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The Effect of Market Orientation on Competitive Advantage with the Mediating Role of Market Innovation and the Moderating Role of Global Strategy in the Tile and Ceramic Industry (A Case Study of the Tile and Ceramic Industry in Yazd Province)

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of market orientation on competitive advantage, considering the mediating role of market innovation and the moderating role of global strategy in the tile and ceramic industry of Yazd Province. In terms of purpose, the research is applied, and in terms of methodology, it is descriptive–survey in nature and conducted using a quantitative approach. Data were collected through a standardized questionnaire from 368 participants active in the tile and ceramic industry of Yazd Province. Data analysis was performed using structural equation modeling based on the partial least squares approach (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS software. The results indicated that market orientation has a positive and significant effect on both market innovation and competitive advantage. In addition, market innovation significantly influences competitive advantage and plays a mediating role in the relationship between market orientation and competitive advantage. The findings also revealed that global strategy moderates the relationship between market innovation and competitive advantage; however, its moderating role in the relationship between market orientation and competitive advantage was not confirmed. Overall, the results emphasize the simultaneous importance of market orientation and market innovation in enhancing firms' competitive advantage.

Keywords: Market orientation; Market innovation; Competitive advantage; Global strategy

Introduction

In contemporary competitive environments, firms are increasingly required to adopt strategic orientations that enable them to sense, interpret, and respond effectively to rapidly changing market conditions. Intensifying competition, accelerated technological change, globalization of markets, and heightened customer expectations have collectively transformed the basis of competition from tangible assets toward intangible capabilities such as market knowledge, innovation capacity, and strategic flexibility. Within this context, market orientation has emerged as one of the most influential strategic paradigms explaining how firms generate superior value for customers and

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achieve sustainable competitive advantage (1, 2). Market orientation emphasizes systematic generation of market intelligence, dissemination of that intelligence across organizational functions, and coordinated responses to current and latent customer needs, thereby positioning firms to outperform competitors in dynamic environments.

The theoretical foundations of competitive advantage can be traced to the resource-based view of the firm, which posits that sustained superior performance arises from resources and capabilities that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (3). However, subsequent research has highlighted that possession of resources alone is insufficient in turbulent markets; rather, firms must continuously reconfigure and renew their resource base in response to environmental change. This insight gave rise to the dynamic capabilities perspective, which emphasizes the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure internal and external competencies to address rapidly changing environments (4). Market orientation is increasingly conceptualized as a critical antecedent of dynamic capabilities, as it provides firms with timely and relevant market knowledge necessary for adaptive and proactive strategic actions (5, 6).

A substantial body of empirical research has demonstrated a positive relationship between market orientation and firm performance across industries and national contexts. Early studies established that firms with strong market orientation tend to achieve higher profitability, sales growth, and customer satisfaction (1, 7). More recent studies have refined this relationship by highlighting the role of marketing capabilities, organizational learning, and cross-functional integration as mechanisms through which market orientation translates into performance outcomes (8, 9). These findings suggest that market orientation operates not merely as a cultural attribute, but as a strategic capability embedded in organizational processes and routines.

Despite the robustness of the market orientation–performance link, scholars increasingly argue that the effect of market orientation on competitive advantage is rarely direct. Instead, it is often mediated by innovation-related processes that enable firms to convert market insights into novel products, services, and business models (10, 11). Market innovation, in particular, reflects a firm's ability to introduce new or significantly improved offerings, enter new markets, and redefine value propositions in response to evolving customer needs and competitive pressures. By fostering experimentation and responsiveness, market orientation provides the informational foundation for market innovation, while innovation serves as a critical pathway through which competitive advantage is realized (12, 13).

The mediating role of innovation has received growing empirical support in recent years. Studies indicate that market-oriented firms are more likely to develop superior new products, enhance differentiation, and respond effectively to competitive moves, thereby achieving stronger market positions (11, 14). Innovation allows firms not only to satisfy expressed customer needs but also to anticipate latent demands and shape market expectations, which is particularly important in highly competitive and uncertain environments (15). In this sense, market innovation functions as a strategic conduit linking market orientation to sustained competitive advantage.

At the same time, globalization has fundamentally altered the competitive landscape for firms across industries. Global strategy, defined as the extent to which firms integrate and coordinate their activities across international markets, has become a critical determinant of competitive outcomes (16). Firms operating in global or semi-global industries must balance pressures for global integration with the need for local responsiveness, while leveraging scale efficiencies, knowledge transfer, and cross-border learning. Global strategy shapes how firms deploy resources, structure value chains, and compete across markets, thereby influencing the effectiveness of market-oriented and innovation-driven strategies.

Recent research suggests that global strategy may play a moderating role in the relationship between market innovation and competitive advantage. Firms with well-developed global strategies are better positioned to exploit innovations across multiple markets, spread risks, and capture learning economies, amplifying the competitive benefits of innovation (16, 17). Conversely, firms lacking coherent global strategies may struggle to appropriate the returns from innovation due to coordination failures, limited market access, or resource constraints. This perspective aligns with studies emphasizing that the performance impact of strategic orientations is contingent upon broader competitive and institutional contexts (18, 19).

In emerging and developing economies, these dynamics are particularly salient. Firms often face intense competition, limited access to capital, volatile demand conditions, and rapid technological diffusion, which collectively heighten the importance of strategic orientation and innovation capability (20, 21). Manufacturing sectors in such contexts must simultaneously pursue efficiency, differentiation, and adaptability to survive and grow. Market orientation enables firms to remain closely attuned to customer preferences and competitor actions, while market innovation provides mechanisms for differentiation and value creation under resource constraints (18, 22).

The tile and ceramic industry represents a particularly relevant empirical context for examining these relationships. Characterized by high capital intensity, strong price competition, and increasing pressure for design, quality, and sustainability, this industry requires firms to continuously innovate while maintaining cost competitiveness. In regions with significant export orientation and exposure to international markets, such as major manufacturing clusters, global strategy becomes a critical factor shaping competitive outcomes. Firms must align market-oriented practices with innovation efforts and global strategic positioning to achieve and sustain competitive advantage in both domestic and international markets (17, 23).

Although prior studies have examined the individual effects of market orientation, innovation, and global strategy on performance, several gaps remain in the literature. First, empirical research integrating market orientation, market innovation, and competitive advantage within a unified framework remains limited, particularly in manufacturing industries in emerging economies (10, 13). Second, the moderating role of global strategy in strengthening or weakening the innovation–competitive advantage relationship has received insufficient empirical attention, despite its growing relevance in globally competitive industries (16, 24). Third, existing studies often focus on firm performance outcomes such as profitability or growth, rather than explicitly examining competitive advantage as a strategic outcome rooted in differentiation and value creation (7, 8).

Addressing these gaps is important for both theory and practice. From a theoretical perspective, integrating resource-based and dynamic capability views with market orientation and global strategy perspectives can enhance understanding of how firms build and sustain competitive advantage under complex competitive conditions (4, 5). From a managerial standpoint, insights into the interplay among market orientation, innovation, and global strategy can inform strategic decision-making, helping managers allocate resources more effectively and design strategies that align with market realities (15, 25).

Moreover, recent studies underscore the increasing importance of ethical considerations, digital capabilities, and adaptive marketing practices in shaping the effectiveness of strategic orientations (22, 25). These factors further complicate the competitive landscape and reinforce the need for integrative models that capture the conditional and mediating mechanisms through which market orientation influences competitive outcomes. In this regard, examining the role of market innovation as a mediator and global strategy as a moderator offers a nuanced understanding of how firms can translate market knowledge into sustainable competitive advantage.

In light of these considerations, this study develops and empirically tests a comprehensive model that examines the effect of market orientation on competitive advantage, the mediating role of market innovation, and the moderating role of global strategy within a competitive manufacturing context (1, 10, 16). Accordingly, the aim of this study is to investigate how market orientation influences competitive advantage through market innovation and how global strategy moderates these relationships in the manufacturing industry.

Methods and Materials

In terms of purpose, this study is applied, and in terms of methodology, it is descriptive–survey in nature and conducted using a quantitative approach. The primary objective of the research is to examine the effect of market orientation on competitive advantage in the tile and ceramic industry of Yazd Province. This study is conducted to analyze the relationships among several variables, including market orientation, market innovation, global strategy, and market turbulence.

The statistical population of the study comprises stakeholders active in the tile and ceramic industry of Yazd Province. The sample size was determined as 410 respondents based on standard PLS-SEM guidelines and considering model complexity and the anticipated response rate. Of this number, 368 questionnaires contained acceptable and valid data and were used for analysis. The data were collected using convenience sampling and questionnaire distribution.

The data for this study were collected using a standardized questionnaire. The questionnaire included items related to market orientation, market innovation, global strategy, and competitive advantage. Items measuring market orientation were adopted from Ganes et al. (2019); items related to competitive advantage were drawn from Nido (2010) and Odria et al. (2019); items measuring market innovation were adopted from Comelo (2014); and items related to global strategy were taken from Nguyen and Khoa (2020). A five-point Likert scale was used to assess respondents' perceptions. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS and SmartPLS software. Structural equation modeling based on the partial least squares approach (PLS-SEM) was employed to test the conceptual model and research hypotheses. The model was designed to examine relationships among independent, dependent, mediating, and moderating variables.

Content validity was used to assess the validity of the questionnaire, and all items and questions were reviewed and confirmed by subject-matter experts. To evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha was applied, indicating satisfactory reliability of the measurement instrument.

Findings and Results

Data were collected from 368 valid respondents. To ensure adequate representation of different groups, individuals from diverse age categories and educational backgrounds were included in the study.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)	18–30	84	23%
	30–45	110	30%
	45–60	100	27%
	60 and above	74	20%
Gender	Female	53	14%
	Male	315	86%
Education level	Diploma and below	103	28%

	Bachelor's degree	174	47%
	Master's degree	85	23%
	PhD and above	6	2%
Work experience (years)	5 or less	92	25%
	5–15	115	31%
	15–30	98	27%
	More than 30	63	17%

Most respondents were young individuals in the 30–45 age range. In terms of gender, 86% of the respondents were male and 14% were female. A substantial proportion of the respondents held at least a bachelor's or master's degree, indicating a relatively well-educated sample.

To validate the factorial structure of the model, an analysis of item factor loadings was conducted. The results confirmed that all factor loadings were close to the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating adequate item representation of their respective constructs.

Table 2. Factor Loadings of Measurement Items

Item	Competitive Advantage	Global Strategy	Market Innovation	Market Orientation	Moderating Variable (Market Innovation × Competitive Advantage)	Moderating Variable (Market Orientation × Competitive Advantage)
CA_Q1	0.901					
CA_Q2	0.905					
CA_Q3	0.882					
CA_Q4	0.878					
CA_Q5	0.882					
CA_Q6	0.910					
CA_Q7	0.905					
CA_Q8	0.906					
GS_Q1		0.796				
GS_Q2		0.801				
GS_Q3		0.827				
GS_Q4		0.785				
GS_Q5		0.818				
GS_Q6		0.802				
MI_Q1			0.812			
MI_Q2			0.828			
MI_Q3			0.780			
MI_Q4			0.762			
MI_Q5			0.773			
MI_Q6			0.802			
MO_Q1				0.860		
MO_Q2				0.844		
MO_Q3				0.842		
MO_Q4				0.872		
MO_Q5				0.875		
Market Innovation × Global Strategy					1.032	
Market Orientation × Global Strategy						1.046

The results confirm adequate convergent validity of the measurement model, as most items exhibit factor loadings above 0.70. This indicates that each item contributes significantly to its corresponding construct.

To assess internal consistency reliability and construct validity of the measurement model, reliability and validity tests were conducted. Reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). Convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE).

Table 3. Reliability and Convergent Validity Analysis

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Global Strategy	0.891	0.917	0.648
Competitive Advantage	0.965	0.970	0.803
Market Innovation	0.882	0.911	0.629
Market Orientation	0.911	0.933	0.737
Moderating Variable (Market Innovation × Competitive Advantage)	1.000	1.000	1.000
Moderating Variable (Market Orientation × Competitive Advantage)	1.000	1.000	1.000

All constructs demonstrate Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values above 0.70, indicating a high level of internal consistency. In addition, composite reliability values exceed the recommended threshold, further supporting the robustness of the model. Convergent validity was confirmed, as AVE values for all constructs were greater than 0.50, indicating that the variance explained by the indicators exceeds measurement error.

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell–Larcker criterion.

Table 4. Fornell–Larcker Criterion

Construct	Global Strategy	Moderating Variable (Market Innovation × Competitive Advantage)	Moderating Variable (Market Orientation × Competitive Advantage)	Competitive Advantage	Market Innovation	Market Orientation
Global Strategy	0.805					
Moderating Variable (Market Innovation × Competitive Advantage)	−0.025	1.000				
Moderating Variable (Market Orientation × Competitive Advantage)	0.049	0.631	1.000			
Competitive Advantage	0.627	0.106	0.056	0.896		
Market Innovation	0.385	−0.023	0.003	0.601	0.793	
Market Orientation	0.589	0.003	0.020	0.625	0.609	0.859

The Fornell–Larcker results indicate that the square root of the AVE for each construct is greater than its correlations with other constructs, confirming adequate discriminant validity.

In the next stage, the explanatory power of the structural model was evaluated using the coefficient of determination (R^2).

Table 5. Coefficient of Determination (R^2) and Stone–Geisser's Predictive Relevance (Q^2)

Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Q^2
Competitive Advantage	0.582	0.576	0.434
Market Innovation	0.371	0.369	0.218

The results indicate that the constructs exhibit moderate and acceptable R^2 values. The Stone–Geisser criterion further demonstrates the predictive relevance of the model, with the constructs showing strong to moderate Q^2 values.

To test the hypothesized relationships, structural equation modeling was conducted using a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples to assess the significance of path coefficients.

Table 6. Structural Equation Modeling Results

Hypothesized Path	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	t Value	p Value
Market Innovation → Competitive Advantage	0.339	0.339	0.041	8.328	< .001
Market Orientation → Competitive Advantage	0.188	0.189	0.048	3.905	< .001
Market Orientation → Market Innovation	0.609	0.609	0.032	19.064	< .001
Market Orientation → Market Innovation → Competitive Advantage	0.207	0.207	0.028	7.509	< .001
Global Strategy (Market Innovation × Competitive Advantage) → Competitive Advantage	0.165	0.165	0.046	3.544	< .001
Global Strategy (Market Orientation × Competitive Advantage) → Competitive Advantage	−0.072	−0.067	0.048	1.522	.128

All path coefficients, except for the moderating effect of global strategy on the relationship between market orientation and competitive advantage, were statistically significant ($p < .001$). Accordingly, all hypotheses except the sixth hypothesis were supported, with t values greater than 1.96 and p values below .05.

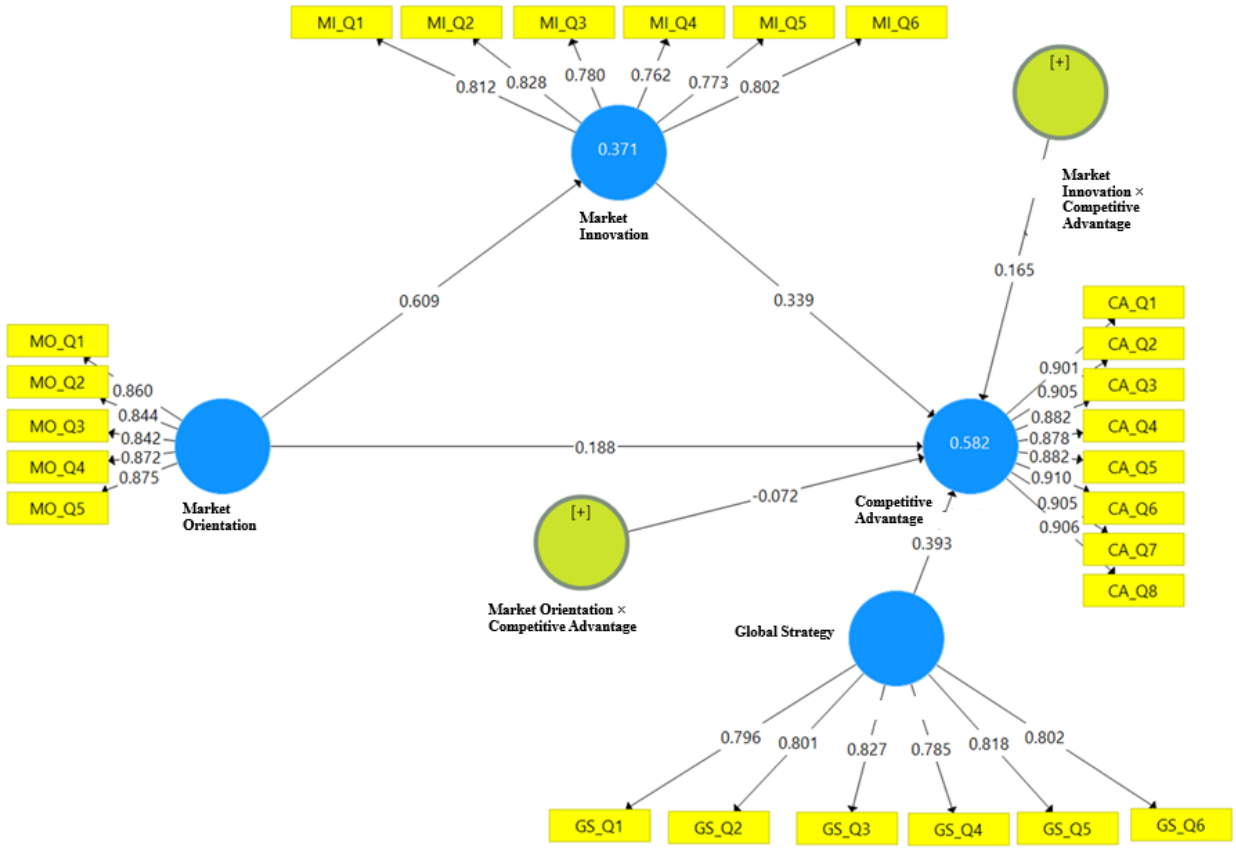

Figure 1. Results of the SEM–PLS algorithm

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study provide robust empirical evidence regarding the mechanisms through which market orientation contributes to competitive advantage and clarify the conditional role of global strategy in this relationship. The results indicate that market orientation exerts a direct and positive effect on competitive advantage, confirming that firms that systematically gather market intelligence, disseminate it across functional units, and respond

effectively to customer and competitor signals are better positioned to achieve superior competitive positions. This finding is consistent with the foundational logic of market orientation theory, which emphasizes value creation through customer focus and competitor awareness (1, 2). It also aligns with empirical evidence demonstrating that market-oriented firms outperform rivals by aligning their offerings with evolving market needs and by responding more effectively to competitive pressures (7, 8).

Beyond this direct effect, the results highlight the critical mediating role of market innovation in the relationship between market orientation and competitive advantage. The significant positive effect of market orientation on market innovation suggests that market-oriented firms are more capable of translating market knowledge into innovative actions, such as developing new products, entering new market segments, or redefining value propositions. This finding supports the argument that market orientation serves as an informational and cultural foundation that stimulates innovation-related processes (5, 6). Prior studies similarly report that firms with strong market orientation exhibit higher levels of innovation capability, as they are better able to identify unmet customer needs and emerging market opportunities (11, 15).

The positive and significant effect of market innovation on competitive advantage further reinforces the notion that innovation is a central pathway through which firms differentiate themselves and sustain superior performance. Market innovation enables firms to move beyond price-based competition by offering unique value, improving quality, and enhancing customer experiences, thereby strengthening their competitive position. This finding is consistent with research emphasizing innovation as a strategic driver of competitive advantage, particularly in environments characterized by intense competition and rapid change (12, 13). It also corroborates studies showing that innovation mediates the relationship between strategic orientations and performance outcomes, underscoring the importance of innovation as a value-creation mechanism (10, 14).

The mediation analysis provides deeper insight into the interplay between market orientation, market innovation, and competitive advantage. The significant indirect effect of market orientation on competitive advantage through market innovation indicates that a substantial portion of the impact of market orientation is realized via innovation-related activities rather than through direct effects alone. This finding aligns with dynamic capability theory, which posits that firms must continuously reconfigure resources and capabilities to maintain competitiveness in turbulent environments (4). Market orientation enhances a firm's sensing capability by providing timely market intelligence, while market innovation reflects the firm's seizing and transforming capabilities that convert insights into competitive outcomes (5, 10).

The moderating role of global strategy reveals more nuanced dynamics. The results show that global strategy significantly moderates the relationship between market innovation and competitive advantage, indicating that firms with more developed global strategies are better able to leverage their innovations to achieve competitive superiority. This finding suggests that innovation yields greater competitive benefits when firms possess the strategic capacity to scale, transfer, and exploit innovations across multiple markets. It is consistent with the global strategy literature, which emphasizes the role of international integration, cross-border learning, and coordination in enhancing the returns to innovation (16). Firms with coherent global strategies can spread innovation-related risks, access diverse knowledge sources, and exploit economies of scale, thereby amplifying the impact of market innovation on competitive advantage (17, 22).

In contrast, the moderating effect of global strategy on the relationship between market orientation and competitive advantage was not supported. This finding implies that while market orientation contributes to

competitive advantage regardless of the degree of global strategic orientation, its effectiveness does not depend significantly on global strategy. One possible explanation is that market orientation primarily operates at the level of customer and competitor responsiveness, which may be equally relevant in both domestic and international contexts. Market-oriented practices such as customer focus, competitor analysis, and interfunctional coordination can enhance competitive advantage even in firms with limited global integration (1, 9). This result also resonates with studies suggesting that strategic orientations may exert universal effects, whereas the value of innovation is more context-dependent and contingent upon firms' strategic scope and market reach (18, 19).

Taken together, these findings contribute to the existing literature in several important ways. First, they empirically validate an integrated model that links market orientation, market innovation, and competitive advantage, thereby addressing calls for more comprehensive frameworks that capture the mechanisms underlying strategic orientation–performance relationships (10, 13). Second, by demonstrating the mediating role of market innovation, the study advances understanding of how market-oriented behaviors are transformed into tangible competitive outcomes, supporting the view that innovation is a critical conduit for value creation (11, 15). Third, the findings regarding the moderating role of global strategy enrich the global strategy literature by showing that international strategic posture strengthens the innovation–competitive advantage link but does not necessarily condition the effectiveness of market orientation itself (16, 24).

From a contextual perspective, the results are particularly relevant for firms operating in competitive manufacturing industries and emerging market environments. Such firms often face intense rivalry, resource constraints, and volatile demand conditions, making it imperative to leverage both market knowledge and innovation capabilities effectively. The findings suggest that while market orientation provides a stable foundation for competitive advantage, firms seeking to maximize the returns from innovation should invest in developing coherent global strategies that enable them to exploit innovations across broader markets (20, 21). This insight is especially pertinent for export-oriented manufacturing sectors, where global competition and international market access play a decisive role in shaping competitive outcomes (17, 22).

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research design is cross-sectional, which limits the ability to draw strong causal inferences about the relationships among market orientation, market innovation, global strategy, and competitive advantage. Second, the study relies on self-reported data collected through questionnaires, which may be subject to common method bias and respondent subjectivity. Third, the empirical context is confined to a single industry and geographic region, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other sectors or countries with different competitive and institutional conditions.

Future research could address these limitations by adopting longitudinal research designs to capture the dynamic evolution of market orientation, innovation, and competitive advantage over time. Comparative studies across industries and countries would also be valuable in assessing the generalizability of the proposed model and in identifying context-specific contingencies. Additionally, future studies could incorporate additional moderating or mediating variables, such as digital capabilities, organizational learning, or marketing ethics, to further refine understanding of how strategic orientations translate into competitive outcomes.

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that firms should invest simultaneously in strengthening market-oriented practices and developing innovation capabilities to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Managers should also recognize the importance of aligning innovation efforts with an appropriate global strategy, particularly in industries exposed to international competition. By integrating market intelligence, fostering

innovation, and strategically leveraging global market opportunities, firms can enhance their ability to differentiate themselves and sustain competitive success in increasingly complex and competitive environments.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this study.

Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were adheried in conducting and writing this article.

Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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