



Market Orientation and Export Performance Study of SMEs in Indonesia with Dynamic Capabilities, Competitive Advantage, and Innovation Capability as Mediating Variables: A conceptual Study

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ABSTRACT

This conceptual study intends to develop a research framework regarding the impact of market orientation on the export performance of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia, by considering the mediating role of dynamic capabilities, competitive advantage, and innovation capabilities. It is hoped that this conceptual study will contribute to analyzing the complex relationships between existing variables to provide insight into how Indonesian SMEs can increase their competitiveness in international markets. This research can be developed quantitatively, utilizing structural equation modeling to test the proposed conceptual framework. The development results of this research can have valuable implications for SME managers and policymakers who seek to increase the export success of Indonesian companies in an increasingly globalized business environment.

INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in the economic development of a country. They are considered the emerging private sector in many nations and form the foundation for private sector-led growth (Beck & Demirgüç-Kunt, 2006). SMEs contribute significantly to job creation, poverty alleviation, and overall economic growth (Tomorri, 2024). These enterprises are vital for employment, exports, and GDP generation, making substantial contributions to the economy (Metzker, 2023). SMEs are essential components of the economy, not only in specific regions like Indonesia but also globally, impacting the speed and stability of the economy (Widayati et al., 2023). Furthermore, SMEs are recognized as important vehicles for employment, reducing poverty levels, and fostering entrepreneurship activities, thereby contributing significantly to the gross domestic product and overall economic well-being of a country (Sitharam & Hoque, 2016). The development and support of SMEs are crucial for economic growth, as they are instrumental in generating GDP, creating employment opportunities, and promoting regional development and poverty reduction (Aloysius et al., 2017). Overall, SMEs are fundamental to the economic fabric of a country, driving growth, innovation, and sustainability.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are crucial to the economic landscape of countries like Indonesia, serving as the backbone of national economies by fostering employment opportunities and driving economic growth (Demirbağ et al., 2006). In Indonesia specifically, the SME sector has demonstrated consistent growth over the years. For instance, in 2016, there were 61.7 million SMEs in the country, a number that increased to 62.9 million in 2017 and further to 63.5 million in 2018 (Effendi & Yasmin, 2017). This growth is indicative of the sector's resilience and adaptability to the country's economic conditions (Susanto et al., 2021). Moreover, SMEs in Indonesia significantly contribute to the nation's GDP, with a share of 59.84% in 2016, which increased to 60.34% in 2017 (Games et al., 2022). Additionally, the labor absorption capacity of SMEs in Indonesia is substantial, with the sector accounting for 97.22% of total employment in 2017 (Widnyana et al., 2021).

Apart from playing an important role domestically, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) must also play an important role in the export sector. SMEs not only provide employment but also contribute to a country's exports and overall economic growth (Wahab et al., 2019; , Abban et al., 2013). The presence of SMEs in the export sector is very important to encourage economic development, because they bring diversity, innovation and competitiveness to international markets (Madushanka & Sachitra, 2021). By venturing into international markets, SMEs not only expand their customer base but also gain diverse market knowledge that enhances their competitive advantage and growth potential (Lafuente et al., 2018). Overall, SMEs contribute significantly to a country's economic growth through their export activities, underscoring their importance in driving revenue generation and job creation (Reswita et al., 2021).

Market orientation is a critical factor influencing export performance through its dimensions of competitor orientation and customer orientation. Research has shown that market-oriented behaviors, such as export market-oriented behaviors and export strategic orientations, directly impact firms' success in product innovation and export performance (Boso et al., 2012; Boso et al., 2016). The dimensions of market orientation, specifically customer orientation and competitor orientation, have been identified as significant predictors of overall export marketing performance, underscoring the importance of understanding and responding to customer needs and competitor actions in export markets (Julian et al., 2013; Lengler et al., 2013). Moreover, market orientation has been found to mediate the relationship between international entrepreneurial orientation and export performance, highlighting its role in driving export success (Pramudana & Santika, 2023). Customer orientation, in particular, has been demonstrated to have a direct positive effect on export outcomes, emphasizing its significance in enhancing export performance (Tuominen et al., 2022; Hortinha et al., 2011; Miocevic et al., 2022; Firouzeh & Satvati, 2018). In conclusion, a robust market orientation, characterized by a focus on both customers and competitors, is essential for firms to excel in international markets and achieve superior export performance.

Export performance for SMEs is influenced by a combination of dynamic capabilities, competitive advantage, and innovation capability. Research by Love & Roper (2015) highlights that SMEs with prior innovation experience are more likely to export successfully and achieve growth through exporting. Cho et al. (2023) delve into the effects of organizational capabilities, such as technology and marketing capabilities, on SMEs' export performance, emphasizing the importance of these capabilities in competitive export-oriented economies. Ribau et al. (2017) focus on how internal innovation capabilities impact SMEs' export performance, stressing the significance of innovation in driving export success. Additionally, Safari & Saleh (2020) underscore the role of innovation and export marketing strategies in enhancing SMEs' export performance. These studies collectively emphasize that SMEs can leverage their innovation capabilities and competitive advantage to improve their export performance, enabling them to compete effectively in international markets.

This research on market orientation's influence on export performance in Indonesian SMEs offers several key advantages. By incorporating dynamic capabilities, competitive advantage, and innovation capability as mediating variables, it provides a more comprehensive understanding of the factors driving export success. This approach allows for a nuanced analysis of how market-oriented strategies translate into improved export outcomes through enhanced organizational adaptability, market positioning, and innovative practices. For Indonesian policymakers and business leaders, such insights can inform targeted interventions to boost SME competitiveness in global markets. Additionally, this study contributes to the broader academic literature by examining these relationships in the context of a developing economy,

potentially revealing unique patterns or challenges specific to Indonesian or similar markets.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Market Orientation

Market orientation is a crucial concept for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as it involves focusing on both customer orientation and competitor orientation to achieve competitive advantage and enhance performance. Customer orientation emphasizes understanding and meeting customer needs and preferences (Appiah- Adu & Singh, 1998). This aspect is vital for SMEs as it enables them to respond effectively to market demands and ensure customer satisfaction (Lee et al., 2019). On the other hand, competitor orientation involves understanding the strengths and weaknesses of competitors and using this knowledge to innovate and meet customer needs better (Mamman & Isaac, 2020). Research suggests that a strong market orientation, which includes both customer and competitor orientation, can lead to improved innovation performance, organizational performance (Beneke et al., 2016), and overall firm performance (Ciunova-Shuleska et al., 2017). Therefore, SMEs that adopt a market orientation strategy focusing on both customer and competitor orientation are more likely to achieve sustainable growth and success in competitive markets.

Market orientation is a crucial factor for the success of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) as supported by various studies. Buli (2017) highlights that integrating market orientation into the operations of SMEs contributes to superior performance, enabling them to thrive in complex environments. Similarly, Jin & Cho (2018) emphasize the importance of market orientation, marketing capability, and digitalization for enhancing SME performance, especially in internationalized settings. Furthermore, Mainardes et al. (2021) demonstrate that market orientation, along with entrepreneurial orientation, drives SMEs to develop technological and marketing capabilities, leading to improved performance in international markets. These findings underscore the significance of market orientation in SMEs' success by enhancing their competitiveness, performance, and ability to adapt to changing market dynamics. Additionally, Mainardes et al. (2021) suggest that fostering a strong market orientation through marketing capabilities can help SMEs achieve sustained competitive advantage, further emphasizing the pivotal role of market orientation in SME growth and profitability.

Market orientation, which includes competitor orientation and customer orientation, is crucial in influencing the export performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Research has indicated that SMEs should enhance their market orientation capabilities to improve their export performance (Rahman & Dahalan@Omar, 2021). Competitor orientation involves understanding and responding to competitors' actions, while customer orientation focuses on meeting customer needs effectively. Studies have emphasized the importance of market orientation in the success of SMEs in exports, especially in competitive environments (Isichei, 2023). Furthermore, research has shown that dimensions of market orientation, such as export

market orientation, have a positive impact on SMEs' international performance (Zhang et al., 2015). By aligning their strategies with market demands and competitor actions, SMEs can enhance their export performance. Therefore, developing a strong market orientation, encompassing competitor and customer focus, is essential for SMEs seeking to excel in the global market.

Competitor orientation and customer orientation are both essential factors influencing the export performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Competitor orientation drives SMEs to focus on understanding and analyzing their competitors, which can impact their innovation capabilities (D'Souza et al., 2021). This understanding of competitors can lead to the development of strategies that enhance the competitiveness of SMEs in the export market. On the other hand, customer orientation emphasizes the importance of meeting customer needs and preferences, which is crucial for SMEs to develop products or services that are well-suited for export markets (Appiah- Adu & Singh, 1998). By aligning their offerings with customer demands, SMEs can enhance their export performance by ensuring customer satisfaction and loyalty. Both orientations are interconnected, as competitor orientation can drive innovation, while customer orientation ensures that the innovations meet market demands, ultimately leading to improved export performance (D'Souza et al., 2021). Therefore, SMEs that effectively balance competitor and customer orientations are likely to achieve better export performance outcomes.

Dynamic capabilities

Dynamic capabilities are essential for influencing the export performance of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). These capabilities refer to a firm's capacity to integrate, build, adapt, and reconfigure its internal and external resources to meet the demands of the dynamic business environment, particularly in international markets (Tartaglione & Formisano, 2018). Research has shown that internal innovation capabilities significantly impact the export performance of SMEs, underscoring the importance of fostering a culture of innovation within these organizations (Ribau et al., 2017). Moreover, organizational capabilities such as technology capability, marketing capability, and market-sensing capabilities have been identified as crucial drivers of export performance for SMEs (Jin & Cho, 2018; Chung et al., 2018; Miočević & Morgan, 2018). Studies have also found that the presence of dynamic capabilities, including cognitive and information-based capabilities, positively influences SME export performance, highlighting the importance of these intangible resources in enhancing competitiveness in export markets (Miočević & Crnjak-Karanović, 2011; Liu et al., 2019). Additionally, the ability of SMEs to identify international opportunities and leverage their operational capabilities has been associated with improved export performance, emphasizing the role of proactive market orientation and innovation capability in boosting exports (Kolbe et al., 2021; Faiz et al., 2018). Overall, the literature emphasizes the significance of dynamic capabilities in enhancing the export performance of SMEs by enabling them to adapt to changing market conditions, innovate, and effectively compete in the global marketplace.

Competitive advantage

Competitive advantage plays a significant role in influencing the export performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Several studies have highlighted the importance of competitive advantage in enhancing SMEs' export performance. For example, Udriyah et al. (2019) emphasize that competitive advantage acts as a mediator between market orientation, innovation, and SMEs' performance (Udriyah et al., 2019). This is further supported by Herman et al. (2018), who found that competitive advantage positively impacts SMEs' performance (Isichei, 2023; . (Isichei, 2023; suggests that competitive intelligence and learning orientation contribute to competitive advantage, which in turn enhances export performance (Rua et al., 2018). Additionally, Rua et al. (2018) and Tan & Sousa (2015) indicate that competitive advantage mediates the relationship between various factors such as marketing capabilities and strategic determinants, ultimately positively influencing SMEs' export performance (Tan & Sousa, 2015).

1. "The effects of market orientation and innovation on competitive advantage and business performance of textile SMEs" *Management Science Letters* (2019) doi:10.5267/j.msl.2019.5.009
2. Herman et al. "Linking Competitive Intelligence, Learning Orientation and Export Performance of SMEs" *Sage Open* (2023) doi:10.1177/21582440231184979
3. "Key drivers of SMEs export performance: the mediating effect of competitive advantage" *Journal of Knowledge Management* (2018) doi:10.1108/jkm-07-2017-0267
4. "Leveraging marketing capabilities into competitive advantage and export performance" *International Marketing Review* (2015) doi:10.1108/imr-12-2013-0279.

Innovation capability

Innovation capability is a critical factor in enhancing the export performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Love & Roper (2015) highlight that SMEs with prior innovation are more likely to export successfully and experience growth from exporting compared to non-innovating firms (Love & Roper, 2015; . Kolbe et al., 2021) further emphasize that developing innovation capability in SMEs contributes to higher export performance by implementing innovations across various processes (Kolbe et al., 2021; . Ribau et al., 2017) delve into the internal innovation capabilities of SMEs and their impact on export performance, with entrepreneurial orientation mediating this relationship (Ribau et al., 2017; . Hashmi et al., 2022) found that both technology-based and market-based innovations positively influence the export performance of SMEs (Hashmi et al., 2022; . Enjolras et al., 2020) also support this notion by indicating that innovation positively affects export performance, particularly through product innovation (Enjolras et al., 2020). Moreover, Ali et al. (2020) suggest that product and marketing innovation capabilities significantly impact SMEs' financial and operational performance (Ali et al., 2020). Overall, these studies collectively demonstrate that fostering innovation capability within SMEs is essential for improving their export performance.

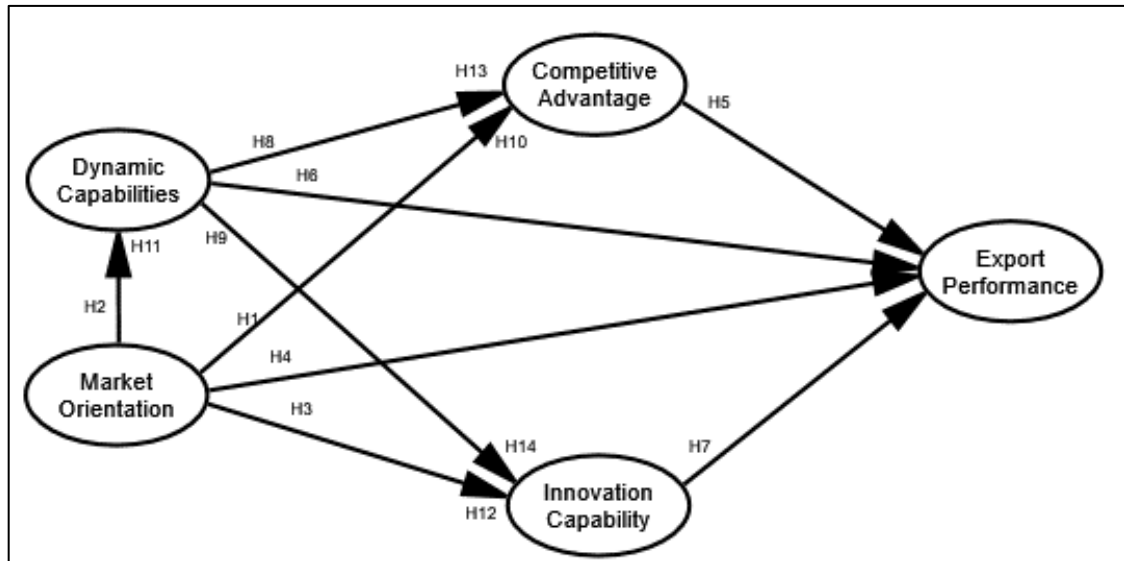


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Based on the research framework presented in Figure 1, the research hypothesis can be presented as follows:

H1: Market orientation has an influence on competitive advantage

H2: Market orientation has an influence on dynamic capabilities

H3: Market orientation has an influence on innovation capability

H4: Market orientation has an influence on export performance

H5: Competitive advantage has an influence on export performance

H6: Dynamic capabilities have an influence on export performance

H7: Innovation capability has an influence on export performance

H8: Dynamic capabilities have an influence on competitive advantage

H9: Dynamic capabilities have an influence on innovation capability

H10: Market orientation has an influence on export performance through competitive advantage

H11: Market orientation has an influence on export performance through dynamic capabilities

H12: Market orientation has an influence on export performance through innovation capability

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This conceptual study examines five key variables: Market Orientation, Dynamic Capabilities, Competitive Advantage, Innovation Capability, and Export Performance. These variables were selected based on their relevance in previous related studies. The research proposes twelve hypotheses for future investigation. Overall, this study seems to present a unique combination of factors affecting export performance among Indonesian small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This conceptual study appears to explore a novel combination of factors influencing export performance for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia. Its uniqueness lies in examining how market orientation affects export performance through multiple mediating variables -

dynamic capabilities, competitive advantage, and innovation capability. By considering these mediating factors together, the study likely aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationships between a firm's market orientation and its success in international markets. The focus on Indonesian SMEs adds contextual novelty, as it explores these concepts in a specific developing economy setting. This research could potentially offer valuable insights for both academics studying international business and practitioners looking to enhance SME export performance in similar economic contexts.

The conceptual study likely recommends that Indonesian SMEs focus on developing a strong market orientation to enhance their export performance. It may suggest that this relationship is mediated by dynamic capabilities, competitive advantage, and innovation capability. The study probably advises SMEs to invest in market research and customer engagement to better understand international market demands. It might emphasize the importance of building flexible organizational structures and processes (dynamic capabilities) to quickly adapt to changing market conditions. The recommendations may also highlight the need for SMEs to cultivate unique selling propositions (competitive advantage) and foster a culture of innovation to differentiate themselves in global markets. Finally, the study could stress the importance of government support and industry collaborations to help SMEs overcome resource constraints and improve their export readiness.

ADVANCED RESEARCH

Based on the conceptual study "The Influence of Market Orientation on Export Performance Studies in SMEs in Indonesia with Dynamic capabilities, Competitive advantage and Innovation capability as mediating variables," several recommendations for further research can be proposed. Future studies could benefit from empirically testing the conceptual model using quantitative methods to validate the hypothesized relationships. Researchers may consider conducting longitudinal studies to capture the dynamic nature of market orientation and its effects over time. Additionally, comparative analyses across different industries or regions within Indonesia could provide valuable insights into sector-specific or geographical variations. Exploring potential moderating variables, such as firm size, age, or export experience, could enhance understanding of the model's boundary conditions. Finally, incorporating qualitative research methods, such as case studies or interviews with SME managers, could offer deeper insights into the mechanisms through which market orientation influences export performance in Indonesian SMEs.

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