

## **Effects of E-Marketing on Growth of Businesses: Evidence from Pakistani Markets**

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### **Abstract**

*Purpose: The purpose of this study is to compare and contrast the various marketing strategies that are at the disposal of growing business and to what extent, e-marketing drives cost-effective business growth. Considering this is a cost effective, fast and flexible way to reach an audience of global Diasporas.*

*Design/approach: Thus, the study evaluates through the present marketing scenarios of Small to Medium Size Enterprises (SMEs) in Pakistan, whether use of e-marketing bring substantial business gains. The marketing scenario is evaluated through a comprehensive, qualitative and quantitative survey based methodology.*

*Findings: This study concludes with these remarks that E-marketing is indeed cost effective and helps in propelling business growth. It is also concluded that web marketing and social media marketing are the most efficient formats of E-Marketing in developing businesses.*

*Originality of work: With the uncontested growth of technology and an increasingly globalised world, the internet plays a paramount role in all the major areas of our lives and industries. With-in few clicks, consumers can explore ample information which will help in conceptualizing tasks in nanoseconds and realizing this power of internet, marketing is not far behind to use it as a driving channel to reach the global territory.*

**Keywords:** *Business growth, E- Marketing, technology, Pakistan*

### **1. Introduction**

The role of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) is growing and gradually becoming more and more important (Veskaisri et al., 2007) due to the reason that they serve as the backbone of any economy with their significant contribution (Syed et al., 2012) while providing about 60% employments worldwide (Khan et al., 2013). SMEs in Pakistan are facing many challenges in their routine functioning, sustainable growth and further business expansion mainly due to their limited funds. In this scenario marketing serves a vital role in generating funds for the SMEs. The present research is aimed to evaluate the marketing strategies of SMEs and to understand their contribution in the business growth. Particularly the role and effectiveness of e-marketing or electronic marketing will be studied and its impact will be evaluated over the organization and customers.

Due to growing market competition, attracting customers has become an essential requirement for firms including manufacturers and suppliers. In this regard, different techniques are used to attract the customers by promoting their product or service while explaining their different features from the customer's point of view to facilitate their buying decision making (Karahasan, 2013). The traditional marketing techniques are being use since long in different forms. Some very common

traditional marketing examples include print and electronic (TV, radio) medias, trade shows, direct postal mail, direct selling through sales force, buying leads and referrals. Traditional marketing has its own significance and a valuable role in different industries and marketing mediums (Onishi 2011).

E-Marketing or electronic marketing is defined by Strauss and Frost (2001) in terms of the internet and technological applications, services and data usage for planning and executing of a firm's marketing concept for distributing and creating value for its products and services in order to satisfy the organizational and individual needs and objectives (Strauss and Frost, 2001). Strauss and Raymond (2001) argue that e-marketing is just like traditional marketing but with the addition of information technology tools and platform for enhancing marketing efficiency for the desired goals.

The comparison of traditional v/s e-marketing shows that the firms which have considered and applied the traditional marketing mediums for the promotion of their products and services are seen more concerned towards their customer's needs rather than focusing and developing their structure (İslamoğlu, 2013) hence less technological advancement is evident in such cases. In contrast, e-marketing has provided a unique and advanced platform for the firms to understand their customer's needs and behaviour and accordingly it has created great changes in the business environment, not only for the firms but it has also changed customers behaviour. The degree of E-Marketing adoption in SMEs is depends on three main components, principally: management beliefs, initiation and implementation activities in relation to perception of relative advantage and customer pressure (Monim et. al, 2018).

E-marketing has made the firms and their customers free from the limitations of time and space while at the same time a greater benefit is reduction or omission of needless transaction cost (Sheth and Sharma 2005). (Silvia Zilber et. al, 2019) find that the perceived characteristics of social media and the characteristics of the adopter are factors that contribute to the adoption of these media by SMEs. Although it is understandable that traditional marketing has its own value and contribution in the business environment while e-marketing has its own significance Saleem et al (2019). One of the biggest contributions of e-marketing is providing the opportunity of creating a global marketplace and all this is few mouse clicks away. Due to this, many medium to large organizations are shifting towards electronic environment (Taherdoost, et al. 2012a). Whereas, E-marketing has great potential to contribute in the growth of any organization particularly SMEs since it is cost effective and more result oriented as compare to other traditional marketing methods that also cost much. Maria et al (2007) have also argued about challenging opportunities for all companies irrespective of their size by using e-marketing applications in the firms operations. Sheikh et al, (2018) go on to conclude that the growth derived by SMEs from e-marketing is also sustainable in nature to a large extent.

SMEs have limited resources and in this regard by means of E-marketing great results can be achieved in terms of more customers, increased volumes of market share and sales and obviously greater profits. The same phenomena has been highlighted by Kiang and Raghu et al. (2000) that e-marketing can serve the firm in distribution and handling transaction hence with reduced costs great objectives can be achieved. A research will be conducted focusing SMEs from the twin cities (Rawalpindi and Islamabad) of Pakistan to study the contribution of e-marketing. For collecting data, a mixed methodology (questionnaires, interviews) will be adopted in order to collect more information to facilitate research in multiple dimensions.

Since the study is based on fresh as well as historical data therefore the findings of the research will serve as a significant contribution in the SMEs marketing decisions. SMEs particularly being research focus would be mainly benefited from the research findings by designing and re-aligning

their marketing programs to create great value for their corresponding businesses.

In many cases the common problem with many SMEs is their limitations to market their products and services to the potential customers or other distributors effectively. This problem may be for many reasons including limitation of funds, lack of business or IT knowledge or infra-structure or less understanding of marketing power Saleem et al (2019). Presently the internet tools and techniques have made it very easy for any business and individual to establish online appearance with very little effort. In view of the present research, the specific problem with many SMEs is the knowledge and understanding about developing and implementing an e-marketing strategy. This study addresses the following questions and objectives respectively. This study investigate the impact of transforming traditional marketing into E- Marketing on business growth and current scenario of SMEs in terms of E-marketing strategies. Moreover, a significant contribution of E-marketing in the growth and development of business and any change in the customer's behaviours by using E-Marketing as compare to traditional marketing.

The present study and its findings will be a valuable contribution in terms of defining the active role of e-marketing in the business growth. The findings of the study will serve as a ready reference for organizations and individual decision makers while planning and designing the marketing strategy for their businesses. Since the study is based on the SMEs and their marketing practices therefore the research will enable new and existing SMEs to understand the contribution of e-marketing and design their strategies in a manner to maintain their active and valuable presence online using different e-marketing platforms to add value to their businesses and generate more revenue.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Marketing**

Marketing in very simple words is identification of needs and wants of customers in terms of customer preferences and expectations and quickly responding them to satisfy the needs while ensuring a stable relationship. The marketing process according to Philip Kotler (2003) deals with making suitable plans and their execution in terms of a right concept, price, promotion and distribution of any valuable item including services, goods or ideas to create an exchange value by satisfying individual and organizational needs. Huang & Brown (1999) have described marketing as the most prevalent problem area for SMEs because SMEs often have limitation of financial resources (Halibi & Lussier, 2014) therefore their marketing is limited to immediate needs only and more focus is given to sales for their survival (Stokes, 2000).

### **2.2. Traditional Marketing**

For many years traditional marketing methods are in use by many medium to large organizations. The needs and wants of customers in a traditional marketing environment are determined and satisfied by using traditional marketing methods including direct communication, product catalogues, magazines (Philip Kotler, 2003) television, radio, exhibitions, billboards, free gifts (Fill, 2005). Although these media have their own contribution but at the same time have limitations in terms of limited coverage of billboards are limited to the passers-by (Fills 2005), radio and TV has limited coverage range (Stephens, 2000; Bonsor K. 2001) while through internet e-marketing can address a worldwide audience.

### **2.3. E- Marketing**

Today, the Internet is one of the most influential media present on a global level and we can perceive it as one of the key contributors to the process of globalisation. Along with the aforementioned globalisation, the Internet and information-communication technologies have generally contributed to the business activity. Business environment has become more competitive and from the global point of view, the entire world is now becoming a potential market Shabbir and Yaqoob (2019).

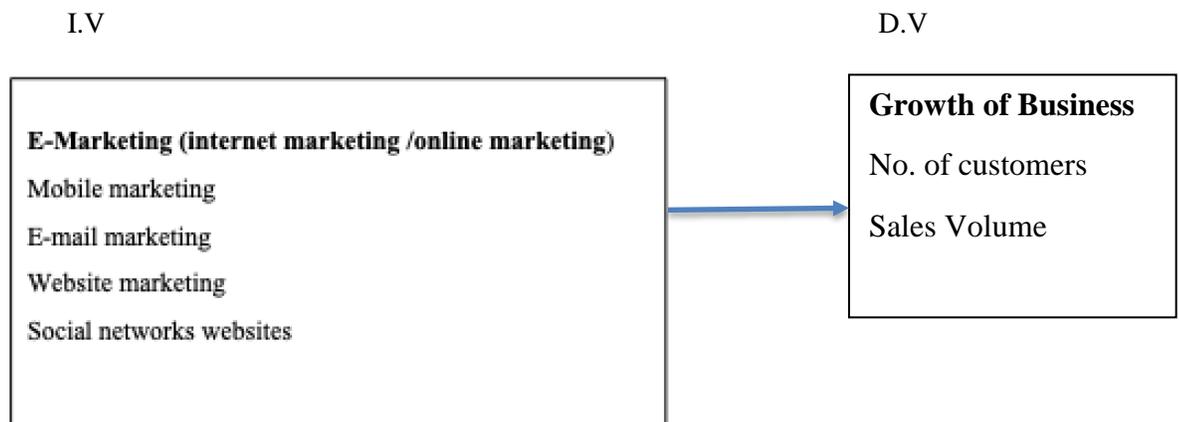
However, no matter the more dynamic environment, the Internet has become a huge opportunity for companies of all sizes, and therefore e-marketing becomes a vital component of 21st century marketing. The range of potential consumers via e-marketing is incomparable with some techniques of the conventional marketing (Bognar et. al, 2019).

The developments in the twenty-first century have transformed the business practices due to growing knowledge and technological advancements for which internet has played a key role (Ainin and Noor Ismawati 2003). E-marketing is the advanced electronic form of traditional marketing mix (4ps) that has been collaborated and equipped with technology tools (Stan, 2003). According to Smith and Chaffey (2001) e-marketing refers to marketing goals achievement by means of information technology or electronic communications technology including internet, mobile phones, e-mail, computerized databases and e-books etc. E-marketing is defined by Gilmore et al (2007) as performing the marketing functions while using internet and its associated technologies in association with different marketing techniques and tools Shabbir et al (2019). On the same line, Javadian et al (2011) have identified four e-marketing tools which include website marketing, e-mail marketing, mobile marketing and social media marketing using social networks for instance, Facebook, twitter for marketing and understanding consumer behaviours. Onojaefe et al (2005) refers towards internet branding strategies by developing interactive web pages as an effective tool for the growth of many small and large firms.

#### 2.4. Comparison of traditional and E- marketing

E- Marketing has many advantages over traditional marketing methods due to the use of internet and advance technology tools and techniques. In traditional marketing methods (TV, radio, billboards) companies are dependent upon advertising agencies and third parties for their marketing and promotion while in case of e- marketing, companies are independent to plan and generate their own marketing strategy (Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright, 2008). E-marketing offers technology tools which enables real time marketing and customer experience while it is not possible with traditional marketing methods (Du Plessis, 2010). Younger generation consumers are comparatively easily attracted by e-marketing (Zainudin, et.al, 2018) Also in case of traditional media, the marketing content is generated by third parties (Ad agencies) which is often exaggerated while in case of e-marketing, mostly the marketing is designed and organized by user hence it is more authentic and close to the real product or service (Daugherty, Eastin, & Bright, 2008). However, E- marketing is also more effective in creating its impact, efficient in spreading the message to a wider customer base in less time and best of all, the marketing costs are very reduced as compare to traditional marketing methods Saleem et al (2019).

#### 3. Conceptual Frame Work:



### 3.1 Hypotheses Development

H1: E-marketing influences business performance.

H2: E-marketing serves as a better tool to link with clients

H3: E-marketing activities enhances value for products and services

H4: E-marketing activities influence marketing research and management communication.

H5: E-marketing helps in saving time, money and efforts as compare to traditional marketing

H6: Certain channels of E-Marketing are significantly more effective than others.

### 4. Data Collection and Methodology

To understand the impact of E-marketing over SMEs business growth, a mix methodology (qualitative and quantitative) will be adopted for the present study because qualitative techniques and methods are more effective for exploration while quantitative methods are used for testing hypotheses. Pre-designed questionnaire (using 5-points Likert scale) and structured interviews will be used for data collection. For the present research, the target population will be SMEs operating within the twin cities of Pakistan; Rawalpindi and Islamabad. In this regard, three (3) SMEs segments have been selected for instance, Pharmacy and Cosmetics (PC), Fashion and Fabrics (FF) and Furniture & Furnishing (FF).

The research data has collected by distributing Semi-Structured questionnaire among target customers from SMEs Shabbir (2015). However, two hundreds (200) questionnaires were distributed and one hundred and ninety (190) questionnaires completed. So, the response rate considers as 95 percent because ten (10) questionnaires are incomplete. Since, the data has collected from different clusters of respondents, therefore cluster sampling techniques used for this study while focusing on the three aforementioned clusters. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software used to analyse the data collected and interpretations of data results.

The E-marketing is an independent variable and consists of four major components such as, mobile marketing (MM), email marketing (EM), websites marketing (WM) and social network website (SNW). Whereas, growth of business (GB) is a dependent variable of this study consists of number of customers and sales volume.

#### Mediation Regression analysis and Mediation Regression analysis construct based

Mediation is a hypothesized causal chain in which one variable affects a second variable that, in turn, affects a third variable. The intervening variable, M, is the mediator. It “mediates” the relationship between a predictor, X, and an outcome.

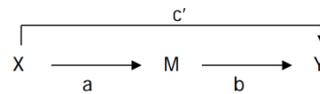
Graphically, mediation can be depicted in the following way:

X---a--->M ----b---->Y

Paths a and b are called direct effects. The mediational effect, in which X leads to Y through M, is called the indirect effect Shabbir and Muhammad (2019). The indirect effect represents the portion of the relationship between X and Y that is mediated by M.

### Testing for mediation

Baron and Kenny (1986) proposed a four step approach in which several regression analyses are conducted and significance of the coefficients is examined at each step and follow the description (note that  $c'$  could also be called a direct effect).



	<i>Analysis</i>	<i>Visual Depiction</i>
<b>Step 1</b>	Conduct a simple regression analysis with X predicting Y to test for path $c$ alone, $Y = B_0 + B_1X + e$	
<b>Step 2</b>	Conduct a simple regression analysis with X predicting M to test for path $a$ , $M = B_0 + B_1X + e$ .	
<b>Step 3</b>	Conduct a simple regression analysis with M predicting Y to test the significance of path $b$ alone, $Y = B_0 + B_1M + e$ .	
<b>Step 4</b>	Conduct a multiple regression analysis with X and M predicting Y, $Y = B_0 + B_1X + B_2M + e$	

Constructs:- A construct is an indicator variable that measures a particular trait and may be a combination of two or more variables. A Construct Based mediation regression allows the researcher to regress their dependent variable and check for mediation with one or more independent variables.

### Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics are used to summarize data in an organized manner by describing the relationship between variables in a sample or population. Calculating descriptive statistics represents a vital first step when conducting research and should always occur before making inferential statistical comparisons. Descriptive statistics include types of variables (nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio) as well as measures of frequency, central tendency, dispersion/variation, and position (Nguyen et al (2019)). Descriptive analysis is a prerequisite for, and provides the foundation of inferential analysis of data (Spriestersbach A et. al, 2009). Descriptive statistics are useful for describing the basic features of data, for example, the summary statistics for the scale variables and measures of the data. In a research study with large data, these statistics may help us to manage the data and present it in a summary table (Morgan G. et. al 1999) as presented below.

### Frequency of Measurements:-

Absolute frequency is the number of times a particular value occurs in the data. In contrast, relative frequency is the number of times a particular value occurs in the data (absolute frequency) relative to the total number of values for that variable. The relative frequency may be expressed in ratios, rates, proportions, and percentages. When presenting data in percentages, it is important to include the denominator for each group (total sample size), as giving percentages alone can be misleading if the groups contained very different numbers (Altman and Bland 1996).

**Table 1. Sample Profile and Description**

Particulars	Frequency	Percentage	Total
<b>Gender</b>			190
Males	124	65.2	

Females	66	34.7	
<b>Age (Years)</b>			190
20 or Less	28	14.7	
21-30	54	28.4	
31-40	65	34.2	
41-50	28	14.7	
51-60	15	7.89	
<b>Marital Status</b>			190
Single	55	28.94	
Married	126	66.31	
Divorced/separated/widowed	9	4.73	
<b>Education</b>			190
High School	34	17.89	
Practice Occupation Course	55	28.94	
Undergraduate Degree	50	26.31	
Graduate Degree	42	22.1	
PhD Degree	09	4.73	
<b>Income (Pak Rupees)</b>			190
40000 or Less	42	22.10	
41000 – 80000	65	34.21	
81000 – 120000	39	20.52	
121000 – 160000	26	13.68	

161000 – 200000	10	5.26	
2001000 or More	8	4.21	
<b>Occupation</b>			190
Government Job	69	36.31	
Private job	48	25.26	
Personal Business	23	12.16	
Students	16	8.42	
Others	34	17.89	

The survey includes a fair mix of consumers from all genders to remove any gender based biases. The sample includes a good representation of customers from ages upto 60 years. It is assumed that the share of the market held by customers above 60 years is not significant and hence the survey results do not reflect their trends. Having taken into consideration that single consumers may have needs that significantly differ from those of married couples, survey is filled by consumers from both marital statuses. Since the survey is done to assess the impacts of E-Marketing, it was ensured that the survey subjects belonged to all income groups, job profiles and all levels of education( almost evenly distributed) so as to allow the effect of E-Marketing awareness to be felt in the survey results.

**Table 2: Outlets have convenient working hours and located at convenient locations**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Completely</b>	<b>Somehow</b>	<b>Little bit</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>Male</b>	28%	39%	19%	14%
<b>Female</b>	35%	36%	22%	7%

A higher percentage of females believe that SME outlets are located in convenient positions however, around 30% of the customers from both genders feel that workings hours and store locations are inconvenient for them, which gives rise to need for E-Marketing.

**Table 3: Does online shopping/channel useful?**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
<b>Male</b>	37%	45%	18%

<b>Female</b>	39%	49%	12%
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The above table indicates that 40% of consumers feel that the online channel was helpful for them, which is more than the customers who were comfortable with physical locations of outlets. However a good percentage of consumers also, did not believe on the online channel suggesting that the channel can be used only for a targeted set of consumers in Pakistani markets.

Table 4: Mediation regression analysis for SMEs.

<b>Mediation regression analysis for Pharmacy and Cosmetics SMEs</b>						
<b>E-Marketing → Growth of Businesses (GB)</b>						
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Adjusted R Square</b>	<b>F-Stats</b>	<b>ANOVA Sig.</b>
Constant	1.235	0.022	0.323	0.225	9.54	0.001
Mobile Marketing (MM)	0.512	0.001				
<b>EM → GB</b>						
Constant	1.245	0.000	0.198	0.225	11.52	0.000
Email Marketing (EM)	0.457	0.000				
<b>WM → GB</b>						
Constant	0.326	0.539	0.528	0.446	-3.46	0.061
Website marketing (WM)	0.746	0.000				
<b>SNW → GB</b>						
Constant	-0.154	0.637	0.329	0.413	10.87	0.000
Social network website (SNW)	0.513	0.000				

It is seen that the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) Significance Levels were lower than 0.05 (assumed critical testing value) this implies that means differ more than would be expected by chance alone. Therefore the Regression is a good fit to be able to analyse results as suggested by the ANOVA testing methodology. It is also clear from the significant values of R squared and adjusted R squared that the regression is a reasonable fit for the research to be able to yield results. Beta values for all types of marketing are positive, which implies that all types of marketing positively affect business growth. It can be seen that Web Marketing has a significantly higher Beta value as compared to other types of marketing suggesting that Web Marketing is the most effective amongst all types of E Marketing techniques. The Beta value of Constant for Social Network Marketing is negative which suggests that the presence of Social Network Marketing is an essential phenomenon for a growing business in the Pharmacy and Cosmetics sector.

**Table 5: Mediation regression analysis for SMEs (Construct Analysis)**

<b>Mediation regression analysis for SMEs (Construct Analysis)</b>						
<b>MM + EM + WM + SNW + GQ → WQ</b>						
<b>Variables</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>R Square</b>	<b>Adjusted Square</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>F ANOVA Statistics</b>
Constant	1.245	0.021	0.521	0.432		9.005
Mobile Marketing (MM)	0.198	0.04				
Email Marketing (EM)	0.129	0.21				
Website Marketing (WM)	0.365	0.10				
Social Network Website (SNW)	0.476	0.00				
General Questions (GQ)	0.35	0.02				
<b>PC + FF + FF + GQ → GB</b>						
Constant	1.432	0.00	0.519	0.454		8.047
Pharmacy and Cosmetics (PC)	0.332	0.004				
Fashion and Fabrics (FF)	-0.256	0.24				

Furniture & Furnishing (FF)	0.132	0.315
General Questions (GQ)	0.271	0.02

It is seen that the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) Significance Levels were lower than 0.05 (assumed critical testing value) this implies that means differ more than would be expected by chance alone. Therefore the Regression is a good fit to be able to analyse results as suggested by the ANOVA testing methodology. It is also clear from the significant values of R squared and adjusted R squared that the regression is a reasonable fit for the research to be able to yield results. This significant construct analysis depicts that Social Network Marketing and Web Marketing are overall, the most efficient forms of E-Marketing, although all forms of E-Marketing promote Business Growth. The Fashion and Fabrics sector is least affected by E-Marketing whereas the Pharmacy and Cosmetics Sector is most affected.

### Conclusion

Through Statistical Analysis on the collected data, it can be concluded that E-Marketing has a positive impact on business performance for SMEs, having said that, a higher percentage of people did not believe that online channel was useful, it cannot be said that E-Marketing serves as a tool to better link with clients. Since business grows with all forms of E-Marketing, therefore E-Marketing does enhance the value of products and services. As most customers in the survey are familiar with online channels, E-Marketing activities indeed influence marketing research and management communication. Since the survey suggests that customers from all ages, genders, educational backgrounds have been reached out to be by E-Marketing, it can be said that it helps in reducing time, money and effort as compared to traditional marketing. It is concluded that Web Marketing and Social Network Marketing are significantly more effective than other forms of E-Marketing. The limitations of the present study are as below; the present research is limited to three industries only due to limitation of time and resources. Due to the limited scope of research, the results of the present research may not be generalized across other business segments, locations and industries. The research is limited to SMEs only, hence comparison between e-marketing and traditional marketing would not be justified in terms of larger organizations.

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