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THE IMPACT OF MARKETING INNOVATIONS ON COMPETITIVENESS.

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ANNOTATSIYA / АННОТАЦИЯ / ANNOTATION

This article provide the interplay between marketing innovations and competitiveness among firms operating in international markets through local resellers. It emphasizes the importance of collaboration between buyers and sellers in fostering both radical and incremental marketing innovations. By applying complexity theory, the research highlights how strong buyer-seller relationships can enhance a firm's capacity for innovation and overall competitive advantage. However, the study's limitations, including its focus on a single industry and geographical context, suggest the need for further research across diverse industries and cultures to fully understand the dynamics of marketing innovations and their impact on competitiveness.

INTRODUCTION. In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, companies are constantly seeking ways to maintain and enhance their competitiveness. One of the most critical factors contributing to a firm's success in a competitive market is its ability to innovate, particularly in marketing practices. Marketing innovations encompass a broad range of activities, from the development of new marketing strategies to the implementation of advanced technologies that enhance customer engagement and satisfaction. The impact of these innovations on a firm's competitiveness cannot be overstated, as they play a pivotal role in differentiating products and services, enhancing customer relationships, and ultimately driving business growth.

The concept of competitiveness is multi-dimensional, encompassing various elements such as market share, profitability, and customer loyalty. Firms that successfully integrate marketing innovations into their strategies can better respond to changing market demands, identify new opportunities, and establish a distinct position within their industry. As markets become increasingly saturated and consumer preferences evolve at a rapid pace, the need for businesses to adopt innovative marketing practices has never been more pressing.

At the heart of marketing innovation is the ability to leverage new technologies and data analytics to understand consumer behavior and preferences. Companies that harness these capabilities can develop targeted marketing campaigns that resonate with their audience, resulting in improved customer acquisition and retention rates. For instance, the rise of digital marketing has transformed how businesses communicate with consumers. Through the use of social media, search engine optimization, and data-driven marketing strategies, companies can reach their target audience more effectively and efficiently. This shift not only enhances brand visibility but also creates opportunities for personalized marketing, which has become a significant driver of customer loyalty.

Furthermore, marketing innovations allow firms to differentiate themselves from their competitors. In a crowded marketplace, where consumers are inundated with choices, the ability to stand out is crucial. Innovative marketing strategies, such as experiential marketing and influencer partnerships, can create memorable experiences that leave a lasting impression on consumers. These approaches not only capture attention but also foster emotional connections between the brand and its customers, enhancing brand loyalty and encouraging repeat business.

Collaboration and partnerships also play a significant role in driving marketing innovations. Businesses that embrace collaboration—whether through alliances with other firms, partnerships with influencers, or co-creation with customers—can generate fresh ideas and insights that fuel innovative marketing strategies. By working together, firms can leverage each other's strengths and resources, resulting in a more robust marketing approach that enhances competitiveness. For example, co-branding initiatives can help companies tap into each other's customer bases, expanding their reach and increasing brand awareness.

In addition to collaboration, firms must also focus on cultivating a culture of innovation internally. An organizational environment that encourages creativity and experimentation is essential for fostering marketing innovations. Companies that empower their employees to think outside the box and propose new ideas are more likely to develop innovative marketing strategies that resonate with consumers. This culture of innovation not only enhances the firm's marketing capabilities but also contributes to employee satisfaction and retention, ultimately impacting competitiveness.

Moreover, the ability to measure and analyze the effectiveness of marketing innovations is critical. Businesses that implement robust performance measurement systems can assess the impact of their marketing strategies on competitiveness. Key performance indicators (KPIs) such as customer engagement, conversion rates, and return on investment (ROI) provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of marketing innovations. By analyzing these metrics, firms can make data-driven decisions to refine their marketing strategies and enhance their overall competitiveness.

The globalization of markets presents both challenges and opportunities for firms seeking to enhance their competitiveness through marketing innovations. As businesses expand into international markets, they must navigate diverse consumer preferences, cultural nuances, and regulatory environments. Innovative marketing strategies that are adaptable to different markets are essential for success. Firms that invest in understanding local consumer behavior and tailor their marketing approaches accordingly can gain a competitive advantage in new markets. This adaptability not only helps in capturing market share but also in building strong relationships with local customers.

While the benefits of marketing innovations on competitiveness are evident, it is essential to recognize that not all marketing innovations yield positive results. The implementation of innovative marketing strategies requires careful planning, resource allocation, and risk management. Firms must be willing to invest in research and development to explore new marketing avenues and assess the potential impact on their competitiveness. Additionally, organizations should be prepared to learn from failures and setbacks, using them as opportunities for growth and improvement.

As technology continues to advance, the landscape of marketing innovations will continue to evolve. Trends such as artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and big data analytics are reshaping how companies approach marketing. AI-powered tools enable businesses to analyze vast amounts of consumer data, providing insights that drive personalized marketing strategies. Similarly, machine learning algorithms can predict consumer behavior, allowing firms to proactively address customer needs and preferences. Embracing these technological advancements will be crucial for companies looking to maintain their competitiveness in the future.

Various studies suggest that managers looking to enter the complex field of internationalization should build a competitive advantage that highlights their firm's strengths (Barney, Wright, & Ketchen, 2001; Porter, 2011; Samli, Wirth, & Wills, 1994). However, fear of uncertainty often discourages managers from expanding beyond their home country, as emerging markets tend to be complex and highly competitive (Knight, 1995; Thai & Chong, 2013). [1] A business-to-business distribution model can help international firms overcome entry barriers and navigate the complexity of foreign markets with high growth potential (Yan, 2012).

Distributors play a crucial role by introducing multiple competing products into the market and engaging local small and medium-sized businesses for sales (Chen, 2003). Since distributors offer a variety of similar products, markets served by resellers become highly competitive, forcing international brands to prove their ability to serve customers in innovative ways (Freeman, Edwards, & Schroder, 2006). A lack of deep local market knowledge can hinder a firm's ability to predict business trends and consumer behavior, which limits their ability to innovate their marketing strategies (Bell, 1995; Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). Distributors and resellers, therefore, play a key role in helping firms successfully penetrate foreign markets by enabling international brands to adapt their marketing approaches through reseller networks.

The resource advantage theory emphasizes the role of marketing in building a competitive edge and highlights the importance of branding in showcasing a firm's capabilities (Hunt & Morgan, 1995, 1996; Srivastava, Fahey, & Christensen, 2001). In industries such as IT and telecom, strong brands can leverage their leadership and local market relationships to compete effectively in foreign markets. Research also shows that brands that enhance the competitiveness of their resellers are better positioned to succeed at the local level through innovative marketing strategies (Gupta & Malhotra, 2013). [2] This suggests that the relationship between international brands and their resellers is critical for success in highly competitive markets (Anderson & Weitz, 1992).[3]

This study explores the relationship between competitiveness and innovation in the marketing practices of large manufacturing firms that distribute their branded products internationally through networks of local small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) acting as resellers. Drawing on the resource-based view and complexity theory, the study investigates what characteristics of both the brand and the reseller support the adoption of innovative marketing practices in a global context.

The research seeks to fill a gap in existing marketing literature by reviewing the current academic understanding of competitiveness and marketing innovation. Specifically, it aims to answer the following question: What configurations between a brand and its reseller enable the adoption of innovative marketing practices by both firms in an international environment? To address this question, the study develops a theoretical framework and uses empirical data for analysis.

The study is conducted in four phases. The first phase grounds the discussion of competitiveness and marketing innovation in established theories, such as the theory of competitive advantage and resource-advantage theory. The second phase examines the key concepts and assumptions with the help of expert insights. In the third phase, a field survey collects data from international brand resellers, and the study applies structural equation modeling (SEM) and fuzzy set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) (Ragin, 2006, 2008). [4] The use of fsQCA, especially when combined with complexity theory, provides researchers with a deeper understanding of the data (Leischnig & Kasper-Brauer, 2015; Mikalef, Pateli, Batenburg, & Wetering, 2015; Ordanini, Parasuraman, & Rubera, 2013; Woodside, 2014; Wu, Yeh, & Woodside, 2014).[5] The fourth phase interprets the results, leading to recommendations and suggestions for future research.

This research contributes to the fields of business-to-business and international marketing, enhancing the understanding of the interdependence between brands and resellers in building competitiveness and adopting innovative marketing strategies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Brands that can drive market demand and simplify the selling process tend to attract resellers (Keller, 2010; Srivastava et al., 2001). Similarly, resellers who effectively help brands enter markets and generate demand are likely to gain the attention of brand managers (Parment, 2008). While creating demand in competitive markets benefits both brands and resellers, it requires innovative collaboration between the two (Gupta & Malhotra, 2013). Research shows that when resellers benefit from a brand's promotional activities, their local knowledge and relationships play a key role in helping brand managers navigate the challenges of growing markets (Cavusgil & Cavusgil, 2012; Gupta & Malhotra, 2013).

Adapting brand strategies to meet local market needs can result in context-specific marketing innovations that improve brand agility (Colder, 2000). According to resource advantage theory, the success of these adjustments depends on the resources available and the anticipated rewards from the marketing innovation (Achrol & Etzel, 2003; Hunt & Morgan, 1996).

Brands and resellers commit to innovative marketing ideas when they see how these innovations can enhance their competitiveness, which serves as a motivator for pursuing innovative practices (Sood & Tellis, 2005). The triple helix model of innovation highlights the complexities behind innovation, while national innovation systems explain how formal and informal collaborations facilitate knowledge sharing and resource mobilization for implementing new ideas (Basant, 2002).

Marketing researchers use these frameworks to describe innovation as either a breakthrough or radical change, or as incremental improvements to existing concepts (Lin & Chen, 2007).[6] Breakthrough innovations involve introducing new products or business models, while incremental innovations may involve enhancing products, expanding markets, or forming new partnerships. Studies on competitive advantage emphasize the importance of key factors managers should consider when identifying innovative initiatives (Hunt & Morgan, 1995). However, they often overlook the challenges faced by firms in industrial contexts and fail to recognize the contributions of partner firms to competitiveness in identifying innovative marketing practices.

While prior research suggests that marketing innovation results from competitiveness, this study emphasizes the relationship between the two, positioning marketing innovation as both an outcome and indicator of competitiveness. To explore these relationships, the study uses complexity theory (Pappas, Kourouthanassis, Giannakos, & Chrissikopoulos, 2015; Woodside, 2014). The goal is to develop a more predictive and comprehensive model of how competitiveness drives marketing innovation.

A firm's competitiveness in the market reflects its ability to capture market share through innovative marketing strategies in collaboration with business partners (Webster, 1988). The success of a business partner in seizing opportunities depends on its contribution to the competitiveness of the partnership (Day, 1994; Ernst, 2000). Anderson (1995) argues that a brand–reseller relationship enhances the competitiveness of both parties through a mutual understanding of each other's ability to utilize resources and sense market opportunities. Sharma and Sheth (1997) [7]found that companies striving for competitiveness often shift from a transactional to a relationship-oriented approach. They also noted that in competitive markets, buyer power can reduce the number of

[1] Achrol, R. S., & Etzel, M. J. (2003). The structure of reseller goals and performance in marketing channels. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 31(2), 146–163.

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[6] Bagozzi, R. P., & Yi, Y. (1988). On the evaluation of structural equation model. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, 16(1), 74–94.

[7] Ballantyne, D., & Aitken, R. (2007). Branding in B2B markets: Insights from the service-dominant logic of marketing. Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing, 22(6), 363–371.

suppliers, while buyers' investment decisions in branded products are linked to a supplier's innovation in supporting resellers.

Although the literature on competitive advantage highlights the importance of innovation for competitiveness, it does not fully explain how a brand and reseller contribute to each other's business and use that relationship to identify and implement innovative marketing ideas. Therefore, configurations may involve combining the competitiveness of both the brand and the reseller, leading to several hypotheses.

Technology and information play a crucial role in fostering marketing innovation within competitive markets (Freeman, 1995; Sood & Tellis, 2009). Rodríguez-Pose and Crescenzi (2008) suggest that by using technology to improve, modify, or transform existing trade channels, transaction costs can be reduced. In contrast, marketing innovation without technology relies on resource-based advantages to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information about market opportunities (Grewal, Iyer, & Levy, 2004; Grimes, 1995; Hunt & Morgan, 1996). The exchange of insights between buyer and seller firms can help uncover unexpected opportunities and generate fresh ideas to address unforeseen challenges (Levitt, 1960).

Different researchers from various business domains have interpreted innovation in multiple ways (Carneiro, 2000; Hunt & Morgan, 1995). While economists view marketing innovation from the perspectives of products and processes, marketing scholars consider it from a commercialization standpoint (Cohen & Levinthal, 1989; Freeman, 1995; Sood & Tellis, 2009).[8] Generally, innovation is seen as a tool for managers to efficiently utilize their resources to gain a competitive edge (Hunt & Morgan, 1995; Knight & Cavusgil, 2004).

The success of an innovative marketing strategy is determined by its ability to work seamlessly within the local ecosystem (Hunt & Morgan, 1996; Hurley & Hult, 1998). The scope, utility, and long-term objectives of such strategies shape the value all stakeholders in the supply chain aim to create (Roy, Sivakumar, & Wilkinson, 2004). International marketing innovation merges theories from marketing, distribution, and sales (Gupta & Malhotra, 2013; Jones, Suoranta, & Rowley, 2013; Kim, Cavusgil, & Calantone, 2006).

Although some studies report the advantages of innovation (Ballantyne & Aitken, 2007; Gandolfo & Padelletti, 1999), they fail to specify the conditions under which brands, distributors, and reseller networks collaborate to create innovative marketing ideas internationally. Levitt (1960) points out that, in addition to innovations in products and processes, there are innovations in marketing—many of which arise unexpectedly from outside the industries they eventually benefit. Slater and Narver (1995) suggest that businesses often improve their marketing by developing new services, updating distribution channels, or adopting new management approaches. Lin, Chen, and Chiu (2010) connect marketing innovation with market research, pricing strategies, segmentation, promotions, retail channels, and marketing information systems.

Reseller firms, which are often small entrepreneurial entities, struggle to compete in growth markets due to financial constraints and limited resources (Luo & Tung, 2007). These resellers prefer selling branded products, assuming that the manufacturer's demand generation will ease their selling efforts (Ballantyne & Aitken, 2007; Parment, 2008). The brand's ability to attract customers, perceived as brand value, allows resellers to allocate resources elsewhere (Lindgreen, Palmer, Vanhamme, & Wouters, 2006).[9] As a result, resellers focus on meeting the demand for well-established branded products, while the manufacturers support their growth by providing resources (Anderson, Day, & Rangan, 2012; Beverland, 2001; Öberg & Shih, 2014).

Brands also play a key role in offering strategic direction through advanced processes or training, which helps resellers think innovatively when encountering business opportunities (O'Donnell & Blumentritt, 1999). Resellers value the brand's support in areas like training, marketing investment, and industry knowledge (Achrol & Kotler, 1999). Identifying market opportunities and utilizing brand resources to ensure product supply requires resellers to adopt an innovative approach to marketing (Hunt & Morgan, 1996). Establishing a brand's credibility strengthens the reseller's competitive position, attracting attention from both competing and complementary brands (Webster, 1992).

While it is well known that associating with brands benefits resellers, how brands enable resellers to innovate by leveraging their local expertise and relationships remains unclear. In markets with high growth potential, low profit margins make distributors serve multiple suppliers simultaneously, creating competition for resellers' revenue (Holm, Kumar, & Rohde, 2012). To compete, brands often bypass distributors to collaborate with resellers who provide local knowledge (Doherty, 1999). Resellers' support helps brands maximize their marketing budgets and compete more effectively (Eagle, Kitchen, Rose, & Moyle, 2003).

Brands benefit from resellers' expertise in product management and real-time market information, enabling them to implement innovative local marketing strategies (Day, 1994). Such innovative brand support makes resellers more capable of independently serving customers on the brand's behalf, thus becoming key players in market management (Sharma & Sheth, 1997). Therefore, brands must align their activities with reseller needs to enhance competitiveness (Wagner, Fillis, & Johansson, 2005). The reputation of being a supportive brand encourages resellers to associate with it, leading to competition among resellers (Beverland & Lockshin, 2003; Pulles, Veldman, & Schiele, 2014; Yi, Dubinsky, & Lim, 2013). Moreover, brands known for innovative support attract resellers, improving business opportunities (Doyle, 1992).[10]

Figure 1: The impact of innavation on market positioning and competitive advantage.

METHOD

This section outlines the methodological framework utilized to explore the impact of marketing innovations on competitiveness among firms. The research design is structured to ensure a comprehensive understanding of how marketing innovations contribute to a firm's competitive advantage, particularly in dynamic market environments.Study investigates the relationship between competitiveness and innovation in the marketing tactics of big manufacturing companies that sell branded products in international markets via a network of resellers. To develop a scale designed for quantifying marketing innovation in this setting, the researchers applied Woodside's (2014) complexity theory. The study identified significant things connected to marketing innovation, both current and new. After developing these indicators, the researchers used structural equation modeling and fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis (fsQCA) to evaluate the hypotheses with data from 649 respondents.

DISCUSSION

This research explores the connection between competitiveness and innovation in the marketing strategies of companies that sell their products internationally through small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as local resellers. The study highlights the factors that enhance competitiveness through collaboration with other market ecosystem participants. Additionally, the findings align with works such as those of

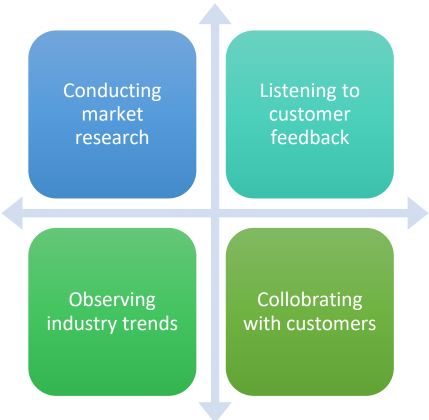
[8]Barney, J., Wright, M., & Ketchen, D. J. (2001). The resource-based view of the firm: Ten years after 1991. Journal of Management, 27(6), 625–641.

[9] Bartlett, C. A., & Ghoshal, S. (2000). Going global: Lessons from late movers. Reading, 1, 3. Basant, R. (2002). Knowledge flows and industrial clusters: An analytical review of literature.

[10]Bell, J. (1995). The internationalization of small computer software firms: A further challenge to "stage" theories. European Journal of Marketing, 29(8), 60–75.

Srivastava et al. (2001) and Barney et al. (2001), which consistently apply a resource-based view to building competitiveness. The study incorporates these ideas into the comparative advantage framework, as seen in research by Inemek and Matthyssens (2013), to demonstrate how organizational learning, knowledge sharing, investment benefits, and adaptability help buyer and seller firms discover marketing innovation opportunities.

Figure 2: Marketing innovation opportunities.



The research examines how buyer support impacts suppliers' ability to form partnerships in social or governance contexts and engage in product development. This study expands previous understandings of marketing innovation as a shared capability of both buyer and supplier. The results have significant implications for buyer firms in mature markets and seller firms in growing markets, indicating that collaboration between these firms can foster both radical and incremental marketing innovations.

This research also offers fresh insights into how innovation contributes to competitiveness. Beyond the existing literature, it explains how a firm's competitive advantage enables its managers to innovate in their marketing practices. The study incorporates the buyer–seller relationship into the comparative advantage theory, showing that international buyers and sellers can help each other enhance their competitiveness for mutual marketing innovation benefits. It supports a marketing innovation approach based on a firm's ability to access appropriate target markets in a competitive environment, improve communication about products, and facilitate comparisons with competitors while ensuring effective product or service delivery to satisfy customers.

Additionally, the study recommends that buyers and sellers mutually leverage resources to address capability gaps and become more competitive. The findings suggest that seller firm managers from foreign markets should treat their buyer firms in growth markets as incubators providing necessary resources to execute critical organizational functions, such as sales, economies of scale, research, development, stock management, and public relations. Furthermore, the role of buyers in boosting sales and reducing costs through involvement in branding, distribution, and local market opportunity identification should be recognized. This research contributes to industrial marketing and management literature and encourages future research on how buyers build value chains and enhance productivity forecasts. Managers should also consider how a strong buyer image can provide assurance about service quality and minimize risk in transactions with seller firms.

However, the study has limitations. It is based on a limited dataset, focusing only on the impact of competitiveness on innovation. The data comes exclusively from India's electronics and IT SMEs, restricting the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could test the proposed model in various industries or countries to explore cross-cultural differences in the relationship between competitiveness, innovation, process integration, and firm performance, which could lead to further research. Moreover, this study examines only the one-way influence of competitiveness on innovation and recommends that future research investigate the reverse relationship how innovation impacts competitiveness.

CONCLUSION

This study provides valuable insights into the dynamic relationship between marketing innovations and competitiveness among firms, particularly those involved in international markets through local resellers. By examining the interplay between buyers and sellers in the marketing ecosystem, this research underscores the importance of collaboration in fostering both radical and incremental marketing innovations. The findings affirm that a firm's competitive advantage not only enhances its capacity for innovation but also facilitates mutual benefits through strategic partnerships.

Through the application of complexity theory, this research demonstrates that effective marketing innovation requires a deep understanding of the local market, the capabilities of resellers, and the resources that both parties can leverage. This interconnectedness is crucial in navigating the complexities of international markets, where diverse consumer preferences and competitive pressures demand agility and responsiveness. The study highlights that firms that invest in developing strong buyer-seller relationships can access valuable insights and resources, ultimately leading to improved marketing strategies and enhanced competitiveness.

However, the limitations of this study—particularly its focus on a single industry and geographical context—call for caution in generalizing the findings. Future research should consider a broader range of industries and cross-cultural contexts to better understand the nuances of the relationship between marketing innovations and competitiveness. Moreover, exploring the reverse relationship—how innovation influences competitiveness—could provide a more holistic view of this complex dynamic.

In summary, this research not only contributes to the existing literature on industrial marketing and management but also offers practical implications for managers seeking to enhance their firms' competitiveness through innovative marketing practices. By recognizing the symbiotic relationship between buyers and sellers and fostering collaborative environments, firms can better position themselves to navigate the challenges of the modern marketplace and achieve sustainable growth.

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