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# EMPOWERING SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE: EXPLORING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN DRIVING WOMEN'S AGROSOCIOPRENEURIAL MOTIVATION

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## Abstract.

This study aims to examine the role of competitive advantage in mediating the relationship between women's agro-socio-preneurial motivation and business performance. Data were collected from agrosocio MSMEs in Malang Regency with a sample of 83 MSMEs. This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory research type. Data analysis uses SEM-PLS to examine the impact of women's agro-socio-preneurial motivation on performance and the mediating role of competitive advantage in the relationship. The research findings show that of all motivational variables consisting of economic, social, passion-related-motivation, and political motivation, only social and political motivation have a major impact on women's agrosociopreneurship performance. Meanwhile, economic motivation and passion-related motivation do not have a major impact on improving performance. The findings also indicate that competitive advantage plays an important role in mediating the relationship between social and political motivation with a partial mediation for political mediation and a full mediation nature for social motivation. Women's agrosociopreneurs who have strong business motivation, especially social and political motivation, can encourage innovation and create a competitive advantage that ultimately improves business performance.

**Keywords:** Competitive Advantage, Superior Performance, Women's Agrosociopreneurial Motivation

## 1. Introduction

Agro-socio entrepreneurship (ASE) refers to a business model that integrates agricultural practices with social entrepreneurship, focusing on creating both economic and social value within rural communities. It merges agricultural development with community empowerment, aiming to address socio-economic issues like poverty and food security while ensuring sustainability and competitiveness. According to Gaddefors & Anderson (2017), in the context of rural entrepreneurship, ASE is a form of entrepreneurship that is greater than just an individual entrepreneur. In this approach, entrepreneurs act as agents of change who operate in complex contexts, where social and economic issues are closely interconnected. They emphasize that rural entrepreneurship is rooted in an understanding of local communities and the ability to adapt to local social and environmental dynamics.



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Semkunde et al. (2022) highlight how ASE in rural areas can help community groups, especially women, to overcome structural barriers in their communities. For example, in Tanzania, women in social groups use agribusiness entrepreneurship to overcome resource constraints such as access to land and business networks. This ASE leads to capacity building and economic independence (Gaddefors & Anderson, 2017).

In another study, ASE is seen as a solution to challenges in the agricultural world, such as poverty, social injustice, and environmental damage. Entrepreneurs in this field focus on sustainable agricultural innovation by prioritizing the welfare of the surrounding community. Experts agree that the key to the success of ASE lies in the ability to create a positive social impact through environmentally friendly agricultural practices (Troise et al., 2022). ASE is heavily influenced by the local context and the entrepreneur's ability to navigate the barriers that exist in rural areas. Factors such as limited access to profitable markets, lack of business networks, and limited financial resources pose challenges to ASE, which ultimately requires a collaborative approach through social or community groups to empower individuals in the environment (Semkunde et al., 2022).

One of the interesting things is that ASE activities involve many women. Studies have shown that women often initiate agrosocio-preneurial ventures to address not only economic viability but also gender equality and community sustainability (Tillmar et al., 2022). In many regions, women's involvement in rural entrepreneurship, including the agricultural sector, is driven by their desire to contribute to household income and to improve local living conditions. This is especially relevant in the context of developing countries, where women often face socio-economic barriers such as limited access to resources, gender biases, and restrictions on land ownership. However, women have shown remarkable resilience by leveraging social capital, networks, and community engagement to overcome these obstacles. (Aggarwal & Johal, 2021).

Women's entrepreneurial intention is crucial in ASE because it directly impacts the economic and social development of rural areas and agricultural sectors. Women bring unique perspectives to entrepreneurship, particularly in sectors like agriculture, where sustainability and community well-being are vital. Their involvement often leads to more inclusive and sustainable business models that address both economic needs and social issues. In the context of ASE, these entrepreneurial intentions help address both economic and social challenges, allowing women to act as agents of change in their communities (Hamdani et al., 2023; Lladós-Masllorens & Ruiz-Dotras, 2022; Mitchelmore & Rowley, 2013). This makes it essential to focus on fostering women's entrepreneurial intentions through policies, education, and support systems, which can lead to sustainable business practices and enhance the overall impact of agrosocio-preneurial ventures.

Research has demonstrated that women's entrepreneurial intentions significantly impact both competitive advantage and business performance. Women entrepreneurs, particularly in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), often bring unique perspectives and leadership styles, which contribute to the development of competitive advantages. These advantages are crucial in markets where differentiation, innovation, and strategic resource management are key to success. Women's entrepreneurial intentions are often influenced by internal factors such as entrepreneurial self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and social support received from the surrounding environment.

Santos & Liguori (2020) show that entrepreneurial self-efficacy and outcome expectations play an important role in increasing women's entrepreneurial intentions, which ultimately contribute to their business success. Support from social norms, such as encouragement from family and mentors, strengthens women's commitment to entrepreneurship. Other studies also



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emphasize that in developing countries, women's entrepreneurship is often associated with improved business performance and competitive advantage because women are more responsive to market opportunities and have strong skills in managing community-based businesses (Corrêa et al., 2022). Other studies indicate that the process of female empowerment through entrepreneurship starts with the perception and operation of a business, which in turn leads to the desired empowerment. Various elements, including family support, the external environment, individual traits, and operational convenience, were found to affect their choice of entrepreneurial activities. Additionally, the interaction of human, social, cultural, and political capital plays a crucial role in generating economic capital, which is essential for establishing and managing businesses in environments where resources are limited (Atarah et al., 2023).

Building on this understanding of entrepreneurship, research increasingly highlights how entrepreneurship, both in business and social contexts, provides opportunities for women in developing countries to gain freedom and improve their circumstances (Barragan et al., 2018; Scott et al., 2012). Marlow (2020) emphasizes the importance of context when examining the ventures of female entrepreneurs. Al-Dajani et al. (2015) found that many of these women face multiple challenges related to poverty, displacement, and gender. They pursue entrepreneurial activities as a means of escaping poverty and hardship, largely because they are often excluded from traditional income opportunities due to their foreign status and the patriarchal nature of their societies.

The obstacles encountered by female entrepreneurs in developing countries are distinct from those in developed nations, as are the reasons behind their entrepreneurial pursuits (Solesvik et al., 2019). In developing countries, necessity and survival often drive women to entrepreneurship, whereas women in developed countries are more motivated by opportunities and a desire for independence. Studies like those by Roy et al. (2022) and Sallah & Caesar (2020) examine the challenges and motivations of women entrepreneurs in developing regions, while Jennings et al. (2016) and Zboralska (2017) focus on entrepreneurship in developed countries. These studies explore how entrepreneurship fosters women's emancipation and highlight the transformative effects on both the entrepreneurs and their communities. However, there is still a gap in understanding the specific processes through which female entrepreneurs overcome perceived constraints. Our study aims to fill this gap, particularly in the context of resource-constrained environments and focusing on women engaged in agrosociopreneurship. Some questions that need to be answered in this study are: how women's agrosociopreneurial motivation can encourage increased performance of MSMEs and the role of competitive advantage in mediating the relationship between women's agrosocio-preneurial motivation and performance.

## 2. Method

This research design uses descriptive and explanatory research to provide an overview of the characteristics of certain phenomena and to find the relationship between the variables forming the research model, namely women's agrosociopreneurial motivation, competitive advantage, and performance. The population of this study was all women's agrosociopreneurs in Malang Regency. Sampling using the purposive sampling method. Data collection was carried out using the survey method. All questionnaire items were measured using a 7-point Likert scale (1 point: strongly disagree, 7 points: strongly agree). For woman's agrosociopreneurial motivation adopted from (Atarah et al., 2023). Competitiveness and performance were adopted from Porter



(1991), Barney (1991), and Chen et al. (2006). The Data Analysis Technique of this study is qualitative descriptive analysis and quantitative analysis of the SEM-PLS method with the Smart-PLS4 tool.

Furthermore, to determine the quality of the data obtained, validity and reliability tests are needed. In this case, the outer loading value is used to test the validity of this study. Overall, the outer loading value of each indicator in the three variables used is greater than 0.70 (Figure 1). Table 1 shows the AVE value of each variable is more than 0.50. Referring to the two assessments, it can be concluded that all the instruments used are valid. Then, to complete the validity test, a reliability test is carried out regarding Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values. Table 1 also shows that the results of the two tests are more than 0.70, meaning that all questionnaire instruments are reliable.

Table 1. Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Competitive Advantage (CA)	0.947	0.958	0.794
Economic Motivation (EM)	0.961	0.972	0.895
Social Motivation (SM)	0.817	0.891	0.732
Passion-related Motivation (PRM)	0.772	0.898	0.814
Political Motivation (PM)	0.748	0.887	0.798
Performance (PF)	0.955	0.967	0.881

Other validity tests are carried out with discriminant validity tests using the Fornell-larcker criterion method. Table 2 presents the Fornell-Larcker Criterion of all variables in this study. The Fornell-Larcker criterion compares the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) with the correlations between constructs. The square root of AVE is greater than the correlations between the construct and other constructs, and discriminant validity is established. This indicates this research instrument is valid. Based on the tests that have been carried out, it can be concluded that all indicators measuring each latent variable are valid and reliable because the value of each test is more than the minimum limit. Based on the tests that have been carried out, it can be concluded that all indicators measuring each latent variable are valid and reliable because the value of each test is more than the minimum limit.

Table 2. Discriminant Validity -Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	CA	EM	SM	PRM	PM	PF
CA	0.891					
EM	0.593	0.946				
SM	0.600	0.818	0.856			
PRM	0.511	0.685	0.737	0.902		
PM	0.593	0.720	0.697	0.815	0.893	
PF	0.789	0.493	0.443	0.407	0.533	0.939



### 3. Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 Result

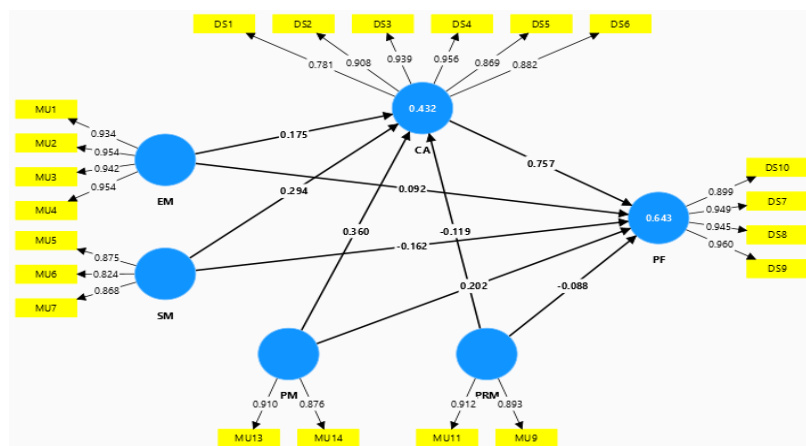


Figure 1. Result of Hypothesis Testing

Figure 1 and Table 3 present the results of the research hypothesis testing. The direct influence of EM directly on competitive advantage and value performance has a p-value above 0.05 so the decision is to reject the hypothesis meaning that EM does not have a significant impact on competitive advantage and performance. This also applies to PRM. On the other hand, the direct influence of PM directly on competitive advantage and performance has a p-value below 0.05 so the decision is to accept the hypothesis, meaning that PM has a significant impact on competitive advantage and also performance.

Table 3. Hypothesis Testing

Direct-Indirect	Path Coefficient	P values	Hypotheses
CA → PF	0.757	0.000	Supported
EM → CA	0.175	0.141	Rejected
EM → PF	0.092	0.461	Rejected
PM → CA	0.360	0.028	Supported
PM → PF	0.202	0.050	Supported
PRM → CA	-0.119	0.408	Rejected
PRM → PF	-0.088	0.392	Rejected
SM → CA	0.294	0.020	Supported
SM → PF	-0.162	0.229	Rejected
EM → CA → PF	0.132	0.158	Rejected
PM → CA → PF	0.272	0.032	Supported
PRM → CA → PF	-0.090	0.421	Rejected
SM → CA → PF	0.222	0.023	Supported

Likewise, the direct influence of SM on competitive advantage has a p-value of 0.000 which is smaller than 0.05 so it can be concluded that the hypothesis is accepted, meaning that SM has a significant impact on competitive advantage. However, this does not happen in the direct influence of SM on performance with a p-value greater than 0.05 so the hypothesis is rejected, meaning that SM does not have a significant impact on performance. In the indirect influence



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test, the conclusion is in line with the direct influence. This means that competitive advantage only mediates the influence of PM and SM on performance with a p-value smaller than 0.05. This means that the competitive advantage variable mediates the relationship between PM and performance with a full mediation nature, while the relationship between SM and performance is partial mediation.

### 3.2 Discussion

Women are often motivated to engage in agrosociopreneurship by a combination of need, social impact, and a desire for economic independence. Studies show that many women enter the field to address social and environmental challenges, such as food security and community development while seeking economic empowerment. Personal drivers, such as the need for achievement and self-confidence, are also important factors in pursuing agricultural entrepreneurial ventures (Fazal et al., 2022).

Women's involvement in agrosociopreneurship is particularly compelling because of several socioeconomic and environmental factors that align with the unique roles women often play in their communities. Women in rural areas are deeply integrated into their communities, often responsible for the well-being of their families and communities. In agrosociopreneurship, which combines agriculture with social impact, women leverage their natural roles as caregivers and community-oriented to address issues such as food security, sustainable agricultural practices, and promoting nutrition and health in their communities (Shahidullah et al., 2023). Agrosociopreneurship provides women with an opportunity to contribute economically while challenging traditional gender roles. Women engaged in agricultural entrepreneurial activities can also improve their families' financial status and gain more decision-making power within the household and community, which is critical for gender equality (Badstue et al., 2020).

Research shows that women often prioritize long-term environmental health, using practices that enhance sustainability in agrosociopreneurship. This results in more resilient agricultural systems that benefit both the economy and the environment (Shahidullah et al., 2023; Thakur, 2023). Women's agrosociopreneurial activities are driven by both personal and social motivations, and their ability to innovate and prioritize sustainability gives them a unique competitive advantage. This contributes to their businesses' success and positive performance, reinforcing their role as key players in sustainable agriculture.

Women in agrosociopreneurship gain a competitive advantage by adopting innovative approaches, leveraging local knowledge, and cultivating strong community relationships. Their businesses often incorporate sustainable agricultural practices, which not only differentiate them from competitors but also align with the growing consumer demand for environmentally friendly products. The ability to balance social objectives with profit-making strategies enhances their competitive position in the market. Research shows that women-led agrosociopreneurial enterprises perform well, especially in terms of sustainability and long-term growth. Their focus on community well-being, combined with entrepreneurial competencies such as resilience, adaptability, and openness to change, contribute to improved business performance. These traits enable women to navigate resource constraints and maintain high levels of productivity, even in challenging environments.

The involvement of women in agrosociopreneurship is driven by many factors. The motivation for women to enter agrosociopreneurship is particularly important because it directly impacts the economic and social development of rural areas and the agricultural sector. Women bring a unique perspective to entrepreneurship, especially in sectors such as agriculture, where sustainability and community well-being are critical. Their involvement often leads to more inclusive and sustainable business models that address both economic needs and social



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issues. Women's participation promotes inclusivity, enhancing community resilience and sustainability. This is particularly important in agrosociopreneurship, which often involves balancing profit-making with social and environmental goals.

Research shows that women's entrepreneurial activity makes a significant contribution to economic development. Studies have highlighted that when women are financially empowered, they are more likely to reinvest in health, education, and local community development. Gender stereotypes and societal expectations often limit women's entrepreneurship. In many regions, addressing these barriers is critical to fostering entrepreneurial intentions. By providing support and removing these barriers, women's engagement in entrepreneurship can be substantially increased, particularly in sectors such as agriculture where traditional roles are deeply rooted.

Entrepreneurial intentions are often driven by self-efficacy—women's belief in their abilities—and social support. Research has shown that women who experience stronger social support, and have confidence in their entrepreneurial abilities, are more likely to succeed. Training, skills development, and financial literacy play a significant role in building this self-efficacy. Research also shows that women's entrepreneurial intentions have a significant impact on competitive advantage and business performance. Women entrepreneurs, particularly in small and medium enterprises (SMEs), often bring unique perspectives and leadership styles, which contribute to the development of competitive advantage. These advantages are particularly important in markets where differentiation, innovation, and strategic resource management are key to success.

The findings of this study are in line with the study by Mahmood & Hanafi (2013) who explored the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and business performance of women-owned SMEs in Malaysia. They revealed that competitive advantage acts as a mediator between entrepreneurial orientation and performance. Their findings suggest that women entrepreneurs with strong entrepreneurial intentions are better able to employ innovative strategies, thereby enhancing their competitive advantage and overall business performance. In other studies, such as those by Fatoki (2012), it has been noted that entrepreneurial motivation and orientation (which can be driven by women's intention to start and grow a business) are key drivers of business success. This is especially true when these entrepreneurs adopt practices that differentiate their businesses from competitors, thereby enhancing their financial performance and market position. The important point is that women's entrepreneurial intentions help drive innovation, agility and resource management, which in turn enhance competitive advantage and business performance across sectors, including agriculture and small businesses.

#### **4. Conclusion**

Women's businesses in rural areas provide essential services that are crucial to the sustainability of local economies, particularly in industries such as agriculture, food processing, and community-based services. The gendered nature of entrepreneurship, with women often engaging in less capital-intensive sectors, underscores their critical role in local development, even though their contributions may be undervalued economically. Furthermore, the impact of women's entrepreneurial intentions in agrosociopreneurship extends beyond economic success. Their ventures often emphasize sustainable practices, community empowerment, and social value creation, which align with the broader goals of agrosociopreneurship.

These efforts can contribute to competitive advantage and improved performance, particularly in creating resilient, community-centered enterprises that promote environmental



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and social sustainability. Overall, women's entrepreneurial intentions in agrosociopreneurship help bridge the gap between economic development and social progress, ensuring that marginalized communities, particularly in rural areas, benefit from inclusive and sustainable growth. Women are often motivated to engage in agrosociopreneurship by a combination of need, social impact, and a desire for economic independence. Studies show that many women enter the sector to address social and environmental challenges, such as food security and community development while seeking economic empowerment. This is in line with the findings of this study which show that women's motivations for entrepreneurship are due to social and political motivations as a form of economic independence.

Women in agrosociopreneurship gain a competitive advantage by adopting innovative approaches, leveraging local knowledge, and fostering strong community relationships. The ability to balance social goals with profit-making strategies enhances their competitive position in the market. Their focus on community well-being, combined with entrepreneurial competencies such as resilience, adaptability, and openness to change, contribute to improved business performance. These traits enable women to overcome resource constraints and maintain high levels of productivity, even in challenging environments. Their ability to innovate and prioritize sustainability gives them a unique competitive advantage. This contributes to the success and positive performance of their businesses, reinforcing their role as key players in sustainable agriculture.

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