



Recognized by: Higher Education Commission (HEC), Government of Pakistan

Exploration of Marketing Strategies: A Study among Female Entrepreneurs in Quetta-Pakistan

Nida Shirazi

MS Scholar, Institute of Management Sciences, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan

nida.shirazi.2016@gmail.com

Dr. Muhammad Danish

Lecturer, Institute of Management Sciences, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan

muhammaddanis@gmail.com

Muhammad Bilal Khalid

Assistant Researcher, Institute of Management Sciences, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Pakistan

drarsalbilal@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The research investigates marketing practices utilised by Quetta Pakistan female entrepreneurs who operate within predominantly male business domains. The research study analyses fundamental marketing methods businesses use to determine their effectiveness and demonstrates the socio-economic challenges they face. The research employed a single case study method and semi-structured interviews with 30 female entrepreneurs in different business sectors. The analysis uncovered four fundamental aspects: customer relationship management (CRM) to retain customers, competitive pricing and value-based approaches, digital marketing as a foundation for brand exposure, and the importance of strategic business positions in the market. The obstacles of financial limitations, cultural difficulties and digital knowledge gaps do not deter female business owners because they implement adaptive planning methods. The study adds knowledge about women's business leadership in developing markets through findings that guide public sector leaders, business development services, and business owners toward improving business stability and women's economic strength.

Keywords: Female Entrepreneurs, Marketing Strategies, Digital Marketing, Customer Relationship Management, Emerging Markets.

INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is crucial to economic development as it involves innovation, employment opportunities, and competitiveness in developed and developing markets (Acs, Estrin, Mickiewicz, & Szerb, 2018). In particular, women entrepreneurs launch and manage enterprises across many industries, overcoming systemic constraints such as financial constraints and limited market access (Kirkwood, 2016). Even with these challenges, women's entrepreneurship has flourished worldwide, and while the lofty heights have been breached, the hat trick has not been sealed. However, in place, women are underrepresented in entrepreneurial activities because of structural and cultural hurdles (Brush, Edelman, Manolova, & Welter, 2019). There is a need to understand the unique challenges and strategies women entrepreneurs adopt to create a supportive enabling environment that encourages sustained growth.

The success of women entrepreneurs requires marketing strategies to help identify brand identity, reach audiences, and provide a competitive advantage (Putri, Alwie, & Wijayanto, 2024). First of all, most women entrepreneurs are in resource-constrained environments, effective marketing strategies will enable them to maximise their limited resources by optimising their outreach with as few resources as possible. By marketing, a business can build customer relationships, strengthen brand loyalty and follow changing customer preferences (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2022). In cases of women entrepreneurs in emerging economies, using digitally viable and inventive marketing approaches like digital marketing, influencer associations, and popular labour drives can significantly affect the business maintainability and progress (Dwivedi et al., 2021), challenges such as digital illiteracy, limited access to financial capital and interpersonal norms continue to hinder their capacity to successfully use the sophisticated marketing strategies (Mahajan, 2021).

Women entrepreneurs employ different marketing strategies worldwide to promote their businesses appropriately in the competitive markets. For women entrepreneurs, digital marketing, personal branding, and collaborations with influencers have become the main channels businesses can scale (Alalwan, Rana, Dwivedi, & Algharabat, 2017). On the contrary, women in emerging economies use community-based marketing, word-of-mouth referrals, and micro financing network to circulate their enterprises (Verma & Jain, 2023). Either in India, socially conscious women shoppers motivated businesses owned by women to employ ethical branding and social enterprises (Araya-Castillo, Hernández-Perlines, Millán-Toledo, & Ibarra Cisneros, 2022). For African female entrepreneurs, cooperative-based marketing and group financing enhance business sustainability (Baluku, Nansubuga, Otto, & Horn, 2021). In the meantime, digital marketplaces and social media campaigns have helped spread the word of women-owned businesses globally in Latin America (Liguori & Pittz, 2020). The different marketing strategies highlighted the adaptability of women entrepreneurs to the different structural challenges in business growth.

Though much work has been done on women entrepreneurship and marketing strategies, the field of research regarding how women entrepreneurs in socio-culturally conservative areas such as Quetta, Pakistan, market remains unexplored.

However, literature has already been broadly focused on women entrepreneurs of metropolitan cities of Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad, which has a moderate business environment and access to digital marketing resources is more ubiquitous (Poggesi, Mari, & De Vita, 2016). However, Quetta has challenges due to socio-cultural norms that limit women's mobility, give limited access to networking opportunities, and create many other barriers to modern marketing techniques (Marlow & McAdam, 2015). In addition, financial constraints and traditional gender roles also limit women entrepreneurs' potential to adopt in the digital economy fully (Bates, 2015). There is minimal research on how women in Quetta deal with such challenges as part of marketing strategies. There is a need to address this gap to develop the policies and support mechanisms that can facilitate the capacity and empowerment of women entrepreneurs in conservative regions.

This study aims to investigate the marketing strategies employed by women entrepreneurs in Quetta, Pakistan and offers valuable knowledge to the current literature. This research will shed some light on the barriers that impact marketing in this region by analysing how women entrepreneurs adapt to their environment and how they initiate and frame change in unique socio-cultural and economic contexts. This study will also demonstrate evidence-based recommendations for policymakers, development agencies, and business support organisations wishing to stimulate the success of women entrepreneurs in conservative and settings of scarce resources. Intervening on the understudied context of women entrepreneurship and marketing in an attempt to shed light on it and thus expand the global discourse, this research contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing comparative perspectives which could further inform future regional, national, and international studies and practical interventions in the field.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women's entrepreneurship has become one of the key drivers of economic development, job creation and innovation, and a source of social progress (Brush et al., 2019). Progress has been made; however, there are structural, financial, and sociocultural challenges to women's business growth. Facilitating enterprising women to face market competition by establishing customer loyalty and strategic marketing also enables women entrepreneurs to build sustainable enterprises (Poggesi et al., 2016). This section reviews women entrepreneurs and how they have used key marketing strategies to overcome challenges in the markets of both the developed and the emerging economies.

Women Entrepreneurship

Broadly, entrepreneurship is the process that involves recognising, building, and controlling a business venture to earn profit and economic gains (Stam, 2008). Regarding innovation, job creation, and role in global economies, women entrepreneurs play a critical role in the world market. However, they often encounter gender-specific barriers in accessing all financial resources, limited market access, and societal expectations that limit their business's operation (Jennings & Brush, 2013). It is important to sustain their competitive advantage that they can innovate marketing

strategies to overcome these barriers (Lashgari, Abedi, Radfar, & Iranban, 2023). Self-employment is driven by necessity and accounts for being predominant in emerging markets. Therefore, resultant marketing strategies must be paramount for survival (Edoho, 2016). Women entrepreneurs in developing countries have to follow resource-constrained marketing ways such as emphasising digital platforms, community involvement, and collaborative marketing for their visibility compared to women entrepreneurs in developed countries (Zhu, Kara, & Zhu, 2019).

Marketing Strategies among Women Entrepreneurs

Personal branding is an important marketing strategy many women entrepreneurs use to establish credibility and connect with their target audience (Shepherd & Patzelt, 2022). Authentic storytelling that explains entrepreneurs' struggles, achievements, and successes makes customers engaged and trusting. This approach has benefited women selling in niche markets, like sustainable fashion, health, wellness, and handmade crafts (Baluku et al., 2021). Personal branding is about getting a strong brand loyal, but it needs constant effort and exposure. Personal branding is effective for digital markets only when you are there, creating or engaging consistent content on various platforms (Liguori & Pittz, 2020). Additionally, this is not likely to have such an impact in industries where the differentiation and price per se are important.

As a cost-effective means of social media marketing, women entrepreneurs have the chance to reach bigger audiences. However, owing to platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and Pinterest, entrepreneurs can display products, interact with clients, and do direct sales through e-commerce integrations (Dwivedi et al., 2021). In addition, with the rise of influencer marketing and user generated content, the women entrepreneurs have also taken advantage of opportunities to expand their reach organically (Alalwan et al., 2017). The negative aspects of social media marketing are that it is pretty accessible, but with possible algorithm changes, content saturation, and platform dependency, Digital marketing strategies could be partially fortified by digital literacy gaps, which women entrepreneurs in developing economies may face (Mahajan, 2021). Additionally, platforms require paid promotions to have something that gets promoted, making it unaffordable for small businesses.

Up to this point, relationship marketing has driven many of what women entrepreneurs want to build with their customers: strong personal relationships through community-driven initiatives (BarNir, Watson, & Hutchins, 2011). In customer retention and brand advocacy, loyalty programs, personalised services, and a customer feedback mechanism are all strategies. This is an excellent marketing method for businesses with repeat customers, and it depends on references rather than advertisements (Marlow & McAdam, 2015). Community-driven engagement may be challenging in scaling businesses beyond local markets in highly competitive industries unless a digital and mass market strategy is added (Verma & Jain, 2023).

Collaboration is the norm among women entrepreneurs to co-promote products, cross-sell services, and expand markets (Kirkwood, 2016). Complementary brands, local influencers, and community organisations are potential partners to allow for shared marketing efforts that help reduce cost and increase reach. However,

collaborative marketing required all parties to align their values with the goal of positive growth for all (Gundolf, Cesinger, Géraudel, & Filser, 2017). Collaborations can be poorly structured, detrimental to resource allocation, conflict, and impede business processes (Chatterjee & Chaudhuri, 2022).

Many women entrepreneurs are marketing their products with sustainability and ethical business practices. Because the socially conscious consumers primarily include the fashion, beauty, and wellness industries, ethical sourcing, eco-friendly manufacturing, and cause-driven campaigns exist (Araya-Castillo et al., 2022). Although sustainability-focused marketing helps build brands and sustains (Kotler, Pfoertsch, & Sponholz, 2021), it necessitates transparency and proof of its commitment to sustainability (Milohut, 2009). Failure to do so may exacerbate 'green washing' accusations, harming the brand's reputation (Delmas & Burbano, 2011).

Marketing Strategies in Women Entrepreneurship Across Different Countries

Depending on the economic environment, the cultural norms and the access to technology, women entrepreneurs use different marketing strategies around the globe. Digital advertising and social media have been important in creating direct-to-consumer brands in the US, especially within industries such as fashion and wellness (Schroeder, Tremblay, & Tremblay, 2021). In contrast, in India, women entrepreneurs use community-driven marketing and word of mouth referrals since digital penetration in rural areas is reduced (Venkatesh & Shyamala, 2021). African women entrepreneurs used mobile money services and WhatsApp marketing to facilitate business transactions and engage with customers in poorly banked areas (Amankwah-Amoah, Khan, Ifere, Nyuur, & Khan, 2022). In Latin America, women-led businesses have adopted cause-driven marketing to appeal to ethically conscious consumers (Pizarro, 2023). Parallel to that, European women entrepreneurs, especially in Scandinavian countries, focus their branding on the items to be sustainable and eco-friendly (Lindberg, Hvenmark, & Nahnfeldt, 2022). These varied strategies illustrate how sociocultural and technological factors are used in the marketing choices of women entrepreneurs from different economies.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study has chosen a qualitative research approach to study the marketing strategies of women entrepreneurs of Quetta, Pakistan. The complexity of marketing practices and entrepreneurial experience being very subjective made qualitative methods the perfect way to delve more in depth about challenges, the decision-making process and adaptive strategies of entrepreneurial experience. Qualitative inquiry, on the other hand, is quite suited to capturing the rich, descriptive texture constituting the daily life of women's practices as businesses. To address this, a single case study design was used so that a thorough investigation of female entrepreneurs in various sectors such as retail, service, and manufacturing could be done. The case study method was thought to be most appropriate from all the available methodological options, as it enables a complete understanding of real life business issues in their particular socio-economic setting.

The sample involved 30 female entrepreneurs, which according to the

principle of data saturation provides an appropriate size for the study (Guest, Namey, & Chen, 2020). This was the sufficient amount of depth of analysis that allowed for manageability in information collection and interpretation. Through purposive sampling and a nonrandom technique, the researchers selected the participants as active business decision makers directly involved in formulating and implementing marketing strategies. Purposive sampling helped the study to select meaningful data, consisting of information-rich cases and hence enabled the generation of meaningful insight into the marketing practices of women entrepreneurs.

The primary sources of data collection were semi-structured interviews, which provided a structured framework and enough flexibility to explore new emerging themes. They also asked interview questions regarding the core aspects of the marketing strategy, like customer engagement, pricing, digital marketing, and brand positioning. This allowed participants to learn how they operate in the market in their own words and provided more comprehensive insights into what goes on in their marketing. They all gave permissions to audio record their interviews to ensure accurate data collection. After the recordings, the responses were transcribed into English for analysis while maintaining authentic responses for thematic evaluations. Multiple strategies were used to improve the study's reliability and validity. The triangulation was done by combining multiple data sources, including interviews, observations, and documentation (Babchuk, 2017). We conducted member checking and shared interview transcript summaries with participants to verify accuracy and interpretation. This was also supplemented with a peer review process to correct the thematic analysis to be consistent and reduce bias introduced from the researcher. Ethical concerns were also taken into account during the study process. Before conducting interviews, all participants gave informed consent, and were informed about the purpose of the study and their voluntary participation. To maintain confidentiality, the participants' identities were anonymised in all the reports and publications. The relevant institutional review board was also consulted for ethical approval to follow ethical research standards (Tisdell, Merriam, & Stuckey-Peyrot, 2025).

RESULTS

In this qualitative study, data analysis was performed using thematic analysis, a systematic way of categorising and interpreting patterns found repeatedly within the data. Qualitative data were organised and managed with the help of the NVivo15 software to facilitate a rigorous analytical process. Thematic coding emerged as the direct theme for marketing strategies: customer engagement, pricing, digital marketing, and brand positioning. In order to increase the credibility of the findings, triangulation was used by integrating multiple data sources, and member checking was used to check the accuracy by getting the participants to verify the interpretation.

Demographic Information

Table 1 demonstrates an overview of the demographics describing female entrepreneurs who participated in this study. 40.0% of participants belonged to the 30-39 age group, while half the participants obtained their bachelor's degree. Business

activities within retail demonstrated the highest distribution of 40.0% in the industry.

Table 1

Demographics of Female Entrepreneurs

Variable	Frequency (n=30)	Percentage (%)
Age Group		
20-29	8	26.7
30-39	12	40.0
40-49	7	23.3
50+	3	10.0
Education Level		
High School	5	16.7
Bachelor	15	50.0
Master	10	33.3
Type of Business		
Retail	12	40.0
Services	10	33.3
Manufacturing	5	16.7
Other	3	10.0

Marketing Strategies Framework

It was found through the analysis that female entrepreneurs in Quetta adopted differentiating techniques, attracted customers, and boosted market reach through different strategies, paying attention to providing personalised products, maintaining good quality, and providing excellent customer service to stand out from the competition. Market conditions influence entrepreneurs to use competitive pricing models and promotional discounts to attract and retain customers. Today, digital tools such as social media promotions, influencer marketing partnerships, and word-of-mouth referrals have become a feature of all marketing efforts to make the brand popular and engage customers. Moreover, the success of a business depends on accessibility. Entrepreneurs pay attention to choosing the physical location,

improving their online presence, and offering remote business for their customers to make it more accessible. Table 2 shows the marketing strategies used by female entrepreneurs. The most commonly used strategies are word of mouth (83.3%), social media marketing (60.0%), and networking (66.7%)

Table 2
Marketing Strategies Used by Female Entrepreneurs

Strategy	Frequency (n=30)	Percentage (%)
Social Media Marketing	18	60.0
Word of Mouth	25	83.3
Traditional Advertising	10	33.3
Networking	20	66.7
Discounts and Promotions	15	50.0
Online Marketplace	12	40.0

Challenges Faced

Table 3 outlines the prominent difficulties experienced by female entrepreneurs. The majority of female entrepreneurs faced cultural obstacles (83.3%), restricted network connections (73.3%) and difficulties obtaining funding (66.7%) as their main challenges.

Table 3
Challenges Faced by Female Entrepreneurs

Challenge	Frequency (n=30)	Percentage (%)
Access to Finance	20	66.7
Gender Bias	15	50.0
Lack of Marketing Skills	18	60.0
Limited Access to Networks	22	73.3
Regulatory Hurdles	10	33.3
Cultural Barriers	25	83.3

Theme 1: Customer Relationship Management

The findings show that customer relationship management (CRM) is a

marketing strategy used by female entrepreneurs in various sectors such as retail, services, and online businesses. Eighteen participants stressed building strong customer relations to sustain business and long-term success. P6, from the online retail sector, said, ‘personalised marketing campaigns involve marketing campaigns with customers and improving brand loyalty.’ Likewise, business owners in the service industry also mentioned the need to keep customer ties long-term. One salon owner (P10) stated: ‘I concentrate on long term and greatly loyal clients instead of one time buyers.’ Similarly, a boutique owner (P12) observed, “I care about my regular customers, as if they keep coming back they will then suggest my business to others.”

The study also reveals the reliance of entrepreneurs in online businesses on CRM tools that would help their customer engagement. One participant from the e-commerce sector (P5) stated that we can send personalised deals and exclusive promotions based on customer preferences. Another online entrepreneur (P7) indicated, ‘Loyalty programs and discounts for repeat customers are great to retain them and boost sales.’ These results are consistent with Relationship Marketing (RM) principles, which believe in customer engagement through proxied service and reward systems (Sheth, 2017b). Through CRM, women entrepreneurs can leverage strategies that strengthen customer relations, increase brand loyalty and guarantee long-term business growth (Sheth, 2017a).

Table 4
Approach of Marketing Used by Female Entrepreneurs Interviewed

Theme	Reference (Participants)	% Frequency of Occurrence
Customer Relationship Personalised	18 (P3.4.5.6.7.8.9.10.11.12.13.14.15.16.17.18.19.20)	60.0%
Customer Digital CRM Tools & Loyalty Programs	10 (P5.6.7.10.12.14.16.18.19.20)	33.3%
	6 (P4.5.7.10.12.18)	20.0%

In addition, the results show that acquiring customer relationship management (CRM) is an indispensable tactic that works for female entrepreneurs in retail, services and online businesses. Also, entrepreneurs are encouraged to maintain customer relationships for long periods for business sustainability and success. An online entrepreneur (P. 6), the leading marketing priorities are customer loyalty and brand awareness because they enable my niche business to grow and retain customers. A service-based entrepreneur (P10) added, ‘I build lasting relationships with my most valuable clients so that they keep coming and this is the lifeblood of my business.’ A retail business owner (P12) put this perspective on a firm one, stating, “Loyal customers not only return, but encourage those around to come as well, expanding my business.” Additionally, through the study, CRM tools have been observed to improve engagement of customers, particularly in online businesses by the female entrepreneurs. An e-commerce entrepreneur (P5) stated, “Through tracking customer

preferences, I can provide personalised deals which make them feel valued and encourage them to purchase again.” Additionally, P7 contributor, another online business owner, commented, “I like to see loyalty programs and promotion offers for the returning customers that improve my brand and keep long/continuous relationship.” This aligns with research in relationship marketing, which suggests that customised marketing approaches such as customised services and loyalty programs facilitate enduring business-to-customer relationships (Sheth, 2017a). Women entrepreneurs’ ability to thrive with CRM strategies alludes to their versatility, choosing to generate business growth and customer scarcity (Payne, Frow, & Eggert, 2017).

Theme 2: Brand Positioning and Competitive Pricing Strategies

Findings indicate that commercial success of female entrepreneurs in Quetta occurs by strategically engaging in brand positioning paired with pricing strategies. Numerous business owners stressed the need to set competitive yet reasonable pricing for attracting customers while the business remains sustainable. A restaurant owner (P3) explains, “I assess my customers’ buying power to set prices they can afford, while at the same time making a profit”. Rival pricing was used by entrepreneurs in the retail sector (P6 and P9) to compete with other businesses at market rates, thereby staying ahead of competitors. Premium pricing is used by a boutique owner (P11) because, “our products have unique features that our customers recognise through our marketing efforts”. A second (P14) said, “Our manufacturers provide materials of the highest quality and thus we pay a higher price based on those materials”.

The study also showed that seasonal pricing affects customers’ purchasing behavior. P17 and P21 entrepreneurs in the event planning and fashion industries both used promotional pricing in peak seasons, namely marriage and Eid, “As in the festive seasons, apart from normal discounts, we tend to give them (customers) discount in order to attract more customers and increase sales one of them put.” Consistent with existing research, these findings related to the ability of such pricing models and seasonal promotions to drive sales and encourage brand loyalty (Grewal & Stephen, 2019) are supported by these findings. Female entrepreneurs adopt competitive, value-based, and promotional pricing which position their brands while maintaining financial stability in a dynamic market.

Table 5

Brand Positioning and Pricing Strategies Adopted by Female Entrepreneurs

Pricing Strategy	Reference (Participants)	% Frequency of Occurrence
Competitive Pricing	12 (P3.6.7.9.10.13.15.16.18.19.23.30)	40.0%
Value-Based Pricing	9 (P4,8,11,14,17,19,21,25,27)	30.0%
Promotional Pricing (Discounts & Loyalty)	7 (P2,6,10,16,18,21,23)	23.3%
Cost-Plus Pricing	5 (P3,7,9,14,19)	16.7%

Analytical findings indicate that market demand, customer expectation, and business positioning play crucial roles in determining the pricing strategy that female entrepreneurs adopt in Quetta. Value-based pricing was important to improve brand visibility in businesses with luxury beauty services and such exclusive handmade products, reflected by many participants. One beauty salon owner (P8) said, 'Our premium pricing is for exclusivity of our services as we offer high-end beauty treatment that attracts customers who can afford it.' On the same note, an artisan specialising in handmade products (P14) stated, "Customers know the work that is done to give uniqueness and quality of my brand, and so they pay for it". In other cases, pricing strategies are based on cost analysis and profit margin calculations to ensure the business remains financially viable. As a retail business owner (P7) noted, "Whatever you are balancing it to profitability and costs because they both correlate with longevity in business and long term trust in the business". In addition, manufacturers underscored the usefulness of bundle pricing during peak shopping periods. One manufacturing entrepreneur (P21) said, "In fact, customers are receptive to the bundled offers, especially on wedding and holiday seasons." Another (P25) corroborated this by saying, 'Festive promotions raise sales volume and attract more buyers.'

Theme 3: Promotional Techniques and Digital Marketing Strategies

The findings reveal that digital marketing and promotional campaigns have become imperative strategies for the success of any female business in Quetta. Social media, word of mouth, and influencer collaboration were many of the things those participants talked about that you needed to acquire or retain customers. One online business owner (P6) said "Facebook and Instagram are the most efficient platforms for engaging customers, not to mention traditional marketing methods are not having the same effect". Another entrepreneur (P9) also said, "Social media helps us to reach a large audience and thanks to that, we can create brand loyalty faster than television commercials". Additionally, entrepreneurs spoke about the importance of digital advertising, specifically the targeting they achieved regarding brand visibility and sales growth. 'To avoid overcrowding, social media analytics and content marketing are deployed in analysing promotion strategies to achieve maximum brand exposure,' said a fashion retailer (P12). A third business owner (P18) said, "Digital marketing has made a difference in living a budding business by improving the engagement of the customers and surviving in the market".

Beauty salon and event planning service-based entrepreneurs have generously highlighted the impact of customer referrals and word of mouth marketing. A salon owner (P2) says, "Largely, my customers come recommended, so I believe that offering great service is the best promotion I can give." Also, a P15 put it evenly, saying "satisfied clients are my best advertisers, it is the referrals that will bring in the best business." In addition, your brand will discover collaborations that effectively increase the brand's visibility. A boutique owner (P7) said, "With influencers, it is partnering with them because it gives me credibility and I get more customers." Another entrepreneur (P19) agreed, adding, "Social media influencer gives my brand exposure that I cannot do with traditional marketing alone."

Table 6
Promotional Strategies Adopted by Female Entrepreneurs

Promotional Strategy	Reference (Participants)	% Frequency
Social Media Marketing	18 (P1.3.5.6.8.9.10.12.14.15.16.18.19.20.22.26.28.30)	60.0%
Word-of-Mouth Marketing	10 (P2.6.7.9.12.15.18.20.24.30)	33.3%
Influencer Collaborations	8 (P7.9.10.12.14.19.22.26)	26.7%
Traditional Marketing (Flvers.	6 (P3.6.10.18.24.29)	20.0%

Interactive content such as video and customer testimonials has further strengthened the role of digital marketing. A beauty entrepreneur (P8) adds, “Videos and customer testimonials add trust and create a customer”. A service provider (P16) also mirrored, “Interactive content helps to retain the customers and engage with them”. Surfacing in the paid social media advertising section, entrepreneurs use ads to target the right people specifically to promote their products. A fashion business owner (P19) said, “We do use Facebook and Instagram ads to get to our ideal customer and brand awareness.” Another participant (P22) also mentioned, “Targeted digital ads are useful in the push and expansion of our customer base beyond local markets”. Second, the integration of digital marketing with promotional pricing was found to be a good approach to engage customers better. A retail entrepreneur (P10) explained, “Social media promotional effort alongside discounts, repeat purchases and customer loyalty are enhanced.”

Theme 4: Placement Strategies and Business Accessibility

The findings demonstrate that the placement of business offices and shops determines the level of suitability towards business accessibility and customer reach. In placing strategies, many female entrepreneurs in Quetta stressed the need for location-based online selection and business expansion. A boutique owner (P6) said, “Being in a high foot traffic area helps attract walk-in customers and also creates sales”. Another entrepreneur (P9) agreed, “A prime location allows for better visibility and customer-friendliness when locating and getting to us”. The study also touches upon the rising phenomenon of hybrid business model where entrepreneurs combine a physical store with an online platform to extend their bench. “P13, a retail business owner, explained that “being able to sell in person as well as online adds to me being able to provide for the customer who should go into a physical store and the customer who buy online.” An event planner (P17) too pointed out that the hybrid model helps them reach a larger audience without losing a personal touch with local clients”. Entrepreneurs will see that some run only online to reduce costs and make their service more open to everyone. As an online business owner (P21), it allows me to bypass the expense of renting a store and instead be able to focus on marketing and

customer engagement. One other participant (P23) affirmed this approach, stating, “Ecommerce has increased my customer base to Quetta, this has made my business viable.”

Table 7

Placement Strategies Adopted by Female Entrepreneurs

Placement Strategy	Reference (Participants)	% Frequency of Occurrence
High-Foot Traffic Locations	10 (P2.3.4.6.9.11.13.15.19.25)	33.3%
Hybrid Business Model (Online + Physical)	8 (P7.8.10.14.17.22.23.28)	26.7%
Fully Online Businesses	6 (P9.13.17.21.23.30)	20.0%
Home-Based or Remote Services	6 (P3.6.7.10.15.22)	20.0%

On the other hand, a home-based and remote business model would deliver freedom to the entrepreneurs and reduce operational expenses. A service-based business owner (P19), “Working from home means that you can run your business without the associated, high costs to hiring a shop”. One other entrepreneur (P22) noted that remote business operations enable me to expand my services without being confined to a particular location. Business placement also gained its location branding. A restaurant owner (P7) said, “the credibility of these businesses also works with customers associating them with some areas and that helps bring more foot traffic”. A boutique owner (P10) shared, “Being in an area of known commercial trust and visibility adds reliability to my business as well.”

Theme 5: Challenges Faced by Female Entrepreneurs

While their marketing is good, female entrepreneurs in Quetta face many challenges that make it difficult to grow a business. However, findings show that financial limitations, social barriers, and digital skill shortages are the key barriers to women business owners. A retail entrepreneur (P6) said, “While I have found it hard to extend my business, I have been unable to obtain financial loans and every bank refuses to provide capital to women entrepreneurs.” Similarly, a boutique owner (P14) said, “Access to funds is a constant headache, the scaling up the business is a dream.” There are also some hurdles from the social and cultural side, making it difficult for female entrepreneurs to network and market. A home-based business owner (P12) said, “because of societal norms, I cannot freely go to networking events and market my products as male entrepreneurs do”. An event planner (P19) also pointed out that “limited mobility combined with social expectations stop women from reaching out to potential clients and expand their business reach”. In addition, digital skill shortages create an extra obstacle to business growth. Entrepreneurs struggled to adopt digital marketing trends and sales techniques reliant on technology. The restaurant owner (P7) also admitted that “he struggles if the social media promotions and online orders are managed with a review if the ownership does not have technical skills to manage

them effectively”. Another participant (P21) noted, “I know that digital marketing is important to a business, but in how to use it in the right way, it has been a school for me”.

Table 8
Challenges Faced by Female Entrepreneurs

Challenge	Reference (Participants)	% Frequency of Occurrence
Limited Access to Finance	10	33.3%
Cultural & Social Barriers	8 (P1.6.7.12.17.19.21.24)	26.7%
Digital Literacy Gaps	6 (P7.10.14.16.19.27)	20.0%
High Market Competition	5 (P4.7.9.16.22)	16.7%

Table 9
Summary of Themes and Findings

Theme	Sub-Themes	Key Findings
1. Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	Personalised customer engagement Digital CRM tools and loyalty programs	60% of participants emphasised CRM for long-term customer relationships. 33.3% used personalised engagement strategies. 20% adopted digital CRM tools for tracking customer preferences and loyalty.
2. Brand Positioning & Pricing Strategies	Competitive Pricing Value-based pricing Promotional pricing	40% used competitive pricing to match or undercut competitors. 30% adopted value-based pricing for premium positioning. 23.3% relied on promotional pricing (discounts, loyalty

3. Promotional Techniques	Social media marketing	60% used social media marketing (Instagram, Facebook).
	Word-of-mouth	33.3% relied on word-of-mouth marketing.
	Influencer collaborations	26.7% collaborated with influencers to expand brand reach.
4. Placement Strategies	High-foot traffic locations	33.3% chose high-foot traffic locations for physical stores.
	Hybrid business models	26.7% adopted hybrid models (online + physical).
	Online stores	20% operated entirely online to reduce costs and reach broader markets.
5. Challenges Faced by Female Entrepreneurs	Limited access to finance	66.7% faced financial constraints.
	Cultural barriers	83.3% cited cultural barriers as a significant challenge.
	Digital literacy gaps	20% identified digital literacy gaps as a hindrance to business growth.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study also contain valuable information about marketing strategies and the challenges faced by female entrepreneurs in Quetta, Pakistan. Overall, the results are consistent with previous, existing research but also provide a bit of a contradictory picture compared to earlier research (or perhaps reflected as a support for it).

Among participants, customer relationship management was a key strategy, and many expressed a commitment to customer loyalty, personalised services, and digital engagement. This agrees with earlier research by Payne and Frow (2017), where CRM is used to sustain customer retention, primarily through loyalty programs and personalised marketing. Just like the findings of Sheth (2017), this study also discovered that female entrepreneurs in Quetta, as compared to male entrepreneurs, give the maximum importance to building long-term relationships and minimal importance to transactional selling and create the impression that relationship marketing has a vital role to play regarding small business survival.

The business, it turns out, also profits from competitive pricing strategies, seasonal discounts, and promotional pricing to attract and retain customers. At the same time, the study also found that pricing and brand positioning were indispensable to success. The results are consistent with the work of Grewal and Stephen (2019), who state that flexible pricing strategy prominently affects customer engagement and brand loyalty. Nevertheless, they followed post Kotler and Keller (2016) findings by adopting premium pricing for exclusive products and services. In contrast, earlier, there was a report by these authors that stated that most small businesses use cost-based pricing over premium pricing. This suggests, however, that in competitive markets, female entrepreneurs in Quetta are aware of differentiation and brand positioning and are starting to value this at a higher level.



The findings correspond to Chaffey and Smith's (2022) assertion that social media marketing boosts a brand's and its customers' visibility. Individuals relied on platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, the same as (Grewal & Stephen, 2019), where small businesses use digital marketing to compete. The study, however, found that, despite the trend towards digital advertisements, word of mouth and influencer collaborations remain dominant marketing strategies among the female entrepreneurs, which is partially contrary to global trends that have seen traditional forms of

marketing being replaced by digital advertisements. Thus, it implies that Quetta's business landscape is still culturally significant and traditional marketing practices are growing.

The theme of placement strategy and business accessibility was about how many female entrepreneurs chose to be located in high foot traffic areas, chose hybrid business models, or conducted all of their business activity online to reach their target customers. This is consistent with Porter's (1998) Competitive Strategy Model stressing the value of location in business success. However, also somewhat unique, some female entrepreneurs prefer home-based / remote business models to mitigate the cost of operations and access cultural constraints. On the other hand, in Western literature, physical presence is emphasised much less and is seen as a significant factor in a business's visibility and success.

The study finally discusses female entrepreneurs' challenges, including financial constraints, social barriers, and digital skill shortages. The findings also are consistent with previous research suggesting that female entrepreneurs in developing economies face a long way to go to obtain financial resources (Kabeer, 2018). Similarly, as detailed by participants, society's restricted mobility and limitation agree with Roomi and Parrott's (2008) argument that gender restrictions hinder women's participation in networking and expansion into business. Nevertheless, this paper demonstrates that rather than being a solved problem, digital literacy is becoming an increasing challenge. While previous research posits digital empowerment of female entrepreneurs (Al-Dajani & Marlow, 2013), the results reveal many women's digital inability, demonstrating a gap in support for digital inclusion.

Overall, this study's findings validate and extend existing research by demonstrating how female entrepreneurs in Quetta use professional closer marketing to overcome structural and societal limitations. The evolution of women-led business can be seen through their approaching norms, that is, the combination of old and new, home-based preferences, and the adoption of premium pricing by some of the entrepreneurs. Future research might consider interventions to fill that digital skill gap and ensure more financial accessibility for female entrepreneurs' business growth.

Practical Implications

This study's findings suggest helpful directions for female entrepreneurs in Quetta to build a successful and sustainable marketing approach. Customer relationship management (CRM) plays a crucial role in a business that aims to keep long-term customer loyalty, as businesses with a customer loyalty program and personalised service are better equipped to stand out in the market. Additionally, the study emphasises the rising position of digital marketing, indicating that entrepreneurs who can use social media, collaborations with influencers, and targeted advertisements can extend their customer base and promote brand visibility. This agrees with Sheth (2018) who claims that businesses should exploit digital tools to optimise sales performance through customer engagement.

In addition, our business success is also tied to the pricing and placement strategies. Lovelock and Wirtz (2016) describe that value-based pricing and seasonal promotions are beneficial for increased customer retention and revenue growth,

which is also beneficial for entrepreneurs who adopt such practices. The study further points towards transitioning to the hybrid and online business models where e-commerce platforms give entrepreneurs an inexpensive option instead of traditional storefronts. According to Melancon and Dalakas (2018), this shift necessitates strong crisis management and handling of online reputations. Adoption of CRM tools, digital literacy programs and best termed microfinance, giving the female entrepreneur the technical, social and market skills to navigate the market and grow the business.

Implications for Literature

Moreover, it contributes to the growing body of research about women's entrepreneurship by providing empirical evidence regarding women's marketing strategies, business accessibility, and digital adaptation, as in the case of Quetta. The findings align with Porter's (1998) Competitive Strategy Model, which shows that to strive for a competitive edge, businesses need to be tactically positioned physically and digitally to achieve top customer accessibility. Grewal and Stephen (2019) argue that digital transformation allows small businesses to compete more effectively in the market, which is why we observe an alignment with the shift toward hybrid business models.

Furthermore, the study contributes to the expansion of CRM frameworks by Sheth (2017a) and Payne et al. (2017), which suggests that (data-driven) customer engagement strategies provide enormous enhancement to customer retention. Furthermore, it validates Chaffey and Smith's (2022) research on digital marketing that social media analytics and influencer partnerships play a key role in promoting modern business. However, these findings also highlight the unique socio-cultural barriers facing female entrepreneurs such as limited mobility and financial limitations, which are not extensively discussed in the western-oriented entrepreneurship literature. Future research should explore gaps in the literature regarding how context-specific the challenges and policy interventions are, specifically in emerging economies, to bridge this gap.

Limitations and Future Research Direction

Nevertheless, there are limitations to this study, which should be acknowledged as it gives important information about female entrepreneurship in Quetta. One may limit the generalizability of the findings to similar geographical contexts beyond that researched, as the research concentrates on a specific geographical context. Qualitative data used in the study come from participant biases and subjective interpretations, and are rich in detail, but may also be influenced. Future research on this topic may include application of quantitative methods or mixed method approaches to validate findings with more statistical evidence. The other limitation of the study is that the adoption of digital marketing and CRM has not been studied in terms of its impact on business performance over a long period. Longitudinal research can be carried out to account for the evolution of these strategies over time and their contributions to business sustainability. In addition, as financial barriers became a major stumbling block in the journey, investigation into micro finance models and government policy interventions would help understand how female entrepreneurship can be enhanced even in developing economies. Lastly,

a new facet to the existing literature might be to examine how the support of male allies and family support systems played a part in female business success.

CONCLUSION

This paper assessed the marketing techniques, their challenges, and business accessibility to the female entrepreneurs in Quetta, explicitly focusing on CRM (Customer Relationship Management), digital marketing, pricing strategy, and placement strategies. It found that female-led businesses depend on customer engagement, social media promotions, competitive pricing and strategic business positioning to sustain and expand. Despite this, there are various challenges, including having limited financial resources, social limitations, and a digital skills shortage that stifle growth. This aligns with previous research on the importance of digital transformation and CRM adoption for small businesses and supports Porter's Competitive Strategy Model. Also practical implications indicate that increasing digital marketing skills of female entrepreneurs, improving access to finance and fostering mentorship programs are effective for female entrepreneurs. This research offers a wealth of insights, but future studies must be conducted to validate quantitatively, estimate the long-term impact of digital marketing, and enact policies that would make a more favourable environment for women entrepreneurs. To support Quetta and beyond on a path towards economic empowerment, business sustainability and gender inclusive growth, it is appropriate to target these areas.

REFERENCES

- Acs, Z. J., Estrin, S., Mickiewicz, T., & Szerb, L. (2018). Entrepreneurship, institutional economics, and economic growth: an ecosystem perspective. *Small Business Economics*, 51, 501-514.
- Alalwan, A. A., Rana, N. P., Dwivedi, Y. K., & Algharabat, R. (2017). Social media in marketing: A review and analysis of the existing literature. *Telematics and informatics*, 34(7), 1177-1190.
- Amankwah-Amoah, J., Khan, Z., Ifere, S. E., Nyuur, R. B., & Khan, H. (2022). Entrepreneurs' learning from business failures: an emerging market perspective. *British Journal of Management*, 33(4), 1735-1756.
- Araya-Castillo, L., Hernández-Perlines, F., Millán-Toledo, C., & Ibarra Cisneros, M. A. (2022). Bibliometric analysis of studies on family firms. *Economic research-Ekonomska istraživanja*, 35(1), 4778-4800.
- Babchuk, W. A. (2017). Book review: *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*, by SB Merriam and EJ Tisdell: SAGE Publications Sage CA: Los Angeles, CA.
- Baluku, M. M., Nansubuga, F., Otto, K., & Horn, L. (2021). Risk aversion, entrepreneurial attitudes, intention and entry among young people in Uganda and Germany: a gendered analysis. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Emerging Economies*, 7(1), 31-59.
- BarNir, A., Watson, W. E., & Hutchins, H. M. (2011). Mediation and moderated mediation in the relationship among role models, self-efficacy, entrepreneurial

- career intention, and gender. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 41(2), 270-297.
- Bates, A. W. (2015). *Teaching in a digital age: Guidelines for designing teaching and learning*: BCcampus.
- Brush, C., Edelman, L. F., Manolova, T., & Welter, F. (2019). A gendered look at entrepreneurship ecosystems. *Small Business Economics*, 53, 393-408.
- Chatterjee, S., & Chaudhuri, R. (2022). Supply chain sustainability during turbulent environment: Examining the role of firm capabilities and government regulation. *Operations Management Research*, 15(3), 1081-1095.
- Delmas, M. A., & Burbano, V. C. (2011). The drivers of greenwashing. *California management review*, 54(1), 64-87.
- Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., . . . Krishen, A. S. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions. *International journal of information management*, 59, 102168.
- Edoho, F. M. (2016). Entrepreneurship paradigm in the new millennium: A critique of public policy on entrepreneurship. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 8(2), 279-294.
- Grewal, L., & Stephen, A. T. (2019). In mobile we trust: The effects of mobile versus nonmobile reviews on consumer purchase intentions. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 56(5), 791-808.
- Guest, G., Namey, E., & Chen, M. (2020). A simple method to assess and report thematic saturation in qualitative research. *PloS one*, 15(5), e0232076.
- Gundolf, K., Cesinger, B., Géraudel, M., & Filser, M. (2017). Strong ties, personality, and legitimacy of entrepreneurs: the case of private physicians. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Venturing*, 9(4), 346-372.
- Jennings, J. E., & Brush, C. G. (2013). Research on women entrepreneurs: challenges to (and from) the broader entrepreneurship literature? *Academy of Management Annals*, 7(1), 663-715.
- Kirkwood, J. J. (2016). How women and men business owners perceive success. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 22(5), 594-615.
- Kotler, P., Pfoertsch, W., & Sponholz, U. (2021). *H2H Marketing*. Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Lashgari, S., Abedi, S., Radfar, R., & Iranban, J. (2023). Research & Development of Digital Marketing and Innovation in Commercial Automotive Industry. *International Journal of Digital Content Management*, 4(7), 289-310.
- Liguori, E. W., & Pittz, T. G. (2020). Strategies for small business: Surviving and thriving in the era of COVID-19. *Journal of the International Council for Small Business*, 1(2), 106-110.
- Lindberg, M., Hvenmark, J., & Nahnfeldt, C. (2022). Social Innovation for Work Inclusion-Contributions of Swedish Third Sector Organizations. *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies*, 12(3), 23-44.
- Mahajan, Y. (2021). A bibliometric analysis of buzz marketing: Research areas, concerns, and suggestions for advancement. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, 10.

- Marlow, S., & McAdam, M. (2015). Incubation or induction? Gendered identity work in the context of technology business incubation. *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 39(4), 791-816.
- Payne, A., Frow, P., & Eggert, A. (2017). The customer value proposition: evolution, development, and application in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 45, 467-489.
- Poggesi, S., Mari, M., & De Vita, L. (2016). What's new in female entrepreneurship research? Answers from the literature. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal*, 12, 735-764.
- Putri, L. T., Alwie, A. F., & Wijayanto, G. (2024). Marketing performance model and environment for micro business scale womenpreneurs based on competence in the Province of Riau. *Journal of Ecohumanism*, 3(6), 2140-2149.
- Schroeder, E., Tremblay, C. H., & Tremblay, V. J. (2021). Confidence bias and advertising in imperfectly competitive markets. *Managerial and Decision Economics*, 42(4), 885-897.
- Shepherd, D. A., & Patzelt, H. (2022). A call for research on the scaling of organizations and the scaling of social impact (Vol. 46, pp. 255-268): SAGE Publications Sage CA: Los Angeles, CA.
- Sheth, J. (2017a). The future history of consumer research: Will the discipline rise to the opportunity? *Advances in Consumer Research*, 45, 17-20.
- Sheth, J. (2017b). Revitalizing relationship marketing. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 31(1), 6-10.
- Stam, E. (2008). Entrepreneurship and innovation. *Micro-foundations for innovation policy*, 18.
- Tisdell, E. J., Merriam, S. B., & Stuckey-Peyrot, H. L. (2025). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*: John Wiley & Sons.
- Verma, C., & Jain, V. (2023). *Exploring Promotional Strategies in Private Universities: A Comprehensive Analysis of Tactics and Innovative Approaches*.
- Zhu, L., Kara, O., & Zhu, X. (2019). A comparative study of women entrepreneurship in transitional economies: The case of China and Vietnam. *Journal of Entrepreneurship in Emerging Economies*, 11(1), 66-80.