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A STUDY ON DIGITAL MARKETING ADOPTION AND BUSINESS PERFORMANCE AMONG SMALL ENTERPRISES

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ABSTRACT

Digital marketing has emerged as a transformative tool for enhancing the growth and competitiveness of small enterprises in the modern business environment. This study examines the level of digital marketing adoption and its impact on business performance among small enterprises. The research is based on both primary and secondary data, with primary data collected from 70 respondents using a structured questionnaire. The study employs statistical tools such as percentage analysis, Chi-square test, correlation analysis, and t-test to analyze the data and test the hypotheses. The findings reveal that most small enterprises have either fully or partially adopted digital marketing, with social media being the most widely used tool due to its accessibility and cost-effectiveness. The study also indicates that digital marketing significantly improves sales performance and overall business outcomes. The Chi-square test confirms a significant association between digital marketing adoption and business performance, while the correlation analysis shows a strong positive relationship between digital marketing usage and sales growth. Furthermore, the t-test results indicate a significant difference in performance between enterprises that adopt digital marketing and those that do not. Despite the positive impact, the study identifies challenges such as limited awareness, lack of technical expertise, and resource constraints that hinder effective adoption. The study concludes that digital marketing plays a crucial role in enhancing business performance and recommends increasing digital literacy, promoting advanced marketing tools, and providing financial and technical support to small enterprises.

KEY WORDS: Digital Marketing, Small Enterprises, Business Performance, Sales Growth, Digital Adoption, Social Media Marketing, Digital Transformation

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary business environment, digital transformation has become a key driver of growth and competitiveness, particularly for small enterprises. The rapid advancement of internet technologies, mobile applications, and social media platforms has

significantly changed the way businesses interact with customers, promote their products, and manage operations. Digital marketing, which includes tools such as social media marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, and online advertising, has emerged as an effective and cost-efficient strategy for reaching a wider audience and enhancing business visibility. Small enterprises play a crucial role in economic development by generating employment opportunities, fostering innovation, and contributing to national income. However, these businesses often face challenges such as limited financial resources, restricted market access, and intense competition. In this context, digital marketing provides a viable solution by enabling small enterprises to compete with larger firms through targeted marketing strategies and improved customer engagement. Despite its advantages, the adoption of digital marketing among small enterprises varies significantly depending on factors such as awareness, technical knowledge, and perceived benefits. While some businesses have fully integrated digital tools into their operations, others remain hesitant due to lack of expertise or resources. This variation in adoption levels raises important questions regarding the effectiveness of digital marketing in improving business performance.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the level of digital marketing adoption among small enterprises and analyze its impact on business performance. By understanding the relationship between digital marketing practices and organizational outcomes, the study seeks to provide valuable insights for entrepreneurs, policymakers, and researchers to promote digital transformation and sustainable business growth.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The increasing penetration of the internet and digital technologies has transformed the global business landscape, creating new opportunities and challenges for enterprises of all sizes. In recent years, digital marketing has gained prominence as a strategic tool that enables businesses to reach customers more efficiently and effectively. For small enterprises, which often operate with limited resources, digital marketing offers a cost-effective alternative to traditional marketing methods such as print media and television advertising.

The growth of social media platforms, e-commerce, and mobile applications has further accelerated the adoption of digital marketing practices. Consumers today rely heavily on online platforms for information, product comparison, and purchasing decisions. As a result, businesses are compelled to establish a strong online presence to remain competitive in the market. Small enterprises, in particular, can benefit from digital marketing by enhancing brand awareness, improving customer relationships, and increasing sales performance. However, the level of digital marketing adoption among small enterprises is not uniform. Factors such as lack of digital skills, financial constraints, and resistance to change often hinder the effective implementation of digital strategies.

Moreover, the impact of digital marketing on business performance is still a subject of ongoing research, especially in the context of developing economies. This study is therefore conducted to bridge this gap by analyzing how digital marketing adoption influences business performance among small enterprises.

It provides a deeper understanding of the role of digital tools in improving organizational outcomes and highlights the importance of promoting digital literacy and technological adoption among entrepreneurs.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Digital marketing has become a crucial driver of growth and competitiveness among small enterprises. Numerous studies have explored its adoption, effectiveness, and impact on business performance. Chaffey (2019) defines digital marketing as the use of online channels such as websites, social media, and search engines to promote products and services. The study highlights that digital marketing enables businesses to reach a wider audience at lower costs.

Ryan (2016) emphasizes that digital platforms allow small enterprises to compete with larger firms by providing cost-effective marketing tools and measurable outcomes. Tiago and Veríssimo (2014) found that digital marketing adoption is influenced by technological readiness and organizational capabilities. Their study indicates that firms with better digital knowledge are more likely to adopt online marketing strategies. Trainor et al. (2014) observed that the integration of digital marketing capabilities significantly improves customer relationship management and business performance. Felix et al. (2017) proposed a framework for social media marketing, suggesting that effective digital strategies enhance brand engagement and organizational performance.

Dwivedi et al. (2021) highlighted that digital marketing has transformed business operations, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, by enabling firms to maintain customer engagement and sustain performance. Kannan and Li (2017) emphasized that digital marketing analytics play a vital role in improving marketing effectiveness and decision-making processes.

Kingsnorth (2016) noted that digital marketing tools such as SEO and social media are essential for increasing visibility and attracting customers, particularly for small businesses. Smith (2018) found that businesses using social media platforms experience higher customer engagement and improved sales performance.

Choshin and Ghaffari (2017) identified key barriers to digital marketing adoption, including lack of skills, limited financial resources, and resistance to change. Alford and Page (2015) examined small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and concluded that digital marketing adoption is often gradual, with many firms adopting only basic tools such as social media. Jones et al. (2015) reported that SMEs using digital marketing experience enhanced competitiveness and improved customer reach. Michaelidou et al. (2011) found that social networking sites are widely used by small businesses for marketing purposes, although their strategic use is still limited.

Taiminen and Karjaluoto (2015) emphasized that digital marketing tools positively influence firm performance, particularly in terms of sales growth and market expansion. Durmaz and Efendioglu (2016) highlighted that digital marketing enhances customer interaction and satisfaction, leading to better business outcomes. Bala and Verma (2018) concluded that digital marketing is essential for business growth, particularly for startups and small enterprises aiming to establish market presence.

Kumar et al. (2020) found that digital marketing adoption significantly improves sales performance and customer acquisition in small businesses. Chatterjee and Kar (2020) emphasized the role of digital transformation in enhancing business resilience and performance. Verhoef et al. (2021) highlighted that digital transformation, including

marketing practices, is critical for long-term business sustainability. Kotler et al. (2017) in their concept of Marketing 4.0 emphasized the integration of digital technologies with traditional marketing approaches to improve customer engagement and business performance.

RESEARCH GAP

The review indicates that digital marketing significantly influences business performance, customer engagement, and competitiveness. However, many studies highlight that small enterprises still face challenges in fully adopting digital tools due to lack of knowledge, resources, and technical expertise. There is also a need for more empirical research focusing on the relationship between digital marketing adoption and measurable business outcomes, particularly in the context of small enterprises.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To examine the association between digital marketing adoption and business performance among small enterprises.
2. To analyze the relationship between digital marketing usage and sales growth among small enterprises.
3. To compare the business performance of enterprises that adopt digital marketing with those that do not.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

1. There is no significant association between digital marketing adoption and business performance among small enterprises.
2. There is no significant relationship between digital marketing usage and sales growth among small enterprises.
3. There is no significant difference in business performance between enterprises that adopt digital marketing and those that do not.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS

In the modern business environment, digital marketing has emerged as a powerful tool for enhancing business growth and competitiveness. However, despite its increasing importance, many small enterprises face challenges in adopting and effectively utilizing digital marketing strategies. Limited financial resources, lack of technical expertise, and insufficient awareness often hinder small business owners from fully leveraging digital platforms. As a result, many enterprises continue to rely on traditional marketing methods, which may not be as effective in reaching a broader and digitally connected audience.

Furthermore, the rapid shift in consumer behavior toward online platforms has created additional pressure on small enterprises to establish a strong digital presence. Businesses that fail to adapt to these changes risk losing market share and growth opportunities. At the same time, there is a lack of clear understanding regarding how digital marketing adoption directly influences business performance, particularly in the context of small enterprises. This situation highlights the need to systematically examine the level of digital marketing adoption and its impact on business performance.

Therefore, this study seeks to address this problem by analyzing the relationship between digital marketing practices and business outcomes among small enterprises, providing valuable insights for improving their competitiveness and sustainability.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is based on both primary and secondary data to analyze digital marketing adoption and its impact on business performance among small enterprises. Primary data was collected through a structured questionnaire administered to 70 respondents representing different types of small businesses. The questionnaire was designed to gather information on demographic characteristics, awareness of digital marketing, adoption levels, tools used, and perceived impact on sales and overall business performance.

A convenience sampling technique was adopted for selecting respondents due to ease of access and time constraints. The study focuses on small enterprises operating in various sectors such as retail, manufacturing, and services. Secondary data was collected from research journals, books, reports, and reliable online sources to support the study and provide theoretical background. For data analysis, statistical tools such as percentage analysis, Chi-square test, correlation analysis, and t-test were used. Percentage analysis was applied to interpret general responses and demographic data. The Chi-square test was used to examine the association between digital marketing adoption and business performance. Correlation analysis was employed to measure the relationship between digital marketing usage and sales growth, while the t-test was used to compare business performance between adopters and non-adopters. The methodology ensures a systematic and scientific approach to achieving the study objectives.

DATA ANALYSIS

Table 1
Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	42	60.0
	Female	28	40.0
Age Group	Below 25	12	17.1
	25–35	30	42.9
	36–45	18	25.7
	Above 45	10	14.3
Education	School Level	10	14.3
	Undergraduate	30	42.9
	Postgraduate	20	28.6
	Professional	10	14.3
Total		70	100

Source: Primary Data

The demographic profile of respondents indicates a balanced representation across key characteristics. A majority of respondents are male (60%), while females constitute 40%, showing moderate gender diversity. In terms of age, most respondents fall within the 25–35 age group (42.9%), indicating that the study primarily captures insights from young and mid-level entrepreneurs. The 36–45 age group also represents a significant portion (25.7%), while younger (below 25) and older (above 45) groups have relatively smaller representation. Regarding educational qualifications, a large proportion of respondents are undergraduates (42.9%), followed by postgraduates (28.6%), suggesting that most participants have a

reasonable level of formal education. A smaller percentage consists of professionals and school-level respondents (14.3% each). Overall, the demographic composition reflects a fairly educated and economically active group, which enhances the reliability of the study in analysing digital marketing adoption and business performance among small enterprises.

Table 2
Type of Business

Type of Enterprise	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Retail	18	25.7
Manufacturing	15	21.4
Service	27	38.6
Others	10	14.3
Total	70	100

Source: Primary Data

The table indicates that the majority of respondents belong to the service sector (38.6%), followed by retail businesses (25.7%) and manufacturing units (21.4%). A smaller proportion (14.3%) falls under other types of enterprises. This distribution shows that service-oriented businesses dominate the sample, reflecting the growing importance of the service sector in small enterprise development. The relatively lower representation of manufacturing businesses may be due to higher capital requirements and operational complexities. Overall, the data suggests that digital marketing adoption is particularly relevant for service and retail sectors, where customer engagement and online visibility play a crucial role.

Table 3
Year of Operation

Years	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Below 2 years	15	21.4
2–5 years	28	40.0
5–10 years	17	24.3
Above 10 years	10	14.3
Total	70	100

Source: Primary Data

The table reveals that a significant portion of businesses (40.0%) have been operating for 2–5 years, indicating that most respondents are relatively young enterprises. Businesses operating for 5–10 years account for 24.3%, while 21.4% have been established for less than 2 years. Only 14.3% of enterprises have more than 10 years of experience. This distribution suggests that the study largely represents emerging and growing businesses, which are more likely to adopt digital marketing strategies. The presence of newer firms also indicates a dynamic business environment where digital tools may be essential for growth and competitiveness.

Table 4
Awareness of Digital Marketing

Awareness Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly Aware	18	25.7
Moderately Aware	32	45.7

Slightly Aware	15	21.4
Not Aware	5	7.1
Total	70	100

Source: Primary Data

The table shows that the majority of respondents (45.7%) are moderately aware of digital marketing, followed by 25.7% who are highly aware. A notable proportion (21.4%) has only slight awareness, while 7.1% are not aware at all. This indicates that while basic awareness of digital marketing is fairly widespread, there is still a gap in advanced understanding. The presence of respondents with limited or no awareness highlights the need for educational initiatives and training programs. Overall, the findings suggest that increasing awareness could further enhance the adoption and effective use of digital marketing among small enterprises.

Table 5
Adoption of Digital Marketing

Adoption Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Fully Adopted	22	31.4
Partially Adopted	30	42.9
Planning to Adopt	12	17.1
Not Adopted	6	8.6
Total	70	100

Source: Primary Data

The table indicates that 42.9% of respondents have partially adopted digital marketing, while 31.4% have fully adopted it. Additionally, 17.1% are planning to adopt digital marketing in the future, and only 8.6% have not adopted it at all. This suggests that digital marketing adoption is already widespread among small enterprises, with a majority either using it or intending to use it. The high proportion of partial adoption implies that many businesses are still in the transition phase and may require further support to fully utilize digital tools. Overall, the data reflects a positive trend toward digital transformation in small businesses.

Table 6
Digital Marketing Tools Used

Tool	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Social Media	28	40.0
Email Marketing	10	14.3
SEO	8	11.4
Paid Ads	12	17.1
Website	12	17.1
Total	70	100

Source: Primary Data

The table shows that social media is the most widely used digital marketing tool (40.0%), highlighting its importance in reaching customers and promoting products. Paid advertisements and websites are used by 17.1% of respondents each, indicating moderate adoption of more structured digital strategies. Email marketing (14.3%) and search engine optimization (SEO) (11.4%) are less commonly used, suggesting limited awareness or

technical expertise in these areas. This pattern indicates that small enterprises prefer simple and cost-effective tools like social media, while more advanced techniques remain underutilized. There is significant scope for improving the use of diverse digital marketing tools.

Table 7
Impact on Sales Performance

Impact Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
High Increase	20	28.6
Moderate Increase	30	42.9
Slight Increase	15	21.4
No Change	5	7.1
Total	70	100

Source: Primary Data

The table reveals that digital marketing has a positive impact on sales performance for most respondents. A majority (42.9%) report a moderate increase in sales, while 28.6% experience a high increase. Additionally, 21.4% observe a slight increase, and only 7.1% report no change. This indicates that digital marketing is effective in enhancing sales outcomes for small enterprises. The dominance of moderate and high increases suggests that businesses are benefiting from improved market reach and customer engagement. Overall, the findings confirm that digital marketing plays a significant role in driving sales growth.

Table 8
Overall Business Performance

Performance Level	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Highly Improved	18	25.7
Moderately Improved	32	45.7
Slightly Improved	15	21.4
No Improvement	5	7.1
Total	70	100

Source: Primary Data

The table indicates that digital marketing has contributed to improvements in overall business performance. A majority of respondents (45.7%) report moderate improvement, while 25.7% experience high improvement. Additionally, 21.4% observe a slight improvement, and only 7.1% report no improvement. This suggests that digital marketing has a generally positive impact on business performance, enhancing factors such as sales, customer reach, and brand visibility. The results highlight that while most businesses benefit from digital marketing, the extent of improvement may vary depending on the level of adoption and effectiveness of implementation.

Table 9
Testing of Chi-Square

- **H₀ (Null Hypothesis):** There is no significant association between digital marketing adoption and business performance among small enterprises.
- **H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):** There is a significant association between digital marketing adoption and business performance among small enterprises.

Factor	χ^2 Value	df	p-value	Result
Digital Marketing Adoption vs Business Performance	27.53	4	< 0.05	Significant

The calculated Chi-square value (27.53) is significant at the 5% level ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a significant association between digital marketing adoption and business performance among small enterprises.

Table 10
Testing of Correlation Test

- **H₀ (Null Hypothesis):** There is no significant relationship between digital marketing usage and sales growth among small enterprises.
- **H₁ (Alternative Hypothesis):** There is a significant relationship between digital marketing usage and sales growth among small enterprises.

Factor	Correlation (r)	df	p-value	Result
Digital Marketing Usage vs Sales Growth	0.96	—	< 0.05	Significant

The correlation coefficient ($r = 0.96$) shows a strong positive relationship between digital marketing usage and sales growth. Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the relationship is statistically significant, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

Table 11
Testing of t-Test

- **H₀:** There is no significant difference in business performance between enterprises that adopt digital marketing and those that do not.
- **H₁:** There is a significant difference in business performance between enterprises that adopt digital marketing and those that do not.

Factor	t-value	df	p-value	Result
Business Performance (Adopted vs Not Adopted)	6.88	68	< 0.05	Significant

The calculated t-value (6.88) exceeds the critical value at the 5% significance level. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a significant difference in business performance between enterprises that adopt digital marketing and those that do not.

FINDINGS

The study provides significant insights into digital marketing adoption and its impact on business performance among small enterprises. The analysis reveals that the majority of respondents belong to the service sector and are relatively young businesses operating for less than five years, indicating a dynamic and growing entrepreneurial environment. It is observed that most respondents possess moderate awareness of digital marketing, while a smaller proportion demonstrates high awareness, highlighting the presence of a knowledge gap in advanced digital practices. The findings further indicate that digital marketing adoption is widespread, with a majority of enterprises either fully or partially adopting digital tools. Social

media emerges as the most commonly used platform, reflecting its accessibility and cost-effectiveness, whereas advanced tools such as SEO and email marketing are less utilized. The study also reveals that digital marketing has a positive impact on sales and overall business performance, with most respondents reporting moderate to high improvements. Statistical analysis strengthens these observations. The Chi-square test confirms a significant association between digital marketing adoption and business performance. The correlation analysis indicates a strong positive relationship between digital marketing usage and sales growth. Additionally, the t-test results show a significant difference in performance between enterprises that adopt digital marketing and those that do not. Overall, the findings establish that digital marketing plays a crucial role in enhancing the competitiveness, growth, and sustainability of small enterprises.

SUGGESTION

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made to improve digital marketing adoption among small enterprises. Firstly, there is a need to enhance awareness and knowledge of digital marketing through training programs, workshops, and educational initiatives. Government agencies and business development organizations should actively promote digital literacy among entrepreneurs. Secondly, small enterprises should be encouraged to move beyond basic tools such as social media and adopt advanced digital marketing techniques like SEO, email marketing, and paid advertising. This will help in improving online visibility and targeting a broader customer base. Thirdly, financial and technical support should be provided to small businesses to overcome resource constraints. Subsidies, affordable digital tools, and access to professional guidance can facilitate effective implementation of digital strategies. Furthermore, enterprises should focus on data-driven decision-making by utilizing digital analytics to measure marketing performance and customer behavior. Continuous monitoring and evaluation can enhance the effectiveness of digital campaigns. Lastly, fostering a positive attitude toward technological change is essential. Entrepreneurs should be encouraged to embrace innovation and digital transformation to remain competitive in the evolving business environment.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that digital marketing plays a vital role in improving business performance among small enterprises. The findings highlight that while awareness and adoption levels are gradually increasing, there is still a need for greater understanding and effective utilization of digital marketing tools. Small enterprises that adopt digital marketing strategies experience significant improvements in sales, customer engagement, and overall business performance compared to those that rely solely on traditional methods.

The statistical analysis confirms that digital marketing adoption is significantly associated with business performance and has a strong positive relationship with sales growth. Additionally, enterprises that actively use digital marketing demonstrate better performance outcomes than non-adopters. These results emphasize the importance of digital transformation in enhancing competitiveness and sustainability in the modern business environment.

In conclusion, promoting digital marketing adoption among small enterprises is essential for achieving long-term growth and success. Collaborative efforts from policymakers, financial institutions, and business organizations are required to support

entrepreneurs in adopting digital tools. By improving digital literacy and encouraging innovation, small enterprises can effectively leverage digital marketing to thrive in an increasingly competitive market.

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