THE MEDIATING ROLE OF INNOVATION PERFORMANCE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP ORIENTATION AND COMPETITIVENESS:

A RESEARCH IN THE EXPORT COMPANIES

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine the relationship between innovation performance, entrepreneurship orientation, and competitiveness in export companies. The sample comprises 170 employees from export companies. Confirmatory Factor Analysis was used for reliability and validity analysis was performed. The research findings showed that entrepreneurship orientation affects competitiveness significantly and positively. Also, competitiveness affects by innovation performance. The correlations between the variables were found statistically significant and mediator effect were analyzed by Baron and Kenney method and confirmed by Sobel test. Innovation performance has mediator effect on the relationship between entrepreneurship orientation and competitiveness.

1. Introduction

Companies have been more and more involved in issues such as entrepreneurship, and innovation in order to survive in the international market as well as in the national market. Entrepreneurship and innovation have become the focal point in order to provide competitive advantage against various services and products offered to the market in the developing and changing world market. Entrepreneurship orientation leads to the formation of new business methods and naturally new competitive structures. In addition, the concept of entrepreneurial orientation, which affects competitive advantage, has gained great importance for exporting companies. Many researchers have studied entrepreneurial orientation and competitiveness. Kiyabo and Isaga (2020) concluded that entrepreneurship orientation in SMEs has a significant and positive impact on competitiveness. Zeebare and Siron (2017) examined the effect of entrepreneurship orientation on competitive advantage by considering three sub-dimensions. In addition, entrepreneurial orientation and innovation performance help businesses exposed to ever-changing environmental conditions to reach new values. Lumpkin and Dess (2001), Hughes and Morgan (2007), Drucker has done many studies on entrepreneurship orientation and innovation performance. Also, Erdil et al. (2018), conducted a study on the effect of innovation performance in exporting firms on competitiveness positively and significantly, and their hypotheses were supported.

This study begins with theoretical framework part about entrepreneurship orientation, innovation performance and competitiveness. Theoretical framework part is followed by hypothesis development section. After the hypothesis development section, the research technique section explains the measures and samples. The data is analyzed by linear regression analysis and confirmed by Sobel test. In the final section, discussions and subsumptions are mentioned, and the study finishes with research recommendations for the future.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Entrepreneurship Orientation

There is no single definition of the notion of entrepreneurship in the literature. However, all definitions have one thing in common and this is the evaluation of the opportunities encountered. The concept of entrepreneurship came into use in the early 17th century to refer to people who make contracts with the government by fixing prices. Cantillon (1755) defined entrepreneurship as "the business of organizing business and taking the risk of the business for the purpose of making a profit". Kirsner (1973) defined the concept of entrepreneurship as the discovery of opportunities by accurately predicting the imbalances and deficiencies that will occur in the market. The general definitions of entrepreneurship include concepts such as taking risks, not being afraid of failure, innovation and proactivity.

Since the pioneering work of Peterson and Berger (1971), the concept of corporate entrepreneurship has become a rapidly developing research topic in the academic field (Fiş and Wasti, 2009: 131). Entrepreneurial orientation appears in the literature as firm-company entrepreneurship, corporate entrepreneurship, and intrapreneurship as concepts that are used interchangeably (Altuntaş and Dönmez, 2010:51). The concept of entrepreneurial orientation was pioneered by Miller's (1983) research on entrepreneurship at the organizational level. This concept was later advanced by Covin and Slevin (1989, 1990) and developed by Lumpkin and Dess (1996) and received increasing attention in the academic field (Solmaz, 2016: 17-18). Lumpkin and Dess (1996) stated that there is an approach that values innovation and risky projects in the market, products and services for businesses that have adopted an entrepreneurship orientation (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996, p. 136).

2.2. Innovation Performance

The concept of innovation has different definitions made by many people. Innovation is an innovation process that deals with the use of experience and knowledge in order to create a useful and new product and bring it to the market (Luecke, 2008). Innovation is the development of ideas that are different and new from others and the use of them to gain an advantage over competitors. The development of a product that is already in the market can be an example of innovation because making an existing product usable as well as a new product is innovation (Dam, 2017, pp. 45-48). Although the innovation performance of a company is determined within the framework of all innovation-related activities in a company, studies on this subject are mostly based on the product process. Innovation performance is evaluated with qualitative and quantitative measurements. Qualitative measures cover questions about whether firms engage in an innovation activity, while quantitative measures cover the resources provided for innovation activities (Şendoğdu and Öztürk, 2013: 104).

2.3. Competitiveness

There are different academic studies related to the definition of the concept of competitiveness as well as the concept of competition. This concept is defined in various ways depending on different fields and criteria. A common definition that fully explains the competitiveness has not been decided. The World Economic Forum defines competitiveness as the level of productivity that includes all of the institutions and organizations, policies and production factors that can make growth sustainable in a country (Ovalı, 2014). The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development defines competitiveness as under free market settings, a country's ability to develop services and goods that can compete with worldwide competition while also increasing real national income (Reinert, 1995).

Competitiveness is to provide exceptional service and, most importantly, to be perceived from competitors or other organizations in the market with high quality and different products (Bal & Erkan, 2019). According to Landau (1992), competitiveness is defined as achieving a great standard of living and an acceptable growth rate in the country by reaching full employment level or close to full employment without reducing the living standards of the next generation and the growth potential of the country (Landau, 1992).

3. Hypothesis Development Process and Related Studies
3.1. Entrepreneurship Orientation and Competitiveness
Entrepreneurial orientation is of great importance for creating and implementing competitive strategies. For this reason, many researchers have studied entrepreneurial orientation and competitiveness. Kiyabo and Isaga (2020) concluded that entrepreneurship orientation in SMEs has a significant and positive effect on competitiveness. Zeebare and Siron (2017) examined the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on competitive advantage by considering three sub-dimensions (innovation, proactivity, risk taking). As a result of their studies, they concluded that each sub-dimension positively and significantly affects competitive advantage.
Hypothesis 1: Entrepreneurship orientation positively affects competitiveness.

3.2. Entrepreneurship Orientation and Innovation Performance
Entrepreneurial orientation and innovation performance help businesses exposed to ever-changing environmental conditions to reach new values. According to Drucker, the entrepreneurial spirit drives innovation. According to Guo, the emphasis in the entrepreneurial process is "creating innovation" and "creating change". Lumpkin and Dess (2001), Hughes and Morgan (2007) state that entrepreneurial orientation directly affects organisational innovation and performance. For this reason, good implementation of entrepreneurial orientation will increase the financial and innovative performance of enterprises. For businesses that have adopted an entrepreneurship orientation, there is also an approach that values innovation and risky projects, product and services in the market (İşlek and İyigün, 2021).
Hypothesis 2: Innovation performance positively affected by entrepreneurship orientation.

3.3. Innovation Performance and Competitiveness
Porter (1981) stated that companies gain a competitive advantage through innovation. Successful innovation can make outer simulation more difficult and allow businesses to better maintain their competitive advantage (García-Morales et al., 2007). It is known that national competitiveness increases with the improvement of innovation performance. According to Ciocanel et al. (2015), developing an innovation performance strategy increases competitiveness. Chen et al. (2009) carried out a study claiming that innovation performance will positively and significantly affect competitiveness. In the research, they concluded that innovation performance has a positive and significant effect on competitiveness. Also, Erdil et al. (2018), conducted a study on the effect of innovation performance in exporting firms on competitiveness positively and significantly, and their hypotheses were supported.
Hypothesis 3: Innovation performance positively affects competitiveness.
Hypothesis 4: Innovation performance has a mediator role in the effect of entrepreneurship orientation on competitiveness.

4. Method
4.1. Participants and Data Collection Instruments
In this study, an online questionnaire was used as a data collection tool. The survey form created via Google Forms consists of two parts, the statements for company and participant information, and the section where demographic information and scale statements are included. LinkedIn platform was used in the process of directing the surveys to the participants. Surveys were directed to company owners, managers and non-managerial white-collar employees from different companies, and participants from 264 different companies returned. According to Gorsuch (1997), the sample size was at least 100 in confirmatory factor analysis; Cattell (1978) at least 250; Hutcheson and Sofroniou (1999) revealed that the sample size should be at least between 150 and 300, and Hatcher (1994) revealed that the number of samples should be at least 5 times the number of scales (Özden, 2019, p. 94). As a result of the evaluation of all this literature, the sample number was determined as 170 for the questionnaire, which had 28 expressions in total, excluding demographic information.
For the entrepreneurship scale developed by Li e. al. (2017) and reliability and validity tests completed in Turkey by Pala (2020) was used. For the innovation performance and competitiveness, the innovation performance scale developed by Chen et al. (2009) and competitiveness scale developed by Lii and Kuo (2016) and both of scales' reliability and validity tests completed in Turkey by Erdil et al. (2018) was used.

4.2. Validity and Reliability Analysis

For the entrepreneurship scale developed by Li e. al. (2017) and reliability and validity tests completed in Turkey by Pala (2020) was used. For the innovation performance and competitiveness, the innovation performance scale developed by Chen et al. (2009) and competitiveness scale developed by Lii and Kuo (2016) and both of scales' reliability and validity tests completed in Turkey by Erdil et al. (2018) was used.

Table 1. Entrepreneurship Orientation Scale Goodness of Fit Index

Goodness of Fit Index	Good Fit	Moderate	Scale Value
X^2/df	≤3	≤5	1,85
CFI	≥0,97	≥0,95	0,97
GFI	≥0,90	0,89-0,85	0,954
AGFI	≥0,90	0,89-0,80	0,903
RMSEA	≤0,05	0,06-0,08	0,071

Source: Jöreskog ve Sörbom, 1984, Meydan ve Şeşen, 2011. (as cited in Sağlam, 2019)

In the entrepreneurship orientation scale, there are 9 items. As a result of the CFA analysis of the entrepreneurship orientation scale, the factor loads of the items vary between 0.578 and 0.913. According to Eisen et al. (1979), the factor load of items to a factor must be a minimum of 0.40. Because of sixth statement causes deterioration in goodness of fit values, it was removed in analysis. Then, analysis was repeated, and goodness-of-fit values are at an acceptable level.

Table 2. Innovation Performance Scale Goodness of Fit Index

Goodness of Fit Index	Good Fit	Moderate	Scale Value
X^2/df	≤3	≤5	1,62
CFI	≥0,97	≥0,95	0,98
GFI	≥0,90	0,89-0,85	0,99
AGFI	≥0,90	0,89-0,80	0,94
RMSEA	≤0,05	0,06-0,08	0,06

Source: Jöreskog ve Sörbom, 1984, Meydan ve Şeşen, 2011. (as cited in Sağlam, 2019)

In the innovation performance scale, there are 5 items. As a result of the CFA analysis of the innovation performance scale, the factor loads of the items vary between 0.582 and 0.859. Due to the high coefficients between fourth statement and fifth statement's error terms, covariances were created between these variables. After that, analysis was repeated, and goodness-of-fit values are at an acceptable level.

Table 3. Competitiveness Scale Goodness of Fit Index

Goodness of Fit Index	Good Fit	Moderate	Scale Value
X2/df	≤3	≤4-5	2,06
CFI	≥0,97	≥0,95	0,97
GFI	≥0,90	0,89-0,85	0,92
AGFI	≥0,90	0,89-0,80	0,88
RMSEA	≤0,05	0,06-0,08	0,07

Source: Jöreskog ve Sörbom, 1984, Meydan ve Şeşen, 2011. (as cited in Sağlam, 2019)

In the competitiveness scale, there are 14 items. As a result of the CFA analysis of competitiveness scale, the factor loads of some items smaller than 0,40. These items were removed from the CFA analysis, and due to the high coefficients between fifth statement and seventh statement's error terms, covariances were created between these variables. After that, analysis was repeated, and goodness-of-fit values are at an acceptable level.

Table 4. Reliability Analysis of Variables

Variable Name	Reliability (Cronbach α)
Entrepreneurship Orientation	0,837
Innovation Performance	0,830
Competitiveness	0,876

The reliability of the scales used in the research was examined by the internal consistency method and the Cronbach Alpha coefficients were calculated. Cronbach's alpha coefficient evaluates the reliability of the scale and questions whether the scale expresses a whole showing a homogeneous structure. As the Cronbach alpha coefficient approaches 1, its reliability increases. For the scale to be acceptable, the α value must be above 0.70. In Table 4, the results of the reliability analysis were given, and all values are found as above the minimum required level of 0.70.

4.3. Scale Validity Test Results
The CR considers the factor loadings (standardized path coefficients) and error variances of the items in a factor. AVE is the criterion of concurrency validity between items representing an implicit structure (Gürbüz, 2019). It is suggested that the factors in a CFA model must meet the following conditions in order to be valid (Hair, Black, Bobin, & Anderson, 2014).

- CR> 0,70
- AVE> 0,50
- CR>AVE

Table 5. Scale Validity Test Results

Variables	AVE	CR
Entrepreneurship Orientation	0,581	0,916
Innovation Performance	0,507	0,836
Competitiveness	0,611	0,970

Source.: Fornell, C. & D. F. Larcker (1981)

Table 5 showing the results of the scale validity test performed after the verification of the factor structures according to the results of the confirmatory factor analysis was examined. Convergent validity values (CR) for scale dimensions were 0.70 and above, discriminant validity values (AVE) were found to be above 0.50. In this case, scale validity was ensured.

4.4. Correlation Analysis
In this research, by using Pearson's Correlation Analysis technique, as a result of the scales were complied with normal distribution, the relationships between entrepreneurship orientation, innovation performance, and competitiveness were analyzed. The direction and strength of linear relationship can be determined between the variables with the Pearson Correlation analysis.

Table 6. Correlation Analysis

	Entrepreneurship Orientation	Innovation Performance	Competitiveness
Entrepreneurship Orientation	1	0,732**	0,587**
Innovation Performance	0,732**	1	0,593**
Competitiveness	0,587**	0,593**	1

*p<0,001 significant

If the correlation value between the two variables is between 0.40-0.59, it is interpreted as a moderate relationship, if it is between 0.60-0.79, there is a high-level relationship, and if it is 0.80-1.0, it is interpreted as a very high relationship (Şen, 2017). According to this analysis, between entrepreneurship orientation and competitiveness has medium-positive relationship. It is found that there is a high-positive relationship between entrepreneurship orientation and innovation performance. Also, there is a medium-positive relationship between innovation performance and competitiveness.

4.5. Hypothesis Testing
According to George and Mallery (2012), a kurtosis value between ±1.0 is considered excellent for most psychometric purposes, but a value between ±2.0 is in many cases also acceptable, depending on the particular application. Kurtosis and skewness values were calculated for the scales used in this research to provide normality.
In this study, the mediating effect of innovation performance in the relationship between entrepreneurship orientation and competitiveness. The Baron and Kenny (1986) method has been used to measure the mediator effect. The mediation effect is based on certain conditions. These conditions:

1. There should be a statistically significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable,

2. There should be a statistically significant relationship between the independent variable and the mediating variable,

3. There is a statistically significant relationship between the mediator variable and the dependent variable,

4. In the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, when the mediating variable is included in the model, the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable should become statistically insignificant (full mediating effect) or the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable should decrease compared to the previous one (partial mediating effect).

Table 7. The Effect of Entrepreneurship Orientation on Competitiveness

Model	Non-standardized		Standardized		
	β	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
Constant	2,838	0,178		15,911	0,00*
Entrepreneurship Orientation	0,425	0,045	0,578	9,397	0,00*
F= 88,316; p=0.00*; R=0,578 R^2=0,344					

*p<0,001

Competitiveness= 2,838 + 0,425* Entrepreneurship Orientation+ ε
Entrepreneurship orientation positively affects competitiveness.

Table 8. The Effect of Entrepreneurship Orientation on Innovation Performance

Model	Non-standardized		Standardized		
	β	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
Constant	1,192	0,208		5,732	0,00*
Entrepreneurship Orientation	0,734	0,052	0,731	13,912	0,00*
F= 193,542; p=0.00*; R=0,731 R^2=0,535					

*p<0,001

Innovation Performance = 1,192 + 0,734*Entrepreneurship Orientation + ε
Entrepreneurship orientation positively affects innovation performance.

Table 9. The Effect of Entrepreneurship Orientation and Innovation Performance on Competitiveness

Model	β	Std. Error	t	Sig.
Constant	2,535	0,186	13,569	0,00*
Innovation Performance	0,254	0,063	4,01	0,00*
Entrepreneurship Orientation	0,238	0,063	3,75	0,00*
F=56,182; p=0.00*; R=0,632 R^2=0,402				

*p<0,001

Competitiveness = 2,535 + 0,238* Entrepreneurship Orientation + 0,254* Innovation Performance +ε

Table 10. Normal Theory Tests for Indirect Effect

The mediator effect of innovation performance	Effect	Std. Error	Z	p
Entrepreneurship Orientation--> Innovation Performance--> Competitiveness	,1868	,0486	3,8469	,0001

Sobel test results can be seen in Table 10. The results of the Sobel test performed to examine the significance of the mediating effects, the fact that the Z coefficients were greater than 1.96. Therefore, the mediator role of innovation performance on the effect of entrepreneurship orientation on firm competitiveness is proven.

Table 11. Indirect Effect of Entrepreneurship Orientation on Competitiveness

	Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Innovation Performance	0,1868	0,0672	0,0632	0,3252

The bootstrap confidence intervals were within the relevant intervals indicate that the results are significant. Both values are above zero. When the results are examined in terms of mediating effects, it is seen that all steps are realized according to the Baron and Kenny approach and the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable decreases when the mediator variable is added, indicating that the mediating effect has a partial mediating role. Innovation performance has a mediator role in the effect of entrepreneurship orientation on competitiveness.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The study results throw that that the mediator role of innovation performance on the effect of entrepreneurship orientation on firm competitiveness is statistically significant. This means that, the relation between entrepreneurship orientation and firm competitiveness is more significant, when the mediator variable innovation performance is in place.

If the entrepreneurship orientation of firm increases, it will also increase competitiveness. Also, innovation performance of firm increases, it will also increase competitiveness. As a managerial implication, these results show that exporter companies should be entrepreneur, and innovative. These conditions will affect the firm competitiveness in a positive way. Therefore, the companies should pursue the ways that helps to produce innovative services/products.

In future studies, researchers can supplement quantitative data by conducting research to examine the impact of entrepreneurial orientation on firm competitiveness, using qualitative as well as quantitative measurement.

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