An Exploratory Analysis of Market Orientation and Perceived Corporate Image in Education Marketing: A Study of Selected Students

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Abstract
In today's academic world, it was observed that most of the leading and progressive universities are consciously and doggedly managed by employing effective marketing strategies, orientations and policies. It is against this background that the study examined the link between market orientation and perceived corporate image. The study examined the effect of student orientations, competitor orientations, intra-functional coordination on perceived corporate image. Random sampling technique was used to select some students from two private universities. Skewness, Kurtosis, factor analysis and structural equation models were among the statistical stools employed to ascertain the quality of research instrument and the pattern of relationship among the variables. It was discovered that both student orientation and intra-functional orientation have positive effect on perceived corporate image while competitor orientation has negative effect on perceived corporate image. Based on the findings, it was recommended that internal marketing should be integrated within the fabrics of university management and operations. There is need for the university management to be more responsive to the needs of their students.
Keywords: student orientations, competitor orientation, intra-functional orientation, market orientation and perceived corporate image.

INTRODUCTION
Higher education institutions or the global academic environment has witnessed tremendous changes in its operations and management. The higher education literature agrees to the fact that universities today are faced with stiff competitions, and that their survival depends mostly on the way in which they choose to manage their operations. It has been observed that universities now compete for both students and resources. As a result of this, a number of universities are beginning to consciously embrace marketing strategies and activities in managing their day-to-day activities. It is also not suprising that there is a shift in the institutions' focus towards customers and the educational marketplace (Newman, 2001). The past orientation when students are seen as helpless captives has sunk into the oblivion and students are now seen as a major stakeholder whose views must be harnessed in order to promote quality service delivery (Hemsley-Brown and Oplatka, 2006). The student – customer –became the focal point, followed by the development of a customer driven organizational culture.

Research on education marketing has been receiving increasing attention in recent years (Oplatka and Hemsley-Brown, 2006, Ogunnaike and Ibidunni, 2014). Today most progressive institutions all over the world commonly acknowledge the need for the use of marketing, in order to survive and continue to face the challenges in the academic environment For more than a decade, a primary area of research has been the study of market orientation (Desphande and Farley, 1999), as a way for institutions to improve the student-university relationship. Basically, this construct reflects the degree to which the marketing concept has been implemented within an organization (Deshpandé, Rohit, and Farley, 1998). Market orientation is believed to be linked to the opportunity of creating sustainable superior value for customers, in this way leading to a competitive advantage, and to higher institutional performance (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990). However, it has been observed that levels of market orientation and levels of management emphasis on market orientation are somehow low within higher education institutions. Also, in spite of the extensive interest in this concept throughout the literature, market orientation seems to be under-researched in education marketing literature. With few exceptions that apply a market orientation perspective to a university setting (Akyol, and Akehurts, 2002), research fails to address the concept in terms of construct or ways in which it can be applied successfully

as a strategy for educational institutions.

However, the central focus of this study is to explore the relationship among student orientation, competitor orientation and intra-functional orientation components of market orientation and its effect on corporate image.

However, the following are the specific objectives;

- To determine the effect of Student orientation on perceived corporate image
- Competitor orientation has a positive effect on perceived corporate image
- Intra-functional coordination has a positive effect on perceived corporate image

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Marketing in Higher Education

Literature on higher education marketing can be found to be rather extensive in developed countries. A good number of scholars focus on various items such as applications of marketing concept, market orientations, service quality, educational marketplace and customer needs as well as marketing mix approaches in higher education instituitions (Teixeira, Rosa and Amaral, 2004; Brown and Scott, 2006; Brown and Oplatka (2006). The controversial discussions over the current marketization of universities or over the function that students hold within the educational process are also discussed in the literature (Molesworth, Scullion and Nixon, 2011). Nevertheless, the emergence and development of educational marketing were somewhat rough and unclear. The issue attracted a lot of criticisms from persons who believe that this is an attempt commercialize academic professions and sanctities. The concept was initially regarded with suspicion and doubt, both by academics, and by universities' management. It was believed that education is a social good and as such should not be commercialized.

One of the major scholars of educational marketing is Brown and Oplatka (2006), who believed that management of universities employ marketing strategies, even though some of them may not be conscious of it. Alessandri (2001) further supports this idea, and argues that marketing is a frame of mind that is crucial to maintaining optimum relationship between an organization and its environment. The author proceeds on defining this concept, and discusses various aspects, which are specific to higher education.

The concept corporate image

Corporate image can be described as the mental picture of an organization held by its audiences regarding that particular organization. Hatch and Schultz (1997), defined image as the way organization members believe others see the organization, to gauge how outsiders are judging them. The mental picture formed in one's mind about an organization upon hearing its name or seeing its logo is about this organization's corporate image (Fombrun, 1996). According to Hatch and Schultz (1997), image is how organization members or others see the organization or the general impression an organization forms in people's minds.

Alessandri (2001) state that there are multiple changing images within each individual and these images are affected by certain factors. The formation of corporate image is defined as a comprehensive and multi-stakeholder process (Fombrun, 1996)) and factors such as communication sources, terminology, branding, logos and emblems, relations with media and customers, building architecture are effective in image formation. Besides, the relations with customers and the actions and statements of top managers simultaneously affect organizational identity and image (Hatch & Schultz, 1997).

Literature search revealed that an organization's image is affected by the organization's attitudes towards accountability and communication style. It was also observed that the communication between management, employees and external audiences shapes the future image of an organization. (Alessandri, 2001). Strong communicative factors such as the brand name, logo, advertisement and public relations can help create a good and strong image (Foxall,, Olivera-Castro, and James, 2007).

When education institutions are concerned, the experiences in application period, advertising, public and social relations, recruitment activities are highly effective in creating both a first impression and image and this perception affects the decision-making process on which school to apply (Lievens, Van Hoye and Anseel, 2007). Another factors that determine the image of education institutions are name awareness, academic properties, sports and social facilities, physical environment, personal and organizational environment, demographic features, environmental features, admission criteria, sports facilities, campus size, academic programmes as well as library facilities (Ogunnaike and Ibidunni, 2014).

Some researchers (Hatch & Schultz, 1997) consider corporate image to have two dimensions. External image reflects how people outside the organization perceive the organization. Internal image, on the other hand, reflects how organization members see the organization. External image is composed of impressions of, for example, suppliers. However, organization members belong to the external group at the same time, because they are also consumers of the products and outcomes produced by the organization and they follow the news about the organization on the media.

The Concept of Market Orientation

Market orientation has received a great deal of attention from academics and a wealth of studies has been carried out since the 1990's. The early focus of market orientation studies was on industrial or consumer industries. This is surprising considering that market orientation is concerned with customer needs and is therefore more relevant to service industries.

However, more recently, there has been a growing interest in applying market orientation to public or service sector industries. Most studies use surveys as the research methodology, although some studies use interviews. Multi-industry studies appear to be as common as single industry studies. Most studies tend to be carried out in one particular country.

Despite the emergence of new or expanded market orientation constructs (e.g. Deshpandé and Farley, 1998; Matsuno et al., 2005), most studies of market orientation tend to be based on the Kohli and Jaworski (1990) or Narver and Slater (1990) construct with exact or refined versions of their propositions. However, market orientation should not be based on a measurement of competitor orientation. Therefore, an adaptation of the Kohli and Jaworski (1990) construct is preferred to that of Narver and Slater (1990), Deshpandé et al. (1993) or Deshpandé and Farley (1998). A number of studies had applied market orientation in international market, which is generally referred to in literature as export market orientation (Akyol and Akehurst, 2002; Cadogan, Cui, Yenud li, 2003; Cadogan, Sundquist, Salminen, Puumalainen, 2002).

Conceptualizations of market orientation have been derived from two complementary perspectives; behavioural and cultural (Homburg and Pflesser, 2000). According to Kirca et al. (2005), the behavioural perspective concentrates on organizational activities related to the generation, dissemination and response to market intelligence (e.g. Kohli and Jaworski, 1990) whilst the cultural perspective concentrates on organizational values that encourage behaviours that are consistent with market orientation (Kirca et.al 2005; Narver and Slater, 1990; Deshpandé et al., 1993; 2004). Key studies from the two complementary perspectives of MO will now be considered individually.

Based upon a review of literature, Narver and Slater (1990) proposed five elements of market orientation: (1) customer orientation; (2) competitor orientation; (3) inter-functional coordination; (4) a long-term horizon; and, (5) a profit focus. Narver and Slater (1990) conducted a survey that was completed by over 400 managers from more than 100 business units. Their survey consisted of 21 propositions relating to the five elements of their market orientation construct (customer orientation, competitor orientation, interfunctional coordination, long-term horizon, and profit emphasis) and the propositions were scored by a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 'not at all' to 'to an extreme extent'.

It must be noted that market orientation construct is still somewhat of an issue in the literature. Many have accepted either Kohli and Jaworski's or Narver and Slater's definition – though Narver and Slater have used slightly different definitions over the years – and the majority uses the term market orientation instead of marketing orientation. Most scholars agree that a market orientation involves generation and dissemination of market intelligence. Applying the concept of market orientation to higher education institutions has not being without resistances and criticisms. However, a number of scholars, in the developed countries, have proved that it is very relevant and useful for fostering quality educational services and global competitiveness. It is on this premise that the study formulated its hypotheses and subjected it to descriptive and explorative analysis in order to ascertain the nature of relationship between market orientation and corporate image.

- **H1:** There is a significant relationship between student orientation, competitor orientation and intra-functional orientation components of market orientation.
- **H2:** Market orientation has a positive effect on perceived corporate image.

This study in line with Tuominen et al., (2009) and Mulyanegara (2010), adopts the 'component-wise' approach (Han, Kim, & Srivastava, 1998; Lukas & Ferrell, 2000). This approach disaggregated market orientation into three distinct components in other to examine the significance effect of each dimension on the dependent variable (stakeholder loyalty). The following hypotheses are therefore proposed:

- **H2a:** Student orientation has a positive effect on perceived corporate image
- **H2b:** Competitor orientation has a positive effect on perceived corporate image
- **H2c:** Intra-functional coordination has a positive effect on perceived corporate image

3. Research method

The major source of data for this research was a set of questionnaire distributed to selected students from two private universities in Nigeria. The first section of the questionnaire dealt with the demograghic data of the respondents, while the second section of the questionnaire dealt with student orientation, competitor orientation and intra-functional orientation. The third section of the questionnaire required information about the perception of the respondents as regards the corporate image of their universities.

Five point Likert scale was employed and the respondents were requested to respond based on their degree of agreement to the issue being discussed. The target population is the Nigerian university students while

the study population for the study consisted of all the student population of the two universities. However, research horizon was limited to business management students from the two universities due to economic and time constraints. 192 copies of the instrument (questionnaire) were hand-delivered to the purposive sample of students. Only 145 copies of the completed questionnaire were found useable for the present study.

The key variables used in this research included student orientation, competitor orientation and intra-functional orientations. These key research variables were developed from extant literature and supported by empirical evidences. All the data analysis procedure was done using the SPSS

computer package. Data analysis was executed at 95% confidence level or better. The statistics, measurement scale, data analysis, reliability and validity tests used in this research followed the

research suggestions in extant literature. Skewness, Kurtosis, factor analysis and structural equation models were among the statistical stools employed to ascertain the quality of research instrument and the pattern of relationship among the variables.

4.0 DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS
Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents Demographic Characteristics

	Frequency	Percent
Gender:		
Male	53	36.6
Female	92	63.4
Total	145	100.0
Institution		
University A	89	61.4
University B	56	38.6
Total	145	100.0
Number of years spent in the University		
Less than 2 years	14	9.7
2-5 years	129	64.1
5-10 years	1	.7
10 years and above	1	.7
Total	145	100.0

Demographic characteristics of respondents in the table above shows that more than 60% of the respondents were of the female gender while over 50% constitute the male gender. Respondents were basically from two institutions. Large proportions (61.4%) of the respondents were from University A. More than 60% of the respondents had spent at least 2 years in their institution, and as such were expected to have experience and a good understanding about their institution.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Market Orientation Measures

Dimensions/ Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Student Orientation (SO)				
SO1	3.7448	1.1412	-.962	.162
SO2	3.5724	1.2346	-.70	-.550
SO3	3.1034	1.2118	-.201	-.1.034
SO4	3. 0305	1.2551	-.044	-.1.175
SO5	3.4760	1.1612	-.602	-.553
SO6	3.0414	1.3064	-.096	-.1.223
Competition Orientation (CO)				
CO1	3.6042	.95507	-.498	.109
CO2	3. 7724	.76144	-.068	-.463
CO3	3.5310	9.8640	-.484	-.032
CO4	3.6552	.98868	-.309	-.540
Intra-Functional Orientation (IFO)				
IFO1	3.8414	1.10350	-1.158	.805
IFO2	3.9931	.82071	-1.134	2.083
IFO3	3.4966	1.1054	-.603	-.084
IFO4	3.7379	.88992	-.477	.149

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Perceived corporate image

Dimensions/ Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Perceived Corporate Image (PCI)				
PCI1	3.8276	1.0824	-.950	.296
PCI2	3.8759	1.0922	-1.177	.976
PCI3	3.9586	1.0794	-1.127	.847

Descriptive analysis results show that the statement with the highest mean value is "Faculties and departments in this University contribute to the marketing of the University" (IFO2) with a mean score of 3.9931. Whereas, the statement with the lowest mean value is "In this University, students complaint are dealt with quickly" (SO4) with mean value of 3.0305. From Table 3, all items had their mean score above 3.8 indicating that respondents strongly agreed to the statements on perceived corporate image. Skewness and Kurtosis for the various variables were obtained to assess their normality of distributions. Skewness and Kurtosis for all variables as shown in table 2 and 3 reflects evidence of normality following the rule of thumb proposed by Kline (2005). This rule indicates that any univariate skew values greater than 3.0 and kurtosis greater than 10.0 may suggest problem of normality of data (Hardigan et al., 2001). None of the results as shown in table 2 and 3 approached these abnormality values. Therefore, normal distributions were assumed for all the variables of interest.

Factor Analysis
- Exploratory Factor Analysis

In this study, exploratory factor analysis procedure using IBM SPSS 19.0 was performed with principal axis component as a method of extraction. Exploratory factor analysis was used to determine the item or statements that appear to best measure the various dimensions of market orientation. This method of Principal component considers the common variance in the data and helps to identify underlying dimensions in large number of variables. This research also used Varimax rotation method which reduces the number of variables with high loadings on one factor (Malhotra, Hall, Shaw, & Oppenheim, 2002).

The exploratory factor analysis procedure using principal component and varimax rotation provided a three-factor solution for market orientation that explained 56..7% of the variance and a one-factor solution for stakeholders' loyalty that explained 70.7% variance. The eigenvalues associated with each of solutions were all greater than 1.00. The value of Bartlett's test for sphericity was 670.184 (significance 0.000) for market orientation and 134.6451 for perceived corporate image (significance 0.000) whereas the Kaiser-Meyer-Okline (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was high at 0.826 for market orientation and 0.678 for perceived corporate image. Results of the factor analysis are reported in Table 4 and 5.

The EFA results indicated that market orientation measures in this research is consistent with Narver and Slater's (1990) dimension of market orientation with three distinct components of 'customer orientation', 'competitor orientation', and 'intra-functional orientation'.

- **Confirmatory Factor Analysis**

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used to test the dimensional structure of the market orientation and stakeholders' loyalty scale suggested by the exploratory factor and also to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of the constructs. The measurement model provided a satisfactory result indicating that the model fits the data very well after the deletion of four items. The standard factor loading coefficient is between 0.50-0.80, indicative of an acceptable level of convergent validity (Steenkamp and Geyskens, 2006).

An observation of the Average of Variance Extracted (AVE) indicates that all items were above the recommended 0.50 level (Hair et al., 1992), this meant that more than one-half of the variances observed in the items were accounted for by their own factors. To examine discriminant validity, shared variances between factors were compared with the average variance extracted of the individual factors (Fornell and Larcker (1981). This showed that the shared variance between factors were lower than the average variance extracted of the individual factors, confirming discriminant validity. Also, correlation between the variables in the confirmatory model were lesser than 0.8 points (Bagozzi, 1994).

According to Real et al., (2005), the squared root of the AVE (diagonal elements in Table 6) was compared with the correlations among constructs (off-diagonal elements in Table 6). In other words, the construct shares more variance with its measures than the variance it shares with the other constructs in the model (Wiertz and De Ruyter, 2007). In summary, the measurement model in this study demonstrated adequate convergent and discriminant validity.

- **Reliability**

The internal consistency of each construct was estimated using cronbach's coefficient alpha. Table 6 reports the reliability of study constructs using Cronbach's coefficient alpha (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994) and the inter-correlations among the items that constitute a scale was also reported. Each of the factors was found to exhibit good reliability (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994) with Cronbach alphas ranging between 0.654 to 0.841, (student orientation' (SO) = 0.841, competitor orientation (CO) = 0.675 and intra-functional orientation' (IFO) = 0.654). The Cronbach alpha for the overall market orientation construct demonstrated a reliable construct of cronbach alpha 0.81 and that of stakeholders' loyalty is 0.792. Table 6 also shows that the question items for each of the construct correlated well with the constructs as the item to item correlation ranges from .410 to .699. The reliability coefficients of the competitor orientation construct was 0.654 which was lower than Nunnally and Bernstein's (1994) 0.70 cut off for reliability. However, it is acceptable for exploratory study such as this research (Hair *et al.*, 1998; Sekaran, 2003). The factor loading for all items as shown in table 4d and 5d are all above 0.50 to 0.912, indicating an acceptable level of convergent validity.

Results of Hypotheses Tested

An examination of the relationship between the three components of market orientation from table 7 shows that there is a statistically significant positive correlation between student orientation, competitor orientation and intra-functional orientation at 0.01 significant level. Thus lending to the support of H1.

The structural model in figure 1 was employed to test the second hypothesis. The model fit indices for this structural model indicates an acceptable fit with the data. Although the Chi-Square was found to be statistically significant (Chi-square=29.185, df=8, p=000) other indicators can suggest a good model fit (Steenkamp and Geyskens, 2006) as: GFI= .934, AGFI= 827, NFI=.900, IFI=.925, CFI=.923 are within the recommended level.

An examination of the standardized regression weights and Critical Ratio indicates that market orientation has a positive effect on stakeholders' loyalty (β = .773, p < .001), thus H2 is supported.

Another structural model was employed to test hypotheses 2a-2c. The model in figure 2 (see appendix) incorporates the three dimensions of market orientation as predictor variables to determine which dimension performs the strongest effect on perceived corporate image. An examination of the goodness of fit indices suggests that the model fit well with the data. The model indices x_2/d.f. = 1.85, RMSEA (0.077), GFI (.904), TLI (.907), IFI (.931), and CFI (.929) are within the recommended level. In terms of predictive power, it was found that 'student orientation" has the strongest effect on perceived corporate image (β = .646, p < .001), lending support to H2a. 'Intra-functional orientation' is also found to be positively associated with perceived corporate image (β = .257, p < .001), lending support to H2b. However, the regression weights reveal that competitor orientation has a negative effect on perceived corporate image (β = -.042, p > .05), thereby failing to support H2c.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study has been able to establish the inter-connectedness of student orientation, competitor orientation and intra-functional orientation and their effects on perceived corporate image. The study concludes that market orientation is a crucial business philosophy that should be employed by the management of Nigerian universities in order to enhance quality of education in Nigeria.

The study however recommends the followings;

- University management needs to focus more on the needs of the students just as it is the practice in every progressive university.
- The university administrators should employ marketing principles, concepts and practices in ensuring that the needs of all the stakeholders of the university are met especially that of the students
- Internal marketing should be employed, that is, all members of the university community must embrace marketing philosophies and orientations in their day-to-day dealings and operations.

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APPENDIX 1

Table 4a. Factor Analysis (KMO & Barlett's Test) of Market Orientation

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.826
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	670.184
	df	91
	Sig.	.000

Table 4b. **Factor Analysis**(Total Variance Explained) of Market Orientation

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	4.786	34.183	34.183	4.786	34.183	34.183	3.400	24.283	24.283
2	1.789	12.782	46.965	1.789	12.782	46.965	2.299	16.420	40.704
3	1.361	9.718	56.683	1.361	9.718	56.683	2.237	15.979	56.683
4	.877	6.267	62.950						
5	.803	5.739	68.689						
6	.764	5.458	74.147						
7	.660	4.713	78.860						
8	.619	4.422	83.282						
9	.562	4.018	87.300						
10	.447	3.191	90.490						
11	.380	2.714	93.204						
12	.361	2.582	95.785						
13	.320	2.286	98.071						
14	.270	1.929	100.000						

Table 4c. Factor Analysis (Component Matrixa) of Market Orientation

	Component		
	1	2	3
SO1	.564		
SO2	.716		
SO3	.789		
SO4	.821		
SO5	.674		
SO6	.680		
CO1			.586
CO2			.683
CO3			.801
CO4			.696
IFO1		.663	
IFO2		.806	
IFO3		.619	
IFO4		.610	

Extraction Method: Principal component Analysis Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization
3 Component Extracted

Table 5a. Factor Analysis (KMO & Barlett's Test) of Perceived corporate image

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.657
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	112.241
	df	3
	Sig.	.000

Table 5b. Factor Analysis(Total Variance Explained) of Perceived corporate image

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.193	73.087	73.087	2.193	73.087	73.087
2	.543	18.088	91.175			
3	.265	8.825	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 5d. Factor Analysis (**Component Matrix**a) of Perceived corporate image

	Component
	1
PCI1	.849
PCI2	.912
PCI3	.800

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
a. 1 components extracted.

Table 6: Discriminant and Convergent validity

	Intra-functional	Student Orientation	Competitor Orientation	Corporate Image
Intra-functional	**0.724**			
Customer/ student	0.650	**0.719**		
Competitor	0.496	0.451	**0.636**	
Corporate Image	0.569	0.713	0.343	**0.756**
AVE	0.524	0.518	0.501	0.572
ASV	0.333	0.378	0.189	0.317

Table 7 Correlation between the components of Market Orientation

		IFO	CO	SO
IFO	Pearson Correlation	1	.335**	.499**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
CO	Pearson Correlation	.335**	1	.324**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
SO	Pearson Correlation	.499**	.324**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
SO- Customer Orientation
CO- Competitor Orientation
IFO-Intra-functional Orientation

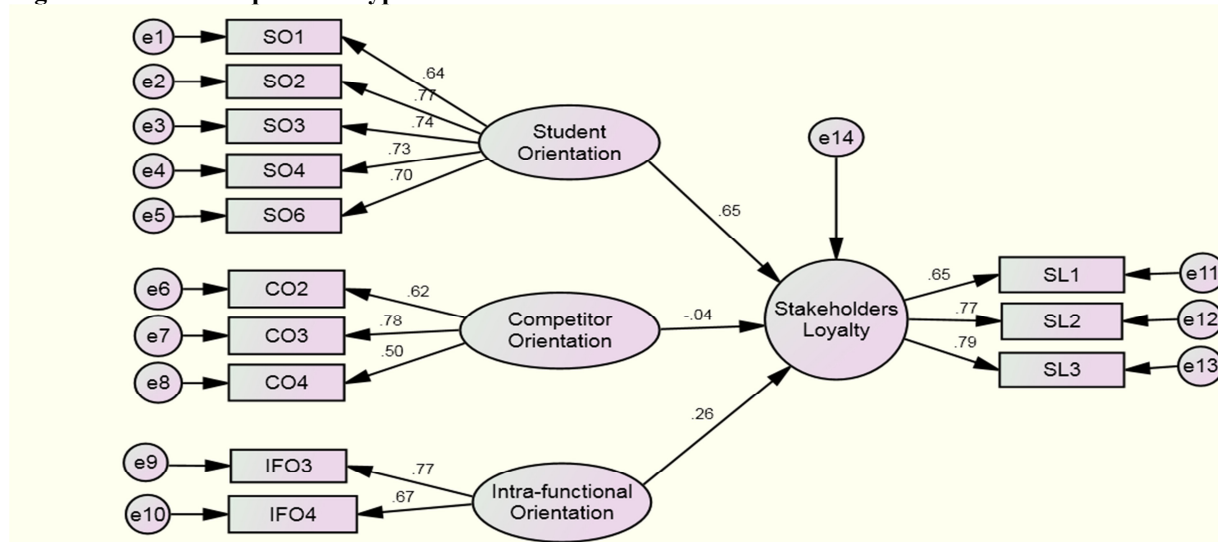**Figure 1 Test of Main Hypothesis**
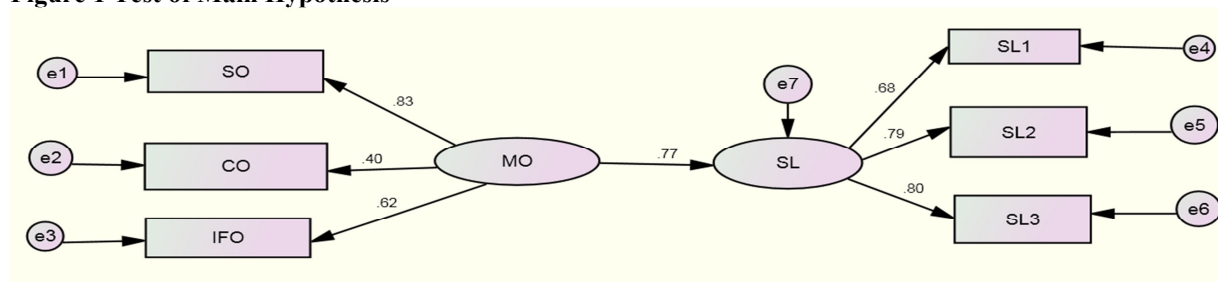
SO- Customer Orientation
CO- Competitor Orientation
IFO-Intra-functional Orientation, SL-Perceived corporate image

Figure 2 Test of Components Hypothesis

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