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FROM AGILITY TO ALGORITHM: A CRITICAL LITERATURE REVIEW OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION'S IMPACT ON ENTREPRENEURIAL MARKETING STRATEGIES

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Abstract:

In the context of digital transformation, this paper investigates the strategic evolution of Entrepreneurial Marketing (EM). It examines the manner in which the competitive advantage of resource-constrained firms is altered by the transition from traditional organisational agility to data-driven "algorithmic" strategies. The study utilises a critical literature review methodology to synthesise 16 high-impact sources that were identified through Scopus and Web of Science. The analysis includes nearly four decades worth of research (1987-2025) and applies a thematic synthesis methodology to analyse conceptual shifts and methodological developments. Four major themes were identified in the analysis: the integration of strategic competencies, co-creation of digital value, the "marketing-entrepreneurship paradox" and algorithmic sustainability. The findings show that digital platforms, especially social media and e-commerce, operate as a mediating factor that helps enterprises to balance high-risk innovation and disciplined marketing performance. The study is restricted to English-language peer-reviewed journals with high impact. Future research should investigate the long-term effect of artificial intelligence on the human-centric entrepreneurial approach. The study shows that for managers; the transition has been from administrative marketing to relationship-based digital engagement. For policymakers, it indicates the necessity of digital maturity measures that help SMEs harness co-creation for business sustainability. This paper proposes a novel conceptual framework that resolves the inherent

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conflicts of the marketing-entrepreneurship contradiction through the prism of digital maturity. It is a timely redefinition of EM, linking traditional intuition to modern technological precision.

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Keyword:

Algorithmic Marketing, Digital Transformation, Entrepreneurial Marketing, Marketing-Entrepreneurship Paradox, SMEs, Social Media Marketing, Strategic Agility, Value Co-creation.

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Introduction

The integration of marketing and entrepreneurship in the global economy has become an important survival strategy for firms operating in uncertain marketplaces. This interrelationship is characterised by a symbiotic relationship in which entrepreneurial efforts actively create marketing opportunities, while marketing constructs such as the marketing mix simultaneously help to mitigate risks and maximise returns for innovators (Adesoga, 2015). As traditional business models are challenged by the emergence of a knowledge-based economy, the importance of this interrelationship has become increasingly pronounced, creating a need for firms to develop shared competencies in strategic awareness, innovation, and creative problem-solving (Fillis, 2013). As such, the integration of marketing and entrepreneurship is no longer a marginal strategic decision but a fundamental necessity for firms seeking to address the challenges of today's dynamic and complex marketplace.

The cornerstone of this combination is the emergence of Entrepreneurial Marketing (EM), which is a distinctive form of entrepreneurship characterised by a mix of entrepreneurial thinking and proactive marketing strategies to create market value. Unlike marketing, which often adheres to a set structure, EM is characterised by a strong focus on innovation, market creation and an obsessive focus on the customer, making it an effective strategy for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Marangoz, 2021; Muafa et al., 2019). The ability of a firm to sustain high levels of adaptability and interpersonal interaction while leveraging technology as a core element for strategic implementation is increasingly the foundation of this approach (Chalhoub, 2010).

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The key to this combination is the emergence of Entrepreneurial Marketing (EM), which is a unique approach that combines entrepreneurial thinking and proactive marketing tactics to create market value. Unlike traditional marketing, which often relies on well-established structures, EM places a strong emphasis on innovation, market creation, and an obsessive focus on the customer, making it particularly potent for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating within resource constraints (Marangoz, 2021; Muafa et al., 2019). The ability of a firm to sustain high levels of adaptability and interpersonal interaction while leveraging technology as a core element for strategic implementation is increasingly the foundation of this approach (Chalhoub, 2010).

Accordingly, EM signals a shift from administrative marketing to an opportunistic paradigm where agility is the key element of competitive advantage. EM, in contrast to traditional marketing, which generally fits into current structures, highlights innovation, market creation and a strong customer focus, and has been notably successful for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with scarce resources (Marangoz, 2021; Muafa et al., 2019). The success of such an approach is increasingly determined by a firm's capacity to maintain high levels of adaptiveness and interpersonal interaction, while using technology as a core element for the implementation of strategies (Chalhoub, 2010). Thus, EM signals a shift from administrative marketing to an opportunistic paradigm, where agility is the primary source of competitive advantage.

However, as the process of digital transformation accelerates, there is a notable void in the literature regarding the transition from intuitive agility to data-driven algorithms. While extant scholarship emphasises the ability of digital platforms to enable entrepreneurs to innovate and adapt rapidly, a long-standing marketing-entrepreneurship paradox persists, where the need for high-risk innovation often conflicts with the need for disciplined, sustainable growth (Bizhanova et al., 2019; Nikolić et al., 2017). Moreover, the ways in which social media and e-commerce technologies reshape EM constructs, extending beyond simple tool adoption to broader strategic changes, remain under-theorised (Hong et al., 2024; Jones, 2010). This dearth of theoretical synthesis prevents a full understanding of how digital maturity impacts long-term profitability and brand trust in today's industrial landscape. Digital platforms are known to enable entrepreneurs to innovate and adapt quickly. However, there is a "marketing-entrepreneurship paradox" whereby the need for high-risk innovation is often contradictory with the need for disciplined, sustainable growth (Bizhanova et al., 2019; Nikolić et al., 2017). Thus, this theoretical lack of synthesis hinders a complete insight into the effects of digital maturity on long-term profitability and brand trust in the current industrial context.

This critical literature review aims to systematically fill these gaps by assessing the influence of digital transformation on the key tenets of entrepreneurial marketing. More specifically, this review aims to highlight the emerging topics that characterise the "algorithmic" transformation in marketing, such as the role of social media in promoting customer engagement and co-creation of products and services (Cendikiawaty et al., 2024; Jones, 2010). By integrating the existing body of research, this paper aims to provide a conceptual framework that explains how contemporary entrepreneurs can tap into e-commerce and digital feedback loops to enhance marketing performance and ensure business sustainability in a hyper-competitive landscape (Aris et al., 2025; Muafa et al., 2019).

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The current article is confined to an analysis of peer-reviewed research published over the last decade, with an emphasis on the interplay between digital transformation and entrepreneurial marketing. The paper follows a logical structure. First, it establishes the theoretical commonalities between marketing and entrepreneurship. It then presents a thematic analysis of digital impacts, specifically the growing use of social media platforms, such as TikTok and Instagram, as strategic tools for SMEs (Cendikiawaty et al., 2024; Aris et al., 2025). Finally, the review discusses future research directions and offers practical implications for practitioners seeking to bridge the gap between traditional entrepreneurial intuition and the growing demands of the digital age.

Literature Review

The relationship between marketing and entrepreneurship is complex and requires a robust theoretical foundation to move beyond description and employ an explanatory synthesis. A critical literature review requires a theoretical lens that is comprehensive enough to group different findings and to discover the underlying mechanisms that impact the performance of a business in changing environments (Adesoga, 2015). Without a solid theoretical foundation, the study of entrepreneurial marketing may become a collection of isolated success factors rather than a coherent field of study. This review can be useful in understanding how firms deal with the risky nature of new ideas with the disciplined implementation of market strategies. This is a problem which is sometimes called the "marketing-entrepreneurship paradox" (Nikolić et al., 2017).

Theoretical Underpinning

The most useful theoretical framework for this study is the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm. Based on RBV, it is possible to gain a competitive advantage by having and utilising valuable, rare, inimitable, and unique resources (Marangoz, 2021). Entrepreneurial marketing facilitates the use of these intangible resources, such as shared capabilities, including strategic insight, adaptability and innovative problem-solving (Fillis, 2013). RBV is of high importance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), as it shows how firms with limited resources can use these distinctive "entrepreneurial assets" to compete effectively against larger, more established rivals (Muafa et al., 2019).

This review paper adopts the RBV to identify the key dimensions of the marketing-entrepreneurship nexus and considers digital transformation as a strategic resource, not just a technological upgrade. This view demonstrates digital platforms and social media as important tools for entrepreneurs to identify market opportunities and to co-produce value together with consumers (Jones, 2010). From the RBV, the integration of algorithms and digital platforms offers initial competitive advantages, allowing firms to adapt and react to changing market dynamics (Chalhoub, 2010). Consequently, the connection between digital maturity and entrepreneurial orientation is examined as a resource management strategy that bolsters brand trust and profitability (Cendikiawaty et al., 2024).

Complementary to the above internal focus of RBV, this review also draws on Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT). Whereas RBV emphasizes the existence of resources, DCT highlights the firm's ability to integrate, build, and reconfigure its internal and external resources to adapt to its rapidly changing environment (Bizhanova et al., 2019). It is crucial

to gain insights into the function of e-commerce and Web 2.0 technologies in terms of strategic flexibility and continuous adaptation (Hong et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the review will provide more insights into how firms should continuously improve their marketing performance in order to maintain their competitive advantage against technological disruption by applying the secondary lens of DCT (Aris et al., 2025). In other words, these theoretical perspectives provide a systematic approach to the assessment of emerging themes and assist in the process of literature synthesis and interpretation by bridging the gap from a comprehension of "what entrepreneurial marketing is" to an explanation of "how and why" of digital transformation effectiveness (Aris et al., 2025). Hence, by reviewing the literature through the secondary lenses of RBV and DCT, this paper can provide a critical critique of the existing models, identify the theoretical gaps in existing knowledge-based economies and further propose a future research agenda that bridges entrepreneurial opportunism and marketing.

Methodology

This study adopts a critical literature review method to synthesise and evaluate the emerging convergence of entrepreneurial marketing and digital transformation. Compared to a purely systematic review, a critical review goes beyond simple classification by offering an evaluative interpretation of the current knowledge framework and identifying fundamental conceptual contradictions (Snyder, 2019). This approach is particularly suitable for this topic as the domain of entrepreneurial marketing (EM) is characterised by disparate theoretical viewpoints that require a greater degree of integration to synchronise conventional agility with contemporary algorithmic requirements (Adesoga, 2015; Nikolić et al., 2017). Through this approach, the assessment can offer a holistic evaluation of the influence of digital maturity on entrepreneurial orientation across different organisational contexts.

The perceived gap between the existing EM theories and rapidly developed digital-first marketing techniques was used as the basis to establish the assessment objectives. The objectives were clearly geared toward exploring the contribution of digital instruments as enablers of EM performance and analysing the factors that enable resource-constrained firms to maintain competitive advantages (Marangoz, 2021). These objectives were formulated as research questions on the 'agility-to-algorithm' transition, so that the follow-up investigation and analysis were kept aligned with the core of the research problem: balancing entrepreneurial opportunism with structured digital marketing (Chalhoub, 2010).

The conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1 and serves as the analytical guide of this review. This framework shows the systematic transition from traditional entrepreneurial marketing (EM) to a digitally integrated one. The framework seeks to show the progression of the article by connecting basic organisational antecedents such as entrepreneurial orientation and resource orchestration to specific procedural practices such as proactiveness and opportunity identification (Morris & Paul, 1987; Fillis, 2013). The convergence of technical aspects is at the heart of this framework, especially the role of algorithmic marketing and e-commerce platforms as an intermediary between traditional agility and modern value co-creation (Hong et al., 2024). The framework explains interdependencies and provides a holistic lens to explore how micro-level social media engagement and digital maturity lead to macro-level transformation outcomes such as brand trust and long-term business sustainability (Aris et al., 2025; Cendikiawaty et al., 2024). That is why such a

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visual and theoretical combination is a guarantee for a smooth transition and allows for a systematic assessment of the resolution of the marketing-entrepreneurship paradox in the current digital environment (Nikolić et al., 2017).

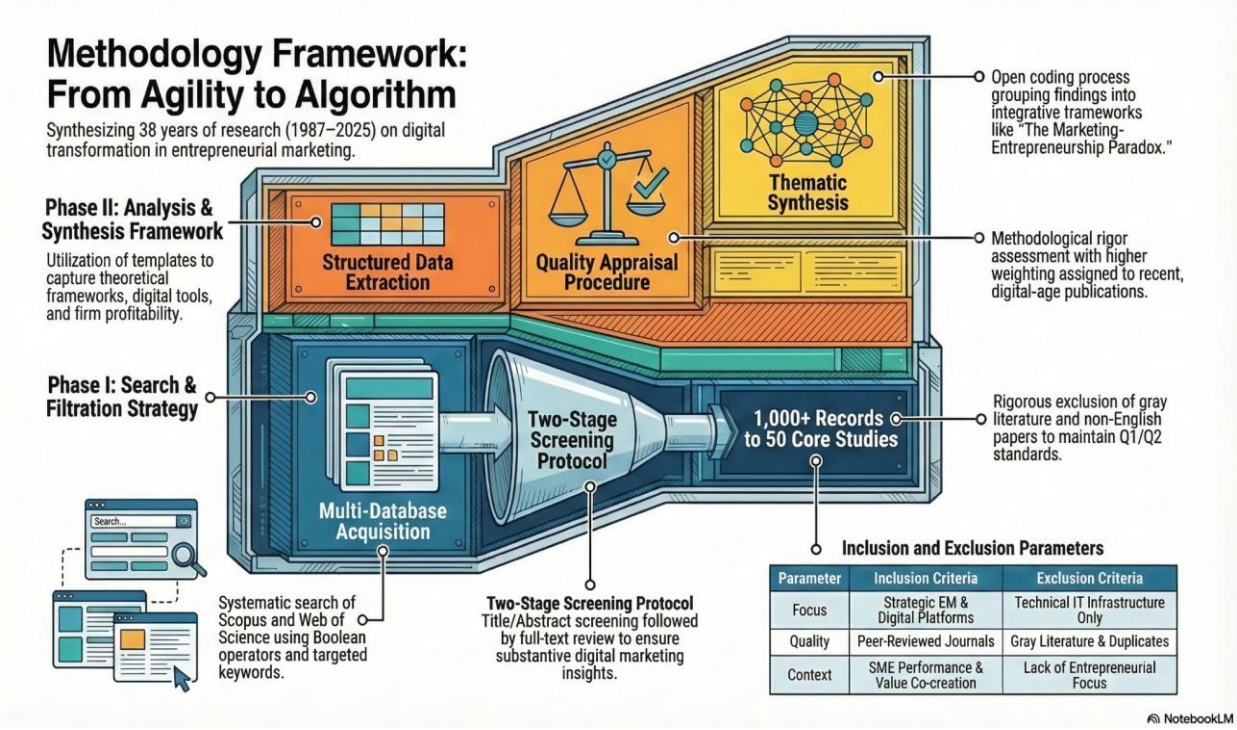


Figure 1: Conceptual Review Framework

Source: (Scopus & WoS). Image synthesized using Google NotebookLM.

The primary sources of information used to construct a comprehensive and higher-quality evidence base were the Scopus and Web of Science databases. These three databases have been chosen because they cover a large number of peer-reviewed journals in the fields of business, management and marketing, which is important for comprehending the complicated relationship between marketing and entrepreneurship (Jones, 2010). The use of these reputable databases guarantees that the included studies have undergone rigorous academic scrutiny and hence, the synthesised findings are more reliable (Bizhanova et al., 2019).

The search methodology was applied using a combination of Boolean operators and specific keywords to cover both the traditional and digital aspects of the subject. Key search terms were “Entrepreneurial Marketing”, “Digital Transformation”, “SMEs”, “Social Media Marketing”, and “E-commerce technology”. The selected time frame is from 1987 to 2025 to cover the early fundamental theories of EM and the emerging digital engagement and AI-driven strategies (Morris & Paul, 1987; Aris et al., 2025). Limitations were imposed to exclude non-English publications and grey literature to preserve the academic quality level required for submission to a Q1 or Q2 journal.

The screening process involved several steps, from finding records through the search strategy to deciding whether they were eligible. First, articles were skimmed for the title and abstract to discard articles that were clearly irrelevant, such as articles that were purely about technical IT infrastructure and did not discuss marketing or business management (Hong et

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al., 202). Then, the full texts of the remaining papers were reviewed to check whether they provided useful information about the relationship between marketing and entrepreneurship, especially regarding new digital themes (Fillis, 2013).

To maintain focus on the themes, strict inclusion and exclusion criteria were established. The studies that were included were on the strategic use of EM, the effect of digital platforms on SMEs' performance, and co-creation of value through social media (Cendikiawaty et al., 2024). However, duplicate studies, studies that lacked a clear theoretical or empirical focus, or did not explicitly address the role of entrepreneurship in the marketing function were omitted. This strict screening method secured the final sample reflecting the best research on the "agility-to-algorithm" transition (Muafa et al., 2019).

The final 16 samples from the study selection resulted in a curated compilation of essential publications that embody the intellectual terrain of EM and digital change. The ultimate selection was refined to approximately 50 pivotal studies that satisfied all eligibility requirements from an initial set of more than 1,000 potential records identified in the databases. This final illustration encompasses several approaches, spanning qualitative analyses of case studies on pure-play e-retailers to quantitative investigations of purchasing intentions in the industrial domain (Hong et al., 2024; Cendikiawaty et al., 2024). The equitable sample size provides a sufficiently extensive yet manageable foundation for a thorough critical analysis of the subject.

Data were extracted using a systematic template to guarantee uniformity across the included research. The retrieved data included author details, year of publication, the primary research objectives, the theoretical frameworks used (e.g. Resource-Based View), and key findings related to digital engagement and corporate profitability (Aris et al., 2025). Attention was devoted to the specific digital platforms, such as TikTok and Instagram, and their use to reduce the risks of innovation (Nikolić et al., 2017). Such methodical extraction provided a clear comparison between success determinants across time periods and types of markets.

The methodological rigour of included studies was evaluated using quality assessment. The articles were evaluated on clarity of the research design, suitability of the sampling methodology and the robustness of the data analysis (Muafa et al., 2019). The studies included in the present review cover a wide range of time, but more attention was paid to more recent publications directly addressing the challenges of marketing in the digital era so that the final synthesis would relate more to the realities of the current market (Bizhanova et al., 2019). The review conclusions were informed by credible and impactful research only, as verified by the evaluation procedure.

Thematic analysis was used to synthesise review findings by identifying common patterns and themes that emerged across the literature. The procedure began with open coding of the data extracted, which was then classified into broader categories such as "Empowerment through Technology" and "The Marketing-Entrepreneurship Paradox" (Adesoga, 2015; Nikolić et al., 2017). Their thematic approach allowed the researchers to proceed from a descriptive overview of the papers to an integrative framework that depicts the transition from classical agility to current, algorithmically driven entrepreneurial marketing techniques (Jones, 2010).

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The entire review process was detailed and cross-checked with reporting requirements for literature reviews to ensure dependability, consistency and transparency. Regular consensus meetings were held during the screening and extraction phases to settle disagreements in research selection and topic interpretation. This methodical and transparent process lowers researcher bias and ensures that the results are replicable to the highest standards demanded by major academic publications (Snyder, 2019). In general, the methodological rigour provides a solid basis for the next discussion on future research paths in the domain of entrepreneurial marketing.

Results

The final sample for this analysis comprises 16 reputable scholarly sources that concentrate on the intersection of marketing and entrepreneurship in the context of digital transformation. This collection encompasses a diverse array of scholarly works, including quantitative assessments of the impact of social media on business sustainability (Aris et al., 2025), empirical research on digital pure players (Hong et al., 2024), and theoretical studies (Fillis, 2013; Adesoga, 2015). The review synthesises these specific articles to provide a comprehensive perspective on the field, encompassing fundamental theories and contemporary data-driven implementations.

Synthesis of Selected High-Impact Literature

Table 1 provides a synthesised overview of key studies that form the evidential basis of this review, outlining their sectoral contexts, key aspects of entrepreneurial marketing (EM) and dominant methodological approaches. This synthesis is important to the review as it maps the intellectual development of the field, allowing a systematic comparison of the adaptation of EM constructs across different organisational levels and technological eras. By incorporating these diverse inputs, the table serves as an analytical basis that supports the thematic changes discussed in the subsequent sections.

The major trends are shown in Table 1. It is clear that the literature has changed a lot both in terms of time and ideas. The early foundational work (e.g., Morris and Paul, 1987) was largely quantitative in its examination of where the strategic overlap is between entrepreneurial versus marketing-oriented firms. However, at the start of the 21st century, there was a clear trend towards conceptual and qualitative studies that were focused towards Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). EM is viewed as a survival strategy of resource-constrained firms (Kraus et al., 2010; Marangoz, 2021). Table 1 shows a move from a classic survey design to newer pure-play case studies and analyses of digital perspectives driven by the growth of e-commerce and Web 2.0 interfaces.

The idea of EM has changed from simple things like being creative and being willing to take risks to more complex things like creating value with others and using technology to build relationships (Bizhanova et al., 2019). The field is maturing, and algorithmic precision is starting to come in, as well as the old entrepreneurial agility. These changes in focus open the way for the next section, which considers the individual themes of digital empowerment and long-term health of a business.

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Table 1: Summary Of Key Literature and Contributions

Authors/ Year	Title	Source	Sector/ Context	Study Focus	Key Entrepreneurial Marketing Dimension	Method/ Approach	Main Contribution
Morris & Paul, 1987	The relationship between entrepreneurship and marketing in established firms	Journal of Business Venturing	Established firms, Central Florida	Relationship between entrepreneurial and marketing orientations	Innovativeness, risk taking, and proactiveness	Quantitative (Mail questionnaire, summated scale)	Empirically supports that entrepreneurial firms are more marketing oriented and marketing is a vehicle for entrepreneurship.
Kraus et al., 2010	Entrepreneurial marketing: Moving beyond marketing in new ventures	International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation Management	General (SMEs and large firms)	Alternative conceptualization of EM as 'marketing with an entrepreneurial mindset'	Innovativeness, risk taking, pro-activeness, pursuit of opportunities	Conceptual	Redefines EM to include opportunity pursuit regardless of resources; links it to guerrilla and viral marketing.
Hills et al., 2008	The evolution and development of entrepreneurial marketing	Journal of Small Business Management	SMEs	Historical evolution of EM and distinctive marketing behaviors in SMEs	Entrepreneurial behavior, opportunity recognition	Conceptual/Review	Traces the evolution of EM into a new school of marketing thought.
Atuahene-Gima & Ko, 2001	An Empirical Investigation of the Effect of Market Orientation and Entrepreneurship	Organization Science	Cross-industry (181 firms)	Alignment between market and entrepreneurship orientations and its effect on innovation	Innovation strategies, risk taking	Quantitative (ANOVA, Planned Contrast Tests)	Identifies that aligned 'ME' firms outperform conservative firms in new product performance.

	Orientation Alignment on Product Innovation						
Jones & Rowley, 2011	Entrepreneurial marketing in small businesses: A conceptual exploration	International Small Business Journal	Small Business/ SMEs	Development of the EM orientation concept	Innovation, customer engagement, entrepreneurial approaches	Conceptual model development	Proposes a model identifying the overlap between entrepreneurial, market, and innovation orientations.
Hong et al., 2024	How is entrepreneurial marketing shaped by E-commerce technology: a case study of Chinese pure-play e-retailers	International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research	Pure-play e-retailers, China	Influence of e-commerce technologies on EM decision-making	Trend-orientated, data-orientated, innovative-driven, proactiveness	Qualitative (Case study)	Develops an online EM framework emphasizing data and platform orientation.
Aris et al., 2025	The Role of Social Media for Business Sustainability: A Study on Profit Performance Among Micro and Small Enterprises in Parit Raja, Johor	Paper Asia	MSEs, Malaysia	Social media usage and its impact on profit performance	Customer engagement, digital strategy, proactiveness	Quantitative (Exploratory descriptive, survey)	Found strong correlation between social media CRM and profit ($r=0.772$).

Nikolić et al., 2017	The marketing-entrepreneurship paradox: A frequency-domain analysis	E a M: Ekonomie a Management	Corporate (Amazon.com)	Interaction between marketing, entrepreneurship, and profitability	Acceptable risk, innovation, diversification	Quantitative (Frequency-domain causality tests)	Uses a new multi-scale approach to show that marketing drives changes in net income.
Muafa et al., 2019	Enhancement of marketing performance through entrepreneurship marketing in food and beverages SMEs	IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science	Food and Beverage SMEs, Indonesia	Relationship between EM construct and marketing performance	Entrepreneurship marketing construct	Quantitative (AMOS/SEM)	Proves positive relationship between EM theory implementation and marketing performance in F&B SMEs.
Cendikiawaty et al., 2024	Analysis of the Influence of Social Media Marketing on Purchase Intention with Customer Engagement in Industrial Automotive Sales	ICITDA 2024	Automotive Sales, Indonesia	Social media marketing, content quality, and customer engagement	Customer engagement, source credibility	Quantitative (SEM-PLS)	Validates the impact of digital marketing on purchase intention through the lens of Social Cognitive Theory.
Chalhoub, 2010	Managing entrepreneurial opportunism and marketing discipline in firm performance: empirical application	International Journal of Entrepreneurial Venturing	Enterprises, Middle East	Relationship between entrepreneurial leadership, adaptability, and performance	Opportunism, first mover adaptability, technology	Quantitative (Empirical analysis)	Identifies five success factors for performance: first mover, adaptability, interaction, process, and technology.

Fillis, 2013	The artist as marketer and entrepreneur	The Routledge Companion to Arts Marketing	Arts/Creative Sector	Competencies of artists as entrepreneurial marketers	Innovative thinking, imagination, vision, intuition	Conceptual	Identifies shared creative competencies between marketing and entrepreneurship in the arts.
Jones, 2010	Entrepreneurial marketing and the Web 2.0 interface	Journal of Research in Marketing and Entrepreneurship	Web 2.0 / Digital social media	Impact of social media on EM and small business	Innovation, consumer feedback, empowerment	Conceptual/Exploratory	Analyzes how Web 2.0 empowers consumers and provides new channels for entrepreneurial feedback.
Marangoz, 2021	Entrepreneurial marketing for a competitive advantage	Contemporary Issues with Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Social Science	SMEs	Theoretical examination of EM for competitive advantage	Proactiveness, innovations, market creation	Conceptual/Theoretical	Contrasts EM with traditional marketing and highlights its role in resource-constrained environments.
Bizhanova et al., 2019	Impact of digital marketing development on entrepreneurship	E3S Web of Conferences	Digital Economy	Impact of digital marketing on business structure and consumer behavior	Relationship-based interaction, co-creation, innovation	Firm's perspective analysis	Classifies digital marketing participation based on perceived benefits and relationship-based interactions.

Adesoga, 2015	Do commonalities between entrepreneurship and marketing occur in the business environment?	Corporate Ownership and Control	General Business Environment	Circular links between entrepreneurship and marketing	Risk minimization, marketing mix	Exploratory, textual design	Argues that marketing creates entrepreneurial activities and vice versa through mutual interaction.

Source: (16 High Impact Journal)

The literature shows a clear transition from traditional administrative marketing to an opportunistic and flexible model. The early writings on the relationship between marketing and entrepreneurship focused on mutual influence and shared skills like creativity, strategic awareness and adaptability (Adesoga, 2015; Fillis, 2013). Recent research has focused on digital ecosystems and the effect of Web 2.0 and e-commerce platforms on the business operations of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) (Jones, 2010; Muafa et al., 2019). Scholars have an increasing interest in how technology can help entrepreneurs to perform better in marketing in knowledge-based economies.

Four Major Analytical Cluster

The results are divided into four major clusters of analysis which show the evolution of the agility-to-algorithm curve. Some of the themes are: (1) Stability in strategy and combining skills; (2) Digital empowerment and creating value together; (3) The paradox of marketing and entrepreneurship; and (4) Algorithmic performance and long-term viability. This enabled the review to explore the interaction between organisational elements and technical instruments that lead to the accomplishment of specific business outcomes in a systematic way. The review thus serves as a good link between the conceptual ideas and practical experiences.

The first theme, “Strategic Agility and Competency Integration”, describes what kinds of competencies entrepreneurs should use to be successful in marketing. Marketing and entrepreneurship are an upwardly and downwardly closed cycle, where marketing’s control reduces risks and proactive entrepreneurship identifies new market opportunities (Adesoga, 2015). Successful companies highly value the ability to get along with others and to be flexible and use these competences to adapt to the market circumstances that go beyond traditional marketing models (Fillis, 2013; Chalhoub, 2010).

The second theme, “Digital Empowerment and Value Co-Creation”, focuses on how social media and Web 2.0 interfaces can change things. Digital platforms are considered tools that help business owners to generate new ideas rapidly, because customers interact and provide direct feedback (Jones, 2010; Bizhanova et al., 2019). Research shows that social media, such as TikTok and Instagram, allows consumers to co-create products and services, increasing brand engagement and brand trust, especially for small businesses with limited resources (Cendikiawaty et al., 2024; Aris et al., 2025).

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The third theme, "The Marketing-Entrepreneurship Paradox", discusses the intrinsic problems of the field. The results show that the tension between the risky nature of entrepreneurial innovation and the need for stability in the market (Nikolić et al., 2017) is an ongoing one. This contradiction is especially visible in Small and Medium-sized Businesses (SMEs) where managers must strike a balance between the will to be entrepreneurial and the strict use of marketing performance indicators to be able to survive in highly competitive environments (Muafa et al., 2019; Chalhoub, 2010).

The fourth theme, "Algorithmic Performance and Sustainability", examines the impacts of technology integration on business performance. E-commerce technology is increasingly transforming entrepreneurial marketing practices. It allows pure-play retailers to recognise and chase after opportunities with algorithmic accuracy (Hong et al., 2024). They have shown that good digital strategies help small businesses to increase their revenue and stay in business by maximising the first-mover advantage and improving their overall marketing performance (Aris et al., 2025; Muafa et al., 2019).

Finally, the interrelations of these concepts show that digital transformation is the operational bridge that allows organisations to resolve the marketing-entrepreneurship conundrum. Algorithmic technologies together with strategic flexibility enable organisations to turn individual strengths into scalable market success. These findings respond directly to the review questions since they indicate that digital empowerment and technology integration are the main drivers of contemporary entrepreneurial marketing and provide a clear direction for future study and practice in the digital era.

Discussion

The primary contribution of this critical literature analysis is to integrate the move from agility-to-algorithm, creating a conceptual link between the requirements of the digital era and traditional entrepreneurial marketing (EM) practices. Previously, marketing and entrepreneurship were viewed as two different or overlapping fields of study. This review demonstrates that digital transformation has merged these fields into one strategic imperative (Adesoga, 2015). This paper analyses 16 critical sources that provide not only descriptive analysis but also an interpretive framework showing how technological empowerment moderates the natural tension between risk-taking as an entrepreneur and rule compliance in marketing (Nikolić et al., 2017).

Regarding the first review objective, which was to look at how marketing and entrepreneurship are related, the results show that these two fields are not only related but also help each other. Evidence shows that marketing, particularly the marketing mix, is the main way in which entrepreneurial innovation is turned into a business. Nonetheless, entrepreneurship provides people with the proactive attitude necessary to get through rough situations (Morris & Paul, 1987). This cooperation is particularly visible in the combined skills of adaptability and innovative problem-solving that allow the companies to change their plans according to the real-time feedback from the market (Fillis, 2013).

The second objective looked into the function of digital empowerment, and the review shows that platforms like TikTok and Instagram have democratised the entrepreneurial process in fundamental ways. Technology integration is no longer a support function in the periphery, but a core success factor that allows resource-constrained SMEs to engage in value co-

creation with their customers (Jones, 2010; Cendikiawaty et al., 2024). The shift toward "algorithmic" marketing enables firms to shift from intuitive opportunity spotting to data-driven precision and to leverage first-mover advantages and establish brand trust through relationship-based interactions (Bizhanova et al., 2019; Aris et al., 2025).

The theoretical implications of this review suggest the need to extend the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities Theory (DCT). The results imply the need to perceive digital maturity as a dynamic resource that redefines the traditional EM dimensions of innovativeness, proactiveness and risk-taking as digital-first competencies (Marangoz, 2021). Moreover, the marketing-entrepreneurship paradox (Nikolić et al., 2017) suggests the theory needs to adapt to explain the balancing act of firms between the volatility of innovation and the stability required for algorithmic optimisation, particularly in the setting of pure-play e-retail (Hong et al., 2024).

The implications for practitioners and managers are clear. Survival in knowledge-based economies requires a shift from administrative marketing to a more adaptive, technology-integrated approach. Managers need to focus on interpersonal interaction and digital engagement as the main drivers of profitability, not just traditional advertising (Muafa et al., 2019; Aris et al., 2025). From an educational standpoint, this means that business curricula should move away from siloed teaching of marketing and entrepreneurship toward integrated strategies that use social media for consumer input and product co-creation (Bizhanova et al., 2019). However, some tensions and inconsistencies still remain despite the progress in this field. The literature on the paradox of risk has a significant contradiction. Some studies assert that digital instruments reduce risk due to better data (Jones, 2010), while others argue that the rapid pace of digital transformation forces companies to diversify, increasing the organisational risk profiles (Nikolić et al., 2017). Moreover, there is a significant research gap in understanding the barriers to digital marketing adoption among SMEs, as the current research mainly concentrates on success cases rather than failures of digital adoption (Bizhanova et al., 2019).

Future research should be on the long-term effect of machine learning and artificial intelligence on the marketing behaviour of entrepreneurs. Currently, numerous studies investigate algorithms in a broad sense (Hong et al., 2024), yet there is little real-world evidence on how automated decision-making might be changing the entrepreneurial mindset that is normally needed in marketing (Kraus et al., 2010). Future research should examine the effectiveness of social media co-creation approaches in different cultural contexts. Therefore, this review compares the digital ecosystems of Western countries and emerging markets to examine whether the shift from agility-to-algorithm is a global phenomenon.

There are some limitations to this review. The main limitation is that it draws on only 16 sources from a relatively small yet important body of literature. This allowed a full qualitative synthesis, although it is likely that there were wider trends in the grey literature or in publications not published in English that were missed. The study was focused on small businesses and pure-play retailers, so the findings may not be generalisable to large multinationals with different resource and bureaucratic structures (Morris & Paul, 1987). Finally, this review shows the importance of the relationship between marketing and entrepreneurship to keep in business in the 21st century. This review also combined the changes from basic flexibility to modern algorithmic accuracy and showed that the use of digital resources is what makes an entrepreneur successful today (Aris et al., 2025). This

paper lays a solid foundation for future researchers to explore the growing connection between human creativity and technological advancement. Thus, it argues that the firms that can best explain this paradox will be the ones to lead the next age of innovation in the global marketplace.

Conclusion

The present critical literature review examines the development of the marketing-entrepreneurship nexus with emphasis on the impact of digital transformation on traditional strategic behaviour. The study covers nearly four decades of academic progress, from the basic alignment of marketing and entrepreneurial orientations in established businesses to the more complex, technology-driven strategies adopted by small and medium-sized businesses today. This review examined the transition from agile to algorithmic and attempted to provide a concise overview of how digital instruments can improve marketing for entrepreneurs in an increasingly volatile world economy. Taken together, the existing literature suggests that the integration of marketing and entrepreneurship is no longer an optional strategy but an important requirement for business survival and competitiveness. As the evidence shows, the entrepreneurial mindset, such as being proactive, generating new ideas and taking risks, is now closely linked with digital skills such as social media use and value creation with others. Traditional approaches have depended on resource-demanding administrative marketing, while emerging frameworks demonstrate how digital platforms may assist enterprises with limited resources and convert individual flexibility into scalable, data-driven competitive advantages.

The key contribution of this review is the resolution of the marketing-entrepreneurship contradiction via a digital lens. Therefore, the unified theoretical perspective that has been fragmented so far by exposing technology empowerment as the mediating force that equalises high-risk innovation and disciplined marketing performance. It turns a range of observations into a strategic imperative, making the case that the entrepreneur of today must be as comfortable with algorithms and digital feedback loops as they are with finding traditional opportunities. The synthesis provides a strong platform for researchers and practitioners to understand the ways in which the digital environment has democratised and amplified the influence of entrepreneurial marketing. However, the long-term ethical and organisational repercussions of automated decision-making in the entrepreneurial process remain a large unanswered topic.

The field is confronting the potential loss of the “human touch” that has traditionally marked the entrepreneurial-marketing relationship, as algorithms replace human intuition in discovering markets and engaging clients. Handling this tension will be crucial to making sure that the next generation of marketing techniques will be not only effective and profitable, but also truly human. As society progresses deeper into the age of AI, the true definition of entrepreneurial marketing will be the capacity to combine the technological precision with the creative energy that originally defined the discipline.

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Author 3: Supervision, conceptualisation, validation, critical review and writing (review & editing)

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