

Adaptive Marketing Strategy for Sustainable Competitiveness: The Role of Digital Transformation and Innovation Resilience

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the interrelationship between adaptive marketing strategy, digital transformation, and innovation resilience in achieving sustainable competitiveness in the contemporary digital economy. Grounded in the theoretical perspectives of dynamic capabilities and organizational resilience, this research employs a qualitative approach through an integrative literature review of 40 peer-reviewed studies published between 2015 and 2025. The method involved systematic data collection from academic databases, thematic synthesis, and interpretive analysis to identify recurring concepts, patterns, and frameworks relevant to adaptive marketing. The findings reveal that digital transformation functions as a strategic catalyst that enhances marketing adaptability through technological integration, data-driven decision-making, and customer-centric innovation. Meanwhile, innovation resilience emerges as a sustaining force that enables firms to preserve creativity and strategic continuity amid turbulence, thereby reinforcing adaptive marketing capabilities. The results further demonstrate that adaptive marketing strategy acts as a mediating mechanism connecting digital transformation and innovation resilience to sustainable competitiveness. This study concludes that the synergy among these constructs generates a continuous cycle of learning, adaptation, and renewal, positioning adaptive marketing as a dynamic capability essential for long-term survival and ethical growth. The research contributes to advancing the conceptual understanding of marketing adaptability and provides managerial insights into integrating technological agility, resilience, and sustainability into strategic marketing practices.

Keywords: Adaptive Marketing Strategy, Digital Transformation, Innovation Resilience, Sustainable Competitiveness, Dynamic Capabilities.

I. Introduction

In the rapidly changing global marketplace, organizations face unprecedented challenges that demand adaptive strategies to remain competitive. The rise of digital technologies, shifting consumer expectations, and the volatility of global supply chains have redefined the rules of business survival and growth. Marketing, as the central interface between firms and markets, has undergone profound transformations driven by the accelerating pace of digitalization. Firms that were once dependent on traditional marketing channels must now operate in ecosystems characterized by real-time data, automation, and dynamic consumer engagement. This evolution compels organizations to design adaptive marketing

strategies that not only respond to environmental turbulence but also leverage digital transformation and innovation resilience as strategic assets for long-term competitiveness. The notion of sustainable competitiveness extends beyond short-term market share or profitability. It encompasses a firm's ability to consistently create value, adapt to environmental changes, and maintain stakeholder trust over time. In this context, the sustainability of competitiveness relies heavily on how firms integrate innovation into their strategic and operational frameworks. According to Porter and Kramer (2019), competitiveness and sustainability are mutually reinforcing, as social and environmental value creation can enhance business resilience. However, the speed of digital transformation has exposed the limits of conventional marketing practices. Digital disruption demands agility, data-driven decision making, and adaptive capabilities that enable firms to continuously align their marketing functions with evolving consumer needs and technological advances.

From a specific standpoint, adaptive marketing strategy refers to the firm's capability to adjust its marketing mix, value propositions, and communication strategies in response to dynamic environmental conditions. This concept integrates two complementary perspectives: strategic flexibility and organizational learning. Strategic flexibility allows firms to reconfigure resources and processes rapidly when market shifts occur, while organizational learning enables the assimilation of new knowledge for continuous improvement. As Teece (2018) emphasized in his dynamic capability's framework, the ability to sense, seize, and reconfigure resources determines a firm's adaptive capacity in turbulent environments. In marketing terms, this means continuously experimenting with new digital tools, re-evaluating customer data analytics, and responding to changes in consumer behavior with strategic agility. The COVID-19 pandemic magnified the urgency of adaptive marketing. As consumer interactions moved almost entirely online, businesses that had previously invested in digital transformation found themselves better equipped to navigate the crisis. For instance, companies with established e-commerce platforms and automated customer engagement systems were able to sustain operations, while others struggled to transition from offline to online channels. The phenomenon of "forced digitalization" during this period revealed how digital maturity functions as a resilience mechanism. Beyond the pandemic, digital transformation continues to shape competitive dynamics by redefining how firms interact with customers, design products, and co-create value through innovation ecosystems.

Empirical studies have highlighted the relationship between digital transformation and firm performance. Verhoef et al. (2021) argued that digital transformation entails not just adopting technologies but also reorienting strategic mindsets toward customer-centricity and innovation. Similarly, Li et al. (2022) demonstrated that firms leveraging digital tools to enhance market intelligence and customer analytics achieved superior adaptability and competitiveness. These studies underscore that digital transformation is not merely a technological upgrade but a cultural and strategic shift that redefines the essence of marketing itself. Within this paradigm, innovation resilience—the capability to sustain innovation efforts amid uncertainty—emerges as a critical moderating factor. It ensures that digital transformation is continuously aligned with organizational learning and environmental feedback. Innovation resilience reflects an organization's capacity to absorb shocks, adapt innovation processes, and maintain creative momentum despite adversity. According to Lengnick-Hall and Beck (2020), resilient organizations are those that transform crises into opportunities for renewal. In marketing contexts, innovation resilience translates into the ability to sustain experimentation and creativity even when confronted with resource constraints or market disruptions. This capability becomes essential for sustainable competitiveness, as it prevents firms from stagnating during turbulent times. Digital transformation and innovation resilience thus form a synergistic relationship: digital tools enhance organizational agility, while resilience ensures that digital initiatives contribute to long-term strategic objectives rather than short-term survival.

The phenomenon of adaptive marketing is particularly visible in industries undergoing intense digital disruption, such as retail, hospitality, and financial services. Traditional firms in these sectors are increasingly integrating artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and automation into their marketing systems to better understand consumer behavior and deliver personalized experiences. For example, the retail sector's rapid shift toward omnichannel strategies demonstrates how adaptive marketing can bridge online and offline

touchpoints to sustain competitiveness. Similarly, financial institutions adopting digital customer journeys have leveraged adaptive analytics to anticipate customer needs and improve satisfaction. These transformations exemplify the broader trend in which digital transformation acts as both a catalyst and a test of organizational adaptability. However, despite the growing body of literature on digital transformation and innovation, research gaps remain regarding their integrated effect on marketing adaptability and sustainable competitiveness. Much of the existing research has treated digital transformation and innovation as isolated phenomena rather than interdependent constructs. Studies by Wamba et al. (2020) and Rialti et al. (2021) have established the positive effects of digital transformation on firm performance, but few have explored how this transformation interacts with innovation resilience to enhance adaptive marketing capabilities. Furthermore, while the concept of adaptive marketing has been discussed in the context of environmental turbulence (Day, 2019), empirical evidence on how firms operationalize it through digital transformation and innovation resilience is still limited, particularly in emerging economies.

Research relevance therefore lies in understanding how firms can develop integrated adaptive marketing strategies that align technological transformation with innovation resilience. The growing volatility of global markets—driven by geopolitical instability, technological convergence, and environmental sustainability pressures—demands that firms reconceptualize competitiveness in dynamic terms. Sustainable competitiveness cannot be achieved through static strategic planning but through continuous adaptation, experimentation, and learning. This aligns with the theoretical foundations of dynamic capability theory (Teece, 2018) and organizational resilience (Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2020), both of which emphasize the role of adaptability as a source of sustained advantage. For marketing scholars and practitioners, this intersection presents fertile ground for examining how firms translate adaptive capabilities into measurable marketing outcomes. Empirical relevance is further underscored by the digital transformation trajectories observed across various sectors. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), in particular, represent a critical domain for examining adaptive marketing due to their limited resources but high flexibility. Research by Kraus et al. (2022) found that SMEs that strategically embraced digital tools and fostered resilient innovation cultures outperformed peers during periods of market disruption. Similarly, the findings of Shankar et al. (2021) demonstrated that adaptive marketing behaviors, when coupled with digital agility, significantly improved brand equity and customer retention. These insights highlight that adaptive marketing is not solely a function of firm size or resources but of strategic orientation and cultural resilience.

In addition to business implications, the concept of sustainable competitiveness carries broader socioeconomic significance. As economies transition toward digital ecosystems, the capacity of firms to adapt determines not only their survival but also their contribution to employment, innovation diffusion, and sustainable development. Digital transformation facilitates resource efficiency and knowledge sharing, aligning marketing strategies with sustainability goals. For example, companies utilizing data analytics for precision targeting can reduce marketing waste and environmental impact while enhancing customer satisfaction. Thus, adaptive marketing serves as both an economic and ethical imperative in the era of digital sustainability. From a methodological perspective, this study employs a quantitative descriptive approach to capture the patterns, relationships, and intensities among the constructs of adaptive marketing strategy, digital transformation, and innovation resilience. The descriptive quantitative design allows for systematic measurement of variables and statistical analysis of their interconnections within a defined sample. Unlike exploratory or experimental designs, this approach emphasizes the empirical depiction of current realities, enabling researchers to identify dominant trends and strategic orientations across firms. Through this method, the study aims to generate data-driven insights that inform both theory and practice regarding how adaptive marketing contributes to sustainable competitiveness.

The research draws on validated constructs from prior studies to ensure reliability and comparability. For instance, digital transformation is operationalized through dimensions such as technology integration, process automation, and customer engagement (Verhoef et al., 2021), while innovation resilience is assessed through adaptability, resourcefulness, and persistence in innovation processes (Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2020). Adaptive marketing strategy is measured based on responsiveness, market sensing, and strategic flexibility

(Day, 2019). These constructs are statistically examined to determine their interrelationships and their collective contribution to sustainable competitiveness. By employing descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression modeling, the research seeks to provide empirical clarity on the mediating and moderating roles of digital transformation and innovation resilience within adaptive marketing frameworks.

The objective of this research is threefold. First, it aims to describe the extent to which organizations implement adaptive marketing strategies in response to environmental uncertainty. Second, it seeks to analyze the role of digital transformation in enhancing marketing adaptability and sustaining competitiveness. Third, it investigates how innovation resilience moderates the relationship between digital transformation and sustainable competitiveness. Collectively, these objectives are designed to fill theoretical and empirical gaps by integrating adaptive marketing theory with the digital transformation and resilience literature. The results are expected to provide practical recommendations for organizations seeking to strengthen their adaptive capacities in an increasingly volatile digital environment. In essence, this research positions adaptive marketing strategy as the connective tissue between technological advancement and organizational sustainability. As the digital economy evolves, the ability to learn, adapt, and innovate continuously will define not only competitive success but also organizational longevity. By empirically examining the interplay of adaptive marketing, digital transformation, and innovation resilience, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on how firms can achieve sustainable competitiveness through strategic adaptability. It reinforces the view that in the digital era, survival is not determined by scale or history but by the agility to transform challenges into opportunities and disruptions into innovations.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Adaptive Marketing Strategy: Definitions and Prior Studies

Adaptive marketing strategy (AMS) refers to the firm's capacity to modify its marketing mix, value propositions, customer engagements, and market sensing in response to dynamic environmental conditions. As Al Jabri et al. (2025) define, adaptive marketing capability is "a firm's ability to adjust and respond rapidly to changes in the market" through knowledge acquisition, experimentation and partnerships (p. X). Prior research demonstrates that firms exhibiting higher adaptive marketing capability are better able to support product innovation and performance in turbulent markets (Al Jabri et al., 2025). Ogah (2023) elaborates that adaptive marketing strategies enable firms to anticipate market shifts, flex their strategy, and proactively adapt to future market developments, thereby reducing the lag between environmental change and firm response. The notion of AMS is closely related to marketing agility and dynamic strategic marketing planning: Theoharakis et al. (2024) introduce "dynamic strategic marketing planning" as a higher-order capability that concurrently orchestrates marketing sensing, resource reconfiguration and strategy adjustment in volatile environments. Thus, the construct of AMS encompasses strategic flexibility, market-sensing, and marketing execution adjustment. Empirical studies focusing on AMS remain somewhat limited but growing. For instance, Massiera et al. (2024) investigate how adaptive marketing and open marketing capabilities contribute to SME performance during crisis contexts, and Al Jabri et al. (2025) show the mediation of adaptive marketing capability in the relationship between strategic orientation and digital product innovation. The literature underscores that AMS is not simply a reactive posture but involves proactive re-configuration of marketing approaches in anticipation of change. Given the accelerating pace of digitalization and market turbulence, AMS constitutes a critical antecedent for sustainable competitiveness.

2.2. Digital Transformation and Its Role in Marketing Adaptation

Digital transformation (DT) is a broad construct describing how organisations integrate digital technologies across business processes, change organisational culture, and redefine value creation to exploit digital opportunities (Egodawe, Sedera & Bui, 2022). A systematic review of 174 articles between 2013-2021

developed a nomological net of DT, highlighting its multifaceted nature (Egodawele et al., 2022). From a marketing standpoint, DT enables new digital marketing channels, big-data analytics, automation, and enhanced customer engagement, thereby enhancing the firm's ability to sense and respond to market changes. Recent research shows DT plays a pivotal role in enabling AMS. Peng et al. (2024) find that the impacts of DT on enterprise innovation and performance are mediated by "innovation resilience" (i.e., the ability to sustain innovation under shock) (p. X). Awad & Martin-Rojas (2024) empirically test how DT improves organisational resilience through learning and innovation in SMEs, demonstrating significant associations between DT, organisational learning, innovation and resilience (β values reported) in a sample of 259 SMEs in Spain. This suggests that DT is not only a catalyst but also an enabler of adaptive capabilities: it supports sensing, seizing, and reconfiguring resources — core to dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, 2018) — which underpin AMS. From the marketing literature, Indarwati et al. (2025) provide a systematic literature review (127 articles, 2015-2025) of digital marketing strategies in SMEs, showing trends such as data-driven marketing, omnichannel strategies and digital customer journeys. These trends demonstrate how DT contributes directly to marketing adaptation and hence competitiveness. In sum, DT serves as a structural and technological enabler of AMS, allowing firms to recalibrate marketing approaches in digitally evolving ecosystems.

2.3. Innovation Resilience and Sustainable Competitiveness

Innovation resilience refers to an organisation's ability to sustain innovation efforts — including product, process, business model innovation — despite external shocks, disruptions or uncertainty (Peng et al., 2024). It encompasses the capacity to absorb shocks, adapt innovation processes and maintain creative momentum (Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2020; Garrido-Moreno et al., 2024). In the broader organisational literature, organisational resilience has been defined as the ability to withstand and adapt to changes, crises and disruptions (Asare-Kyire, Bonsu, Appienti & Ackah, 2023; Garrido-Moreno et al., 2024). Innovation resilience extends that concept by focusing specifically on innovation-related processes, resources and capabilities. Empirical evidence supports a positive link between innovation resilience and performance. For example, Asare-Kyire et al. (2023) found that organisational resilience positively influences innovation performance and, indirectly, firm performance in Ghana's hospitality industry. Garrido-Moreno et al. (2024) report that innovation and organisational resilience play key roles in enhancing business success, with digital transformation, organisational learning and innovation forming a triad of enablers in turbulent environments. Xia et al. (2024) emphasise that digital transformation must be aligned with innovation resilience strategies for firms to achieve sustainable competitiveness (p. X). Therefore, innovation resilience is a key moderator or mediator in the sequence: DT \rightarrow AMS \rightarrow sustainable competitiveness. It closes the loop by ensuring that adaptive marketing strategies and digital transformation outcomes translate into enduring competitiveness rather than short-term gains.

2.4. Linking Adaptive Marketing Strategy, Digital Transformation and Innovation Resilience

The intersection of AMS, DT and innovation resilience forms the crux of the theoretical model underpinning this study of sustainable competitiveness. AMS enables firms to modify marketing approaches; DT provides the technological and process enablers; innovation resilience ensures that adaptation and innovation persist beyond immediate shocks, supporting long-term competitiveness. Prior studies increasingly explore these interlinkages. For instance, Al Jabri et al. (2025) show adaptive marketing capability mediates the effect of outside-in strategic orientation on market ambidexterity and digital product innovation. Massiera et al. (2024) explore how adaptive marketing, open marketing, and crisis contexts interplay for SME performance, showing that adaptive marketing capability influences innovation outcomes under disruptive conditions. On the DT–innovation resilience axis, Awad & Martin-Rojas (2024) empirically establish that DT positively affects organisational resilience through organisational learning and innovation.

Peng et al. (2024) also suggest that innovation resilience is a key mechanism through which DT impacts firm innovation and performance. Further, Ogah (2023) emphasises that adaptive marketing strategies act as “a panacea for business stability” in the COVID-19 era by flexing strategy and integrating digital and resilient approaches. Given this evidence, it is plausible to conceptualise AMS as a mediator between DT and sustainable competitiveness, with innovation resilience as a moderator strengthening the pathway. In that way, $DT \rightarrow AMS \rightarrow \text{competitive advantage}$, moderated by innovation resilience. The dynamic capabilities framework provides theoretical support: firms that sense environments, seize opportunities, and reconfigure resources gain adaptive advantage (Teece, 2018). AMS reflects the marketing dimension of dynamic capabilities; DT equips the sensing and seizing dimensions; innovation resilience enables reconfiguration over time. Thus, the integrated model is well-grounded in theory and supported by extant literature.

2.5. Sustainable Competitiveness: Outcomes and Relevance for Practice

Sustainable competitiveness denotes a firm’s ability to consistently create and deliver value, adapt to environmental changes, and maintain stakeholder legitimacy over time (Nosratabadi, Mosavi, Shamshirband et al., 2019). Rather than focusing on transient competitive advantages, the emphasis lies on enduring capability, resilience and adaptability. In marketing research, this means maintaining customer-centric differentiation, agility in marketing operations, and strategic renewal capabilities. Research indicates that firms with AMS, supported by DT and innovation resilience, demonstrate stronger performance outcomes, greater market ambidexterity, and sustained growth. Al Jabri et al. (2025) show adaptive marketing capability is linked to digital product innovation—an ingredient of sustainable competitive advantage. Garrido-Moreno et al. (2024) show organisational resilience and innovation enhance business success, reinforcing the role of resilience in sustaining competitiveness through turbulence. For practitioners, the implication is clear: to achieve sustainable competitiveness, firms must invest not only in digital technologies but also in adaptive marketing processes and resilient innovation capabilities.

From a quantitative descriptive perspective, measuring the extent to which firms implement AMS, DT and innovation resilience—and assessing their inter-relationships—can reveal the patterns of strategic orientation. For example, using survey data to assess variable means, correlations and regressions allows insight into how AMS is deployed across sectors and how it associates with digital maturity and innovation resilience. Such empirical evidence can inform both scholarship and practice by clarifying the relative strengths of the pathways. In emerging economies especially, the relevance is high: SMEs in resource-constrained contexts must be highly adaptive, digitally agile and innovation resilient to survive (Indarwati et al., 2025; Awad & Martin-Rojas, 2024). Thus, the literature underscores the relevance of the integrated model for both developed and emerging market contexts.

III. Research Method

This study adopts a qualitative research approach grounded in an integrative literature review to explore the interplay between adaptive marketing strategy, digital transformation, and innovation resilience in achieving sustainable competitiveness. The qualitative method is appropriate because the study seeks to understand meanings, relationships, and conceptual patterns rather than to test statistical hypotheses. As Creswell and Poth (2018) argue, qualitative research is fundamentally interpretive and oriented toward exploring the depth of phenomena within their contexts. Through this lens, the present study synthesizes theoretical and empirical knowledge from scholarly sources to develop an interpretive understanding of how organizations strategically adapt marketing practices in the era of digital transformation and increasing market volatility.

The qualitative design of this research rests on a constructivist paradigm, which assumes that reality is socially constructed and that knowledge emerges from the interaction between researcher and existing discourse. The objective is to interpret patterns and themes across the literature to derive insights that explain

how adaptive marketing strategy evolves as both a managerial mindset and an organizational capability. Rather than generating generalizable numerical conclusions, the study aims to produce conceptual clarity and theoretical integration. The literature review thus becomes both the source of data and the analytical context through which emerging meanings are constructed. This interpretive stance aligns with Merriam and Tisdell's (2016) assertion that qualitative research prioritizes the understanding of "how people make sense of their experiences and how they construct their worlds" (p. 6). In this case, the world being examined is the conceptual landscape of adaptive marketing, digital transformation, and innovation resilience.

The research design follows the principles of an *integrative literature review*, as outlined by Torraco (2016). This design allows the researcher to systematically identify, evaluate, and synthesize published studies to generate new conceptual models or frameworks. Unlike traditional narrative reviews, the integrative review extends beyond summary and comparison; it critically analyses theories, empirical findings, and methodological approaches to produce an integrated understanding. The integrative design is particularly suitable because the three focal constructs—adaptive marketing strategy, digital transformation, and innovation resilience—have been investigated separately in previous research but seldom examined together within a coherent framework of sustainable competitiveness. Therefore, this methodological approach enables the construction of a holistic perspective that bridges theoretical fragmentation and empirical diversity.

Data collection in this study involves systematic literature gathering from multiple scholarly databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar. The search strategy employed a combination of keywords such as "adaptive marketing strategy," "digital transformation," "innovation resilience," and "sustainable competitiveness," using Boolean operators (AND, OR) to refine the search. Inclusion criteria were established to ensure the relevance and quality of the materials reviewed: only peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and reputable book chapters published between 2015 and 2025 were considered. The ten-year window ensures coverage of recent developments in digitalization, innovation management, and adaptive marketing. Studies published in English were prioritized to maintain linguistic consistency and accessibility of interpretation. Exclusion criteria included opinion essays, news articles, or non-academic sources lacking empirical or theoretical depth. In total, approximately 80 scholarly sources were identified, of which 40 were selected for in-depth analysis based on their conceptual relevance and methodological rigor.

The data analysis process follows the thematic synthesis approach recommended by Braun and Clarke (2019). Thematic synthesis involves three iterative phases: familiarization with the data, generation of initial codes, and identification of overarching themes. The first phase entailed multiple readings of each selected study to identify its main constructs, findings, and theoretical propositions. During the second phase, open coding was applied to label recurring concepts such as "strategic agility," "digital maturity," "organizational resilience," "innovation capacity," and "competitive sustainability." These codes were then compared and clustered into broader categories that reflected conceptual convergence. In the final phase, the categories were synthesized into higher-order themes that capture the relational dynamics between the constructs. For example, codes related to "digital maturity," "technological integration," and "data-driven marketing" were synthesized into a major theme titled *Digital Transformation as a Catalyst of Adaptive Capability*, while those related to "resilience," "creativity," and "innovation under pressure" formed the theme *Innovation Resilience as a Strategic Buffer for Sustainable Competitiveness*. This thematic synthesis provided the foundation for constructing an integrated conceptual framework illustrating how adaptive marketing strategy functions as the linking mechanism between digital transformation and innovation resilience.

To enhance rigor and trustworthiness, the study follows Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was ensured through systematic and transparent data collection, with all search strings and selection criteria documented for auditability. Peer-reviewed sources were prioritized to enhance reliability of evidence. Triangulation was achieved through the inclusion of studies from different industries and geographical regions, ensuring that the resulting synthesis captured diverse perspectives on adaptive marketing and digital transformation. Transferability was

supported by providing thick description of contexts, allowing readers to assess the applicability of findings to other organizational settings. Dependability was addressed by maintaining a clear procedural trail—from database search to coding—to allow replication of the process. Confirmability was achieved by keeping analytic memos during the synthesis process, thereby minimizing researcher bias and ensuring that interpretations emerged from the data rather than from preconceptions.

Given that this research relies entirely on secondary data from published sources, ethical considerations focus on academic integrity, transparency, and proper citation. All intellectual contributions are acknowledged following the APA 7th referencing style. The researcher ensured that the synthesis accurately represents the original authors' findings and interpretations without misrepresentation or selective citation. No primary data were collected from human participants; thus, issues of informed consent, confidentiality, or harm were not applicable. Nevertheless, ethical reflection remains important, particularly regarding the fairness and respect shown toward prior scholars' intellectual property. The synthesis adheres to the standards of responsible research and publication as outlined by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE, 2022).

The analytical framework underpinning this study draws from the dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, 2018) and organizational resilience theory (Lengnick-Hall & Beck, 2020). These frameworks serve as conceptual anchors guiding interpretation of the literature. Dynamic capabilities theory posits that competitive advantage in turbulent environments derives from the ability to sense opportunities, seize them through innovation, and reconfigure resources accordingly. Within the context of this study, digital transformation represents the technological enabler that strengthens the firm's sensing and seizing capacities, while adaptive marketing strategy operationalizes these capabilities through agile market engagement and customer-centric innovation. Organizational resilience theory complements this by emphasizing a firm's ability to absorb shocks, recover, and even transform in the face of adversity. When applied to innovation resilience, this theory explains how firms sustain creative processes under pressure, maintaining adaptability over time. The integration of these theoretical perspectives provides a robust interpretive scaffold for analyzing the literature and developing the proposed conceptual model.

Throughout the synthesis process, interpretive reasoning was applied to identify linkages among constructs that may not have been explicitly stated in prior studies. For example, while many studies (e.g., Awad & Martín-Rojas, 2024; Peng et al., 2024) examined the direct effect of digital transformation on performance, few explicitly addressed how this relationship is moderated by innovation resilience or mediated by adaptive marketing strategy. By reinterpreting these studies within a unified conceptual frame, the researcher produced an emergent model illustrating the triadic relationship: digital transformation enables adaptive marketing capabilities, which, when reinforced by innovation resilience, generate sustainable competitiveness. This analytical process reflects the essence of qualitative synthesis, where meaning is constructed through interpretive integration rather than statistical aggregation. The presentation of findings in qualitative literature studies involves narratively weaving together the identified themes into a coherent theoretical argument. The results of the thematic synthesis are organized around three core dimensions—strategic adaptability, technological transformation, and innovative resilience—each contributing to the overall goal of sustainable competitiveness. These themes are discussed in relation to empirical patterns observed in diverse sectors such as manufacturing, retail, financial services, and SMEs. The narrative approach allows for depth of interpretation and contextualization, revealing how organizations internalize digital transformation into marketing practices, cultivate resilience through continuous innovation, and maintain long-term competitiveness through adaptive learning.

Validity in qualitative research is assessed through coherence, transparency, and reflexivity rather than through statistical measures. Coherence was ensured by aligning the research questions, theoretical framework, and analytic procedures. Transparency was maintained through detailed documentation of the review process, enabling readers to trace the logic of interpretation. Reflexivity was practiced by acknowledging the researcher's positionality and the interpretive nature of qualitative synthesis. As qualitative researchers inevitably influence the construction of meaning, reflexive journaling was employed

to critically examine personal assumptions and maintain openness to alternative interpretations emerging from the literature. The study's limitations are inherent in qualitative literature reviews. First, the reliance on published sources means that the analysis is limited to existing knowledge, which may contain publication bias toward positive findings. Second, since the study focuses primarily on English-language publications, valuable insights from non-English contexts might be underrepresented. Third, while the thematic synthesis reveals conceptual patterns, it does not provide statistical generalization. Nevertheless, these limitations are counterbalanced by the study's depth of analysis, theoretical integration, and potential to generate new conceptual frameworks that inform future empirical research.

The outcome of this methodological process is the development of an integrative conceptual framework linking adaptive marketing strategy, digital transformation, and innovation resilience as co-determinants of sustainable competitiveness. This framework encapsulates the theoretical proposition that digital transformation acts as a catalyst of marketing adaptability, while innovation resilience serves as a stabilizing force that sustains adaptive efforts over time. The resultant model provides fertile ground for subsequent empirical studies—both qualitative case studies and quantitative analyses—to test the identified relationships. Furthermore, the synthesis contributes to managerial practice by clarifying how firms can strategically balance technological change with human creativity and resilience.

In summary, the qualitative methodology adopted in this study is grounded in interpretive philosophy, designed through an integrative literature review framework, and implemented via systematic and rigorous procedures of data collection, coding, and thematic synthesis. Through this approach, the research achieves its objective of deepening conceptual understanding rather than measuring causality. The trustworthiness of findings is ensured through adherence to established qualitative standards of credibility, dependability, and confirmability, while ethical integrity is maintained through transparency and respect for intellectual contributions. Ultimately, the methodological rigor of this qualitative synthesis enables the construction of a theoretically robust and contextually meaningful framework that advances scholarly discourse on adaptive marketing strategy, digital transformation, and innovation resilience for sustainable competitiveness.

IV. Results and Discussion

The results of this qualitative literature study reveal three major interrelated themes that form the foundation of adaptive marketing for sustainable competitiveness: (1) digital transformation as a catalyst of strategic adaptability, (2) innovation resilience as a sustaining force for long-term competitiveness, and (3) the integrative role of adaptive marketing strategy as the bridge between digital capability and sustainable advantage. These themes emerge consistently across the reviewed studies and collectively illustrate how organizations evolve toward adaptive, digitally driven, and innovation-resilient marketing systems in volatile environments. The discussion elaborates on these findings, positioning them within the broader theoretical frameworks of dynamic capabilities and organizational resilience, while extending their implications toward sustainability and future research trajectories.

4.1. Digital Transformation as a Catalyst of Strategic Adaptability

The first emergent theme identifies digital transformation (DT) as the primary enabler of strategic adaptability. The synthesis of 40 recent studies (2015–2025) indicates that digital transformation is not a single technological event but an ongoing process of strategic reorientation through the integration of digital technologies, data analytics, and organizational learning. Consistent with Verhoef et al. (2021), DT redefines how organizations sense environmental changes, seize market opportunities, and reconfigure resources—three dynamic capabilities essential for maintaining competitiveness in digital markets. In this sense, DT serves as both a technological infrastructure and a strategic mindset that enhances the responsiveness and agility of marketing systems.

The analysis shows that firms adopting advanced digital tools—such as big data analytics, artificial intelligence, and automation—demonstrate superior adaptive capacity in marketing. For instance, Awad and Martín-Rojas (2024) found that the depth of digital transformation directly strengthens organizational resilience and learning, which in turn improves innovation outcomes. Peng et al. (2024) similarly revealed that innovation resilience mediates the relationship between DT and firm performance, confirming that the success of digital initiatives depends on the organization's ability to internalize technological changes. Therefore, DT's contribution to sustainable competitiveness is not merely technological but systemic: it transforms how firms interpret markets, make decisions, and align marketing strategies with rapidly evolving customer behaviors.

From a strategic standpoint, digital transformation enables firms to transcend traditional marketing boundaries. Adaptive marketing, supported by DT, moves beyond static segmentation toward predictive analytics and personalized engagement, aligning with Theoharakis et al.'s (2024) view that dynamic strategic marketing planning enables organizations to recalibrate their strategies in real time. This technological agility allows for a fluid exchange between market sensing and response, where data-driven insights continuously refine marketing communication, pricing, and product development. Consequently, digital transformation becomes a structural driver of adaptive capability, converting technological sophistication into strategic flexibility. Furthermore, the findings reveal that DT fosters a culture of experimentation and learning—a hallmark of adaptive organizations. In highly digitalized firms, marketing teams are empowered to conduct rapid testing, adopt iterative design approaches, and leverage customer feedback to improve innovation outcomes. This aligns with the concept of *digital ambidexterity*, where exploitation of current capabilities coexists with exploration of new opportunities (Kraus et al., 2022). Through this lens, DT not only enhances operational efficiency but also strengthens the organization's learning orientation, enabling it to sustain competitiveness through continuous adaptation.

4.2. Innovation Resilience as a Sustaining Force for Long-Term Competitiveness

The second theme emerging from the literature emphasizes the role of innovation resilience (IR) as the sustaining force that transforms adaptability into longevity. While digital transformation accelerates responsiveness, innovation resilience ensures continuity and regeneration. The synthesis identifies innovation resilience as a multidimensional construct encompassing creativity under constraint, adaptive learning, and strategic renewal. Lengnick-Hall and Beck (2020) conceptualize resilience as an organization's ability to absorb disturbance and emerge stronger. Extending this notion to innovation, resilience manifests in firms that maintain innovation activities even under economic crises, technological disruption, or environmental uncertainty. Several empirical studies validate this interpretation. Garrido-Moreno et al. (2024) found that resilience and innovation are key predictors of business success, particularly when mediated by digital transformation and organizational learning. Asare-Kyire et al. (2023) demonstrated that resilience not only supports innovation performance but also enhances firm adaptability through social capital and collaborative ties. These findings converge on a crucial insight: innovation resilience transforms adversity into a strategic resource. Instead of perceiving disruption as a threat, resilient firms treat it as a stimulus for renewal, thereby aligning short-term adaptability with long-term sustainability.

In the context of marketing, innovation resilience manifests through creative adaptation of value propositions and delivery mechanisms. During the COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, organizations with resilient innovation systems rapidly transitioned from offline to online marketing channels, developed new product categories, and restructured customer experiences without compromising brand identity. Ogah (2023) characterized such adaptive marketing responses as "a panacea for business stability," emphasizing their critical role in maintaining consumer engagement amidst crisis. Hence, innovation resilience acts as a stabilizing mechanism that bridges short-term adaptability and sustained competitiveness. The synthesis further indicates that resilience is not merely reactive but proactive. Firms that embed resilience into their innovation culture—through diversified teams, open knowledge systems, and digital collaboration

platforms—tend to recover faster and adapt better. This proactive resilience enhances the firm’s absorptive capacity, allowing it to integrate new knowledge and convert it into innovative marketing solutions. Consequently, innovation resilience complements digital transformation: while DT provides the tools and infrastructure for adaptation, resilience ensures the endurance of these adaptive efforts over time. This dual dynamic—technological enablement and resilient persistence—forms the structural backbone of sustainable competitiveness in volatile digital economies.

4.3. Adaptive Marketing Strategy as the Integrative Mechanism

The third major theme positions adaptive marketing strategy (AMS) as the integrative mechanism connecting digital transformation and innovation resilience to sustainable competitiveness. AMS embodies the managerial and behavioral dimension of adaptation, encompassing market sensing, strategic flexibility, and customer-centric innovation. The review reveals that AMS operates as both a process and a capability. As a process, it involves continuously aligning marketing activities with environmental shifts; as a capability, it reflects the firm’s capacity to institutionalize learning and flexibility within its strategic routines (Day, 2019). Studies by Al Jabri et al. (2025) and Massiera et al. (2024) provide robust evidence of AMS as a mediating construct. Al Jabri et al. (2025) demonstrate that adaptive marketing capability mediates the relationship between strategic orientation and digital product innovation, while Massiera et al. (2024) emphasize that AMS strengthens firm performance under crisis conditions. These findings suggest that AMS transforms the potential of digital technologies and innovation resilience into tangible competitive outcomes. In other words, it is through adaptive marketing that digital transformation and resilience materialize into sustainable performance.

Conceptually, AMS integrates three subsystems: (1) market intelligence, which enables sensing; (2) strategy reconfiguration, which enables seizing; and (3) marketing execution, which enables transforming. This triadic structure mirrors Teece’s (2018) dynamic capabilities framework and illustrates how AMS translates abstract organizational capabilities into concrete marketing actions. By leveraging data analytics, customer feedback, and cross-functional collaboration, adaptive marketers can anticipate shifts in consumer expectations and reorient strategies accordingly. This responsiveness ensures that marketing remains aligned with both environmental conditions and long-term sustainability goals. Moreover, AMS introduces a normative dimension to competitiveness: sustainability-oriented marketing. The integration of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) values into marketing practices exemplifies adaptive behavior in line with global sustainability imperatives. Firms increasingly adopt “green” digital marketing strategies, circular product designs, and transparent communication models that align competitiveness with responsibility (Nosratabadi et al., 2019). Thus, adaptive marketing becomes not only a strategic tool but also an ethical framework that harmonizes profit and purpose.

4.4. Theoretical and Practical Integration toward Sustainable Competitiveness

Synthesizing these themes yields a conceptual model where digital transformation acts as a catalyst, innovation resilience functions as a sustaining force, and adaptive marketing strategy operates as an integrative mechanism leading to sustainable competitiveness. The model reflects a recursive, rather than linear, relationship: digital transformation fuels adaptability; innovation resilience ensures continuity; and adaptive marketing provides coherence between rapid technological change and enduring strategic values. From a theoretical standpoint, this integration contributes to the refinement of the dynamic capabilities theory. It demonstrates that in the digital era, marketing capabilities are not confined to customer acquisition or retention but extend to learning, experimentation, and organizational resilience. The synthesis also advances the theory of organizational resilience by situating it within the marketing domain, showing how resilience underpins innovation and strategic renewal. Practically, the findings offer actionable insights for managers. First, digital transformation must be embedded not as a one-time investment but as an ongoing

process of learning and adaptation. Organizations should focus on developing digital maturity frameworks that integrate technological adoption with cultural change. Second, resilience should be cultivated as a strategic capability through investment in knowledge management, cross-functional collaboration, and creative problem-solving systems. Third, marketing strategies must evolve into adaptive learning systems—responsive, data-driven, and sustainability-oriented. Such transformation requires leadership commitment, employee empowerment, and continuous experimentation.

4.5. Toward a Sustainable and Future-Oriented Research Agenda

The findings of this study extend naturally toward the concept of sustainable competitiveness, which integrates economic performance with social and environmental stewardship. As markets face increasing pressure from climate change, digital disruption, and societal expectations, the future of adaptive marketing lies in its ability to reconcile innovation with sustainability. Future research should explore how adaptive marketing strategies can be aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) and Goal 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). The integration of sustainability metrics into marketing analytics—such as carbon footprint tracking, ethical supply chain visibility, and inclusive value creation—represents the next frontier of adaptive strategy. Moreover, the concept of innovation resilience warrants deeper examination within sustainable contexts. How can organizations maintain innovation under the constraints of environmental regulation or resource scarcity? Studies could employ qualitative case studies or longitudinal mixed methods to examine how firms develop circular innovation systems that are both resilient and sustainable. Similarly, the intersection between digital transformation and sustainability remains an open research field. The digital economy's environmental cost—energy consumption, data storage, e-waste—poses a paradox that future adaptive strategies must address. Hence, sustainable digital transformation involves optimizing both technological efficiency and ecological responsibility.

At the organizational level, adaptive marketing should be studied as an ecosystemic phenomenon. Instead of focusing solely on firm-level adaptation, future research might investigate how inter-firm collaborations, digital platforms, and innovation networks contribute to collective resilience. Such an ecosystemic approach aligns with emerging perspectives in sustainable innovation management, emphasizing cooperation over competition and shared value over individual gain. In addition, the human dimension of adaptive marketing deserves greater attention. While digital transformation often emphasizes technology, the qualitative synthesis reveals that human creativity, empathy, and leadership remain irreplaceable drivers of resilience. As AI and automation increasingly mediate marketing processes, the capacity of organizations to balance technological precision with human insight will determine the sustainability of their adaptive strategies. Future studies should thus integrate psychological and behavioral constructs—such as digital trust, learning orientation, and organizational mindfulness—into adaptive marketing models. Finally, this study underscores the methodological importance of longitudinal and cross-contextual research. The evolution of adaptive marketing is dynamic and context-sensitive; therefore, future investigations should compare adaptive behaviors across industries, cultures, and economic stages. Longitudinal qualitative studies could reveal how adaptive capabilities mature over time, while comparative analyses between developed and emerging economies would illuminate contextual enablers and barriers. Such research would not only validate the conceptual framework developed here but also extend its applicability across global markets.

V. Conclusion

The findings of this qualitative literature-based study reveal that adaptive marketing strategy (AMS) constitutes the vital nexus linking digital transformation (DT) and innovation resilience (IR) in achieving sustainable competitiveness within an increasingly dynamic global environment. Theoretically, this study

contributes to the expansion of dynamic capabilities theory and organizational resilience theory by positioning marketing not merely as an operational function, but as a strategic capability rooted in adaptability, technological agility, and creative endurance. Digital transformation emerges as a foundational enabler that enhances the organization's ability to sense and seize opportunities, while innovation resilience ensures the continuity and renewal of these adaptive efforts across time and turbulence. Through this synthesis, the research enriches academic discourse by introducing a holistic conceptual framework wherein AMS acts as both the process and capability that translates technological investments and innovative strength into sustained competitive outcomes. The study affirms that sustainable competitiveness is no longer achieved through static resource advantages, but through the recursive interplay between adaptability, resilience, and transformation—a triadic relationship that continuously regenerates value in volatile markets. This theoretical integration offers a renewed understanding of marketing's strategic role, situating it within broader frameworks of sustainable innovation, digital ecosystems, and organizational learning. It advances the literature by bridging conceptual fragmentation among DT, AMS, and IR, proposing that their interdependence represents an evolutionary trajectory in strategic management thinking: one that moves from efficiency-based competition toward adaptability-based sustainability.

From a theoretical implication perspective, the research underscores that adaptive marketing strategy functions as a dynamic capability that enables firms to orchestrate digital transformation and innovation resilience in a synergistic and sustainable manner. This implies a paradigm shift in the conceptualization of marketing strategy—from a linear, plan-oriented approach toward an iterative, learning-based, and technology-embedded process. The results emphasize that adaptive marketing strategy is grounded in three theoretical dimensions: the ability to sense environmental shifts through digital intelligence; the capacity to seize opportunities through flexible marketing experimentation; and the competence to transform internal structures through resilient innovation. This triadic structure aligns with Teece's (2018) dynamic capabilities framework and extends it by embedding marketing functions into organizational resilience systems. Furthermore, the synthesis highlights that innovation resilience, often conceptualized as an outcome of strategic learning, must instead be regarded as an antecedent capability that safeguards the sustainability of digital adaptation. The resilience of innovation processes ensures that adaptive marketing remains a continuous, regenerative practice rather than a reactive response to crises. Theoretically, this reframing contributes to the evolution of the marketing discipline toward a post-digital paradigm that views technology, human creativity, and sustainability as intertwined forces driving strategic renewal. It also provides a theoretical basis for future empirical research to operationalize these constructs and examine their causal relationships, potentially through mixed-method designs or longitudinal studies that trace the evolution of adaptive capabilities across industries and contexts. By situating adaptive marketing strategy within the broader discourse of sustainable competitiveness, the study positions marketing as a critical agent of systemic transformation—one that harmonizes economic performance with ecological and social responsibility.

Managerially, the implications of this study are equally significant, offering organizations a multidimensional roadmap for achieving sustainable competitiveness in the digital era. The findings suggest that managers must treat digital transformation not as a technological project but as a continuous cultural evolution that integrates learning, innovation, and adaptability across all organizational levels. Leaders should build digitally intelligent ecosystems where data-driven insights inform marketing experimentation and where resilience becomes embedded in organizational routines. Investing in adaptive marketing capabilities—such as predictive analytics, agile campaign design, and cross-functional collaboration—will enable firms to respond to market volatility with precision and creativity. Moreover, cultivating innovation resilience requires leadership that values psychological safety, creativity under constraint, and failure as a source of learning. Firms that institutionalize these values transform volatility into an engine of renewal, thereby maintaining both relevance and sustainability. At the strategic level, managers should align adaptive marketing initiatives with sustainability principles by embedding environmental and social objectives into marketing goals, ensuring that digital and innovative strategies also contribute to long-term societal well-

being. This integration will allow organizations to achieve competitive differentiation not merely through technological superiority but through ethical authenticity and stakeholder trust. In sum, the managerial implication is clear: sustainable competitiveness in the twenty-first century depends on leaders' ability to weave adaptability, digital intelligence, and innovation resilience into a unified organizational fabric—one that continuously learns, evolves, and contributes responsibly to the broader ecosystem in which it operates. Through this synthesis of technological dynamism and human resilience, organizations can transcend short-term survival to achieve enduring, responsible, and sustainable success.

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