

Impact Of Digital Marketing On Key Accounts Business Performance With Mediating Role Of Market Sensing And Customer Linking Capabilities

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Abstract

Key accounts are the vital businesses which are strategically beneficial for the companies. Due to the limitation of resources and integration issues most of the key accounts businesses have often faces an obstacle in establishing and maintaining the digital marketing capabilities. There exist little studies that specifically examine the relationship between digital marketing capabilities (DMCs) and key account business performance (KABP). Therefore, the objectives of the study are (a) to assess the effect of DMCs on marketing sensing capabilities (MSCs), customer linkage capabilities (CLCs) and KABP, (b) to assess the effect of MSCs and CLCs on KABP (c) to assess the mediating effect of MSCs and CLCs in the relationship between DMCs and KABP. To examine the aforementioned objectives, the researcher chose a positivist research philosophy and used a deductive research technique. The researcher used a survey research technique with a sample of three hundred eighty-nine executives and managers working i¹n the eight major electronics distribution businesses in Pakistan. Using stratified random sampling with proportional allocation, the sample size was ascertained. A significant response rate was obtained by using a survey questionnaire to gather data. The research used multivariate analysis method to evaluate construct validity, factor analysis, suggested measurement models, and structural equation modeling (SEM), via AMOS software. The statistical findings revealed that (a) the DMCs has a significant positive effect on MSCs, CLCs and KABP, (b) MSCs, and CLCs have a significant positive effect on KABP, (c) MSCs, and CLCs mediates between DMCs and KABP. This report emphasizes the crucial role that plays in improving important account performance, offering firms enlightening information as they navigate the dynamic business context.

Keywords: Key Account, Digital Marketing, Market Sensing, SEM.

1. Introduction

In today's digital age, businesses are increasingly relying on digital marketing to drive growth and stay competitive. Digital marketing enables companies to reach their target audience more effectively, build brand awareness, and create personalized customer experiences. However, the impact of digital marketing on key account business performance is still not fully understood. To better understand this relationship, this study

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aims to investigate the impact of digital marketing on key account business performance, with a focus on the mediating role of market sensing and customer linking capabilities.

The key accounts are very vital for the organizational success (Flores-Vilcapoma et al., 2022). Key accounts refer to the most important customers or clients of a company or organization, who typically generate a significant portion of the company's revenue (Sandesh & Paul, 2023). Key accounts are critical to the success and growth of a company, as they can provide ongoing business and help to establish long-term partnerships (Herhausen et al., 2022). The key account is a kind of commercial clients that a supplier firm handles during periods of repeated purchases (Herhausen et al., 2022). These accounts bring in significant earnings for the distributor (Herhausen et al., 2022).

Recent studies reported that the firm or business performance can be persuaded by the digital marketing capabilities (Homburg & Wielgos, 2022; Tolstoy, Nordman & Vu, 2022). Digital marketing capabilities (DMC's) refer to an organization's ability to effectively use digital marketing channels and technologies to create, communicate, and deliver value to customers (Homburg & Wielgos, 2022). This includes skills and knowledge related to search engine optimization (SEO), social media marketing, email marketing, mobile marketing, content marketing and data analytics, among others (Tolstoy, Nordman & Vu, 2022). It also involves the use of digital tools and platforms to enhance customer engagement, improve brand awareness, and ultimately drive sales and revenue growth. Overall, digital marketing capabilities are critical for businesses to reach and engage with their target audience in today's digital age.

The MSC refers to the ability of a company to gather, analyze and interpret information about the market environment in order to anticipate and respond to changes in customer needs, competitor activities, and other factors that may impact business performance. The MSC is comprised of market research, competitive intelligence, social media listening, customer feedback, data analytics, collaboration and agility. On the other hand, the customer linking capability (CLC) describes the ability to develop and sustain relationships with the customer (Rapp et al., 2010). The CLC build and maintain relationships with customers, understand their needs and provide them with personalized experiences. The CLC comprised of customer data management, customer segmentation, personalization, omni-channel communication, customer service, loyalty programs and customer feedback management. Overall, customer linkage capabilities are critical for businesses to build and maintain relationships with customers, increase customer satisfaction and ultimately drive business growth and success.

1.1 Problem Statement

Implementing and maintaining digital marketing capabilities, market sensing, and customer linkage can be resource-intensive, especially for smaller businesses with limited budgets. On the other hand, digital marketing capabilities require specialized knowledge and skills, which may be lacking in the organization. Similarly, market sensing and customer linking require expertise in data analysis and building customer relationship, which may not be available in-house. Therefore, collecting and managing customer data requires strict adherence to data privacy regulations and security protocols to prevent data breaches and protect sensitive information. Introducing new technologies, processes and ways of working can be met with resistance from employees who may be resistant to change, which can hinder the implementation and adoption of these capabilities. Integration of different digital marketing, market sensing and customer linking with existing IT systems can be difficult, which may require significant IT infrastructure investments.

The relevance of digitalization is demonstrated by the speed with which technology is being applied as well as by shifting market practices (Blut et al., 2018). However, many businesses in Asia have failed to implement comprehensive Omni-channel approaches that satisfy customer prospects (Cao & Tian, 2020). Furthermore, it has made it such that the merchants are continually challenged by successfully changing their business strategies, which has an impact on the standard of Omni - channel business (Massa et al., 2017). There

has been limited evidence on business performance through exploiting digital marketing skills, particularly in the context of industrial enterprises, according to studies (Munir, Kadir & Umar, 2023; Nuseir & Refae, 2022). There aren't many studies assessing that how DMCs affect corporate success in Asia when mediating factors like marketing sense and customer connectivity skills are taken into account (Apasrawirote, Yawised & Muneesawang, 2022; Liu, 2022).

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions are mentioned as follow.

1. What is the effect of digital marketing on marketing sensing capabilities and customer linkage capabilities?
2. Is there any effect of digital marketing on key account business performance?
3. Does marketing sensing capabilities and Customer Linking Capabilities have an effect on key accounts business performance?
4. Is marketing sensing and Customer Linking capabilities mediates the relationship between digital marketing key account business performance?

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives are mentioned as follow.

1. To assess the effect of digital marketing on marketing sensing capabilities and customer linkage capabilities?
2. To analyze the effect of digital marketing on key account business performance?
3. To analyze the effect of marketing sensing capabilities and customer Linking Capabilities on key accounts business performance
4. To evaluate the mediating effect of marketing sensing capabilities and customer Linking Capabilities in the relationship between digital marketing and key accounts business performance.

1.4 Study Significance

The significance of this study lies in understanding the impact of digital marketing on key account business performance and the role played by market sensing and customer linking capabilities in mediating this impact. The results of this study can provide valuable insights for businesses in formulating their digital marketing strategies and improving their overall performance. By understanding the key drivers and factors that influence the impact of digital marketing on business performance, organizations can make more informed decisions and allocate their resources more effectively. Moreover, the study can contribute to the existing body of knowledge on digital marketing, market sensing, and customer linking capabilities, by providing empirical evidence on the interplay of these variables. This can help in advancing the theoretical understanding of these concepts and guide future research in this area.

The outcomes of this research could have a significant influence on marketing professionals' ability to use digital marketing practices such as use of social media, online advertisement and content marketing

2. Literature Review

2.1 Digital Marketing and Market-Sensing Capabilities

According to Kane et al. (2015), a company's online advertising capabilities indicate its capacity to realign its resource allocation and acquire fresh expertise in addressing relations with stakeholders in real-time. They frequently enhance the social connectivity of consumers and the efficacy of market studies. Additionally, DMCs frequently talk about the social skills required to reap the benefits of digitization (Wang, 2020). For possibilities to be receptive and adaptable, stuff must be naturally flexible. Comparably, Teece (2012) made a distinction between dynamical talents and stagnant skills, which help businesses adapt to quickly changing circumstances. Equivalent competencies guarantee the efficacy

of business activities. Furthermore, supporting logistics operations using globalized databases is standard practice. This creates and maintains a fruitful network throughout the governing body. Still, because of their flexible capabilities, DMCs can alter the duration of resource conjunction procedures (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000). Additionally, it is being demonstrated that DMCs improve business performance by altering digital buying decisions (Scheinbaum, 2016). In this case, the DMCs' function might affect a corporation (Farook & Abeysekara, 2016). Marketing rules have been drastically altered by digital media, rendering many traditional advertising strategies outdated (Kingsnorth, 2019). Digital advertising has grown more important for many organizations hoping to flourish in the business world since the creation of the web (Pieiro-Otero et al., 2016). Wibisurya (2018) asserts that digital marketing, including a focus on client customization, customization, and the importance of why, has a favorable impact on buyer intentions. Recognizing the connection between MSC and DMC is essential for companies trying to stay relevant in the digital age. By adopting digital marketing technologies, businesses can increase their ability to sense the market. Through the utilization of such abilities, companies may adapt their marketing strategies and offerings to meet client needs, gain a competitive advantage, and thrive in the digital era. The suggested theories are predicated on the argument.

H₁: DMCs have a significant influence on market sensing capabilities

2.2 Digital Marketing and Customer Linkage Capabilities

Using social media platforms, firms can communicate with clients, share content, and get input (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). It enhances the ability to connect with customers. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), online marketing facilitates personalized communication, specific advertisements, and actual time feedback all of which increase customer engagement and commitment. However, online advertising allows businesses to target certain clientele and interact with larger audiences. It provides opportunities for interactive initiatives, personalized marketing messages, and customer reaction tracking (Kim & Lennon, 2013). By providing relevant content, increasing brand identification, and promoting consumer interaction, efficient Internet marketing strategies enhance customer linking abilities (Brodie et al., 2013). Information management also places a strong emphasis on producing valuable and timely information to attract and retain clients. It comprises disseminating informative and entertaining material via websites, videos, and data visualizations, among other media formats (Schultz et al., 2014). By providing helpful information, fostering creative thinking and fostering client confidence and loyalty, blogging enhances consumer linkage abilities (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). Online advertising networks offer personalized interactions and involvement by enabling mutual communication among companies and their clientele. With networking sites, online advertisements, and content promotional activities, companies may converse with customers, respond to their inquiries, and get their feedback all of which improve consumer connectedness (Hoffman & Fodor, 2010). Businesses can increase their reputation and grow their customer base by implementing digital marketing techniques. Specific consumer demographics are targeted by online advertisements, viral spreading is made easier by networking systems, and search engine exposure is enhanced by content promotion. According to Heinonen et al. (2017), such initiatives support consumer connecting capabilities and boost the visibility of brands. The study by Grewal et al. (2020) emphasizes how crucial DMCs are for fostering customer connection abilities. They argue that companies using state-of-the-art DMCs are better able to interact with customers, understand their needs, and modify their marketing strategies appropriately. As per the report, a robust online presence, encompassing social media engagement, focused online advertisements and material promotional activities, enhances customer satisfaction and fortifies customer relationship management abilities. Li and Kannan's (2014) study also concentrates on the potential benefits of social media for enhancing client interaction abilities. They argue that social networking sites offer businesses special opportunities to

interact with customers right away, get feedback, and provide timely customer service. The research highlights the potential of networking channels to foster successful client relationships, increase customer loyalty, and augment company outcomes. Furthermore, Kim and Ko (2017) investigate the impact of promotional content on client linking capabilities. According to their studies, methods for content promotion like creating valuable and timely information can help improve consumer interaction abilities.

H₂: DMCs have a significant influence on customer linkage capabilities

2.3 Digital Marketing Capabilities and Key Accounts Business Performance

According to studies (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012; Mangold & Faulds, 2009), social media platforms can promote brand awareness, consumer engagement, and relationship-building, contributing to better business performance. Similar findings have been made about the positive effects of online advertising on customer acquisition, customer retention, and total sales performance (Chatterjee et al., 2008; Li & Kannan, 2014). According to research by Singh and Sonnenburg (2012) and Pulizzi & Barrett (2009), content marketing, which entails producing and disseminating helpful material to draw in and engage customers, has also been associated with improved brand recognition, customer retention, and sales results. Online advertising has been shown to benefit business performance measures such as website traffic, customer acquisition, and sales income (Gupta & Kim, 2021; Li & Kannan, 2014). This includes display ads, search engine marketing, and video commercials. Additionally, employing content marketing, which entails producing and disseminating helpful material to draw in and keep clients, has been linked to improved brand recognition, client confidence, and client retention (Pulizzi & Barrett, 2009; Singh & Sonnenburg, 2012). According to research, businesses with excellent digital marketing capabilities typically experience faster client growth rates. For instance, Zahay et al.'s (2015) study discovered that companies with more established digital marketing capabilities saw more excellent client acquisition rates than those with less developed capabilities. Similar findings were made by Huang and Rust (2018), who discovered that businesses with effective digital marketing channels experience more robust sales growth and market share. Digital marketing capabilities have been associated with increased customer engagement and satisfaction, and consumer acquisition. Businesses may interact with clients in real-time through social media channels, answer questions, and offer tailored experiences. Customer loyalty and satisfaction may rise (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Similar findings were found in a study by Stephen and Toubia (2010), which showed that businesses that actively engage with clients through digital platforms enjoy better client satisfaction and return business. According to Kumar et al. (2016) and Strauss & Frost (2014), this may enhance brand loyalty and more substantial brand equity. It is crucial to remember that digital marketing capabilities may be less effective depending on the environment and industry. The effect of digital marketing on business performance can be influenced by firm size, industry competitiveness, and target audience characteristics (Ngai et al., 2009; Zahay et al., 2015).

H₃: DMCs have a significant influence on key account business performance

2.4 Customer-Linking Capabilities and key accounts business performance and Customer-Linking Capabilities as a Mediator

According to Trainor et al. (2014), customer linkage capabilities highlight a company's capacity to foster cooperative dialogues with clients and improve client relationships. According to recent research, customer linking capabilities foster the growth of strong relationships with clients, which in turn boosts satisfaction and retention of clients (Trainor et al. 2014). According to earlier research, creating unique capabilities may contribute to better organizational performance, which is consistent with the concepts of RBV and adaptive capacity hypothesis (Menguc and Auh 2006). Performance is inclined to increase for businesses that are skilled at transforming their current assets and competencies into new, creating value procedures and skills. Numerous studies have demonstrated that customer linking capabilities, for companies of all sizes in developed nations, are positively

correlated with company performance (Shin 2013). The efficiency of internal management and communication with clients is increased by customer connectivity capabilities. As a result, businesses ought to see improvements in overall organizational performance. According to research, customer-linking abilities are essential for converting digital marketing efforts into enhanced business performance results. For instance, a study by Hajli and Sims (2015) discovered that the relationship between social media marketing and client loyalty is mediated by the ability to bind customers to specific brands. According to research by Chang and Chen (2018), businesses with strong customer-linking capabilities can use online advertising to engage customers and attract new ones. These tools allow businesses to segment their target audience, gather and evaluate client data, and send targeted and relevant marketing messages (Harrigan et al., 2017). According to the report, businesses with excellent customer-linking capabilities may use social media platforms to communicate with clients, develop brand equity, and boost company performance indicators like brand recognition, loyalty, and repute. The mediating role of customer-linking capacities in the relationship between content marketing and business performance was also examined in a study by Chatterjee and Bhat (2019). According to Huang, Li, and Huang's research from 2020, customer-linking capabilities are crucial for converting online advertising campaigns into increased customer engagement, customer loyalty, and ultimately greater business success. In addition, Zhou, Ma, Zhang, and Zhang (2020) investigated the mediating function of customer-linking capabilities in the relationship between digital marketing capabilities and business performance.

H₄: Customer linkage capabilities has a significant effect on key account performance

H₅: Customer linkage capabilities mediate between digital marketing capabilities and key account performance

2.5 Market-Sensing Capabilities and key accounts business performance and Market-Sensing Capabilities (MSC) as a Mediator

Verhoef, Franses, and Hoekstra's (2002) study examined the connection between market-sensing skills and company performance. The study made clear sense and comprehended market needs, tastes, and trends to build and implement digital marketing strategies that work. Businesses may gather and analyze client data, keep an eye on market dynamics, and quickly react to changes thanks to market sensing capabilities. The results showed that businesses with excellent market sensing capabilities are more likely to achieve superior business performance outcomes, including growing market share, enhancing customer satisfaction, and increasing profitability. The mediating function of market sensing abilities in the relationship between digital marketing capabilities and business performance was further investigated by Lee, Lee, and Pennings (2001). Additionally, Kim, Park, and Prescott's (2019) study looked into market-sensing talents' role in mediating the link between social media marketing and business performance. According to the findings, businesses can better monitor social media platforms, gain client insights, and adjust their marketing plans when they combine solid digital marketing and market-sensing capabilities. By doing this, businesses can increase consumer engagement, create brand equity, and generate positive business performance results, including boosted brand awareness, enhanced customer loyalty, and higher market share. Furthermore, the mediating function of market sensing abilities in the relationship between content marketing and company performance was investigated in a study by Vorhies, Harker, and Rao (1999). The mediating function of market-sensing abilities in the relationship between online advertising and business performance was investigated in a study by Zhang, Voola, and Olya (2020). Li, Ye, and Zhang (2019) emphasized that businesses with cutting-edge digital marketing capabilities can amass priceless consumer and market intelligence, which, when combined with efficient market-sensing capabilities, improves their capacity to find new market opportunities, create ground-breaking goods or services, and perform better in terms of innovation. The results strongly correlate with innovation performance, market sensing abilities, and digital marketing capabilities. Furthermore, Homburg, Jensen, and

Krohmer (2008) investigated the mediating function of market-sensing abilities in the relationship between social media marketing and business performance. Zahay, McMillan, and Rose (2016) examined the role of market sensing capabilities in mediating the link between content marketing and business performance.

H₆: Marketing sensing capabilities has a significant effect on key account performance.

H₇: Marketing sensing capabilities mediate between digital marketing capabilities and key account performance

2.6 Stimulus Response Theory

The Stimulus Organism Response model (SOR Model) critiqued the Stimulus-Response (SR) theory Albert Mehrabian and James Russell (1974) improved the SOR model by examining consumer behavior. The SOR contends that the environment outside the individual drives feelings and actions (Apasrawirote et al., 2022). The 'organism' or individual reacting to the stimuli, however, is not taken into account by the SR model (Johnson-Deberry, 2023). The SR idea was lacking because it was evident that a person's moods and emotions might influence their answer (Haudi et al., 2024).

The stimulus organism response theory postulates that an organism responds to a stimulus depending on its internal sentiments or behavior (person). Depending on the input, this inner processing may be aware or unconscious. It further sets off an emotion that prompts a reaction (Munir et al., 2023). A response may follow, either internally, such as an elevated heart rate, or externally, such as crying.

Based on the SOR theory, in the proposed conceptual framework, the digital marketing capabilities along with its facets, namely, the use of social media, online advertisement and content marketing, will be taken as a stimulus to trigger the response, i.e. (key account business performance) (Apasrawirote et al., 2022). At the same time, marketing sensing and market linkage will be taken as an organism. When it became clear that a person's mood and emotions may significantly impact their replies, the SR theory's flaws became apparent (Johnson-Deberry, 2023).

2.7 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework thoroughly explains the interactions between key account business performance, product innovation performance, market sensing capabilities, customer connection capabilities, and digital marketing capabilities. It offers a methodical framework for analyzing these factors' intricate connections and interactions, fostering a better comprehension of how vital account-specific digital marketing initiatives might influence business performance.

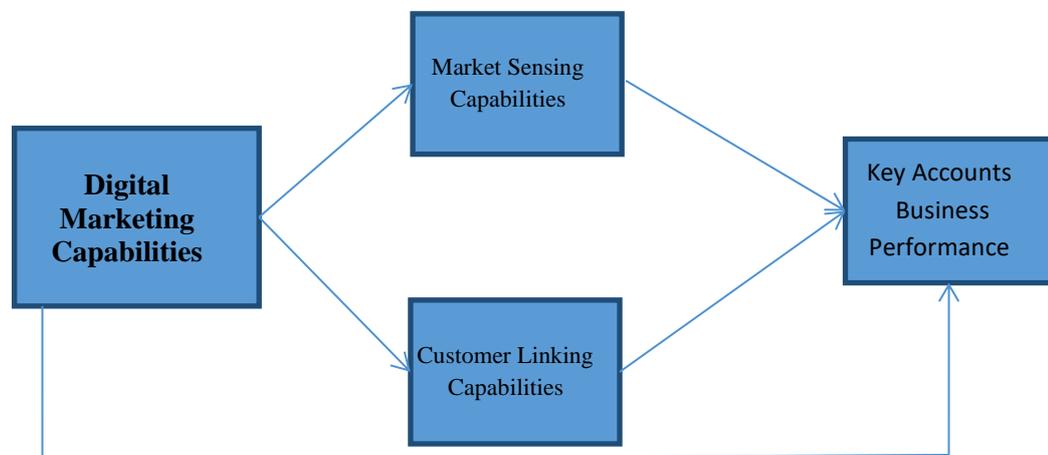


Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework

3.1 Research Methodology

The study's targeted population comprised managers and executives occupying pivotal roles within the top eight electronics (home appliance) distribution companies operational in Pakistan. These businesses have been meticulously chosen due to their distinctive attributes: a) certification as key account holders of prominent electronics corporations in Pakistan and b) demonstrable financial robustness, with substantial assets and revenue over the past three years (2019-2022). This selection ensures the representation of businesses wielding considerable influence in the electronics distribution sector. The study encompasses a comprehensive population of four hundred sixty-one (461) managers and executives across those above eight key account enterprises operating within the landscape of Pakistan. The sample size was calculated via formula of Yamane (1973), The estimated sample size was 389. Probability sampling (stratified random sampling) was used as a sampling approach.

3.2 Measurements

The measurements were developed based on 5-point likert scale. The digital marketing capabilities were assessed via three key dimensions, i.e. social media usage (4-items), content marketing (4-items), and online advertising (4-items) (Alabdulkareem, 2015; Winata et al., 2021; Celebi, 2015). The marketing sensing capability was measured via 5 items (Li & Wang, 2005). The customer linkage capabilities were measured via 7 items (Lin et al., 2016). The product innovation performance was measured via 3-items (Martinde Castro et al., 2013). The key account performance was measured by 5-items (Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014).

3.3 Data Collection

The researcher individually delivered the survey questionnaire following a pilot investigation. The managers and executives of Pakistan-based key account businesses provided the information. Three hundred eighty-nine (389) questionnaires were distributed, and three forty-seven (347) returned, for a total response rate of 89.2%, which is favorable (Sekaran & Bougie, 2006).

3.4 Data Analysis

According to the information, 340 male respondents 98% were male respondents. On the other hand, there were just 7 female respondents representing 2%. This suggests that the involvement rate for men is substantially greater. The statistics highlight a clear gender disparity in the study's participant pool, having a preponderance of men and a far lower percentage of women. The data offers important insights into the survey participants' ages. It was found that 230 people, or 66.3% of the total population, are between the ages of 20 and 30. This suggests that there were a lot of younger participants in the study. 97 respondents or 28.0% of the total participants in this category were between the ages of 31 and 40. This shows a noticeable, but slightly diminished, representation of people who are in their thirties.

Table 1

Demographics		
	Sum	Sum
Male	340	98.0
Female	7	2.0
Ages in Years		
20-30 years	230	66.3
31-40 years	97	28.0

41-50 years	20	5.8
Qualification		
Graduate	289	83.3
Masters	58	16.7

Note. Demographic

4.1 Path Analysis

Bootstrapping and SEM, or structural equation modeling, methods were used to evaluate the model's arrangement (Chin, 2010). Exogenous factors account for 70.5% of the variability in the outcome component (KABP), suggests a significant association. After determining the measurement structure standard path coefficient need to be looked at and determined in order to assess the proposed relationships between the factors. According to Chin (1998), an increase within the variable's R2 which reacts with time proportionate to the volume of the participant factor's unexplained shift is used to determine the extent of the influence. Table 2 describes the methodology used to determine the impact magnitude of exogenous factors based on their impact on the linked endogenous parameters. Effect estimation, i.e. (F2) for the digital marketing capability is (0.349), market sensing capability is (0.211), customer linkage capability is (0.319) and for the exogenous factors that make up to the endogenous factor indicate substantial and average influence levels.

Table 2 Variability

Exogenous Variables	F2	Effects
Digital Marketing Capability	0.349	Substantial
Market Sensing Capability	0.211	Average
Customer Linkage Capability	0.319	Substantial

4.2 Direct Relationship

Hair et al. (2013), stated that the hypotheses is accepted with significant relationship and rejected with insignificant relationship. The significant relationship shows that the hypothesis supports the data. The hypothesis, H1, stated that the digital marketing capabilities (DMCs) have a significant influence on market sensing capabilities (MSC). The result shows that DMC substantially influence MSC ($\beta = 0.435$, $t=9.93$, $p<0.05$). Hence, H1 is approved. The hypothesis, H2, stated the DMCs have a significant influence on customer linkage capabilities (CLC). The result shows that DMC substantially influence CLC ($\beta = 0.689$, $t=15.1$, $p,0.05$). Hence, H2 is accepted. The hypothesis, H3 stated the DMCs have a significant influence on key account business performance (KABP). The result shows that DMCs substantially influence KABP ($\beta = 0.184$, $t=3.48$, $p<0.05$). Therefore, H3 is accepted. The hypothesis, H4, stated the CLCs have a significant influence on KABP. The result shows that CLCs substantially influence KABP ($\beta = 0.710$, $t=16.90$, $p<0.05$). Consequently, H4 is accepted. The hypothesis, H5, stated the MSC have a significant influence on KABP. The result shows that MSC substantially influence KABP ($\beta = 0.162$, $t=3.27$, $p<0.05$). Consequently, H5 is accepted.

4.3 Indirect Relationship

To comprehend the mediated influence within the framework of the study, it is necessary to evaluate the value of the link between each aspect. Preacher & Hayes (2004) state that mediation is one particular indirect effect strategy to use. Hair et al. (2014) emphasize its importance in bolstering bootstrap in the context of mediated-moderated impacts (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The SEM is a more useful tool for evaluating the link between multiple factors than the causation approach proposed by Hair et al. (2012). According to Zhao et al. (2010), the most reliable method for assessing the mediated-moderated impacts is bootstrap technique. Furthermore, because it makes no assumptions about the variance distributions or sample, the bootstrapping method is perfect for SEM (Hair et al., 2014).

Thus, in order to investigate the bootstrapping premise suggesting SEM adequately records mediating impacts. The current study employed Haye's (2009) methodology. Hayes

(2009) stated that the mediation impact involves a few stages. To examine the relationship among the predictor and mediator factors, a SEM framework was initially created. Then, bootstrapping is used to generate t scores in order to assess the direct correlations. The mediating testing is performed if meaningful direct relationships are discovered. After 5000 bootstrapped immediate consequences have been produced, paths a and b shall be evaluated. For each indirect effect, standard errors (SE) have been taken into account. As indicated in Table 3 Figure 4.1, the mediated premise produced substantial indirect consequences at an appropriate relevance level. By creating a 95% bootstrapped range of confidence and utilizing it to confirm the study's mediating effect, the Hayes (2009) approach was used to analyze the mediation.

Hypothesis H6 specified that the customer linkage capabilities (CLC) mediate between digital marketing capabilities (DMCs) and key account business performance (KABP). Henseler et al. (2009)'s bootstrapping technique was used to assess the significance of mediating factors in SEM analysis. Considering a t-value of 5.69, the bootstrapping outcomes demonstrated a substantial consequential effect (0.581). Preacher and Hayes' (2008) method was further supported by the evidence that zero wasn't intersect within the 95% bootstrapped interval of confidence [LL=0.118, UL=0.544]. Thus, the CLC acts as a mediator in the relationship between DMCs and KABP. The results of the study therefore endorse H6. Hypothesis H7 specified that the market sensing capabilities (MSC) mediate between DMCs and KABP. Considering a t-value of 6.42, the bootstrapping outcomes demonstrated a substantial consequential effect (0.160). Preacher and Hayes' (2008) method was further supported by the evidence that zero wasn't intersect within CI [LL=0.137, UL=0.441]. Thus, the MSC acts as a mediator in the relationship between DMCs and KABP. The results of the study therefore endorse H7.

Figure 4.1 Estimated Structure Model

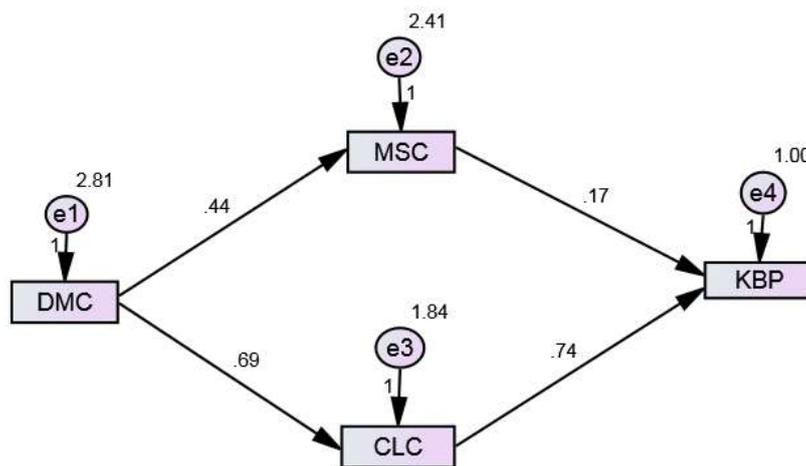


Table 3 Path Analysis

Direct-Effect	Beta	SE	t	Sig	95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
DMC -> Market Sensing Capability	0.435	0.044	9.93	.000	0.132	0.609
DMC-> Customer Linkage Capability	0.689	0.046	15.1	.000	0.418	0.698
DMC-> Key Account Performance	0.184	0.049	3.48	.000	0.111	0.312
CLC -> Key Account Performance	0.710	0.042	16.9	.000	0.419	0.721

MSC-> Key Account Performance	0.162	0.049	3.27	.000	0.122	0.369
Indirect-Effect	Beta	SE	t	Sig	95%CI	
					Lower	Upper
DMC -> MSC -> Key Account Performance	0.160	0.025	6.42	.000	0.137	0.441
DMC -> CLC-> Key Account Performance	0.581	0.102	5.69	.000	0.118	0.544

Note. DMC: Digital Marketing Capability, MSC: Market Sensing Capability, CLC: Customer Linkage Capability, KABP: Key Account Business Performance,

5.1 Discussion

The study found that digital marketing capabilities (DMCs) have a significant influence on market sensing capabilities. The result was aligned with prior studies (Kingsnorth, 2019; Pieiro-Otero & Martínez-Rolán, 2016; Wibisurya, 2018). The adaptability provided by digital marketing tactics was emphasized by Kingsnorth (2019), who also emphasized the significance of prompt and well-informed decision-making in the rapidly evolving digital marketplace. In light of increased market responsiveness made possible by digital marketing skills, the premise is supported that being able to recognize changes in the market quickly can be a crucial component of acquiring a competitive edge. The study found that customer linkage capabilities are significantly impacted by digital marketing capabilities. The result was consistent with earlier studies by Grewal et al. (2020), Baird & Parasnis (2011), and Schultz et al. (2014). All of these studies help to clarify that the businesses with robust digital marketing capabilities are in a better position to build and strengthen relationships with their clients. Strong customer connections are fostered and maintained by being able to effectively exploit digital marketing channels in an increasingly digitalized corporate environment where customer interactions take place online.

Huang and Rust (2018), and Zahay et al. (2015) corroborate the claim that digital marketing capabilities have a significant influence on key account business performance. Accepting this theory is supported, among other things, by the way, DMCs help to promote focused and customized communication with important accounts. According to Ngai et al. (2009) and Huang and Rust (2018), customized communication tactics are crucial for effective key account management. The results of earlier research by (Menguc & Auh, 2006; Shin 2013; Trainor et al., 2014) support the notion that customer linkage capabilities have a major impact on critical account performance. This theory is based on the idea that strong, enduring connections with important accounts are fostered via customer linkage skills. Menguc & Auh (2006) stress how crucial it is to develop mutual respect and trust with important clients.

The study by Zhou et al. (2020) provides evidence in favor of the customer linkage capabilities' role as a mediator between digital marketing skills and key account performance. This theory is based on the complex interaction that exists between the development of customer relationships and digital marketing capabilities. According to Zhou et al. (2020), digital marketing capabilities enable firms to establish and maintain connections with key accounts by facilitating individualized and targeted communication. This study found that the marketing sensing capabilities significantly affect the key account performance. The results of earlier research by Day (2022), Grewal and Slotegraaf (2007), and Olavarrieta and Friedmann (2008), also supported the notion that marketing sensing capabilities have significant effects on key account performance. Day (2022) and Grewal and Slotegraaf (2007) both stress how critical it is to understand consumer behavior and market structure. Organizations can obtain and analyze pertinent data about important clients and industry trends thanks to marketing sensing capabilities.

Research by Zhang, Voola, and Olya (2020), Li, Ye, and Zhang (2019), and Zahay, McMillan, & Rose (2016) supports the study's conclusion that marketing sensing capabilities mediate between digital marketing capabilities and key account performance. A primary argument for this is that digital marketing capabilities enable businesses to better target their important customers and develop new goods that cater to their changing wants and needs.

5.2 Conclusion

This study concludes by exploring the complex interactions that affect key account performance between digital marketing capabilities, customer linkage capabilities and marketing sensing capabilities. The results provide significant contributions to the discipline of marketing management by illuminating the complex relationships that businesses must manage in today's business environment. The study emphasizes how crucial digital marketing skills are in forming organizational competencies. Our results are consistent with previous research, which highlights the long-lasting impact of digital marketing on key account business performance, customer relationships and market sensing. Because digital technologies are revolutionary, businesses can quickly perceive market dynamics and create and maintain meaningful consumer interactions. Examples of these activities include social media marketing, optimization for search engines, and data analytics. Digital platforms offer a swift feedback loop that is crucial for enabling firms to adjust to shifts in consumer behavior, industry trends, and competitor actions. This improves the overall responsiveness of the market. The report also highlights how important customer linking capabilities are for strengthening bonds with important accounts. By using digital technologies in marketing campaigns, companies may customize messages, provide unique solutions and anticipate important account requirements ahead of time. Customer linkage capabilities play a mediating role between digital marketing activities and key account performance. This underscores the strategic value of these capabilities in facilitating adaptation, promoting optimal key account management and converting data insights into effective plans. The study also reaffirms how crucial marketing sensing capabilities are in the context of important account management. Advanced marketing sensing skills put organizations in a better position to collect, analyze and apply data-driven insights, which promote strategic positioning and proactive decision-making. The interdependence of these capabilities in attaining superior key account performance is further highlighted by the mediating role that marketing sensing capabilities play in converting digital marketing insights into optimal key account strategy. The research's findings have practical relevance for companies looking to improve their performance and capabilities in managing important clients in a fast-paced, cutthroat market. The study's conclusions provide a road map for improving marketing tactics, building client connections and attaining better key account performance as companies continue to traverse the digital era.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The generalizability of this study is one of its main limitations. Followed by the study's dependence on cross-sectional data presents challenges in determining the cause and comprehending the dynamics over an extended period. Third, it's possible that respondents gave socially acceptable responses, which could cause an overestimation of the benefits of digital marketing capabilities on important account performance. Fourth, even with a thorough examination of all relevant variables, the study can leave out some important ones that have an impact on the relationships it is looking into. External economic situations, leadership styles and organizational culture are a few examples of factors that may influence the results but are not specifically taken into account in this study. Lastly, inadvertent bias in responses or views by participants may affect the validity of the correlations examined in the study.

5.4 Future Research Area

Prospective investigations may concentrate on performing a dynamic examination of developing patterns in digital marketing. Examining how emerging technologies (such as augmented reality and artificial intelligence) affect organizational capabilities and key account performance might shed light on how digital marketing strategies are changing. Second, it could be a worthwhile study project to examine how major account performance

and digital marketing capabilities differ throughout industries. Comparative research could reveal subtleties unique to a certain industry and provide insight into the elements that influence the efficacy of digital marketing tactics across a range of commercial domains.

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