



Volume 12, Issue 3, 2024

ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Pages: 35-46

The Role of Entrepreneurial Culture in the Impact of Innovative Marketing Opportunities on Entrepreneurial Performance in the Tourism Industry

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Received: 03 Jan 2024

Revised: 06 March 2024

Accepted: 22 April 2024

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research is to investigate the role of entrepreneurial culture in the effect of innovative marketing opportunities on entrepreneurial performance in the tourism industry of Mazandaran province. This is an applied research with a quantitative (comparative) approach conducted through a descriptive survey using standard questionnaires. The statistical population of the present study included all employees of Mazandaran Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Office, numbering 410 people, of which 108 were women and 302 were men. Of this population, using Cochran's formula, a sample consisting of 385 was formed ($n=199$), the individual members of which were selected using simple random sampling. For measurement of the variables, we made use of the standard questionnaire developed by Battour(2022). Validity of the questionnaire was assessed and confirmed by the academic experts. Its reliability, as measured in terms of Cronbach's alpha ($= 0.891$), was high and thus, confirmed. The obtained survey data for the test of the research hypotheses were analyzed using SEM-PLS technique. The obtained results from the test indicated that innovative marketing opportunities had a positive and significant impact on the entrepreneurial culture and entrepreneurial performance in the tourism industry of Mazandaran province. In addition, the results indicated that entrepreneurial culture had a positive and significant effect on entrepreneurial performance in the understudy tourism industry.

KEYWORDS: Entrepreneurial Culture; Innovative Marketing Opportunities; Entrepreneurial; Tourism Industry

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How to Cite This Article: Rezazadeh, F; Shokri, Y. (2024).“ The Role of Entrepreneurial Culture in the Impact of Innovative Marketing Opportunities on Entrepreneurial Performance in the Tourism Industry”. *The Open Access Journal of Resisitive Economics*, 12(3): 35-46.

1. Introduction

Considering today's turbulent and competitive market and the high speed of changes in the business environment, in order to achieve optimal performance, companies need to adopt measures in their activities that correspond to the changes in the business environment. Given the marketing importance as one of the main pillars of business, innovative measures in the form of "innovative marketing" strategy can offer an effective solution in this regard (Bozorgi et al, 2021).

Marketing is the management process of identifying, predicting and meeting customer needs (Song, 2020). However, the important point is that experts believe that innovative marketing is a type of marketing that encompasses all the marketing activities of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), including making rapid and gradual changes and realizing sufficient profit. The innovative marketing includes such components as marketing variables, modification, integrated marketing, customer focus, market focus, unique offer, mental image, and strategic alliances. It should be kept in mind that paying little attention to the dynamism and competitiveness of the advanced technologies market and neglecting innovations will increase the failure rate of companies. Such challenges along with other factors such as the excessive employee's focus on the product and the lack of attention to marketing activities can make it difficult to achieve the company's objectives (Lee et al, 2020).

Innovative marketing looks for creative and new solutions and is applied when traditional marketing is not effective. This type of marketing allows small and medium-sized enterprises to respond to market needs by altering and customizing their marketing activities (Gilmore, 2020). Before the current decade, marketing activists have often considered the strategies of large and long-established companies as fixed and inevitable principles that can be applied in small and medium-sized businesses. Many researchers have pointed to the lack of attention to innovative marketing as the key factor in business failure (Bak et al, 2020). Due to the fact that nowadays innovation is considered as the key factor for the survival of companies and organizations, these companies use innovation to enhance their competitiveness in their business (Kim-Soon et al, 2017). It should be noted that innovation is the renewal of related activities in a chain that starts with creative discovery and continues with the development of entrepreneurship (Pazari et al, 2020). Researchers emphasize the necessity of benefiting from innovation elements in marketing theories in this type of companies (Stokes & Wilson, 2010). Therefore, small and medium-sized enterprises are looking for innovative marketing activities, more creative production and alternative marketing (Sethna et al, 2013). The reason for this can be traced to the fact that today companies are facing dynamic environments that have reduced their ability to predict and thus increased the risk of planning. Therefore, by focusing on organizational innovation, they are able to increase their financial performance level (Kim-Soon et al, 2017). Identification of innovative opportunities affects marketing decisions. Identification of innovative opportunities refers to the ability to detect situations in which by creating new tools, and setting new goals, or establishing means-end relationships, new products, resources, required raw materials, markets, and organizational approaches can be identified (Dey et al, 2019). Due to covid-19, technology is

helping entrepreneurial marketing decisions. Therefore, with the activity of people in their homes, artificial intelligence can be a main tool that allows entrepreneurs to make business decisions remotely (Dhingra et al, 2018). In general, the identification of entrepreneurial opportunities is a combination of social factors, external conditions, and entrepreneur's opinions and subjective ideas (Gilmore, 2020). Therefore, the main question is whether entrepreneurial culture has a significant effect on the impact of innovative marketing opportunities on entrepreneurial performance in the tourism industry of Mazandaran province.

2. Theoretical framework and research background

In today's market and with the intensification of competition in the regional and global business environment, followed by rapid changes and increased uncertainty in the business environment, companies need to look for solutions to ensure their survival in these conditions (Ghavayeh & Mansha, 2018). In the meantime, in order to discover and profit from business opportunities, innovative measures can be considered as an effective solution to overcome the problems of today's competitive market, achieve optimal performance and create significant value for companies (Maleki Minbash et al, 2019). This pillar in business, like other pillars, is affected by rapid environmental changes. In order to discover opportunities, the market exploits these opportunities (Martiz & Deval, 2012). And as a result, to create a competitive advantage (Battour et al, 2021), companies should include measures in their marketing activities that correspond to the changes in the business environment. The use of innovation in marketing enables companies to actively identify the needs of customers in accordance with the growth and change of customer needs, as well as the changes in the business environment, and to seek appropriate responses to them (Martiz & Deval, 2012). To this end, companies can gain greater market share and create a new market for their products and services through innovation (Maleki Minbash et al, 2018).

Ahmadi et al (2023) showed that marketing researchers give the highest priority to digital financial technologies and blockchain and the development of decentralized banking in terms of influencing the future of innovative marketing in the banking industry with a focus on blockchain technology. In a research titled "Analysis of innovative marketing and its application in organizations," Saghari et al (2021) reviewed eight main constituting elements of innovative marketing with highest frequency in research texts as well as 15 methods and tools of innovative marketing. Mahmoud Mohammadian et al (2021) found that among the identified factors, innovation factors, expert forces, customer focus, and market focus are respectively more significant. Rezvani et al (2013) found that the innovative marketing components in technology-oriented small and medium-sized enterprises operating in the nano industry consisted of 8 themes, 21 sub-components and 55 items. These themes included marketing variables, customer focus, market focus, change and improvement, integrated marketing, unique position, positive mental image, and networking.

Falaras and Moschidis (2023) investigated the effect of entrepreneurial culture and institutional framework on innovation with the mediating role of institutional framework and found that

entrepreneurial culture positively and statistically affected innovation. Caliendo et al (2023), in a research titled The effect of startup motivation on entrepreneurial performance, suggested that predicting entrepreneurship development based on individual and business-related characteristics is one of the key goals of entrepreneurship research. Ouragini and Lakhali (2023) found that the overall performance of companies was positively related to various dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing. Arabeche et al (2022), in a research titled Entrepreneurial Orientation, Organizational Culture and Business Performance in SMEs: Evidence from the Emerging Economy, suggested that the excellent link between entrepreneurial orientation and the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises is partially mediated by organizational culture. Zakiyah Zahara et al (2022), in a research titled Entrepreneurial marketing and marketing performance suggested that the use of digital resources through digital marketing is an option to reach customers, create interaction with customers in real time and ultimately achieve customer satisfaction.

Therefore, based on the above background and the model of Battour et al (2022), the conceptual model of the research is drawn as follows:

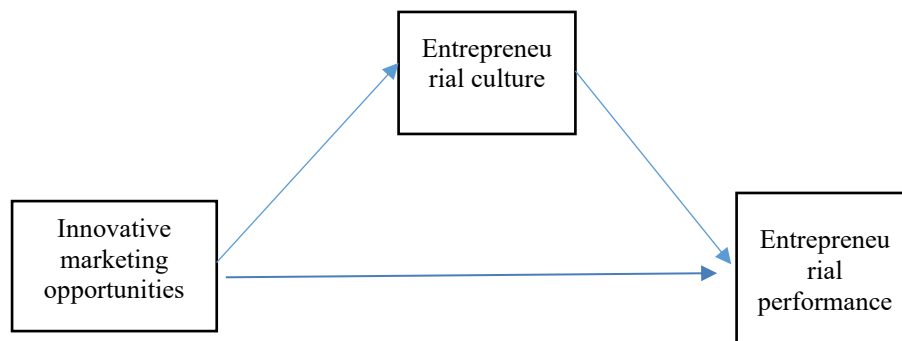


Figure 1. Research conceptual model (Battour et al, 2022)

Hence, the following hypotheses are made:

Hypothesis I. Innovative marketing opportunities have a significant impact on entrepreneurial performance in the tourism industry of Mazandaran province.

Hypothesis II. Innovative marketing opportunities have a significant impact on the entrepreneurial culture in the tourism industry of Mazandaran province.

Hypothesis III. Entrepreneurial culture has a significant impact on entrepreneurial performance in the tourism industry of Mazandaran province.

3. Methodology

This is an applied research with a quantitative (comparative) approach conducted through a descriptive survey using standard questionnaires.

The statistical population of the present study included all employees of Mazandaran Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Office, numbering 410 people, of which 108 were women and 302 were men. Of this population, using Cochran's formula, a sample consisting of 385 was formed ($n=385$), the individual members of which were selected using simple random sampling.

For measurement of the variables, we made use of the standard questionnaire developed by Battour(2022) as detailed in table 1.

Table 1. Features of the research questionnaire

Components	Number of items
Innovative marketing opportunities	6
Entrepreneurial culture	9
Entrepreneurial performance	8

The questionnaire was adapted and validated consulting the supervisor and other professors with expertise and knowledge of the field.

A preliminary test of reliability was performed by distributing the questionnaire among 30 respondents, according to which the obtained Cronbach's alpha for all variables of information sharing level and the whole questionnaire was more than 0.7. Next, the obtained data from the whole sample was analyzed in SPSS and the SmartPLS4 software, using structural equation modeling (SEM) technique for PLS.

4. Findings

In this section, the results of confirmatory factor analysis of each research variable by SmartPLS 4 are presented. The strength of the relationship between the latent and observable variable is given by the factor loading. Factor loading is a value between zero and one. If the factor loading is less than 0.4, the relationship is considered weak and is ignored. A factor loading between 0.4 and 0.6 is acceptable, and if it is greater than 0.6, it is very desirable (Klein, 2010). The factor loadings of the research variables were calculated separately as shown in figure 2.

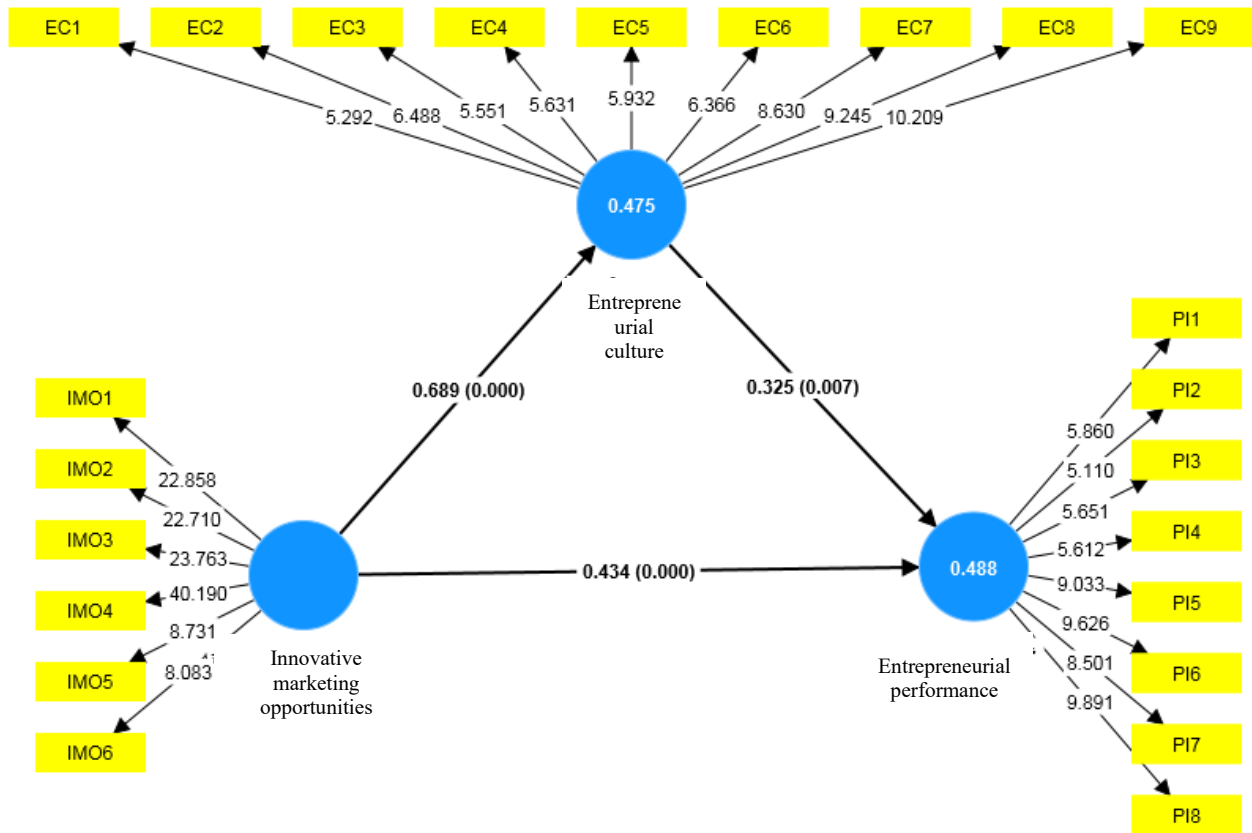


Figure 2. Factor loadings of model components in standard state

As can be seen in the figure above and table 2, in all the model's constructs, factor loadings have values greater than 0.4. Hence, the reliability of measurement models is acceptable. Having measured the factor loadings of the questions, Cronbach's alphas and composite reliability (Dillon–Goldstein’s ρ) were computed, the results of which are reported in the table below.

Table 2. The results of Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability (CR), and convergent validity

Dimension	CR	Cronbach's alpha	Convergent validity (AVE)
Entrepreneurial performance	0.801	0.850	0.523
Innovative marketing opportunities	0.808	0.866	0.529
Entrepreneurial culture	0.730	0.800	0.513

As is seen in the above table the obtained Cronbach's alpha for all dimensions is greater than the threshold of 0.7, hence the research reliability is confirmed.

To test the composite reliability (CR) of each construct, the Dillon-Goldstein coefficient (ρ) is used. The composite reliability reported in table 1 for each construct is greater than the threshold 0.7, hence composite reliability of the constructs are confirmed.

Another criterion in examining the measurement model fit in terms of internal consistency of the constructs is convergent validity which is measured by average variance extracted (AVE). In

the table above, the obtained AVE for all constructs is greater than the minimum acceptable value 0.5, whereby the convergent validity of the model is confirmed.

We also use the measure heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) to assess discriminant validity. If the HTMT value is less than 0.90, there is discriminant validity among the constructs (Henseler et al, 2015).

Table 3. Discriminant validity by HTMT

HTMT	Entrepreneurial performance	Innovative marketing opportunities	Entrepreneurial culture
Entrepreneurial performance			
Innovative marketing opportunities	0.736		
Entrepreneurial culture	0.686	0.838	

Overall model fit

Chen (1998) proposed three values of 0.19, 0.33 and 0.67 as criterion values for weak, moderate and strong R^2 values, respectively, as the indicators of the structural model overall fit.

Table 4. R^2 values

Variable	R^2 value	Adjusted R^2 value	Q^2
Entrepreneurial performance	0.488	0.485	0.191
Entrepreneurial culture	0.475	0.474	0.212

The second structural model fit index is the Q^2 index. This measure indicates the predictive power of the model regarding an endogenous construct. As a rule, Q^2 values of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35 indicate weak, moderate and strong predictive power corresponding to an exogenous construct, respectively. Given the R^2 and Q^2 values, as reported in table 4, the structural model overall fit and predicting power is confirmed.

According to Henseler et al (2014), a standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) value of below 0.1, and in a conservative case, of 0.08, indicates the model adequate overall fit.

Table 5. The results on the overall model fit using standardized root mean squared residual (SRMR) and NFI index

Estimated model	Saturated model	Latent variables
0.092	0.092	SRMR
0.451	0.451	NFI
1.319	1.319	d ULS
1.288	1.288	d G

The NFI index, which is called the Bentler-Bonnet index, is a comparative fit index. This index assesses the model by comparing the chi-square values of the independent model and the chi-

square of the saturated model. An NFI value above 0.9 is acceptable, indicating the model suitability. Bootstrap provides confidence intervals for the two values discrepancy. Values greater than 0.05 for d_{ULS} measure (i.e. the Euclidean least square discrepancy) and d_G (i.e. the geodesic discrepancy) indicate good model fit. The obtained d_{ULS} and d_G values in the above table which are more than 0.05 indicate the model good fit.

By default, PLS4 software tests relationships at the 95% confidence level, and since the t-value at this interval is equal to 1.96, any relationship with a t-value outside the range of -1.96 to +1.96 is considered statistically significant at the 95% confidence interval.

The t-statistic shows the significance of the relationship between the variables. A t-value greater than 1.96 indicates a positive and significant effect; a t-value between -1.96 and +1.96 indicates the lack a significant effect; and a t-value smaller than -1.96 indicates a negative and significant effect. Also, if the path coefficients are above 0.6, it means that there is a strong relationship between the two variables; If it is between 0.3 and 0.6, there is a moderate relationship, and if it is below 0.4, there is a weak relationship. As shown in the model, all the hypotheses of the model are confirmed as their t-value falls outside the specified range, indicating the significance of all hypotheses and relationships between variables at the 95% confidence interval. The results on the test of the research hypotheses are presented in the table below.

Table 6. Results on the test of the hypotheses

Test result	t-value	p-value	Path coefficient	Path	Hypothesis
Accepted	0.000	4.617	0.434	Innovative marketing opportunities -> Entrepreneurial performance	1
Accepted	0.000	23.447	0.689	Innovative marketing opportunities -> Entrepreneurial culture	2
Accepted	0.007	2.725	0.325	Entrepreneurial culture -> Entrepreneurial performance	4

Given the results in the above table, all the research hypotheses are confirmed.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The obtained result from the test of the first hypothesis showed that innovative marketing opportunities have a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial performance in the tourism industry of Mazandaran province. This finding is consistent with the research results obtained by Arabeche et al (2022), Zakiyah Zahara et al (2022) and Bator et al (2022) who found that in order to maximize the performance of their entrepreneurial marketing decisions by using innovative marketing opportunities, they should not stop using technology opportunities in a standard way, rather by expanding entrepreneurial marketing decisions in innovative ways, it is possible to create value and, as a result, achieve better performance in the field of tourism (Battour et al, 2022).

The obtained result from the test of the second hypothesis showed that innovative marketing opportunities have a significant impact on the entrepreneurial culture in the tourism industry of Mazandaran province. This finding is in line with the research results found by Caliendo et al (2023) and Ouragini and Lakhal (2023). Also the findings of Battour et al (2022) are, to some extent, in line with our result, as they concluded that innovative opportunities had a significant effect on entrepreneurial culture. In addition, Battour et al (2022) presented a framework for an entrepreneurial culture maturity model, and one of the factors of this maturity was innovation and competitiveness opportunities, which is consistent with the results found in the present research. Caliendo et al (2023) used data mining as a tool to discover knowledge in entrepreneurial culture and, consistent with our findings, they showed that data mining needs to be integrated with entrepreneurial culture in order to improve entrepreneurial performance.

The obtained results from the test of the third hypothesis showed that entrepreneurial culture has a significant positive effect on entrepreneurial performance in the tourism industry of Mazandaran province. This finding is in line with the results found by Battour et al (2022) who showed positive effects among different variables suggesting that the use of entrepreneurial culture affects entrepreneurial performance and hence, performance decision makers should focus on cultivating the use of entrepreneurial culture in marketing, sales, management and internal business operations (Battour et al, 2022).

Therefore, it is recommended that an action plan be developed to promote entrepreneurship culture with respect to management duties in the field of tourism. Further, training courses on entrepreneurship culture and its components should be held. Tourism managers in the field of entrepreneurial marketing should plan and act for cost indicators, political indicators and legal restrictions in attracting tourists. As for innovative marketing opportunities, the attention of tourism organizations should be focused more on the entrepreneurial structure and the position of the organization. The tourism organization should have a strategic view to innovative opportunities and pay more attention to entrepreneurial performance indicators. Therefore, it is suggested that the tourism managers in the province be holistic viewers, expert and experienced, and have entrepreneurial employees who are familiar with the business activities.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The current study has not received any grant, fund or contribution from private or government institutions. Also, the authors declare that there is no conflict of interests

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Authenticity of the texts, honesty and fidelity has been observed.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Author/s confirmed no conflict of interest.