Marketing Capabilities and Social Media as Drivers of Sustainable Competitive Advantage in Adventure Sports

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Masoud Taghiabadi[1]
Nooshin Benar[2*]
Ali Nazarian[3]
Sadegh Fatahi Milasi[4]

[1] Master's of Sport Management, University of Guilan, Rasht, Iran
[2] Associate Professor of Sport Management, University of Guilan, Rasht, Iran
[3] Assistant Professor of Sport Management, Lorestan University, Khorramabad, Iran
[4] Ph.D. Student of Sport Management, University of Guilan, Rasht, Iran

*Correspondence:
Nooshin Benar , Associate Professor of Sport Management, University of Guilan, Rasht, Iran
Email: noshin.benar@gmail.com
ORCID: 0000-0002-3377-2889
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Abstract

Purpose: This study examines the impact of marketing capabilities on sustainable competitive advantage in the field of adventure sports, with the mediating role of social media.

Method: This applied descriptive-survey study investigated athletes, managers, and coaches involved in adventure sports using a convenience sample of 200 participants. Data were collected through a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire assessing marketing capabilities (Vorhies & Morgan, 2005), sustainable competitive advantage (Hill & Jones, 2013), and social media (Hadi, 2020). Validity was established through expert review and the Fornell–Larcker criterion, while reliability was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha. Data analysis was conducted using structural equation modeling.

Results: Findings revealed that marketing capabilities exert a significant positive effect on social media ($\beta = 0.775$, $t = 25.106$) and sustainable competitive advantage ($\beta = 0.51$, $t = 7.619$). Social media also significantly influences sustainable competitive advantage ($\beta = 0.325$, $t = 4.624$). The mediating role of social media in the relationship between marketing capabilities and sustainable competitive advantage was confirmed ($\beta = 0.252$, $t = 4.482$), with key pathways operating through customer service, product identity, and quality. The model exhibited strong explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.624$ for sustainable competitive advantage) and demonstrated satisfactory overall fit (GOF = 0.529).

Conclusion: Organizations and clubs in the adventure sports sector should prioritize customer-oriented services, including systematic feedback collection and ongoing service quality monitoring, within their marketing strategies. Furthermore, investing in marketing education and the development of digital competencies among managers and coaches will enhance sustainable competitive advantage, increase public participation, contribute to societal health improvement, and support economic development in this domain.

Keywords: Extreme Sports, Adventure Tourism, Social Media, Customer Service, Economic Growth.

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Introduction

Organizations that intelligently analyze customer needs and establish strong and effective connections with the market by delivering innovative and unique value can achieve a distinguished and sustainable position (Fatahimilasi et al., 2024). By leveraging marketing capabilities and delivering distinctive customer value, organizations can outperform competitors and achieve sustainable growth. In dynamic and competitive environments, marketing capabilities are widely recognized as a key source of competitive advantage.

Marketing capabilities are integrated processes through which organizations utilize tangible and intangible resources to understand customer needs, differentiate offerings, and enhance brand quality (Kachouie et al., 2018). These capabilities also enable organizations to adapt flexibly and creatively to rapid market changes (Khan et al., 2024). The shift in preferences and methods of sports participation has significantly highlighted the importance of marketing capabilities for sports clubs and organizations. With the growth of recreational and adventure sports, the need to create sustainable competitive advantage has intensified (Milasi et al., 2024).

Sports organizations must strengthen marketing capabilities to respond to changing audience preferences. Accordingly, adventure sports have become a major domain of sport participation.

This growth is driven by positive outcomes such as increased self-esteem, positive emotions, intrinsic motivation, resilience, enjoyment, competence, connectedness, independence, and personal transformation, (Lee et al., 2020). According to Molina-Collado et al. (2022), competitive advantages must be sustainable and unique to keep businesses ahead of their competitors. Sustainability requires strategies that are difficult to imitate and continuously deliver superior value. In adventure sports, sustainable competitive advantage extends beyond organizational performance to social, economic, and environmental outcomes. Adventure sports contribute to tourism development and income generation, particularly in natural and pristine areas (Rahmani et al., 2016).

As small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) navigate rapidly changing markets, leveraging unique marketing capabilities—such as product development, customer engagement, and strategic communications—is essential for achieving and maintaining a competitive advantage (Oduro & Mensah-Williams, 2023). In this context, social media has emerged as a strategic tool that enhances the effectiveness of marketing capabilities by enabling direct interaction with stakeholders. Research shows that effective use of social media can mediate the relationship between marketing capabilities and sustainable performance, by increasing brand visibility and customer engagement (Dehqanpoori et al., 2020; Russo et al., 2022). In adventure sports, social media facilitates participation and experience sharing(Sadeqzade & Razavi, 2018). Moreover, social media enables experience-based and personalized marketing for adventure sport consumers. (Milasi et al., 2024)

This is particularly important in today's world, where consumers seek unique and personalized experiences (Milasi et al., 2024; Rahimiyan et al., 2024). Additionally, empirical research shows that organizations effectively using social media can achieve significant improvements in sustainability performance metrics. The correlation between social media engagement (such as retweets and likes) and sustainability initiatives demonstrates that increased online visibility can lead to greater interest and support for sustainable practices (Fatahimilasi et al., 2024; Russo et al., 2022).

Focusing on marketing capabilities can serve as

a fundamental tool for success in today's competitive world. In other words, an organization with distinct marketing capabilities is more likely to create superior value for customers, achieve better market performance, and gain a competitive advantage. Various studies have examined the relationship between marketing capabilities and sustainable competitive advantage. Mahmoodi et al. (2023) in their investigation of the impact of marketing capabilities on creating competitive advantage for fitness clubs during the COVID-19 pandemic, stated that there is a significant positive relationship between marketing capabilities and the competitive advantage of clubs during this period. Fanaei et al. (2020), by examining the impact of market intelligence and marketing communication capabilities on export performance through the mediating role of competitive advantage, demonstrated that both market intelligence and marketing communication capabilities influence competitive advantage. Kamboj et al. (2015), exploring the relationship between marketing capability, competitive advantage, and firm performance, revealed that competitive advantage fully mediates the relationship between marketing capabilities and financial performance. Mazaherıasad and Jamali (2024), in their study of the impact of entrepreneurial culture on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Tehran Province, focusing on the mediating role of marketing capacities and the use of social media, stated that the use of social media has a positive impact on marketing capabilities. Susanto et al. (2023), investigating the role of marketing capabilities and the use of social media in small businesses, highlighted that small businesses need to expand market activities through social media channels. These insights have made marketers more aware of the importance of shared content, as well as the emotional resonance and narrative behind it. Tarsakoo and Charoensukmongkol (2019) in their examination of the contribution of marketing capability to the performance of social media businesses, emphasized that marketing capabilities are significantly crucial to the performance of social media businesses.

empirical studies have reaffirmed the critical role of marketing capabilities in enhancing the performance of social media–based businesses. For instance, Shamaileh et al. (2023) demonstrated that marketing capabilities significantly improve customer engagement and brand responsiveness on digital platforms. Similarly, Mohapatra et al. (2025) found that data-driven marketing capabilities strengthen organizational performance through advanced social media analytics and personalized content strategies. Furthermore, Van Hoang et al. (2025) emphasized that organizations with advanced marketing capabilities are more successful in leveraging social media to achieve sustainable competitive advantages. Nazarian et al. (2025) demonstrated that social media marketing and customer experience significantly enhance relationship quality, which in turn mediates and strongly promotes the sustainability of customer relationships. Niguse et al. (2026) demonstrated that sustainability in strategic innovation serves as a key driver for competitive advantage, with human capital acting as a vital mediator in this relationship.

Given the review of previous studies, research gaps and existing knowledge deficiencies can be analyzed from several perspectives. First, the field of marketing capabilities in adventurous sports is still in its infancy, and many aspects of marketing skills and knowledge in this area remain unexplored or unaligned. Second, most of the existing literature predominantly examines isolated marketing capabilities related to specific social media functions, such as content creation, online customer engagement, digital branding, or electronic word-of-mouth. For example, prior research has investigated social media marketing capabilities in contexts including

tourism destinations, retail firms, export-oriented SMEs, and the hospitality industry, often focusing on outcomes such as brand awareness, customer loyalty, or online purchase intention. However, these fragmented and context-specific approaches fail to provide a comprehensive understanding of how integrated marketing capabilities contribute to sustainable competitive advantage, particularly within the domain of adventurous sports.

Furthermore, with the rapid expansion of social media usage in marketing strategies, the importance of marketing capabilities in creating and maintaining sustainable competitive advantage in various industries is increasingly evident. Existing research has predominantly focused on the impact of social media on consumer behavior, brand awareness, tourism, export performance, and business performance.

However, there is a clear research gap in studies examining the direct relationship between marketing capabilities and the sustainable competitive advantage of adventurous sports through the use of social media. Given the high functionality and necessity of quantitative studies to enhance knowledge in emerging fields and developing disciplines, as well as the existing research gap, this study focuses on addressing part of this knowledge deficiency. Accordingly, this research investigates the impact of marketing capabilities on the sustainable competitive advantage of adventurous sports. It also examines the mediating role of social media in realizing the potential of marketing capabilities as an influential contextual factor. Finally, this study seeks to answer the following question: Does marketing capability significantly influence the sustainable competitive advantage of adventurous sports, mediated by social media?

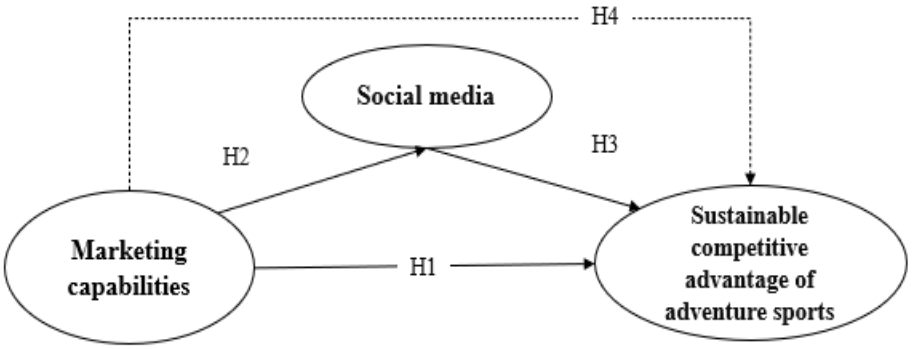

Figure 1. Conceptual model of research

Materials and methods

This research is applied in terms of its purpose and descriptive-survey in nature with regard to the method of data collection. The exact size of the statistical population is unknown due to the dispersed and heterogeneous nature of individuals active in adventure sports across the country; nevertheless, the population includes all members of the Mountaineering Federation, provincial mountaineering committees, and other participants with at least five years of experience in adventure sports.

Non-probability convenience sampling was employed. Since convenience sampling may limit the generalizability of the findings, participant selection criteria were carefully defined, with the inclusion criterion being a minimum of five years of experience in adventure sports. Participants were primarily recruited through online platforms (such as email and social media groups related to adventure sports). This method was chosen due

to practical constraints in accessing a comprehensive sampling frame for this specialized population.

To determine the minimum sample size for partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), the commonly accepted "ten-times rule" was applied. According to this rule, the sample size should be at least ten times the maximum number of incoming arrows (structural paths) to any latent variable in the model (Hair et al., 2017). Given the model structure, which comprises seven latent variables and a total of 24 indicators (items) across the three main constructs, the maximum number of incoming arrows to any single latent variable was estimated at approximately seven. Consequently, the minimum required sample size was calculated to be around 70 participants. To enhance statistical power and the reliability of the results, the sample size was substantially increased, and 200 valid datasets were ultimately analyzed.

Data were collected using three standard questionnaires after localization and translation into Persian. The original English versions were first translated into Persian by two independent bilingual translators (forward translation), followed by back-translation into English by a third translator to ensure conceptual equivalence. The translated versions were then pilot-tested on a small sample, and minor wording adjustments were made based on the feedback received to improve clarity and cultural appropriateness while preserving the original meaning.

The Marketing Capabilities Questionnaire by Vorhies and Morgan (2005) consisted of 11 items across two dimensions: marketing skills and marketing knowledge. The Sustainable Competitive Advantage Questionnaire by Hill and Jones (2013) included 8 items across three dimensions: quality, customer service, and product identity. The Social Media Questionnaire by Hadi (2020) comprised 5 items across two dimensions: informational and educational. All items were measured using a five-point Likert scale.

To assess validity and reliability, the questionnaire was submitted to 12 experts, including professors of sports management, coaches, athletes, and field specialists. Their detailed feedback confirmed the content relevance, clarity, and appropriateness of the dimensions and items (content validity). In addition, construct validity was evaluated through the Fornell-Larcker criterion and average variance extracted (AVE), while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability.

Descriptive analysis of participants' demographic characteristics (including gender, age, work experience, and education level), as well as the mean and standard deviation of responses to questionnaire items, was conducted using SPSS software version 27. Inferential statistics and hypothesis testing were performed through partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS software version 3.2. The analysis encompassed examination of T-statistics, path coefficients, significance of path coefficients, explained variance of endogenous constructs (R^2), predictive relevance (Q^2), and overall model fit (GOF).

Results

The description of the demographic characteristics of the research sample revealed that most respondents were in the age group of 20 to 29 years (63 people; 31.5%) and held a bachelor's degree (77 people; 38.5%). Other personal details are fully presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the sample

Variable	Variable Type	Frequency (N)	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	99	49.5

	Female	101	50.5
Age	20 to 29 years	63	31.5
	30 to 39 years	41	20.5
	40 to 49 years	45	22.5
	50 years and above	51	30.5
Education Level	Below High School/High School	61	25.7
	Bachelor's Degree	77	38.5
	Master's Degree	48	24.0
	Doctorate	14	7.0
Experience in Mountaineering	Less than 10 years	105	52.5
	10 to 19 years	52	26.0
	20 to 29 years	34	17.0
	30 years and above	9	4.5
Mountaineering Subfields	Hiking	165	82.5
	Wall Climbing	6	3.0
	Rock Climbing	6	3.0
	Mountain Running	8	4.0
	Other Subfields	15	7.5

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to evaluate the construct validity of the research instrument. Using Smart PLS 3.2, the analysis indicated that all items exhibited acceptable factor loadings, except for items 7 and 8 of the marketing knowledge dimensions, which were removed due to low loadings. The model was subsequently re-estimated, and all remaining indicators demonstrated satisfactory loadings (Table 2, Figure 2). Factor loadings ranged from 0.5 to 0.7, with 0.4 as the minimum acceptable threshold, confirming that each indicator adequately represents its corresponding latent construct.

Table 2. Reliability, Convergent Validity, and Factor Loading Assessment of the Research Instrument

Variable	Statement	Factor Load	α	Rho	CR	AVE
Marketing Capabilities			0.876	0.878	0.901	0.503
Marketing Skills	Interest of coaches, managers, and officials in mountaineering in learning marketing issues	0.801	0.809	0.812	0.874	0.635
	High ability in group skills and teamwork	0.789				
	Verbal and oral communication skills	0.784				
	Skills in planning marketing activities	0.814				
Marketing Knowledge	Sufficient knowledge in mountaineering marketing	0.732	0.833	0.834	0.882	0.600
	Expertise in team marketing	0.749				
	Awareness of different mountaineering brands	0.822				
	Sufficient knowledge of online marketing	Item deleted				
	Ability to analyze the sports market	Item deleted				
	Introducing club services and distribution	0.808				
	Sufficient ability and knowledge in service	0.759				

	provision and information dissemination					
Social media			0.825	0.825	0.877	0.589
Informational	Excitement and attractiveness of mountaineering social media	0.863	0.833	0.834	0.882	0.600
	Up-to-date mountaineering information on social media	0.854				
	Access to required mountaineering information on social media	0.847				
Educational	Providing conditions for more education and learning on mountaineering social media	0.899	0.765	0.765	0.895	0.810
	Teaching first aid, risk management, and safety measures on mountaineering social media	0.901				
Sustainable Competitive Advantage in Adventure Sports			0.884	0.886	0.908	0.554
Customer Service	Special services to mountaineering athletes like raffles, discounts, and sports equipment gifts	0.876	0.708	0.708	0.872	0.774
	Access to recreational facilities for athletes in the club	0.883				
Quality	Having modern and suitable infrastructure	0.789	0.791	0.795	0.878	0.706
	Access to training locations in mountaineering	0.865				
	Success in achieving competition results	0.865				
Product Identity	Trust in individual and group capabilities	0.830	0.756	0.757	0.860	0.672
	Logical performance during challenges and problems	0.827				
	Belief in oneself as a successful individual	0.802				

In this study, the acceptable threshold for composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha was set at values greater than 0.7. As shown in Table 2, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients (ranging from 0.708 to 0.884) and composite reliability indices (ranging from 0.860 to 0.908) indicate the adequate reliability of the research instrument. To assess the convergent validity of the research variables, the average variance extracted (AVE) index was utilized. According to Henseler et al. (2015), the acceptable value for this index is greater than 0.5. The results demonstrated that the criterion for convergent validity was satisfied. For evaluating discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker matrix was applied (Table 3). Discriminant validity reflects the uniqueness of a measurement instrument. If the correlation between the instrument under study and those measuring different constructs is low, the instrument is considered to have discriminant validity. Interpretation of this matrix involves ensuring that the square root of the AVE for a construct is greater than the correlations of that construct with other constructs.

Table 3. Discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker)

Dimensions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1.Educational	0.900						
2.Informational	0.530	0.855					
3.Customer Service	0.447	0.507	0.880				
4.Marketing Knowledge	0.602	0.696	0.642	0.775			

5.Marketing Skills	0.581	0.552	0.521	0.634	0.797		
6.Product Identity	0.635	0.654	0.614	0.677	0.600	0.820	
7.Quality	0.478	0.571	0.723	0.632	0.536	0.662	0.840

In this study, the values along the main diagonal of each column must be greater than the values below and, if applicable, to the right of them. Based on Table 3, these conditions are met, and the structural model's fit is confirmed in terms of discriminant validity indices. The evaluation of the research structural model was performed using the criteria of coefficient of determination (R^2), predictive power (Q^2), and significance coefficient (T-values) (Hair et al., 2017) (Table 5). The R^2 value ranges between 0 and 1, indicating model fit at three levels: weak (0.25), moderate (0.50), and strong (0.75). In this study, the R^2 value for all variables exceeded 0.50, indicating a moderate to strong structural model fit. Additionally, the Q^2 criterion was used to assess the predictive power of the model, and the results showed that all dimensions of the research had Q^2 values above zero. Therefore, the research model demonstrates predictive capability (Table 4).

Table 4. Structural model evaluation

Dimensions	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Q^2
Educational	0.677	0.676	0.526
Informational	0.842	0.842	0.584
Customer Service	0.738	0.736	0.547
Marketing Knowledge	0.860	0.859	0.484
Social media	0.601	0.599	0.331
Marketing Capabilities	Exogenous	Exogenous	Exogenous
Sustainable Competitive Advantage in Adventure Sports	0.624	0.620	0.320
Marketing Skills	0.770	0.768	0.460
Product Identity	0.758	0.757	0.483
Quality	0.833	0.832	0.558

As Hair et al. (2017) noted, Goodness Of Fit (GOF) criterion is a suitable criterion for determining the fit of the overall model (both measurement and structural model parts). Therefore, GOF criteria were used in this study. In the GOF criterion, the values which are obtained using the GOF formula can be divided into strong, medium and weak levels with three values of 0.1, 0.36 and 0.25. In the GOF equation, the (communalities) index shows the average of communality of each construct, which is used to check the fit of the measurement model. Likewise, R^2 is the average value of R Squares values of endogenous constructs of the model. Considering that the GOF criterion was equal to 0.5291, the overall fit of the model was considered to be "strong" (Formula 1). In addition, SRMR serves as a criterion for evaluating both the measurement and structural components of the model. A standard threshold for acceptable model fit has been reported as less than 0.10, while some scholars recommend a more stringent value of less than 0.08 (Henseler et al., 2009). In the present study, the SRMR value was obtained as 0.10.

$$GOF = \sqrt{\overline{communalities} \times \bar{R}^2}$$

$$GOF = \sqrt{0/375 \times 0/744} = 0.529$$

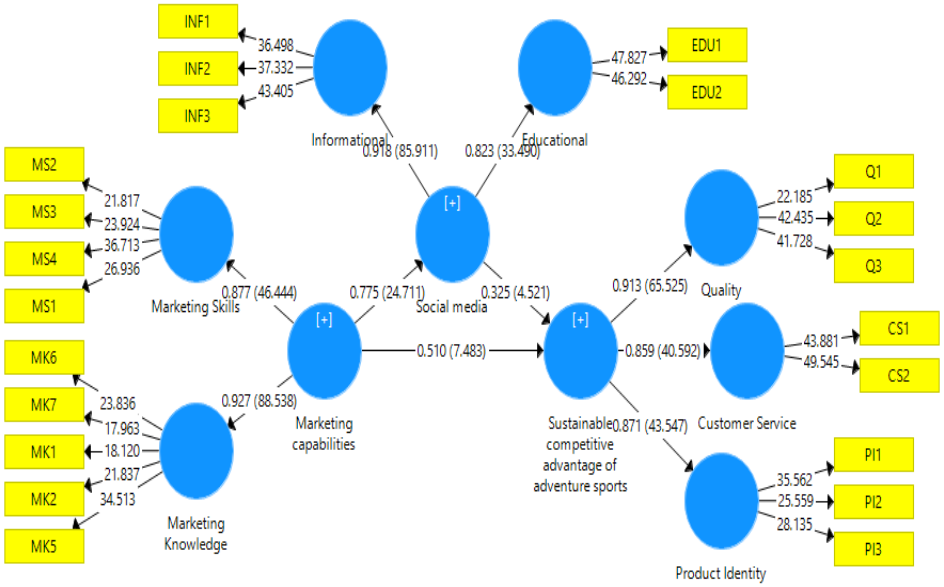

Figure 2. Structural model of research

Table 5. Examining the direct hypotheses of the research

H	Relationship	Path coefficient	SD	T Statistics	P Statistics
H1	Marketing Capabilities → social media	0.775	0.031	25.106	0.001
H2	Social media → Sustainable Competitive Advantage in Adventure Sports	0.325	0.070	4.624	0.001
H3	Marketing Capabilities → Sustainable Competitive Advantage in Adventure Sports	0.510	0.067	7.619	0.001
H4	Marketing Capabilities → social media → Sustainable Competitive Advantage in Adventure Sports	0.252	0.056	4.482	0.001

Based on the data in Table 5, the relationships between the research variables are statistically significant, and the model demonstrates high explanatory power. The t-value statistic was used to assess the significance of the relationships. According to statistical standards, if the t-value is greater than 1.96, the relationship is significant at the 0.05 confidence level, and if greater than 2.58, it is significant at the 0.01 confidence level. The results in Table 5 indicate that all direct hypotheses of the study (H1, H2, and H3) are supported, with t-values exceeding 2.58 and p-values below 0.001. Specifically, marketing capabilities have a significant impact on social media (β = 0.775, t = 25.106) and on the sustainable competitive advantage of adventure sports (β = 0.51, t = 7.619). Additionally, social media also shows a significant impact on the sustainable competitive advantage of adventure sports (β = 0.325, t = 4.624). Regarding indirect hypotheses, the results confirm that social media plays a crucial mediating role in the relationship between marketing capabilities and the sustainable competitive advantage of adventure sports (β = 0.252, t = 4.482). Furthermore, several mediating pathways, including customer service (β = 0.217, t = 4.401), product identity (β = 0.22, t = 4.319), and quality (β = 0.23, t = 4.39), are also

statistically significant. To evaluate the strength of these relationships, the coefficient of determination (R^2) was used, which reflects the explanatory power of the model. In this study, the R^2 value was calculated at 0.624, indicating that the independent and mediating variables collectively explain 62.4% of the variance in the dependent variable. These results demonstrate that the research model has a good fit and that the relationships among the variables exhibit high predictive power

Discussion

This study focused on adventure sports and analyzed the effect of marketing capabilities on the sustainable competitive advantage of adventure sports with social media as a mediator. The results confirmed a positive and significant relationship between marketing capabilities and SCA, consistent with previous studies. The findings of this hypothesis align with the research of Mahmoodi et al. (2023), Fanaei et al. (2020), and Kamboj et al. (2015). Moreover, this study highlights contextual implications for adventure sports organizations in Iran, emphasizing practical strategies to enhance competitive positioning.

This is particularly important in a context where companies are increasingly challenged to not only meet consumer demands but also to adapt to rapid changes in market conditions, technological advancements, and sustainability concerns. The interplay between marketing capabilities—defined as the ability to effectively understand and respond to market needs—and sustainable competitive advantage, referring to the unique position a company maintains relative to its competitors, is crucial for enhancing resilience and growth in a complex business environment (Kero & Bogale, 2023). For example, Iranian adventure sports federations and local clubs can leverage these capabilities to create differentiated programs and build stronger loyalty among participants.

Furthermore, marketing capabilities have a positive and significant impact on social media. This relationship is supported by studies such as Khan et al. (2024), bolaq et al. (2024) , Mahmoodi et al. (2023), Warsame et al. (2021), and Wong et al. (2022) Social media serves as a strategic platform for two-way engagement, feedback collection, and marketing optimization.

In this context, marketing capabilities, particularly in the area of social media, have emerged as essential components of contemporary business strategies. In an era dominated by digital interactions, organizations must develop a diverse set of competencies that enable them to engage effectively with consumers and optimize marketing performance. Specifically, for adventure sports in Iran, effective social media usage can foster communities around outdoor activities, increase participation, and improve program visibility.

The integration of social media into marketing efforts plays a crucial role in enhancing brand visibility and consumer engagement. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn not only facilitate direct interactions between brands and consumers but also provide valuable analytics that inform real-time decision-making. This dynamic interaction fosters a two-way communication model, which is vital for building brand loyalty and trust.

The results indicated that the impact of social media on sustainable competitive advantage was significant. This is consistent with prior research Warsame et al. (2021), Wong et al. (2022), Allsop (2016) , Khan et al. (2024), bolaq et al. (2024), Mahmoodi et al. (2023), Nijssen and Ordanini (2020) and Horng et al. (2023). demonstrating that social media strengthens sustainable competitive advantage by enhancing engagement, loyalty, and adaptability.

In this context, it can be stated that the impact of social media on achieving sustainable

competitive advantage has emerged as a critical focus for businesses in the digital age. As social media platforms have proliferated, they have fundamentally changed how companies interact with consumers, shape marketing strategies, and influence organizational performance. The importance of social media lies not only in its capacity to enhance brand visibility but also in its role as a powerful tool for strengthening customer loyalty, creating engagement, and gaining insights into consumer behavior (Dissanayake et al., 2019).

Marketing capabilities have a positive and significant impact on the sustainable competitive advantage of adventure sports, with social media playing a mediating role. Social media mediates the effect of marketing capabilities on sustainable competitive advantage, highlighting that the benefits of marketing capabilities are amplified when digital platforms are leveraged effectively.

These findings are supported by the studies of Mahmoodi et al. (2023) and Kamboj et al. (2015). who emphasized the effectiveness of marketing capabilities in creating sustainable competitive advantages? These capabilities include a set of skills and resources that allow organizations to identify customer needs and provide unique value with innovative strategies. In the digital age, social media acts as a strategic platform, playing an important mediating role and enabling organizations to enhance the impact of their marketing capabilities. Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter not only provide access to a wider audience but also facilitate two-way, real-time interactions with customers. This can help increase customer loyalty and build stronger relationships. Research by Russo et al. (2022) and Nijssen and Ordanini (2020) also showed that smart use of social media not only increases brand awareness but also has a direct impact on sustainable competitive advantage. In adventure sports, where the audience's lifestyle must align with brand values, combining strong marketing capabilities with effective use of social media creates a personal and meaningful experience for customers (Tolossa et al., 2024). Leveraging data analytics helps organizations tailor offerings to local cultural and environmental contexts, further enhancing sustainable competitive advantage.

Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that the integration of marketing capabilities and social media exerts a significant positive influence on the creation and maintenance of sustainable competitive advantage in the adventure sports sector. Marketing capabilities constitute a foundational element, enabling organizations to develop the skills, processes, and resources essential for effective audience engagement. When these capabilities are systematically combined with social media platforms, brand loyalty is substantially enhanced, meaningful and enduring customer relationships are established, and long-term value creation is achieved.

In an industry where consumer experience, lifestyle alignment, and commitment to sustainability are of paramount importance, continuous innovation in marketing strategies is indispensable. The application of social media analytics empowers brands to monitor audience preferences in real time, adapt their offerings dynamically, and align their activities with emerging values such as social responsibility and environmental sustainability. This proactive, data-driven approach not only increases brand differentiation within a highly competitive market but also strengthens long-term competitive positioning and sustainable growth potential.

Ultimately, adventure sports organizations that consistently invest in developing robust marketing capabilities and align their strategic initiatives with evolving customer expectations are well positioned to establish a distinctive

identity and secure a sustainable competitive advantage.

As with any empirical investigation, this research is subject to certain limitations that offer valuable directions for future inquiry. First, the present study examined social media exclusively as a mediating variable; however, other potential mediators—such as product innovation, perceived service quality, and customer interactions—may also play significant roles in the relationship between marketing capabilities and sustainable competitive advantage. Future research is encouraged to extend the conceptual model by incorporating these additional mediating factors. Second, the sample was restricted to individuals with more than five years of experience in adventure sports and members of federations and mountaineering associations. While this criterion ensures domain-specific expertise, it may limit the generalizability of the findings to the broader adventure sports community, including novices, casual participants, and other stakeholders. Subsequent studies should therefore employ more diverse and inclusive sampling strategies to enhance external validity and the wider applicability of the results.

Although prior research has thoroughly documented the independent contributions of marketing capabilities and social media to competitive advantage, the synergistic effect of their integration within the specific context of adventure sports has remained underexplored. This study addresses this knowledge gap by providing empirical evidence that the combined implementation of marketing capabilities and social media strategies significantly strengthens customer engagement, brand loyalty, and sustainable competitive advantage.

The findings yield several actionable practical implications: Organizations should maintain ongoing investment in professional training for managers and staff to strengthen marketing skills, processes, and resources required for effective audience engagement. Systematic mechanisms for feedback collection and the utilization of social media analytics are recommended to enable dynamic adaptation of offerings to emerging preferences and trends. Furthermore, adventure sports organizations should explicitly align their marketing strategies with principles of sustainability and social responsibility in order to reinforce brand identity and foster long-term customer relationships.

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Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest are declared by the authors

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