



Role of Strategic Marketing in Survival of Small Business and Creating Job Opportunities in the U.S. Economy

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.47814/ijssrr.v9i1.3055>

Abstract

Small businesses are essential drivers of US economic growth and employment, however many struggle to remain viable because of inadequate strategic marketing capabilities. This study filled the existing gap on a measurable effect of strategic marketing practices on small business survival and job creation, which has not received much attention in empirical studies. The purpose of the research was to analyze the effect of marketing orientations such as market research, branding, pricing and digital marketing on business performance and employment creation. After quantitatively surveying 410 small business owners and managers in the context of different U.S. regions, analyses were conducted through Descriptive statistics and Structural Equation Modelling. Findings indicated that strategic marketing practices were associated with 62.4% of the variation in survival of firms and 54.7% in firm job creation. In terms of marketing dimensions, digital marketing performance ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$) and customer relationship action plans ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < 0.01$) had the greatest effect on firm survival and workforce growth. The results indicated that businesses with a regular marketing planning and customer-centric approach were 1.8 times more likely to achieve sales growth, job creation. Original evidence on marketing strategy and socioeconomic outcomes was provided, with policy implications for the support of small firms' marketing capacity to increase employment and develop regions.

Keywords: *Strategic Marketing; Small Business Survival; Job Creation; Business Growth; U.S. Economy*

1. Introduction

Small businesses are the foundation of the U.S. economy and a major source of innovation, job creation, and regional economic development (Singh, 2018). The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA, 2024) stated that small businesses represent nearly 99.9% of all U.S. businesses and make up around 46% of the private sector work force (Ogundipe, 2025). Small business enterprises substantially contribute to the economy. However, they are confronted with numerous problems like market competition, limited resources and lack of strategic direction in turn leading to high levels of failure in their businesses, especially within five years form inception (Chukwuelue, 2024). These struggles are also

indicative in the past few years of an ever-growing demand for successful strategic marketing practices, which is to say that companies need intelligent ‘ways of conducting business’ to improve and secure their long-term business resilience and competitiveness (Urefe et al., 2024). Strategic marketing is the viewing of an organization as a whole system; a total network of contracts, that connect internal stakeholders and external markets through property right (Magelssen et al., 2023). Strategic marketing is a key tool for small business survival allowing companies to discover market segments, improve limited assets and adjust to the fast-moving consumer patterns and technology trends (Chernyshov et al., 2024). In the business environment that emerges after the pandemic crisis, as markets become even more digitalized and consumer preferences keep changing in dominance by leading companies, small businesses need to focus on strategic marketing in order to remain competitive and profitable (Sari et al., 2024). Yet surprisingly, despite this significance, many small business owners continue to make marketing decisions based merely on intuition rather than data-driven strategic thinking, leaving them unable to capitalize on growth opportunities and too exposed to inevitable market shocks (O’Connor et al., 2022). Existing research on small business performance has primarily concentrated on the topics of financial management, innovation and entrepreneurial orientation, whereas relatively little empirical attention has been paid to how firms’ strategic marketing behaviors affect survival and job growth. This is an important miss, because marketing does not only have a direct effect on sales and customer retention but also contributes to job generation by growing businesses and scaling operations. Literature such as (Shuxi, 2023) underscored the importance of strategic marketing orientation in the context of business expansion; however, scant studies have empirically explored this association within the U.S. boundary, and further examined for job creation and related socio-economic performance impacts. Filling this void, we empirically analyze the contribution of strategic marketing in enhancing small business survival and expansion and its consequential impact on job creation in the overall U.S. economy (Rohatg, 2022). Its purpose is to determine those particular marketing aspects (e.g., market research, brand positioning, digital commitment, pricing strategy or customer relationship management) that contribute most to business sustainability. In addition, the study investigates the role of external support networks such as government programs, training opportunities, and digital marketing tools that may moderate the relationship between marketing and performance. There are important theoretical and practical implications of the findings in this study. In principle, it contributes to the theoretical understanding by establishing a connection between marketing strategy theory and small business sustainability and employment outcomes that has remained under-explored in empirical literature. From a practical perspective, the findings provide actionable implications to entrepreneurs, policy-makers, business development agencies seeking to enhance small business resilience. It is also policy-relevant as it indicates that strengthening marketing capability (training, technological support and financial incentives) can be an effective tool in promoting job creation and inclusive economic growth.

Ultimately, this study emphasizes the importance of strategic marketing not as just a marketing communication device but an organizational imperative for survival among small firms in competitive environments. By linking marketing effectiveness to business survival and job growth, the research adds a novel perspective on how small firms can prosper in a volatile and unpredictable U.S. economy.

2. Literature Review

Strategic marketing is an accepted key contributor to the success of many organizations, particularly for small businesses in saturated market places (Van Scheers & Makhitha, 2016). (West et al., 2023) defines strategic marketing as the planned matching of an organization’s resources and capabilities to desired market opportunities in order to attain long-term growth and profitability. Strategic marketing is therefore an important tool to assist small firm development, because of the limitation they face in terms of capital, human resource and also considering that small firms face tough competition as such

focus on efficient positioning, segmentation and customer management is vital (Morokhova & Boiko, 2023). Research has supported the fact that small firms which formalize their marketing are able to survive downturns in economy. (Sharma et al., 2023) also concluded that small firm adaptability and decision-making effectiveness is greatly enhanced through strategic marketing planning. Likewise, (Becherer et al., 2003) revealed that proactive marketing orientation defined by consistent market research, product invention and brand uniqueness has a significant positive impact on the profitability of small businesses, as well as survival rate. Yet, most small companies do not have a systematized marketing approach but rely on intuition and ad-hoc promotional tactics instead (Şahin, 2024). This improvised process hampers their ability to anticipate market changes, making them less competitive and more prone to failures. For example, in the U.S., where approximately 20% of startups fail after one year (Shivnani & Ho, 2024), an absence of strategic marketing frameworks plays a substantial role in early-stage susceptibility. Accordingly, small firms consider incorporating strategic marketing planning to be a necessity for survival as well as growth. Not only firm-level survival, strategic marketing also plays a workhorse role in macro-economic development prospects; not least as a vital means of fuelling job creation (Ambili, 2024). Business expansion is generated through expanding markets, increased customer demand and product innovation with job opportunities being created (direct or indirect employment) as a result of such marketing efforts. Marketing is, as (Kiradoo, 2023) stressed, not just about selling but also knowing what customers want so that they can lay demand on production and work.

This link is empirically supported in the literature. Based on a study of small firms in the U.S., (Rosário & Patrício, 2023) reported that, among firms with active market development strategies, those without formal marketing plans grew jobs 25–35% more than others over five years. Similarly, (Oyeyemi et al., 2024) argue that marketing-driven firms help to conceive and/or produce a larger number of local economic multipliers due to their demand for suppliers, distributors and service providers. In the U.S. case, the small business role in job creation is of particular importance. The SBA (2024) document indicated that small firms accounted for 61.7 percent of net new jobs from 2019 to 2023. Companies using strategic marketing, especially digital marketing and brand positioning, were more likely to experience workforce expansion and employee retention (Siddiqui et al., 2024). This is evidence that reaching into marketing helps not just business growths, but also jobs and regional economic strength. Though strategic marketing is essential, its success is subject to externalities such as government backing, technology access and market trends (Mehta et al., 2025). External systems of support such as training, business development programs, digital infrastructure and financial incentives can amplify the effects marketing has on performance outcomes. (Verma, 2024) claimed that, policy packages that deliver marketing education and digital adoption support do much to enhance small firm performance. Moreover, market characteristics including technology progress, consumer behavior variations and competitive pressure can reinforce or dampen the effects of marketing strategies. For example, (Kanojia & Rathore, 2025) found small businesses that were quick to embrace digital marketing in unstable market environments tended to perform better in terms of customer retention and profit margins. In contrast, for the ones who couldn't exploit online channels, their visibility and market share were decreasing. In the U.S. economy, public policies initiatives such as the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program and local entrepreneurship support networks have played an important role in providing marketing training, grant assistance, and digital tools to increase marketing capacity among SMEs (Goestjahjanti et al., 2025). These enablers serve as modifiers that increase the association between strategic marketing and firm performance, most importantly under conditions of resource scarcity. A consideration of existing literature provides several important and some key missing insights. Whereas previous studies have established the positive impact of marketing strategy on firm performance, little research has focused on a quantitative modelling of its combined effect on business survival and job creation in the small business sector. Furthermore, the extent to which external support factors can moderate this relationship has not been extensively investigated in a US setting.

The focus of this paper is to fill these existing gaps by proposing a theory that links Strategic Marketing Practices with Business Survival and Growth, and then to job creation and economic impact, where ESMD functions as the moderating factor. The model suggests that successful marketing brings with it survival and profitability for the organization and consequent employment growth and economic development for locations. The objectives of the study are:

1. To investigate the effects of strategic marketing function on successful survival and growth of small business sector in the U.S. economy.
2. To assess the connection of strategic marketing-oriented business survival with job creation.
3. To determine the primary dimensions of strategic marketing: market research, branding, pricing and digital engagement; contributing to small business performance.
4. To examine external support and market dynamics as the boundary conditions of strategic marketing-business performance link.
5. To develop policy-relevant guidance for strengthening the capacity of small business marketing to stimulate job creation and economic resilience in the U.S. economy.

3. Methods and Methodology

It was a quantitative research design to empirically examine the impact of strategic marketing in support of small business survival and job creation in the U.S. economy. The population of interest was small business owners and managers working in a multitude of sectors (the retail, service, technology or manufacturing). Sample size sample estimation was done by using Cochran's formula:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot (1 - p)}{E^2}$$

Where $Z = 1.96$ for a 95% confidence level, $p = 0.5$ assuming maximum variability and $E = 0.05$ margin of error (Cochran, 1942). Adjusting for non-responses and part-complete questionnaires brought the final sample size to 500, with a total of 470 responses collected, out of which 410 valid responses were included in the statistical analysis after data screening. Information was compiled with a standardized questionnaire in five sections related to main constructs namely strategic marketing practices, business survival and growth, job creation and economic impact, external support and market dynamics and demographic details. The data that was collected was analyzed by SPSS and SmartPLS to conduct descriptive statistics, test reliability and validity.

4. Result and Discussion

The empirical results of the study are presented and described in this section, with an interpretation of these results given in light of the research aims and literature. The review looks at the effect of strategic marketing enterprise on small business survival and growth, and its impact on job creation in the U.S. economy. To gauge the relationships between strategic marketing, business performance, job creation, as well as external support and market dynamics that were used as moderate variables; both descriptive statistics and inferential tests such as regression analysis were computed. The narrative becomes an in-depth discussion that weaves the quantitative findings together with theoretical insights and draws attention to how the patterns observed either support or counter prior research and the implications for small firm strategy and public policy.

4.1 Demographic Information of the Respondents

An examination of the demographics for respondents was important to understand the strategic marketing activities and performance effects of small firms in the U.S. economy. We analyzed 410 valid responses from owners and managers of a variety of firms such as those in the retail, service, manufacturing, and technology industry.

Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender Distribution	Male	59.3%	59.3
	Female	40.7%	40.7
Age Distribution	18-25	18.5%	18.5
	26-35	31.7%	31.7
	36-45	28.3%	28.3
	46-55	15.6%	15.6
	55+	5.9%	5.9
Education Level	High School	9.8%	9.8
	Associate Degree	17.6%	17.6
	Bachelor's Degree	42.4%	42.4
	Master's Degree	25.1%	25.1
	Doctoral Studies	5.1%	5.1
Sectoral Distribution	Service	35.9%	35.9
	Retail	27.6%	27.6
	Manufacturing	21.5%	21.5
	Technology	10.2%	10.2
	Other	4.8%	4.8
Business Age	<2 Years	22.0%	22.0
	2-5 Years	34.1%	34.1
	6-10 Years	27.8%	27.8
	>10 Years	16.1%	16.1
Number of Employees	1-5	38.5%	38.5
	6-10	26.6%	26.6
	11-25	18.3%	18.3
	26-50	10.7%	10.7
	>50	5.9%	5.9

The above table represents that, gender ratio revealed that 59.3% of the respondents were male and 40.7% were female, representing a well-balanced participation which accords with the increasing involvement of women in entrepreneurial and managerial roles in the U.S. small business sector. This balance of gender distribution is in line with national data as provided by U.S. Small Business Administration (2024) shows that there has been a continued rise in women running businesses, particularly in services sectors. The inclusion of a mix of male and female outlooks allowed for insight into the practice of marketing and management within gender lines. Regarding age, 18.5% were aged from 18 to 25 years, while 31.7% were between 26 and 35 years old, with additional percentages for individuals: between the ages of 36–45 (28.3%), between the ages of 46–55 (15.6%), and older than fifty five (5.9%) (Table 1). It tells us that there is a large number of small business managers from young and middle age group, indicating that entrepreneurship in the United States has been made by the younger and

dynamic as well as innovation - oriented people. Young entrepreneurs were also more prone to a preference for digital marketing and adoption of technology, which corroborated with findings in the study by (Domegan et al., 2019) that age diversity promotes marketing responsiveness as well as innovation. In terms of academic qualifications, it was found that among the respondents there were 9.8% had high school finished; an associate degree completed was held by 17.6%, a bachelor's degree obtained accounted for 42.4%; a master's degree completed resulted on 25.1%; and doctoral studies concluded were for only available to 5.1%. This is consistent with the fact that, in the U.S., owners of small businesses are likely to have substantial education and, thus we feel confident they can develop and execute strategic marketing programs. Previous literature (Van Scheers & Makhitha, 2016) provides evidence that education positively contributes to managerial decision-making, creativity and the capacity of risk assessment characteristics crucial for marketing innovation and company development. By sectoral distribution 35.9% of the businesses were in the service sector, followed by 27.6% retail, 21.5% manufacturing and the technology-based firms accounted for 10.2%, while other sectors recorded a combined percentage of about 4.8%. The preponderance of service and retail businesses does not come as a surprise given the structural makeup of small business in the US. Service-based ventures, which include consulting, accommodation, food services and personal care etc. are major generators of employment. These industries also typically depend extensively on customer relationship marketing and digital communication, so this underscores the importance of sustainable strategic marketing for these markets. As for the number of years businesses were established, 22.0% had been established for less than two years, 34.1% between two and five years, 27.8% between six and ten years, and 16.1% over ten years. More business age was associated with increased reliability of execution of marketing strategy, whereas newer-aged businesses tended to endorse the use of digital platforms and innovative promotions. Number of employees was used as a proxy for company size and firm stage. Results indicated that 38.5% of companies had 1–5 employees, 26.6% between 6 and 10, 18.3% between 11 and 25, 10.7% between 26 and 50. Group Layouts with more than 50 workers each were found. This trend reinforces the fact that most of the respondents ran micro and small businesses, similar to the U.S. SBA definition of small businesses. Complementary, the relationship between strategic marketing activities and business survival was stronger in larger firms indicating a positive relation between sizes and marketing sophistication.

4.2 Strategic Marketing Practices

The examination of Strategic Marketing Practices has given some understanding how small business in the U.S. choose to stimulate survival, growth and employment generation by utilizing marketing strategies. The questionnaire incorporated 7 main items about market research and selling, branding and reputation building, pricing strategies, promotion skills and performance measurement skills such as online sale, client evaluation reporting system. Participants were asked to rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1 =Strongly Disagree) to (5 =Strongly Agree).

Table 2: Strategic Marketing Practices of Small Business in U.S. Economy

Measure	Average Score (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Likert Scale Rating
Digital Marketing and Social Media	4.21	0.61	Strongly Agree
Customer Feedback Integration	3.98	0.67	Strongly Agree
Market Research	3.94	0.7	Strongly Agree
Branding	3.85	0.72	Agree
Pricing Strategy	3.78	0.69	Agree
Promotional Strategies	3.72	0.72	Agree
Marketing ROI Evaluation	3.74	0.73	Agree

In table 2 shows that, findings were used to formulate a model showing moderate-to-high SDI for small businesses. Average of items for the Strategic Marketing Practices ranged from 3.72 to 4.21, which shows some consensus among the respondents concerning marketing activities as important for business success. The second most adopted practice was digital marketing and social media (mean = 4.21, SD = 0.61), which suggests the increasing importance of online communication channels as a means to access target markets, particularly for younger entrepreneurs. This result is consistent with work by (O'Connor et al., 2022) where they indicated that digital marketing is indeed important when it comes to customer acquisition, brand recognition and positioning within the competitive small business sector. Customer feedback integration (M = 3.98, SD = 0.67) and market research (M = 3.94, SD = 0.70) also emerged as having high scores when determining whether small businesses actively try to understand customer needs and adapt products or services in response to demand. These behaviors have generated customer satisfaction, repeat business and enabled informed decision-making, adding credence to earlier research that associated market intelligence with business adaptability and long-term survival (West et al., 2023). Branding (mean = 3.85, SD = 0.72) and pricing strategy (mean = 3.78, SD = 0.69) scored moderate levels of adoption suggesting that small enterprises acknowledge the importance of differentiation and competitive price during tough economic situation but constrained resources may inhibit their extent of sophistication associated with these activities. Promotional strategies and marketing ROI evaluation exhibited slightly lower degrees of adoption (mean = 3.72 and 3.74, respectively), which is indicative of small business owners' inclination to emphasize short-term sales results instead of a systematic monitoring of marketing effectiveness. The reliability analysis confirmed that the Strategic Marketing Practices construct showed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.87, thus evidencing high internal consistency of the variable and confirming its adequacy for structural modeling. Correlation results revealed that SMP was correlated positively and significantly with Business Survival and Growth ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$) and Job Creation ($r = 0.57$, $p < 0.01$). These results indicate that public service admission is more likely to Grow, Expand its market reach and Create employment if the (AMAS) will be involved in adopting marketing strategy.

4.2 Business Survival and Growth

The BSG analysis considered how strategic marketing practices, was one of the factors that facilitated the operational survival, profitability and growth of small businesses across the U.S. economy. The construct was assessed using six primary variables that were the lens: enhancing profitability, customer retention, nimbleness in adapting to market shifts, positive public perception of the business itself, expansion of revenue and long-term stability. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Table 3: Survey Results of Business Survival and Growth

Measure	Average Score (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Likert Scale Rating
Enhancing Profitability	4.06	0.68	Strongly Agree
Customer Retention	4.25	0.58	Strongly Agree
Nimbleness in Adapting to Market Shifts	4.12	0.63	Strongly Agree
Positive Public Perception	3.89	0.65	Agree
Expansion of Revenue	4.06	0.68	Strongly Agree
Long-Term Stability	3.94	0.71	Agree

However, most of the respondents reported a strong overall tendency towards both survival and growth strategies (means between 3.76 and 4.25). The highest rated element was customer retention

(mean = 4.25, SD = 0.58), which indicates that firms with good strategic marketing can develop loyal customer base and sustain continuous demand. This was followed closely by an increased in action ability of marketing strategy (mean = 4.12, SD = 0.63) and revenue growth (mean = 4.06, SD = 0.68), suggesting that firms with a structured marketing strategy had higher financial performance and were more competitive in the marketplace (Table 3). These results align with previous findings by (Siddiqui et al., 2024), who demonstrated that marketing-led small firms outperform other firms specifically in terms of growth and resilience. Market responsiveness (mean = 3.94, SD = 0.71) and business image (mean = 3.89, SD = 0.65) received moderate ranking indicating that although many small businesses have already incorporated adaptive tactics in their marketing efforts and brand building endeavors, some difficulties such as capital size limitation and uncertain market entry are still limiting long term sustainability. This suggests that small businesses still struggle to remain in operation year-on-year through external shocks such as inflation, changes in technology and policy. This working instrument was confirmed reliable, with Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 that shows the BSG construct was valid statistically and high internal consistent. The correlation test evidenced a strong positive association between Strategic Marketing Practices and Business Survival and Growth ($r = 0.61$, $p < 0.01$), indicating companies that adopt structured ways of marketing are more likely to perform sustainably in the long term. In addition, the results from structural equation modeling (SEM) indicated that strategic marketing exerted a significant positive impact on business survival and growth ($\beta = 0.64$, $t = 9.28$, $p < .001$), which confirmed that marketing has an important role in promoting small firm resilience. The implications are that small businesses can be competitive by engaging in strategic marketing such as market orientation, differentiation and customer focus. Through a consistent process of market sensing, value capturing and leveraging customer relationships, small firms can develop adaptive resources that facilitate both survival and growth. This finding is consistent with the resource-based view that suggests marketing capabilities are a fundamental organizational resource, which promotes firm performance and long-term survival (Mehta et al., 2025).

In conversation the findings emphasize strategic marketing as a survival strategy for SME firms, particularly at times of competitor pressures and economic uncertainty. Companies that repeatedly invested in customer engagement, branding, and digital transformation have shown greater financial stability and market position. Accordingly, marketing education campaigning to build strong SME support programs should include digital literacy and innovation supports if small firms are to survive and create jobs.

4.3 Job Creation and Economic Impact

The Job Creation and Economic Impact study sought to understand the impact of small business survival and expansion as a result of strategic marketing practices, in terms of jobs and broader contribution to the economy. The several dimensions of this construct were assessed using five indicators: increase in the number of employees, creation of new employment positions, employee skill development, support to the local community welfare and sensed role in reducing unemployment. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each of the items, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Table 4: Role of Strategic Marketing in Job Creation and Economic Impact

Measure	Average Score (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Increase in the Number of Employees	3.68	0.72
Creation of New Employment Positions	4.18	0.59
Employee Skill Development	4.05	0.64
Support to Local Community Welfare	3.89	0.66
Role in Reducing Unemployment	3.78	0.69

The findings showed that small enterprises had a moderate to strong role in job creation (mean range: 3.68-4.18). The highest ranking was a new job position (mean = 4.18, SD = 0.59), as expansion-oriented small firms could afford to hire more workers since the customer base and volume of operations grew because of good marketing strategies. Employee capability development was the second ranked antecedent (mean = 4.05, SD=0.64), with businesses investing in marketing and expansion also enhancing their workforces' skills through training and digital up skilling (Table 4). These results mirror the work of (Urefe et al., 2024), which highlighted that marketing-led growth directly nudges employment generation and human capital creation in small companies. The motivation categories of contribution to local community welfare (mean = 3.89, SD = 0.66) and reduction of unemployment (mean = 3.78, SD = 0.69) were rated moderately, indicating that small enterprises acknowledge their social and economic roles but may be constrained in scaling the employment impact on account of financial and operational constraints. The least highly rated indicator, increase in the total number of personnel (mean =3.68, SD=.72), suggests that new jobs are being created; however overall growth remains modest which may reflect a level of cautiousness due to market competition as well as economic uncertainty. Internal consistency of the JCEI factor was high as indicated by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86. Entrepreneurship Creation and Business Growth correlated positively and significantly high with Job Jobs Creation and Economic Impact ($r = 0.64$, $p < 0.01$); thus indicating that as small business profit as they are marketed effectively, there is substantial increase in the amount of jobs created for others to work in those companies. The results of structural equation modeling (SEM) also showed that Business Survival and Growth contributed to Job Creation and Economic Impact significantly, directly ($\beta = 0.59$, $t = 8.74$, $p < 0.001$), proving that there will be realistic economic consequences if sustainable development can be achieved. The results support the view that job creation is immediately stimulated though the strategic marketing by means of firm profitability, market growth and operational capacity. Companies using integrated marketing practices like customer relationship management, e-marketing such as online promotion, and value-based branding tend to grow more quickly and therefore hire more people. These findings are consistent with the entrepreneurial growth hypothesis, according to which business expansion is a core mechanism of employment and local economic development (Magelssen et al., 2023).

On a policy level the findings indicate that encouraging small businesses to participate in marketing skills training and adopting digital marketing will make a substantial contribution towards national employment targets. Programs that foster marketing innovation, digital solutions and business development services must take precedence if small firms are to move from survival mode to sustainable job producers. In sum, the results suggest that this is not only leads to small business survival but also contributes to inclusive economic growth by acting as a driving mechanism for appropriate shaping of U.S. small business ecosystem.

4.4 Overall Perception and Future Outlook

The Overall Perception and Future Outlook section was designed to capture respondents' perceptions of the relevance of strategic marketing for small business sustainability in a tough U.S. economy, as well as their views regarding how business would perform in future years given the prevailing economic conditions. This attitude was formed by five key measures: perceived strategic marketing importance, confidence of business survival, future optimism on growth, willingness to invest in new marketing methods and perceived economic stability. A 5-point Likert type scale (1: Strongly Disagree, 5: Strongly Agree) was employed to measure responses.

Table 5: Overall Perception and Future Outlook of Strategic Marketing.

Measure	Average Score (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Likert Scale Rating
Strategic Marketing Importance	4.32	0.58	Strongly Agree
Business Survival Confidence (Next 5 years)	3.89	0.71	Agree
Future Optimism on Growth	4.18	0.63	Strongly Agree
Willingness to Invest in New Marketing Methods	4.11	0.67	Strongly Agree
Perceived Economic Stability	3.82	0.74	Agree

In general, a favorable perception and future expectation of the function of strategic marketing was indicated among small business owners. The average scores of the items were between 3.82 and 4.32, suggesting high confidence over marketing as a long-term enabler for success. The most highly rated assertion, “Strategic marketing is vital for small business competitiveness and survival” (mean score = 4.32, SD = .58) (Table 5), revealed a nearly unanimous perception of marketing as an essential driver of performance. This result is consistent with the results of (Rosário & Patrício, 2023) who reported that market-orientation thinking promotes small firms’ resilience and innovation. High optimism of future business growth (M = 4.18, SD = 0.63) and intention to invest more efforts in marketing innovation (M = 4.11, S D = 0.67) displayed by the entrepreneurs indicated a good potential for entrepreneurship and readiness to adjust to changes in market conditions also fall into high level per point average which is above of midpoint three. Respondents were also optimistic about the post-pandemic recovery and growth opportunities offered by digital tools, customer analytics, and brand differentiation. The implications indicate SMEs do not see marketing as an expense, but an investment in survival and competitiveness. At the same time, moderate levels were reported for confidence about companies surviving in the next 5 years (mean = 3.89, SD = 0.71) and perceived stability of the economy mean = 3.82, SD = 0.74). Moderate confidence in sales prospects it is this moderate level of confidence that suggests small business owners have reasons not to lose hope but still feel hesitant, a result of the macroeconomic pressures such as inflation, supply chain disruption and increased operating expenses. This result is in line with those found by (Goestjahjanti et al., 2025) who showed that the growth prospect of small firms depends on the external support, technology adoption, and regulatory certainty. An internal reliability test of the overall perception and future outlook construct resulted in a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.85, indicating that OPFO is consistent as well. There was found to be a positive relationship between Strategic Marketing Practices and Overall Perception and Future Outlook ($r = 0.58$, $p < 0.01$), suggesting that firms who are more orientated towards doing something specific about marketing were more confident and forward-looking. SEM results also indicated that Strategic Marketing Practices indirectly influenced Future Outlook via Business Growth ($\beta = 0.47$, $t = 7.63$, $p < 0.001$), thus indicating that concrete marketing effects enhance entrepreneurs’ optimism and investment expectations. In conversation such results suggest small business owners in the U.S. Are beginning to understand strategic marketing as a tool of long-term sustainability and job creation. Their optimistic outlook marks an evolution from the industry’s typical short-term, reactive marketing approach to quick-paced though innovation-oriented strategies that are driven by data and adaptability. But their relative confidence in the economic outlook also underlines the importance of sustaining policy and institutional support, especially related to digital infrastructure, financing and entrepreneur training.

5. Findings

- Results showed that marketing focus significantly contributed to the survival and growth of smaller business enterprises through a positive relationship ($r = 0.61$, $P < 0.01$) and a structural path coefficient ($\beta = 0.64$, $p < 0.001$), revealing that marketing oriented firms were able to earn higher profits, be more adaptable and retain more customers beyond what other less market focused organizations do under study.
- Marketing-induced business growth was found to play a significant role in job creation and influence on the economy (as indicated by a significant path from business survival and growth to job creation [$\beta = .59$, $p < .001$]), with support of the notion that growing firms created jobs that benefited local communities.
- They found strategic marketing dimensions such as digital engagement, market research and customer feedback integration had the strongest impact on enhancing competitiveness and long term sustainability in small businesses.
- The study demonstrated that external support and marketing environment reinforced the relationship between marketing practices and business performance to a medium extent, meaning better access to financial support, training facilities and technological infrastructure increases the effectiveness of marketing.
- At the aggregate level, strategic marketing is viewed favorably by small business owners as a driver of sustainable growth and employment in the U.S. economy; this is evident by high average measures for optimism and investment intentions of strategic marketing's role in their future success.

6. Recommendations

- Small business Development Corporation and local chambers of commerce should initiate continued training programs on strategic marketing, digital marketing to increase entrepreneurs' awareness about branding, pricing and customer relations management for productivity growth.
- There should be a role for policymakers to foster widespread adoption of digital tools (such as marketing, e-commerce and data analytics) through subsidized technology programs or public-private partnerships in order to assist small businesses' market reach and compete better.
- Specialized financial support, cheap credit and grant programs for marketing innovation and business expansion (especially for startups and micro companies) should be supported from the part of government and financial institutions in the underdeveloped areas.
- Small businesses must make use of objective methods for measuring marketing performance such as tracking customer feedback, calculating ROMI and using analytics dashboards to justify their marketing spend with facts.
- Policy makers need to design an integrated SME development policy linking marketing innovation with job creation, particularly in such a way that growing firms have incentives to create jobs and contribute to local economic development.
- Industry organizations need to promote partnership marketing relationship, mentorship initiatives and cluster-based marketing strategy among SMSEs to increase consumer information awareness thereby lowering the cost of advertisement.
- Small businesses should consider integrating marketing planning strategy within their strategic plan and aligning both with emerging market trends, customer behavior and sustainability objectives in order to continue to compete in future business environment.

Conclusion

The research found that access to strategic marketing is critical to the survival, expansion, and job creation opportunity of small businesses in the United States economy. Empirical evidence revealed that companies utilizing structured marketing approaches such as market research, digital engagement and customer-centric branding were also more likely to be more profitable, agile and sustainable than those without a formal marketing orientation. The positive link of strategic marketing practices to the business performance was also reflected in terms of considerable job creation and welfare gains in community. While small businesses measure high optimism and a significant awareness of marketing importance, their future viability is contingent on financial capital, institutional support and technological capability. Implications The results reflect the necessity for policy intervention, education and innovation support to enhance marketing competencies of microenterprises. Finally, the study found that strategic marketing is not just a tactical input but rather a strategic resource and economic driver at the small business level that contributes to competitive advantage, durability, and broader-based economic growth for America's small businesses.

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