

The Role of Sales Network Quality in Transforming Proactive Market Orientation into Sales Performance: Evidence from MSMEs in Central Java, Indonesia

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: August 12, 2026

Revised: September 07, 2026

Accepted: September 09, 2026

JEL Classification:

M12, L26, M31, D22

DOI:

10.14414/jebav.v29i2.5751

Keywords:

Sales Network Quality, Proactive Market Orientation, Sales Performance

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to develop a novel concept of Sales Network Quality that explains the mechanism linking Proactive Market Orientation and Sales Performance among Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). Previous studies have predominantly examined the direct effect of market orientation on business performance, while limited attention has been given to the role of sales network quality in transforming proactive market capabilities into improved sales performance. Data were collected through a survey of 287 MSME owners or managers in Central Java, Indonesia, and analyzed using structural equation modelling-partial least squares (SEM-PLS). The results indicate that Proactive Market Orientation is positively associated with sales network quality and sales performance, whereas sales network quality is found to mediate the relationship between Proactive Market Orientation and Sales Performance. These findings demonstrate that sales network quality, developed through mutually beneficial cooperation, active participation, idea sharing, trust, and long-term relationships with partners, is an important relational resource for MSMEs. This study contributes to the advancement of Resource-Advantage Theory by highlighting that competitive advantage is derived not only from internal resources but also from the ability to develop and manage valuable external networks.

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengembangkan konsep Sales Network Quality sebagai konsep kebaruan penelitian yang menjelaskan mekanisme penghubung antara Proactive Market Orientation dan Sales Performance pada Usaha Mikro, Kecil dan Menengah (UMKM). Penelitian terdahulu lebih banyak mengkaji pengaruh orientasi pasar terhadap kinerja bisnis secara langsung, namun belum banyak menjelaskan peran kualitas jaringan penjualan dalam mengubah kapabilitas orientasi pasar menjadi peningkatan kinerja penjualan. Data penelitian dikumpulkan melalui survei terhadap 287 pemilik atau pengelola UMKM di Jawa Tengah, Indonesia, dan dianalisis menggunakan metode Structural Equation Modeling-Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Proactive Market Orientation berasosiasi dengan Sales Network Quality dan Sales Performance, serta Sales Network Quality terbukti berperan sebagai mediator dalam hubungan tersebut. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa kualitas jaringan penjualan melalui kerja sama yang saling menguntungkan, partisipasi aktif, pertukaran ide, kepercayaan, dan hubungan jangka panjang dengan mitra menjadi sumber daya relasional yang penting bagi UMKM. Penelitian ini berkontribusi pada pengembangan Resource-Advantage Theory dengan menegaskan bahwa keunggulan bersaing juga dibangun melalui pengelolaan jaringan eksternal yang bernilai.

1. INTRODUCTION

Increasingly intense business competition encourages micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to develop a deeper understanding of the strategic factors that influence sales performance (Beninger & Francis,

2021). In the marketing literature, market orientation has been recognized as an important conceptual framework for creating value for customers and business partners (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). Further developments in this area have introduced proactive market orientation (PMO), which emphasizes an organization's ability to anticipate the latent needs of customers and business partners and identify new market opportunities (Ma et al., 2021).

Previous studies on proactive market orientation have shown inconsistent findings regarding firm performance. Several studies have found that proactive market orientation positively affects business or sales performance (Andersson et al., 2020; Bodlaj & Čater, 2022; Foltean & Glovačchi, 2021). In contrast, other studies have reported that proactive market orientation has no significant effect on either business or sales performance (Christa, 2021; Gotteland et al., 2020; Inigo et al., 2020; Shashishekar et al., 2022; Wang & Liu, 2020).

Studies reporting the positive effect of proactive market orientation on business or sales performance provide several explanations. First, firms that develop a proactive market orientation can strengthen their competitive position through product development, which supports firm growth (Svante Andersson et al., 2020). Second, in the context of exporting SMEs, proactive market orientation through anticipating market needs, recognizing new opportunities, and developing differentiated products has been shown to improve firm performance (Bodlaj & Čater, 2022).

Meanwhile, studies reporting no significant relationship between proactive market orientation and business or sales performance highlight several considerations. First, the development of a proactive market orientation is closely related to proactive managerial policies and business decisions, which may change over time and across business conditions (Christa, 2021). Second, firms with a technologically oriented and proactive market orientation may be more focused on creating superior value than firms with a more responsive orientation; however, this does not necessarily translate directly into improved sales performance (Gotteland et al., 2020). These inconsistent findings indicate that the mechanisms underlying the relationship between PMO and sales performance have not yet been fully explained, particularly in the context of MSMEs.

From a relationship marketing perspective, sales performance is influenced not only by market orientation but also by the quality of relationships and networks among business actors. However, many MSMEs still operate their businesses in a traditional and transaction-oriented manner and therefore have not fully utilized sales networks as strategic resources (Dessaigne & Pardo, 2020). This situation creates several challenges, including limited knowledge and information, inadequate human and financial resources, limited management support, and weak relationships with business partners (Ghosh, 2022; Khan et al., 2022; Zulhelmy et al., 2025). In contrast, intensive communication and interaction within business networks have been shown to improve sales performance and strengthen long-term relationships with business partners (He & Zhang, 2022).

Based on the empirical gap in the relationship between proactive MO and sales performance, this study introduces a new concept called sales network quality. The concept of sales network quality is developed by integrating the concepts of sales network (Brzeziński & Cyplik, 2020), network quality (Hatjidis et al., 2019), and sales quality (Gutama et al., 2021). In this study, sales network quality is defined as the quality of a sales network system in building and strengthening long-term partnerships with customers and business partners through high-quality relationships, which ultimately supports the achievement of optimal sales performance.

This concept is developed based on the Resource-Advantage Theory of Competition (R-A Theory), which emphasizes that the effective management of unique informational and relational resources can create a competitive advantage. From this perspective, sales network quality is considered a valuable and difficult-to-imitate relational resource that can strengthen relationship quality and improve the effectiveness of the sales network. Therefore, sales network quality may serve as a mechanism through which proactive market orientation contributes to improved MSME sales performance.

This study also develops a new empirical model to explain how proactive market orientation can improve sales performance through the mediating role of sales-network quality. The model was tested on MSMEs in Central Java, Indonesia, covering four business sectors: grocery stores, food and beverage, fashion, and automotive spare parts. These sectors were selected because they share similar business characteristics, particularly their strong dependence on close relationships with customers, suppliers, distributors, and other business partners in the sales network.

Such characteristics require firms to develop long-term partnerships, strengthen communication, coordination, and collaboration, effectively share market information, maintain product lifecycle sustainability, and respond quickly to changes in customer needs. Previous empirical evidence shows that these capabilities strengthen relationships among business partners, improve relational capabilities, and enhance overall firm

performance (Sujarwo & Indriani, 2025; Turunen & Halme, 2021). Therefore, this study proposes that sales network quality serves as a relational mechanism that explains how proactive market orientation can be transformed into improved sales performance.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

2.1 Resource-Advantage Theory of Competition (R-A Theory)

Resource-Advantage (R-A) theory proposes that competitive advantage and superior business performance are derived from the use of resources that provide comparative advantage and create differentiation in the market (Hunt & Morgan, 1995). A firm's resources may include financial, physical, legal, human, organizational, informational, and relational resources. Through unique combinations, these resources can generate comparative advantage and improve financial performance (Hunt et al., 2012).

Firms that develop strong relational ties with their business partners can transform these relationships into strategic assets that contribute positively to their overall performance. Although building such relationships requires time and a strong market orientation, relational ties can become important organizational resources (Hunt & Madhavaram, 2020). High-quality relational networks also enable firms to obtain creative ideas, combine resources more effectively, and create comparative advantages that support competitive and financial performance (Kayyali, 2025; Nyuga & Tanova, 2024).

2.2 Development of the New Concept: Sales Network Quality

The development of a sales network supported by a competent sales force and effective promotional activities can attract new customers, increase partner satisfaction, and strengthen both the sustainability of business relationships and sales performance (Brzeziński & Cyplik, 2020; Wan & Yu, 2022). Sales networks built on strong relational ties and supported by open access to information among business partners can reduce communication barriers and improve overall firm performance (Bai et al., 2021). In addition, developing a sales network that improves partners' access to services and functions as a strategic partnership can help firms obtain important external resources that support business performance (Ghi et al., 2024).

The reliability, diversity, and quality of a firm's network can build partner trust and reputation, strengthen collaboration, and support the development of unique products, processes, and services (Mariam, 2025; Purnomo & Purwandari, 2025). A firm's reputation also influences the quality of the network it develops. A reliable network can improve partner satisfaction and loyalty through wider market access and clearer information, whereas poor network quality may limit access and weaken business relationships. Therefore, network quality and trust are important foundations of inter-firm collaboration (Lee et al., 2020; Leong et al., 2022).

Sales networks within firms generally consist of direct, partner, and hybrid sales networks (Brzeziński & Cyplik, 2020). Participation in a reliable sales network can improve both internal and external network qualities. When network quality meets or exceeds partner expectations, it strengthens relational ties and makes alliance-building capabilities increasingly important for supporting innovation and maintaining customer relationships (Fryczynska & Ciecierski, 2020; Inigo et al., 2020).

Based on these arguments, this study proposes a new concept: Sales Network Quality. Sales Network Quality is defined as a firm's capability to manage and improve the quality of its sales network by enhancing sales quality, strengthening relationships with business partners, identifying latent customer needs, and optimizing network ties to support superior sales performance. Sales Network Quality (SNQ) differs from both relationship quality and networking capability. Relationship quality focuses primarily on the quality of a specific inter-organizational relationship, whereas networking capability refers to a firm's ability to establish, maintain, and utilize relationships within a broader network of organizations. Relationship quality reflects the strength and depth of customer relationships, which can increase customer loyalty and encourage repeat purchases (Hwang et al., 2026). Its measurement commonly includes customer satisfaction, behavioral intention, and commitment as core dimensions of relationship quality, particularly in service firm settings (Hwang et al., 2026).

In contrast, networking capability refers to a firm's ability to develop and manage relationships that are expected to strengthen competitive advantage (Wegner et al., 2023). Its measurement includes the ability to create network relationships, build collaboration with partners, and manage and utilize partner relationships. Previous studies have mainly examined manufacturing and service firms as the unit of analysis (Santos-Vijande et al., 2022).

In contrast, Sales Network Quality emphasizes strengthening the overall quality of a firm's sales network as an integrated relational resource. This quality is reflected in mutually beneficial cooperation, active participation, knowledge and idea exchange, mutual trust, and the maintenance of strong relationships

among actors in the sales network. The indicators of Sales Network Quality include contracting, alliance building, mutually beneficial cooperation, active participation, knowledge and idea exchange, mutual trust, long-term relationship building, and information sharing (Brzeziński & Cyplick, 2020; Gutama et al., 2021; Hatjidis et al., 2019). In this study, Sales Network Quality was developed specifically within the context of MSMEs.

However, previous studies have not adequately explained how the development of proactive market orientation can be strengthened through the quality of sales networks in building stronger relationships. Theoretically, Sales Network Quality may address the gap in the relationship between proactive market orientation and sales performance. From the perspective of R-A Theory, Sales Network Quality can be viewed as a relational resource that enables MSMEs to access, share, and utilize market information and knowledge with their business partners (Hunt & Morgan, 1995). Therefore, when MSMEs identify latent customer needs through proactive market orientation, a high-quality sales network can help translate this market knowledge into faster and more effective responses, ultimately contributing to improved sales performance.

2.3 Proactive Market Orientation and Sales Network Quality

Proactive market orientation refers to a firm's capability to anticipate and satisfy future customer needs through proactive and innovative marketing activities while developing valuable customer relationships (Narver et al., 2004). The main elements of proactive market orientation include satisfying customer needs, developing new products or services to respond to latent demand, and identifying customer needs that have not yet been expressed (Andersson et al., 2020; Bodlaj & Čater, 2022).

Firms that implement proactive market orientation are better able to identify the latent needs of customers and business partners, either gradually or rapidly. This capability requires firms to strengthen their relational ties and networking capabilities to reach broader markets. Rapid changes in the market also require firms to understand both expressed and latent partner needs while maintaining strong relationships to strengthen loyalty and reduce the possibility of partners switching to competitors.

Effective access to market information is often supported by well-maintained business relationships. These relationships can be further strengthened through high-quality sales networks involving strategic partners. Therefore, a proactive market orientation is expected to improve the quality of MSME sales networks. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: Proactive market orientation positively affects sales network quality among MSMEs.

2.4 Sales Network Quality and Sales Performance

Strong and sustainable relationships with business partners, supported by a reliable sales network and the capability to build strategic alliances, enable firms to improve network quality, support innovation, and capture new business opportunities (Fryczynska & Ciecierski, 2020; Inigo et al., 2020). High sales quality can also reduce errors and increase partners' perceived value through stronger relationship quality, effective knowledge integration and efficient use of business networks (Gutama et al., 2021).

The effective use of resources through strong network ties can support business growth and improve firm sales performance. When the quality of a sales network increases, firms can better meet partner requirements, coordinate sales activities, and maintain business relationships. Consequently, MSMEs with higher sales network quality are expected to achieve better sales performance. Therefore, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2: Sales network quality positively affects on sales performance.

2.5 Proactive Market Orientation and Sales Performance

Proactive market orientation encourages business innovation by helping firms identify latent customer and partner needs, create superior value, and improve organizational performance and partner loyalty (Foltean & Glovaṭchi, 2021). Its effective implementation requires firms to continuously improve their capabilities to respond to changing and unexpressed market needs.

The implementation of proactive market orientation allows firms to uncover hidden needs, which encourages them to strengthen relational ties, networking capabilities, and proactive alliances to manage market complexity and maintain business continuity (Inigo et al., 2020; Irún et al., 2020). Intensive interaction with customers and business partners also enables firms to move beyond simply selling products and to better understand latent needs through the development of business networks, which may ultimately improve sales performance (Liu et al., 2020).

Therefore, proactive market orientation can be considered a strategic capability that enables firms to

improve their sales activities by understanding their partners' needs, strengthening relationships, and developing business networks. These capabilities are expected to contribute to higher MSME sales performance. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: Proactive market orientation positively affects MSME sales performance.

2.6 The Mediating Role of Sales Network Quality in the Relationship Between Proactive Market Orientation and Sales Performance

Proactive market orientation enables firms to identify latent partner needs, create distinctive advantages, improve business performance, and develop active and mutually beneficial relationships with customers (Bodlaj & Čater, 2022; Foltean & Glovačchi, 2021). Strong relationships with business partners and a high-quality sales network can increase sales frequency, improve distribution efficiency, and enable firms to respond more quickly to partner requirements, thereby contributing to improved firm performance (Alonso-Garcia et al., 2022; Munyon et al., 2021).

In dynamic business environments, MSME creativity, supported by stronger business networks, can create additional network value. Combined with feedback from customers and business partners, this value can contribute to improved sales performance (Byun et al., 2021; Mulyana & Hendar, 2020). Therefore, MSMEs that are proactively oriented toward latent market needs are expected to develop stronger sales network quality, which, in turn, supports better sales performance.

Based on this reasoning, sales network quality is expected to act as a relational mechanism that explains how a proactive market orientation contributes to sales performance. Accordingly, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Sales network quality positively mediates the relationship between proactive market orientation and MSME sales performance.

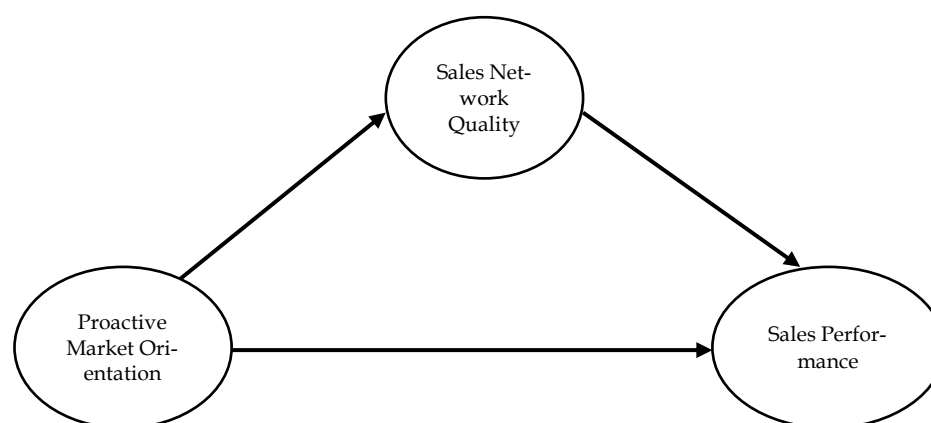


Figure 1. Research framework

3. RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a deductive design to empirically test the hypothesized relationships among the research variables based on established theoretical frameworks (Hair et al., 2019). The target population consisted of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) operating in the grocery store, food and beverage, fashion, and automotive spare parts sectors in Central Java, Indonesia. Participating MSMEs were required to be actively engaged in sales activities and to have established sales networks.

The target respondents were MSME owners or managers who were directly involved in marketing decision-making and sales network management. A non-probability sampling technique using purposive sampling was applied (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). The respondents were selected based on the following criteria: (1) the MSME had been operating for more than one year; (2) it operated in the grocery store, food and beverage, fashion, or automotive spare parts sector; and (3) it maintained an active sales network.

The sample size was determined based on the guidelines for structural equation modeling (SEM), which recommend a sample size of approximately five to ten times the number of measurement indicators (Hair et al., 2019). As this study initially used 25 indicators, a target sample size of 250 respondents was established based on the upper guideline of 10 observations per indicator. Primary data were collected using

a structured questionnaire measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”) (Malhotra et al., 2017). To improve the response rate and support data quality, the questionnaires were administered using a dual-mode approach consisting of online self-administered surveys and direct face-to-face data collection.

The measurement items for each construct were adopted and adapted from validated scales reported in previous studies published in reputable academic journals. Proactive market orientation was measured using a five-item scale adapted from Gotteland et al. (2020). Sales network quality, as the novel concept proposed in this study, was measured using eight indicators adopted and adapted from Brzeziński and Cyplik (2020), Gutama et al. (2021), and Hatjidis et al. (2019). Sales performance was measured using a five-item scale adapted from Aqmala and Ardyan (2019), Gotteland et al. (2020), and Rayburn et al. (2021). The research variables, operational indicators, measurement items, and their respective sources are presented in Table 1.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The unit of analysis in this study was MSMEs operating in several business sectors in Central Java, Indonesia, including grocery stores, food and beverages, fashion, and automotive spare parts. Empirical data were collected from MSME owners and managers who served as the key informants. Data were collected between June and July 2026 using a dual-mode strategy that combined face-to-face questionnaire administration and online surveys using Google Forms.

A total of 371 questionnaires were successfully collected during the data collection process. A screening process was conducted to ensure that respondents met the research criteria. The screening results showed that 84 respondents did not meet the eligibility criteria, consisting of 48 respondents who were not MSME owners or managers, 13 respondents whose businesses operated outside the sectors specified in this study, and 23 respondents whose businesses had been operating for less than a year. Therefore, 287 respondents met the required criteria and were included in this study sample. These respondents were MSME owners or managers who were actively engaged in sales activities, had established sales networks, and had operated their businesses for more than one year. Respondents who did not meet the criteria were excluded from the analysis.

Table 2 presents the respondents’ demographic characteristics and the profiles of the participating MSMEs. Respondent characteristics included gender, age, educational background, and organizational position, while business characteristics included business sector, business scale, years of operation, business partnership, and geographical location.

Table 2 presents the respondents’ demographic characteristics and the profiles of the surveyed MSMEs. In terms of gender, the respondents were relatively balanced, with 48.1% male and 51.9% female respondents. The largest age group was 41–50 years (30.0%), while most respondents had completed senior high school education (58.9%). All respondents were MSME owners (100.0%), indicating their direct involvement in business operations and strategic decision-making.

Regarding business characteristics, the sample was dominated by food and beverage MSMEs (41%) and grocery stores (40%), followed by fashion (11%) and automotive spare parts (8 %) businesses. Most participating enterprises were classified as micro enterprises (87.8%). All sampled businesses had operated for more than one year, had established business partnerships, and were located in Central Java. Overall, these characteristics indicate that the participating MSMEs were consistent with the predetermined sampling criteria.

Convergent validity was assessed using indicator loadings and average variance extracted (AVE). The results show that all constructs had AVE values above the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating satisfactory convergent validity (Hair et al. (2019)). In addition, all constructs met the recommended reliability criteria, with composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach’s alpha (CA) values exceeding 0.70. These results indicate that the constructs have satisfactory internal consistency and reliability.

The Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value of the model was 0.077, indicating an acceptable model fit. The Normed Fit Index (NFI) was 0.816. Taken together, these results provide additional support for the overall adequacy of the estimated models (Hair et al., 2019).

To ensure that each construct met the criteria for convergent validity and reliability, the outer loading values of all the indicators were evaluated. Indicators retained for further analysis were required to have outer loading values of at least 0.70, in accordance with the recommended criteria (Collier, 2020; Hair et al., 2021). Based on the evaluation results, several indicators had outer loading values below 0.70. Therefore, these indicators were removed from the measurement model: PMO3 (0.675), PMO5 (0.697), SNQ1 (0.437), SNQ2 (0.613), SNQ8 (0.612), and SP3 (0.697).

Table 1. Operational Definition of Variables and Measurement Items

Variable	Indicator	Code	Measurement Items	Source
<i>Proactive Market Orientation (PMO)</i>	Assisting partners	PMO1	We assist our partners in anticipating market developments in their business environment.	(Gotteland et al., 2020)
	Uncovering partner needs	PMO2	We continuously seek to identify the additional needs of our partners that they may not yet recognize.	
	Innovation	PMO3	We actively seek to innovate our products and services.	
	Fulfilling partner needs	PMO4	We actively gather information about areas in which our partners experience product shortages and seek to fulfill these needs.	
	Identifying key market trends	PMO5	We analyze important market trends to better understand our partners' future needs.	
<i>Sales Network Quality (SNQ)</i>	Contracting	SNQ1	We establish formal agreements or contracts with business partners to support the achievement of our organizational objectives.	Developed by the authors in this study
	Alliance building	SNQ2	We develop strategic alliances with business partners to improve our organizational performance.	
	Mutually beneficial co-operation	SNQ3	We seek to develop cooperative relationships that provide mutual benefit.	
	Active participation	SNQ4	We actively participated in joint activities that supported mutual development.	
	Knowledge and idea exchange	SNQ5	We regularly exchange knowledge and ideas with our business partners.	
	Mutual trust	SNQ6	We maintain mutual trust with our business partners by identifying and addressing their needs.	
	Long-term relationship building	SNQ7	Our firm continuously seeks to develop sustainable and long-term relationships with business partners.	
	Information sharing	SNQ8	Our firm actively shares relevant business information with its partner.	
<i>Sales Performance (SP)</i>	Sales target achievement	SP1	Our sales consistently meet or exceed established targets.	(Gotteland et al., 2020; Rayburn et al., 2021)
	Sales growth rate	SP2	Our sales have shown consistent growth over time.	
	Sales force expansion	SP3	The capacity and number of our sales personnel are increasing.	
	Total sales volume	SP4	Our total sales volume has consistently increased over time.	
	Profit margin	SP5	Our profit margin generated from sales has increased significantly.	

Source: Developed in this study, 2026

For Sales Network Quality, three indicators were removed not only because their outer loading values did not meet the recommended threshold but also based on conceptual considerations. SNQ1 and SNQ2, which represent formal contracting and alliance building, tend to reflect formal or strategic partnership arrangements rather than the quality of the sales network itself, which places greater emphasis on relationships, interactions, and exchanges among network actors. In addition, SNQ8, which reflects information sharing, was removed because it is more functional in nature and conceptually overlaps with market orientation, making it less representative of the relational quality of the sales network as a whole. These indicators were therefore removed during the measurement model refinement process. The results of the measurement model assessment, including outer loadings, Cronbach's Alpha, Average Variance Extracted, and Composite Reliability, are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Demographic and Business Characteristics of MSMEs Respondents

Characteristics	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	138	48.1
	Female	149	51.9
Age	< 30 years	84	29.3
	31–40 years	79	27.5
	41–50 years	86	30
	> 50 years	38	13.2
	Elementary School	18	6.3
Education Level	Junior High School	45	15.7
	Senior High School	169	58.9
	Diploma (D3/D4)	18	6.3
	Bachelor's Degree	34	11.8
	Master's Degree	3	1
Position in SMEs	Owner	287	100
	Grocery Store SMEs	115	40.1
	Food and Beverage SMEs	117	40.8
Business Sector	Fashion SMEs	31	10.8
	Automotive SMEs (Spare Parts)	24	8.3
	Micro Enterprise	252	87.8
Business Scale	Small Enterprise	29	10.1
	Medium Enterprise	6	2.1
Years in Business	More than 1 year	287	100
Business Partnership	Has Business Partners	287	100
Location	Central Java, Indonesia	287	100

Source: Primary data processed (2026)

Table 3. Convergent validity, CA, AVE and CR

Construct	Indicator	STD Loading	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	CR	Status
Proactive Market Orientation	PMO1	0.817	0.739	0.656	0.851	Valid
	PMO2	0.809				Valid
	PMO4	0.804				Valid
	SNQ3	0.74				Valid
Sales Network Quality	SNQ4	0.767	0.803	0.557	0.863	Valid
	SNQ5	0.733				Valid
	SNQ6	0.753				Valid
	SNQ7	0.738				Valid
Sales Performance	SP1	0.801	0.856	0.698	0.902	Valid
	SP2	0.869				Valid
	SP4	0.827				Valid
	SP5	0.842				Valid

Source: Primary data processed (2026)

The R^2 values of 0.272 for Sales Network Quality and 0.270 for Sales Performance indicate that the model explains a certain proportion of the variance in these endogenous constructs, while the remaining variance may be explained by other factors outside the model. In the case of Sales Performance, these factors may include marketing capability, product quality, pricing, customer experience, competitive intensity, and market conditions, which were not examined in this study.

Table 4. R-Square

Construct		R-Square	R-Square Adjusted
Sales Network Quality		0.272	0.269
Sales Performance		0.27	0.265

Source: Primary data processed (2026)

Discriminant validity was first evaluated using the Fornell-Larcker criterion to determine whether each construct was empirically distinct. The results show that the square root of the AVE for each construct was greater than its correlation with the other constructs. For example, Proactive Market Orientation had a square root of AVE of 0.810, which was higher than its correlations with Sales Network Quality (0.521) and Sales Performance (0.432). These results indicate that each construct shares more variance with its indicators than with other constructs, thereby supporting discriminant validity. The results of the Fornell-Larcker assessment are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Proactive Market Orientation	Sales Network Quality	Sales Performance
Proactive Market Orientation	0.810		
Sales Network Quality	0.521	0.746	
Sales Performance	0.432	0.471	0.835

Source: Primary data processed (2026)

In addition to the Fornell-Larcker criterion, discriminant validity was assessed using the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). Table 6 shows that all HTMT values are below the recommended threshold of 0.90, in accordance with the criteria suggested by Hair et al. (2019). These results indicate that the constructs demonstrate satisfactory empirical distinctiveness, and that no serious discriminant validity problems remain in the final measurement model.

Table 6. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Proactive Market Orientation	Sales Network Quality	Sales Performance
Proactive Market Orientation			
Sales Network Quality	0.659		
Sales Performance	0.538	0.550	

Source: Primary data processed (2026)

Collinearity was evaluated using the variance inflation factor (VIF). The results show that all VIF values ranged from 1.392 to 2.384, while the inner VIF values ranged from 1.000 to 1.373. All values were below the recommended threshold of 3.00 (Hair et al. (2019), indicating that the model is free from serious collinearity issues and meets the recommended criteria.

Table 7. F-Square

	Proactive Market Orientation	Sales Network Quality	Sales Performance
Proactive Market Orientation		0.373	0.066
Sales Network Quality			0.114
Sales Performance			

Source: Primary data processed (2026)

The effect size (f^2) was used to assess the magnitude of the contribution of exogenous constructs in explaining the variance of endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2019). As presented in Table 7, Proactive MO has a large effect on SNQ ($f^2 = 0.373$), while its effect on Sales Performance is small ($f^2 = 0.066$). Meanwhile, SNQ also shows a small effect on Sales Performance ($f^2 = 0.114$).

Table 8. Predictive Relevance

Item	SSO	SSE	Q^2 (=1-SSE/SSO)
Proactive Market Orientation	861.000	861.000	
Sales Network Quality	1435.000	1232.031	0.141
Sales Performance	1148.000	942.488	0.179

Source: Primary data processed (2026)

The Q-Square (Q^2) test was conducted through the blindfolding procedure using Construct Crossvalidated Redundancy to assess the model's predictive relevance. A Q^2 value greater than zero indicates that the model has predictive relevance for the endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2019). As presented in Table 8, all endogenous constructs had Q^2 values above 0.00, indicating a moderate level of predictive relevance.

Structural Model Evaluation

After confirming the validity and reliability of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated to test the hypothesized relationships among the constructs. The analysis was performed using SmartPLS version 3. The results show that all indicators retained in the final model had outer loadings above the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating that the retained indicators adequately represented their latent constructs.

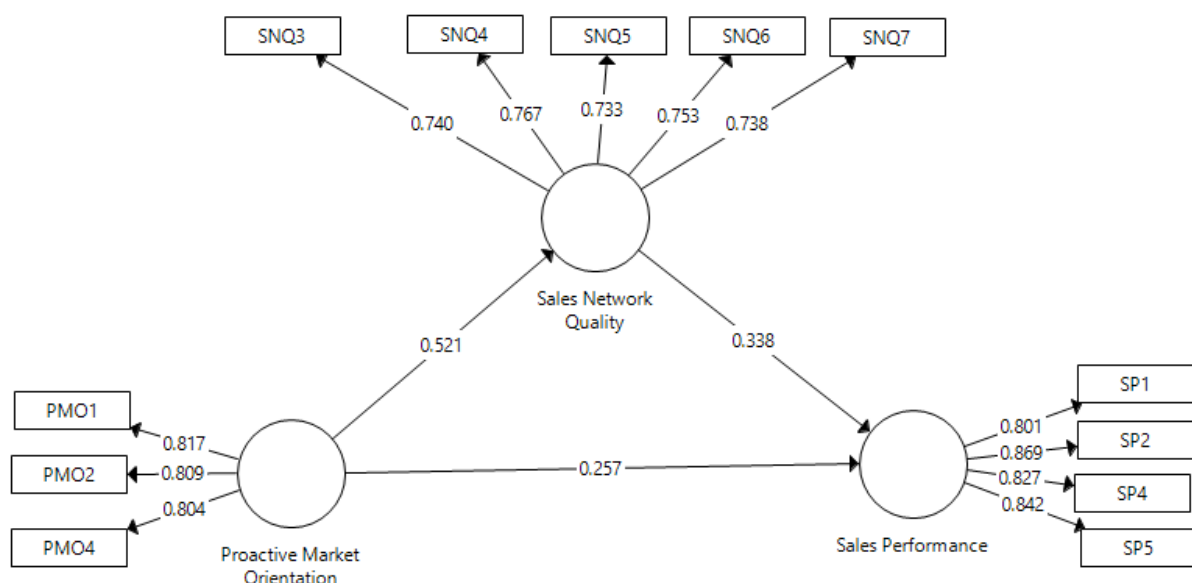


Figure 2. Path analysis

The results show that H1 is supported ($\beta = 0.521$; $t = 10.716$; $p < 0.001$), indicating that proactive

market orientation has a positive and statistically significant effect on sales network quality. This finding suggests that a stronger proactive market orientation among MSMEs contributes to the development of higher-quality sales networks. In other words, MSMEs that actively anticipate market developments, identify emerging customer and partner needs, and respond to market trends are more capable of developing and managing high-quality sales networks.

H2 is also supported ($\beta = 0.338$; $t = 5.570$; $p < 0.001$), confirming that Sales Network Quality has a positive and statistically significant effect on Sales Performance. This result indicates that MSMEs with stronger sales network quality are more likely to achieve higher sales performance.

Furthermore, H3 is supported ($\beta = 0.257$; $t = 3.816$; $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that proactive market orientation has a positive and statistically significant effect on sales performance. This finding indicates that MSMEs that are better able to anticipate market changes and identify emerging opportunities tend to achieve better sales performance.

Finally, H4 is supported ($\beta = 0.176$; $t = 4.945$; $p < 0.001$), indicating that Sales Network Quality significantly mediates the relationship between Proactive Market Orientation and SP.. As proactive market orientation has a significant direct effect on Sales Performance and a significant indirect effect through Sales Network Quality, the mediating role of Sales Network Quality can be classified as partial mediation. According to Hair et al. (2021), complementary partial mediation occurs when both direct and indirect effects are significant and have the same positive direction. The results of this study show that Proactive Market Orientation has a positive and significant effect on Sales Performance, both directly and indirectly through Sales Network Quality. Therefore, Sales Network Quality can be classified as a complementary partial mediator. The type of mediation was determined based on the significance and direction of the direct and indirect effects rather than the Variance Accounted For (VAF), which is no longer recommended as the primary basis for classifying mediation effects (Hair et al., 2021). This suggests that proactive market orientation improves sales network quality, which subsequently contributes to better MSME sales performance. Therefore, Sales Network Quality serves as an important relational mechanism through which Proactive Market Orientation contributes to SP..

Table 9. Results of the Direct and Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	Structural path	Beta (β)	Std Dev	LLCI	ULCI	T-value	P-value	Decision
H1	Proactive Market Orientation → Sales Network Quality	0.521	0.049	0.441	0.616	10.716	0.000	Accepted
H2	Sales Network Quality → Sales Performance	0.338	0.061	0.213	0.463	5.570	0.000	Accepted
H3	Proactive Market Orientation → Sales Performance	0.257	0.067	0.125	0.397	3.816	0.000	Accepted
H4	Proactive Market Orientation → Sales Network Quality → Sales Performance	0.176	0.036	0.114	0.25	4.945	0.000	Accepted

Note(s): LLCI (Lower-Level Confidence Interval) and ULCI (Upper-Level Confidence Interval) represent the lower and upper bounds of the confidence interval, respectively, generally at the 95% confidence level, as obtained through the bootstrapping procedure.

Source: Primary data processed (2026)

At the 95% confidence level, none of the confidence intervals between the Lower-Level Confidence Interval (LLCI) and Upper-Level Confidence Interval (ULCI) included zero, as both bounds were positive. Specifically, the effect of Proactive Market Orientation on Sales Network Quality ranged from 0.441 to 0.616, the effect of Proactive Market Orientation on Sales Performance ranged from 0.125 to 0.397, the effect of Sales Network Quality on Sales Performance ranged from 0.213 to 0.463, and the indirect effect of Proactive Market Orientation on Sales Performance ranged from 0.114 to 0.250. These positive confidence intervals indicate

significant positive direct and indirect relationships between the variables. The results of the direct and indirect effect tests are summarized in Table 9.

5. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION, SUGGESTION, AND LIMITATIONS

This study examines the role of proactive market orientation in improving sales performance among MSMEs in Central Java, Indonesia, operating in the fashion, food and beverage, and automotive spare parts sectors, based on the resource-advantage (R-A) theory perspective. The empirical findings confirm that an MSME's ability to anticipate market needs, create superior customer value, and develop strong relational ties represents an important strategic capability for improving sales performance. From the perspective of R-A theory, competitive advantage can be achieved when firms are able to manage and utilize heterogeneous resources more effectively than their competitors, including market knowledge, innovation capabilities, and relational resources (Hunt & Morgan, 1995). The inconsistencies found in previous studies may arise because proactive market orientation has often been viewed as having a direct effect on sales performance, while its development is closely related to the proactive policies and decisions of business actors, which are dynamic and may change over time (Christa, 2021). However, the market knowledge generated through proactive market orientation does not automatically translate into improved sales performance. In the context of MSMEs, such market knowledge needs to be developed through relational resources that enable it to be accessed, exchanged, and integrated with business partners.

The findings also show that Sales Network Quality plays an important role in improving MSME sales performance. A high-quality sales network enables MSMEs to expand market access, obtain relevant business information, and strengthen relationships with business partners. From the R-A Theory perspective, relational networks can function as strategic resources that contribute to competitive advantage when they are effectively developed and managed (Hunt & Morgan, 1996). Strong and sustainable relationships with business partners can help firms improve network quality, strengthen marketing capabilities, and identify new business opportunities that ultimately contribute to better performance (Fryczynska & Ciecierski, 2020). Therefore, Sales Network Quality functions not only as a mechanism that connects firms with the market, but also as a relational capability that enables MSMEs to utilize network resources more effectively to improve sales performance.

Furthermore, the results confirm that Proactive MO has a positive effect on MSME sales performance. This finding indicates that MSMEs that are able to identify market changes, understand unexpressed customer needs, and recognize new business opportunities are more likely to achieve better performance. Within the R-A theory framework, Proactive MO can be viewed as a strategic capability that enables firms to use market knowledge more effectively as a source of competitive advantage (Hunt, 1997). This finding is consistent with previous studies by Inigo et al. (2020) and Irún et al. (2020), which suggest that proactive market orientation helps firms anticipate customer expectations and improve overall firm performance.

More importantly, the empirical findings confirm that Sales Network Quality mediates the relationship between Proactive Market Orientation and Sales Performance. From the perspective of R-A theory, proactive market orientation enables firms to identify market opportunities, understand changing customer requirements, and organize available resources to create superior value (Hunt & Morgan, 1996). However, the benefits of this capability can be strengthened when firms are supported by high-quality relational resources, such as an effective sales network. Through strong sales networks, MSMEs can build closer relationships with business partners, improve access to market information, strengthen distribution coordination, and respond more quickly to changing market requirements. Therefore, Sales Network Quality serves as a strategic relational mechanism that helps transform proactive market orientation into improved sales performance.

This finding also supports the view that competitive advantage does not depend solely on internally controlled resources but also on a firm's ability to develop and manage valuable relational resources within its business network (Hunt & Morgan, 1996). This argument is consistent with previous studies showing that high-quality sales and business networks can generate network value and contribute to improved firm performance (Alonso-Garcia et al., 2022; Munyon et al., 2021).

This study contributes to the strategic marketing literature by introducing Sales Network Quality as a relational mechanism that links Proactive Market Orientation and Sales Performance. Previous studies on proactive market orientation have mainly focused on a firm's ability to identify future market opportunities and respond to changing customer needs, while the relational mechanisms that translate such capabilities into improved sales outcomes remain less clearly explained. This study introduces Sales Network Quality as a relational resource reflected through mutually beneficial cooperation, active partner participation, knowledge and idea exchange, mutual trust, and long-term relationship building.

MSME managers need to strengthen Sales Network Quality by developing long-term relationships, increasing trust and active participation with business partners, and intensifying the exchange of knowledge and ideas to support sales performance. This study extends the Resource-Advantage Theory perspective (Hunt & Morgan, 1996) by showing that proactive market orientation not only helps MSMEs actively identify market needs but also encourages stronger interaction and collaboration with business partners through trust, knowledge exchange, and long-term relationships, which together form the relational resources embedded in Sales Network Quality. These findings support the view that competitive advantage is determined not only by the effective use of internal resources but also by relational resources developed through valuable external networks. Such relational resources are subsequently associated with Sales Performance and contribute to value creation and more sustainable sales performance.

More specifically, this study extends the Resource-Advantage Theory (Hunt & Morgan, 1995) by clarifying the mechanism through which Proactive Market Orientation can be transformed into relational resources. Proactive Market Orientation enables MSMEs to actively identify market needs, strengthen interactions and cooperation with business partners, and develop trust, knowledge exchange, and long-term relationships, which are reflected in Sales Network Quality. These relational resources are subsequently associated with Sales Performance, thereby providing a clearer explanation of how market orientation can be converted into relational resources that support competitive advantage and business performance. These findings are also consistent with previous studies emphasizing the importance of strengthening relationships among business partners through the development of customer offerings, network-oriented relationships, and effective communication and collaboration within business networks, which can ultimately expand market reach (Yaghtin & Gummerus, 2026; Zhang et al., 2026).

This study had several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the geographical scope was limited to MSMEs in Central Java, Indonesia. Therefore, the findings should be generalized to other regional or international contexts with caution. Future studies involving MSMEs from different regions or countries and larger sample sizes may provide a broader understanding of these relationships.

Second, this study used a cross-sectional research design in which data were collected at a single point in time. Consequently, this study could not fully capture the long-term development of proactive market orientation, sales network quality, and sales performance. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to examine how these relationships develop and change over time.

Third, this study relied primarily on the perspectives of MSME owners and managers as key informants. Although these respondents were directly involved in strategic business decisions, perspectives from channel partners, distributors, suppliers and customers could provide additional insights into relationship quality and network effectiveness.

Based on these limitations, future research should expand the geographical scope by including MSMEs from different regions or cross-national settings to improve the generalizability and comparative value of the findings. Future studies should also use longitudinal research designs to examine the development of sales network relationships and their long-term effects on business performance. In addition, future research may adopt multi-actor perspectives by including sales partners, suppliers, distributors, and buyers. Further studies may also examine additional moderating or mediating variables that could explain the conditions under which proactive MO and sales network quality contribute to performance, including digital capability, firm innovativeness, inter-organizational trust, and market turbulence.

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