; Learned, 1992; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Shane et al., 2003; Baron, 2008). Over the past three decades, researchers have investigated several antecedents in order to better understand the concept, such as, the

ability to take action, self-efficacy and motivation. However, according to Wales et al. (2013) the EO literature shows a notable inconsistency and bias with regard to the construct's antecedents. In a recent article, Randerson (2016) suggested the investigation of the psychological antecedents of EO through a processual approach to allow organisations to perceive it as a real time dynamic developmental process. In addition, it was clear from the literature that previous studies have made several attempts to identify several entrepreneurial motivations. For instance, Pittino et al. (2017) identified several internal and external motivations and personal traits that lead to a higher EO. These motivations are the need for achievement, emotional attachment, material needs, the need for independence, social expectations, the internal locus of control and tolerance of ambiguity.

Another study acknowledged several entrepreneurial processes with regard to new ventures (e.g. Schindehutte et al., 2006). These are extreme positive feeling, extreme level of performance and a full capacity for engagement in an activity. However, the proposition of this study is that EO is a continuous behavioural approach and thus the antecedents that lead to EO are required at every stage of a firm's lifecycle. Therefore, this study brings together the antecedents that lead and maintain EO and identifies other behavioural elements that are considered entrepreneurial in SMEs.

It is also important to clarify that the sample represents working and sustainable SMEs. This is what makes the study distinctive, as the participants were selected carefully from sustained SMEs. In addition, this study has made an attempt to explore the antecedents that lead to EO by evaluating them in enterprises at different ages of their life cycle. Consequently, results from this

study show that the process of EO, including its antecedents, are a continuous process and is not limited to any stage of a firm's lifecycle.

6.2.1. Primary Antecedents Underlying EO

The empirical results have identified two primary and five secondary antecedents that lead to EO. Their categorisation reflects the level of emphasis placed by participants on each component. The two primary components were passion and relevant work experience. From the empirical results, passion always came first by twenty-six (n26) participants out of the total sample (n29). Passion has been identified in the literature using two different terms: one is 'passion for work' and the second is 'entrepreneurial passion'. 'Passion for work' determines the extent to which entrepreneurs derive joy from their work and its related activities (De Clercq et al., 2013). However, 'entrepreneurial passion' has been conceptualised as "*consciously accessible, intense positive feelings experienced by engagement in entrepreneurial activities associated with roles that are meaningful and salient to the self-identity of the entrepreneur*" (Cardon et al., 2009). Passion in entrepreneurship ensures the persistence of the entrepreneur in maintaining the same level of enthusiasm to achieve goals at every stage of the firm's life-cycle (Cardon and Kirk, 2015). According to the empirical findings, passion as a component creates a high level of determination in the entrepreneur to persevere.

However, previous studies have not shown passion as an antecedent or as an element of the process that leads to EO. Instead, studies have shown that EO requires action to be taken to pursue opportunities. For instance, Shane

et al. (2003) indicate that the process of entrepreneurship occurs because entrepreneurs pursue opportunities by acting upon them. However, several recent studies have shown that EO and passion for work are two complementary items that enhance SMEs performance (e.g. Adomako et al., 2016). Nevertheless, passion has always been considered the heart of entrepreneurship and a central characteristic of an entrepreneur (Cardon et al., 2013; Mueller et al., 2017). Passion has also been seen as a good explanation for sustained entrepreneurial behaviour and the self-efficacy of the entrepreneur (Cardon and Kirk, 2015). Therefore, it is clear that entrepreneurs require a continuous passion to assist them in overcoming the struggles they face over the years of running their businesses, and not only in certain periods of the businesses' lifetime.

However, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) have identified passion as more specifically a precursor to innovativeness. They suggest that passionate commitment in mastering the latest in new products or technological advances are antecedents of innovativeness. This also aligns with some empirical findings from this study, which have identified that passion can work as a source of innovativeness. However, none of the participants limited their definition of passion to innovativeness. Rather, they defined passion for work as a “fuel to make the engine move”. They emphasised it is a component that is essential to back up EO in all of its dimensions and in every stage of the firm's lifecycle.

The participants have also identified two approaches to classify the level of passion of entrepreneurs. They noted that passion can be seen as a reflection of some actions and/or processes. Passion through action is identified practically, based on many activities such as working hours, dedication to

learning, amount of money that has been invested and many other actions that comprise the level of passion. However, passion can be seen more from an emotional perspective and it can explain the “prerequisite” behind the entrepreneur taking such steps, for instance, following an internal desire and working to achieve personal goals. These sorts of desires encourage the actions and build more passion to succeed. Cardon et al. (2017, p. 24) have identified six main entrepreneurial passion resources, these are: *“passion for growth, passion for people, passion for the product or service, passion for inventing, passion for competition, and passion for a social cause”*. In Saudi Arabia, participants have rarely shown passion for the product and for competition. However, passion for growth and achieving an internal desire seems to be the dominant motivators.

Therefore, passion for internal desires is seen as an important reason behind entrepreneurial intentions in SA. The results refer to four main reasons for this. First, most entrepreneurs have sufficient financial back-up to support them if they don’t succeed. Second, the cultural influence on the motivation to invest is based on their aim to appear to be a successful entrepreneur so they achieve an internal desire ultimately based on seeking external approval. Third, competition was very low for all successful entrepreneurs before the execution of the transition plan due to the stable economy. Fourth, regardless of the process that builds or enhances passion, it is clear that passion as a component can be derived from many foundations but the reflection of passion on work is what really matters.

The second primary antecedent is ‘human capital’ and in particular, attributes related to relevant work experience and background. As

demonstrated from the empirical findings, these two combined elements are also essential for EO. Due to the various settings that each market has, experience and background inside the potential market are critical for SMEs. Unger et al. (2011) have concluded that there is a positive relationship between successful entrepreneurs and human capital. Attributes of human capital are experience, knowledge, skills and education. However, the definition of relevant work experience, which was provided by the participants, was basically the breadth of knowledge about the basic know-how in performing a certain job inside a specific market. This includes legal work, dealing with competition, product specifications, exploring potential customers, financing, available manpower and other logistical issues.

According to the empirical results, relevant work experience and background assists entrepreneurs in four main ways. First, they minimise overall costs by reducing the length of the planning and executing period. Second, they ease access to logistics so that firms can ensure the continuous supply of raw materials and other logistical issues. Third, they ease legal understanding and assist in addressing compliance issues. Fourth, they facilitate customer informed design and product or service acceptance. The experience required is not limited to these four main areas of expertise, however, these are the most important from the perspective of the participants. In addition, education and work experience have been identified in the literature as two elements underpinning entrepreneurial quality in a theoretical framework developed by Santos et al. (2012). They have been categorised as elements that strengthen entrepreneurial quality. Therefore, the results from this study

extend prior work on the relationship between education and experience and EO.

To summarise, passion is a behavioural component that underlies EO. Thus, it is an important element in every stage of the business lifecycle, not only in the early stages or during economic downturns because SMEs require every effort to be made during good and bad periods to help them sustain and grow. Due to the ongoing challenges which SMEs face on a daily basis, passion seems to be a vital component every day, in every event, and in every economic condition. According to Cardon (2008) passion should be contagious and transmitted to every member of the firm including stakeholders such as employees as it is the component that builds determination, dedication and persistence. Also, relevant work experience and background were considered to be the most important attributes from human capital theory by entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia. However, previous studies have shown that the importance of human capital, which includes relevant work experience, background, skills and education varies in every stage of the business lifecycle (Chang and Hsieh, 2011) and in different strategies such as the internationalisation of SMEs (e.g. Javalgi and Todd, 2011; Andersén, 2019). So, every SME must leverage its human capital attribute to suit each stage of their lifecycle. Therefore, it can be said that this study has identified two major drivers from the human capital theory that influence EO along with passion as primary antecedents that lead to higher EO in SMEs.

6.2.2. Secondary Antecedents Underlying EO

The five other elements which were identified as antecedents that lead to EO were volunteerism and community serving, working in areas of interest, identification of a need, self-confidence and commitment. These components seem less essential, but they still have a notable impact on EO. The reason why they appear less essential is because the participants varied in the importance they placed on them. For instance, some entrepreneurs (n8) valued the role that voluntary work takes in shaping entrepreneurial behaviour, others thought that entrepreneurs gain benefits from these activities by increasing their networks and obtaining access to the community, which then result in more consumers. Below is a discussion of these five components from a theoretical viewpoint in comparison to the empirical results.

To begin with, volunteerism and community serving as elements that underlie EO was not represented in the literature. Though there were several articles which discussed the personality of social entrepreneurs (e.g. Stephan and Drencheva, 2017). However, this is not what this study is investigating. Before moving on, it is important to clarify the differences between entrepreneurs spending time voluntarily to support social activities, which is the case in this study, and social entrepreneurship, which refers to individuals who establish their enterprises for social objectives rather than for profit (Shaw and Carter, 2007). Although social enterprises may focus on profit, they invest them in social missions and social development objectives. Eight (n8) of the participants valued their previous or continuous experience in volunteerism and community serving. They consider that these activities have raised their EO and have assisted them in becoming involved in new and sometimes different

experiences that broaden their business horizon. It also gave them the strength to face difficult times by teaching them to be patient and it trained them in how to maximise their use of time on a daily basis. In addition, some successful entrepreneurs state that this is an obligation towards the community to serve and assist others. This is why they have formed a consultation group and recently started a tour around the country to mentor and guide new ventures on how to overcome obstacles in the early days of an enterprise.

Volunteerism and serving the community appear to be useful for entrepreneurs with regard to shaping their EO. From the results, it appears that they assist entrepreneurs in gaining personal satisfaction and recognition and it provides them with different challenges for developing their skills. We cannot separate volunteering and serving the community from religion because Islam encourages “Sadaqah” which means ‘giving without seeking any rewards’. This can be through many means such as money, time, effort or experience. Therefore, it can be said that values of faith have a role in articulating EO of individuals in Saudi Arabia. This might not be limited to this context: the impact of values and beliefs of different religions can play a key role in influencing the EO of individuals in different research contexts. For the purpose of this study, volunteerism and community serving has been identified as a secondary element that underlies EO for research participants.

The second component in this category is for entrepreneurs to work in their area of interest. This component causes individuals to develop products and services that they are passionate about. The participants noted that this component increases entrepreneurs’ motivation and dedication to work. It also reduces the level of fear when launching new products or service due to the

knowledge that the entrepreneur has in his/her field of interest. This also aligns with arguments from a study by Shane et al. (2003) that entrepreneurial process is critically influenced by human motivation. Yet motivational factors have different levels of influence on the entrepreneurial process. They are not limited to this component; however, the participants strongly emphasised this component as it was their opinion that it raised the level of motivation in terms of their enterprise.

According to the participants, working in an area of personal interest is considered an element that positively affects entrepreneurial motivation. In fact, this component overlaps with one of the primary components proposed earlier which is, work experience. However, it is distinct and totally different as not every individual has work experience in an area that interests them. Instead, if they are interested in something, they become expert at it if they are able to keep up with the advances made in that area. This is presumably can open doors for creativity and innovation. This component works as an antecedent of the third component which is self-confidence. The participants have clearly noted that working in an area of interest should enhance the motivation of the entrepreneur thus building a certain level of self-confidence and self-efficacy. As a consequence, participants have named self-confidence the third antecedent in this category that leads to EO.

According to Wilson et al. (2007) Self-confidence refers to the self-perception of the individual of his/her own abilities and skills. It is clear that, taking a decision to establish a new business and leave a secure job is a consequence of high level of confidence in individuals. Self-confidence and self-efficacy in entrepreneurship have gained more attention from researchers

in the field over the last decade (Schmitt et al., 2018; Santos and Liguori, 2019). However, it was clear from the participants viewpoint that confidence was among the drivers that led them to establish their own businesses. This aligns with findings from a study by Jodyanne (2009) whose study concluded that self-confidence affects the decisions and actions of entrepreneurs in established businesses. These particularly impacts on business growth and access to finance.

Some scholars have noted that self-confidence denotes self-efficacy or vice versa (Jodyanne, 2009; Wilson et al., 2007). It is clear that they are two related elements, but they work on a different stage as this study suggests, and as shown in figure 6.1. Self-efficacy is a person's belief in him/herself to perform a task relying on their capabilities (Bandura, 1977). Self-efficacy has been found to be a main driver of persistence in entrepreneurs (Cardon and Kirk, 2015) and more aggressive decisions related to investments (Cassar and Friedman, 2009). Sources of self-efficacy were identified by several scholars as mainly related to areas of mastery experience and learning capabilities (Bandura, 1977; Wood and Bandura, 1989). The empirical results are compatible with the literature in the general understanding of self-efficacy. However, this study suggests that work experience is a main component that enhances self-confidence for entrepreneurs when making decisions. Self-efficacy, which comes as a result of self-confidence, brings these decisions into actions. Given the fact that entrepreneurs often fail, they make great efforts to persist and pursue their goals. Therefore, for a successful entrepreneur and for positive results from the proposed process, relevant work experience must

come as an antecedent of self-confidence, and self-efficacy comes later as a component that underlies EO.

With regard to confidence it is worth noting that this study assumes that confidence is an element that is significantly related to risk taking because, if the entrepreneur is financially and socially safe then the level of confidence in taking the next step in the business will be high. However, if the financial and social status of the entrepreneur is unstable, then the level of confidence will noticeably decrease (Kreiser et al., 2010). So, as in the studied context individuals have a more secure economic status and high SME institutional support, entrepreneurs generally are mainly risking their social status. Therefore, I consider self-confidence to be an antecedent that leads to EO, however, it is believed that the financial and social status of the economy have a major effect on this component.

The fourth component in this category is identification of a need. Many could argue that this component should be a primary one (e.g. Reynolds et al., 2002; Mota et al., 2019). However, the participants of this study had different views in this regard. Most of them were of the opinion that need is a component that is changeable overtime and therefore it cannot be among the primary components. From the time they started the business until now, many of the participants identified several different needs they used to consider. Some of them stated that they needed the business because they were unemployed at that time and others stated that they needed the business to satisfy some internal desire. Three (n3) of the participants only mentioned financial needs and this is unusual. However, all entrepreneurs (n21) agreed on one point and

that is that in every stage of the business lifecycle, the identified need completely changed.

Previous studies have considered identification of need as what they call push and pull motivations for entrepreneurship (Zwan et al., 2016). According to Mota et al. (2019) most of the literature has made a distinction in their investigation of motivation. They considered the positive factors as ones that “pull” people, and negative factors as ones that “push” people towards entrepreneurship. For example, pull motivations are the need for achievement and the desire to be an independent businessperson. On the other hand, push motivations are factors such as the fear of employment insecurity and the desire to change the individual’s current situation. From another perspective, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM) has also distinguished between these motivations by introducing two categories, ‘entrepreneurship by opportunity’ or ‘entrepreneurship by necessity’. Necessity entrepreneurs are the ones who start a business because they are unemployed and that compels them to start a business. On the other hand, opportunity entrepreneurs are individuals who start a business by exploiting a given opportunity. Considering all perspectives, it is clear that identification of need is a component that is a primary antecedent for EO. However, it has been categorised among the secondary components for two reasons. First, it often related to passion and experience and second, it is not a fixed competency as the majority of participants noted that they started their businesses without identifying a clear need behind the business.

Researchers have noted that identification of a need is a factor impacting entrepreneurial passion, and that passion builds a high level of persistence (Cardon and Kirk, 2015). It has also been stated that when goals, actions and

roles are identified, individuals are more likely to persist in achieving them (Houser-Marko and Sheldon, 2006). The participants in this study have similar perceptions on this. However, they think that it goes beyond persistence and it creates a type of determination and insistent behaviours when faced with difficulties and challenges. This was emphasised by Wu et al. (2007) when they noted that persistence helps to sustain the efforts of entrepreneurs in terms of the business over time including complex challenges.

The last component is self-commitment, which refers to the partners' willingness to adhere to agreements made between each other without any safety controls such as written documents (Fink and Harms, 2012). This component refers to the trust behaviour of the entrepreneur when dealing with others (Krishnan et al., 2006). Self-commitment in Saudi Arabia shows the extent to which entrepreneurs are able to make a relationship with other firms in order to work with them and to fulfil verbal obligations even if they were not written and legally bonded as many deals are made through phone calls and casual meetings on many occasions, followed only later by formal agreements.

The participants in this study believed that it is essential to show a high level of self-commitment and to prove this with people working with them either internally or externally, and to monitor the fine line between being committed and being naïve. They emphasised that inside the organisation, colleagues and employees copy the behaviour of the entrepreneur or the person who manages the enterprise. Therefore, punctuality, commitment to promises and achievements, and transparency are critical elements of success with their team. On the other hand, credibility and fulfilment of financial promises prove a high level of self-commitment with the external community including suppliers,

third party contractors and others. Consequently, this component secures and eases supply and other operational issues. These findings align with previous literature, which found that self-commitment help firms in reducing costs (Dyer, 1997). In addition, it reinforces the results from a study by Fink and Harms (2012) which reveals that the performance of companies within TEs is positively related to self-commitment.

Figure 6. 1. below shows three different levels of components that work as antecedents of EO. The two green square shapes are the primary antecedents of EO, which are passion and relevant work experience and background. These two primary antecedents have an influence on the following five antecedents which are identification of a need, working in areas of interest, volunteering and serving the community, self-confidence and self-commitment. Identification of a need showed a two-way relationship with passion. The final component is self-efficacy, which comes as a result of the latter two, which are self-confidence and self-commitment. The figure below summarises the antecedents of EO and shows their relationships.

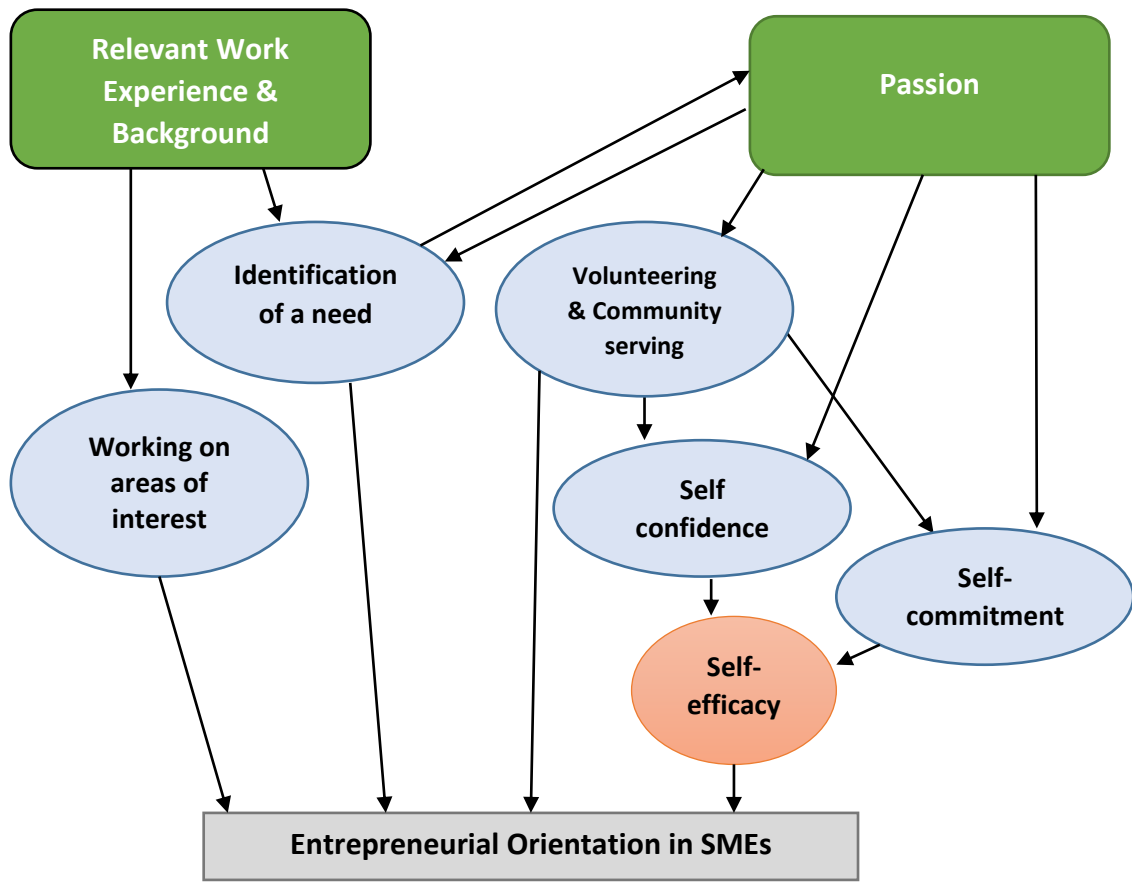


Figure 6. 1. The Relationships of the Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Orientation, Author (2020)

6.2.3. Re-defining Entrepreneurial Orientations

EO is argued to be a well-conceptualised concept that has been widely studied in the entrepreneurship literature (Covin and Lumpkin, 2011; Su et al., 2011; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005). This widespread perception has brought forward many definitions of the concept that can describe it in the most appropriate format. Miller's (1983, p. 771) definition of an entrepreneurial firm is one which is *"a firm that engages in product market innovation, undertakes somewhat risky ventures, and is first to come up with 'proactive' innovations, beating competitors to the punch"*. Morris and Paul (1987, p. 251) defined EO as *"the propensity of a company's top management to take calculated risks, to be innovative, and to demonstrate pro-activeness in their approach to strategic*

decision making'. Lumpkin and Dess's (1996, p. 138) definition is simpler and more practical. They defined EO as "*the processes, practices, and decision-making activities that lead to a new entry*". All of these definitions can be potentially considered and understood from different perspectives and provide various meanings. In fact, the concept of EO has gained much attention and scholars have provided many interpretations of these definitions over the last three decades.

As part of this study and after exploring the antecedents that lead to EO, this research proposes a new detailed definition of EO that can show the dimensions of EO and its related antecedents. As we can see, none of these definitions provide an explanation of these antecedents or the behaviours that lead to successful EO. The closest is the model by Lumpkin and Dess (1996) in which they attempted to distinguish between entrepreneurship as a general topic and EO as a concept, but they still did not provide any details about the antecedents and the practices apart from several components such as entrepreneurial intention, actions and opportunity definition (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). Given this, the current study has consulted most of the existing definitions of EO and synthesised them with their antecedents, which were identified by the participants, in order to redefine the concept of EO. Therefore, the proposed definition is provided in a more a processual approach rather than several dimensions that stand alone. It is also important to note that these antecedents are perceived by entrepreneurs who own or manage SMEs in a TE which is Saudi Arabia, so they might not all apply to every economy. On the other hand, the sample included different SMEs from different sectors in order to offer a wider perspective.

Based on what has been stated previously, this study views EO as “an invention or an adaptation of an idea, product, process or service with a proactive approach towards realise it, which entails a planned risk-taking orientation, technological capability and an aggressive or coalition approach with competitors. For this to happen, passion for work, relevant work experience, self-confidence, commitment, volunteerism and community serving, identification of a need and working in an area of an entrepreneur’s interest are key antecedents which underlies this orientation”. As the underlying antecedents become stronger and active, the EO becomes more effective. This approach works effectively at every stage of the business lifecycle and is not only limited to new ventures.

One last point which is considered necessary by participants is to utilise technology. Most of the participants state that being familiar with technology should be considered as one extra dimension within the concept of EO. The participants hypothesise that many SMEs have gone out of business as a consequence of lag and insufficient utilisation of technology. Therefore, this study recommends that familiarity with aspects related to modern technology is a new dimension that should be included in the concept of EO. This dimension will affect all other dimensions of EO including innovativeness, risk-taking, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness and autonomy. Previous work has shown how technology can affect EO and how it enhances the innovativeness and lowers costs, which results in the enterprise obtaining a competitive advantage (e.g. Renko et al., 2009; Ross and Blumenstein, 2014). However, this is the first proposal to include technological capability as a main skill or

dimension that is essential for every entrepreneur to master now and in the future.

The influence of technology on EO was investigated in the previous literature mainly to explore the mediation effect of technology on EO and performance. For instance, a positive and significant relationship between technology orientation, EO and performance is indicated in a study of 240 Nigerian SMEs (Ibrahim et al., 2017). Another study by Choi and Williams (2016) investigates the relationship between EO and performance by investigating the mediating effect of technology orientation against marketing action in 489 Korean SMEs. They found that technology orientation and marketing actions mediate the relationship between EO and performance. However, technology has a stronger effect on manufacturing industries, while in the service sector marketing actions have a stronger effect. Therefore, this study extends the previous literature in identifying the positive and significant effect of technology on SMEs. Moreover, it suggests that technological capability should be a distinct dimension that distinguishes entrepreneurs from normal business owners. Similarly, with other dimensions of EO, the importance of leveraging technology can sometimes overwhelm certain other dimensions.

Utilisation of technology refers to either being an expert or by knowing how to make use of it. Entrepreneurs must leverage the technology to the best extent possible to improve existing and future business decisions. The participants in this study have demonstrated several successful practices related to technology. One of them has scaled up his business in six months in more than twenty cities via a mobile application. Three have made a significant

sales growth by affiliating with a service provider that has a huge customer database. Therefore, this study maintains that it is the time for entrepreneurs to familiarize themselves with the effective role that technology plays in businesses these days and to include it as a unique dimension within EO.

Some consequences of technology have been shared by participants, which apparently makes it an element that affects most of the EO's dimensions. For instance, it takes less time to manage the operation and logistical issues, therefore, entrepreneurs are freer to innovate their products, services or processes. Moreover, it reduces the risks associated with investment with regard to establishing new stores or even to launching a big marketing campaign. In addition, it is clear that it is a tool that increases the pro-activeness of the entrepreneur by making it easier to exploit opportunities. Finally, all the above examples show that technology should work as a tool that enhances the firms' competitive advantage in the market. So, SMEs which are the main focus of this study can sustain in this period of transition and grow in periods of economic stability.

6.2.4. Summary

This first section responds to the call to identify the antecedents that lead to EO (Miller, 2011; Randerson, 2016; Wales, 2016). The proposition was that, without having a clear processual approach for entrepreneurship, every business owner would assume themselves as entrepreneurs. Thus, as this study considers EO is positively related to EM, the need to explore antecedents of EO was key in order to establish a solid base for EM. The antecedents that

lead to EO, as previously identified, are mostly related to psychological or functional behaviours. These are passion for work, relevant work experience, self-confidence, commitment, volunteerism and community serving, identification of a need and working in an area of interest to the entrepreneur. These results confirm some previous attempts to identify what motivates entrepreneurship among university students (De Clercq et al., 2013), early stage firms (Bird, 1988; Estay et al., 2013) and internationalisation of new ventures (Yamakawa et al., 2008). However, this study has brought a wider perspective to the process of EO. It has also proven some of the previously mentioned attempts in the literature by using existing and successful SMEs, which have passed through almost all stages of the business lifecycle, apart from the decline stage, and overcome a recent downturn in a TE.

The antecedents were categorised in two separate groups known as primary and secondary components. This categorisation was based on the level of emphasis that was provided by entrepreneurs during the dialogue. First, primary components are passion for work and relevant work experience. Second, secondary components are working in an area of interest to the entrepreneur, volunteerism and community serving, identification of a need, self-confidence and commitment. This identification assists in obtaining an initial clarification of whether EO is an internal behaviour that cannot be acquired, or it is a bundle of skills that can be obtained or developed by entrepreneurs so that they better manage their enterprises.

Finally, this study has provided a re-definition of EO that combines its dimensions and antecedents. The proposed definition extends previous work on EO and its unique dimensions by identifying the antecedents that lead to this

orientation. This definition was arrived at through combining what the existing literature refers to as EO and which elements were identified from the empirical work. However, the definition still needs validation because participants had different perceptions of innovativeness and competitive aggressiveness, in particular due to several reasons mentioned above. In addition, the identified antecedents of EO requires more evaluation from a wider sample and in different geographical contexts. This study focused on SMEs in a certain wealthy economy, which is passing through a once-in-a-lifetime transition period transforming all aspects of society. The unique characteristics of the context of this study, which is SA, are discussed in the following section.

6.3. Entrepreneurial Orientation in SMEs in Saudi Arabia

6.3.1. Overview

Saudi Arabia as well as the other Gulf states have different social, cultural and economic settings compared to other countries (Alharbi, 2014). These differences are mostly related to the nature of their tribal societies and the Islamic faith, which is the dominant faith in these countries. Nevertheless, the high GDP which these states have achieved over the last five decades has created a strong perception which made people rely on jobs rather than establishing any form of enterprise. If we look back forty years, we see a completely different picture. Many of the existing enterprises and family businesses were formed during that time and they still exist now. So, this intention of relying on jobs and not making an effort to start businesses did not exist forty years ago. This could be due to the increase in oil prices, until it

reached its highest four years ago and dropped dramatically due to low demand. By then, governments realised that there was a huge reliance on oil as a major source of the annual budget and a major corrective solution had to be applied to counter such price falls in the future.

The Saudi Arabian government felt the impact of this on the overemployment rates within the governmental sector, which used to consume almost 65% of the annual budget, according to the Ministry of Finance's public reports (2016). Together with other factors such as high unemployment rates among new graduates, the government started to encourage entrepreneurship as one dimension of its transition plan and the ambitious vision 2030 through many channels such as the initiation of 'Munshaat', the General Authority of SMEs (Saudi Vision 2030 Report, 2016).

This contextual assessment shared by most of the participants, who stated that the economy should be balanced and entrepreneurship must be at the heart of the economy. However, the results indicate that it is felt it is still not possible for entrepreneurs to grow or at least sustain unless governments support SMEs. This could take the form of waiving some fees, exempting them from some laws, and providing them with the opportunity to obtain contracts from governmental entities in a form of small projects that can secure them financially. This is thought to be crucial when passing through a transition period which causes a downturn in the economy. This was one of the reasons behind this study as it is perceived that the identification of the antecedents will assist SMEs in being more entrepreneurially oriented in order to help them to overcome consequences of the transition period. Thus, this approach will clarify

perspectives on various dimensions of EO as applied to a novel economical context.

6.3.2. Different Interpretations of EO Dimensions

There is no doubt that culture, politics, economic roles, institutional affect and faith are seen as major influencers of EO in this context. This perception aligns with previous research which investigated the impact of these different factors on EO (e.g. Muller and Goic, 2002; Alexandrova, 2004; Walter and Smallbone, 2011). Certainly, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) noted that entrepreneurs have different capabilities on every dimension of EO and therefore firms can apply some dimensions more effectively than others. Similarly, this study perceives that dimensions of EO are defined and applied differently between various cultures based on many factors. Some of these factors have been noted frequently in this study and they are institutional support (mainly governmental entities), the education system, social influence and religion. This section will evaluate how each dimension subsumed within the concept of EO is perceived by entrepreneurs in Saudi Arabia.

The first dimension is innovativeness which generally reflects the entrepreneur's ability to exploit opportunities available in the market using a pioneering approach (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). In a society that is less innovative, it is apparently rare to observe innovativeness through SMEs. However, the participants in this study seemed to show innovative orientations based on the adoption of ideas for products, services or processes and modifying them to match the tastes of the local communities. Therefore, this

study has emphasised the importance of the ability to make use of international ideas and adapting them to suit local tastes. According to a recent report by Bloomberg Economics it is perceived that inventions are limited in developing economies compared to developed ones (Jamrisko et al., 2019). However, entrepreneurs often adopt international ideas and inventions and try to reshape them to fulfil people's needs and suit the society they work in. In fact, local entrepreneurs have this capability as they know the market better than others and they are exposed to global ideas more than in the past. Therefore, the concept of adopting and making use of ideas is already in the mind of entrepreneurs. This is why it is believed that adaptation of ideas is of equal importance to innovativeness as a dimension of EO.

The second dimension is pro-activeness, which refers to the ability of the firm to take the initiative to introduce a new product or service ahead of their competitors (Lumpkin and Dess, 2011). It demonstrates the entrepreneur's opportunity-seeking and forward-looking behaviour (Lumpkin et al., 2009). Before the execution of the transition plan and despite opportunity, this dimension was rarely in evidence. According to most of the participants it is generally believed that 90% to 95% of the opportunities in the Saudi Market in almost every sector remain available and untapped. However, nowadays with a reduction in market size and financial capabilities of consumers, SMEs trying to seize opportunities ahead of their competitors is more in evidence. Therefore, the participants of this study, especially in the current slow economic situation, are trying to seize any available opportunity they can. In fact, they started to approach potential customers directly which they did not need to do before this

period. Therefore, this study perceives proactiveness precisely as reported and described in the literature.

Risk-taking, the third dimension, was the most complicated and differentially perceived dimension. These different perspectives are not limited to the studied context, as evidenced across the management literature (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). From the empirical results, this study argues that risk in entrepreneurship is based on many factors such as the financial capability of each entrepreneur, legal instability, economic uncertainty, social and emotional settings. Risk-taking is a dimension that implies strong EO and it refers to the ability of the entrepreneur to tolerate uncertainty and to allocate resources to take advantage of opportunities in the form of new entry or even new product or service (Lee et al., 2011). However, each factor from the ones mentioned above plays a major role in the risk-taking propensity of the entrepreneur. For instance, in SA entrepreneurs rarely mentioned financial risks. The biggest risk is their social status for two reasons. First, either because they have gained sufficient income over the past ten years in their previous jobs or they came from a wealthy family so that they are still financially secure even if the business fails.

Another source of risk that has been noted by every entrepreneur is the uncertainty due to the current economic situation and the fast-changing decisions made by the policy makers with regards to the transition plan. Therefore, this study argues that, to measure the risk-taking dimension fairly it is important to distinguish between financial capability of each entrepreneur, economic status and settings, social ties and beliefs and finally, and most

importantly, networks as this is a factor that reduces the risk for entrepreneurs in the studied context.

With regard to the first three dimensions, the results indicated that the propensity to take risk is higher when an individual has no choice but to establish their own business. Nevertheless, innovativeness was also high in the form of adopting ideas from international markets. Participants have noted that innovativeness is one of the survival instincts during transition periods. In addition, when risk-taking is high the levels of pro-activeness is also high as has been argued by Kreiser et al. (2010) and this was verified within the studied context. This leads to identifying a relationship between some dimensions of EO and factors influencing risk propensity of the entrepreneur. These factors were social influence, financial influence and the family support.

The fourth dimension is one related to bringing an idea to completion and that is autonomy. It was first included as a dimension of the concept of EO by Lumpkin and Dess (1996). They argue that it is not an outcome of entrepreneurial behaviour, in fact it is a defining component. Autonomy describes a team or an organisation that works beyond the common systems and strategies. It is a dimension that shows the entrepreneurial skills in leveraging the existing strengths of the firm, encouraging the development of new ideas or improving business processes, and identifying opportunities that are beyond the firm's current capabilities (Lumpkin et al., 2009). Similarly, results from the participants of this study have defined autonomy as a major component of the concept. However, they emphasised it with regard to leveraging the overall capabilities of the firm in terms of approaching new markets or providing additional services. In practice, autonomy is a dimension

that is seen in the studied context as the ability of the entrepreneur to make use of the available resources to reach a new goal. In addition, it is more valuable during transition periods because many SMEs require more sacrifices from their employees in terms of fewer bonuses and long working hours. However, the most important element is that entrepreneurs commit to their promises, securing trust, when there is a financial upturn as has been described earlier in this chapter regarding self-commitment.

The final dimension in the concept of EO is competitive aggressiveness, where the participants have shown different approaches to this dimension. Scholars have defined this dimension as the challenging approach of the entrepreneur towards competition. It is the response made by the firm in order to protect its competitiveness and its market position (Le Roux and Bengesi, 2014). However, the participants of this study believe that SMEs cannot compete and be aggressive towards the market, despite their size and their market share. They state that the best way for them to sustain and grow is through coalition and partnerships with other enterprises working in the same field. Another way is to serve a niche segment that is very low in competition.

There are two main reasons for these perspectives: first, the lack of inventions and the lack of new ideas in the market requires every enterprise to focus on a niche. Second, the number of available opportunities in the market is considered by many of the participants as limitless. So, entrepreneurs in such contexts do not face fierce competition and so do not experience the dimension based on its real meaning from the literature. In practice, the participants have emphasised two main approaches to facing competition. First, by using a customisation strategy and second, most participants valued coalition and

partnering with competitors. It is worth noting that these responses were registered when these SMEs had already passed through the worst stages of the transition period and their sales figures had started to increase once more.

In fact, results from the empirical exploration correspond to previous work related to entrepreneurship in a TE. For instance, Smallbone and Welter (2006) noted that the level of entrepreneurship of individuals in TEs highly depends on the opportunities available in the market and the entrepreneurs' goals and their perceptions of these opportunities. In addition, they noted that this external condition may impact the contribution of entrepreneurship to the development of the economy in terms of unproductive and destructive entrepreneurship. These results align with the findings from this study, where the sample of successful entrepreneurs identified similar factors that affect EO in the transition period of the economy. However, with regard to the unproductive and destructive forms of entrepreneurship, it is believed that when the transition is being executed, these forms of entrepreneurial activities are meant to be suppressed by the authorities such that they will exist for a certain period of time and then disappear forever. A case in point is the 'Shadow economy' which was mentioned earlier in this study. This means that whilst employees are employed in a specific sector they are illegally working in others. Suppression of such practices was felt by participants to be healthy for the economy in the long run.

Another viewpoint expressed by the participants, was the need for rapid adaptability in entrepreneurs in these types of economies with respect to skills, customer profile, regulation etc. Welter and Smallbone (2003) argued that entrepreneurs in TEs frequently exhibit persistent behaviour where they try to

avoid rules and 'muddle through' to respond to the external environmental conditions. In practical terms, persistent behaviour in a TE looks impossible because the economy is moving towards documentation and legalisation of all of its aspects. Therefore, avoiding rules and finding ways through the policies and fees brought in by the government is not the way to sustain a business. The participants of this study emphasised that entrepreneurs who manage SMEs during such periods require a certain level of dynamism to adapt to these changes in order to sustain. Some of them even stated that it is the role of a transition plan to correct the way business performs, such that firms must follow the correct policy, or they will never survive.

Adaptability regarding management strategy was mentioned repeatedly in the dynamic capability literature (e.g. Borch and Madsen, 2007; Eisenhardt and Martin, 2000). However, this study suggests that the dimension of adaptability is essential to the concept of EO in TE based on the framework shown above (Figure 4. 2.) in chapter 4. The findings from this study do not stand alone, it extends work by Alexandrova (2004) in which she found that the perception of dynamism of the entrepreneur is variable and had the highest impact on EO based on a study of Bulgarian micro-firms entrepreneurs. Nevertheless, as both risk-taking and competitive aggressiveness dimensions were rarely seen in Saudi Arabia due to the consequences of the transition period, eliminating them from the framework of EO's dimensions during TEs should be considered. The table below summarises the results from this section with regard to which dimensions of EO apply to a TE and which do not.

| Existing Dimensions of EO | Dimensions of EO in TE | Other Forms of EO in TE |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Innovativeness | Innovativeness | Adoption of Ideas |
| Proactiveness | Proactiveness | Flexibility |
| Risk-taking | N/A | Adaptability to Change |
| Competitive Aggressiveness | N/A | Partnering/Coalition |
| Autonomy | Autonomy | Autonomy |

Table 6. 1. Entrepreneurial Orientation Dimensions during Transition Economies, Author (2020)

6.3.3. Religion and EO

Religions and beliefs are influential factors that teach and promote values within a given society. They are identified as the values and wisdom repositories and therefore they direct cultural values (Dana et al., 2009). Religion cannot be disregarded when assessing the factors that influence activities related to entrepreneurship (Henley, 2017). This factor was noted repeatedly in the studied context. Entrepreneurs often link their success to faith and God's (Allah) will. Although this study did not intend to investigate the impact of religion on EO, it was noticeable how often entrepreneurs linked their actions, successes and failures to faith along with other business and management strategic views. This might support the summary by Dodd and Gotsis (2007) in which they argue that the interrelationship between entrepreneurship and religion is a highly context-specific one.

There is very little literature that explores how religion might direct the EO in different cultures and societies. For instance, Wales (2016) has mentioned religion in terms of how it could suppress social drivers that might affect EO. This was one of the rare examples in the literature relating EO and religion. However, the number of articles increases when broadening the search to

entrepreneurship and religions. For instance, religious entrepreneurs were found more socially responsible for businesses than non-religious ones (Brammer et al., 2007). In addition, it was noted that entrepreneurship might gain encouragement from religion but at the same time it restricts the range of sectors in which entrepreneurship occurs and can be supported (Dana et al., 2009). A case in point is that Islam prohibits Usury (interest payments on loan) and that prevents some businesses from expanding. However, it encourages entrepreneurship and discourages inactivity and absolute dependence.

From a broader perspective, Batjargal (2010) argues that local settings, social norms, culture, and personality are factors which control the entrepreneur's behaviour towards growth and performance. In fact, faith and religion can influence every aspect of the above including culture, norms, personality and local settings. Therefore, this study encourages further research to investigate the role that religion has in affecting EO. This study highlighted some effects that Islam has had on EO as discussed in the previous chapters on findings. Despite the fact that global authorities such as the United Nations, are encouraging more sustainable and cleaner business environments, and that religion can direct cultural values, advancing the research into EO and institutional logic in specific religions might strengthen understanding this relationship and contribute to increasing business values in entrepreneurs which in turn can help develop sustainable business environments.

6.3.4. Summary

This section has demonstrated how the different dimensions of EO are perceived and interpreted in a different context, which is SA. This is a context that carries different social and cultural values and an economy which has a high GDP. This section concludes that EO is perceived differently based on several elements such as educational background, economic status, culture and religion. In addition, this section has summarised some cultural and religious perspectives related to the implementation of EO in SA in general as well as in the current period of economic transition. Therefore, it is clear that different types of economies have different cultural, economic and religious settings which determine the way that the EO dimensions are interpreted and applied. The next section will demonstrate to what extent EO dominates and influences EM in SMEs. This will assist in creating a clearer picture in order to synthesise both concepts to assist SMEs in approaching the market more effectively.

6.4. Entrepreneurial Orientation Precedes Entrepreneurial Marketing

EO is a concept that describes the strategic approach and behaviour of certain enterprises (Mintzberg, 1973). EM on the other hand is another strategic concept that is more customer and market oriented (Morris et al., 2002). From a wider perspective, researchers have claimed that both entrepreneurship and marketing have similar underlying philosophies considering both are customer-oriented (e.g. Hills and LaForge, 1992). In a study by Kilenthong et al. (2015) EO was identified as an antecedent of EM behaviour. However, the findings

from this study agree with this identification but only if adding two more components which interlink both EO and EM (Figure 6. 2).

Results from the participants of this study showed that the EO dimensions affect the way the whole enterprise functions, including marketing. Successful marketers in SA have stated that two additional major components are missing i.e. human capital and market information. The need for these two components increases when SMEs have problems with finance and where they want to reduce the number of less impactful activities or functions of the enterprise such as in a TE environment. As argued by some participants, marketing activities are frozen in enterprises which have little knowledge of marketing whilst they increased innovatively in firms which have a great deal of marketing knowledge. This knowledge was mainly gained through this previous experience of the entrepreneurs themselves who now own these enterprises.

In the literature, there is still scarce evidence about what underlies EM behaviour in SMEs. However, several exploratory studies have been published in different journals investigating antecedents of EM. For instance, a study by Lee et al. (2001) argues that entrepreneurially-oriented firms can recognise market opportunities better and faster than their competitors, considering that opportunity recognition is one dimension of EM. Another study of SMEs revealed that entrepreneurial and market orientation (MO) lead to superior performance especially in turbulent environments (Buli, 2017). These attempts to link the concepts of EO and EM or MO were few and do not provide the explicit understanding about the link between EO and EM apart from the study mentioned above by Kilenthong et al. (2015). However, this study did not mention any other factors that affect this relationship. Nevertheless, MO is

different from EM as MO is more related to linking an organisation's actions consistently with marketing concepts (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990).

This study has identified two major components along with the EO dimensions, where they all work together to stimulate EM. These components are human capital incorporating specific marketing knowledge, talent and experience on the one hand and efficient market information on the other. The results from this study identified this based on twelve (n12) successful entrepreneurs who explicitly stated that a lack of marketing knowledge discouraged them from conducting any marketing activities during such a period of transition. They all agreed on the advantages of marketing and they stated that if they possessed these additional components, they would be in a better position in the market compared to their current position.

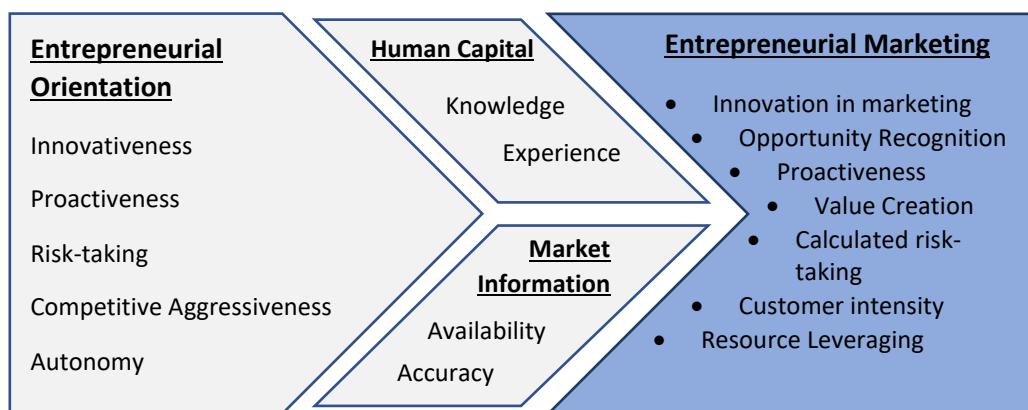


Figure 6. 2. Human Capital and Market Information in Addition to Dimensions of EO Underlies EM Orientation in SMEs, Author (2020)

In summary, this study contributes to EM and its related literature by investigating the relationship between EM and EO in SMEs in TE. It can be stated that EO is a concept that is reflected at the higher managerial levels,

while EM is more reflected at the marketing operational levels. This conclusion aligns with one study to date by Jones et al. (2013) which proposes a model of EM's background based on the definition of EM in the existing literature. It cannot be ignored that EM plays a major role in formulating a marketing strategy at the top level but indeed it is of equal importance at the operational levels. For instance, people who execute marketing strategies should be able to apply all dimensions of EM in order to implement the strategy in an effective way, otherwise, there is no benefit in locating EM behaviours at the strategic level. The figure below (Figure 6. 3) demonstrates the findings of the previous several sections of this study encompassing the antecedents of EO and the interrelation between EO and EM.

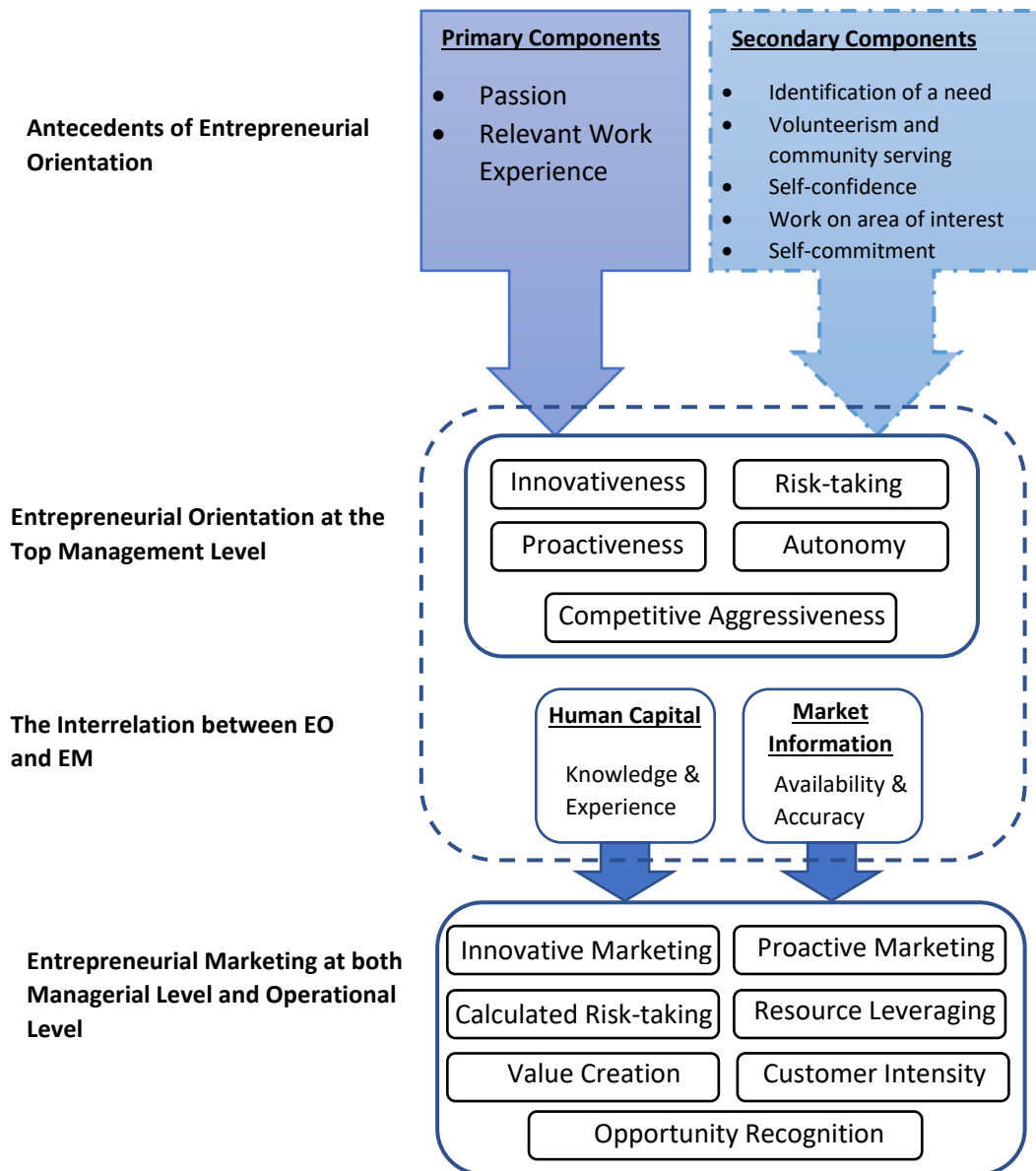


Figure 6. 3. Linking Entrepreneurial Orientation and Entrepreneurial Marketing in SMEs, Author (2020)

The following section will demonstrate the most applicable marketing strategies and tools for SMEs in TEs. It focuses on the practical side of the Saudi Arabian context in which this study took place and links it to what is available in the existing literature.

6.5. Entrepreneurial Marketing for SMEs in Transition Economies

The present study aimed to enhance the way that SMEs approach the market in TE, so that they can increase the impact and reduce the costs of their marketing activities. In TE, the majority of businesses are affected due to the overall economic transformation. In addition, managerial attitudes in this period seem to change. Singh (2003) argues that firms in TE tend to plan and commit towards improving their response to satisfy the changing needs of their existing and potential customers. Similarly, in Saudi Arabia, SMEs were affected by the consequences of the transition plan. This is why this study has taken two main paths so that SMEs strengthen their position to overcome such consequences. The first path was to identify the antecedents of EO, as it is perceived that EO has a strong impact on EM based on the arguments offered in the previous section. The second main path which is provided in this section is to evaluate the most effective marketing strategies that can be applied in this period. These strategies and tools were identified based on the participants' viewpoints.

Moreover, this section is an attempt to address and clarify the gap raised by Jones and Rowley (2011) in which they argue that the decision-making process related to aspects of marketing strategies in SMEs is not clear. In addition, the section will identify the most useful tools that assist SMEs in enhancing the execution of their marketing campaigns. Both tools and strategies were identified by the participants in Chapter 5, but the current section will demonstrate their link to the existing literature. Kumar (2017) notes that marketing academia has offered few resources in helping firms to understand emerging practical topics in marketing. This study aims to fill this

gap and to create the link between academic theory and practitioners in the area of marketing for SMEs in TEs.

6.5.1. Customisation and Serving a Niche

One of the key findings of this study was that all entrepreneurs, regardless of the sector, agreed that customisation and/or serving a niche are key to succeeding in TE. Both strategies are considered one of the survival choices by all participants. In the literature, customisation and serving a niche segment were identified by Carson (1985) as one of the SMEs' characteristics, which is to have a small market share. O'Dwyer et al. (2009) have identified customisation as a key characteristic which has an impact on innovative marketing for SMEs. However, according to Stachowski (2012) the strategy of serving niche markets was often discussed in side conversations not as a main research topic. This is why it was difficult to reach any conclusions in their literature review study, although it focused on investigating niche marketing strategy among the internationally oriented SMEs in New Zealand.

The main goal for customisation is to minimise waste of effort and increase quality in all aspects of the business. Brunoe and Nielsen (2016) argue that an increase in product variety will result in increase in cost and hinder the manufacturing process. One might say that an increase in the product portfolio should result in an increase in customer base. This might be correct; however, it might also be incorrect if the profit to cost ratio was negative. Therefore, this study supports that customisation can assist SMEs in minimising operational costs, offering a distinctive service and increasing the quality of their products.

In addition, it allows more time to focus on side activities such as marketing and supply chain and to come up with innovative ideas that give the firm its real edge. This will also contribute to the value proposition of the firm that is offered to its customers, which will result in higher retention rates and more loyal customers. Then, if this is done correctly, it will produce the competitive edge that the firm aimed for.

Therefore, based on this discussion and the findings from the empirical work earlier, it can be said that customisation and serving a niche segment in the market is an important strategic position for survival for SMEs in TE. Hence SMEs need to consider them as two distinct characteristics which they need to strengthen and to focus on in transition periods. These findings extend argument by Brunoe and Nielsen (2016) as it explores how the strategy of customisation and serving a niche work as a survival choice for SMEs in a TE. The results from this study confirm that this strategy is a conscious choice by SME managers or entrepreneurs and not simply a consequence of being an SME. The key is that the choice provides entrepreneurs or managers the opportunity to choose the appropriate segment and to minimise the costs and efforts associated with any consequent expansion step.

6.5.2. Dealing with Competition in SMEs in Transition Economies

The second strategy for SMEs which assists in cost reduction and operation efficiency is to minimise the competition orientation through partnering. There is no doubt that competition is a major factor that every firm considers especially when selling typical or only partially differentiated products

or services. However, an interesting finding raised by the participants made dealing with this element less challenging and more innovative. Nine (n9) of the participants encourage partnering with other enterprises in the same sector. In SA over the last three years, many small enterprises have merged together to leverage the overall costs. This approach can be seen as an innovative one which is only achievable by dynamic entrepreneurs. Some have called this “share resources program” others call it a “merger between enterprises”. In practice, a few small enterprises merge together to create a middle-sized enterprise so that they are able to increase cost efficiency as well as take advantage of many other benefits. This view is not new in the literature of SMEs and competition. Chorev and Anderson (2006) found that small technology firms can expand their limited resources and capabilities through networking with partners. Therefore, they encouraged partnerships with major corporations to overcome the issues related to limited resources and market penetration.

A recent study suggests that partnership is an element that must be included in a framework called marketing for sustainability (Pomering, 2017). Hence, another study argue that it is more important for SMEs to sustain their business by considering partnering through networks as it is an important element of the entrepreneurial process (Jack et al., 2010). Moreover, scholars argue that new types of strategic relationships with competitors and co-workers are more essential than individual pursuit of simple increase in the number of sales transactions and contracts (Piercy, 2016). Yet, the approach followed in SA looked different from the approaches scholars have raised in the literature. Entrepreneurs work to create new holding company that bring all these small firms together as one entity. Then, every owner of each small enterprise

receives a share in the holding company and owns the majority percentage of his/her own firm, giving away 5% to each partner.

Therefore, this study argues that currently competition is not about price or product, it is more about business models. For instance, Uber and Airbnb are examples of the way entrepreneurs have created a business model based on partnerships and cooperation. The results from this study show that this business model of partnering and becoming one entity will allow SMEs to sustain over this period and grow in future.

The advantages of this approach are impressive as stated by the participants in this study, as SMEs which engaged in such a partnership have successfully launched several new products or services. They claim that instead of having one person to consider any opportunity, now they have several people with different opinions and expertise. They also appreciate that they were competing with each other but now they realise that being together is much more beneficial and profitable for all concerned. They also reduce any conflicts of interest to the minimum so that they reduce daily conflicts. For instance, two fashion designers and a trader formed a larger firm in which the trader is responsible for machines and logistics, one of the designers is responsible for the materials and the other one is responsible for designs and operation. Recently they made a 17 million Saudi Riyals investment in a new factory which brought sales up to levels they could never have previously anticipated.

However, it also has some disadvantages. First, it is a form of cooperation and it creates more liabilities for entrepreneurs who want to have a smaller establishment. Second, it also has some ambiguity in terms of sharing

the power as entrepreneurs would often prefer to run their businesses on their own. Third, although it is the best approach to follow in periods of economic downturn, whether it should continue when the economy is healthy is a question that needs to be addressed.

In summary, EM as a concept seems not to favour competition as none of its dimensions is clearly competition oriented. In fact, most of the entrepreneurs who participated in this study focus little on competition. This intention aligns with previous literature by O'Dwyer et al. (2009) and Westerlund and Leminen (2018) in which they note that small firms are found less competitor-oriented than large firms. Thus, it seems clearer that this intention becomes even less during such periods of economic transition. In addition, it was clear when exploring the antecedents of EO that the participants did not consider the dimension of competitive aggressiveness, when they gave their responses. Therefore, if this dimension is not effective in TE it might be worth re-evaluating its position with regard to the EO concept, especially within SMEs. Finally, partnering and merging approaches seem very effective during this period. This study assumes that both approaches will work even more effectively if the economy is healthy but working under better and more systemised procedures. The next section is an explanation of the brand engagement strategy that customers and entrepreneurs prefer in SMEs in TE.

6.5.3. Brand engagement

Branding is the key to determining SMEs' performance (Wong and Merrilees 2005). It has been argued that branding can affect growth positively in SMEs as it offers a way of securing distinctness for SMEs in a competitive

environment (Agostini et al., 2015). The findings of this study are consistent with the literature. However, defining the process that leads to strong brand engagement differs. Bowden (2009) proposes a framework to demonstrate the process of customer engagement, which entails a set of calculative commitments, trust development and involvement which result in effective commitment. This framework focuses less on the effect of emotions in the process. However, Pansari and Kumar (2017) have developed a framework which consists of trust and commitment, but in addition, emotional bonding and satisfaction. This study supports and extends the findings of the latter as the participants noted that before developing a brand awareness campaign, they have to understand the emotional responsiveness of the audience or audiences to be targeted. They emphasised the value of such understanding to create optimal hype and positive reputation through careful in-house managed messaging for brand identity.

When customers are fully engaged with a certain brand, they become very loyal to it. However, with their current busy lifestyles, customers are not able to evaluate between products (Kotler et al., 2017). Thus, they make more rapid purchasing decisions compared to before. Desai and Waller (2010) note that consumers these days are buying a brand, rather than a product. So, they in effect become advocates of the brand if they become loyal to it (Kotler et al., 2017). This is especially clear in this period of connectivity with social media and blogs for example. Despite customers having the possibility, through their smart devices, to evaluate different products not only locally but internationally, the participants made it clear that it is very difficult to dislodge engaged customers from their preferred brand unless the quality of the alternative

product or service becomes inconsistent. This leads us to standardisation of quality which will be the focus of the next section.

In summary, there is nothing more valuable than having fully engaged customers who become advocates of your brand. Therefore, SMEs are encouraged to increase their brand awareness and work effortlessly to engage customers with their brands, especially in transition periods because losing a customer has the potential for a knock-on effect leading to the loss of several other potential customers. Therefore, it is important to plan the process of attracting customers who will be committed to the brand based on an exploration of drivers of trust, emotional elements and satisfaction. As a result, consumers become loyal, advocates and marketers through their positive blog and social media posts. So, this study supports the framework of the process of customer engagement based on the generation of trust, commitment, emotional bonding and satisfaction as put forward by Pansari and Kumar (2017). The empirical results confirmed extension of this framework including emotional bonding and satisfaction. Moreover, these findings have addressed a gap in studies relating to the branding process identified by Odoom et al. (2017) on how products and services are branded in SMEs.

6.5.4. Standardisation of Quality

Standardisation of the product/service quality was noted by the participants of this study as a key element in maintaining a close relationship with customers and in building loyalty. As the literature lacks an exploration of strategies for delivering standardised quality, this study addresses the issue in

the light of total quality management (TQM) in SMEs (e.g. Alfalah, 2017). TQM strategy typically covers more than SMEs can afford but every enterprise can adapt the concept based on their own capabilities. TQM was found positively related to SMEs' performance when these enterprises have high levels of EO. Thus, EO has been found to play an influential role in the adoption of TQM (Sahoo, 2017). In fact, EO was found to have a direct positive relationship with quality performance in small technology firms (Ndubisi and Agarwal, 2014). In addition, it was argued that SMEs are less focused on innovations and more focused on the production process (Laforet and Tann, 2006). Therefore, the findings of this study concur with the literature which states that SMEs are required to maintain a standard level of quality, which enables them to sustain in periods of economic transition (Gupta and Batra, 2016).

The role that marketing plays in standardising quality is significant. Marketers are responsible for delivering the exact or sometimes even better quality in terms of the product or service. They are also liable for pricing and maintaining a level of competitive advantage against competitors. Thus, they follow up and obtain feedback which increases customer satisfaction and creates the loyalty they aim for. As stated earlier, quality requires total control of all functions in the enterprise and having a customised and/or a niche market to serve will help in maintaining the quality and reducing the load in all functions. Identification of this strategy for SMEs extends previous work on quality management and marketing. It verifies the proposition by Longbottom et al. (2000) in which they identify commonalities between the two philosophies.

Standardisation of quality has become a strategic requirement beyond local markets. It guides and underpins adaptation when planning for marketing

internationally. For almost four decades, the topic of standardisation in foreign markets has been one of the key areas of research in marketing (Theodosiou and Leonidou, 2003). However, there has been little exploration in the literature about whether to standardise or to adapt in the local market when facing economic downturn, in this case the economic slowdown in SA as a consequence of the transition plan. Given the fact that during these periods, costs increase, purchasing power falls and SMEs struggle to sustain, all of the participants stressed that the standard of the quality that is provided, whether it was the quality of the actual product or the overall experience that the customer had, should never be compromised.

6.5.5. Expansion Strategy

As stated in the section above, most literature discusses expansion of SMEs internationally rather than locally. Little attention has been paid to exploring an effective strategy to enable SMEs to expand locally, given the fact that studies concerning internationalisation of SMEs have often evaluated between whether the firms should expand by themselves or whether they should create a franchise model in the foreign market (e.g. Al-Hyari et al., 2012; Dada and Watson. 2013). This is the reason why this study only considered these two approaches, franchising or self-investing, when evaluating the feedback of the participants. Thus, these are the only two approaches that participants identified in the Saudi context. I divided the participants into two different categories based on the sector they operate in, service or retail, in relation to expansion strategy. The participants in the service category tend to expand through self-investment and the participants never suggested any

forms of franchising. However, the majority of entrepreneurs who manage a small or a medium sized retail or food business admitted they have considered or have already taken steps towards franchising in this period.

When considering expansion as a strategy to apply in TEs, seven (n7) of the participants have considered an expansion strategy during this period of economic transition based on franchising. What was unusual is that they found local franchisees who are capable to invest during such a period. The majority of the seven agreed that the correct strategy for SMEs to consider is expansion through franchising. They stated that there remains unfilled market demand for many of their products. However, financial and operational loads prevented them from exploiting available opportunities by themselves, and therefore they chose a franchise model. These results align with previous findings from a study by Sadi and Henderson (2011) in which they identified franchising as a suitable strategy for SMEs and this has contributed to success in Saudi Arabia.

On the other hand, two (n2) entrepreneurs were against the franchising strategy for two main reasons. They stated that for SMEs to come up with a solid franchising program requires too much time, experience and finance. Secondly, they noted that small or medium businesses have less capacity in terms of monitoring or controlling franchisees compared to big organisations. Thus, problems with one franchisee could result in a big loss of trust from customers as well as a loss of money in case of any consequent litigation. Alharbi (2014) identifies six barriers to successful franchising in SMEs in SA. The barriers are (1) shortcomings in the legal environment, (2) lack of financial support, (3) lack of marketing expertise in franchising, (4) absence of a strong franchising system, (5) lack of trained follow up team and, (6) absence of

training related to franchising. The study was the only one that discussed the barriers to franchise in Saudi Arabia, however, the study took place two years before the initiation of the transition plan. It should be noted that most of these barriers have been dealt with by the Ministry of Trade and Investment and other governmental bodies that deal with SMEs according to the participants. However, they still claim that a strong legal system that deals with franchising conflicts is still unavailable.

Therefore, it can be said that franchising as a strategy to expand during transition periods is in principle effective for SMEs. It assists in exploiting opportunities rapidly and with fewer financial liabilities. However, it requires a well-ordered system that saves both parties from having any business conflict. It also requires certain efforts and skills on the franchisor to evaluate any new local market by conducting market research taking into account franchisee scale, expertise, track record etc.

6.5.6. Dealing with Market Research

Market research is another key strategy that most of the participants mentioned. Market research is defined as *“the function that links the consumer, customer, and public to the marketer through information–information used to identify and define marketing opportunities and problems; generate, refine, and evaluate marketing actions; monitor marketing performance; and improve understanding of marketing as a process”* (American Marketing Association, 2004). Although all entrepreneurs considered its importance, the group with less knowledge of marketing did not have any idea how to perform proper and

efficient market research (this is more evidence that human capital connects both EO and EM). Nevertheless, the group lacking knowledge of marketing consider that market research would bring significant results to the enterprise, but they state that it would require a large investment, which they cannot afford.

A study by Meler (1997) noted that market research in TEs can help in expanding sales through exploring and then establishing new potential markets either nationally and/or internationally. It also assists the firm in determining and scoping new priority directions in terms of the national development policy. In addition, innovation in SMEs was found to be positively associated with the level of market orientation which includes customer and competitor orientation (Low et al., 2007). Therefore, the results related to the importance and the effectiveness of market research to SMEs in general, and in this period in particular, are compatible with the literature. However, the strategic approach towards planning for effective market research by SMEs was the missing element, as market research is viewed as a complicated topic and generally used by large companies or consultants (Venkatesan and Soutar, 2001).

There is another related concept that entails market research and is discussed in the marketing literature and that is market orientation (MO) (Reijonen et al., 2012; Al-Mamun et al., 2018). This orientation is an overall organisational culture rather than an approach towards an external element. The idea of using this concept is because of the scant amount of literature relating to market research for SMEs. In practice, both MO and market research share the same principles and they work towards understanding the market through its customers and competitors. Nevertheless, a market orientation approach consists of three main behaviours, customer orientation, competitor

orientation and inter-functional coordination (Narver and Slater, 1990; Jaworski and Kohli, 1993). With regard to competitor orientation, the results have shown that the participant valued this less. This can be attributed to two main reasons. First, the market is still new and has a number of available opportunities and as such entrepreneurs have not yet experienced strong competition. Second, even if there were competition in one or a few segments, the participants still showed less orientation towards competition as they were operating in a niche or focusing only on their existing customers. This orientation seems to be effective for them and they prefer this because no one can afford any extra costs related to dealing with the competition. So, this study mainly emphasises customer orientation as an element in MO with respect to SME market-oriented research.

Customer orientation is the process of understanding the behaviour of the current and potential customers in order to provide them with superior value (Narver and Slater, 1990). The results of this study suggest that with basic market research fundamentals such as evaluating purchasing behaviour through the point of sales system, observation activities and obtaining consistent customer feedback, SMEs can employ this strategy and improve their product/service delivery. In this regard, a study into the importance of market research among 700 SMEs in Australia revealed that scope of operation and the size of the enterprise are two factors that affect the formal application of market research (Venkatesan and Soutar, 2001). The results of this study contradict this. The participants mainly overestimated the 'entry requirement' for accessibility and usefulness of market research, assuming it was more properly the domain of large corporations with international reach. This perception affected their intentions concerning adoption of this strategy.

Nevertheless, the study also presented some successful implementation of market research.

This study confirms with a small sample that market research and customer orientation are more important in transition periods, as noted by Buli (2017). Due to exposure to online resources and the increasing amount of data and information published by the private and public sector, market research became more feasible recently for SMEs. The results from the empirical work have identified that customer behaviour including purchasing behaviour and purchasing power are changing significantly during this period hence the need for every SME to re-assess and re-evaluate their position in the market has become essential. Therefore, for any SME to sustain during this period, they must make use of the available data and the market reports to maintain their competitive edge in the market. It can be said that SMEs must become customer-oriented – through market research. In doing so, they can provide superior value to their customers and sustain during transition periods.

6.5.7. Digital Marketing

The advancement of digital technology, smart devices and mobile applications has radically transformed people's daily routines. It is changing the conventional ways of interaction between businesses and their consumers. Marketers, through utilising this technological advancement, are more able to rapidly and accurately identify and reach customers (Taiminen and Karjaluoto, 2015) so that they can scale their businesses up in a cost-efficient way. It is widely believed that digital marketing provides different opportunities to SMEs

such as reaching new customers, improving growth, increasing performance and competitiveness (Galloway, 2007). Digital marketing, as a tool to leverage marketing costs, seems essential to SMEs in Saudi Arabia. Apparently, all entrepreneurs (n21) prefer digital marketing as they perceive it as cheaper and more effective compared to conventional marketing communication tools.

Digital marketing has its own characteristics and dynamics compared to conventional marketing (Järvinen et al., 2012). Given this, entrepreneurs of SMEs must be aware of the different characteristics that distinguish digital marketing in order to utilise it appropriately. Taiminen and Karjaluoto (2015) have noted that SMEs are required to obtain more in-depth knowledge in order to utilise digital channels in marketing. In this regard, only two (n2) entrepreneurs who seemed very familiar with the sector noted that digital marketing is effective although costly. They stated that despite the number of daily messages received by every individual, the successful impact of any marketing communication campaign is significantly lower than before. Therefore, it can be said that digital marketing is useful, easily accessible, and it may be cheaper, but it does not always create the required impact.

In fact, in SA entrepreneurs mostly rely on social media and more specifically influencers, to deliver their marketing campaigns. A large number of those influencers are not successful marketers; hence they create campaigns that boost sales for a short period of time only and they are very expensive, therefore, the campaigns have very little sustained impact. The lack of marketing talent that is able to create a complete digital marketing campaign is clearly missing in the Saudi market. Here I summarise some steps from the literature and compare them to what has been identified in the field work so that

SMEs can enhance the outcome of their digital marketing campaigns. These steps are mostly applied to SMEs in TEs and are related to the marketing strategies identified above. First, digital marketing must be aligned with overall marketing and organisational strategy (Stokes, 2013). However, it goes beyond this as some entrepreneurs have also noted that similar to traditional marketing, these campaigns must also consider elements such as the firm's values and ethics. Second, as the participants use the strategy of serving a niche market and/or customisation, it is essential to direct digital marketing activities towards the core market segments with the intention of delivering high impact communication through a restricted number of campaigns as stated by Spence and Hamzaoui-Essoussi (2010).

Third, accepting the fact that digitisation has changed interaction between customers and businesses, it requires more dynamism and customer-oriented strategies. The participants shared one piece of advice with regard to dealing with digital marketing, in particular social media. One of the participants stated that if you are successful on one platform, it is not necessary to be successful on another. He encourages SMEs to focus on managing followers on one platform only. Therefore, for SMEs it is important to choose the platform which matches the overall strategy of their enterprise and then to focus on utilising all the available resources to deliver successful marketing campaigns through this platform. It is worth noting that another participant stressed that it was important not to ignore other platforms as the lifetime of these social media applications is very limited and they disappear very quickly. So, having a base on another one or more platforms is also recommended but the primary focus must be on only one of them to be able to manage it effectively.

Finally, some of the participants have suggested increasing the volume of messages by saying, “It is a disruptive mode so act likewise in terms of brand communication intensity”. This goes against the argument by Kotler et al. (2017) who state that the impact of a brand awareness campaign comes in just a moment of joy. This moment of joy requires enough knowledge related to marketing communication. Entrepreneurs are required to consider the elements of an effective message so that they enhance the effectiveness of each communication campaign they perform. They need to build clear objectives for each message and choose the most suitable digital platform. They also need to create that moment of joy and link it to their brand so that the impact of the message remains, and it is difficult to be distracted by other messages.

In summary, this study has shown the benefits of SMEs utilising digital marketing in TE. In addition, it extends results from other studies which provide some insight into the channels and goals of digital marketing (e.g. Taiminen and Karjaluoto, 2015). The results show some approaches and potentials for better optimising digital marketing, and more specifically social media, for SMEs in periods of TE. On the other hand, most other results from this study with regard to the advantages of utilising digital marketing for SMEs are compatible with previous literature. However, another significant point that was found in the results is that the entire sample agreed that a digital marketing strategy was effective and never considered conventional marketing tools during a transition period. This could be due to the level of acceptance of the Saudi population, 70% of which are young people who adapt very quickly to the new technologies. This could be a reason why entrepreneurs acknowledge its effectiveness.

6.5.8. Strategies in Utilising Big Data

Leveraging 'Big Data' was one among the list of different marketing tools which have been identified important for SMEs by participants in this study. Big data is considered to be a source of innovative solutions and advanced processes and enables entrepreneurs to exploit opportunities for SMEs (Del Vecchio et al., 2018). It has gained increasing attention from researchers in the last ten years with the aim of identifying a definition, its dimensions, its unique characteristics (Gandomi and Haider, 2015) and its applicability to SMEs in comparison to large corporations (Del Vecchio et al., 2018). The most common definition of big data was the one by Kaisler et al. (2013, p. 995) who defined it as *"the amount of data just beyond technology's capability to store, manage and process efficiently"*. This definition allows application of the concept to every enterprise as it considers the distinguishing characteristics of each enterprise, in terms of size and technological capabilities with regard to how to manage the complexity of big data. The perception of whether this set of data is big or not is based on the ability of the organisation to deal with it in a less complex way (Ward and Barker, 2013).

The empirical results show that leveraging big data is extremely beneficial for SMEs. However, firms during transition periods in SA have rarely considered the utilisation of big data due to a lack of time and financial resources. Given the fact that most of them have already made decisions relating to the redundancy of employees and cost cutting, the remaining employees including owners and managers spend a great deal of time trying to improve operations and logistics and reduce costs. Yet there is no definitive approach for SMEs to assist them in utilising big data (Sen et al., 2016; Soroka

et al., 2017; Del Vecchio et al., 2018). In addition, researchers have acknowledged the lack of research into identifying the capabilities required by firms in generating customer insights through data from social media (Wieneke and Lehrer, 2016).

However, through the empirical work, five (n5) of the participants have seen the value in the recent actions which they have taken. Two activities were commonly introduced which entrepreneurs state are the most effective approaches to leveraging big data during transition periods taking into consideration that the advance point-of-sale machines and software which make it simple to collect and store data are not very expensive and within the reach of all SMEs nowadays. The first action is using coalition programs, which means enterprises with different core competences and related products or services are encouraged to create an alliance in order to obtain a greater insight into potential customers, as this approach will disclose consumer behaviour data of five or six (the number of members in the alliance) enterprises. In addition, they can employ an outsourcer to monitor the program and this can be anyone from an individual freelancer up to an expert data management firm. By doing this, they leverage 'big data' in a cost-efficient way with the potential to open a pool of new potential customers. The second action is starting a loyalty scheme, which is more common with medium enterprises which already have a strong customer base. Firms could maximise the benefits of their customer loyalty programs through successful processing of big data.

This study has identified several particular advantages from the perspective of the participants. Big data can assist in overcoming a decrease in sales during periods of economic transition. One advantage is that an

effective loyalty programme could maintain a high retention rate, it assists in creating targeted offers and it can also build efficient customer relationship marketing protocols so that customers perceive the value proposition provided by the firm. As a result, this should reduce the cost of a marketing campaign while increasing its impact, because this tool allows every individual customer to be identified as a segment based on their patterns of previous purchase. These findings advance the literature (i.e. Ransbotham et al., 2015; Coleman et al., 2016) on how big data can benefit SMEs.

From another practical point of view, in a recent report published by NewVantage Partners, a data management consultancy, six objectives were identified as drivers of firms to invest in big data. These six objectives are: to advance analytical skills to improve business decision making, to improve customer service, to decrease expenses, to find new avenues for innovation, to increase speed to market and to establish a data monetising culture (Davenport and Bean, 2018).

In summary, leveraging big data as an emerging concept related to marketing is fundamental for SMEs in periods of TEs. Capability is continually advancing and, therefore, SMEs must adopt its new tools and strategies to enable them to make marketing decisions. Therefore, the results from this study support encouragement of SMEs to leverage big data regardless of their size or technological capabilities and skills. This study has also attempted to bridge the gap between academic insight and practitioner engagement in providing directions in issues related to big data which have been identified by Kumar (2017).

6.5.9. Digital Technology Adoption

The results from this study have indicated that digital technology is having a significant impact on advancing SMEs functionality. In particular, it is transforming firms' operations from the customer side (Setia et al., 2013). Participants have noted that during periods of TEs, when costs increase and purchasing power decreases, digital technologies can deliver sales and also improve cost efficiency for both sellers and buyers. For instance, utilisation of digital technology in retailing has made physically visiting stores optional and customers can perform a typical visit virtually with lower costs.

From the sellers' point of view, four (n4) of the entrepreneurs who participated in this study are reconsidering the number of shops they have and how efficiently they perform, so they can either move to a cheaper outlet or close some of them down completely. Entrepreneurs attribute this to the impact of digital technology in general and to mobile applications, enhanced logistical services and location services in particular. Recently, some retail shops and restaurants in Saudi Arabia have become totally virtual, making the element of choice of location less serious for some marketers than before.

For the last two decades, the positive effect of utilising digital technologies by SMEs has been investigated in the literature. However, the exploration of its direct impact on a firm's performance is still unclear in its conclusions (Foroudi et al., 2017). A study in a similar market condition, in Dubai, revealed that innovation in SMEs is influenced by the firms' technological orientation. However, it did not have a direct effect on performance (Al-Ansari et al., 2013). It has argued that digital technology allows firms to respond effectively to their customers' needs and to improve the

operation on the customer side (Setia et al., 2013; Foroudi et al., 2017). In addition, given the fact that customer base and mobile applications have become a source of success for organisations, they are therefore considered an asset that increases the value of the firm. Most entrepreneurs in SA are considering maximising the benefits of digital technologies in their firms so that they increase their market value. This increase will be reflected in their balance sheets and show a positive financial performance in addition to the increase in sales and cost efficiency as discussed above.

Although leveraging digital technologies has become increasingly popular in the retail and food sectors, it is continuing to be a challenge in service organisations (Setia et al., 2013). In tackling this issue, this study is encouraging service organisations to structure their business models around one of these digital technologies. One example was a retail flower shop previously focussed on live sales in front of hospitals with occasional contract supply to hotels etc., to move towards a business model based on a direct to retail customer delivery service for individualised bouquets. They made contracts with flower shops, built a digital platform, constructed the purchasing process, which involved three steps and the flower bouquet was sent. In practice, they sell flowers without any investment on real estate assets. Another example is the transformation of some medical services to virtual consultations providing access to medical advice to those who are in serious need (e.g. advice to tackle heart attacks and sports injuries) or even for repeat prescriptions. This is how services can exploit and make use of the advantages of digital technologies, making it one of the core competencies of a firm.

As has been stated earlier in this chapter, the investigation indicated that technological skills are a dimension to be added to the EO concept. Results from this study extend previous work conducted into the effect of technology on one dimension such as the management of design and innovation capability (Foroudi et al., 2017), or responding to customer needs (Setia et al., 2013), and by demonstrating the appropriate marketing strategies that are most effective for SMEs in TE. For instance, entrepreneurs have identified positive effects of market research and digital technology utilisation on firm performance. Thus, it showed how digital technology can enhance process and cost efficiency as key concerns of SMEs in TE. Therefore, the results from this study are advancing previous studies (e.g. Foroudi et al., 2017) relating to the effectiveness of digital technology in delivering sales and increasing cost efficiency. Customers have noticed improved process and perceive a better value proposition according to entrepreneurs who utilised this tool.

6.5.10. Summary

Marketing is no doubt a challenging process for SMEs and it becomes more challenging in TE. This study has evaluated several strategies and tools that allow SMEs to approach the market and make a bigger impact in TE. The results identified five main strategies and three main tools that most entrepreneurs used and made an effective impact in the market by leveraging them. These strategies are customisation or serving a niche market, standardisation, coalition and partnering in marketing campaigns, franchising as an expansion choice and brand engagement. To achieve effective results with regard to these strategies, entrepreneurs who manage SMEs are

encouraged to utilise the following tools including, big data, digital marketing and digital technologies. Therefore, SMEs approach the market more effectively and create the required impact.

6.6. The Impact of these Findings on the Resource Dependency Theory and the Resource-Based View

These findings add to the Resource Dependency Theory (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) and Resource-based view (Barney, 1991) in four main ways. First, it is important to note that RDT is underpinned by the idea that resources are key to organisation success and that access to and control over resources, especially external ones, provides a basis for organisational power. This study argues that organisations often deal with other organisations in the same environment to obtain the necessary resources for their survival. So, elements such as commitment, confidence and other antecedents would help in this process. Therefore, identifying the antecedents that lead to EO has clarified some required resources that lead to sustainable SMEs in the long run. Second, these required resources vary between physical, psychological, institutional and knowledge based. Therefore, EO not only has the previously identified five behavioural dimensions, it has other antecedents. Thirdly, the empirical work took place in an unstable economic environment for SMEs in SA. Therefore, the view obtained from entrepreneurs who manage SMEs depended on contingent external factors.

From the perspective of the resource-based view, these findings and the list of marketing strategies identified above contribute to this study by

determining the strategic resources that SMEs can exploit in order to sustain in TEs. In addition, these results extend prior work (i.e. Jones and Rowley 2009; Kilenthong et al., 2015) on advancing conceptualisation of EO and EM in SMEs in the specific circumstances of TEs.

6.7. Chapter Summary

Although the number of studies that investigated EO as a concept which lead to superior performance in SMEs is high, there is still a lack of literature identifying the antecedents that lead to EO (Miller, 2011; Randerson, 2016; Wales, 2016). The field work in this study took place in Saudi Arabia and investigated twenty-nine (n29) entrepreneurs who run SMEs during one of the most significant transition periods in the economy in the Kingdom's history. The execution of the TP was in early 2016. The study employed the concepts of EO and EM in order to enhance SMEs approach to the market. This study defines 'market approach' as recognising and taking advantage of opportunities, creating value, retaining customers and leveraging costs associated with marketing activities.

The results showed that there are several behavioural elements and capabilities that are less emphasised by scholars when applying EO in their studies. This study grouped these elements into two categories and called them component antecedents that underlie EO. First, primary components included passion for work and knowledge capability encompassing relevant work experience and past education. Second, the secondary components included

identification of a need, volunteerism and community serving, work in an area of interest to the entrepreneur, self-confidence, and self-commitment.

By identifying these components, the study has redefined the concept of EO based on its antecedents. The proposed definition has also broadened the picture of EO as suggested by Miller (2011) and Randerson (2016) rather than restricting research into EO to its three or five previously identified dimensions. Nevertheless, the study has proposed a new dimension to be added to the concept of EO and one to be re-evaluated. This is a response to the call by Covin and Lumpkin (2011) in which they noted that exploration of different dimensions is a potential research area into EO. The dimension is related to the entrepreneur's technological capability as this dimension was found key in many successful examples of SMEs sustaining and even growing in the period of economic transition in SA. This study proposes this dimension as separate from innovation given its inherent breadth of scope and variety. For instance, it was noticed that there are many innovative products and services that are successful during this period. However, the enterprises that are more technologically capable are significantly more successful in all aspects, such as cost efficiency, logistics, scalability and marketing.

The second section discussed several contextual issues related to application of EO in SA. The results indicated different interpretations of the dimensions of EO in the studied context compared to some of those identified in the literature. These variations are mainly related to the culture of entrepreneurship in the country. For instance, entrepreneurs do not differentiate between innovation and adoption of ideas. This is why the proposed definition considers the adoption of ideas as a sub-dimension of innovativeness because

when entrepreneurs adopt ideas, they have to implement them in different ways to suit the local tastes, so whilst there is a degree of innovativeness, it is still considered an adoption of ideas. Another example, which was seen regularly, is that the perception of risk, namely social risk, in the context of SA is dominant. However, the risk component in the studied context cannot be compared to other entrepreneurial settings where, for example, shelter or food can be at risk. So, there must be a clear identification of the different types of risk and how this dimension is perceived by entrepreneurs in different economic settings.

The third section evaluated the level of influence that EO has on. It was found that EM is based on a systematic process which begins with EO and is influenced by two components. Therefore, this study concluded that EO precedes EM, where EO is a higher managerial level concept and EM is a functional level concept. However, it has some roles at the higher level such as the formulation of marketing strategy, pricing strategy and designing of new products. In addition, the results have identified two major components along with EO's dimensions where they interlink both concepts to establish a better approach to marketing. These components are human capital, more specifically knowledge about marketing, talents and experience in marketing and market information. Therefore, this study answers the question raised by Hunt (2010) about whether EM is a systematic proposition or is only a phrase used for non-traditional marketing activities (cited in Miles et al., 2015).

Moreover, the study has offered different marketing strategies and tools that are more applicable to SMEs in TE. These results aimed to address the gaps identified by scholars in the area of EM and SMEs. For instance, Jones and Rowley (2011) encouraged researchers to explore the decision making

process related to the aspects of marketing strategies in SMEs by employing EM. Kumar (2017) noted that marketing academia has offered few resources to help firms to understand emerging topics in marketing. The section offered an evaluation of the existing literature and the empirical results in order to fill the gaps in the literature and to provide a practical approach that supports SMEs when approaching the market during TE and possibly also in sustainable economies. Finally, these findings add to the Resource Dependency Theory (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) and Resource-based view (Barney, 1991) in four main ways as discussed above.

Chapter 7: Conclusions and Recommendations

7.1. Preface

This thesis presents an empirical research study into SMEs in a TE. The central problem which this research wanted to address was identified following observation of the failure of a number of SMEs in SA to sustain commercial viability during the period of government sponsored economic transition within the Kingdom. Among the several proposed explanations of this failure is the ineffective planning and implementation of marketing campaigns. As reported of Small-Medium Enterprises in SA (Jeddah Chamber of Commerce, 2016), a lack of knowledge in how to market a product or a service was ranked third among the top seven obstacles for SMEs to sustain and develop in SA. More generally, according to Chaston (2015) one of the main reasons that hinders and prevents SMEs from sustaining viability or growing is a lack of marketing knowledge. Therefore, to help improve the marketing practices for SMEs in TEs, the rationale of this study was threefold. First, to explore what drives entrepreneurial behaviour and what are its relevant constitutive dimensions. Second, to determine the link between EO and EM and to identify what components in this relationship are most salient in promoting positive marketing outcomes. Third, to evaluate which marketing strategies and tools which are more applicable for SMEs in TEs.

To achieve this, the research has identified the study's core theoretical concepts: EO from the entrepreneurship literature and EM from the entrepreneurship/marketing interface literature. After a comprehensive review of the literature from both disciplines, several gaps in understanding of the

issues were identified and accordingly the study's research objectives were refined. To achieve these objectives the researcher used a qualitative research method with semi-structured interviews to collect data and a thematic analysis technique was applied to analyse the data. This chapter will summarise the research outcome including theoretical contributions, managerial implications, limitations and suggestions for future research. The following section offers an outline of the research gaps which were identified earlier, and how this study addressed them.

7.2. An Outline of the Research Gaps

Before moving on to the theoretical and practical contributions, it is important to highlight in brief the research gaps which were identified from the literature. These research gaps are related to the concept of EO, the interlink between EO and EM and finally how EM is practically applied in SMEs. This study identified three main gaps as highlighted below.

Gap 1: The process that leads to EO is still unclear including the antecedents that underlie EO. Indeed, what behaviours should be considered as entrepreneurial are still questionable (Randerson, 2016). To address this gap, this study aimed to determine the antecedents that lead to EO in general and to identify what the different behaviours are that can be distinguished as entrepreneurial in SMEs in TEs in particular. In doing this, the research highlighted the antecedents and any other essential elements that are required to stimulate entrepreneurial behaviour. This also resulted in answering the question 'Is entrepreneurship considered a skill or a bundle of skills that can be acquired or not?' It also responded to several calls from researchers who urged

further exploration of different dimensions and elements of EO (e.g. Covin and Lumpkin, 2011; Randerson, 2016; Wales, 2016)

Gap 2: There is a lack of studies in the relationships between EO and EM as two distinct concepts. Therefore, the interlink between both concepts has not yet been elucidated. In addition, how EO exerts any influence on EM is still not clear. However, one recent study revealed that EO dominates EM (Kilenthong et al., 2015) and the same researchers pointed out in another study that the relationship between EO and EM is systematic and could not happen randomly (Kilenthong et al., 2016). Despite the fact that many entrepreneurs believe that they know how to approach the market successfully, when it came to critical times such as the transition period case in SA, most entrepreneurs who lacked marketing knowledge suspended any marketing activities. This study clarified this by investigating the entrepreneurs' approach to marketing during a transition period when customer purchasing power is low and sales are not reaching sustainable levels. Therefore, this study contributes in two ways. First, it attempts to determine the extent to which entrepreneurs use marketing effectively regardless of their backgrounds and level of experience by assessing their approach through the lens of the dimensions constitutive of EM. Second, it explores and evaluates the extent to which EO can enhance the marketing of SMEs in TEs. Taken together these explorations give insight into the effectiveness of marketing activities carried out by entrepreneurs from different business and marketing backgrounds.

Gap 3: Given the gap between academic research and practice has been widening, researchers, especially in the marketing discipline, have been encouraged to more closely integrate theory and practice to achieve better

results from, and impact of, the academic research (Skálén and Hackley, 2011; Kumar, 2017). This study employed the EM theoretical concept for SMEs in TEs in order to provide practical examples of how entrepreneurs seek to approach the market more effectively. This was at the core of this study as the initial problem behind this study was the SMEs' failure to sustain due to a lack of effective marketing. The results allowed for a better understanding of marketing in SMEs and demonstrated how EM as a theory is applied in practice. This should enable improvement of the theoretical concept to bring about more effective impact on SME practice especially in economies in transition periods. In this study, the transition economy providing context involved a case of a total transformation of the economic and social status of the country. Saudi Arabia was chosen because it is experiencing a transition period in all aspects including, cultural, economic and social. Following are the key theoretical contributions of this study.

7.3. Theoretical Contributions

This study extends the theoretical understanding of EO, EM and the interface between both concepts. With respect to EO, it complements the work by Miller (1983), Morris and Paul (1987) and Lumpkin and Dess (1996). With respect to EM, it builds on the work by Morris et al., 2002 and Hills et al., 2008. Thus, it offers a novel perspective in studying the interface between EO and EM as this study is among the first to apply this approach, apart from the work done by Kilenthong et al. (2015). So, the study has made five key contributions to theory. As was noted earlier, the theoretical context of this research included the concept of entrepreneurial orientation (EO), the concept of entrepreneurial

marketing (EM), and the domains of SME marketing and marketing in a transition economy (TE). The research employed existing proposed dimensions and elements taken from the relevant literature and identified gaps in understanding. The research contributions to theory are as follows.

First, the study has contributed to the entrepreneurship literature by identifying the antecedents of EO as a specific mode of orientation. Pittino et al. (2017) had previously identified several internal and external motivations and personal traits that lead to a higher EO. These elements are the need for achievement, emotional attachment, material needs, the need for independence, social expectations, the internal locus of control and tolerance of ambiguity. However, the results from this study identified a partly different set of seven antecedents of EO. First, primary components include passion for work and knowledge capability reflected as relevant work experience and past education. Second, the secondary components include identification of a need, volunteering and serving the community, working in an area of interest to the entrepreneur, self-confidence, and self-commitment. In addition, the results from this study show the level of impact that each antecedent has and the relationships between them (see figure 6. 1). It is acknowledged that the findings from this study and previous proposals in the literature do indeed overlap in one or more element. However, it extends rather than supersedes previous understandings of the concept of EO.

The identification of these antecedents adds to Resource Dependency Theory (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978) considering that this identification has clarified the range of required resources that lead to sustainable SMEs in the long run by extending the resource rich concept of EO. Moreover, the study

context was SMEs, but these antecedents work as behavioural elements that underlie the EO of the individual. Therefore, the size or age of the firm has no influence on these antecedents. In addition, the study has offered additional input with regard to EO. The study has demonstrated the impact of EO on SMEs in TE and the results also confirmed that the process of EO including its antecedents are continuous and not limited to any stage of the firm's life cycle. This study has also made an important contribution to the concept of EO by proposing a new detailed definition of EO that captures its dimensions and its related antecedents.

Moreover, the study added the dimension technological capability to the concept of EO. It was identified as critical by all entrepreneurs. Being familiar with issues related to technology is important and cannot be compromised. Some studies have identified the positive effect of the utilisation of technology on SMEs but the impact on their performance is not clear (e.g. Al-Ansari et al., 2013; Foroudi et al., 2017). However, the results from this study have shown the importance of adding technological capability as a dimension of EO given the fact that technology is advancing every process within SMEs including, crucially, the customer experience.

Furthermore, the results confirmed several factors affecting the entrepreneurial context. This included institutional support (mainly governmental entities), the education system, social influence and religion. The latter was a strong factor as the country firmly believes in faith. The study also found that a review of the dimensions that have been typically taken to reflect EO is required. For instance, the results showed that participants of this study gave no attention to element such as competitive aggressiveness. This

dimension refers to the action a firm takes to establish strong competition initiatives to strengthen its position with respect to other competitors. Nonetheless, innovativeness needs a sub-dimension that reflects the adoption of ideas that match local tastes. However, elements such as adaptability to the rapid changes which occur in official policies and flexibility to adapt to them are dimensions that are more pertinent in TE (see figure 4. 2.). These findings might reflect only the context that this study took place in and they were identified as important to face consequences of the TE. These results respond to several calls in the literature such as Miller (2011) and Wales (2016) to consider new contexts in studying EO in order to explore more elements, new variables and different dimensions.

Second, this study demonstrated the influence that EO can have on EM in SMEs by identifying the two components that interlink both concepts. These two components relate to human capital are, more specifically, knowledge of marketing, talent; and experience in marketing, and accurate and efficient market information (see figure 6. 2). This study found that these two components can enhance the impact and the effectiveness of EM behaviour and therefore result in a positive outcome of marketing activities in SMEs. A study has noted that EO dominates EM and the relationship between EO and EM is systematic and, indeed, could not happen randomly (Kilenthong et al., 2016). Therefore, it can be concluded that EO precedes EM. Moreover, it can be said that EO is a concept that is more salient at the higher managerial levels, while EM is used more salient at the marketing operational levels. In addition, the study also noted that EO has a major influence on EM when EO acts as a

unidimensional concept. However, there is no specific level of influence which can be assigned to each dimension separately.

Third, the study contributes to the literature on EM and SMEs' marketing by identifying the most applicable and effective marketing strategies to be used, especially in TE. Thus, it also provides a list of the most effective marketing tools that can achieve a successful approach to the market in periods of TEs. Identifying these strategies and tools has answered several calls in the literature to explore the nature of the decision-making process for SMEs when they approach the market (e.g. Jones and Rowley, 2011) or with issues related to linking academia to practice (e.g. Kumar, 2017).

Fourth, according to the Resource-based View, it is important to have strategically valuable, unique and inimitable resources for the long-term success of a company (Barney, 1991). In fact, EM as a marketing concept that is more applicable to SMEs, can provide these resources so that the firm is in a better position to sustain in TEs. In addition, EM in this regard can create the competitive advantages required by these enterprises in order to approach the market more effectively.

Fifth, the theoretically demonstrated linkage between EO and EM has offered new insights that can benefit future research. For instance, the rationale considered in this study was to understand the entire process underlying EO and its linkage to EM. The study has made a significant contribution by showing a synthesised model of EO and EM in SMEs (see figure 6. 3). This synthesis has developed both concepts and provided interlinking elements between both of them. Identification of commonalities and differences between them has

allowed a strong link between EO and EM. Lastly, the approach of the study has clarified the distinction between each concept by considering the operability of both concepts in one study.

7.4. Methodological Contributions

This study has made several methodological contributions by applying an exploratory method to understand the phenomenon under investigation. The qualitative strategy which was used in the empirical work was chosen to obtain deeper insights into how entrepreneurs deal with their businesses in general and the marketing aspects of it in particular. These insights have allowed better understanding of the antecedents that lead to EO. Hence, it responds to several calls for qualitative research on EO such as Covin and Lumpkin (2011) and Wales (2016) to explore different dimensions and their antecedents. It is also another attempt to identify the determinants of EO, which extends the literature related to the concept (e.g. Pittino et al., 2017).

Moreover, the interpretive phenomenological approach taken in analysing the data addresses the gap in the lack of phenomenological orientation in entrepreneurship research as has been highlighted by Hlady-Rispal and Jouison-Laffitte (2014). In addition, the insights obtained offer several marketing strategies and tools that are useful in sustaining SMEs in TEs. This has allowed the study to demonstrate some links between academia and practice, while responding to other calls by researchers to strengthen the link between academic theory and practice in order to bridge the gap between them (e.g. Kumar, 2017).

Furthermore, ensuring data trustworthiness and validity has been discussed in the methodology section above. For instance, the criteria which were identified to select participants from different cities and the selected sampling techniques were two elements that reduced the researcher influence. On the other hand, the findings from this study including, antecedents of EO, the components that interlink EO and EM and the marketing strategies for SMEs are not context specific and they overlap with findings from different studies in other transition economies.

Some of the findings from this study have been considered in previous studies in other contexts (e.g. Pittino et al., 2017) with different research objectives. For example, the antecedents that lead to EO are several behavioural elements that are likely to be observable in many entrepreneurs within other contexts. The components that interlink EO and EM are required by entrepreneurs in every economy to deliver an effective marketing campaign. Finally, some of the strategies and tools which are more applicable to SMEs in TEs have been identified in previous studies as characteristics of SMEs in other contexts.

Therefore, I would suggest that the study's findings would have generalisability to similar SMEs in other economies going through processes of transition to achieve greater diversification in economic activity. However, the greater the distance between the individual entrepreneur and the operation of its commercial activities, such as is the case in large enterprises, the less applicable will be the study's findings based as they are on highly personal perceptions and practices of the business owner/entrepreneur. Nonetheless, the key contribution of this study is to demonstrate the potential and essential

interdependence of EO and EM to SME success in a TE irrespective of specific cultural context.

7.5. Managerial Implications

This study has made several practical suggestions useful for entrepreneurs and marketers working in SMEs in general and in TEs in particular. First, identifying the antecedents that lead to EO should assist entrepreneurs in classifying the behaviours required to become a successful entrepreneur. Thus, having these antecedents categorised into two groups will allow entrepreneurs or managers of SMEs to focus on them based on their position, in order to become more successful. In addition, the development of the framework (Antecedents of EO, figure 6. 1) demonstrates the relationships and the outcomes of these antecedents among each other. This will help in understanding the links between these components and also explain their expected outcomes.

In addition, considering the research problem and the main aim of this study, which is to enhance the effectiveness of the marketing approach by SMEs in TEs, the study has accomplished this by identifying the most effective marketing strategies to be considered by SMEs when approaching the market during such periods. For instance, offering a customised product/service was one of the most effective strategies that every entrepreneur considers in TEs. Customisation evolves from another strategy which is differentiation, which involves serving a niche segment. In addition, the strategy of customisation should assist in increasing the ability of the enterprise to provide standard

products/services to customers and that brings about the third strategy which is standardisation. With these three strategies, customers become more engaged with the brand and they also become a strong source of marketing, for instance, by posting positive blogs on social media and by using word of mouth advertising. This makes brand engagement the fourth strategy. Finally, with regard to expansion, the results provided full support towards franchising as a more effective choice for SMEs to expand in TEs.

In addition, the results identified the effective marketing tools that can assist in applying the above strategies. These tools include utilisation of big data, exploitation of digital marketing tools and adaptation of digital technologies. To illustrate, with regards to big data, it is believed that this term is used loosely in research but what this study suggests is that every enterprise should maximise the use of the available data given the resources they have. This study also encourages entrepreneurs and managers in SA to increase their understanding of data and how to utilise it for the sake of sustaining their businesses in TEs. On the other hand, with regard to digital marketing tools, the results encourage entrepreneurs to make use of the many platforms which are available nowadays. Despite the drawbacks, related to the content and reliability of marketing through influencers, they remain an effective channel for SMEs. Finally, adaptation of digital technologies has been considered a tool that can deliver sales and also improve cost to benefit both sellers and buyers. So, entrepreneurs must restructure their business models around one or two of the digital technologies available in the market.

The results have also shown several practical examples of successful marketing campaigns for SMEs in TEs. These campaigns assisted current

SMEs in gaining back some of the sales and enhancing the image of the brand. The impact of this was more sustainable SMEs which will result in a healthier economy. The sustainability of SMEs has a role to play in maintaining a certain level of employment when economies are affected. Thus, they add to the overall GDP of the country. In the case of this study, SMEs are a main targeted sector that should contribute to the Vision 2030 of SA in the two critical areas of GDP and employment.

Finally, this study has built a simple model that can easily be applied by entrepreneurs in SMEs to enhance their efforts towards sustaining and growing their businesses. The study was carried out during a period of a TE when most aspects within the economy are changing, including social aspects. It also identified two practical issues related to marketing for SMEs in a TE. First it listed several marketing strategies that are carried out by entrepreneurs in SMEs and which achieved positive results. Second, it provided several tools that can assist SMEs in periods of economic transitions that can enhance the impact of their marketing campaigns and help in more effectively approaching the market. Approaching the market in this study was mainly defined as recognising and taking advantage of opportunities, creating value, retaining customers and leveraging costs associated with marketing activities. The study also highlights several key issues for SMEs in TEs as follows.

7.5.1. Key Issues for SMEs in Transition Economies

The results of this study have also highlighted several pieces of advice for entrepreneurs who manage SMEs in TEs.

- SMEs are encouraged never to risk the loss of a single customer, as it will result in the loss of many others due to the negative impact of word of mouth, especially in this era, when technology has made an individual's views more accessible and widely spreadable.
- Partnering and/or coalition is effective, whether on a larger scale by merging or sharing resources with an enterprise in the field, or on a smaller scale using marketing activities such as the examples provided in section 5. 3. 7. Therefore, entrepreneurs must maximise the use of their networks in order to utilise such opportunities.
- SMEs are encouraged to create a proper vision that is aligned with the national Vision 2030 of SA. Starting one now if the company has not already done so, will help in identifying the areas where the product/service can fit with the overall national development goals.
- Cost efficiency is different from cost cutting, so entrepreneurs must not always consider cost reduction as an effective method of efficiency.
- Entrepreneurs are encouraged to ignore every distracting idea around diversification of capital and focus only on sustaining the business or redirecting it to fit with any of the major national goals. However, always focus on one direction as specialisation is key to both successful standardisation and successful differentiation.
- The government has made available many initiatives for SMEs so entrepreneurs must make themselves aware of these initiatives as they might offer financial support, or they might open new sales channels.
- SMEs must equip themselves with different survival techniques such as having a back-up financial plan and pursuing continuous development in

product/service/ process and marketing activities. This will allow them to face the rapid changes that are happening in the market, not only because of the transition period but in terms of everyday challenges and competition.

Here, the study presents some suggestions for policy makers as shown below.

7.6. Implications for Policy Makers

This study proposes several suggestions to policy makers with regards to supporting, empowering and assisting entrepreneurs and SMEs in TEs. These suggestions are applicable to countries passing through a transition period or any other country aiming to maintain SMEs' contribution to the overall economy. Saudi Arabia has an objective to increase the contribution of SMEs to the GDP by 15% according to Vision 2030's report, which is available at (<https://vision2030.gov.sa/en>). These suggestions reflect my understanding of participants concerns.

First, as many governments are making efforts to raise the contribution of SMEs to GDP and to employment, they are initiating many actions to support these enterprises. Saudi Arabia is among these countries and has introduced several initiatives to support SMEs, including waiving the tax on expatriates working in some of these enterprises and forming alliances with many major private sector bodies to provide financial support to these enterprises. Despite many participant complaints about the harsh execution of the TP, it is acknowledged that the main problem is in communication concerning these

initiatives. Therefore, the policy makers are encouraged to formulate marketing communication plans that target these enterprises to make them aware of the initiatives. This might be through creating a platform that includes every initiative and to increase the reach of these initiatives so every SME can benefit from them.

Second, policy makers are encouraged to engage the previously nominated councils of SMEs from every chamber of commerce in every city to participate in any decisions that are to be taken by the policy makers. In addition, the policy makers should distinguish between SMEs and large corporations when policies and regulations are applied as SMEs are less able to afford certain changes in policy associated with the consequences of the TP. In addition, it is not easy for them to become 100% legally accredited as per the government requests due to their limited resources compared to large firms. Therefore, they have to have different schemes or more support from the government in order to achieve the corrective requirements.

Third, as has been highlighted by two participants, more changes need to be made in the court system especially in the area of commerce related litigation. There is still a lack when it comes to linking Sharia law (the Islamic law) with the detailed conflicts happening in the current dynamic economies. Certainly, Islamic law has covered the main principles of trading but many of the conflicts which are happening currently are very different from the conflicts which used to happen in the past. For instance, privacy issues and internet trading are two examples of very recent issues that need to have separate policies under Islamic principles.

In fact, the country is moving towards policing every sector and that is being reflected in the new regulations that have been implemented for e-commerce trading recently. However, some of these corrections take a considerable amount of time to become effective. Overall, the participants think that the court system, when it comes to commercial conflicts, is still not sophisticated enough to understand the nature of these conflicts. In practice, delays in litigation process often place a burden on entrepreneurs and the entrepreneurship ecosystem in the country. For instance, passion and self-confidence are compromised if the entrepreneur faces issues that take a considerable amount of time in courts as shown in section 4.5.3.2 in the findings chapter. In view of the fact that SMEs are not able to persist in the face of long litigations due to their limited resources, the policy makers need to make clear the most common case scenarios and relevant and typically viable solutions.

Finally, some of the big public entities such as universities have misused the term 'entrepreneurship', and this has affected its nature and has made every person wanting to become a successful independent businessman. For instance, most of the general population are of the view that entrepreneurship means fast and high returns which does not require too much effort. Thus, they are not fully aware of the obstacles and the difficulties that go with becoming and being a successful entrepreneur. This is reflected in the number of small businesses which open and subsequently close down quite rapidly. Their failures could be the result of many factors such as an unsuitable financial plan, an inappropriate feasibility study, poor identification of need among many other factors. However, this study shows that above all, the main reason is the misuse of the term 'entrepreneurship', which leads many people to start their own

businesses without being equipped with the skills that might enable them to survive. Therefore, governmental bodies, mainly universities, are encouraged to take the lead in transmitting detailed information, advice and support from the findings of this study and many others to enable entrepreneurs to sustain their enterprises during periods of economic downturn. This might be in the form of improving curriculum that focuses on the behavioural elements that can stimulate EO of individual or supporting more studies that can investigate the effectiveness of the proposed marketing strategies that are more applicable to SMEs in TEs.

7.7. Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to Saudi Arabia and focused on a small sample of SMEs some of which are self-sustaining, and a few have left the market. This means that the findings are not necessarily generalisable. However, data was collected from three different cities in the country in order to improve the reliability of the results. In addition, the social and cultural settings which exist in the Gulf countries were discussed and commonalities between these countries were identified. As such, this might increase the possibility of generalising the findings to some extent. However, the results need more quantitative-based studies to prove points such as the process that leads to EO and some identified strategies of EM which were discussed earlier.

Another limitation is that the study has evaluated EO in SMEs based on the five dimensions of EO provided in the literature. It has also employed the seven dimensions of EM proposed by Morris et al. (2002) in evaluating EM activities. In doing so, the study has provided the same weight of validity to

dimensions from both concepts. However, it must be said that dimensions of EO have gained a great deal of attention and have been investigated extensively compared to the EM dimensions. Whilst there has been broad scholarly agreement on the dimensions of EO the components of EM are contested.

Moreover, although the sample was selected from different regions in one country, applying the same approach in other countries should identify more dimensions and should also contribute to validation of the results from this study. This also applies to different cultural and religious backgrounds. Further, there might be a need for cross-cultural studies which may offer better insights into the exact antecedents of EO, the nature of the relationship between EO and EM and finally the most effective marketing strategies and tools for SMEs.

7.8. Further Research

Given the exploratory nature of this study and the significant insights provided by the interviews, some of these findings will gain more validity if they are tested through quantitative studies. Hence, the findings from this study will assist in generating new hypotheses for future quantitative research. Other avenues for future research in EO, EM and SMEs marketing are discussed below.

- The proposed framework demonstrates the antecedents that lead to EO, which need to be verified and tested in other economies and geographical contexts. For instance, conducting a cross-cultural study

would be beneficial in order to further refine the set of these determinants or antecedents. This is critical given the variable perspectives found in previous literature (e.g. Pittino et al. 2017).

- Generating hypotheses on the basis of the proposed framework of the antecedents would be helpful in terms of validating the functional and psychological behavioural elements that lead to EO. This should improve the concept of EO as a theoretical concept, and practically for entrepreneurs by emphasising the identified skills and behaviours that should lead them to better sustain their businesses.
- There is still a clear lack of information in the literature concerning the role that religion, faith and values play in entrepreneurship, more specifically, how these aspects affect the EO of individuals. One important factor that clarifies the importance of such studies is that all the above-mentioned aspects are relatively stable, and they affect explicitly or implicitly the EO of individuals in many ways (e.g. Batjargal, 2010). Some of the effect has been identified in this study but many other aspects have yet to be discovered.
- This study has uncovered the relationship between EO and EM and has proposed that EO precedes EM but only with two main components which interlink this relationship. These components are human capital, more specifically knowledge of marketing, talent and experience in marketing, and the second component is accurate and efficient market information. These components need further validation by generating new hypotheses and testing them quantitatively and in other economies.

- This research has identified many strategies that are intended to be useful for SMEs when marketing their products and services. It would be useful to investigate every strategy in greater depth, in addition, to carry out some longitudinal studies that can measure the impact of certain strategies on the sustainability of SMEs.
- There is still a large area to be explored in how the technological capabilities of the entrepreneur and the available technologies have affected and are continuously affecting conventional theory in marketing. In particular, 'place' as a key consideration should be reviewed along with current decision-making processes in SMEs (Jones and Rowley, 2011).
- Finally, one very important area for further research is connected to leveraging big data by SMEs as noted by Kumar (2017). In fact, this area has gained increasing attention from researchers in the last ten years but there is still a lack of research in the literature in terms of identifying a consistent definition, characteristics and dimensions relating to the leveraging of big data. Whilst entrepreneurs support this view, it was clear that they lack knowledge about it.

7.8. Summary

This section brings this thesis to an end. The current chapter concludes the thesis and provides a brief summary of its main contributions, limitations and further avenues of research. The study has shown a model to any entrepreneur who is currently working or has the intention to have their own enterprise in terms of how to deal with marketing in SMEs. The study has

employed concepts of EO and EM as they are the most relevant concepts to SMEs' marketing. The study has advanced the understanding of the antecedents that lead to EO and in turn furthering the development of the concept of EM as applied to SMEs in a TE. Furthermore, the study has clarified the relationship between EO and EM and proposed two components that interlink this relationship. It has also advanced EM by exploring the concept in a transition economy and in a new geographical context, which is Saudi Arabia. The empirical findings have demonstrated interesting insights into how SMEs with few resources have profitably employed some dimensions of EM in the context of a slow-moving economy. Finally, the study has developed a synthesised framework that might prove useful for entrepreneurs who run SMEs to assist them in approaching the market more effectively, especially in periods of economic transition. The model below provides a summary of the results of this study (figure 7. 1).

The model shows an effective processual approach to marketing for SMEs, especially in TEs. The first stage demonstrates the antecedents that lead to EO. These antecedents ultimately allow EO to have a stronger impact on the firm's entrepreneurial behaviour. Two primary components were identified and they are passion and relevant work experience. However, other secondary components are also considered but with varied emphasis. The second stage considers the dimensions of EO that are held by individuals at the firm's level. It is clear from the literature that EO consists of three to five dimensions. In fact, the model has not discarded these dimensions but proposed different dimensions for SMEs in TEs. For instance, risk-taking and competitive aggressiveness were given no attention by the participants in TEs.

Instead, entrepreneurs who passed through this period identified two different dimensions which are flexibility and adaptability to change. Moreover, they stressed technological capability as a main dimension for EO due to the impact technology currently has on every aspect of a business. The third stage confirmed the relevance of the EM dimensions proposed by Morris et al. (2002) as they were the key dimensions applied by entrepreneurs in TEs. Lastly, the model offers clearly specified strategies to SMEs and the tools required to implement them, with particular reference to business needs in a transitional economy.

| | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| Antecedents of Entrepreneurial Orientation | Primary | - Passion - Relevant work experience |
| | Secondary | - Identification of need - volunteerism and community serving - Self-confidence - work on the area of their interest - Identification of a need - Self-commitment |
| Firm Level Behaviour Entrepreneurial Orientation | Existing Dimensions | Innovativeness, pro-activeness, risk-taking, autonomy and competitive aggressiveness |
| | Proposed Dimensions during TE | Innovativeness, pro-activeness, autonomy, flexibility and adaptability to change |
| | Proposed Dimension | Technological Capability |
| Firm & Functional Level Behaviour Entrepreneurial Marketing | Existing Dimensions | - Innovation in marketing - Pro-active marketing - Calculated risk-taking - Value creation - Opportunity focus - Customer intensity - Resource leveraging |
| Marketing Strategies for SMEs in TE | | - Customisation or serving a niche market - Standardisation - Coalition and partnering in marketing campaigns - Franchising - Brand engagement |
| Tools to Leverage for Marketing for SMEs in TE | | - Big data, loyalty program and partnerships - Digital marketing, mainly social media - Digital Technologies e.g. mobile applications and advanced POS devices and software |

Figure 7. 1. The Synthesis of Entrepreneurial Orientation and Entrepreneurial Marketing in SMEs in Transition Economies, Author (2020)

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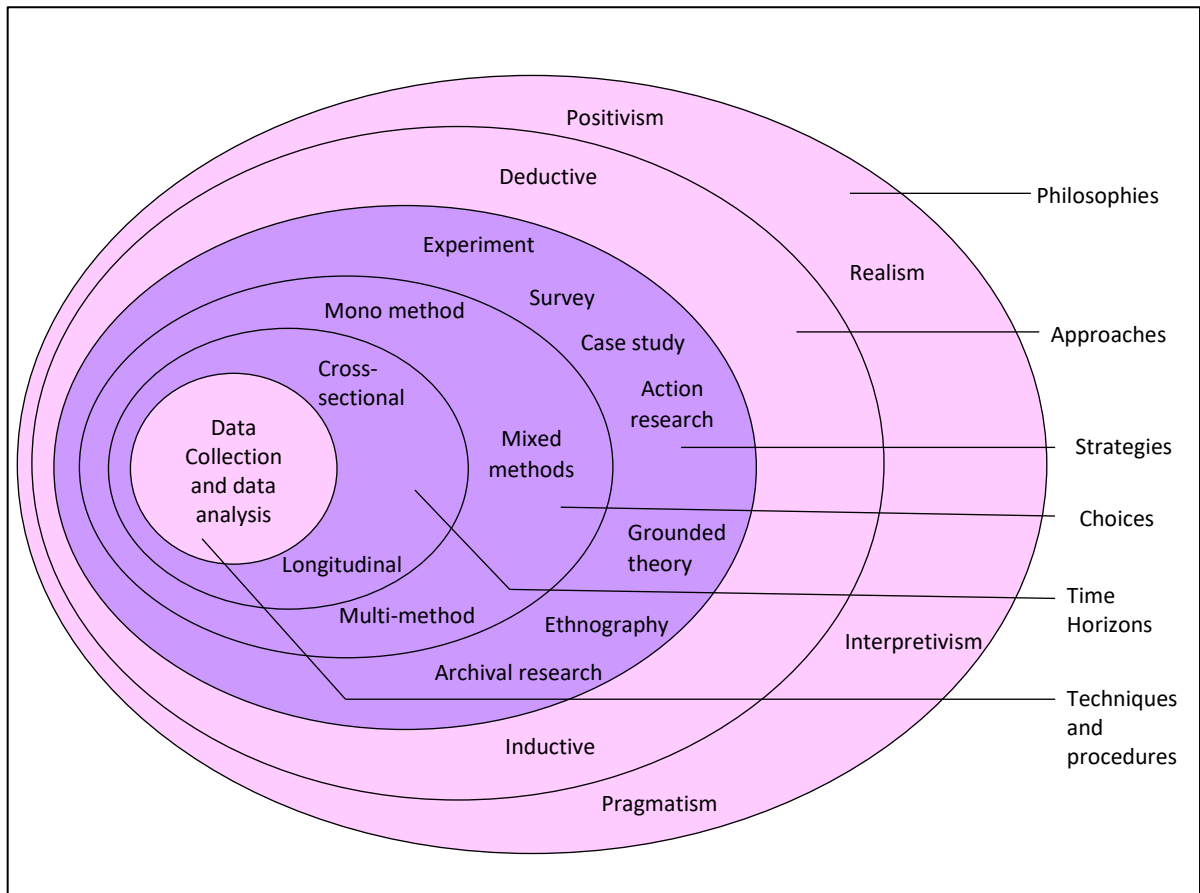
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Appendices:

Appendix. 1: Differences between Traditional Marketing and Entrepreneurial Marketing (Morris et al., 2002, p. 6).

| | Traditional Marketing | Entrepreneurial Marketing |
|---|---|--|
| Basic Premise | Facilitation of transactions and market control | Sustainable competitive advantage through value-creation innovation |
| Orientation | Marketing as objective, dispassionate science | Central role of passion, zeal, persistence and creativity in marketing |
| Context | Established, relatively stable markets | Envisioned, emerging, and fragmented markets with high levels of turbulence |
| Marketer's role | Coordinator of marketing mix; builder of the brand | Internal and external change agent; creator of the category |
| Market approach | Reactive and adaptive approach to current market situation with incremental innovation | Proactive approach, leading the customer with dynamic innovation |
| Customer needs | Articulated, assumed, expressed by customers through survey research | Unarticulated, discovered, identified through lead users |
| Risk perspective | Risk minimisation in marketing actions | Marketing as vehicle for calculated risk-taking; emphasis on finding ways to mitigate, stage or share risks |
| Resource management | Efficient use of existing resources, scarcity mentality | Leveraging, creative use of the resources of others; doing more with less; actions are not constrained by resources currently controlled |
| New product/ Service development | Marketing supports new product/service development Activities of Research and Development and other technical departments | Marketing is the home of innovation; customer is co-active producer |
| Customer's role | External source of intelligence and feedback | Active participant in firm's marketing decision process, defining product, price, distribution and communications approaches |

Appendix. 2: The Research 'Onion' (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 108)



The Research 'Onion' (Saunders et al, 2009, p. 108)

Appendix. 3: Major Differences Between Deductive and Inductive Approaches to Research (Cited from Saunders et al, 2009, p. 127)

| Deduction Emphasises | Induction Emphasises |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific principles | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gaining an understanding of the meaning humans attach to events |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moving from theory to data • The need to explain causal relationships between variables | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A close understanding of the research context |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The collection of quantitative data • The application of controls to ensure validity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The collection of qualitative data |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The operationalisation of concepts to ensure clarity of definition • A highly structured approach | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more flexible structure to permit changes of research emphasis as the research progress |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Researcher independence of what is being researched • The necessity to select samples of sufficient size in order to generalise conclusions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A realisation that the researcher is part of the research process • Less concern with the need to generalise. |

Appendix. 4: Goals of Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia

1. To increase the Kingdom's capacity to welcome Umrah visitors from 8 million to 30 million every year.
2. To double the number of Saudi heritage sites registered with UNESCO
(Now is ???)
3. To have three Saudi cities by recognised in the top-ranked 100 cities in the world
4. To increase household spending on cultural and entertainment activities inside the Kingdom from the current level of 2.9% to 6%
5. To increase the ratio of individuals exercising at least once a week from 13% of population to 40%
6. To raise our position from 26 to 10 in the Social Capital index
7. To increase the average life expectancy from 74 years to 80 years
8. To lower the rate of unemployment from 11.6% to 7%
9. To increase SME contribution to GDP from 20% to 35%
10. To increase women's participation in the workforce from 22% to 30%
11. To move from our current position as the 19th largest economy in the world into the top 15
12. To increase the localization of oil and gas sectors from 40% to 75%
13. To increase the Public Investment Fund's assets, from SAR 600 billion to over 7 trillion

14. To rise from our current position of 25 to the top 10 countries on the Global Competitiveness Index
15. To increase foreign direct investment from 3.8% to the international level of 5.7% of GDP
16. To increase the private sector's contribution from 40% to 65% of GDP
17. To raise our global ranking in the Logistics Performance Index from 49 to 25 and ensure the Kingdom is a regional leader
18. To raise the share of non-oil exports in non-oil GDP from 16% to 50%
19. To increase non-oil government revenue from SAR 163 billion to SAR 1 Trillion
20. To raise our ranking in the Government Effectiveness Index, from 80 to 20
21. To raise our ranking on the E-Government Survey Index from our current position of 36 to be among the top five nations
22. To increase household savings from 6% to 10% of total household income
23. To raise the non-profit sector's contribution to GDP from less than 1% to 5%
24. To rally one million volunteers per year (compared to 11,000 now)

Appendix. 5: Interviews Question Guide

1- Questions to Entrepreneurs and Managers

Background

| Interview Question | Objective | Question |
|--|-----------|-------------|
| Would you please tell us about yourself (education and previous employment)? | General | General |
| Tell me about your inspiration and motivation behind establishing your own business? | General | General |
| Would you tell me the story behind this business? | RO3 | RQ2, RQ3 |
| If time goes back, is this the same business would you love to start? If no then, what new business would you love to start? Why? | RO5 | RQ1 |
| What skills do you think the entrepreneur should have or a regular manager should acquire in order to build a successful business? | RO3 | RQ2, RQ5 |

Entrepreneurial orientation of the firm

| Interview Question | Objective | Question |
|---|-------------|----------|
| How would you describe the management style/behaviour in your firm? | RO3 | RQ2 |
| On which basis do you measure the performance? Probe for different types of measures. | RO6 | RQ2 |
| Do you think that your managerial approach helps in planning for marketing? Which marketing activities? | RO3, RO4 | RQ5 |
| What do you understand about entrepreneurship? | RO6 | RQ2 |

| | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| What skills should the entrepreneur have? | RO3, RO6 | RQ1, RQ2 |
| Do you think there is a strong relationship between these skills and firm performance? How? | RO6 | RQ2 |
| How many critical decisions you make every month? | RO3 | RQ5 |
| How many critical decisions you make that are related to marketing? | RO4 | RQ5 |
| What skills do you think have helped you during the initiating stage of this business? | RO3, RO6 | RQ5 |
| Do you think that these skills are helping you in networking and acquiring information? | RO3, RO6 | RQ5 |

Entrepreneurial Marketing in the firm

| Interview Question | Objective | Question |
|---|------------------|-----------------|
| How do you plan your marketing activities? | RO3 | RQ1 |
| How do you execute them? | RO3 | RQ1 |
| How do you face the competition? | RO3 | RQ1 |
| How do you catch market opportunities? | RO3 | RQ1 |
| How do you describe the term entrepreneurial Marketing? | RO4 | RQ1, RQ4 |
| What do you think its essential dimensions? | RO3 | RQ1 |
| What do you think the most important elements that need to be taken into consideration from managers or entrepreneurs of SMEs when planning to approach the market? | RO4 | RQ1, RQ4 |
| Tell me about the toughest decision you have ever made in relation to your marketing strategy? Was it successful or not? | RO4 | RQ4 |
| Why was that tough, what were the circumstances of the firm and the market before that? | RO4 | RQ4 |

SMEs in Saudi Arabia

*General comment: answering the previous questions should identify the essential elements for SMEs in Saudi Arabia which help them to approach the market more effectively and that should lead to better performance. If not, then there must be a direct question(s) about this...

| Interview Question | Objective | Question |
|---|------------------|-----------------|
| What do you think the most important obstacles for SMEs in Saudi Arabia these days? | RO4, RO5 | RQ4 |
| Do you believe planning and executing marketing activities is harder or easier for these enterprises? Why? | RO4, RO6 | RQ5 |
| What is the impact of the economic transition on your marketing strategies? | RO3 | RQ3 |
| Giving the fact that most SMEs are trying to reduce their expenses, what are the new tactics and channels do you apply for marketing? | RO6 | RQ4 |
| Tell me about a successful marketing campaign that you have planned and executed in the last three years? | RO4 | RQ4, RQ5 |

Closing Question

| Interview Question | Objective | Question |
|---|------------------|-----------------|
| What other parts of setting a marketing strategy for SMEs that we have not discussed? | RO4 | RQ3 |
| What else would you like to add? | General | General |

2- Questions to Consultants

Background

| Interview Question | Objective | Question |
|---|-----------|----------|
| Would you please tell us about yourself (background and work experience)? | General | General |
| Tell me about earlier experience in marketing? | General | General |

General Questions

| Interview Question | Objective | Question |
|--|-------------|-------------|
| Could you identify the most essential elements behind any successful business? | RO6 | RQ1 |
| What skills do you think the entrepreneur should have or a regular manager should acquire in order to build a successful business? | RO6 | RQ1 |
| Do you think the similar skills required for the business to grow? | RO6 | RQ1, RQ2 |
| In recent days, have you noticed any differences in marketing strategy formation within SMEs? What are they? | RO4 | RQ4, RQ5 |
| How was the situation before? I mean before the evolution of the new trend of entrepreneurship in the country. | RO4, RO5 | RQ4, RQ5 |

SMEs nature in the country

| Interview Question | Objective | Question |
|--|-------------|-------------|
| What are the factors that you think SMEs in Saudi Arabia have? | RO3, RO4 | RQ1, RQ3 |

| | | |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Do you think that the term “having your own business” has become a trend in the country these days? Why? | RO3, RO5 | RQ3 |
| - How healthy do you think this trend is for the economy? | RO5 | RQ3 |
| What stories could you tell us about effective adaptation with the new policies and roles applied by the country in the last three years? | RO3, RO6 | RQ2, RQ5 |

Marketing and SMEs

| Interview Question | Objective | Question |
|---|-------------|-------------|
| Is marketing different in SMEs comparing to large organisations? | General | General |
| - Any preferable strategy or channels? | RO4 | RQ4 |
| What are the essential factors in marketing strategies for SMEs? | RO4 | RQ2, RQ5 |
| Are you satisfied with the new marketing trend in the country? | RO5 | RQ4 |
| Which subject in marketing do you think is more appropriate when considering SMEs strategies towards marketing? | RO4 | RQ4, RQ5 |
| Can this become a general approach in all SMEs? | RO6 | RQ5 |
| How do you describe the term entrepreneurial orientation? | RO6 | RQ2 |
| What do you think the most important dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation? | RO4, RO6 | RQ3 |
| Is it anyway different than entrepreneurial marketing? In what sense? | RO3 | RQ2 |
| To what extent do you think entrepreneurs apply marketing effectively in SMEs in Saudi Arabia? | RO5 | RQ3 |

| | | |
|---|-----|-----|
| What dimensions you see most frequently applied by SMEs when they plan and execute marketing strategies? | RO3 | RQ5 |
| - EM dimensions are, innovation in marketing, calculated risk-taking, market pro-activeness, value creation, resource leveraging and customer intensity | -- | -- |
| If entrepreneurs and managers of SMEs feel they apply marketing effectively why would they come to seek your advice? | RO6 | RQ1 |
| Have you noticed any common problems in marketing for SMEs? | RO4 | RQ4 |
| Have you ever created an unsuccessful marketing campaign for an SME? Why did it fail? | RO6 | RQ1 |
| Any successful campaigns and why did they succeed? | RO6 | RQ1 |
| How do you see the future of marketing for SMEs will look like? Why? | RO5 | RQ3 |

Closing Questions

| Interview Question | Objective | Question |
|--|-----------|----------|
| What other parts of marketing for SMEs that we have not discussed? | RO4 | RQ3 |
| What else would you like to add? | General | General |

Appendix. 6: SOWT Analysis for SMEs in Saudi Arabia

- **Internal Strengths**

Strengths are the internal characteristics that the sector has which provide organisations within this sector with more advantages and a stronger position in comparison to larger firms (based on SMEs General Authority's classification). Major strengths are based on the fact that this sector is attracting more attention and support in the vision 2030's objectives. Outcomes include the establishment of the General Authority of SMEs as an official body leading the sector, which also led to the establishment of a funding body under its management supported by the government with a budget of more than four billion Saudi Riyals (\$ 1.2 billion). This funding body aims to invest mainly in bold capital funds to support and stimulate investment opportunities in this sector. Another strength of this sector is the availability of other fund supporting entities, support arms for training and qualifications, and the availability and spread of incubators and technical valleys across the country. Finally, and most importantly, is the strong economic and social conditions that the Kingdom has represented as the strongest private sector in the region, and a young and dynamic society.

- **Internal Weaknesses**

Weaknesses are the internal characteristics that the sector has which represent disadvantages to organisations within this sector in comparison to other sectors (based on SMEs General Authority's classification). The study by the SMEs Authority in Saudi Arabia identified five main weaknesses that need to be improved. Firstly, difficulties in doing business, which entails a complex

licensing process (which can take up to one year), the absence of legalisations for SMEs and difficulties in obtaining accurate market information and other data. Secondly, other problems include difficulties in obtaining finance which include high interest rates on loans, difficulties in the process of approving these loans and poor investment activities in the venture capital sector and the private sector.

Thirdly, further obstacles relate to attracting talented Saudis and non-Saudis to work and invest in these organisations as the prevailing trend is to secure a job in a large corporation or a multinational firm. Fourthly, elements related to fairness of competition and accessing the market includes difficulties in accessing governmental or large companies' procurement departments, poor competitive advantages compared to large firms, commercial concealment and podded monopoly, and difficulties in internationalisation and exporting. Finally, a poor entrepreneurial culture that includes a lack of interest of large companies in innovation and entrepreneurship adds to the difficulties. This study aims to provide solutions to overcome difficulties in accessing the market and enhancing the entrepreneurial culture of the sector.

- **External Opportunities**

Opportunities are elements that the external environment offers and firms within the sector could exploit to their advantage (based on SMEs General Authority's classification). SMEs in Saudi Arabia can benefit from many opportunities that the Kingdom offers. Among the wide range of opportunities three stand out as the most powerful and significant ones. These include the

economic position that the Kingdom holds, which makes it the largest economy in the region and among the top 20 economies worldwide (G 20).

In addition, there is the new government approach to transitioning the social and economic bases of the Kingdom, which can be seen from the objectives of the national development plan 2030. SMEs are playing a huge part in this transition as they are believed to be able to take advantage of opportunities in bridging the gaps of services and facilities in order to develop regional and rural areas, and to fill shortages in several promising sectors such as, services, entertainment, logistics and sports. Moreover, the role that Saudi women could play in developing this sector is enormous as a large number of them are currently outside the labour market despite the fact that one major goal for the vision is to increase women's participation in the workforce by at least 8%. Finally, the infrastructure of this sector is already in existence but needs development. For example, financial services and academic institutions are already available but need more tolerance to better service entrepreneurship and SMEs.

- **External Threats**

External threats are also many, these are the elements that could possibly affect the success of the sector (based on SMEs General Authority's classification). Most of these elements are inside the Kingdom such as, the current economic downturn which has resulted in many issues including the decline in purchasing power, which has led to threats of investment and threats of the withdrawal from banks to issue loans. There is also the threat of the level to which the private sector is ready to accept the plan of transition. In addition,

a further major threat is the lack of integration between the government agencies which leads to a great deal of bureaucracy. On the other hand, there is a major external threat which is the gap between the Kingdom and other developed countries in SMEs' practices is wide and that leads some countries in the region such as the United Arab Emirates to better attract entrepreneurs and small businesses.

Appendix. 7: Empirical Themes, Codes, Theoretical Constructs

| |
|--|
| <i>Do same dimensions apply?</i> |
| Innovation, risk-taking, pro-activeness, autonomy, competitive aggressiveness |
| <i>What formulates EO?</i> |
| Background, previous work, certain skills, internal motives, passion, dedication and adoptability |
| <i>What restricts EO?</i> |
| Influence, effects, |
| <i>Culture and EO</i> |
| lifestyle, standard of living, |
| <i>How the construct is different?</i> |
| <i>How was the economy before the transition period</i> |
| <i>Current status of the economy and the impact of transition plan</i> |
| <i>SMEs in this Period</i> |
| <i>How EO can help in this period</i> |
| <i>What is the current status of marketing in SMEs in this period</i> |
| <i>Availability of opportunities</i> |
| <i>What dimensions do apply</i> |
| Innovation marketing, Pro-activeness, calculated risk-taking, opportunity recognition, value creation, resource leveraging, customer intensity |
| <i>What are the new emerged dimensions?</i> |
| Flexibility, decision-making |
| <i>What restricts application of EM</i> |
| <i>What encourages application of EM</i> |
| <i>The use of data base</i> |
| Followers, enrolled, ambassadors, |
| <i>Customer focus</i> |
| <i>Product/service</i> customisation and standardisation |
| <i>The role of digital marketing</i> |
| Advantages, disadvantages, support, negative impact, positive impact |
| <i>The effect of social media on SMEs marketing</i> |
| <i>The major role of technology</i> |
| <i>How can marketing assist in SMEs sustainability</i> |

| |
|--|
| Networking, innovative channels, branding, different source of profit, share resources and coalition |
|--|

| |
|--|
| <i>Essential Marketing Elements</i> |
|--|

| |
|--|
| <i>When entrepreneurs are not marketers</i> |
|--|