



Competitive advantage model of the culinary industry in sukabumi city: technological capability, market orientation and business adaptation

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ABSTRACT

The sustainability of competitive advantage in small culinary businesses depends not only on resources but also on their capacity to transform those resources into adaptive actions. This study examines business adaptation as a strategic mechanism linking technological capability and market orientation to competitive advantage in the culinary industry of Sukabumi City. Using a quantitative design, data were collected from 140 culinary business owners and analyzed with PLS-SEM. The findings reveal that market orientation significantly enhances competitive advantage both directly and indirectly through business adaptation. Adaptation emerges as the dominant mechanism translating market intelligence into operational and strategic adjustments. In contrast, technological capability does not significantly drive adaptation but directly strengthens competitive advantage through efficiency and service improvements. These results contribute to the dynamic capabilities perspective by demonstrating that adaptation is primarily activated by market-sensing capability rather than technological capability in micro and small enterprises. The study highlights that in contexts of limited digital maturity, competitive advantage is more strongly shaped by adaptive responsiveness than by technology adoption alone.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This research is important because the culinary industry is not just a consumption sector, but also a driver of added value and employment. Data from the Central Statistics Agency (BPS) shows that in 2023 the food and beverage sector generated IDR 998.37 trillion, or 4.77 percent of Indonesia's GDP, and employed approximately 9.80 million workers (BPS, 2023). At the regional level, the urgency of competitiveness is heightened when market structures exhibit high levels of entry and exit. In Sukabumi City, the number of restaurants and eateries fluctuated sharply from 2016 to 2023, including a significant spike in 2020 and a decline in subsequent years (BPS Sukabumi City, 2023).

This pattern indicates that many businesses are able to enter the market, but sustainability and the ability to maintain a competitive position remain practical issues that require scientific explanation. In strategic management literature, competitive advantage is understood as an organization's ability to create superior value compared to competitors, either through differentiation or efficiency, and is based on the quality of resources and capabilities that are difficult to imitate (Porter & Linde, 1995; Barney, 1991). In a rapidly changing environment, advantage is also supported by an organization's ability to respond to change through the reconfiguration of resources and routines, as emphasized in the dynamic capabilities framework (Teece et al., 1997). This means that in the culinary industry, which is sensitive to changes in tastes and digital channels, competitiveness cannot be explained solely by product quality but must be linked to capabilities and adaptation mechanisms that keep the business relevant.

Several recent studies in the past five years have shown increasingly clear direction regarding the role of market orientation and adaptation, but also leave room for further clarification of their mechanisms in the context of the culinary service industry. Market orientation is associated with the formation of adaptive strategies when customer needs change (Reimann et al., 2021), and its measurement typically includes customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination (Wu et al., 2024). Furthermore, business adaptation is understood as the ability to adjust strategy, structure, and operational processes to respond to environmental dynamics (Perlin et al., 2022; Moşteanu, 2024). Adaptation is also interpreted as a proactive response to uncertainty and risk, including technology adoption and market volatility (Mou & Li, 2025).

In the realm of competitive performance measurement, recent studies link competitive advantage to dimensions such as innovation, product quality, market position, human resources, and capital (Shi & Zailani, 2025). These findings reinforce the message that market orientation and adaptation are relevant, but further testing of models that simultaneously position internal capabilities as drivers, adaptation as mechanisms, and competitive advantage as outcomes is needed, particularly in the dynamic context of regional culinary culture.

This study's uniqueness compared to previous similar research lies in three aspects. First, it simultaneously examines two key capabilities technological capability and market orientation as antecedents of competitive advantage, rather than examining them separately. Second, it positions business adaptation as a mediating mechanism that explains how capabilities and strategic orientation translate into operational actions such as the adoption of production technology, adjustments to production times, and product diversification. Third, the testing is conducted within the specific context of the Sukabumi City culinary industry, which exhibits fluctuations in the number of businesses and competitive pressures, thus providing more contextual empirical evidence addressing the challenges of sustainable competitiveness at the local level.

The objectives of this study are stated explicitly as follows: (1) to analyze the influence of technological capabilities on business adaptation, (2) to analyze the influence of market orientation on business adaptation, (3) to analyze the influence of technological capabilities on competitive advantage, (4) to analyze the influence of market orientation on competitive advantage, (5) to analyze the influence of business adaptation on competitive advantage, and (6) to test the mediating role of business adaptation in the relationship between technological capabilities and market orientation on competitive advantage in the culinary industry in Sukabumi City. The contribution of this study is to provide a capability-based explanation regarding the sources of competitive advantage of local culinary businesses by emphasizing the position of business adaptation as a mechanism that connects market orientation and internal capabilities with competitive output.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a causal-comparative design to examine the relationships between constructs in the competitive advantage model of the culinary industry in Sukabumi City, namely the influence of technological capability and market orientation on competitive advantage, as well as the role of business adaptation as a mediating variable. The study population was the owners or managers of culinary businesses in Sukabumi City. The sampling technique used purposive sampling with the criteria of businesses having 5–19 employees. The sample size was set at 140 respondents, referring to Hair Jr et al. (2021), which is a minimum of 5–10 times the number of indicators in the model (14 indicators).

Primary data were collected through a closed-ended questionnaire developed from variable indicators in previous studies and measured using a 1–5 Likert scale. Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with the help of SmartPLS. Evaluation of the measurement model (outer model) included convergent validity testing through loading factors and AVE, as well as reliability testing through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability. Evaluation of the structural model (inner model) was conducted through testing the path coefficient and coefficient of determination (R^2), as well as significance testing using a bootstrapping procedure with a t-statistic criterion > 1.96 at a significance level of 5%. The mediating role of business adaptation was tested through the significance of the indirect effect in bootstrapping, with procedural reference to Baron and Kenny (1986). In addition, the effect size (f^2) refers to Cohen's (1988) criteria, namely 0.02 (small), 0.15 (medium), and 0.35 (large).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Evaluation of Measurement Model (Outer Model)

Outer model evaluation is conducted to ensure that the indicators in each construct meet validity and reliability requirements before testing structural relationships. In PLS-SEM, convergent validity is generally assessed using outer loadings and AVE, while reliability is assessed using Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and Composite Reliability (CR).

3.1.1 Convergent Validity and Reliability

Convergent validity aims to assess the extent to which indicators within a construct consistently measure the same concept. In PLS-SEM, convergent validity is evaluated through three main parameters: outer loading, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Composite Reliability (CR). According to Hair et al. (2021), an indicator is considered to have good convergent validity if its outer loading is above 0.70, its AVE is at least 0.50, and its CR exceeds 0.70.

Table 1. Convergent validity and construct reliability

Variables	Indicator	Outer Loading	CA	CR	AVE
Business Adaptation (AB)	AB.1–AB.6	0.707–0.843	0.871	0.903	0.609
Technology Capability (TC)	CT.1–CT.6	0.702–0.870	0.848	0.883	0.562
Competitive Advantage (CEA)	KB.1–KB.10	0.689–0.833	0.895	0.913	0.514
Market Orientation (OP)	OP.1–OP.6	0.753–0.877	0.871	0.902	0.607

Table 1 shows that the outer model evaluation for the four constructs meets the measurement quality criteria. In general, the indicator factor loadings are within an adequate range, and all constructs have high reliability as the Cronbach's Alpha, rho_A, and Composite Reliability (CR) values are above the minimum threshold. The AVE values for all constructs also exceed 0.50, thus confirming convergent validity. For the Competitive Advantage construct, one indicator is slightly below 0.70 (KB.2 = 0.689), but

it can still be maintained because the CR and AVE still meet the threshold and the indicator remains conceptually relevant. Thus, all indicators are deemed capable of consistently reflecting the latent construct, making the measurement model suitable for further structural testing.

3.1.2 Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity is used to assess the extent to which a construct in a research model is truly distinct and does not overlap with other constructs. This is important to ensure that each latent variable represents a unique concept. In this study, discriminant validity was tested using the Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), which is recommended in SEM-PLS analysis as a more sensitive approach to detecting discriminant validity issues.

Table 2. Discriminant validity (HTMT)

	Business Adaptation	Technology Capabilities	Competitive Advantage	Market Orientation
Business Adaptation				
Technology Capabilities	0.178			
Competitive Advantage	0.775	0.274		
Market Orientation	0.645	0.208	0.637	

Table 2 shows that all HTMT values between constructs are in the range of 0.178–0.775 and all are still below the commonly used threshold, either <0.90 or the more stringent criterion of <0.85. The highest value appears in the Business Adaptation–Competitive Advantage pair (0.775), but remains within safe limits. Because no HTMT values exceed the recommended limits, discriminant validity is declared fulfilled and the measurement model is suitable for proceeding to structural testing.

3.1.3 Multicollinearity Test

Multicollinearity testing is performed to ensure there is no excessive correlation between independent variables, as this can lead to unstable coefficient estimates and complicate interpretation of the results. In this study, multicollinearity was tested using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF). If the VIF value is <5, the model is considered free of multicollinearity, allowing for more reliable interpretation of the relationships between variables in subsequent SEM-PLS analysis stages.

Table 3. Outer VIF Value

Item	VIF
AB.1	1.447
AB.2	2.049
AB.3	2,462
AB.4	2.108
AB.5	2.255
AB.6	2.212
KB.1	2.143
KB.10	1.694
KB.2	2,220
KB.3	2.593
KB.4	4.822
KB.5	3.557
KB.6	4.055
KB.7	2.654
KB.8	1.725
KB.9	1.788

KT.1	1.820
CT.2	2.235
CT.3	2.223
KT.4	1.715
KT.5	1.693
KT.6	1.405
OP.1	2.015
OP.2	2.697
OP.3	2.508
OP.4	1.943
OP.5	2.096
OP.6	1.886

The multicollinearity test results show that all VIF values are in the range of 1.405–4.822, thus remaining below the critical limit of 5, and most are also below the conservative threshold of 3.3. The lowest value is found in KT.6 (1.405) and the highest in KB.4 (4.822), but both remain within safe limits. This confirms the absence of multicollinearity, so the model estimation is not affected by excessive indicator correlation.

3.2 Structural Model Evaluation (Inner Model)

3.2.1 Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination (R^2) indicates how much of the variation in the dependent variable can be explained by the independent variables in a structural model. The higher the R^2 value, the stronger the model's ability to explain the phenomenon under study. Meanwhile, the Adjusted R^2 is a more conservative version because it adjusts the R^2 value to account for the number of predictors, thus providing a more realistic picture of explanatory power.

Table 4. R^2 and Adjusted R^2 Values

Endogenous Variables	R Square	R Square Adjusted
Business Adaptation (AB)	0.354	0.344
Competitive Advantage (CEA)	0.638	0.630

Table 4 shows that R^2 of Business Adaptation = 0.354, meaning that Technological Capability and Market Orientation explain 35.4% of the variation in business adaptation, so its explanatory power is moderate. Meanwhile, R^2 of Competitive Advantage = 0.638, meaning that Business Adaptation, Technological Capability, and Market Orientation explain 63.8% of the variation in competitive advantage, so its explanatory power is strong. The Adjusted R^2 value is very close to R^2 (0.344 and 0.630) indicating a stable model and does not show symptoms of overfitting, so the model is considered good, especially in explaining the factors forming the competitive advantage of culinary businesses in Sukabumi City.

3.2.2 Effect Size (f^2)

The effect size (f^2) test is used to determine the contribution of each exogenous variable in explaining the endogenous variables in the structural model. This test complements the path coefficient significance results, as it not only indicates whether or not it has an effect, but also the strength of its influence. Based on Cohen's criteria, an f^2 value of 0.02 is considered small, 0.15 is considered medium, and 0.35 is considered large. Table 7 then displays the f^2 values for each influence path in the research model.

Table 5. Effect size (f^2)

Construct	Business Adaptation	Technology Capabilities	Competitive Advantage	Market Orientation
Business Adaptation			0.611	

Technology Capabilities Competitive Advantage	0.011	0.117
Market Orientation	0.546	0.102

Table 5 shows that Business Adaptation has the strongest influence on Competitive Advantage ($f^2 = 0.611$), which is categorized as large according to Cohen's criteria. This means that the variation in competitive advantage in culinary businesses is primarily explained by the ability of business actors to adapt to environmental changes. Meanwhile, Technological Capability only contributes very little to Business Adaptation ($f^2 = 0.011$) and little to Competitive Advantage ($f^2 = 0.117$). Market Orientation plays a significant role in driving Business Adaptation ($f^2 = 0.546$), but its direct contribution to Competitive Advantage is relatively small ($f^2 = 0.102$). Overall, these findings confirm that market orientation works primarily through adaptation, and business adaptation is a primary mechanism for building and maintaining competitive advantage.

3.2.3 Model Fit

Goodness of Fit (GoF) in SEM-PLS is used to assess whether the overall model adequately fits the data. Although PLS-SEM does not prioritize GoF as CB-SEM does, measures such as SRMR and d_ULS are still used to evaluate model fit. SRMR indicates the average difference between observed and model-predicted correlations; a smaller value is better, and for complex models, a value ≤ 0.10 is generally considered adequate.

Table 6. Model fit

Index	Mark
SRMR	0.076
d_ULS	6,488

Table 6 shows that SRMR = 0.076 for both the saturated and estimated models, indicating acceptable model fit (≤ 0.10). This indicates that the difference between the actual correlation and the predicted correlation is relatively small, indicating that the model adequately represents the data. Furthermore, d_ULS = 6.488 for both models indicates consistent results between the saturated and estimated models, indicating a relatively stable model structure.

3.3 Hypothesis Testing (Direct Effect)

Direct effect testing was conducted to determine the extent to which each independent variable significantly contributes to the dependent variable in the structural model. This evaluation refers to the path coefficient, t-statistic, and p-value, with the effect considered significant if the t-statistic is > 1.96 and the p-value is < 0.05 .

Table 7. Results of direct effect testing

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Business Adaptation Competitive Advantage ->	0.585	0.590	0.063	9,285	0,000
Technology Capability Business Adaptation ->	-0.086	-0.073	0.096	0.894	0.371
Technological Capability Competitive Advantage ->	0.210	0.222	0.060	3,488	0,000
Market Orientation Business Adaptation ->	0.604	0.607	0.058	10,487	0,000
Market Orientation Competitive Advantage ->	0.243	0.235	0.076	3,216	0.001

Based on the results of the direct effect test, Technological Capability does not have a significant effect on Business Adaptation ($\beta = -0.086$; $t = 0.894$; $p = 0.371$). A p-value greater than 0.05 indicates that the technological capabilities of culinary business actors are not strong enough to significantly drive the business adaptation process, so H1 is rejected. Market Orientation is proven to have a positive and significant effect on Business Adaptation ($\beta = 0.604$; $t = 10.487$; $p = 0.000$). This finding indicates that understanding customer needs, attention to competitor dynamics, and coordination between functions encourage business actors to be more responsive in adjusting strategies and operations when facing market changes, so H2 is accepted. Technological Capability has a positive and significant effect on Competitive Advantage ($\beta = 0.210$; $t = 3.488$; $p = 0.000$). This indicates that the use of technology continues to play a role as a source of strengthening the competitiveness of culinary businesses in Sukabumi City, so H3 is accepted. Market Orientation also has a positive and significant effect on Competitive Advantage ($\beta = 0.243$; $t = 3.216$; $p = 0.001$), which confirms that market orientation is able to strengthen the competitive position of the business directly, so that H4 is accepted. Business Adaptation has a positive and very significant effect on Competitive Advantage ($\beta = 0.585$; $t = 9.285$; $p = 0.000$). This finding indicates that the higher the adaptability of business actors, the stronger the competitive advantage that can be built and maintained, so that H5 is accepted.

3.4 Mediation Test (Indirect Effect)

Indirect effect analysis was used to test the role of mediating variables in the structural model. In this study, Business Adaptation was tested as a mediator bridging the relationship between Technological Capability and Market Orientation towards Competitive Advantage. The significance of the indirect effect was assessed using the t-statistic (> 1.96) and p-value (< 0.05).

Table 8. Results of indirect effect testing

			Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Technology Capability	->						
Business Adaptation	->		-0.050	-0.043	0.058	0.865	0.387
Competitive Advantage							
Market Orientation	->	Business					
Adaptation	->	Competitive	0.354	0.358	0.050	7,043	0,000
Advantage							

The results of the mediation test show that Business Adaptation does not mediate the relationship between Technological Capability and Competitive Advantage because its indirect effect is not significant ($\beta = -0.050$; $t = 0.865$; $p = 0.387$), so H6 is rejected. On the other hand, Business Adaptation positively and significantly mediates the relationship between Market Orientation and Competitive Advantage ($\beta = 0.354$; $t = 7.043$; $p = 0.000$), which means that market orientation increases competitiveness mainly through encouraging business adaptation, so H7 is accepted.

3.5 Discussion of Findings

Technological capabilities in culinary businesses in Sukabumi City have not yet emerged as a driver of business adaptation. While technology is already used in daily activities, its utilization tends to be limited to basic operational functions, such as digital transactions or ordering, and thus has not significantly changed the way businesses plan, organize core processes, or make adaptive decisions. This discrepancy is understandable because many businesses are still in the early adoption stage, so technology has not yet been integrated into work systems that help them understand changes in demand, manage product variations, or anticipate supply dynamics. In other words, new technology will

impact adaptation if accompanied by human resource readiness, a supportive work structure, and clear integration into core business processes, as emphasized in a study on the importance of organizational readiness and strategic integration in technology utilization (Ong & Chen, 2013). This finding also explains why research findings do not always align with studies that find technology can accelerate organizational agility, as the context of digital maturity in culinary MSMEs differs from that of more prepared organizations (Awamleh & Bustami, 2022).

Conversely, market orientation serves as a key foundation driving business adaptation. Sensitivity to customer needs, competitor monitoring, and internal coordination enable businesses to more quickly make concrete adjustments, such as fine-tuning menus to suit local tastes, adjusting operating hours to reflect customer patterns, improving service, or altering promotional strategies as competitors move. This pattern aligns with literature that positions market orientation as the foundation of adaptation and innovation, as market information provides clear direction on what needs to change and how it should be implemented (Gürlek & Tuna, 2018; Tajeddini & Ratten, 2020; Jeong et al., 2006). In the culinary industry, which is heavily influenced by consumer trends and preferences, market orientation naturally serves as a key "compass" for adaptation, as small, targeted changes are often more decisive than investments in immature technology.

The most important finding of the model is the role of business adaptation as a key lever for competitive advantage. Competitive advantage in the culinary industry is dynamic, so businesses that can quickly adapt strategies, operational processes, and product variations tend to be more able to retain customers, maintain quality, and build difficult-to-replicate differentiation. Adaptation in the Sukabumi context can manifest itself in the form of menu innovation, strengthening flavor consistency, improving production flows to shorten lead times, or flexibility in responding to changing demand. This finding aligns with the view that adaptation is a crucial mechanism for maintaining business sustainability under uncertainty (Bari et al., 2022; Perlin et al., 2022; Moşteanu, 2024). From a dynamic capabilities perspective, adaptation reflects the ability to sense, seize, and transform, enabling businesses to capture market signals, seize opportunities, and then transform internal processes to increase customer value (Tece, 2018). Thus, adaptation is not a passive response, but rather a strategic process that forms the foundation of more sustainable competitiveness.

While technological capabilities do not drive adaptation, technology still contributes directly to competitive advantage. In the culinary business context, technological benefits often emerge through increased service efficiency, ease of transactions, accelerated customer communication, and digital marketing support. Technology also has the potential to strengthen product innovation when used to support offering development and market information management, rather than simply as a transactional tool (Awamleh & Bustami, 2022; Tai & Ku, 2016). This means that technology becomes a source of competitive advantage when integrated into activities that create customer value and when business actors' digital literacy is sufficient to utilize technology beyond its basic functions.

Market orientation also directly strengthens competitive advantage because understanding customers and monitoring competitors encourages businesses to create more relevant value, whether through menu differentiation, service quality, or more responsive strategy development. This finding is consistent with studies linking market orientation to innovation capabilities and service differentiation, as well as more effective competitive strategies in rapidly changing markets (Gürlek & Tuna, 2018; Na et al., 2019; Reimann et al., 2021). In the culinary industry, where consumer tastes are volatile, market orientation helps businesses maintain the relevance of their offerings and reduces the risk of "falling behind the times."

The mediating role of business adaptation clarifies the mechanism by which market orientation generates competitive advantage. Market orientation not only has a direct impact but also operates through adaptation, translating market information into concrete actions, such as developing new menus, adjusting services, or adapting operations to meet customer needs. This mediation is partial, indicating that some of the benefits of market orientation do arise from adaptive change, but others arise directly from the business's ability to develop a more relevant value proposition. Conversely, adaptation does not mediate the effect of technology on competitive advantage because technology does not yet function as a trigger for adaptive process transformation in this context. Technology's contribution is seen more as a direct enhancer of competitiveness, rather than through adaptation mechanisms. Theoretically, this pattern remains consistent with the dynamic capabilities framework, as adaptation acts as a more powerful transformation mechanism when driven by market sensing capabilities, while technology becomes a driver of adaptation only when it is integrated into decision-making and core business process changes.

This study extends the dynamic capabilities literature by clarifying the activation pathway of adaptation in small culinary enterprises. The findings demonstrate that adaptation is not automatically triggered by technological capability. Instead, it is primarily stimulated by market orientation, suggesting that sensing capability plays a more critical role than operational digital capability in shaping transformation processes. This nuance challenges the common assumption that digitalization inherently enhances adaptive capacity and emphasizes the importance of strategic interpretation of market signals in resource-constrained contexts.

4. CONCLUSION

This research provides a clear practical message for culinary businesses in Sukabumi. The strongest competitiveness is built through a truly practiced market orientation that translates into rapid adaptation. This means that business owners need to routinely and systematically "listen" to the market, for example, by managing customer feedback, monitoring digital reviews, reading menu trends, and observing competitors' movements, then using this information as a basis for decisions about menu changes, services, operating hours, promotional methods, and even production arrangements. Technology remains important, but it is more appropriately positioned as a value enhancer, such as service efficiency, quality consistency, process accuracy, customer experience, and expanding market reach. To ensure its impact extends beyond basic usage, practical steps include improving team digital literacy through training and expanding collaboration with delivery platforms, local influencers, and culinary communities to accelerate adaptation and market visibility. On the other hand, the limitations of this study are that the results are specific to Sukabumi and therefore may not be consistent across other cities with different market structures. The data is also based on respondents' perceptions, thus potentially biased, and the model does not incorporate external factors such as competitive intensity, government support, or environmental uncertainty that could influence competitiveness. Furthermore, the technological capability measure tends to capture operational aspects, not addressing strategic uses such as data integration, analytics-based decision-making, or data-driven innovation. Therefore, it is understandable that technology has not yet emerged as a driver of adaptation. Therefore, further research is recommended that expand the scope, use mixed methods or more objective data, add variables such as innovation and organizational agility, employ multiple groups (e.g., business categories), and use longitudinal designs to more fully capture changes in adaptation and competitiveness, while simultaneously reviewing indicators to avoid conceptual overlap.

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