

The Influence of Entrepreneurial Training on Business Performance of Women Food Vendors in Ilala Municipality, Tanzania: Mediating Role of Product Innovation/Service Innovation

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Abstract

The challenges in the business environment and the increase in competition have made women food vendors focus greatly on improving their business performance to attain business survival and develop their innovation abilities to meet their desire for success. This study therefore evaluates the mediating effect of product/service innovation on the relationship between entrepreneurial training and the business performance of women food vendors in Ilala Municipality, Tanzania. The study employed an explanatory research design with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) as a statistical method for testing hypotheses. Multistage sampling procedures using stratified, purposive, and systematic random sampling were used to select a sample size of 302 women food vendors. Data collection was done using research questionnaires. The findings revealed that entrepreneurial training has a significant and positive effect on product/service innovation. The findings also revealed that product innovation has a positive and significant effect on business performance. Moreover, the findings revealed that product/service innovation mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial training and business performance. The findings provide significant insights for women's food vendors, managers, policymakers, and researchers to further understand the mediating role of product/service innovation on the relationship between entrepreneurial training and business performance of women's food vendors. Thus, it is imperative for women to be encouraged to attend and improve their entrepreneurial skills and product/service innovation, which may increase business performance.

Keywords: Business Performance, Entrepreneurial Training, Product Innovation, Food Vendor, Service Innovation

Introduction

Globally, entrepreneurial training is considered an important component of development. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals have two objectives that directly reflect the importance of entrepreneurial training. These include Goal 4.4, which emphasises the increase in the number of adults and youth who have suitable employability and entrepreneurial skills, and Goal 8.3, which emphasises the promotion of development-oriented policies that could assist

productive activities, entrepreneurial creativity, decent job creation, innovation, and creativity, and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small-, and medium enterprises through access to financial services (The United Nations Conference of Trade and Development, 2016).

Regarding the 2030 and 2063 agendas for sustainable development in Africa, many African governments have acknowledged the need for entrepreneurial training to boost business growth (Africa Union, 2015). Again, under the support of the new partnership for African development and the African Union strategies for MSMEs, the African government has promoted policies aimed at improving entrepreneurial skills and entrepreneurial training (The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2017).

Sub-Saharan African countries, particularly South Africa, have developed a programme called "Teaching Entrepreneurial Skills Development" that aims to improve the entrepreneurial abilities of trainers, educators, and small business owners (Botha, 2006). In Rwanda, the Rwanda Development Board (RDB) has been developed to assist entrepreneurs through distinctive business development programs, which include entrepreneurship training. Similar to this, Ghana has developed an industrial growth plan related to entrepreneurial development. While in Tanzania, Gambia and Cameroon have established a national entrepreneurship policy with the same objective of advancing entrepreneurial culture through training (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017).

Furthermore, the Tanzanian government has made several efforts to develop entrepreneurship as both life and business skills. These include creating the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, the National Entrepreneurship Training Framework (United Republic of Tanzania, 2013), the National Economic Empowerment Policy (2004), and the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Policy (2013). However, there is still poor business performance among women entrepreneurs (Mramba et al., 2015). Poor performance is observed in income generation, competitive advantage, increase in sales, customer satisfaction, and business expansion.

Although several countries, and Tanzania in particular, have adopted entrepreneurial training as a key driver of business performance, the knowledge base about its effects is still limited. When it is, it is disputed regarding its effect on business performance. According to Mwakio et al. (2020), the idea that entrepreneurial training advances business performance is not certainly true. This marks the divergent findings that have been reported by numerous studies (Bauer, 2011; Patel, 2014).

In a randomised control study, Karlan and Valdivia (2011) assessed the marginal impact of providing business training to Peruvian women micro entrepreneurs. They did not discover any

proof of changes in crucial result areas like business profits, net incomes, or hiring new employees. Entrepreneurship training slightly improved financial performance, according to a study by Martinez et al. (2016). Similarly, Cho and Honorati (2013) argue that entrepreneurship training is typically more detrimental than beneficial because their findings showed that it had no impact on income.

However, a study in Dodoma, Tanzania, by Said (2020) on the role of entrepreneurship training in improving the business performance of Tanzanian food vendors discovered a positive relationship between entrepreneurship training and business performance. Bruhn (2013), on the other hand, found that entrepreneurship training does not affect the firm outcomes of young entrepreneurs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the same vein, Karlan and Valdivia (2011) found non-directional relationships with no evidence of a change in important outcomes such as business profits.

Based on this debate, studies on the impact of entrepreneurial training on business performance have yielded conflicting findings (Mwakio et al., 2020). Moreover, previous research has overlooked the role of product/service innovation as a mediator of the relationship between entrepreneurial training and business performance (Lenihan et al., 2019). Thus, Alene (2020) recommends more research on the subject, and some have suggested that similar research be done in another sector (Msoka, 2013; Reven & Le, 2015; & Tambwe, 2015) to integrate the three constructs of entrepreneurial training as exogenous, product/service innovation as a mediator, and business performance as endogenous.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the mediating role of process innovation in the relationship between entrepreneurial training and business performance has not been studied, particularly in the context of Tanzanian women's food vendors. Little attention has been paid to the integrative approach of testing the integrative effect of three latent constructs: entrepreneurial training, process innovation, and business performance (Zhou et al., 2017; Al-Sa'di et al., 2017). As a result, the current study was conducted to assess the mediating role of product/service innovation on the relationship between entrepreneurial training and the business performance of women's food vendors in Ilala Municipality, Tanzania.

Literature Review

Numerous studies (Caloghirou et al., 2018; Jeong et al., 2019; Kristinae et al., 2019; Tan & Nasurdin, 2011) have considered the relationship between entrepreneurial training and product/innovation. Studies by Forkuoh et al., (2016), Kawira (2021), & Wasike (2014) have

linked product/service innovation and business performance. However, studies conducted by Aboda and Elgharbawy (2022); Alliyu et al.(2019); Aliyu et al. (2018); & Autio et al. (2014) have focused only on the mediating role of innovation in general without specifying the type of innovation on which the present study is focused.

A study by Tan and Nasurdin (2011) on human resource management practice and organisational innovation assessed the mediating role of knowledge management effectiveness in Malaysia. The study employed a sample size of 171 large manufacturing firms. The data analysis was done using regression. The findings of the study revealed that training was positively related to product innovation. The study recommends future research be conducted on the service on which the study is focusing.

Caloghirou et al. (2018) conducted a study on how employee training and knowledge stocks affect product innovation in Anthen Greek. The study employed a sample size of 524 of the largest Greek manufacturing firms and was conducted in two waves in 2011 and 2013. The study employed a single-equation probit model to investigate whether a binary variable for training is correlated with product innovation. The findings of the study suggested that training increases absorptive capacity and, consequently, is necessary for successful product and process innovation.

Wasike (2014) conducted a case study of Haco Tiger brands in East Africa on the effect of product innovation on performance. Data analysis was done using a longitudinal study design, and secondary data was collected from the annual financial sales report for the years 2009 to 2014. The data was then analysed using trend analysis. The research study found that product innovation was relevant to the company as it contributed significantly to sales growth and helped to accelerate total company sales revenue. Product innovation thus influenced the performance of Haco Tiger Brands positively.

Alliyu et al. (2019) conducted a study on the mediating effect of innovation on the relationship between marketing orientation, social network, training, access to finance, and business performance of women entrepreneurs in Nigeria. The study used a survey research design. Stratified, disproportionate, and systematic random sampling procedures were used to select a sample size of 576 women-owned businesses (MSMEs). A research questionnaire was adopted to collect the data required from women entrepreneurs. Structural equation modelling was used to test the proposed hypothesis. The results found that market orientation, social network, training, and access to finance are significant strategic factors for the business performance of women-owned MSMEs in Nigeria. The findings further found that innovation mediates the

relationship between entrepreneurial training and business performance. The recommended stakeholder is to encourage women to improve their entrepreneurial training on innovation, which in turn may increase their business performance.

Aliyu et al. (2018) did a study on the mediation effects of innovation on the relationship between market orientation, training, and business performance of women in Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design. Stratified disproportion and systematic random sampling procedures were employed to select a sample size of 576 women owned by MSMEs. Data were collected using a research questionnaire. The collected data was analysed using structural equation modelling (SEM). The study revealed that marketing orientation and training are important strategic factors for the performance of women in micro, small, and medium enterprises. The results also found that innovation mediates the relationship between market orientation, training, and business performance of women-owned MSMEs in Nigeria. The study recommended that women-owned MSMEs improve their market orientation and receive training to increase their business performance.

Based on the empirical literature review, studies on the mediation effect of product/service innovation (Niyi et al., 2022) in the relationship between entrepreneurial training and business performance are scant. Thus, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, the mediating role of product/service innovation in the relationship between entrepreneurial training and business performance has not been studied, particularly in the context of Tanzanian women's food vendors. Therefore, based on the empirical literature review, the present study proposes the following hypotheses.

H1: Entrepreneurial training has a significant effect on Product/service innovation of women food vendors in Ilala Municipality

H2: product innovation has a significant effect on business performance of women food vendors in Ilala Municipality

H3: Product/service innovation mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial training and business performance of women food vendors in Ilala Municipality

Theoretical Perspectives Underpinning the Study

The present study adopted Schumpeter's theory (1934) and the entrepreneurial performance model (Van Vuuren, 1997) as the theoretical perspectives underpinning this study. Both of the two theories summarise the study by taking into consideration the relationships among the

variables. The study emphasises primarily how businesses make and attain their performance. In the present study, Schumpeter theory and the entrepreneurial performance model are adopted to explain the relationship between the independent variable (entrepreneurial training), the dependent variable (business performance of women food vendors), and the mediating variables (product innovation) (see Figure 1).

The Schumpeter theory was developed in 1934. It holds that Product/service innovation may take any shape, including the introduction of new products, changes in the appearance of products, changes in the quality of products, and new methods of sales that may attract customers and hence increase profit. The theory claims that any enterprise aiming to prosper and progress must be innovative in its approach.

The entrepreneurial performance model was developed by Vuuren in 1997. The model emphasises the relationship between performance and skills (Vuuren, 1997). These entrepreneurial performance measures include increased profitability, increased productivity, the establishment of own businesses, and growth in net values, while entrepreneurial skills include business skills, entrepreneurial skills, technical skills, and personal skills (Botha, 2006).

The two theories, Schumpeter theory and entrepreneurial performance model, are integrated into this study as suggested by prior research, notably Nieman et al. (2019), who have emphasised the need for combining two or more theories for the purpose of strengthening and enhancing business performance.

Conceptual Framework

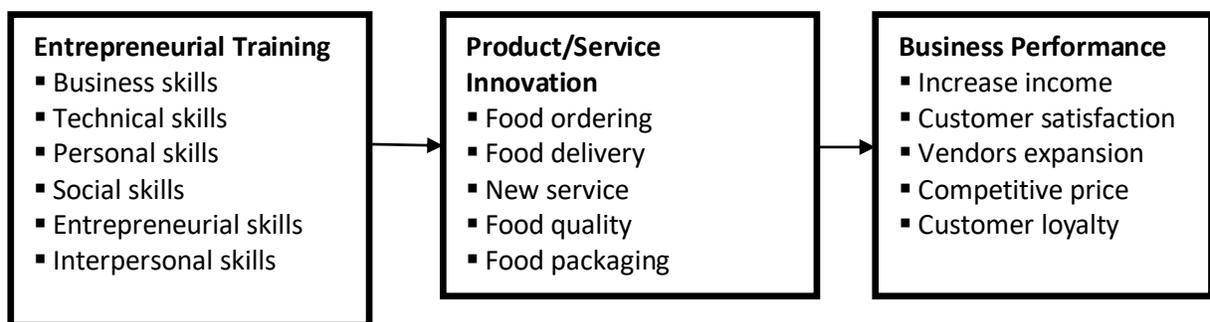


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Materials and Methods

This study was conducted in Ilala Municipality, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, comprising three markets: Ferry, Buguruni, and Kisutu. The municipality was chosen because it hosts large markets such as Kisutu, Ferry Fish Market, Buguruni, and many large industries that serve as strategic areas that attract many vendors due to the high demand for food in those areas (Karondo & Tumaini, 2021; Wango et al., 2022). A deductive approach was adopted in this study. The use

of a deductive approach is to generate and test hypotheses with existing theories to explain causal relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2012). The study employed an explanatory research design. The explanatory research design is suitable because it takes into account the various methodological techniques such as qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods (Cresswell, 2012). Multistage sampling procedures using stratified, purposive, and systematic random sampling were used to select a sample size of 302 women food vendors. The sampling procedure is suitable for obtaining a representative that is not biased. Data was collected from women food vendors using a research questionnaire. The use of a research questionnaire is suitable as it offers a standardised system of questions to collect measurable and factual data that classifies specific groups and their circumstances in statistical characterization (Creswell, 2014). The data were processed and analysed using Partial Least Squares-Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) version 4.

Research Findings and Discussion

This part comprises two sections. The first section depicts findings on the reliability and validity of the measurement model that links indicators to latent constructs, and the second section depicts findings for the structural model that links endogenous latent variables to other latent constructs, which focus on hypothesis testing

Validity and Reliability

The assessment of the measurement model was done through validity and reliability. The aim was to ensure that the collected data reflected adequately the intended construct measurement in the study. It is also important to confirm that the measurement scale precisely represents the concepts to be measured (Hair et al., 2019). The factor loading per indicator was first assessed, and the findings indicated 13 indicators out of 16 were above the recommended statistics of 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2017; Hair *et al.*, 2019), which ranged between 0.717 and 0.853. However, three indicators that were below the recommended level of 0.70 were deleted, while 13 indicators were carried forward for analysis. The reliability of each construct was met since its Cronbach value was above the recommended 0.70 (Hair *et al.*, 2019). The results are presented in Table 1.

Furthermore, the results revealed that composite reliability was all above the recommended value of 0.6, implying that composite reliability was met (Hair et al., 2019). The average mean extracted (AVE) was above the recommended 0.50, hence the convergent validity was met (Fornel & Larker, 1981; Hair *et al.*, 2019). Therefore, the data was fit, as indicated by the fact that all the fitness indexes were attained. This simply means all the constructs are valid (Table 1).

Table 1: Validity and Reliability

| Variables | Indicators | Loadings | Cronbach's alpha | (CR) | (AVE) |
|--------------------------|------------|----------|------------------|-------|-------|
| Business Performance | BP1 | 0.847 | 0.786 | 0.86 | 0.607 |
| | BP2 | 0.853 | | | |
| Entrepreneurial Training | ET1 | 0.783 | 0.783 | 0.86 | 0.606 |
| | ET2 | 0.752 | | | |
| | ET3 | 0.763 | | | |
| | ET4 | 0.717 | | | |
| | ET5 | 0.732 | | | |
| | ET6 | 0.75 | | | |
| Product Innovation | PSI 1 | 0.828 | 0.846 | 0.896 | 0.683 |
| | PSI 2 | 0.769 | | | |
| | PSI 3 | 0.796 | | | |
| | PSI 4 | 0.845 | | | |
| | PSI 5 | 0.747 | | | |

Note:CR=Composite Reliability, AVE= Average variance extracted

Discriminant Validity

The findings indicate that the correlations among the reflective latent constructs are acceptable, and the discriminant validity value was 0.75 to 0.798 above the recommended values by Chin (1998), Fornell and Larcker (1981), and Hair et al. (2019), in which assessment was done by employing the correlation among constructs with the square roots of average variance extracted (AVE). (See Table 2).

Table 2: Discriminant Validity

| Latent Construct | BP | ET | PSI |
|------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| BP | 0.85 | | |
| ET | 0.565 | 0.75 | |
| PSI | 0.572 | 0.538 | 0.798 |

Note: BP= business performance, ET= entrepreneurial training, PSI= product/service innovation

Hypothesis Testing

After confirming the reliability and validity of the measurement model, the next step is the evaluation of the measurement of the structural model. This was done to test the mediating role of product/service on the relationship between entrepreneurial training and business performance. To evaluate the significance path, the study carried out the Boost trapping 5000

times with 302 respondents' data. The findings of hypothesis testing of the measurement structural model is indicated in Figure 2 and Table 3.

The findings of hypothesis (H1) testing revealed that entrepreneurial training, as an independent variable, has a significant positive relationship with product/service innovation ($\beta = 0.641$, $T = 9.423$, $P = 0.000$). These findings are similar to those of studies by Jeong et al. (2019), Kristina et al. (2019), and Tan & Nasurdin (2011), who found that entrepreneurial training is positively related to product/service innovation. These findings support the vitality of entrepreneurial training in business skills, technical skills, personal skills, entrepreneurial skills, interpersonal skills, and social skills, which enhance the ability of women food vendors to improve product/service innovation that includes food ordering, food delivery, new services, food quality, and food packaging. The role of entrepreneurial training is to enable women food vendors to obtain knowledge and skills that are important for cultivating their product/service innovation and, hence, their business performance.

Furthermore, the findings of this study corroborate with the study by Caloghirou et al. (2018) who found that training increases absorptive capacity and, consequently, is necessary for successful product and process innovation. It imperative to develop women's food vendors in numerous skills, such as business skills, technical skills, personal skills, entrepreneurial skills, interpersonal skills, and social skills, that would enhance their ability to improve product/service innovation for business success. The study confirmed that entrepreneurial training on skills such as technical skills, business skills, personal skills, interpersonal skills, social skills, and entrepreneurship skills was important for improving product/service innovation among women food vendors. Additionally, the results confirmed that entrepreneurial training develops the capability and knowledge of women food vendors who use it to improve product/service quality based on the market and customer needs.

Equally, the hypothesis (H2) showed that product/service innovation and business performance have a significant and positive relationship ($\beta = 0.355$, $T = 3.293$, $P = 0.000$). This finding is consistent with prior findings by Wasike (2014) who found that product innovation being relevant to the company as it contributed significantly to sales growth and helped to accelerate total company sales revenue. Thus, product innovation influenced the performance of Haco Tiger Brands positively. This finding has confirmed that product innovation is vital factor for business performance. It important for stakeholders and women food vendors to invest in product/service innovation in order to enhance their business performance.

The finding of this study is further concurring with Schumpeter theory (1934) that hold that any enterprise aiming to prosper and progress must be innovative in its approach. It is from this point the present study support the fact that for women food vendors to increase their business performance are required to be innovative in product/service such as food ordering, food delivery, new service, food quality and food packaging.

The findings of the study is also in the line with studies by Forkuoh et al. (2016), Kawira (2021), and Rosli and Sidek (2013), who found that product/service innovation has a positive and significant effect on the performance of micro, small, and medium enterprises. With regard to the study findings, the effect of product innovation on business performance may be higher because of improvements in product/service innovation such as food ordering, food delivery, new services, food quality, and food packaging.

Furthermore, the study discovered that product/service innovation mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial training and the business performance of women's food vendors ($\beta = 0.228$, $T = 3.299$, $P = 0.000$). This result is similar to the study by Alliyu et al. (2019) findings that innovation mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial training and business performance. This finding suggests stakeholders in food vending sector to encourage women to improve their entrepreneurial training on innovation, which in turn may increase their business performance.

The findings of the present study is also in the same vein with the study by Aliyu et al. (2018) who found that innovation mediates the relationship between market orientation, training, and business performance of women-owned MSMEs in Nigeria. Furthermore, Aboda and Elgharbawy (2022), confirmed that product innovation mediates entrepreneurial training and business performance in small businesses in the food industry. Similarly, Autio et al. (2014) confirmed that entrepreneurial training is mediated by innovation towards business performance, thereby improving product quality and hence a competitive advantage. The findings support the importance of entrepreneurial training in improving product/service innovation, which leads to the business performance of women's food vendors. The results thus provide evidence that even in a mature industry like restaurants, where product/service innovation is critical to success, individual entrepreneurs' training can significantly impact business performance. Institutionalising entrepreneurial training is critical to driving innovative initiatives' business performance. Food vendors should prioritise building this trait among employees to develop competitive business advantages. A strategy for promoting innovativeness, creativity, continuous

improvement, resilience building, and adaptability in a dynamic business environment through entrepreneurial training.

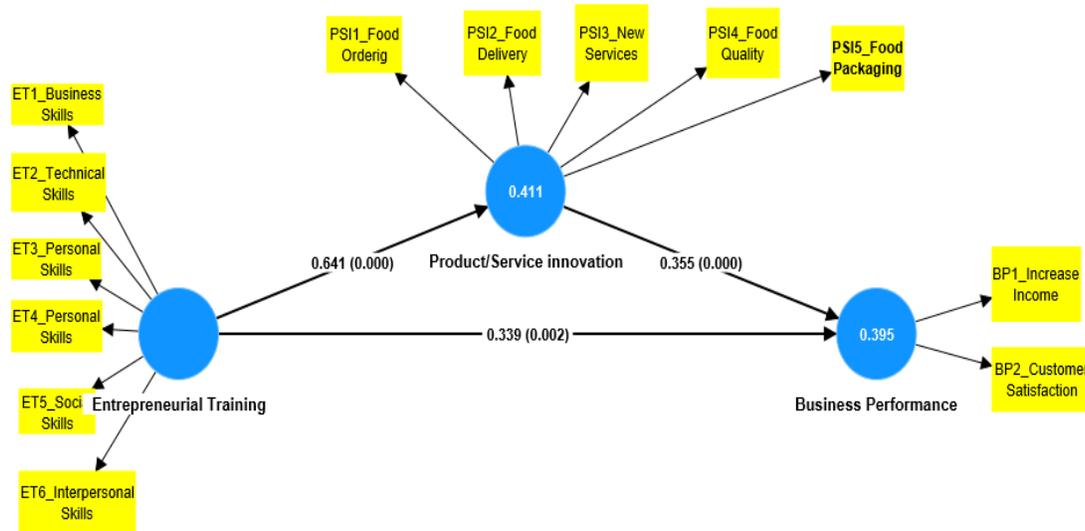


Figure 2 Structural model showing the Mediating role of product/service innovation on relationship between entrepreneurial training and business performance

Table 3: Direct and Indirect Effects Product/Service Innovation on Relationship between Entrepreneurial Training and Business Performance

| hypothesis | Relation | Beta | STD Deviation | T-Value | Findings |
|------------|-----------|-------|------------------|---------|-----------|
| H1 | ET→PSI | 0.641 | 0.068 | 9.423 | Supported |
| H2 | PSI→BF | 0.355 | 0.108 | 3.293 | Supported |
| H3 | ET→PSI→BF | 0.228 | 0.069 | 3.299 | Supported |

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study concludes that product/service innovation is an important factor in facilitating the relationship between entrepreneurial training and the business performance of women food vendors in Ilala Municipality, Tanzania. It is understood that a vast amount of opportunity exists to enhance the business performance of women food vendors in Ilala Municipality, including providing entrepreneurial training that could equip women food vendors with appropriate product/service innovation. The improved business performance contributes to national economic growth.

The study recommends that further and future researchers conduct similar studies in specific areas such as food processing, retail, and fruits in other regions of Tanzania to see whether the findings will deviate from the ones reported in this study. Furthermore, the study recommends women food vendors to advocate for the adoption of product/service innovation practices, with

much emphasis on the introduction of new services or products, food ordering, food delivery, food quality, and food packaging.

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