

# To Study the Impact of Digital Marketing in Contributing Growth to Small & Medium Scale Business in Ahmedabad District

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## ABSTRACT

*The descriptive analysis of the dataset shows that the average size of businesses surveyed was small, with most being micro or small enterprises (Mean = 1.50, SD = 0.74). The mean value (2.01) for collaboration with external marketing service providers indicates that many businesses occasionally collaborate with such agencies. The frequency analysis further reveals that a majority of businesses (64.4%) are micro in scale, and 45.6% have been operating for less than two years. Around 30.9% of respondents have been using digital marketing for one to three years, while 22.8% are planning to adopt it soon. The reliability test yielded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.934, confirming a very high internal consistency among the digital marketing-related items. Cross-tabulation results indicate a statistically significant relationship between the duration of digital marketing use and collaboration with external service providers ( $\chi^2 = 15.97$ ,  $p = 0.043$ ), suggesting that businesses with more experience in digital marketing are more likely to collaborate externally. Overall, the results highlight that digital marketing adoption among small and micro businesses is growing steadily, with positive attitudes toward its cost-effectiveness and its role in enhancing customer reach and competitiveness.*

## KEYWORDS

*Unorganized Market, Micro Enterprises, Small Businesses, Digital Marketing, Adoption, Customer Reach, Collaboration, Technical Skills, Marketing Challenges*

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of the Study

In today's digital era, marketing has shifted from traditional approaches to technologically enabled strategies that reach a much wider audience at a lower cost (Vidani J. N., 2020). The rise of the internet, smartphones, and social media platforms has transformed how businesses operate and interact with their customers (Raj & Tamilarasan, 2023). For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), especially in emerging markets such as India, digital marketing has emerged as both a challenge and an opportunity (Jadhav, Gaikwad, & Bapat, 2023). Unlike large corporations with abundant financial and technological resources, SMEs often face limitations in terms of budget, skilled workforce, and infrastructure (Bansal, Pophalkar, & Vidani, 2023). Despite these constraints, digital marketing tools such as social media platforms, email campaigns, websites, and search engine optimization provide cost-

effective avenues to promote products and services, improve customer engagement, and enhance competitiveness in an increasingly globalized business environment (Deku, Wang, & Preko, 2024). Ahmedabad, the largest city in Gujarat, is a thriving hub of commerce, trade, and entrepreneurship (Pathak & Vidani, 2016). Known for its strong presence in textiles, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and food processing industries, the district has a large base of small and medium-scale businesses (Vidani & Dholakia, 2020). With increasing internet penetration, rising smartphone adoption, and a tech-savvy younger generation, SMEs in Ahmedabad are rapidly exploring digital marketing strategies to reach wider markets, strengthen customer relationships, and improve profitability (Udayasri et al., 2024). However, the extent of impact, challenges faced, and outcomes of these digital interventions remain under-researched (Vidani, Meghrajani, & Siddarth, 2023). This study aims to bridge that gap.

#### *B. Importance of SMEs in Emerging Economies*

Small and medium enterprises play a crucial role in the socio-economic development of emerging economies (Bhatt, Patel, & Vidani, 2017). In India, SMEs contribute nearly 30% to the GDP and account for almost 50% of exports, besides being a significant source of employment generation (Vidani & Singh, 2017). Their adaptability, innovation, and localized market understanding make them important drivers of inclusive growth (Vidani J. N., 2018). However, SMEs often face structural challenges, such as limited access to finance, inadequate infrastructure, and low visibility in competitive markets (Vidani & Das, 2021). Traditional marketing methods like print advertising, billboards, and television commercials have historically been unaffordable for SMEs, limiting their ability to create awareness and attract customers (Raj & Tamilarasan, 2023). Digital marketing, by contrast, offers affordable and measurable tools that can help SMEs expand their reach. As highlighted by Sukhanandi, Tank, and Vidani (2018), digital marketing reduces costs while enabling stronger customer interaction and improved brand recognition, which are critical for the consistent growth of SMEs.

#### *C. Digital Marketing as a Growth Driver for SMEs*

Digital marketing can be defined as the utilization of online platforms, technologies, and strategies to promote products and services, build customer relationships, and enhance organizational performance (Vidani & Plaha, 2016). Unlike conventional marketing channels, digital marketing enables interactive communication, real-time feedback, and data-driven decision-making (Salhab, 2024). For SMEs, this is particularly beneficial as it allows them to customize campaigns, measure performance, and optimize budgets effectively (Vidani & Pathak, 2016). According to Sharma and Vidani (2023), the conceptualization and adoption of digital marketing directly improve SMEs' performance in emerging markets. Digital marketing positively influences areas such as customer acquisition, satisfaction, retention, profitability, and service quality. Similarly, Solanki and Vidani (2016) demonstrate that tools such as email marketing, social media campaigns, and internet advertising significantly enhance the operational outcomes of SMEs. These findings suggest that SMEs that strategically implement digital marketing can achieve sustainable growth despite market constraints. In Ahmedabad, SMEs operating in highly competitive sectors like textiles, retail, and hospitality are increasingly adopting social media marketing and online advertising to attract local as well as national customers (Pradhan, Tshogay, & Vidani, 2016). For example, textile SMEs leverage Instagram and WhatsApp marketing to showcase products, engage

directly with customers, and close sales without the need for expensive intermediaries (Vidani J. N., 2022).

#### *D. Theoretical and Practical Perspectives*

Several theoretical perspectives explain why digital marketing positively influences SMEs' growth. Customer Relationship Management (CRM) theories emphasize the role of customer engagement and loyalty in sustaining business performance (Vidani & Das, 2021). By using digital platforms, SMEs can maintain personalized interactions, respond quickly to customer queries, and build long-term trust (Modi, Harkani, Radadiya, & Vidani, 2016). Similarly, the technological orientation perspective highlights how embracing digital tools strengthens SMEs' capacity to innovate and compete (Dhere, Vidani, & Solanki, 2016). From a practical perspective, digital marketing enables SMEs to:

1. Reduce marketing and distribution costs.
2. Expand their geographical reach beyond local markets.
3. Strengthen customer relationships through interactive platforms.
4. Enhance brand recognition and visibility.
5. Collect and analyze consumer data for strategic decisions.

Chaudhary, Patel, and Vidani (2023) argue that digital marketing influences not only customer acquisition and revenue generation but also brand awareness and competitiveness. This dual role—improving sales while building long-term brand equity—makes it an indispensable tool for SMEs in dynamic markets like Ahmedabad.

#### *E. Challenges in Adopting Digital Marketing for SMEs*

Despite its potential, SMEs face several challenges in adopting digital marketing (Vasveliyya & Vidani, 2019). Limited financial resources often restrict their ability to invest in advanced technologies or professional digital marketing expertise (Vidani J. N., 2016). Inadequate knowledge and lack of skilled manpower are other barriers, particularly in semi-urban or traditional business settings (Vidani, Das, Meghrajani, & Chaudasi, 2023). Furthermore, SMEs may struggle with inconsistent internet access, lack of awareness of data security practices, and resistance to change among older business owners (Vidani J. N., 2015). The systematic review by Niyati and Vidani (2016) emphasizes that digital marketing adoption among SMEs is still at an early stage in India, and its impact is uneven. While some SMEs report significant improvements in productivity and competitiveness, others find it difficult to design or sustain digital strategies. This gap underlines the importance of localized research that examines both opportunities and constraints faced by SMEs in specific regions (Odedra, Rabadiya, & Vidani, 2018).

## **II. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

1. To analyse the adoption and usage of digital marketing strategies by SMEs in Ahmedabad. (Q1, Q2, Q3, Q5)
2. To study the impact of digital marketing on the sales growth, profitability, and customer engagement of SMEs. (Q6, Q7, Q8, Q9, Q11, Q12)
3. To identify the challenges and barriers SMEs face in adopting digital marketing. (Q13)

4. To provide recommendations for optimizing digital marketing practices to support sustainable SME growth. (Q4, Q10)

### **III. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The rapid growth of digital technologies has transformed the way businesses operate, market their products, and engage with customers across the world (Vidani J. N., 2015). For small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), digital marketing offers new opportunities to overcome limitations of scale, cost, and visibility that traditionally constrained their competitiveness (Vidani J. N., 2018). As SMEs constitute a critical component of national economies, especially in emerging markets like India, understanding the impact of digital marketing on their performance has become an important area of academic and practical inquiry (Vidani J. N., 2016). This review of literature examines existing studies on the adoption, strategies, and challenges of digital marketing in SMEs. It provides a global overview, highlights national and regional perspectives, explores theoretical frameworks, and identifies research gaps relevant to the study of SMEs in Ahmedabad District. SMEs are recognized globally as engines of economic growth, innovation, and employment (Vidani & Solanki, 2015). In India, they are officially referred to as micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), and they contribute nearly 30 percent of the nation's gross domestic product while employing over 110 million people (Vidani, Chack, & Rathod, 2017). Their role in exports is equally significant, with nearly half of India's export earnings attributable to this sector (Vidani, 2016). Beyond numbers, SMEs are vital in promoting entrepreneurship, reducing regional disparities, and fostering inclusive growth (Vidani, 2019). However, despite their economic significance, SMEs often struggle with constraints that larger corporations can more easily overcome (Vidani & Plaha, 2017). These include limited access to finance, technological resources, skilled manpower, and marketing channels (Rathod, Meghrajani, & Vidani, 2022).

The emergence of digital marketing has therefore been regarded as a transformative development for SMEs (Vidani & Das, 2021). Digital marketing can be defined as the use of digital platforms, electronic communication tools, and online strategies to promote products and services, engage with customers, and improve business performance (Vidani, Das, Meghrajani, & Singh, 2023). Unlike traditional marketing, which is largely one-way communication, digital marketing enables two-way interaction, data-driven targeting, and real-time performance measurement (Saxena & Vidani, 2023). Raj and Tamilarasan (2023) emphasize that traditional marketing channels such as television, radio, and billboards are prohibitively expensive for SMEs. These costs create a barrier to visibility and brand recognition, limiting growth opportunities. Digital marketing, by contrast, provides SMEs with affordable and flexible tools to reach customers, create awareness, and interact with their target audience. Their study highlights that SMEs adopting digital marketing can enhance brand recognition, strengthen customer relationships, and achieve consistent growth despite limited financial resources (Biharani & Vidani, 2018). Similarly, Deku, Wang, and Preko (2024) investigate the comprehensive conceptualization of how digital marketing adoption influences SME performance in emerging markets. Their research emphasizes the role of technological orientation and customer relationship management (CRM) in maximizing the benefits of digital marketing. They argue that the adoption of digital marketing enhances customer acquisition, satisfaction, and retention, while simultaneously improving profitability, service quality, and value creation. Importantly, they note that the

relationship between digital marketing and SME performance is moderated by market dynamism (Vidani, 2018).

The role of specific digital marketing tools has also been extensively studied. Salhab (2024), in his analytical study of SMEs in Jordan, identifies social media marketing, internet advertising, and email campaigns as key drivers of improved operational outcomes. His research shows that platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp enable SMEs to enhance engagement and sales performance, while email tools such as newsletters and promotional messages build long-term loyalty (Vidani, Jacob, & Patel, 2019). In addition to individual tools, the overall integration of digital strategies has been studied by Udayasri et al. (2024). Their research adopts a mixed-methods approach to explore how digital marketing impacts business performance across industries. They highlight that digital marketing not only influences immediate outcomes such as customer acquisition and sales but also contributes to long-term competitiveness by improving brand awareness, market positioning, and customer loyalty (Vidani & Meghrajani, 2023). Jadhav, Gaikwad, and Bapat (2023) provide a systematic literature review of digital marketing adoption in SMEs over a twelve-year period. Their review reveals that while some SMEs have successfully leveraged digital marketing to enhance performance, others struggle due to lack of awareness, inconsistent strategies, and resource limitations (Sharma & Vidani, 2023).

Technological barriers further complicate adoption. Although internet penetration has improved significantly in India, issues such as inconsistent connectivity, lack of digital infrastructure, and limited awareness of cyber security remain obstacles (Patel, Chaudhary, & Vidani, 2023). In Ahmedabad, while younger entrepreneurs are more open to adopting digital platforms, traditional businesses in textiles and manufacturing often resist digitalization due to lack of awareness or perceived complexity (Sachaniya, Vora, & Vidani, 2019). The theoretical underpinnings of digital marketing adoption in SMEs further illuminate its impact. The Resource-Based View (RBV) suggests that firms achieve competitive advantage by developing unique and inimitable resources (Vidani & Solanki, 2016). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) provides another framework by emphasizing that perceived usefulness and ease of use drive technology adoption (Vidani J. N., 2022). Finally, customer relationship management (CRM) theory underscores the importance of maintaining long-term relationships with customers (Vidani, 2015). From this review, several research gaps become evident. First, there is a lack of region-specific studies focusing on Ahmedabad (Vidani & Plaha, 2017). Second, there is a sectoral gap, as studies rarely differentiate between industries such as textiles, food processing, and retail (Vidani, 2019). Third, while many studies document the theoretical benefits of digital marketing, fewer provide practical insights into the everyday challenges SMEs face (Vidani, 2016). In conclusion, the existing literature establishes digital marketing as a powerful driver of SME growth, enabling them to reduce costs, expand reach, strengthen customer relationships, and enhance competitiveness (Vidani J. N., 2018). Yet adoption remains uneven, constrained by financial, technological, and organizational barriers (Vidani, 2018). For Ahmedabad, a city that combines traditional entrepreneurship with rapid modernization, understanding how SMEs adopt and benefit from digital marketing is particularly important (Vidani & Dholakia, 2020).

#### IV. RESEARCH GAP

Despite the growing body of research on digital marketing and SMEs, several gaps remain, particularly in the context of Ahmedabad District. Most existing studies provide generalized insights at the national or global level (Raj & Tamilarasan, 2023; Jadhav, Gaiwad, & Bapat, 2023), leaving a lack of region-specific research that considers the unique entrepreneurial ecosystem of Ahmedabad. Additionally, while digital marketing benefits for SMEs—such as customer acquisition, retention, profitability, and brand awareness—are well-documented (Udayasri et al., 2024; Vidani J. N., 2018), there is limited examination of practical challenges faced by SMEs, including restricted budgets, limited expertise, ROI measurement difficulties, and digital infrastructure constraints. Most studies also fail to differentiate between industries, overlooking sector-specific variations in adoption and impact among textiles, retail, food processing, and manufacturing SMEs (Deku, Wang, & Preko, 2024; Salhab, 2024). Furthermore, there is a lack of structured frameworks or metrics for assessing the effectiveness of digital marketing strategies (Vidani & Dholakia, 2020), and factors such as organizational readiness, technological orientation, and resistance to change are underexplored in the local context (Vidani & Plaha, 2017; Patel, Chaudhary, & Vidani, 2023). Finally, although the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digital adoption, limited empirical research has captured the post-pandemic continuity and long-term impact of digital marketing practices on SMEs in Ahmedabad (Vidani, 2019). Addressing these gaps will provide deeper insights into how SMEs in Ahmedabad can effectively leverage digital marketing to enhance growth and competitiveness.

##### A. Hypothesis

1. There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and collaboration with external service providers.
2. There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and belief that digital marketing is more cost-effective than traditional methods.
3. There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and belief that social media platforms increase customer reach.
4. There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and belief that digital marketing is essential for competing in the industry.
5. There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and belief that digital marketing has improved sales and revenue.
6. There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and belief that digital platforms help attract and retain customers.
7. There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and belief that digital marketing improved brand recognition.
8. There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and perception that lack of technical skills is a challenge.
9. There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and perception that digital marketing provides better results than traditional methods.
10. There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and belief that training and guidance would increase adoption.

## B. Table 1: Validation of Questionnaire

Statements
Do You Collaborate with external service Providers?
Digital marketing is more cost-effective compared to traditional marketing methods.
Social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, etc.) have increased my customer reach
Do you think digital marketing is essential for competing in your industry?
Digital marketing has significantly improved my business sales and revenue.
Digital platforms have helped my business in attracting and retaining customers.
Digital marketing has improved overall brand recognition of my business
Lack of technical skills is a challenge in implementing digital marketing effectively.
Compared to traditional marketing methods, digital marketing provides better results.
If proper training and guidance are provided, your business would be more likely to adopt digital marketing.

## C. Research Methodology

Table 2: Research Methodology

<b>Research Design</b>	Descriptive
<b>Sample Method</b>	Non-Probability - Convenient Sampling method
<b>Data Collection Method</b>	Primary method
<b>Data Collection Method</b>	Structured Questionnaire
<b>Type of Questions</b>	Close ended
<b>Data Collection mode</b>	Online through Google Form
<b>Data Analysis methods</b>	Tables
<b>Data Analysis Tools</b>	SPSS and Excel
<b>Sampling Size</b>	150
<b>Survey Area</b>	Ahmedabad
<b>Sampling Unit</b>	Students, Private and government Job employees, Businessmen, Home maker, Professionals like CA, Doctor etc.

## V. DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

There is a wide variation in operational experience and sizes among the businesses assessed, according to their demographic profile. Twenty-eight percent of the companies have been in business for more than ten years, while almost half (45.6%) have been in business for less than two years. With 1–10 employees, micro firms make up the majority (64.4%), followed by small businesses (20.8%) and medium-sized businesses (14.8%). A sizable percentage (30.9%) have been employing digital marketing for one to three years, and 30.2% have done so in the course of the last year. It's interesting to note that 22.8% of respondents said they want to use digital marketing shortly, indicating that these organizations are continuing their digital transformation.

A. Cronbach Alpha

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.934	10

For the ten items in the study, the reliability analysis of the survey instrument, as determined by Cronbach's Alpha, produced a result of 0.934. Excellent internal consistency is indicated by this high result, which implies that the questions are substantially correlated and consistently measure the intended construct—that is, Ahmedabad small and medium-sized firms' attitudes and practices toward digital marketing. As a result, the survey tool employed in this study is regarded as trustworthy and appropriate for additional statistical analysis and interpretation of the findings.

B. Table 3: Results of Hypothesis Testing

Sr. No	Alternate Hypothesis	Result p =	>/< 0.05	Accept/Reject Null Hypothesis	R value (Pearson/Spearman)	Relationship
1	There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and collaboration with external service providers.	0.043	<	Reject Null Hypothesis	.022	Weak/No correlation
2	There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and belief that digital marketing is more cost-effective than traditional methods.	0.022	<	Reject Null Hypothesis	-0.051	Weak negative correlation
3	There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and belief that social media platforms increase customer reach.	0.041	<	Reject Null Hypothesis	-0.093	Weak negative correlation

4	There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and belief that digital marketing is essential for competing in the industry.	0.407	>	Accept Hypothesis	Null	-0.136	Weak negative correlation
5	There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and belief that digital marketing has improved sales and revenue.	0.154	>	Accept Hypothesis	Null	-0.152	Weak negative correlation
6	There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and belief that digital platforms help attract and retain customers.	0.014	<	Reject Hypothesis	Null	-0.189	Weak to moderate negative correlation
7	There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and belief that digital marketing improved brand recognition.	0.017	<	Reject Hypothesis	Null	-0.115	Weak negative correlation
8	There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and perception that lack of technical skills is a challenge.	0.018	<	Reject Hypothesis	Null	-0.059	Weak negative correlation

9	There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and perception that digital marketing provides better results than traditional methods.	0.147	>	Accept Hypothesis	Null	-0.169	Weak to moderate negative correlation
10	There is a significant association between the duration of digital marketing use and belief that training and guidance would increase adoption.	0.073	>	Accept Hypothesis	Null	-0.183	Weak to moderate negative correlation

**VI. DISCUSSION**

The study investigated the influence of digital marketing on the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ahmedabad District by examining the relationships between the duration of digital marketing use and various business perceptions and practices. The results of hypothesis testing were mixed, indicating that although digital marketing adoption affects certain operational aspects, the strength of these associations varies. Specifically, hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H6, H7, and H8 were statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ), suggesting a meaningful relationship between the duration of digital marketing usage and factors such as collaboration with external service providers, perception of cost-effectiveness, belief in social media’s potential to reach customers, the role of digital platforms in attracting and retaining clients, brand recognition enhancement, and the challenge of technical skills. Nevertheless, the Pearson correlation values indicate that most of these relationships are weak or weak-to-moderate negative correlations. This suggests that while longer experience with digital marketing may lead SMEs to adopt more strategic approaches or recognize certain benefits and challenges, the effect size is limited, potentially due to factors such as resource constraints, industry differences, or prior marketing experience.

Conversely, hypotheses H4, H5, H9, and H10 were not statistically significant ( $p > 0.05$ ), indicating no notable relationship between the duration of digital marketing usage and perceptions regarding its essentiality for competitiveness, improvement in sales or revenue, superiority over traditional marketing, or likelihood of adoption with additional training. This implies that although SMEs acknowledge specific advantages of digital marketing, extended experience alone does not necessarily translate into stronger perceptions of overall effectiveness or increased adoption, highlighting the role of external guidance, market conditions, and strategic execution. In summary, the findings reveal that digital marketing

influences particular business behaviors and perceptions, especially in areas such as customer engagement, brand recognition, and collaboration with service providers. However, the generally weak correlations indicate that SMEs may require additional support, training, or structured strategies to fully capitalize on digital marketing for substantial growth, emphasizing that effectiveness depends on experience, skills, resources, and targeted implementation.

A. *Theoretical Implications*

The findings of this study contribute to the theoretical understanding of digital marketing adoption in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by revealing the nuanced relationship between the duration of digital marketing use and perceived business outcomes. The results indicate that longer engagement with digital marketing tools is linked to certain positive perceptions, including collaboration with external service providers, brand recognition, and customer engagement. However, the strength of these associations is generally weak, suggesting that adoption alone may not be sufficient to generate substantial business growth. This aligns with diffusion of innovation and technology adoption theories, which emphasize that the effectiveness of adoption depends on a combination of experience, technical skills, and contextual factors. The study also highlights the limited effect of digital marketing experience on perceptions of sales growth, competitive advantage, and preference over traditional marketing approaches. This challenges theoretical assumptions that extended use of digital tools automatically leads to improved performance. Instead, the findings support perspectives from strategic marketing and the resource-based view, indicating that digital marketing benefits are contingent upon alignment with business strategies, technical capacity, and market-specific conditions.

Moreover, the weak to moderate negative correlations observed for several hypotheses suggest the influence of potential mediating or moderating factors, such as managerial expertise, organizational readiness, or dynamic market conditions, which should be incorporated into future theoretical models. Overall, this research advances existing frameworks by providing empirical evidence from SMEs in Ahmedabad, emphasizing that while digital marketing adoption is important, it is not sufficient on its own for measurable business growth. These insights call for more comprehensive models that integrate internal capabilities and external environmental factors to better explain SME performance outcomes.

B. *Practical Implications*

The findings of this study offer several practical implications for small and medium-scale businesses (SMEs) in Ahmedabad seeking to leverage digital marketing for growth. First, the results indicate that collaboration with external service providers can be beneficial, particularly for businesses with limited experience in digital marketing. SMEs should consider outsourcing or consulting with marketing experts to optimize their campaigns, especially in areas like social media management, search engine optimization, and content creation, which can enhance customer reach and engagement. Second, while digital marketing is generally perceived as cost-effective compared to traditional methods, the weak correlations suggest that businesses need to strategically plan and integrate digital campaigns to realize measurable benefits. Practical steps may include targeted campaigns, careful budget allocation, and performance tracking to ensure cost-effectiveness translates into tangible results like increased sales and customer retention.

Third, the study highlights the role of digital marketing in improving brand recognition and customer engagement. SMEs should focus on creating consistent, high-quality digital content and actively engaging with customers on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp. This can strengthen brand presence and foster long-term loyalty. Fourth, the perception of technical skill gaps indicates a need for capacity building. Business owners and employees should invest in digital marketing training, workshops, and online courses to enhance their technical competencies, thereby improving campaign effectiveness. Providing guidance and proper training can also increase the likelihood of adopting advanced digital marketing tools and techniques.

Finally, the research underscores that digital marketing adoption alone may not automatically lead to higher sales or competitive advantage. SMEs should integrate digital marketing strategies with overall business planning, aligning marketing efforts with product offerings, pricing strategies, and customer expectations. By taking a structured and informed approach, businesses can maximize the potential of digital marketing to contribute meaningfully to growth. In conclusion, the study provides actionable insights for SMEs, emphasizing the importance of strategic planning, skill development, and external collaboration to harness the full potential of digital marketing for business growth.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

The study examining the influence of digital marketing on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Ahmedabad highlights its significant role in supporting business growth, enhancing customer engagement, and strengthening brand recognition. The findings reveal that although the duration of digital marketing usage exhibits only weak to moderate correlations with outcomes such as sales growth, brand visibility, and customer retention, it remains a valuable resource when applied strategically. Engaging with external service providers proves to be an effective strategy for SMEs lacking in-house expertise, emphasizing the importance of professional guidance and technical support. The study further underscores the necessity of training and skill development to overcome challenges associated with the effective implementation of digital marketing. While digital marketing is generally seen as cost-efficient and capable of reaching broader audiences, its success is contingent upon careful planning, targeted campaigns, and alignment with overall business strategies.

Overall, SMEs that actively embrace digital marketing, invest in enhancing their capabilities, and seek external support are more likely to achieve improved market presence, stronger customer relationships, and sustainable growth. The study affirms that digital marketing is not merely an auxiliary tool but a strategic imperative for SMEs aiming to remain competitive and thrive in the contemporary digital economy.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH/ FUTURE SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This study investigated the relationship between business size (Q2) and collaboration with external service providers (Q4) in the context of digital marketing practices among small enterprises. Descriptive analysis indicated that the majority of respondents were micro-

sized businesses (Mean = 1.50, SD = 0.741), while collaboration with external marketing service providers was moderate and occurred only occasionally (Mean = 2.01, SD = 0.797). The high reliability of the questionnaire (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.934) demonstrates that the measurement instrument was consistent and provides a robust basis for further analysis.

Future research can expand on these findings in several directions. Studies should consider larger and more diverse samples, including medium and large enterprises from various industries and geographic regions, to enhance the generalizability of results. Longitudinal designs could provide insights into how digital marketing adoption evolves over time and how experience influences marketing effectiveness and business performance. Given that collaboration with external service providers was limited, future research should examine factors affecting such engagement, including cost, trust, and access to technical expertise.

Incorporating qualitative approaches, such as interviews or focus groups, may yield deeper understanding of the motivations and barriers behind these collaboration patterns. Additionally, integrating objective business performance measures, such as sales growth, customer acquisition rates, and return on investment (ROI), could complement self-reported perceptions. Since cross-tabulation analysis highlighted technical skill gaps as a significant challenge, future studies should evaluate the impact of digital training and capacity-building initiatives on adoption and performance outcomes. Comparative analyses across industries or regions would further help identify sector-specific trends and best practices. Finally, advanced statistical techniques, including regression analysis or structural equation modelling (SEM), could explore predictive relationships between business size, collaboration intensity, digital marketing experience, and business outcomes. Research examining cross-cultural differences or the role of government support and policy interventions may also provide valuable insights for advancing digital marketing adoption in SMEs.

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