

The Role of Entrepreneurial Marketing in Achieving Competitive Advantage in Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs)

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Abstract

The micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) sector continues to drive the national economy as a crucial and strategic sector. Competitive ability is a key factor for companies to succeed and survive in the existing situations and conditions, especially in facing unexpected and rapid business environment changes (environmental dynamics). This research aims to examine how environmental dynamics affect competitive advantage, both directly and through the role of entrepreneurial marketing strategies, among business actors in the Tempe Chips Industry Centre in Sanan, Malang City, as an evaluation for future business development to build competitive advantage in running their business. Explanatory research employs a quantitative methodology, collecting data through questionnaires and analysing it using SmartPLS. The results show that environmental dynamics do not directly affect competitive advantage, but have been proven to influence entrepreneurial marketing strategies, which in turn significantly enhance competitive advantage. This means that the role of entrepreneurial marketing is as a bridge between environmental dynamics and the enhancement of competitive advantage; thus, entrepreneurial marketing becomes an important mediating variable. Thus, in the midst of a dynamic business environment, entrepreneurs need to be more innovative and adaptive to remain competitive.

Keywords: Competitive Advantage; Entrepreneurial Marketing; Environmental Dynamics

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1. INTRODUCTION

The economic growth of East Java shows an important role in supporting the national economy, cumulatively (c-to-c) reaching 4.95 per cent by the fourth quarter of 2023. This achievement places East Java in the second position on the island of Java and slightly lower than the national economic growth of 5.31 per cent during the same period. This condition illustrates that East Java Province contributes 14.22 per cent to supporting the national economy (BPS Provinsi Jawa Timur, 2024).

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play an important and strategic role in driving the national economy, particularly from the perspective of job opportunities and sources of income for

poor groups, income distribution, and poverty reduction (Sarfiah et al., 2019). (KADIN Indonesia, 2024), In 2023, the number of MSMEs in Indonesia reached around 66 million business units, an increase of 1.7% compared to the previous year. The contribution of MSMEs to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) reached 61% or around Rp9,580 trillion, with employment absorption reaching 97% of the total national workforce. However, the contribution of MSMEs to non-oil and gas exports is still relatively low, at 16% in 2023.

This research views that competitive ability is a key factor for a company to succeed and survive in the development of technology that is interconnected worldwide, while also presenting a sharply increasing challenge of globalisation. This competitiveness does not only arise from the variety of product forms but also from their quality. The quality or standard of a product can be obtained from the company's ability to create an image or innovative products that differ between regions. Companies require high levels of creativity to create innovative products. From this point forward, the existence of MSMEs emerges and develops (Darwanto, 2013).

The combination of resource availability and a large market has the potential to drive faster growth in the future and make MSMEs one of the sources of growth for the Indonesian economy. Nevertheless, in the context of value creation, MSMEs face many factors that can hinder their growth (Syahbudi & Ma, 2021) including the low market awareness of creative products and works in Indonesia, despite the uniqueness and creativity of Indonesian creative works and products being recognised by the global market. This situation arises from the low ability to brand, develop packaging and diversification, ensure production sustainability, and create environmentally friendly creative products and works (Vinsensia et al., 2023).

SMEs currently also have to face the era of the 4.0 industrial revolution and disruptive innovation, which require small and medium-sized enterprises to seek new sources of competitive advantage and engage in new forms of competition to overcome the challenges and problems they face and enhance their competitiveness and competitive edge. This, in turn, requires a clear understanding of the nature and dynamics of competition (DeNisi et al., 2003). SMEs' adaptability, a tool for navigating environmental dynamics, also contributes to their competitive advantage. Environmental dynamics will influence the relevance of strategies and the achievement of competitive advantage (Ward, P., and Duray, 2000). Therefore, a solution is needed to address the challenges and problems faced by MSMEs, particularly marketing issues, through an entrepreneurial approach to marketing (Kraus, S., Harms, R., and Fink, 2009).

Marketing and entrepreneurship have traditionally been two distinct fields of study. The importance of entrepreneurship and marketing innovation, as well as achieving success in entrepreneurship, has led to the awareness of combining two disciplines, namely marketing and entrepreneurship, as entrepreneurial marketing. (Morris et al., 2002) proposed entrepreneurial marketing as an integrative construct to conceptualise marketing in an era of change, complexity, chaos, contradiction, and resource reduction, and as one way to manifest itself differently as a mature and growing company. Therefore, this research aims to develop effective business strategies for the Sanan tempe chips MSMEs in Malang City, which is recognised as one of the city's flagship products. We hope to eventually produce products that can compete in both local and national markets, boost community income, generate job opportunities, enhance community welfare, and significantly contribute to Malang City's economic development.

2. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The internal environment of the company is a resource that will determine the company's strengths and weaknesses. These company resources include: 1) human resources. 2) organisational resources, and 3) physical resources, which, if the company can optimise their use, will provide a competitive advantage. The external environment is the environment outside the organisation that needs to be analysed to determine the opportunities and threats the company will face. The external environment is conceptualised as a multidimensional construct (Justin Tan & Litsschert, 1994; Van

Egeren & O'Connor, 1998; Dess & Beard, 1984) that breaks down the environment into three main dimensions: munificence, complexity, and dynamism.

A dynamic environment refers to one that changes rapidly (Power & Reid, 2005). Ward, P., and Duray, (2000) examined the influence of environmental dynamics on competitive strategies to achieve competitive advantage; the influence of competitive strategies on the choice of manufacturing strategies and manufacturing strategies on performance; the direct influence of environmental dynamics on manufacturing strategies; and the direct influence of competitive strategies (competitive advantage) on performance. Suardhika et al., (2012) conducted a study to determine the influence of strategic resources (physical, reputational, organisational, financial, human, and technological) and environmental dynamics on competitive strategies (cost leadership, differentiation, and focus) and business performance (profitability, productivity, and market).

The recognition of the importance of the interaction between entrepreneurship and marketing has led to the proposal of the concept of entrepreneurial marketing (EM). While some authors argue that EM is important for all organisations (large and small), there is general recognition that this concept is particularly suited to the context of small businesses. Miles & Darroch, (2006) researched how the entrepreneurial marketing processes (EMPs) are strategically used to build and renew competitive advantages.. Becherer et al., (2005) studied how the dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing relate to both qualitative and quantitative performance measurements for SMEs and entrepreneurs. The findings of this research indicate that the dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing directly and positively influence performance. Carson & Gilmore, (2000) propose that SMES marketing is actually entrepreneurial marketing characterised by various factors, including an inherently informal, simple, and haphazard approach. Empirical evidence indicates that there is a significant correlation between corporate marketing and entrepreneurial orientation, both of which are broadly responsible for the company's success (Miles & Arnold, 1991).

Adapun yang menjadi hipotesis dalam penelitian ini adalah sebagai berikut:

- H₁: It is suspected that the increase in environmental dynamics will be able to enhance competitive advantage.
- H₂: It is suspected that the increase in entrepreneurial marketing will be able to enhance competitive advantage.
- H₃: It is suspected that entrepreneurial marketing will be able to mediate the influence of environmental dynamics on the improvement of competitive advantage.

3. METHODS

This research uses a quantitative approach to analyse the relationships between variables or the influence of one variable on another. It is also an explanatory study intended to address the problems formulated based on the established objectives and to test the hypotheses. This research was conducted at the Sanan Tempe Chips Industrial Centre in Malang City using online and offline questionnaires to collect data from all active Tempe Chips entrepreneurs, totalling 51 entrepreneurs, making the entire population the research sample as the unit of observation (census). According to (Ferdinand, 2014) if the population is less than 100 people, the entire sample is taken, but if the population is more than 100 people, 10–15% or 20–25% of the population can be sampled. Where the data obtained will be analysed using the variance-based SmartPLS approach. Wold et al., (1996) developed PLS for the first time to estimate path models using latent variables with multiple indicators. PLS allows for a simultaneous series of analyses of several latent variables, thereby providing statistical efficiency.

The instrument used in this study is a questionnaire employing a 1-5 Likert scale with 14 indicators, which consist of environmental dynamics (3 indicators), namely changes in consumer trends, market competition, and the speed of environmental changes; entrepreneurial marketing (6 indicators), namely proactivity, opportunity focus, risk-taking orientation, innovation orientation, customer intensity, and resource utilisation; and competitive advantage (4 indicators), namely cost leadership, differentiation, management, and performance.

4. RESULTS

The tempeh industry in Sanan, Malang City, began in the early 1970s. At that time, most people in Sanan worked as factory labourers and farmers. However, with the increasing demand for tempeh as a staple food in the community, some residents began to switch professions and become tempeh makers. The production of tempeh started on a small scale as a home-based business carried out by several families.

Initially, the tempe production process was carried out simply using manual equipment and locally sourced soybeans that were easy to obtain. These artisans produce tempeh for their consumption or to sell at traditional markets around the city of Malang. The tempeh production activities gradually attracted more and more residents, who then got involved in the production of tempeh chips. Currently, tempeh chips have become an iconic souvenir of Malang, and many tourists make tempeh chips a gift when visiting Malang. Their popularity further encourages the craftsmen in Sanan to increase their production capacity and introduce new variants of tempeh chips with various flavours.

Based on the research results by distributing questionnaires to tempe craftsmen in the Tempe Sanan Industrial Centre, Malang City, with 51 active tempe chip entrepreneurs from Sanan, Malang City, as respondents, information regarding the characteristics of the respondents was obtained, including gender, age, and number of workers. A descriptive analysis will then be conducted, which involves describing the processed data in the form of tables as follows:

Table 1 : Respondent Characteristics

Description	Percentage (%)
Gender	
Male	27,00
Female	73,00
Age	
< 30 years	11,76
30-39 years	33,33
40-49 years	41,18
> 50 years	13,73
Number of Workers	
< 5 People	35,29
5-10 People	54,90
> 10 People	9,80

Based on Table 1 above, it is illustrated that the majority of tempeh chip entrepreneurs in the Tempe Sanan Industrial Centre, amounting to 73 per cent, are women, with ages varying from young to old. The majority of tempeh chip entrepreneurs are aged between 40 and 49 years, which falls into the productive age category. The oldest tempeh chip entrepreneur respondent in the study is 62 years old. At this age, the experience gained is certainly greater, and the youngest respondent is 24 years old. Meanwhile, the number of workers is one of the determining factors for the success of the production results of Sanan tempeh chips. The number of workers in a tempeh chip business seems to depend more on the owner's ability to employ someone, where most have a workforce of 5–10 people.

Measurement Model

The results of the loading factor analysis provide important indications regarding how well each question item or indicator measures the intended variable. The loading factor is a coefficient that indicates the strength of the relationship between each indicator and the latent construct. Only indicators with adequate loading factors are retained in the model to ensure accurate and valid results.

Table 2 : Validity and Reliability Testing of Variables

Variable	Indicator	Loadings	Cronbach's alpha	rho_A	CR	AVE
Environmental Dynamics	ED1	0.819	0.758	0.761	0.861	0.674
	ED2	0.794				
	ED3	0.849				
Entrepreneurial Marketing	EM1	0.831	0.896	0.901	0.921	0.664
	EM2	0.841				
	EM3	0.892				
	EM4	0.892				
	EM5	0.710				
	EM6	0.701				
Competitive Advantage	CA1	0.841	0.810	0.819	0.875	0.638
	CA2	0.811				
	CA3	0.735				
	CA4	0.803				

Based on the results of the measurement model analysis, results were obtained for three variables, namely environmental dynamics, entrepreneurial marketing, and competitive advantage using the cut-off values recommended by (Hair et al., 2010). It is known that overall, all constructs in this measurement model meet the validity and reliability criteria based on outer loading, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) that are in accordance with the standards recommended by (Hair et al., 2010). The outer loading values for each indicator are above the 0.7 cut-off, indicating that these indicators have a strong contribution in measuring the construct. Additionally, the AVE value above 0.5 for each construct indicates that more than half of the variance of each indicator is explained by the latent construct, which means this construct has excellent convergent validity. This process ensures that the indicators used accurately capture the essence of each construct.

From the reliability perspective, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) also show adequate results. Cronbach's alpha above 0.6 indicates that the indicators in each construct have excellent internal reliability, while a CR value exceeding 0.7 shows high measurement consistency. With validity and reliability met, this measurement model can be used for further analysis in the inner model, ensuring that the results obtained from this research are trustworthy and reliable.

5. DISCUSSION

According to the research plan and goals, the tests for the relationship model and hypotheses include: 1) looking at how environmental changes affect competitive advantage at the Sanan Tempe Chips Industrial Centre in Malang City; 2) examining how entrepreneurial marketing impacts competitive advantage at the same centre; and 3) studying how environmental changes influence competitive advantage through entrepreneurial marketing at the Sanan Tempe Chips Industrial Centre in Malang City. Hypothesis testing is done by checking the significance values for each path in the research model. The analysis of direct, indirect, and total effects among the variables helps compare how much each variable influences the others. We conduct hypothesis testing based on the significance values obtained for each path in the research model. Analysis of direct effect, indirect effect, and total effect among variables in the model is used to compare the magnitude of the influence of each variable construct (Ghozali & Latan, 2015).

Table 3 : Results of Hypothesis Testing Analysis

Description	β	T - values	p - values	Supported
H ₁ Environmental dynamics -> Competitive advantage	0.064	1.244	0.107	No
H ₂ Entrepreneurial marketing -> Competitive advantage	0.610	12.849	0.000	Yes
H ₃ Environmental dynamics -> Entrepreneurial marketing -> Competitive advantage	0.428	10.671	0.000	Yes

The Increasing Environmental Dynamics Will Be Able to Enhance Competitive Advantage

Based on the analysis results, it was found that the path coefficient in the relationship between (environmental dynamics -> competitive advantage) was rejected with $\beta = 0.064$, t-values = 1.244, and p-value = 0.107, indicating that environmental dynamics does not have a significant direct impact on competitive advantage. Although environmental dynamics, which reflect uncertainty and rapid changes in the business environment, are often considered factors that can influence company performance, these results indicate that their impact is indirect on achieving competitive advantage in the Tempe Chips Industry Center in Sanan, Malang City.

The rejection of this hypothesis indicates that environmental dynamics do not automatically generate competitive advantages for companies. On the contrary, these environmental dynamics require intermediaries or other mechanisms that enable companies to effectively respond to external challenges. In this case, these insignificant results underscore the importance of mediating variables, such as entrepreneurial marketing, in facilitating the impact of a turbulent environment on enhancing competitive advantage. In other words, companies operating in a dynamic environment will not immediately gain a competitive advantage unless they are able to develop innovative and adaptive marketing strategies to respond to market dynamics. This emphasises the importance of the company's internal strategies in leveraging environmental dynamics into opportunities that can enhance their competitive position. This aligns with the notion that environmental dynamics are not factors that directly and automatically impact competitive advantage or company performance. Instead, companies need to build their own skills through flexible and creative strategies like entrepreneurial marketing, entrepreneurial orientation, and strategic resource integration to turn environmental challenges into competitive advantages (Justin Tan & Litsschert, 1994); (Suardhika et al., 2012).

The Increase in Entrepreneurial Marketing Will Be Able to Enhance Competitive Advantage

Based on the analysis results, it was found that the path coefficient on the relationship between (entrepreneurial marketing -> competitive advantage) was accepted with $\beta = 0.610$, t-values = 12.849, and p-value = 0.000, indicating that entrepreneurial marketing plays a significant role in enhancing the company's competitive advantage. Entrepreneurial marketing involves the use of innovative, proactive, and bold marketing strategies, reflecting the company's ability to adapt and take risks in responding to market dynamics. When companies implement entrepreneurial marketing, they are able to leverage market opportunities more effectively, create products or services that differ from competitors, and respond quickly to changes in consumer needs.

The implementation of this marketing strategy allows the company not only to survive in the tight competition but also to achieve a stronger position by developing unique value that is difficult for competitors to imitate. In the context of a business environment full of uncertainty, entrepreneurial marketing allows companies to innovate faster and take advantage of untapped market opportunities. Thus, companies that practice entrepreneurial marketing tend to have a more sustainable competitive advantage, which is reflected in increased market share, customer loyalty, and long-term financial performance. This reinforces the findings of the research conducted by (Becherer et al., 2005); (Waris et al., 2020) which describes that entrepreneurial marketing, driven by entrepreneurial motivation and innovative and adaptive marketing strategies, is a key factor in creating and maintaining competitive

advantage. This process is not only relevant for large companies, as discussed by (Miles & Darroch, 2006), but also crucial for small and medium enterprises in facing market uncertainty and intense competition, as demonstrated in the research that has been conducted.

Entrepreneurial Marketing Can Mediate the Influence of Environmental Dynamics on Enhancing Competitive Advantage

Based on the analysis results, it was found that the path coefficient in the relationship between (environmental dynamics → entrepreneurial marketing → competitive advantage) was accepted with $\beta = 0.428$, t -values = 10.671, and p -value = 0.000, indicating that entrepreneurial marketing plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between environmental dynamics and competitive advantage. In this case, environmental dynamics, which reflect uncertainty and rapid changes in the market, encourage companies to implement entrepreneurial marketing strategies, which then positively impact the improvement of the company's competitive advantage.

Mediation by entrepreneurial marketing explains how environmental dynamics do not directly provide competitive advantages, but through the implementation of innovative and adaptive marketing strategies. When companies face environmental turbulence, such as technological changes, regulatory shifts, or market pressures, they are forced to innovate and respond to these changes with a more aggressive and opportunity-oriented marketing approach. Entrepreneurial marketing transforms the challenges posed by environmental dynamics into opportunities to create new value, reach new markets, and enhance operational efficiency. Thus, the relationship between environmental dynamics and competitive advantage is strengthened through entrepreneurial marketing strategies that overcome uncertainty and optimise company resources to achieve a stronger competitive position. These results emphasise the role of entrepreneurial marketing as a bridge between turbulent environmental conditions and superior competitive performance. Miles & Arnold, (1991); (Khouroh et al., 2020) also highlight that entrepreneurial marketing serves as a strategic bridge between environmental changes and achieving competitive advantage, with marketing orientation as the foundation that initiates the company's entrepreneurial orientation. In other words, companies that can integrate a responsive marketing orientation with adaptive entrepreneurial behaviour can more effectively face market uncertainties and achieve a competitive advantage.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, there is a significant influence of entrepreneurial marketing in creating competitive advantage amidst environmental dynamics, but not directly. The evidence indicates that environmental dynamics trigger the implementation of entrepreneurial marketing, and innovative marketing strategies significantly enhance the company's competitive advantage. These results reinforce the view that entrepreneurial marketing serves as a key mechanism in responding to environmental dynamics and creating competitive value. However, environmental dynamics do not have a direct influence on competitive advantage. This finding emphasises the importance of mediation by entrepreneurial marketing to transform environmental uncertainty into opportunities that can be optimised by the company. Overall, the findings in this study highlight that in the context of turbulent environmental dynamics, companies need to adopt more innovative marketing strategies and be bold in responding to rapid environmental changes to survive and excel in competition. Additionally, companies must be more adaptive, especially in terms of product innovation, adjusting marketing strategies, and taking measured risks. This approach enables companies to capitalise on new opportunities arising from the ongoing environmental dynamics.

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