

**ENHANCING THE EXPORT PERFORMANCE OF SMALL
AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES THROUGH
ENTREPRENEURIAL MARKETING**

ALI MAHDI

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Telfer School of Management
University of Ottawa

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Preface

This dissertation is an original intellectual product of Ali Mahdi. The fieldwork reported in Chapter 2, Chapter 3, and Chapter 4 received research ethics approval from the University of Ottawa Research Ethics Board, file number S-09-22-8166, of which I am the principal investigator. A version of Chapter 2, a version of Chapter 3, and a version of Chapter 4 have each been submitted to separate scholarly journals and are under peer review. I am the first-named author of each of these three journal articles. Dr David Crick, Dr James Crick, Dr Martine Spence, and Dr Wadid Lamine offered respective supervisory/collaborative guidance/roles including work on conceptualisation, getting the mentioned ethics approval, data analysis, and manuscript edits, which I am tremendously grateful for. The co-authors of the three journal articles under review are Ali Mahdi, Dr David Crick, Dr James Crick, Dr Martine Spence, and Dr Wadid Lamine.

Abstract

This dissertation contributes to the cross-disciplinary international entrepreneurship/international marketing literature by unpacking how entrepreneurial marketing activities can enable owner-managers to overcome internationalisation challenges alongside stimulating further investigations of entrepreneurial marketing topics. The three papers contained in this dissertation collectively contribute to answering an overarching research question: *How can owner-managers of under-resourced, smaller-sized, marginal exporters utilise facets of entrepreneurial marketing activities to expand sales abroad in a post-COVID environment?*

The first paper of this dissertation (presented in Chapter 2) focused on the performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities of smaller firms actively moving to export markets in a post-COVID environment. With the competitive intensity of export markets presenting a challenging environmental contingency, this paper considered the effects of the degree of competitive intensity on entrepreneurial marketing activities, not least cooptation behaviour.

To further unpack the studied effects of the competitive environment on entrepreneurial marketing activities, the second paper (presented in Chapter 3) unpacked the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing activities and cooptation activities in the previously mentioned post-crisis environment. Specifically, this second paper expanded on the first paper by unpacking the specific role of cooptation in internationalising firms manoeuvring varying competitive intensities across domestic and export markets in a post-COVID environment.

The third paper (presented in Chapter 4) explored the outcomes of the first and second papers by investigating the relationship between competitive intensity and cooptation behaviour. Chapter 4 unpacked the complex relationship between competitive intensity and cooptation behaviours, along with effects on a cooptation-oriented mindset preceding cooptation behaviour.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Cross-disciplinary Research at the Entrepreneurship/Marketing Interface

Situated at the entrepreneurship/marketing interface, this dissertation's main objective is to answer the following core research question underlying the three papers presented in the following chapters: *How can owner-managers of under-resourced, smaller-sized, marginal exporters utilise facets of entrepreneurial marketing activities to expand sales abroad in a post-COVID environment?* The research setting is important because institutional conditions, and especially lockdowns, negatively impacted many firms' business models (Crick & Crick, 2020a). The net result was that local (domestic) markets in the post-COVID environment became increasingly limiting, which presented both a constraint and an opportunity, leading firms that were previously concentrated mainly on their domestic markets to seek internationalisation (Kahiya, 2020; Kahiya & Delaney, 2023). While the resulting COVID-19-led digital acceleration (Felzensztein & Tretiakov, 2023; Higuera-Castillo et al., 2023) facilitated online sales, various barriers existed, presenting challenges for the active entry to export markets. These have been well-documented in broader studies, such as the cost, risk, and time, not least due to varying institutional and environmental aspects (Jones & Coviello, 2005; Kahiya, 2018; Magnani & Zucchella, 2019). Nevertheless, prior research has found that by employing a combination of entrepreneurial and market-oriented behaviours (known as entrepreneurial marketing activities), the opportunity exists for under-resourced owner-managers to overcome certain constraints and facilitate internationalisation (Crick et al., 2020). In fact, this may include utilising stakeholders, which enable firms to overcome environmental challenges through different forms of collaboration (Granata et al., 2018; Brache & Felzensztein, 2019; Faroque et al., 2021; Kahiya & Delaney, 2023).

Among the stakeholders potentially facilitating the move to export markets via partnerships are competitors, such that trust-based relationships through co-competition behaviours can help internationalising entrepreneurs access resources and capabilities (Felzensztein et al., 2022; Mostafiz et al., 2023) and overcome challenges in new markets (Felzensztein et al., 2014b). While forming co-competition relationships is often facilitated in a smaller cluster featuring a relatively stable environment (Dana et al., 2013; Geldes et al., 2015; Reay et al., 2015; Felzensztein et al., 2018; Granata et al., 2018), building social capital with new partners in export markets can be challenging. Clusters enable the formation of informal “psychological contracts” leading to social capital with trusted partners, however, new social networks may need to be built in export markets (Felzensztein et al., 2010; 2018; Geldes et al., 2015; Crick & Crick, 2021c). However, building social capital, not least via network relationships, is also important outside of cluster-based relationships (Lamine et al., 2015). The studied post-crisis setting featuring decision-makers of smaller-sized firms scaling up export activities nonetheless remains under-researched.

The Need for Entrepreneurial Marketing Research

The purpose of this research stems from the need to explain how under-resourced, independent, smaller-sized firms utilise entrepreneurial marketing activities to facilitate their move from passive to active export in an immediate post-crisis timeframe. Consequently, five under-researched avenues justify the imperative research and resulting contributions of this dissertation. These avenues, examined below, relate to (1) the contextual challenges of the immediate post-COVID era, (2) established firms’ path to internationalisation, (3) pivoting facets of entrepreneurial marketing, (4) the competitive business environment, and (5) a co-competition-oriented mindset facilitating co-competition behaviours.

First, manoeuvring the complexities of an immediate post-COVID setting, not least due to a transformed business environment, presents an added layer of challenges facing under-resourced internationalising firms. This is important as the role of context is central to firms' internationalisation paths (Reuber et al., 2017). Yet, as previously alluded to, entrepreneurs' pivot to scale-up activities in a post-crisis setting remains under-researched. As such, the temporal context of this research (following Jones & Coviello, 2005; Welch et al., 2016) features a timely, important, and under-studied setting: the immediate aftermath of COVID-19. It is noted that prior studies considered contexts in which entrepreneurs face crises of varying severities and emphasized the need to persevere and build resilience (Lamine et al., 2014; Orhan, 2016; Battisti & Deakins, 2017; Huang et al., 2018; Stevenson et al., 2018; Morrish & Jones, 2020). However, existing studies examining crisis recovery situations (Morrish & Jones, 2020) feature more local situations rather than extreme global phenomena, hence their findings might not extend to entrepreneurial marketing activities in an immediate post-COVID era. Such activities are affected in several ways.

Considering that this research surveys surviving firms, facets of decision-makers' performance-enhancing entrepreneurial marketing activities may have evolved to build resilience in preparation for what comes after the pandemic (Lund Peterson & Ritter, 2020; Behl et al., 2023; Chaudhary et al., 2023; Klöckner et al., 2023). Moreover, entrepreneurs need to account for market-led environmental conditions and remain strategically flexible in pivoting aspects of their business models (Priem & Butler, 2001), while environmental contingencies play potentially influential roles in a post-COVID era, not least due to market disruptions. Therefore, special consideration should be given to the immediate post-crisis era in order to answer this dissertation's overarching research question and fulfil its central objective.

Second, the research setting features firms that typically exhibit passive export involvement (Piercy, 1981; da Rocha et al., 1990) and whose internationalisation path is under-researched compared to new ventures that are often growth-oriented from the start (Crick et al., 2020). Given that past evidence suggests that “scale-up” behaviours sometimes result in a non-linear internationalisation path featuring intermittent export involvement (Pauwels & Matthyssens, 2004; Freeman et al., 2013; Bernini et al., 2016; Vissak et al., 2020; Kafouros et al., 2022; Crick et al., 2020; 2023a), which itself needs strategic flexibility, the immediate post-COVID context further emphasizes the need to address this under-researched area. This will contribute to our understanding of these firms’ entrepreneurial marketing pivoting behaviours. As such, it is unclear how international entrepreneurs pivot facets of their business models that lead to changes in their product-market strategies, hence moving from passive to active export activities. To re-iterate, there is a need for unpacking facets of entrepreneurial marketing activities to explain decision-makers’ internationalisation behaviour while considering contingency factors at play, across markets, in an immediate post-COVID context.

Third, while the performance-enhancing outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities are well-documented in the literature (Morris et al., 2002; Hills et al., 2008; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; Eggers et al., 2020), it is unclear what types of performance-enhancing entrepreneurial marketing behaviours are employed by small, passive exporters, namely, when attempting to scale-up sales abroad in the aftermath of a large-scale crisis. As previously mentioned, the role of the investigated post-COVID context can be influential (Reuber et al., 2017) in that it necessitates a nuanced understanding of how the newly altered competitive environment affects owner-managers’ strategic pivoting behaviours aiming to ensure performance-enhancing outcomes of their entrepreneurial marketing activities. Hence, it remains unclear if owner-managers’

entrepreneurial marketing behaviours, given the internationalisation challenges in an immediate post-COVID environment, are still performance-enhancing. If the positive performance outcomes are indeed enduring (e.g., across contexts), investigating which facets of entrepreneurial marketing activities enhance performance and how they need to be pivoted in the studied context is relevant, important, and timely as it reflects ways in which strategic flexibility and business model pivoting can be implemented following a crisis (extending Priem & Butler, 2001; Hughes et al., 2020; Hagen et al., 2019; Christofi et al., 2021; Nyamrunda & Freeman, 2021; Zahoor & Lew, 2023).

Fourth, the previous point discussed a need for revisiting the entrepreneurial marketing-firm performance relationship in an immediate post-COVID context when studying under-resourced firms' move to export markets. Similarly, there is also a need for investigating the effects of contingencies on the re-visited relationship as moderators can be influential (Alqahtani et al., 2023; Crick et al., 2023c) not least due to the context leading to changes in business environments across markets. For instance, international entrepreneurs are likely to face varying competitively intensive environments depending on the product-markets targeted when internationalising following a major environmental shock, hence decision-makers will need to pivot entrepreneurial marketing behaviours to manoeuvre the challenges brought upon by this context. The need to unpack the moderating effect of competitive intensity in an immediate post-COVID context is made clear by the outcomes of previous studies. For example, prior research reported mixed results pertaining to the moderating effects of environmental contingencies on the entrepreneurial marketing-firm performance relationship (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005; Rauch et al., 2009; Boso et al., 2012; Alqahtani et al., 2023). In addition, the literature points to a context-specific moderating role of competitive intensity (Alqahtani et al., 2023; Crick & Crick, 2021c).

Fifth, the need to investigate coopetition behaviours in an immediate post-COVID context is twofold. Pre-COVID-19 research featuring a relatively stable environment focused on the wine sector found that entrepreneurs often engage in coopetition in their domestic markets (Dana et al., 2013; Geldes et al., 2015; Reay et al., 2015; Felzensztein et al., 2018; Granata et al., 2018). However, an immediate post-COVID context in which under-resourced firms seek an active move to export markets is likely to affect coopetition behaviours, especially given the varying competitive intensities in domestic and export markets. Hence, this research focuses on investigating the extent to which a coopetition-oriented mindset, leading to coopetition behaviours, influence under-resourced international entrepreneurs to actively pursue export markets in an immediate post-pandemic era. While also unclear and under-researched, this research also investigates how international entrepreneurs pivot facets of their business models, not least coopetition behaviours, leading to changes in product-market strategies and facilitating a move to export markets. Moreover, coopetition research traditionally focuses on outcomes rather than antecedents of coopetition behaviour (building on Bernal et al., 2002; Chetty & Wilson, 2003; Vanyushyn et al., 2009; Kock et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2019; Crick & Crick, 2022). Hence, exploring the role of a coopetition-oriented mindset can further unpack how coopetition behaviours pivot following a crisis. In other words, the way in which a coopetition-oriented mindset translates into coopetition activities across product-markets needs unpacking.

Theoretical Contributions to Entrepreneurial Marketing Research

While the theoretical contributions of this dissertation are synthesized in Chapter 5, along with an overview of contributions to practice and policy, a brief summary of the theoretical contributions follows. This dissertation focuses on decision-makers in a single sector and country context utilizing entrepreneurial marketing activities in an immediate post-COVID era to facilitate

their enhanced move into export markets. As such, the theoretical contributions resulting from the three papers comprising this dissertation focus on manoeuvring both environmental challenges in export markets and aspects of resource-deficiency by utilizing entrepreneurial marketing activities centring around cooperation behaviours via trust-based relationships challenged by competitive intensity.

First, the dissertation offers several contributions to the entrepreneurial marketing literature. Support is offered for previous research affirming the role of entrepreneurial marketing activities as drivers of firm performance (Eggers et al., 2020; Hills et al., 2008; Morris et al., 2002). Specifically, research insights show that capturing the intended benefits of an entrepreneurial orientation and marketing orientation (Hamzah et al., 2023; Jones & Rowley, 2011; Morgan et al., 2015) via entrepreneurial marketing activities, despite challenges brought upon by environmental contingencies, is nonetheless attainable when such activities are well-managed. The unique context testing the boundaries of realising the benefits of entrepreneurial marketing activities, in this research, was represented by an immediate post-COVID period featuring competitive environments challenging under-resourced firms' internationalisation process. As such, this research emphasizes the importance of applying well-managed entrepreneurial marketing activities rather than applying them in a "welcoming" context (e.g., familiar business environment). However, context can facilitate facets of entrepreneurial marketing activities (e.g., resource leveraging) and challenge others (e.g., calculated risk-taking) as domestic markets (typically a context with a manageable competitive intensity) enable symbiotic relationships via cooperation activities, while export markets (typically a context with varying competitive intensity) present challenges to building such relationships, mainly due to lack of trust and opportunism (Crick & Crick, 2021a; Morgan et al., 2015). This connects to the second avenue of theoretical

contributions of this dissertation, which relates to the cooptation literature situated at the entrepreneurship/marketing interface.

Consequently, second, while entrepreneurial marketing activities enhance performance across varying competitive intensities in domestic and export markets, cooptation behaviour in competitive export markets faces challenges. Time is needed to build social capital with complementary cooptation partners (following Crick & Crick, 2021c), thus the performance outcomes of cooptation stem from well-managed, effective relationship-building activities that aim to facilitate the move to export markets via access to resources. The competitive intensities across domestic and export markets present a key consideration for cooptation behaviours to avoid dark-side complications (following Crick & Crick, 2021a; Morgan et al., 2015).

Third, this dissertation contributes to the understanding of the role of competitive intensity as a market factor and environmental contingency (building on Cadogan et al., 2003; Morgan & Anokhin, 2020) affecting the internationalisation process of under-resourced firms. Such firms utilise entrepreneurial marketing activities and cooptation behaviours to facilitate their move to export markets. On one hand, specific facets of entrepreneurial marketing are more susceptible to the detrimental impact of competitive intensity (e.g., innovation), and cooptation behaviours face heightened challenges due to varying competitive intensity across domestic/export markets (following Alqahtani et al., 2023; Crick et al., 2023c). On the other hand, the adverse implication of competitive intensity on entrepreneurial marketing activities and cooptation behaviours can be mitigated by effectively managing such activities and behaviours when pivoting business models to internationalise (extending Bouncken et al., 2015; Gernsheimer et al., 2021; Crick et al., 2023b; Meena et al., 2023).

Fourth, focusing on the dissertation's contributions to the internationalisation process in tandem with cooptation in export markets, insights emerged about the form of cooptation relationships needed for scaling up export sales. While cooptation relationships with domestic partners help sustain the business and its domestic cluster (Dana et al., 2008; Reay et al., 2015), the internationalisation process is aided by forming new cooptation relationships with partners in export markets. Building such relationships requires nurturing trust with complementary partners, which can take time and follow trial-and-error given the competitive intensity variance between markets. As such, the process of internationalisation through cooptation may not follow a forward progression, but rather an intermittent process (building on Pauwels & Matthyssens, 2004; Jeong & Yang, 2023).

Fifth, the three papers of this dissertation are theoretically underpinned by a relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory complemented by an outside-in lens (Barney, 2018; Priem & Butler, 2001; Day, 2014; Lavie, 2006), which considers the role of competitive intensity as a market-led condition affecting the performance of relation-based cooptation behaviours in domestic/export markets. Insights emerge regarding the mentioned theoretical underpinning, mainly the performance effects of competitive intensity acting on cooptation relationships needed for internationalisation (as per Dana et al., 2008). Given the studied immediate post-COVID-19 environment, exhibiting strategic flexibility, agility, and an ability to improvise and pivot aspects of the business model (following Christofi et al., 2021; Hagen et al., 2019; Hughes et al., 2020; Nyamrunda & Freeman, 2021; Priem & Butler, 2001; Zahoor & Lew, 2023) will likely help mitigate varying competitive intensities, hence leading to iterative but successful cooptation relationships in export markets. This further highlights the importance of accounting for market-led environmental conditions, namely competitive intensity, to complement

firm-level performance-enhancing strategies, namely entrepreneurial marketing and coopetition. Engaging in relationships with stakeholders, namely complementary competitors, in competitive export markets, when well-managed, can help overcome resource- and performance-related challenges. Lastly, the performance outcomes of managing such symbiotic behaviours offer support for the co-existing institutional logics noted by Reay et al. (2015), as pivoting collaborative practices in export markets help support both international entrepreneurs and the cluster they operate in.

To summarize, this dissertation investigates how under-resourced, smaller-sized firms that traditionally focused on domestic markets can actively move to export markets in an immediate post-COVID environment by utilising entrepreneurial marketing activities, not least via coopetition behaviours, hence overcoming environmental challenges and resource deficiency. Relationships between entrepreneurial marketing, coopetition, competitive intensity, and firm performance are unpacked, leading to theoretical, practical, and policy contributions. The next section presents the main concepts under investigation: entrepreneurial marketing, competitive intensity, coopetition, and internationalisation. This is followed by the dissertation's context and setting, after which the theoretical underpinning is presented. The methodological approach follows, and the chapter concludes with an overview of the dissertation.

Entrepreneurial Marketing: Internationalisation, Competitive Intensity, and Coopetition

The definition of entrepreneurial marketing evolved in the literature throughout the last several decades. Some of the notable entrepreneurial marketing definitions are outlined in Table 1-1. To demonstrate the evolution of entrepreneurial marketing definitions, research in the 1990's stipulated that "*the interface of entrepreneurial behaviour and marketing is that where innovation is brought to market*" (Gardner, 1994, p. 37). A recent definition, however, defines it as "*an agile*

mindset that pragmatically leverages resources, employs networks, and takes acceptable risks to proactively exploit opportunities for innovative co-creation, and delivery of value to stakeholders, including customers, employees, and platform allies” (Alqahtani & Usley, 2020, p. 64).

Nonetheless, the definition most aligned with the objectives of this dissertation views entrepreneurial marketing as *“the proactive identification and exploitation of opportunities for acquiring and retaining profitable customers through innovative approaches to risk management, resource leveraging, and value creation” (Morris et al., 2002, p. 4).*

Table 1-1

Definitions of Entrepreneurial Marketing¹

Year	Definition	Author
2000	“EM is marketing carried out by entrepreneurs or owner-managers of entrepreneurial ventures.”	Stokes (2000, p. 2)
2002	“Proactive identification and exploitation of opportunities for acquiring and retaining profitable customers through innovative approaches to the risk management, resource leveraging and value creation.”	Morris et al. (2002, p. 4)
2002	“Marketing of small firms growing through entrepreneurship.”	Bjerke and Hultman (2002, p. 15)
2006	“EM is the overlapping aspects between entrepreneurship and marketing; therefore it is the behavior shown by any individual and/or organization that attempts to establish and promote market ideas, while developing new ones in order to create value.”	Bäckbrö and Nyström (2006, p. 13)
2009	“A particular type of marketing that is innovative, risky, proactive, focuses on opportunities and can be performed without resources currently controlled.”	Kraus et al. (2009, p. 30)
2011	“EM is a spirit, an orientation as well as a process of passionately pursuing opportunities and launching and growing ventures that create perceived customer value through relationships by employing innovativeness, creativity, selling, market immersion, networking and flexibility.”	Hills and Hultman (2011, p. 6)
2012	“EM is a set of processes of creating, communicating and delivering value, guided by effectual logic and used a highly uncertain business environment.”	Ionita (2012, p. 147)
2012	“The marketing processes of firms pursuing opportunities in uncertain market circumstances often under constrained resource conditions.”	Becherer et al. (2012, p. 7)
2016	“EM is a combination of innovative, proactive, and risk-taking activities that create, communicate, and deliver value to and by customers, entrepreneurs, marketers, their partners, and society at large.”	Whalen et al. (2016, p. 3)

¹ Reprinted from Journal of Business Research, 100, Sadiku-Dushi, N., Dana, L.-P., & Ramadani, V., Entrepreneurial marketing dimensions and SMEs performance, 86-99, Copyright (2019), with permission from Elsevier.

In terms of conceptualizing entrepreneurial marketing, several operationalizations have also been proposed, with some being more established than others. This research adopts the conceptualization developed by Sadiku-Dushi et al. (2019) in which entrepreneurial marketing captures the marketing orientation elements of opportunity focus, resource leveraging, customer intensity, and value creation, and the entrepreneurial orientation elements of proactiveness, risk-taking, and innovativeness. This conceptualisation best suits this research's setting and context, research questions, tested hypotheses, and method, all of which are explained in the subsequent sections. While this section focuses on the conceptualisation of main concepts in this dissertation, mainly entrepreneurial marketing, internationalisation, competitive intensity, and coopetition, a glossary of key terms is outlined in Appendix A. Furthermore, the questionnaire (electronic survey using Qualtrics) is outlined in Appendix B, which includes the operationalisations of all variables included in the dissertation's three papers (e.g., latent, moderating, outcome, control, procedural control, and instrumental variables).

The entrepreneurial marketing research domain combines the entrepreneurship and marketing literatures by focusing on *“how individuals and management teams accept risk to innovatively and proactively leverage resources to create value in the marketplace”* (Miles et al., 2015, p. 94). Hence, as mentioned, entrepreneurial marketing stems from the interplay between a market orientation and an entrepreneurial orientation, with owner-managers of typically smaller firms utilizing entrepreneurial marketing activities to enhance firm performance (Bjerke & Hultman, 2004; Morrish et al., 2010). Briefly stated, a marketing orientation is a set of firm-level information-processing tools that owner-managers utilise to develop customer value (Hult et al., 2005) while an entrepreneurial orientation is defined as the *“strategy-making processes that provide organisations with a basis for entrepreneurial decisions and actions”* (Rauch et al., 2009,

p. 762). Hence, a common conceptualization of entrepreneurial marketing features the seven components of opportunity focus, resource leveraging, customer intensity, value creation, proactiveness, risk-taking, and innovativeness (Morris et al., 2002).

Entrepreneurial marketing research, situated at the entrepreneurship/marketing interface, seeks to explore how under-resourced (typically) smaller firms leverage their limited resources through social networking with stakeholders, among other means (Hills et al., 2008). This research focuses mainly on implementing entrepreneurial marketing activities by leveraging limited resources through relationships and social networking with stakeholders (e.g., competitors) (Hills et al., 2008). The sought-after outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing relate to enhancing a multitude of performance factors (e.g., financial performance, growth, etc.) (Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019).

The need for the emergence of entrepreneurial marketing as a cross-disciplinary research area stems from marketing academics' doubts over the adequacy of applying traditional marketing thought in Small- and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) research (Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019). While larger corporations often have more abundant capabilities, SMEs, especially smaller firms, have relatively fewer resources and weaker capabilities, which affect how they plan and execute business strategies (Miles et al., 2015) including pivoting aspects of their business models. Attempting to adapt traditional marketing models to SMEs has often been unsuccessful (Jones & Rowley, 2011). As such, entrepreneurial marketing is "*derived inductively from the study of how SMEs do business... and deductively from the study of how firms leverage relationships in marketing*" (Miles et al., 2015, p. 97).

There is a general recognition among entrepreneurial marketing researchers that entrepreneurial marketing is particularly apposite to the small rather than the large business context

(Jones & Rowley, 2011). Nevertheless, entrepreneurial marketing research has investigated its application in large firms. For instance, Kraus et al. (2009) argue that by defining entrepreneurial marketing as the organisational function of marketing, entrepreneurial marketing can be equally applied to small and large firms. Furthermore, Miles and Darroch (2006) argue that large firms can effectively leverage entrepreneurial marketing processes for competitive advantage in free and open markets. However, the focus of this research is exclusively on the implementation of entrepreneurial marketing in smaller firms. Specifically, this research investigates entrepreneurial marketing activities in under-resourced, independent, smaller-sized wine producers with passive exports, which is expanded on in later sections. Consequently, the findings of this research are not expected to apply to larger wine producers, especially those with relatively high export activities.

The study of entrepreneurial marketing is important and pertinent to the current global business environment for several reasons. SMEs, which include smaller firms, account for 99% of all firms in OECD economies (OECD, 2017) and represent between 50% and 90% of the global labour force (Albaz et al., 2020). The global economy faced disruptions in recent years following the COVID-19 pandemic, resulting in SMEs facing immense uncertainty and challenges (European Commission, 2022). Moreover, global business challenges are disproportionately harmful to SMEs (OECD, 2022), which usually include family firms and entrepreneurs, due to them typically having limited resources and capabilities compared to large firms (Hills et al., 2008).

The study of entrepreneurial marketing behaviour in smaller firms provides an avenue for understanding how these firms can overcome business challenges by pivoting facets of their activities to capture their pursued performance outcomes. In other words, to achieve performance outcomes and overcome aspects of resource deficiency, it is imperative for smaller firms

(specifically their owner-managers) to understand how to utilize entrepreneurial marketing activities by combining entrepreneurial and marketing behaviour in their business strategies/models. However, contextual factors, such as environmental contingencies and moderating factors, can play a potentially significant role in determining the outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities. Hence, it is important to unpack the entrepreneurial marketing activities-firm performance relationship while considering the role of contingencies in the wider research context, which features an immediate post-COVID environment.

In order to understand the impact of entrepreneurial marketing activities, this research focuses on five measures of relative performance (i.e., compared to major competitors) as follows: acquiring new customers, growth in sales revenues, market share growth, increasing sales from new customers, and increasing sales from existing customers (Morgan et al, 2009). The chosen conceptualisation and measurement of performance take into consideration the objective of the research. While these choices are important, considering the reasons behind performance results is also crucial for contextualising and understanding the performance-related research findings. Hence, analysing performance results is complemented by considerations of contextual factors such as decision-makers' objectives (e.g., growth and expansion, financial performance, etc.) and business models (e.g., individualistic, collaborative, etc.). For instance, a collaborative business model is likely to enhance performance in circumstances where owner-managers lack appropriate resources/capabilities (Crick, 2019a), while the goals of decision-makers of smaller firms directly influence their business strategies (Kilenthong et al., 2016) and significantly affect resource allocations and performance (Brush & Chaganti, 1999).

Turning to internationalisation, which is a core aspect of this research, the three papers comprising this dissertation focus on different aspects of internationalisation in under-resourced

wineries moving from passive to active export activities in a post-COVID-19 era. The first paper focuses on the moderation effect of competitive intensity on the entrepreneurial marketing activities - firm performance relationship. That is, the paper examines how the change in the level of competitive intensity resulting from entering export markets affects the entrepreneurial marketing activities - performance relationship. In order to further understand the mentioned relationship, given its context (i.e., change in competitive intensity), the second paper examined the moderation effect of coopetition, while considering the studied variation in competitive intensity across markets. Coopetition behaviours featured in the second paper are also assessed in terms of their effect on the internationalisation process of international entrepreneurs. The third paper takes a closer look at the competitive intensity-coopetition relationship by examining the moderation effect of competitive intensity on the relationship between a coopetition-oriented mindset and coopetition behaviour, and examining both the competitive intensity-coopetition relationship and the relationship between a coopetition-oriented mindset and coopetition, given the mentioned context (i.e., under-resourced wineries moving from passive to active export activities in a post-COVID-19 era). Below are brief definitions of internationalisation, competitive intensity, and coopetition.

The different degrees of internationalisation describe the levels of involvement in international markets (Crick et al., 2020). One way of capturing the degree of internationalisation is by examining the export intensity and scope (Cadogan et al., 2009). Internationalisation in small firms is typically facilitated by entrepreneurial marketing activities since it is often a resource-intensive process that entails taking risks and leveraging resources to capture opportunities via expanding to new markets in an effort to create value and achieve growth (Crick & Crick, 2016). The need for resources can be eased by coopetition (Felzensztein et al., 2019) through resource-

and capability-sharing activities (i.e., for expansion). Thus, internationalisation (i.e., its export intensity and scope) can be affected by engaging in facets of entrepreneurial marketing behaviours, such as cooptation.

Research focusing on firms' internationalisation processes can consider the role of cooptation. That is, research can unpack how firms, both domestic- and export-focused, can pivot their cooptation behaviours to internationalise (Felzensztein et al., 2019). Some research has focused on cooptation activities in larger corporations in the form of strategic alliances (Liu et al., 2019), but more research has examined the internationalisation of smaller firms facilitated by cooptation behaviours (Crick & Crick, 2020c). Various stimuli exist that facilitate internationalisation, such as owner-managers' growth-oriented objectives and perception of being constrained by limited domestic demand (Leonidou, 1995; Bell et al., 1998; Young et al., 2000; Spence & Crick, 2006; Jones et al., 2011; Kahiya, 2020).

While cooptation affects internationalisation, the latter can also affect the former in smaller firms since having a presence beyond the domestic market can reduce the degree of rivalry with domestic competitors and inter-firm tensions, hence enabling domestic cooptation (Bouncken et al., 2018), not least by stabilizing its risks (Crick & Crick, 2021c). In addition, internationalised firms can engage in cooptation with their rivals in their domestic markets to enhance their performance in the international markets they operate in (Felzensztein et al., 2014a).

Turning to competitive intensity, it is defined as an environmental-level factor indicating the magnitude of competitive rivalry within a particular market (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). High levels of competitive intensity can enhance entrepreneurial marketing activities, such as cooptation, as it drives such activities to become more selective when choosing partners among rivals, due to the high rivalry in the market (Crick & Crick, 2021b). However, studies investigating

the role of competitive intensity as a contingency factor affecting the performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities reported mixed results, which emphasizes the context-specific nature of the moderating role of competitive intensity (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005; Rauch et al., 2009).

The final core concept discussed in this section is cooptation, which is defined as “*a paradoxical relationship between two or more actors, regardless of whether they are in horizontal or vertical relationships, simultaneously involved in cooperative and competitive interactions*” (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014, p. 180). It demonstrates an entrepreneurial marketing behaviour in which firms cooperate with their competitors to improve their performance in ways that would not be possible if they operated individualistically (Akpınar & Vincze, 2016; Bengtsson & Kock, 1999; Rusko, 2011). In order to better compete in the business environment, smaller firms can implement a variety of business behaviours, such as forming partnerships and engaging in cooptation (Bouncken & Kraus, 2013). Cooptation involves acquiring and sharing resources and capabilities and gaining access to opportunities in order to obtain higher levels of performance than would otherwise be possible given the initial lack of resources and/or capabilities (i.e., tangible and intangible resources) (Ritala et al., 2014). A firm could be lacking several types of resources and capabilities such as equipment, tools, information, promotion ability, and skills, hence, cooptation can give under-resourced firms access to such resources and capabilities (Crick & Crick, 2021c). The behavioural view of cooptation has been used in several studies (Ritala et al., 2014; Rusko, 2011) in which cooptation includes behaviours consisting of resource-sharing activities (e.g., sharing tangible assets, equipment) and capability-sharing activities (e.g., sharing knowledge and experience) (Crick, 2018). Furthermore, the infusion of collaborative values of owner-managers

throughout their firms is important for implementing cooptition strategies and activities (Crick, 2015), as cooptition is seen as a behavioural process (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000).

Ritala and Hurmelinna-Laukkanen (2009) demonstrate reasons why smaller firms engage in cooptition activities, such as (1) the lack of resources needed for increasing market size or creating a new market, (2) the need for improving resource utilization, mitigating risk, and sharing costs, and (3) protecting market share and improving competitiveness against bigger and stronger rivals. While cooptition presents a myriad of potentially positive outcomes, cooptition relationships might result in dark-side effects in certain circumstances. For example, cooptition can pose a high risk of opportunism (Zerbini & Castaldo, 2007) in which knowledge that was absorbed or shared as part of a cooptition relationship is used by a cooptition partner to compete against another (Bouncken & Kraus, 2013).

In terms of the cooptition process, it entails the formation of collaborative business strategies, and it can be formal and informal, with written and unwritten rules governing the interplay between cooperation and competition (Dahl, 2014). Smaller firms engaged in cooptition are often likely to utilize informal networks based on friendships with rivals (Felzensztein et al., 2018). In certain situations, decision-makers engage in relationships underpinned by trust and commitment and characterised by unwritten rules, together with typically shared values, rather than formal legal contracts (Kingshott & Pecotich, 2007). This entails that managers of smaller firms should remain aware of the boundaries where goodwill and collaboration end and rivalry resumes (Mathias et al., 2018). Nevertheless, the importance of cooptition in the studied context is stressed as previous research highlight the importance of forming social connections for facilitating access to resources (Lamine et al., 2016) and resources mobilization (Lamine, 2017). This is especially important for firms moving to active export activities as previous studies found

that newly-exporting firms can be disadvantaged in terms of access to different types of capital (Riding et al., 2012). Hence, coopetition relationships can play an important role as lack of access to capital often limits growth-seeking firms from competing internationally (Riding et al., 2008). Furthermore, the literature consistently shows that expanding networks, entering alliances, and forming partnerships are often advantageous (Etemad et al., 2001; Freeman et al., 2006; Spence et al., 2008; Zahoor et al., 2023).

**Context and Setting: Under-resourced Wine Producers Moving from Passive to Active
Export Activities in a Post-COVID-19 Era**

As previously outlined, this investigation focuses broadly on unpacking entrepreneurial marketing activities as they relate to firm performance. In doing so, this research focuses on a specific subset of entrepreneurial marketing activities, a defined subset of smaller firms, and an outlined context/setting as follows. First, the research focuses on entrepreneurial marketing activities as they relate to a marketing orientation, entrepreneurial orientation, internationalisation, and coopetition. Second, the research focuses on under-resourced, independent, small wineries in the US. When considering the US wine industry, such firms are operated by owner-managers who are international entrepreneurs engaged in passive exporting activities. Third, the research focuses on the mentioned firms implementing entrepreneurial marketing activities in order to move from passive to active export activities in a post-COVID-19 era, while operating in markets characterised by varying levels of competitive intensity.

The context in which the studied firms are operating has several unique characteristics. First, the temporal dimension is an immediate post-COVID-19 era signalling a shift from survival to growth/expansion. Second, the studied firms survived the pandemic and likely gained agility and strategic flexibility allowing for pivoting certain aspects of their business model. Third, the

mentioned gained abilities and learning can aid the aspirational internationalisation/scale-up efforts in terms of moving from passive to active exports and forming new partnerships via coopetition relationships in the targeted export markets.

The three papers of this dissertation make use of the same sample of owners-managers of small US wineries. The wine industry represents a suitable setting given the objectives of this research as wine producers engage in entrepreneurial marketing activities such as coopetition and internationalisation. Furthermore, as it relates to entrepreneurial marketing activities, whereby firms in the hospitality/tourism sector around the world are found to be typically opportunity-driven and committed to creating a positive experience for their customers (Crick et al., 2018). Such firms often collaborate to promote their regional cluster in order to attract and retain customers (Crick et al., 2018).

Given the defined research setting, the outcomes of this research relate to its specific context in several ways. First, the research contributes to the literature by explaining how an external shock to the business environment, namely the COVID-19 pandemic, can affect entrepreneurial activities such as internationalisation and coopetition, exemplified by moving from passive to active exports and partnering with competitors, respectively. A second context-related contribution explains how environmental factors, exemplified by varying levels of competitive intensities across domestic and export markets, can affect entrepreneurial activities such as internationalisation and coopetition. Third, insights emerge relating to how changes to the business environment can affect the performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities given the immediate post-COVID context. However, it is stressed that this dissertation makes a theoretical rather than simply context-based contribution to knowledge.

Theoretical Underpinning: Relational, Stakeholder Perspective of Resource-based Theory with an Outside-in Lens

This research is theoretically underpinned by the relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory, complemented by an outside-in lens (Barney, 1991, 2018; Dyer et al., 2018; Dyer & Singh, 1998; Lavie, 2006). Resource-based theory was first established as a theoretical framework that explains how firms gain sustained competitive advantages, mainly by utilising valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 1991). For simplification, this discussion uses the term “resources” to refer to resources and capabilities that are both tangible (e.g., physical assets) and intangible (e.g., knowledge). Resource-based theory’s recent development broadened its scope to include and emphasize how social networks and relationships with different stakeholders in the firm’s environment facilitate resource-leveraging leading to performance enhancement (Barney, 2018).

Much of the discussion surrounding firm resources in Barney's (1991) seminal work emphasized the inward orientation of the firm in which resources are described as being owned and controlled by the firm. The seminal work adopts the following definition of firm resources: “*all assets, capabilities, organizational processes, firm attributes, information, knowledge, etc. controlled by a firm*” (Barney, 1991, p. 101). Priem and Butler (2001) helped develop resource-based theory by emphasizing its need for considering the interaction between the value of firms’ resources and the environmental context they face. This led to the synthesis of the resource- and environment-based perspectives when Barney (2001) highlighted the effects of market conditions on the value of firms’ resources, which led to research into these effects. As such, resource-based theory developed to consider the role of the environmental factors outside the firm (i.e., market

conditions) and the interaction between resources and the competitive environment (Barney, 2001).

Moreover, resource-based theory was further developed to focus on incorporating a stakeholder perspective (Barney, 2018). This outward orientation includes acquiring resources by building relations with stakeholders (e.g., competitors, customers, governments), sharing resources with partners through collaborative relationships, and building social networks across the firm's value chain (Sirmon et al., 2011). The development reinforces the notion that resource-based theory's early internal orientation is replaced by one that considers the firm's wider context and its relationships with its various stakeholders, not least competitors. Specifically, Barney (2018) indicates that firms usually require critical resources from stakeholders that are both inside and outside the firm.

Resource-based theory's integration into research on coopetition, which builds on the stakeholder perspective, provides an avenue for its application in a highly-cooperative and highly-competitive context, since such a context is suitable, if not needed, for the study of coopetition (Crick, 2019b). In terms of research disciplines, the theory's integration into coopetition research allows it to expand the entrepreneurial marketing literature (Crick, 2019a). Entrepreneurial marketing research has commonly used resource-based theory to investigate "*individualistic perspectives concerning how entrepreneurs operate their businesses*", however, the theory's use in coopetition research expands entrepreneurial marketing research by considering decision-makers' use of collaborative business strategies through inter-firm relationships (Crick, 2019a, p. 19), building on the theory's stakeholder perspective.

As a result, resource-based theory is able to explain the performance outcomes of firm-level entrepreneurial marketing activities by considering how managers of SMEs build

relationships with different stakeholders, such as competitors, in order to access and leverage external resources, which is what cooperation entails. The development of resource-based theory has moved the initial theoretical framework introduced by Barney (1991) from mainly focusing on inside-the-firm issues to explaining how SMEs build relationships to acquire and use out-of-firm resources and capabilities, mainly through entrepreneurial marketing activities such as cooperation (Hamzah et al., 2023). Entrepreneurial marketing being a cross-disciplinary research domain (Gilmore, 2011; Morrish et al., 2020) necessitates the use of a theory to explain entrepreneurial marketing activities. Resource-based theory is often used as the theoretical lens for evaluating the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing activities and firm performance (e.g., growth, financial performance, etc.) (Hamzah et al., 2023).

To further emphasize its relational perspective, resource-based theory explains entrepreneurial marketing activities by acknowledging that a firm's critical resources may be embedded in inter-firm resources (Dyer & Singh, 1998). As such, resource-based theory can be used to research cooperation as it focuses on inter-firm cooperation (Glynn et al., 2007) in tandem with its focus on competition (Barney, 1991). Resource leveraging can be facilitated when firms adhere to an "outside-in" perspective (Day, 2014) in which collaborating with key network members (e.g., competitors) gives SMEs the strategic flexibility to facilitate the acquisition of out-of-firm resources (Barney, 2018; Dana, 2001; Wright & Dana, 2003). Day (2014) argues that the "outside-in" perspective, which is infused into resource-based theory through its consideration of strategic flexibility, explains how network relationships can enhance performance. For example, by means of pooling funds, sharing equipment and knowledge, and creating cooperative innovation practices, among other examples (Bouncken et al., 2018; Bouncken & Kraus, 2013; Crick & Crick, 2020b). Cooperation with stakeholders involves competitors as some can play the

role of effective network members in circumstances where environmental contingencies (e.g., competitive intensity) allow for that (Crick, 2019a).

Finally, the relational view includes utilizing network relationships (Coviello & Brodie, 2001) for resource- and capability-sharing activities (Mesquita et al., 2008) in which the achieved performance is one that firms cannot achieve in isolation (i.e., without utilizing network relationships) (Dyer & Singh, 1998; Mesquita et al., 2008). Research has integrated resource-based theory and the relational view to investigate cooptation strategies (Crick, 2019a; Dyer et al., 2018; Lavie, 2006) following Barney's (2018) emphasis on relationships with stakeholders (e.g., competitors) and the relational view's emphasis on the quality of relationships between network partners (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014; Stadtler & Van Wassenhove, 2016). The relational view posits that firms' effective utilization of their social capital via engaging in high-quality relationships can lead to outperforming firms lacking social capital (Dyer & Singh, 1998). When combined with resource-based theory's central focus on enhancing performance through resources and capabilities, the fusion between resource-based theory and the relational view (Dyer et al., 2018; Lavie, 2006), along with the "outside-in" perspective, represent a theoretical underpinning capable of explaining how business partnerships, such as cooptation relationships, can be best managed to enhance performance and mitigate risk and conflict. In other words, the relational view can be used to explain how firms engaged in cooptation can manage network relationships to minimise performance-hindering factors such as inter-firm tensions and environmental contingencies (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014; Tidström, 2014).

Methodological Approach: Qualitative Field Interviews and Quantitative Online Survey

The philosophical worldview represents the ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions the researcher brings to the study. These ontological (i.e., nature of

reality), epistemological (i.e., how we know what we know), and methodological (i.e., the process of research) assumptions are integrated and require consistency, as worldviews guide the general approach and inform choices of research design and methods (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This research adheres to the mixed-methods approach, which assumes and carries ontological, epistemological, and methodological implications discussed below.

The pragmatic worldview is at the core of the mixed methods approach since combining approaches stems from a pragmatic reason which, according to pragmatism, overcomes the discrepancies between the worldviews of the quantitative and qualitative approaches. Pragmatism focuses on the research problem and therefore holds considerable flexibility in terms of research methods (Creswell, 2014a). As a result, the mixed methods approach uses several research designs that combine quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell, 2014a). This problem-centred worldview leads to the flexible use of research methods such that combinations are made to satisfy the main purpose of pragmatic mixed methods research, which is to solve research problems. The main tenets of pragmatism are practicality, contextual responsiveness, and consequentiality (Patton, 2015), which together translate into openness to justifiable combinations of research methods.

Research designs within the mixed methods approach can combine and/or integrate qualitative and quantitative research and data depending on the purpose of the mixed methods study (Creswell, 2014a). For instance, the exploratory sequential design starts with conducting qualitative research, which is then used to conduct quantitative research (Creswell, 2014a). This initial qualitative research can help build the instrument to be used in quantitative research (Creswell, 2014a). Another mixed-methods design, the explanatory sequential design, is beneficial in using qualitative research to explain the results of prior quantitative research (Creswell, 2014a).

Using this design, mixed methods researchers conduct quantitative research, utilize the results to conduct qualitative research, and then use the qualitative results to better explain the initial quantitative results (Creswell, 2014a).

The research in this dissertation adheres to neither the exploratory sequential design nor the explanatory sequential design, as it uses elements of both, broadly consistent with an abductive approach. That is, each paper starts with qualitative research (i.e., field interviews), which is used to build the quantitative research (i.e., online survey). Selected background characteristics of the firms included in the 20 field interviews are outlined in Table 1-2.

Following the qualitative data obtained via the mentioned field interviews, each paper then employs the quantitative research and refers back to the qualitative stage to help explain the results of the quantitative model-testing phase. When using a mixed-methods design (e.g., exploratory sequential design, explanatory sequential design), the mixed-methods study is potentially capable of both statistically testing cause and effect relationships between variables and interpreting meanings developed in specific contexts, which is what each of the three papers of this dissertation utilised.

The following illustrates how mixed methods are suitable for entrepreneurial marketing research. In their analysis of the research methods used in entrepreneurial marketing research, Most et al. (2018) found that entrepreneurial marketing research frequently uses quantitative methods such as multiple regression and structural equation modelling in investigating moderator/mediator relationships. However, the authors indicate that entrepreneurial marketing's investigation of softer areas such as stakeholder relationships, business networks, and socio-environmental aspects involves qualitative methods. Although they conclude that fairly diverse research methods are used in entrepreneurial marketing literature, the authors re-assert Gilmore

and Coviello's (1999) call for the use of mixed methods in entrepreneurial marketing research, which contributes to the theoretical and empirical advances in the field.

Table 1-2

Selected Background Characteristics of the Firms in the Field Interviews

Firm Number	Approximate Export Ratio	Typical Number of “Core” Export Markets Served¹	Core Regions Served (export sales to North America meaning Canada)
1	<5	1	North America
2	<1	2	Western Europe
3	<5	1	Western Europe
4	<1	1	Western Europe
5	<1	2	Western Europe
6	<1	1	North America
7	<5	2	Western Europe
8	<1	1	Western Europe
9	<5	1	South Asia
10	<1	2	Western Europe
11	<5	1	Western Europe
12	<5	1	Western Europe
13	<5	1	Western Europe
14	<5	1	Western Europe
15	<5	1	Western Europe
16	<5	1	Western Europe
17	<1	2	Western Europe
18	<5	1	North America
19	<5	1	Western Europe
20	<5	1	Western Europe

Research in the entrepreneurial marketing domain is advancing towards theory construction and testing (Miles et al., 2015), which can be supported through the use of diverse

¹ Firms in the field interviews concentrated their target market strategies on core markets but would also serve ad hoc customers like via selling individual cases of wine via their websites (like to ex-tourists who visited their premises). However, efforts were being made to scale-up export sales.

research methods. Understanding the origins of entrepreneurial marketing research and its development aids in analysing how different research approaches (i.e., quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches) affect this development. The choice of research approach has implications for the theoretical and empirical advancement of entrepreneurial marketing research since each approach provides a bundle of unique benefits and limitations.

The core assumption of the mixed methods approach is that using both quantitative and qualitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of the research problem compared to relying on only one approach (Creswell, 2014b). Although the mixed methods approach represents the use of both the quantitative and qualitative approaches, this combination yields a unique identity and considerations that match neither the quantitative nor the qualitative approach. This is apparent in the worldview of the mixed methods approach in which pragmatism is favoured.

Creswell (2014b, p. 10) summarizes the links between the mixed methods approach, its pragmatic worldview, research designs, and research methods by indicating that *“for the mixed methods researcher, pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews, and different assumptions, as well as different forms of data collection and analysis.”* The main benefit resulting from the pragmatic worldview of the mixed methods approach is flexibility in terms of research designs and methods, which can enable mixed methods researchers to gain a more complete understanding of their research problems, given that they can establish a purpose for combining research approaches. Another worldview, realism, which is based on ontological realism and epistemological constructivism, can also, in some cases, justify the use of a mixed methods approach since this worldview is compatible with different research approaches and follows a pragmatic orientation regarding research methods (Maxwell, 2012).

This dissertation contributes to the entrepreneurial marketing literature by using a mixed methods approach allowing it to both mitigate the drawbacks of using a purely quantitative or qualitative research approach and capture the benefits of using each of these research approaches separately. To further enhance theoretical and empirical advancements within the entrepreneurial marketing research discipline, the use of diverse research approaches, especially a mixed methods design is needed, hence this dissertation's choice of research approach.

Overview of the Dissertation: Research Questions, Method, Results

This dissertation is comprised of three papers, all of which have been submitted to different academic journals and are currently under review. Each paper features a unique research objective, but collectively, all three papers contribute to the entrepreneurial marketing literature by answering their respective research questions. Table 1-3 below features the three papers and their respective research questions, research method and focus, and results. The table demonstrates how all three papers work in tandem to complement each other and deliver an overall contribution achieved by this dissertation. As briefly discussed in this chapter, the contributions of this dissertation are connected to the specific context of owner-managers traditionally focused on domestic markets moving to export markets in an immediate post-COVID environment. As the local market became unreliable as a primary/sole focus in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, these under-resourced, smaller firms started an evolved internationalisation process by moving to active export activities. In other words, while the dissertation starts by considering the domestic context (see, Dana et al., 2013; Geldes et al., 2015; Reay et al., 2015; Felzensztein et al., 2018), it moves away from local markets as its primary focus is on scaling up export activities. As such, the contributions of the three papers of this dissertation emphasize the dynamics governing the performance outcomes of

Table 1-3

Overview of the Dissertation

Paper	Research Question	Research Method and Focus	Results
Paper 1: Small, Passive Exporters' Entrepreneurial Marketing Scale-up Activities and Performance in an Immediate Post-COVID-19 Era: Moderating Role of Competitive Intensity	In the "new normal" of an immediate post-pandemic era, to what extent has the variation in competitive intensity in export markets affected the performance outcomes of under-resourced international entrepreneurs' move to export markets aided by entrepreneurial marketing activities?	Empirical study featuring 20 qualitative field interviews followed by pretesting, pilot testing, and administering a quantitative online survey yielding 306 responses from owner-managers of under-resourced, independent, smaller-sized wine producers in the US. • H1: Entrepreneurial marketing activities - firm performance relationship. • H2: Moderation effect of competitive intensity on the above-mentioned relationship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At an aggregate-level, entrepreneurial marketing activities were positively and significantly associated with firm performance among the passive exporters, while competitive intensity yielded a non-significant moderating effect. • Using a post-hoc test, various dimensions of the multi-faceted entrepreneurial marketing construct were associated with firm performance, whereby, competitive intensity played different moderating roles (hence, exhibiting varying interaction effects).
Paper 2: A study of Entrepreneurial Marketing Activities and Firm Performance in an Immediate Post-COVID-19 Era: The Moderating Role of Coopetition	In the "new normal" of an immediate post-pandemic era, to what extent has the challenge of undergoing new coopetition behaviours in export markets with varying competitive intensities affected the performance outcomes of under-resourced international entrepreneurs' move to export markets aided by entrepreneurial marketing activities?	Empirical study featuring 20 qualitative field interviews followed by pretesting, pilot testing, and administering a quantitative online survey yielding 306 responses from owner-managers of under-resourced, independent, smaller-sized wine producers in the US. • H1: Entrepreneurial marketing activities - firm performance relationship. • H2: Moderation effect of Coopetition on the above-mentioned relationship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entrepreneurial marketing activities positively and significantly influenced firm performance, while coopetition provided a non-significant moderation effect. • Although owner-managers re-joined trustworthy and complementary pre-pandemic coopetition partners in the immediate aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic for domestic market activities, they had to minimise risks from dark-side/opportunistic behaviour when joining coopetition networks with partners to serve export markets.
Paper 3: How a Coopetition-Oriented Mindset and Competitive Intensity Drive Coopetition Behaviour to Support Export Scale-Up Activities in a Post Crisis Environment	In an immediate post-crisis environment, to what extent has a coopetition-oriented mindset and an ability to implement associated behaviour, influenced under-resourced international entrepreneurs who were previously passive exporters, to pursue sales abroad more actively?	Empirical study featuring 20 qualitative field interviews followed by pretesting, pilot testing, and administering a quantitative online survey yielding 306 responses from owner-managers of under-resourced, independent, smaller-sized wine producers in the US. • H1: Coopetition-oriented mindset - coopetition relationship. • H3: Moderation effect of competitive intensity on the above-mentioned relationship. • H2: Competitive intensity - coopetition relationship.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respective significant positive relationships were found between first, a coopetition-oriented mindset; second, competitive intensity, and engaging in coopetition activities. A non-significant moderation effect existed regarding competitive intensity on the coopetition-oriented mindset - coopetition activities relationship. • Pivoted coopetition practices can take time to achieve benefits as decision-makers face new levels of competitive intensity across product-market strategies, affecting the nature of their coopetition partners.

the entrepreneurial marketing activities enabling the internationalisation process of owner-managers seeking internationalisation in an immediate post-COVID environment.

In addition to Table 1-3 featuring an overview of the three papers, Figures 1-1, 1-2, and 1-3 feature the three conceptual frameworks studied in this dissertation. The tested relationships and subsequent findings, some of which counter-intuitive, are briefly mentioned, with the overall synthesis and discussion of findings and contributions featured in Chapter 5.

The first paper of this dissertation focused on the performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities in the context of smaller firms internationalising in a post-COVID environment. Entrepreneurial marketing activities were found to be a driver of firm performance, even in an immediate post-COVID environment in which moving to export markets is actively pursued. With the respective export markets presenting a challenging environmental contingency, the paper investigated the effect of the degree of competitive intensity faced in the international environment. Competitive intensity was not found to have a significant impact on the performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities. The tested relationships were as follows:

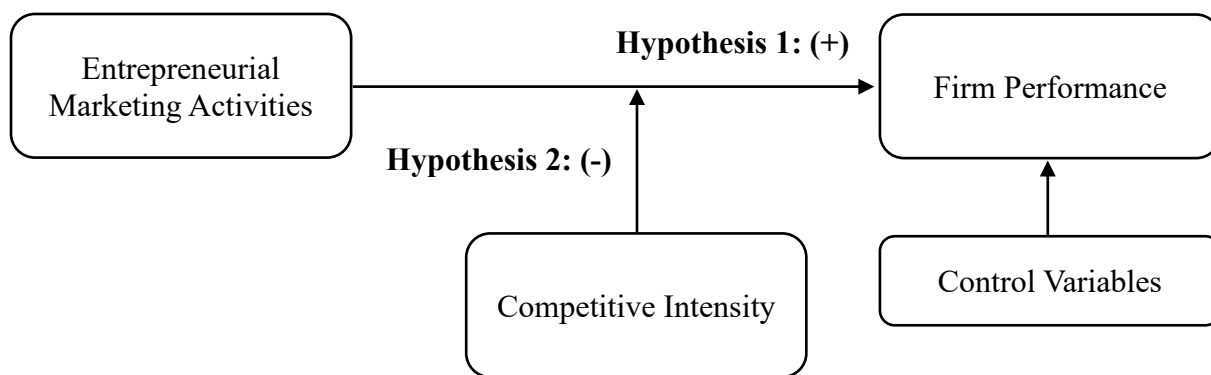


Figure 1-1

Conceptual Framework of Paper 1

Hypothesis 1-1: Entrepreneurial marketing activities have a linear (positive) relationship with firm performance. (Supported)

Hypothesis 1-2: Competitive intensity negatively moderates the linear (positive) relationship between entrepreneurial marketing activities and firm performance. (Not supported)

To further unpack the effect of cooperation on entrepreneurial marketing activities in the same mentioned setting, the second paper considered the performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities and focused on the effect of cooperation activities on this relationship. This expanded our understanding of the effect of competitive intensity examined in the first paper and outlined the specific role of cooperation in the studied firms given their internationalisation process in an immediate post-COVID context. Similar to the first paper, the second paper found that entrepreneurial marketing activities positively affected firm performance of under-resourced smaller firms moving to export markets in an immediate post-COVID environment. Moving to the effect of cooperation activities on their mentioned internationalisation process, while competitive intensity was not found to hinder this process in the first paper, cooperation activities were not found to enhance these activities. The research hypotheses were as follows:

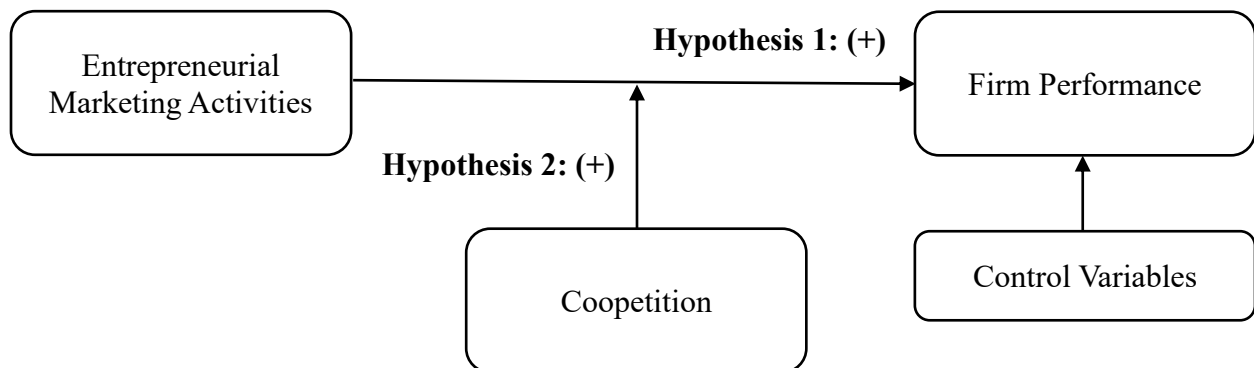


Figure 1-2

Conceptual Framework of Paper 2

Hypothesis 2-1: Entrepreneurial marketing activities have a linear (positive) relationship with firm performance. (Supported)

Hypothesis 2-2: Coopetition positively moderates the linear (positive) relationship between entrepreneurial marketing activities and firm performance. (Not supported)

The results obtained in the first and second papers relating to the effects of competitive intensity and coopetition, respectively, on the performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities within the studies' context were the main focus of the third paper. As such, the third paper investigated the relationship between competitive intensity and coopetition behaviour, the latter being preceded by the firm's coopetition-oriented mindset. This final paper aimed at unpacking the complex relationship, given the research setting, between competitive intensity and coopetition such that the role of competitive intensity was further understood in facilitating coopetition activities but not hindering the flow of such activities from coopetition intentions (i.e., a coopetition-oriented mindset). The research found that having a coopetition-oriented mindset did indeed motivate coopetition activities facilitating internationalisation. Furthermore, competitive intensity was a driver of coopetition activities, as such activities rely on the presence of some competitive rivalry in order to choose trustworthy coopetition partners. However, competitive intensity was less fruitful in facilitating the link between a coopetition-oriented mindset and coopetition activities, especially in export markets. The following three relationships were unpacked:

Hypothesis 3-1: A coopetition-oriented mindset has a linear (positive) relationship with engaging in coopetition activities. (Supported)

Hypothesis 3-2: Competitive intensity has a linear (positive) relationship with engaging in coopetition activities. (Supported)

Hypothesis 3-3: Competitive intensity negatively moderates the relationship between a coopetition-oriented mindset and engaging in coopetition activities. (Not supported)

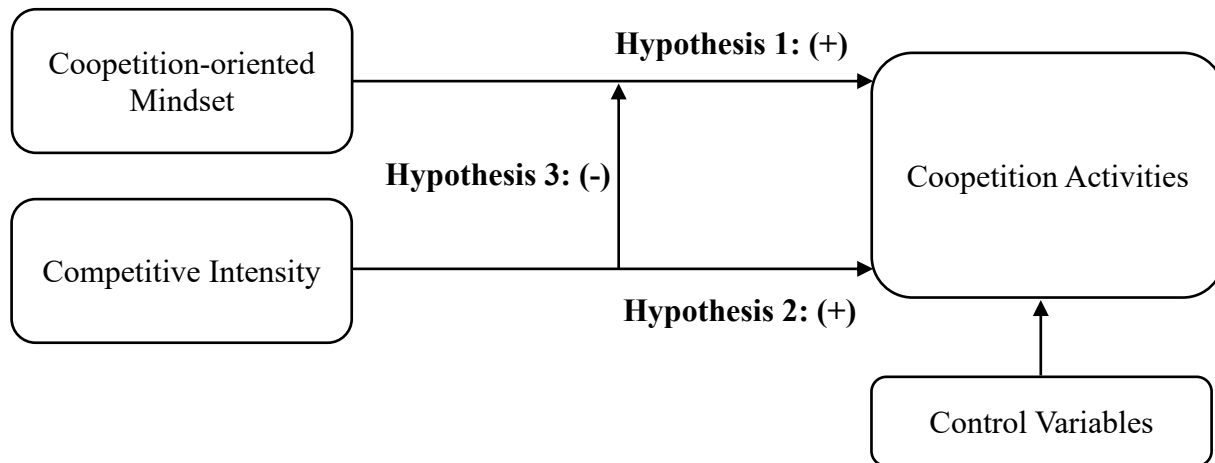


Figure 1-3
Conceptual Framework of Paper 3

Collectively, the contributions provided by this dissertation to the cross-disciplinary international entrepreneurship/international marketing literature serve as a stimulus for investigating entrepreneurial marketing issues that can expand our knowledge of how owner-managers of under-resourced firms can overcome challenges in export markets following a crisis.

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Appendix A

Glossary of Key Terms

Glossary of Key Terms

Key Term	Explanation	Author
Cluster	“Geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries, and associated institutions (e.g., universities, standards agencies, trade associations) in a particular field that compete but also cooperate”. It is explicitly noted that clusters can exist in various sectors other than wine like restaurants and sports clubs (Chaudhry & Crick, 2004; Crick & Crick, 2020b).	Porter (2000, p. 16)
Coopetition	“A paradoxical relationship between two or more actors, regardless of whether they are in horizontal or vertical relationships, simultaneously involved in cooperative and competitive interactions”.	Bengtsson and Kock (2014, p. 180)
Coopetition-oriented Mindset	A coopetition-oriented mindset reflects decision-makers valuing the importance of engaging in collaborative relationships with rivals.	Crick (2021)
Digitalisation	The degree of digitalisation was captured by the percentage of the firm’s business model that is digitalised, which was evaluated by using a sliding ratio scale ranging from 0 to 100.	Niemand et al. (2021)
Impact of COVID-19	The extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic, as an environmental shock, affected firm performance. The effect was measured using a sliding ratio scale ranging from -100 to 100, which can help owner-managers target customers across different product-markets.	Mensah et al. (2022) Zahra (2021)
International Entrepreneur	While there is no formal definition or a broadly agreed on measure of what constitutes an international entrepreneur, this dissertation considers owner-managers exporting by the case as international entrepreneurs. For instance, international entrepreneurship can be viewed as a firm level activity that crosses national borders and focuses on the relationship between businesses and the international environments in which they operate.	Zahra & George (2017) Wright and Ricks (1994)
Low-high Export Intensity	“Firms with an export-to-total sales ratio greater than 50 per cent were designated as "high involvement" exporters and the remaining firms as "low-involvement" exporters”.	Diamantopoulos & Inglis (1988, p. 53)
Opportunistic Behaviour	Opportunistic behaviour occurs when knowledge that was absorbed or shared as part of a coopetition relationship is used by a coopetition partner to compete against another. Such behaviour includes acting on the weaknesses of coopetition partners. Ineffectively managed (paradoxical) coopetition activities can result in dark-side effects due to the high risk of opportunism.	Bouncken & Kraus (2013) Narver & Slater (1990) Zerbini & Castaldo (2007)
Performance	Performance can be measured in both objective and/or subjective terms. For example, this may be a published measure like their personal wealth (Chaudhry & Crick, 2008). Alternatively, it may reflect their goals or even	Morgan et al. (2009)

perceptions vis-à-vis rivals, since certain entrepreneurs seek to enhance their firm's growth, profits, etc., and others are satisfied by lifestyle-related achievements (Spence & Crick, 2006; Crick et al, 2018). Therefore, an established composite measure was considered appropriate in this study.

Stakeholders A firm's stakeholder includes any group that or individual who affects or is affected by a firm. Firms' stakeholders include competitors/rivals, employees, suppliers, customers, debtholders, and shareholders. However, this dissertation focuses on competitors as stakeholders when discussing cooperation relationships. Freeman (1984) Freeman et al. (2010)

Appendix B

Questionnaire

Short Survey – Academic Research Project

Thank you for taking the time to complete this short survey, which should take about 11-13 minutes to complete. The survey is part of a PhD research project that studies the business practices of firms operating in the U.S. wine industry.

All answers are confidential, and all collected data is anonymized in the study. Please carefully read the study's [consent form](#) to learn about procedures governing the use of this survey. Consent is necessary for initiating and filling this survey. You will not be able to proceed before consenting to participate in this study after reading the consent form. By clicking "Yes", you consent to participate in this study

Yes

Firm Size, Age, State, Business Experience, Industry Experience

Please indicate where your firm is located

▼ Alabama ... Other

Please select the year your firm was established in

Year

▼ 1900 ... 2023

Please indicate the total number of **full-time** employees at your firm

1

499



Please indicate the total number of **part-time** employees at your firm

1

499



Please indicate the number of years you have worked...

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60



Family & Non-family Firm Classification

Do you consider your firm to be a family firm?

Yes

No

Does a family own 51% or more of the equity of your firm?

Yes

No

Is your firm governed and/or managed with the intention to shape and pursue a family's vision?

Yes

No

Is your firm either a partly- or a wholly-owned subsidiary of a parent or holding company?

Yes

No

Internationalization

Please indicate the percentage (%) of your firm’s total sales that originated from overseas markets over the last 12 months

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100



Please indicate the number of countries to which your firm exported your products over the last 12 months

0 15 30 45 60 75 90 105 120 135 150 165 180 195



Coopetition

Please indicate to which extent you agree or disagree with the following statements

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
We are in close competition with our partners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Active competition with our collaborators is important to us	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our partners are also our competitors, with whom we pursue common goals in our projects	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Digitalisation

	Very Low	Low	Average	High	Very High
Rate the level of digitalisation of your products and services compared to your competitors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rate your firm's exploitation of opportunities for digitalisation in the market to develop your products and services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rate your firm's level of success in implementing new digital business ideas or business models within the last three years	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rate your firm's ability to quickly adopt your digital offerings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please evaluate to what degree (%) your firm's business model is digitalised

	0	25	50	75	100

Competitor Orientation

In our firm...

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
... our employees share information concerning competitors' strategies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... managers frequently discuss competitors' strengths and weaknesses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... we respond rapidly to competitors' activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... we are aware of the strategies our rival firms are formulating	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... we possess knowledge of the competitive moves of our rivals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... we know what activities our rivals are planning	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Competitive Intensity

In our industry...

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
... competition is cut-throat	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... there are many promotion wars	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... anything that one competitor can offer, others can readily match	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... price competition is common	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... one hears of a competitive move almost every day	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... our rivals are relatively strong	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Entrepreneurial Marketing Orientation

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
I am constantly on the lookout for new ways to improve our firm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am always looking for better ways to do things in our firm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I excel at identifying opportunities for our firm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am great at turning problems at our firm into opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
When it comes to our firm, I am more action-oriented than reaction-oriented	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Nothing is more exciting in our firm than seeing our ideas turn into reality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
My management approach looks beyond current customers and markets for more opportunities for our firm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am good at recognizing and pursuing opportunities for our firm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would characterize our firm as opportunity-driven	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our firm is always looking for new opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our firm will do whatever it takes to pursue a new opportunity	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

In our firm...

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
... we would rather accept a risk to pursue an opportunity than miss it altogether	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... we are willing to take risks when we think it will benefit our firm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... we would not be considered gamblers, but we do take risks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
Being innovative is a competitive advantage for our firm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our firm tends to be more innovative than most of our competitors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I create an atmosphere that encourages creativity and innovativeness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our firm tries to use innovative approaches if it will help it get the job done more efficiently	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
We frequently measure our firm's customer satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I expect that all employees in our firm recognize the importance of satisfying our customers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My business objectives are driven by customer satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I pay close attention to after-sales service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I encourage our employees to strive for innovative approaches to create relationships with customers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our firm pays attention to customers who can offer insights about our business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I make sure that our firm's competitive advantage is based on understanding customers' needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
In the past, we have always found a way to get the resources we need to get the job done	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have been able to leverage our resources by bartering and/or sharing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have used networking and/or an exchange of favors to our advantage in our firm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People who know me well would say that I am persistent, even tenacious, in overcoming obstacles	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use creative approaches to make things happen	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our firm prides itself on doing more with less	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
I make sure that our firm does an excellent job of creating value for customers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I make sure that our firm uses excellent service to create value for customers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I make sure our firm's pricing structure is designed to reflect value created for customers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I make sure managers understand how employees can create value for customers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Providing value for our customers is the most important thing our firm does	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Firm Performance

Please rate the performance of your firm over the last 12 months relative to your major competitors

	Much worse than competitors	Worse than competitors	Somewhat worse than competitors	About the same as competitors	Somewhat better than competitors	Better than competitors	Much better than competitors
Acquiring new customers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Growth in sales revenues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Market share growth	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increasing sales from new customers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Increasing sales from existing customers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

COVID-19

How much do you think COVID-19 has impacted your overall firm performance?

	Towards an extremely negative impact	No impact at all	Towards an extremely positive impact
	-100	0	100

MO & EO

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
Our business objectives are driven primarily by customer satisfaction	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We constantly monitor our level of commitment and orientation to serving customer needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We freely communicate information about our successful and unsuccessful customer experiences across all business functions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our strategy for competitive advantage is based on our understanding of customers' needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We measure customer satisfaction systematically and frequently	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We have routine or regular measures of customer service	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We are more customer focused than our competitors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe this business exists primarily to serve customers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
We poll end-users at least once a year to assess the quality of our products and services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Data on customer satisfaction are disseminated at all levels in this business unit on a regular basis	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
Our firm characteristically exhibits high levels of risk-taking, innovativeness, and proactiveness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our firm often takes calculated risks by pursuing innovative initiatives before potential rivals recognize such opportunities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Risk-taking, innovativeness, and proactiveness are equally inherent to our firm's overall business orientation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our firm pursues/funds innovative initiatives that are industry-leading and often somewhat risky	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our firm concurrently manifests risk-taking, innovativeness, and proactiveness	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our firm often pre-empts its rivals by being an early leader with innovations whose successful outcomes cannot be assured	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Our firm exploits entrepreneurial opportunities because of our desire and ability to embrace novel and risky innovative initiatives ahead of our rivals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

COOP Mindset

In our firm...

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
... we believe in the importance of cooperating with competing firms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... we perceive that it is effective to collaborate with competitors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... we feel that it is vital to collaborate with our rivals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... we have a mindset focused on cooperating with competitors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... we believe that firms should share assets (equipment, etc.) with their rivals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
... cooperating with competitors is likely to improve our performance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

INFR Quality

In closing to the survey:

	Very Strongly Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Very Strongly Agree
I am confident about my answers to the previous questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This survey deals with issues that I am knowledgeable about	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am a qualified person to complete this survey	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My current role allows me to have answered the previous questions accurately	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Email

Optional: if you would like to receive a free summary of the study's results, please enter your email below:

Optional: if you are willing to grant a short follow-up interview, kindly enter your email below:

Chapter 2

Paper 1 - Small, Passive Exporters' Entrepreneurial Marketing Scale-up Activities and Performance in an Immediate Post-COVID-19 Era: Moderating Role of Competitive Intensity

Abstract

Purpose – Scale-up behaviour has received considerable interest within the cross-disciplinary literature. This study unpacks the entrepreneurial marketing-performance relationship, alongside the moderating role of competitive intensity, among small, passive exporters seeking to scale-up sales abroad in an immediate post-COVID-19 environment. The investigation is underpinned by a relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory, together with an outside-in marketing lens.

Design/methodology/approach – Following 20 field interviews, the model testing stage featured survey responses from owner-managers of 306 small wine producers across multiple regions in the United States. The temporal context of an immediate post-pandemic period was after lockdowns and international travel restrictions were ended.

Findings – Unique insights revealed that at an aggregate-level, entrepreneurial marketing activities were positively and significantly associated with firm performance among the passive exporters, while competitive intensity yielded a non-significant moderating effect. A post-hoc test revealed that various dimensions of the multi-faceted entrepreneurial marketing construct were associated with firm performance, whereby, competitive intensity played different moderating roles (hence, exhibiting varying interaction effects).

Originality/value – The focus of prior studies involving scale-up activities typically features practices within new ventures, whose owner-managers rapidly seek to identify and exploit opportunities abroad soon after their respective firm’s inception. In contrast, it remains unclear from earlier research what types of performance-enhancing entrepreneurial marketing behaviour are employed by small, passive exporters, namely, when attempting to scale-up sales abroad in the aftermath of a large-scale crisis (typified by COVID-19). Unique insights emerged to unpack the entrepreneurial marketing-performance relationship regarding decision-makers’ attempts to scale-up internationalisation, namely, when faced by new degrees of competitive intensity.

Keywords: Competitive intensity; COVID-19; entrepreneurial marketing; exports; outside-in perspective; performance; resource-based theory; scale-up.

Introduction

A body of literature exists featuring decision-makers’ “scale-up” behaviour through internationalising to facilitate growth (Piaskowska et al., 2021; Reuber et al., 2021; Jansen et al., 2023; Tippmann et al., 2023a; 2023b). This pursuit of opportunities is despite recognition that institutional conditions vary across markets, and exporters may encounter different barriers creating uncertainty in decision-making (Kahiya, 2018; Magnani & Zucchella, 2019; Torkkeli et al., 2019). In fact, evidence suggests the internationalisation process is not always linear/forward moving, and that entrepreneurs may cease or have intermittent export involvement (Pauwels & Matthyssens, 2004; Freeman et al., 2013; Bernini et al., 2016; Vissak et al., 2020; Kafouros et al., 2022; Crick et al., 2020a; 2023a). Some firms may become what has been termed “born-again” globals, with owner-managers having reduced exports then dramatically scaling-up sales abroad (Bell et al., 2003).

This study is positioned at the marketing/entrepreneurship interface (often known as entrepreneurial marketing), whereby it follows precedents by drawing on cross-disciplinary literature to explain facets of decision-makers' internationalisation behaviour (Jones et al., 2011; Sundqvist et al., 2012; Yang & Gabrielsson, 2017; Ibeh et al., 2019; Crick et al., 2020a; Yang & Leppäaho, 2023). It builds on the observation of Cadogan (2012) that employing certain strategic orientations may lead to business success, and this investigation considers the potential performance-enhancing role of exhibiting an entrepreneurial marketing orientation. In doing so, prior research has highlighted that such an orientation (employing entrepreneurial marketing activities) is likely to enhance firms' performance, since it encapsulates the intended merits of a market orientation and an entrepreneurial orientation (Jones & Rowley, 2011; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; Hamzah et al., 2023).

Although definitions and measurement scales vary, in broad terms, this orientation involves owner-managers' behaving innovatively, proactively, taking calculated risks, as well as exhibiting autonomous and competitively aggressive traits to create enduring value for their customers (Morris et al., 2002; Hills et al., 2008; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; Eggers et al., 2020). Despite the positive entrepreneurial marketing-performance relationship being widely advocated in earlier research, moderating factors are likely to influence this relationship (Alqahtani et al., 2023; Crick et al., 2023b). This study investigates the role of environmental contingencies in the form of competitive intensity that may impact performance outcomes (Cadogan et al., 2003; Morgan & Anokhin, 2020).

However, the role of "context" is potentially important when considering firms' internationalisation paths (as per Reuber et al., 2017). This is pertinent, since in this investigation, contextual considerations may influence the speed, scale, and scope of decision-makers' attempts

to scale-up export sales, in turn, their perceptions towards performance. More specifically, first, the temporal nature of the investigation (following Jones & Coviello, 2005; Welch et al., 2016) contextualises this study in an under-researched setting of an immediate post-crisis timeframe; that is, in the aftermath of COVID-19.¹ Second, it features the context of established businesses that have traditionally exhibited marginal/passive/reactive export involvement (Piercy, 1981; da Rocha et al., 1990). This post-crisis setting remains under-researched regarding entrepreneurs' pivot to scale-up activities, namely, in comparison to those that are growth-oriented from the start-up phase. Consequently, the objective of this study is to unpack the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing activities and firm performance under the moderating role of competitive intensity. Specifically, among small, passive exporters seeking to scale-up sales abroad in an immediate post-COVID-19 environment. The research setting features under-resourced, independent, smaller-sized, wine producers in the United States. A relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory, together with an outside-in marketing lens underpins the investigation (Day, 2014; Barney, 2018).

The research setting is timely and important given that in an immediate post-COVID-19 period, the potential exists that certain facets of decision-makers' performance-enhancing entrepreneurial marketing practices may have evolved following them building resilience and preparing for the aftermath of the pandemic (Lund Peterson & Ritter, 2020; Behl et al., 2023; Chaudhary et al., 2023; Klöckner et al., 2023). That is, since entrepreneurs exhibited a prior reliance on their domestic market, earlier cluster-based research highlights a degree of collaboration to support co-dependence rather than co-destruction vis-à-vis competitive intensity.

¹ To suggest this study features an immediate post-COVID-19 period, in no way downplays the longer-term sector and country-level implications, like those related to economic factors and healthcare (following Foss, 2021). However, in the temporal context of this investigation, lockdowns had ended, plus owner-managers and many customers had travel restrictions lifted.

For example, existing pre-pandemic studies across different countries demonstrate owner-managers in the sector under investigation often being part of local in-person wine tours, alongside exhibiting degrees of reciprocal cross-referrals and sharing assets; yet also, extending to varying degrees of national and export sales (Dana et al., 2013; Reay et al., 2015; Crick & Crick, 2021). Nevertheless, since different degrees of competitive intensity might be expected when decision-makers attempt to scale-up export sales following a major environmental shock, the impact on the entrepreneurial marketing-performance relationship under investigation remains unclear.

Three contributions are offered to build on existing studies. First, prior research typically advances the positive nature of the entrepreneurial marketing-performance relationship (Hills & LaForge, 1992; Hills & Hultman, 2011; Alqahtani & Uslay, 2020; Morrish et al., 2020). Nevertheless, following a major crisis typified by COVID-19, stronger evidence emerges regarding the intricacies of decision-makers' entrepreneurial marketing practices, namely, conditions where these behaviours may (or may not) enhance firm performance (building upon Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; Hamzah et al., 2023).

Second, new insights outline how aspects of the competitive business environment (specifically, competitive intensity in owner-managers' attempts to scale-up export activities) could unhinge the performance prospects of employing entrepreneurial marketing practices (extending Boso et al., 2012; Morgan et al., 2015). In fact, a post-hoc test outlined various dimensions of the multi-faceted entrepreneurial marketing construct were associated with firm performance; hence, competitive intensity played different moderating roles (via an interaction effect). To illustrate, new light is shed on the collaborative nature of mutually beneficial practices between entrepreneurs within and outside of clusters, that to some extent, limit the impact of competitive intensity (building on Reay et al., 2015; Granata et al., 2018).

Third, the wider aspects of a relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory (alongside an outside-in lens) are evaluated through highlighting how the competitive business environment may impact the way owner-managers engage in entrepreneurial marketing behaviour. Specifically, new insights emerge regarding decision-makers exhibiting strategic flexibility, agility, and an ability to improvise in respect of pivoting product-market strategies (extending Priem & Butler, 2001; Hughes et al., 2020; Hagen et al., 2019; Christofi et al., 2021; Nyamrunda & Freeman, 2021; Zahoor & Lew, 2023), namely, following a major environmental shock.

The remaining sections of this paper cover a review of the framing literature, methods, empirical results, a discussion of the findings, conclusions, practitioner recommendations, as well as some limitations and avenues for future research.

Literature Review

A Relational, Stakeholder Perspective of Resource-based Theory (with an Outside-in Lens)

Seminal resource-based theory examines the connection between organisational assets (resources and capabilities) and firm performance (Barney, 1991). Resources are tangible assets, like hardware and finance, whereas capabilities refer to intangible assets, such as education and industry experience (Morgan et al., 2009; Miocevic & Morgan, 2018; Felzensztein et al., 2022; Mostafiz et al., 2023). Over time, resource-based theory has been extended to cover new considerations of how entrepreneurs can elevate their firms' performance (Priem & Butler, 2001; Lavie, 2006; Barney, 2018; Helfat et al., 2023). This includes the role of the competitive business environment, in which volatile macro-level conditions can influence the performance outcomes of not just organisational resources and capabilities, but also, firm-wide strategies (Priem & Butler, 2001). In fact, certain considerations associated with the competitive business environment feature market-led issues vis-à-vis an outside-in perspective (Day, 2014), extending the inside-the-firm

seminal features of resource-based theory (Barney, 1991). Furthermore, from a relational perspective, recognition exists that decision-makers may, in some cases, need the support of various stakeholders in addition to utilising their own assets (Lavie, 2006; Barney, 2018). For example, stakeholders may range from trade bodies through to alliances like with rivals in the provision of information, funds, and so on (Fischer & Reuber, 2003; Freeman et al., 2006; Granata et al., 2018; Brache & Felzensztein, 2019; Faroque et al., 2021; Kahiya & Delaney, 2023). This study uses the wider aspects of this theoretical lens to address the research objective.

Background

The existing cross-disciplinary literature identifies various motives for decision-makers to pursue opportunities abroad, including in some cases, demand limitations arising from a small domestic market (Leonidou, 1995; Chandra et al., 2009; Kahiya, 2020; Masango & Lassalle, 2020; Hilmersson et al., 2021). However, to re-iterate the under-researched boundary conditions of this study, the focus involves decision-makers of smaller-sized firms in the sector under investigation that historically focused sales on their large domestic market but pivoted to scale-up export sales when facing the extra-ordinary circumstances attributed to COVID-19. As previously alluded to, consistent with a relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory (Barney, 2018), the wine industry in various countries is often typified in pre-pandemic studies by various firms engaging in local (cluster-based) in-person wine tours, with reciprocal cross-referrals and sharing assets, although practices extend to varying degrees of national and export sales (Dana et al., 2013; Reay et al., 2015; Crick & Crick, 2021). Nevertheless, taking an outside-in lens (Day, 2014), changes in market-led conditions affected by policies and especially lockdowns during COVID-19, meant entrepreneurs faced a significant crisis.

To illustrate, consistent with evidence in various sectors, many businesses ceased trading with surviving firms' decision-makers seeking ways to develop resilience alongside exhibiting strategic flexibility, agility, and an ability to improvise (Eggers, 2020; Hughes et al., 2020; Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021a). The net result for international entrepreneurs owning surviving businesses in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic, featured them making decisions in a climate of institutional change (Zahra, 2021) and facing “the new normal” or similar terminology. A well-documented pivot of many firms' business models involved a move from operations (or at least increased activities) taking place in a physical environment, to having an online presence; hence, COVID-19 led to a digital acceleration (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021b; Felzensztein & Tretiakov, 2023; Higuera-Castillo et al., 2023). Indeed, evidence suggests that entrepreneurs' capabilities can be enhanced in various ways by engaging in digital activities like speed of information search and reducing supply chains (Sinkovics et al., 2013; Liu et al., 2020; Samiee, 2020; Sinkovics & Sinkovics, 2020; Vadana et al., 2020; Wang, 2020). It follows that certain research findings from the relatively more stable pre-COVID-19 period do not necessarily translate to the “new normal” of an immediate post-pandemic era.²

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework contained two research hypotheses and a series of control paths (Figure 2-1). First, the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing activities and firm performance was expected to be linear and positive (linking with Boso et al., 2013; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019). Second, competitive intensity was anticipated to negatively impact the association between entrepreneurial marketing activities and firm performance (following Cadogan et al.,

² This is in no way to suggest that owner-managers have not faced various environmental shocks over time, ranging from natural disasters through to economic crises (Johnstone et al., 2019; Morrish & Jones, 2020). Rather, the magnitude of COVID-19's impact, and not least the effect of lockdowns, was somewhat different to various earlier crises.

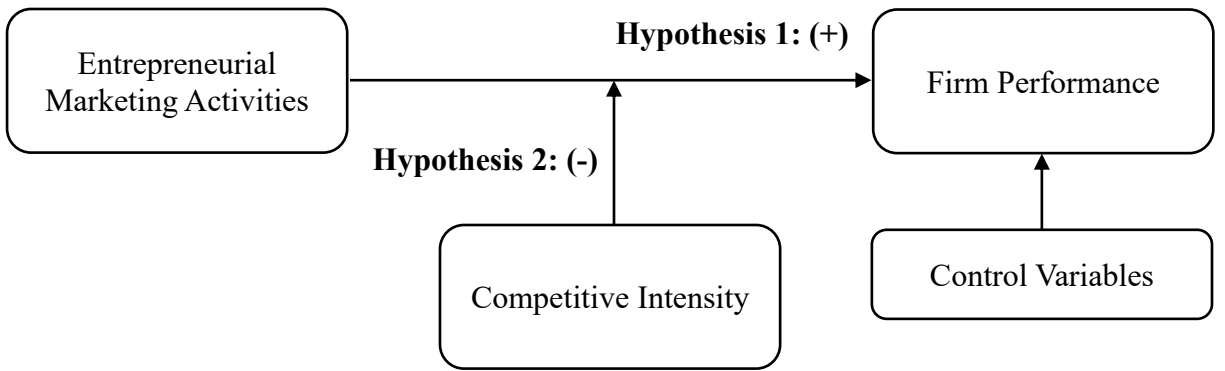
2003; Boso et al., 2012). Third, the outcome variable (firm performance) was controlled for various factors that had the potential to explain its variance, together with some procedural control variables. Consideration of the respective hypotheses' development follows.

Research Hypotheses

A body of knowledge has grown over the last three decades regarding the evolution of entrepreneurial marketing behaviour (Hills & LaForge, 1992; Hills & Hultman, 2011; Alqahtani & Uslay, 2020; Morrish et al., 2020). This has featured varying types of firms like large and smaller-sized, domestic versus internationalising ventures; also, investigating the sectors they operate in, ranging from product to service-oriented businesses (Miles & Darroch, 2006; Jones et al., 2013; Crick et al., 2020a). Entrepreneurial marketing activities encapsulate the positive features of employing a market orientation and an entrepreneurial orientation³ (Morrish et al., 2010; Jones & Rowley, 2011; Hansen et al., 2020). By way of clarification, in broad terms, a market orientation refers to the organisation-wide implementation of the marketing concept (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Slater & Narver, 1994). An entrepreneurial orientation focuses on the ways that owner-managers identify and exploit opportunities (Boso et al., 2013).

In respect of the link with the previously mentioned wider considerations associated with resource-based theory (and the outside-in perspective) that underpins this investigation, well-managed entrepreneurial marketing activities are likely to positively impact firm performance. Namely, because practices assist decision-makers to effectively manage their assets when pursuing opportunities in line with market-led considerations. Specifically, because entrepreneurs act

³ Various conceptualisations/measures exist involving a market orientation and an entrepreneurial orientation (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Kohli et al., 1993; Hughes & Morgan, 2007). In this study, a market orientation, and an entrepreneurial orientation, feature as peripheral notions, vis-à-vis, the core construct of entrepreneurial marketing activities where various conceptualisations/measures also exist (Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; Eggers et al., 2020; Hamzah et al., 2023).



The main control variables were firm age, firm size, business experience, industry experience, export intensity, export geographical scope, degree of digitalisation, impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, competition, a competitor orientation, a market orientation, and an entrepreneurial orientation. Plus, various procedural control paths were added to the conceptual framework to test the complex effects.

Figure 2-1

Conceptual Framework

proactively, innovatively, are opportunity focused, take calculated risks, behave autonomously, and act in a competitively aggressive manner to “tackle” rivals within their sectors (Eggers et al., 2020; Hamzah et al., 2023). In turn, from a customer-centric perspective, entrepreneurial marketing activities are likely to help owner-managers to create enduring value for their customers by leveraging their resources and capabilities (Morris et al., 2002; Hills et al., 2008; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; Crick et al., 2023). Thus, it stands to reason that if decision-makers of smaller-sized, passive exporters engage in well-managed entrepreneurial marketing activities in their attempts to scale-up sales abroad in an immediate post-COVID-19 period, they are more likely to develop performance-enhancing outcomes. Consequently, it is expected that:

Hypothesis 1: Entrepreneurial marketing activities have a linear (positive) relationship with firm performance.

Competitive intensity pertains to the degree of rivalry within a market (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Auh & Menguc, 2005; Alqahtani et al., 2023). The evolved environmental themes of resource-based theory, including the market-led outside-in perspective, have highlighted that if sectors are volatile (with respect of competitive rivalry), it can be potentially challenging for entrepreneurs to utilise assets to enhance performance (Priem & Butler, 2001; Day, 2014). As previously noted, prior pre-pandemic studies suggest that the wine sector in different countries has typically exhibited a degree of social capital, influencing collaborative practices among certain rival decision-makers (Dana & Winstone, 2008; Dana et al., 2013; Reay et al., 2015).⁴ To re-iterate a prominent example from earlier research, mutually beneficial cluster-based collaboration is common among complementary partners where trust exists. Illustrations include owner-managers sharing equipment, knowledge, funds, etc., including across product-markets served (Crick & Crick, 2021). That is not to suggest practices do not also exist in other sectors where such collaboration among competitors (known as “coopetition”) allows a win/win symbiotic relationship to occur among network partners (Dana et al., 2008; Ryan et al., 2019). Such collaborative behaviour is likely to enhance the performance of individual firms, maintain family employment (where applicable), and sustain rival firms within their network; that is, based on co-dependence rather than co-destruction (Reay et al., 2015). Nevertheless, it is important that decision-makers know when to collaborate rather than attack competitors, as risk/reward considerations exist, and not all rivals are the same (Cui et al., 2018; Chiambaretto et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2020). As such, exhibiting a competitor-orientation (knowing about and acting on the strengths and weaknesses of rivals, as per Narver & Slater, 1990), may help owner-managers

⁴ Social capital is also a major feature of some other clusters and especially where owner-managers are likely to know each other based on geographic proximity and/or where a degree of co-dependency exists (Geldes et al., 2015; 2017; Crick et al., 2020b).

decide who to collaborate with, and the extent of relationships, as opposed to operating autonomously.

The impact of competitive intensity in an immediate post-COVID-19 period, nonetheless, remains under-researched. Interestingly, in a broader sense, there is mixed evidence across sectors pertaining to whether aspects of the business environment (like competitive intensity) impact the respective connections between a market orientation, an entrepreneurial orientation, and firm performance (Slater & Narver, 1994; Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005; Cadogan et al., 2009; Boso et al., 2012). This means that it is unclear if, and in what capacity, competitive intensity might influence the entrepreneurial marketing activities – firm performance relationship. In fact, some earlier work has overlooked certain environmental contingencies that might exist when decision-makers engage in entrepreneurial marketing activities (Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; Hamzah et al., 2023).

The owner-managers of surviving firms in the immediate aftermath of COVID-19 are nonetheless likely to have engaged in a degree of planning and built some resilience via strategic flexibility, agility, improvisation; for example, through pivoting facets of their business models (Lund Peterson & Ritter, 2020; Behl et al., 2023; Klöckner et al., 2023). Indeed, making decisions based on learning is often helpful (Guercini & Freeman, 2023). Such planning and learning behaviour potentially affect the competitive intensity that small, passive exporters face vis-à-vis the pre-COVID-19 period; that is, when attempting to scale-up sales abroad in the aftermath of the pandemic (assuming resilience strategies have been effectively implemented).

On balance, following a major environmental shock like COVID-19, competitive intensity is anticipated to negatively influence the entrepreneurial marketing-performance relationship in this study's scaling-up context. The main reason for this argument is that institutionally different

markets may become more rivalrous, exhibiting barriers, and creating uncertainty (Kahiya, 2018; Magnani & Zucchella, 2019; Torkkeli et al., 2019). Additionally, while “broad” strategies like increasing an online presence may have been implemented, the likelihood is that there has been limited time in an immediate post-COVID-19 environment to learn and implement tailored pivoted strategies across a variety of individual new markets. For example, identifying and exploiting new distributor agreements. Therefore, it could be challenging for under-resourced owner-managers to proactively deliver value to their customers, be innovative, make accurate calculations pertaining to risk-taking behaviours, act autonomously, and remain competitively aggressive (Cadogan et al., 2003; Boso et al., 2012). Indeed, a new level of competitive intensity associated with scaling-up exports could impose challenges that make it harder for decision-makers within the smaller-sized businesses to operate, leading to inefficiencies within their day-to-day and long-term operations (consistent with Cadogan et al., 2002 in a wider context). Plus, engaging in performance-enhancing entrepreneurial marketing activities in competitively intensive environments can be potentially time-consuming and expensive to effectively implement (Crick et al., 2023). Hence:

Hypothesis 2: Competitive intensity negatively moderates the linear (positive) relationship between entrepreneurial marketing activities and firm performance.

Control Variables

The outcome variable (firm performance) was controlled for the following factors - firm age, firm size, business experience, industry experience, export intensity, an export geographical scope, degree of digitalisation, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, competition, a competitor orientation, a market orientation, and an entrepreneurial orientation. Although the number of controls may at first sight appear large, these resulted from considerations in earlier research and helped make the model testing robust alongside procedural control factors (for example, linking

with Narver & Slater, 1990; Deshpande & Farley, 1998; Cadogan et al., 2009; Morgan et al., 2009; Boso et al., 2013; Niemand et al., 2021). To minimise repetition, the operationalisations of the main variables alongside the controls are outlined in the following Methods section. In addition, several procedural control variables were “run” to test the complex factors within the conceptual model.

Methods

Empirical Setting

To investigate entrepreneurial marketing activities, scholars should select an empirical setting that hosts the respective attributes of an entrepreneurial orientation and a market orientation. Accordingly, vineyards (in different parts of the world) have been described as often possessing related characteristics, like creating value for their customers, while behaving in ways that are entrepreneurial in nature (see, for example, Dana et al., 2013; Felzensztein et al., 2014b; 2019; Granata et al., 2018; Crick et al., 2023). For this study, the wine industry in the United States was selected as the empirical context to test the elements of the conceptual framework. This decision resulted from its relatively large domestic market, and in principle (subject to confirmation in field interviews discussed later), the perceived lesser need in pre- as opposed to post-pandemic times to actively internationalise in contrast to countries with smaller domestic markets. The sampling frame featured a purchased database that contained the names and contact details of vineyards from across the United States (Wines Vines Analytics 2022). By 2022, lockdowns had ended in the sector under investigation and travel had commenced for owner-managers alongside many tourists from various countries; hence, suggesting an immediate post-COVID-19 setting. After receiving ethics approval, field interviews took place in late 2022 and the core quantitative survey was undertaken in early 2023.

Data Collection

The 20 field interviews with key decision-makers across three States were used to help the researchers ensure that the subsequent core survey would be aligned with the empirical context (as per Katsikeas et al., 2006). Kumar et al. (1993) suggests reliance on key informants in smaller-sized businesses can be acceptable if these represent the salient decision-makers; not least, since such firms often operate with relatively flat organisational structures. Field interviews took place in distinct regions of the wine sector in the United States – with varying degrees of production and reputation. Thus, the preliminary field interviews stage was effective for highlighting contextual issues associated with the research setting, despite this investigation focusing on the core quantitative stage.

Illustrations from the field interviews are revisited in the later Discussion section. For now, salient contextual factors involved first, all interviewees confirming they were using online methods like their wine club to increase exports. Second, all interviewees perceived (in practitioner discourse) they could not proactively identify and exploit new export opportunities on their own and needed stakeholder support. Not least, to minimise risks where different degrees of competitive intensity would be faced. This ranged from trade bodies through to collaboration with rivals; the latter being not necessarily the same firms as those in the domestic market. Third, that scale-up activities varied between interviewees regarding their speed, scale, and scope. Consequently, some innovative practices would take longer to achieve beneficial outcomes than others. Additionally, the field interviews were used to help shape measurement scales taken from the existing literature.

An electronic survey (using Qualtrics) was designed, containing operationalisations of the latent variables within the conceptual framework shaped by the field interviews. Then, the survey

was pre-tested with a sample of academics ($n = 3$) and practitioners ($n = 6$) to ensure that the questions were clear, the length of the survey was reasonable, and that appropriate scales were used. The field interviews raised no obvious concerns with any aspect of the survey. Afterwards, a pilot study took place, in which a small sample of respondents ($n = 20$) were selected to assess the distributions and descriptive statistics of the measurements – showing no problematic measures (Bolton, 1993). Next, the core data collection stage was administered, leading to a final sample of key decision-makers in 306 wine producers from across the United States (deemed an acceptable response rate); that is, arising from utilising a sub-set of the Wines Vines Analytics (2022) database. It is worth re-iterating that boundary conditions were placed on this study, as such, no claim is made of wider generalisations to the practices of larger wine producers, and/or those consistently exhibiting higher export activities. Further, the research team found non-significant t -values between the early and late responses – suggesting that non-response bias was not of concern (Armstrong & Overton, 1977).

Operationalisations

The constructs within the conceptual framework were measured as follows. First, entrepreneurial marketing activities were measured as a multi-dimensional latent variable, comprised of innovativeness, proactiveness, calculated risk-taking, customer intensity, opportunity focus, value creation, and resource leveraging. These facets (with multiple items) were captured on seven-point interval scales, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (adapted from Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019 whose work was adapted from others' research, namely, Li et al., 2009; Becherer et al., 2012). Second, firm performance was operationalised using the multi-item seven-point interval scale of Morgan et al. (2009), ranging from: 1 = much worse than competitors to 7 = much better than competitors. Third, competitive intensity was captured on a

seven-point interval scale, with multiple items, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (adapted from Cadogan et al., 2003).

Fourth, turning to the main control variables, firm age was measured by using the number of years since establishment (Vorhies et al., 2011). Firm size was operationalised via the number of full-time employees (Morgan et al., 2009). Business experience was captured through the number of years that the respondents had been working in their current firm (Boso et al., 2013). Industry experience was evaluated by using the number of years that the respondents had worked in the global wine sector (Crick & Crick, 2021). Export intensity was measured by using the percentage of sales that originated from export markets (Cadogan et al., 2009). An export geographical scope was operationalised via the number of export markets that offerings are shipped to (Oliveira et al., 2023). The degree of digitalisation was captured by the percentage of their business model that was digitalised (Niemand et al., 2021). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was evaluated by using a sliding ratio scale (ranging from: -100 to 100) regarding the extent to which this worldwide crisis had impacted firm performance (Mensah et al., 2022). Coopetition was measured on a multi-item interval scale, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (Bouncken et al., 2018). A competitor orientation was operationalised on a multi-item interval scale, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (Narver & Slater, 1990; Hult et al., 2005). A market orientation was assessed on a multi-item interval scale, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (Deshpande & Farley, 1998; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019). An entrepreneurial orientation was evaluated on a multi-item interval scale, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (Miller, 1983; Li et al., 2009; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019). Procedural controls were added because of the complexity of the model. For example, an entrepreneurial marketing orientation involved

multiplying a market orientation with an entrepreneurial marketing orientation (Morgan et al., 2015), to differentiate this from entrepreneurial marketing activities (as per Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019).

Fifth, the survey included two instrumental variables, namely, the informant quality tool – used to assess face validity and common method variance. This measurement scale was captured on a multi-item interval scale, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (adapted from Katsikeas et al., 2006; Boso et al., 2013). Furthermore, the multi-dimensional entrepreneurial marketing activities construct was modelled as a material formative measure (in line with Lee et al., 2014).

Survey Data Analysis

The following steps were taken to analyse the survey data. First, the researchers examined the characteristics of the final sample (Table 2-1). Through SPSS 28, the descriptive statistics showed that a reasonable mixture of wine producers had participated in this investigation, in terms of their employees, firm ages, and beyond. Further, these smaller-sized organisations were located throughout the United States – from the famous wine-producing states (such as California, Washington, and Oregon) to the lesser-known wine-producing regions (like Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Arizona).

Second, using SPSS 28, an exploratory factor analysis model was “run” through a principal components analysis extraction and a varimax rotation (Peterson, 2000). This showed that no major problems existed, for which the multi-item constructs loaded onto distinct factors. The researchers used a series of exploratory factor analysis models – by evaluating sets of multi-item latent variables in conceptually-linked groups. Likewise, the respective Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin tests of sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s tests of sphericity were indicative of being satisfactory for all

exploratory factor analysis models. Third, through LISREL 12, assessment followed of all operationalisations through a series of confirmatory factor analysis models (Cadogan et al., 2009).

In other words, the latent variables were evaluated in conceptually linked groups consistent with the approach during the exploratory factor analysis models. In doing so, the purified constructs had relatively high standardised factor loadings and somewhat low standardised error variances that were all significant (*t*-values). Likewise, the final model fit indices were within the minimum thresholds for all confirmatory factor analysis models (Table 2-2).

Table 2-0-1

Sample Characteristics

Profiling information	Mean	Standard deviation
Firm age (years)	106.55	17.45
Number of full-time employees	5.43	13.98
Number of part-time employees	6.54	11.32
Business experience (years)	13.41	10.67
Industry experience (years)	16.21	11.20
Export intensity (%)	2.18	10.21
Number of export markets	1.52	2.83
Degree of digitalisation (%)	30.62	25.71
Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	-1.62	49.71
The sampled small firms had a domestic market focus but were all involved in ad-hoc forms of exporting, together with varying degrees of inwards internationalisation activities (wine tourism products and services).		

Fourth, through SPSS 28, the elements of the conceptual framework were tested through an ordinary least squares regression analysis (following Katsikeas et al., 2006). In doing so, the moderating variables were transformed through “residual-centering” to alleviate any multicollinearity concerns (Echambadi & Hess, 2007). Here, the researchers recorded the unstandardised regression coefficients (β), the *t*-values, and *p*-values. Furthermore, the model fit summary was displayed. Fifth, since a counter-intuitive result was identified (as shown later), a post-hoc test was used to unpack the elements of the conceptual framework (like Cadogan et al.,

2009). Instead of testing the entrepreneurial marketing activities construct as a material formative measure (see Lee et al., 2014), its various facets were individually tested, coupled with the moderating role of competitive intensity, to examine which dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing activities were better-associated with firm performance (extending Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; Hamzah et al., 2023).

Table 2-0-2

Final Model Fit Indices

Sets	χ^2/df	Sig.	RMSEA	CFI	IFI	NNFI
1	2.31	0.00	0.07	0.92	0.92	0.91
2	1.99	0.00	0.06	0.95	0.95	0.93
3	2.69	0.00	0.07	0.96	0.96	0.95

The conceptually-relevant groups were as follows - set 1 (proactiveness, opportunity focus, calculated risk-taking, innovativeness, customer intensity, resource leveraging, and value creation), set 2 (coopetition, a competitor orientation, competitive intensity, coopetition-oriented mind-set, firm age, firm size, business experience, industry experience, export intensity, an export geographical scope, degree of digitalisation, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic), and set 3 (firm performance, a market orientation, an entrepreneurial orientation, and informant quality).

Robustness Checks

To address reliability, using SPSS 28, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients (α) of the multi-item operationalisations were recorded. These scores exceeded 0.70, indicating reliable measures (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). Face validity was checked by utilising the informant quality scale (as per Katsikeas et al., 2006; Boso et al., 2013), as well as pre-testing the survey with a sample of knowledgeable academics and practitioners. Content validity was evaluated by using established operationalisations for the constructs within the conceptual framework (Cadogan et al., 2009). Convergent validity existed because the final measures (for all multi-item scales) yielded composite reliabilities that were above 0.60 and average variance extracted values that were greater than 0.50 (Hamzah et al., 2023). Through LISREL 12, discriminant validity was tested by

squaring the phi matrix correlations and comparing them against the average variance extracted values (in all confirmatory factor analysis models). Here, because the largest squared phi matrix correlation was consistently lower than the smallest average variance extracted value, discriminant validity was likely to exist (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The final multi-item measures' reliability scores are shown in Table 2-3.

Table 2-0-3

The Reliabilities of the Purified Multi-item Measurement Scales

Purified multi-item measurement scales	Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α)	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Proactiveness	0.85	0.85	0.59
Opportunity focus	0.84	0.85	0.65
Calculated risk-taking	0.85	0.85	0.66
Innovativeness	0.87	0.87	0.63
Customer intensity	0.87	0.89	0.58
Resource leveraging	0.76	0.79	0.57
Value creation	0.83	0.84	0.57
Coopetition	0.76	0.76	0.52
Competitor orientation	0.88	0.88	0.71
Competitive intensity	0.86	0.86	0.61
Coopetition-oriented mind-set	0.93	0.96	0.76
Firm performance	0.93	0.93	0.77
Market orientation	0.87	0.88	0.70
Entrepreneurial orientation	0.95	0.97	0.75
Informant quality	0.88	0.90	0.76
The reliabilities for the single indicators could not be processed. Since the scores for the multi-item scales were above the minimum thresholds, the single-item scales were deemed to be reliable. All multi-item measures retained at least two indicators.			

Common method variance was treated in procedural and statistical capacities. As a procedural remedy, the survey was designed (as per pre-testing) to be relatively short and user-friendly (Podsakoff et al., 2003), yet long enough to test variables in the conceptual model, including controls. In addition, the marker variable technique was employed as a statistical test (via SPSS 28). Specifically, bivariate, and partial correlation matrices were created, with the same information. The only difference between them was that the partial correlation matrix controlled

for the “informant quality tool”, namely, as the marker variable. Subsequently, the differences were calculated and averaged. Since this score was very small ($r = 0.00$), it is likely that the statistical data were unaffected by a common method factor (Lindell & Whitney, 2001).

Results

During the model-testing stage, entrepreneurial marketing activities had a linear (positive) and significant relationship with firm performance. Consequently, support existed for Hypothesis 1. In addition, competitive intensity positively, but non-significantly, moderated this association, meaning that no support was offered for Hypothesis 2. Plus, the main control variables (as well as the procedural factors) contributed to explaining the variance of firm performance, for which the adjusted R^2 was 0.23 (with a significant F -statistic). The impact of COVID-19 was especially pertinent. During the post-hoc test, certain aspects of the entrepreneurial marketing activities construct were drivers of firm performance – with some dimensions being significant (positive or negative) and others being non-significant. Here, opportunity focus, innovativeness, and resource leveraging were positive and significant drivers, whereas, calculated risk-taking was negative and significant. As for moderating effects, only two facets were influenced by competitive intensity (calculated risk-taking and innovativeness), with negative and significant results. This time, the final adjusted R^2 was 0.27 (with a significant F -statistic). The ordinary least squares regression models are displayed in Table 2-4.

Discussion

Grounded in the wider (including outside-in) relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory (Day, 2014; Barney, 2018), the objective of this study was to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing activities and firm performance under the moderating role of competitive intensity. This was in the context of passive exporters that were

Table 2-0-4

Ordinary Least Squares Regression Models

	Model 1 (model-testing stage)		Model 2 (post-hoc test)	
	β	<i>t</i> -values	β	<i>t</i> -values
Main control variables				
Firm age	0.00	0.37	0.00	0.30
Firm size	0.00	0.53	0.00	0.72
Business experience	-0.01	-0.56	-0.01	-0.97
Industry experience	-0.01	-0.53	-0.01	-0.43
Export intensity	0.00	0.39	0.00	0.83
Export geographical scope	0.00	0.13	0.00	0.12
Degree of digitalisation	0.00	0.91	0.00	0.41
Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	0.01	2.81**	0.00	3.43**
Coopetition	-0.05	-1.05	-0.05	-1.06
Competitor orientation	0.07	1.40	0.05	0.95
Market orientation	0.07	1.51	0.07	1.62
Entrepreneurial orientation	0.11	1.73 [†]	0.14	1.85 [†]
Procedural control variables	β	<i>t</i> -values	β	<i>t</i> -values
Entrepreneurial marketing orientation	0.01	0.38	0.01	0.44
Entrepreneurial marketing orientation x competitive intensity	-0.01	-0.36	-0.01	-0.01
Competitive intensity	-0.10	-0.36	-0.13	-0.41
Hypothesised relationships	β	<i>t</i> -values	β	<i>t</i> -values
Entrepreneurial marketing activities (H1)	0.43	3.54**	-	-
Entrepreneurial marketing activities x competitive intensity (H2)	0.00	0.08	-	-
Post-hoc test relationships	β	<i>t</i> -values	β	<i>t</i> -values
Proactiveness	-	-	-0.05	-0.51
Opportunity focus	-	-	0.22	2.18*
Calculated risk-taking	-	-	-0.25	-2.77**
Innovativeness	-	-	0.20	2.02*
Customer intensity	-	-	-0.05	-0.57
Resource leveraging	-	-	0.23	2.49*
Value creation	-	-	0.13	1.51
Proactiveness x competitive intensity	-	-	0.03	0.44
Opportunity focus x competitive intensity	-	-	0.07	0.92
Calculated risk-taking x competitive intensity	-	-	-0.09	-1.65 [†]
Innovativeness x competitive intensity	-	-	-0.13	-1.84 [†]
Customer intensity x competitive intensity	-	-	-0.01	-0.01
Resource leveraging x competitive intensity	-	-	0.09	1.56
Value creation x competitive intensity	-	-	0.03	0.41
Model fit summary				
R^2	0.27		0.34	
Adjusted R^2	0.23		0.27	
<i>F</i> -statistic	6.40**		4.83**	
[†] $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed tests). The critical <i>t</i> -value was 1.65 (5%, one-sided). The entrepreneurial marketing orientation construct (and its subsequent interaction effects) was a procedural control variable; that is, as an alternative way to operationalise, and test, the entrepreneurial marketing activities construct.				

looking to scale-up sales abroad in an immediate post-crisis period. After undertaking an empirical investigation in the United States wine sector in the immediate aftermath of COVID-19 (with lockdowns ending), the following discussion points highlight advancements to the existing body of knowledge.

First, entrepreneurial marketing activities were identified as being drivers of firm performance. This supports a growing body of knowledge surrounding the performance outcomes of behaviours that are positioned in the cross-disciplinary entrepreneurial marketing domain (see, for example, Morris et al., 2002; Hills et al., 2008; Eggers et al., 2020). In other words, since entrepreneurial marketing activities encapsulate the intended positive facets of a market orientation and an entrepreneurial orientation (Jones & Rowley, 2011; Morgan et al., 2015; Hamzah et al., 2023), it stands to reason that if well managed, these inter-disciplinary firm-wide strategies should enhance firm performance in various contexts.

Second, competitive intensity did not significantly moderate the entrepreneurial marketing activities – firm performance relationship. This was somewhat surprising, because competitive intensity was anticipated to serve as an aspect of the environment that could unhinge the performance outcomes of firm-level activities (building upon Cadogan et al., 2003; Boso et al., 2012). That said, depending on how variables are modelled in studies, there is mixed evidence pertaining to the potential for environmental forces to influence the respective performance outcomes of a market orientation, an entrepreneurial orientation, and indeed, an entrepreneurial marketing orientation (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005; Rauch et al., 2009; Boso et al., 2012; Alqahtani et al., 2023). As an illustration, Slater and Narver (1994) found that the competitive business environment plays no major role in moderating the market orientation – firm performance relationship. Hence, it could be that a similar situation exists regarding entrepreneurial marketing

activities. Put another way (and consistent with the prior point), in a generic sense, effectively managed entrepreneurial marketing activities are likely to drive firms' performance regardless of how competitively intensive conditions are within a sector. It is now important to discuss contributions in more detail.

In the specific context under investigation, the typically pre-COVID-19 collaborative rather than competitively intensive nature of practices identified in earlier research and the field interviews are likely to have impacted the findings (following Dana et al., 2013; Reay et al., 2015; Granata et al., 2018; Crick & Crick, 2021). For example, the field interviews suggested that despite owner-managers increasing an online presence to enhance domestic and export sales during and after lockdowns, cluster-based wine tours had recommenced in an immediate post-COVID-19 period. However, post-COVID-19 practices differed whereby from one perspective, in their domestic market, co-dependence rather than co-destruction was still important among rivals. From an alternative perspective, despite the social capital that existed, those collaborative partners in domestic operations were not necessarily the best to form relationships with when scaling up export sales. There was a common perception that each entrepreneur had limited export experience and individuals were learning at the same time. As such, decision-makers quickly learned to pivot relationships with new complementary partners across markets to help overcome potential opportunistic dark-sides of entrepreneurial marketing practices.

To illustrate, where an overseas distributor may only buy a varietal like Chardonnay from a single producer in a cluster (hence, strong competitive intensity existing among local firms), it was preferable to team-up with rivals from other clusters to reduce opportunistic behaviour. Such new relationships were often supported via trade assistance, but building trust with complementary partners was perceived to take time. In fact, the field interviews offered examples of relationships

that did not work, resulting in entrepreneurs entering and exiting some new markets, while concentrating on those offering greater potential. To link with a prior point, the findings therefore suggest that following a major environmental shock, well managed entrepreneurial marketing behaviours that avoid dark-side (opportunistic) practices are advantageous, irrespective of the impact of competitive intensity faced within their sector (supplementing Morgan et al., 2015; Alqahtani et al., 2023).

Third, proceeding to the findings from the post-hoc test, stronger insights have emerged on the aspects of entrepreneurial marketing activities that are more likely to influence firm performance than others, but also, are susceptible to being influenced by competitive intensity. In other words, the post-hoc test provided more nuanced insights into the relationships under investigation, as opposed to considering relationships in a generic sense. This means that further evidence has been offered on the specific types of entrepreneurial marketing activities that are beneficial, vis-à-vis, harmful for decision-makers in the setting under investigation (extending Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; Hamzah et al., 2023). As such, this suggests that there are some elements of behaviour at the cross-disciplinary entrepreneurial marketing domain that are more likely to drive smaller-sized firms' performance than others when decision-makers pivot market strategies after a major crisis.

Fourth, this study was underpinned by the broader relational, stakeholder aspects of resource-based theory with an outside-in perspective; not least, by considering the role of competitive intensity as an environmental factor that might impact performance outcomes based on market-led conditions (building on Priem & Butler, 2001; Lavie, 2006; Day, 2014; Barney, 2018). For example, in the face of changed environmental conditions like from the pre- to post-COVID-19 period, new evidence suggests that owner-managers are likely to be well-served in

exhibiting strategic flexibility, agility, and an ability to improvise (following Priem & Butler, 2001; Hughes et al., 2020; Hagen et al., 2019; Christofi et al., 2021; Nyamrunda & Freeman, 2021; Zahoor & Lew, 2023). To illustrate, this appeared from the field interviews to involve decision-makers pivoting from a collaborative in-person focus to an individualistic online presence during COVID-19, then to varying degrees pivoting back to collaborative pre-pandemic activities in the immediate aftermath. As previously mentioned, the rationale for this reverted pivot strategy being to support co-dependence rather than co-destruction in clusters, yet the same collaborative relationships did not always work out positively when attempting to scale-up export activities. Entrepreneurs perceived that certain pivot strategies take time to exhibit desired outcomes and can follow iterations, like the previously illustrated entering and exiting of new markets. Consequently, this enhanced theoretical lens has been applied to unpack and therefore better understand the performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities; specifically, in an immediate post-COVID-19 environment.

Conclusions

First, following a major environmental shock typified by the immediate post-COVID-19 setting under investigation, it is concluded that for decision-makers of small, passive exporters seeking to scale-up export activities, by engaging in well-managed entrepreneurial marketing activities, this is likely to positively lead to performance-enhancing outcomes. Second, it is concluded that in a generic sense, competitive intensity is not likely to significantly, and negatively, impact the entrepreneurial marketing - performance relationship, assuming that activities are well-managed; especially, in sectors typified by a high degree of collaboration. Nevertheless, third, it is concluded that all rather than some of the facets of entrepreneurial marketing activities require effective management; not least, to avoid dark-side practices among partners in resource

leveraging behaviour. That is, some facets are more likely than others to be impacted by competitive intensity following an environmental shock given that respective rivals will probably pivot behaviour. As such, fourth, it is concluded that owner-managers need to exhibit strategic flexibility, agility, and an ability to improvise in respect of their entrepreneurial marketing activities to remain competitive. Not least, because certain performance outcomes may take time to be achieved following decision-makers pivoting market-led strategies.

Practitioner Implications

Alongside its theoretical contributions, the subsequent practitioner implications are offered in the context of an immediate post-COVID-19 research setting where previously passive exporters are seeking to scale-up sales abroad. First, owner-managers should behave innovatively, proactively, take calculated risks, as well as exhibit autonomous and competitively aggressive traits, while striving to create enduring value for their customers. That is, these activities are likely to help them to enhance firm performance. Second, competitive intensity may not play a major role in limiting the performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities, assuming they are managed effectively to counter environmental turbulence and potential dark-side (opportunistic) behaviour of rivals. This assumes that decision-makers engaged in entrepreneurial marketing activities are strategically flexible, agile, and can improvise, as some behaviour may take time to impact performance outcomes. To illustrate, they can pivot facets of their business models to help avoid them being overly concerned about sector-wide rivalry. Nevertheless, international entrepreneurs need to ensure a win/win scenario exists among partners with whom they collaborate. Indeed, decision-makers should not become too dependent on partners and need the ability to employ exit strategies if environmental conditions change.

Third, it is nonetheless important to unpack the two broad prior points that otherwise might be perceived as somewhat generic and self-evident by practitioners. There are some facets of entrepreneurial marketing activities that are more susceptible to intensely competitive markets (like calculated risk-taking and innovativeness). These are areas where decision-makers should exercise most caution because they could weaken the ability to increase their respective firms' performance. For example, what this means in practice is that owner-managers may need to consider engaging more with appropriate stakeholders like trade support providers or even enter new collaborative partnerships with complementary rivals for a win/win strategy across different product-markets targeted. To illustrate, this resource-leveraging, proactive behaviour, is likely to add value to customers, minimise risk, and support decision-makers' ability to effectively innovate. In short, these practitioner implications are designed to assist decision-makers of smaller-sized enterprises to elevate the performance prospects of employing entrepreneurial marketing activities in competitive environments when scaling-up export sales; that is, following an environmental shock.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

There are some limitations that can be addressed in future research. The empirical context was ideal for testing the elements of the conceptual framework. However, this was merely one sector and country in a specific temporal period; hence, future research is advised to examine these issues in different settings to ensure that the findings are transferrable. Additionally, for the core model testing stage, single-source and cross-sectional survey responses were utilised from the sampled firms in an immediate post-COVID-19 period. Nevertheless, certain insights arose from the field interviews that helped explain the core quantitative findings. Even so, it would be of interest to undertake future research with more in-depth multi-source data (and perhaps

incorporating longitudinal insights). In fact, subject to an ability to collect data, qualitative research involving case studies offer the opportunity to provide greater how/why explanations of relationships under investigation. Not least, it would be interesting to investigate temporal considerations as decision-makers move from an immediate to a more established post-COVID-19 period. Additionally, different theoretical lenses can be employed to underpin studies. Nevertheless, these considerations were not major concerns, but rather, potential issues that can yield future research insights.

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Chapter 3

Paper 2 - A Study of Entrepreneurial Marketing Activities and Firm Performance in an Immediate Post-COVID-19 Era: The Moderating Role of Coopetition

Abstract

Purpose – Although earlier research suggests a positive relationship exists between engaging in entrepreneurial marketing activities and firm performance, there may be contingent issues that impact that association. This investigation unpacks the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing behaviour and firm performance under the moderating role of coopetition, in an immediate post-COVID-19 period.

Design/methodology/approach – A resource-based theoretical lens, alongside an outside-in perspective, underpins this study. Following 20 field interviews, survey responses via an online survey were obtained from 306 small, passive exporting wine producers with a domestic market focus in the United States. The data passed all major robustness checks.

Findings – The statistical findings indicated that entrepreneurial marketing activities positively and significantly influenced firm performance, while competition provided a non-significant moderation effect. Field interviews suggested that entrepreneurs' move from passive to active export activities in an immediate post-pandemic period, helped explain the findings. Although owner-managers rejoined trustworthy and complementary pre-pandemic coopetition partners in the immediate aftermath of COVID-19 for domestic market activities, they had to minimise risks from dark-side/opportunistic behaviour when joining coopetition networks with partners to serve export markets.

Originality/value – Unique insights emerge to unpack the entrepreneurial marketing - performance relationship via the moderation effect of coopetition, namely, with the temporal setting of an immediate post-COVID-19 period. First, new support arises regarding the likely performance-enhancing impact of owner-managers' engaging in entrepreneurial marketing practices. Second, new evidence emerges in respect of the contrasting role of coopetition in both domestic and export market activities. Third, new findings arise in relation to an extended resource-based theoretical lens alongside an outside-in perspective, whereby, strategic flexibility in pivoting facets of a firm's business model needs effective management following a crisis.

Keywords: Coopetition; COVID-19; entrepreneurial marketing; passive exporters; outside-in perspective; resource-based theory.

Introduction

It is widely considered that employing entrepreneurial marketing activities (a combination of entrepreneurial and marketing-oriented practices) is likely to assist decision-makers to enhance performance outcomes (Hills et al., 2008; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; Eggers et al., 2020; Hamzah et al., 2023). More specifically, these cross-disciplinary activities include seven facets of behaviour, namely, proactiveness, opportunity focus, calculated risk taking, innovativeness, customer intensity, resource leveraging, and value creation (Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019). However, there are potential contingencies that affect the association between entrepreneurial marketing activities and a firm's performance, suggesting a need to unpack that relationship. For example, entrepreneurs might experience environmental shocks (Eggers, 2020; Morgan & Anokhin, 2020; Morrish & Jones, 2020); and/or, they may encounter competitive practices exhibiting dark side/opportunistic behaviour (Morgan et al., 2015; Crick & Crick, 2021). Moreover, from a

relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory together with an outside-in lens, some entrepreneurs may possess limited assets, and have difficulties being strategically flexible when responding to market-led conditions (Priem & Butler, 2001; Lavie, 2006; Day, 2014; Barney, 2018; Khan et al., 2023). Therefore, instead of employing an individualistic business model, they might need to build relationships with stakeholders utilising a collaborative business model, namely, to facilitate symbiotic performance-enhancing activities (Dana et al., 2008).

This investigation focuses on collaboration with competitors (“coopetition”) as a specific type of stakeholder group. Bengtsson and Kock (2014, p. 180) regard coopetition as “*a paradoxical relationship between two or more actors, regardless of whether they are involved in horizontal or vertical relationships, simultaneously in cooperative and competitive interactions*”. The outcomes of this behaviour can vary, but the rationale is to gain mutual benefits among partners, such as creating extra value to customers compared to an entrepreneur operating on their own (Bouncken et al., 2015; Gernsheimer et al., 2021; Crick et al., 2023; Meena et al., 2023). In fact, prior cluster-based wine sector research consistent with this investigation, but in a more stable pre COVID-19 environment, has found that entrepreneurs often engage in coopetition (Dana et al., 2013; Reay et al., 2015; Granata et al., 2018). To illustrate, activities include owner-managers’ businesses being part of wine tours where reciprocal referrals may occur among network partners, sharing knowledge and equipment, along with joint funding of promotional activities.

Consequently, the aim of this study is to unpack the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing behaviour and firm performance under the moderating role of coopetition in an immediate post-COVID-19 period (as per lockdowns ending).¹ In terms of the timeliness and

¹ Recognition exists that although lockdowns had finished and travel restrictions were lifted in relation to the sector/country context under investigation (suggesting an immediate post-COVID-19 period), longer-term, wider implications, such as economic and healthcare-related, are nonetheless likely (as per Foss, 2021).

importance of this study, during COVID-19, many entrepreneurs faced a major crisis, with various firms ending trading, and decision-makers of surviving businesses seeking to develop resilience (Eggers, 2020; Kraus et al., 2020; Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021a; Bressan et al., 2021; Arslan et al., 2022; Waehning et al., 2023). Preparation for a post-pandemic period occurred in different ways, including via respective owner-managers receiving government assistance and/or them pivoting facets of their business models (Lund Peterson & Ritter, 2020; Behl et al., 2023; Kabir & Abubakar, 2023; Klöckner et al., 2023). For example, during lockdowns, certain firms' business models pivoted from in-person to online sales, sometimes referred to as a digital acceleration (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021b; Gavrila Gavrila & De Lucas Ancillo, 2022; Giotopoulos et al., 2022; Felzensztein & Tretiakov, 2023; Higuera-Castillo et al., 2023).

Yet, in a contemporary, immediate post-COVID-19 environment typified by the term “the new normal” or similar (Lim, 2023), it remains unclear if owner-managers' entrepreneurial marketing practices are still performance enhancing. Additionally, if cluster-based practices have returned to utilising pre-pandemic collaborative business models via cooperation as a mechanism to facilitate such behaviour; also, whether the magnitude of activities have changed. Such considerations are especially pertinent, since although this study features the entrepreneurial marketing and cooperation practices of cluster-based wine producers in the United States who exhibited a domestic focused business model, they were also engaged in export activities. Given the potential changes in institutional and competitive conditions, alongside the time, costs, risks etc., involved with internationalising (Liesch et al., 2011; Kahiya, 2018; Magnani & Zucchella, 2019; Haddoud et al., 2021), this study also addressed behaviour in respect of entrepreneurs' different targeted markets.

In building upon prior research, three contributions arise from this investigation in the context of an immediate post-COVID-19 environment. First, new support arises from both the core quantitative survey and the field interviews regarding the likely performance-enhancing impact of owner-managers' engaging in entrepreneurial marketing practices (extending Hills et al., 2008; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; Eggers et al., 2020); that is, even following an extreme environmental crisis.

Second, unique insights outline a surprising finding regarding the role of cooperation, namely, a negative non-significant moderation effect. The field interviews suggested that following COVID-19, decision-makers returned to focus on in-person domestic wine tourism activities via existing well-managed cluster-based cooperation partners (building on Dana et al., 2013; Reay et al., 2015; Granata et al., 2018). In contrast, regarding efforts to also build exports, certain problems arose when entering new markets via ineffective new cooperation partnerships. As such, novel findings emerge regarding the potential dark side of entrepreneurial marketing practices (extending Morgan et al., 2015; Crick & Crick, 2021).

Third, new light emerges in relation to this study's underpinning lenses regarding the wider aspects of resource-based theory, in tandem with an outside-in perspective (building on Lavie, 2006; Day, 2014; Barney, 2018; Khan et al., 2023). That is, following a major environmental crisis typified by the investigation's temporal focus on an immediate post-COVID-19 period, the field interviews highlighted that strategic flexibility (as per Priem & Butler, 2001) in pivoting facets of a business model needs effective management. Under-resourced entrepreneurs may rush to pursue new opportunities with ineffective partners, and therefore exit strategies are needed to enable them to re-pivot facets of their business models.

Theoretical Framework, Including Hypotheses

An Extended Resource-Based Theoretical Lens and an Outside-in Perspective

The seminal inside-the-firm perspective of resource-based theory (Barney, 1991) has been extended over time. However, a core principle of this lens is still nonetheless pertinent in this study under investigation, namely, the association between an organisation's assets (resources and capabilities) and performance outcomes. For clarity, resources feature tangible assets, such as funds, and capabilities involve intangible assets, including experience (Morgan et al., 2009). Yet, this investigation moves from an inside-the-firm perspective and takes an extended resource-based theoretical lens, that includes both an appreciation of environmental issues and relationships with stakeholders (Priem & Butler, 2001; Lavie, 2006; Barney, 2018). It also draws on what has been termed an "outside-in" perspective (Day, 2014), taking account of market-led issues. As such, aspects of both an inside-out and outside-in perspective are deemed important to underpin this study (following Khan et al., 2023).

The rationale for taking this extended theoretical perspective involves first, the contextual focus on firms engaged in coopetition indicates that certain decision-makers have relationships with stakeholders to overcome their own limited assets (as per Lavie, 2006; Barney, 2018). Second, the temporal focus of an immediate post-COVID-19 environment suggests there is a likelihood that owner-managers of surviving firms have exhibited a degree of strategic flexibility in response to volatile conditions (consistent with Priem & Butler, 2001). The third features a related theme to the second consideration, namely, in relation to the market-led, outside-in conditions of an immediate post-COVID-19 period. Specifically, such conditions may have influenced owner-

managers to reconsider which product-markets to target and the extent to which they try to de-rail as opposed to collaborate with their pre-pandemic partners (following Day, 2014).²

Conceptual Framework

Figure 3-1 outlines the conceptual model under investigation, incorporating two research hypotheses; also, control paths that might impact the outcome variable. The hypotheses involved first, an expectation that entrepreneurial marketing activities would positively facilitate performance outcomes (following Boso et al., 2013; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; Alqahtani & Usay, 2020; Eggers et al., 2020; Hamzah et al., 2023). Second, an expected positive moderation effect of competition regarding the entrepreneurial marketing activities - firm performance relationship (consistent with Bouncken & Fredrich, 2012; Ritala, 2012; Bouncken et al., 2018; Kraus et al., 2019; Czakon et al., 2020). Finally, third, firm performance as the outcome variable was controlled for various issues that might explain its variance, alongside a procedural control. Nevertheless, consideration of the controls follows in the “Operationalisations” sub-section of the Methodology to avoid repetition and to minimise distraction from the core hypothesised relationships that are now considered.

Hypotheses

Various studies exist to conceptualise entrepreneurial marketing behaviour (Hills & LaForge, 1992; Morris et al., 2002; Thomas et al., 2013; Morrish et al., 2020; Sun & Lee 2023). It is widely recognised that such behaviour features the benefits of engaging in market oriented and entrepreneurially oriented activities (Hansen & Eggers, 2010; Jones & Rowley, 2011; Whalen et

² Decision makers in this study indicated being active in attempting to target export markets within an immediate post-pandemic period, despite traditionally focusing on their domestic market and possessing a low export ratio. This is pertinent because various motives and problems may exist when entrepreneurs internationalise (Crick et al., 1998; Kahiya, 2018; 2020). Therefore, different stakeholders other than rivals can assist entrepreneurs in particular ways across varying product-market strategies, such as trade associations, government policy advisors, etc. (Crick, 1992; Haddoud et al., 2017; Brache & Felzensztein, 2019; Kariv et al., 2023).

al., 2016; Hansen et al., 2020). Prior studies indicate that by engaging in entrepreneurial marketing behaviour, this is likely to assist decision-makers to facilitate performance outcomes across various organisational-level contexts. For example, among different sizes of firms, those involved with service/product and domestic/international markets; also, with contrasting objectives including for-profit versus socially oriented (Miles & Darroch, 2006; Jones et al., 2013; Roundy, 2017; Crick et al., 2020).

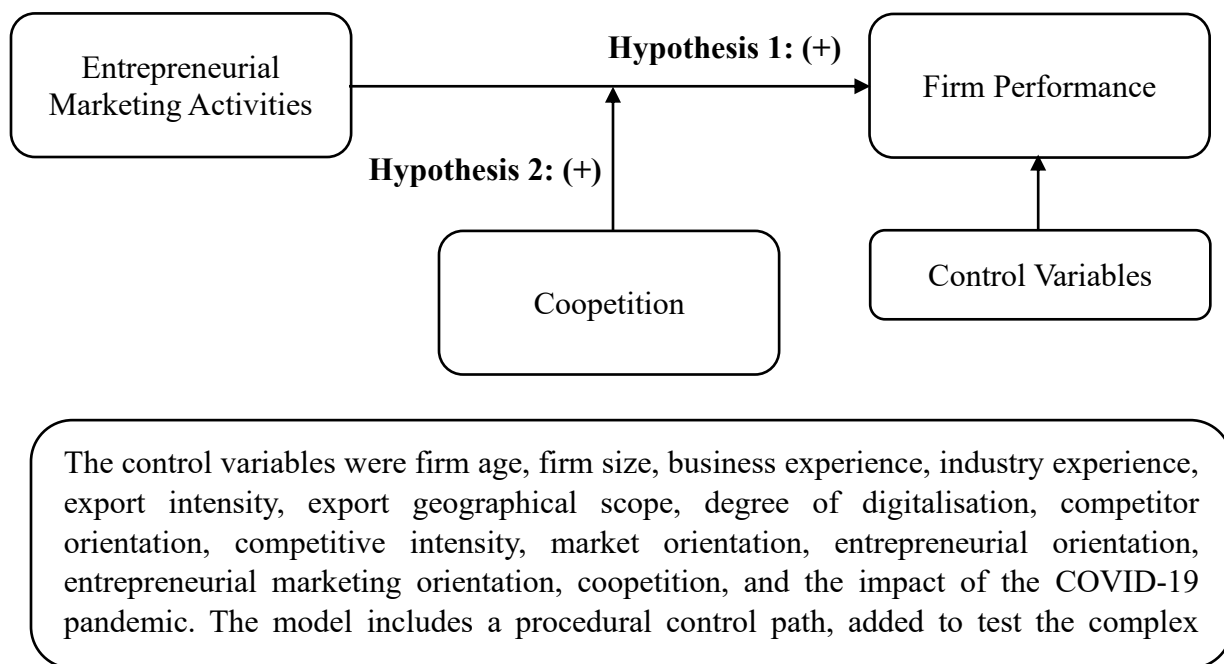


Figure 3-1

Conceptual Framework

Turning to the component parts of entrepreneurial marketing behaviour, although there are different measurements, first, a market orientation essentially involves the organisation-wide adoption/implementation of the marketing concept (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Kohli et al., 1993; Slater & Narver, 1994). Second, in broad terms, an entrepreneurial orientation features mechanisms by which decision-makers identify and exploit opportunities (Boso et al., 2012;

Eggers et al., 2013; Karami & Tang, 2019). It follows that entrepreneurs are likely to enhance performance if they undertake firm-level behaviour exhibiting proactiveness, an opportunity focus, calculated risk taking, innovativeness, a customer intensity, be resource leveraging, and create value (Morrish et al., 2010; Hills & Hultman, 2011; Morrish, 2011; Miles et al., 2014; Alqahtani et al., 2023). Therefore, it is anticipated that:

Hypothesis 1: Entrepreneurial marketing activities have a linear (positive) relationship with firm performance.

Although the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing behaviour and firm performance is well established, there may be contingencies that affect the association. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 does not provide the core contribution of this study and rather Hypothesis 2 that is now discussed. Specifically, in terms of resource leveraging behaviour as one facet of entrepreneurial marketing activities, it follows from a wider perspective of resource-based theory and an outside-in perspective, that certain under-resourced entrepreneurs may need to address market-led conditions and build relationships with stakeholders (Lavie, 2006; Barney, 2018; Khan et al., 2023).

For clarity, and as previously mentioned, stakeholders can vary in nature, but this investigation focuses on the role of rivals via coopetition. In fact, prior research suggests that a mutual benefit(s) should arise among partners in respective coopetition networks (Dorn et al., 2016; Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018; Bouncken et al., 2020; Crick et al., 2023). Turning to the links with facilitating other facets of entrepreneurial marketing activities, possible benefits from this resource leveraging behaviour vary. They include, providing an ability to proactively pursue opportunities, creating value for customers, facilitating innovation, and minimising risks associated with employing an individual as opposed to a collaborative business model. To

illustrate, prior studies demonstrate practices in the wine sector (Dana et al., 2013; Reay et al., 2015; Granata et al., 2018). Evidence suggests that entrepreneurial marketing activities include network partners participating in wine tours and offering value-adding cross referrals to customers. Behaviour extends to collaborative activities to share expenses in pursuing opportunities in new markets. Another example includes shared wine tasting among partners to maintain the reputation of a region. Relationships in clusters that include, but are not restricted to wine producers, are often built on degrees of social capital. Indeed, certain decision-makers often know each other based on geographic proximity and have developed informal “psychological contracts” (Felzensztein et al., 2010; 2018; Geldes et al., 2015; Crick & Crick, 2021). Nevertheless, that is not to suggest decision-makers restrict activities to cluster-based relationships, because some have diversified business models that include international sales (Felzensztein et al., 2014; 2019; Crick & Crick, 2022).

The nature of business models is relevant since much of the earlier studies on cooptation feature activities in somewhat stable conditions. The term “somewhat stable” is pertinent, given that in any cooptation relationship, decision-makers need to balance the seemingly paradoxical nature of collaborating with competitors (Bengtsson & Kock, 2014). This suggested paradox has led to terms such as “walking the tightrope” (Park et al., 2014), and “the double-edged sword” of cooptation (Bouncken & Kraus, 2013). However, recognition exists that well-managed cooptation is likely to result from owner-managers building relationships with trustworthy and complementary partners (Raza-Ullah et al., 2014; Tidström, 2014; Czakon & Czernek, 2016). Yet, building such relationships is perhaps easier in seemingly stable cluster-based networks where mutual benefits arise. These benefits may feature the enhancement of performance for individual firms, maintaining employment of family members (where applicable), and sustaining respective

firms' clusters (as per Reay et al., 2015). Consequently, it is rationale for rivals to engage in a degree of co-dependent rather than co-destructive behaviour.

In contrast, decision-makers selling outside of their cluster may not experience the same environmental conditions, where strategic flexibility may be important (as per Priem & Butler, 2001). For example, they may face different degrees of competitive intensity, referring to the degree of rivalry within a particular market (following Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Cadogan et al., 2003). An outside-in, market-led consideration (as per Day, 2014), is whether decision-makers should attempt to de-rail rivals. That may not be viable if owner-managers are under-resourced and are likely to gain mutual benefits by collaborating with competitors. Consequently, owner-managers may need to enter new cooperation partnerships like when a distributor will only take a single varietal from a cluster (Crick & Crick, 2022). In effect, entrepreneurs need to decide when to cooperate as opposed to attack rivals; that is, because risk/reward issues exist, given not all competitors are the same (Cui et al., 2018; Chiambaretto et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2020). To support decision-making regarding the choice of partners and the magnitude of involvement, it follows that entrepreneurs knowing about and acting on the strengths and weaknesses of rivals (a competitor-orientation as per Narver & Slater, 1990) may be useful.

Returning to the temporal consideration mentioned earlier, evidence suggests that during lockdowns associated with COVID-19, various decision-makers pivoted from in-person to online sales, in a manner sometimes referred to as a digital acceleration (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021b; Felzensztein & Tretiakov, 2023; Higuera-Castillo et al., 2023). Yet, in an immediate post-pandemic period, the extent to which entrepreneurs returned to working with prior cooperation partners or formed new ones across product-markets to address the challenges remains under-researched. Limited evidence is nonetheless starting to emerge in other contexts, such as Crick et

al. (2023) in the hospitality sector. Given that this study features firms that primarily targeted their domestic markets, despite an involvement in exporting, on balance, the preceding considerations suggest a potential return to certain pre-pandemic coopetition activities. The rationale is that some under-resourced owner-managers were likely to return to participating in wine tours, sharing knowledge and equipment, and so on (as per Dana et al., 2013; Reay et al., 2015; Granata et al., 2018). More specifically, coopetition provides a mechanism to enhance performance for individual firms, maintain family employment (where applicable), and sustain their cluster; that is, based on co-dependence rather than co-destruction (following Reay et al., 2015). Consequently, although the magnitude of immediate post vis-à-vis pre COVID-19 activities is under-researched, it follows that:

Hypothesis 2: Coopetition positively moderates the linear (positive) relationship between entrepreneurial marketing activities and firm performance.

Methods

Empirical Context and Data Collection

Earlier research has viewed the wine sector in different countries as a suitable context to examine facets of entrepreneurial marketing and/or coopetition behaviour (Dana et al., 2013; Felzensztein et al., 2014; Reay et al., 2015; Granata et al., 2018; Crick & Crick, 2021). In this study, the United States wine sector was chosen as the research setting to test the hypothesised relationships within the conceptual framework (Figure 3-1). In terms of timeframe, an immediate post-COVID-19 period was perceived to exist in 2022 whereby lockdowns had ended in the sector under investigation; also, travel was relatively available for owner-managers in addition to tourists. Following receipt of ethics approval, 20 field interviews occurred in late 2022, while the core online survey to allow model testing took place in early 2023. A purchased database (Wines Vines

Analytics, 2022) served as the sampling frame, and this featured names and contact details of vineyards across the United States.

In terms of the rationale for initially undertaking 20 field interviews across three States (each lasting about one hour), this was two-fold. Namely, to align issues under investigation to the research setting, and to shape measurement scales in the subsequent core survey (following Katsikeas et al., 2006). By utilising Qualtrics, an online survey was designed where operationalisations were fundamentally drawn from existing literature but amended to correspond with data collected from the field interviews. Subsequently, pre-testing of the survey took place with 3 academics and 6 practitioners to check the clarity of questions, that the length/completion time minimised the risk of respondent fatigue, plus it utilised appropriate scales. No obvious concerns were raised at the pre-testing stage, so implementation of a pilot study followed via a relatively small sample ($n = 20$). No concerns were experienced regarding the distributions and descriptive statistics of the measurements (following Crick & Crick, 2021). Therefore, the substantive survey followed, resulting in a final sample of 306 wine producers from across the United States (that was considered an acceptable response rate). Non-response bias was not perceived of concern, since non-significant t -values were found between the early and late responses (consistent with Boso et al., 2013).

Operationalisations

In respect of the conceptual framework, measurement of the constructs took place as follows. First, operationalisation of entrepreneurial marketing activities involved a multi-dimensional latent variable (adapted from Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019). It encompassed proactiveness, opportunity focus, resource leveraging, innovativeness, calculated risk-taking, customer intensity, and value creation. The facets of entrepreneurial marketing (via multiple items)

were captured using seven-point interval scales, that ranged from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree. Second, competition was measured via a multi-item seven-point interval scale (adapted from Bouncken et al., 2018), that ranged from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree. Third, firm performance featured a multi-item seven-point interval scale (as per Morgan et al., 2009). This ranged from: 1 = much worse than competitors to 7 = much better than competitors.

Fourth, in respect of the control variables, measurement of firm age involved the number of years after establishment (Vorhies et al., 2011). Firm size was via the number of full-time employees (Morgan et al., 2009). Business experience was measured by the number of years that the respondent had worked in their current firm (Boso et al., 2013). The measure for industry experience used the number of years the respondents had worked in the global wine sector (Crick & Crick, 2021). Capturing export intensity featured the percentage of sales in export markets, and export geographical scope involved the number of export markets shipped to (Cadogan et al., 2009). The firm's degree of digitalisation was measured by the percentage of the business model being digitalised (Niemand et al., 2021). Possessing a competitor orientation was captured on a multi-item interval scale, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (Narver & Slater, 1990; Hult et al., 2005). Competitive intensity was assessed via a seven-point interval scale, with multiple items, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (adapted from Cadogan et al., 2003). A firm's market orientation featured a multi-item interval scale, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (Deshpande & Farley, 1998; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019). The assessment of an entrepreneurial orientation was via a multi-item interval scale, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (Miller, 1983; Li et al., 2009; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019). An entrepreneurial marketing orientation

was calculated by the multiplication effect of a market orientation and an entrepreneurial orientation (Morgan et al., 2015). This also served as a procedural control via the relationship with coopetition, due to the complexity of the model. Measurement of coopetition featured as a control for model purposes and as already mentioned, featured a multi-item interval scale, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (Bouncken et al., 2018). A measurement of the impact on performance resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic was via a sliding ratio scale ranging from: -100 to 100 (Mensah et al., 2022).

Additionally, fifth, an instrumental variable was included. That is, the informant quality tool that was used to assess face validity and common method variance. A multi-item interval scale was employed, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (adapted from Katsikeas et al., 2006; Boso et al., 2013). The implementation of the instrumental variable is considered in the “Robustness Checks” sub-section.

Survey Data Analysis

Various procedures took place to analyse the survey data, starting first, with an examination via SPSS 28 of the characteristics of the final sample. Table 3-1 suggests a variety of wine producers featured in the survey in terms of age, size, etc.; not least, being located across the country. Specifically, they ranged from locations in major wine producing states like California, through to less famous regions like Arizona.

Second, the researchers then “ran” an exploratory factor analysis model via a principal components analysis extraction and a varimax rotation using SPSS 28 (following Crick & Crick, 2021). The multi-item constructs loaded onto distinct factors suggesting no major problems existed; also, the respective Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin tests of sampling adequacy and Bartlett’s tests of sphericity were deemed satisfactory. Subsequently, third, assessment took place via LISREL 12 of

all operationalisations through a confirmatory factor analysis (Cadogan et al., 2009). The purified constructs exhibited relatively high standardised factor loadings and somewhat low standardised error variances that were significant (*t*-values). Furthermore, the final model fit indices met the minimum thresholds (as per Table 3-2). Then, fourth, aspects of the conceptual framework were tested through SPSS 28 using an ordinary least squares regression analysis (Katsikeas et al., 2006). “Residual-centering” was employed to help alleviate any multi-collinearity issues (Crick & Crick, 2021). Recording followed of the unstandardised regression coefficients (β), the *t*-values, and *p*-values; also, the model fit summary was produced.

Table 3-0-1

Firms’ Characteristics

Profiling information	Mean	Standard deviation
Age (years)	106.55	17.45
Full-time employees	5.43	13.98
Part-time employees	6.54	11.32
Business experience (years)	13.41	10.67
Industry experience (years)	16.21	11.20
Export intensity (percentage)	2.18	10.21
Number of export markets	1.52	2.83
Degree of digitalisation (%)	30.62	25.71
COVID-19 pandemic (impact)	-1.62	49.71
Businesses were involved with at least ad-hoc exports, despite a focus on the domestic market.		

Table 3-0-2

Final Model Fit Indices

χ^2/df	Sig.	RMSEA	CFI	IFI	NNFI
2.13	0.00	0.06	0.96	0.96	0.94

Robustness Checks

Utilising SPSS 28, the Cronbach’s alpha coefficients (α) of the multi-item operationalisations suggested acceptable reliability scores were obtained, given they exceeded

0.70 (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). Undertaking pre-testing of the survey with academics and practitioners alongside incorporating the informant quality scale (following Katsikeas et al., 2006; Boso et al., 2013), helped evidence that potential face validity concerns were overcome. The use of established operationalisations for the constructs under investigation, suggested content validity was adequately addressed (Cadogan et al., 2009). Since the final measures (multi-item scales) exhibited composite reliabilities above 0.60 and average variance extracted values larger than 0.50, this was an indication that convergent validity existed (Hamzah et al., 2023). Using LISREL 12, a test for discriminant validity was undertaken via squaring the phi matrix correlations, then making comparisons against the average variance extracted values. Discriminant validity was likely to exist because the largest squared phi matrix correlation was lower than the smallest average variance extracted value (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 3-3 outlines the final multi-item measures' reliability scores.

Table 3-0-3

The Reliabilities of the Purified Multi-item Measurement Scales

Purified multi-item measurement scales	Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α)	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Coopetition	0.76	0.76	0.52
Competitor orientation	0.88	0.88	0.71
Competitive intensity	0.86	0.86	0.61
Firm performance	0.93	0.93	0.77
Market orientation	0.87	0.88	0.70
Entrepreneurial orientation	0.95	0.97	0.75
Informant quality	0.88	0.91	0.78
Since the reliabilities for the single indicators could not be processed; also, the scores for the multi-item scales were above the minimum thresholds, the single-item scales were considered as reliable. The multi-item measures retained at least two indicators.			

Both procedural and statistical approaches/remedies were undertaken to address common method variance. Following Podsakoff et al. (2003), care in the design of the survey led to this

being short and user-friendly as a procedural remedy. In respect of a statistical test, the marker variable technique was utilised through SPSS 28. That is, bivariate, and partial correlation matrices were produced, whereby, control took place within the partial correlation matrix for the “informant quality tool”, serving as the marker variable. After differences were calculated and averaged, the score was small ($r = 0.00$); hence, the statistical data were unlikely to be affected by a common method factor (as per Lindell & Whitney, 2001).

Results

In respect of the model tested in Figure 3-1, the ordinary least squares regression model is shown in Table 3-4. First, entrepreneurial marketing activities exhibited a linear (positive) and significant relationship with firm performance; hence, offering support for Hypothesis 1. Second, competition negatively, but non-significantly, moderated this relationship, offering no support for Hypothesis 2. Furthermore, the control variables alongside the procedural factors helped explain the variance of firm performance; whereby, the adjusted R^2 was 0.24. The significant value for the impact of COVID-19 was especially notable. To unpack the core statistical results, the findings from the field interviews were revisited to offer tentative explanations for the somewhat surprising result of Hypothesis 2, but also, to link with the support for Hypothesis 1.

In helping to explain the core model testing stage, the seven facets of entrepreneurial marketing behaviour were perceived as important in different ways during the field interviews. As a reminder, these facets of entrepreneurial marketing behaviour were: proactiveness, opportunity focus, calculated risk taking, innovativeness, customer intensity, resource leveraging, and value creation. That is not to say that practitioners’ discourse aligned exactly with academic terminology; instead, the researchers and interviewees arrived at a shared understanding and discussed contextual examples of the performance-enhancing nature of entrepreneurial marketing activities.

Overall, the common underlying consideration was for entrepreneurs to move from a survival to growth-oriented goal; hence, there was a need to pivot aspects of their business models in the immediate post-COVID-19 period. The net result involved all owner-managers seeking to move from a passive to active export involvement via implementing aspects of entrepreneurial marketing behaviour.

Although from one perspective, this pivoting behaviour towards more active exports may be viewed as “proactive” in an immediate post-pandemic period, in another sense, it could be argued that this behaviour was “reactive” following COVID-19. Put another way, decision-makers may not have pivoted unless the pandemic took place. Nevertheless, since owner-managers had started to actively pursue growth via exports as opposed to their prior concentration on their domestic market, this offered support that the behaviour was fundamentally proactive in nature, alongside being opportunity focused. However, decision-makers appreciated that increasing exports would take time and be costly. In doing so, they needed to take calculated risks, and be selective in the innovative manner that pivots in facets of their business models occurred to add value to different customers.

Consequently, there was recognition that owner-managers would struggle to effectively facilitate growth through proactively pursuing export opportunities based on their own resources/capabilities, and so they needed to leverage these via cooperation. It was apparent that for domestic, cluster-based cooperation practices, entrepreneurs had returned to collaborating with their pre-COVID-19 partners. Although the term was not used in practitioner discourse, “psychological contracts” existed among certain owner-managers based on informal relationships, manifesting in various ways like lending equipment and sharing knowledge. Importantly, rivals returned to resource leveraging behaviour via wine tours to add value to customers in ways that

were difficult if they operated individualistically. Depending on respective firms' business models (like producing one varietal or multiple varietals of wine, having accommodation, a café/restaurant, and so on), reciprocal recommendations occurred based on complementary and trusting relationships, since a degree of social capital existed.

Table 3-0-4

Ordinary Least Squares Regression Model

Main control variables	β	<i>t</i>-values
Firm age	0.00	0.42
Firm size	0.00	0.36
Business experience	-0.01	-0.36
Industry experience	-0.01	-0.67
Export intensity	-0.01	-0.09
Export scope	0.01	0.33
Digitalisation	0.00	0.74
Competitor orientation	0.08	1.47
Competitive intensity	-0.07	-1.50
Market orientation	0.07	1.51
Entrepreneurial orientation	0.11	1.70 [†]
Entrepreneurial marketing orientation	0.02	0.64
Coopetition	0.24	0.87
Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	0.00	2.83*
Procedural control variable	β	<i>t</i>-values
Entrepreneurial marketing orientation x coopetition	-0.02	-0.98
Hypothesised relationships	β	<i>t</i>-values
Entrepreneurial marketing activities (Hypothesis 1)	0.33	2.23*
Entrepreneurial marketing activities x coopetition (Hypothesis 2)	-0.06	-1.04
Model fit summary		
R^2	0.28	
Adjusted R^2	0.24	
<i>F</i> -statistic	6.52**	
[†] $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed tests). The critical <i>t</i> -value was 1.65 (5%, one-sided).		

However, in revisiting the data from the field interviews following the core statistical analysis, the magnitude of owner-managers' immediate post-COVID-19 experiences in attempting to become more active in export markets helped to explain Hypothesis 2 being unsupported. That

is, certain entrepreneurial marketing activities were being undertaken as previously described. However, the resulting impact of resource leveraging via coopetition was different in the export markets that were being pursued in comparison to their substantive domestic market focus. To illustrate, local network partners from wine tours had limited experience in export markets, so collaborating with these in markets abroad would mean all were learning about market-led issues at the same time. In effect, a value-added offering could be made to customers like distributors overseas, by various wine producers being proactive and opportunity focused via their coopetition activities. For example, finding innovative ways to gain greater interest in joint activities vis-a-vis if they tried to export on their own, and advantages extended to reducing costs via certain shared expenses. Yet, the owner-managers also explained calculated risk-taking because opportunistic practices might out-weigh positive features of the resource leveraging activities taking place through coopetition. That is, in situations where a distributor would take one varietal like chardonnay from a cluster, it made sense to try to build complementary relationships with new partners outside of their cluster. This helped entrepreneurs to minimise experiencing dark-side/opportunistic practices, or only engage with local cluster-based partners selling different varietals. A discussion of the results follows in the next section.

Discussion

In building on prior research, the contributions arising from this investigation involved testing two hypotheses via responses to a survey; also, additional insights emerged from entrepreneurs' reflections during field interviews. The aim of this study was to unpack the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing behaviour and firm performance under the moderating role of coopetition in an immediate post-COVID-19 period (as per lockdowns ending). The underpinning theoretical lenses featured a relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-

based theory, alongside an outside-in viewpoint (Lavie, 2006; Barney, 2018; Day, 2014; Khan et al., 2023). Several discussion points extend knowledge from prior cross-disciplinary studies at the entrepreneurship/marketing interface.

First, although the findings suggest that engaging in entrepreneurial marketing activities is likely to enhance firm performance, this is already a widely supported notion (as per Morris et al., 2002; Hills et al., 2008; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; Eggers et al., 2020; Hamzah et al., 2023). Therefore, the finding of Hypothesis 1 was not the core contribution of this investigation. However, for model testing purposes, the relationship was important to unpack in respect of the moderating effect of coopetition (as per Hypothesis 2 discussed shortly). Furthermore, the temporal contribution of the focus on an immediate post-COVID-19 environment may have impacted that relationship. Specifically, existing studies related to crisis recovery situations (such as Morrish & Jones, 2020 following a natural disaster), might not extend to entrepreneurial marketing practices in the aftermath of the extreme circumstances of the pandemic. That is, while not wanting to downplay the extent of certain prior crises such as natural disasters through to economic recessions, arguably, COVID-19 may be perceived as a more significant crisis given the magnitude of the impact on many entrepreneurs and their businesses (Eggers, 2020; Kraus et al., 2020; Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021a; Bressan et al., 2021; Arslan et al., 2022). This study's new insights to support Hypothesis 1 were consequently timely and important. Specifically, suggesting employing well-managed entrepreneurial marketing practices, being a combination of a market orientation and an entrepreneurial orientation, is likely to enhance firm-level performance, even following extreme environmental circumstances.

Second, as alluded to above, new findings arise to unpack the well-established entrepreneurial marketing activities – performance relationship, namely, in respect of the

moderating role of coopetition. Although no support existed for Hypothesis 2 regarding the survey data, unique insights nonetheless emerged from the field interviews to build on prior studies and contribute to knowledge. In terms of resource leveraging behaviour as a facet of wider entrepreneurial marketing practices, earlier research demonstrates the likelihood that under-resourced entrepreneurs can gain symbiotic advantages via engaging in well-managed coopetition activities (Bouncken et al., 2015; Gernsheimer et al., 2021; Crick et al., 2023; Meena et al., 2023). Consequently, in an immediate post-COVID-19 environment, the unsupported Hypothesis 2 can be somewhat explained by entrepreneurs' attempts to pivot business models, namely, to move from a passive to more active export involvement.

Two important and timely issues arise from the field interviews to build on prior research. That is, involving entrepreneurs returning to work with prior coopetition partners in their domestic market, but engaging with different ones in their attempt to expand export activities. Taking each of these points individually, first, entrepreneurs' focus on in-person, domestic wine tourism activities, via existing well-managed coopetition partners, supports a body of existing literature (building on Dana et al., 2013; Reay et al., 2015; Granata et al., 2018). The findings suggested it made sense to collaborate with partners where trust and complementarity exists, facilitating reciprocal recommendations, lending equipment, pooling funds, participating in shared tastings, and so on. In short, consistent with Reay et al. (2015), this helped the performance of individual firms, maintained family employment (where applicable), and helped sustain their respective cluster via co-dependency rather than co-destruction.

Second, turning to owner-managers' efforts to enhance exports, the field interviews suggested this was where potential problems arose; hence, explaining why coopetition did not exhibit the expected positive moderation effect. In certain cases, coopetition activities were not

well-managed. Specifically, problems were experienced by some entrepreneurs when attempting to enter export markets, since newly established and ineffective cooperation relationships existed. It follows that new cooperation arrangements based on trust and complementarity, that are customer centric and add value, may take time to become effective. To illustrate, it may be time consuming to build “psychological contracts” via social capital (following Crick & Crick, 2021) across markets where different institutional conditions exist, and not least, where decision-makers encounter new degrees of competitive rivalry. Indeed, consistent with some prior studies, entrepreneurs need to decide when to collaborate rather than attack rivals, since risk/reward considerations exist, and not all competitors are the same (Cui et al., 2018; Chiambaretto et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2020). Unique insights therefore emerge in respect of the potential dark side of ineffectively managed cooperation activities as part of owner-managers’ wider entrepreneurial marketing practices following a crisis (building on Morgan et al., 2015; Crick & Crick, 2021).

Third, new insights also emerge regarding this investigation’s theoretical underpinning; namely, the wider aspects of resource-based theory, alongside an outside-in lens (building on Lavie, 2006; Day, 2014; Barney, 2018; Khan et al., 2023). In doing so, the prior considerations suggest that entrepreneurs need to account for market-led environmental conditions and remain strategically flexible in their ability to pivot behaviour (as per Priem & Butler, 2001). Following a major environmental shock typified by COVID-19, it is important that owner-managers consider when to engage in relationships with rivals as stakeholders rather than attempt to “de-rail” them (following Day, 2014), namely, as a firm-level performance-enhancing strategy. The findings suggest that the decisions regarding with whom to form partnerships and the magnitude of involvement will differ between decision-makers, based on respective domestic and export market activities.

Conclusions, Practitioner Implications and Further Research

Conclusions

In the context of the immediate post-COVID-19 setting of this study, first, it is concluded that under-resourced entrepreneurs who undertake effectively managed entrepreneurial marketing activities are typically likely to benefit from enhanced performance outcomes. Second, it is concluded that in a broad sense, participating in inter-firm collaborative activities with rivals will not necessarily have a significant impact on the entrepreneurial marketing - performance relationship. Nevertheless, a positive relationship is more likely in circumstances when entrepreneurs have well-established cooptation arrangements, where trust, complementarity, and a degree of co-dependency exist. This contrasts with circumstances where new cooptation arrangements are formed and especially if competitive intensity is relatively high. Third, building on the prior issues, it is therefore also concluded that exhibiting strategic flexibility will likely assist entrepreneurial marketing and cooptation activities and lead to performance-enhancing outcomes.

Practitioner Implications

In the temporal context following an environmental shock (namely, an immediate post-pandemic setting), the preceding conclusions lead to following corresponding practitioner implications. In summary, first, if decision-makers effectively employ entrepreneurial marketing behaviour, this should lead to performance-enhancing outcomes. Specifically, facets of behaviour include - proactiveness, opportunity focus, calculated risk taking, innovativeness, customer intensity, resource leveraging, and value creation. Nevertheless, second, effectively implementing entrepreneurial marketing practices may be difficult if owner-managers are under-resourced. In such circumstances, resource leveraging activities via a collaborative as opposed to an

individualistic business model may prove beneficial. Third, decision-makers may need to pivot aspects of their entrepreneurial marketing behaviour, and not least, when they engage in different product-market strategies.

What these three implications mean in practice is that owner-managers are advised to build psychological contracts via social capital with trustworthy and complementary partners. However, the nature of these partnerships is likely to differ as opportunities are identified and exploited (or those opportunities are ignored). Put another way, a “one size fits all” generic approach is unlikely to prove beneficial in all network relationships. For example, in domestic, cluster-based networks, there may be reciprocal recommendations where a degree of co-dependency exists, or at least this is preferable to engaging in co-destructive behaviour. To illustrate in the context of the wine sector under investigation, respective producers may sell different varietals, and some may have diversified business models that include accommodation, a café/restaurant, and so on. It stands to reason that under such conditions, forming complementary relationships with trustworthy partners makes sense to facilitate win/win situations. Yet, the same operating conditions may not extend to export markets where different coopetition networks may be formed, and this may take time and effort. That is, entrepreneurs are likely to face varying degrees of competitive intensity alongside wider institutional conditions vis-à-vis their domestic market. It follows that entrepreneurs should have exit strategies if relationships do not work out, or at the very least, be prepared to work with different partners across their respective target markets; that is, to minimise facing dark-side/opportunistic behaviour.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

Certain limitations existed in this study that future research can address. Despite the research setting being suitable for testing the core relationships under investigation, it nonetheless

featured one sector and country. It also involved a specific timescale, largely via single-source and cross-sectional survey responses (hence, drawing on the field interviews offered further insights). Consequently, future research would be useful to establish whether the findings are transferrable to other sector/country contexts. Additionally, the temporal focus requires further research to consider whether (and if so, how, and why) entrepreneurs' practices evolve from an immediate post-pandemic environment to a more established post-COVID-19 era. In fact, this may suggest in-depth qualitative research is required, and possibly utilising a thick description of data from multiple sources to justify a longitudinal case study method. That said, difficulties may arise regarding certain entrepreneurs providing data, that they may perceive as confidential and especially over an extended period. Finally, future research may utilise varying theoretical lenses; for example, an institutional perspective might be useful to investigate relevant issues surrounding sectors and/or countries. There could be "rules of the game" that impact practices in different contexts. Likewise, an effectuation lens may be useful to examine decision-making across research settings. These limitations were not major concerns, and instead, offer avenues for future research.

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Chapter 4

Paper 3 - How a Coopetition-Oriented Mindset and Competitive Intensity Drive Coopetition Behaviour to Support Export Scale-Up Activities in a Post Crisis Environment

Abstract

This study unpacks the complexity of the relationship between a coopetition-oriented mindset, coopetition activities (collaboration with competitors), and competitive intensity. The research setting features passive exporting firms seeking to scale-up sales abroad in an immediate post-crisis period (after COVID-19). Following 20 field interviews, a survey of 306 under-resourced wine producers in the United States was utilised in the model testing stage. Findings evidence respective significant positive relationships between first, a coopetition-oriented mindset; second, competitive intensity, and engaging in coopetition activities. A non-significant moderation effect existed regarding competitive intensity on the coopetition-oriented mindset - coopetition activities relationship. The field interviews offer unique insights highlighting that pivoted coopetition practices in the move from a passive to active exporting involvement following a crisis can take time to achieve benefits. Not least, because decision-makers face new levels of competitive intensity across product-market strategies, affecting the nature of their coopetition partners.

Keywords: Competitive intensity; coopetition; crisis; mindset; passive exporters; resource-based theory.

Introduction

Objective and Research Question

Prior studies have evidenced entrepreneurs facing challenges and crises with varying severities, plus the need to persevere and build resilience (Lamine et al., 2014; Orhan, 2016; Battisti & Deakins, 2017; Huang et al., 2018; Stevenson et al., 2018; Morrish & Jones, 2020). Recently, the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic in comparison to certain earlier crises included government measures like lockdowns, with many firms ceasing trading across various sectors and countries, together with various owner-managers needing to find ways to build resilience (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021a; Ali et al., 2022; Arslan et al., 2022). Respective entrepreneurs prepared for a post-pandemic period in different ways, like evaluating and pivoting facets of their business models, alongside implementing new product-market strategies (Lund Pedersen & Ritter, 2020; Ritter & Lund Pedersen, 2020; Behl et al., 2023). Not least, due to lockdowns, certain owner-managers changed practices from operating in a physical space to an online presence in domestic and in some cases international markets, leading to the suggestion that COVID-19 provided a digital acceleration (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021b; Zahra, 2021; Felzensztein & Tretiakov, 2023; Ul Zia et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, the impact on under-researched entrepreneurs' practices that pivoted from a domestic to international market focus remains under-researched, especially regarding whether they could undertake scale-up behaviour on their own or if they required stakeholder support. This is pertinent since it has been widely documented in prior studies that entering markets abroad can be costly and take time; also, international entrepreneurs face wider institutional obstacles (Jones & Coviello, 2005; Liesch et al., 2011; Kahiya, 2018; Magnani & Zucchella, 2019). Consequently, efforts to facilitate growth like identifying and exploiting opportunities abroad may sometimes

require the support of stakeholders that can help under-resourced owner-managers, such as regional and national trade bodies, investors, and rivals (Fischer & Reuber, 2003; Brache & Felzensztein, 2019; Ryan et al., 2019; Galloway et al., 2021; Croce et al., 2023; Kahiya, 2024).¹

The focus of this study involves collaboration with one specific type of stakeholder, namely rivals, to help entrepreneurs facilitate expansion abroad in a post-crisis environment. That is, because of the prevalent role of cooptation (collaboration with competitors) that prior research has established takes place in the wine sector under investigation (Dana et al., 2013; Felzensztein et al., 2014; Granata et al., 2018; Crick & Crick, 2022). Underpinning respective entrepreneurs' decision to engage in cooptation activities is the implicit assumption that they possess a cooptation-oriented mindset (Crick, 2021), since this symbiotic behaviour provides potential benefits among network partners (Dana et al., 2008). Specifically, engaging in well-managed cooptation activities can help owner-managers to overcome constraints imposed by their limited assets; namely, via a move from an individualistic to a collaborative business model (Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Ritala, 2012; Bouncken et al., 2015; Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino, 2017; Hoffmann et al., 2018; Estrada & Dong, 2020).

However, an understanding of whether and under what circumstances entrepreneurs' mindsets drive cooptation activities across product-market strategies following a severe crisis remains under-researched; specifically, when decision-makers implement a pivot strategy to scale-up sales abroad where they are likely to face different competitive intensities compared to domestic market conditions. This consideration leads to a pertinent research question under investigation in this study. That is, in an immediate post-crisis environment, to what extent has a cooptation-oriented mindset and an ability to implement associated behaviour, influenced under-resourced

¹ Stakeholders can enhance owner-managers' resources/capabilities in various ways across product-markets, such as the provision of information, financing, facilitating network opportunities, etc.

international entrepreneurs that were previously passive exporters, to pursue sales abroad more actively? Therefore, this cross-disciplinary study's objective involves unpacking the complexity of the relationship between a coopetition-oriented mindset, coopetition activities, and competitive intensity, in the immediate aftermath of a crisis. The research setting features under-resourced, independent, smaller-sized wine producers in the United States, owned by international entrepreneurs with a passive export involvement. More specifically, these international entrepreneurs were actively seeking to increase sales across product-markets in an immediate post-crisis period (following the end of COVID-19 lockdowns); hence, facing different degrees of competitive intensity. In unpacking the relationship under investigation, a resource-based theoretical lens underpins the research.

Contributions

This study first offers unique insights regarding the potentially positive role that a coopetition-oriented mindset is likely to have regarding the impact on coopetition activities among under-resourced, passive exporters, in an immediate post-crisis environment. This is important, since prior studies tend to overlook international entrepreneurs' coopetition-oriented mindsets; instead, focusing on the outcomes of coopetition (building on Chetty & Wilson, 2003; Vanyushyn et al., 2009; Kock et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2019). New light is shed on a coopetition-oriented mindset offering a mechanism to engage in coopetition activities; hence, overcome limited assets, and help passive exporters to increase their sales abroad following a severe crisis.

Second, new insights emerge regarding the impact of competitive intensity on coopetition activities among passive exporters. This is important, since international entrepreneurs face varying institutional conditions and competitively intensive environments depending on the product-markets targeted (Cadogan et al., 2009; Jafari-Sadeghi et al., 2019). The findings suggest

that engaging in coopetition, as a mechanism to enhance export sales, may not necessarily lead to internationalisation following a forward moving and rather an intermittent process (building on Bernini et al., 2016; Kafouros et al., 2022; Jeong & Yang, 2023). Not least, due to the timescale for certain coopetition networks to become effective in export markets. New light is also shed on the need for entrepreneurs to effectively manage tensions among coopetition partners across those product-markets that are targeted (following Raza-Ullah et al., 2014; Czakon & Czernek, 2016; Virtanen & Kock, 2022).

Third, consistent with a relational, stakeholder perspective of a resource-based theoretical lens (as per Lavie, 2006; Barney, 2018), new findings highlight the value-adding role of symbiotic relationships being a consideration for international entrepreneurs (following Dana et al., 2008). Importantly, in an immediate post-crisis environment, well-managed coopetition behaviour provides a mechanism to help expand owner-managers' prior focus on passive export activities. New insights nonetheless build on wider prior studies, demonstrating that it is important decision-makers exhibit strategic flexibility and be agile, with an ability to improvise behaviour across product markets due to facing different competitive intensities (building on Priem & Butler, 2001; Hughes et al., 2020; Christofi et al., 2021).

Theory and Hypotheses

Key Concepts

It is useful to outline key concepts arising from the existing cross-disciplinary literature that are associated with this study's research objective. First, although there are various modes of internationalisation available to decision-makers (Jones, 1999; Ji & Dimitratos, 2013; Sharma et al., 2018), all owner-managers in this investigation were only involved in exporting. However, there is no single agreed benchmark to differentiate between active and passive exporters, a term

used to signify a high-low export involvement/intensity (Diamantopoulos & Inglis, 1988; Crick et al., 2011). All the firms in this study had a low export ratio, including those that only exported on request (like shipping individual cases to buyers abroad).

Second, Bengtsson and Kock (2014, p. 180) view “coopetition” involving “*a paradoxical relationship between two or more actors, regardless of whether they are involved in horizontal or vertical relationships, simultaneously in cooperative and competitive interactions*”. In contrast, coopetition may not be paradoxical and instead rational for some under-resourced decision-makers. Specifically, if there are mutually beneficial outcomes of coopetition arising from partners entering a symbiotic relationship (Dana et al., 2008). To illustrate, outcomes may feature enhanced innovation, value-creation, and opportunities, like an ability to enter markets otherwise difficult via operating individualistically (Bengtsson & Johansson, 2014; Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018; Kraus et al., 2019; Bouncken et al., 2020). Earlier research has considered the antecedents of coopetition (Bouncken & Fredrich, 2012; Czakon et al., 2020a), and this includes either implicitly or explicitly possessing a coopetition-oriented mindset (Crick, 2021); albeit whether and how such a mindset leads to coopetition activities across new product-markets in a post-crisis environment remains under-researched. In this study, a coopetition-oriented mindset was measured in terms of decision-makers valuing the importance of engaging in collaborative relationships with rivals (Crick, 2021). Furthermore, coopetition activities featured a measure of engagement across product-markets served (Bernal et al., 2002; Chetty & Wilson, 2003; Vanyushyn et al., 2009; Kock et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2019). Third, competitive intensity involves a measure of the degree of rivalry within a market (as per Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Cadogan et al., 2003).

A Relational, Stakeholder Perspective of Resource-Based Theory

From an inside-the-firm perspective, seminal resource-based theory (Barney, 1991) suggests that decision-makers' well-managed utilisation of assets (resources and capabilities) positively impacts performance outcomes. Nevertheless, a body of research has subsequently built on the seminal inside-the-firm perspective of this theoretical lens. Examples pertinent to this investigation feature first, the role of the external environment, whereby Priem and Butler (2001) noted the need for strategic flexibility in decision-makers' utilisation of assets in the face of contingent circumstances. Second, Barney (2018) highlighted the role of stakeholders, linking with the relational perspective of Lavie (2006). Furthermore, a recognition exists that inside-the-firm issues associated with seminal resource-based theory may not adequately explain the performance outcomes of aspects of owner-managers' behaviour, since some are essentially market-led. This has given rise to what has been termed the "outside-in" perspective (Day, 2014; Mu et al., 2018; Quach et al., 2020).

With respect to the issues under investigation in this study, Day (2014, p. 28) outlines some relevant considerations for decision-makers aligned to the outside-in perspective. These are pertinent vis-à-vis the issues raised in respect of environmental forces (Priem & Butler, 2001) and the relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory (Lavie, 2006; Barney, 2018). *"How and why are customers changing? What new needs do they have? What can we do to solve their problems and help them make more money? What new competitors are lurking around the corner, and how can we derail their efforts?"* The issues raised by Day (2014) are both contextually and conceptually important in this investigation. To date, in an immediate post-crisis environment (typified by the severity of COVID-19), there is a limited understanding of whether (and the extent that) international entrepreneurs' customers and competitors have changed in

respect of their respective product-market strategies. Moreover, there is limited understanding of whether (and if so how) the coopetition-oriented mindset of decision-makers in passive exporting firms has changed. Specifically, whether international entrepreneurs have a mindset where they want to de-rail competitors via employing an individualistic business model across their potentially “pivoted” (new) product-market strategies, or rather, collaborate with rivals through a coopetition-oriented business model. Such considerations are now discussed in more detail.

International Scale-up Activities

This study’s focus on entrepreneurs’ efforts to increase internationalisation activities in an immediate post-crisis environment, has broad similarities with the notion of “scale-up” behaviour among growth-oriented decision-makers; namely, that has become prominent in recent international business research (Piaskowska et al., 2021; Reuber et al., 2021; Jansen et al., 2023; Tippmann et al., 2023a; 2023b). However, from a wider perspective, various stimuli exist to facilitate internationalisation; for example, some owner-managers have growth-oriented objectives; and/or, perceive they are constrained by limited domestic demand (Leonidou, 1995; Bell et al., 1998; Young et al., 2000; Spence & Crick, 2006; Jones et al., 2011; Kahiya, 2020). In contrast, various barriers exist (Kahiya, 2018) that may negatively impact entrepreneurs’ efforts to increase export activities. Therefore, decision-makers’ considerations of stimuli and barriers have been found to influence their speed, scale, and scope of internationalisation (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004; Rialp et al., 2005; Welch et al., 2016; Reuber et al., 2018; Schwens et al., 2018; Gripsrud et al., 2023).

For example, some firms exhibit limited degrees of internationalisation and/or do not necessarily follow linear paths in serving markets abroad; namely, de- and re-internationalisation (Pauwels & Matthyssens, 2004; Welch & Welch, 2009; Javalgi et al., 2010; Bernini et al., 2016;

Kafouros et al., 2022; Jeong & Yang, 2023). Consequently, some entrepreneurs have traditionally tended to be less motivated than others to actively engage in export sales; especially, if they possess limited assets (Piercy, 1981; Diamantopoulos & Inglis, 1988; da Rocha et al., 1990; Crick et al., 2011). However, as previously alluded to, following domestic lockdowns during COVID-19 as an example of a major crisis, owner-managers had an opportunity to gain benefits from digitalisation in targeting customers across different product-markets (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021b; Zahra, 2021; Felzensztein & Tretiakov, 2023; Ul Zia et al., 2023). To illustrate, wider studies have noted advantages of digitalisation in a broader sense, like easier information search and reduced supply chains (Samiee, 2020; Sinkovics & Sinkovics, 2020). Yet, whether decision-makers can rely on an individualistic business model (such as using digitalisation) to facilitate the move from a passive to more active export involvement in an immediate post-crisis environment is unclear. Instead, they may benefit from undertaking a collaborative business model via cooptation and so the importance of mindset in driving behaviour is now considered.

Cooptation and a Cooptation-Oriented Mindset

In a generic business sense, the advantages of entrepreneurs entering networks/alliances have been recognised for some time (Etemad et al., 2001; Freeman et al., 2006; Spence et al., 2008; Zahoor et al., 2023). Not least, consistent with the context of this investigation, earlier studies of under-resourced entrepreneurs in various cluster-based sectors² outline the value-added benefits of well-managed cooptation in decision-makers' product-market strategies. For example, sharing

² Porter (2000, p. 16) views clusters as “*geographic concentrations of interconnected companies, specialized suppliers, service providers, firms in related industries, and associated institutions (e.g., universities, standards agencies, trade associations) in a particular field that compete but also cooperate*”. Clusters are prominent in sectors like agriculture/fisheries and tourism/hospitality, in addition to the wine sector under investigation in this study (Chaudhry & Crick, 2004; Felzensztein et al., 2010; Crick, 2011; Chaudhry et al., 2023; Crick et al., 2023; Karami et al., 2023). However, the importance of network relationships, especially based on social capital, is not restricted to cluster-based relationships (Lamine et al., 2015).

knowledge, equipment, and funds through to cross-referrals within local cluster-based activities (Dana & Winstone, 2008; Dana et al., 2013; Granata et al., 2018; Crick & Crick, 2022). The US wine sector is part of what is often termed the “New World”; that is, featuring other wine producing countries like Australia, Canada, and New Zealand (Aylward, 2003). This contrasts with what is typically perceived as “Old World” wine producing countries like France and Italy. The sector is pertinent, since prior research has shown varying degrees of co-competition, competitive intensity, and export activities among wine producers across different regions (Felzensztein et al., 2014; 2019; Yu & Lindsay, 2016; Crick & Crick, 2023). In fact, from a co-existing logics perspective (Reay et al., 2015), engaging in mutually beneficial collaborative activities is a rational strategy to enhance the performance of under-resourced individual firms, maintain family employment (where applicable), and sustain their cluster. That is, engaging in collaborative as opposed to individualistic business models supporting co-dependence, is preferable to co-destruction.

By suggesting that under-resourced decision-makers can gain mutually beneficial outcomes from engaging in co-competition does not imply larger and typically better resourced organisations cannot engage in collaborative alliances of some kind (as per Luo, 2005; Gnyawali & Park, 2011). However, research depicting such behaviour in larger organisations is not necessarily indicative of practices among under-resourced owner-managers in smaller-sized businesses exhibiting an internationalised business model (Chetty & Wilson, 2003; Vanyushyn et al., 2009; Kock et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2019). For example, Luo (2005) considers subsidiaries as opposed to smaller-sized and independently owned passive exporting businesses, whereby, the latter cannot rely on the assets of a parent company.

Existing international entrepreneurship studies recognise the role, experience, international/global mindsets, and commitment of owner-managers in respect of

internationalisation decision-making (Reuber & Fischer, 1997; Nummela et al., 2004; Nielsen & Nielsen, 2011; Torkkeli et al., 2018). Nevertheless, a cooptation-oriented mindset is also potentially important and stems from the game theoretical approach of Brandenburger and Nalebuff (1996). Yet, to date, a relatively limited body of research has been undertaken involving how antecedents of cooptation, such as mindsets, manifest in practice; hence, leading to various outcomes across product-markets (Gnyawali & Ryan Charleton, 2018; Crick, 2021). In fact, a cooptation-oriented mindset is potentially important since this drives the decision whether to engage in cooptation activities and the magnitude of owner-managers' involvement across product-market strategies. As previously alluded to, earlier research suggests that if under-resourced decision-makers (typical of various smaller-sized firms) engage in cooptation, it follows that mutually beneficial outcomes can arise if activities are effectively managed (Czakov et al., 2020b; Gernsheimer et al., 2021; Meena et al., 2023).

The term “effectively managed” is important because this is somewhat key to the assumption about the likelihood of enhancing performance, given that a degree of rivalry exists in cooptation-oriented network relationships (consistent with the “paradoxical” nature mentioned by Bengtsson & Kock, 2014). To illustrate, Bouncken and Kraus (2013) mention the term “the double-edged sword” in respect of cooptation, and Park et al. (2014) refer to “walking the tightrope”. Benefits may accrue from decision-makers exhibiting a cooptation-oriented mindset; not least, leading to them building social capital with like-minded and complementary partners. The intended result is to add value but minimise tensions and opportunism across product-market strategies (Tidström, 2014; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014; Virtanen & Kock, 2022; Crick & Crick, 2022). These prior considerations suggest that:

Hypothesis 1: A cooperation-oriented mindset has a linear (positive) relationship with engaging in cooperation activities.

Coopetition: The Role of Competitive Intensity Across Product-Market Strategies

Although Hypothesis 1 may appear somewhat self-evident, understanding this relationship is required for model testing purposes. Therefore, turning from broader cooperation-oriented mindset considerations, competitive intensity features the degree of rivalry within a market (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993; Auh & Menguc, 2005). Recognition of the degree of competitive intensity is pertinent in this post-crisis study due to the research setting; that is, which product-markets are explored and exploited by decision-makers, in addition to cooperation featuring as the mechanism used to support activities. Prior research has illustrated mixed behaviour in regional

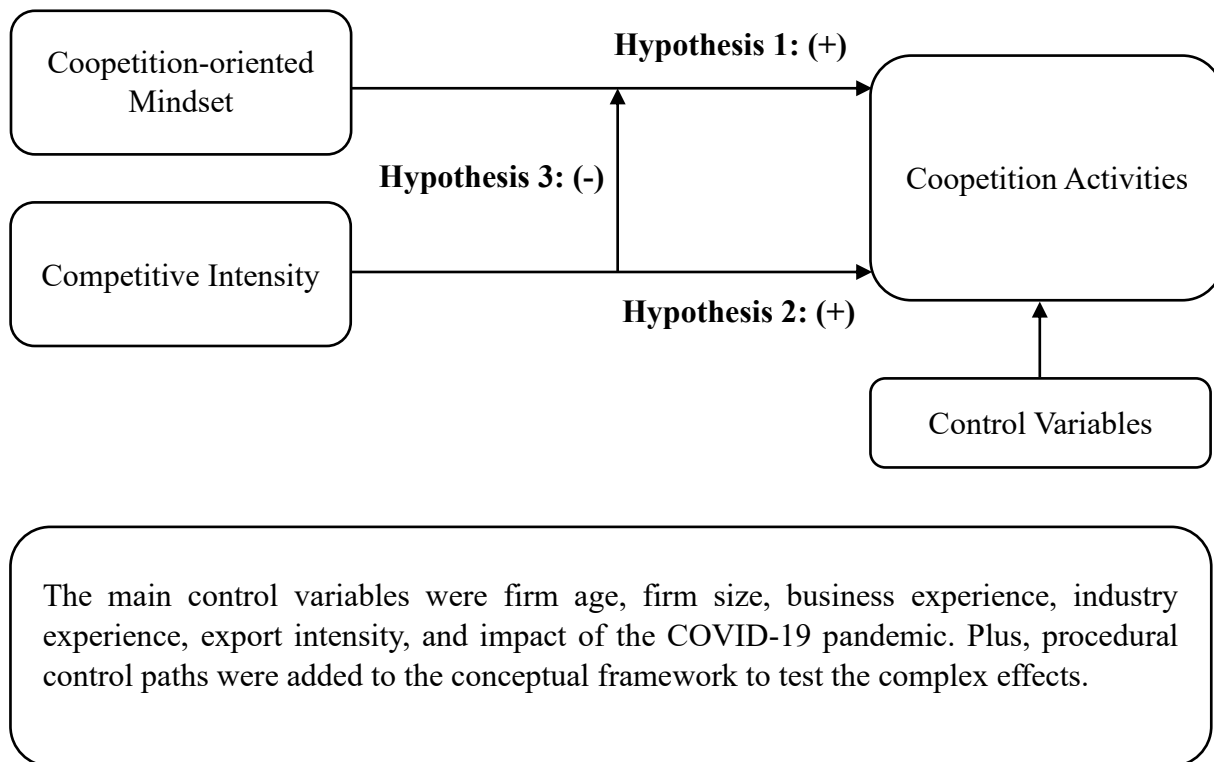


Figure 4-1

Conceptual Framework

clusters whereby some owner-managers exhibit seemingly lifestyle goals in comparison to others that appear growth-oriented (Geldes et al., 2015; Reay et al., 2015; Felzensztein et al., 2018; Granata et al., 2018).

For example, from one perspective, some owner-managers operate boutique wine producing firms with relatively low international sales, and that are essentially passive exporters, like selling occasional cases of wine abroad. As such, their respective business model may feature a concentration on domestic sales, and even more specifically, a potential focus on the region in which they are based (Dana & Winstone, 2008; Dana et al., 2013; Crick & Crick, 2021; 2022). In managing issues associated with competitive intensity, such prior research suggests that some wine producers may engage in cooptation via alliances with local rivals in the form of tours aimed at visitors to the region. In fact, these earlier studies highlight that some businesses may have diversified portfolios like accommodation, café/restaurant, hosting weddings, etc., whereby, cross-referrals among complementary networks of businesses within relationships may take place. From a different perspective, other owner-managers seek to identify and exploit opportunities to varying degrees in export markets (Yu & Lindsay, 2016; Felzensztein et al., 2014; 2019).

It follows that depending on which product-markets are targeted and the extent of involvement, the degree of competitive intensity experienced may vary. In fact, contrasting institutional conditions are experienced across export markets, and some are more turbulent than others (Cadogan et al., 2009; Jafari-Sadeghi et al., 2019). Owner-managers need to decide when to attack rather than collaborate with rivals as risk/reward considerations exist in cooptation, and not all competitors are the same (Cui et al., 2018; Chiambaretto et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2020). This might manifest differently in practice among various exporters, based on the potential difficulties in gaining distribution agreements in markets abroad. For example, Crick and Crick (2022)

provided examples of New Zealand wine producers engaging in different coopetition relationships between domestic and international markets in certain circumstances. Specifically, when distributors in export markets would only take a single wine varietal from a cluster, it made sense for international entrepreneurs to form alliances with firms based in different clusters. Assuming activities are well-managed, it follows that owner-managers will select the most appropriate coopetition partners from those available in respective competitively intensive environments (across product-markets targeted).

There is nonetheless a need for some form of competitive intensity to exist across product-markets served, otherwise, there would be no, or at least limited, choice in selecting coopetition partners. To minimise risk; also, linking with the earlier consideration of the importance of social capital, some decision-makers may form informal “psychological contracts” with rivals based on trust and commitment (following Rousseau, 2001). That is, psychological contracts are probably underpinned by unwritten rules and shared values (Kingshott & Pecotich, 2007) as opposed to formal contracts. Additionally, the establishment of social capital in cluster-based relationships is potentially influenced by the likelihood of owner-managers whose businesses are based close together knowing each other and them exhibiting a degree of trust (Geldes et al., 2015). Based on the prior considerations it follows that:

Hypothesis 2: Competitive intensity has a linear (positive) relationship with engaging in coopetition activities.

Competitive Intensity as a Moderator

Irrespective of the earlier mentioned considerations regarding the relationships in Hypotheses 1 and 2, competitive intensity (following Jaworski & Kohli, 1993) may also be modelled as a moderating issue to offer more nuanced insights. In other words, instead of limiting

this investigation's consideration of linear relationships regarding the role of a coopetition-oriented mindset and competitive intensity respectively with engaging in coopetition activities, there is a need to unpack relationships to contribute to knowledge. That is, the coopetition-oriented mindset - coopetition activities relationship, may be impacted by the competitive intensity perceived by international entrepreneurs across their product-market strategies.

As previously alluded to, there has been a need for various decision-makers to prepare for, and pivot aspects of their firms' business models because of COVID-19 (Lund Pedersen & Ritter, 2020; Ritter & Lund Pedersen, 2020). Yet, from an international entrepreneurship perspective, the extent to which COVID-19 has affected decision-makers in passive exporting firms' perceived need to increase sales abroad in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic; also, the mechanisms needed to undertake this (like coopetition), remain under-researched. Indeed, there may have been a change in owner-managers' mindsets following domestic lockdowns ending. That is, vis-à-vis a prior focus on typically in-person sales in local clusters, or at least their domestic market, as opposed to those abroad. In turn, under-resourced decision-makers' coopetition-oriented mindsets may have changed to recognise the need to gain stakeholder support to supplement firm-level efforts like having an online presence.

Hence, the support of rivals as stakeholders may help enable international entrepreneurs to engage in coopetition activities across evolved product-markets that are targeted (Chetty & Wilson, 2003; Vanyushyn et al., 2009; Kock et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2019); namely, where different degrees of competitive intensity exist. However, building trust with complementary partners is widely viewed as important (Tidström, 2014; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014; Virtanen & Kock, 2022). Not least, due to the potentially added risks and obstacles faced when entering markets abroad (Liesch et al., 2011; Kahiya, 2018; Magnani & Zucchella, 2019). As such, in an immediate post COVID-19

environment, where previously passive exporters attempt to become more active in targeting sales abroad, they are likely to face different competitive intensities; hence, it follows that:

Hypothesis 3: Competitive intensity negatively moderates the relationship between a coopetition-oriented mindset and engaging in coopetition activities.

Methods

Context and Timescale

Commencing with the importance of selecting an appropriate empirical setting, it was considered necessary that this exhibited decision-makers' behaviour pertinent to the key concepts under investigation. That is, featuring firms with low export intensities, decision-makers engaging in degrees of coopetition (as per their collaborative mindsets), and rivals exhibiting a degree of competitive intensity. As previously mentioned, earlier research to varying degrees has evidenced wine producers (in different parts of the world) exhibiting this behaviour (see, for example, Dana et al., 2013; Felzensztein et al., 2014; Granata et al., 2018; Crick & Crick, 2022). Turning to timescale, this investigation occurred in a period considered as an immediate post-pandemic era to signify a major crisis. That is in no way to suggest the wider impact of COVID-19 will not continue for some time (as per Foss, 2021), like relating to longer-term macroeconomic or ongoing healthcare-related effects. However, by 2022, COVID-19 lockdowns had ended in the US wine sector, and so pilot interviews took place in late 2022, and an online survey was administered in early 2023 following ethics approval. The approach undertaken in respect of these methods will be discussed in more detail in the following sub-sections; however, to access wine producers, a sampling frame involved a purchased database (Wines Vines Analytics, 2022), containing the names and contact details of US vineyards.

Field Interviews

Prior to the core quantitative data collection stage, it was important to undertake field interviews to establish whether, and the extent to which, COVID-19 as a major crisis had affected international entrepreneurs' perceptions related to facets of this study. Additionally, how best to measure the issues under investigation. Not least, whether owner-managers were pursuing export activities more actively and hence were likely to face different degrees of competitive intensity; also, to establish if their mindsets were oriented towards engaging in cooptation activities (and how this was manifesting in practice). Such considerations were initially addressed via 20 field interviews, each lasting approximately one hour with key informants within wine producers, that took place in three US states. The work of Kumar et al. (1993) notes that relying on key informants in smaller-sized firms is sometimes acceptable if they are the key decision-makers, given they typically operate with relatively flat organisational structures. In other words, interviewing other employees in the smaller-sized firms that are not decision-makers may offer limited added value in gathering relevant information. The ways in which the field interviews helped shape the operationalisations in the core survey feature in a later sub-section.

In the small, independent, firms under investigation, "owner-managers" were found to be responsible for internationalisation and cooptation decisions, meaning either the equity owner or a manager brought into a business to oversee operations on behalf of an owner. The field interviews in the selected states featured distinct locations within the US wine sector, namely, with varying degrees of production and reputation. To summarise, the purpose of the 20 field interviews was two-fold, namely, to first understand contextual issues associated with the research setting. Second, to shape operationalisations that would feature in the subsequent core survey. Put another way, the

two-fold purpose was to enhance the probability that the research was aligned with issues and measures associated with the empirical context (following Katsikeas et al., 2006).

Core Survey Data Collection

The core data collection method employed to test the facets of the conceptual framework involved an electronic survey (via Qualtrics). A questionnaire was designed following a review of the pertinent literature where established scales were utilised, and these were shaped to meet contextual issues arising from the previously described field interviews. Subsequently, pre-testing took place with academics ($n = 3$) and practitioners ($n = 6$) to help establish pertinent issues associated with data collection, namely, clarity of questions, appropriateness of the scales, and the length of the survey. No concerns were raised at this stage. Next, the researchers implemented a pilot study where no problems were observed; that is, a small sample of respondents was undertaken ($n = 20$) to assess the distributions and descriptive statistics of the measurements (Bolton, 1993). Then, after administering the core data collection stage including a reminder, 306 wine producers from across the US featured as the final sample (deemed an acceptable response rate). Moreover, non-significant t -values were found between the early and late responses across key variables, indicating that non-response bias was likely to be not of concern in the investigation (Armstrong & Overton, 1977).

Operationalisations

The constructs within the conceptual framework were measured as follows. First, a competition-oriented mindset was captured on a multi-item seven-point interval scale, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (Crick, 2021). Second, operationalising competition activities was via a multi-item seven-point interval scale, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (Bouncken et al., 2018). Third, competitive intensity

was measured on a multi-item seven-point interval scale, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (adapted from Cadogan et al., 2003).

Fourth, in respect of the main control variables, measurement of firm age featured the number of years since the business started trading (Vorhies et al., 2011). Firm size was captured by the number of full-time employees (Morgan et al., 2009). Business experience was operationalised by the number of years the respondent had worked in their current firm (Boso et al., 2013). Industry experience was measured by using the number of years the respondent had worked in the international wine sector (Crick & Crick, 2021). Measurement of export intensity was via the percentage of sales that originated from markets abroad (Diamantopoulos & Inglis, 1988). Evaluation of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic as a key crisis was evaluated by utilising a sliding ratio scale (ranging from: -100 to 100) in respect of the extent to which this phenomenon impacted the performance of the respondent's firm (Mensah et al., 2022). A procedural control was added to test complex effects associated with the model. Fifth, the informant quality tool served as an instrumental variable, namely, to assess face validity and common method variance. A multi-item interval scale was employed, ranging from: 1 = very strongly disagree to 7 = very strongly agree (adapted from Katsikeas et al., 2006; Boso et al., 2013).

Survey Data Analysis

In terms of the data analysis for this investigation, first, via SPSS 28, the researchers considered the characteristics of the final sample shown in Table 4-1. In principle, the descriptive statistics suggested that a reasonable variety of wine producers featured in this study, for example, in terms of their ages, sizes, etc. Moreover, these were located throughout the US, ranging from prominent wine-producing states (like California and Oregon), through to less famous regions

(such as Arizona and Pennsylvania). This was in addition to the required data to test the conceptual model, such as respondents' export sales, competition-oriented mindsets and activities, and perceptions towards competitive intensity.

Table 4-0-1

Sample Characteristics

Profiling information	Mean	Standard deviation
Firm age (years)	106.55	17.45
Number of full-time employees	5.43	13.98
Business experience (years)	13.41	10.67
Industry experience (years)	16.21	11.20
Export intensity (%)	2.18	10.21
Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	-1.62	49.71

Using SPSS 28, second, an exploratory factor analysis model was “run” via a principal components analysis extraction and a varimax rotation (Brown et al., 2001). The analysis suggested no major problems existed, whereby, the multi-item constructs loaded onto distinct factors. Third, via LISREL 12, assessment followed through a confirmatory factor analysis (Cadogan et al., 2009) and the final model fit indices were within the minimum thresholds (Table 4-2). Subsequently, fourth, through SPSS 28, testing followed of respective aspects of the conceptual framework by employing an ordinary least squares regression analysis (Katsikeas et al., 2006). To help alleviate any multi-collinearity concerns in model testing, including a moderator (Tiegs et al., 1992), “residual-centring” took place (Hamzah et al., 2023).

Table 4-0-2

Final Model Fit Indices

χ^2/df	Sig.	RMSEA	CFI	IFI	NNFI
2.01	0.00	0.06	0.96	0.96	0.94

Robustness Checks

Reliability assessments were undertaken using SPSS 28, whereby, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients (α) of the multi-item operationalisations were recorded; that is, each exceeded 0.70, indicating reliable measures (Jaworski & Kohli, 1993). Statistical evaluation of face validity was via employing the informant quality scale (Katsikeas et al., 2006; Boso et al., 2013). This supplemented the previously mentioned procedural pre-testing of the survey involving a sample of academics and practitioners. Utilisation of established operationalisations for the constructs within the conceptual framework enabled evaluation of content validity to take place (Cadogan et al., 2009). An assessment that convergent validity existed, involved the final measures yielding composite reliabilities above 0.60 and average variance extracted values that were greater than 0.50 (Crick & Crick, 2021). By using LISREL 12, a test for discriminant validity involved squaring the phi matrix correlations, then comparing these against the average variance extracted values. Discriminant validity was likely to exist, since the largest squared phi matrix correlation was lower than the smallest average variance extracted value (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Table 4-3 shows the respective final multi-item measures' reliability scores.

Table 4-0-3

The Reliabilities of the Purified Multi-item Measurement Scales

Purified multi-item measurement scales	Cronbach's alpha coefficient (α)	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Coopetition	0.76	0.76	0.52
Competitive intensity	0.86	0.86	0.61
Coopetition-oriented mind-set	0.94	0.94	0.79
Informant quality	0.88	0.91	0.78

There are various procedural and statistical approaches to minimise the chance of common method variance featuring in studies. In procedural terms, the researchers set out to design the survey to appear short and user-friendly (Podsakoff et al., 2003). In fact, the pre-testing mentioned

earlier helped support this. In statistical terms, the researchers employed the marker variable technique (through SPSS 28). That is, bivariate, and partial correlation matrices were created, with essentially the same information, but the only difference involved the partial correlation matrix controlling for the “informant quality tool”, acting as the marker variable. After differences were calculated and averaged, the score was very small ($r = 0.00$); hence, the likelihood exists that the statistical data were not affected by a common method factor (Lindell & Whitney, 2001).

Findings

Quantitative Results

A cooperation-oriented mindset had a linear (positive) and significant relationship with cooperation activities, supporting Hypothesis 1. Additionally, competitive intensity exhibited a linear (positive) and significant relationship with cooperation activities offering support for Hypothesis 2. Although the results of the first two hypotheses were not surprising, competitive intensity had a negative but non-significant moderated association between a cooperation-oriented mindset and cooperation activities, meaning that no support was offered for Hypothesis 3. This finding led the researchers to revisit the data from the field interviews that features in the next sub-section. In addition to the core hypotheses, the main control variables in the conceptual model (in addition to the procedural factor) contributed to explaining the variance, for which the adjusted R^2 was 0.15 (with a significant F-statistic).

Field Interviews

As alluded to in the prior sub-section, the statistical analysis provided the core model testing focus of this investigation. Nevertheless, the researchers revisited the data from the field interviews to gain unique insights that helped explain the somewhat not surprising support for Hypotheses 1 and 2, but importantly, also, the non-significant finding for Hypothesis 3. This stage

of the analysis suggested the timescale of the investigation (an immediate post-crisis environment) assisted in providing a contribution to knowledge; specifically, as contextual issues can affect hypothesised relationships. However, it is useful to briefly comment on the first two hypotheses that were supported and then turn attention to the unsupported Hypothesis 3. In doing so, the field interviews suggested that it was common for owner-managers of small, independent, vineyards to exhibit lifestyle-oriented objectives, and this explained an often-passive export involvement prior to the crisis to minimise risks. For clarity, it is again re-emphasised that firms with a high export involvement prior to the COVID-19 crisis were not the focus of this study and did not feature in data collection for comparative purposes. Furthermore, it was typical that these international entrepreneurs perceived being under-resourced and therefore actively pursuing export opportunities would be time-consuming and expensive, like efforts to gain distributor agreements. Instead, before the crisis, export sales included orders by the case from tourists that had visited a vineyard and with whom there was an affinity. For example, based on the vineyard employees creating a positive wine tourism experience during a visit or that simply customers liked the wine and were content to order it when they returned to their country of residence.

Consistent with Hypothesis 1, a co-competition-oriented mindset was prevalent among cluster-based owner-managers in driving value-adding co-competition activities, but largely oriented around domestic sales. In doing so, firms exhibited a degree of co-dependency rather than co-destructive behaviour so all benefited. For example, depending on their respective business models like having accommodation, a café, restaurant, etc.; also, the wine varieties they produced, it was common that co-competition-oriented cross-referrals took place when an individual firm could not satisfy customers' needs. Not least, during wine tours that rival businesses participated in, when customers (especially tourists) visited a variety of competing vineyards. This symbiotic behaviour supported

individual firms, maintained family employment (where applicable), and helped sustain their cluster. However, the field interviews suggested the lockdowns during the crisis meant that previous business models based on cluster-based collaborative activities resulted in the need to exhibit flexibility, agility, and the ability to improvise. Specifically, there had been a need to move from a passive to a more active export involvement.

Table 4-0-4

Ordinary Least Squares Regression Model

Main control variables	β	t-values
Firm age	-0.01	-0.59
Firm size	0.00	-0.07
Business experience	0.00	0.35
Industry experience	-0.01	-0.67
Export intensity	-0.02	-2.28
Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic	-0.01	-0.51
Procedural control	β	t-values
Competitive intensity x competitive intensity	-0.04	-1.30
Hypothesised relationships	β	t-values
Coopetition-oriented mind-set (Hypothesis 1)	0.43	5.04**
Competitive intensity (Hypothesis 2)	0.54	2.13*
Coopetition-oriented mind-set x competitive intensity (Hypothesis 3)	-0.04	-0.90
Model fit summary		
R^2	0.18	
Adjusted R^2	0.15	
F -statistic	6.41**	
† $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$ (two-tailed tests). The critical t -value was 1.65 (5%, one-sided).		

To illustrate, during lockdowns, there were times when no wine tours took place with in-house tastings, no cafes/restaurants were open, and so on. Instead, there was a need to enhance sales via on-line channels, and that included trying to sell nationally plus internationally, like via targeting members of vineyards' wine clubs within their databases. It also meant re-evaluating the risks/rewards associated with a more active drive to increase exports, especially as legislative

restrictions started lifting and allowing travel. For example, manifesting in efforts for trustworthy and complementary cooperation partners to investigate distributor opportunities abroad. Nevertheless, the field interviews also suggested that a cooperation-oriented mindset driving cooperation activities leading to a move from a passive to active export involvement can take time and effort. Consequently, in the immediate post-crisis period of the study, firms still had relatively low export ratios, despite efforts to increase sales abroad via engaging in cooperation.

Importantly, consistent with the support offered for Hypothesis 2, for cooperation to exist, there was a need for a degree of competitive intensity. Without this, there would be no firm or at least very few businesses to collaborate with. The key issues arising from the field interviews in this respect involved first, the need for owner-managers to develop trust via social capital with complementary rivals, as this minimised the potential for opportunism. Second, there was a need to not become too reliant on rivals in case relationships became problematic; hence, exit strategies from relationships were important. Third, well-managed tensions helped owner-managers to avoid becoming complacent, and instead, facilitated partners seeking to add value to customers for a win/win symbiotic relationship. Consequently, such explanations provided the support for Hypothesis 2 in respect of the positive relationship between competitive intensity and engaging in cooperation activities.

However, the field interviews suggested that international entrepreneurs' perceptions towards the degree of competitive intensity faced had changed following the crisis, namely, due to the pivot behaviour in re-evaluating efforts in targeting respective product-markets. To illustrate, prior to the lockdowns, a degree of well-managed cooperation helped maintain service relationships to local customers (wine tours, cafes/restaurants, etc.). Indeed, without knowing what rivals offered, it would be difficult to make recommendations to customers and add value across

coopetition partners. Of course, if a vineyard produced the same wine varietal as certain rivals and/or had their own café/restaurant etc., less reciprocation via recommendations would be likely. As such, the focus had been to build social capital with complementary partners as indirect rivals (like producing different varietals), while still maintaining cordial relations with direct competitors due to a degree of co-dependency rather than co-destruction. Therefore, the previously mentioned need to pivot behaviour in identifying and exploiting opportunities abroad because of the crisis, affected owner-managers' perceived risks/rewards considerations vis-à-vis the relative effect of competitive intensity across local, national, and especially international markets.

At a local level, in the immediate post-crisis period, wine tours re-started, and tourists returned to clusters. Coopetition relationships in this respect were consistent with the pre-crisis environment. In contrast, efforts to enhance national and more especially international sales meant that owner-managers faced a new competitive environment (or rather “environments”) across their respective product-markets. The net result was that decision-makers still perceived that a coopetition-oriented mindset was important in driving coopetition activities, but the inherent competitive intensity varied across different product-markets. To illustrate, attempts to move from a passive to more active export intensity would result in owner-managers facing different perceived risks/rewards considerations vis-à-vis the respective rivalry encountered. A common initial perception was that such risks/rewards would be most appropriately managed by pursuing export sales via collaboration with the same trustworthy and complementary partners based on social capital developed at a local level. Decision-makers quickly realised the downside was that each of these previously under-resourced, passive exporters, had limited contacts abroad. As such, rivals would all be learning about targeting new export markets at the same time; hence, the field interviews established that international entrepreneurs were also investigating the merits of

engaging with new cooperation partners across product-markets being targeted. They nonetheless recognised that building social capital with trustworthy and complementary cooperation partners would take time to manifest in performance-enhancing strategies across new product-markets. For example, affecting the period that evolved cooperation networks would result in a change from a passive to active export involvement (so the timescale for broader performance targets would also need re-evaluating).

More specifically, the field interviews provided illustrations that a move from a passive to active export involvement would not only take time to occur, but also not necessarily manifest in a forward moving internationalisation process. Indeed, export sales to certain new markets may be intermittent, or could end, and other markets pursued instead. This was largely due to the respective competitive intensity faced in new product-market strategies; hence, emphasising the earlier point regarding the perceived need to potentially change cooperation partners. Two illustrations are especially pertinent, whereby first, if various “complementary” (selling different varieties) cooperation partners from a region came together for a joint promotion in an export market, this may generate more interest than if a single firm operated individualistically. In such circumstances, competitive intensity would be relatively low, and the benefits of a cooperation-oriented mindset manifesting in cooperation activities were self-evident, including among existing network partners. Second, in contrast, there may be instances where buyers like distributors are only prepared to take a single variety from a region, and therefore competitive intensity would be high if rivals produced the same variety. Under such circumstances, it made sense for entrepreneurs’ cooperation-oriented mindsets to lead to engagement with complementary network partners from their cluster selling different varieties (as per the first example); alternatively, to engage with new partners from different clusters. In short, although a cooperation-oriented mindset was evident among

international entrepreneurs, the uncertainty regarding different competitive intensities across changing product-markets and how this would manifest in coopetition activities over time, helped explain the finding for Hypothesis 3.

Discussion

The prior findings lead to revisiting the earlier research question. That is, in an immediate post-crisis environment, to what extent has a coopetition-oriented mindset and an ability to implement associated behaviour, influenced under-resourced international entrepreneurs that were previously passive exporters, to pursue sales abroad more actively? Hence, further discussion of the findings warrants attention to address this question. Commencing with a cautionary issue, the participants in this study exhibited what might be termed as “survivor-bias” following the external shock associated with the COVID-19 crisis. Not least, given that many entrepreneurs faced various hardships or even business closures, plus there was a general need to build resilience (as per Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021a; Ali et al., 2022; Arslan et al., 2022). Despite recognising this contextual issue, it is important to turn to a discussion of the findings in more detail. First, earlier research has tended to largely overlook international entrepreneurs’ coopetition-oriented mindsets; rather, having focused on the outcomes of coopetition (building on Bernal et al., 2002; Chetty & Wilson, 2003; Vanyushyn et al., 2009; Kock et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2019; Crick & Crick, 2022). Unique insights suggest a coopetition-oriented mindset is a potentially important mechanism to facilitate passive exporters’ attempts to overcome limited resources/capabilities and become more active in an immediate post-pandemic environment. However, the findings also suggest the way in which a coopetition-oriented mindset translates into coopetition activities across product-markets needs unpacking.

Therefore, second, new evidence emerges on the impact of competitive intensity regarding cooperation activities among passive exporters. Of course, some degree of competitive intensity is needed for cooperation to exist, namely, so decision-makers can choose between rivals with whom to partner and the extent of involvement. In fact, entrepreneurs need to decide when to attack rather than collaborate with rivals as there are risk/reward considerations and not all competitors are the same (following Cui et al., 2018; Chiambaretto et al., 2020; Yan et al., 2020). This is important, since various earlier cluster-based studies have tended to focus on relatively stable environments featuring entrepreneurs engaged in established cooperation networks (see, Dana et al., 2013; Geldes et al., 2015; Reay et al., 2015; Felzensztein et al., 2018; Granata et al., 2018). For example, such prior studies offer evidence of entrepreneurs sharing knowledge and equipment among trustworthy and complementary partners. Such practices can assist an individual firm's performance, maintain family employment (where applicable), and help sustain a cluster (consistent with Reay et al., 2015). Therefore, practices are based on co-dependency rather than co-destruction.

However, in an immediate post-crisis environment, the findings offer new insights to suggest international entrepreneurs are likely to face varying competitively intensive environments depending on the product-markets targeted in efforts to move from a passive to active export involvement. New light emerged on the benefits of decision-makers effectively managing cooperation tensions arising from changed competitive intensities across product-markets (building on Tidström, 2014; Raza-Ullah et al., 2014; Virtanen & Kock, 2022). However, the findings indicated that potential tensions arising from changed competitive intensities across product-markets are not necessarily negative. That is, when well-managed, such as changing cooperation partners across product-markets (within and between clusters), this can positively motivate network partners to create value for customers like helping to secure new distributor agreements

abroad (following Crick & Crick, 2022). In contrast, the findings also indicate that engaging in co-competition as a mechanism to facilitate enhanced exports may not always lead to internationalisation following a forward moving and rather an intermittent process (building on Pauwels & Matthyssens, 2004; Welch & Welch, 2009; Javalgi et al., 2010; Bernini et al., 2016; Kafouros et al., 2022; Jeong & Yang, 2023). This is largely due to the respective competitive intensities encountered in different export markets. Consequently, the findings suggest the timescale for certain co-competition networks to become effective in export markets is likely to vary, depending on how well co-competition arrangements are managed.

Third, this investigation was underpinned by a relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory (following Lavie, 2006; Barney, 2018), whereby, new light is shed on the value-adding role of symbiotic relationships being a consideration for international entrepreneurs (as per Dana et al., 2008). Additionally, in an immediate post-crisis environment, decision-makers are typically likely to need to exhibit strategic flexibility, be agile, and possess an ability to improvise behaviour across product markets (building on Hughes et al., 2020; Christofi et al., 2021). In short, the findings suggest that a co-competition-oriented mindset that manifests in flexible, agile, and improvised co-competition activities (accounting for varying competitive intensities), can help passive exporters become more active in identifying and exploiting opportunities abroad. In turn, broad support is offered for the co-existing institutional logics noted by Reay et al. (2015) in respect of this symbiotic behaviour, but rather, in a post-pandemic era as opposed to the more stable conditions of a pre-COVID-19 period. That is, the pivoted collaborative practices from a passive to active export involvement following a crisis, help support entrepreneurs' businesses, facilitate employing family members (where applicable); also, sustain rival firms within their cluster.

Conclusions, Implications, and Avenues for Future Research

Conclusions

Underpinned by a relational, stakeholder perspective of a resource-based theoretical lens, the focus of this study involved owner-managers that ordinarily exhibited a collaborative business model largely targeting their domestic market, but who were pivoting from a passive to more active export focus. This was in an immediate post-crisis research setting. First, it is concluded that for under-resourced international entrepreneurs, a cooptation-oriented mindset is likely to positively lead to their engagement in cooptation activities. As such, this appears to be a mechanism to enable under-resourced decision-makers to enhance limited resources/capabilities to address the added potential risks/rewards in increasing export activities. Second, it is concluded that competitive intensity is likely to positively lead to cooptation activities. Not least, because owner-managers need a choice of trustworthy and complementary rivals with whom to form well-managed cooptation partnerships. However, third, it is concluded that international entrepreneurs face different competitive intensities across product-markets and need to choose partners and manage relationships wisely. Fourth, decision-makers need to consider pivoting behaviour; hence, exhibit strategic flexibility, agility, and the ability to improvise. This may result in decision-makers not necessarily following a forward moving internationalisation process. These conclusions lead to the practitioner implications that follow in the next section.

Practitioner Implications

In a generic sense, the prior conclusions suggest that international entrepreneurs are likely to benefit from an ability to transform a cooptation-oriented mindset into effective cooptation activities, namely, that account for the respective competitive intensities they will face across different product-markets. Nevertheless, the reality is that the role of cooptation behaviour in a

transformation from a passive to a more active export focus is potentially time consuming and prone to difficulties. Most notably, developing new cooperation networks based on trust and complementarity is typically not a simple task that can be easily implemented. To illustrate, prior networks may be unsuitable when engaging in more active export strategies. More specifically, the win/win relationships based on social capital in a local, cluster-based network, may not readily translate to the same symbiotic relationships in markets abroad.

For example, previously passive exporters engaged in cooperation and attempting to actively enhance sales abroad, may be learning about new markets at the same time; not least, how competitive intensity may change. This could result in certain existing relationships only operating in specific markets and new ones being formed to address opportunities in other markets. It may also mean a period of trial and error in seeing where trust and complementarity rather than opportunism exists among different partners. As such, this is likely to affect not only with whom to form relationships, but also the extent of that ongoing involvement. Such considerations may also influence a non-linear internationalisation process, such as intermittently entering and exiting export markets, or completely withdrawing, and pursuing others deemed more likely to be beneficial to the partners concerned.

It follows that international entrepreneurs are likely to benefit from networking widely, despite the potential time and cost involved. To reduce search time and costs, wider stakeholders might be able to support networking activities like trade associations or government support providers; that is, via subsidised trade events. In doing so, such stakeholder support to facilitate networking should help decision-makers to obtain relevant knowledge and develop trust via social capital; hence, lead to building complementary symbiotic relationships. Importantly, international entrepreneurs would also likely benefit from the ability to remain strategically flexible, agile, and

that can improvise. Consequently, they can benefit via implementing pivoting strategies as market-led conditions evolve, such as different degrees of competitive intensity impacting competition networks.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

Despite the US wine sector being an appropriate setting for this study, it nonetheless featured a single industry and country context. Moreover, the immediate post-crisis timescale as a contextual contribution suggests the findings may not be fully transferable to other contexts. Consequently, there are opportunities for researchers to investigate other sectors, countries, and temporal contexts. Additionally, although field interviews were undertaken that helped provide insights regarding the core statistical findings, future research might employ in-depth case studies and a longitudinal approach to help explain international entrepreneurs' practices across time periods. Such an opportunity is subject to decision-makers providing the required thickness of data over time to constitute robust case study research. Interestingly, alternative theoretical lenses might offer useful insights regarding certain issues from a different perspective. Given the findings of this investigation, one opportunity involves an institutional lens due to the different competitive intensities that international entrepreneurs perceive in their product-market strategies. Another example involves employing an effectuation/causation lens to examine the role of decision-making among respective international entrepreneurs. However, the identified limitations are not perceived as posing major challenges. Instead, they offer avenues for future studies to help further contribute to the cross-disciplinary international entrepreneurship/international marketing literature.

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Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

This dissertation builds on, and contributes to, seminal and contemporary research in the entrepreneurial marketing literature (for example, Hills & LaForge, 1992; Morris et al., 2002; Hills et al., 2008; Jones & Rowley, 2011; Morgan et al., 2015; Felzensztein, et al., 2018; Kahiya, 2018; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; Morrish et al., 2020; Hamzah et al., 2023). The three papers that provide the substantive basis of this dissertation are underpinned by the relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory (alongside an outside-in lens) (Priem & Butler, 2001; Lavie, 2006; Day, 2014; Barney, 2018). In addition to the theoretical contributions, the adopted research setting provides contextualized practical contributions applicable to smaller-sized firms utilising entrepreneurial marketing activities to manoeuvre the complexities of the competitive business environments in export markets. This is following scale-up activities via enhanced internationalisation in the aftermath of a crisis (the COVID-19 pandemic).

This concluding chapter synthesizes the overall contributions of this dissertation, which are a result of both the individual contributions of each of the three papers and the interplay between them such that each paper builds on the results of the preceding paper(s). In other words, instead of all three papers using the same starting point to contribute to the entrepreneurial marketing literature, this dissertation is unique in that the value provided by each paper utilises the insights of the preceding paper(s). As such, the following sections provide an integrated synthesis of the theoretical and practical contributions of all three papers as they relate to the overarching research question presented early on in the Abstract section of this dissertation (and re-iterated in Chapter 1): *How can owner-managers of under-resourced, smaller-sized, marginal exporters*

utilise facets of entrepreneurial marketing activities to expand sales abroad in a post-COVID environment? The following section briefly examines the under-researched avenues of interest, followed by a synthesis of contributions to knowledge connecting to the explained avenues. The dissertation concludes with identified limitations as well as opportunities for future research.

Under-researched Entrepreneurial Marketing Avenues

Entrepreneurial marketing research (Hamzah et al., 2023; Hills et al., 2008; Jones & Rowley, 2011; Kahiya, 2020; Morrish et al., 2020) and resource-based theory (Barney, 1991; 2018; Day, 2014; Helfat et al., 2023; Lavie, 2006; Priem & Butler, 2001) have received attention in various studies throughout the last few decades. However, four under-researched avenues emerge in the cross-disciplinary entrepreneurial marketing literature when considering this dissertation's overarching research question. This section briefly showcases and re-iterates selected under-researched entrepreneurial marketing issues in order to further contextualise the theoretical contributions synthesized in the next section.

First, prior research considering the interplay between the performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities and the competitive business environment tends to be domestically focused (for example, Morgan et al., 2015; Morrish et al., 2010). Hence, the mentioned interplay considering entrepreneurs' pursuing exports markets, including via stakeholder support (Chaudhry & Crick, 1998; Crick & Chaudhry, 2000; Crick, 2007; Brache & Felzensztein, 2019; Kahiya, 2018), and leading to intermittent internationalisation processes (Kafouros et al., 2022; Crick et al., 2020; 2023a), is under-researched. Capturing the performance benefits of well-managed entrepreneurial marketing behaviours across product-markets requires manoeuvring challenging competitive business environments. The mechanisms facilitating this in a post-crisis context featuring a move to export markets were under-researched prior to this study.

Second, moderating factors are found to affect the performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing behaviours (Alqahtani et al., 2023; Crick et al., 2023b), yet mixed evidence pertaining to environmental forces (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005; Rauch et al., 2009; Boso et al., 2012; Alqahtani et al., 2023) calls for further unpacking the role of moderators. Connecting with the first point, such moderating effects are further under-researched in export markets (building on Cadogan et al., 2003; Morgan & Anokhin, 2020). Not least, competitive intensity was found to have varying effects across different business environments (for example, Slater & Narver, 1994; Cadogan et al., 2003; Boso et al., 2012). Hence, this study identified the need to unpack the role of moderators while considering the research setting (i.e., under-resourced, smaller-firms manoeuvring competitive environments across markets to further internationalise in a post-COVID era). That is, because the effects of moderators can be context-specific (e.g., competitive intensity) (Crick & Crick, 2021a; Alqahtani et al., 2023).

Third, giving attention to context is needed when studying firms' internationalisation processes (Reuber et al., 2017). In addition to being under-researched, the study of context gains further importance given the recent business disruptions and global contingencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic (building on Crick et al., 2023a; Felzensztein & Tretiakov, 2023; Kahiya & Delaney, 2023; Zahra, 2021). Connecting to the first and second points, the temporal context can have implications on the competitive business environment. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic's domestic lockdowns led owner-managers to utilise digitalisation to target customers across product-markets (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021; Ul Zia et al., 2023). Similarly, this study identified that the post-pandemic era potentially carries its own unique implications for the competitive business environment (e.g., in export markets), which potentially affects

internationalisation processes and outcomes of smaller firms' utilisation of entrepreneurial marketing.

Fourth, connecting with the relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory following an “outside-in” perspective (Lavie, 2006; Day, 2014; Barney, 2018), considering only “inside-the-firm” issues, which are typically associated with seminal resource-based theory (Barney, 1991), fails to adequately explain firm performance. This is especially important and relevant given the dissertation's research context and emphasis on the studied role of the competitive environment; hence the role of market-led factors is essential for this investigation.

Synthesis of the Theoretical Contributions to the Literature

Considering the four mentioned under-researched aspects of the marketing/entrepreneurship interface, this dissertation investigates how under-resourced, smaller-sized firms, that traditionally focused on their domestic markets, can actively move from passive to active export, hence scaling up their internationalisation by utilising entrepreneurial marketing behaviours and overcoming resource-deficiency and environmental challenges in an immediate post-COVID era. Considering the dissertation's three papers in tandem, six main avenues of theoretical contributions are synthesized below, which connect both to the entrepreneurial marketing literature and resource-based theory. The six avenues are (1) the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing activities and firm performance. (2) Environmental and competitor-oriented contingency factors (i.e., competitive intensity and cooptation, respectively) affecting the mentioned relationship. (3) The coupling/embeddedness of the mentioned contingency factors within the research context/setting. (4) The interplay between the mentioned contingency factors, studied separately but connected to the initially-studied moderating roles affecting the entrepreneurial marketing-performance relationship. (5) The relationship between the competitive

environment and outcomes of a competition-oriented mindset (i.e., how competitive intensity affects pivoting cooperation behaviours). (6) Contributions to resource-based theory. The six mentioned contributions are intertwined with the temporal contribution related to the context of the research, which is an immediate post-crisis environment featuring under-resourced, independent, smaller-sized firms with a passive export involvement, actively moving to export markets.

First, while the performance-enhancing outcomes of utilising entrepreneurial marketing activities are well-documented in the literature (see, for example, Morris et al., 2002; Hills et al., 2008; Sadiku-Dushi et al., 2019; Eggers et al., 2020), the research setting features a unique post-crisis context in which internationalisation activities face a challenging competitive environment. As such, the research investigates whether the facilitating role of entrepreneurial marketing activities is enduring and/or conditional. The first and second papers unpack this relationship and contribute to the literature by identifying the efficacy of entrepreneurial marketing activities as enduring but conditional on being well-managed. Well-managed entrepreneurial marketing activities effectively mitigate the threat of contingency factors in a post-crisis environment, such as competitive intensity, which is traditionally expected to unhinge owner-managers' intended performance outcomes (Cadogan et al., 2003; Boso et al., 2012). Furthermore, nuanced insights emerge relating to the specific entrepreneurial marketing activities that are more likely to drive performance (i.e., opportunity focus, innovativeness, resource leveraging) and others that are more susceptible to competitive intensity (i.e., calculated risk-taking, innovativeness) following decision-makers' business model/strategy pivot after a major crisis. The temporal consideration provides a nuanced contribution to research focused on the entrepreneurial marketing-firm performance relationship by unpacking its nuanced behaviour and underlying driving mechanisms

in an under-researched context (building upon Hills & LaForge, 1992; Hills & Hultman, 2011; Alqahtani & Uslay, 2020; Morrish et al., 2020).

Second, the first two papers further unpack the entrepreneurial marketing-firm performance relationship by examining the role of moderators (competitive intensity and cooperation, respectively), which are expected to influence the relationship in different ways (Alqahtani et al., 2023; Crick et al., 2023b). While competitive intensity as an environmental contingency (Cadogan et al., 2003; Morgan & Anokhin, 2020) in a post-COVID context did unhinge some performance prospects of entrepreneurial marketing activities, when such activities are effectively managed, they are likely to drive the performance of owner-managers who are actively moving to export markets. That is, following an environmental shock, dark-side (opportunistic) practices in export markets, not least due to competitive intensity, can be overcome when entrepreneurial marketing behaviours are well-managed (building on Felzensztein et al., 2014b). This finding supports the mixed nature of the findings in previous studies by further showing how the moderating role of competitive intensity is context-specific (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2005; Rauch et al., 2009; Boso et al., 2012; Crick & Crick, 2021a; Alqahtani et al., 2023).

The second examined moderator is cooperation behaviour, which was expected to facilitate the entrepreneurial marketing-firm performance relationship (following Bengtsson & Kock, 2000; Ritala, 2012; Bouncken et al., 2015; Chim-Miki & Batista-Canino, 2017; Hoffmann et al., 2018; Estrada & Dong, 2020). Building social capital via network relationships can be advantageous as it facilitates access to and mobilization of resources (Etemad et al., 2001; Felzensztein et al., 2019; Freeman et al., 2006; Lamine, 2017; Lamine et al., 2015; 2016; Spence et al., 2008; Zahoor et al., 2023), especially for newly-exporting firms, which are often resource-limited (Riding et al., 2008;

2012). A counter-intuitive result specified how cooptation does not facilitate entrepreneurial marketing activities of internationalising entrepreneurs in a post-crisis environment. Interestingly, the research explains how international entrepreneurs face varying institutional conditions and competitively intensive environments depending on the product-markets targeted. That is, the different competitive intensities in domestic and export markets affect cooptation behaviours in different ways. As such, when entrepreneurs pivot facets of their business models to move from passive to active export involvement, cooptation behaviour also needs to be pivoted given the differing competitive environments across markets. That is, decisions regarding with whom to form mutually beneficial, complementary relationships and the magnitude of involvement will differ in domestic and export markets. As a result, internationalising entrepreneurs are more prone to the potential dark side of cooptation in export markets (building on Morgan et al., 2015; Crick & Crick, 2021b) as cooptation activities need to be effectively pivoted, which is further complicated by both the time-consuming nature of building social capital and the imperative of choosing the “appropriate” rivals to build cooptation relationships with (following Felzensztein et al., 2022).

Third, it is important to emphasize how the effects of the mentioned contingency factors (i.e., competitive intensity and cooptation activities) on the entrepreneurial marketing-firm performance relationship are context-dependent. That is, the research is situated in a post-COVID era, which leads to unique competitive environments affecting internationalising activities. Various stimuli for internationalisation exist, such as owner-managers’ growth-oriented objectives and perception of limited domestic demand (Leonidou, 1995; Bell et al., 1998; Crick et al., 2000; Young et al., 2000; Spence & Crick, 2006; Jones et al., 2011; Kahiya, 2020). In addition to the two mentioned stimuli, entrepreneurs’ need to persevere and build resilience in the face of challenges

and crises is evidenced in the literature (Lamine et al., 2014; Orhan, 2016; Battisti & Deakins, 2017; Huang et al., 2018; Stevenson et al., 2018; Morrish & Jones, 2020). Hence, it is important to consider owner-managers' competitive environment and internationalisation process in the studied post-crisis context. The nuanced effects of competitive intensity on specific facets of entrepreneurial marketing activities are a result of owner-managers attempting to leverage resources in export markets by building cooperation relationships, which is expected to lead to performance-enhancing outcomes if well-managed (Bouncken et al., 2015; Gernsheimer et al., 2021; Crick et al., 2023a; Meena et al., 2023). However, when pivoting business models in an immediate post-COVID-19 environment to move from a passive to active export involvement, the resource leveraging process via cooperation behaviours is challenged due to both the need for new cooperation relationships in export markets and the varying competitive intensities across markets.

To further expand this point, it is important to note that decision-makers engaged in cooperation in two distinct ways: they returned to work with prior cooperation partners in domestic markets and engaged with new cooperation partners in export markets. The outcomes of domestic cooperation engagements resulted in the expected positive outcomes (building on Dana et al., 2013; Reay et al., 2015; Granata et al., 2018). However, cooperation engagement in export markets was prone to dark side practices as building effective, trust-based relationships with rivals is challenging (extending Morgan et al., 2015; Crick & Crick, 2021b). This highlights the contrasting role cooperation plays in domestic and export markets (building on Felzensztein et al., 2014a; Felzensztein et al., 2010; Geldes et al., 2015), which affects entrepreneurial marketing activities differently across these markets. As a result, cooperation relationships of entrepreneurs actively expanding efforts to pursue export markets in a post-crisis context will take time to become effective (following Crick & Crick, 2021b), given that they are built on trust and complementarity

(Felzensztein et al., 2022). However, a coopetition-oriented mindset can be impactful in helping passive exporters identify and exploit opportunities in export markets. That is, a coopetition-oriented mindset can manifest in flexible, agile, and improvised coopetition activities that account for varying competitive intensities across targeted product-markets. To re-iterate, this discussion highlights the embeddedness of the mentioned contingency factors in the research context.

Fourth, the research contributions extend to the interplay between competitive intensity and coopetition, which leads some owner-managers to follow an intermittent rather than linear internationalisation path in a post-crisis environment (building on Pauwels & Matthyssens, 2004; Welch & Welch, 2009; Javalgi et al., 2010; Bernini et al., 2016; Kafouros et al., 2022; Jeong & Yang, 2023). Connecting with the previous (third) point above, the resulting intermittent process is explained by international entrepreneurs facing varying levels of competitive intensity across product-markets, which affects the nature of their coopetition partners. To re-iterate, pivoted coopetition practices in the move from passive to active export activities in an immediate post-COVID environment can take time to achieve benefits, hence, it is sometimes unlikely to follow a forward-moving process (extending Bernini et al., 2016; Kafouros et al., 2022; Jeong & Yang, 2023). For instance, well-managed coopetition arrangements in export markets will likely lead to a shorter timescale for coopetition networks to become effective. Therefore, it is imperative for international entrepreneurs to effectively manage tensions among coopetition partners across targeted product-markets in an immediate post-COVID era (following Raza-Ullah et al., 2014; Czakon & Czernek, 2016; Virtanen & Kock, 2022).

Fifth, while previous studies focused on the outcomes of coopetition and overlooked the international entrepreneurs' coopetition-oriented mindsets, an important contribution of this dissertation is unpacking the complex relationship between a coopetition-oriented mindset and

coopetition activities (building on Chetty & Wilson, 2003; Vanyushyn et al., 2009; Kock et al., 2010; Ryan et al., 2019), as influenced by the competitive environment (i.e., competitive intensity in export markets) in an immediate post-crisis era. The findings contribute to the entrepreneurial marketing literature by specifying how a coopetition-oriented mindset influences under-resourced international entrepreneurs to actively pursue sales abroad via coopetition behaviours despite the competitive environmental challenges affecting relationship-building in export markets. As such, a coopetition-oriented mindset offers a mechanism for owner-managers to engage in coopetition activities, hence overcoming their limited resources and capabilities to actively enter export markets following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sixth, research undertaken in this dissertation is underpinned by the relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory (alongside an outside-in perspective) (Lavie, 2006; Day, 2014; Barney, 2018; Khan et al., 2023). Specifically, in which the three papers contribute to the enhanced, expanded theory by highlighting the importance of value-adding symbiotic relationships to international entrepreneurs manoeuvring competitive market environments and seeking to enhance firm performance (following Dana et al., 2008). The unique insights of this dissertation extend resource-based theory by unpacking the firm resources-performance relationship distinctively through integrating international (market expansion), social (coopetition behaviours), environmental (competitiveness), and strategic (business model pivot) aspects of the entrepreneurial marketing domain. Furthermore, the research highlights the effects of market-led factors (e.g., the role of competitive intensity in export markets) on performance aspects of entrepreneurial marketing activities, hence decision-makers should exhibit strategic flexibility, agility, and an ability to improvise when pivoting their product-market strategies (extending Priem & Butler, 2001; Hughes et al., 2020; Hagen et al., 2019; Christofi et al., 2021; Nyamrunda &

Freeman, 2021; Zahoor & Lew, 2023). However, pivoting strategies in export markets can take time and follow iterations before desired outcomes are achieved in a post-crisis environment.

It is important to note that iterative attempts and time are not enough; to achieve performance outcomes, international entrepreneurs need to effectively manage their business model pivoting activities. As such, owner-managers are best served by not rushing to pursue new opportunities with ineffective cooperation partners, in addition to having exit strategies enabling a quick re-pivot of facets of the business model when cooperation relationships are ineffective. Thus, when international entrepreneurs account for market-led environmental conditions and remain strategically flexible, their ability to pivot strategically is more likely to lead to effective performance outcomes (as per Priem & Butler, 2001). Finally, the theoretical explanation of how coopetition behaviour can enhance the performance of owner-managers entering export markets in an immediate post-crisis environment supplements the expanded resource-based theory. To illustrate, for a coopetition-oriented mindset to lead to flexible, agile, and enhanced coopetition activities, it should account for varying competitive intensities across product-markets, which consequently leads to active identification and exploitation of opportunities abroad. Moreover, collaborative practices that are pivoted to account for changes in the competitive environment in the targeted export market help support entrepreneurs' businesses, sustain rival firms within their cluster, and facilitate employing family members (where applicable), which provide support for the co-existing institutional logics in a post-pandemic era (Reay et al., 2015).

Contributions to Practice and Policy

This dissertation provides owner-managers, decision-makers, and practitioners with unique insights relating to practices within the entrepreneurial marketing domain. That is to say, the theoretical insights of this dissertation suggest that practitioners should consider giving special

consideration to certain aspects of their business activities, behaviours, and strategies. Specifically, the practitioner implications discussed in this section are valuable for under-resourced, international entrepreneurs moving to export markets following a crisis. The mentioned temporal context is given special attention in light of the environmental challenges it entails. The main implications and insights, which aim at elevating performance, relate to managing entrepreneurial marketing activities, competitive intensities, coopetition behaviours, and consequently, the internationalisation process. Each of these four aspects relating to the entrepreneurship/marketing interface applied in a professional setting is explored in turn and within the mentioned context (i.e., under-resourced firms internationalising in an immediate post-COVID-19 environment), followed by policy implications.

First, in terms of managing entrepreneurial marketing activities, and given the facets of behaviour investigated in this research, owner-managers are encouraged to act innovatively, proactively, take calculated risks, and exhibit autonomous and competitively aggressive traits, while striving to create enduring value for their customers. That is, even after a period of elevated uncertainty experienced in a crisis, and with the challenges brought upon by entering export markets, international entrepreneurs can elevate performance by properly utilising entrepreneurial marketing activities. Effectively employing such activities is key, and precautions ought to be taken for some entrepreneurial marketing behaviours. Specifically, engaging in new and different product-marketing strategies requires pivoting aspects of the decision-makers' entrepreneurial marketing behaviours. Innovative thinking and behaviour, in addition to taking calculated risks, are susceptible to markets with strong competitive rivalry. To mitigate potential impairment to performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities, decision-makers can engage,

collaborate, and build partnerships with appropriate stakeholders such as complementary rivals seeking win-win cooperation relationships.

Second, building on the first discussed practical implication, the dark-side (opportunistic) behaviour of rivals in export markets with different competitive intensities can be mitigated by effectively managing entrepreneurial marketing activities. Adding to the discussed suggestion to build effective partnerships, strategic flexibility is advised such that decision-makers can pivot facets of their business models to avoid becoming too dependent on newly-formed partnerships. Consequently, exit strategies should be planned to counter environmental turbulence, as the competitive intensity of (unfamiliar) export markets is a key concern.

Third, expanding on the role of cooperation behaviours in the discussed context, actively moving to export markets can be facilitated by a collaborative business model that enables resource-leveraging activities as part of entrepreneurial marketing behaviours. This can help overcome the challenges of the competitive rivalry in such markets. However, cooperation relationships should be carefully managed as building social capital with trustworthy, complementary partners pose a challenge to under-resourced international entrepreneurs. That is to say that a collaborative, rather than individualistic, business model can prove beneficial while maintaining the advised strategic flexibility, agility, and propensity for improvisation, which can manifest in the form of working with different partners in domestic/export markets to minimize risks of dark-side/opportunistic behaviour. As such, owner-managers can expect a lengthy social capital-building process with potentially promising, but delayed performance outcomes.

Finally, given the importance of effectively managing entrepreneurial marketing activities, not least by undergoing a relatively lengthy process of trust-building for cooperation relationships in markets with challenging competitive intensity, the internationalisation process of under-

resourced international entrepreneurs is expected to follow a pattern of trial and error. As such, in an effort to avoid opportunism, choosing whom to form a relationship with, and the extent of involvement, will likely lead to a non-linear internationalisation process, characterised by intermittently entering and exiting export markets. The emphasized effective management of entrepreneurial marketing activities is key to elevating the performance prospects of smaller-sized firms scaling up export sales following an environmental shock.

While practitioners are advised to focus on collaborative efforts given the importance of effectively managing entrepreneurial marketing activities to build coopetition relationships, the role of policymakers in facilitating this process can be captured by enabling social networks to be built across markets. This can help improve the internationalisation process and reduce the risk, time, and cost involved. For instance, subsidised trade events organised by trade associations or government support providers can help facilitate network-building activities. This can aid international entrepreneurs in obtaining relevant knowledge, developing trust, and building social capital with “the appropriate rivals” leading to complementary, symbiotic relationships that are more likely to result in a win-win coopetition situation, hence facilitating internationalisation.

Limitations and Areas for Future Research

The research of this dissertation is not without limitations, which rather than being concerns, are conceptual, theoretical, and methodological matters that, when addressed, can help generate further research insights. As such, avenues for future research are also examined below, which present researchers with opportunities to further contribute to the entrepreneurial marketing literature by complementing the three papers of this dissertation and building on its contributions. The potential limitations and proposed directions for future studies identified in this section relate to diverse research considerations such as (1) boundary conditions (spatial, temporal contexts), (2)

contingency factors (moderators), (3) methodology (method, measurements, sample, data), and (4) theoretical underpinning, all being discussed in turn.

First, the research setting in which the dissertation's three conceptual frameworks were tested featured a specific temporal context (immediate post-COVID era) and spatial context (wine industry in the US). In addition, the research relies on cross-sectional quantitative and qualitative data from smaller-sized wineries. As such, while the empirical context was ideal for testing the conceptual frameworks, hence leading to unique contributions, it also presents a potential limitation and a possible boundary condition as findings might not be fully transferable to other temporal and spatial contexts. Therefore, opportunities are presented to test the conceptual frameworks in a more stable post-COVID era, and in a variety of countries and industries where decision-makers are known to implement entrepreneurial marketing activities, build coopetition relationships, and target export markets. This can help ensure the contributions of this research are transferable. For instance, Diaz Hermelo and Vassolo (2012) found that industry effects were more important than the country effects, hence comparative studies can utilize multi-industry samples to assess the generalizability of findings across spatial contexts. Conversely, the conceptual frameworks could potentially be found to behave differently due to a plethora of factors relating to the studied context's competitive business environment, institutional conditions, cultural setting, economic factors, etc. For instance, investigating pivoted coopetition behaviours in export markets might lead to varying consequences on the performance effects of entrepreneurial marketing activities in wine industries across countries with varying individualistic/collaborative dominant cultures or business environments.

Similar to the mentioned potential alternative spatial context, a possibly interesting alternative temporal context relates to the strategic flexibility and business model pivoting of the

studied firms in a more established post-COVID era, which potentially features varying competitive intensities given the more stable environment. While the studied firms shifted from a collaborative to an individualistic business model during the COVID-19 pandemic, not least aided by digitalisation, and again to a collaborative business model in the immediate post-COVID era, a further study of coopetition behaviours can track the evolution of business models, which might gravitate towards a pre-pandemic, more stable state or settle in a unique “post-new normal” state. These proposed directions for future research investigate the boundary conditions of the dissertation’s findings by assessing the extent to which they sustain or unravel in different spatial and temporal contexts across different cultural, economic, institutional, and competitive settings. This will help define the generalizability and limitations of this research.

Second, the effects of competitive intensity and coopetition on the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing activities and firm performance were unpacked by considering moderation effects on both the individual facets of entrepreneurial marketing and on the entrepreneurial marketing construct as a whole. Our understanding of the factors that enhance or hinder the performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities can be further deepened by examining the potential differential roles that coopetition and competitive intensity play in domestic and export markets. For instance, owner-managers might hold a “dual coopetition capacity” in which they exhibit simultaneous capacities for pivoting cooperation behaviours across domestic and export markets, which consider environmental factors such as varying competitive intensities and institutional conditions. Alternatively, a coopetition capacity might only activate for specific markets (e.g., domestic or export). A related issue is whether prior coopetition experience in a domestic market aids the formation of coopetition relationships in export markets, as “experienced” firms are able to choose complementary partners and avoid opportunistic

behaviours, perhaps leading to the mentioned “dual coopetition capacity” in which the internationalisation path is less complex (e.g., intermittent) and more positively linear. This can help identify strategically flexible firms characterised by an ability to pivot facets of their business models, not least their coopetition behaviours, in order to operate individualistically and/or collaboratively as necessary.

In addition to expanding the investigations of the moderating roles of coopetition and competitive intensity acting on the entrepreneurial marketing-firm performance relationship, factors such as digitalisation could be examined in the studied context. While the digital acceleration following the COVID-19 pandemic (Zahra, 2021; Felzensztein & Tretiakov, 2023) aided firms in establishing online sales, the impact of digitalisation on firms’ internationalisation path can help unpack the performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities. As such, the moderating role of digitalisation can be an important aspect for understanding owner-managers’ active move to export markets, especially as it relates to entrepreneurial marketing facets such as resource leveraging.

To reiterate, the role of different contingencies, including both firm factors and environmental factors, can be investigated to aid theoretical development by specifying the conditions affecting the entrepreneurial marketing-firm performance relationship. This future research direction will help refine the boundaries of this relationship by understanding the conditions under which the performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities are more pronounced or restrained, which can also guide practitioner implications.

Third, in terms of the methodological approach adopted in this dissertation, several limitations and ensuing opportunities for alternative methodological choices related to the method, measurements, sample, and data are presented in turn. Starting with the method, while the featured

temporal context is fundamentally linked to the theoretical contributions, adopting a longitudinal design, rather than the utilised cross-sectional design, can help address the temporal dynamic affecting the internationalisation path of smaller firms, which the chosen cross-sectional design fails to capture. For instance, a longitudinal study can answer pertinent research questions related to whether the move to active exports, which stemmed from a need for resilience following the COVID-19 pandemic, is enduring in a more established post-COVID era. Another potential question relates to whether strategic flexibility and pivoting aspects of business models, not least cooperation behaviours, lead to an established presence in export markets following the research results indicating an intermittent internationalisation path.

In addition, insights relating to the delayed performance outcomes of the time-consuming cooperation-building efforts can potentially help further unpack the entrepreneurial marketing activities-firm performance relationship in an established post-COVID context. While this consideration is important given the potentially varying competitive environment of a more established post-COVID era, adopting a longitudinal design is potentially resource-intensive and may be constrained due to the smaller size of the studied firms and their typically limited resources.

Furthermore, while the single-source survey data was complemented by field interviews to offer further insights related to the survey findings, future research can utilise in-depth, multi-source data, perhaps using the discussed longitudinal design, to provide further insights into the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing activities and firm performance. For instance, qualitative research involving case studies and utilising a thick description of data, subject to availability, can provide deeper explanations of the how's and why's of the studied relationships. This is pertinent for expanding on the studied moderator effects impacting the internationalisation

path and process across temporal and spatial contexts, especially given the potential changes in the competitive environment across markets in an established post-COVID era.

Turning to the measurements used, the dissertation integrates quantitative and qualitative research methods, which helps capture the breadth of quantitative data and some of the depth of qualitative insights. However, limitations are potentially present in terms of the adopted measurements. While the quantitative survey utilised established measurement scales, these chosen scales may pose challenges when trying to compare results across studies. For example, different performance metrics could be used in different studies, emphasizing financial performance, growth, etc. To capture multiple levels of the performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities, future research can assess the impact on different performance measures separately, which can lead to a nuanced understanding of the impact of entrepreneurial marketing activities on facets of firm performance. Similarly, researchers can unpack facets of entrepreneurial marketing activities and adopt multiple forms of this construct by utilising different measurement scales to determine which aspects are most likely to drive facets of firm performance.

In terms of the sample, one limitation relates to the under-resourced, smaller-sized, independent nature of the surveyed wineries. Larger firms that are less resource-constrained might experience different internationalisation paths and competition behaviours as their performance in new, export markets and response to varying competitive intensities might differ. As such, future research can consider a sample featuring firms of different sizes (e.g., micro, small, and medium-sized) and/or types (e.g., family firms, growth-oriented firms, and “lifestyle” firms). Furthermore, a limiting aspect of this dissertation is using key respondents, despite its benefits in serving the specified research purpose. As such, researchers can utilise data from multiple respondents, such as cooperation partners, in addition to the focal firm.

A final methodological consideration relates to the self-reported, single-source data utilised in both the survey and field interviews. To circumvent this limitation, future research can utilise additional secondary data, subject to gaining access, such as archival, “objective” sources. Connecting to a previous point, in-depth case studies with thick description of data can help mitigate this limitation. Moreover, follow-up interviews were not conducted in this research, which also constitutes a further methodological consideration for future research such that probing and confirming the results can be made possible.

Fourth, the relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory (with an outside-in lens) theoretically underpins this research, which explains the studied relationships from this specific perspective given its underlying assumptions and scope. However, a different theoretical lens can be utilised to further contribute to the cross-disciplinary international entrepreneurship/international marketing literature by unveiling unique insights relating to the effective management of entrepreneurial marketing activities leading to performance outcomes. For instance, an institutional perspective can underpin a study of how the “rules of the game” affect entrepreneurs’ decision-making considerations in different contexts, which include, as mentioned, different spatial (industries, countries) and temporal (established post-COVID era) contexts. While this dissertation mainly focused on competitive aspects of the business environment in export markets, institutional challenges can potentially affect performance outcomes of entrepreneurial marketing activities as different countries and industries are governed by possibly varying institutional conditions. Moreover, an effectuation lens could be useful for examining under-resourced entrepreneurs’ decision-making process across research settings featuring different spatial and temporal contexts. Furthermore, a focus on research orchestration and/or dynamic capabilities can help unfold how entrepreneurial marketing activities are utilised across markets,

not least by pivoting facets of business models as a reflection of strategic flexibility and agility. Lastly, a social network lens can help better understand the challenges facing the formation of coopetition relationships (e.g., collaborations, partnerships, support networks) in domestic and export markets, which depends on building social capital. This analysis can also help investigate whether an enduring “coopetition experience” can be gained, and if so, how it can be utilised to enter export markets. Applying complementary theoretical lenses can help overcome the boundary conditions of resource-based theory and unravel unique insights about the studied relationships.

Given the complex and dynamic landscape of entrepreneurial marketing, researchers are encouraged to explore these promising avenues for future research, which can potentially lead to valuable insights for academics, practitioners, and policymakers.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this dissertation investigated the following fundamental research question: *How can owner-managers of under-resourced, smaller-sized, marginal exporters utilise facets of entrepreneurial marketing activities to expand sales abroad in a post-COVID environment?* The question was only partly answered in the first paper, leading to further investigations of how international entrepreneurs can utilise coopetition relationships to overcome environmental challenges exacerbated by varying competitive intensities between domestic and export markets. Subsequently, the findings of the second paper contributed more answers to the overarching research question, but in turn emphasized the need to further understand how competitive intensity affects coopetition behaviours, starting with how it affects the relationship between a coopetition-oriented mindset and coopetition behaviour, which was examined in the third paper. The complementarities of the three papers culminated in a multi-faceted answer to the dissertation’s central research question. Given the intricacies demonstrated by the progression of this research

and the mentioned connectedness between its three papers, this dissertation presents a continuation of decades of entrepreneurial marketing research aiming at enriching theory and providing practitioners with valuable insights.

As a concluding note, this dissertation's research is underpinned by a relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory. The focus was on owner-managers of smaller, under-resourced firms focused on domestic markets, who were pivoting to actively move to export markets. The research context featured an immediate post-pandemic setting. Briefly, it is concluded that well-managed entrepreneurial marketing activities can withstand environmental challenges faced in export markets, not least due to varying competitive intensities. Furthermore, the dissertation concluded that building cooperation relationships can help under-resourced firms enter export markets via an often-intermittent internationalisation process reflecting strategic flexibility in a competitive environment following a crisis. In conclusion, following the relational, stakeholder perspective of resource-based theory, owner-managers of smaller firms can utilise entrepreneurial marketing activities to enhance their resources, not least by pivoting facets of their business models to build value-adding symbiotic relationships across product-markets, hence facilitating enhanced internationalisation.

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