

# Effect of Openness to Change, Empowerment, Customer Orientation, and Marketing Innovation to Resilience and Survival of a Convenience Store Business in the Midst of Covid-19 Pandemic

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to enrich the understanding about what elements can shape organizational resilience as a key factor in the survival of a convenience store business in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. By using PLS-SEM as quantitative method complemented with qualitative analysis from interview, this research shows empirically that marketing innovation affects organizational resilience in the midst of Covid-19 impact. At the same time, organizational resilience has proven its important role in determining organizational survival when the organization facing with crisis. Other interesting results give us a new perspective about the importance of new knowledge creation during the organization's adaptation process, in order to encourage the forming of new routines and working processes. These may be the factors that can leads organization to be resilient in the midst of crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** *Organizational Resilience, Organizational Survival, Openness to Change, Empowerment, Customer Orientation, Marketing Innovation, Retail, Covid-19*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

VUCA phenomenon, which stands for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity, and Ambiguity, has struck us as Covid-19 pandemic since last year. According to data, since its emergence in early 2020 Covid-19 has made a severe economic impact by affecting prominent G7 countries (US, China, Japan, Germany, UK, France, and Italy) that hold the biggest world's manufacturing exports [1], [2]. It also affected Indonesia by shrinking its economic growth rate in the first quarter of 2020. Various sectors have also been reported to experience a decline in their growth rate [3].

This may lead to many serious problems such as high mass layoff, poverty, and the increase of inflation rate [4]. Adaptation and planning to respond this situation now can be considered as one of the factors that will determine organizational survival. Organizational resilience plays important factor here, due to these elements when an organization is faced with a crisis to encourage recovery, business continuity, and survival [5], [6].

Although organizational resilience is improving widely in terms of management research fields, many of them is conceptual and still not empirical [7], [8]. These became reason to develop the empirical research based on [9] study, by visualizing the predictors of

organizational resilience into openness to change, empowerment, customer orientation, and marketing innovation as the determinant of organizational resilience. These variables direct relationship with organizational resilience also hasn't been studied much until now, especially for openness to change, customer orientation, and marketing innovation. Further concept will be discussed in next section.

Study will be conducted in Indonesian retail business, since this field showed great performance since 2017 [10], [11], but then the major change as Covid-19 spread happened. With the declining in people's purchasing power and the activity restrictions ruled by government, this pandemic has made the Indonesian retail industry performance index in 2020 suffered, considering their position also as the frontline and bridge in product distribution from manufacturer to the market [12], [13], [14].

Further understanding of this phenomenon will be explained through a convenient store business (Store) consisting of outlets spread across Indonesia that does not seem to have ever had satisfactory and statistically significant achievements. Assuming this situation is worsened by the Covid-19 impact, Author hopes that this research can picture the actualization of organizational resilience in an organization and its effect on Organizational Survival.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The following sections will present previous studies regarding the predictors and outcome of organizational resilience in this study. Organizational resilience itself can be defined as the ability to maintain the system as a form of adaptation to crises, stress, and risks, which includes the organization's ability to recover through absorption and efforts to bounce back after being hit by a problem [16]. According to [17], it has dimensions of planned resilience and adaptive resilience.

### **2.1 Openness to Change**

Openness to change can be considered as the visualization of [9] perceptual stance which is the collection of positive perceptions and unified commitment among organizational members. Openness to change defined as the organizational efforts to overcome resistance to change, through the forming of positive perceptions and commitment in the smallest organization structure which is employees, before finally being able to manifest in bringing the organization towards successful change [18], [19]. This correlation makes Author choose openness to change as the visualization of perceptual stance. In retail industry, previous studies showed that openness to change is an indicator to understand the probability and customer's behaviour to the acceptance of new technology [20], new experiences [21], as well as being a driver for organizations to adopt an understanding of the importance of innovation [22].

### **2.2 Empowerment**

Empowerment can be considered as the visualization of [9] contextual integrity which is the presence of employee participation and empowerment to expand the boundaries of decision making. Eventually, this will be functioned as an organizational weapon in dealing with a chaotic and unpredictable environment. [23] also defined empowerment as participation behaviour and motivation to control which includes activities in leadership sharing, ability development, and effective community influence. In retail industry, concept of empowerment has been noted by previous studies for its relation to leadership style [24], trust in company management [25], and economic recovery services [26].

### **2.3 Customer Orientation**

Customer orientation can be considered as the visualization of [9] strategic capacity which is a certain capabilities or competencies needed by an organization to exploit their resources in order to prepare for crisis or disruption event. Customer orientation is also defined as a set of paradigms that placed the customer as a priority over the other stakeholders in the organization, with the

aim of making a profit in the long term [27]. Customer orientation can be viewed as important capability that enabling organization to grasp bigger picture of market and enrich their resource in form of information and market intelligence. This correlation makes Author choose customer orientation as the visualization of strategic capacity. In retail industry, previous studies stated that customer orientation is affecting the level of customer commitment to the organization [28], making organization focused on the customer service aspect [29], and allowing retailers to survive and outperform their competitors [30].

### **2.4 Marketing Innovation**

Marketing innovation can be considered as the visualization of [9] strategic acting which is the realization of creative, flexible, proactive, and solution-oriented organizational component to adapt and predict future events, including crisis and adversity. Marketing innovation is one of many innovation types that emphasizes in shifting market segments through a series of activities such as product modification and better presentation of delivery operations to customers [31]. Marketing innovation enables organization to channel their creativity to market, also adapt in business adversity. This correlation makes Author choose marketing innovation as the visualization of strategic acting. In retail industry, marketing innovation can be seen as the issuance of customer cards as an organization's effort in establishing a customer loyalty program [32], integration of technology in organizational process [33], use of social media and artificial intelligence to increase the value the company provides to customers in the supply chain [34], and the combination of market analysis along with design innovation [35].

### **2.5 Organizational Survival**

Organizational survival can be considered as the visualization of [9] organizational evolvability which act as an output needed for an organization that faced with change or crises, so they can grow and continue their business. Organizational survival also defined as the forming of capacities and skillsets related to the allocation and recombination of resources to form new routines that can support organization's business activities [36], [37]. This correlation makes Author organizational survival as the visualization of organizational evolvability. In retail industry, previous studies showed that the survival of an organization is affected by fluctuations in currency values [38], the age of the branch [39], the level of heterogeneity of the types of retailers operating in its surroundings [40], and leader's gender [41].

### **3. HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

#### ***3.1 Effect of Openness to Change on Organizational Resilience***

[42] argued that openness to change indicates low resistance to changes that occur, and shows organizational commitment to undergoing change. [43] also said that the element of positive perception in openness to change can be formed through various cognitive elements in each individual. This indicates the importance of employee's role in the success of all organizational responses. Organizational resilience that contains the concept of adaptation and planning, will need the properties of openness to change to ensure that the changes in organization run without resistance and smoothly. This can be achieved through the collection of resilient individuals within organization [44].

Some studies also stated that organization must have the openness to produce a resilient and responsive system at various levels in the organization, especially when related to the planning and response process as a driver of trust shaping and placing the organization on the coherence in its decision making process [45], [46]. In this research, Store employee's openness to change towards changes made in order to adapt to the shocks of the Covid-19 pandemic, is expected to produce resilient individuals, before finally being reflected at a higher organizational level. Based on these points, Author argue that:

H1: Openness to change has a positive effect on organizational resilience.

#### ***3.2 Effect of Empowerment on Organizational Resilience***

The relationship between empowerment and organizational resilience is already highlighted in several previous studies such as [47], which argued that empowerment can make employees built awareness of their personal goals, and this affects the forming of organizational resilience. Empowerment effect also mentioned by [48] as the key to the adaptive nature of organizations. An empirical study conducted by [49] also stated that empowerment will have a positive impact on the forming of organizational resilience. The disruptive Covid-19 pandemic can force organizations including Store, to adapt in order to respond to the disturbances from organization's external problem. Based on these points, Author argue that:

H2: Empowerment has a positive effect on organizational resilience.

#### ***3.3 Effect of Customer Orientation on Organizational Resilience***

Relationship between customer orientation and organizational resilience is mentioned by [49], which believed that customer satisfaction is an important factor in the forming of organizational resilience. [50] also mentioned that in order to be resilient and be able to face various shocks, organization need to concentrate on their customers. [51] in another study, divided the rhythm of business resilience into several stages, one of which is the reactive stage. At that stage, organization need to make a proper and fast response in order to fulfill of customer needs.

[52] believed that the existence of market sensing in customer orientation can enrich organizational resources in the form of market information to face a dynamic environment. This will make an organization aware of the changes before it occurs in their respective markets and customers, so they can use this as a reference to plan and adapt in order to deal with environmental changes. In facing Covid-19 pandemic, Store will be benefited from their customer orientation because the focus of strategy development on customers can be considered as a capability that will encourage them to have a resilient trait and promote a responsive response to shocks that occur from external factors. Based on these points, Author argued that:

H3: Customer orientation has a positive effect on organizational resilience.

#### ***3.4 Effect of Marketing Innovation on Organizational Resilience***

Creativity and flexibility can be considered as factors that encourage innovation [53]. Adaptation which requires flexibility and creativity within organizational can help organization in predicting future events. Innovation has been mentioned as a factor that affect organizational resilience in several previous studies. [54] mentioned that innovation that integrated with organization's strategy is the basis for building resilience. Organizational resilience that acts as a dual capacity of the organization to make them be able to withstand shocks and crises before finally being able to expand again, is affected by innovation [55].

As one of the innovation form, marketing innovation can be considered as a key capability for organizations to survive through crises [31]. It can trigger the resilience capacity to emerge so that the organization can withstand disruptions and crises by adapting, before finally returning in a stronger state. In an effort to deal with the shock of the Covid-19 pandemic, Author assume that the marketing innovations conducted by Store can act as one of the predictors that affect its resilience. Based on these points, Author argue that:

H4: Marketing innovation has a positive effect on organizational resilience.

### 3.5 Organizational Resilience on Organizational Survival

Organizational survival explained by [56] as a form of organization's output that have many proxies in its measurement. [57] showed that corporate mortality can be used in measuring organizational survival. Another way, is to use organization's financial performance in the midst of crisis as a proxy of organizational survival, like [31] has done. On the other hand, resilience has been mentioned as one of the factor that influence and improve organizational performance [8]. Based on the resilience's ability that can make an organization able to respond and adapt better to environmental shocks and disruptions, author assume that in the face of Covid-19, resilience will make Store be able to survive, before finally being able to rise again towards a better performance than before. With this, Author argue that:

H5: Organizational resilience has a positive effect on organizational survival.

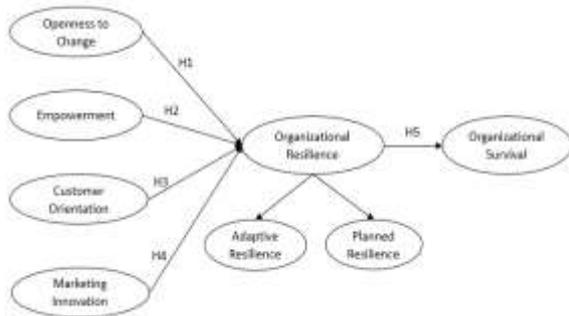


Figure 1 Research Conceptual Model

### 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses quantitative method where the data is collected using questionnaires distributed among all of the convenient store's outlets throughout Indonesia. Participant's rate of this research reached 77% from total active outlets. According to the quota sampling rule, respondents were grouped into staff and managerial position for representation of the unit analysis. In order to represent Store as the unit analysis, each of the respondent level (both staff and manager) must give the response before the data can be averaged.

Respondent profiling show that at managerial level, most of the them have 1-3 years of Store's tenure. While at staff level, most of the respondents have <5 years Store's tenure. Data then processed and analyzed using Partial Least Square- Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) method via SmartPLS 3.0 software. PLS-SEM approach used in this research is the two stage disjoint, following the [58]. To complement PLS- SEM method, author interview one of Store's key person to enrich the discussion section.

### 5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Five findings in this research shows that two of the author's hypothesis is accepted, and the other three are rejected. First, openness to change has no effect on Store's resilience in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic empirically. This may be happened because changes made by Store in terms of the content, may not providing enough stimulus to generate the forming of new knowledge, that can lead to new routines implementation as the important trait of adaptive resilience.

As stated by [59], new knowledge creation involves a social process in the form of accumulation of individual justifications that are embedded throughout the organization. Organizational paradigm can be a barrier to the creation of new knowledge within an organization, depends on the urgency and sensemaking made by those paradigm that born from change implemented within organization. Also, the unforeseen Covid-19 has made Store shocked, and having not enough time to do sensemaking process and knowledge conversion. As [60] said, in order to foster the new routines which can be considered as explicit knowledge, organization need to convert their tacit into explicit knowledge. Because of this, most of the sensemaking also happen spontaneously, and it may not be able to be used to create new organizational routines, which is the trait of adaptive resilient.

Second, empowerment has no effect on Store's resilience in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic empirically. This may be happened because Store's employee cannot deploy new working process as the important trait of adaptive resilience. In order to adapt the Covid-19 that comes unpredictably, Store needs to do empowerment so they can function in a more optimal way and react faster to this situation. But unfortunately, they don't have enough time so the new knowledge that can lead them to the creation of new working process, may not be created through emergent- like empowerment. So, empowerment isn't affecting their Store's resilience in this context.

Third, customer orientation has no effect on Store's resilience in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic empirically. This may be happened because Store's employee interaction with their customers cannot create new knowledge as the important trait of adaptive resilience. In order to be adaptive and resilient, Store needs to maximize the potential of their customers as the knowledge pool so they can facilitate the knowledge creation [15]. But in this case, Store's customers are mostly simple buyer which usually visit their Store while filling up the gas, or stop by in the middle of their trip. This kind of customers may be not the customers that can provide them with new knowledge.

Fourth, marketing innovation significantly affecting Store's resilience in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic empirically. This result proves that marketing innovation can make the organization become resilient by the usage of new knowledge as the important trait of adaptive resilience. As mentioned in [54], having a dedicated component for innovation process will facilitate the organization in developing learning capabilities and good knowledge management. In this context, Store have their own dedicated department in the higher structural level to take care of marketing issues. In addition, marketing innovations such as in the usage of internet for boosting their Store's promotion, can give benefit with a relatively low cost. This is very relevant to be applied in crisis conditions and has proven to be effective in dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

Fifth, organizational resilience significantly affecting Store's survival in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. This result proves that in facing crisis like Covid-19 pandemic, resilience is one of the keys that can determine Store's resilience. Result also show that adaptation element in resilience is more influential to determine the Store's survival than the planning for this research context, because Store's never have any plan on how to cope with this situation before it happened. They only give their best to adapt as the pandemic strike in order to survive.

## 6. CONCLUSION

In this research, findings prove that only marketing innovation significantly affecting organizational resilience. Also, it is proven empirically that in the midst of Covid-19 pandemic, organizational resilience significantly affecting their survival. Another interesting findings show that openness to change, empowerment, and customer orientation are not affecting organizational resilience in this research context, and knowledge aspect may hold its importance role here.

## 7. IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study enriches empirical research, as the previously 5 conceptual constructs from [9]'s model, tested in their proxy by this research variables. This study also can act as the insight for retail business practitioners to expand the innovation scope, considering the effect of innovation through simple marketing innovation that has been proven to be effective and can make the organization become resilient in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic.

As for the next research's suggestion, researcher can use another possible variables based on [9]'s conceptual model, or even develop and combine it with other conceptual model. Also, it is interesting to see this research model tested on another research context, such as manufacturing industry, or another crisis context.

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