

Impact of digital marketing on SMEs performance in Saudi Arabia: Implications on building NEOM

Areej Algumzi¹

Abstract

Digital marketing has replaced traditional marketing approaches due to an increase in the access to internet and communication technologies across the globe. In addition, it has created an opportunity for SMEs with limited market and funding to promote their brand across different regions, supporting balanced regional development. In this context, Saudi Arabia has been promoting the growth of SMEs through various initiatives as a part of its vision 2030 programme. Accordingly, NEOM city, a multi-billion project was launched to support businesses, innovators, entrepreneurs, and researchers by proposing the city as a hub for international entrepreneurs. However, it is unclear how the local SMEs and their approaches toward digital marketing would be impacted, and how the city can support them. This paper analyses and evaluates the impact of digital marketing on SMEs performance in Saudi Arabia, and its implications for developing NEOM city. An online survey questionnaire instrument was used for collecting data from 358 entrepreneurs and business owners categorised under SMEs. Low-cost marketing mix with techniques such as email marketing, social media marketing are preferred by SMEs. Cultural, economic, and technological are the major factors identified influencing the adoption of digital marketing by SMEs. Digital marketing reflected more positive impact on strategic performance (customers and employees' satisfaction) than financial performance (profitability and sustainability) of Saudi Arabian SMEs. Saudi Arabian SMEs reflect their readiness and preparedness to reap the benefits from the Saudization programme, with a few minor issues related to socio-cultural, technological, and labour challenges.

Keywords: NEOM; SMEs; digital marketing; promotion; strategy; performance

Introduction

With the emergence of innovative technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, social media networking and web 2.0 technologies, significant changes were observed in the business environment in the recent past. Integration of these technologies into the business environment has changed the ways in which businesses interact with their customers, and also the business activities such as marketing and promotion [1]. Digital marketing has become an integral operational activity of many organisations in different sectors including tourism and hospitality, banking, retail, manufacturing, services etc. as all seek innovative approaches to market their products and services through an effective online medium [2-4]. Increased access to internet across the globe, where 4.1 billion have access to internet [5] is one of the major contributing factors for increasing adoption of digital marketing technologies. This can facilitate digital communication between the organisations and customers, which can promote individual and personalised interactions through various online channels, that can help organisations in effectively target their consumers and maintain relationships with them. In addition, digital marketing also helps companies to increase their

¹ Areej Algumzi, College of Business Administration - Tabuk University, Tabuk, Saudi Arabia. E-mail: Aalgumzi@ut.edu.sa.



competitiveness through effective online marketing and sales [6]. Digital marketing is one of the effective techniques for small and medium scale enterprises (SMEs) to achieve sustainable growth, sustain competition from multi-national companies (MNCs), and enhance their competitive edge by maintaining good customer relations [7,8]. However, a few disadvantages related to digital marketing were identified, such as increased competition and open options for customers to purchase from any other SMEs based on price and quality comparisons [9].

Realising the potential of digital marketing, companies are increasingly adopting various online marketing technologies across the globe. According to a recent study [10], the global digital marketing software market size in 2019 was valued at 43.8 billion and a projected compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 17.4% was predicted through 2020 to 2027, reflecting the huge scope for digital marketing market. There are various contributing factors for increasing utilisation of digital marketing techniques. Firstly, more than five billion global population now have access to mobile phones (66% penetration rate); more than four billion global internet users (59% penetration rate); 3.96 billion worldwide social media users (51% penetration rate); and increasing daily time spent with digital media by the people: 6 hours on internet, two hours on social media, three hours in watching television etc. in 2020 [11] were few contributing factors that have encouraged companies to rely extensively on digital marketing techniques to maintain relationships with their consumers. This is evident from the companies' \$ 355.7 billion spent on global digital advertising, which is projected to reach \$ 460.6 billion by 2024 [12].

Accordingly, various countries are promoting the use of digital technologies and increasing infrastructure and access to internet and communication technologies to support business and community development. Saudi Arabia, in this context, has fared very well with its 93% of the population having access to the internet, where 94% of the users browse the internet at least once a day [13]. Accordingly, the average online advertising spending in Saudi Arabia was projected at \$ 1 billion in 2021, with a yearly increase in spending at a rate of 19.2%; and an average ad spending of \$ 32.8 per internet user, with a yearly increase in spending at a rate of 13.8% [14]. Search advertising is the most commonly used approach followed by banner advertising, social media advertising, video advertising and classifieds [14]. With an effective and efficient digital infrastructure, Saudi Arabia through its vision 2030 programme has been transforming itself from an oil-dependent economy to a knowledge-based economy [15]. As part of the programme, the country has undertaken various initiatives such as raising the SME's contribution to GDP from 20% to 35% by 2030 [16,17] and launching various supporting and development programmes for fostering SMEs growth and entrepreneurship [15]. One of the key initiatives proposed by the government is to develop a new city called NEOM, on the coast of Red sea with an initial investment of \$ 500 billion, which would act as an international hub for entrepreneurs, innovators, and research. Various plans were proposed for the development of SME's business districts within the city connected through high end technology infrastructure based on AI technologies [18-20]. However, the success of SMEs in the process of transformation may depend on various factors, out of which digital marketing perspective can be one of the most prominent factors for achieving sustainable growth. Therefore, there is a need for an extensive study to assess the awareness of digital marketing among the entrepreneurs and business executives, types of digital marketing practices, attitudes towards digital marketing, and its implications on SMEs' performance in order to evaluate the impact of digital marketing on SMEs. Accordingly, this study aims to



analyse and evaluate the impact of digital marketing on SMEs performance in Saudi Arabia and its implications on developing NEOM city.

Literature Review

Considering the scope of implementation, channels of communication, different perspectives of analysing, digital marketing can be understood as a multi-faceted approach in marketing. Accordingly, various definitions have been identified by the researchers in relation to differing views and areas of considerations. It is understood as an online activity which aims to market products and services to the target customers [21]. The online medium can include different methods such as email marketing, content marketing, social media marketing etc. In this context, it is also understood as the future of marketing, where the majority of an organisations marketing activities are streamed over digital channels [22]. It may use conventional marketing tools and strategies powered by internet and communication technologies [23]. Focusing on the customer relationships, the digital marketing institute defined it as the “use of digital technology to create integrated, targeted and measurable communications that help to obtain and retain customers while building deeper relationships with customers” [24]. Overall, the definitions from these studies, focus on three major aspects that include: marketing products and services, using effective online communication technologies, and building stronger relationships with customers.

There are various benefits associated with digital marketing which can motivate businesses to adopt them in their marketing activities. Some of the major benefits identified include reduction of marketing costs, ability to target various demographics simultaneously, an easy and effective approach for providing products and services, and an easy approach for consumers to interact, enabling them to make quick and effective purchasing decisions [25]. Improved communication, customer service and competitive advantage, and better control over marketing activities are other few benefits identified in [26]. While these benefits motivate businesses to invest in digital marketing, certain factors may influence the use of digital marketing. Socio-technological factors such as lack of knowledge and skills, stakeholder unreadiness, technology incompatibility with target market or consumers (lack of online skills, lack of internet access etc.), and technology disorientation were identified to be influencing the adoption of digital marketing [21,27]. Similarly, business and economic factors such as economic or funding constraints, lack of skilled marketing professionals, difficulty in determining return on investments (ROI) [28]; and political and legal factors such as online communication policies, data regulation acts, privacy and security policies [29] are few other factors that affect the adoption of digital marketing.

Though there are various benefits and influencing factors of digital marketing attitudes towards digital marketing would mainly influence towards the decision-making on its adoption by entrepreneurs and businesses. Focusing on the costs, the needs, and skills required differences between the attitudes of businesses can be observed. Often, big companies invest huge amounts in online marketing in relation to their market and competitive advantage; however, small companies, especially SMEs have different attitudes towards online markets given the scope, market size, and ROIs [30]. In addition, there are various challenges associated with different types of online marketing, which may be a cause of concern for SMEs considering the scope and market for their businesses. Online marketing strategies such as Email marketing have challenges such as data integrity, deliverability,

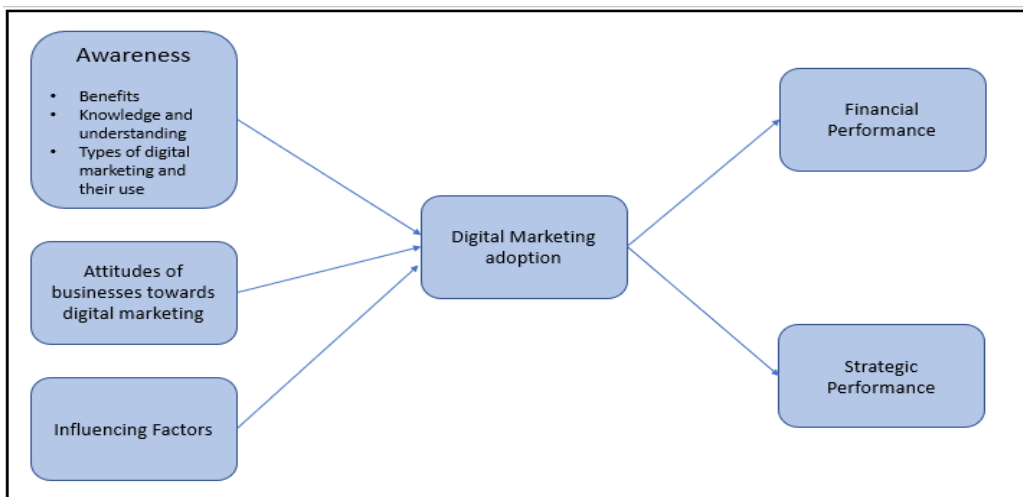
reducing spam complaints, etc. [31]. Other online marketing approaches such as call to action (CTA) that uses an image or button, which grabs the attention of the users and lands them on the content offered upon clicking, also has a challenge of facing customers exasperation for interruption [32]. In addition, other approaches such as SEO such as ‘pay per click’ advertising may increase traffic to the website, but does not necessarily acquire customers and retain them, as it depends on various factors such as ratings, reviews, content etc. [33]. Similarly, social media marketing is associated with challenges such as defining target audience, selecting platform and features, defining social interaction etc. [34].

Depending on the extent of application of digital marketing, the organisational performance can be assessed from different perspectives. Studies [35,36], to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of an action or business intervention, have classified organisational performance into two categories: financial performance and strategic performance. Financial performance has three dimensions which includes profitability (measures a firm’s past ability to generate returns), growth (firm’s past ability to increase its size), and market value (the external assessment and expectation of firms’ future performance) [37]. Strategic performance, on other hand can be measured using variables including customer satisfaction, employees’ satisfaction, social performance (efforts undertaken to satisfy community and other stakeholders such as governments), and environmental performance (efforts undertaken to recover and preserve environment) [37,38]. Thus, it can be understood from the literature review that awareness (benefits, knowledge and understanding, types of digital marketing and their use) and influencing factors of digital marketing; and attitudes towards digital marketing can be used to assess the digital marketing impact using financial and strategic performance of the firms.

Methods and data

Literature review [31-38] has identified various aspects of digital marketing including awareness, influencing factors and attitudes to assess the impact from SMEs financial and strategic performance perspectives, as shown in figure 1.

Figure 1. Study design



Accordingly, for evaluating the impact of digital market on SMEs in Saudi Arabia, an online-questionnaire based survey was adopted. The survey questionnaire was designed in two parts. The first part provides the introduction to the survey, a brief description about the purpose of study, data usage policy, privacy aspects for fully informing the participants about the study and its objectives. At the end of first section, an acceptance button is provided to which participants provide their consent. Second part of the questionnaire was designed by listing various factors relating to digital marketing. The second part of the questionnaire included questions under different categories including knowledge and understanding of digital marketing (five items), benefits of digital marketing (eight items), factors influencing the use of digital marketing (seven items), attitudes towards digital marketing (four items), types of digital marketing being used (eight items), financial (four items) and strategic (four items) performance. Items relating to knowledge and understanding of digital marketing, benefits of digital marketing, factors influencing the use of digital marketing, attitudes towards digital marketing, types of digital marketing being used are adopted from [1], and items related to financial and strategic performance were adopted from [36]. In relation to the factors identified from the literature review in this study, the factors included in studies [1,36] were identified to be relevant in the context of Saudi Arabia.

Moreover, the objectives of both studies [1,36] are similar to this study, however, conducted in different regions. Items related to Each item in the questionnaire was carried out to be rated using five scale Likert ratings [39]. The questionnaire was then translated to Arabic using two professional Arabic translators.

A pilot study was conducted with ten university members (Eight MBA students and two lecturers). Cronbach's alpha ($0.81 > 0.70$) [40] was used for calculating the reliability of the questionnaire items, indicating good reliability and consistency. In addition, feedback was collected from all the participants in pilot study, based on which few words were rewritten in Arabic to reflect more accurate meaning in relation to the items in the English version of the questionnaire. The Arabic version of the questionnaire was then uploaded to QuestionPro application [41], generating a link to the questionnaire.

As the objective of this study was to identify and evaluate the impact of digital marketing on Saudi Arabian SMEs, the need to identify a specific group of entrepreneurs and businesses was realised. Accordingly, a purposive sampling [42] was adopted in selecting the participants, who included business owners and entrepreneurs of different companies categorised under SMEs. The survey link was forwarded to various SMEs (directors and entrepreneurs). The survey was conducted over a period of seven weeks, from 20th October 2020 and 8th December 2020. Business portals and online communities were used for forwarding the survey link to the participants. The survey link was initially forwarded to 438 SMEs, out of which 21 participants only completed a part of survey and 59 participants did not participate in survey. As a result, a final sample of 358 was achieved, reflecting a response rate of 81.7%.

The responses for the questionnaire items were downloaded from QuestionPro application, which were loaded in to excel spreadsheets. Average ratings (mean) and standard deviations for each item were calculated to prioritise the opinions of the participants and analyse the variance in responses respectively. Accordingly, the findings are discussed in the next section.

Results & Discussion

The final sample achieved for the study was 358 (Table 1). The majority of the participants included male businessmen and entrepreneurs (64.5%). However, there are a considerable number of women entrepreneurs (35.5%) participated in this study. In relation to age group, the majority of the participants belonged to 40-49 years (37.7%), followed by 30-39 years (33.8%), 20-29 years (22.9%), 50-59 years (4.5%), and only 1% of the participants aged more than 59 years. Focusing on educational background, most of the participants (52.8%) were qualified in some disciplines and have bachelor degrees, followed by 27.1% participants having education in some other forms, 18.2% in some disciplines, and have master's degree. only 1.9% of the participants were having doctoral degrees reflecting lower participation of academic researchers and innovators in business activities. Focusing on their experience in business, majority of the participants had six to ten years of experience (38.8%), followed by three to five years' experience (36.8%). Further, 17.6% of participants had less than three years' experience, and 6.7% had more than ten years' experience. Overall, 80% of the participants represent those with more than three years of experience, indicating more awareness and knowledge in relation to marketing, resulting in collecting quality data.

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Demographic Variables

Variables	n (%)
Gender	
Male	231 (64.5%)
Female	127 (35.5%)
Age	
20-29	82 (22.9%)
30-39	121 (33.8%)
40-49	135 (37.7%)
50-59	16 (4.5%)
>59	4 (1.1%)
Education	
Bachelor's Degree	189 (52.8%)
Master's Degree	65 (18.2%)
Ph.D.	7 (1.9%)
Others	97 (27.1%)
Work Experience (In business)	
< 3 years	63 (17.6%)
3-5 years	132 (36.8%)
6-10 years	139 (38.8%)
> 10 years	24 (6.7%)

As identified from studies [21-24], digital marketing was defined in relation to the use of electronic media and communication technologies such as social media; its features for improving customer relationships, by effective marketing and promotion of products and services (Table 2). In this context, the participants' understanding reflected in similar aspects: use of electronic and online communication channels (Mean=4.2. SD=1.07), and reference to Internet marketing (Mean=4.4, SD=1.76). Findings reflected good levels of understanding about digital marketing among all the participants as the variation in the participants (SD) was identified to be low, reflecting similar opinions by the majority. Similarly, the benefits identified can be linked to the customer relationships factor, which can be improved by



promoting brand (Mean=4.3, SD=1.14), increasing brand popularity (Mean=4.2, SD=1.61), reaching more customers (Mean=3.6, SD=1.61), customer loyalty (Mean=4.1, SD=3.08), and increased customer referrals (Mean=4.5, SD=1.86). However, participants' opinions differed in relation to customer loyalty, revealing a lack of clarity if digital marketing can lead to customer loyalty. In addition, an economic perspective was identified in understanding the concept of digital marketing in relation to increasing sales volumes (Mean=4.2, SD=1.27), and minimise costs (Mean=4.3, SD=1.52). However, reducing advertising costs (Mean=2.9, SD=3.19) reflected varied views with an increase in variance, reflecting few participants held the opinion while few rejected it in reducing the advertising costs. The findings in relation to the awareness of digital marketing can be supported by the study [45] that has identified the increasing adoption of mobile internet services in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, digital marketing adoption and its role in improving customer relations and creating brand awareness was identified to be effective in Saudi Arabia [46-48], further supporting the future prospects for the adoption of digital marketing.

Table 2. Awareness of digital marketing

Awareness factors	Mean	Std. Deviation
Knowledge and understanding of digital marketing		
The promotion of products or brands that use one or more forms of electronic media	3.1	1.19
Advertising mediums that use electronic media	3.4	1.54
Marketing strategy of a business that include electronic media	3.1	1.39
Internet marketing	4.4	1.76
All promotional efforts that include internet, social media, mobile phones, and electronic billboards, television and radio channels	4.2	1.07
Benefits of digital marketing		
business reaches more customers	3.9	1.61
business brand popularity increases	4.2	1.92
business get more customer referrals	4.5	1.86
business sales volume increases	4.2	1.27
business maintains customer loyalty	4.1	3.08
Minimise costs	4.3	1.52
promote brand	4.3	1.14
reduce advertising costs	2.9	3.19

For big companies, online advertising may reduce costs compared to the wide scope of marketing activities [30], however, for SMEs which have limited and fixed budgets for marketing, there may or may not be significant cost reduction, compared to the market size and target customers, which can be related to differing opinions of the participants in relation to reduction in advertising costs. Therefore, SMEs have to carefully design the marketing and promotional plans that identify appropriate channels requiring minimum investments of capital and resources that can result in maximum benefits.

Considering the challenges associated with digital marketing [30-38], the marketing mix of SMEs may significantly vary according to the market size, target customers, funding allocated, and the skills possessed. Findings in this context (as shown in Table 3) revealed that email marketing (Mean=4.2, SD=1.03), social media marketing (Mean=4.1, SD=1.24), and search engine optimisation were mainly used by the participants reflecting low-cost marketing strategies with clearly identified target customers. However, mobile marketing (Mean=2.7, SD=1.45) was less preferred by SMEs. An increase in large companies adopting the mobile

market, which might negatively impact customers, leading to irritation and disturbances [43,44] and fewer customers compared to big companies could be the reasons for low adoption. Findings suggested that more emphasis was given to maintaining relationships with existing customers than acquiring new customers.

Table 3. Types of digital marketing being used by SMEs

Types	Mean	Std. Deviation
Email marketing	4.2	1.03
Social media	4.1	1.24
Mobile marketing	2.7	1.45
Viral marketing	3.9	4.13
Affiliate marketing	3.4	1.29
Content Marketing	2.3	3.56
Search Engine Optimisation	3.7	1.07
Influencer Marketing	2.1	1.11

Content marketing (Mean=2.3; SD=3.56) reflects a lack of content writing skills affecting the adoption of content marketing [21,27]. In addition, the low applicability of influencer or celebrity marketing reflects the impact of social (Mean=3.7, SD=3.16) and cultural (Mean=4.5, SD=1.15) factors as shown in table 4. In addition, business (Mean =4.1, SD=1.73) and economic (Mean=4.3, SD=1.05) factors as identified in [28] may influence digital marketing operations, which are further supported by the findings in this study. However, political (Mean=3.8, SD=1.53) influence is considerably high, as the government is launching various initiatives in support of SMEs and digitisation of operations [15,17] and accordingly, legal factors influence was low on the adoption of digital marketing. In the context of the NEOM project, it can be assessed that the awareness levels of the entrepreneurs and businessmen among Saudi Arabian SMEs reflect preparedness and readiness to reap the benefits and opportunities available in NEOM city for business growth and sustainability.

Table 4. Factors influencing the adoption of digital marketing

Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation
social factors	3.7	3.16
economic factors	4.3	1.05
cultural factors	4.5	1.15
technology factors	4.4	1.73
political factors	3.8	1.53
legal factors	2.7	1.28
business factors	4.1	1.73

With respect to the NEOM project, the proposed plan is to accommodate more than a million international and local residents and develop the city as the international hub for business, innovation, and research. High relevance to cultural diversity and huge competition from international organisations may reflect the impact of technology, cultural, social, business, and economic factors in, similar to the findings for which SMEs must be prepared to develop and implement strategies for sustainable growth and achieve a competitive edge.

Low preferences by participants in a few areas of marketing such as content marketing as identified in table 3, can be correlated with the attitudes toward digital marketing as shown in table 5. Requirements for special skills for internet marketing (Mean=4.3, SD=1.13) reflected



the need for skilled professionals for digital marketing in Saudi Arabian SMEs. Cultural factors identified to be greatly influencing the adoption of digital marketing. The majority of the participants reflected that digital marketing is very much essential in the current market; however, it is expensive and time-consuming. The gaps and issues with respect to funding, accessibility of internet services at low cost, and skilled marketing professionals can be addressed in the proposed infrastructure and business design of NEOM city.

Table 5. Attitudes towards digital marketing

Factors	Mean	Std. Deviation
Internet very expensive	3.9	3.78
too much time required for Internet	3.7	1.29
Businesses can do without digital marketing	2.8	1.35
Internet marketing needs special skills	4.3	1.13

Focusing on the impact of digital technologies on SMEs performance, positive impact was identified in relation to few strategic performance indicators such as customer satisfaction (Mean=4.5, SD=1.03) and employees' satisfaction (Mean=4.2, SD=1.17) (Table 6). However, impact in relevance to social and environmental performance was identified to be low. Environmental performance was mainly related to manufacturing and operational factors rather than marketing activities. In addition, social performance such as corporate social responsibility would depend on profits, growth, and the scale of market of the companies.

Table 6. Impact of digital marketing on the performance of SMEs

Types	Mean	Std. Deviation
Financial performance		
Profitability	2.8	1.43
Growth	3.9	1.31
Market Value	3.6	3.76
Sustainability	2.9	1.54
Strategic performance		
Customer satisfaction	4.5	1.03
Employees' satisfaction	4.2	1.17
Social performance	2.1	3.11
Environmental performance	2.8	1.81

However, both profitability (Mean=2.8, SD=1.43) and sustainability (Mean=2.9, SD=1.54) reflected poor performance. These limitations may be addressed in NEOM project, where SMEs are introduced to new clients, businesses, and markets, which can increase their sustainable growth opportunities. In addition, access to skilled international human resources can support innovation and research leading the new opportunities for SMEs in Saudi Arabia. However, focusing on strategic performance indicated positive impact on customers and employees' satisfaction, which are considered to be the most essential and reliable components of business operations and growth. Poor social and environmental performance can be attributed to poor sustainability performance, indicating the lack of sustainable development programs among Saudi Arabian SMEs. Therefore, necessary measures have to be taken to create awareness about sustainable development and provide support by the government to SMEs in integrating sustainability operations into their business processes.

Conclusion

The findings in this study indicated good awareness levels of digital marketing among Saudi Arabian SMEs, with varying marketing mix levels in accordance with their market size, funding, and nature of business. These were also reflected in the attitudes of SMEs towards digital marketing. More emphasis was given to low-cost digital marketing techniques to minimise the costs; while risky and high-cost techniques such as viral and influencer marketing were less preferred. Moreover, cultural, technology, economic, and business factors were identified to be the major factors influencing the adoption of digital marketing by SMEs. Digital marketing reflected more positive impact on strategic performance (customers and employees' satisfaction) than financial performance (profitability and sustainability) of Saudi Arabian SMEs. The issues and gaps identified from the findings can be addressed by the Saudization initiatives, especially the NEOM project, which provides wide range of business opportunities for SMEs in Saudi Arabia.

Thus, this study has identified various factors related to digital marketing to assess its impact on Saudi Arabian SMEs' performance and identified various implications for developing NEOM project. However, few recommendations are provided in this study for preparing SMEs for advanced cities like NEOM. The lack of sustainable development plans was identified as one of the major reasons for the low impact of digital marketing. Therefore, the government should create awareness about sustainable development among SMEs, and support them in integrating sustainable development goals into their business objectives. However, there are a few limitations observed in this study. Firstly, this study adopted a survey instrument for data collection. Using a mixed methods approach by adopting other data collection methods such as qualitative interviews can lead to quality data collection. In addition, the low sample achieved in this study makes it difficult to generalise results. Therefore, generalisations of results should be treated with care. With a lack of existing literature in the context of using digital marketing to improve SMEs' performance and their role in mega projects such as NEOM, the findings and limitations in this study can contribute to future research. In addition, findings in this study can have practical implications, as it can support decision-makers in better analysis the prospects of utilising digital marketing for SMEs in NEOM, and accordingly design and develop the proposed city's infrastructure. In addition, this study has theoretical implications, as the findings from this study can be used for future research in project management, business ethics and marketing studies related to megaprojects.

References

1. Lekhanya, L. M. the Significance of Emerging Technologies in Promoting Internationalisation of Rural SMEs in South Africa. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, MCSER Publishing, Rome-Italy, 2014; 5(20).
2. Sarwar-A Alam M, Wang D, Waheed A. Impact of Digital Marketing on Consumers' Impulsive Online Buying Tendencies with Intervening Effect of Gender and Education. *International Journal of Enterprise Information Systems*. 2019;15(3):44-59.
3. Kannan P, Li H. Digital marketing: A framework, review and research agenda. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*. 2017;34(1):22-45.
4. Nuskiya, A.F. Impact of Digital Marketing in Tourism Industry of Sri Lanka. *Information and Knowledge Management*. 2018; 8(9): 59-68.
5. Statista. Topic: Internet usage worldwide [Internet]. Statista. 2021 [cited 21 January 2021]. Available from: <https://www.statista.com/topics/1145/internet-usage-worldwide/#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20the%20number%20of,currently%20connected%20to%20the%20internet.>



6. Moctezuma N.P.B. Digital Marketing in Building Market Competitiveness in Mexico: A Framework of Research for SMEs. In: Stieler M. (eds) *Creating Marketing Magic and Innovative Future Marketing Trends. Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science*. Springer, Cham, 2017.
7. Dumitriu, Militaru, Deselnicu, Niculescu, Popescu. A Perspective Over Modern SMEs: Managing Brand Equity, Growth and Sustainability Through Digital Marketing Tools and Techniques. *Sustainability*. 2019;11(7):2111.
8. Swallehe O. Adoption of Digital Marketing Initiatives and SMEs Performance in Tanzania: Technological Innovation Theory. *SSRN Electronic Journal*. 2020;.
9. Nuseir, M.T. DIGITAL MEDIA IMPACT ON SMEs PERFORMANCE IN THE UAE. *Academy of Entrepreneurship Journal*. 2018; 24(1): 1-13.
10. Grandviewresearch. Digital Marketing Software Market Size Report, 2020-2027 [Internet]. Grandviewresearch.com. 2021 [cited 21 January 2021]. Available from: <https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/digital-marketing-software-dms-market>
11. Kemp, S. DIGITAL 2020: JULY GLOBAL STATSHOT. [Internet] datareportal.com. 2021 [cited 21 January 2021]. Available from: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-july-global-statshot>
12. Statista. Digital advertising spending worldwide from 2017 to 2024, by format. [Internet] Statista.com [cited 21 January 2021]. Available from: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/456679/digital-advertising-revenue-format-digital-market-outlook-worldwide/#:~:text=The%20global%20digital%20video%20ad,Markets%20can%20be%20found%20here>
13. Albaker Z. 2020 Digital Marketing Statistics Saudi Arabia - Top Digital Agency [Internet]. Top Digital Agency. 2021 [cited 21 January 2021]. Available from: <https://topdigital.agency/2020-digital-marketing-statistics-saudi-arabia/>
14. Statista. Digital Advertising: Saudi Arabia [Internet] Statista.com [cited 21 January 2021]. Available from: <https://www.statista.com/outlook/216/110/digital-advertising/saudi-arabia>
15. Nurunnabi, M. Transformation from an Oil-based Economy to a Knowledge-based Economy in Saudi Arabia: the Direction of Saudi Vision 2030. *Journal of Knowledge and Economy*. 2017; 8: 536–564.
16. Ashri O. On The Fast Track: Saudi Arabia's Entrepreneurship Ecosystem [Internet]. *Entrepreneur*. 2021 [cited 20 January 2021]. Available from: <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/336766#:~:text=According%20to%20the%202019%20Global,out%20of%2049%20countries%20analyzed>.
17. Moshashai D, Leber A, Savage J. Saudi Arabia plans for its economic future: Vision 2030, the National Transformation Plan and Saudi fiscal reform. *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. 2018;47(3):381-401.
18. NEOM. NEOM – IT'S TIME TO DRAW THE LINE [Internet]. Neom.com. 2021 [cited 15 January 2021]. Available from: <https://www.neom.com/whatistheline/>
19. Reuters. UPDATE 1-Saudi NEOM set up as joint stock company run by state fund - SPA [Internet]. U.S. 2021 [cited 15 January 2021]. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/saudi-neom-idUKL5N1ZT4C9?edition=uk>
20. NEOM. NEOM – IT'S TIME TO DRAW THE LINE [Internet]. Neom.com. 2021 [cited 15 January 2021]. Available from: <https://www.neom.com/whatistheline/>
21. Järvinen, J., Tollinen, A., Karjaluo, H. & Jayawardhena, C. Digital and social media marketing usage in b2b industrial section. *The Marketing Management Journal*, 2012; 22(2): 102 -117.
22. Wertime, K. & Fenwick, I. *Digital marketing: The essential guide to new media & Digital marketing*, John & Sons, 2008.
23. Piñeiro-Otero, T., & Martínez-Rolán, X. Understanding Digital Marketing—Basics and actions. In *MBA Theory and Application of Business and Management Principles*. Springer International, 2016; 37-74.
24. Royle, J, & Laing, A. The digital marketing skills gap: Developing a Digital Marketer Model for the communication industries. *International Journal of Information Management*, 2014; 34(2), 65–73.
25. Durmaz, Y., & Efendioglu, I.H. Travel from Traditional Marketing to Digital Marketing. *Global Journal of Management and Business Research: E Marketing*. 2016; 6(11): 173.
26. Junusi, R.E. Digital Marketing During the Pandemic Period; A Study of Islamic Perspective. *Journal of Digital Marketing and Halal Industry*. 2020; 2(1):15-28.
27. Cruz, D. & Fill, C. Evaluating viral marketing: isolating the key criteria. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*. 2008; 26 (7): 743 - 758.
28. Marshall, P., Sor, R. & McKay, J. An industry case study of the impacts of electronic commerce on car dealerships in eastern Australia. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 2000; 1: 1-12.
29. Chaffey, D. & Ellis-Chadwick, F. *Digital Marketing*. (7th Edition). Pearson, 2019.

30. Cole H, DeNardin T, Clow K. Small Service Businesses: Advertising Attitudes and The Use of Digital and Social Media Marketing. *Services Marketing Quarterly*. 2017;38(4):203-212.
31. Hartemo, M. Email marketing in the era of the empowered consumer”, *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 2016; 10(3):212-230.
32. Handayani R, Purwandari B, Solichah I, Prima P. The Impact of Instagram “Call-to-Action” Buttons on Customers’ Impulse Buying. *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Business and Information Management*. 2018;
33. Kecgan, B. and Taylor, J. Are You Local (SEO)? Understanding The Challenges Of Local SEO Strategies. *The Journal of Digital and Social Media Marketing*. 2019; ISSN 2050-0076 (Unpublished)
34. Yadav M. Social Media as a Marketing Tool: Opportunities and Challenges. *Indian Journal of Marketing*. 2017;47(3):16.
35. Al-Matari, E.M., Al-Swidi, A.K. & Bt Fadzil, F.H. The Measurements of Firm Performance’s Dimensions”, *Asian Journal of Finance & Accounting*, 2014; 6(1): 24-49.
36. Deraz, H. The Impact of Adopting Digital Marketing (Digitalization) on SMEs Performance. [Internet] [cited 15 January 2021]. Available from: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327680577_The_Impact_of_Adopting_Digital_Marketing_Digitalization_on_SMEs_Performance_A_Study_of_Small_and_Medium_Size_Retailing_and_Manufacturing_Firms_in_Sweden/citation/download
37. Santos J, Brito L. Toward a subjective measurement model for firm performance. *BAR - Brazilian Administration Review*. 2012;9(spe):95-117.
38. Tarutė, A. & Gatautis, R. ICT impact on SMEs performance. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2014; 110: 1218 – 1225
39. Likert R. A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes. *Archives of Psychology*. 1932. 140: 1–55.
40. Taber, K.S. The Use of Cronbach’s Alpha When Developing and Reporting Research Instruments in Science Education. *Res Sci Educ* 48, 1273–1296 (2018). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11165-016-9602-2>
41. Rosly R, Khalid F. Evaluation of the “e-Daftar” System Using the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). *Creat Educ*. 2018;09(05):675-686. doi:10.4236/ce.2018.95049
42. Etikan I. Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*. 2016;5(1):1.
43. Martins, J., Costa, C., Oliveira, T., Gonclaves, R., Branco, F. How smartphone advertising influences consumers’ purchase intention. *Journal of business research*. 2019; 94: 378-387.
44. Maseke B. Consumer attitudes toward the adoption of mobile marketing in Namibia. *International Journal of Markets and Business Systems*. 2020;4(1):42.
45. Baabdullah, A.M et al. Assessing Consumers’ Intention to Adopt Mobile Internet Services in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. *AMERICAS CONFERENCE ON INFORMATION SYSTEMS, Adoption and Diffusion of Information Technology (SIGADIT)*, 2017.
46. Labbad, S.A. & Niketh, S. The role of digital marketing in creating brand awareness and measuring customer satisfaction at Intercontinental Hotel, Al-Jubail, Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Research in Economics and Social Sciences*, 2018; 8(5): 60-72.
47. Al-Thagafi A, Mannion M, Siddiqui N. Digital marketing for Saudi Arabian university student recruitment. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*. 2020;12(5):1147-1159.
48. Alotaibi, B. Assessing social media adoption and maturity in small and medium enterprises: case of Saudi Arabia. Masters thesis, Middlesex University, 2019. [Thesis]

