

The mediating effect of agility at relationship between market orientation and marketing performance

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Abstract

Market orientation is a way for companies to focus on customers so that customers continue to buy company products. Agility is an important ability of a company to increase a sustainable competitive advantage. This study was conducted based on the decline in batik sales in Pekalongan and the existence of a research gap on the relationship between market orientation and marketing performance. This paper aims to test empirically the mediating effect of agility on the relationship between market orientation and marketing performance. Data were collected from 190 SMEs in Pekalongan. The result shows that market orientation significantly affects agility and marketing performance, and agility significantly affects marketing performance. Furthermore, agility mediates the correlation between market orientation and marketing performance. The Marketing performance of Batik SMEs can be improved by developing market orientation and agility simultaneously. The role of market orientation in improving marketing performance will be more effective if it is done indirectly through agility.

Keywords: market orientation; agility; marketing performance.

Article history: Submission date: Oct 29, 2019 Revised date: Dec 31, 2019 Accepted date: Mar 30, 2020

INTRODUCTION

Market orientation is a term that is often used by experts in marketing in implementing marketing concepts (Zait, Timiras., & Nichifor, 2010). According to Zhang, Kara, Spillan, & Mintu-Wimsatt (2017), over four decades, market-oriented corporate strategies are seen by academics and practitioners as the main pillars to achieve superior corporate performance for manufacturing and service companies.

Pekalongan is well known as a batik center that has the ability to be developed in the batik industry. Pekalongan has many abilities to develop optimally for small and medium businesses. Batik UKM in Pekalongan has an important role to gain economic

growth in the city of Pekalongan. Batik sales data in Pekalongan from 2015 until 2018 had uncertain condition (Table 1).

Table 1
Sales data of Batik in Pekalongan city

Year	Sales Value
2015	17,384,060,750
2016	19,081,546,650
2017	17,683,268,640
2018	17,233,356,680

Sources: Data from the direct interview with Tjandrawati (SMEs Section Head of Industry, Trade, Cooperatives and SMEs Office, Pekalongan).

Based on Table 1, it appears that the sales value of batik sales in Pekalongan experience uncertain conditions. In 2016, the volume of batik reached IDR 19,081,546,650 and decreased in 2017 to IDR 17,683,268,640. According to direct interview with Tjandrawati (SMEs Section Head of Industry, Trade, Cooperatives, and SMEs Office, Pekalongan), the existence of the Pekalongan batik industry must still be maintained considering that batik is a characteristic of Indonesian products. Therefore, a strategy is needed for companies engaged in the batik industry to have a strong competitive advantage, because this is a business phenomenon that must immediately find the right solution so that to increase batik sales can be done by improving the marketing performance of Batik SMEs (with indicator variable sales growth).

Sales decline can be caused by uncertain market environment, so companies need to have adaptability to maintain competitive advantage and sales performance (Filiari, 2013; Mariam & Ramli, 2019). A company's ability to maintain its position in the uncertain environment is basically of developing a positioning of marketing (Takaya, Ramli, & Lukito, 2019; Chandra, Takaya, & Ramli, 2019). Identifying differentiators that are driven by meaningful products can be very beneficial for gaining and maintaining competitive advantage, by differentiating brands (Dirisu, Lyiola, & Ibidunni, 2014). According to a direct interview with Tjandrawati (SMEs Section Head of Industry, Trade, Cooperatives and SMEs Office, Pekalongan), batik SMEs in Pekalongan have not fully implemented the market orientation. Furthermore, some of them are not responsive to customers so that many customers end up buying elsewhere such as Solo, Pati or Jepara. Also, some of them have difficulty in allocating resources to meet special customer demand.

Therefore, this study uses market orientation variables combined with agility used to improve marketing performance, so that the company's efforts in advancing performance are expected to be achieved optimally. With this study, companies need to know whether efforts to apply market orientation and agility can significantly affect marketing performance. In order to be solved correctly and accurately, those problems need to be formulated specifically. From the literature review, we find some research gaps that can see in Table 2.

Table 2
Research Gap

Author	Market Orientation - Performance
Setyawati & Abrilia (2013)	Not significant relationship
Pertiwi & Siswoyo, (2016)	Significant relationship

Sources: Result of research development

Based on Table 2 and business phenomena described above, this research uses agility combined with market orientation to gain marketing performance of Batik SMEs.

For the research gap solution above, this study uses agility as a mediating variable in the relationship between market orientation and marketing performance. This is paper aims to investigate the effect of market orientation and agility on marketing performance, and the mediating effect of agility in the relationship between market orientation and marketing performance. It is important to conduct this research because the gap from the results of previous studies could be solved. Furthermore, the result of this study is expected to contribute to the development of Batik SMEs in facing the tight competition in the global market. The research novelty of this study is using agility variables as mediating variable between market orientation and marketing performance.

The marketing strategy is a means to an end which is the company's best opinion with the most profitable method to apply their resources in the market because it is in the environment that must be faced, so as to increase company agility (Cacciolatti & Lee, 2016). Marketing strategy is the strategic ability of organizations to create unique competitive advantages in a fast-growing competitive market, so it is necessary for find out the base of marketing strategies for company to gain success for a long time (Burns, 2014). Determining marketing targets is one basic strategic of marketing. To carry out sales targets, we have to conduct analysis of market segmentation (Terho, Eggert, Haas, & Ulaga, 2015). Market segmentation has great benefits and is relevant to marketing leadership, positioning, and market programs within the company.

According to Taylor, Yusof, Aziz (2010), there are three main streams that have evolved over time which emphasizes a variety of key factors in the strategy of adaptation literature, namely the main role of the environment, the resource-based view that result in the success of various companies by optimizing the internal factor in company, and the integrative view which has a profound effect on the organization's strategic adaptation. Adaptation strategy is the ability a company for adapt to changing environments, by means of a differentiation or low-cost strategy, to adjust new marketing strategies and using marketing integration strategies (Tantong, Karande, Nair, & Singhapakdi, 2010).

Nurcholis (2018) emphasized companies must have the ability to carry out a situation analysis and choose the direction for implementing new service strategy through a holistic process to adjust needs and wants of customer, market demand, analysis of rivals, and reconfigure new processes of services. Company must have adaptability and fast responsiveness to market changes by having new method in the uncertain environment to find new processes and gain competitive advantage. Marketing adaptation strategy is the company's strategy to analyze the situation and choose the

direction to implement marketing activities that in accordance with the needs of customer and demand of market (Jirawuttinaunt & Ussahawanitchakit, 2011).

Organizational theorists also explicitly consider the role of agility that enables companies to successfully adapt to the rapidly changing marketing environment. (Appelbaum, Calla, Desautels, & Hasan, 2017). There is no specific formula for developing company agility; a company can become more agile, but it is never agile in a concrete way. (Alzoubi, 2011). Agility is a process of continuous improvement. (Alzoubi, 2011). To be able to adapt and be proactive, organizational agility is considered a core competency, competitive advantage, and differentiator that requires innovative mindsets, strategic thinking, change exploitation and unending needs. Agility is a business necessity for survival. At the basic level, agility is divided into two parts: adaptability and flexibility (Zitkiene & Deksnys, 2018). Agility is a responsive measure, where the response made to external stimulus is a picture of overall organizational flexibility. Responses and decisions taken by organizations to adapt to changing environments is a measure of organizational adaptability. These effectively planned or unplanned responses are the main characteristics of agility that must be carried out by an organization. Agility can be further developed into attribute definitions such as sensing, anticipation, entrepreneurship, and proactive entrepreneurship. Conceptualization of the dimensions of agility as a pillar helps to strengthen the basis and breadth of agile action, which is designed to address certain situations in the face of environmental change.

Agility is the successful application of competitive bases such as speed, innovation, flexibility, and quality by integrating resources and best reconfigurable practices from a knowledge environment to provide customer-driven products and services in an uncertain market environment. Adapt the marketing program carried out by reviewing aspects of the marketing mix such as products, promotions, prices and distribution (Hejase, Bassam, Orfali, & Hejase, 2012). Two aspects related to standardization marketing strategies in the national market are standardization resource allocation patterns across all variables marketing mix that is inseparable from the strategy business marketing, and standardizing the contents of the strategy related to the marketing mix variable individuals, who have been the subject of various articles conceptual (Purwani & Nurcholis, 2015). Arnett & Wittmann (2014) conceptualize the development of marketing programs as the degree to which firms can create a variation of marketing development in terms of its core and expand marketing programs to accommodate differences in environmental forces, consumer behavior, usage patterns, and competitive situations.

Organizational agility has been developed in various concepts. The theme found in the literature is that organizational agility requires the ability of reason and response. Companies that have limited capabilities or are hampered in some way will tend to struggle. There may be a time delay between feeling and responding and the tension underlying the use of scarce resources. Sensing ability does not mean that an appropriate response or indeed any response will be followed, no matter how developed that ability is, so there is a step between reason ability and responding where decision making needs to translate reason ability into response (Tallon & Pinsonneault, 2011).

Market-oriented program development refers to the extent to which companies can vary marketing development in accommodating differences in the strength of the

market environment, consumer or customer behavior, patterns of consumer use, and an increasingly competitive situation (Jirawuttinaunt & Ussahawanitchakit, 2011). This difference can be accommodated with the capability to identify, capture, and exploit opportunities more quickly. This capacity is equivalent to agility (Sull, 2010). Another research stated that market orientation directly and positively impacts agile manufacturing (Zelbst, Green, Abshire, & Sower, 2010).

Some research show that market orientation has a positive significant relationship with marketing performance (Raju, Lonial, & Crum 2011). Prifti & Alimehmeti (2017) examined the effect of market orientation and innovation on business performance. A sample of 99 companies operating in Albania was selected using a questionnaire and structural equation model for data analysis. Results showed market orientation significantly positive affect business performance. Similarly, Jeen-Su (2017) scrutinized the effect of market orientation, innovation commercialization, capability relationships, and moderating role of a supply chain in influencing firm performance using the survey of 180 top managers in Dun and Bradstreet Midwest state of the USA. Data were analyzed by using multiple regressions method and the findings revealed the role of moderating supply chain in impacting on orientation of market and business performance relationships. Grisseemann, Plank, & Brunner-Sperdin (2013) conducted a study on the role of innovation and customer orientation on enhancing the firm performance using a data of 203 hotel managers. Findings showed the influence of customer orientation on firm performance.

Agility can increase competitive advantage by expanding the company's list of competitive actions and the nature of appropriate responses related to changing environments. Agility gives companies the choice to face changing environments and to engage in new actions to control the risks and uncertainties of the market environment (Tallon, Queiroz, Coltman, & Sharma, 2018). Companies that choose this option can receive some future benefits in the form of revenue or profitability, cost avoidance, or higher market growth. Thus, when companies adapt to changes in product demand, increase the pace of innovation, or expand into new markets, they can have higher profits, reduce costs, and gain market share in the future (Chakravarty, Grewal, & Sambamurthy, 2013).

Previous research conducted by Kotter (2014) stated that the key to sustained competitive advantage was the ability to reconfigure network resources and complex relationships quickly and flexibly. Previous research conducted by Ivory & Brooks (2018) also stated that the specific organizational practices and processes related to implementing strategic agility can enhance company excellence. Agility will be able to improve market performance when decision-makers have market skills, experience, and learning orientation (Nemkova, 2017), and agility of a company has a significantly effect on company performance (Ravichandran, 2018). A summary of the previous agility research showed in Table 3.

Table 3
Research of agility-performance relationships

Study	Agility - performance
Tallon & Pinsonneault, (2011)	Agility significantly affects firm performance

METHOD

This research was conducted at Batik SMEs in Pekalongan. The type of research in this study is causal-comparative, namely research that shows the direction of the relationship between independent variables and dependent variables and questions the cause and effect problems (Skiera, Bayer, & Schöler, 2017). In this study the independent variables used are agility and marketing performance. The dependent variable in this study is market orientation. This study using purposive sampling method. Face-to-face interviews and questionnaires for data collection was conducted (June–September 2019). Respondents selected were 270 managers or Batik SME owners in Pekalongan. Questionnaires collected and filled are as much as 190 of the total respondents, because only 190 SME that have 10 years of business time (requirements of purposive sampling method). During the data processing, there are still 19 data that are extreme and inappropriate to use. The total sample of this study was 189 respondents or 47% of the total respondents.

The indicators of market orientation used in this study are: collection, distribution, and response from market information knowledge (Surbakti, Azwir, & Taslim, 2018). The indicators Agility used in this study are: developing closer links with suppliers (Nurcholis, 2010), responsiveness to demand, innovation, service, and pricing; response times to new product launched, market expansion, and product mix by competitor; monitoring product and service quality and monitoring delivery times (Tallon & Pinsonneault, 2011). The indicators of marketing performance used in this study are: sales growth, customer growth, and sales volume (Nejatian, Zarei, Nejati, & Zanjirchi, 2018).

Testing the validity of the questionnaire was done by initial review of the primary questionnaire content by asking the opinions of experts from SMEs about the order and choices of their responses with the content of questionnaire. After learning the opinions of the experts, the questionnaire was distributed to several SMEs and they were expected to bring out their ideas about content of the questionnaire. All constructs of a 10-point Likert scale were ranked from 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) (Harpe, 2015). Examine the construct validity and results verified using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). This research uses Standardized Regression Weights from AMOS text output to examine the questionnaire reliability (Table 4). All indicators have reliability because they have loading factor > .60 (Barnidge & De Zúñiga, 2017).

Table 4
Standardized Regression Weights

Indicator	Loading factor
Collection from market information knowledge	.783
Distribution from market information knowledge	.700
Response from market information knowledge	.648
Responsiveness to change in demand, innovation, service, and pricing	.707
Response times to new product launched, market expansion and	.696

Indicator	Loading factor
changes in product mix by competitor	
Closer links with suppliers, monitoring product, service quality, and delivery times	.871
Sales growth	.820
Customer growth	.753
Sales volume	.702

Source: data processed

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

AMOS output show that Chi-square=39.365 with probability of .025; RMSEA=.058; GFI=.953; AGFI=.912; TLI=.961; CFI=.974; RFI=.905; NFI=.937; and IFI=.974. Based on this AMOS output value, the result of the model is good (Table 5). The results of this study show conformity with the required standard cut off values.

Table 5
Result of AMOS Output

Parameter	Result	Cut off
Chi Square (df=24)	39.365	< 39.365
Probability value	.025	≥ .050
RMSEA	.058	≤ .080
Goodness of fit index	.953	≥ .900
AGF Index	.912	≥ .900
CMIN/DF	1.640	≤ 2.000
TL Index	.961	≥ .950
CF Index	.974	≥ .950
NF Index	.937	≥ .900
RF Index	.905	≥ .900
IF Index	.934	≥ .900

Source: data processed

Table 6 shows that empirical data support all hypotheses. The result shows that market orientation significantly affects agility (the probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 5.573 in absolute value is less than .001. In other words, the regression weight for market orientation in the prediction of agility is significantly different from zero at the .001 level (two-tailed). The result also shows that market orientation significantly affects marketing performance (the probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 4.094 in absolute value is less than .001. In other words, the regression weight for agility in the prediction of marketing performance is significantly different from zero at the .001 level (two-tailed). The result also shows that agility significantly affects marketing performance (the probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 2.026 in absolute value is .043. In other words, the regression weight for market orientation in the prediction of marketing performance is significantly different from zero at the .05 level (two-tailed).

Table 6
Result of Hypotheses Test

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	t-value
Agility	<---	Market orientation	.512	.092	5.573	Less than .001
Marketing Performance	<---	Agility	.498	.122	4.094	Less than .001
Marketing performance	<---	Market orientation	.240	.118	2.026	.043

Source: data processed

Construct reliability and Average Variance Extracted

Reliability test shows the extent to which a measuring instrument can provide relatively the same results if it is measured again on the same object. The minimum reliability value and the dimension indicator forming latent variables that can be accepted is equal to .70. The results of the calculations in Table 7 indicate internal consistency because the value of construct reliability is greater than the value of the acceptance limit of reliability of .70. The reliability calculation results show that all constructs meet the minimum cut-off value requirement of 0.70. The results of the calculation of variance extracted in Table 7 shows that all constructs meet the minimum cut-off value of .50 (Barnidge & De Zúñiga, 2017).

Table 7
Construct Reliability and AVE

Indicator	Std	std2	1-std2	CR	AVE
Collection from market information knowledge	.783	.613	.387		
Distribution from market information knowledge	.700	.490	.510		
Response from market information knowledge	.648	.420	.580		
	2.131	1.523	1.477	.800	.500
	4.541				
Responsiveness to changes in demand, innovation, service, and pricing	.707	.500	.500		
Response times to new product launched, market expansion, and changes in product mix by competitor	.696	.484	.516		
Closer links with suppliers, monitoring product, service quality, and delivery times	.871	.759	.241		

	2.274	1.743	1.257	.800	.600
	5.171				
Sales growth	.820	.672	.328		
Customer growth	.753	.567	.433		
Sales volume	.702	.493	.507		
	2.275	1.732	1.268	0.800	.600
	5.176				

Source: data processed

Direct and Indirect Effect

Table 10 and Table 11 show that the value of indirect effect between MO and PF is larger than the value of the direct effect between MO and PF (.226 > .213). This means that agility mediates the correlation between market orientation and marketing performance.

Table 8
Direct Effect

	MO	OA	PF
PF	.213	.430	.000

Source: data processed

Table 9
Indirect Effect

	MO	OA	PF
PF	.226	.000	.000

Source: data processed

Discussion

Market orientation significantly affects marketing performance. This means that the increase in market orientation will also increase marketing performance. Sales growth, customer growth, and sales volume of Batik SMEs can be improved by collection, distribution, and response from market information knowledge. The result of this study supports the previous research which states that market orientation has a positive relationship with marketing performance (Widana, Wiryono, Purwanegara, & Toha, 2015; Jeen-Su, 2017; Grissemann et al., 2013; Prifti & Alimehmeti, 2017).

Market orientation significantly affects agility. This means that the increase in market orientation will also increase agility. Batik SMEs can have fast response to changes in demand, innovation, service, and pricing; response times to new product launched, market expansion, and changes in product mix by competitor; closer links with suppliers, monitoring product, service quality, and delivery times if collecting, distributing, and make a response from market information knowledge. The result of this study supports the previous research which stated market orientation directly and positively impacts agile manufacturing (Zelbst et al., 2010).

Agility significantly affects marketing performance. This means that the better of agility level can increase marketing performance. Sales growth, customer growth, and sales volume of Batik SMEs can increased by fast response to changes in demand,

innovation, service, and pricing; response times to new product launched, market expansion, and changes in product mix by competitor; closer links with suppliers, monitoring product, service quality, and delivery times if collecting, distributing and make a response from market information knowledge. The result of this study supports the previous research conducted by Kotter (2014) which stated that the key to sustained competitive advantage is the ability to manage and reassemble, rapidly and decisively, complex networks of resources, and relationships. The result of this study also supports the previous research conducted by Ivory & Brooks (2018) which stated that the specific organizational practices and processes associated with the application of strategic agility, and they can manage corporate sustainability with a paradoxical lens. This finding also supports the assertion that agility will be able to improve market performance when decision-makers have market skills, experience, learning orientation (Nemkova, 2017), and organizational agility has a strong influence on company performance (Ravichandran, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The result shows the importance of agility to improve the marketing performance of SMEs Batik in Pekalongan. Market orientation has the confidence and value that puts customers on every business decision. It encourages the SMEs Batik to improve marketing performance based on the customers' expectations. Market orientation is essential to enhance agility to gain marketing performance.

In managerial implication, the marketing performance of the Batik SMEs can be improved by marketing orientation. Market orientation in marketing policy can be done by collection, distribution, and response from market information knowledge. Agility is needed by Batik SMEs to improve marketing performance according to market orientation. Improving market orientation can gain agility. Improving agility can gain marketing performance.

The theoretical implication of this research is that the marketing performance of Batik SMEs can be improved by developing market orientation and agility simultaneously. The role of market orientation in improving marketing performance will be more effective if it is done indirectly through agility.

The finding of this study is expected to contribute to the development of science, especially management science. The limitation of this research is that the research focuses only on the Batik SMEs with a relatively small sample size. Leaders or managers of Batik SMEs have different abilities in developing their business. They also have different views and behaviors towards the willingness to learn and understand market changes. This is an interesting area for other research with different respondents. For future research it is recommended to add other variables to the model with aims to improve company performance.

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