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## Developing Entrepreneurial Marketing Mix: Case Study of Entrepreneurial Food Enterprises in Iran

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*The purpose of this paper is to identify and exam the main elements of entrepreneurial marketing mix in entrepreneurial enterprises. Our focus in this study is on Iran's top small and medium-size business entrepreneurs in 2007, which possess a brilliant experience about entrepreneurial marketing practices. Accordingly, we aim to identify how these enterprises use their previous knowledge and experience to extract elements of marketing mix, which are adjusted in entrepreneurial marketing. As its research framework, this study has used the Quality - Exploratory approach specifically case study according to Ghauri framework. Data were collected from 17 entrepreneurial enterprises. Different methods including in-depth and semi-structured interviews, along with open questions from entrepreneurs and marketing managers were employed in gathering information.*

*Finally, Content analysis method also inductive inference used for data analysis. Results indicate that the Entrepreneurial Marketing Mix include 5Ps which element of Person is a new element among others. However it should be mentioned that there is an entrepreneurial approach in component of Price, Place, Product and Promotions as well and some new component have been added to the conventional marketing mix.*

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**Keywords:** *Entrepreneurial Marketing; Entrepreneurial Marketing Mix; Small and medium size enterprise*

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## Introduction

Recent economic studies consider economic growth as a prerequisite for progress in human society and meanwhile entrepreneurial approach to economy, especially in third world countries, will be terminated to economic development (Simpson et al. 2009). Nowadays entrepreneurial development is considered as the best way to leave recession and if firms can provide the highest degree of value for their customer, they will both enjoy their own competitive advantage, position themselves in the market, and also among their target customers (Hill and Hultman, 2006).

Based on Schumpeter (1960), entrepreneurship process includes innovation in creating new products/services, processes, market and strategy (Crane, 2010). So accordingly, this process is considered as a way to create sustainable advantage in market which allows identifying new needs and demand of customer and meet their satisfaction (Martin, 2009).

On the other hand, marketing is an organizational function and a set of process for create, communicate and deliver value to customer and manage relationship with them in order to achieve profitability and value for organization and its stakeholders (Fillis, 2000). Then, emerging business success requires establishing long-term relationships with customers and deliver value to them and the result of this operation is to achieve loyal customers, which are valuable resources for disseminating product/service among other consumers (Crane, 2010). Yet, this is marketing that enables entrepreneurs to discover, create, motivate, satisfy and meet the demands and desires of customers. So that in entrepreneurial logic, scholar believe that a successful business is often created by an Intelligent and creative entrepreneur who considers one reason of market pain and tries to find out some specific way to cure them (Crane, 2010: P.2).

Literature review leads us to the fact that entrepreneurship and marketing are both have been considered as two different research areas, but by raising awareness about the impact of entrepreneurship and

innovation on the marketing and on the other hand marketing role in the success of entrepreneurial activity, these two field of study were combined and the concept of "Entrepreneurial Marketing" have emerged (Hill and Hultman, 2006). Contemporary definition of this concept is suggested by Morrist et al. (2002:P.5), which says that:"Entrepreneurial Marketing is a proactive identification and exploitation of opportunity to obtain and maintenance profitable customer through innovative perspectives on risk management, value creation and entrepreneurial resource navigation".

In most of the literature, entrepreneurial behavior is attributed to small and medium enterprises. This is because an entrepreneurial activity entails innovation, risk-taking and proactive performances (Stokes, 2000), and since small and medium enterprises face numerous constraints due to unavailability of enough resources, their activities are infused with more risk-taking and a higher level of innovativeness, to the effect that entrepreneurial activities can be observed mostly in the small and medium enterprises (Stokes and Spring, 2000). Moreover it should be noted that small and medium sized enterprises have some major problems in field of marketing such as: having small range of customer (few major customer), financial constraints in field of marketing, limited resource, non-normative and variable effort and excessive reliance on the owner's marketing competency (Stokes, 2000). Considering these limitation, an entrepreneurial SME is not able to meet the needs of all customers in the market place, so the entrepreneur should focus his/her effort to attract a specific group of potential customers, which is named target market. Selection of these target customers requires going through different stages such as specialized procedures and processes, which are, include targeting, segmentation and identification of customers and using specific methods for attracting and maintaining these group of customer. This effort is called the "Entrepreneurial Marketing Mix". In fact, marketing mix is the integration of marketing programs that are used to attract and keep long-term relationship with customers (Crane, 2010:P.6).

Given the above discussions, it can be deduced that the marketing mix is the main essence of marketing activities in entrepreneurial small and medium enterprises and dominates all the firms' activities. However, and despite its importance, there is a lack of appropriate introduction of an entrepreneurial marketing mix in the existing literature commensurate with

small enterprises. Hence, in this study, we aim to identify main and subsidiary elements of marketing mix in Iranian entrepreneurial small and medium sized enterprises. Our main focus in this study is on Iran's top small and medium-size business entrepreneurs in 2007, which possess a brilliant experience about entrepreneurial marketing practice. So we used the Quality - Exploratory approach specifically case study according to Ghauri framework to extract these elements due to weakness in the theoretical background and empirical research as well as the lack of effective components in the marketing mix is entrepreneurial research.

## Literature review

One common aspect between entrepreneurship and marketing is the study of methods through which marketing concepts and principles could be applied in the field of entrepreneurship. Because this issue has been repeatedly acknowledged that the marketing techniques used by entrepreneurs are somehow different from the concepts presented in the literature and traditional marketing contracts (Hill and Hultman, 2006). Traditional marketing is a deliberate and organized process and its concepts are based on the assumption that identifying customer needs, requires formal research and in order to meet these needs the firm plans to create an organized structure for new products and services development. Yet, entrepreneurial behavior is informal, unplanned and based on individual intuition and understanding of events in the market place (Hill et al, 2009). In the literature, entrepreneurial behavior has been attributed to SMEs. The nature of an entrepreneurial acting involves three dimensions including: innovation, risk taking and proactiveness; and since SMEs face some limitations such as having few major customer, financial constraints in field of marketing and limited resource, their effort especially in current turbulence environment, associated with higher risk and they need more creativity and innovation to face the risks. Then, entrepreneurial behavior is more obvious in small and medium size enterprises (Stokes, 2000).

SME owner's claim that their marketing activities in contrast to other organizational function, are in lower degree of formality and they consider marketing "something that a large and established company has to do" (Stokes and Spring, 2000). Despite this evidence, marketing is essential

for survival and development of an entrepreneurial SME (Carson et al., 1995). Besides, since marketing principles and theories have made through the review and study of marketing experience in large company, it seems that it is time to consider marketing process in the field of small business to develop our general understanding of the concept "entrepreneurial marketing".

## **Entrepreneurial Marketing**

For entrepreneurs and owner managers of small enterprise, marketing is a method or in other words, a tactic for catching opportunities. They don't consider marketing as an organizational culture or a strategic process, rather their definition of marketing have been taken from their own subjective and have great emphasis on using promotion techniques to attract customers while ignore other non-promotional aspects of marketing such as product development, pricing and distribution strategy. Most of the owner managers of small enterprise believe that their business relies on word of mouth marketing so they have no need to use informal marketing techniques. This does not necessarily mean that they do not have peers on fundamental aspects of marketing, but in fact they are not familiar with the concepts and terminology in this area and their assumption comes from their personal experiences (Stokes, 2000).

In fact they have a strategic awareness, especially in review of market situation, segmentation, find target market, Establish direct communication with them and finally provide customer services (Crane, 2010). There are also experimental evidences that show entrepreneurial personality characteristics such as being consistent and persistence have positive effect on performance of an entrepreneurial enterprise (Sorensen and Chang, 2006). List of personality characteristics and core features of prominent entrepreneurs which are of paramount importance is presented in Table 1.

**Table1:** Characteristic of entrepreneurs (Sorensen and Chang, 2006)

Year	Scholar	Characteristics of entrepreneurial	Core characteristic
1775	Cantillion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entrepreneur as a dealer – agent</li> <li>• Entrepreneur do not see any difference between risk and uncertainty</li> <li>• Emphasis on interaction of entrepreneurial goals</li> </ul>	Power trading in risk (for Factor of production)
1800	Say	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A main input in the production process</li> <li>• With management and judgment power</li> <li>• Use his/her judgment power to recognize opportunity</li> </ul>	Judgment power
1875	Marshal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on innovation in addition to emphasis on two previous view</li> <li>• Innovation to reduce costs</li> </ul>	Innovation
1911	Schumpeter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovator and creator of new component</li> <li>• Will tolerate uncertainty</li> <li>• Banker</li> </ul>	Innovation and creation new component
1921	Knith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distinguish risk and uncertainty</li> <li>• Will tolerate uncertainty</li> </ul>	Uncertainty taker
1973	Kerzner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have entrepreneurial conciseness</li> <li>• Have access to information</li> <li>• Recognize opportunity with usage of information</li> <li>• Make Imbalance in market</li> </ul>	Entrepreneurial conciseness
1975	Shultz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinator and Resource Allocator</li> <li>• Entrepreneur as interactive</li> </ul>	Resource Allocator
2000	Shane and Venkateraman	Entrepreneur as Nexus with Opportunity	Nexus with Opportunity
2003	Cason	Decision maker	Decision making

In the literature, generally, there is a notion that marketing and entrepreneurship both emphasize on opportunity recognition in dynamic

environments and EM is the way to identify market opportunity and transfer resource such as knowledge, technology and capital from social network into the organization which consequently creates value for customers (Hill and Hultman, 2006).

### **Entrepreneurial Marketing in small and medium sized enterprises: paradigm of modernity**

Small and medium size enterprises don't follow conventional methods in their marketing practices and their functions are so specific (Stokes, 2000; Hill et al., 2009). But sometimes they apply traditional methods in an innovative and entrepreneurial manner to achieve their goals (Carson, 1993).

One of the major problems, which they face, is being in dynamic environment (Moriarty et al., 2008). Therefore, their marketing decisions are occasionally, discontinuous, non-structured, informal, and includes spontaneous reactions. Moreover, marketing functions in these companies are highly dependent on available recourses, life cycle of both company and its product/service, personality, knowledge and experience of owner manager and degree of Customer satisfaction (Odwyer et al., 2009). Also social networks include people and other related companies have become the inherent characteristics of SME marketing (Zontanos and Anderson, 2004).

Marketing literature confirms that small enterprises cannot benefit from economies of scale in order to establish their core competencies on innovative development of new product or service and the information needed for this process is gathered from customer and market place (Odwyer et al., 2009).

In current environment, entrepreneurial orientations are the core of marketing process in SMEs and are necessary for their success (Stokes and Spring, 2000; Zontanos and Anderson, 2004). Small businesses may not work as professional marketing experts, but are always running for their survival and growth (Zontanos and Anderson, 2004).

Kotler (2003:4-5) believes that entrepreneurial marketing is a new technique, which is applicable in SMEs and divided it in three steps:

First, entrepreneurial marketing. In this stage, most of entrepreneurs run their businesses by individual efforts and rely on their cleverness and awareness the most. They initially recognize an opportunity and adjust their experiences, understanding and intuition to exploit it. In the second step, marketing techniques are in the form of formulated marketing, Kotler continues that: “while an SME achieves some success, begins to formulate its marketing efforts and after a while it has much formal technique as road map. But the lack of creativity and desire to guerrilla marketing at this stage of growth companies is seen”. Now, brand and product managers should come out from their office and live with their customers and create new way to deliver more value to them. In this stage, they need entrepreneurial marketing. (Hills and Hultman, 2006).

According to Kotler, Entrepreneurial marketing is related to first development phase of business where the level of entrepreneurship is high and the degree of formalization of marketing practices is low. While, businesses move to growth stage, the degree of formalization increases and more staff and procedure is needed. However entrepreneurship is independent from organization growth and may increase or decline during the time (Hills and Hultman, 2006).

### **Marketing mix in small and medium enterprises**

Marketing mix comprises are the core essence of marketing activities (Martin, 2009). Marketing researchers is always attributed the success of marketing activities to the implementation of similar elements in the mix. The elements in the marketing mix in a successful marketing activity have been traditionally known as to be associated with the 4p’s (price, promotion, place, product) for everyone (Kotler, 2003). Firms usually organize these elements according to the known and tested patterns and step-by-step procedures and claim that the existing designs inherent in these patterns are highly structured and systematic (Carson et al, 1995). However, Martin (2009) alluding to the points above and investigating empirical cases, realized that small and medium enterprises lose their entrepreneurial spirit by purely imitating the conventional marketing mix patterns. As mentioned before, this is because these firms due to their nature face opportunities and threats that cause them to use their own



particular marketing practices (Hill et al, 2008). It is generally accepted that the characteristics and features of a small enterprise influences its activities, techniques, and marketing experiences (Zontanos and Anderson, 2004).

The tactics of using a different marketing mix are different from an entrepreneur to another, regarding conventional processes such as product development, pricing, place and promotion (Martin, 2009). Entrepreneurs prefer having direct interactions and developing personal relationships with organizational shareholders to practicing formal and conventional principles. Moreover, their functional tactics are directed towards understanding the market instead of doing formal research and are based on personal observations (Stokes and Nicholas, 2010). In fact, most manager-owners of small and medium enterprises do not determine their marketing mix based on the 4p's, instead they prefer interactive and conversational marketing practices (Carson, 2005).

## **Methodology**

As previously noted, the present study tries to identify appropriate elements (components) of entrepreneurial marketing mix which are applied in Iran's Top small and medium-size business entrepreneurs. Considering the emerging issue of entrepreneurial marketing concept, and the fact that in previous studies, does not found any research which identify all appropriate elements of marketing mix applicable in entrepreneurial enterprises, in this paper, a qualitative research approach and specifically exploratory case study strategy is selected. Besides, implementation process is based on stages of implementation case study, matching Ghauri's theory which consists of seven steps include: Stage one- Research problem definition, Stage two- Select initial conceptual framework and design research tools, Stage three-Sampling, Stage four- Systematically data collection, Stage five- Management and classification of the data collected, Stage six- Analysis of findings, Stage Seven – Theorization ( Ghauri,2009:49-20).

## **Research stages**

### **Stage one - Research problem definition**

As mentioned above, the purpose of this study is to identify elements (components) of marketing mix applicable in Iran's top small and medium-size business entrepreneurs in 2007.

### **Stage two - Select initial conceptual framework and design research tools**

Conceptual framework considered in this study is based on knowledge of marketing and entrepreneurship or in other words, entrepreneurial marketing framework which is applied to organize results of reports and interviews and gathering and managing findings. Thus, selected framework composes of entrepreneurial marketing elements include: Risk management, Innovation, opportunity recognition, Proactiveness, Customer intensify, Value creation and resource leveraging. Mentioned concepts were applied as a basis in designing open questionnaire and gathering data from entrepreneurs.

### **Stage three - Sampling**

Since the case study with exploratory approach, has great emphasize on processes and understanding and interpreting them, for extracting entrepreneurial marketing mix we apply depth and semi-structured interviews and discussed open question with 17 top entrepreneurs and senior directors of marketing in 17 small and medium-size enterprises which are selected by Iranian Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs as top entrepreneurial enterprises in 2007.

It should be noted that, people who directly faced to entrepreneurial marketing subject were the main target in our interview, so our sampling method was targeted.

### **Stage four - Systematically data collection**

Since collecting detailed data from different references, is the main process in case studies, in order to increase the validity of this research, we did not only confined ourselves to the results collected from interviews but

also secondary data sources and previous texts have been used to achieve more reliable and richer results.

One of the basic foundations of interpretive researches is theoretical sampling which means: data collection based on concepts that come from the theory, going to different places and meet different people or events which give us the opportunity to discover differences between existing concepts. It should be mentioned that qualitative methodology allows the researcher to distinguish the theoretical characteristics from general characteristics of a subject that simultaneously rooted in empirical observations (Heath and Cowley, 2003).

In this research, we focused on entrepreneurial enterprises, which have a close interaction with their market place. Data collected during 3 months and 24 hours in-depth and semi-structure interviews. All points have been noted and additional notes gather right after each interview. Eventually, our primary data consists of 120 paper notes. Since the main theme of the case study is collected detailed data from multiple sources, in upcoming research to ensure validity of results and to benefit from the advantages of pluralism, we did not only put stress on interview, but also we used scientific databases as well as article publications as secondary resources.

### **Stage five - Management and classification of the data collected**

In this paper, we designed "semi-structured" interviews and then asked interviewees to describe issues outside theoretical frameworks. It should be mentioned that the process of interviewing would continue until reliable results were collected.

In the next step, answers were adjusted with theoretical framework, and content analysis method including data purging, data presentation, codification, thematic analysis and categorizing was applied to analyze data. Based on the results from the interviews, 54 components were obtained and based on their concepts and thematic analysis, they were categorized into five main elements namely the entrepreneurial marketing mix. The components for each element of this mix are outlined in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Codification of conducted interviews

participants	Components	Dimension	
16, 9, 3, 12, 8, 11, 12	PUBLIC RELATIONSHIP (PRIVATE/ PUBLIC)	PERSON	
	CUSTOMER COMMUNICATIONS		
	Correct decisions with the correct information		
1, 9, 15, 17, 7, 13, 10, 11	Popular participation		
	INDIVIDUAL INNOVATION		
	RISK TAKING		
	Having ethics and adhere to the culture of market		
16, 12, 5, 8, 13, 9, 11, 17, 2	USING BODY LANGUAGE		
	Extensive social networking and efficient use of them		
	Rapidly changing		
1, 9, 11, 2, 6, 4, 7, 16, 12, 8	Do not use media advertising		PROMOTION
	Do not use verbal and indirect advertising		
	Create a complete cycle of non-homogeneous products		
	Direct communication with primary and secondary customers		
	New product development based on Entrepreneurs preferences		
	New product development based on market needs		
14, 12, 2, 9, 5, 8, 17, 16	Using quality products and lack of ad		
	Attending exhibitions and private gatherings		
	Updating knowledge		
	Using tech day		
3, 1, 7, 11, 1, 6, 4, 15, 13	Create an intimate relationship with the original buyer		
	Commitment to responsibility and ethics common in market		
	use of incentive award and supports		
	Customer classified as primary and secondary categories		
	Use the distribution system for Ads		

	Long-term communication		
	Ensure customer satisfaction during and after the exchange process		
5 , 4 , 3 , 1 10 , 8 , 7 , 6 15 , 14 , 12	price-quality fitness	<b>Price</b>	
	Working with distributors		
	Not giving loans and credit to distributors		
	Having a pricing strategy		
	Lower production costs		
2 , 9 , 3 , 12 14 , 17 , 13 , 1 10	Using capillary distribution system	<b>Place</b>	
	Create a full food basket for the primary customers		
	Creating innovation in distribution networks		
	Categories of distributors		
	Considering the profit margin		
	Cooperation with competitors to expand activities		
	speed up payback to shops and to public companies		
	7 , 16 , 9 , 5 13 , 3 , 10 , 8		Outsourcing distribution station
			Create competition for the product
			Used mess to distribute
Distribution under license			
9 , 12 , 4 , 8 8 , 3 , 15 , 13 14 , 10 , 9	Using a multi-brand product	<b>Product</b>	
	Classification based on the quality		
	Homogeneous production with diverse approaches		
	Variety of products with non-homogeneous approach		
	Given customer conformity and needs		
	Efforts to enhance brand		
8 , 6 , 4 , 12 17 , 14 , 5 , 9 15 , 16	Product offering in different packages		
	Applying the innovations in products		
	Match all customer taste		
	the highest price and not necessarily highest quality		

### **Stage six - Analysis of findings**

Results indicate that elements of entrepreneurial marketing mix include 5 main elements and 54 components (sub-element). In addition, the hypothesis, which shows difference between traditional marketing mix and entrepreneurial marketing mix, has also been verified.

As is shown in Table 2, new entrepreneurial marketing mix posses 5 main elements including: Person, Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. The element of Person (owner manager / entrepreneur) has been extracted during the study as a new element and then added to the previous cases. In this new classification, Person consists of 10 sub-elements which somewhat are personality characteristics of the owners such as risk management, creativity, his personal ability to communicate directly with customers and using body language and communication in interactions with others. These features will apply not only to the early stages of the entrepreneurial marketing process which is identifying and exploiting opportunities, but also in later stages of this process, including product introduction or market growth. On the other hand, individual access to social networks and exploiting them for the sake of public relations with public and private institutions, also the participation rate of managers, his decision making strategy under uncertainty, and his ability to react to the changes, are prominent elements which were extracted during our research.

The element of product includes 10 sub-elements which includes component such as Product Categories based on quality, attention to customer conformity and he needs, Product offering in different packages, using innovation in products, matching all customer tastes in the production, and Product offering in highest price and not necessarily the highest quality, are among new elements which were extracted and added to previous ones.

The element of Price consists of 5 sub-elements. Quality fitness prices, cooperation with distributors, and not giving loans and credit to distributors are new elements added to the previous marketing mixes. Study revealed that elements of Promotion have 17 sub-elements which components such as entrepreneur's direct interaction with their primary and secondary customers, using quality products and not using ads. , updating knowledge and information, the use of superior technology, creating an intimate relationship with initial buyer's, commitment to responsibility and

ethics in market place, Use of incentive awards and support, customer classification of primary and secondary categories, the use of distributed systems for advertising, long-term communication and ensure customer satisfaction during and after the exchange process are different from those that introduce in previous studies.

Finally, this research revealed 12 sub-elements for Place (distribution). Creating a full basket of food for early customers, making innovation in distribution networks, classified distributors and profit all of them, considering the profit margin, speed up playback to shops and to public companies, outsourcing the positions of distribution, the use of mess to distribute, distribution licensees and market categories, are new elements which have not been mentioned in the previous studies.

### **Stage Seven - Theorization**

Using data obtained in this research, and considering this important fact that the desired output of a qualitative research method in an exploratory research is a hypothesis, we realized that entrepreneurial marketing mix is different from common marketing mix.

New entrepreneurial marketing mix consist of 5 elements and notes that the component of these new elements are different from olds ones.

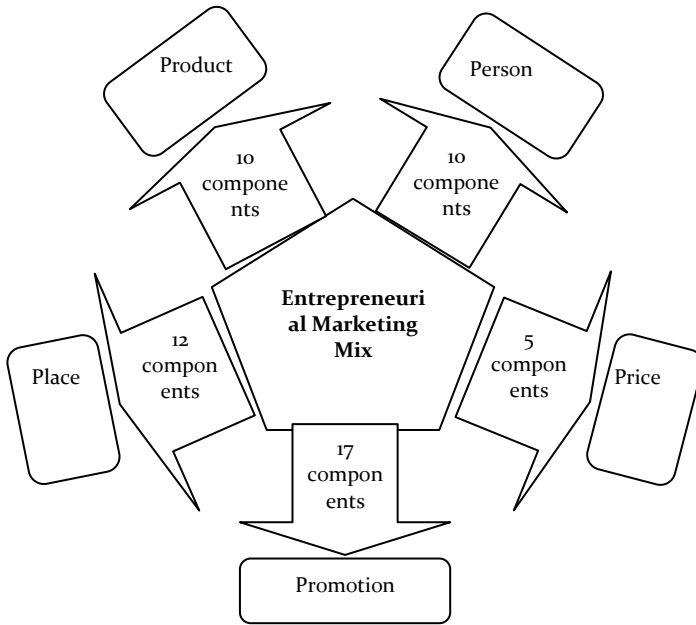
### **Results and Deduction**

In this study, we conceptualize the concept of entrepreneurial marketing mix components and we avoided from processing of purely theoretical explanation of the issue in question. So in this conceptualization we declare that: entrepreneurial marketing mix is an innovative process which utilizes the capabilities of individual and combines components of Price, Product, Promotion and Place, trying to deliver further values to the primary and secondary customers more than other competitors and gets more profit.

Hence, according to the subjects mentioned in the research process, questions raised in the study could be responded. Results indicate that the element of Person is a new element amongst others. However, it should be mentioned that there is an entrepreneurial approach in component of Price,

Place, Product and Promotions and as you have noted previously, some new components have been added to the previous combination.

Finally, total elements of an entrepreneurial marketing mix including 5 major elements and 54 sub-elements are depicted in Diagram 1.



**Diagram 1:** Entrepreneurial Marketing Mix (Own elaborated)

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