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Red marketing strategies and their role in achieving product sustainability

(A survey of a group of employees at Noor Al-Kafeel Private Company)

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Abstract. *This research seeks to clarify the role played by Red Ocean Marketing Strategies, represented by its dimensions, in achieving Product Sustainability, also represented by its dimensions. The study aimed to diagnose the extent of the surveyed company's interest in these strategies and their impact on product sustainability. To this end, the study adopted a descriptive-analytical approach, which allows the researcher to describe the problem, collect relevant data, and subsequently analyze it. This is done in an attempt to describe the reality and address the challenges facing the achievement of a sustainable competitive advantage, by surveying the opinions of several employees at Noor Al-Kafeel Private Company.*

To achieve this objective, a simple random sampling method was used to distribute a questionnaire designed for this purpose, with 132 responses collected. The study relied on a questionnaire consisting of 38 items distributed across the research variables to gather the required data. The research tested the main hypothesis to uncover the influence relationships between the variables using the outputs of the SmartPLS statistical software.

The study concluded that the reliance on Red Ocean Marketing Strategies and the fulfillment of customer needs and desires at Noor Al-Kafeel Company led to a significant positive impact on achieving product sustainability. In other words, the more the surveyed company relies on Red Ocean Marketing Strategies and understands and meets the needs of its customers, the greater the opportunity to achieve product sustainability compared to other competitors.

Keywords: *Red Ocean Marketing Strategies, Product Sustainability, Noor Al-Kafeel Company,*

1. INTRODUCTION

In a highly competitive environment, contemporary organizations strive to gain a sustainable competitive advantage over their rivals by providing superior value to customers and achieving continuous excellence that aligns with customer needs. Product sustainability is realized when the possibility of imitation by competitors is extremely difficult or impossible, as it requires significant investment in terms of both time and capital. Organizations attempting to secure a sustainable competitive advantage—which facilitates continuous success—do so when they possess resources, capabilities, and attributes that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN). Thus, the goal of an organization seeking superiority is to secure the best possible position among competitors.

To achieve this competitive advantage, it is essential to employ Red Ocean Marketing Strategies. This approach is descriptive, relying on information and observations expressed by customers regarding the company's products, which contributes to developing the product in an exemplary manner. Furthermore, organizations need to add value to their services to face challenges such as funding cuts and rising customer expectations (Leblanc & Nguyen, 1999: 193). Additionally, Red Ocean Marketing is considered the cornerstone of the Quality Function Deployment (QFD) process; it assists the company in designing and developing products that satisfy customer desires and needs by clarifying the relationship between design characteristics and customer requirements (Bhattacharyya & Rahman, 2004: 137).

2.1. MATERIALS

Text 1-What is the relationship between Red Ocean Marketing Strategies and product sustainability at Noor Al-Kafeel Company?

2-What is the impact of Red Ocean Marketing Strategies on achieving product sustainability at the surveyed Noor Al-Kafeel Company?

2.2. METHODS

This term is considered one of the modern concepts in management science in general, and marketing in particular. Chakrabarti (2014: 67) indicated that Red Marketing refers to those areas where competition is intense, resembling "shark-infested waters stained with blood."

Furthermore, Kim & Mauborgne (2005: 2) explained that Red Marketing describes markets where products and industries suffer from a crowded market space, saturated with competing firms. In such markets, the number of competitors increases, the intensity of price competition rises, and product differentiation decreases. It has been named the "Red Ocean" due to the high density of competitors and their use of aggressive competitive tactics within the market.

Kim & Mauborgne (2017: 70) indicated that Red Ocean marketing involves negotiating within existing market spaces and the capability to create new markets. Furthermore, Sharp (2007: 5) emphasized that the Red Ocean represents a marketing challenge for companies; it requires identifying distinct features in their products and industries that provide meaningful benefits to consumers (thereby gaining a competitive advantage) that are difficult for competitors to copy or imitate, leaving rivals unable to offer similar products.

From his perspective, Aithal (2016: 3) points out that Red Ocean marketing consists of organizations competing like sharks fighting one another, striving to achieve the goal of attracting

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the largest possible number of customers. In this process, "blood is shed" among them, turning the Blue Ocean into Red. This is why the competitive strategies followed by organizations are called Red Ocean Strategies, where Red Oceans represent all the industries in existence today within the known market space.

From the researchers' perspective, industry boundaries are defined and accepted in this ocean, and the competitive "rules of the game" are well understood. Here, companies try to outperform their rivals to capture a greater share of existing demand. As the market space becomes more crowded, prospects for profits and growth diminish. Products turn into mere commodities, and increasing competition turns the waters "bloody."

2.1.2.Dimensions of Red Ocean Marketing Strategies

1.Product Strategy

From the perspective of Zhan & Xu (2019: 84), product strategy means that companies adopt various production and sales procedures for their products to improve their chances of survival and growth amidst intense market competition. This strategy encompasses five key aspects: product integration, product development, product differentiation, branding, and the product life cycle.

2.Pricing Strategy

Companies achieve their marketing objectives by setting and adjusting prices in accordance with market rules. This strategy is primarily realized through Customer Added Value, which is defined as the difference between Total Customer Value and Total Customer Cost.

Total Customer Value comprises the bundle of benefits customers expect from a given product or service, including product value, service value, personnel value, and image value. On the other hand, Total Customer Cost includes the perceived bundle of costs customers expect to incur in evaluating, obtaining, and using the product or service, encompassing monetary cost, time cost, physical cost, and psychological cost. Customer Added Value is fundamentally achieved by maximizing Total Customer Value and minimizing Total Customer Cost (Zhan & Xu, 2019: 85).

3.Distribution Strategy

Regarding e-commerce companies, Zhan & Xu (2019: 85) argue that establishing traditional distribution channels, securing capital, setting up physical stores, advertising, and other related tasks represent significant challenges for companies striving to implement distribution strategies. Furthermore, the gap between online traffic and traditional sales constitutes a substantial weakness.

4.Promotion Strategy

Zhan & Xu (2019: 85) emphasize the necessity of utilizing various information dissemination methods to stimulate consumer purchasing desire, thereby increasing product sales and achieving the company's marketing objectives. This strategy involves the integration and application of controllable factors, such as advertising and sales promotion. The promotion strategy is not limited to merely generating profits; it encompasses a series of marketing activities, including branding (advertising) and public relations.

Furthermore, the continuously evolving digital world significantly influences changes in global trade methods. Among these methods, promotional media is increasingly utilized across social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok (Prastya, 2023: 58).

2.1.3.Types of Competition in the Red Ocean Market

In this market, there is a diverse range of competitors that vary according to the field and the companies operating within it. Therefore, business owners and production managers must understand these competitors and confront them by making strategic decisions related to the

Marketing Mix (Product, Price, Promotion, and Distribution). Some researchers have identified specific types of competitors in this market as follows:

1. Direct Competition: This occurs when two or more companies sell the same products or services to the same target group of consumers. In essence, direct competition involves satisfying the shared needs of the same customer segment through various means.

2. Indirect Competition: This type of competition occurs in Red Oceans through rivalry between producers of different but complementary products or services, which are designed to satisfy a common need for consumers or customers.

3. Replacement (Substitute) Competition: This arises when products and services offered by different manufacturers can replace each other based on their qualities and features. For example, a dairy product with superior packaging or features can substitute for another dairy product. (Ibragimov & Xurramov, 2015: 22).

2.2. Product Sustainability

2.2.1. The Concept of Product Sustainability

A number of writers and researchers have addressed the concept of product sustainability. Horne (2009: 175) described it as a rapid evolutionary process in methods, data, and protocols for assessing product sustainability over the past decade to provide sustainable products on a large scale. Furthermore, evidence from numerous surveys suggests that consumers remain committed to purchasing sustainably; however, these stated preferences have not yet translated into a widespread shift toward buying more sustainable products—meaning the adoption of consumption patterns that favor products with higher resource and energy efficiency.

On the other hand, Zafarmand (2003: 174) noted that the concept of a product in the minds of users is defined by what it does and how it meets their needs, as they perceive, judge, and value the product as a functional object. One of the crucial aspects that product design must address is the necessity of reconsidering product aesthetics through the lens of sustainability to illuminate the fundamental question: What is the relationship between the product and sustainability?

How a simple substitute in product material can lead a manufacturer toward producing more sustainable products and achieving the ultimate goal of sustainable manufacturing. Consequently, manufacturing a more sustainable product can help an organization move toward comprehensive sustainable manufacturing. To manufacture such products, they must first be evaluated. In this context, various methodologies have been developed to assess product sustainability, taking into account one, two, or the integration of the three dimensions: social, environmental, and economic (Ghadimi, 2012: 10).

2.2.2. The Importance of Product Sustainability

The United Nations declared that product sustainability is the guiding principle for the 21st century during the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992, due to the multifaceted importance it holds.

- It is considered one of the key factors for achieving growth, environmental sustainability, and improving the quality of life.
- Product sustainability is a growing field of significance for productive development.
- Product sustainability consistently commits to the re-engineering of business processes with a focus on green perspectives.
- It entails social, economic, and environmental impacts that extend beyond current projects. Therefore, aligning portfolio selection and monitoring with the principles of sustainable development requires evaluating, comparing, and ranking several alternatives based on their direct and long-term costs, as well as their contribution to achieving organizational goals.

ATU- AFJIMS, Volume:2, Issue:1, June 2026
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• Product sustainability increasingly focuses on how to manage new knowledge of ideas and practices that can expand business operations. Open innovation plays a key role toward sustainable strategic management; through open innovation, companies can leverage knowledge management of assets that foster sustainable innovations to enhance organizational sustainability (Lopes et al., 2017: 476).

2.2.3. Dimensions of Product Sustainability

A. Economic Product Sustainability The fundamental idea underlying the call for "Sustainable Development for Product Sustainability" has several significant implications. Economics has never been the subject of a single tradition alone; this has encouraged many prominent economists, business leaders, and bureaucrats to strive toward achieving organizational sustainability for product sustainability (Anand & Sen, 2000: 2029-2031).

B. Social Product Sustainability Social product sustainability is considered a fundamental element of corporate marketing strategies, given the recognized need to ensure long-term success. The pursuit of social sustainability has already begun to transform the competitive landscape, forcing marketing companies to change their way of thinking regarding products, technologies, processes, and business models (Longoni & Cagliano, 2015: 1-11).

C. Environmental Product Sustainability As a result of globalization and industrial development, studies have indicated that significant attention must be paid to Sustainable Environmental Product Development. Environmental and pollution-related concerns have reached a global scale, considering that any environmental degradation can undermine the entire local ecosystem and may lead to negative impacts on various biomass components (Severo et al., 2015: 118-125).

2.2. The Impact of the Customer's Voice on Sustainable Competitive Advantage

Bhattacharyya & Rahman (2004: 128) argue that to obtain a sustainable competitive advantage, a company must be able to create and retain customers. A necessary condition for this is that the company's product must be capable of satisfying customer needs and desires. To plan and develop a product, the company needs to know what customers want from it. This is achieved by proposing a model that helps identify the functions or features of the product that meet the basic needs, performance needs, or excitement needs of the customer. Furthermore, a superior understanding of customer needs, competitive actions, and market trends enables a market-oriented company to identify and develop the capabilities necessary for long-term performance.

Investments in capabilities—such as the active acquisition of information through multiple channels (e.g., sales teams, channel partners, and suppliers), integrating the Voice of the Customer (VoC) into every aspect of the company's activities, and the rapid sharing and dissemination of knowledge about customers and competition—take time to yield returns. For instance, investments in improving customer satisfaction affect company performance by enhancing customer retention and profitability. However, these benefits are more likely to be observed in the long term rather than the short term (Kumar et al., 2011: 17).

Additionally, the Voice of the Customer is one of the most critical requirements of the marketing environment in today's business organizations, given its ability to directly influence the organization's activities and its sustainability within its business sector or industry. It is essential for organizations to pay attention and listen to their customers' opinions, as this listening is considered the starting point for planning or adapting services to meet customer needs. In other words, improving the quality of the products offered cannot be achieved unless the organization listens to its customers' desires and opinions and focuses on fulfilling their requirements. This interest in the Voice of the Customer comes as a result of the expansion of rival companies; it has become difficult to satisfy the customer, who has become an expert in what they want. Therefore, organizations must manage the Customer Experience by listening to and adopting their views regarding the company's products (Al-Husseini, 2020: 327).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Accordingly, it can be hypothesized that:

H_1: There is a statistically significant and positive correlation between the Voice of the Customer and sustainable competitive advantage.
As shown in the figure
Fig. 1. Rig Research model

3.1. RESULTS

3.1. The Research Context

Markets, products, and product development differ significantly between the business-to-business (B2B) and consumer product sectors. For instance, products manufactured by B2B organizations are generally more complex, and new product development cycles take considerably more time. In this sector, customers are typically large organizations rather than individual consumers. In industrial business markets, there are usually fewer customers compared to consumer markets, and collaboration with customers is generally more direct and intense. Industrial products are often purchased by professional buyers who consider a wide range of criteria when making purchasing decisions. These buyers tend to possess extensive information about the industrial products to be acquired and usually evaluate various alternatives objectively. The demand for industrial products is derived from the demand for the company's industrial customers' products and, ultimately, end-user demand (Kärkkäinen et al., 2010: 55).
Furthermore, Noor Al-Kafeel Company for Animal and Food Products, an affiliate of the al-Abbas's (p) Holy Shrine, is considered a leading firm in animal and food production. It has consistently supplied the Iraqi market with various types of meat and dairy products, known for their high quality and affordable prices, which support the average citizen. Noor Al-Kafeel has sought to rely on national production and encourage domestic projects, such as fruit juices, dairy, and egg production. The company's management is also keen on investing in youth potential, translating their ideas into projects that serve the public, and striving to revitalize national production by establishing or contracting with local factories to employ the largest possible number of the national workforce. The company aims to provide high-quality food and animal products to citizens and seeks to establish local plants and factories for food and animal resource production (https://nooralkafeel.com/).

3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

Our research analyzed the relationship between Red Ocean Marketing Strategies and Perceived Product Sustainability from the perspective of the organization under study. Data were collected from the administrative staff of Noor Al-Kafeel Company. A total of 132 questionnaires were distributed, and SmartPLS software was employed to examine the retrieved responses. Among the returned questionnaires, 10 were found to contain missing data (7.5%). Before commencing the analysis, missing data and outliers were treated to ensure the validity of the results and avoid potential bias.

Al-Furat Journal of Innovations in Management Sciences
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As shown in the figure
Table 1: Description of Respondents and Response Rate

3.3. Research Measures

This research utilized reliable and validated scales previously established in academic literature. The questionnaire, which targeted the administrative staff of Noor Al-Kafeel Company, was designed to measure the research variables: Red Ocean Marketing Strategies (Independent Variable) and Product Sustainability (Dependent Variable).

- Red Ocean Marketing Strategies (Independent Variable): To measure this variable, the scale developed by Zhan & Xu (2019) was adopted. It consists of four dimensions: Product Strategy, Pricing Strategy, Distribution Strategy, and Promotion Strategy, comprising a total of 20 items.
- Product Sustainability (Dependent Variable): The scale by Severo et al. (2015) was adopted to measure this variable. It includes three dimensions: Economic Sustainability, Environmental Sustainability, and Social Sustainability, comprising 18 items.

The total number of items in the research instrument was 38. A 5-point Likert Scale was applied to all questionnaire items, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). To ensure the quality of the data, Validity and Reliability tests were conducted, and the collected data were evaluated using SmartPLS software.

4. Results

4.1. Regression and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) Analysis

Testing Direct Effect Hypotheses:

The direct effect hypotheses in this study are represented as follows:
The First Direct Effect Hypothesis (H_1):
Red Ocean Marketing Strategies have a statistically significant and positive effect on Product Sustainability at the aggregate variable level.
To test this hypothesis, a Structural Model was constructed to illustrate the relationship path between the two research variables (Red Ocean Marketing Strategies and Product Sustainability), comprising 38 items, as shown in Figure (2).
As shown in the figure
Figure (1): Testing the Hypothesis of the Impact of Red Ocean Marketing Strategies on Product Sustainability. (SPSS Outputs)
The results presented in Figure (1) and Table (2) indicate a statistically significant and positive impact of the independent variable, Red Ocean Marketing Strategies, on the dependent variable, Product Sustainability. The impact value (Beta coefficient) reached (0.745) at a significance level of (0.01). This demonstrates that the level of Product Sustainability increases by (74.5%) for every one-unit increase in Red Ocean Marketing Strategies.
Furthermore, the Red Ocean Marketing Strategies variable explains (24.1%) of the variance occurring in Product Sustainability, as indicated by the coefficient of determination value (R^2 = 0.241) in Table (2). This value is considered reliable for identifying the levels of Product Sustainability. These findings confirm the acceptance of the direct impact hypothesis, which states: "Red Ocean Marketing Strategies have a statistically significant and positive effect on Product Sustainability at the aggregate variable level."
As shown in the figure

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ATU- AFJIMS, Volume:2, Issue:1, June 2026
ISSN : 3106-4973

5. Discussion and Implications of the Study

The results demonstrate that customers who express their opinions are the most influential individuals within the organization. Loyal customers often show a willingness to express their dissatisfaction through their "voice" and constructive criticism, granting the organization the necessary time to address and overcome its shortcomings instead of exiting (switching to competitors). Moreover, the more likely customers are to voice their complaints directly to a service organization, the stronger their attachment to that organization becomes. Conversely, aggressive criticism can have a negative impact on the mood and emotions of employees and other customers within the service facility; however, when managed effectively, these interactions play a significant role in fostering Product Sustainability (Bove & Robertson, 2005: 94-95).
Subsequently, Red Ocean Marketing has played a substantial role in increasing and achieving Sustainable Competitive Advantage within organizations. The Voice of the Customer (VoC) has become the primary benchmark for improving operations and ensuring market continuity. While some customers find certain products and services fail to meet their expectations or provide full satisfaction—potentially turning their voice into negative criticism—this feedback can be transformed into a positive factor for service improvement and problem-solving in the future.
The most crucial aspect, however, is the positive dimension of the customer's voice, which propels the organization to the forefront and enhances its competitive capabilities sustainably. The findings of this study empirically confirm that the Voice of the Customer plays a pivotal positive role in achieving Sustainable Competitive Advantage.

6. CONCLUSIONS

Red Ocean Marketing strategies contribute to making the organization more capable of achieving a Sustainable Competitive Advantage. These strategies encompass stages that, when effectively implemented, enable the organization to provide superior products compared to competitors, thereby dominating target markets. Furthermore, the dimensions of the Red Ocean Marketing variable achieved an acceptable level of presence within Noor Al-Kafeel Company, indicating a significant interest by the company's management in this variable.
Additionally, product sustainability—represented by the ability to establish close relationships with customers—can serve as a primary source of sustainable competitive advantage. The incremental benefits of a strong relationship capability can outweigh the costs of the strategies used to develop and maintain them. Moreover, companies that succeed in developing close relationship capabilities may enjoy a sustainable competitive advantage because such capabilities are likely to be rare and difficult to imitate, even in contexts where they are most beneficial.
Finally, Red Ocean Marketing has a statistically significant and positive impact on product sustainability within the surveyed company. This implies an increased opportunity to reach a sustainable competitive advantage, which results from the growing attention paid to the various dimensions of the Voice of the Customer within the organization.

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ATU- AFJIMS, Volume:2, Issue:1, June 2026
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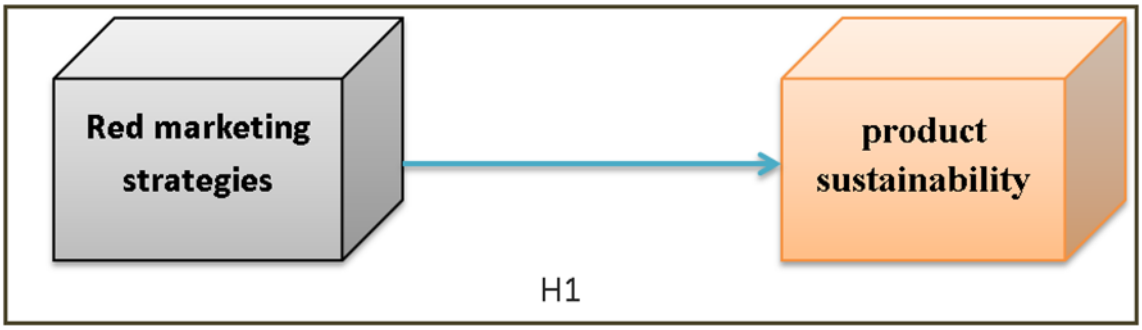
Figure and tables



Note: → **Direct Effect**

Fig. 1. Rig Research model

Table 1. Description of Respondents and Response Rate

Percentage	Frequency	Status
100	132	**Distributed Questionnaires**
%6.8	9	**Non-returend Questionnaires**
%85	113	**Returned Questionnaires**
%7.5	10	**Incomplete Questionnaires (Missing Data)**
%85	113	**Valid Questionnaires for Statistical analysis**

Al-Furat Journal of Innovations in Management Sciences

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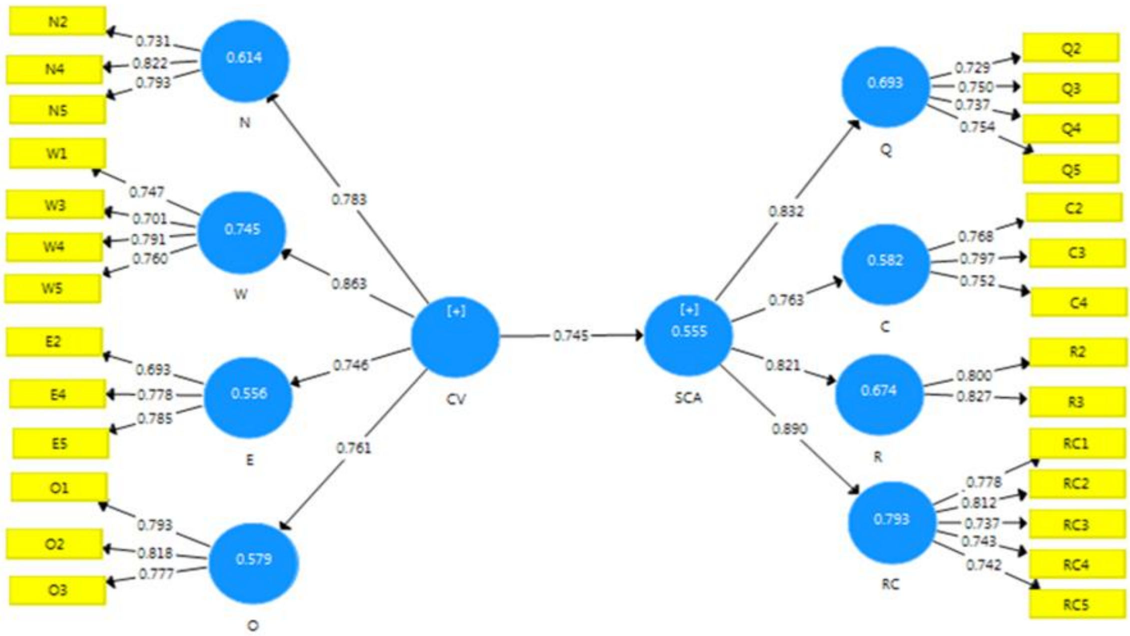

Figure (1): Testing the Hypothesis of the Impact of Red Ocean Marketing Strategies on Product Sustainability. (SPSS Outputs)

Result	Sig. (p-value)	Value T	Standard Deviation	R-Square R^2	Impact coeffcient β	Correlation R	Hypothesis Path
Accepted	0.000	12.262	0.061	0.241	0.745	0.491	Red Ocean Marketing Strategies <- Product Sustainability

Table 1. SmartPLS: