

The Influence of Entrepreneurial Competence on Business Growth: The Mediating Role of Competitive Advantage

Adi Adiansyah^{1*}, Nizar Alam Hamdani¹, Asri Solihat¹, and Didit Supriyadi¹

¹Garut University

*Correspondence: 24081121001@fkwu.uniga.ac.id

Abstract: Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) serve as the backbone of the economy in many countries, including Indonesia. Despite their crucial role, MSMEs in Indonesia continue to face numerous challenges, particularly in terms of growth. A significant proportion of these enterprises – approximately 99% – operate at the micro and small scale, while only about 1% fall into the medium or large-scale category. This imbalance limits the overall contribution of MSMEs to national economic development. The present study aims to examine/analyze the extent to which entrepreneurial competence affects MSME growth, with competitive advantage serving as a mediating variable. The research was conducted through a quantitative survey involving 30 MSME practitioners in Indonesia. Data collected from the field were analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method. The findings indicate that entrepreneurial competence has a positive influence on MSME growth, and this relationship is mediated by competitive advantage.

Keywords: Competitive Advantage; Entrepreneurial Competence; Business Growth

A. Introduction

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in Indonesia frequently encounter challenges in scaling their operations beyond the micro level. This issue underscores the need to identify and understand the key factors that drive MSME growth, with particular attention to entrepreneurial competence and the development of competitive advantage.

Table 1. Percentage of Business Scale Size in
Indonesia

Business Scale Size	Percentage
Micro and small	99%
Medium and Large	1 %

Source: (SUMU, 2025)

Based on the data presented in the table above, there is a significant disparity in business scale in Indonesia, with 99% of enterprises categorized as micro and small businesses, while

only 0.1% have successfully transitioned to medium or large-scale operations. This disparity highlights a critical issue in the growth trajectory of MSMEs in Indonesia, underscoring the need for in-depth investigation into the various factors that influence their development.

B. Literature Review

1. Business Growth

The growth of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) is influenced by the dynamic interplay of supportive government policies, access to financial resources, and the enhancement of entrepreneurial competencies. Prior studies highlight that structural support—particularly in the form of regulatory frameworks and financial assistance—is essential for the long-term sustainability and expansion of MSMEs (Utomo et al., 2024). The growth of MSMEs encompasses a range of interrelated dimensions that contribute to broader economic development and business resilience (Octaviana & Andni, 2023). Within this framework, MSME growth is commonly assessed using indicators such as revenue increase, customer base expansion, and workforce development. These aspects are often shaped by factors such as digitalization, innovation, and effective financial management (Ilyas, 2024). Digitalization, for instance, enhances market accessibility through online marketing and technological integration in operations, both of which have been shown to significantly boost MSME revenues across regions (Ilyas, 2024). Furthermore, several studies suggest that fostering the development of existing MSMEs plays a critical role in reducing unemployment and stimulating economic growth (Sari & Fisabilillah, 2021). Maulana and Yuliani (2023) further note that MSME growth can be measured through increases in revenue, market reach, employment levels, and overall business resilience.

The concept of MSME growth, as outlined in the literature, highlights that such growth is not solely determined by internal business factors but is also significantly influenced by external elements such as government policies, infrastructure, and the capacity to adapt to

innovation and technological advancements. In this study, business growth is measured using the following indicators: increased revenue, expanded market reach, a growing employee base, and long-term sustainability (Maulana & Yuliani, 2023). Income growth refers to the rise in financial earnings received by individuals, households, or business entities over a specific period. These earnings may derive from various sources, including salaries, business profits, investment returns (such as dividends and interest), and non-monetary income (Octaviana & Andni, 2023). Employee performance also plays a critical role, as high-performing employees contribute more effectively to organizational success, thereby accelerating the growth of MSMEs (Arif et al., 2024). Furthermore, (Arif et al., 2024) emphasize that strong business resilience is a key factor in ensuring the long-term sustainability of MSMEs.

2. Entrepreneurship Competence

Entrepreneurial competencies encompass the knowledge and skills required to identify opportunities, formulate business strategies, and effectively manage risks and resources. These competencies reflect an entrepreneur's ability to recognize and capitalize on business opportunities, foster creativity, and drive innovation within dynamic business environments (Fradito & Hasanah, 2021). Moreover, competent entrepreneurs must be adaptable to rapid changes in markets and technology (Munandar, 2022). Empirical evidence supports the positive contribution of entrepreneurial competence to business success and growth. For instance, (Aini & Suardika, 2023) found that both entrepreneurial attitudes and competencies significantly influence the performance of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Similarly, (Susanto & Sukarno, 2021) reported that entrepreneurs with high levels of competence are better equipped to make informed decisions and navigate challenges, thereby enhancing the growth and

competitiveness of their enterprises. Entrepreneurial competence serves as a critical pillar for strengthening competitiveness at both individual and organizational levels, indicating that its impact extends beyond personal capabilities to influence broader organizational outcomes. Furthermore, entrepreneurial competence underpins the preparedness of human resources in managing business operations. (Hidayah et al., 2024) highlight that individuals with strong entrepreneurial competence are more likely to lead high-performing teams and respond effectively to market fluctuations. In the context of MSMEs, the readiness and capability of human resources are essential to ensuring long-term business sustainability and growth.

Entrepreneurial competencies encompass a combination of knowledge, skills, creativity, and adaptability, all of which are essential for identifying opportunities, formulating strategies, and managing business risks. These competencies significantly influence business success and competitiveness, particularly for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and are critical to both human resource preparedness and broader organizational development. In this study, the indicators used to measure entrepreneurial competence are knowledge, innovation, and resources (Hidayah et al., 2024). Knowledge in the field of entrepreneurship greatly enhances an individual's readiness to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Prima Melyana & Pujiati, 2015). One of the most essential traits of an entrepreneur is the ability to innovate, as innovation is fundamental to ensuring long-term business sustainability (Prima Melyana & Pujiati, 2015). Moreover, resources within a company's internal environment are vital in building a sustainable competitive advantage.

3. Competitive Advantage

The development of a conducive business environment for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) aims to enhance their

competitiveness by expanding business opportunities and ensuring the presence of healthy market mechanisms (Irawan, 2020). Competitive advantage is broadly defined to include elements of sustainability; firms are expected not only to possess comparative advantages but also to sustain them over the long term through continuous innovation and the effective utilization of intellectual capital (Mahanani et al., 2023). This underscores that the sustainability of competitive advantage depends heavily on a company's ability to adapt to evolving market dynamics and technological advancements. Competitive advantage is frequently linked to improved business performance, and prior research has identified it as a mediating variable that reinforces the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation, innovation, and business outcomes (Dewi, 2022). In essence, businesses that are able to establish strong competitive advantages are more likely to achieve higher effectiveness in both operational and marketing performance (Prasetya et al., 2023)

The indicators of the Competitive Advantage variable in this study include product uniqueness, product quality, and competitive pricing (Sukma et al., 2022). Product uniqueness enables firms to gain a competitive edge by offering distinctive and valuable features to consumers (Tinggi et al., 2024). Enhancing the quality of MSME products is crucial for strengthening their competitiveness in the marketplace (Sobar et al., 2023). Additionally, pricing plays a significant role in determining the competitive advantage of MSMEs, as it has been shown to exert a substantial influence (Zuhdi & Muniroh, 2021).

Enhancing entrepreneurial skills and knowledge has been shown to significantly influence business performance (Yusuf & Soelaiman, 2022). Meanwhile, competitive advantage serves as a mediating factor that can strengthen the relationship between entrepreneurial competence and the growth of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). Previous research highlights that competitive advantage plays a crucial role in mediating the impact of various strategies on business

performance (Rahmawati et al., 2022). The growth of MSMEs is also highly dependent on how effectively they manage their resources to enhance competitiveness. These findings underscore the need for further research that explores the interplay between entrepreneurial competence, competitive advantage, and business growth, in order to identify appropriate solutions to the challenges MSMEs face in scaling their businesses.

This study is grounded in the theoretical framework of entrepreneurial competence, as proposed by Fradito and Hasanah (2021b), which highlights knowledge, skills, and innovation as critical drivers of entrepreneurial effectiveness. This framework is further integrated with the concept of competitive advantage articulated by Mahanani et al. (2023b), which underscores the strategic significance of uniqueness, quality, and cost efficiency as key differentiators in a competitive market landscape.

While numerous prior studies have primarily focused on the direct relationship between entrepreneurial competence and business performance or growth, limited attention has been given to the mediating role of competitive advantage. This study contributes empirical evidence demonstrating that competitive advantage functions not only as an independent construct but also as a mediating mechanism that amplifies the impact of entrepreneurial competence on business growth.

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to comprehensively analyze the influence of entrepreneurial competence on business growth, with competitive advantage serving as a mediating variable. The findings are expected to offer strategic insights for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in enhancing their entrepreneurial competencies and competitive strengths to foster more sustainable and optimal business growth.

C. Materials and Methods

This study employs a quantitative approach, which is suitable for measuring the influence of variables (Sugiyono, 2013). The research targets micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), with a sample consisting of 30 MSMEs. Sample sizes larger than 30 and less than 500 are appropriate for most research. The data utilized in this study comprise both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained directly from respondents through an online survey using structured questionnaires. Secondary data were collected from relevant literature and previous research. For data analysis, the study applies the Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) method, using the SmartPLS software as the analytical tool.



Figure 1 Research Model

- Hypothesis 1 : Competitive advantage influences business growth (Sono et al., 2023)
- Hypothesis 2 : Entrepreneurial Competence influences competitive advantage (Destany et al., 2022)
- Hypothesis 3 : Entrepreneurial competence influences the growth of MSMEs through competitive advantage.

D. Results and Discussion

Prior to analyzing the outer and inner models using the SEM-PLS approach, the validity of the indicators for each variable was assessed. The results are presented as follows.

Table 2. Variables

Variables	Indicator	Validity
Growth of MSMEs	Increased Income	Valid
	wide reach	Valid
	employees increased	Valid
	Endure	Valid
Entrepreneurial Competence	Knowledge	Valid
	innovation	Valid
	resource	Valid
Competitive Advantage	Product uniqueness	Valid
	Product quality	Valid
	Competitive price	Valid

Following the indicator validity assessment, the outer model evaluation was conducted using several analytical procedures, including tests for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and construct reliability. These assessments were performed using SmartPLS software, based on data collected from a sample of 30 MSMEs. The results and key findings from the outer model evaluation are presented below.

The outer model was evaluated using several analytical procedures, including tests for convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability. These assessments were carried out using SmartPLS software, based on a sample of 30 micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The following section presents the results and findings of the outer model evaluation.

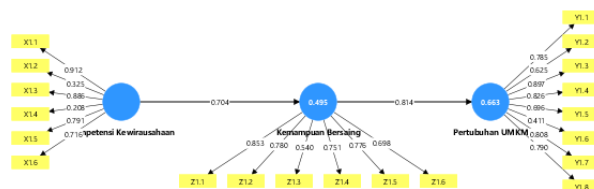


Figure 1. PLS Algorithm

The results of the PLS algorithm, as presented in Figure 2, illustrate the calculation process used to assess the convergent validity of the measurement model and its associated indicators. An indicator is considered reliable

when its loading value exceeds 0.70. The correlation between each indicator and its corresponding construct, which supports this assessment, is detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. Outer Loading

	Competitive Ability	Entrepreneurial Competence	MSME Organization
X1.1		0.912	
X1.2		0.325	
X1.3		0.886	
X1.4		0.208	
X1.5		0.791	
X1.6		0.716	
Y1.1			0.785
Y1.2			0.625
Y1.3			0.897
Y1.4			0.826
Y1.5			0.696
Y1.6			0.411
Y1.7			0.808
Y1.8			0.790
Z1.1	0.853		
Z1.2	0.780		
Z1.3	0.540		
Z1.4	0.751		
Z1.5	0.776		
Z1.6	0.698		

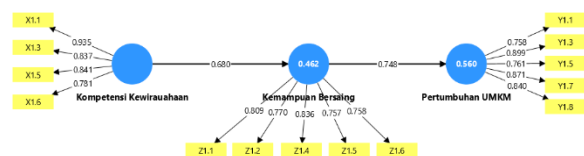


Figure 2. PLS Algorithm After Re-Estimation

After re-estimation by eliminating indicators with outer loading values below 0.70, the following table presents the remaining indicators included in the Inner Model testing to evaluate the research hypotheses.

Table 4. Outer Loading Values after Indicator Elimination

	Competitive Ability	Entrepreneurial Competence	Growth of MSMEs
X1.1		0.935	
X1.3		0.837	
X1.5		0.841	
X1.6		0.781	
Y1.1			0.758
Y1.3			0.899
Y1.5			0.761
Y1.7			0.871
Y1.8			0.840
Z1.1	0.809		
Z1.2	0.770		
Z1.4	0.836		
Z1.5	0.757		
Z1.6	0.758		

To evaluate the cross loading value between the indicators and their constructs, analysis can be done by checking the Discriminant Validity in SmartPLS. The following are the results obtained:

Table 5. Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Competitive Ability	0.848	0.866	0.890	0.619
Entrepreneurship Competence	0.871	0.882	0.912	0.723
Growth of MSMEs	0.885	0.899	0.915	0.685

Based on Table 5, the reliability and validity test results for the three main constructs—entrepreneurial competence, competitiveness, and MSME growth—indicate satisfactory measurement quality. The competitiveness variable achieved a Cronbach's alpha of 0.848, a composite reliability (rho_a) of 0.866, a composite reliability (rho_c) of 0.890, and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.619. The entrepreneurial competence variable recorded a

Cronbach's alpha of 0.871, a rho_a of 0.882, a rho_c of 0.912, and an AVE of 0.723. Meanwhile, the MSME growth variable showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.885, a rho_a of 0.899, a rho_c of 0.915, and an AVE of 0.685. These results demonstrate that all three constructs meet the recommended thresholds for internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha > 0.7), composite reliability (> 0.7), and convergent validity (AVE > 0.5). Therefore, the measurement model exhibits good construct validity, confirming that the instruments used are both reliable and valid for examining the relationship between entrepreneurial competence and MSME growth, with competitive ability as a mediating variable.

Table 6. R-Square Value

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Competitive Ability	0.462	0.443
Growth of MSMEs	0.560	0.544

After assessing the reliability and construct validity, the next step in this study was to evaluate the structural model (inner model) through the R-Square (R²) value, which serves as an indicator of the model's explanatory power. Based on the results presented in the table, the variable *competitive ability* obtained an R² value of 0.462, indicating that 46.2% of the variance in competitive ability can be explained by the exogenous variables in the model. Meanwhile, the variable *MSME growth* achieved an R² value of 0.560, suggesting that 56.0% of its variance is accounted for by the predictive constructs. These values indicate a moderate level of explanatory power for both endogenous variables, according to commonly accepted thresholds in structural equation modeling.

To evaluate the significance of the influence of entrepreneurial competence on MSME growth through the mediating variable of competitive ability, it is necessary to analyze the parameter estimates, path coefficients, and t-statistics. Prior to this, the PLS-SEM model must undergo a bootstrapping procedure to obtain robust

estimates and determine the statistical significance of the hypothesized relationships.

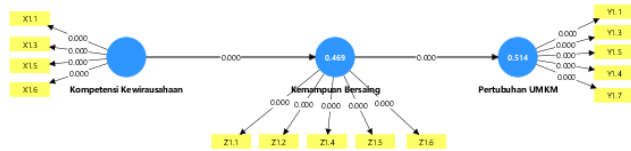


Figure 3. Bootstrapping Test

After re-estimating the model by eliminating several indicators that did not pass the validity and reliability tests, the next step is the bootstrapping test, as illustrated in Figure 3. The detailed results of this test are presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Path Coefficients

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STD EV)	T statistics (O/STD EV)	P values
Competitive Ability -> MSME Growth	0.717	0.738	0.071	10,078	0.000
Entrepreneurial Competence -> Competitive Ability	0.685	0.703	0.098	6,967	0.0

Based on the results presented in Table 7, the data offer important insights into the influence of entrepreneurial competence on MSME growth, with competitive advantage serving as a mediating variable. The path coefficient (original sample) for the effect of competitive advantage on MSME growth is 0.717, indicating a strong positive relationship—suggesting that an increase in competitive advantage is associated with greater MSME growth. The sample mean of the path coefficient is 0.738, reflecting consistency across samples. The standard deviation of 0.071 suggests a high level of stability with minimal variation. A t-statistic of 10.078, which exceeds the critical value of 1.96, demonstrates strong statistical significance, further reinforced by a p-value of 0.000, providing robust evidence to reject the null hypothesis. Collectively, these findings support the hypothesis that competitive advantage significantly influences MSME growth. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

The results of the second hypothesis test, which examines the effect of entrepreneurial competence on competitive advantage, indicate a significant and positive relationship. The path coefficient (original sample) is 0.685, suggesting a strong positive association—implying that higher levels of entrepreneurial competence contribute to increased competitive advantage among MSMEs. The sample mean of the path coefficient is 0.703, reflecting consistency across multiple samples. Furthermore, the standard deviation of 0.089 indicates low variability, suggesting stability in the estimated effect. The t-statistic of 6.967 exceeds the critical value of 1.96, confirming the statistical significance of the relationship. Additionally, the p-value of 0.000 strongly supports the rejection of the null hypothesis. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is accepted.

After testing the direct effects of variables X and Z on Y, Hypothesis 3 is examined by analyzing the indirect effect among the variables, as presented in the following table.

Table 8. Indirect Effects

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STD EV)	T statistics (O/STD EV)	P values
Entrepreneurial Competence -> Competitive Ability -> MSME Growth	0.491	0.521	0.099	4,942	0.0

Based on Table 8, the path coefficient (original sample) for the effect of Entrepreneurial Competence on MSME Growth through Competitive Advantage is 0.491, with a sample mean of 0.521, indicating consistent results across samples. The standard deviation of 0.099 reflects the stability of the coefficient, suggesting minimal variation. A t-statistic of 4.942, which exceeds the critical value of 1.96, demonstrates strong statistical significance. Additionally, the p-value of 0.000 provides robust evidence to

reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, Hypothesis 3 is supported, confirming that Entrepreneurial Competence significantly influences MSME Growth through Competitive Advantage.

The results of this study are consistent with the findings of (Sono et al., 2023), who also identified the influence of competitive capability on MSME growth. Additionally, this study reveals that entrepreneurial competence has a significant impact on the competitive advantage of MSMEs, corroborating the findings of (Destany et al., 2022). (DEVI, 2025) further explains that entrepreneurial competence, when mediated by competitive capability, can significantly affect business performance. Similarly, (Tuluki et al., 2023) argue that improved business performance—particularly in marketing and production—can contribute to the growth of MSMEs.

The relationship between MSME growth and entrepreneurial competence, with competitive advantage as a mediating variable, is closely tied to a range of indicators that define these three constructs. MSME growth is typically assessed through several key parameters, including increased revenue, expanded market reach, growth in the number of employees, and business resilience. Increased revenue reflects the firm's ability to generate higher income over time (Octaviana & Andni, 2023). Additionally, the presence of a growing number of high-performing employees contributes significantly to MSME development (Arif et al., 2024). According to Arif et al. (2024), strong business resilience plays a crucial role in ensuring the long-term sustainability of MSMEs.

Entrepreneurial competence can be assessed through several key indicators, including business knowledge, the ability to innovate, and access to sufficient resources or capital. These elements collectively reflect an individual's preparedness and capability to engage in entrepreneurial activities. According to (Ovilini, 2024), entrepreneurial knowledge significantly influences one's readiness to become an

entrepreneur. Innovation, as another essential trait, is critical for entrepreneurial success; without it, a business is unlikely to sustain itself in the long term (Ovilini, 2024). Moreover, internal resources within a business environment play a vital role in establishing and sustaining a competitive advantage (Hidayah et al., 2024a).

The competitive advantage variable is reflected through indicators such as product uniqueness, product/service quality, and competitive pricing. Product uniqueness enables firms to establish a competitive edge by offering distinctive and valuable propositions to consumers (Tinggi et al., 2024). Enhancing the quality of MSME products is also essential for increasing their competitiveness in the market (Sobar et al., 2023). In addition, pricing plays a significant role, as it strongly influences the competitive advantage of MSMEs (Zuhdi & Muniroh, 2021).

Furthermore, the mediating effect was statistically significant, as evidenced by the indirect influence of entrepreneurial competence on business growth through competitive advantage. This finding affirms that competitive advantage serves as a critical mechanism that strengthens and channels the impact of entrepreneurial competence on the performance and growth of MSMEs. Accordingly, the study extends both theoretical and practical insights by emphasizing the strategic importance of fostering product differentiation, quality, and competitive pricing as essential components of business development grounded in entrepreneurial competence.

The findings of this study yield several practical implications that can be directly implemented by MSME actors to stimulate business growth. First, MSME entrepreneurs should actively engage in entrepreneurship training and workshops to enhance their business acumen, strengthen product innovation capabilities, and improve the efficiency of resource management. Second, it is essential for business actors to develop unique value

propositions by incorporating local cultural elements or distinctive designs that differentiate their offerings from competitors. Third, sustained efforts should be made to improve product quality while setting prices that are both competitive and financially viable. Fourth, digital platforms such as social media and online marketplaces should be strategically utilized to broaden market reach and strengthen promotional activities. Finally, MSME operators are encouraged to participate in local business networks or cooperatives to exchange knowledge, foster collaboration, and access shared training and marketing opportunities. When implemented consistently, these strategic actions can enhance competitive advantage and foster long-term business growth.

E. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that entrepreneurial competence significantly influences the growth of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), with competitive advantage serving as a mediating variable. MSME growth is reflected through indicators such as increased revenue, market expansion, workforce growth, and business sustainability. Entrepreneurial competence encompasses sound business knowledge, innovation capability, and the availability of adequate resources or capital—key competencies required by entrepreneurs. Competitive advantage, in this context, is demonstrated by the ability of MSMEs to offer unique, high-quality products at competitive prices.

These findings highlight the critical role of enhancing entrepreneurial knowledge, fostering innovation, and improving both the quality and quantity of business resources. Furthermore, MSMEs should prioritize product differentiation, quality assurance, and strategic pricing to strengthen their market position. Strengthening these aspects is expected to support MSME growth and enable them to scale up to higher levels of business performance.

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