
Technology Adoption as an Innovation in Entrepreneurial Marketing Dimension Allowing to Improve Micro and Small Businesses' Performance

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Abstract:

Purpose: The study was aimed at determining the technology adoption serving as an entrepreneurial marketing implementation in the business performance of micro and small businesses in Indonesia. Existing research focuses on medium and large-scale companies, while technology adoption as an entrepreneurial marketing implementation has never been applied to micro and small businesses.

Approach/Methodology/Design: At the initial stage, this research employed a qualitative research method with a phenomenological research approach in which samples were obtained from several regions in Indonesia. This study used primary data collected from the results of in-depth interviews, questionnaires and literature studies.

Findings: The findings challenge the innovation dimension; it is one of the dimensions in entrepreneurial marketing that can improve micro and small businesses' performance.

Practical Implications: Technology in the form of new production facilities and the use of information technology can support the creation of new products leading to the improvement of business performance.

Originality/Value: The study are beneficial for the government or other parties in micro and small business empowerment programs in promoting their courage to invest enabling them to improve their business performance and have stronger competitiveness.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial marketing, technology adoption, business performance, small and micro businesses.

JEL classification: A10, D24, E22, G51, R23.

Paper Type: Research study.

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1. Introduction

The role of large micro and small enterprises (MSEs) in the national economy encourages the government to always increase the empowerment of MSEs in Indonesia. MSEs spread throughout remote areas and villages, thus, they can contribute to the region's economy by evenly distributing income to the surrounding community. MSEs are acknowledged as having the largest number of business groups and being quite dominant in the economy; therefore, many parties are involved in empowering MSEs. Nevertheless, they still need assistance because most MSEs are still in the form of informal companies (Lukiyanto, Widita and Kumalasari, 2018). The government, the main MSE assistant, always makes an effort to minimize problems encountered by the enterprises.

Mainly, MSEs deal with marketing and competitiveness problems (Hidayati, 2012). Marketing in small companies has unique characteristics that distinguish it from large organizations (Fillis, 2000; Gilmore, 2011). The marketing of small companies is often carried out in a haphazard, informal, loose, unstructured and spontaneous way (Gilmore, 2011). In addition, it is considered weak in terms of price, planning, training and forecasting (McCartan-Quinn and Carson, 2003). This demonstrates that MSEs' characteristics of being informal, unplanned, relying on intuition and energy from individuals are different from the characteristics of large companies.

In terms of marketing, unfortunately, MSEs are still treated the same as marketing in general. Many experts claim that marketing for large and small organizations is the same, and the basic principles of marketing are seen to apply to both (Reynolds, 2002). This assumption cannot certainly be justified. Small and large companies are characterized distinctly along with different activities. An MSE owner has a dominant role in all business activities. Consequently, the owner's personal ability in both entrepreneurial and managerial skills is the key to the MSE success. The emergence of the entrepreneurial-marketing concept shows the right direction for MSEs to overcome their problems up to this point (Hadiyati and Lukiyanto, 2019).

Entrepreneurial marketing is a combination of two theories: marketing and entrepreneurship. These two basic theories are combined creatively with business practice and become a new concept called entrepreneurial marketing (Gilmore, 2011). This concept has generated differences between large and small business ventures on the element of entrepreneurship in marketing theory education (Stokes, 2000). Entrepreneurial marketing emphasizes entrepreneurs to have the character of innovation, find the use of principles and effective marketing strategies, and ultimately achieve success (Morris, Schindehutte and Laforge, 2002).

Innovation, which is one of the basic characteristics of an entrepreneur, is one of the main dimensions in entrepreneurial marketing (Pitsamorn, 2015). With the concept of innovation, a business can run creatively and keep up with changes in the business environment. With innovation at hand, the business will be dynamic and

keep its pace with the rapid change of global situations. Global changes are undoubtedly followed by consumer changes; thus, marketing must be able to create innovations that can attract consumers. Through innovation, marketing performance will increase and affect company performance.

The dimension of entrepreneurial marketing study is developed from a few previous opinions. There was a study revealing that all dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation affect the dimensions of entrepreneurial marketing, varying in magnitude. Innovation has the strongest impact on entrepreneurial marketing, compared to others such as being proactive and taking risks (Pitsamorn, 2015).

The successful application of entrepreneurial marketing in large companies (Morris *et al.*, 2002) needs to be examined specifically related to the application of entrepreneurial marketing in micro and small businesses. Some research results indicate a discrepancy in marketing practices between small and medium business actors and large companies (Ionita, 2012); this indicates that there may also be differences in the application of entrepreneurial marketing. In terms of innovation, it is necessary to find how MSEs interpret innovation and what steps are taken to respond to the challenges of entrepreneurial marketing in their business.

In general, innovation is understood as the creation of new products or the improvement of existing products and is carried out through the process of creativity (Kanagal, 2015; Suarniki *et al.*, 2019). New products are created to meet the desires and needs of consumers (Jukka, Jouko, Haapasalo and Law, 2014) by involving them in the creation process. Although the scale may vary, innovation in a business cannot stand alone as it is always related to investment (Cooper, 2000). The creation of a new product may only require a small investment, or perhaps, a huge sum of investment. In this era, technology support is unquestionably needed in the innovation process. The form of investment that adopts technology is a must for MSEs. Technology investments expected to support company innovation must adjust to the concept, the short-term plan, and the long-term plan of the company. This is what affects the magnitude of investment.

Innovation as a part of Entrepreneurial Marketing requires investment support to achieve the goal of improving the performance of micro and medium enterprises. This study aims to find forms of technology adoption that are effective from the perspective of micro and small business operators and can improve operational performance. As the central figure in the business, micro and small businesses understand what is needed in the innovation process. In addition, these business actors are involved with the concept of marketing and entrepreneurship as the basic theory of entrepreneurial marketing although they might occasionally be unaware of it. Understanding the form of investment that can improve operational performance can be used as a reference for many parties to develop a strong MSE. Innovation will make MSEs strong, add competitiveness, and improve the national economy.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Entrepreneurial Marketing Concept

Entrepreneurial marketing is total integration between marketing and entrepreneurship (Morris *et al.*, 2002). Its development is not only connecting the marketing tools and the entrepreneurial process but also covers all administrative aspects of marketing and entrepreneurship. Some studies show that entrepreneurial marketing has a positive influence on business development (Arfanly, Sarma and Syamsun, 2016). Entrepreneurial marketing capabilities also have a positive effect on business sustainability, businesses with higher entrepreneurial marketing capabilities will have a higher level of business development and sustainability. Entrepreneurial marketing improvises and does not look for perfect conditions to grow the company (Nwaizugbo and Anukam, 2014). Entrepreneurship and marketing have differences and similarities which are collaborated to deal with unstable markets in the application of marketing and entrepreneurship.

Based on the results of existing research, the practice of entrepreneurial marketing in micro, small and medium enterprises is also recognized for its success. Rahim, Wahab and Saad (2015), asserted that in the study area, which was Klang Valley in Malaysia, there was a paradigm shift from traditional marketing to entrepreneurial marketing. Observed among small and medium businesses, the application of entrepreneurial marketing in marketing practices can increase sales volume and higher growth. According to the research conducted by Arfanly, Sarma and Syamsun (2016), business actors have implemented entrepreneurial marketing quite well; the greatest entrepreneurial marketing ability is shown by the strategy. Innovation and investment are part of a long-term strategy in entrepreneurial marketing significantly affecting marketing performance.

2.2 Operational Performance

Operational performance is the superior competence of organizations formed by a process of competitive advantage to meet expectations and attract customer attention (Tracey and Vonderembse, 2004; Gong, 2013; Slack and Lewis, 2015). Several studies have concluded that operational performance consists of several indicators: quality, speed, the accuracy of fulfilling promises, flexibility, and prices compared to market performance or similar business entities (Slack and Lewis, 2015; Gong, 2013; Stevenson, 2007)

- a. A quality indicator is defined as the ability of business entities to produce superior quality products (product quality), product innovation, and the ability to develop a variety of new product developments (Slack and Lewis, 2015; Lai, Zhao and Wang, 2006).
- b. Speed indicators are measured by the ability of business entities in order completion, namely: the time required (Lead Time), speed of delivery (Fast

- Delivery), and speed of response (Quick Response) (Slack and Lewis, 2015; Lai, Zhao and Wang, 2006; Jitpaiboon *et al.*, 2013).
- c. The indicators of Accuracy in Fulfilling Promises are defined as the ability of business entities to form the following competencies: reliability of delivery (Reliable Delivery) and accuracy of fulfillment of demand (Order Accuracy) (Slack and Lewis, 2015; Lai, Zhao and Wang, 2006; Jitpaiboon *et al.*, 2013).
 - d. Flexibility indicator is defined as the ability of competitiveness established by business entities in terms of the accuracy of handling complaints and customer claims (Promptly follow-up customer claims and complaints) and the ability to communicate smoothly with its customers (Smooth Communication with customers) (Slack and Lewis, 2015; Lai, Zhao and Wang, 2006; Jitpaiboon *et al.*, 2013).
 - e. Price indicators are the ability to manage costs in a business entity, which are Product Price and Service Charge (Slack and Lewis, 2015; Lai, Zhao and Wang, 2006; Jitpaiboon *et al.*, 2013).

2.3 Innovation and Investment

Forsman (2011) defines innovation as a new generation of implementation of new or better services and products aimed at increasing the competitiveness of a company. It is an important factor in a company's performance. Several research results reveal that innovation is very essential to increase competitiveness and success. The success of new products as a result of innovation can increase sales volume and market share; this can attract new customers while maintaining old customer loyalty (Gunday, Ulusoy, Kilic and Lutfihak, 2011; Cheng and Dennis, 2012). In general, innovation is performed in two ways; they are the innovation of product and service, both of which have a positive relationship with company performance (Koellinger, 2008). The success of real innovation is not in the short term but supports growth through adaptation and continuous innovation (Tidd, Bessant and Pavitt, 2005). In company terminology, success is related to the whole process of innovation and its ability to consistently support growth. Furthermore, innovation is an investment utilized to help shape and enhance the company's ability to consistently innovate. At times, investment in innovation requires integrated technical resources and managerial skills.

Investment decisions are current resource commitments for the future in the expectation of receiving future benefits of innovation (good cash flow or high income/return) that will be greater than current expenditures (Brigham and Ehrhardt, 2005). Meanwhile, the investment dimension in innovation can be in the form of finance, technology, and investment in human resources related to innovation activities in production (Zahra and Das, 1993). The financial investment includes expenditures for R&D projects and purchase or development innovations in other areas. Technology investment involves purchases of basic infrastructure equipment and basic facilities needed for innovation. Human capital investment includes salary,

training, and development (T&D), as well as other costs related to staff capacity building (Brigham and Ehrhardt, 2005; Tidd *et al.*, 2005; Zahra and Das, 1993).

3. Methodology

This research was designed qualitatively; it is a research process that sees problems in terms of multiple disciplines, domains, and research subjects, which are associated with a tradition of positive thinking and perspectives related to culture and interpretation studies (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). The phenomenological approach was used because the subjective perspective of micro and small business owners' individual experiences is thorough (Lincoln and Guba, 2000; Olanrewaju, 2012). The main idea of empirical phenomenology is a scientific explanation based on meaning and words. The use of the phenomenological approach aims to determine the form of investment that supports innovation in microbusiness.

The research data were collected by 3 methods: in-depth interviews, observation, and literature study. The interview data were taken from 15 key informants from garment micro-small businesses in several cities in East Java. Determination of the informants' origin is used to see the effect of cultural differences on thinking related to technology investment. The number of key informants is determined based on the information provided; thus, the information saturation is achieved at that amount (Eberle, 2010; Piperopoulos, 2010). Saturated information was achieved when the information provided is close to the similarity between one informant and another. Informants were determined at the beginning of the study (purposive sampling method) since it made it easier to reach those residing in different cities. Expert opinion was used in the context of the triangulation of data obtained to ensure that the existing data were correct and valid.

3.1 Key Informant

Substantially, key informant selection was taken into consideration as it could provide the necessary data; the selection was carried out strictly to obtain characteristics of almost the same informants. The criteria required for the selected informants were:

- a. Owning a micro and small scale business with a turnover of less than Rp. 2.5 billion (Law No. 8 of 2008);
- b. Owning less than 30 employees (ref. World Bank);
- c. Having been in business for at least five years.

3.2 Validity and Data Analysis

The data processing was done in the following stages: (1) transcribing the results of in-depth interviews; (2) making the interpretation to facilitate understanding; (3) coding; (4) conducting analysis to find sub-themes. To ensure that the data obtained

were correct and in conformity with the facts, it was necessary to do data triangulation; it was to compare the results of the interview with the experts' opinions, literature, and available secondary data (Piperopoulos, 2010). Data analysis compares data to develop concepts that will be used to identify contexts, determine processes, and evaluate theoretical integration (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

The techniques utilized for data analysis include working with the data, organizing them, sorting them into manageable units, synthesizing them, and then looking for what is important and deciding what will be of use to others. At this stage, data analysis was done and used in such a way as to successfully obtain the truth allowing to answer questions and problems in this study. The inductive method was used to manage the qualitative data of this study. This method allows a specific set of facts to inform generalizations about common traits. This line of reasoning has been used to obtain opinions consisting of several specific views; the opinions are generalized by connecting them.

3.3 Data Validation Check

The validity of the data in this study was determined using credibility criteria (level of trust). Data credibility is intended to prove that the data conform to the facts in the study. To determine the validity of the data, researchers used the following inspection techniques:

1. Extended research participation; it allows an increased level of trust in the data collected. With extended participation, the researcher can examine the accuracy of the information introduced by distortion and build trust in the subject. Therefore, limited participation is not done in a short time. Instead, researchers expand participation that takes place in the background of the study.
2. Observation of perseverance; this means that researchers find characteristics and elements in situations that are strongly relevant to the problem being studied and then concentrate on such matters in detail.
3. Triangulation; it helps the data validation check by comparing it to something else. This involves a significant source of triangulation to compare and ensure that the level of trust in information increases over time with different tools. This involves (a) comparing observed data with interview data; (b) comparing what people say in public to what they say in private; (c) comparing one's circumstances and perspectives with various opinions and views; (d) comparing what people say about the research situation with what they previously said.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on the results of data analysis, all informants agreed that innovation is part of marketing and a crucial mindset for entrepreneurs. It is believed that their innovation can deal with business competition and improve operational performance. It appears that all informants have practiced the concept of entrepreneurial marketing even

though they did not really understand the definition of the concept. As a matter of fact, none of the informants had heard or learned about entrepreneurial marketing. Interestingly, all the informants have unknowingly applied the concept being widely researched and developed by experts.

The concept of innovation is equally understood by all informants as a process of continuous improvement both in products and processes. The purpose of innovation is to satisfy consumers and win the competition. This view is similar to those of existing researchers (Forsman, 2011; Gunday *et al.*, 2011; Tidd *et al.*, 2005). The innovations were implemented diversely by the informants. Most of them (10 informants) implemented their innovations in the form of products. They stated that innovation means creating new or improving the existing products, adapting to technology, as well as meeting the needs and desires of consumers.

4.1 Innovation Supports Marketing to Win the Competition

The awareness of micro and small businesses about innovation in the garment sector in Indonesia is based on an understanding that the markets dynamically moves and advances. The needs and desires of consumers in the field of fashion are changing quite rapidly. Companies engaged in the garment sector must naturally adhere to this development if they wish not to be abandoned by their customers. Information in the form of needs or trends in the market is used as material to innovate the next product. Without continuous innovation, it will be difficult to market the company's products. Information obtained from consumers through marketing is used as the groundwork for innovation. Thus, the products can always meet the needs and desires of consumers. The following responses present the informants' opinions when asked about the relationship between marketing and innovation:

Informant 2: *“The company must always make innovation in its products, picture this, can you sell clothes of the same model for five years? selling the same model for 2 years is considered outdated, let alone 5 years. We must improve existing products or create new products. Innovation starts from (obtaining) information about trends out there, consumers’ requests, and our presumption of what the consumer desires. Company innovation is largely determined by marketing. If we want our marketing to run smoothly, we must continue to innovate.”*

Informant 11: *“Marketing and innovation are two inseparable things. Information (obtained) from marketing is used as a reference for other elements of the company to innovate. While the marketing itself must also innovate in its process. So, marketing and innovation are two inseparable things.”*

4.2 Innovation Must be Supported by Technology

All informants agreed that innovation must be supported by technology. It is unlikely that companies can innovate well without the assistance of new technology;

product and process innovation always rely on it. Moreover, the manufacturing process of new products is considered difficult as it demands durability and so forth. Newer infrastructure is needed to deal with this. In a garment company, technology can be in the form of more modern sewing machines with a computerized system to make the production faster and to achieve a uniform quality of products. Innovation cannot only rely on the existing workforce; nevertheless, something new is even often rejected. Workers in this type of industry generally have low skills; they prefer to do the same work for long periods because it is easier and does not need to continuously learn something new. Based on this condition, all informants agreed that without following technological developments it would be impossible to innovate according to the consumers' demands. The following are interview responses representing this conclusion:

Informant 5: *"Technology is a must ... it is impossible not to use the technology. Technology makes it easy to work; so, if you want (to make) innovation, use the technology. We can no longer rely on workers, they just want easy jobs. If given a new product, it takes a long time to learn. We have bought computerized machines, and they are (working) much faster. Making any products is also easy."*

Informant 7: *"Innovation must utilize technology ... it is impossible without it."*

Informant 8: *"Most of the innovations created must be supported by technology, besides making it easier, it can also speed up the innovation process. For example, with recent technology, it needs three days to produce a new product to be ready. If we rely on humans, the learning process can take more than one month, and even then, they don't necessarily do it properly. The process will take too long and eventually make us lost in the competition."*

Informant 14: *"Technology is the main tool for innovation. It's expensive but the process is fast, and it will be cheaper for large quantity production."*

4.3 Computer-Integrated Machines Are the Most Effective Form of Technology Adoption

According to all informants, technology adoption is believed to be an answer to the demands of innovation. The form of technology adoption that can improve the company's operational performance is differently perceived. In addressing this matter, two opinions represent that the most effective technology adoption is an investment in the form of computer-integrated (ones that can be programmed) or information technology-integrated machines. Much higher production speeds and efficiency can surely improve the company's operational performance. This opinion is supported by several previous studies that measure operational performance in terms of speed in meeting consumer needs (Slack and Lewis, 2015; Lai, Zhao and Wang, 2006).

Only two of the informants were slightly different; they emphasized on the new machine as well but thought that it did not need to be computerized. Based on field observations, the two informants made such opinions because they did not deal with mass production, but unique production for each product instead. The use of machines with a computerized system does not support them; however, it is believed that the use of new technology machines can improve their performance. The following statements are informants' responses explaining the form of technology adoption that is effective and can improve the company's operational performance:

Informant 1: *“The most effective one is a machine that can be programmed ... it has to be an easy, fast and efficient job. In the end, of course, the company is more developed.”*

Informant 2: *“(I think) it is a machine that can be programmed; with this machine, the work is fast and efficient. Nothing conquers this machine yet; if we want to make any model, just use the program, and we can start production immediately. Our work is fast and easy, it doesn't need a lot of employees so it must be efficient ... well, the problem is it is expensive, so it must be carefully considered. The market must also be well prepared.”*

Informant 9: *“The company will experience an increase in operational performance if it uses a computerized machine. Speed, uniform quality, and not requiring a lot of people: these are the three things that make performance better. The problem is that the price of this machine is expensive; this must be calculated from the start.”*

Based on the results of data analysis and the process in the field, it appears that the use of production machines integrated with information technology systems can improve the company's operational performance. As the informants stated, however, investment in machines like this is quite expensive. Nevertheless, they have the courage to invest in this type of machine if the production process looks promising. They believe that the investment value will return quickly if the number of markets increases. For this reason, marketing plays a major part in developing the markets to cover. The decision to always innovate supported by the courage to invest by adopting technology is a form of entrepreneurial marketing. Micro and small entrepreneurs are required to master entrepreneurial marketing to improve the company's operational performance.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

Based on the discussion about technology adoption in small and micro companies in Indonesia, it can be concluded that:

1. Innovation supports marketing to win the competition.
2. Innovation must be supported by technology.

3. Machines integrated with information technology/computer is the most effective form of technology adoption.

Further research on this topic can be conducted by other researchers to obtain more valid results. It is also necessary to study other research methods to ensure the factuality of these results. It will be more beneficial if there is further research discussing the level of risk and expensive cost of investment in technology for the performance of micro and small businesses in the garment sector, or other fields.

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