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Identifying the Components of Marketing Flexibility and Examining Their Impact on Marketing Performance among Selected Service Businesses in Iraq

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to identify the components of marketing flexibility and examine their impact on marketing performance among selected service businesses in Iraq. The present study was conducted with a developmental-applicable objective, conducted with a mixed exploratory approach and a mixed (qualitative-quantitative) implementation method. The statistical population included 15 experts in the field of educational services in Baghdad in the quantitative section, and the statistical population in the quantitative section included managers and marketing experts in private educational institutions in Baghdad, 300 people, selected as samples based on the Cochran formula. To collect data, semi-structured interviews and a researcher-made marketing flexibility questionnaire derived from the qualitative section and a marketing performance questionnaire adapted from Izadyar (2010) with a five-point Likert scale were utilized. The Fuzzy Delphi method was applied to analyze the findings in the qualitative section, and SmartPLS software was used in the quantitative section. The findings showed that 54 components were extracted in the form of five components including organizational capacity, marketing analytical intelligence, marketing strategic alignment, marketing experimental innovation and marketing mix flexibility. The results showed that marketing flexibility has a positive and significant effect on marketing performance (β=0.595). Also, all its dimensions including marketing mix flexibility (β=0.555), marketing experimental innovation (β=0.412), marketing analytical intelligence (β=0.331) and marketing strategic alignment (β=0.324) have a positive and significant effect on marketing performance. The results show that developing flexibility capabilities in decision-making, innovation and marketing mix adjustment can lead to improved marketing performance of service businesses in dynamic and high-risk markets such as Iraq.

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

With the advancement of technology and globalization, companies are increasingly facing complex environments and intense competition (Alirezaei & Naji, 2025). Given that market demand fluctuates and competitive conditions change in different regions of the world, companies need to create the necessary flexibility to adapt to these conditions and redeploy resources to operate in a specific location. Therefore, marketing flexibility in resource allocation and skill development along with product/market changes is essential in a company (Al-Attar & Al-Mamouri, 2020). An organization that considers marketing flexibility can face short-term and long-term demand fluctuations and also face the threats that exist in this ever-changing business environment. Therefore, marketing flexibility helps to succeed and survive in such challenging conditions. It is a key to the organization's growth strategy (Amarikwa et al., 2020). Marketing flexibility is also related to the field of sales management. Accordingly, flexible resource reallocation and resource coordination in sales units are of potential importance on marketing performance (Bashir khodaparast et al., 2020). Marketing performance is one of the most important indicators for evaluating the success of organizations in competitive markets; because it reflects the extent to which goals such as customer acquisition and retention, increasing market share, creating perceived value, and the effectiveness of marketing strategies are achieved (Baharlou et al., 2025). Marketing literature shows that in dynamic and unstable environments, marketing performance is most affected by the ability of organizations to continuously adapt to market changes, customer behavior, and environmental pressures. However, a significant part of previous research has examined the explanation of marketing performance improvement mainly in terms of general organizational capabilities, strategic agility, or technological resources, and has paid less attention to marketing-oriented mechanisms that directly affect marketing performance (Ateke & Nadube, 2021; Fainshmidt, 2014). Meanwhile, the concept of marketing flexibility as the ability to rearrange, adjust, and continuously learn in marketing decisions and activities has not yet been fully explained conceptually and operationally, and is often hidden in more general concepts such as organizational flexibility or dynamic capabilities. This gap is doubly important in-service markets, especially in unstable contexts, because in these markets, marketing performance is highly dependent on human interaction, rapid response to demand changes, and continuous learning from the market (Morgan et al., 2011). Therefore, identifying specific and native components of marketing flexibility and measuring their impact on marketing performance is a theoretical necessity, because without explaining these components, it is not possible to explain why marketing performance declines or improves in unstable conditions. Therefore, the main question of the research is: How can identify the components of marketing flexibility and examine their impact on marketing performance among selected service businesses in Iraq?

Theoretical Framework

Marketing Flexibility

Marketing flexibility is the ability of an organization to quickly identify market changes and effectively adapt marketing strategies, programs, and activities to changing environmental conditions. In other words, an organization that has marketing flexibility can respond quickly and appropriately to changes in customer needs, competitor behavior, new technologies, economic conditions, social developments, and changes in distribution channels (Hassan Zahi & Sheikh Hosseini, 2025).

Marketing Performance Marketing

Performance indicates the extent to which an organization achieves its marketing and business goals. This performance is not only dependent on financial indicators such as sales and profitability, but also relies on non-financial measures such as customer satisfaction, loyalty, market share, and perceived brand value (Plotkina et al., 2025). Mirza Aboalhassan khan Ilchi et al. (2026) investigated the identification and prioritization of key capabilities affecting marketing performance in small and medium-sized businesses. The results show that the most important final categories include customer relationship integration and effectiveness of marketing strategies, innovation and networking for sustainable competitive advantage, agile adaptation to market-driven innovation, data-driven digital transformation, development of digital support ecosystems, low-cost entrepreneurial marketing, and green marketing strategies. From the experts' point of view, the three capabilities of "effective implementation of the marketing plan", "product innovation" and "multi-channel marketing" are of the greatest importance in improving the marketing performance of small and medium-sized businesses. It is suggested that managers of these businesses improve their marketing performance by developing documented marketing plans, developing product innovation based on customer interaction and integrating presence in online and offline channels. Karimianzadeh et al. (2026) studied the effect of human resource flexibility on organizational innovation with the mediating role of job turnover among employees of Kermanshah University of Medical Sciences. The results showed that human resource flexibility has a direct effect on organizational innovation of university employees. Human resource flexibility has a direct effect on job turnover. Job turnover has a direct effect on organizational innovation. Human resource flexibility has an indirect effect on organizational innovation with the mediating role of job turnover of university employees.

Research Methodology

The present research was developmental-applicable, conducted with a mixed exploratory approach and a mixed (qualitative-quantitative) implementation method. The statistical population in the quantitative section included 15 experts in the field of educational services in Baghdad, and in the quantitative section included managers and marketing experts of private educational institutions in Baghdad, 300 of whom were selected as samples based on the Cochran formula. To collect data, semi-structured interviews and a researcher-made marketing flexibility questionnaire derived from the qualitative section and a marketing performance questionnaire adapted from Izadyar (2010) with a five-point Likert scale were applied.

Research findings

The fuzzy Delphi method was applied to analyze the findings in the qualitative section and the SmartPLS software was applied in the quantitative section. The findings showed that 54 components were extracted in the form of five components including organizational capacity, marketing analytical intelligence, marketing strategic adaptation, experimental innovation in marketing, and marketing mix flexibility. The results showed that marketing flexibility has a positive and significant effect on marketing performance (β=0.595). Also, all its dimensions including marketing mix flexibility (β=0.555), experimental innovation in marketing (β=0.412), marketing analytical intelligence (β=0.331) and marketing strategic alignment (β=0.324) have a positive and significant effect on marketing performance. The results show that developing flexibility capabilities in decision-making, innovation and marketing mix adjustment can lead to improving the marketing performance of service businesses in dynamic and high-risk markets such as Iraq.

Conclusion

The present study was conducted with the aim of identifying the components of marketing flexibility and examining their impact on marketing performance among selected service businesses in Iraq. The results of this study are consistent with the results of Mirza Aboalhassan khan Ilchi et al. (2026), Karimianzadeh et al. (2026), Abu Atta & Mazaheri (2026), Ahmadi et al. (2025), Baharlou et al. (2025), Hassan Zahi & Sheikh Hosseini (2025), Jabbari et al. (2024), and Arabshahi & Abbaszadehgaretekan (2023). Abu Atta & Mazaheri (2026) showed that supply chain flexibility mediates human resource management practices on the marketing performance of Khorasan Steel Company. Human resource management practices have a positive and significant effect on marketing performance and supply chain flexibility of Khorasan Steel Company. Also, supply chain flexibility has a positive and significant effect on the marketing performance of Khorasan Steel Company.

One of the most important prerequisites for marketing flexibility is rapid and accurate recognition of market changes. Therefore, it is suggested that selected service businesses in Iraq establish a regular market monitoring system, especially in areas such as tourism, hospitality, transportation, education, healthcare, banking, and communications. The main product of the organization in service businesses is “service.” Therefore, flexibility in designing, modifying, and delivering services plays an important role in improving marketing performance.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no financial or non-financial, personal, professional, or institutional conflicts of interest relevant to this work.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

AI Use Statement

The authors declare that no generative artificial intelligence (AI) or AI-assisted technologies were used in the preparation, writing, or editing of this manuscript.

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Ethics Approval

All procedures performed in this study were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible institutional and national research committee.