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Organizational Drivers of Marketing Agility in International Firms

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ABSTRACT:

Digital transformation of the business life, rapidly changing competitive dynamics, and changes in customer behavior have prompted a need for more flexible and responsive approaches to marketing. Marketing agility as a means for the marketing teams to successfully operate in unpredictable environments has gained increasing traction in the past decade. As more firms are thriving towards more marketing agility, understanding the factors impacting marketing agility is necessary. The aim of this thesis is to examine impact of organizational factors on marketing agility. I examine the organizational factors, first identified in the conceptual work of Kalaighnam et al., and assess their impact on marketing agility in international firms. In order to assess this, primary data input from marketing professionals was collected via an online questionnaire. A sample of 39 responses was collected and the data is analyzed utilizing linear regression analysis. The results of the study confirm organizational factors influence marketing agility in international firms. Examining the impact of different organizational factors, it is found that organizational culture is the only variable with statistically significant positive relation to marketing agility. The research contributes to the existing marketing agility research. It builds upon previous conceptual work and provides empirical evidence for the impact of organizational factors on marketing agility. The results of the study provide also managerial implications for international firms seeking towards more marketing agility. As the results provide proof of the impact of organizational culture, exploring how organizational culture fostering agility is created and retained is an interesting future direction.

KEYWORDS: marketing agility, agility, marketing, international firms

VAASAN YLIOPISTO**Markkinoinnin ja viestinnän yksikkö**

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TIIVISTELMÄ:

Liiketoiminnan digitaalinen murros, nopeasti muuttuva kilpailudynamiikka ja muutokset asiakkaiden käyttäytymisessä ovat aiheuttaneet tarpeen joustavammille ja responsiivisemmille lähestymistavoille markkinoinnissa. Markkinoinnin ketteryys keinona, jonka avulla markkinointitiimit voivat toimia menestyksekkäästi arvaamattomissa ympäristöissä, on saanut yhä enemmän jalansijaa viime vuosikymmenen aikana. Kun yhä useammat yritykset pyrkivät kohti ketterämpää markkinointia, markkinoinnin ketteryyteen vaikuttavien tekijöiden ymmärtäminen on tarpeen. Tämän tutkielman tavoitteena on tutkia organisaatiotekijöiden vaikutusta markkinoinnin ketteryyteen. Tarkastelen organisaatiotekijöitä, jotka tunnistettiin ensimmäisen kerran Kalaignanamin ym. konseptuaalisessa työssä, ja niiden vaikutusta markkinoinnin ketteryyteen kansainvälisissä yrityksissä. Tämän arvioimiseksi keräsin primääriaineistoa markkinoinnin ammattilaisilta verkkokyselylomakkeella. Vastauksia kerättiin 39 kappaletta. Analysoin kerätyn datan lineaarisen regressioanalyysin avulla. Tutkimuksen tulokset vahvistivat, että organisaatiotekijät vaikuttavat markkinoinnin ketteryyteen kansainvälisissä yrityksissä. Eri organisaatiotekijöiden vaikutusta tarkasteltaessa havaittiin, että organisaatiokulttuuri oli ainoa tekijä, jolla oli tilastollisesti merkitsevä positiivinen yhteys markkinoinnin ketteryyteen. Tutkimus edistää osaltaan olemassa olevaa ketterän markkinoinnin tutkimusta. Se perustuu aiempaan teoreettiseen työhön ja tarjoaa empiiristä näyttöä organisaatiotekijöiden vaikutuksesta markkinoinnin ketteryyteen. Tutkimuksen tulokset ovat relevantteja myös käytännössä kansainvälisille yrityksille, jotka pyrkivät lisäämään markkinoinnin ketteryyttä. Koska tulokset osoittavat organisaatiokulttuurin vaikutuksen, olisi mielekästä tutkia, miten ketteryyttä edistävä organisaatiokulttuuri luodaan ja säilytetään.

AVAINSANAT: ketterä markkinointi, ketteryys, markkinointi, kansainväliset yritykset

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1 Introduction

Digital transformation of the business life, rapidly changing competitive dynamics, and changes in customer behavior have prompted a need for more flexible and responsive approaches to marketing (Asseraf et al., 2019; Kalaigianam et al., 2021; Swaminathan et al., 2020). There are new channels emerging constantly, the relevance of existing channels is in constant change, and technology enables reaching wider audiences than ever. Companies need to cope with more data points and conflicting signals, and it has become harder to make precise predictions of what is to come. The increased importance of digital marketing adds another level of complexity for firms as need to navigate through an ever-increasing number of channels, new technologies, and new regulations concerning e.g. data privacy. As businesses in general must operate in high levels of uncertainty and risk, many firms have adopted some degree of organizational agility to be able to cope with these challenges (Osei et al. 2018, p. 2, Asseraf et al. 2019, p. 1).

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for more responsiveness. Businesses have been forced to find new ways of navigating through the unpredictability of the global crisis. Being fast in understanding the potential impact of changes taking place and being responsive have been critical for companies who have needed to adjust or pivot their operations (Saputra et al. 2021: p. 2, Moi & Cabiddu 2022: p. 1-2). However, already for a few decades the issue of how companies can prosper in unpredictable and dynamic environments has been a hot topic in both academia and industry (Sherehiy et al. 2007, p. 1).

Agility as a means to successfully operate in unpredictable environments emerged as a topic in international business research in the 1980s. However, the interest in the topic has been strongly increasing in recent years (Christofi et al. 2021, p. 5). Research has conceptualized and expanded on our understanding of agility in several disciplines such as manufacturing, human resource management, and information technology (Christofi et al. 2021, p. 2, Zhou et al. 2019, p. 1). Also within the marketing discipline, a need for more speed and adaptiveness has been recognized by both researchers and companies.

Of the current global top companies, among others Alphabet and Spotify are known for being pioneers in viewing marketing agility as the necessary next step for successful marketing in the increasingly uncertain environments (Think with Google, 2021 & Kalaighnam et al. 2021, p. 12).

It can be argued that marketing agility is especially relevant for internationally operating companies. International companies must understand the requirements of different markets and the changes in consumer behavior, legislation, and other external factors in their operating environments. Compared to firms operating only in their domestic markets, international firms need to adapt and adjust their operations more often to respond to the different market needs and to be able to enter and succeed in new markets (Gomes et al. 2020)

1.1 Research gap

In recent years, the interest in marketing agility research has increased (e.g. Moi & Cabiddu 2020, Gligor & Bozkurt 2021, Thoumrungroje & Racela 2021). Due to the novelty of the topic in this context, the main focus in previous research has been on defining marketing agility and conceptualization of the role of different factors in marketing agility (e.g. Kalaighnam et al. 2021, Elo & Silva 2022).

There have been a few studies exploring the drivers of marketing agility. However, in the empirical studies the scope has mainly been limited to a single organization, single industry, or single country. Osei et al. (2018) analyse drivers and implementation of marketing agility in the context of emerging markets through a single-case study on African multinational enterprise Blues Skies. They find international marketing agility depended upon relationship building, social responsibility, and innovativeness in standardization and adaptation approach. However, they examined international marketing agility in the context of a single emerging economy multinational enterprise, and they propose multi-case approach for future research. Asseraf et al. (2019) assess the drivers and impact of

marketing agility on international market performance, drawing on the resource-based view and dynamic capabilities perspective. In their research, they found that marketing planning capability and flexibility maintenance were positively related to international marketing agility. However, in their study they only examined Israeli companies, and they note in their paper multi-country research as potential future research direction. Supreethi and Suresh (2021) study factors influencing marketing agility in garment industries. They examined the relationships between the factors utilizing a Total Interpretive Structural Modelling (TISM) approach. In their paper, Supreethi and Suresh found that training and development, responsiveness, robustness, and organizational agility were linked to achieving marketing agility in the context of garment industries. Thourunroj and Racela (2022) find a connection between international marketing agility and new technology adoption studying small and medium-sized enterprises in Thailand. The results from these studies are not necessarily generalizable.

The different factors considered in different studies also show there is no clear scientific consensus on what the main factors connected to marketing agility are. Considering the recognized need for more agile marketing, I argue it is valuable to expand the existing research by examining factors influencing marketing agility based on data from different organizations, industries, and countries.

The need for further research in this area has been flagged by researchers of the discipline. For example, Kalaighnam et al. (2021) review in their paper the previous marketing agility research and outline a roadmap for future research. They discuss the concept of international marketing agility and its role in navigating through fast-paced and uncertain environments. The authors also explore the concept of marketing agility as a new and more flexible framework for organizations. They call for more conceptual and empirical research and list nearly 50 priority topics for future studies. The COVID19 outbreak and the ongoing global pandemic crisis has further highlighted the importance of research in this area. Moi & Cabiddu (2022, p. 9) argue in their paper that the unique nature and novelty of the COVID19 crisis has created a need for new theorization on how

businesses could embed agility in their marketing strategy for more resilience and better coping with turbulent market conditions.

Besides contributing to the research in this area, the study can also provide practical implications for international companies. Speed and the ability to change direction fast are regarded important by marketing professionals worldwide (Deloitte, 2021, p. 20). Understanding better the factors that drive or impede marketing agility can help international companies to build the foundations for agile marketing or to improve their current practices to reach better performance. Through my own professional experience in digital marketing role at an international e-commerce company, I have gained insights to one company's approach and views of agility within this context. This has strengthened my belief of the industry relevance of this topic.

1.2 Research questions and aims

In my thesis, I will examine the relationship between organizational factors and marketing agility in international firms. With this study, I seek out to contribute to filling a gap in existing research by providing insights into how organizational factors impact marketing agility in international companies. The theoretical work of Kalaighnam et al. (2021) suggests organizational factors impacting marketing agility are marketing technology, organizational structure, organizational capabilities, organizational budgeting, and organizational culture. As the focus of their research was on conceptualizing marketing agility and providing suggestions for future research directions, these factors were presented as part of a conceptual model but their impact on marketing agility was not tested. The aim of this study is to expand on this existing theoretical work and test the relationships between the organizational factors identified and marketing agility in the context of international firms. The research question is as follows:

RQ: How are the different organizational factors (marketing technology, organizational structure, organizational capabilities, organizational budgeting, and organizational culture) impacting marketing agility in international firms?

1.3 Definitions of key concepts

The key concepts in this study are agility, marketing agility, and international firm. The definitions used for the purposes of this study are as follows:

Agility refers to “rapid, continuous and systematic evolutionary adaption and entrepreneurial innovation direct at gaining and/or maintaining competitive advantage”, as defined by Baškarada and Koronios (2018, p. 6). This definition encompasses many attributes found in the most common definitions for agility: speed, adaptiveness, innovativeness, but also highlights the role of the firm in actively and continuously partaking in a continuous process.

Marketing agility refers to agility specifically in the context of the marketing discipline, using the definition coined by Kalaighnam et al. (2021, p. 1). As per their definition, marketing agility is understood as “the extent to which an entity rapidly iterates between making sense of the market and executing marketing decisions to adapt to the market”. In other words, marketing agility refers to ability to quickly understand both challenges and opportunities in the markets and take the right action. An entity regarded to operate with high marketing agility, is able to iterate with speed between the sense-making and execution.

The focus of this study will be narrowed down to international firms. The definition of an international company varies from author to author: it may be based for example on activity outside of the firm’s home country, investment outside of the home country, or the share of sales originating from outside of the home country. For the purposes of this thesis, an international firm will be defined as a company conducting business in two or

more countries, following the definition of international business of Daniels and Radebaugh (1989).

1.4 Delimitations of the study

There are some delimitations to my study. Firstly, the aim of my study is to examine the impact of organizational factors on marketing agility in the context of international firms. As I focus only on the marketing discipline and international companies, the results of the study may be only relevant in these contexts. The study will not include companies operating only in their domestic markets or focus on other areas where agility may be relevant, and for this reason the results may not be generalizable to those contexts.

Secondly, when it comes to the factors examined in this study, the scope of this study was narrowed down to organizational factors. This was done due to feasibility within the planned scope of a master's thesis work. Previous research including Kalaighnam et al (2021) whose marketing agility construct I am building upon, has noted other groupings of factors, such as leadership factors, potentially impacting marketing agility. Considering this, it should be noted the factors examined in this thesis are not representing an exhaustive list of factors potentially impacting marketing agility.

Lastly, based on previous research, I assume marketing agility provides benefits for international companies. However, the focus of my thesis is not to evaluate the benefits or disadvantages of marketing agility itself. Therefore, my work will not provide theoretical contributions or managerial implications regarding the value of marketing agility for international firms.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter 1, the theoretical framework of this study will be presented in chapter 2. This second chapter will provide literature review focusing on the agility and marketing agility research and the chapter presents the theoretical framework for this thesis.

Following, the methodology will be presented in chapter 3. In this chapter, first the research approach will be discussed, and the hypotheses formulated. Next, the research design will be explained. This will be followed by discussion of the data collection methods and sample. At the end of chapter 3, the reliability and validity of this study will be discussed.

Next, in chapter 4 the results of this study will be presented. In this chapter, I will first evaluate and confirm the assumptions before moving on to presenting the regression analysis results. Following, a summary of findings will be presented. At the end of the chapter, the findings will be briefly discussed.

Lastly, in the concluding chapter 5, the theoretical contributions and managerial implications will be discussed. Following, the limitations of this study will be discussed. This last chapter will be concluded by providing suggestions and potential focus areas for future research.

2 Theoretical framework

This chapter creates the theoretical framework for this thesis, building upon previous research conducted in related areas. First, a literature overview of agility research will be provided. Second, conceptualizations and relevant previous research in marketing agility will be discussed. Lastly, the antecedents of marketing agility identified in previous research will be presented.

2.1 Agility

Change and uncertainty arising from accelerated growth enabled by technology, political instability, climate concerns, and other phenomena are constantly shaping and reshaping the world around us. While many solutions for firms to cope with this have been proposed, agility is perhaps one of the concepts gaining most traction in recent years. Businesses are pursuing agility increasingly across all business units as it is viewed as important for business performance (Deloitte 2019). Existing research also supports the idea that agility can help firms perform better (e.g., Christofi et al. 2021, Zhou et al. 2019, Vaillant & Lafuente 2018).

Agility first emerged in research in the 1990s (Zhou et al 2019, p. 1). At first, agility gained traction mainly among manufacturing and supply chain management disciplines. Within this context, Kidd (1994) defined agility as “a rapid and proactive adaptation of enterprise elements of unexpected and unpredicted changes”. While the ability to adapt quickly to changes taking place is often central in the conceptualizations of agility, it is commonly understood as more than only reactivity to external events. For example, Sharifi and Zhang (1999) define agility in the context of manufacturing as “The ability to cope with unexpected challenges, to survive unprecedented threats posed by the business environment, and to take advantage of changes and opportunities”. As conveyed by this definition, agility can also be understood to encompass proactive seeking, identifying, and seizing of opportunities in the market.

The agile manifesto, published in 2001 by software practitioners, is regarded as the key trigger for the increased attention to agile methods (Agile Manifesto; 2001). The agile practices, principles and methods outlined in the Agile Manifesto provided an alternative approach to the traditional waterfall methodology in the context of software development. One of the authors of the agile manifesto, Jim Highsmith, defines agility as “the ability to both create and respond to change in order to profit in a turbulent business environment”. According to Highsmith, agility is not only about responsiveness but also finding a balance between flexibility and stability (Mundra, 2018, p. 20, p. 28).

Furthermore, in more recent research stability and balance have also been highlighted in the conceptualization of agility. For example, Doz (2020) argues that more companies should focus on fostering strategic agility. Strategic agility here refers to being adaptive and flexible, but simultaneously consistent and purposeful in taking action. In other words, it is about taking the right action at the right time and retaining stability. While Doz here conceptualizes this balancing act between reactivity and stability as strategic agility, many other definitions of agility also include retaining stability and balance.

While many conceptualizations of agility have focused on the speed and ability to adapt quickly in response to the unexpected, the previously mentioned element of stability maintenance and also proactiveness have also been considered in many. See Table 1 below for an overview of the previous conceptualizations of agility:

Table 1. Agility literature

Author(s)	Year	Definition of agility
Kidd	1994	A rapid and proactive adaptation of enterprise elements of unexpected and unpredicted changes
Dove	1999	An effective integration of response ability and knowledge management in order to rapidly, efficiently, and accurately adapt to any unexpected (or unpredictable) change in both proactive and reactive

		business/customer needs and opportunities without compromising with the cost or the quality of the product/process.
Sharifi and Zhang	1999	The ability to cope with unexpected challenges, to survive unprecedented threats posed by the business environment, and to take advantage of changes and opportunities
Yusuf et al.	1999	The successful application of competitive bases such as speed, flexibility, innovation, and quality by the means of the integration of reconfigurable resource and best practices of knowledge-rich environment to provide customer-driven products and services in a fast-changing environment
McGaughney	1999	A firm being able to respond both successfully to challenges and changes, but with speed or quickness
Sambamurthy, Bharadwaj, and Grover	2003	The ability to detect opportunities and seize those competitive market opportunities by assembling requisite assets, knowledge, and relationships with speed and surprise
Setia, Sambamurthy, and Closs	2008	The ability to discover new opportunities, harness the existing knowledge, assets, and relationships to seize these opportunities, and adapt to sudden changes in business condition
Doz and Kosonen	2008	The capacity to continuously adjust and adapt strategic directions in a core business to create value for a company.
Conboy	2009	The ongoing readiness to create, embrace and learn from change while contributing to customer value through the collective and relationship components inherent to agility.

Doz and Kosonen	2010	The thoughtful and purposive interplay on the part of top management between three meta-capabilities: strategic sensitivity, leadership unity, and resource fluidity
Lu and Ramamurthy	2011	A firm's ability to cope with rapid, relentless, and uncertain changes and thrive in a competitive environment of continually and unpredictably changing opportunities
Roberts and Grover	2012	The degree to which a firm can sense and respond quickly to customer-based opportunities for innovation and competitive action
Fourné et al.	2014	A meta-capability that creates and deploys a dynamic balance between sensing local opportunities, enacting global complementarities and appropriating local values
Lewis et al.	2014	Flexible, mindful responses to constantly changing environments
Weber and Tarba	2014	Ability of management to constantly and rapidly sense and respond to a changing environment by intentionally making strategic moves and consequently adapting the necessary organizational configuration
Eckstein et al.	2015	The ability to sense short term, temporary changes in the supply chain and market environment, and to rapidly and flexibly to respond to those changes
Chang, Chen, and Huang	2015	The ability of pair of partners to integrate and reconfigure resources to respond and adjust to environmental shifts
Cegarra-Navarro et al.	2016	Firm's capability to deal with changes that come from the business environment by using rapid and innovative responses
Felipe et al.	2016	A firm's ability of sensing environmental changes and responding efficiently and effectively to them

Teece et al.	2016	The flexibility and adaptability of organization in being responsive to preferred consumer choices and additionally supplying the products timely
Baškarada and Koronios	2018	Rapid, continuous, and systematic evolutionary adaptation and entrepreneurial innovation directed at gaining and/or maintaining competitive advantage.
Highsmith in Mundra	2018	The ability to both create and respond to change in order to profit in a turbulent business environment
Osei et al.	2019	Firm's ability to mobilize firm resources and expertise to adapt or react to changes in the business environment to exploit market opportunities in timely manners
Cunha et al.	2020	Timely decision-making to execute business strategies in advance of or in reaction to ongoing environmental trends
Doz	2020	Strategic agility: The ability to exploit, or create to one's advantage changing patterns of resource deployment in a thoughtful and purposeful but also fast and nimble way rather than remain hostage to preset plans and existing business models

Table 1. Agility definitions

For the purposes of this thesis, I will use the definition of Baškarada and Koronios (2018). They define agility as *“Rapid, continuous and systematic evolutionary adaptation and entrepreneurial innovation directed at gaining and/or maintaining competitive advantage”*. In this conceptualization, the common attributes found in the definitions of agility are reflected: on the one hand, speed, and adaptiveness and on the other hand, proactive discovery of opportunities and the creation of new opportunities through innovation. Additionally, this definition entails a component of continuous, systemic improvement. I find that this highlights well how agility is not something that is performed only when encountered unexpected events. In this conceptualization, agility is also

clearly regarded as something that requires ongoing attention and a systematic approach. Following this definition, agility is by nature strategic.

2.2 Marketing agility

In the area of marketing, it is not a new phenomenon for companies to seek alternatives to traditional administrative marketing in order to thrive in today's uncertain, complex, and unpredictable world. For example, entrepreneurial marketing research has been steadily increasing since the 1990s. Entrepreneurial marketing is an approach drawing upon innovativeness and challenging the norms. In entrepreneurial marketing, identifying non-conventional opportunities and using available resources more creatively are key characteristics (Hallbäck & Gabrielsson 2013, p. 2).

In the context of the marketing discipline, discussion around agility has increased in the past decade. In the very recent years, the disruptiveness of the global COVID 19 pandemic has further highlighted the need for more flexibility and adaptiveness. According to the CMO survey (2021a, 2021b), the top marketing managers in UK and U.S. companies report both an increase of importance of marketing within their companies and more focus on digital channels following the pandemic.

The crisis has also made it more apparent that responsiveness is not only about gaining competitive advantage. Deloitte (2021, p. 19) states in their Global Marketing Trends report that the changes in customer behavior triggered by the pandemic forced companies to either shift to agile digital channel strategy or risk their foothold in the market. Indeed, the pandemic has accelerated the shift to digital marketing channels and increased uncertainty, which has highlighted the need for more agile marketing.

However, these trends were to be observed already in the previous years. The importance of digital marketing has increased strongly in the past decade. Statista (2021)

reports that in 2020 digital advertising spend surpassed traditional marketing mediums globally. They also project the worldwide digital advertising spend to continue to grow in the upcoming years. Naturally, the digital focus of companies originates from changing consumer behavior in the markets. By media consumption, television has been the worldwide number one channel for decades (Statista 2020). However, in 2019 internet consumption surpassed television and online media became globally the most consumed media (Statista 2020). The global consumption of online media can be expected to grow further. According to Deloitte (2021, p. 19), 63% of global consumers state that they will use more digital technologies after the pandemic. They also found in their report that 66% of consumers report increased appreciation towards digital technologies.

While the need for marketing agility has been clearly recognized, there have been different conceptualization proposed (See table 2 below).

Table 2. Marketing agility literature

Author(s)	Year	Definition of marketing agility
Accardi-Petersen	2011	The ability to outpace a firm's competition in the marketplace by being nimble enough to realign resources as necessary
Asseraf et al.	2019	An international firm's ability to respond rapidly to changes in its international markets and competitive conditions
Zhou et al.	2019	A firm's ability to proactively anticipate and sense marketing opportunities, and to respond quickly and flexibly to those opportunities to better satisfy customer needs
Homburg, Theel, and Hohenberg	2020	A firm's strategic means for executing growth activities by the marketing organization and its members through simplified structures and processes, fast decision-making, and trial and error learning

Kalaiganam et al.	2021	The extent to which an entity rapidly iterates between making sense of the market and executing marketing decisions to adapt to the market
Golgeci et al.	2022	The ability to do more with less and proactively remain ahead of competition
Khan et al.	2022	The ability of a business to sense and react to market opportunities for competitive actions, and the capability to identify and seize opportunities for innovation
Moi & Cabiddu	2022	Being responsive to customers' needs and expectations, flexibly reconfiguring marketing objectives and resources accordingly, adapting to ever-changing market conditions at short notice and fulfilling market needs more effectively
Thoumrunroje & Racela	2022	International marketing agility: The firm's ability to respond and adapt marketing plans; the ability to create close outside-in and inside-out relationships; the ability to consistently and quickly initiate international marketing plans; and the ability to predict and respond to future international marketing needs

In some previous studies, marketing agility has been approached from the dynamic capabilities' perspective. For example, Asseraf et al. (2018, p. 3) define international marketing agility as a dynamic capability consisting of two capabilities: marketing planning and flexibility maintenance. In their definition, marketing planning capability refers to the ability to plan and implement a clear direction. Flexibility maintenance refers to the readiness and ability to introduce new ways of decision-making and apply a multiple perspective approach. According to Asseraf et al., marketing agility requires both marketing planning and flexibility maintenance in a balanced manner. Also Zhou et al. (2019) regard marketing agility as a dynamic capability. In their conceptualization, marketing

agility is the ability to both anticipate and sense marketing opportunities, and to exploit the identified opportunities quickly and flexibly. As the limitation of the conceptualizations approaching marketing agility from the dynamic capabilities perspective, it could be argued that proactive and continuous development receive little attention.

In my thesis, I will follow the definition of marketing agility coined by Kalaighnam et al. (2021). The work of Kalaighnam et al. is based on their review of several previous marketing agility frameworks. They define marketing agility as “the extent to which an entity rapidly iterates between making sense of the market and executing marketing decisions to adapt to the market”. Here sense-making refers to the reaction to unforeseen or ambiguous development. Sense-making means how the entity builds an understanding of its surrounding environment and creates order from unordered or even chaotic environments. Marketing decision-making refers here to both reactive and proactive marketing decisions and understanding when the best act is to refrain from making changes (Kalaighnam et al. 2021; p. 2-6). To paraphrase this, marketing agility is conceptualized as an iterative process of understanding the environment to identify threats and opportunities and taking purposeful, right-timed action. The speed of iteration between the sense-making and decision-making processes is a central element in this construct. Marketing agility requires fast iteration between these two processes while maintaining balance and stability.

2.3 Antecedents of marketing agility

When it comes to the antecedents of marketing agility, there is only limited research done so far. As research interest towards marketing agility has increased only in the recent years, much of previous research has focused on conceptualizing marketing agility or understanding its impact on firm performance (e.g. Kalaighnam et al. 2021, Zhou et al. 2019, Khan et al. 2022). There are a few studies examining potential antecedents of marketing agility focusing on a specific case organization, industry, and/or market (e.g.

Asseraf et al. 2019, Osei et al. 2018, Moi & Cabiddu 2021). However, in these different drivers were examined and the results cannot be considered generalizable.

In this study, I will build upon the marketing agility construct of Kalaighnam et al. (2021). As their research reviewed past research done in the field of marketing and connected fields, I find this to provide a good foundation for further examination. In their paper on marketing agility, Kalaighnam et al. (2021) identify based on a literature review and interviews conducted with 22 senior managers, potential antecedents of marketing agility. These identified factors are included in their model of marketing agility (see Figure 1). These internal antecedents are categorized under four groups: leadership factors, employee factors, team factors, and organizational factors. The conceptual work of Kalaighnam et al. provides a starting point for identifying factors which have an impact on marketing agility.

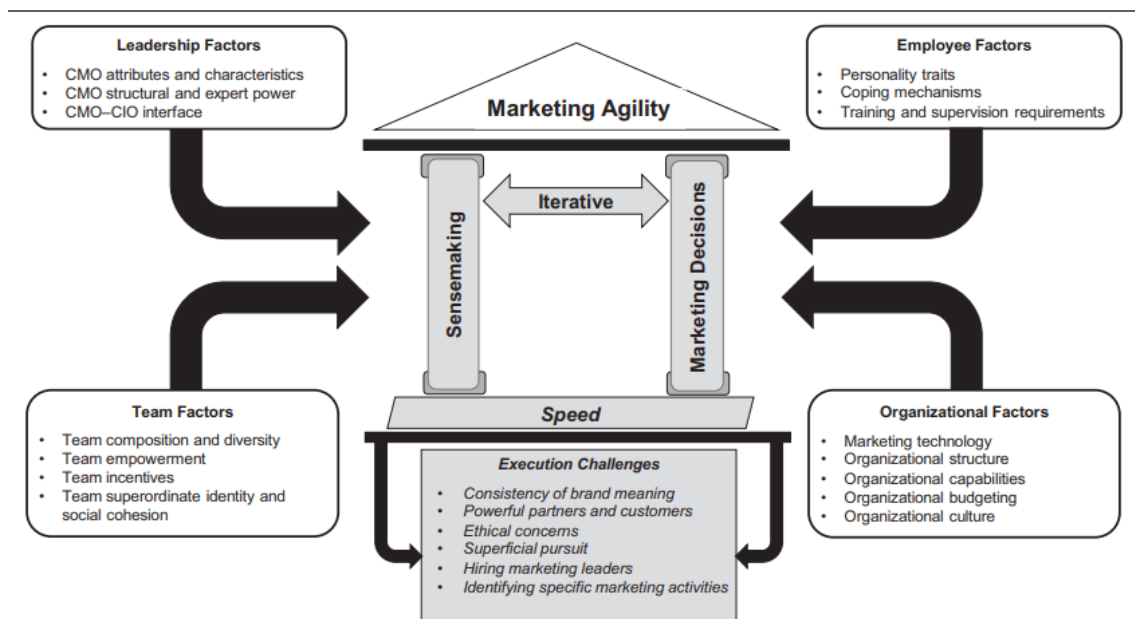


Figure 1. Marketing Agility (Kalaighnam et al. 2021, p. 4).

Given the work of Kalaighnam et al. was of conceptual nature, an empirical examination of the factors that impact upon marketing agility seems warranted. In the empirical part

of my thesis, I will expand on this theoretical work and test the relationships between the organizational factors identified here and marketing agility in the context of international firms.

3 Methodology

In this chapter, the research methodology will be introduced in detail. First, the research approach will be discussed, and the hypothesis will be formulated. Second, the research design will be presented. Following, the data collection method and sample used will be explained. Lastly, the reliability and validity of the study will be discussed.

3.1 Research approach

As mentioned previously, in this study, I will draw upon the marketing agility construct of Kalaighnam et al. (2021). From the marketing agility model proposed in their paper, I will focus on the organizational factors. Kalaighnam et al. highlight in their model five organizational factors: marketing technology, organizational structure, organizational capabilities, organizational budgeting, and organizational culture (Kalaighnam et al. 2021, p. 4). While Kalaighnam et al. identified these factors, the purpose of their paper was not to test their hypotheses but rather to guide direction for future research. Due to this, in their paper the model was not tested. In this sub-chapter, I will briefly provide definition for these organizations factors and present the hypotheses of this study.

Marketing technology (MarTech) refers to strategies, solutions, and technology firms use to reach their marketing and business goals. This encompasses for example automation solutions, data virtualization and artificial intelligence (AI) (Baltes 2017, p. 2). Kalaighnam et al. argue MarTech plays an enabling factor in achieving and sustaining marketing agility. In pursuing marketing agility, it is necessary to be able to have timely access to relevant data and be able to grasp insights from large amounts of data. MarTech enabling data virtualization provides a unified and structured data access layer for marketing insights and decision-making. MarTech solutions like machine learning and deep learning also allow for exploitation of different types of data (Kalaighnam et al. 2021, p. 11). Considering the ever-increasing number of channels, new technologies, and data signals available for marketing decision-making, it is easy to recognize the role

technology could play in marketing agility. For example, technological solutions providing easier access to relevant data points could improve sense-making processes and automation can enable quick and scalable implementation of marketing decisions. The first hypothesis is as follows:

H1: Marketing technology capabilities and perceived marketing agility in international firms are positively related.

When it comes to organizational structure, Kalaighnam et al. argue not all structures are the same. In order to enable marketing agility, they view flexible structures that encourage cross-functional collaboration and knowledge-sharing fundamental. They also highlight the importance of retaining autonomy and ownership on the team-level, while enabling frequent touchpoints and coordination across teams and functions (Kalaighnam et al. 2021, p. 12). Given that marketing agility requires acting quickly when opportunities or threats arise, having the ownership on the team level to make decisions and take actions could be assumed to contribute to marketing agility. Cross-functional knowledge-sharing can help better transfer and make sense of information. Close collaboration between functions can support allocating resources needed for marketing decisions. Following from this, the second hypothesis is:

H2: Organizational structure characterized by low hierarchies, empowered teams, and cross-functional collaboration and perceived marketing agility in international firms are positively related.

Organizational capabilities, here referring to the simultaneous discovery and delivery processes or routines, are also highlighted by Kalaighnam et al. Continuous learning and simultaneous implementation of past learnings, the “Test and learn” approach, is stated to help firms increase their marketing agility. As firms operate in continuously changing environments, marketing teams need to be able to simultaneously move an

idea to be tested or implemented while continuing to explore new ideas (Kalaighnam et al. 2021, p. 12–13). As the third hypothesis, I posit:

H3: Organizational capabilities in simultaneous discovery and delivery processes or routines, and perceived marketing agility in international firms are positively related.

Furthermore, Kalaighnam et al. argue marketing agility is not possible under the traditional marketing budgeting process, where resources typically are linked to a specific channel, product, or market. They argue marketing managers should be able to move resources fluidly across different channels, products, and markets according to needs (Kalaighnam et al. 2021, p. 13). As marketing agility is about quickly iterating between sense-making and making marketing decisions, having flexibility in organizational budgeting would seem to allow for capturing opportunities that under the traditional budgeting process may not be possible to seize. The fourth hypothesis is:

H4: Organizational budgeting characterized by marketing team involvement and flexibility, and perceived marketing agility in international firms are positively related.

Lastly, among the organizational factors hypothesized to influence marketing agility, Kalaighnam et al. note organizational culture. They propose marketing agility needs an organizational culture where under uncertainty, acting fast is preferred over caution and waiting to have all the information. They also highlight the importance of continuous development and growth. An organizational culture that embraces experimental mindset and continuous learning is regarded positively impacting marketing agility. An organizational culture following strictly established rules and extensive planning and control is not viewed compatible with marketing agility (Kalaighnam et al. 2021, p.14). Following, the last hypothesis is:

H5: Organizational culture valuing speed, growth, flexibility, and continuous change and perceived marketing agility in international firms are positively related.

To summarize, the hypotheses selected for this study are the following:

Table 3. Hypotheses of the study and connected organizational factors.

No.	Hypothesis	Variable
H1	Marketing technology capabilities and perceived marketing agility in international firms are positively related.	Marketing technology
H2	Organizational structure characterized by low hierarchies, empowered teams and cross-functional collaboration and perceived marketing agility in international firms are positively related.	Organizational structure
H3	Organizational capabilities in simultaneous discovery and delivery processes or routines and perceived marketing agility in international firms are positively related.	Organizational capabilities
H4	Organizational budgeting characterized by marketing team involvement and flexibility and perceived marketing agility in international firms are positively related.	Organizational budgeting
H5	Organizational culture valuing speed, growth, flexibility, and continuous change and perceived marketing agility in international firms are positively related	Organizational culture

To illustrate the expected relationship between the organizational factors examined in this study and the marketing agility construct, the figure 2 below provides a visualization of this:

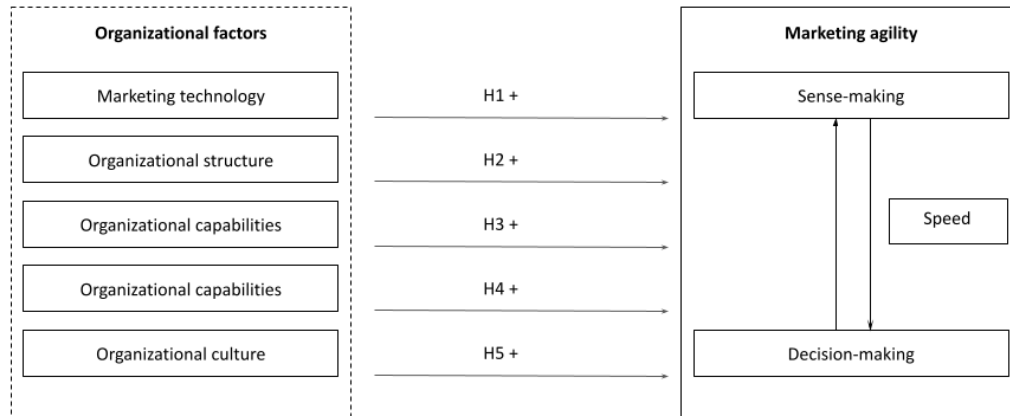


Figure 2. Hypothesized organizational drivers of marketing agility in international firms.

3.2 Research design

The research will be conducted as a quantitative study. For the study, a questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was formulated with statements corresponding to marketing agility and organizational factors chosen to be examined. The questions were formulated to be Likert-type to enable statistical analysis of the potential positive relation between organizational factors and marketing agility in international firms. For the data analysis, linear regression analysis is used. In the analysis, IBM SPSS Statistics was utilized.

To capture perceived marketing agility construct in the questionnaire, four questions were formulated to gather input from the respondents regarding marketing agility within their organization. For each organizational factor, a minimum of two questions were added in the questionnaire.

Table 4. Example questions in the questionnaire.

Construct	Question
Marketing agility (Sense-making, speed)	“We are able to recognize new trends and emerging opportunities among the first in industry.”
Marketing agility (Decision-making, speed)	“When there is disruption impacting our operations, we are quick to adjust and implement necessary changes.”
Organizational budgeting	<p>“Our marketing team is actively involved in the process of marketing budget definition.”</p> <p>“We are able to react upon dynamic market opportunities through flexibility in our budget constraints.”</p>

In the table below, an overview of the constructs and corresponding elements in the questionnaire is provided:

Table 5. Constructs and corresponding questionnaire elements

	Questionnaire elements
Marketing agility	1–4
Marketing technology	5–7
Organizational structure	8–10
Organizational capabilities	11–12
Organizational budgeting	13–14
Organizational culture	15–18

3.3 Data collection and sample

The data used for the analysis is primary data that was collected through a questionnaire. The data collection method was chosen to enable the gathering of a sufficient amount of input from marketing professionals. Compared to for example in-depth interview, a questionnaire requires less time commitment, which can help to gather responses from more people. Also considering that this study aims to test five hypotheses regarding the impact of organizational factors with a quantitative approach, it is crucial to have sufficient data input from the marketing professionals to be able to provide solid basis for the analysis.

All statements in the survey were formed to be aligned with the Likert scale, which allows for statistical analysis of the survey responses. The survey was sampled, developed, and pilot tested before sharing it more widely. The questionnaire was created using Webropol and shared online to marketing professionals.

The questionnaire was shared within three large industry groups on LinkedIn: Advertising & Marketing Industry Professionals, Digital Marketing: Social Media, Search, Mobile & more, and The Marketing Network. The survey was sent out to a total of 455 marketing industry professionals. In the sample, a total of 39 marketing professionals currently employed in international firms were included. The response rate was at 8.6%. The questionnaire was sent to marketing professionals via LinkedIn In-Mail functionality. This potentially had a negative impact on the response rate, as with the free LinkedIn version these In-Mail messages are first received as message requests when sent to contact outside of one's own connections and the request needs to be approved by the respondent. The low response rate poses a risk to the representativeness of the sample, as large samples are more likely to be representative of the total population (Saunders 2007, p. 211). Additionally, the low response rate required additional data collection in order to reach a sample size large enough for statistically significant results.

The sample selection approach could be considered close to a random sample: From the non-alphabetical LinkedIn group member lists, marketing professionals from international firms were included in the sample until enough responses were collected. It should be noted that as these groups are open for all and not exclusive to marketing professionals from international firms, there was inclusion criteria applied: all members selected in the sample were currently employed in an international firm at a marketing role and this information had to be publicly available in their LinkedIn profile. All potential respondents were qualified through a manual check. In the sample, marketers representing a variety of international companies and nationalities were included.

3.4 Reliability and validity

In this subchapter, the reliability and validity of this study will be discussed. Reliability refers to the consistency of findings and potential to replicate the results. Reliability can be assessed through examining whether the results would be replicable at a different time and by different observers, and whether there is transparency in how insights were gained from the raw data. Validity refers to whether the findings measure what was aimed to be measured (Saunders 2007, p. 149–150)

For the study, a quantitative approach was chosen and data was collected through a questionnaire and the full questionnaire is included (See Appendix 1) for transparency. As linear regression analysis was chosen as the analysis method, the findings could be replicated by another researcher. These elements contribute positively to the reliability of this study.

For the purposes of this study, primary data was used. Input from marketing professionals in international firms was collected using an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was created using Webropol, which enabled capturing the data and importing the responses to statistical software platform IBM SPSS Statistics for data analysis.

The questionnaire was distributed on professional social media platform LinkedIn. While this method was chosen for the ease of access to marketing professionals of different nationalities and from companies originating a variety of countries, this also limits the pool of potential respondents to those active on the platform and within the three selected industry groups (Advertising & Marketing Industry Professionals, Digital Marketing: Social Media, Search, Mobile & more, and The Marketing Network). Within these groups, the respondents were selected from the group member lists. Selecting individual respondents instead of posting the survey to the groups was chosen to ensure only the planned target group of marketing professional in international firms would be included.

I aimed at a random sample selecting marketing professionals from the non-alphabetical group member lists top down. To ensure the respondents were part of the target group, I performed a manual check to confirm they were at the time of sending out the survey having a job title corresponding to marketing roles and were currently employed at an international firm. Self-employed marketing professionals and marketing agency employees were excluded from the study, as the study deals with organizational factors specifically. However, the potential impact of the LinkedIn algorithm should be considered: there is limited transparency on whether the lists displayed are same for all or if these are impacted by the viewer's LinkedIn profile.

Potential bias could arise from membership within these groups: in order to be able to send out the messages, I had to join these groups as a member. However, as a researcher I was not previously active in these groups and among the selected respondents <0.5% were within my pre-existing connections. I decided against excluding these respondents from the selection, as I am currently myself working in a marketing role in a large international firm and I believe in this case excluding all personal connections could have introduced more bias than it would have prevented.

With this approach, a total of 455 respondents were selected to receive the questionnaire. With the response rate at 8.6%, a total of 39 responses were included in the

sample. For the purposes of this study, this was considered sufficient to respond to the main research questions set forth. However, a larger sample would be recommended in order to ensure reaching significant results on individual predictor level.

As the responses were submitted anonymously online, answers were unlikely to be socially influenced. However, as the questionnaire required subjective perceptions from the perspective of marketing professionals instead of objective factual inputs, some level of bias is likely to arise from different interpretations and perspectives of the respondents.

Finally, as discussed among the delimitations noted in the introductory chapter of this thesis, this study is limited to the context of marketing in international firms. While results can be considered generalizable within this context, the results cannot be considered generalizable to other functions or types of firms.

4 Results

In order to answer the research questions set for this study and to provide insights into the impact of organizational factors on marketing agility in international firms, empirical evaluation is needed. In this chapter, the empirical research conducted as part of this study will be presented. First, the data will be assessed to evaluate and confirm assumptions before proceeding to analysis. Following, the collected data will be analysis utilizing regression analysis to answer the research questions set forth. The chapter will be concluded with a summary of findings to provide a brief overview of the key results.

4.1 Evaluation and confirmation of assumptions

Before proceeding with the analysis of the results, it is necessary to first evaluate and confirm the assumptions. In this sub-chapter, the data will be first checked for outliers, the independence of observation will be examined, and normality assessed.

First, to check the data for outliers, I looked at the standardized residuals. Here the standardized residuals should not be below -3.29 or above 3.29, as this would indicate outliers. From residual statistics, I can confirm no outliers in the data:

Table 6. Residual statistics.

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	2,7465	4,7475	3,9509	0,48270	39
Residual	-0,84259	0,87630	0,00000	0,39655	39
Std. Predicted Value	-2,495	1,650	0,000	1,000	39
Std. Residual	-1,980	2,059	0,000	0,932	39

a. Dependent Variable: Marketing agility

Next, a Durbin-Watson test was performed to check for independence of observations. Durbin-Watson test value at no less than 1 or greater than 3 confirms the independence of observations. As shown in Table 6 below, for the study data the Durbin-Watson value is at 2.125:

Table 7. Durbin-Watson test in model summary.

Model	Durbin-Watson
1	2,125
a. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational culture, Marketing technology, Organizational budgeting, Organizational structure, Organizational capabilities	
b. Dependent Variable: Marketing agility	

Following, the normality of observations was assessed. This was done through an analysis of the P-P plot of regression standardized residuals (See Figure 3 below). This figure shows observations line up around 45-degree slope, supporting the assumption of normality.

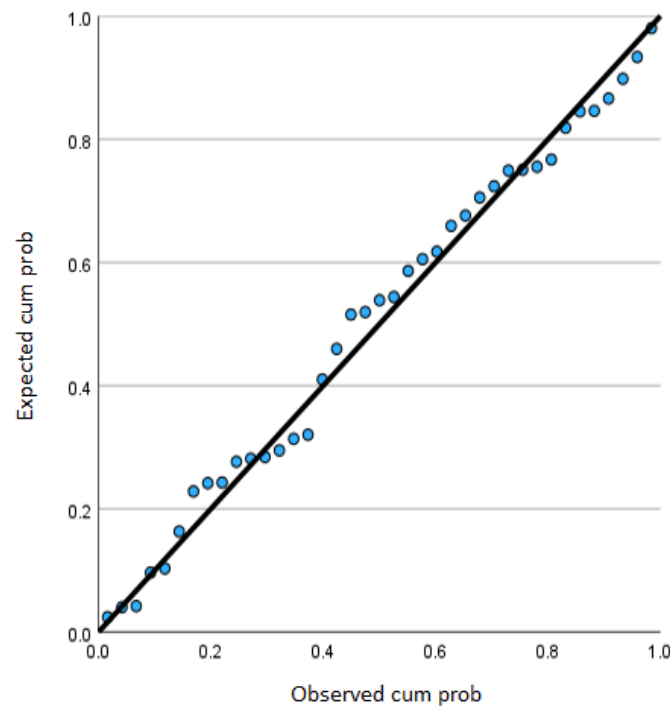


Figure 3. P-P plot of regression standardized residual.

Furthermore, I analyzed the histogram of distribution of dependent variable marketing agility (See Figure 4 below). Through an analysis of the histogram, a normal distribution of the dependent variable marketing agility was also confirmed:

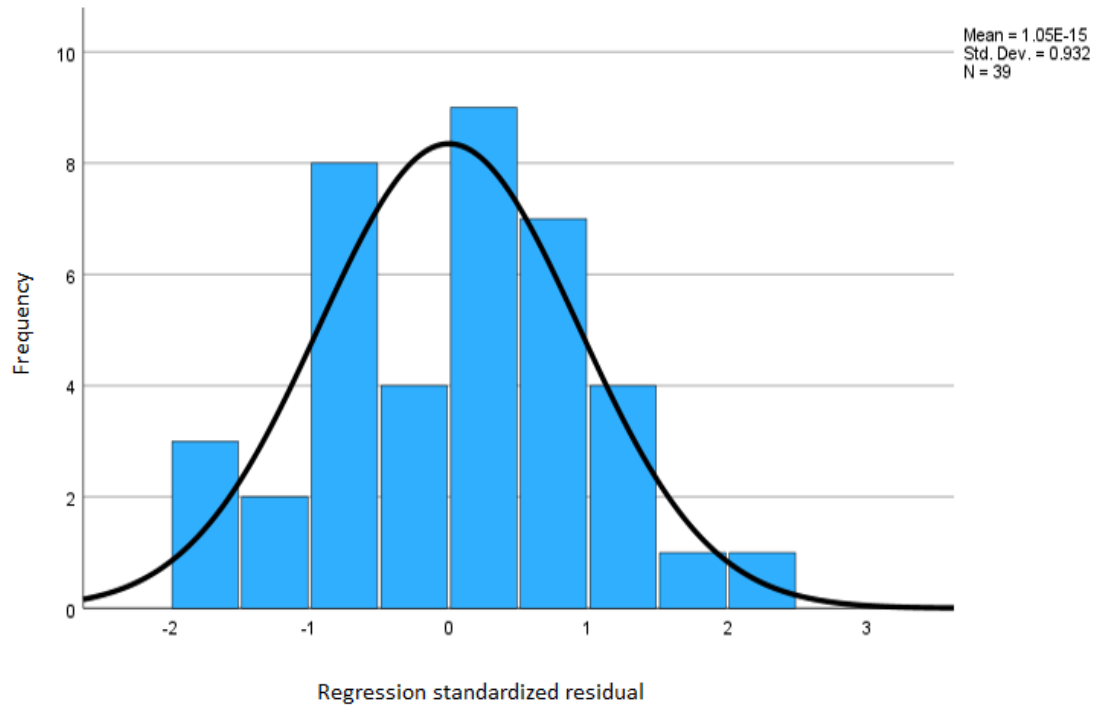


Figure 4. Histogram of distribution of dependent variable marketing agility.

Finally, I examined the scatterplot of the standardized residuals against the predicted values (See Figure 5 below). This shows no pattern, confirming our assumptions:

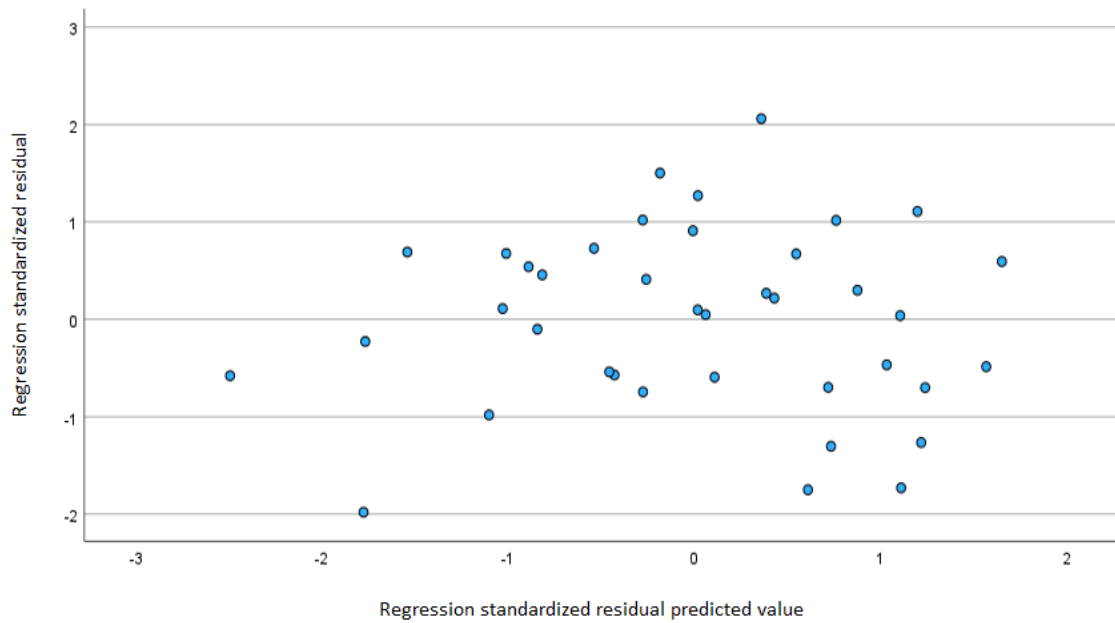


Figure 5. Scatterplot of dependent variable marketing agility.

After assessment of outliers, independence of observations, and normality, we can conclude that the assumptions were confirmed. This allows us to proceed with analysis of the results in the next sub-chapter.

4.2 Analysis of results

For this study, one main research question was set. The aim of this study was to understand how organizational factors (marketing technology, organizational structure, organizational capabilities, organizational budgeting, and organizational culture) impact marketing agility in international firms. To answer this question, primary data was collected via an online questionnaire. In this sub-chapter, I will examine the collected data and test the hypothesis drafted in Chapter 3 (See Table 3 p. 27). For the analysis, linear regressions analysis utilizing IBM SPSS Statistics software platform will be used.

4.2.1 Descriptive statistics

The data was collected through an online questionnaire with Likert-scale elements corresponding to the variables examined in the study. In the analysis, the elements of respective constructs were grouped weighting all elements equally.

As shown in the Table 8 below, all 39 cases were included in the sample. From the table, we can also see the means for different variables. We can observe means above 3,5 for all variables, indicating responses centered around agreeing. From the table we can also see the standard deviations for each variable.

Table 8. Descriptive statistics.

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Marketing agility	3,9509	0,62470	39
Marketing technology	3,5641	0,91496	39
Organizational structure	4,0256	0,71486	39
Organizational capabilities	3,6667	0,95513	39
Organizational budgeting	3,7179	0,94448	39
Organizational culture	3,7564	0,70824	39

For the model, the organizational factors were entered as variables. From the Table 9 below, we can see marketing technology, organizational structure, organizational capabilities, organizational budgeting, and organizational culture were entered as predictors and dependent variable was marketing agility. The enter method was used. No variables were removed from the model.

Table 9. Variables entered/removed for the model.

Model	Independent variables
1	Organizational culture, Marketing technology, Organizational budgeting, Organizational structure, Organizational capabilities

a. Dependent Variable: Marketing agility

b. All requested variables entered.

4.2.2 Inferential statistics

To examine whether organizational factors impact marketing agility, next the statistical test performed will be presented.

First, the R correlation was assessed. The R Square statistic, the coefficient of determination, supports that organizational factors are linked to marketing agility. For the model with organizational factors, the R Square 0,597 shows that 59.7% of the variance in marketing agility is explained by organizational factors.

Table 10. R Correlation in model summary.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.773 ^a	0,597	0,536	0,42553

a. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational culture, Marketing technology, Organizational budgeting, Organizational structure, Organizational capabilities

b. Dependent Variable: Marketing agility

Performing the ANOVA analysis confirms that the model with organizational factors works better than simply using the mean. The ANOVA table (See table 11 below) shows that the model using organizational factors was significantly better ($p < .001$) than a model without organizational factors. This demonstrates a statistically significant

relationship between organizational factors examined in this study and the dependent variable marketing agility.

Table 11. ANOVA.

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8,854	5	1,771	9,779	<,001 ^b
	Residual	5,975	33	0,181		
	Total	14,829	38			

a. Dependent Variable: Marketing agility

b. Predictors: (Constant), Organizational culture, Marketing technology, Organizational budgeting, Organizational structure, Organizational capabilities

In order to examine how the different organizational factors are related to marketing agility, I first conducted analysis of the Pearson correlations. The Pearson correlation coefficient for the predictor marketing agility shows the correlations between the different constructs: marketing agility, organizational structure, organizational capabilities, organizational budgeting, and organizational culture (See Table 12 below).

Table 12. Pearson correlations

	Marketing agility	Marketing technology	Organizational structure	Organizational capabilities	Organizational budgeting	Organizational culture
Marketing agility	1,000	0,441	0,595	0,677	0,364	0,687
Marketing technology	0,441	1,000	0,438	0,472	0,164	0,272
Organizational structure	0,595	0,438	1,000	0,565	0,511	0,671
Organizational capabilities	0,677	0,472	0,565	1,000	0,535	0,660
Organizational budgeting	0,364	0,164	0,511	0,535	1,000	0,490
Organizational culture	0,687	0,272	0,671	0,660	0,490	1,000

From the Pearson correlation coefficients, we can see organizational culture and marketing agility correlate positively to a strong degree ($r = 0,687$). A strong correlation to marketing agility can also be seen for organizational capabilities ($r = 0,677$) and organizational structure ($r = 0,595$). Between marketing agility and organizational budgeting, there is a positive correlation to a moderate degree ($r = 0,364$). Also marketing technology and marketing agility correlate positively to a moderate degree ($r = 0,441$).

In order to examine whether these relationships are significant and to understand which organizational factors are significantly contributing to the model, I examined the coefficients. While the ANOVA test confirmed the organizational factors impact marketing agility ($p < .001$), assessment of the coefficient will help us understand how the different organizational factors contribute to the model. Through this, we can understand, which organizational factors significantly impact marketing agility.

To analyse the coefficients, I will first take a look at the results of the t-test for the beta coefficients (See Table 13 below). A statistically significant result from the t-test confirms that adding the variable as a predictor in the model improves its predictive ability. If the t-test for the beta coefficient is not statistically significant, we can conclude that the variable does not significantly contribute to the model. For the organizational culture, we can note statistically significant t-test results were reached ($p = .032$). Also, it should be noted that for organizational capabilities the results were not far from reaching statistical significance ($p = .060$) and the t-test could be considered significant at 90% confidence interval. For the other variables, the t-test for the beta coefficient did not yield statistically significant results.

Based on this, we can conclude that marketing technology ($p = .324$), organizational structure ($p = .410$), and organizational budgeting ($p = .523$) are not significantly contributing to the model. Also organizational capabilities ($p = .060$) are not statistically significant contributor in the model at 95% confidence. Following, we can move on to examine

the variable with statistically significant beta coefficient t-test results, organizational culture.

Table 13. Coefficients

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.	95,0% Confidence Interval for B	
	B	Std. Error				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
(Constant)	1,296	0,447		2,903	0,007	0,388	2,205
Marketing technology	0,092	0,092	0,134	1,001	0,324	-0,095	0,278
Organizational structure	0,122	0,146	0,139	0,835	0,410	-0,175	0,418
Organizational capabilities	0,218	0,112	0,333	1,948	0,060	-0,010	0,445
Organizational budgeting	-0,063	0,093	-0,095	-0,677	0,503	-0,251	0,126
Organizational culture	0,339	0,151	0,384	2,242	0,032	0,031	0,647

a. Dependent Variable: Marketing

For organizational culture, we can see the unstandardized coefficient B value at 0,339. This shows a positive relationship between organizational culture and marketing agility. We can interpret this value as: for every unit increase in organizational culture, the dependent variable marketing agility will increase by the unstandardized beta coefficient value 0,339.

This is also visible if we look at the standardized coefficient Beta, which shows the standardized coefficient of the relationship between two variables. For organizational culture, we can see the standardized beta coefficient at 0,384. This we can read as: for every standard deviation increase in organizational culture, marketing agility will increase by 0,384 of a standard deviation.

4.3 Summary of findings

Evaluation and confirmation of assumptions confirmed no outliers, independence of observations, and normality in data. Based on the linear regression analysis of the collected data, I found that organizational factors influence marketing agility and 59.7% of the variance in marketing agility is explained by organizational factors.

When examining how the different organizational factors impact marketing agility, I found that organizational culture was the only variable statistically significantly impacting marketing agility ($p = .032$). Between organizational culture and marketing agility, a positive relationship was confirmed ($B = 0,339$, $Beta = 0,384$).

For the other factors, no statistically significant impact on marketing agility was detected. However, it should be noted that for organizational capabilities the results were close to reaching statistical significance ($p = .06$) and could actually be considered significant at 90% confidence interval. Also between organizational capabilities and marketing agility, the relationship was positive ($B = 0,218$, $Beta = 0,333$).

Based on the evaluation of results, hypotheses 1–4 are not supported. Following the analysis, H5 is supported. For a summary of the results, see the table below:

Table 14. Summary of results

No.	Hypothesis	Results	Supported
H1	Marketing technology capabilities and perceived marketing agility in international firms are positively related.	Not significant	No
H2	Organizational structure characterized by low hierarchies, empowered teams, and cross-	Not significant	No

	functional collaboration and perceived marketing agility in international firms are positively related.		
H3	Organizational capabilities in simultaneous discovery and delivery processes or routines, and perceived marketing agility in international firms are positively related.	Significant at 90% CI	No
H4	Organizational budgeting characterized by marketing team involvement and flexibility, and perceived marketing agility in international firms are positively related.	Not significant	No
H5	Organizational culture valuing speed, growth, flexibility, and continuous change and perceived marketing agility in international firms are positively related.	Significant	Yes

4.4 Discussion of findings

The aim of this study was to understand, whether organizational factors have an impact on marketing agility. The evaluation of the results confirmed that organizational factors are linked to marketing agility. However, not all variables were statistically significantly contributing to the model. On the contrary, based on the evaluation of results only organizational factors were found to be significantly impacting marketing agility and hypotheses 1–4 are not supported.

The results provided support that organizational culture valuing speed, growth, flexibility, and continuous change is positively related to marketing agility in international firms. I found this result interesting, as this shows marketing agility is less about the newest technology or a specific organizational setup, and more about the culture. The

relationship between an organizational culture embracing uncertainty and a learning mindset and marketing agility is not surprising itself. Marketing agility is about rapid iteration between making sense of the opportunities and threats and taking marketing decisions. It is not something marketing professionals are performing on the side, but rather a way of thinking and working. An organizational culture valuing speed and flexibility over perfection and strictly structured slow processes, can enable quicker action. Also an organizational culture valuing growth and having a learning mindset fosters innovation (Kalaighnam et al. 2021, p. 14). Still, I found it interesting that organizational culture was the only variable with significant positive relation to marketing agility.

As the results show organizational culture can support international firms in reaching and becoming better at marketing agility, this can be an interest area for both future research and firms to explore. How can organizational culture that fosters marketing agility be not only created but also sustained in international firms?

5 Contributions and future research suggestions

In this final concluding chapter, I will present the main contributions of this study and provide suggestions for future direction. I will first summarize the theoretical contributions. Next, I will present the managerial implications of the study. Finally, I will provide suggestions for future research.

5.1 Theoretical contributions

This study contributes to the existing marketing agility literature. From a theoretical standpoint, the main contribution is expanding upon previous conceptual work on the factors impacting on marketing agility in international firms. Building upon the conceptual work of Kalaighnam et al. (2021), in this study the previously identified organizational factors are examined. Empirical research is conducted to provide insights into the impact of organizational factors on marketing agility in international firms.

The empirical research conducted provides support of the hypothesized impact of organizational factors on marketing agility. The results of this study prove a significant positive relationship between organizational culture and marketing agility in the context of international firms. These findings provide support for the theoretical suggestions of Kalaighnam et al. (2021) on the connection between organizational culture and marketing agility.

5.2 Managerial implications

This study does not only contribute to the research, but the findings of this study can also provide managerial implications. In the study organizational culture valuing speed, growth, flexibility, and continuous change was found to have a significant positive relation to marketing agility in international firms. For international firms pursuing

marketing agility, it can be relevant to consider this finding and focus on understanding how to create and sustain such an organizational culture. The findings also highlight that marketing agility is not something that can be pursued superficially through for example adoption of new tools, but rather something fostered through culture.

5.3 Limitations

There are some limitations to this study that should be considered. Firstly, this study only focuses on marketing agility in the context of international firms and the results may not be generalizable beyond this context. Secondly, the response rate for the questionnaire used for primary data collection was comparably low at 8.6%. This can pose a risk for the representativeness of the sample. Due to the low response rate, also the sample size was 39 cases. While some significant results were gained from the study, based on the data collected not all hypotheses could be supported or rejected and further research would be needed into these.

5.4 Future research suggestions

For future research, in the area of marketing agility many research topics providing potentially interesting theoretical and managerial implications remain. In this study, the organizational factors influencing marketing agility were selected as the focus. However, in previous research other factors have been identified as well. One potential future research direction would be empirical research to examine these other factors, such as leadership factors, team, or employee factors noted in the marketing agility construct of Kalaighnam et al. (2021).

In this study, organizational culture was found to be positively related to marketing agility. However, in this study no insights were provided into how firms can create and retain such an organizational culture. Expanding the understanding of how firms can create and

sustain this kind of organizational culture fostering marketing agility could be another interesting future research direction.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Questionnaire

Marketing agility

1. We are able to recognize new trends and emerging opportunities among the first in industry

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

2. When there is disruption impacting our operations, we are quick to adjust and implement necessary changes

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

3. We can derive actionable insights from apparent chaos and navigate confidently through uncertainty

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

4. We treat change as an opportunity and adapt our marketing execution based on new insights

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Organizational factors

Marketing technology

5. We have diverse technological solutions and relevant tools supporting our marketing activities

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

6. We actively leverage technology and automation to improve our processes and to gain efficiencies

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

7. We are pioneering in marketing technology development, discovering and implementing new technologies ahead the curve

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Organizational structure

8. Everyone in our organization is encouraged to take responsibility and are empowered to take autonomous action

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

9. Our marketing function takes end-to-end ownership from strategy definition to execution, operating as self-sufficient expert team

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

10. The marketing team is closely interacting with relevant stakeholders across functions and participating in cross-functional cooperation

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Organizational capabilities

11. We have a structured approach to continuous development, from identifying new opportunities to implementing validated concepts

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

12. We maintain a steady flow of new ideas and apply validated concepts and learnings in parallel

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Organizational budgeting

13. Our marketing team is actively involved in the process of marketing budget definition

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

14. We are able to react upon dynamic market opportunities through flexibility in our budget constraints

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Organizational culture

15. In our organization, making fast potentially imperfect decisions is favored over risk of missing out on opportunities

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

16. Our organization invests in supporting growth, learning opportunities, and talent development

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

17. Our organization is quick to adapt to new situations and overcome diverse challenges by transforming available resources

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

18. We treat the way as a goal and embrace continuous improvement

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree