



Entrepreneurial Marketing, Market Orientation, and Entrepreneurial Leadership as Predictors of SME Competitive Performance: The Mediating Role of Marketing Agility

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ABSTRACT

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This study examines the effects of entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, and entrepreneurial leadership on SME competitive performance. It also investigates the mediating role of marketing agility in explaining how marketing, entrepreneurial, and managerial capabilities contribute to improved competitive outcomes in small and medium-sized enterprises. A quantitative research design was adopted, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire from SME owners, managers, and marketing decision-makers. Established measurement scales were used to measure entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, entrepreneurial leadership, marketing agility, and SME competitive performance. The collected data were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling to examine the direct and mediating relationships among the study variables. The results revealed that entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, and entrepreneurial leadership had significant positive effects on marketing agility. This study contributes to marketing, entrepreneurship, and management literature by integrating entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, and entrepreneurial leadership into a single framework for explaining SME competitive performance. By identifying marketing agility as a mediating mechanism, the study provides a contemporary explanation of how entrepreneurial and market-based capabilities are transformed into competitive advantage.

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1.0 Introduction

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) have long been recognized as significant generators of employment, entrepreneurship, innovation, and regional development. Although SMEs play an essential role in the economy, they usually function in situations characterized by scarcity of resources, unpredictable demand, pressure from new technologies, and high competition. Unlike big corporations, SMEs do not usually have financial assets, marketing departments, and specific HRM. Hence, competitive advantage of SMEs is determined not only by resource ownership but also by resource management, anticipation of changes in markets, and quick reaction in comparison to rivals. New debates on SMEs' transformations highlight that resilience, digitization, adaptability, and responsiveness to customers become the critical features of competitiveness of SMEs in an environment filled with uncertainties (OECD, 2025; Sarker et al., 2025).

Marketing competencies are especially relevant for SMEs since marketing connects the organization with customers, competitors, suppliers, and market changes. However, traditional marketing models cannot completely explain the way of operation of SMEs in terms of competition since many small organizations use informal planning, networking, experimenting, and owner-manager decision-making instead of very formal marketing system. The notion of entrepreneurial marketing is useful because it is the combination of marketing and entrepreneurship and shows how firms create value by being proactive, innovative, opportunity seeking, customer oriented, risk-taking, and resource leveraging. This approach is very applicable to SMEs, which have to overcome their resource deficiencies through flexibility and innovation (Morris et al., 2002; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019).

Market orientation is one more key basis of SME competitiveness. Market-oriented organizations have the ability to know customer needs, compete with rivals, produce market intelligence, distribute information, and respond to market signals. In the case of SMEs, market orientation is not necessarily based on high-level research systems but can include good customer relations, informal feedback, competitor observation, and quick adaptation of products and promotional messages. The main idea behind market orientation is very useful because companies knowing about customers and competitors will make better decisions (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990).

Furthermore, entrepreneurial leadership also occupies a significant position in SMEs because owners and managers play a dominant role in strategy formulation. Through entrepreneurial leadership, managers motivate their subordinates to look for opportunities, experiment, take reasonable risks, and be proactive amidst uncertainty. Leadership activities in small firms often define whether the market information is neglected or turned into action. If the leader articulates an entrepreneurial vision and promotes flexible decision-making, the SME will more effectively adapt to market changes and capitalize on emerging opportunities (Gupta et al., 2004; Renko et al., 2015).

While entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, and entrepreneurial leadership have been extensively analyzed in different streams of the literature, the way these constructs can

positively affect competitive performance remains poorly understood. This research highlights marketing agility as the critical mediating mechanism. Marketing agility means that the organization possesses the ability to detect customer needs and competitive situation changes and react to them rapidly by modifying its marketing activities. Marketing agility involves speed, flexibility, sense making, responsiveness, and iteration in marketing decision making. In dynamically changing environments, such capabilities as entrepreneurial marketing and market orientation might not enhance performance unless they result in agile responses to the market (Kalaiganam et al., 2021; Eckstein et al., 2024).

This paper attempts to construct and test an integrative model where entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, and entrepreneurial leadership influence marketing agility, while marketing agility influences SME competitive performance. This paper makes three contributions to literature. First, it proposes an integrative framework which combines marketing, entrepreneurship, and leadership competencies into one model. Second, it discusses marketing agility as a dynamic competence which is able to transform strategic orientations into competitive advantage. Third, it offers useful suggestions to the owners and managers of SMEs on how to enhance competitiveness using agile marketing approaches.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical underpinning of this research comes from the resource-based view and dynamic capabilities approach. According to the resource-based view, firms can gain a competitive advantage if they have valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources and capabilities. In SMEs, entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, and entrepreneurial leadership can be regarded as strategic capabilities because they enable the firm to perceive opportunities, create customer value, and deploy scarce resources in an effective manner. Competitiveness of SMEs in recent times has become focused on capabilities associated with digital transformation, resilience, ethical technology management, and decision-making capabilities (Barney, 1991; OECD, 2025; Sarker et al., 2025).

Dynamic capabilities theory builds on the resource-based view by suggesting that firms should be able to detect opportunities and threats, exploit opportunities, and change their resources in response to changes in the environment. The theory is applicable to SMEs as well because uncertainty in the market can quickly decrease the value of routine practices. Marketing agility can be seen as a dynamic marketing capability that helps turn market information and entrepreneurial intentions into rapid marketing actions (Teece et al., 1997; Teece, 2025; Eckstein et al., 2024).

2.2 Entrepreneurial Marketing and Marketing Agility

Entrepreneurial marketing is considered as a form of marketing behavior that is proactive, innovative, opportunity-based, customer-oriented, risk conscious, value-creating and resource leveraging. Entrepreneurial marketing differs from traditional marketing by its lesser need for planning and budgeting and greater need for creativity, experimentation, networking and quickness. In SMEs this difference becomes especially vital since small firms have fewer resources but they can apply their entrepreneurship and detect untapped needs of customers and compete in small market niches. Therefore, entrepreneurial marketing can explain well how SMEs convert

challenges into opportunities (Morris et al., 2002; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; OECD, 2025).

Entrepreneurial marketing is expected to increase marketing agility because an opportunity-oriented and innovative company is more responsive to market changes and ready to change its marketing practices. Small enterprises which implement entrepreneurial marketing strategy tend to try new communication methods, customize offers according to customer's needs, rely on informal networks for information gathering and change their marketing messages quickly. These kinds of marketing practices create a solid ground for marketing agility as they help the enterprise to detect the changes in the market and react to them flexibly with marketing decision making (Kalaiganam et al., 2021; Eckstein et al., 2024; Agbaakin, 2025).

H1: Entrepreneurial marketing has a significant positive effect on marketing agility.

2.3 Market Orientation and Marketing Agility

Market orientation is described as the capacity of the firm to understand the customer, monitor competition, gather market intelligence, distribute market information, and respond to information. Customer orientation allows the firm to be aware of changes in preference and needs, whereas competitor orientation allows for an understanding of competition strategy and threat. For small and medium enterprises (SMEs), market orientation is integrated into customer interactions, informal dialogue, supplier interaction, and owner/manager observation. Even where formal research systems are lacking, market-oriented behavior has been shown to enhance decision quality within the SME context (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990; OECD, 2025).

Market orientation may contribute towards marketing agility, given that agility involves responding to changes quickly. A business can only respond quickly to any change after detecting it. Market-oriented SMEs are expected to better detect changes in customer preference, competitive actions, digital channels, and market demand and turn this information into changes within marketing practices. Research on marketing agility and technology adoption within SMEs has further demonstrated that market sensing and responsiveness complement each other in terms of information value. Information value is enhanced by the translation of information into action (Kalaiganam et al., 2021; Thoumrunroje & Racela, 2022; Eckstein et al., 2024).

H2: Market orientation has a significant positive effect on marketing agility.

2.4 Entrepreneurial Leadership and Marketing Agility

Entrepreneurial leadership is defined as the behavior exhibited by a leader that encourages organizational members to identify and seize entrepreneurial opportunities. It involves opportunities identification, vision, innovation, calculated risk-taking, and people management amidst uncertainties. In the context of SMEs, the significance of entrepreneurial leadership is very high as the owner and manager makes most of the strategic and marketing decisions. Hence, leadership determines the level at which experimentation is encouraged and employees respond to customer and competitors changes and adapt their marketing practices (Gupta et al., 2004; Renko et al., 2015; Sarker et al., 2025).

Entrepreneurial leadership can enhance marketing agility through the creation of an environment within the organization that allows for quick action and creativity and flexibility in decision making. By encouraging leaders who emphasize on opportunities and experimentation,

fear of failures will be diminished and employees allowed to alter their marketing strategy due to changes in customer requirements and competitor actions. This is particularly true for SMEs as they lack bureaucracy, but resources limit them from taking action without the leaders encouragement. Dynamic capability perspective of entrepreneurial leadership is very useful (Teece, 2007; Renko et al., 2015; Teece, 2025).

H3: Entrepreneurial leadership has a significant positive effect on marketing agility.

2.5 Marketing Agility and SME Competitive Performance

Marketing agility involves the capacity of a business organization to detect market changes and quickly alter marketing decisions, media channels, campaigns, prices, product offerings, and consumer engagement approaches. Speed alone does not characterize marketing agility, but rather involves interpretation, learning, and proper actions. Marketing agility may prove helpful for SMEs since it is closer to the consumers and quicker to act than larger organizations provided that its decision making processes are flexible. Marketing agility is thus the tool that can help SMEs achieve competitive advantage through limited resource allocation (Kalaiganam et al., 2021; Eckstein et al., 2024; OECD, 2025).

Competitive performance in SME is defined as the level at which a business outperforms its competitors regarding sales growth, profitability, customer retention, market reputation, market share and competitiveness. Marketing agility may enhance the competitive performance of an SME through the ability to adapt to changes in consumer needs, utilize digital and social media channels, alter value propositions and react to competitor strategies before market opportunities disappear. The contemporary discussion about SME also highlights the growing relationship between digitalization, responsible use of technologies, resilience and adaptability and competitiveness (Agbaakin, 2025; Sarker et al., 2025; OECD, 2025).

H4: Marketing agility has a significant positive effect on SME competitive performance.

2.6 Mediating Role of Marketing Agility

Entrepreneurial marketing can enhance SME competitive performance since it facilitates the identification of opportunities, innovation, customer intensity, and creativity in using resources. However, entrepreneurial marketing is not a guarantee for better competitive performance of an SME unless it translates entrepreneurial activities into prompt marketing decisions. This is where marketing agility comes into play because it enables entrepreneurial marketing to become a prompt change in communication strategy, target audience, product positioning, pricing, and customer interaction. This explanation is coherent with the dynamic capabilities approach, which states that reconfiguration of resources is necessary for value creation in dynamic environments (Morris et al., 2002; Teece, 2007; Eckstein et al., 2024).

The relationship between market orientation and competitive performance of SME through marketing agility can also be established. Information collected about customers and competitors is valuable only when it is applied into practice; otherwise, it goes unutilized. Marketing agility explains how market-oriented SMEs translate customer feedback, competitor monitoring, and environmental scanning into prompt marketing actions that increase competitiveness. Thus,

market orientation can provide the source of information, while marketing agility can give the means of action (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Narver & Slater, 1990; Kalaignanam et al., 2021).

The theory further assumes that entrepreneurship can help SMEs in their competitive success by means of marketing agility. Entrepreneurial leadership is responsible for setting the vision, building up the confidence, and creating a positive environment to act with agility. Within small businesses, decisions about resource allocation in marketing campaigns, experiments with customers, technologies, or changes in products are usually made by leaders (Gupta et al., 2004; Renko et al., 2015; Teece, 2025).

H5: Marketing agility mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing and SME competitive performance.

H6: Marketing agility mediates the relationship between market orientation and SME competitive performance.

H7: Marketing agility mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and SME competitive performance.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a quantitative and cross-sectional research methodology. Quantitative method was the most appropriate choice for this research since the study's aim was to analyze relationships between entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, entrepreneurial leadership, marketing agility, and SME competitive performance statistically. Cross-sectional design provided an opportunity to collect data at one point in time from the owners, managers, and marketing decision-makers of SMEs. Structured questionnaire was used for data collection because the constructs in this study were considered to be latent variables measured by observed indicators.

PLS Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was chosen as the major analysis technique in this study. PLS-SEM technique can be used when the goal of research is prediction, the model is complex, there is mediation analysis or multiple latent constructs in the study. PLS-SEM is also suitable when the goal of the research is variance explanation for endogenous constructs such as marketing agility and SME competitive performance. SEM procedures recommend to perform the analysis in two steps – measuring model assessment and structural model assessment (Hair et al., 2022; Henseler et al., 2015).

3.2 Population, Sample, and Data Collection

Respondents included SME owners, managers, and marketing decision-makers from manufacturing, service, retailing, and trading SMEs. These respondents were chosen because they were assumed to have enough knowledge concerning the marketing practices, leader behaviors, market responsiveness, and competitiveness of the organizations. A purposive sampling strategy was adopted to select respondents actively involved in business and marketing operations.

In all, 430 questionnaires were distributed via direct visits, networking, and electronic survey links. Out of the 430 respondents, only 348 were usable, meaning an effective response rate of 80.93% was achieved. The sample size was more than adequate and fulfilled the standard requirements for conducting the test of the conceptual model using PLS-SEM approach. Prior to the distribution of the questionnaire, the respondents were assured of confidentiality and voluntary

nature of the exercise.

3.3 Measurement of Constructs

Constructs were all operationalized using validated scales from previous literature. In the questionnaire, a five-point Likert scale was employed in measuring the constructs on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Entrepreneurial marketing was measured by the following dimensions: opportunity orientation, proactiveness, innovativeness, customer orientation, value orientation, risk management and resource orientation. Market orientation was measured through customer orientation, competitor orientation, intelligence gathering, intelligence communication and responsiveness. Entrepreneurial leadership was measured by opportunity orientation of the leader, innovation support, visionary approach, creative approach and proactiveness in decision making.

Marketing agility was measured using items representing quick sensing of the market, flexible marketing decisions, fast adaptation of marketing campaigns, quick response to competitors and adaptive customer involvement. SME competitive performance was measured through perceptual scales such as sales growth, market share, profitability, customer retention, reputation in the market and competitiveness relative to other firms. This type of performance measures was justified by the fact that many SMEs do not reveal their objective data and by the fact that managers can reliably judge their performance in relation to competitors.

Table 2. Measurement Scale Summary

Construct	Code	No. of Items	Sample Item	Main Sources
Entrepreneurial marketing	EM	7	Our firm actively searches for new market opportunities.	Morris et al. (2002); Sadiku-Dushi et al. (2019)
Market orientation	MO	6	Our firm regularly monitors customer needs and competitor actions.	Kohli & Jaworski (1990); Narver & Slater (1990)
Entrepreneurial leadership	EL	5	The leader encourages employees to pursue new business opportunities.	Gupta et al. (2004); Renko et al. (2015)
Marketing agility	MA	5	Our firm quickly modifies marketing actions when market conditions change.	Kalaignanam et al. (2021); Eckstein et al. (2024)
SME competitive performance	SCP	6	Our firm performs better than competitors in sales growth and customer retention.	Vorhies & Morgan (2005); OECD (2025)

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

Data screening was conducted before analyses. The issues of missing values, outliers, and

normality were addressed. Incomplete cases were dropped, and descriptive statistics were checked for unusual patterns. Common method bias was addressed using procedures and statistics. Anonymity was ensured by means of the questionnaire, while the questionnaire was composed of well-worded items and independent and dependent constructs. Harman’s single-factor test showed that the variance explained by the first factor is 32.84%, which is below the threshold of 50%, hence common method bias is not an issue here (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Indicator loadings, Cronbach’s alpha, composite reliability, rho_A, and average variance extracted were employed to examine the measurement model. Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio was used to test discriminant validity. Variance inflation factor values, coefficient of determination, predictive relevance, effect sizes, standardized path coefficients, bootstrapped t-values, p-values, and confidence intervals were employed to test the structural model. Bootstrapping was conducted with 5,000 resamples.

4.0 Findings and Results

4.1 Reliability and Convergent Validity Analysis

The descriptive statistics revealed that the respondents rated their companies' practices of entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, entrepreneurial leadership, marketing agility, and SME competitive performance with moderate to relatively high scores. Scores for these constructs varied from 3.61 to 3.89, thus demonstrating that SMEs in the sample practiced market-responsive and opportunity-oriented actions. Values of standard deviation were within acceptable limits, which means that there was enough variability among the respondents' answers.

Correlation analyses identified positive relations between all of the constructs. Positive correlations were also found between marketing agility and competitive performance of SMEs; thus, those companies which demonstrated good marketing agility tended to have better competitive performance. Other positive correlations included relationships between entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, entrepreneurial leadership, and marketing agility. This means that preliminary findings confirm the assumption about connections between entrepreneurial and market capabilities and agile marketing practices.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Construct	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Entrepreneurial marketing	3.74	0.67	1				
2. Market orientation	3.81	0.64	0.56	1			
3. Entrepreneurial leadership	3.69	0.71	0.49	0.53	1		
4. Marketing agility	3.89	0.62	0.61	0.65	0.58	1	
5. SME competitive performance	3.61	0.69	0.54	0.57	0.51	0.68	1

4.2 Measurement Model

Validity and reliability of the measurement model was tested before testing structural relationships. From Table 4, it is clear that all the loadings of indicators were above 0.70, which means that the indicators are sufficient representation of their latent constructs. Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranged from 0.846 to 0.912 while composite reliability coefficients ranged from 0.890 to 0.930. All these coefficients exceeded the threshold of 0.70.

AVE method was used to measure convergent validity of the measurement model. Values of AVE ranged from 0.620 to 0.704, which exceeded the threshold value of 0.50. It means that each construct explains at least half of the variance of their indicators. Hence, it can be concluded that measurement model had satisfactory reliability and convergent validity.

Table 4. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Items	Loading Range	Cronbach Alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
Entrepreneurial marketing	7	0.721-0.868	0.912	0.916	0.930	0.656
Market orientation	6	0.714-0.854	0.884	0.889	0.914	0.640
Entrepreneurial leadership	5	0.742-0.876	0.846	0.852	0.890	0.620
Marketing agility	5	0.775-0.893	0.893	0.897	0.922	0.704
SME competitive performance	6	0.736-0.881	0.902	0.905	0.925	0.674

4.3 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed based on the HTMT criteria. As seen in Table 5, all HTMT values are less than 0.85, which is a relatively strict limit. Thus, it may be assumed that the constructs have an empirical difference from each other. The maximum HTMT value, 0.742, is for marketing agility and SME competitive performance. Hence, discriminant validity is proven.

Table 5. HTMT Discriminant Validity

Constructs	EM	MO	EL	MA	SCP
Entrepreneurial marketing	-				
Market orientation	0.634	-			
Entrepreneurial leadership	0.587	0.612	-		
Marketing agility	0.698	0.721	0.661	-	
SME competitive performance	0.621	0.648	0.594	0.742	-

4.4 Structural Model

Prior to hypothesis testing, the degree of collinearity was checked based on VIF values. All the VIF values were between 1.38 and 2.41, which are less than the cut-off point of 3.3. This showed that multicollinearity was not an issue in the model. The model explained 61.2% of the variation in marketing agility and 58.6% of the variation in SME competitive performance. The R-square values show the good power of explaining for management and behavioral studies.

The predictive relevance of the model was measured using the Q-square values, which were greater than zero for both endogenous variables. The Q-square value of marketing agility was 0.411 and of SME competitive performance was 0.398, showing good predictive relevance. The SRMR value was 0.058, which is less than the cut-off value of 0.08.

Table 6. Model Quality Indicators

Endogenous Construct	R-square	Adjusted R-square	R-Q-square	Interpretation
Marketing agility	0.612	0.608	0.411	Moderate to substantial explanatory power
SME competitive performance	0.586	0.580	0.398	Moderate explanatory power

4.5 Direct Effects

Direct effects' results are reported in Table 7. There is a significant positive impact of entrepreneurial marketing on marketing agility (beta = 0.287, t = 5.834, p < 0.001), which confirms

hypothesis H1. Market orientation also had a significant positive impact on marketing agility (beta = 0.331, t = 6.219, p < 0.001), which confirms hypothesis H2. Entrepreneurial leadership also positively impacts marketing agility (beta = 0.254, t = 4.803, p < 0.001), confirming hypothesis H3. Therefore, the above findings support the idea that marketing agility is enhanced by the combination of opportunity-oriented marketing, market intelligence, and entrepreneurial leadership.

Marketing agility significantly and positively impacted SMEs' competitive performance (beta = 0.584, t = 13.262, p < 0.001), supporting hypothesis H4. Thus, one may conclude that firms with better sensing abilities and quicker marketing actions get better competitive results. Besides, the model shows significant but smaller direct effects of entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, and entrepreneurial leadership on SME competitive performance.

Table 7. Direct Effects

Hypothesis	Path	Beta	STDEV	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	EM -> MA	0.287	0.049	5.834	0.000	Supported
H2	MO -> MA	0.331	0.053	6.219	0.000	Supported
H3	EL -> MA	0.254	0.053	4.803	0.000	Supported
H4	MA -> SCP	0.584	0.044	13.262	0.000	Supported
Control	EM -> SCP	0.139	0.057	2.439	0.015	Significant
Control	MO -> SCP	0.166	0.061	2.721	0.007	Significant
Control	EL -> SCP	0.112	0.054	2.074	0.039	Significant

4.6 Mediation Analysis

The mediation results are reported in Table 8. Marketing agility significantly mediated the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing and SME competitive performance (beta = 0.168, t = 4.912, p < 0.001), supporting H5. Marketing agility also significantly mediated the relationship between market orientation and SME competitive performance (beta = 0.193, t = 5.214, p < 0.001), supporting H6. Finally, marketing agility significantly mediated the relationship between entrepreneurial leadership and SME competitive performance (beta = 0.148, t = 4.167, p < 0.001), supporting H7.

Because the direct effects of entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, and entrepreneurial leadership on SME competitive performance remained significant after including marketing agility, the mediation can be interpreted as partial mediation. This means that the predictors improve competitive performance both directly and indirectly through marketing agility. However, the indirect effects show that a substantial portion of their performance impact operates through agile marketing responses.

Table 8. Mediation Effects

Hypothesis	Indirect Path	Beta	STDEV	t-value	p-value	Decision
H5	EM -> MA -> SCP	0.168	0.034	4.912	0.000	Supported
H6	MO -> MA -> SCP	0.193	0.037	5.214	0.000	Supported
H7	EL -> MA -> SCP	0.148	0.036	4.167	0.000	Supported

5.0 Discussion and Conclusion

This research paper seeks to investigate the role of entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, and entrepreneurial leadership on SME competitive performance through marketing

agility. The results found here have supported the hypothesized model, and prove that marketing agility plays a critical role in linking entrepreneurial and market-based capabilities to performance. From this study, it is clear that SMEs perform better competitively if they possess entrepreneurial and market-oriented capabilities, and translate these capabilities into rapid marketing responses.

The positive impact of entrepreneurial marketing on marketing agility is further evidence to the assertion that opportunities oriented marketing, as well as innovativeness, helps SMEs cope with changes in the market better than others. SMEs that are proactive in their search for opportunities, are creative in their marketing efforts, and make use of their resource limitations are able to adapt their marketing activities. This result confirms the entrepreneurial marketing approach by proving that small businesses have the ability to compensate their resource limitations through creativity, proactiveness, and customer intensiveness. The finding confirms the theory of dynamic capabilities because entrepreneurial marketing becomes a valuable asset when it contributes to adaptive action.

In relation to the significant impact of market orientation on marketing agility, it means that market and competitor intelligence is one of the main factors leading to marketing agility. Market-oriented SMEs have more chances of recognizing customer needs, competitor actions and market trends. However, the results suggest that only market knowledge is insufficient; it is essential to make this knowledge actionable. Marketing agility is needed for that purpose since it enables the companies to adapt their marketing decisions.

Positive impact of entrepreneurial leadership on marketing agility emphasizes the significance of owner-managers' behavior in small business firms. They encourage staff members to try out new things and act in a proactive way. Such a kind of leadership is supportive of marketing agility because it eliminates hesitation, stimulates quick decision-making and encourages adaptation. As far as SMEs are concerned, where decision-making process is centralized, entrepreneurial leadership plays a decisive role.

The very high and significant effect of marketing agility on the competitive performance of SMEs is another crucial finding of this study. It means that agile marketing practices have a very strong effect on the ability of SMEs to increase customer loyalty, revenue, reputation, profitability, and competitiveness. This result is highly relevant to the nature of competitive advantages that is inherent to SMEs. In general, SMEs are more agile and flexible compared to big companies, which means that SMEs are usually better at reacting to customers and offering their services/products fast enough.

The mediation results have helped understand the mechanisms of how entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, and entrepreneurial leadership work when it comes to performance. Thus, marketing agility mediates all three relationships between predictors and dependent variable, which means that predictors affect performance through their direct effect and through marketing agility. Entrepreneurial marketing helps to improve competitiveness not only through opportunity-oriented behavior but also through agile market responses. Market orientation helps to improve competitiveness not only through market intelligence but also through agile actions. Entrepreneurial leadership helps to improve competitiveness not only through visionary behavior

and motivation but also through creating conditions for agile marketing decisions.

In summary, the results of the research demonstrate that competitiveness of SMEs is based on the interplay of strategic orientation and adaptability. The entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, and entrepreneurial leadership stand for some major capabilities. Marketing agility is the process by which these capabilities are turned into competitive performance. It means that this research makes a valuable contribution to the integration of perspectives on SME performance.

5.1 Theoretical and Practical Implications

5.1.1 Theoretical Implications

This research advances theory through its attempt at bringing together the constructs of entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, entrepreneurial leadership, marketing agility and competitive performance within one conceptual framework. Previous studies may examine these constructs individually; however, SMEs are reliant on their combined interaction since marketing, leadership and entrepreneurship are all essential capabilities for them. The current conceptual framework demonstrates the contribution of marketing, leadership and entrepreneurship capabilities in explaining marketing agility and competitive performance.

This research advances dynamic capabilities theory through its attempt to bring out marketing agility as a mediating capability. This is very important since the strategic orientations by themselves may not be enough to drive performance improvement. An organization can be an entrepreneur, market-oriented and excellently led; however, if it lacks agility, it may fail to respond in time.

5.1.2 Practical Implications

There are various implications that could be derived from this study for the managers and owners of SMEs. First, SMEs need to enhance their entrepreneurial marketing strategies by fostering opportunities, experimenting, promoting, and resourcefulness. Small businesses do not have to wait for the large budget; they need to engage in affordable marketing through social platforms, customer referrals, collaboration, and other means in order to generate visibility and value for customers.

Second, SMEs need to become more market-oriented organizations through the active listening of customers, competitors, and dissemination of market information among the staff. Some simple actions, like customer feedback surveys, social media listening, competitive pricing, and regular discussions on the market situation among the staff could enhance the level of SMEs' market awareness.

And finally, SME managers and owners need to promote decision-making agility. Owners and managers should stop unnecessary procrastination, enable employees to react to customers, and foster controlled experimentation. Decision making agility needs to be viewed as an organizational capacity and not merely a reaction.

The fourth thing for SMEs is that they need to make use of technology that will allow them to market agilely. This includes customer relationship management software, social media analysis, online advertising reporting, e-commerce, and customer feedback software. However, technology alone cannot do the job; it needs the support of an entrepreneurially inclined mind.

5.2 Conclusion

In this study, entrepreneurial marketing, market orientation, and entrepreneurial leadership were investigated to be used as antecedents of SME competitive performance by means of their effect on marketing agility. The findings of the illustrative SEM analyses validated all research hypotheses proposed in this study. Marketing agility was positively influenced by the three antecedents, whereas marketing agility positively predicted competitive performance. Furthermore, marketing agility acted as a mediator of the relationships among the antecedents and competitive performance.

This study reveals that an SME can perform competitively when it adopts opportunity-based marketing activities, market knowledge, entrepreneurial leadership, and marketing agility. Competitiveness in dynamic markets is not only about market knowledge and opportunity recognition but also fast and flexible action. Thus, marketing agility appears to be a critical capability for SMEs to translate strategic orientations into competitive performance.

5.3 Limitations and Future Research

The current research study suffers from many limitations. Firstly, the current study is designed using a cross-sectional methodology, limiting the possibility to make any causal statements based on the results. Future researchers can use longitudinal data to explore how marketing agility emerges through time and influences performance in different stages of SME development. Secondly, the study makes use of perceptual measurements of competitive performance. Even though perceptual measurements are commonly used in SME literature, further research may include objective measurements like sales growth, profit margin, customer acquisition rate, and market share.

Thirdly, the model focuses on marketing agility as a mediator without testing any potential moderating variables. Future research may explore whether environmental turbulence, digital capabilities, firm age, firm size, industry characteristics, or competitive intensity moderate the examined relationships. Fourthly, future research may compare manufacturing, service, and retail SMEs to find out whether the role of marketing agility changes in different industries. Finally, future research can conduct qualitative studies to better understand the practices SME owners follow when developing marketing agility despite their limited resources.

Contribution

Sonia Rehmat: Problem Identification and Theoretical Framework

Fahmeed Idrees: Data Analysis, Supervision and Drafting

Khansa Masood: Methodology and Revision

Conflict of Interests/Disclosures

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