DOI: https://doi.org/10.4038/jhrmp.v8i1.17

Continuous Growth through Entrepreneurial Leadership: The Success Story of SMS Holding

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Abstract: The use of Interlocking paving stones in history has been around for more than 5,000 Years, 3,000 BC. An interlocking concrete paver is a type of paver. Segmental pavers have been used for thousands of years. The Romans built roads with them which still exist with good quality. Before the paver was made from concrete either real stone or a clay product was used. Interlock Paving Stones were very famous in Sri Lanka in history as well. SMS Holding, being the most pioneering and leading interlocking paving manufacturer and landscape solution provider, was able to serve society with its Strategic Management Systems (SMS) by transforming the paving culture of the country in a new direction. Accordingly, thorough out the journey SMS gifted the nation with plenty of novel products, and processes to nurture the interlocking paving and construction industry from time to time. The researcher has conducted a comprehensive literature survey to figure out how continuous growth can be influenced through entrepreneurial leadership, market orientation, and operational excellence. In this context, continuous growth has been examined in terms of revenue growth, production and capacity growth, and employee growth. In arriving at the outcome of continuous growth the aforementioned three key drivers can be identified as significantly impactful throughout. The presence of Skill labor shortage and government policy changes has been moderately impacting in reaching the outcome. In conducting the case study research, a conceptual framework was established from which strong theoretical backing has been provided. Both secondary and primary data were collected whereas the researcher conducted ten in-depth interviews and four focus group discussions based on the developed interview guide. The pilot studies and the few observatory visits also equally supported the validation of the findings of the study. Accordingly, there could be a further research avenue for future researchers to explain the correlation that exists between the entrepreneur's decision and enterprise growth.

Keywords: *Continuous Growth, Entrepreneurial Leadership, Market Orientation, Operational Excellence*

Introduction

The uses of Interlocking paving stones in history have been around for more than 5,000 Years3,000 BC. However, it was not until the mid-1940s that pavers began to be produced out of concrete. Interlock Paving Stones were very famousin Sri Lanka in history as well. Most Temples, Vihara buildings, Gardens, and walking paths, etc. were decorated & made by using metal & granite paving blocks and similartypes of building blocks. Over the past two decades in Sri Lanka, manufacturing alternative brick, clay or concrete was most popular.

SMS had its modest start-up in 2001, after having broken up with the initial partnership businesswhich was initiated by Mr. Shehan and his partner back in 1999. SMS holding officially began its operation on 18 July 2001 by establishing a small and quite ordinary factory facility in Pahathgama, Hanwella. As it was the very beginning of the company chairman had owned only 40 perches of land, in which a small factory and office had been built. The production was carried out on a fully manual basis where they could not even cross 1,000 units of bricks production for the first week from the establishment. As of now, SMS has a commanding market share of more than 60% which can be recognized as the largest ever portion occupied by a single player in the industry that operates along with ISO, SLS, LEED, and other locally and globally accepted standards. SMS paving block differentiates itself from the other products on the market by the means of non-slip and skid-resistant qualities.

The Theme of the Case Study

The case study report is articulated around the theme of 'continuous growth of SMS Holding through entrepreneurial leadership'. The company which is referred to as his initiated its operation at a very lower phase whereas the presence of the chairman's entrepreneurial leadership approach has reached a way better position in terms of achieving continuous growth and being the industry leader. Hence in this case the leadership approach has takenthe initiative to drive the company towards success while interacting with the company's market orientation approach and operational excellence. However, certain external environmental factors like shortage of skilled labour and strict government policies and their lack of support towards industry development have moderated the relationship that exists between the independent variables and the dependent variable.

The objective of the Case Study

The case study objectives have been set as follows.

i. To study how has SMS Holding been able to secure continuous growth from 2010 to 2020.
ii. To investigate how entrepreneurial leadership has been the role played in achieving the continuous growth at SMS holdings.
iii. To explore how continuous growth at SMS Holding is relatively influenced by entrepreneurial leadership, market orientation, and operational excellence.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to the company and its performance framing to the identified key drivers' moderators and outcomes. Case studies are generally in-depth investigations of a single person, group, event, or community. In this case, it's about SMS Holdings and its founder's entrepreneurial leadership approach. Hence data are gathered from a variety of sources and by using several different methods (e.g. observations & interviews). There may be a series of other attributes which could have contributed to the achievement of continuous growth besides the identified attributes by the author. However, keep exploring all those that would fall beyond the required level of this study. Hence the case is preliminarily compiled based on entrepreneurial leadership and the other identified key drivers' impact on the achievement of continuous growth outcome of the company. Hence the case is set and articulated around these areas with supporting information gathered in terms of primary and secondary data source

Literature Review

Continuous Growth

Continuous growth is a pattern of growth that is replicated in terms of continuous revenue, production, and employee increment over time. Kruger (as cited in Gupta et al., 2015) stated that Growth has various connotations. It can be defined in terms of revenue generation, value addition, and expansion in terms of the volume of the business. Gray (as cited in Owusu et al., 2018) found certain organizations prefer to measure growth in terms of sales turnover. Blundel and Hingley (2001) argued that growth may be achieved quickly, slowly, or not at all. Growth is defined as a change in size during a determined period (Dobbs & Hamilton, 2007). Delmar (as cited in Davidson et al., 2005) underlying theory predicts that certain antecedents would be related to, e.g., growth in sales and markets share while other predictors are believed to influence growth in employment and profits, respectively. Hubbard and Bromiley (1995) contended that income and sales growth are the two most recognized measures of overall firm performance. Further Kim and Ployhart (2014) suggested that recruitment, training, and productivity have a direct impact on growth, which could be influenced by changes in the operating environment. Achtenhagen et al. (2010) researched entrepreneurs´ ideas on growth and listed the following: increase in sales, increase in the number of employees, increase in profit, increase in assets, and increase in the firm´s value, and internal development.

Thus, organizational growth also can be evaluated with the support of certain features which are qualitative in nature. These include market position, quality of product, and company's goodwill. In the study of company growth, it is an inevitable requirement to study about company beginning from what it is, how much has it grown, what it offers to the market? and lastly what assets it controls (Markman & Gartner, 2002). Roure and Keeley (1990) argued that the willingness to include new partners can positively influence venture growth. A company's growth is essentially the result of the expansion of demand for products or services. Wiklund and Shepherd (2003) contended that employee numbers can be considered a better measurement of firm growth. Rutashobya and Olomi (2004) argued that production volume could be a widely accepted measure of organizational growth in the literature.

Entrepreneurial Leadership

Entrepreneurial leadership is a process that is associated with the different phases of organizational development**.** The scope of leadership and entrepreneurship facilitates a critical insight into how individuals and organizations perform and function within a dynamic environment. Huang et al. (2014) defined entrepreneurial leaders' capabilities in framing challenges, absorbing uncertainty, and underwriting, empowering them to recognize opportunities to create sustainable competitive advantage for their businesses. Hence it is evident that entrepreneurial leadership appears to have originated in the fields of entrepreneurship and leadership. Kuratko (2007) declared that Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation. According to Gupta et al. (2004), Entrepreneurial leadership has been defined as a type of leadership that creates a visionary scenario that is used to assemble and mobilize a "supporting cast" of participants who become committed to the vision, discovery, and exploitation of strategic value creation. According to Palmer (1971), risk measurement and risk-taking are known to be the primary functions of an entrepreneur.

A few key traits of an entrepreneurial leader would determine the phase of company growth and future success. Opportunity recognition, opportunity exploitation, risk-taking, visioning, and encouraging employee creativity and team performance are perceived to be the selected attributes that could be prominent. Lippitt (as cited in Harrison et al., 2007) identified six characteristics of an entrepreneurial leader: risk-taking, divergent thinking, sharp focus, personal responsibility, economic orientation, and learning from experience. According to Ashely and Suire (2008), Entrepreneurial leadership involves a proactive and creative reaction to environmental opportunities, therefore such leaders can be seen as innovators or creators in their domains. Osborne (1995) found that Entrepreneurs who succeed often exhibit a characteristic profile. They display a strong need for achievement. Entrepreneurial leaders may inspire employees to work together which may lead to collaboration toward creative results (Gupta et al., 2004). Flamholtz (2011) defined that entrepreneurial leadership functions include creating the vision, managing the organization's culture, coordinating operations, overseeing system development, and leading innovation and change. Vision is the cornerstone of entrepreneurial architecture. In other words, entrepreneurial leaders need the ability to define and communicate a shared vision for an organization (Roomi & Harisson, 2011). As contended by Renko et al. (2015) Entrepreneurial leadership can be referred to as the process of influencing and directing the performance of group members toward achieving those organizational goals that involve recognizing and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities

Market Orientation

Keeping customers' interest first is central to the Successful implementation of market orientation. Shapiro (as cited in Lafferty & Hult, 2001) conceptualized market orientation as an organizational decision-making process. At the heart of this process is a strong commitment by management to share information interdependently and practice open decision-making between functional and divisional personnel. As contended by Gounaris et al. (2004), Marketing orientation is perceived as a system of corporate beliefs and values pivoting around the creation of superior customer value at a profit while not neglecting the interests of other key stakeholders and the shaping a company's internal environment and climate to increase the company's responsiveness to market information. A firm with a marketing orientation chooses its markets and manages its production capabilities to achieve goals. (Sharp, 1991), Ruckert, (1992) contended that the level of market orientation in a business unit is the degree to which the business unit obtains and uses information from customers, develops a strategy that will meet customer needs, and implements that strategy by being responsive to customer needs and wants. Day (1994) defined market orientation as superior skills in understanding and satisfying customers" and emphasize market-sensing and customer-linking capabilities that set market-driven firms apart as the key to better anticipation and response to changing market requirements ahead of competitors.

Customer orientation, competitor orientation, and functional coordination elements are inherent in market orientation. As postulated by Winston and Dadzie (2002), the view of market orientation is believed to be synonymous with key behavioral factors of the firm, including customer orientation, inter-functional coordination, and competition. Day and Nedungadi (as cited in Tajeddini et al., 2006) suggested that market orientation represents superior skills in understanding and satisfying customers, as well as understanding competitors, and observes that market-driven firms that balance these two orientations achieve better performance. Jaworski and Kohli (1996) stated that an organization-wide generation of market intelligence about customers, competitors, and forces affecting them, internal dissemination of the intelligence, and reactive as well as proactive responsiveness to the intelligence as market orientation. Narver and Slater (as cited in Baker & Sinkula, 2009) scaled construe market orientation as a three-dimensional construct. The former assesses information acquisition, dissemination, and responsiveness, whereas the latter measures customer orientation, competitor orientation, and inter-functional coordination.

Operational Excellence

Reducing unnecessary waste, being efficient, and having quality consciousness represent the soundness of operations in an organization. According to Goldman et al. (as cited in Hallgren & Olhager, 2009), an agile manufacturing system is a system that can operate profitably in a competitive environment of continually and unpredictably changing customer opportunities. According to Bai et al. (2019), many manufacturers embraced lean as a vital business strategy that provides the foundation for operational excellence through the standardization of processes, propagation of continuous improvement culture, and empowerment of the workforce Naylor et al. (as cited in Hallgren & Olharger, 2009) postulated that lean manufacturing as developing value stream to eliminate all waste, including time, and to endure a level schedule. As suggested by Yeung et al. (2005), quality management practices generally refer to an organized and integrated set of operational processes that deliver quality, which is defined as all of the features and characteristics of a product or service that affect its ability to satisfy a given need. These include organizational responsibilities, resources, procedures, and structures.

Being excellent in operation has brought forward the utmost significance for any organization today. According to Yeo (2019), Operational excellence is a systematic process of doing things to ensure consistency in the way work is conceptualized, coordinated, and produced. Russell and Koch (2009) stated that operational excellence is about reaching the height of operational efficiency by doing things better, faster, and cheaper. Operational excellence does not just merely include optimizing business processes, improving quality, and increasing productivity and efficiency, rather at present it is nurtured with the aspects of improving profitability and competitive advantage. Allen and Rai (1996) argued that operational efficiency is the ability to use resources at an optimum level and deliver products and services with cost-effectively. As contended by Kalluru and Bhat (2009). Operational efficiency is the proficiency of a corporation to curtail the unwelcome and maximize resource capabilities to deliver quality products and services to the customers. According to Cui et al. (2020), Operational excellence aims to constantly improve the operation process and the efficiency and effectiveness of the industrial system. Assen (as cited in Ismail et al., 2016) defined operational excellence as the design and management to maximize operating profit through the continuous operation of an excellent production and delivery system that offers products and services to customers at the right value.

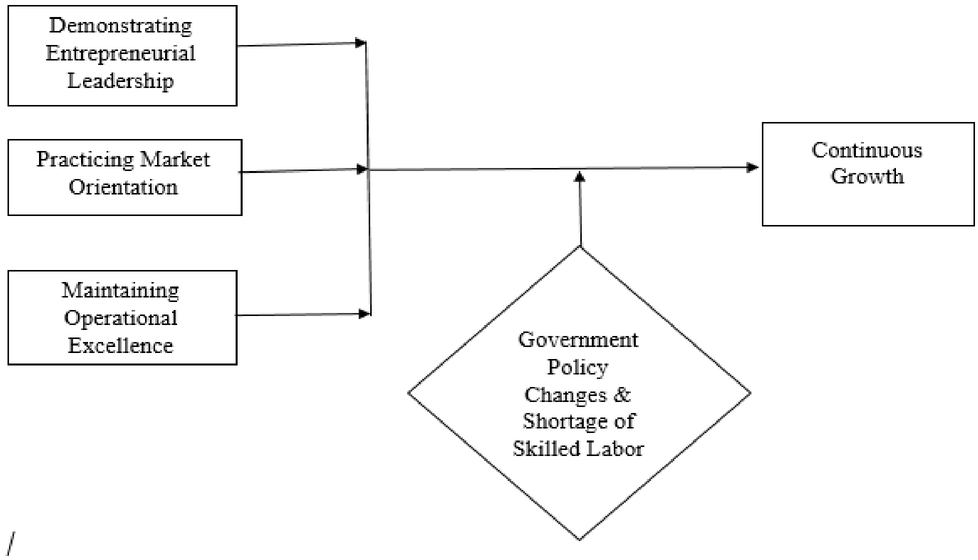
Government Policy changes & Skilled Labor Shortage

The construction industry has been experiencing difficulties due to improper government policies and their ineffectiveness of them. Hillman and Keim (2008) argued that in weak political environments, governments can change rules and public policies in a far less explicit and transparent way. For instance, government tender procedures based on low price-based are sometimes shown to be very inefficient. Tax policies are another one of the main concerns. The political instability in the country created rapid changes in certain policy decisions taken by the governments. According to Luo (2006), change can happen overnight, without any previous explanation, making it harder to predict, so firms find it difficult to understand what the actual political risk is. Companies prefer governments that are not unpredictable and change laws suddenly Murtha and Lenway (1994) Countries characterized by high policy discretion are countries where political risk is harder to assess due to the unpredictability of changes, and corruption prevails which ends up affecting policy implementation (Khanna & Palepu, 2000). Therefore, the political instability of the government can affect the construction industry and its productivity.

Skill shortages occur when there is an insufficient number of workers with the required qualifications, skills, or experience necessary to carry out a particular job. Lack of labor, equipment, knowledge, and other competencies to stand against barriers predominantly. Othman (2014) stated that the shortage of skilled labor had serious consequences on construction productivity and the general health of construction projects. Today, many construction workers are hired on a project basis and made redundant on project completion. This is a common fact to inset of developing countries. As a result, the construction industry is characterized by a pool of laborers who work for a variety of contractors in different types of construction. This may be due to a lack of experience and knowledge. The skilled labor shortage is an intricate phenomenon, which influences the performance of construction activities. According to Healy et al. (as cited in Silva et al.,2018) skill shortages are a complex labor market phenomenon, and most business address skill shortages through better utilization of their core workforce (e.g., longer hours, better pay and conditions, and internal training). Enhancing skills and efficiency in many ways could improve the image of the construction industry.

Case Framework and Methodology

The case framework presented below depicts that the success of SMS Holdings is preliminarily influenced and driven by the three independent variables such as entrepreneurial leadership, Operational excellence, and market orientation. Moreover, one moderator variable has been identified and that is nothing else, but the government policy changes and the skilled labor shortage. It is vital to mention that the leadership style manifested by the chairman as an entrepreneurial leader has become the critical driving factor in the case along with the interaction of other two variables by which he made the strategic turnaround to transform the business into a larger revenue-making company.



Source: Author

Figure 1: Case Study Framework

Data Collection and Methodology

To compile the case study research project, both primary and secondary data were gathered through conducting interviews and referring to available data which are available in relevant secondary data sources. At the very beginning, a pilot study was conducted on the company by visiting several times to determine whether the company is eligible for the case study research. Once having confirmed the eligibility the author made the initial discussion with the Managing Director, and Head of Administration to figure out the important events and company milestones on their way to achieving the continuous growth outcome. A total of ten in-depth interviews and four focus group discussions were conducted in connection with the compilation of the case. Accordingly, when it comes to sections of interviewees, the authors have considered a diverse set of respondents based on their seniority, hierarchical role, scope of work, and experience with the organization. In fact, through this, the compiler of the case expects to have a diverse and comprehensive 360-degree kind of opinion on the organization.

Presence the of technological improvements and wider internet access has intensified the usage of secondary data for much research work since accessing and using secondary data has become more popular among researchers who have limited time and busy working schedules. Accordingly, the presented case study research project utilizes the most commonly using secondary data sources like websites, blogs, YouTube, and other social media platforms, government reports, market survey reports, as well as company internal documents including company financial statements, marketing profiles product, and service information.

Results of the Case Study
About SMS Holdings PVT limited

SMS had its modest start-up in 2001, after having broken up with the initial partnership businesswhich was initiated by Mr. Shehan and his partner back in 1999. The inception of SMS holding was a result of an incident that had been going through by the founder Mr. Shehan Senevirathna and that particular scenario happened to transform many lives in the future including the founder himself.

SMS holding's overallrevenue generation, capacity increment, and employee increment data can be stated that they have been experiencing continuous growth throughout their journey. When it comes to the gradual sales growth the CFO of the company mentioned that "*We could gradually increase our sales starting from 200 million, 300 million likewise and now we are landed on almost one billion sales revenue per annum*" Furthermore The sales and marketing manager of the company confessed that *"there has been a year by year sales growth somewhere at 20% to 25% & it has been a steady growth"* Moreover the Purchasing Manager also confessed that *"We managed to collect over 60 million to 70 million per month then thereafter we collected more than 100 million per month."*

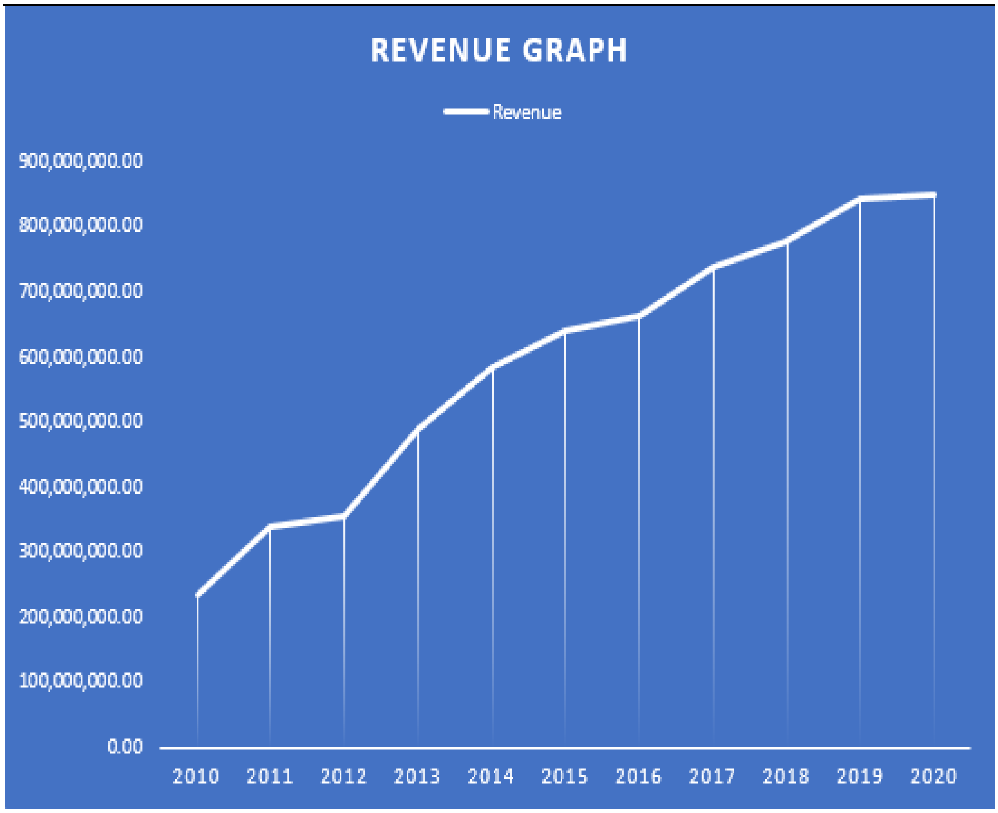


Figure 2: Revenue Graph
Source: Company Internal Data (2020)

Table 1: Company Revenue & Net Profit Increment Data

Year	Revenue	Net profit
2010	235,766,759.00	7,323,256.00
2011	340,375,814.00	9,232,256.00
2012	356,375,814.00	10,235,987.00
2013	489,823,233.00	12,598,365.00
2014	584,129,101.00	16,254,789.00
2015	640,281,878.00	32,254,589.00
2016	662,022,412.00	38,245,456.00
2017	739,265,978.00	40,235,236.00
2018	778,275,264.00	42,898,645.00
2019	843,122,265.00	44,258,974.00
2020	848,200,122.00	48,654,789.00

Source: SMS Holding (PVT) Ltd. (2020)

The capacity of a company is none other than its maximum phase of production where a companycan afford to provide for the market. In production and capacity increment certain dimensions like an organization's size, magnitude, and development from a simple form to a more complex one which is known to be vital. Hence, the first-ever factory that the company started is located in Phathgama, Hanwella contributes to the daily production of more than 25,000 units of interlocking paving with the support of one automated machine that they have installed at the premises. Hence likewise the rest of the running five factories located in the different parts of the country contribute significantly to achieving a daily production capacity of more than 100,000 units per day. So, in this light, the general manager of production confessed that *"At the beginning, we use small-capacity manual operating system. Now we have engaged with mass scale of production with the support of technology*

Table 2: Production Quantity Increment over Years

Year	No. of units
2010	12,600,000
2011	14,400,000
2012	18,000,000
2013	19,800,000
2014	21,600,000
2015	22,680,000
2016	23,400,000
2017	24,480,000
2018	25,200,000
2019	26,280,000
2020	27,000,000

Source: SMS Holding (PVT) Ltd. (2020)

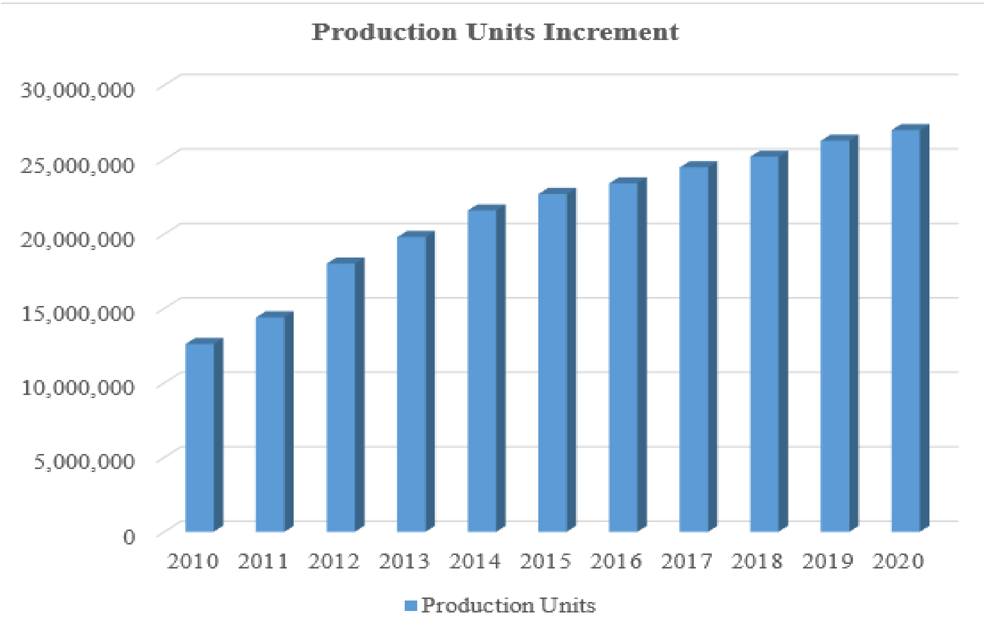


Figure 2: Graph on Production Units Increment Over the Years
Source: SMS Holding (PVT) Ltd. (2020)

Entrepreneurial Leadership

Entrepreneurial leadership has emerged within the field of both leadership and entrepreneurship where it can be known as a leadership pattern that creates a precise vision for the rest of the followers to get aligned with the leader's movement in strategic value creation. In becoming a successful entrepreneurial leader, the recognition of the right business opportunities at the right time is essential. It can be stated that an opportunity may occur as a simple concept that would become more lucrative as and when an entrepreneur develops them. The chairman of SMS holdings is such a kind of entrepreneurial leader who has been able to identify the right business opportunities at the right time with a clear intention to exploit them. Moreover, within a character of an entrepreneurial leader, there can be certain attributes identified in general. Thus in the context of common traits which are easily traceable from a character of an entrepreneurial leader some of them are highlighted as being independent and active-minded, passionate about work, competent, visionary ambitious, and tenacious are likely to be common. The sales and marketing manager mentioned that "*he is 100% far ahead than we all are! If he sees an opportunity even in the paper, then he comes and discusses with us on what we are going to do and think far ahead even in the future for many years also*"

Opportunity Recognition & Exploitation

When it comes to utilizing the available market opportunities in the favor of business, it is quite evident that the entrepreneurial leader always employs appropriate human resources, plans the organization, perceives customers and the market, collects financial information and sets up the organization. Accordingly, the establishment of SMS holdings itself is a better example to prove that Mr. Shehan is a leader who tends to identify the prevailing market opportunities and exploit them for new products and solutions to serve customer requirements. Hence in this light, the senior quantity surveyor of the company confessed that *"With the business we are in, if he sees some opportunity in the market he approaches for that to expand the business. So with the available resources, we can easily go for that because we do not have to afford a huge overhead. So, he will take the opportunity!"*

Innovation Focus

Innovation and novelties are the lifeblood for any organization to be grown and successful in any industry. Hence innovation could involve a greater range of changes depending on the organization's resources, capabilities, strategies, and requirements. Hence innovation is presented in the form of different categories such as novel products, processes, materials, new services, and new organizational forms. Accordingly, in the scope of entrepreneurial leadership, innovation plays a pivotal role with a supplementary backing of creativity and the skills of the leader. When it comes to the SMS holdings, the chairman has necessarily built up an organizational culture that inevitably inculcates varieties of innovation as it is precisely mentioned in their vision statement "to be the most innovative and preeminent manufacture of blocks and bricks by exploring opportunities in emerging markets." In fact, to bring about a very lucrative innovation culture SMS holding has adopted new technologies and process innovation by which certain novel bricks and block categories were introduced to the market. In fact, during the in-depth interview MD confessed that "No *company can survive without making new things, so yes! We* look *for new products and processes by which the innovative culture of the company can be promoted".*

Visioning

Every successful leader tends to have a precise vision of their future in terms of what he or wants to be and where he or wants to be as an individual or overall, as an organization. Being visionary provides more accurate, compelling directions and guidelines for an organization which is an inherent and inevitable attribute of an entrepreneurial leader. Accordingly, when it comes to the SMS holding the chairman has Cleary articulated and communicated his vision throughout the organization in such a way that everyone could well align and adhere to what the chairman wants them to implement. The general manager production of SMS clearly stated that "*SMS holdings chairman is simple and the best example for his vision, he had already seen the business twenty years ago. Also, when he leads the company, he has a vision and sees a wide area.*"

Risk Taking

The capability to take challenges on the other hand risk-taking ability is one of the most predominant components in the personality of an entrepreneurial leader. In fact, on many occasions, both entrepreneurial leaders and their followers tend to be prone to substantial amounts of risk which is an inherent nature of an organization led by an entrepreneurial leader irrespective of the industry or the business they are operating. The chairman of SMS holding had taken a considerably higher amount of risk to initiate this business by employing all of his valuable resources. Chairman stated that at the point of inception, he had to undertake relatively a higher amount of risk, *"It was a higher risk! Because we had a big war. Some people did not want to go for this kind of luxury item. So, it was a risk to initiate this."*

Encouraging Team Performance & Creativity

An entrepreneurial leader is the type of leader who is essentially capable of attracting his key followers, managers, or team members of the organization in executing the set plan. Hence in this context, an entrepreneurial leader tends to encourage and promote creativity along with the overall team performance in the organization with the support of certain qualities that an entrepreneurial team needs to have including appropriate competencies, experience, and interpersonal skills. Hence when it comes to the SMS holdings, the overall team performance and creativity have been well promoted since they have recruited and delegated the tasks to the right person at the right time. An assistant factory manager stated that *"Since there is a freedom and satisfied working environment, we all are mentally and physically in a better position and that will help us to do more and implement new things within the company."*

Market Orientation

Market orientation encompasses certain attributes such as the generation of market intelligence about customers, competitors, and forces affecting them, internal dissemination of the intelligence, and reactive as well as proactive responsiveness to the intelligence. Project Supervisor shared thoughts on delivering a superior service to its customer base by mentioning *"Sometimes we receive certain jobs which need immediate attention and complete those within a matter of a shorter period. We deliver our service to them with the right quality at the right time."*

Customer Orientation

The term "customer" should be understood in its wider sense to involve all the parties and individuals who would influence the character, scope, and nature of the product or service the business needs to provide. SMS today caters to more than 60% of the market share as a pioneering and leading interlocking paving company in the industry by availing an exceptional service to the country's construction development. The sales and marketing manager revealed that *"We have satisfied the customers who have approached us in all aspects."*

Competitor Orientation

The companies which behave in a competitor-oriented fashion will have a higher performance level due to their capability to benchmark competitors' value chain strategies, thereby securing an improved response. Hence in the market orientation approach the significance of being competitor oriented is emphasized because by being competitor oriented an organization can obtain a solid basis of information about present and potential competitors for executive actions. The Sales and Marketing manager of the company confessed that *"We never overestimate ourselves rather we look back at what the competitors are doing. What is the machine they are using in production?"*

Market Intelligence & Inter functional Coordination.

The necessity of having access to perfect market intelligence is quite indispensable in implementing a market-oriented approach within an organization. Accordingly, the attribute of market intelligence encompasses not just merely the opinions that are known verbally by the customers but also the coordination of external market factors such as competitors, and regulations which have an impact on the customer needs and performances that represent the future needs as well. One of the administration executives stated that *"when it comes to task execution part there is better integration with all the department."*

Operational Excellence

The systematic approach to achieving world-class performance in productivity, quality, and delivery of services or products is termed operational excellence. With the presence of increasing competition, business processes, and new technology evolution along with uncertainty in business sectors, better operating performance is severely required to gain success in the competitive world. Thus, operational excellence is composed of three key attributes which are planning and production control, manufacturing execution, and operational effectiveness of people, processes, and assets. The purchasing manager revealed that *"Once we started to utilize automated manufacturing machines, our wastage reduced significantly than the time we use manual operations. Before laborers mixed the materials from a mixture and then take it out and put it in another machine and likewise wastage is higher."*

Lean & Agility

In a stiffly competitive business environment, every business organization tends to enhance its manufacturing and service operations by carefully sorting out different paths of improvement. The systematic approach to achieving world-class performance in productivity, quality, and delivery of services or products is termed operational excellence. Most manufacturing organizations tend to practice lean and agile manufacturing techniques by which they can substantially reduce unnecessary wastage and cost. Hence because of implementing these practices within the company, they can gain a competitive advantage over their rivalry in the industry. The chairman stated that *"we are recycling whatever our wastage. We take those back and put them as raw materials again in production. Almost 95% of the waste again we recycle and reuse."*

Quality Management & Continuous Improvement

Quality management practices would be generally referred to as an organized and integrated set of operational processes that deliver quality, which is defined as all the features and components of a product or service that affect its ability to satisfy a given need. So, it comprises organizational responsibilities, resources, procedures, and structures. Hence SMs holdings being Sri Lanka's largest and pioneering interlocking paving and landscape solution provider possesses well-structured and established quality parameters to deliver superior quality products and service to its customer base where out of their three hallmarks “quality” represents a first place. MD is of the view that ‘’*our main intention is to make the best quality product which delivers superior value to customers.”*

Operational Efficiency

It can be stated that the operational efficiency of a company reveals the long-term survival of the business. Especially when it comes to manufacturing-oriented companies, the achievement of greater efficiency in terms of utilizing all the resources is quite advisable because otherwise meeting production targets and minimizing cost cannot be secured. The senior quantity surveyor stated that “*we have been able to monitor our operations through the ERP system. We don’t necessarily have to go and check one by one is not required since there is a monitoring system through which our efficiency level has been increased.”*

Discussion on Findings of the case study

Achieving Continuous Growth

In this VUCA environment securing continuous growth in a business is not something that is easier to achieve. In fact, continuous growth is replicated in terms of undisturbed, revenue increment, production increment, and capacity expansion over a period. Kruger (as cited in Gupta et al., 2015) stated that Growth has various connotations. It can be defined in terms of revenue generation, value addition, and expansion in terms of the volume of the business. Blundel and Hingley (2001) argued that growth may be achieved quickly, slowly, or not at all. Growth is defined as a change in size during a determined time span (Dobbs & Hamilton, 2007). As per the presented primary and secondary data and other factors of SMS Holding, it is quite evident that the company has been achieving continuous growth year by year for the underlining period of 2010-2020. Gray (as cited in Owusu et al. 2018) found certain organizations prefer to measure growth in terms of sales turnover. Delmar (as cited in Davidson et al., 2005) underlying theory predicts that certain antecedents would be related to, e.g., growth in sales and markets share while other predictors are believed to influence growth in employment and profits, respectively. Hubbard and Bromiley (1995) contended that income and sales growth are the two most recognized measures of overall firm performance. Hence revenue increment can be treated as one of the major components in determining company growth whereas in the context of SMS Holding, this can also be evident. Hence SMS has been able to gradually increase its revenue starting from 200 million per annum to almost one billion revenues at present. Further, they have been maintaining 20-25% annual sales growth over the period.

Achieving continuous Growth via Entrepreneurial Leadership

Company growth can be essentially influenced by the role played by an entrepreneurial leader in the organization. Huang et al. (2014) suggested that entrepreneurial leaders’ capabilities in framing the challenge, absorbing uncertainty, and underwriting, empower them to recognize opportunities to create sustainable competitive advantage for their business. Kuratko (2007) contended that Entrepreneurship is a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation. According to Gupta et al. (2004), Entrepreneurial leadership has been defined as a type of leadership that creates a visionary scenario that is used to assemble and mobilize a “supporting cast” of participants who become committed to the vision, discovery, and exploitation of strategic value creation. According to (Palmer, 1971), risk measurement and risk-taking are known to be the primary functions of an entrepreneur. In arriving at the outcome of continuous growth at SMS, entrepreneurial leadership has been a greatly influencing element as per the presented primary and secondary data. Picking the right opportunity at the right time with proper calculation of risk while having a greater focus on creativity and innovations are some of the certain key attributes that can be highlighted within the entrepreneurial leadership approach demonstrated by Mr. Shehan Senevirathne in his endeavor. The presented data provide useful evidence for proving his leadership approach which lead SMS to be the largest and number one paving manufacturer in compliance with all types of industry standards. A few salient traits of an entrepreneurial leader would determine the phase of company growth and future success. Ashely and Suire (2008) Entrepreneurial leadership involves a proactive and creative reaction to environmental opportunities, therefore such leaders can be seen as innovators or creators in their domains. Lippitt (as cited in Harrison et al., 2007) identified six characteristics of an entrepreneurial leader: risk-taking, divergent thinking, sharp focus, personal responsibility, economic orientation, and learning from experience. Osborne (1995) mentioned that Entrepreneurs who succeed often exhibit a characteristic profile. They display a strong need for achievement.

Achieving continuous Growth via Market Orientation

The term market orientation needs to be understood in its wider sense for better execution of marketing practices. Shapiro (as cited in Lafferty & Hult, 2001) conceptualizes market orientation as an organizational decision-making process. Further, Gounaris et al. (2004) contend that market orientation is perceived as a system of corporate beliefs and values pivoting around the creation of superior customer value at a profit while not neglecting the interests of other key stakeholders and the shaping a company's internal environment and climate to increase the company's responsiveness to market information. Day (1994) defined market orientation as "superior skills in understanding and satisfying customers" and emphasize market-sensing and customer-linking capabilities that set market-driven firms apart as the key to better anticipation and response to changing market requirements ahead of competitors. Sharp (1991), Ruckert, (1992) contended that the level of market orientation in a business unit is the degree to which the business unit obtains and uses information from customers, develops a strategy that will meet customer needs, and implements that strategy by being responsive to customer needs and wants. SMS today caters to more than 60% of the market share as a pioneering and leading interlocking paving company in the industry. Initially, the company has taken all its possible steps to satisfy whomever the customer approaches them seeking any kind of solution or product. They are prepared to meet the three hallmarks of quality, customer care, and value by which they intend to establish a strong trust and unbroken relationship between them and the customers. SMS Unit type, SMS Cobble type, SMS pedestal type, SMS Heritage type, Jagged Eliana, jagged Uni, jagged Tegular, Wing pavers, split wall blocks, nail curbs SMS Eliana type, guiding tiles, are some of the paving products that are always popular under the name of SMS.

Achieving continuous Growth via Operational Excellence

Operational excellence consists of a few key attributes that are recognized as vital all the time. Waste reduction, promptness, and quality consciousness represent the soundness of operations in any organization. According to Goldman et al. (as cited in Hallgren & Olhager, 2009) an agile manufacturing system is a system that can operate profitably in a competitive environment of continually and unpredictably changing customer opportunities. According to Bai et al. (2019), many manufacturers embraced lean manufacturing as a vital business strategy that provides the foundation for operational excellence through the standardization of processes, propagation of continuous improvement culture, and empowerment of the workforce. Naylor et al. (as cited in Hallgren & Olharger, 2009) articulated that lean manufacturing is developing a value stream to eliminate all waste, including time, and to endure a level schedule. Further Yeung et al. (2005) quality management practices generally refer to an organized and integrated set of operational processes that deliver quality, which is defined as all of the features and characteristics of a product or service that affect its ability to satisfy a given need. Accordingly, SMS is in a better position in minimizing overall waste percentage at production where they maintain it below 5% and more than 95% of production wastes are being recycled through crushing plants. In fact, with the introduction of PLC system machines and automated machinery to the production process, companies have met promptness and leanness in their production operations. Further SMS holding is the one and only interlocking paving manufacturing company in Sri Lanka that manufactures and supplies British standard hydraulically pressed concrete paving to the local and international markets. SMS has taken a greater initiative to establish a proper standard for the interlocking paving blocks and bricks by collaboratively working together with the Sri Lanka Institute of Standards. Accordingly, SMS holdings have been certified with a series of quality standards including ISO 9001-2015, SLS 1425-2011, etc.

Achieving Continuous Growth Presence Policy Changes & Skilled Labor Shortage

Securing the outcome of Continuous growth could be moderated through sudden government policy changes. According to Hillman and Keim (2008) in weak political environments, governments have the capacity to change rules and public policies in a far less explicit and transparent way. Similarly, within the present political arrangements in the country, there are many more uncertainties prevailed amongst all the industries where certain policy changes and government decisions have adversely impacted the survival of the business. For instance, when it comes to eco-friendly business practices SMS has been one of the pioneering companies to receive green labeling & LEED Certification. Moreover, when it comes to raw material procurement and production executions, SMS has made sure to minimize the adverse impact on the environment as much as possible in all aspects. Hence these can be treated as being adapted to the policy requirement on eco-friendly business practices in protecting the environmental regulations and laws. Further SMS has gained the industry trade license, environment license, and certificate for running the business. Irrespective of whatever political changes happen in the country SMS has been the first choice for government project undertaking as they have been excelling in the execution of whatever the assigned task is before the due date with the right quality.

Conclusion

The first objective of the case study research project was to explain how SMS Holding was able to secure continuous growth during the period of 2010 - 2020. The continuous growth was met at SMS Holding in terms of revenue growth, production capacity growth, and employee growth. Besides the aforesaid components, continuous growth was manifested through the other growth indicators as well. Demonstrating Entrepreneurial leadership, practicing market orientation, and maintaining operational excellence were clearly visible as the three key drivers in arriving at the continuous growth of the company. The second objective mentioned is how entrepreneurial leadership is role-played in achieving continuous growth at SMS holding. Hence in this context, entrepreneurial leadership was recognized as the core driver supported in arriving at the outcome due to its predominance over the other two complementary drivers identified in the case framework. Further, it can be mentioned that entrepreneurial leadership was the underlying agent for the other complementary drivers for influencing the continuous growth outcome of the company. The final objective of the case study was to explore how continuous growth at SMS Holding is relatively influenced by entrepreneurial leadership, market orientation, and operational excellence. Hence in this context, the attributes of the underlying driver of marketing orientation such as customer orientation, competitor orientation, market intelligence, and inter-functional coordination were equally contributed to practicing marketing orientation by SMS Holding where they were able to secure the higher most position in the market by claiming to be the only single player in the interlocking paving industry to dominate over 60% market share with SLS and ISO standards. Nevertheless, the second and final complementary driver is none other than operational excellence which was composed of the attributes of leanness and agility, quality management, and continuous improvement, operational efficiency set the tone for company growth achievement whereby the presented primary and secondary data were providing evidence onthese throughout the case study.

Practical Implications

First and foremost an organization should have clear expectations, particularly the leader needs to have a precise visionary mind and a well-set mission, goals, objectives, and values through which fellow members and other stakeholders can be aligned in turn. The other lesson could be the company's speedy adoption of the changing market in responding to customer requirements, competitor movements, and available market intelligence. In this light, the company needs to be active as well as proactive in bringing novel ideas, new ways and means of meeting the customer requirements better than how others do in the industry because at present those who are not making the new things will not last so long presence stiff competition prevailed in any industry. Accordingly, the companies need to properly assess the industry conditions, especially the external industry forces to keep monitoring the trends and changes which would affect the business performance favorably and adversely as they sense opportunities and threats.

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