

## Entrepreneurship, Innovation, and Business Environment Adaptation: Determinants of Culinary SMEs' Performance in Semarang

Aryoga Wiweko<sup>1\*</sup>, Afina Hasya<sup>2</sup>, and Adi Wahyu Anggara<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup> Diponegoro University, Indonesia

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### CORRESPONDING AUTHOR

[aryoga.wiweko@live.undip.ac.id](mailto:aryoga.wiweko@live.undip.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

SMEs are independent productive enterprises managed by individuals or business entities that are not subsidiaries or branches of larger companies. This study aims to analyze the influence of entrepreneurial orientation, business environment adaptation, and business innovation on business performance through competitive advantage among culinary SMEs in Semarang City. The research involved 120 respondents, consisting of owners and managers of culinary SMEs in Semarang. Data were analyzed using the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) method with the support of IBM AMOS 22 software. The findings reveal that entrepreneurial orientation, business environment adaptation, and innovation influence business performance through competitive advantage. However, only business environment adaptation has a direct effect on business performance without going through competitive advantage, while the other variables impact business performance only when mediated by competitive advantage. Therefore, MSME owners are advised to strengthen their adaptability, business innovation, and entrepreneurial orientation in order to face market dynamics and competition. For further research, it is highly recommended to expand the study to other MSME sectors or different regions to enrich local business development strategies.

### ABSTRAK

UMKM adalah usaha produktif mandiri yang dikelola oleh individu atau entitas bisnis yang bukan merupakan anak perusahaan atau cabang dari perusahaan besar. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh orientasi kewirausahaan, adaptasi lingkungan bisnis, dan inovasi bisnis terhadap kinerja bisnis melalui keunggulan kompetitif di kalangan UMKM kuliner di Kota Semarang. Penelitian ini melibatkan 120 responden, terdiri dari pemilik dan manajer UMKM kuliner di Semarang. Data dianalisis menggunakan metode *Structural Equation Modelling* (SEM) dengan dukungan perangkat lunak IBM AMOS 22. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa orientasi kewirausahaan, adaptasi lingkungan bisnis, dan inovasi mempengaruhi kinerja bisnis melalui keunggulan kompetitif. Namun, hanya adaptasi lingkungan bisnis yang memiliki efek langsung pada kinerja bisnis tanpa melalui keunggulan kompetitif, sementara variabel lain hanya mempengaruhi kinerja bisnis ketika dimediasi oleh keunggulan kompetitif. Dengan demikian, para pemilik UMKM disarankan untuk memperkuat kemampuan adaptasi, inovasi bisnis, dan orientasi kewirausahaan guna menghadapi dinamika pasar dan persaingan. Untuk penelitian selanjutnya sangat disarankan memperluas kajian ke sektor UMKM lain atau wilayah berbeda untuk memperkaya strategi pengembangan bisnis lokal.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research Background

Businesses within a country produce goods or services with the main goal of generating profits for their owners. These businesses can be classified into several types based on their operational characteristics. The main types include: (1) service companies, which focus on providing services rather than tangible goods; (2) trading companies, which purchase goods from suppliers and resell them to consumers at a markup; and (3) manufacturing companies, which acquire raw

materials, process them into finished products, and then sell those products to consumers.

The focus of this study discusses companies with individual types of organizations. The discussion will focus specifically on small and medium-sized enterprises, often referred to as Small and Medium Units (SMEs). Most economists view SMEs as playing a vital role in supporting and driving a country's economic development. These SMEs can provide fields and employment opportunities to generate income or income for most households.

The rise in the number of SMEs is followed by intensified competition among them within the community. The limitations and compulsion of someone to improve their household economy is a problem that arises, given the limited level of economy and available resources. The existence of SMEs can support early or small entrepreneurs to apply the flexibility they have to manage simple organizations, innovate, and adapt to changes in the surrounding environment. Therefore, SME entrepreneurs need to be flexible so they can continue to adapt to the business environment.

The sustainability of SMEs' performance is strongly determined by their ability to build and maintain a competitive advantage [1]. This advantage serves as the mediating factor that links entrepreneurial and marketing practices to business performance. SMEs can only achieve superior performance when entrepreneurs are able to design and implement the right strategies that respond effectively to industry dynamics. Thus, the entrepreneur's capability in executing these strategies becomes a crucial driver for strengthening competitive advantage and, consequently, improving overall business outcomes. In the more recent literature, scholars emphasize that entrepreneurs' ability to execute strategies 'especially those that are flexible and responsive to market dynamics' is one of the most critical determinants of achieving competitive advantage, which in turn yields a positive effect on firm performance [2], [3].

Entrepreneurial orientation refers to the decision-making process that generates new ideas or inputs and implements them within the company [4]. Additionally, innovation serves as a key factor in sustaining a competitive advantage. The amount of innovation capacity of a company can provide a response to changes in the business environment. Innovation can be defined as the outcome, input, and implementation of processes and ideas, typically involving new products or methods [5]. Changes in the business environment also have a significant impact on the overall business climate, particularly for smaller enterprises like SMEs. An SME's adaptive capability positively influences both innovation and competitive advantage, indicating that firms must dynamically realign in response to environmental change through innovation [6]. Organizational agility, which includes adaptability, serves as a critical multidimensional capability enabling firms to reconfigure structure and operations in rapidly changing environments to sustain competitive advantage [7].

SMEs have an important role in helping the national and regional economy grow, including those in the culinary field. In Semarang, the number of new culinary SMEs went down between 2013 and 2015, while SMEs in other areas grew a lot. Every year, the number of SMEs increases by about 2.38%, mostly in

trade and industry. However, the decrease in new culinary SMEs could affect the economic situation in Semarang. The impact related to the decline in the number of SMEs is that the number of workers in the sector will also decrease. The assumption is that more SMEs operating in an area will absorb a large amount of labor, and vice versa. One thing about SMEs in the community is that their numbers keep changing. They can start up easily but also close down just as fast. This might be because the owners don't really understand how to run a business well, so their performance isn't very good.

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyze the factors behind the decrease in the number of culinary SMEs in Semarang, which may result from low company performance influenced indirectly by competitive advantage, as well as to examine whether entrepreneurial orientation, adaptation to the business environment, and business innovation have a direct impact.

## 1.2. Literature Review

### 1.2.1. Business Performance

Business performance is basically how well a person, or a group manages to run their business and reach their goals. It shows the results of their hard work and responsibility in managing the business. Good business performance means that the people involved are doing their jobs properly, making the business grow, and achieving its targets. It's also important that this is done in a legal and fair way, without breaking any rules or laws. [8]. Business performance, which shows how well a company is doing, is the result of what the company has planned before and managed to achieve within a certain time, based on the goals or standards that were already set. Performance is an illustration of the results of the implementation of activities in order to realize the management's vision, mission and objectives previously designed in strategic planning.

Business performance plays an important role in supporting business processes and has received special attention from management experts. Empirically, researchers have examined the use of performance construction for various issues related to the survival of an organization [9]. Performance is the achievement of targets in a form that must be known and communicated to all parties in the organization and associated with the vision assigned to an organization [10]. Business performance shows how well an organization reaches its economic goals, which can be seen through financial results.

Measuring performance using financial indicators is called financial performance, and it's often used as the main method in strategic research [11]. The indicators used for this approach are sales growth, profitability reflected in return on investment, return on sale, return on equity, earnings per share, and so on. Efforts to

better reflect current market conditions, researchers also use market-based strategies for measuring performance, such as market-to-book returns or stock markets and the like [12].

### 1.2.2. Competitive Advantage

Competitive advantage means the things that make a company better than others. This advantage comes from how well the company uses its resources and manages things like costs, innovation, and prices. Besides that, business owners, including those who run SMEs, need to have good skills in organization and marketing. In the food or culinary business, owners often compete directly with other sellers, so they must be ready to face strong competition. Organizations which adopt differentiation strategies and demonstrate competitive aggressiveness are better able to position themselves defensively against competitors, thereby strengthening their competitive advantage [2].

Generic competitive strategies are [13]:

- a) Cost Excellence Strategies. The cost advantage is when the company becomes a low-cost producer in the industry, and the company has broad market coverage and can serve many segments in the industry and can even operate in a number of related industries. When a company has broad market coverage, the company can achieve cost advantages.
- b) Differentiation Strategies. In this strategy, the company must have a unique or distinctive characteristic that is different from certain dimensions in general. With the uniqueness that other companies do not have, the company deserves to set a premium price. Differentiation strategies can be based on the characteristics inherent in the product itself, the marketing system or the product delivery system
- c) Focus Strategies. In this strategy, the company chooses to compete in a specific or narrow competition within an industry. In this case the company selects one or several specific groups or communities in an industry and then adjusts the strategy to provide services or handle the group specifically. The focus strategy consists of two types, namely the cost focus strategy. Namely, the company achieves cost advantages in its target segment

The way to deal with the threats of competition in the culinary SME industry, Porter, describes three strategies to deal with this, such as: Differentiation strategy "emphasizing the existence of specific characteristics in the company rather than its competitors", Price leadership strategy "emphasizes excellence in costs", Focus strategy "to focus products or services to meet the needs of certain segments (limited)" [14]. According to Porter's theory, a

company can become stronger and more successful if it has a good strategy to create a competitive advantage. This means the company needs to find ways to stand out from its competitors, such as offering better products, lower prices, or more efficient services. When a company builds a strong competitive advantage, it can take a leading position in its industry and be able to survive even when competition becomes tough. Competitive strategies determine the company's ability to get large profits.

### 1.2.3. Entrepreneurship Orientation

Entrepreneurial orientation is the process of making strategies that help an organization make decisions and take actions based on an entrepreneurial mindset. There are also several factors that influence a company's entrepreneurial orientation, namely [4], [15], [16]:

- a) Innovative: means the company encourages creativity and works to develop new products;
- b) Risk-taking: means the company looks for and tries new opportunities even if there's a chance of failure; and
- c) Proactive: means the company actively observes competitors and responds quickly to future market demands.;
- d) Competitiveness: The intensity of the company in exploiting new opportunities.

From the above opinion, it can be observed that if business owners pay attention to and apply the four factors of entrepreneurial orientation, it can help improve the company's performance. The indicator used as a measuring tool to assess the entrepreneurial orientation variables in this study uses indicators written by certain researchers [17] in certain study [18]. This variable is assessed and measured in 4 dimensions of indicators: the need for achievement, internal self-control, self-confidence, and openness.

### 1.2.4. Adaptation of Business Environment

Organizational agility enables firms to flexibly adapt to environmental turbulence, which includes how leaders explore external market information to detect shifts, threats, and opportunities that may arise abruptly [19]. Meanwhile, certain study conceptualizes external adaptation as a strategic leadership function that aligns the organization with both macro environments (political, economic, social, cultural) and task environments (industry-level actors) by interpreting environmental signals and integrating them into strategic action [20].

Adapting the business environment can also be a place to provide resources by providing coverage for a number of segments such as demographic, economic, political, legal, social, cultural, and technological [21]. It is still very necessary to conduct an in-depth analysis

of the adaptation of industrial environments which includes how threats are made by competing companies, the existence of substitute goods, how the strength of consumer power and competition intensity are.

1.2.5. Business Innovation

Innovation ‘whether in products, processes, or organizational methods’ has a significant positive influence on SMEs’ business performance, such that firms that innovate more intensively tend to achieve stronger performance outcomes [22]. Innovation comes from analyzing the business environment, which helps entrepreneurs understand what consumers want. From this understanding, they can develop new ideas to meet those needs, such as improving existing products or services.

Based on a review of studies about Innovation Capability, four main dimensions of innovation have been identified:

- a) Product innovation, which involves developing research, technology, and product improvements to bring new or better products to the market faster than competitors;
- b) Process innovation, which focuses on creating and applying new or more effective production methods and processes;
- c) Service innovation, which means improving and developing services to better satisfy customers; and
- d) Organizational innovation, which refers to using new organizational methods in business operations, workplace management, or external relations.

In general, these dimensions show the importance of focusing on innovation and investing in it to improve business performance [23], [24].

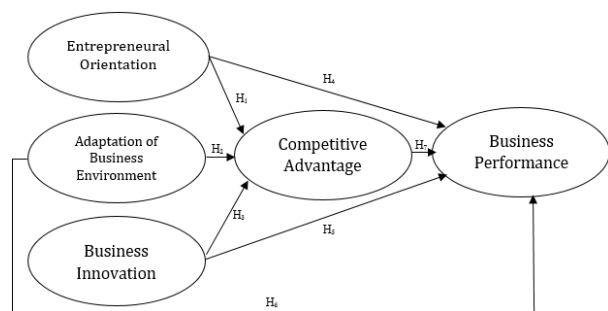


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

The hypothesis that will be shown in this study are as follows:

- H1: Entrepreneurial orientation positively influences the competitive advantage of SMEs.
- H2: Business environment adaptation has a positive impact on the competitive advantage of SMEs.
- H3: Business innovation positively affects the competitive advantage of SMEs.
- H4: Entrepreneurial orientation has a positive influence on the business performance of SMEs.
- H5: Business environment adaptation positively affects SME business performance.
- H6: Business innovation has a positive impact on the business performance of SMEs.
- H7: A company’s competitive advantage positively influences the business performance of SMEs.

2. Research Method

This study uses a quantitative approach. This approach was chosen with the aim of testing the relationship between variables empirically through statistical analysis. The sample in this study consisted of 120 owners or managers of culinary SMEs in the city of Semarang, selected from a total population of 741 culinary SMEs. Data were collected through questionnaires to obtain information about entrepreneurial orientation, business environment adaptation, innovation, competitive advantage, and business performance. For data analysis, the study used the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) method, processed with IBM AMOS 22 software, to examine the model as well as the relationships between variables and indicators in this research.

3. Result and Discussion

Hypothesis testing is carried out based on the Critical Ratio (CR) value from the SEM test results, which shows the causal relationships and is presented on the Table 1. Based on the test results, five variables have a Critical Ratio (CR) greater than 1.96 and a probability value less than 0.05. Meanwhile, the remaining two variables show the opposite, with CR values below 1.96 and probability values above 0.05.

Table 1. Regression Structural Equational Model

Endogen	Exogen	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Competitive Advantage	→ Entrepreneurial Orientation	0,299	0,148	2,024	0,043
Competitive Advantage	→ Adaptation of Business Environment	0,637	0,105	6,044	***
Competitive Advantage	→ Business Innovation	0,245	0,113	2,177	0,029
Business Performance	→ Entrepreneurial Orientation	0,002	0,130	0,017	0,986
Business Performance	→ Adaptation of Business Environment	0,343	0,151	2,279	0,023
Business Performance	→ Business Innovation	0,062	0,104	0,602	0,547
Business Performance	→ Competitive Advantage	0,631	0,196	3,224	0,001

The significance value of the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on competitive advantage is 0.043, with a positive CR value of 2.024. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 and positive, it indicates that entrepreneurial orientation has a significant positive impact on the competitive advantage of SMEs. This means that the higher the level of entrepreneurial orientation among SME owners, the greater their competitive advantage, and vice versa. Therefore, H1 is accepted. The findings suggest that a strong entrepreneurial orientation from the owners or managers of culinary SMEs in Semarang City can enhance their competitive advantage.

The significance value of the effect of business environment adaptation on competitive advantage is 0.000, with a positive CR value of 6.044. Since the p-value is below 0.05 and positive, it shows that business environment adaptation has a significant positive impact on the competitive advantage of SMEs. This means that the better SME owners adapt to changes in the business environment, the stronger their competitive advantage will be, and vice versa. Then based on the test means H2 is accepted. The results of this study indicate that the adaptation of a strong business environment by owners or managers of culinary SMEs in Semarang will increase the competitive advantage of SMEs.

The significance value of the effect of business innovation on competitive advantage is 0.029, with a positive CR value of 2.177. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 and positive, it indicates that business innovation has a significant positive impact on competitive advantage. This means that the higher the level of innovation among SME owners, the greater their competitive advantage, and vice versa. Therefore, H3 is accepted. The findings of this study show that strong business innovation from the owners or managers of culinary SMEs in Semarang City can enhance their competitive advantage.

The significance value of the effect of entrepreneurial orientation on business performance is 0.986, with a positive CR value of 0.017. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that H4 is rejected, meaning entrepreneurial orientation does not have a significant positive impact on the business performance of SMEs. The greater the level of entrepreneurial orientation owned by SME entrepreneurs does not affect the business performance of SMEs. Then based on the test means H0 is accepted. The results of this study indicate that an increase in entrepreneurial orientation by owners or managers of culinary SME in Semarang City does not affect the business performance of SMEs directly.

The significance value of the effect of business environment adaptation on business performance is 0.023, with a positive CR value of 2.297. Since the p-value is below 0.05 and positive, it can be concluded that H0 is rejected, meaning that business environment

adaptation has a significant positive impact on SME business performance. This implies that the better SME owners adapt to their business environment, the stronger their business performance will be, and vice versa. Therefore, H5 is accepted. The findings of this study suggest that strong business environment adaptation by the owners or managers of culinary SMEs in Semarang directly enhances their business performance.

The significance value of the effect of business innovation on business performance is 0.547, with a positive CR value of 0.602. Since the p-value is greater than 0.05, it can be concluded that H6 is rejected, indicating that business innovation does not have a significant positive impact on SME business performance. In other words, a higher level of business innovation among SME owners does not necessarily lead to better business performance. Therefore, H0 is accepted. The findings of this study show that increasing business innovation by the owners or managers of culinary SMEs in Semarang City does not have a direct effect on improving their business performance.

The significance value of the effect of competitive advantage on business performance is 0.001, with a positive CR value of 3.224. Since the p-value is less than 0.05 and positive, it can be concluded that H0 is rejected, meaning that competitive advantage has a significant positive impact on SME business performance. This implies that the higher the level of competitive advantage owned by SME entrepreneurs, the better their business performance will be, and vice versa. Therefore, H7 is accepted. The findings of this study suggest that the competitive advantage possessed by culinary SME owners or managers in Semarang City contributes to improving their overall business performance.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The findings of this study indicate that entrepreneurial orientation, adaptation to the business environment, and innovation drive business performance, particularly through competitive advantage. Adaptation to the business environment, with a dominant influence (standardized regression weight value of 0.684), affects performance both directly and indirectly, surpassing entrepreneurial orientation (0.219) and innovation (0.187). To improve performance, MSME owners need to foster a sense of achievement, self-confidence, and internal control to strengthen entrepreneurial orientation, as well as adapt to customer economic conditions, ensure raw material supply, face competition, and take advantage of government policies as opportunities. In addition, innovating products, processes, services, and marketing by offering competitive prices and unique branding will strengthen market position. Although the findings of this study are strong, there are limitations in the form

of the weak influence of the openness aspect in entrepreneurial orientation and challenges in data collection, so caution is needed in generalizing the results. Further research could expand the study to other MSME sectors in Central Java or focus on specific industries and raw materials to tailor growth strategies, as well as the importance of clearer communication in research. By prioritizing adaptability, innovation, and competitiveness, culinary MSMEs in Semarang can grow rapidly and have the potential to drive job creation and regional economic growth.

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