

Research on the Impact of an Immature Market on the Entrepreneurial Orientation and Success of SMEs from the Private Health Sector in the Republic of North Macedonia

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Abstract Entrepreneurial orientation in developing countries may not be observed in isolation from the specifics of their surroundings. In fact, as the country develops and moves from a developing country to an industrialized nation, its business environment, as well as the needs for products and services changes dramatically. The purpose of this study was to investigate how the position of market immaturity impacts the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and SMEs' success in developing countries. In this direction, the study elaborates on five identified patterns between the entrepreneurial orientation dimensions (risk taking, innovativeness, pro-activeness, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness) and the SMEs' success of the six selected private healthcare businesses in the Republic of North Macedonia. Applying a multiple case study research strategy, the study examines if the position of market immaturity encourages SMEs to take more risks and initiate more innovative undertakings, and if this factor impacts positively SMEs' proactive market approach, autonomy within the organizations and their competitive aggressiveness. Results show no disparity in confirmation of the positive market immaturity influence over the companies' positions of risk taking, innovativeness, pro-activeness, and autonomy. A study has shown that patients need more

healthcare services, but with higher quality and expertise. The reasons behind these trends have been detected through people's awareness of healthy needs and lifestyles, as well as their increased healthcare literacy resulting from internet and globalization trends. However, results show that market immaturity influence has been shown to be insignificant on competitive aggressive actions in all cases. It may be concluded that while the surrounding opportunities coming from the market immaturity position encourage SMEs to proactively undertake innovative activities at certain levels of risk, at the same time, the unsaturated position of competition on the market distinguishes the businesses from aggressive competitive activities. Recommendations for entrepreneurs in developing countries stand that they should respond to the increasing needs for private healthcare services that the immature market position has to offer, but at the same time, continuously track clients' needs, since the market lifecycle continues to evolve and the market position should be revised regularly.

Keywords Entrepreneurial Orientation, Developing Countries, SMEs' Performance, Immature Markets

1. Introduction

An important factor for the successful economic transition of developing countries, innovation, national development, and economic expansion, has been entrepreneurship. True entrepreneurship is significant not only for satisfying economic growth needs and filling monetary gaps in society, but also for improving citizens' status and well-being. With the involved investments, innovations and creation of new markets, entrepreneurship contributes highly to enlarging people's choices, leading directly to improvement in human development. The role played by self-employment, measured through the self-employment ratio (defined as the proportion of the labour force who are self-employed or business owners) in the process of evaluating entrepreneurship is enormous. However, while literature outlines the significance of self-employment as a catalyst benefit from entrepreneurship, research in developing countries acknowledges that the increase in self-employment contributes to economic growth over the short term but has negative effects on development in the long term [1]. Moreover, entrepreneurial orientation has become an unseparated part of the companies' entrepreneurial activities. According to the work of Miller [2] and Lumpkin and Dess [3], entrepreneurial orientation, as a strategic perspective, has been presented through the scope of five dimensions: innovativeness, risk-taking, pro-activeness, autonomy and competitive aggressiveness. The fact is, entrepreneurship in developing countries may not be observed in isolation from the specifics of their surroundings; therefore, lots of issues remain to be resolved. The answers are to be found in the market capacities of developing countries, countries' regulations and labour capacity issues. Developing-country markets are often small, with a series of imperfections such as lack of infrastructure, low purchasing power and a lack of institutional support for entrepreneurs. Therefore, drawing on this insight, incentives for domestic entrepreneurs to radically innovate are minor. In order for innovations and entrepreneurial processes to occur, a wide range of diverse, knowledgeable, and specialized labour is necessary, which developing country-markets are rarely able to provide.

This study is structured as follows: first, a short overview of the entrepreneurial orientation concept and entrepreneurial orientation dimensions is presented, including innovativeness, risk-taking, pro-activeness, autonomy and competitive aggressiveness. Then, the market position is determined by the elaboration of Martinez and Haddock [4] four stages of population need, and the conceptual framework of the relationship is presented. After this theoretical background and conceptualization, the methods and discussion of results follow, culminating in the concluding remarks of the conducted study.

2. Entrepreneurial Orientation Concepts and Dimensions

The past decade has been a witness of massive research in entrepreneurial orientation literature. Reasons behind this trend lay on globalization, openness of foreign markets, higher competitiveness and the development of new markets and regions. In this context, entrepreneurial orientation construct presents a topic in entrepreneurial research for which a cumulative body of knowledge is developing. Although the general studies on the concept of entrepreneurial orientation are numerous, still, the literature incorporating the concept of entrepreneurial orientation in the sphere of developing countries is relatively scarce. According to Miller [2], the firm-level entrepreneurial orientation, composed of the elements of innovativeness, risk taking and proactiveness, highlights the existence and significance of firm-level entrepreneurship. Adding to this construct, Lumpkin and Dess are drawing the definition to the roots of entrepreneurship as a new entry activity and initiating a bright new and important momentum in the entrepreneurial orientation literature by introducing two additional dimensions to the entrepreneurial orientation canvas – autonomy and competitive aggressiveness.

Measuring entrepreneurial orientation influence on firm performance has been commonly spread and practised by researchers and businesses respectively [5,6,7]. In fact, entrepreneurial orientation is the most widely used measure of entrepreneurial behaviour. While the measurement of the construct has received numerous modifications and amendments through the years, still the grounds are traced to the Miller [2] concept definition, later refined by Covin and Slevin [8] into an entrepreneurial orientation measurement scale and extended by Lumpkin and Dess [3]. It stands to follow that entrepreneurial orientation makes a valued contribution to entrepreneurship and economic development and is therefore also important for the economies of developing countries. Since these countries face specific conditions and receive diverse environmental influences, we draw our study to these specific edges. In this study, we emphasise the contextual influence on entrepreneurial orientation and elaborate on the relevance of immature market conditions in the context of healthcare in developing countries.

2.1. Autonomy

Numerous entrepreneurial studies conducted on the matter indicate that exercising autonomous behaviour represents a precondition for the foundation and sustainability of new businesses [9,10]. On the other hand, not a lot of studies have examined the relationship between business performance and autonomy directly. This comes because autonomy is not mentioned as a prime dimension in the work of Miller [2]. As it is implicit in the literature on entrepreneurship, the merit of entrepreneurial initiative,

action and performance is generally connected to the capabilities of the founder-entrepreneur. Relating it to autonomy, this point is replicated in the study of Lumpkin and Dess [3], who stated that “Entrepreneurship has flourished because independently minded people elected to leave secure positions in order to promote novel ideas or venture into new markets... pp.140”.

The assumption behind this idea draws on the work of Mintzberg [11] who described the entrepreneurial strategy-making mode as risky actions taken by strong leaders. Based on the available literature, it could be seen that the performance of entrepreneurial activities heavily depends on autonomy. Therefore, it could be said that it is of crucial importance for a firm. Consequently, we support Lumpkin and Dess [3] decision to include autonomy as an integral part of the entrepreneurial orientation construct. In the study of Yu et al. [12], autonomy has been specifically elaborated under different dynamic settings in sample companies in the USA and Taiwan, reaching results that show that as a significant entrepreneurial orientation dimension, autonomy is heavily dependent on the culture and the environment in which the company operates. This fact leads us further to the justification of the conceptual framework of this study which presents the immaturity of the market as an influential factor in the entrepreneurial orientation-performance relationship in developing countries. Nonetheless, without autonomy, no risky actions would be taken at any organizational level, creating an environment where no individual or group within the firm’s boundaries would be able to create economic value.

2.2. Innovativeness

The domain of innovation has been highly emphasized in Schumpeter’s theories of entrepreneurship. To define innovation as a concept one may include a wide range of meanings, starting from a simple willingness to try a new product line to the passionate commitment to master the latest in new products, processes or services on the market. There is a large body of literature giving evidence for positive contribution of innovation to the success and survival of the SMEs [6,13]. Many academics believe that, regardless of the existence of other characteristics, there is no business-level entrepreneurship without innovation [14,15,16].

However, another stream of literature argues that innovation is useless unless it is combined with other dimensions. Therefore, Anderson et al. [17] proposed a new construct labelled “entrepreneurial behaviour” consisting of innovation and pro-activeness. The argument behind tightening these two phenomena together holds that entrepreneurial firms do not simply create innovations, but they create them with intention to employ innovations in established markets, creating new markets and pre-empt competitors [18]. At the end, every innovative process has the end means of gaining a competitive advantage, therefore, to gain competence to act competitively on the

market.

2.3. Risk-Taking

Cantillon [5], Schumpeter [19] and Knight [20] have attempted to capture the dimension of uncertainty, in their theories. It is logical that all businesses encompass a certain level of risk associated with their operations. However, a difference arises where in the past risk has been examined in an explicit manner as a construct connected to individuals, while in the entrepreneurial orientation, it is defined as a firm-level strategic posture. In this context, risk can also be associated with the firm, acknowledging the fact that the risk may come from any organizational level. The dimension of risk and uncertainty has also been examined by Knight [20] where uncertainty has been connected to possessing partial knowledge (incomplete information) of the unique events in the external reality that are part of the entrepreneurship.

While risk taking can be perceived as an internal factor connected with the management of a firm, it is impossible to completely isolate it from the environment. Therefore, the importance of environmental dynamism, as well as the external business focus to reach prompt external information, are of predominant meaning. It is certain that risk is of essential meaning for every entrepreneurial undertaking, referring to both individual and firm levels. Organizational culture plays an important role in pursuing entrepreneurial behaviour, often through taking risky initiatives [21]. Still, managers and venture departments in larger organizations should focus on careful management of risky behaviour of the firm, since it may bring concern as well as high returns.

2.4. Pro-Activeness

In his earliest studies, where Miller [2] defined and conceptualized the entrepreneurial orientation phenomenon, pro-activeness played an integral part, synthesizing the construct together with risk-taking and innovativeness. Even though, numerous studies have attempted to build on the above-mentioned relationship, a few have examined pro-activeness in isolation compared to risk-taking and innovativeness. As a forward-looking perspective, pro-activeness needs to be evaluated by considering the first to come across market demand and the speed to innovate [22]. Many have recognised the underlying importance of pro-active behaviour and emphasized the fact that tracking and monitoring changes are needed to clarify pro-activeness.

Besides the simple stating pro-activeness functions in different definitions, some authors have given more emphasis on the activities and consequences of proactive behaviour. In that manner, Kropp et al. [23] explained that most often pro-activeness is associated with the identification and evaluation of new opportunities, constantly screening market trends and new venture team

creation. The necessity of proactivity for successful entrepreneurial processes has been shown in the literature in a variety of contexts. A recent study that examines entrepreneurial orientation dimensions with a focus on a proactive approach to market [24] indicates that two important driving variables drive religious entrepreneurs' EO: the desire for opportunity discovery and both the search for opportunity creation and overcoming hurdles connected with the necessity for survival. While the benefits of being the first to market have been investigated, the sacrifice it makes in terms of investment in innovation and the benefits of being the second to market are topics for future discussion. Evidence suggests that environmental conditions and the industry life cycle are important in terms of pro-activeness' contribution to company success.

2.5. Competitive Aggressiveness

Even though, competitive aggressiveness has been less examined compared to the other dimensions, it has still grasped the attention of renowned authors, Lumpkin and [25-32,26,27]. Additionally, Miller [2] emphasized the significance of competitive aggressiveness by pointing to the importance of activities that would "beat competitors to the punch". Besides, Miller [2] did not include competitive aggressiveness in his entrepreneurial orientation structuring. Numerous studies have supported the viewpoint that entrepreneurs' eagerness to implement unconventional competitive tactics, rather than relying heavily on the traditional methods used to gain competitive advantage [28].

Therefore, competitive aggressiveness can be defined as a firm's response to rivals' threats that can lead to confrontations. This may also be one of the main reasons why companies show a lack of aggressiveness and are regularly advised to improve competitive aggressiveness and therefore increase their competitiveness in a labour-intensive industry [29]. As an important entrepreneurial orientation component, competitive aggressiveness may also be present in many other forms including activities like cutting prices and sacrificing profits to achieve set goals, spending aggressively on marketing or making an initial huge capacity investment compared to rivals [27,30,31].

2.6. Conceptualizing an Entrepreneurial Orientation Strategic Posture under the Constraints of the Market Immaturity Circumstance

When examining the view from an entrepreneurial perspective in developing countries, it could be said that it is perceived as unfavourable and poor. However, the immature markets shape the entrepreneurial atmosphere. Nonetheless, it is of critical importance not to neglect the positive aspects that developing countries have, as they also play an integral part. In this context, the study

examines the immature market, in order to support and expand the viewpoint within the examined theoretical framework. Specifically, this paper will analyse the factors within the scope of the four stages of population needs.

2.7. The "Immature Market" and the Four Stages of Population Needs

The stage of market maturity has been indicated as a positive aspect of developing countries' entrepreneurial conditions. In fact, as the country develops and moves from a developing country to an industrialized nation, the needs for products and services change dramatically. According to Martinez and Haddock [4], population's basic needs pass through four stages: survival, quality, convenience, and customization. As they indicate in their article: "*In developing countries, most of the population is preoccupied with basic survival – obtaining adequate food, housing, and clothing. As a middle class emerges, people seek greater quality in their food, housing, clothing, and healthcare services. After the stage of availability of high-quality products, they begin to seek convenience, they buy time-saving appliances and processed foods, and they may move closer to work.*"

Another viewpoint that sheds some positive light on the economic and social development of transition countries has been presented by Perlo-Freeman and Webber [31] and Mayer-Foulkes [32], stressing the positive relationship that changes in needs have on productivity and vice-versa. Studies have found a unidirectional relationship that improving basic welfare contributes strongly to labour productivity change, moreover, channelling resources towards improving health, education and nutrition might bring dramatic economic returns [29].

These issues on invisible economic vehicles have been also present in the work of Mayer-Foulkes [33], who found that increased health and welfare raise the returns of all types of investments and lead to faster capital accumulation. Naturally, with the increase in human capabilities, technology and social organization develop and transition tracks start progressing more rapidly.

The Republic of North Macedonia is an emerging market with a population of 2 million citizens. As a small, land-locked country in South-eastern Europe it has shown serious progress in the past two decades. However, it is still one of the Europe's poorest countries. According to the statistics provided in 2018, Macedonian households spent greatest share of their revenues on food and non-alcoholic beverages (37.8%) and housing, water, electricity and other fuels (11.4%). Additional consumption items have been present in very small quantities. For instance, in 2018, Macedonians spent 5.1% of their income on clothing and footwear; 3.6% on restaurants and hotels; 2.9% on health; and only 1.8% on recreation and culture and 0.2% on education [33]. Additionally, incorporating the data on average monthly salary of 391euros in 2019 may assist in creating a more comprehensive picture of the current

Macedonian consumption market.

3. Methodology

Although literature is heavily evidenced of the negative factors present in the developing countries' environment, still, we shed light on the prosperous environmental aspects, focusing on market immaturity and its effect on entrepreneurial activities. Specifically, this study attempts to give an answer to the issue of how market immaturity affects the link between the five qualities of SMEs' entrepreneurial orientation and their company's success. Based on the created conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 below, we derived five theoretical propositions. The five propositions examine exactly the positive immature market impact on SMEs' entrepreneurial orientation and success and are primarily concentrated on entrepreneurial activities such as risk taking, innovativeness, proactivity, autonomous actions and competitive aggressiveness.



Figure 1. Conceptual framework: EO – performance relationship moderated by market immaturity

The five proposed patterns of the study are set as following:

Proposition 3a: In conditions of immature markets, businesses take more risk, which has positive influence on SMEs success.

Proposition 3b: In conditions of immature markets, businesses initiate more innovation, which has positive influence on SMEs success.

Proposition 3c: In conditions of immature markets, businesses act more proactively, which has positive influence on SMEs success.

Proposition 3d: In conditions of immature markets, business act more autonomously, which has positive influence on SMEs success.

Proposition 3e: In conditions of immature markets, businesses act more competitively, which has positive influence on SMEs success.

To analyse the propositions of this study, we chose to employ a qualitative research approach, since literature in the field of entrepreneurial orientation strategy lacks this type of empirical research. This research is based on extensive field work, that suggests direct interviews with entrepreneurs, giving answers to a cautiously created questionnaire to make a significant contribution to entrepreneurial-oriented strategic positions in an environment of a developing country.

The research includes six case studies. A multiple-case research strategy has been applied to analyse the entrepreneurial behaviour of a modern business. The five propositions have been applied in the design of the six case studies and the corresponding methodology has examined whether the stated propositions are demonstrated in each of the cases, or if SMEs performed entrepreneurial orientation differently.

Furthermore, we started by stating a specific framework that outlines the relationships in our research. Furthermore, the process continued with case selection and data collection design. Then, we continue to select six SMEs from the private healthcare sector in the Republic of North Macedonia. The analysis started by creating an individual case study report for each of the elaborated cases, followed by a cross-case analysis and summary report.

For all individual cases the report indicates how and why a specific proposition was demonstrated or not demonstrated. In the second phase, across cases, the report indicates the extent of the replication logic and why some cases were predicted to have certain results while other cases have demonstrated different or opposite results. The six selected companies from the private healthcare sector in the Republic of North Macedonia that participated in the research are:

Table 1. Macedonian private healthcare providers involved in the multiple case design of the study

	Services	Name
Case C1	Clinic for gastroenterology	SRCE
Case C2	Clinic for gynecology	DR. Lozankovski
Case C3	Dentist ordination	Dental Cosmetics Studio
Case C4	Clinic for dermatology	Vivi Derm
Case C5	Nursing home	Pu Terzieva
Case C6	Clinic for rehabilitation	Kinezika

Participating companies had to fulfil the following inclusion/exclusion criteria:

Inclusion criteria:

1. Domestic company
2. Part of the private sector

3. To have more than 3 years of existence and
4. To employ less than 250 people (SMEs).

Exclusion criteria:

1. Foreign investments
2. Public providers
3. Refuse to give information.

Sampling has been conducted by applying qualitative non-probability purposive sampling. Moreover, N-vivo software for qualitative data analysis primarily assisted in exploring propositions within cases and then we explored propositions across cases. This gave us an opportunity to see the unique experiences within the cases, and, at the same time to explore similarities between their unique experiences.

4. Research Results

Data from the six cases was coded and analysed using N-vivo software, yielding findings for the five sub-propositions, indicating whether the set relationships are verified to be valid or whether the recommended activities were conducted differently. The responses of firms to the testing of the five sub-propositions under the moderating factor of market immaturity have been presented in Table 2.

A plethora of evidence has supported the notion that selected businesses have been driven forward by the received positive influences of the immature Macedonian market condition. In essence, it is evident throughout the cases that businesses are concentrated on the positive environmental factors since majority of the sub-propositions regarding the positive immature market influence have been confirmed throughout the interview process with the founders. The supported sub-proposition mainly refers to the immature market influence on the activities connected to risk taking, incorporating innovation in the business, and acting proactively on the private healthcare market, whereas the activities connected to autonomy throughout the organizations and competitive actions towards competition have been practiced less frequently.

Study results have indicated that the position of immature market had the greatest influence on the risk taking and the innovation activities in the selected cases. In general, results clearly expose that under the conditions of immature market entities, they are more prepared to take on risky activities, therefore supporting sub-proposition 3a. Similarly, a considerable body of evidence has been built up confirming sub-proposition 3b, referring to the influence of immature market on the innovation cycles of the private healthcare providers. Study results showed a positive connection between innovation, risk taking and proactivity, showing the importance of the combination of eagerness for innovation and the courage to act upon certain opportunities as crucial. On the other side, results explicitly showed low presence of competitive actions in the selected cases, leading to the summary that all of the selected companies for elaboration have completely eliminated competitive practices towards competitive companies.

In the first part of the proposition analysis, we have presented relevant and supportive evidence for business activities under the framework of entrepreneurial orientation construct and how they are performed under the influence of immature market position. More precisely, we have concentrated on the business activities related to risk taking, innovations, proactivity on the market, autonomous activities within the organizations, as well as external competitive actions. Following that, we released the outcomes for the last set of propositions relating to company performance and success parameters. For this purpose, we analysed the indicators of companies' position in profit generation, change in number of employees and position of market share. Results from the software analysis indicated relatively positive companies' performance changes during the observed period of the last three years. The only indicator that has been observed to be constant in part of the cases is the number of employees. A complete presentation of the results of propositions of this study has been outlined in Table 2. This would complete the previous analysis of the sub-propositions which assume that an immature market has a positive influence on business performance.

Table 2. Within case sub-proposition results

Case Name	Within case sub-propositions analysis	Indicators N-vivo results		
		Profitability Increase	Number of Employees	Market Share Increase
Case C1 SRCE	<p>Proposition 3e: 2 Proposition 3d: 2 Proposition 3c: 2 Proposition 3b: 4 Proposition 3a: 2</p>	1	1	1
Case C2 DR. Lozankovski	<p>Proposition 3e: 3 Proposition 3d: 1 Proposition 3c: 3 Proposition 3b: 3 Proposition 3a: 3</p>	1	1	1
Case C3 Dental Cosmetics Studio	<p>Proposition 3e: 2 Proposition 3d: 2 Proposition 3c: 4 Proposition 3b: 2 Proposition 3a: 2</p>	1	0	1
Case C4 Vivi Derma	<p>Proposition 3e: 2 Proposition 3d: 2 Proposition 3c: 2 Proposition 3b: 3 Proposition 3a: 2</p>	1	0	1
Case C5 PU Terzieva	<p>Proposition 3e: 4 Proposition 3d: 4 Proposition 3c: 4 Proposition 3b: 5 Proposition 3a: 4</p>	1	1	1
Case C6 Kinezika	<p>Proposition 3e: 3 Proposition 3d: 3 Proposition 3c: 3 Proposition 3b: 5 Proposition 3a: 4</p>	1	0	1

5. Cross Case Analysis

The previous sections examined the five sub-propositions on a single-case level, defining the within-case analysis. Patterns were identified between the five dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation (risk taking, innovativeness, pro-activeness, autonomy, and competitive aggressiveness) and the business success of the selected private healthcare providers under the influence of immature markets. Extensive research was required to give a profound within-case analysis and to determine the credibility of the set sub-propositions based on coded data from the cases. Sub-propositions backed by adequate evidence have been highlighted as true and verified. At this phase, a cross-case analysis is performed to evaluate, detect, and compare the similarities and differences across the six cases. Following the findings of the within-case analysis, each of the set sub-propositions would be analyzed and compared across cases to verify if literal replication was ensured.

Furthermore, all six cases have emphasized the positive impact of the position of immature market that surrounds private healthcare providers. Besides, it reveals across cases that replication of the results has been reached for majority of the sub-propositions incorporating this issue. Sub-propositions that refer to immature market influence over the entrepreneurial orientation dimensions and correspondingly to the success of the selected companies follow.

Proposition 3a: In conditions of immature markets, businesses take more risks, which has a positive influence on SMEs success.

Proposition 3b: In conditions of immature markets, businesses initiate more innovation, which has a positive influence on SMEs success.

Proposition 3c: In conditions of immature markets, businesses act more proactively, which has a positive influence on SMEs success.

Proposition 3d: In conditions of immature markets, business act more autonomously, which has a positive influence on SMEs success.

Proposition 3e: In conditions of immature markets, businesses act more competitive aggressively, which has a positive influence on SMEs success.

All six cases have clearly confirmed sub-proposition 3a, therefore indicating that at conditions of immature markets businesses take more risks and that this has a positive influence on SMEs success. The supporting evidence behind this affirmation holds on to the fact that the immature market has motivated and encouraged private healthcare companies to get involved in a greater number of risky undertakings. Simply, the immaturity of the market, through the wide range of opportunities, has motivated companies to explore and exploit more, therefore including risk in any of these actions. As the founder of case C6 has elaborated throughout the interview, they base future steps on the valuable

experience from the patients served, and also on the world-leading trends in their sphere of interest. The preparation of the selected companies to take a sound level of risk has also been demonstrated through founders' choice to establish private healthcare offices rather than being/staying employed in the state hospitals; their preparation to finance the business through all their savings and to leverage their homes to secure loans from the banks; as well as their constant search for ways to secure funding for new equipment and training for development.

Naturally, the increased level of risk-taking activities has been shown to be closely connected to the innovativeness of the companies, since all the six cases have experienced an increased level of innovation as well. In fact, all cases have exuded a high level of innovativeness in their businesses, therefore fully confirming that in conditions of immature market businesses initiate more innovation and it positively affects SMEs success. Initially, case C1 has shown an accountable use of new and innovative technology to improve internal operation processes and to retain patients satisfied.

Moreover, the founder of the company in the case C2 has started to introduce innovations in the practice intuitively, encouraged by everyday operations intending to offer comprehensive service to future and present patients in need. Besides, another way to introduce innovation in the business has been demonstrated by case C4 and case C6 through the imitation of international best practices. In this manner, they tend to apply as much as possible more sophisticated methods and services, which may not be a revolution for the advanced countries but are new and interesting on a local level. As further explained in case C5, although frequent involvement in radical innovation would come with extremely high costs, the company is constantly looking for ways to improve ongoing operations and to involve new technology or new services when possible.

In addition to the high level of risk taking and innovative activities, five of the six elaborated cases have demonstrated a high level of pro-activeness on the market as well. Namely, most of the cases have clearly demonstrated that in conditions of immature markets businesses act more proactively, which has a positive contribution to business success. Findings show that the immature position of the market additionally encourages business to constantly look for new opportunities and act in an entrepreneurial manner, to be first on the market with the introduction of novel products and services. Moreover, their proactive stances have been also demonstrated through regular adaptation of services, therefore elimination of old methods and treatments as well as those that involve complicated procedures and may be replaced by simpler and more sophisticated ones. Case C4 has been the only case that has failed to provide

supporting evidence for its pro-activeness and its influence on performance results. This may be the result of the highly competitive surroundings and the inability to outperform rivals in the introduction of innovations and novelties on the market. As the founder explained in the interview, they tend to follow trends, but competitors follow trends as well, so case C4 has failed to build an outstanding proactive market position.

Autonomy, as an entrepreneurial orientation dimension, has also been shown to have a valuable position within the selected companies. In essence, five of the elaborated cases have confirmed that the immature market position has positively impacted the autonomy of their companies and has experienced a positive contribution to performance. The immature market potential to explore more possibilities, strategically plan new undertakings and the increased level of diversity in operations has significantly encouraged founders to build a team that would work responsibly and autonomously to achieve company's goals. Founders from the five cases supporting this notion have explained that teamwork is highly encouraged and performed in managing the health units. Even though final decisions are mainly made by the founders, they encourage employees' participation and are willing to delegate more of their responsibilities.

Their leadership style is based on democracy and inclusion, showing understanding and tolerance for mistakes made during employees' performance, accompanied by advice on how to execute better. Case C2 has been the only case that failed to demonstrate autonomous processes within the private healthcare unit and to support its positive impact on the final performance results. As the founder of case C2 has elaborated throughout the interview, besides the fact that employees are encouraged to take innovative actions and to contribute to improving policlinic performance, it seems that there is still a lot of room to work on initiating new ideas from the bottom up in the hierarchy. It prevails across cases that the immature market showed no influence over the competitively aggressive position of the businesses and their corresponding success results. Namely, all the six elaborated cases have failed to demonstrate that in conditions of immature markets, businesses act more competitively aggressive. The six elaborated cases have generated massive evidence that these companies lack competitively aggressive actions and have eliminated this entrepreneurial orientation dimension from their strategic plans and actions.

Results from this study have revealed that the immature market influence over the dimensions of risk taking, innovation, pro-activeness and autonomy within the companies has been fully confirmed and result could be replicated. However, the market influence over the companies' aggressiveness toward competitors, presented through sub-proposition 3e, was not supported by any of the selected cases.

6. Discussion of Results

The immaturity of the market has been selected as one of the four significant moderating factors in the entrepreneurial orientation-performance relationship in developing countries' context. The influence it has over the success of entrepreneurial ventures might be observed in two different contexts. First, markets in developing countries are often small, fragmented and far from perfect. The reasons behind this poor market position are usually connected to a lack of proper infrastructure, low per capita income, and misguided policies and institutional constraints. An additional burden for the SMEs operating in the developing countries is the possibility of political instability, transparency, peace, and other institutional imperfections needed for proper functioning of the market [34]. On the other side, there are the increasing needs of the nation, since as the country develops and moves from a developing country to an industrialized nation, the needs for products and services change dramatically. As illustrated in the literature, according to Martinez and Haddock [4], population's basic needs pass through four stages during the transition processes of the countries: survival, quality, convenience, and customization. Passing through these phases of development, the Republic of North Macedonia has been positioned nearly the quality and convenience phases, meaning it holds a certainly immature market that opens various possibilities for entrepreneurial undertakings. In essence, this is the reason why the position of immature markets has been presented as a positive factor in our analysis and positioned as a trigger for initiating innovation and starting and developing successful businesses' stories. In fact, the immature market influence over the entrepreneurial dimensions and consequently on the performance results of the businesses, has been illustrated through sub-propositions 3a-3e. The stated sub-propositions propose that in conditions of immature markets, businesses take more risks, initiate more innovation, act more proactively, more autonomously and more competitively aggressive; and that all these actions have a positive impact on business success. The results of the provided research will be additionally discussed in the section that follows.

Results from the analysis of the entrepreneurs' views on the market seem to bear the notion that all the founders of private health offices are fully aware of the increasing needs of the patients and immaturity of the market they are operating in. Although in some instances, the initial market has been perceived as highly developed and close to the level of more advanced countries with a sound market offer and highly professional doctors that stand behind; this does not necessarily indicate that there is no opportunity for improvement. In fact, the general view holds that people's awareness about health and a healthy lifestyle has shown a positive and increasing trend. In fact, the reason behind this increased demand for health services in the private health offices might be closely connected to the unsatisfactory

service the patients receive at the state hospitals in the country. Moreover, the significantly increased internet literacy of the patients and the speed of dissemination of global information have certainly contributed to the present market position. Consequently, people in the Republic of North Macedonia have also shown increased demand for more convenient service and higher quality. It is worth noting that demographic trends in the country affect the position of the private health market as well. Moreover, an aging population is a healthcare service indicator suitable for the global healthcare system, which is not an exception in the Republic of North Macedonia. Additionally, the nation's aging trends as well as the great percentage of migration of younger members of the Macedonian families lead to inevitable need for sound and professional institutions that would take care of the elderly in need.

Since the general view on the market influence on businesses has been confirmed, we proceeded with a discussion of the results revealing how the immature markets influence entrepreneurial dimensions and therefore business success. Moreover, findings from elaboration of the sub-propositions of the study have attributed a highly positive influence of the immature market on almost all the entrepreneurial orientation dimensions. There seems to be no disparity in confirmation of the positive immature market influence over the positions of risk taking, innovativeness, pro-activeness, and autonomy of the elaborated business. However, its influence has been shown to be insignificant on competitive aggressive actions in all the cases. As results indicate, the immature market has motivated and encouraged private healthcare companies to get involved in a greater number of risky undertakings. Simply, the immaturity of the market, through the wide range of opportunities, has motivated companies to explore and exploit more, therefore including risk at any of these actions. Findings show that the immature position of the market additionally encourages businesses to constantly initiate innovations, look for new opportunities, and be first on the market with introduction of novel products and services. Moreover, their proactive stances have also been demonstrated through regular adaptation of services, therefore elimination of old methods and treatments as well as those that involve complicated procedures and may be replaced by simpler and more sophisticated ones. The immature market potential to explore more possibilities, strategically plan new undertakings and the increased level of diversity in operations has significantly encouraged founders to build a team that would work responsibly and autonomously to follow company's mission and objectives. On the other side, results about immature market influence over the competitive aggressiveness of the businesses failed to secure replication and consistency. The assumption behind these results may rely on the fact that the immaturity of the market means a lack of highly competitive environment, so businesses are not forced to invest additional funds and efforts in activities to overcome

competitors.

Findings from this study clearly demonstrated that selected entrepreneurs have a clear view of their market position in the direct entrepreneurial environment. Besides all the imperfections that the small market in a developing country holds, data from the six cases revealed the results that Macedonian entrepreneurs from the private healthcare sector can overcome the possible obstacles and concentrate and take advantage of the positive market attributes and business stimulation. Acknowledging the immaturity of the initial market as a positive moderator of their entrepreneurial performance has certainly made positive contributions to their final business results which was also evident from the case analysis. The importance of markets for entrepreneurial growth is far from new in entrepreneurial literature. Whereas many studies have elaborated on the markets giving them immense credit for entrepreneurial success or failure [34]; another plethora of authors have even built a market orientation as a separate strategic orientation in management [35,36,37]. Since all the elaborated cases have attributed a high importance to the role of the immature markets that surround them in their decisions on risk taking, innovativeness, pro-activeness, and autonomous activities, it leads to full consistency with the previous review of the entrepreneurial literature in this study. Furthermore, previous studies, taking into consideration the size and other imperfections of markets in developing countries, have revealed the assumption that in such small and uncertain markets entrepreneurs have no incentives to innovate [34,38].

7. Concluding Remarks

In alignment with the expected findings from this study, it was revealed that under the stated market positions in a developing country as the Republic of North Macedonia, private healthcare businesses have found their way to apply numerous entrepreneurial orientation tactics that have contributed positively to final business performance results. The research has clearly shown that selected SMEs from the private healthcare sector feel the impact of the immature stage of the market they are operating in and it directly influences their ability to innovate, but also motivates them to take more risks and act proactively. The specified encouraging surroundings have also influenced businesses' decisions to create well-standing and autonomous teams that would be able to respond to the detected increasing market demands.

As results from this research suggest, Macedonian patients have become progressively more demanding. A study has shown that patients need more healthcare services, but at the same time services with higher quality and expertise. The reasons behind these trends have been detected through people's awareness of healthy needs and lifestyles, as well as their increased healthcare literacy resulting from internet and globalization trends. Moreover,

the findings are consistent with the literature explaining the development stages of countries in transition and the four initial positions expected (survival, quality, convenience, and customization). Results from this study clearly outline that the healthcare sector in the Republic of North Macedonia is gradually processing from the phase of survival to the phases of quality and convenience. This may present a clear guide to Macedonian entrepreneurs in the private healthcare sector and give them a clear view of how the specified entrepreneurial orientation activities may improve their final performance and results. This study also indicates that although businesses in the Republic of North Macedonia almost eliminate the component of competitive aggressiveness, entrepreneurs should prepare themselves for the next phases of the market, including greater competition and should be armed with competitive tactics to protect their market share and gain new clients.

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