

# The Impact of Innovation and Market Orientation on the Competitive Advantage of MSMEs during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Julyanthry, Debi Eka Putri, Syaifuddin, Yusniar Lubis, Acai Sudirman

<sup>1,2,5</sup>Lecturer, Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Sultan Agung, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Lecturer, Universitas Prima Indonesia, Indonesia

<sup>4</sup>Lecturer, Universitas Medan Area, Indonesia

Corresponding Author: Acai Sudirman

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**ABSTRACT:** An entrepreneur has to take the risk of taking on a business and deal with the uncertainty and volatility of the business, especially for people who are starting a business for the first time while making a profit. Several potential tools for participating in the entrepreneurial process, such as being an innovator and understanding market orientation, are important for building a business's competitive advantage. This study aims to analyze the effect of innovation and market orientation on the competitive advantage of SMEs during the Covid-19 pandemic. This research design uses a quantitative research design. Determination of the sample in this study using the convenience sampling method with 170 respondents. Data collection uses a questionnaire distributed online from May to June 2021. This study concludes that innovation and market orientation have a positive and significant influence on competitive advantage simultaneously or partially.

**KEYWORDS:** Innovation, Market Orientation, Competitive Advantage, SMEs

## I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is one of the economic resources categorized as an integral part of the production, and the others are land/natural resources, labor, and capital (Afwaw et al., 2021). An entrepreneur combines all three to produce goods or provide services. Entrepreneurs typically create a business plan, hire a workforce, obtain resources and financing, provide leadership and management. Entrepreneurs generally face many obstacles when building their companies. The three most challenging challenges are tackling bureaucracy,

hiring talent, and securing financing (Ayesha et al., 2021)

The entrepreneurial activity contributes to economic growth, but entrepreneurs often rely on their wealth or personal inheritance (Sherly et al., 2020). Entrepreneurs can also use informal networks such as friends and family to obtain financial resources or formal networks such as customers, suppliers, etc. In addition, they often face difficulties in obtaining external financial sources due to a lack of assurance, legitimacy, and information asymmetry (Talaja et al., 2017). This lack of financial resources often leads to underinvestment in activities necessary for high-growth entrepreneurship (Indriyaningrum & Fachrunnisa, 2021). In addition, various other obstacles still often encountered in MSMEs are the low quality of human resources in innovating.

The emergence of a new category in entrepreneurship called Digital Entrepreneurship is defined as a relevant socio-economic and technological phenomenon that can be considered the utilization of digital technology to change the traditional model of creating and doing business in the digital age (Garcia-Morales et al., 2018). It is almost impossible to miss the impact of digital technology in our daily activities. Digital technology is drastically reshaping markets and society, some of the future impacts and challenges stemming from digitalization, both on innovation, on entrepreneurship, technology entrepreneurship, and on the process of creating new businesses (Halim et al., 2021)

Digital technology supports the new phenomenon of generativity (the ability of technology to support the creation of new products)

when individuals, groups, and organizations come together to create services, applications, and content. This creates opportunities for radically new business models, and new forms of social infrastructure are constantly fueling new opportunities (Basoeky et al., 2021). New digital technologies such as mobile computing, cloud computing, social media, 3D printing, and data analysis into various aspects of innovation and entrepreneurship have also changed the nature of uncertainty inherent in entrepreneurial processes and outcomes and ways of managing such uncertainty (Irwansyah et al., 2021).

The urgency of competitive advantage in business is seen when a business can survive in various contexts of changing internal and external environments. This is important to be studied further, considering that the role of competitive advantage has a big impact on business sustainability in the future. Therefore, it is important to know the fundamental factors that drive competitive advantage from the internal environment itself. Innovation is a determining factor in industrial competition and is a formidable weapon against competition. Study results (Julyanthry et al., 2021) explained that innovation and creativity in this digital era are needed in developing the business you want to do so that you do not get stuck in daily operational activities and pursue performance targets (Hasan et al., 2021). In addition to the innovation factor, on the other hand, to create and encourage innovation, a touch of market orientation is needed to create customer value equal to or higher than the price. Study results (Meylananda et al., 2021) explain that business strategy in the form of market orientation significantly influences product creativity in the form of continuous innovation.

For MSMEs in Pematangsiantar City to become an economic driver, it is necessary to pay attention to market orientation through product innovation and a deeper understanding of market orientation. If MSMEs want to have a competitive advantage, of course, they must know about several market opportunities by adding existing innovations. In addition, understanding related to product innovation is used as an entrepreneurial foothold to create a competitive market by considering current market orientation. The main purpose of this study is to analyze the competitive advantage of SMEs in terms of innovation and market orientation. Then with this article,

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Innovation**

A company must adapt to innovations as well as new market contexts. Changes in input costs,

prices, customer requirements, or technical grounds require firms to change their routines and their ability to survive. The consequence of this change process is innovation. In this way, the company's ability to modify its routines and capabilities is innovation capability. Opinion (Riswanto et al., 2020) reinforces this assumption, stipulating that innovation capabilities must be dynamic to support the firm's adaptation to changing markets. From an organizational point of view, (Im et al., 2020) understands that innovation is a consequence of the company's managerial ability to transform technology and capabilities into competencies that can provide value aggregation. On the other hand, (Ren et al., 2010) views innovation as the result of a company's technological capabilities, presenting a three-capability model. The company innovates from its investment capabilities in infrastructure, production capabilities, and relationship capabilities – exchanging knowledge with its network of suppliers and customers (Yi et al., 2021). Innovation is the notion of openness to new ideas as an aspect of corporate culture, while the capacity to innovate is the company's ability to implement new ideas, processes, or products successfully (Mulyana & Sutapa, 2014). The better the building innovation capacity, the more effectively a company can carry out the innovation process and thus, the stronger the innovation performance (Sulistyo & Ayuni, 2020).

### **Market Orientation**

Market orientation is one of the important ways to improve your business performance. Especially because this strategy focuses on customer satisfaction, you will try your best to maintain the quality of service to meet customer expectations (Bavarsad et al., 2015). Market orientation is a business strategy that relies on consumer demand in the supply of goods and services produced by the company (Rahman et al., 2021). This business strategy can also be called market orientation. Anyone, including MSME actors, can use this strategy because logically, the more people need a product, the more companies can buy them. The point is that the company follows the customer's wishes, then it is adjusted to the company that produces the goods and services that the customer wants (Sampaio et al., 2019). The company sells what consumers want instead of selling as many products as possible that consumers might not want to buy. They conduct market research and develop an effective marketing mix. Thus, product failures are much reduced as companies align their products with customer expectations and demands (Kuncoro et al., 2021). Market research allows companies to gather

feedback from consumers. It is useful for improving the quality of existing products or developing the next new product. Product failures in the market are much reduced as companies align their products with customer expectations and demands. Market research allows companies to gather feedback from consumers (Muhajirin et al., 2020). It is useful for improving the quality of existing products or developing the next new product. Product failures in the market are much reduced as companies align their products with customer expectations and demands. Market research allows companies to gather feedback from consumers. It is useful for improving the quality of existing products or developing the next new product (Sari & Gultom, 2019).

### Competitive Advantage

Digital business strategy has improved recently due to impressive improvements in information systems, communications, and technology connectivity (Garcia-Morales et al., 2018). Practically, improving the MSME sector's business performance is influenced by entrepreneurial orientation and the use of social media and can also be influenced based on the market orientation applied to the marketing system (Solikahan & Mohammad, 2019); (Yasa et al., 2020). Competitive advantage is the ability to add value to a product or service to provide greater benefits than those provided by competitors (Yusnita & Wahyudin, 2019). The rapid development of the digital world has given birth to a business with a new face and a business system with a new pattern (Talaja et al., 2017). The increasing ability of information technology and the internet brings online sales and online sales, giving birth to new entrepreneurs. The presence of MSMEs with new business concepts brings challenges to existing and new businesses. For this reason, to survive in such a dynamic and competitive business environment, MSME actors must create differentiation. Differentiation focuses more on offering different and unique products and services but for various circumstances that are relatively insensitive to customer prices. Competitive advantage depends on the speed of competitors to outpace the

company (Yusnita & Wahyudin, 2019). This speed determines how long the competitive advantage will last. Competitors can acquire the skills needed to compete effectively (Lorenzo et al., 2018). They can duplicate the benefits of a company's value creation strategy beyond what already exists.

### III. METHOD

The research plan is carried out from early 2021 until the end of 2021. The selection of locations is adjusted to the number of MSMEs located in each kelurahan in the districts of East Siantar, West Siantar, North Siantar, South Siantar, Siantar Marihat, Siantar Martoba, Siantar Sitalasari, Siantar Marimbum. This study uses a literature and field research design with a quantitative approach. The population in this study is the total number of SMEs in Pematangsiantar City. The sampling method used in this study is the convenience sampling method, where this technique was chosen because it is the fastest method due to time constraints, and anyone who accidentally meets the researcher can be used as a sample if the person is considered suitable as a data source. According to (Hair, 2014), the number of samples can be determined from 5-10 times the number of indicators used in a single construct. This study uses 34 indicators, so the number of samples obtained is  $34 \times 5 = 170$ . The data analysis method used is Partial Least Square (PLS). The data analysis test tool uses the statistical software Smartpls 3.0. The analysis stage consists of testing the validity and reliability, and evaluating the external model with convergent validity. The expected convergent validity criterion is  $> 0.7$  (Hair, 2014). The internal evaluation model reviews the value of R Square ( $R^2$ ) with the criteria that the  $R^2$  value is in the range of 0.5-0.6, which means good, 0-0.33, which means moderate, and 0-0.19, which means weak. Next, review the F-Square ( $f^2$ ) value with an assessment criteria of 0.02 which means weak, 0, 15, medium, and 0.35, which means large (Hair, 2014). Finally, testing the hypothesis is the criterion for measuring significance and probability values  $< 0.05$ .

### IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1. General Profile of Respondents**

Category	Details	Amount	Percentage (%)
Gender	Men	78	45.88
	woman	92	54.12
Age (years)	20-29	24	14.12
	30-39	66	38.83
	40-49	43	25.29

	50-59	37	21.76
Level of education	High School	58	34.13
	Bachelor	100	58.71
	Master	12	7.06
Length of business (years)	< 1	40	23.53
	1-3	57	33.54
	4-6	33	19.41
	7-9	28	16.47
	> 10	12	7.05
Income level (in rupiah)	< 1 million	22	12.95
	1-5 million	88	51.76
	5-10 million	39	22.94
	> 10 million	21	12.35

### Validity and Reliability Test

**Table 2. Validity Test Results**

Variable	Corrected Total correlation	item-N of Items	Test results
Innovation	0.522	4	Valid
Market Orientation	0.410	3	Valid
Competitive advantage	0.551	4	Valid

Based on the validity test of table 1 above, it is concluded that all indicators in the study have a value above 0.30, the measurement items used in this research are valid. Next, a reliability experiment is carried out to measure the measurement items on

the questionnaire items that describe the indicators of the variables. A questionnaire is reliable if a person's response to a question does not change or is normal from time to time.

**Table 3. Reliability Test Results**

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items	Test results
Innovation	0.628	4	Valid
Market Orientation	0.673	3	Valid
Competitive advantage	0.710	4	Valid

Based on the results of the reliability experiment shown in table 2 above, it proves that all indicators have a Cronbach alpha value for each instrument > 0.60, so it can be concluded that all the instruments used are reliable.

### Multiple Regression Test

**Table 4. Multiple Regression Test Results**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t-count	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	8,953	1760		5.088	.000
	Innovation	,433	0.080	.457	5.411	.000
	Market Orientation	,198	,077	.218	2,583	.011

a. Dependent Variables:Competitive Advantage

The results of the multiple linear regression above, the equation model are obtained: = 8.953 + 0.433 X1 + 0.198 X2 + 0.644X3, which means that

innovation and market orientation positively affect competitive advantage. Based on these equations, it can be explained as follows:

1. The constant value of 8,953 can be interpreted if the innovation and market orientation variables are considered zero, then the competitive advantage value will be in the range of 8,953 values.
2. The beta coefficient value on the innovation variable is 0.433, which means that each change in the innovation variable by one unit will result in a change in the competitive advantage of 0.433 units assuming the other variables are at a constant value.
3. The value of the beta coefficient on the personal market orientation variable is 0.198, which

means that every change in the market orientation variable by one unit will result in a change in the competitive advantage of 0.198 units assuming the other variables are at a constant value.

#### Simultaneous and Partial Hypothesis Testing

To examine the binding of variables simultaneously, experiment F is used. Simultaneous hypothesis testing tries to find out whether innovation and market orientation variables simultaneously affect competitive advantage.

**Table 5. Simultaneous Test Results**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.
1	Regression	75,303	2	25,794	.000b
	Residual	156,188	107		
	Total	231,491	109		

Based on the results of the simultaneous test analysis in table 5, the Fount value is 25,794 > from Table with (0.05; 3 vs 107) of 3.08 or with a significant 0.000 < 0.05, it can be interpreted that innovation and market orientation have an effect on the competitive advantage at the same time. Data analysis was then carried out by partial testing, which aims to determine the relationship between innovation and market orientation variables that partially tried to influence competitive advantage. Based on the results of data analysis in table 4, it can be explained the results of the t-test as follows:

1. Innovation obtained a significant level of 0.000 0.05, meaning that innovation significantly affects competitive advantage.
2. Market orientation has a significant level of 0.011 0.05, meaning that market orientation has a significant effect on competitive advantage.

#### Coefficient of Determination Test

The coefficient of determination is used to measure how far the ability of a model to explain the variation of the dependent variable. The results of the determination test in this study can be explained in Table 6 below:

**Table 6. Coefficient of Determination Test Results**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.570a	.325	.313	1,208

Based on the results of data analysis in table 6 above, the coefficient of determination value is 0.325, which means that the high and low competitive advantage of 32.5% can be explained, meaning innovation and market orientation, while the remaining 67.5% can be explained by other factors not discussed in this section. this research.

#### Discussion

Based on the results of partial hypothesis testing (H1), innovation has a significant effect on competitive advantage. This shows that the innovation process plays an important role in influencing competitive advantage. For the

business to remain relevant, adapting to the innovation process is necessary. Especially during today's technological disruption, innovation is a crucial thing to consider to encourage business growth in a better direction(Lestari et al., 2019). In fact, until now, technology has become one of the biggest factors driving change in every line of business. Technological developments have also created a new era of innovation across business models and industries. Those conditions made many new businesses (startups) appear with various innovations that broke the industry(Halim et al., 2021). It is not impossible, the startup becomes a new competitor for companies that already exist.

For this reason, innovation is very much needed for all companies, both large companies and those that are pioneering. The goal is to be able to compete and remain relevant in the face of a different changing environment, MSMEs can increase their competitive advantage by increasing three alternative innovations (Yi et al., 2021), namely: (1) MSMEs must be able to adopt new process technologies that are better than competitors in order to create better product differentiation. b) MSMEs must obtain process technology patents that are better than competitors to create better product selling values. c) MSMEs must continue to increase the potential for market demand better than competitors to encourage more optimal business growth (Zainurrafiqi & Amar, 2021).

Based on the results of partial hypothesis testing (H2), market orientation has a significant effect on competitive advantage. These results confirm that market orientation affects the sustainable development of a business. Consumers want every business actor instead of selling as many products as possible that consumers do not want to buy. They conduct market research and develop an effective marketing mix for effective market orientation (Sutapa et al., 2017). Thus, product failures are much reduced as companies align their products with customer expectations and demands. The alignment of products following consumer expectations, will encourage the development of business competitiveness to encourage long-term competitive advantage (Puspaningrum, 2017). As outlined through market research in developing product innovation, the role of market orientation is crucial to encourage competitive advantage in the long term. Through market research and market segmentation (Sultan et al., 2020). Then, business actors can develop the right marketing mix through renewable innovations for the products created. That way, the product can better meet customer requirements which in the end, the product will win the competition in the market (Purnamasari & Andreas Wijaya, 2020).

## V. CONCLUSION

The study results concluded that from the two hypotheses developed to test the direct effect, it was stated that both hypotheses were accepted. The analysis of the influence of innovation and market orientation on competitive advantage obtained positive and significant results. In general, new product innovations that have never been on the market have received little attention, so business actors need to improve their innovation in a comprehensive and structured manner. Increase product variety, create unique and different

products from competitors and make product packaging more attractive and necessary for product development. In addition, the essence of market orientation during the Covid-19 Pandemic is crucial in directing companies to product differentiation and efficiency based on market orientation, directing managers to reduce the emphasis on product orientation to respond to the market, and directing organizational systems, such as formalization and centralization, will be determined sequentially and will not stand alone. In addition, the market orientation position helps produce more efficiently than competitors and explains the differences in the performance achieved by the company.

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