**Maya,**

**Thank you for your submission.   
I think you have picked a very interesting research topic. As it stands now, I think you have done some really good ground work, but more narrowing down and refining need to be done. I encourage you to keep digging in the literature to find your focus where you can provide more clear research questions and precise hypotheses.   
  
I have added comments throughout the paper, please review them and let me know if you have any questions. Please don’t hesitate to reach out, I’d be happy to jump on a zoom call with you if you want to discuss anything related to your research topic and/or this class.   
Dr. Z**

**Draft a Research Problem, Purpose, and Quantitative Research Questions and Hypothesis**

Maya R. Troupe

Northcentral University

BUS 7320

Dr. Jingyun Zhang

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**Overview of the Research Focus**

The current marketplace continues to require agility as governmental policy continues to adjust to the economic environment during the coronavirus pandemic (Knabke & Olbrich, 2018; Moi & Cabiddu, 2021). An uptick in consumer buying online forced businesses to innovate in business strategy and marketing (Dąbrowska et al., 2021). Part of this strategy required the use of agile digital platforms to create an online presence and capability (Dyduch et al., 2021; Moi & Cabiddu, 2021). While this may have been an existing strategy for more prominent, well-established companies, small to medium-sized enterprise (SME) managers may not have realized the need for an online marketing strategy (Black & Glaser-Segura, 2020).

Considering the increase in online consumerism, if SMEs desire to remain competitive and sustain through the pandemic, relying solely on previous customer buying habits may prove less advantageous as a marketing strategy (Dąbrowska et al., 2021; Dyduch et al., 2021; Raymond Dionysus, 2020). Combining the resources of multiple existing internal resources within an organization to create dynamic capabilities could challenge business strategies like Wernerfelt’s Resource-Based View (RBV) theory (He et al., 2018; Knabke & Olbrich, 2018; Marcos Paixão Garcez & Sbragia, 2013). Moreover, RBV strategies may need to evolve to consider the synchronization of collaborative resources within an industrial environment, which may create a more competitive advantage during and after the coronavirus pandemic (Black & Glaser-Segura, 2020).

The transition of brick-and-mortar SMEs to what has been coined “click-and-mortar” online strategies usher in a rapid digital transformation that requires SMEs to utilize AI, social media, and existing data platforms to remain flexible during the coronavirus pandemic (Shahzad et al., 2020). Successful SMEs based on dynamic capabilities must now decide if their internal resources are enough for the current economic and industrial environment (Raymond Dionysus, 2020). SMEs must consider revamping business strategies that incorporate internal use of AI and digital capabilities or the use of existing resources that provide the capability through collaboration (Bergamaschi et al., 2021; Dyduch et al., 2021). This paper discusses the challenges SMEs face utilizing business models that use traditional RBV theory in a digital marketplace environment.

**Statement of the Problem**

The problem statement to be addressed by this study is the failure of managers to integrate collaborative digital capabilities into SME business models affects performance before and during the onset of the coronavirus pandemic. According to (Lestari et al., 2021), 42% of offline SMEs closed during the pandemic. With up to 50% of the United States working population employed by SMEs, managers of such enterprises must invest in digital capabilities to sustain competitive advantage within the local economy (*How Covid-19 Triggered the Digital and E-Commerce Turning Point,* 2021). Not doing so could continue to contribute to higher unemployment rates within service-based storefronts that rely on face-to-face patronage from their customer base (Ahmed et al., 2020).

While some managers of SMEs realize the advantage of a digital presence, many are still reluctant to forego the process to integrate the capability into their business model and strategy (Kapucu, 2021; Raymond Dionysus, 2020). A quantitative study conducted in Turkey during a business leadership conference revealed that although managers understood the added value of digitalization, they were reluctant to incorporate this capability due to lack of knowledge, perceived increase in workload, or fear of change (Kapucu, 2021). Considering the transition of developing countries like Indonesia, Lestari et al. (2021) utilize (Deloitte, 2021) reports of an increase in online shopping of up to 78% in local SMEs that incorporated mobile e-commerce and e-commerce platforms by the end of 2020.

Dabrowska et al. (2021) assert that it is vital for SMEs to consider adding digital capabilities through external digital resources. Dabrowska et al. (2021) suggest that innovative managers must use community-driven, collaborative approaches that add to SME internal resources to not only sustain in local communities but to reach consumers that cross borders to sustain during the pandemic. This phenomenon, in turn, increases the possibility to sustain through the digital transformation and contributes to chances of maintaining competitive advantage in the new digital economy (*How Covid-19 Triggered the Digital and E-Commerce Turning Point,* 2021; Ahmed et al., 2020; Bergamaschi et al., 2021). Failing to acquire this capability possibly contributes to higher unemployment rates and fewer resources on a local and global scale (*How Covid-19 Triggered the Digital and E-Commerce Turning Point,* 2021; Bergamaschi et al., 2021).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this quantitative study is to examine the relationship between the performance of SMEs whose managers chose to adopt external digital platforms into their business models before and during the pandemic. The study aims to gauge the sustainability of following the traditional use of RBV theory versus evolving RBV theory due to external, uncontrollable economic influences like the coronavirus pandemic. The study will use existing business data to compare SME performance before and during the pandemic concerning a company’s manager incorporating external digital platforms to create a social media and online presence.

**Research Questions and Hypothesis**

RQ1:

What is the difference in performance, measured by increase in sales, between SMEs that adopted e-commerce or digital platforms after the onset of the pandemic?

H10:

There is no difference in performance in sales between SMEs that adopted an e-commerce or digital platform after the onset of the pandemic.

H11:

There is a significant difference in performance in sales between SMEs that adopted an e-commerce or digital platform after the onset of the pandemic.

RQ2:

Was there a difference in performance, measured by increase in sale, between SMEs that adopted existing e-commerce from existing external digital platforms versus internal, website digital platforms?

H20:

There is no difference in performance in sales between SMEs that adopted an external, more established e-commerce digital platform versus creating an internal digital platform after the onset of the pandemic.

H21:

There is a significant difference in performance in sales between SMEs between SMEs that adopted an external, more established, e-commerce digital platform versus creating an internal digital platform after the onset of the pandemic.

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