

EXPANDED ABSTRACT

Management accounting: effect on key factors of competitive success in the cooperative sector

Contextualization and objective

The importance of the cooperative sector for the economy has been demonstrated in the available literature (Comité Económico y Social Europeo, 2012; Mogrovejo et al., 2012; Confederación de Cooperativas de Colombia (CONFECOOP), 2017). However, these organizations also face turbulence in the market, where their managers are exposed to large volumes of information, which increases uncertainty in the decision-making process. This situation gives rise to the need to implement tools to efficiently manage the key factors of competitive success, with the aim of developing capabilities that can overcome the demands of the environment.

Management accounting is considered one of the tools used for this purpose, since its positive relationship with business competitiveness has been demonstrated (Simons, 1990; Ismail & Isa, 2011). However, authors like Isa and Foong (2005) and Poporato (2015) point to a theoretical gap by indicating that, despite their contribution to reducing uncertainty in the decision-making process, their contribution to the development of competitive advantages through the management of key factors of competitive success is not clear, due to the market requires rapid responses and management accounting takes some time to process the information, thus affecting the ability to respond efficiently to critical situations of exogenous origin.

This situation leaves open the discussion on whether all aspects of management accounting contribute to business competitiveness. To resolve this theoretical discrepancy, it is considered necessary to dimension the management accounting in threads, to analyze its effect on the key factors of competitive success in the cooperative sector. Based on the above and given the importance of the cooperative sector in the economy, the objective of the study is to explain the incidence of the dimensions of management accounting on the key factors of competitive success in multi-activity cooperatives in Barranquilla (Colombia).

Design and methodology

An investigation of quantitative approach, explanatory scope and non-experimental design was carried out. Statistical tools such as measures of central tendency, dispersion, correlation coefficients (Pearson) and multiple linear regression are used to test the hypotheses. The population is made up of multi-activity cooperatives, which were chosen based on the definition of Colombian law and

data provided by Cámara de Comercio of Barranquilla for the year 2017, resulting in a population of 186 multi-activity cooperatives. Applying a margin of error of 5%, reliability coefficient of 95% and an estimated percentage of the sample of 50%, a sample of 126 units was obtained, selected through simple random sampling. The technique used was the survey by means of a questionnaire applied to managers, which was validated by experts and whose Cronbach's alpha reliability index was 0.87. The variables studied were measured using a Likert-type ordinal scale with six response options.

Results, limitations, and implications

As a relevant result, the negative and significant incidence of the aggregation of information stands out, with respect to the key factors of competitive success in the context of multi-active cooperatives, which can be tentatively explained by the high participation of SMEs in the population, complexity of the process and the sensitivity of these organizations to the high costs of applying aggregate information systems. Likewise, a positive and significant influence of the amplitude, opportunity, and integration on the key factors of competitive success is evident, suggesting that these variables add value to the information generated by management accounting to support the decision-making process.

However, these results refer to the Barranquilla's multi-active cooperatives and although they have allowed to delve into the particularities of this type of organizations, it has implications for a broader generalization of the results, since the solidarity sector is also made up of mutual and associative institutions, which have characteristics that differentiate them and that may be sensitive for the study. In this sense, this work presents limitations that constitute opportunities for future lines of research. For this reason, it is recommended to extend the study to these entities. On the other hand, it is suggested to develop investigations whose design is longitudinal with panel data, in order to have greater robustness in the data obtained.

Conclusions and contributions

It is possible to demonstrate the significant and positive influence of the dimensions of management accounting, breadth, opportunity, and integration on the key factors of competitive success. Thus highlighting the importance of the content and characteristics of accounting information that, within the framework of the theory of resources and capabilities, favors the development of competitive advantages through the identification of the key factors of competitive success, contributing to the reduction of the uncertainty in the decision-making process by managers. These findings allow us to recommend to the managers of the multi-active cooperatives that they focus their efforts on the manipulation of these variables, since they marked a significant and positive incidence on the key factors of competitive success.

Likewise, the results take on original value, because they provide empirical evidence that constitutes a significant contribution to the literature by proposing an explanation that presents the theoretical gap between the contributions of Isa and Foong (2005), Ismail and Isa (2011) and Poporato (2015);

since it manages to demonstrate, on the one hand, the contribution of management accounting to the key factors of competitive success through breadth, opportunity and integration, and yet, on the other hand, manages to explain the reasons why it delays the ability to companies to provide timely responses to the demands of the environment, by revealing the significant and negative influence of aggregation within the process. This allows us to tentatively deduce that in the context of Barranquilla's multi-active cooperatives, the application of aggregated information systems is more expensive than giving up on them and this may be due to the aggregation is the dimension of management accounting it is more complicated when trying to detail the information by product lines, departments, periods and others, in multi-asset companies; making it more expensive and difficult to implement due to the requirement of greater resources to prepare it in a timely and reliable way to respond to the demands of the environment at the speeds it demarcates.

KEYWORDS: Management accounting, competitiveness, multi-active cooperatives, key factors of competitive success, resources and capabilities.