

# Women Agripreneurs in the Digital Era: Institutional Support and Coopetition Marketing as Drivers of Business Excellence

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the influence of agripreneurship (AP) on the business performance (PF) of women-led enterprises in the agricultural sector, with digital coopetition marketing (DCM) as a mediating variable and institutional support as a moderator. The model is further enriched with control variables: age and education, to explore demographic sensitivity. Drawing upon Resource-Based Theory and Institutional Theory, this research proposes a moderation-mediation model tested using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). Data were collected from 83 women agripreneurs in Malang Regency, and the findings suggest that while DCM significantly mediates the AP–PF relationship, institutional support has an insignificant moderating effect. Age and education as control variables do not significantly alter performance, underscoring the dominance of strategic and digital factors over demographic ones in influencing entrepreneurial outcomes. This study contributes to the discourse on inclusive innovation, gendered entrepreneurship, and rural economic development.

**Keywords:** *Agripreneurship, Digital Coopetition Marketing, Institutional Support, Women Entrepreneurship, Business Performance.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The landscape of agricultural entrepreneurship is rapidly transforming in the digital age, offering new opportunities for marginalized groups—particularly women in rural areas—to participate in value creation, access markets, and build sustainable businesses. Agripreneurship, which combines agricultural activities with entrepreneurial strategies, has been increasingly recognized as a pathway for rural revitalization and gender empowerment (Kamarapu et al., 2025; Narasimha Rao & Venkateswara Kumar, 2016). Despite these advancements, women agripreneurs continue to face structural limitations, including restricted market access, gendered norms, and limited support mechanisms (Siegrist, 2022).

At the intersection of digitalization and entrepreneurship lies a promising strategy: digital coopetition marketing (DCM), where firms simultaneously collaborate and compete in digital ecosystems to create mutual value. This approach enables women agripreneurs to overcome resource constraints through shared platforms, collaborative learning, and collective innovation (Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Klimas et al., 2023; M. Wu & He, 2022). However, the success of these strategies does not exist in a vacuum. Institutional support (IS)—from governments, cooperatives, NGOs, and community networks—plays a critical role in shaping outcomes, especially for women navigating traditionally male-dominated sectors (Scott, 2008).

This study is grounded in Resource-Based Theory (RBT) and Institutional Theory, proposing a moderated mediation model where digital coopetition marketing mediates the impact of agripreneurship on business performance, and institutional support moderates the impact of agripreneurship on business performance. While prior studies have examined either digital strategies or institutional enablers in isolation, the novelty of this research lies in its integrative approach—bridging coopetition, digital marketing, institutional contexts, and gendered agripreneurship in a single empirical framework. This paper aims to fill a critical research gap by exploring how women agripreneurs leverage coopetition-based digital marketing in varying institutional contexts to improve performance outcomes. In

doing so, it contributes to the evolving discourse on inclusive innovation, gendered entrepreneurship, and sustainable rural development.

### ***1.1. Agripreneurship and Women's Business Performance***

Agripreneurship represents a transformative model of rural entrepreneurship that integrates traditional agricultural activities with innovative business practices to improve livelihood outcomes (Adenle et al., 2017; Chand, 2019; Tabares et al., 2022). For women, especially in developing economies, agripreneurship offers a pathway out of poverty, enabling them to generate income while retaining their role in community and household structures. Despite structural barriers such as gender bias, land ownership inequality, and limited financial access (FAO, 2020), women agripreneurs are increasingly participating in value-added agricultural ventures—ranging from food processing to agri-tourism—demonstrating resilience and creativity.

Empirical studies have established positive links between agripreneurial engagement and business outcomes, including increased profitability, innovation, and resilience to market shocks (Akpa et al., 2024). Given the growing emphasis on inclusive entrepreneurship, it is essential to assess how agripreneurship directly influences the performance of women-led businesses, particularly in underserved rural economies.

**H1:** Agripreneurship positively affects women's business performance.

### ***1.2. Digital Coopetition Marketing as a Mediator***

Digital coopetition marketing (DCM) is an emerging strategy that blends competitive and cooperative behaviors via digital platforms (Gnyawali & Park, 2011; Ritala & Hurmelinna-Laukkanen, 2013). In practice, DCM allows micro-entrepreneurs—including women in agriculture—to collaborate in product promotion, logistics, and information sharing, while still maintaining brand independence. This hybrid model is particularly relevant in digital economies where online marketplaces and social media allow multiple small players to gain visibility and scale.

In rural entrepreneurial ecosystems, where women often lack capital and infrastructure, DCM enables them to access new markets, co-create value, and reduce individual marketing costs (Cioppi et al., 2023; Ogbeide-Osaretin & Ebhote, 2020; Verhoef et al., 2021). Furthermore, digital tools facilitate real-time feedback, customer interaction, and collaborative branding, fostering both innovation and operational efficiency. Based on this framework, DCM may serve as a mediating mechanism that strengthens the impact of agripreneurship on performance. Agripreneurs equipped with digital coopetitive strategies are more likely to expand their market reach and improve business outcomes.

**H2:** Agripreneurship positively affects digital coopetition marketing.

**H3:** Digital coopetition marketing positively affects business performance.

**H4:** Digital coopetition marketing mediates the relationship between agripreneurship and business performance.

### ***1.3. Institutional Support as a Moderator***

Institutional support refers to the formal and informal structures—such as regulations, training programs, access to finance, infrastructure, and social norms—that enable or constrain entrepreneurial activities (Bruton et al., 2010)(Bruton et al., 2010; Mwesigwa et al., 2024; Scott, 2008). In the context of women agripreneurs, institutional frameworks are critical for reducing systemic barriers and amplifying the effectiveness of entrepreneurial strategies. Supportive institutions can provide women with tailored digital literacy training, funding access, market linkages, and protection from discriminatory practices.

Institutional support can serve as an important contingency that strengthens the effectiveness of entrepreneurial efforts. In contexts where resources and market access are limited, formal support mechanisms such as financing programs, capacity-building initiatives, and policy protections can enhance the success of agripreneurship activities (Bruton et al., 2010; Manolova et al., 2008) By reducing environmental uncertainty and providing legitimacy, institutional support is expected to positively moderate the relationship between agripreneurship and business performance. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis:

**H5:** Institutional support positively moderates the relationship between agripreneurship and business performance, such that the relationship is stronger when institutional support is higher.

## 2. RESEARCH METHODS

### 2.1. Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional research design to empirically examine the proposed moderated mediation model. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was utilized due to its suitability for complex models and small to medium sample sizes, as well as its predictive orientation and robustness against non-normal data (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

### 2.2. Population and Sample

The study population consists of women agripreneurs operating in rural regions of Malang Regency, East Java, Indonesia. Respondents were selected using purposive sampling, targeting women who actively run agribusiness ventures and utilize digital marketing channels. A total of 83 valid responses were collected and analyzed. This sample size meets the minimum threshold recommended for PLS-SEM analysis based on the "10-times rule" and power analysis criteria (Hair Jr et al., 2021).

### 2.3. Measurement Instruments

The constructs in this study were measured using previously validated scales, adapted to the agripreneurial and digital coopetition context. Agripreneurship (AP): Measured using reflective items adapted from Apostolopoulos et al. (2021), Bonfanti et al. (2024), Khourouh et al. (2022) and Latino et al. (2023). These items captured dimensions such as innovation, value-added practices, and market orientation in agribusiness. Digital Coopetition Marketing (DCM): Assessed using a multidimensional scale covering digital coopetition knowledge (DCK), strategy (DCS), and marketing execution (DM). Scale items were adapted from Wu et al. (2022), Lee & Roh (2023) and Riquelme-Medina et al. (2022). Institutional Support (IS): Measured using six items reflecting both formal (policy, finance, training) and informal (networks, community norms) dimensions of support, following the frameworks of Scott (2008) and Bruton et al. (2010). Business Performance (PF): This construct included 11 items covering financial and non-financial performance metrics such as profitability, customer satisfaction, and market reach, adapted from Henao et al. (2019), Kamble et al. (2020) and Wang et al. (2015). All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), allowing for a nuanced assessment of respondents' perceptions.

### 2.4. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using SmartPLS version 4.0, which is appropriate for testing complex models involving mediation and moderation effects with smaller samples. The analysis proceeded in two stages: (1) measurement model evaluation, which assessed indicator reliability, internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha, rho\_C, and composite reliability), convergent validity (average variance extracted), and discriminant validity (HTMT ratio); and (2) structural model assessment, including R<sup>2</sup> values, path coefficients. Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was employed to test the significance of the path coefficients and indirect effects.

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 3.1. Measurement Model Evaluation

The measurement model was assessed through reliability and validity tests. All constructs achieved Composite Reliability (CR) values above 0.7 and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.5, demonstrating internal consistency and convergent validity.

**Table 1.** Construct Reliability and validity

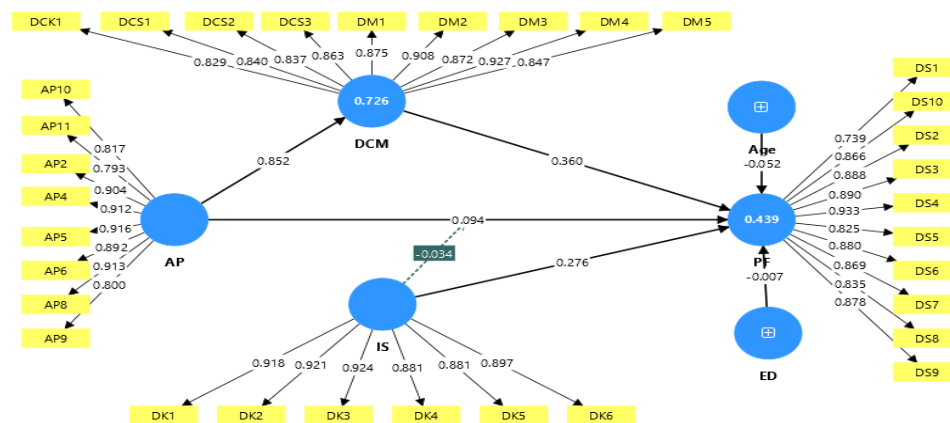
	Cronbach Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Agripreneur (AP)	0.953	0.961	0.757
Digital Coopetition Marketing (DCM)	0.959	0.965	0.752
Institutional Support (IS)	0.955	0.964	0.816
Performance (PF)	0.961	0.966	0.743

Discriminant validity was established using the HTMT criterion, with all ratios below the recommended threshold of 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015).

**Table 2.** Discriminant Validity - Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)

	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)
DCM <-> AP	0.885
IS <-> AP	0.611
IS<-> DCM	0.509
PF <-> AP	0.611
PF <-> DCM	0.624
PF <-> IS	0.543

### 3.2. Structural Model Evaluation

**Figure 1** Result of Hypotheses Testing

The structural model was assessed through path analysis using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

**Table 3.** Hypothesis Testing

Direct-Indirect Effect	Original sample (O)	T statistics	P value	Hypotheses
AP -> DCM	0.852	25.564	0.000	Supported
AP -> PF	0.094	0.625	0.532	Rejected
DCM -> PF	0.360	2.849	0.004	Supported
IS -> PF	0.276	3.180	0.001	Supported
IS x AP -> PF	-0.034	0.354	0.724	Rejected
AP -> DCM -> PF	0.313	2.757	0.006	Supported

The results indicate several noteworthy relationships among the study variables. First, agripreneurship (AP) demonstrated a strong and significant positive effect on digital coopetition marketing (DCM) with a path coefficient of  $\beta = 0.852$ ,  $t > 1.96$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . This suggests that higher agripreneurial engagement among women is strongly associated with greater utilization of digital coopetition marketing strategies. Second, digital coopetition marketing (DCM) significantly influenced women's business performance (PF) ( $\beta = 0.360$ ,  $t > 1.96$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), supporting its mediating role in the relationship between agripreneurship and performance outcomes. However, the direct effect of agripreneurship on performance was positive but not statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.094$ ), indicating that DCM may serve as a crucial pathway through which agripreneurship contributes to improved performance.

The analysis of the moderating effect of institutional support (IS) on the relationship between AP and performance revealed a negative but statistically insignificant interaction term ( $\beta = -0.034$ ), suggesting that the role of institutional support may not substantially influence the strength of this relationship in the current context. Regarding explanatory power, the model showed substantial variance explained for digital coopetition marketing ( $R^2 = 0.726$ ) and moderate variance explained for performance ( $R^2 = 0.439$ ). These values indicate that the model accounts for a considerable proportion of the variance in both mediating and outcome constructs, affirming its explanatory relevance. The f-square analysis reveals that agripreneurship has a very large effect on DCM but only a negligible direct effect on

performance. Meanwhile, DCM and IS have small yet notable effects on performance, and the moderating role of institutional support is statistically insignificant.

To assess the potential demographic influence on performance, age and education were included as control variables in the extended structural model. As illustrated in Figure 1, neither age ( $\beta = -0.052$ ) nor education ( $\beta = -0.007$ ) demonstrated a significant path coefficient toward business performance. This suggests that demographic differences among women agripreneurs do not substantially explain variance in performance outcomes. Age and education might still influence how women perceive or engage with digital marketing, even if not statistically significant in this model. For example, younger or more educated women may adopt DCM more quickly. However, this effect might be absorbed by the DCM construct itself, making age/education less directly impactful on performance.

### 3.3. Discussion

The results underscore the pivotal role of agripreneurship in enhancing digital coopetition marketing among women entrepreneurs. The strong path from AP to DCM supports previous literature on how entrepreneurial capacity empowers rural women to leverage digital channels and cooperative strategies for market competitiveness (Bichler et al., 2022; Ndofirepi et al., 2020). The mediating role of DCM further emphasizes the significance of digital strategies as mechanisms for transforming agribusiness practices (Gnyawali & Park, 2011).

Contrary to expectations, institutional support did not significantly moderate the relationship between agripreneurship and business performance. This finding suggests that the impact of agripreneurial activities on performance is primarily driven by internal capabilities and adaptive digital strategies, rather than external formal support structures. One possible explanation is that institutional programs may not be sufficiently aligned with the practical and digital needs of rural women agripreneurs (Kistruck et al., 2015; Mair & Marti, 2009), limiting their capacity to enhance entrepreneurial effectiveness. As a result, institutional support operates more as an independent predictor rather than as a contingent amplifier in this context.

The inclusion of age and education as control variables enriches our understanding of the model's robustness. The negligible effect sizes suggest that regardless of age group or educational attainment, digital coopetition marketing and agripreneurial behavior remain the strongest predictors of success. This aligns with research emphasizing skills and adaptability over static characteristics (Brush et al., 2019; Roomi & Parrott, 2008). The nonsignificant direct effect of age and education suggests that entrepreneurial success in the digital era is driven more by digital adaptability and proactive learning than by demographic characteristics. Nevertheless, controlling for age and education remains critical to ensure that the observed relationships between agripreneurship, DCM, and business performance are attributed to strategic capabilities rather than background variations.

These findings support the idea that empowering women through digital and strategic tools could be universally effective across age and education groups. Institutional reforms should thus focus less on demographic tailoring and more on ecosystem and capability development (Tambunan, 2017). These insights call for a more inclusive and adaptive institutional framework that supports gender-specific digital transformation initiatives in agriculture. Stakeholders, including local governments, NGOs, and private sectors, must collaborate to deliver accessible digital training, co-marketing platforms, and funding tailored for rural women-led enterprises (De Vita et al., 2014).

## 4. CONCLUSION

This study advances the understanding of how agripreneurship, when mediated through digital coopetition marketing (DCM), can enhance the performance of women-led businesses in the agricultural sector. The findings demonstrate that while agripreneurial engagement alone does not significantly predict performance outcomes, its integration with digital coopetition strategies significantly contributes to improved business results. This underscores the importance of digital innovation not merely as a supporting tool, but as a central mechanism through which women agripreneurs can overcome structural market constraints.

Moreover, the study contributes to the theoretical development of coopetition and gendered entrepreneurship by highlighting the role of DCM as a key enabler in the agribusiness context—particularly for women operating in mass-affordable (BoP) segments. The absence of a significant moderating effect of institutional support suggests that current institutional frameworks may lack the specificity and agility required to support digitally-driven agripreneurship. Moving forward, institutions must evolve beyond generic interventions to effectively catalyze entrepreneurial performance in rural, technology-enabled contexts. Practically, the research points to the need for ecosystem-based interventions that simultaneously address entrepreneurial capacity, digital infrastructure, cooperative

collaboration, and gender-sensitive support systems. As digital transformation reshapes agri-markets globally, empowering women through cooperative digital entrepreneurship represents both an economic opportunity and a strategic pathway for inclusive rural development. Future research is encouraged to explore sectoral variations, cultural dimensions, and the evolving role of informal digital networks in shaping women's agripreneurial trajectories—especially through longitudinal and comparative approaches.

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