

ENTREPRENEURIAL MARKETING STRATEGY AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY: AN EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FROM COFFEE SHOPS

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Abstract

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For many decades, the main focus of successful businesses has been customer orientation. However, the role of the entrepreneur in shaping the landscape of marketing and business performance was recognized recently. Entrepreneurial marketing (EM) is described as the marketing done by entrepreneurs or business owners of entrepreneurial businesses by employing different strategies that are distinct from the typical textbook marketing to attract new businesses. In EM, the entrepreneur is a crucial actor in the marketing process (Adel et al., 2020). Grounded on the concept of entrepreneurial marketing and business performance, the aim of this study revolves around analysing the relationship among entrepreneurial marketing, business performance, antecedents of entrepreneur, and customer loyalty. Six hundred customers who regularly visit the coffee shops in Muwaileh, Sharjah, were a part of this study. The study used a descriptive research method. Entrepreneurial marketing was measured using five sub-variables namely, *Product strategy*, *Pricing strategy*, *Promotion strategy*, *Behavioural strategy*, and *Locality/Area characteristics* (Al-Shaikh, 2022). Statistical techniques like descriptive analysis, reliability analysis, structural equation modelling (SEM), and mean comparison tests were performed in this study. The study found that all the factors of entrepreneurial marketing have a significant impact on business performance. It was also evident from the study that the antecedent of entrepreneur, as well as customer loyalty, have a positive influence on business performance.

Keywords: Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurial Marketing, Business Performance, Customer Loyalty

Authors' individual contribution: Conceptualization — M.B.B. and A.G.; Formal Analysis — T.M.G. and M.T.A.; Investigation — M.B.B. and A.G.; Data Curation — M.A.A. and H.M.A.; Writing — M.B.B. and A.G.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The economy of the UAE is the second largest in the Middle East, with a gross domestic product (GDP) of US\$35 billion, and is one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. According to Gulf News Report (2022), "SMEs represent more than 94 percent of the total number of companies operating in the country and provide jobs for more than 86 percent of the private sector's workforce". The UAE government is investing funds through channels such as Sheik Zayed and Sheik Khalifa funds to support entrepreneurs. Young Emiratis have started taking a deep interest in business and many of them are doing business through their Instagram business account. Having said that, many businesses do not survive for more than two years due to increased competition and turbulent markets. Entrepreneurs increasingly operate in a turbulent market with change, complexity, chaos, and contraction (Hitt & Reed, 2000). The success of a business depends on innovative products or services and entrepreneurs' willingness to compete in the market with limited resources. As such, entrepreneurial marketing strategy (EMS) plays an essential role in enhancing the organization's performance in the market. There have been many recent studies, mostly in Western countries, related to entrepreneurial marketing (EM). There is very little knowledge of how entrepreneurs indulge their marketing activities in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, especially in the UAE. Despite the UAE government's emphasis on developing small and mid-size enterprises (SMEs) through various institutional training such as the Sheik Khalifa fund and Mohamed bin Zayed fund, very little knowledge and information are available to understand entrepreneurial marketing perspective, actions, and customer perception towards the entrepreneurial activities. The study aims to find out the entrepreneur's marketing strategy and techniques used to attract customers. The study aims to fill that gap by exploring the full range of factors, such as product strategy, pricing strategy, promotion strategy, behavioural strategy, locality/area characteristics, business performance, antecedents of the entrepreneur, business performance, and customer loyalty program adopted by the entrepreneur. To understand the variable influences the study intends to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: With the growing number of competitors in the market, to what extent can an entrepreneur differentiate his position and brand in the market?

RQ2: Does the customer loyal program play an important role in stopping the customer from switching to the competitors?

RQ3: Are customers satisfied with the entrepreneur's performance?

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 underpins the importance of existing research to this study and the review of the relevant literature is presented. An outline of the research methodology implemented by the study is presented in Section 3. Data collection and data analysis are presented in Section 4, thereafter, study results are discussed. Section 5 concludes the paper, and considers the study's implications.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Entrepreneurial marketing (EM) is the "proactive identification and exploitation of opportunities for acquiring and retaining profitable customers through innovative approaches to risk management, resource leveraging, and value creation" (Morris et al., 2002, p. 11). Entrepreneurial marketing evolved in the late 1960s and emerged at the intersection of two major disciplines, namely "marketing" and "entrepreneurship" (Hills & Hultman, 2006). The International Council for Small Business and the American Marketing Association first proposed the notion of "entrepreneurial marketing" in 1982 (Sarwoko & Iva, 2021; Kamarudin & Yusof, 2017).

According to Stokes (2000), EM is the marketing carried out by entrepreneurs or owner-managers of entrepreneurial companies employing innovative marketing strategies other than the traditional methods mentioned in marketing textbooks, to attract new businesses. Entrepreneurs in emerging markets are more likely to be innovation-oriented (driven by ideas and intuition) rather than customer-oriented (driven by market requirements assessments). They rely on informal networking rather than formalised research and intelligence systems (Nwankwo & Kanyangale, 2022; Dzozbenuku & Keelson, 2019; Carson & Gilmore, 2000; Basha et al., 2021).

Entrepreneurial marketing strategy is composed of five sub-strategies, namely product strategy, pricing strategy, promotion strategy, behavioural strategy, and locality/area characteristics (Kolabi et al., 2011). *Product strategy* of entrepreneurial marketing focuses on the elements of product categories with a special focus on quality, consumer compliance, product innovation, offerings in different packages, etc. *Pricing strategy's* focal point is better quality at a competitive price. *Promotion strategy* concentrates on an entrepreneur's interaction with customers, and the adoption of technology to leverage customer loyalty and satisfaction. *Behavioural strategy* emphasizes the personality traits of the entrepreneur such as an appetite for risk management, inventiveness, and the capacity to interact directly with clients, in addition to employing effective body language and interpersonal communication skills. *Locality/Area characteristics* emphasize innovative approaches in developing distributive networks, ease of servicing customers at the fastest pace, market categories based on customer's tastes and likings, etc. (Al-Shaikh, 2022; Fiore et al., 2013; Basha, 2014; Nasrabadi et al., 2020).

According to Cant and du Toit (2012), a loyal customer is one who has an emotional attachment to an organization, acts positively towards the organization by purchasing repeatedly from the organization over a certain period of time and recommends the organization to others, including friends and colleagues. Loyal customers can, therefore, be said to be important to the organization as both, a source of revenue and a marketing tool for recommending the organization. Deku et al. (2023) and Gurău (2012) further endorsed that entrepreneurial marketing strategy is a challenge or an opportunity initiative that may improve a company's productivity and performance and increase consumer loyalty. Wongtianchai et al. (2015) have developed a conceptual framework demonstrating

that product, pricing, and customer loyalty are vital for a small business owner who has to run the firm and produce results. Entrepreneurial marketing was advocated as an evolving paradigm that aids in the functioning of businesses in a quickly changing environment. Entrepreneurial marketing strategy plays a significant role in achieving marketing goals. It also has a momentous impact on business performance.

Hamali (2015) analysed the impact of EM aspects on the success of a small garment firm in Bandung, Indonesia. In this survey, ninety small industries were chosen as samples. Multiple linear regression was utilised to analyse the data in this study. The results showed that all the factors of EM had a noteworthy impact on business performance. Adel et al. (2020) have explored the relationship between entrepreneurial marketing strategy (EMS), institutional environment (IE), and business performance (BP). The sample of the study consisted of 202 owners/entrepreneurs of SMEs in Egypt. The study used a non-probability quota sampling technique and the results indicated that EMS affects BP positively. Based on the above extant study and discussion, the following hypotheses were developed:

H1: Locality/area characteristics have a profound impact on business performance.

H2: Pricing strategy plays an important role in impacting business performance.

H3: Behavioural strategy has repercussions on business performance.

H4: Promotion strategy has a pronounced impact on business performance.

H5: Product strategy has implications on business performance.

H6: Antecedents of the entrepreneur impact business performance.

H7: Customer loyalty has a paramount effect on business performance.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study's primary aim is to identify entrepreneurs' marketing techniques to create customer loyalty and a promising impact on business performance. The primary reason for selecting the UAE is due to the cosmopolitan environment and the affluent lifestyle enjoyed by many of the residents. Most of the youngsters are students cum-entrepreneurs or employees-cum-entrepreneurs. The culture of the business is booming across the Emirates among the Emiratis.

3.1. Methodology

To study the impact of EM and customer loyalty on the business performance of coffee shops in Sharjah, this study adopted a descriptive research design technique in which a quantitative method was used for data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) and a quantitative survey instrument was designed and validated in the study. This research explored the entrepreneurs' marketing tactics and the consumers' perception of these tactics as different and unique compared to similar organizations in the market. To understand the factors influencing the customers' visit or loyalty towards a particular coffee shop, a set of structured questionnaires were distributed to those customers who were regular to the coffee shop. The study

adopted a cross-sectional approach for collecting data from the respondents. In cross-sectional research, data is collected at a single point in time.

This research could have also been conducted using a qualitative research design approach (Maxwell, 2012). To comprehend people's views, experiences, attitudes, behaviour, and interactions, qualitative methods are employed. In qualitative research, non-numerical data is generated. Similarly, this research could also be conducted using a longitudinal study, in which the data is collected over an extended period of time with the same sample to discover the relationships between the study variables (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

3.2. Sampling design

Ten (10) coffee shops in Sharjah were selected for the data collection of the study. The respondents of the study consisted of consumers who visited the coffee shops in Muwaileh, Sharjah. A total of 600 questionnaires were sent to respondents representing different coffee shops in the study area. However, only 550 questionnaires were returned from the respondents. Thus, the response rate was 87.0%.

3.3. Research instrument

Based on the findings of an exhaustive evaluation of the literature on the areas of management like marketing, entrepreneurship, business performance, customer loyalty, etc., the authors developed the research instrument utilised in the study. The tool was created using a five-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating significant disagreement, 2 indicating disagreement, 3 indicating neither disagreement nor agreement, 4 indicating agreement, and 5 indicating strong agreement. The conceptual model is shown in Figure 1. The model hypothesizes that the components of entrepreneurial marketing like product strategy, pricing strategy, promotion strategy, behavioural strategy, and locality/area characteristics have significant impact on business performance. Similarly, the study also hypothesizes that the antecedents of entrepreneur and customer loyalty also impact business performance positively. The quantitative data gathered from the study respondents was statistically analysed using the SPSS Statistics (25.0) software suite. The researchers used descriptive statistical analysis techniques such as descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and normality analysis. In addition, the AMOS (21.0) software package was used to do regression analysis.

3.4. Statistical procedures used

To analyse the data collected from the consumers of the coffee shops, different statistical procedures were used including frequency and percentage analysis, reliability analysis, descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, skewness, kurtosis), regression analysis, and structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis. The regression model hypothesized in the study is presented here.

$$y = b_0 + b_1x_1 + b_2x_2 + b_3x_3 + b_4x_4 + b_5x_5 + b_6x_6 \quad (1)$$

where,

- y is business performance;
- b_0 is the constant (also called “line intercept”);
- x_1 is locality/area characteristics;
- b_1 is the slope of the regression line for locality/area characteristics;
- x_2 is the pricing strategy;
- b_2 is the slope of the regression line for the pricing strategy;
- x_3 is behavioural strategy;
- b_3 is the slope of the regression line for behavioural strategy;
- x_4 is the promotion strategy;
- b_4 is the slope of the regression line for the promotion strategy;
- x_5 is the product strategy;
- b_5 is the slope of the regression line for product strategy;
- x_6 is for the antecedents of the entrepreneur;
- b_6 is the slope of the regression line for antecedents of the entrepreneur;
- x_6 is customer loyalty;
- b_6 is the slope of the regression line for customer loyalty.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Data analysis and findings

Table 1 illustrates that the majority of the study respondents were males (64.2%) and females constituted around 35.8%. The study of the age group of the respondents shows that the majority were from the age group of 21–30 years (41.5%), followed by respondents belonging to the age group 31–40 years (37.6%); 11.8% of respondents were from the age group of above 40 years and only 9.1% of respondents represented the age group of below 20 years. The educational profile of the respondents demonstrates that the majority of the respondents have post-graduate and above qualifications (42.2%), followed by respondents with graduate qualifications (26.2%). The study also included respondents with professional/technical qualifications (21.1%) and only 10.5% of respondents have higher secondary and below qualifications. Regarding marital status, 63.5% of the respondents were single and 36.5% of the respondents were married.

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents

Demographic factors	Category	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	353	64.2
	Female	197	35.8
Age	Below 20 years	50	9.1
	21–30 years	228	41.5
	31–40 years	207	37.6
	Above 40 years	65	11.8
	Total	550	100.0
Qualification	Higher secondary and below	58	10.5
	Graduate	144	26.2
	Post-graduate and above	232	42.2
	Professional/Technical	116	21.1
Marital status	Single	349	63.5
	Married	201	36.5

Note: $N = 550$.

Source: Authors generated the table from the data.

4.2. Descriptive statistics

The descriptive statistics of the data are presented in Table 2. The table also shows the result of normality analysis using skewness and kurtosis parameters.

Table 2 displays that the respondents have given the highest mean score for the *Pricing strategy* ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 0.57$), followed by the *Promotion*

strategy ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.58$). The *Locality/Area characteristics* was the least rated variable with a mean score of 3.15 and a standard deviation of 0.70. The table also shows that the skewness and kurtosis values of all the study variables are within the -2 to +2 threshold bounds, indicating that the questionnaire meets the normalcy criteria (Cain et al., 2017).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Product strategy	1.60	5.00	3.60	0.57	0.04	0.58
Pricing strategy	1.60	5.00	3.74	0.57	-0.18	0.31
Promotion strategy	2.00	5.00	3.62	0.58	-0.30	0.39
Behavioural strategy	1.60	5.00	3.47	0.56	-0.16	0.58
Locality/Area characteristics	1.00	5.00	3.15	0.70	-0.23	-0.16
Business performance	2.17	5.00	3.61	0.54	0.14	1.23
Antecedents of the entrepreneur	1.80	5.00	3.61	0.56	0.21	0.09
Customer loyalty	2.00	5.00	3.36	0.69	0.25	-0.25

4.3. Reliability analysis

The data sets were further analysed to check the reliability of the data test. Cronbach’s alpha measure of internal consistency (Cronbach, 1951) was used to measure the construct in order to test if

the alpha value was greater than 0.6 or 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). The purpose of this test was to identify how close the questionnaire fits into the intended study. Any questionnaires below 0.7 were removed from the study. Table 3 exhibits the result of the reliability analysis using

a coefficient of reliability namely Cronbach's alpha. The outcome of the test result shows that all the variables are within the acceptable range. This demonstrates that the components in the instrument were trustworthy for making additional measurements.

Table 3. Reliability analysis

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's alpha
Product strategy	10	0.922
Pricing strategy	10	0.888
Promotion strategy	11	0.899
Behavioural strategy	12	0.942
Locality/Area characteristics	6	0.742
Business performance	8	0.764
Antecedents of the entrepreneur	10	0.942
Customer loyalty	12	0.902

4.4. Structural equation modelling analysis

The conceptual model developed in this study was empirically validated using SEM analysis using AMOS (21.0) software tool. The SEM analysis is used to explore the predictive ability of a set of independent variables on one dependent variable (Pallant, 2001). The results from the SEM model indicate the testing of the hypotheses between the independent variable such as *Locality/Area characteristics*, *Pricing strategy*, *Behavioural strategy*,

Promotion strategy, and *Product strategy* — and the dependent variable *Business performance*. Figure 1 shows the standardised regression estimate model of the variables.

Figure 1. Standardised regression estimate model

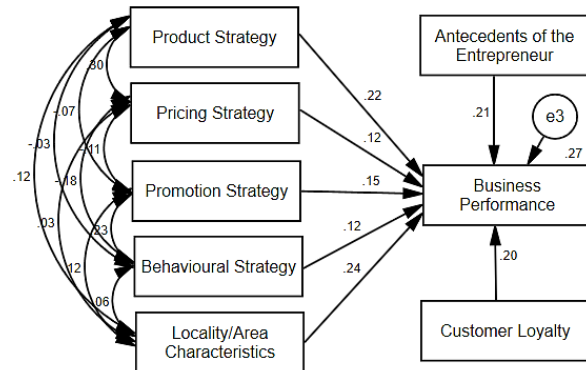


Table 4 presents the value of the beta estimate for different predictor variables. The path coefficients of each variable of EM (like *Locality/Area characteristics*, *Pricing strategy*, *Behavioural strategy*, *Promotion strategy*, and *Product strategy*) on *Business performance*, are shown in the table. The values of path coefficients show that all the path coefficients are significant (p-value < 0.05).

Table 4. Regression weights

Dependent variable	Relationship	Independent variable	Beta estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P-value
Business performance	←	Locality/Area characteristics	0.25	0.023	6.392	0.000
Business performance	←	Pricing strategy	0.11	0.029	2.941	0.003
Business performance	←	Behavioural strategy	0.12	0.029	3.271	0.001
Business performance	←	Promotion strategy	0.15	0.028	3.901	0.000
Business performance	←	Product strategy	0.22	0.030	5.313	0.000
Business performance	←	Antecedents of the entrepreneur	0.21	0.031	5.053	0.000
Business performance	←	Customer loyalty	0.20	0.023	5.496	0.000

From Table 4, it is very clear that all the hypotheses were accepted and the results are discussed below:

- The first hypothesis (H1): The *Locality/Area characteristics* variable has a profound impact on *Business performance*, was accepted with a beta value of 0.25.
- The second hypothesis (H2): *Pricing strategy* plays an important role in impacting *Business performance*, was accepted with a beta value of 0.11.
- The third hypothesis (H3): *Behavioural strategy* has its repercussions on *Business performance*, was accepted with a beta value of 0.12.
- The fourth hypothesis (H4): *Promotion strategy* has a pronounced impact on *Business performance*, was accepted with a beta value of 0.15.
- The fifth hypothesis (H5): *Product strategy* has a significant impact on *Business performance* was accepted with a beta value of 0.22.
- The sixth hypothesis (H6): The *Antecedents of the entrepreneur* variable has a huge impact on *Business performance* was accepted with a beta value of 0.21.
- The seventh hypothesis (H7): *Customer loyalty* has a paramount effect on *Business performance* was accepted with a beta value of 0.20.

The goodness of fit indices for the overall AMOS model developed in this study are demonstrated in Table 5.

Table 5. Goodness of fit — AMOS model

Parameter	Recommended value	Obtained value
Chi-square value	-	48.246
P-value	-	0.004
RMSEA	< 0.09 (Hair et al., 2011)	0.078
RMR	< 0.02 (Hair et al., 2011)	0.012
GFI	> 0.90 (Hair et al., 2011)	0.954
AGFI	> 0.90 (Hair et al., 2011)	0.950
CFI	> 0.90 (Hu & Bentler, 1999)	0.984
TLI	> 0.90 (Hooper et al., 2008)	0.950
RFI	> 0.90 (Hair et al., 2011)	0.923
NFI	> 0.90 (Hu & Bentler, 1999)	0.974
Chisq/df	< 5.0 (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004)	4.386

Note: RMSEA is for root mean square error of approximation; RMR is for root mean square residual; GFI is goodness of fit index; AGFI is adjusted goodness of fit index; CFI is comparative fit index; TLI is for Tucker-Lewis index; RFI is relative fit index; NFI is normed fit index, and Chisq/df denotes degree of freedom.

The values obtained for several indices such as GFI (goodness of fit index), AGFI (adjusted goodness of fit index), and CFI (comparative fit index) are more than the suggested value of 0.9, as illustrated in Table 5. This denotes that the model is well-fitting (Hooper et al., 2008; Hu & Bentler, 1999). Similarly, the RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation) value was lower than the 0.09 limit advised (Hair et al., 2011). Overall, the results of

the study's model fit indices are within the suggested range (Hu & Bentler, 1999; Schumacker & Lomax, 2004; Hooper et al., 2008).

4.5. Discussion

The result of the SEM analysis signifies that all seven independent variables contribute positively toward business performance. It is important to understand that despite all the factors that contributed positively, some variables have a higher impact than others. The outcome of the SEM analysis reveals that the *Locality/Area characteristic* has a 0.25 beta estimate, which contributes the highest towards the *Business performance*. *Product strategy* is the second highest contributor with a value of 0.22 beta estimate towards the business performance. *Antecedents of the entrepreneur* are the third highest contributor with a beta value of 0.21. *Customer loyalty* follows as the fourth highest contributor with a value of 0.20 beta estimate, followed by *Promotion strategy* (0.15), *Behavioural strategy* (0.12), and the least contribution is by *Pricing strategy* beta estimate of which is 0.11.

5. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the impact of different factors of entrepreneurial marketing (pricing strategy, behavioural strategy, promotion strategy, product strategy, and locality/area characteristics) on business performance with special reference to coffee shops in Muwaileh, Sharjah. The study also analysed the influence of business performance on the antecedent of entrepreneur and customer loyalty. The study found that all the factors of entrepreneurial marketing

have a crucial impact on business performance. Similarly, the antecedent of the entrepreneur, as well as customer loyalty influence business performance in a positive manner. The findings are in conformance with the results of the previous study by Singh et al. (2019), which found that customer loyalty heavily impacts business performance. Similarly, the study findings are in accordance with the previous studies that have depicted the positive relationship between entrepreneurial marketing and business performance (Hamali, 2015; Wongtianchai et al., 2015; Adel et al., 2020; Muhammad et al., 2020). The findings of the study have made a significant contribution to the evolving body of literature related to entrepreneurial marketing, customer loyalty, and antecedents of entrepreneurs. Finally, this study has made a significant contribution to the body of research by providing an in-depth understanding of the nuances of entrepreneurial marketing in small enterprises like coffee shops.

The findings of the study will provide the base which the researchers can use in future studies. The findings of the study reveal that all the variables (Pricing strategy, Behavioural strategy, Promotion strategy, Product strategy, and Locality/Area characteristics) significantly impact the consumer's positive attitude towards the entrepreneurs and business performance. However, the study has certain limitations which provide an opportunity for further research. First of all, since the data set is taken from one specific city, the results cannot be attributed to the complete UAE population. As such, similar studies should be carried out in a much more diverse population with large samples to further strengthen the findings. Secondly, our data is cross-sectional and so causality cannot be claimed.

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