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THE MEDIATING ROLE OF MARKETING AGILITY ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENTREPRENEURIAL RESILIENCE, ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY, AND NEW PRODUCT PERFORMANCE

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This study aims to explore the association between entrepreneurial resilience (ER), absorptive capacity (ACAP), and new product performance (NPP). Additionally, it aims to investigate if marketing agility (MA) acts as a mediator in these relationships within the suggested model. Data were gathered from telecommunications firms in the Kurdistan region of Iraq through a self-administered survey. A total of 556 questionnaires were distributed, and 299 of them were returned and used for statistical analysis. A structural equation model (SEM) was used to assess both the measurement and structural models in the data analysis. Both ER and ACAP have an influence on NPP. In addition, MA not only affects NPP but also enhances the relationship between ER and NPP. Contrary to

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expectations, ACAP has no impact on MA. This study provides NPP researchers with a deeper insight into the capabilities that can influence the performance of new products.

Keywords: Absorptive capacity; entrepreneurial resilience; marketing agility; new product performance.

Introduction

There is no doubt that firms are constantly in need of improving the performance of their new products (Aljanabi, 2022; Modolo *et al.*, 2021). The growth and thrive of firms can be seriously jeopardised by the appearance of new and alternative products, shifting consumer preferences, technology advancements, and other external environmental factors (Branicki *et al.*, 2018). In a dynamic business landscape marked by shifting preferences and global uncertainties, research indicates that enhancing capabilities, especially those related to entrepreneurship, has led to improved product performance and value generation (Branicki *et al.*, 2018; Modolo *et al.*, 2021). Organisations that demonstrate entrepreneurial resilience (ER) have the capacity to bounce back from setbacks and persistently pursue opportunities for long-term success. This ability enhances the performance of new products when firms capitalise on these core capabilities (Hagen *et al.*, 2019; Medase and Barasa, 2019). Branicki *et al.* (2018) have emphasised that continuous improvement and resilient operational procedures equip firms with the necessary knowledge to recognise opportunities and efficiently manage unforeseen crises. Elshaer and Saad (2022) concluded that the ER is a sign of effective coping with environmental challenges, leading to better organisational recovery. However, other studies reported different or sometimes conflicting results (Fulgence *et al.*, 2022).

The success of new products depends not only on a firm's ability to seize opportunities and demonstrate innovativeness but also on the extent to which these firms can acquire valuable knowledge developed beyond their boundaries and integrate it with their existing knowledge to develop competitive products (Aljanabi, 2018; Medase and Barasa, 2019). This is what entrepreneurs, particularly portfolio entrepreneurs, strive for as they continue managing their original businesses while establishing or acquiring other projects. This differs from serial entrepreneurs, who end one project before starting a new one (Dabić *et al.*, 2023).

Resources-based view (RBV) suggested that entrepreneurial firms can enhance their ability to adapt to environmental changes more effectively than their competitors by developing their absorptive capacity (ACAP) — the capacity to acquire, interpret, and utilise external developed knowledge (Aljanabi, 2022; Fulgence *et al.*, 2022).

Prior research has explored various concepts related to entrepreneurship and ACAP in the context of new products. However, limited attention has been given to examining ER and its direct role in the new product performance (NPP).

For instance, Ibarra-Cisneros and Hernandez-Perlines (2020) demonstrated that ACAP enhances the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and business performance in Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), emphasising the critical role of knowledge absorption in fostering innovation. Seepana *et al.* (2021) investigated how entrepreneurial orientation and ACAP interact within coopetitive relationships, highlighting their distinct and significant contributions to both innovation and operational performance. The limited focus of previous studies on the role of ER in NPP highlights the need for further empirical research to address this gap in the literature.

Although there is a significant amount of literature on ACAP emphasising the critical need for firms to facilitate the transfer of knowledge (Ma *et al.*, 2021; Mata *et al.*, 2023), there is a noticeable absence of recent literature investigating the interactive connection between market knowledge and ACAP (Chang *et al.*, 2024; Cho *et al.*, 2023). In the highly competitive and rapidly changing business environment, the ability to react to these changes by utilising dynamic capabilities is crucial for achieving long-term success (Cho *et al.*, 2023; Golgeci *et al.*, 2023), In order to accomplish these tasks, organisations must possess the ability to comprehend market demands, promptly fulfil the requirements of existing and prospective clients, and innovate novel revenue streams (Medase and Barasa, 2019; Modolo *et al.*, 2021). Golgeci *et al.* (2023) argued that marketing agility (MA) represents the interface of ER and has been found to be of great importance for new products and business performance. Hagen *et al.* (2019) stated that MA enables the organisation to deal with uncertainties arising from dynamic and unpredictable environments and to leverage ER.

Despite the theoretical and practical significance of MA, surprisingly little attention has been paid to this topic in the literature. Asseraf *et al.* (2019) highlighted the importance of marketing innovation and its potential to drive product success; however, their study did not directly explore MA or its influence on NPP. This gap is especially evident in research examining MA's role in enhancing ER and ACAP, as well as its impact on NPP (Cho *et al.*, 2023; da Costa *et al.*, 2018; Ma *et al.*, 2021; Thoumrungroje and Racela, 2022).

The environment in Iraq, particularly the Kurdistan Region, presents a paradox: it provides favourable prospects for entrepreneurship in the telecommunications industry, yet it also confronts various obstacles in terms of acquiring the requisite expertise for delivering desired products (e.g., mobile phone plans, internet services, digital communication platforms, and business communication services) in the market (UN, 2022; WorldBank, 2016). Reports have revealed that the region is more developed in the area of communications compared to the rest of Iraq (FreedomHouse, 2022). However, it still falls behind in effectively marketing products at a competitive level (UNDP, 2017). Furthermore, telecommunications service providers face fierce competition in markets that are already filled to

capacity. Overcoming these challenges necessitates the development of required capabilities for the success of new products (Aljanabi, 2022).

Considering the aforementioned gaps, this study contributes to the literature in three ways. First, this study builds upon previous research on ER (Aljanabi, 2022; Branicki *et al.*, 2018; Elshaer and Saad, 2022) and ACAP (Fulgence *et al.*, 2022; Ma *et al.*, 2021; Mata *et al.*, 2023) by integrating these two areas and investigating their impact on NPP, both through direct and indirect influences mediated by MA. The findings reveal that ER and ACAP are not mutually exclusive. Instead, the responsiveness aspect of ER works side by side with the application of ACAP, leading to positive outcomes for NPP. Second, from a theoretical standpoint, this study contributes to the growing body of literature exploring the concept of MA from a theoretical perspective. Contrary to previous research (Khan *et al.*, 2022; Thoumrungroje and Racela, 2022), which suggests that developing countries tend to associate MA more closely with products, this study demonstrates how service sector firms improve their MA and its implications for NPP.

Finally, concerning the practical implications of the research findings, it could be argued that in order to enhance innovation performance, as manifested in the success of new products, organisations should formulate strategies aligned with market demand and promptly anticipating customer needs to enhance the performance of their new products. This approach advocates for the acknowledgment and appreciation of ER and ACAP, and it highlights the importance of cultivating concepts like MA. Managers are advised to develop these aspects adequately to establish competitive advantages based on enhanced NPP. Hence, a number of interesting research questions emerge regarding the NPP. RQ1. Does the presence of ER, ACAP, and MA have an impact on NPP within the service sector? RQ2. Does the presence of ER and ACAP have an impact on MA? RQ3. Does MA mediate the relationships between ER, ACAP, and NPP?

The remaining parts of this study are structured as follows. Section 2 is assigned for theoretical underpinnings and the development of hypotheses, while Sec. 3 outlines the research methodology. The analysis of data and presentation of results are covered in Sec. 4. Section 5 involves the discussion and draws conclusions, while Sec. 6 presents research implications. Section 7 outlines limitations and suggests directions for future research.

Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

The relationship between ER and NPP

The RBV argues that the ability to develop new products with outstanding performance helps organisations to generate additional revenue, expand their market

share and mitigate potential risks (Aljanabi, 2022; Khan *et al.*, 2022). NPP can be described as the effectiveness of a new product in fulfiling its intended role in the market, generating revenue, operating efficiently, maintaining competitiveness, and ultimately satisfying end users (Carbonell and Escudero, 2010). The entrepreneur's competence and ambition to transcend immediate environmental constraints are key to the performance of new products (Branicki *et al.*, 2018). The prevalent of entrepreneurial mindset motivates firms to generate new ideas and create innovations that enhance their performance (Elshaer and Saad, 2022). Resilience as a capability plays a significant role in reducing organisational errors during product development activities.

ER is defined as "*the ability of the entrepreneur to face the dangerous environment around them*" (Santoro *et al.*, 2020). Thus, learning from errors after they have occurred is an effective enhancement activity that reduces future errors or their consequences in the process of developing new products (Branicki *et al.*, 2018; Santoro *et al.*, 2020). Studies suggested that the resilient entrepreneurs are more adaptable to change and tolerant of confusion, which contributes to the product's performance and success (Branicki *et al.*, 2018; Golgeci *et al.*, 2023). They enhance their resilience by rebounding from errors, assimilating knowledge from their encounters, and adjusting to their changing surroundings by implementing essential strategies and reacting to potential risks to their existence (Elshaer and Saad, 2022; Santoro *et al.*, 2020).

In the same vein, Delladio *et al.* (2023) provided evidence of a robust correlation between ER and NPP. Organisations with higher levels of resilience demonstrate increased tenacity and effort when facing challenges, prompting them to seek innovative solutions and take directed actions that lead to superior NPP. Golgeci *et al.* (2023) demonstrated that ER is a crucial factor in leading firms to achieve superior performance through innovation. However, Liu *et al.* (2023) found that the fear of failure may impede ER in exploring new products. Therefore, this study hypothesises the following:

H1: *There is a positive relationship between entrepreneurial resilience and new product performance.*

The relationship between ACAP and NPP

Given the rapid acceleration in the business world, organisations need to embrace knowledge generated outside their borders and develop their capabilities to acquire it, especially when they do not have sufficient knowledge to develop competitive products (Aljanabi, 2018; Medase and Barasa, 2019). The broadening of the RBV has resulted in the concept of "dynamic capabilities," which describes an organisation's

capacity to develop and invest in resources and competencies in order to adapt to changing and turbulent business environments (Andersén, 2012). Previous research has indicated that possessing ACAP can be highly influential in organisational success.

ACAP refers to "*an organization's ability to recognize the value of new external knowledge, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial ends*" (Flatten *et al.*, 2011a). ACAP includes four dimensions, as highlighted by most studies: acquisition, which refers to the organisation's ability to identify and acquire knowledge sources outside its boundaries; assimilation, which involves the processes the organisation undertakes to analyse and interpret knowledge critical to its operations; transformation, which refers to the organisation's ability to integrate existing knowledge with newly acquired knowledge to generate new insights; and finally, exploitation, which related to the organisation's ability to apply knowledge for commercial purposes, such as developing tangible products (e.g., goods) and intangible products (e.g., services) (Andersén and Kask, 2012; Javalgi *et al.*, 2014; Zahra and Hayton, 2008).

It enhances an organisation's ability to seek out external sources of information, adjust to shifting environmental changes, foster innovation, and meet the demands of clients (Fulgence *et al.*, 2022; Mata *et al.*, 2023; Medase and Barasa, 2019). This further supports the argument that firms leveraging ACAP to introduce new products to the market have a higher probability of succeeding in the commercialisation of innovative products. Conversely, innovation performance can be diminished where firms lack the requisite capabilities (Medase and Barasa, 2019). Therefore, creating ACAP and sharing novel insights are necessary requirements for obtaining innovation from external channels (Chang *et al.*, 2024; Cho *et al.*, 2023). However, da Costa *et al.* (2018) found a non-significant relationship between ACAP and organisational performance in terms of new or improved products. Therefore, this study hypothesises the following:

H2: *There is a positive relationship between absorptive capacity and new product performance.*

The relationship between ER and MA

The flexibility of organisations to respond to strategic changes at a low cost and at a rapid pace reflects their agility in bringing more successful products to market (Kalaignanam *et al.*, 2021; Khan *et al.*, 2022). Previous studies have defined MA as an enterprise's ability to surpass its rivals in the marketplace by reallocating resources as necessary to identify and promptly address customer-driven opportunities for innovation and proactive action. Additionally, MA involves learning from trials and errors in executing marketing decisions to adapt to the ever-changing market (Golgeci *et al.*, 2023; Kalaignanam *et al.*, 2021; Zhou *et al.*, 2019). Vizcaíno

et al. (2021) demonstrated that entrepreneurs who exhibit higher levels of resilience have the capability to exchange valuable insights and cultivate social networks, leading to the formation of sustainable competitive advantages. It is noteworthy that ER represents the backbone that enables and enhances MA, ensuring the firm can navigate uncertainties and stay competitive through three shared traits. (1) Adaptability, Resilient entrepreneurs foster MA by creating a culture of adaptability, where managers and their teams are encouraged to embrace change and face ambiguity (Branicki *et al.*, 2018; Connor and Davidson, 2003). (2) Proactiveness: Resilience involves excepting potential challenges, aligning with MA's emphasis on being proactive in identifying potential customer needs and market demands (Vizcaíno *et al.*, 2021). (3) Resourcefulness: Resilient entrepreneurs effectively utilise limited resources and control events, which is critical for enhancing agile marketing that often require extraordinary problem-solving approaches (Ayala and Manzano, 2014). Therefore, it is no surprise that ER offers businesses with the support they need during challenging market conditions, even if it means accepting less favourable terms (Golgeci *et al.*, 2023; Swaminathan, 2022). Surprisingly, Liu *et al.* (2023) found that ER does not significantly predict a firm's ability to reintegrate existing knowledge or adapt current processes to changes in the market and technology. Therefore, this study hypothesises the following:

H3: *There is a positive relationship between entrepreneurial resilience and marketing agility.*

The relationship between ACAP and MA

Competent firms know where to find new opportunities and how to make the most of them. However, unless they are willing to capitalise on these opportunities, their knowledge resources may be of little value (Aljanabi, 2022; Khan *et al.*, 2022). This might clarify why certain firms can obtain and integrate externally produced knowledge but struggle to effectively use it to achieve successful innovation (Aljanabi, 2018). The capacity of firms to effectively improve their performance is enhanced by assimilating external knowledge tailored to their unique organisational setting (Kale *et al.*, 2019; Zhou *et al.*, 2019). Miranda *et al.* (2022) emphasised the crucial role of knowledge recognition, acquisition, creation, sharing, delivery, and utilisation in determining an organisation's ability to remain competitive. Particularly, the organisation's marketing knowledge can significantly contribute to converting assets into valuable outcomes, thereby leading to a sustainable competitive advantage. Furthermore, Cho *et al.* (2023) highlighted that ACAP enables agile organisations to comprehend diverse conditions in international markets, facilitating the formulation of marketing strategies and products that meet the customer

demands of foreign markets effectively. However, Mata *et al.* (2023) found a non-significant relationship between ACAP and organisation's ability to identify more market opportunities. Therefore, this study hypothesises the following:

H4: *There is a positive relationship between absorptive capacity and marketing agility.*

The relationship between MA and new product success

In order to stay competitive and gain market share, business need to recognise suitable alternative strategies. The most crucial strategy is one that provides customers with valuable products and services that exceed those of their competitors (Mata *et al.*, 2023). Organisations that possess an elevated level of market agility, comprising distinctive abilities such as market awareness, adaptability, and swiftness, are capable of recognising opportunities in an ever-changing marketplace. They promptly reconfigure their marketing strategies and provide considerably more value to their clients through improved product performance (Golgeci *et al.*, 2023; Khan *et al.*, 2022). In this vein, Cho *et al.* (2023) reported that the success of a new product hinges on the firm's comprehension of customer needs, purchasing capacity, and preferences. Golgeci *et al.* (2023) contended that MA greatly enhances NPP. Following this rationale, a high level of MA within firms delivers unique value to customers, consequently bolstering the success of new products. However, the organisation's possession of marketing and sales advantages may not be directly correlated with the performance of its new products (Lassen and Laugen, 2017). Therefore, this study hypothesises the following:

H5: *There is a positive relationship between marketing agility and new product success.*

The mediating model

Entrepreneurs must adapt to change in order to survive in a turbulent environment, confront uncertainty, achieve organisational goals and objectives, and improve firm performance (Connor and Davidson, 2003; Elshaer and Saad, 2022), by overcoming the risks associated with developing new products (Golgeci *et al.*, 2023). In this vein, the RBV emphasises the importance of MA as a crucial tool through which the needs of current and potential customers are explored. It serves not only as an autonomous entity but also as a connecting link between ER and the performance of new products (Khan *et al.*, 2022). Entrepreneurs who possess high MA have the ability to foresee and identify the need for change and meet market

expectations (Thoumrungroje and Racela, 2022), and facilitate the development of new products (Vizcaíno *et al.*, 2021; Zhou *et al.*, 2019). Studies indicate that entrepreneurial opportunities are typically abundant in dynamic and evolving settings (Delladio *et al.*, 2023; Miocevic and Morgan, 2018). Hence, one could posit that the ability of entrepreneurs to influence targeted markets significantly hinges on consumers' openness to change. In other words, in situations where consumers are resistant to embracing new innovations, the likelihood of entrepreneurs achieving success with innovative products is rather low (Aljanabi, 2022). However, some scholars did not view MA as a crucial factor for business success (Golgeci *et al.*, 2023). Therefore, this study hypothesises the following:

H6: *Marketing agility positively mediates the relationship between entrepreneurial resilience and new product performance.*

On the other hand, MA acts as a catalyst for elevating a firm's performance (Golgeci *et al.*, 2023; Kalaignanam *et al.*, 2021). It enables firms to respond purposefully to environmental changes and create product and service offerings better suited to the market (Zhou *et al.*, 2019). On the contrary, firms with limited or no agility struggle to adjust their processes to changing environments, and this limited capacity thereof directly impacts their performance (Kalaignanam *et al.*, 2021). In this regard, Thoumrungroje and Racela (2022) reported that agile firms promote manufacturing flexibility and responsiveness to emerging market demand by identifying market opportunities, gathering market information, and comprehending consumers' needs. Khan *et al.* (2022) discovered that agility can significantly reduce the time it takes to bring a product to market. Studies have shown that the combined synergy between the ACAP and MA has a significant impact on the performance of new products, especially in turbulent environments (Cho *et al.*, 2023). Kale *et al.* (2019) indicated an indirect influence of ACAP on NPP through agility. Mata *et al.* (2023) found that ACAP dimensions had more indirect influences than direct ones on NPP when the firms' agility was combined with its

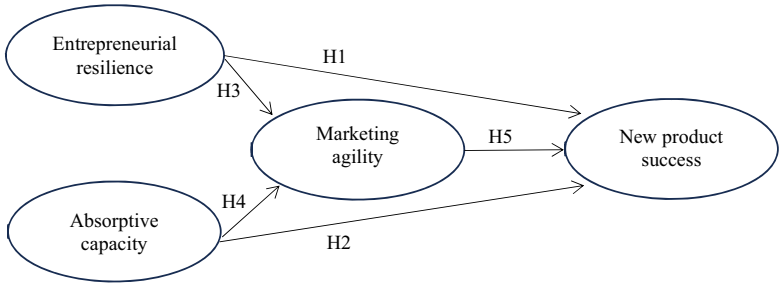

Fig. 1. Research framework.

ability to absorb knowledge generated abroad. Therefore, this study hypothesises the following:

H7: *Marketing agility positively mediates the relationship between absorptive capacity and new product success.*

Drawing on RBV, Fig. 1 illustrates the conceptual model that examines the role of ER and ACAP in influencing MA and NPP.

Research Method

Data collection and sample

Data were gathered from six telecommunication firms officially registered with the Ministry of Transportation and Communication in the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Data collection spanned from October 2023 to January 2024. To be included in the research sample, firms were required to meet two criteria: (1) a minimum of three years of operational history and (2) active engagement in new product development within the communication industry. A stratified sampling approach was employed to acquire a representative sample from each firm. Self-administered questionnaires were utilised to collect data from relevant personnel, such as new product development managers, marketing staff, R&D engineers, and CEOs. This method aimed to gain a more profound understanding from participants occupying key roles within each respective firm.

In total, 992 individuals met the criteria for inclusion in this study. Given that the participants worked in the communication and information technology sector, it was assumed that they had sufficient language skills. Therefore, the survey was distributed in English. Following Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) recommendations and considering the population size, an ideal sample size of 278 managers was suggested. Past research concentrating on NPP in the telecommunications industry has reported response rates varying from 24.5% to 38% (Barczak, 1994; Kim *et al.*, 2013). Hence, to ensure a representative sample, the sample size for this study was increased to 556. A total of 299 responses were collected, yielding a response rate of 53.8%. Due to the relatively modest sample size, Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was selected as the preferred method for handling small samples, following the recommendation of Hair *et al.* (2014). To assess non-response bias, an analysis using the *t*-test method, as per Armstrong and Overton's (1977) approach, was conducted. The results indicated no significant differences between participants who responded early and those who responded later, confirming the absence of non-response bias in the dataset.

Level of analysis

The study variables were examined at the organisational level. Therefore, the individuals selected for the survey held senior positions directly related to the study variables, particularly ER, ensuring that those unfamiliar with new product strategies could not respond. This approach has been employed in several studies, especially in relation to measuring ER, such as Santoro *et al.* (2020, 2021) and Liang and Cao (2021).

Measuring

The adopted questionnaire was based on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1, denoting 'strongly disagree,' to 7, denoting 'strongly agree.' These measurements were adopted from antecedent scholarly works, as reported in Appendix A. Seven items were used to measure NPP, these items were adapted from Rodríguez-Pinto *et al.* (2011). Li and Huang (2012) asserted that this measure exhibited satisfactory reliability, with composite reliabilities surpassing the threshold of 0.80. The formulation of the four items comprising the ER measurement was adapted from Sinclair and Wallston (2004). Santoro *et al.* (2020) indicated an excellent reliability of this measure, with Cronbach's α of 0.947. The four ACAP dimensions were adapted from Flatten *et al.* (2011b). Aljanabi (2018) reported acceptable reliability of these measures with Cronbach's α of 0.715. Finally, the four items of MA measurement were adapted from Zhou *et al.* (2019).

Results

Measurement model

As suggested by Hair *et al.* (2014), it is recommended to calculate internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity to estimate the measurement model. For internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's α was computed, yielding values between 0.728 and 0.956. To estimate convergent validity, factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) were computed for each construct. The results showed acceptable values for convergent validity, as recommended by Hair *et al.* (2014), as shown in Table 1 and Fig. 2. Additionally, two methods were employed to verify discriminant validity: the Fornell–Larcker criterion (Fornell and Larcker, 1981) and the heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratio (Henseler *et al.*, 2015). As shown in Table 2, the Fornell–Larcker calculation results showed that the square root of the AVE for each factor was greater than the estimated correlation between constructs, thereby confirming discriminant validity. The HTMT ratio of correlations indicated that all HTMT values were below the recommended threshold of 0.85,

Table 1. Convergent validity analysis.

Constructs	Items	Factor loadings	Convergent validity		
			Cronbach's α	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted
Acquisition	**ACQ1**	0.766	0.728	0.845	0.645
	ACQ2	0.831			
	ACQ3	0.811			
Assimilation	**ASSI1**	0.743	0.748	0.841	0.570
	ASSI2	0.802			
	ASSI3	0.764			
	ASSI4	0.707			
Entrepreneurial resilience	**ER1**	0.851	0.926	0.948	0.819
	ER2	0.927			
	ER3	0.931			
	ER4	0.909			
Exploitation	**EXP1**	0.829	0.795	0.880	0.709
	EXP2	0.860			
	EXP3	0.838			
Marketing agility	**MA1**	0.928	0.956	0.968	0.883
	MA2	0.940			
	MA3	0.951			
	MA4	0.940			
New product performance	**NPP1**	0.775	0.927	0.941	0.696
	NPP2	0.856			
	NPP3	0.804			
	NPP4	0.908			
	NPP5	0.787			
	NPP6	0.870			
	NPP7	0.831			
Transformation	**TRAN1**	0.773	0.774	0.855	0.596
	TRAN2	0.789			
	TRAN3	0.798			
	TRAN4	0.726			

thereby confirming acceptable discriminant validity for all constructs, as shown in Table 3.

Structural model

The path coefficient (β) and the coefficient of determination (R^2) are calculated to estimate the structural model. As shown in Table 4 and Fig. 3, the path coefficient indicates a significant relationship between ER and NPP ($\beta = 0.246$, $t = 4.453$, $p < 0.000$), thereby supporting hypothesis H1. A significant relationship is also

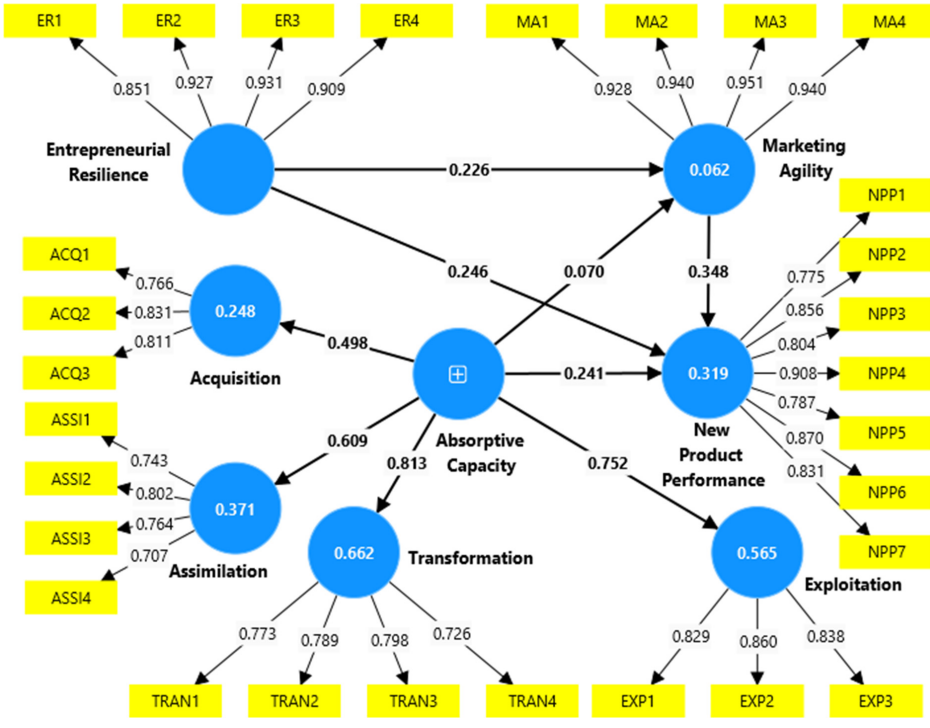

Fig. 2. Measurement model.

Table 2. Correlations and discriminant validity.

Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Acquisition	**0.803**						
2. Assimilation	0.104	**0.755**					
3. Entrepreneurial resilience	0.132	0.010	**0.905**				
4. Exploitation	0.235	0.252	0.153	**0.842**			
5. Marketing agility	0.060	0.114	0.238	0.054	**0.940**		
6. New product performance	0.181	0.232	0.370	0.324	0.433	**0.834**	
7. Transformation	0.272	0.316	0.157	0.458	0.073	0.147	**0.772**

found between ACAP and NPP ($\beta = 0.241$, $t = 4.537$, $p < 0.000$), supporting H2. The significant relationships between ER and MA ($\beta = 0.226$, $t = 4.002$, $p < 0.000$) supporting H3. However, the non-significant relationships between ACAP and MA ($\beta = 0.070$, $t = 1.168$, $p > 0.05$) does not support H4. Finally, MA significantly influences NPP ($\beta = 0.348$, $t = 7.398$, $p < 0.000$), thus providing support for H5. Additionally, the results indicate that MA is explained by 6.2% of the variance in ER and ACAP, while 31.9% of the variance in NPP is

Table 3. HTMT criterion values.

Items	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Acquisition							
2. Assimilation	0.142						
3. Entrepreneurial resilience	0.168	0.066					
4. Exploitation	0.297	0.321	0.178				
5. Marketing agility	0.081	0.135	0.253	0.068			
6. New product performance	0.219	0.282	0.394	0.375	0.458		
7. Transformation	0.354	0.412	0.184	0.583	0.088	0.170	

Table 4. Results of the structural "inner" model.

No.	Relationships	Path coefficient	Standard error	*T*-value	*P*-value	Decision
H1	ER → NPP	0.246***	0.055	4.453	0.000	Supported
H2	ACAP → NPP	0.241***	0.053	4.537	0.000	Supported
H3	ER → MA	0.226***	0.057	4.002	0.000	Supported
H4	ACAP → MA	0.070	0.060	1.168	0.243	Not supported
H5	MA → NPP	0.348***	0.047	7.398	0.000	Supported
H6	ER → MA → NPP	0.080**	0.023	3.460	0.001	Supported
H7	ACP → MA → NPP	0.024	0.021	1.160	0.246	Not supported

Notes: $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$.

explained by ER, ACAP, and MA. To verify that the model is free from common method bias, the variance inflation factors (VIFs) were examined. The results ranged from 1.000 to 1.084, which are acceptable according to Hair *et al.* (2019) and Kock (2015), who stated that VIF values less than or equal to 3 indicate that the study model is free from common method bias.

Mediation analysis

This study investigated the mediating role of MA using the bootstrapping method, and the findings reveal a significant indirect effect of ER on NPP through MA ($\beta = 0.080$, $t = 3.460$, $p < 0.01$) supporting H6. However, H7 was rejected due to the lack of statistical support ($\beta = 0.024$, $t = 1.160$, $p > 0.05$), and the direct relationship between ACAP and MA (H4) was not significant.

To assess the magnitude of the indirect effect, the variance accounted for (VAF) formula was employed, as recommended by Hair *et al.* (2014). The results indicate that the VAF for this study is 0.59, which is classified as partial mediation:

$$\text{VAF} = \frac{(\text{path } a \times \text{path } b)}{(\text{path } a \times \text{path } b + \text{path } c')}. \quad (1)$$

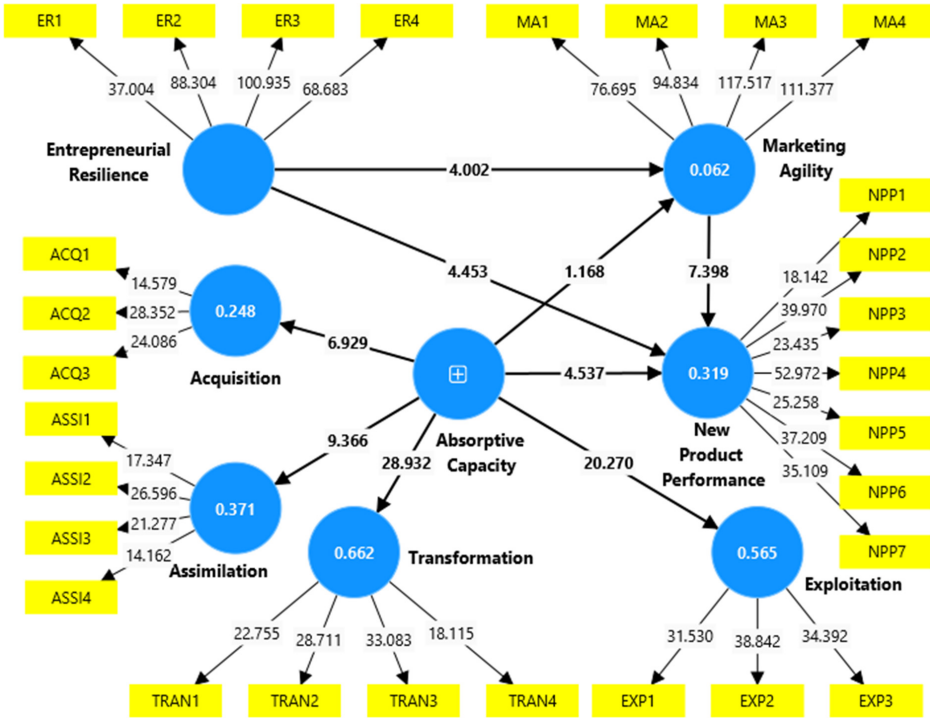

Fig. 3. Structural model.

Discussions

Adopting RBV facilitates the examination of issues related to the proposed constructs that enhance NPP in the telecommunications sector, helping firms remain competitive in a dynamic market. Regarding the first research question (RQ1), several conclusions can be drawn. First, the significant relationship between ER and NPP highlights the crucial role of ER as an organisational resource in achieving various competitive advantages, the most important of which are adaptability to change and learning from failure. This result is consistent with the studies by Liu *et al.* (2023) and Golgeci *et al.* (2023), which indicate that resilient entrepreneurs are better able to adapt to market shifts and unexpected challenges. They view failures as learning opportunities, using the insights gained to improve their products and strategies, ultimately achieving better performance and ensuring the development of new competitive products. Perhaps the most important point is the ability of resilient entrepreneurs to better manage the risks associated with NPP, making informed decisions that balance potential rewards and setbacks. This enables them to find innovative solutions to problems that may arise during product development or market entry.

Furthermore, entrepreneurs need to learn from past experiences and external sources. In this context, ACAP plays a crucial role by acquiring external knowledge and combining it with existing knowledge to develop new products. The results of this study are consistent with those of Cho *et al.* (2023), who confirmed that the performance of new products, especially in turbulent environments, hinges on a firm's ACAP. Perhaps this is due to two reasons. The first is better market fit. ACAP allows firms to stay updated on market trends and customer needs. By incorporating this externally generated knowledge, they can develop products that better align with market demands and achieve superior performance. The second reason is faster development cycles. By leveraging external knowledge and best practices, firms can streamline their product development processes. This efficiency reduces time-to-market and can lead to the faster introduction of high-performance products.

This study also found a significant relationship between MA and NPP. This may be due to the role of AM in enhancing customer engagement. AM enables firms to better understand and meet customer needs through real-time feedback and iterative adjustments, leading to products that are more aligned with customer preferences, improving their chances of success. Additionally, AM improves product positioning by continuously monitoring and adjusting positioning strategies based on market dynamics. This ensures that new products are well-positioned and effectively communicated to the target audience, enhancing their market impact. This result contrasts with the findings of Lassen and Laugen (2017), who reported that the possession of marketing and sales capabilities may not be directly correlated with the performance of new products.

Regarding RQ2, the findings indicated that ER significantly impacts MA. This contradicts previous studies, such as Liu *et al.* (2023), which found that ER does not significantly predict a firm's ability to reintegrate existing knowledge or adapt current processes to changes in the market and technology. These results suggest that ER encourages proactive behaviour, which aligns with the proactive nature of MA. Entrepreneurs who anticipate market changes and prepare in advance contribute to a more agile marketing approach. Moreover, it confirms that obtaining externally generated knowledge can effectively enhance MA beyond that of the firm's competitors in communication firms within the Kurdistan region of Iraq.

Surprisingly, in contradiction to the results of previous studies (Cho *et al.*, 2023), the findings did not show a significant effect of ACAP on MA. This may be due to the nature of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, which includes a large number of longstanding SMEs across Iraq and requires improvement before it can make a significant impact (WorldBank, 2023). Despite the Kurdistan Regional Government's strong emphasis on developing the ICT sector as a key driver of economic growth, which has transformed the region into a hub for innovation and

entrepreneurship, official reports highlight weaknesses in certain aspects of the entrepreneurship ecosystem, particularly in areas such as research and development and the culture of information sharing among entrepreneurs (KAPITA, 2024). This suggests that there are obstacles preventing organisations from benefiting from each other, particularly in their ability to respond rapidly to accelerating market demands. This result contrasts with the findings of Mata *et al.* (2023), who found a non-significant relationship between ACAP and an organisation's ability to identify more market opportunities.

RQ3 was addressed by assessing the mediating effects of MA in the relationships outlined in the proposed model. The results validated the mediating role of MA on the relationship between ER and NPP. This finding is consistent with previous studies (Thoumrungroje and Racela, 2022; Vizcaíno *et al.*, 2021; Zhou *et al.*, 2019) and suggests the importance of the rapid adaptation to market changes that MA provides. This includes the quick adjustment of marketing strategies in response to changes in customer preferences, competitor actions, and market conditions, giving firms greater resilience to develop new, competitive products. However, MA did not demonstrate a mediating effect on the relationship between ACAP and NPP. A potential explanation for this finding is that while ACAP allows a firm to acquire and comprehend external knowledge, there may be a gap in translating this knowledge into agile marketing actions. This disconnect can occur if the insights obtained are not relevant to immediate marketing strategies or if the organisation faces challenges in implementing changes rapidly. Additionally, in highly regulated industries, the capacity to adapt marketing strategies quickly may be restricted, thereby limiting the impact of MA on NPP.

Managerial implications

In addition to the significant insights gained from the findings, this study highlights several practical implications. First, firms can benefit from benchmarking their practices against industry leaders in the investigated variables (e.g., ER, ACAP, and MA). Adopting best practices from successful firms can help improve their own NPP. For example, firms can establish reliable contingency planning frameworks that enable the organisation to adapt its strategies in response to potential demands, as well as adopt flexible organisational policies that enhance agility, even under uncertain market conditions. Second, firms should invest strategically in enhancing their ER, ACAP, and MA. By doing so, they can better identify external opportunities, absorb and apply externally generated knowledge, which can improve their marketing flexibility and ultimately enhance NPP. Third, encouraging cross-functional collaboration can leverage the strengths of different departments, enhancing the firm's ability to absorb external knowledge and apply

it effectively in new product development. This collaborative approach can also foster a more agile and resilient organisational culture. Fourth, policymakers can support initiatives that enhance the ER and ACAP of firms, especially in regions like the Kurdistan region of Iraq. Providing access to external knowledge sources and facilitating networking opportunities can help local firms become more competitive. Such initiatives allow businesses to anticipate market opportunities, adapt to trends, and develop competitive products. Additionally, the findings highlight the importance of a supportive innovation ecosystem. Stakeholders, including government agencies, academic institutions, and industry associations, should work together to create an environment that promotes knowledge exchange, resilience, and agility. These efforts contribute to enhancing an innovation-friendly ecosystem, ultimately improving the performance of new products in the market.

The weakness of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the Kurdistan Region (KAPITA, 2024) calls for greater emphasis on the government's role in fostering a supportive environment for development, particularly at the planning and monitoring levels. This is especially relevant in developing countries like Iraq. At the planning level, for example, encouraging R&D investments and supporting collaborations between universities, research institutions, and industries to enhance firms' ability to absorb and apply new generated knowledge. Furthermore, motivate innovation in product development policies by introducing grants and tax incentives, particularly for firms that prioritise innovative product development strategies. These approaches suggest that policies rewarding innovation contribute to long-term competitiveness and achieving optimal use of resources.

At the monitoring level, the government's role involves evaluating challenges in the business environment. This requires implementing mechanisms to regularly assess and address environmental and economic barriers that hinder firms' capabilities. These measures will enhance the business environment and enable firms to focus more on innovation without unnecessary external constraints. Finally, the government plays a crucial role in raising awareness about the importance of NPP, particularly in areas experiencing rapid technological progress. This can be achieved by organising workshops, seminars, and campaigns to educate companies on the strategic significance of ER, ACAP, and MA in achieving superior productivity, thereby enhancing their products performance.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

Despite the insights provided by this study, some limitations must be considered when generalising its results. First, the study may have a limited sample size within the telecommunications sector, which may affect the generalisability of the

findings. Therefore, future studies should use a relatively larger sample size from the telecommunications sector or other sectors to better generalise the results. For instance, adopting the proposed model in the retail industry may provide deeper insights into how MA directly influences customer-centric NPP. Similarly, the model could be explored in the manufacturing sector, where the investigated variables may exhibit different results compared to their application in the services sector with intangible products. Second, there may be other influential factors not covered by the study, such as market conditions, organisational culture, or leadership styles, which could affect the relationships between the variables studied in the same sector or other sectors. Finally, rapid technological changes can impact the significance of the results. As new technologies emerge, variables and their relationships may evolve, which may make results less applicable over time. Therefore, it is useful to retest the proposed model in different environments at later times or to apply a different analysis method such as multigroup analysis (MGA) to compare multiple organisations or environments.

Appendix A. Measures

New product performance	Factor loadings
1. The new product met or exceeded profit objectives	0.775
2. The new product met or exceeded sales objectives	0.856
3. The new product met or exceeded market share objectives	0.804
4. New product profits relative to competition	0.908
5. New product sales relative to competition	0.787
6. New product market share relative to competition	0.870
7. Overall new product success	0.831
Entrepreneurial resilience	
1. I actively look for ways to replace the losses I encounter in life	0.851
2. I believe that I can grow in positive ways by dealing with difficulties	0.927
3. I look for creative ways to alter difficult situations	0.931
4. Regardless of what happens to me, I believe I can control my reaction to it	0.909
Absorptive capacity	
Acquisition:	
1. The search for relevant information concerning our industry is every-day business in our company	0.766
2. Our management motivates the employees to use information sources within our industry	0.831
3. Our management expects that the employees deal with information beyond our industry	0.811

(*Continued*)

New product performance	Factor loadings
Assimilation:	
4. In our company ideas and concepts are communicated cross-departmental	0.743
5. Our management emphasises cross-departmental support to solve problems	0.802
6. In our company there is a quick information flow, e.g., if a business unit obtains important information, it communicates this information promptly to all other business units or departments	0.764
7. Our management demands periodical cross-departmental meetings to interchange new developments, problems, and achievements	0.707
Transformation:	
8. Our employees have the ability to structure and to use collected knowledge	0.773
9. Our employees are used to absorb new knowledge as well as to prepare it for further purposes and to make it available	0.789
10. Our employees successfully link existing knowledge with new insights	0.798
11. Our employees are able to apply new knowledge in their practical work	0.726
Exploitation:	
12. Our management supports the development of prototypes	0.829
13. Our company regularly reconsiders technologies and adapts them accordant to new knowledge	0.860
14. Our company has the ability to work more effective by adopting new technologies	0.838
Marketing agility	
1. We can spot the first indicators of new market threats	0.928
2. We are often the first to seize new market opportunities	0.940
3. We can anticipate new opportunities for market growth	0.951
4. We create new preferences by informing customers about new benefits of our products	0.940

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