

# Green Marketing Practices To Enhance Business Performance By Competitive Advantage As Mediating In Smes In Malaysia

Maryam Hamid Yaseen<sup>1</sup>, Rozilah Kasim<sup>2</sup>, Falah Saleem Falih<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>*Faculty of Technology Management & Business, University Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, Batu Pahat, 86400, MALAYSIA.*

<sup>1</sup>[maryam2008hy@gmail.com](mailto:maryam2008hy@gmail.com) <sup>2</sup>[rozilahkasim@gmail.com](mailto:rozilahkasim@gmail.com) <sup>3</sup>[falah.cbi@gmail.com](mailto:falah.cbi@gmail.com)

## Abstract

Effective marketing has become a potentially precious way to boost competitiveness and BP in institutions.

This paper aims to assess for CA and BP the effects of Green Marketing Practices.

A quantitative approach is used to obtain data from a survey (questionnaire) consisting of 33 items with a five-point Likert scale. The unit of analysis is small and medium companies in Malaysia. The respondents in this paper are the managers of departments. Smart PLS 3.2.9 was used to analyze the results. The findings of the path analysis of partial least squares (PLS) support variables in their hypothesized direct relationships with BP.

The analysis results suggest that CA partially mediates the relationship between GMP and BP. The paper provides many suggestions that are helpful both for researchers and policymakers to undertake more research in this area as well as to enhance the CA and BP of institutions in the future.

**Keywords:** Business Performance (BP), Competitive Advantage (CA), Green Marketing Practices (GMPs).

## 1. Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have become a topical subject among management as well as research practitioners all over the world and, this has led to a proliferation of research interests centered on SMEs (Mafini & Omuruyi 2013). Love and Roper (2013) stated that SMEs play a vital role in economic development as they have been the main source of employment generation and output growth, both in developing as well as in developed countries. SMEs are also the fastest

growing sector of most economies and are perceived to be more pliant and adaptable regarding structure and speed of response than larger enterprises (Kumar 2015).

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) constitute the largest business entities in many countries, where governments show a keen interest in ensuring their competitiveness. This interest is usually channeled through policies and financial assistance towards the implementation of innovative and

emerging technologies, especially in developing countries. Additionally, SMEs are essential professional units contributing to the country's GDP (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). Therefore, the Malaysian SMEs contributed 37.8% of the country's GDP, 57.5% of the country's employment and 19% of the country's exports (SME Annual Report, 2018/2019). However, the 2018 GDP commitment reached 38.3%. Despite this, the actual implementation of SMEs was still in an insecure zone and the annual growth rate of small enterprises in 2017 dropped from 3.7% to 2.2% (The Star, 2018).

The Malaysian government has also placed much emphasis in facilitating the development of SMEs in order to ensure their sustainability and continued contribution to the country's socio-economic development. In line with the attention given by government, many programs have been developed by numerous government agencies to provide training, financial support, and other relevant incentives to assist and monitor the development of SMEs in Malaysia. Despite many facilitating programs and funding given by the government, there are still daunting challenges faced by the SMEs in Malaysia (Ministry of Domestic Trade, 2017).

The Malaysian government has launched several projects, such as developing "green technology", "green business" and promoting "green consumerism" (WBCSD, 2008).

Indeed, as spotted by Crane & Desmond (2002), consumer consciousness on environmental issues is steadily gaining ground in this part of the world.

Therefore, businesses need to give environmental responsibility a high priority, not only in respect of the consumers but also to increase business effectiveness. Firms with good records on the environment are seen as well managed and fictitious. Successful marketing of products reduces the outcomes of environmentally non-sustainable business practices and enhance organizational performance (Hart & Milstein, 1999; Ginsberg & Bloom, 2004).

Ebitu, Glory, & Alfred (2016) explains that SMEs find themselves in a competitive environment both locally and globally, hence effective marketing practices are required to have a competitive edge over competitors, as well as to improve the business performances of the SMEs. Carneiro, Cunha, Fereira and Shamsuzzoha (2013) indicate that in order to survive in today's the competitive environment, manufacturing enterprises, essentially SMEs, are required to join efforts and to collaborate and share the prerequisite knowledge, capabilities, capital and pivotal mass to grow innovative businesses and deliver higher quality and multifaceted products.

In addition, to compete and survive in a highly competitive global marketplace, it is important for manufacturing SME managers to resort to the utilization of green marketing practices in order to have a competitive edge over their rivals, as well as to improve business performance (Maziriri & Maramura, 2022). Also, Kimani (2015) contends that green marketing practices in general, influence performance and that in relation to individual measures of

performance, green marketing practices have a statistically significant effect on innovativeness, effectiveness, as well as competitive advantage.

Considering the above, this study examines the impact of three green marketing practices, namely, green innovation, green packaging and green advertising on the CA, as well as BP among manufacturing SMEs in Malaysia.

The remaining part of this study is structured as follows: Section 2 provides an extant literature review on strategy, competitive advantage, and business performance. Section 3 deals with the framework specification. Section 4 data collection method and the findings of the study, while Section 5 focuses on the conclusions.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Green Marketing Practice**

According to Saini (2014), green marketing is a business practice that considers the consumer concerns about promoting preservation and conservation of natural resources.

Dangelico and Vocalelli (2017) defined green marketing as “the process of planning, implementing, and controlling the development, pricing, promotion, and distribution of products in a manner that satisfies the following three criteria: (1) customer needs are met, (2) organizational goals are attained, and (3) the process is compatible with eco-systems”.

It can be reasoned from the foregoing discussion that green marketing mirrors the goals of conventional marketing,

which are to facilitate exchanges with the intention of satisfying consumer needs profitably. The point of difference is that green marketing attempts to satisfy consumer needs with minimum detrimental impact on the natural environment (Singh & Pandey, 2012). Precisely, green marketing needs to be understood as a comprehensive phenomenon aimed at balancing consumption, production, and environmental sustainability (Chen & Chai, 2010). Moreover, “as increasing competition drives companies to become a greener company, and green marketing concept based on green environmental responsibility has become a strategy for enterprise” (Aytekin & Çelik, 2017).

The concept of green marketing practically and academically has been accepted to reach customers’ needs and expectation towards green products in a beneficial and sustainable approach (Lin, et al., 2017; Khare & Pandey, 2017).

According to Saini (2014), green marketing is a business practice that considers the consumer concerns about promoting preservation and conservation of natural resources. Green marketing is the way firms can advertise their products and at the same time, inform the consumers that they are working in an environmentally friendly way (Chen & Chang, 2012). Green marketing encompasses all marketing activities, such as research and development, product design, packaging, and advertising, that are necessary to develop and sustain consumers’ eco-friendly attitudes and behaviours, in a way that sustains the natural environment (Sarumathi, 2014)

### **Green packaging**

According to Khan, Hussain and Ajmal (2016) “green packing involves reducing the size, shape and weight of packaging and the use of environmentally friendly materials”.

### **Green advertising**

According to Kumar and Kumar (2017) “green advertising is an important facet of green marketing that communicates greenness in products, services, practices and processes of enterprises”.

### **Green innovation**

The classic definition of green innovation offered by Dangelico and Pujari (2010) is a multi-faceted process wherein three key types of environmental focus – material, energy, and pollution – are highlighted, based on their major impact on the environment at different stages of the product’s physical life cycle.

## **2.2 Competitive Advantage**

competitive advantage of a business refers to an enterprise’s ability to earn consistent profits over rival firms in the industry by delivering a service which cannot be matched easily (Arseculeratne & Yazdanifard, 2013). Gaining competitive advantage in terms of marketing is one of the objectives, on which enterprises are focusing, in an attempt, to change psychological and social perceptions of society (Shakeel & Khan 2011). Bulankulama, Khatibi and Herath (2014) define competitive advantage as an organizational capability to perform in one or many ways that competitors find difficult to reproduce now and in the future.

In addition, competitive advantage is something to do with more competitive markets; lower barriers to entry or simply a larger number of firms may give an industry an advantage in competing with foreign rivals (Gupta, 2015).

A competitive advantage is a technique for value-adding where future rivals cannot adopt and could hardly be replicated (Mnjala, 2014). Every enterprise that has a competing business or a resource that a enterprise has insight is particularly useful as a comparing desire (David & David, 2017).

There are several approaches to boost competitive advantages, including expense, development, reliability, quality, timeliness, new product releases, product line width, filling volume, customer service, effective capital deployment, distribution dependability and availability (Kwak, Seo, & Mason, 2018).

According to the findings of (Al Badi, 2018), all marketing mix aspects (location, product, pricing, and promotion) have a massive effect on obtaining a competitive advantage in enterprises. The outcomes of the research (Moravcikova et al., 2017) support recent green marketing literature suggesting that there is a significant interaction involving green marketing strategy and people that contributes to competitive advantage.

## **2.3 Business performance**

Business performance is an important component in investigating organizational phenomena (Ho, Ahmad & Ramayah 2016). Business

performance could be described by utilizing the main data in recognition of 'subjective business performance' calculating the secondary data to quantify 'objective business performance' or both as a cumulative indicator of the enterprise's ability to serve its stakeholders (Shad, Lai, Fatt, Klemeš & Bokhari 2019).

Uddin, Bose and Yousuf (2014) indicate that business performance is important to any business enterprise. Liu and others (2014) state that business performance is the basic embodiment of enterprise management, effectiveness, and efficiency. Further, to attract satisfactory business performance is the basis for the enterprise's survival and the principal reason for the existence of the enterprise (Liu et al., 2014). Gharakhani and Mousakhani (2012) view business performance as the ability of a enterprise to generate acceptable results and actions. Shehu and Mahmood (2014) describe performance of business in terms of revenue development, market share growth and the overall growth of the enterprise. Mark and Nwaiwu (2015) clarify that the enterprise is working to meet its customer satisfaction, employee happiness, social satisfaction, and sustainability targets by making the business productive.

Maziriri (2018) see business performance measurement is critical for the survival and development of business sodalities. The author expresses that performance quantification guarantees ceaseless change as the advance in objective accomplishment is always performed. The author maintains that if there are issues, these performance measurement frameworks give systems to actualizing change endeavors.

## **2.4 Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)**

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a substantial and crucial role in the economic growth of many nations across the world, particularly in developing economies (Ibrahim, Roslin & Mohamed, 2022).

The Malaysian economy relies heavily on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which account for 38 percent of the country's GDP or more than MYR 500 billion (GDP) (Ellis & Pecotich, 2011).

Around 97.2 percent of Malaysia's businesses are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), and they employ close to 70 percent of the country's workers (Ellis & Pecotich, 2011). The Malaysian government pays particular attention to local businesses through programs such as the Bumiputera Enterprise Enhancement Program (BEEP) and the Tunas Usahawan Belia Bumiputera Program (TUBE), which aim to generate jobs and increase exports (Alam, Salleh, Masukujjaman, Al-Shaikh, Makmor & Makhbul, 2022).

Aziz and Samad (2016) conducted a study which focused on examining the influence of innovation on competitive advantage in foods' manufacturing SMEs in Malaysia and they described manufacturing small and medium enterprises as those manufacturing enterprises or companies providing services related to manufacturing with sales turnover not exceeding RM50 million and employs full-time workers not exceeding 200 people.

## **3. Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of (Wu & Lin, 2016) has an essential part in research to explain the methodology used for the study. Thus, to direct this research

into its aim, a conceptual framework is necessary. As can be seen in “Fig. 1”, the author has developed a clear conceptual framework for this paper:

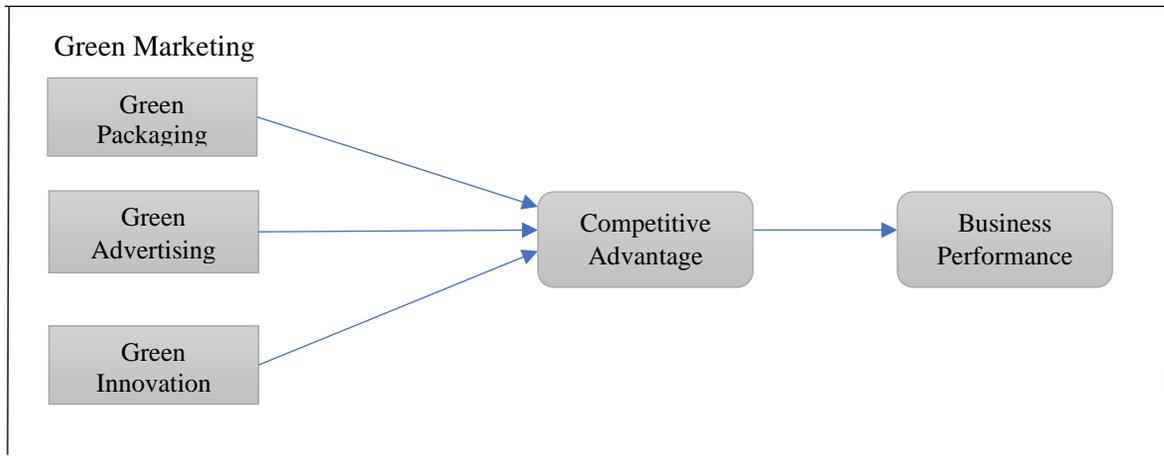


Fig. 1: Conceptual Framework

#### 4. Empirical Results and Discussion

##### 4.1 Profile of population

Table 1 Displays general features of respondents, including gender, age, educational level, and years of service:

Table 1: Profile of population

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage %	Total sampling
Gender	Male	75	59.1	127
	Female	52	40.9	
Age	30-20	8	6.2	127
	40-31	31	24.4	
	50-41	67	52.8	
	50 And over	21	16.5	
Educational	Diploma	14	11	127
	Bachelor	74	58.3	
	Master	29	22.8	
	Ph.D.	10	7.9	
Years of service	More Than 5-10	22	17.3	127
	More Than 10 -15	34	26.8	
	More Than 15-20	47	37	
	20 And over	24	18.9	

#### 4.2 Convergent validity

Convergent validity is defined as "subcategories of construct validity", is assessed to validate the measurement model. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is used to calculate the proportion of the Variance described by way of metrics for calculation errors. The lowest recommended reliability level is 0,7 based on the PLS review (Hair et al., 2017), And Average Variance Extracted (AVE) level 0.5 is the minimum

acceptable level. As seen in Table 2, composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha are deployed to evaluate the internal consistency reliability of each dimension. If the alpha coefficient of each part of a building in general exceeds 0.7, the objects are considered highly trustworthy (Kannan & Tan, 2005). The products were considered to be extremely accurate because the alpha coefficients of the individual Cronbach structures were over 0.7.

Table 2: The product of convergent variables of validity

Variables	Construct	Items	Outer Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Green Marketing	Green packaging	GP1	0.849	0.915	0.944	0.685
		GP2	0.976			
		GP3	0.877			
		GP4	0.913			
		GP5	0.907			
	Green advertising	GA1	0.945	0.882	0.903	0.799
		GA2	0.876			
		GA3	0.933			
		GA4	0.865			
		GA5	0.843			
	Green innovation	GI1	0.922	0.899	0.922	0.787
		GI2	0.876			
		GI3	0.790			
		GI4	0.888			
		GI5	0.855			
Competitive advantage	Competitive advantage	CA1	0.891	0.932	0.897	0.750
		CA2	0.876			
		CA3	0.899			
		CA4	0.902			
		CA5	0.789			
		CA6	0.877			
		CA7	0.839			
		CA8	0.899			
		CA9	0.902			
		CA10	0.799			
		BP1	0.844			

Business performance	Business performance	BP2	0.889	0.901	0.834	0.688
		BP3	0.798			
		BP4	0.844			
		BP5	0.803			
		BP6	0.833			
		BP7	0.790			
		BP8	0.769			

As Table 3 reveals., the correlation of latent variables and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker) Squared correlations were lower than the corresponding AVE estimates between the variables. This

finding indicates that the constructs had a stronger relationship to their respective indicators; the result indicated that the measure had adequate discriminant validity.

Table 3: Correlation of latent variables and discriminant validity

Variables	GP	GA	GI	CA	BP
GP	0.838				
GA	0.752	0.809			
GI	0.675	0.468	0.898		
CA	0.634	0.642	0.637	0.855	
BP	0.546	0.538	0.674	0.567	0.873

Furthermore, about the explanation of the convergent reliability, it is significant for assessing the distinctiveness for the variables. In this manner, the researcher has used HTMT is the association ratio of attributes to attribute correlations. HTMT is the mean for all associations between indicators measuring various combinations in comparison with the average links among indicators measuring the same structure (Sarstedt et

al., 2016). HTMT was also performed to assess discriminatory validity. HTMT's approach is to estimate the relationship between structures.

Hair (2017) suggested that the value of HTMT be smaller than 0.85, which meant that the combinations were distinct. Table 4 reveals the HTMT values for all variables in this paper below 0.85. Consequently, adequate discriminatory structures were offered.

Table 4: Correlation of latent constructs and discriminant validity (HTMT method)

Variables	GP	GA	GI	CA	BP
GP					
GA	0.677				
GI	0.745	0.523			
CA	0.579	0.559	0.613		
BP	0.734	0.542	0.710	0.635	

### 4.3 Hypotheses Testing (Path Coefficient)

The final step in evaluating the structural model is examining the research hypotheses through assessing the path coefficient. The less the p-value, the

more significant the relationship is (Hair et al., 2017). Table 5 shows below the direct relationship results of the structural model, the relationship between hypothesis as H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7.

Table 5: Direct results of hypotheses

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	Std. Error	T-value	P-value	Inference	Decision
GP-CA	0.204	0.065	3.222	0.001	Significant *	Supported
GA-CA	0.359	0.109	3.494	0.000	Significant **	Supported
GI-CA	0.379	0.055	7.423	0.000	Significant **	Supported
GP-BP	0.178	0.053	3.301	0.001	Significant *	Supported
GA-BP	0.631	0.076	7.900	0.000	Significant **	Supported
GI-BP	0.055	0.023	2.579	0.010	Significant *	Supported
CA-BP	0.667	0.077	8.581	0.000	Significant **	Supported

### 4.4 Testing the Mediation Relationship (Indirect Effects)

The theoretical design of this paper provides a unique opportunity to test whether competitive advantage mediate the relationship between green marketing practices and business performance.

Hayes (2009) define the mediator as a variable that accounts for all or part of the relationship between a predictor and outcome. The predictor in this paper is (GMP) while the outcome is the competitive advantage. Table 6 displays the effects for the mediating variable of the indirect effect.

Table 6: Results of the Specific Indirect Effects (Mediation Test)

Hypothesis	Path Coefficient( $\beta$ )	Std. Error	T-value	P-value	Inference	Decision
GP-CA-BP	0.403	0.054	7.641	0.000	Significant **	Supported

GA-CA-BP	0.075	0.031	2.530	0.001	Significant *	Supported
GI-CA-BP	0.198	0.072	2.578	0.000	Significant **	Supported

The important information presented in Tables 4,5 of transactions is the statistical significance of each dependent variable. The value of t and the value of p tell us if the coefficients of the variables are zero in the population. If p is less than 0.005, We may conclude that the variables are statistically significant. In our case, we may see from the table that all independent variables have a positive effect and that the p-values for all independent variables are less than 0.05. Hence, a reasonable conclusion can state that a significant and positive impact, and we reject our empty assumptions and thus support the assumptions:

H1: There is a positive relationship between green packaging and competitive advantage.

H2: There is a positive relationship between green advertising and competitive advantage.

H3: There is a positive relationship between green innovation and competitive advantage.

H4: There is a positive relationship between green packaging and Business performance.

H5: There is a positive relationship between green advertising and Business performance.

H6: There is a positive relationship between green innovation and Business performance.

H7: There is a positive relationship between competitive advantage and Business performance.

H8: There is a positive relationship between green packaging indirectly affects a business performance through competitive advantage as a mediate variable.

H9: There is a positive relationship between green advertising indirectly affects a business performance through competitive advantage as a mediate variable.

H10: There is a positive relationship between green innovation indirectly affects a business performance through competitive advantage as a mediate variable.

#### 4.5 Discussion

In the previous section, the overall results of this paper are presented through different statistical methods and measures. However, this section is about the discussion of key research findings.

Firstly, the test for the measurement model has been carried out to test the reliability of each variable. In this regard, the values of composite reliability, Cronbach Alpha, and outer loading of all the variables are identified, as above the threshold, thus there was no need to drop any factor or variable from this paper.

Apart from that, the distinctiveness and similarity of the variables have been tested through the HTMT ratio. With respect to the results of HTMT ratio, no variable was found to violate the criteria of HTMT ratio; hence, all the variables were qualified for path analysis.

From the summary of findings, it is clear, that the Green Marketing Practices had an effect on competitive advantage and Business performance at SMEs in Malaysia.

The paper found that the three independent variables in the study (Green packaging, green advertising, green innovation) influenced Business performance by competitive advantage as mediating.

This finding further supports the results of the research by (Hasan & Ali, 2015; Moravcikova, et al., 2017; Al-Murad, N. Y. M. 2022). The findings provided sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis and established that Green Marketing Practices influence the competitive advantage and Business performance of SMEs positively.

## **5. Conclusions, Limitations and Future Research**

### **5.1 Conclusions**

The aim of this paper was to test the impact of Green Marketing Practices on competitive advantage and Business performance at SMEs in Malaysia.

The findings revealed that Green Marketing Practices (Green packaging, green advertising, green innovation) and competitive advantage play a key role in improving Business performance.

Additionally, the competitive advantage positively contributes to improving the Business performance of companies.

More importantly, the competitive advantage mediates the relationship between Green Marketing Practices (Green packaging, green advertising, green innovation) and the Business performance, in which both direct and

indirect effects do exist and point in the same direction (i.e., denoting a positive relationship).

Hence, the higher the level of Green Marketing Practices implementation, the higher the competitive advantage and Business performance.

According to the aims of this paper, the researcher also confirms that both Green Marketing Practices and competitive advantage influence the Business performance positively which, in turn, supports the study hypotheses.

### **5.2 Limitations and Future Research**

This paper is selective and offers opportunities for further studies. However, the paper findings are limited by its focus only on companies of manufacturing. Further research could be done in the service sector of the country to generalize the results of this paper or indicate a need to modify the related concepts.

Second, self-reported data were used, possible interference with the survey cannot be ruled out because the respondents' interpretation and answers are not inherently impartial. A future study could use an on-site survey process with a researcher helping the respondent during the questionnaire without guaranteeing that the employees will complete the survey personally.

Finally, qualitative research on Green Marketing Practices a deeper understanding of how companies manage them is very necessary. Future research will conduct interviews or conduct on-site visits with executives and employees to further explore these activities.

### **Disclosure statement**

The writers have not identified any possible conflicts of interest.

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