



The Role of Marketing Mix, Services Quality and Environmental Orientation on Competitive Advantage: Moderating Role of Business Environment

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Article History:</i> Received: May 05, 2024 Revised: June 27, 2024 Accepted: June 29, 2024 Available Online: June 30, 2024</p> <p>Keywords: Marketing Mix Services Quality Environmental Orientation Competitive Advantage Business Environment</p> <p>Funding: This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.</p>	<p>Competitive advantage (CA) achievement has been the foremost element for the organizational success and this aspect requires the new researchers' emphasis. So, the present article examines the impact of marketing mix, services quality and environmental orientation (EO) on the CA of manufacturing industry in Ethiopia. The study also investigates the moderating role of business environment among marketing mix, services quality, EO and CA. The study gather the primary data from the marketing department employees of manufacturing industry in Ethiopia. The study also employed the smart-PLS to check the data reliability and nexus among variables. The outcomes indicated that the marketing mix, services quality and EO have a positive nexus with CA. The results also exposed that business environment significant moderates among marketing mix, services quality, EO and CA. The article guides the policymakers in developing regulations related to improve the CA using effective marketing mix, services quality and EO.</p>
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1. Introduction

Globalization has impacted every aspect of the world. Irrespective of the concern whether its societal or business factors the consequences of rapid changes in result of globalization can be witnessed. From the business point of view, the globalization has increased its efforts in the form of increase of competition. Since, the business has become borderless similarly the competition has also become borderless. As the volume of business across the world is increasing, the level of competition is accelerating. Such acceleration results in forcing the firms to explore more ways to get success in the competition in order to get their entity alive. There are a lot of factors unearthed which are considered key to the firm's success but the most important one is a CA. Firms with a competitive edge can generate more value for their shareholders and themselves due to certain advantages over their rivals (W.-C. Wang, Lin, & Chu, 2011). The firms avail numerous benefits from CA like a) cost structure, b) betterment in product quality, c) branding concept, d) providing high standard service quality to attract the customers, d) providing best customer service, e) better management of distribution work, and f) intellectual property (O'Shannassy, 2008). Literature also proposed that there are six types of CA 1) differential, 2) cost-effective, 3) market-focused, 4) brand, 5) network, and 6) resources (Thibeault, Ryder, Tomomewo, & Mann, 2023; Zekiri & Nedelea, 2012).

Ethiopia is one of those economies that are important for the world due to its geographical positioning. With the passage of time, the country is continuously its efforts to get its economy better. The manufacturing industry of the world is accepted across the globe due to its quality. Businesses across the globe prefer Ethiopia for the sake of manufacturing business particularly due to low cost and high quality (Butt, Lodhi, & Shahzad, 2020). The CA is the factor that enabled the country to become a manufacturing hub. Before becoming one of the world's leading manufacturing hubs, it produced everything from networking gear to toys, and these businesses effectively used their lower costs to take on established businesses in developed economies. The firms usually leverage their low-wage advantage with complex end-to-end strategies by

increasing their competencies in critical value chain areas that support CA, such as R&D, marketing mix, environmental factors, service quality (Lu, Li, Luo, Anwar, & Zhang, 2021), marketing, and strategy (Thibeault et al., 2023). Literature also proposed that marketing is one of the key tools for CA as marketing is one of the elements used to attract the customer's mind for making or changing their purchase intentions (Rasheed & Ahmad, 2022). Despite that CA is one of the core factors for business success and researched a lot but still, several factors need to be explored more. Accordingly, the current study aimed to explore factors like marketing mix, EO, and service quality from the context of CA, particularly in Ethiopia.

In our study, we have addressed the existing literature gap likewise investigating the model having factors i.e., CA, marketing mix, service quality, and EO along with the moderating effect of business environment. Further, 1) Al Badi (2018) and Chumaidiyah investigated the association of marketing mix with CA. The present investigation would also check some other variables i.e., added factors like service quality and EO. Furthermore, also tested the moderating effect of the business environment, 2) Zameer, Wang, Yasmeen, and Mubarak (2022) and Fatoki (2021) investigated the association of EO with CA. The present investigation would also check some other variables i.e., service quality and marketing mix. Furthermore, also tested the moderating effect of the business environment, 3) Dominic, Goh, Wong, and Chen (2010) and Kusumadewi and Karyono (2019) investigated the association of service quality with CA. The present investigation would also check some other variables i.e., EO and marketing mix. Furthermore, also tested the moderating effect of the business environment, 4) Mikalef, Boura, Lekakos, and Krogstie (2019), Ibidunni, Ogundana, and Okonkwo (2022) and Johnson and Sirikit (2002) tested the moderating effect of the business environment in multiple relationships at different times, hence, the present article also used CA as moderator among the nexus of, marketing mix, service quality, and EO.

2. Literature Review

Firms all around the globe use a major part of their profit to market their products. Thus, marketing is considered the backbone of the product's success or failure. On the other side, it is also considered as key for the CA. The concept of marketing mix is one of the prime elements of marketing strategy. Literature also proposed that there is a nexus between marketing mix and CA (Darmawan & Grenier, 2021). In this context, Al Badi (2018) investigated whether marketing mix ownership affects the CA. The investigation focused on the SMEs in Oman. The data of 75 instances was taken as sample for further analysis. A simple random sampling technique was adopted in the study to collect the sample. The results indicate that in the case of Al Buraimi's SMEs, obtaining a CA is significantly impacted by factors of marketing mix. Similarly, Chumaidiyah investigated whether the marketing mix strategy has any effect on the CA. The results of the investigation proposed that the marketing mix plan is a crucial element that impacts CA. Every component of the marketing mix worked in concert to influence CA at the same time and in a big way. All components of the marketing mix contribute positively to the CA, except for some locations. Additionally, Khorsheed, Abdulla, Othman, Mohammed, and Sadq (2020) investigated the role of marketing mix in the achievement of CA in Iraq. The data of 60 instances was taken as sample for further analysis. A simple random sampling technique was adopted in the study to collect the sample. The study findings concluded that the services marketing mix's seven components significantly influence gaining CAs and had a strong positive link with them.

H1: Marketing mix is significantly associated with competitive advantage.

The firms are recognized by their environment. The environment has perform significant role in the success or failure of any firm. Environment is also the key element for the CA. In this context, Zameer et al. (2022) explored the nexus between EO and CA. The study also tested the moderating effect of green innovation in between EO and green CA. A simple random sampling technique was adopted in the study to collect the sample. The results proposed that EO as well as business analytics are essential for both green innovation and green CA. Further, business analytics plays a more significant influence than EO. While EO is an important component of green innovation, it does not directly contribute to a green CA. Further, Fatoki (2021) explored the nexus between green EO and CA along with the mediating effect of green innovation. The data of 250 instances was taken as sample for further analysis. The study employed the simple random sampling technique. The results proposed a strong positive correlation between EO and green CA. Further, green innovation has a large indirect impact. Moreover, Zameer, Wang, Vasbieva, and Abbas (2021) explored the nexus between green process innovation, EO, and

green CA to reinforce environmental performance in China. The data of 388 instances was taken as sample for further analysis. The study employed the simple random sampling technique. The results proposed a significant association between green process innovation, EO, and green CA. Further, EO is one of the key factors towards the achievement of CA.

H2: Environmental orientation is significantly associated with a competitive advantage.

The term quality is the ultimate focus of every business across the globe. In this era, the competition requires both high-quality products with high-quality services. Many times firms with high-value products fail just because of poor quality services. The quality of service is one of the factors that results in CA (Kusumadewi & Karyono, 2019). In this context, Dominic et al. (2010) investigated the level of importance of service quality in achieving CA. The data of 110 instances was taken as sample for further analysis. The study employed the simple random sampling technique. The study findings concluded that the level of importance of service quality in achieving CA is very high. Further, the service quality is one of the prime factors in the customer's mind while making its purchase intentions. The study also recommended that firms should pay special attention to service quality. Similarly, Kusumadewi and Karyono (2019) investigated the combined effect of service quality and service innovation on CA. The data of 1100 instances was taken as sample for further analysis. The study employed purposive and cluster sampling techniques. The findings concluded a significant association between service quality, and service innovation on CA. Further, service quality is more important for CA as compared to service innovation. The study also recommended that the role of service innovation needs to more investigated from CA. Additionally, Johnson and Sirikit (2002) investigated the effect of service quality CA in Thailand. The study employed the simple random sampling technique. The findings concluded a significant association between service quality and CA in Thailand. Further, there was no discernible difference between expectations and perceptions of the degree of service quality. Further, the telecom sector scored highly on tangibles specifically, the attire of customer support representatives while scoring poorly on empathy specifically, the disparities in interest between service providers. For Thai telecom customers, tangibles represent one aspect of service quality that is incredibly significant.

H3: Service quality is significantly associated with competitive advantage.

For the success of the business, marketing is considered as key. Firms having a low focus on marketing strategy usually fail to have success. But on the other side many times firms despite investing maximum in marketing strategy failed to secure CA (M. Singh, 2012). In such a case factors like business environment, culture, and leadership express their intervention and result in the achievement of CA. Hence, the business environment acts as a moderator. In this regard, D. S. Wang (2019) explored the moderating effect of the environment in the nexus between technological innovation and firm performance in Taiwan. The study employed the SPSS model for the sake of analysis. The findings concluded a significant nexus between technological innovation and firm performance. Further, the business environment acts as a significant moderator in this relationship. Further, the study also recommended that technology is a real fact of this era. The firms should adopt it for the betterment of their performance. Data analysis is one of the important elements for the firm's performance. In this context, Mikalef et al. (2019) explored the moderating effect of the environment in the nexus between big data analysis capabilities and innovation in Taiwan. The data of 175 instances was taken as sample for further analysis. The findings concluded a significant nexus between big data analysis capabilities and innovation. Further, the business environment acts as a significant moderator in this relationship.

H4: The business environment significantly moderates the nexus between marketing mix and competitive advantage.

EO is one of the elements that interact with the customer as well as the focused market. Every aspect of the firm is considered of the firms participating in the competition. Many times the firms ensure equal focus on all the factors like culture, strategy, management, marketing, and environment but still fail to secure CA. In such cases factors like business environments, and leadership quality act moderators (Chin, Lee, & Lee, 2022) to support the firm in securing a CA. In the moderation context, Ibidunni, Ogundana, and Okonkwo (2022) explored the moderating effect of the environment in the nexus between entrepreneurial competencies and SME

performance in Nigeria. The data of 296 instances was taken as sample for further analysis. The findings concluded a significant nexus among entrepreneurial competencies and SME performance. Further, the business environment acts as a significant moderator in this relationship. Environmental dynamism is one of the core elements for the betterment of the performance of any firm. Its concept is accelerating with the passage of time. Accordingly, the moderating effect of the environmental dynamism in the nexus between big data analytics and supply chain ambidexterity was explored by Wamba, Dubey, Gunasekaran, and Akter (2020) in China. The data of 281 instances was taken as sample for further analysis. The study employed the SPSS analysis approach to analyze the collected data. The findings concluded a significant nexus between big data analytics and supply chain ambidexterity. Further, environmental dynamism acts as a significant moderator in this relationship. Hence the study established the hypothesis as under:

H5: Business environment significantly moderates the nexus between environmental orientation and competitive advantage.

Quality is the prime focus of every firm. But many times the firm despite providing the best quality services not achieve a CA. In such a scenario it is reported that factors like business environment play a vital role in getting better the relationship with CA (Sołoducho-Pelc & Sulich, 2020). In this context, Yuan and Zhang (2020) explored the moderating effect of environmental regulatory enforcement in the nexus between flexible environmental policy and sustainable development in China. The data of 09 years was taken as sample for further analysis. The study employed the GMM analysis approach to analyze the collected data. The findings concluded a significant nexus between flexible environmental policy and sustainable development. Further, environmental regulatory enforcement acts as a significant moderator in this relationship. Further, S. Wang, Li, and Zhao (2018) explored the moderating effect of environmental commitment and resource availability in the nexus between institutional pressure and management practices in China. The data of 188 instances was taken as sample for further analysis. The study employed the Smart-PLS multivariate analysis approach to analyze the collected data. The study findings concluded a significant nexus between institutional pressure and management practices. Further, environmental commitment and resource availability act as a significant moderator in this relationship.

H6: The business environment significantly moderates the nexus between service quality and competitive advantage.

3. Research Methodology

The article examines the impact of marketing mix, services quality and EO on the CA and also investigates the moderating role of business environment among marketing mix, services quality, EO and CA of manufacturing industry in Ethiopia. The study gather the primary data from the marketing department employees of manufacturing industry in Ethiopia. The questions were used to measure the constructs. The marketing mix is used as the predictor in the study and measured with ten questions taken from Maulana and Najib (2021). These questions are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Marketing Mix Items

Items	Statements	Sources
MM1	Quality impression (Product)	(Maulana & Najib, 2021)
MM2	Compliance with specifications (Product)	
MM3	Safe for consumption (Product)	
MM4	Durability (Product)	
MM5	Competitive price (Price)	
MM6	Price according to quality (Price)	
MM7	Price keeps the product desirable (Price)	
MM8	Advertising exposure (Promotion)	
MM9	Persuasive of advertising (Promotion)	
MM10	Giving discounts (Promotion)	

In addition, the EO is also used as the predictor in the study and measured with eight questions adopted from Sadiq, Bharti, Adil, and Singh (2021). These questions are given in Table 2.

Table 2: Environmental Orientation Items

Items	Statements	Sources
EO1	We are approaching the limit of the number of people the earth can support.	(Sadiq et al., 2021)
EO2	The interference of humans with nature results in horrible consequences.	
EO3	The environment is being severely abused by the humans.	
EO4	The rights of plants and animals are also as much as humans have.	
EO5	Humans are considered as the subject to the laws of nature.	
EO6	The earth is considered as the spaceship with limited resources.	
EO7	Nature's fragile balance is easily disturbed.	
EO8	If we not take care of the environment then a massive ecological disaster will soon befall.	

In addition, the services quality is also used as the independent variable in the study and measured with thirteen questions extracted from Tešić (2020). These questions are given in Table 3 given below:

Table 3: Services Quality Items

Items	Statements	Sources
SQ1	The promise of service is fulfilled.	(Tešić, 2020)
SQ2	The problems of the customer are being addressed.	
SQ3	The service is good "from the first".	
SQ4	The delivered service was on time.	
SQ5	The delivered service was without any error.	
SQ6	The delivery time was notified to customers.	
SQ7	The execution of the service was quick.	
SQ8	Employees remain ready for customer help.	
SQ9	Employees remain ready for requests response.	
SQ10	Employees instill confidence in customers.	
SQ11	While payment the customers feel safe.	
SQ12	The employees are kind.	
SQ13	Employees have the knowledge to respond to customers.	

Moreover, the business environment is used as the moderating variable in the study and measured with six questions extracted from Ibidunni, Ogundana, and Okonkwo (2022). These questions are given in Table 4 given below:

Table 4: Business Environment Items

Items	Statements	Sources
BE1	Our local market competition is penetrating.	(Ibidunni, Ogundana, & Okonkwo, 2022)
BE2	The organizational unit has strong competitors.	
BE3	Intensive changes have been made in our local market.	
BE4	Customers regularly demand new products.	
BE5	Volumes of products to be delivered faster.	
BE6	The level of our local market competition is extremely high.	

Finally, the CA is used as the dependent variable in the study and measured with six questions extracted from S. K. Singh, Chen, Del Giudice, and El-Kassar (2019). These questions are given in Table 5 given below:

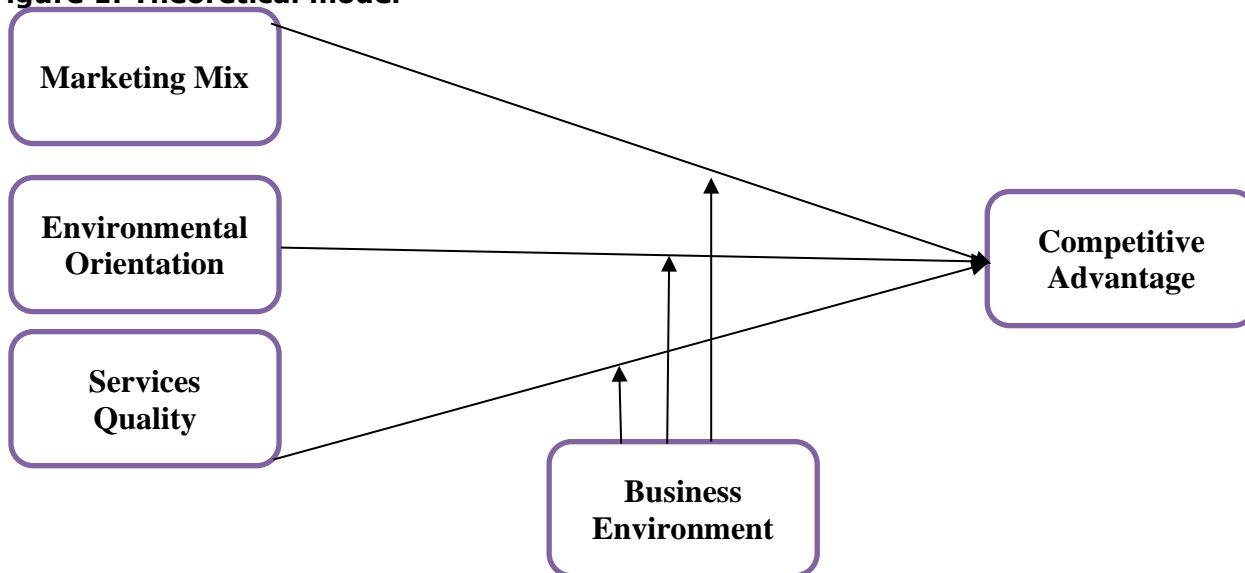
Table 5: Competitive Advantage Items

Items	Statements	Sources
CA1	My organization's products are better than its competitors.	(S. K. Singh et al., 2019)
CA2	The capabilities of R&D capabilities are better than its competitors.	
CA3	The capabilities of managerial level are better than its competitors.	
CA4	Profitability is better than its competitors.	
CA5	As compared with its competitors the image is better.	
CA6	As compared with its competitors its CA is better.	

In addition, the study used the marketing department employees of manufacturing industry in Ethiopia as respondents. The surveys were distributed by personal visits to the manufacturing companies. The researchers distributed 511 surveys but only 290 valid responses

were received. These valid responses have 56.75 percent response rate. In addition, the study also employed the smart-PLS to check the data reliability and nexus among variables. The smart-PLS provides the best outcome using primary data and effectively deals with large data sets (Hair Jr, Howard, & Nitzl, 2020). The three independent variables were used in the study named marketing mix (MM), environmental orientation (EO) and services quality (SQ), while one moderating variable used in the study named business environment (BE) and one dependent variable named competitive advantage (CA). Figure 1 shows these variables in framework.

Figure 1: Theoretical model



4. Research Findings

The outcomes show the convergent validity that exposed the correlation between items. These correlation has been investigated using composite reliability (CR) and Alpha and results exposed values not less than 0.70. In addition, these correlation has also been investigated using average variance extracted (AVE) and factor loadings and results exposed values not less than 0.50. These values exposed a high correlation between items. Table 6 shows these results.

Table 6: Convergent validity

Constructs	Items	Loadings	Alpha	CR	AVE
Business Environment	BE1	0.830	0.919	0.937	0.712
	BE2	0.864			
	BE3	0.814			
	BE4	0.874			
	BE5	0.868			
	BE6	0.808			
Competitive Advantage	CA1	0.541	0.873	0.907	0.623
	CA2	0.843			
	CA3	0.852			
	CA4	0.852			
	CA5	0.750			
	CA6	0.849			
Environmental Orientation	EO1	0.928	0.978	0.981	0.865
	EO2	0.943			
	EO3	0.924			
	EO4	0.921			
	EO5	0.930			
	EO6	0.931			
	EO7	0.940			
	EO8	0.925			
Marketing Mix	MM1	0.731	0.924	0.935	0.592
	MM10	0.821			
	MM2	0.754			
	MM3	0.808			
	MM4	0.725			
	MM5	0.728			
	MM6	0.700			

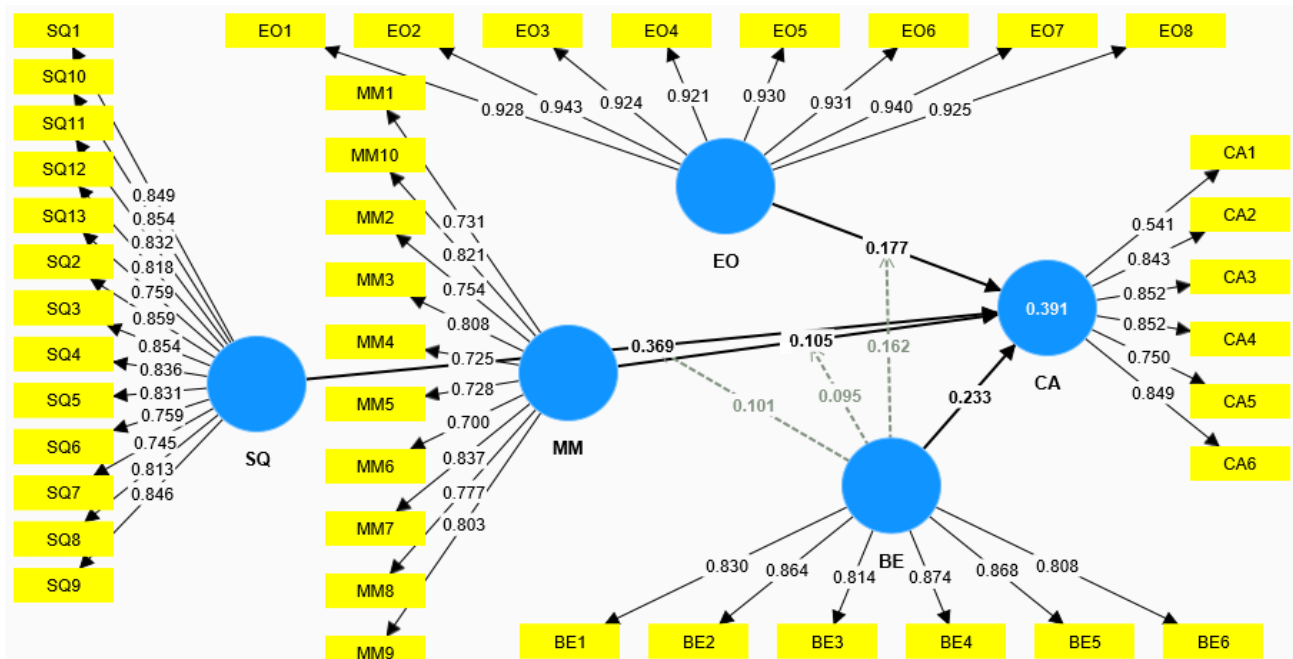
	MM7	0.837			
	MM8	0.777			
	MM9	0.803			
Services Quality	SQ1	0.849	0.959	0.964	0.673
	SQ10	0.854			
	SQ11	0.832			
	SQ12	0.818			
	SQ13	0.759			
	SQ2	0.859			
	SQ3	0.854			
	SQ4	0.836			
	SQ5	0.831			
	SQ6	0.759			
	SQ7	0.745			
	SQ8	0.813			
	SQ9	0.846			

The outcomes show the discriminant validity that exposed the correlation between variables. These correlation has been investigated using Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) ratio and the figures exposed that the values are not larger than 0.85. These values exposed a low correlation between variables. Table 7 shows these results.

Table 7: Discriminant validity

	BE	CA	EO	MM	SQ
BE					
CA	0.459				
EO	0.460	0.472			
MM	0.098	0.162	0.130		
SQ	0.479	0.551	0.512	0.073	

Figure 2: Measurement model assessment

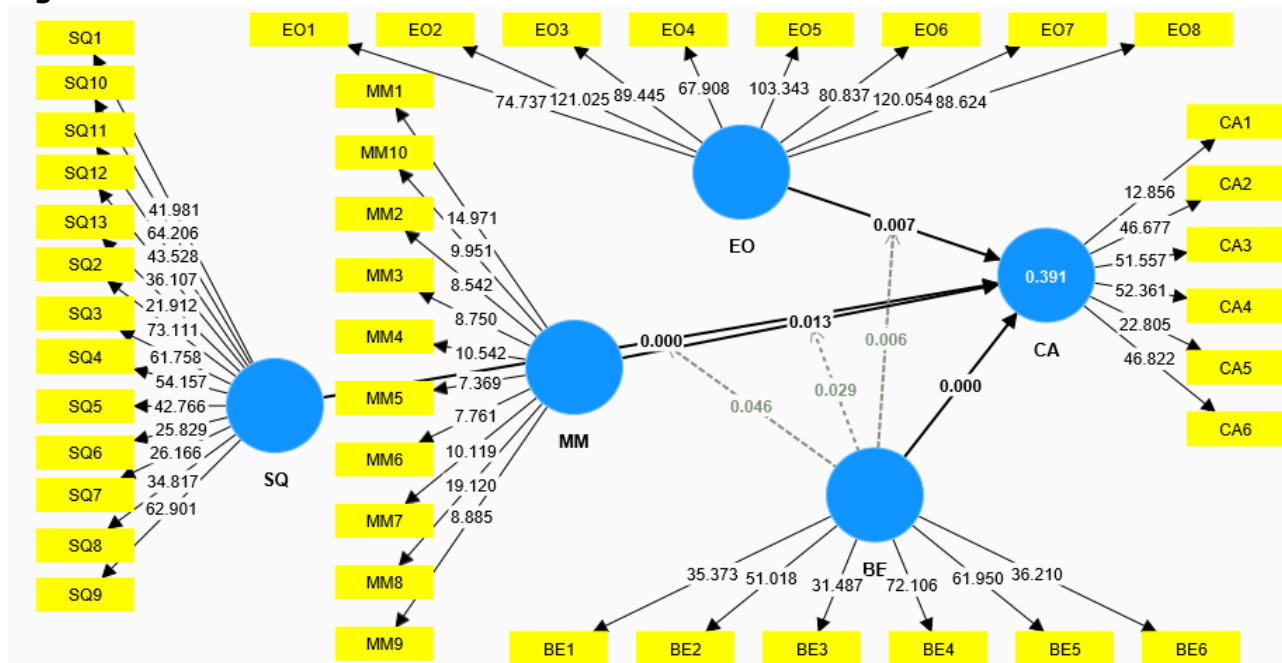


The outcomes indicated that the marketing mix, services quality and EO have a positive nexus with CA of manufacturing industry in Ethiopia and accept H1, H2 and H3. Finally, the results also exposed that business environment significant moderates among marketing mix, services quality, EO and CA of manufacturing industry in Ethiopia and accept H4, H5 and H6. Table 8 shows these relationships.

Table 8: Path analysis

Relationships	Beta	Standard deviation	T statistics	P values
BE -> CA	0.233	0.059	3.944	0.000
EO -> CA	0.177	0.064	2.749	0.007
MM -> CA	0.105	0.041	2.532	0.013
SQ -> CA	0.369	0.063	5.815	0.000
BE x MM -> CA	0.095	0.043	2.214	0.029
BE x EO -> CA	0.162	0.058	2.804	0.006
BE x SQ -> CA	0.101	0.050	2.021	0.046

Figure 3: Structural model assessment



5. Discussions

The research offers insight into the complex interactive relationship in the extent of the marketing mix, service quality, and EO for enhancing the competitiveness in the context of Ethiopia. The study aims at establishing how these factors contribute to the improvement of companies’ competitiveness within the vantage Ethiopai context. Therefore, with the assessment of the aforementioned elements, the study offers a clear perception of the essential factors that play a major role in determining the success of a business in a developing country environment.

The findings of Chou, Horng, Liu, and Lin (2020) reveals that Marketing communication tools, product, price, place and promotion that form the marketing mix are the major determinants of consumers’ attitudes and the key factors that define competitiveness of the market. Therefore, it is stated that the effectiveness of the marketing mix in Ethiopia can be dependent on the following aspects as cultural differences and economic conditions. This study underlines the fact that marketing solutions should also be culture sensitive and take into consideration consumer purchasing capacity in the particular locality. For instance, in a price-sensitive market as Ethiopia, considerable attention is paid to the possibilities of setting reasonable prices for products in order to gain more clients acquiring the company’s products, and at the same time, to remain profitable. The same applies to promotional related activities as they should employ culturally related themes that will appeal to the target public. This localization of the marketing mix is important for any business that seeks to make firm strides into the cut-throat market of Ethiopia (Jamali, Lund-Thomsen, & Khara, 2017). Service quality emerges as another important factor in this study, implying that business needs to offer better customers’ experiences. Kashif and Abdul Rehman (2014) Points, in Ethiopia especially where consumers’ expectations are changing at a high rate, any firm is likely to find itself competing in a rather saturated market/segment by offering and maintaining high quality of service. The present study reveals the relationship between the services delivered and the customers’ retention and revisits. In a way, this hints at the fact that business organizations should focus on development programmes to boost the competency of staff towards better service provision (De Vos, De Hauw, & Van der Heijden, 2011). Furthermore, the study finds that implementing efficient technologies

to enhance operations and customized services can also strengthen the consumers' satisfaction level. Where people's influence still holds sway, especially among friends and family, great service delivery will go a long way in helping the business get positive remarks from customers as well as retain more of them.

EO, which basically means a company's passion for environmental friendly production processes, is slowly and gradually picking up in Ethiopia. This paper aims at establishing how companies that implement environmentally sustainable business practices can be competitive. As the Ethiopia's consumer awareness towards environmental problems rises, the companies that successfully convey their environmental responsibility and corporate social responsibility receive greater attention from green consumers (Salam, Smith, & Mehboob, 2022). Also noted in the research is the fact that the adoption of environmental practices in business production similarly results in cost benefits due to optimization of resource use. For example, Wainwright, Jordan, and Day (2014) finds that horticulture that involves use of energy efficient equipment, or waste management programs which contribute to the minimization of carbon emissions into the environment ultimately enhance business operations. These two objectives of cost savings and improved brand image can thus greatly strengthen a firm's CA. Another important component of this research is the moderating function of the business environment. The overall business environment at Ethiopia involves lots of regulation and political and economic instability (Kessides, 2013). Such factors enhance or moderate the relationship between marketing mix, service quality and EO on competitiveness. Based on the research it is evident that organizations in such an environment require a certain degree of flexibility. For example, Volberda (1997) points that changes in the business regulations may require quick adaptations of the strategies to be employed. Thus, firms that are able to manage such changes efficiently and in a timely manner are likely to be in a better position to maintain their competitive position. In addition, timely relationships with the regulatory agencies and constant tracking with policies assisting the businesses in managing the regulatory arena of the specific country more effectively (Abbott & Snidal, 2013). The study also emphasize on technological factor where it explain the use of advanced technology in the development of the business environment in Ethiopia. Digital technologies make business development possible and provide novel ways to upgrade marketing communication, services' quality, and increase the usage of sustainable practices (Nylén & Holmström, 2015).

5.1. Implications

The findings of this study are useful for the Ethiopia industry by offering guidance on how to improve the competitive position. This confirms its suitability to the market and the need to adopt market-specific marketing mix to suit the consumers' interpretations, focus on service delivery, and sustainable marketing approaches that embrace environmental conservation. The results indicate that a business with a prominent focus on the environment can appeal to consumers deeply involved with environmental issues and become more efficient. Also, the study reveals that competitions are increasing in the global environment and recommends that business organizations use the emerging technological systems to enhance marketing, organizational effectiveness, and lasting impacts. All these strategies help the business to address the process of brand development and establish and maintain a strong brand image for sustainable business operation. The article guides the policymakers in developing regulations related to improve the CA using effective marketing mix, services quality and EO.

5.2. Limitations

Thus, it could be noted that the study has several limitations. Slightly, the choice of Ethiopia might restrict the results' applicability to other countries with diverse economic, culture, or regulatory environment. The survey data gathered are self-reported which has a tendency to reduce the accuracy of the findings of the research. Moreover, the nature of the work indicates that the results are vulnerable to obsolescence as markets progress; this is especially true in the case of the Ethiopian context due to the dynamic and ever-changing business environment that exists in its economic landscape. The following are the research limitations which must be considered for future research: The study did not use a longitudinal approach and it aimed to compare findings in different regions of the globe and different industries, and the results of which can also increase the confidence of the study results.

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