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Social entrepreneurship and organizational performance: A study of the mediating role of distinctive competencies in marketing

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ABSTRACT

Social economy is considered as the option that offers the best response in times of crisis. In this context, social economy companies play an essential role in the promotion of sustainable growth. This research wants to present the importance of social entrepreneurship in the organizational performance of a company. It also aims to show the positive relationship between the extent to which social entrepreneurship is implemented and the creation of distinctive marketing competences, as well as the mediating role these competences have between social entrepreneurship and organizational performance. For this purpose, an analysis of 221 Spanish social-economic entities has been developed from January to May 2014. In order to evaluate organizational performance, a validated scale has been used (Nakata, 2008), since it integrates sociometric characteristics that are necessary for this research. For the two remaining constructs, that is to say, social entrepreneurship and distinctive marketing competences, specific items have been developed by taking into consideration the analysis of their sociometric properties that could lead to the validation of the relationship among the three proposed variables. The results show a positive relationship between the extent to which an organization introduces social entrepreneurship and its organizational performance, social entrepreneurship and the creation of distinctive marketing competences, as well as the influence of distinctive marketing competences as a mediating variable in the relationship between the degree of implementation of social entrepreneurship and organizational performance.

1. Introduction

In recent years, social entrepreneurship has increased as a result of the poor effectiveness of governmental entities in improving the standard of living of disadvantaged social sectors. The large-scale actions of these entities have been restrained by complex bureaucracy and political alternation, which have limited the beneficial effects of social entrepreneurship. Consequently, social economy has become an alternative to public and private capitalist sectors in that it provides the best response in times of crisis. The advantage of social entrepreneurship lies in the smaller dependence these companies have on the financial markets and, therefore, in the lower impact the financial crisis had on them (Birchall, 2013).

The working definition of social economy in this article is the one found in the CIRIEC report (Monzón & Chaves, 2008), which enjoys the highest institutional prestige and has been developed from an extensive theoretical consensus. This definition structures social economy according to the market, which is the area in which most traditional entities work, and the non-market, the field in which non-profit organizations operate.

This study analyzes cooperatives and other entities that are part of the social economy insofar as they contribute to the promotion of sustainable growth. Social entrepreneurship is defined as the search for social value creation by means of economic activity (Fisac, Moreno, Mataix, & Palacios, 2011). Despite its relevance, this definition has not been explicitly recognized in the economic literature.

On the other hand, the multidimensionality of organizational performance hinders its definition. This construct consists of four correlated elements: financial results, operational efficiency, stakeholder satisfaction, and ability to compete. The measurement of the four elements on organizational performance has been extensively studied (McGahan & Porter, 2002; Ruefli & Wiggins, 2003). Recently, research

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has addressed organizational performance as the result of an indiscriminate combination of different types of indicators: objective ones (number of employees, income, profitability) and subjective ones (quality, customer satisfaction, market). In this sense, it is important to measure distinctive competencies and their effect on organizational performance (Camisón & Villar-López, 2014).

A distinctive competency is understood as an activity capable of generating value in a company and necessary to establish a competitive advantage in that company. The term was coined with the objective of determining the fundamental strategy capabilities of an organization (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). In this study, the distinctive marketing competencies have been analyzed in order to clarify whether they constitute a strategic link between social entrepreneurship and organizational performance. The economic literature sustains that distinctive competencies can help some companies to obtain better results (Teece, Pisano, & Shuen, 1997; Yeoh & Roth, 1999).

The general objective of this study is to empirically prove the importance of distinctive competencies as a mediating factor between social entrepreneurship and organizational performance. In this way, it is necessary to estimate the relation among the three defined variables: social entrepreneurship, distinctive marketing competencies and organizational performance. Thus, this study proposes a set of hypotheses concerning the relation among these variables. In order to demonstrate the validity of these hypotheses, an empirical study was conducted on a sample of 221 Spanish social economy entities from January to May 2014, where structural equation models were used. Likewise, in order to measure organizational performance this study employs a validated scale (Nakata, Zhu, & Kraimer, 2008) that includes sociometric characteristics that suit the objectives of this research. Besides, specific items have been created to measure the theoretical constructs of social entrepreneurship and distinctive marketing competencies. As for the scales of measurement, the study analyzed their sociometric properties, which validated the causal relations that exist in the case of the three proposed variables.

The results of the research show the positive relation between the degree to which an organization implements social entrepreneurship and its organizational performance. In the same way, the positive relation between the degree of implementation of social entrepreneurship and the creation of distinctive marketing competencies is confirmed. Finally, the results support the influence of distinctive marketing competencies as a facilitating factor in the positive relationship between the degree of implementation of social entrepreneurship in an organization and its organizational performance. Thus, distinctive marketing competencies as a mediating variable contribute to a better understanding of the relationships between its antecedent variables and organizational performance.

This research is structured as follows: First, a review of the literature about each of the analyzed variables and their interrelations was performed. The review of the literature enabled the definition of both the proposed measurement scales and the hypotheses. Subsequently, structural equations were used to validate the scales. The following section introduces the results while the last one presents the conclusions.

2. Review of the literature

Analyzing the concept of social economy requires a review of the term *third sector*. This term was coined in 1973 by Theodore Levitt and is described as the part of public performance covered neither by the state nor by the market. Several authors define this concept in the same terms.

Regarding the definition of the third sector, there are two trends. The first one defines the third sector negatively as compared to the private and public sector. That is to say, reality is determined by the theoretical variables of state and market, so only two sectors are recognized. Therefore, everything that cannot be included in these two conceptual categories would constitute the third sector, formed by organizations as diverse as cooperatives, religious organizations, associations, clubs, museums, foundations, NGOs, etc.

However, a current in disagreement with this conceptualization establishes that the third sector should not be understood as a third option separate from the public and the private sector because it would minimize its importance and legitimacy.

Two theoretical approaches define the third sector. On the one hand, the non-profit approach focuses on the altruism of organizations such as foundations and Anglo-Saxon charities, which are the most typical ones. On the other hand, the social economy approach originated toward the late 18th century in different European countries and includes cooperatives, mutuals, foundations, and associations.

The consolidation of this term contains three important milestones: the first involves the foundation of the National Liaison Committee for Mutual, Cooperative and Associative Activities (CNLAMCA) in France. It adopted the *"charte de l'economie sociale"* and defined the term as a group of non-public sector entities based on a democratic management and equal obligations and rights for partners which distribute tax-year surpluses to achieve the growth of the entity and the improvement of services for partners and society. The second milestone was the publication of the Statute for a European Cooperative Society in 2003 by the European Economic and Social Committee. Finally, the third milestone took place on 23rd March 2011, when the Spanish Congress of Deputies passed the Law on Social Economy defined as "the set of economic and business activities carried out in the private sphere by those entities that pursue the collective interest of its members, either economic or social, or both" (Ley 5/2011, 2011).

The dominant definition of the third sector using the social economy approach is the one presented by CIRIEC-Spain and its partners. According to this institution, the third sector comprises a group of private companies with autonomy of decision and freedom of adhesion that has been created to satisfy the needs of its partners through the market and in which decision-making is not directly linked to the capital contribution of each partner; instead, each of them has one vote. On the other hand, the third sector is defined by CIRIEC as a group of private entities with autonomy of decision and freedom of adhesion that produce non-market services for the benefit of families, and whose surpluses the economic agents who create them cannot exploit. Social economy includes non-financial corporations, credit institutions, insurance companies and social economy business groups.

Two hundred thousand entities existed in Spain in 2008. 76% of them were associations, 12.3% were cooperatives, 8.7% were labor companies, 2.1% were foundations and 2% were mutual societies. Their overall turnover amounted to 116,000 million euros. They generated 1.2 million direct jobs, are had about 24 million members.

3. The new economy

Toward the end of the 20th century, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) forecasted an optimistic evolution of the economy. Thanks to the benefits of globalization, regions like Africa, Latin America and Asia would grow at a faster rate and more advanced regions would achieve a more stable growth. The increase in competition among companies, the opportunities derived from new technologies and the economic liberalization and deregulation policies gave way to the New Economy. However, the 21st century's global economy is not performing as expected. In fact, several promoters of the current model of globalization argue that political-institutional failures have slowed down company growth and innovation and have hindered the greater liberalization of the economy, whereas the opponents think that the cause of the failures lies in the chaos produced since 2008 by an excess of deregulation and liberalization of the economy, on the one hand, and a high entrepreneurial competition, on the other.

For some authors, competition characterizes the values on which the global economic system is based. Competition and profit-making have conditioned the behavior of international institutions such as the IMF, which foster the logic of these values by establishing the rules of supply and demand according to which companies are run with the objective of maximizing profits. This type of system is known as "Darwinian capitalism," whereby only the strongest survive. Thus, the most developed regions, the best and largest companies, and individuals with high income are able to benefit from global competition, whereas more and more territories, businesses, and individuals suffer from unemployment, low income, social exclusion, and poverty.

Globalization and its competitive paradigm have given rise to the development of a complementary and frontier paradigm (Santos, Barroso, & Guzman, 2013): the economy of entrepreneurship, which is contrary to the paradigm of "management economics" (Audretsch & Thurik, 2000). Both publications highlight the important role of entrepreneurship in global capitalism and define it as any activity that an individual develops on his or her own initiative, by creating and consolidating companies out of the detection and management of opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). When the entrepreneur is motivated by altruism, entrepreneurship acquires a social character (Leadbetter, 1997; Yunus, 2009). Social entrepreneurs use altruism to generate social value, addressing social needs such as poverty, social exclusion, unemployment for the disabled, and environmental degradation.

Despite other differences, both types of entrepreneurship, classic and social, share management and search for opportunities through innovation, provoking changes that enable them to meet their objectives. Nevertheless, although the perspective is different, since the value proposition in classic entrepreneurship is financial and in social entrepreneurship is social (Martin & Osberg, 2007), both types of entrepreneurship share elements like risk, creativity, or persistence.

Several authors understand entrepreneurship as a multidimensional construct that can be defined according to achieved outcomes. The literature on the subject seems to agree that addressing social needs is the goal, although there is no consensus about the goal-achievement process (Roberts & Woods, 2005).

Social entrepreneurship can be defined as the ability to recognize opportunities in order to create social value, whereas the process of social entrepreneurship is understood as the construction, evaluation, and pursuit of opportunities to achieve social change (Roberts & Woods, 2005). However, social entrepreneurship is not charity and it is not necessarily unprofitable. Social entrepreneurs act through social enterprises that can use public and private funds efficiently (Trexler, 2008) and, even if their structure, strategy, norms, and values are different from for-profit organizations, they seek to be profitable in order to support themselves and create value.

Massetti (2008) proposes a matrix in order to analyze the different typologies of companies and to understand the business model set up by a social entrepreneur. Four models are derived from the matrix. The first comprises the traditional non-profit company characterized by a social mission, regardless of profitability. The second model is the traditional profitable company characterized by market orientation, revenue-bearing, and awareness of its corporate social responsibility. The third model involves the social organization in transition, which responds to market demands but does not need to make profits; it is financed through donations, government programs, and established funds. Its objective is to solve social problems; therefore, it modifies its offer according to the changes in the market. Finally, the fourth model is represented by social companies with a clear social mission and a lucrative motivation to achieve their objectives. They are developing companies that seem to be the new model for social and economic transformation and rely on social funds; those funds are managed efficiently so that they can reinvest them and remain independent. These companies are committed to social change.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to distinguish between social entrepreneurship and social actions that are not entrepreneurial. Social entrepreneurship is a direct action (Martin & Osberg, 2007) that considers opportunity (Thompson, 2008) and creates sustainable social value (Martin & Osberg, 2007; Van Slyke & Newman, 2006).

Some authors consider social entrepreneurship to be part of the model of sustainable competitive advantage (Weerawardena & Sullivan-mort, 2001) insofar as they conceive it as a behavior that is developed within for-profit, nonprofit and/or governmental organizations (Sullivan, Weerawardena, & Carnegie, 2003). The model of sustainable competitive advantage belongs to the theory of resources and capacities (Barney, 1986; Teece, 1980), which understands the organization as a set of unique and exceptional resources and capacities that enable the acquisition of sustainable competitive advantages.

In this line, it is usually the internal, personal, intangible, or social resources that create competitive advantage because they contain implicit knowledge and emotional intelligence, among other assets (Kwiatkoski, 2004). In the case of social enterprises, these resources may owe to the altruism of the community and social networks (Chell, 2007), where social capital abounds. This social capital enables all ventures to access other forms of physical, human, or financial capital (Liñán & Santos, 2007). The management literature defines social capital as the added value that entrepreneurs receive from their network of contacts and the relationships that shape their social network. Likewise, the literature emphasizes that social networks represent a good source of business because they facilitate economic action and encourage entrepreneurs to be more efficient, expand their scope of action, and access exclusive opportunities.

In this line, extol Burt's research (1992), in which he analyzes structural holes, which take place when complementary resources are found in a poorly connected network. Entrepreneurs who manage to improve their connection to the network thorough a more favorable positioning will enjoy significant competitive advantages. Those advantages are derived from building closer relationships and synergies out of additional resources and from the productivity resulting from their position in the network. This is a complement to the Schumpeterian analysis perspective, which considers business function responsible for revolutionizing the pattern of production by exploiting an invention; hence entrepreneurs are enabled to act in an intelligent and daring way in order to take advantage of these structural holes and turn them into good opportunities in their projects.

In this line, the broader the network of relationships, the more likely it is to achieve organizational performance because the entrepreneur can build relationships with customers, suppliers and distributors more easily, neutralizing their negotiating power to some extent, thus getting access to key, privileged, and valuable information. Therefore, social entrepreneurship can be considered a source of competitive advantage. In addition, the concept of competitiveness is related to organizational performance. In fact, the generation of income produced by competitive advantages will lead to greater organizational performance. Thus, the first hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H1. : An organization' level of social entrepreneurship is positively related to organizational performance. Social entrepreneurs are able to create socially positive businesses that can associate a technically and economically viable business project with social utility and a social mission, driven by sustainability and affected by context dynamics (Sullivan & Weerawardena, 2006).

These characteristics of a social entrepreneur cause a positive environment in the organization, which fosters the generation of distinctive marketing competencies that create sustainable competitive advantages. Customer orientation and global vision in an organization could contribute to the creation of capacities that enable the entrepreneur to get information about current customers and markets in order to identify opportunities and business trends. In addition, supporting competitiveness and making efficient decisions about different marketing policies requires maintaining the efficiency of the systems and resources necessary for the acquisition of important, continuous, and updated information about the macro-environment of the

Table 1
Mean and standard deviation of the items in the social entrepreneurship scale.

Item	m	σ
ES1: The company's strategy takes into account ethical components in its formulation.	6.08	1.25
ES2: Management are concerned about employees' problems.	5.98	0.79
ES3: Staff selection takes into account the candidate's social values.	6.32	0.91
ES4: There is management commitment to the surrounding social problems.	6.74	1.02
ES5: When evaluating the different methodologies necessary to address a problem, their social benefits are taken into account.	5.07	1.38
ES6: When defining the objectives of the company, not all have an economic component, some have a social character.	5.83	1.07
ES7: The company seeks information on business projects that, at the same time, can have a social benefit.	5.36	1.14
ES8: The company allocates part of its budget and its activity to obtaining goods and services that, besides being viable, benefit the neediest sectors of society.	5.71	1.08

company. In this way, hypothesis 2 relates two theoretical constructs:

H2. : A positive relationship exists between the degree of implementation of social entrepreneurship and the creation of distinctive marketing competencies.

Marketing competencies are linked to obtaining customer-related advantages and include, among other things, the capacity to get information about consumers and current markets or the ability to distribute products (Teece et al., 1997). Thus, marketing competencies support the awareness of customer demands, distribution and communication channels, pricing policy, and the corporate image of the company, all of which depend on the level of efficiency of the business. Therefore, organizations must develop and apply their distinctive competencies in marketing in order to obtain competitive advantages; that is, internal resources possess the qualities to create such advantages. This idea has been pointed out repeatedly in the literature (Hall, 1992; Harris, 2001; Hunt, 2000; Hunt & Morgan, 1995).

On the other hand, several studies confirm the positive relationship between distinctive marketing competencies and organizational performance (Hooley, Greenley, Cadogan, & Fahy, 2005; Hunt & Morgan, 1995; Weerawardena, 2003; Yu, Ramanathan, & Nath, 2014). Thus, the internal resources and capacities of a company have a greater effect on its organizational performance than its external factors do. Similarly, the prevalence of internal resources of an organization contributes to identify the differences in results (Hansen & Wernerfelt, 1989; Wernerfelt & Montgomery, 1988). Thus, distinctive competencies transform the company into a unit of analysis whereby sustainable competitive advantage is obtained when the organization develops the above-mentioned resources in its product markets.

In this context, distinctive marketing competencies are those that affect organizational performance positively and to a greater extent, especially when compared to distinctive competencies in other areas such as management, organization, and human resources, among others. At this point, it can be affirmed that the distinctive competencies in marketing and organizational performance are connected (Lakhal & Pasin, 2008).

This research considers that social entrepreneurship enables the development of a set of competencies in a company. These competencies act as a mediating factor that enables the analysis of the use of competencies by companies to face the changing environment in which they are immersed.

As noted earlier, the influence of social entrepreneurship on organizational performance may be moderated by other variables. In this case, this study posits that distinctive marketing competencies represent a mediator of the relationship between social entrepreneurship and organizational performance. Thus, the two previous hypotheses are extended with another hypothesis of global importance:

H3. : The positive relationship between the degree of implementation of social entrepreneurship and performance is explained by the mediation of distinctive marketing competencies.

This third hypothesis is key to this study, since it aims to ascertain whether the distinctive competencies in marketing operate as a mediating variable. Furthermore, it analyzes whether the integration of distinctive marketing competencies in this model supports a better relationship between social entrepreneurship and organizational performance.

4. Method

In order to validate the hypotheses, an empirical study was performed at a national level in Spain, using as sample social economy entities that provide services, such as social cooperatives, social integration cooperatives, public service cooperatives, and social enterprises providing social services. The sample was composed of 221 companies and the study took place between January and May 2014.

Regarding measurement variables, measurement items were created for two theoretical constructs of the study: social entrepreneurship and distinctive marketing competencies. The Nakata scale was used for the organizational performance (Nakata et al., 2008). The statistics obtained for the three constructs are as follows (Table 1):

The descriptive statistics of the 22 items that form the variable of distinctive competencies in marketing can be seen in the Table 2.

The items in the Nakata scale (Nakata et al., 2008) are shown in Table 3.

The hypotheses are validated using structural equations through the EQS program, version 5.7. The sociometric properties of all the

Table 2
Mean and standard deviation of the items in the scale of distinctive competency in marketing.

Item	m	σ
M1: Ability to obtain information about customers and current markets	4.72	0.75
M2: Ability to identify new customer and market opportunities, and to collect information about them	4.07	1.25
M3: Ability to obtain information about competitors	3.86	1.05
M4: Ability to identify business trends	4.05	1.36
M5: Accuracy of sales forecasts and profitability	3.89	1.05
M6: Awareness of the company's marketing strengths	4.26	0.95
M7: Awareness of the company's marketing weaknesses	4.17	0.74
M8: Effectiveness of the business planning process	4.52	1.04
M9: Allocation of resources to the marketing department	4.19	0.79
M10: Ability to integrate marketing activities	4.08	1.05
M11: Ability to segment target markets	4.79	0.56
M12: Ability to differentiate product offers	4.64	0.76
M13: Ability to design, collaborate in the development of new products and launch them on the market	3.74	1.54
M14: Ability to provide consistent and quality service	4.68	0.64
M15: Efficiency of the pricing policy	4.01	0.98
M16: Efficiency of the advertising, promotion and public relations policy	3.41	0.86
M17: Efficiency of company image policy	4.01	0.96
M18: Efficiency of product branding policy	3.86	1.04
M19: Ability to select the best locations for commercial premises	4.79	0.45
M20: Efficiency of containment/reduction of marketing costs	3.97	0.79
M21: Efficiency of the process of evaluation and control of marketing activities	4.11	1.15
M22: Ability to distribute products widely	3.67	1.19

Table 3
Mean and standard deviation of the items in the organizational performance scale.

Item	m	σ
D1: Quality of product or service	4.75	0.94
D2: Success of new products or services	3.98	1.31
D3: Customer retention rate	3.47	1.02
D4: Level of sales	3.74	1.26
D5: Return on capital	4.11	0.79
D6: Gross profit margin	3.84	0.93
D7: Return on investment	4.25	1.51

measurement scales have been analyzed and the possibility of causal relationships among the variables that appear in the hypotheses has also been validated.

5. Results

This section analyzes the values obtained for each of the hypotheses.

5.1. Test for the first hypothesis

The structural model consists of an exogenous latent variable (the degree of implementation of social entrepreneurship) and an endogenous latent variable (organizational performance). Considering the hypothesis as such, there is no mediating variable between the two constructs. Thus, the structural model can be translated into the following equation:

$$Performance = \alpha\ Soc\ Ent + D$$

where D is a random disturbance.

The following table shows the fit indices of the model (Table 4):

As we can see, the fit measures show statistically significant values. The chi-square statistic is statistically significant, the GFI index is near 0.9, and RMR is near 0, showing good fit in absolute terms. Likewise, BBNFI and RCFI exceed the minimum level of acceptance. The value of NC is also statistically significant.

The fit of the structural model implies the analysis of the significance reached by the estimated coefficients (for a significance level of 0.05, the value of t has to reach 1.96). The following table shows the equation parameter and the obtained reliability (Table 5).

The estimated parameter is statistically significant at 95% ($t = 9.204 \geq 1.96$). The above table shows a correct fit of the structural model. Therefore, the first hypothesis is confirmed.

5.2. Test for the second hypothesis

The structural model consists of an exogenous latent variable (degree of implementation of social entrepreneurship) and an endogenous latent variable (distinctive marketing competencies). Thus, the structural model can be translated into the following equation:

$$CD\ Marketing = \alpha\ Soc\ Ent + D$$

where D is a random disturbance.

The following table shows the fit indices of the model (Table 6):

As the table shows, the fit measures indicate statistically significant values. The chi-square statistic is statistically significant, the GFI index is higher than 0.9, and RMR is near 0, which shows good fit in absolute terms. Likewise, BBNFI and RCFI exceed the minimum level of acceptance.

Table 4
Global model fit indices.

g.l.	Chi2	P	BBNFI	RCFI	GFI	RMR	NC
35	52.8711	0.0268	0.860	0.982	0.817	0.043	1.51

Table 5
Estimated parameter and reliability index in the structural model of the first hypothesis.

Model	γ Coefficient in the equation	Reliability
SE → DO	0.54	0.979

Table 6
Global model fit indices.

g.l.	Chi^2	p	BBNFI	RCFI	GFI	RMR	NC
32	26.804	0.727	0.963	1	0.971	0.016	0.84

Table 7
Estimated parameter and reliability index in the structural model of the second hypothesis.

Model	γ Coefficient in the Equation	Reliability
SE → CDM	0.845	0.972

The fit of the structural model implies the analysis of the significance reached by the estimated coefficients (for a significance level of 0.05, the value of t has to reach 1.96). The following table shows the equation parameter and the reliability obtained (Table 7).

The estimated parameter is statistically significant at 95% ($t = 17.624 \geq 1.96$). The above table shows a correct fit of the structural model. Therefore, the second hypothesis is confirmed: there is a positive and statistically significant relationship between the level of social entrepreneurship of an organization and the creation of distinctive marketing competencies.

5.3. Test of the third hypothesis

The structural model consists of an endogenous latent variable—distinctive competencies in marketing and organizational performance—and an exogenous latent variable—the degree of implementation of social entrepreneurship. The structural equations are as follows:

$$CD\ Marketing = \alpha\ Soc\ Ent + D$$

where D is a random disturbance.

$$Performance = \gamma\ Soc\ Ent + \beta\ CD\ Marketing + D$$

The fit indices of the model are considered first (Table 8):

The table above shows very positive fit measures. The chi-square statistic is statistically significant, RMR is close to 0, which shows good fit in absolute terms. Likewise, BBNFI and RCFI exceed the minimum level of acceptance considerably. The value of NC is between 1 and 2.

Reliability is high in both models. The γ and α coefficients in the structural equations are statistically significant. However, the β coefficient is not significant, since its associated t-value is lower than 1.96. Overall, the fit is acceptable (Tables 9 and 10).

The previous table analyzes the direct and indirect effects of SE on organizational performance. The indirect effect (0.819) is much higher than the direct effect (0.128). In addition, the direct effect is not statistically significant ($t < 1.96$), whereas the indirect effect is significant. After validating this hypothesis, distinctive marketing

Table 8
Global model fit indices.

g.l.	Chi2	p	BBNFI	RCFI	GFI	RMR	NC
50	71.9471	0.0226	0.939	0.980	0.938	0.062	1.43

Table 9
Estimated parameters and reliability indices in the structural models of the third hypothesis.

Model	γ Coefficient in the equation	Reliability of the structural equation
SE → CDM → DO	DO = γCDM + βSE + D γ = 0.902 (*t* = 9.285); β = 0.128 (t = 0.139)	0.961
SE → CDM	CDM = αSE + D α = 0.908 (*t* = 22.064)	0.973

Table 10
Direct and indirect effect on organizational performance.

Model	Indirect effect	Direct effect	Total effect
SE → CDM → DO	α γ = 0.819	β = 0.128 Not significant (*t* = 0.139)	0.947

competencies are found to act as a mediating variable and their inclusion in the explanatory model contributes to an improved understanding of the relationships between their antecedent variables and organizational performance.

6. Conclusions

The global economy of the 21st century is not what was expected. On the one hand, the literature about the current model of globalization implies that political-institutional failures have slowed down the growth of companies and innovations, hindering a greater liberalization of the economy. On the other hand, detractors of the model believe that the cause lies in the chaos produced since 2008 not only because of an excess of deregulation and liberalization of the economy but also because of a high degree of business competition. This current model is based on the paradigm of competition, whereby making a profit is prioritized over sharing life with altruistic human beings and their concern for social problems.

Over the last decades, a number of organizations known as social economy companies have played a major role in the search for solutions that should contribute to improving social welfare and the life quality of vulnerable groups that are excluded from the dynamics of the capitalist system. All this has given rise to the development of a complementary paradigm that is juxtaposed with the previous one: the economy of entrepreneurship.

Concerning the economy of entrepreneurship in this study, the focus was placed mostly on social entrepreneurship. Besides creating socially positive businesses social entrepreneurs run not only an economically and technically viable business project, but also a socially useful one.

In this line, the results of the research carried out on a sample of 221 national social economy entities confirm that the degree of social entrepreneurship has a positive and significant effect on organizational performance. With regard to the distinctive competencies in marketing, they represent a mediating variable between social entrepreneurship and performance; therefore, their inclusion in the explanatory model contributes to a better understanding of that relationship.

Social entrepreneurs try to combine the social purpose they promote with the effectiveness and efficiency of business in order to be profitable and able to support themselves. The literature classifies social entrepreneurship within the model of sustainable competitive advantage (Sullivan et al., 2003; Weerawardena & Sullivan-mort, 2001) and considers it a behavior that develops in social organizations as a result of the optimal management of the resources and capacities of a company (Barney, 1986; Teece, 1980), leading to tacit knowledge, emotional intelligence, etc. At the same time, social entrepreneurship is a consequence of altruism in a community and its social networks (Chell, 2007), while social capital is one of the main assets that enables all social entrepreneurship to access other forms of physical, human, or financial capital (Liñán & Santos, 2007). Therefore, the capacity of social entrepreneurship can be considered a competitive advantage generator, whereas the income produced by this advantage leads to greater organizational performance.

Consequently, certain characteristics of social entrepreneurship such as the ability to detect opportunities, the innovative spirit, and social commitment in organizations should be encouraged because they foster a beneficial environment for the creation of distinctive marketing competencies in the organization. These competencies lead to sustainable competitive advantages like identifying opportunities and business trends, becoming aware of the weaknesses that should be changed through innovation in the company, launching new products, and choosing the distribution and point of sale, among other aspects.

Entrepreneurs who are well positioned in order to have a high number of connections in the network will enjoy significant competitive advantages by building closer relationships, obtaining synergies of additional resources and creating advantages from the productivity that results from their location within the network.

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