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Original Research

Examining the Marketing Strategy, Relationship Quality, Entrepreneurial Orientation and Agricultural Marketing Cooperative Unions Performance at Western Oromia, Ethiopia

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Abstract

This study examines the marketing cooperative strategy, relationship quality, entrepreneurial orientation, and marketing performance of agricultural cooperative unions in Western Oromia. Data was collected from 272 respondents from general assembly members of seven sample AMC unions. The results showed that the AMC unions in Western Oromia are in good management, firm value, and financial performance. They are also good in practicing cooperative marking strategies, such as member return, risk management, and market diversification. The AMC unions maintain strong relationship quality, satisfying members in business and management, building trust, and ensuring member commitment and loyalty. They also practice entrepreneurial orientation, demonstrating proactive risk-taking, autonomy, and entrepreneurial managerial competency. The study concludes that the AMC unions in Western Oromia have high overall performance, implementing member-benefiting marketing strategies, maintaining strong relationship quality, and practicing entrepreneurial orientation. The recommendations are to further improve business performance, transaction cost reduction strategy implementation, and innovative business operation practices.

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INTRODUCTION

As the longest-lasting business model, cooperatives emerged in the modern age as a reaction to capitalist exploitation. According to Batzios et al. (2021), farmers can own, control, and participate in agricultural marketing through agricultural marketing cooperatives (AMCs). AMC is vital to the long-term viability of farms because it primarily provides its members with agricultural inputs, feed for animals, and food grains (Candemir et al., 2021). In addition, according to Giagnocavo et al. (2018), AMC helps its producer members with their socioeconomic issues by providing them with agricultural marketing services that generate value.

Cooperatives fulfill AMC's goals when they meet the needs of their members and reach their full potential. From this vantage point, MCP acknowledges, as does any commercial enterprise, that the production of cooperative societies is evaluated over a specified time frame (Debebe & Mesfin, 2020). Cooperatives are distinct from for-profit businesses because their primary goal is not maximization of profit but rather the service and benefit of their members (AMC included) (Hinton & Maclurcan, 2017). Because cooperatives like AMC serve both social and economic functions, this is the case. As a result, in order to serve its members and fulfill socio-economic needs in a sustainable manner, AMC is evaluated based on its business, management, company values, and financial sustainability (Simamba, 2018).

If AMC wants to keep serving its members, it needs to come up with plans that will assist the cooperative fulfill its mission. According to Gashaw and Tsehay (2016), AMC should increase member service performance by implementing a marketing cooperative strategy (MCS) that is both basic and has potential. This strategy should be in line with AMC's service-motive character. Cooperatives of all sizes and types need AMC's member-focused, risk-management, transaction-cost-reduction, and diversification marketing approach if they want to stay in business (Hidayati et al., 2016; Rakhal, 2017).

Efficient cooperative service delivery is in line with sustaining high-quality relationships inside the cooperative. The goal here is to make sure everyone is happy, which will keep people loyal to the cooperative (Debebe & Mesfin, 2020; Hao et al., 2019; Hidayati et al., 2016). Furthermore, stakeholder commitment is a metric of RQ in cooperative organizations generally and AMC specifically. Consequently, RQ in the cooperative is being explained by member users' and other stakeholders' (particularly internal) commitments to either joining the cooperative or meeting the members' needs (Solomon et al., 2020; Pönkä, 2019; Alkhlaifat et al., 2017). This, along with other aspects of RQ, guarantees the cooperative's sustainability.

In order to tap into their enormous potential and ensure their long-term viability, cooperatives must encourage and support an entrepreneurial orientation (EO). For the reason that EO helps AMC projects succeed from several angles (Wales et al., 2019; Kosa et al., 2018; Wales, 2016). By actively monitoring the progress of the designed business, EO unquestionably aids AMC in obtaining a durable advantage (Kosa et al., 2018). According to Daneluz et al. (2021), marketing cooperatives are impacted by the innovativeness and risk-taking that is a component of EO.

Cooperatives' ability to make decisions about their own affairs is directly correlated to the degree to which its managers are autonomous and competent entrepreneurs (Situma, 2021). The effectiveness of AMCs is dictated by the degree to which the following characteristics are exhibited: inventiveness, initiative, risk-taking, independence, and managerial competence.

Based on the data presented above, it is clear that CMS, RQ maintenance, EO practice, and a consistent MCP are critical components of AMC that dictate its final destination. The majority of prior studies, however, have focused on cooperative leadership and membership engagement, marketing

strategies, market infrastructure, and governmental backing as potential cooperative success factors. Furthermore, research on the efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of agricultural cooperatives is lacking, and studies focusing on AMC unions in West Oromia, Ethiopia, in particular, have shortcomings in terms of CMS, RQ, and EO. The study was carried out to address these shortcomings. A marketing cooperative union in West Oromia will be the focus of this study, which aims to analyze their marketing strategy, the quality of their relationships, their entrepreneurial attitude, and their marketing performance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design and approach

Applying appropriate research design is one of the essential aspects of research, for it is the procedure and guidelines within which the research is conducted (Akhtar, 2016; Sekaran and Bougie, 2016). Subsequently, this study used a descriptive research design to describe the AMC's performance, marketing strategies used, RQ observed, and EO practiced by AMC unions in the study area.

Undoubtedly, researchers used different quantitative and/or qualitative research approaches to pursue a research project. This is because quantitative research approaches are based on positivism, a worldview pertinent to dealing with quantitative data, and qualitative research approaches are based on constructivism, which deals with qualitative data (Apuke, 2017; Grover, 2015). Therefore, this study used a mixed research approach for quantitative, quantifiable, and qualitative forms of data were used.

Sampling design

The sampling design encompasses the target population, sample size determination, and sampling procedure of the study. In this regard, this study was conducted in western Oromia, which encompasses four zones from which six AMC unions were selected for the study. The general assembly meeting members of the sample AMC unions which account for 926 are the target population of the study,

Next to establishing the target population of the study, the main issue of the research is determining the sample size. In determining the sample size, according to Kothari (2004), the study considered the representativeness of the sample to ensure the credibility and validity of the result to generalize to the study population. Consequently, the following sample size determined as,

$$n = \frac{N * p * q * z^2}{e^2\,(N-1) + p * q * z^2}$$

Where:

n is the sample size for the study,

N is the target population of the study (N = 926),

e is an acceptable error term (0.05 for a 95% confidence interval),

z is standard variety for the normal curve (1.96 for 95% confidence interval),

p is the proportion to be included in the sample. The study has given equal opportunity for the study population to be selected. Hence, p = 0.5),

q is the proportion not to be included in the sample (1-p = 0.5).

Based on this sample size determination formula, the sample size of the study could be 284 as estimated by the formula

$$n = \frac{926 * 0.5 * 0.5 * 1.96^2}{0.05^2\ (926 - 1) + 0.5 * 0.5 * 1.96^2}$$
$$= \frac{930.8416}{2.3125 + 0.9604} = \frac{804.8152}{3.2729}$$
$$= 284.408 \cong 284$$

Researchers must indicate the sampling procedure when they have established the study's sample size. The study area, located in western Oromia, was selected using a purposive sampling technique. Six AMC unions were included in the sample: Gibe Didessa, Chaffe Bulluk, Jorgo Birbir, Dilla Alaltu, Malka Gudina, and Torban Anfillo. Because the farmers' cooperative union is involved in so many different agricultural marketing operations and serves such a diverse group of member farmers, and because no comprehensive study of them has been conducted, we have chosen this region and the AMC union to conduct our research.

Due to the existence of a formal list of the research population from each sample cooperative union, the respondents were selected using the systematic sampling approach from the sample AMC unions. Using the judgment sampling approach, we conducted in-depth interviews with the cooperative union's manager and chair of the board of directors, and we formed focus groups with other members of the board and management. In order to ensure that the study included only knowledgeable cooperative unions, this sampling procedure was employed.

Data collection methods

Types and sources of data dictated how the study's data was collected. The study used a variety of data kinds and sources to ensure the reliability of the results. To accomplish its goals, the study analyzed primary and secondary sources of information. Respondents, key informants, and members of the focus groups provided the bulk of the data. The primary purpose of combining the descriptive results from respondents with the data obtained from key informants and FCG was to bolster and validate the former.

Various sources and types of data informed the study's data collection procedures. This is due to the fact that in order to guarantee the accuracy of the results, data is gathered through interviews, surveys, and questionnaires (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The study obtained primary data from respondents and key informants by questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus groups, respectively, with this consent. When it came time to gather information from the participants, a semi-structured questionnaire was utilized. Two- or five-point Likert scales were employed for the closed-ended surveys. The purpose of the open-ended questions was to augment the responses from the closed-ended surveys.

Data analysis methods

Sorting, field checking, and coding the data using the data codebook were all steps in the data analysis process. The statistical data analysis were supported by SPSS version 26. This study's descriptive data analysis approach stems from its research strategy. Cleff (2014) argues that this is the case because it seeks to synthesize data with purpose and makes it possible to draw conclusions about specific phenomena from legitimate individual data points. In particular, the research variables were described using the means and standard deviations of the Likert scale. Weights to

response categories were also used as part of the data analysis for the study, in which a composite of multiple Likert scale questions was used to describe an item of the study (Joshi et al., 2015; Chakrabartty, 2019; Warmbrod, 2014). According to these scholars, the weights to response categories of Likert scale responses are the ratio of the total frequency of the category of the overall statements to the total of the items, which is calculated as:

$$W_j = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{m} f_{ij}}{\sum\sum f_{ij}}$$

Where:

W_j is the weight for the i^{th} response category of the five-point Likert response,

$\sum_{i=1}^{m} f_{ij}$ is the total frequency (over all items) of the category, $\sum\sum f_{ij}$ is a total of the items (the number of questions or statements used to describe the item multiplied by the sample size. The rationale of the study to use descriptive data analysis is that it is used for the data in the form of categorical, either ordinal or nominal responses, to be summarized for interpretation (Agresti, 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results and discussion section of the study presents analyses and interpretations of the findings. These analyses and discussions of the results are regarding marketing cooperative performance, strategy, relationship quality, and entrepreneurship orientation of AMC unions in western Oromia, Ethiopia.

Response rate, Reliability, and Validity

Analyses of the data for the study rely on the responses from the respondents, which demand an indication of the response rate. The questionnaires were distributed to 284 sample respondents, as per the determined sample from the target population. However, the fully responded and returned questionnaires were 272. Therefore, the response rate for the study was 95.8% which is believed to be adequate for proceeding to data analysis using the collected data. The other major issue to be considered before data analysis is the testing of the reliability and validity of the collected data to ensure the internal consistency and external validity of the collected data (Oktavia et al., 2018), for they are the most important and fundamental measurements of research instruments. Reliability is a statistical test of the precision of data, for which Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is used. According to Candemir et al. (2021), a coefficient of $0.6 - 0.7$ is accepted; $0.7 - 0.8$ is good; and greater than 0.8 is a strong reliability level.

Table 1

Reliability Statistics

Variables of the study	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
AMC Union Performance	0.754	24
Marketing cooperative strategy	0.724	29
Relationship Quality of Farmers' Cooperative Union	0.879	29
Entrepreneurial orientation of AMC Union	0.838	42
Cumulative reliability	0.799	109

The reliability statistics displayed in Table 1 reveal that the coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha for farmers' cooperative union performance (0.754) and marketing cooperative strategy (0.724) are at a good reliability level. The coefficient of Cronbach's Alpha for relationship quality in farmers' cooperative unions (0.879) and entrepreneurial orientation in farmers' cooperative unions (0.838) are within the strong reliability level. Likewise, the cumulative reliability level (0.799) is in the good range. These illustrate that the collected data for the study are reliable to measure the internal consistency of the data. A validity test is a highly important measure of the quality or accuracy of an instrument. The validity of the instruments is described by calculating the Pearson's correlation coefficient of the scores of respondents' responses to an item with their total scores (Oktavia et al., 2018). Accordingly, a Pearson's correlation coefficient of 0.35 and greater is very beneficial, and 0.21-0.35 is likely to be useful.

As displayed in Table 2 above, the correlation of all study variables with the total response of the items is statistically significant ($P < 0.001$). Besides Pearson's correlation coefficients for all variables are above the very beneficial range (0.35). This illustrates that the data collection instruments used by the study area are accurate in measuring what they are supposed to measure and are hence externally valid tools.

Table 2

Validity statistics

Variables of the study		Total Responses on the Items
AMC Union Performance	Pearson Correlation	0.576**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Marketing Cooperative strategy	Pearson Correlation	0.605**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
Relationship Quality of the FCUs	Pearson Correlation	0.687**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
The FCU is an Entrepreneurial orientation	Pearson Correlation	0.624**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Mean values

Mean values of the response used by the study for interpretation. According to Warmbrod, (2014), range of mean value for the interpretation is determined by the formula $\frac{n-1}{n}$ where n is the highest response rate in the Likert response scale which indicates n = 5). Therefore, the range for the mean is $\frac{5-1}{5}$ = 0.80.

Agricultural Marketing Cooperative performance

CMP is indicated by cooperative business performance (BP), management performance

(MP), firm financial performance (FP), and value performance (FVP) which are deserving member benefits from agricultural marketing. These measures of CMP are examined and the findings are presented subsequently in the following Tables 3 to 6.

As presented in Table 3, the respondents perceived that AMC unions of the case are high in management performance (mean 3.72, Std deviation 0.564); business performance (mean 3.43, Std deviation 0.545); financial performance (mean 4.12, Std deviation 0.540) and firm value performance (mean 4.01, Std deviation 0.519).

The result reveals that the grand response mean of AMC union in the study area is 3.97 with small variability (Std deviation 0.239). This indicates that the overall performance of the AMC union under study is high. The results from the in-depth interview and FGD support the finding by indicating that AMC unions in the study area are performing well. In serving the members' needs.

These views from key informants and FGD demonstrate that AMC unions are highly involved in negotiations with suppliers and buyers for fair costs of supplies and prices of products sold. As a result, the cooperative unions provide goods member needs at relatively lower cost and market member products at a higher price than the market.

Table 3

AMC Unions Performance

Cooperative performance measures*	Mean	Std. Deviation
Management performance	3.72	0.564
Business performance	3.43	0.545
Financial performance	4.12	0.540
Firm value performance	4.01	0.519
Overall AMC union performance	3.97	0.239

The qualitative result from the interview and discussion also indicate that AMC unions strive to maintain a good financial position through increasing equity capital from which they create firm value that sustains the cooperative unions.

These study findings are in harmony with the previous research results by Debela and Kerim (2020); Srinivasan and Sundaram (2020); Ahmed and Burhan (2019); Giagnocavo et al. (2018), which concluded agricultural cooperatives in Ethiopia, have considerable agricultural marketing performance in managing farm input and output marketing, sustaining financial status and creating firma value which builds the endurance of agricultural cooperative.

Besides the study collected secondary for five years of financial data panels from the sample AMC unions to supplement the results from the primary data. The summarized result for five years and the descriptive statistics summary is presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Financial performance of sample AMC unions for five years

The measure of financial performance	Operational year				Descriptive statistics			
	2018	2019	2020	2021	Mini.	Max.	Mean	Std.
Return on Asset (ROA)	0.2440	0.2486	0.3006	0.2500	0.0253	0.0409	0.0359	0.0063
Return on Equity (ROE)	0.0354	0.0384	0.0396	0.0409	0.1971	0.3006	0.2481	0.0367
Patronage refund Ratio	0.5291	0.5303	0.5264	0.5309	0.5264	0.5309	0.5287	0.0019

The results reveal that the five-year average ROA of AMC unions in the study is 0.0359 (standard deviation 0.003), the average ROE is 0.241 (standard deviation 0.0367), and the patronage refund (dividend) ratio is 0.5287 (standard deviation 0.019). These results implied that the AMC of the case obtained 3.59% ROA, and 24.81% ROE, and distributed 52.87% patronage refunds for members from earnings, all with low variability from the mean. Moreover, the financial performance of the cooperative unions under study is concentrated on member benefits rather than asset creation, which is in line with the nature of the cooperative. Furthermore, weights-to-response category data analysis was used for the study, in which a summated composite of multiple Likert scale questions is used for describing an item of the study. In this study, weighted response categories are used to evaluate the overall performance of the AMC union under study and the result is resented in Table 5.

Table 5

Weights to response categories measuring AMC Union performance

Items	Response categories*					
	Very Low	Low	Moderate	High	Very High	Total
BP	0	4	182	82	4	272
MP	0	2	93	162	15	272
FVP	1	5	29	208	29	272
FP	0	0	30	192	50	272
Total	1	11	334	644	98	1088
Weights to response categories	0.00092	0.01011	0.307	0.592	0.0901	1.00

The results reveal that the relatively highest weight is 0.592 for the response category of high. This indicates that the overall performance of AMC unions in the study area is found to be high. This is indeed the high frequency of the response reflected in the high response category, which implies AMC unions in the study area are high in management, firm value creation, and financial performance. This study finding is similar to research results by Debela and Kerim (2020); Dendup and Aditto (2020);

Ajates (2020) which concluded that AMCs are high in economic and social services, seizing up growth opportunities, managerial and leadership performance, and financial growth, by which they are participating and surviving in a competitive agricultural marketing environment for serving the needs of their respective members.

Marketing strategy of agricultural marketing cooperative

The study used indicators to measure marketing cooperative strategies (MCS) implemented by the AMC union that benefit member-owners. These indicate the strategies of the AMC union: cooperative member return marketing strategy (MRMS), marketing risk management marketing strategy (RMMS), transactional cost reduction strategy (TCRS), and market diversification strategy (MDS). As presented in Table 6, respondents agree that AMC unions in western Oromia are implementing member return strategies (mean 3.82; Std deviation 0.518); Risk management strategies (mean 4.07; Std deviation 0.433); transaction cost reduction strategies (mean 3.66; Std deviation 0.605) and market diversification strategies (mean 3.52; Std deviation 0.676).

Table 6

AMC strategy implantation

Marketing cooperative strategies*	Mean	Std. Deviation
Member return strategy	3.82	0.518
Risk management strategy	4.07	0.433
Transaction cost reduction strategy	3.66	0.605
Market diversification strategy	3.52	0.676
Overall AMC strategy implementation	4.04	0.457

The result elucidates that the overall response means on the implementation of MCS is 4.04 with low dispersions of view (Std deviation 0.457). This result explains that AMC unions in West Oromia, the study area, are implementing MCS. The analyzed qualitative result from both interviews and discussions also confirmed the result which indicates that AMC unions in the study area are implementing strategies for safeguarding members' benefits and managing marketing risks in today's competitive market by diversifying marketing operations. It also indicates that designing and implementing approaches that are useful for reducing business operation costs through direct marketing, and vertically working with cooperative federations. The study findings are in agreement with the previous research findings on the marketing strategies of AMC by Liang and Wang (2020); Faysse and Onsamrar (2018) which concluded that AMC counteracting market power through a competitive yardstick strategy, diversifying farm input/output marketing. The study finding is also supported by scholars' research findings which summarized as AMC used marketing strategies to engage in agricultural processing and supply basic consumer goods demanded by members (Ashenafi, 2016)

Table 7

Weights to response categories measuring AMC Union market strategy

Marketing Cooperative strategies	Response categories					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
MRMS	2	1	51	209	9	272
RMS	0	0	17	220	35	272
TCRS	0	4	146	107	15	272
MDS	2	8	106	143	13	272
Total	4	13	320	679	72	1088
Weight to response categories	0.0037	0.0119	0.2941	0.6241	0.0662	1.00

Moreover, the study also examined the weights to response categories measuring AMC union market strategy to indicate the implementation of MCS by AMC unions in the study area. Table 7 - 8 display results from the composite analysis of marketing strategies implemented by the AMC union in the study area.

According to the result, the relatively highest weight is 0.6241 for the response category of agree. This indicates that AMC unions in the study area implementing CMS focused on member benefits and business sustainability. This is indeed the highest frequency of the responses reflected on the agree-on response category except for TCRS, which implies FCUs in the study area are implementing MRMS, RMMS, and MDS to ensure sustainability in addressing member needs as listed in Table.7.

These study findings are in harmony with the previous empirical evidence. For instance, according to Liang and Wang (2020), AMC is practicing various marketing strategies to guarantee member benefits by implementing market risk management strategies. Furthermore, the current study findings coincide with research findings by Faysse and Onsamrar (2018) which concluded that AMC uses marketing strategies for reducing transaction costs and diversification strategies for serving members by sustaining the business in the agricultural market.

Relationship Quality in Agricultural Cooperatives

Relationship quality (RQ) in cooperatives is explained by maintaining cooperative member satisfaction (CMS) and building cooperative member trust (CMT) in their cooperative, member commitment (CMC) in participation, and establishing cooperative member loyalty (CML) toward their cooperative. The data were collected by the study on RQ indicators and the result is presented in Table 8. The AMC unions in Western Oromia are maintaining cooperative member satisfaction (mean 3.57; Std deviation 0.627); cooperative member trust (mean 4.12; Std deviation 0.577); cooperative member commitment (mean 4.16; Std deviation 0.585) and build on cooperative member loyalty (mean 4.23; Std deviation 0.590).

Table 8

Relationship Quality maintained by AMC unions

Marketing cooperative strategies*	Mean	Std. Deviation
AMC union's member's satisfaction	3.57	0.627
AMC union members trust	4.12	0.577
Member commitment in AMC unions	4.16	0.585
Member loyalty of AMC union	4.23	0.590
Overall AMC strategy implementation	3.89	0.511

As it is elucidated by the result, the overall response means regarding maintaining RQ is 3.89 with an almost small variability of responses (Std deviation 0.511). This result demonstrates that AMC unions in Western Oromia, Ethiopia are maintaining RQ in the cooperative unions. The results from the interview and discussion reveal similar evidence for member satisfaction that members of the cooperative unions mutually control the operation and management of the cooperative through their representatives. Management maintains equality in using the cooperative unions' goods/services to build positive attitudes towards their cooperatives which all contributed to the RQ in the cooperative unions. These findings of the study are also in agreement with study findings by Debebe and Mesfin, (2020); Solomon et al. (2020) which concluded that agricultural cooperatives maintain relationships with stakeholders for service members effectively. Besides, the study run the composite analysis of the cooperative RQ of AMC unions in the study area for further confirming the RQ maintained by the AMC union of the case, and the weight to response category is displayed in Table 9.

Table 9

Weight to response category of RQ in cooperative

Cooperative RQ	Response categories					Total
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	
CMS	1	4	118	136	13	272
CMT	0	2	25	184	61	272
CMC	0	4	16	184	68	272
CML	1	1	14	174	82	272
Total	2	11	173	678	224	1088
Weight to response categories	0.00184	0.01011	0.15901	0.62316	0.20588	1.00

As it is revealed by the result, the relatively highest weight is 0.62316 for the response category of agree. This indicates that AMC unions in the study area maintain RQ to maintain good relationships among the stakeholders. This is definitely since the

highest frequency of the response reflected on the agree response, which infers AMC unions in the study area satisfy members, enhance CMC, build CMT, and maintain CML for ensuring RQ in the cooperative unions of the study. The particular study findings agree with the empirical evidence by Artanti et al. (2020); Debebe and Mesfin (2020); and Simamba (2018). These scholars concluded that agricultural cooperatives provide goods and services at fair costs to satisfy members' needs, consequently creating belongingness and confidence among members. Moreover, this study's findings are in coherence with previous research findings, which concluded that agricultural cooperatives ensure members benefit from society's worth and distinguish members as owner-users (Solomon et al., 2020). These improved member commitments subsequently retained member loyalty, contributing to RQ in the cooperatives.

Entrepreneurial orientation in cooperative

EO in cooperatives is measured using dimensions of innovativeness, pro-activeness, risk-taking, autonomy, and entrepreneurial managerial competence (EMC). Therefore, the study collected data and presented the analyzed results in Table 10. The respondents strongly agree AMC unions of the case are retaining autonomy (mean 4.22; Std deviation 0.551); they agree that the AMC unions under study are innovative (mean 3.44; Std deviation 0.610); proactive (mean 3.84; Std deviation 0.494); risk-taker (mean 3.95; Std deviation 0.517) and they are entrepreneurial managerially competent (mean 4.04; Std deviation 0.457).

Table 10

EO practices of AMC unions

Marketing cooperative strategies	Mean	Std. Deviation
Innovativeness of AMC unions	3.44	.610
Pro-activeness of AMC unions	3.84	.494
Risk-taking by AMC unions	3.95	.517
Autonomy of AMC unions	4.22	.551
EMC of AMC union	4.04	.457
Overall EO practices of AMC union	3.95	.335

From the result, it is observed that the cumulative response means on EO is 3.95 (Std deviation 0.335). This demonstrates that AMC union in the study area is practicing EO in its marketing and management operations. The study result is supplemented by the results from interviews and FGD which indicated that AMC union creatively identifies member problems for initiating and expanding member needs business operations, predicting the future in agricultural marketing to deliver member needs. The interview and discussion result also support the descriptive finding for views of interview and discussion participants consensuses that AMC unions are tolerating the unforeseen uncertainty that they face in business operation; they are self-directed associations to take action in serving their mission and are strong in leadership and administration for creating internal and

external relationships to achieve strategic goals. The study findings are in harmony with previous research results by Boabeng and Li (2018) which indicated that AMC is focused on creativity to provide extensive and integrated services and goods; it is also in agreement with study findings by Situma (2021), concluded that AMC is independent and pro-active in forecasting the future opportunities and uncertainty to take risk in benefiting members from marketing operation.

In addition, the study run a composite analysis of the EO of AMC unions in the study area for supplementing results on the practices of EO and the result is presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Weight to response categories of EO

Cooperative RQ	Response categories					
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Innovativeness	2	4	146	113	7	272
Pro-activeness	1	2	46	213	10	272
Risk-taking	0	2	37	205	28	272
Autonomy	1	1	9	188	73	272
EMC	0	4	11	227	30	272
Total	4	13	249	946	148	1360
Weight to response	0.0029	0.0096	0.1831	0.6956	0.1088	1.00

As it is observed from the result, the relatively highest weight index is 0.62316 for the response category of agree. From this, it can be generalized that AMC unions in the study area practice an entrepreneurial orientation. According to this study's findings, cooperative unions are inventive, anticipatory, risk-taking, competent, and autonomous, which contribute to the EO of the cooperative union in business operations and directly contribute to its success.

The results of this study are interrelated with the research findings by Daneluz et al. (2021); Boabeng, and Li (2018). These scholars concluded that cooperatives practiced the multi-dimensions of EO for business success by improving inventiveness, being proactive, and dealing with the risks of the business. Moreover, the findings of the study are in line with earlier research results that discussed cooperatives, including AMC, being independent in deciding on the affairs of the cooperative and member needs, as well as enlightening leaders and management to acquire the necessary competency in attaining the desired goal (Guzmán et al., 2019; Wales et al., 2019).

CONCLUSIONS

Agricultural marketing cooperative unions in Western Oromia, Ethiopia will be the focus of this study, which aims to analyze their marketing performance, tactics, relationship quality, and entrepreneurial orientation. Therefore, these features of the cooperative unions were the focus of the study's data

collection and analysis, which led to a detailed discussion of the findings and the subsequent conclusions.

Agricultural marketing cooperative unions scored highly in all areas tested, including management, firm value, financial performance, and business. High levels of farm input supply, reasonable prices, effective leadership and management, rising profits, grasping new opportunities, and expanding assets all point in this direction. The results show that agricultural marketing cooperative unions in western Oromia are generally doing well.

The study's findings showed that agriculture marketing cooperative unions in the research region prioritized member advantages while using marketing cooperative techniques. This is because cooperative unions excel primarily in implementing ways to increase member return, control risk, reduce transactional costs, and diversify marketing for the benefit of members and the sustainability of businesses. Consequently, the research found that the cooperative unions in agricultural marketing are using cooperative marketing techniques to help their members and stay in business for the long haul.

The research found that agricultural marketing cooperative unions in the region were successful at keeping in touch with their stakeholders by prioritizing relationship quality. This is seen through the members' devotion, loyalty, sense of belonging, and the trust that is fostered. As a result, the research found that the case's agricultural marketing cooperative unions are building and sustaining high-quality business relationships, which boosts stakeholder confidence in collaborating with the unions.

The cooperative union's inventive, proactive, risk-taking, competent, and independent management style, as well as its entrepreneurial orientation in company operations, are all factors in its success, according to this study. Consequently, it is clear that the study area's agricultural marketing cooperative unions prioritize an entrepreneurial attitude in order to maintain autonomy in their business operations, seize chances in agricultural marketing, and stay competitive in the face of uncertainty.

Agricultural marketing cooperative unions scored highly on the following areas: performance, member-focused strategy implementation, relationship quality maintenance, and entrepreneurial orientations, according to the means and weights of response category composite indices. So, to make sure they can keep meeting the needs of their members in the long run, agricultural marketing cooperative unions in the research area should work on their performance, marketing strategy execution, cooperative relationship quality, and entrepreneurial orientation.

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DECLARATION

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

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