Economic and Business Horizon

Vol. 4, no. 1, (2025), 20-33
https://journal.lifescifi.com/index.php/ebh/

Strategic Collaboration and Sustainable Competitive Advantage Capabilities: A Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Approach

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Abstract

This study aims to examine and validate the constructs of strategic collaboration capabilities, entrepreneurial leadership capabilities, digital transformation capabilities, strategic agility, and sustainable competitive advantage using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) within the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) framework. Strategic collaboration is essential for organizations to foster innovation and adaptability through partnerships, while sustainable competitive advantage reflects a firm's ability to maintain superior performance over time. The research tested five observed indicators for each construct—strategic collaboration capabilities, entrepreneurial leadership capabilities, digital transformation capabilities, strategic agility, and sustainable competitive advantage—to assess factor structure and convergent validity. Results show that all factor loadings exceed the 0.60 threshold, confirming strong convergent validity for each construct. While the model fit indices for strategic collaboration indicate room for improvement, particularly in RMSEA and CMIN/DF, indices such as CFI and TLI fall within acceptable ranges. In contrast, the sustainable competitive advantage construct shows a favorable model fit, with factor loadings ranging from 0.740 to 0.975 and strong fit indices. These findings validate the reliability and construct validity of the examined constructs within the SEM framework.

Keywords

Strategic Collaboration, Sustainable Competitive Advantage, CFA, SEM, Model Fit

1. Introduction

The concept of sustainable competitive advantage has also evolved with the introduction of the VRIO framework (Barney, 1991), which emphasizes the value, rarity, inimitability, and organizational support of resources. When a firm develops capabilities that meet these criteria—such as strategic collaboration—it not only differentiates itself in the market but also builds a defensive "moat" against competitive threats. Moreover, as markets evolve rapidly due to globalization and digital transformation, the ability to adapt and dynamically reconfigure these capabilities becomes central to sustaining advantage (Teece et al., 1997).

Despite extensive research on the concept of sustainable competitive advantage (SCA), there remains a noticeable gap in examining the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for its determinants. While numerous studies have explored the critical success factors and key determinants contributing to SCA, such as those by Vinayan et al. (2012), Rezaee and Jafari (2016), and Zulkiffli and Padlee (2021), few have rigorously employed CFA to validate the underlying dimensions of these determinants. For instance, while existing research highlights factors such as resource-based capabilities, technological opportunities, and human resource management as integral to achieving SCA (Takala et al., 2013; Jafari & Rezaee, 2014; Huang et al., 2015), there is limited empirical work that systematically assesses the factor structure of these determinants through CFA. This lack of CFA-driven validation leaves room for deeper insights into how these constructs converge and interact to support sustainable competitive advantage, particularly in industries like manufacturing (Vinayan et al., 2012) and hospitality (Hossain et al., 2021).

The importance of this research lies in its empirical investigation of how strategic collaboration capabilities influence sustainable competitive advantage, using rigorous statistical tools like Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The study examines four key constructs: entrepreneurial leadership capabilities, digital transformation capabilities, strategic collaboration capabilities, and strategic agility. Using CFA, the research assesses the reliability and validity of these constructs, ensuring that they effectively measure the intended factors. Furthermore, SEM is employed to test the causal relationships between strategic collaboration and SCA, providing robust empirical evidence for their connection.

While existing literature has conceptually linked collaboration with long-term performance, there is limited empirical evidence validating these relationships using robust measurement models. By applying CFA and SEM, this study not only enriches theoretical understanding but also provides practical insights for managers and policymakers seeking to build competitive, collaborative, and resilient organizations. This research bridges the gap between conceptual theory and measurable organizational outcomes, reinforcing the strategic value of collaboration in achieving long-term excellence.

2. Literature Review

In today's increasingly competitive and dynamic business landscape, Sustainable Competitive Advantage (SCA) has become a crucial determinant of long-term organizational success. SCA refers to a firm's ability to maintain superior performance relative to competitors over time through unique, valuable, and difficult-to-imitate resources or capabilities. A company is said to

possess a competitive advantage when its profitability consistently exceeds the industry average, coupled with robust profit growth (Nuryani et al., 2023). This advantage is sustainable when it cannot be easily replicated or substituted by competitors, allowing the firm to secure a lasting edge in the market (Barney, 1991; Yildiz & Aykanat, 2021). Examples include strong brand identity, proprietary technology, a loyal customer base, and operational efficiencies.

Strategic collaboration has emerged as one of the most critical intangible resources in achieving SCA. It involves building long-term partnerships, sharing knowledge, and integrating competencies across organizational boundaries to respond to market needs and drive innovation. Firms leveraging strategic collaborations often access new markets, develop complementary capabilities, and adapt faster to environmental changes. This collaborative orientation not only enhances resource utilization but also strengthens a firm's strategic agility and innovation potential—key enablers of sustainable advantage (Teece et al., 1997; Liu & Atuahene-Gima, 2018).

Porter's (1985) generic strategies framework further reinforces that a sustainable edge stems from cost leadership, differentiation, or market focus. However, merely choosing a strategy is insufficient; the underlying capabilities that drive and sustain these strategies are critical. Strategic collaboration represents such a capability—facilitating knowledge transfer, resource-sharing, and joint problem-solving across firms. The integration of these collaborative practices into organizational processes has become essential for firms striving to achieve long-term value creation, differentiation, and resilience in an increasingly interconnected world (Hosnaidah et al., 2023).

In this study, some constructs examined include Entrepreneurial Leadership Capabilities, Digital Transformation Capabilities (DTC), Strategic Collaboration Capabilities, and Strategic Agility. Entrepreneurial Leadership Capabilities refer to a leader's ability to drive innovation, recognize and seize business opportunities, take calculated risks, and inspire others to pursue strategic goals within dynamic environments. Digital Transformation Capabilities (DTC) represent an organization's ability to adopt and integrate digital technologies into its business processes, enabling greater efficiency, innovation, and responsiveness to market changes. This construct comprises five indicators that collectively assess the extent to which a company can implement digital solutions, adapt to technological advancements, and create value through digital initiatives.

Moreover, Strategic collaboration capabilities refer to an organization's ability to form, manage, and leverage partnerships and alliances with external stakeholders, such as suppliers, partners, and research institutions. These capabilities are essential for achieving shared goals, driving innovation, and enhancing a company's competitive advantage. Strategic Agility refers to an organization's ability to sense, respond to, and capitalize on opportunities in dynamic and fast-changing environments. It represents the capacity to quickly adjust strategies, business models, and operations to maintain competitive advantage (Purwanti et al., 2022). Strategic Collaboration Capabilities (SCC) reflect an organization's ability to form, manage, and leverage partnerships and alliances to achieve shared goals, drive innovation, and enhance competitive advantage.

3. Methods

This study employs Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) as the primary analytical technique, with a focus on Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to validate the measurement model. SEM is an effective approach for analyzing complex relationships among latent constructs, particularly when examining theoretical frameworks that involve multiple variables, such as strategic collaboration capabilities, entrepreneurial leadership capabilities, digital transformation capabilities, strategic agility, and sustainable competitive advantage (Awang, 2015).

Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is used to determine the goodness of fit of the proposed model with the data used, as well as to determine the amount of variance explained by the model. CFA testing will be carried out at the variable level and full CFA involving all latent variables. CFA is used to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement model by determining whether the observed variables accurately represent their respective latent constructs.

The construct of Digital Transformation Capabilities is measured using five key indicators designed to capture the essential traits and behaviors of entrepreneurial leaders. Based on the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) conducted in this study, all five indicators of the Entrepreneurial Leadership Capabilities construct demonstrated strong and significant factor loadings, indicating a high level of convergent validity. The Strategic Collaboration Capabilities construct is measured through five key indicators, which collectively capture an organization's proficiency in strategic cooperation and resource-sharing. The Strategic Agility construct consists of five indicators that reflect the company's ability to adapt to market changes, foster innovation, and make informed, timely decisions. The construct of Strategic Collaboration Capabilities (SCC comprises five indicators that assess the extent to which a company engages in strategic cooperation with external stakeholders, such as suppliers, partners, or research institutions, to strengthen its market position and adapt to environmental changes.

For each construct—strategic collaboration capabilities, entrepreneurial leadership capabilities, digital transformation capabilities, strategic agility, and sustainable competitive advantage—CFA evaluates factor loadings, model fit indices, and overall measurement structure. This process ensures that the constructs are valid, reliable, and unidimensional, with factor loadings above the threshold of 0.60 for all observed indicators.

4. Results

4.1 Entrepreneurial Leadership Capabilities

The CFA results for Entrepreneurial Leadership Capabilities confirmed that these indicators are suitably represented by a single latent factor, meaning that the construct exhibits unidimensionality and internal consistency. This alignment validates the theoretical assumption that entrepreneurial leadership, while multifaceted, can be captured as a unified capability within organizational contexts. The model fit indices further support the robustness of the construct, with favorable values across key metrics such as RMSEA, CFI, and TLI, indicating a well-fitting measurement model. These findings suggest that Entrepreneurial Leadership Capabilities play a critical role in shaping strategic direction and adaptability in organizations and can be reliably assessed using the developed measurement model. As such, this construct is essential in exploring

how leadership influences organizational outcomes like innovation and sustainable competitive advantage. The Entrepreneurial Leadership Capabilities construct consists of 5 indicators. The CFA test results for this construct are obtained as follows:

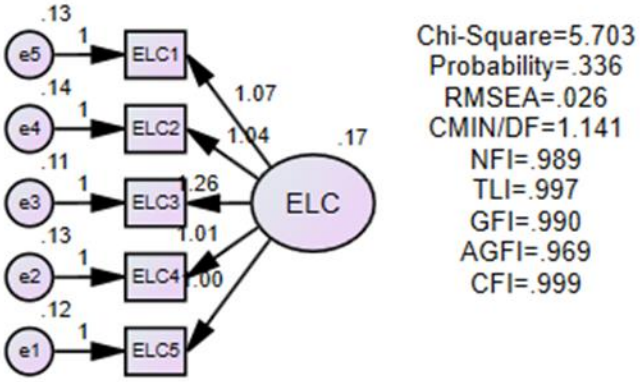

Figure 1. CFA Results of the Entrepreneurial Leadership Capabilities Construct

As the results of the 5th CFA test the construct indicators Entrepreneurial leadership capabilities can be accommodated in one factor. This is also shown from the CFA results for each loading factor value (Table 1).

Table 1. Loading factor Entrepreneurial leadership capabilities construct

Chi-Square	Prob.	RMSEA	CMIN/DF	NFI	TLI	GFI	AGFI	CFI
5.703	0.336	0.026	1.141	0.989	0.997	0.990	0.969	0.999

Variable	ELC1	ELC2	ELC3	ELC4	ELC5
Factor Loading	0.771	0.753	0.845	0.756	0.763

Source: Processed primary data, 2023

Table 1 displays the loading factors for the Entrepreneurial Leadership Capabilities (ELC) construct in the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. The chi-square statistic is 5.703 with a probability value of 0.336, indicating an acceptable model fit. The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.026, and the CMIN/DF (Chi-Square divided by degrees of freedom) is 1.141, both falling within the recommended thresholds. Additionally, other fit indices, including NFI, TLI, GFI, AGFI, and CFI, demonstrate values of 0.989, 0.997, 0.990, 0.969, and 0.999, respectively, all indicative of a well-fitting model. The loading values for the individual components of the Entrepreneurial Leadership Capabilities construct, namely ELC1 through ELC5, range from 0.753 to 0.845. Importantly, all these values exceed the conventional threshold of 0.60, signifying robust convergent validity for the Entrepreneurial Leadership

Capabilities construct. The results indicate that the model is well-fitted, as evidenced by favorable goodness-of-fit indices and satisfactory factor loadings for the Entrepreneurial Leadership Capabilities construct. The chi-square probability value of 0.336 further supports the assertion of a well-fitting model.

4.2 Digital Transformation Capabilities

Based on the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results, all five indicators of the Digital Transformation Capabilities construct demonstrated satisfactory factor loadings, each exceeding the conventional threshold of 0.60. These results indicate strong convergent validity, confirming that the indicators reliably measure a single underlying construct. The CFA supports the theoretical assumption that DTC is a unidimensional capability that can be represented by one factor.

Although some model fit indices, such as RMSEA and CMIN/DF, suggest a less-than-optimal fit, other indices like CFI and NFI remain within acceptable ranges. This implies that the model is reasonably well-fitting and valid for assessing digital transformation capabilities. As organizations increasingly rely on digital tools to maintain competitiveness, understanding and measuring DTC is essential. This construct is particularly relevant for evaluating how firms leverage technology to support strategic goals, improve customer experience, and achieve sustainable competitive advantage in the digital era.

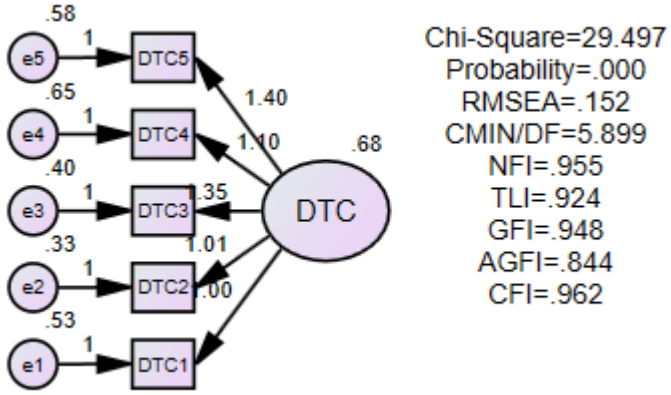

Figure 2. CFA Results of the Digital Transformation Capabilities Construct

The results of testing the CFA construct of Digital transformation capabilities in the second order form are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Loading factor Digital transformation capabilities construct

Chi-Square	Prob.	RMSEA	CMIN/DF	NFI	TLI	GFI	AGFI	CFI
29.497	0.000	0.152	5.899	0.955	9.24	0.948	0.844	0.962

Variable	DTC1	DTC2	DTC3	DTC4	DTC5
Factor Loading	0.749	0.823	0.870	0.745	0.834

Source: Processed primary data, 2023

Table 22 presents the loading factors for the Digital Transformation Capabilities (DTC) construct in the context of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. The chi-square statistic is 29.497 with a probability value of 0.000, indicating a significant model fit. However, other fit indices such as RMSEA, CMIN/DF (Chi-Square divided by degrees of freedom), and NFI are less favorable, suggesting a less optimal fit compared to the Entrepreneurial Leadership Capabilities construct.

The individual components of the Digital Transformation Capabilities construct, represented by DTC1 through DTC5, exhibit loading values ranging from 0.745 to 0.870. Importantly, all these values surpass the conventional threshold of 0.60, indicating robust convergent validity for the Digital Transformation Capabilities construct. Despite the slightly less optimal fit as suggested by certain fit indices, the overall model still demonstrates acceptable convergent validity for the Digital Transformation Capabilities construct. The loading factors above 0.60 for all indicators contribute to the comprehensive assessment of this construct within the SEM framework.

4.3 Strategic collaboration capabilities

The Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) conducted for this construct revealed that all five indicators could be effectively represented by a single factor, confirming the unidimensional nature of strategic collaboration capabilities. The CFA results, as shown in Table 3, indicate strong factor loadings for each of the five indicators, all exceeding the threshold of 0.60, which demonstrates robust convergent validity. This suggests that each indicator consistently measures the underlying construct of strategic collaboration.

Although the CFA model fit indices, such as RMSEA and CMIN/DF, suggest room for improvement, other indices like NFI, TLI, and CFI show an acceptable fit. This finding supports the construct's reliability and validity for assessing the extent to which organizations engage in and benefit from strategic collaborations. Consequently, the Strategic Collaboration Capabilities construct remains an important element for enhancing organizational performance in a competitive and dynamic business environment.

The Strategic collaboration capabilities construct consists of 5 indicators. In theory, the Strategic Collaboration Capabilities construct can also be accommodated in one factor. The CFA test results for this construct are obtained as follows:

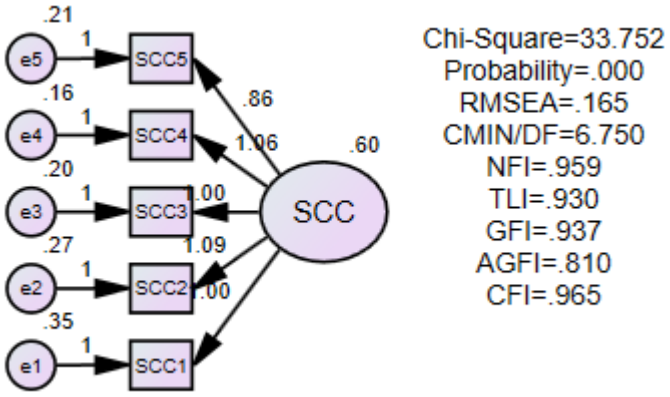

Figure 3. The results of the CFA Construct Strategic collaboration capabilities

The results of testing the CFA construct Strategic collaboration capabilities are shown in the following results (Table 3).

Table 3. Loading factor Strategic collaboration capabilities construct

Chi-Square	Prob.	RMSEA	CMIN/DF	NFI	TLI	GFI	AGFI	CFI
33.752	0.000	0.165	6.750	0.959	0.930	0.937	0.810	0.965

Variable	SCC1	SCC2	SCC3	SCC4	SCC5
Factor Loading	0.797	0.854	0.864	0.897	0.823

Source: Processed primary data, 2023

Table 3 presents the loading factors for the Strategic Collaboration Capabilities (SCC) construct within the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. The chi-square statistic is 33.752 with a probability value of 0.000, indicating a significant model fit. However, the RMSEA, CMIN/DF, and other fit indices suggest a less than optimal fit compared to ideal standards. The individual components of the Strategic Collaboration Capabilities construct, denoted by SCC1 through SCC5, exhibit loading values ranging from 0.797 to 0.897. All these values surpass the conventional threshold of 0.60, demonstrating robust convergent validity for the Strategic Collaboration Capabilities construct. Despite certain fit indices indicating a less than ideal fit, the loading factors above 0.60 for all indicators provide confidence in the convergent validity of the Strategic Collaboration Capabilities construct within the SEM framework. The comprehensive assessment of this construct contributes valuable insights into the collaborative dimensions of the analyzed model.

4.4 Strategic Agility

Strategic Agility refers to an organization's ability to sense, respond to, and capitalize on opportunities in dynamic and fast-changing environments. It represents the capacity to quickly adjust strategies, business models, and operations to maintain competitive advantage. The Strategic Agility construct consists of five indicators that reflect the company's ability to adapt to market changes, foster innovation, and make informed, timely decisions.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) results for this construct reveal that the five indicators can be consolidated into one factor, confirming the theoretical assumption. Each indicator showed strong factor loadings, with values ranging from 0.735 to 0.902, indicating that they all significantly contribute to the underlying construct. These results demonstrate high convergent validity, where the items collectively measure the core concept of strategic agility.

The CFA model fit indices suggest a reasonable fit with the data, with CFI and TLI values of 0.945 and 0.891, respectively, indicating good model performance. Although the RMSEA value (0.193) is slightly above the ideal threshold, other indices, such as CMIN/DF (8.852) and NFI (0.939), show acceptable fit levels. The results highlight the importance of strategic agility as an essential capability for organizations to remain flexible and responsive in an ever-evolving business landscape, ensuring long-term success and competitiveness.

Strategic agility construct consists of 5 indicators. The CFA test results for this construct are obtained as follows:

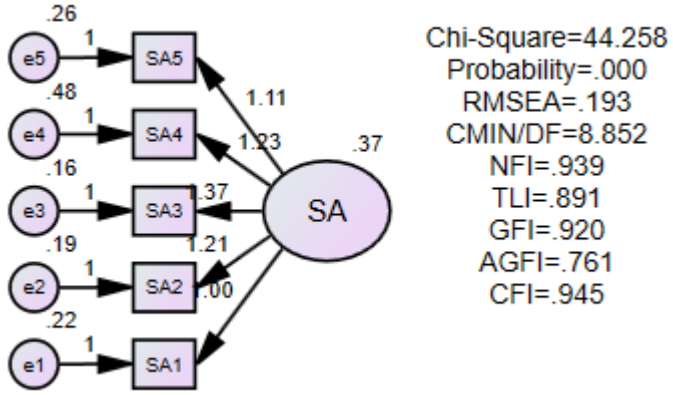

Figure 4. CFA Results of the Strategic Agility Construct

As the results of the EFA test, the 5 indicators of the Strategic agility construct can be accommodated in one factor. This is also shown from the CFA results for each loading factor value as follows:

Table 4. Loading factor of the Strategic Agility Construct

Chi-Square	Prob.	RMSEA	CMIN/DF	NFI	TLI	GFI	AGFI	CFI
44.258	0.000	0.193	8.852	0.939	0.891	0.920	0.761	0.945

Variable	SA1	SA2	SA3	SA4	SA5
Factor Loading	0.791	0.860	0.902	0.735	0.798

Source: Processed primary data, 2023

Table 4 outlines the loading factors for the Strategic Agility construct within the context of the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. The chi-square statistic is 44.258 with a probability value of 0.000, indicating a significant model fit. However, the RMSEA, CMIN/DF, and other fit indices suggest a less than optimal fit compared to ideal standards. The individual components of the Strategic Agility construct, denoted by SA1 through SA5, exhibit loading values ranging from 0.735 to 0.902. All these values surpass the conventional threshold of 0.60, demonstrating robust convergent validity for the Strategic Agility construct. Despite certain fit indices indicating a less than ideal fit, the loading factors above 0.60 for all indicators provide confidence in the convergent validity of the Strategic Agility construct within the SEM framework. The comprehensive assessment of this construct contributes valuable insights into the strategic agility dimensions of the analyzed model.

4.5 Strategic Collaboration Capabilities

The results from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) demonstrate that the five indicators of Strategic Collaboration Capabilities can be effectively accommodated within a single factor. Each indicator showed strong factor loading values, all exceeding the standard threshold of 0.60, indicating robust convergent validity. This confirms that all items consistently measure the same underlying construct.

While some model fit indices, such as RMSEA and CMIN/DF, suggest room for improvement in model fit, key indices including CFI, NFI, and TLI indicate an acceptable to good fit. These results provide empirical support for the construct's reliability and validity within the structural model. The ability to collaborate strategically is increasingly vital in dynamic market environments, enabling firms to share resources, co-create value, and navigate complexity. Therefore, SCC serves as a critical capability for sustaining long-term growth and competitive advantage through synergy and innovation. The Sustainable competitive advantage construct consists of 5 indicators. The CFA test results for the Sustainable competitive advantage construct are obtained as follows:

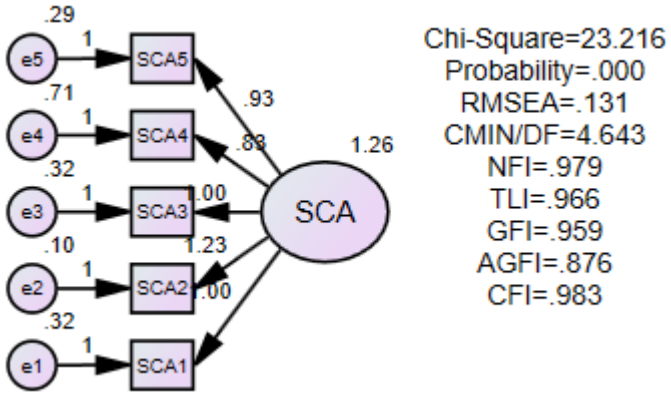

Figure 5. CFA Results Construct a Sustainable competitive advantage

The results of testing the CFA construct of the Sustainable competitive advantage are shown from the following results:

Table 5. Loading factor Construct of Sustainable competitive advantage

Chi-Square	Prob.	RMSEA	CMIN/DF	NFI	TLI	GFI	AGFI	CFI
23.216	0.000	0.131	4.643	0.979	0.966	0.959	0.876	0.983

Variable	SCA1	SCA2	SCA3	SCA4	SCA5
Factor Loading	0.892	0.975	0.893	0.740	0.889

Source: Processed primary data, 2023

Table 5 provides insights into the loading factors for the Sustainable Competitive Advantage construct in the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis. The chi-square statistic is 23.216, and the associated probability value is 0.000, indicating a statistically significant model fit. The RMSEA, CMIN/DF, and other fit indices collectively suggest a good fit for the model. The individual components of the Sustainable Competitive Advantage construct, represented by SCA1 through SCA5, demonstrate loading values ranging from 0.740 to 0.975. All these values exceed the conventional threshold of 0.60, affirming the robust convergent validity of the Sustainable Competitive Advantage construct. While certain fit indices suggest a strong fit, the loading factors above 0.60 for all indicators provide confidence in the convergent validity of the Sustainable Competitive Advantage construct within the SEM framework. This analysis contributes valuable insights into the dimensions of sustainable competitive advantage captured by the model.

5. Discussion

The results from the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) across various leadership and organizational capabilities constructs, such as Entrepreneurial Leadership Capabilities (ELC), Digital Transformation Capabilities (DTC), Strategic Collaboration Capabilities (SCC), Strategic Agility, and Sustainable Competitive Advantage, demonstrate a strong degree of internal consistency and convergent validity. Notably, the high factor loadings for each indicator across these constructs—ranging from 0.753 to 0.975—indicate that the measurement models are robust, confirming that each construct is effectively captured by its respective indicators. This is consistent with prior research, which emphasizes the importance of establishing convergent validity to ensure that the constructs are well-represented by their indicators (Hair et al., 2010).

Despite minor variations in the fit indices (such as RMSEA and CMIN/DF), most models still exhibit acceptable or good fit, as evidenced by favorable values for CFI, TLI, and NFI. These findings suggest that while room for improvement remains in certain models, they nonetheless provide reliable and valid measurements of the constructs. This aligns with findings from studies on organizational capabilities, which emphasize the need for accurate and valid measures to assess complex, multidimensional constructs like leadership and strategic agility (Teece, 2014). Therefore, these results underline the significance of these capabilities in driving innovation, adaptability, and competitive advantage in dynamic business environments.

6. Conclusion

This study provides empirical validation for the constructs of strategic collaboration capabilities, entrepreneurial leadership capabilities, digital transformation capabilities, strategic agility, and sustainable competitive advantage within the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) framework, utilizing Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for construct validation. The findings confirm that all constructs are measured with high reliability and convergent validity, as evidenced by factor loadings above the recommended threshold of 0.60 for all observed indicators.

Strategic collaboration capabilities, entrepreneurial leadership, and digital transformation capabilities all demonstrate strong factor loadings, indicating their significant role in contributing to sustainable competitive advantage. While model fit indices for strategic collaboration suggest room for improvement, the constructs of entrepreneurial leadership, digital transformation, and sustainable competitive advantage exhibit favorable model fits, reinforcing their robustness as key drivers of long-term competitiveness.

This study's use of CFA and SEM provides robust empirical evidence linking strategic collaboration with sustainable competitive advantage, an area with limited prior research. The findings underscore the importance of strategic collaboration as a core capability for organizations seeking to navigate a dynamic business environment and sustain superior performance. The research contributes valuable insights into the practical application of collaboration and capability-building strategies, offering guidance for both academics and practitioners aiming to foster innovation, resilience, and competitiveness in an ever-evolving marketplace.

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