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## THE DIGITAL MARKETING PRACTICES TOWARDS SMEs PERFORMANCE IN CYBER ENTREPRENEURSHIP

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### Abstract:

Nowadays, there has been an increasing number of SMEs in the world. SMEs play a vital role in economics across the world and Malaysia particularly. The rapid ICT development in the digital age and pandemic of Covid19 affects many aspects of SMEs performance especially in conducting business and how costumers behave. The use of internet and electronic devices emphasised as an effective tool for running business activities. Parallel to that, incorporating the information and communication technologies (ICT) component into the traditional business and adapting it to the current modes of operation through digital marketing play crucial roles in order to SMEs stay competitive in the marketplace and cope with IR 4.0. Digital marketing has dramatically changed the organization and marketing environment. This study aims to know the relationship between social media and omnichannel marketing toward SMEs' performance in cyber entrepreneurship in Malaysia. This study was conducted among SMEs across all states in Malaysia that range from the age of 18 years old to 37 years old and above. Besides, this study distributed 370 sets of questionnaires to respondents answering the questions. This study employed a quantitative approach to 370 small businesses comprised of various sectors. The result of the analysis will be obtained through research using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software for interpreting data. The findings showed that respondent mostly practices digital marketing; social media and

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omnichannel marketing are significantly connected to SMEs' performance in cyber entrepreneurship. To help SMEs, compete in the foreseeable challenges of the IR 5.0 era, this present study shines light by alerting the relevant authorities to the necessity of digital marketing in their operation.

**Keywords:**

Digital Marketing, Social Media, Omnichannel Marketing, SMEs Performance, Cyber Entrepreneurship

**Introduction**

Nowadays, there has been an increasing number of SMEs around the world including Malaysia. It plays a vital role in economics across the world, especially in developing countries (Ndiaye et al., 2018). In Malaysia, there are 907,065 SMEs established exists that fall below certain limits in terms of staff numbers which contributed 36.6% of Malaysia's GDP in 2016. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2019) performance of SMEs in Malaysia showing the GDP in 2019 decreased to 5.8% as compared to 6.2% in the year 2018. SMEs' performance is characterized by the use by SMEs of the value-added (VA) as a percentage of the total VA by enterprises (Cicea et al., 2019). Besides, SMEs' performance can be also evaluated from a quantitative point of view; efficiency, financial results, level of production, and the number of customers (Cicea et al., 2019; Ghanem & Hamid, 2021). Performance or success factors may be processes and benchmarks based on elements that are necessary for the business to be efficient and competitive in this market organization (Ng & Kee, 2012; Katz and Green, 2009). The SME's performance is deemed to be the outcome of constructive management activities and it can be accessed via several norms, which comprise efficiency, effectiveness, productivity, and growth (Salam & Hoque, 2019).

Currently, the technology development reflects the modifications in many aspects of shepherding business. Previously, the traditional media were become the main communication channels whereby involving printed and broadcast media when the business community or entrepreneurs rely entirely on this traditional media to advertise and promote their products. However today, a new phenomenon has emerged, namely marketing through digital media among the entrepreneurs. In fact, the statistics released by Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission (MCMC) (2015), more than half of the Malaysians maximise utilisation of smartphone to access the Internet (Ahadzadeh & Sharif, 2017; Darwish, Abdo, & AlShuwaiee, 2018). To those who are rely heavily on the Internet access in their daily live routine, this could be a golden opportunity for them. By having these facilities of the Internet access, many things absolutely have been transformed from analog to digital or online basis. Thus, to stay competitive in the marketplace and cope with IR 4.0, SMEs must keep performing well (Efrat et al., 2018) and the practices of digital marketing play a significant role even though most small businesses do not pay due attention to the digitalization of their businesses (Gagauz, 2020). According to SME Annual Report (2018), only 32% of Malaysian SMEs, compared to other nations, are using digitization in their company operations, and only 29% of companies have a website (World Bank Group, 2018). Likewise, previous data indicated by the Department of Statistic Malaysia, DOSM (2020), the adoption of the *ICT*, Internet usage and web presence among the Malaysian entrepreneur including small medium enterprises (SMEs) still in poorer percentage. Moreover, Kelantan was classified among the bottom states with the only 46.5% of *ICT* usage in business, 32.1 % of internet usage in business and 11.5% web presence usage in business after Terengganu 51%, 36.8%, 13.7% and Pahang 64.8%, 47.2%

and 18% mainly in five major sectors; manufacturing, services, construction, agriculture and mining. In fact, the utilization of e-commerce was still not fully utilized among developing countries (Kshetri, 2008). Supported by the surveyed that had been conducted by the Association of Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industries Malaysia in 2012 resulted that e-commerce adoption among the SMEs is quite low by which only 28% (Bernama, 2012) of them adopt in the business which supposedly failed to reach out the minimum target (Saleh & Ndubisi, 2006).

The emergence of cyber entrepreneurship has sparked a phenomenon when it comes to the rise of the well-known brands across the variety of cyber trends, including websites, mobile applications, marketplaces, social media, and many more (Rozmi, Nordin, & Bakar, 2018). This is due to the quickly expanding information technology infrastructure in Malaysia. No wonder the number of Malaysians who use the internet has generally climbed from 48.8% in 2016 to 53.3% in 2018, according to data from the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission (MCMC Internet)'s User Survey. Whereas (Sofian, 2018) said that according to a survey by PayPal published by The Star Online, Malaysians spent over RM1.8 billion in 2010 and are projected to spend three times as much by 2020. Digital marketing influences SME performance but, according to (Adam et al., 2020), digital transformation is restricted to the direct use of digital technologies and investment. Still, it is related to the need of making business models more efficient, which is expected to lead to value creation for customers and employees, enabling SMEs to stay viable in the digital economy. SMEs must create a clear market orientation to achieve a competitive advantage since the digital market is the key to gaining competitive advantages that ultimately impact SME performance (Adam et al. 2020). Digital marketing through cyber entrepreneurship is any method of selling products and services that involve electronics in the era of digitalization and it is part of the marketing technique or strategy practiced by organizations of any kind and any size, with the increasing number of usages from year to year (Baltes, 2015). Additionally, digital marketing is not just conventional marketing boosted by digital elements in a modern marketing strategy (Taiminen and Heikki, 2015; Liu, et al., 2011) which connects the world interconnectedness of individual networks, that have evolved from being a secondary platform for communication and economic activity to what it is today (Alba et al., 1997). Changes in marketing strategies brought forth by social network technology improvements have created new doors and abundant chances for business owners (Nakara et al., 2012). Badaruddin & Abdullah (2018) highlighted a few types of cyber entrepreneurship whereby among them are social networking so-called social media and email marketing. Social media is seen as a new marketing tool for businesses, particularly for entrepreneurship in the level of engagement between customers and businesses is the most notable characteristic of social networks (Nakara et al., 2012). The importance of the internet in changing connections and business society has been further enhanced in transforming the business and contributed to the development of a more effective market by enhancing the appeal and interactivity of product promotion and advertising. Thus, in this study researcher aimed to know the relationship between digital marketing practices towards SMEs' performance in cyber entrepreneurship.

## Literature Review

This section highlights the literature review related to the current topic. The subsection starts with general information concerning digital marketing, followed by social media and omnichannel marketing towards SMEs' performance in cyber entrepreneurship. Each subsection conveys hypotheses formulation in this study.

### ***Digital Marketing***

According to Bolos et al., (2016), success in a company has always depended on effective marketing. Businesses would not exist without the capacity to locate clients and persuade them to buy the item or service being supplied. Electronic marketing, henceforth referred to as "digital marketing," is one of the fast-expanding marketing strategies that is progressively displacing old strategies in industrialized as well as developing and underdeveloped nations, including Malaysia. E-marketing, digital marketing, Internet marketing, online marketing, and social media marketing are widely used interchangeably by current scholars, academicians, researchers, and practitioners to get more acceptance according to Shaltoni et al., (2017). Before this, the E-Marketing Association (EMA) defined digital marketing as the use of electronic information and applications for starting businesses, pricing and promoting ideas, distributing goods and services, and developing products or services to create interactions between customer satisfaction and organizational objectives (Burgess and Bothma, 2007).

Similar to this, digital marketing refers to the use of electronic data and communication technologies, namely the Internet of things (IoT), to achieve marketing goals (Shaltoni et al. 2017). In addition, digital marketing provides access to an online marketplace where customers may buy, sell, distribute, and support customer sales of goods and services (Eze et al., 2013). Similarly, the idea of digital marketing originated from traditional marketing principles and eventually grew to include current organizational tactics and the use of marketing techniques to engage with potential customers through websites, social media, and online marketplaces (Bolos et al., 2016).

### ***Social Media***

Social media is an activity such as sharing text and image notifications, videos, and other material that drives viewer interaction, as well as paid social media ads that provide social media content and allow people to freely communicate with one another, which also gives marketers many other methods to connect with and engage with customers (Appel et al., 2020). Social media activities are a part of digital marketing that enables SMEs to communicate, gather information as well as reply to rivals at minimal costs. Social media is utilized by billions of people worldwide and has quickly emerged as one of the technologies that define our age. Facebook on March 31, 2019, for instance, claimed to have 2.38 billion monthly active users and 1.56 billion daily active users (Facebook 2019). According to Ahmad et al., (2019), social media can exchange, share, and access information that will influence the SME's performance. The use of social media in marketing services is considered to be the most powerful and result-oriented marketing tool for online businesses. These services deliver efficient results and have a direct effect on an organization's overall functioning. This is because, according to Kithinji, (2014) social media means promoting a business or a website on various networking platforms and mainstream media channels like LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Blogger, etc. promoting company websites through the pricing of social media ads guarantees increased traffic, resulting in a decent amount of profit.

Social media as part of digital marketing can bring remarkable success to companies, build loyal brand advocates, and even drive leads, sales and about 90 percent of marketers say that their business has created substantial social media exposure, and that is only one of its many benefits (Ištvaníć et al., 2017). The greater engaged audiences use social media networks, the simpler it would be to accomplish the company objectives, particularly among SMEs.



### ***Omnichannel Marketing***

Omnichannel marketing refers to the multichannel advertising strategy that offers an optimized shopping experience for the consumer. The customer can shop online, by phone, or in a brick-and-mortar store, using a desktop or mobile device, and the experience will be seamless. According to Saghiri et al., (2017), the Omnichannel is aimed at coordinating processes and innovations across supply and sales channels. The Omnichannel era forces retail or SMEs business to develop new mindsets toward both marketing and multichannel (Saghiri et al., 2017). SMEs who use Omnichannel retail gain an abundance of useful and valuable data; website analytics, social media metrics, email campaign statistics, and more will measure the performance of each of these channels and help SMEs understand their customers better. Kabadayi et al., (2007), supported that business strategy has been insufficiently connected to multichannel marketing and have found strong support for the argument that when they are properly integrated with the company's business strategy, the multichannel method provides the greatest contribution to company performance.

### **Methodology**

The nature of this study employed a quantitative approach as the most appropriate research design to test the hypotheses among variables (Bougie and Sekaran, 2019). This study distributed 370 sets of questionnaires to 370 small businesses comprised of various sectors in Malaysia. The result of the analysis will be obtained through research using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software for interpreting data. This descriptive study involved a demographic profile (Section A), screening questions (Section B), and the digital marketing practices toward SMEs' performance in cyber entrepreneurship in Malaysia (Section C). This study uses primary data, and the data is obtained and collected primarily for the outcome of the study (Zikmund et al., 2003) via self-administered questionnaires that have been designed and originally prepared in the Malay language and English languages. Each of the questionnaires has a cover letter to clarify the purpose of the study to the respondents. Besides, the questionnaires will be distributed online to the 370 respondents among SMEs in Malaysia through the Google form. To verify and assure the validity and reliability of the measuring items, this study extended these variables by using scales that were already utilized in the literature and revising them by the study's objectives. All of the items were altered by researchers from earlier studies, including El-Gohary (2009); Cicea et al., (2019), Bolos et al., (2016), and Shaltoni et al., (2017). Additionally, social media and omnichannel marketing were the independent variables, whilst SMEs' performance is the dependent variable. The Likert scale with five points was used to score and evaluate each item with 1 denoting strongly disagree and 5 denoting strongly agree. This study employed a probability sampling technique which simple random sampling where each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected in a random survey sample.

### **Result and Discussion**

#### ***Respondents Composition***

The data focuses on analyzing the relationship of digital marketing practices towards SMEs' performance in cyber entrepreneurship across Malaysia. 370 respondents answered the questionnaire distributed by Google form.

**Descriptive Analysis**

This research gives descriptive statistics on the key variables to provide a preliminary view of the data gathered. The means and standard deviations (SD) of the variables in this study were computed and listed as shown in Table 2. For the dependent variable (SMEs performance) the mean was 4.7746 while for the independent variable, the social media mean is 4.7665 and the Omnichannel marketing is 4.7519.

**Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of The Model**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
SMEs Performance	370	4.7746	0.38887
Social Media	370	4.7665	0.39695
Omnichannel Marketing	370	4.7519	0.42364

Source: Based on The Study IBM SPSS Statistics Output.

Table 3 shows Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient value of dependent and independent reliability coefficient. All the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient value of the dependent variable (SMEs performance) which is 0.955, social media (0.943), and Omnichannel marketing (0.965) as independent variable shows excellent association and thus it indicated the reliability is acceptable.

**Table 2: Summary of Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of Each Variable**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items	Strength of Association
SMEs Performance	0.955	5	Excellent
Social Media	0.943	5	Excellent
Omnichannel Marketing	0.965	5	Excellent

Source: Based on The Study IBM SPSS Statistics Output.

Table 4 and Table 5 show that there is a relationship between social media and SMEs' performance in cyber entrepreneurship. The result is significant where the p-value is 0.000 which is lower than 0.01 and it shows a strong correlation between social media content and SME performance with a value of 0.953. Thus, the hypothesis (H1) is accepted. Meanwhile, there is also a relationship between Omnichannel marketing and SMEs' performance in cyber entrepreneurship where the result is significant where the p-value is 0.000 which is lower than 0.01 and it showed a strong correlation between Omnichannel marketing and SMEs' performance with the value of 0.938. Thus, the hypothesis (H2) is also accepted.

H1: There is a relationship between social media towards SMEs' performance in cyber entrepreneurship across Malaysia.

H2: There is a relationship between Omnichannel marketing towards SMEs' performance in cyber entrepreneurship across Malaysia.

**Table 3: Spearman Correlation Coefficient for Social media and SME's Performance**

		SME's Performance	Social Media
SME's Performance	Spearman Correlation	1	.953**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	370	370
Social Media	Spearman Correlation	.953**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	370	370

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

**Table 4: Spearman Correlation Coefficient for Omnichannel marketing and SME's Performance**

		SME's Performance	Omnichannel marketing
SME's Performance	Spearman Correlation	1	.938**
	Sig. (1-tailed)		.000
	N	370	370
Omnichannel marketing	Spearman Correlation	.938**	1
	Sig. (1-tailed)	.000	
	N	370	370

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

**Table 5: Spearman Correlation's Analysis**

Variable	Spearman Correlation	Strength
Social Media Content	0.953	Very strong
Omnichannel Marketing	0.938	Very strong

Source: Based on The Study IBM SPSS Statistics Output.

The result of the correlation analysis between social media towards SMEs' performance in cyber entrepreneurship shows that there is a very strong correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable. Referring to the Spearman Correlation value (r-value) which is 0.953 had shown that there is a very strong correlation relationship between social media and SME performance. According to Adegbuyi et al., (2015), social media for instance as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and many more prove that social media's ability to exchange, share and access information plays a vital role in SMEs' performance (Ahmad et al., 2018). Great social media marketing can bring remarkable success to SMEs' performance in cyber entrepreneurship. But still, about 90 percent of marketers say that their business has created substantial social media exposure, and that is only one of its many benefits (Ištvanic et al., 2017). The more frequently involved in social media networks, the easier it would be to meet some other marketing targets and goals.

In addition, the result showed that there is a very strong correlation between Omnichannel marketing and SME performance which (r-value) is 0.938. It is because Omnichannel marketing is a multi-channel approach that provides an integrated and seamless consumer experience regardless of how or where a customer reaches out to advertise, sell, and support customers. Omnichannel aims to ensure that all touchpoints, be it social media, e-commerce, or connecting with the customers and the result shows that Omnichannel marketing has a positive relationship with SME's performance. Omnichannel marketing forces the SME business to develop new mindsets toward both marketing and multichannel (Saghiri et al., 2017). As a large distribution tool from company websites to social, email, website live chat, to in-store promotions, Omnichannel marketing is a strategic approach to different platforms.

### Conclusion and Future Studies

In this study has proven the empirical evidence regarding social media and omnichannel marketing towards SMEs' performance in cyber entrepreneurship. Business operations via social media in the global world today become a phenomenon where it creates a virtual place for entrepreneurs to communicate through Web 2.0 technologies. At present, the most eminent social media is Facebook at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) and followed by Instagram at [www.instagram.com](http://www.instagram.com) (Ishak et al., 2017). This study revealed that social media is very useful and valuable for helping SMEs' performance in Malaysia since it allow the SME easily and effectively connected either with customers or business partner. Most importantly, because of several benefits offered by using social media itself as low cost, ease of use, interactivity, visibility yet providing opportunity for SMEs to respond proactively with limited resources (Ali Qalati et al., 2020). SMEs' performance will potentially grow well if they pay attention to digital marketing practices for their businesses. All the hypotheses are being accepted which shows that social media and Omnichannel marketing have a significant relationship with SMEs' performance towards cyber entrepreneurship. Thus, these independent variables are playing a vital role in SMEs' performance in cyber entrepreneurship where cyber entrepreneurship becoming one of the most imperative agendas for all countries around the world (Alkhalaileh, 2021).

In addition to its contributions, the delimitations are also highlighted in this study. It is quite difficult for the researcher to identify digital marketing practices among SMEs in Malaysia. Due to that constraint, cooperation and support from them consume time during the data collection process. Yet, they also thought that answering the questionnaires would be wasting their precious time and disturbing their privacy which might lead to rejection of answering the questionnaire. This study currently ponders about 370 samples of SMEs scattered in all the states. It was highly recommended for future researchers to focus the sample size within particular states and regions which possibly the data to be more accurate. At the same time produced more quality and persuasive research in this industry.

Nevertheless, by taking into consideration the delimitations, there are a lot of digital marketing practices in enhancing the SME's performance towards cyber entrepreneurship. Thus, the future researcher should include any other additional variables linked to the digital marketing practices that have the greatest impact and effect on the SME's performance in cyber entrepreneurship.



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