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Environmental Mediation of Entrepreneurial Competencies: Evidence from Agricultural Product SMEs

Ni Gst.Ag.Gde Eka Martiningsih[1], Ida Bagus Swaputra[2], Ni Putu Fajar Kartika Lestari [3], Setya Chendra Wibawa[4]
[1]Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Indonesia;ekamartini@unmas.ac.id
[2]Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Manajemen Handayani, Denpasar, Indonesia; iswaputra@gmail.com
[3]Universitas Mahasaraswati Denpasar, Indonesia;fajarkartika@unmas.ac.id
[4]Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Ekonomi Darul Falah, Mojokerto, Indonesia;setyachendra@stiedarulfalahmojokerto.ac.id

Abstract
Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) that focus on agriculture product play an important role in economic development in general. Especially for Indonesia including Bali as one of regency that still concern on tourism based on agricultural activities. Related to this perspective, it is very important to develop entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and update entrepreneurial competence (EC) to emerge in today's competitive era, because community farmer that involve in agriculture industry never aware about how the important make the link between tourism and agriculture. This study specifically addresses this aspect and seeks to determine the need to identify entrepreneurial orientation and entrepreneurial competence in SMEs in order to improve community farmer performance and increase the competencies. Researchers have collected data from farmer community in Gianyar Regency, Bali using a proportional random sampling technique with a total sample 128 respondent. Structural equation analysis based on partial least squares (PLS) was used to analyze data and test hypotheses. The results of the analysis found a positive relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and SME performance, entrepreneurial competence and SME performance, entrepreneurial orientation and entrepreneurial competence. In addition, entrepreneurial competence is proven to be a mediator between entrepreneurial orientation and SMEs performance. Lastly, this research can be used by different stakeholders to put more emphasis on developing competency levels and determining the level of orientation towards better SMEs performance.
Keywords: *Agricultural product-based SMEs, entrepreneurship orientation, entrepreneurial competence, performance, Mediation*

INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) have become highly significant for countries worldwide due to their flexible and compatible structures (Kayadibi, S., Polat, R., & Fidan, 2013). In an era of rapid global change, SMEs account for a substantial portion of production, thanks to their adaptability. During the COVID-19 pandemic, agriculture-based SMEs in all developing countries played a crucial role, emerging as a primary driver of economic growth—enhancing income distribution, productivity, efficiency, and economic structure amid the financial crisis (Tehseen & Ramayah, 2015). Additionally, most countries worldwide recognize the importance of SMEs in contributing to economic growth (Okoli, Nwosu, & Okechukwu, 2021). In Indonesia, SMEs make a significant contribution to economic development. In 2021, SMEs contributed 61.07% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), amounting to IDR 8,574 trillion. That same year, the number of SME business sectors reached 64.19 million (Azzura, 2021). In terms of employment, SMEs absorbed 97% of the total national workforce in 2021 (Habibie, 2022). SMEs in each country send different signals to stakeholders regarding their economic contributions (Saeed, Yousafzai, & Engelen, 2015). However, on the other hand, SME practitioners and researchers in developing countries like Indonesia have observed that SME growth still needs to be strengthened (Haider, Asad, & Fatima, 2017). In this context, SME entrepreneurs may have an orientation toward entrepreneurship, yet they might lack the necessary competencies to compete in dynamic industries (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005). Furthermore, according to Tehseen & Ramayah (2015), competencies are not easily imitated by competitors, making such skills and capabilities crucial in driving economic development.

In this context, it is crucial to understand and develop Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and update Entrepreneurial Competencies (EC) to perform better in a competitive environment (Khan, Rathore, and Sial, 2020). Currently, very few studies have been conducted on EO and EC in Indonesia, and further exploration is needed to provide a stronger platform for SMEs to remain competitive in their respective sectors. There is also a limited number of studies on EO across different regions of the country. Therefore, it is important to understand why some entrepreneurs perform better in certain areas. The fundamental reason could be a lack of proper understanding of EO and EC (Asad et al., 2016). A gap in the existing research is the minimal number of intervening variables explaining the relationship between EO and business performance (Rezaei and Ortt, 2018). Moreover, most studies have focused on improving the financial performance of SMEs, yet little attention has been given to EO and EC within the SME sector (Al Mamun et al., 2018). Furthermore, no research has taken EO as a second-order latent variable to explore its relationship with SME performance while considering EC as a mediator. Thus, this study could play a crucial role in establishing the significance of EO and EC for becoming effective entrepreneurs to enhance SME performance (Khan, Rathore, and Sial, 2020). Additionally, there is an ongoing debate about whether EO should be used as a "uni-dimensional or multi-dimensional" construct. Some studies support EO as a uni-dimensional construct (Asad et al., 2016), whereas others employ separate measures of EO to assess SME performance, as different researchers adopt various EO dimensions they deem relevant. Measuring EO is a complex process; therefore, it must be operationalized through different dimensions (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996).

Several EO dimensions have been used in research, but the most frequently cited four dimensions are "creativity and innovation, risk-taking propensity, proactiveness, and autonomy" (Al Mamun et al., 2016). Previous studies have explored each EO dimension separately in relation to business performance (Al Mamun & Fazal, 2018). However, this study aims to pave the way for SMEs by considering the extent of orientation when taking EO as a latent construct, allowing for a greater focus on developing both entrepreneurial orientation and competencies. Additionally, EC plays a critical role in the smooth operation of SMEs, particularly during challenging times (Al Mamun et al., 2018). Thus, the objective of this research is to examine the relationship between EO and SME performance, with EC acting as a mediating factor within the SME environment in Gianyar Regency, Bali. Moreover, there is a scarcity of literature on EO and business performance in developing countries, especially in Asia (Zainol & Ayadurai, 2011; Wijetunge and Pushpakumari, 2014). It has also been found that 85% of SMEs face significant survival challenges, and more than 75% fail within five years of startup (Gamage, 2003). This implies that SMEs must be proactive and innovative to successfully tackle these challenges and ensure long-term survival. Furthermore, the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory plays a vital role in understanding this issue, as competencies and orientations are highly specific to individuals. These skills can be effectively utilized to enhance entrepreneurs' performance and business success (Meekaewkunchorn et al., 2021).

Based on the aforementioned discussion, this study attempts to re-examine how Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and Entrepreneurial Competencies (EC) contribute to SME business performance. Thus, by analyzing the relationship between EO and performance, EC and performance, and highlighting the mediating role of EC, this study provides valuable insights for SME managers in Gianyar Regency, Bali Province, enabling them to foster an entrepreneurial orientation in running their businesses. The specific objectives of this study are as follows: (1) to identify and analyze the impact of EO on SME performance, (2) to identify and analyze the impact of EC on SME performance, (3) to identify and analyze the impact of EO on EC, and (4) to identify and analyze the role of EC in mediating the relationship between EO and SME performance.

Theoretical Foundation

Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory

This study employs the Resource-Based View (RBV) theory, aligning with previous research examining the relationship between Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and business performance (Ringo, Tegambwage, and Kazungu 2022; Kiyabo and Isaga 2020; Monteiro, Soares, and Rua 2017; Imran, Aziz, and Abdul Hamid 2017). RBV posits that a firm is defined as a collection of resources integrated in various ways, and it is this resource pool that gives the firm its uniqueness (Ringo, Tegambwage, and Kazungu 2022). The theory provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the significance of different resource combinations in enhancing a

firm's competitiveness and overall performance. According to this perspective, organizational performance varies due to differences in resource availability (Peteraf and Barney 2003). In general, a firm's resources can be categorized as tangible resources, such as financial and physical assets, or intangible resources, including capabilities, skills, and knowledge.

This theory further asserts that the possession of strategic resources is crucial for firms to achieve competitive advantage and superior performance (Kiyabo and Isaga 2020). Strategic resources are those that are valuable, rare, and irreplaceable, and they have been recognized as the primary differentiator between firms that achieve competitive advantage and those that do not (Kellermanns et al. 2016). These resources can provide either "cost leadership or differentiation," making them a potential source of sustainable competitive advantage (Kellermanns et al. 2016).

Existing literature acknowledges intangible resources as strategic resources due to their unique characteristics. As a result, recent studies have shifted focus from tangible to intangible resources, which are considered more vital and relevant to a firm's success and performance (Monteiro, Soares, and Rua 2017). Racela and Thoumrungroje (2020) argue that to achieve sustainable competitive advantage and superior performance, strategic intangible resources must be utilized efficiently. For SMEs, EO is regarded as a strategic intangible resource that significantly contributes to competitive advantage and superior performance (Monteiro, Soares, and Rua 2017; Runyan, Huddleston, and Swinney 2006).

SME Performance

Performance is a multidimensional concept (Wiklund and Shepherd 2005; Garengo, Biazzo, and Bititci 2005); therefore, relying on a single performance indicator tends to produce biased results (Lumpkin and Dess 1996). Empirical and theoretical research has been conducted in countries where SME studies are prevalent, such as Australia (Garengo, Biazzo, and Bititci 2005), and findings indicate no fundamental differences in SME performance measurement based solely on the country where the study was conducted. However, five common characteristics should be identified: (1) difficulties in engaging SMEs in performance measurement projects, (2) studies showing that SMEs do not use performance measurement models properly, (3) the lack of a holistic approach in SME performance measurement, (4) the informal nature of SME approaches to performance measurement, and (5) limited resources for data analysis.

Although literature highlights the importance of dynamic performance measurement, most companies still use static models due to several limitations (Bititci et al. 2002), namely (1) the inability to distinguish between control-related performance measures and those that support improvement, (2) limited understanding of causal relationships between strategic objectives, processes, and activities, (3) the lack of external monitoring despite SMEs needing to be flexible and responsive to competitive changes, (4) the inability of management to systematically link external and internal environmental changes to performance changes, and (5) the absence of frameworks and platforms specifically designed for SME needs.

SME performance refers to business activities within a company (Kiyabo and Isaga 2020; Kotane and Kuzmina-Merlino 2017). Various SME performance measurement tools have been developed in Western countries due to entrepreneurs' willingness to be explored, while in developing countries, performance measurement is often driven by necessity (Kiyabo and Isaga 2020). This study attempts to summarize performance measurement methods commonly applied in Western countries, such as sales growth, assets, profit, employees, and equity. Meanwhile, in developing countries, the reality of performance measurement often takes a personal wealth approach, as suggested by Eijdenberg (Kiyabo and Isaga 2020), which includes consumption, healthcare, and the ability to acquire housing.

Entrepreneurial Orientation

Entrepreneurship is one of the key factors in enhancing a country's economy, as it creates wealth for entrepreneurs (Utama, 2011). Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) refers to the processes, practices, and decision-making activities that lead to innovation. It is considered an additional resource for companies (Khan, Rathore, and Sial 2020) or an organizational capability that reflects the entrepreneurial process and how business activities are managed (Rauch et al. 2009). Furthermore, EO serves as a key driver of organizational transformation and strategy through the combination of a company's strategic resources (Suardhika 2012).

EO is a crucial element in the success of any company (Rauch et al. 2009; Wales et al. 2016). It is predominantly regarded as a "cultural construct" with several dimensions, including proactiveness, risk-taking, and innovation (Khan, Rathore, and Sial 2020). However, recent literature has identified four dimensions: risk-taking tendency, proactiveness, creativity and innovation, and autonomy (Al Mamun and Fazal 2018). Based on these frequently cited dimensions, researchers have expanded the framework to include five dimensions (Dess and Lumpkin 2005): autonomy, innovativeness, proactiveness, competitive aggressiveness, and risk-taking.

Entrepreneurial Competency

Research on entrepreneurial competency (EC) suggests that it is defined as underlying characteristics such as specialized knowledge, motives, traits, self-image, social roles, and skills that contribute to business creation, survival, and/or growth (Duru, Ehidiamhen, and Chijioke 2018). Man et al. (2002), as cited in Mitchelmore and Rowley (2006), define entrepreneurial competency as the overall ability of an entrepreneur to successfully perform job roles. According to the resource-based view (RBV) of the firm, the value creation process of a company is closely linked to the manager's ability to acquire and develop resources (Barney, Wright, and Ketchen 2001).

In summary, there is a consensus that entrepreneurial competency is exercised by individuals who initiate and transform their businesses, with broad recognition that the skills and competencies required to run a small enterprise differ both qualitatively and quantitatively from those needed in larger organizations (Johnson et al. 1999). This distinction arises at least in part because entrepreneurship focuses on the individual. While comprehensive studies on entrepreneurial competencies exist, much research has focused on general entrepreneurial competency.Through a comprehensive review of previous studies (Mitchelmore and Rowley 2010), significant studies have been identified, reflecting various approaches adopted in measuring entrepreneurial competency. One of the key objectives in classifying entrepreneurial competency is to establish measurable indicators. It is important to note that different researchers have employed varying approaches to measuring competency, each supported by distinct assumptions.

The Positive Effect of Entrepreneurial Orientation on SME Performance

The relationship between entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and firm performance is one of the most extensively researched topics in entrepreneurship studies (Dess and Lumpkin 2005). The link between EO and SME performance may depend on the indicators used to assess performance (Lumpkin and Dess 1996). Firms with a higher level of EO tend to act independently, are driven to innovate, take risks, be proactive, and exhibit competitive aggressiveness (Ciampi et al. 2021). EO is considered a key constituent of business success (Rauch et al. 2009; Wales et al. 2016).

Khan, Rathore, and Sial (2020) explain that EO is largely perceived as a "cultural construct" encompassing dimensions such as proactiveness, risk-taking, and innovation. EO is widely accepted as an explanatory factor for business performance (Khan, Rathore, and Sial 2020) and has recently been recognized as one of the most critical factors for company growth and profitability (Zainol and Ayadurai 2011). Although the correlation between EO and firm performance has been widely discussed, many unresolved questions remain, given that EO-performance relationships are multidimensional constructs (Lumpkin and Dess 1996).

Several studies have examined individual EO dimensions to test their relationship with performance or have included mediating variables to establish stronger connections (Al Mamun et al. 2018). A study conducted on SMEs in Singapore found that EO is positively associated with entrepreneurial performance (Keh, Nguyen, and Ng 2007). Similarly, another study concluded that firm performance improves with higher EO when psychological traits are effectively considered (Palmer et al. 2019). In another study, EO was measured using three dimensions—innovation, proactiveness, and risk-taking—and concluded that performance increases with a rise in EO (Lisboa, Skarmeas, and Saridakis 2016).

Based on the theoretical framework and previous research findings, the first hypothesis (H1) is proposed: Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) positively influences SME performance.

The Positive Effect of Entrepreneurial Orientation on Entrepreneurial Competence

Key factors for achieving entrepreneurial success include forward-thinking and strategic focus (Khan, Rathore, and Sial 2020). Entrepreneurs make decisions regarding their entrepreneurial actions based on their assessment

of competencies (Wickramaratne, Kiminami, and Yagi 2014). An increase in competence levels does not automatically translate into capabilities; therefore, competence becomes essential in achieving better performance and/or business success (Chandler and Hanks, 1994).

Based on the available literature, the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and entrepreneurial competence (EC) remains underexplored (Khan, Rathore, and Sial 2020). Although theoretical studies have been conducted to examine this relationship, a possible reason for the lack of consensus is that some countries actively develop entrepreneurial competencies to ensure entrepreneurs acquire stronger competencies alongside EO (Wickramaratne, Kiminami, and Yagi 2014).

A study by Al Mamun et al. (2018) conducted on micro-enterprises in Malaysia found a positive relationship between EO dimensions and EC. Another study also found a significantly positive relationship between EO and EC, although through an intervening effect based on firm age and size (Wickramaratne, Kiminami, and Yagi 2014). A similar study conducted in Sri Lanka on 109 tea manufacturers using EO and EC measurements revealed a positive relationship between the two constructs (Wickramaratne, Kiminami, and Yagi 2014).

Based on these theoretical insights and previous research findings, the second hypothesis (H2) is proposed:

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) positively influences entrepreneurial competence (EC).

The Positive Effect of Entrepreneurial Competence on SME Performance

Human capital is a tangible asset in every company, regardless of industry type, and plays a crucial role in business performance (Bontis, Keow, and Richardson 2000). With the rapid advancement of technology, SMEs face an increasingly competitive business environment, making it difficult to sustain business performance (Kraus et al. 2012). In this regard, human capital is a critical factor influencing business performance (Barazandeh et al. 2015).On the other hand, competence generates human capital within a company, representing the education, experience, skills, genetics, and attitudes of business owners and employees (Bontis, Keow, and Richardson 2000). Thus, entrepreneurial competence (EC) directly impacts business performance (Mitchelmore and Rowley 2010).everal studies have examined the relationship between EC and SME performance. A study conducted on Spanish entrepreneurs concluded that EC plays a significant role in enhancing entrepreneurial performance (Sánchez 2012). Similarly, research on 197 micro-entrepreneurs in Malaysia found a significant relationship between EC and entrepreneurial performance (Al Mamun et al. 2016). Other studies have also confirmed a positive relationship between EC and SME performance (Aliyu 2017; Zizile and Tendai 2018; Barazandeh et al. 2015).The substantial body of research demonstrating the positive relationship between EC and SME performance indicates that more efforts should be made to enhance entrepreneurs' skills to improve performance in an increasingly dynamic industry.

Based on these theoretical insights and previous research findings, the third hypothesis (H3) is proposed:

Entrepreneurial competence (EC) positively influences SME performance.

Entrepreneurial Orientation, Entrepreneurial Competence, and SME Performance

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) is considered essential for companies aiming to succeed in a competitive business environment (Aliyu 2017). However, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) argue that the positive implications of EO on firm performance are context-specific and can vary independently within different organizational settings. In this context, an SME owner may exhibit entrepreneurial orientation but lack the necessary competencies required to thrive in a highly dynamic environment. Over the past few decades, the significance of entrepreneurial competence (EC) has been reinforced due to the strategic role played by entrepreneurs (Wickramaratne, Kiminami, and Yagi 2014). Furthermore, Khan, Rathore, and Sial (2020) explain that competencies are not easily imitated by competitors, making them crucial for economic development. Thus, understanding and enhancing EO while continuously refining EC is essential for achieving better performance in a competitive landscape. This necessity underpins the importance of examining the relationship between EO and EC in improving firm performance (Asad et al. 2016). Only one study has explored EC as a mediator between EO and SME performance, examining EO dimensions separately and testing their individual relationships with EC and performance (Al Mamun et al. 2018). The study confirmed that EC acts as a mediating variable.

Based on this discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Entrepreneurial competence (EC) mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and SME performance.

Entrepreneurship Based on Agricultural Products

Farming Science is a science that studies how farmers obtain and combine limited resources (land, labor, capital and management) to achieve their goals. According to this definition, it can be seen that farming is an activity carried out by farmers starting from determining the resources to be used and how to combine them. These activities are to achieve the goal, namely to obtain the maximum possible profit (Soekartawi, 2011). Farming in general is an activity to produce in an agricultural environment to obtain maximum profits. To get these profits, many influencing factors such as production, revenue, production costs and the technology used can increase income. In the context of its relationship with SMEs, farming carried out by farmers is business-based, because it has the aim of making a profit. One solution approach to accelerate economic escalation in villages is the implementation of a collective entrepreneurial movement by all village residents in the form of an entrepreneurial village. Entrepreneurship as a strategy for growth and development of the welfare and prosperity of a village community is based on the existence of resources and access to representative facilities and infrastructure provided by village communities in order to achieve positive changes in socio-economic conditions in villages (Ansari et al., 2013). Entrepreneurship has been proven to be a solution for society to solve various problems (Purnomo et al., 2020).

RESEARCH METHOD

The population in this study consists of all Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Gianyar Regency that are actively registered, totaling 1,405 SMEs. The details of the population are as follows:

Table 1. SME Population Per District, Gianyar Regency

Tabl	District	Number of Taxpayers UKM
1.	Blahbatuh	159
2.	Gianyar	225
3.	Payangan	54
4.	Sukawati	400
5.	Tampaksiring	69
6.	Tegalalang	55
7	Ubud	143
Total		1405

The sample used in this study consists of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Gianyar Regency. The sampling technique applied in this research is proportional sampling, where the researcher selects representatives from each group within the population. The appropriate sample size for testing with Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) ranges between 100-200 samples.

In this study, a total of 253 questionnaires were distributed to SME taxpayers in Gianyar Regency online. The distribution of questionnaires and their response rate are presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2 Questionnaire Distribution and Number of Returns

Description	Quantity (unit)
Distributed questionnaire	253
Returned questionnaire	154
Dropped questionnaire/incomplete data	26
Questionnaire that can be processed	128

Operational Definitions and Variable Indicators

This study examines three latent variables: SME Performance (PSME's), Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO), and Entrepreneurial Competence (EC). The definitions, dimensions, and indicators for each variable are presented in the following table:

Table 3: Definition of variables, dimensions, indicators and measurement scales

Construct	Operational Definition	Dimensions and Number of Indicators	Skala
SME Performance (PSME)	Performance; one's ability to produce results in a priori-determined dimension, in relation to a particular target (Kotane and Kuzmina-Merlino 2017)	SME performance measurement with 8 indicators; growth in sales, assets, profits, employees and equity. as well as costs for consumption, health care, housing acquisition capabilities(Kiyabo and Isaga 2020)	Likert 1-5
Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO)	Entrepreneurship Orientation as a strategic orientation of the company, in obtaining certain aspects of entrepreneurship in the sense of styles, practices, and methods (Wijetunge and Pushpakumari 2014)	Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) has 5 dimensions: (Dess and Lumpkin 2005) *that is*; Autonomy with 5 items; Innovation through 5 items; Proactive 4 items; Competitive Aggressiveness 3 items and Risk-taking 4 items	Likert 1-5

Data Collection Method

This study employs a survey method for data collection by distributing online questionnaires via Google Forms. The questionnaire includes respondent identification details and several closed-ended questions aligned with the research variables, along with relevant indicators for each dimension and construct.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis in this study employs both descriptive and inductive approaches. Inferential statistical analysis is used to evaluate the measurement model (outer model), ensuring the validity and reliability of the constructs. Meanwhile, the structural model is assessed using several approaches, including R-Square (R^2) to determine the explanatory power of the model, Q-Square Predictive Relevance (Q^2) to measure predictive accuracy, and Goodness of Fit (GoF) to evaluate the overall model fit. Additionally, the structural model is tested using the bootstrapping method, which enhances the robustness of the statistical findings (Ferdinand, 2011).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Result

The description of respondent characteristics can be explained from the aspects of gender, last level of education, respondent's age, type/field of SME business, and business duration.

Table 4: Description of Respondent Characteristics

Demography	**Number of Respondents**	**Percentage**
Gender:		
Man	77	60,20
Woman	51	39,80
Total	128	100,00
Education Level:		
High School/Vocational	19	14,80
School	41	32,00
Diploma	57	44,50
Bachelor	11	8,60
Postgraduate	128	100,00
Total		

Respondent Age:		
< 26 years old	14	10,90
26-35 years old	60	46,90
36 - 44 years old	36	28,10
> 45 years old	18	14,10
Total	128	100,00
Types of MSMEs:		
Culinary	13	10,20
Textile	11	8,60
Craft	42	32,80
Trade	38	29,70
Other	24	18,80
Total	128	100,00
Length of Business:		
< 5 years	41	32,00
>= 5 years	87	68,00
Total	128	100,00

Based on Table 4, respondents' distribution by gender shows that 60.20 percent are male and 39.80 percent are female. In terms of education level, 14.80 percent of respondents have completed high school (SMA/SMK), 32.00 percent hold a diploma, 44.50 percent have a bachelor's degree (S1), and 8.60 percent have a master's degree (S2). These figures indicate that most SME entrepreneurs have pursued higher education, suggesting a solid understanding of technology.Regarding age, 10.90 percent of respondents are under 26 years old, 46.90 percent are between 26-35 years old, 28.10 percent are between 36 - 44 years old, and 14.10 percent are over 45 years old. The majority of respondents fall within the productive age range, indicating their capability to operate tax systems. The types of SMEs represented in this study include culinary businesses (10.20 percent), textiles (8.60 percent), handicrafts (32.80 percent), trade (29.70 percent), and other sectors such as agriculture, livestock, plantations, and services (18.80 percent).Regarding business duration, 32.00 percent of SMEs have been operating for less than five years, while 68.00 percent have been in business for five years or more. This suggests that the respondents are predominantly experienced entrepreneurs who have been engaged in their businesses for a considerable time. This study employs SEM-PLS to test both the outer and inner models for data analysis. In the first stage, the researcher conducts a measurement test (outer model) to evaluate convergent validity by assessing the measurement model using reflective indicators. This validity can be observed through the loading factor values for each variable indicator and the average variance extracted (AVE).

Evaluation of the Outer Model

The evaluation of latent variable indicators from the three constructs in this study yielded the following results (Table 4 and Table 5). In the SEM model with reflective indicators, the measurement model's convergent validity requires an outer loading above 0.70 and an average variance extracted (AVE) value above 0.50 (AVE > 0.50). The calculations (Table 4) show that the outer loading of all latent variable indicators exceeds 0.70 (minimum 0.737), and the AVE values (Table 5) are above 0.50 (minimum 0.891). Therefore, both requirements are met, confirming these indicators as valid measures of the latent constructs.

Table 5 Outer Loading Estimation Results of Measurement Model

Variable Indicators	**EC**	**EO**	**PSMEs**
EC1	0,813		
EC3	0,907		
EC4	0,883		
EC5	0,775		
EC7	0,883		
EO1		0,893	

EO3	0,823	
EO4	0,871	
PSMEs4		0,931
PSMEs5		0,821
PSMEs6		0,918
PSMEs7		0,737
PSMEs8		0,901

The validity measurement of the indicators forming the latent variables can also be conducted through discriminant validity. The output for discriminant validity is shown using the HTMT (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio <0.90), which indicates validity. The processing results demonstrate that all latent constructs have values below 0.90, thus meeting the criteria for discriminant validity.

Tabel 6 Cronbach's Alpha, Composite Reliability dan Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Konstruk	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
EC	0,904	0,928	0,722
EO	0,834	0,897	0,744
PSMEs	0,914	0,936	0,748

Tabel 7. Discriminant Validity (HTMT) hasil estimasi pengukuran

Konstruk	EC	EO	PSMEs
EC	-	-	-
EO	0,526	-	-
PSMEs	0,789	0,818	-

Composite reliability is a measure of reliability among indicator blocks within the research model. A measurement is considered reliable if the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values exceed 0.70. The calculation results in Table 6 indicate that the composite reliability values for all constructs meet the minimum threshold of 0.897 (> 0.70), thereby fulfilling the reliability criteria. Additionally, the Cronbach's alpha values obtained are greater than 0.70 (minimum 0.834), further confirming the reliability of the measurement.

The Inner Model test is used to evaluate the overall model using analytical tools such as R-Square (R^2) and Goodness of Fit (GoF).

Table 8. Test the Overall Model

Construct	R Square Adjusted)	*Goodness of Fit* (GoF)
EO	0,239	0,421
PSMEs	0,733	0,743

Based on Table 7, the coefficient of determination (R^2) for each variable falls within an adequate to good range. Meanwhile, the Goodness of Fit (GoF) for the overall construct is categorized as medium to large (GoF large). Thus, when evaluated using analytical tools such as R-Square (R^2) and Goodness of Fit (GoF), the proposed model is considered to be well-fitted overall. The examination of relationships between latent constructs, as hypothesized in this study, was conducted through a resampling process using the bootstrapping method (Table 8). The output provides estimates for structural model testing, where the expected result is the rejection of the null hypothesis (H_0), indicated by a significance value (p-value) of less than 0.05 or a t-statistic greater than 1.96 for a significance level of 0.05.

Table 9. Hypothesis Test Results

Relationships Between Constructs	**Original Sample (O)**	**Sample Mean (M)**	**Standard Error (STERR)**	**T Statistics (O/ STERR)**	**P-Value)**	**Information**
EC → PSMEs	0,514	0,508	0,074	6,926	0,000	Signifikan
EO → EC	0,495	0,500	0,049	9,997	0,000	Signifikan
EO → PSMEs	0,479	0,488	0,074	6,505	0,000	Signifikan

Table 10. Mediation Test Results

Relationships Between Constructs	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Error (STERR)	T Statistics (O/ STERR)	P-Value)	Information
EO → EC → PSMEs	0,254	0,253	0,034	5,893	0,000	Signifikan

DISCUSSION

According to the data analysis presented in Tables 9 and 10, this section discusses the results and findings related to the proposed hypothesis.

The Positive Effect of Entrepreneurial Orientation on SME Performance

The first hypothesis (H1) states that entrepreneurial orientation (EO) positively impacts SME performance. The test results show a coefficient value of 0.479 (positive) with a t-statistic of 6.505 (>1.96) and a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05), indicating that the first hypothesis is accepted.

These findings align with previous studies by Palmer et al. (2019), Keh, Nguyen, and Ng (2007), as well as Lisboa, Skarmeas, and Saridakis (2016), which confirm a significant positive relationship between EO and SME performance, particularly among SMEs in Gianyar, Bali. As mentioned earlier, both EO and SME performance are multidimensional constructs, meaning their relationship may depend on the indicators used to measure performance (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996).

Companies with a higher level of entrepreneurial orientation tend to act independently, consistently pursue innovation, take risks, and be proactive and aggressive (Ciampi et al., 2021). EO is a key component in the success of any business (Rauch et al., 2009; Wales et al., 2016). According to Khan, Rathore, and Sial (2020), EO is largely considered a "cultural construct" with several dimensions, including proactiveness, risk-taking, and innovation. Entrepreneurial orientation is widely recognized as an essential factor for business growth and profitability (Zainol & Ayadurai, 2011).

The Positive Effect of Entrepreneurial Orientation on Entrepreneurial Competence

The second hypothesis (H2) states that entrepreneurial orientation (EO) positively impacts entrepreneurial competence (EC). The test results show a coefficient value of 0.495 (positive) with a t-statistic of 9.997 (>1.96) and a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05), indicating that the second hypothesis is accepted.

These findings support previous research conducted by Al Mamun et al. (2018) and Wickramaratne, Kiminami, and Yagi (2014), which found a significant positive relationship between EO and EC. An increase in competence does not automatically translate into capability. Therefore, competence plays a crucial role in achieving better performance and/or business success (Chandler and Hanks, 1994). Entrepreneurial success involves looking ahead and focusing on strategy (Khan, Rathore, and Sial, 2020).

Entrepreneurs make decisions about their entrepreneurial actions based on their assessment of their own competencies (Wickramaratne, Kiminami, and Yagi, 2014). However, the available literature on the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation (EO) and entrepreneurial competence (EC) remains limited (Khan, Rathore, and Sial, 2020). Theoretical studies have explored the relationship between these constructs, possibly due to the fact that some countries actively develop entrepreneurs' competencies to ensure that their skills improve alongside their increasing entrepreneurial orientation (Wickramaratne, Kiminami, and Yagi, 2014).

The Positive Effect of Entrepreneurial Competence on SME Performance

The third hypothesis (H3) states that entrepreneurial competence (EC) positively impacts SME performance. The test results show a coefficient value of 0.512 (positive) with a t-statistic of 8.732 (>1.96) and a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05), indicating that the third hypothesis is accepted.

This finding aligns with previous research by Man, Lau, and Snape (2008) and Mitchelmore and Rowley (2010), which suggests that entrepreneurial competence plays a crucial role in enhancing business performance. Entrepreneurial competence includes a combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that enable entrepreneurs to make strategic decisions, innovate, and manage their businesses effectively.

According to Chandler and Hanks (1994), competence is a key factor in achieving superior business performance. Entrepreneurs with higher competence tend to be more adaptable to market changes, better at risk management, and more proactive in identifying business opportunities. Additionally, Man et al. (2002) argue that entrepreneurial competence is a multidimensional construct that directly influences the success of SMEs by improving their ability to navigate competitive environments. Thus, this study reaffirms that enhancing entrepreneurial competence is essential for improving SME performance, as it equips business owners with the necessary capabilities to sustain and grow their enterprises in an increasingly dynamic and competitive market.

Entrepreneurial Orientation, Entrepreneurial Competence, and SME Performance

Hypothesis 4 (H4) states that Entrepreneurial Competence (EC) mediates the relationship between Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) and SME performance. The test results show a positive coefficient of 0.254, with a t-statistic of 5.893 (>1.96) and a significance value of 0.000 (<0.05), confirming that the fourth hypothesis is accepted. These findings align with those of Al Mamun et al. (2018), who also found that EC serves as a mediating variable in the relationship between EO and SME performance.

In this context, SME entrepreneurs may have a strong entrepreneurial orientation, but they also need sufficient competence to navigate highly dynamic business environments. Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) is considered essential for companies aiming to succeed in competitive markets (Aliyu, 2017). However, Lumpkin and Dess (1996) explain that the positive implications of EO on business performance are context-specific and can vary independently across different organizational settings. On the other hand, Khan, Rathore, and Sial (2020) highlight that entrepreneurial competence is not easily imitated by competitors, making it a crucial factor in economic development. Therefore, understanding and enhancing both EO and EC is vital for businesses to perform better in competitive environments. This underscores the necessity of examining the EO-EC relationship as a key driver of business performance (Asad et al., 2016).

Agricultural Product Entrepreneurship

The analysis of the entrepreneurial characteristics of agricultural products reveals no significant difference from general entrepreneurship, as there is a correlation between business orientation, business competence, and the performance of SME entrepreneurs. However, the key difference lies in business performance, where, specifically for agricultural products, there is no direct impact. This is due to the nature of agricultural products, which experience highly fluctuating demand and inconsistent availability. Therefore, the essential factors for agricultural product entrepreneurship are networking and commitment to conducting entrepreneurship professionally.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion serves as the answer to the research problem previously raised. Based on the analysis results, the conclusions are as follows: entrepreneurial orientation (EO) has a significant positive effect on SME performance, entrepreneurial competence (EC) has a significant positive effect on SME performance, and entrepreneurial orientation (EO) has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial competence (EC). From the mediation effect perspective, it can be explained that entrepreneurial competence (EC) successfully mediates the influence of EO on SME performance. In the context of agricultural product entrepreneurship, what is needed is networking and commitment to conducting entrepreneurship professionally.

The limitation of this study is that the sample was only drawn from SMEs registered in Gianyar Regency. For future research, it is recommended to study a broader population or include samples covering all SMEs in Bali Province.

EO and EC play a crucial role in determining SME performance. This study also observes a significant positive relationship between EO, EC, and performance, where EC acts as a mediating variable between EO and SME performance. This relationship is highly relevant for SMEs in developing EO, as an increase in EO also leads to an increase in EC, which entrepreneurs can utilize to accomplish complex tasks in dynamic conditions. Therefore, SME entrepreneurs need to be equipped with the necessary competencies to help improve their performance. Lastly, this research can be used by various stakeholders to place greater emphasis on developing competency levels and determining the appropriate orientation to achieve better SME performance.

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