Strategizing Marketing Mix for Business Sustainability of Ethiopian MSEs

Kishor Chandra Meher [1]
Gemechu Geda Hamato [2]

Abstract

The medium and small-scale enterprises contribute immensely to the economic growth of Ethiopia. Hence, the long-term sustainability of this sector is vital for the economy. The captioned research aimed to assess the marketing mix strategies and their effect on the short and long-term sustainable advantage of MSEs. The research applied structural equation modeling with pre-run confirmatory factor analysis to investigate the causal analysis among the study's variables. The study applied cluster sampling by taking the largest state Oromia and simple random sampling to obtain the responses through a Likert scaled questionnaire. The criterion variables are marketing performance and business sustainability, while marketing mix strategies are predictor variables. The CFA results revealed that the people and place variables were not eligible for applying SEM. The SEM results exhibited the hypothesized model as a perfect fit. Product strategy influenced the marketing performance, whereas there was a significant effect of product, process, and pricing strategies on the sustainability of MSEs' businesses. The results hinted to the owners of MSEs to strengthen the strategic resources and apply the right tools by innovating differentiation of products to sustain value for the business.

Keywords : long-term sustainability, pricing strategy, process strategy, product strategy, promotion strategy

Marketing is a primary management function that delivers value to customers by creating perceived demand for the products and services, transforming into the firm's value by developing a customer base, thereby increasing the revenue performance. Marketing strategy is a set of marketing tools that firms nurture to pursue their marketing performance objectives in the target market. A marketing mix strategy is resource-based but invariably used by organizations to stay competitive in the local, regional, and globally competitive market environment by creating and sustaining the organization's value (Kotni, 2014). Therefore, the firms have to choose and select appropriate tools from the arrays of marketing mix strategies, namely price, product, process, promotion, place, physical, and people, to pursue their marketing objectives to achieve the ultimate goal of business sustainability. Thus, the marketing mix strategy is a vital prerequisite of an industry's ability to strengthen its market share and minimize competition (Gbolagade & Oyewale, 2013).

Medium and small enterprises (MSEs) play an essential role in building the country's economy through a process of income generation, reduction of unemployment, and economic growth (Alene, 2020). Furthermore,

[1] *Professor (Management) (Corresponding Author),* Department of Management, College of Business & Economics, Bule Hora University, Post Box-144, Bule Hora, Ethiopia. (Email : kishorcm@gmail.com)
ORCID iD : https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1294-7915

[2] *PhD. Scholar, Management, Lecturer (Management),* Department of Management, College of Business & Economics, Bule Hora University, Post Box-144, Bule Hora, Ethiopia. (Email : gemechugeda@gmail.com)
ORCID iD : https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5739-4958

MSEs contribute to the country's gross domestic product growth. Thus, choosing an appropriate marketing strategy aligned with MSE's status and potential to build its marketing mix becomes increasingly pertinent, particularly in low-income developing countries like Ethiopia. This is because the performance of MSEs contributes significantly to the development of the economy (Taiwo et al., 2012). The marketing mix strategies defined by Kotler and Armstrong (2012) are a mix of deliberate and organized marketing tools that the companies apply to the target market. However, the resource availability and perceived demand in the target market and cost and pricing are the determining factors in choosing the right marketing mix strategies.

Furthermore, the primary goal of marketing strategy is to improve the product and service quality, accelerate domestic and export performance to acquire sizeable market share, and stay competitive (Erdil & Ozdemir, 2016; Singh et al., 2017). Al Badi (2013) added that an organization's marketing strategy is developed to establish, build, defend, and maintain its sustainable competitive advantage to remain competitive in the existing local market. However, the perceived rationale behind applying strategy to marketing activities trickles down to the pursuit of marketing performance in the short run by creating value from designing innovative approaches to delivering the best customer experiences (Chakraborty & Dash, 2022). The implementation of the marketing mix can be undertaken after identifying its role and impact on the sustainable value creation of MSEs. Gbolagade and Oyewale (2013) and Al - Samirae et al. (2020) observed a significant effect of marketing mix strategy on marketing and sustainability of the business of MSEs. The current study is of immense necessity in the Ethiopian context as the economy's growth depends on the growth of MSEs operating in Ethiopia that creates per capita income through employment generation. Although many studies have been conducted on financial sustainability in the Ethiopian context (Meher & Getaneh, 2019), no study has been observed to learn how the MSEs attain the long-term sustainable business competitive advantage.

The study of Amin (2021) revealed that the development of marketing strategies theories and paradigms concerning MSE's performance had not reached its momentum yet, despite the last ten years' studies. The study observed the population gap in Ethiopia due to the unique nature of operating the MSEs. The study takes cognizance of the methodological gap as the previous studies have focused on a standalone dependent variable like marketing performance. Most important is the conceptual gap in achieving twin objectives of short-term marketing performance and maintaining the same time long-term sustainability of MSE's businesses. Hence, the study analyzes the effect of the determinants of marketing mix strategies on MSE's marketing performance and their effect on business sustainability. There has been an enormous interest in marketing strategies fostering sustainability of the business of Ethiopia. Thus, the marketing mix is the foremost strategy applied by MSEs to grab the market share by entering the new market and new customers while serving existing customers. Thus, the study's objective is to investigate the variables' multiple and interrelated dependent association to understand the extent of influencing predictor marketing mix strategies on marketing performance and business sustainability as criterion variables.

Literature Review

The study is based on a resource-based view of comparative advantages as the theoretical anchor to this research in having better resources and effectively utilizing these resources to gain a competitive advantage. Porter (1996) noted that competitive cost advantage results from a business performing specific activities more efficiently than competitors. Competitive differentiation advantage results from a business's choice of activities to perform and how they are performed relative to competitors. Conner (1991) observed that the firms adopting either low cost or differentiation of products lies with the distinctness of resources to produce. He believed that the firms could acquire a competitive advantage by nurturing the essential resources for the production and marketing of products. Hunt (2015) noted that the resource advantage theory could provide a theoretical implication for the issues

explained by Varadarajan (2010) as essential to marketing strategy, who advocated that the firm's performance is dependent on specific strategic behavior under control and competitive environment to attain comparative resource advantages. According to Hunt (2015), resources under the resource advantage theory are defined as the visible and invisible services accessible to MSEs, enabling them to produce in the most efficient way for creating value for some target customers and markets. Finally, the resource advantage theory leverages superior business performance for the organizations by acquiring sustainable competitive positional advantages in the target markets. Thus, the theoretical underpinning of this study is the resource advantage theory that drives the firms into a state of sustainable competitive advantage by creating and sustaining the value of MSEs' business. Further, the study considers the following operational variables with their meaning and extant empirical literature evidence.

Product Strategy

The product brings value for the customer and is recognizable in the target market despite the challenges in the changing business environment where MSEs operate. The firms will not earn adequate profit without offering customer-centric products with differentiation. From selecting the product strategy, right through the various stages of its life cycle, the business will have to make certain strategic decisions. Gbolagade and Oyewale (2013) posited that product strategy significantly relates to the organization's profitability. Companies will be at risk if they fail to develop a new product for the customer's changing needs. The existing products are redundant to new technologies, shortened product life cycles, and increased domestic and foreign competition. When a new product is successful, competitors copy it quickly. It is further evidenced by the retailers who have introduced green products in their product line as part of their marketing strategy to gain a sustainable competitive advantage (Bhatti & Negi, 2018).

Pricing Strategy

Price is the amount that the customer pays for a product or service (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010). A business can use various pricing strategies when offering a product. The price can be fixed to maximize profitability and revenue growth for each unit sold. The pricing strategy can be applied as a tool to the existing customers in an existing market that refrains the new entrants to acquire the market share. Bhatti and Negi (2018) observed that green pricing adopted by the retailers in the Delhi region significantly influenced sustainable competitive advantage. Pricing is the most vital and highly relevant component of the marketing mix theory (Erdil & Ozdemir, 2016). The pricing strategies are low, moderate, and high depending on the firms' existing products, market, and objectives. The firms adopt a low price strategy to sell outdated stocks that diminishes the market share of competitors. The firms adopt premium prices to retain their brand image by producing and marketing new, unique, and innovative products (Menon, 2021). While the moderate pricing strategy is faced with severe competition from the existing competitors, it penetrates the existing market while retaining adequate profit for the business (Horska & Bercík, 2014).

Promotion Strategy

A promotion strategy is a marketing campaign by the firms that signal the offering of products to the potential customers who are inspired to buy the products (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010). The promotion strategy covers selling on discount, advertising, and attractive sale promotion tools to attract the customers' buying habits. Promotional campaigns are necessarily a part of a marketing orientation for consumer goods, industrial goods, and agribusiness products (Baliga et al., 2020).

Place Strategy

Place strategy refers to a place that needs to be spotted by the firms to sell their products to the targeted consumers. The place is a channel through which the firms sell their products to internal and external customers (Hawkins & Mothersbaugh, 2010). Marketing channels are interdependent organizations like whole sellers and retailers that help make a product or service available for sale to the consumer. The distribution channels are essential elements in the delivery of products or services (Kotler & Armstrong, 2012).

People Strategy

People strategy is the personnel involved in delivering the services to customers that depends on their training and development, professional behavior, and maturity in rendering service delivery leading to customer satisfaction (Al-Debi & Al-Waely, 2015). A firm needs the right people to run the organization, that is, the staff must handle the firm's processes like delivering goods and services. Lack of managerial and technical knowledge and other business skills limits the growth of MSEs and their development. Using technology for the advantage of the business requires identifying possible uses for each technological advancement. Some technological advances may prove cost-inefficient for small businesses (Chakraborty & Dash, 2022).

Physical Strategy

Physical strategy signals the intangibility of service offerings by the firms to the customers before they make an informed judgment to buy the products (Al-Debi & Al-Waely, 2015). Therefore, the firms should create a positive environment in the customers' minds so that they will not think negatively about the firms' products or services.

Process Strategy

Process strategy is a series of activities in terms of procedure as to how the service is being delivered to the customers since the service and sellers are inseparable. The firms have to adopt the modes of service delivery that influence the customers' expectations, thus creating a competitive advantage over the competitors. There is a need for constant touch between the service provider and customer during post-product sales (Gbolagade & Oyewale, 2013).

Marketing Performance

As the market environment changes due to customers' preferences, the competition is challenging due to cutthroat competition; hence the firms require the right strategy to sell the products. The marketing strategy's performance depends on selecting the right mix of strategies to obtain good marketing performance (Chakraborty & Dash, 2022). Marketing performance is the means to measure the market share and revenue growth of a firm that achieves the mission of the firm. Erdil and Ozdemir (2016) observed that marketing strategy positively influenced marketing performance.

Business Sustainability

The objective of any business is to be sustainable by creating a comparative advantage. Since the country's economy depends on the survival and growth of MSEs in the Ethiopian context, the firms should strive to achieve a long-term sustainable advantage. The fulfillment of this mission of the firms depends on value creation and

differentiation of products because of changing environments and customers' preference for new and innovative products (Kotni, 2014). In a rapid and volatile business environment, unforeseen events allow the firms to adapt or perish (Bansal & DesJardine, 2014; Gross-Golacka et al., 2020).

Methodology

The study has analyzed the marketing mix strategies like product, price, place, promotion, people, physical, and processes of MSEs as independent variables and business sustainability as the dependent variable denoting long-run sustainable advantage. From the perusal of literature evidence, marketing performance has been taken as an intervening variable that is influenced initially by the independent variable (marketing mix strategies) denoting the short-run performance of MSEs.

The study adopts a quantitative research approach coupled with inferential analysis through causal modeling by deploying structural equation modeling (SEM) that establishes the relationship between the variables by analyzing multi regression equations simultaneously through path analysis (Hair et al., 2006). The primary purpose of SEM is to describe the interdependent relationship between the predictor variables and latent variables simultaneously. Before hypothesizing SEM, a statistical tool such as confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) has been applied to understand whether the collected data fits a hypothesized measurement model by reducing the number of constructs and factors to ensure data's internal consistency, reliability, and validity. The data qualified post-CFA are ready to apply SEM to understand whether the hypothesized model is a good fit (Barbara, 2010). The CFA and SEM are analyzed through the Analysis of Moments & Structure (AMOS) 26 version, and the results are drawn to get inferences about the study.

The study is primarily related to the medium and small-scale enterprises (MSEs) spread across Ethiopia as the target population. As the MSEs are located throughout Ethiopia, cluster sampling was applied to choose the largest state Oromia as a cluster. As the study population is large and homogeneous across Ethiopia (as observed by Dereso et al., 2022), the formula prescribed by Cochran (1977) was applied to derive 384 samples from the randomly selected MSEs in Ethiopia.

The sampling frame consists of entrepreneurs and managers as the respondents from each MSE selected through simple random sampling. The study period is from April 2020 to February 2021. The data from the respondents were collected through a semi-structured Likert scaled questionnaire. The respondents' level of agreement is from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). While designing the questionnaire, possible care was taken to minimize common bias in having single-source data collection as prescribed by Podsakoff et al. (2003). Furthermore, the questions used in this study were given to independent experts in consultation with a statistician to evaluate its worth concerning content validity and conceptual clarity to eliminate the investigative bias.

Analysis and Results

The study applied confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) as a diagnostic test to pave the ground for applying structural equation modeling (SEM). CFA reduces those factors which show the inconsistency of data and hence need to be dropped out for further analysis (Hair et al., 2006). All the variables underwent a test with CFA as per Table 1, and it was observed that place and people strategy are omitted for further analysis.

Table 1 contains the CFA output of the study variables: product strategy *(PROD)*, pricing strategy *(PRI)*, process strategy *(PROC)*, promotion strategy *(PROM)*, physical strategy *(PHY)*, marketing performance *(MP)*, and business sustainability *(BS)*. Table 1 reveals that the product, price, process, promotion, and physical strategy variables have passed the test for further analysis whose values of CMIN/*DF* are below 5, ensuring the fitness of the CFA model (Hair et al., 2006). The model's fitness is further confirmed by $p > 0.05$ (McDonald & Ho, 2002).

None of the statements one to four from the study variables had been omitted by the application of CFA. The Cronbach's alpha result in the case of all these factors is above 0.70, implying the internal consistency of the data.

Table 2 explains the results of the level of agreements of the respondents from statements one to four of the questionnaire for all the variables of the study (refer to the Appendix). The AVE and CR confirm the suggested value of 0.5 and 0.7, respectively, indicating that the data have satisfactory convergent validity and internal consistency. Thus, the CFA results confirm that these factors are taken further to apply SEM to confirm the model's fitness. The model's hypotheses are outlined to ensure the interdependent association among the variables, as cited in Dereso et al. (2022).

✤ H_{01}: The assumed structural model does not have fitness.

✤ H_{a1}: The assumed structural model has fitness.

Figure 1 has explained the fitness of the hypothesized model with the application of SEM.

Table 1. *Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) of Variables*

| Indices	Variables							Decision	Suggested Value
	PROD	*PRI*	*PROC*	*MP*	*BS*	*PROM*	*PHY*	Model Fit	
Chi-Square Value	1.464	0.836	3.045	1.631	0.012	0.939	4.041	-----	-----
DF	1	2	2	2	1	3	2	-----	-----
Chi-Square/*DF*	1.464	0.418	1.523	0.816	0.012	0.313	2.021	Accepted	< 5
p-value	0.226	0.658	0.218	0.442	0.914	0.816	1.33	Accepted	> 0.05
GFI	0.998	0.999	0.996	0.998	1.000	0.999	0.993	Accepted	> 0.90
AGFI	0.982	0.995	0.982	0.99	1.000	0.995	0.974	Accepted	> 0.90
NFI	0.988	0.999	0.92	0.954	1.000	0.998	0.962	Accepted	> 0.90
CFI	0.999	1.000	0.999	1.000	1.000	1.000	0.98	Accepted	> 0.90
RMR	0.008	0.100	0.017	0.015	0.000	0.01	0.031	Accepted	< 0.08
RMSEA	0.034	0.000	0.036	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.052	Accepted	< 0.08
Cronbach's Alpha	0.765	0.726	0.748	0.789	0.763	0.745	0.791	Accepted	> 0.70

Note. > denotes 'greater than,' < denotes 'less than.'

Table 2. *Average Variance Extracted (AVE) & Construct Reliability (CR)*

Variables		Variables	Estimate	Item Reliability (I.R.)	Delta (Error)	AVE	Sum of F.L.	Sum of Delta	CR
Product1	<--	Product	0.72	0.52	0.28				
Product2	<--	Product	0.80	0.65	0.20				
Product3	<--	Product	0.83	0.68	0.18				
Product4	<--	Product	0.81	0.66	0.19	0.63	3.16	0.84	0.92
Pricing1	<--	Pricing	0.82	0.67	0.18				
Pricing2	<--	Pricing	0.81	0.65	0.19				
Pricing3	<--	Pricing	0.84	0.70	0.17				
Pricing4	<--	Pricing	0.82	0.67	0.18	0.67	4.09	0.72	0.96
Process1	<--	Process	0.75	0.56	0.26				

Process2	<--	Process	0.81	0.66	0.19				
Process3	<--	Process	0.84	0.70	0.17				
Process4	<--	Process	0.89	0.80	0.11	0.68	3.29	0.71	0.94
Marketing Performance1	<--	Marketing Performance	0.83	0.69	0.17				
Marketing Performance2	<--	Marketing Performance	0.80	0.63	0.20				
Marketing Performance3	<--	Marketing Performance	0.78	0.61	0.22				
Marketing Performance4	<--	Marketing Performance	0.75	0.56	0.26	0.62	3.15	0.85	0.92
Business Sustainability1	<--	Business Sustainability	0.82	0.68	0.18				
Business Sustainability2	<--	Business Sustainability	0.89	0.79	0.11				
Business Sustainability3	<--	Business Sustainability	0.70	0.49	0.30				
Business Sustainability4	<--	Business Sustainability	0.81	0.66	0.19	0.66	3.23	0.77	0.93
Promotion1	<--	Promotion	0.71	0.50	0.30				
Promotion2	<--	Promotion	0.80	0.63	0.21				
Promotion3	<--	Promotion	0.82	0.67	0.18				
Promotion4	<--	Promotion	0.83	0.70	0.17	0.62	3.15	0.85	0.92
Physical1	<--	Physical	0.79	0.62	0.21				
Physical2	<--	Physical	0.80	0.63	0.21				
Physical3	<--	Physical	0.81	0.66	0.19				
Physical4	<--	Physical	0.79	0.62	0.21	0.63	3.18	0.82	0.93

Note. Please refer to the Appendix for the variable statements.

Figure 1. *Hypothesized Structural Equation Model (SEM)*
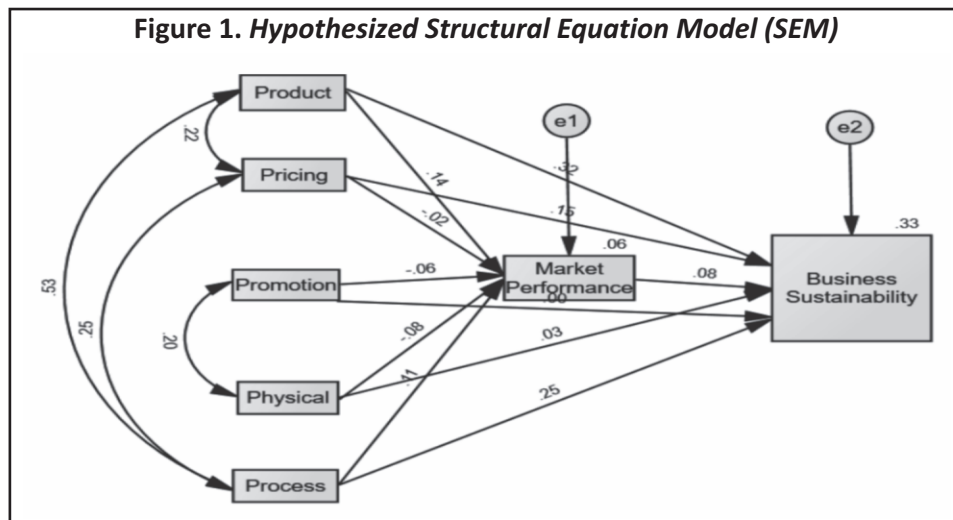
The model fit in Table 3 shows that the chi-square value/*DF* and *p*-value have confirmed the suggested value, implying rejection of the null hypothesis H_{01}. Furthermore, the fitness of the structural model has been confirmed from other fit indices mentioned in the table as well.

Table 4 demonstrates the output of the structural model with their coefficients to signal the most and least influencing paths in the model. The effect of product strategy on business sustainability is the most influencing path; whereas, the marketing performance on business sustainability is the least influencing path in the model.

Further, the effect of product strategy on business sustainability is highly significant at 1%, implying that the business sustainability of MSEs would develop by 32% (0.317) for each unit increase in product strategy. The product strategy is significant, with marketing performance at 5%, representing that the marketing performance is increased by 14% (0.138) for every unit increase in product strategy. It implies that the influence of product strategy on sustainability is more than that of marketing performance due to the launching of new and innovative products using the latest technology that creates value and has a lasting impact on customers' minds.

Table 3. *Model Fit Indices in Structural Equation Modeling*

Indices	Value	Decision of Model Fit	Suggested Value
Chi-square value	4.301		–
DF	6		–
p - value	0.636	Accepted	> 0.05
Chi-square value/*DF*	0.717	Accepted	< 5.00
GFI	0.997	Accepted	> 0.90
AGFI	0.986	Accepted	> 0.90
NFI	0.988	Accepted	> 0.90
CFI	1.000	Accepted	> 0.90
RMR	0.237	Rejected	< 0.08
RMSEA	0.000	Accepted	< 0.08

Table 4. *Variables in Structural Equation Model Analysis*

Variables			Unst. Coef (B)	S.E. of B	St.Coef (Beta)	*t* value	*p*-value
Business Sustainability	<---	Product	0.266	0.041	0.317	6.455	0.000***
Business Sustainability	<---	Process	0.191	0.038	0.247	5.016	0.000***
Business Sustainability	<---	Pricing	0.096	0.027	0.149	3.51	0.000***
Marketing Performance	<---	Product	0.141	0.059	0.138	2.387	0.017**
Marketing Performance	<---	Process	0.099	0.055	0.105	1.809	0.071*
Business Sustainability	<---	Marketing Performance	0.067	0.035	0.082	1.935	0.053**
Business Sustainability	<---	Physical	0.037	0.049	0.031	0.74	0.459
Business Sustainability	<---	Promotion	–0.004	0.049	–0.004	–0.084	0.933
Marketing Performance	<---	Pricing	–0.013	0.039	0.017	–0.332	0.74
Marketing Performance	<---	Promotion	–0.08	0.07	0.056	–1.137	0.256
Marketing Performance	<---	Physical	0.114	0.071	–0.08	1.601	0.109

Note. significant at level 1% ***, 5% ** , 10% *.

The effect of process strategy on business sustainability is highly significant at a 1% level, representing that business sustainability would be enhanced by 25% (0.247) for every unit rise in the process strategy. Further, the process strategy is significant at 10%, suggesting that the marketing performance is better by 11 % (0.105) for every one unit surge in process strategy. It implies that the influence of process strategy on business sustainability is much more than that of marketing performance. This phenomenon reveals that most products are sold in the local market immediately after production due to a lack of distribution channels for the delivery of products to distant places. As the products come with quality by adding value to the consumers by differentiating its competitors, such strategy brings the MSE's business towards sustainability. The result of *p*-values as the significance of product and process strategy on marketing performance is consistent with the findings of Kotni (2014) and Erdil and Ozdemir (2016).

The effect of pricing strategy on business sustainability is highly significant at 1%, signifying the magnitude of change in business sustainability by 15% (0.149) for every unit growth in pricing strategy. However, the pricing strategy is not significant with marketing performance, which unveils that the MSE's business moves towards sustainability due to uniform and low price strategy without sacrificing differentiation of products. Further, the discount for bulk purchases and the forward integration channel of wholesalers and retailers create and sustain value for the business. On the contrary, this price discount strategy has no instant outcome on the revenue growth as a driver of marketing performance. Thus, the result on the effect of marketing mix strategy on business sustainability is consistent with the findings of Bhatti and Negi (2018).

The effect of marketing performance is significant, with business sustainability at 5%, demonstrating that business sustainability is influenced by 8% (0.082) for every unit rise in marketing performance. It shows that the sales promotion activities and other media campaigns have a low impact on the sustainability of MSE's businesses.

The results further show that physical and promotion strategies are not significant with MSE's business sustainability. Additionally, pricing, promotion, and physical strategies are not significant with MSE's marketing performance. It is due to the local market's sale of products that do not require local sales promotion. Thus, the results reveal that the MSE's business is not sustainable because of the lack of promotional campaigns to sell the products. In contrast, the MSEs can achieve business sustainability due to the marketing mix strategies adopted by the organizations concerning product, processes, and pricing strategies, respectively. However, the study reveals that these factors have not contributed to the MSE's marketing performance.

Conclusion

The study attempts to estimate the effect of the marketing mix strategies on marketing performance and their impact on the business sustainability of MSEs of Ethiopia. The data were applied with CFA as part of the assumption diagnostic test at the outset. The results forced the variables: people and places ineligible for further application of SEM. The rest of the variables were passed for further deployment of SEM. The hypothesized model was tested using SEM and observed a good fit of the model by indicating rejection of the null hypothesis. The research findings show that the SEM model has explained the effect of product strategy on business sustainability as the most influencing path. The least influencing path is the effect of marketing performance on business sustainability of MSEs detected from the study. The study shows that the MSEs had not achieved market share and revenue growth while implementing marketing mix strategies. On the other hand, the product, process, and pricing strategies contributed much to achieving sustainability for the MSEs' businesses in the long run by creating a sustainable competitive advantage over their competitors.

Implications

This study will add to the body of scientific knowledge bringing the strategic direction to the entrepreneurs of MSEs to revamp their sales promotion activities through advertising, social media marketing, and relationship marketing. Such an initiative would enhance the short-term gain in terms of revenue growth and market performance. Such a potential move requires strengthening the supply chain strategy to reach remote consumers to grab a sizeable market share that brings long-term sustainability. Further, the study contributes to the theory that MSEs should nurture optimum utilization of resources to maintain quality, differentiation, and affordable prices by creating a competitive advantage that could bring long-run sustainability to the business. Additionally, the regulators of MSEs should extend handholding support to the MSEs entrepreneurs through subsidized loans, technology support, and marketing linkage, both domestic and export, to accelerate the marketing performance, which ultimately leads to the sustainability of the business (Singh et al., 2017).

Limitations of the Study and Scope for Future Research

The study suffers from some limitations. The study has taken the MSEs without considering the specific sectors, which might give different results if taken up for the study. The study lacks descriptive and demographic analysis of the respondents concerning their level of agreement on the marketing performance and business sustainability. The research findings are based on medium and small-scale enterprises. However, due to the changing marketing environment and changing consumer buying preferences, this cannot be generalized to other large-scale manufacturing and service sectors.

Further, marketing performance and business sustainability can also be prejudiced by other external factors like inflation, interest rate, and gross domestic product not taken in this study. The study has established the interrelationship among the variables and their influence simultaneously. However, it could not establish the mediating or moderating role of marketing performance between the seven P's of marketing mix strategies and business sustainability. Future researchers can ponder on these researchable areas for further study. The study results will have theoretical implications to the extant pieces of literature for future researchers.

Authors' Contribution

Prof. Kishor Chandra Meher contributed to the conceptualization of the manuscript, undertook the empirical study, development of methodology, prepared the questionnaire, wrote the original draft to results, and applied the software application of structural equation modeling using AMOS-26. Mr. Gemechu Geda Hamato distributed and collected the questionnaire from the respondents, wrote the conclusion, implications, and scope for future research, and prepared the references. Prof. Kishor Chandra edited the whole manuscript using Grammarly.

Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

Funding Acknowledgement

References

Al - Samirae, Z., Alshibly, M. S., & Alghizzawi M. (2020). Excellence in drawing up marketing mix strategies for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and their impact on the marketing performance. *Business Management and Economics Research*, *6*(3), 30 – 36. https://doi.org/10.32861/bmer.63.30.36

Al Badi, K. S. (2018). The impact of marketing mix on the competitive advantage of the SME sector in the Al Buraimi Governorate in Oman. *SAGE Open*, *8*(3), 1–10. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018800838

Al-Debi, H., & Al-Waely, D. (2015). The effect of services marketing mix dimensions on attracting customers and retaining them: The case of Jordanian insurance companies. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, *7*(5), 132 – 146. https://doi.org/10.5539/ijms.v7n5p132

Alene, E. T. (2020). Determinants that influence the performance of women entrepreneurs in micro and small enterprises in Ethiopia. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, *9*(1), 24. https://doi.org/10.1186/s13731-020-00132-6

Amin, H. J. (2021). Influence of marketing strategies on the performance of SMEs: Evidence from Abuja SMEs. *Journal of Economics and Business*, *4*(1), 294 – 307. https://doi.org/10.31014/aior.1992.04.01.338

Baliga, V., Shetty, G. S., & Shenoy, S. (2020). Marketing orientation led by consumer motivations towards agribased products: An evidence from Udupi District in India. *Indian Journal of Marketing, 50*(2), 7–19. http://dx.doi.org/10.17010/ijom/2020/v50/i2/150438

Bansal, P., & Desjardine, M. R. (2014). Business sustainability: It is about time. *Strategic Organization*, *12*(1), 70 – 78. https://doi.org/10.1177/1476127013520265

Barbara, M. B. (2010). *Structural equation modelling with AMOS: Basic concepts, applications, and programming* (2nd ed.). Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

Bhatti, K. K., & Negi, A. (2018). Determinants of green marketing leading to sustainable competitive advantage for retailers within the Delhi region. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, *48*(8), 53–64. https://doi:10.17010/ijom/2018/v48/i8/130540

Chakraborty, D., & Dash, G. (2022). 'The New Normal' and the strategies of marketers to attract consumers. *Indian Journal of Marketing, 52*(1), 58–62. https://doi.org/10.17010/ijom/2022/v52/i1/167652

Cochran, W. G. (1977). *Sampling techniques*. John Wiley & Sons.

Conner, K. (1991). A historical comparison of resource-based theory and five schools of thought within industrial organisation economics: Do we have a new theory of the firm? *Journal of Management*, *17*(1), 121–154. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F014920639101700109

Dereso, C. W., K. C., & Shobe, A. A. (2022). COVID-19 pandemic and strategizing the higher education policies of public universities of Ethiopia. *International Journal of Sociotechnology and Knowledge Development (IJSKD)*, *14*(2), 1–16. http://doi.org/10.4018/IJSKD.2022040101

Erdil, T. S., & Ozdemir, O. (2016). The determinants of relationship between marketing mix strategy and drivers of export performance in foreign markets: An application on Turkish clothing industry. *Procedia - Social and Behavioural Sciences, 235,* 546 – 556. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2016.11.067

Gbolagade, A., & Oyewale, I. O. (2013). Impact of marketing strategy on business performance: A study of selected small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Oluyole Local Government, Ibadan, Nigeria. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management*, *11*(4), 59 – 66. https://doi.org/10.9790/487X-1145966

Gross-Gołacka, E., Kusterka-Jefmańska, M., & Jefmański, B. (2020). Can elements of intellectual capital improve business sustainability? — The perspective of managers of SMEs in Poland. *Sustainability, 12*(4), 1545. https://doi.org/10.3390/su12041545

Hair, J. F., Anderson, R. E., Tatham, R. L., Black, W. C., & Babin, B. J. (2006). *Multivariate data analysis* (6th ed.). Pearson Education.

Hawkins, D. I., & Mothersbaugh, D. L. (2010). *Consumer behaviour: Building marketing strategy*. McGraw-Hill Irwin.

Horska, E., & Bercik, J. (2014). The influence of light on consumer behavior at the food market. *Journal of Food Products Marketing*, *20*(4), 429 – 440. https://doi.org/10.1080/10454446.2013.838531

Hunt, S.D. (2015). The theoretical foundations of strategic marketing and marketing strategy: Foundational premises, R-A theory, three fundamental strategies, and societal welfare. *AMS Review*, *5,* 61–77. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13162-015-0069-5

Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (2012). *Principles of marketing* (14th ed.). Pearson Education Inc.

Kotni, V. D. (2014). Perception of the retailers towards marketing mix strategies: An empirical case study on the soft drink market in Visakhapatnam. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, *44*(6), 24–36. https://doi.org/10.17010/ijom/2014/v44/i6/80369

McDonald, R. P., & Ho, M.-H. R. (2002). Principles and practice in reporting structural equation analyses. *Psychological Methods*, *7*(1), 64 – 82. https://doi.org/10.1037/1082-989X.7.1.64

Meher, K., & Getaneh, H. (2019). Impact of determinants of the financial distress on sustainability of Ethiopian commercial banks. *Banks and Bank Systems*, *14*(3), 187–201. http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/bbs.14(3).2019.16

Menon, P. B. (2021). Influence of social media marketing efforts on brand equity and consumer response to branded shoes in India. *Indian Journal of Marketing, 51*(9),24–40. https://doi.org/10.17010/ijom/2021/v51/i9/166162

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *88*(5), 879 – 903. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879

Porter, M. E. (1996). What is strategy? *Harvard Business Review*, *74* (November-December), 61–78.

Singh, H., Saufi, R.A., & Hassan, A. A. (2017). Export market orientation strategy, external environment, and export performance of SMEs in Malaysia. *Prabandhan: Indian Journal of Management*, *10*(12), 32–49. https://doi.org/10.17010/pijom/2017/v10i12/119979

Taiwo, M. A., Ayodeji, A. M., & Yusuf, B. A. (2012). Impact of small and medium enterprises on economic growth and development. *American Journal of Business and Management, 1*(1), 18–22. https://doi.org/10.11634/21679606170644

Varadarajan, R. (2010). Strategic marketing and marketing strategy: Domain, definition, fundamental issues and foundational premises. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *38*(2), 119–140. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-009-0176-7

Appendix

Product Strategy

S.No	Content
PROD1	I feel the business has appropriate machinery and equipment to produce the right products essential for marketing to the customers.
PROD2	We are aiming at a new/innovative product that rivals cannot copy quickly.
PROD3	The business has adequate production technology to produce the right product at the right time to deliver to the customers.
PROD4	There is a challenge of poor quality products due to lack of standardization of products.

Pricing Strategy

S.No	Content
PRI1	We offer multiple quantity discount schedules, under which unit the buyers reduce the price due to bulk purchases.
PRI2	The pricing schemes have functional discount schedules to offer to different classes of buyers like wholesalers, retailers, and consumers.
PRI3	We adopt a uniform pricing policy with equalized freight to attract customers and generate maximum revenue.
PRI4	We follow a low pricing strategy based on the differentiation of our products to customers.

Place Strategy

S.No	Content
PLA1	We are facing challenges of electronic channels to present products to the market.
PLA2	We lack a transportation facility to deliver the products to distributors and retailers.
PLA3	We are still struggling to identify a target market to sell the products.
PLA4	We generally sell our products primarily in the local market.

Promotion Strategy

S.No	Content
PROM1	We are facing the latest technology challenges to create awareness of products for our customers.
PROM2	We do not have competitive intelligence to get the correct market information, and we cannot promote in the right market.
PROM3	Our marketing team is not adequately trained to cope with the marketing of products.
PROM4	We follow promotion strategies like personal selling, direct marketing, and relationship marketing.

People Strategy

S.No	Content
PEO1	My organization lacks the well-rounded, experienced staff to handle the marketing of products.
PEO2	I feel we have not developed a proper organizational culture so that the staff will feel motivated to work.
PEO3	I think the staff should be trained appropriately to have systematic coordination to add value to the products and services.
PEO4	The marketing of products needs special training for sales and promotion of products to the staff to accelerate revenue.

Physical Strategy

S.No	Content
PHY1	Our business has not developed a conducive environment to attract customers.
PHY2	The business products look attractive to the customers due to their ergonomic product design and other differentiation features.
PHY3	Although the products have the local demand, we are yet to create a national presence for the customers.
PHY4	We cannot penetrate the market due to improper sales promotion that is not creating enough visibility among the customers.

Process Strategy

S.No	Content
PROC1	I feel our business does not offer speedy service delivery to the customers.
PROC2	We deliver the products to customers without sacrificing the quality of products.
PROC3	Once goods are produced, an effort is made to sell to the customers in the local market as soon as possible.
PROC4	I feel there is a need for improvement in delivering the products to the customers.

Marketing Performance

S.No	Content
MP1	I think the product strategy contributes more towards the business's marketing performance.
MP2	I believe the process strategy of delivering the product to the customers is optimal, which positively affects the business's marketing performance.
MP3	The sales and promotion activities are not adequate to reach the revenue target.
MP4	We need to revise our present discount structure to attract more customers.

Business Sustainability

S.No	Content
BS1	Our products are primarily basic consumable types that contribute to the business's long-term survival because of inelastic demand in the market.
BS2	The design of an optimal service delivery process of the products creates a long-term and positive perception in the customers' minds.
BS3	We maintain a low-cost pricing strategy that customers of all demographies like.
BS4	The customers of local markets choose to buy our products than our competitors' products.

About the Authors

Kishor Chandra Meher is currently working as a Professor at Dept. of Management, College of Business & Economics, Bule Hora University, Ethiopia, since three years. He is a Fellow CMA (India), CIMA (UK), and PhD in business administration (specialization in strategic management), having 32 years of experience, which includes 14 years in the corporate sector and 18 years of academic experience at various business schools and universities across India and abroad. His current research interests include strategic marketing, business sustainability, and innovation for business.

Gemechu Gada Hamato is pursuing the doctoral program in management at Bule Hora University, Ethiopia. He received MBA in Marketing from Bule Hora University. He has been working as a Lecturer in Marketing at Bule Hora University since the last three years. His current research interests include strategic marketing and green marketing.

INDIAN JOURNAL OF MARKETING

Statement about ownership and other particulars about the newspaper "INDIAN JOURNAL OF MARKETING" to be published in the 3rd issue every year after the last day of February.

FORM 1V
(see Rule 18)

1.	Place of Publication	:	NEW DELHI
2.	Periodicity of Publication	:	MONTHLY
3.	4,5 Printer, Publisher and Editor's Name	:	S. GILANI
4.	Nationality	:	INDIAN
5.	Address	:	Y-21,HAUZ KHAS, NEW DELHI-16
6.	Newspaper and Address of individual	:	ASSOCIATED MANAGEMENT
	who owns the newspaper and partner	:	CONSULTANTS PRIVATE LIMITED
	of shareholder holding more than one percent.	:	Y-21, HAUZ KHAS, NEW DELHI-16

I, S. Gilani, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Dated : March 1, 2022

Sd/-
S. Gilani
Signature of Publisher