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Marketing Competency, Marketing Innovation, and Sustainable Competitive Advantage of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): A Study on Eucalyptus Oil SMEs in Buru District

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Abstract: The research seeks to ascertain the influence of marketing proficiency and innovative marketing strategies on enduring competitive advantage inside of small enterprises and medium enterprises (SMEs) of eucalyptus oil in Buru Regency. data was collected via a questionnaire administered to 60 populations of eucalyptus oil entrepreneurs in Buru Regency. inside of this research, the explanatory variable of marketing competency uses two dimensions, namely capabilities and resources. Then for the independent variable of marketing innovation utilizing four dimensions, namely novelty in offerings, pricing strategies, sales channel advancements, and marketing communication breakthroughs. While for the dependent variable of sustainable competitive advantage, the dimensions used are product innovation advantage, managerial capabilities, and competitive resilience. These dimensions are adopted by previous studies by relevant variables constituting the primary emphasis of the investigation. Verification of hypotheses, assessment of validity, and evaluation of reliability were conducted utilising PLS-SEM as the analytical approach. The outcomes of the research that have been presented show that marketing competency exhibits no substantial influence on enduring competitive advantage, whereas marketing innovation demonstrates a favourable and notable influence. This outcome states that innovation strategies increase the competitiveness of SMEs, especially in products According to superior commodities.

Keywords: Marketing Competency, Marketing Innovation, Sustainable Competitive Advantage, Eucalyptus Oil SMEs.

INTRODUCTION

Eucalyptus oil (Melaleuca cajuputi) is a heading Indonesian commodity that has various benefits, ranging by traditional medicine to overcome flatulence and provide a warming influence, to being an antibacterial, antiviral, antifungal, and aromatherapy agent (Rienoviar et al., 2024). Its wide distribution in Eastern Indonesia, such as Maluku, West Nusa Tenggara, Southeast Sulawesi, Bali, and Papua shows great potential for further development. The outcomes of eucalyptus oil distillation by various species also vary greatly, ranging by 0.45%

to 6.7%, depending on several factors such as the species and extraction method used (Belaid et al., 2023). One of the areas by great potential in eucalyptus oil production is Buru Regency in Maluku Province, that has been known as one of the national eucalyptus oil producing centres. Buru Regency was identified as the largest eucalyptus plantation in the Indonesian region in 2006, that shows that it has great potential for further cultivation (Maulidah, 2012). Despite having advantages in terms of natural resources, the development of eucalyptus oil businesses in Buru Regency still faces serious challenges, especially regarding market-related aspects and product competitiveness.

Inside of the evolution of the eucalyptus oil businesses, particularly inside of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) industry, the primary challenges faced are certainly not only in terms of production and supply chains, but also by weak marketing strategies and the low competitiveness of local products in the wider market. Marketing competence is one of the keys to success that determines the extent to that SMEs can recognise market needs, build connections by customers, and deliver competitive value propositions (Olazo, 2023). This competence also includes mastery of digital technology, consumer data analysis, and distribution channel management (Ru-Zhue et al., 2025). Low competence in these aspects often causes SMEs to be trapped in traditional marketing that is less influenceive.

In addition to competence, marketing innovation also holds a crucial function in propelling commercial growth and sustainability. Marketing innovation refers to strategic changes in the way products are developed, marketed, and communicated to consumers, including in terms of adjusting prices, distribution, promotion, and product packaging (Joueid & Coenders, 2018; Wang et al., 2020). The implementation of appropriate innovation not only increases the added value of products but can also provide chances for SMEs to differentiate themselves by competitors and expand market reach. In the current context, marketing innovation also leads to more sustainable and environmentally friendly practices, that are increasingly relevant in geting the expectations of modern consumers (Jia et al., 2022).

Efforts to strengthen the competitiveness of SMEs should not stop at short-term activities, but rather be directed at achieving sustainable competitive advantage (SCA). This benefit encompasses the capacity of a business to create a competitive position that is not easily imitated by competitors in the long term, through differentiation strategies, market focus, or cost leadership (Olazo, 2023; Porter & Advantage, 1985). Such advantages arise by a combination of unique, difficult to imitate, and non-substitutable resources and capabilities (Nyuga & Tanova, 2024). Therefore, the integration of marketing competence and marketing innovation is an important foundation in building such advantages, especially for SMEs According to regional superior commodities such as eucalyptus oil. Drawing by the aforementioned observations, the present inquiry endeavours to ascertain this influence marketing proficiency and innovative marketing strategies regarding the sustained market superiority eucalyptus oil SMEs Buru Regency.

Marketing Competency

Marketing competency is a crucial element that determines the success of a business strategy in an increasingly competitive market environment (Maziriri et al., 2020). This competency reflects not only technical capabilities in conducting marketing activities but also the integration of material and immaterial assets to understand market demands,establish distinct product offerings, and foster collaboration by customers (Olazo, 2023). Marketing competency can be seen as an evaluation of a business's marketing performance in comparison to its competitors (Hazaea et al., 2014). This competency encompasses abilities like building connections by customers, managing distribution channels, and adapting to changes in the commercial landscape landscape (Aziz & Yasin, 2004; Golfetto & Gibbert, 2006).

By the advancement of digital technology, the paradigm of marketing competency have also evolved. This marketing competency includes the use of technology for consumer data analysis, quality content creation, and influenceive marketing campaign management (Ru-Zhue et al., 2025). In general, marketing competency is not only an parameter of managerial influenceiveness but also hands as a foundation for building sustainable competitive advantage (Palacios-Marqués et al., 2019). Therefore, marketing competency reflects not only functional skills but also acts as a strategic basis for business competitiveness, particularly for local eucalyptus oil SMEs in Buru Regency.

Marketing Innovation

Marketing innovation is a systematic effort to update marketing methods, strategies, or approaches to be more relevant to increasingly competitive market dynamics. Such innovation can manifest as adjustments to products, prices, distribution, or promotions, all aimed at enhancing the business's competitive position (Olazo, 2023). Marketing innovation strategy is considered a business's commitment to utilizing new approaches substancially to create superior customer value through efficient use of resources (Wang et al., 2020). Furthermore, marketing innovation involves substancial changes inside of the marketing blend, encompassing elements like product conceptualization, wrapping, and publicity, or pricing (Joueid & Coenders, 2018). Over time, the concept of environmentally conscious marketing innovation has also emerged, that involves integrating environmentally friendly values into various marketing activities (Jia et al., 2022). Ren et al. (2010) emphasized that marketing is a continuous process According to identifying and utilizing market chances to create a more adaptive and competitive marketing system. For SMEs, influenceive marketing innovation is essential for responding to changes in consumer preferences and technological advancements, as well as for differentiating themselves by competitors (Ren et al., 2009).

Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Sustainable competitive advantage (SCA) strategic goal that every business organization, including SMEs, wants to achieve. SCA is defined as a business's ability to achieve a dominant market position through low-cost, differentiation, and focus strategies that are challenging for competitors to replicate (Olazo, 2023). Moreover, Abdeen (2025) added that the sustainability of competitive advantage relies on ongoing innovation and the utilization of conceptual capital inside of the role of strategic leadership and dynamic capabilities (Abdeen et al., 2025).

Yang et al. stated that SCA is a form of advantage that cannot be replicated by competitors, thus providing a long-term competitive position for the organization (Yang, 2004). For commodity-based SMEs like eucalyptus oil, attaining SCA relies on how business actors effectively manage internal competencies and sustainably implement innovative strategies. Building on the prior analyzed theory, it is postulated that marketing competency can influence long-lasting competitive superiority, by marketing innovation contributing to this enduring market dominance.

H1: Marketing competency has a favourable and substancial influence on sustainable competitive advantage

H2: Marketing innovation has a favourable and substancial influence on sustainable competitive advantage.

METHOD

The present research adopted a quantitative design, specifically utilizing survey approach by distributing questionnaires via a google form link by a Likert scale of 1-5. This research was conducted on eucalyptus oil entrepreneurs in Buru Regency utilizing a saturated sampling technique, namely constituents of a population are chosen to form a sample, this methodology

is referred to as a census (Sugiyono, 2020). This research was conducted among 60 small and medium-scale eucalyptus oil entrepreneurs. The first independent variable (X1) is marketing competency (MC), measured utilizing a scale developed by Olazo (2022), that includes two dimensions: resources and capabilities. The second independent variable (X2) is marketing innovation (MI), measured According to the research by Na et al. (2019), consisting of four dimensions: product innovation, pricing innovation, retail channel innovation, and promotional strategy innovation. This research used an embedded two-degree approach. In the first degree, the same parameters were used to measure the constructs. The latent variable scores obtained by this degree were then used as parameters for bigger-order constructs in the second degree. After that, structural modeling (deep models) was conducted (Sarstedt et al., 2019). This research used an embedded two-degree approach. In the first degree, the same parameters were used to measure the constructs. The latent variable scores obtained by this degree were then used as parameters for bigger-order constructs in the second degree. After that, structural modeling (deep models) was conducted (Sarstedt et al., 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondents Characteristics

According to the distributed questionnaires, the demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 2. In total, 51.7% of the participants were female, while 48.3% were male. The most common age bracket among the participants was among 30 and 39 years (46.7%). Approximately 55.0% of the participants had been working for 1 to 3 years. The majority of businesses were small-scale enterprises (85.0%), while medium-scale businesses accounted for 15.0%. Most of these businesses employed among 3 to 5 people (56.7%).

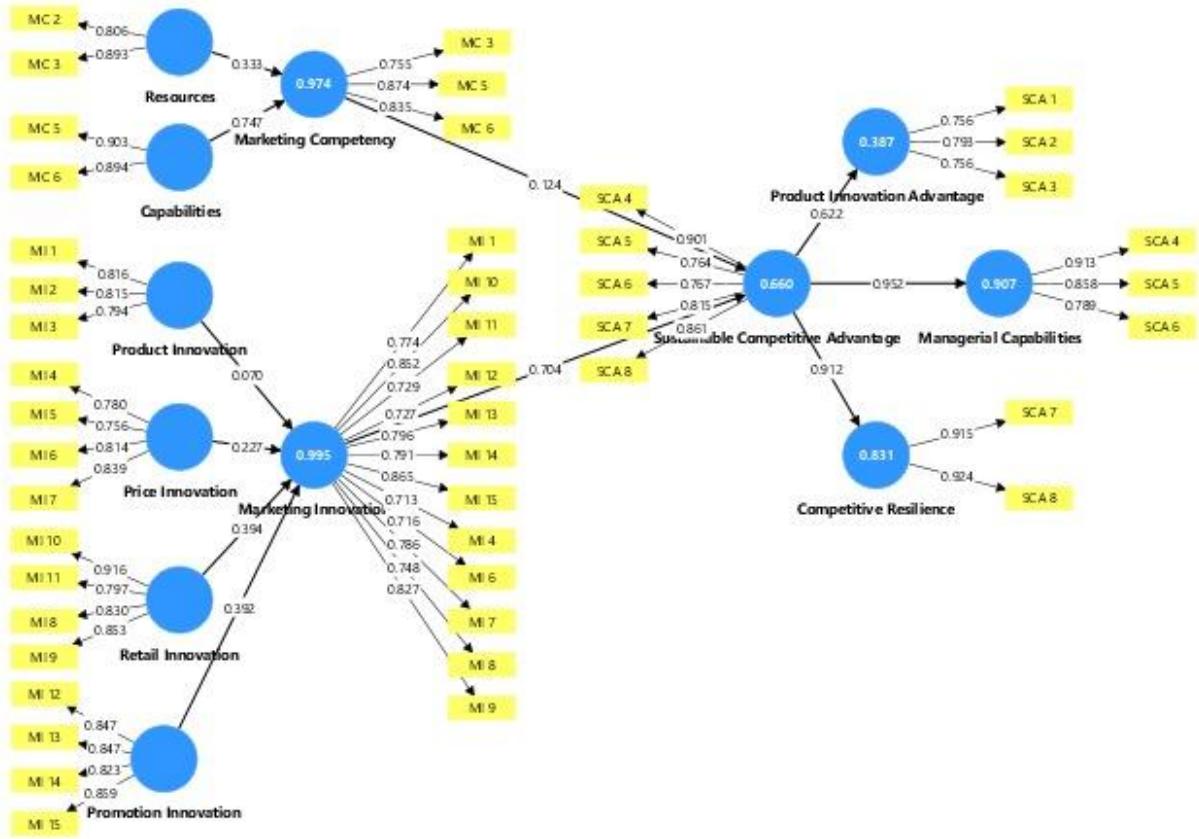
Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of participants

Characteristic	Items	Frecuency	%
Gender	Female	31	51,7
	Male	29	48,3
Age	<20 years	-	-
	20-29 years	26	43,3
	30-39 years	28	46,7
	40-49 years	5	8,3
	50-59 years	1	1,7
	>60 years	-	-
Working Period	<1 years	7	11,7
	1-3 years	33	55,0
	4-6 years	14	23,3
	7-10 years	5	8,3
	> 10 years	1	1,7
Business Scale	Kecil	51	85,0
	Menengah	9	15,0
Number of employees	< 3 orang	14	23,3
	3-5 orang	34	56,7
	5-7 orang	10	16,7
	7-10 orang	-	-
	> 10 orang	2	3,3

Source: Processed Data By Authors (2025)

Smart PLS Measurement Model

Figure 1 below presents the conceptual role of this research, that includes three latent variables. The first is marketing competence, the primary exogenous variable, consisting of two dimensions. The second is marketing innovation, the secondary exogenous variable, consisting of four dimensions. The third is sustainable competitive advantage, the outcome variable, that consists of three dimensions. The theoretical role of this research is considered reflective, meaning that the parameters are influenced by the underlying latent variables. The outcomeing structural model was then analyzed utilizing SmartPLS software. After the data manipulation outcomes, the outcomeing path in degree 1 is as follows:



Source: Processed Data By Authors (2025)

Figure 1. Output Path degree 1

Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model) degree 1

The outer model, or measurement model, is evaluated in two degrees: the first degree assesses construct validity, including convergent and discriminant validity, followed by the second degree, that examines reliability(Hamid & Anwar, 2019). Convergent validity is assessed by analyzing the factor loading values and the average variance extracted (AVE). Discriminant validity is tested utilizing the Fornell-Larcker category. In addition, reliability is measured through internal consistency and composite reliability.

Table 2. Factor loading and internal consistency and reliability parameters (First Order)

Variable	Items	Factor Loadings
MC2	Use of the latest technology or data.	0.806
MC3	Availability of adequate human resources in marketing.	0.893
MC5	Continuous development of marketing program plans.	0.903

MC6	Adaptability to market changes.	0.894
	Marketing Competency (X1) CA=0.761 CR=0.892AVE=0.806	
MI1	Innovative product design	0.816
MI10	Collaboration by local stores	0.916
MI11	Sales through digital platforms	0.797
MI12	Digital promotional media	0.847
MI13	Creative promotional content	0.847
MI14	Customer testimonials	0.823
MI15	Collaboration by local communities	0.859
MI2	Strategic product placement	0.815
MI3	Added value by design	0.794
MI4	Innovative pricing strategy	0.780
MI5	Price adjustments per segment	0.756
MI6	Price discounts	0.814
MI7	Price packages (bundling)	0.839
MI8	New distribution channels	0.830
MI9	Strategic product placement	0.853
	Marketing Innovation (X2) CA=0.926 CR=0.948 AVE=0.819	
SCA1	Superior quality compared to competitors	0.756
SCA2	Attractive product packaging	0.793
SCA3	Techniques to improve product quality	0.756
SCA4	Wider market reach	0.913
SCA5	Manage business finances by regular supervision	0.858
SCA6	Take entrepreneurship training to improve skills	0.789
SCA7	Have business advantages that are not easily imitated	0.915
SCA8	Have business advantages that are not easily imitated	0.924
	Sustainable Competitive Advantage CA=0.881 CR=0.910 AVE=0.630	

Source: Processed Data By Authors (2025)

Table 3. Discriminant Validity Fornell Larcker category (First Order)

	C	CR	MC	MC	MI	PI	PI	PIA	PI	R	RI	SCA
Capabilities	0.899											
Competitive Resilience	0.605	0.920										
Managerial Capabilities	0.662	0.743	0.855									
Marketing Competency	0.951	0.634	0.715	0.823								
Marketing Innovation	0.826	0.711	0.792	0.858	0.779							
Price Innovation	0.717	0.654	0.676	0.777	0.881	0.798						
Product Innovation	0.737	0.549	0.663	0.781	0.821	0.712	0.808					
Product Innovation Advantage	0.672	0.536	0.613	0.659	0.683	0.610	0.750	0.769				

Promotion Innovation	0.792	0.664	0.752	0.814	0.945	0.806	0.731	0.637	0.844			
Resources	0.614	0.517	0.623	0.791	0.699	0.636	0.678	0.478	0.644	0.850		
Retail Innovation	0.743	0.683	0.769	0.763	0.930	0.730	0.767	0.623	0.808	0.623	0.850	
Sustainable Competitive Advantage	0.682	0.912	0.952	0.728	0.810	0.712	0.658	0.622	0.764	0.619	0.784	0.823

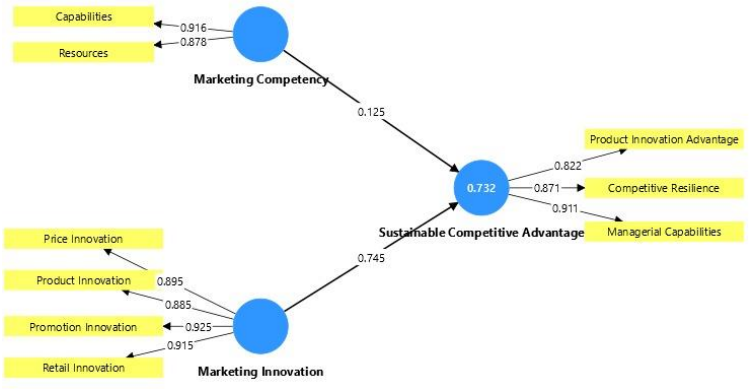
Sumber: Processed Data By Authors (2025)

An parameter is considered optimal if its factor loading value is bigger than 0.70. On the other hand, an parameter is considered suboptimal if its loading value is below 0.40, or if it falls inside of the range of 0.40 to 0.69 and the AVE value is less than 0.50. As drawn in Table 3, the loading factors for 25 items are classified as optimal because their values exceed 0.70. Furthermore, the outcomes drawn in Table 2 draw that the average variance extracted (AVE) values for the marketing competence, marketing innovation, and sustainable competitive advantage variables, along by their respective dimensions, are all above 0.50. This confirms that each variable and its associated components are considered valid.

According to the calculation outcomes drawn in Table 3, all constructs get the requirements for discriminant validity according to the Fornell-Larcker category. This means that the correlation coefficients among constructs do not exceed the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each personal construct. In addition, as drawn in Table 2, all composite reliability values are above 0.70, indicating strong reliability across all variables. This draws that the dimensions of marketing proficiency—specifically resources and capabilities—along by the dimensions of marketing innovation, that include product, pricing, retail, and promotional novelty, and the dimensions of sustainable competitive advantage, namely product innovation advantage, managerial capabilities, and competitive resilience, all demonstrate good reliability and can be classified as reliable.

Measurement Model Analysis (Outer Model) degree 2

After processing the data and fulfilling the scores for the latent variables in the first degree, the next step is to evaluate the bigger-order constructs in the second degree. The outcomeing path analysis output is presented below:



Source: Processed Data By Authors (2025)

Figure 2. Output Path degree 2

Table 4. Factor loadings and parameters of internal consistency and reliability (Second Order)

Dimensi dan Barang	Pemuatan Faktor
Resources	0.916

Capabilities	0.878
Marketing Competency (X1) CA=0.761 CR=0.892 AVE=0.806	
Price Innovation	0.895
Product Innovation	0.885
Promotion Innovation	0.925
Retail Innovation	0.915
Marketing Innovation (X2) CA=0.926 CR=0.948 AVE=0.819	
Product Innovation Advantage	0.822
Competitive Resilience	0.871
Managerial Capabilities	0.911
Sustainable Competitive Advantage CA=0.837 CR=0.902 AVE=0.755	

Source: Processed Data By Authors (2025)

Table 5. Discriminant Validity of Fornell-Larcker category (Second Order)

	Marketing Competency	Marketing Innovation	Sustainable Competitive Advantage
Marketing Competency	0.898		
Marketing Innovation	0.861	0.905	
Sustainable Competitive Advantage	0.767	0.853	0.869

Source: Processed Data By Authors (2025)

As drawn in Table 5, the loading coefficients for the parameters of marketing proficiency, marketing innovation, and sustainable competitive advantage are considered optimal, as each value exceeds 0.70. Furthermore, the analytical outcomes in Table 4 draw that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for marketing proficiency, marketing innovation, and sustainable competitive advantage is bigger than 0.50. Therefore, all variables in the model are considered valid.

The analytical outcomes in Table 5 show that all variables get the criteria for discriminant validity, as stated by the Fornell-Larcker principle. Specifically, the correlation among each variable is lower than the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for that variable. In addition, as drawn in Table 2, all composite reliability values exceed 0.70. This draws that the variables marketing proficiency, marketing innovation, and sustainable competitive advantage demonstrate strong reliability.

Table 6. Path Coefficient Value

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P values	outcome
Marketing Competency ->Sustainable Competitive Advantage	0.125	0.129	0.101	1.232	0.218	Positif namun tidak signifikan
Marketing Innovation ->Sustainable Competitive Advantage	0.745	0.742	0.100	7.482	0.000	Positif dan signifikan

Source: Processed Data By Authors (2025)

Table 7. R-Square Value

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Sustainable Competitive Advantage	0.732	0.722

Source: Processed Data By Authors (2025)

As drawn in the R-squared summary, a value of 0.732 draws that approximately 73.2% of the variation in sustainable competitive advantage is described by the predictor variables in the model, namely marketing competence and marketing innovation. This suggests that the model has strong predictive ability. According to Hamid and Anwar (2019), an R-squared value above 0.670 is considered to represent a substantial or strong influence (Hamid & Anwar, 2019). Therefore, the R-squared value of 0.732 in this research can be classified as robust.

As drawn in the path coefficient output in Table 6, the influence of marketing proficiency on sustainable competitive advantage has an initial sample value of 0.125. However, the p-value of 0.218 draws that this connection is not statistically substancial; therefore, the hypothesis is not supported. These outcomes are in line by previous research by Olazo (2023), that also explored the connection among marketing capabilities and innovative marketing strategies. In contrast, the influence of marketing innovation on sustainable competitive advantage is highly substancial, by an initial sample estimate of 0.745 and a p-value of 0.000, indicating a strong and meaningful connection. Therefore, it can be summarized that marketing innovation employs a major role in building sustainable competitive advantage, whereas marketing competence does not have a substancial influence in this context. Overall, the model effectively explains a large proportion of the variation in sustainable competitive advantage.

CONCLUSION

The researcher tested the influence of marketing capabilities, that consist of capabilities and resources, as well as marketing innovation, that includes novelty in offerings, pricing strategies, sales channel advancements, and marketing communication breakthroughs, on sustainable competitive advantage (SCA). The SCA in this research is measured through its formative dimensions, namely product innovation advantage, managerial capabilities, and competitive resilience. This research investigates the influence of marketing competency and marketing innovation on eucalyptus oil entrepreneurs, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Buru Buru Regency. According to the research outcomes, marketing competency does not influence sustainable competitive advantage, yielding favourable but not statistically substancial outcomes, heading to the refuse of the null hypothesis. Subsequently, the research outcomes draw that marketing innovation substancially influences enduring competitive advantage, showcasing favourable and substancial outcomes, thereby accepting the hypothesis. These outcomes draw that certain eucalyptus oil entrepreneurs, particularly in Buru Regency, have adopted marketing innovation strategies for their products to enhance customer experience.

Certain elements received limited attention in the research, attributed to time constraints and undisclosed existing phenomena. The parameters investigated in this research are confined to marketing expertise, marketing creativity, and strong competitive advantage. Therefore, it is suggested that future studies delve deeper into this area by incorporating additional factors. Moreover, the entrepreneurs studied in the research are restricted to eucalyptus oil entrepreneurs, particularly SMEs in Buru Regency, suggesting the potential to broaden the discourse to encompass other businesses and regions. Further studies can directly assess the connections among dimensions by utilizing various testing methodologies, such as the two-degree disjoint role employed inside of Smart PLS.

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