

# The Effect of Digital Marketing on Sales Increase in SMEs: Prioritizing Innovation

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## Abstract

*The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of digital marketing on small and medium-scaled businesses (SMEs), with focus on prioritizing Innovation. Digital marketing is the marketing of products or services using digital technologies, mainly on the Internet, but also including mobile phones, display advertising, and any other digital medium. This study uses quantitative methods and data analysis techniques are performed based on a questionnaire and for findings used SPSS latest. Search engine, blog marketing, online and email marketing variables used as independent variables. The results of study found that only online marketing have significant negative impact on an increase in sales in SMEs. The findings of this research will assist all small and large enterprises improve their business efficiency by considering the factors of SME digitalization.*

**Keywords:** *SMEs, Digital marketing, Sales Increase, Online Marketing, Blog Marketing, Email Marketing, Search Engine*

## Introduction

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) perform a vital role in the economy of any country. They are the backbone of the economy as they contribute significantly to employment, innovation, and economic growth. In times of economic crisis, SMEs become even more important as they can withstand economic shocks better than larger businesses. During the 1998 economic crisis in Indonesia, the country's large-scale businesses were hit hard by high debts and the fluctuating value of the dollar. However, SMEs were able to survive the crisis due to their lower debt levels and the fact that they did not have to deal with large amounts of dollars. This allowed them to continue operating and contributing to the economy, providing a stable source of employment for many people. Despite their substantial impact, SMEs encounter numerous hurdles that impede their long-term sustainability and growth. Researches reveal that SMEs often struggle to compete both domestically and internationally, resulting in their decline. Several factors contribute to this decline, necessitating targeted measures to bolster SMEs' prospects (Arshad, Ali, Sabir, Shahidan, & Arshad, 2021). The usage of social media channels has currently skyrocketed, necessitating a massive investment in social

media marketing. Marketing partnerships must thus be thoroughly reviewed. Geographically, each nation has its own experience with internet buying, which is seen favorably in some places but not others. The ability of SMEs to generate employment is one of their most significant contributions to economic growth. As the example given above illustrates, a single SME can employ multiple individuals. When there are thousands of such SMEs operating in an economy, they can collectively provide employment opportunities to a significant proportion of the population. This, in turn, leads to higher levels of consumer spending, which fuels economic growth and prosperity. SMEs also have the potential to drive innovation and competitiveness in an economy. They are typically more flexible and adaptable than larger businesses and can respond quickly to changing market conditions. This makes them well-suited to taking advantage of new opportunities and developing new products and services that meet the evolving needs of consumers. SMEs play a vital role in the economy of any country, particularly during times of economic crisis. They provide a stable source of employment, drive innovation and competitiveness, and contribute significantly to economic growth and development.

The use of digital media to reach customers and promote goods and services is known as digital marketing. This type of marketing goes beyond internet marketing because it also includes offline mediums such as mobile phones (both MMS and SMS). Social media marketing, display advertising, search engine marketing, and other multiple sources are also included in Digital marketing. The online platform accelerated due to the pandemic COVID-19 and a sudden boom occurred in e-commerce growth especially in online shopping because there was a lockdown everywhere and people had no other choice but to go out for anything. So the preference automatically shifts towards digital marketing. Research shows that in 2020, 79% of consumers preferred to buy household items online, there will be a 19% increase from 2019 to 2020 (Inmar.I, 2021).

The problem to be addressed through this research is that digital marketing is capable to increase the revenue or sales impact of a business. Now the matter of fact is that digital marketing is a big domain that carries a number of variables within it and all those variables will have a variety of results that will differ from each other. This happens when there is a difference in location, ethnicity, literacy level, age group, and many more demographic effects. Hence, at a point, we will be able to find ourselves answering whether digital marketing is beneficial and if not then why not, and if yes then the reasons for that. The aim of this research is to investigate that will provide us with a clear scenario of whether the effect of digital marketing would have a negative or positive effect on the sales of any small and middle-level business, and whether revenue would be improved, and if so, to what size.

## Literature Review

### Digital Marketing

The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 triggered significant shifts in the corporate sector as countries implemented lockdowns and restrictions to curb the disease's spread. Such measures can impact company operations, especially if traditional face-to-face interactions with clients persist. While people's need for essential shopping continues, the marketplace's sensitivity to the virus poses infection risks. Instead of prolonged nationwide lockdowns, focusing on safeguarding vulnerable individuals becomes crucial. Consumers expect robust healthcare measures and preparedness in shopping centers and related services. As the outcomes, all aspects of the supply chain, logistics, travel, communications and mobility should be primed to address potential epidemics (Eneizan, Alhawamdeh, Arif, Alhamzah, & Enaizan, 2020). However, it is necessary for business operations that previously depended on conventional approaches to go online. By using this technology, the internet system may support business players build networks between companies that are no longer bound by limitations of distance and time. In accordance with Pandiangan et al. (2022), the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) sector requires innovation in marketing in addition to the online business system as a whole. This is because MSMEs need to promote their goods and maintain profits even in the absence of in-person customer interactions, as well as endure a pandemic.

Starting with the use of email and websites, search engines like Alexa, Yahoo, Lycos, and Google have been used to sell goods and services online since the 1990s. This increase was accelerated by the development of smartphones, which provide more sophisticated online communication tools like social media like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, Line, and many more. Today, a variety of organizations may easily and affordably use computers and cell phones. MSMEs must be aware of a variety of tactics that may be utilized to benefit from digital marketing, including identifying the target market, applying digital advertising, utilizing social media, leveraging marketplaces, and regularly doing online promotions. When choosing their target market, MSMEs must consider the various client kinds and match the products they offer to those customer types. This may be done by grouping market segments according to age, gender, characteristics, and other variables. To increase brand awareness among certain target clients, MSMEs may also profit from digital advertising. This strategy is advantageous since it can easily and rapidly reach a wider network of consumers. The services that are now offered are in the form of YouTube Ads, Facebook Ads, Instagram Ads, and Google Ads, which may alter the broadcast depending on the target audience, time, location, and media. Accordingly, marketing can be described as an activity that utilizes the sales element to attract customers, maintain positive client relations, and increase sales in order to offer ongoing and continuous interaction between activities (Adiyono et al., 2021).

### **Sales Increase**

The universe of internet marketing is unpredictable, irrational, and unanticipated. In order to help them sell their products and services, serious entrepreneurs as well as marketers are searching for more creative, efficient, and affordable advertising techniques due to the fierce competition in the field of marketing. The most successful people are those who fully grasp the potential of Internet marketing. This method is by far the most effective one now in use for boosting website traffic. Digital marketing distinguishes itself from traditional kinds of advertising by fully recognizing and utilizing the power of first impressions. To enhance their return on investment, marketers and business owners must pivot to the most recent trends in digital marketing, which have been sparked by the technological era.

When done properly, digital marketing is the most effective method to showcase the objectives of your company and present your items to potential consumers in a simple to utilize, appealing method. In the age of tweets, people only have 140 characters to spare. Therefore, having an online presence alone is insufficient to properly benefit from the World Wide Web. You need to understand how digital media works and what the newest tools are for reaching your target audience if you want to run a modern business. To improve sales by converting local and online audiences into paying customers, you and your business need to embrace digital marketing and find a skilled partner to help you put the newest trends into action. Digital marketing is the newest, most cutting-edge tactic for standing out from the competition, but only those that invest in it can benefit from it.

These days, a lot of customers spend their time on digital and social networks for an array of reasons, from gathering information to placing their final purchase. In response to this shifts, advertisers are spending a large portion of their financial resources on online advertising (Mohammad Faruk et al., 2021). In addition to expanding their business using agents or distributors, they may expand it further by sending payments and conducting transactions directly. Sales volume assessments from social media also lead to a rise in volume of sales (Djakasaputra & Utama, 2021).

### **Blog Marketing**

A blog post is a piece of written content that appears on a blog. Blog posts can be utilized in digital marketing to provide valuable information, establish thought leadership, and increase website traffic. We are focusing on blogs as the new business. In recent years, blog has grown to be one of the most prevalent and well-established kinds of CGM. According to Onishi and Manchanda (2012), there are currently around 346 million blog readers internationally. By creating high-quality blog posts that

address the demands and interests of your target audience, you can increase brand awareness and engagement, leading to an increase in sales. Additionally, blog posts can be optimized for search engines, facilitating the discovery of your website and products/services by potential consumers. By consistently producing blog content that resonates with your target audience, you can develop trust and credibility, which can, over time, lead to an increase in sales. (Nyawira & Karugu, 2014). Written form when shown or directed as a form of a blog, captures the audience because it is no more a simple text, in the blog the audience will find relatable content that they will be able to connect with more easily. Connecting with the audience means that the product you want to sell or at least pitch in the market grounds will have a greater interest in the people. Not only the audience will buy the product through the blog but rather recommend other potential customers. When potential customers would be reached they will read the blogs and responses of the blog as their affirmation to buy the recommended product online.

### **Search Engine Marketing**

Sponsored search results pages and website advertising are also included in Internet marketing, sometimes known as search engine marketing. In many business companies, using search engine marketing may increase sales success. Three essential components must be present for an organization to rank well in the Google search engine. Search Engine Marketing that aided the online presence of the business, Search Engine Marketing that increases the sales lead, and Search Engine Marketing that improves marketing performance. According to a tabular survey, it is shown that all the factors increase sales because the boost of digital marketing occurs on the platforms of all organizations. The performance is clear and advantageous where unique theories and concepts are applied to the customers (Nyawira & Karugu, 2014). Large corporations frequently invest enormous sums of money on internet advertising to promote their brands and competitive edge; nevertheless, small- and medium-sized enterprises, particularly SMEs, have different opinions regarding digital marketplaces due to the range, scale, and returns on investing (Algumzi, 2022).

### **Online Advertisement Marketing**

The impact that digital marketing initiatives have on a company's overall success is the influence of online advertising on an organization's performance. To boost sales, revenue, market share, customer engagement, and brand recognition, a company may use online marketing to advertise its goods and services, reach its target audience, and set itself apart from rivals. The findings demonstrate that internet advertising is successful in easing concerns about market saturation and enhancing competition. 80% of those polled think that online advertising has alleviated worries about market saturation. Market expansion and the introduction of new items benefit from online advertising.

Online advertising is regarded as one of the most essential e-marketing instruments, with a considerable impact on a company's policies and marketing plans. Advertising on the Internet allows SMEs to reach new customers and maximize their potential. (Nyawira & Karugu, 2014). There will be an extensive selection of brands available to customers. Marketing is one of the ways that producers communicate with consumers. These days, social media are usually employed for advertising. Several metrics—sales, remember, and persuasion—can be used to evaluate the efficacy of marketing (Adiyono et al., 2021).

### **Email Marketing**

Organizations may use email marketing, a direct marketing approach, to alert consumers on their contact list of sales, new items, and other details. Because of its substantial return on investment (ROI), it is essential to the majority of company's whole inbound approach. The results show that 75% of respondents concur that email marketing considerably boosts the number of potential consumers who subscribe to the services offered by their company. This supports the argument developed by

(Kirkpatrick, 2012) and (Yan & Kennedy, 2013) which email marketing improves the customer experience and can strengthen the performance and marketing position of SMEs that make use of its possibilities. (Nyawira & Karugu, 2014). When Email marketing is covered, it is very applicable for the customers, now this happens in some spontaneous ways. Email marketing sends you emails that cover, the launching of new products, discounts, sales, offers, and much more. Those who are behind Email marketing send emails through your purchase history, your viewing history, or your requirements that you knowingly or unknowingly click on other platforms. Once you click the product, the company will get to know and reach out to you through that, or if an individual has already signed up for the product or brand by entering their email addresses.

## **Methodology**

Collecting and analyzing data are the specific procedures of the research method. It is an integral part of research design. In our research, we employed a mixed method incorporating qualitative and quantitative approaches to encompass both the positivist and interpretivist paradigms. Our study utilized empirical, quantitative methods to test hypotheses, while also embracing the interpretivist perspective, which acknowledges reality as socially constructed and subjective (Ali, Arif, Galani, Ali, & Rehman, 2022). The quantitative study includes graphs and numbers. Assumptions and theories can be tested using quantitative research. Generalized facts can be made regarding a topic using this method. It focuses on testing hypotheses. The quantitative study helps us in the direct comparison of results. Results can be compared statistically. It can help avoid potential bias in a study.

We have gathered data through primary research. Primary research is similar to conducting your own investigation to get the answers you need. Using Likert scale based questionnaire used to collect data from the customers. The data analysis employed in this study is path analysis utilizing SPSS version 23. Path Analysis begins with assessing the Goodness of Fit model by evaluating its reliability, validity, and feasibility through regression analysis. Two types of tests, namely the determination test (R-Square) and the F test, can reveal the viability of the employed model. When the model is deemed usable, a path model will be created and utilized the t-test for immediate impact analysis to test hypotheses.

## **Hypothesis**

H0: The Company's sales growth is positively affected by digital marketing.

H1: Blog marketing strategy will have a positive effect on sales based on these data.

H2: Search engine marketing has a positive effect on businesses' sales growth.

H3: Implementing online marketing strategies will have a positive effect on sales based on these data.

H4: Business growth in sales is positively impacted on email marketing.

## Conceptual Framework

Fig. 1



## Data Analysis

### Demographic Results

According to the above data collected, 45 (50.6%) of the 89 persons in the sample or population were male, and 44 (49.4%) were female. Since they reflect the whole sample or population, the percentages add up to 100%.

Secondly, the age range "18-22" had the highest frequency with 52 people or 58.4% of the total population. This indicates that a major proportion of the sample or population is comprised of people in this age bracket.

There are 18 people in the "23-27" age bracket on average, which accounts for 20.2% of all the total population. At this point, the cumulative percent is 78.7%, meaning that 78.7% of the sample instances have been fully accounted for.

The following age brackets, "28-32," "33-37," and "38 above," have related rates of 8, 6, and 5. Their valid percepts and cumulative percent relate, respectively, to the percentages of valid cases and the cumulative total.

Thirdly, the "student" profession had the highest frequency with 65 people or 73% of the total population. This indicates that a major proportion of the sample or population is comprised of people in this profession.

There are 12 people in the "on average, which accounts for 13.5% of the total population. At this point, the cumulative percent is 86.5%, meaning that 86.5% of the sample instances have been fully accounted for.

The industry professional has a frequency of 9, which is 10.1% of the total population. The "other" profession has a frequency of 3, which is 3.4% of the total population. At this point the cumulative is 100% means all valid cases have been included in the analysis.

Table 1.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
GENDER	Male	45	50.6	50.6	50.6
	Female	44	49.4	49.4	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
AGE	18-22	52	58.4	58.4	58.4
	23-27	18	20.2	20.2	78.7
	28-32	8	9.0	9.0	87.6
	33-37	6	6.7	6.7	94.4
	38 Above	5	5.6	5.6	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	
PROFESSION	Student	65	73.0	73.0	73.0
	Teacher/faculty	12	13.5	13.5	86.5
	Industry Professional	9	10.1	10.1	96.6
	Other	3	3.4	3.4	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

## Correlation

Correlation is the association between two or more variables. It is used to describe the direction and strength of a linear relationship between two variables.

If the P-value > 0.05 then the outcome will be insignificant. If the P-value < 0.05 then the outcome will be significant.

If Pearson's value lies between 0.7 to 0.1 then we conclude the relationship is **Strong**.

If Pearson's value lies between 0.3 to 0.7 then we conclude the relationship is **Moderate**.

If Pearson's value is less than 0.3 then we conclude the relationship is **Weak**.

1. SEM: Significant positive correlation with EM (r = .340\*\*, p = .001).
  - Significant positive correlation with BM (r = .306\*\*, p = .004).
  - Non-significant correlation with OM (r = .049, p = .651).
2. EM: Significant positive correlation with SEM (r = .340\*\*, p = .001).
  - Significant positive correlation with BM (r = .260\*, p = .014).
  - Non-significant correlation with OM (r = -.065, p = .542).
3. BM: Significant positive correlation with SEM (r = .306\*\*, p = .004).
  - Significant positive correlation with EM (r = .260\*, p = .014).
  - Non-significant correlation with OM (r = .169, p = .113).
4. OM: Non-significant correlation with SEM (r = .049, p = .651).
  - Non-significant correlation with EM (r = -.065, p = .542).
  - Non-significant correlation with BM (r = .169, p = .113).

The hypothesis that there is not a statistically significant relationship among the variables is

confirmed by non-significant correlations.

**Table 2.**

		SEM	EM	BM	OM
SEM	Pearson Correlation	1	.340**	.306**	.049
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001	.004	.651
	N	89	89	89	89
EM	Pearson Correlation	.340**	1	.260*	-.065
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001		.014	.542
	N	89	89	89	89
BM	Pearson Correlation	.306**	.260*	1	.169
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.014		.113
	N	89	89	89	89
OM	Pearson Correlation	.049	-.065	.169	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.651	.542	.113	
	N	89	89	89	89

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

## Reliability of Constructs

### Coefficients

The reliability of constructs was examined using Cronbach’s alpha which is recommended to be 0.7 or above however all the constructs could not meet the said criteria except Blog marketing having the reliability value of 0.816. Researchers such as (Shi et al., 2012) suggested that any value of alpha greater than 0.6 is also acceptable.

**Table 3.**

Construct	No. of Items	Cronbach’s Alpha
Search Engine Marketing (SEM)	04	0.641
Email Marketing (EM)	02	0.393
Blog Marketing (BM)	03	0.816
Online Marketing (OM)	03	0.272

## Model Summary

The above model summary table presents the overall variance for which the model is accounted. The value of r-square shows a minimal value of r-square referring to the very low explanatory power of the model.

Table 4.

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.234 <sup>a</sup>	.055	.010	.99358

a. Predictors: (Constant), OM, SEM, BM, EM

## ANOVA<sup>a</sup>

The ANOVA results in the above table show a p-value of 0.309 which is less than 0.05, indicating that the overall model is insignificant and the model is not fit.

Table 5.

	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	4.813	4	1.203	1.219	.309 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	82.925	84	.987		
	Total	87.738	88			

a. Dependent Variable: Sales Increase

b. Predictors: (Constant), OM, SEM, BM, EM

## Coefficients

The coefficient table above depicts the relationships of independent and dependent variables in the model. The independent variables include search engine marketing, email marketing, blog marketing, and online marketing. The p-values of the relationships of all IVs and DV are insignificant except for the significant negative impact of online marketing on an increase in sales revenue (Shi, 2012).

Table 6.

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	4.574	.826		5.537	.000
Search Engine Marketing	.040	.173	.027	.231	.818
Email Marketing	-.128	.158	-.093	-.808	.421
Blog Marketing	.097	.119	.094	.821	.414
Online Marketing	-.378	.180	-.228	-2.102	.039

a. Dependent Variable: Sales Increase

## Discussion and Results

### Discussion

The literacy rate in Pakistan is around 58%. With this low literacy rate, a large number of the population lacks the basic knowledge to effectively navigate and utilize the digital landscape for

marketing purposes. This lack of awareness and understanding poses a major challenge for businesses and many other skills in Pakistan. Digital marketing has become an important part of the global economy as it offers a variety of opportunities for businesses to reach their dedicated goals and targets. However, in a country where the majority of the population struggles with basic literacy, the concept of digital marketing remains largely foreign and unknown stuff. The lack of awareness about digital marketing and its immense benefits hinders the growth and development of businesses, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). One of the key aspects of digital marketing is the ability to leverage different online platforms and channels to promote their products and services and reach more audience which drives sales. However, without a basic understanding of digital platforms, social media, and other digital marketing tools, businesses may find it difficult to tap into the vast potential of the digital world.

Many businesses, especially small and medium-sized ones, lack the tools or chances to understand the advantages and use of email marketing. As a result, there is a huge knowledge gap that prohibits organizations from taking advantage of digital marketing's benefits. The usage of email marketing needs to be encouraged, therefore concerted efforts are needed to close this gap. It can be beneficial to promote awareness and knowledge by offering accessible training and educational programs that are especially suited to the requirements of Pakistani enterprises.

## Conclusion

Through the results and discussions above proves that the demographics of the research do not support the hypothesis in any way. The citations validate that in other locations digital marketing proves to be beneficial. However, the case and background that we follow reject the hypothesis for all the variables mentioned above. Of the statistical analysis, multiple aspects were taken into consideration which thoroughly evaluated the results that were not in favor of our hypothesis.

According to the study's outcomes, only internet marketing significantly impedes SMEs' ability to increase their sales. By taking into consideration all aspects of SME digitization, the findings of the study will help both large and small businesses increase the efficacy of their businesses.

## Recommendations

Digital marketing can help target the right audience. The data firms get through digital marketing can be used to choose an audience on the basis of elements like; gender, age, location, interest, and education. Firms can also send personalized messages and reach out to those customers who have already experienced the product or service earlier. Digital marketing and collection of data is an opportunity for brands to understand their customers more accurately and choose the right approach in the longer run.

The solutions to make digital marketing in our favor:

- The content to be authentic: It is essential that a company's marketing stands out among the inundation of advertisements that litter the digital landscape for people to notice it.
- Need/Want of the customer must be considered: In recent months, digital/mobile marketing has grown exponentially. Consider the audience, who is primarily home-based and isolated from peers and family.
- Leverage cross-channel marketing: As consumers spend more time online, there has been an increase in online marketing. Display advertisements, advertisements that appear in our social accounts, and email clutter are increasing. Include direct mail marketing in your marketing strategy to stand out from the crowd.

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