



# **EFFECT OF THE STRATEGIC ORIENTATION IN STRATEGIC AMBIDEXTERITY THROUGH THE MEDIATING ROLE OF STRATEGIC CLARITY : AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE OPINIONS OF A SAMPLE OF EMPLOYEES IN GOVERNMENT BANKS IN MAYSAN GOVERNORATE**

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## **Abstract:**

This study focuses on examining strategic orientation within the context of strategic ambidexterity, emphasizing the mediating influence of strategic clarity. Its primary goal is to develop an integrated theoretical framework addressing key issues highlighted by scholars and researchers concerning these variables. It also gives an analysis based on feedback from a group of employees who work in government banks in the Maysan Governorate. The sample comprised 130 employees out of a total of 150 working in these institutions. Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire, which was subsequently analyzed through various statistical methods with the assistance of the Smart PLS software. The findings confirmed the validity of the study's hypothesis, demonstrating significant relationships among the examined variables. Based on these results, the study proposed several recommendations, particularly emphasizing the importance for leaders in government banks to prioritize strategic orientation as a critical factor in achieving long-term strategic goals effectively.

**Keywords:** Strategic Ambidexterity, Strategic Clarity , Strategic Orientation , employees in government banks in Maysan

## **INTRODUCTION**

In an increasingly competitive business landscape, organizations are compelled to evolve in order to stay relevant and maintain their edge (Gupta et al., 2019). While certain companies excel at navigating emerging challenges, others may falter, succumbing to success paradoxes or experiencing stagnation within their operations (Audia et al., 2000). The ability to implement innovative strategies in response to these obstacles underscores the significance of entrepreneurial principles—a cornerstone for growth that holds equal importance for both SMEs and large-scale enterprises (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013).

Unlike large firms endowed with substantial resources, SMEs face constraints that push them to innovate and develop unique approaches to contend with intense competition (Boohene et al., 2020). One key concept aiding this effort is strategic orientation, a contemporary framework that plays a critical role in empowering organizations to assess their internal capabilities and external conditions. Through this approach, businesses can identify opportunities, capitalize on them, and mitigate threats posed by external factors. By reducing potential negative impacts from their competitive environment, strategic orientation helps organizations ensure their sustainability while building a strong competitive advantage (Badayneh, 202:47).

## **1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

### **1.1 Strategic Orientation**

With the growing significance of service in contemporary business environments, numerous studies have concentrated on examining the factors influencing the shift towards service-oriented practices. While much of this research has identified operational-level drivers, there remains a notable gap in addressing the strategic-level factors critical to service transition. This is especially important because transitioning to a service model demands a strategic commitment from manufacturers to tackle uncertainties, overcome challenges, and steer their actions accordingly. Drawing upon strategic choice theory, it can be argued that an organization's strategic orientation serves as a robust guiding framework, directly shaping their decision-making processes toward adopting service-oriented strategies (Zhang et al., 2021:3). Strategic orientation, thus, acts as a manifestation of corporate culture, encapsulating an organization's overarching business



philosophy aimed at achieving competitive advantage. Through entrenched beliefs, businesses engage with the market to foster the creation of high-value corporate outcomes (Harsono, 2018:2).

Strategic orientation is often referred to as strategic intent—a concise statement outlining the future aspirations of an organization. It embodies top-management's vision and provides clear direction toward maintaining a competitive edge. Within public organizations, strategic intent plays a vital role by helping sustain superior performance despite limitations in resources or capabilities (Ng'ang'a et al., 2017:20). Strategic direction is fundamentally about business growth through the optimal utilization of organizational resources. Without clarity in strategic planning, organizations lack a reliable framework for achieving their objectives. To design effective core strategies, an organization must first establish its vision and goals, which then guide its ambitions and operations within a defined timeline or implementation schedule frequently revisited to align with desired outcomes. The organization's values serve as the cornerstone for ensuring its activities are congruent with its mission, vision, and overarching goals. These values are periodically reassessed to maintain relevance and commitment. A realistic approach to envisioning the future is essential, as it lends credibility and motivation to all stakeholders working within the organization (Alawneh & Al-Zoubi, 2020:297-298). As noted by Zhou et al. (2005), strategic orientation embodies an organization's foundational philosophy regarding business conduct. Anchored by deeply ingrained values and beliefs, these orientations guide efforts to achieve superior performance. Strategic orientations are categorized into multiple dimensions, such as market orientation, learning orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, and technological orientation, each representing key facets of organizational focus and approach.. From the perspective of the resource-based view, such orientations represent intangible yet invaluable capabilities that are inherently challenging for competitors to replicate, thus fostering sustainable competitive advantages (Kindermann et al., 2020:2). (Szymaniec et al. 2016) further delineate strategic orientation into two key dimensions:

### **1) Customer Orientation**

The organization's commitment to integrating customer preferences into its product development and marketing strategies highlights the importance of adopting a customer-centric approach as a key tactic for building strong and effective connections with its audience.. Customer orientation entails a company's ability to understand its target audience comprehensively, enabling it to consistently deliver superior value. On an individual level, customer orientation reflects the customer's overall satisfaction, commitment, and enjoyment derived from using an organization's products and services. Fundamentally, this approach revolves around aligning organizational strategies with evolving market demands and encompasses a strategic framework aimed at solving customer challenges strategically (Arun & Özmutlu, 2021:3).

### **2) Market Orientation**

Market orientation represents a vital aspect of organizational culture that prioritizes the creation and delivery of exceptional value to customers. It comprises two key sub-components: competitor orientation and customer orientation. Customer orientation emphasizes the importance of deeply understanding prospective customers to craft relevant solutions, whereas competitor orientation involves monitoring competitors and responding promptly to their strategic moves, based on a nuanced understanding of their strengths and limitations. Many studies focused on China conceptualize market orientation as encompassing these dual dimensions, although some prioritize customer orientation because they view it as the core principle underlying market-focused strategies. However, Gao et al. (2007) argue that customer and competitor orientations possess distinctive characteristics, particularly in emerging markets. Zhou et al. (2005) caution against overly emphasizing customers, noting it may result in strategic and market myopia (Zhou & Li, 2007:449-450). For market-oriented small and medium enterprises (SMEs), responsiveness to market changes is an essential practice.

Narver and Slater (1990) describe market orientation as an organizational culture that optimally facilitates behaviors aimed at generating exceptional value for customers while driving business success. Lindblom (2015 reinforces this notion, emphasizing the critical role of aligning with market dynamics to deliver superior value, particularly for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Additionally, Septrizola (2020:416) argues that market orientation serves as a foundation for nurturing a corporate culture capable of improving marketing performance. By prioritizing responsiveness to evolving market trends and fostering innovative or differentiated approaches, market orientation emerges as a proactive strategy for achieving sustainable competitive advantage. This dynamic approach—characterized by leveraging internal knowledge—enhances organizational innovation and boosts new product performance (Tutar et al., 2015:710).

#### **1.2 Strategic Ambidexterity**

Strategic ambidexterity embodies an organization's capacity to concurrently explore and cultivate new opportunities while maximizing the potential of established markets. Judge and Blocker (2008) highlight this concept as a critical



competency for sustaining competitive advantage. According to O'Reilly and Tushman (2013), this dual approach allows organizations to detect opportunities across both existing and emerging markets through strategic allocation of resources and capabilities. Furthermore, O'Reilly and Tushman (2004) underscore that ambidextrous organizations are adept at delivering innovative products without detracting from their current offerings, ensuring a balanced focus on both fronts. March (1991) argues that entities operating within fast-evolving market landscapes must synchronize their strategies to meet the demands of both present and future market conditions. In addition, et al. (2001) underline the critical role of exploitative strategies in driving sales in established markets, while exploratory approaches foster growth in nascent ones—a perspective further supported by Ocasio (2011). Wu et al. (2020) provide deeper insights by categorizing strategic ambidexterity into two essential dimensions, enabling a more nuanced understanding of how organizations can navigate complex and fluctuating environments.

## **1. Exploration**

Exploration centers on identifying new products, resources, and knowledge. For start-ups, exploration is closely tied to radical innovation and learning through experimentation (Sinha, 2015:313). This dimension embodies behaviors such as research, creativity, diversification, risk-taking, flexibility, innovation, (Chou, 2018:4).

## **2. Exploitation**

Exploitation encompasses optimizing existing resources, streamlining operations, and boosting efficiency, all while fostering innovation by venturing into uncharted territories through calculated risks and experimental approaches (Gastaldi et al., 2022). Organizations employing such strategies leverage their current expertise to enhance performance while simultaneously exploring new opportunities for growth.

### **1.3 Strategic Clarity**

Strategic clarity is a relatively modern concept that gained prominence among researchers in the late nineteenth century, particularly as organizations began prioritizing the need for defined strategies. Within the domain of strategic management, scholars have sought new perspectives to enhance organizational performance and drive excellence.

According to Dhaher and Saaed (2021), the study of strategic clarity emerged from the military strategic framework of the early 1990s, later gaining acceptance among management researchers, as noted by Hassan and AL-Kubasy (2020). Hamel and Prahalad (1983) argue that strategic clarity plays a critical role in achieving organizational coherence since it ensures that all functions within an organization align with a unified strategic focus. Bantel (1993) was among the first to lay the groundwork for strategic clarity, building on Andrews' strategy principles (1971), and incorporating Porter's strategies of cost orientation, differentiation, and focus, as well as Miles and Snow's (1978) strategic typologies—Prospector, Advocate, Analyst, and Responder. Bantel emphasized that organizations grappling with unclear strategies often encounter restrictive external environments due to a lack of coherent plans. Strategic clarity stands in contrast to strategic ambiguity. Strategic ambiguity occurs when managers and employees in organizations are confronted with conflicting and simultaneous demands from internal and external stakeholders, as highlighted by Guthey and Morsing (2014). In contrast, Bantel (1993) defines strategic clarity as the deliberate pursuit of interconnected competitive tactics within an organization. Similarly, Dunham and Robbino (2001) describe strategic clarity as fundamental to organizational orientation. Leitch and Davenport (2002) further regard it as a cornerstone of effective communication, whether through a process model focused on clear message delivery or a transactional model emphasizing shared meanings. According to Bantel (1993), strategic clarity can be broken down into three main dimensions, offering a structured approach to understanding its application in organizational contexts:

#### **1- Information-processing Capacity**

The complexity and uncertainty associated with strategic decision-making demand a high level of information-processing ability (Kellermanns et al., 2011: 127). Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that individuals differ significantly in their capacity to absorb, retain, and integrate extensive amounts of information (Henry, 1980: 42). Constraints on information-processing capabilities can significantly hinder the congruence between an individual's abilities and the implementation of strategies (Smith et al., 2007: 959). Consequently, a critical challenge for managers lies in achieving alignment between organizational capabilities and the volume of information that managers must process to meet the organization's objectives (Gomez et al., 2016: 810). In line with this, Muhammad and Taib (2010: 9) suggested that an enhanced ability to process environmental information contributes significantly to improving decision quality. Various studies have underscored information-processing ability as the most reliable metric for monitoring comprehensive environmental indicators (Kiewra & Benton, 1988: 41). Bantel (1993: 1190) described information-processing ability as the act of selecting, interpreting, and assessing stimuli from diverse sources of information. Meanwhile, others have associated information-processing capacity with physiological elements of the central nervous system or an individual's cognitive approach (Hsia, 1971: 53).

Hilbert et al. (2010: 158) further defined it as the ability to store, communicate, and compute information using a set of tools. In summary, upon examining various perspectives about the concept of Information-Processing Capacity, it



becomes evident that the rapid transformations occurring within the general and industry-specific environments bring about heightened complexity. For strategic clarity to be achieved at the managerial level, especially among those at the helm of the organization, managers must possess a strong ability to interpret and evaluate relevant information effectively.

## 2- Diversity of Perspectives

The diversity in individuals' perspectives and their generation of ideas is fundamental across various domains of work. Despite its challenges, this diversity plays a vital role in fostering creativity (Wang et al., 2011: 1). Some researchers attribute diversity in viewpoints to individual differences, which make people distinct not just due to cultural variations but also as a result of differences in ability, experience, and other factors (Suryani et al., 2020: 1). Identifying these differences often requires interviews or multi-stage questionnaires, which can be time-consuming and costly (Penner et al., 2019: 106).

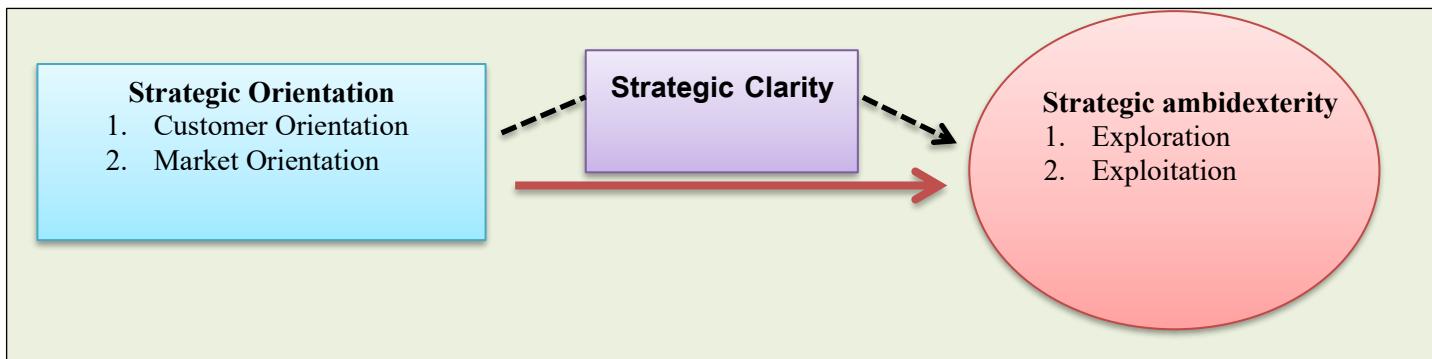
Nguyen et al. (2022: 4) observed that individuals with diverse perspectives actively adapt to changing environments, and effective management of such diversity can enhance creativity within teams. Several studies, including those by Krithi and Pai (2021: 162), have confirmed that differences in opinions within organizations often stem from varied attitudes, values, and beliefs. Bantel (1993: 1190) further noted that diverse viewpoints significantly shape the information received and influence the interpretations derived from it. Overall, it can be concluded that Diversity of Perspectives refers to the variation in how individuals perceive and approach various matters, shaped by differences in attitudes, values, experiences, and personal characteristics.

## 3- Ability to Reach Consensus

The Merriam-Webster dictionary describes "agreement" as a "general meeting" or a judgment reached by the majority of participants (Hartnett, 2011: 1). Achieving agreement among managers leads to carefully considered decisions, incorporating diverse experiences and perspectives to yield the optimal choice for attaining organizational goals (Madden & Ontario, 2017: 2). Within organizations, managers often hold differing opinions regarding the direction they advocate, providing varied assessments shaped by the uneven distribution of information. Consequently, if a decision is made without addressing conflicts and divergent opinions, it can foster a belief that these viewpoints were inadequately considered. This can lead to resistance toward the organization's decision and necessitates a consensus-building process (Zhang et al., 2021: 97). This aligns with Bantel's perspective (1993: 1190) on managers' ability to achieve consensus regarding strategic direction, accomplished by harmonizing similar but distinct viewpoints. Herrera et al. (1997: 309) assert that aligning opinions involves pooling data from diverse sources to obtain more detailed insights, which is an effective way of addressing ambiguity. Additionally, consensus is viewed as a cooperative effort within the organization, where members work collaboratively to achieve a high degree of alignment (Cabrerizo et al., 2014: 115).

## 3. The proposed framework for the study's design and methodology

The diagram provides a straightforward and concise overview of the subject under investigation. It illustrates potential relationships between various factors using arrows, though these connections remain hypothetical and untested. The visual representation is based on assumptions regarding measurable components and the overall coherence of the concept. Figure (1) outlines the framework for the study.



### 1.5 Hypotheses of the study

**1.5.1-The study's primary hypothesis posits a significant impact of strategic orientation in strategic ambidexterity. From this, several sub-hypotheses have been formulated as detailed below:**

**1st hypothesis:** Customer orientation has a significant impact in strategic ambidexterity.

**2nd hypothesis:** Market orientation has a significant impact in strategic ambidexterity.



**1.5.2-The primary hypothesis of the study suggests that strategic orientation significantly influences strategic ambidexterity through strategic clarity. From this main hypothesis, several sub-hypotheses arise:**

**1st sub-hypothesis:** Customer orientation has a significant impact in strategic ambidexterity, mediated by strategic clarity.

**2nd sub-hypothesis:** Market orientation has a significant impact in strategic ambidexterity, mediated by strategic clarity.

## 2.1 Study Sample

The research focused on a total of 250 employees employed at government banks in Maysan, Iraq. Out of this population, a subset of 180 employees was selected for analysis.

### The tool of HDJHstudy

The research utilized a questionnaire as its primary tool for data collection, structured into three distinct sections. The first section focused on strategic orientation, with its questions adapted from the work of Szymiec et al. (2016). The second section addressed strategic ambidexterity, incorporating modified content derived from Wu et al. (2020). Meanwhile, the third section concentrated on strategic clarity, and its items were adapted from Bantel (1993). To validate the test's reliability, the research employed the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, which is widely recognized as acceptable with values exceeding 0.70 (Chen & Huang, 2007). Upon implementing the test, it was determined that the strategic orientation section achieved a reliability coefficient of 0.876, indicating strong reliability. Similarly, the strategic ambidexterity section demonstrated an acceptable reliability coefficient of 0.868 and the strategic clarity section recorded a reliability coefficient of 0.852. When evaluated collectively, all sections achieved an aggregate reliability coefficient of 0.928, confirming acceptable consistency across all axes. Furthermore, an overall reliability coefficient of 0.962 was recorded, reaffirming that the questionnaire reflects highly reliable and consistent results.

### 3. Hypotheses testing

#### 3.1 The study's primary hypothesis posits a significant impact of strategic orientation in strategic ambidexterity.

To validate this hypothesis, its sub\_hypotheses are analyzed. The results presented in Table (1) reveal the following insights:

**Table (1)**  
**Examining the influence of strategic orientation on achieving strategic ambidexterity**

The explanatory variable and its dimensions	Regression coefficient		R2	F value	P	Responsive variable
	$\alpha$	$\beta$				
Customer Orientation	1.685	0.622	0.231	233.564	0.000	Strategic ambidexterity
Market Orientation	1.537	0.541	0.344	130.611	0.000	
Strategic orientation	0.631	0.742	0.575	458.868	0.000	

The value of (F) tabulated at a level of significance (0.05) = 3.841 The value of (F) tabulated at a level of significance (0.01) = 6.635

The analysis underscores a positive correlation between internal environment orientation and strategic ambidexterity. The alpha regression constant is calculated at 1.537, alongside a beta effect factor of 0.541. The independent variable accounts for 34.4% of the variance in strategic ambidexterity, as demonstrated by the R<sup>2</sup> coefficient. The model's robustness is verified by the F statistic, which not only surpasses the critical threshold but also exhibits a significance level below 0.05, solidifying support for the hypothesis.

A similar case can be observed with Satya Nadella, CEO of Microsoft, where an in-depth assessment highlights a favorable influence of strategic orientation on strategic ambidexterity. In this example, the alpha regression constant is determined to be 0.631, while the beta effect factor stands at 0.742. Strategic orientation among school managers explains 57.5% of the variance in the dependent variable, as conveyed by the R<sup>2</sup> coefficient. Once again, the credibility of the model is affirmed through the F statistic, exceeding the critical benchmark and maintaining a significance level below 0.05. These results further validate the core hypothesis under examination.

**Strategic clarity, strategic orientation, and strategic ambidexterity are closely linked through an effective mediation process that improves their combined impact.**

To evaluate this hypothesis, its sub-hypotheses are analyzed. The outcomes presented in Table 4 highlight .

**Table4**

**The role of strategic orientation in fostering strategic ambidexterity, specifically through enhanced strategic clarity.**

The explanatory variable and its dimensions	Regression coefficient		R2	F value	P	Mediator variable	Responsive variable
	$\alpha$	$\beta$					
Customer Orientation	1.633	0.549	0.261	129.559	0.000	Strategic Clarity	Strategic Ambidexterity
Market Orientation	1.815	0.545	0.337	186.466	0.000		
Strategic Orientation	0.502	0.881	0.558	462.976	0.000		

The value of (F) tabulated at a level of significance (0.05) = 3.841 The value of (F) tabulated at a level of significance (0.01) = 6.635

The analysis demonstrates that balanced supervision within organizations fosters strategic ambidexterity, which subsequently enhances strategic clarity. In this context, the regression model identifies a constant value of 1.815 and a beta factor of 0.545, indicating the strength of the relationship. The independent variable accounts for 33.7% of the variation in strategic clarity, as evidenced by the R-squared value. The model's reliability was confirmed through an F-statistic exceeding the critical threshold, combined with a significance level under 0.05, marking it statistically valid.

These results affirm the accuracy of the proposed hypothesis. Additionally, the data underscore that strategic orientation positively influences both strategic ambidexterity and strategic clarity. For this factor, the regression constant is 0.502, while the beta coefficient stands at 0.881, signifying its substantial impact. Strategic orientation among school managers explains 55.8% of the variation in outcomes based on the R-squared metric. The robustness of this model was similarly validated by an F-statistic surpassing the critical value and an acceptable significance level below 0.05. Collectively, these findings corroborate support for the central hypothesis.

#### **4.CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

##### **4.1Conclusions**

The research revealed that the element of customer orientation holds the lowest significance in shaping the strategic ambidexterity of government banks operating in Maysan.

Moreover, it suggests that an inability to establish a proper balance in strategic orientation for employees within Iraqi government banks could negatively impact their strategic effectiveness. However, fostering a strong alignment between strategic orientation and strategic ambidexterity, guided by clear strategic objectives, may facilitate goal achievement and enhance adaptability to environmental changes.

The findings further highlighted a high level of creativity within the strategic ambidexterity component, signifying employees' capacity to handle unforeseen environmental conditions. To capitalize on this, managers are advised to encourage employee engagement and delegate authority, allowing staff to respond effectively to emerging challenges.

##### **4.2 Recommendations**

- 1) Managers in government banks in Maysan should establish a well-defined framework that balances exploration and exploitation, fostering an environment where employees feel empowered to express creativity, generate fresh ideas, and adapt to evolving circumstances.
- 2) Cultivating a culture of innovation requires granting employees greater autonomy and responsibility, enabling them to develop a clearer understanding of external dynamics and navigate changes more effectively.
- 3) Leveraging the strategic capabilities of bank management teams and striving to refine strategic orientation to strike a balance between stability and innovation, thereby boosting confidence in new ideas and cultivating a culture of learning from external experiences.
- 4) Strengthening the ability to address critical work matters while granting employees greater autonomy through the adoption of modern technological tools to enhance customer interactions.

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