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Assessing the Impact of Entrepreneurial Opportunities on Internal Market Orientation (Case Study: Iran Khodro Company)

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Abstract: *The modern world is changing at an incredible pace. As one of the most prominent characteristics of today's societies, organizations are also evolving rapidly, thus, promoting internal market orientation is considered one of the primary goals of any active organization. It is therefore clear that evaluating the variables influencing internal market orientation can help managers improve their organization. In this regard, the present study sought to investigate the impact of entrepreneurial opportunities on the internal market orientation in Iran Khodro Company. This research had an applied purpose for methodology and used a survey correlational design for data collection. The study population included all customers of Iran Khodro Company with unlimited number. Pearson correlation coefficient was used to measure the relationship and regression analysis was also performed to assess the impact using SPSS software. The findings of the study showed that the competitive dynamics of opportunities and active research for opportunities had an impact on the internal market orientation of Iran Khodro Company. In addition, it was found that creating innovative solutions for opportunity had an impact on the internal market orientation. Therefore, entrepreneurship opportunities had a significant impact on internal market orientation in Iran Khodro Company.*

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial Opportunities, Internal Market Orientation, Iran Khodro Company.*

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial opportunity is defined as “those situations in which new goods, services, raw materials, and organizing methods can be introduced (Kerzner, 1997). Further, it seems that advances in modern economy would have not been possible without the private sector; therefore, the existence of entrepreneurs with high intelligence to exploit the *entrepreneurial* opportunities and universal capabilities is very critical (Qanei et al., 2013; Mehrabanfar and Nobari, 2013).

Since entrepreneurial opportunity is a central concept within the entrepreneurship field, without an *opportunity*, there is *no entrepreneurship*. To legitimize this area, a number of scholars have defined the entrepreneurship based on the opportunity concept to identify the unique territory for the entrepreneurship and distinguish it from other management areas (Rostami and Feizbakhsh, 2013). In doing so, the focus on entrepreneurship approach has shifted from entrepreneurial characteristic to understanding the relationship and interaction between the entrepreneurial individuals and valuable opportunities. Internal market orientation refers to an integrated process in which companies use tangible and intangible resources to understand the complexity of the specific needs of customers, achieve a relative differentiation of products for competitive advantage, and ultimately achieve an appropriate brand quality (Song et al. 2007). This enables

companies to effectively implement strategic orientations tailored to meet the company's market conditions and achieve specific performance goals (Morgan, 2009). The market based identification and *monitoring of valuable sources of competitive advantage such as marketing capabilities can provide fact-based evidence to help* managers recognize the need for *capability* improvements. Internal market orientation is regarded as one of the key resources for improving the firm's competitive advantages; firms exploit their capabilities to transfer resources to outputs based on their marketing strategies (Vorhies and Morgan, 2005). Therefore, the question is whether entrepreneurial opportunities have any impacts on the market orientation in Iran Khodro Company?

Background of the Study

This section firstly has discussed the concepts of entrepreneurial opportunities and then described the internal market orientation. Next, it presented the research conceptual model and articulated the research hypotheses.

1. Entrepreneurial opportunities

Today, one of the most important topics in individual and organizational entrepreneurship is to identify entrepreneurial opportunities. Entrepreneurial opportunities are in fact situations in which a person creates a *new* mean-ends framework and paradigm for the use of useful resources. According to Ardichvili et al. (2003) an opportunity is a chance to meet a market need using a creative combination of resources. In addition, Shane and Venkataraman (2000, p. 220) have defined entrepreneurial opportunities as "those situations in which new goods, services, raw materials, and organizing methods can be introduced and sold at greater than their cost of production" (Azizi et al., 2012). Opportunity recognition is considered one of the key components of entrepreneurial processes and one of the key factors for organizational survival and success. Despite the critical role of opportunity recognition, *little research* has been done on how and why opportunities are identified. As noted before, entrepreneurial opportunity refers to any *unmet or partially met needs* of the society to any situation that might create a new company or develop an existing company. Entrepreneurial opportunities include the following dimensions:

2. Research for competitive opportunity:

Then opportunity refers to a set of desirable circumstances that may make it possible to do something using a particular strategy. He defined opportunity as a desirable future state that is different from the current state and that is deemed feasible to achieve. The term opportunity recognition refers to the process of perceiving the possibility of a profitable new business or a new product or service. Opportunity recognition is the identification of a chance to combine resources in a way that might generate a profit.

3. Competitive dynamics of opportunity

Because of its impact on all dimensions and foundations of the organization, and especially in the competition with other companies, developing competitiveness and creating new processes as an organizational strategy have received much attention over the past decades. In fact, the proper application of entrepreneurship mechanisms driven by managers in organizations has led to the development of a clearly defined path with transcendent goals and prospects, where the employees play a central role.

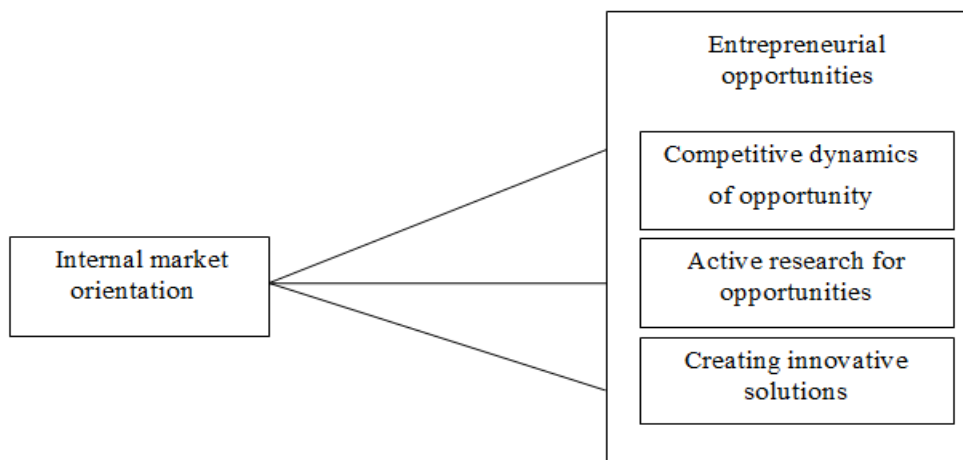
4. Creating innovative solutions:

Environmental changes and increased competition among the companies have required companies to constantly seek innovation to succeed and remain *competitive in the market*. *In the meantime, enterprises need to improve their flexibility and gain competitive advantage by fostering entrepreneurship through their operations. Entrepreneurship plays an essential role in improving productivity and promoting economic growth.*

Miller (1983) suggested innovation, risk taking, and pro-activeness as key dimensions of entrepreneurial activity.

Internal Market Orientation:

As Pearce and Morgan (1991) considered domestic employees like domestic customers and their businesses as domestic products, domestic marketing is nothing but the use of external marketing activities within the organization; *internal marketing is nothing but the use of external marketing activities within the organization*. Internal marketing can be defined as the company’s effort to meet the needs of effective client staff (Barry et al., 1976), or the more effective management of the value-service chain and communication between colleagues (Gamson, 1987). The goal of internal marketing is to ensure the employee’s satisfaction within the organization and to develop the quality of products and services in order to achieve the external customer’s satisfaction in the organization. The program can be well implemented through a process from internal customers towards foreign customers. Internal marketing focuses on appropriate internal relations between people at all levels in organizations, leading to the creation of service-centered and customer-centered relations between employees and customers (Hooshangie et al., 2017; Gronos, 2000). Therefore, internal marketing acts as a comprehensive management process that integrates multiple duties of organizations in two directions: 1) It causes all employees at all different levels of organizations, businesses and processes in context experience and understand the same environment. 2) It causes all employees prepare and motivate in a service focused way (Gronos, 2000). Therefore, according to the above mentioned descriptions, the incorporation of different dimensions of entrepreneurial opportunities can help to provide a conceptual model for the current research. Figure 1 illustrates the research model. This model consists of the relationships between the three dimensions of entrepreneurial opportunities (competitive dynamics of opportunities, active research for opportunities and creation of innovative opportunity solutions), and internal market orientation. One main hypothesis and three sub-hypotheses were identified based on the conceptual model presented below.



Main hypothesis:

Entrepreneurial opportunities have a positive, direct and significant impact on the internal market orientation in Iran Khodro Company.

Secondary hypotheses:

- Competitive dynamics of opportunities have a positive, direct and significant impact on the internal market orientation in Iran Khodro Company.
- Active research for opportunities has a positive, direct and significant impact on the internal market orientation in Iran Khodro Company.

- Creating innovative opportunity solutions has a positive, direct and significant impact on the internal market orientation in Iran Khodro Company.

Methodology

This research had an applied purpose for methodology and was a *correlational descriptive study* in terms of nature. Data were collected using field survey through a questionnaire.

Population, sample and sampling method

The study population included all customers of Iran Khodro Company with unlimited number. We used simple random sampling method for sampling. The Cochran formula was used to determine the minimum sample size. Given the size of population, this study required at least 384 samples, of which 400 questionnaires were distributed among the samples. Then, 388 questionnaires were returned to the researchers. Three questionnaires with heterogeneous and unreliable data were excluded. Finally, 385 questionnaires were analyzed, which were higher than the required sample according to the mentioned rules.

Research tools

Entrepreneurship opportunities questionnaire: This questionnaire was developed by Pohaka (2009) to measure the entrepreneurial opportunities. The questionnaire consists of 15 items that measure entrepreneurial opportunities in three subscales of competitive dynamics of opportunities, active research for opportunities, and creating innovative solutions. The items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Five items were designed for each subscale ranging from 5 to 25. The reliability of the questionnaire was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, with a value of 0.77 for competitive dynamics of opportunities, 0.75 for active research of opportunities and 0.74 for creating innovative solutions. Since the minimum acceptable value for the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.7 (Hooshangie et al., 2016) and the coefficients were higher than 0.7, the reliability of the questionnaire was confirmed. The validity of this questionnaire was also confirmed using face validity.

Internal Market Orientation scale:

The scale was developed by Money and Foreman (1995) containing 15 items. The items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The scores ranged from 15 to 75. The reliability of the scale was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the acceptable value was reported 0.76. The validity of this questionnaire was also confirmed using the face validity.

Data analysis

Data analysis was performed using SPSS software. Inferential statistics and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests were used to evaluate the impact of entrepreneurial opportunities on internal market orientation and to normalize the data, respectively. In addition, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to measure the relationship between the variables, as well as regression analysis to measure the impact of variables.

Findings

Normality test

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to check if the variables were normally distributed; therefore, if the value was greater than 0.05, then the variables would follow a normal distribution (Fazli et al., 2013). According to the results, since the variables were normally distributed, the Pearson correlation coefficient was utilized.

Table 1: Result of normality test for research variables

Variable	Significant level	Mean	Z statistic	Result
Competitive dynamics of opportunities	083.0	52.3	261.1	Normal
Active research for opportunities	066.0	47.3	306.1	Normal
Creating innovative solutions	232.0	53.3	037.1	Normal

Main hypothesis

The main hypothesis analyzed the impact of entrepreneurial opportunities on the internal market orientation in Iran Khodro Company.

Table 2: Relationship between the entrepreneurial opportunities and internal market orientation

Test	Number	Correlation coefficient	Significant level
Pearson	385	885.0	000.0

Table 3: Summary for the fit of regression model

Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of determination	Adjusted coefficient of determination	Standard deviation of error	Durbin Watson
885.0	783.0	782.0	263.0	970.1

Since the error level was below 0.05, then, there was a statistically significant relationship between the entrepreneurial opportunities and internal market orientation. The value of the correlation coefficient was also $R = 0.885$, suggesting a strong positive relationship. Further, since the Durbin-Watson value was higher than the standard value of 1.5, the *independent residual* assumption was then supported and it was concluded that the research model was adequate based on the mentioned indices.

Table 4: Testing (ANOVA) for the significance of regression

Model	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Average sum of squares	F statistics	sig
Regression	592.48	1	592.48	244.697	0.000
Residual	450.13	384	070.0		
Total	042.62	385			

According to Table 3, the estimated significance level of this statistic was $sig = 0.000$, suggesting the significance of regression at 1% error level. Table 4 shows the steps of regression implementation for the variable of entrepreneurial opportunities with their standard and non-standard coefficients, standard deviation, t-student and significance level.

Table 5: Coefficients of regression model for the main hypothesis

Variable entered into the model	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	T statistics	Significance level
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	402.0	122.0		285.3	0.000
Entrepreneurial opportunities	901.0	034.0	885.0	405.26	0.000

The table above shows the results of the analysis of the regression model parameters with the following fitted regression model:

$$Y = 0.402 + .901 X$$

First sub-hypothesis

The first sub-hypothesis investigated the impact of competitive dynamics of opportunities on the internal market orientation in Iran Khodro Company.

Table 6: Relationship between the competitive dynamics of opportunities and internal market orientation

Test	Number	Correlation coefficient	Significant level
Pearson	385	0.868	0.000

Table 7: Summary of the model for the first sub-hypothesis

Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of determination	Adjusted coefficient of determination	Standard deviation of error	Durbin Watson
0.868	0.753	0.752	0.2810	1.796

Since the error level was below 0.05, then, there was a statistically significant relationship between the competitive dynamics of opportunities and internal market orientation. The value of the correlation coefficient was also $R = 0.868$, suggesting a strong positive relationship. Further, since the Durbin-Watson value was higher than the standard value of 1.5, the *independent residual* assumption was then supported and it was concluded that the research model was adequate based on the mentioned indices.

Table 8: Testing (ANOVA) for the significance of regression

Model	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Average sum of squares	F statistics	sig
Regression	46.727	1	46.727	588.855	0.000
Residual	15.315	384	0.079		
Total	62.042	385			

According to Table 7, the estimated significance level of this statistic was $sig = 0.000$, suggesting significance of regression at 1% error level. Table 8 shows the steps of regression implementation for the variable of competitive dynamics of opportunities with their standard and non-standard coefficients, standard deviation, t-student and significance level.

Table 9: Coefficients of regression model

Variable entered into the model	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	T statistics	Significance level
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	0.703	0.121		5.817	0.000
Entrepreneurial opportunities	0.797	0.033	0.868	24.266	0.000

The table above shows the results of the analysis of the regression model parameters with the following fitted regression model:

$$Y = 0.703 + .797 X$$

Second sub-hypothesis

The second sub-hypothesis examined the impact of active research for opportunities on the internal market orientation in Iran Khodro Company.

Table 10: Relationship between the active research for opportunities and internal market orientation

Test	Number	Correlation coefficient	Significant level
Pearson	385	0.691	000.0

Table 11: Summary of model for the second sub-hypothesis

Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of determination	Adjusted coefficient of determination	Standard deviation of error	Durbin Watson
0.691	0.477	0.474	0.410	1.923

Since the error level was below 0.05, then, there was a statistically significant relationship between the active research for opportunities and internal market orientation. The value of the correlation coefficient was also $R = 0.0691$, suggesting a strong positive relationship. Further, since the Durbin-Watson value was higher than the standard value of 1.5, the *independent residual* assumption was then supported and it was concluded that the research model was adequate based on the mentioned indices.

Table 12: Testing (ANOVA) for the significance of regression

Model	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Average sum of squares	F statistics	sig
Regression	29.591	1	29.591	175.991	0.000
Residual	32.451	384	0.168		
Total	62.042	385			

According to Table 11, the estimated significance level of this statistic was $sig = 0.000$, suggesting significance of regression at 1% error level. Table 8 shows the steps of regression implementation for the variable of active research for opportunities with their standard and non-standard coefficients, standard deviation, t-student and significance level.

Table 13: Coefficients of regression model

Variable entered into the model	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	T statistics	Significance level
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.512	0.160		9.476	0.000
Entrepreneurial opportunities	0.590	0.044	0.691	13.266	0.000

The table above shows the results of the analysis of the regression model parameters with the following fitted regression model:

$$Y = 1.512 + .590 X$$

Third sub-hypothesis

The third sub-hypothesis examined the impact of creating innovative opportunity solutions on the internal market orientation in Iran Khodro Company.

Table 14: The effect of creating innovative opportunity solutions on the internal market orientation

Test	Number	Correlation coefficient	Significant level
Pearson	385	0.719	000.0

Table 15: Summary of model for the third sub-hypothesis

Correlation coefficient	Coefficient of determination	Adjusted coefficient of determination	Standard deviation of error	Durbin Watson
0.719	0.517	0.514	0.394	2.043

Since the error level was below 0.05, then, there was a statistically significant relationship between creating innovative opportunity solutions and internal market orientation. The value of the correlation coefficient was also $R = 0.0719$, suggesting a strong positive relationship. Further, since the Durbin-Watson value was higher than the standard value of 1.5, the *independent-residual* assumption was then supported and it was concluded that the research model was adequate based on the mentioned indices.

Table 16: Testing (ANOVA) for the significance of regression

Model	Sum of squares	Degrees of freedom	Average sum of squares	F statistics	sig
Regression	32.072	1	32.072	206.529	0.000
Residual	29.971	384	0.155		
Total	62.042	385			

According to Table 15, the estimated significance level of this statistic was $sig = 0.000$, suggesting significance of regression at 1% error level. Table 16 shows the steps of regression implementation for the variable of innovative opportunity solutions with their standard and non-standard coefficients, standard deviation, t-student and significance level.

Table 17: Coefficients of regression model

Variable entered into the model	Non-standard coefficients		Standard coefficients	T statistics	Significance level
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	1.491	0.149		10.013	0.000
Entrepreneurial opportunities	0.604	0.042	0.719	14.371	0.000

The table above showed the results of the analysis of the regression model parameters with the following fitted regression model:

$$Y = 1.491 + .604 X$$

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the above analysis, firstly the hypotheses have been described and then suggestions are made and finally the research limitations have been stated.

Main hypothesis

Having analyzed the results, the main hypothesis suggesting the significant impact of entrepreneurial opportunities on the internal market orientation was confirmed. In other words, since the significance level (0.000) was less than 0.01 and the correlation coefficient was 0.885; therefore, there was a direct effect between the variables. These results were in line with those results obtained by Ahmadi et al. (2012), Soltani et al. (2017), Jafari Postaki et al (2016).

First sub-hypothesis

Having analyzed the results, the first sub-hypothesis suggesting the significant impact of competitive dynamics of opportunities on the internal market orientation was confirmed. In other words, since the significance level

(0.000) was less than 0.01 and the correlation coefficient was 0.868; therefore, there was a direct effect between the variables. These results were consistent with those results obtained by Ahmadi et al. (2018), Soltani et al. (2017), Jafari Postaki et al (2016).

Second sub-hypothesis

Having analyzed the results, the second sub-hypothesis suggesting the significant impact of active research for opportunities on the internal market orientation was confirmed. In other words, since the significance level (0.000) was less than 0.01 and the correlation coefficient was 0.691; therefore, there was a direct effect between the variables. These results were congruent with those results obtained by Ahmadi et al. (2018), Soltani et al. (2017), Jafari Postaki et al (2016).

Third sub-hypothesis

Having analyzed the results, the third sub-hypothesis suggesting the significant impact of creating innovative opportunity solutions on the internal market orientation was confirmed. In other words, since the significance level (0.000) was less than 0.01 and the correlation coefficient was 0.719; therefore, there was a direct effect between the variables. These results were consistent with those results obtained by Ahmadi et al. (2018), Soltani et al. (2017), Jafari Postaki et al (2016).

Suggestions

1. It is recommended that employees can be engaged in making important decisions to clarify the organization goals in order to emphasize the significance of customer in achieving the organization objectives, including the successful implementation of internal market orientation, as well as to ensure appropriate conditions to create the entrepreneurial opportunities.
2. It is recommended that managers achieve their internal market orientation objectives through introducing and bringing new and diversified products and services to the local markets, expanding economic activity, reducing the cost of intra-organizational processes, and applying small changes to the current products and services.
3. Given the impact of organizational culture on the customer attitudes and behavior, it is critical for the organization to focus on developing a customer-oriented culture to achieve the successful internal market orientation.
4. Increasing new business knowledge and information is considered as one of the main ways to stay ahead of rivals in the market. Therefore, a portion of capital and income should be invested to acquire new information, retrain it to clients and finally create entrepreneurial opportunities.

Limitations

- ✓ Since research in social sciences, humanities and management is closely linked to the analysis and understanding human activities as well as the complexity of human behavior and activities, data collection from the people has always been one of the main problems of research due to its impact on factors beyond the control of researcher. The issue has been escalated in our society due to the lack of institutionalization of research spirit.
- ✓ The impact of variables that may be beyond the control of the researcher and their potential influence on the research results were among the major limitations of our study.
- ✓ Research data were collected based on the questionnaire design and completed by the experts. Despite the validity and reliability of the measurement tool, caution should be exercised while commenting on the accuracy of the results (inherent limitation of the questionnaire).
- ✓ The study findings were cross-sectional and only restricted to the collection time; passage of time may influence the variables of the study leading to some changes in the results.

- ✓ Research findings were limited to Iran Khodro Company, thus, caution should be taken while generalizing the results to other companies or organizations.
Due to different levels of perception and judgment of individuals on a subject, the use of questionnaire tools for data collection and contextual linguistic data might cause errors.

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