MARKET LEARNING ORIENTATION, ENTREPRENEURIAL ORIENTATION, INNOVATION CAPABILITY, TRUST AND THEIR IMPACT ON THE PERFORMANCE OF CONTRACT FARMING IN MALAYSIA

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DEDICATION

To my family who always be the pillar of my strength…

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ABSTRACT

Contract farming (CF) is facing a number of issues which require farmers to change their traditional business approaches to strategic orientation (SO). In addition, innovation capability (IC) has been promoted as mechanism for growth and sustainability in various sectors. However, the study on the adoption of both SO and IC are still low. Previous studies have been done in manufacturing or technology-related sectors and towards large firms from the developed nations. Nevertheless, most studies have ignored the small and medium-sized firms in developing nations, particularly the agricultural sector. Motivated by this phenomenon, a better understanding on the adoption of SO and IC are provided in this study to fill the existing gap, using the Malaysia's fruits and vegetables contract farming (FFV CF) as an analysis. Additionally, this study regards IC as mediator, while trust as moderator between SO and farm performance relationship. The relationship between SO-Trust-IC which are summarised as SOTI Model is one of the mechanisms to improve FFV CF performance in Malaysia. The quantitative method was employed and were guided according to the integration of Resource-Based View (RBV), Dynamic Capabilities view (DCV) and Commitment and Trust theory to achieve the objective of this study. 300 questionnaires were distributed to FFV CF and only 228 usable questionnaires were analysed and assessed using the Partial Least Square (PLS) technique. Finding shows that both SO of Market Learning Orientation (MLO) and Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) were significant towards IC. IC was the only variable which gives positive and significant impact to farm performance and fully mediates the relationship between MLO, EO and farm performance while trust do not moderate the relationship of MLO, EO and IC. However, the direct effect of Trust to IC was substantial. Therefore, the study shows that MLO, EO, Trust and IC were important variables in influencing FFV CF performance in Malaysia. Besides, this study offers conclusive insights to various stakeholders, such as academician, practitioners and policy makers to engage in various strategies in enhancing the strategic business approach of FFV CFs. In summary, this study has concluded that the influence of SO of MLO, EO, Trust and IC towards farm performance in the context of FFV CF were significant, solidified by providing empirical evidence and suggestions for improvement, particularly to FFV CF and the agricultural sector as a whole.

ABSTRAK

Pertanian ladang kontrak (CF) menghadapi beberapa isu yang memerlukan petani untuk mengubah tradisi pendekatan perniagaan mereka kepada orientasi strategik (SO). Di samping itu, keupayaan inovasi (IC) merupakan satu mekanisme bagi membantu meningkatkan pembangunan mampan dalam pelbagai sektor. Namun begitu, kajian kesesuaian kedua-dua SO dan IC masih kurang dilaksanakan. Kajian lepas telah banyak dilakukan dalam sektor pembuatan atau berkaitan teknologi dan terhadap firma besar dari negara membangun. Namun, kebanyakan kajian telah mengabaikan firma kecil dan sederhana di negara sedang membangun, terutamanya dari sektor pertanian. Didorong oleh fenomena ini, pemahaman yang lebih baik berkaitan SO dan IC dilaksanakan dalam kajian ini untuk mengisi jurang sedia ada, dengan menganalisis pertanian ladang kontrak buah-buahan dan sayur-sayuran (FFV CF) di Malaysia. Sebagai tambahan, kajian ini menganggap IC sebagai pengantara dan kepercayaan sebagai moderator antara hubungan SO dan prestasi ladang. Hubungkait antara SO-Kepercayaan-IC (SO-Trust-I) yang diringkaskan sebagai SOTI Model adalah salah satu mekanisme untuk meningkatkan prestasi FFV CF di Malaysia. Kaedah kuantitatif digunakan berdasarkan Teori Berasaskan Sumber (RBV), Teori Keupayaan Dynamik (DCV) dan Teori Komitmen dan Kepercayaan untuk mencapai matlamat kajian ini. 300 soal selidik telah diedarkan kepada FFV CF dan hanya 228 jawapan yang diterima, dianalisis dan dinilai menggunakan teknik Partial Least Square (PLS). Hasil analisa menunjukkan bahawa SO dari Orientasi Pembelajaran Pasaran (MLO) dan Orientasi Keusahawanan (EO) terbukti penting kepada IC. IC adalah satu-satunya pemboleh ubah yang memberikan impak positif dan signifikan kepada prestasi FFV CF dan sepenuhnya menjadi pengantara diantara hubungan MLO, EO dan prestasi ladang manakala kepercayaan tidak menyederhanakan hubungan antara MLO, EO dan IC. Akan tetapi, kesan langsung dari kepercayaan kepada IC adalah besar. Oleh itu, kajian ini membuktikan bahawa MLO, EO, kepercayaan dan IC adalah pemboleh ubah penting dalam mempengaruhi prestasi FFV CF di Malaysia. Selain itu, kajian ini telah menawarkan pandangan yang konklusif kepada pelbagai pemegang taruh seperti ahli akademik, pengamal industri dan pembuat dasar untuk melibatkan pelbagai strategi dalam meningkatkan pendekatan perniagaan yang strategik terhadap FFV CF. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini membuktikan bahawa pengaruh SO dari MLO, EO, kepercayaan dan IC terhadap prestasi FFV CF adalah signifikan, diperteguhkan dengan bukti empirikal dan cadangan penambahbaikan, khususnya kepada FFV CF dan umumnya kepada sektor pertanian.

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AVE	-	Average Variance Extracted
CF	-	Contract Farming
CR	-	Composite Reliability
DCV	-	Dynamic Capability View
EO	-	Entrepreneurial Orientation
FAMA	-	Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority
FFV	-	Fruits and Vegetables
HIP	-	High Impact Projects
HTMT	-	Heterotrait-monotrait
LO	-	Learning Orientation
LVS	-	Latent Variable Scores
MLO	-	Market Learning Orientation
MO	-	Market Orientation
MoA	-	Ministry of Agricultural and Agro business
MOKJ	-	MO by Kohli and Jaworski
MONS	-	MO by Narver and Slater
MP	-	Malaysia's Plan
PLS-SEM	-	Partial Least Square – Structural Equation Modelling
RBV	-	Resource-based View
RMK	-	Rancangan Malaysia Ke
SO	-	Strategic Orientation
TKPM	-	Taman Kekal Pengeluaran Makanan
VRIN	-	Valuable, Rare, Inimitable and Non-substitutable

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The agricultural sector has "long tradition of being commodity-oriented with emphasis on efficiency, high-volume, consistent quality and economies of scale" (Grunert et al., 2005, p. 429). Due to the intense competition in all industries to produce high levels of value-added and differentiated products, it is crucial for production- and commodity-oriented firms (i.e., firms in the agricultural sector) to supplement and tailor themselves to the emerging situations according to a farm's abilities and business competencies (Grunert et al., 2005; McElwee et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, studies on a farm's abilities and competencies such as ICT adoptions, new knowledge acquisition, innovation, or entrepreneurial competencies in the agricultural sector of developing countries were understudied (Diaz-Pichardo et al., 2012; Prawiranegara et al., 2015; Yang, 2013). In fact, farmers' abilities to penetrate larger markets to obtain reasonable profits remains questionable (Huang et al., 2015). In Malaysia, evidence shows that smallholding farmers are unable to procure an adequate quantity and quality of products due to their lack of marketing and innovation skills in production (Kaur et al., 2015). Additionally, the agricultural sector in Malaysia has recorded a decreasing contribution rate from 2015 to 2017 in terms of the percentage share of gross domestic products (GDP) as compared to other sectors as shown in Table 1.1. Also, Table 1.2 illustrates a slight percentage decrease in the average annual growth for agriculture in Malaysia Plans, or Rancangan Malaysia Ke (RMK), from RMK8 to RMK10.

Table 1.1 Percentage Share of Agricultural Sector in Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Year	Share (%)	Source
2015	8.9	Department of Statistics Malaysia (2016)as at 31st December 2016
2016	8.1	Department of Statistics Malaysia (2017) as at 31st December 2017
2017	8.2	Department of Statistics Malaysia (2018) as at 31st December 2018

Table 1.2 Highlights of Agriculture's Percentage of Achievement

RMK	% Achievement	Source
RMK8 (2001-2005)	3.2%	Economic Planning Unit (2010)
RMK9 (2006-2010)	3.0%	Economic Planning Unit (2010)
RMK10 (2011-2015)	2.4%	Economic Planning Unit (2015a)

Even though the contribution of the agriculture sector in Malaysia is small and decreasing, it plays a vital role in supplying food for society, ensuring food security, and creating employment for rural people. In fact, the sector is expected to achieve an average annual growth rate of 3.5% in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan (RMK11) (2016-2020) (Economic Planning Unit, 2015b). Therefore, all agencies are required to help this sector by strategically steering towards becoming more modern and dynamic than it is at present (Arshad, 2012; Mohamed and Damin, 2015).

Although the agricultural sector is a production-oriented sector, this sector is to be treated as entrepreneurial (Diaz-Pichardo et al., 2012; Mcelwee, 2006). Research has suggested that farms' focus should be directed towards non-farming activities to alleviate poverty and increase household income (Mohamed and Xavier, 2015; Rosairo and Potts, 2016; Valdés and Foster, 2010). Farmers would be faced with stagnant income if they refuse to change their traditional farming practices (i.e., if they remain heavily production-oriented) (Valdés and Foster, 2010). Countries in which agriculture is the main source of income (e.g., China, India, and Africa) faced difficulties if they did not change their operation methods (Elly and Silayo, 2013; Huang et al., 2015). Thus, contract farming (CF) is believed to resolve these problems because CF changed the traditional practices of agriculture and connects

farmers with buyers and urges farmers to plan, manage, strategized, and commercialise their business operations efficiently (Nguyen et al., 2015).

CF is designed to connect and assist smallholding farmers by providing support to the primary agricultural production and preserving the perishable product (i.e., the fresh fruits and vegetables (FFV)) to bring it into the market (Jia and Bijman, 2013; Otsuka et al., 2016; Prowse, 2012). The majority of FFV producers are involved in CF for the purposes of commercialisation, economic and technical realities (Eaton and Shepherd, 2005). FFV is regarded as an important resource in the agricultural sector with promising market potential. For instance, in 2017, 10 out of 13 fruits, (e.g., papaya, star fruit, pineapple, and durian) and vegetables (e.g., tomato, cucumber, and spinach) had a 100% self-sufficient ratio (SSR) in Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2017). The 100% SSR indicates that the country's supply or production of agricultural commodities is sufficient to meet domestic demands. In fact, to secure food sources and agricultural growth, research and development on agricultural modelling are directed towards good agricultural practices (GAP) adoption towards creating 500 additional new FFV plantations in the RMK11 (Economic Planning Unit, 2015b).

Moreover, the FFV industry in Malaysia performed well according to the strong domestic demand (Ministry of Finance, 2016). This situation highlighted the potential opportunity for the FFV CF industry to develop in this country. Nevertheless, the National Agro-food Policy (2011-2020) was formulated to substantially increase FFV production to enhance the country's self-sufficiency; reduce the vast sums spent on importing food; promote the country's status as a food net exporter; increase the income levels of farmers; and guarantee the security, safety, availability, affordability, accessibility, competitiveness, and sustainability of the food industry (MOA, 2011). Subsequently, the policy has set targets for this sector to increase its gross national income (GNI) from US$9.1 billion to US$15.4 billion by 2020 (PEMANDU, 2010). Therefore, Malaysia should consider how to achieve these aims.

Considering the potential growth of FFV, the present study recognised the importance of supporting FFV CF to improve its sustainability and agricultural performance. Therefore, two priorities have been identified in this research: (i) to improve the performance of FFV CF by increasing the efficiency with which resources and dynamic approaches are utilised and (ii) to support the development of strategic approaches and the adoption of innovations in farmers' competencies to foster agricultural development.

1.2 Motivation of This Study

CF involves a contract agreement between two parties: the seller (the farmers) and the buyer. Farmers (producers) and supermarkets or retailers (buyers) enter a contract in which farmers sell their commodities according to standard requirements. These requirements obligate farmers to produce only high-quality products (Eaton and Shepherd, 2005; Man and Nawi, 2010a). In return, buyers provide a vast range of services and assistance to farmers. For example, a buyer might provide the farmer with technical assistance, helpful products (e.g., seeds and pesticides), or guarantee market at mutually agreed-upon prices (Arumugam et al., 2012; Man and Nawi, 2010a, 2010b; Majid and Hassan, 2014; Morrison et al., 2006; PEMANDU, 2010; Prowse, 2012). This process is called the vertical integration and alliance between buyers and producers which represents a transformation and modernisation from its traditional agricultural procedure.

The literature on this topic has extensively discussed the significant impact of CF on reducing difficulties for smallholding farmers to participate in the market and to generate income in rural societies (Eaton and Shepherd, 2005; Mohamed and Xavier, 2015; Ragasa et al., 2017). CF has gained considerable popularity as a useful tool to provide positive impacts on productivity, sustainability, economic development, welfare, and the well-being of the smallholding farmers in developed and developing countries (Jia and Bijman, 2013; Maertens and Velde, 2017; Oya, 2012; Wang et al., 2014). Through CF, smallholding farmers can adopt new technologies, invest in modern facilities, gain market information, create business

relationships, and invest in research and development by tying the production based on buyers' requirements (Ponciano et al., 2011). CF has also introduced farms' products to a broader market through commercialisation while mitigating the risks and uncertainties faced by farmers (Kaur et al., 2015). Thus, CF is considered a means for small and medium scale farmers to upgrade farm's income as well as its operations.

Additionally, CF is undeniably responsible for the emergence of 'value-chain agriculture,' which incorporates "small holding farmers into commercial relations to redress apparent food shortages" (Mcmichael, 2013, p. 671). The alarming situation of food security and quality has urged CF development in many countries (Bellemare and Novak, 2015; Kumar et al., 2018; Ton et al., 2017). Significantly, FFV supplies are provided to society every day. Therefore, the provision of high-quality, safe, and fresh foods is crucial. This situation has spurred this study to focus on CF of FFV commodities. In Malaysia, the agricultural sector and government agencies play a large role in ensuring food security, particularly in terms of food sufficiency and the quality of food supplied to society. To achieve food security and sufficiency, the government introduced policies in this sector aimed at helping agriculture's strategic direction and making this sector modern and dynamic (Economic Planning Unit, 2015), namely the National Food Security Policy (2008-2011) and the National Agro-Food Policy (2011-2020).

These policies focus on the need for sustainable farming practices with incentives provided to promote CF, livestock rearing, food production and to encourage agricultural entrepreneurs to become involved in agriculture (MOA, 2011). In light of this information, CF has been recognised a high-impact program (HIP), as introduced in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (RMK9), and FAMA is responsible for assisting CF farmers (MOA, 2014). Therefore, CF is a significant FFV support program and facilitator of agriculture intended to ensure that sufficient levels of food supply and security are met according to the national agro-food policies.

Few studies around the world focused and approached the problems of defining and describing the success of the CF program itself (Abebe et al., 2013;

Bellemare and Bloem, 2018; Kumar et al., 2017). However, the evidence on the positive effect of CF remains inconclusive (Otsuka, Nakano and Takahashi, 2016). In fact, lack of studies have compared the business approaches used in the agricultural sector and CF to those used in other sectors. As such, this study is conducted to help FFV CF in Malaysia to efficiently use their unique resources and capabilities through strategic orientation (SO) approaches. Studies on the SO as the business approaches in the agricultural firms significantly increase farm's income and promote food sustainability to local consumption (Gellynck et al., 2012; Gellynck et al., 2015; Ho et al., 2018). Through such approaches, the farmers can indirectly contribute to the agricultural sector and overall economic growth.

1.3 Problem Statement

In Malaysia, CF was initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture Malaysia (MOA) in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (9MP) (2006-2010), with specific attention given to the improvement of production and value-added agricultural activities. CF provides several benefits, such as increments in production and sustainable income to FFV farmers (Arumugam and Shamsudin, 2014; Arumugam et al., 2011; D'Silva et al., 2009; Man and Nawi, 2010b). Nevertheless, several external and internal factors are known to lead to the failure of CF in Malaysia.

Among the main external issues faced by FFV CF in Asia and Malaysia particularly, is on the nature of the CF agreement itself. CF is a vertical coordination process which allows buyers to unfairly impose specifications and requirements in the agreement that are impossible for farmers to follow (Arumugam and Shamsudin, 2014; Minot and Sawyer, 2014; Morrison et al., 2006; Serin et al., 2011; Otsuka et al., 2016). CF farmers in the developing countries including Malaysia, operate on a small or medium scale with limited resources and capabilities (Minot and Sawyer, 2014). Due to farmer's limitations, hence, the complexity of the CF agreements and criteria requested by buyers, especially when stringent quality and safety requirements are in place, have created difficulty for farmers to follow and adhere to

the contract (Arumugam and Shamsudin, 2014; Man and Nawi, 2010b; Minot and Sawyer, 2014; Morrison et al., 2006; Serin et al., 2011).

Other internal factors are lacking in terms of internal skills and competencies (Chin, 2014). Studies in Malaysia context have reported that some farmers begin CF because they are reluctant to adapt to any changes beyond the farm gate (Arumugam and Shamsudin, 2014; Arumugam et al., 2011; Chin, 2014; D'Silva et al., 2009). Past studies on CF in Malaysia have only analysed issues related to the FFV CF program development. However, limited studies, such as studies by Bahri et al. (2016) and Halim et al. (2011), have identified the individual efficacies of farmers in achieving performance goals. CF fails to show significant improvements due to the limited entities of the farms. This dynamic has resulted in the restriction of farmers' access to external knowledge which would allow them to make changes and innovations (Lambrecht et al., 2015).

In order to help CF, the government agencies have provided tremendous support to contract farmers by encouraging farmers to meet market demands and ensure a continuous supply of quality products to customers (Kaur et al., 2015; Majid and Hassan, 2014; Serin et al., 2011). The government has assisted contract farmers to the extent that the farmers can make their products competitive and profitable. However, it is worth noting that the agriculture industry will continue to be uncompetitive if it remains highly dependent on government assistance (PEMANDU, 2012).

Additionally, due to the internal and external problems faced by contract farmers, CF programs showed a lack of improvement as both agricultural performance and output have decreased (Department of Agriculture, 2015; Economic Planning Unit, 2014; FAMA, 2017). Until recently, this sector is still considered laggard in a knowledge ecosystem context even though the technical and non-technical supports, such as subsidies, funds, and training, have been provided (Malaysia Productivity Corporation, 2017). In line with the practical gap arising in FFV CF in Malaysia, a conclusive study on strategic business approach has deemed urgently necessary to solve these issues. In fact, farmer's reluctance to make changes

in their business operations is no longer acceptable. Farmers are required to continually learn about the market because it is crucial for them to utilise any input and valuable resources from the environment (Micheels and Gow, 2015). Modern farming practices such as CF involve stringent contract agreements which require effective business approaches and tools and do not rely solely on the government and the contracts themselves.

Many different types of strategic orientation (SO) are discussed in literatures including market orientation (MO), learning orientation (LO) and entrepreneurial orientation (EO). Studies on SO has been subjected to discussion across sectors, both in developing and developed countries. For instance, studies on LO and MO to non-profit firms in South Korea (Choi, 2014), SMEs in Iran (Kakapour et al., 2016) and public and private sector in manufacturing and service firms in India (Raj and Srivastava, 2016). Besides, studies on EO has been conducted in manufacturing industry for middle and large firms in Turkey (Zehir et al., 2015) and SME firms in India (Gupta and Batra, 2015); MO on Taiwanese high-tech firms (Wang, 2015); MO and EO on China high-tech firms and LO on logistic firms in China (Yuan et al., 2018). These to indicate that SO is a crucial determinant for firm performance and outcome in all sectors. However, the empirical analysis on the integration of all MO, LO and EO are limited in the literature such as studies by Deutscher et al. (2016), Hakala, (2011) and Hussain et al. (2013).

Additionally, little empirical research have focused on the impact of SO on the agricultural sector in the developed and developing countries, whether individual or with the combination of SO such as MO and LO in USA Micheels and Gow (2015) and Indonesia (Pramono et al., 2015); EO in USA (Campbell, 2014); and MO in Vietnam (Ho et al., 2018) including Malaysia (such as Awang et al., 2010), while at the infant stage on FFV CF such as study by Morrison et al. (2006) on entrepreneurship for small scale contract farming in Sarawak.

Notably, minimal attention has been given to the effect of IC on the agricultural sector (such as studies by Gellynck et al., 2015; Ho et al.,. 2018; Martino and Polinori, 2019; Lambrecht et al., 2014; López-mosquera et al., 2014), and this

effect has gone unexplored in the FFV CF context. This study is the first investigation, to the researcher's knowledge, focusing upon the relationship of innovation capability (IC), as a significant factor that should be applied in FFV CF context with SO approach so that they can cope in dynamic and challenging environments. The IC on FFV CF is referred following from the previous agricultural context whereby; product innovation refers to the use of new ideas and modification on products (Micheels and Gow, 2008); process innovation refers to proper operation process in term of equipment or skills to improve production (Martino and Polinori, 2019; Otsuka et al., 2016); management innovation refers to methods or forms in recording the intangible knowledge and expertise (Luo et al., 2017); and marketing innovation refers to targeting and quality of product (Otsuka et al., 2016).

The concept of leveraging a firm's performance by utilising its available resources and capability is supported by the resource-based view (RBV) and dynamic capability view (DCV) theories (Ndubisi and Agarwal, 2014; Ndubisi, 2014). The RBV, which has to do with a farm's tangible resources (land, machines, and employees) and intangible resources (knowledge, skills, business strategies, and innovation capability) are integrated and transformed into a more dynamic approach according to the DCV. This kind of transformation facilitates farms in capturing their potential market. Thus, farms would be able to gain more benefits, opportunities, and income with the process. This also would minimise farms' dependency on FFV CF on FAMA. Nevertheless, limited studies have applied the RBV and DCV theories to the agricultural sector (e.g., Bahri et al., 2016; Buerkler, 2013; Ding et al., 2014; Grande, 2011), while none have specifically dealt with FFV CF.

Despite early conceptualizations in the literatures on the link between MLO, EO and IC and the corresponding implication of the RBV and DCV of the firm, the literature has not examined the moderating role of trust (TR) in such theoretical framework. Limited studies have recognized TR to facilitate and moderate relationship such as EO and competitive intelligence from chemical industry in Vietnam (Trong Tuan, 2015), intellectual capital and innovation on manufacturing and non-manufacturing firms in Taiwan (Wu et al., 2008) and LO and service effectiveness of logistics firm in China (Yuan et al., 2018). Nevertheless, scarce

studies on the effectiveness role of trust in moderating the relationship of MLO, EO and IC were conducted (such as by Ben and Ladib, 2015; Wu et al., 2008). In fact, limited studies have investigated the moderating effect of TR in the social relationships of SO as according to the trust-commitment theory and have supported its use in the agricultural literatures (such as studies by Gellynck et al., 2015; Lambrecht et al., 2014; Micheels and Gow, 2011; Sanzo et al., 2012).

In summary, this study aims to fulfil the gaps mentioned above by investigating the relationships between SO of MLO, EO, TR on IC, and their correlation in one framework – namely the strategic orientation-trust-innovation capability (SOTI) model – in Malaysia's agricultural context, particularly FFV CF. This study aims to apply the RBV and DCV to potentially improve FFV CF performance. As such, this study focuses on how farmers can overcome the challenges and limitations they are facing by reconfiguring them (Ambrosini and Bowman, 2009; Teece et al., 1997). Consequently, the proposed SOTI model can hopefully be regarded as a benchmark model to improve FFV contract farmer's daily operations so that they can sustain, maintain, and increase productivity and profit from their business activities.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of this research is to improve the performance of FFV CF in Malaysia using the proposed SOTI model. The following sub-objectives are proposed as follows:

1. To investigate the direct effect of market learning orientation, entrepreneur orientation, trust to FFV CF innovation capability
2. To investigate the direct effect of market learning orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and innovation capability on FFV CF performance.
3. To examine the mediating role of innovation capability between market learning orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and FFV CF performance.

4. To examine the moderating role of trust to effect the market learning orientation and entrepreneurial orientation on innovation capability.
5. To recommend the policy makers and development practitioners with SOTI model to help FFV CF performance.

1.5 Research Questions

Based on the research background and the motivation for this study, the researcher addressed the research objectives via the following four questions:

1. Do the market learning orientation, entrepreneur orientation and trust provide a direct effect on FFV CF innovation capability?
2. Do the market learning orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and innovation capability directly affect FFV CF performance?
3. Does the innovation capability has a mediating effect between market learning orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and FFV CF performance?
4. Does trust moderate the effect of market learning orientation and entrepreneurial orientation on innovation capability?
5. How the development of SOTI model would aid the policy maker and development practitioners in improving the FFV CF performance?

1.6 Significant of Study

Based on the gaps identified in the problem statement, this study examines the factors that influence the performance of FFV CF in Malaysia. This research extends the constructs of SO, which consists of MLO and EO, to the agricultural context and combines its effect with IC as a mediating variable and TR as a moderating variable. This research contributes to theory, methodology and practice in order to understand the association between SO, TR, IC and FFV CF performance. The following subsections are dedicated to illustrating the significance of this research in terms of its academic and non-academic contributions.

1.6.1 Academic Contribution

First and foremost, this study contributes to the agriculture literature because it extensively examined the effect of both RBV and DCV approaches on FFV CF in Malaysia. The findings of this study provide benefits to farmers, as the RBV and DCV approaches play important roles in the competitive agricultural environment. Several studies on RBV and DCV approaches have been applied in manufacturing, services, and even to non-profit organisation sectors. Nevertheless, in the agricultural sector (particularly in the area of FFV CF), only a few studies have applied the RBV and DCV individually, while none have combined the RBV and DCV.

Secondly, this study contributes to the research on the importance of MLO. This study recognises the similarity of the behavioural perspective of MO by Kohli and Jaworski (1990) (i.e., market intelligence generation and market intelligence dissemination) with the cultural perspective of LO by Huber (1991) (i.e., knowledge acquisition and knowledge distribution, shared interpretation and shared memory). Both knowledge and market intelligence acquisitions refer to the same MO process of generating and acquiring market information (Serra, 2013). Additionally, MO firms are also LO firms and do not require any additional orientation to develop learning, as MO involves continuously gathering and sharing information (Farrell et al., 2008; Jiménez-Jiménez and Cegarra-Navarro, 2007; Gebhardt et al., 2006).

The third contribution of this study is related to the mediating effect of IC. The influence of MLO and EO on farmers' FFV CF performance has necessitated the intervention of a third variable to evaluate the significance of the relationship (Mahmoud et al., 2016; Gao et al., 2017). Moreover, the mediating effect of IC on MLO, EO and FFV CF performance is the pioneering effort within the framework of FFV CF performance.

Fourthly, the current study also addresses the moderating role of TR on the relationship between MLO, EO and IC. This study highlights how IC can be ensured and how TR can be maximized. The higher level of interaction on TR by FFV CF farmers in the relationship of MLO and EO is to achieve higher levels of IC.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the findings from this study narrow the following gaps:

1. The theoretical gap in the combination of RBV and DCV in the field of agriculture, particularly in FFV CF
2. The literature gaps on the overlapping concepts of MO and LO, which lead to the new MLO concept
3. The literature gap of IC as a mediator and the role of TR as a moderator in the effect of MLO and EO on IC and FFV CF performance

1.6.2 Non-academic Contribution

This study provided practical contributions, as it is relevant to the agricultural industry, policymakers, and government officials. First and foremost, this study contributes significantly to the agricultural sector. Traditionally, agricultural sectors are controlled by suppliers, whereas farmers focus only on the production process. As a result, farmers have failed to fully benefit and profit from their products. The farmers must react and respond to the business environment directly through SO and IC approaches. Farming is also a business, and SO, TR and IC are required for running a business. Even though the agriculture sector has been regarded as secondary compared to other sectors, such as manufacturing, commercial, or government sectors, its significant contribution to economic growth and its role as a source of motivation of farmers' livelihoods cannot be denied.

This study could also influence policymakers or government officials to work towards reducing the poverty level in Malaysia, reduce imports and increase the agricultural sector's contribution to the economy. As mentioned earlier, CF is one of five high-impact programs (HIPs); therefore, this study aims to encourage growth in the agricultural sector not only through government support, assistance, and incentives for CF but also to propose relevant business approach to farmers themselves.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The agricultural sector environment is dynamic and competitive. Therefore, although farmers are traditionally production-oriented, they are now required to adopt a dynamic approach to sustain themselves. Because of this situation, the present study engaged the FFV CF owners in Peninsular Malaysia (according to FAMA databases) to participate in this study. The study focused on evaluating the importance of the resources and capability approaches in the relationships between MLO, EO, TR, and IC, focusing only on the owners of FFV CF from every region in Johor, Negeri Sembilan, Perak, and Pahang. This selection is based on the suggestion by FAMA, as these areas produce large quantities of FFV.

In this study, MLO focuses on the simultaneous processes of market intelligence generation, dissemination, interpretation, and responsiveness. MLO refers to how FFV CF utilises the information generated. EO focuses on innovativeness, pro-activeness, and risk-taking. EO emphasises that all CF owners should have individual efficacies as owners and should strive to achieve a competitive advantage in the market. IC focuses on product, process, marketing, and management based on the assumption that contract farmers are willing to make some changes in their farming operations in light of the challenges and dynamic changes in the business and market environments. TR is considered as support from government agencies, suppliers, and buyers that enhance the ability of contract farmers to be innovative.

1.8 The Terms and Operational Definitions

The following terms are operationally defined for the purpose of this study:

1.8.1 Market Learning Orientation (MLO)

MO is defined by Jaworski and Kohli (1990; 1996) as the continuous acts and activities of generating, disseminating, and being responsive towards market intelligence gained from internal and external sources. Market intelligence that is collected and distributed requires LO as a non-stop process included in all decisions made and activities performed by firms (Day, 1994a). Therefore, the operational definition of MLO adopted by this study refers to the market knowledge development resulting from MO activities through the endogenous learning process of LO via gains in market intelligence.

In the FFV CF context, the aim of MLO is to describe (i) how the FFV CF farmer learns and gains intelligence from the external market (exploration), (ii) how this intelligence is utilised within the farm (firm) internally (exploitation), (iii) how the intelligence is shared and understood in a valuable way within the farm, and (iv) how the farm responds to the information. The dimensions of MLO are adopted from Hult et al. (2005), Jiménez-Jimenez et al. (2008), Matsuno et al. (2000), and Morgan and Berthon (2008) (these studies originally adopted the MARKOR measurement from Kohli et al. (1993)). The MLO dimensions are market intelligence generation, market intelligence dissemination, market intelligence interpretation, and market intelligence responsiveness.

1.8.2 Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO)

EO is related to entrepreneurial behaviour and is an important antecedent for any entrepreneurial activity (Kollmann and Stöckmann, 2014). Miller (1983) claimed that EO assists firms to pursue innovativeness, take risks, and outperform competitors by reacting proactively. On the other hand, Covin and Slevin (1989) defined EO as the "innovativeness of the entrepreneurial attributes of the product and technological innovation, top management risk-taking and pro-activeness."

In this study, EO is defined as assistance given to farmers related to their strategy-making processes, decisions, and actions. Farmers have to indicate which items represent their willingness to become involved in innovations and to act proactively to improve performance, seize market opportunities, make risky decisions, and experiment with new technologies and processes. These factors can be measured using Lumpkin and Dess's (1996), Mirzaei et al.'s (2016), and Rosairo and Potts's (2016) questionnaires, which were adopted from Covin and Slevin (1989).

1.8.3 Innovation Capability (IC)

IC is a firm's ability to generate innovation through continuous learning, knowledge transformation, creativity and exploitation of internal and external resources available to them (Iddris, 2016). It allows knowledge and ideas to be translated into new products, processes and systems for the benefit of the firm (Lawson and Samson, 2001). IC significantly affects agricultural extension activities, improve productivity, efficiency, performance and reduces cost (Luo et al., 2017; Micheels and Boecker, 2017). The IC requires combination of all product, process, management and marketing innovation to increase the current and future agricultural performance (Lambrecht et al., 2014; Martino and Polinori, 2019; Micheels and Boecker, 2017; Pindado and Sánchez, 2017). In the context of FFV CF, IC is defined as the adoption and implementation of innovations when the farmer is willing to utilise new and modified additions to the farm's production, processing, management, and marketing activities. The IC could be a means of improving

efficiency through product, process, marketing and management innovation, following the OSLO Manual (OECD, 2010). IC is analysed using a combination of items developed by Liao et al. (2007), Nasution et al. (2011), and Ozkaya et al. (2015).

1.8.4 Trust (TR)

The development of trust may result in mutual benefits for firms and partners. Any activities related to relationship-building (e.g. networking, social capital, strategic alliances or engaging in social interactions) is regarded as aspects of trust. Trust foster firm's coordination in relationship which gives positive consequences, such as the minimisation of agricultural costs and the reduction of risk and uncertainties (Gellynck et al., 2015). Reflecting the approach of Gellynck et al. (2015), this study focus on trust as the extent of relationships that are developed by farmers through personal relationships with external entities (such as suppliers, customers, competitors, distributors or government officials) who provides knowledge, skills and expertise to expand FFV CF's IC. Thus, this study adopted the instruments developed by Gellynck et al. (2015) and Micheels and Gow (2011) to facilitate the MLO, EO and IC of CF.

1.8.5 FFV CF Farm Performance

Performance measurement involves the evaluation of a firm's performance by comparing its current achievements with specific achievement goals. In this study, FFV CF performance refers to firm performance, whereby farms are considered to be firms. Farm performance, in this study, is analysed to measure the impact of subjective measurements on the financial performance of FFV contract farms. These measurements include the farm's returns on assets, cash flow, production investments, and overall performance. These are measured using Micheels and Gow's (2011) instrument, which was adopted from Jaworski and Kohli (1993).

1.9 Organization of the Thesis

The remainder of the thesis is organised as follows. In Chapter 2, a comprehensive review of the literature that is relevant to the problem statements, providing a theoretical background for each construct. The proposed framework is provided in Chapter 3. The research methodology discussed on research design, instruments, sampling procedure, data collection employed in this study were discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 focuses on the results and findings obtained from hypotheses testing. Finally, Chapter 6 presents the conclusion of the study, including a discussion and summary of the hypotheses tests, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

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