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Research Paper

Developing a Competitive Strategy Canvas for MSMEs: A Conceptual Framework Approach

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Abstract

Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) face increasing challenges in sustaining competitiveness due to limited strategic capabilities, inadequate competitor analysis, and insufficient differentiation strategies. Existing strategic tools are generally designed for large enterprises and often fail to address the specific characteristics and resource limitations of MSMEs. This study addresses the research gap by developing an integrated strategic framework to support MSMEs in building sustainable competitive strategies. The purpose of this strategy is to address the challenges faced by MSMEs and develop competitive strategies. The methodology of this strategic tool is qualitative, using a literature review of journals conducted with PRISMA 2020. The result is Competitive Strategy Canvas has eleven elements consisting of Focus on a niche market (F); Operationally efficient (O); Market Research & Analysis (R); Monitor and benchmark performance (M); Agile and Responsive (A); Invest in talent and training (T); Build Strong Customer Relationships (B); Sustainable Innovation (I); Differentiation (D); Effective Marketing and Branding (E); Strategic partnerships and alliances (S). Expectantly, the originality of this study lies in proposing a comprehensive strategic framework specifically designed for MSMEs, which may assist business owners in developing more adaptive and sustainable competitive strategies while also providing a foundation for future quantitative validation studies.

Keywords: *Competitive Strategy, Strategy Canvas, Business Development, Differentiation, Market Analysis, Strategic Capability*

INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) play an important role in economic growth and employment creation. However, many MSMEs continue to face challenges in sustaining competitiveness in increasingly dynamic markets. One of the major challenges is the limited capability of entrepreneurs to analyze competitors and formulate effective competitive strategies (Kim, 2023).

Many MSME owners tend to follow market trends without developing clear differentiation or unique value propositions, resulting in homogeneous products and intense price-based competition (Bastian & Zucchella, 2023). As a consequence, MSMEs often struggle to establish sustainable competitive advantages. In addition, MSMEs frequently attempt to target broad customer segments without a specific market focus, which may reduce strategic effectiveness and increase operational burdens.

Limited understanding of competitor characteristics, business scale, and operational patterns further constrains MSMEs' ability to respond strategically to market competition (Odlin & Benson-Rea, 2021). These conditions indicate that many MSMEs still lack practical strategic tools to identify market positioning, differentiation opportunities, and long-term competitive strategies.

Previous studies on business strategy have introduced various frameworks, such as SWOT analysis, Porter's competitive strategy, Business Model Canvas, and Value Proposition Canvas. However, most existing frameworks are either too general or primarily designed for larger organizations, making them less adaptable to the resource limitations and operational realities of

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MSMEs, such as limited resources and informal decision-making.

Furthermore, prior studies often discuss strategic dimensions separately, such as innovation, marketing, operational efficiency, or partnerships, without integrating these dimensions into a comprehensive strategic framework specifically tailored for MSMEs. This creates a research gap: there is no integrated Competitive Strategy Canvas that can practically support MSMEs in developing sustainable competitiveness.

Given entrepreneurs' limited ability to analyze competitors and formulate effective competitive strategies, this study aims to develop a conceptual Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC) for MSMEs. The framework is proposed as a strategic tool to assist MSME entrepreneurs in identifying competitive positioning and designing adaptive business strategies.

The proposed CSC consists of eleven strategic elements: Focus on a Niche Market, Operationally Efficient, Market Research and Analysis, Monitor and Benchmark Performance, Agile and Responsive, Invest in Talent and Training, Build Strong Customer Relationships, Sustainable Innovation, Differentiation, Effective Marketing and Branding, and Strategic Partnerships and Alliances. This study contributes by proposing an integrated conceptual framework that may serve as a foundation for future empirical studies and practical implementation in MSME strategic development.

Competition in the business area is common in the market. However, there are always opportunities to compete and excel. Although there is a lot of competition, not all MSMEs are able to compete effectively. From the author's experience interacting with MSME actors, there are problems and conditions they face. They need tools and strategies to survive, compete with other MSMEs, and even increase the scale of their business (Feldman & Frederiksen, 2025; Maalouf et al., 2025).

The purpose of this article is to try to provide new ideas and tools for MSME business development strategies. It aims to offer strategic tools that MSMEs can implement. We offer the Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC) as a strategy tool for business development, especially to improve entrepreneurs' skills in facing competition.

The canvas that is made consists of eleven (11) elements starting with Focus on a niche market (F); Operationally efficient (O); Market Research & Analysis (R) Monitor and benchmark performance (M); Agile and Responsive (A); Invest in talent and training (T); Build Strong Customer Relationships (B); Sustainable Innovation (I); Differentiation (D); Effective Marketing and Branding (E); Strategic partnerships and alliances (S).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC) proposed in this study is grounded in strategic management theory, particularly concepts related to competitive advantage, market positioning, organizational capabilities, customer orientation, innovation, and strategic collaboration. Rather than viewing business competitiveness through a single dimension, this study adopts an integrated perspective that combines internal capabilities and external market responsiveness into a unified strategic framework for MSMEs.

Previous strategic management literature has emphasized that sustainable competitiveness is influenced by multiple interconnected factors. Porter's competitive strategy highlights the importance of differentiation and market positioning in achieving competitive advantage. The Resource-Based View (RBV) (Holz, 2026) explains that organizational resources and capabilities—such as operational efficiency, skilled human resources, innovation capability, and customer relationships—are important strategic assets that create long-term competitiveness. In addition, Dynamic Capability Theory emphasizes firms' ability to adapt rapidly to market changes, respond to customer needs, and continuously innovate in uncertain business environments.

Although several strategic tools such as SWOT Analysis (Friesner, 2011), the Business Model Canvas (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2012), and the Value Proposition Canvas (Osterwalder et al., 2015) have been widely adopted in business strategy studies, these frameworks generally focus on particular strategic dimensions and are often developed for larger organizations. MSMEs, however, require a more practical and integrated framework that combines market focus, operational capability, innovation, customer relationships, branding, and strategic collaboration into a single strategic perspective.

Therefore, this study proposes the Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC) as an integrated strategic framework consisting of eleven interrelated elements: Focus on a Niche Market, Operationally Efficient, Market Research and Analysis, Monitor and Benchmark Performance, Agile and Responsive, Invest in Talent and Training, Build Strong Customer Relationships, Sustainable Innovation, Differentiation, Effective Marketing and Branding, and Strategic Partnerships and Alliances. These elements are not independent variables but complementary strategic dimensions that collectively support MSMEs in developing sustainable competitive advantages.

The integration of these eleven elements reflects three major strategic orientations. First, market-oriented dimensions, including niche market focus, market research, customer relationships, and branding, emphasize customer understanding and market positioning. Second, capability-oriented dimensions, including operational efficiency, talent development, innovation, agility, and performance monitoring, reflect internal organizational capabilities emphasized in the Resource-Based View and Dynamic Capability Theory. Third, collaboration-oriented dimensions, particularly strategic partnerships and alliances, highlight the importance of external networks and resource sharing in enhancing MSME competitiveness.

Literature Classification Based on Competitive Strategy Canvas – FORMAT BIDES

The following section maps the selected references into the eleven elements of the Competitive Strategy Canvas – FORMAT BIDES framework.

Focus on a Niche Market (F)

Focus on a niche market, meaning that introducing or selling goods and services must focus on the target market (Odlin & Benson-Rea, 2021). The company's ability to define a specific market segment and build a strong positioning (Santos-Arteaga et al., 2022). Not everyone is a target market (Olagunju et al., 2025). For that, MSMEs must see who their target market is, what is unique about their products or services, and whether the products and services offered can meet customer needs (Pascaris et al., 2023).

This element emphasizes specific market segmentation, niche markets, positioning, and market specialization.

Table 1. Literature Supporting the Focus on a Niche Market (F) Element

Contribution	References
Niche markets as dynamic resource domains	Odlin & Benson-Rea (2021)
Niche markets in sustainable agri-food systems	Olagunju et al. (2025)
Entrepreneurial location choices based on market size and competition	Kim (2023)
Transition from niche innovation to mainstream markets	Pascaris et al. (2023)
Technological niche markets	Santos-Arteaga et al. (2022)
Exploiting niche markets through responsiveness	Fruchter & Wiszniewska-Matyszkiel (2024)

Operationally Efficient (O)

Operational efficiency means paying attention to efficiency, reducing costs, increasing productivity by automating repetitive activities, reducing waste, saving energy, using renewable resources, and, if it is still small-scale, combining employee responsibilities and authorities. The company's ability to manage resources efficiently to reduce costs and increase productivity (Y. Li et al., 2025). This term refers to the ability of an organization, enterprise, or system to maximize output with the minimum resources, including time, labor, and cost.

In other words, operational efficiency occurs when a business or process produces the best results at the lowest cost without sacrificing quality. This is usually achieved by Process optimization (e.g., automation and workflow improvement), reducing waste (time, materials, energy, etc.), better use of technology, and improving labor productivity. In a business environment, companies that operate efficiently are often more competitive because they can offer better prices, faster service, and greater profits (T. T. Li et al., 2025).

This element focuses on lean operations, business efficiency, productivity, and resilience.

Table 2. Literature Supporting the Operationally Efficient (O) Element

Contribution	References
Lean and Industry 4.0 impacts on operational performance	Frank et al. (2025)
Operational efficiency in the banking sector	Y. Li et al. (2025)
Energy efficiency and operational resilience	T. T. Li et al. (2025)
Lean Business Model Canvas	Moshood et al. (2022)
Sustainable procurement, packaging, and distribution	Bhatti et al. (2023)
SME survival strategies during crisis conditions	Maalouf et al. (2025)

Market Research & Analysis (R)

Market Research & Analysis means that there are both internal and external departments that can ask for help to conduct market research and analysis, to find out and understand competitors, target markets, and trends in the industry being carried out (Kim, 2023). Market research is the process of gathering information about the market, potential customers, industry trends, and competitors to understand market needs and preferences (Nordin & Ravald, 2023).

Market analysis is the process of analyzing collected data to identify business opportunities, understand consumer behavior, and assess the strengths and weaknesses of competitors. The combination of the two helps companies make strategic decisions, develop products that meet market needs, and improve competitiveness (Silva et al., 2024).

This element highlights market orientation, environmental scanning, information acquisition, and analytical capabilities.

Table 3. Literature Supporting the Market Research & Analysis (R) Element

Contribution	References
Market orientation and export performance	Bodlaj & Čater (2022); Kim (2023)
Integrated marketing communications and SME performance	Butkouskaya et al. (2024)
Marketing decision-making processes	Nordin & Ravald (2023)
Information acquisition capabilities	Santos-Arteaga et al. (2022)
Bibliometric mapping and predictive analysis	Silva et al. (2024)

Monitor and Benchmark Performance (M)

Monitor performance metrics regularly and compare progress with competitors. Identify areas for improvement, capitalize on strengths, and address weaknesses to continually strengthen your competitive position (Santos-Arteaga et al., 2022). Regular recording is needed so that it can be monitored and evaluated (Pourheydari et al., 2025).

This element emphasizes KPIs, benchmarking, monitoring capability, and performance evaluation.

Table 4. Literature Supporting the Monitor and Benchmark Performance (M) Element

Contribution	References
Performance benchmarking systems	Pourheydari et al. (2025)
Export venture performance measurement	Bodlaj & Čater, (2022)
Business model innovation and firm performance	Salfore et al. (2023)
Innovation-performance relationship	Larios-Francia & Ferasso (2023)
Long-term sustainable company development	Yang et al. (2025)

Agile and Responsive (A)

Agile and responsive to changes in the market, customer preferences, or competitive landscape (Gilpin et al., 2015; Chuang, 2020; Fruchter & Wiszniewska-Matyszkiel, 2024), MSMEs must adapt quickly to emerging trends, seize opportunities, respond proactively to challenges, and maintain a competitive advantage (Wiszniewska-Matyszkiel & Fruchter, 2024; Bodlaj & Čater, 2022).

This element focuses on agility, responsiveness, adaptability, and dynamic capabilities.

Table 5. Literature Supporting the Agile and Responsive (A) Element

Contribution	References
Social media agility	Chuang (2020)
SME agility during crises	Sharif et al. (2024)
Dynamic capabilities in omnichannel transformation	Febriani et al. (2025)
Responsiveness to customer expectations	Wiszniewska-Matyszkiel & Fruchter (2024); Bodlaj & Čater (2022)
Responsiveness to labor market changes	Gilpin et al. (2015)
Dynamic managerial capabilities	Merín-Rodrigáñez et al. (2025)
Organizational adaptation and digital transformation	Wang & Zhang (2025)

Invest in Talent and Training (T)

Companies must also prioritize recruiting and retaining skilled employees who are passionate about the business and committed to delivering exceptional results (Tang et al., 2024). They should invest in ongoing training and development to keep their team up to date on industry best practices and new technologies (Yang et al., 2025; Montero Guerra et al., 2023; Naumov & Pillmayer, 2024; Holz, 2026).

This element emphasizes human capital, capability development, learning, and talent management.

Table 6. Literature Supporting the Invest in Talent and Training (T) Element

Contribution	References
Digital transformation and talent management	Montero Guerra et al. (2023); Tang et al.

	(2024)
Talent management in tourism and hospitality	Naumov & Pillmayer (2024)
Managerial capability development	Merín-Rodrigáñez et al. (2025)
Resource-Based View and strategic capability	Holz (2026)

Build Strong Customer Relationships (B)

Invest in building strong relationships with customers through personal interactions, exceptional customer service, and ongoing engagement (Lavan et al., 2025; Bation et al., 2025). Loyal customers are more likely to make repeat purchases and recommend the business to others, giving it a competitive advantage (Bae, 2024; Chuang, 2020; Han et al., 2023).

This element focuses on CRM, customer engagement, loyalty, trust, and communication.

Table 7. Literature Supporting the Build Strong Customer Relationships (B) Element

Contribution	References
Trust and communication in customer relationships	Bae (2024)
Systematic review of CRM systems	Bation et al. (2025)
Customer-firm relationships through social media agility	Chuang (2020)
Customer concentration and supplier performance	Han et al. (2023)
Knowledge transfer in B2B customer relationships	Lavan et al. (2025)
Supplier flexibility and information exchange	Liu et al. (2025)

Sustainable Innovation (I)

Stay ahead of the competition by continuously innovating and improving products, services, and processes (Wang & Zhang, 2025; Sharif et al., 2024). Embrace new technologies, trends, and customer feedback to drive innovation and stay relevant in the market (Merín-Rodrigáñez et al., 2025). Companies must continually innovate in products, services, and paradigms (Sarango-Lalangui et al., 2023; Mady et al., 2023; Bhatti et al., 2023; Salfore et al., 2023; Chungyalpa & von Rosing, 2025).

This element emphasizes eco-innovation, business model innovation, sustainability, and open innovation.

Table 8. Literature Supporting the Sustainable Innovation (I) Element

Contribution	References
Eco-innovation mediation	Bhatti et al. (2023)
Environmental capabilities and eco-innovation	Mady et al. (2023)
Sustainability and open innovation	Sarango-Lalangui et al. (2023)
Business model innovation	Salfore et al. (2023); Sharif et al. (2024)
Sustainable innovation through digital transformation	Wang & Zhang (2025)
Corporate green innovation	Tang et al. (2024)
Sustainable innovation business model	Moshood et al. (2022)
Sustainable business practices	Chungyalpa & von Rosing (2025)

Differentiation (D)

Companies must have the courage to differentiate themselves from competitors by offering a unique product, service, or value proposition (Maalouf et al., 2025; Merín-Rodrigáñez et al., 2025).

They should identify and leverage their strengths, whether it is superior quality, innovation, customization, or exceptional customer service (Salfore et al., 2023).

This element focuses on uniqueness, competitive advantage, strategic positioning, and value propositions.

Table 9. Literature Supporting the Differentiation (D) Element

Contribution	References
Brand image and purchase intention	Agmeka et al. (2019); Maalouf et al. (2025)
Innovation-performance differentiation	Larios-Francia & Ferasso (2023); Merín-Rodrigáñez et al. (2025)
Competition and entrepreneurial positioning	Kim (2023); Salfore et al. (2023)
Sustainable competitive advantage	Mady et al. (2023)

Effective Marketing and Branding (E)

Companies must build a strong brand image and conduct targeted marketing campaigns to increase awareness, attract new customers, and retain existing customers (Agmeka et al., 2019; Febriani et al., 2025). They should leverage a combination of online and offline marketing channels to engage their target audience effectively (Butkouskaya et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2025).

This element emphasizes branding, communication strategies, digital marketing, and market visibility.

Table 10. Literature Supporting the Effective Marketing and Branding (E) Element

Contribution	References
Brand reputation and brand image	Agmeka et al. (2019)
Strategic marketing	Feldman & Frederiksen (2025)
Integrated marketing communication	Butkouskaya et al. (2024); Liu et al. (2025)
Social media analytics	Sivarajah et al. (2020)
Marketing decision environments	Nordin & Ravald (2023)

Strategic Partnerships and Alliances (S)

Companies need to implement strategic partnerships or alliances with complementary businesses to expand their reach, enter new markets, or leverage shared resources and expertise (Larios-Francia & Ferasso, 2023; Bastian & Zucchella, 2023). Cooperation can strengthen a company's competitive position and create mutually beneficial development opportunities (Lavan et al., 2025; Moshood et al., 2022).

This element focuses on collaboration, alliances, networking, ecosystems, and partnership strategies.

Table 11. Literature Supporting the Strategic Partnerships and Alliances (S)Element

Contribution	References
Startup competitions and co-created problematization	Bastian & Zucchella (2023)
Knowledge transfer in B2B relationships	Lavan et al. (2025)
Supplier flexibility and information exchange	Liu et al. (2025)
Supplier-customer relationships	Larios-Francia & Ferasso (2023)
Industrial synergy	Moshood et al. (2022)

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study employed an exploratory qualitative research design with a framework-development approach to develop the Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC) for Micro, Small, and

Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). The study aimed to identify strategic dimensions relevant to MSME competitiveness and integrate them into a conceptual strategic framework. The study employed a narrative literature review to gain theoretical insights into competitive strategies for MSMEs (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016), while also incorporating a systematic review approach based on PRISMA 2020 guidelines to synthesize findings from relevant studies (Page et al., 2021).

Literature Review Procedure

The narrative literature review was conducted to identify strategic concepts, competitive dimensions, and business development practices relevant to MSMEs. Literature sources were collected from international academic databases, including Scopus, Google Scholar, and ScienceDirect. The search process used keywords such as "MSME competitive strategy," "competitive advantage," "business strategy for SMEs," "strategic management," "innovation capability," "market orientation," and "strategic partnership."

The literature search focused primarily on publications from 2019–2025 to capture recent developments in MSME competitiveness and strategic management (Snyder, 2019), and it was complemented by a systematic literature review using PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021).

The inclusion criteria consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles discussing MSME competitiveness, strategic management frameworks, innovation, customer relationships, operational capability, and business sustainability. Articles unrelated to MSME strategy or lacking theoretical relevance were excluded. The selected literature was analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring strategic dimensions and relationships among concepts. The synthesis process contributed to the development of the eleven elements of the Competitive Strategy Canvas.

Data Collection

To complement the literature review, various business sectors were examined, including culinary, retail, creative industries, and service businesses, in order to provide a broader understanding of entrepreneurial strategies, operational challenges, and sustainable business development across different industry contexts (Kabir, 2016; Jiang et al., 2024).

Data Analysis and Framework Development

The study applied thematic analysis to integrate findings from the literature review. Similar strategic concepts were grouped into broader strategic categories, resulting in eleven interconnected elements forming the Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC). The framework development process emphasized conceptual consistency, practical relevance for MSMEs, and alignment with established strategic management theories, including competitive advantage theory, Resource-Based View (RBV), and dynamic capability theory.

Trustworthiness and Research Rigor

To improve the trustworthiness of the study, methodological triangulation was applied by combining literature review findings. The study also used theoretical triangulation by comparing multiple strategic management perspectives from previous studies. Reflexive interpretation was employed during data analysis to minimize subjective bias in interpreting MSME experiences and strategic needs (Sivarajah et al., 2020).

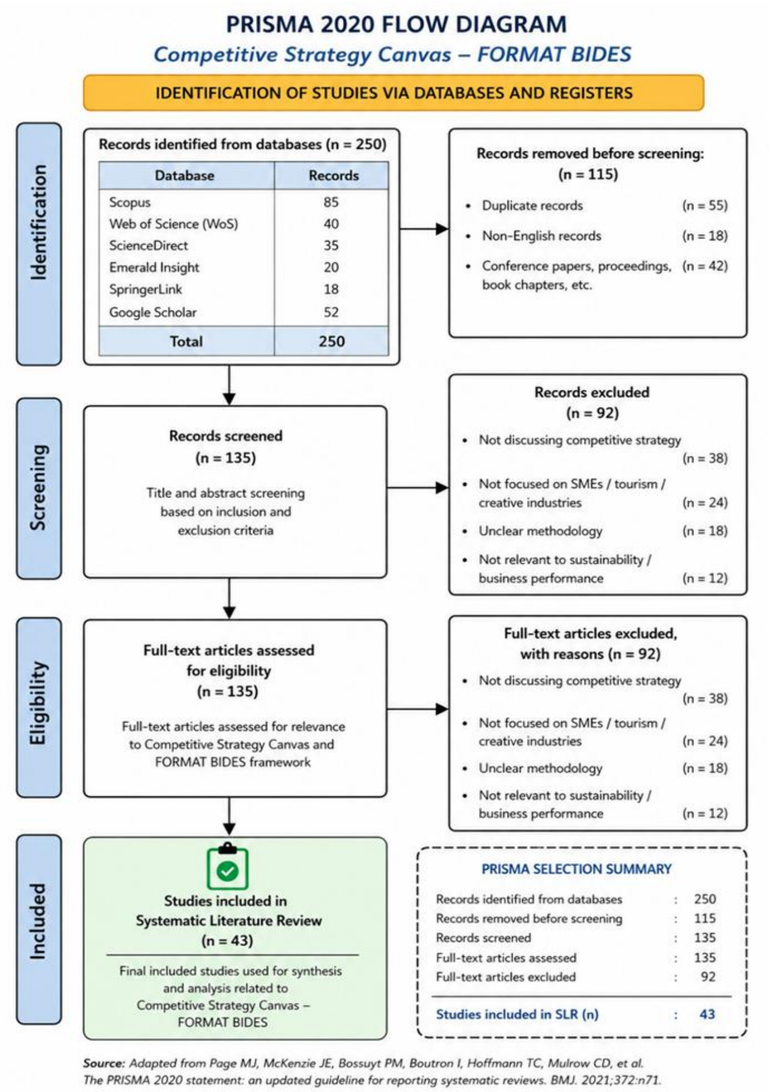


Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 Flow Diagram for Competitive Strategy Canvas PRISMA 2020 Statement (Page et al., 2021)

The PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for the FORMAT BIDES framework illustrates a systematic and transparent process for selecting relevant literature on the Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC). Figure 1 shows that the initial pool of 250 records was narrowed through screening and eligibility assessment to 43 studies that met all inclusion criteria and were used in the systematic literature review.

As shown in the picture, records were identified from six databases, and duplicates, non-English articles, and non-journal sources were removed before screening. After title and abstract screening and full-text assessment, 43 high-quality studies remained for synthesis to support the FORMAT BIDES framework

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings from Literature Review

The literature review revealed several recurring challenges experienced by MSMEs in developing sustainable competitive strategies. The findings indicate that MSMEs commonly experience difficulties in market targeting, differentiation, operational management, innovation, customer retention, and competitor analysis.

These findings are consistent with previous strategic management studies emphasizing that MSMEs often face limitations in strategic capability, market analysis, innovation management, and resource allocation. The literature synthesis further indicated that sustainable competitiveness requires the integration of market orientation, internal capability development, innovation, branding, and strategic collaboration.

Based on thematic analysis, the study identified eleven recurring strategic dimensions that consistently appeared across literature findings. These dimensions later formed the basis for the development of the Competitive Strategy Canvas.

Development of the Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC)

The Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC) was developed through the integration of literature synthesis. The eleven elements represent interconnected strategic dimensions that collectively support MSME competitiveness. The development process showed three major strategic orientations emerging from the findings:

1. Market-Oriented Dimensions

These dimensions emphasize customer understanding, market positioning, and competitive awareness:

a. Focus on a Niche Market (F) (Olagunju et al., 2025; Odlin & Benson-Rea, 2021; Moshood et al., 2022; Pascaris et al., 2023)
b. Market Research and Analysis (R) (Silva et al., 2024)
c. Build Strong Customer Relationships (B) (Lavan et al., 2025; Bae, 2024)
d. Effective Marketing and Branding (E) (Agmeka et al., 2019; Febriani et al., 2025; Butkouskaya et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2025)

The literature revealed that MSMEs with clearer target markets and stronger customer engagement were better able to differentiate themselves from competitors.

2. Capability-Oriented Dimensions

These dimensions reflect internal organizational capability and operational sustainability:

a. Operationally Efficient (O) (Frank et al., 2025; Y. Li et al., 2025)
b. Monitor and Benchmark Performance (M) (Santos-Arteaga et al., 2022; Pourheydari et al., 2025)
c. Agile and Responsive (A) (Gilpin et al., 2015; Chuang, 2020; Wiszniewska-Matyszkiel & Fruchter, 2024)
d. Invest in Talent and Training (T) (Tang et al., 2024; Montero Guerra et al., 2023)
e. Sustainable Innovation (I) (Sarango-Lalangui et al., 2023; Mady et al., 2023; Bhatti et al., 2023; Salfore et al., 2023; Chungyalpa & von Rosing, 2025; Larios-Francia & Ferasso, 2023)
f. Differentiation (D) (Maalouf et al., 2025; Merín-Rodrigáñez et al., 2025)

The findings suggest that MSMEs require adaptive operational capabilities and continuous innovation to remain competitive in changing markets.

3. Collaboration-Oriented Dimension

a. Strategic Partnerships and Alliances (S) (Larios-Francia & Ferasso, 2023).

Literature findings highlighted that MSMEs frequently rely on collaboration, partnerships, and shared resources to overcome resource limitations and expand market access.

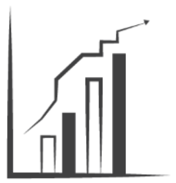
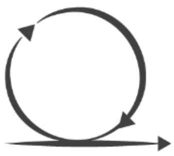
Explanation for element Competitive Strategy Canvas - FORMAT BIDES

The strategic tools to address existing problems are to identify competitors and analyze the business competition in the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector require strategic planning and implementation. Here are some strategies to help small and medium businesses thrive in a competitive market:

We introduce eleven elements of the Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC), with an explanation in Table 12. The Competitive Strategy for MSMEs consists of a picture/graph of the 11 elements of the competitive strategy, as well as stimulus questions for business actors to explore the business strategies they need to focus on in each element. To make it easier for MSME actors to remember and implement the Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC), each element is given a picture. Each picture reflects a strategy that MSMEs can implement.

Table 12. Explanation of the Competitive Strategy Canvas for MSMEs

No.	Element	Explanations and questions
1	Focus on a niche market (F)  A dartboard picture focuses on a specific target segment or niche where you can stand out or be different and build a strong presence. Tailor your product or service to meet the specific needs and preferences of this niche market.	Target a specific segment or niche where you can stand out or differentiate yourself and build a strong presence (Olagunju et al., 2025). Tailor your products or services to meet the specific needs and preferences of this niche market (Odlin & Benson-Rea, 2021). Questions for Focus on a Niche Market are as follows: - Who is the customer segment or niche you are focusing on? - What are your efforts to present uniqueness, or what does your company want to highlight? - What makes your products and services meet customer needs and preferences?
2	Operationally efficient (O)  Electric clock lamp picture meaning streamlines your operations and processes to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and increase productivity. Find ways to automate repetitive tasks, optimize resource utilization, and eliminate waste across your organization.	Streamline your operations and processes to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and increase productivity (Frank et al., 2025). Find ways to automate repetitive tasks, optimize resource utilization, and eliminate waste across your organization (Y. Li et al., 2025). Questions for operationally efficient are as follows: - What is your company doing to simplify operations and processes to increase efficiency? - What is your company doing to simplify operations and processes to reduce costs? - What is your company doing to simplify operations and processes to increase productivity? - What is your company doing to eliminate waste?
3	Market Research & Analysis (R)	Conduct thorough market research to understand your competitors, target audience, and industry trends (Silva et al., 2024). Use this information to identify opportunities, anticipate challenges, and make informed

	 A rising graph means conducting thorough market research to understand your competitors, target audience, and industry trends. Use this information to identify opportunities, anticipate challenges, and make informed decisions about your business strategy.	decisions regarding your business strategy. Questions for market research and analysis are as follows: - How does your company conduct market research to understand your competitors? - How does your company conduct market research to understand the target audience? - How does your company conduct market research to understand industry trends?
4	Monitor and benchmark performance (M)  Graphing in a magnifying glass means monitoring your performance metrics regularly and comparing your progress with your competitors. Identify areas for improvement, capitalize on strengths and address weaknesses to continually strengthen your competitive position.	Monitor your performance metrics regularly and compare your progress with your competitors (Santos-Arteaga et al., 2022). Identify areas for improvement, capitalize on strengths, and address weaknesses to continually strengthen your competitive position (Pourheydari et al., 2025). Questions for monitoring and benchmarking performance are as follows: - How do you have performance metrics? - What are the ways to regularly monitor performance metrics? - How long does monitoring take to carry out? - How do you monitor your company's performance? - Who is responsible and authorized to monitor the Company's performance? - Which areas need to be improved to strengthen your Company's competitive position? - Which areas need to be maintained to maintain your company's competitive position?
5	Agile and Responsive (A)  Rolling circle picture means agile and responsive to changes in the market, customer preferences, or competitive	Agile and responsive to changes in the market, customer preferences, or competitive landscape, MSMEs must adapt quickly to emerging trends, seize opportunities, respond proactively to challenges, and maintain a competitive advantage (Gilpin et al., 2015; Chuang, 2020; Wiszniewska-Matyszkiel & Fruchter, 2024). Questions for Agile and Responsive are as follows: - How is your company agile and responsive

	landscape. Adapt quickly to emerging trends, seize opportunities, respond proactively to challenges, and maintain a competitive advantage.	in facing market changes? - What are your company's agile and responsive ways of dealing with customer preferences? - How is your company agile and responsive in facing the competitive landscape?
6	Invest in talent and training (T)  A star picture means hiring and retaining skilled employees/talent who are passionate about your business and committed to delivering exceptional results. Invest in training (T) and ongoing development to keep your team up to date with industry's best practices and emerging technologies.	Recruit and retain skilled employees who are passionate about your business and committed to delivering exceptional results. Invest in ongoing training and development to keep your team up to date on the industry's best practices and new technologies (Tang et al., 2024; Montero Guerra et al., 2023). Questions for Invest in Talent and Training are as follows: - How do you recruit skilled employees? - How does your company retain skilled employees? - What investments have been made to maintain and improve employee talent, especially in facing new industries and technology?
7	Build Strong Customer Relationships (B)  Four intertwined squares meaning to invest in building strong relationships with your customers through personal interactions, exceptional customer service, and ongoing engagement. Loyal customers are more likely to make repeat purchases and recommend your business to others, giving you a competitive edge.	Invest in building strong relationships with your customers through personal interactions, exceptional customer service, and ongoing engagement. Loyal customers are more likely to make repeat purchases and recommend your business to others, giving you a competitive advantage (Lavan et al., 2025; Bae, 2024). Questions for Building Strong Customer Relationships are as follows: - What is the investment in building relationships with your customers? - What are the ways of personal interaction and service to your customers? - What are the efforts to build relationships with loyal and repeat customers? - What do you do for customers who make repeat purchases? - What do you do for customers who recommend your business to others?
8	Sustainable Innovation (I)  Light lamp picture means staying ahead	Stay ahead of the competition by continuously innovating and improving your products, services, and processes. Embrace new technologies, trends, and customer feedback to drive innovation and stay relevant in the market (Sarango-Lalangui et al., 2023; Mady et al., 2023; Bhatti et al., 2023; Salfore et al., 2023; Chungyalpa & von Rosing, 2025; Larios-

	of the competition by continually innovating and improving your products, services, and processes. Embrace new technologies, trends, and customer feedback to drive innovation and stay relevant in the marketplace.	Francia & Ferasso, 2023). Questions for Sustainable Innovation are as follows: - What sustainable innovations does your company carry out? - What new technologies and feedback trends do you use to achieve sustainable innovation? - What is your company doing to drive innovation and stay relevant in the market?
9	Differentiation (D)  Rounded triangle box picture means to make something stand out or be different from the competition by offering a unique product, service, or value proposition. Identify and leverage your strengths, whether it's superior quality, innovation, customization, or exceptional customer service.	Make your offering stand out by providing a unique product, service, or value proposition. Identify and leverage your strengths, whether it is superior quality, innovation, customization, or exceptional customer service (Maalouf et al., 2025; Merín-Rodrigáñez et al., 2025). Questions for Differentiation are as follows: - What stands out or is different about your product/service? - What is unique about what you offer customers? - What strengths do you/your company have? - What innovations have you implemented that your competitors do not? - What adjustments do you make when looking at your competitors?
10	Effective Marketing and Branding (E)  A registered trademark picture means building a strong brand image and conducting targeted marketing campaigns to increase awareness, attract new customers, and retain existing ones. Leverage a combination of online and offline marketing channels to effectively engage your target audience.	Build a strong brand image and conduct targeted marketing campaigns to increase awareness, attract new customers, and retain existing customers. Leverage a combination of online and offline marketing channels to engage your target audience effectively (Agmeka et al., 2019; Febriani et al., 2025; Butkouskaya et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2025). Questions for Effective Marketing and Branding are as follows: - What is your company doing to build a strong brand image? - What does your company do for marketing campaigns? - What is your company doing to build customer awareness? - What is your company doing to attract new customers? - What is your company doing to retain customers? - How does your company utilize online and

		offline facilities?
11	Strategic partnerships and alliances (S)  Handshake picture meaning: Form strategic partnerships or alliances with complementary businesses to expand your reach, enter new markets, or leverage shared resources and expertise. Collaboration can strengthen your competitive position and create mutually beneficial development opportunities.	Forge strategic partnerships or alliances with complementary businesses to expand your reach, enter new markets, or leverage shared resources and expertise. Cooperation can strengthen your competitive position and create mutually beneficial development opportunities. (Larios-Francia & Ferasso, 2023). Questions for strategic partnerships and alliances are as follows: - What are the efforts to establish strategic partnerships and alliances with complementary businesses? - What are your efforts to establish partnerships and strategic alliances with businesses to expand your reach? - What are the efforts to establish partnerships and strategic alliances with businesses to enter new markets? - What efforts are made to establish strategic partnerships and alliances with businesses to leverage shared resources and expertise?

Sources: Malinda, 2025

Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC)

To make it easier to understand the Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC) strategy to deal with competition among MSMEs, see Figure 2: Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC) and FORMAT BIDES.

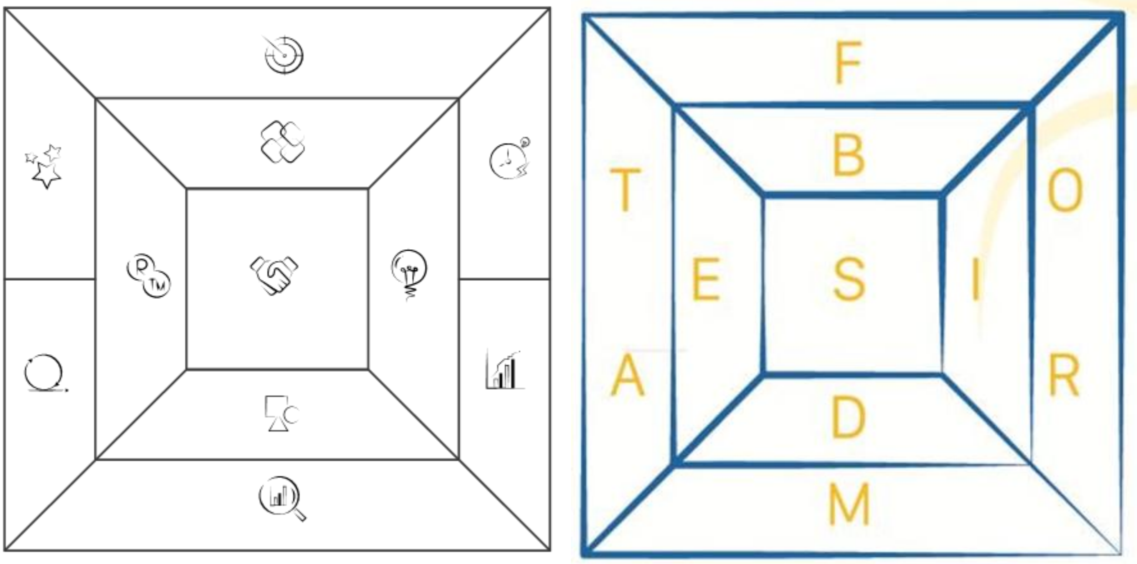


Figure 2. Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC) and FORMAT BIDES (Malinda et al., 2024; Malinda, 2025)

The Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC) is one of the strategy tools in business development, especially to improve entrepreneurs' skills in facing competition. The canvas that is made consists of eleven (11) elements: Focus on a niche market (F); Operationally efficient (O); Market Research & Analysis (R); Monitor and benchmark performance (M); Agile and Responsive (A); Invest in talent and training (T); Build Strong Customer Relationships (B); Sustainable Innovation (I); Differentiation (D); Effective Marketing and Branding (E); Strategic partnerships and alliances (S).

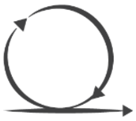
By implementing these strategies, MSMEs can effectively navigate and thrive in competitive markets, driving growth, profitability, and long-term success. Figure 2 presents the integrated Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC) framework developed in this study.

The findings suggest that the CSC may provide MSMEs with a practical strategic reflection tool to identify strengths, weaknesses, and strategic priorities. However, this study does not empirically test whether the framework improves business performance, profitability, or long-term success. Therefore, the CSC should currently be understood as a conceptual strategic framework requiring further empirical validation.

The Competitive Strategy Canvas is abbreviated as FORMAT BIDES, where "FORMAT" refers to the way in which something is arranged or determined, while "BIDES" means waiting for the right time. Taken together, "FORMAT BIDES" can be interpreted to mean that entrepreneurs, when facing competition, need to arrange and determine their strategies and wait for the right time to implement them, as shown in Table 13.

Table 13. Element and Abbreviation of FORMAT-BIDES

Figure of Element CSC	Abbreviation	Figure of Element CSC	Abbreviation
Focus on a niche market  Dart board	(F)	Build Strong Customer  Relationships Four intertwined squares	(B)
Operationally efficient  Electric clock lamp	(O)	Sustainable Innovation  Light lamp picture	(I)
Market Research & Analysis  Rising graph	(R)	Differentiation  Rounded triangle box	(D)

Monitor and benchmark performance  Graphing in a magnifying glass	(M)	Effective Marketing and Branding  Registered trademark	(E)
Agile and Responsive  Rolling circle picture	(A)	Strategic partnerships and alliances  Handshake	(S)
Invest in talent and training  Star	(T)		
	FORMAT		BIDES

Source: Malinda et al., (2024)

Proposed Questionnaire and Interview Guide for Future Research

Based on the eleven CSC dimensions, this study also developed a preliminary questionnaire and interview guide intended for future quantitative and qualitative research. The questionnaire items were derived from literature synthesis and interview findings related to MSME strategic challenges and competitiveness.

The proposed instrument has not yet been statistically tested for validity or reliability because the current study focuses on conceptual framework development rather than empirical model testing. Therefore, the questionnaire should be considered an initial research instrument for future studies.

Future research may conduct: expert review for content validity, pilot testing, construct validity analysis, reliability testing using Cronbach's Alpha, and empirical testing using quantitative methods such as SEM or regression analysis. The interview guide was designed to support future qualitative exploration of MSME competitive strategy implementation across different business sectors and regional contexts.

Questionnaires for Quantitative and Qualitative Methods

1. Questionnaires for Quantitative Methods

This section presents the variable operationalization used in this study. Table 14 outlines the Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC) operationalization, in which each variable is measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), specifically: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree.

Table 14. Variable Operationalization of the Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC)

Variable	Item Statement	Scale
Focus on a Niche Market (F)	1. My company has a clearly defined niche market.	Likert Scale 1–5
	2. Our products/services are tailored to specific customer needs.	Likert Scale 1–5
	3. We offer unique value compared to competitors.	Likert Scale 1–5
Operationally Efficient (O)	4. Our operations run efficiently.	Likert Scale 1–5
	5. The company effectively reduces operational costs.	Likert Scale 1–5
	6. We minimize waste in our processes.	Likert Scale 1–5
	7. We use automation/technology to improve efficiency.	Likert Scale 1–5
Market Research & Analysis (R)	8. The company regularly conducts market research.	Likert Scale 1–5
	9. We understand customer needs and behavior.	Likert Scale 1–5
	10. We understand competitors' strategies.	Likert Scale 1–5
	11. Business decisions are based on market data.	Likert Scale 1–5
Monitor and Benchmark Performance (M)	12. The company has clear performance indicators (KPIs).	Likert Scale 1–5
	13. Performance is regularly monitored.	Likert Scale 1–5
	14. We benchmark performance against competitors.	Likert Scale 1–5
	15. Evaluation results are used for strategic improvement.	Likert Scale 1–5
Agile and Responsive (A)	16. The company responds quickly to market changes.	Likert Scale 1–5
	17. We adapt to customer needs effectively.	Likert Scale 1–5
	18. The company is proactive in facing industry changes.	Likert Scale 1–5
Invest in Talent and Training (T)	19. The company recruits competent employees.	Likert Scale 1–5
	20. Continuous training is provided.	Likert Scale 1–5
	21. Employees are encouraged to improve their skills.	Likert Scale 1–5
Build Strong Customer Relationships (B)	22. The company maintains strong customer relationships.	Likert Scale 1–5
	23. Customers frequently make repeat purchases.	Likert Scale 1–5
	24. We actively engage with customers.	Likert Scale 1–5
	25. Customers recommend our business to others.	Likert Scale 1–5
Sustainable Innovation (I)	26. The company continuously innovates.	Likert Scale 1–5
	27. We follow trends and new technologies.	Likert Scale 1–5
	28. Innovation is driven by customer needs.	Likert Scale 1–5
Differentiation (D)	29. Our products/services have unique advantages.	Likert Scale 1–5
	30. The company provides superior value compared to competitors.	Likert Scale 1–5

	31. We clearly differentiate ourselves in the market.	Likert Scale 1–5
Effective Marketing & Branding (E)	32. The company has a strong brand image.	Likert Scale 1–5
	33. Marketing strategies are well planned.	Likert Scale 1–5
	34. We effectively use online and offline channels.	Likert Scale 1–5
	35. The company attracts new customers successfully.	Likert Scale 1–5
Strategic Partnerships & Alliances (S)	36. The company builds strategic partnerships.	Likert Scale 1–5
	37. Partnerships help expand market reach.	Likert Scale 1–5
	38. Collaboration enhances competitive advantage.	Likert Scale 1–5
	39. The company optimizes partner resources effectively	Likert Scale 1–5

2. Questionnaires for Qualitative Methods

Table 15. In-depth Interview Guide for the Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC) — BIDES Framework

Dimension	Interview Questions
Opening	• Can you describe your business profile? • How competitive is your industry?
F — Focus (Focus on a Niche Market)	• Who is the customer segment or niche you are focusing on? • What are your efforts to present uniqueness or what does your company want to highlight? • What makes your products and services meet customer needs and preferences?
O — Operations (Operational Efficiency)	• What is your company doing to simplify operations and processes to increase efficiency? • What is your company doing to simplify operations and processes to reduce costs? • What is your company doing to simplify operations and processes to increase productivity? • What is your company doing to eliminate waste?
R — Research (Market Research and Analysis)	• How does your company conduct market research to understand your competitors? • How does your company conduct market research to understand the target audience? • How does your company conduct market research to understand industry trends?
M — Monitoring (Monitoring and Benchmarking Performance)	• How do you have performance metrics? • What are the ways to regularly monitor performance metrics? • How long does monitoring take to carry out? • How do you monitor your company's performance? • Who is responsible and authorized to monitor the Company's performance? • Which areas need to be improved to strengthen your Company's competitive position?

	• Which areas need to maintain your company's competitive position?
A — Agile (Agility and Responsiveness)	• How is your company agile and responsive in facing market changes? • What are your company's agile and responsive ways of dealing with customer preferences? • How is your company agile and responsive in facing the competitive landscape?
T — Talent (Investment in Talent and Training)	• How do you recruit skilled employees? • How does your company retain skilled employees? • What investments have been made to maintain and improve employee talent, especially in facing new industries and technology?
B — Customer (Building Strong Customer Relationships)	• What is the investment in building relationships with your customers? • What are the ways of personal interaction, service to your customers? • What are the efforts to build relationships with loyal and repeat customers? • What do you do for customers who make repeat purchases? • What do you do for customers who recommend your business to others?
I — Innovation (Sustainable Innovation)	• What sustainable innovations does your company carry out? • What new technologies and feedback trends do you use to achieve sustainable innovation? • What is your company doing to drive innovation and stay relevant in the market?
D — Differentiation	• What stands out or is different about your product/service? • What is unique about what you offer customers? • What strengths do you/your company have? • What innovations have you implemented that your competitors do not? • What adjustments do you make when looking at your competitors?
E — Marketing (Effective Marketing and Branding)	• What is your company doing to build a strong brand image? • What does your company do for marketing campaigns? • What is your company doing to build customer awareness? • What is your company doing to attract new customers? • What is your company doing to retain customers? • How does your company utilize online and offline facilities?
S — Partnership (Strategic Partnerships and Alliances)	• What are the efforts to establish strategic partnerships and alliances with complementary businesses? • What are your efforts to establish partnerships and strategic alliances with businesses to expand your reach?

	• What are the efforts to establish partnerships and strategic alliances with businesses to enter new markets? • What efforts are made to establish strategic partnerships and alliances with businesses to leverage shared resources and expertise?

CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to develop a conceptual Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC) for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) by integrating insights from strategic management literature. The study identified recurring strategic challenges faced by MSMEs, including limited competitor analysis capability, lack of differentiation, operational constraints, weak market targeting, and insufficient strategic planning.

Through thematic synthesis of the literature review, the study developed the Competitive Strategy Canvas consisting of eleven interconnected strategic elements: Focus on a Niche Market, Operationally Efficient, Market Research and Analysis, Monitor and Benchmark Performance, Agile and Responsive, Invest in Talent and Training, Build Strong Customer Relationships, Sustainable Innovation, Differentiation, Effective Marketing and Branding, and Strategic Partnerships and Alliances. These elements collectively represent market-oriented, capability-oriented, and collaboration-oriented strategic dimensions relevant to MSME competitiveness.

The study contributes to the strategic management literature by proposing an integrated conceptual framework specifically designed for MSMEs. Rather than examining strategic dimensions separately, the CSC combines multiple strategic perspectives into a single framework intended to support strategic reflection and business development planning for MSMEs.

However, this study is limited to conceptual framework development and exploratory qualitative analysis. The study does not empirically test the effectiveness of the CSC in improving business performance, profitability, or long-term competitiveness. Therefore, the proposed framework should be viewed as a preliminary strategic tool requiring further empirical validation.

Future research is recommended to conduct quantitative testing, instrument validation, and broader empirical implementation across different MSME sectors and geographical contexts to evaluate the applicability and effectiveness of the Competitive Strategy Canvas.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study focuses on the conceptual development of the Competitive Strategy Canvas (CSC) and does not empirically test the framework's effectiveness in improving MSME competitiveness, business performance, profitability, or sustainability outcomes. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as an initial conceptual contribution rather than a validated strategic model.

Second, the questionnaire and interview guide proposed in this study were developed as preliminary research instruments based on literature synthesis. However, these instruments have not yet undergone formal validity and reliability testing. As a result, the proposed measurement items should be considered exploratory and require further methodological refinement.

Future research is recommended to empirically evaluate the applicability and effectiveness of the Competitive Strategy Canvas across different MSME sectors and business environments. Further studies may conduct quantitative validation using statistical methods such as Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), factor analysis, or regression analysis to test relationships among the CSC dimensions and business performance outcomes.

Future researchers may also validate the questionnaire through expert review, pilot testing, construct validity assessment, and reliability analysis. In addition, comparative studies between

CSC and other strategic frameworks, such as Business Model Canvas or SWOT Analysis, may provide deeper insights into the practical contribution of the proposed framework for MSMEs.

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