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# Competitor orientation and SME performance in competitive environments: the moderating effect of marketing ethics

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## Abstract

### Purpose

Although competitor orientation (CO) has been given great attention, its link to firm performance (FP) is still unclear. The reason behind this may be attributed to the fact that the CO–FP relationship depends on several contingencies. The purpose of this paper is to simultaneously explore the separate and combined moderating effects of marketing ethics (ME) and competitive intensity (CI) in the CO–FP relationship.

### Design/methodology/approach

The participants in this study were managers or owners from 289 manufacturing SMEs located in two regions in Yemen (i.e. Sana'a and Taiz). Hierarchical regression analysis using PROCESS Macro V. 3.5 in SPSS was performed to analyze the data collected.

### Findings

The obtained results reveal that ME in fact positively moderates the CO–FP relationship and, importantly, this effect is not influenced by CI.

### Practical implications

The findings of this paper provide advantageous insights for managers and decision-makers for SMEs as it is expected that they demonstrate a greater commitment to the practice of ME in their firms. This has implications that with the practice of ME, it is expected that SMEs will be able to use the full potential of CO to improve their performance at a low level of CI.

### Originality/value

This study contributes to widening the studies on CO, ME, CI and SMEs in a different context. In addition, it adds to the knowledge by exploring the combined moderating influence of internal (e.g. ME) and external factors (e.g. CI) when examining the CO–FP relationship.

## Keywords

[SMEs](#)[Firm performance](#)[Competitive intensity](#)[Marketing ethics](#)[Competitor orientation](#)

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