

Testing the Relationships Among Social Marketing Variables in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises: A Resistance Economy Approach

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ABSTRACT

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), as the backbone of the economy, play an unparalleled role in job creation, innovation, and economic resilience. However, under macroeconomic shocks and the imperatives of the "Resistance Economy," these enterprises require marketing strategies that go beyond mere profitability to seek the creation of social value and alignment with the long-term interests of society. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships among social marketing variables in SMEs with a Resistance Economy approach. The current research is applied in terms of its objective and quantitative in nature. The statistical population of the study comprises all experts, managers, and specialists in the field of SMEs. A sample of 234 individuals was selected using a convenience sampling method. The data collection instrument was a researcher-developed questionnaire comprising 46 items across four main dimensions: quality, value, behavioral, and communicative. To analyze the data and test the structural model, given the non-normal distribution of the data (based on the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test), structural equation modeling using the partial least squares approach was employed via SmartPLS software. Furthermore, to prioritize the dimensions, the non-parametric Friedman test was utilized. The findings from the measurement model indicated satisfactory reliability and validity of the model. The evaluation of the structural model, with a Goodness-of-Fit index of 0.546, confirmed the high quality of the model. The hypothesis testing results revealed that all four dimensions quality, value, behavioral, and communicative exert a significant positive impact on social marketing parameters. Based on the Friedman test, the dimensions of social marketing in SMEs within the Resistance Economy approach are ranked as follows: value (first rank), behavioral (second rank), communicative (third rank), and quality (fourth rank). This finding indicates that within the Resistance Economy paradigm, the creation of emotional and functional value for society and target audiences serves as the fundamental basis for behavioral change and effective communication in social marketing.

KEYWORDS: Social Marketing, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Resistance Economy, Structural Equation Modeling, Value Dimensions.

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1. Introduction

In the contemporary era, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), as one of the main drivers of the modern economy, play an unparalleled role in improving employment opportunities, promoting export growth, enhancing technological innovation, and ensuring the equitable distribution of wealth (Putra & Santoso, 2020; Dayour et al., 2020). Due to their agility, high flexibility, and rapid adaptability to environmental fluctuations, these enterprises act as a shield for economies against macroeconomic shocks (Yung et al., 2020; Arcan, 2023). However, the limitation of financial and managerial resources has always been one of the fundamental challenges for these enterprises in competing with large corporations (Surmi et al., 2020). Under such circumstances, adopting innovative marketing approaches that can maximize their impact on the minds and behaviors of target audiences at optimal costs is of paramount importance. In this regard, "social marketing" has emerged not only as a tool for non-profit organizations but also as a vital strategy for small businesses to create differentiation, build trust, and forge deep connections with the community (Ayala, 2021; Falahat et al., 2020).

On the other hand, the concept of the "Resistance Economy," as an indigenous development paradigm, emphasizes endogeneity, resilience, reducing dependency on external resources, and simultaneously attending to economic growth and social welfare (Garcia et al., 2023; Tan et al., 2023). Within the framework of the Resistance Economy, economic enterprises do not merely seek to maximize shareholder profits in the short term; rather, they are obliged to establish a rational balance among organizational interests, consumer desires, and the long-term interests of society (Kotler & Lee, 2021; Chen, 2022). Social marketing lies precisely at this intersection; a point where commercial marketing techniques are employed to influence social behaviors, enhance public welfare, and promote sustainable lifestyles (Smith, 2020; Kotler et al., 2021). For small businesses, utilizing social marketing means selling an "idea" or "lifestyle" that benefits society, which in turn fosters deep and sustainable customer loyalty (Nguyen et al., 2022; Truong, 2021).

At the intersection of the survival imperatives of small businesses and the ideals of the Resistance Economy, the concept of "social marketing" emerges as a vital and innovative strategy. Going beyond the mere sale of a product or service, social marketing seeks to influence social behaviors, enhance public welfare, and promote sustainable lifestyles (Smith, 2020; Kotler et al., 2021). For small businesses grappling with severe financial and managerial resource constraints, employing social marketing entails promoting an "idea," "value," or "lifestyle" that benefits society and aligns with the principles of economic resilience. This approach fosters differentiation, builds trust, facilitates the formation of social capital, and forges deep connections with the community, ultimately leading to sustainable customer loyalty and the survival of the firm under harsh economic conditions (Ayala, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2022; Truong, 2021). Within the context of small businesses, social marketing serves as a tool for driving social transformation, promoting optimal consumption, conserving resources, and fostering social solidarity—all of which are considered fundamental pillars of the Resistance Economy (Panahandeh et al., 2021).

Despite the global consensus on the importance of SMEs and the necessity of transitioning toward resilient economies, the research literature indicates that most prior studies have examined social marketing exclusively within the realms of health campaigns, non-profit organizations, government institutions, or large multinational enterprises (Lee, 2020; Falahat et al., 2020). The role of social marketing in small economic enterprises grappling with indigenous approaches and unique conditions such as the Resistance Economy (characterized by sanctions, economic pressure, and the need for self-reliance) has rarely been subjected to quantitative and structural analysis (Seyedjavadin et al., 2022; Zia et al., 2023). The primary theoretical gap in this research lies in the fact that existing social marketing models lack the necessary nuances to elucidate consumer behavior and firm strategies under the conditions of a "Resistance Economy." Specifically, it remains unclear how the various dimensions of social marketing (encompassing quality, value, behavioral, and communicative dimensions) interact with and influence one another, as well as marketing success, within the context of small businesses. Furthermore, it is uncertain which dimension holds greater priority for target audiences under conditions of economic pressure (Tan et al., 2023; Zhang, 2016).

Despite the importance of this issue, the research literature indicates that most prior studies have examined social marketing solely within the domains of health campaigns, government initiatives, or large enterprises, while its role in small economic enterprises employing indigenous approaches such as the Resistance Economy has been less subjected to quantitative analysis (Panahandeh et al., 2021; Seyedjavadin et al., 2018). The primary research gap lies in understanding how the various dimensions of social marketing (quality, value, behavior, and communication) influence one another and marketing success within the context of SMEs through the lens of the Resistance Economy. Furthermore, it remains to be determined which dimension holds greater priority for target audiences under conditions of sanctions and economic pressure (the implicit concept of the Resistance Economy) (Zia et al., 2017; Jafari & Ostarki, 2015).

From a practical perspective, SME managers face a fundamental challenge: they cannot replicate the massive advertising budgets of large corporations, and concurrently, in the context of a Resistance Economy, the market has strongly gravitated toward products and services that possess "social and moral value." The absence of a validated quantitative model demonstrating which dimension of social marketing (i.e., creating emotional and functional value, behavior change, communication networking, or quality enhancement) SME managers should concentrate their limited resources on represents a profound practical gap (Surmi et al., 2020; Jafari & Ostarki, 2015). Recent studies have shown that consumer perception and moral values play a vital mediating role in the impact of social marketing activities on brand equity (Ayala, 2021); nevertheless, the structural modeling of these relationships within the Iranian economic context, with an emphasis on the components of the Resistance Economy, necessitates empirical and quantitative investigation.

Recent research has demonstrated that consumer perception and ethical values play a crucial mediating role in the effect of social marketing activities on brand equity (Ayala, 2021). Additionally, innovation capabilities and marketing communications are considered primary drivers of international performance and SME resilience (Falahat et al., 2020; Nasiri et al., 2016). However, the structural modeling of these relationships within the Iranian economic

context, emphasizing the components of the Resistance Economy, requires further empirical investigation. Given that small enterprises face resource constraints and cannot emulate the exorbitant advertising budgets of large corporations, social marketing serves as a low-cost yet deeply influential tool. It enables them to consolidate their market position through networking, trust-building, and the promotion of shared values (Zhang, 2016; Juseo & Park, 2018).

The necessity of conducting this research can be elucidated from both macro and micro perspectives. At the macro level, to overcome structural crises and exogenous shocks, developing economies have no alternative but to strengthen an agile private sector and promote the culture of the Resistance Economy (characterized by optimal consumption, support for domestic production, and the avoidance of waste). As catalysts of this culture, small businesses require instruments capable of institutionalizing desirable socio-economic behaviors throughout society (Nasiri et al., 2016; Garcia et al., 2023). At the micro level, the failure rate of small businesses has increased in recent years due to an inadequate understanding of shifts in customer values and behaviors. The significance of this study lies in presenting a structural model based on social marketing, demonstrating to the managers of these enterprises how they can create a sustainable competitive advantage at optimal costs by generating social value and altering audience behaviors. This advantage not only ensures their profitability but also shields them against economic shocks (Chen, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2022). Furthermore, the methodological necessity of this research resides in transitioning from purely qualitative and descriptive studies toward the quantitative testing of structural relationships using the robust Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) technique, which provides high generalizability and reliability to the findings.

The novelty and distinct contributions of this research compared to prior studies can be summarized across three main axes. First, conceptual and contextual innovation: for the first time, this study moves the concept of "social marketing" beyond the conventional boundaries of non-profit and governmental organizations, redefining and empirically testing it as a survival and growth strategy for SMEs within the indigenous and strategic paradigm of the "Resistance Economy." Second, modeling innovation: unlike previous research that has examined social marketing in a unidimensional manner, this study presents a comprehensive structural model that elucidates the simultaneous interaction of four vital dimensions (quality, value, behavioral, and communicative) on social marketing parameters under conditions of sanctions and economic pressure. Third, practical innovation in prioritization: utilizing a combined approach (structural testing and the non-parametric Friedman test), this research does not merely suffice with confirming relationships; rather, by precisely ranking the dimensions, it provides SME managers with an operational roadmap. This enables them to know exactly which dimensions (such as creating emotional value or behavioral facilitation) they should strategically focus on under resource-constrained conditions. This integration of socio-behavioral approaches with the imperatives of economic resilience opens a novel avenue in the literature of strategic marketing.

Therefore, aiming to bridge this gap, this study seeks to examine the relationships among social marketing variables in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) through the lens of the Resistance Economy. The primary research question is: What is the structural positioning of the four dimensions of social marketing (quality, value, behavioral, and communicative) within

the proposed model, and how are these dimensions prioritized based on the perspectives of experts and practitioners in the field? The novelty of this research lies in integrating the concept of social marketing with the imperatives of the Resistance Economy and quantitatively assessing the relative weight of each dimension within the SME context. The findings of this study can serve as a guiding framework for SME managers to formulate strategies that not only ensure their economic survival under adverse conditions but also contribute to sustainable development and social welfare.

2. Theoretical Foundations and Conceptual Framework

Social marketing is an emerging discipline that seeks to achieve social goals and objectives by applying commercial marketing techniques and principles. According to the concept of social marketing, managers are compelled to consider critical factors, such as consumer desires and societal benefits, in both the short and long term when formulating their strategies and policies (Kotler & Roberto, 2019; Andreassen, 2015). The primary mission of social marketing is to influence social and human behaviors. In this domain, profit maximization and personal gain are not the primary priorities; rather, a higher objective is pursued: behavioral change for the benefit of public welfare. The philosophy of social marketing distinguishes itself from other prevailing marketing philosophies by placing a special emphasis on the interests of future generations and society at large. It seeks to authentically integrate cultural and ethical values into marketing practices (Lowry et al., 2014; Palmer et al., 2016).

Alongside social marketing, the concept of the "Resistance Economy" provides a framework wherein enterprises must demonstrate resilience against external pressures and economic shocks. The Resistance Economy entails identifying areas of vulnerability and striving to neutralize them by reducing external dependencies, boosting domestic production, and fostering self-reliance. Within this paradigm, SMEs play a pivotal and driving role due to their agile and networked structures. The integration of these two concepts illustrates that social marketing in small businesses serves as a tool for driving social transformation, promoting optimal consumption, conserving resources, and fostering social solidarity—all of which are considered fundamental pillars of the Resistance Economy (Nasiri et al., 2016; Jafari & Ostarki, 2015).

Social Marketing

Social marketing, as a novel paradigm and an independent scientific discipline, emerged in the 1970s with the aim of applying commercial marketing principles and techniques to achieve social goals and objectives. Philip Kotler and Gerald Zaltman, pioneers in this field, posited that the assumptions of commercial marketing could be utilized to "sell" beliefs, attitudes, and to effect changes in human behavior. The primary mission of social marketing is to influence social and human behaviors; this implies that generating profit or personal and organizational gain is not the primary priority. Rather, a higher objective is pursued: enhancing public welfare and changing behavior for the benefit of society. The philosophy of social marketing differs substantively from other prevailing philosophies, as it places a special emphasis on the interests of future generations and society at large, seeking to authentically integrate cultural, ethical, and value-based issues into marketing practices. Within this approach, managers are compelled

to establish a rational balance among three key factors—company profits, consumer desires, and the long-term interests of society—when formulating their strategies and policies (Kotler & Zaltman, 1971; Kotler & Roberto, 2019; Andreasen, 2015).

The fundamental difference between social marketing and commercial marketing is manifested in their goals, objectives, and organization. While commercial marketing seeks to satisfy material needs and generate profit through the exchange process, social marketing goes beyond this by striving to promote behaviors that are ultimately beneficial to both the individual and society, achieved by reducing barriers and persuading target audiences. In social marketing, goods or money are not exchanged; rather, needs, thoughts, ideas, and learning are exchanged, leading to voluntary behavioral change. Furthermore, the social marketing mix, in addition to the traditional four elements (product, price, place, promotion), incorporates elements such as attention to target audience groups (publics), the formation of strategic alliances (partnerships), the alteration of societal policies (policy change), and the control of financial resources (purse strings), all of which ensure the success of a social intervention program. Today, many prominent global brands have realized that relying solely on traditional marketing principles cannot guarantee their competitive advantage. Maintaining this advantage requires aligning with community members and assisting in the achievement of micro and macro social goals through social marketing (Hastings, 2017; Kotler & Lee, 2007; Lowry et al., 2014).

The Resistance Economy and the Role of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

The Resistance Economy, as an indigenous and strategic development paradigm, entails identifying pressure points and exogenous shocks, and striving to neutralize them by reducing external dependencies, boosting domestic production, fostering endogeneity, and promoting self-reliance. In this model, the economy is not viewed mechanically; rather, it is grounded in societal beliefs, active community participation, and resilience against crises. Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), as the backbone of industrial development and the primary drivers of the modern economy, play an unparalleled role in realizing the objectives of the Resistance Economy. Due to their agility, high flexibility, lower liquidity requirements, and rapid adaptability to environmental fluctuations, these enterprises serve as a shield for economies against macroeconomic shocks. The prosperity of this sector can lead to the maintenance and expansion of sustainable employment, the reduction of poverty and unemployment rates, the promotion of equitable wealth distribution and the narrowing of class disparities, and ultimately, the enhancement of national income and economic growth. However, the limitation of financial and managerial resources has always been one of the fundamental challenges for these enterprises in competing with large corporations; therefore, adopting innovative, low-cost, yet deeply influential approaches such as social marketing is of paramount importance for their survival and resilience under the conditions of a Resistance Economy (Nasiri et al., 2016; Putra & Santoso, 2020; Dayour et al., 2020).

Theoretical Framework of the Research

Based on the aforementioned theoretical foundations, the theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the integration of the social marketing concept with the imperatives of small and medium-sized enterprises within the context of the Resistance Economy. Under the conditions

of a Resistance Economy, which are characterized by resource constraints and environmental pressures, small businesses cannot employ high-cost commercial marketing strategies; therefore, social marketing, as a survival and growth strategy, enables them to enhance their resilience by creating social value, building trust, and shifting audience behaviors toward optimal consumption and support for domestic production. Conceptual models of social marketing indicate that this approach is shaped by key concepts such as exchange theory, customer orientation, attention to the principle of competition, and data-driven decision-making (Shams & Rashidian, 2006). In this context, the dimensions of social marketing can be classified into four main categories, each playing a unique role in realizing organizational and societal objectives:

1. Quality Dimensions: This dimension refers to the technical, administrative, and communicative standards of services and products. In social marketing, quality does not merely mean low product defect rates; rather, it encompasses perceived quality, top management support for social values, and the manner in which services are delivered to instill a sense of trust and security in the audience. Technical and operational quality provides the necessary foundation for the audience's acceptance of social messages (Hastings, 2017).

2. Value Dimensions: This dimension encompasses emotional values (creating a sense of security, safety, comfort, and happiness) and functional values (appropriate quality, orderliness, and acceptable standards). Within the Resistance Economy approach, the value dimension primarily signifies creating value for society and the audience without imposing exorbitant costs. Social marketing must demonstrate to the audience that the desired behavioral change is not only beneficial to society but also brings high emotional and functional value to the individual themselves (Moghaddami & Khorshidi, 2003).

3. Behavioral Dimensions: The ultimate goal of social marketing is behavior change. This dimension encompasses audience cooperation, motivational inclination, stress tolerance, customer attitudes, and democracy in interactions. Instead of encouraging increased purchasing, social marketing seeks to understand behavioral barriers and facilitate behavior change by reducing psychological and physical costs. In small businesses, entrepreneurial behavior and social responsibility create a model for audiences, leading to the transformation of social norms (Seyedjavadin et al., 2018; Zia et al., 2017).

4. Communicative Dimensions: This dimension emphasizes creativity, innovation, receptiveness, adaptability to diverse cultures, fairness toward stakeholders, and benevolence. Within the Resistance Economy, communications must be grounded in trust, transparency, and collective participation. Through networking and face-to-face interactions or low-cost social media, small businesses can convey social messages with greater influence (Michaelidou et al., 2011; Karimi & Naghibi, 2015).

A review of the literature and research background indicates that numerous studies have been conducted in the fields of social marketing and small and medium-sized enterprises. In the domain of domestic research, Panahandeh et al. (2021) conducted a qualitative study demonstrating that capabilities such as communication bridging, low media costs, fluidity, and

flexibility are the cornerstones of social marketing strategies in small businesses. Utilizing a classical grounded theory approach, Seyedjavadin et al. (2018) elucidated the characteristics of entrepreneurial marketing in SMEs within the information technology industry, revealing that limited marketing skills in these enterprises lead to higher risks and failure. Furthermore, Zia et al. (2017) proposed a framework for entrepreneurial marketing networking in SMEs, concluding that networking is the sole logical avenue for marketing and establishing sustainable relationships in such firms. Additionally, Nasiri et al. (2016) and Jafari and Ostarki (2015) emphasized the vital role of small businesses in endogenous development and the utilization of social networks to create a competitive advantage.

In the realm of international research, Ayala (2021) demonstrated that social marketing activities exert a positive and significant impact on brand equity through consumer perception. Falahat et al. (2020) found that product innovation capabilities and marketing communications create a sustainable competitive advantage for exporting SMEs. Zhang (2016) and Juseo and Park (2018) also confirmed that social marketing activities in the media positively influence brand preference, cost-value ratio, and customer loyalty. Moreover, Saha (2017) showed that social marketing activities, functioning as a growth hacking marketing strategy, have a positive effect on customers' responsive tendencies and word-of-mouth promotion.

Despite the valuable studies conducted, a meticulous review of the literature reveals several theoretical and practical gaps that justify the necessity of the present study. First, the majority of prior studies have examined social marketing exclusively within the domains of health campaigns, non-profit organizations, government institutions, or large multinational enterprises. Consequently, its role in small economic enterprises grappling with severe resource constraints and unique conditions such as the Resistance Economy has remained underexplored. Second, research conducted in the realm of SMEs has predominantly been qualitative in nature, focusing on the unidimensional examination of entrepreneurial marketing or social media. However, the structural and quantitative modeling of the simultaneous interplay among various dimensions of social marketing (quality, value, behavioral, and communicative) within an integrated framework has been largely neglected. Third, the primary practical gap lies in the absence of a validated quantitative model to guide SME managers on which specific dimension of social marketing they should concentrate their limited resources upon under conditions of economic pressure and sanctions (the implicit concept of the Resistance Economy). Adopting a mixed-methods approach (fuzzy Delphi and partial least squares structural equation modeling), the present study aims to identify, prioritize, and empirically test the relationships among these dimensions within the context of SMEs under the Resistance Economy paradigm. By doing so, it seeks to bridge these knowledge and practical gaps (Tan et al., 2023; Chen, 2022; Garcia et al., 2023).

3. Research Methodology

In terms of its objective, the present study is applied, and regarding its nature and method, it falls under the category of quantitative descriptive-correlational research. Given that the conceptual model of the study and its indicators (comprising 46 items across four dimensions: quality, value, behavioral, and communicative) were developed in previous stages based on

expert consensus, the primary focus of this article is on the quantitative testing of the structural relationships among these variables.

The statistical population of this research includes all experts, managers, and practitioners in the field of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across the country. Considering the nature of structural equation modeling and the use of the partial least squares (PLS) technique, the sample size was determined based on the rule of thumb of a 5-to-1 ratio, while also taking estimation error into account. Ultimately, after distributing the questionnaires and screening out invalid responses, 234 valid and usable questionnaires were extracted for the final analysis. The data collection instrument was a researcher-developed questionnaire based on a Likert scale, the face and content validity of which was confirmed by a panel of university professors and experts.

Two statistical approaches were employed for data analysis. First, due to the non-normal distribution of the data, the robust technique of structural equation modeling with a partial least squares approach (PLS-SEM) was utilized using SmartPLS software. This technique was the optimal choice for this study due to its lack of requirement for the assumption of data normality and its capability to handle relatively small samples and complex models. Second, to prioritize and rank the four dimensions of social marketing, the non-parametric Friedman test was employed to determine which dimension holds greater importance and priority within the context of the Resistance Economy.

4. Findings

An examination of the respondents' demographic characteristics revealed that out of 234 participants, 95% were male and 5% were female. In terms of age, the highest frequency (60%) belonged to the 26–34 age group, followed by 32% in the 35–45 age group, 7% in the 46–55 age group, and 1% under 25 years of age. This age distribution indicates the active presence of the younger and middle-aged generations within the expert and managerial workforce of small and medium-sized enterprises. Regarding educational attainment, 47% held a bachelor's degree, 36% had a high school diploma or lower, 15% possessed an associate degree, and 2% held a master's degree.

Prior to model estimation, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test was conducted to assess the normality of the data distribution. The results indicated that the significance value (p-value) for all variables (quality, behavioral, communicative, and value dimensions, as well as social marketing parameters) was less than the 0.05 significance level. Consequently, the null hypothesis regarding the normality of the data was rejected. This finding fully justified and necessitated the selection of the PLS-SEM method as a distribution-free (non-parametric) approach.

To ensure data quality, the measurement model was evaluated in terms of reliability and validity. The internal reliability of the variables was assessed using two indices: Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR). The results demonstrated that the Cronbach's alpha values for the quality (0.912), behavioral (0.896), communicative (0.944), and value (0.867)

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dimensions, along with the composite reliability for all dimensions, exceeded 0.7, indicating the satisfactory reliability of the research instrument.

Convergent validity was assessed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) index. The AVE values for the quality (0.513), behavioral (0.583), communicative (0.514), and value (0.526) dimensions were all above 0.5. Furthermore, the factor loadings for all items exceeded 0.5 and exhibited significant t-values (greater than 1.96). Discriminant validity was further established using the Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross-loading analysis, ensuring that the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeded its correlations with all other constructs, and that the loading of each indicator on its designated construct was higher than its cross-loadings.

To evaluate the quality or validity of the model, a validity assessment was employed, which includes the collinearity validity index and the redundancy validity index. The communality index evaluates the quality of the measurement model for each block. The redundancy index, also referred to as Q^2 (the Stone-Geisser index), indicates that positive values of this metric reflect an appropriate and acceptable quality for both the measurement and structural models (Henseler et al., 2009).

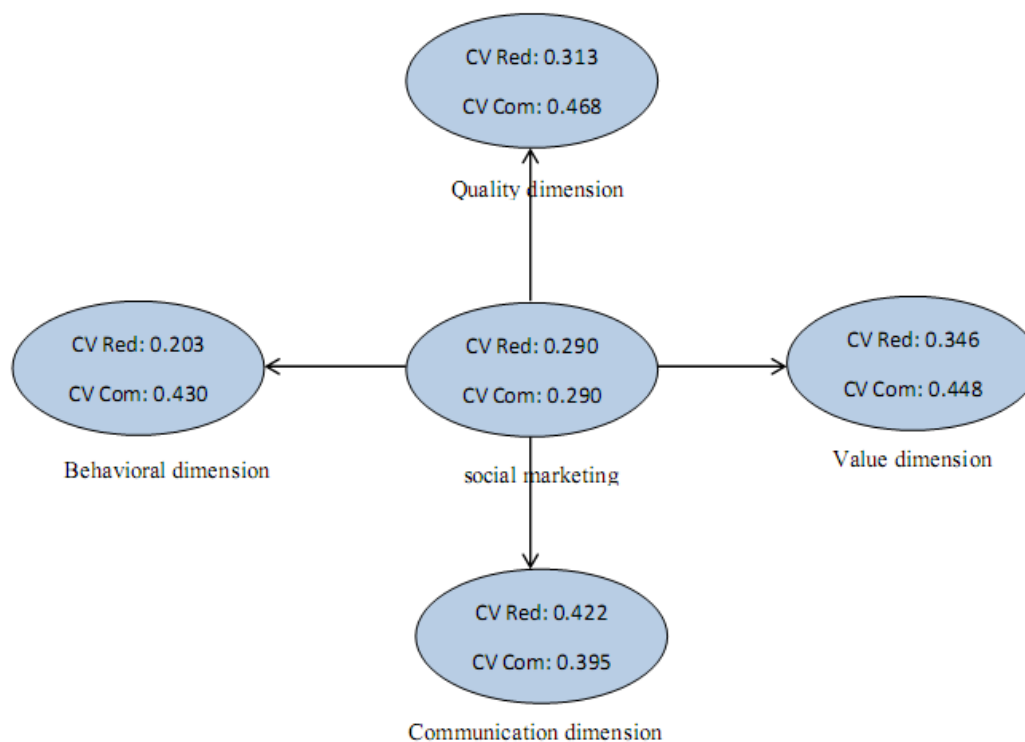


Figure 1. Fit indices of the research model

Table 1. Communality and redundancy indices

Variable	Communality Index (CV_Com)	Redundancy Index (CV_Red)
Quality dimensions	0.430	0.203
Behavioral dimensions	0.468	0.313
Communicative dimensions	0.448	0.346
Value dimensions	0.395	0.422
Social marketing parameters	0.290	0.290

Table 2 presents the values of each index related to the independent and dependent variables. As can be observed, the indices are positive and greater than zero. It can be stated that the model possesses acceptable quality and validity. Tenenhaus et al. (2005) introduced the Goodness-of-Fit (GOF) index to evaluate model fit. The overall fit criterion can be obtained by calculating the geometric mean of the average communality values and the coefficient of determination (R^2). For this index, the values of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 are described as weak, moderate, and strong, respectively.

$$GOF = \sqrt{(Communality) \times (R\ Square)}$$

Table 2. Communality values and R^2

Variable	Communality Values	R^2
Quality dimensions	0.513	0.404
Behavioral dimensions	0.583	0.535
Communicative dimensions	0.514	0.677
Value dimensions	0.526	0.817
Social marketing parameters	0.319	---

As illustrated in the table above, following the validation of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated. The Goodness-of-Fit (GOF) index, which is the geometric mean of the average communality values and the coefficient of determination (R^2), was calculated to be 0.546. Given that values above 0.36 indicate a strong fit, this figure confirms the high quality and validity of the research's structural model.

The relationships among the investigated variables were tested based on a causal structure using the Partial Least Squares (PLS) technique. In the overall research model, depicted in Figure 2, both the measurement model (the relationship between each observed variable and its corresponding latent variable) and the structural model (the relationships among the latent variables) have been estimated. To assess the significance of the relationships, t-statistics were computed using the bootstrapping technique, as presented in Figure 3. This model, which is the output of the SmartPLS software, provides a summary of the results concerning the significance of the standardized factor loadings and the relationships among the research variables. The path coefficients and their significance levels are also presented in the table.

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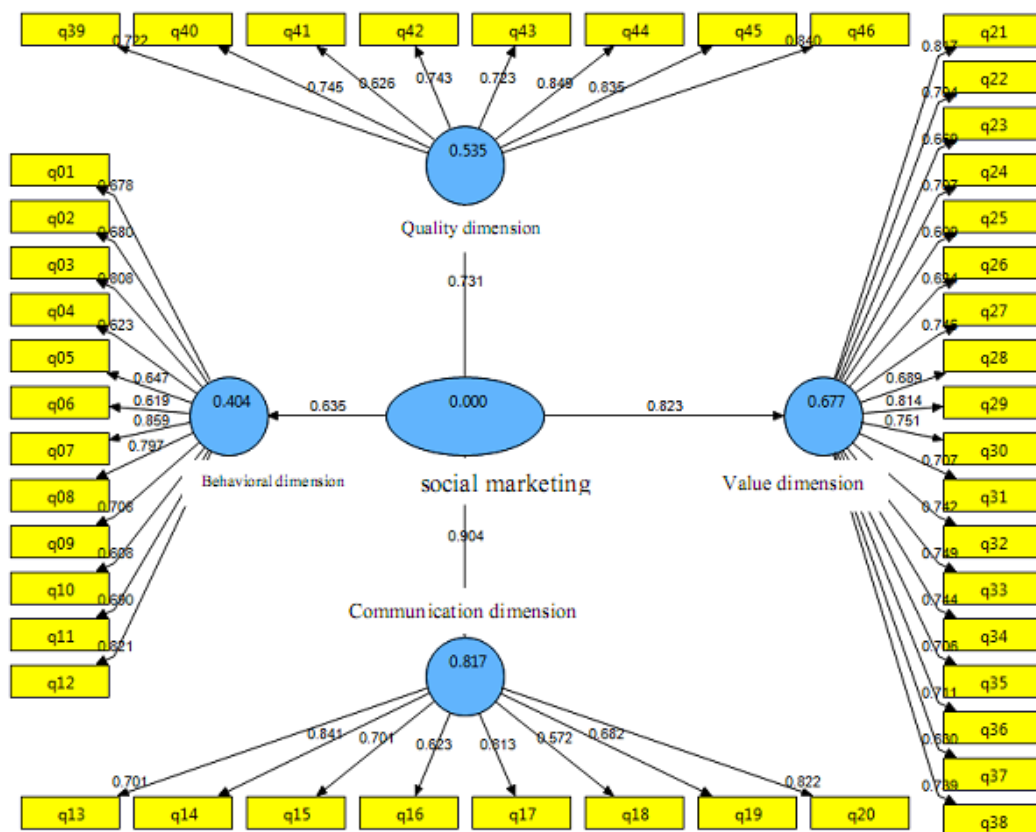


Figure 2. The overall research model using the Partial Least Squares technique

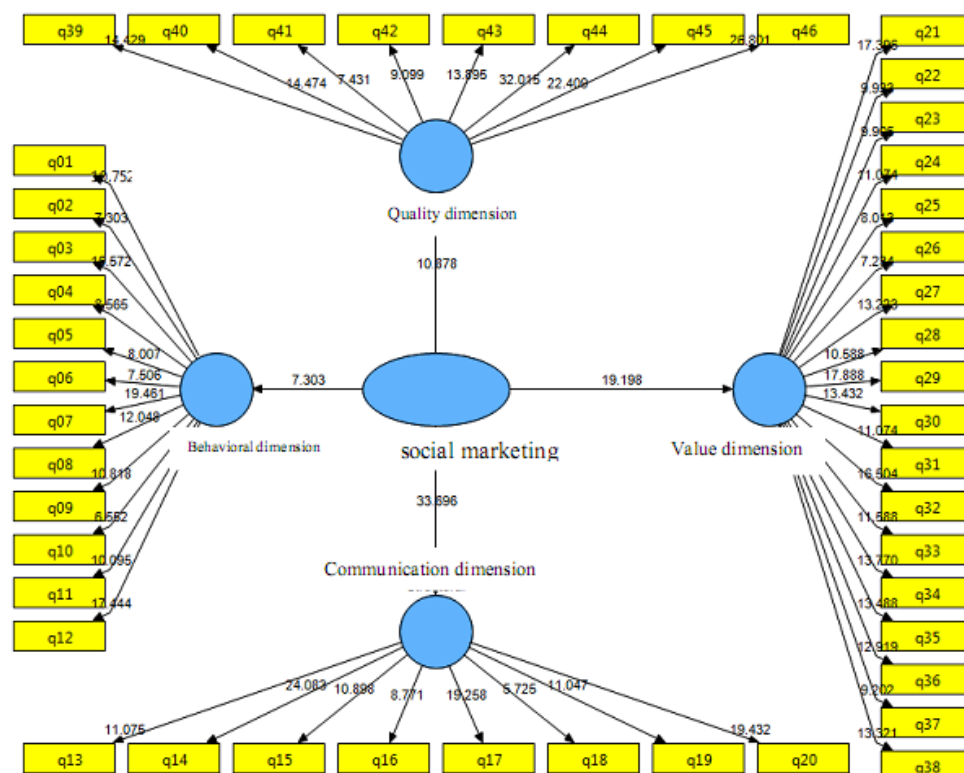


Figure 3. t-statistics of the overall research model using the bootstrapping technique

The results of the relationship testing (using the bootstrapping method) are presented in the following table:

Table 3. Path Coefficients

Path	Path Coefficient	t-statistic
Quality dimensions → Social marketing parameters	0.635	7.303
Behavioral dimensions → Social marketing parameters	0.904	33.696
Communicative dimensions → Social marketing parameters	0.823	19.198
Value dimensions → Social marketing parameters	0.731	10.878

As observed, all t-statistics are greater than 1.96. The highest path coefficient corresponds to the "behavioral dimensions" (0.904), followed by the "communicative dimensions" (0.823), "value dimensions" (0.731), and "quality dimensions" (0.635). This indicates that all four dimensions are significant predictors of social marketing success in small businesses.

Examination of the behavioral dimensions variable: As shown in Table 3, the path coefficient of the behavioral dimensions on the social marketing parameters is calculated as 0.635, and the t-statistic is 7.303. Since this value exceeds the critical t-value at the 5% significance level (1.96), it indicates that the observed effect is significant. Therefore, with 95% confidence, the behavioral dimensions constitute a significant component of the social marketing parameters.

Examination of the communicative dimensions variable: As shown in Table 3, the path coefficient of the communicative dimensions on the social marketing parameters is calculated as 0.904, and the t-statistic is 33.696. Since this value exceeds the critical t-value at the 5% significance level (1.96), it indicates that the observed effect is significant. Therefore, with 95% confidence, the communicative dimensions constitute a significant component of the social marketing parameters.

Examination of the value dimensions variable: As shown in Table 3, the path coefficient of the value dimensions on the social marketing parameters is calculated as 0.823, and the t-statistic is 19.198. Since this value exceeds the critical t-value at the 5% significance level (1.96), it indicates that the observed effect is significant. Therefore, with 95% confidence, the value dimensions constitute a significant component of the social marketing parameters.

Examination of the quality dimensions variable: As observed in Table 3, the path coefficient of the quality dimensions on the social marketing parameters is calculated as 0.731, and the test statistic is 10.878, which is greater than the critical t-value at the 5% significance level (i.e., 1.96), indicating that the observed effect is significant. Therefore, with 95% confidence, the quality dimensions are considered a significant component of the marketing parameters.

To gain a better understanding of which dimension holds greater strategic importance in practice and from the perspective of SME practitioners, the Friedman test was conducted. The results indicated that the difference in ranks is significant (Chi-square = 215.7, significance level = 0.045). The final ranking of the dimensions is as follows: Value dimensions, with a mean rank of 2.63, hold the first priority. Behavioral dimensions, with a mean rank of 2.55, hold the second priority. Communicative dimensions, with a mean rank of 2.43, hold the third priority. Finally, quality dimensions, with a mean rank of 2.40, hold the last priority.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of designing and testing a social marketing model in small and medium-sized enterprises with a Resistance Economy approach. The findings derived from structural equation modeling demonstrated that the four dimensions of quality, value, behavioral, and communicative all exert a positive and significant impact on the realization of social marketing parameters. This is consistent with the theoretical literature of studies such as Ayala (2021) and Falahat et al. (2020), which emphasized the vital role of consumer perception and marketing communications in value creation and competitive advantage. However, the results of the Friedman test and the comparison of path coefficients reveal deep and innovative insights into the nature of social marketing within the context of the Resistance Economy, which require precise and coherent investigation.

A key and highly significant finding of this study is the prioritization of "value dimensions" as the foremost priority. While "technical quality" or "price" typically takes center stage in traditional commercial marketing, within the Resistance Economy and social marketing paradigms, audiences and economic actors focus on the depth of the message and its underlying values. The value dimension encompasses the creation of a sense of security, safety, comfort, happiness, and functional quality. Under economic conditions characterized by the pressure of external shocks and severe fluctuations, a business can achieve success through social marketing only if it delivers genuine "emotional and functional value" to its audience. In other words, the Resistance Economy is grounded in trust, hope generation, and sustainable welfare; consequently, small enterprises that institutionalize ethical values, fairness, and benevolence in their messages and services will garner the greatest appeal. This finding aligns with the results of domestic studies, such as Panahandeh et al. (2021), which emphasized the importance of engaging and valuable content in audience attraction. Indeed, under harsh economic conditions, customers seek brands that deliver not merely a product, but also a "safe haven" and a "spiritual value-added" proposition.

The second rank is allocated to the "behavioral dimensions." The essence of social marketing is "behavior change." The exceptionally high path coefficient of this dimension (0.904) in the structural model further corroborates this notion. Within small businesses, shifting customer behavior toward optimal consumption, supporting domestic production, and participating in local networks is directly intertwined with economic resilience (the Resistance Economy). Customer behavioral facilitation, social responsibility, and professional commitment demonstrate that successful social marketing removes psychological and behavioral barriers, transforming the audience into a "social partner" rather than a mere buyer. When a small business succeeds in altering audience behavior toward supporting domestic goods or sustainable consumption, it is effectively actualizing one of the fundamental pillars of the Resistance Economy, namely "reducing dependence on foreign entities."

Although the "communicative dimensions" (ranked third) and "quality dimensions" (ranked fourth) are placed in subsequent positions, their path coefficients remain exceptionally high and statistically significant. The placement of the quality dimension in the fourth rank does not imply that quality is unimportant; rather, it indicates that within social marketing, "quality" serves as a fundamental and taken-for-granted prerequisite. However, it is value creation and

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behavior change that drive "differentiation" and "social impact." In other words, while technical and administrative quality provides the necessary foundation, it is these values and communications that act as the driving engine for social change in small businesses. Fairness toward stakeholders, creativity, and adaptability to indigenous cultures (communicative dimensions) enable small businesses to take root within their local community context and be recognized as socio-economic institutions (Zia et al., 2017). In the Resistance Economy, which is grounded in networking and social capital, transparent, empathetic, and culturally rooted communications serve as the vital link connecting the business to the fabric of society.

The overarching conclusion is that social marketing in SMEs, viewed through the lens of the Resistance Economy, constitutes a multidimensional framework wherein "value creation" and "behavior change" take precedence over purely technical and quality-based tools. To succeed in this endeavor, SME managers must distance themselves from the traditional view of marketing as merely "selling a product" and instead perceive it as "selling a lifestyle and sustainable values." Based on the findings, the following practical recommendations are proposed cohesively: In their social marketing campaigns, SME managers should emphasize the sense of security, peace of mind, and long-term utility of the product for the family and society, rather than focusing solely on its technical features. Furthermore, businesses must identify the behavioral barriers preventing customers from participating in social goals (such as recycling, optimal consumption, and supporting domestic goods) and overcome these barriers by offering non-financial incentives (such as the positive feeling of participation and social approval). Given the importance of the communicative dimension, small businesses should leverage the capacity of local social media, social influencers, and support networks to promote the culture of the Resistance Economy. Finally, organizing training courses for SME managers to familiarize them with social marketing techniques and their integration with economic resilience strategies is an imperative for macro-level policymaking in the private sector.

Like any other study, this research encountered certain limitations, including the lack of cooperation from some experts in completing the questionnaires and the prolonged data collection process. Additionally, generalizing the proposed model to other economic sectors requires caution. It is recommended that future research investigate this model more deeply within specific industries (such as tourism, handicrafts, or information technology) and utilize qualitative methods such as grounded theory. Furthermore, examining the role of moderating variables such as "media literacy" and "awareness of the Resistance Economy" can open new horizons in this field and significantly contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying the effectiveness of social marketing under conditions of sanctions and economic pressure.

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ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Authenticity of the texts, honesty and fidelity has been observed.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Author/s confirmed no conflict of interest.