

THE SYNERGY OF LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR ON MARKETING MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS: A CASE STUDY ON SMES IN NORTH SUMATRA

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A B S T R A C T

This study examines the synergistic relationship between leadership styles and organizational behavior in influencing marketing management effectiveness among Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in North Sumatra, Indonesia. The research employs a quantitative approach utilizing Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to analyze data collected from 250 SME owners and managers across various sectors including food processing, handicrafts, and textiles. The findings reveal that transformational leadership significantly moderates the relationship between organizational behavior and marketing management effectiveness. Furthermore, organizational culture, employee commitment, and innovative behavior serve as critical mediating variables in this relationship. The study demonstrates that SMEs with strong leadership alignment and positive organizational behavior achieve 34% higher marketing performance compared to those with weak leadership structures. These findings contribute to the understanding of internal organizational dynamics in resource-constrained environments and provide practical implications for SME development policies in emerging markets. The research underscores the importance of developing leadership capabilities and fostering conducive organizational behavior as strategic priorities for enhancing marketing competitiveness among SMEs in North Sumatra.

A B S T R A K

Penelitian ini mengkaji hubungan sinergis antara gaya kepemimpinan dan perilaku organisasi dalam mempengaruhi efektivitas manajemen pemasaran di kalangan Usaha Kecil dan Menengah (UKM) di Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan Model Persamaan Struktural (SEM) untuk menganalisis data yang dikumpulkan dari 250 pemilik dan manajer UKM di berbagai sektor, termasuk pengolahan makanan, kerajinan tangan, dan tekstil. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan transformasional secara signifikan memoderasi hubungan antara perilaku organisasi dan efektivitas manajemen pemasaran. Selain itu, budaya organisasi, komitmen karyawan, dan perilaku inovatif berperan sebagai variabel mediasi kritis dalam hubungan ini. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa UKM dengan keselarasan kepemimpinan yang kuat dan perilaku organisasi yang positif mencapai kinerja pemasaran 34% lebih tinggi dibandingkan dengan UKM yang memiliki struktur kepemimpinan lemah. Temuan ini berkontribusi pada pemahaman dinamika organisasi internal dalam lingkungan dengan keterbatasan sumber daya dan memberikan implikasi praktis bagi kebijakan pengembangan UKM di pasar emerging. Penelitian ini menekankan pentingnya mengembangkan kemampuan kepemimpinan dan memupuk perilaku organisasi yang kondusif sebagai prioritas strategis untuk meningkatkan daya saing pemasaran di kalangan UKM di Sumatera Utara.

JEL Classification: M31, M54, L26, O15.

INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) constitute the backbone of Indonesia's economy, contributing approximately 61% to the national GDP and employing over 97% of the workforce (Ministry of Cooperatives and SMEs, 2024). In North Sumatra province, SMEs represent a vital economic force with more than 2.8 million business units operating across diverse sectors. Despite their significant contribution, SMEs in this region face persistent challenges in achieving sustainable marketing effectiveness, primarily due to limited resources, inadequate managerial capabilities, and intense market competition. The effectiveness of marketing management in SMEs is not solely determined by external market conditions but is significantly influenced by internal organizational factors. Recent scholarship emphasizes the critical role of leadership in shaping organizational dynamics and driving business performance (Northouse, 2021). Similarly, organizational behavior—encompassing employee attitudes, workplace culture, and collective behavioral patterns—has emerged as a fundamental determinant of organizational success (Robbins & Judge, 2022). However, existing research has predominantly examined leadership and organizational behavior as isolated variables, with limited attention to their synergistic interaction, particularly in the context of marketing management effectiveness. This gap is especially pronounced in emerging market settings where SMEs operate under unique constraints and opportunities.

Despite the recognized importance of both leadership and organizational behavior, several critical questions remain unanswered: How do different leadership styles interact with organizational behavior patterns to influence marketing management effectiveness? What mediating mechanisms explain the relationship between leadership, organizational behavior, and marketing outcomes? How can SMEs in North Sumatra leverage leadership and organizational behavior synergies to enhance their marketing competitiveness?. This study aims to: Analyze the direct impact of leadership styles on marketing management effectiveness in North Sumatra SMEs Examine the influence of organizational behavior on marketing management effectiveness Investigate the synergistic effect of leadership and organizational behavior on marketing outcomes Identify mediating variables that explain the relationship between these constructs Provide practical recommendations for SME development policies and managerial practices

This research contributes to both theoretical knowledge and practical application. Theoretically, it extends the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory by demonstrating how intangible organizational resources create competitive advantages in marketing. Practically, it provides actionable insights for SME owners, policymakers, and business development agencies in North Sumatra to enhance marketing effectiveness through strategic leadership and organizational development interventions.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS FORMULATION

2.1 Leadership in SMEs

Leadership represents a critical success factor in SMEs, where organizational structures are typically flat and the leader's influence permeates all aspects of operations (Ključnikov et al., 2022). Transformational leadership, characterized by inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence, has been consistently associated with superior organizational performance (Bass & Riggio, 2006). In the SME context, transformational leaders foster innovation, encourage risk-taking, and create environments conducive to adaptive marketing strategies (Gumusluoglu & Ilsev, 2009). Conversely, transactional leadership, which emphasizes exchange relationships and performance-based rewards, remains relevant in structured marketing activities requiring consistent execution (Burns, 1978). Recent studies suggest that effective SME leaders often employ hybrid approaches, combining transformational and transactional elements based on situational demands (Avolio & Bass, 2004).

2.2 Organizational Behavior

Organizational behavior encompasses the collective attitudes, values, and behavioral patterns that characterize an organization's internal environment (Luthans, 2011). In SMEs, organizational behavior is particularly salient due to close interpersonal relationships and the significant impact of individual behaviors on overall performance (Schein, 2010). Key dimensions include organizational culture, employee commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and innovation orientation. Research indicates that positive organizational behavior correlates with enhanced creativity, customer responsiveness, and market adaptability all crucial for marketing effectiveness (Hitt et al., 2016). Furthermore, organizational behavior serves as a conduit through which leadership influence translates into tangible business outcomes (Yukl, 2013).

2.3 Marketing Management Effectiveness

Marketing management effectiveness refers to an organization's capability to plan, implement, and control marketing activities to achieve desired market outcomes (Kotler & Keller, 2021). For SMEs, this encompasses market orientation, customer relationship management, brand positioning, and marketing innovation (O'Cass & Weerawardena, 2010). Effectiveness is typically measured through market share growth, customer acquisition and retention rates, brand equity, and return on marketing investment (Ambler, 2003). In resource-constrained SME environments, marketing effectiveness depends heavily on entrepreneurial orientation and the ability to leverage relational networks (Kraus et al., 2020). The integration of digital marketing capabilities has also emerged as a critical component of contemporary marketing effectiveness (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).

2.4 The Synergy of Leadership and Organizational Behavior

The concept of synergy suggests that the combined effect of leadership and organizational behavior exceeds the sum of their individual impacts (Ansoff, 1965). Leadership shapes organizational behavior through role modeling, value articulation, and reward systems (Schein, 2010). Conversely, organizational behavior can either amplify or constrain leadership effectiveness depending on cultural alignment and employee receptivity (Hofstede, 2001). In the marketing domain, this synergy manifests through coordinated customer engagement, consistent brand messaging, and collective market intelligence gathering (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Organizations where leadership vision aligns with supportive behavioral norms demonstrate superior market responsiveness and innovation capacity

2.5 Hypothesis Formulation

Based on the theoretical framework and empirical evidence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- a) **H1:** Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on marketing management effectiveness in North Sumatra SMEs.
- b) **H2:** Organizational behavior has a positive and significant effect on marketing management effectiveness in North Sumatra SMEs.
- c) **H3:** There is a significant synergistic effect between leadership and organizational behavior on marketing management effectiveness in North Sumatra SMEs.
- d) **H4:** Organizational culture mediates the relationship between leadership and marketing management effectiveness.
- e) **H5:** Employee commitment mediates the relationship between organizational behavior and marketing management effectiveness.
- f) **H6:** Innovation orientation mediates the synergistic effect of leadership and organizational behavior on marketing management effectiveness.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

The research model positions leadership styles (transformational and transactional) and organizational behavior (culture, commitment, citizenship behavior) as independent variables, marketing management effectiveness as the dependent variable, and organizational culture, employee commitment, and innovation orientation as mediating variables. The synergistic interaction between leadership and organizational behavior represents the model's unique contribution.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study adopts a quantitative research design with a cross-sectional survey approach under the positivist paradigm, emphasizing objectivity, measurement, and statistical hypothesis testing. It is explanatory in nature, aiming to establish causal relationships among transformational leadership, organizational behavior, and marketing management effectiveness in SMEs across North Sumatra. The population consists of approximately 12,500 registered SMEs from the manufacturing, trade, and service sectors, operating for at least three years and employing between 5 and 99 workers. Using stratified random sampling and the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, 300 questionnaires were distributed, and 267 valid responses were obtained, representing an 89% response rate. Primary data were gathered using a structured questionnaire administered to SME owners or senior managers overseeing marketing functions. The instrument covered five sections: demographic characteristics, leadership styles (adapted from Bass & Avolio's MLQ, 1997), organizational behavior (based on Denison et al., 2006, and Meyer & Allen, 1991), marketing management effectiveness (adapted from Kohli et al., 1993, and Vorhies & Morgan, 2005), and mediating variables such as organizational culture, employee commitment, and innovation orientation. Responses were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (7). The variables were operationalized as follows: transformational leadership and organizational behavior as independent variables, marketing management effectiveness as the dependent variable, and organizational culture, employee commitment, and innovation orientation as mediators, with business age, firm size, industry sector, and owner education level serving as control variables.

Instrument validity and reliability were rigorously tested to ensure measurement quality.

Content validity was confirmed through expert review by academics and practitioners, while construct validity was assessed using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) with factor loadings exceeding 0.6. Convergent validity was established through AVE values above 0.5, and discriminant validity was verified when the square root of AVE surpassed inter-construct correlations. Reliability tests yielded Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) values above 0.7, confirming internal consistency and construct stability. These validation procedures ensured that the research instruments accurately captured the theoretical constructs and maintained measurement robustness across all dimensions. Data were analyzed using a two-stage process. The first stage involved descriptive statistics, demographic profiling, and diagnostic tests such as normality, multicollinearity (VIF), and distribution checks. The second stage applied Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) using AMOS 24.0 to test both direct and indirect relationships, supported by mediation and moderation analyses through bootstrapping with 5,000 iterations. Model fitness was evaluated with indices including Chi-square/df (<3), CFI (>0.9), TLI (>0.9), RMSEA (<0.08), and SRMR (<0.08). All analyses used a 5% significance level ($p < 0.05$), and results were reported with standardized path coefficients. Ethical research principles were upheld through informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and institutional review board approval to ensure integrity and participant protection.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Respondent Profile

The final sample of 267 SMEs demonstrates diverse characteristics. Respondent demographics reveal that 58% of SME owners/managers are male, with ages ranging from 28 to 62 years (mean age = 42.3 years). Educational backgrounds show 45% hold bachelor's degrees, 32% have high school diplomas, and 23% possess postgraduate qualifications. Organizational characteristics indicate that 38% of SMEs operate in food processing, 27% in handicrafts, 20% in textiles and fashion, and 15% in other manufacturing sectors. Business age ranges from 3 to 28 years (mean = 11.6 years), with employee numbers ranging from 5 to 95 (mean = 23 employees). Annual revenues vary from IDR 300 million to IDR 15 billion, representing diverse SME scales within the sample.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive analysis reveals the following mean scores (7-point scale):

- a) Transformational Leadership: $M = 5.12$, $SD = 0.89$
- b) Transactional Leadership: $M = 4.87$, $SD = 0.76$
- c) Organizational Behavior: $M = 5.34$, $SD = 0.82$
- d) Marketing Management Effectiveness: $M = 4.96$, $SD = 0.94$
- e) Organizational Culture: $M = 5.21$, $SD = 0.85$
- f) Employee Commitment: $M = 5.08$, $SD = 0.91$
- g) Innovation Orientation: $M = 4.78$, $SD = 1.02$

These results indicate moderate to high levels across all constructs, with organizational behavior demonstrating the highest mean score, suggesting relatively positive internal organizational dynamics among North Sumatra SMEs.

4.3 Measurement Model Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis confirms the validity and reliability of all measurement

instruments. Factor loadings range from 0.68 to 0.91, all exceeding the 0.6 threshold. Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0.82 to 0.93, and Composite Reliability (CR) values range from 0.84 to 0.94, both exceeding the 0.7 minimum standard. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values range from 0.57 to 0.73, confirming convergent validity. Discriminant validity is established through the Fornell-Larcker criterion, with the square root of AVE for each construct exceeding its correlations with other constructs. The measurement model demonstrates excellent fit indices: $\chi^2/df = 2.18$, CFI = 0.94, TLI = 0.93, RMSEA = 0.067, SRMR = 0.052.

4.4 Structural Model and Hypothesis Testing

The structural model analysis yields the following results:

1) Direct Effects:

- a) H1 (Transformational Leadership → Marketing Effectiveness): $\beta = 0.342$, $t = 5.87$, $p < 0.001$ - SUPPORTED The positive and significant relationship indicates that transformational leadership directly enhances marketing management effectiveness. SME leaders who articulate clear vision, inspire employees, and encourage innovation demonstrate 34.2% improvement in marketing outcomes.
- b) H2 (Organizational Behavior → Marketing Effectiveness): $\beta = 0.289$, $t = 4.93$, $p < 0.001$ - SUPPORTED Positive organizational behavior, characterized by strong culture, high commitment, and citizenship behaviors, contributes significantly to marketing effectiveness with a path coefficient of 0.289.
- c) H3 (Leadership × Organizational Behavior → Marketing Effectiveness): $\beta = 0.214$, $t = 3.76$, $p < 0.001$ - SUPPORTED The interaction term demonstrates significant synergistic effects, indicating that the combination of strong leadership and positive organizational behavior produces outcomes exceeding their individual contributions by 21.4%.

2) Mediation Effects:

- a) H4 (Leadership → Organizational Culture → Marketing Effectiveness): Indirect effect = 0.156, 95% CI [0.089, 0.234], $p < 0.01$ - SUPPORTED Organizational culture partially mediates the relationship, explaining 31.3% of the total effect of leadership on marketing effectiveness.
- b) H5 (Organizational Behavior → Employee Commitment → Marketing Effectiveness): Indirect effect = 0.127, 95% CI [0.067, 0.198], $p < 0.01$ - SUPPORTED Employee commitment serves as a significant mediating mechanism, accounting for 30.5% of the organizational behavior effect.
- c) H6 (Leadership × Organizational Behavior → Innovation Orientation → Marketing Effectiveness): Indirect effect = 0.183, 95% CI [0.112, 0.267], $p < 0.001$ - SUPPORTED Innovation orientation mediates 46.2% of the synergistic effect, demonstrating that the leadership-behavior synergy primarily operates through enhanced innovative capabilities.

The final structural model demonstrates excellent fit: $\chi^2/df = 2.34$, CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.071, SRMR = 0.058. The model explains 68.4% of variance in marketing management effectiveness ($R^2 = 0.684$), indicating strong explanatory power.

4.5 Discussion

The findings provide robust support for the synergistic relationship between leadership and organizational behavior in driving marketing management effectiveness among North

Sumatra SMEs. Several key insights emerge:

- a) **Leadership as a Catalyst:** Transformational leadership emerges as the strongest direct predictor of marketing effectiveness. This finding aligns with Bass and Riggio's (2006) assertion that transformational leaders create environments conducive to market adaptation and customer focus. In the North Sumatra context, where SMEs face resource constraints and market uncertainties, transformational leadership provides the vision and motivation necessary to pursue aggressive marketing strategies despite challenges. The relatively weaker but still significant transactional leadership effect ($\beta = 0.187$, included in the broader organizational behavior construct) suggests that North Sumatra SMEs benefit from balanced leadership approaches. Transactional mechanisms ensure consistent marketing execution while transformational elements drive strategic innovation a finding consistent with Avolio and Bass's (2004) full-range leadership model.
- b) **Organizational Behavior as Foundation:** The significant direct effect of organizational behavior on marketing effectiveness validates the Resource-Based View perspective that internal organizational resources create competitive advantages (Barney, 1991). SMEs with strong organizational cultures, committed employees, and prevalent citizenship behaviors demonstrate superior market responsiveness and customer relationship management.

Interestingly, organizational behavior's effect operates partially through employee commitment (30.5% mediation), suggesting that attitudinal commitment translates behavioral patterns into tangible marketing actions. This aligns with Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model, where affective commitment particularly enhances discretionary effort in customer engagement activities.

- a) **Synergistic Amplification:** The significant interaction effect ($\beta = 0.214$) represents this study's primary theoretical contribution. The synergy operates through three mechanisms:
 - b) **Cultural Alignment:** Leaders shape organizational culture, which in turn reinforces leadership initiatives, creating a virtuous cycle (Schein, 2010)
 - c) **Behavioral Amplification:** Positive organizational behavior provides the social capital through which leadership vision materializes into collective action
 - d) **Innovation Acceleration:** The leadership-behavior combination particularly enhances innovation orientation, which mediates 46.2% of the synergistic effect

This finding extends Dynamic Capabilities Theory (Teece, 2007) by demonstrating that organizational agility in marketing requires not just individual leadership or favorable culture, but their strategic alignment and mutual reinforcement. Contextual Considerations: The North Sumatra setting provides unique contextual insights. The province's multicultural environment (comprising Batak, Malay, Javanese, and Chinese ethnicities) creates complex organizational dynamics where leadership must navigate diverse cultural expectations. SMEs demonstrating high synergy scores typically exhibit culturally inclusive leadership that leverages diversity as a marketing asset rather than a management challenge.

Furthermore, North Sumatra's position as a gateway to international markets (through Belawan International Port and Kualanamu International Airport) exposes SMEs to global competition, making marketing effectiveness a survival imperative. The findings suggest that leadership-behavior synergy provides the adaptive capacity necessary for competing in both domestic and export markets. Comparative Analysis: Comparing high-synergy SMEs (top quartile in both leadership and organizational behavior) with low-synergy counterparts reveals

substantial performance differentials:

- a) Customer retention rates: 78% vs. 54%
- b) New customer acquisition: 34% annual growth vs. 12%
- c) Marketing ROI: 3.4:1 vs. 1.8:1
- d) Brand recognition (regional): 67% vs. 31%

These practical differences underscore the managerial significance of the theoretical findings.

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study provides a comprehensive analysis of the synergistic relationship between leadership and organizational behavior in shaping marketing management effectiveness among SMEs in North Sumatra. The findings highlight that transformational leadership significantly enhances marketing performance by fostering vision clarity, employee empowerment, and innovation-driven strategies. Similarly, organizational behavior exerts a strong positive influence, demonstrating that internal dynamics such as culture, commitment, and citizenship behaviors play a critical role in shaping external market outcomes. The interaction between leadership and organizational behavior yields a synergistic effect that amplifies innovation orientation and marketing agility, illustrating that aligned leadership and supportive behavioral environments generate performance levels exceeding their individual impacts.

The research also reveals key mediating mechanisms explaining how leadership and behavior translate into marketing effectiveness. Organizational culture, employee commitment, and innovation orientation serve as critical conduits, mediating over 30% of leadership and behavioral effects. This underscores that leadership alone is insufficient without the reinforcement of shared values, psychological attachment, and an innovation-friendly climate. In the specific context of North Sumatra, characterized by resource constraints and cultural diversity, these synergies provide SMEs with adaptive capacity and resilience, resulting in a 34% improvement in marketing performance compared to firms with weaker alignment. These findings affirm that organizational success in dynamic markets depends less on resources and more on the internal quality of leadership-behavior alignment.

Theoretically, the study advances the integration of leadership and organizational behavior literature by treating them as interdependent systems rather than isolated constructs. It extends the dynamic capabilities theory by showing that marketing agility and innovation emerge from the interplay between visionary leadership and behavioral execution. Additionally, the research enriches SME marketing theory by identifying internal organizational antecedents of effectiveness, contributing to emerging market perspectives and broadening the understanding of how leadership and behavior interact in culturally diverse and resource-limited environments. Such integration moves beyond traditional Western-centric models, offering valuable insights into organizational dynamics in developing economies like Indonesia.

Despite its methodological rigor, the study acknowledges several limitations, including the use of cross-sectional design, self-reported data, and sectoral imbalances, which restrict causal inference and generalizability. Future research should adopt longitudinal and mixed-method approaches, integrate objective performance data, and explore emerging leadership paradigms such as servant or authentic leadership. Expanding comparative studies across regions, sectors, and organizational life cycles would provide deeper contextual validation. Moreover, future scholarship should investigate digital transformation, sustainability integration, and generational leadership differences as new frontiers shaping leadership-behavior synergies.

Addressing these dimensions would strengthen theoretical frameworks and enhance practical interventions to optimize SME marketing effectiveness in evolving business landscapes.

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