

# DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE OF SMALL ENTERPRISES: THE CRITICAL ROLE OF CUSTOMER AWARENESS AND CONSIDERATION

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## Abstract

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Digital strategy represents an inevitable requirement for superiority in a digital world (Menz et al., 2021; Turuk, 2020). More precisely, this study aimed to determine the key success factors (KSFs) of the digital marketing strategy that have an influential effect on the marketing performance of small enterprises (SEs) in Jordan. A theoretical framework has been proposed based on an extensive review of the related literature and the assumptions of the technology acceptance model (TAM). The study followed the quantitative approach, where intended data were gathered from 370 valid e-questionnaires based on the convenience sampling technique. Then, the collected data was statistically analyzed using the AMOS V.23 program. The findings of the research pointed out e-marketing orientation as a prominent KSF for SEs and recommended that such orientation deserves to be positioned at the heart of the digital strategy to drive success. In addition, the findings confirmed the indirect effect of customer awareness and consideration in the relationship between digital marketing applications and performance. Customer awareness and consideration need to be given more attention while developing SEs' digital marketing model, as it plays a pivotal role and constitutes a crucial mediating variable between each of the digital strategy variables and the targeted performance of small enterprises (PSEs).

**Keywords:** Digital Marketing Strategy, Performance of Small Enterprises, Awareness, Considerations

**Authors' individual contribution:** Conceptualization — M.L.A. and R.A.-Q.; Methodology — M.L.A., E.S., and A.R.A.; Formal Analysis — M.L.A., R.A.-Q., and A.R.A.; Resources — E.S. and O.M.; Writing — Original Draft — M.L.A. and O.M.; Writing — Review & Editing — M.L.A., R.A.-Q., E.S., and O.M.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In developing countries, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are considered the engines that drive economic development in different aspects. SMEs play a vital role in the global economy.

Enterprises' philosophies and visions vary in their adoption of a particular strategic orientation. One of the fundamental propositions in business strategy is that performance is positively related to a business strategy. A digital strategy represents a strategic alternative that employs online platforms and digital data to fulfill strategic communication and marketing goals (Waseem et al., 2024; Morehouse & Saffer, 2018). Furthermore, Truong et al. (2024) argued that any company that wants to achieve both financial and non-financial performance needs to have internal control; meanwhile, improving business strategy is the main requirement for improving such internal control.

Particularly in Jordan, small enterprises (SEs) constitute a fundamental pillar of the country's economy, making up more than half of the country's gross domestic product and employing two-thirds of the workforce (Middle East Investment Initiative, n.d.).

Consequently, the present research is designed to gain insight into the key digital marketing variables that have the most critical influence on the digital performance of small enterprises (PSEs), which represent one of the most important economic activities in Jordan. Hence, such evaluation is intended to contribute to SEs growing and expanding, which in turn will have a broad effect on the national economy and improve regional stability.

The rapid growth of communication technologies associated with the accelerating rate of internet penetration has allowed users to interact easily with groups of people via their computers or cell phones. Also, the widespread use of Facebook and other online interactive applications has contributed to creating an interactive environment that helps customers participate and interact with other users and customers about various issues, products, and services. Consequently, it is justified to contribute to supporting managers and policymakers in SEs by examining the impact of digital marketing implementations in enhancing the performance of this vital type of economic activity.

In addition, it is common that many SEs are of a craft or agricultural nature, family-owned businesses, and located in rural areas, managed by owners, not professionals who do not possess the required administrative skills. Hence, the findings of this research are expected to help in identifying the potential poor practices in such kinds of businesses. Thus, the intended outcome of this research is to develop a comprehensive marketing guide by identifying the key success factors (KSFs) of digital marketing strategies and tactics to be followed by managers of SEs.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. The literature review and hypotheses development are presented in Section 2. Section 3 discusses the research design, sampling methods, data collection instruments, and analytical methods used in the study. Section 4 presents the research results. Section 5 discusses the findings of the study, and finally, the conclusion is presented in Section 6.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Several studies have focused on different aspects of SMEs. The study by Khayer et al. (2021) was conducted within a developing country perspective approach, aiming at examining the determinants of cloud computing adoption in SMEs.

While Bi et al. (2024) explored the internationalization strategy management for Chinese SMEs, Jangjarat and Jewjinda (2023) examined the influence of innovation on the performance of SMEs. The authors pointed out that digital technologies and innovations bestow substantial advantages upon SMEs in their pursuit of long-term development. Similarly, Priambodo et al. (2022) highlighted the crucial role of innovation capabilities, which may help entrepreneurs' creative businesses to enhance their performance, especially in e-commerce. Also, the research of Muriithi (2017), which was carried out in an African context, indicated numerous challenges that face SMEs, ranging from power shortage, lack of capital, poor management skills and competencies, and inadequate information and corruption. According to Omar et al. (2009), SEs should be managed within a human resource development perspective, which is important for such businesses to progress and be competitive. Khan and Burki (2020) and Jasra et al. (2011) explored the key factors in the success of SMEs in developing countries. The findings of the study identified financial resources as the most important factor in the success of businesses perceived by SMEs.

Based on a survey technique, the study of Taiwo et al. (2012) pointed out a lack of financial support, poor management, corruption, and a lack of training as prominent factors that restrict the success of SEs in developing economies. In addition, the study recommended that governments should provide assistance for potential entrepreneurs to reduce operating costs and increase efficiency by facilitating access to information necessary for financing and information related to business opportunities, modern technology, and raw materials.

In Arab developing countries, much previous research has evaluated several perspectives of SMEs. A number of such studies focused on the economic aspect by exploring the role SMEs play in supporting economic efforts in such countries. The study conducted by Al-Tit et al. (2019) indicated business support as the most critical factor that significantly affects the success of SMEs in Saudi Arabia. In addition, Fazah (2013) aimed to examine the difficulties of financing SMEs in Iraq, and Harb (2006) focused on evaluating the role of SMEs in the economic and social development of the Syrian people. Furthermore, Abdelwahed et al. (2023) evaluated the mediator role of the environmental management process between business strategy and the performance of SMEs in Saudi Arabia. In the same context and as a comprehensive research that included a number of economies in the Middle East and North Africa region, the Arab Monetary Fund study conducted by Abdulmonem et al. (2019) reported the actual performance of SMEs in these economies with the aim of diagnosing the strengths and weaknesses of these vital economic activities.

E-marketing orientation represents the integration of 1) marketing orientation (marketing philosophy) that views the customer as a priority, and 2) technology orientation. It is a strategic alternative that needs to be aligned with all activities of a business firm to fulfill customer dynamics and changing needs (Shaltoni & West, 2010). While marketing orientation outlines how the company's core offering is presented to its users and how the marketing teams are empowered, "e-marketing orientation" defines a company's usage of related technologies, which has a favorable impact on customer satisfaction, sales performance, quality improvement, and relationship development (Cadauid & Valencia-Arias, 2022).

E-marketing orientation was conceptualized as a synthesis of the behaviors toward the adoption of e-marketing and the concurrent organizational business philosophy (Shaltoni et al., 2018). From a behavioral perspective, it is viewed as employing information technology (IT), the Internet, and other interactive technologies to create and mediate dialogue between a business and a targeted audience.

Moreover, e-marketing orientation is a strategic mechanism that helps to create innovative ideas for business firms (Al Idrus et al., 2020) and enhances the operation capacity to offer better customer value which in turn will result in higher online performance of small and medium-sized businesses organizations as Al Asheq et al. (2021) stated.

Digital marketing capability is the mechanism by which a mix of technology, resources, skills, knowledge, and processes is managed to deliver business strategy in the digital age (Duah et al., 2024). E-marketing orientation leverages the business's capabilities to achieve the intended marketing objectives.

The findings of the study conducted by Wang (2020) confirmed the positive influence of digital marketing capabilities on performance as firms with greater entrepreneurial orientation leverage digital marketing capabilities more effectively and have better performance.

Hence, if e-marketing is adopted without sufficient manpower and skills, organizational performance will not be enhanced even with an adequate e-marketing budget (Lee & Ng, 2020).

While perceived ease of use is defined as the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular technology would be beneficial, perceived ease of use refers to the user's perception of how easy it is to use a particular technology or system, the idea which is rooted to the technology acceptance model (TAM) (Davis, 1989). TAM is a framework that examines how users come to accept and use technology in practical contexts. In today's dynamic business landscape, digital marketing emerges as a modern tactic and as a cost-effective strategy. The effectiveness of digital marketing contributes to enhancing business competency (Nilasari et al., 2019).

Compared to traditional marketing channels, costs for advertising digital marketing are more economical than the traditional way (Giang, 2022). Hence, the cost-effectiveness of digital marketing allows even small businesses and startups to grow their audience and find potential customers.

Consumer awareness and consideration are the main components of the social media framework

(Hanlon, 2022). While consumer awareness is an act of making sure the user, buyer, or consumer is aware of the information about offerings, consideration represents the stage where online visitors are thinking about your brand, and this may result in web traffic, talking about the brand online, or other engagement.

From a digital marketing perspective, awareness and consideration are classified at the start within the digital marketing framework. Using social media advertising, a new service can be targeted at specific customer groups, personas, or other demographics to gain awareness within minutes (Hanlon, 2022).

Although many previous studies were carried out on examining different aspects of the relationship linking various variables with organizational performance of digital marketing, the mediation role of customer awareness in this relationship was treated as a black box in prior research (Akaileh et al., 2023).

Consequently, based on an extensive review of related literature, a proposed conceptual model was developed aiming at identifying the KSFs of the digital marketing strategy of SEs.

It is worth noting that in the proposed research model digital marketing performance was measured through two levels; 1) engagement metrics such as content viewership, tagging, number of shares, bookmarking or "likes" and 2) action metrics such as purchase, click through to an advertiser's site, registration, and contact form completion (Rahman et al., 2017; Fondevila Gascón et al., 2016).

The developed framework presents the interrelationships linking the independent, mediator, and dependent variables as shown in Figure 1 below.

Moreover, the following hypotheses have been proposed:

*H1: There is a significant positive impact of e-marketing implementation on the performance of small enterprises.*

*H1a: There is a significant positive impact of e-marketing orientation on the performance of small enterprises.*

*H1b: There is a significant positive impact of digital marketing capabilities on the performance of small enterprises.*

*H1c: There is a significant positive impact of perceived ease of use on the performance of small enterprises.*

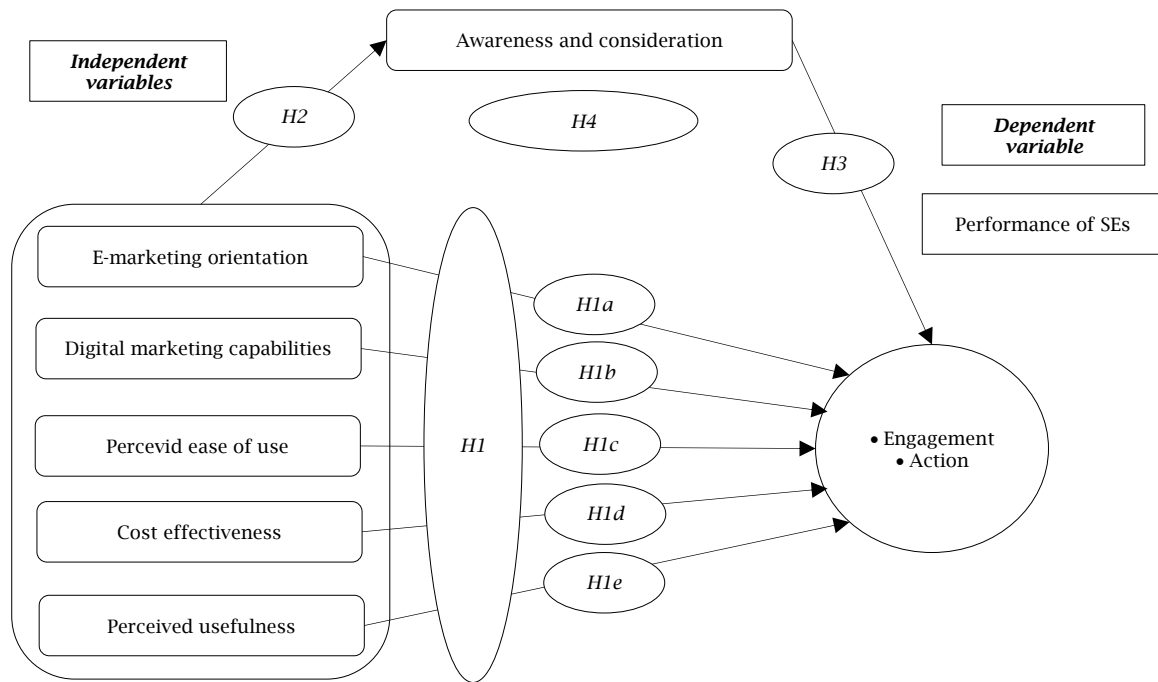
*H1d: There is a significant positive impact of cost-effectiveness on the performance of small enterprises.*

*H1e: There is a significant positive impact of perceived usefulness on the performance of small enterprises.*

*H2: There is a significant positive impact of e-marketing implementation on the awareness and consideration.*

*H3: There is a significant positive impact on awareness and consideration of the performance of small enterprises.*

*H4: Awareness and consideration mediate the relationship between e-marketing implementation and the performance of small enterprises.*

**Figure 1.** Research theoretical framework

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is an approach to methodically explain the research problem. It is concerned with linking the theoretical aspects of research with the appropriate practical data collection instruments or techniques (Swarooprani, 2022). Research is broadly divided into quantitative and qualitative research designs. Quantitative research is a systematic investigation of phenomena (Allen, 2017). It is a research method used to answer questions on relationships within measurable variables with the intention to explain, predict, and control a phenomenon (Mohajan, 2020). Thus, the present study followed the logic of a quantitative approach to assess the interrelated relationships linking the variables of the developed research theoretical framework using an e-questionnaire targeting participants from SEs in Jordan. Accordingly, the intended data were gathered from 370 valid e-questionnaires based on the convenience sampling technique. This research instrument included two sections: the first one consists of descriptive and demographic data regarding participating SEs, meanwhile, the second section includes a set of questions related to the variables of the research theoretical framework.

In more detail, the used research instrument consists of 31 items that include descriptive data for participating SEs in terms of the number of employees, the age of the project, the nature of the business activity (craftsmanship, commercial, or agricultural), as well as the digital marketing applications used by these SEs. In addition, the main body of the adopted questionnaire included items related to the independent variables (19 questions), the mediator (4 questions), and the dependent variable (8 questions) as detailed in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Dimensions of the developed questionnaire

| No.   | Dimensions   | Number of items |
|-------|--|-----------------|
| 1     | Independent variable: e-marketing implementation (EMI)       | 19              |
| 1.1   | E-marketing orientation (EMO)                                | 3               |
| 1.2   | Digital marketing capabilities (DMC)                         | 4               |
| 1.3   | Perceived ease of use (PEU)                                  | 4               |
| 1.4   | Cost-effectiveness (CE)                                      | 4               |
| 1.5   | Perceived usefulness (PU)                                    | 4               |
| 2     | Mediating variable: awareness and consideration (AC)         | 4               |
| 3     | Dependent variable — Performance of small enterprises (PSEs) | 8               |
| 3.1   | Engagement metrics (EM)                                      | 4               |
| 3.2   | Action metrics (AM)  | 4               |
| Total |  | 31              |

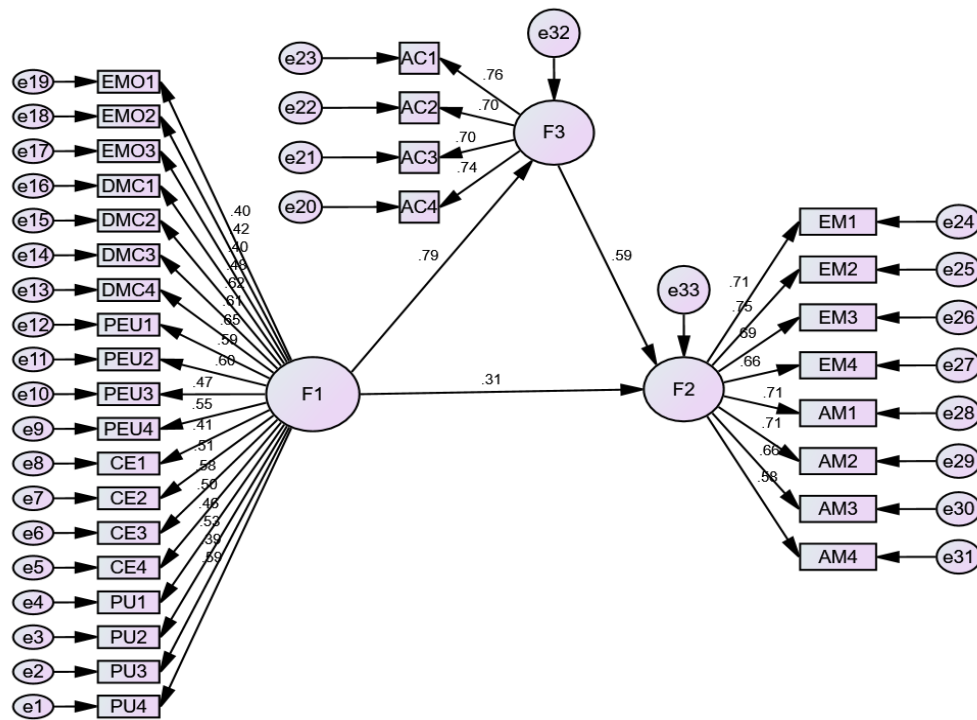
Thus, data were collected from participants that were statistically analyzed using the AMOS V.23 program. Then, AMOS software was used to calculate the model fit indicators. Good of fit index (GFI), adjusted GFI (AGFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), and comparative fit index (CFI) were used as indicators of model fitness.

It was noted from the results of Table 2 and Figure 2 that all fit indicators indicate the quality of the data. Hence, it is suitable for the purposes of this study.

**Table 2.** Indicators of model fit

| Indicators | Value    |
|------------|----------|
| RMSEA      | 0.062    |
| RMR        | 0.039    |
| Chi-square | 1331.567 |
| Df.        | 309      |
| Sig.       | 0.00     |
| GFI        | 0.910    |
| AGFI       | 0.899    |
| TLI        | 0.915    |
| CFI        | 0.936    |
| NFI        | 0.923    |

Note: RMR is root mean square residual, TLI is Tucker-Lewis index, NFI is normed fit index.

**Figure 2.** Drawing of the indicators of model fit

#### 4. RESULTS

AMOS V.23 software was used for testing the *H1*. Table 3 shows the results of the data analysis:

**Table 3.** Result of *H1* — the impact of e-marketing implementation on the performance of small enterprises

| Direction              | $\beta$ | $t$    | Sig.   | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ |
|------------------------|---------|--------|--------|-------|----------------|
| EMI $\rightarrow$ PSEs | 0.666   | 17.152 | 0.00** | 0.444 | 0.442          |

Note: \*\* Statistically significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

It was noted from Table 3 that the effect values have reached 0.666. The value of  $t$  was statistically significant at the level of statistical significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . Such a result indicates the significance of the effect value. Also, the value of adjusted  $R^2$  which is equal to 0.442, indicates that *EMI* explained 44.2% of the variance in the *PSEs*.

**Figure 3.** The impact factor of e-marketing implementation on the performance of small enterprises



Moreover, AMOS V.23 software was used to test the sub-hypotheses, namely *H1a*, *H1b*, *H1c*, *H1d*, and *H1e*, as detailed in Table 4 below. These hypotheses were formulated to gain insight and to detail the interrelationships of the main hypothesis.

The above sub-hypotheses assume a positive impact for each of 1) *EMO*, 2) *DMCs*, 3) *PEU*, 4) *CEs*, and 5) *PU* on the *PSEs*.

**Table 4.** Results of testing sub-hypotheses

| Direction              | $\beta$ | $t$    | Sig.   | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ |
|------------------------|---------|--------|--------|-------|----------------|
| EMO $\rightarrow$ H1a  | 0.364   | 7.510  | 0.00** | 0.133 | 0.130          |
| DMCs $\rightarrow$ H1b | 0.596   | 14.263 | 0.00** | 0.355 | 0.354          |
| PEU $\rightarrow$ H1c  | 0.602   | 14.468 | 0.00** | 0.362 | 0.360          |
| CE $\rightarrow$ H1d   | 0.391   | 8.161  | 0.00** | 0.153 | 0.151          |
| PU $\rightarrow$ H1e   | 0.456   | 9.853  | 0.00** | 0.208 | 0.206          |

Note: \*\* Statistically significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

As shown in the above table, all sub-hypotheses were accepted based on data analysis. The effect values of  $\beta$  for independent variables (*EMO*, *DMCs*, *PEU*, *CE*, and *PU*) have reached 0.364, 0.596, 0.602, 0.391, and 0.456 respectively where the values of  $t$  were statistically significant at the level of statistical significance  $\alpha = 0.05$  which indicates the significance of the effect value.

For testing the *H2*, AMOS V.23 software was used. Table 5 shows the results of the analysis:

**Table 5.** Result of *H2* — the impact of e-marketing implementation on awareness and consideration

| Direction            | $\beta$ | $t$    | Sig.   | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ |
|----------------------|---------|--------|--------|-------|----------------|
| EMI $\rightarrow$ AC | 0.655   | 16.650 | 0.00** | 0.429 | 0.427          |

Note: \*\* Statistically significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

It was noted from Table 5 that the effect values have reached 0.655. The value of  $t$  was statistically significant at the level of statistical significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ . This indicates the significance of the effect value. Also, the value of adjusted  $R^2$ , which is equal to 0.427, indicates that *EMI* explained 42.7% of the variance in the *AC* of users in the *SEs* in Jordan.

**Figure 4.** The impact of e-marketing implementation on awareness and consideration

For testing the *H3*, AMOS V.23 software was used. Table 6 shows the results of the analysis:

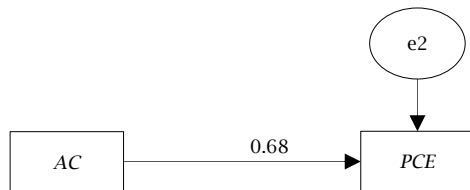
**Table 6.** Result of *H3* — impact on awareness and consideration of awareness performance of small enterprises

| Direction | $\beta$ | <i>t</i> | Sig.   | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ |
|-----------|---------|----------|--------|-------|----------------|
| AC → PSEs | 0.681   | 17.876   | 0.00** | 0.464 | 0.463          |

Note: \*\* Statistically significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

It was noted from Table 6 that the effect values have reached 0.681. The value of *t* was statistically significant at the level of statistical significance  $\alpha = 0.05$ , which indicates the significance of the effect value.

In addition, the value of adjusted  $R^2$  which is equal to 0.463, indicates that AC explained 46.3% of the variance in the PSEs.

**Figure 5.** The impact factor awareness and consideration of on performance of small enterprises

For testing the *H4*, the researchers adopted path analysis using the structural equation modeling (AMOS V.23 software). Table 7 shows the results of the data analysis:

**Table 7.** Result of *H4* — awareness and consideration mediate the relationship between e-marketing implementation and performance of small enterprises

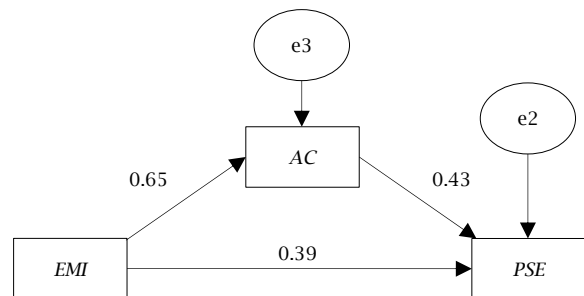
| Variable       | Effect type | $\beta$ | <i>t</i> | Sig.  | $R^2$ | Adjusted $R^2$ |
|----------------|-------------|---------|----------|-------|-------|----------------|
| EMI → PSEs     | Direct      | 0.39    | 8.320    | 0.0** | 0.370 | 0.368          |
| EMI → AC       | Direct      | 0.65    | 16.650   | 0.0** |       |                |
| AC → PSEs      | Direct      | 0.43    | 9.271    | 0.0** |       |                |
| EMI → PSEs, AC | Indirect    | 0.28    | 13.583   | 0.0** | 0.549 | 0.546          |

Note: \*\* Statistically significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

It was noted from Table 7 that there is a statistically significant effect of EMI on PSEs, with AC as a mediating variable. All values of *t* were statistically significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

The value of the indirect effect of EMI on PSEs in the AC variable was a mediating variable (0.28).

Moreover, the value of adjusted  $R^2$ , which is equal to 0.546, indicates that EMI with AC as a mediating variable explained 54.6% of the variance in PSEs.

**Figure 6.** The impact factors (awareness and consideration) mediate the relationship between e-marketing implementation and the performance of small enterprises of small enterprises

Moreover, to determine the importance of the value of the indirect effect of the mediating variable, the researcher used the Sobel test.

As shown in Table 8 below, the value of the Sobel test is 31.548. This value is statistically significant ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), which means accepting the value of the indirect effect.

**Table 8.** Results of the Sobel test analysis

| Beta (a)        | Beta (b)     | SE (a)                       | SE (b)               | The nature of the mediating role | Sig.   |
|-----------------|--------------|------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|--------|
| 0.65            | 0.43         | 0.014                        | 0.010                |                                  |        |
| Indirect effect | Total effect | Variance accounted for (VAF) | Test mediation Sobel | Partial                          | 0.00** |
| 0.280           | 0.670        | 0.881                        | 31.548               |                                  |        |

Note: \*\* Statistically significant at  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

## 5. DISCUSSION

The present research effort has sought to identify the KSFs of SE's digital marketing strategy in the context of Jordan. From a strategic perspective, the findings of the study confirmed the positive association between e-marketing orientation and the intended PSEs, which represent the total outcomes of implementing the digital marketing strategies.

The results pointed out e-marketing orientation as a main pillar of SE's digital marketing strategy. Comparing e-marketing-oriented businesses to non-marketing-oriented ones, e-marketing-oriented businesses are more likely to manage and respond

to digital market requirements and conditions efficiently, which in turn results in enhancing marketing performance. Such a result was consistent with El Saghier (2021) research that positioned e-marketing orientation as an essential of start-ups' business in order to enhance their competitive advantage. In addition, the above finding is in agreement with Al Asheq et al. (2021), who confirmed that a higher degree of e-marketing orientation and technology orientation would result in higher online performance of small and medium-sized business organizations.

Moreover, the findings of the research indicated that DMCs are an essential asset for achieving superiority in the digital age. DMCs

enhance a business's ability to use digital technology and enable processes to interact better with customers. This finding corroborates prior research that has demonstrated that marketing capability has a positive impact on firm performance (Jung & Shegai, 2023). However, some research argued that SEs with strong digital capabilities perform as well as medium-sized firms but large firms perform marginally better than small and medium-sized firms (Wang, 2020).

With regard to PEU and PU of digital applications and activities, the results of the study are consistent with the logic of the TAM model, which assumes that when potential customers or users are exposed to new digital applications or advanced technology, a number of factors influence their decision about how and when they will use it such as PU and perceived ease-of-use, and attitude toward using, etc. (Davis, 1989). Thus, PU and perceived ease-of-use will contribute to increasing engagement with the digital marketing activities of SEs, which in turn will be positively reflected in their marketing performance.

With regard to CE, a main competitive advantage of SEs refers to the idea that the adoption of a digital marketing model allows SEs to compete with larger enterprises at a lower cost. The digital marketing model gives the opportunity to allocate available resources effectively by targeting the most appropriate consumer categories and supporting SEs to acquire a large market share with limited budgets.

It is worth noting that a prominent finding of the present research is the highlighting of the relationship that links digital marketing implementation and PSEs and the crucial role of customer AC in this relationship.

The findings of the study pointed out the important impact of AC that constituted an important mediating factor between each of the independent variables and the targeted PSEs, as it confirmed the existence of the strong association between digital marketing implementation and the achievement of superior marketing performance measured by 1) EM and 2) AM as detailed in data analysis.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The present research was designed to identify the KSFs of SEs' digital marketing strategy. Consequently, the study has made several contributions. It offered further insight into the relationship between SEs' digital marketing strategy and marketing performance. Thus, it enabled the identification of the most influential digital marketing variables of SEs and explored the significant mediating role of awareness and consideration between the digital marketing strategy and the targeted performance of SEs. Furthermore, the findings of this study offered several implications for managers and policymakers. First, it highlighted e-marketing orientation as a priority and recommended that e-marketing orientation deserves

to be positioned at the heart of the corporate strategy to drive success. Hence, as a first step, SEs should establish, enhance, and disseminate their internal organizational culture based on the values and practices of the e-marketing philosophy. Such an approach will enhance the success of implementing other digital activities in marketing. Second, the findings indicated that SEs that possess digital marketing capabilities are more capable of performing better than others with less digital marketing capabilities because of the indirect effect of digital marketing innovation on firm performance through marketing capability. Such SEs are expected to have the ability to deal competently with regard to the e-marketing model, and to manage their relationships through electronic applications so that they can create value for all stakeholders. Third, marketers and decision-makers should give great attention to awareness and consideration in their marketing communication programs while formulating the digital strategy. Thus, in order to achieve the targeted digital marketing performance (represented in engagement and action), marketers need to manage awareness and consideration carefully as awareness maximizes the brand's share-of-voice through impressions and consideration, encouraging customers to take action to find out more about SEs' offerings.

However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this research. One limitation is attributed to the adopted methodological approach. This research adopted a quantitative research design using a questionnaire as a single research instrument, and the process included collecting and analyzing numerical data to test the causal relationships. However, other methodological alternatives as the use of mixed and multi-methods research (Salmons, 2015) or triangulation (Gibson, 2017; Guion et al., 2002) offer methodological powerful techniques that facilitate the validation of data by using a combination of several research methods that enable researchers to expand the methodological alternatives horizontally and vertically aiming at increasing the validity and credibility of evaluation findings. Another potential limitation is related to the lack of prior research on the corporate digital strategy within the context of SMEs in developing countries, as in the case of the present research. Accordingly, it is justified to conduct further similar research in the same context but in other developing country markets so that KSFs of digital marketing strategy can be verified in other contexts. Also, it is recommended that future studies employ a multi-method approach while investigating the association between digital marketing strategy and digital marketing performance, as the triangulation method may facilitate to facilitation of validation of data through corroboration with each other and to achieve a meaningful image, complete description, and holistic understanding for the issue being evaluated.

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