



THE IMPACT OF DIGITAL MARKETING STRATEGIES ON THE GROWTH AND PERFORMANCE OF SMALL BUSINESSES

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ABSTRACT :

Digital marketing gives small businesses practical ways to promote their products, communicate with customers and reach people beyond their immediate area. This study looks at how digital marketing strategies relate to perceived business growth and performance, with particular attention to social media marketing, content marketing, search engine optimization (SEO) and online advertising. The study considers customer acquisition, sales, market reach, brand awareness and customer interaction, as well as the difficulties businesses may face when using these tools. A questionnaire-based quantitative study is proposed for a population of 200. Using Yamane's formula at a 5% precision level gives a target sample of about 133 respondents. The 135 records available for this draft are simulated, so the statistical results are illustrative. Real survey data are required before drawing conclusions about small businesses.

Keywords: Digital marketing; small businesses; business growth; business performance; social media marketing; customer engagement; brand awareness; competitive advantage.

1. Introduction

Digital technology has changed the way businesses introduce their products, share information and stay in contact with customers. Websites, social media, search engines, messaging apps and online advertisements allow businesses to communicate quickly and reach people outside their local area. This can be particularly useful for small businesses, which may not have the same marketing budgets or specialist staff as larger companies.

Small businesses support employment, household income, entrepreneurship and local economic activity. However, many operate with tight budgets and face strong competition, limited staff skills and difficulty finding new customers. Traditional advertising can be costly, and it is not always easy to see how well it has worked. Digital channels can help reduce some of these difficulties, but they still require planning, regular communication with customers and a basic understanding of performance data.

Digital marketing covers several activities rather than one single method. These include social media marketing, content marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), email marketing, online advertising and mobile communication. Social media gives businesses a way to talk directly with customers and build visibility. SEO helps potential customers find products or services through search engines, while useful content can answer questions and build trust. Paid advertising can also reach selected audiences. Which method works best depends on the business, its customers and the time and skills available to manage it.

Using digital platforms does not automatically lead to higher sales. A business may receive likes, comments or enquiries without gaining new customers, while another may see more sales but struggle to work out which campaign led to them. For this reason, researchers have looked beyond simple adoption of digital tools to consider marketing skills, innovation, market orientation and the ability to turn customer interaction into business results (Wu et al., 2024; Tajvidi & Karami, 2021).

This study examines how small businesses use digital marketing and how they perceive its relationship with customer numbers, sales, market reach, brand awareness and overall performance. It also considers practical barriers such as cost, limited knowledge, a lack of skilled staff and not having enough time. The spreadsheet supplied for this draft can be used to demonstrate statistical analysis, but its simulated responses cannot show what happens in real businesses.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Small-business owners have to choose where to spend limited time and money, and the right digital channel may vary by industry and customer group. It can also be difficult to tell whether a change in sales is due to digital marketing or to other factors. This study is intended to explore the digital strategies

small businesses use, the outcomes they associate with those strategies and the difficulties they encounter. Genuine field data are needed to establish whether the patterns observed in a real sample apply more widely.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This topic is relevant to small-business owners deciding how to promote their products, advisers who support local businesses and researchers studying digital adoption. The questionnaire asks about platform choice, how often digital marketing is used, customer interaction, perceived business growth and implementation challenges. Once genuine responses have been collected, the findings may help identify where business owners need training and how they can make more informed marketing decisions.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The study covers five main areas: digital marketing practices, perceived growth, business performance, customer engagement and brand awareness, and the challenges of implementation. The questionnaire includes social media, content marketing, SEO and online advertising, as well as platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and YouTube. The stated population for the project is 200. Although the workbook contains 135 rows, they are simulated entries and should not be treated as the results of a completed field survey or as representative of a particular region.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Social Media Adoption among Indian SMEs

Chatterjee and Kar (2020) examined why Indian small and medium enterprises adopt social media marketing and how its use relates to business performance. They identified usefulness, compatibility, cost and ease of use as factors that can influence adoption. Their findings also linked social media use with performance-related outcomes such as sales and customer contacts. Because the study focuses on Indian SMEs, it provides a useful point of comparison for research on digital marketing among small businesses in India.

2.2 Digital Marketing Strategy and Organizational Capabilities

Wu, Botella-Carrubi and Blanco-González-Tejero (2024) studied the relationship between digital marketing strategy and SME performance using resource-based and dynamic-capabilities perspectives. Their study of 148 Taiwanese SMEs highlights the importance of being innovative, taking initiative and having the managerial skills needed to put a strategy into practice. In other words, simply having access to digital tools may not be enough; businesses also need the ability to use them well.

2.3 Social Media and Firm Performance

Tajvidi and Karami (2021) studied social media use and firm performance in the UK hotel industry. They reported a positive association between the two and highlighted the role of marketing capabilities, including branding and innovation. Hotels are not the same as all types of small businesses, but the study supports looking at customer engagement and brand awareness alongside business performance.

2.4 Innovation Capability as a Moderator

Fan et al. (2021) analysed responses from 423 SMEs and found positive relationships between entrepreneurial orientation, social media adoption and business performance. They also reported that innovation capability affected the strength of the relationship between social media use and performance. This suggests that small firms may gain more from digital channels when they are willing to test ideas and respond to changing customer needs.

2.5 Knowledge Creation and Innovation

Moy, Cahyadi and Anggraeni (2020) studied 384 SMEs in the Jabodetabek region of Indonesia. Their findings did not show a simple direct link between social media use and business performance. Instead, knowledge creation and innovation helped explain how social media could contribute to results. This is relevant to the present study because comments, reviews and customer messages are most useful when businesses act on that feedback to improve their products or services.

2.6 Sustainable Performance and Digital Leadership

Borah, Iqbal and Akhtar (2022) explored social media use and sustainable performance among SMEs. Their findings connected social media use with innovation capability and sustainable performance, and suggested that digital leadership can strengthen these relationships. The study points to the importance of leadership and a willingness to learn when businesses try to get value from online activity.

2.7 Social Networking and Absorptive Capacity

Scuotto, Del Giudice and Carayannis (2017) examined social networking sites, absorptive capacity and innovation performance in SMEs. They described how online networks can expose businesses to outside information and ideas that may help them identify opportunities or innovate. Their work shows that digital platforms can support more than promotion; they can also help businesses learn from customers and other organizations.

2.8 Rural–Urban Differences in SME Networks

Tiwasing (2021) compared social media business networks and SME performance in rural and urban settings. The study found that the benefits and uses of online networks can differ according to location and the performance measure being considered. This matters because internet access, digital infrastructure and local business conditions may affect how much small businesses can gain from digital marketing.

2.9 Digital Marketing Capabilities and Market Orientation

Hazzam and colleagues (2026) examined digital marketing capabilities, market orientation and customer relationship management among 224 SME managers and directors in the UK. They found that digital marketing capabilities were related to SME performance, even when customer relationship management capabilities were considered. Their study also highlighted the importance of understanding customer needs. This supports a customer-focused approach to digital marketing rather than choosing tools without a clear purpose.

2.10 Emerging-Economy Research Agenda

Elkhouday, Yadav and Alam (2026) reviewed research on digital marketing capabilities, SME innovation and performance. The themes they identified included digital skills, analytics, customer relationship management, organizational readiness and leadership, particularly in emerging economies. Their review points to a need for studies that examine these factors together and consider the conditions in which small businesses operate.

2.11 Literature Review Synthesis

Taken together, these studies suggest that digital marketing can help SMEs, but the results depend on how well the strategies are managed and how closely they fit customer needs. Some studies focus on social media alone or examine firms in a single country or industry. The present study therefore considers several digital marketing methods along with customer interaction, brand awareness, business growth, overall performance and the practical barriers businesses may face.

3. Research Gap

Earlier studies have linked digital marketing with SME performance, but some gaps remain. Much of the research looks at social media on its own rather than comparing several methods, including content marketing, SEO and online advertising. Findings on direct effects are also mixed, suggesting that customer engagement, brand awareness, innovation and management skills may influence whether online activity leads to business results. Since many studies focus on a particular country or industry, their findings may not apply equally to small businesses in India. Studies also measure performance in different ways. This project brings together customer growth, sales, market reach, revenue, competitiveness, brand awareness and customer interaction, while considering cost and skill-related barriers. Any claims based on the proposed field study must wait until genuine responses have been collected.

4. Conceptual Framework

The framework places digital marketing practices at the centre of the study. Customer engagement and brand awareness are considered possible links between those practices and the outcomes of interest: business growth and performance. Practical constraints, such as cost, time and digital skills, may affect how effectively a business can use its chosen channels.

Digital Marketing Practices	Customer / Brand Pathways	Growth and Performance Outcomes
Social media marketing	Customer enquiries and interaction	Customer-base growth
Content marketing	Feedback and reviews	Sales and revenue changes
SEO	Brand awareness	Market reach
Online advertising	Customer relationship quality	Competitiveness
Digital usage frequency		Overall business performance

Contextual constraints: marketing cost, digital knowledge, availability of skilled employees, and time.

This framework is a guide for the study, not a tested model. The questionnaire does not include validated multi-item measures for every concept, and the simulated dataset cannot be used to confirm the relationships shown.

5. Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the different digital marketing strategies adopted by small businesses.
2. To assess the impact of digital marketing strategies on the growth of small businesses.
3. To evaluate the effect of digital marketing strategies on the overall performance of small businesses.
4. To examine the role of customer engagement and brand awareness in the relationship between digital marketing strategies and business performance.
5. To identify the challenges faced by small businesses in adopting and implementing digital marketing strategies.

6. Hypotheses of the Study

H₀₁: Digital marketing strategies have no significant impact on the growth of small businesses.

H₁₁: Digital marketing strategies have a significant impact on the growth of small businesses.

H₀₂: Digital marketing strategies have no significant impact on the performance of small businesses.

H₁₂: Digital marketing strategies have a significant impact on the performance of small businesses.

For this demonstration, customer-base change is used as a limited indicator of growth and is compared across the main digital marketing method groups (social media versus other methods). Performance is examined by comparing the four-category performance rating across the four primary method groups using one-way ANOVA. A separate exploratory regression estimates performance from marketing-use frequency, customer-interaction frequency and brand-awareness rating. These indicators provide only a partial view of the broader concepts in the hypotheses.

7. Research Methodology

7.1 Research Design

The study is planned as a quantitative, cross-sectional survey using a structured questionnaire for small-business owners or managers. The survey is intended to capture responses at one point in time. Frequencies and percentages can describe the responses, while inferential tests can explore possible relationships between categorical and ordered variables. Since the attached spreadsheet does not contain verified field responses, the analyses in this draft use simulated data only to demonstrate the process.

7.2 Population and Sample Size

The population provided for this project is 200. Yamane's formula is applied using a 5% precision level:

$$n = N / [1 + N(e)^2]$$

$$n = 200 / [1 + 200(0.05)^2] = 200 / 1.5 = 133.33. \text{ The planned sample is therefore approximately 133 respondents.}$$

There are 135 rows in the supplied spreadsheet, but these are mock records rather than verified responses. The spreadsheet therefore does not show that 135 people were recruited or completed the questionnaire. The formula gives a target for the actual field study; it does not make the simulated data a real sample.

7.3 Sampling Technique

The supplied files do not show a verified list of eligible businesses or how real participants were recruited, so the sampling method cannot be confirmed. For the field study, the researcher should define the study area and business eligibility rules, specify whether probability or non-probability sampling will be used, and keep a record of recruitment and non-response.

7.4 Research Instrument

The questionnaire has seven demographic questions covering name, gender, age, occupation, education, income and marital status, followed by 20 questions about digital marketing, growth, performance, customer interaction, brand awareness and challenges. Most closed questions provide four options. Some answers are categories without a natural order, while others represent an order, such as how often an activity occurs or how much improvement is reported.

7.5 Data Coding and Preparation

For the analysis workbook, the categorical answers were converted into numerical codes and listed in a codebook. For nominal questions, the numbers are labels only; they do not represent amounts or rankings. Ten ordered questions were coded from 1 to 4, with higher values indicating more frequent use or a more positive reported outcome. Means and standard deviations are included as summaries of these ordered categories, but the scores should not be treated as precise interval measurements.

7.6 Statistical Techniques

- Frequencies and percentages were used to show how often each response option was selected, including demographic categories.
- Mean, median and sample standard deviation were calculated for ten ordinal items coded from 1 to 4.
- Chi-square tests of independence were run for selected two-by-two comparisons. Some answer categories were combined to make the comparisons easier to interpret. Expected counts were checked; one comparison had a minimum expected count slightly below five.
- A one-way ANOVA was used to compare the average coded performance rating across the four main digital marketing method groups. Since the outcome is ordinal rather than continuous, the ANOVA results are treated as exploratory.
- Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was used to estimate the performance score from digital marketing frequency, customer-interaction frequency and brand-awareness score. Because the variables are ordinal, the coefficients require caution and describe associations rather than cause and effect.

For these illustrative tests, the significance level was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. The analyses must be repeated using genuine responses before the results can be reported as findings from the field study.

7.7 Ethical Considerations

The attached spreadsheet does not establish that any genuine respondent data were collected. For the actual study, participants should be told the purpose of the research, participation should be voluntary, and personal details should be limited or stored separately. Results should be reported accurately, and mock responses should never be described as data from real people.

8. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The tables below summarize the 135 simulated records in the supplied workbook. Their counts and test statistics can be reproduced using the accompanying analysis files, but they should not be read as results from real survey participants.

8.1 Respondent Profile (Simulated Records)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Female	69	51.1%
Gender	Male	65	48.1%
Gender	Prefer not to say	1	0.7%
Age	Below 25	22	16.3%
Age	25–35	53	39.3%
Age	36–45	43	31.9%
Age	Above 45	17	12.6%
Occupation	Business owner/entrepreneur	94	69.6%
Occupation	Self-employed	17	12.6%
Occupation	Employee/professional	17	12.6%
Occupation	Other	7	5.2%
Education	Higher Secondary	16	11.9%
Education	Diploma	19	14.1%
Education	Undergraduate	65	48.1%
Education	Postgraduate or above	35	25.9%
Monthly income	Below ₹20,000	24	17.8%
Monthly income	₹20,001–₹40,000	62	45.9%
Monthly income	₹40,001–₹60,000	30	22.2%

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Monthly income	Above ₹60,000	19	14.1%
Marital status	Single	52	38.5%
Marital status	Married	76	56.3%
Marital status	Divorced	4	3.0%
Marital status	Widowed	3	2.2%

In the simulated records, the largest groups were business owners or entrepreneurs (69.6%), respondents aged 25–35 (39.3%), undergraduates (48.1%), people reporting monthly income of ₹20,001–₹40,000 (45.9%), and married respondents (56.3%). These proportions reflect the way the mock records were generated and should not be generalized to the wider small-business population.

8.2 Digital Marketing Practices and Reported Outcomes

Question area	Most frequent response	n	%
Most important platform	Instagram	59	43.7%
Main digital marketing method	Social media	74	54.8%
Digital marketing frequency	Daily	58	43.0%
Digital marketing frequency	Daily or weekly combined	107	79.3%
Person managing digital marketing	Business owner	85	63.0%
Biggest perceived growth benefit	More customers	47	34.8%
Customer-base change	Increased moderately	61	45.2%
Sales effect	Increased moderately	69	51.1%
Reach beyond local area	Yes, to some extent	57	42.2%
Overall business performance	Good	73	54.1%
Business-performance area improved most	Revenue	47	34.8%
Revenue effect	Increased slightly	58	43.0%
Competitive ability	Improved moderately	70	51.9%
Activity generating most customer interaction	WhatsApp messages	52	38.5%
Customer interaction frequency	Frequently	53	39.3%
Most common customer response	Enquiries	42	31.1%
Brand-awareness effect	Increased moderately	64	47.4%
Biggest digital marketing challenge	High cost	43	31.9%
Most difficult activity	Managing social media	49	36.3%
Self-rated digital marketing knowledge	Good	62	45.9%
Main reason not to use more digital marketing	Limited budget	45	33.3%

Social media and Instagram were the most frequently selected marketing method and platform in the simulated records, and most entries indicated daily or weekly digital marketing use. The responses also leaned toward positive reports about customer numbers, sales, market reach and brand awareness. Because favourable answers were built into the simulated response pattern, these results should not be treated as estimates of what real small businesses

experience.

8.3 Mean, Median and Standard Deviation

Ordinal variable	N	Mean	Median	Sample SD	Coding direction
Digital marketing use frequency	135	3.133	3	0.945	1–4; 4 = daily
Customer-base change	135	3.007	3	0.868	1–4; 4 = increased greatly
Sales effect	135	3.081	3	0.802	1–4; 4 = increased greatly
Reach beyond local area	135	2.970	3	0.946	1–4; 4 = yes, significantly
Overall business performance	135	2.807	3	0.748	1–4; 4 = excellent
Revenue effect	135	2.948	3	0.892	1–4; 4 = increased significantly
Competitive ability	135	3.193	3	0.718	1–4; 4 = improved greatly
Customer interaction frequency	135	2.859	3	0.865	1–4; 4 = very frequently
Brand-awareness change	135	3.059	3	0.799	1–4; 4 = increased greatly
Self-rated digital marketing knowledge	135	2.748	3	0.826	1–4; 4 = excellent

The median for each item shown was 3, while the means ranged from 2.748 to 3.193. Competitive ability had the highest mean score ($M = 3.193$, $SD = 0.718$), and self-rated digital marketing knowledge had the lowest ($M = 2.748$, $SD = 0.826$). These figures are useful for describing the coded responses, but the response options are ordinal, so the gaps between scores should not be assumed to be equal.

8.4 Chi-Square Tests

Grouping variable	Outcome grouping	χ^2	df	p	Cramér's V	Minimum expected n
Daily/weekly use vs monthly/occasional use	Sales increased vs unchanged/decreased	0.070	1	.791	.023	4.978
Social media vs other methods	Good/excellent vs average/poor performance	3.499	1	.061	.161	18.526
Social media vs other methods	Customer base increased vs unchanged/decreased	0.000	1	1.000	.000	14.459
Instagram vs other platforms	Moderate/great vs slight/no awareness increase	0.000	1	1.000	.000	12.674

None of the four illustrative chi-square tests reached the 5% significance level. The closest result was the comparison between main marketing method and perceived performance, $\chi^2(1, N = 135) = 3.499$, $p = .061$, $V = .161$. This result does not meet the chosen significance threshold. The comparison between use frequency and sales had a minimum expected count of about 4.98, slightly below five, so it needs particular caution. Since the data are simulated, these tests do not establish whether the same relationships exist in the population.

8.5 One-Way ANOVA

Primary method	N	Mean performance score	SD
Social media	74	2.946	0.757
Content marketing	23	2.739	0.689
SEO	11	2.636	0.809

Primary method	N	Mean performance score	SD
Online advertising	27	2.556	0.698

The ANOVA comparing performance scores across the four method groups returned $F(3, 131) = 2.177$, $p = .094$, $\eta^2 = .047$. This is not statistically significant at the .05 level. The social-media group had the highest mean (2.946), while online advertising had the lowest (2.556), but the test does not provide enough evidence of a difference among the groups. The performance measure has only four ordered categories and group sizes vary, so this ANOVA is best treated as a demonstration. With genuine data, a non-parametric test or ordinal regression may be more suitable.

8.6 Linear Regression

An exploratory OLS regression was run with the business-performance rating as the outcome and digital marketing frequency, customer-interaction frequency and brand-awareness rating as predictors. In the coding used here, higher values indicate more frequent use or a more positive response.

Predictor	B	SE	t	p	95% CI
Intercept	2.541	0.403	6.301	< .001	[1.743, 3.339]
Use frequency	-0.007	0.069	-0.108	.914	[-0.144, 0.129]
Customer-interaction frequency	0.018	0.075	0.236	.813	[-0.131, 0.167]
Brand-awareness score	0.078	0.082	0.955	.341	[-0.084, 0.240]

N	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F(3, 131)	Model p-value
135	0.007	-0.016	0.316	.814

The regression model was not statistically significant, $F(3, 131) = 0.316$, $p = .814$, and accounted for about 0.7% of the variation in the coded performance score ($R^2 = .007$). None of the three predictors had a p-value below .05. As the entries are simulated and the measures are ordinal, this result should not be taken to mean that these factors have no real-world importance. OLS is included to demonstrate the requested procedure; an analysis of real responses should check the model assumptions and consider ordinal logistic regression.

8.7 Hypothesis Decisions

Hypothesis / illustrative operational test	Result	Decision
H ₀₁ : no association between main method group and customer-base growth category	$\chi^2(1, N = 135) = 0.000$, $p = 1.000$	Fail to reject H ₀₁ for the simulated dataset
H ₀₂ : no difference in performance ratings across main method groups	$F(3, 131) = 2.177$, $p = .094$	Fail to reject H ₀₂ for the simulated dataset
Exploratory regression of performance on use frequency, interaction frequency and awareness	$F(3, 131) = 0.316$, $p = .814$	Model not statistically significant in simulated data

Failing to reject a null hypothesis does not prove that it is true. In this case, the results are also based on simulated records, so the decisions show how hypotheses can be reported rather than what is happening in real businesses. The tests should be rerun with genuine survey responses before final conclusions are drawn.

9. Discussion

In the simulated dataset, social media—especially Instagram—was prominent, and digital marketing was often marked as a daily or weekly activity. WhatsApp was the most common choice for generating customer interaction, and enquiries were the most frequently selected response from customers. These patterns fit the questionnaire's focus on accessible platforms that allow direct communication, but they cannot be treated as population estimates because the records were generated for demonstration.

The literature review suggests that digital marketing is best understood as more than simply using online tools. Chatterjee and Kar (2020) report benefits associated with social media adoption among Indian SMEs, while Wu et al. (2024) emphasize the skills and capabilities needed to put a strategy into practice. Tajvidi and Karami (2021), Fan et al. (2021), and Borah et al. (2022) also discuss branding, innovation and leadership as factors that may help explain business outcomes. The questionnaire's focus on customer interaction, brand awareness and practical challenges reflects these themes.

The illustrative tests did not identify statistically significant associations at the 5% level. This does not confirm or contradict the findings of the previous studies: the records here were generated rather than collected from businesses, and they were not designed to reproduce real-world relationships. The statistical outputs should therefore be used only as examples. When genuine data are available, results should be assessed alongside effect sizes, data quality, measurement validity and other factors that may affect performance.

A stronger field study could add a few objective business measures, such as monthly sales changes over a fixed period, marketing expenditure, new-customer numbers and the rate of repeat purchases. It could also use established multi-item measures for digital capability, customer engagement and performance. These additions would provide a firmer basis for regression analysis and reliability testing than single questions with four response options.

10. Major Findings from the Illustrative Analysis

- Instagram was the most frequently selected platform (43.7%), while social media was the most commonly selected digital marketing method (54.8%) in the simulated records.
- The business owner was identified most often as the person responsible for digital marketing (63.0%).
- The most frequently selected perceived benefits were gaining more customers (34.8%) and increasing sales (31.9%).
- Moderate customer-base growth (45.2%), a moderate increase in sales (51.1%), good overall performance (54.1%) and a moderate increase in brand awareness (47.4%) were the most common responses in their respective categories.
- High cost (31.9%) and lack of knowledge (28.1%) were the most frequently selected challenges. Managing social media was the activity most often described as difficult (36.3%).
- None of the four chi-square tests was significant at the .05 level. The ANOVA also found no statistically significant difference in performance ratings across primary marketing methods, $F(3, 131) = 2.177$, $p = .094$.
- The exploratory regression model was not significant, $F(3, 131) = 0.316$, $p = .814$, $R^2 = .007$, and none of its predictors had $p < .05$.
- These results describe only the simulated records supplied for this exercise. They should not be reported as findings about real small businesses.

11. Conclusion

Digital marketing gives small businesses several ways to stay in touch with customers, improve their online visibility and promote their products or services. The studies reviewed for this project suggest that outcomes can depend on choosing suitable channels and having the skills to use them well, including customer knowledge, innovation, leadership and analytics. The study framework brings these areas together with customer engagement, brand awareness, business growth, performance and practical barriers.

The analysis in this draft demonstrates how to prepare frequency tables and calculate descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, one-way ANOVA and linear regression using 135 simulated records. The inferential tests were not statistically significant at the .05 level. These results cannot show the actual impact of digital marketing on small businesses. Before submitting the project as an empirical study, the researcher should collect genuine responses and repeat the analysis.

12. Recommendations for Small Businesses

1. Choose digital channels that fit the target customers and business goals instead of trying to maintain a presence on every platform.
2. Track useful outcomes, such as qualified enquiries, purchases, repeat orders, conversion rates and customer acquisition costs, rather than relying only on likes or views.
3. Use customer messages, reviews and feedback to make practical improvements to products, service quality and communication.
4. Set a manageable schedule for creating content and replying to customers so that marketing activity does not depend entirely on the owner's available time.
5. Where skills are limited, look for affordable training in content creation, advertising, analytics and customer-data privacy.
6. Start with a small test budget, compare results with clear objectives and increase spending only when there is evidence that a campaign is working.
7. In the research process, document recruitment and consent procedures carefully and do not use generated responses as if they were primary data.

13. Limitations of the Study

- The main limitation is that the 135 rows analysed here are simulated and are not verified observations from real businesses.
- The files do not specify a confirmed study location, the mix of business sectors or a real participant-recruitment process.
- Most questionnaire items are single categorical or ordinal questions rather than validated scales made up of several items.
- The ANOVA and OLS regression treat four-category ordinal responses approximately as numeric. With genuine responses, these results should be checked using methods designed for ordinal outcomes.
- The analysis does not account for other factors that may affect business performance, such as industry, business age, firm size, marketing budget, product type, competition or the owner's digital skills.
- A one-time self-report survey can identify reported patterns and associations, but it cannot establish cause and effect or show that digital marketing alone produced a change in performance.

14. Suggestions for Future Research

Future research should collect genuine responses and clearly describe the study location, business sectors, eligibility rules, sampling method and response rate. Where possible, survey answers should be compared with business records or indicators measured over a defined period. A broader sample could allow comparisons by industry, business age and marketing budget. Any multi-item measures should be piloted and checked for reliability and validity. Depending on the final questionnaire, ordinal logistic regression or robust association tests may be more appropriate than treating every response as continuous. A study that follows businesses over time could provide stronger evidence about changes in sales and customer retention.

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