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Sustainable performance of Budget hotels in Pakistan: Nexus of Networking Capability, Marketing Innovation and Absorptive Capacity

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Abstract:

The idea behind this study was to explore a model empirically which explains the relationship between Networking Capability (NC) and Sustainable Performance (SP), with a focus on budget hotels of Hospitality industry of Pakistan. This study determined on comprehending the mechanisms at play, such as Marketing Innovation's (MI) mediating role and the contingent impacts impacted by businesses' Absorptive Capacity (AC). The data was collected from 178 budget hotels of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa. Survey method was used to collection of data in which structured questionnaires were adopted from the previous studies.

This study used statistical techniques like multiple regression analysis, including hierarchical, descriptive, and correlation analyses, to look at the relationships between the variables. The results indicate that, in low-cost hotels, networking capability (NC) had a positive effect on marketing innovation (MI) and sustainable performance (SP). The result also validated MI's mediation function in the relation between NC and SP. Moreover, it was found that the relationship between NC and MI was strengthening by the influence of absorptive capacity (AC). This study emphasises the significance of NC and its multiple dimensions, which provides valuable data for strategic planning and management. The roadmap and instructions that are presented can play a crucial role in accomplishing the goals of Sustainable Performance. The research makes a substantial contribution to the body of literature by illuminating the beneficial effects of NC on SP, especially in the hotel sector. The investigation of MI's mediating function

in this relationship offers an important new perspective to the body of research on SP. Additionally, the addition of a moderated mediation model broadens the body of knowledge in this area.

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Keywords: Sustainable performance, Networking Capability, Marketing Innovation, Absorptive Capacity, Budget Hotels

Introduction

The world hospitality industry is highly dynamic and competitive now days, where firms need to continuously innovate and adapt to changing market trends, customer needs and wants.

In today's business environment is dynamic and highly competitive, marketing innovation has become an increasingly important driver of sustainable performance for hospitality industry. Marketing innovation involves the development and implementation of new ideas, marketing strategies, processes, and products that can better meet the growing needs, wants and preferences of customers. However, to achieve sustainable performance through marketing innovation, firms need to acquire the necessary capabilities, assimilate, and apply external knowledge effectively. This is where absorptive capacity comes into action, as it enables firms to connect knowledge from their external environment and use it to improve their marketing innovation capabilities.

One of the key factors that, networking capabilities influence a firm's absorptive capacity. Networking capabilities refer to the firm's capacity to establish and maintain relationships with various external stakeholders such as customers, suppliers and other firms. Through networking, firms can gain access to valuable knowledge and resources that can boost their absorptive capacity and gear up marketing innovation. However, the position of absorptive capacity as a mediator between networking capabilities and sustainable performance through marketing innovation has received relatively slight attention in the literature.

So address this gap, this paper aim to explore the moderating role of absorptive capacity in the relationship between networking capabilities and sustainable performance through marketing innovation. Drawing on the resource-based view and absorptive capacity literature, we propose a

conceptual model which outlines the key constructs and relationships concerned in this process. We hypothesize that networking capabilities positively persuade absorptive capacity, which turn enhances marketing innovation capability, and in due course leads to sustainable performance.

This paper contributes to the literature by providing a better understanding of the mechanism causal the relationship between networking capabilities, marketing innovation, absorptive capacity, and sustainable performance. The findings results can also have practical implications for firms specially hospitality industry, as they can help managers to identify the key factors that can enhance their marketing innovation capabilities and get better their sustainable performance.

Literature Review

Networking Capability:

In marketing, networking capability refers to the ability of a business or individual to connect and build relationships with other businesses, organizations, and individuals in their industry or market. This can include participating in networking events, joining industry groups and associations, and building a professional online presence through social media and other digital platforms (Hu and Huang,2020).Having a strong networking capability can help businesses and individuals to gain valuable industry insights, stay up-to-date with the latest trends, and create opportunities for collaboration and business development(Arastiet al,2022). Creating connection through networking is purposeful act with real advantages, not just a way to widen your social circle. Alshurideh et al, (2022), claim that networking can lead to trustworthy suppliers, useful partners, and new clients. Apart from the short-term benefits, it is essential in forming one's personal and professional reputation, which is critical for advancing one's career and growing a firm (Hsu and Lin, 2021).

Gulati (1998) highlights how important networking skills are to a company's search for a competitive edge. Long-term success is correlated with the capacity to create and leverage strong networks. Furthermore, Hitt et al, (2000) emphasise the need of networking skills in the context of technical learning and knowledge management in order to obtain a competitive advantage. The authors argue that firms that can build strong networks with other firms are better able to

access new technologies and knowledge, which can help them to achieve sustained competitive advantage.

Marketing Innovation:

Marketing innovation is the act of creating new and improved marketing strategies, tactics and tools (Lageset al, 2019). Such as using data analytics and machine learning to personalize marketing messages and experiences for individual customers. Marketing innovation is crucial for businesses looking to stay ahead of their competitors in today's fast-paced and ever-changing digital landscape. By continually experimenting with new marketing strategies and tactics, companies can stay relevant, build customer loyalty, and drive growth (Shin and Kim, 2020).

Sustainable Performance:

Sustainable performance refers to the incorporation of economic, social, and environmental dimensions of performance to create long-term value for internal and external stakeholders. Organizations that adopt sustainable practices are better able to respond to the challenges like changing needs and expectations of customers, employees, investors, and society at large. A growing body of literature has examined the concept of sustainable performance and its antecedents, outcomes, and mechanisms (Eccles&Serafeim, 2013; Elkington, 1998; Sharma &Vredenburg, 1998).

Research also suggests that organisations can benefit from sustained success in a number of ways. These include increased competitiveness and innovation, improved financial performance, and increased legitimacy and reputation (Eccles&Serafeim, 2013; Elkington, 1998). Similarly, implementing sustainable practises can result in cost-effective corporate operations that improve risk management, productivity, and cost savings. Consequently, this leads to improved financial outcomes. Adopting sustainable practises can also improve an organization's legitimacy and reputation, which will increase investment and consumer loyalty. Therefore, it has been evident that adopting sustainability can also boost competitiveness and innovation. Companies and Organisations can create new Products, services, and procedures that not only satisfy customers demand but also tackle new issues by coordinating with sustainability aims.

Absorptive Capacity:

The absorptive capacities known as the ability of a person or organisation to identify, comprehends, and applies new knowledge, information, and skills. (Makri et al., 2006). It can also refer to an organization's capacity to create new knowledge by integrating and reorganising pre-existing knowledge, going beyond simple absorption (Wang and Wang, 2022).

This ability is vital for businesses that want to continue being creative and competitive. It provides them with a way to keep up with the newest trends, implement best practises and technological advancements, and settle changing market situations. An organization's ability to take advantage of opportunities, manage risks, and overcome challenges increases with its capacity to take in and use new knowledge, trend and information.

Absorptive capacity is composed of four essential components. 1. Acquisition: The capacity to recognise and gather fresh facts or knowledge from outside sources. 2. Assimilation: The capacity to comprehend and incorporate new information or knowledge into pre-existing processes and understanding. 3. Transformation: The capacity to use fresh information or expertise to create innovative goods, services, or procedures. 4. Exploitation: The capacity to enhance current goods, services, or procedures by applying new knowledge or information.

Organizations can build their absorptive capacity by investing in training, creating a culture of continuous learning and improvement, and by fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing among employees.

Hypothesis Development:

The firms must have ability to establish and maintain effective networks with vendors, suppliers, partners, and customers become increasingly important to achieve sustainable performance in contemporary and vibrant business atmosphere. The ability of businesses to create and manage networks of connections in order to get access to outside opportunities, knowledge, and resources that can improve their performance and competitiveness is known as network capability. Anemergent body of literature has shown that network capability is positively related

to various dimensions of sustainable performance, such as social performance, environmental performance, and financial performance (Garg&Rahman, 2019; Wu et al., 2021).

Many studies have identified the mechanisms through which network capability can contribute to sustainable performance, such as knowledge sharing, innovation, and resource efficiency (Choi & Lee, 2017; Parida et al., 2018). For example network capability can facilitate firms to access and share knowledge with partners and suppliers, which can facilitate and coordinate in the development of new products and services and improve operational efficiency. Additionally, network capability can facilitate mutual understanding, collaboration and partnerships with all relevant stakeholders, which can enhance the firm's social and environmental performance by promoting sustainability practices and reducing pessimistic impacts on stakeholders. Generally, the literature suggests that network capability is a valuable resource for firms seeking to achieve sustainable performance, and that developing and leveraging effective networks of stakeholders can have a positive impact on various dimensions of sustainability.

H1: Network capability has positive impact on sustainable performance.

Networking capability mean firm's capability to establish and maintain valuable relationships within the relevant industry such as suppliers, customers, and partners. This capability able the firms to get new ideas for achieving marketing innovation, which involves the development and implementation of new practices, marketing strategies, and processes that create values for customers and enhance the firm's competitiveness within the relevant industry. The literature has suggested that networking capability is positively associated to marketing innovation, and that effective networks can help to acquire the knowledge and resources that are necessary for innovation (Chen et al., 2021; Pangarkar& Wu, 2019).

Most of studies have lighted the mechanisms through which networking capability can contribute to marketing innovation, such as collaboration, knowledge sharing, and resource integration (Chen et al., 2021; Pangarkar& Wu, 2019). For example, effective networks can facilitate the firms to exchange of information and knowledge among stakeholders, which can make possible for firms to identify customer needs, emerging trends and market opportunities. Moreover,

networks can provide access to complementary resources and capabilities that can boost the firm's marketing innovation capacity. For instance partnerships with suppliers, vendors or distributors can provide access to new technologies, distribution channels, or customer segmentation that can drive towards marketing innovation.

The literature suggests that networking capability is a helpful resource for firms seeking to achieve marketing innovation, and effective networks can have a positive impact on various dimensions of marketing strategies and performance.

H2: Networking capability has positive impact on marketing innovation.

Marketing innovation is to develop and implementation of novel marketing strategies, practices, and processes which enhance value for customers and create the firm's competitiveness. Conversely, in order to provide long-lasting value for stakeholders, sustainable performance combines the economic, social, and environmental components of performance. The literature has suggested that marketing innovation can positively impact sustainable performance by enabling firms to create new value propositions that align with sustainability goals and address the needs and expectations of various stakeholders (Dangelico&Pujari, 2010; Kianto et al., 2018).

Many researchers have highlighted the ideas and mechanism through which marketing innovation can contribute to sustainable performance, such as social innovation, environmental innovation, and economic innovation (Kianto et al., 2018; Saebi& Foss, 2015). For example, marketing innovation can facilitate firms to develop new ideas for products and services which are more environmentally friendly, socially responsible, and economically viable. If we further explore the scope of marketing innovation with other stakeholders such as customers, suppliers and partners which can enhance the sustainability process and support innovation and helpful resource for firms those who seeking to achieve sustainable performance and to developing and implementing innovative marketing ideas, strategies and practices can have positive impact on various dimensions of sustainability.

H3: marketing innovation has positive impact on sustainable performance.

As established earlier in H1, networking capability has a positive relationship on sustainable performance. In the light of existing literature, we argue that marketing innovation mediates the relationship between networking capability and sustainable performance. Networking capability and Sustainable Performance are two important factors that can influence the success of an organization. Previous studies suggest that there is a strong relationship between sustainable performance and networking capability, as organizations that have strong networking capabilities are often better able to achieve sustainable performance (Ghisettiet al, 2018; Pereiraet al, 2020). By building relationships with other organizations and stakeholders, an organization can access resources, information, and expertise that can help it to adopt more sustainable practices (Raza and Standing, 2019). For example, an organization might partner with a supplier that has expertise in sustainable sourcing practices or collaborate with a non-profit organization to develop a sustainability program. In addition, networking can help to raise awareness of an organization's sustainable performance and promote its reputation as a socially responsible organization. By building relationships with customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders, an organization can demonstrate its commitment to sustainability and build a strong reputation that can enhance its brand and attract new customers(Sen and Bhattacharya,2001).

Several studies have investigated the influence and relationship of marketing innovation with other firm performance measures. For example, Yang and Wu (2018) examined the mediating role of marketing innovation in the relationship between networking capabilities and new product performance. They found that firms with stronger networks in market were in position to develop and implement new ideas and innovative marketing strategies, which in turn improved their new product performance. Mohammadi et al. (2017) investigated the mediating influence of marketing innovation in the relationship between networking skills and business performance in a study pertaining to the pharmaceutical industry. The results showed that marketing innovation had a major mediating influence. Businesses that possess the ability to create and implement successful marketing strategies have been shown to have a higher chance of achieving long-term success, especially when dealing with fierce competition and quickly shifting market conditions. Chen et al. (2015) conducted a study that examined the mediating role of marketing innovation within the context of Taiwanese enterprises and their global success. This study further emphasised how important marketing innovation is as a mediator. Companies exhibiting

proficiency in formulating and executing efficacious marketing tactics were observed to possess a greater probability of attaining enduring global performance. Essentially, these results highlight how important marketing innovation is to improving total company performance, both domestically and internationally.

Businesses can use marketing innovation to develop and implement cutting-edge and effective marketing strategies, as well as to strengthen their networking capacities (Sousa and Vrontis, 2018). The cooperation of suppliers, buyers, sellers, and other stakeholders during the new product development process serves as an example. These kinds of partnerships provide insightful information on the requirements, wants, and preferences of customers, enabling businesses to create more creative and successful marketing campaigns.in the same way by leveraging social media and other online platforms, firms can reach new and previously untapped markets, and build stronger relationships with customers (Pascussiet al, 2023).Marketing innovation can intervene the relationship between networking capabilities and sustainable performance by creating new opportunities for value creation, competitive advantage, and long-term growth(Han and Zhang, 2021). When firms have strong networking capabilities, they are able to establish and maintain relationships with customers, suppliers, and other stakeholders that can provide access to resources, information, and knowledge (Ahuja and Katila, 2001). Therefore, we can infer that, this in turn can facilitate the development of new and innovative marketing strategies, which can create value for customers, enhance the firm's competitive position, and contribute to sustainable performance.

We argue that marketing innovation mediates the relationship between networking capabilities and sustainable performance by facilitating the development of new and effective marketing strategies, and by creating new opportunities for value creation, competitive advantage, and long-term growth. By leveraging their networking capabilities to develop and implement effective marketing strategies, firms can differentiate themselves from competitors, reach new and previously untapped markets, and achieve sustained growth and profitability (Yooet al, 2000).

It is hypothesized that absorptive capacity moderates the relationship between networking capability and sustainable performance. This means that the effectiveness of an organization's

networking capability in enhancing its sustainable performance will depend on its absorptive capacity.

In other words, an organization with high absorptive capacity will be able to effectively acquire and utilize the knowledge and resources accessed through networking activities to enhance its performance in a sustainable manner (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990). On the other hand, an organization with low absorptive capacity may not be able to effectively utilize the knowledge and resources accessed through networking activities and may not experience significant sustainable performance improvements.

Therefore, it is expected that organizations with high absorptive capacity will experience stronger positive relationships between networking capability and sustainable performance compared to organizations with low absorptive capacity and Top of Formthis leads to the development of hypothesis 4.

H4: MI mediates the relationship between networking capabilities and sustainable performance.

Hypotheses 5 establish on the idea that networking capability or the ability of an organization to develop and maintain relationships with external stakeholders; can provide sufficient access to new ideas, technologies, and resources that can compel marketing innovation. However, to fully realize the prospective of networking capacity, an organization must also have the absorptive capacity to effectively incorporate and apply the knowledge and information obtained through these relationships.

For instance, an organization’s management with strong networking capacity that lacks absorptive capacity may struggle to influence the knowledge and information obtained from its external network resources to drive marketing innovation. On the other hand, an organization with both well-built networking and absorptive capacity may be in better position to identify and take advantage of new marketing opportunities and create innovative marketing ideas and strategies that differentiate it from its competitors. Furthermore, it is contingent that an organization's ability to acquire and assimilate new knowledge from its external networks which we consider as an important element of absorptive capacity is a critical factor in determining the degree to which networking capacity influences its marketing innovation.

Absorptive capacity, defined as the capacity of an organization to acquire, assimilate, transform, and apply external knowledge to improve its performance (Cohen &Levinthal, 1990), and networking capability, defined as the capability of an organization to establish and retain relationships with external parties to access resources and knowledge (Lane &Lubatkin, 1998), are two important elements which can contribute to an organization's marketing innovation.

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Therefore, it may be experience that organizations with high absorptive capacity will experience stronger positive relationships between networking capability and marketing innovation compared to organizations with low absorptive capacity (Zahra and George, 2002). The absorptive capacity of an organization can act as a facilitator or barrier to the development and implementation of innovative marketing strategies by leveraging external knowledge through networking capability.

Makri et al. (2006) examine joint ventures and the relationship between performance, networking capacity, and absorptive ability in the context of inter-organizational partnerships. The authors discover that in firms with more absorptive capacities, the relationship between joint venture complexities a measure of networking capacity and performance is stronger. This implies that the relationship between performance and inter-organizational interactions is significantly moderated by absorptive capacity. The study emphasises how important absorptive capacity is in determining how networking capacity and performance relate to one another. Although more research is necessary to fully understand the dynamics between absorptive capacity, networking

capacity, and marketing innovation, this study provides a useful basis for understanding how absorptive capacity affects the outcomes of inter-organizational relationships.

Furthermore, hypothesis (H6) proposes that networking competence and sustainable performance are connected through the mediation of marketing innovation. It also indicates that absorptive ability affects the strength of this association.

In other words, an organization with higher networking capability is better able to access external knowledge and resources through its relationships with external parties. If the organization has high absorptive capacity, it can effectively acquire and utilize this knowledge to develop and implement innovative marketing strategies. These strategies, in turn, can improve the organization's sustainable performance.

Hence H5 and H6proposes that:

H5: Absorptive capacity moderates the relationship between networking capability and marketing innovation.

H6: MI mediates the relationship between networking capability and sustainable performance such that relationship is stronger in the presence of absorptive capacity.

Theoretical framework

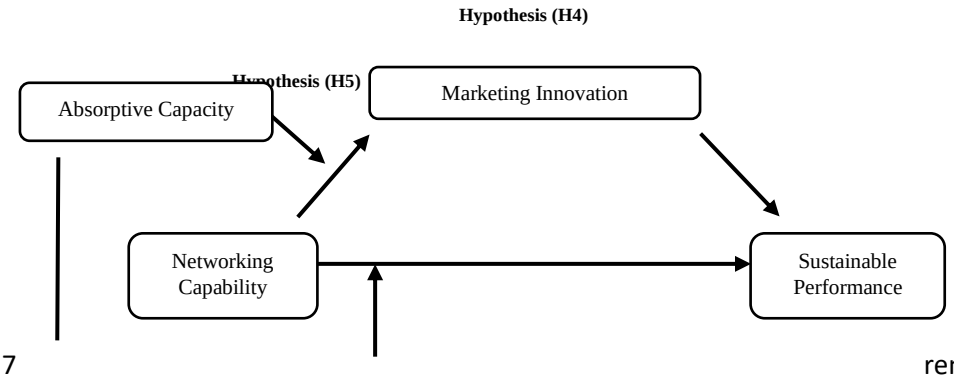

Figure 1: Research Model

Methodology

Tourism and hospitality industry of the Pakistan is continuously experiencing growth, has large potential of growth and has been acknowledged as one of the key source of employment and revenue generation (Goryushkina, et al., 2018). Government of Pakistan is focusing on the imperative role of hospitality sector in the development of economy (Sun, Sarfraz, Khawaja, Ozturk&Raza, 2022). In Pakistan the large part of hospitality sector is comprises of budgeted hotels which include two stars and three stars hotels (Tariq, Yasir&Majid, 2021). As the result of continuous growth of this sector has strongly influences the several economic development indicators. In light to significance of this sector, this study has chosen two stars and three stars hotels as the unit of analysis for current study. Two stars and three star hotels in several economies around the globe have similar attributes like business service, room services, conference rooms, valet services and on-site restaurants. Therefore, data collected from two stars and three star hotels of Pakistan might not eliminate the implication of this study to other economies around the world.

In order to evaluate the hypothesized model in this study a cross-sectional research design was utilized and data was gathered from the managerial level employees of two stars and three stars hotels of Pakistan. Directory of Hotels and restaurants prepared by Directorate of Tourists

services, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan was consulted to know the exact list of population of two stars and three stars hotels and to determine the further representative sample size for this study. Moreover, a specific criterion was developed in this study to select the two stars and three stars hotels as sample. Firstly, the hotel must possess the valid certification and registration from government agencies. Secondly, the hotel must be in operation in industry from last five years. Thirdly, hotel must meet the international standards of two stars and three stars hotels. In line to the above criterion, 762 employees of 127 two stars and three star hotels of two tourist destinations Galiyat of district Abbottabad and Naran/Kaghan of district Mansehra were identified. Two stars and three stars hotels are experiencing increase number of tourists and open to competition and this may produced adverse effects on natural environment and additionally these hotels are acknowledging environmental performance as an imperative component for their survival (Meo, Kanwal, Ali, Karim&Kamboh, 2022).

Data was gathered form 517 owners and managers of 75 two stars and 52 three stars hotels of two tourist destinations Galiyat of district Abbottabad and Naran/Kaghan of district Mansehra, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. For the purpose of data gathering a structured questionnaire was utilized and this process was comprised of two phases. First, after contacting the owners and managers of hotels selected for this study on emails and phone calls, questionnaires were mailed to the owners and managers of these hotels on their postal addresses along with return envelope. However, in first phase response was not satisfactory. In next phase, researcher personally visited the hotels for data collection as the result of which 517 valid responses were recorded. The demographic details are depicted in table 1. To measure the study construct the questionnaire was designed and responses of the respondents were recorded on 5-point Likert scale.

Table 1

Demographic Profile

	N	%		N	%
Hotels' age (years)			Respondent's Experience		
5 to 10 years	27	21.25	Less than 5 years	39	7.54
11 to 15 years	35	27.55	5 to 10 years	81	15.66
16 to 20 years	48	37.79	11to 20 years	290	56.09
More the 20 years	17	13.38	More than 20 years	107	20.69
Total	127	100	Total	517	100
Hotels' size			Respondent's Education		
No of employees			Matriculate	88	17.02
Less than 20	29	22.83	Intermediate	92	17.79
21 to 50	41	32.28	Bachelors	127	24.56
51 to 100	32	25.19	Masters	192	37.13
More than 100	25	19.68	MS/MPhil	15	2.90
Total	127	100	PhD	3	0.58
			Total	517	100
Respondent's Age (years)			Respondent's Gender		
20 to 30	67	12.95	Male	476	
31 to 40	128	24.75	Female	51	
41-50	144	27.85	Total	517	
51-60	107	20.69			
More than 60	71	13.73			
Total	517				

For measuring the four dimensional construct of networking capability 19 items scale was used which was adapted from (Hasyim, Simarmata&Nasirwan, 2022).The calculated

Cronbach's alpha value for these 19 items was 0.827. The marketing innovation scale, with ten items, was measured and its Cronbach's alpha was 0.867. The scale was taken from [source]. Furthermore, a four-item scale was modified from Khan et al (2021) for the determination of the two-dimensional construct absorptive capacity, yielding a Cronbach's alpha value of 0.813. Similarly, three dimensional construct of sustainable performance (economic, social and environmental performance) was measured with 15 items scale which was adapted from Khan, et al., (2021). 15 items scale generated the Cronbach's alpha value of 0.891. The construct of SP was measured with its three components that are economic performance, social performance and environmental performance. The 15 items scale was adapted from Ciemleja and Lace (2011) to measure three dimensional SP. 15 items scale computed the value of Cronbach's α .732. Items used to measure SP were reliable. Hotel's age, Hotel's size, educational qualification of owners and managers and managers and owner experience was considered as control variables for this study.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient and the Corrected Item-Total Correlation (CITC) were calculated in order to evaluate the constructs' reliability. The results are shown in Table 2. Table 2 presents findings that demonstrate the reliability of the instrument used. Specifically, the statistical results for CITC exceeded the threshold value of 0.5, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficients beyond the barrier of 0.7. Convergent and discriminant validity were used in this study when evaluating the construct validity. To evaluate convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Composite Reliability (CR) were computed. The findings shown in Table 2 clearly show that the AVE values and the CR values both exceeded the 0.50 and 0.70 thresholds. Furthermore, the outcomes show that AVE exceeded CR. The findings for Factor Loadings (FL), t-values, CR, and AVE are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Construct measurement and confirmatory factor analysis

Construct		CITC	FL	t-value	AVE	CR	Alpha
Network Capability	NC1	0.670	0.980	11.070	0.702	0.993	0.827
	NC2	0.652	0.815	13.819			
	NC3	0.600	0.922	15.185			
	NC4	0.632	0.846	12.340			
	NC5	0.669	0.801	11.177			
	NC6	0.651	0.828	14.211			
	NC7	0.649	0.871	11.920			
	NC8	0.628	0.869	14.886			
	NC9	0.601	0.842	12.665			
	NC10	0.676	0.819	11.110			
	NC11	0.691	0.919	14.131			
	NC12	0.622	0.903	13.870			
	NC13	0.689	0.815	11.132			
	NC14	0.697	0.805	10.234			

	NC15	0.611	0.841	14.151			
	NC16	0.641	0.862	7.111			
	NC17	0.623	0.923	11.892			
	NC18	0.656	0.856	10.144			
	NC19	0.612	0.812	12.872			
Marketing Innovation	MI1	0.666	0.891	15.250	0.731	0.976	0.867
	MI2	0.647	0.873	9.895			
	MI3	0.645	0.892	15.526			
	MI4	0.623	0.798	16.136			
	MI5	0.605	0.817	14.250			
	MI6	0.673	0.894	11.107			
	MI7	0.687	0.889	10.892			
	MI8	0.626	0.821	12.136			
	MI9	0.685	0.851	14.873			
	MI10	0.692	0.820	12.250			
Absorptive Capacity	AC1	0.694	0.874	14.166	0.768	0.913	0.813
	AC2	0.646	0.825	14.290			

	AC3	0.623	0.858	13.197			
	AC4	0.616	0.848	12.812			
Sustainable Performance	SP1	0.606	0.846	11.144	0.727	0.988	0.891
	SP2	0.618	0.882	14.873			
	SP3	0.633	0.880	12.250			
	SP4	0.623	0.830	11.015			
	SP5	0.672	0.819	10.892			
	SP6	0.644	0.853	14.881			
	SP7	0.656	0.828	13.114			
	SP8	0.663	0.813	11.250			
	SP9	0.686	0.814	13.893			
	SP10	0.604	0.892	11.506			
	SP11	0.615	0.837	12.134			
	SP12	0.608	0.888	10.250			
	SP13	0.610	0.850	12.873			
	SP14	0.613	0.892	14.250			
	SP15	0.622	0.862	11.015			

Model fit index $\chi 2$ /df = 14.605; p = 0.000; CFI = 0.914; NFI = 0.918; GFI = 0.902; RMSEA = 0.062

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construct reliability; CITC: corrected item-total correlation

Significance level: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001; CR:

Correlation coefficients with other constructs were calculated, and the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct was compared, in accordance with the guidelines provided by Fornell and Larcker (1981) for evaluating discriminant validity. The findings shown in Table 2 validated the discriminant validity of the measures by showing that the square roots of AVE were greater than the correlation coefficients with other constructs. In addition, this study implied the VIF test for the evaluation and reduction of issue related to multi-collinearity between constructs. The findings show that there was no problem with multicollinearity in this study because the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for the study constructs were within an acceptable range (below 50). Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) using AMOS version 12 was used to evaluate the model fit. A number of indices were taken into consideration, including chi-square, the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI), the Normed Fit Index (NNFI), and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI). With the following indices, the four-factor model was found to meet the requirements for model fitness: $\varphi 2/df = 14.605$, p = 0.000, CFI = 0.914, NFI = 0.918, GFI = 0.902, and RMSEA = 0.062.

Analysis and results

Table 2 revealed the statistical results for Mean, standard deviation and the value of correlation coefficient. The results present in table approve the significant correlation between study

variables. It is clear from results that NC is correlated significantly to MI (r=.41**), SP (r=.51**) and AC (r=.46**). MI is correlated significantly to SP as results depicted in table 3 revealed that (r=.48**)

Table 3

Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficient

Construct	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Hotel's Age	3.2	.83	1							
Hotel's Size	2.3	.79	.11	1						
Educational Level	2.5	.80	.15*	.05	1					
Work Experience	2.4	.85	.08	.07	.06	1				
NC	3.7	.84	.09	.14*	.12	.09	***(.876)***			
MI	3.6	.87	.05	.11	.06	.07	.41**	***(.845)***		
SP	3.4	.88	.06	.09	.08	.17*	.51**	.48**	***(.833)***	
AC	3.8	.85	.08	.05	.06	.09	.46**	.39**	.43**	***(.868)***

Note: NC (Networking capability); MI (Marketing Innovation); SP (sustainable performance); AC (Absorptive Capacity); M (Mean); SD (Standard Deviation)

The in italics (diagonal data) are the square roots of AVE (average variance extracted) of constructs.

In order to evaluate the mediating part in support of the relationship of variables the standards recommended by Baron and Kenney (1986) were considered using SPSS version 23. To evaluate the direct effects of NC upon SP and mediating effects of MI among NC and SP regression analysis was undertaken. Results provided in Model-2 of table 4 evidently suggested that NC is predicting significantly SP (β = 0.443** SE = 0.029). Hence, founding upon this result, H1 for this study is confirmed. It is evident form results revealed in table 4 Model-5 that NC is predicting significantly MI (β = 0.388** SE 5 0.024), founding upon which H2 of this

study is established. Additionally, results for Model-3 advocates that MI is predicating significantly SP (β = 0.341** SE = 0.049). So, H3 of this study is approved. Moreover, the model-3 checks the mediating role of MI in explaining the association among NC and SP. MI is added to model for testing the mediating role of MI among NC and SP. After inclusion of MI to Model-3 the NC coefficient prevails significant; whereas, the beta value has decreased in significant way in comparison of Model-2 (β = 0.178 < 0.443, p < 0.001). Results established the partial mediation of MI in the association of NC and SP. So, grounded on the outcomes H4 of this study is approved statistically.

Table 4

Results of regression analysis for the mediating role of Marketing Innovation

Constructs	DV: Sustainable performance			DV: Marketing innovation	
	Model-1	Model-2	Model-3	Model-4	Model-5
Control variables					
Hotel's age	-0.028(0.047)	0.015 (0.048)	-0.016(0.046)	0.007(0.059)	0.059(0.043)
Hotel's size	0.081(0.097)	-0.044(0.080)	0.008(0.071)	0.017(0.082)	-0.083(0.076)
Working experience	0.040(0.060)	0.021(0.038)	0.013(0.054)	0.005(0.053)	0.061(0.042)
Educational level	0.061(0.117)	0.024(0.065)	0.015(0.091)	0.016(0.092)	0.071(0.078)
Predictors.					
Network capability		0.443***(0.029)	0.178***(0.042)		0.388***(0.024)
Marketing innovation			0.341***(0.049)		
R^2	0.026	0.355	0.448	0.037	0.439
Adjusted-R^2	0.013	0.347	0.409	0.023	0.416
F-value	1.939*	68.651**	71.856**	3.099**	78.641***

Durbin Watson	1.670	2.090	2.008	1.817	2.209

Significance level: *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.

Un-standardized coefficients reported.

Standard errors in parentheses.

Table 5 presents the statistical findings of the regression analysis using the "PROCESS" program, in accordance with Hayes' (2013) guidelines. A mean-centralized moderator was used as the basis for an interaction term in order to solve possible multicollinearity problems.

The statistical study supported Hypothesis 5 by showing positive associations (β = 0.435, 0.230, 0.117; p < 0.001, 0.001, and 0.001) between Marketing Innovation (MI) and Absorptive Capacity (AC) and their associated interaction term. Furthermore, it was discovered that there was a substantial relationship between Sustainable Performance (SP) and NC, AC, MI, and the interaction term that went along with them (β = 0.375, 0.190, 0.337, 0.103; p < 0.001, 0.001, 0.001, and 0.001, respectively). Founding upon statistical analysis result H6 of this study was confirmed

Table 5

Regression results of PROCESS

Path estimates	Dependent Variable	
	Marketing Innovation	Sustainable Performance
Controls		
Hotel's age	0.006(0.053)	0.007(0.057)
Hotel's size	0.011(0.080)	0.013(0.062)
Work experience	0.007(0.059)	0.005(0.073)
Education level	0.011(0.082)	0.006(0.072)

Predictors		
Network capability	0.435***(0.033)	0.375***(0.041)
Absorptive Capacity	0.230***(0.038)	0.190***(0.046)
Network capability * Absorptive Capacity	0.113***(0.051)	0.103***(0.053)
Marketing Innovation		0.337***(0.032)
R^2	0.408	0.396
F-statistic	67.030***	59.610***

Note. Table values are path estimates from the estimated model.

Entries are un-standardized coefficient estimates.

Standard errors in parentheses.

Significance level: * p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001.

In addition, founding upon the regression analysis shown in table 6, both AC high level and low level simple effects were checked. Following Edwards and Lambert's (2007) suggestions, a sample of 5000 was bootstrapped, and the bootstrap estimate was used to create bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs) for each significance test in this investigation. Tables 6 and 7 present statistical data demonstrating that NC predicts both direct effects (β = 0.495; p < 0.001) and indirect effects (β = 0.239; 95% bias-corrected CI: [0.178, 0.323]) upon SP through MI when using the upper level AC. Conversely, at low AC levels, NC demonstrated direct effects (β = 0.310; p < 0.001) as well as indirect effects (β 5 0.163; 95% bias-corrected CI: [0.112, 0.245]) on SP through MI. The study's H5 and H6 were also validated, as the statistical findings suggest that rising AC levels increase both direct and indirect impacts.

Table 6

Conditional direct effects of network capability on sustainable performance at values of

absorptive capacity

(Condition)	Conditional _direct _effects					
					95% CI	
	Effect	SE	T	P	LL	UL
Low (-1SD)	0.310	0.047	6.215	0.064	0.181	0.447
Middle (0)	0.401	0.045	7.447	0.000	0.267	0.545
High (+1SD)	0.495	0.032	11.759	0.000	0.359	0.650

Note. Bootstrap resample = 5000. Conditional for moderator (absorptive capacity) are the mean and plus/minus one standard deviation from the mean.

SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit;

Estimates were calculated using the PROCESS macro

Table 7

Conditional indirect effect of network capability on sustainable performance by marketing innovation moderated through absorptive capacity

Mediator	Condition	Conditional indirect effects of Absorptive Capacity			
		Effects	Boot-SE	Boot 95% CI	
				LL	UL
Marketing innovation	Low(-1SD)	0.163	0.037	0.112	0.245
	Middle(0)	0.201	0.035	0.110	0.279
	High(+1SD)	0.239	0.031	0.174	0.319

Note. Bootstrap resample = 5000. Conditional for moderator (absorptive capacity) are the mean and plus/minus one standard deviation from the mean.

SE = standard error; CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit;

Estimates were calculated using the PROCESS macro.

Additionally, this research verified whether the indirect effect is influenced by AC and whether the Boot confidence interval of moderated mediation limited zero. The moderated mediation results are presented in Table 8, indicating that the mediation's effects were positive and had a non-zero probability ($\beta = 0.028$; 95% bias-corrected CI; [0.001, 0.047]). Based on these findings, it can be concluded that AC not only favourably modifies the link between NC and SP, but also favourably modifies the indirect effects of NC on SP through MI. Thus, this study's H5 and H6 were confirmed.

Table 8

Statistical results for moderated mediation analyses

Independent-Variable	Dependent-Variable	Moderator	Mediator	index	Boot – SE	Boot 95%CI	
						LL	UL
Network capability	Sustainable performance	Marketing innovation	Absorptive Capacity	0.028	0.001	0.001	0.047

Note. SE=standard error; CI=confidence interval; LL=lower limit; UL=upper limit.

In addition and in line to the recommendations of Preacher et al. (2007), in this study the moderating result of AC on the association of NC and SP were plotted. Figure 2 suggests that the direct effects for all AC values are far-off from zero. In line to recommendations of Preacher et al. (2007) in order to plot the conditional indirect effects of NC upon SP through MI founded upon the variance of second order with accounted 95 percent confidence interval.

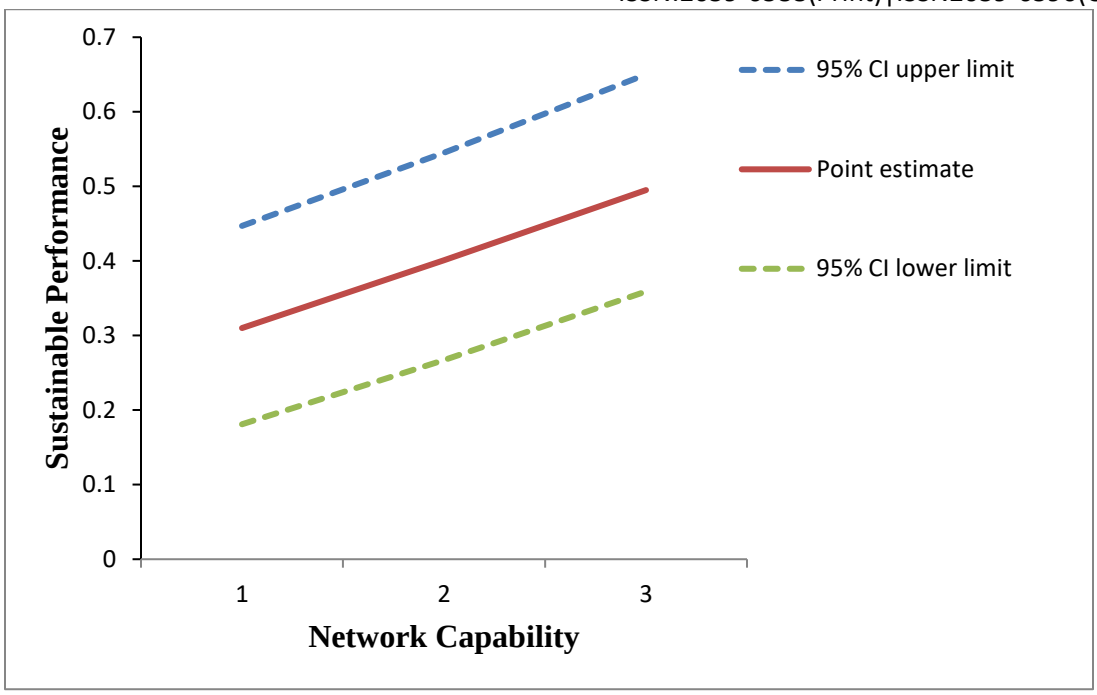

Figure 2 Direct effects

In figure 3 it is revealed graphically that indirect effects for all AC values are far-off from zero. Concluding the study analysis, it is established that NC approved higher direct effects upon SP whenever AC was on higher side.

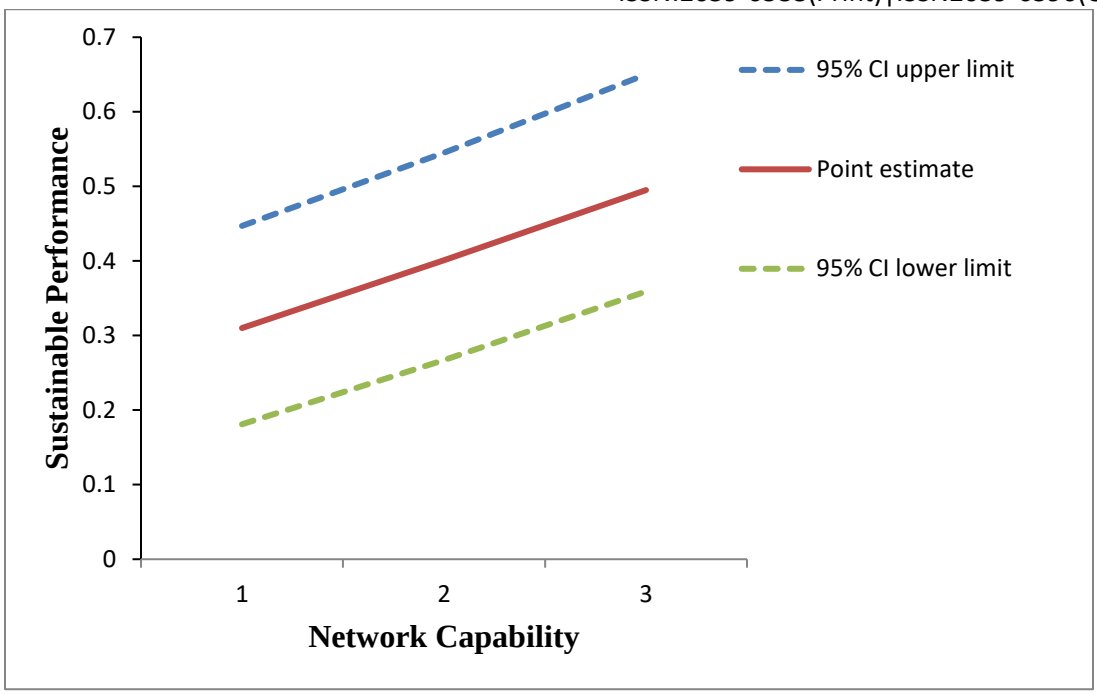

Figure 3 Conditional indirect effects

Conclusion:

This study sought to unravel the complicated relationship between networking abilities, sustainable performance, marketing innovation,and absorptive aptitude. Our study findings have shown numerous notable relationships that highlight creative and environmentally concerned organizations' dynamics. Importantly, our study shows that good networking abilities lead to sustainable performance. Thus, networking capabilities in the hotel industry are more likely to gain a competitive advantage. Furthermore, building connections and cooperating with stakeholders within and beyond their sector may help hotel businesses survive and thrive. This supports earlier research (Garousiet al., 2020) that networking improves organizational effectiveness and sustainability.

Our research also shows that networking skills boost marketing inventiveness. This shows the value of networking in facilitating information and experience exchange, which leads to new marketing tactics. Businesses that network often may foresee industry trends, client preferences, and technological advances, allowing them to craft standout advertising campaigns. Expanding on these findings, we show that creative marketing is sustainable. This suggests that marketing innovators are more likely to achieve sustainability objectives. Creative marketing programs boost customer engagement and loyalty while achieving economic, social, and environmental sustainability goals. Coordination of marketing strategies with sustainability objectives may help companies remain ahead of the competition and benefit society and shareholders.

Marketing innovation also moderates networking skills and long-term success, according to our study. This shows that innovative marketing is needed to transform networking advantages into sustainable outcomes. Businesses may improve sustainability by networking to boost marketing innovation. These two elements work together to achieve sustainable goals. We also find that absorptive capability mediates networking skills and marketing innovation. The ability to absorb, evaluate, and use knowledge from outside sources makes networking skills a powerful tool for marketing innovation. Networking may help marketing departments innovate if a business can absorb fresh information. This implies networking may boost creativity in these companies even more.

Finally, absorptive capacity mediates networking capacities and long-term performance. Absorptive ability is crucial to translating networking advantages into long-term performance increases. Businesses require strong absorption capacity to adapt to changing market dynamics, anticipate new trends, and embrace sustainable growth opportunities. This lets them leverage networking to promote sustainability. Our study illuminates the complicated link between an organization's capacity to absorb new knowledge, marketing innovation, networking abilities, and long-term success. Companies must understand these interrelated aspects to prosper in today's fast-paced business environment and increase sustainability over time. Future research may examine additional factors that affect networking, innovation, and absorptive capacity to better understand how they affect organizational sustainability.

Summary

This research underscores the importance of Networking Capability and Marketing Innovation in forceful Sustainable Performance in budgeted hotels. It highlights the importance for hotel managers to focus on building strong networking capabilities, fostering innovative marketing practices, and enhancing absorptive capacity to achieve sustainable success in a competitive market environment.

Overall, this study contributes to both academic literature and practical implications for budget hotel management, offering valuable insights for strategic decision-making and performance enhancement in the hospitality industry.

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