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ORGANIZING FOR THE DIGITAL WORLD: A PATHWAY TOWARDS THE

AGILE MARKETING CAPABILITY

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Preface

Today, the increasing challenges of current business scenarios, marked by digitalization, competition and fluctuating customer demand, are affecting the way through which firms approach to change. Firms perform under conditions of high uncertainty, and are continuously exposed to new information from the marketplace. Thus, they are required to improve their capacity to respond to new conditions in a quicker and more effective manner. In this context, it is necessary to foster decision making processes more flexible and centred around people, especially customers.

Recently, firms have been increasingly striving to turn themselves into more *agile* organizations. Features of agility are extensively experienced by start-ups and newly developed firms as essential requirement to stay in tune with current "aggressive" marketplaces, since such firms particularly act in contexts of high uncertainty (Ries, 2011), but are increasingly affecting also the performance of more stable enterprises (D'Aveni, Dagnino & Smith, 2010; Roberts & Grover, 2012a, 2012b).

To date, the concept of agility found its main applications in research fields like supply chain, manufacturing and software development (e.g., Fayezi, Zutshi & O'Loughlin, 2017; Gunasekaran & Yusuf, 2002; Lee & Xia, 2010), where it briefly designates a quick and flexible approach in reacting to change. Over time, it started attracting the attention also in marketing, since marketing capabilities are actually crucial drivers of firm performance, particularly in turbulent and dynamic contexts (Cacciolatti & Lee, 2016; Martin, Javalgi & Cavusgil, 2017; Wilden & Gudergan, 2015).

Marketing attention towards agility is emphasized by the emergence of the so-called "Agile Marketing", whose adoption is growing among marketing teams. Agile Marketing is an emerging marketing approach based on the adoption of agile practices (i.e., practices originally rooted in software development processes to design software greater adjusted to changes in users' needs), which implies greater customer engagement and value, greater speed towards market demand, and greater ability to adapt to change (Accardi-Petersen, 2011; Brinker, 2012; Ewel, 2013; Hoogveld & Koster, 2016a, 2016b; van den Driest & Weed, 2014). Briefly, it designates "the ability to outpace a firm's competition in the marketplace by being nimble enough to realign resources as necessary" (Accardi-Petersen, 2011; p. 41).

The academic attention to this topic in marketing field its overall still in its infancy, thus there exist many opportunities to deepen the research on agility in the context of marketing capabilities, especially because the development of new marketing capabilities greater aligned with high competitive and ever-changing business scenarios is largely encouraged by marketing scholars (Day, 2011; Guo, Xu, Tang, Liu-Thompkins, Guo & Dong, 2018; Merrilees, Rundle-Thiele & Lye, 2011).

The ultimate goal of this dissertation is to explain how agility intersects in the field of marketing capabilities, in order to deepen the understanding about a new marketing capability: the *Agile Marketing Capability*. The capability that I propose, extensively explored and discussed throughout the present thesis, aims to outline future paths in the current debate of marketing capabilities.

My dissertation consists of three papers that address the following research questions:

1) What are the key theoretical underpinnings of the Agile Marketing Capability? (Paper 1)
2) What are the key dimensions of the Agile Marketing Capability in a digital and international marketing context? (Paper 2)
3) How different organizations pursue and implement the Agile Marketing Capability? (Paper 3)

The first paper of this thesis inquires how the Agile Marketing Capability can be formally theorized and conceptualized, identifying its key theorizing elements and putting the basis for its further exploration and analysis.

The relevance of agility as key dynamic capability is increasingly evident both in current research and practice in numerous fields, including supply chain, manufacturing, software development, information systems, and business strategy (e.g., Gunasekaran & Yusuf, 2002; Lee, 2004; Lee & Xia, 2010; Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011; Swafford, Ghosh & Murthy, 2006). Recently, it started gaining attention even in marketing field. Specifically, in marketing departments, the adoption of agile principles and practices has led to the emergence of Agile Marketing approach, whose ultimate goal is to allow the marketing function to respond and adapt quickly and cost-efficiently to market changes (Accardi-Petersen, 2011; Ewel, 2013; Miles, 2013; van den Driest & Weed, 2014).

However, by looking at current literature, I observe that the topic of agility has remained relatively under-explored in marketing studies, where a specific marketing-oriented analysis and conceptualization of agility is still missing. Despite the increasing need to develop more

competitive marketing capabilities to manage ever-changing environments (Day, 2011; Guo, Xu, Tang, Liu-Thompkins, Guo & Dong, 2018; Merrilees, Rundle-Thiele & Lye, 2011), and the recognized role played by agility in positively affecting organizational performance particularly in turbulent and dynamic contexts (Chakravarty, Grewal & Sambamurthy, 2013; Côrte-Real, Oliveira & Ruivo, 2017; Teece, Peteraf & Leih, 2016; Zhou, Mavondo, & Saunders, 2018), existing literature fails to properly capture the relevance of agility in the marketing field, and to specifically build a homogenous body of knowledge of agility rooted in marketing capabilities. The lack of a formal conceptualization of agility in marketing field complicates understanding how agility may develop in terms of marketing capability, and to what extent it may differentiate with respect to current marketing capabilities. Thus, not only it becomes difficult to find agreement on what could constitute agile capabilities when extended to marketing, but also to clarify from a practical perspective what key elements could facilitate the development of agile capabilities in marketing field and, in turn, increase firms' awareness of how to implement agility.

To narrow these research gaps, the motivation of this paper is to explicate how agility may develop in terms of marketing capability, and to outline its key theorizing elements. Drawing on a stepwise theorization process (Greenwood, Suddaby & Hinings, 2002) grounded in construct-development practices (e.g., DeVellis, 2016; Hoehle & Venkatesh, 2015; MacKenzie, Podsakoff & Podsakoff, 2011), with this work I seek to formally theorize and conceptualize an Agile Marketing Capability.

The outcomes of this first study identify the core dimensions (or constructs) of the Agile Marketing Capability, advance a holistic theoretical model, and discuss the underlying constructs and relationships. With this first conceptualization of a marketing-focused capability of agility, I start outlining a new path of marketing capabilities, seeking to redefine marketing capabilities by learning more about Agile Marketing implementation. Thus, I lay the terrain for future exploration and forecast of this topic, and enrich the debate on the opportunity to integrate agile principles into marketing studies, and ultimately impact marketing capabilities.

The second paper of this thesis provides an initial empirical investigation of agile capability in marketing field, exploring its main defining features and thus elaborating some key theoretical and empirical dimensions which may characterize and compose the Agile Marketing Capability.

A great amount of literature acknowledges that in order to get a sustained competitive advantage in dynamic, unpredictable and international business environments dominated by digitalization, marketing strongly needs to employ agility, the dynamic capability to embrace change, sense up-to-date market feedbacks and respond accordingly by adjusting strategies, tactics and operations (Hagen, Zucchella & Ghauri, 2019; O'Keeffe, Ozuem & Lancaster, 2016;

Ravichandran, 2018; Rigby, Sutherland & Takeuchi, 2016; Roberts & Grover, 2012). Althought scholars pointed out how current marketplaces have been pushing firms to consider agility in marketing activities in order to succeed, survive, and get a sustained competitive advantage in their international performance (e.g. Asseraf, Lages & Shoham, 2019; Hagen et al., 2019; Nemkova, 2017; Osei, Amankwah-Amoah, Khan, Omar & Gutu, 2019; Zhou et al., 2018), I found still paucity of knowledge on how agile capabilities in marketing may empirically take place particularly in international and digital settings, where being agile is a prominent requirement.

Therefore, because of the need to focus greater theoretical and empirical attention on this topic in marketing research stream, the second paper of my thesis has a two-fold objective: 1) investigate the concept of agility in a digital and international marketing setting to advance the understanding of a marketing-focused agile capability; 2) identify and explore some key theoretical and empirical dimensions composing an Agile Marketing Capability, thus proposing an initial framework and key propositions.

To fulfill the aforementioned objectives, I adopt a qualitative research design, and perfom a theory building process based on an in-depth exploratory single-case study (Eisenhardt, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Yin, 1994). The motivation of this study is then to capture the relevance of the Agile Marketing Capabilityn in a digital and international setting by means of an empirical case-study. Notably, I focus the attention on *Spotahome*, a digital and international start-up, leader in the online booking for non-vacation home rentals.

The outcomes of this second study identify and organize the key theoretical concepts and dimensions of the Agile Marketing Capability in a theoretical framework. To summarize study results I also formulate some propositions, which could stimulate future theoretical and empirical research towards this topic. The findings of this research considerably advance extant knowledge on capabilities greater aligned with digital transformation challenges, which is a topic still at an early stage in current literature (Warner & Wäger, 2019). Specifically, the analysis carried out in the second paper improves the understanding on agility in digital and international marketing settings, contributing to extend dynamic capabilities and marketing capabilities literature. In the meantime, the framework and propositions of this study, as well as the empirical findings, contribute to explain what strategic actions are needed to foster marketing agility, thus pursuing and implementing an Agile Marketing Capability.

The third and final paper of this thesis extends the body of knowledge of agile capabilities in marketing field by looking at how different organizations pursue and implement the Agile Marketing Capability.

Scholars and practitioners extensively discuss about the importance for organizations to be agile as the new imperative of marketing approaches (Accardi-Petersen, 2011; AgileSherpas & Kapos, 2018; Ewel, 2013; Poolton, Ismail, Reid & Arokiam, 2006; Recker et al., 2017). Fostering Agile Marketing approaches has become critical to stay in tune with ever-changing scenarios (Moi & Cabiddu, 2019; Moi, Frau & Cabiddu, 2018a, 2019). Nevertheless, current research does not properly explain the benefits that could derive from employing agile approaches and capabilities in marketing, and the impact that these could generate on enhancing extant marketing capabilities of organizations.

The motivation of this paper is then to extend previous research by empirically investigating the Agile Marketing Capability across different organizations in order to elucidate in which ways employing agile approaches and capabilities actually impact on improving a firm's marketing capabilities.

Therefore, the ultimate objective of this paper is to empirically investigate the Agile Marketing Capability across different organizations, in order to understand how they differently pursue and implement activities, behaviors and actions around such capability, thus identifying and defining different levels of maturity. Consistent with these objectives, I engage in a theory-building approach through a multiple-case study research design in the context of MICE tourism (Eisenhardt, 1989), a specific niche of business tourism concerning meetings, incentives, conferences, exhibitions and events.

The outcomes of this third study deepen the conceptualization and definition of the Agile Marketing Capability dimensions, proposing a four-stage Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework. The framework provides key actions, activities and behaviours organized in progressive maturity levels to enable organizations to assess and improve their capabilities in Agile Marketing implementation. The findings of this work contribute to deepen the body of knowledge on marketing capabilities and agility research streams, explaining the benefits that could derive from employing agile approaches and capabilities in marketing, and how their employment actually may enhance organizations' extant marketing capabilities, particularly in turbulent and fast-changing contexts. Notably, the analysis performed in this third study sheds light on progressive behaviors and actions representative of different maturity levels in the development and management of the Agile Marketing Capability. The maturity framework proposed in this paper and the empirical findings clarify to managers and practitioners how to assess current maturity level in the development of such capability, understand potential improvement actions, and, thus, achieve higher levels of performance. Briefly, it provides useful guidelines for organizations to *become* more agile in their marketing capabilities.

The overall thesis structure and the contribution provided by the three studies is illustrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Thesis structure
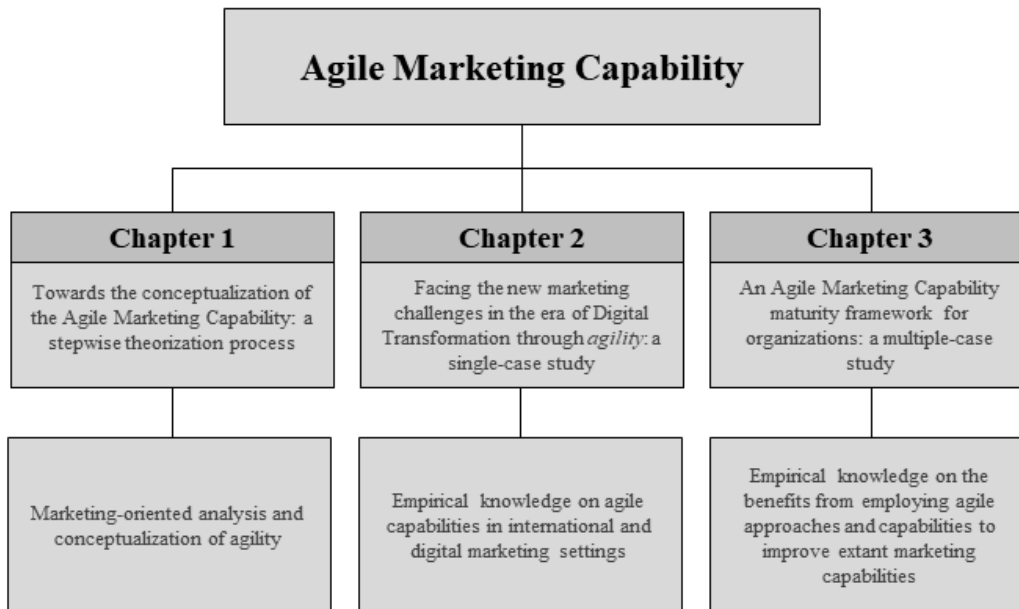
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Paper 1

Towards the conceptualization of the Agile Marketing Capability: a stepwise theorization process

Keywords: Agility; Agile Marketing Capability; construct development; theorization; dynamic capabilities; marketing capabilities.

Towards the conceptualization of the Agile Marketing Capability: a stepwise theorization process

Abstract

The relevance of agility is increasingly evident in current research and practice in numerous fields, including supply chain, manufacturing, software development, information systems, and business strategy. In marketing departments, the adoption of agile principles and practices has led to the Agile Marketing approach, whose ultimate goal is to allow the marketing function to respond and adapt quickly and cost-efficiently to market changes. However, agility has remained relatively under-explored in marketing studies, where a marketing-oriented analysis and conceptualization of agility is missing. While the existing literature acknowledges the role of agility and marketing capabilities in positively affecting organizational performance in turbulent and dynamic contexts, it fails to build a homogenous body of knowledge of agility rooted in research on marketing capabilities. To fill this gap, with this work I seek to theorize and conceptualize an Agile Marketing Capability by following construct development practices. I identify four core dimensions (or constructs) of the Agile Marketing Capability (adaptability, cross-functional collaboration, quickness of reactions, responsiveness), advance a holistic theoretical model, and discuss the underlying constructs and relationships. With this first conceptualization of a marketing-focused agile capability, I lay the terrain for further analysis and exploration towards this topic, enriching the debate on the opportunity to integrate agile principles into marketing studies, and ultimately impact marketing practice.

Keywords: Agility; Agile Marketing Capability; construct development; theorization; dynamic capabilities; marketing capabilities.

1. Introduction

The management of new marketing initiatives and tactics represents a critical issue for marketers (Chaffey, 2010). The dynamic, unpredictable and competitive nature of today's environments pressure managers to adopt new managerial solutions (Ellwood, Grimshaw & Pandza, 2017; Kachouie, Mavondo & Sands, 2018; Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlström & Freundt, 2014; Panda & Rath, 2017) in order to align their business strategies to the "volatility" of marketplaces challenged by increasing digitalization, competitive rivalry, and fluctuating demand (Brozovic, 2018; D'Aveni, Dagnino & Smith, 2010; Killian & McManus, 2015; Rogers, 2016). In other words, there is an increasing preassure to make organizations *agile* (Brannen & Doz, 2012; Junni, Sarala, Tarba & Weber, 2015; Osei, Amankwah-Amoah, Khan, Omar & Gutu, 2019; Weber & Tarba, 2014), hence capable to react more quickly and easily (Gren, Torkar & Feldt, 2015).

Agility is the dynamic capability "to manage uncertainty […] to efficiently and effectively redeploy/redirect its resources to value creating and value protecting (and capturing) higher-yield activities as internal and external circumstances warrant" (Teece, Peteraf & Leih, 2016; p. 8). Recently, the concept of agility has received increasing attention also in marketing studies, which started recognizing the critical role of the marketing function in determining a firm's overall organizational agility (Asseraf, Lages & Shoham, 2019; Hagen, Zucchella & Ghauri, 2019; O'Keeffe, Ozuem & Lancaster, 2016; Zhou, Mavondo, & Saunders, 2018). The interest in marketing agility has also been reflected in practice, where agile methods or practices found quick adoption (Hendrix, 2014), and laid the foundation for advancing the "Agile Marketing" approach (e.g., Accardi-Petersen, 2011; Ewel, 2013; Hoogveld & Koster, 2016a, 2016b; Poolton, Ismail, Reid & Arokiam, 2006). Agile practices seek to facilitate continuous improvement processes, the speed of production cycles and superior human expertise (Dewell, 2007; Piercy & Rich, 2004). Hence, Agile Marketing implies greater customer engagement and value, greater speed towards market demand and greater ability to adapt to change, enhancing a firm's ability to respond and adapt quickly and cost-efficiently to market changes (Accardi-Petersen, 2011; Brinker, 2012; Miles, 2013; van den Driest & Weed, 2014). According to a recent survey of 693 marketers based in the United States, 36.7 % of them have been already adopted Agile principles and practices among marketing teams. The survey revealed an overall positive impact of agility on major performance, including greater speed (i.e., by being more proactive and reactive towards market demand), role coordination (i.e., by promoting greater transparency and alignment among teams and business objectives), customer engagement (i.e., by creating multiple customer touch points, and by identifying different customer segments based on their specific needs), and flexibility (i.e., by adapting easily to market changes) (AgileSherpas & Kapos 2018).

Despite managerial interest in the impacts of Agile Marketing and the increasing adoption of agile practices by marketing departments, currently no studies have still contributed to analyse and build a homogenous body of knowledge of agility in terms of marketing capability. To date, existing conceptualizations of marketing capabilities connected to the theories of resource-based view and dynamic capabilities, have significantly demonstrated how marketing strongly fosters and contributes to firm performance (Cacciolatti & Lee, 2016; Martin, Javalgi & Cavusgil, 2017; Wilden & Gudergan, 2015). Among them, for instance, dynamic marketing capabilities capture a firm's ability to create, exploit and integrate market knowledge to respond to market and technological changes with greater speed and efficiency (Barrales-Molina, Martínez-López & Gázquez-Abad, 2014; Bruni & Verona, 2009; Fang & Zou, 2009; Xu, Guo, Zhang & Dang, 2018). Also, adaptive marketing capabilities capture a firm's capabilities of "engaging in vigilant market learning, adaptive market experimentation, and open marketing through relationships forged with partners" (Guo, Xu, Tang, Liu-Thompkins, Guo & Dong, 2018; p. 79). Nevertheless, searching for new marketing capabilities is a constantly evolving topic, and researchers call for a redefinition of marketing capabilities to add new capacities able to anticipate, respond and adapt to market changes, particularly in highly competitive contexts (Day, 2011; Merrilees, Rundle-Thiele & Lye, 2011).

Therefore, a question arises: how the dynamic capability of agility may develop in terms of marketing capability? Although a focus on prior theorizations of marketing capabilities reveals that such capabilities capture crucial aspects for firms in order to learn how to succeed in high turbulent environments (e.g., responsiveness, marketing flexibility, cross-functional business processes), questions remain about explaining how agility may develop in marketing field, and in which ways it may differentiate to extant or similar marketing capabilities, thus explicate what additional understanding and value could be gained through agility as marketing capability compared to existing knowledge in the marketing field. In other words, the lack of a conceptualization of agility as a marketing capability creates challenges for both research and practice. Regarding research, there is little knowledge on what could constitute agile capabilities in marketing, thus it becomes challenging to conceptualize how agility might have a marketing-oriented capability. Regarding practice, it is difficult to clarify what key elements could facilitate the development of agile capabilities in marketing field and, in turn, increase firms' awareness of how to implement agility.

The current study is designed to address this conceptual gap, and tries to answer to the following research question: "What are the key theoretical underpinnings of an Agile Marketing Capability?" Drawing on a stepwise theorization process (Greenwood, Suddaby & Hinings, 2002) grounded in construct-development practices (e.g., DeVellis, 2016; Hoehle & Venkatesh, 2015;

MacKenzie, Podsakoff & Podsakoff, 2011), I provide an initial formal conceptualization of agility as marketing capability, namely, the Agile Marketing Capability. The motivation of this paper is then to explain how agility may develop in terms of marketing capability, and to outline its key theorizing elements.

This work makes relevant contributions to research and practice alike. From a theoretical perspective, this study offers a crucial contribution to the extant literature on dynamic capabilities and marketing capabilities by interconnecting these theories, and proposing a new marketing capability, the Agile Marketing Capability. Then, I define the key theorizing elements of the Agile Marketing Capability, and streamline them into a theoretical model that highlights the underlying key constructs and relationships (Strang & Meyer, 1993). From a managerial perspective, this analysis may be useful to managers and practitioners seeking to improve or redefine their marketing capabilities by learning more about agility and Agile Marketing implementation.

My work is structured as follows: in section 2, I provide a brief overview of prior conceptualizations and definitions of agility in the literature, and argue that a novel Agile Marketing Capability is needed; in section 3, I present the stepwise theorization procedure that I perform; in section 4, I conceptualize the Agile Marketing Capability and propose a theoretical model, discussing in detail the key constructs and how they are related to each other; to do this, I develop propositions; in section 5, I end with the discussion and conclusion, as well as the limitations of this study and some suggestions for future research.

2. "Agility": an overview of prior conceptualizations

As previously mentioned, the concept of agility has received increasing attention over the years in multiple disciplines, including supply chain, manufacturing, software development, information systems, business strategy, and marketing. This rich diversity has resulted in a broad, multidimensional and cross-disciplinary conceptualization of agility that has assumed different meanings and features across studies.

For instance, in the *supply chain* domain, scholars define agility as the capacity of the supply chain to respond to market changes in a quick and effective manner (Fayezi, Zutshi & O'Loughlin, 2017; Lee, 2004; Swafford, Ghosh & Murthy, 2006) by adjusting operations, tactics and offerings along the entire chain, and according to new opportunities and threats (Eckstein, Goellner, Blome & Henke, 2015; Gligor, Holcomb & Stank, 2013; Gligor & Holcomb, 2012). Agility corresponds, then, to the capacity to capture and handle opportunities when firms "tap into the pool of external information held by supply-chain partners" and design "products that are better aligned with the firm's sourcing and manufacturing capabilities" (Bendoly, Bharadwaj & Bharadwaj, 2012; p. 653).

An agile supply chain coordinates efforts and information flows (Huang, Pan & Ouyang, 2014) through IT tools (Li, Nagel & Sun, 2011; Mavengere, 2013; Yang, 2014) along the whole supply chain, both inside and across a firm's ecosystem (Bharadwaj, El Sawy, Pavlou & Venkatraman, 2013). Consequently, the firm is able to address and provide flexible responses to market changes (Aslam, Blome, Roscoe & Azhar, 2018), such as changes in demand (e.g., quality, quantity, variety) and supply (e.g., shortages, disruptions) (Blome, Schoenherr & Rexhausen, 2013).

The concept of agility is also well developed in the *manufacturing* field (Dubey & Gunasekaran, 2015), mainly due to the changing market dynamics driven by technology, floating customer requirements, and competition (Aravind Raj, Sudheer, Vinodh & Anand, 2013; Vázquez-Bustelo, Avella & Fernández, 2007). Manufacturing therefore had to reshape its traditional approaches, which were based on "rigid" planning and control, by adopting agility principles to gain flexibility, responsiveness and the ability to cope with unexpected and continuous changes in the marketplace (Cao & Dowlatshahi, 2005; Gunasekaran, 1998; Gunasekaran & Yusuf, 2002). Among the key advantages of agile manufacturing, scholars have observed improved abilities to deliver customer value, to address the changes taking place in the environment (e.g., speed of innovation rate, growth of niche market, pressure of competition, new customer requirements) (Zhang, 2011), to employ cross-trained and more flexible workers able to accomplish multiple tasks (Goldsby, Griffis & Roath, 2006) and to create virtual partnerships where people's competencies and expertise are transparent and shared across units or enterprises (Goldman, 1995; Yusuf, Sarhadi & Gunasekaran, 1999).

In *software development*, agility is a principle epitomized in methodologies such as Scrum, eXtreme Programming and Lean Software Development (Beck & Gamma, 2000; Conboy, 2009; Schwaber & Beedle, 2002), where teams, by splitting software development projects into smaller parts, simultaneously and flexibly detect and integrate user requirements to provide final products faster, and to ensure that those products meet customers' expectations (Lee & Xia, 2010; Lindstrom & Jeffries, 2004; Nerur, Mahapatra & Mangalaraj, 2005). Grounded in the "Agile Manifesto" (Beck et al., 2001), agile software development methodologies aim to address issues related to the traditional management of software projects (Larman & Basili, 2003), where the requirements and goals of the project are generally fixed at the beginning, before project implementation (Verlaine, 2017). Agile practices in software development embody three main principles: stakeholders' collaboration, continuous improvements and prototyping, and openness to changes in user requirements (Conboy, 2009; Recker, Holten, Hummel & Rosenkranz, 2017). In software development, agility is found to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of teamwork (Lee & Xia, 2010).

In the field of *information systems*, agility-sensing-and-responding is considered to be the result of a firm's investments in IT assets, services and applications, which facilitate internal and external integration (Nazir & Pinsonneault, 2012; Tallon & Pinsonneault, 2011; Weill, Subramani & Marianne, 2002). Firms would then achieve superior flexibility, efficiency and coordination due to greater internal cooperation among people and units, and deeper involvement of external stakeholders (e.g., customers, suppliers, partners) (Sambamurthy, Bharadwaj & Grover, 2003). Interestingly, these studies suggested two main types of agility: market-capitalizing and operational adjustment (Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011). Market-capitalizing agility relates to a firm's capacity to rapidly respond and seize on changes, while operational adjustment agility corresponds to a firm's ability to reconfigure internal business processes following market changes (Lu & Song, 1987).

In *business strategy* studies, agility represents "the strategic intent to achieve agile operations which are driven by the management emphasis on improving its time-based competitive advantage, namely responsiveness and adaptability to customers' needs and requirements" (Shin, Lee, Kim & Rhim, 2015; p. 183). Agility relates to a firm's responses to business challenges by profiting from rapid market changes to achieve higher performance, quality and customized goods and services (Goldman, 1995). Specifically, in the strategic field, agility embodies a firm's capacity to implement strategic initiatives with a flexible and nimble approach, namely, by transforming, reinventing and adapting according to changing conditions (Doz & Kosonen, 2008). Thus, it is a key factor of a firm's success (Weber & Tarba, 2014).

In *marketing*, scholars have confirmed the positive link between agility and marketing performance (Alford & Page, 2015; Breur, 2011; Chaffey, 2010; Golgeci & Gligor, 2017; Hendrix, 2014; Zhou et al., 2018). Agility encourages firm creativity in generating novel ideas, thus having positive effects on marketing performance (Asseraf et al., 2019; Nemkova, 2017). Furthermore, agility has been considered a critical success factor for creating customer value and competitive advantage (Matthyssens, Pauwels & Vandenbempt, 2005) and for handling market-related changes (new product introduction, increasing competition, new customer requirements, accelerated technological change) (Tahmasebifard, Zangoueinezhad & Jafari, 2017). Marketing agility would then enable the organization to develop demand by readily adjusting strategies, tactics and operations according to environmental changes (Golgeci & Gligor, 2017; Li, Wu & Holsapple, 2015; Roberts & Grover, 2012). Marketing agility is praised for "embracing change" (O'Keeffe et al., 2016), making the organization more sensitive to market needs (Hagen et al., 2019), enabling the organization to master innovation (Rigby, Sutherland & Takeuchi, 2016), and therefore enabling it to succeed (Osei et al., 2019; Tahmasebifard et al., 2017). Interestingly, agile practices (e.g., greater speed in addressing events, coordination, customer engagement, flexibility, transparency)

that originated from the Agile Development Manifesto (Ewel, 2013) found echoes in marketing departments, culminating in the publication of the Agile Marketing Manifesto (agilemarketingmanifesto.org). This manifesto provided the impulse for the diffusion of the Agile Marketing approach (e.g., Ewel, 2013; Hoogveld & Koster, 2016a, 2016b; Poolton et al., 2006), whose ultimate aim is to allow marketing functions to respond and adapt quickly and cost-efficiently to market changes (Accardi-Petersen, 2011; van den Driest & Weed, 2014).

2.1 The need for a new capability: The Agile Marketing Capability

The dynamic capabilities literature deems agility as a higher-order dynamic capability (Blome et al., 2013; Brannen & Doz, 2012; Sambamurthy et al., 2003; Zhou & Wu, 2010) required to achieve competitive advantages in turbulent environments (Chakravarty, Grewal & Sambamurthy, 2013; Côrte-Real, Oliveira & Ruivo, 2017; Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011; Nijssen & Paauwe, 2012). Agility is currently defined as the organizational dynamic capability "to successfully manage uncertainty […] to efficiently and effectively redeploy/redirect its resources to value creating and value protecting (and capturing) higher-yield activities as internal and external circumstances warrant" (Teece et al., 2016; p. 8).

Over the years, the theory of dynamic capabilities has begun to be considered as similar to something almost "static", a repeatable process (Day, 2011): briefly, it implies to sense what is occurring in the market, look for different or new ways to respond through available resources of the firm accordingly, deliver value and, finally, make profit (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece, 2007; Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997). However, such theory is not sufficient anymore.

Scholars have started to acknowledge not only the key role played by the marketing function in the development of a firm's dynamic capabilities, but also conceptualized capabilities more effective to perform in international, highly competitive scenarios, such as dynamic marketing capabilities (Barrales-Molina et al., 2014; Bruni & Verona, 2009; Kachouie et al., 2018; Orlandi, 2016; Xu et al., 2018). Such capabilities "reflect human capital, social capital, and the cognition of managers involved in the creation, use, and integration of market knowledge and marketing resources in order to match and create market and technological change" (Bruni & Verona, 2009; p. 7). They capture essential aspects such as the responsiveness and efficiency of cross-functional business processes in reconfiguring resources in response to market-related changes to deliver greater customer value (Falasca, Zhang, Conchar & Li, 2017; Fang & Zou, 2009; Xu et al., 2018). Looking at recent reviews, I also observed the conceptualization of adaptive marketing capabilities (Day, 2011), defined as "the extensible ability to proactively sense and act on market signals,

continuously learn from market experiments, and integrate and coordinate social network resources to adapt to market changes and predict industry trends" (Guo et al., 2018; p. 81).

Despite this accumulating body of knowledge on marketing capabilities rooted in the theory of dynamic capabilities, there are scant studies that analyze the necessity to develop new marketing capabilities able to adapt to ever-changing environments. Following scholars that call for the need to explore new marketing capabilities to redefine firms' abilities to anticipate, respond or adapt to market changes (Day, 2011; Merrilees et al., 2011), in this study I try to build and explain a new marketing capability able to adapt to ever-changing environments and where agility is embedded. By extending prior conceptualizations of marketing capabilities, I consider that there are other key aspects which are necessary to collectively create an Agile Marketing Capability, and that differentiate such capability from current or similar marketing capabilities.

Agile Marketing capabilities would arise from the interconnection between theories of dynamic capabilities and marketing capabilities. Thus, they would be those marketing capabilities characterized by cross-functional alignment and collaboration of teams and departments that, through a flexible approach in sensing and responding to changing market conditions, aim to address marketing changes by adapting or reconfiguring resources and capabilities with greater speed and efficiency. Agile Marketing capabilities would then provide firms with adequate abilities to manage uncertainty and successfully perform in volatile contexts by continuously and quickly renew, improve and innovate resources and capabilities, and, in the end, deliver higher customer value.

Actually, these underlying features of Agile Marketing capabilities are not completely new in marketing field. Prior research provides valuable insights about, for instance, a firm's abilities to respond to and satisfy customer needs (e.g., customer response expertise ability), and to be quick, through the commitment of various departments (e.g., customer response speed ability) (Jayachandran, Hewett & Kaufman, 2004). Such abilities are facilitated by the cross-functional collaboration and cooperation among units and departments (e.g., marketing and research and development, R&D) (De Luca & Atuahene-Gima, 2007). Also, prior studies conceptualized marketing flexibility, defining a firm's capacity to shape marketing efforts in accordance to quick changes in customer needs and the overall environmental context (Shalender, 2017).

The key point is that such features that I found quite fragmented across literature, are instead interconnected when referring to Agile Marketing capabilities. This consideration is the starting point of my intention of explaining how agility may develop in terms of marketing capability, and how it may differentiate to extant or similar marketing capabilities, in order to conceptualize a new marketing capability and motivate future research and analysis towards this topic.

To advance this newly developed marketing capability that I name Agile Marketing Capability, I then use (1) the general framing of marketing capabilities, as I want to differentiate such capability from extant conceptualizations of similar marketing capabilities, and (2) prior conceptualizations of agility, which allow to leverage the extant body of knowledge that has already characterized agility in the different literature streams. In doing so, I attempt to make a crucial step in my conceptualization, which is to integrate the existing body of knowledge on agility, dispersed in both academic and professional literature, to identify the key theorizing elements that support the conceptualization of agility as a dynamic capability extended to the marketing field, namely, a new marketing capability. My primary aim is to identify proper agility constructs in order to advance – through the rigorous development of constructs – a theorization that can deepen our comprehension of the Agile Marketing Capability (Subramaniam & Youndt, 2005).

3. Construct development process

I based the conceptualization of the Agile Marketing Capability on a stepwise theorization process (Greenwood et al., 2002) grounded in the practices of construct development (DeVellis, 2016; MacKenzie et al., 2011; Podsakoff, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2016), which are broadly acknowledged in theorization and conceptualization studies in the marketing research stream (e.g., Findsrud, Tronvoll & Edvardsson, 2018; Piha & Avlonitis, 2018). The ultimate purpose of my theorization was to define the constructs of the Agile Marketing Capability conceptually in line with prior research and available understandings and definitions (MacKenzie, 2003; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994; Sartori, 1984; Schwab, 1980; Spector, 1992) in order to clearly and concisely provide the meaning of the construct (Churchill Jr, 1979; Hinkin, 1995). As the conceptualization of agility was dispersed in a vast body of literature, I had to first determine a clear and accurate set of essential attributes and features to establish the uniqueness and distinctiveness of the construct's conceptual theme (MacKenzie et al., 2011). In developing the constructs, I also specified the type of property that the construct represents and the type of entity to which it refers (Sartori, 1984; Schwab, 1980).

To perform this study, I specifically carried out the following steps: 1) a systematic literature review of agility constructs, which enabled to outline an integrative overview of existing agility measures and constructs; 2) an in-depth coding and analysis of the Agile Marketing Manifesto in order to look for key patterns of the Agile Marketing approach; 3) an interplay matrix between the Agile Marketing Manifesto and prior literature, which enabled to relate Agile Marketing patterns to prior measures and constructs of agility; 4) the identification of the Agile Marketing Capability constructs, streamlined into a theoretical model, in order to point out the underlying key constructs

embedded in the Agile Marketing Capability; 5) proposition development, in order to postulate the underlying relationships of the proposed theoretical model. Figure 2 depicts the outline of the entire procedure.

Figure 2: Outline of construct development process

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┌─────────────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ 1. Systematic literature│   │ 2. Coding and analysis  │   │ 3. Interplay matrix of  │
│    review               │──▶│    of Agile Marketing   │──▶│    Agile Marketing      │
│ ▪ Integrative overview  │   │    Manifesto            │   │    patterns with prior  │
│   of existing agility   │   │ ▪ Coding matrix of the  │   │    measures of agility  │
│   constructs and        │   │   Agile Marketing key   │   │ ▪ Interaction matrix    │
│   measures (Table 1)    │   │   patterns (Table 2)    │   │   between Agile         │
│                         │   │                         │   │   Marketing Manifesto   │
│                         │   │                         │   │   and literature        │
│                         │   │                         │   │   (Table 3)             │
└─────────────────────────┘   └─────────────────────────┘   └─────────────────────────┘
                                           │
                              ┌────────────┘
                              ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐   ┌─────────────────────────┐
│ 4. Identification of the│   │ 5. Proposition          │
│    Agile Marketing      │   │    development          │
│    Capability constructs│──▶│ ▪ Underlying            │
│ ▪ Theoretical model of  │   │   relationships of the  │
│   the underlying        │   │   proposed theoretical  │
│   constructs of the     │   │   model of the Agile    │
│   Agile Marketing       │   │   Marketing Capability  │
│   Capability (Figure 6) │   │   (Figure 5)            │
└─────────────────────────┘   └─────────────────────────┘
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In the following sections, I closely describe the stepwise approach I followed to perform each of the abovementioned steps.

3.1 Systematic review of agility constructs

In conceptualizing the Agile Marketing Capability, I first performed a systematic literature review (SLR) of the available agility constructs and measures (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009). Such a review is a replicable, scientific and transparent method (Soosay & Hyland, 2015; Thorpe, Holt, Macpherson & Pittaway, 2005; Tranfield, Denyer & Smart, 2003) that follows specific rules and strategies to reduce review biases, and enables the development of a close understanding of the extant evidence on a topic (Briner, Denyer & Rousseau, 2009; Gough, Oliver & Thomas, 2017). SLR is a suitable method to explore complex phenomena that are "fragmented" in the literature or present mixed and contrasting results across studies (Pascucci, Ancillai & Cardinali, 2018). Consistent with the intention of conceptualizing the Agile Marketing Capability, this method allows to explore available constructs in a specific domain, including their validity and reliability (HakemZadeh & Baba, 2016). In doing so, because of the multi-dimensionality and multi-disciplinary features of agility, I purposefully traced back all the associated constructs and measures used to study this concept, and outlined an integrative overview of the agility constructs. Actually, measures are associated with constructs. Because I was interested in identifying the contructs of the Agile Marketing Capability, I searched measures and scales to look for the associated constructs of agility, and thus derive the constructs for the conceptualization of the Agile Marketing Capability.

My search followed rigorous inclusion and exclusion criteria. The reasoning behind the choice of the selected inclusion criteria was to specifically find agility measures and what they are supposed to measure. Therefore, this search focused on studies quantifying "agile" or "agility" concepts, and excluded conceptual or qualitative works that argued about agility without operationalizing it. Articles that identified constructs of agility, developed new scales or indices, or adopted existing scales to study new populations were included in my review. I focused only on measures of agility; thus, I excluded quantitative papers that did not use agility measures or scales in their methodology or that developed scales to measure a concept related to agility (e.g., a concept where agility represents one of the components). Finally, because agility is mainly recognized as a multi-dimensional concept (e.g., AbdoliBidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Gligor & Holcomb, 2012; Lee, O.-K., Sambamurthy, Lim & Wei, 2015; Li, Goldsby & Holsapple, 2009) and study's aim is to understand how to conceptualize an Agile Marketing Capability in a way that also enables its future analusis and measurement, I decided to focus the systematic review on those studies that operationalized agility as a multidimensional or second-order construct. In this way, I attempted to coherently develop the process through which I derive the elements for theorizing the Agile Marketing Capability and to create the basis for the future exploration, analysis and measurement of that capability. Consequently, I excluded studies that operationalized agility as a unidimensional or first-order construct. In summary, I simultaneously considered the following criteria for inclusion:

- quantitative studies;
- articles that identify agility constructs and develop scales or indices to measure agility;
- papers that develop new scales for measuring agility or exploit existing scales to study new populations;
- papers that operationalize agility as a multidimensional or second-order construct.

I further excluded:

- qualitative or conceptual papers;
- quantitative papers that do not use agility measures or scales in their methodology;
- articles that develop scales to measure a concept related to agility, e.g., a concept where agility represents one of the components;
- articles that operationalize agility as a unidimensional or first-order construct.

To identify available scales and indices that have been developed to measure agility, I performed the literature search by leveraging two major databases, the Web of Science and Scopus, looking for the keywords ("agile" OR "agility") AND "measure*" AND ("scale*" OR "index" OR "indices") and restricting the research to the business, management, accounting and economics subject areas. I did not apply restrictions on publication year.

The research yielded an initial set of 101 articles, covering the period 2001-2019. Then, I carefully analysed each title and abstract and excluded certain articles on the basis of the aforementioned criteria. Accordingly, I excluded qualitative or conceptual papers (3), quantitative papers without agility measures or scales (53), and articles that operationalize agility as a unidimensional or first-order construct (13). From the resulting pool of 26 articles which included proceedings, lecture notes and conference papers, I further excluded qualitative or conceptual works (5), quantitative studies without agility measures or scales (12) and papers operationalizing agility as a unidimensional construct (2); finally, I excluded papers that did not have results available in full-text (6). Only one conference paper was selected because it developed a multidimensional scale of agility. Hence, I obtained a set of only 7 articles operationalizing agility as a multidimensional or second-order construct. Based on these 7 articles, I extended the search by leveraging on the databases, looking at the articles which cited the articles identified (Webster & Watson, 2002). I thus found an additional 12 results beyond the selected ones. At the end of the systematic review process, I collected a final set of 19 articles that matched selection criteria. Upon screening the selected articles, I identified 49 measures or first-order constructs of agility. Among them, 23 constructs measured agility at the functional level, 23 constructs measured agility at the organizational level, and 3 measured agility in both ways (see Table 1).

Table 1: Summary of agility constructs and measures

Agility Measure(s)	Definition(s)	Unit of analysis	Domain	Source(s)
Accessibility	Ability to access to relevant data	Function	Business & Economics	Gligor et al. (2013)
Adaptive Agility	Ability to detect and respond to market dynamics in a strategic manner (Overby et al., 2006)	Organization	Information Science & Library Science Business & Economics	Chakravarty et al. (2013)
Adaptiveness	Ability to adapt business models and adopt best practices in the industry (Jarrar & Zairi, 2000; Rindova & Kotha, 2001; Subramaniam & Youndt, 2005)	Organization	Information Science & Library Science Business & Economics	Lee et al. (2015)
Alertness	Ability to detect changes, opportunities and threats in a quick manner	Function	Business & Economics	Gligor et al. (2013)
Co-location	Degree of physical proximity (Layman et al., 2004; Williams et al., 2004)	Function	Agile Software Development	So & Scholl (2009)
Collaborative Innovation	Ability to reconfigure organizational tasks to meet new requirements by jointly designing and implementing new activities, or improving existing ones (Lee, Swink & Pandejpong, 2011)	Organization	Engineering, Operations Research & Management Science	Shin et al. (2015)
Competence/ Competency	Set of abilities that provide activities the proper productivity, efficiency and effectiveness in achieving the aims of the firm (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999).	Function	Business & Economics	AbdoliBidhandi & Valmohammadi (2017)
		Organization	Business & Economics	Tahmasebifard et al. (2017)
Competitor Agility	Ability to sense cooperation opportunities with suppliers	Organization	Business & Economics	Felipe, Roldán & Leal-Rodríguez (2016), Yang & Liu (2012)
Continuous Integration and Testing	Continuous integration, test-driven development (Layman et al., 2004; Williams et al., 2004)	Function	Agile Software Development	So & Scholl (2009)
Customer Acceptance Tests	Frequent, requirements verification by the customer (Layman et al., 2004; Williams et al., 2004)	Function	Agile Software Development	So & Scholl (2009)
Customer Access	Ease of contact to the customer, useful feedback (Layman et al., 2004; Williams et al., 2004)	Function	Agile Software Development	So & Scholl (2009)
Customer Agility	Ability to sense new customer requirements	Organization	Business & Economics	Felipe et al. (2016), Yang & Liu (2012)
Customer Responsiveness	Ability to sense customer needs or preferences, and respond to them with new/existing product and service	Organization	Computer Science Information Science & Library	Ravichandran (2018)

			Science Business & Economics	
Decisiveness	Resolute decision-making	Function	Business & Economics	Gligor et al. (2013)
Dynamic Flexibility	Ability to respond to temporary changes in the supply chain and the environment, with extant supply chain (Swafford et al., 2006)	Function	Engineering, Operations Research & Management Science	Eckstein et al. (2015)
Dynamic Sensing	Ability to sense temporary changes in the supply chain and the environment by catching changes in technology, competition, and demand (Li et al., 2009; Overby et al., 2006)	Function	Engineering, Operations Research & Management Science	Eckstein et al. (2015)
Dynamic Speed	Ability to respond to temporary changes in the supply chain and the environment with extant supply chain in a quick and rapid manner (Swafford et al., 2006)	Function	Engineering, Operations Research & Management Science	Eckstein et al. (2015)
Entrepreneurial Agility	Ability to forecast and respond to environmental changes proactively (Overby et al., 2006)	Organization	Information Science & Library Science Business & Economics	Chakravarty et al. (2013)
Episodic Alertness	Ability to timely and flexibly adjust tasks due internal or environmental changes	Function	Business & Economics	Li et al. (2009), Sangari & Razmi (2015)
Episodic Response Capability	Ability to exploit extant or acquired resources to perform occasional tasks timely and flexibly	Function	Business & Economics	Li et al. (2009), Sangari & Razmi (2015)
External Relationship Management	Ability to manage external relationships (e.g., partners, vendors)	Organization	Information Science & Library Science/ Business & Economics	Bradley, Pratt, Byrd, Outlay & Wynn (2012), Felipe et al. (2016)
Flexibility	Ability to manage different products and objectives with the same facilities (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999)	Function	Business & Economics	AbdoliBidhandi and Valmohammadi (2017)
		Organization	Business & Economics	Tahmasebifard et al. (2017)
	Ability to adjust tactics and operations	Function	Business & Economics	Gligor et al. (2013)
Internal Alignment	Ability to align goals, needs and strategies among business units in order to assess the environment and implement the proper organizational adjustments (Luo & Park, 2001)	Organization	Engineering, Operations Research & Management Science	Shin et al. (2015)
Iteration Planning	Participation of all team members (Layman et al., 2004; Williams et al., 2004)	Function	Agile Software Development	So & Scholl (2009)
Iterative Development	Short iterations, time-boxing, working software (Layman et al., 2004; Williams et al., 2004)	Function	Agile Software Development	So & Scholl (2009)

Market Capitalizing Agility	Ability to respond and capitalize on changes by continuously monitoring the environment, and quickly improving products or services to satisfy customers' needs (Sambamurthy et al., 2003; Volberda, 1997, 1996)	Organization	Computer Science, Information Science & Library Science, Business & Economics	Felipe et al. (2016), Lu & Ramamurthy (2011), Mikalef & Pateli (2017)
Market Responsiveness	Ability to respond to new market opportunities and stakeholders' needs	Organization	Information Science & Library Science/ Business & Economics	Bradley et al. (2012), Felipe et al. (2016)
Operational Adjustment Agility	Ability of firm's internal business processes to quickly address market changes (Dove, 2002; Sambamurthy et al., 2003)	Organization	Computer Science, Information Science & Library Science, Business & Economics	Felipe et al. (2016), Lu & Ramamurthy (2011), Mikalef & Pateli (2017)
Operational Alertness	Ability to promptly detect and flexibly cope with changes in extant sources of supply and demand	Function	Business & Economics	Li et al. (2009), Sangari & Razmi (2015)
Operational Flexibility	Ability to pipeline processes, and speed up product development, supply chain and logistics processes	Organization	Computer Science Information Science & Library Science Business & Economics	Ravichandran (2018)
Operational Response Capability	Ability to proactively or reactively respond to changes in supply and demand by timely and flexibly adjust business operations	Organization	Business & Economics	Li et al. (2009), Sangari & Razmi (2015)
Organizational Learning	Ability to accumulate knowledge over time, improving experience in performing organizational tasks timely and flexibly (Li et al., 2009)	Organization	Engineering, Operations Research & Management Science	Shin et al. (2015)
Organizational Responding Agility	Ability to start new ventures, modify product lines/features according to changes in competitors' strategy and customers' needs, rightsize IT operations to better address customers' requirements, innovate to adapt business to changes in the demand (Dove, 2002; Overby et al., 2006)	Organization	Business & Economics	Panda & Rath (2017)
	Ability to respond quickly to changes in competitors' strategy, customers' needs, and market-related changes as business opportunities		Business & Economics	Panda & Rath (2018)
Organizational Sensing Agility	Ability to effectively use IT to monitor changes in customers' needs, competitors' strategy, environmental shifts (Dove, 2005, 2002; Overby et al., 2006)	Organization	Business & Economics	Panda & Rath (2017)
	Ability to recognize changes in customers' needs, competitor's actions, environmental changes, through the use of advanced technology		Business & Economics	Panda & Rath (2018)
Proactiveness	Ability to catch and proactively respond to new business opportunities by anticipating competitors (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996; Miller & Friesen, 1983)	Organization	Information Science & Library Science Business & Economics	Lee et al. (2015)

Quickness	Ability to perform processes and operations in a short time (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999)	Organization	Business & Economics	Tahmasebifard et al. (2017)
Radicalness	Ability to start radical strategic shifts and new business models to enter new markets (Miller and Friesen, 1983)	Organization	Information Science & Library Science Business & Economics	Lee et al. (2015)
Respond To Market Changes	Ability to develop and implement plans coordinated with supply chain to respond to market changes	Function	Information Science & Library Science	DeGroote & Marx (2013)
Responsiveness	Ability to identify and respond to changes quickly, in a reactive or proactive manner, and to recover from them (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999)	Function	Business & Economics	AbdoliBidhandi & Valmohammadi (2017)
	Ability to rapidly respond to new market opportunities due to changes in customer needs (Hinkin & Tracey, 1999; Hult, Hurley & Knight, 2004)	Organization	Information Science & Library Science Business & Economics	Lee et al. (2015)
	Ability to quickly detect and respond to changes, and to recover from them (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999)	Organization	Business & Economics	Tahmasebifard et al. (2017)
Retrospectives	Identification and implementation of improvement points (Layman et al., 2004; Williams et al., 2004)	Function	Agile Software Development	So & Scholl (2009)
Sense Market Changes	Ability to use IT to improve adequacy, accuracy, accessibility and timeliness of information	Function	Information Science & Library Science	DeGroote & Marx (2013)
Speed	Ability to perform tasks and operations as short as possible (Sharifi & Zhang, 1999)	Function	Business & Economics	AbdoliBidhandi & Valmohammadi (2017)
Stand-up Meetings	Short, regular, focused meetings (Layman et al., 2004; Williams et al., 2004)	Function	Agile Software Development	So & Scholl (2009)
Strategic Alertness	Ability to identify changes in the marketplace promptly and flexibly	Function	Business & Economics	Li et al. (2009), Sangari & Razmi (2015)
Strategic Flexibility	Ability to recognize and enter new markets, redefining scopes and businesses	Organization	Computer Science Information Science & Library Science Business & Economics	Ravichandran (2018)
Strategic Response Capability	Ability to be responsive in addressing the needs of new markets	Function	Business & Economics	Li et al. (2009), Sangari & Razmi (2015)
Supplier Agility	Ability to sense activities of competitors	Organization	Business & Economics	Felipe et al. (2016), Yang & Liu (2012)
Swiftness	Ability to implement quick decision-making	Function	Business & Economics	Gligor et al. (2013)
Technology Capability	Ability to be alert and responsive to new customers' requirements through the use of IT (Sambamurthy et al., 2003; Zaheer & Zaheer, 1997)	Organization	Engineering, Operations Research & Management Science	Shin et al. (2015)

During the systematic review of agility constructs and measures, I also looked for additional information on the selected articles, such as the relationship examined, the population studied, and the rigor of the measures (e.g., measure validity and reliability), as well as their dimensionality and nature, when mentioned (DeVellis, 2016) (see Appendix A).

3.2 Coding Matrix of the Agile Marketing Manifesto

As previously mentioned, the concept of agility is under-explored in the marketing literature. To better ground this work in marketing studies, I found in the Agile Marketing Manifesto (agilemarketingmanifesto.org), a critical stepping-stone from which to define the aim of this study, frame the initial conceptualization of the Agile Marketing Capability and derive its constituents (DeVellis, 2016; MacKenzie et al., 2011). I followed, in this sense, a consolidated approach considering both the theory and "examining a practical intervention using a well-established, rigorous research approach" (Rosemann & Vessey, 2008; p. 7)

The Agile Marketing Manifesto is a public declaration containing the key values and principles related to the Agile Marketing approach, already acknowledged by scholars and practitioners when approaching agile practices in business (e.g., Accardi-Petersen, 2011; Smart, 2016). It is grounded in the Agile Development Manifesto, which represents the prevailing source of agile practices, including for instance, greater speed in addressing events, coordination, customer engagement, flexibility, and transparency (Ewel, 2013). The Agile Marketing Manifesto integrates these practices and extends them to the marketing function. Therefore, I found the Agile Marketing Manifesto suitable for informing the development of the Agile Marketing Capability conceptualization. Specifically, I performed an in-depth analysis of the Agile Marketing Manifesto to identify Agile Marketing patterns, focusing on three key questions (Hoehle & Venkatesh, 2015; MacKenzie et al., 2011):

1) What are the key points of the Agile Marketing approach according to the Agile Marketing Manifesto?
2) What are the main concepts related to each point?
3) What are the descriptions of each concept provided by the Agile Marketing Manifesto?

During the analysis, I closely read the content of the Agile Marketing Manifesto, and then I coded its content following the open and axial coding procedures to identify key patterns of the Agile Marketing approach. According to Strauss & Corbin (1990), open coding is the "analytical process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in

the data" (p. 101), while axial coding consists of "relating categories to their subcategories, termed 'axial' because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions" (p. 123). For the coding procedure, I used *NVivo software* because it is an appropriate means to support qualitative data analysis (AlYahmady & Alabri, 2013), create flexible coding scheme, examine qualitative relationships between concepts, and categorize phrases according to the proper theme (Backlund & Backlund, 2017). Moreover, it is also deemed as a tool suited to perform team research easily (AlYahmady & Alabri, 2013; Wong, 2008).

By exploiting *NCapture*, a browser application which enables to collect data or digital contents from websites and social networks (Moi, Frau & Cabiddu, 2018), I firstly captured the digital content of the Agile Marketing Manifesto, and then I uploaded it within NVivo software (e.g. Figure 3).

Figure 3: Example of digital content of the Agile Marketing Manifesto get with NCapture and unploaded within NVivo
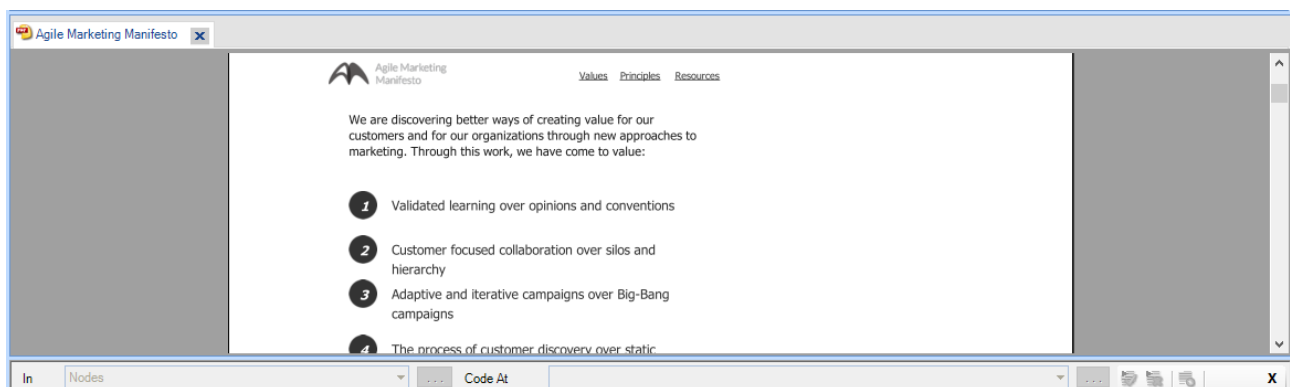
I thus performed two coding steps. First, I carefully analysed the Agile Marketing Manifesto line-by-line and identified the most essential open codes. Second, I aggregated them into sub-categories by similarity based on my understanding or interpretation (Hoehle & Venkatesh, 2015). For instance, in the Agile Marketing Manifesto, I recognized open codes such as "plans must adapt to change", "flexible vs. rigid planning", and "responding to change over following a plan". These open codes were associated with the subcategory (or, using NVivo terminology, *free node*, as it does not have relationships with other nodes) named the *adaptive and flexible approach in responding to change* (see examples in Figure 4).

Figure 4: Examples of Subcategory of the Agile Marketing Manifesto coded with NVivo (first coding step)

Nodes

	Name
	AGILE MARKETING SUBCATEGORY
	Adaptive and flexible approach in responding to change
	Close relationships among people, and collaborative working e
	Quick adjustment and delivering of marketing programs
	Sense and respond to customer-related changes constantly
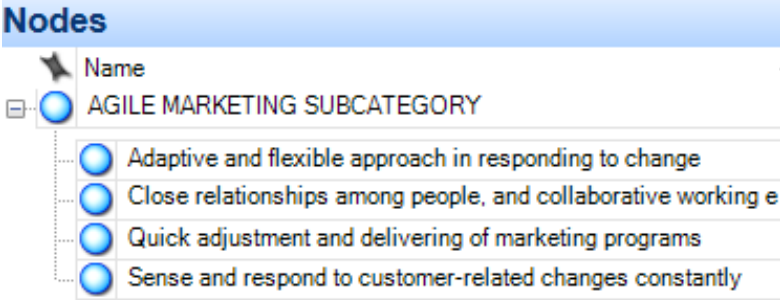
Hence, with axial coding, I labelled sub-categories in major categories or conceptual units (Ryan & Bernard, 2000). In the previous example, I labelled the axial code "adaptability". This approach has been followed throughout the coding of the Agile Marketing Manifesto (see examples in Figure 5).

During each step of the coding process, me and my tutor performed the coding process simultaneously and separately. To achieve a coding consensus, I checked the robustness of codes through a Coding Comparison Query, and then discussed inconsistencies with my tutor until we reached a K-coefficient value above 0.75[1] (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

Figure 5: Examples of Axial Codes of the Agile Marketing Manifesto coded with NVivo (second coding step)

Nodes

	Name
	AGILE MARKETING AXIAL CODE
	ADAPTABILITY
	Adaptive and flexible approach in responding to chang
	CROSS-FUNCTIONAL COLLABORATION
	Close relationships among people, and collaborative w
	QUICKNESS OF REACTIONS
	Quick adjustment and delivering of marketing program
	RESPONSIVENESS
	Sense and respond to customer-related changes cons

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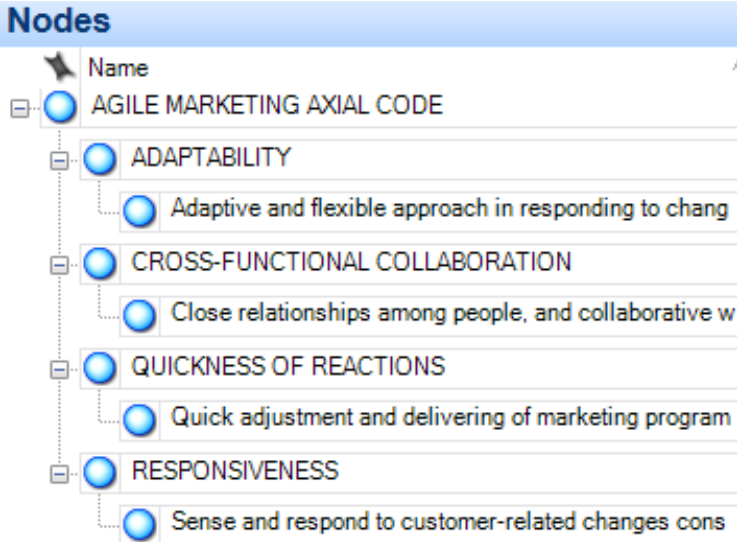
[1] Cohen's kappa coefficient is the outcome of the coding comparison query. It measures the agreement between coders who simultaneously and independently classify N items (or codes) in C mutually exclusive categories. A value of K-coefficient close to 1 indicates a level of "excellent agreement", whereas a value of 0 (or less) indicates disagreement between coders.

The open and axial codes have been organized in a matrix (Miles & Huberman, 1984) to synthesize information and outline conclusions (Table 2). The first column lists the axial codes used as the basis for the construct development of the Agile Marketing Capability. My coding process led to a final set of 4 axial codes or constructs, namely, adaptability, cross-functional collaboration, quickness of reactions, and responsiveness.

Table 2: Coding matrix of Agile Marketing Manifesto

Axial Codes	Subcategory	Examples of Open Codes from the Agile Marketing Manifesto
Adaptability	Adaptive and flexible approach in responding to change	• "Flexible vs. rigid planning" • "Plans must adapt to change" • "Adaptive and iterative campaigns over Big-Bang campaigns" • "Many small experiments over a few large bets" • "Responding to change over following a plan"
Cross-functional collaboration	Close relationships among people, and collaborative working environment	• "Great marketing requires close alignment with the business, sales and development" • "Business people and developers must work together daily throughout the project" • "The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation" • "One of the things we wanted to convey with this value was the non-linear nature of Agile Marketing – it is a process of validating our learning through a implement-measure-learn feedback loop, rather than of following conventions or deciding what's best based on the opinion of the highest paid person in the room" • "Validated learning over opinions and conventions" • "Individuals and interactions over one size fits all" • "Build marketing programs around motivated individuals. Give them the environment and support they need, and trust them to get the job done" • "Customer focused collaboration over silos and hierarchy" • "Collaboration, focused on the needs of the customer, produces better marketing than siloed, departmental turf wars and strict adherence to hierarchical decision making"
Quickness of reactions	Quick adjustment and delivering of marketing programs	• "Deliver marketing programs often, from every couple of weeks to every two months, with a preference to the shorter timescale" • "A non-linear, adaptive approach, which involves starting with a little strategy, implementing it quickly, getting insight into its success (or failure) with customers, adjusting and continuing to learn […]" • "We welcome and plan for change. We believe that our ability to quickly respond to change is a source of competitive advantage" • "Sustainable marketing requires you to keep a constant pace and pipeline"
Responsiveness	Sense and respond to customer-related changes constantly	• "Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of marketing that solves problems and creates value" • "At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behavior accordingly" • "The process of customer discovery over static prediction" • "Customers often don't act in the neat, predictable ways that we assume they'll act. Marketing is an act of customer discovery"

3.3 Interaction matrix between the Agile Marketing Manifesto and prior literature

After generating the axial codes, I tried to match them with the extant literature on agility constructs and measures. Specifically, I developed an interplay matrix between the Agile Marketing Manifesto and prior literature, in order to relate Agile Marketing patterns, identified during the coding and analysis step (Table 2), to prior constructs and measures of agility extracted from the systematic review (Table 1).

For instance, the literature on agility defines a firm's dynamic flexibility in terms of its ability to respond to temporary changes in the supply chain and the environment (Eckstein et al., 2015; Swafford et al., 2006) or manage different products and objectives with the same facilities (AbdoliBidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999; Tahmasebifard et al., 2017). Therefore, the flexibility attribute of agility implies the ability of the firm to adjust tactics and operations according to customer requirements (Gligor et al., 2013). The coding of the Agile Marketing Manifesto and the comparison with prior literature on agility measures and constructs make it possible to extend the notion of adaptability to the marketing context. Specifically, I use the notion of "adaptability" to highlight that, when referring to agile capabilities in marketing, I mean an adaptive and flexible approach in responding to changing market requirements (i.e., "plans must adapt to change", "flexible vs. rigid planning", "responding to change over following a plan").

In Table 3, I illustrate the comparison of the initial axial codes obtained from the coding of the Agile Marketing Manifesto with existing literature on agility constructs and measures. The first column reports the constructs identified during the coding process. The second column provides some examples of the open codes derived from the Agile Marketing Manifesto. The last column mentions prior literature on agility constructs and measures resulting from my review (see Table 1) that studied conceptual domains related to the domains of the axial codes that I identified.

Table 3: Interaction matrix between the Agile Marketing Manifesto and the literature

Construct	Examples of Open Codes from the Agile Marketing Manifesto	Prior Literature on "agile" and "agility"
Adaptability	• "Flexible vs. rigid planning" • "Plans must adapt to change" • "Adaptive and iterative campaigns over Big-Bang campaigns" • "Many small experiments over a few large bets" • "Responding to change over following a plan"	• Respond to short-term, temporary changes in the supply chain and in the environment, with extant supply chain (Eckstein et al., 2015; Swafford et al., 2006); • Manage different products and objectives with the same facilities (AbdoliBidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999); • Adjust tactics and operations according to customer requirements (Gligor et al., 2013).
Cross-functional collaboration	• "Great marketing requires close alignment with the business, sales and development" • "Business people and developers must work together daily throughout the project" • "The most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation" • "One of the things we wanted to convey with this value was the non-linear nature of Agile Marketing – it is a process of validating our learning through a implement-measure-learn feedback loop, rather than of following conventions or deciding what's best based on the opinion of the highest paid person in the room" • "Validated learning over opinions and conventions" • "Individuals and interactions over one size fits all" • "Build marketing programs around motivated individuals. Give them the environment and support they need, and trust them to get the job done" • "Customer focused collaboration over silos and hierarchy" • "Collaboration, focused on the needs of the customer, produces better marketing than siloed, departmental turf wars and strict adherence to hierarchical decision making"	• Perform more productive, efficient and effective activities to achieve the aims of the firm (AbdoliBidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999) based on a set of abilities including for instance close relationships, decentralization of decision-making, and IT integration (Ismail & Sharifi, 2006; Lin et al., 2006); • Participation of all team members (Layman et al., 2004; So & Scholl, 2009; Williams et al., 2004).

Quickness of reactions	• "Deliver marketing programs often, from every couple of weeks to every two months, with a preference to the shorter timescale" • "A non-linear, adaptive approach, which involves starting with a little strategy, implementing it quickly, getting insight into it's success (or failure) with customers, adjusting and continuing to learn […]" • "We welcome and plan for change. We believe that our ability to quickly respond to change is a source of competitive advantage" • "Sustainable marketing requires you to keep a constant pace and pipeline"	• Be alert in detecting changes, opportunities and threats occurring in the environment in a quick manner (Gligor et al., 2013; Li et al., 2009); • Respond to short-term, temporary changes in the supply chain and in the environment with extant supply chain in a quick and rapid manner (Eckstein et al., 2015; Swafford et al., 2006); • Timely and flexibly adjust tasks due to internal or environmental changes (Li et al., 2009; Sangari & Razmi, 2015); • Exploit extant or acquired resources to perform occasional tasks timely and flexibly (Li et al., 2009; Sangari & Razmi, 2015); • Promptly detect and flexibly cope with changes in extant sources of supply and demand (Li et al., 2009; Sangari & Razmi, 2015); • Perform tasks and operations as short as possible (AbdoliBidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999), for instance with quick information access, multitasking teams, speed in introducing new products and exploring new markets (Ismail & Sharifi, 2006; Lin et al., 2006); • Identify changes in the marketplace promptly and flexibly (Li et al., 2009; Sangari & Razmi, 2015); • Continuously integrate and test (Layman et al., 2004; So & Scholl, 2009; Williams et al., 2004); • Implement quick decision-making to address changes, opportunities and threats in the business environment (Gligor et al., 2013); • Be resolute in decision-making to deal with changes, opportunities and threats in the business environment (Gligor et al., 2013).
Responsiveness	• "Our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of marketing that solves problems and creates value" • "At regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behavior accordingly" • "The process of customer discovery over static prediction" "Customers often don't act in the neat, predictable ways that we assume they'll act. Marketing is an act of customer discovery"	• Access to relevant data and information towards customers (Gligor et al., 2013); • Easily contact customers for useful feedback (Layman et al., 2004; So & Scholl, 2009; Williams et al., 2004); • Sense short-term, temporary changes in the supply chain and in the environment by catching changes in technology, competition, and demand (Eckstein et al., 2015; Li et al., 2009; Overby et al., 2006); • Develop and implement plans coordinated with the supply chain to respond to market changes (DeGroote & Marx, 2013); • Be responsive in addressing the needs of new markets (Li et al., 2009; Sangari & Razmi, 2015); • Identify and respond to changes quickly, in a reactive or proactive manner, and to recover from them (AbdoliBidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999), by predicting market demand, enhancing customization, using IT to meet customer expectations (Ismail & Sharifi,

		2006; Lin et al., 2006);
		• Use of IT to improve adequacy, accuracy, accessibility and timeliness of information (DeGroote & Marx, 2013).

4. Main Constructs and Propositions of the Agile Marketing Capability

The literature I reviewed on prior definitions of agility extensively reveals the multidimensional nature of this concept (e.g., Abdoli Bidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Gligor & Holcomb, 2012; Lee et al., 2015; Li et al., 2009). To extend current knowledge, I analysed agility within a marketing framework and captured the following key dimensions of the Agile Marketing Capability: adaptability, cross-functional collaboration, quickness of reactions, responsiveness. Drawing on my conceptualization procedure (Borsboom, 2005), I advance the following definition of Agile Marketing Capability:

The Agile Marketing Capability is the firm's marketing capability resulting from the ability of the marketing function to 1) respond to change through an adaptive and flexible approach; 2) create close relationships among people, and a collaborative working environment; 3) continuously and quickly adjust and deliver marketing programs; 4) constantly sense and respond to customer-related changes.

This conceptualization highlights the key theorizing elements of the Agile Marketing Capability, posited to be positively related to a firm's level of Agile Marketing Capability. Consequently, for example, an increase in marketing function's adaptability would enhance the firm's Agile Marketing Capability (Jarvis, MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2003; MacKenzie et al., 2011). Figure 6 displays my theoretical model graphically.

Figure 6: Theoretical model of the Agile Marketing Capability
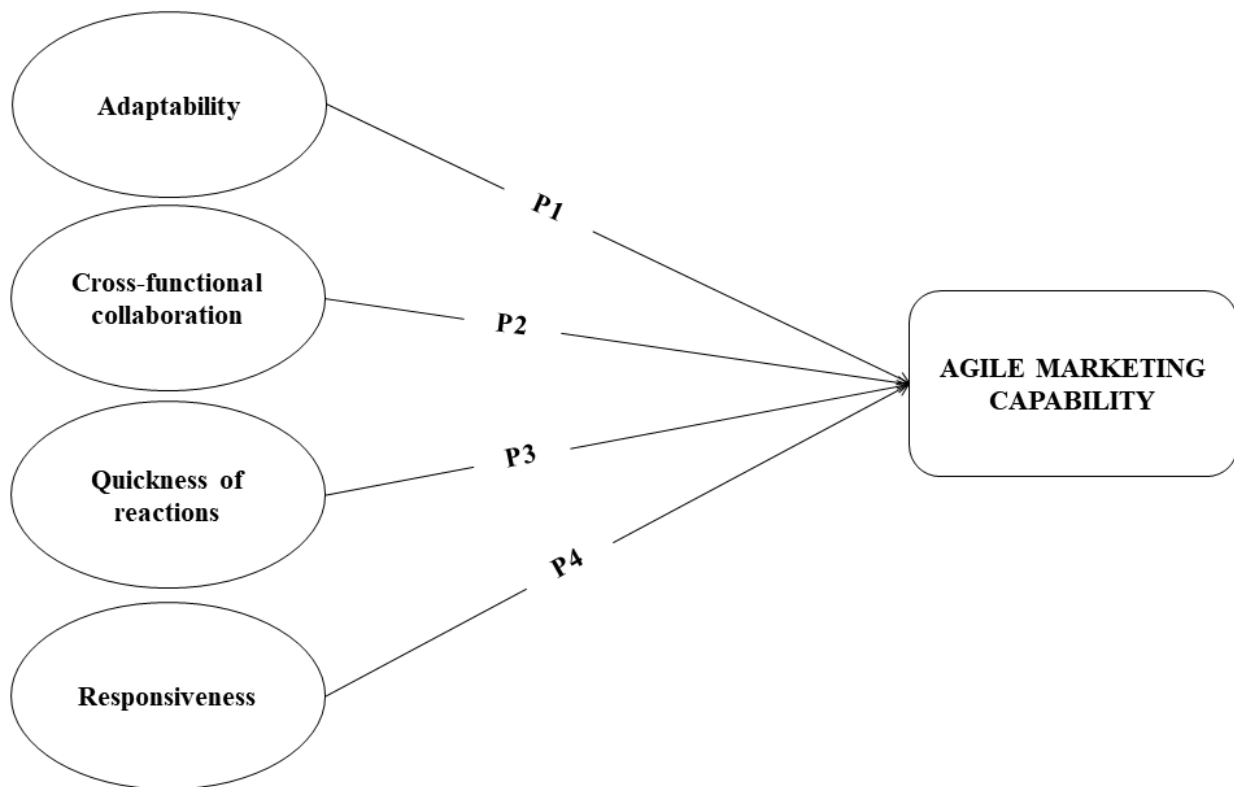
An important step when conceptualizing constructs is to specify the type of entity (E) to which the construct refers (e.g. the organization, a person, a function, a team, a process, a relationship, an organizational culture, a task, a network) and the general property (GP) the construct represents (a characteristic, an action, an attitude, an ability, an outcome) (Sartori, 1984; Schwab, 1980). Table 4 displays the definition of each proposed construct, specifying the type of entity (E) to which the construct refers (function), and the general property (GP) it represents (ability). As shown in Table 4, the first column lists the construct name, the second column provides the definition I developed for each construct, and the third column outlines the entity and general property for each construct.

In the following sections, I argue in detail about each construct and develop testable propositions to explain how they are related to each other (Dubin, 1978).

Table 4: Constructs, Construct Definitions, Entities and General Properties

Construct Name	Construct Definition	Entity (E) and General Property (GP)
Adaptability	The degree to which the marketing function develops the ability to respond to change through an adaptive and flexible approach	E = Function; GP = Ability to respond to change through an adaptive and flexible approach
Cross-functional collaboration	The degree to which marketing function develops the ability to create close relationships among people and a collaborative working environment	E = Function; GP = Ability to create close relationships among people, and a collaborative working environment
Quickness of reaction	The degree to which the marketing function develops the ability to continuously and quickly adjust and deliver marketing programs	E = Function; GP = Ability to continuously and quickly adjust and deliver marketing programs
Responsiveness	The degree to which the marketing function develops the ability to constantly sense and respond to customer-related changes	E = Function; GP = Ability to constantly sense and respond to customer-related changes.

4.1 Adaptability

The first construct proposed in conceptualizing the Agile Marketing Capability corresponds to **adaptability**, here defined as the degree to which marketing function develops the ability to respond to change through an adaptive and flexible approach. Adaptability is posited to have a positive effect on the Agile Marketing Capability, consequently:

Proposition 1 (P1). *Increasing marketing function's adaptability will enhance the Agile Marketing Capability.*

The reasoning behind the aforementioned proposition is as follows. Deeply analysing the Agile Marketing Manifesto reveals the importance of developing an adaptive and flexible approach in responding to change. Actually, Agile Marketing supports *"flexible* vs. *rigid planning"*, an *"adaptive and iterative campaigns over Big-Bang campaigns"*, *"responding to change over following a plan"*, and *"many small experiments over a few large bets"*, since *"plans must adapt to change"*. Accordingly, Agile Marketing encourages adopting an approach that, instead of pursuing rigid planning in responding to change, tries to make flexible changes *in itinere*. If the marketing function relies on this, it develops the ability to adopt a more adaptive and flexible approach that easily adapts to changing contexts without requiring radical changes.

Prior literature underlines a firm's flexibility or adaptability as a key attribute of agility. According to scholars, flexibility (or adaptability) means responding to short-term, temporary

changes in the supply chain and in the environment with an extant supply chain (Eckstein et al., 2015; Swafford et al., 2006), or managing different products and objectives with the same facilities (AbdoliBidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999). Flexibility (or adaptability) implies adjusting or adapting tactics and operations according to customer requirements (Gligor et al., 2013).

These theoretical arguments suggest that features of adaptability and flexibility in adjusting tactics, operations and strategies enable firms to accommodate changes and satisfy market needs using extant sources with more effectiveness. Consequently, if the marketing function leverages adaptability, it will develop marketing capabilities inclined to be Agile Marketing capabilities. Therefore, by following an adaptive and flexible approach to address environmental changes, firms develop an Agile Marketing Capability.

4.2 Cross-functional collaboration

The second construct proposed to conceptualize the Agile Marketing Capability is represented by **cross-functional collaboration**, here portrayed as the degree to which marketing function develops the ability to create close relationships among people and a collaborative working environment. Cross-functional collaboration is posited to have a positive effect on the Agile Marketing Capability, consequently:

Proposition 2 (P2). *Increasing marketing function's cross-functional collaboration will enhance the Agile Marketing Capability.*

The reasoning behind the aforementioned proposition is as follows. The Agile Marketing Manifesto strongly supports the building of close relationships among people and a collaborative working environment. More specifically, I found that *"great marketing requires close alignment with the business, sales and development"*, since *"the most efficient and effective method of conveying information to and within a development team is face-to-face conversation"*, and *"validated learning over opinions and conventions"*. As stated in the Agile Marketing philosophy, *"collaboration, focused on the needs of the customer, produces better marketing than siloed, departmental turf wars and strict adherence to hierarchical decision making"*, and moreover, it is recommended to *"build marketing programs around motivated individuals. Give them the environment and support they need and trust them to get the job done"*. Accordingly, Agile Marketing promotes close alignment among departments in performing their tasks, but more importantly, it recognizes close relationships among people as key to creating an environment

where they perform their jobs more effectively. If the marketing function relies on this, it develops the ability to build trust-based relationships and to create a working environment that performs more collaborative marketing.

When arguing about agility, even prior research claims that for a firm seeking to engage in more productive, efficient and effective activities to achieve its objectives (AbdoliBidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999), agility fosters, for instance, the participation of all team members (Layman et al., 2004; So & Scholl, 2009; Williams et al., 2004), close relationships, decentralization of decision making, and IT integration (Ismail & Sharifi, 2006; Lin et al., 2006).

These theoretical arguments suggest that features of close alignment, collaboration and interaction among people and departments enable firms to develop a working environment better able to create successful marketing programs. Consequently, if the marketing function leverages cross-functional collaboration, it will develop marketing capabilities inclined to be Agile Marketing capabilities. Therefore, by creating close and trust-based relationships and developing a working environment that is as collaborative as possible, firms develop an Agile Marketing Capability.

4.3 Quickness of reactions

The third construct proposed to conceptualize the Agile Marketing Capability is represented by **quickness of reactions**, here defined as the degree to which marketing function develops the ability to continuously and quickly adjust and deliver marketing programs. Quickness of reactions is posited to have a positive effect on the Agile Marketing Capability, consequently:

Proposition 3 (P3). *Increasing marketing function's quickness of reaction will enhance the Agile Marketing Capability.*

From the analysis of the Agile Marketing Manifesto, one crucial emerging point concerns the rapid adjustment and delivery of marketing programs. Among the principles and values of the Agile Marketing philosophy, I found *"deliver marketing programs often, from every couple of weeks to every two months, with a preference to the shorter timescale"*, and *"we welcome and plan for change. We believe that our ability to quickly respond to change is a source of competitive advantage"*. Furthermore, *"sustainable marketing requires you to keep a constant pace and pipeline"* (see Table 3). Accordingly, Agile Marketing advocates changing marketing programs very quickly, at a frequent and constant pace. If the marketing function relies on this, it develops the capability to constantly and rapidly adjust marketing plans to respond to unexpected changes, improving a firm's competitive advantage.

Additionally, prior research on agility highlights that the agility concept implies detecting and coping with changes, opportunities and threats occurring in the environment in a quick and continuous manner (Gligor et al., 2013; Li et al., 2009; Sangari & Razmi, 2015). In doing so, firms are able to respond to short-term, temporary, internal or environmental changes by exploiting extant or acquired resources and adjust tasks timely and flexibly (Eckstein et al., 2015; Li et al., 2009; Sangari and Razmi, 2015; Swafford et al., 2006). To perform tasks and operations as quickly as possible (AbdoliBidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999), some research suggests, for instance, quick information access, multitasking teams, speed in introducing new products and exploring new markets (Ismail & Sharifi, 2006; Lin et al., 2006), and continuous integration and testing (Layman et al., 2004; So & Scholl, 2009; Williams et al., 2004).

These theoretical arguments suggest that features of quickness and timeliness in addressing and reacting to environmental changes enable firms to continuously make improvements. Consequently, if the marketing function leverages quickness of reactions, it will develop marketing capabilities likely to be Agile Marketing capabilities. Therefore, by continuously and rapidly performing improvement processes to manage market changes, new customer requirements, and competition more efficiently and effectively, firms develop an Agile Marketing Capability.

4.4 Responsiveness

The fourth construct proposed to conceptualize the Agile Marketing Capability corresponds to **responsiveness**, which I define as the degree to which the marketing function develops the ability to constantly sense and respond to customer-related changes. Responsiveness is posited to have a positive effect on the Agile Marketing Capability, accordingly:

Proposition 4 (P4). *Increasing marketing function's responsiveness will enhance the Agile Marketing Capability.*

The reasoning behind the aforementioned proposition is as follows. Based on the analysis of the Agile Marketing Manifesto, the ability to constantly sense and respond to customer-related changes plays a pivotal role in the Agile Marketing approach. As mentioned in Table 2, when referring to Agile Marketing, *"our highest priority is to satisfy the customer through early and continuous delivery of marketing that solves problems and creates value"*. More specifically, *"at regular intervals, the team reflects on how to become more effective, then tunes and adjusts its behavior accordingly"*, since *"customers often don't act in the neat, predictable ways that we assume they'll act. Marketing is an act of customer discovery"*, and it is important to enhance *"the*

process of customer discovery over static prediction". Accordingly, Agile Marketing recommends always putting customers, both current and potential ones, at the centre, adjusting marketing to create value for them. If the marketing function relies on this, it develops the capability to constantly create value for customers by sensing (or even predicting) customer needs and responding to them, fostering customer satisfaction.

Prior research suggests that agility is crucial if a firm is to access relevant data and information on customers (Gligor et al., 2013) and easily contact customers for useful feedback (Layman et al., 2004; So & Scholl, 2009; Williams et al., 2004) in order to sense short-term, temporary changes in technology, competition, and demand (Eckstein et al., 2015; Li et al., 2009; Overby, Bharadwaj & Sambamurthy, 2006), and then develop and implement coordinated plans to respond to market changes (DeGroote & Marx, 2013). Thus, agility implies being responsive in addressing the needs of new markets (Li et al., 2009; Sangari & Razmi, 2015), which means identifying and responding to changes quickly, in a reactive or proactive manner, and recovering from them (AbdoliBidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999). Being responsive to customers corresponds, for instance, to predicting market demand, enhancing customization, and using IT to meet customer expectations (Ismail & Sharifi, 2006; Lin, Chiu & Chu, 2006), as IT enables improved adequacy, accuracy, accessibility and timeliness of information (DeGroote & Marx, 2013).

These theoretical arguments suggest that features of dynamic and timely sensing and responding to market-related changes enable firms to improve their responsiveness in successfully addressing changing customer requirements. Consequently, if the marketing function leverages responsiveness, it will develop marketing capabilities inclined to be Agile Marketing capabilities. Therefore, by constantly sensing and responding to changes driven by their customers in order to fulfil those customers' expectations, firms develop an Agile Marketing Capability.

5. Discussion and theoretical contribution

To succeed in turbulent, unpredictable and competitive business environments, the marketing function of firms has been increasingly adopting agile practices. However, I observed still paucity of theoretical and empirical research on agility concept in the marketing field, which call for the theorization of a marketing-oriented conceptualization of agility.

The motivation of this research was to understand how agility, traditionally defined as dynamic capability, may develop in terms of marketing capability, and in which ways it may differentiate with respect to extant marketing capabilities. This is a salient topic in marketing field, where scholars recognize that, despite the accumulating knowledge on marketing capabilities stream of research, exploring new marketing capabilities is a constantly evolving topic, as firms performing in

current ever-changing environments are required to continuously redefine their marketing capabilities (Day, 2011; Guo et al., 2018; Merrilees et al., 2011).

Therefore, with this study I tried to advance a stepwise theorization and conceptualization of a new marketing capability, namely, the Agile Marketing Capability, using on the one hand, the general framing of marketing capabilities, and on the other hand prior conceptualizations of agility. This study contributes to extend current literature in several and important ways.

First and foremost, this work extends current literature on dynamic capabilities and marketing capabilities. To date, prior research has extensively conceptualized crucial features to achieve greater marketing competitiveness, such as sensing and responding to market changes, cross-functional processes and continuous market learning, but these are fragmented across different theories and conceptualizations (e.g., dynamic capabilities, dynamic marketing capabilities, adaptive marketing capabilities) (e.g., Teece, 2007; Teece et al., 1997; Barrales-Molina et al., 2014; Day, 2011). My analysis reveals that the Agile Marketing Capability embraces a wider theoretical view, by interconnecting these theories and embodying features that collectively, and in a more extensive way, contribute to create such capability: adaptability, cross-functional collaboration, quickness of reactions, responsiveness. These dimensions substantially extend current knowledge:

- According to prior research, agility implies flexibility or adaptability in terms of responding to short-term, temporary changes with the extant supply chain (Eckstein et al., 2015; Swafford et al., 2006), managing different products and objectives with the same facilities, and adjusting or adapting tactics and operations according to customer requirements (AbdoliBidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Gligor et al., 2013; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999). In marketing, this corresponds to a firm's capacity to shape marketing efforts in accordance to quick changes in customer needs and the overall environmental context (Shalender, 2017). This study advances the dimension of *adaptability* characterizing the Agile Marketing Capability, referred to as the ability to define marketing strategies which easily adapt to changing contexts, avoiding rigid planning and broad experimentation, but instead encouraging more flexible changes *in itinere* when making adjustments of marketing operations, tactics and strategies.
- Also, according to prior research agility is extensively associated with close relationships, decentralization of decision-making, IT integration (Ismail & Sharifi, 2006; Lin et al., 2006) and participation of all team members (Layman et al., 2004; So & Scholl, 2009; Williams et al., 2004), resulting in more productive, efficient and effective activities (AbdoliBidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999). In marketing, this is also known as the cross-functional collaboration and cooperation among units and departments (e.g., marketing and

research and development, R&D) (De Luca & Atuahene-Gima, 2007). This study reinforces the relevance of *cross-functional collaboration* as dimension of the Agile Marketing Capability, referred to as the ability of the firm to build close alignment among departments in performing their tasks, and to emphasize the relational social aspects of creating inclusive and trust-based relationships among people and a collaborative working environment.

- Furthermore, prior research argues about agility in terms of the ability to constantly and quickly address environmental changes, opportunities and threats (Gligor et al., 2013; Li et al., 2009; Sangari & Razmi, 2015). This is crucial also for marketing, and relates, for instance, to customer response speed abilities, that is, abilities to be quick, through the commitment of various departments (Jayachandran et al., 2004). This study extends the notion of agility and deepens the relevance of *quickness of reactions* dimension of the Agile Marketing Capability, which additionally implies the rapid and ongoing adjustment and delivery of enhanced marketing programs to respond to unexpected changes (e.g., new customer requirements, technological change, competition) at a frequent and constant pace, in order to increase a firm's marketing agility.

- Finally, earlier studies defined agility in terms of the organization's market responsiveness by achieving enhanced demand prediction, customization, and responses to customer expectations (Gligor et al., 2013; Ismail & Sharifi, 2006; Lin et al., 2006). In the marketing field, this aspect relates to a firm's customer response expertise abilities, that is, abilities to respond to and satisfy customer needs (Jayachandran et al., 2004). This work, by conceptualizing *responsiveness* dimension of the Agile Marketing Capability, extends extant research and recognizes the importance of constantly sensing, predicting and responding to changing customer requirements in order to enhance marketing agility.

Briefly, the proposed Agile Marketing Capability provides a more integrative and extended overview of agility and marketing capabilities, capturing the interconnectedness of such theories under a unique, broader capability. With respect to prior research, where features of adaptiveness, cross-functional collaboration, quickness of reactions and responsiveness are fragmented across literature, when referring to Agile Marketing Capability such features are instead interconnected. Thus, for these reasons, the proposed conceptualization of the Agile Marketing Capability better respond to the necessity to develop new marketing capabilities greater able to adapt to ever-changing environments, improving a firm's ability to anticipate, respond and adapt to market changes.

Furthermore, I integrate both academic and practitioners' views on agility by grounding the conceptualization on the Agile Marketing Manifesto, that substantiates the principles of the Agile Marketing approach. The importance of applying agile principles in marketing has already been recognized. Marketing agility is set to stimulate market demand by readily adjusting strategies, tactics and operations according to environmental changes (Golgeci & Gligor, 2017; O'Keeffe et al., 2016; Roberts & Grover, 2012; Zhou et al., 2018). Agile methods and practices are therefore substantiated in the Agile Marketing approach (e.g., Ewel, 2013; Hoogveld & Koster, 2016a, 2016b; Poolton et al., 2006), which aims to achieve greater marketing speed, role coordination, customer engagement, and flexibility in facing uncertain market contexts (Ewel, 2013). My research represents a first conceptualization of a marketing-focused agile capability considering to integrate agile principles into marketing studies and ultimately impact marketing practice, therefore conceptualizing the Agile Marketing Capability.

5.1 Managerial implications

Although this work mainly develops a theoretical conceptualization of the Agile Marketing Capability, it provides relevant insights for managers and practitioners who are considering employing agile principles to redefine and enhance their marketing capabilities.

This paper contributes to increase the attention that organizations should devote towards new marketing approaches in order to be more competitive in turbulent marketplaces, and promptly cope with ever-changing environmental scenarios. Practitioners should recognize that new trends of marketing capabilities have shifted to agility concept, and should understand the benefits from the employment of agile marketing capabilities.

Although research findings may appear relatively "heuristic," as stated in the purpose of this study, this analysis may provide an interesting and useful guide for managers and practitioners seeking to understand how to enhance marketing capabilities by applying the principles of agility and concretize Agile Marketing.

The identification of the Agile Marketing Capability constructs based on extant measures of agility advances practitioners and marketers' knowledge with a reliable foundation from which to decide and take the proper actions to foster marketing agility and marketing performance. Actually, if the firm would pursue marketing activities that can be reconfigured and adapted to customers' preferences at short notice, this study could help practitioners in orienting their behaviours, improving the effectiveness of their performance. Managers may use the identified dimensions of the Agile Marketing Capability to guide their assessments of their actual marketing practices, and leverage the proposed dimensions to better evaluate their actions.

5.2 Limitation and future research

Given the growing need to understand the concept of agility in the marketing field, the contribution of this study is valuable, and considerably advances current knowledge of this topic. The results of this work are represented by the conceptualization of the Agile Marketing Capability, and advance that capability's key constructs and underlying relationships. While study findings rely on a rigorous and solid development methodology, I acknowledge that this research has some limitations that may be addressed by future research.

Given the extreme innovativeness of this topic, this study develops some key dimensions of the Agile Marketing Capability based on the analysis of the Agile Marketing Manifesto. By deepening this new stream of research, future studies could deepen and explore such dimensions, or identify additional ones that may be employed for conceptualizing the Agile Marketing Capability.

From a methodological point of view, the methodological approach used in this study to conduct the SLR focused on specific criteria based on the intention to look for agility measures and what they are supposed to measure, thus focusing on studies that, apart from arguing about agility, also operationalized it. This method allowed to ground my conceptualization on reliable theoretical foundations. However, future research could further improve and refine the SLR conducted in this study, and provide additional and greater value to current research.

Furthermore, because of its theoretical and conceptual nature, this work may encourage further empirical studies in this emerging area. As a newly proposed theory, the Agile Marketing Capability may benefit from empirical validation and testing. For instance, future researchers could exploit our findings to empirically explore these constructs or discover additional ones. Further research could also deepen the mechanisms and relationships between the identified constructs of the Agile Marketing Capability, and empirically test the propositions developed concerning how these constructs are related to each other.

Finally, because the construct development process corresponds to an essential preliminary stage that precedes the development of further scale development procedures, future studies may perform an initial scale development process for the Agile Marketing Capability in an attempt to empirically measure it. More specifically, in order to further improve the theorization of the Agile Marketing Capability in the marketing field, future studies could proceed by developing and validating an adequate survey instrument to measure such capability, and test the relationship with its consequences in order to analyze its predictive ability (e.g., what are the effects that the capability bring to firm performance?). By validating the Agile Marketing Capability core dimensions and nomological network, future research could better explicate its theoretical

underpinnings as well as better assess the relevance of such capability for marketing field across different organizational settings

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Websites

http://agilemarketingmanifesto.org/

Paper 2

Facing the new marketing challenges in the era of Digital Transformation through *agility*: a single-case study

Keywords: Agility; Agile Marketing Capability; international marketing; digital business; single-case study

Facing the new marketing challenges in the era of Digital Transformation through *agility*: a single-case study

Abstract

Scholars and practitioners believe that agile capabilities are crucial for marketing to cope with the challenges of Digital Transformation. However, empirical and theoretical research on agility in the marketing field especially when considering digital and international marketing settings, where being agile is a prominent requirement, is severely lacking. The motivation of this study is to provide an initial empirical investigation of agility concept in a digital and international marketing context in order to explore and design an Agile Marketing Capability. Drawing on a qualitative research design, I perform an in-depth exploratory single-case study involving a digital and international start-up operating in the online booking for non-vacation home rentals. This work extends current literature on dynamic capabilities and marketing capabilities by identifying key dimensions which may properly characterize the Agile Marketing Capability, systematically organized in a theoretical framework, and offers practical guidelines to facilitate its implementation. This study also puts forward some propositions that summarize study results as starting point for future theoretical and empirical research towards this topic. With this first empirical analysis of the Agile Marketing Capability, I try to increase the understanding of marketing managers and practitioners operating in digital and international contexts about marketing-focused agile capabilities, thus helping them in developing more effective competencies of speed, flexibility and customer responsiveness in their marketing strategies, operations and tactics.

Keywords: Agility; Agile Marketing Capability; international marketing; digital business; single-case study.

1. Introduction

In current business environments, firms are pushed to continuously rethink their business models, offerings, and processes to stay in tune with the challenges posed by digital transformation: globalization, high competition, technological advancement and shifting market demand (Hess, Matt, Benlian & Wiesböck, 2016; Killian & McManus, 2015; Onetti, Zucchella, Jones & McDougall-Covin, 2012; Roberts & Grover, 2012a; Rogers, 2016). This scenario has triggered more "aggressive" marketplaces, where competitive, innovative and agile start-ups, provided with quicker abilities of sensing and responding to new business opportunities, have been jeopardizing the stability of enduring firms (D'Aveni, Dagnino & Smith, 2010; Roberts & Grover, 2012a, 2012b).

The constant state of flux characterizing current businesses has led marketers to increasingly consider applying agile methods and practices to shorten cycle time, increase flexibility, sharpen competitiveness (Barkema, Baum & Mannix, 2002; Goldman, 1995; Grewal & Tansuhaj, 2001; Sebastian, Ross, Beath, Mocker, Moloney & Fonstad, 2017), as well as foster a swift adaptation to market globalization (Chaffey, 2010; Day, 2011; Overby, Bharadwaj & Sambamurthy, 2006; Panda and Rath, 2017). Start-ups and newly developed firms have been those organizations that firstly required the employment of such practices, as they perform their business under condition of high uncertainty, thus achieving greater coordination, team working and speed (Coleman & O'Connor, 2008; Hoegl & Gemuenden, 2001; Pantiuchina, Mondini, Khanna, Wang & Abrahamsson, 2017; Pikkarainen, Haikara, Salo, Abrahamsson, & Still, 2008).

The agile practices (e.g., greater speed of production cycles, continuous improvement processes, transparency, coordination, customer engagement), originally designed to developing software better adjusted and prompt to customers' needs (Conboy, 2009; Recker, Holten, Hummel & Rosenkranz, 2017), have been extended also to marketing field, and led to the emergence of *Agile Marketing*. The Agile Marketing is a new marketing approach aimed at closing the trade-off between the "need identified" and "learning deployed" (Miles, 2013; p. 22), in order to design more strategic and effective responses to dynamic environments (Accardi-Petersen, 2011; Hendrix, 2014; Poolton, Ismail, Reid & Arokiam, 2006; van den Driest & Weed, 2014), thus achieving speed and adaptability in addressing changing events, coordination between roles and departments, transparency and greater customer engagement (Ewel, 2013).

Literature on marketing and management have been recognizing the role of agility to address the challenges posed by digital transformation, as it enables to "embrace change" (O'Keeffe, Ozuem & Lancaster, 2016; p. 432), predict market needs and innovate (Rigby, Sutherland & Takeuchi, 2016), especially in highly competitive (Cunha, Gomes, Mellahi, Miner & Rego, 2018;

Fourné, Jansen & Mom, 2014; Weber & Tarba, 2014) and international marketing scenarios (Asseraf, Lages & Shoham, 2019; Hagen, Zucchella & Ghauri, 2019), and thus cater to the needs of international customers (Bock, Opsahl, George & Gann, 2012; Theodosiou & Leonidou, 2003; Vendrell-Herrero, Bustinza, Parry & Georgantzis, 2017). Being agile literally means moving quickly and easily (Gren, Torkar & Feldt, 2015). Agility is specifically deemed as the dynamic capability to stay up-to-date with market dynamics and adapt strategies, tactics, and operations accordingly to rapidly respond to market changes and new business opportunities (Dubey, Altay, Gunasekaran, Blome, Papadopoulos & Childe, 2018; Felipe, Roldán & Leal-Rodríguez, 2016; Ravichandran, 2018; Sambamurthy, Bharadwaj & Grover, 2003; Teece, Peteraf & Leih, 2016).

Despite the increasing interest by marketing scholars towards agility, there is still a paucity of research in this field (Moi & Cabiddu, 2019; Moi, Frau & Cabiddu, 2018a; 2019). Agility in management and marketing literature has only recently gained academic attention, recognizing the role of marketing in shaping agility as key driver to firm's international performance (Hagen et al., 2019) and financial performance (Zhou, Mavondo, & Saunders, 2018). Current literature explores, for instance, some drivers and outcomes of international marketing agility (Asseraf et al., 2019), or strategies for deploying marketing agility especially in emerging economies (Osei, Amankwah-Amoah, Khan, Omar, & Gutu, 2019). Other studies explore the relationship between agility and entrepreneurial orientation (Tahmasebifard et al., 2017), or that with born-global firms' market performance (Nemkova, 2017). Regarding the Agile Marketing approach, current body of knowledge is still limited and weak from an academic perspective (e.g., Accardi-Petersen, 2011; Cram & Newell, 2016; Dewell, 2007; Hoogveld & Koster, 2016; Poolton et al., 2006). Currently, extant knowledge has neglected to properly understand, explain and deepen how agility capabilities in marketing might take place from an empirical perspective, particularly when considering international and digital settings. Therefore, there is the necessity to better learn how Agile Marketing works in practice, and what key aspects may contribute to develop a proper marketing-focused agile capability, or, in other words, an Agile Marketing Capability. Indeed, a firm's marketing capabilities play a pivotal role in boosting performance especially when looking at international and highly competitive scenarios (Martin, Javalgi & Cavusgil, 2017; Wilden & Gudergan, 2015; Kachouie, Mavondo & Sands, 2018; Orlandi, 2016; Xu, Guo, Zhang & Dang, 2018). Marketing capabilities contribute to making organizations more responsive, coordinated, and open to learning and adapting to changing market conditions (Day, 2011; Guo, Xu, Tang, Liu-Thompkins, Guo & Dong, 2018; Falasca, Zhang, Conchar & Li, 2017; Fang and Zou, 2009). This is an important step forward to fill current research gaps, as research on capabilities especially aligned

with the challenges of digital transformation is a topic still at an early stage (Warner & Wäger, 2019).

The motivation of the present study is close this gap by providing an initial empirical foundation to further explore and design an Agile Marketing Capability. Specifically, this study aims to: 1) investigate the concept of agility in a digital and international marketing setting to advance the understanding of a marketing-focused agile capability; 2) identify and explore some key theoretical and empirical dimensions composing an Agile Marketing Capability, thus proposing an initial framework and key propositions. Accordingly, the research question that I try to answer to with this work is: "What are the key dimensions of the Agile Marketing Capability in a digital and international marketing context?" To unfold this study, I adopt a qualitative research design, notably I perform a theory building process based on an in-depth exploratory single-case study (Eisenhardt, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Yin, 1994), focusing the attention on the case of *Spotahome*, a digital and international start-up leader in the online booking for non-vacation home rentals.

Thanks to this work, I contribute to extend both research and practice in several ways. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to extend the literature on dynamic capabilities and marketing capabilities by advancing the understanding of a marketing-focused agile capability. Also, the findings of this study make a pivotal contribution to current body of knowledge on agility by empirically investigating such capability in a digital, international marketing context, thus identifying key dimensions which may properly characterize an Agile Marketing Capability, systematically organized in a theoretical framework. Finally, the study puts forward four propositions that summarize study results, as starting point for future theoretical and empirical research towards this topic. From a managerial perspective, the framework and propositions of this study could help marketing managers and practitioners operating in digital and international contexts to start approaching to Agile Marketing capabilities. Specifically, they could better understand the ways to develop and implement agility in marketing in order to develop more effective competencies of speed, flexibility and customer responsiveness in implementing marketing strategies, operations and tactics. Also, this study offers useful guidelines for managers and practitioners, particularly those who perform in digital and international business contexts, on how to improve their ability in leveraging digital technologies to satisfy customers in international and high dynamic contexts.

I structured this paper as follows: in section 2, I provide the theoretical background grounded in the theories of dynamic capabilities and marketing capabilities, followed by an overview of agility features based on earlier studies; in section 3, I describe the single-case study methodology that I

adopt, going into the details of case selection, data collection and data analysis process; in section 4, I argue about the research findings, identifying the key dimensions of the Agile Marketing Capability, systematically organized in a framework; in section 5, I conclude with the discussion section where I present four propositions to summarize the outcomes of the study; I then explain the main theoretical contributions and managerial implications, as well as the limitations of this work and avenues for future research.

2. Theoretical background

Contemporary marketplaces are increasingly challenged by the phenomenon of digital transformation, namely, "the changes digital technologies can bring about in a company's business model, which result in changed products or organizational structures or in the automation of processes" (Hess et al., 2016; p. 124). Indeed, digital trasformation concerns "the use of new digital technologies (social media, mobile, analytics or embedded devices) to enable major business improvements such as enhancing customer experience, streamlining operations, or creating new business models" (Fitzgerald, Kruschwitz, Bonnet & Welch, 2014; p. 2).

Agility represents a strategic mean to address the challenges posed by digital transformation, and facilitate easy adaptation to the current complex business environments (Warner & Wäger, 2019). It implies more flexible mind-sets and ways of working, and it is crucial for firm's success (Cobb, 2011). In the field of marketing and management research, it is broadly recognized the positive linkage between agility and marketing performance (e.g. Alford & Page, 2015; Golgeci & Gligor, 2017; Hendrix, 2014; Nemkova, 2017; O'Keeffe et al., 2016). Agility is deemed as critical for creating customer value and added competitive advantage (Matthyssens, Pauwels & Vandenbempt, 2005), providing firms with the ability to handle market-driven changes (Tahmasebifard, Zangoueinezhad & Jafari, 2017). Actually, marketing function mainly concerns with demand creation or development, and employing agile competencies facilitate to cope with the demand, quickly adapting strategies, tactics and operations in response to environmental changes (Golgeci & Gligor, 2017; Li, Wu & Holsapple, 2015; Roberts & Grover, 2012a).

Dynamic capabilities are the theoretical foundations of agility (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997). Agility is specifically defined as the dynamic capability to "detect and seize market opportunities with speed and surprise" (Sambamurthy et al., 2003; p. 238), efficiently redeploy resources to create value and manage turbulent environments (Chakravarty, Grewal & Sambamurthy, 2013; Felipe et al., 2016; Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011; Teece et al., 2016).

Over time, scholars have been trying to deepen and extend the theory of dynamic capabilities, looking for the conceptualization of capabilities which enhance a firm's adaptability to increasingly

challenging and competitive environments (Bruni & Verona, 2009; Day, 2011; Merrilees et al., 2011; Morgan, 2012). Accordingly, they started to recognize the pivotal role played by marketing function in developing firm's dynamic capabilities (Barrales-Molina, Martínez-López & Gázquez-Abad, 2014; Orlandi, 2016; Xu et al., 2018). Marketing function particularly plays a crucial role in developing knowledge on customer needs, distribution channels and competing products (Barrales-Molina et al., 2014), as well as superior organizational performance (Cacciolatti & Lee, 2016; Pucci, Simoni & Zanni, 2015). In this sense, marketing researchers started focusing on dynamic marketing capabilities (Barrales-Molina et al., 2014; Bruni & Verona, 2009; Cacciolatti & Lee, 2016; Martelo Landroguez, Barroso Castro & Cepeda-Carrión, 2011; Morgan, Katsikeas & Vorhies, 2012). Dynamic marketing capabilities "reflect human capital, social capital, and the cognition of managers involved in the creation, use, and integration of market knowledge and marketing resources in order to match and create market and technological change" (Bruni & Verona, 2009; p. 7). They are broadly defined as dynamic managerial capabilities "that use market knowledge to adapt organizational resources and capabilities" (Barrales-Molina et al., 2014; p. 13), "sense and seize, or respond to new opportunities" (Orlandi, 2016; p. 2), create and deliver customer value (Fang & Zou, 2009). Dynamic marketing capabilities deepen how the relationships among marketing and dynamic capabilities take place to develop a sustained competitive advantage (Barrales-Molina et al., 2014; Orlandi, 2016), particularly when firms perform "overseas" (Xu et al., 2018). According to the literature, they are specifically embedded in greater efficiency and responsiveness of product development management, supply chain management and customer relationship management (Fang & Zou, 2009; Srivastava, Shervani & Fahey, 1999). For instance, greater ability of designing or launching products aligned with customer needs (Day, 2011), improved cost-structure along the supply chain (Graves & Willems, 2005), or anticipating future demand quickly and effectively (Day, 2011; Day & Schoemaker, 2008). In a similar vein, scholars conceptualized adaptive marketing capabilities (Day, 2011), defined as "the extensible ability to proactively sense and act on market signals, continuously learn from market experiments, and integrate and coordinate social network resources to adapt to market changes and predict industry trends" (Guo et al., 2018; p. 81). By employing such capabilities, firms enhance their capacities of "engaging in vigilant market learning, adaptive market experimentation, and open marketing through relationships forged with partners" (Guo, Xu, Tang, Liu-Thompkins, Guo & Dong, 2018; p. 79).

2.1 Features of agility concept

The concept of agility has received significant academic attention in multiple fields, including supply chain, manufacturing, and software development.

Earlier studies on agility underline that firms with agile features especially, for instance, in supply chain and IT development, and performing in disruptive business contexts, they are known to continuously and quickly monitor and detect environmental changes, opportunities, and threats (Gligor, Holcomb & Stank, 2013; Li, Goldsby & Holsapple, 2009; Sambamurthy et al., 2003; Sangari & Razmi, 2015). Thus, they respond swiftly to market changes with timely and resolute decision-making and innovation (Chen, Wang, Nevo, Benitez-Amado & Kou, 2015; Eckstein, Goellner, Blome & Henke, 2015; Gligor et al., 2013; Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011; Swafford, Ghosh & Murthy, 2006). Agile firms can exploit extant or acquired resources to perform tasks or operations shortly (Abdoli Bidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Li et al., 2009; Mandal, 2018; Sangari & Razmi, 2015; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999) or exhibit quick access to information, multitasking teams, or speed in introducing new products and exploring new markets (Ismail & Sharifi, 2006; Lin, Chiu & Chu, 2006).

Furthermore, by foreseeing temporary changes in supply chain, technology, competition, and demand (Eckstein et al., 2015; Li et al., 2009; Overby et al., 2006), agile firms are greater responsive in addressing the changing needs of new or extant markets (Chakravarty et al., 2013; Hult, Ketchen Jr & Slater, 2005; Li et al., 2009; Poolton et al., 2006; Sangari & Razmi, 2015), and adequately coordinate plans with the supply chain accordingly (DeGroote & Marx, 2013). Agility responsiveness entails the use of IT to improve adequacy, accuracy, accessibility, and timeliness of information, and facilitate the access to relevant customer data (DeGroote & Marx, 2013; Gligor et al., 2013; Kitchens, Dobolyi, Li & Abbasi, 2018). Responsiveness, hence, to identify and respond to changes quickly, in a reactive or proactive manner, and to recover from them (Abdoli Bidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999) when arguing about agility, may display for instance by predicting market demand, enhancing customization, or using IT to meet customer expectations (Ismail & Sharifi, 2006; Lin et al., 2006; Roberts & Grover, 2012b; Sambamurthy et al., 2003).

Another key feature exhibited by agile firms concerns flexibility, as they must respond quickly to market changes and customer demands without major strategic changes, rather through a flexibile approach (Narasimhan, Swink & Kim, 2006; Weber & Tarba, 2014), by adjusting or adapting tactics and operations according to floating customer requirements (Gligor et al., 2013; Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011; Overby et al., 2006; Sheffi & Rice Jr, 2005). Flexibility helps in quickly adjusting strategies to compete with speed and surprise (Cegarra-Navarro, Soto-Acosta & Wensley, 2016; Sambamurthy et al., 2003) and redeploy resources (Teece et al., 2016), or even adapt business models to best practices (Jarrar & Zairi, 2000; Rindova & Kotha, 2001). Flexibility might also

include managing new or diversified products and objectives with the same facilities and existing supply chain (Abdoli Bidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Eckstein et al., 2015; Lee, Sambamurthy, Lim & Wei, 2015; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999; Swafford et al., 2006).

In the agility setting, people are known to be also more productive, efficient, and effective in achieving organizational objectives (Abdoli Bidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999). They benefit from close relationships and collaboration (Chen & Chiang, 2011; Felipe et al., 2016; Mithas, Ramasubbu & Sambamurthy, 2011; Wagner, Beimborn & Weitzel, 2014), decentralized decision-making, and expertise in using IT to address dynamic environments (Chakravarty et al., 2013; Piccoli & Ives, 2005; Zhou, Bi, Liu, Fang & Hua, 2018). Moreover, marketers use technology integration to align with businesses (Ismail & Sharifi, 2006; Kearns & Sabherwal, 2006; Lin et al., 2006; Oh & Pinsonneault, 2007; Tallon & Pinsonneault, 2011) to facilitate effective information flow across the supply chain (Li, Lin, Wang & Yan, 2006; Roberts & Grover, 2012b).

Features of agility are also crucial for the development of competitive marketing capabilities. In the marketing field, scholars acknowledge, for instance, the importance of a firm's ability to respond to and satisfy customer needs (e.g., customer response expertise ability), and to be quick, through the commitment of various departments (e.g., customer response speed ability) (Jayachandran, Hewett & Kaufman, 2004). Such abilities are facilitated by the cross-functional collaboration and cooperation among units and departments (e.g., marketing and research and development, R&D) (De Luca & Atuahene-Gima, 2007). Also, prior studies conceptualized marketing flexibility, defining a firm's capacity to shape marketing efforts in accordance to quick changes in customer needs and the overall environmental context (Shalender, 2017).

However, researchers are constantly calling for new or improved marketing capabilities aligned with current ever-changing environments, where firms are required to continuously redefine their marketing capabilities (Day, 2011; Merrilees et al., 2011). Briefly, it has been growing the need to build marketing capabilities more "competitive" and efficient to succeed in international scenarios and handle higher competitive rivalry (Davcik & Sharma, 2016; Haapanen, Juntunen & Juntunen, 2016; Takata, 2016; Wang, Senaratne & Rafiq, 2015).

3. Methodology

In order to empirically explore the dynamics of this complex and under-explored phenomenon, I selected an in-depth, inductive case study research design (Eisenhardt, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Yin, 1994). Indeed, the limited number of theoretical and empirical studies on agility in digital and international marketing settings has led to the exploratory nature of the present study.

Specifically, I chose to undertake a single-case study methodology, recommended as useful approach for theory-building process (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Yin, 1994). Since case study methodology is crucial for "confronting theory with the empirical world" (Piekkari, Welch & Paavilainen; p. 569), its adoption allows to deeply explore how agile competencies in a digital and international marketing field might take place from a practical perspective. As the phenomenon of interest is not well developed in marketing literature, this research design is a proper and logical choice to gather detailed empirical data for the broader understanding and description of the phenomenon of interest (Dyer Jr & Wilkins, 1991; Edmondson & McManus, 2007; Siggelkow, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994).

3.1 Case selection

In this study, I followed a purposeful sampling approach (Patton, 2014), selecting a case study highly representative and informative of the phenomenon of interest, that is, an "archetypical" case where the phenomenon under investigation better fulfills theoretical purposes and research question of the study (Silverman, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). Furthermore, I focused the attention on a firm operating in a digital and international marketing setting, because in this context, the phenomenon of agility is more clearly observable. Consistent with these purposes, I focused empirical efforts on Spotahome, a digital and international start-up leader in the online booking for non-vacation home rentals. By selecting this company, with this study I wanted to differentiate from previous works investigating more renowed digital platforms such as Airbnb, Amazon, or Uber (e.g. Stone, 2013, 2017).

Spotahome is a start-up, founded in 2014. I find this a very interesting case study to conduct an empirical qualitative research of agile capabilities in a digital and international marketing setting for several reasons (Yin, 2009).

First, I chose this case since start-ups (or newly developed firms) represent the ground where the concept of being agile actually started gaining attention. Innovation, globalization, internationalization and technological advancement have been forcing these firms to perform under conditions of high uncertainty (Ries, 2011) and, in turn, to be extremely flexible (Almor, 2011; Anthony, 2012; Coleman & O'Connor, 2008; Hoffman, Casnocha & Yeh, 2013). Therefore, start-ups have been increasingly adopting agile practices (Pantiuchina et al., 2017) in order to increase team working, coordination, communication and quickness (Coleman & O'Connor, 2008; Hoegl & Gemuenden, 2001; Pikkarainen et al., 2008).

Also, online firms like Spotahome strongly depend on the use of digital tools to be sensitive to changes in international customer needs and to pursue more customer-centric marketing initiatives,

which actually represent critical traits of agility capabilities (DeGroote & Marx, 2013; Gligor et al., 2013; Kitchens et al., 2018; Matthyssens et al., 2005). Furthermore, such firms are required to be highly flexible both internally and externally, in order to adjust their marketing strategies and operations according to digital transformation, or adapt them to different international contexts. These are key features embedded in agility (Abdoli Bidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011; Swafford et al., 2006).

Preliminary research also disclosed that the company owns unique features that yielded to consider it as the best candidate for conducting the study (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994). Spotahome is a digital start-up committed to providing easier home renting services, similar to *"getting a coffee,"* while surmounting traditional real estate agencies and addressing customers' appreciation for holiday rental platforms. As clearly stated in their official web page (www.spotahome.com), the company's mission is *"to reinvent real estate. Make it transparent, instant, and exciting. Loved at last. Unreal estate […] We work to teleport people into homes anywhere, so they can live the experience without being there. We connect with them. We bring the reality to them."* Spotahome engages in fulfilling customers' requirements for home rental, and ensures cross-communication and transparency: *"The Spotahome experience removes the need for in-person viewings, saving both tenants and landlords the time and expense. We take professional photos, design floor plans, and record high-definition videos of the property and neighbourhood. We also write detailed descriptions about the home and local area".* For the aforementioned characteristics, in several facets the values on which Spotahome leverages are also close to Agile Marketing principles (agilemarketingmanifesto.org). For instance, one of the highest priorities of Agile Marketing is to continuously satisfy and create value for customers. Spotahome attention is clearly and completely dedicated to satisfying its customers' needs. Furthermore, another key Agile Marketing value is considering simplicity as essential, as Spotahome does when declaring to "embrace simplicity". Finally, when dealing with Agile Marketing, it is crucial a collaborating environment, and in Spotahome case team working plays a pivotal role for its success.

I also chose this case for the access to key information of the firm. Indeed, I have been able to interview key members of the marketing department with different roles, which provided extensive, detailed and useful information concerning marketing activities and performance.

All these observations, hence, strengthen the suitability of the selected case to carry out an empirical qualitative research in line with the purposes and research question of this study.

3.2 Data collection

To conduct this study, I collected data from different sources, namely, semi-structured interviews, Spotahome social networking sites, official website, and archivial documents (e.g., documents, reports) to ensure data triangulation, enrich research findings (Miles & Huberman, 1984) and increase their robustness (Benbasat, Goldstein & Mead, 1987; Dubé & Paré, 2003; Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994). In doing so, following homogeneous lines of inquiry (Yin, 2009), I reduced misinterpretation and increased the in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation (Hagen et al., 2019).

I collected primary data through **semi-structured interviews** with respondents highly knowledgeable in this field (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Owing to the complex process of conducting interviews, I followed a standardized interview protocol consisting of eight questions (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Robson, 1993) (see Appendix B). The questionnaire was pilot-tested with an Italian firm operating in the online booking to ensure clarity (Yin, 1994), and then refined according to the feedbacks received on questions' ambiguity or complexity (Van Teijlingen, Rennie, Hundley & Graham, 2001). To ensure openness and enrich information during conversation, without rigidly following the protocol (Myers, 2013), I also asked futher explorative questions during the interview (Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015). The interviews have been unfolded during November 2018. They lasted 30 minutes on average. They were properly recorded and transcribed (Bryman & Bell, 2015; Seidman, 2013), and then coded through NVivo 10 software. Interview respondents included key informants of Spotahome marketing department with different roles, in order to gather diverse information on marketing processes and strategies (see Table 5).

Table 5: Summary of primary data sources

Source	Position	Interview time span (minutes)
Semi-structured interview	Head of Brand and Communications	28
Semi-structured interview	Brand and Communications Executive	31
Semi-structured interview	Head of Digital Performance Marketing	33
Semi-structured interview	Head of Insights and Analytics	18
Semi-structured interview	SEO Manager	33
Semi-structured interview	Growth and User Acquisition Coordinator	32

Furthermore, I collected secondary data from Spotahome **social networks** and **official website** (see Table 6). I included Spotahome social networking pages to gather additional data for analyzing the firm's marketing strategies, increasing information at disposal for data analysis (Miles and Huberman, 1984). All multimedia content shared on Spotahome social networking sites (i.e., posts,

photos, and videos) were captured using NCapture (the browser application of NVivo) (Moi, Frau & Cabiddu, 2018b).

I also made an in-depth analysis of Spotahome official website, and coded the relevant information. Among secondary data, I even included archivial documents.

Table 6: Summary of secondary data sources

Source	Type	Number of items
Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	261 posts on Facebook 712 posts on Instagram
Official website	Web page	5

3.3 Data analysis

In this study, I performed a within-case analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007), and I specifically looked for theoretical categories or concepts emerging during the coding process (Gibbs, 2007). Data coding and analysis were performed using NVivo 10 software.

Firstly, I analyzed data and identified open codes. I then coded key units of test (e.g., "adapt" and "collaboration" units of text), covering and extending the meaning of each unit of text with a list of codes (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Secondly, I further analyzed data by identifying new codes and comparing with the coded data. During data analysis, I triangulated the interview data with the other data sources until reaching a theoretical saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Finally, I performed a thematic analysis in order to identify patterns and common meanings or themes (e.g., "bring improvements and innovation" and "customer-centric marketing efforts") (Aronson, 1995; Boyatzis, 1998). Thus, I identified a few relevant concepts for better theoretical understanding (see some code examples of the entire data analysis process in Table 7).

Table 7: Data analysis process (code examples)

First coding stage		Second coding stage	Third coding stage
Open codes	**Units of text**	**Key patterns**	**Concept**
"we are always trying to make improvements on the website by making small changes"	improve, change	Bring improvements and innovation	Continual and quick innovation pace
"we are using other tools that are quite new in the industry […] in order to get improving the position of our brand"			
"we innovate the way that we make the things better for the customers"	innovate, review		
"our mission is to review our frictions and innovation"			
"and also put even more efforts […] to continue being the best on that thing"	continue	Advancing performance constantly	
"we are always trying to review the frictions between both sides of the marketplace, and in order to do that we are constantly evolving our product"	constantly, always		
"we are always trying to innovate in our industry"	always, innovate		
"normally we have a weekly goal, a weekly plan to reach this goal"	weekly, every moday, every week	Quick planning and performance of tasks	
"every monday we create a report with an analysis of previous week, and then we take decisions after this analysis"			
"our CEO makes every week an update on the main targets and figures that we are achieving"			
"monitoring quickly on a weekly basis what's happening, for example, who is gaining visibility"	weekly, quickly		
"our plans are shorter because we think in the mid-term"	short, mid-term		
"specific target […] that search for something related to that architecture […] maybe could be our potential customers. So, we prepare these different lists, and we try to target these customers"	customer, user, target, voice, experience, interact	Customer-centric marketing efforts	Forecasting and monitoring of market needs
"we need to deliver the best experience to the customer"			
"we are a marketplace of two faces […] the needs are completely different one to the other"			
"maybe you want to run a super fantastic marketing campaign, but everything has to be relevant for the customer"			
"we listen the voice of the customer, this is the first to step. Once that we understand what they want, we try to bring in into our services"			
"we know through Facebook his interests because […] you can interact with the users interested in, because they are looking for an accommodation"			
"they need to understand the pricing, the features of the apartment , flat or whatever they are booking"	need	Solutions to market needs	
"we are giving to the tenant all the tools they need to book accommodation without the hassle of visiting a property"			
"we try to plan in advance what these changes are going to be, trying to plan it best […] what you get is a forecast or what we'll be doing right after this change happens"	plan, forecast	Sense changes and react to them	
"we have to be super proactive in the reaction that the customer has"	proactive,		

	reaction		
"in terms of customers we use tools to understand their behavior, how they enter a website, what content or pages they visit, what is the behavior"	understand, behavior		
"what we are doing is trying to understand what are not only our customers but all the possible customers in the real estate market trying to look for"			
"once that we understand what they want, we try to bring in into our services"			
"monitoring is key because you need to follow the conversation across media channels and across countries to analyze also the sentiment of the conversation"	monitor, analyze		
"there are some users for example in China that used to pay with specific payment methods that it's not the same in Europe for example, so we need to be flexible and to adapt to the country of origin"	adapt, flexible	Adaptive and flexible approach according to diverse countries and customers	Adaptability to changing conditions
"we adapt for you our website, and from the beginning until the payment method"			
"in order to adapt our product to younger generation"			
"because the one from Ucraine wants only to go to a small place, work […] and the one from Barcellona he wants maybe to spend more time in the center etc. So we have to adapt"			
"if you have an objective so you have to adapt your own task to these objectives. So if you for example if you have to change something for budget limitations then the other activities have to cut down the same budget"			
"we need to be flexible and to adapt to the country of origin"			
"you have to be really really careful with what things you have to convey to each of stakeholder, and also you have to be flexible"			
"when we are deciding a plan or an action plan for whatever, we always ask our team or ourself ok, is this the best scenario?"	team, open, feedback	Strong team-working	Collaborative and integrated working environment
"my personal management with my team is I try to be a mentor and teach what is the right way that we should follow, but I'm always opened to receive feedbacks, to allow anyone in my team area saying you're not right, maybe we can try to do this other thing and open to test, and discover another alternative"			
"we are a team because we have an objective, and all the company works towards the same objectives"			
"we collaborate with the customer experience department people we need to know their review, and we try to adopt in accordance to user suggestions or complaints"	collaboration, cooperation	Collaborative approach throughout the firm	
"with the rest of the peers, and the rest of the stakeholders or departments, I think that cooperation and collaboration are key to achieve our goals. If you don't give an hand to your colleagues, the company is not going to succeed"			

The whole coding process was carried out independently and simultaneously by me and my tutor. By using NVivo 10, I then run a Coding Comparison Query, and solved the emerging inconsistencies between me and my tutor until achieving a Kappa coefficient above 0.75 (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

At the end of data analysis process, I identified some key dimensions composing an Agile Marketing Capability, that is, "adaptability to changing conditions," "collaborative and integrated working environment," "continual and quick innovation pace," "forecasting and monitoring of market needs." (Table 8). I discuss the major study outcomes in the following sections.

Table 8: Summary of Agile Marketing Capability dimensions

Dimension	Definition	Code example
Adaptability to changing conditions	The ability to easily adapt to changing international customer needs and contexts	"We try to do more with less because we try to optimize and spend less not only money, but time, efforts, everything" **[Growth and User Acquisition Coordinator]** "We try to make everything simple […] when we define a plan we say, okay, is it simple enough to be understand by a kid of 3 years old or 50 years old person? If it is the second option, let's think again and let's try to make it simpler because we need to deliver really clear messages" **[Head of Brand and Communications]**
Collaborative and integrated working environment	The ability to create close and trust-based, outside-in and inside-out relationships among people and departments	"It's a matter of listening, it's a matter of understanding the needs of each department, it's a matter of understanding the need of the company […] we are a team because we have an objective, and all the company works towards the same objectives" **[Head of Insights and Analytics]** "We are sitting with different people from different markets. I can ask them like can you help me with this because I don't know how to do it or I don't understand […] we are very close one to another" **[Brand and Communications Executive]**
Continual and quick innovation pace	The ability to constantly and quickly innovate, make improvements, update marketing plans, and deliver new marketing programs	"Every Monday we create a report, with an analysis of previous week, and then we take decisions after this analysis. In order to adjust in case of underperformance, we need to invent something to go to the target" **[Head of Digital Marketing Performance]** "We are always trying to make improvements on the website by making small changes […] launching a new functionality on the website or testing a new channel, or whatever initiatives that we come up within the company" **[SEO manager]**

Forecasting and monitoring of market needs	The ability to sense and respond to market needs, in a proactive or reactive way, for greater customer satisfaction	"We can measure all the journey funnel […] we use the Analytics as the first tool to analyze the traffic, and the acquisition, and the behavior" **[Head of Digital Performance Marketing]** "We are applying technology to a sector completely new, so when we implement a change we don't know what is gonna be the response of the market. We have to be super proactive in the reaction that the customer has" **[Head of Brand and Communications]**

4. Findings

In this research, I empirically studied the concept of agility in a digital, international marketing context through the analysis of semi-structured interviews, triangulated with Spotahome social networking sites and official website, and also additional archival documents.

Spotahome is a digital firm running a global marketplace. I observed that the firm tries to educate customers across countries on a different home renting experience, strongly driving the digitalization of the real estate industry.

Evidence from this study analysis provides interesting insights, actions, and guidelines on how firms performing in international marketing contexts influenced by the power of digital transformation should practically develop and implement agility, thus fostering an Agile Marketing Capability.

The findings of this study are organized in a theoretical framework in which the key dimensions of the Agile Marketing Capability are depicted (see Figure 7).

Figure 7: The Agile Marketing Capability Framework
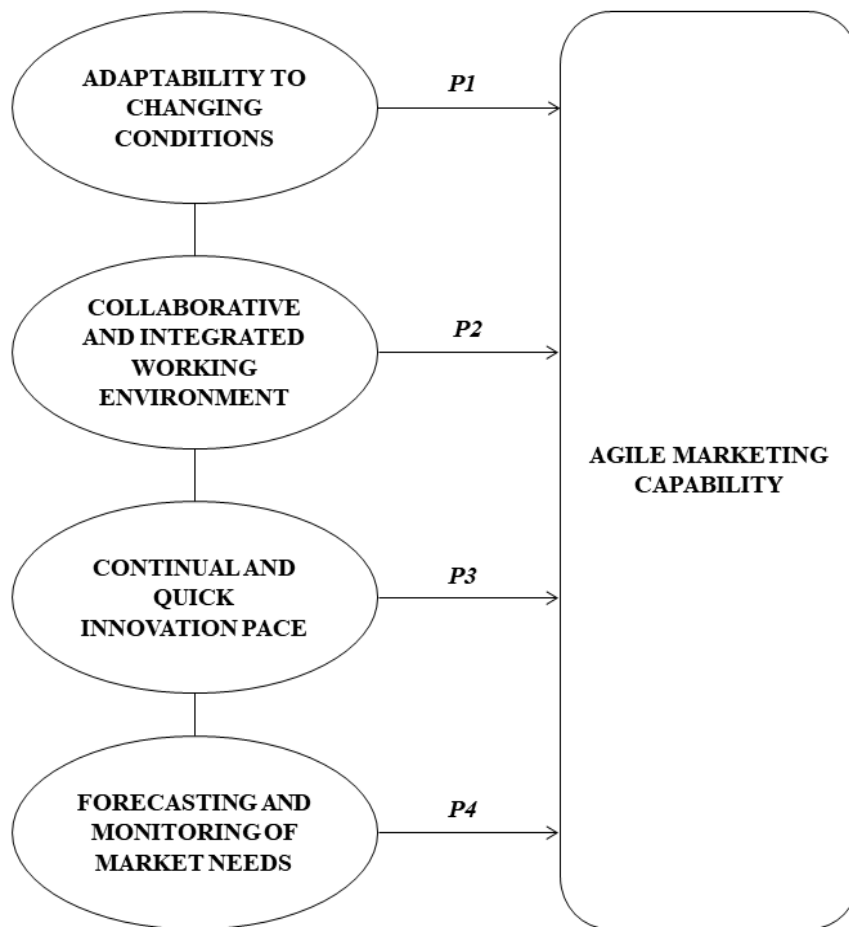
4.1 Adaptability to changing conditions

Thanks to the ease of its product, Spotahome strongly leverages on a flexible and adaptive approach to accommodate and satisfy changing customer needs and diverse international scenarios. Looking at the Facebook page, the firm claims *"Do you already know how to rent on Spotahome? 1. Search and select your accommodation, 2. Book the property, 3. Wait the confirmation from the owner, 4. Just move. Easier than that!"* Thus, it ensures a trust and guaranteed method that very flexibly and easily adapts to the various needs and expectations of customers seeking accommodation.

Such features of adaptability are of extreme importance for its business. For instance, Spotahome has to cope with seasonality issues characterizing the rental market. Hence, the firm is able to adapt its product to September–October or January–February, when people move and change house usually more frequently. Broadly speaking, it has the capacity to coordinate marketing efforts in a different way according to the way in which the objectives change over time. As claimed by the Head of Insights and Analytics:

"If you have an objective, you have to adapt your own task to these objectives. So, if you for example have to change something for budget limitations then the other activities have to cut down the same budget."

Furthermore, in their official website Spotahome states *"we embrace simplicity"* and *"we get more from less,"* which suggest that the firm strives to satisfy changing customer needs with optimum resources. As adaptability is key for Spotahome, they invest proper resources by simplifying and ensuring frugality without radical changes but optimizing in terms of money, time, and efforts. Such adaptive approach is particularly crucial in international contexts. Actually, the firm adopts a flexible rather than rigid planning since successful marketing should adapt to changing contexts. As the SEO manager claims:

"We try to make the Spotahome product available in as many geolocations as possible […] you can search for an accommodation in Madrid […] but maybe you are looking for an accommodation in a specific address, or next to whatever square, or in a neighborhood […] we try to create or make the site as granulared as possible by geolocation entities […] in order to adapt our product to people searching for accommodation, we try to make that life easier this way."

Thus, it is important to develop an accessible product with features that flexibly adapt to various international contexts. As a global firm, Spotahome aims to be more efficient and effective by satisfying the different and fluctuating expectations, requests and needs of international customers, taking into account their peculiarities. The Head of Digital Performance Marketing states that,

"To reach the target necessary for Spotahome that complete our specific audience and interested to book an accommodation […] we need to involve the language because each user from their country search with the proper language. Everytime it's necessary to think about the audience, the user. The user is between specific age, located in a specific city or country, and we need to speak their languages […] so we need to be flexible and to adapt to the country of origin […] from your sofa, you can book from Cagliari an accommodation in Madrid, in your language. So we adapt for you our website, and from the beginning until the payment method."

Briefly, the firm tries to adapt to customers' expectations which may considerably differ from one country to another. For example, the Ukrainian customer who moves to Poland for work, or the customer from Barcelona who travels for leisure. Furthermore, they try to adapt their campaigns to users' language. For instance, in Belgium, people mainly speak English, French, and Dutch languages, and Dutch language is not included in Spotahome website languages, but they create some campaigns in Dutch language through remarketing, and impact websites in Dutch on lifestyle and sport, trying to convince the user to "come back" to Spotahome website, and convert him.

4.2 Collaborative and integrated working environment

One key aspect to succeed in digital, global contexts relates to collaboration and integration among people, both internally and externally-focused. As Spotahome asserts in the website, *"we play a pivotal role in eliminating communication and language barriers between local landlords and foreign tenants by offering excellent customer support in several languages on both sides."* Also, the firm adds *"we are a team," "we live for the mission,"* and *"we trust in trust,"* values that highlight how integration, interaction, and trust-based relationships among people are crucial for developing a working environment oriented to build successful, international marketing programs. The Head of Brand and Communications remarks:

"We need to think in a global level and we need to cooperate in a global level. So everytime that we have a success, we celebrate all together. And everytime that we fail, we cry all together […] I try to be a mentor and teach what is the right way that we should follow, but I'm always opened to receive feedbacks, to allow anyone in my team area saying you're not right, maybe we can try to do this other thing and open to test, and discover another alternative."

Accordingly, success depends on cooperation and collaboration among people in marketing projects. Spotahome nurtures close and trust-based relationships both within and among departments. The marketing team may collaborate with the product department to solve technical issues between the website and the platform, or with the customer experience team to learn reviews based on user suggestions or complaints. The marketing department also needs to interact with the design team for the "creativity" required for advertisement, or with the insight team to gather necessary data to measure promotions, among others. This holds good for managing a global market. The Brand and Communications Executive states:

"Spotahome headquarter is in Spain […] all the teams are located in the same building and in the same place […] I'm sitting with the other brand communication managers for other regions, for example I have here the english one, the german one, the french one, so we talk all the time together because in marketing we are now structured like a function that gives service to the different regions, and we are like a global marketing team."

Thus, despite decentralized decision-making characterizing global firms, where different people oversee different countries, there is however the intention to cooperate and work together, as they are also phisically sitted next to each other, which simplify asking questions or help.

A digital, global firm like Spotahome strongly depends on the use of technological means for communication to foster an environment of close cooperation. For example, chatting tools for interacting, sharing documents, and links (e.g., Slack and Hipchat), and also internal newsletter for delivering weekly news and update all departments. Therefore, by leveraging technology, the firm strongly enhances information flows across the organization. When there is a meeting, information is loaded onto a chat box to ensure full and transparent communication among the teams. Also the CEO strongly incentivizes this aspect of collaboration, by planning a weekly update on the main achievements for the departments and their targets. The Head of Insights and Analytics sums it up:

"Sometimes it happens that you think that only the things you do are the right ones. It's a matter of listening, it's a matter of understanding the needs of each department, it's a matter of understanding the need of the company and if you are able to combine all that and put them in the same direction it all goes well. So we are a team because we have an objective, and all the company works towards the same objectives."

4.3 Continual and quick innovation pace

As it performs in a digital and global marketplace, Spotahome must continuously and quickly engage with improvements and innovation. From press reviews retrieved from the archives, the company was found to have gained important funding rounds in the past 2 years to promote expansions across countries and invest in New Product Development for optimized digital services to tenants and property owners (the landlords). The firm has a long-term vision, where being innovative is key for its performance, as declared by the Head of Insights and Analytics:

"We have to be at the forefront of technology […] so we innovate all the time in technology, we innovate all the time in customer support, we innovate all the time in many things that come to bring better support to customers."

Over the years, Spotahome has been attempting to bring improvements and innovation in the real estate industry. For instance, at the beginning they didn't take 360° photos and videos of properties, while currently this is one of its key strengths for visiting home virtually, as a real experience. Moreover, the firm has been working on influencing marketing campaigns, a practice usually more frequent in other industries like fashion one, and involved "online entrepreneurs", better known as *digital nomads* (Johanson, 2014). Digital nomads are tech-savvy, English-speaking, young people, highly popular on social media (MacRae, 2016).

The firm also aims to digitalize the complete renting process, including booking and digital transactions. The matter of payments is actually crucial for global firms such as Spotahome in order to ease monetary transactions from across the world. From a practical perspective, a constant attention towards innovation management is then key for the firm. As claimed by the SEO manager in charge of improving brand ranking on search engines (e.g., Google):

"We are always trying to make improvements on the website by making small changes […] launching a new functionality on the website or testing a new channel, or whatever initiatives that we come up within the company. We are always trying to lunch them as fast as possible with the minimum cost or effort."

Managers create a weekly report analysis of customers' behavior, for example, how they click on the website, what content do they select, among others, in order to identify areas of "underperformance" and take better decisions to fulfill target requirements. They also analyze gain and loss of visibility in terms of keywords, cities, and targets, and try to improve accordingly. Furthermore, as it is an international business, these efforts of improvements and innovation also involve the external freelancers in charge of the other countries. The firm defines a weekly plan to achieve a goal and conveys the changes that need to be implemented (e.g., a new promotion or a discount). If there is lack of efficiency, they communicate through Hangouts or e-mails, and ask them to optimize. Hence, they always review the "frictions" that may arise among the market stakeholders (tenants and landlords) by constantly advancing their product. Improvements, innovation, and optimization would not be feasible if Spotahome was tardy in response. As stated by the Head of Brand and Communications:

"Our plans are shorter, because we think in the mid-term instead of in the long-term […] so the plans are shorter, and everything has to be relevant for the customer."

Every advance plan represents a forecast of future scenarios. Accordingly, the marketing department as well as the other departments defines different quarterly plans for the main project areas according to their role (e.g., content for the site, link building and BI, and technical aspects of the website for the SEO manager). They also try to enhance speed by simplifying the management of communication channels. For instance, one team member covers all languages and a minimum of two channels, which is in fact crucial for global marketing performance.

4.4 Forecasting and monitoring of market needs

Finally, one key pillar of Spotahome is a complete customer-centric marketing approach, which is enabled by the 100% online platform. This is essential for superior customer experience, as repeatedly claimed in their website. For example, *"we work to teleport people into homes anywhere, so they can live the experience without being there. We connect with them. We bring the reality to them,"* or *"we are dedicated to providing the most enjoyable and stress-free housing search service. From booking to final confirmation, we're there for you!"* Customer-focused attention is critical for firm's mission. Several of the firm's Facebook posts are as follows: *"Are you planning to move to Berlin, but you don't know the city? We will guide you. We will help you to choose the place fit for your needs,"* or *"Are you going to move to another city, but you don't have already found the right rent for you? We will help you to choose the perfect home!"*, where Spotahome tends to customers, offering help and guidelines to provide them the best digital experience.

In particular, the firm is committed to continuously foresee and react to customer-related changes in order to fulfill their expectations. Here, IT certainly plays a key role. As a digital business, Spotahome owns the advantage of analyzing customer behaviors and motivations across touch points, gradually optimizing customer interactions and predicting future behaviors. Hence, the Head of Brand and Communications asserts:

"You need to follow the conversation across media channels and across countries to analyze also the sentiment of the conversation, if it is positive or negative, neutral, and also the keywords that users are using. Users can use some wording, a specific messaging […] and you have to switch

your messages if yours have not delivered the proper idea or the proper description of the service that you are given."

Further asserting that,

"We have different metrics to measure the satisfaction levels, and when those metrics go down a little bit, we put all efforts to solve the situation […] The customer has to be on the center. Not the brand, it's the customer. Not the company, it's the customer."

Accordingly, Spotahome tries to forecast customers' diverse needs to offer a high customizable product. For example, landlords seek profits from their property through quick rentals, whereas tenants seek accommodations in specific areas and with specific characteristics. The Spotahome tool is extremely useful for both landlords and tenants: landlords can avoid the hassles of potential tenants visiting the property. The tool facilitates home renting in a couple of clicks. Meanwhile, tenants who temporary move abroad for traveling or seeking international experience get guaranteed verified and real accommodations, along with the photos and videos of the properties. This is especially important for firms operating in international markets, to cope with different sets of expectations, and to ensure safety and transparency. Verification of properties is actually one of the key strengths of Spotahome, and particularly prevents scams.

Create value for customers is then a top priority. Spotahome exploits technology to constantly forecast and respond to customer needs proactively, by applying technology to implement changes potentially relevant to customer expectations, and reactively, by adjusting failing ideas. They analyze group pages on Facebook dedicated to those seeking accommodation in places such as Madrid, London, Milan, or Rome, they contact the potential customers and offer customized solutions for them. This is critical for global digital firms that use technological tools to satisfy expectations of international customers. Recalling the words of the Head of Digital Performance Marketing:

"There are specific audiences decided by Google, so we can't choose, it's something automatic, but it's able with the algorithm to understand when you put for example specific keywords like we are searching for some users interested in, specific target with this age, located in specific countries, cities, or neighborhoods, that search for something related to the architecture or garden etc. Maybe could be our potential customers. So, we prepare these different lists, and we try to target these customers,"

"We can measure all the journey funnel, so we know the number of people interested in the world to rent and accommodation […] we try to convince him to book […] we analyze this funnel, we use the Analytics as the first tool to analyze the traffic, the acquisition, and the behavior."

5. Discussion and theoretical contribution

To succeed in dynamic, unpredictable and international business environments dominated by digitalization, the marketing function strongly needs to employ agility, the dynamic capability to embrace change, sense up-to-date market feedbacks and respond accordingly by adjusting strategies, tactics and operations (Hagen et al., 2019; O'Keeffe et al., 2016; Ravichandran, 2018; Rigby et al., 2016). Despite the attention that this topic is gaining also in management and marketing literature (e.g. Asseraf et al., 2019; Hagen et al., 2019; Nemkova, 2017; Moi et al., 2018a; 2019; Osei et al., 2019), I found unclear understanding on how agile capabilities in marketing field empirically work particularly when considering international and digital settings, and what key aspects may contribute to develop a proper Agile Marketing Capability.

With this work, I tried to fill this gap, providing an empirical foundation to further explore and design an Agile Marketing Capability. Specifically, the ultimate objective of this study was two-fold: 1) to investigate the concept of agility in a digital and international marketing setting to advance the understanding of a marketing-focused agile capability; 2) to identify and explore some key theoretical and empirical dimensions composing an Agile Marketing Capability, thus proposing an initial framework and key propositions. The results of this study definitely contribute to extend current research in several ways.

First, this study contributes to extend the literature on dynamic capabilities and marketing capabilities by advancing the understanding of a marketing-focused agile capability. Prior research argues about the importance for marketing to employ agility, particularly in dynamic and international business contexts affected by digitalization (Asseraf et al., 2019; Hagen et al., 2019; Osei et al., 2019; Roberts & Grover, 2012; Zhou et al., 2018). This work extends prior literature by empirically examining and explaining how agile capabilities take place particularly in digital and international marketing settings, thus proposing the Agile Marketing Capability. This novel capability considerably develops prior research by deepening the exploration of capabilities greater aligned with digital transformation challenges (Warner & Wäger, 2019).

Second, this study extends the existing theories on agility to the marketing domain by empirically investigating this concept in a different field, and provides a theoretical framework in which to study the key dimensions characterizing the Agile Marketing Capability: adaptability to

changing conditions, collaborative and integrated working environment, continual and quick innovation pace, forecasting and monitoring of market needs (see Figure 7). In this section, I further enrich the contributions of this study by developing four propositions which summarize the outcomes of this work, as starting point for driving further theoretical and empirical research towards this topic.

Adaptability to changing conditions. Prior studies on agility highlights the relevance of an adaptive approach (Narasimhan et al., 2006; Overby et al., 2006; Sheffi & Rice Jr, 2005; Weber & Tarba, 2014) to compete with speed and surprise, adjust strategies and redeploy resources flexibly (Cegarra-Navarro et al., 2016; Gligor et al., 2016; Sambamurthy et al., 2003; Teece et al., 2016), and manage new or diversified products and objectives with the existing facilities and supply chain (Abdoli Bidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Eckstein et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2015; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999; Swafford et al., 2006). In the marketing field, prior research highlights that features of marketing flexibility enhance the firm's ability to quickly shape marketing efforts according to changes occurring in customer needs and the whole environmental context (i.e., marketing flexibility) (Shalender, 2017). This study contribute to extend existing literature by showing that, in a marketing setting, such adaptability is achieved with a flexible planning that place individuals at the centre and that easily adapt to changing customer requirements. In this case study, for example, the firm tries to adapt to the seasonality of rental market and is committed to manage evolving objectives and reach global target by saving time, efforts, and money. Interestingly, the concept of adaptability exhibits with the attempt to pursue simplicity, for example by specifically providing an easy home searching tool, which makes rental simple, accessible, and adaptable to the different requirements expressed by customers across countries. Therefore, empirical evidence from this study reveals that, in a digital and international marketing setting, what I name *adaptability to changing conditions* is essential for developing a marketing-focused agile capability. Thus, I advance this proposition:

Proposition 1 (P1): The Agile Marketing Capability is grounded in the adaptability to changing conditions, by easily adapting to changing contexts and customer needs.

Collaborative and integrated working environment. According to the literature, agility entails collaboration as crucial for effective and efficient achievement of a firm's objectives (Abdoli Bidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Chen & Chiang, 2011; Felipe et al., 2016; Mithas et al., 2011; Wagner et al., 2014). This is further enhanced by IT integration and alignment throughout the supply chain, which facilitate information flows (Ismail & Sharifi, 2006; Kearns & Sabherwal,

2006; Oh and Pinsonneault, 2007; Tallon and Pinsonneault, 2011). According to prior studies in the marketing field, such feature is known as the cross-functional collaboration and cooperation among units and departments (e.g., marketing and research and development, R&D) (De Luca & Atuahene-Gima, 2007). Empirical evidence presented in this study extends this argument in the marketing field, and demonstrates that collaboration and integration among departments (e.g., marketing and product teams) and being open to feedbacks and advices from others are some of the essential features for global marketing teams that strongly need to foster close and trust-based relationships, both inside and outside the organization. In addition, particularly for digital, international businesses, the use of communication tools throughout the organization is critical in order to facilitate up-to-date information on achievements, targets and weekly goals across teams and departments for greater business alignment. Thus, empirical evidence from this study reveals that, in a digital and international marketing setting, a *collaborative and integrated working environment* is necessary to develop a marketing-focused agile capability. This leads to the following proposition:

Proposition 2 (P2): The Agile Marketing Capability is grounded in a collaborative and integrated working environment, by creating close and trust-based, outside-in and inside-out relationships among people and departments.

Continual and quick innovation pace. Earlier studies claim that supply chain and IT agility imply to continuously detect environmental changes and swiftly respond with innovative solutions (Chen et al., 2015; Gligor et al., 2013; Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011; Sambamurthy et al., 2003), such as by redeploying resources and quickly performing tasks (Abdoli Bidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Li et al., 2009; Mandal, 2018). Such features are also evident in the marketing field, where scholars argue about, for instance, customer response speed abilities, which imply a firm's ability to be quick through the commitment of various departments (Jayachandran et al., 2004). The study findings extends current knowledge, showing that continuous efforts in adopting cutting-edge technology to investigate market trends, customer behaviour and competition are key to providing optimized services and innovative responses to international customer needs. Moreover, planning in the short or mid-term, by quickly improving the strategic areas relevant for customers, and rapidly updating or delivering of marketing plans, are essential to achieve greater speed in adjusting tasks by learning directly from customer insights. Empirical evidence from this study shows that, in a digital and international marketing setting, what I refer to as *continual and quick innovation pace* is

crucial in the development of a marketing-focused agile capability. Therefore, I formulate the following proposition:

Proposition 3 (P3): The Agile Marketing Capability is grounded in a continual and quick innovation pace, by constantly and quickly innovating and making improvements, updating and delivering new marketing plans.

Forecasting and monitoring of market needs. A large body of literature on agility focuses on swift responsiveness, that is, to identify and respond to changes in supply chain, technology, competition, and demand in a reactive or proactive manner, and to recover from them (Abdoli Bidhandi & Valmohammadi, 2017; Eckstein et al., 2015; Overby et al., 2006; Sharifi & Zhang, 1999). By leveraging on IT, which facilitates gathering customer information (DeGroote & Marx, 2013; Gligor et al., 2013; Kitchens et al., 2018), agility implies greater market prediction and customization (Ismail & Sharifi, 2006; Lin et al., 2006; Roberts & Grover, 2012b; Sambamurthy et al., 2003). In the marketing field, such features are recognized in the customer response expertise abilities, which imply a firm's ability to respond to and satisfy customer needs (Jayachandran et al., 2004). The study findings reveal the importance of market-oriented responsiveness triggered by technology in a marketing setting. I therefore propose that firms are able to forecast market needs at a global level by using metrics for measuring customer satisfaction levels, by analysing sentiments across media channels and countries, and generally tracking information, and thus offering more customized products. Furthermore, study results show that there is also a constant need to ensure safety and transparency to people. Accordingly, the study findings shows that technology is key to adopt more proactive or reactive marketing strategies toward the marketplace, and create higher customer satisfaction. Empirical evidence from this study reveals that, in a digital and international marketing setting, the *forecasting and monitoring of market needs* is critical for developing a marketing-focused agile capability. I then propose the following:

Proposition 4 (P4): The Agile Marketing Capability is grounded in forecasting and monitoring of market needs, by sensing and responding to their needs proactively or reactively through the means of different channels for greater customer satisfaction.

5.1 Managerial implications

Although the present study provides an initial attempt to the theoretical and empirical understanding on the Agile Marketing Capability, it gives crucial managerial insights. This work

increases managers and practitioners' awareness towards marketing agility and explains how to start approaching marketing-focused agile capabilities, particularly to those operating in digital and international contexts.

Through an in-depth qualitative case study, whose key outcomes are synthesized in the framework and propositions, this study could be of particular interest for international marketing managers and practitioners in order to learn how to practically employ agility in their marketing strategies and operations.

Indeed, in order to be more competitive and aligned with the challenges of digital transformation with which current firms have to deal with, they should be trained to develop more effective competencies in marketing field, and pursue quicker, more flexible, and customer-responsive marketing strategies, operations and tactics. Thus, this study provides interesting practical guidelines for managers and practitioners in the implementation of marketing agility in order to achieve greater marketing performance.

Furthermore, the identification of the key dimensions characterizing the Agile Marketing Capability would strongly help marketers and practitioners to be better informed during the planning of proper actions towards marketing-focused agile capabilities. This study particularly advances the knowledge of practitioners and international marketers who perform in digital and international contexts on how to improve their abilities in exploiting digital technologies in their marketing activities to better satisfy customers in international and high dynamic contexts thanks to the development and implementation of agility.

5.2 Limitation and future research

Although the study findings provide a good theoretical and empirical understanding of Agile Marketing Capability, I acknowledge that this research owns some limitations that may be addressed by future research.

With regard to the methodological perspective, the qualitative analysis performed in this study involved a single-case study because of the research design that I selected to conduct the present research. Although the study findings may be generalized to a certain degree, it would be necessary to explore this topic in multiple research contexts to further improve the debate towards this topic. Future research may use this study as a pilot case, and increase the viability of the results and the applicability of the framework in other organizational settings, or investigate how firms differ in terms of agility.

Moreover, this study examines agility from the firm perspective. It does not analyze customer side. Future studies could extend this topic by looking at customers' perception of a firm's agility.

Also, this study only tangentially discussed the impact of different channels of communication to sense and respond quickly to environmental change. Actually, this is a crucial point especially when considering digital ecosystems, since using different types of channels to create contents may affect the subsequent customer behavior, and value (Mariani, Borghi & Gretzel, 2019). Therefore, managers and practitioners should take into account the differences in using different channels when defining their marketing strategies in order to determine how to better meet customer requests and needs, or get new market opportunities or challenges (Ransbotham, Lurie & Liu, 2019), thus, improving their agility. Future research interested in this topic could better examine this point.

Finally, study results have been summarized in some theoretical propositions. The four propositions that I developed might be taken to start further theoretical and empirical studies towards this topic.

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Paper 3

An Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework for organizations: a multiple-case study

Keywords: Agile Marketing Capability; marketing capabilities; maturity framework; multiple-case study; MICE.

An Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework for organizations: a multiple-case study

Abstract

The importance for firms to be agile as the new imperative of marketing approaches is increasingly acknowledged by scholars and practitioners. Thus, the Agile Marketing has become critical for addressing ever-changing scenarios. Nevertheless, academic work on the benefits that agility could yield in improving marketing capabilities surprisingly remains still in an embryonic state. With this work, I seek to further explore and deepen the dimensions of the Agile Marketing Capability by empirically investigating such capability across different organizations, in order to understand how they differently pursue and implement the Agile Marketing Capability. Drawing on an exploratory multiple-case study research design in the context of MICE tourism, this study extends current research and practice by advancing an Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework, which captures progressive behaviors and practices representative of different maturity levels in the development and management of the Agile Marketing Capability. The empirical analysis conducted in this research shows to managers and practitioners how they could become more agile in their marketing capabilities, increasing their abilities to adapt to dynamic and fast-changing environments. Also, it provides them with a useful tool to assess current maturity level in the development of the Agile Marketing Capability, understand potential improvement actions, and, thus, achieve higher levels of marketing performance.

Keywords: Agile Marketing Capability; marketing capabilities; maturity framework; multiple-case study; MICE.

1. Introduction

The role of marketing capabilities as crucial source of competitive advantage has been extensively acknowledged by scholars (Cacciolatti & Lee, 2016; Day, 2011; Martin, Javalgi & Cavusgil, 2017; Wilden & Gudergan, 2015). Actually, marketing capabilities represent the means through which organizations enhance their ability to learn and exploit market knowledge in order to respond to environmental changes with greater quickness and efficiency (Barrales-Molina, Martínez-López & Gázquez-Abad, 2014; Bruni & Verona, 2009; Guo, Xu, Tang & Liu-Thompkins & Dong, 2018; Xu, Guo, Zhang & Dang, 2018).

Early studies analysed marketing capabilities from the perspective of the resource-based view (RBV), thus assuming an internally-driven approach. The RBV focuses on the internal firm resources and capabilities, and on its ability to generate competitive advantage by effectively understanding and serving its customers (Barney, 1991). However, such definition of firm's marketing capabilities started to be questioned, and scholars pinpointed that it was static and inadequate to adapt to current complex and fast-changing environments (Day, 2011). The dynamic capability (DC) approach has then emerged as an attempt to develop new marketing capabilities (Bruni & Verona, 2009). The DC theory is based on the firm's capabilities to sense the market and to look for different ways to reconfigure available resources accordingly (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece, Pisano & Shuen, 1997). Marketing scholars have been increasingly arguing about the role played by the marketing function in the development of a firm's dynamic capabilities, focusing on the development of marketing capabilities which could facilitate organizations' performance in highly competitive business scenarios (Day, 2011; Kaleka & Morgan, 2017; Morgan, Katsikeas & Vorhies, 2012; Vorhies, Orr & Bush, 2011; Vorhies & Morgan, 2005). Thus, the dynamic marketing capabilities emerged, defined as cross-functional marketing capabilities "that use market knowledge to adapt organizational resources and capabilities" (Barrales-Molina et al., 2014; p. 13), and cope with market changes (Bruni & Verona, 2009; Fang & Zou, 2009; Menguc & Auh, 2006). Also, scholars theorized the adaptive marketing capabilities (Day, 2011), defined as "the extensible ability to proactively sense and act on market signals, continuously learn from market experiments, and integrate and coordinate social network resources to adapt to market changes and predict industry trends" (Guo et al., 2018; p. 81).

Nevertheless, understanding how to improve marketing capabilities is a topic which constantly requires further attention (Vorhies et al., 2011; Vorhies & Morgan, 2005). Current dynamic business contexts call for continuously redefining firm's marketing capabilities to gather greater abilities to anticipate, respond or adapt to market changes (Day, 2011; Merrilees, Rundle-Thiele & Lye, 2011). Today, the challenges placed by ever-changing marketplaces (e.g., highly competitive rivalry,

globalization, rapid changes in customer preferences and economic cycles, reliance on digital technologies) have been increasingly forcing firms to learn how to be more *agile* in adapting to changing business scenarios (Chakravarty, Grewal & Sambamurthy, 2013). Drawing on DC perspective, scholars define *agility* as the dynamic capability of an organization to manage uncertainty (Teece, Peteraf & Leih, 2016), and to "detect and seize market opportunities with speed and surprise" (Sambamurthy, Bharadwaj & Grover, 2003; p. 238) by adjusting strategies, operations and tactics accordingly (Felipe, Roldán & Leal-Rodríguez, 2016; Lee, Sambamurthy, Lim & Wei, 2015; Overby, Bharadwaj & Sambamurthy, 2006). Indeed, the new imperative of marketing game is represented by agility, through which organizations become better at turning current changes in new opportunities (Purcarea, 2016).

Agility epitomizes a salient topic in marketing field, and the "impetus" towards *Agile Marketing* is growing. Agile Marketing defines a new approach for marketing management based on greater coordination of people and technology adoption to develop more effective marketing solutions, especially in dynamic contexts (Inversini, Pesonen & Buhalis, 2014). Basically, Agile Marketing approach arises from the adoption of the agile practices (or methods) by marketing teams, originally rooted only in manufacturing and software development fields (e.g., just-in-time responses, systematic and continuous improvement of processes to eliminate waste and inefficiencies, speed up of production cycles) (Qamar & Hall, 2018; Tortorella, Giglio & Limon-Romero, 2018; Womack & Jones, 1997). Marketing adoption of agile practices leads organizations to improve productivity and innovation, to manage changing priorities based on feedbacks in quicker and more effective ways, to achieve better project visibility, and to improve work quality through greater alignment among teams and business objectives (Accardi-Petersen, 2011; AgileSherpas & Kapos, 2018; Ewel, 2013; Poolton, Ismail, Reid & Arokiam, 2006; Recker, Holten, Hummel & Rosenkranz, 2017).

Despite these significant insights, academic work on the benefits that agility could yield in improving marketing capabilities surprisingly remains still in a embryonic state. Most of research on agility capabilities addresses research fields such as supply chain and manufacturing (Gunasekaran & Yusuf, 2002; Lee, 2004; Swafford, Ghosh & Murthy, 2006), whereas research in marketing field is almost missing. Therefore, there are still some research gaps on agility from the perspective of marketing capabilities. Furthermore, there is still very few systematic knowledges on Agile Marketing from an academic perspective (Accardi-Petersen, 2011; Cram & Newell, 2016; Dewell, 2007; Moi & Cabiddu, 2019; Poolton et al., 2006). Current research does not properly explain the advantages and benefits that could derive from employing agile approaches and

capabilities in marketing (Moi and Cabiddu, 2019; Moi, Frau & Cabiddu, 2018a; 2019), and the impact that these could generate on enhancing extant marketing capabilities.

With this study, I seek to empirically investigate how different organizations implement and pursue activities, behaviors and actions towards the Agile Marketing Capability, thus identifying and defining different levels of maturity. Therefore, the research question that I try to answer to with this work is: "How different organizations pursue and implement the Agile Marketing Capability?" To this end, I undertook a theory building approach based on an exploratory multiple-case study research design in the context of MICE tourism (Eisenhardt, 1989).

My work contributes to extend current research and practice in important ways. For research, this study contributes to extend prior literature on marketing capabilities and Agile Marketing by explaining how firms might be differently agile in their marketing capabilities. Thus, this work advances a framework for understanding progressive behaviors and practices representative of different maturity levels in the development and management of the Agile Marketing Capability (i.e., the Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework), where maturity refers to a condition of being "complete", "perfect" or "ready" (Lahrmann, Marx, Winter & Wortmann, 2010). For practice, this study clarifies to marketing managers and practitioners how they could become more agile in their marketing capabilities. The framework developed in this study provides pratical guidelines on what strategic actions are needed to implement, develop and improve an Agile Marketing Capability. It could serve as a useful tool to assess a firm's current maturity level in the development of such capability, understand potential improvement actions, and, thus, achieve higher levels of marketing performance.

The present paper unfolds as follows: in section 2, I present prior literature on agility and marketing capabilities; in section 3, I discuss the methodology followed to conduct this study; in section 4, I present the key findings of the study, and I define the Agile Marketing Capability key dimensions; in section 5, I perform the cross-case maturity analysis, and I synthetize the outcomes in the Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework; in section 6, I end with the discussion of the key implications to theory and practice, the limitations of the study and avenues for future research.

2. Theoretical background

According to the literature, agility is rooted in the theory of dynamic capabilities (Chakravarty et al., 2013; Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011; Sambamurthy et al., 2003). It is specifically defined as the higher-order dynamic capability of the firm to timely sense and respond to changes occurring in the marketplace (i.e., changes in customers' needs and preferences, competition, technology), and improve its performance (Bi, Davidson, Kam & Smyrnios, 2013; Cai, Liu, Huang & Liang, 2019;

Sambamurthy et al., 2003; Tallon & Pinsonneault, 2011; Zhou & Wu, 2010). Notably, it is the dynamic capability of firm "to successfully manage uncertainty […] to efficiently and effectively redeploy/redirect its resources to value creating and value protecting (and capturing) higher-yield activities as internal and external circumstances warrant" (Teece et al., 2016; p. 8). There are two essential aspects of agility that arise: the "entrepreneurial" aspect of agility, that is, the ability to be proactive towards customers, and to anticipate business opportunities through new products and services, disruptive innovation, new positioning and strategy; the "adaptive" aspect of agility, that is, the resilient and defensive attitude of firms which protect themselves from market threats or challenges, and recover from them (Lee et al., 2015; Overby et al., 2006).

Marketing scholars extensively discuss the crucial role played by marketing function in the development of a firm's dynamic capabilities, and conceptualized a firm's dynamic marketing capabilities (Barrales-Molina et al., 2014; Bruni & Verona, 2009; Kachouie, Mavondo & Sands, 2018; Xu et al., 2018). Dynamic marketing capabilities "reflect human capital, social capital, and the cognition of managers involved in the creation, use, and integration of market knowledge and marketing resources in order to match and create market and technological change" (Bruni & Verona, 2009; p. 7). Such capabilities enhance organization's responsiveness and cross-functional efficiency in reconfiguring resources and capabilities according to market-related changes to deliver higher customer value (Falasca, Zhang, Conchar & Li, 2017; Fang & Zou, 2009; Xu et al., 2018). Moreover, scholars conceptualized adaptive marketing capabilities (Day, 2011), namely, "the extensible ability to proactively sense and act on market signals, continuously learn from market experiments, and integrate and coordinate social network resources to adapt to market changes and predict industry trends" (Guo et al., 2018; p. 81). Such capabilities improve organization's capacity of "engaging in vigilant market learning, adaptive market experimentation, and open marketing through relationships forged with partners" (Guo, Xu, Tang, Liu-Thompkins, Guo & Dong, 2018; p. 79).

The importance of agility started gaining attention even for greater marketing performance (Golgeci & Gligor, 2017; Hendrix, 2014). When extended to marketing, agility enhances the ability of the firm to generate novel ideas (Nemkova, 2017), and to manage the development of market demand through prompt adjustments of marketing strategies, operations and tactics according to environmental changes (Golgeci & Gligor, 2017; Li, Wu & Holsapple, 2015; Roberts & Grover, 2012; Tahmasebifard, Zangoueinezhad & Jafari, 2017). The positive linkage between agility and marketing is also emphasized in practice by the emergence of the Agile Marketing approach. The Agile Marketing is grounded in the Agile Development Manifesto, a set of agile practices and methods originally designed for software development (e.g., stakeholders' collaboration, continuous

improvements and prototyping, openness to changes in user requirements) (Beck et al., 2001; Conboy, 2009; Cram & Newell, 2016; Recker et al., 2017). To deepen and extend the agile practices in business field (Accardi-Petersen, 2011; Smart, 2016), it has been then developed the Agile Marketing Manifesto (agilemarketingmanifesto.org), a public declaration including Agile Marketing values and principles, based on greater speed, coordination, customer engagement and flexibility, to more efficiently and effectively deal with market changes (Ewel, 2013). The research interest towards the application of agile methods and practices in marketing field is due to increasingly complex and dynamic business contexts, which constrain firms to renew traditional marketing approaches (Hoogveld & Koster, 2016a, 2016b). Agile is particularly suitable for performing in environments characterized by continuous changes in customer preferences, shorter time-to-market and innovation, as its adoption improves team productivity and cross-functional interaction, customer engagement, employee and customer satisfaction, and reduces waste of time and risks (Rigby, Sutherland & Takeuchi, 2016).

Despite the vast existing body of knowledge linking the theories of dynamic capabilities and marketing capabilities, and the increasing attention towards agility in marketing field, it lacks a proper understanding and knowledge of agility in the context of a firm's marketing capabilities. These premises stimulate the intention to trying to explain and understand the advantages that could derive from employing agile approaches and capabilities in marketing, and to deepen the impacts that these could generate on enhancing extant marketing capabilities.

3. Methodology

The ultimate aim of this research is then to empirically investigate how different organizations implement and pursue activities, behaviors and actions towards the Agile Marketing Capability, thus identifying and defining different levels of maturity.

This study owns an exploratory nature; thus I undertook a theory building approach based on multiple-case study research design (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2009). Multiple-case study is considered as the proper methodology for "how" and "why" modes of inquiry (Yin, 2009). Case studies allow to have a holistic understanding of complex social phenomena (Yin, 1984). Notably, they "allow the study of contemporary phenomenon, which is difficult to separate from its context, but necessary to study within it to understand the dynamics involved in settings" (Halinen & Törnroos, 2005; p. 1286). Multiple-case study also enables to perform cross-case comparison (Chiesa, Frattini, Lazzarotti & Manzini, 2007), and to explore the phenomenon under investigation looking at different empirical environments (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Indeed, "multiple cases enable comparisons that clarify whether an emergent

finding is simply idiosyncratic to a single case or consistently replicated by several cases" (De Massis & Kotlar, 2014; p. 18). Therefore, it is the proper methodology to verify the replication of emerging findings in more cases (Eisenhardt, 1991), thus achieving greater generalization in the theory building process (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007).

Given the intention to explore, analyze, deepen and get greater empirical insights on the dimensions of the Agile Marketing Capability across different organizations, in order to empirically examine how organizations differently pursue and implement an Agile Marketing Capability, this is the appropriate methodology. In the following sections, I depict the details of sample selection, data collection and analysis of this study.

3.1 Research setting

To conduct this research, I employed a theoretical sampling approach, in order "to choose cases which are likely to (…) extend the emergent theory" (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; p. 537). I then opted for a research setting adequate for answering to the theoretical purposes and research question of this study and illuminating the phenomenon under investigation, selecting case studies highly representative and informative (Silverman, 2013; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994).

Consistent with these objectives, I decided to focus the attention on tourism sector. Marketing management is often a critical issue for the actors operating in tourism context. Tourism destinations are complex combinations of several products, services and businesses, managed by different stakeholders with diverse interests (Buhalis, 2003; Pike & Page, 2014). Thus, the coordination of marketing efforts becomes increasingly challenging under such conditions (Pike, 2007) for several reasons: increasing competitiveness, necessity of being responsive to continuous internal and external stimuli, presence of a huge variety of stakeholders to be coordinated and satisfied (Buhalis, 2003, 2000; Inversini et al., 2009; 2014; Pike & Page, 2014). More effective capabilities in responding quickly to ever-changing customers' requirements (i.e., tastes, preferences) are then needed (Mandal et al., 2017), as well as exploiting technology to design more effective destination marketing strategies (Gretzel, Yuan & Fesenmaier, 2000; Hays, Page & Buhalis, 2013; Jewell, Blackman, Kuilboer, Hyvonen, Moscardo & Foster, 2004). Therefore, tourist marketers are pushed towards learning to be agile, and the Agile Marketing approach represents the new imperative within this context (Hays et al., 2013; Inversini et al., 2009; Neuhofer, Buhalis & Ladkin, 2012), a new method for enhancing coordination among stakeholders, and drawing on technology to provide more dynamic marketing solutions (Inversini et al., 2014).

Based on these observations, I decided to specifically focus on MICE tourism context to unfold this study. MICE is an acronym which stands for Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and

Exhibitions[2] (Dwyer & Forsyth, 1997). It designates a type of business tourism related to activities and events like congresses, conferences, festivals (Getz & Page, 2016; Hamid, Fuza & Zain, 2016). MICE represents a profitable industry, which brings positive impacts on economic development (Jones & Li, 2015; Kim, Chon & Chung, 2003), greater attraction of tourists, and enhanced tourist destinations' image (Haven-Tang, Jones & Webb, 2007; Lockstone-Binney, Whitelaw, Robertson, Junek & Michael, 2014). Also, it is a crucial industry for reducing the problems related to the seasonality of tourism (Nistoreanu & Stoian, 2017).

MICE tourism represents a huge network of several hospitality-related services (e.g., accommodations, catering services, transportation, convention facility rentals) (Buathong & Lai, 2017; Haugland, Ness, Grønseth & Aarstad, 2011). Thus, it is a high dynamic sector, where continuous exchange and sharing of resources and relationships for planning events and addressing multiple requests and needs take place (McCabe, Poole, Weeks & Leiper, 2000). Notably, "its market refers to a specialized niche of group tourism dedicated to planning, booking, and facilitating conferences, seminars, and other events, including different components which must provide a full range of tourism services and conferences for all types of groups and events" (Silva-Pedroza, Marin-Calero & Ramirez-Gonzalez, 2017; p. 2). MICE is a critical context in which marketing management could be particularly difficult because of several products, services, people to be coordinated, and ever-changing requirements and needs to be addressed (Buhalis, 2003; Mandal et al., 2017; Pike, 2007; Pike & Page, 2014). Therefore, the Agile Marketing approach could represent an effective method to enhance coordination and design more strategic and dynamic marketing solution (Hays et al., 2013; Inversini et al., 2014, 2009; Neuhofer et al., 2012).

I selected the subset of organizations to be involved in my research focusing on Sardinia MICE network. The network was founded in 2013, and plays an important role in current tourism landscape of Sardinia[3]. Specifically, *"its objective is to coordinate the supply of its Members for offering the best opportunities for events planning and management in Sardinia island – Italy"* (www.micesardegna.it). I selected the cases from an initial list of 34 members within the network, which includes hotels & premises, services, DMCs – PCOs categories[4]. I then stopped case

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[2] For meetings, I mean informal events involving few participants, usually lasting one day. For conferences, I refer to formal events involving a larger number of participants. These events are organized through a plan of specific activities, and usually last a couple of days. Incentive travel corresponds to a particular reward travel program addressed to employees as a way to recognize their value and reward their good performance. Exhibitions represent activities (e.g., fairs) typically aimed at presenting new products or services to current and potential customers.

[3] MICE industry is one of the key activities of the Sardegna Destination Management Organization Business Plan 2018-2020. In 2017, 50% of tourist flows in Sardinia was concentrated on July and August, increasing up to 80% if considering also June and September (ECONOMIA DELLA SARDEGNA, 26° rapporto 2019, CRENoS).

[4] DMCs stand for Destination Management Companies. PCOs stand for Professional Congress Organisers.

selection at 16 cases, when I reached theoretical saturation. Table 9 summarizes the cases selected for my research[5].

Table 9: Summary of the selected cases

Case Study	Case Description
Case-1	Hotel&Premises
Case-2	Hotel&Premises
Case-3	DMC-PCO
Case-4	DMC-PCO
Case-5	Services
Case-6	Hotel&Premises
Case-7	Hotel&Premises
Case-8	Hotel&Premises
Case-9	Services
Case-10	Services
Case-11	DMC-PCO
Case-12	DMC-PCO
Case-13	DMC-PCO
Case-14	Hotel&Premises
Case-15	Hotel&Premises
Case-16	Hotel&Premises

3.2 Data collection

The data of this study have been collected from different sources: 1) semi-structured interviews, 2) social networking sites, 3) official websites, and 4) archivial data. In this way, I ensured data triangulation (Miles & Huberman, 1984) and robustness (Dubé & Paré, 2003; Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 1994). I triangulated data from primary and secondary data sources.

Primary data were collected through **semi-structured interviews** with key informants for MICE sector in the selected cases (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Yin, 2009). For the semi-structured interviews, I outlined an interview protocol consisting of 10 questions (Fontana and Frey, 2000; Robson, 1993) (see Appendix C). The interview has followed a standard protocol for capturing emerging themes in field research, focusing on questions regarding marketing activities in MICE context (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I pilot-tested the interview protocol with the manager of an organization operating in tourism sector in order to reduce ambiguity, and I refined it on the basis of the feedbacks received (Van Teijlingen, Rennie, Hundley & Graham, 2001; Yin, 1994). When I unfolded the interviews, I also asked further explorative questions to enrich information (Myers, 2013; Taylor, Bogdan & DeVault, 2015). All interviews have been recorded, transcribed and coded through NVivo 10 software (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). Overall, I performed 16

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[5] Organizations have chosen to remain anonymous.

interviews with key informants of the organizations included in Sardinia MICE network. The interviews took place between June-July 2019, and lasted between 16 to 61 minutes (see Table 10).

Table 10: Summary of primary data sources

Case study	Source	Position	Interview time span (minutes)
Case-1	Semi-structured interview	General Manager	53 minutes
Case-2	Semi-structured interview	Sales Manager	47 minutes
Case-3	Semi-structured interview	Sales Manager	25 minutes
Case-4	Semi-structured interview	General Manager	29 minutes
Case-5	Semi-structured interview	CEO	33 minutes
Case-6	Semi-structured interview	Commercial Manager	41 minutes
Case-7	Semi-structured interview	General Manager	35 minutes
Case-8	Semi-structured interview	CEO	48 minutes
Case-9	Semi-structured interview	Commercial Manager	25 minutes
Case-10	Semi-structured interview	CEO	61 minutes
Case-11	Semi-structured interview	Project Manager	37 minutes
Case-12	Semi-structured interview	CEO	25 minutes
Case-13	Semi-structured interview	Project Manager	30 minutes
Case-14	Semi-structured interview	Marketing and Communication Manager	39 minutes
Case-15	Semi-structured interview	Sales Manager	24 minutes
Case-16	Semi-structured interview	General Manager	16 minutes

Furthermore, I gathered secondary data from **social networking sites** (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), **official website, and archivial data** (e.g., documents, reports, meeting notes) in order to get additional information (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Multimedia content shared on social networks and websites have been captured through NCapture (the browser application of NVivo) (Moi, Frau & Cabiddu, 2018b), and properly coded (see Table 11).

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Table 11: Summary of secondary data sources

Case study	Source	Type	Number of items
Case-1	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	663 posts on Facebook 102 posts on Instagram
	Official website	Web page	3 captures
Case-2	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	67 posts on Facebook 216 posts on Instagram
	Official website	Web page	3 captures
Case-3	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	162 posts on Facebook
	Official website	Web page	1 capture
Case-4	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	83 posts on Facebook 35 posts on Instagram
	Official website	Web page	5 captures
Case-5	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	975 posts on Facebook 87 posts on Instagram
	Official website	Web page	7 captures
Case-6	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	392 posts on Facebook
	Official website	Web page	5 captures
Case-7	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	1371 posts on Facebook 351 post on Instagram
	Official website	Web page	3 captures
Case-8	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	1160 posts on Facebook 140 posts on Instagram
	Official website	Web page	8 captures
Case-9	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	3713 posts on Facebook 741 posts on Facebook
	Official website	Web page	7 captures
Case-10	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	NA
	Official website	Web page	4 captures
Case-11	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	54 posts on Facebook 53 posts on Instagram
	Official website	Web page	12 captures
Case-12	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	76 posts on Facebook
	Official website	Web page	7 captures
Case-13	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	269 posts on Facebook 25 posts on Instagram
	Official website	Web page	10 captures
Case-14	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	2859 posts on Facebook 747 posts on Instagram
	Official website	Web page	5 captures
Case-15	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	677 posts on Facebook 108 posts on Instagram
	Official website	Web page	2 captures
Case-16	Social networks	Posts on Facebook and Instagram	1356 posts on Facebook 55 posts on Instagram
	Official website	Web page	4 captures

3.3 Data analysis

Because of the multiple-case study research design, both within- and between-case analyses were performed (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). I carried out data analysis

process in three coding stages, starting from the particular analysis until moving to the more general one (Saldaña, 2015) (see Figure 8).

Figure 8: Overview of data analysis process
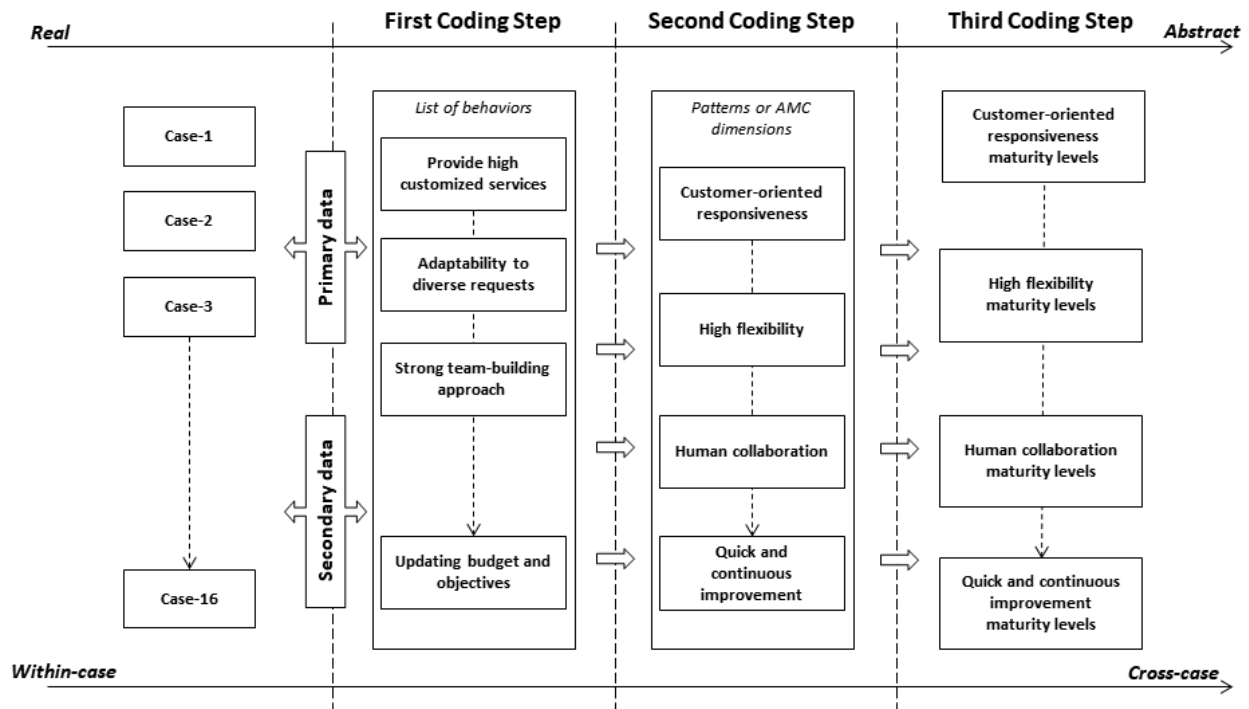
In the first round of coding, I performed an in-depth analysis of the 16 cases individually, looking for descriptive and interpretative codes (Miles & Huberman, 1984) representative of the ways in which organizations perform marketing activities in MICE context within the selected cases. Hence, I started to abstract and generalize data through a concept-driven coding procedure (Gibbs, 2007). The outcome of this first coding stage is represent by a list of behaviors related to marketing execution across cases (see some examples in Table 12).

Table 12: Examples of the first coding round: code examples, behaviors

Code examples	Behaviors
"We take care of organizing entirely your event (...) we are able to select and propose the most suitable locations and services for your needs to optimize your budget, to carefully and accurately manage the entire event from the design phase to the final accounting closure. In other words, we substitute you in achieving your objective, making it our objective with expertise and originality." **[Case-13, Website]**	**Provide high customized services**
"As expert in our sector, we put into practice the hospitality principles, but we arrange also, and this is a further value added, our Sardinian traditions, thus, before departure, the cogress speaker tastes our food and experiences our peculiarities, our culture" **[Case-12, CEO]**	**Create customer value and satisfaction**
"Our strength is the ability to fulfill your wishes completely (…) to create an experience that involves the traveler, modeling it on the basis of his requests, desires and aspirations. The priority is always and only YOU." **[Case-11, Website]**	**Provision of customer experience**
"Few weeks ago sent us a request for an Incentive that previously took place in Tokyo (…) We have tried to adapt the requests for activities, experiences, etc., to the local level." **[Case-13, Project Manager]**	**Adaptability to diverse requests**
"If today I foresee that a room will have a particular layout, for example a parterre, and tomorrow the same room must be set in a horseshoe shape, it would be the case to find continuity in the same horseshoe-shaped room perhaps for two days three days, as much as possible." **[Case-1, General Manager]**	**Reconfigure resources and capabilities**
"We focus on what is the quality of service, every segment of our work is addressed by taking care of the characteristics of the person and the professional who works in service (…) the availability, courtesy, welcome, find the maximum application in all our actions." **[Case-13, CEO]**	**Quality-based adaptability of services**
"Because we work a lot with team spirit. In any job, but in our work even more, there is no goal achievement without a real team. We make team-building with the customer as well as between us. Collaboration could is for us the driving force of our business, networking, and growth." **[Case-12, CEO]**	**Strong team-building approach**
"Here we love families, children, difficulties, we are always working in a nonconformist way (…) thus, welcome all those we can involve in anyway in this beautiful way of working. With great enthusiasm, we really want to change the world, so we hope to enhance collaboration, study, research and discussion." **[Case-12, CEO]**	**Open environment motivating people**
"Results must be planned and monited (…) it is a constant activity, part of our modus operandi. We hold quickly and monthly meetings with staff, since during planning the return of the single event is not necessarily only economic, but planning is a medium-long range investment." **[Case-12, CEO]**	**Look at future plans and objectives**
"We share a budget with all the collaborators and people who are part of the department. This budget has quarterly updates, so three times a year we stop and see if we have achieved the goals. We have general objectives, but also four-monthly objectives. Each of us, during the formalization of these goals, presents his own and personal goals, which he wants to bring (…) these are certainly tools that help us to reach goals more easily." **[Case-11, Project Manager]**	**Updating budget and objectives**

In the second round of coding, I carried on generalization process by grouping the former collection of codes, verifying the presence of cohesive patterns, common meanings and themes. My analysis led to identify the following dimensions of the Agile Marketing Capability: customer-

oriented responsiveness, high flexibility, human collaboration, quick and continuous improvement (Table 13).

Table 13: Summary of the second coding round: code examples, descriptions, definitions, AMC dimensions

AMC dimensions	Definitions	Descriptions	Code examples
Customer-oriented responsiveness	Constantly sensing and responding to changes related to customer needs and requests	Abilities in dynamic and timely sensing and responding to customer-related changes in order to successfully fulfill customer requirements and expectations	"Our priorities are: anticipate and satisfy the needs, desires and requests of customers; create great added value; communication, creativity, professionalism; deep knowledge of the territory." **[Case-11, Website]** "We are ready to meet our Customers' requirements thanks to our the accurate selection of provider of services, which has enabled us to establish a network of highly reliable professional." **[Case-13, Website]**
High flexibility	Follow an adaptive and flexible approach in dealing with changes	Adaptability and flexibility abilities in adjusting tactics, operations and planning in order to deal with changes and satisfy customer needs and requests by using extant sources with more effectiveness	"We are a flexible and dynamic organization that, through a professional team, guarantees the quality and efficiency of the services it provides, containing costs, with a substantial containment of the corporate needs, managing to satisfy the requests of the most demanding customers." **[Case-12, CEO]** "Our spaces can be reorganized in few minutes (…) this total flexibility allows you to expand the rooms to host more participants or reduce them if necessary to offer more closeness and participation, guaranteeing great confidentiality in all cases." **[Case-1, Website]**
Human collaboration	Create close work relationships among people, and a collaborative working environment	Close alignment, collaboration and interaction among people and departments, in order to create close and trust-based relationships and a collaborative working environment, better able to create successful, customer-oriented marketing programs	"We need that everyone always updates everything, so that we are always aligned and uniformed. We have offices all over the place, so for us it is essential that all our colleagues are always up to date, even remotely." **[Case-11, Project Manager]** "We are consolidated team that has been working together for so many years, and so we have created a synergy between use that lead the organization to react very quickly to customer requests (…) the decision-making process is much more lean." **[Case-2, Sales Manager]**
Quick and continuous improvement	Continuously and quickly adjust and deliver new marketing plans	Quickness and timeliness abilities in addressing changes to continuously make improvements in the execution of marketing tactics, operations and planning, and manage changes (e.g. new customer requirements, technical issues) more efficiently and effectively	"We believe in training and in the need for continuous updating. For this reason we have decided to implement a meeting room within our new headquarters, a space to learn, to compare, to grow." **[Case-13, Facebook and Instagram]** "Results must be planned and monitored, it is a constant activity, part of our modus operandi. We hold quickly and monthly meetings with staff (…) planning is a medium-long range investment." **[Case-12, CEO]**

In the third round of coding, I finally tried to assess the maturity of the behaviors representative of the cohesive patterns (the Agile Marketing Capability dimensions) by comparing and contrasting selected cases. I thus assigned an adequate maturity level of their agility-related marketing capabilities, where maturity refers to a condition of being overall "complete", "perfect" or "ready" in the development of the capability (Lahrmann et al., 2010). I assessed behaviors' maturity looking at the accuracy, the rigor and the systematic approach with which the organizations regularly perform them (e.g., established procedures) (De Carlo & Cabiddu, 2014). Hence, I identified four maturity levels of the Agile Marketing Capability across cases: level 1 – Initial Agility; level 2 – Managed Agility; level 3 – Defined Agility; level 4 – Proactive Agility. For example, a *quality-based adaptability of services* behavior (i.e., the flexibility of spaces able to be reorganized to address diverse events) was assessed in terms of adequate synergies between people and business objectives, thus assigned to a *level 3 - defined agility*. Conversely, *proactively define customer-oriented plans* behavior (i.e., attempt to anticipate and satisfy customer needs and requests through greater communication and creativity), was assessed in terms of systematic learning commitment, thus assigned to an higher *level 4 - proactive agility* (see Table 15).

Table 14 synthetizes the descriptions of such maturity levels.

Table 14: Description of maturity levels

Level	Description
1 – Initial Agility	There is no proper strategic planning within the organization. Positive outcomes are generally attributable to the initiatives of single or specific individuals
2 – Managed Agility	There is encoded marketing planning and management of activities in MICE context, that is, regular, repeated and standard actions, processes and procedures
3 – Defined Agility	There are adequate synergies and coordination of marketing processes and practices which adapt to changing conditions in MICE context
4 – Proactive Agility	There is systematic learning commitment and proactive actions or interventions to improve marketing performance in MICE context

The whole coding process was performed by me and my tutor independently and simultaneously, and then we compared and discussed data categorization until agreement. During each coding round, I run a Coding Comparison Query and emerging inconsistencies were solved between me and my tutor until a value of Kappa coefficient above 0.75 was achieved (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013).

Table 15: Examples of the third coding round: AMC dimensions, code examples, descriptions, patterns, maturity levels

AMC dimensions	Code examples	Descriptions	Patterns	Maturity levels
Human collaboration	"I'm in charge of many other things, so that I recognize that often we consume a bit of energies (…) It would be useful to earmark a person for doing only these things." **[Case-3, Sales Manager]**	Limited collaboration. Commitment of single individuals	No proper strategic planning. Positive outcomes attributable to specific individuals	Level 1 – Initial Agility
High flexibility	"(…) so finally with the client we opted for the solution that he would have managed the transfer on his own, and we would have organized the excursion. He handled transfer with his own means, so in the end we managed to find a solution." **[Case-3, Sales Manager]** "Structurally we are not really organized for that kind of target and activity, so we don't work a lot (...) When requests arrive, we evaluate together with the booking office we evaluate availability, which is very often difficult to find because the resort is small." **[Case-15, Sales Manager]**	Difficult in making adjustment of marketing operations		
Quick and continuous improvement	"Honestly, there is no planning of future objectives, even if it would be useful, unfortunately we don't do it." **[Case-3, Sales Manager]**	No forecast of future objectives and results		
Customer-oriented responsiveness	"We don't communicate with final users before the event (…) if the customer has a specific request or there is a problem, he can talk with the reception." **[Case-2, Sales Manager]**	Unit-level actions towards customer requests	Encoded processes and procedures in marketing planning	Level 2 – Managed Agility
Human collaboration	"We don't work on the same paperwork, but each one has its own, specific paperwork (…) before the event there is a general briefing on how it is going." **[Case-13, Project Manager]**	Limited sharing of competencies		
Quick and continuous improvement	"We are aware that if we don't do any statistics and analysis, we cannot improve (…) a couple of years ago, we started to write the number of visitors, their origin, their interests, and by doing these small investigations, for us they are important (...) the planning then surely consists in looking at how much budget the company has to make certain things." **[Case-6, Commercial Manager]**	Keep the results achieved		

Quick and continuous improvement	"Internally, there is a meeting between the heads of the different services twice a week, so that if something doesn't work, it is reported (…) we make a service order, so a paper that all departments have in hand, a guideline." **[Case-2, Sales Manager]**	Peer reviews and evaluation mechanisms among teams	Adequate synergies between people and business objectives	Level 3 – Defined Agility
Customer-oriented responsiveness	"It's a matter of being present (...) so when we make advertising at the stadium in front of an audience of a game on the led boards, we do nothing but emphasize our presence on the territory, the fact that we are there" **[Case-1, General Manager]**	Outbound communication with customers		
High flexibility	"Our spaces can be reorganized in few minutes, varying the number of seats through a system of perfectly soundproof mobile walls. This total flexibility allows you to expand the rooms to host more participants or reduce them if necessary to offer more closeness and participation, guaranteeing great confidentiality in all cases." **[Case-1, Website]**	Quality-based adaptability		
Human collaboration	"Sometimes it takes two or three people to work simultaneously just to have you are there (…) there is always one of us, the closest is who intervenes. We have multilingual staff, we have staff who speaks English, German, Russian, Spanish." **[Case-4, General Manager]**	Active participation of people	Systematic learning commitment	Level 4 – Proactive Agility
Quick and continuous improvement	"The beginning of an innovative path that wants to educate all participants in our events (…) We have abolished the plastic in the congress events, we work with natural and recycled objects." **[Case-12, CEO]** "We aim at talking with colleagues, to understand what are the strategies that can be implemented to increase incoming tourism in Sardinia." **[Case-11, Project Manager]**	Qualitative and quantitative improvement actions		
Customer-oriented responsiveness	"Our priorities are: anticipate and satisfy the needs, desires and requests of customers; create great added value; communication, creativity, professionalism; deep knowledge of the territory." **[Case-11, Website]**	Proactively define customer-oriented plans		

4. Findings

In this study, I try to empirically explore and analyze agility-related marketing capabilities in tourism context, looking at a peculiar, dynamic and critical sector for marketing management represented by MICE tourism. Thus, I define and deepen a new marketing capability, the Agile Marketing Capability, and propose a four-stage Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework in the context of MICE tourism.

Empirical evidence from the different organizations within Sardinia MICE network discloses the multiple ways through which such organizations undertake to address customer requests and needs, to coordinate roles for achieving customer satisfaction, to identify gaps or weaknesses in their performance and plan new or improved activities. My analisys reveals that four main aspects collectively contribute to define an Agile Marketing Capability in this context: customer-oriented responsiveness, high flexibility, human collaboration, quick and continuous improvement. The empirical analysis also reveals that, despite being overall committed in these aspects, there is a great heterogenity across organizations involved in MICE in terms of actions, initiatives and behaviors executed. The founder of Sardinia MICE Network claims, *"it's a context characterized by the necessity to provide continuously feedbacks from network's partners, in order to consolidate relationships and better address requests and needs, identify weaknesses in the activities and critical issues and plan new and improved activities"*, adding also that, *"sharing is a slow and challenging process, which firstly involves a change of mindset, from the personal sphere to the wider one of the network. But not all companies are ready in the same way and with the same speed of adjustment."* Thus, not all organizations display to be mature (or ready) in the same way in addressing customer requests and needs, and adapting to changing conditions with the same speed of adjustment. In other words, I observed how organizations are differently agile in their marketing capabilities.

I structured study results in two stages. Firstly, I present in detail the emerging dimensions of this new marketing capability, the Agile Marketing Capability, discussing with examples the different activities, behaviors and actions implemented across case studies throughout such dimensions. Secondly, I make a further analysis by exploring how the organizations differently implement and pursue such activities, behaviors and actions around the Agile Marketing Capability, identifying and defining different levels of maturity (Lahrmann et al., 2010).

The results of this work are then synthetized in a framework, that is, the Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework, where I highlight progressive behaviors, actions and practices related to the Agile Marketing Capability across different maturity levels.

4.1 Customer-oriented responsiveness

MICE is an industry which embraces multiple types of events, ranging from smallest business meetings to international congresses, together with related services to be provided. It represents a wide and high profitable sector. Hence, several marketing efforts are dedicated to stimulate and create interest and attraction of potential customers, and to retain current ones. Organizations are committed to be ready to address ever-changing customer requests and expectations, and to be always more responsive to continuous stimuli from their target market. The deep attention towards MICE final users then represents a crucial point of MICE-related marketing skills, in order to be more effective, efficient and rapid in detecting what they are looking for and provide right responses accordingly.

The main objective of any action related to MICE is creating greater customer value and satisfaction. When they plan the events and provide all the associated services, organizations do their best to reach an optimal final result, thus retaining customers also for further initiatives that they will plan in the future [Case-13]. They undertake to put full customer satisfaction as a top priority in their marketing performance, for instance, by providing support and taking care of customers step by step during design phase, planning, development and management of their personalized events, from business meetings to professional conferences [Case-1] [Case-8] [Case-11].

In order to fully address customers' requirements, organizations try to understand the specific needs of their target, formulating tailored offerings which respond to such requests and needs. Briefly, they provide high customized MICE offerings, which combine all the necessary things to plan the event (e.g., location, transportation, technologies, room layout) [Case-16]. A key source of success in satisfying customers' expectations and requirements is sometimes to provide high personalized customer experiences, trying to achieve customer satisfaction by stimulating more "sensorial" aspects to inspire a long-lasting memory. For instance, by arranging collateral experiences which leverage on MICE destination peculiarities and traditions, food, but also archaeological, cultural, historical, ethnographic, enogastronomic, naturalistic-environmental aspects [Case-5] [Case-8] [Case-14]. Some informants illustrate this point: *"As experts in our sector, we put into practice the hospitality principles, but we arrange also, and this is a further value added, our Sardinian traditions, thus, before departure, the cogress speaker tastes our food and experiences our peculiarities, our culture"* [Case-12, CEO]; *"Our strength is the ability to fulfill your wishes completely (...) to create an experience that involves the traveler, modeling it on the basis of his requests, desires and aspirations. The priority is always and only YOU"* [Case-11, Website].

Nevertheless, all such things should be organized to such an extent that organizations do not fall into potential issues. It is strongly important to plan and deliver MICE offerings provided with all the necessary features that final users are really looking for. Thus, sometimes it may occur that an organization proposes more options or alternative solutions on the basis of client budget, trying to understand why proposing one option or the other, and taking care of crucial aspects such as the distance from the airport or the number of seats suitable for that event, as it may happen that, if you overlook such things, people may complain [Case-4].

Promotion plays certainly a prominent role in MICE-related initiatives for being responsive to customers. Promotion occurs through more traditional means such as "word-of-mouth" or specialized sector magazines, but mainly takes place through fairs or meetings, essential moment of contact to stimulate the interest towards the organization as a proper destination for MICE events given its features and strenghts [Case-1] [Case-13]. Ad hoc campaigns or newsletters are useful promotion channels [Case-14], especially because MICE is a seasonal industry, and such means allow to "push" people interest during slower months, when requests are few (e.g., plan specific offerings for niche operators) [Case-2]. For instance: *"We have a database that we update (...) So depending on the origin, the target market, we study the newsletters. We have a dedicated person, who analyzes and organizes the newsletters, writes and translates them in all languages, and then these newsletters are customized according to the market and sent to our contacts, both current and past ones."* [Case-11, Project Manager].

Organizations undertake promotion in multiple ways in MICE context. Certainly, digital channels (e.g., Facebook page, official website) deserve particular attention in attempting to retain or convert final users. Outbound (or one-way) marketing modes such as newsletters are usually combined with the use of digital channels to publish posts or messages which announce upcoming events (e.g., *"A new meeting this morning in our plenary room! #cagliari #meeting #congresses #mice #tourism #business #work"*, Case-1, Facebook and Instagram), or key information about the whole services that organizations provide (e.g., *"Hotel and restaurant booking, transportation, excursions, hostess and interpreters, special events, entertainment: these are just some of the services we can offer!"*, Case-13, Website). Outbound communication forms are also exploited to disclose the details and features of rooms and spaces at disposal, in such a way that potential clients who are looking for a place to organize an event, are able to gather all information required (e.g., information about surface, technologies at disposal, table shapes, acustics, number of seats) [Case-1].

I even noticed that there are some organizations involved in forms of inbound marketing (e.g., digital marketing strategies like SEO or SEM) [Case-11]. In such cases, organizations are

committed to create more personalized and valuable contents, putting greater attention on the organization's quality, distinctive features and strenghts in MICE context [Case-4] [Case-8]. In other words, they use technology means of communication to create engagement and positive B2C communication related to MICE (e.g., *"For the goals achieved and the communication of future challenges for your company. And then a dinner on the beach, served and pampered by an impeccable service, enchanted by an indiscreet moon."*, Case-11, Website; *"Whatever the occasion that brought you here, the important thing for use is to make you feel good and that yours would be a dip in taste, in art, in music and in our Sardinia. With astonishment and emotion."*, Case-8, Website).

Empirical evidence from cases can be synthetized in terms of the ability of the organizations to constantly sense and respond to changes related to customer needs and requests in MICE context (customer-oriented responsiveness). The Agile Marketing Capability would then correspond to the organization's abilities to dynamic and timely sense and respond to such changes, and properly provide responses which fulfil their requirements and expectations.

4.2 High flexibility

It would be extremely time-consuming and expensive planning and organizing MICE-related initiatives if organizations would not be able to achieve proper adaptability or flexibility in responding to diverse needs or requests, unexpected events, and sudden changes in customer requests. Under such conditions, organizations are forced to learn how to redeploy people and resources in effective and efficient manners according to the flow of events. Briefly, organizations should achieve proper flexibility to provide more dynamic marketing solutions (e.g., *"We are a flexible and dynamic organization that, through a professional team, guarantees the quality and efficiency of the services it provides, containing costs, with a substantial containment of the corporate needs, managing to satisfy the requests of the most demanding customers"*, Case-12, CEO).

Being flexible in MICE industry means dealing with a huge range of requests, and accommodate to diverse conditions [Case-13], making the proper adjustments (e.g., location, event details, people involved) according to customers [Case-4] [Case-9]. In this way, organizations manage to address also particularly challenging requests [Case-8]. Among them, satisfy "weird" customers requirements by simply adapting the resources at displosal, thus achieving a great and successful result anyway (e.g., *"Few weeks ago sent us a request for an Incentive that previously took place in Tokyo (…) We have tried to adapt the requests for activities, experiences, etc., to the local level. So if at Tokyo they were going to eat the top-level sushi on the highest tower, we*

brought them here to the family farm, to experience the typical local products, folkloric, Sardinian dance, local music", Case-13, Project Manager).

When adopting a flexible planning of MICE events and activities, organizations also attempt to optimize resources by redefining with greater efficiency extant sources to respond to change, or using the same facilities in a different way to manage different events (e.g., *"if today I foresee that a room will have a particular layout, for example a parterre, and tomorrow the same room must be set in a horseshoe shape, it would be the case to find continuity in the same horseshoe-shaped room perhaps for two days three days, as much as possible"*, Case-1, General Manager). In this sense, flexible planning means also catch business opportunities, and reconfigure operations accordingly, that is, understand where it is better moving business when something occurs (e.g., *"sometimes the business shift from one thing to another, because the congress room with 50 seats bring 50 hotel rooms, so the business moves to hotel rooms and attention is focused on the congress room"*, Case-1, General Manager).

Employing a flexible approach ensures to organizations to achieve the proper elasticity in addressing misunderstandings which may occur when dealing with MICE events, and promptly find a solution. Organizations then tend to adjust or adapt tactics and operations according to changes taking place, or, when a change occurs, trying to approach to such changes by adapting to new conditions. Briefly, organizations should always have an optional plan B when things go to another direction (e.g., you plan a business lunch on the boat, but because of bad weather you organize an alternative lunch at an ancient farmhouse) [Case-4]. Thus, be able to find the most effective and rapid solution, to obtain the same (or better) result: *"An event can't be canceled, but organized differently. It is always an experience. It is different, unexpected, unforeseen, but without losing its charm"* (Case-14, Marketing and Communication Manager).

My analysis then discloses the organizations' ability to follow an adaptive and flexible approach in dealing with changes occurring in MICE context (high flexibility). Hence, I advocate that the Agile Marketing Capability corresponds also to adaptability and flexibility abilities in adjusting tactics, operations and planning, in order to deal with changes and satisfy customer needs and requests by using extant sources with greater effectiveness.

4.3 Human collaboration

The successfull planning and management of events and related services in MICE context is essentially enabled by people. Involving and coordinating the right people are essential to be prompt to ever-changing contexts and more demanding requests. Marketing management under such conditions would not be feasible without the involvement and the proper coordination of

people, motivated to cooperate efficiently in order to succeed in organizing events (e.g., *"Who plans the event must be able to relate to all departments depending on their functioning, but also work hours, because for example the chef has a different schedule works (...) also the reception, you must take care of their necessities. If a group of 100 people is going to come, I can't warn them the day before, because the reception plans shifts in such a way that there will be the necessary people during that shift"*, Case-2, Sales Manager). Certainly, quality, competence and expertise of people involved in organizing MICE events are a critical source of competitive advantage: *"A strength is certainly the fact that ownership and management invested in people with consolidated international experiences, people very competent. You can have the most beautiful structure in the world, but if you don't have the right people who run it, it doesn't work (...) what people don't expect is the service you give, this is the difference"* [Case-2, Sales Manager].

In MICE context, great marketing requires close alignment, engagement and commitment among people across teams and departments when performing activities, in order to ensure the efficiency and efficacy of the events. People (e.g., employees, heads of departments) must take care of all the steps during the event to check what it happens [Case-1] [Case-8] and be ready to help and offer support not only when things are going well during the event, but more importantly when something doesn't work, or a problem suddenly comes [Case-11] [Case-14].

For successful collaboration and team working, foster transparency, visibility and coordination of information across teams and departments should be encouraged. For instance, through face-to-face conversations, but also in other ways, like through the use of management softwares where recording everything (e.g., every detail of the event), so that all actions to be done are well and promptly communicated [Case-16]. In some cases, there might be a person in charge of collecting all the updates, who interact then with the departments involved [Case-2]. Hence, it is of extreme importance that all departments that work together are aligned and promptly informed or updated. This is a crucial task especially when organizations own spin-off offices (e.g., *"We need that each one updates always everything so that we are always aligned and informed. We have offices everywhere, it is fundamental that colleagues are updated also remotely (...) update documentations within our server is necessary to be always updated on everything"*, Case-11, Project Manager).

I also found that successful organizations in MICE context are not limited to be prepared and efficient. Rather, they are committed to build close relationships among teams, and to stimulate a collaborative working environment when performing tasks. It is important to motivate and valorize people, and give them the proper support: *"Here we love families, children, difficulties, we are always working in a nonconformist way (...) thus, welcome all those we can involve in anyway in*

this beautiful way of working. With great enthusiasm, we really want to change the world, so we hope to enhance collaboration, study, research and discussion" [Case-12, CEO].

Thus, I observed the organizations' ability to create close work relationships among people, and a collaborative working environment in MICE context. Therefore, I claim that the Agile Marketing Capability also corresponds to close alignment, collaboration and interaction among people and departments, in order to create close and trust-based relationships and a collaborative working environment, better able to create successful, customer-oriented marketing programs.

4.4 Quick and continuous improvement

In the previous sections, it is clearly described how MICE industry is actually a really complex "package" including diverse needs and requests to be perceived and satisfied, people to be coordinated, technological advancementes and high competitiveness to deal with. Unexpected changes are always "behind the corner". Thus, organizations need to learn how to be as quick as possible in addressing and solving problems, and make the necessary improvements [Case-11] (e.g., *"departments are coordinated so that we react very quickly to requests. We are not part of a chain, so the decision-making process is lean"* [Case-2, Sales Manager]. Quick improvement is a constant activity in which organizations are involved: rapidly adjust marketing plans (e.g., resources, services, people), respond quickly to customer requests, and adopt resolute decision-making [Case-1].

Continuous learning and improvement are key sources for being ready and competitive, for instance, by training people, or also through continuous updating [Case-13]. This continuous updating throughout the organization to make the corresponding improvements/updates occur in several ways. It may take place through frequent reunions or meetings (e.g., at least two times a week), or through quick follow-ups with the heads of departments, in order to undersand what did not go well during events, identify gaps and weaknesses, and intervene accordingly to improve performance [Case-2]. Also, it may take place by working close together in open space offices to update offerings, but also through e-mail or Skype [Case-11]. Briefly, results of MICE initiaves are required to be planned and monited, as a continuous activity or *modus operandi* of the organization [Case-8] [Case-12].

Even the role of final user is decisive for making improvements. It may happen that they are asked to give a feedback about the event, or their personal opininion about single services or activities [Case-7] [Case-13]. Sometimes, organizations seek for advices on potential things to be improved by delivering a survey to customers with few, focused questions [Case-11].

Planning changes continuously is necessary to seize new directions to become more competitive and achieve a sustained competitive advantage. For instance, it may occur through the experimentation of new innovative paths that could be greater appreciated by customers, or open up to other sectors and extend the target (e.g., *"the beginning of an innovative path that wants to educate all participants in our events (...) We have abolished the plastic in the congress events, we work with natural and recycled objects"* [Case-12, CEO]. Particularly efficient organizations are used to fix quantitative and qualitative objectives to improve service quality, thus, profit (e.g., new catering services, investments on improving congress rooms through greater facilities) [Case-9] [Case-16], or plan changes through the support of tools (e.g. *"We share a kind of budget between all collaborators. This budget has quarterly updates, thus three times a year we see if we reach the objectives. We have general objectives and quarterly objectives. Each of use during the formalization of such objectives present its own objectives (...) ways that help us to achieve more easily our objectives"*, Case-11, Project Manager).

In short, my analysis disclose the ability of the organizations to continuously and quickly adjust and deliver new marketing plans in MICE context. I thus assert that the Agile Marketing Capability even corresponds to quickness and timeliness abilities in addressing changes to continuously make improvements in executing marketing tactics, operations and planning, and manage changes (e.g. new customer requirements, technical issues) more effectively.

5. Cross-case maturity analysis

The analysis conducted in this study reveals that the organizations involved in MICE network present contrasting levels of maturity in terms of being agile in their marketing capabilities.

In this section, I enrich my analysis by developing a framework for understanding progressive behaviors and practices representative of different maturity levels in the development and management of an Agile Marketing Capability (see Table 16). Notably, the proposed framework simultaneously identifies: on the one hand, the behaviors and actions related to each strategic area of the capability based on how the organizations perform (that is, what they do); on the other hand, the levels of maturity associated with the behaviors and actions, from 1 ("initial agility") to 4 ("proactive agility"), based on the accuracy, the rigor and the systematic approach with which the organizations perform them (i.e., established procedures) (De Carlo & Cabiddu, 2014).

In the following sections, I present in detail the analysis of behaviors and actions across maturity levels and dimensions.

5.1 Customer-oriented responsiveness maturity levels

Looking at the selected case studies, organizations exhibit different maturity levels in the ways through which they try to dynamic and timely sense, and successfully provide responses, to customer-related changes (e.g., change in customer needs or requests) to meet their requirements and expectations in MICE context (Figure 9).

I observed that some organizations place at very low levels in the development of agility-related marketing capabilities. At level 1 (initial agility), organizations don't undertake to enhance their communication with customers. The use of technology is actually crucial for being more agile and responsive to customers. At such level, it is almost absent. Some organizations do not exploit any type of technology (e.g., social media, website) to communicate with customers, and do not engage in providing any customer experiences [Case-3] [Case-10]. For such organizations, every action or effort towards their MICE-related customer target is almost "spontaneous", and they interact with them through more traditional means (e.g., phone calls or e-mail). They do not collect data or information about customers, and don't adequately plan any MICE-related marketing activity, including promotions or newsletters [Case-3] [Case-15].

At level 2 (managed agility), organizations reach a slightly higher attention towards customers. Although still limited at unit-level, they are used to adopt and follow regular and standard processes and procedures to address customer requets (e.g., small teams like the reception are present to coordinate efforts and solve customer problems or requests) [Case-2]. At this level, organizations engage in communicating with customers, but the use of technology to attract or retain customers, and the provision of customer experience in MICE context, is still very limited (e.g., they simply have a website or a Facebook page, but do not engage in creating valuable communication related to MICE) [Case-2] [Case-6] [Case-7].

I observed organizations placed at a good level of maturity in being responsive towards customers, that is, level 3 (defined agility). Such organizations mainly engage in outbound or one-way communication and provide appropriate information in such a way that customers are able to find what they look for (e.g., general e-mail, newsletters, list of all services provided by the organization through the website). They own a well-developed website and social media channels where promoting the organization or Sardinia destination, but they do not adequately focus on "pushing" their organization in MICE industry. Hence, they may obtain positive outcomes anyway, but they still partially provide customer experience in MICE context [Case-1] [Case-9] [Case-12]. At operative level, such organizations are used to improve service quality to meet specific customer requests: when clients report positive or negative feedbacks about services, they correct or improve the services provided accordingly [Case-16]. Instead of trying to solve customer issues proactively,

by using for instance monitoring tools to trace back everything in a more consistent way, they prefer direct feedbacks from customers [Case-1] [Case-5].

At level 4 (proactive agility), the importance of technology to be responsive to customers becomes crucial. Organizations display a more integrated use of technologies (e.g., website and Facebook), and pursue an inbound communication across their digital channels [Case-8]. They undertake to provide greater personalized experience to customers and contents of higher quality in order to attract them and be chosen as potential MICE destination. Also, they promote all services offered, and highlight the value added embedded in the way through which they provide such services [Case-4] [Case-11] [Case-13]. Compared to organizations with less maturity, I here observe greater attempts to define customer plans in MICE context in a proactive manner. When designing their MICE offerings, for instance, they collect in advance all characteristics and information about the most adequate and alternative locations, hotels and about all the necessary things aligned with client budget, and propose solutions that try to address their requests proactively [Case-4]. Also, they deeply analyze their target in order to understand where to push promotion and marketing using digital means, thus creating ad hoc campaigns [Case-14].

Figure 9: Cross-case maturity analysis: customer-oriented responsiveness
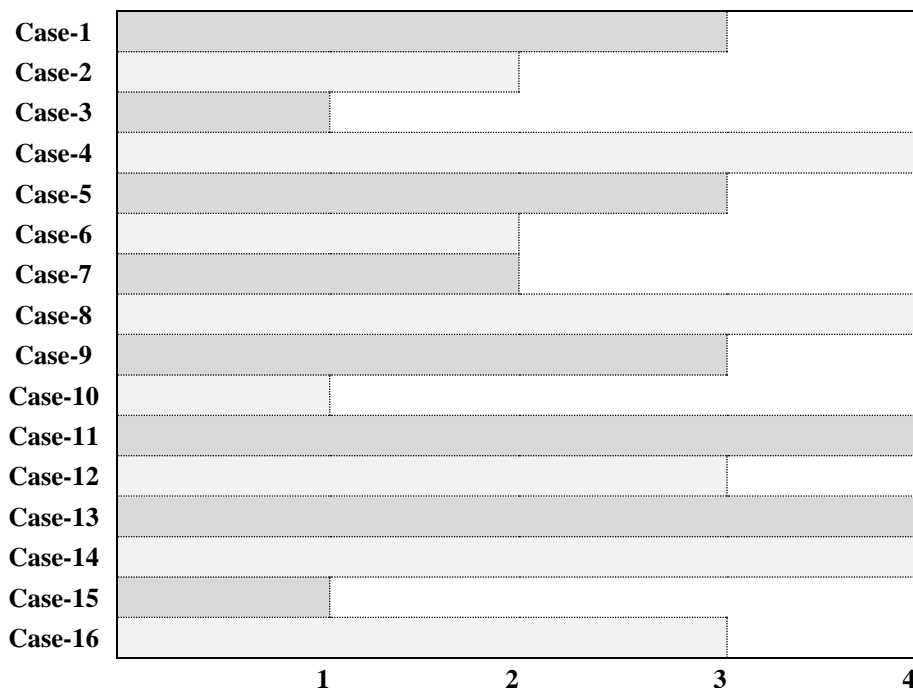
5.2 High flexibility maturity levels

I also observed that, in MICE context, organizations exhibit different maturity levels in the ways through which they try to adapt and to adjust flexibly their marketing tactics, operations and

planning to deal with changes and satisfy customer needs and requests by using extant sources with greater effectiveness (Figure 10).

Some organizations reveal no overall commitment in marketing planning (i.e., defining marketing objectives), thus placing at level 1 (initial agility). In such organizations, there are specific individual teams or people who are committed to develop marketing plans, that is, the actions to capitalize on MICE market. This condition impedes to make the proper adjustments in marketing operations in order to improve performance. Hence, when something unexpected occurs, it becomes extremely difficult for such organizations to find a solution, and they are not always able to accomodate to customer requests, especially most demanding (or profitable) ones [Case-3]. Organizations have limited resources and capabilities to address MICE initiatives to such an extent that they cannot satisfy many proposals (e.g, they receive some requests but they cannot fulfill them) [Case-10] [Case-15].

At level 2 (managed agility), the flexibility of organizations is turned into regular processes or procedures during marketing activities. Organizations define an outline plan about the key activities, but do not exhibit proper synergies throughout the firm. Thus, they still have limited skills and resources to respond to change and to make improvements or adjustments [Case-6]. They may have rarely managed some successful events in the past. In MICE context, their role is still almost "passive", since they lack of all required resouces to hold the events [Case-7], or to reconfigure extant resouces to address all requests expected during events [Case-13]. Even though they have a good vision and attention towards customers, their limited skills and resources lead to individual efforts by specific people or teams in providing services to customers. This may generate difficulties in making adjustments or improvements to better satisfy increasing customer requests. In other words, proper synergies lack throughout the firm, and everything is centred on single individuals [Case-5].

At level 3 (defined agility), organizations display adequate synergies between people involved in planning new marketing objectives and events. These organizations are greatly coordinated at unit-level in their performance, and to properly adapt competencies (e.g., skills, technologies) to changing conditions [Case-2]. Nevertheless, their adaptability mainly consist of improving service quality to accommodate new requests and needs, and adjustments merely involve existing marketing processes (e.g., adapt service details to the new request received) [Case-1] [Case-9] [Case-12].

At level 4 (proactive agility), organizations perform more proactive initiatives and actions of flexibility and adaptability (e.g., more incisive corrective actions, small changes or experimentations) to adapt performance to new marketing conditions [Case-4] [Case-11]. Such

abilities are enabled by a good alignment of people to new qualitative or quantitative goals, which facilitate to adjust more easily marketing activities [Case-16]. If something occurs during or right after an event such organizations are able to adapt quickly to new conditions, and to find an alternative solution with the same, or even greater, degree of success [Case-8] [Case-14].

Figure 10: Cross-case maturity analysis: high flexibility
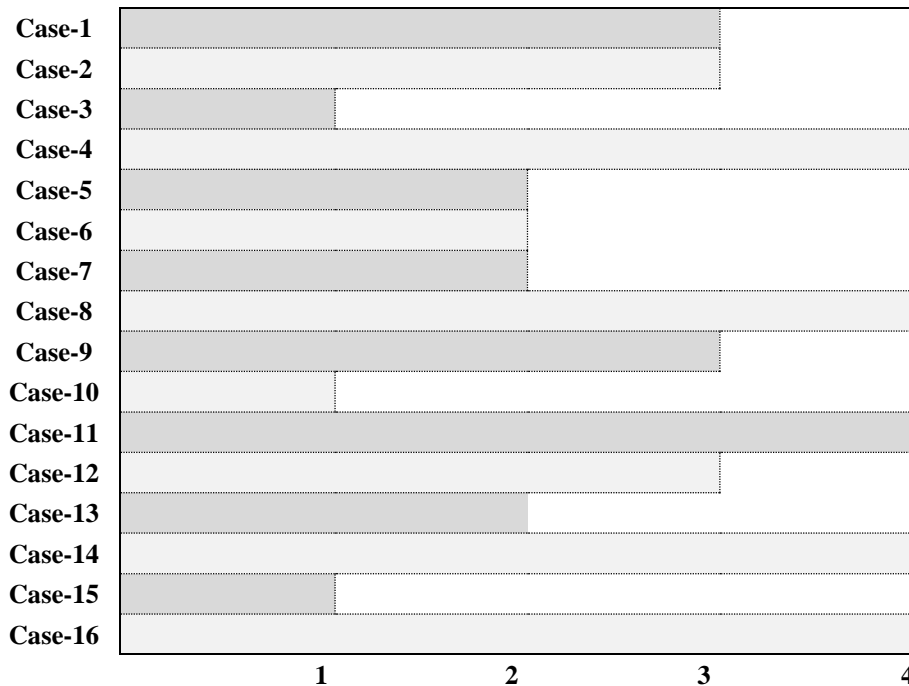
5.3 Human collaboration maturity levels

My analysis reveals that organizations are characterized by contrasting maturity levels in the ways through which they attempt to foster alignment, collaboration and interaction among people and departments, and to create close and trust-based relationships, thus, a collaborative working environment able to create successful, customer-oriented marketing programs (Figure 11).

At level 1 (initial agility), I identified organizations where there is no a proper collaborative environment. Rather, there is the committment of single individuals, responsible of the main marketing tasks. Hence, organization's success depends on the efforts undertaken by single individuals who manage everything, take care of relationships with the main stakeholders, plan all the details about events and related services [Case-5]. This may lead to inefficiencies and issues in satisfying increasing requests in MICE context. Actually, single individuals coordinate everything, and interact with the other departments involved in planning events (e.g., logistics, booking) [Case-3] [Case-10]. Within such organizations, communication is not advanced, and there is no integration through the use of technology as they prefer verbal communication, phone calls and e-mail [Case-15].

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At level 2 (managed agility), organizations exhibit proper unit-level staffing and communication, and encoded procedures in coordinating roles and tasks [Case-9]. Such organizations are usually characterized by the presence of a reference person who ensures adequate unit-level coordination, but teams and departments tend to work on their own tasks [Case-7]. It may happen that they may consult fellows in order to define some final details when planning events, but they don't really work close or together. Rather, consultation and collaboration is limited and sporadic [Case-13]. Small staff and the lack of a structured organization obstruct to collaborate and create synergies throughout the organization, thus, the sharing of skills and competencies is still limited [Case-6].

At level 3 (defined agility), organizations own a good level of agility-related marketing capabilities in terms of human collaboration. They tend to invest in increasing competencies to have greater skilled people in performing tasks. Also, they are characterized by proper synergies among teams and departments when addressing new or unexpected conditions, as they adequately intervene by coordinating efforts and staff of existing processes accordingly [Case-1]. In such organizations communication generally takes place through face-to-face conversation, quick follow-up or e-mail [Case-14], but also through digital means (e.g., management software) to trace all actions to be implemented, and coordinate teams and departments more efficiently [Case-16].

At level 4 (proactive agility), there is extremely high human collaboration across teams and departments. These organizations reveal active participation of people in decision-making, promptly at disposal and always ready to address unexpected problems [Case-4]. They encourage transparency, strong alignment and cooperation throughout all departments, also remotely when offices with different tasks work together and are aligned to the same things [Case-2] [Case-11]. Teams are committed to define a roadmap of marketing performance, proposing and pursuing adequate team-oriented qualitative and quantitative goals [Case-8] [Case-12].

Figure 11: Cross-case maturity analysis: human collaboration
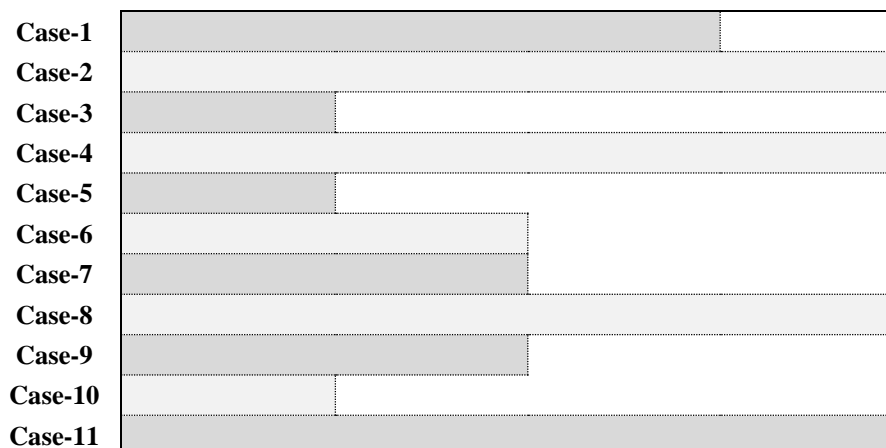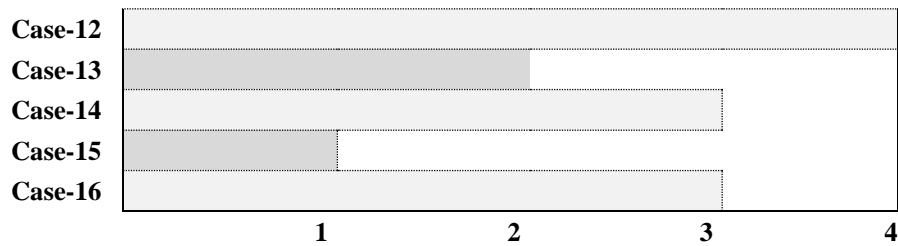
5.4 Quick and continuous improvement maturity levels

Finally, I observed that organizations in MICE context exhibit different and contrasting maturity levels in the way through which they attempt to quickly and timely address changes in order to constantly improve the executing of their marketing tactics, operations and planning, and manage changes (e.g., new customer requirements, technical issues) more efficiently and effectively (Figure 12).

At level 1 (initial agility), I identified organizations that, although considering useful the marketing planning, do not undertake any forecast of objectives and results in order to make improvements [Case-3] [Case-10]. Sometimes, the presence of limited resources and capabilities do not enable to extend or develop MICE business substantially for such organizations, and there is no planning in this sense [Case-15]. It lacks a proper improvement strategy related to MICE activities, which leads to general difficulties in accessing to information on customers and responding to their requests quickly [Case-3].

At level 2 (managed agility), organizations are used to keep the results achieved related to MICE in a more substantial manner. However, their performance is still limited. Althought they own good proposals or new ideas to improve, they neither monitor their results, nor use any tool, rather they simply take the results achieved. Marketing planning is more "temporal", thus, they may define long-term objectives (e.g., improving workshops, synergies, experiences), but if they don't manage to have achieve them (e.g., they don't have the necessary resources), they don't pursue such objectives anymore. They do not investment on new resources, people and technologies [Case-5] [Case-6], and do not consider improvement actions as something currently crucial or relevant, also in near future (e.g., they might organize formative workshops to enhance congress planning, but they do not really undertake to implement them) [Case-13].

At level 3 (defined agility), organizations are committed to perform some improvement actions or activities, such as peer reviews or evaluation mechanisms across teams. They hold regular meetings and follow-up, or quick updates with fellows (e.g., face-to-face conversations) to optimize services and resources [Case-1]. With customers, they prefer direct feedbacks or interviews in order to learn about potential issues instantly right after MICE events [Case-14]. Thus, such organizations are able to coordinate efforts in response to unexpected changes [Case-4]: if people report

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problems, teams align themselves to solve them, and to improve existing processes and procedures (e.g., customers report a problem in any aspect of a service, and they try to optimize such service for next time) [Case-7].

At level 4 (proactive agility), organizations are characterized by a greater level of maturity in terms of improving marketing performance. They regularly adopt proper qualitative and quantitative evaluation techniques, and define more structured qualitative and quantitative objectives [Case-2] [Case-9] [Case-16]. Such organizations are used to implement very quickly corrective actions in order to improve performance (e.g., ad hoc tests, team-oriented goals, quarterly plans to redefine marketing performance). They engage in continuous marketing planning and monitoring through weekly meetings to check eventual gaps or weaknesses right after the event, and also to plan long-term improvement actions (e.g., they share a budget which is continuosly updated with quarterly objectives) [Case-8] [Case-11] [Case-12].

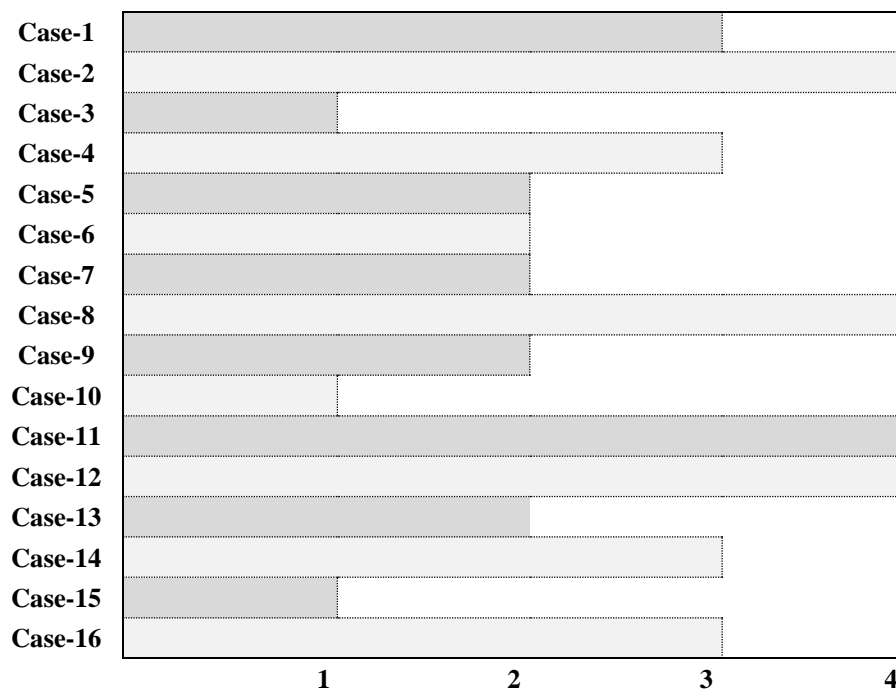**Figure 12**: Cross-case maturity analysis: quick and continuous improvement

Table 16: The Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework: behaviors and maturity levels

Maturity levels / Dimensions	Level 1 - Initial Agility	Level 2 - Managed Agility	Level 3 - Defined Agility	Level 4 - Proactive Agility
Customer-oriesnted responsiveness	-No engagement in communication with customers -No use of technology to communicate with customers -No provision of customer experience -No collection of information through databases -No improvements for being more reactive towards clients	-Unite level attention towards customers -Regular processes/procedures in addressing customer requests -Limited use of technology for attracting customers -Limited customer experience	-Outbound (one-way) communication with customers -Partial provision of customer experience -Improvement of quality services to address customer requests -Direct feedback from customers about issues	-Integrated use of technology for inbound communication -Provision of personalized experiences -Corrective actions based on customer feedbacks received -Proactively define customer plans
High flexibility	-Individual teams/specific people committed to develop marketing plans -Difficulty in making adjustments of marketing operations -Lack of full information to make adjustments and improve performance	-Regular processes/procedures in marketing activities -Outline plan for key marketing activities -When responding to change, no proper synergies throughout the firm -Limited skills/resources to make improvements/adjustments	-Proper synergies between people and new marketing objectives -Adapt competencies to new conditions -Quality-based adaptability -Make adjustments of existing marketing processes	-Proactive actions to adapt marketing performance to new conditions (e.g., more incisive corrective actions, small changes or experimentations) -Adjust easily marketing activities to new qualitative and quantitative business objectives -Alignment of marketing staff to find alternative successful solutions to new conditions
Human collaboration	-Limited collaboration -Individual efforts/commitment in the main marketing tasks -No integration of communication through IT throughout the organization	-Encoded processes and procedures to coordinate roles and tasks -Limited sharing of competencies -Unit-level communication, coordination and staffing	-Investments in increasing competencies -Proper synergies among teams and departments to deal with new conditions -Communications to coordinate efforts of existing marketing processes	-Teams engage in defining a roadmap of marketing performance -Team-oriented qualitative and quantitative goals -Active participation of people in decision-making

Quick and continuous improvement	-No forecast of objectives and results to make improvements -Lack of proper improvement strategy -Lack of quick access to information on customers	-Keep the results achieved in a consistent manner -Limited marketing feedbacks (unit-level) -New marketing programs mainly based on greater volumes -Limited investment on new resources, people and technologies	-Peer reviews and evaluation mechanisms among teams -Coordinate efforts in response to unexpected changes -When people report problems, teams are align to solve them -Improve existing processes and procedures -Regular optimization of services and resources	-Proper qualitative and quantitative evaluation techniques to improve marketing performance -Ad-hoc tests to improve the performance of marketing processes -Quickly implement corrective actions to improve performance

6. Discussion and theoretical contribution

Despite the interest towards Agile Marketing as a way through which improve coordination, and design more strategic and dynamic marketing solutions (Hays et al., 2013; Inversini et al., 2014, 2009; Neuhofer et al., 2012), there is still few systematic research on the benefits that agility may actually generate in improving extant marketing capabilities. In marketing field, prior knowledge on agility was limited to recognize its importance for greater marketing performance (Golgeci & Gligor, 2017; Hendrix, 2014), by enhancing the ability of the firm to generate novel ideas (Nemkova, 2017), and to manage the development of market demand through prompt adjustments of marketing strategies, operations and tactics according to environmental changes (Golgeci & Gligor, 2017; Li et al., 2015; Roberts & Grover, 2012; Tahmasebifard et al., 2017).

The goal of this study was to empirically investigate how different organizations implement and pursue activities, behaviors and actions towards the Agile Marketing Capability, thus identifying and defining different levels of maturity. The focus on MICE tourism context has enabled to illustrate a valuable example of industry where being agile plays a prominent role in marketing performance. Marketing management in tourism industry is critical for the increasing competitiveness, the responsiveness required to deal with continuous internal and external stimuli, and the huge variety of stakeholders to be coordinated and satisfied (Buhalis, 2000, 2003; Inversini et al., 2009, 2014; Pike & Page, 2014). Therefore, the development of more effective capabilities in responding quickly to ever-changing requirements is decisive for greater competitive advantage and, ultimately, succeed (Mandal et al., 2017).

Prior research on agility mainly explored such capability, from both a theoretical and empirical perspective, in research fields which lay beyond the marketing context (Gunasekaran & Yusuf, 2002; Lee, 2004; Swafford, Ghosh & Murthy, 2006), so that the implications of employing agility approaches and practices in marketing is still limited (Accardi-Petersen, 2011; Cram & Newell, 2016; Dewell, 2007; Moi & Cabiddu, 2019; Poolton et al., 2006). This work extends prior studies by conducting a multiple-case empirical analysis of a marketing-focused agile capability, thus increasing the theoretical understanding of an Agile Marketing Capability. Therefore, this study contributes to develop and extend prior literature on agility and marketing capabilities in significant ways. Firstly, it extends the understanding about the features and benefits of a new marketing capability, the Agile Marketing Capability. Secondly, it proposes a four-stage Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework, elucidating practical guidelines for the management and development of the Agile Marketing Capability.

The Agile Marketing Capability. Recognizing the importance of marketing in the development of a firm's dynamic capabilities, prior research has extensively focused on defining capabilities

aimed at improving the ability to adjust strategies in response to quick market changes, thus the performance of firms in highly competitive and fast-changing business contexts. Specifically, prior marketing studies have acknowledged the importance of dynamic marketing capabilities to seize the responsiveness of cross-functional business processes in reconfiguring resources, in order to respond to market-related changes and deliver greater customer value (Barrales-Molina et al., 2014; Bruni & Verona, 2009; Fang & Zou, 2009; Menguc & Auh, 2006; Xu et al., 2018). Also, they have underlined the importance of adaptiveness of marketing capabilities, and how they facilitate a firm's ability to adjust strategies in response to quick market changes (Guo et al., 2018), calling for the definition of marketing capabilities greater aligned with environmental changes (Day, 2011; Merrilees et al., 2011). By exploring and deepening the Agile Marketing Capability, this work advances marketing capabilities' field of research. Indeed, prior studies provide only a fragmented understanding and knowledge of the key dimensions that define the Agile Marketing Capability. Notably, prior studies on dynamic marketing capabilities capture the ability to "use market knowledge to adapt organizational resources and capabilities" (Barrales-Molina et al., 2014; p. 13), and cope with market changes (Bruni & Verona, 2009; Fang & Zou, 2009; Menguc & Auh, 2006). Also, prior studies on adaptive marketing capabilities grasp the organization's ability to "proactively sense and act on market signals, continuously learn from market experiments, and integrate and coordinate social network resources to adapt to market changes and predict industry trends" (Guo et al., 2018; p. 81). Despite prior conceptualizations about marketing capabilities have advanced the knowledge in this field of research, they are not sufficient to define a new marketing capability able to adapt to ever-changing environments and where agility is embedded. Rather, the empirical analysis conducted in this study reveals that there are several aspects that collectively and in a integrative way, compose and define an Agile Marketing Capability: customer-oriented responsiveness, high flexibility, human collaboration, quick and continuous improvement.

Also, it is increasingly discussed by scholars and practitioners the adoption of agile practices by marketing teams, which lead organizations to improve innovation and productivity, manage changing priorities based on feedbacks in a quicker and more effective manner, achieve better project visibility, and enhance work quality, through greater alignment among teams and business objectives (Accardi-Petersen, 2011; AgileSherpas & Kapos, 2018; Ewel, 2013; Poolton et al., 2006; Recker et al., 2017). This study increases the understanding about the advantages and benefits from a business perspective that could derive from employing agile approaches and capabilities in marketing (Moi and Cabiddu, 2019; Moi, Frau & Cabiddu, 2018a; 2019), explaining the impact that their employment could generate on enhancing extant marketing capabilities, particularly in turbulent and fast-changing contexts.

More in detail, this study reveals that firms that pursue more systematic actions to achieve greater responsiveness towards customers (e.g., more integrated and advanced use of technology to attract customers, provision of high personalized and tailored offerings to customers, definition of more proactive customer plans), considerably boost their abilities in timely sensing and responding to customer-related changes, through the continuous adoption and employment of up-to-date technologies or tools to analyze and discover customer needs, and plan tailored offerings based on what they are looking for (i.e., *customer-oriented responsiveness* dimension).

Also, this work shows that firms that implement actions oriented to achieve greater flexibility towards customers (e.g., more proactive actions to adapt marketing performance to new conditions or to adjust marketing activities to new objectives, greater alignment and synergies of people to new business goals), improve their abilities in adapting and adjusting flexibly their marketing tactics, operations and planning to deal with changes, and satisfy fluctuating customer needs and requests, thus increasing customization (i.e., *high flexibility* dimension).

Furthermore, firms that undertake actions oriented to reach greater organizational collaboration (e.g., more active participation of teams and departments in defining a roadmap of marketing performance, definition of team-oriented qualitative and quantitative goals to improve performance in the medium and long term), increase their abilities to foster alignment, collaboration and interaction among people and departments, creating close and trust-based relationships, and a collaborative and stimulating working environment, which valorizes people and a lean decision-making process (i.e., *human collaboration* dimension).

Finally, this study displays that firms which foster actions to achieve greater reaction to changes (e.g., quantitative and qualitative evaluation techniques to improve marketing performance, implementation of very quick corrective actions, continuous marketing planning and monitoring), boost their abilities in quickly and timely address continuous changes, constantly improving the executing of their marketing tactics, operations and planning with greater speed (i.e., *quick and continuous improvement* dimension).

The Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework. By developing and exploring this new marketing capability, this research also explains how organizations might be differently agile in their marketing capabilities. The cross-case analysis performed in this study reveals that some organizations are actually more agile in their marketing capabilities than others. Briefly, organizations display to be mature (or ready) not in the same way in addressing customer requests and needs, and do not have the same speed of adjustment in adapting to changing conditions. Empirical evidence enabled to identify different maturity levels in the development and

management of the Agile Marketing Capability, streamlined in the Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework.

Prior studies addressing agility maturity assessment mainly concern software development field of research, defining a roadmap of progressive maturity levels for the assessment and improvement of agility in software development processes (e.g., Gill, Henderson-sellers & Mcbride, 2007; Gren, Torkar & Feldt, 2015; Leppänen, 2013; Özcan-Top & Demirors, 2019; Patel & Ramachandran, 2009; Schweigert, Vohwinkel, Korsaa, Nevalainen & Biro, 2014). Outlining the Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework, this study contributes to extend prior literature by proposing a framework to understand progressive behaviors and practices representative of different maturity levels in the development and management of an Agile Marketing Capability. The framework grasps the fine differences among levels in terms of being ready and more "sophisticated" in the development and management of the Agile Marketing Capability, and, as displayed in such framework, moving from one level to the other implies deeper, greater and continuous organizational learning.

Such framework also extends prior research on dynamic capabilities and marketing capabilities. Studies which focus on similar topics concerning maturity frameworks in these research fields is still very limited. Also, such studies concentrated on defining general patterns and guidelines concerning organizational capabilities (e.g., organizational capability lifecycle; organizational decision-making capability) (Helfat & Peteraf, 2003; McKenzie, van Winkelen, & Grewal, 2011). With this study, I extend prior literature by developing a specific maturity framework oriented to the development of a specific marketing capability, namely, the Agile Marketing Capability. Moreover, prior research focuses on explaining the heterogeneity of capabilities and resources between firms by defining different evolution levels of a firm's capability, and deems maturity as the ultimate step in building that capability (capability maintenance) (e.g., Helfat & Peteraf, 2003). Differently from prior research, this study conceives maturity as a progressive evolving condition of being "complete", "perfect" or "ready" (Lahrmann, Marx, Winter & Wortmann, 2010), which ranges from levels of initial maturity to higher levels of proactive maturity. My framework contributes to extend prior research by offering a detailed and meticulous analysis of progressive steps to achieve greater maturity levels, where maturity is not the final step, rather, it is a constant condition of improvement.

6.1 Managerial implications

From a managerial perspective, this study tries to clarify to marketing managers and practitioners the importance of being agile in order to succeed in current business contexts. More

importantly, it explains how organizations could become more agile, improving their marketing performance.

The framework conceptualized in this study is interesting for organizations preparing for Agile Marketing capabilities development. Specifically, it provides crucial practical guidelines on what strategic actions are needed to implement, develop and improve an Agile Marketing Capability. Thus, it could serve as a useful practical tool to assess current state of maturity in the development of such capabilities (e.g., recognize current business gaps or areas of underperformance) and how to go through maturity levels, understand potential improvement actions, and, thus, achieve higher levels of performance. The framework could also help marketing managers to make comparisons across organizations and businesses (e.g., benchmark, best practices' evaluation), in order to improve their performance, be more reactive to market changes and increase their competitiveness.

Briefly, managers can use my visual checklist to audit how well their organization is exploting Agile Marketing capabilities, and then plan how to properly take it to the next level. By consulting the Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework, firms that discover to currently have still low maturity levels in Agile Marketing capabilities could exploit useful practical guidelines to boost their extant marketing capabilities, and then achieve higher maturity levels. Organizations that instead acknowledge to be placed at good levels of maturity in their Agile Marketing capabilities could become awarer about the next step, heading towards further degree of improvement for more systematic change management and, thus, greater efforts of continuous improvement and change management.

6.2 Limitation and future research

Despite its significant contributions, I acknowledge that this study owns some limitations, which actually suggest avenues for further theoretical and empirical studies in this emerging topic.

Given the qualitative and exploratory nature of this work, it would be interesting to improve the generalization of our results.

I decided to conduct the empirical analysis and develop this framework focusing on a specific context, represented by MICE tourism. Therefore, it would be interesting to deepen and further extend this framework to other research settings where the Agile Marketing capabilities might be required and strongly encouraged, in order to improve the generalization of findings, and extend and deepen the understanding of this topic.

Also, I foster future empirical testing and validation of the Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework, and the list of behaviors identified across the different progressive maturity levels. Following the design requirements for maturity models, which represent crucial guidelines defining

a set of principles or practices to be adopted by the firm in order to develop a capability (Becker, Knackstedt & Pöppelbuss, 2009; Fraser, Moultrie & Gregory, 2002), for example, it would be interesting to test this framework, and develop appropriate measurement scales of the Agile Marketing capabilities.

Future research could also better deepen the reasons behind the lower level of Agile Marketing Capability for some organizations. For instance, it would be interesting to investigate the question of financial constraints which could actually determine the difficulty for some firms in engaging in agility. Also, a future direction could be for example to compare the more or less Agile Marketing Capability when dealing with tangible or intangible assets provided by the organization.

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Websites

www.agilemarketingmanifesto.org

www.micesardegna.it

Conclusion and final remarks

The overall objective of the present dissertation was to deeply investigate how the concept of agility intersects in the field of marketing capabilities, in order to support and deepen the full understanding about a new marketing capability: the Agile Marketing Capability.

Indeed, while prior research has broadly discussed about how agility plays a crucial role in enhancing firms' performance especially in current turbulent and dynamic business contexts, to date little was known about the ways in which agility particularly embeds in marketing activities, thus impacting on marketing capabilities. Hence, the specific aim of Paper 1 has been to inquire how agility may develop in terms of marketing capability, identifying the theoretical underpinnings of the Agile Marketing Capability. Paper 2 and Paper 3 had the objective to further extend and deepen the theoretical and empirical knowledge on the Agile Marketing Capability by empirically investigating such capability in different research contexts. Notably, Paper 2 was aimed at 1) investigating the concept of agility in a digital and international marketing setting to advance the understanding of a marketing-focused agile capability, and then 2) identify and explore some key theoretical and empirical dimensions composing and characterizing the Agile Marketing Capability. Finally, Paper 3 had the objective to empirically investigate how different organizations implement and pursue activities, behaviors and actions towards the Agile Marketing Capability, thus identifying and defining different levels of maturity

The originality of this thesis has been to advance scholarly work towards this topic, focusing the attention on what could be defined as a new path in the current debate of marketing capabilities. Through a stepwise pathway towards the development of the Agile Marketing Capability, the overarching contributions of this work considerably extends the literature on dynamic capabilities and marketing capabilities both from a theoretical and empirical perspective in several ways. Let us explore in detail in which way and why.

With Paper 1, it has been inquired an initial formal theorization and conceptualization of the Agile Marketing Capability, with the intention of putting the basis for its further empirical exploration and analysis. Thanks to a stepwise theorization process (Greenwood, Suddaby & Hinings, 2002) grounded in the construct development practices (e.g., DeVellis, 2016; Hoehle & Venkatesh, 2015; MacKenzie, Podsakoff & Podsakoff, 2011), the outcomes of this study advance a solid body of knowledge of agility in the field of marketing capabilities. Since the relevance of agility is evident both in research and practice in numerous fields (e.g., Gunasekaran & Yusuf, 2002; Lee, 2004; Lee & Xia, 2010; Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011; Swafford, Ghosh & Murthy, 2006), but remains still under-explored in marketing studies, this work contributed to extend prior research by performing a specific marketing-oriented analysis and conceptualization of agility, developing a

holistic theoretical model that conceptualizes the key constructs of the Agile Marketing Capability and identifies its key theorizing elements.

With Paper 2, it has been performed an initial empirical investigation of agile capability in the marketing field looking at a high representative context, that is, a digital and international marketing setting. Indeed, prior research argues about the importance for marketing to employ agility particularly in dynamic and international business contexts marked by digitalization (e.g. Asseraf, Lages & Shoham, 2019; Hagen et al., 2019; Osei, Amankwah-Amoah, Khan, Omar & Gutu, 2019; Roberts & Grover, 2012; Zhou et al., 2018), but does not properly explain how agile capabilities empirically take place particularly in digital and international marketing settings, where being agile is a prominent requirement. Hence, the analysis conducted with this second study based on an in-depth exploratory single-case study (Eisenhardt, 1989; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Yin, 1994), contributed to extend prior literature by identifying an initial framework and some propositions which explain what actions are needed to foster marketing-focused agile capabilities, thus pursuing and implementing an Agile Marketing Capability.

With the last Paper 3, it has been further extended the body of knowledge of agile approaches and capabilities in marketing field by looking at how different organizations pursue and implement the Agile Marketing Capability. Since prior research extensively acknowledges the importance for organizations to be agile as the new imperative of marketing approaches (Accardi-Petersen, 2011; AgileSherpas & Kapos, 2018; Ewel, 2013; Poolton, Ismail, Reid & Arokiam, 2006; Recker et al., 2017), but does not properly shed light on the benefits that could derive from employing agile approaches and capabilities in marketing, and the impact that these could generate on enhancing extant marketing capabilities of organizations, the contributions of this study are significant. Thanks to the analysis performed with this third study based on a multiple-case study research design (Eisenhardt, 1989), not only I verified the replication of the emergent findings found in the single-case study analysis by examining how different organizations implement and pursue an Agile Marketing Capability, but I further extended and deepened the proposed dimensions of the Agile Marketing Capability, thus developing the Agile Marketing Capability maturity framework. Hence, this work contributed to extend prior literature by explaining progressive behaviors and actions that facilitate the stepwise development, improvement and management of the Agile Marketing Capability, synthetized in a maturity framework.

Overall, the implications of the present thesis from a managerial perspective are crucial. Marketing management has become always more challenging for organizations because of high competition, and increasingly fluctuating and demanding customer requests and needs. Hence,

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managers and practitioners are constantly looking for new and more effective ways through which cope with ever-changing business contexts. Agility could be considered as one of these.

The present thesis has extensively offered new insights and opportunities for firms seeking to redefine and improve their abilities in adapting marketing to evolving business contexts, encouraging the development of more effective marketing capabilities greater aligned with the conditions of high uncertainty characterizing current competitive business scenarios.

The findings of the studies presented in this dissertation suggest that managers and practitioners should recognize that new trends of marketing capabilities are shifting towards agility concept, and should be trained to take the proper actions to foster the employment of Agile Marketing capabilities. With this thesis, I provided crucial conceptual and practical guidelines for them to be better informed during the planning of proper actions towards the development of Agile Marketing capabilities. Thus, my dissertation could help them in orienting their behaviors towards marketing activities that can be reconfigured and adapted to customers' preferences at short notice.

The outcomes of this work has suggested that this topic is particularly true for managers and practitioners operating in digital and international contexts, where it is extremely important to increase awareness about how to practically employ agility in their marketing activities, and learn how to pursue quicker, more flexible, and customer-responsive marketing strategies, operations and tactics. By developing Agile Marketing capabilities, practitioners and international marketers who perform in digital and international contexts could actually improve their abilities in exploiting digital technologies in their marketing activities to better satisfy customers in international and high dynamic contexts. However, the findings of my papers also extend to other contexts, and are not limited to digital and international marketing settings. Rather, this work has revealed that this topic is interesting for all organizations preparing for Agile Marketing capabilities development.

In summary, the present thesis not only has extensively explained what key strategic aspects and actions are needed to develop an Agile Marketing Capability. More interestingly, it has shed light on crucial practical guidelines for those organizations that recognize to have some gaps or areas of underperformance in their Agile Marketing capabilities, suggesting potential improvement actions to achieve higher levels of performance, reactiveness to market changes and competitiveness. Actually, the development of marketing-focused agile capabilities is a continuous path, thus organizations should constantly make increasing efforts to become more agile and then improve their marketing performance.

To conclude, the innovativeness of the topic addressed by this thesis has led to the exploratory and qualitative nature of the papers developed throughout this work. Given that little was known about Agile Marketing from an academic perspective, choosing qualitative and theory building

methodological approaches has been considered the proper choice to start building an Agile Marketing Capability.

This dissertation has extensively put the basis for further theoretical and empirical studies to get greater insights concerning the Agile Marketing Capability. As extensively discussed throughout each paper, future research directions are actually several. However, the crucial next step will be to extend and deepen this topic by developing proper measurement scales for the proposed dimensions of the Agile Marketing Capability. Thus, the proposed framework of the Agile Marketing Capability, largely discussed along this work from both a qualitative theoretical and empirical perspective, would be empirically tested and validated, as well as extended to other research settings, increasing the outcomes of this thesis to larger populations.

A crucial challenge that will be accomplished by future research will be to better clarify how, among all marketing capabilities, the Agile Marketing Capability may be positioned, in order to capture its relevance and distinctive value. For this reason, future research should try to embed the Agile Marketing Capability within an overarching nomological network including potential antecedents and consequences, in order to analyze its predictive ability (Peter & Churchill Jr, 1986). Actually, "learning more about a theoretical construct is a matter of elaborating the nomological network in which it occur, or of increasing the definiteness of the components" (MacKenzie et al., 2011; p. 321). By identifying potential antecedents, future researchers could investigate the extent to which these antecedents may affect the Agile Marketing Capability dimensions. By identifying its potential consequences, they could understand how the Agile Marketing Capability impact on, for instance, firm performance or innovation performance, and then measure how the Agile Marketing Capability actually differentiate from existing marketing capabilities.

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Appendix A: Summary of agility measures (relationship, population, entity, rigor of agility measures)

Source	AGILITY MEASURES SUMMARY					RIGOR OF AGILITY MEASURES	
	Relationship examined	Population studied	Entity	Dependent variable	Type and direction of the effect	Measure validity	Measure reliability
Abdoli Bidhandi & Valmohammadi (2017)	Supply chain agility and organizational performance (i.e., profitability)	Employees and managers of a manufacturing company	Supply chain function	Profitability	Direct and positive effect of supply chain agility factors on profitability	Literature, questionnaires and questions of similar studies, meetings and opinions of managerial and academic experts	Cronbach's α (0.9)
Bradley et al. (2012)	Enterprise architecture (EA) maturity, IT alignment and operational IT effectiveness	Hospital CIOs	Organization	Enterprise agility	Direct and positive effect of EA maturity on IT alignment and operational IT effectiveness. Indirect and positive effect of EA maturity on enterprise agility, moderated by IT alignment	Prior studies	Composite reliability (0.7), Cronbach's α (0.7), AVE (0.5)

Chakravarty et al. (2013)	IT competencies, organizational agility and firm performance	Chief executive officers, founders, or vice presidents B-to-B electronic marketplaces	Organization	Organizational agility and firm performance	Direct effect of IT competencies on organizational agility. Moderated effect played by environmental dynamism on the effect of agility on performance	Literature review, face validity check with professionals	Exploratory factor analysis (0.5)
DeGroote & Marx (2013)	IT, supply chain agility, and firm performance	Senior managers, directors, vice presidents from various industries (i.e., chemicals, pharmaceutical, computer, food and beverage)	Supply chain function	Supply chain agility and firm performance	Direct and positive effect of IT on supply chain agility, and direct and positive effect of supply chain agility on firm performance	NA	Cronbach's α (0.7)
Eckstein et al. (2015)	Supply chain agility and supply chain adaptability, cost performance and operational performance	Managers from manufacturing and logistics industries	Supply chain function	Cost performance and operational performance	Direct effect of supply chain agility and supply chain adaptability on cost performance and operational performance. Indirect effect of supply chain adaptability mediated by supply chain agility on performance	Prior literature, pre-test with academics and business professionals, personal discussions	Composite reliability (0.6)

Felipe et al. (2016)	IS capabilities, organizational agility, absorptive capacity	Firms from various industries, mainly computer systems design, machinery manufacturing and chemical sectors	Organization	Organizational agility	Direct and positive effect of IS capabilities on organizational agility, mediated by absorptive capacity. Negative moderating effect of hierarchy culture on the link between absorptive capacity and organizational agility	Literature review, pilot test	Composite reliability (0.7), AVE (0.5)
Gligor et al. (2013)	Supply chain agility and its dimensions	Supply chain managers and senior-level managers of different backgrounds	Supply chain function	Supply chain agility	Direct and positive effect	Literature review, pretests with samples of academics and supply chain managers	Cronbach's α (0.7), AVE (0.5)
Lee et al. (2015)	IT ambidexterity and organizational agility	IT and business executives of firms with a significant IT support in	Organization	Organizational agility	Mediating effect of operational ambidexterity in the relationship between IT ambidexterity and organizational agility. Moderator effect played by environmental dynamism between IT ambidexterity and operational ambidexterity	Review of constructs definitions, and three rounds of structured sorting involving academic faculty, students, industry managers.	Cronbach's α (0.7)
Li et al. (2009)	Supply chain agility and its dimensions	Supply chain executives, directors and managers	Supply chain function	Supply chain agility	Direct and positive effect	Literature review, experience surveys, and expert judges	Cronbach's α (0.7), Composite reliability (0.6), AVE (0.5)

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Lu & Ramamurthy (2011)	IT capability and agility	Senior business and IS executives	Organization	Market capitalizing agility and operational adjustment agility	Direct and positive effect	Literature review, pretests with doctoral students, questionnaires and interviews with business and IS executives	AVE (0.5)
Mikalef & Pateli (2017)	IT-enabled dynamic capabilities and competitive performance	CIOs, CEOs and IT managers from various industries	Organization	Market capitalizing agility and operational adjustment agility	Mediating role played by organizational agility in the relationship between IT-enabled dynamic capabilities and competitive performance	Literature review, pretest with academics and experts	Cronbach's α (0.7), Composite reliability (0.7)
Panda & Rath (2017)	Human IT capabilities and organizational agility	IT personnel	Organization	Organizational agility	Direct effect of human IT capabilities on organizational agility, and moderating effect of IT infrastructure	Prior research, pre-test	Composite reliability (0.7), Cronbach's α (0.7), AVE (0.5)
Panda & Rath (2018)	Human IT infrastructure and organizational agility	Business and IT executives working in the middle and senior level of management	Organization	Organizational agility	Direct and positive effect of human IT infrastructure on organizational agility	Literature review	Composite reliability (0.7), Cronbach's α (0.7)

Ravichandran (2018)	IT competence, innovation capacity, organizational agility	CIO, vice-president, director manager mainly from manufacturing industry	Organization	Organizational agility	Direct and positive effect of IT competence and innovation capacity on organizational agility	Prior literature, pre-test with doctoral students and experts	ICR (0.7)
Sangari & Razmi (2015)	BI competence, agile capabilities, and agile performance of the supply chain	Manufacturers	Supply chain function	Supply chain agile performance	Direct and positive effect of supply chain BI competence on agile capabilities and agile performance of the supply chain. Mediating effect of agile capabilities in the relationship between BI competence and agile performance of the supply chain	Literature review, check from academics and practitioners expert in that field	Cronbach's α (0.7)
Shin et al. (2015)	Strategic agility, operational performance, firm performance	Supplier SMEs	Organization	Customer retention, operational responsiveness, and financial performance	Direct and positive effect of strategic agility on operational performance (responsiveness) and firm performance. Mediating effect of operational responsiveness in the relationship between strategic agility and firm performance	Grounded theory, literature reviews, online survey	Cronbach's α (0.7), Composite reliability (0.7), AVE (0.5)

So & Scholl (2009)	Measurement instruments of agile practices	Software development teams	Software development function	Agile practices	Direct and positive effect	Prior studies, review by experts	Cronbach's α (0.75)
Yang & Liu (2012)	Enterprise agility, firm network structure and firm performance	General or senior managers	Organization	firm performance and network structure	Direct and positive effect of enterprise agility on firm performance, mediated by network structure	Literature review and pilot test with EMBA students (practitioners or general managers)	Cronbach's α (0.7), composite reliability (0.7), AVE (0.5)
Tahmasebifard et al. (2017)	Entrepreneurial orientation and agility capabilities	CEO and board members of manufacturing firms	Organization	Agility capabilities	Direct and positive effect of entrepreneurial orientation on agility capabilities	Literature review, previous studies	Composite reliability (0.7), factor loadings (0.5), AVE (0.5)

Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Before starting with the interview, I would like to ask you some preliminary questions. Could you specify:

- Name
- Surname
- How long have you been working in Spotahome?
- According to your role within the company, which are your main tasks or activities that you perform?

Q1. According to your opinion, and also on the basis of your experience at work during these years, which are the main changes that take place in Spotahome sector?

- Technological changes, changes in customer needs or preferences, new competitors? Other?
- What activities do you implement in accordance with these changes? (e.g., market monitoring, sector analysis, customer data collection) What are the specific tools that you use?

Q2. With respect to the competitors in the same or similar sectors at international level, what is in your opinion the key success factor or most representative aspect that enable Spotahome to succeed and be competitive at international level? Why?

- *"We innovate to win,"* this is one of the values of Spotahome. What does it mean for you? In which way innovation is central for Spotahome competitive advantage?

Q3. On the basis of your experience at work, what are your customers looking for? What are their needs?

- Do you use specific channels/tools to communicate and interact with them? For example?
- Do you use specific tools to collect and analyze data of your customers? For example?
- Can you explain me the way or the procedure through which you try to satisfy customer needs?

Q4. Can you describe the procedure that you follow to change/update marketing plans?

- What are the key factors that you consider mostly to improve/optimize marketing plans or programs?

Q5. The mission of Spotahome basically concerns to make renting simple and fast, and offers the possibility for customers to live an experience without being there. Among the values that

Spotahome supports there are *"we embrace simplicity"* and *"we get more from less."* On the basis of your role within the firm, could you describe me what do they mean these principles for you? Could you give me a practical example?

Q6. How do you use technology to communicate with customers? What type of relationship do you create with them?

- Could you tell me an example of the way in which you interact with your customer on the basis of your current/past experience?

Q7. How do you use technology to communicate and coordinate your work with the other people within your department? Could you tell me an example of the way in which you use technology in this sense?

- Conversely, in which way do you use technology to communicate and coordinate your work with the other departments? Could you tell me an example of the way in which you use technology in this sense?

- Finally, how do you use technology to communicate and coordinate your work with the other departments located in different countries? Could you tell me an example of the way in which you use technology in this sense?

Q8. In its official website, among its key values Spotahome declares *"we are a team."* According to you, and also on the basis of your experience at work, what does it mean?

- Can you describe me what type of relationship do you have with the other people within your department? In which way do you work with marketing department? Can you describe how is a "normal" working day?

- What type of relationship do you have with the other departments? In which way to you work with them? For example?

- What type of relationship do you have with the other departments located in different countries? In which way to you work with them? For example?

Appendix C: Semi-structured Interview Protocol

Good morning, thank you for agreeing to take part to this research. The purpose of the interview is to informally talk about your organization in the context of the MICE initiatives. I inform you that the interview will be properly recorded and transcribed. Everything we will talk about will remain confidential and the information I will use for my research will be processed anonymously.

To start the interview, could you kindly specify:

- your name,
- your surname,
- how long have you been working at X,
- what is your role within X,
- according to your role within X, what are the main tasks/activities that you perform with reference to MICE initiatives?

Q1. Could you tell me when did your organization start collaborating with Sardinia MICE network?

- Which were the expectation when the organization became part of Sardinia MICE network?
- According to you, do you think that the expectations have been overall met over time? What results have been achieved? Why?
- Could you tell an example on the way through participating to Sardinia MICE network helped the organization to achieve such results?

Q2. If it was my first day at work, how would you train me in planning and organizing a MICE initiave? What activities, procedures, or steps would you suggest me to do? Examples.

Q3. Could you tell me in which way do you manage the main activities in MICE (e.g., the communication with clients or participants, the booking of accommodations, the management of transportation, the requests of customers or participants, the communication with the leadership of MICE)? Examples.

- Do you remember a particular episod in which a communication problem or others created an unexpected problem in planning or during the execution of a MICE initiative? How did you addess it? Examples.

Q4. Could you tell me how many MICE initiatives are approximately organized by your organization in a year or were organized by your organization in the last year?

- Is there an initial definition of objectives and results to be achieved with reference to MICE events? For example? In which way?
- Is there a specific budget planning for marketing activities? What are the main marketing expenses included in the budget?
- Generally, what are the main MICE events in which your organization is involved or that your organization manages? Do you have a database where you report the events you participate to or organize?
- Immediately, after carrying out an initiative linked to MICE, is there any assessment or evaluation activity performed on how it went (e.g., reporting, marketing performance measurement)? For example?
- Has the participation or organization of MICE initiatives brought benefits to your organization (e.g., in terms of tourist flow, economic, visibility, notoriety)? What are the main changes that you detected?

Q5. Could you tell me, in general, what are the specific requests of clients for MICE initiatives?

- In which way do you communicate with clients? Do you use specific tools or channels? Examples.
- According to you, what are the most challenging requests to be satisfied? Could you make me an example about the procedure that you follow when the client has a specific request?
- Is there any specific activity that your organization does to create greater engagement with clients (e.g., marketing campaigns to specific client target, social media)? How do they create greater engagement?

Q6. Could you tell me if are there any initiatives or activities that you have implemented to change or improve something within MICE initiatives over the years? For example? Why?

- Are you planning improvement initiatives for the next 12 – 18 months? Why?

Q7. Could you tell me in which way do you coordinate work with your fellows in planning MICE initiatives? How do you relate each other?

- Could you tell me how do you communicate with your fellows to coordinate work in planning MICE initiatives? Do you use specific tools? In which way? Examples.

Q8. Could you tell me if there is a communication with the other members of MICE network? If yes, why? In which way do you communicate (e.g., tools)?

- Do you participate to meetings with them? For what? Examples.
- Is there a communication with MICE leadership? Why? In which way? Examples.

Q9. According to you, what are the key strengths of your organization with respect to competitor in the sector? Why?

- What makes the organization distinctive in MICE context? Examples.

Q10. Is there anything you think it would be interesting, useful or important to improve in your organization to increase performance in MICE context or increase the involvement of your organization in MICE context?

- Increase tourism involvement initiatives, improve strategic planning, innovation, make better use of technology, improve coordination, other? Examples.

List of publications during Ph.D. thesis work

1. **Moi, L.**, & Cabiddu, F. (2019). Riding Digital Transformation in International Context: The Agile Marketing Capability. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, *2019*, 13158. Academy of Management Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510. DOI: 10.5465/AMBPP.2019.13158abstract

2. **Moi, L.**, Cabiddu, F., & Frau, M. (2019). Towards the Development of an Agile Marketing Capability. Towards the Development of an Agile Marketing Capability. In: Cabitza F., Batini C., Magni M. (eds) *Organizing for the Digital World. Lecture Notes in Information Systems and Organisation*, vol 28. Springer, Cham. DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-90503-7_11

Paper accepted for presentation and conference proceeding

3. **Moi, L.**, Cabiddu F., & Mameli M. (2019). Developing Agile Marketing Capability in organizations: A Maturity Framework. "9th International Conference on Tourism Management and Related Issues", September 19-20, Venezia (Italy). ISSN 2295-3485

4. **Moi, L.**, & Cabiddu F. (2019). Riding Digital Transformation in international context: the Agile Marketing Capability. "79th Annual Meeting of the Academy of Management", August 9-13, Boston (USA).

5. **Moi, L.**, & Cabiddu F. (2019). Leading digital transformation through the Agile Marketing Capability: the case of Spotahome. "Digital Transformation and Internationalization of Firms: Prospects, Challenges and Future Agenda". October 8, Palermo (Italy). **BEST CONFERENCE PAPER FINALIST**.

6. **Moi, L.**, Cabiddu, F., & Frau, M. (2018). Conceptual framework for modeling the agile marketing capability. "2018 Global Marketing Conference", Tokyo, Japan, July 26-29 (pp. 71-90). ISSN 1976-8699; DOI 10.15444/GMC2018.01.08.05

7. **Moi, L.**, Cabiddu F., & Frau, M. (2017). Towards the development of an agile marketing capability. ITAIS 2017 "XIV Conference of the Italian Chapter of AIS", October 6-7, Milano (Italy). **BEST CONFERENCE PAPER selected for Springer book publication**. ISBN 978-3-319-90502-0

8. **Moi, L.**, Cabiddu F., & Frau, M. (2017). Leveraging on IT and dynamic marketing capabilities to develop an agile marketing capability. AIDEA 2017 "XXXVIII Convegno Nazionale: Tendenze nuove negli studi Economico-Aziendali. L'evoluzione dei rapporti azienda-società", September 14-15, Roma (Italy).

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