

# Effective marketing strategies for promoting SMEs in Pacific Island Countries: A systematic review

*Nirma Sadamali Jayawardena* Griffith University

*Jack Boe* Central Bank of Solomon Islands

*Angeline B Rohoia* Central Bank of Solomon Islands

*Parmendra Sharma* Griffith University



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Effective marketing strategies for promoting SMEs in  
Pacific Island Countries: A systematic literature review  
(2000–2020)

Nirma Sadamali Jayawardena<sup>1</sup>, Jack Boe<sup>2</sup>,  
Angeline B. Rohoia<sup>2</sup> and Parmendra Sharma<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> PhD candidate, Department of Marketing Department, Griffith University

<sup>2</sup> Central Bank of Solomon Islands

<sup>3</sup> Department of Accounting Finance and Economics and Griffith Asia Institute

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## About the Authors

### **Nirma Sadamali Jayawardena**

Ms Nirma Sadamali Jayawardena is a PhD student of Griffith Business School, attached to Marketing Department. She completed BSc in Business Management with a first-class Honours from National School of Business Management, Sri Lanka, and completed MBA in international business from University of Colombo, Sri Lanka. Her research interests include social cognition, consumer visual memory and advertising.

### **Jack Boe**

Mr Jack Boe works as the Acting Senior Analyst for the Government Finance Unit in the Economics Research and Statistics Department of the Central Bank of Solomon Islands. He has been with the Central Bank since 2013. Jack has also served as the Acting Senior Analyst for the Money and Banking unit within the department and thus has a firm background in both government finance and monetary statistics. He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Economics from the University of New England, Australia. His research interests include: government finance, financial and private sector development and monetary policy.

### **Angeline B Rohoia**

Ms Angeline Rohoia works as a Senior Research Analyst (Ag) for the Research Unit under the Monetary Policy & Research Division within the Economics Research and Statistics Department of the Central Bank of Solomon Islands. She is currently involved in writing other working papers co-authored with CBSI colleagues and Griffith University. Since joining the bank in 2017 she also worked for a year as an acting Senior Analyst for the Real Sector Unit. She holds an Honours Degree in Applied Economics from Massey University, New Zealand. Her research interests include: development economics, financial sector development and economic growth and public policy.

### **Parmendra Sharma**

Dr Parmendra Sharma is a senior lecturer and the program convenor of the South Pacific Centre for Central Banking at Griffith University. His publications are beginning to fill the huge vacuum in the literature relating to South Pacific's financial sector, including on issues such as determinants of bank interest margins, profitability and efficiency. His recent publications include Factors influencing the intention to use of mobile value-added services by women-owned micro enterprises in Fiji), Microfinance and microenterprise performance in Indonesia (International Journal of Social Economics), A first look at the trilemma vis-à-vis quadrilemma monetary policy stance in a Pacific Island country context, (Review of Pacific Basin Financial Markets Policy), Mobile value added services in Fiji: Institutional drivers, industry challenges and adoption by women micro entrepreneurs (Journal of Global Information Management) and Bank reforms and Efficiency in Vietnamese Banks: Evidence based on SFA and DEA (Applied Economics).

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# Abstract

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This study provides the first systematic review of the different marketing strategies used for promoting Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Pacific Island Countries (PICs). Literature published in high ranked management journals were reviewed in this area using PRISMA guidelines published between 2000 to 2020. The study identifies three major marketing communication strategies useful for SMEs in the PICs: digital marketing strategies, market orientation strategies and experience-based marketing strategies. The scope of this study is limited to different marketing strategies in promoting SMEs in Pacific Island countries and the findings provide a solid foundation for the researchers on how to effectively promote the SMEs in Pacific Island countries. To the best of the authors' knowledge, none of the studies up to date reviewed the existing literature to identify suitable marketing strategies to promote SMEs in Pacific Island countries. The findings provide a solid foundation on how to effectively promote SMEs in PICs.

Keywords: Marketing strategies, SMEs, Pacific island countries, systematic literature review

# 1. Introduction

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Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)<sup>1</sup> have been shown to matter for jobs, economic growth, poverty alleviation and overall prosperity (Bello, Jibir, & Ahmed, 2018; Chingwaru, 2015; Heneman, Tansky, & Camp, 2000). The creation, sustenance, and growth of SMEs is believed to be a key ingredient for development of a country's private sector (Bello et al., 2018). On the other hand, SMEs are also shown to be constrained, financially and otherwise, resulting in less than optimal growth and performance of firms. The foregoing dichotomy has led to an explosion of research investigating the extent and magnitude of SME constraints as well as performance and various other aspects such as innovation and productivity. Research has also looked at the efficacy of marketing strategies for SME growth and performance.

Marketing is shown to enhance firm visibility, by promoting the company image and improving the quality of customer service (Tambunan, 2005). Firms use marketing as a tool to enhance corporate growth, financial performance, and competitive advantage (Samiee & Walters, 1991). Diverse marketing strategies constitute a plan of action designed to promote and sell products or services (Lamb, Hair, & McDaniel, 2011). Marketing plays an important role by linking organisations through planning the products. The goal is to plan products which satisfy customer requirements and to confirm technologies and products are developed in a timely manner. It is also an important research topic to fit in with the current market trends (Cheng & Liu, 2017). Different marketing strategies influence market-oriented technical innovation contents, commercialised plans on technology development, organization management, finance and risk management, and corporate culture, etc (Luca, Verona, & Vicari, 2010). This approach has a large effect on research and development performance and cross-department reconciliation (Luca et al., 2010).

In the case of Pacific Island Countries (PICs), literature appears scarce, if not non-existent, in terms of documentation and/or assessment of SME marketing strategies (Hills, 1987; Munoz, Welsh, Chan, & Raven, 2015; Naidu & Chand, 2011; Nair & Chelliah, 2012a, 2012b; OECD, 2004; Singh, Pathak, & Naz, 2010). This study attempts to fill this gap in the literature via a review of existing marketing strategies for promoting SMEs in PICs. This paper uses a systematic literature review approach using several PRISMA guidelines such as a timeline, inclusion and exclusion criteria. Fifteen PICs and areas are included in the Country Cooperation Strategy for the PICs as named by the 'World Health Organization' in 2013 (WHO, 2020). These countries include Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, French Polynesia, Kiribati, the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI), Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, and Wallis and Futuna (WHO, 2020). In this review, authors covered several countries including the CNMI, Fiji, Kiribati, the RMI, Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Results show that SMEs in PICs could focus more on marketing, innovation, and learning capabilities, as it is positively related to SME performance

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 provides a discussion of the study context. Section 3 reviews the extant relevant literature to assess SME marketing strategies in place in the PICs. Section 4 documents the analysis. Section 5 presents the results. Section 6 concludes.

## 2. Study context

### 2.1 The macroeconomy

The Pacific Island Countries (PICs) are small states<sup>2</sup> that vary in terms of size, population, culture and economic resources. The region is further divided into three sub-regions: Melanesia in the south-west, Polynesia in the central and Micronesia in the north-west (Table 1). Countries within the Melanesian group are largely endowed with natural resources namely, agriculture, forestry, fisheries and minerals. Economies within the Polynesian group have modest resources backed by tourism, foreign aid and remittances while the smaller Micronesian countries such as Kiribati and Nauru have extremely limited resources confined largely to fisheries within their Economic Exclusive Zone as well as foreign aid. Overall, PICs remain among the world's most remote, socio-economically and geo-politically disadvantaged, aid dependant and vulnerable small, open island economies (Khor, Kronenberg, & Tumbarello, 2016; ADB, 2016).

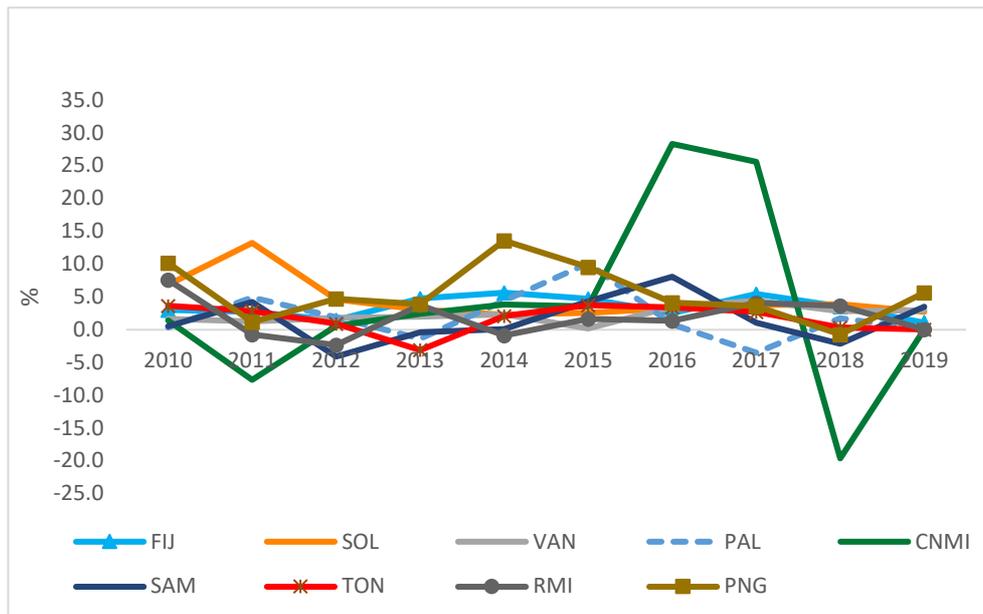
Table 1: PICs and territories demographic and other socio-economic indicators

Country/ Territory	Population 2019	Urban population (% of total population) 2019	HDI category	GDP per capita 2018	Proportion of population below \$1.90 purchasing power parity a day	Proportion of population living below the national poverty line
<b>Melanesia</b>						
Papua New Guinea	8,776,109	13	0.543 (Low)	2,505	...	37.5 (2017)
Fiji	889,953	57	0.724 (High)	4,795	1.371 (2013)	28.1 (2013)
Solomon Islands	669,823	24	0.557 (Med)	1,483	25.1 (2013)	12.7 (2013)
Vanuatu	299,882	25	0.597 (Med)	2,862	...	...
New Caledonia	287,800	71	...	...	...	...
<b>Polynesia</b>						
American Samoa	55,312	87	...	9,272	...	...
Cook Islands	20,200p	75	...	...	...	...
French Polynesia	279,287	62	...	...	...	...
Samoa	197,097	18	0.707 (High)	3,749	1.14 (2013)	18.8 (2013)
Tonga	104,494	23	0.717 (High)	4,055	0.9525 (2015)	22.1 (2015)
Wallis and Futuna	15,854	...	...	...	...	...
Niue	1862p	46	...	...	...	...
Tuvalu	11,646	63	...	...	...	...
<b>Micronesia</b>						
Guam	167,294	95	...	31,477	...	...
Palau	18,008	80	0.814(High)	12,260	...	...
CNMI	57,216	92	...	18,578	...	...
Kiribati	117,606	55	0.623 (Med)	1,778	...	...
RMI	58,791	77	0.698 (Med)	3,067	...	...
FSM	113,815	23	0.614 (Med)	2,729	15.39 (2013)	41.2 (2013)
Nauru	12,581	100	...	8,143	...	24 (2013)

Source: World Bank World Development Indicators, 2020; Key Indicators Database, Asian Development Bank (ADB), 2020; HDI sourced from United Nations Development Programme, 2019. Poverty indicators sourced from Basic Statistics, 2020, ADB. Notes: (1) HDI: Human Development Index; (2) GDP per capita in 2018 at constant prices (2010 US\$); (3) ... means data not available (4) p means preliminary.

Economic growth in the PICs has generally been low and volatile during 2010–2019. This is due to a wide range of internal and external shocks on these small island economies as seen in Figure 1. The decline in growth has been contributed, among others, by natural disasters, such as Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu (2015), Cyclone Winston in Fiji (2016) and Cyclone Yutu in CNMI (2018), causing widespread destruction to infrastructure and economic livelihoods. Moreover, the observed spike in economic growth over the period is attributed to either robust output from productive sectors and large one-off economic activities such as the resumption of mining activities in Solomon Islands in 2011 commencement of the Liquefied Natural Gas production in PNG in 2014 and the opening of a new casino in the CNMI in 2018.

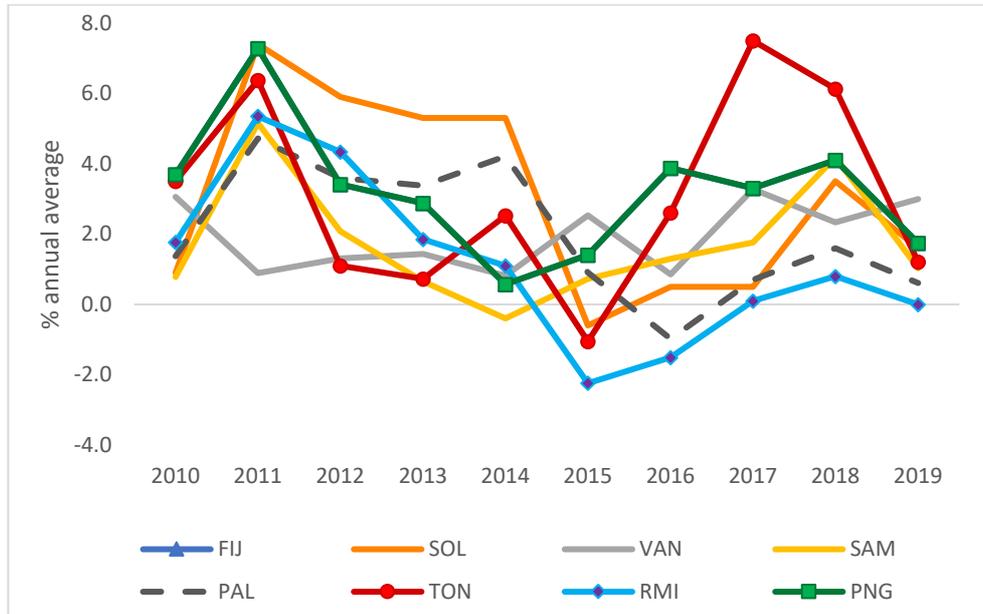
**Figure 1: Economic growth in selected PICs and territories [2010–2019]**



Source: World Bank World Development Indicators (2020); Key Indicators Database, ADB (2020).

Inflation in the Pacific Island economies has been modest and volatile from 2010–2019 whilst still contained within single digits (Figure 2). This outcome is attributed to the region’s vulnerability to supply shocks on the external and domestic fronts as well as exchange rate volatility. The spike in inflation for most PICs in 2011 (except Vanuatu) was due to higher global food and fuel prices. Inflationary pressures have also emerged on the domestic front emanating from an increase in Value Added Tax and minimum wage increase for Fiji in 2011 (UNESCAP, 2012). As well as from supply-side shortages such as the scarcity of kava in Tonga which contributed to a surge in inflation to 7.5 per cent in 2017 (NRBT, 2018). In recent years, inflation has been declining reflecting softer global food and fuel prices and muted domestic inflationary pressures resulting from sluggish economic activity.

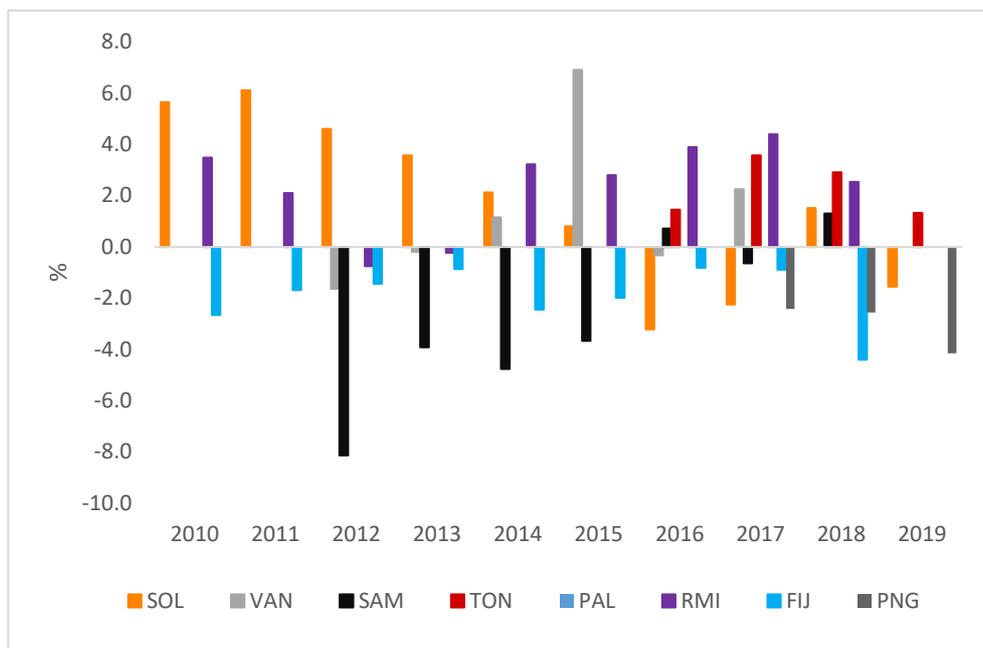
Figure 2: Inflation in selected PICs [2010-2019]



Source: Key Indicators Database, ADB (2020).

PICs face tremendous challenges with fiscal management, with most countries running budget deficits and others displaying mixed outcomes over the period (Figure 3). These budget deficits have remained broadly within the 5 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) level while others have reported strong fiscal surpluses supported by strong revenue collections from the export of primary commodities such as logs, and fish as well foreign aid. Chowdhury and Vidyattama (2007) noted that volatility in fiscal revenues for PICs have been due to their reliance on aid.

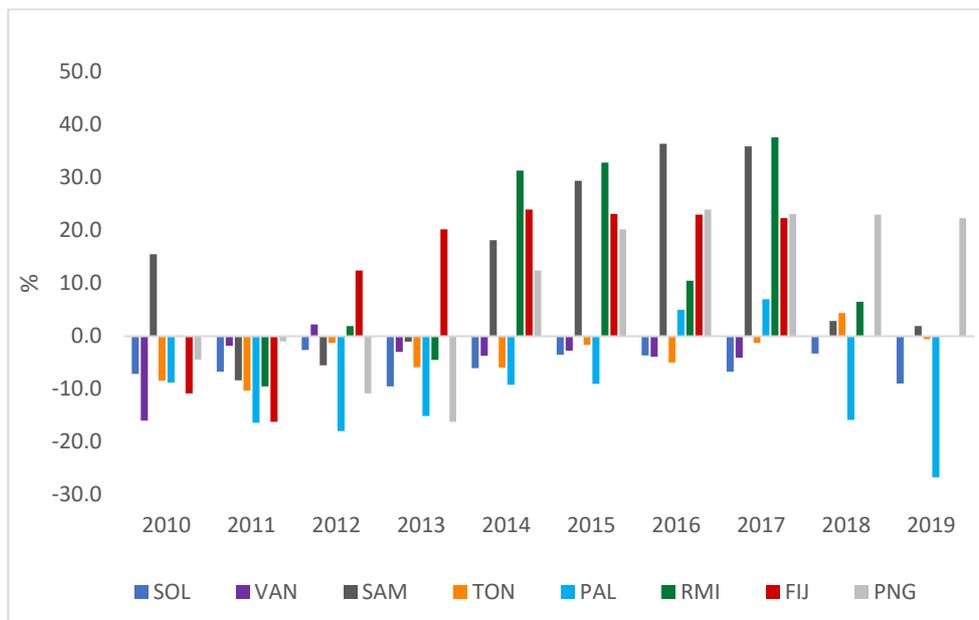
Figure 3: Fiscal balance (% of GDP) of selected PICs [2010-2019]



Source: Key Indicators Database, ADB (2020).

On the external front, Pacific economies have generally experienced persistent current account deficits between 2010–2019 as reflected in Figure 4. This in part reflects weakness in trade in goods as most PICs are net importing countries heavily reliant on essential imports of rice, wheat flour, and fuel and machinery imports. Meanwhile, these island economies have a narrow export base dominated by primary commodities that are heavily impacted by changes in world prices.

**Figure 4: Current account (% of GDP) in selected PICs [2010–2019]**



Source: Key Indicators Database, ADB (2020).

PICs vary significantly in terms of their socio-economic development and poverty outcomes (Table 1). Based on the latest report by UNDP (2019), Palau, Samoa, Fiji and Tonga are categorised in the High Human Development Index (HDI) group, while the remaining PICs (except for PNG) fall within the Medium HDI group (Table 1). Furthermore, there is a higher incidence of poverty in the Solomon Islands and the FSM while there appear to be low levels of extreme poverty in Samoa, Tonga and Fiji. Available data on poverty incidence in the region show that an estimated 25.1 per cent of Solomon Islanders live below the international US\$1.90 per person per day poverty line in 2011 purchasing power parity terms. This is followed by the FSM with 15.4 per cent compared to around 1 per cent of the population in Fiji and Tonga. Meanwhile, the FSM reported a larger proportion of its population living below the national basic needs poverty line at 41 per cent followed by Fiji with 28 per cent, Nauru with 24 per cent and Tonga with 22 per cent compared to the Solomon Islands with an estimated 12.7 per cent of its population living below the national basic needs' poverty line.

## 2.2 The financial sector development

The financial system in the PICs is dominated by banks. The banking sector is characterised largely by foreign ownership, limited competition, focus on urban operations, excess liquidity, shallow financial markets, large interest rate spreads and generally high profitability (ADB, 2001). Economies with higher levels of financial development and intermediation tend to experience faster growth (ABD, 2001). Hence, a well-developed financial sector and an enabling business environment is a precondition to supporting SME development in the PICs.

The financial systems in the Melanesian group of countries are more developed and diversified relative to the Polynesian and Micronesian countries (Table 2). The financial sector in these countries comprises banks and complex entities such as superannuation funds, life insurance companies and foreign exchange dealers. In addition, Fiji and PNG have stock markets and stockbrokers. Moreover, the banking sector accounts for over half of the financial system in these countries is regulated by the Central and Reserve banks in each country.

Table 2: Financial systems of selected PICs

Types of Financial Institutions	Melanesia				Polynesia and Micronesia				
	PNG	Fiji	Vanuatu	Solomon Islands	Samoa	Tonga	Palau	RMI	Kiribati
Commercial Banks <sup>a</sup>	4	6	11	5	5	4	6	2	1
Provident fund	4	1		1	1		2		1
Pension fund			1				2	1	
Credit Institutions		4	1	2					1
Insurance Companies		9	34	4	6			2	
Insurance brokers		4		4	4				
Insurance agents				2					
Life insurance companies and brokers	9								
Trusts, Fund Managers and investment advisors	8	9			1				
Stockbrokers	2	3							
Stock exchange	1	1							
Money changer and transfer services <sup>b</sup>	10	11		13	13	11			
Other financial institutions <sup>c</sup>	35	1	1	11	1			1	1
Total	73	49	48	42	31	15	10	6	4

Notes: <sup>a</sup> Includes Development Banks; <sup>b</sup> Includes foreign exchange dealers, <sup>c</sup> includes credit unions, loans and savings, societies, micro-lending, mobile operators.

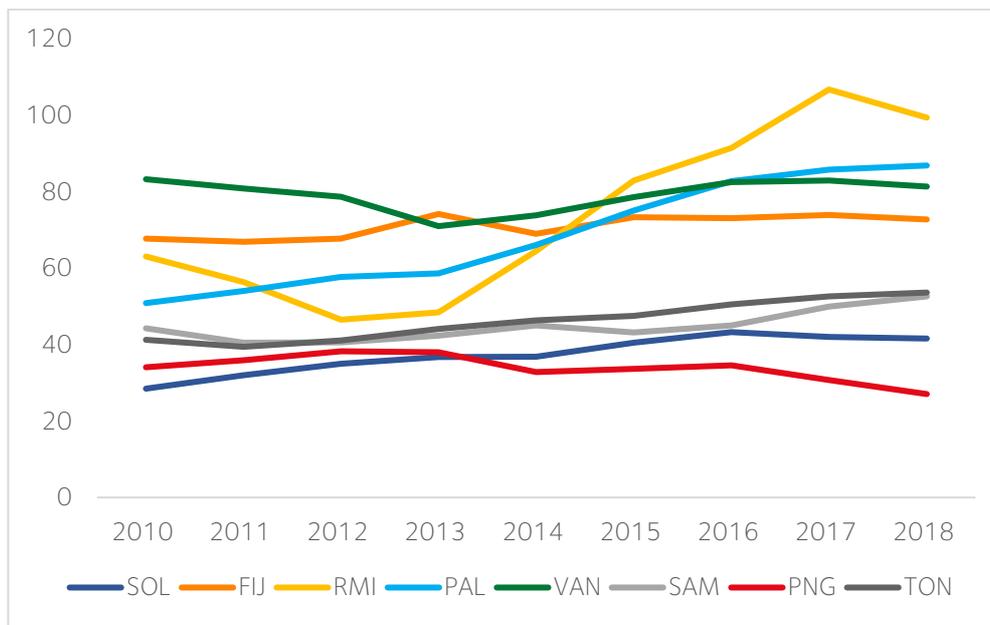
Source: Various Pacific Finance Sector Briefs, 2019; Central Bank of Solomon Islands, 2019; Reserve Bank of Fiji, 2019 and Reserve Bank of Vanuatu, 2018.

In the Micronesian and Polynesian groups, the financial system is less diverse, relatively small and bank-centric. The banking system comprises of foreign and nationally owned institutions being supervised by their own regulatory body such as the Central Bank of Samoa, Banking Commission in RMI, Palau Financial Institutions Commission and FSM Banking Board. Samoa, has a relatively developed financial system compared to its peers, with four commercial banks, ten insurance companies and brokers, and thirteen money exchange services. Tonga has four commercial banks, two of which are international banks and two locally incorporated banks, and seven money transfer dealers. Banking services in smaller states are quite limited. In Kiribati, there is only one commercial bank and two public financial institutions.

Financial deepening in the PICs, measured by the ratio of broad money to GDP, is expanding although uneven (Figure 5). Fiji, Vanuatu, RMI and Palau's economies are highly monetised

with the average ratio of broad money to GDP well above 50 per cent from the period 2010–2018 (Table 3). The other group of countries which include, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga and PNG have moderately monetised economies with the average ratio of broad money to GDP below 50 per cent during the same period. However, monetisation in these countries has been expanding over the review period except for PNG whose ratio of broad money to GDP declined to 27 per cent in 2018 from a peak of 38 per cent in 2012.

Figure 5: Ratio of broad money (% of GDP) in selected PICs [2010–2018]



Source: ADB, key indicators, country tables (<https://www.adb.org/publications/key-indicators-asia-and-pacific-2020>), World Bank, Global Financial Development Database. (<https://data.worldbank.org/topic/financial-sector?view=chart>), Graduate School USA. 2019, Pacific and Virgin Islands Training Institute (<https://pitiviti.org/initiatives/economics/rmi.php>).

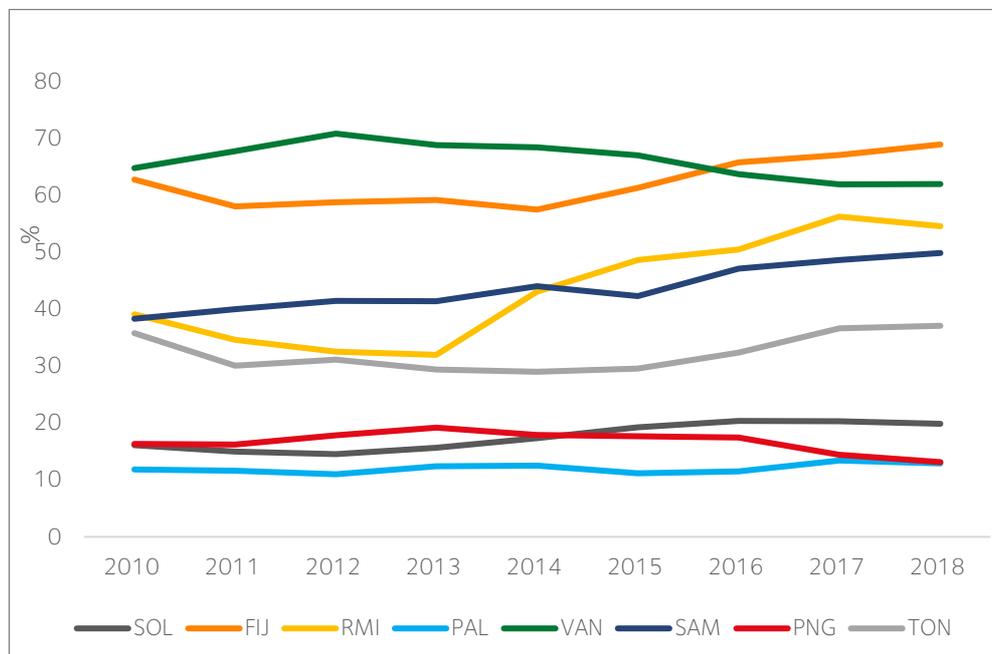
Table 3: Average money, credit and interest spread [2010–2018]

Country	Broad Money (% of GDP)	Private Sector Credit (% of GDP)	Interest Margin
Solomon Islands	37	18	11
PNG	34	17	9
Fiji	71	62	3
Vanuatu	79	66	3
RMI	73	43	10
Palau	69	12	11
Samoa	45	44	7
Tonga	46	32	6

Source: ADB, key indicators, country tables (<https://www.adb.org/publications/key-indicators-asia-and-pacific-2020>), World Bank, Global Financial Development Database. (<https://data.worldbank.org/topic/financial-sector?view=chart>), Graduate School USA. 2019, Pacific and Virgin Islands Training Institute (<https://pitiviti.org/initiatives/economics/rmi.php>).

Except for Fiji and Vanuatu, the average interest rate margins on loans and deposits are higher in the PICs, ranging from 6 per cent in Tonga to 11 per cent in both Solomon Islands and Palau (Table 3). Fiji and Vanuatu have the lowest interest rate margins each averaging 3 per cent from the period 2010-2018. Moreover, private sector credit in both countries—66 per cent in Vanuatu and 62 per cent in Fiji—is higher than in other PICs over the same period (Figure 6). Samoa, RMI and Tonga performed relatively better with average private sector credit ratios between 30-50 per cent through 2010-2018. The least performing countries are Solomon Islands, Palau and PNG all with average private sector credit ratios below 20 per cent. Despite being highly monetised economies, RMI and Palau's lower private sector credit mirrored high interest rate margins and risk-averse behaviour of banks that pooled domestic funds and invested them in less risky markets overseas (ADB, 2019). Meanwhile, RMI's credit to private sector increased sharply from 2013 mainly on the account of consumer loans which highlights concerns over household indebtedness and poses risks to financial stability (IMF, 2016; ADB, 2019). Higher interest rate margins in Solomon Islands and PNG mirrored country risks and structural issues.

Figure 6: Private sector credit (% of GDP) in selected PICs [2010-2018]



Source: ADB, key indicators, country tables (<https://www.adb.org/publications/key-indicators-asia-and-pacific-2020>), World Bank, Global Financial Development Database (<https://data.worldbank.org/topic/financial-sector?view=chart>), Graduate School USA. 2019, Pacific and Virgin Islands Training Institute (<https://pitiviti.org/initiatives/economics/rmi.php>).

### 2.3 Small and Medium Enterprises

The definition of SMEs<sup>3</sup> in PICs varies from country to country and is based on three criteria namely, the number of employees, turnover and number of assets owned.<sup>4</sup> Turnover is a common criterion used across all countries that have a national definition in use as seen in Table 4. For example, Fiji dropped the number of employees from its definition of SMEs in early 2020 to only include turnover. Meanwhile, the SME definition in PNG is further split into two groups based on the industries in which the businesses operates. The first group consists of the manufacturing, construction and engineering and the second group comprises agriculture, tourism, forestry, fisheries, services and others. PNG and Solomon Islands both include assets owned in their national definition.

Table 4: SME definition in selected PICs

Country	Enterprise Type	Number of employees	Turnover	Assets
Fiji	Micro		\$0-\$50,000	
	Small		\$50,000-\$300,000	
	Medium		\$300,000-\$1,250,000	
PNG	<b>Manufacturing, construction and Engineering sectors</b>			
	Micro	< 5	< K200,000	< K200,000
	Small	> 5 and < 20	> K200,000 and < K5m	> K2,000,000 and < K5m
	Medium	> 20 and <100	> K5m and < K10m	> K5m and < K10m
	<b>Agriculture, Tourism, Forestry Fisheries, services and other sectors</b>			
	Micro	> 5	> K200,000	< K200,000
	Small	> 5 and < 40	> K200,000 and < K5m	> K200,000 and > K5m
	Medium	> 40 and < 100	> K5m and < K10m	> K5m and < K10m
Solomon Islands	Micro	1 - 5	< \$300,000	< \$500,000
	Small	> 5 - 25	> \$300,000-\$10m	> \$ 0.5m-\$1.5m
	Medium	> 25 - 50	> \$10m - 50m	\$1.6-\$7.5m
	Large	> 50	> \$50m	> \$7.5m
Vanuatu	Micro	1 - 5	< VT 4m	
	Small	6 - 20	< VT 50m	
	Medium	20 - 50	< VT 200m	
	Large	> 50	> VT200m	
Tonga	Micro	1 - 5	< T30,000	
	Small	6 - 15	T30,000-T99,999	
	Medium	16 - 25	T100,000-T200,00	
	Large	> 25	> T200,000	

Sources: Fiji Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism & Transport, 2020; PNG Ministry of Trade, Commerce and Industry, 2016; Solomon Islands Ministry of Commerce, Industries, Labour and Immigration, 2013; Reserve Bank of Vanuatu, 2017; Tonga Ministry of Commerce, Consumer, Trade, Innovation and Labour, cited in Tonga Business Enterprise, n.d.

Note: Turnover and assets are in each country's national currency, currency by country, Fiji (Fiji Dollar), PNG (Kina), Solomon Islands (Solomon dollar), Vanuatu (Vatu), Tonga (Tala). '<' means 'less than', '>' means 'more than'. Fiji's MSME definition was reviewed in 2019, during which the number of employees was dropped from the categories of SME definition.

SMEs are widely recognised for their contribution to economic development and employment. SMEs accounted for 96 per cent of all enterprises, 62 per cent of the labour force and contributes 42 per cent to GDP across the Asian Pacific region. In the PICs, SMEs contributed significantly to employment and constituted a greater share of businesses in the economy. In Fiji, SMEs contribute over 18 per cent of the country's GDP and approximately 60 per cent of its labour force (**Ministry of Commerce, Trade, Tourism & Transport, 2020**). Meanwhile, in Papua New Guinea, SMEs account for more than 10 per cent of GDP<sup>5</sup> and provide about 200,000 jobs. Moreover, it was estimated that SMEs represented over 88 per cent of all business enterprises in Samoa in 2018 (**Ivamere, 2018**).

SMEs in the Pacific Island region also face numerous challenges that hinder their capacity to contribute fully to their national GDP and employment. Naidu & Chand (2012) highlighted that the lack of finance is one of the major problems faced by SMEs in the region. Typically, commercial banks are largely focused on larger and well-established enterprises compared to SMEs which typically suffer from the problem of asymmetric information and lack of collateral. As a result, SMEs tend to use informal sources of finances than from banks. In Vanuatu, around 68 per cent of businesses in the urban centres used informal savings for businesses start-ups and 19 per cent used commercial bank loans. Similarly, in the rural areas, 81 per cent used informal savings, and only 7 per cent of businesses used commercial bank loans (RBV, 2017). In PNG, 94 per cent of SMEs never obtained any form of loans for their business (Ministry of Trade, Commerce and Industry, 2016).

Moreover, an enabling business environment is another constraint inhibiting the growth of SMEs in the PICs. According to the World Bank's Doing Business Indicators 2020<sup>6</sup>, a prominent yet debatable measure that ranked 190 countries on their ease of doing business showed that the PICs performed poorly in comparison to the East Asia and Pacific region's average rank of 96<sup>th</sup>. As revealed in Table 5, in the PIC region, Samoa attained the highest overall ranking (98<sup>th</sup>) while Kiribati reported the lowest (at 164). Furthermore, when comparing the region's ease of doing business scores between the years 2016 and 2020, most countries have improved their scores marking improvements in the business investment climate between those periods except for Fiji and FSM.<sup>7</sup> In essence, these highlight the importance of appropriate policies to enhance the SME development.

**Table 5: World Bank Doing business indicators [2016 & 2020]**

	Rank (2020)	Ease of doing business	
		2016	2020
Fiji	102	62.8	61.5
Kiribati	164	50.6	50.9
RMI	153	45.4	46.9
FSM	158	48.1	48.1
Palau	145	53.1	53.7
PNG	120	56.0	59.8
Samoa	98	60.2	62.1
Solomon Islands	136	54.7	55.3
Tonga	103	61.3	61.4
Vanuatu	107	59.3	61.1
Average of East Asia and Pacific	96		

Source: World Bank Ease of Doing Business Indicators, 2020

Furthermore, for the large PICs, the majority of their population live in remote, widely dispersed villages in the rural areas and this presents many challenges to starting and operating a viable business. In Solomon Islands, a small business training conducted by the Solomon Islands Small Business Enterprises Centre identified the top three constraints to starting a business were access to finance, remoteness in the provinces, and low financial literacy (ADB, 2015). Meanwhile, in Vanuatu, approximately 78 per cent of MSME's were located in the rural areas, where 76 per cent of the population resided, with 90 per cent of MSME operating in the informal sector (RBV, 2017). With the concentration of financial services mostly in urban centres and dispersion of SMEs in the rural areas, digital marketing would reduce cost of doing business, enhance access to markets and improve visibility.

### 3. A systematic literature review

Systematic literature reviews (SLR) are often contrasted with traditional literature reviews since systematic reviews are objective, replicable, systematic, comprehensive and the process is reported in the same manner as for reporting empirical research (James, 2018). The purpose of this systematic literature review is to identify different marketing strategies in promoting SMEs in PICs.

This systematic literature review uses several PRISMA guidelines and categorises articles published from 2000 to 2020 and identified 32 relevant articles that provide an overview of different marketing strategies of SMEs in Pacific Island countries. Authors conducted the database search manually using several keywords such as “different marketing strategies of SMEs in Pacific Island Countries” and “Pacific Island Countries, marketing strategies and small and medium entrepreneurs”, “marketing strategies in promoting SMEs in Pacific Island countries.” Researcher reviewed studies published in top management, and marketing fields across several databases including Google Scholar, Griffith Library, Emerald Full text, ProQuest using the ‘publish or perish’ software. All results were limited to English only peer-reviewed studies. Table 6 shows the initial findings obtained from various databases.

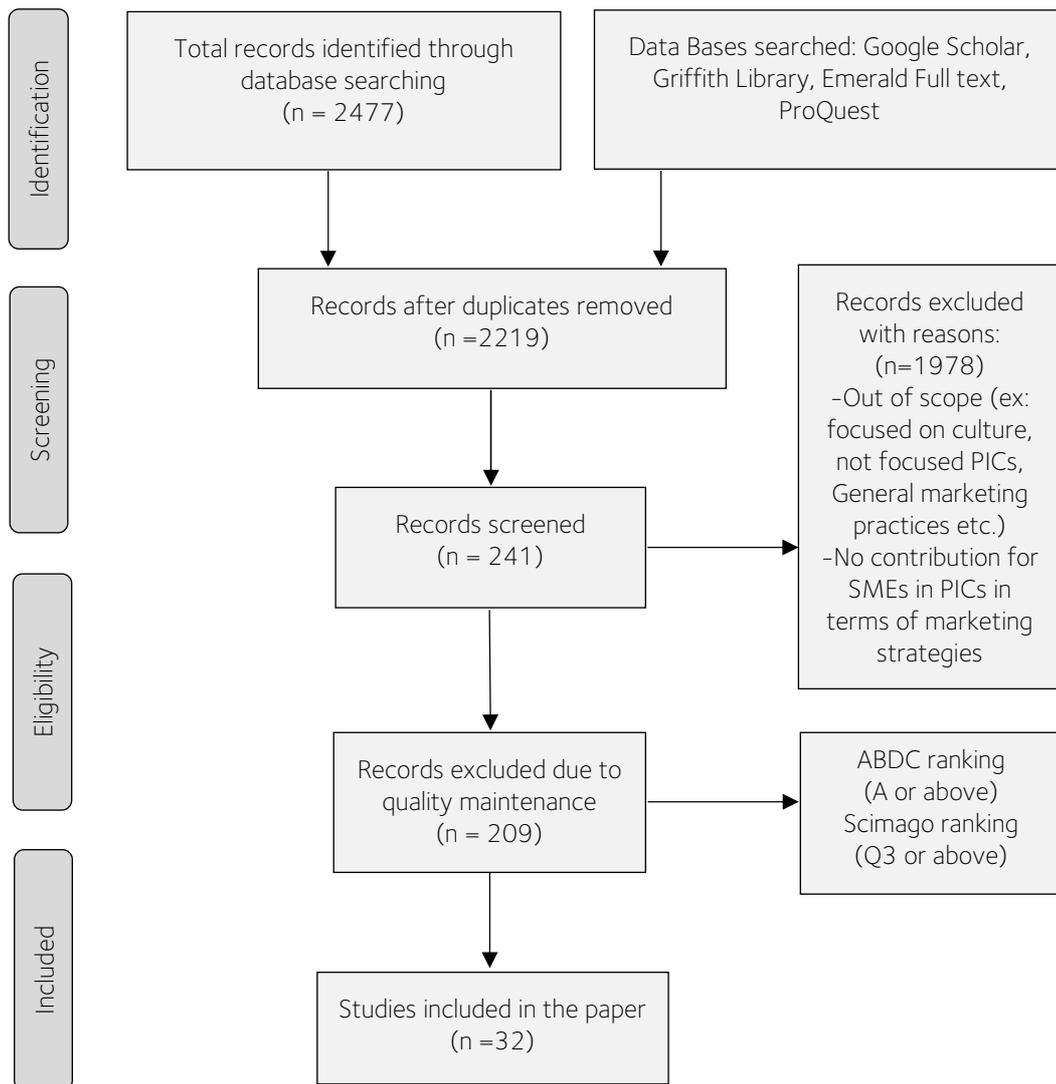
**Table 6: Initial findings**

Database	Number of Articles
Google Scholar	999
Griffith Library	724
Emerald	326
ProQuest	428
Total	<b>2477</b>

Initially, a total of 2477 articles were identified. Another 258 articles were identified as duplicated records. Mainly, the articles applying marketing strategies in SMEs of PICs have been considered. First the abstracts were screened and the articles which did not focus on marketing strategies of SMEs and marketing strategies in PICs were removed. Specifically, only the articles with results demonstrating a contribution to SMEs in PICs were prioritised excluding non-PICs from the study. Another set of articles were removed due to lack of contribution SMEs in PICs.

Therefore, from the remaining 2219 articles, 1978 were identified as unnecessary due to out of scope issues. The remaining 241 articles were selected for the next stage reviewing. In order to maintain the quality, the articles published in A or above in ABDC ranking and Q3 or above in SC imago ranking were included. Other than these rankings, several studies also included considering the higher impact factor of the journal and contribution of the paper. Finally, a total of 32 articles been selected for the final reviewing based on the contributions of the different marketing strategies on SMEs of PICs. Figure 7 further illustrates the inclusion and exclusion criteria used for this review.

Figure 7: Flow chart of the literature search process



Source: Developed by author based on the PRISMA guidelines

## 4. Document analysis

The final thirty-two (32) studies include journal papers, book reviews and thesis projects. These were summarised with six sections as source, journal, key constructs, theory and findings, using Table 7.

Table 7: Summary of the key studies reviewed in this paper

Source	Journal/ Book/ Theses	Key constructs	Theory	Key Findings
Chandra (2012)	Master of Commerce Thesis University of South Pacific	Explored the current marketing practices used by SMEs in Fiji  Identified new marketing opportunities of SMEs	Entrepreneurial Theory of Kuratko (2009)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This SME which is a Handicraft business, identified product prices and packaging as factors creating competitiveness.</li> <li>Several marketing campaigns were identified as effective such as advertising, sales promotions, door to door selling, internet marketing, personal selling and mass marketing.</li> <li>Implementation of quality control measures (ISO standards) are very low among SMEs in Fiji.</li> <li>Marketing intermediaries are useful and necessary to connect producers with customers.</li> <li>Technical interventions are low and manual processing is high.</li> </ul>
Fairbairn (2006)	Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship	Discussion which explained some of the leading constraints to entrepreneurship and small business development among Pacific islanders	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For SMEs workers need to have a basic education, prior work experience in business or government service, and the local application of business skills and know-how by islanders returning home from abroad.</li> <li>The removal of unnecessary regulations, improving access to finance and the adoption of more innovative training schemes is another strategy for SME growth.</li> <li>Identified obstacles are shortage of basic business skills, poor access to credit, inadequate infrastructure and obstructive socio-cultural influences.</li> </ul>
Tuibeqa (2015)	Doctoral Thesis of Victoria University, Australia	Developed a small business development framework that takes into consideration the input of small business stakeholders in the design and delivery of support services and assistance programs	Market Orientation Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This study advances the belief that small business support services and assistance programs are not working in Fiji because of a mismatch between supply and demand.</li> <li>Factors attributed to this failure include cultural misfit, limited sources of capital, lack of markets, inadequate information and inappropriate products.</li> <li>The main issue for failure was found to be a lack of preparation before businesses start-up</li> <li>A market-based view, rooted in market orientation theory, is offered to investigate the problem</li> <li>Market intelligence gathering, and customer surveys is needed for product and services development and enhancement</li> </ul>

Effective marketing strategies for promoting SMEs in Pacific Island Countries:  
A systematic literature review (2000–2020)

Source	Journal/ Book/ Theses	Key constructs	Theory	Key Findings
Singh et al. (2010)	International Journal of Emerging Markets	Discussed the issues, challenges, and impediments coming in the way of SME internationalisation in Fiji and Samoa	Resource-based Theory, Industrial Organisation Theory, Network Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Huge political risks impacting SME businesses tremendously in Fiji leading to brain drain (labour shortages).</li> <li>• Costing was a problem for the entrepreneurs intending to globalise, which was hampered further as they lacked marketing skills and were not equipped in pricing techniques resulting in stiff competitive battles.</li> <li>• The main impediments in the two countries were namely: government paperwork, government regulations, locating qualified employees, employment regulation, rates, electricity and telephone costs, advertising, pricing, and competition with other businesses.</li> </ul>
Everett, Simpson, and Wayne (2018)	Report of Asian Development Bank	Discussed that Pacific island countries and tourism through interventions in four areas: tourism policy, strategy, and the regulatory environment; infrastructure; human resources; and product development and marketing	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Market- or demand-based development is a key path to increased competitiveness for the entire region.</li> <li>• The South Pacific Tourism Organisation has undertaken market surveys, but further support is needed to use the data more effectively and to undertake deeper research.</li> <li>• They need to maximise regional cooperation to maximise national benefits, especially for improving connectivity, product development, and joint marketing, workforce development and training, exchanging best practices for governance, and destination management.</li> </ul>
Chand and Kumar (2017)	Fijian Studies	This paper looked at the extent of adoption of ecommerce in Fiji's small and medium enterprises	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technically, SMEs are aware that many of the customers do-not have credit cards to make online payments.</li> <li>• Government's intervention on e-commerce is not very enthusiastic.</li> <li>• There is an absence of legal and regulatory system for e-commerce.</li> <li>• For most SMEs setting up e-commerce was a major problem. This was compounded by perceived costs of hiring additional staff to manage ecommerce. Delivery logistics was an added concern. Many SMEs also lacked support from upper management due to lack of knowledge and awareness. Most organisations were resistant to change.</li> </ul>
Slack, Singh, and Sharma (2020)	International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management	Examined the impact of customer perceived value and its dimensions on customer satisfaction in a developing country, and practical suggestions for marketing strategies	Value-percept disparity theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results reveal that customer perceived value (CPV) has a positive impact on customer satisfaction; and functional value (price/value for money) has more positive impact than social value, emotional value has a negative impact and functional value (performance/quality) has no significant impact on customer satisfaction.</li> </ul>

Effective marketing strategies for promoting SMEs in Pacific Island Countries:  
A systematic literature review (2000-2020)

Source	Journal/ Book/ Theses	Key constructs	Theory	Key Findings
Novaczek and Stuart (2006)	Journal of Small Business Entrepreneurship	Discussed the development of two female-owned micro-enterprises on small Pacific islands. Each makes and sells products made from sea plants, which occupy ecological and cultural niches	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to technology, sophisticated packaging, and dependable supply of pure raw materials are critical.</li> <li>• As these case studies show, entrepreneurial women may already be employing their traditional knowledge and skills to provide community services, and a training opportunity may be enough to translate this into a microscale, income-generating enterprise. On islands and in coastal communities, where medicinal sea plants are available as potentially sustainable raw materials, health and beauty product businesses can be developed. Such businesses are particularly well-suited for women.</li> </ul>
Sharma (2018)	Master of Commerce Thesis University of South Pacific	Explored how SMEs in Fiji can use social network marketing as a tool to better manage its relationships with customers	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Majority of the SMEs prefer using social network marketing rather than traditional marketing (such as newspapers, banners, radio TV) due to cost effective nature.</li> <li>• Entrepreneurship needs to be encouraged from early stages, infrastructure, technology and legal policies needs to be developed.</li> </ul>
Nair and Chelliah (2012b)	Journal of Global Business Management	Examined the most pressing challenges faced by small business owners in Fiji	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The findings revealed that the lack of access to business advisory services and capital were the foremost hurdles faced by owners.</li> <li>• They seem lack of imagination and were unaware of opportunities in other sectors like manufacturing or cottage industries.</li> <li>• The Fijian governments small business advisory and micro finance service was poorly accessed with more than half the owners unaware of this service. Others are unable to afford professional business and finance advice.</li> </ul>
Owen (2015)	Journal of Marine and Island Cultures	Examined possibilities in improving Guam's Bamboo industry	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The use of social networking, gaining viewpoints of young adults is identified as vital.</li> <li>• Bamboo is fast growing and resilient in many Asian markets and considering exporting is another vital element for the bamboo companies.</li> <li>• Additionally, a potential for bamboo as a food source and charcoal aligns with the fiesta culture of Guam.</li> <li>• Sourcing of Bamboo Vulgaris, Guami s major bamboo species, has ecological benefits, while Blumeana (another type of the product) could be cultivated for crafts for export and tourists.</li> </ul>

Effective marketing strategies for promoting SMEs in Pacific Island Countries:  
A systematic literature review (2000–2020)

Source	Journal/ Book/ Theses	Key constructs	Theory	Key Findings
Schoenberger -Orgad and McKie (2005)	Public Relations Review	The article illustrated how one SME, <i>Dawnraid Entertainment</i> , from the socio- cultural and geographical edge of Aotearoa/New Zealand, responds by pioneering community- embedded enterprises	Milton Friedman public relations theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Findings indicated that CSR often results from adverse publicity (and so has been defensive in nature, and reactive rather than proactive); and that its emphasis on corporations marginalises small to medium enterprises (SMEs).</li> </ul>
Stachowski (2012)	Small Enterprise Research	This study reviewed studies on niche marketing strategy amongst internationally active SMEs, identifying opportunities for future research. This work also provides practical advice for international marketers in New Zealand-based SMEs	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In terms of lessons for OMs leading exporting SMEs in New Zealand, there are some helpful suggestions for SMEs in Pacific Island countries.</li> <li>In terms of a niche strategy SME owners should be aware of the business context, some basic marketing techniques; not to react or imitate other SMEs, develop professional relationships and always focus on customer and not the country.</li> </ul>
Crick and Crick (2015)	Marketing Intelligence & Planning	Investigated how decision making and learning are related to marketing planning among owner /managers with lifestyle in comparison to growth-oriented objectives in the New Zealand wine industry	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Uncertain business environment such as problematic exchange rates and influence of climate on vineyards.</li> <li>More priority needs to be given to develop relationships rather than competing against others.</li> </ul>
Ramsey and McCole (2005)	Journal of Small Business Enterprise Development	The aim of this study is to understand the reason of New Zealand firms in the professional services industries are slow to embrace e-business technologies.	Diffusion of innovations theory by Rogers, (1995)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A combination of factors is influential in determining a firm's current and future level of e-business adoption. These factors include being able to understand potential e-business benefits; being able to respond to customer and competitor practices; being prepared to develop staff skills and knowledge of IBTs; and having a well justified and strategic orientation towards e-business.</li> </ul>
Chua, Deans, and Parker (2009)	Australasian Journal of Information Systems	Study presented a future research agenda on how the SMEs can use eBusiness technology such as blogs for marketing	Diffusion of Innovation Theory Rogers, (2003), Social Network Theory, Resource- based Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Blogs were identified as a marketing tool which creates awareness on branding, managing reputation, developing customer trust and loyalty, niche marketing, gathering marketing intelligence and promoting online presence.</li> </ul>

Effective marketing strategies for promoting SMEs in Pacific Island Countries:  
A systematic literature review (2000-2020)

Source	Journal/ Book/ Theses	Key constructs	Theory	Key Findings
Clark (2010)	Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship	Presented key findings from an empirical study of innovation processes in 95 New Zealand SMEs	Innovation Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Smaller firms will be more likely to have lower levels of innovation and lower sales volumes due to resource scarcity.</li> </ul>
Sok, O'Casey, and Sok (2013)	Australasian Marketing Journal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Developed a unified model to investigate the combined effect of marketing, innovation, and learning capabilities on performance</li> <li>- Examined the complementary effect of these capabilities on performance</li> </ul>	Resource-based view theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The findings suggest that marketing, innovation, and learning capabilities are positively related to SME performance.</li> </ul>
Brooksbank, Garland, and Taylor (2008)	Small Enterprise Research	Examined the contribution of selected 'textbook' strategic marketing practices to the competitive success of medium sized New Zealand manufacturing firms and the extent of overall adoption for these marketing strategies	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many of the basic strategic marketing practices were applied by higher performing firms than the lower performing counterparts.</li> </ul>
Renton, Daellenbach, and Davenport (2016)	Journal of Brand Management	Examined of brand orientation and brand management practices New Zealand-based small and medium enterprises (SMEs).	Baumgarth's (2010) model of brand orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisational resources influence mainly to brand strategy and effective communication practices.</li> </ul>
Miles and Darroch (2006)	European Journal of Marketing	Explored how large firms might leverage entrepreneurial marketing processes to gain and renew competitive advantage	Competitive advantage Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Findings show how large firms leverage entrepreneurial marketing processes to gain advantage. The findings suggest that, in free and open markets, entrepreneurial marketing processes can be strategically employed to create superior value for the firm's customers and owners.</li> </ul>

Effective marketing strategies for promoting SMEs in Pacific Island Countries:  
A systematic literature review (2000–2020)

Source	Journal/ Book/ Theses	Key constructs	Theory	Key Findings
Al-Qirim (2005)	Electronic Markets	Investigated the significance of an adoption-capability model of e-commerce technologies in SMEs in New Zealand	Adoption-capability model of e-commerce technologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The research findings indicated that: (1) starters: adoption of the Internet and external email was dependent on the innovativeness of the CEO; (2) innovators: the adoption of any of the EC infrastructure technologies (ECIT): intranet, extranet, internet-EDI and websites was dependent on CEO's innovativeness, organisation size, and compatibility; and (3) extended innovators: adoption of more than one ECIT was dependent on organisation size, compatibility, CEO's innovativeness, support from technology vendors, and competition.</li> </ul>
Blumberg (2005)	Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research	Based on the results of a case study of tourism destination marketing in the Nelson/Tasman Region, New Zealand, this article examined the suitability of tourism destination marketing as a tool and of destination marketing organisations as a vehicle for tourism destination management and development.	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Destination marketing organizations are unlikely to be able to claim too much responsibility for destination management but that they can play an important part in the management of the destination product.</li> </ul>
Nand (2015)	Developing Country Perspectives on Public Service	This study is a conceptual analysis on the issue regarding the: regulatory compliance requirements coupled with the financial constraints have forced SMEs in Fiji to remain in the informal sector	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It is evident from the analysis that the regulatory policy needs to be reviewed to provide efficient public service delivery for small and micro enterprises.</li> <li>In general, there should be a "One Stop" checklist (according to the business type) detailing all the regulatory compliance needed to be fulfilled in opening and maintaining a business.</li> <li>Also, checklist should be readily available in different languages and should come with considerable advice. Standalone legislation on SMEs may be considered desirable for SMEs, rather than a plethora of provisions in different legislation.</li> </ul>
Lynthia (2019)	Master's Thesis of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University	Explored the potential for Agritourism to support the current sustainable development policy frameworks in the Solomon Islands.	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While the banana growing culture of Makira Province has been developed into a tourism event called the Banana Festival.</li> <li>Over the years, the Banana Festival has seen more emphasis on the cultural aspect of banana farming, and therefore the event has been strongly promoted as a tourism event with sideline events of cultural performances by various tribal groups of the Makira province.</li> <li>Nambo production culture of Temotu Province must focus on the traditionally inspired breadfruit farming systems and the demonstration of the traditional method of producing Nambo. These activities must be the focus of any agritourism product development. Given the isolation of Temotu province from the main tourist traffic in the Solomon Islands, the most practical market segment for this product is the cruise ship market.</li> </ul>

Effective marketing strategies for promoting SMEs in Pacific Island Countries:  
A systematic literature review (2000-2020)

Source	Journal/ Book/ Theses	Key constructs	Theory	Key Findings
Jayaraman and Singh (2007)	ARTNeT Working Paper Series	Investigated the relationship between employment and foreign direct investment for Fiji through a multivariate modelling strategy by including GDP	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fiji should continue not only its current proactive policies to attract FDI inflows but also maintain appropriate environment including political stability for retaining the inflows.</li> <li>the Fiji Trade and Investment Bureau (FTIB), which is the screening and appraising authority, should stipulate while approving the FDI proposal that overseas investors should file returns on employment in their ventures in regard to employment by categories of skilled and unskilled; by levels such as plant, supervisory and managerial; by local and foreigners; and by gender. Further, FTIB should be entrusted with the responsibility for collecting the data. Enabling legislative amendments should be introduced in the FTIB Act towards these purposes</li> </ul>
Kersten, Harms, Liket, and Maas (2017)	World Development	A systematic review and meta-analysis of the empirical literature on SME finance effectiveness.	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This yields three results. Firstly, few evaluations of SME finance programs apply the same rigorous experimental methods that are more commonly used in studies of microfinance. Secondly, most evaluations of SME finance programs consider neither spill over effects to other enterprises nor effects on the employee level. Thirdly, authors found a positive significant effect of SME finance on capital investment, firm performance, and employment within the supported firm, whereas the summary effect on profitability and wages is insignificant.</li> </ul>
Reddy, Naidu, and Mohanty (2003)	Fijian Studies	This study utilises primary data from two cities and a town to examine the contribution of the urban informal sector to employment creation and poverty alleviation.	Dualistic theory of development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results show that there has been a significant increase in the incomes and assets of those who are involved in the informal sector compared to their pre-informal sector days. It also shows that the average education level for those involved in the informal sector is no higher than primary school level. The informal enterprises absorb mostly immediate family members. It is also found that those in the informal sector have entered this sector relatively recently.</li> <li>Another important cluster of results is that informal sector has a relatively long working day as well as a relatively long working week.</li> <li>The key problems faced by the informal sector operators are lack of access to credit facilities, and the national and municipal laws and regulations governing conducting business in the country.</li> </ul>

Effective marketing strategies for promoting SMEs in Pacific Island Countries:  
A systematic literature review (2000–2020)

Source	Journal/ Book/ Theses	Key constructs	Theory	Key Findings
Singh, Pathak, Kazmi, Sharma, and Terziovski (2007)	South Asian Journal of Management	The study involves the development and application of a competency-based framework in small businesses in Fiji	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The findings led to five strategies being proposed for possible consideration by small businesses for the improvement of their performance. The study concludes that small business managers in Fiji need to become more strategically oriented; implement business performance measures, manage risk and uncertainty; implement more sophisticated systems and procedures and become more aware of regulatory stipulations</li> </ul>
Douglas, Eti-Tofinga, and Singh (2018)	Sustainability Accounting, Management Policy Journal	Examined the contributions of hybrid organisations to wellbeing in small Pacific island countries.	Hybrid business theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fijian hybrid organisations improve social and economic wellbeing for individuals, families and communities by providing employment, schools and training facilities, financial and support services, sustainable agriculture projects and facilitating networking. These services improve individual and community social and economic wellbeing, build resilience, add to personal and family security, offer opportunities for the future, advance leadership skills and sustain the environment. Commercial activities that support these organisations in their wellbeing endeavours include product sales, service fees, project levies and investment income</li> </ul>
Leokana (2014)	Master of Management Thesis Massey University	Using data drawn from interviews with ten Solomon Island Business owners, this study explored the influences and practices that shape the development and operation of small businesses	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social capital despite the economic and political situations and networks helps as a valuable resource. Lack of funds poor cash flow low infrastructure, low technical and managerial skills were identified as other issues.</li> </ul>
Naidu and Chand (2012)	International Journal of Emerging Markets	Examined the financial obstacles faced by micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs)	Not discussed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The research involved conducting a survey of 200 MSMEs in Fiji and Tonga. The study concluded that financial problems faced by the MSMEs could be divided into three broad categories: financing problems; operational and administrative problems; and sales and debtors' problems.</li> </ul>

Source: Developed by author

## 5. Results

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It is evident that, SMEs in Pacific Island countries should focus more on marketing, innovation, and learning capabilities, as it is positively related to SME performance (Blumberg, 2005). Many of the basic strategic marketing practices were applied by higher performing firms than lower performing counterparts (Nand, 2015). Based on the Table 7, authors identified several effective marketing strategies in promoting SMEs in PICs.

### 5.1. Digital marketing strategies

While advertising spent on digital media appears to be increasing rapidly (Lynthia, 2019) the internet has empowered consumers, allowing them by being the leader of the communication approach (Jayaraman & Singh, 2007). Therefore, digital marketing can be considered as a component of marketing, that uses the internet and digital technologies such as digital media, tools and platforms to promote products and services (Kersten, Harms, Liket, & Maas, 2017). In this review, three main digital marketing strategies were identified as follows.

#### *Social media marketing strategies*

Social media marketing is an essential component in 21st-century business. However, the literature on social media marketing remains relatively under-explored (Reddy, Naidu, & Mohanty, 2003). Social media marketing offers an opportunity to use social media to build relationships with company stakeholders such as customers, employees, etc. Further, firms may choose to view social media as simply another communication channel through which they can push information to customers (Singh, Pathak, Kazmi, Sharma, & Terziovski, 2007). The usage of social media such as Facebook pages, Instagram pages, twitter, etc will build relationships and a network without any cost. Therefore, SMEs in PICs can benefit through this strategy by using social media to share destinations or destination marketing (Douglas, Eti-Tofinga, & Singh, 2018). Further, communicating the latest discounts and offers (for example the hotel discounts in different seasons) and building a network of customers are the other benefits of social media marketing. Leokana (2014) stated that the majority of the SMEs prefer using social network marketing rather than traditional marketing (such as newspapers, banners, radio and television) due to the cost-effective nature.

Entrepreneurship needs to be encouraged from the early stages and infrastructure, technology and legal policies need to be developed as well (Naidu & Chand, 2012). Based on Table 2, several researchers identified that the lack of funds for marketing as the biggest issue to promote SMEs in PICs (Brooksbank et al., 2008; Naidu & Chand, 2012; Phippen, 2004; Sok et al., 2013; Truong & Simmons, 2010). Therefore, a social media marketing strategy is identified as another vital element in promoting SMEs. For example, Phippen (2004) stated that the use of social networking, gaining viewpoints of young adults is vital. Bamboo is fast growing and resilient in many Asian markets and bamboo SMEs should be encouraged to export. (Felix, Rauschnabel, & Hinsch, 2017). Additionally, the potential for bamboo as a food source and charcoal aligns with the fiesta culture of Guam. Sourcing Bamboo *Vulgaris*, Guami's major bamboo species, has ecological benefits, while *Blumeana* (another type of the product) could be cultivated for crafts for export and tourists.

#### *Blogs*

The new Internet (dubbed Web 2.0) fosters community participation and builds on collective community intelligence in a formalised, dynamic information creation and sharing environment (Blumberg, 2005; Felix et al., 2017; Sharma, 2018). Blogs can be considered as one such Web 2.0 tool with a person posting commentaries, descriptions of events, and other

information, with readers posting comments immediately as replies for these entries (Chand & Kumar, 2017; Nair & Chelliah, 2012a; Sharma, 2018). A New Zealand-registered company called Pinnacle Life is an example of an SME using a blog as part of its niche marketing strategy (Novaczek & Stuart, 2006). The company defines its target market as the younger, internet-savvy users, and the blog provides information about insurance regarding the life insurance concept (Sharma, 2018). As a result of this innovative marketing strategy, Pinnacle Life won the US-based 2008 Innovator of the Year Award as well.

#### *Company websites*

The websites of business firms are considered as a marketing tool by many business organisations (Slack et al., 2020). Consequently, analysis of web content is essential to gain a competitive advantage over other business organisations. Website marketing is a less expensive advertising method, with high accessibility and prompt response (Owen, 2015). Information intensive industries should always invite the customer for internet transformation (Owen, 2015). O'Flaherty (2008) mentioned that the "firms which are future-oriented and consist of a top management consultancy with updated technology are technologically opportunistic". Schroth and Janner (2007) mentioned that access to technology, sophisticated packaging, and a dependable supply of pure raw materials are critical. Singh et al. (2010) found that adoption levels to internet marketing and infrastructure technologies mainly depend on organisation size, compatibility, CEO's innovativeness, support from technology vendors, and competition.

Similarly, in some of the PICs Government's intervention in e-commerce is not very enthusiastic (O'Flaherty, 2008). Schroth and Janner (2007) found that being able to respond to customer and competitor practices, being prepared to develop staff skills and knowledge and having a well-justified and strategic orientation towards e-business as potential e-business benefits. Several researchers argue that Pacific Island SMEs do not have enough funds to allocate to marketing and promotional activities. For example, Singh et al. (2010) mentioned that in Handicraft SMEs technical interventions are low and manual processing is high. Organisational resources mainly influence brand strategy and effective communication practices (Chua et al., 2009).

## **5.2 Market orientation strategy**

Market orientation promotes the satisfaction of market needs with a higher degree of excellence than competitors (Chua et al., 2009). It is identified that the firm infrastructure development and innovative products play a vital role in g SMEs of Pacific island countries.

#### *The role of infrastructure development*

Charoula, Eleonora-Ioulia, Fotini, and Maro (2014) found that small business managers in Fiji should focus on business performance measures, risk and uncertainty management, implementation of more sophisticated systems and procedures, and should be more aware of regulatory stipulations. Li and Wang (2010) stated that for SMEs, workers need to have a basic education, prior work experience in business or government service, and the local application of business skills. Similarly, Raymond (2001) argued that small business support services as crucial for the development of SMEs. Additionally, Government intervention is also identified as a vital factor (Novaczek & Stuart, 2006; Raymond, 2001) specifically for SMEs in Fiji (Al-Qirim, 2005; Chand & Kumar, 2017). However, the low infrastructure facilities (Chandra, 2012; Chua et al., 2009; Renton et al., 2016; Vázquez, Santos, & Álvarez, 2001) and technical facilities (Singh et al., 2007) influence consumer dissatisfaction which results in lower sales. Further, The Fijian government's small business advisory and microfinance service were poorly accessed with more than half the owners unaware of this service (Fairbairn, 2006). Moreover, Tuibeqa (2015) found that SMEs in Fiji are aware that many of the customers do not have credit cards to make online payments (Everett et al., 2018) and are aware of the consumer needs.

In terms of a niche strategy, SME owners should be aware of the business context, some basic marketing techniques (Singh et al., 2010). Further, they should not react or imitate other SMEs. Despite reacting by competing, they should develop professional relationships and always focus on the customer and not the country of origin (Jayaraman & Singh, 2007). Similarly, Nand (2015) also found that more priority needs to be given to developing relationships rather than competing against others in SMEs in the Pacific island context. The low infrastructure was identified as a major factor that decreases the company's marketing activities.

#### *The role of Innovation*

Bamboo is fast growing and resilient in many Asian markets and companies in focusing on Bamboo products should focus more on exporting (Kersten et al., 2017). Moreover, the Nambo production culture of the Temotu Province must focus on the traditionally inspired breadfruit farming systems and the demonstration of the traditional method of producing Nambo. These activities must be the focus of any agritourism product development (Leokana, 2014). Additionally, the potential for bamboo as a food source and charcoal aligns with the fiesta culture of Guam. Sourcing Bamboo Vulgaris, Guam's major bamboo species, has ecological benefits, while Blumeana (another type of the product) could be cultivated for crafts for export and tourists (Nair & Chelliah, 2012a). This further illustrates the need for innovativeness in SMEs of PICs due to availability of natural resources. Reddy et al. (2003) found that smaller firms will be more likely to have lower levels of innovation and lower sales volumes due to resource scarcity.

### **5.3 Experience based marketing communication strategies**

Experience-based marketing is another marketing strategy to attract customers (Nair & Chelliah, 2012a). For example, it is identified through the literature that PICs can focus more on cultural festivals and cruise ship markets. While the banana growing culture of Makira Province has been developed into a tourism event called the Banana Festival. Over the years, the Banana Festival has seen more emphasis on the cultural aspect of banana farming, and therefore the event has been strongly promoted as a tourism event with sideline events of cultural performances through various tribal groups of the Makira province (Nair & Chelliah, 2012b). Further, considering the isolation of Temotu province which is the main tourist traffic in the Solomon Islands, the practical market segment of the cruise ship market can be used under experience-based marketing (Chand & Kumar, 2017).

## 6. Conclusion

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The purpose of this systematic literature review was to identify different marketing strategies in promoting SMEs in PICs. Marketing strategies are vital for the growth of the Tourism sector, as Tourism sector development offers Pacific island countries a path to economic security. It was identified that Tourism will be one of the most important drivers of economic growth in the Pacific over the next decade (Chand & Kumar, 2017). The demand for authentic cultural and natural experiences has been increasing globally, particularly among the island countries of the Pacific. Consequently, literature published in top management and marketing journals were reviewed. This systematic literature review used several PRISMA guidelines including a publication timeline of 2000 to 2020 and filtering process (inclusion and exclusion criteria) in reviewing the papers. Authors divided the existing literature based on different marketing strategies in promoting SMEs in PICs into five sections including source, name of the journal, key constructs, theory and findings.

In general, the authors identified that SMEs in Pacific Island counties should focus more on marketing, innovation, and learning capabilities, as it is positively related to SME performance. Many of the basic strategic marketing practices were applied by high performing firms than low or moderately performing counterparts. Further, the authors categorised the identified marketing strategies into three main types as digital marketing strategies, market orientation strategies and experience-based marketing strategies. The main findings revealed useful marketing strategies in promoting SMEs in PICs. It is important to understand that marketing strategies in PICs is an under-researched area with several future research insights. This study revealed updated marketing approaches such as social media marketing, blogs, company websites. Further, it was found that the role of infrastructure development and the role of innovation plays a vital role in the marketing of SMEs in PICs. Experience-based marketing is another marketing strategy for the growth of the tourism sector.

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## Notes

- 1 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are independently owned and managed trades consisting a limited number of employees (Chandra, 2012). The specific size of employees and assets varies across countries.
- 2 With the exception of Papua New Guinea (PNG), the IMF (2014) notes that small developing countries/small states have population of under 1.5 million.
- 3 SMEs used in the discussions also include micro enterprises or MSME.
- 4 There is no fixed definition of an SME across the region.
- 5 Although figures should be higher if the informal sector was included.

- 6 The Ease of Doing Business Index measures the ease of doing business in a country based on 10 components (1) starting a business (2) dealing with construction permits (3) employing workers (4) registering property (5) getting credit (6) protecting investors (7) paying taxes (8) trading across borders (9) enforcing contracts and (10) closing business. Recently there has been debate over the methodological approach used in this study, however, this finding is useful for indicative terms and to highlighting the position of a country in terms of their ease of doing business (UNESCAP, n.d).
- 7 Caution should be taken when investigating the World Bank's ease of doing business which was only recently discontinued to due to discrepancies in terms of country specific issues.



## **GRIFFITH ASIA INSTITUTE**

Griffith University Nathan campus  
Nathan Queensland 4111, Australia

**Phone:** +61 7 3735 3730

**Email:** [gai@griffith.edu.au](mailto:gai@griffith.edu.au)

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**[griffith.edu.au/asiainstitute](http://griffith.edu.au/asiainstitute)**