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Factors Influencing the Growth of Small Enterprises: a Survey of Hair Dressing Industry in Asmara, Eritrea

By Fitsum Ghebregiorgis Ghebremeskel and Berhane Abadi Assefaw

Abstract
The main objective of this study is to investigate the main factors affecting the growth of micro and small enterprises firms in Eritrea. A survey was conducted in Asmara (capital city of Eritrea having very large number of hair dressing firms compared to other cities) on a sample of 212 hairdressing businesses. The survey research design was employed using a self-administered questionnaire as the data collection instrument. The items measuring the constructs were adapted from the extant literature. Data was analyzed using regression test. The results have shown that there is a relationship between training, location and growth of the hairdressing firm. Furthermore, the research revealed that though training and location positively influence a firm's growth, they have weak correlations with growth. Finally, education, experience and financial resources emerged not having a relationship with growth of the firms.

Key words: Small Business, Hair Dressing Industry, Small Enterprises, Asmara, Eritrea

Introduction
Small and Micro Enterprises (SME's) are among the most studied areas because of their substantial contribution to the economy, job creation and innovation (Hassan and Hart, 2016). In fact, SME's play a vital role in driving and stimulating the economic development of a country since they are the primary sources of employment opportunity especially in the private sector. According to Li and Kai (2009) SMEs are a source of both exports and a significant amount of revenue in terms of tax for the government with significant impact on the GDP of any nation.

Many countries have given sufficient emphasis to micro, small, and medium enterprises, and have identified them as a building block for their economic development (Gupta, Guha, and Krishnaswami, 2013). Small businesses support economies by bringing growth and innovation, increasing production and encouraging export. Small businesses also trigger economic growth by generating employment opportunities to people. Small businesses act as a podium of new innovation to these who implement new solutions for existing ideas. They are also the root structure of larger businesses not only due to their potential to mature into bigger corporation but also their capacity of feeding the today's supply chain with semi completed and fully processed goods and service.

Over the last several decades, the number of SME's has consistently increased. Amaradiwakara and Gunatilake (2016) indicated that 99.8 percent of European firms are SME's, while a rough estimate of 95 percent world enterprises being SME's. Similarly, the 2006 estimates show that the number of Chinese small businesses reached 39.8 million (Kanamori, Lim and Yang, 2006). Even in Africa, small businesses create more employment and generate more output than large businesses (Soni, 2005). Small Businesses plays a vibrant role in creating a great deal of employment opportunity and contributing to the economic growth of nations. That's why many governments vow to support and uphold the sector in various ways that confirms its significance. There is the general agreement and approval of

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researchers in the significance of this sector for economic growth, employment creation, poverty reduction and reducing levels of inequality. However, there are discrepancies regarding the numbers of SME's between the developing and the industrialized countries as the platforms for SME's growth between these nations is different. Accordingly, the contribution of SMEs in most African countries has been minimal (Kedogo, 2013).

Small and medium sized enterprises also face several challenges in the course to growth. Actually, it has been witnessed that many of them they fail just as startups. Fatoki and Smit (2011) stated that about 70 percent of South African small ventures fail within three years of their birth. There are several reasons for the failure of SMEs. Firstly, the fundamental challenge most SME's encounter is financial constraint. The extensive need for financing and the barriers (collateral requirements/access to finance) of financial institutions are cumbersome to the survival of SME's. In addition, as most small firms are owner-managed, the lack of experience in managing the business also affects their growth significantly (Adisa, Abdulraheem and Mordi, 2014). Other reasons that tackle the growth of small businesses include competition, poor strategy, and lack of innovation.

Small businesses in many countries include service or retail operations such as convenience stores, small grocery stores, bakeries, hairdressers, trade people (e.g., carpentry, electricity), restaurants, guest houses, photographers, very small-scale manufacturing, and internet-related businesses such as web design and computer programming. One of these small business that is growing dramatically is the hair dressing (Onsongo and Muturi, 2015; Beauty Environmental Scan, 2014).

The growing trends of the hairdressing business could be traced to the growing interest in fashion by members of all ages and gender. The expandable characteristic of the industry help its sustainable growth. Apart the ordinary hair care given by all the business, the service can include skin care, massage, and other value adding services. Onsongo and Muturi (2015) noted that the sector has long been perceived as a resort to non-skilled, unemployed and those with lower education level individuals. In fact, in Eritrea nearly all employed in or owners of hair dressing businesses have lower level of education with a maximum being high school complete. To this end, this study attempts to identify factors affecting the growth of hair dressing businesses in Eritrea.

Anecdotal evidence indicates that the impact of SME's in the Eritrean economy has been significant. According to Ghebretensae (2005) SME's contribute about 45percent of the employment in the private sector. Almost all the SME's are owner-managed business. The Macro Policy of Eritrea emphasizes empowering private sector led economy. However, the magnitude of the contribution of these small and medium sized enterprises is not well researched.

To the best of our knowledge, ours is the first study to identify the factors influencing the growth of hairdressing businesses. Since this report is the first of its kind for Eritrea, it provides new knowledge regarding small hairdressing businesses in Eritrea. Although the hair dressing businesses also sell beauty parlour products, in Eritrea hair dressers operate separately from barber shops. Thus, the main objective of this study is to investigate educational level, business training, experience, finance, and firm location variables affecting growth of micro and small enterprises. The specific objective of this study is to answer the following questions: What are the factors that influence the growth of hair dressing businesses?

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Background and Hypotheses

In Eritrea, over the past 25 years, there has been a remarkable increase of small and medium sized enterprises. There are several types of SMEs in Eritrea such as groceries, hairdressing, barbers, manufacturing, weaving, carpentry, retail, kiosk shops …etc. Small Business growth has been studied by researchers for many years as it is one of the fundamental and determining issues of small business survival. Small business contribution to the economy of nations has been crystal, thus many governments has invested in supporting the sector starting from tax concession, financial assistance, consultation and other variety means in order to secure the survival of the firms. Hence, growth is a significant area of study ensuring the sustainability of small business. However, there is no universal theoretical framework that encompasses all factors and determinants of small business growth (Kastrati, 2015).

Several factors are examined affecting the growth of small and medium enterprises. Amaradiwakara and Gunatilake (2016) studied factors affecting the growth of small and medium enterprises in Sir Lanka. In a survey conducted in various small business sectors of the Gampaha district, they found out that educational level, financial resources, and access to technology and government regulations as influential factors to the growth of Sri Lankan small and medium enterprises. Insah, Mumuni and Bangniyel (2013) also conducted a study on the determinants of business growth in Ghana. Data gathered from a sample of over 100 business owners revealed the significant influence of business age and record keeping on business size which was measured in terms of employment number. However, the study also indicated a negative and weak correlation between gender and business size, and education and business size.

Moreover, a study by Tarfasa, Ferede, Kebede and Behailu (2016) on 300 randomly selected Ethiopian micro and small enterprises revealed access to finance and entrepreneurial characteristics such as marital status, age, and education as determinant factors affecting the growth of micro and small enterprises. Furthermore, the study found the inverse correlation of environmental factors such as power and water utilities with business growth. Similarly, Kastrati (2015) in his study of determinants of growth in Kosovo confirmed the impact of environment such as electricity supply and market environment on growth of the business.

In other study, a cross sectional research on the South Africa by Sitharam and Hoque (2016) found that internal and external environment affects greatly the growth of the small business. The influential factors of the internal environment encompasses managerial competency, access to finance and technological capabilities; while the external environment include competition, globalization, macroeconomic and regulatory factors, and crime and corruption.

Research shows that there are various factors affecting the growth of small and medium sized enterprises. For instance, Onsongo and Muturi (2015) in a study that encompasses 92 hair salon owners in Kenya indicated a strong relationship between education level, training, experience of the owner-manager and growth of the firm. Specifically, the study shows that firm growth is function of three set of groups namely: entrepreneurs, strategy, and firm. These three areas also encompass a list of determinant factors under their segment. A combination and interaction of these factors influence the growth outcome of the business. Sound interaction can result in positive growth rate while a lack of good combination can give rise to lower growth rate.

Innovation is also an essential phenomenon which has the capacity to secure the growth of small firms. Innovation makes up a major reason for the growth of small business through utilizing and creating opportunities. In this regard, Machado (2016) has emphasized

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the fundamental role of innovation in determining growth. Unfortunately, small firms happen to be weaker at their market area. Most of them fail to introduce new product and service in their range and perhaps the reason of their slow innovation may go back to their weak resource base and capacity. However, according to Daunfeldt and Elert (2013), there is great chance that small innovating firms to beat up large firms lacking innovative force.

Therefore, based on the above reviews and discussions we propose the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Level of education positively influences the growth of hair dressing business.

Hypothesis 2: Business experience positively influences the growth of hair dressing business.

Hypothesis 3: Business training positively influences the growth of hair dressing business.

Hypothesis 4: Financial resources positively influence the growth of hair dressing business.

Hypothesis 5: Business location positively influences the growth of hair dressing business.

Methodology

Sample and Procedures

This study investigates the factors influencing the growth of hair dressing business in Eritrea. In conducting this study, primary and secondary data have been used. This study is mainly quantitative in nature. Primary data were collected from individual businesses using survey questionnaire. Due to its capacity to cover large population efficiently and easiness to conduct mainly through questionnaire, survey strategy is an optimal choice for such kind of study (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009). A close-ended, structured self-administered questionnaire was distributed to hair salons located in Asmara. According to the statistics of Registration Office of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, there are 430 registered and actively working Hair Salons in the city of Asmara. We distributed 220 questionnaires (which is to include more than half of the total hair dressing firms) and we obtained 212 useable questionnaire. Thus, of the total 430 hairdressing businesses, 212 (which are almost 50 percent of the target population) have been included in this study based on simple random sampling. However, it should be noted here that getting 212 useable questionnaires out of the distributed 220 consists of 96.4% response rate.

Secondary data have been extracted from various sources such as documents of the Ministry of Trade and Industry, academic journals, books, other internet sources...etc.

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Dependent variables: in this study, the dependent variable is growth of hair dressing business as explained by the size of employees.

Independent variables: five factors, namely educational level, business training, business experience, financial resources, and firm location which might influence growth have been included as independent variables in the regression model.

The collected data has been analyzed using SPSS version 20. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables through regression analysis.

Discussion of results

The frequency distribution of the respondents' background is given in Table 1. Of the total respondents, 67 (31.6 percent) are male, while 145 (68.4 percent) are females. In terms of education, the distribution is not equally distributed as 68.4 percent has received secondary (high school) education. In addition, 41 percent are single, while 59 percent are married. Regarding age, the mean age (years) of the respondents was 33 years (the youngest age being 20 years old and the oldest 63 years old).

Table 1: Summary indicators of respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gender			
Male	67	31.6	31.6
Female	145	68.4	100.0
Education			
Elementary	4	1.9	1.9
Junior	35	16.5	18.4
Secondary (high school)	145	68.4	86.8
College and above	28	13.2	100.0
Marital status			
Single	87	41.0	41.0
Married	125	59.0	100.0

The aim of this study is to determine the factors influencing small business growth. Thus, in order to test the stated hypotheses, a linear relationship was estimated between independent and dependent variables through a regression model. A regression analysis was used to establish the influence of the independent variables (education, experience, business training and location) on dependent variable (growth). Two models were estimated in this study as financial resources was a control variable; thus, the first model included financial resources while the second model excluded it. The first regression model for growth of small business is:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + e \quad (1)$$

Growth of SMEs= Constant + education + experience + business training+ financial resources + location

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The multiple linear regression analysis for education, experience, business training, financial resources, location and growth is provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Model summary, ANOVA and coefficients

Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.288[a]	.083	.061	1.670

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	51.884	5	10.377	3.721	.003[b]
Residual	574.545	206	2.789		
Total	626.429	211			

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	2.127	.883	2.409	.017
education	.003	.191	.013	.989
business training	.775	.267	2.908	.004*
experience	.027	.021	1.293	.197
business location	-.623	.265	-2.351	.020*
financial resources	-.131	.134	-.975	.331

The significance value of 0.003 (F= 3.721) shows that the model is significant enough to measure the relationship between variables. Furthermore, a positive relationship was found between education, business training, experience and growth of the small business. Based on the result, the model entailed that business training was having significant relationship (0.004 $\leq$ 0.05) with growth and business location also scored a significance value of 0.020 (less than 0.05) leading to the acceptance of the hypotheses of significant relationship between business training, location and growth. However, the relationship of education, experience, and financial resources with growth was insignificant. Hence, each null hypothesis of no significant relationship for level of education, experience and financial of a salon enterprise was accepted and the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship was rejected. Thus, it seems plausible to conclude that hypothesis 1 (education), hypothesis 2 (experience), and hypothesis 4 (financial resources) as factors influencing growth of firm are rejected.

The model for the above regression analysis is as follows:

Growth of SMEs = 2.127 + 0.003(education) + 0.775(business training) + 0.027(experience) - 0.623 (location) - 0.131(financial resource)

The majority (75 percent) of the respondents have not taken any business training, which indicates lack of managerial competency and skills and mere dependence upon experience to manage the business. However, about 72 percent of these respondents agreed

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that training influences growth. Moreover, the regression analysis for business training and growth is estimated as follows in Table 3.

Table 3: Model summary, ANOVA and coefficients

Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.201[a]	.040	.036	1.692

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	25.360	1	25.360	8.860	.003[b]
Residual	601.069	210	2.862		
Total	626.429	211			

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.050	.484	2.171	.031
Business training	.799	.268	2.977	.003*

The significance value of 0.003 was less than the level of significance of 0.05, and the relationship was statistically significant. The null (alternative) hypothesis of no relationship was rejected and it was concluded that there is a relationship between training and enterprise growth in the sampled population. The coefficient, R was 0.201, showing a weak positive relationship between training of the entrepreneur and the growth of a salon enterprise. The coefficient of determination, R^2, was 0.040 implying that the training of the entrepreneur can explain 4percent of the total variance in the growth of a salon enterprise when all factors are kept constant. The regression model for business training and growth is as follows:

$$\text{Growth} = 1.050+0.799*\text{training}$$

In addition, the majority (89.2 percent) of the respondents agreed to the influence of location of the firm on the growth path of the business. Further regression analysis for location and growth is presented in Table 4 below.

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Table 4: Model summary, ANOVA and coefficients

Model summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.185	.034	.030	1.697

ANOVA

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	21.375	1	21.375	7.419	.007[b]
Residual	605.054	210	2.881		
Total	626.429	211			

Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients			
	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.
(Constant)	3.678	.466	7.888	.000
Business location	-.712	.262	-2.724	.007*

As can be seen from Table 4 above, it was observed that the significance value for location was 0.007. The relationship was statistically significant at 0.05 level of confidence. The null (alternative) hypothesis of no relationship between location of the business and the growth of the enterprise in the sampled population was rejected and the alternative hypothesis that there is a significant relationship between business location and the growth of the hair salons in the sampled population was accepted. As some of the respondents explained "*in the areas where there are few hair dressing firms (less number of competitors) in a crowded neighborhood or those located in the center of the downtown are having more businesses (large customers) where they can make more money quickly thus enhancing growth*."

$$\text{Growth} = 3.678 - 0.712*\text{location}$$

Generally, with the test results above, there are two hypotheses including H3 and H5 that are supported in accordance with the theory presented in literature review; while three hypotheses H1, H2 and H4 are not supported. Table 5 below provides summary of the results.

Table 5: Summary of Hypotheses test results

	Hypothesis	Test results
H1	Education positively influences the growth of hair dressing business	Not supported
H2	Experience positively influences the growth of hair dressing business	Not supported
H3	Training positively influences the growth of hair dressing business	Supported
H4	Finance positively influence the growth of hair dressing business	Not supported
H5	Location positively influences the growth of hair dressing business	Supported

Conclusion and way forward

The objective of this study is identifying factors that influence growth of micro and small businesses in Asmara, Eritrea. The study employed two models using five variables—namely education, experience, business training, financial resources, and location to establish if a relationship exists with growth of the hair dressing business. The study found out that there is a weak positive relationship between the business location and business growth, in the first

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model where a financial resource was added with the other four variables. Moreover, education, experience, and financial resources emerged to have no significant relationship. In this regard, it seems plausible to conclude that why education is not influencing growth is that most of them join the business as intern employees or getting 3 to 6 months training in hair dressing and then rent hair dressing business. As mentioned in the introduction section, also those in hair dressing business are having lower level of education as there are no institutions that teach about beauty parlour.

On the other hand, in the second model, the study revealed that there is a weak positive relationship between business training and business growth. Similarly, the relationship established by this study between location and growth of business was weak. Nonetheless, a considerable difference of growth rate between the hair salons located at the business district and the residential or peripheral area of the city was found. Those located at the center of the city tended to show greater growth rate compared with those located in the residential areas. Moreover, the study revealed a fundamental perception of the owner-managers specifically located in the residential areas trying to preserve the neighborhood customers by serving with lower price and having better customer relationship as the business is highly personnel dependent.

Furthermore, the study did not find any significant relationship between level of education of the entrepreneurs and growth of the business. Despite highest proportion of the respondents attending secondary school, the education level did not contributed to the growth of the business. Thus, unlike many studies, the influence of education level on the hair salon business growth has been minimal in the case of Eritrea. It was also found that experience of the entrepreneurs like educational level having no relationship with the growth of hair salon business. The dominance of the sector with youngsters coupled with few years of experience can be one of the main reasons to the insignificant influence on growth of the business.

The study also sought to find differences based on the demographic characteristics of the respondents. Thus, male-owned hair salons displayed a higher growth rate in comparison with female-owned salons while there was no significant difference between the hair salons owned/managed by married and unmarried people. The result that male-owned hair salons having higher growth is a bit surprising in the sense that traditionally in Eritrea hairdressing (hair braiding) is women's' business. Perhaps this could be men are investing more in the business than women because in terms of employment it is extremely rare to find men employed in hair dressing or beauty parlour businesses.

The fact that education is not having any influence on the growth of hair salons raises some interesting questions that merit further study. Therefore, entrepreneurs need to upgrade their educational capacity related to their business operations in order to enhance their business growth. Moreover, majority of the owner managers lack any business training, and to empower these small businesses there should be institutions that cater to the needs of entrepreneurs with managerial skills to improve the performance of the business whereby then higher growth rate of the small and micro businesses can be achieved. Future research would benefit from including a large survey and more variables such as culture, business policy of the country…etc.

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