

IN TERMS OF MARKETING PROFICIENCY AND ORIENTATION, DOES ETHICAL STEWARDSHIP PLAY A MEDIATING FUNCTION AMONG ETHIOPIA'S SMES SEGMENT?

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Abstract: *There are significant problems with SME industry's management standards, ethical stewardship, marketing competence, and orientation, as well as inadequacies in innovation, a lack of venture savvy, marketing, and marketing flair, as well as problems with technical experience and HR administration. With ethical stewardship acting as a mediating factor, this study will investigate the effect of marketing talent and direction on venture success: the state of a select group of Ethiopian SME sectors. Using surveys and questionnaires to gather data, the study used a quantitative research design method. SME owners and leaders of the job opportunity creation and proficiency offices in both zones and towns are purposefully chosen to participate in this study through random sampling and purposeful sampling, and they are asked to complete questionnaires. Given the extent of the Zone, the researcher will pick five towns to study: Nagele, Adola, Shakiso, Bore, and Haro Wachu. The sample size was determined to be 382 responders in total. Due to Yamane's (1967) simplicity of use, the sample size will be determined by taking into account the anticipated total population of 2,322 business owners, job creators, and competent office executives in 5 towns. For the data analysis in the meta analysis, the random effect model was employed. The impact of marketing talent and direction on venture success was examined in this case using meta analysis, which also used forest plot, funnel plot, moderation analysis, publishing bias based on effect size, and ethical stewardship as a mediating factor.*

Keywords: *marketing proficiency, marketing orientation, ethical stewardship, sustainability of venture*

INTRODUCTION

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are crucial to regional and national economic growth in both high- and low-income nations today. Also, they play a significant role in the growth of an economy's GDP, the alleviation of poverty, the equitable distribution of income, tax receipts, export sustainability, domestic savings, and job creation (Wakjira & Kant, 2022). Several researchers and decision-makers acknowledge that marketing innovation is essential to the success of today's civilizations due to its demand and consequences on economic growth, technological improvement, and new market prospects (Schlepphorst et al., 2020). So, it is assumed that in order for today's youth to succeed in life, they must possess marketing knowledge and orientation. These are thought of as 21st-century competencies. Finding the motivation to found a new company is one of the obstacles in marketing innovation that cannot be avoided.

Jufri and Wirawan (2018) claimed that toddlers acquire marketing skills through games and develop their self-employment responsibilities in society. This showed how marketing expertise is necessary for a company to be sustainable and the foundation for newer folks to start a business. As a result, it continues to be an issue in Ethiopia, particularly in the research zones of the Guji Zone. According to a number of academics, orientation is the propensity or desire to organize, control, and master concepts or organizations as quickly and independently as feasible. This definition fits with marketing proficiency. According to Shane et al. (2020), marketing orientations can be categorized into fundamental (vision, drive, locus of control, passion, desire for achievement, and need for self rule) and mission categories (self-efficacy and task-specificity). Schlepphorst et al. (2020) defined intention as an ambition that led to actual activity and was motivated by a number of factors. Studies by Lang

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and Liu and Atienza-Sahuquillo (2017) and others have shown that marketing goals affect an enterprise's sustainability (2019).

Furthermore, it is thought that developing into a successful marketing innovator requires a strong commitment to ethical stewardship. The current issue on the global stage, according to Asbari, is whether a business or organization can thrive in a setting of increasing competition (2020). In this scenario, the leader acts as the organization's main decision- and policy-maker. Leaders must have the ability, knowledge, competency, and plan necessary to direct and steer the organization toward success (Astuti et al. 2020). Generally speaking, a variety of factors could have an impact on a venture's success and viability. These factors affect people's ability to convert ideas into actions, such as marketing acumen, marketing drive, and ethical stewardship (Kagnew, 2018; Ahmad & Ahmad, 2021).

The sustainability of the small and mid-size firm (SME) sector in Ethiopia, notably in the remote Guji zone, which is home to the country's capital, regrettably suffers from a lack of marketing expertise and drive, which stops them from turning a profit. Due to this, the current study will evaluate the effects of marketing aptitude and emphasis on the viability of business ventures in the SME segment in the case of Guji Zone oromia regional states, Ethiopia, with ethical stewardship acting as a mediating element.

As the international economy continues to move toward deeper integration, the capacity of Micro and Small Sized Businesses (MSEs) to engage in the global marketplace will present some of the biggest opportunities (Wakjira, & Kant, 2022). It is commonly known that SMEs are contributing more than ever before to the creation of jobs, money, and innovation (Asefa & Kant, 2022). Yet, there are significant issues with this industry's management standards, ethical stewardship, marketing prowess, marketing orientation, and inadequacies in innovation, venture savvy, practical understanding, and human resource management (Adula et. al. 2022). As a result, many businesses are unable to grow and realize their full potential (Kagnew, 2018; Ahmad & Ahmad, 2021).

Yet, a number of socioeconomic, social, and political circumstances with varied degrees of severity impact nations all over the world, not just those in the global south, which are not excluded (Schlepphorst et. al., 2020). These countries' capacity to grow sustainably is negatively impacted by the myriad economic, social, and political problems they are presently facing, particularly the high unemployment rate they currently face. As a result, unemployment has spread globally in the late twentieth century, and a Malaysian study indicated that the problem is becoming more complex every year. The labor market in Malaysia is plagued by underemployment, unemployment, and rural-to-urban migration (Hui Lim & Ban Teoh, 2021).

Finding a solution to the unemployment problem in this case depends heavily on the SME sector. For the past few years, this fact has caused an increase in SME trends worldwide (Wakjira & Kant, 2022). This type of business may be formed with relatively little start-up money, which is why the majority of SME venture owners opt to run it. Children and others, 2022 Yet, despite the fact that many academics have concentrated their attention on evaluating the significance of the SME segment in supporting national economic development, including lowering the jobless rate, the segment's viability is still in question. The viability of the SME sector has been the subject of several studies. One study, for instance, looked at how marketing orientation affects promotion. For example, a study on the effect of marketing orientation on fostering interest using Indonesia as an example discovered that people are not interested in things if they lack the motivation to pursue them (Abdul Al & Mostafa, 2019 and Putra & Adnyani, 2021).

In addition, the research on the effect of ethical stewardship on intangible assets in Jordan (Zubi & Khalid, 2022) revealed that this influence is significant and advantageous. The current study will combine the effects of marketing expertise and marketing orientation on the viability of SME ventures with the mediating importance of ethical command structure in the case of Guji Zone oromia regional

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state, Ethiopia. Due to theoretical and practical shortcomings, both studies regrettably fail to address this issue. Many factors may, in general, have an impact on the success of organizational effectiveness. The ability to convert ideas into actions is affected by a person's marketing talent, marketing drive, and ethical stewardship (Diabate et al., 2019 & Badr El-Deen & Ali, 2021).

The effectiveness of SME segments in the Guji zone is still weak despite its distance from Ethiopia's center or capital city. Lack of marketing expertise, marketing orientation, and ethical stewardship can all be obstacles to the SME segment's development, keeping them from turning successful ventures. With ethical stewardship serving as a mediator in the case of Guji Zone oromia regional states, Ethiopia, the current study's main objective was to assess the effects of marketing skill and marketing drive on the viability of ventures in the SME segment.

The hypotheses used were:

- 1) H1: Marketing proficiency has a vital effect on Sustainability of venture;
- 2) H2: Marketing orientation has a vital effect on Sustainability of venture;
- 3) H3: Ethical stewardship has a vital effect on Sustainability of venture;
- 4) H4: Ethical stewardship Vitality mediates the relationships among Marketing proficiency and Sustainability of venture;
- 5) H5: Ethical stewardship vitality mediates the relationships among Marketing orientation and Sustainability of venture; and
- 6) H6: Marketing proficiency, Marketing orientation and Ethical stewardship has a positive and vital effect on Sustainability of venture.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

For this study, SME owners and leaders of the job opportunity creation and proficiency offices in both zones and towns were specifically chosen to participate by random sample and purposeful sampling. The researcher will choose 5 towns because the Zone is so big: Nagele, Adola, Shakiso, Bore, and Haro Wachu. The sample size will be 382 respondents in total. calculating the entire population at 2,322 proprietors, proficient office executives, and career opportunities. The Yamane (1967) formula for a finite (known) population will be used to get the sample size (382) and is: $1 + \frac{2,322(0.03)^2}{382}$.

The researcher gathered information for this study using a questionnaire. The study's data collection method of choice is a questionnaire because of the study's large sample size and quantitative character. Every respondent must provide the same set of responses in a random order in order to prevent bias. According to established frameworks, the questionnaire will initially be coded and combined from several topics. As a result, the survey produced informative data that will be required to meet the study's objectives. The surveys will be built on the basis of a five-item Likert scale. A response to each statement will be given on a Likert-type scale with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree."

This methodology is used by researchers, private citizens, private and public organizations, and even governments. This method involves distributing a questionnaire to the pertinent parties and asking them to fill it out and send it back. A questionnaire consists of a number of questions that are printed or typed in a certain order on a form or set of forms. Respondents receive the questionnaire through mail, and are needed to read, comprehend, and answer the questions in the space designated on the actual form. Participants are required to provide their own independent responses to the questions. A questionnaire is a list of questions that are posed to a group of individuals beforehand.

Analysis of data will be made in line with three basic stages: Data preparation, tabulation or presentation of statistics and analysis of relationship of variables as nicely as hypothesis testing. As part of data preparation, the data accumulated from the survey has been compiled, sorted for completeness, checked for errors and omissions and coded to have the required quality, accuracy and

completeness. The data gathered via the questionnaire will explore d by Statistical software AMOS. In this study, the descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency distribution was used to explore the general profile of the participants.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Meta-Analysis of Reviewed Literature

Using visuals, tables, and statistics from the Meta-Essential workbooks makes it simpler to combine and synthesize effect sizes from many studies. The statistical information produced by Meta-Essential for a group of research on the same subject is based on the statistical data from each individual study.

Table 1. Effect Size of Reviewed Studies

#	Study name	Partial Correlation	CI Lower limit	CI Upper limit	Weight
1	Schlepphorst et. al., 2020	0.70	0.50	0.90	2.99%
2	Wakjira, & Kant, 2022	0.80	0.64	0.96	4.13%
3	Asefa & Kant, 2022	0.75	0.36	1.14	0.91%
4	Hui Lim & Ban Teoh, 2021	0.82	0.78	0.86	11.36%
5	Child et al., 2022	0.68	0.62	0.74	9.94%
6	Putra & Adnyani, 2021	0.72	0.66	0.78	9.77%
7	Zubi & Khalid, 2022	0.86	0.83	0.89	11.76%
8	Diabate et al., 2019	0.66	0.56	0.76	6.85%
9	Badr El-Deen & Ali, 2021	0.74	0.67	0.81	9.35%
10	Adula et. al. 2022	0.80	0.75	0.85	10.73%
11	Ahmad & Ahmad, 2021	0.78	0.73	0.83	10.39%
12	Kant, 2023	0.84	0.81	0.87	11.83%

Source: Meta Esesntial Output (2023)

The researchers developed a forest plot to illustrate the meta-analysis to visualize the association combining effect estimation and heterogeneity among the used studies.

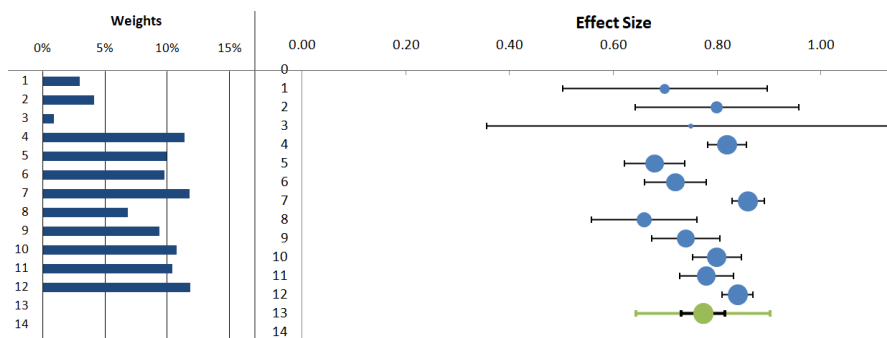


Figure 1. Forest Plot

Source: Meta Essential Output (2023)

As stated in Table 1 above, the plot area findings were determined using a random effect model and a 95% confidence interval. The combined coefficient of determination established by the researcher through plot area is 0.75 in the form of partial correlation since the scholar used the n (number of samples) and r (correlation) used by earlier researchers in the study that was used by the scholars. The P-value for the meta-analysis model was 0.000, (p=0.000 0.05). It suggests that the data

was significantly heterogeneous or that they weren't exactly homogeneous. Thus, the combined effect size model with the random effect was adopted.

Also, due to heterogeneity, the I2 magnitude was found to be 95.51%. I2 exceeds a specified threshold (25%).

Table 2. Meta-Analysis Model

Model	Random effects model
Combined Effect Size	
Partial Correlation	0.77
Z-value	40.27
One-tailed p-value	0.000
Number of incl. studies	12
Heterogeneity	
I ²	81.07%
T ²	0.00
T	0.06

Source: Meta Essential Output (2023)

The figure above displays a summary of the effect's size. meta-analysis The left image shows the eleven objects that were looked at. The forest plot is made up of a variety of elements, including the lower limit at the left end, the upper limit at the right end, and a bullet with different sizes in the middle, whose breadth symbolizes the weight sizes and whose position denotes the strength of each study's influence. Partial Correlation was founded as 0.77, showed a strong effect size. Random effects model showed the Heterogeneity because 1² value is 81.07%.

Meta Analysis for Intermediate studies

The use of a method to try to detect and take into account systematic differences in the magnitude of the effect or outcome under investigation is known as "moderator analysis" in the context of a meta-analysis.

Table 3. Moderator Analysis

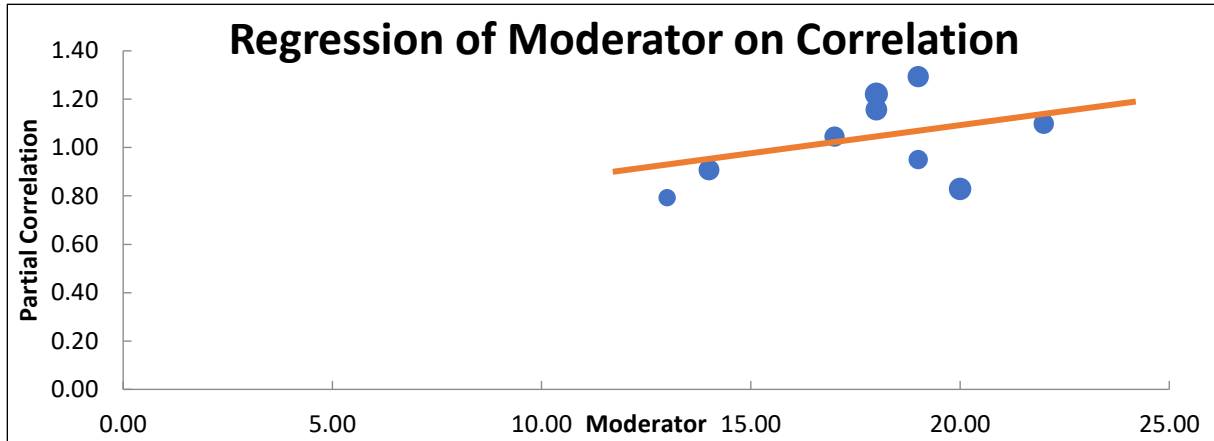
Study name	Moderator	Partial Correlation (z)	Standard Error	Weights
Hui Lim & Ban Teoh, 2021	18.00	1.16	0.24	12.06%
Child et al., 2022	20.00	0.83	0.23	12.96%
Putra & Adnyani, 2021	14.00	0.91	0.25	11.16%
Zubi & Khalid, 2022	19.00	1.29	0.25	11.62%
Diabate et al., 2019	13.00	0.79	0.30	7.73%
Badr El-Deen & Ali, 2021	19.00	0.95	0.27	9.58%
Adula et. al. 2022	22.00	1.10	0.26	10.66%
Ahmad & Ahmad, 2021	17.00	1.05	0.26	10.52%
Kant, 2023	18.00	1.22	0.23	13.71%

Source: Meta Essential Output (2023)

Despite the fact that Meta-Essentials creates the statistics that are typically shown in a regression analysis, it is not advised to place a lot of attention on the results because there are so few data points (studies). As with any regression study, the researcher should start with the vector that

has been created through the scatter plot rather than the other way around. For instance, the scatter plot in the example in Figure below demonstrates unequivocally that there is no discernible relationship between the moderator and the declared effect sizes. This is supported in this instance by a regression weight significance test's "invital" result.

Figure 2. Moderation Plot



Source: Meta Esesntial Output (2023)

The output on the Moderator Analysis sheet is a scatter plot with a regression line and a table with numerous statistics. Out of a total of 12, only nine studies were taken into account for mediation. Five show a positive effect, while four show a negative one.

Table 4. Intercept Analysis

	B	SE	CI LL	CI UL	β	Z-value	p-value
Intercept	0.63	0.61	-0.78	2.03		1.03	0.303
Moderator	0.02	0.03	-0.05	0.10	0.35	0.69	0.489

Source: Meta Esesntial Output (2023)

Because there are so few data points (with $z=1.03$ and Intercept $B=0.63$), even though Meta-Essentials produced the statistics that are typically shown in a regression analysis, it is not advisable to place undue emphasis on the results. As with any regression analysis, the researcher should start here rather than with the line that has been drawn through the scatter plot. Both publication bias and significant heterogeneity were evident.

Publication Base

The studies included in the meta-analysis are represented as blue dots in a scatter plot called a funnel plot, which is bounded by the effect size (on the x-axis; scale is provided on top of the image) and standard error (on the y-axis) (on the y-axis). Moreover, the whole impact size is shown (green dot), together with its black confidence and prediction intervals (green). The graphic additionally displays a vertical line that connects the (adjusted) overall effect size and its corresponding lower and upper confidence interval bounds. This line also uses the color red (red diagonal lines).

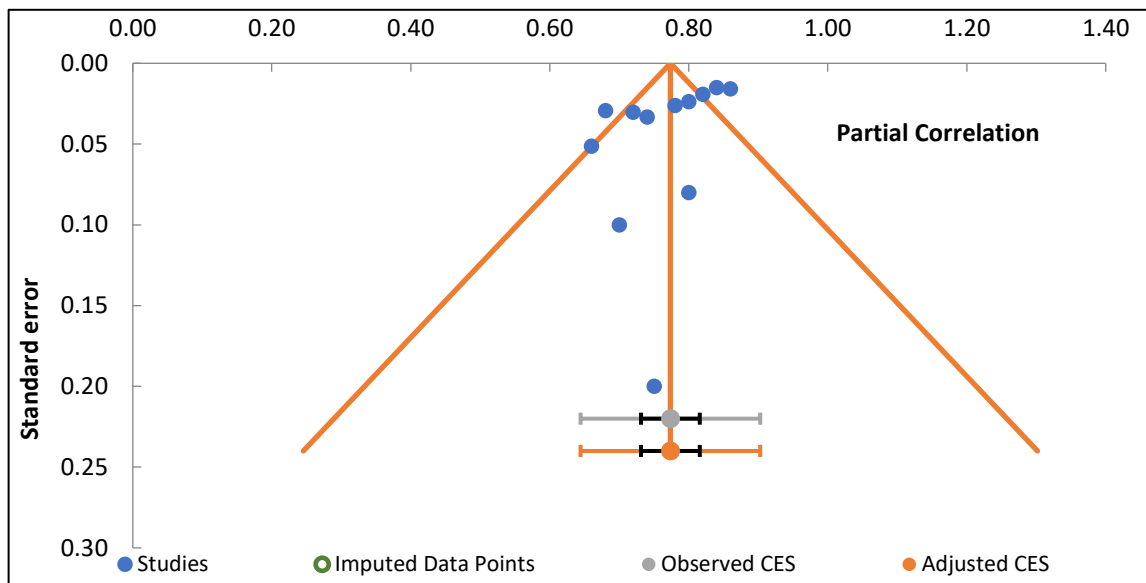


Figure 3. Funnel Plot

Source: Meta Essential Output (2023)

The researchers used a funnel plot to show how a study's precision and effect size relate to one another. This scatter plot compares treatment effects (vertical axis) versus sample size (horizontal axis) as determined by independent research (vertical axis). Asymmetry in the funnel plot, an indicator of publishing bias, was revealed via regression analysis.

Egger Regression				
	Estimate	SE	CI LL	CI UL
Intercept	-1.02	1.06	-3.36	1.32
Slope	0.84	0.07	0.68	1.00
t test	-0.96		Begg and Mazumdar's	
p-value	0.358	p_z		0.451

Source: Meta Essential Output (2023)

Egger's test for a regression intercept returned a p-value of 0.358, which excluded any evidence of publication bias. The funnel plot of Figure 1 displays a sign of publication bias. The p-value of 0.451 from Begg and Mazumdar's rank correlation test suggested a potential publishing bias.

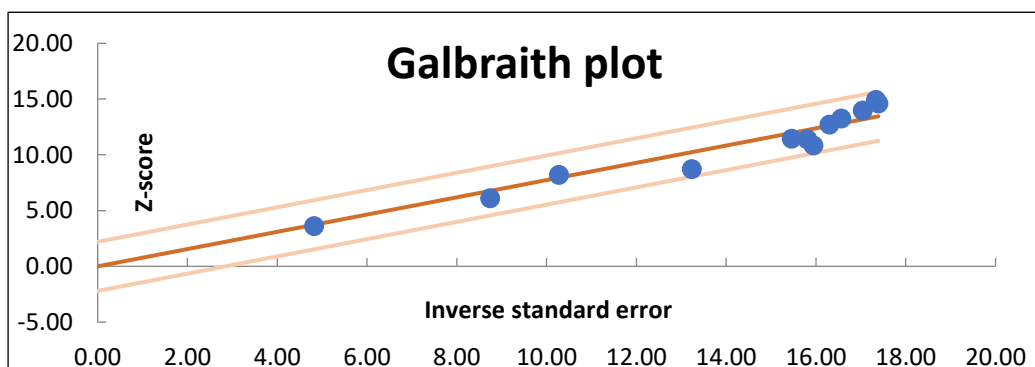


Figure 4. Galbraith Plot

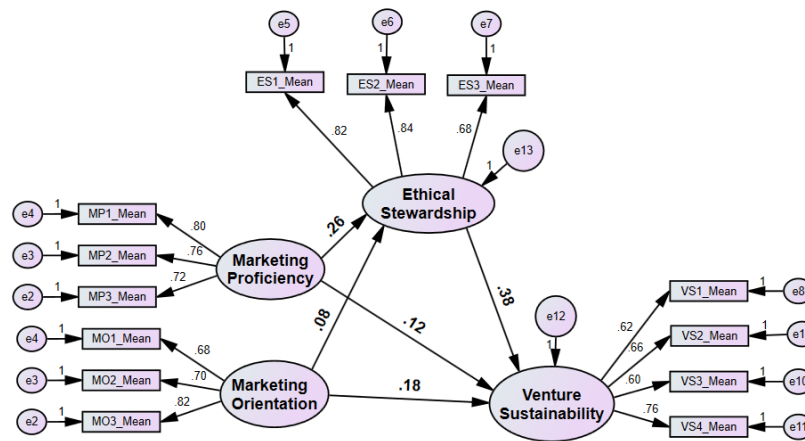
Source: Meta Essential Output (2023)

Galbraith plots are a visual way to tell your meta-analysis's it showed that the overall effect size is proper, the precisions of the study-specific effect sizes also under acceptance level, and the no identification of probable outliers. It also explore d and founded the effect size heterogeneity.

Table 6. Regression Estimate

	Estimate	SE	CI LL	CI UL
Intercept	0.00			
Slope	0.77	0.02	0.73	0.82

Source: Meta Esesntial Output (2023)



Source: AMOS Output (2023)

According to SEM, ethical stewardship serves as a mediator, helping to explain how or why an independent variable affects an outcome. The research variables were found to have a mediation effect; when ethical stewardship was included in the regression, the effect of X on Y disappeared (or at least diminished). Marketing innovation talent and orientation have an impact on others through ethical stewardship. While ethical stewardship acts as a complete mediator between marketing innovation talent and orientation and venture sustainability, their impact on sustainability is entirely voluntary (full mediation).

CONCLUSION

The first steps in doing research are defining the issue area of the subject title, setting goals, and generating relationships among the study's components. The data has been gathered, and consistency and dependability are evident from the indicated Cronbach alpha value. The study's findings include a demographic analysis of the respondents and a correlation table. The variables have all passed the diagnostic checks for various assumptions and are now qualified to undergo multiple regression analysis. In the analysis on the sustainability of ventures of SMEs, the regression result explains the level of relevance of marketing proficiency, marketing orientation, and ethical stewardship as having the most important path.

The article's conclusions could not be applied to other manufacturing industries, such as those producing consumer durable goods. Without doing qualitative research with the same type of respondents, the study further fails to comprehend the perceived perspective of the marketing innovators. Due to the interviewees' low literacy levels, the researcher had difficulties gathering data.

The study's findings are very pertinent to SMEs' marketing innovators since they would use the variables to improve their ventures' sustainability. Also, the outcome is important to the government,

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which will support these marketing innovators in developing strong entrepreneurial competence and marketing orientation to improve their venture's sustainability. A country's economic growth might be accelerated by the introduction of variables among the SMEs, which would increase their capacity for income generation.

Using a quantitative technique, the study was conducted. To better understand the respondents' perceptions and opinions, future researchers might adopt a qualitative method. This would allow them to determine the effective size for SMEs' marketing innovators. The supply chain approach is one of the mediating and moderating variables that future studies can use.

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