

Developing a Localized Entrepreneurial Marketing Model to Overcome Contextual Factors in Iranian Developing a Localized Entrepreneurial Marketing Model in Iranian Startups Using an Exploratory Mixed-Methods Approach

Reza Arabgari¹, Hormoz Mehrani² , Narges Hasanmoradi³, Zahra Alipourdarvishi³ 

1- PhD Student of Business Administration, Majoring in Marketing, North Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

2- Assistant Professor, Management Department of Ghazali Qazvin Institute of Higher Education, Qazvin, Iran

3- Associate Professor, Department of Management, North Tehran Branch, Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran

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Abstract

This study aims to develop a native entrepreneurial marketing model for Iranian startups using a mixed heuristic approach. In this regard, the role of causal, contextual, and intervening factors in the formation and implementation of entrepreneurial marketing strategies was examined, and a model appropriate to the cultural and economic characteristics of Iran was designed. In the qualitative part of the research, using the grounded theory method and content analysis, 33 key categories were identified in the form of causal, contextual, intervening, strategies, and consequences conditions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 marketing and entrepreneurship experts. In the quantitative part, data from a researcher-made questionnaire was collected from 340 startup managers in Tehran, and the validity of the model was examined through structural equation modeling and SmartPLS software. The findings showed that innovation, customer orientation, and networking as causal factors; and factors such as technology infrastructure, government support, public culture, and employee behavior in contextual and intervention roles have a significant impact on entrepreneurial marketing strategies. These strategies include new marketing, training, digitalization, customization, and inter-organizational partnerships, which ultimately lead to outcomes such as organizational agility, enhanced customer engagement, opportunity discovery, and improved business performance. This indigenous model, emphasizing the specific characteristics of Iran's entrepreneurial ecosystem, can be an effective tool for guiding government policymaking, accelerator support programs, and startup management decisions. The findings also indicate that a smart combination of contextual and strategic factors can lead to sustainable competitive advantage and improve the position of startups in domestic and international markets.

Keywords:

Entrepreneurial Marketing, Business Performance Improvement, Innovative Companies, Mixed Heuristic Method

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Publisher: Research Center of Resource Management Studies and Knowledge-Based Business

Corresponding Author: Hormoz Mehrani

Email: larabgari@gmail.com

Introduction

This research aims to develop a native entrepreneurial marketing model for Iranian startups using a mixed heuristic approach. This study examines the causal, contextual, and intervening factors in the formulation and implementation of entrepreneurial marketing strategies and presents a model appropriate to the economic and cultural characteristics of Iran. The research approach consists of two qualitative and quantitative parts. In the qualitative part, grounded theory and content analysis were used to identify key factors affecting entrepreneurial marketing. In this stage, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 entrepreneurial marketing experts and an initial model was designed. In the quantitative part, data collected from 340 startup managers were analyzed and the proposed model was validated using structural equation modeling. To increase the accuracy of the analysis, SmartPLS software was used and the validity and reliability of the measurement tools were carefully examined. The findings showed that innovation, customer orientation, and networking play a key role in the development of entrepreneurial marketing strategies. Also, government support, economic infrastructure, and public culture as contextual factors, and digital technologies, organizational culture, and employee behavior as intervening factors have a significant impact on the implementation of this model. The results indicate that the interaction between these factors and the adopted strategies improves the performance of startups in challenging environments. Entrepreneurial marketing strategies enhance the financial and competitive growth of startups by increasing organizational agility, improving interaction with customers, and identifying new opportunities. This study provides recommendations for business managers and policymakers to optimize their marketing strategies by focusing on innovation, customer orientation, and networking. It is suggested that future studies examine the role of advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, machine learning, and augmented reality in optimizing entrepreneurial marketing models to ensure the model's adaptability to future changes.

Theoretical Framework

Given the specific characteristics of today's world, including rapid change, increasing complexity, and increasing competition, as well as the inefficiency of traditional methods such as strategic planning and classic market forecasts, it has become necessary to pay attention to new methods to overcome these changes. In the world of modern businesses, startups are recognized as the main players in the innovative economy, which seek to create value and gain market share by utilizing new technologies and flexible business models. However, the survival and growth of these new companies in an environment characterized by economic uncertainty, rapid technological change, and intense competition is a serious challenge. In such circumstances, startups need innovative strategies that are adaptable to their environment to survive and grow in competitive markets.

One of the most effective strategies for startup growth in uncertain times is entrepreneurial marketing, which, due to its flexible and opportunity-oriented nature, allows startups to be more agile in the face of environmental changes and challenges and to benefit from sustainable competitive advantages. Unlike traditional marketing, which emphasizes long-term planning and specific processes; entrepreneurial marketing, as a dynamic model, focuses on identifying new opportunities, taking targeted risks, innovating in service delivery, and creating value for customers. These characteristics are especially important for startups in the early stages of development, as limited financial and human resources and an uncertain market environment force them to adopt more flexible approaches.

Entrepreneurial Marketing

Entrepreneurial marketing refers to processes in which entrepreneurs use innovative methods to develop the market, establish effective relationships with customers, and achieve new business opportunities. Unlike traditional models that focus on exploiting existing resources, this approach emphasizes innovation, courage in facing risks, and flexibility in decision-making. Many studies have shown that the use of entrepreneurial marketing can improve financial performance, increase market share, and enhance the competitive position of companies.

However, existing entrepreneurial marketing models are mainly designed based on data and conditions of developed countries, and their localization is challenging for countries like Iran that face their own economic, infrastructural, and cultural limitations. Therefore, the need to develop a local model for entrepreneurial marketing in Iranian startups is strongly felt; a model that, while taking into account the environmental characteristics of Iran, has modern research approaches for scientific and operational structuring.

Startup

Startups operate in highly variable and uncertain conditions as new businesses trying to meet market needs in a different way by offering new products or services. These companies usually face high risk, limited resources and ambitious goals. In fact, what distinguishes a startup from other businesses is its innovative, risk-taking and opportunistic nature. Successful startups usually operate on the basis of a creative human team, a collaborative culture and an approach based on experimentation and learning.

On the other hand, marketing in startups does not simply mean advertising and sales, but has a deeper meaning that includes a precise understanding of customer needs, designing a differentiated value proposition, creating a unique customer experience and developing long-term relationships. In this direction, digital technologies, data analysis and new communication tools play an important role in enhancing the effectiveness of entrepreneurial marketing. Therefore, the present study is trying to identify the influential components in the Iranian space, to design a comprehensive model for entrepreneurial marketing in startups that not only has a strong theoretical support, but also can be used and implemented in practice by managers.

Research Methodology

In this regard, the present study has used a mixed heuristic methodology. In the qualitative part, data were collected using semi-structured interviews with 18 experts in the fields of marketing, entrepreneurship, and startup management. Data analysis was conducted using the grounded theory method in three stages of open, axial, and selective coding, as a result of which 33 key categories were identified in the form of five main components: causal conditions, contextual conditions, intervening factors, strategies, and consequences. Then, based on these components, an initial conceptual model was designed that served as the basis for the quantitative part of the research.

In the quantitative part, in order to empirically evaluate the model, a researcher-made questionnaire was designed and distributed among 340 startup managers active in Tehran. The collected data were analyzed using SmartPLS software and structural equation modeling method. The results of data analysis confirmed the proposed model and showed that the identified dimensions have statistical validity and reliability.

Research findings

The findings indicated that the variables of innovation, customer orientation, and networking have the greatest impact in the causal dimension. In the contextual dimension, structural

factors such as government support, information technology infrastructure, and general culture of society play an important role in shaping the entrepreneurial marketing context. Also, in the intervention dimension, organizational culture, leadership style, and employee behavior play a facilitating and reinforcing role in implementing strategies. The identified strategies also included innovative marketing, process digitization, service personalization, brand development, employee training, and creating strategic partnerships. These strategies ultimately led to outcomes such as increasing organizational agility, improving customer interaction, discovering market opportunities, and improving the financial and competitive performance of startups. In fact, this model is able to pave the way for the development of new businesses in volatile markets by considering the link between intra-organizational and environmental variables. On the other hand, the analysis of the research results showed that integrating innovative strategies with capable human resources and a learning organizational culture can increase the capacity for adaptation and innovation at different organizational levels.

Conclusion

This indigenous entrepreneurial marketing model is not only designed to suit the specific conditions and challenges of the Iranian entrepreneurial ecosystem, but also has the ability to be applied practically at different decision-making levels. From a theoretical perspective, the present study has contributed to the enrichment of the entrepreneurial marketing literature in the context of developing countries by providing a comprehensive framework. From a practical perspective, the research results can be used by policymakers, managers, and young entrepreneurs.

Finally, the present study suggests that in future studies, the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data analysis, augmented reality, and blockchain in the design and implementation of entrepreneurial marketing strategies be examined. Also, conducting comparative research among developing countries can lead to the identification of common patterns or significant differences. Focusing on developing dynamic models that are adaptable to environmental and technology-driven changes will be valuable avenues for continuing this line of research.