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Marketing Approaches in SMEs: Comparing  
Digital and Traditional Strategies of P&G and  
Fiorillo Detergenza

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis provides a comparative analysis of Procter & Gamble, a giant corporation operating in the detergent industry, and Fiorillo Detergenza, an SME's, operating in the same industry. The study examines how each company leverages traditional and digital marketing strategies to address different market challenges and long-term objectives. Fiorillo Detergenza, with limited resources, adopts a more localized, customer-centric digital approach, relying on social media and interactive marketing to maintain competitiveness. P&G, differently from the analyzed SME's, employs large-scale, data-driven marketing tactics, supported by substantial budgets for global campaigns. By comparing the effectiveness of these strategies, this research highlights how digital tools empower smaller enterprises to compete against multinational corporations. Data from qualitative interviews with Fiorillo's management and secondary sources from P&G form the basis of the analysis. The findings suggest that digital transformation offers SMEs unique opportunities to enhance customer engagement and build brand loyalty by fostering a closer connection between the enterprise and the consumer. This increasing need for proximity represents a valuable opportunity for Fiorillo and other SMEs to strengthen their market presence, despite resource and budget constraints.

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## 1.INTRODUCTION

*This chapter provides an overview of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and their distinctive marketing strategies, focusing particularly on how these businesses adapt to digitalization in promoting their products. The chapter outlines the research gaps in the current literature, presents the aim of the study and the main research questions guiding this research. Limitations of the study are discussed at the end of the chapter, clarifying the scope and limitations of the research.*

### 1.1Background

Small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in the European economy, contributing significantly to job creation, GDP growth, entrepreneurship, and innovation. (Jasra et al., 2011)<sup>1</sup> These businesses, characterized by having fewer than 250 employees (Jasra et al., 2011), dominate the market in many countries, including Italy, UK and Turkey. (European Commission, 2018). Marketing strategies in small enterprises differ from those of larger corporations due to resource constraints, but they maintain advantages such as flexibility and close customer relationships (Hill, 2001)<sup>2</sup>. Despite their limited market influence and budget restrictions, SMEs can employ informal marketing plans that suit their needs and offer tailored products/services, often enhancing customer loyalty and satisfaction. (Carson, 1985)<sup>3</sup>

The way SMEs conduct marketing has been greatly affected by performance of digitalization. Digital marketing provides an alternative to traditional marketing approaches in reaching a wider audience at an affordable price (Chong and Pervan, 2007)<sup>4</sup>. Especially small firms using social media have the chance to communicate with customers better and develop customer loyalty more effectively (Hafele, 2011). With adequate online presence, small businesses are able to compete in an arena that is predominantly occupied by bigger businesses (Taiminen & Karjaluo, 2015).<sup>5</sup> Despite these advantages, the informal and unstructured approach to marketing that many SMEs take can hinder their potential for growth. Most of the small enterprises do not appreciate the need to formalize their approach to marketing as a part of a business strategy and usually do not have a clear plan and outline for it. This tends to make the execution of such marketing plans ineffective,

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<sup>1</sup> Jasra, J., Hunjra, A. I., Rehman, A. U., Azam, R. I., & Khan, M. A. (2011). Determinants of business success of small and medium enterprises. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 2(20), 274-280.

<sup>2</sup> Hill, J. (2001). A multidimensional study of the key determinants of effective SME marketing activity: Part 1. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 7(5), 171- 204.

<sup>3</sup> Carson, D. J. (1985). The evolution of marketing in small firms. *European journal of marketing*, 19(5), 7-16.

<sup>4</sup> Chong, S., & Pervan, G. (2007). Factors influencing the extent of deployment of electronic commerce for small-and medium sized enterprises. *Journal of Electronic Commerce in Organizations (JECO)*, 5(1), 1-29.

<sup>5</sup> Taiminen, H. M., & Karjaluo, H. (2015). The usage of digital marketing channels in SMEs. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 22(4), 633-651

and resources spent on them cannot be recovered back especially in the cut-throat market such as detergents.

The study will investigate the case of Fiorillo Detergenza, which belongs to a small enterprise in the detergent sector, and compare it with P&G, which is a large corporation in the same sector.

The analysis will focus on the differences in marketing strategies between the two, examining how a small business like Fiorillo Detergenza can compete with larger corporations using tailored marketing approaches and digital tools. This research will emphasize the need to develop the marketing department of a small and medium-sized enterprise and explain how technology could facilitate this process through implementation of cost-efficient strategies.

In addition, the role of branding and communication strategies will be explored in the context of SMEs and big corporations.

## **1.2 Preliminaries of the study**

The purpose of this study is to analyze and compare marketing strategies of small and medium enterprises such as Fiorillo Detergenza with multinational companies like Procter & Gamble (P&G). The major concern is relating the main differences with respect to the promotion and communication strategies among the companies of these two types and the results they achieve. Currently, the existing literature regarding the management has already been interested in most of the marketing aspects of big corporation especially in relation to globalization and its dynamics. Small and medium enterprises, however, have often been excluded from such research analysis despite their increasing global competitiveness and importance.<sup>6</sup> In the 1980s, interest started building in the competitive advantage of SMEs thus spurring on studies which became more focus yet empirical studies are still relatively few. The 1990s had a different academic experience as it marked the beginning of noticing differences between large firms and small ones and, showing also that the conventional marketing management is not as useful in all companies.<sup>7</sup> Despite the acknowledged importance of customer satisfaction by SMEs, they tend to adopt traditional market approaches to deal with the customers and perform transactions without specific strategies and proper strategic management. However, it is important to recognize that SMEs should not merely be seen as steppingstones to becoming large corporations; rather, they should be recognized as independent entities that may continue to operate at their existing scale.

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<sup>6</sup> GILMORE A., CARSON D., ROCKS S. (2006), “*Networking in SMEs: Evaluating its Contribution to Marketing Activity*”, *International Business Review*, Vol. 15, pp. 278-293.

<sup>7</sup> Carson D. (1985), “*The evolution of marketing in small firms*”, *Marketing and Small Business (special issue)*, *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 19, No. 5

As such, they deserve specialized management attention, particularly in terms of their marketing efforts, to sustain their unique positions and needs.<sup>8</sup> In this case, marketing is in the centre of management decisions regarding, developing the demand on the market, the activity of competitors and the requirements of consumers. The research was dedicated to helping fill this gap by examining the marketing and communication approaches of small enterprises such as Fiorillo Detergenza and subsequently compare those entities with large organizations such as P&G. This analysis helps this research to detect potential weaknesses in SMEs and to offer growth strategies which are important in a globalized and competitive environment.

### **1.3 The aim of the study**

This paper investigates the various ways in which small scale enterprises approach marketing, and argues how marketing can help them challenge the big players. Micro and small enterprises are usually faced with problems like inadequate finances and inadequate marketing know-how, which frequently reduces their market share. Such an investigation investigates the management of the fundamentals of the marketing mix such as marketing strategies and customer satisfaction, deployment of retention strategies and delivery of appropriate products and services. At the same time, it also brings out the need for marketing within the context of changing technologies which is central to engaging in competition.<sup>9</sup>

Through the identification of useful marketing strategies, this research not only adds to the existing body of knowledge but more importantly, it also highlights ways in which small businesses can bolster their competitive advantage. It similarly plays the role of a typical comparative impact assessment study against larger firms, showing the characteristics as well as the strategies that smaller firms should exploit in order to outperform larger organizations in their highly demanded markets, dominated by the latter.

The study aims is also to contribute to the existing literature on SME's marketing by providing a detailed case study of Fiorillo Detergenza, along with practical recommendations for small business owners on how to optimize their marketing strategies for long-term success.

#### **1.3.1 Research question**

This study addresses the following questions:

**RQ 1:** *How does Fiorillo Detergenza, as a small enterprise, develop and implement marketing strategies to gain a competitive advantage in a market dominated by larger enterprises?*

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<sup>8</sup> Gandolfi V. (2010), "Il marketing delle medie imprese. Analisi di alcuni casi aziendali, Impresa Progetto, *Electronic Journal of Management*, No.1.

<sup>9</sup> Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2019). *Digital Marketing* (7th ed.). Pearson Education..

**RQ 2:** *How has digitalization influenced Fiorillo Detergenza's marketing activities, and in what ways has it helped the company strengthen its competitive position against larger competitors like P&G?*

## 1.4 Delimitation

In order to respond to the research objectives of this study, a qualitative method was applied, consisting of non-structured interviews with the managers and/or owners of Fiorillo Detergenza, range of secondary information for a bigger player in the same sector. This focus was recommended to enhance the effectiveness of the depth analysis of SMEs and comparison in marketing strategies between small and large enterprises across industries. In addition, no aspects of the customer were considered, and the study focused only on the business's own ways of how it undertakes competitive strategies. This study is also constrained by its only two firms qualitative case study as a small sample which may not capture the entire industry's marketing strategies.<sup>10</sup> In concentrating solely on one sector, its findings may be difficult to apply in other areas where competition and marketing strategies are different.<sup>11</sup> Even worse, looking for secondary data for larger competitors may have the disadvantage of providing less recent and lower detail information than that from the smaller firm Fiorillo Detergenza.<sup>12</sup> Lastly, the in-depth interview and case study methods used in this study produces rich and insightful data, however their use means that results from the research may lack a representative sample of the population, therefore each division may not able to ascertain the statistically significant effects of various strategies employed.<sup>13</sup>

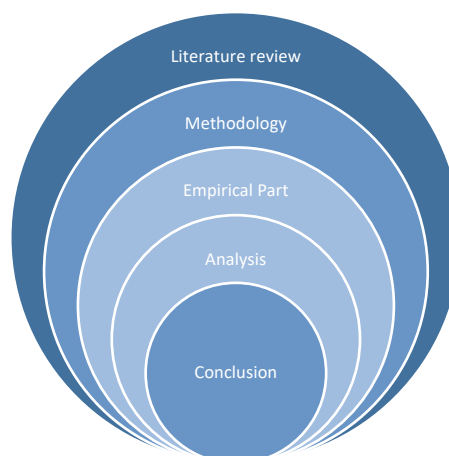


Figure 1- Disposition

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<sup>10</sup> Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2015). *Business Research Methods* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.

<sup>11</sup> Porter, M. E. (1985). *Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance*. The Free Press.

<sup>12</sup> Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P. R. (2012). *Management Research* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

<sup>13</sup> Silverman, D. (2013). *Doing Qualitative Research* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

*This section focuses on the research concerning the marketing strategies developed by small businesses which aim to enter in a market that is dominated by larger businesses. It will show which marketing measures are taken by SMEs by way of comparing them. It explores why small enterprises need to adopt either digital or traditional marketing strategies to enhance their competitive edge against large corporations.*

### 2.1 SMEs: analysis of entities.

Before proceeding with the evaluation of the traditional and digital marketing strategies which are in use by small enterprises, it is necessary to apply the literature review methodology and identify what a small enterprise is and the particulars that define it.

The European Commission (2003/361/EC) helps provide a detailed overview of the methods that were conducted by measuring the number of employees and the revenue of small and middle-sized enterprises.

Most of the business foundations that is 84.0% in Italy are Micro Enterprises employing 10 individuals and above, while almost all are small, and these comprise most SMEs. 4.6% of the market is covered with Small enterprises whereas Medium-sized Businesses cover just 0.5%. This only implies that there are Small and medium-sized Enterprises (SME's) in Italian business. It is only 0.1% of the cases that more than 250 employees working in the companies exist. Based on the IT Net Initiative, the figures are, those working in small and medium enterprises in Italy comprise 79.6% of the workforce, while in the EU it is only 67% average.

SMEs play a vital role in Italy's economy, significantly contributing to the GDP.

According to existing literature: Cattaneo (1963) notes that smaller firms depend on the decisions of larger companies and lack the ability to significantly alter market dynamics.<sup>14</sup> Learning from Carson (1990), he believes that the differences between small and large firms go beyond size and are more evident in their management and marketing techniques. Why? Because most small firms are localized or niche market centered and employ a more hands-on, personalized management style with managerial decision making being predominant. And these small companies, for the most part, also do not have much of an access to things like marketing know-how, tools, or market power.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Cattaneo, M. (1963). *Le imprese di piccole e medie dimensioni*. Istituto Editoriale Cisalpino: Milano

<sup>15</sup> Carson, D. (1990). Some exploratory models for assessing small firms' marketing performance (A qualitative approach). *European journal of marketing*, 24(11), 8-51.

In their investigation Berthon et al. (2008) emphasize the role played by SMEs in contributing towards country's GDP and employment opportunities. This is the reason why a proper understanding of backstopping SME growth towards slum development is necessary.

In view of this, it's very clear that SMEs should seek to have knowledge on the various strategies of business marketing in order to the maximum extent possible use all that they are able to do to the economy.

## **2.2 Marketing strategies for SME's**

Designing a marketing strategy suitable to the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises is very important as it goes beyond their own benefits and adds much to the economy at large which is why it needs focus.

The core competitiveness of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Italy is that they can change very rapidly due to the simple and small size of their businesses. Such a peculiarity allows quickly responding to new ideas, technologies, or products on the market. The operating strategies are also easy to implement owing to the high degree of involvement of the business owner. The owner of the business is often the one who decides all the important issues centrally and so there is little need for outside intervention in important business matters. The clarity in the decision-making ensures that the company remains responsive and innovative as it does not lag behind in competition. Owing to the nimbleness and urgency in decision making present at the level of SMEs, the precious opportunities wouldn't be lost whilst also problems would be faced in a shorter period in comparison to the larger and hierarchical organizations.<sup>16</sup>

It is the connection with family members that represents one of the main weaknesses of small and medium-sized enterprises in Italy since decisions depend on the internal conditions and resources of the family.<sup>17</sup> A further vulnerability of SMEs is their capital. This financial handicap tends to put them at a disadvantage against bigger firms that generally have better financial resources and larger human resources. This imbalance has the effect of limiting the investment potential of the smaller firm in new technologies, expansion into new markets, and hiring new workforce which are crucial for innovations and growth.<sup>18</sup> In spite of the weaknesses outlined earlier on, the fundamental problem for small and medium enterprises lies in the fact that there is no ideally and clearly defined

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<sup>16</sup> Baldassi, C. (1998). *Organizziamo la spontaneità: Il cambiamento delle piccole e medie imprese*. Pontecorboli Editore.

<sup>17</sup> Bettiol, M. (2015). *Raccontare il made in Italy: Un nuovo legame tra cultura e manifattura*. Marsilio Fondazione Nord Est.

<sup>18</sup> Baldassi, C. (1998). *Organizziamo la spontaneità: Il cambiamento delle piccole e medie imprese*. Pontecorboli.

strategies and mission, especially regarding the focus on the long –terms marketing strategies. This shortcoming is frequently the result of the owners’ shortsightedness, which causes them to pursue quick profits and neglect to engage in long-term core planning and mission formation to steer the business to greater heights.

It was observed by De Luca A. in ‘Innovation and Competitiveness in SMEs’, marketing in small and medium businesses mostly does catchy, badly planned marketing because it is derived from the knowledge of the entrepreneur.<sup>19</sup> It is often argued that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are lagging behind their larger counterparts when it comes to the use of technology. Small and medium enterprises are hardly present on the Internet. Only a small number of SMEs has started e-business or other unconventional ways of selling its goods on the Internet. Only a few such companies can be noticed in the market or compete with big players in this industry in terms of delivering the right level of user experience and online performance for their products and services. By using data from an interview by Adinolfi et al, “Osservatorio Innovazione Digitale nelle PMI” 80% of all 1538 companies surveyed have a website and only 12% have an e-commerce portal, compared with the EU average of 17.5%. Similarly, this research pointed out a very low commitment on the part of business owners to online marketing campaigns citing that ‘only 57% were spending some money on online ads, of which 21% was on social media ads and 36% on other internet ads’. As for advertising and techniques, all young business owners must understand that advertising brings revenue in a different way than how it was before, hence they should be ready to support new unexplored advertising subdivisions.<sup>20</sup>

Looking into the marketing traits of small and medium-sized businesses:<sup>21</sup>

MAIN CHARACTERISTICS	
<i>Basic and Supplementary</i>	Marketing in SMEs is simplistic, seen as a supplementary aspect, and highly responsive to competitors' actions.
<i>Focused on product</i>	In small to medium businesses, especially during startup, marketing tends to focus on the product.

<sup>19</sup> De Luca, A. (2014). *Innovazione e competitività delle PMI in Italia. Metodi e modelli di mercato*. Franco Angeli.

<sup>20</sup> Redazione Osservatori Digital Innovation. (2021). *Il 2020 spinge la digitalizzazione nelle PMI, ma mancano ancora competenze e strumenti*. Osservatori.

<sup>21</sup> Melia, M. (2017). *Le strategie di branding delle PMI*. Università degli Studi Magna Grecia di Catanzaro. (p. 67).

<i>Entrepreneur-Driven</i>	Strategies are typically decided by the entrepreneur who directs the majority of the business's activities, including marketing.
<i>Restricted Operational Range</i>	Due to resource constraints, marketing efforts in SMEs are similarly restrained. These enterprises avoid planning expensive marketing strategies.

More often, in small and medium enterprises, marketing is done to the immediate needs of the subject in the currency of some benefits, an ideal for a period of time. Such companies tend to prioritize short term goals, and communications and management methods are adjusted in a way that quick returns are achieved. This is not the case with multinationals where some of the strategies would be overwhelming, more long term in nature. The impact of the marketing is then disregarded since the business targets the consumer based on the knowledge or experience of the owner and founder. Which is why advocates state is a more hands-on approach to the business, hence the strategies call for the use of more direct methods and tend to be quite flexible, rather than being so comprehensive as what the giants have. As such marketing in SMEs reflects the imagination of the entrepreneur as well as the practice of economic activity in conditions of relatively small scales. Due to their size as well as market dominance, small and medium sized enterprises are self sufficient but have geographical limitations with very few jurisdictions covered. Due to increased monetary value on their services or goods, the bigger enterprises enjoy less costs whether fixed or otherwise because they have lots of sales. Such industries show a clear divergence on this aspect as the revenues of small and medium sized sectors are quite often small or low causing the limited currency power in the business sector and unwillingness to enter into overseas colonization efforts.<sup>22</sup> Most of the time, failures within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) Italian originate from a failure of the decision-makers to cope with risk exposure properly. They may underestimate or not consider the risk or trouble their business may come across.<sup>23</sup> Most of the time, failures within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) Italian originate from a failure of the decision-makers to cope with risk exposure properly. They may underestimate or not consider the risk or trouble their business may come across. Other common areas of concern for these smaller firms include the fact that these companies usually lack aspirations or objectives, in particular regarding the marketing aspects of their goods and services. Such an absence of concern for marketing could make it difficult for them to appreciate the needs and wants of the customers. Due

<sup>22</sup> Aprea G., Di Napoli C. (2002), *Piccole e medie imprese: come creare alleanze e collaborazioni transnazionali*, Franco

<sup>23</sup> Sito PMI Tutoring. (n.d.). *Crisi di impresa: quando si verifica e perché?* Retrieved from: <https://www.pmitutoring.it/news/crisi-impresa-perche-quando> [last access March 2024].

to this, these firms may find it hard, or even impossible, to expand, or even to survive – due to lack of customers, or providing customers with goods they do not want. Apart from that, it is many times more difficult for smaller companies to compete with big players in the industry than vice versa since these small medium enterprises (SMEs) are close to their markets and are therefore able to customize their offerings.<sup>24</sup>

As pointed out by Teece (2007), in the context of an emerging world market, where competition is gradually excluding even the tiniest businesses, and every business of any size is struggling not only with the wants and behaviors of customers but also emergence of new opportunities like technology advancement.<sup>25</sup> This enables companies that are relatively small in size to have an opportunity to adopt the digital way for marketing themselves. As Taiminen & Karjaluoto (2015) have noted, by making themselves visible on the Internet and utilizing ads strategically, people become easier to target and in a more cost-efficient way which gives them a chance to wear out the giants in the business.<sup>26</sup>

### 2.3 Communication Mix in SMEs vs. Large Enterprises

The communication mix defines what businesses should tell people, employing the following methods: *advertising, sales promotion, public relations, direct marketing, personal selling, word of mouth, interactive marketing*.<sup>27</sup>

It is essential for the companies to determine how to allocate their budgets on these components, depending on their size, their target audience, the sphere of activity and their aims.<sup>28</sup>

The communication mix differs significantly between SMEs and large enterprises, largely due to differences in resources, scale, and market reach. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), due to budget constraints, often prioritize cost-effective channels like social media and local advertising. They rely heavily on digital platforms for advertising because these channels offer flexibility and the ability to track performance in real-time (Gabrielli & Balboni, 2010)<sup>29</sup>. SMEs also tend to focus

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<sup>24</sup> Stojanova, T., Suzic, N., & Orcik, A. (2012). Implementation of mass customization tools in small and medium enterprises. *International Journal of Industrial Engineering and Management*, 3(4), 253-260.

<sup>25</sup> Teece, D. J. (2007). Explicating dynamic capabilities: the nature and microfoundations of (sustainable) enterprise performance. *Strategic management journal*, 28(13), 1319-1350

<sup>26</sup> Taiminen, H. M., & Karjaluoto, H. (2015). The usage of digital marketing channels in SMEs. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 22(4), 633-651

<sup>27</sup> Churchill, Jr., G.A. e Peter J.P., *Marketing: Creating value for customers*, II ed. Irwin/McGraw-Hill, Burr Ridge, IL, 1998, cap.18.

<sup>28</sup> Kotler, Keller, Ancarani, Costabile.(2012) *Marketing management*, quattordicesima edizione. Pearson, Parte 7 pag 745.

<sup>29</sup> Gabrielli, V., & Balboni, B. (2010). *SME practice towards integrated marketing communications*. Emerald Publishing.

on short-term sales promotions to increase immediate sales, using discounts or local events to attract customers without requiring large-scale investments.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, large enterprises leverage their significant resources to implement extensive advertising campaigns across multiple platforms, including television, radio, and digital. These campaigns are often data-driven, allowing them to personalize their advertisements for different regions and consumer segments.

When it comes to public relations, SMEs focus on localized strategies, building relationships with their community and engaging with local influencers (Kossaï & Piget, 2014)<sup>31</sup>.

For direct marketing, SMEs tend to use personalized tools such as email campaigns or SMS marketing targeted at smaller, localized customer bases. Large enterprises, on the other hand, deploy automated CRM systems like Salesforce to manage their global-scale direct marketing campaigns, ensuring targeted and personalized communications to millions of customers. (Gabrielli & Balboni, 2010).

### **2.3.1 Advertising**

*Advertisement* in SMEs is an essential factor for every entrepreneur who intends to succeed and grow. Such expenditures also pose a huge cost where some sectors such as catering or cleaning companies spend up to one-fifth of their profits on advert costs.<sup>32</sup> SMEs' advertising strategies revolve around three factors: it is the advertisement of the product which is quite clear as the advertisement of the offered goods or services, the promotional advertisement that aims at the promoting sales, and local or retailer advertisement designed to increase purchase activity in given shops or local goods. Advertising requires careful selection of the means of communication such as television, radio, the internet, print media and billboard, which entails structured budgeting, targeting a defined audience and communicating clearly the crucial issues in a given advertisement. In this regard, Advertising on the Internet or E-advertisement is gaining wide acceptance as a result of its capability to reach intended clients based on their past transactions. Such e-advertisement media consists of banners, pop-up, search engines, as well as sponsorships and exhibits enhancements in terms of advertising effectiveness and cost compared to traditional media.<sup>33</sup>

### **2.3.2 Sales promotions**

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<sup>30</sup> Gabrielli, V., & Balboni, B. (2010). *SME practice towards integrated marketing communications*. Marketing Intelligence & Planning, 28(3), 275-290.

<sup>31</sup> Kossaï, M., & Piget, V. (2014). The role of ICT in improving SME competitiveness. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*.

<sup>32</sup> J. Paul Peter, James H. Donnelly Jr, C. A. Pratesi, *A Preface to Marketing Management*, tredicesima edizione Mc Graw-Hill (2013) pag 159

<sup>33</sup> M.R.Salomon, E.W. Stuart, (2005), *Marketing*, American University of Cairo, Apogeo, Parte 4, pag 390

Promotional strategies come in handy for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) since they provide instant short-term relief which can be used to increase sales and nurture customer loyalty. These strategies take advantage of short inducements such as gifts, price cuts and rewards in form of consumers, distributors, and the sales team. Short term initiatives help to enhance brand awareness and help to up the transactional amounts. There are incentives like special deals and advertising programs which encourages the clients to sample products of the SMEs. Customers could become conditioned to only purchase goods at a discounted rate due to this overliefer of such promotions. Therefore, for small or medium-sized enterprises, it is important to learn how to properly balance these activities so that consumers do not form the attitude that all the time there are discounts and other strategies should be employed to create a good and loyal market.<sup>34</sup>

### **2.3.3 Public relations**

The activities associated with the public relations practicing amongst the SMEs can be referred to as a complex communication process geared at supporting important relationships and have both tarities and long-term advances as well. In effecting positive public relations perceptions, feelings and views about the SME or its products from consumers, prospects, employees and partners are developed. Some of the prominent PR activities for such enterprises are media relations and sponsorship. In the area of sponsorship, SMEs provide this support monetarily to various activities with the intent of gaining the attention and cross branding themselves to many audiences so as to improve their image.<sup>35</sup> Public relations take on heightened importance for SMEs when navigating adverse publicity challenges, like instances of product issues, aiming to soothe concerns among consumers and ensure continued support from distributors. Crafting an effective PR strategy for an SME entails meticulous planning of goals, thorough situational analysis and targeted audience identification.<sup>36</sup> In contrast, larger enterprises such as Made-in-Italy brands operating for example in China use comprehensive PR strategies, including global initiatives and corporate social responsibility (CSR) campaigns. These efforts significantly boost their brand image, positioning them effectively in diverse markets (Mazzù, Plateo, & Baccelloni, 2022)<sup>37</sup>.

### **2.3.4 Direct marketing**

Direct marketing within SME's refer to the use of telephone, email, internet, mail and so forth as tools to reach the individual consumers directly. This technique allows one to collect information

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<sup>34</sup> Salomon, M. R., & Stuart, E. W. (2005). *Marketing*. Apogeo: American University of Cairo. (p.414)

<sup>35</sup> Vogt, W. (1992). Shaping public perception. *Agri Marketing*, 72-75.

<sup>36</sup> Salomon, M. R., & Stuart, E. W. (2005). *Marketing*. Apogeo: American University of Cairo. (p.406)

<sup>37</sup> Mazzù, M. F., Plateo, E., Baccelloni, A., Lavini, L., & Finistauri, P. (2022). Unveiling Main Trends Affecting the Fast-Evolving Chinese Customers: An Expert-Based Perspective on Opportunities and Challenges for Made-in-Italy Brands. *Micro & Macro Marketing*, 31(3), 415-437.

about the customer creating an interaction with him/her. Important characteristics include personalization, presenting the individual clients with unique advertising; adjustments, considering the alteration of advertisements in a short span of time; and response modification, improving advertising appeal according to the feedback from consumers.<sup>38</sup> Tools like telemarketing, online shopping, TV sales, voice messages, emails, company websites, mail advertising, and catalogs are vital for direct marketing. SMEs benefit greatly from this approach, thanks to the ability to continually tailor their campaigns, measure effectiveness in real time, and target increasingly specific market segments. This not only aids in building a loyal customer base but also allows for detailed control over sales results, crucial in the fast-paced market environment of SMEs.

### **2.3.5 Personal selling**

In SMEs, direct selling is a way to talk directly to buyers to inform them and convince them to buy, giving businesses a chance to hear straight from their customers during face-to-face interactions.<sup>39</sup> This approach uses sales talks, meeting with buyers, reward programs, and joining fairs and shows.<sup>40</sup> However, it can be expensive because it needs staff to act as the face of the company, making it tough to balance the costs against sales returns, especially with SMEs' small advertising budgets. Still, direct selling lets small businesses create close connections with their buyers and adjust their products based on direct feedback.<sup>41</sup>

### **2.3.6 Word of mouth**

Word of mouth, vital in person-to-person communication, unfolds through exchanges of opinions, whether written, oral, or digital, about the purchasing and usage experiences of products and services.<sup>42</sup> This method of sharing proves especially valuable for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which often prefer this form of promotion over traditional advertising, thanks to the mutual trust and esteem among consumers. Nielsen's 2015 research highlights a marked preference: in Europe, 82% of consumers rely on word of mouth, compared to 42% who believe in classic advertising. In Italy, trust in word of mouth stands at 74%, with traditional advertising convincing only 40% of consumers.

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<sup>38</sup> Kotler, P., Keller, K. L., Ancarani, F., & Costabile, M. (2012). *Marketing management* (14th ed., Part 7, p. 747). Pearson.

<sup>39</sup> Pride, W. M., Ferrell, O. C., & Podestà, S. (2005). *Marketing 2*. In Chapter 16 (p. 385). Egea.

<sup>40</sup> Kotler, P., Keller, K. L., Ancarani, F., & Costabile, M. (2012). *Marketing management* (14th ed., Part 7, p. 731). Pearson.

<sup>41</sup> D.C. Weillbakerr, The identification of selling Abilities Needed for missionary type sales, *Journal of personal selling & sales management* 10, 1990, 45-48.

<sup>42</sup> Kotler, P., Keller, K. L., Ancarani, F., & Costabile, M. (2012). *Marketing management* (14th ed., Part 7, p. 731). Pearson.

In the digital era, word of mouth has evolved into "word of mouth 2.0," thanks to the internet, social networks, blogs, and chats, further amplifying its impact. This new approach retains its effectiveness when the consumer knows the opinion giver and there is mutual trust. For SMEs, leveraging these dynamics means counting on a promotional tool with incredible potential, capable of overcoming geographical and budgetary limits, consolidating their reputation on a broader scale and with contained costs.

### **2.3.7 Interactive Marketing**

Interactive marketing simply refers to all the internet-oriented activities or programmes that aim at interaction with the potential and current clients of the business, support brand awareness activities, enhance the corporation's reputation etc. There is common practice of using this in superset enterprises as well as small and mid-sized enterprises SME. This may look quite similar to online advertising, but one major differentiator exists, and it is interactive marketing's tendency to have the customers participate in the definition of the brand. A company has its message which gets altered by a customer based on what they like. In this kind of marketing, every business, irrespective of its size, is able to find its customers and adjust its marketing accordingly to what people like. This way, companies can address the end-consumer directly, bridging the gap between the business and the user, inspiring trust and making the user feel like a part of the organization.<sup>43</sup> The shift towards immersive technologies like Augmented Reality (AR) is reshaping interactive marketing, especially in SMEs. Research indicates that AR enhances physiological arousal and willingness to pay (WTP) compared to traditional media, creating more engaging consumer experiences. AR enables SMEs to build deeper emotional connections by increasing the ease with which consumers process product information, resulting in favorable purchase intentions.<sup>44</sup> Pozharliev et al. (2022) emphasizes the importance of visual cues in social media advertising. Studies using consumer neuroscience techniques, such as eye-tracking and EEG, show that Instagram posts featuring strong visual elements, such as influencers' photos, generate higher consumer attention and behavioral activation compared to verbal cues like follower count.<sup>45</sup> This suggests that visual content could be crucial for SMEs aiming to enhance engagement in their interactive marketing strategies.

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<sup>43</sup> Canle, E. (2018). *Qué es el marketing interactivo?* Cursos.com. Retrived from: <https://cursos.com/blog/marketing-interactivo/>

<sup>44</sup> Pozharliev, R., De Angelis, M., & Rossi, D. (2021). The effect of augmented reality versus traditional advertising: A comparison between neurophysiological and self-reported measures. *Marketing Letters*, 33(1), 113–128.

<sup>45</sup> Pozharliev, R., Rossi, D., & De Angelis, M. (2022). A picture says more than a thousand words: Using consumer neuroscience to study Instagram users' responses to influencer advertising. *Psychology & Marketing*, 39(7), 1336–1349

## 2.4 Communication channels utilized in SME's

SMEs, like all other large enterprises, choose communication channels that best align with their short-term and long-term business objectives. Communication channels are simply the means through which a company decides to transmit a message to all potential recipients. The choice of communication channels is challenging to coordinate due to the vast array of options available. It is necessary to analyze the difference between personal and non-personal communication channels: *Personal Communication Channels* allow for face-to-face communication between two people or between one person and an audience, by phone, mail, or email. All personal channels boast the significant advantage of message customization and the immediate receipt of a response. For SMEs, these channels are particularly valuable because they allow for a high degree of personalization, which is crucial for building and maintaining strong customer relationships. SMEs often rely on personal communication channels to create a more intimate connection with their customers, leveraging the direct feedback and quick response time to adapt their strategies in real-time. This agility gives SMEs a competitive advantage in markets where customer preferences can change rapidly.<sup>46</sup>

Differentiated from the first set of communication is Non-Personal Communication Channels which incorporate broad communication coverage and includes advertising, sales promotions, events and experiences, among others. Non-personal communication channels can be sub divided to the standardization of all these channels but kingdom into mass and individual traditional non-personal communication channels and innovative communication channels. For example, while large corporations may harshly dominate the traditional non-personal communication channels such as TV advertising, or national advertising brochures due to the size of their budgets, Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are making their presence felt in the markets using rather economical modern digital ways of advertisement for example using social websites and e-mail campaign, content marketing and so on.<sup>47</sup> This offers capacity to detect and easily reach target audience demographics thereby making competitive differentiation in these businesses possible while making the communication performance measurable through analytics..<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Bianchi, L., & Rossi, M. (2023). *Il ritorno sull'investimento dei canali di comunicazione nelle PMI*. Rivista Italiana di Comunicazione, 45(2), 112-125.

<sup>47</sup> Johnson, A., & Smith, T. (2022). *Strategie di marketing per grandi imprese: Un'analisi comparativa*. Journal of Marketing Management, 60(3), 234-248.

<sup>48</sup> Verdi, G. (2021). *Customer Relationship Management e canali personali nelle PMI: Un'analisi empirica*. Management & Innovazione, 39(1), 78-92. h

It is those tools that enhance personalization of communication that leads to the fusion of the Personal Communication Channels, and Non-Personal Communication Channels. This is, for example, both SMEs and large enterprises are in the trend of such Marketing Automation software, which enables the execution of effective personalized email campaigns to a great number of publics. While people can be bombarded even with mass messages, this technology lets you communicate with them individually.

Also, businesses are utilizing AI-powered chatbots on their websites and social media channels to facilitate communication between personal and non-personal interaction. These chatbots interact with customers more efficiently as they are able to respond instantly to customer queries in a personalized way to combine personal contact and automation.

<b>Advertising</b>	<b>Sales Promotions</b>	<b>Events/Experiences</b>	<b>Public Relations</b>	<b>Direct Marketing</b>
Print and broadcast ads	Contests, games, raffles	Sporting events	Press reviews	Catalogs
External packaging	Discounts and gifts	Entertainment	Conferences	Postal advertising
Internal packaging	Free samples	Festivals	Seminars and symposiums	Telemarketing
Films	Trade fairs and exhibitions	Artistic events	Financial reports	Electronic purchases
Brochures and leaflets	Demonstrations	Charity events	Contributions to charities	TV shopping
Posters and flyers	Discount vouchers	Visits to facilities	Publications	Fax messages
Listings	Clearance sales	Corporate museums	Community relations	Email messages
Reprints of advertising	Payment facilitations	Street activities	Lobbying activities	Voice messages
Billboards	Loyalty programs		Identity building tools	Blog
Street signs	Associations		Corporate magazines	Corporate websites

*Table 1-Some examples of communication tools.*

The opt choice of communication channels, be it personal or non-personal, also indicates more general strategy decisions in SMEs and large enterprises. For instance, while the direct establishment of contacts with customers will be of high importance for SMEs due to their focus on

relationship building and retention, in the case of large enterprises, the reverse will be true.<sup>49</sup> Taking the changing market situations into account these three choices can be made in isolation but the boundaries between them are becoming less clear with the speeding up of the digital transformation over the last years. Many new media have opened up, and both SMEs as well as large corporations figure out how to utilize these media to gather and analyze information about target audiences to re-target their communications at the audience in an appropriate time at an appropriate place. Perhaps one of the toughest choice faced by a manager is the choice of the medium through which the selected message will be taken out. Even though one-on-one communication is much more effective than one-to-many communication, the latter has not ceased to be an important supplementation to the former. Determining the optimal level of media expenditure via a media plan is also another critical managerial choice as the document details which specific media chosen to run the advertising online – through which radio and television stations or periodicals, and during which period and time.<sup>50</sup>

## 2.5 Digital era on SME's

The Internet and Web technologies have become pivotal in marketing as transformative means for engaging and establishing robust connections with customers. Micelli, in the year 2000, characterized networks as crucial instruments influencing almost all significant internal and external communication processes. Additionally, he noted that computers have evolved from mere data processors to powerful communication devices, increasingly adept at handling multimedia contents.<sup>51</sup> Prandelli and Verona believe the real benefit of the internet is how it lets people interact, customize, and measure how well content does. At first, the main way to communicate online was through websites, which were important. But when more platforms came out, companies started using a wider range of online communication tools. To make sure a company stands out online, they often use Search Engine Optimization (moving up in search results) and Search Engine Marketing (paying for ads to get more visibility).<sup>52</sup> Jasra et al. (2011) contend that a business's success hinges significantly on its technological capabilities, emphasizing the importance for owners of SMEs, particularly those operating traditionally, to embrace technological advancements more readily.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Ferri, D., & Neri, P. (2024). *Adattamento tecnologico nelle comunicazioni d'impresa: Un approccio innovativo*. Journal of Business Technology, 32(2), 149-165.

<sup>50</sup> Pride, W. M., Ferrell, O. C., & Podestà, S. (2005). *Marketing 2*. (pp. 365-370). Egea.

<sup>51</sup> Micelli, S. (2000). *Imprese, reti e comunità virtuali*. Etas: Milano.

<sup>52</sup> Salomon, M. R., & Stuart, E. W. (2005). *Marketing*. Apogeo: American University of Cairo. (p. 185).

<sup>53</sup> Jasra, J., Hunjra, A. I., Rehman, A. U., Azam, R. I., & Khan, M. A. (2011). Determinants of business success of small and medium enterprises. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 2(20), 274-280.

The UniCredit bank report discusses small and medium businesses and points out that Italy's lag in digital progress compared to other countries in Europe isn't so much about the tech systems they have. It's more about how Italian people are slower to pick up and use new digital options. It comes down to the way people think and do things there - it's a part of the culture.<sup>54</sup>

The literature highlights digitalization's positive impact on small and medium-sized businesses' (SMEs) operational success, scalability, and competitiveness.<sup>55</sup> The authors emphasize that employing digital marketing techniques is essential for attracting prospective customers and strengthening connections with the existing customer base.<sup>56</sup>

Blockchain technology is increasingly used to build consumer trust by ensuring the transparency of product information. In supply chains, blockchain enhances trust by verifying product authenticity and sustainability, which are critical for SMEs that rely on e-commerce platforms to attract ethically conscious customers. Blockchain-enabled traceability has been shown to increase purchase and word-of-mouth intentions, providing a unique competitive advantage in the digital era.<sup>57</sup>

In 2012, a study by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) revealed the significant impact of web utilization on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Italy. The research highlighted that SMEs engaging actively online through marketing and e-commerce saw a 1.2% annual revenue increase over three years, in stark contrast to their less web-involved counterparts. Moreover, these active online businesses doubled their international sales compared to online-present companies and tripled those of completely offline businesses, underscoring the substantial benefits of digital engagement for SMEs.<sup>58</sup>

Emerging platforms, like the Metaverse, offer new opportunities to deepen consumer interaction. Studies show that 3D virtual environments provide more immersive experiences compared to traditional 2D platforms, particularly in promoting sustainable practices.<sup>59</sup> Through the Metaverse, SMEs can create engaging, multi-sensory brand experiences, enhancing consumers' trust in the business's commitment to sustainability.

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<sup>54</sup> Digital4. (2012, December). *Il digitale nelle PMI? Una questione di cultura*. Digital4PMI.

Retrieved from: <https://www.digital4.biz/pmi/il-digitale-nelle-pmi-un-problema-di-cultura/> [last access March 2024].

<sup>55</sup> Taiminen, H. M., & Karjaluo, H. (2015). The usage of digital marketing channels in SMEs. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 22(4), 633-651

<sup>56</sup> Taiminen, H. M., & Karjaluo, H. (2015). The usage of digital marketing channels in SMEs. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 22(4), 633-651.

<sup>57</sup> Mazzù, M. F., Baccelloni, A., & Lavini, L. (2022). Injecting trust in consumer purchase intention through blockchain: Evidences from the food supply chain. *Italian Journal of Marketing*, 2022, 459-482.

<sup>26</sup> Faraldi A., Tardito, M., & Vos, M. (2011). *Fattore Internet: Come Internet sta trasformando l'economia italiana*. The Boston Consulting Group. Retrieved from: <https://www.grafichenenci.it/images/file/fattore-internet-ed-economia-italiana.pdf> [last access March 2024].

<sup>59</sup> Mazzù, M.F., Della Sala, I., & Baccelloni, A. (2023). *Sustainability perceptions of high-end fashion products in the Metaverse: A comparative investigation on different media settings*.

The internet reduces marketing costs for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), enabling them to reach a specific audience without significant investment in resources.<sup>60</sup> While SMEs have been slow to fully adopt digital marketing tools, they have leveraged websites and Search Engine Optimization (SEO) to increase their online presence and promote their products and services.<sup>61</sup>

### **2.5.1 Social media marketing in SME's**

Having an active presence on social networks such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube, Snapchat, and Twitter has become crucial for companies. Due to their widespread global adoption, these digital channels provide businesses with the opportunity to broaden their communication. A study by McCann Global highlighted that between 2006 and 2011, there was a surge in social media profiles, with an increase of over 74%. Remarkably, Facebook profiles had already reached 2 billion by 2017. Therefore, the ability to quickly influence an online community is a key function of social media marketing. Through engagement, such as comments and various forms of interaction, companies that gather followers manage to stand out and strengthen their prominence within their targeted group.<sup>62</sup> Social media serves as a tool to solidify interactions between customers and companies, fostering more robust relationships.<sup>63</sup>

Leveraging social media platforms is seen as pivotal in boosting customer engagement, emphasizing that proactive communication with customers is crucial for businesses aiming to sustain their competitiveness.<sup>64</sup>

It's crucial for businesses to select the right social platforms, often by observing the platforms their rivals utilize for customer relationship building, to secure competitive opportunities.<sup>65</sup>

### **2.5.2 E-commerce and e-commerce marketing**

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<sup>60</sup> Chong, S., & Pervan, G. (2007). Factors influencing the extent of deployment of electronic commerce for small-and medium sized enterprises. *Journal of Electronic Commerce in Organizations* (JECO), 5(1), 1-29

<sup>61</sup> Taiminen, H. M., & Karjaluo, H. (2015). The usage of digital marketing channels in SMEs. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 22(4), 633-651

<sup>62</sup> KINSTA. (2022). Statistiche curiose e fatti interessanti su Facebook. Retrieved from <https://kinsta.com/it/blog/statistiche-facebook/> [last access March 2024].

<sup>63</sup> Vladimir, M. (2018). *A Decade of Active Political Marketing on Social Media*. Ovidius University Annals & 58; Economic Sciences Series, 18(1), 326-330

<sup>64</sup> Clark, M. & Melancon, J. (2013). The influence of social media investment on relational outcomes: A relationship marketing perspective. *International Journal of Marketing Studies*, 5(4), 132-142.

<sup>65</sup> Chan, N. L. & Guillet, B. D. (2011). Investigation of social media marketing: how does the hotel industry in Hong Kong perform in marketing on social media websites?. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 28(4), 345-368.

E-commerce represents the buying and selling of goods via electronic tools. It encompasses not only online shopping but also every transaction conducted over the internet daily. In recent years, e-commerce has surged in popularity, enabling businesses to extend their market reach globally, operate around the clock, and significantly reduce operating costs compared to brick-and-mortar establishments. This expansion is partly attributed to enhanced trust in payment systems among consumers, highlighted by the introduction of external payment services like PayPal, Worldpay, and Skrill.<sup>66</sup> The capability for direct customer monitoring offered by online commerce is a key factor in its significant growth, currently being experienced. This growth is further supported by the ongoing advancements in interaction quality and the diversity of multimedia content accessible on digital platforms. For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), while it's less common than in larger companies, establishing an e-commerce presence not only marks them as actively engaging in the online sphere but also enhances their excellence. The management of distribution networks through e-commerce is crucial, encouraging managers to consider its development. This consideration becomes even more pressing when addressing the previously discussed issue of Italian SMEs' relatively low web presence compared to the European average. It highlights the need for a reevaluation of how the internet's potential, including web marketing and e-commerce, can be more effectively utilized without contradicting traditional methods and tools. Engaging in e-commerce marketing means integrating all those digital advertising and communication activities essential for ensuring visibility and interest towards a small and medium-sized enterprise's (SME's) website and its range of products and services.<sup>67</sup>

## **2.6 The brand and the brand orientation in SME's**

The American Marketing Association describes a brand as a distinguishing feature that identifies one seller's goods or services from another's, known legally as a trademark. Aaker (1996) expands this definition, seeing a brand as either adding or detracting value to a product or service. Poor brand management, for example, can lead to negative customer reviews and diminish value. DeChernatony and McDonald (1998) emphasize a brand's ability to create unique added value that resonates with buyers' needs<sup>68</sup>, while Keller, Busacca, and Ostilio (2005) identify six criteria for an effective brand, including memorability and aesthetic appeal, to protect and enhance company

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<sup>66</sup> Protheroe, R. (2021). *Che cos'è l'e-commerce? Definizione di e-commerce per il 2022*.

Retrieved from: <https://ecommerce-platforms.com/it/glossary/ecommerce> [last access March 2024].

<sup>67</sup> Spelozzo, G. (2024). *Ecommerce Marketing: Consigli per una Strategia di Successo*. GetResponse. <https://www.getresponse.com/it/blog/ecommerce-marketing-strategia> [last access March 2024].

<sup>68</sup> DeChernatony L., McDonald M., *creating powerful brand in consumer*, Elsevier, Oxford, 1998 pag 142.

value.<sup>69</sup> Branding in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has yet to gain significant attention in academic circles, where research tends to concentrate more on larger organizations. Historically, SMEs haven't prioritized branding. However, those that have devoted attention to their brand have succeeded in creating unique and recognizable identities, fostering a superior image in their customers' thoughts and, as a result, attaining greater brand equity.<sup>70</sup>

The development of strong brand orientation in SMEs can benefit from insights in social neuromarketing. The previous research suggests that brands which integrate social context in their advertising enhance consumer engagement, leading to improved memory retention and emotional connection. (Pozharliev, 2017)<sup>71</sup>

Frequently, small and medium-sized enterprises choose to establish new brands instead of capitalizing on the strength of their primary brand, aiming to prevent any possible damage to their flagship brand.<sup>72</sup>

## 2.7 Analysis of marketing strategies in the detergent industry

Today, marketing plays a pivotal role across various consumer sectors, with the laundry detergent market exemplifying a vast, developed, and highly competitive environment that still harbors opportunities for rapid growth. A recent analysis has shown that by 2030, the detergent market is projected to reach a valuation of \$50.9 billion, with an annual compound growth rate of 5.7%. As of 2022, the market's volume was recorded at 5,854.4 thousand tones, marking a 7.4% increase over the period from 2019 to 2022.<sup>73</sup>

When people choose which detergent to buy, they go through a process that's pretty like other daily decisions. It's not just a random pick; it involves careful thought and clear choices. Consumers weigh their options based on what matters to them—like sticking to brands they trust, how well the product works, the kind of scent they prefer, the price, and even the environmental impact of the

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<sup>69</sup> K.L. Keller, B. Busacca, M.C. Ostilio (2005) *la gestione del brand* pag 78

<sup>70</sup> *Brand equity* represents the surplus value granted to a firm by its brand name, a value that wouldn't be conferred to a comparable generic product.

<sup>71</sup> Pozharliev, R. (2017). *Social Neuromarketing: The Role of Social Context in Measuring Advertising Effectiveness* (Doctoral dissertation, Erasmus University Rotterdam). Erasmus Research Institute of Management.

<sup>72</sup> M. Renton, U. Daellenbach, S. Davenport, J. Richard (2015) *Small but sophisticated: entrepreneurial marketing and SME approaches to brand management*. Pp 149-164

<sup>73</sup> N.A. (2024). *Global Liquid Detergent Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report By Nature (Conventional, and Organic), By Application (Laundry, and Dish Washing), By End-use (Residential, and Commercial), By Sales Channel, By Regional Outlook and Forecast, 2023 – 2030*. KBV Research. Retrieved June 22, 2024, from [https://www.kbvresearch.com/liquid-detergent-market/#:~:text=Market%20Report%20Description,%25%20\(2019%2D2022\).](https://www.kbvresearch.com/liquid-detergent-market/#:~:text=Market%20Report%20Description,%25%20(2019%2D2022).)

detergent.<sup>74</sup> By really understanding how people make these decisions, marketers can create ads that connect more effectively with what consumers care about, making it more likely that they'll choose their product over the competition.

## **2.8 Gap of the theory**

From the literature review, is possible to clearly understand that both digital and traditional marketing strategies in SMEs and large enterprises have been satisfactorily covered so far. Numerous studies have explored the effectiveness, implementation, and outcomes of these marketing approaches within different organizational contexts. However, a significant gap remains in the comprehensive understanding of how digital versus traditional marketing strategies compares specifically in terms of effectiveness and efficiency across different enterprise sizes (small-medium, or large).

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<sup>74</sup> N.A. (2023). Decision making. *Il giornale delle scienze psicologiche: State of Mind*. Retrieved August 2023, from <https://www.stateofmind.it/tag/decision-making/>

### 3. METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

*This chapter delineates the methodology employed in gathering data concerning marketing decisions and strategies within the analyzed small enterprises. It encompasses the collection of both primary and secondary data, offering insights into the marketing landscape of small businesses comparing large corporation. Additionally, this chapter entails a detailed description of the research methodology and study design, along with an assessment of the chosen research approach and its constraints.*

#### 3.1 Business Research

While examining the definition of ‘Research’, Lewis, and Thornhill cite it as a procedure which is logical in the collection and within the different sources of information to bring about some new conceptualizations or more profound insights. In view of this, almost everyone may be compiling data as collection of materials for writing which is not research except if it is done in an orderly manner with specific aims. Hence, it can be said that research is mainly a systematic way of growing the body of knowledge.<sup>75</sup>

This study explores new approaches to analyzing marketing strategies in small enterprises, such as Fiorillo Detergenza, and their contrasts with those of big enterprises like P&G. It is essential to make a distinction between research methods, which relate to means of collecting information, and research methodology, which refers to the logic behind the conducted research. Both abovementioned are examined in this chapter in a comparative perspective. In business research, the questions that are posed are to be well founded, precise and pertinent in that there should be a reason for gathering the data, as was stated in the introduction of the book.<sup>76</sup>

Leonidou et al. observe that marketing, initially dominated by the United States, has evolved into a global discipline, thereby enriching its diversity.<sup>77</sup> This study aims at undertaking this diversity by analyzing and contrasting the marketing approaches of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the large multinational corporations. The present investigation is an interdisciplinary one as a provision of classic or modern approaches to the study of business marketing is offered. Heavily concentrated on the disadvantages which caucus small and medium enterprises when engaging in competition with big corporation under the global scene. These theoretical perspectives were later contrasted with the qualitative data acquired through interviews of managers of Fiorillo Detergenza.

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<sup>75</sup> Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2011). *Research methods for business students*. Amsterdam: Prentice Hall.

<sup>76</sup> Greener, S. (2008). *Business research methods*. London: BookBoon.

<sup>77</sup> Leonidou, L. C., Barnes, B. R., Spyropoulou, S., & Katsikeas, C. S. (2010). Assessing the contribution of leading mainstream marketing journals to the international marketing discipline. *International Marketing Review*, 27(5), 491-518.

The research strategy included an extensive literature study, then analyzing the two organizations in depth to formulate specific and appropriate research questions. Then, were conducted semi-structured and intensive interviews with the members of Fiorillo Detergenza's management team to collect primary data required by the study. Qualitative data have their fullness and richness and, in that respect, Robson (2002) enhances notes on these being qualitative rather than individual, focusing mainly on survey managers who describe qualitative approaches.<sup>78</sup>

### **3.2 Data Collection**

In this section, was detail how data was collected for the comparative analysis of the marketing strategies in small and large multinational corporations. The information is further graded into two divisions which are secondary and primary data.

#### **3.2.1 Collecting data for P&G**

In the case of P&G, only secondary data was used for the purposes of the analysis. This situation, however, included working with a wide range of academic materials such as databases, Google scholar, and qualitative research reports. Such materials helped in obtaining thorough details of P&G with respect to marketing, technological advancement, and competition. By reanalyzing existing studies and reports, a robust foundation was established for comparing P&G's strategies with those employed by SMEs like Fiorillo Detergenza. Secondary data analysis is a widely recognized method in marketing research, offering a cost-effective way to gather substantial amounts of information. In the view of Johnston (2014), this exercise is however useless in cases where primary data collection is too costly or simply unfeasible. Secondary data was beneficial in establishing comparisons between P&G's wide range of well-documented strategies and those employed by the SMEs that have their operations in more concentrated markets. During the research, several efforts were made to reach out P&G's managers to collect further primary data. Several outreach activities were thus conducted but no response was received. This constraint is quite normal in engagements which involve big organizations and especially in research where several managers at the top could be inaccessible due to company policies or time constraints (Bishop, 2007). The absence of any direct interview from the P&G management is one of the more important limitations faced during this research course. The reliance on secondary data, while comprehensive, has its constraints. According to Smith (2008), the main challenge with secondary data is that it may not perfectly align with the specific research objectives or questions at hand.<sup>79</sup> In this case, while the secondary sources provided valuable insights into P&G's marketing strategies,

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<sup>78</sup> Robson, C. (2002). *Real World Research* (2nd edn). Oxford: Blackwell.

<sup>79</sup> Smith, E. (2008). *Using Secondary Data in Educational and Social Research*. McGraw-Hill Education.

the absence of primary data from the company itself limited the depth of the analysis. Future studies might benefit from a mixed-methods approach, combining secondary data with more aggressive primary data collection efforts, possibly through interviews with lower-level employees or external stakeholders who can provide indirect insights into the company's strategies

### **3.2.2 Collecting data for Fiorillo Detergenza**

In the case of Fiorillo Detergenza, both primary and secondary data sources have been used for research. The management team member, also a part of the management team who was interviewed, is the Sales and Marketing Manager and CEO and this was also the strategy used in gathering information towards marketing. These forms of interviews were supported by secondary data sources to put into perspective how Fiorillo Detergenza operated. The primary data collection involved interviewing targeted key management members who include the Sales and Marketing Manager and the CEO of the organization who how the company markets itself. They were also very strategically chosen because they had knowledge in the strategic decision-making process of the organization and had knowledge of the market space of the organization. This resonates with the proposition of Rubin & Rubin (2012) which states that rich experienced interviewees have superb and comprehensive data since they are experienced in the area of concerns.<sup>80</sup> The objective of the interviews was touch upon particular details of Fiorillo Detergenza's marketing strategy as advertising or sales promotion or positioning of individuals. These discussions were intended to explore the strategic aspects of why and how the company goes for traditional or digital marketing. Some resources were dedicated to investigate how the company combines elements of the marketing mix (4Ps) in realizing its goals. These information focused interviews are useful in uncovering the small details that organizations use when competing in the market according to Ghauri and Grønhaug (2010).<sup>81</sup> To enhance the credibility of the findings, data from these interviews were cross-referenced with secondary sources, such as industry reports, market analyses, and academic literature. Denzin (1978) emphasizes the importance of triangulation in qualitative research, where multiple data sources are used to validate and enrich the findings.<sup>82</sup> By combining insights from both primary and secondary data, a more comprehensive understanding of Fiorillo Detergenza's marketing strategies was achieved. Apart from the primary data collected, secondary sources were also valuable in this study. This included information obtained from academic journal articles, industry reports, and market researches which placed the study in context and provided

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<sup>80</sup> Rubin, H. J., & Rubin, I. S. (2012). *Qualitative Interviewing: The Art of Hearing Data* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.

<sup>81</sup> Ghauri, P. N., & Grønhaug, K. (2010). *Research Methods in Business Studies* (4th ed.). Pearson Education.

<sup>82</sup> Denzin, N. K. (1978). *The Research Act: A Theoretical Introduction to Sociological Methods* (2nd ed.). McGraw-Hill.

wider views. As pointed out by Saunders et al. (2019), adding secondary data helps researchers keep focused on a particular industry and understand its context based on previous literature. This method helped particularly in evaluating how Fiorillo Detergenza's strategies compared to the industry standards and best practice. The primary data and secondary data collection and analysis provided a solid base for the evaluation of the marketing strategies employed by Fiorillo Detergenza. Relying on the strengths of both data types, the study was able to give a comprehensive appraisal of the company's market position, advertising as well as sales promotion strategies.

### 3.2.3 Interview guide

In the case of the qualitative research conducted on Fiorillo Detergenza's marketing strategies, the researchers undertook face-to-face interviews employing mostly an informal conversational style. This technique was designed to promote lively interactions with senior personnel, which would highlight on the more subtle aspects of the company's marketing systems. Since the intention was to gain a broader perspective, manager from different departments in the organization were invited for the interviews. This inclusion of viewpoints from different functional areas and levels of experience was meant to enrich the general understanding.

Respondent	Gender	Age	Experience (Years)	Position	Education Background
R1	Male	57	28	Chief	NA
R2	Male	36	10	Sales Manager	Business Administration
R3	Male	42	6	Supply Chain Manager	Mechanical Engineering
R4	Female	29	7	Export Specialist	Modern Language and Cultures
R5	Female	30	10	Accountant	Economics and Accounting

Table 3 - Respondents' Demography<sup>83</sup>

Data regarding marketing strategies was collected through open-ended questions. This qualitative approach was chosen because, given the complexity of the subject, the depth and nuance of responses would be necessary. This is one reason why semi-structured interviews are so useful for addressing complicated issues and employing various strategies in this case, marketing since they allow for discussions in such frameworks.<sup>84</sup> Horton, Macve, and Struyven highlight that the

<sup>83</sup> Private source

<sup>84</sup>Harrell, M. C., & Bradley, M. A. (2009). *Data collection methods. Semi-structured interviews and focus groups*. Santa Monica, CA: Rand National Defense Research Inst.

adaptability of semi-structured interviews offers a significant advantage over rigid statistical methods. This adaptability facilitated a more thorough examination of the interviewees' viewpoints, revealing specific details and potential inconsistencies in their marketing strategies.<sup>85</sup>

To ensure clarity and accuracy during the interview process, all respondents were clearly registered, and detailed notes were taken. This attention to detail was critical not only for maintaining focus on the verbal content but also for capturing non-verbal cues, which can often provide additional context to the spoken words. Kvale and Brinkmann argue that non-verbal communication is a critical component of the interview process, offering additional layers of meaning that are crucial for qualitative analysis.<sup>86</sup>

Moreover, the decision to conduct in-person interviews was influenced by the desire to create a more personal connection, which can lead to more candid responses. Opdenakker discusses how the immediacy of face-to-face interviews can enhance the richness of the data collected by facilitating a rapport between the interviewer and interviewee, thereby encouraging more in-depth discussions.<sup>87</sup> In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer prepares a set of key topics and questions to explore, though the specific questions and their order may differ from one interview to the next.<sup>88</sup>

#### **3.2.4 Analysis of the data**

Since the study employed a qualitative research design, the data collected through interviews required careful and detailed analysis of the analyzed SME's. To handle this, was adopted a general *inductive approach*, allowing the findings to naturally emerge from the data rather than being shaped by pre-existing models or frameworks (Thomas, 2006)<sup>89</sup>. Disorganized materials were reorganized through the *inductive approach* and helped in identify patterns and relationships within the data.

Specific text segments relevant to the study's objectives were categorized into 8 macro themes, such as "importance of marketing", "traditional marketing", "social media", "communication mix", "digital transformation". For example, all text relevant to "placement" within the marketing mix was tagged as "placement" allowing the extraction and consolidation of all placement-related

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<sup>85</sup> Horton, J., Macve, R., & Struyven, G. (2004). *Qualitative research: experiences in using semi- structured interviews. In The real life guide to accounting research* (pp. 339-357). Amsterdam: Elsevier Science.

<sup>86</sup> Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.

<sup>87</sup> Opdenakker, R. (2006). Advantages and Disadvantages of Four Interview Techniques in Qualitative Research. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 7(4)

<sup>88</sup> Saunders, M. N. K., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2011). *Research methods for business students*. Amsterdam: Prentice Hall.

<sup>89</sup> Thomas, D. R. (2006). A general inductive approach for analyzing qualitative evaluation data. *American journal of evaluation*, 27(2), 237-246.

content into a single document when required. All data that could be used in more themes were underlined during the analysis to make use to be considered for more than one thematic.

After the initial categorization, overlapping categories were reduced to avoid redundant coding. Irrelevant text segments that did not align with the evaluation objectives were removed (Thomas, 2006). This process allowed the identification of the most relevant and coherent data, which was then organized into smaller refined groups.

### **3.3 Validity and ethics aspects**

Data was collected through interviews with employees and the owner at various organizational levels, ensuring representation across all areas of expertise. This method made it possible to gather more relevant and accurate information concerning operations inside the company. Standardization of the interview process to all participants has enabled consistency where all the interviewees were asked relevant role-specific questions in relation to their area of specialization. Furthermore, having interviews with the key people in each department brought credibility in the answers since the portraits of the company's marketing and operational strategies were reliable.

Specific measures were implemented to ensure the *anonymity* of the respondents so that they had the confidence to respond in a manner that couldn't be traced back to them.

Collected data from the study was used in educational purposes only. Respondents were given the interview transcripts so that they could positively or negatively adjust what was captured.

The *face-to-face* interviews were necessary as they involved observing the *behaviour and non-verbal communication* that would have been difficult to capture via telephone or email. Before the beginning of the interviews, the respondents were stimulated with information about the purpose of the study and their participation. All interviews were ideally held in the same physical locati

## **4. EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF P&G AND FIORILLO DETERGENZA**

*In this chapter, we analyzed the results of the empirical research, which for P&G is based exclusively on secondary data collected from company sources, industry reports and scientific literature, while for Fiorillo Detergenza it combines secondary and primary data, the latter obtained through interviews and questionnaires. The objective is to compare marketing and communication strategies between a large company (P&G) and an SME (Fiorillo Detergenza), highlighting differences in how they approach their respective markets. The chapter begins with the presentation of the two companies and after is divided into themes to understand different topics related to marketing and digitalization, trying to make a more structured comparison*

### **4.1 Introduction of the two companies**

In the rapidly evolving detergent industry, understanding the different strategies employed by enterprises of varying sizes can provide valuable insights. This study focuses on comparing the marketing and business strategies of two prominent players: Procter & Gamble (P&G) and Fiorillo Detergenza. P&G, a global giant, known for its extensive market reach and innovative marketing strategies. On the other hand, Fiorillo Detergenza, a small to medium-sized enterprise (SME) based in Italy, exemplifies a family-run business that has grown through a commitment to quality, sustainability, and local market engagement. The choice to compare these two enterprises stems from their contrasting scales and approaches. P&G represents the strategies of a large multinational corporation with vast resources and a global footprint, while Fiorillo Detergenza offers insights into the agility and customer-centric strategies of a smaller, locally-focused business with a global commitment. This comparative analysis seeks to show how each company can capitalize on its strengths in the production and marketing of detergents, thus giving a broader insight on traditional vs. digital marketing, pricing, distribution, and other promotional strategies – encompassing all aspects of marketing.

### **4.2 The analyzed SME's: Fiorillo Detergenza**

Fiorillo Detergenza was established in the 1990s in Vibo Valentia. Initially, the focus was on producing dishwashing liquids, bleach, and ethyl alcohol, aiming to dominate untapped markets. In early 2003, the company relocated its production to the industrial area of Maierato, allowing for product line diversification and meeting increasing customer demands. This move facilitated innovation in production techniques and enabled expansion into new sales channels, including large-scale distribution (GDO). Fiorillo Detergenza also ventured into other sectors, importing raw materials directly from global manufacturers to achieve promising results in pool and water

treatment chemicals. Currently, the company operates in a 11,000-square-meter facility split in Vibo Valentia's and Maierato's industrial zone. With over 25 years of experience, Fiorillo Detergenza stands out in a highly competitive market due to its technical specialization and ability to adapt to market changes. The company prioritizes customer satisfaction, considering them as "client-persons" rather than mere customers, and focuses on fulfilling individual needs and ensuring immediate customer loyalty. With the second generation now involved, Fiorillo Detergenza presents itself as a modern and dynamic company, capable of managing the entire production chain independently, from concept to finished product. This approach ensures high-quality standards through meticulous selection of chemical components, regular quality controls, and continuous innovation in products and production systems. The company boasts a dynamic team of highly qualified employees, contributing to its efficiency and innovation. Fiorillo Detergenza's organizational structure includes commercial, production, research & development, administration, and logistics sectors, all of which communicate effectively to maintain the company's success.<sup>90</sup>



Figure 1- Retrived from: <https://www.fiorillodetergenza.com/fiorillo/la-nostra-storia/>

By 2024, Fiorillo had moved into a new, technologically advanced facility, integrating the Armonya WMS system developed by Sistemya. This system optimized storage and handling operations, reducing picking and delivery times and minimizing errors, further enhancing the company's production capacity and service quality.<sup>91</sup>

#### 4.2.1 In-depth brand strategy review of Fiorillo Detergenza

The brand has always played a central role in Fiorillo Detergenza's marketing and promotion strategies. Since 1993, the logo has undergone multiple redesigns, but its distinctive characteristics in terms of typography and main design have remained unchanged. The first logo from 1993 emphasized the family name, with a shining point on the "O" indicating the results customers could achieve with the products. Flowers in the logo represent the pleasant fragrance of the products, and a line running through the logo signifies the action of cleaning floors.

<sup>90</sup> Fiorillo Detergenza website (2024). *La nostra storia* from <https://www.fiorillodetergenza.com/>

<sup>91</sup>Fiordiliso, E. (2024). Benvenuto Fiorillo Detergenza! Sistemya. <https://www.sistemya.it/benvenuto-fiorillo-detergenza/>

The current logo, featuring blue and yellow colors, continues to highlight the brand's identity after over 25 years of history and numerous redesigns.



Figure 2- Old Fiorillo's logo (internal sources)

Fiorillo's core values are deeply embedded in the company's operations and communicated consistently across all marketing channels. The brand values are:

- **Sustainability:** Committed to eco-friendly practices, using sustainable materials and processes. Fiorillo Detergenza is committed to achieving zero waste by 2025 through complete recycling of HDPE and PET waste from their production lines, aligning with circular economy principles.
- **Quality:** Dedicated to producing high-quality products that meet consumer expectations.<sup>92</sup>
- **Customer-Centricity:** Focused on understanding and fulfilling customer needs, ensuring high levels of satisfaction and loyalty.
- **Social Responsibility:** Supports regional and national associations, provides tangible helped families economically affected by the pandemic, and offers humanitarian aid to war-affected populations.



Figure 3- Article retrieved from a local news organization: <https://www.lacnews24.it> \*Translation in the appendix\*

- **Legality:** Supports the association LIBERA against mafias through organized initiatives.
- **Sports Support:** Provides concrete assistance to amateur sports teams, promoting physical activity and ethical behavior. Fiorillo also funds more prominent teams such as Vibonese Calcio (Lega Pro) and Pallavolo Cinquefrondi (Serie A2).

<sup>92</sup> Redazione (2022). Fiorillo Detergenti, presto sugli scaffali una linea nuova premium. GDO News. <https://www.gdonews.it/2022/07/17/fiorillo-detergenti-presto-sugli-scaffali-una-linea-nuova-premium/>

\*Translation of the article:

**Three Thousand Detergents Donated to the Needy in the Municipality of Vibo**

The Fiorillo company decides to contribute with a solidarity initiative in favor of less affluent families.

Redazione - April 10, 2020, 18:41



Figure 4- Retrived from <https://www.usvibonese Calcio.com>

- **Employee Recognition:** Awards and recognizes employees for their contributions.
- **Environmental Responsibility:** In 2021, Fiorillo Detergenza embarked on a significant green transformation, focusing on sustainability and renewable energy. The installation of a new photovoltaic system now covers 55% of the company's energy needs, with plans to increase this percentage significantly in the coming years. In the past year alone, the company's renewable energy efforts have prevented the release of seventy tons of CO2 into the atmosphere, equivalent to planting 2,000 trees.<sup>93</sup>

Fiorillo Detergenza's recent success can be largely attributed to its well-planned marketing strategies, which align with the overall brand objectives. The company has developed a diverse product portfolio, including categories like laundry detergents, dishwashing products, surface cleaners, and personal and home care items. These products are distributed across Italy and internationally, with a significant presence in countries like Tunisia, Albania, Romania, and Greece. The export sector accounts for 21% of the company's total revenue, emphasizing the importance of international markets for brand growth.



Figure 5- Export map in 2024- internal source

The shift towards e-commerce has been a key development for Fiorillo Detergenza, especially in response to the growing trend of online shopping. Since 2017, online sales have surged, with a

<sup>93</sup> Redazione (2022). Fiorillo Detergenti, presto sugli scaffali una linea nuova premium. GDO News. <https://www.gdonews.it/2022/07/17/fiorillo-detergenti-presto-sugli-scaffali-una-linea-nuova-premium/>

notable increase during the COVID-19 pandemic and is going to increase for the following years.<sup>94</sup> The company's e-commerce platform offers consumers the convenience of online shopping, including special offers and product bundles designed to save time and money.<sup>95</sup>

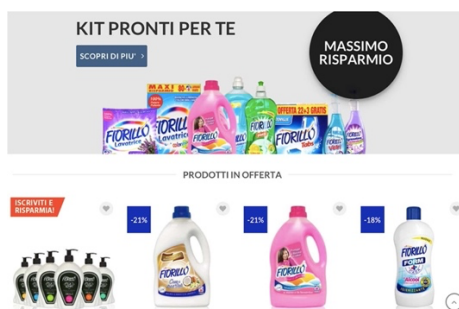


Figure 6- Shop online Fiorillo Stor

Fiorillo Detergenza also places great emphasis on its communication strategy.<sup>96</sup> The company effectively uses both traditional and digital media to engage with customers and strengthen brand loyalty. Through social media channels like Facebook and Instagram, Fiorillo keeps its audience informed about new products, promotions, and social initiatives, while also fostering customer interaction and feedback.

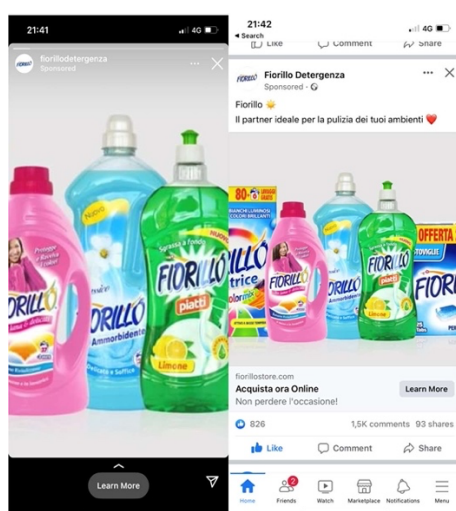


Figura 7- Visible Sponsorships on Social Channels to Promote E-Commerce (Instagram and Facebook).

Outdoor advertising has been another successful strategy for Fiorillo. The company's creative billboards and outdoor campaigns, designed in collaboration with Publiemme Group Italia, have been particularly impactful in attracting customer attention and enhancing brand visibility. Additionally, Fiorillo has leveraged radio and regional television advertising to reach a broader audience.<sup>97</sup> The company's radio campaigns have been recognized for their creativity and

<sup>94</sup> Statista (2022) *Online revenues share Detergents sector*. Statista

<sup>95</sup> Fiorillo Shop Online: <https://www.fiorillostore.com>

<sup>96</sup> Il Vibonese. (2017). Fiorillo, storia di un'azienda... "lui pulisce, io brillo". Il Vibonese. <https://www.ilvibonese.it/economia-e-lavoro/12054-fiorillo-storia-azienda-lui-pulisce-brillo-vibo-maierato/>

<sup>97</sup> Fiorillo Detergenza Facebook page (2022). Spot televisivo disponibile da <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=270246344498827>

effectiveness, helping to establish a strong brand presence beyond the local market. The company's website serves as a crucial tool for reinforcing brand identity and communicating the company's values. It provides customers with easy access to product information, useful cleaning tips, and updates on the company's social and environmental initiatives. This online presence is vital for maintaining visibility and trust in the digital age.

#### 4.2.3 Sanremo and Eurovision Fiorillo case

During the Eurovision Song Contest, Fiorillo Detergenza executed an ambush marketing campaign. Ambush marketing is a tactic where a brand takes advantage of the visibility associated with a major event without being an official sponsor. Fiorillo leveraged the high visibility of Eurovision by creating marketing messages and promotions that aligned with the contest's themes. This clever tactic allowed Fiorillo to associate their brand with Eurovision, generating significant buzz and enhancing brand visibility without the costs of an official partnership.



Figure 8- Fiorillo's campaign during Eurovision Song Contest<sup>98</sup>

Fiorillo utilized a similar approach during the Sanremo Music Festival and during Eurovision song contest. By tapping into the excitement surrounding these high-profile events, Fiorillo was able to effectively reach a wide audience. The campaigns involved themed promotions and advertisements that resonated with the event's audience, creating a strong association between Fiorillo and these renowned cultural events.

The online shop was strategically employed to address the difficulty of finding the product in physical stores across the northern regions. The main objective of the campaign was to extend the consumption of Fiorillo products into regions where the brand is not as well known, particularly in northern Italy. This approach ensures accessibility and convenience for consumers in these areas. To further boost competitiveness, two music shows were integrated into the marketing strategy. The marketing team cleverly crafted lyrics inspired by popular Italian songs that have triumphed at Eurovision and Sanremo. These lyrics not only resonate with well-known hits but also playfully

<sup>98</sup> Redazione (2022). Fiorillo Detergenti, presto sugli scaffali una linea nuova premium. GDO News. <https://www.gdonews.it/2022/07/17/fiorillo-detergenti-presto-sugli-scaffali-una-linea-nuova-premium/>

reference the Italian tradition of singing while doing household chores, adding a cultural and humorous touch to the campaign. This creative strategy helps make the product more relatable and appealing, connecting with the audience. on a personal and cultural level, ultimately strengthening the brand's market position.



Figura 9- Facebook's Fiorillo page (post dedicated to Eurovision campaign)

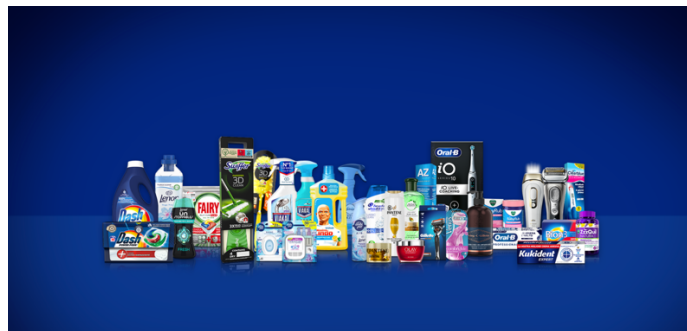
This strategy proved to be highly effective for Fiorillo, increasing their brand awareness and engagement without the need for expensive and difficult sponsorship deals. By creatively aligning their marketing efforts with popular events, Fiorillo took advantage of the power of strategic ambush marketing for SME's in capturing consumer attention and boosting brand recognition.

#### 4.3 The analyzed big enterprise: P&G (Procter & Gamble)

Procter & Gamble (P&G) is a leading American multinational in consumer goods, is headquartered in Cincinnati, Ohio. In 2023, P&G operated with a substantial workforce of approximately 107,000 employees and maintained 104 production facilities globally. The fiscal year closed with a revenue of \$82.0 billion and a net profit of \$14.7 billion, reflecting the company's strong market presence and consistent profit generation. P&G's reputation as an industry leader was further recognized in 2011 when Fortune Magazine ranked it fifth in the 'World's Most Admired Companies,' an improvement from sixth place the previous year. These accolades not only highlight P&G's solid management and business strategy but also underscore its commitment to innovation and operational excellence—key elements that support its global marketing strategies and impact in the consumer goods sector.

After introducing Procter & Gamble on a global scale, this section will primarily analyze the strategies the company utilized in the Italian market. P&G boasts a diverse and extensive portfolio

of brands in Italy that cater to various aspects of daily life, from personal care and beauty to home care and health. Established as a key player in the Italian market, P&G's brand presence is both wide-reaching and deeply influential, reflecting its strategic commitment to innovation, quality, and consumer satisfaction. Personal Care and Beauty: P&G's personal care and beauty segment in Italy features some of the most recognized and trusted brands. Gillette, known for its shaving products, leads in its category, offering precision grooming products that are popular among Italian consumers. Pantene and Head & Shoulders dominate in the hair care sector, providing advanced solutions for hair health that appeal to the discerning needs of Italian customers. Olay offers skincare products that are well-regarded for their efficacy and innovation in anti-aging technology. Home Care: In the home care category, Fairy, known for its powerful dishwashing detergents, and Dash, a leading laundry detergent, are prominent. These brands are celebrated for their cleaning effectiveness and efficiency, resonating well with the Italian emphasis on meticulous home care. Additionally, Febreze offers solutions for home freshness, further embedding P&G's footprint in everyday Italian household routines. Health and Family Care: P&G also serves the health and family sectors through brands like Oral-B, which provides dental care products designed to improve oral health with cutting-edge technology, and Pampers, the top choice for baby care among Italian parents due to its high-quality diapers and baby wipes that ensure comfort and protection for infants. P&G's strategy in Italy involves not only providing a wide range of product choices but also engaging with consumers through robust marketing campaigns that blend traditional advertising with digital strategies to enhance brand visibility and engagement.<sup>99</sup>



*Figure 2- Set of products produced by P&G<sup>100</sup>*

Despite the wide range of products manufactured by the multinational company, the analysis will concentrate on strategies implemented for home care products. This focus is guided by their significant sales within the company (refer to the figure illustrating P&G's net sales by business segment) and aligns with the main business segment of the compared SMEs. This approach ensures a more effective comparative analysis.

<sup>99</sup>Procter & Gamble official website (2024). Retrived June from <https://it.pg.com/>

<sup>100</sup> Procter & Gamble official website (2024). Retrived June from <https://it.pg.com/>

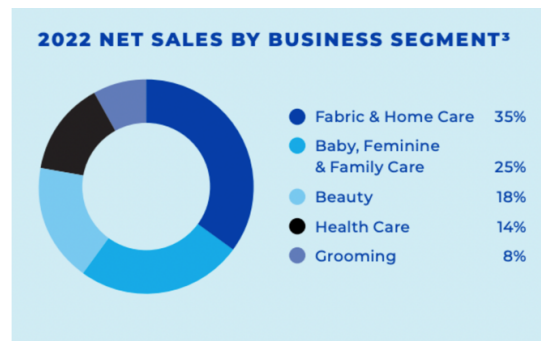


Figure 3-Net sales by business segment<sup>101</sup>

Regarding innovation P&G has tripled its innovation success rate through its "Connect and Develop" model, focusing on external partnerships and internal capabilities (Anthony, Eyring, & Gibson, 2006).<sup>102</sup> P&G places consumers at the center of its strategies, utilizing extensive market research and data analytics to understand and meet consumer needs. This approach ensures that their products and marketing campaigns resonate deeply with their target audience, fostering brand loyalty and engagement (The Brand Hopper, 2023).<sup>103</sup>

P&G is recognized for its pledge to product innovation. The company invests heavily in R&D to develop new products and improve existing ones, keeping up with evolving consumer demands. This focus on innovation helps P&G maintain its competitive edge and capture market share. Notable innovations including Tide Pods, which revolutionized the laundry detergent market by offering a convenient, single-use solution were made (Anthony et al., 2006).<sup>104</sup>

P&G's innovation strategy also includes collaborative efforts through the "Connect + Develop" program, which seeks to partner with external innovators to co-create new products and technologies (Huston & Sakkab, 2006).<sup>105</sup> P&G utilizes a mix of traditional and digital marketing channels to reach consumers. This includes TV commercials, print media, social media, influencer marketing, and public relations. By ensuring consistent messaging across all channels, P&G maximizes consumer reach and engagement. Their integrated marketing communications strategy ensures that whether through a TV ad or a social media post, the message remains cohesive and compelling (Wang, 2021).<sup>106</sup> P&G's marketing campaigns often focus on creating emotional

<sup>101</sup> Cuofano, G. (2024, April 9). Analisi del modello di business di P&G. FourWeekMBA. Retrieved June 30, 2024, from <https://fourweekmba.com/it/modello-di-business-procter-e-gamble/>

<sup>102</sup> Anthony, S. D., Eyring, M., & Gibson, L. (2006). How P&G tripled its innovation success rate. Innosight. Retrieved from [https://www.innosight.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Innosight\\_HBR\\_How-PG-Tripled-Its-Innovation-Success-Rate.pdf](https://www.innosight.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Innosight_HBR_How-PG-Tripled-Its-Innovation-Success-Rate.pdf)

<sup>103</sup> TheBrandHopper. (2023). Marketing Strategies and Marketing Mix of P&G.

<sup>104</sup> Anthony, S. D., Eyring, M., & Gibson, L. (2006). How P&G Tripled Its Innovation Success Rate.

<sup>105</sup> Huston, L., & Sakkab, N. (2006). Connect and develop: Inside Procter & Gamble's new model for innovation. *Research-Technology Management*, 49(3), 21-25.

<sup>106</sup> Wang, Q. (2021). Research on the Successful Experience of P&G's Digital Marketing Transformation. Clausius Scientific Press.

connections with consumers. Campaigns like "Thank You, Mom" and "Like a Girl" are designed to evoke strong emotional responses, fostering deeper relationships with the brand. Emotional branding helps P&G differentiate its products and build a loyal customer base by aligning with consumers' values and aspirations (Wang, 2021).<sup>107</sup> P&G integrates social causes into their marketing efforts, promoting messages of empowerment, inclusivity, and sustainability. This purpose-driven approach not only enhances the brand image but also connects with socially conscious consumers. For example, P&G's commitment to sustainability is evident in their "Ambition 2030" goals, which focus on reducing environmental impact and improving social responsibility (StartupTalky, 2023).<sup>108</sup>

Recognizing the importance of digital channels, P&G has embraced digital marketing and e-commerce to engage with tech-savvy consumers. They leverage social media, online advertising, and e-commerce platforms to expand their reach and drive online sales. P&G's digital transformation includes utilizing big data and AI to personalize marketing efforts and improve consumer engagement.

P&G's promotional strategies include a mix of advertising, direct marketing, public relations, and personal selling. Their use of TV commercials, print media, and online advertising, combined with celebrity endorsements and social media campaigns, ensures widespread brand awareness and engagement. P&G ensures the superiority of its products through superior product performance, packaging, and brand communication. This includes advertising that effectively communicates the benefits of the brand's products and packaging, attracting consumers and driving brand and category growth.

P&G aims to lead the constructive disruption of the industry across all areas of the value chain, including innovation, brand building, supply chain management, and digitization & data analytics. Procter & Gamble also leverages advanced algorithms and Big Data to optimize the lifecycle management of products like detergents, thereby enhancing marketing efficiency and their ability to respond to consumer needs. (Il Sole 24 Ore)<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Wang, Q. (2021). Research on the Successful Experience of P&G's Digital Marketing Transformation. Clausius Scientific Press.

<sup>108</sup> StartupTalky. (2023). Marketing Strategies of Procter and Gamble (P&G): The FMCG Giant.

<sup>109</sup> Laura Cavestri (2023). Algoritmi e Big Data dietro il detersivo: così P&G gestisce il ciclo dei consumi. *Il Sole 24 Ore*. [https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/algoritmi-e-big-data-dietro-detersivocosi-pg-gestisce-ciclo-consumi-AEPiofcD?refresh\\_ce=1](https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/algoritmi-e-big-data-dietro-detersivocosi-pg-gestisce-ciclo-consumi-AEPiofcD?refresh_ce=1)

In 2022, following the pandemic, Procter & Gamble reduced its marketing expenditure.<sup>110</sup> This reduction was a response to the substantial increase in spending that had occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic,<sup>111</sup> when the company had invested heavily to maintain top-of-mind awareness for its products.

In the fiscal year 2024, P&G's marketing expenditure saw a notable increase of 3%. This rise was primarily due to reinvestments into marketing efforts. Despite this increase, the impact was partially offset by savings achieved through productivity improvements and positive effects from sales growth.<sup>112</sup>

#### 4.3.1 In-depth brand strategy review of P&G's home care segment

After a deep understanding of the company's main strengths, focusing on the home care segment provides a more valuable comparison with a company that operates primarily in this subsection of P&G. Therefore, the analysis begins by introducing P&G's most iconic brand in the home care segment: Dash.



Figure 10- Dash campaign with Francesco Totti<sup>113</sup>

Over the decades, Dash has been recognized as a leader in the home care segment. Nearly all marketing strategies launched by Dash have set benchmarks for competitors in the industry, making it a top-of-mind brand for consumer recognition. A study conducted by *GfK Italia* on a representative panel of 3,000 people using online interviews with interactive dialogue. The survey took place between November and December 2020, covering 38 product categories and involving 247 brands. Two main dimensions were considered: 'brand success' — including market presence, customer relationship, and price positioning relative to the average — and 'share of soul,' which

<sup>110</sup> Engage. (2022). P&G taglia le spese di marketing e punta tutto su digital e programmatic. *Engage*. <https://www.engage.it/programmatic/peg-taglia-le-spese-di-marketing-e-punta-tutto-su-digital-e-programmatic.aspx>

<sup>111</sup> Engage. (2021). P&G nei 12 mesi fino a giugno 2021: La spesa pubblicitaria della multinazionale cresce del 12%. *Engage*. <https://www.engage.it/brand-e-aziende/peg-nei-12-mesi-fino-a-giugno-2021-la-spesa-pubblicitaria-della-multinazionale-cresce-del-12.aspx>

<sup>112</sup> Procter & Gamble. (2024). P&G announces fourth quarter and fiscal year 2024 results. *Procter & Gamble Investor*. <https://www.pginvestor.com/financial-reporting/press-releases/news-details/2024/PG-Announces-Fourth-Quarter-and-Fiscal-Year-2024-Results/default.aspx>

<sup>113</sup> Engage.it. (n.d.). *Dash torna in comunicazione con Francesco Totti e la regia di Paolo Genovese*. Retrieved August 8, 2024, from <https://bit.ly/3rdw3Ge>

encompasses brand awareness, cross-selling potential (both within the same and in other product categories), emotional connection to the brand (brand relationship), and brand experience. Resulting today as the most loved product for Italians in 2021.<sup>114</sup> Dash is perceived now and always as the detergent of the Italians, embodying a longstanding relationship with its consumers and maintaining a prominent place in Italian households. The case of Dash perfectly illustrates also how important packaging and marketing can be in influencing purchase decisions while also becoming a nostalgic and emotionally significant element for consumers. In 1965, Dash detergent was launched in Italy with its iconic cylindrical container. This shape allowed consumers to repurpose the Dash container after use, often as a storage bin at home. For example, it was commonly used as a toy box, acquiring significant sentimental value. In the 1980s, Italian households were evolving, requiring more practicality, space, and convenience. In response, Dash transformed its packaging to meet these new needs, introducing the suitcase-style container that became widely recognized. By observing societal changes and adapting to new requirements, Dash strengthened its brand. The original cylindrical container became a cultural icon among Italians.



Figure 11- Dash campaign with Paolo Ferrari e Paolo de Luigi<sup>115</sup>

To celebrate its 50th anniversary, Dash reintroduced the cylindrical packaging in a limited edition, reinforcing its nostalgic value.<sup>116</sup>

#### 4.3.2 Dash and Mike Bongiorno case

In the historical context of detergent marketing in Italy, television played a pivotal role, especially during the era of the iconic program 'Carosello.' One of the most memorable campaigns featured Mike Bongiorno promoting Dash detergent (a brand own by the analyzed big enterprise P&G) . This campaign is particularly noteworthy not only because of Bongiorno's immense popularity but also because it exemplified the shift towards more engaging and narrative-driven advertising in the detergents market. 'Carosello,' which aired in the evenings on RAI, became a cultural phenomenon

<sup>114</sup> Media Key. (n.d.). *E Dash il prodotto più amato dagli italiani*. Retrieved July 25, 2024, from <https://www.mediakey.tv/news/archivio-news/leggi-news/e-dash-il-prodotto-piu-amato-dagli-italiani>

<sup>115</sup> Brand News. (2012, February 22). *Spot Dash con Paolo Ferrari e Fabio de Luigi* [Video]. YouTube. <https://youtu.be/zW5jB-zUxxM>

<sup>116</sup> Ninja Marketing. (n.d.). *Il packaging di Dash: Un'icona di innovazione e nostalgia per gli italiani*. Retrieved July 27, 2024, from <https://www.ninja.it/packaging-dash/>

by blending entertainment with product promotion, thus embedding products like Dash deeply into the Italian consumer psyche.<sup>117</sup>

The Dash campaign with Mike Bongiorno was innovative for several reasons. First, it leveraged Bongiorno's appeal, which was akin to that of a trusted household name, to foster a sense of reliability and quality associated with Dash products. Second, the format of 'Carosello' allowed for extended narratives, which were used effectively to demonstrate the product's benefits in a humorous and memorable way. This approach was not merely about displaying the product but creating a storyline that resonated with the everyday experiences of its audience, making the advertising message more impactful.<sup>118</sup>

This case study of Dash's advertising strategy during the 'Carosello' period highlights a broader trend in the detergent industry towards more sophisticated and consumer-focused marketing strategies. It illustrates how detergent companies began to move beyond simple product presentations, embracing narrative advertising to connect emotionally with consumers. This method proved to be particularly effective in a competitive market, setting a precedent for future advertising campaigns not just in Italy but globally.



*Figure 1- TV advertising of Dash with the iconic Mike Bongiorno<sup>119</sup>*

#### **4.3.3 Redefining gender roles: men in detergent advertising**

Traditionally, detergent advertising targeted primarily women, but as markets have evolved, the demand has diversified. In less developed countries, advertisements continue to target wives and mothers predominantly. Reflecting the shift in societal roles, some detergent companies have employed reverse psychology by shifting their marketing focus predominantly towards men. An example is Clorox's<sup>120</sup> 1964 'Bleachable Moments' campaign, which featured a television

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<sup>117</sup> N.A. (2020). Marketing laundry detergent: How successful companies market laundry detergent. Marketing Schools. Retrieved April 24, 2022, from <https://www.marketing-schools.org/consumer-psychology/marketing-laundry-detergent/#section-0>

<sup>118</sup> Pubblicità mandata in onda RAI, Mike Bongiorno e Dash. (2022, April 24). YouTube. Retrieved from <https://youtu.be/EpjsVdCihWU>

<sup>119</sup> YouTube. (2015). Adv Dash Carosello - Mike Bongiorno (1965) [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ef7thasWXSs>

<sup>120</sup> Clorox was purchased by P&G in 1957

commercial directed by iconic metal musician turned filmmaker Rob Zombie.<sup>121</sup> The advertisement depicted a burly man in overalls and a leather mask, dragging a dirty sack through the woods to unsettling pulsating background music, signaling a marked departure from traditional marketing narratives.



*Figure 2 - Clorox's spot (1964)*

In another Gain's advertisement<sup>122</sup> man was chosen as a protagonist, the character Ted (ordinary-looking man) experiences a week filled with messy accidents that stain his shirts with mustard, red wine, and motor oil.



*Figure 3 - Gain's spot (2011)*

Despite these challenges, the commercial shows Ted triumphantly pulling spotless shirts from his dryer, thanks to Gain detergent's effective cleaning power. The ad highlights Gain's ability to tackle tough stains and showcases the product's benefits through Ted's relatable mishaps.



*Figure 4 - Gain's spot (2011)*

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<sup>121</sup> N.A. (2020). *Marketing laundry detergent: How successful companies market laundry detergent*. Marketing Schools. Retrieved June 2024, from <https://www.marketing-schools.org/consumer-psychology/marketing-laundry-detergent/#section-0>

<sup>122</sup> Gain's advertisement complete spot, retrieved June 2024 from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCMvy\\_88SQw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DCMvy_88SQw)

As analyzed previously, the methods of advertising available to boost sales are numerous. Detergents can be promoted through a wide range of channels, including social networks, television, magazines, radio, billboards, catalogs, direct mail, trade shows, and exhibitions. The target audience for detergent brands primarily comprises women and middle-class individuals. Therefore, a study has asserted that television advertising remains one of the best methods for attracting new consumers and retaining existing ones.<sup>123</sup> Despite the enduring appeal of traditional marketing for detergent producers, it is increasingly threatened by digital marketing. With the rise of middle-aged social media users, advertising and commerce in detergents have adapted to digital transformation. Successful companies have been investing substantial amounts in online advertising for years, reflecting on the critical importance of marketing in the detergent sector and the extent to which companies engaged in detergent production have committed to their advertising campaigns.

#### 4.4 Analytical models

In this regard, drawing on the information obtained about the studies of the specifics of the two In this regard, drawing on the information obtained about the studies of the specifics of the two companies, a number of methods including comparative analysis will be used to compare Procter & Gamble with Fiorillo Detergenza. It will be well illustrated using SWOT analysis and the marketing mix, also known as the 4Ps—Product, Price, Place, Promotion—along with the organization of resources and its activities in accordance with the resource-based view of the firm, referred to as the VRIO framework. These tools will provide a fair picture of the relative strengths and weaknesses of the companies in terms of their competitive stance in the marketplace. The 4Ps of marketing explain how every company markets its products by detailing how the product, price, place, and promotion are utilized to attract and retain customers. This model, as explained in detail by Kotler and Keller (2016), elaborates on how companies can use the Marketing Mix to gain competitive advantages.<sup>124</sup> A SWOT analysis, as defined by Rothaermel (2016), is a mechanism that helps identify the internal and external environmental factors affecting a company. This includes assessing the risks and opportunities the company might encounter in its operating environment.<sup>125</sup> Furthermore, the VRIO model created by Barney (1991) discriminates a company's resources and capabilities into four categories—value, rarity, imitability, and organization—which are vital in creating a sustainable competitive edge.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> N.A. (2021) Detergent Powders Marketing Strategy- Target Audience retrieved June 2024 from <https://howigotjob.com/business-model/detergent-powders-marketing-strategy-target-audience/>

<sup>124</sup> Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing Management* (15th ed.). Pearson Education. (p.40)

<sup>125</sup> Rothaermel, F. T. (2016). *Strategic Management* (3rd ed.). McGraw-Hill Education. (p.91)

<sup>126</sup> Barney, J. B. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 99-120

For Fiorillo Detergenza, in addition to these analytical models, primary data from interviews will be utilized to offer deeper insight into how the company positions itself relative to its competitors and responds to market dynamics.

#### **4.4.1 Marketing Mix (4Ps)**

The Marketing Mix (4Ps) is useful in determining the effectiveness of these elements against the needs of consumers and demands of the market. This enables an appreciation of the marketing strategies of different companies.<sup>127</sup>

##### **4.4.1.1 Product**

P&G provides multiple functional forms, for instance, powder, liquid, and pods towards customer preferences.<sup>128</sup> The company is famous for using highly qualitative ingredients and powerful formulations that enhance cleaning capacities. The image and brand icon of P&G is dominant and stands for quality and effective cleaning every time. Directly opposite side, Fiorillo Detergenza's product forms are mainly liquid and powder concentrating on the use of quality ingredients and compositions conforming to nature, as R1 and R2 confirmed. In addition to these both brands offer range of product forms and stress on quality, P&G offers larger category of products and bigger international brand awareness.<sup>129</sup> Fiorillo uses its more female oriented and local niche marketing knowledge and tries to seduce more friendly and local market consumers.

As respondent R1 mentioned during the interview:

*"Our focus is on providing good-quality liquid and powder detergents that respect nature. We consciously decided to offer a specific line of product than our larger competitors, but we ensure that every product aligns with our sustainability goals."* (Interview, 2024)

In contrast to P&G, which provides a broad range of product types (powder, liquid, pods), Fiorillo concentrates on a more friendly niche of products.

Respondent R2 emphasized:

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<sup>127</sup> Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing Management* (15th ed.). Pearson Education. (p. 46).

<sup>128</sup> Procter & Gamble Annual Report (2024). Retrived June from <https://it.pg.com/>

<sup>129</sup> PitchGrade. (2024). *Procter & Gamble: Business model, SWOT analysis, and competitors*. PitchGrade.

*"We use our local brand awareness and target female consumers who prefer environmentally friendly products. Fiorillo doesn't need a large range of products; we compete on quality and sustainability." (Interview, 2024)*

#### **4.4.1.2 Price**

P&G has adopted premium pricing for its product range to reflect the quality of its products and the corresponding marketing efforts.<sup>130</sup> On the other hand, Fiorillo Detergenza is more price-oriented, making it competitive with resellers, and its retailing strategy is quite different. R5 remarked:

*"Our pricing is slightly more aggressive; however, our target market is mid income and mid-high range. But this comes with regular and consistent sales and bundling offers. This enables us to be more aggressive and grow our market share among lower-income consumers who are more price-sensitive." (Interview, 2024)*

R2 elaborated further:

*"In terms of positioning, we care for our image as a brand that always offers the highest quality at affordable prices. We compare our position as offering cheaper prices, everyday-use products within the same price range as what the ordinary consumer would buy. Our pricing strategy aims to offer value for money by always having deals running to capture more of the market."*

#### **4.4.1.3 Place**

Fiorillo Detergenza has focused its marketing actions mainly on the segments of the supermarkets, niche shops and its own e-commerce platform. In regional markets, the company has a well-established manufacturing facility with a strong regional focus. This emphasis on local operations allows Fiorillo to meet the demands of its core market while maintaining logistics sustainability through eco-friendly supply chain solutions. Despite the company mobilizing to improve the placement, it remains a challenge. R3 said:

*"Our distribution strategy is extremely specific. We are taking all possible measures to ensure that people have access to our products in supermarkets and specialized stores, as well as on our e-commerce site for those that may lack a physical geography to buy our products. Placement remain one of the major challenges."*

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<sup>130</sup> Panmore Institute. (2023). *Procter & Gamble's Marketing Mix (4Ps) Analysis*.

In contrast, P&G operates on a much broader scale, with its products available in supermarkets, hypermarkets, convenience stores, and major e-commerce platforms like Amazon.<sup>131</sup>

This regional strategy geographic scope enables Fiorillo to control the supply chain and help the company to optimize its logistics operations as well as minimize carbon footprint. R2 affirmed:

*“Our regional orientation gives flexibility to our logistics satisfying them and them the core market. Since we have the regional focus on our logistics, we ensure that the products are sufficient – it goes beyond that – it is in adherence to environmental sustainability.”*

#### **4.4.1.4 Promotion**

The homogenous feature P&G is deeply determined by standard practices in promotion, which is quite complicated and high-cost because it includes TV, print, and online advertising.<sup>132</sup> Within the brand itself there are many promotions centred around sales, coupons or point of purchase displays. Furthermore, P&G also promotes its image through big sponsorship and important partnerships, and a lot of ad activities online and in social media for further exposure. The size of P&G makes every campaign and partnership difficult and expensive. Every campaign has to be supervised more times due to possible scandal related to the importance of the company in the market.

On the other hand, the access of the consumer in this case Fiorillo Detergenza is much more effective and less expensive as well. Therefore the company limits itself with the local newspapers, regional TV, local radio, and selective internet advertising. In-store promotions, everyday promotional activities, and seasonal events are organized for greater sales potential.

R2 at Fiorillo noted:

*“All our marketing activities are community focused. We concentrate on local sponsorship activities and carry out intensive social media campaigns to help in creating brand loyalty, through our social media we create connection and a direct relationship with our consumer. We do not require the full blown and costly marketing methods.”*

#### **4.4.2 VRIO Analysis**

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<sup>131</sup> Demery, P. (2021). *Procter & Gamble rides a growing wave of ecommerce sales*. Digital Commerce 360.

<sup>132</sup> The Brand Hopper. (2024). *Marketing Strategies and Marketing Mix of P&G*.

CRITERIA	P&G	Fiorillo Detergenza
<b>Value</b>	Strong brand portfolio, extensive R&D capabilities, global distribution network	Local market knowledge, strong relationship with customers
Source	Source: Annual Report Procter & Gamble (2024). <a href="https://it.pg.com/">https://it.pg.com/</a>	R2 stated: <i>"Our close connection with local consumers helps us build trust and loyalty."</i>
<b>Rarity</b>	Proprietary technologies, highly recognizable global brands, extensive market research data	Deep understanding of local consumer preferences, flexible manufacturing processes, flexible working team
Source	Anthony, S. D., Eyring, M., & Gibson, L. (2006). <i>How P&amp;G tripled its innovation success rate</i> . Innosight.	R3 remarked: <i>"We are very agile in adjusting our production to meet local demands."</i>
<b>Imitability</b>	Procter & Gamble. (2024). <i>Our integrated strategy to win</i> . Procter & Gamble.	Personalized customer service, local-needed product expertise
Source	Anthony, S. D., Eyring, M., & Gibson, L. (2006). <i>How P&amp;G tripled its innovation success rate</i> . Innosight.	R1 emphasized: <i>"Our personal touch and local knowledge make us difficult to be replicable."</i>
<b>Organization</b>	Efficient organizational structure, robust management processes, strategic global alignment	Small, agile organizational structure, strong local partnerships
Source	FourWeekMBA. (2024). <i>P&amp;G business model analysis</i> . FourWeekMBA	R5 explained: <i>"We have a lean structure that allows us to act quickly in response to market needs."</i>

#### 4.4.3 SWOT Analysis

FACTORS	P&G	Fiorillo Detergenza
<b>Strengths</b>	Strong brands, innovation capability, global scale	Flexibility, local market knowledge, customer loyalty
Source	Procter & Gamble. (2024). <i>P&amp;G's strategy: Innovation and leadership</i> . Procter & Gamble.	R2 explained: <i>"Our flexibility allows us to adapt to customer needs quickly."</i>
<b>Weaknesses</b>	Operational complexity, high costs, dependence on mature markets	Limited resources, reduced R&D capacity
Source	Procter & Gamble. (2024). <i>P&amp;G announces results for the third quarter of fiscal year 2024</i> . Procter & Gamble	R1 remarked: <i>"Our smaller scale means we can't invest in R&amp;D like larger competitors."</i>
<b>Opportunities</b>	Expansion into emerging markets, product differentiation, strategic acquisitions	Focus on current markets and expansion into new countries, sustainable growth
Source	Panmore Institute. (2024). <i>Procter &amp; Gamble's generic competitive strategy &amp; growth strategies</i> . Panmore Institute	R4 mentioned: <i>"Our international presence is growing in countries like Tunisia and Albania."</i>

<b>Threats</b>	Intense competition, stringent regulations, Supply Chain disruptions	Competition with large multinationals, economic fluctuations
Source	Procter & Gamble. (2024). <i>Government and trade controls</i> . Procter & Gamble. <a href="https://ewbcm.pg.com/integrity/government-and-trade-controls">https://ewbcm.pg.com/integrity/government-and-trade-controls</a>	R5 noted: <i>"We face challenges from larger competitors, but our local presence gives us an advantage."</i>

#### 4.5 Importance of marketing for SME's

As explained previously during the literature review, within the framework of small enterprises, the financial resources allocated for marketing activities tend to be inconsistent depending on the size, availabilities, and impression the company makes in the market. For some companies, it might be acceptable to treat marketing as an area of secondary importance. In the situation of Fiorillo Detergenza, the organization has embraced a systematic and progressive method of marketing. As stated by R1 during the interview:

*"Marketing has played a very key role in our development and especially when we started venturing outside the boundaries of the immediate market. Every year we set aside a reasonable amount of money for both digital and offline marketing."* (Interview, 2024)

R2 added:

*"Marketing is not just an expense, it's an investment with a huge return on it. During the past years we have learned that customers need reminders of our presence, and we achieve this through promotions, local partnerships, and targeted online campaigns. Our tentative to be present in the mind of our consumer is huge but several factors like competition against big corporation could affect it."* (Interview, 2024)

Fiorillo Detergenza demonstrates the importance of a consistent marketing budget.

R4 added regarding marketing in foreign countries:

*"There is a particular emphasis on the online and offline visibility of our product trying to reach also international markets through having official social network profile in different country and languages. Our studies have shown that engage with people from different countries require different marketing approaches especially online."* (Interview, 2024)

Unlike smaller companies that may limit their marketing expenditure due to resource constraints, in Fiorillo Detergenza key members affirmed and recognized that consistent investment in marketing is essential for maintaining a competitive edge and achieving sustainable growth.

#### 4.6 Role of digitalization

Fiorillo Detergenza is currently working on leveraging social networks and its online store more effectively to enhance its marketing efforts. The company faces challenges in fully utilizing these digital tools, particularly as they aim to strengthen their presence and engagement online.

To put this into perspective, R1 mentioned:

*“Digitalization is a challenge because while we’ve made efforts in building our online store and social media presence, there’s still a lot of work to be done in optimizing these channels and reaching new customers.”* (Interview, 2024)

Similarly, R2 emphasized the ongoing efforts:

*“We are constantly learning how to use social media in a more impactful way. It's not just about being present but creating meaningful interactions and ensuring our customers find us when they need us.”* (Interview, 2024)

In contrast, Procter & Gamble (P&G) has successfully integrated digital strategies, using tools like AI-driven customer insights, data analytics, and cloud platforms to enhance its market positioning. P&G uses these technologies not only for personalized marketing but also for optimizing the consumer's buying journey, which has helped them remain highly competitive in global markets. (Michael Chui, 2022)<sup>133</sup> For instance, P&G has partnered with Microsoft to digitize and integrate data from over 100 manufacturing sites globally. This integration allows P&G to leverage predictive analytics and real-time insights to improve decision-making, quality control, and operational efficiency.<sup>134</sup> Fiorillo’s journey in digitalization is progressing fast, P&G's experience highlights the vast potential that a company can tap into once digital channels are fully optimized and strategically managed. Fiorillo Detergenza’s path to stronger digital skills will likely involve

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<sup>133</sup> Michael Chui (2022). *Inside P&G's digital revolution*. McKinsey & Company.

<sup>134</sup> P&G & Microsoft. (2022). *P&G and Microsoft co-innovate to build the future of digital manufacturing*. Microsoft News.

continuous improvements, as they aim to achieve the same digital maturity that larger players like P&G have achieved due to important resources invested.

#### 4.7 The role of social media

P&G has indeed integrated social media and data-driven strategies extensively, but it focuses on building personalized consumer experiences across platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. P&G utilizes AI and data analytics through collaborations with Google Cloud, which enables them to gather consumer insights and refine their marketing strategies in real time.<sup>135</sup> This allows P&G to offer customized and engaging campaigns, boosting consumer loyalty and creating a two-way dialogue between the brand and its audience. For example, they have successfully used these insights to run interactive campaigns, such as product launches and customer feedback loops, driving customer engagement and satisfaction.<sup>136</sup>

As Sashi (2012) highlights, social media offers companies an invaluable opportunity to connect with customers, making it a crucial part of modern marketing strategies. This is particularly relevant for SMEs such as Fiorillo Detergenza which understand the value of social platforms but are still trying to figure out how to exploit with them.

R1 mentioned and recognized the role of social media:

*“We realize that today social media are important. However, the problem is how to operate with such tools to interact better with people rather than just sell them our goods.”* (Interview, 2024)

R2 elaborated:

*“While we've made strides in building our social media presence, we are still figuring out how to turn followers into loyal customers. We primarily use social media for promotions and increment traffic on our shop online, but we know we can do more in terms of interaction and engagement.”* (Interview, 2024)

Chan and Guillet (2011) noted that many businesses, particularly SMEs, often use social media as a promotional tool rather than as a platform for genuine customer engagement a bit as was noted and analyzed by R1 and R2 in Fiorillo Detergenza that is currently effectively utilizing social media for promotions but is still working on interactions.

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<sup>135</sup> Procter & Gamble. (2022). *P&G and Google Cloud team up to deliver personalized experiences for consumers*. Procter & Gamble.

<sup>136</sup> Consumer Goods Technology. (2022). *How P&G is Leveraging AI and Data Analytics for a Digital Future*. Consumer Goods Technology.

## 4.8 Communication mix

The communication mix, as analyzed previously in Chapter 2 differs between SMEs and large enterprises, due to differences in resources, scale, and market reach.

### 4.8.1 Advertising

Fiorillo's advertising focuses on local media due to budget constraints. The company utilizes regional TV channels, radio, and community events to raise awareness, prioritizing cost-effective methods. According to R1:

*"We target our customers through local media because it's both effective and affordable. Given our limited budget, we focus on localized advertising strategies that help us connect with our community directly."* (Interview, 2024)

P&G operates on a completely different scale, utilizing global advertising campaigns across a variety of platforms including television, digital channels, and print media. They have a well-established data-driven approach, utilizing advanced data analytics and AI to personalize ads for various regions, ensuring each campaign resonates with local audiences while maintaining global consistency.<sup>137</sup>

### 4.8.2 Sales Promotions

Fiorillo's sales promotions are typically seasonal and tied to regional events or holiday promotions. They focus on offering discounts at local supermarkets and online promotions to attract short-term sales spikes. As mentioned by R2:

*"Our promotional strategies revolve around key holiday periods. We rely on deep discounts during festive seasons to boost sales quickly and engage our customers with limited-time offers. We had discounts during Black Friday and during summer when in our region there is a peak of people living."* (Interview, 2024)

Additionally, Fiorillo has experimented with online couponing and loyalty programs, which are limited but help maintain customer engagement during off-peak periods. In contrast, P&G runs large-scale sales promotions across multiple channels, often incorporating product bundling, bulk-buy discounts, and loyalty programs.<sup>138</sup> They employ big data to customize promotions, leveraging

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<sup>137</sup>Michael Chui (2020). *Inside P&G's digital revolution*. McKinsey.

<sup>138</sup> The Brand Hopper. (2023). *Marketing strategies and marketing mix of P&G*. The Brand Hopper.

insights into consumer behavior to tailor offers to specific markets. P&G's integration with major retail partners allows them to scale these promotions globally, providing consistency in messaging while accommodating regional preferences.

#### 4.8.3 Public Relations

Fiorillo's PR strategy is deeply rooted in community engagement. They frequently collaborate with local events, leveraging this sharing moment for the community to reinforce their local presence. R3 elaborated:

*"By partnering with well-known events for our regions, we've been able to build a strong community presence. It's an affordable and effective way to enhance our brand visibility and reputation."* (Interview, 2024)

Fiorillo also employs local press releases and engages with community influencers to maintain a positive brand image within its regional market. P&G has a robust global PR strategy, focusing on corporate social responsibility (CSR), sustainability efforts, and media outreach. Their PR teams handle everything from crisis management to global cause marketing, with a focus on aligning the brand with socially responsible initiatives, such as environmental sustainability and gender equality.<sup>139</sup> P&G frequently partners with international media to ensure global brand consistency, while their CSR initiatives resonate with a wide range of consumers.<sup>140</sup>

#### 4.8.4 Direct Marketing

Fiorillo's direct marketing is highly personalized, consisting primarily of email newsletters, SMS campaigns, and face-to-face interactions at trade fairs and community events. R4 highlighted:

*"We maintain close connections with our customers through personalized messages and make use of trade fairs to create meaningful face-to-face engagements."* (Interview, 2024)

Their approach is relationship-driven, focusing on building customer loyalty through constant, personalized contact. P&G uses automated direct marketing strategies, deploying AI-driven CRM platforms to send personalized emails, SMS messages, and other direct communications to millions

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<sup>139</sup> Business Wire. (2019). *P&G 2019 Citizenship Report Highlights Commitment to Community Impact, Gender Equality, Diversity & Inclusion, and Sustainability*.

<sup>140</sup> Utroske, D. (2016). *P&G debuts Citizenship Report on sustainability, CSR, and gender equality*. *Cosmetics Design* pag. 55

of customers worldwide. The company's advanced data analytics allows them to create highly tailored campaigns based on customer preferences and behaviors.<sup>141</sup>

#### **4.8.5 Personal Selling**

Personal selling is a fundamental aspect of Fiorillo's B2B operations. Their sales teams maintain long-term, trust-based relationships with local retailers and distributors. R2 commented:

"Our personal relationships with local retailers are crucial. We build trust and reliability, which gives us an advantage in such a competitive market." (Interview, 2024)

This relationship-driven approach allows Fiorillo to establish itself as a reliable local brand, helping to retain business partners and gain market share within the region and outside. P&G's approach to personal selling is highly systematized. With large sales teams and account management systems, they handle key accounts through relationship management programs. Supported by data-driven insights, P&G optimizes its personal selling efforts, making use of real-time analytics to manage performance and relationships across global markets.<sup>142</sup>

#### **4.8.6 Word of Mouth**

Word of mouth is crucial for Fiorillo's local market. Their focus on delivering tailored products and customer service helps generate organic referrals from satisfied customers. R1 emphasized:

"Many of our new customers come through recommendations from one to another consumer." (Interview, 2024)

Word of mouth serves as one of Fiorillo's most cost-effective marketing tools, allowing the brand to expand its customer base without significant advertising expenditure. P&G employs structured word-of-mouth marketing, including referral programs and partnerships with influencers to spread brand awareness. These structured campaigns are often tied to larger marketing initiatives, providing consistency across markets.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Consumer Goods Technology. (2020). *P&G gets personal with consumers through data, AI tech collaboration*.

<sup>142</sup> Michael Chui (2020). *Inside P&G's digital revolution*. McKinsey.

<sup>143</sup> The Brand Hopper (2023). *Marketing Strategies and Marketing Mix of P&G*

#### 4.8.7 Interactive Marketing

Fiorillo engages in interactive marketing mainly through social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. They encourage customer interaction via customer feedback and incentives in sharing pictures with the community. R3 explained:

"We've found that engaging with our customers directly through the incentives of sharing pictures of our products in their homes and reviews helps us in foster a deeper connection with the targeted audience." (Interview, 2024)

By keeping the engagement fun and light, Fiorillo can build stronger customer relationships and encourage repeat business. P&G's interactive marketing strategy is much more sophisticated, involving AI-powered chatbots, personalized content, and immersive experiences like augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR).<sup>144</sup>

#### 4.9 Brand Orientation

Fiorillo's brand orientation focuses on relationship, place, and sustainability. Since this is a family business, this brand values making products that are authentic and environmentally responsible. R1 stated that:

*"Our brand is not just about selling products; it's about representing who we are. We focus on sustainability and quality because our customers expect that level of integrity from us."* (Interview, 2024)

The strategies for the promotion of the Fiorillo brand are localized in the markets where their trust has been built over the years by interacting and supplying what is needed at those regions, with a focus on maintaining long-term relationships through ethical practices and continuous innovation. P&G's brand orientation is shaped by its vast global scale and the management of a portfolio of leading brands such as Tide, Pampers, and Gillette. This strategy enables P&G to position itself across diverse product categories, with each brand carefully tailored to different market segments. For instance, Tide focuses on the laundry care segment, promoting high-performance products, while Pampers targets the baby care category, offering products that emphasize comfort and protection. Gillette, on the other hand, serves the personal grooming market with a focus on precision and innovation. Doing such segmentation its brands in this way, P&G ensures that each

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<sup>144</sup> P&G LifeLab. (2022). *Welcome Back to the Metaverse*.

product addresses specific consumer needs and preferences, enhancing market penetration and brand loyalty across different demographics.<sup>145</sup>

THEMES	THEORIES	FINDINGS
Marketing Mix (4Ps)	SMEs utilize the 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) to create targeted, cost-effective strategies.	Findings <i>support</i> the theory.
VRIO Analysis	SMEs investing in valuable, rare, inimitable, and well-organized resources gain a competitive edge.	Findings <i>support</i> the theory.
Importance of Marketing	Marketing is vital for SMEs to compete in saturated markets and grow customer bases.	Findings <i>support</i> the theory.
Role of Digitalization	Digitalization accelerates SMEs' ability to reach broader markets and scale their operations.	Findings <i>support</i> from the theory.
Role of Social Media	SMEs use social media to engage with customers and increase brand visibility.	Findings <i>support</i> the theory.
Communication Mix	Effective communication in SME's through multiple channels drives customer engagement and loyalty.	Findings <i>support</i> the theory.
Brand Orientation	SMEs focus on building unique brand identities to differentiate themselves from competitors.	Findings <i>support</i> the theory.

*Figure 4- Summary of findings comparing theories*

<sup>145</sup> The Brand Hopper. (2023). *Understanding the brand architecture of Procter & Gamble (P&G)*.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

*This final chapter addresses the research questions and evaluates how the study's findings meet its objectives. It highlights the contributions to small enterprises' marketing strategies, particularly in terms of digitalization and communication improvements. The chapter also outlines the managerial, theoretical, and societal implications of the findings, followed by a brief discussion of the study's limitations and suggestions for future research.*

### 5.1 Achievement of the research's purpose

The aim of this study was to explore the key factors influencing small enterprises' marketing strategies in the context of digitalization. It examined how digital tools and platforms have reshaped the way small businesses market their products, giving them a competitive advantage despite limited resources. Previous research indicates that many small enterprises face challenges such as limited marketing expertise and budget constraints, which affect their ability to conduct market research and select appropriate promotional channels. However, information technology has bridged these gaps by facilitating closer connections between businesses and consumers. The findings of this study reveal that digitalization has significantly reduced the limitations of small enterprises. Digital marketing now demands fewer resources than traditional methods, reducing the need for large marketing teams and high budgets. This shift has allowed managers and owners of small enterprises to reach broader audiences with ease through platforms like social media and websites. The study highlights that Fiorillo showed an adaptive attitude towards digital marketing, embracing change and responding quickly to new opportunities, thus leveraging digital tools to enhance their marketing capabilities.

### 5.2 Consideration of Research Questions

***RQ 1: How does Fiorillo Detergenza, as a small enterprise, develop and implement marketing strategies to gain a competitive advantage in a market dominated by larger enterprises?***

In addressing the first research question, it can be concluded that Fiorillo Detergenza lacks a formal strategic planning process but compensates by focusing on key aspects of the marketing mix. For a SME's as addressed by the existing literature is difficult to have a clear and precise long term marketing plan. Like many small enterprises, price is their primary marketing tool. The company follows a low-middle pricing strategy maintaining high standard of quality, it ensure to remain competitive, especially when compared to larger enterprises like P&G. This allows them to attract

cost-conscious customers. As R1 noted in the interview, their ability to make quick pricing decisions gives them a significant advantage, unlike larger enterprises, which often face delays due to centralized decision-making processes at their headquarters. Through digitalization and digital marketing, Fiorillo is able to easily monitor competitors' pricing using online tools, positioning themselves as price followers, which ensures they can offer competitive pricing based on market trends. This agility in adjusting prices is a key element that helps them sustain a competitive advantage in their market. Another major aspect of Fiorillo's strategy is their personalized service. Unlike large enterprises that provide standardized services, Fiorillo leverages their closer relationship with customers. R2 highlighted that personalized interaction is key to building customer loyalty:

*"We know our customers really well, and that personal connection encourages repeat business. They feel valued and come back because we treat them like they were in our big family."* (Interview, 2024)

However, unlike many large enterprises, Fiorillo does not invest in loyalty programs, instead relying on the strength of these personal connections to retain customers. While larger businesses often focus on automated loyalty systems, Fiorillo's personalized approach fills the gap left by these formal programs, fostering strong customer relationships. When talking about promotion, Fiorillo prioritizes digital channels, such as social media and their company website, although promotional activities are not the primary focus of their marketing efforts. Their use of paid promotion is limited, typically based on the available budget and the perceived return on investment. This reflects a more resource-constrained approach to advertising, where promotion is not seen as a significant driver of competitive advantage. Instead, location-based marketing, highlighting their unique local presence, is more central to their promotional strategy, though it plays a lesser role in gaining a competitive edge in the market.

***RQ 2: How has digitalization influenced Fiorillo Detergenza's marketing activities, and in what ways has it helped the company strengthen its competitive position against larger competitors like P&G?***

Digitalization has significantly empowered Fiorillo Detergenza to level the playing field with larger enterprises. By adopting digital marketing channels, Fiorillo can arrive more closely to a broader audience without a huge marketing budgets traditionally required for traditional marketing as print, TV, or radio ads. Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, allow Fiorillo to interact with customers in real-time, identifying their preferences, and quickly adjust their strategy.

R3 pointed out:

*"Social media has become our primary tool for customer engagement. We use it to announce new products, interact with our customers, and gather feedback instantly."* (Interview, 2024)

The ability to interact directly with customers and obtain an instant feedback allows Fiorillo to offer more personalized services, something more difficult for larger enterprises with slower decision-making processes. For example, Fiorillo can rapidly launch a new campaign or adjust product offerings based on customer preferences, providing a level of flexibility that large competitors cannot match. In addition, Fiorillo benefits from their e-commerce web-site, which provide smaller companies the same global exposure as larger corporations. This has helped Fiorillo expand its customer base in the regions where Fiorillo was not present until nowadays, it could be considered a key advantage against big competitors who may struggle to react as swiftly due to corporate bureaucracy. Finally, through digital marketing tools such as Google Ads and SEO optimization, Fiorillo has improved its visibility online, ensuring its products are easily found by potential customers, thus reducing the gap between itself and its larger competitors in terms of brand reach and customer access.

### **5.3 Academic Contributions**

With respect to history, marketing literature has primarily concentrated on large enterprises and their strategies, with relatively little focus on the marketing practices of SMEs.<sup>146</sup> This study aimed to fill that gap by providing deeper insights into Fiorillo's marketing strategies as a small enterprise competing in markets dominated by larger corporations. Marketing theory suggests that small enterprises often lack professional marketers and structured marketing resources, which limits their ability to establish standard marketing strategies. This study reveals that Fiorillo Detergenza has successfully adapted its marketing strategy, benefiting significantly from digitalization, despite its limited formal marketing education. Digital tools and platforms have allowed them to reach customers more efficiently, demonstrating that marketing structure is more flexible and less resource-dependent in small enterprises than in large corporations. This finding aligns with research that shows the growing role of digitalization in helping SMEs to compete effectively with larger firms.<sup>147</sup> Fiorillo Detergenza also demonstrates a good approach in adopting digital marketing techniques such as social media management and search engine optimization (SEO), enabling them to achieve all elements of the marketing mix without the need for extensive financial or human

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<sup>146</sup> O'Donnell, A., Gilmore, A., Cummins, D., & Carson, D. (2002). Competitive Advantage in Small to Medium-Sized Enterprises. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 10(3), 205-223.

<sup>147</sup> Carson, D. (1990). Marketing for Small Firms. *European Journal of Marketing*, 24(11), 8-11.

resources. This finding contrasts with Clark and Montgomery's (1999) view that small enterprises tend to adopt supply-based or competitor-oriented marketing strategies, as Fiorillo is more customer-oriented, focusing on personal relationships and meeting customer preferences over simply reacting to competitors. The study also supports the claims of Alford and Page (2015) regarding the increasing adaptability of small business owners/managers to technology-aided marketing strategies. The study offered a good highlight thanks to a clear and structured comparison with P&G's strategies and techniques.

#### **5.4 Business contributions**

Some of the strategies mentioned in this paper have been identified as some potential valuable managerial strategies that are applicable to all small and medium enterprises especially where the larger market players domain the market. These are useful in the detergent industries but as well enterprises in other industries. First, small enterprises should leverage their flexibility, they can make immediate adjustments to their pricing and marketing strategies. By capitalizing on this agility, managers utilize paper like this to create marketing strategies that reflect real-time market dynamics. Also, the rise of social media has fundamentally altered the competitive landscape for small enterprises. Social media marketing allows SMEs to compete with larger enterprises, reaching diverse customer segments at minimal cost. This allows managers to tailor their products to meet the evolving needs of their target audience.

Finally, this study emphasizes the key point of being more customer oriented. Small enterprises may offer personalized services and products and effectively satisfy consumers' needs, establishing trust and loyalty that large enterprises tend to lack because of standardization of products and services.

#### **5.5 Social contributions**

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) like Fiorillo Detergenza play a crucial role in economic development, especially in regions such as southern Italy<sup>148</sup>, which faces higher levels of unemployment and poverty.<sup>149</sup> Investigate and help SMEs with studies can contribute in a positive way to job creation and local economic stimulation, helping to reduce poverty by offering employment opportunities and driving local consumption. As these enterprises expand, they attract both national and international customers, further boosting regional economies.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Fiorillo Detergenza operates in Calabria, southern region of Italy.

<sup>149</sup> Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS). (2021). *Unequal Italy: Regional socio-economic disparities in Italy*.

<sup>150</sup> Gherghina, Ș. C., Botezatu, M. A., Hosszu, A., & Simionescu, L. N. (2020). *Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs): The engine of economic growth through investments and innovation. Sustainability*, 12(1), 347.

## **5.6 Critical reflection about the study**

This research focused only on Fiorillo Detergenza, that operate in the detergents industry and its results cannot be extrapolated to any SMEs in different sectors very easily. The situation with small businesses in this region (Calabria), characterized by much higher levels of unemployment, may operate considerably differently from the rest of the more stable regions in the country where the spending power of families are different. Further, the market rivalry with big corporations is probably not that pronounced in areas where the market conditions are different, and people can spend more.

## **5.7 Suggestions for future studies**

This study focuses on a single small enterprise within the detergent industry, limiting the scope of the findings. A different sector from the detergents one may present different opportunities and challenges. For example, future research should consider expanding the scope to include small enterprises from various sectors, including service and other manufacturing businesses.

Additionally, as digitalization and social media usage may vary across different regions and industries, a broader quantitative study could provide a more comprehensive understanding of how these platforms are used. Finally, this study was conducted in a developed country context, and conducting similar research in emerging markets could provide others valuable insights into how marketing and digitalization is impacting SMEs globally.

## **APPENDIX**

*In this section the set of questions submitted to Fiorillo's management team to address study scope and interesting topics*

### **Information about the respondent:**

Gender:

Age:

Role in the company:

Years of experience in the sector:

### **Marketing topics**

- 1- How significant is marketing in your company's overall growth strategy? Is there a dedicated budget for marketing efforts?
- 2- Who is responsible for managing your marketing activities?
- 3- What factors influence your pricing strategy? Do you adjust your prices based on competitor activity?
- 4- How do you ensure that your products stand out from those of your competitors?
- 5- How does your company's location impact your marketing decision? What marketing efforts emphasize your location?
- 6- How you interact with your local community and how they respond to your calls?
- 7- Can you explain your primary customer base? How do you customize your marketing strategies based on different customer segments?
- 8- Who do you view as your main competitors, and how do they impact your business decisions?
- 9- How do you monitor and respond to competitor activities?
- 10- When formulating your business or marketing strategy, how do your competitors factor into your decision-making process?

### **Digital topics**

How do you maintain an online presence to reach potential new customers? Do you use paid digital advertising methods?

- 11- What online platforms (website, social media, etc.) do you find most effective for communicating with your customers?
- 12- How frequently do you interact with your customers through online tools or platforms?
- 13- What impact has social media had on how you market your business? How has it changed your approach?
- 14- What offline methods (e.g., print media, TV, sponsorships) do you use to promote your business, and how effective are they compared to digital strategies?
- 15- What challenges have you encountered with digitalization in your marketing strategies? How have you adapted to them?
- 16- How do you customize your marketing strategies based on different customers?
- 17- Who do you view as your main competitors online, and how do they impact your business decisions?
- 18- How do you monitor and respond to competitor activities online?
- 19- When formulating your business or marketing strategy, how do your competitors factor into your decision-making process?

### **Customer-centric topics**

- 20- What strategies do you use to retain your existing customers? Is your focus more on customer retention or acquiring new customers?
- 21- Do you offer any incentives, such as promotions or discounts, to encourage customer loyalty?

- 22- How do you collect and use customer feedback to improve your products or services?  
What methods do you use to gather customer feedback?
- 23- How do you ensure that your product meet customer expectations?
- 24- What additional value do you offer your customers?

**Open question**

- 25- Is there anything else you'd like to share about your business approach that could provide valuable insights for our study?

**Interview with Giuseppe Fiorillo**

*A conversation with the CEO of Fiorillo Detergenza about future and interesting topics for the south of Italy and to understand better about the culture of the company.*

**What is Fiorillo Detergenza to you?**

*Fiorillo Detergenza represents more than just a business to me—it's a family. Our company thrives on strong bonds of affection, both internally with our employees and externally with our customers. The philosophy we operate by is based on a combination of quality and fair pricing. My parents, Anna and Michele, instilled in me the importance of respect, which has become the cornerstone of our company's values. This respect not only governs how we treat our employees but also how we conduct business. Our team works with dedication and sacrifice, knowing that the success of the company is the direct result of their hard work. If asked about the secret to our success, I would unhesitatingly say, it's our people.*

*Our other fundamental value is legality and respect for institutions. All our employees are compensated and insured, something my ancestors emphasized as part of running a reputable business. During difficult times, such as the recent economic challenges, we made sure our employees were supported and could still provide for their families. This sense of solidarity is something we take great pride in, as it reflects the familial nature of our company.*

**Your company is very active in social initiatives. Would you say these efforts reflect Fiorillo's core values?**

*Absolutely. These are values rooted in the family aspect of our business. My connection to this land runs deep, and I am driven to give back to a region like Calabria, which has faced many challenges. My ancestors always worked to contribute positively to the area, and now, with the support of my wife Serafina and her love for the community, I continue this tradition. I aim to pass on these values to my children—Michele, Anna, and Marco—because I believe that we can make a concrete difference in our homeland. In fact, the company actively supports various national youth initiatives, such as those organized by Associazione Valentia.*

**How did the idea of using multiple marketing techniques come about for a small enterprise like yours?**

*This was driven by my eldest son, Michele, who developed a passion for marketing while studying at the University of Calabria. With the help of great collaborators, Michele spearheaded a successful advertising campaign, modernizing our approach to marketing. His determination and vision have transformed Fiorillo Detergenza into a more dynamic and modern company, fully capable of meeting the evolving needs of today's customer.*

**What are your future goals for the company?**

*Our primary goal is to continue growing and provide jobs to as many people as possible. We also aim to modernize our plant, expanding its size and incorporating new technologies to enhance production. However, it's important to me that we maintain the historical traditions that connect my family to the business. We're focused on innovation while preserving the values that have defined Fiorillo Detergenza over the years.*

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