



Strategic Interplay between Product Improvement and Digital Appearance: Analysis of Marketing Leadership in Enterprises

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Abstract

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) increasingly apply internet-based tools to expand their market appeal and encourage innovation in a contemporary, feasible commercial setting. For SMEs to expand sustainably, efficient product creation and an effective digital appearance must work collaboratively. This study examines the function of marketing oversight in increasing the impact of online techniques in creating new products. This study conducted a questionnaire, and based on the results, 150 participants were selected from the focused SME manufacturing firms. The regression method and the SPSS tool were used for data analysis. In SMEs, Marketing Leadership in Enterprises (MLE) improves Creativity in Products (CP) and Digital Appearance (DA), demanding complementing organizational characteristics. Organizational Learning (OL) and Market Focus (MF) also strengthen SME's ability to implement DA for CP. The strategic relationships between DA and CP outcomes for SMEs are emphasized by this research, along with the value of MLE skills and the responsibilities of OL and MF. To maximize the value of their products by adapting them according to their customers' demands, managers need to comprehend therefore the benefits of incorporating MLE ideas and methods into DA solutions.

KEYWORDS

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Digital Appearance (DA), Marketing Leadership (MLE), Organizational Characteristics

1 | INTRODUCTION

With the wide-ranging acceptance of digitalized technology and the growing quantity of people spending time online, businesses should adjust to that shift in customer activities through digital marketing developments (Jung and Shegai, 2023). These developments allow businesses to contact and interact with their targeted customers, collect essential data, and maintain a competitive advantage. Therefore, numerous companies invest in marketing development and implement it throughout their marketing approaches to stay competitive and relevant within the digital market (Melović et al., 2020). Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are businesses with lower than a certain amount of investment and revenue. It comprises both service and manufacturing businesses. It plays an important role in economic growth and employment generation.

In the framework of the relationship between the

enhancement of products and digitized presence in MLE, product improvement refers to a multifaceted approach to enhancing the functioning, quality, and attractiveness of the products (Li et al., 2022). It comprises identifying opportunities for advancements or enhancement based on consumer feedback, trends in the market, and technological improvements. Developing the characteristics to better satisfy the requirements of consumers, as well as improving efficiency for enhanced effectiveness, and refining the design elements to improve aesthetic appeal and usability are all specific instances of product development initiatives. Furthermore, the enhancement of goods extends beyond their substantial individuality and involves factors such as consumer understanding, long-term sustainability, and compatibility with promising digital-based platforms (Wedel et al., 2020).

The DA has established itself as a significant component of the business's whole brand awareness and market position in the modern business world (Kurdi et al., 2022). DA denotes how a company offers itself and its products or facilities across numerous digital networks, such as websites, social media platforms, mobile apps, and online advertisements. In the planned interaction between product development and DA within MLE, digital occurrence plays an essential role in shaping customer insights and driving engagement. Marketing leaders must sensibly align digital occurrences with product development initiatives to certify consistency and efficiency in handing over the value scheme of their donations to target audiences (Roggeveen et al., 2021). It entails using technological resources and digital tools to offer innovative products, characteristics, and advantages in a compelling and visually appealing way. Enterprises could improve the visibility of their brands, credibility, and competitiveness in a contemporary digital-driven marketplace by properly managing their digital presence, resulting in development and achievement (Aithal, 2023).

In companies, the MLE is responsible for managing and monitoring the tactical direction of marketing efforts inside an organization, especially the interaction of product enhancement and DA. This requires a multidimensional strategy that incorporates market research, customer insights, and technical improvements to improve the offerings of products as well as ensure an engaging online appearance (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Marketing executives are responsible for connecting these activities with broader corporate goals, driving innovations in product creation that meet evolving customer requirements, and leveraging digital-based platforms to successfully communicate the value proposition (Adama et al., 2024). It must find the way the multifaceted correlation between produce modernization and digital brand and ensure reliability and consistency across all touch-points to capitalize on consumer commitment and reliability (Baddam 2022). By growth partnership between invention increase team and digital marketing specialist, advertising influence can assist synergy between creation enlargement initiative and DA strategy, finally dynamic, aggressive improvement and unrelenting production enlargement

Organizational Learning (OL) comprises a company's potential to acquire, distribute, and apply acquaintance internally. Market focus (MF) pertains to aligning strategy with consumer requirements and aggressive dynamics for unrelenting achievement. The study aims to determine how marketing leadership affects product growth independence and the efficacy of DA, emphasizing enhancing organizational qualities. Also, to observe the purpose of marketing oversight in raising the impact of online techniques for creating new products.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Product Improvement and Digital Appearance among SMEs

According to Falahat et al. (2020), four important export abilities, including market knowledge, product innovation, price, and market communications, are factors influencing competitive benefits to export SMEs. The work of (Muñoz-Pascual et al., 2019) validated the relationships with pathways that contribute to long-term product innovation efficiency and considered three pillars regarding the triple-bottom-line approach. A combination of techniques was employed to discover the factors that influence long-term innovations in product efficiency. The three frameworks containing factors at two stages have been suggested by Muñoz-Pascual et al. (2021), including creativity development, which was an individual stage; long-term innovations in product efficiency, which was an organizational stage; and sustainability progress.

Chen and Liu (2020) demonstrated that consumer engagement might be a feasible method of appropriating pressure from consumers and encouraging green product creation in SMEs. To determine the mediating impact of innovations in green products, it is important to assess the relationship between the transformational green enterprising approach, green leadership, and SMEs' efficiency. Rasheed et al. (2021) examined the influence of transformational leadership on SMEs' creativity using employee voice practices. Therefore, hypothesis H₁ was proposed:

H₁: DA provides a positive impact on SME's CP

2.2 MLE and Product Improvement among SMEs

The resource-based view evaluated by (Afriyie et al., 2019) examined the impact of transformational leadership on marketing and innovation efficiency in SME service-based enterprises. Chatterjee et al. (2021) investigated the influence of social networking marketing on SME's long-term growth of business within a developing economy. Borah et al. (2022) examined the correlations between the usage of social media and innovative abilities to enhance the long-term efficiency of SMEs. Also, it conceptualizes the perceptions of how the top management team's sharing of leadership, the culture of the market, and company innovation ability relate to the company's efficiency (Singh et al., 2019). Here is the proposed hypothesis as H₂, H₃, and H₄:

H₂: MLE provides a positive impact on CP among SMEs

H₃: OL provides a positive impact on CP among SMEs

H₄: MF provides a positive impact on CP among SMEs

2.3 MLE in Enterprises between Product Improvement and DA among SMEs

Purwati et al. (2021) posited the importance of inventive abilities in enhancing Indonesian SME's performance. Triwardhani et al. (2023) analyzed the external and internal elements that influence digital marketing interactions for micro, small, and medium enterprises' products while characterizing social media usage in marketing the products of micro, small, and medium enterprises. Using a schematic approach, Suryani et al., (2021) verified the improvement of brand image in the digital age. It was discovered that brand awareness and electronic word-of-mouth (E-WOM) have a greater direct impact on brand image than other websites and social media. The report offers useful suggestions for improving brand image through the use of digital platforms to stakeholders, such as the government, entrepreneurship-focused universities, and SMEs. The influence of digitalization on technical advances in German SMEs was investigated by Radicic and Petković, (2023) with a particular focus on three areas: big data analytics, digital value chains, and manufacturing and logistics. The findings demonstrate that, depending on the form and nature of innovation, the effects of digitalization on innovation activities are varied and moderate. Additionally, the report contends that while internal research and development (R&D) initiatives benefit non-R&D SMEs, they mitigate the effects of digitalization. Hence, the proposed hypothesis as H_5 , H_6 , and H_7 :

H_5 : MLE provides a mediating impact on CP and DA among SMEs

H_6 : OL provides a mediating impact on CP and DA among SMEs

H_7 : MF provides a mediating impact on CP and DA among SMEs

The dependent variable was using the CP. It represents the result variable. This refers to improvements to the quality, features, and performance of the firm's products. Improvements in products could be quantified using measures like the rate of new products that are released, consumer satisfaction ratings, and product upgrading success rates. The independent variable was using the DA. This is the predictive variable that influences the dependent variable. DA refers to a company's online appearance and digital strategy, such as website quality, social media engagement, digital marketing efficacy, and e-commerce abilities. It could be measured using website traffic statistics, social media engagement measurements, as well as online sales data. The mediating variables were using the MLE, OL, and MF.

➤ **MLE:** This serves as an interaction between DA and product enhancement. MLE includes both strategic vision and successful implementation of marketing

activities. It entails establishing marketing objectives, leading marketing teams, and encouraging marketing innovation. This variable could be examined using effective leadership investigations, marketing team performance measures, and innovation indices.

➤ **OL** describes a company's capacity to acquire, communicate, and use information efficiently. It mitigates the influence of DA on product enhancements by incorporating data from online interactions into product innovation procedures. Development and training initiatives, knowledge administration structures, and assessments of learning culture are all examples of indicators.

➤ **MF:** It refers to a company's understanding and response to market demands and trends. It can manage the interaction to ensure the digital presence corresponds to market requirements and leads product development. This could be assessed by market research, feedback from consumer structures, and market responsiveness ratings.

The control variables used were firm size and sector.

➤ **Firm size:** Larger companies could have greater resources for investing in digital presence and product development, possibly skewing the outcomes. This might be managed by incorporating staff count, overall revenue, and market capitalization.

Sector: Different sectors could have varied criteria and implications on digital look and product development. For instance, technological businesses might have experienced a distinct connection from manufacturing enterprises. This could be managed by classifying businesses into technology, healthcare, and manufacturing sectors.

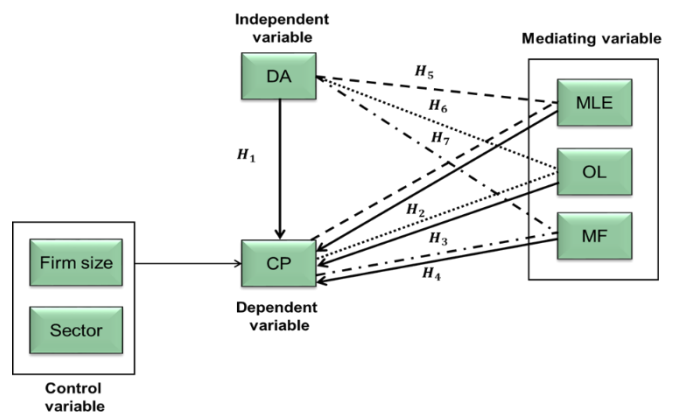


Fig. 1: Conceptual framework

3 MATERIAL AND METHOD

3.1 Collection of Data

Analyzing the MLE in enterprises interacts between product improvement and DA among SMEs. Overall, the data were selected from 200 SME manufacturing firms in Malaysia. This investigation conducted a survey. The

hypotheses were tested based on SMEs' survey data. The survey has been performed based on the questionnaires administered. According to the questionnaire result, scores greater than 90% out of 100% would be considered for this investigation. Finally, considering the outcomes of the conducted questionnaires, 150 participants were selected from the focused SME manufacturing firms.

3.2 Selection Criteria

Selection criteria play an essential role in the present investigation. They can be categorized into two categories: inclusion and exclusion criteria. The selection criteria classifications are described below.

➤ Inclusion Criteria

- 1) Analyze the effective integration of product development and digital presence into company marketing strategy.
- 2) Investigations or instances of MLE that drive innovation in products and digital transformation.
- 3) Examinations on the effects of unified marketing strategy on perceptions of the brand and engagement among consumers.

➤ Exclusion Criteria

- 1) Concentrate entirely on product innovation or online marketing without considering their strategic interactions.
- 2) Generalized marketing concepts or principles unrelated to product enhancement and digital presentation.
- 3) The studies are limited to smaller businesses or startups and do not apply to larger enterprises.

3.4 Statistical Analysis

In this research, statistical analysis in MLE investigates data on product enhancements and digital presence to identify patterns and interactions. Regression analysis, correlation, and hypothesis testing were techniques used to measure the influence of product improvements on digital indicators, which include online engagement, conversions to sales, and satisfaction among consumers. It utilizes the tests such as t-test and chi-square. Employing inferential and descriptive statistics, enterprises could make data-driven choices, improve marketing tactics, forecast future efficiency, and ensure product improvement and digital marketing activities are aligned for long-term competitive advantage.

4 RESULTS

Analyzing the MLE relationship between CP and digital presence using the SPSS tool to provide an entire understanding of efficiency. This research investigates how businesses combine improving product quality and refining their online presence to maintain MLE, providing techniques for efficient integration and competitive advantage. Table 1 indicates the participant's demographic profiles for N = 150. The gathered categories are age, gender, education, and occupation.

The research investigates the interactions between product innovation, digital presence, and MLE in the company to understand how these aspects work together strategically to produce success. Table 2 represents the descriptive data and correlation among variables.

Table 1: Demographic profiles

Category		Number of samples	Percentage (%)
Age	21-25	25	16.67
	26-30	25	16.67
	31-35	30	20
	36-40	25	16.67
	41-45	20	13.33
	46-50	15	10
	51-55	10	6.66
	Female	61	40.67
Gender	Male	89	59.33
	Bachelor Degree	60	40
Education	Master Degree	45	30
	Master of Business Administration	30	20
	Doctorate	15	10
	Chief Marketing officer	5	3.33
Occupation	Marketing Manager	45	30
	Digital marketing specialist	30	20
	Product development manager	25	16.67
	Market research analyst	25	16.67
	Marketing Consultant	20	13.33

Table 2: Correlation Analysis

Variables	Min	Max	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sector	0.13	0.03	1.00	-	-	-	-	-	-
Firm size	0.07	-0.04	0.08*	1.00	-	-	-	-	-
MLE	0.13	0.11	-0.10**	0.21**	1.00	-	-	-	-
OL	0.14	0.25	0.06	0.38**	0.43**	1.00	-	-	-
MF	0.04	0.90	-0.03**	0.22**	0.19*	0.06	1.00	-	-
DA	0.15	0.91	0.04	0.34**	0.03	0.50**	0.44**	1.00	-
CP	0.01	0.05	0.13**	-0.4	-0.12**	0.11**	0.15**	0.19**	1.00

Significance level * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

The validity and reliability are evaluated using the internally consistent reliability and convergence validity. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability evaluations were used to evaluate internally consistent reliability. Convergence validity refers to the strength of the positive association between an item and the additional items that belong to an identical variable. The convergence validity has been evaluated using indicator reliability, factor loads, and average variance extracted. Table 3 shows the outcomes of validity and reliability. The average variance extracted results for reliability and validity are DA (0.71), CP (0.73), MLE (0.75), OL (0.68), MF (0.70), firm size (0.66), and sector (0.75). The composite reliability outcomes of the reliability and validity are DA (0.89), CP (0.92), MLE (0.92), OL (0.91), MF (0.89), firm size (0.83), and sector (0.89). The Cronbach's alpha results for reliability and validity are DA (0.85), CP (0.89), MLE (0.91), OL (0.89), MF (0.85), firm size (0.73), and sector (0.83).

Table 4 demonstrates the regression results for the seven models between the relationships using the T-test and chi-square. The outcomes of the coefficient are DA to CP (0.674), MLE to CP (0.521), OL to CP (0.389), MF to CP (0.793), MLE to DA and CP (0.437), OL to DA and CP (0.285), and MF to DA and CP (0.621).

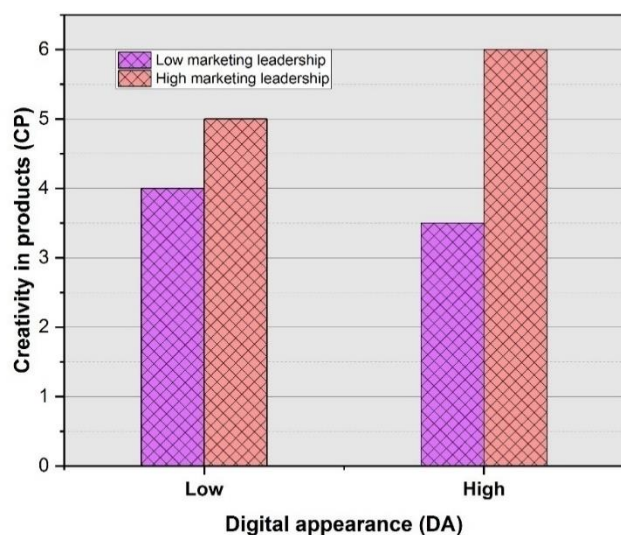


Fig. 2: The mediating impact of MLE on the relationship between CP and DA

Table 5 displays the relationship with different variables. In the decision section, Reject Null implies there is evidence to imply a substantial relationship, but failing to Reject Null suggests there is insufficient evidence to establish a substantial relationship. The decision is produced by comparing the significance level of p – value. The p – value the significance level is 0.05. If the p – value is less than 0.05, and the decision result is Rejected null. If the p – value is greater than 0.05, and the decision result is Fail to reject null. H_1 , H_3 , H_5 , and H_6 indicate the reject null. H_2 , H_4 , and H_7 represent the failure to reject the null.

Fig. 2 shows that MLE has a significant positive impact on CP and DA. Low MLE results in fewer outcomes, and high MLE results in greater outcomes. The higher outcomes of high MLE for CP and DA attain greater outcomes in the high portion.

5 | DISCUSSION

The research emphasizes the significance of organizational characteristics, such as culture, structure, and resources, in enhancing the effectiveness of internet-based tools for product creation and digital appearance in SMEs. It emphasizes the strategic interplay between digital appearance and creativity in product outcomes. The study (H_1) indicates a significant relationship between DA and CP, as demonstrated by a t-value of 2.345 and a p-value of 0.021. This suggests that improvements in digital appearance directly enhance product creativity, likely because visually appealing digital designs can inspire more innovative and creative product development processes. Given the low standard error of 0.034, the results are consistent and reliable.

Consequently, we reject the null hypothesis, affirming the positive impact of digital appearance on creativity in products. MLE was hypothesized to mediate the relationship between DA and CP. However, the direct relationship between MLE and CP (H_2) shows a t-value of 1.892 and a p-value of 0.067, leading to a failure to reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that MLE alone does not significantly influence CP. Yet, when MLE is considered alongside DA (H_5), the relationship becomes significant with a t-value of 2.901 and

Table 3: Validity and reliability

Variables	Item code	Indicator reliability	Factor loads	The average variance extracted	The composite reliability	Cronbach's alpha
DA	DA1	0.55	0.72	0.71	0.89	0.85
	DA2	0.60	0.75			
	DA3	0.37	0.59			
	DA4	0.50	0.68			
	DA5	0.52	0.69			
	DA6	0.53	0.70			
CP	CP1	0.73	0.85	0.73	0.92	0.89
	CP2	0.79	0.89			
	CP3	0.71	0.84			
	MLE1	0.73	0.85			
MLE	MLE2	0.79	0.89	0.75	0.92	0.91
	MLE3	0.70	0.83			
	MLE4	0.79	0.89			
	MLE5	0.73	0.88			
OL	OL1	0.71	0.83	0.68	0.91	0.89
	OL2	0.73	0.85			
	OL3	0.65	0.80			
	OL4	0.82	0.68			
MF	MF1	0.73	0.85	0.70	0.89	0.85
	MF2	0.71	0.84			
	MF3	0.71	0.84			
	MF4	0.60	0.78			
Firm size	FS1	0.70	0.83	0.66	0.83	0.73
	FS2	0.56	0.75			
Sector	S1	0.80	0.89	0.75	0.89	0.83
	S2	0.82	0.90			

Table 4: Regression outcomes

Model Number	Relationship	Coefficient	t – value	p – value
1	DA to CP	0.674	3.245	0.002
2	MLE to CP	0.521	2.187	0.031
3	OL to CP	0.389	1.846	0.067
4	MF to CP	0.793	3.874	0.001
5	MLE to DA and CP	0.437	2.319	0.024
6	OL to DA and CP	0.285	1.569	0.116
7	MF to DA and CP	0.621	2.983	0.004

R²: 0.652, **Adjusted R²:** 0.635, **F – statistic:** 38.274, **N** = 150.

Table 5: Relationship with different variable

Hypothesis	Relationship	Standard Error	p – value	t – value	Decision
H ₁	DA to CP	0.034	0.021	2.345	Reject null
H ₂	MLE to CP	0.045	0.067	1.892	Accept null
H ₃	OL to CP	0.028	0.005	3.127	Reject null
H ₄	MF to CP	0.039	0.126	1.543	Accept null
H ₅	MLE to DA and CP	0.042	0.012	2.901	Reject null
H ₆	OL to DA and CP	0.037	0.018	2.673	Reject null
H ₇	MF to DA and CP	0.038	0.075	1.785	Accept null

a p-value of 0.012. This suggests that while MLE may not directly impact CP, it enhances the effect of DA on CP, functioning as an important mediator when combined with digital appearance. OL presents a strong mediating influence on the relationship between DA and CP. Hypothesis H₃, assessing the direct relationship between OL and CP, shows significant results (t – value of 3.127 and p – value of 0.005), and leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis.

This indicates that organizational learning

significantly contributes to product creativity. Furthermore, OL as a mediator in the relationship between DA and CP (H₆) also shows significant results (t – value of 2.673 and p – value of 0.018). This highlights that fostering an environment of continuous learning within an organization not only directly enhances product creativity but also amplifies the positive effects of digital appearance on creativity. Market focus (MF) does not show a significant direct relationship with CP, as indicated by hypothesis H₄(t –

value of 1.543 and p – value of 0.126), resulting in a failure to reject the null hypothesis. Similarly, when MF is considered in the relationship between DA and CP (H_7), the results are not significant (t – value of 1.785 and p – value of 0.075).

Analyzing the MLE in enterprises strategically interacts with product enhancement and DA among SMEs. DA provides a positive impact on CP for H_1 , and it attains p – value = 0.021 and t – value = 2.345 was rejected null. MLE significantly impacts the CP for H_2 , and it attains p – value = 0.067 and t – value = 1.892 was failed to reject null. OL contributes positively to the CP for H_3 , and it attains p – value = 0.005 and t – value = 3.127 was rejected null. MF similarly influences the CP for H_4 , and it attains p – value = 0.126 and t – value = 1.543 was failed to reject null. MLE provides direct impacts on the DA and CP for H_5 , and it attains p – value = 0.012 and t – value = 2.901 was rejected null. OL provides direct influences on the DA and CP for H_6 , and it attains p – value = 0.018 and t – value = 2.673 was rejected null. MF provides direct impacts on the DA and CP for H_7 , and it attains p – value = 0.075 and t – value = 1.785 was failed to reject null.

These results recommend that market focus does not significantly interfere with the association between DA and CP. While market orientation is essential, it may not be a strong independent driver of product creativity or a significant enhancer of the DA-CP relationship. The study reveals the intricate relationship between market leadership, organizational dynamics, digital presence, and product innovation, emphasizing the need for effective digital design and leadership.

6. Conclusion

This investigation concentrated on the function of marketing oversight in increasing the impact of online techniques in creating new products and the MLE in the enterprise's strategic interaction between product enhancement and DA among SMEs. Initially, the data were collected, and based on the outcomes of the questionnaires, 150 participants were selected from the SME manufacturing firms. The conceptual framework was performed using seven hypotheses. In the result, demographic profiles, correlations, validity and reliability, regression results, and relationships with various variables were performed. The strategic relationships between DA and CP outcomes for SMEs are emphasized by this research, along with the value of MLE skills and the responsibilities of OL and MF. Possible survey data biases, a lack of generalization to larger businesses, and dependence on self-reported measurements are some of the constraints. Future research might examine longitudinal impacts, cross-sector comparisons, and improved statistical tools for rigorous analysis and validation.

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