



# Green Marketing Strategy, Brand Capability, and SME Marketing Performance in South Sulawesi

Abdul Razak Munir\*, Nuraeni Kadir, and Fauziah Umar

Hasanuddin University, Makassar, Indonesia

\*arazak.munir@gmail.com

**Abstract.** Although green marketing has emerged as a pivotal strategy for sustainability, empirical evidence regarding its direct impact on marketing performance remains fragmented, particularly within the context of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). Addressing this theoretical gap, this study proposes a novel construct, ‘Brand Articulating Capability’, as a strategic mediator to elucidate the mechanism linking green marketing strategy to marketing performance. A purpose-based sample of 230 SME firms in South Sulawesi, Indonesia was used in the study, which is built on Resource Advantage Theory of Competition. The hypothesized paths were tested using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). Based on the empirical result green marketing strategy directly has not positive impacts on marketing performance excepts negatively. On the contrary, it behaves forcefully and positively to help brand delivering ability. Most importantly, the analysis proves that brand convey capability is a full mediator; that is, green strategies will enhance performance if and only if the signal of your product is conveyed in this way, saying that your product will be positively responded. These insights offer a substantial theoretical contribution by resolving prior inconsistencies in green marketing literature and provide practical guidance for SME managers to prioritise brand articulation alongside ecological initiatives to secure a competitive advantage.

**Keywords:** Green Marketing Strategy, Brand Articulating Capability, Marketing Performance.

## 1 Introduction

Many sectors and enterprises have transitioned to environmentally friendly or non-harmful products, thereby increasing public awareness of the importance of ecological sustainability. As a result of this realization, the corporation has included environmental concerns in its marketing strategy. The process of promoting products made from ecologically friendly materials is known as green marketing.

The most new company technique is green marketing. It is a strategic option and opens up new opportunities and with a multiplier effect. This helps the employees of firms as well as consumers of society as whole. Here, you have green consumerism in this scenario. Businesses will opt for green marketing for the purpose to increase the likelihood of firm objectives being met.

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Green marketing is the new emphasis of business endeavors. By the end of the twentieth century, this style of strategic marketing had emerged and was widely recognized. This condition necessitates greater caution on the part of marketers while making environmental decisions [1]. Green marketing encompasses not only the sale of ecologically friendly products to customers, but also their production and distribution. Sustainability-focused marketing is a current marketing trend that will serve as a future competitive advantage for businesses and consumers [2].

The green economy contains sectors/product of green products, organic farming, renewable energy sources, clean technology and sustainable utilization of natural resources as listed by [3]. This implies the marketer is able to leverage this feature in order to increase competitive fitness. This leads many industries to develop green business plans that will ensure them large returns by incorporating their sustainable practices into their corporate structure. ISO 14001, Indonesia Early entry to ISO certification to Environmental Management System ISO 14001 with the amount of 7,233 number of companies in Indonesia in the year from 1999 to 2012. Thailand has the highest number of ISO 14001 EMS (17,519) while neighbouring country, Malaysia has only 11,706, Singapore has 9,740 and Philippines has only 5,084. It is among the three countries where at least addition total of licenses released by 302,480 institutions [4].

Green Marketing is one of the hottest prospects for innovation and entrepreneurship today. The green marketing is a recycling programme so the production costs will keep down. Apart from this, the positive attitude of people towards environment saves also provide a good base for green marketing which marketers can utilize much easier. Benefits of Green pathway You synthesize materials from a natural source material, and the resulting materials are environmentally friendly [5]. Green marketing is not just about selling sustainable products to consumers - businesses have to create and provide them too.

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) are among the many businesses in Indonesia. Numerous young entrepreneurs model their businesses after SMEs. It does not require establishment licenses, which can be difficult to obtain at times, and has limited resources, including capital, labor, and technology, making SMEs one alternative for those who aspire to become entrepreneurs. Indonesia's unemployment and poverty rates continue to decline due to the expansion of the country's SME sector.

In addition to the above, the common problems of institutions poor performance management and organizational structure budget control without and cannot do long-term planning has been imposed macroscopic level on SMEs also injected reflection inventory control problem for inadequate business continuity funds and investment problems encourage innovation (not demand cost) poor network marketing [6] is made, this is a faced by small class absolute in trouble. A challenge which is an important issue for SMEs [7] impact on marketing. Third, as protection gives way to deregulation, competition will heighten leading into a danger of market shares for some SMEs because: availability-increases/improvements in products and services at cheaper prices and better quality, emergence of substitute-products or-services and reduction/elimination of entry barriers.

Producers can profit from consumers' desire to contribute to ecological sustainability by modifying their traditional marketing strategy to incorporate an eco-friendly dimension known as Green Marketing. At this time, perceptions of marketing oriented purely towards profit cannot be utilized as a benchmark; however, the enterprise is an organization that may alleviate societal issues [8]. [9] study indicate that consumers are contributing to environmental deterioration by purchasing environmentally hazardous or inefficiently utilized products.

Due to the opportunities and advantages of environmentally friendly products and green marketing [10], green marketing faces several challenges [11]. As a result of misleading ads, dishonest claims, confusing labeling, and unsatisfactory performance, the quantity of new green products has decreased [12]. There is growing evidences that more and more companies are adopting a greener perspective; traditional ones get far bigger profits after converting their production towards green processes [13]. It's also an eco friendly shop [14]. Agriculture needs to re-orient as well, so industries are creating food that is not causing harm for [15]. Besides these, besides hotels and tourism resort business are changing their work habit into green hotel and sustainable tourism [16]. Although managers of business organizations are just now beginning to address the issue, it is found in the literature that empirical evidence shown is not robust between sustainable marketing and improved financial performance [11]. The result is that many of the present generation of senior managers and policy developers are comparatively ignorant about the perverse effects of environmental labelling [17]. Introduction Several studies green marketing impact of green marketing performance multiple correlation Green marketig on performance and marketoshive product Thea ise gap in gr een marketing fulltext 367 performsheavenaccount Research a group shows in the light of researches between green positive and negative impact of green maareetingand perfoRISTance obtained performance compared to mean previous K s different conclusion which indicates that there is agapis that wurbi g not able t o garreiormmce ith per. commun., pp. This gap has to be overcome by future investigations.

This paper is attempts to develop a conceptual framework that acts as a strategic tether between green marketing and marketing performance of SMEs. In doing so, we propose Brand Articulating Capability as a strategic bridging mechanism to the connect green marketing and effective marketplace responsiveness. The focus of this article is marketing (and not as much a business) context; therefore the commentary from different business disciplines wil lnot be addressed.

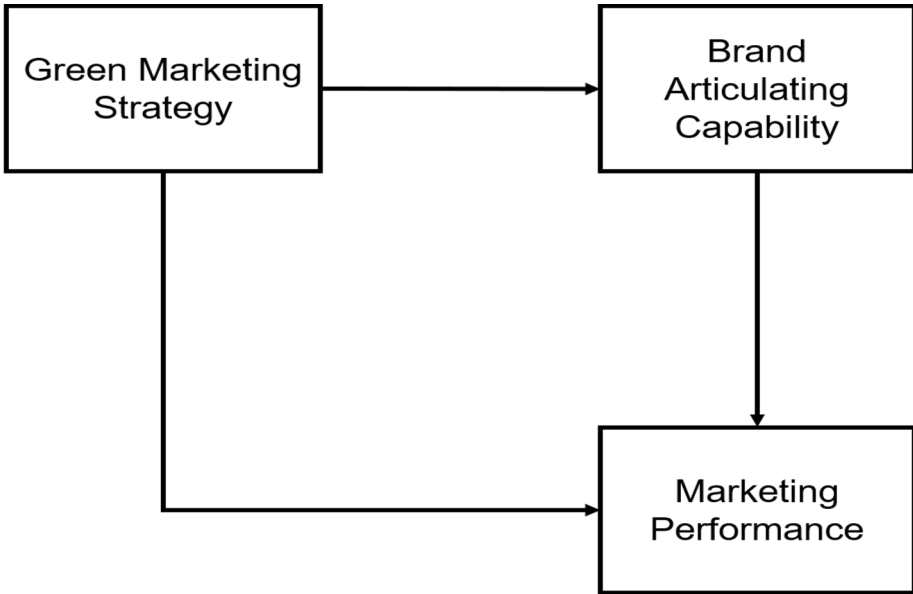


Fig. 1. Empirical Research Model

## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Brand Articulating Capability.

As the determinacy of relationship among green marketing and its impact on marketing performance is not consistent in research gap, we intend to offer a possible way for further actions because of the translation from green marketing into best absorptive capacity of lives. Consequently, we have borrowed the resource-based theory of competition (RBTC) [17] and drawn our inferences from Resource Advantage Theory of Competition (RAToC) [18,19,20, 21] to conceptually base a relationship between green marketing and Marketing Performance. Therefore, we propose a new concept called Brand articulating capability as an intervening variable of Green marketing and Marketing Performance

The brand is a company asset. One of the most important keys to building and maintaining a successful business is your brand. Positive brand image in the market helps the firm to add new customers and retain existing ones [22]. Furthermore In local corporate literature also mentions, brand that contribute to competitive advantage more over have become local throught strategy [23]. Brand creation in the external markets is one of the priority aspects for them under competitive market, according to several investigators [24].

It's bringing the sound smooth and sweet, full and round through the horn. ArticulationThe articulation is defined by Cambridge dictionary as “the production of clear and particularly of the speech sounds that make something” [24]. Articulate is

the deliberate, critical or intelligent effort to explain content; and today we focus on an articulator of brands.

First, the Resource Advantage concept recognizes the role of marketing function in marketing tised as such [15, 29, 30] and providing such competitiveness Perceiving that a firm can be positioned to show forth capabilities to a level that outclass the competitors is the renewed role for branding in enhancing Resource Advantage [26, 27, 28]. Brand articulation ability is the ability of the firm/organization to express what the brand means to customers. In order to add value, an organization has to serve customers better and more than its competitors [26, 27]. A comparative advantage of this nature allows firms to adjust a higher rungs on the market and eventually, achieves superior financial performance as theorized by the Resource Advantage Theory [27, 29]. We conceptualize this marketing capacity and refer to it as Brand Articulating Capability- A performance lever. What does it mean for a product to be able to speak the same language as the brand it sells? Brand Articulating Capability: Source: Adapted from 15) The rationale behind this is that ability in marketing also defines the brand; (1) The brand stands at eyes of customers, (2) The brand speaks loudly with customers and (3) The brand carries a visible image among customers.

## 2.2 Green Marketing Strategy

According to the American Marketing Association, green marketing involves offering ecologically friendly products by modifying commodities, refining the manufacturing process, optimizing packaging, and adjusting advertising strategies [30]. Approaches to a green marketing mix include innovation, logistics, promotion, price, and consumption. General strategies extend beyond the realm of marketing. Nonetheless, marketing and other business functions of the firm may utilize them to address environmental issues, which refer to a set of marketing strategies and aspects that enable the company to serve its consumer base and achieve its objectives without harming the natural environment [31]. According to [32], four factors influence Green Marketing: Green Products, Green Pricing, Green Promotion, and Green Placing. Meanwhile, according to [33], the main components of green marketing include Eco-Labels, Eco-Brands, and Environmental Advertisements.

Green marketing is positively related to sustainable development. A sustainable development strategy comprises of sustainable economic growth intertwining with environmental growth in decision making, and policies that will persist the agricultural progress and ecological conservation [34].

Green Marketing Mix's components are those that enable it to acquire its objectives in the finance and strategy area (and especially, time, in the advance (or amelioration) it's negative environmental coverture. Such interpretation is aligned with clean-marketing behavior like rude marketing practices in fight dirty as counterstrategic elements of the MDCM) which is because each element within a strategic marketing mix is developed and utilized in order to prevent unwanted impact on the environment. This definition of the green marketing mix reflects prior definitions of environmental and green marketing [35].

### 2.3 Marketing Performance

Marketing performance is a subset of overall business performance. Performance marketing is the aggregate of activities performed across a business marketing funnel. Another way you could think about marketing performance is based on how much your product is enhanced your customer ability to succeed. In support of this assumption,[36] it shows that Marketing effectiveness is a marketing quality measure. Recognizing the fact that marketing performance is generally a subset of business performance [37] at least partially capturing business performance through marketing performance.

It is a fact that the marketing performance of any company determines its success. The latter concerns the advertisement performance as to how marketing findings can be used for a company. Marketing performance also has been identified in a separate study as an important component of overall firm performance, since marketing activity may serve as a partial reflection of a firm's performance [38]. It also explains the market performance by revenue, volume and revenues generated from the serving of its incontinence product topics.

Market performance is commonly assessed using firm-level indicators such as sales volume, customer base, revenue, and profit growth [39]. It can also be reflected in the acquisition of new customers and increased purchasing volumes among existing customers [40, 41]. In addition, market performance is frequently captured through changes in sales growth, market share, and marketing share [42, 43], as well as brand-level outcomes such as a firm's overall market share and the monthly variation in a brand's market share relative to competitors [44, 45, 46]. Overall, the findings of this study suggest that firms aim to create value by improving profitability while simultaneously pursuing growth in sales and customers. Figure 1 illustrates the empirical research methodology utilized for this study. This analysis includes three hypotheses based on literature reviews, previous research, and statistics:

1. Green Marketing Strategy Influences Brand Articulating Capability.
2. Green Marketing Strategy Influences Marketing Performance.
3. Brand Articulating Capability Influences Marketing Performance.
4. Green Marketing Strategy Influences Marketing Performance through Brand Articulating Capability

## 3 Research Method

The study was conducted across several regencies and districts in South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. It examines both exogenous and endogenous constructs in the proposed model. Green Marketing is treated as the exogenous variable and is measured using three indicators, while Brand Articulating Capability and Marketing Performance are modeled as endogenous variables, each also operationalized through three indicators.

The population comprises all active SMEs in South Sulawesi that are officially registered with the Provincial Cooperative and SME Agency (Dinas Koperasi UMKM),

including those recorded by relevant regency offices within the study area. A purposive sampling approach was employed to select respondents. In total, 230 entrepreneurs participated as respondents, representing the targeted regencies. Data were collected through a structured questionnaire. Each construct in the model is measured based on respondents' perceptions of the indicators [46], using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The operational definitions of the variables and their indicators are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Variables and Indicators.

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
Green Marketing Strategy	The practice of promoting items or services due to their environmental benefits. This product or service may be eco-friendly or produced in an environmentally friendly manner.	1.Eco-label 2.Eco-brand 3.Environmental Advertisement
Brand Articulating Capability	The ability of the company/organization to convey the message contained in its brand to customers clearly	1.The brand is apparent in the eyes of customers 2.The brand communicates clearly with customers 3.The brand builds a clear reputation with customers.
Marketing Performance	The level of marketing performance	1.Sales Volume 2.Sales Value 3.Customer Growth.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to estimate the standardized factor loadings of all measurement items on their respective latent constructs as part of the validity assessment. Indicator validity was evaluated using the common criterion of factor loadings  $\geq 0.50$  [47]. The results show that all indicators in the model exceed this threshold, indicating that the measurement items demonstrate adequate validity (Table 2).

To assess the reliability and convergent validity of the latent variables, this study applied Construct Reliability (CR) and Variance Extracted (VE). A CR value of 0.70 or higher is generally considered acceptable [47], while the recommended cut-off for VE is 0.50 [48]. Since the CR and VE values for all constructs in this study surpass these benchmarks, the results confirm that the measurement model is reliable and exhibits satisfactory convergent validity.

**Table 2.** Validity and Reliability

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Indicators.</b>	<b>Standardized Loading Factors.</b>	<b>Standard Errors.</b>	<b>Reliability</b>	
				<b>CR</b>	<b>VE</b>
	X11	0.704	0.67	0.72	0.68

Green Marketing Strategy	X12	0.822	0.73		
Brand Articulating Capability	X21	0.852	0.70		
	X22	0.836	0.66	0.88	0.71
	X23	0.806	0.80		
Marketing Performance	X31	0.781	0.89		
	X32	0.813	0.93	0.87	0.75
	X33	0.748	0.86		

All sample data were analyzed using AMOS software with structural equation modelling (SEM).

### 4 Results

The below Goodness of Fit Indices from the Structural model study indicate a high level of model acceptance, as multiple indices, including  $\chi^2= 76.357$ ; Significance Probability = 0.068; GFI= 0.932; AGFI= 0.873; TLI = 0.928; CFI =0.952; RMSEA = 0.098. Thus, we may say that our model conforms to the expected population.

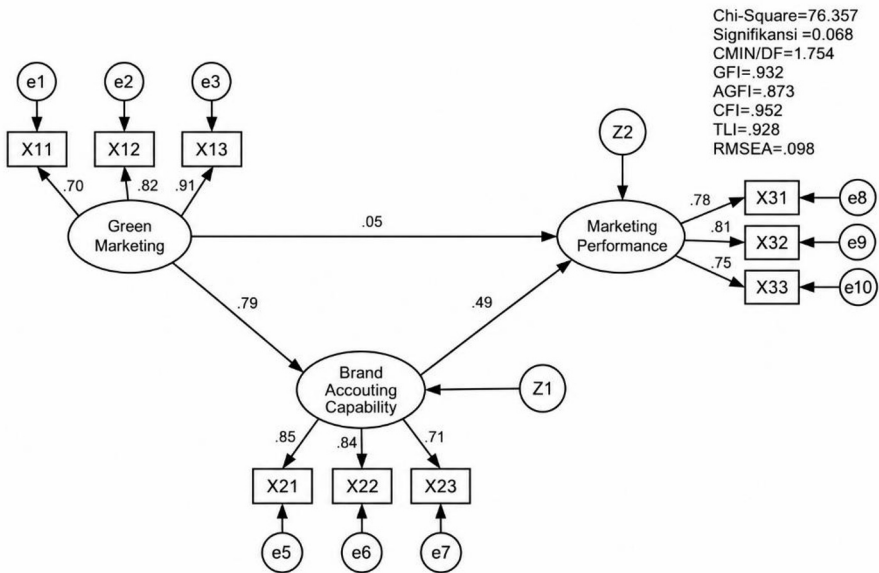


Fig. 2. Model Testing

**Table 3.** Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis			Standardize Estimate	P
Green Marketing Strategy	→	Brand Articulating Capability	0.785	0,000
Green Marketing Strategy	→	Marketing Performance	0.045	0,734
Brand Articulating Capability	→	Marketing Performance	0.494	0,000
Green Marketing Strategy →	Brand Articulating Capability	→ Marketing Performance	0.388	0,009

Table 3 reveals that, except for hypothesis 2, the significant probability for the hypothesis variable relation is less than 0.05. Based on our sample data, we conclude that hypotheses 1, 3, and 4 are accepted, and reject hypothesis 2.

## 5 Discussion

This study aimed to clarify why previous findings on the relationship between green marketing and marketing performance in SMEs have been inconsistent. The results indicate a clear mechanism. Green marketing strategy strengthens Brand Articulating Capability, and Brand Articulating Capability improves marketing performance, while the direct influence of green marketing strategy on marketing performance is not statistically meaningful. Most importantly, the indirect effect is significant, confirming full mediation. This means green marketing contributes to performance only when the firm can translate its environmental initiatives into a clear, credible, and easily understood brand meaning that customers can recognize and trust. This finding helps explain why earlier studies reported mixed results, because environmental initiatives alone do not automatically convert into market outcomes unless they are communicated convincingly and interpreted as valuable by customers [11, 35].

The strong relationship between green marketing strategy and Brand Articulating Capability suggests that environmental orientation can stimulate the development of marketing capabilities. When SMEs adopt eco labels, eco branding, and environmental advertising, they are encouraged to sharpen their value proposition, standardize messages, and provide cues that reduce customer uncertainty [30, 33]. From a Resource Advantage Theory perspective, this supports the argument that superior performance depends not only on possessing resources such as green initiatives, but also on deploying market facing capabilities that make those resources meaningful to customers and difficult for competitors to replicate [18, 19, 20, 26, 27, 28]. In this study, Brand Articulating Capability functions as a market based capability that helps SMEs express what the brand stands for, communicate benefits consistently, and build a recognizable reputation in the market [22, 23].

The absence of a significant direct effect between green marketing strategy and marketing performance is theoretically informative. In the SME context of South Sulawesi, several factors can weaken immediate market returns from green initiatives. First, green practices may increase operating costs through materials, packaging, or process adjustments, while customers may remain highly price sensitive, delaying performance gains. Second, buyers may face information limitations, so green claims are not always easy to verify. Without clear signals, customers may not understand how a product is environmentally friendly or why it matters for them [10, 12]. Third, skepticism toward environmental claims can reduce the persuasive power of green messages, especially when labels are confusing or when consumers suspect exaggeration, which is a recurring concern in green marketing research [10, 11, 12]. As a result, green marketing strategy by itself may not function as a direct performance lever, and its benefits may appear only when it is communicated in a way that builds confidence and relevance [35].

The significant positive effect of Brand Articulating Capability on marketing performance highlights the central role of communication clarity and brand meaning in driving market outcomes. When the brand is visible, communicates clearly, and builds a strong reputation, customers can more easily differentiate the offering and feel more certain about their choices. This aligns with branding and capability research showing that strong brand related capabilities support customer acquisition and retention and can improve market outcomes, particularly for smaller firms operating under resource constraints [22, 24, 43]. In practical terms, Brand Articulating Capability is not merely promotion. It reflects the firm's competence in converting internal initiatives into externally understandable value, which shapes customer responses and ultimately supports improvements in sales volume, sales value, and customer growth [36, 37, 38].

The mediation finding contributes to the green marketing literature by offering a capability based explanation for inconsistent evidence. Rather than expecting green marketing to directly improve performance, the results suggest that the performance effect depends on whether green initiatives are translated into a coherent brand message that customers interpret as credible and beneficial [11, 35]. This perspective aligns with sustainable marketing arguments that environmental strategies pay off when they are integrated into the broader marketing mix and communicated with clarity, consistency, and legitimacy [12, 35]. Therefore, the proposed construct Brand Articulating Capability provides a theoretical bridge that helps reconcile prior inconsistencies and clarifies how green marketing can become competitively valuable for SMEs [18, 20].

From a managerial perspective, the findings imply that SME owners should not treat green marketing as a standalone campaign. Instead, they should prioritize strengthening how the brand communicates the meaning of its environmental efforts. This can be done by using eco labels that are easy to understand and, when possible, supported by recognized standards, ensuring that eco branding is consistent across packaging and digital channels, and designing environmental advertising that explains why the product is environmentally responsible and how the firm delivers that promise [30, 33]. SMEs can also reinforce articulation by training frontline staff to explain the green value proposition in simple language, documenting claims to avoid inconsistency, and

ensuring that product quality matches environmental promises, because weak product performance can undermine trust and reduce customer responsiveness [10, 12].

Several limitations suggest directions for future research. The study relies on cross sectional survey data and perceptual measures, which may not fully capture time lag effects or objective market outcomes. The model also focuses on SMEs within a single province, which may limit generalizability. Future studies could incorporate objective performance indicators and longitudinal designs to examine whether green marketing produces stronger performance effects over time as awareness and trust develop [36, 37]. Researchers could also test boundary conditions such as consumer environmental concern, competitive intensity, and price sensitivity to identify when brand articulation becomes most critical for converting green strategy into measurable marketing performance [11, 35].

## 6 Conclusions

Our model illustrates the relationship between Green Marketing Strategy, Brand Articulation Capability, and Marketing Performance. Our investigation shows that the Green Marketing Strategy has a minor and negative impact on marketing performance. Green Marketing, on the other hand, has a significant and positive impact through brand articulation capability. The results enabled us to assume that there is a relationship between green marketing strategies as well as the SMEs' marketing performance. An SME must have a strategic brand that in turn, combines with green marketing strategy to enhance the performance of their marketing strategies. An SME is not satisfied with just setting a green marketing strategy since it is expensive. Green marketing strategies have the most remarkable effect on marketing performance with reference to Brand Articulating Capability. Brand Articulating Capability plays a role as a media which connects the Green Marketing policy to South Sulawesi Province's SMEs marketing performance.

Theoretically, the findings of this study contribute to filling research void in green marketing strategies and marketing performance. Brand Articulating Capability (BAC), which has been suggested as a bridge between green marketing and marketing performance, was tested in practice to be fundamental in mediating the relationship of the dimensions. Further research will, therefore be needed in order to have broad based findings when other scope area and the type of enterprises variables are included.

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