

Marketing Strategies and Competitive Advantage of Small Retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato

Rosemarie G. Nono¹, Thea G. Penetrante², Charmie A. Lagdamen, MBA³

^{1,2,3}*Sultan Kudarat State University, Department of Accounting Studies, EJC Montilla Tacurong City, Sultan Kudarat, Philippines*

rosemarienono2@gmail.com , theapenetrante7@gmail.com , charmielagdamen@sksu.edu.ph

ABSTRACT: This study was conducted to determine which domain of marketing strategies that best influences the competitive advantage of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato. The study used quantitative, non-experimental research design employing the correlational and regression technique. The respondents of the study were 119 small retailers selected through a total enumeration approach. Adapted and contextualized structured questionnaires were deployed to measure and establish the relationship between marketing strategies and competitive advantage. Moreover, the mean, Pearson r, and regression were used as statistical tools. Results of the study showed that the levels of marketing strategies and competitive advantage were high. Also, the data revealed that marketing strategies has a moderate positive relationship with competitive advantage of small retailers. When regressed, it was found that two domains of marketing strategies influence the competitive advantage of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato. Of the two domains, process resulted as the best predictor of competitive advantage.

Keywords: marketing strategies, competitive advantage, small retailers, correlation, regression

I. INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Sustainable competitive advantage is the ultimate goal of every business (McGrath, 2009). In today's world, this is essential for the business to succeed because without it companies will surely find it difficult to survive (Hu, Ocloo, Selorm, & David, 2019). If there is no competitive advantage, better not to compete (Welch, 2021) because being just good is not enough, every businesses should and need to set their standards very high, so that even the flaws and imperfections are considered outstanding (Fields, 2021). And this can only be experienced when operations of the business creates economic worth and provides higher values to the customers (Hu et al., 2019).

Marketing strategy is an important sword or instrument for any business organization to stay competitive and stronger (Gbolagade, Adesola, & Oyewale, 2013). In addition, Juneja (2015) also said that marketing strategies is a way in explaining how an organization reaches its predetermined objectives. In the result of the study conducted by Fanaei, Dehnavi and Sadeghian(2014) it showed that marketing strategy really influenced sustainable competitive advantage in which they states that marketing strategy affects the image of the organization, both on the value of the brand and the organization itself. All the elements in the marketing mix have a notable impact on achieving competitive advantage (Al badi, 2018). Strategies are the game plan that every company or businesses chooses in order to get the largest growth and profits with the lowest risk (Lombardo, 2012). Marketing concepts are the strategies where it leads to our business position with our customers, differentiate our products from our competitors, and create a strong and effective marketing plan (Raju, 2021).

Knowing what and where your business can excel and being focused on creating strategies on that factor is the most important element of any successful strategic plan (Competitive Advantage, 2021). In order to sustain business competitiveness for a long time, business owners should make sure that their strategies cannot be easily duplicated by their competitors (Maina, 2016). Long-term success need to build a marketing-based competitive advantage (Chron Contributor, 2021). Nonetheless, change is constant; like Hyken(2021) said what works today may not work tomorrow meaning not all strategies applicable today may also be applicable in the future. The reality of modern business is that

many successful ones use consistency approach on which they are 'stuck in the middle'. After achieving the peak of the business life they stay and continue the same process on which it should not be. Continuously adding value to the organization is very essential in the business world (Competitive Advantage - Marketing Strategy, 2020). Whereas, one should always think to endure or stay competitive regardless of new competitors entering the market or existing competitors enhancing their own products or services (Chron Contributor, 2021).

Thus, with this research, the researchers aim to examine if there is really a relationship between marketing strategies and competitive advantage of the small retailers at Tantangan, South Cotabato. At the same time, it identifies the domain of marketing strategies which best influences the competitive advantage.

Statement of the Problem

This study generally aims to know the relationship between marketing strategies and competitive advantage of small retailers in the Municipality of Tantangan, Province of South Cotabato.

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

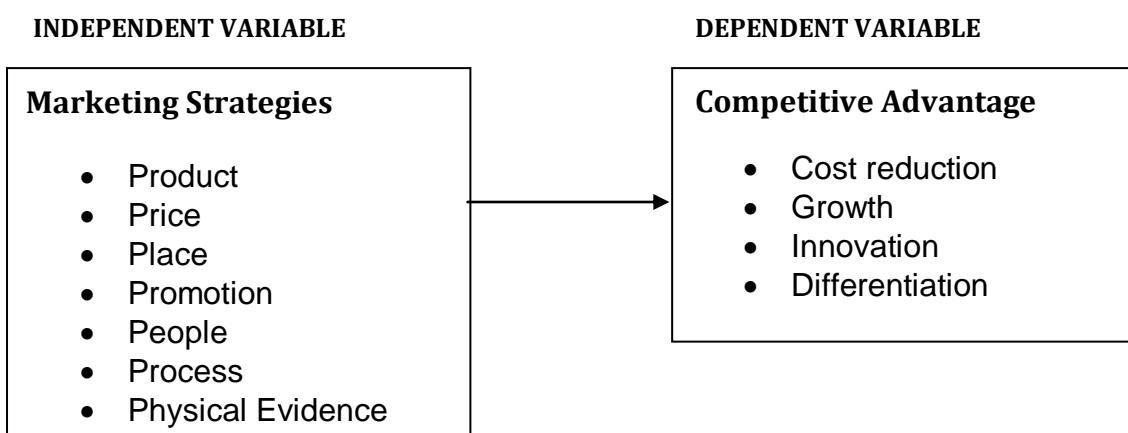
1. What is the level of marketing strategies of small retailers in terms of:
 - 1.1 Product;
 - 1.2 Price;
 - 1.3 Place;
 - 1.4 Promotion;
 - 1.5 People;
 - 1.6 Process; and
 - 1.7 Physical Evidence?
2. What is the extent of competitive advantage of small retailers in terms of:
 - 2.1 Cost Reduction;
 - 2.2 Growth;
 - 2.3 Innovation; and
 - 2.4 Differentiation?
3. Is there a significant relationship between marketing strategies and competitive advantage on small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato?
4. Which domain of marketing strategies best influences the competitive advantage of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study is presented in Figure 1, depicting the independent variable and dependent variable of the study. The independent variable is the marketing strategies which were based on the works of Calderon, Catolico, Dela Cruz, Forro, and Labarinto(2021), and Ponsawat (2016) with the 7Ps indicators such as Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical Environment and Process. Consequently, the dependent variable of this study is competitive advantage with the following indicators; cost reduction, growth, innovation and differentiation anchored on the constructs of Hu et al. (2019).

The arrow from the first box to the second box signifies the causal or direct relationship of marketing strategies to the competitive advantage of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato.

Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework of the Study



Hypothesis

At a significance level of 0.05, the following null hypothesis was tested:

1. There is no significant relationship between marketing strategies and competitive advantage of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato.
2. There is no domain of marketing strategies that best influences the competitive advantage of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato.

Significance of the Study

The result of this study will serve as basis on which small retailers may understand, appreciate, and embrace the importance of competitive advantage to having marketing strategies. The study will specifically help various individuals or groups such as:

Small Retailer. The findings of this study will help retailers apply strategies better suited to their industry to improve operations and use resources effectively and efficiently. This will help businessmen evaluate their business and improve their operations.

Retail Industry. This research may help them understand the market industry whereas they will also be aware of the effective marketing strategies used by different size of businesses.

Future Entrepreneurs. This research study will provide them insights that may serve as their reference in the decision-making process prior to the start of their business operation. They can get ideas and strategies on how they are going to manage future situations that may happen in their future business.

Researchers. The result of this study will present valuable information for future researchers that will help them with their study.

Scope and Limitation of the Study

One of the problems that this research study needs to answer is how to find the greatest marketing strategies to use in a small retailing business. The primary purpose of this study is to determine whether or not marketing strategies have an impact on market competitiveness. As a result, the data on marketing strategies in this study is confined to the 7Ps of marketing mix, which are product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence strategy. Competitive advantage, on the other hand, refers to the selected small retailers' cost reduction, growth, innovation and differentiation.

The respondent of the study will revolve around the small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato for they are the most accessible respondents for the researchers. Also, quantitative research using likert scale via survey questionnaire for face-to-face respondents is the way of conducting the research. In compliance with the health protocols implemented by the government, the researchers strictly follow the wearing of face mask during the conduct of the said study. And this was conducted in the whole duration of the Academic Year 2021-2022 from August 2021 up to May 2022.

Definition of Terms

The researchers operationally defined the following terms in order to provide a greater understanding of the study.

Competitive Advantage

It refers to a situation wherein one business is apart from its competitors. Instances where customer chooses to buy in a specific business even there are many businesses with the same products offered around. Meaning the business stays strong despite of having too many competitors around him or her.

Marketing Strategies

It pertains to those applied strategies by the small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato. These mainly focus on 7Ps such as the product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence. These strategies are those planned actions in order to maintain or improve sales rate at the same time stay competitive in the market industry.

Small Retailers

Refers to the respondents of the study who buy goods from the wholesaler, manufacturer, or other distributor, then resell directly to the final consumers. These are the businesses included in the 2021 registered small retailers in the Municipality of Tantangan, South Cotabato. They are identified using the data provided by the Municipal Business Permits and Licensing Office (MBPLO). These businesses have less than 1 million capitals with less than 10 employees whose businesses were located at the whole area of the Municipality of Tantangan, South Cotabato.

Tantangan, South Cotabato

refers to the locale of the study. A third-class municipality in the Province of South Cotabato which composed of 13 barangays and located in between the City of Koronadal and Tacurong City

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section provides conglomeration of the perspectives, propositions, principles, concepts, and ideas from different authors about marketing strategies, competitive advantage, its observed variables, and their hypothesized relationship. The discussion on the independent variable, which is marketing strategies, is based on the works of Calderon, et al. (2021), and Ponsawat(2016) with the 7Ps indicators such as the Product, Price, Place, Promotion, People, Physical Environment and Process. However, the dependent variable, which is competitive advantage and its indicators, is anchored on the constructs of Hu et al. (2019), the cost reduction, growth, innovation and differentiation.

Marketing Strategy

The first step toward a successful strategy is to analyze the marketing mix (Ponsawat, 2016). Borden pioneered the marketing mix concept in year 1964 by which he defined marketer as a mixer of elements in the course of conducting business. Nevertheless, it was formally used using the marketing mix model or famously known as 4Ps of McCarthy (1964) whereas it refers to the product, price, promotion and place (Akroush, 2010). However, McCarthy's 4P's evolved throughout time. As a result of various marketing mixes that have been proposed for various marketing situations, mix has becoming more questioned and attacked. Booms and Bitner's (1981) 7Ps mix for services were expanded to other sectors of marketing such as goods production (Rafiq& Ahmed, 1995). The initial marketing mix was expanded to include "people", "process", and "physical evidence" in addition to the usual 4Ps (Akroush, 2010). Furthermore, Rafiq and Ahmed agreed that Booms and Bitner's 7Ps framework should replace McCarthy's marketing mix.

Before all these things came to happen, various authors conduct a research regarding these matters and as expected different definitions were published. Steiner (1979) states that a marketing strategy should answer the questions: What is our end goal and how should we attain it? Mintzberg(1994) also gives definition with this word saying it is a process on which one should begin with a perspective and create conclusions that will be used to gain a certain position in the market which will result to discover how effective thy created plans. Andrews (1995) gives another explanation which he states that marketing strategy is the pattern of how a company decides based on their objectives and goals. As time unceasingly change, many definitions still exist but as a whole it is all about how to improve the business and how to stay competitive despite of different instances.

Customer satisfaction is the main goal or the key concept of marketing strategy. Proper strategy to implement plans is required in order to run a business (Zenith, 2011). According to an article entitled Marketing Strategies, (2019),

for a business to succeed marketing plans has a lot to do. The best thing businessman should do is to truly understand who they were trying to sell to (Uzialko, 2021). Marketing is helpful to gain customers loyalty. It is useful to increase sales and earn product branding (Marketing Strategies, 2019). Every local marketing strategy has a goal of planning and implementing it efficiently. A local marketing strategy ensures that you are targeting a client that might patronize your business (Uzialko, 2021).

Statistics says that 50% of small businesses do not have marketing strategies that is why they felt hard to stay competitive in the industry and one reason for this is having no budget for creating marketing strategies (Dixit, 2021). Budget for marketing strategies is really hard. If a businessman do not allocate any amount for the said matter, conducting a business will be not easy. However, there are plenty of ways to still make plans possible (Beattie, 2022). Marketing strategies do not stick with only one strategy but more. If a business start applying a strategy for sure it will stand out against the others.

The development of your business strategy may lead to success or failure of your operation that is why it is very important to have a marketing strategies whatever kind of business we have (Frederiksen, 2022). According to Ponsawat (2016), the factors composing the marketing strategies are the product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence. On the result of his research, product factor highlights the image of the product as well as its quality. Price factor on the other hand states that cost must be suitable for its quality. Place factor emphasizes that business should be located where transportation is simple and easy. Promotion factor mostly advertise using media. People factor give significance on the proper treatment of the employees. Fastening of service procedures is a process factor and physical evidence aims for a nice and clean atmosphere. On the other side Jain (2013) defined the different elements of marketing mix as the following: Product is all important components and elements to do a service which create or give value for customer. Price is all about giving the perfect match of the cost of the product equal to its quality and also making sure to gain profit. Place refers to administrative decisions about where customers should receive services, which can encompass both electronic and physical routes. Personnel or people are one of the main players of the business; they provide the customer with the service. Procedure is where the management ensures a balance between the supply and demand. Physical Assets refers to the facilities where the businesses were conducted. Promotion the way businessmen market their products to the market.

If there is no *product strategy*, it will be so hard to win, this include product development (Labs, 2020). When it comes to developing a product it's like sailing without a map (Babich, 2020). A product strategy is a plan for further developing a product in order to meet or exceed one or more business objectives (Venema, 2020). Every small micro enterprise (SME) strives to meet the needs and desires of its clients through the products it sells. Wherefore, selecting the appropriate products to sell is critical for it may lead to a loss of profit if they choose the wrong product (Cant, Wiid, & Kallier, 2015). When making key decisions, round 70% of firms consider their product strategy. With a clear strategy, companies can easily define their vision, set smart goals, and determine the steps needed to achieve their business (Picincu, 2019). A good product strategy always tell us to focus on what is important and address or prioritize it instantly (Evans, 2021) Application of things is to create new product is truly a risk-taking actions, it may lead to either a positive result or not. However, every failure is a lesson and thus taking a risk will never allow us to say we made mistakes because we fail. Nonetheless, it is the best way to improve not just our product but the decision making of the owner also.

Pricing strategy is one of the key elements of a marketing plan as it allows companies to differentiate their products or services from other competitors (Nitro PDF Professional, 2021). Pricing strategies are an important way to determine the revenue generated, the profits earned, and the amount reinvested in business growth for business sustainability. Pricing strategy options include, but are not limited to, markup prices, target ROI prices, perceived value prices, competitive prices, penetration prices, and skimming prices. (Bonnici & Channon, 2015). Pricing a product consist different trial and error because there are lots of factors need to consider. Pricing a product too high, many people simply won't buy it and maybe competitors will see it as an opportunity. On the other hand, if the business will price it too low, it might end up having a consistent result of income or maybe it will have a loss (Skripak, 2016).

Place is a spacious entity at a particular point in time, determined by its location, size, value and boundary (Vaňová, Vitálišová, & Borsekova, 2017). Place also plays an important role in determining the overall image of the product (Mundy & Bullen, 2021). Using the right product in the right price available at the right place gives you a competitive advantage (Ehmke, Fulton, & Lusk, 2021). Suchlike Jollibee always made, they position their outlets in a populated areas where it will allow them to get the attention of many people (Shastri, 2021). Nonetheless, place strategy is one of the most underappreciated marketing strategy, it has a fewer articles being published compared to other Ps of the marketing mix (Mishra, 2020).

Effective communication between buyers and seller is the ultimate goal of *promotion*. It requires a better understanding of the persuasive process and an understanding of the environment (Alam, Almotairi, & Gaadar, 2013).

Generally promotion is all about communication; it requires an effort in order to promote an event, product or organization to achieve certain goal (Haris, 2021). According to MBA Skool Team (2021), promotional strategy refers to the ways of a business to advertise its products or services. This was based on the factors like product type, advertising budget and audience preferences. Hofstrand (2018) stated that promotional activities have five general reasons or purposes: providing information, promoting demand, differentiating products, emphasizing product value and maintaining sales stability. How to get in touch with people means that you need to share certain facts and information (Alam et al., 2013).

Employees need to be optimized for companies to continually evolve, grow and improve performance. Therefore, it is important to create and maintain a well-implemented people strategy (Garvey, 2020). People strategy lay out the strategic direction of the people over the years of the business. It helps to enable and equip people or employee with the required knowledge, skills experience and attitudes to deliver outstanding services (Barnsley Hospital, 2018). The purpose of this strategy is to create development despite of the rapidly changing world. As business recruit, develop and retain people, offering a modern culture and an employment package should be attractive and competitive (Mortimer, 2021). Effective people strategies need to support organizational goals while ensuring that internal capabilities are aligned with the overall organizational vision (Garvey, 2020).

If you lose your way or you do not know where you're going, there are many roads that will take you there (The Alternative Board, 2013). *Processes* are an action where businesses use its resources to provide a product that has a value. Process strategy creates a pattern of decisions to be made in different stages of the business in order to achieve competitive priorities (Rao, 2021). Process decisions directly affect the entire process and indirectly affect the services and the products it produces. Whereas, the one assigned in this task must consider the proper process decisions (Santra, 2018).

The intention of advertising and marketing mix is to comprise the proper factors to attract the preferred customers. Physical evidence is used to achieve this (Bhasin, 2018). Physical evidence may be related not only to the building or facility, but also to the businessman and his outfit and attitude (Business Queensland, 2021). Some people says we should not judge a book by its cover. However, most of the time whether we like it or not, people are choosing to buy or patronize products that already look appealing (The Marketing Mix, 2021).

Competitive Advantage

The term competitive advantage is widely used in various economic studies. This was first discussed by Selznick (1957), Chandler (1962) and Andrews (1971) as a complex phenomenon that relied heavily on the positive presence of good leadership. However, all of the facts and information collected in this study are rooted firmly in historical analysis and careful qualitative research according to Cockburn, Henderson and Stern, (2000). A thorough discussion of competitive advantage was clearly observed in the book entitled "The Competitive Advantage of Nations (1990)" by Porter. Stated in there that the term was officially published in 1985 as an integral companion to competitive strategy. Whereas, he strategically considered competitive advantage for the activities of various companies, their relative cost and differentiation. He explained that he defined it as a general framework for thinking strategically about the activities involved in different businesses and evaluating their relative cost and role in differentiation.

As time gone by, various definition of this term was established. This includes the definition of Cambridge University Press (2021) where competitive advantage is defined as a scenario in which a business is more successful than a competing business, or in a specific case in which a company is successful. Competitive advantage gives you a solid advantage over your competitors and allows you to make consistent profits (Arsecularatne&Yazdanifard, 2013). This reflects a company's ability to gain a secure against its competitors as a result of critical business decisions and plans. This can be experienced when a business creates economic value and is able to deliver greater value to its customers (Hu et al., 2019). Competitive advantage thus refers to the situation where the product or service of a firm is perceived to be better than that of its competitors.

In business competition there is no exceptions. There were times where it is agonizing and frightening to observe that another business gain advantage from your company's weaknesses. However, competition can also drive your business to yield into a better version of itself (Cote, 2020). Through pressure and challenge, companies can gain an edge over the world's best competitors. They can benefit from having different styles and strategies (Porter, 2011). Competitive advantage means company that sets it apart from its competitors. This highlights the benefits customers receive when doing business with your company. It's your product, service, reputation or even location (Queensland Government, 2021). For any company, the biggest challenge is finding a way to gain a sustainable competitive advantage over other competing products and companies in the market (Tutor2u, 2021). In the study of Dr. Lee Frederiksen (2021) states that finding a sustainable competitive advantage is not an easy task. Meanwhile, Hyken (2021) made a statement in his opinion that no one has a sustainable competitive advantage because it is just a myth. He

emphasizes in his article a quote that what works today may not work tomorrow. Therefore, there is no fixed strategy. Certainly there are competitors who are always looking for ways to reverse their competitive advantage.

In the research entitled "Effects of B2B E-commerce Adoption on Competitive Advantage of SME (2019)" it examines competitive advantage in terms of four factors such as cost reduction, growth, differentiation and innovation. Having a competitive advantage means the firms were also able to have a *cost reduction* (Hu et al., 2019). By cutting cost, a business can gain competitive advantage. (Srivastava, 2015) Transformation begins by aligning costs with strategy by investing in differentiated territories and reducing the rest (O'Hearn. 2016). Reduce costs and gain a competitive advantage. Seeing cost cutting as a prudent long-term strategy will make a business more competitive in the marketplace (Rooyen, 2019). Wrong assumptions suchlike reducing costs will improve cash flow will lead to a cost reduction failure. The hard truth is that cutting some costs now can result in higher costs later, wherefore; the most effective way to reduce cost is by reducing waste or if possible eliminates it (CFO Selections Team, 2021).

Second factor of competitive advantage is *growth*, in which it was define as enhancing business efficiency (Hu et al., 2019). Managing the growth process of a new business is a very complex task and is one of the central themes or most tackled topic of strategic management researches (Santamaria, 2018). Growth is considered as an important measure of business success and is considered a key factor in creating wealth, employment, and economic development. However, many small business owners are not interested in or intentionally forgo growth (Ngek & Vanzyl, 2014). Having just a competitive advantage is not enough, the importance of managers and executives task is also important in sustaining value and creating growth (Zenger, 2016). Growth is a phenomenon that occurs over time and needs to be investigated vertically, at least to assess changes in startup size and current size (Hoxha, 2013). This is an event dominated by a variety of factors that are controlled or unmanaged by small businesses owners and management. One of the difficult problems to analyze growth is that most studies have substantial qualitative difference and general impacts on growth, such as demographic factors, basic characteristics like company's size and age. This is because we could not recognize the existence of such factors, organizational forms, ownership, etc. (Janeska & Debarliev, 2015).

Next factor is *differentiation* wherein according to Reynolds (2019), a differentiated business and marketing strategy makes a firm brand stand out in a crowded marketplace. Whereas, it is believed that a business with a differentiation strategy can adjust its prices with a greater profit margins (Young African Leaders Initiative, 2018). In a differentiation strategy, a business used the widely valued ways by the customers to be unique in its industry. Companies that can achieve and maintain differentiation outperform in a cluster or industry. Therefore, a business needs to be truly unique or perceived as unique in something, especially if it is under a premium price (Porter's 1990). Differentiation is a key factor in a company's success in achieving a competitive advantage (Putra, Sudarmiatin, & Suharto, 2018). Differentiation makes a customer more because the key premise behind a differentiating strategy is that the customer is willing to pay a higher price for a product that is different or importantly different from other products (Bordes, 2009). Therefore, product differentiation can be used as a tool to gain a competitive advantage and improve performance (Dirisu, Iyiola, & Ibidunni, 2013).

Finally, *innovation* as one of the factors of competitive advantage can provide one or more links to an industry or value chain that includes product and process research and development (R&D), marketing, sales and distribution (Hu et al., 2019). Any businesses can achieve a competitive advantage through innovation (Porter, 1990). Innovation means meeting customer needs in a variety of ways. Each business strives to be the first to offer new products and services to attract and bring back customers (Young African Leaders Initiative, 2018). Leveraging new ideas is very crucial at the same time very important because it is considered to be a key to success for the reason that it introduced improve productivity, reduce costs, become more competitive, establish the value of the brand, increase sales and improve profitability, as well as establishing new partnerships and relationships among the suppliers and stakeholders (Adhikari, 2011). Product innovation is really seen as a method to gain competitive advantage but there are things that should also be assessed like the likelihood of positive market acceptance and the defensibility of the pioneer advantage (Angelmar 2014). Ultimately, upgrading is the only way to maintain or secure a competitive advantage – to move to more unique and sophisticated kind of products (Porter, 1990).

Marketing one's business is really hard; it requires positioning it properly in order to satisfy market needs (Ehmke et al., 2021). The strategy is a long-term corporate map and direction. Ideally, resources should be adapted to a changing environment, especially the market, customer or client (Ford, 2021). However, as Hyken (2021) points out, the changes are really constant, what works today may not work tomorrow, and seriously there are lots of competitors who are always looking for ways to gain competitive advantage. Thus, if there is no competitive advantage, businesses should not compete (Welch, 2021). Wherefore, sustainable competitive advantage is really needed because just like Debbi Fields said: being good will never become sufficient. All companies need to set their standards very high so that even their shortcomings are considered good.

Marketing Strategies and Competitive Advantage

Based on the meta-analysis conducted by the researchers, it was determined that there was no specific study that investigated the relationship of marketing strategies or Booms and Bitner's (1981) 7Ps mix as proposed by Calderon, et al (2021) and Ponsawat (2016) and Competitive Advantage as proposed by Hu, et al (2019) in the context of small retailers at the place of study. However, several researchers have laid strong propositions that marketing strategies has a big effect on achieving competitive advantage. In the study conducted by Fanaei et al. (2014) stated that in order to have a sustainable competitive advantage every business should have an effective marketing strategies.

Marketing is everyone's business in today's highly competitive business world. If you are part of the business industry, you really need a thorough understanding of the marketing strategies key principles, procedures, and strategic viewpoints (Beattie, 2022). Having no marketing strategies will surely make the conduction of the business truly hard (Frederiksen, 2022). That is why Maina (2016) states that to make sure that the business remains competitive in a long run, business owners must secure to create a marketing strategies that could impossibly duplicated. Furthermore, Al Badi (2018) proves in his research that all marketing mix have significant effect for every businesses to achieve competitive advantage. Wetosi, Geoffrey and Kibet (2017) also proves that marketing strategies really gives a big impact on achieving competitive advantage.

Strategies are the game plan that every company or business chooses to get the largest growth and profits with the lowest risk (Lombardo, 2012). Additionally, Juneja (2015) states that marketing strategies are a way of explaining how an organization reaches its predetermined objectives. Marketing concepts are the strategies done to position our business with our customers, differentiate our products from our competitors, and create a sustainable and effective marketing plan (Raju, 2021). Business marketing strategy affected the image of the organization, on which the image of the organization provides impact on both the value of a brand and the organization itself (Fanaei et al., 2014). Whereas, in order to remain competitive, marketing strategy is an important sword or instrument (Gbolagade et al., 2013).

According to Rao (2021), among the different elements of marketing strategies process strategy is the effective one because it created a pattern of decisions made to be used in different stages of the business that would lead to competitive advantage. It contradict to the statement of Mishra, (2020) which points out that place strategy is the most effective one because proper positioning of the business will lead to competitive advantage. Nonetheless, all of these statements were valid and accepted. But the bottom point of this study is that sustainable competitive advantage is the ultimate goal of every businesses. Hence, according to Welch (2021) if there is no competitive advantage, better not to compete anymore because being just good in today's generation is not enough, every businesses should and need to set their standards very high, so that even the flaws and imperfections are considered outstanding (Fields, 2021). Hence, in this research, the researchers will try to prove if there is truly a relationship between marketing strategies and competitive advantage and if there is truly a domain of marketing strategies best influences competitive advantage.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the methodologies and processes utilized to perform the study. It describes the research design, the respondents of the study, data gathering procedure, data gathering instrument and statistical treatment used by the researchers in conducting the study.

Research Design

This study will employ a quantitative, non-experimental design using correlation and regression technique. This research design is applicable for studies that dealt with the influence of one variable to another; in this case the marketing strategies and competitive advantage. It is a type of research design in which a researcher measures two variables, understands and assesses the statistical relationship between them with no influence from any extraneous variable, that is, you are either reporting a scenario or phenomena as it is, or you are describing a relationship between two or more variables, all without the researcher's intervention.(Bhandari, 2021).

Respondent of the Study

A total of one hundred nineteen (119) small retailers are the respondents of the study. These are the businesses included in the 2021 registered small retailers in the Municipality of Tantangan, South Cotabato. They are identified using the data provided by the Municipal Business Permits and Licensing Office (MBPLO). These businesses have less than 1 million capitals with less than 10 employees whose businesses were located at the whole area of the Municipality of Tantangan, South Cotabato. The respondents of the study were chosen using total enumeration sampling technique. Total enumeration sampling is a type of purposive sampling that involves studying the entire population of interest. When the entire population is controllable, such as a well-defined subsection of a larger population, it is most practicable. It has the potential to allow researchers to paint a much more complete picture, and

greatly reduce guesswork. It eliminates the risk of biased sample selection that is often encountered in random study samples (Glen, 2018).

The respondents were drawn from the residents of Tantangan, South Cotabato. Located at the SOCCSKSARGEN Region (Region XII). It has a land area of 149.70 square kilometres or 57.80 square miles which constitutes 3.95% of South Cotabato's total area. The 2020 Census determined that a total of 45,744 is the total population of Tantangan which represents 4.69% of the total population of South Cotabato province, or 0.93% of the overall population of SOCCSKSARGEN Region (PhilAtlas, 2021).



Figure 2. Map of the Philippines and the Research Local Municipality of Tantangan

Data Gathering Instrument

A survey questionnaire was used to gather the information and data needed for the study. The instrument was adapted from various related studies. The adapted instruments are modified to make the instrument more applicable in meeting the objectives of the study. The content of the questionnaire was validated by a panel of experts in order to ensure its validity.

The first instrument measures the extent of marketing strategies employed by the enterprise in terms of: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence was adapted from the study of Calderon et al. (2021), and Ponsawat (2016). The last instrument was adapted from Hu et al. (2019) was used to measure the level of competitive advantage of the enterprise in terms of: cost reduction, growth, innovation, and differentiation. The respondents will indicate their answers using a five-point Likert type scale that ranges from 1 to 5 with descriptions from always to never.

Numerical Rating	Description
5	Always
4	Oftentimes
3	Sometimes
2	Rarely
1	Never

To determine the level of marketing strategies of the small retailers, the scale below was used to describe the mean responses.

Range of Mean	Descriptive Level	Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	Very High	This means that the marketing strategies described in the items is manifested at all times.
3.41 – 4.21	High	This means that the marketing strategies described in the items is oftentimes manifested.
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate	This means that the marketing strategies described in the items is sometimes manifested.
1.81 – 2.60	Low	This means that the marketing strategies described in the items is rarely manifested.
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low	This means that the marketing strategies described in the items is not manifested.

Table 1. Measures for determining the level of marketing strategies

To determine the extent of competitive advantage of the small retailers, the scale below was used to describe the mean responses.

Range of Mean	Descriptive Level	Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	Very High	This means that the competitive advantage described in the items is manifested at all times.
3.41 – 4.21	High	This means that the competitive advantage described in the items is oftentimes manifested.
2.61 – 3.40	Moderate	This means that the competitive advantage described in the items is sometimes manifested.
1.81 – 2.60	Low	This means that the competitive advantage described in the items is rarely manifested.
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low	This means that the competitive advantage described in the items is not manifested.

Table 2. Measures for determining the extent of competitive advantage

There were experts who validated the adapted and modified questionnaires. It was validated based on its clarity of directions, presentation, suitability and organization of items, attainment of purpose, objectivity and evaluation scale. The instruments on marketing strategies and competitive advantage were also pre-tested through Cronbach's Alpha to check its reliability and internal consistency. The measurement on reliability refers to the extent to which it is consistent measure of the research objective (Taber, 2018). The result of the Cronbach's Alpha Test for marketing strategies was 0.862 while for the competitive advantage was 0.769.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to data collection, from August 2021 to October 2021, the researchers think of different possible research titles then presented and ask for approval during their title defense. On October 2021 to January 2022, the researcher submitted manuscript and other requirements for outline defense and revised manuscript based on the suggestions and recommendations of the panels provided during the outline defense. At the same time, the researchers submitted the research questionnaires for internal and external validation. From January 2022 to March 2022, pilot testing was conducted and the research questionnaires were administered to target respondents. In March 2022 to May 2022, the researchers conduct the final survey. And on May 2022, the researchers applied for final defense.

Data were collected from March 2022 to May 2022, by undertaking the following steps: First, a copy of the list of registered small retailers from the Municipal Business Permits and Licensing Office was obtained. Then, the researchers sought permission in the Municipal Mayor for the conduct of the study in its locale or area of responsibility. After which, upon approval, the questionnaires were administered. Permission to the enterprise was also sought; the guidelines and direction in answering the questionnaire were also discussed in detail. The researchers formally conducted the survey personally with precaution and protocols observed. Lastly, the researchers retrieved the questionnaire then tallied all the data gathered from the respondents and analyzed and interpreted the same based on the purpose of the study.

Statistical Treatment

The data gathered through the questionnaires were tailed and treated using the following statistical tools:

Mean. This was used to describe the extent of marketing strategies and competitive advantage of the small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato.

Pearson Correlation. This was applied to determine the relationship between marketing strategies and competitive advantage. Specifically the researchers used the Pearson correlation interpretation table of ParvezAhammad which was presented by Jaadi(2019). To identify the relationship between marketing strategies and competitive advantage of the small retailers the table was used to describe the result.

Size of Correlation	Interpretation
±.90 to ±.1	Very High Positive/Negative Correlation
±.70 to ±.90	High Positive/Negative Correlation
±.50 to ±.70	Moderate Positive/Negative Correlation
±.30 to ±.50	Low Positive/Negative Correlation
±.00 to ±.30	Negligible Correlation

Table 3. Pearson Correlation Interpretation Basis

Multiple Regression. This was employed to identify which domain of marketing strategies best influences the competitive advantage of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the summary, analysis, and discussion of the results from the gathered data to provide answers to the statement of the problem. The following table shows the computation of mean, correlation, and regression by utilizing the one hundred nineteen (119) respondents to evaluate the Marketing Strategies and Competitive Advantage of Small Retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato.

Level of Marketing Strategies

The first statement of the problem of this study is to determine the level of marketing strategies of the small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato. Table 4 shows the respondents' responses on the level of marketing strategies of small retailers in terms of product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence strategies. The result reveals that process and people strategies were very high which means that these strategies are manifested at all times. Based on the table, it is shown that process strategies is the most implemented ($M=4.34$) among all indicators, followed by place strategies ($M=4.32$) with only 0.02 mean result difference. On the other hand, promotion strategies ($M = 2.87$) has the least manifested among all the indicators. However, in general, the level of marketing strategies of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato is rated high with an overall mean of 3.71 which indicates that the measures of marketing strategies were oftentimes manifested.

Table 4. Mean Distribution on the Level of Marketing Strategies of Small Retailers; n= 119

Marketing Strategies	Mean	Descriptive Level
Product	4.21	High
Price	3.46	High
Place	4.32	Very high
Promotion	2.87	Moderate
People	3.67	High
Process	4.34	Very high
Physical Evidence	3.10	Moderate
GRAND MEAN	3.71	High

The high level of marketing strategies of small retailers is due to the high ratings answered by the respondents on the indicators of marketing strategies. Small retailers have shown high level of understanding and implementation of the different elements of marketing strategies. With the overall mean result, it presents that small retailers really considered applying marketing strategies in conducting their business.

These practices are expected to gain higher marketing strategies level in accordance with the perspectives of different authors (Beattie, 2022; Frederiksen, 2022; Raju, 2021) who pointed out that marketing is everyone's business in today's highly competitive business world. If you are part of this industry, you really need a thorough understanding of the marketing strategies key principles, procedures, and strategic viewpoints because a businessmen who do not pay attention to marketing strategies, will be conducting its business uneasily. The development of business strategy may lead to success or failure of the business operation that is why it is very important to have marketing strategies whatever kind of business we have.

Table 4.1. Level of marketing strategies of small retailers in terms of Product

Item	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. The business offers good quality products and services	4.86	VERY HIGH
2. The business has a wide range of product line	3.52	HIGH
3. The business packaging is well-done	4.06	HIGH
4. The business is efficient in meeting the customer needs and wants.	4.26	VERY HIGH
5. The business is willing to add or remove its product line to adapt with the changes in customer demand	4.33	VERY HIGH
Overall	4.21	HIGH

Table 4.1 shows the level of marketing strategies in terms of product, it has an overall mean of 4.21 with a descriptive level of high. According to Venema, (2020) and Cant et al. (2015) every business should strive to meet the needs and desires of its clients through the products it sells. Picincu (2019) states that when making key decisions firms should consider their product strategy. This proves that product strategies specifically securing good quality products and services, meeting customer needs and wants and fast adaptation of the changes in customers demand are oftentimes manifested by the small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato.

Table 4.2. Level of marketing strategies of small retailers in terms of Price

Item	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. The business offers levels of products or services at different price points	4.10	HIGH
2. The business' prices are cheaper than other competing businesses	3.03	MODERATE
3. The business' prices are higher as compared to the suggested retail price	2.28	LOW
4. The business considers the customer's purchasing power in terms of pricing	3.82	HIGH
5. The business' price or service fee charged suits the quality	4.07	HIGH
Overall	3.46	HIGH

Table 4.2 shows the level of marketing strategies in terms of price, it has an overall mean of 3.46 with a descriptive level of high. Some authors like Bonnici et al. (2015) and Nitro PDF Professional (2021) states that pricing is the key element of a company to differentiate their business to other competitors. It is also the reason to make firm's sustainable for growth. This proves by the result as it provides high manifestation of price strategies. However, in the case of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato, not all indicators were given enough attention specifically the second and third indicators stated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.3. Level of marketing strategies of small retailers in terms of Place

Item	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. The business is accessible to customers	4.56	VERY HIGH
2. The business has a reliable channel of distribution for their products	3.82	HIGH
3. The business is located where traffic of people is present	3.15	MODERATE
4. The business uses communication tools to order	3.01	MODERATE
5. The business make sure that products are always available	3.80	HIGH
Overall	3.67	HIGH

Table 4.3 shows the level of marketing strategies in terms of place, it has an overall mean of 3.67 with a descriptive level of high. Ehmke et al. (2021) states that proper positioning of the business provides competitive advantage to the business. Based on the result place strategy were oftentimes manifested by the small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato specifically by considering that the business is accessible to the customers.

Table 4.4. Level of marketing strategies of small retailers in terms of Promotion

Item	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. The business advertises its products through different media (ex. Facebook, Instagram, Radio)	1.95	LOW
2. The business appoints employees with good sales communication skills	4.16	HIGH
3. The business offers some testers to newly launched product	2.37	LOW
4. The business offers discount promos and coupons	2.88	MODERATE
5. The business gives seasonal promotions (Christmas, New Year, etc.)	2.98	MODERATE
Overall	2.87	MODERATE

Table 4.4 shows the level of marketing strategies in terms of promotion, it has an overall mean of 2.87 with a descriptive level of moderate. Promotion is an effective means to get in touch with people (Alam et al., 2013). However, according to Haris, (2021) advertising a product or a business requires effort and enough budget. This may be the reason why the result should a moderate level of manifestation for the small retailers do not focus more on promoting their business.

Table 4.5. Level of marketing strategies of small retailers in terms of People

Item	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. The business has enough employees to cover all the services	4.23	VERY HIGH
2. The employees of the business can solve problems even without supervision	4.28	VERY HIGH
3. The employees of the business have the skills and knowledge needed in the operation	4.32	VERY HIGH
4. The employees of the business are enthusiastic when responding to questions	4.31	VERY HIGH
5. The employees of the business understand customer needs	4.47	VERY HIGH
Overall	4.32	VERY HIGH

Table 4.5 shows the level of marketing strategies in terms of people, it has an overall mean of 4.32 with a descriptive level of very high. Effective people strategies need to support organizational goals while ensuring that internal capabilities are aligned with overall organizational vision Garvey (2020). As observed in the result, people strategies truly given enough attention by the small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato.

Table 4.6. Level of marketing strategies of small retailers in terms of Process

Item	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. The business categorizes products to cater convenience to customers	4.31	VERY HIGH
2. The business considers the importance of the buyer's time	4.37	VERY HIGH
3. The business makes sure a small waiting time to acquire the product or services	4.27	VERY HIGH
4. The business's service process continues fluently	4.39	VERY HIGH
5. The business resolves problems when it occurs	4.37	VERY HIGH
Overall	4.34	VERY HIGH

Table 4.6 shows the level of marketing strategies in terms of process, it has an overall mean of 4.34 with a descriptive level of very high. Process strategies creates pattern of decisions wherein it is truly need by every firm for it affects the entire sequence of the business operation (Rao, 2021 &Santra, 2018). This proves by the result which showed a very high descriptive level which implies that process strategies are always manifested by the small retailers.

Table 4.7. Level of marketing strategies of small retailers in terms of Physical Evidence

Item	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. The business has sufficient resources needed	3.82	HIGH
2. The business has high quality technology instruments	2.48	LOW
3. The environment of the business is calm and enjoyable	4.07	HIGH
4. The business has enough parking space available for customers	3.68	HIGH
5. The business has WiFi accessible to its customers	1.47	VERY LOW
Overall	3.10	MODERATE

Table 4.7 shows the level of marketing strategies in terms of physical evidence, it has an overall mean of 3.10 with a descriptive level of moderate. According to the article entitled The Marketing Mix, 2021 people are choosing to buy or patronize products that already look appealing. Based on the result not all small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato are using physical evidence strategies.

Extent of Competitive Advantage

The second objective of this study is to measure the extent of competitive advantage in terms of cost reduction, growth, innovation and differentiation. Table 5 shows the responses of the respondents to the second objective. As displayed, on average, growth and innovation got the highest mean with 3.89 results. However, all other indicators specified in the table were also rated high. Overall, the extent of Competitive Advantage of Small Retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato is found to be high ($M=3.69$). In short, this means that the extent of competitive advantage is oftentimes manifested.

Table 5. Mean Distribution on the Extent of Competitive Advantage of Small Retailers; n= 119

Competitive Advantage	Mean	Descriptive Level
Cost Reduction	3.40	High
Growth	3.89	High
Innovation	3.89	High
Differentiation	3.57	High
GRAND MEAN	3.69	High

The high level of competitive advantage of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato is due to the high ratings answered by the respondents on cost reduction, growth, innovation and differentiation. The result showed that small retailers have a high knowledge on how to attain competitive advantage. At the same time, it indicates that small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato were really able to reduce cost, increase profitability or attain growth, innovate and differentiate their products along the existence of their business.

These practices provided an expectation that applying more of these factors may help the business to attain higher level of competitive advantage. This was validated by different authors point of view which states that if there is no competitive advantage, better not to compete in the market industry (Welch, 2021) because being just good in today's generation is not enough, every businesses should and need to set their standards very high, so that even the flaws and imperfections are considered outstanding (Fields, 2021). Furthermore, Hu et al. (2019) affirm that cost reduction, growth, innovation and differentiation are good indicators of competitive advantage. Applying it to the operation of business make sure that business owners can gain competitive advantage.

Table 5.1. Extent of competitive advantage of small retailers in terms of Cost Reduction

Item	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. The business lowers the amount of marketing expenses such as advertising and promotions	3.30	MODERATE
2. The business minimizes the cost of purchase by availing some discounts and coupons	3.67	HIGH
3. The business lowers the amount of transportation cost because suppliers do direct deliveries	3.50	HIGH
4. The business lowers the amount of cost for communication	3.24	MODERATE
5. The business lessens expenditures in operational activities such as hiring employees, paper processing etc.	3.31	MODERATE
Overall	3.41	HIGH

Table 5.1 shows the extent of competitive advantage in terms of cost reduction with an overall mean of 3.41 and descriptive level of high. Reduction of cost can make the business competitive in the marketplace (Rooyen, 2019) as shown in the result small retailers oftentimes manifested the cost reduction indicators of competitive advantage.

Table 5.2. Extent of competitive advantage of small retailers in terms of Growth

Item	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. The business enhances its business efficiency by securing good supply and demand curve	4.36	VERY HIGH
2. The business increases customer satisfaction	4.31	VERY HIGH
3. The business increases sales and revenue	3.82	HIGH
4. The business gains access to new markets	3.77	HIGH
5. The business achieves operational goals	4.10	HIGH
Overall	3.89	HIGH

Table 5.2 shows the extent of competitive advantage in terms of growth with an overall mean of 3.89 and descriptive level of high. Enhancing business efficiency is truly important for a business (Hu et al, 2019) Analysis of growth requires for a business to evaluate how to stay competitive in the market industry (Janeska et al, 2015). Thus, with the result it showed that most of the small retailers truly considered growth as an indicator of competitive advantage specifically by securing good supply and demand curve as well as increasing customer satisfaction

Table 5.3. Extent of competitive advantage of small retailers in terms of Innovation

Item	Mean	Descriptive Level
1. The business acquires better coordination on business operations	4.30	VERY HIGH
2. The business shortens the period for product availability and distribution	3.82	HIGH
3. The business responds quickly to changes	3.90	HIGH
4. The business provides products unusual to the customers	3.15	MODERATE
5. The business has different styles of selling to attain loyal customers	4.25	VERY HIGH
Overall	3.89	HIGH

Table 5.3 shows the extent of competitive advantage in terms of innovation with an overall mean of 3.89 and descriptive level of high. Angelmar, 2014 states that product innovation is really a method to gain competitive advantage at the same time a unique product can make the business stay stronger. Hence, this statement was proved by the result as it showed a high manifestation of the innovation indicator.

Table 5.4. Extent of competitive advantage of small retailers in terms of Differentiation

	Item	Mean	Descriptive Level
1.	The business provides better and new products to customers	4.06	HIGH
2.	The business provides easier customer access to information	3.97	HIGH
3.	The business speeds up its transactions in ordering and delivering the product	4.11	HIGH
4.	The business enhances brand distinguishability	3.03	MODERATE
5.	The business provides customized products/services	2.68	MODERATE
Overall		3.57	HIGH

Table 5.4 shows the extent of competitive advantage in terms of differentiation with an overall mean of 3.57 and descriptive level of high. Based on Putra et. al 2018 differentiation is a key factor in a company's success in achieving competitive advantage. The result implies that small retailers considered the same resonates for they oftentimes manifested differentiation strategies in conducting their business.

Significant Relationship between Marketing Strategies and Competitive Advantage

The third and one of the significant objective of this research is to know whether there is a significant relationship between marketing strategies and competitive advantage. Presented in Table 6 is the computed r-value of 0.663 which fell to the threshold moderate positive correlation (based on Table 3) and the computed p-value 0.000 which is lower than the significance level 0.05. This means that there is a significant direct relationship between marketing strategies and competitive advantage of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato, thus, the first null hypothesis of this study is rejected.

Table 6. Significant Relationship Between Marketing Strategies and Competitive Advantage of Small Retailer.

Category	p-value	R	Significant
Marketing Strategies vs.	p<0.000	0.663**	Moderately Positive Correlation
Competitive Advantage			

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

In general, the results disclosed the significant statistical relationship between marketing strategies and competitive advantage of small retailers. This demonstrates that marketing strategies provides impact in achieving competitive advantage. This further implies that strategies in terms of product, price, place, promotion, people, process and physical evidence helps increase the level of cost reduction, growth, innovation and differentiation of the small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato. Thus, understanding and applying marketing strategies in one's business leads to a competitive advantage.

This result suits to the statement of Al Badi (2018) statements which says that all of the marketing mix elements have a significant impact on achieving a competitive advantage. This further proved Gbolagade et al. (2013) utterance that marketing strategy is an important sword or instrument for any organization to remain competitive and to stay stronger. This means that applying a marketing strategy can make the business stay competitive in a long-run. Additionally, this finds parallelism with the claim of Juneja (2015) that marketing strategies are a way of explaining how an organization reaches its predetermined objectives. Moreover, the result of this study confirms Fanaei et al. (2014) assertion that the factors of a sustainable competitive advantage influenced marketing strategy. A business marketing strategy affected the image of the organization on which the image of the organization provides impact on both the value of a brand and the organization itself. Generally, a differentiated business and marketing strategy makes a firm brand stand out in a crowded marketplace (Reynolds, 2019).

Significance in the influence of Marketing Strategies Influence Best the Competitive Advantage

The final and one of the ultimate goal of this study is to determine whether there is a domain of marketing strategies that best influence competitive advantage. Presented in Table 7 is the result of the Regression Analysis on the Domain of Marketing Strategies Influence Best the Competitive Advantage of Small Retailers. Findings of the study revealed that marketing strategies influences competitive advantage with an F value of 12.416 and p < 0.05. The R-square value suggests that 43.90 percent of the competitive advantage can be explained by marketing strategies. The remaining 56.10 percent can be explicated by other factors not covered in this study.

Furthermore, the data revealed the domains of marketing strategies that influence best the competitive advantage are. The results showed that place domain with $t=2.877$, $p=.005$, and process domain with $t=4.169$ $p=.000$ are the two domains of marketing strategies with a p-value less than the alpha value of 0.05. It is therefore concluded that out of the seven domains, two of which significantly influence competitive advantage. With the domains of marketing strategy, process strategy was noted to be the best indicator or the most significant domain of competitive advantage with reference to the beta standardized coefficients. Hence, with this result, the second null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 7. Regression Analysis on the Domain of Marketing Strategies Influence Best the Competitive Advantage of Small Retailers.

Competitive Advantage					
Marketing Strategies (Indicators)	B	Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Product	.124	.082	.123	1.503	.136
Price	-.056	.070	-.067	-.799	.426
Place	.215	.075	.290	2.877	.005
Promotion	.078	.052	.147	1.506	.135
People	.035	.080	.037	.435	.664
Process	.346	.083	.369	4.169	.000
Physical Evidence	.027	.067	.042	.404	.687
R	.663 ^a				
R ²	.439				
F	12.416				
P	.000				

A regression analysis was used to determine the significant influence of marketing strategies to the competitive advantage of small retailers. Data revealed that in general marketing strategies influences competitive advantage. This finding certifies the propositions of the various authors (Maina, 2016; Wetosi, et. al, 2017; Lombrado, 2012 &Raju, 2021) that strategies are the game plan that every business chooses to get the largest growth and profits with the lowest risk, thus, in order to make sure that the business remains competitive in a long run, business owners must secure to create a marketing strategies that could impossibly duplicated.

Furthermore, in their singular capacities, process and place strategies revealed to have significant influence on the competitive advantage of the small retailers. Hence, if small retailers implement strategies in both the process and place, they will surely gain competitive advantage against their competitors. Place strategy as one of the best influence of competitive advantage implies that business should be located where transportation is simple and easy. This supports the contexts of several authors (Ponsawat, 2016; Jain, 2013; Ehmke et. al, 2021; and Mishra, 2020) who states that place strategy is one of the most underappreciated marketing strategy, it has a fewer articles being published compared to other Ps of the marketing mix. This strategy is an administrative decisions of where customers should receive services, this should not be limited to physical routes only but of course by any electronic means too. Using the right product in the right price available at the right place gives you a competitive advantage. Wherefore, business should be positioned where a traffic of people is located.

On the other hand, of the seven domains of marketing strategies, process strategy was found out to be the best indicator of competitive advantage. This symbolizes that the ability of the small retailers to cater customer's convenience, small waiting time and proper addressing of problems are effective ways to gain competitive advantage. This finds synchroeneity with Ponsawat (2016) statements that fastening of service procedures may lead to competitive advantage. This also validate the statement of Rao (2021) which states that in order to achieve competitive priorities, process strategy should be created as a pattern of decisions to be made in different stages of the business.

V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This chapter presents the comprehensive summary of findings, generalizations and conclusions. Recommendations are formulated herein to affect the results of the study.

Summary

This study generally aims to know the marketing strategies and competitive advantage of small retailers in the Municipality of Tantangan, Province of South Cotabato. The respondents were the one hundred nineteen (119) small retailers registered in the Municipality of Tantangan, South Cotabato. The researchers used a survey questionnaire to gather the needed data. The data was statistically tabulated and analyzed based on the study's descriptive level and interpretation.

The study's findings are listed below:

The first statement of the problem is about the level of marketing strategies of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato. Based on the result presented and discussed in Chapter 4, it has a high descriptive level. This means that the level of marketing strategies is oftentimes manifested. In another word, the small retailers really considered applying marketing strategies in conducting their business.

The second statement of the problem showed the result of the extent of competitive advantage of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato. According to the result presented, it is at a high extent. Wherein, the data reveals that competitive advantage just like marketing strategies are oftentimes manifested also. This indicates that small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato were really able to reduce cost, increase profitability or attain growth, innovate and differentiate their products along the existence of their business.

The third statement of the problem answers the question, Is there a significant relationship between marketing strategies and competitive advantage on small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato? Using a Pearson r correlation computation, the result showed that there is a moderate positive relationship between marketing strategies and competitive advantage. Whereas, the result was supported by different claims and on which it also proves that the first null hypothesis was rejected.

The fourth and last statement of the problem concerns about the domain of marketing strategies best influences the competitive advantage of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato. From the result of regression, it reveals that out of 7 domains, there were 2 domains that influence competitive advantage. These was the process and place strategies, where process is actually the best influence among all the indicators. Place strategies referring to the location of the business where transportation is simple and easy while process strategies are the ability of the small retailers to cater customer's convenience, small waiting time and proper addressing of problems. Since the result showed that there is a domain influence best competitive advantage, therefore, the second null hypotheses were also rejected.

Conclusion

The level of marketing strategies of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato is high. This means that the marketing strategies are oftentimes manifested by small retailers. Among the seven indicators, process and people strategies yielded higher manifestation. This indicates that most of the small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato used process and people strategies in conducting their business. Meanwhile, the study also revealed a high level of competitive advantage. Of the four indicators of competitive advantage, growth and innovation posted the highest rating of manifestation. This implies that small retailers focused more on increasing its worth and innovating its products or processes.

As with the relationship between the two variables, it was established that marketing strategies significantly influences the competitive advantage of small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato. This showed that applying one or more marketing strategies truly helps the business to gain or achieve competitive advantage. Further, when regressed singularly, the process strategy domain of marketing strategies emerged as the best indicator of competitive advantage among the small retailers in Tantangan, South Cotabato. This suggest that organized procedures specifically in solving operational problems, reducing of waiting time and considering customer's convenience is truly essential in conducting a business because this may lead to a competitive advantage.

Basically, the findings of this study support the concepts outlined in the conceptual framework that marketing strategies and competitive advantage are correlated. This association between the two variables provides affirmation to the assertions of different authors (Gbolagade, et. al, 2013; Juneja, 2015; Fanaei, et. al, 2014; Al badi, 2018; Lombardo, 2012; Raju, 2021) that application of marketing strategies in a business is an important instrument in order to gain sustainable competitive advantage that truly help the small retailers stay strong in a long period of time.

Recommendations

According to the findings and conclusions of the study, the researchers recommend that Local Government Units (LGUs) or any agencies related to the retail industry may conduct seminars or trainings discussing the different elements of marketing strategies specially the place strategy. According to Mishra (2020) place strategy is one of the most underappreciated marketing strategy, it has a fewer articles being published compared to other Ps of the marketing mix. Whereas, based on the result of this study, it was one of the domains that influence competitive advantage and it was also one of the weakest strategy used by the respondents of this study. Hence, in order to improve the economy of the chosen locality, it is recommended by the researchers to make the small retailers or any kind of business owners knowledgeable about all those possible strategies that they may apply in order for them to increase their economic worth. In the conduction of the said seminar, the speakers should comprehensively explains the definition and importance of each marketing strategies and make sure that each indicator has an example. Speakers may use the sets of indicators in the questionnaire of this research as an example during the discussion. In this training or seminar, the agencies or LGUs must assume that the audiences are not that familiar with all the marketing strategies specifically the 7Ps (product, price, place, process, promotion, people and physical evidence). The main objective of this training or seminar is to let business owners knew what best strategy fits their business and increase of the economy will follow.

Withal, based on the level of marketing strategies result, it has a high descriptive level. However, not all of its indicators are put into practiced as shown in the statistical table in the appendices. There are elements specifically the promotion and physical evidence strategies that only gain moderate level of manifestation. Wherefore, not all small retailers are familiar or applying the 7Ps strategies. Thus, for small retailers, it is suggested that those marketing strategies that they already used and found that is effective should sustain and continue to be used by the business. However, it is also recommended that small retailers or business owners may try to use other strategies like promotion or physical evidence in order to gain more competitiveness. Suchlike Fields (2021) said being just good will never become sufficient, all businesses should set their standards very high so that even the flaws are considered outstanding.

Additionally, as shown in the result of this research, it also helps future entrepreneur, by scanning the result of this research they can be able to know the most effective strategies for some small retailers. At the same time they will be able to identify the lapses of some businessman. In this means, they can be able to get ready to enter in the business industry. Henceforth, the researcher suggest that before putting up a business they may refer to the results of this study or other outputs to identify strategies that they could possibly give a big help for their future businesses.

Lastly, based on the result, the researchers also suggest that other or future researchers may conduct a study specifically focusing on how effective place and/or process strategies. This is to confirm whether place and process strategies are truly effective or not. They can also conduct the same study in a wider scope of respondents or may use other type of businesses as a respondent. Furthermore, they can also use other variable in exchange to the term marketing strategies to determine the remaining 56.10 percent indicator that has significant relationship with the variable competitive advantage. Researchers may use as a factor the remaining three variables in the four sets of variable of competitive advantage according to Porter which are the demand conditions, factor conditions and lastly the related and supporting industries. Moreover, since the study was conducted during the urge of COVID-19 pandemic, researchers may also conduct a comparative research on a different time frame or during the time that there is no pandemic at all, to determine whether the result is consistent or not. And also to prove the statement of Hyken, (2021) which states that what works today may not work tomorrow.

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