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Linkages between market orientation and brand performance with positioning strategies of significant fashion apparels in Pakistan

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Abstract

The study explores the importance of market orientation strategy to enhance brand performance and the mediating role of positioning strategies. The researcher used questionnaires to collect data from the managers of middle and high fashion apparel manufacturing firms based on the quantitative research approach. The data was collected from 220 managers who were directly involved in the decision-making process. The analysis has revealed a significant impact of market orientation strategy on Pakistan's fashion brands' performance, with the mediating effect of positioning strategies. The management of firms must give considerable importance to market orientation strategies to enhance overall brand performance. The market orientation strategies' development is also helpful in building different positioning strategies through which performance gets enhanced. This study contributes valuable literature because it focuses on the fashion apparel industry's context, which is almost most important for everyone in the present era. Firms can focus on tight product quality control, innovative manufacturing processes, trained and experienced personnel, and extensive customer service.

Keywords: Proactive market orientation, Reactive market orientation, Positioning strategies, Brand performance, Fashion apparel, Pakistan

Introduction

It has become crucial for organizations to pursue such best practices in the current dynamic and globalized business environment, with the help of which competitive advantage can be generated and retained. The competitive advantage is generally relevant to structural characteristics, like market power, offering promised services to customers, and showing attention to employees' needs (Dabrowski et al., 2019). One key reason a firm may compete in sales is its goal orientation to a specific market segment. The focus of market-oriented organizations is becoming more significant by understanding both the expressed or visible needs more so than customers' latent

or internal requirements. (Laukkanen et al., 2016). The focus of the market-oriented organization is on satisfying internal and external customers with intelligence generation, dissemination of intelligence, and positive response to its information (Iyer et al., 2019). When an organization's management follows internal market orientation, it refers to the employee orientation throughout the firm. Hence, the firm's market orientation gets improved with the help of understanding how market-oriented behaviors are defined and viewed by employees (M'zungu et al., 2017).

The market-oriented organizations get involved in communicating the firm's aim, identifying employees' roles, and improving the work environment. This ultimately results in increased employee satisfaction. As a result of market orientation, the employees become satisfied, enhancing the firm's success. Due to this reason, employees within the firm become customer-oriented. The customer-oriented employees give the proper response to customers' needs to have good congruency with an organization's market orientation. Market-oriented companies make superior value for employees and customers (Odoom & Mensah, 2018).

However, fashion markets lack the brand characteristics related to sales and do not emphasize how they position themselves in the market. This causes concern because brand management will help distinguish a business's offerings from its competitors, particularly brand positioning, which has increased in the recent literature. Apparel markets are quite competitive, and differentiation should be strong between offerings. Understanding the styles of brand positioning and the possible antecedents becomes an essential academic and managerial task (Lämsiluoto et al., 2019).

Overall, there is a lack of understanding and awareness about the positioning and its relationship's antecedents and outcomes in the apparel industry. The increasingly common need to research this gap is exacerbated by the increased emphasis on apparel companies' branding. The purpose of this study is to address the research gap in the apparel branding literature by examining the relationship between positioning platform, firm performance, and antecedent variables such as market orientation (Hult & Ketchen, 2017; Narver et al., 2004).

In Pakistan, there is intense competition among organizations working within the clothing sector. It has become significant for the management of Pakistan's fashion brands to adopt those effective practices, which can help in enhancing overall performance. Market orientation is referred to as one such approach, which can help fashion brands gain a competitive edge in the market (Alnawas & Hemsley-Brown, 2019). In the current literature, there is no research study for investigating the significance of market orientation strategy for enhancing brand performance within Pakistan's fashion apparel industry. This study's focus is to fill this gap in the literature on Pakistan's fashion apparel brands.

The current research study also examines companies' positioning strategies' mediating effect because different types of effective positioning strategies prove to help enhance brand performance. However, no study has examined the mediating effect of positioning strategies on the relationship between market orientation and brand performance in Pakistan's fashion brands. This study investigates the importance of market orientation strategy for Pakistan's fashion apparel brands to enhance performance.

The paper introduces the concept of market orientation and brand positioning in the apparel context. We conclude that proactive market orientation will contribute to the development of marketing research and product development strategies, and responsive market orientation will support strategy formulations and brand performance in a wide variety of industries. A positioning strategy that centers on customer orientation should be established and the process required to develop its market orientation. The study contributes to the positioning literature by focusing on how various market orientation types form the basis for developing brand positioning strategies atypical of conventional positioning studies (Kalafatis et al., 2000). This study contributes to the existing literature because it examines positioning using an analytical perspective instead of a positioning-oriented approach (Kalafatis et al., 2000; Penttinen & Palmer, 2007). Among these, the study has contributed knowledge of the development of marketing capabilities and competitive advantages that an apparel organization must have (Barney, 2014; Day, 2014; Gregory et al., 2019). The following paragraphs are a small review of relevant literature and are followed up by the hypothesized relationships between focal constructs. Then the research methods, analyses, and findings are recorded and discussed. Finally, both the theoretical and managerial implications and the limitations and avenues for future research have been discussed.

Literature review

Market orientation

Iyer et al. (2019) market have given the idea of the market's orientation as some dynamic ability of an organization to combine or integrate the company's capabilities and resources. Poole (2017) has identified the connection between developing a new item, the market's orientation, and performance while exporting. The market's orientation is recognized as the development done across market intelligence companies, intelligence dissemination across different departments, and firm-wide response to these. The research of Tajeddini et al. (2017) has made a significant contribution to more interest in the idea of the market's orientation. The research on competitive advantage has resulted in the growth of the measurement scale for the given concept. It has been considered that market orientation tends to have three of the significant components of behavior that is inter-functional coordination, competitor orientations and customers. Lämsiluoto et al. (2019) have considered the idea of market orientation to be like some intangible resource. This resource is linked with the fact that how competitive benefits can be acquired through information related to competitors, consumers, and their response.

Types of market orientation strategies

Proactive market orientation is seen as more linked with the identification of implicit or latent requirements of customers. The target of PMO is to discover the future needs of consumers and then doing the detection of new opportunities in the market. In other words, if they risk, they could boost sales of some current products. Following Frambach et al. (2016), PMO gets driven through research. It shows a learning mindset, and it gets pushed through the market. Higher PMO levels characterize an organization's inclination towards giving directions to consumers to uncover the unexplored/new requirements that can be fulfilled through the development of future items. PMO also shares

more similarities and exploration and is described as practices that challenge the present ways in which things are done and then promote more invention. Therefore, PMO is a conduit for adopting such competitive techniques as design-based or quality-based differentiation that significantly stress the measured risk-taking, detection of opportunity, and market research. Therefore, responsive market orientation (Samadi et al., 2020) is more targeted over the interpretation of customers' current requirements and more receptive to these requirements. RMO is an orientation that gets led through consumers, determining what new competitive strategies require the organization to do. It let an organization do satisfaction with customers' current requirements by developing new items (Iyer et al., 2019). When contrasted with PMO, RMO engenders more exploitative learning that concentrates mainly on improving and efficiency of the present ways to do things. The starting ideas of the orientation of the market refer to responsive market orientation. Responsive market orientation aborts the chances of making new solutions. Without RMO, organizations cannot fulfill the immediate requirements of consumers. Therefore, it can cause danger to the present profitability (Sambharya & Goll, 2019). The alignment of RMO is done with the consistency value that is considered significant from brand management. Therefore, the conduciveness of RMO is more towards various competitive techniques like cost-leadership and differentiation. It mainly targets low-risk market skimming, efficiency, and consistency. More of the research (Udriyah et al., 2019) over the market's orientation is mainly targeted over the interpretation of its link with performance. Doing this has resulted in drawing different constructs like innovation, learning company, and entrepreneurship. A great deal of the literature regards that Markets promote technological and marketing abilities. Various researchers have called for a better interpretation of marketing capabilities' growth. The current study responds to the call by testing and conceptualizing the given typology of market orientation. PMO is considered the significant antecedent to the competitive strategies of positioning and their subsequent influences over the brand's performance in the context of business to customer.

Proactive market orientation and positioning strategy

When an organization is trying to manipulate the market or act proactively within it, it makes a conscious effort to respond to and identify the latent or unmet needs or ask for present or unknown conditions. To identify requirements that have not yet been met, the organization must have an 'explorative mindset of learning.' This means that the Service Management office is the one that is responsible for coming up with solutions for unreasonable demands, thus forcing the consumers to comply with them. Following the previously described PMO mindset, the organization will choose which posture best fits the organization's PMO's competencies. These priorities and associated competencies need to be communicated clearly to the organization. This concept is inconsistent with the literature done over the strategic alignment that holds that the brand's superior performance is attained when strategic configuration gets aligned with some of the internal practices. Firms can be positioned to meet their strategic objectives when the firm's internal arrangement matches its strategic orientation. If a mismatch is seen between an organization's operations and its strategic directions, confusion can be seen (Doux-champs et al., 2016). These techniques make correspondence to two of the strategies

given in the typology of Mintzberg. The first one is design-dependent differentiation, like making differentiation of the firm/brand through giving some specialty features/products, making refinement in present features/items, giving services/products in high-cost segments, and making new items (Sahi et al., 2018). Therefore, it can be stated that.

H1: There is a significant relationship between PMO strategy and designer-based differentiation.

H2: There is a significant relationship between PMO strategy and quality-based differentiation.

Responsive market orientation and positioning strategy

Organizations pursuing responsive market orientation use exploitative system learning to acknowledge to satisfy their customers' needs. Companies should engage themselves in manufacturing and business to better solutions to meet the requirements. These organizations can incorporate activities/processes that are more targeted over enhancing or refining market efficiency. Some authors have stated that management of a brand and its undergirding mindset (like the orientation of brand) are more aligned with learning and RMO through extension. It is the reason that the primary concern of a brand manager is to ensure consistency. It can be acquired in the best way by using different techniques to produce differentiation while ignoring other disruptions. In the concept of brand positioning, Ni and Qian (2018) suggested that marketers target over consistency. Image-based differentiation is an instance of such practices that can induce improper differentiation. Differentiation through image is acquired by inhabiting and constructing a significant place in customers' minds through different promotion campaigns like public relations and advertisements. To this end, an organization requires monitoring the public relations campaigns and advertising of competitors and delineating unique images for brands. Ideally, it surpasses the averages of the industry when referring to the expenses of advertisements. In other words, it can be stated that the organization looks forward to the kind of market information that best facilitates the operations of a business in the present form. Organizations that pursue the technique employ different innovative methods and strategies in the advertisement. It helps in increasing the advertisement quality (Muhammad et al., 2019).

Moreover, it also facilitates building identity and reputation for the brand. It can improve links with distributors for the competitive positioning of a brand image within the given marketplace. For instance, John Deere and Caterpillar have met competition by making more expenses over the advertisement and innovative photos in the markets (Frank et al., 2016). Based on these observations, it can be stated that:

H3: Responsive market orientation strategy has a significant impact on brand image-based differentiation strategy.

RMO is also seen aligned with different techniques that give consumers higher value through additional competitively priced items. To minimize the cost to make a competitive benefit, the translation of cost-cutting needs to be done into competitively low costs of the market. B2B organizations mainly target low-cost offerings by enhancing the efficiency of operation. There is a need to decrease expenditure and move up the value chain to attract more significant funding to reach lower and less expensive resources. An essential factor of this type of strategy is profit maximization.

The price-based technique is witnessed more often in business markets to the customer (Liu & Atuahene-Gima, 2018). This low-price/low-cost approach corresponds to the differentiation strategy based on Porter's cost and cost leadership strategy. Differentiation strategy based on price needs the organization to get raw materials of lower cost, improve efficiency across various business units, decrease expenses. These practices are considered different from collecting information related to the unmet/latent consumers' requirements. Instead, these target over the interpretation of conditions manifested in the market and giving competitively cost solutions. From this, the given hypothesis can be generated:

H4: Responsive market orientation strategy has a significant impact on price-based differentiation strategy.

In consumer markets, the firm's successful positioning/brand to customers is only possible if it appears that the conflict between customers' perception of the problem and their perception of the solution that the seller offers are successfully helped to resolve (Corsaro & Snehota, 2011). Because many companies copy or refer to the incumbent firm, many apparel companies tend to play it safe. Information regarding the competition and customers will be needed, which can be provided through RMO. The undifferentiation strategy effectively maintains the incumbent firm's brand value in the consumer-dominated marketplace (Kotha & Vadlamani, 1995). This refers to entering the opponent's intellectual territory to copy the techniques of their rivals. From this, the given hypothesis can be generated:

H5: Responsive market orientation strategy has a significant impact on undifferentiation strategy in apparel brands.

Pakistan fashion industry

Pakistan's fashion and apparel industry are witnessing accelerated growth, and the youth behind it appears to be the driving power, comprising approximately 32 percent of Pakistan's population. In recent years, some of the country's largest textile companies have joined the apparel industry. With the launch of separate labels, lawns, and other fashion-related items on the market, these textile groups have taken advantage of opportunities. Moreover, Pakistan's cultural heritage is showcased by talented designers with creative concepts and globally competitive designs. There are about 40 plus high-end fashion brands in the region, and their annual sales volume is in the billions of rupees. These brands aim to come up with the most innovative ideas in an intensely competitive environment. These brands target the youth and appeal to their requirements. In Pakistan, fashion goods and the apparel industry display dynamism and diversity. The bulk of branded apparel purchases are carried out by franchises that have acquired the right to market these items to customers. There are also gaining grounds for the online selling of clothing, and mainly young people tend to purchase online (Kashif & Mubarik, 2020).

Youth are aware of brands because they assume that they look gorgeous, funky, and trendier in brands. Working classes wear branded clothes so that they seem to be more respectable, lovely, and they have to have a good impression on other people. People imitate and want to compete to wear others' best and most famous brands (Irshad et al., 2020).

The mediating role of positioning strategy

Different organizations moving beyond the mindset led through traditional sales and integrating positioning techniques for inhabiting the unique place within customers' minds dependent on industry and market information get more poised for reaping the performance. This is the primary case when an organization's positioning strategy gets informed better and gets empowered with the help of engagement in dissemination and intelligence development related to competitors and consumers through exploitative (Samadi et al., 2020) or explorative (PMO) learning aspects. These abilities or approaches to learning are considered important in getting benefits within the market. It is a significant concept highlighted in kinds of literature of both management and marketing. Specifically, capabilities are identified as the major ones integrating and transforming resources for a competitive benefit (Al-Henzab et al., 2018). This assumption has consistency with the theory of resource-advantage and to the idea of market orientation.

By integrating this concept in the present context, the positioning strategy can be identified as a procedure required to transform and use information developed through RMO and PMO behaviors. It can be stated that these strategies of positioning are the connection between brand performance and market orientation. At the same time, types of market orientation can directly influence the version of a brand. Following Frösén et al. (2016), positioning techniques can mediate the given link. It has been argued that along with the behaviors of market orientation, organizations should also develop competitive benefits within the market through strategies of differentiation positioning like cost, brand image, quality, and design. For instance, by interpreting consumers' preferences for competitive movement and renewable resources, IBM could capitalize on the given problem by using Smarter Planet (brand image). These strategies of differentiation have a positive impact on the performance of the brand. It is essential to consider that performance of a brand captures both brand-dependent outcome measurements like awareness and image. It also involves objective measures like market share and sales (Mokoena & Dhurup, 2017). The association between brand performance and un-differentiation strategy is identified as a very complex one. Different smaller B2B organizations can use an un-differentiation process, resulting in diminished/undistinguished brand image and market share/special sales. The presence of culture dominated through sales, untapped appreciation for some given branding benefits, and other copycat strategies can be stated that an un-differentiation approach can work for some of the B2B organizations in shorter terms. However, the un-differentiation process cannot increase the brand-associated performance indicators like awareness and brand image (Naseem et al., 2021).

Moreover, these cannot let the organization improve in value-proposition. It is expected that an un-differentiation strategy can mediate the link between brand performance and RMO. However, there will be a negative link between brand performance and un-differentiation. Therefore, the following hypothesis can be developed through this:

H6: DBD mediates the relationship between PMO and BP.

H7: QBD mediates the relationship between PMO and BP.

H8: BBD mediates the relationship between RMO and BP.

H9: PBD mediates the relationship between RMO and BP.

H10: UD strategy significantly mediates the relationship between PMO and BP.

Market orientation and brand performance

Kazemian et al. (2016) have started a positive connection in profitability to be the important measurement for an organization's performance and competitor orientation. It is significant for organizations to have successful consumer responsiveness and orientation. Al Asheq and Hossain (2019) have also supported these outcomes. It can be stated that consumer orientation has a direct influence on the total consumer performance indicator. Some other research has incremented the perceived value of consumer outcomes into the customer's loyalty and satisfaction. These are the primary benefits that get emanated by adopting the orientation of the market as a technique. Peña et al. (2017) have said that this orientation can be linked with the growth objectives driven by the exploitation and identification of untapped opportunities of the market. Some other researchers have stated that market orientation can inject sufficient consumer value. It can assist companies to get practical and efficient experiential learning (Naseem et al., 2020).

Moreover, it also makes significant improvements in partnership done with other suppliers. Frontline employees feel more encouraged to deliver exceptional consumer service when the company adopts the market concept strategy. In congruency with these results, other researchers have stated that market orientation can be an efficient resource for deriving competitive benefits for the firm. It can also provide an improved commitment of an organization and service innovation effectiveness in the public sector. Improvement of the organization's commitment is a prerequisite for developing new products and wealth development for the organization's owners.

İpek and Bıçakcıoğlu-Peynirci (2019) have said that each part of the market orientation makes a cause-and-effect link, and the diffusion and creation of information affect trust with the help of information sharing done in between organizations and responses of organizations. Market orientation can significantly improve the organization's market performance depending on the sensitive reactions caused to the market changes. It is also identified as positively impacting product development, earnings, sales, and product market share. The significance of considering both non-financial and financial approaches in measurements of management performance is targeted. The research of Modi and Sahi (2018) has identified that a company's marketing abilities can improve through learning influence, and it can then enhance earnings. Therefore, an organization's market performance can improve depending on the sensitive response made to the alterations in the market.

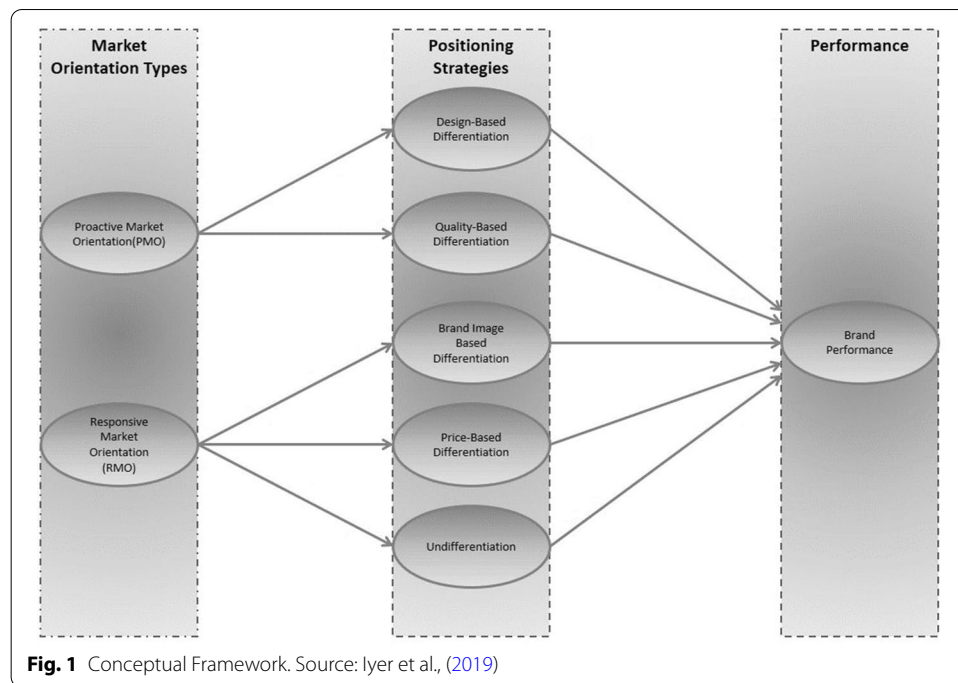
Conceptual framework

See Fig. 1.

Method

Data collection and sample size

The study samples include brand managers, general managers of marketing, product manager, vice president, and sales manager from the firms that manufacture fashion apparel for different brands. A similar local fashion market was also earlier researched by Irshad et al. (2020). Besides, we included medium and high organizations for data



collection. According to the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), a firm with more than 100 employees is a medium-firm and having more than 250 employees are considered a high firm. That had more than 100 employees. Zaim and Zaim (2008) also proposed that a firm with more than 100 employees is deemed medium. The average experience of respondents in brand management was 10.7 years, and their expertise in managing the current brand was 7.5 years. By keeping in view, the sample size, the study used a well reputed and globally implemented sample size formula focusing on a finite population introduced by Krejcie and Morgan (1970). Furthermore, to improve the findings' generalizability, two hundred and fifty questionnaires were distributed to respondents from April 2020 to June 2020 through personal visits, e-mail, and an online survey. Two hundred and thirty were returned and after screening two hundred and twenty valid responses were usable, with a response rate of 88%.

Questionnaire and measurements

Researchers went through a thorough literature review to give a complete picture of the current latent variables' relationship. The questionnaire was developed by adopting items from several different studies to finalize the questionnaire, and it consisted of thirty-three questions. Respondents had to say how right/wrong they thought each item was using a scale from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree).

PMO (CR=0.931) and RMO (CR=0.874) were measured with items adapted from the study of (Narver et al., 2004) on a five-point Likert scale of one (strong disagreement with the item) to five (strong agreement with the item). The scale consisted of five items each.

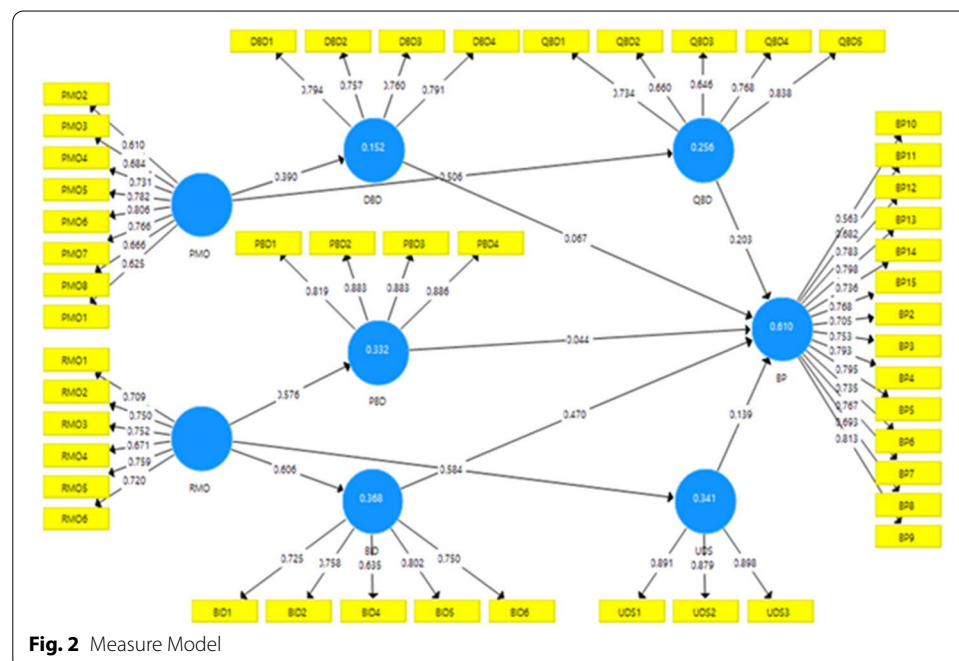
Positioning Strategies were assessed with items adapted from the study of (Kotha & Vadlamani, 1995) on a five-point Likert scale of one (strong disagreement with the item) to five (strong agreement with the item). Designed based differentiation consisted of four items ($CR=0.894$), quality-based differentiation consisted of five items ($CR=0.900$), brand image based differentiation consisted of six items ($CR=0.886$), price based differentiation consisted of four items ($CR=0.95$), and undifferentiation strategy consisted of three items ($CR=0.948$).

To assess brand performance, the 14-items were adopted from the work of Cui et al. (2014). The composite reliability of the scale for the current study is 0.961. Composite reliability (CR) is a measure of internal consistency in scale items, much like Cronbach's alpha (Netemeyer et al., 2003). In our study, all constructs have values above threshold 0.7 (Fig. 2).

Results and discussion

Measurement model

The study used partial least squares (PLS) modeling using SmartPLS3.2.8 version (Ringle et al., 2015) as the numerical tool to analyze the structural and measurement model, as it can accommodate a smaller number of observations without normality assumption and survey research is generally not normally distributed (Chin et al., 2003). Also, the Method bias was estimated through the common method variance using the individual factor method. Scholars disagreed about the effect of common method bias (CMB) on self-reporting variables that involve CMB assessment, as proposed by (Podsakoff et al., 2012). Literature has shown many analytical methods for identifying and regulating any potential CMB (Chang et al., 2010). To prevent existing problems CMB, this analysis used Harman's single-factor test proposed by Podsakoff and Organ (1986) to verify CMB's existence. The Principle Component Factor analysis was used to assess all



questionnaire items of 8 constructs with eigenvalue value greater than one were derived. The total variance is 63,723%; the first-factor interpretation variance is 32% (less than 50%). The findings show no single factor in a broad range of data sets, and the first significant factor does not describe a substantial part of the variation. The results indicate that CMB is not a major problem in our statistics. Furthermore, the individual factor model was also examined in AMOS which indicated the model fitness indicators as $\chi^2=2947.16$, $DF=893$, $CFI=0.879$, $GFI=0.842$ and $RMSEA=0.056$ and confirm the cut off criteria for the current study. Furthermore, The non-response bias was verified through the t-test (Armstrong & Overton, 1977), where respondents with missing demographic values were considered non-respondents (Kam & Meyer, 2015).

Following the recommendations of Hair Jr, Howard, and Nitzl (2020), that confirmatory composite analysis (CCA) for assessing reflective constructs includes a process that involves an assessment of the item loadings, composite reliability, Cronbach's alpha, AVE, discriminant validity, nomological validity, and predictive validity (Hair Jr et al., 2020). The loadings were all above 0.7, the AVE was higher than 0.5, Cronbach's Alpha was more significant than 0.7, and CR was higher than 0.7 (see Table 1 and Fig. 2). Furthermore, In assessing the discriminant validity, the study followed the guidelines from Fornell and Larcker (1981). The average variance extracted's square root should be higher than the correlations' row and column values. As shown in Table 2, all the diagonal values exceeded the row and column values, confirming adequate discriminant validity.

Discriminant validity

In short, the Fornell and Larcker technique demonstrate discriminant validity when the square root of the AVE enhances the relationships between the measure and every single other measure. To stimulate the measurement of the model's discriminant validity, the AVE estimation of every construct is produced by utilizing the Smart-PLS algorithm, as appeared in Table 2.

The values that lie in off-diagonal are smaller than the average variance's square root (highlighted on the diagonal), supporting the scales' satisfactory discriminant validity. Consequently, the outcome affirmed that the Fornell and Larcker (1981) model is met.

Structural model

Hair Jr et al. (2020) recommended a multi-step approach to assess the structural model, including multicollinearity, path coefficients, significance, R^2 , effect sizes, Q^2 , and $PLSpredict$ (Hair et al., 2020). All the VIFs were below five; thus, multicollinearity was not an issue. Next, the path coefficients, t-values, and effect sizes have been presented in Table 3.

We have 6 endogenous constructs in our model (see Fig. 1). The R^2 for DBD was 0.152 ($Q^2=0.08$), QBD was 0.256 ($Q^2=0.13$), PBD was 0.332 ($Q^2=0.24$), BID was 0.368 ($Q^2=0.18$), UDS was 0.341 ($Q^2=0.26$) and BP was 0.61 ($Q^2=0.33$), which indicates that 15.2%, 25.6%, 33.2%, 36.8%, 34.1% and 61% of the variance in the respective constructs can be explained by their predictors (see Fig. 3).

Table 1 Measurement properties

Variables	Dimensions	Items	Loading	t-value	CA	CR	AVE	R ²	Q ²
Market orientation types	Proactive market orientation	PMO1	0.625	9.889***	0.859	0.891	0.507		
		PMO2	0.610	9.599***					
		PMO3	0.684	11.95***					
		PMO4	0.731	14.97***					
		PMO5	0.782	17.67***					
		PMO6	0.806	21.23***					
		PMO7	0.766	17.16***					
		PMO8	0.666	9.222***					
	Responsive market orientation	RMO1	0.709	14.09***	0.822	0.871	0.529		
		RMO2	0.750	19.58***					
		RMO3	0.752	14.85***					
		RMO4	0.671	10.98***					
		RMO5	0.759	20.85***					
		RMO6	0.720	15.38***					
Positioning strategy	Design based differentiation	DBD1	0.794	22.58***	0.78	0.858	0.602	0.152	0.08
		DBD2	0.757	16.35***					
		DBD3	0.760	18.58***					
		DBD4	0.791	16.14***					
	Quality based differentiation	QBD1	0.734	16.26***	0.786	0.852	0.537	0.256	0.13
		QBD2	0.660	8.010***					
		QBD3	0.646	7.250***					
		QBD4	0.768	16.01***					
		QBD5	0.838	34.45***					
	Brand image-based differentiation	BID1	0.725	17.91***	0.791	0.855	0.542	0.368	0.18
		BID2	0.758	21.75***					
		BID4	0.635	8.470***					
		BID5	0.802	19.70***					
		BID6	0.750	13.08***					
	Price based differentiation	PBD1	0.819	22.08***	0.891	0.924	0.754	0.332	0.24
		PBD2	0.883	36.01***					
		PBD3	0.883	36.59***					
		PBD4	0.886	46.90***					
	Undifferentiation strategy	UDS1	0.891	41.49***	0.868	0.919	0.791	0.341	0.26
		UDS2	0.879	33.30***					
		UDS3	0.898	41.27***					
Brand performance		BP2	0.705	15.82***	0.937	0.945	0.554	0.61	0.33
		BP3	0.753	18.56***					
		BP4	0.793	22.05***					
		BP5	0.795	22.34***					
		BP6	0.735	17.35***					
		BP7	0.767	20.83***					
		BP8	0.693	12.79***					
		BP9	0.813	31.69***					
		BP10	0.563	8.362***					
		BP11	0.682	12.61***					
		BP12	0.783	21.17***					
		BP13	0.798	29.31***					
		BP14	0.736	17.50***					
		BP15	0.768	17.09***					

Table 1 (continued)CA is Cronbachs Alpha ≥ 0.7 , CR is composite reliability ≥ 0.7 ; AVE is average variance extracted. ≥ 0.5 ***Factor loadings are significant at: $p < 0.001$ **Table 2** Discriminant validity

	BID	BP	DBD	PBD	PMO	QBD	RMO	UDS
BID	0.736							
BP	0.719	0.744						
DBD	0.520	0.566	0.776					
PBD	0.529	0.537	0.486	0.868				
PMO	0.549	0.635	0.390	0.394	0.712			
QBD	0.628	0.661	0.767	0.579	0.506	0.733		
RMO	0.606	0.619	0.489	0.576	0.634	0.681	0.728	
UDS	0.451	0.543	0.555	0.671	0.435	0.613	0.584	0.889

Diagonal values are the square root of average variance extracted (AVE)

Table 3 Hypotheses testing results

Hypotheses	Relationship	Beta	St.Dev	t-value	F ²	Accepted/Rejected
Hypothesis1	PMO- > DBD	0.39	0.082	4.77***	0.179	Accepted
Hypothesis2	PMO- > QBD	0.506	0.068	7.44***	0.344	Accepted
Hypothesis3	RMO- > BID	0.606	0.051	11.9***	0.581	Accepted
Hypothesis4	RMO- > PBD	0.576	0.073	7.93***	0.496	Accepted
Hypothesis5	RMO- > UDS	0.584	0.064	9.06***	0.517	Accepted
Hypothesis6	RMO- > BID- > BP	0.287	0.051	5.58***		Accepted
Hypothesis7	PMO- > DBD- > BP	0.082	0.041	1.973*		Accepted
Hypothesis8	RMO- > PBD- > BP	0.025	0.04	0.63 ^{NS}		Rejected
Hypothesis9	PMO- > QBD- > BP	0.029	0.054	0.36 ^{NS}		Rejected
Hypothesis10	RMO- > UDS- > BP	0.162	0.051	3.15**		Accepted

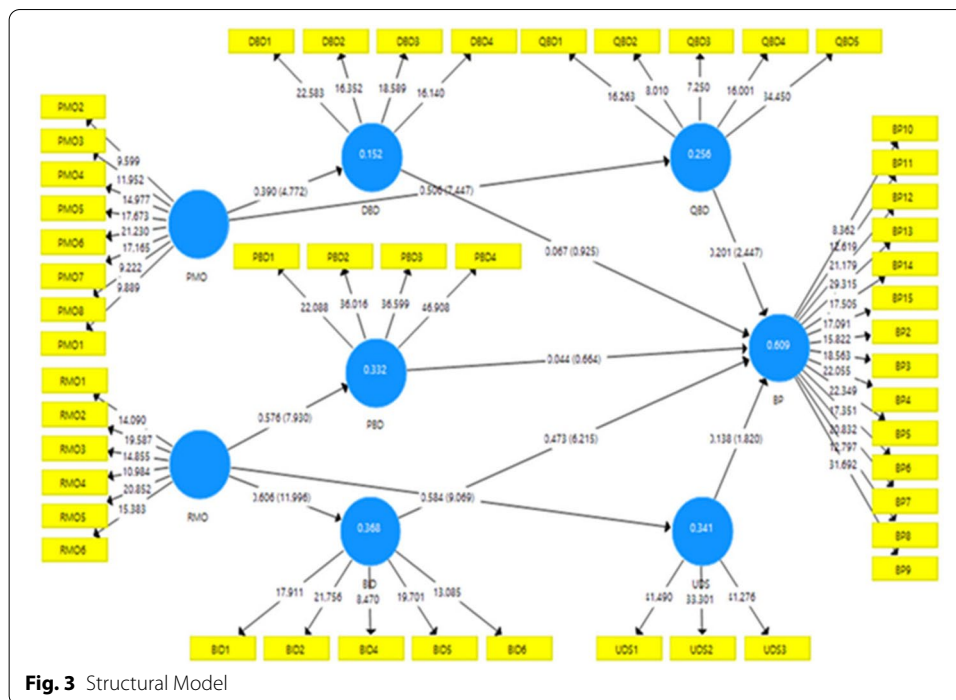
PMO proactive market orientation, RMO responsive market orientation, DBD design based differentiation, QBD quality based differentiation, PBD price based differentiation, UDS undifferentiation strategy, BP brand performance

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$; NS = Not supported

Hypotheses testing results

Calculating the standard error with T and P-values and the significance of the path coefficient Bootstrapping (1000 subsamples) was used, which Provided direct evidence of the hypotheses being accepted or rejected. The structural model analysis results show the path coefficients and their significance levels, as shown in Table 3. The findings confirmed that five out of five direct relationships were significant, and it can be concluded that H1, H2, H3, H4, and H5 were supported, as results are shown in Fig. 3.

The macro process's indirect bootstrapping method was employed (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The bootstrapping results validated that three out of the five indirect effects were significant (Table 3). Preacher and Hayes (2008) indicated that the indirect effect did not straddle 0 in between, showing mediation. Thus, the researchers can conclude that the mediation effects are statistically significant, meaning that H6, H7, and H10 were supported, While H8 and H9 were rejected, as shown in Table 3.



Discussion

The market orientation strategy has a significant impact on brand performance. The fashion brands of Pakistan must focus on some key aspects such as innovation, learning organization, and entrepreneurship to improve overall brand performance. The study has revealed that market orientation is an essential part of a firm's culture. This is similar to the findings generated by (Ni & Qian, 2018), who claimed that a market orientation strategy is required to focus on managing organizations as a critical resource and capability to ensure overall improvement in a firm's performance. This study revealed that a fashion brand's management could develop effective positioning strategies by concentrating on market orientation strategies. This is similar to the findings of Poole (2017), who stated that there is a need to focus on market orientation strategy to develop positioning strategies, through which the performance of brands can be improved. Following analysis and regression analysis, all hypotheses were supported. It was found that when the management of brands focuses on PMO and RMO strategies, this ultimately results in enhancing the effective development of positioning strategies. Consistent with the findings of Tajeddini et al. (2017), a customer-centered organization is one that focuses on the needs of customers. For those strategies and methodologies that focus on exploring new approaches or the substitution of the existing ones, PMO can be considered very important. The fashion industry needs to emphasize the development of new products. It gives a specific specialty to its products and refines some of its existing products to ensure it will be successful in the market. A responsive market orientation strategy was significantly related to image-based differentiation, price-based differentiation, and brand strategies' un-differentiation. To realize the claimed positioning strategy, management can develop their brands by following response orientation. This is consistent with the findings of Iyer et al. (2019), who revealed that the management of a firm is required

to focus on a responsive market orientation strategy to ensure differentiation in the market and to get ultimate success in the market.

Conclusion and recommendations

It is possible to establish market orientation as a particular expertise of conducting the knowledge. Other researchers have found that market orientation becomes incarnated in organizational culture and is embedded in corporate culture. Therefore, it is reasonable to expect that companies with such a culture will obtain positive competitive gains by integrating the idea as a norm of performance. The review that has been done and has been used as a case study has found that customer orientation is considered one of the critical factors that lead to an organization's success. The organization that puts the consumer in focus in all decisions can respond to alterations in customers' tastes and preferences, developing more loyal consumers for the organization in the long race. The principal objective of consumer-linked companies is to continuously get customers' loyalty by giving more value to the consumer. The organization that is more linked with consumers attempt to interpret the whole value chain of the purchaser. The assessment of the limit to which an organization is market-orientated gets more affected through the coordination level seen at its inter-functions. Organizations that were the service of delivery stellar were identified as having more vital coordination in inter-functions. Market orientation makes a significant impact on the decision-making process by offering superior services through convenience and improvement. Market orientation is increasingly dependent on acquiring information from the market and responding through different sources such as competitors and consumers. The level of customer satisfaction was improved by a higher orientation of the learning company to the market. The satisfaction of the consumer, when compared with competitors, affect profit and development. The organizational performance that has sustainable competitive benefit will enhance further over time. Thus, organizations get more flexibility in the integration of the marketing mix than other competitors.

Theoretical contribution

This study's main contribution was to link the market orientation types and the fashion brand positioning strategies of apparel companies. There were essential literature contributions to this analysis. Based on the literature on market orientation, organization, and capital, this paper adds to literature with more organizational ability and corporate metabolism knowledge. Results confirm that the positioning type and efficiency of PMO and RMO are associated. We notice that PMO promotes design, efficiency, and differentiation strategies, while RMO improves brand image, price, and undifferentiation differentiation strategies. The present research also discusses the relationship between the apparel business' positioning and its future performance. However, apparel companies did not extensively research a company's ability to use such positioning strategies. Long-term considered positioning strategies emphasize this contribution's significance as an essential factor (Fuchs & Diamantopoulos, 2010; Kalafatis et al., 2000).

This research contributes to understanding how positioning could be used for strategy formulation. The premise of positioning strategy needs to be discussed more in-depth in the sense of retailers and apparel firms. The majority of clothing companies want to

brand at a corporate level (Ballantyne & Aitken, 2007). The studies conducted in clothing markets were typically image-driven. They assumed to overestimate the value of identifying inside images by having consumers judge them before answering the questions. The picture-taking approach puts greater focus on the value building process. This article provides researchers and managers with perspectives on an antecedent role in supporting various positioning strategies and their impact on brand results.

Managerial implications

PMO could be distinguished from other firms based on design, performance, and reputation. Given that design-based differentiation (DBD) has not been associated with brand performance, quality-based differentiation (QBD) is a viable positioning strategy connected to PMO. In reality, mediation involving PMO and differentiation based on consistency shows us how direct and indirect paths contribute to brand success and possible positive effects. Thus, through the exploratory and festive, and proactive collection, dissemination, and use of customer information, companies that want to resolve unmet customer needs can also benefit from a positioning strategy that separates them from competitors. These companies will introduce strict quality monitoring, production processes, hiring professional workers, and developing customer service skills. Businesses that have built well-anchored capabilities will benefit from proactively addressing their business orientation.

RMO was linked to three positioning techniques through our conceptualization: brand image-based differentiation, price-based differentiation, and undifferentiation positioning. The results of the experiment obtained indicate that differentiating based on price is not associated with brand performance. In this analysis, an undifferentiated strategy was negatively correlated with brand performance. In other words, when given a premium positioning, the brand image-based differentiation technique is successful. Mediation between two groups, representing the PMO and the brand performance, means two direct and indirect paths that benefit brand performance. In response to this current competitive climate, learning is essential for companies who try to provide solutions to a limited set of customer needs, making their brand names stand out from the rivalry they battle. In this sector, these businesses will focus on leveraging advertising efforts to monitor their products' significance and their decisions to use specific communication strategies. Companies skilled in making their brand image, or who perform many jobs that their products are essential for a right place on the market, will benefit from actively positioning themselves for competitive business orientations.

Limitations and areas for future studies

This research examines a survey of fashion brands in Pakistan. Future studies can cover more diverse topics like the retail sector of Pakistan than the fashion sector. Future studies can continue to examine the importance of brand promotion strategies and studying market orientation strategies to assist businesses.

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Not Applicable

Authors' contributions

RFG: He is the principal author of this paper and he draw the initial idea of this paper and write introduction, problem statement and significance of the study. DL: He supervised all the work done by all the authors and guide them about

the topic and suggest necessary changes during the whole process of paper write up. KJ: He write the literature review and draw conceptual framework. SAB: He is expert in data analysis and he analyze collected data and interpret it. FHA: He write the research methodology portion and draw questionnaire. ML: He collected the data and enter in SPSS. All authors read and approve the final manuscript.

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Availability of data and materials

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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