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An Empirical Review of Determinants Influencing Firm Collaboration and Their Impact on Competitive Performance

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Abstract

Achieving a sustainable competitive advantage is essential for improving marketing performance in highly dynamic business environments. One strategic approach to attaining this objective is through relationship learning, which enables firms to enhance their organizational learning capabilities by facilitating systematic information exchange, fostering shared learning platforms, and aligning behaviors with stakeholder expectations. Relationship learning is not limited to dyadic firm-stakeholder interactions but also encompasses insights obtained from external sources such as scientific publications and academic research. By integrating both internal and external knowledge, firms can develop a comprehensive understanding of their strategic environment, allowing them to formulate more adaptive and effective marketing strategies. The establishment of mutual understanding through continuous collaborative efforts between customers and suppliers serves as a foundation for influencing behavioral alignment and strategic coherence. This dynamic learning process significantly contributes to the development of a firm's competitive advantage, thereby strengthening its marketing performance over time.

Introduction

A competitive advantage is defined as a benefit that allows a firm to surpass its rivals, typically achieved by offering greater value to customers than competing firms can deliver. Companies can establish competitive advantage either by creating superior customer value at the same price or by offering comparable value at a lower price (Porter, 2014). The success of enterprises, as key drivers of economic growth, is closely tied to their competitiveness. When a company manages to compete effectively on a global scale, it can be considered a contributor to national growth and welfare. Therefore, it is clear that the arena of competition lies with companies themselves, rather than with the state or the broader industry (Porter, 2014).

To respond to competitive pressures, Porter (2014) proposes a framework known as generic strategies, which enables firms to achieve profitability above the industry average by developing sustainable competitive advantages. The three generic strategies include a cost leadership strategy, a differentiation strategy, and a focus strategy. Cost leadership involves achieving lower overall costs in the industry through carefully targeted functional policies. Differentiation refers to the creation of products or services perceived as unique across the industry. Differentiation can be realized through elements such as design, technology, brand image, special features, customer service, distribution networks, or other dimensions. Meanwhile, the focus strategy targets specific customer segments, product categories, or geographical areas.

A firm is deemed to possess a competitive advantage if it is able to deliver products or services that provide greater value to customers than those offered by rivals. Such value can be realized through prompt delivery, rapid response to complaints, competitive pricing, and continuous innovation. To achieve this, firms must emphasize efficiency, enhance quality, and pursue consistent product development in terms of features and performance. These efforts help ensure products are preferred by customers who, if satisfied, may further recommend them to others through word-of-mouth communication. As noted by Tjiptono (2015), quality can be challenging to define precisely since individual perceptions vary. Quality is frequently described in terms such as conformance to requirements, defect-free output, or meeting customer expectations. These definitions generally emphasize product outcomes. However, quality also involves product design, which encompasses specification standards. Beyond results and design, quality should also be viewed from the perspective of processes, human resources, and the environment.

Competitive advantage may also be enhanced through technological tools. For example, in the banking sector, institutions compete by providing 24-hour online services through internet banking, supported by advanced databases. However, it must be noted that technology is only a supporting instrument. Its impact on competitive advantage is realized only if all corporate strategies are aligned with either a cost leadership or differentiation orientation.

Valos and FitzRoy (2017) further argue that the implementation of performance improvement initiatives must be integrated with Porter's strategic typologies. Specifically, differentiator strategies emphasize superior product image or quality, cost leadership strategies focus on lower operating costs, and combination strategies aim to pursue both simultaneously. This study does not examine focus strategy because it concentrates on customer value dimensions rather than market scope.

Competitive advantage that enhances marketing performance can also emerge from relationship learning, where organizations encourage knowledge exchange, develop shared learning spaces, and adjust their behaviors according to stakeholder expectations. Such learning can originate from diverse sources, including stakeholders as well as academic research. By pursuing relationship learning, firms gain broader insights for formulating strategic decisions. Relationship learning fosters a shared understanding through joint activities between customers and suppliers, which helps shape behavior. These shared understandings may be supported by collective assumptions or cognitive frameworks regarding outcomes and activities within the business environment.

According to the relationship-learning framework, several key processes are involved: (1) sharing information, (2) building a common understanding, and (3) developing relationship-specific memory. Information sharing refers to the mutual exchange of knowledge between customers and suppliers that influences behavior, which is vital for coordinating and planning a productive relationship. Continuously exchanging information improves the partners' ability to navigate market conditions. Developing shared understanding is facilitated by ongoing cooperative activities, while relationship-specific memory involves the collective integration of information into a shared memory domain. This is consistent with the concept of organizational memory. Strategic alliance gatherings, such as trade shows involving suppliers and distributors, can accelerate knowledge sharing, support a culture of co-learning, and enable companies to capitalize on market opportunities. Relationship memories serve as behavioral precedents that may guide future sales activities. For example, foreign exporters developing *guanxi* networks in China find that relationship memories facilitate negotiation, problem solving, partner search, and ultimately strengthen export performance.

Another path to competitive advantage and improved marketing performance is through Market Orientation (MO). MO is a cornerstone of modern management philosophy founded on marketing principles and is widely recognized for its positive effects on long-term profitability. The Marketing

Science Institute has encouraged empirical research into the conceptualization and measurement of MO. In their landmark publication, Kohli and Jaworski (2013) introduced market intelligence as a central pillar of MO, arguing that it represents a broader concept than mere customer focus. Market intelligence incorporates external market forces that shape consumer needs and preferences, both current and future.

Market orientation is regarded as a critical differentiator for successful firms operating in sophisticated modern economies. The concept emphasizes that organizational objectives can best be achieved by understanding and responding to client needs more effectively than competitors (Kohli & Jaworski, 2013). First, organizations identify what customers need and want, then design offerings tailored to meet those expectations in an acceptable and desirable way.

MO encompasses three main behavioral components:

1. **Customer orientation**, which refers to understanding both current and future customer needs in order to deliver superior value. The essence of MO is a strong consumer focus, not only in meeting their needs but also in delivering added value by reducing costs or enhancing benefits.
2. **Competitor orientation**, which involves collecting and analyzing data on both current and potential rivals. This includes insight into their strengths, weaknesses, and long-term capabilities to inform effective strategic decisions.
3. **Inter-functional coordination**, which involves aligning resources across the business organization to create superior value for consumers, acknowledging that each function plays a distinct role in supporting value creation.

Brand orientation is another relevant concept, encompassing the organization’s brand values and practices that aim to strengthen brand capabilities through interaction with target consumers. It has been conceptualized as a multidimensional model involving the brand as a differentiator, a source of value creation, and a symbolic mirror for consumers. Empirical evidence supports the link between brand orientation and competitive advantage, demonstrating that brand assets provide stronger protection than product excellence alone. This realization came to the management of TetraPak, a food packaging systems supplier, when Japanese competitors successfully replicated their machine technology. According to Claes Nermark, TetraPak’s Vice President of Marketing, brand value is a crucial competitive tool. At the Tokyo Pak 1985 trade show, Japanese competitor Shikok showcased a copy of the Tetra Brik machine under the name UP-Fuji-MA60. This experience underscored the significance of strong brands in protecting market positions beyond patents.

Generally, brand orientation consists of six dimensions drawn from the literature: shared brand vision, brand functionality, brand positioning, brand return on investment (ROI), brand symbolism, and brand value-enhancing capabilities. A shared brand vision ensures that the brand is fully integrated with other resources and competencies, supported by clear responsibilities and authority. Organizations recognize that brands help differentiate them by communicating functional attributes and unique benefits to customers, thereby reinforcing loyalty and brand equity. Brand orientation also integrates emotional and symbolic elements to strengthen consumer relationships. It emphasizes that branding is not only about functional features but also about service quality, brand personality, and the ability to build mutual understanding with customers and stakeholders.

Historically, marketing performance prior to the 1970s was measured in narrow, productivity-focused terms, with indicators emphasizing output–input ratios that prioritized efficiency. Such measures were often monetary, short-term, and driven by the producer's interests, potentially creating conflicts between employee and organizational objectives. In the long term, this efficiency-based approach could undermine the company's vision, mission, and culture, and even reduce morale. It also led to flawed decisions, such as selling so-called unproductive assets or downsizing skilled employees to meet productivity goals, thereby harming the firm's growth prospects.

In the 2000s, marketing performance measurement evolved with new indicators that better reflect marketing's contribution to company success. For instance, indicators of customer satisfaction and loyalty are now viewed as more appropriate, as they relate to product quality, service quality, and effective customer relationship techniques. These measures recognize the value that customers attribute to the goods and services received, beyond their monetary price. Time and psychological costs borne by customers, which are difficult to quantify, should not be overlooked. These nonfinancial, long-term indicators positively influence employee attitudes and behavior, reinforcing the firm's image and growth potential. Other relevant indicators include marketing assets, which extend beyond tangible facilities and headcount to encompass intangible assets. These intangibles — such as the quality of the customer base, reliable distribution channels, and relationships with supportive business partners — are essential to smooth business operations. Intangible resources also provide valuable information to inform strategic decision-making and policy development.

Marketing has thus evolved from a simple service function to a strategic driver of decision-making within the firm, shifting from a functional discipline to a framework for organizational leadership.

2. Literature Review

Brand Orientation and Competitive Advantage

According to Kotler and Armstrong (2016), brand orientation contributes to competitive advantage by enabling firms to offer superior value to customers compared to competitors. A competitive advantage exists when a firm provides greater customer value, either through superior benefits at comparable prices or by delivering similar value at lower costs (Hansen & Mowen, 2015). Competitive strategy involves identifying and securing a favorable market position, with the ultimate goal of maintaining long-term profitability and resilience against industry forces (Porter in Hooley et al., 2017).

Hansen and Mowen (2015) further define customer value as the perceived net benefit—what customers gain minus what they sacrifice. Sustainable competitive advantage can only be achieved when customers recognize a meaningful difference between the offerings of a firm and those of its competitors. These differences arise from strategic capability gaps that must be sustained over time. Competitive strategy operates at three interrelated levels:

1. **Corporate-level strategy**, which focuses on the allocation of resources across different business units.
2. **Business-level strategy**, which concerns competitive positioning and the formulation of competitive advantage in specific markets or divisions.
3. **Functional-level strategy**, which relates to specific business functions such as marketing, human resources, and finance.

Creating Competitive Advantage

A firm can attain competitive advantage by delivering superior customer value relative to competitors, whether by offering more benefits at the same price point or delivering equal value at a reduced cost (Hansen & Mowen, 2015). Customers perceive brand orientation and customer-centric capabilities as signals of advantage, which enhance the firm's position relative to competitors (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016).

Establishing competitive advantage typically involves two core stages:

1. **Competitor Analysis** – assessing competitors' strengths, weaknesses, and strategic positioning.
2. **Development of a Competitive Marketing Strategy** – formulating strategic responses that leverage the firm’s unique capabilities.

To sustain this advantage, firms may adopt the following initiatives:

1. **Leveraging Organizational Resources**
While many firms possess extensive resource portfolios, not all resources contribute equally to competitive positioning. Identifying and utilizing those with the highest strategic value is essential.
2. **Following Generic Pathways to Advantage**
Porter (2014), as cited in Hooley et al. (2017), outlines two primary paths to competitive advantage: cost leadership and differentiation. These strategies can be operationalized through all components of the value chain, both core and support activities.

3. **Achieving Cost Leadership** Maintaining the lowest operational cost structure in the industry while retaining acceptable levels of quality and service.
4. **Achieving Differentiation** Creating and delivering offerings perceived as unique by the market through innovation, brand identity, or customer service excellence.

Dimensions of Competitive Strategy

Porter (2014) emphasizes the use of **generic strategies** as a foundational approach to achieving above-average industry profitability and building sustainable competitive advantage. These strategies are:

1. **Cost Leadership Strategy** – aiming for the lowest production and operational costs across the industry through functional efficiencies.
2. **Differentiation Strategy** – offering unique features, brand image, technological attributes, or customer support services that are perceived as superior by the market.
3. **Focus Strategy** – targeting specific market segments, buyer groups, or geographic areas to deliver tailored value propositions.

Marketing strategy formulation is often guided by **SWOT analysis**, which assesses internal strengths and weaknesses against external opportunities and threats to determine a company's strategic positioning within the industry.

Factors Influencing Competitive Advantage

Relationship Learning and Its Strategic Role

A study conducted on Taiwan's manufacturing industry, titled *"The Positive Effects of Relationship Learning and Absorptive Capacity on Innovation Performance and Brand Orientation in Industrial Markets,"* revealed that both relationship learning and absorptive capacity significantly enhance innovation outcomes, thereby strengthening competitive advantage.

Relationship learning is defined as the process through which information is assimilated and used to alter or refine behaviors in anticipation of future needs (Zhou et al., 2018). It comprises three core components: **information sharing**, **joint knowledge creation**, and **relationship-specific memory**.

- **Information sharing** entails the bilateral exchange of strategic and operational insights between partners, such as customer preferences, product information, and market intelligence.
- **Joint knowledge creation** refers to collaborative efforts, often in cross-functional or cross-organizational teams, to co-develop solutions and innovations.
- **Relationship-specific memory** involves institutionalizing these shared experiences into a form of collective knowledge that can guide future interactions and decision-making.

Relationship learning promotes a dynamic and reciprocal knowledge environment between firms, involving shared values, communication protocols, and mutual understanding. It emphasizes the interactive nature of learning and serves as a critical enabler of differential advantage. Consequently, firms are encouraged to cultivate learning competencies as a strategic asset in managing customer and supplier relationships.

Learning and knowledge acquisition are increasingly recognized as vital to fostering inter-organizational relationships. Organizational learning initiatives generate shared knowledge that can shape long-term collaborations and partnerships. Unlike linear development models, most relationships evolve dynamically in response to shifting needs and contextual opportunities. This evolution requires continuous mutual learning—not only by individual members but across the organizational ecosystem.

Inter-organizational learning, therefore, acts as a catalyst for economic synergy, cultural alignment, and relational strength. Firms capable of developing robust learning capabilities across their networks are more likely to achieve sustainable competitive advantages in complex and rapidly changing environments.

Relationship Learning and Marketing Performance

The development of effective practices for evaluating brand equity and financial returns has shown a positive correlation with both organizational learning and performance outcomes. Contemporary studies have highlighted the beneficial role of marketing performance measurement (MPM) dashboards in facilitating the dissemination and application of marketing information systems within organizations.

Effective organizational alignment around customer-centric processes significantly enhances the success of customer relationship management (CRM) initiatives, surpassing the impact of CRM technology utilization alone. Beyond anecdotal evidence, the process of capturing and analyzing customer satisfaction data - ranging from data collection and analysis to dissemination and utilization - demonstrates that high-performance outcomes are associated with superior measurement practices. These outcomes reflect a wide range of contingencies embedded in the organization’s culture, strategic resources, and competitive positioning.

Market Orientation and Competitive Advantage

An investigation into the declining enrollment trends at private secondary schools in West Java and Banten from 2002/2003 to 2007 revealed that macro-environmental factors—such as demographics, economic conditions, technology, politics, and culture—as well as micro-environmental influences like vendors, intermediaries, markets, customers, and competitors played a significant role. Competitive advantage in this context is closely linked to leveraging superior resources, capabilities, and control mechanisms, all of which contribute to enhanced brand perception and marketing performance.

Market orientation refers to the systematic generation, dissemination, and organizational responsiveness to market intelligence pertaining to both current and prospective customer needs (Narver & Slater, 2013). This concept is rooted in an organizational culture that prioritizes behaviors intended to deliver exceptional customer value and sustain superior business performance. Kohli and Jaworski (2015) conceptualized market orientation through the lens of information processing, emphasizing its role in generating company-wide intelligence, cross-functional sharing, and coordinated action.

Market Orientation and Marketing Performance

The rise of customer-centric marketing paradigms—such as co-creation—has underscored the critical role of fostering strong firm-customer relationships in enhancing marketing effectiveness. These practices contribute to improved customer integration, which is typically measured through key performance indicators such as customer lifetime value, satisfaction, retention, and loyalty (Grönroos, 2015).

Moreover, the intersection between supply chain management and marketing has gained recognition, as marketing activities increasingly influence supply chain integration. This includes joint product development, strategic alignment with channel partners, and retail management, reflecting marketing's broader role in enhancing supply chain value (Christopher, 2017). Studies have analyzed various marketing performance metrics—such as delivery speed, service levels, and the proportion of revenue from co-developed products—in both marketing and logistics literature (Mentzer et al., 2015).

Internal marketing consistency, particularly the capacity to synchronize marketing with other business functions, has become an essential element of performance. This aligns with theories of market orientation and customer centricity, highlighting the importance of integrating marketing strategies with broader organizational goals (Day, 2016). The role of marketing in cultivating a knowledge-based culture has also emerged, with scholars asserting that marketing departments are instrumental in promoting market-oriented values and behaviors across the firm (Kumar & Reinartz, 2019).

Brand Orientation and Competitive Advantage

Empirical studies examining the linkage between market orientation, organizational learning, and brand orientation in the UK retail sector have found that competitive advantage plays a mediating role in the effectiveness of strategic initiatives, though it does not directly influence financial performance. Interestingly, market orientation was not found to exert a significant direct or indirect impact on either competitive advantage or organizational financial outcomes.

Wong and Merrilees (2016) assert that brand orientation significantly influences the strategic planning process in marketing, especially in determining brand utilization. Their research approaches brand management through multiple dimensions, including the creation of a distinctive brand identity, brand portfolio development, strategic brand communication, and performance monitoring.

By focusing on these dimensions, firms can better assess consumer perceptions, align branding strategies with organizational vision, and proactively manage brand image. This process enables organizations to estimate brand value in the minds of consumers, thereby strengthening stakeholder confidence and reinforcing both tangible and intangible value propositions. Although these strategies are primarily designed for profit-oriented firms, their application has also been extended to non-profit sectors (Hankinson, 2017).

Tetra Pak's case provides a compelling illustration: facing imitation by Japanese competitors, the company shifted its focus toward brand value as a key source of protection beyond technical patents. According to Claes Nermark, the brand offered a more sustainable competitive shield than legal protections, reinforcing the strategic value of branding in competitive markets.

Brand Orientation and Marketing Performance

The integration of robust measurement systems for brand equity and financial returns has positively influenced both learning and performance in marketing contexts. Recent research indicates that marketing dashboards play a pivotal role in distributing and utilizing marketing performance management (MPM) data (Segev, 2014).

Segev (2014) emphasized that market orientation serves as an organizing principle for managing stakeholder relationships and evaluating a firm's alignment with core marketing principles. This orientation has been conceptualized from both cultural and behavioral perspectives: the cultural view highlights shared values and norms that support market-oriented behavior, while the behavioral perspective focuses on specific managerial activities, such as generating market intelligence, cross-departmental information sharing, and responsiveness to insights. Although the behavioral model tends to overlook competitor orientation, it remains widely accepted as a valid empirical framework for explaining market orientation's antecedents and its influence on marketing performance (Lafferty & Hult, 2015).

Marketing Performance

Performance, as an outcome of organizational activities, can range from straightforward to complex. The assessment of business performance has become a prominent focus among academics and practitioners, with thousands of publications emerging annually since the mid-1990s (Morgan et al., 2019).

Key indicators of marketing performance typically address intra-functional efficiencies—such as cost management and revenue generated through activities like promotions, pricing, sales, and distribution (Ambler, 2015). Over time, marketing metrics have evolved along three key dimensions: from financial to non-financial indicators, from output-oriented to input-focused measures, and from unidimensional to multidimensional models.

The Marketing Performance Measurement System (MPMS), a component of the broader corporate performance system, is designed to capture the impact of marketing efforts on overall business success (Clark et al., 2017). However, a notable discrepancy remains between normative models and real-world application, which varies significantly depending on the strategic context of the firm.

Morgan, Clark, and Gooner (2019) emphasized that information availability differs across firms, with some organizations experiencing data abundance while others lack access to critical metrics. Performance measurement systems are also influenced by factors such as leadership attitudes, industry standards, and regulatory pressures. The autonomy of strategic business units (SBUs) and the influence of external stakeholders—including regulators, customers, suppliers, and advocacy groups—further complicate measurement. Growing scrutiny from civil society, especially in areas such as product ethics and fair trade practices, underscores the rising importance of marketing accountability in shaping organizational performance and public perception.

3. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

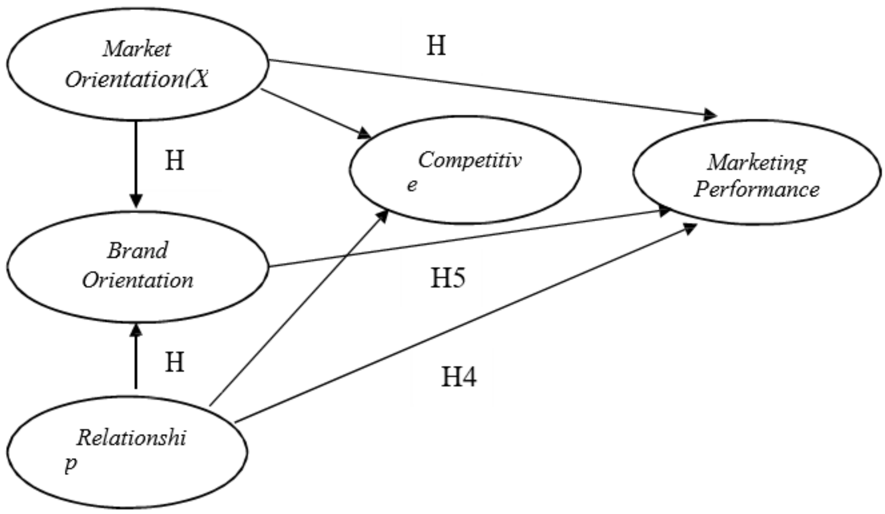
Brand orientation has emerged as a pivotal driver for enhancing competitive advantage. Nermark, Vice President of Marketing at Tetra Pak, underscores the strategic value of branding in competitive settings. He recounts an experience during the 1985 TokyoPak trade exhibition, where Japanese competitor Shikok showcased a replica of Tetra Brik's machine system under the name UP-Fuji-MA60. Despite patent protections and paper supply arrangements through the USA International Paper, Tetra Pak realized that branding offered a stronger form of protection than legal instruments. This incident highlighted the critical role of brand orientation as a strategic asset in safeguarding market position ([Nermark in Yohn, 2014]).

Empirical findings by Jaworski and Kohli (2013) corroborate the assertion that brand orientation contributes significantly to competitive advantage. Similarly, Wong and Merrilees (2015) argued that brand should serve as the foundation of corporate strategy. A company that embeds brand orientation into its strategic framework is better positioned to sustain its competitive edge over time, facilitating long-term growth and expansion. This strategic commitment enables firms to create enduring differentiation in the market and enhance stakeholder perception. Moreover, firms that project compelling brand identities—backed by tangible or intangible value—are more likely to stimulate stakeholder trust and elevate organizational performance (Nguyen & Barrett, 2016).

The positive correlation between brand orientation and competitive advantage is particularly crucial in highly dynamic market environments. Firms must exhibit high responsiveness to customer expectations; otherwise, competitors may seize the opportunity to deliver superior offerings. A strong market-oriented culture, therefore, becomes instrumental in crafting superior value propositions and enhancing long-term business sustainability (Kumar et al., 2018; Narver et al., 2017).

Simultaneously, the concept of relationship learning has gained attention as a significant determinant of competitive advantage. Companies seeking to expand their operations globally must align innovation, knowledge acquisition, and adaptation with their strategic goals (Zhou et al., 2015). Relationship learning is inherently collaborative and often characterized by firm-specific, non-transferable knowledge that is difficult for competitors to imitate. As a result, it becomes a source of sustainable competitive advantage (Li & Dyer, 2014).

Theoretically, relationship learning is viewed as a long-term strategic investment. Unlike tangible cost reductions, the outcomes of relationship-based strategies are less visible but potentially more impactful. While many firms assume that stronger relationships correlate positively with performance outcomes, the mechanisms underlying this connection are often not well understood. Nonetheless, the influence of competitive advantage on marketing performance remains a crucial link that reflects how intangible assets such as learning and brand equity translate into measurable business results (Chen & Hsieh, 2019).



Hypotheses

- **H1**: Market orientation positively influences brand orientation.
- **H2**: Relationship learning positively influences brand orientation.
- **H3**: Market orientation positively influences marketing performance.
- **H4**: Relationship learning positively influences marketing performance.
- **H5**: Brand orientation positively influences marketing performance.

4. Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative survey design to empirically test the relationships among key constructs. The research investigated the influence of market orientation, relationship learning, and brand orientation on competitive advantage and marketing performance.

Sample and Data Collection

A stratified sampling approach was utilized to ensure representativeness of the population, accounting for a 10% margin of error. The use of a 5% tolerance level would have resulted in an unmanageable sample size due to logistical constraints posed by the geographical dispersion and professional obligations of the respondents.

Questionnaire-based data collection was conducted to capture responses related to the variables under investigation. The constructs—Market Orientation (X1), Brand Orientation (X2), Relationship Learning (X3), Competitive Advantage (Z), and Marketing Performance (Y)—were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5).

Model and Data Analysis Technique

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was adopted as the analytical technique due to its ability to test multiple causal relationships simultaneously, including both direct and indirect effects. This model was deemed suitable because it encompasses two intervening variables and facilitates comprehensive analysis of interrelated constructs.

Hypothesis Testing and Structural Model Results

1. Market Orientation → Brand Orientation

The SEM results using AMOS 7.0 revealed a statistically significant positive effect of market orientation on brand orientation among furniture companies in Java. The standardized path coefficient was +0.224, with a critical ratio of 2.008 (> 1.960) and a p-value of 0.045 (< 0.05), confirming significance. This supports **H1**, suggesting that effective market orientation contributes to 22.4% of the variance in brand orientation. A stronger market orientation enables companies to better align with consumer expectations, thereby enhancing their brand positioning in competitive markets. Conversely, firms with weak market orientation may lag behind foreign competitors operating in Indonesia.

2. Relationship Learning → Brand Orientation

The path coefficient from relationship learning to brand orientation was +0.353, with a critical ratio of 3.095 and a p-value of 0.002. This indicates a significant and positive relationship, validating **H2**. The contribution of relationship learning to brand orientation is approximately 35.3%. Firms that actively cultivate knowledge-sharing, mutual understanding, and long-term relational memory with partners tend to exhibit stronger brand orientation, enhancing their perceived competitive advantage among consumers. A deficiency in such learning mechanisms is likely to weaken brand positioning in the marketplace.

3. Market Orientation → Marketing Performance

Market orientation was also found to significantly influence marketing performance, as indicated by a standardized estimate of +0.199, a critical ratio of 1.969 (> 1.960), and a p-value of 0.049 (< 0.05), supporting **H3**. Approximately 19.9% of the variability in marketing performance can be attributed to market orientation. Firms that effectively generate, disseminate, and respond to market intelligence are better positioned to implement strategic marketing actions that sustain business performance and ensure long-term viability.

4. Relationship Learning → Marketing Performance

The relationship between relationship learning and marketing performance was found to be positive and significant, with a standardized coefficient of +0.401, a critical ratio of 4.058, and a p-value of 0.000. This supports **H4** and demonstrates that relationship learning accounts for 40.1% of the variation in marketing performance. Organizations that foster strong collaborative ties with stakeholders benefit from enhanced marketing capabilities, facilitating achievement of business objectives, adaptability to dynamic markets, and improved interdepartmental coordination.

5. Brand Orientation → Marketing Performance

Brand orientation also exerted a significant positive effect on marketing performance, with a standardized estimate of +0.313, a critical ratio of 2.964, and a p-value of 0.003. These results confirm **H5**, suggesting that 31.3% of marketing performance is influenced by the extent of brand orientation. Firms that prioritize brand strategy—incorporating cost leadership, differentiation, and focus—are more likely to achieve sustained growth, customer loyalty, and competitive positioning.

Key Research Findings

1. Market orientation - via intelligence generation, dissemination, and responsiveness—enhances relationship learning by fostering deeper connections with experts, suppliers, and distributors, ultimately improving information-sharing and strategic alignment.
2. A firm's ability to use market orientation as a strategic tool significantly influences its brand orientation, empowering the organization to align with consumer expectations through distinctive positioning strategies.
3. Market orientation significantly enhances marketing performance by supporting data-driven decisions, customer insights, and strategic responsiveness - key enablers of sustainable growth in competitive environments.
4. Relationship learning - characterized by information sharing, mutual understanding, and the cultivation of relational memory—substantially contributes to brand orientation through the internalization of strategic goals and market alignment.
5. The development of relationship learning mechanisms improves marketing performance by promoting collaborative practices, innovation, and market responsiveness, ultimately contributing to the company's sustainability and competitiveness.
6. A robust brand orientation, built on strategic positioning through cost leadership, differentiation, and focus strategies, has a significant effect on marketing performance by ensuring alignment with consumer preferences and fostering strategic agility.

Conclusion

1. Enhanced market orientation fosters greater awareness and action toward cultivating relationship learning among stakeholders, which in turn amplifies marketing performance.
2. Market orientation is a key determinant of brand orientation.
3. Relationship learning positively influences brand orientation; stronger learning capabilities lead to greater strategic clarity in brand positioning.
4. Market orientation directly contributes to improved marketing performance, making it essential for companies to remain responsive to evolving consumer and market needs.
5. Relationship learning significantly supports marketing performance by building enduring inter-organizational ties and facilitating knowledge transfer among firms, suppliers, and thought leaders.
6. Strong brand orientation directly impacts marketing performance. Organizations that strategically develop their brand identity are more likely to enhance customer engagement and achieve long-term business success.

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