



THE IMPACT OF HR PRACTICES ON MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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ABSTRACT

In the dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem, organizations must rely on both human resource (HR) practices and marketing strategies to remain competitive and sustainable. This research paper explores how key HR practices—including recruitment and selection, training and development, performance management, employee engagement, and organizational culture—contribute to marketing effectiveness in entrepreneurial ventures. Drawing on theoretical frameworks and existing empirical insights, the study highlights the strong relationship between people management and marketing outcomes such as customer satisfaction, innovation, brand performance, and market responsiveness. The findings suggest that HR practices play a strategic role in shaping entrepreneurial marketing capabilities by improving employee competencies, creativity, and organizational commitment. The paper concludes that integrating HR practices with marketing strategies enhances overall business performance and provides a competitive advantage for entrepreneurial firms.

Keywords: Human Resource Practices, Marketing Effectiveness, Entrepreneurship, Employee Engagement, Innovation, Organizational Performance.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship in the modern business environment is increasingly shaped by how effectively firms manage and deploy their human resources. While marketing effectiveness has traditionally been associated with market research, branding, promotion, and customer relationship management, contemporary research emphasizes that these functions are deeply dependent on people-related capabilities. Human resource (HR) practices such as recruitment and selection, training and development, performance appraisal, compensation, and employee engagement systems influence employees' skills, motivation, and behaviors, which in turn affect how marketing strategies are designed and executed. For entrepreneurial firms, where resources are limited and adaptability is crucial, the alignment between HR practices and marketing objectives becomes especially significant.

From a strategic perspective, human resource management (HRM) is increasingly viewed as a source of competitive advantage rather than a purely administrative function. Strategic human resource management theory suggests that well-aligned HR systems create valuable human capital that supports organizational goals, including market responsiveness and customer value creation. In entrepreneurial contexts, this alignment is critical because employees often perform multiple roles and directly interact with customers, suppliers, and partners. Studies since 2010 have consistently shown that HR practices contribute to firm performance by enhancing innovation capability, service quality, and customer orientation—key dimensions of marketing effectiveness.

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) has emerged as an important conceptual link between HR practices and marketing outcomes. EO, characterized by innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking, is strongly influenced by organizational policies and people-management systems. Zehir et al. (2016) demonstrated that HR practices encouraging autonomy, learning, and participation foster entrepreneurial behaviors among employees, which subsequently improve market-related performance. Similarly, Wei (2013) highlighted that investment in human capital enables small and entrepreneurial firms to respond more

effectively to market changes and customer needs, strengthening their marketing performance.

Research between 2010 and 2015 largely focused on establishing the direct relationship between HRM and firm performance, including sales growth and market share. During this period, scholars such as Hazlina Ahmad and Schroeder emphasized that training, performance-based rewards, and selective hiring improve service quality and customer satisfaction. These outcomes are particularly relevant for entrepreneurial firms that rely on reputation, word-of-mouth promotion, and customer loyalty rather than large advertising budgets. As a result, HR practices were increasingly recognized as indirect but powerful drivers of marketing effectiveness.

Between 2016 and 2020, the literature shifted toward understanding contextual and mediating factors. Researchers began to argue that HR practices do not automatically lead to superior marketing outcomes unless they are aligned with the firm's entrepreneurial strategy and external environment. Van Lancker et al. (2022), in their systematic review of HRM in entrepreneurial firms, noted that the effectiveness of HR practices depends heavily on firm size, age, and stage of development. Informal HR systems may work well in early-stage startups by enabling flexibility and speed, whereas growing entrepreneurial firms require more structured HR practices to sustain marketing consistency and brand credibility.

More recent studies from 2021 to 2024 have expanded the scope by incorporating employee well-being, engagement, and organizational culture as critical explanatory variables. Scholars such as Harney (2022) and Alam (2024) argue that HR practices fostering psychological safety, compassion, and work-life balance improve employee engagement, which translates into better customer interactions and stronger brand relationships. In service-oriented entrepreneurial ventures, engaged employees are more likely to display customer-oriented behaviors, adapt marketing messages in real time, and contribute to positive customer experiences. These findings reinforce the idea that marketing effectiveness is not solely the result of external market strategies but also of internal people management.

Another important development in the recent literature is the recognition of knowledge sharing and cross-functional integration as mechanisms linking HR practices to marketing effectiveness. HR systems that promote collaboration, internal communication, and continuous learning enable closer coordination between marketing, operations, and innovation activities. This integration enhances the firm's ability to develop market-relevant innovations and deliver consistent value propositions. Studies conducted between 2018 and 2024 also highlight that HR practices supporting digital skills and adaptability are increasingly important as entrepreneurial firms adopt digital marketing tools and data-driven decision-making.

Despite these advances, gaps remain in the literature. Many empirical studies focus on either HR outcomes or marketing outcomes in isolation, without examining integrated models that connect HR systems, entrepreneurial orientation, employee engagement, and concrete marketing performance indicators such as customer acquisition, retention, and brand equity. Moreover, a significant proportion of studies rely on cross-sectional data and are concentrated in specific regions, limiting the generalizability of findings across different entrepreneurial ecosystems.

In this context, the present study seeks to contribute to the existing literature by examining the impact of HR practices on marketing effectiveness in entrepreneurship through an integrated framework. Drawing on research published between 2010 and 2024, it emphasizes the role of strategic HR practices in shaping entrepreneurial orientation, employee engagement, and market-facing capabilities. By doing so, the study aims to provide both theoretical insights and practical guidance for entrepreneurs seeking to leverage HR practices as a strategic tool for enhancing marketing effectiveness and sustaining competitive advantage.

STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT AND RBV

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM) plays a pivotal role in enhancing marketing effectiveness within entrepreneurial ventures by aligning human capital with organizational strategy. Unlike traditional human resource management, SHRM emphasizes the long-term integration of HR practices—such as recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and rewards—with strategic objectives. In entrepreneurial contexts, where resources are constrained and competition is intense, the strategic management of human resources becomes a critical driver of sustainable competitive advantage, particularly in marketing functions that rely heavily on creativity, customer engagement, and innovation.

The Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm provides a robust theoretical framework to understand how SHRM contributes to marketing effectiveness in entrepreneurship. RBV posits that organizations achieve sustained competitive advantage by possessing and effectively deploying resources that are valuable, rare,

inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN). Human resources—specifically employee skills, knowledge, attitudes, and relational capabilities—fit these criteria more closely than physical or financial assets. In entrepreneurial firms, marketing success often depends on the ability of employees to interpret market signals, build customer relationships, and adapt quickly to changing consumer needs. These capabilities are inherently human and socially complex, making them difficult for competitors to replicate.

Strategic HR practices enhance the value of human capital by ensuring that employees possess marketing-relevant competencies such as customer orientation, digital literacy, communication skills, and innovative thinking. For example, selective recruitment enables entrepreneurial firms to attract individuals with strong market awareness and entrepreneurial mindsets. Training and development programs further strengthen these competencies by equipping employees with up-to-date marketing tools, data analytics skills, and customer relationship management techniques. Through RBV, such investments transform human capital into a strategic asset that directly improves marketing effectiveness.

Performance management and reward systems also play a crucial role in aligning employee behavior with marketing objectives. When appraisal systems emphasize customer satisfaction, brand building, and market responsiveness, employees are more likely to engage in behaviors that enhance marketing outcomes. Incentive structures linked to sales growth, customer retention, or innovation encourage proactive marketing efforts and foster accountability. From an RBV perspective, these HR practices help in leveraging human resources in ways that maximize their strategic value while embedding them within organizational routines that competitors cannot easily imitate.

In entrepreneurial ventures, organizational culture acts as a key mechanism through which SHRM and RBV intersect. A culture that promotes learning, collaboration, and customer focus strengthens the collective marketing capability of the firm. Strategic HR initiatives such as leadership development, team-based work structures, and internal communication systems nurture this culture. Over time, shared values and norms related to market responsiveness and customer engagement become deeply embedded, creating socially complex capabilities that reinforce marketing effectiveness and long-term competitiveness.

Furthermore, SHRM contributes to dynamic capabilities—an extension of RBV—by enabling entrepreneurial firms to sense, seize, and respond to market opportunities. Continuous learning, employee empowerment, and participative decision-making allow firms to adapt marketing strategies swiftly in response to environmental changes. This agility is particularly vital for entrepreneurs operating in volatile markets, where rapid innovation and customer responsiveness determine survival and growth.

In conclusion, Strategic Human Resource Management, when viewed through the Resource-Based View, provides a powerful explanation for how HR practices influence marketing effectiveness in entrepreneurship. By developing valuable and inimitable human capital, aligning employee behavior with marketing goals, and fostering a market-oriented culture, SHRM transforms human resources into a strategic asset. For entrepreneurial firms seeking sustainable growth, integrating SHRM with RBV is essential not only for effective marketing performance but also for achieving enduring competitive advantage.

DIMENSIONS OF HR PRACTICES RELEVANT TO ENTREPRENEURIAL MARKETING

Entrepreneurial marketing operates in dynamic and uncertain environments where innovation, speed, and close customer interaction are essential for survival and growth. In such contexts, the effectiveness of marketing activities depends largely on how human resources are managed. Human Resource (HR) practices play a crucial role in shaping employee competencies, motivation, and behaviors that directly influence entrepreneurial marketing outcomes. Unlike traditional organizations, entrepreneurial ventures require flexible, opportunity-driven, and customer-centric approaches, making specific dimensions of HR practices particularly relevant for enhancing marketing effectiveness.

One of the most important HR dimensions in entrepreneurial marketing is recruitment and selection. Entrepreneurial firms benefit from hiring individuals who possess an entrepreneurial orientation characterized by creativity, proactiveness, adaptability, and a willingness to take calculated risks. Employees with these traits are better equipped to identify market opportunities, respond to changing customer needs, and contribute innovative marketing ideas. Since roles in entrepreneurial ventures are often fluid and overlapping, selecting multi-skilled employees with strong interpersonal and problem-solving abilities strengthens marketing responsiveness and effectiveness.

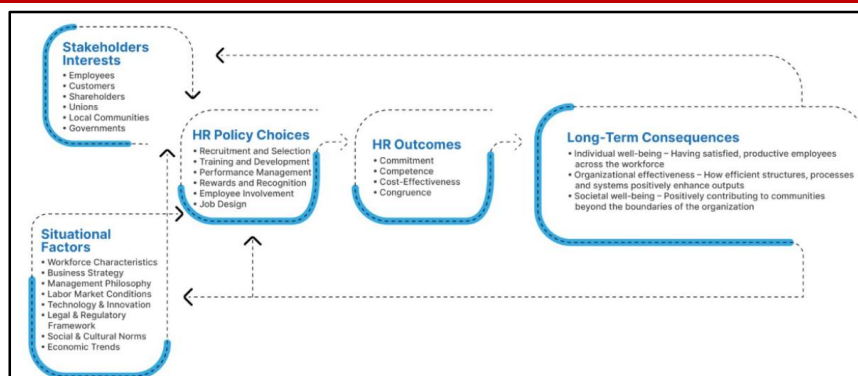


Fig 1: Conceptual framework showing how key HR practice dimensions

Training and development represent another critical HR dimension that supports entrepreneurial marketing. Continuous learning enables employees to keep pace with evolving markets, emerging technologies, and changing consumer behavior. HR practices focused on developing skills in digital marketing, customer relationship management, market analysis, and communication enhance employees' capacity to engage effectively with customers. Developmental initiatives such as mentoring, experiential learning, and cross-functional exposure further strengthen employees' understanding of the market and encourage collaboration between HR and marketing functions, leading to more integrated and innovative marketing efforts.

Performance management systems also significantly influence entrepreneurial marketing effectiveness. Traditional appraisal methods that emphasize rigid targets and short-term results may limit creativity in entrepreneurial settings. Instead, HR practices should focus on flexible performance evaluation that values experimentation, learning, teamwork, and customer impact. When employees are assessed and rewarded for initiative, creativity, and relationship-building rather than only sales outcomes, they are more likely to adopt innovative and proactive marketing behaviors. Aligning individual performance goals with overall marketing objectives ensures coherence between employee efforts and entrepreneurial strategy.

Compensation and reward systems are equally important in motivating employees to contribute to entrepreneurial marketing success. Given the resource constraints faced by many entrepreneurial ventures, HR practices often rely on a mix of financial incentives and non-financial rewards such as recognition, autonomy, and career development opportunities. Incentives linked to customer acquisition, retention, and market expansion encourage employees to focus on long-term marketing effectiveness rather than short-term gains. Such reward systems foster commitment, enthusiasm, and a strong sense of ownership among employees. Employee empowerment and participation form another vital HR dimension that supports entrepreneurial marketing. Empowered employees are more likely to take initiative, interact confidently with customers, and propose innovative marketing solutions. HR practices that promote decentralization, open communication, and participative decision-making enhance employee engagement and responsiveness. When employees feel trusted and valued, they act as brand representatives, strengthening customer relationships and enhancing the firm's market reputation.

Organizational culture and internal communication, shaped largely by HR practices, also influence entrepreneurial marketing effectiveness. A culture that emphasizes innovation, learning, collaboration, and customer focus encourages employees to align their actions with marketing goals. Effective internal communication ensures that employees understand the firm's value proposition, brand identity, and market vision. This alignment translates marketing strategies into consistent behaviors across the organization, thereby improving marketing outcomes.

Leadership development and talent retention further strengthen the link between HR practices and entrepreneurial marketing. Entrepreneurial leaders play a key role in inspiring market-oriented thinking and guiding teams through uncertainty. HR practices that nurture leadership capabilities and retain skilled employees help preserve organizational knowledge and maintain strong customer relationships, which are essential for sustained marketing effectiveness. Overall, HR practices serve as foundational drivers of entrepreneurial marketing effectiveness by developing capable, motivated, and empowered employees. By strategically aligning HR dimensions with marketing objectives, entrepreneurial firms can enhance innovation, customer engagement, and competitive advantage in rapidly changing markets.

LINKING HR PRACTICES TO MARKETING EFFECTIVENESS: MECHANISMS

In entrepreneurial ventures, marketing effectiveness is not determined solely by creative campaigns, digital tools, or market analytics. Instead, it is deeply rooted in how people within the organization are recruited, trained, motivated, and led. Human Resource (HR) practices act as enabling mechanisms that shape employee behavior, service quality, innovation, and customer relationships, thereby directly and indirectly influencing marketing effectiveness. Linking HR practices with marketing outcomes is particularly critical in entrepreneurship, where limited resources, high uncertainty, and intense competition require employees to play multifunctional and customer-facing roles.

One of the most fundamental mechanisms linking HR practices to marketing effectiveness is strategic recruitment and selection. Entrepreneurial firms that hire employees with customer orientation, communication skills, adaptability, and creative problem-solving capabilities are better positioned to understand and respond to market needs. When employees naturally align with the brand's values and customer-centric philosophy, marketing messages become more authentic and credible. Such alignment ensures consistency between what the firm promises externally and what it delivers internally, strengthening brand trust and customer loyalty.

Training and development constitute another critical mechanism. In entrepreneurial contexts, employees often interact directly with customers and represent the firm's brand. Continuous training in product knowledge, digital marketing tools, customer relationship management, and interpersonal skills enhances employees' ability to convey value propositions effectively. Well-trained employees can translate marketing strategies into meaningful customer experiences, improving satisfaction, retention, and word-of-mouth promotion. Moreover, learning-oriented HR practices foster innovation, enabling employees to contribute ideas for new offerings, promotional strategies, and market positioning.

Performance management and appraisal systems also link HR practices to marketing effectiveness by aligning employee goals with marketing objectives. When performance metrics include customer satisfaction, service quality, responsiveness, and brand advocacy, employees become more accountable for marketing outcomes. In entrepreneurial firms, where formal marketing departments may be small or absent, such alignment ensures that marketing is not siloed but embedded across the organization. Regular feedback and recognition reinforce behaviors that enhance customer engagement and market responsiveness.

Another key mechanism is reward and compensation systems. Incentives tied to marketing-related outcomes—such as customer acquisition, retention, cross-selling, or positive customer feedback—motivate employees to actively support marketing efforts. Both financial rewards (bonuses, commissions) and non-financial rewards (recognition, career growth, autonomy) encourage proactive market-oriented behavior. In startups and small ventures, where financial resources may be constrained, intrinsic rewards and a sense of purpose can be powerful drivers of employee commitment to the brand.

Employee engagement and organizational culture serve as integrative mechanisms connecting HR practices with marketing effectiveness. HR practices that promote trust, empowerment, teamwork, and open communication foster high levels of engagement. Engaged employees are more likely to act as brand ambassadors, deliver superior service, and build emotional connections with customers. In entrepreneurship, a strong internal culture often substitutes for formal marketing budgets, as motivated employees generate positive customer experiences that function as organic marketing channels.

Finally, internal marketing represents a unifying mechanism that explicitly links HR and marketing functions. By treating employees as internal customers, HR practices ensure that employees understand, believe in, and commit to the firm's marketing vision. Clear internal communication about brand values, target markets, and customer promises ensures coherence between internal behaviors and external marketing messages. This internal-external alignment is essential for entrepreneurial firms seeking to build credibility and differentiation in dynamic markets.

HR practices influence marketing effectiveness in entrepreneurship through multiple interconnected mechanisms, including recruitment, training, performance management, rewards, engagement, and internal marketing. These mechanisms shape employee capabilities, motivation, and behavior, which ultimately determine how effectively a firm attracts, satisfies, and retains customers. For entrepreneurial ventures, integrating HR strategy with marketing objectives is not optional but essential for sustainable growth and competitive advantage.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

Empirical research on the impact of human resource (HR) practices on marketing effectiveness in entrepreneurship demands careful methodological planning because entrepreneurial firms differ significantly from large, established organizations in structure, resources, and decision-making processes. The research design should align with the dynamic and uncertain nature of entrepreneurial environments, where HR practices are often informal yet strategically influential. A mixed-methods approach is particularly appropriate, as quantitative methods help establish statistical relationships between HR practices—such as recruitment, training, performance appraisal, employee empowerment, and reward systems—and indicators of marketing effectiveness like customer acquisition, brand recognition, market responsiveness, and sales growth. At the same time, qualitative methods such as interviews and case studies provide deeper insights into how entrepreneurial values, leadership style, and organizational culture shape the way HR practices translate into marketing outcomes. While cross-sectional designs are commonly used due to time and cost constraints, longitudinal designs offer stronger explanatory power by capturing how HR initiatives implemented at early stages of a venture influence marketing performance over time, thereby supporting stronger causal inferences. Sampling is another critical methodological consideration, as entrepreneurial firms are highly heterogeneous in terms of size, industry, age, and growth orientation. Researchers must clearly define the unit of analysis—whether focusing on the firm, the entrepreneur, or employees involved in marketing activities—and adopt appropriate sampling techniques. Because comprehensive sampling frames for startups are often unavailable, non-probability methods such as purposive or stratified sampling are frequently employed, though researchers should strive for diversity in the sample to enhance generalizability. The measurement of key constructs is central to methodological rigor. HR practices should be operationalized using validated and context-sensitive scales that capture both formal and informal practices, while marketing effectiveness should be measured using a combination of financial indicators (such as revenue growth and return on marketing investment) and non-financial indicators (such as customer satisfaction, brand equity, and market adaptability). In entrepreneurial research, perceptual measures collected through surveys are widely used due to limited access to objective performance data; however, the risk of common method bias must be addressed through procedural and statistical remedies, including anonymity assurances, multiple respondents, and post-hoc bias tests. Data collection methods should be designed to reflect the realities of entrepreneurial firms, where employees often perform multiple roles and HR policies may not be formally documented. Well-structured questionnaires, supported by pilot testing, are essential for capturing reliable data, while qualitative interviews with founders and key personnel can illuminate the mechanisms through which HR practices foster marketing capabilities such as creativity, customer orientation, and innovation. For data analysis, multivariate techniques such as regression analysis, mediation and moderation testing, and structural equation modeling are particularly useful in examining the complex and interrelated pathways linking HR practices to marketing effectiveness. These techniques allow researchers to explore not only direct effects but also indirect mechanisms through variables like employee engagement, learning capability, and organizational agility. Ethical considerations must also be addressed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and responsible data management, especially given the sensitivity of employee and performance-related information in small firms. Finally, contextual factors such as industry conditions, cultural norms, and institutional environments should be explicitly acknowledged, as they shape both HR practices and marketing strategies in entrepreneurial settings. Overall, robust methodological choices are essential for generating valid and meaningful empirical insights into how HR practices contribute to marketing effectiveness in entrepreneurship, thereby advancing theory and offering practical guidance for entrepreneurs seeking sustainable competitive advantage.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Empirical research on the impact of human resource (HR) practices on marketing effectiveness in entrepreneurship demands careful methodological planning because entrepreneurial firms differ significantly from large, established organizations in structure, resources, and decision-making processes. The research design should align with the dynamic and uncertain nature of entrepreneurial environments, where HR practices are often informal yet strategically influential. A mixed-methods approach is particularly appropriate, as quantitative methods help establish statistical relationships between HR practices—such as recruitment, training, performance appraisal, employee empowerment, and reward

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CONCLUSION

Human resource practices are a strategic lever for enhancing marketing effectiveness in entrepreneurial firms. By thoughtfully selecting, socializing, developing, and motivating talent—and by designing teams and cultures that privilege customer learning—entrepreneurs can amplify their marketing outcomes in meaningful ways. HR in startups should not be seen as merely a compliance or administrative function; it is a core part of the go-to-market engine. Practical steps—hiring for market orientation, prioritizing microtraining, aligning incentives to marketing outcomes, and building rapid feedback loops—are actionable for resource-constrained ventures and can materially improve customer acquisition, retention, brand credibility, and innovation speed. Rigorous empirical work that couples HR interventions with objective marketing metrics will strengthen the evidence base and provide more precise guidance; until then, the theoretical and applied rationale for treating HR as an essential ingredient of marketing success in entrepreneurship is robust and persuasive.