

Research

Impact of entrepreneurial orientation, marketing capability, and market orientation on business sustainability and corporate reputation

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Abstract

This research aimed to explore the effect of market orientation, marketing capability, and entrepreneurial orientation on business sustainability and corporate reputation in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). It also aimed to test the mediating effect of business sustainability between the stated factors and corporate reputation. The required data was obtained from employees of various SMEs in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) through a survey method. Structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was used for data analysis in order to test the hypotheses and reach at conclusions. The analysis confirmed that entrepreneurial orientation and market orientation have significant effects on business sustainability and corporate reputation. It was also found that marketing capability plays a key role in affecting business sustainability and corporate reputation. Lastly, the results revealed that business sustainability mediates the relationship among the selected factors and corporate reputation. The findings contribute to the existing empirical research on this topic and suggest that SMEs' management should emphasize on these factors in an attempt to ensure the sustainability of their businesses and strengthen their reputations.

Keywords Business sustainability · Corporate reputation · Entrepreneurial orientation · Market orientation · Marketing capability

1 Introduction

The topic of sustainability has attracted the attentions of businesses practitioners and academicians in the recent years. The word of sustainability was initially introduced for dealing with the deregulations of natural environment and its undesirable effects on economic growth, human health, and societal well-being. According to Watson et al. [1], sustainability refers to the ability of a business to make significant developments in a society by meeting various needs of the present generation and concurrently safeguarding the future generations' abilities to fulfill their desired needs as well. A significant amount of research in the academic literature exhibited that sustainability can be measured and evaluated based on economic, environmental and social performance. Savitz and Weber [2] demonstrated that business sustainability creates advantages for organizational stakeholders, enhances the welfare of the individuals who interact with it, and ensures environmental protection. Moreover, sustainability exemplifies different practices of businesses, for instance,

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emphasizing on developing environmental-friendly products, green manufacturing processes, improved practices of human resources, reducing the carbon footprint via pollution reductions, recycling, and community development [3].

Nowadays, sustainable development has been regarded as an important theme of research due to its significance in affecting economic, environmental, social, and political aspects. As a result of the increasing competitions in business markets and the enlarged interventions of governments for regulating corporate operations, firms have experienced challenges in balancing their economic performance with the social improvement while addressing environmental concerns. According to Ng and Rezaee [4], sustainable firms focus on creating several benefits for their different stakeholders, and at the same time consider environmental protection and enhancing the society's quality of life as a priority. Firms have become extremely conscious about environmental substances that are predominantly caused by the environmentalism trends in the society. In other words, there are growing pressures from different business stakeholders towards considering environmental protection into organizational agendas. Besides that, the government agencies and different regulatory bodies in diverse areas in the world have put further pressures on businesses and, for this reason, it has become hard for any firm to ignore the actual and potential effects of its operations on the immediate environment [5].

Prior researches regarded market orientation and marketing capability as important strategies that should be capitalized by entrepreneurs and firms of different sizes in order to build and sustain their competitiveness in target markets [6]. Market orientation tends to be closely linked with the marketing capabilities of a firm [7], because market-oriented businesses are likely to possess strong marketing capabilities to satisfy customers' needs [8]. According to Chao and Spillan [9], a firm which acquires distinctive capabilities to support its market orientation strategy tends to emphasize on learning and meeting the diverse needs of its customers and clients in the target markets. Chen et al. [10] also reported that a market-oriented company focuses on continuous product and service innovations in order to fulfil customers' expectations and increase its social performance. Equally important is the role of entrepreneurial orientation which was recognized in the business literature as a key factor that shapes competitive advantage and business performance [11].

Furthermore, academics and business practitioners alike have started paying more attention towards corporate sustainability and its impact on corporate reputation [12, 13]. This may partly be attributed to the notion that the dimensions of business sustainability are the main antecedents of corporate reputation [14]. From a universal viewpoint, reputation tends to be associated with stakeholders' evaluations of corporate credibility and ability to fill their needs and expectations. According to Gomez-Trujillo et al. [15], a firm's involvement in social responsibility programs enable it to improve its reputation. Hillebrand and Money [12] found that the reputation and public perception of a company can be greatly impacted by its adherence to sustainability standards. Prior researches also regarded corporate sustainability and reputation as important intangible assets that ultimately lead to improved firm performance and success [16]. This was supported by Melo and Garrido-Morgado [17] who outlined the significance of sustainability practices in driving corporate reputation and verified that both of these intangible assets are difficult to be replicated or imitated; thus, they represent valuable sources of sustainable competitive advantage. However, there is unclear understanding in the existing literature about the linkages between business sustainability and corporate reputation [15]. Alon and Vidovic [18] also reported that there is insufficient research on the relationship between business sustainability and reputation.

Nevertheless, despite the importance on entrepreneurial orientation, marketing capability, and market orientation in affecting business sustainability and corporate reputation, there are very few empirical studies on this area. In essence, there is a scarce research about the effect of entrepreneurial orientation, marketing capability, and market orientation on corporate reputation and the mediating effect of business sustainability between them. Certain scholars [19, 20] also pointed out that not many studies have looked at the connections among entrepreneurial orientation and corporate sustainability. Mariadoss et al. [21] further revealed that there are insufficient studies on marketing capabilities and corporate sustainability. However, in fact, the question "Do entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation, and marketing capability affect corporate reputation indirectly through business sustainability?" is still unexplored. In other words, this research attempts to check if business sustainability mediates the association between the stated factors and corporate reputation.

Certain researches have also tested the mediating role of business sustainability previously amongst technological innovation and organizational performance [22]. Yet, there is no evidence in the existing literature to support whether business sustainability acts as a key mediator in the relationship between the selected constructs (entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation, and marketing capability) and corporate reputation—despite the fact that business sustainability is allied with positive brand outcomes. By looking at empirical literature, it is also hard to find a study that tested the empirical relationship among market orientation and business sustainability [23], particularly in SMEs context. Thus, this research provides a valuable contribution to the extant literature on business sustainability and corporate reputation by bringing novel insights from the UAE. In previous empirical studies, it is noticed that a very limited attention has

been devoted towards exploring the impact of entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation, and marketing capability on business sustainability and corporate reputation. Furthermore, this is the first study that integrates all of the stated factors in one research framework and used business sustainability as a mediator between them. The present research further corresponds to the recommendation in past literature which highlighted the necessity for examining the drivers of business sustainability in SMEs' context. The review of previous research that is deemed relevant to this topic is presented in the following section.

2 Literature review

2.1 Corporate reputation

The term "corporate reputation" was defined in the literature as the general evaluations of a firm's image from the perspective of business stakeholders, which include customers, shareholders, employees, and the general public [24]. Lee et al. [25] also referred corporate reputation to the overall attitude that stakeholders have towards an organization over the course of time. According to Abratt and Kleyn [26], a firm's reputation is shaped by consumers' impressions and experiences based on the degree to which it has satisfied their needs and expectations. It has been suggested in the previous research that a firm's reputation represents a significant source of competitive advantage [27]. Kotha et al. [28] pointed out that a firm's reputation is both a significant indicator of brand value and a primary measure of its market performance. They added that customers rely on a firm's reputation as a primary point of reference, which reduces the perceived risk and uncertainty. This, in turn, increases advertising's efficacy, customer base, and satisfaction levels.

Companies nowadays are under increasing pressures from market dynamics and competitors to prioritize reputation management in order to differentiate themselves through better products and services, as well as boost their credibility and public perception [25, 29]. Corporate reputation has been regarded as a key factor behind the success of strong brands. A good reputation for a firm can help it save money in the long run. In addition, individuals prefer to work for brands with positive images, and therefore, it will be easy to attract and retain a talented workforce at low cost [30]. Earlier literature established that customers select products based on perceived quality and brands in relation to perceived empathy [31]. Therefore, enterprises are expected to provide a bundle of benefits that improve product quality and foster brand reputation. However, in order to develop a good reputation for a firm, it is critical to prioritize the needs of business stakeholders and offer them with the best benefits available that are superior to those provided by competitors. Brand reputation tends to be established based on the ability to detect market needs and develop products or services to fulfill them. Firms that comply with government regulations and respond to stakeholders' need tend to be perceived positively and gain greater brand equity. Involving in social responsibility activities are also vital for enhancing brand equity and improving business value [32].

The resource-based view perspective (RBV) provides the theoretical underpinnings for this study. According to RBV, a company's intangible assets that are scarce, unique, and hard to imitate enable it to secure better competitive advantages and boost its bottom line [33]. According to Lee and Roh [34], the reputation of a firm is a valuable intangible asset which is extremely difficult for rivals to replicate and it represents a key competitive advantage. In addition, a company's reputation is not something that can be bought or sold, rather it is cultivated and nurtured over time. A corporation can gain a competitive edge that boosts its financial performance by investing in this scarce, uneasy to imitate, and unique asset. Previous research has also acknowledged the significance of a firm's reputation as an intangible asset that allow to it compete with its rivals and obtain a larger number of customers who will have the willingness to pay higher prices for its products [35–37]. Generally, reputation is a unique intangible asset which is difficult to replicate, making it a key element in shaping the success of a brand [38, 39]. To achieve this status, regular research into the varying requirements and expectations of a company's stakeholders is essential. In a larger sense, one could say that a brand's reputation is tied to its credibility.

2.2 Entrepreneurial orientation

Entrepreneurial orientation is one of the highly researched topics in the business literature [40], and has been considered as a key strategy for building a competitive advantage and improving financial and non-financial performance. Miller [41] provided a comprehensive definition for entrepreneurial orientation and described it as the active engagement of a firm in creating innovative offerings, taking risks for business development, and being proactive in introducing new

innovations. Similarly, Morris and Paul [42] stated that entrepreneurial orientation exists when the top management of a firm takes calculated risks, proves its innovativeness, and becomes proactive in implementing the change before others. Most of the previous studies relied on innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking to measure entrepreneurial orientation [43]. Innovativeness can be described as the creativity, tendency to involve in generating new ideas and introducing new or modified products, processes, services, or technologies. On the other hand, proactiveness exists when a firm undertakes an initiative to anticipate and pursue new opportunities before its competitors. Furthermore, risk taking occurs when a firm makes bold decisions and commit its viable resources to undertake new, uncertain and risky ventures [43].

The benefits of entrepreneurial orientation appear through the ability to anticipate and capitalize on various opportunities that arise, and then introduce new offerings, create the industry's standards, and take control over the target market and channels of distribution. Successful companies focus on introducing innovative products that are both environmentally friendly and beneficial to customers. By getting into the market with these innovations before their rivals, they can reap economic benefits and charge higher rates for them. Notably, entrepreneurial orientation is highly correlated with market orientation as both focus on introducing new products and service to satisfy market needs [42]. According to Luoma-Aho [44], consumers are likely to have favorable perceptions towards a company which regularly offers products that are innovative. In the SMEs context, entrepreneurial orientation represents an important approach for developing new products and achieving sustainable competitive advantage [45]. Previous studies showed that entrepreneurial orientation has a positive impact on business sustainability [46, 47] and corporate reputation [19, 45, 48–50]. Rauch et al. [43] further reported that entrepreneurial orientation is a key predictor of economic performance. Moreover, Cravens et al. [51] added that understanding customers' needs and wants and introducing products to meet them enable a company to secure a competitive edge and boost its brand image. Prior research also reported that business sustainability has a positive impact on corporate reputation [52] and could mediate the relationship amongst entrepreneurial orientation and corporate reputation. For instance, El-Khalil and Mezher [53] found that business sustainability mediates the relationship between agility and operational performance. However, based on the extant review of literature, it is hard to find a study that tested the mediating role of business sustainability on the relationship amongst entrepreneurial orientation and corporate reputation. Consequently, the following hypotheses are suggested:

H1 Entrepreneurial orientation has a positive effect on business sustainability.

H2 Entrepreneurial orientation has a positive effect on corporate reputation.

H3 Business sustainability mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and corporate reputation.

2.3 Market orientation

Market orientation occurs when a firm directs its efforts to collect, disseminate and react to market information for the purpose of creating greater values for its customers and meeting their needs [54]. It was defined by Ruekert [55] as the extent to which various units in a firm acquire the necessary information about their current and potential customers, and then apply this knowledge in developing marketing strategies to satisfy customers' needs, wants and expectations. Market orientated firms have better abilities for responding to the emerging challenges with regards to maintaining customers [56]. These firms continuously focus on obtaining customers' feedback to learn about their needs and desires and then design the appropriate marketing program that delivers the greatest benefits for both parties [57]. Morgan et al. [56] viewed market orientation as a significant predictor of firm performance and brand competitiveness. Kumar et al. [58] also suggested that a firm which undertakes the initiative of market orientation before others tends to attain higher performance and sustain its business on the long term. Market orientation among successful firms further necessitates them to introduce innovative products and services from time to time, which is also a key strategy of successful entrepreneurs. Such firms continuously evaluate market needs and the changing policies to ensure the achievement of environmental sustainability.

Firms with high market orientation should build their brand images, learn about cultural values in target markets, and relate their contributions to environmental protection in order to please or satisfy the customers. In this regard, market-oriented corporations are likely to emphasize on environmental friendly practices throughout their operations [10]. Furthermore, firms that adopts market orientation strategy tend to regularly collect important information about their diverse groups of customers, network of suppliers, and also learn about new social, political, technological, and

environmental trends. This information can help them in designing environmentally friendly products and services that can best serve their customers and fulfil their responsibilities towards the society at large [11]. Prior researchers found that market orientation has a significant positive effect on business sustainability [59, 60] and corporate reputation [61, 62]. They added that corporate reputation can be established based on the ability to regularly monitor market environment, understand emerging customers' needs, and design product or services to fulfill stakeholders' expectations. These activities enable it to build customer satisfaction and trust, thereby improving and reinforcing corporate reputation. Furthermore, business sustainability can function as a mediator between market orientation and corporate reputation, because corporate sustainability tends to be fostered through focusing on market needs, which leads to favourable brand image. This was supported by prior researches which showed that market orientation positively affects corporate sustainability [58, 63–65] and in turn, corporate sustainability leads to greater corporate reputation [15, 66]. Hence, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H4 Market orientation has a positive effect on business sustainability.

H5 Market orientation has a positive effect on corporate reputation.

H6 Business sustainability mediates the relationship between market orientation and corporate reputation.

2.4 Marketing capability

During the last few years, the concept of “capabilities” was prominently used in previous researches and called it as “marketing capabilities”, and currently it is one of the foremost research topics. Marketing capability was conceptualized as the ability of a firm to improve marketing aspects that focus on communicating its products and services through diverse promotional tools and distribution networks [67]. Pratono and Mahmood [68] also described marketing capability as the ability to manage the marketing mix elements by designing effective pricing, promotion, distribution, and product development strategies. Drawing upon the dynamic capabilities perspective, a firm's marketing capability represents an important determinant of its existence and survival in today's highly competitive markets. A strong marketing capability appears through the acquisition of competitive strengths in setting and implementing appropriate marketing strategies that can increase a firm's financial performance and achieve business objectives in dynamic markets [56]. According to Hart and Dowell [69], the resource-based view of the firm suggests that the distinctive competitive advantage of a firm is rooted in capabilities that accelerate environmentally sustainable economic action.

Earlier literature also suggested that marketing capability contributes to economic performance of a firm's products and services [70–72]. Moreover, firms with robust marketing capabilities tend to develop innovation-based strategies that focus on sustainability, and then communicate about these innovations to customers in order to attract them and build a sustainable competitive advantage. Mariadoss et al. [21] concluded that SMEs which acquire distinctive marketing capabilities tend to be more innovative and have better chances to achieve sustainability objectives. These views are in line with that of Ruiz-Ortega and García-Villaverde [50] who revealed that marketing capability enables a firm to improve its reputation, and ultimately engender greater performance outcomes. Kamboj and Rahman [73] also added that marketing capability enables firms to attain sustainable innovation. Moreover, there are some factors that may mediate the relationship amongst marketing capability and corporate reputation. In previous literature, business sustainability was used as a mediator between different factors and organizational performance. Jacomossi et al. [74] also reported that business sustainability plays a noteworthy role in strengthening the association between innovation and competitive advantage. However, in the existing literature, there is an insufficient evidence to verify the mediating role of business sustainability between marketing capability and corporate reputation. In order to address this gap, business sustainability is used in the present research as a key mediator amongst marketing capability and corporate reputation. Thus, the following research hypotheses are postulated:

H7 Marketing capability has a positive effect on business sustainability.

H8 Marketing capability has a positive effect on corporate reputation.

H9 Business sustainability mediates the relationship between marketing capability and corporate reputation.

2.5 Business sustainability

Sustainable business practices are increasingly seen as a key factor in a company's long-term prosperity. Sustainable development occurs when organizations make conscientious attempts to balance current stakeholder needs with those of future generations, [75]. According to prior literature [20, 76], sustainability is used to describe a system's ability to balance social and economic needs without compromising ecological systems. According to Sartori et al. [77], the term 'business sustainability' emphasizes on the attainment of three key goals: economic, social, and environmental performance. Meng [78] outlined that business sustainability places equal importance on both the achievement of a company's goals and the welfare of the society. According to the above definitions of sustainability, businesses should not just focus on maximizing profits for their shareholders; but they also need to think about how their actions will affect their staff, the community at large, and the natural environment [79]. Sustainable practices pay off in the long run through increased profits, greater quality of products, customer satisfaction, employee retention, favourable brand reputation, the possibility of government support, savings from a more efficient supply chain and logistics, and minimized financial as well as legal risk associated with protecting the environment.

As a result of the accelerated rate of development in today's corporate world, it is essential for companies to conduct thorough analyses of both their internal and external environments on a regular basis. This will enable them to better grasp the different needs of their customers and make better use of their resources as they strive to meet new challenges and gain long-term competitive edge [73]. Businesses of all sizes today understand that their success depends on meeting the demands of their customers, who base their judgments largely according to their impact on the environment and society [80]. According to Martínez and del Bosque [13], organizations can improve their images and boost consumer loyalty by embracing sustainability practices. Prior literature [4, 81] also documented that a company which implements sustainable practices in its business operations has the potential to enjoy reduced costs of equity capital and a higher level of brand value. Dyllick and Muff [5] argued that sustainable business practices are demonstrated by the reduction of emissions, the protection of a society, and the achievement of financial targets. They further added that such businesses benefit through reduced operational risks and expenses, increased interest from prospective employees, enhanced brand recognition and loyalty, and stronger competitive advantages.

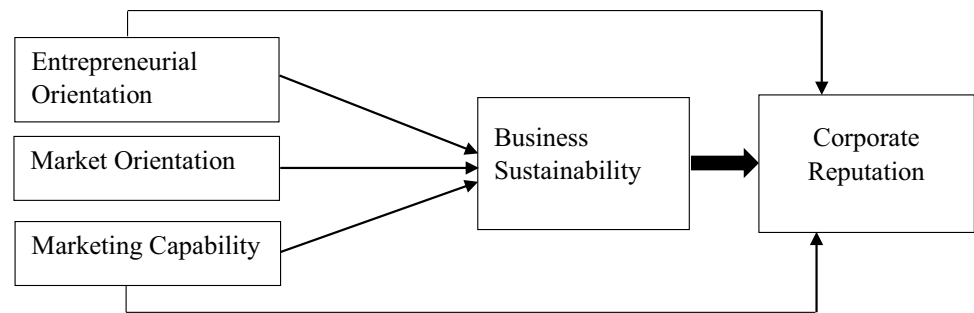
In prior literature, business sustainability has been viewed as an essential predictor of corporate reputation [13, 15]. Lee et al. [25] indicated that socially responsible activities improve a firm's brand image and consumers' perceptions toward its products or services. Certain scholars [13–15] reported a positive correlation between the environmental, economic, and social dimensions of sustainability and corporate reputation, and this indicates that sustainability activities can develop the reputation of firms. Melo et al. [17] also confirmed the implications of sustainability as a key determinant of corporate reputation owing to its significance in boosting the firm's hard to imitate competitive advantages. Unal and Tascioglu [82] supported this notion, suggesting that the disclosure of sustainability activities positively affects consumers' trust towards the firm and improves their perception of its reputation. In addition to that, corporate sustainability and reputation can boost customers' satisfaction and repurchase intentions, and above all their behavioral responses, for instance brand loyalty and word of mouth [83]. More support was acknowledged by prior researches [4, 15] which indicated that the perception of social responsibility activities and doing good have momentous impact on customers' satisfaction and trust, which as a result affect corporate reputation. Therefore, the subsequent hypothesis is projected:

H10 Business sustainability has a positive effect on corporate reputation.

Based on the above literature and drawing upon the theory of dynamic capabilities and the resource based view perspective, the theoretical framework for this paper is displayed below in Fig. 1.

3 Methodology

In this study, a cross-sectional design and a quantitative survey were used to collect the necessary data for measuring and examining the direct and indirect impact of entrepreneurial orientation, marketing capability, and market orientation on corporate reputation via business sustainability in SMEs' context. In particular, the SMEs chosen to

Fig. 1 Research framework

accomplish the objective of this research span across a wide range of industries, from manufacturing and services to restaurants and retail. They were categorized into three groups—production, service, and commerce for simplicity of interpretation. All participants were briefed about the study's purpose and assured regarding the confidentiality of their responses before collecting any information from them. Each respondent has verbally agreed and showed the consent to participate voluntarily in this research without any influence. The suggestions of Krejcie and Morgan [84] were considered in order to ascertain the suitable sample size for the targeted population. At present, the total population of targeted SMEs in the UAE exceeds 557,000 and they represent 94% of total businesses in the country. Throughout the data collection process, convenience sampling method was utilized to ensure that the desired number of responses can be obtained from the targeted respondents. Out of 630 questionnaires being distributed on the managers and owners of SMEs for participating in this study, only 206 were returned. Only one response was obtained from each of the sampled SMEs.

The measurement items for all constructs were adapted from previous research with only minor modifications to make them suitable for the context of this study. In detail, the construct of business sustainability was measured through the scale developed earlier by Khan and Quaddus [85]. All respondents were instructed to rate their companies' sustainability initiatives based on 12 items, divided equally between the environmental, the economic, and social sustainability aspects. To measure corporate reputation, a four-item scale was taken from Liao [86]. Additionally, entrepreneurial orientation was measured through seven-items which were previously tested and validated by Chavez et al. [45]. Market orientation was also measured based on five items taken from Buli [87]. Similarly, six items were employed based on the study of Ngo and O'Cass [88] to measure and test marketing capability. A Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used across all measurement items.

4 Analysis of results

The SPSS software was utilized for conducting the descriptive analysis to determine the characteristics of participants. The descriptive results displayed that 78.6% of the participants hold managerial positions, while 21.4% are business owners. In terms of the professional experience, 10.8% of them have less than 5 years, while 34.8% have between 6 and 10 years. Among the respondents, 18.1% had from 11 to 15 years of professional experience in the industry, whereas 36.2% had a work experience of 16 years or above. Furthermore, the frequency tables showed that 63.2% of respondents work for companies with 5–25 employees. Lastly, the statistical results depicted that the majority of the participants came from the service industry, accounting for 57.8% of the total response, followed by those from trade sector (27.9%), while 14.3% from the manufacturing sector.

The measurement model was estimated in order to verify the reliability and validity assumptions for all constructs. The procedure was performed by calculating factor loadings, internal consistency (reliability analysis), and the average variance extracted (AVE) Hair et al. [89]. In line of the suggestions proposed by Hair et al. [90], composite reliability and the Cronbach's Alpha were employed for checking the internal consistency among all constructs. The recommended threshold for both measures is 0.70, and the results displayed that all the measurement scales included in this study surpassed this value. Additionally, by looking at the factor loadings and AVE, we were able to assess if the constructs were valid and reliable. The analysis showed that all items' loadings (see Fig. 2) and AVE values for the constructs included in this paper are higher of 0.5, which provide an indication of acceptable convergent validity [90]. All of the AVE values and reliability indicators are displayed in Table 1.

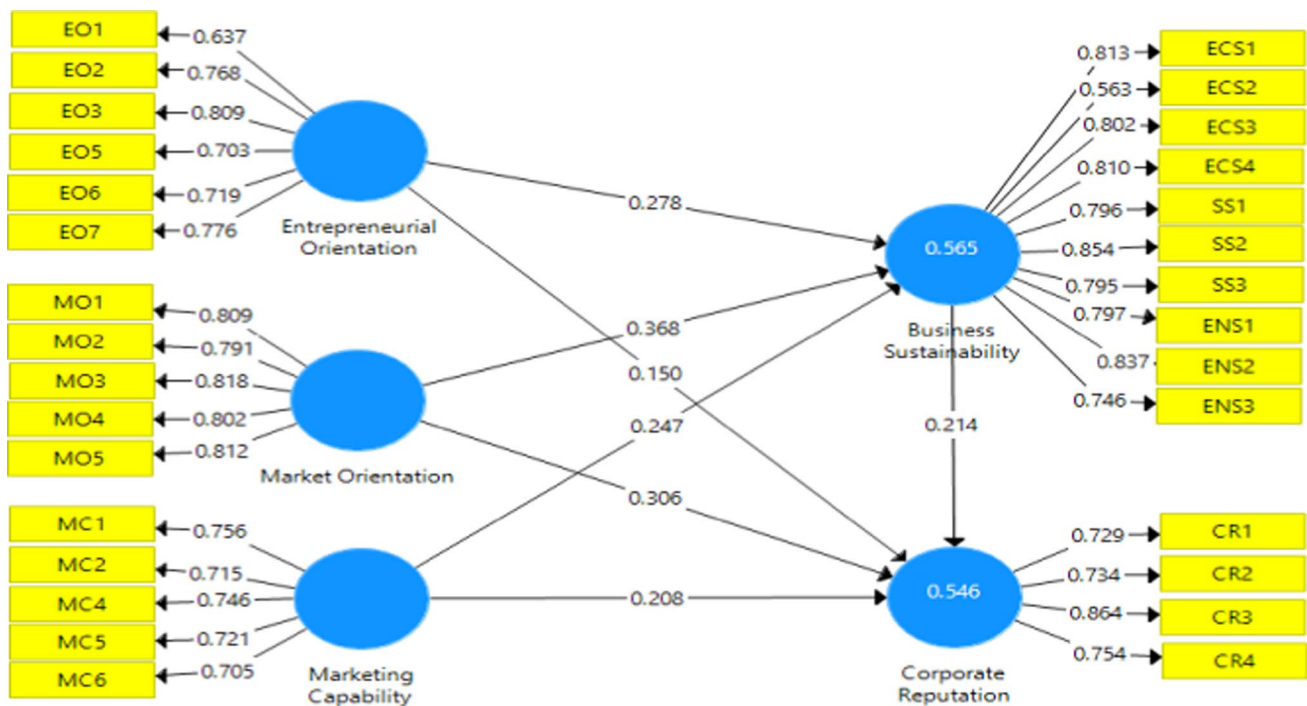


Fig. 2 Measurement model

The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was utilized for the purpose of evaluating and estimating the measurement scales because it has been considered as an accurate measure for testing the internal consistency across multiple items. As displayed in Table 1, the Cronbach’s alpha for entrepreneurial orientation (0.841), market orientation (0.866), marketing capability (0.833), and business sustainability (0.941) are higher than the 0.7 threshold value that was recommended by Hair et al. [90]. The reliability assumptions were supported by a composite reliability calculation, and the findings displayed that the values for all constructs are acceptable. In addition, a test for discriminant validity across all constructs was conducted as per Fornell and Larcker’s [91] suggestions. According to the authors, when the square roots of the AVEs of the individual constructs are larger than the correlations with the constructs, we have evidence of discriminant validity. It can be seen from Table 2 that the results generally support the assumptions of discriminant validity.

The proposed hypotheses for the present study were verified according to the output of structural model which was derived via Smart PLS-SEM. As previously noted, obtaining satisfactory factor loadings for the residual items in the measurement model was necessary for the verification of the hypotheses. The findings as shown in Table 3 point out that entrepreneurial orientation has a positive effect on business sustainability ($\beta = 0.278$, $t\text{-value} = 3.104$, $p < 0.05$) and corporate reputation ($\beta = 0.150$, $t\text{-value} = 1.993$, $p < 0.05$), consequently, H1 and H2 are confirmed. It was also found that market orientation positively affected business sustainability ($\beta = 0.368$, $t\text{-value} = 3.991$, $p < 0.05$) and corporate reputation ($\beta = 0.306$, $t\text{-value} = 3.211$, $p < 0.05$), and this indicates that H4 and H5 are supported. The results also showed that marketing capability has a positive effect on business sustainability ($\beta = 0.247$, $t\text{-value} = 3.012$, $p < 0.05$) and corporate reputation ($\beta = 0.208$, $t\text{-value} = 2.212$, $p < 0.05$); hence, H7 and H8 are accepted. Finally, the findings display that business sustainability has a positive effect on corporate reputation ($\beta = 0.214$, $t\text{-value} = 2.005$, $p < 0.05$); thus H10 is supported. Overall, entrepreneurial orientation, marketing capability, and market orientation explain 56.5% of variance in business sustainability. Collectively, these factors and business sustainability explain 54.6% of variance in corporate reputation.

To calculate the mediating effect of business sustainability between the independent variables (entrepreneurial orientation, marketing capability, and market orientation) and corporate reputation, the recommendations of Preacher and Hayes [92] were followed in this study. First, the indirect impact of each independent variable on the dependent variable (corporate reputation) was determined. According to their recommendations, if the p-value is statistically significant, then the first criteria for the existence of a mediating effect is met. Then, in the next step, it is necessary to calculate the lower and upper bound values. The mediating impact can be proven if zero does not fall between the lower and upper bound values while setting the Confidence Intervals (CIs) at 95%. Otherwise, evidence of the mediating effect is lacking. The findings shown in Table 4 demonstrate that the indirect effect of entrepreneurial orientation

Table 1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Construct	Item	Factor loadings	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Entrepreneurial orientation	EO1	0.637	0.830	0.877	0.544
	EO2	0.768			
	EO3	0.809			
	EO5	0.703			
	EO6	0.719			
	EO7	0.776			
	Market orientation	MO1			
MO2		0.791			
MO3		0.818			
MO4		0.802			
MO5		0.812			
Marketing capability	MC1	0.756	0.780	0.850	0.531
	MC2	0.715			
	MC4	0.746			
	MC5	0.721			
	MC6	0.705			
Business sustainability	ECS1	0.813	0.930	0.941	0.617
	ECS2	0.563			
	ECS3	0.802			
	ECS4	0.810			
	SS1	0.796			
	SS2	0.854			
	SS3	0.795			
	ENS1	0.797			
	ENS2	0.837			
	ENS3	0.746			
Corporate reputation	CR1	0.729	0.775	0.855	0.596
	CR2	0.734			
	CR3	0.864			
	CR4	0.754			

Table 2 Discriminant validity

	Business sustainability	Corporate reputation	Entrepreneurial orientation	Market orientation	Marketing capability
Business sustainability	0.785				
Corporate reputation	0.640	0.772			
Entrepreneurial orientation	0.602	0.540	0.737		
Market orientation	0.675	0.659	0.546	0.806	
Marketing capability	0.613	0.596	0.487	0.627	0.729

The diagonal values/boldface values are the square root of AVE of the latent variables and indicate the highest in any column or row. Off-diagonals are correlations

on corporate reputation is supported (t-value = 2.810, LL = 0.054, UL = 0.305), thus, H3 is confirmed. The analysis also verified that the indirect effect of market orientation on corporate reputation is supported (t-value = 3.262, LL = 0.094, UL = 0.376), thus, H6 is confirmed. Finally, the results exhibited that the indirect effect of marketing capability on corporate reputation is supported (t-value = 3.028, LL = 0.056, UL = 0.259), thus, H9 is confirmed.

Table 3 Results of hypotheses

	Hypotheses	Beta	Std. deviation	t-value	P
H1	Business sustainability → Corporate reputation	0.214	0.107	2.005	0.045
H1	Entrepreneurial orientation → Business sustainability	0.278	0.090	3.104	0.002
H2	Entrepreneurial orientation → Corporate reputation	0.150	0.075	1.993	0.047
H4	Market orientation → Business sustainability	0.368	0.092	3.991	***
H5	Market orientation → Corporate reputation	0.306	0.095	3.211	0.001
H7	Marketing capability → Business sustainability	0.247	0.082	3.012	0.003
H8	Marketing capability → Corporate reputation	0.208	0.094	2.212	0.027
H10	Business sustainability → Corporate reputation	0.214	0.107	2.005	0.045

***: $p < 0.001$

Table 4 Mediation test

Hypotheses	Path a	Path b	Indirect effect	Bootstrapped confidence interval				
				SE	t-value	95% LL	95% UL	Decision
EO→BS→CR	0.281	0.640	0.180	0.064	2.810	0.054	0.305	Mediation
MO→BS→CR	0.367	0.640	0.235	0.072	3.262	0.094	0.376	Mediation
MC→BS→CR	0.246	0.640	0.157	0.052	3.028	0.056	0.259	Mediation

*EO entrepreneurial orientation, CR corporate reputation, MC marketing capability, MO market orientation, BS business sustainability

5 Discussion

The principal objective of the current research was to verify whether entrepreneurial orientation, marketing capability, and market orientation have any associations with corporate reputation and business sustainability in the SMEs' context. It also aimed to test whether business sustainability mediates the relationship between the stated factors and corporate reputation. The findings established that business sustainability has a positive impact on corporate reputation, and this matches those of prior studies [13, 14] which reported that business sustainability was an antecedent of corporate reputation. This finding confirms the importance of sustainability practices which consider customers' interests, a firm's profits, and a society's well-being in shaping corporate reputation. It also suggests that the management should integrate both corporate reputational and business sustainability into the organizational strategies, because they represent important sources to create value, safeguard brands against uncertainties, and ensure long-term business survival. A firm which successfully establishes and communicates a distinct position about its contributions to social and environmental issues, ability to build beneficial networks globally and locally, and reaffirms its business objectives with its several stakeholders, while abiding by sustainable development agendas tends to have a positive reputation [15].

Furthermore, the outcomes indicated that entrepreneurial orientation affects corporate reputation, directly and indirectly through business sustainability. This result could be relatively supported by some prior studies [45, 48, 93, 94] which portrayed that entrepreneurial orientation and corporate sustainability have positive linkages. Pratono et al. [54] also showed that entrepreneurial orientation enables firms to build and foster their competitive advantages on the long term. It also enables the entrepreneurs to identify business opportunities [68] and ensure the sustainability of their businesses in target markets. Further support was reported by Hughes et al. [95] who found that entrepreneurial orientation positively improves a firm's financial performance. Moreover, Martínez and del Bosque [13] verified that business sustainability has a positive impact on corporate reputation. The result indicates that entrepreneurs can achieve sustainable competitive advantages when they continuously look for market opportunities, take proactive approaches to utilize the opportunities before others, and focus on innovativeness through their operations. This is because market needs and expectations tend to change rapidly, and therefore, entrepreneurs should be aware about the new changes in order to take proactive actions at the right time. The innovation strategy helps the company get a competitive edge, which in turn enable it to enjoy a better reputation and brand strength. Liao [86] also demonstrated that innovativeness positively affects a company's reputation.

The statistical analysis in this study also showed that market orientation has a direct and indirect effect on corporate reputation through business sustainability. The finding is in agreement with previous researches [10, 96, 97] which confirmed that market oriented firms tend to achieve business sustainability and increase their market performance on the long-term. Pérez-Cornejo et al. [66] also reported that business sustainability has a positive effect on corporate reputation. According to Crittenden et al. [98], corporate sustainability represents the foremost priority for firms, because marketing tactics and strategies are closely associated with the future characteristics of natural environment. Moreover, Hult [99] stated that firms can sustain their businesses when they collect important information about customers and understand the marketplace first, and then design appropriate marketing program to satisfy those needs. The author added that market oriented firms tend to satisfy the needs and interests of their stakeholders by considering social, economic, and environmental aspects. Accordingly, it is evident that achieving business sustainability and improving corporate reputation requires entrepreneurs in the SMEs to be market oriented and support the sustainability efforts through increased awareness about customer demand, environmental laws concerning advertising and packaging practices, and society expectations [23]. Thus, the practitioners in SMEs should continuously conduct marketing research to understand about the needs and expectations of their target market, and then fulfill their needs to order to sustain their business and respond to emerging challenges.

The findings also showed that marketing capability has a direct and indirect effect on corporate reputation through business sustainability. This result was partly supported by Mariadoss et al. [21] who found positive linkages between both constructs. Vorhies and Morgan [100] also verified that marketing capability represents the key strategy for attaining business sustainability. The authors added that building marketing capabilities enables firms to strive in dynamic markets and achieve sustainable competitive advantages. Moreover, Irfan et al. [14] confirmed that business sustainability has a positive impact on corporate reputation. Prior literature documented that entrepreneurs tend to build their marketing capabilities through the development of product and service innovations regularly. The result indicates that the success and survival of a firm requires effective marketing capabilities that stimulate customer purchases and exploit market opportunities by providing superior customer value from each marketing mix element. The marketing capability exerts significant implications for sustainability and enable businesses to thrive in target markets in the presence of competition [101, 102]. Therefore, business practitioners in SMEs should improve their marketing capabilities in order to ensure their survival on the long-term.

6 Conclusion and implications

The prime purpose of this paper was directed towards making a noteworthy theoretical contribution to the theory of dynamic capabilities and the resource based view perspective. It further contributes to the current literature on entrepreneurial orientation, market orientation, marketing capability, business sustainability and corporate reputation by bringing new insights from the UAE. Taking into consideration the empirical research on these factors in past studies, it can be said that there are only few of them which examined their effects on business sustainability and corporate reputation. Moreover, this is the first study that combined all of these three factors and used business sustainability as a mediator between them in one research framework. The current study further corresponds to the suggestions in earlier literature with regards to examining the determinants of business sustainability in SMEs' context. The findings verified that business sustainability represents the most significant predictor of corporate reputation. The results also confirmed that marketing capability, market orientation, and entrepreneurial orientation are important determinants of business sustainability and corporate reputation. According to the dynamic capability theory, entrepreneurs in SMEs can sustain their competitive advantages when they upgrade their marketing capabilities and develop appropriate strategies that align with market conditions. The findings support the assertions of dynamic capabilities theory by coming up with new findings from SMEs in the UAE. In addition, the results contribute to the RBV perspective by verifying the role of entrepreneurial orientation and market orientation in predicting business sustainability. Entrepreneurial skills and ability to optimize organizational resources in an efficient way are vital for attaining a sustainable competitive advantage. The results are aligned with RBV and suggest that firms can develop a sustainable business and improve their reputations by promoting strategic entrepreneurship at the top levels of management. Specifically, managers should be risk takers, innovative, and more proactive. That is to say, they should be more entrepreneurial oriented. Additionally, it is suggested for marketing specialists in SMEs to put more focus on implementing effective marketing strategies and innovation practices to reach their potentials.

Managers, who wish to strengthen their businesses and enhance the reputation of their firms should also focus on developing marketing capabilities that allow them to acquire the essential resources to ensure the success of marketing strategies. For instance, managers have to improve the effectiveness of their advertising and marketing communication programs in order to be able to easily reach customers and disseminate envisioned brand messages. Furthermore, managers should exploit their resources and continuously monitor emerging trends in the market to get better insights about changing customers' needs, and then construct an integrated marketing program that deliver the intended value. Marketers should also introduce innovative products and services before competitors in order to maintain their competitive strengths and respond to changing market needs. In addition to that, managing social media channels can be adopted for nurturing consumers' engagement and shaping their buying behaviours. Marketing specialists in SMEs are further recommended to provide customized products and services to improve the perceptions and feelings of consumers towards their brands via social networks and thus, foster corporate image. By doing so, marketers can identify the sorts of contents that can trigger consumers' perceptions and shape their brand reputation.

7 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Despite the noteworthy contributions made in this paper to the empirical literature on business sustainability, there exists few limitations which can be taken into account in upcoming studies. First, only three predictors of business sustainability were examined; for this reason, future researches can test other antecedents, such as green innovation and corporate social responsibility. Second, the data was collected using the quantitative method, that is survey instrument; hence, it is recommended for future studies to employ longitudinal data to confirm the results. Additionally, the study relied on a sample of SMEs in the UAE; therefore, upcoming researches can replicate the model in different countries to verify the results. Moreover, this research primarily focused on the SMEs as most of the businesses in the UAE fall under this classification. As such, future researches can examine the model in large firms to understand how these firms leverage their resources and marketing capabilities to achieve sustainability and improve their performance.

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Data availability The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate This is an exploratory study. The committee of research ethics at Skyline University College has confirmed that there is no need for any ethical approval for this kind of research. However, the purpose and objectives of this research were described to the respondents during data collection process. Each respondent has verbally agreed and showed the consent to participate voluntarily in this research without any influence. Furthermore, it was assured that all the collected data will be kept confidential, anonymous, and will not be disclosed anywhere.

Competing interests The authors declare no competing interests.

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