THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING TECHNOLOGY FOR TRANSFORMATION ON SMES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This comprehensive systematic review delves into the complex landscape of digital marketing adoption within Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). By scrutinizing existing literature, it aims to uncover nuanced insights into the multifaceted dynamics surrounding digital marketing strategies in SMEs, emphasizing its impact, challenges, and strategic imperatives for sustainable growth in the digital era. Employing a systematic approach, this review synthesizes various scholarly articles, research reports, and industry insights to unravel the intricate dynamics of digital marketing adoption in SMEs. By meticulously analyzing existing literature, this study seeks to uncover underlying patterns, emerging trends, and critical success factors shaping SMEs' digital marketing endeavors. The findings of this systematic review carry profound practical implications for SMEs navigating the complex terrain of digital marketing. By distilling key insights and best practices, this study equips SMEs with actionable strategies to optimize their digital marketing efforts, enhance customer engagement, and foster sustainable growth amidst evolving market dynamics.

Keywords: Digital marketing, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), Transformation, Data-driven decision-making

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) drive global economic growth, promote innovation, and generate jobs. However, the digital world has brought enormous changes to SMEs, posing difficulties and possibilities. One notable development is the growing importance of digital marketing in promoting firms and reaching out to specific consumers. According to Kapoor et al. (2019), digital marketing includes a variety of online methods and platforms, such as social media, search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, and content marketing. Effective use of digital marketing may level the playing field for SMEs, allowing them to compete against larger enterprises.

According to De Vries et al. (2017), introducing digital marketing technologies has transformed how SMEs communicate with clients, sell their products or services, and do

business. Unlike traditional marketing tactics, digital marketing enables SMEs to target specific demographic categories accurately and track campaign results in real time. This degree of accuracy and measurability enables SMEs to improve their marketing efforts, manage resources more efficiently, and generate greater returns on investment (ROI) (Alalwan et al., 2018).

Despite the potential benefits, many SMEs must be more active in implementing digital marketing tactics due to various obstacles and constraints. These include limited financial resources, a need for more skill or understanding of digital marketing tools and tactics, and worries about data protection and security (Kraus et al., 2020). Additionally, Ryan et al. (2020) stated that SMEs in conventional or specialist sectors may view digital marketing as irrelevant or incompatible with their business strategies. However, as consumer behavior shifts to online channels and digital platforms, SMEs must embrace digital marketing to remain competitive and relevant.

Given these conditions, this systematic review aims to assess the available literature on digital marketing technology's impact on SMEs. This paper seeks to provide insights into the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies for SMEs by synthesizing findings from academic research articles, industry reports, and case studies, as well as the barriers to adoption and the strategies they can employ to overcome these challenges. Furthermore, the assessment will look at the role of analytics and data-driven decision-making in improving the efficiency of SMEs' digital marketing activities, the importance of mobile marketing, and remaining current with emerging trends and technology.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The significance of digital marketing for SMEs

The literature on digital marketing for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) is extensive and diverse, comprising research from various fields, including marketing, entrepreneurship, and information technology. This section provides a complete review of available studies on the influence of digital marketing technology on SMEs, emphasizing essential issues such as its importance, adoption hurdles, and successful methods.

In the digital era, digital marketing has emerged as an essential tool for SMEs seeking to increase exposure, reach target customers, and drive business success. Chaffey et al. (2019) emphasize the importance of digital marketing in levelling the playing field for SMEs, allowing them to compete with more prominent firms through digital channels such as social media, search engines, and email. Similarly, research by De Vries et al. (2017) and Ryan et al. (2020) emphasize the importance of digital marketing in growing brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales for SMEs in various industries.

Despite the potential benefits, many SMEs need help implementing digital marketing techniques. Financial restrictions, a lack of digital skills and competence, and scepticism about the efficiency of digital marketing are among the most often mentioned impediments (Dwivedi et al., 2019; Alalwan et al., 2018). Furthermore, cultural and organizational barriers may impede the integration of digital marketing into SMEs' existing business processes and practices (Kapoor et al., 2019).

To overcome these obstacles, researchers found a variety of techniques and best practices for SMEs to use digital marketing successfully. These include investing in digital skills training and education for employees (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015), using social

media platforms to engage with customers and build brand loyalty (Ngai et al., 2018), and taking a customer-centric approach to digital marketing that focuses on delivering personalized and relevant content (Harrigan et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the importance of analytics and data-driven decision-making has received much attention in the literature on digital marketing for SMEs. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) may acquire insights into client behaviour, preferences, and purchase habits by leveraging data analytics tools and methodologies, allowing them to modify their marketing strategy appropriately. Nguyen et al. (2020) and Wang et al. (2018) found that evaluating key performance indicators (KPIs) such as website traffic, conversion rates, and customer lifetime value is critical for assessing the efficiency of digital marketing initiatives and optimizing resource allocation.

In addition to analytics, mobile marketing has become an essential component of SMEs' digital marketing plans. With the rise of smartphones and mobile internet usage, SMEs have recognized the need to optimize their websites and content for mobile devices to improve user experience and engagement (Sawang et al., 2019). Barnes et al. (2020) and Li et al. (2018) found that mobile marketing methods such as SMS marketing, mobile applications, and location-based advertising successfully reach and engage mobile-savvy customers.

Furthermore, to remain competitive in the digital marketplace, SMEs must constantly adapt and improve their digital marketing strategies in response to shifting consumer trends and technical breakthroughs. This needs an innovative and experimental culture inside SMEs and a readiness to adopt emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, voice search, and augmented reality (Kraus et al., 2020; Grewal et al., 2019).

2.2 The Role of Analytics and Data-driven Decision Making

In digital marketing for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), analytics and data-driven decision-making have emerged as a critical component for improving marketing effectiveness and optimizing resource allocation. This section explores the use of analytics in digital marketing for SMEs, emphasizing the value of data in understanding consumer behaviour, increasing engagement, and monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs).

Analytics is the process of collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data in order to acquire insights and guide decision-making. In digital marketing, analytics tools and methodologies allow SMEs to analyze and measure numerous metrics linked to their online presence, including website traffic, user engagement, conversion rates, and customer demographics. By using these data, SMEs may acquire a more in-depth understanding of their target audience's preferences, interests, and purchase behaviour, allowing them to adjust their marketing tactics more effectively.

One of the most significant benefits of analytics for SMEs is the ability to analyze and measure the efficacy of digital marketing efforts in real time. Unlike conventional forms of marketing, where calculating ROI may be difficult and time-consuming, digital marketing platforms give SMEs rapid access to various information on campaign efficacy and audience engagement. This allows SMEs to understand which marketing channels and approaches yield the best results and allocate resources appropriately, maximizing the effect of their marketing expenditure (Kannan & Li, 2017).

Furthermore, analytics enables SMEs to segment their target audience more effectively and tailor their marketing efforts to meet individual tastes and demands. By analyzing consumer data such as prior purchase behaviour, browsing history, and demographic information, SMEs can produce highly targeted and relevant marketing messages that personally engage with their target audience. This increases the efficacy of marketing initiatives and develops better consumer connections and brand loyalty (Nguyen et al., 2020).

In addition to campaign optimization and audience segmentation, analytics is critical for measuring and monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs) that indicate digital marketing success. These include website traffic, conversion rates, click-through rates, bounce rates, and customer acquisition expenses. Setting defined KPIs and routinely evaluating performance against these benchmarks allows SMEs to evaluate the efficacy of their digital marketing activities, identify areas for development, and make data-driven decisions to optimize their strategy (Wang et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the emergence of sophisticated analytics technologies such as machine learning and predictive analytics offers enormous potential for SMEs seeking a competitive advantage in the digital economy. To stay ahead of the competition, SMEs may use predictive modelling to foresee future trends, anticipate client wants, and proactively alter their marketing tactics. Furthermore, machine learning algorithms can automate data analysis and pattern detection, allowing SMEs to extract actionable insights more quickly and accurately from big, complex datasets (Kannan & Li, 2017). By leveraging data, SMEs may acquire essential insights into their target audience, assess the efficacy of their marketing activities, and make educated decisions to meet their company objectives in the dynamic and competitive digital world.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study uses a descriptive tool to analyze the data. The study is based on secondary data and information related to traditional and Islamic accounting, gathered from various books, journals, newspapers, research papers, and many websites. In this study, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) tool was pivotal in shaping the methodological approach. PRISMA was a robust framework for establishing and standardizing the search strategy, ensuring a comprehensive and systematic exploration of the relevant literature. By adhering to PRISMA guidelines, the research team could methodically identify and incorporate key components of the review question, enhancing the clarity and coherence of the study's objectives and methodology.

PRISMA is widely recognized for its effectiveness in guiding the systematic review process, particularly in qualitative investigation studies and mixed methods research. Its structured approach facilitates the identification of pertinent studies while promoting transparency and reproducibility in the review process. By utilizing PRISMA, researchers can ensure that all relevant aspects of the research question are adequately addressed, thereby minimizing the risk of bias and enhancing the reliability of the findings.

3.1 Identifying Research Questions

This article examines tactics, challenges, and the applicability of ways to explore opportunities for differentiation in the Islamic and conventional accounting standards. Consequently, the following research questions are formulated to direct the inquiry and guarantee that a variety of literature that focuses on these areas of interest is gathered.

1. How do the multifaceted barriers to digital marketing adoption by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) evolve across diverse industries and geographic contexts, and what novel insights can be gleaned from examining the intersectionality of these barriers?

2. How can Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) strategically navigate the multifaceted challenges inherent in digital marketing adoption, including organizational culture, resource constraints, and external market dynamics, to cultivate resilient competitive advantages and sustainable growth trajectories in an ever-evolving digital landscape?

3. How do the intricate dynamics of analytics utilization and data-driven decision-making shape the efficacy of digital marketing strategies for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and what nuanced methodologies and frameworks can be devised to comprehensively assess the multifaceted impacts of these strategies on SME performance and market positioning?

3.2 Identify related studies

A comprehensive search strategy was employed to identify relevant studies for this systematic review. Databases, including Scopus, were searched using keywords and Boolean operators. The purposed of the authors only using Scopus databased are because Scopus is one of the largest abstracts and citation databases of peer-reviewed literature, covering a broad range of disciplines, including social sciences, business, economics, and technology. Moreover, for studies focusing on interdisciplinary fields such as digital marketing adoption, Scopus offers a rich collection of relevant articles.

Table 1. The leading search item used to issue a published article.

Essential search items used to generate published articles
SMEs” AND “Digital Marketing”
"competitive advantage" or "strategic management"

The keywords used for the search included variations of terms such as “SMEs” AND “Digital Marketing." Additionally, specific terms related to the research objectives, such as “competitive advantage" or "strategic management," were included to ensure a comprehensive search. The search strategy also involved screening the reference lists of relevant articles and consulting experts in the field to identify additional studies that met the inclusion criteria.

Table 2. Comprising and exclusion criteria

Criterion	**Comprising**	**Exception**
Period	2019-2024	Articles outside the year
Language	English only	Other languages
Types of articles	Original and peer-reviewed research	Articles that are not peer-reviewed
Study focus	SMEs AND digital marketing only	Other residents

4.0 RESULT

This procedure is continued with a deeper review iteration in which the full-text version of the article is retrieved, thoroughly studied, and validated as relevant using the author's exclusion or inclusion criteria. In the first phase, 304 entries were found in the previously stated databases. After removing the duplicate articles and books (n = 127), 177 unique papers were examined. In a subsequent step, 89 records were excluded based on titles,

keywords, and abstract analysis, leaving 88 articles suitable for a thorough review. Figures 1 through 4 show the findings from the Scopus database.

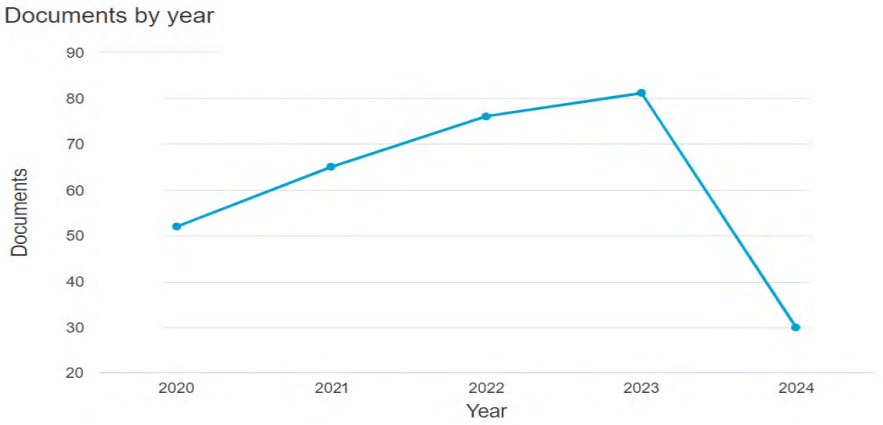


Fig. 1 *Document by year*

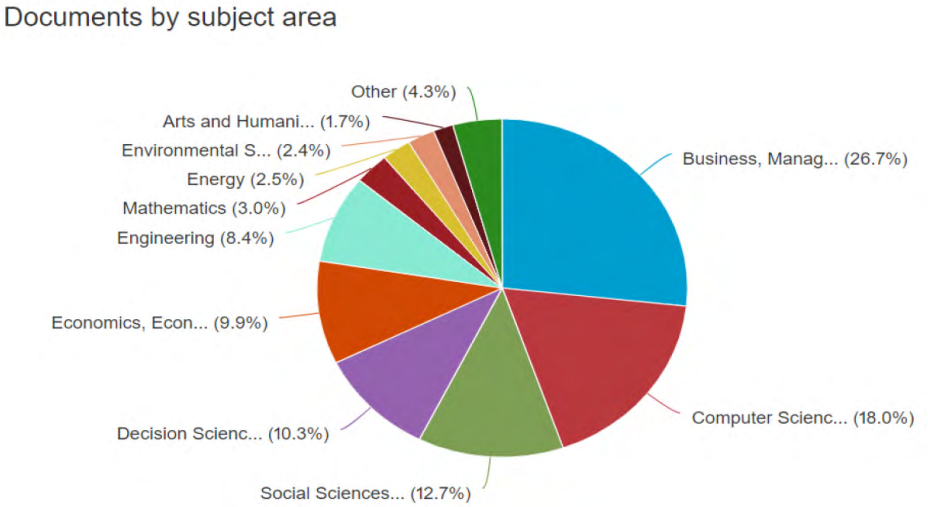


Fig. 2 *Document by subject area*

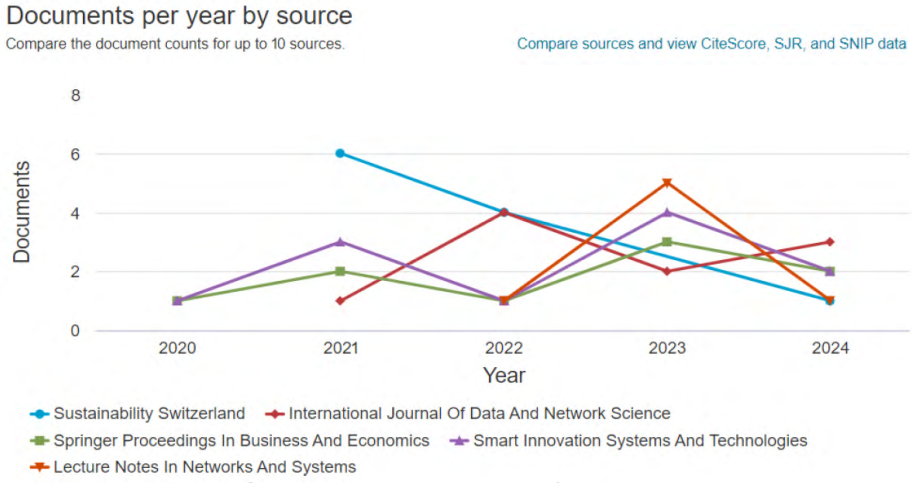


Fig. 3 *Documents per year by source*

Figure 1 illustrates the number of documents published by year from 2020 to 2024, showing fluctuations over time. Starting at 50 documents in 2020, there is a steady increase, reaching approximately 80 documents in 2022 and peaking at around 85 documents in

2023. While, Figure 2 and 3 show the largest share is dominated by "Business, Management" with 26.7%, followed by "Computer Science" (18.0%), "Social Sciences" (12.7%), and "Decision Sciences" (10.3%). Other notable areas include "Economics" (9.9%) and "Engineering" (8.4%). Smaller segments cover fields like "Mathematics," "Energy," "Environmental Science," "Arts and Humanities," and an "Other" category. The diversity in subject areas indicates an interdisciplinary focus, although business and technology-related fields are the most represented.

5.0 Discussion

The obstacles to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) adopting digital

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) confront various challenges when adopting digital marketing, which vary based on industry and region (Harrigan et al., 2021). These impediments can take many forms, including financial constraints, limited digital skills, poor infrastructure, and cultural aversion to change (De Vries et al., 2017). In industries such as conventional manufacturing or agriculture, SMEs may need clarification on the suitability of digital marketing methods for their businesses. Similarly, SMEs in rural or undeveloped locations may face challenges such as poor internet connectivity or restricted access to technology resources, limiting their capacity to use digital marketing strategies.

The interconnectedness of these restrictions complicates the digital marketing landscape for SMEs. Cultural influences, such as societal conventions and values, considerably impact SMEs' attitudes toward digitization and readiness to accept new technology (Barnes et al. 2020). In certain areas, there may be scepticism about digital platforms and worries about data privacy and security, which serve as additional barriers. Furthermore, regulatory frameworks and government policies vary by area, affecting SMEs' ability to handle legal difficulties and comply with digital marketing sector laws (Chaffey et al.,2019).

By investigating the intersectionality of these barriers, we may acquire a better understanding of the complex dynamics of SMEs' digital marketing adoption. This method allows academics and practitioners to find similar patterns and trends across sectors and locations while recognizing the contextual elements influencing SMEs' digitization journeys. For example, latest research by Deku et al. (2024), investigated the interaction between cultural norms and technology readiness might give valuable insights into ways to overcome cultural resistance and increase SMEs' adoption of digital marketing.

Furthermore, understanding the changing nature of hurdles to digital marketing adoption enables the development of customized interventions and support systems to assist SMEs in overcoming these obstacles (Kapoor et al., 2019). Policymakers, industry associations, and support organizations can create tailored initiatives to promote digital literacy, provide access to affordable technology solutions, and create an enabling environment for SMEs to thrive in the digital economy by considering the diverse needs and circumstances of SMEs in various industries and regions.

Navigate the multifaceted challenges inherent in digital marketing adoption

To effectively address the obstacles of digital marketing adoption, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) must take a strategic approach considering their organizational culture, resource constraints, and external market dynamics. According to Kraus et al .(2020), SMEs must recognize the critical importance of organizational culture in promoting digital marketing adoption. SMEs may establish an atmosphere that promotes digital transformation by cultivating an innovation culture, embracing change, and encouraging continuous learning. Leadership must be supportive, and workers must actively participate in advancing digital projects and overcoming opposition to change (Li et al., 2018).

Moreover, Ngai et al. (2018) suggest the SMEs must manage resource constraints during their digital marketing journey. While SMEs may need more financial resources from prominent organizations, they may use their agility and flexibility to get the most out of their digital marketing efforts. Prioritizing high-impact areas, such as focused advertising campaigns or user-friendly website design, may assist SMEs in using their limited resources and achieving demonstrable outcomes.

On the other hand, Ryan and Jones (2020) stated that, SMEs must modify their digital marketing strategy to reflect external market dynamics and changing customer behaviours. This demands a detailed awareness of the target audience, market trends, and competitive environment. SMEs may uncover new growth prospects and differentiate themselves in the digital marketplace by performing market research, tracking industry advancements, and staying current on emerging technology.

Furthermore, teamwork and collaboration may be highly beneficial in overcoming resource limits and improving SMEs' digital skills (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015). SMEs may boost their digital marketing efforts by developing alliances with other firms, industry groups, or digital marketing services, which provide extra experience, resources, and networks. Activities such as collaborative marketing campaigns or co-branded content may help SMEs increase their reach and substantially influence the digital world.

The intricate dynamics of analytics utilization and data-driven decision-making shape the efficacy of digital marketing strategies for SMEs

In the rapidly changing digital marketing landscape, staying competitive depends on SMEs' ability to constantly learn, adapt, and innovate and SMEs to stay up with the ever-changing dynamics of digital marketing, continuous learning is required (Dwivedi at al., 2019). As new technologies emerge and customer demands shift, SMEs must invest in developing digital skills and expertise within their staff. Employees may be given training programs, workshops, and resources to help them better comprehend digital marketing tools, tactics, and best practices (Taiminen & Karjaluoto, 2015). SMEs may enable their staff to adapt to new challenges and embrace growth possibilities in the digital era by cultivating a learning and professional development culture.

Furthermore, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) must be watchful and proactive in monitoring and responding to developing digital trends and technologies (Deku et al. 2024). This entails staying current on industry news, attending conferences and seminars, and networking with peers and industry professionals to acquire insights into the newest advancements and breakthroughs. For example, the emergence of voice search,

artificial intelligence, and augmented reality provides new chances for SMEs to connect with customers in novel ways and distinguish themselves from the competition (Kraus et al., 2020). By adopting innovative technology and experimenting with new ideas, SMEs may remain ahead of the competition in the digital marketplace.

In addition to using new technology, SMEs must be prepared to experiment and take measured risks in their digital marketing efforts. Innovation frequently requires trial and error, and SMEs must be prepared to learn from mistakes and adjust their tactics accordingly. This may entail experimenting with various marketing channels, message approaches, and audience targeting strategies to determine what connects most successfully with their intended audience (Grewal et al., 2019). By adopting an experimentation and iteration approach, SMEs may uncover new potential for development and innovation in the digital space.

Furthermore, teamwork and partnerships may help SMEs become more competitive in digital marketing. Alliances with other firms, industry groups, or digital marketing agencies may provide SMEs with extra resources, experience, and networks to help them improve their digital capabilities (Kannan & Li, 2017). Collaborative activities, such as collaborative marketing campaigns, co-branded content, or shared data projects, may help SMEs reach new audiences, grow their market presence, and increase their digital marketing effect (Grewal et al., 2019).

Finally, being competitive in digital marketing necessitates a proactive and flexible strategy prioritizing ongoing learning, experimentation, and cooperation. SMEs should position themselves for long-term success and growth in the dynamic and competitive digital marketplace by investing in digital skill development, monitoring emerging trends and technologies, embracing innovation, and forming strategic alliances.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The systematic research gave a detailed overview of the influence of digital marketing technologies on transformation in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The analysis showed that digital marketing is essential in increasing SMEs' exposure, consumer interaction, and overall competitiveness in the digital age. SMEs may use digital platforms and technology to reach target audiences more effectively, assess the efficacy of marketing efforts, and adjust their tactics to changing customer preferences.

Table 3: Summary of the challenges, dynamics, and analytics utilization in relation to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) adopting digital marketing strategies

No	Categories	Key Findings
1	Obstacles to SMEs Adopting Digital	- **Financial constraints**: Limited budgets for digital transformation. - **Technological barriers**: Lack of infrastructure, digital tools, and technical expertise. - **Skills Gap**: Insufficient digital literacy and training among employees. - **Cultural resistance**: Resistance to change and reluctance in adopting new technologies.

2	Challenges in Digital Marketing Adoption	- **Complexity of digital platforms**: Navigating a multitude of marketing channels (social media, SEO, email, etc.) is overwhelming. - **Resource allocation**: Difficulties in balancing time, staff, and budget for effective digital marketing. - **Customer engagement**: Struggles with creating relevant, engaging content that resonates with target audiences.
3	Analytics Utilization and Data-Driven Decision Making	- **Lack of expertise in analytics**: SMEs often lack the knowledge or tools to interpret digital marketing data effectively. - **Integration challenges**: Difficulty integrating analytics tools into existing business systems.

In conclusion, the systematic evaluation emphasizes the revolutionary potential of digital marketing technology for SMEs. By tackling adoption hurdles, utilizing analytics for data-driven decision-making, embracing innovation, and being nimble in response to changing market dynamics, SMEs may seize new chances for development and sustainability in the digital era. Finally, digital marketing should be considered a way to promote enterprises and a strategic requirement for SMEs looking to prosper in an increasingly digitalized and competitive environment. The systematic research gave a detailed overview of the influence of digital marketing technologies on transformation in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). The analysis showed that digital marketing is essential in increasing SMEs' exposure, consumer interaction, and overall competitiveness in the digital age. SMEs may use digital platforms and technology to reach target audiences more effectively, assess the efficacy of marketing efforts, and adjust their tactics to changing customer preferences.

7.0 SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the potential benefits, SMEs need help adopting and implementing digital marketing techniques. Financial restrictions, a lack of digital expertise, and doubt about the efficiency of digital marketing are some of the most often stated impediments. However, the literature also identifies techniques and best practices for addressing these problems, including investing in digital skills training, using social media platforms, and adopting data-driven decision-making.
Furthermore, analytics and data-driven decision-making have emerged as essential factors in improving the success of SMEs' digital marketing efforts. By leveraging data insights, SMEs may acquire a better knowledge of their target audience, track the effectiveness of their marketing activities, and make educated decisions to improve their strategy. Furthermore, SMEs must embrace mobile marketing and keep up with evolving trends and technology to remain competitive in today's changing digital marketplace.

CO-AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

The study conducted does not contain any elements of conflict of interest among all aspects, especially between the principal researcher and the co-researcher, and does not contravene any laws or statutes in force. Author1 carried out the fieldwork, prepared the literature review and overlook the writeup of the whole article. Author2 wrote the research

methodology and did the data entry. Author3 carried out the statistical analysis and interpretation of the results.

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