

E-Marketing Mixes and Their Influence on Business Growth: Evidence from SME Leaders in Erbil, Kurdistan Region

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Abstract

The advent of e-marketing has transformed the business landscape, offering small and medium enterprises (SMEs) a powerful tool for growth, particularly in emerging economies like the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. In Erbil city, SMEs face the dual challenge of leveraging digital tools for competitiveness while operating within a unique socio-economic context. This study aims to investigate the impact of electronic marketing on business growth in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Erbil city. To achieve this end, the researchers utilize analytical descriptive approaches. Using a quantitative case study methodology, data were collected through a pre-tested, structured questionnaire distributed to 85 e-marketing group leaders in Erbil City. A total of 79 valid responses were obtained for statistical analysis. The study yielded multiple conclusions, indicating a substantial and positive correlation between the adoption of e-marketing mixes and business growth, illustrating that the proficient utilization of digital marketing tools enhances revenue growth, market expansion, and customer engagement. The research presented a set of recommendations; the most important thing is that small and medium-sized firms ought to aggressively employ social media marketing to promote brand awareness and foster client involvement, while collaborating with local influencers can bolster brand recognition and broaden reach in the Kurdistan market.

Keywords: E-Marketing Mixes, Business Growth, SME, Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq.

1. Introduction

The rise of e-marketing has revolutionized the business environment, particularly for small and medium-sized businesses in Kurdistan. This research seeks to investigate how e-marketing impacts the development of local businesses, with a specific focus on the views of SME leaders (Kobis et al., 2024). In the rapidly changing global business environment, e-marketing has become an essential tool for enterprises of all sizes, particularly those operating locally. The Kurdistan Region, characterized by its unique economic and cultural traits, has been leveraging digital marketing to enhance the visibility and competitiveness of its local enterprises. As traditional marketing methods increasingly give way to digital initiatives, understanding the significance of e-marketing in this region is vital for fostering economic growth and community development (Bekos et al., 2025).

E-marketing encompasses numerous online marketing strategies that employ digital media to engage consumers. This includes social media marketing, email campaigns, search engine optimization (SEO), and content marketing. In the Kurdistan Region, where internet penetration has surged significantly over the past decade, these digital marketing methods



have become indispensable for local enterprises seeking to connect with potential clients. The region's tech-savvy and actively engaged youth on social media presents substantial opportunities for businesses to creatively connect with their target audience (Zhou et al., 2024).

Existing literature suggests that adopting e-commerce and digital marketing strategies can greatly benefit small and medium enterprises. Research indicates that e-commerce adoption can result in increased market share and sales, thus enhancing the global competitiveness of SMEs (Elbeltagi et al., 2016). In developing economies like Kenya, factors such as implementation costs, IT skills, and training have been identified as crucial determinants of e-commerce adoption by SMEs (Macharia, 2009). Similarly, a study in Pakistan emphasized the importance of e-commerce for SMEs, highlighting its ability to reduce transaction costs, access larger untapped markets, and eliminate intermediaries (Khaskheli & Jun, 2016). Research conducted in Indonesia has revealed that small and medium enterprises frequently face challenges when integrating e-commerce into their overall business plans. This underscores the importance of gaining a deeper understanding of the factors that influence the adoption of e-commerce (Hidayati et al., 2019; Kartiwi, 2006). While existing literature offers valuable insights into the potential of e-marketing for SMEs, there is a notable lack of research focusing on the specific experiences and perspectives of SME leaders in the Kurdistan region.

A primary benefit of e-marketing for local enterprises in the Kurdistan Region is its cost efficiency. Traditional advertising methods, such as print media and television, often require substantial financial investment that may be unaffordable for smaller businesses. In contrast, e-marketing allows enterprises to reach a broader audience at a significantly lower cost. Social media networks provide free or low-cost advertising options that can yield substantial returns on investment. The democratization of marketing resources enables local firms, like artists, restaurants, and service providers, to compete with larger organizations that have bigger marketing budgets (Bekos et al., 2025).

Furthermore, e-marketing facilitates personalized advertising, which is particularly advantageous for local enterprises. By leveraging data analysis and consumer insights, businesses can tailor their marketing messages to different demographics, ensuring that their advertisements reach the most relevant audiences. This specific strategy not only boosts the chances of converting customers, but also encourages active involvement within the community. For instance, a local café can promote its offerings to nearby residents or tourists, thereby building customer loyalty and encouraging repeat visits (Zhou et al., 2024).

In addition to cost-effectiveness and reach, e-marketing provides local enterprises in the Kurdistan Region with essential tools for enhancing brand awareness and reputation. By creating engaging content, including videos, blog posts, and interactive social media campaigns, businesses can showcase their unique offerings and develop a distinct brand identity. This is especially important in an area where cultural heritage and local products are highly appealing to consumers. By sharing their stories and values online, businesses can forge a deep connection with customers, fostering trust and loyalty.

In the swiftly advancing digital economy, e-marketing has become a crucial strategy for corporate expansion and sustainability. Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), who represent a substantial segment of the Kurdistan Region's economy, encounter mounting demand to use digital marketing strategies to improve their market reach, competitiveness, and overall performance. Nonetheless, despite the worldwide acknowledgment of e-marketing's potential, a significant information gap persists concerning its efficacy and implementation among SMEs in the Kurdistan Region.

Current study predominantly examines e-marketing within wider economic frameworks or developed markets, with scant empirical data regarding its particular influence on local enterprises in emerging economies, especially in Kurdistan. Significant hurdles, including digital infrastructure, financial limitations, technological proficiency, and leadership perspectives on digital transformation, exacerbate the incorporation of e-marketing into SME operations. Furthermore, there is a lack of comprehensive scholarly examination about the perceptions and utilization of e-marketing tactics by business leaders in the region to foster growth and sustainability.

This study seeks to fill these gaps by performing an analytical examination of the function of e-marketing in fostering local business growth, concentrating on the viewpoints of SME leaders in the Kurdistan Region. This research aims to elucidate the opportunities and constraints of e-marketing adoption, offering significant insights for policymakers, corporate executives, and scholars, thus enhancing the theoretical and practical discourse on digital marketing in emerging economies.

The primary goals of this study are to analyze the impact of e-marketing on the development and competitiveness of small businesses, particularly Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), in Kurdistan. In particular, the study aims to assess the extent to which SMEs in Erbil city are utilizing e-marketing and to pinpoint the factors influencing the adoption and utilization of e-marketing strategies. It also aims to provide recommendations for SMEs and the government at the regional level aimed at improving e-marketing strategies designed to promote business sustainability and contribute to the economy of the region. In addition to this, the research will analyze the relationships between different e-marketing variables and the impact these variables have on the growth of local businesses in the context of Erbil city using robust statistical techniques.

The research examines several key areas related to e-marketing and business development in Erbil. First, it explores the extent to which small and medium enterprises in the region currently utilize e-marketing strategies and tools. Second, it investigates whether there has been notable expansion and advancement among these small and medium-sized enterprises in Erbil. Third, the study seeks to determine if a statistically meaningful correlation exists between e-marketing practices and business growth within the research community. Finally, it aims to assess whether there is a statistically significant effect of e-marketing on the overall business growth experienced by the enterprises under study.

This study is significant for its ability to address the knowledge gap about the impact of e-marketing on the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the Kurdistan Region. Small and medium-sized enterprises constitute the foundation of the region's economy, notably contributing to job creation, innovation, and economic diversity. Many local enterprises have difficulties in embracing digital transformation, hindering their competitiveness in a progressively digital environment. Comprehending the influence of e-marketing on business expansion is essential for improving SME competitiveness and promoting economic resilience.

This research enhances the existing literature on digital marketing in emerging economies by providing empirical findings pertinent to the Kurdistan Region. Although e-marketing has been well-researched in developed markets, there is a paucity of academic literature investigating its acceptance, obstacles, and outcomes in the distinct socio-economic and technological landscape of Kurdistan. This study will offer a detailed insight of how SME leaders view and execute e-marketing strategies, illuminating the elements that affect digital adoption in a developing economy.

This research has substantial consequences for business proprietors, governments, and industry stakeholders. This study will identify the primary facilitators and obstacles to e-marketing adoption, offering practical recommendations to improve digital marketing strategies within SMEs. Furthermore, it will provide insights into the influence of technological infrastructure, financial limitations, and digital literacy on the efficacy of e-marketing. These findings will be instrumental for policymakers in formulating focused efforts that assist SMEs in their digital transformation endeavors.

Moreover, the study's findings can assist entrepreneurs and business executives in utilizing e-marketing tools more efficiently to broaden market reach, improve consumer engagement, and stimulate revenue growth. As digital marketing evolves, comprehending its influence on SME performance will be crucial for fostering sustainable economic development in the Kurdistan Region. This research addresses academic and practical concerns, advancing theoretical discussions on e-marketing while offering strategic insights that can facilitate the long-term growth and digital transformation of SMEs in Kurdistan.

2. Literature Review

2.1. E-Marketing: The Concept

E-marketing entails utilizing information and social technologies to convey client requirements and foster relationships with them. This form of marketing emerged in the 1990s and has shown significant growth in recent years. The Kurdistan Region has had notable advancements in e-marketing in recent years. E-marketing has emerged as a crucial element of contemporary corporate strategy, profoundly altering how firms engage with consumers. E-marketing, characterized by the utilization of digital technology to advertise products and services, encompasses several channels such as email, social media, search engines, and websites (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). The advancement of the internet and mobile technology has enabled the transition from conventional marketing to more dynamic and interactive engagement methods (Mahmood & Darbandi, 2023).

Scientific literature underscores certain essential elements of e-marketing. The notion prioritizes customer centricity, when firms employ data analytics to comprehend consumer behavior and preferences (Kumar et al., 2020). This facilitates tailored marketing techniques that improve client experience and cultivate loyalty. Secondly, e-marketing is distinguished by its cost-efficiency, allowing small and medium-sized enterprises to compete with larger corporations via targeted advertising and social media interaction (Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014).

Furthermore, e-marketing interactivity enables organizations to engage with consumers via instantaneous feedback and interaction (Holliman & Rowley, 2014). This bilateral contact not only augments brand recognition but also fosters community development surrounding products and services. As e-marketing evolves, its integration into comprehensive marketing plans will become essential for organizations seeking success in a digital-centric environment. The literature highlights the transformative capacity of e-shopping in influencing consumer-business interactions and fostering economic growth.

2.2. E-Marketing Mixes

It is a set of processes and practices that the marketing department in the organization sets and ensures its implementation. It thoroughly addresses the strategies and rules pertaining to the marketing process, with its components including electronic product, electronic pricing, electronic distribution, and electronic promotion interconnected (Fattah & Moneim, 2011). The following are the mixes of e-marketing (Ashqar, 2024):

- 1) The electronic product is essential in electronic marketing, affecting all aspects of the marketing mix. The service aims to meet the needs and preferences of online customers, improve the quality of products and services, and optimize pricing strategies in electronic marketing while distributing information about various products and services, thereby enhancing market competitiveness (Badi, 2019).
- 2) Electronic Pricing: Pricing is a key element of a bank's electronic marketing strategy, greatly impacting revenue generation, competitive positioning, and market share growth. Pricing affects both profitability and the lifespan of services. It is described as a process that balances the benefits a client receives with the monetary value they are willing to spend. This process is complex and dependent on various economic and behavioral factors (Bukova et al., 2017).
- 3) Electronic Distribution: Distribution encompasses the activities that ensure the efficient and effective flow of products or services from the producer to the consumer, guaranteeing that the correct quantity and quality are delivered at the right time through appropriate distribution channels (Ariyanti et al., 2024).
- 4) Electronic Promotion: E-promotion refers to the use of the internet and various communication services to share information about a product or service with consumers, encouraging a behavioral response toward the institution's offerings. This is achieved by aligning with the overall marketing strategy and specific goals set for promoting goods, services, and concepts from the institution to the consumer (Badi, 2019).

2.3. Business Growth: The Concept

Since Penrose's pioneering study in 1959, business expansion has been a prominent issue in strategic management research. Previous research has thoroughly examined several growth strategies that firms may adopt, along with their corresponding advantages. Companies may diversify their operations to reallocate important resources or concentrate on their primary market to capitalize on their core competencies (Santamaria, 2018). The indicators are categorized into four primary groups: capacity, business outcomes, qualitative indicators, and business outputs. The result indicators encompass profit, defined as the disparity between expenses and revenues. Its generated revenues and operational efficiency determine the profit of a corporation. An increase in profits will indicate enhanced efficiency and sales performance. Consequently, the company's growth is evident through enhanced efficiency and increased revenues (Funk, 2022).

Companies may enter new markets either through organic growth via internal development or by acquiring an existing established firm, contingent upon their resources and capabilities (Lee & Lieberman, 2010). Although small businesses are organized differently than large corporations, existing research has largely overlooked the growth strategies accessible to entrepreneurs, instead treating business growth as a singular phenomenon occurring solely at the organizational level (Sarasvathy et al., 2013). Overseeing the growth trajectory of a nascent enterprise is intricate (Hellmann et al., 2016). This approach typically necessitates a convergence between an entrepreneur possessing an innovative business concept and external collaborators who endorse that concept and can provide diverse resources.

However, attaining such a correspondence is not very simple. On one hand, entrepreneurs often hesitate to develop their businesses by incorporating partners due to concerns about losing control, encountering partners with divergent objectives, and being accountable to others (Cruz & Justo, 2017). Conversely, it is highly perilous for partners to invest in a nascent enterprise due to insufficient transparency and moral hazard (Burchardt et

al., 2016). Establishing distinct legal entities organized as a business group may address the aforementioned issues. We contend that, under certain situations, entrepreneurs who extend their enterprises as a business group can procure greater external resources and achieve accelerated growth compared to those who develop their businesses within a singular legal and organizational framework (Mohammed, 2020).

The Kurdistan Region has had substantial economic and trade expansion in recent years. Local firms have encountered numerous challenges and inconsistencies, including financial difficulties, diminished standing, and market-related problems. Local enterprises in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region encounter a distinct combination of prospects and obstacles. The region has maintained relative peace in contrast to other areas of Iraq, promoting a flourishing entrepreneurial ecosystem. Numerous local enterprises are flourishing in industries like as retail, hotel, and construction, attributable to a burgeoning middle class and heightened consumer expenditure. Nonetheless, these enterprises face considerable obstacles (Mahmood & Mohammed, 2024).

Economic inflation, political instability, and restricted access to capital might hinder growth. The KRG has initiated numerous reforms to bolster the private sector; nonetheless, bureaucratic inefficiency and regulatory obstacles persist extensively. Local entrepreneurs frequently encounter difficulties in obtaining essential resources, such as loans or investments, which can hinder innovation and growth. Moreover, rivalry between major enterprises and imported products presents difficulties for small businesses. Numerous local enterprises struggle to compete in terms of price and quality, resulting in dependence on niche markets or specialized products.

Notwithstanding these hurdles, there is an escalating trend toward digital transformation, as numerous local enterprises progressively adopt e-commerce platforms and social media marketing to engage broader audiences (Omar, 2023). The recent focus on economic diversification beyond oil offers new growth potential in sectors such as agriculture, technology, and tourism. Local enterprises in the Kurdistan Region must negotiate a complicated environment replete with obstacles and opportunities; their resilience and adaptation will be crucial for future success and sustainability (Mahmood & Omar, 2024).

2.4. Digital Marketing Mix and Business Growth in SMEs

The digital marketing mix is a cornerstone of modern marketing approaches, given its effective role in influencing consumer behavior and guiding purchasing decisions, especially in highly competitive, dynamic environments (Wilson et al., 2024). According to Mahendratmo & Ariyanti (2019), the use of digital marketing tools, such as social media promotion and content customization to suit customer preferences, contributes to enhancing consumer purchase intentions in the region. The study demonstrated that direct interaction via digital channels enhances brand trust and is a pivotal factor in building sustainable customer relationships.

Studies confirm that implementing digital marketing mix elements offers real opportunities to enhance the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in emerging markets characterized by volatility and challenges. Kano et al. (2022) concluded that the use of data-driven digital marketing strategies and predictive analytics contributes to increased customer satisfaction and improved brand image, leading to significant sales growth, thus supporting overall business growth.

Furthermore, entrepreneurial and agile leadership are key factors determining the effectiveness of digital marketing mix strategies. A recent study conducted by Sharabati et al. (2024) found that SME leaders increasingly recognize the importance of integrating digital tools into their marketing activities and rely on agile teams capable of quickly adapting to

technological developments. This enhances marketing efficiency and supports an upward trajectory of business growth.

2.5. Research Hypothesis

H1: The viewpoints of respondents in the surveyed small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Erbil differed about the classification of the variables in the present study.

H2: Asserts a significant link between e-marketing mixes and business growth in the surveyed small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Erbil.

H3: Asserts that e-marketing mixes significantly impact the business growth of leaders in the surveyed small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Erbil.

2.6. Research Model

A survey was carried out on e-marketing group leaders in Erbil City using a cross-sectional questionnaire. The aim was to gain a deeper understanding of how e-marketing mixes impact the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Erbil City. The model used in this study is based on the aforementioned principles, which are detailed below.

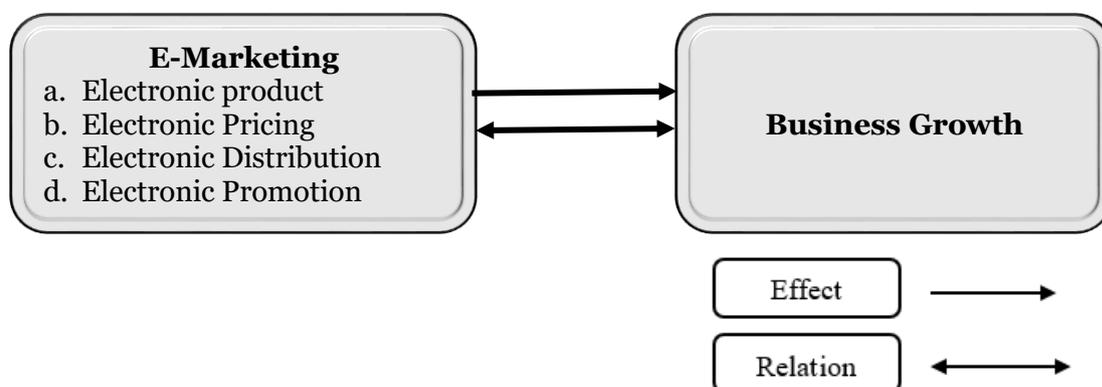


Figure 1. Research Model
Source: Prepared by researchers

3. Methods

A method combining description and analysis was utilized, drawing on various relevant scientific references in order to achieve the objectives and hypotheses of this research. A set of questions was created and given to the specified audience for feedback. A quantitative analysis of a sample of leaders from a cohort of SEM companies in the Erbil region of Kurdistan. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26 software to evaluate the results.

3.1. Data Collection Method

The researchers utilized a field study methodology to collect data by distributing a questionnaire randomly. The research encompassed 85 leaders from a cohort of SEM companies in the Erbil region of Kurdistan. Out of the distributed questionnaires, 79 were deemed appropriate for inclusion in the subsequent statistical analysis, accounting for 96.35% of the total. The introductory portion encompasses the demographics of the respondents, including gender, age, educational achievement, and years of experience. The second section examines the selected elements, including e-marketing mixes and business growth.

The questionnaire comprises 34 items designed to evaluate the model constructs. The inquiries were extracted from prior research. These articles had modest modifications to cater to the Local Business sector in the Kurdistan Region. The measurements from the previous

study were altered. A five-point Likert scale ranges from 1 for “Strongly Disagree” to 2 for “Disagree,” with a mean of 3 for “Neutral.” If the Item scores 4 for “agree” and 5 for “strongly agree,” the outcome is “agree.”

3.2. Demographics

Table 1 reveals that a predominant proportion of participants in this study are male (26.6%) compared to females (73.4%). The number of female leaders surpasses that of male leaders in the examined SEMs. The majority of surveyed SME leaders are between the ages of 19 and 29, accounting for 74.7% of the total population. The age group of 30 to 39 years is 16.5% of the overall population. The demographic of individuals under 18 years is just 6.3% of the total population. Only two leaders are aged 40-49, and none are 50 years or older.

The research reveals that the young population comprises the predominant segment of leaders in all analyzed SMEs. The education levels of surveyed leaders reveal that the majority hold bachelor's degrees (63.4%), followed by high school (29.1%), master's degrees (6.3%), and PhDs (1.2%). Regarding professional experience, the data shows that most respondents have between 5 and 14 years of experience (58.3%), while those with 15 to 24 years account for 34.2% of the sample. A smaller proportion possesses less than 4 years of experience (5.1%), and both the 25-34 years and over 35 years categories each represent 1.2% of respondents.

Table 1. Demographic Information

Variable	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	21	26.6%
	Female	58	73.4%
	Total	79	100%
Age	Less than 18	5	6.3%
	19-29	59	74.7%
	30-39	13	16.5%
	40-49	2	2.5%
	50 and more	0	0%
	Total	79	100%
Academic qualification	High School	23	29.1%
	Bachelor's degree	51	63.4%
	Master's degree	5	6.3%
	PhD	1	1.2%
	Total	79	100%
Years of experience	Less than 4	4	5.1%
	5 - 14	46	58.3%
	15 - 24	27	34.2%
	25-34	1	1.2%
	More than 34	1	1.2%
	Total	79	100%

Source: Prepared by researchers

3.3. Normal Distribution Test

Table 2 presents Cronbach's alpha coefficients assessing internal consistency reliability. The values are 0.949 for E-Marketing, 0.965 for Business Growth, and 0.925 overall. All constructs exceed the minimum acceptable threshold, confirming the measurement's reliability (Taber 2018).

Table 2. Reliability of Measurements for All Variables

Variables	Number of questions	Cronbach's Alpha
E-Marketing	15	0.949
Business Growth	15	0.965
Overall	30	0.925

Source: Prepared by researchers

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Data Analysis

This part of the report presents the findings from the study, which consist of descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and evaluation using a detailed linear regression model. The data was collected through surveys given to leaders in small and medium-sized enterprises located in Erbil City.

4.1.1. Descriptive Statistics about E-Marketing

Table 3. E-Marketing Descriptive Statistics

Items	Paragraph	Mean	SD.	Agreement percentage
X1	Using e-marketing strategies enhances brand awareness among potential customers.	4.22	0.762	84.4
X2	Social media plays a key role in improving our company's image and increasing its popularity.	4.12	0.853	82.4
X3	Search Engine Optimization (SEO) helps increase our company's online visibility.	4.15	1.014	83
X4	Paid online advertising campaigns positively impact brand recognition.	4.16	0.883	83.2
X5	Email marketing enhances customer engagement and leads to increased sales.	3.97	0.974	79.4
X6	Content marketing (such as blogs and videos) helps build strong relationships with customers.	4.00	0.974	80
X7	Targeted online advertisements positively influence customers' purchasing decisions.	4.13	0.882	82.6
X8	Providing digital services (such as live chat) improves the customer experience and contributes to their loyalty.	3.84	1.018	76.8
X9	E-marketing significantly helps increase our company's sales.	3.92	1.010	78.4
X10	Online marketing campaigns provide a high return on investment compared to traditional channels.	3.99	0.913	79.8
X11	Promotional offers and digital discounts contribute to increasing company revenue.	4.03	0.891	80.6
X12	The cost of e-marketing presents a challenge for small businesses in adopting it effectively.	4.01	0.967	80.2
X13	Artificial intelligence and marketing automation will be key factors in improving e-marketing strategies.	4.09	0.950	81.8
X14	Investing in digital marketing is a strategic decision necessary to ensure business sustainability in the future.	3.87	1.017	77.4
X15	Influencer marketing will be one of the important factors in the success of small businesses in Erbil.	3.91	0.909	78.2
Overall		4.02	0.934	80.54

Source: Output of SPSS

Table 3 presents the outcomes of leaders at the chosen private SEM in Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq, illustrating the independent variable (X1-X15). The accessibility of e-Marketing illustrates this point. The arithmetic mean (4.02) and standard deviation (0.934) substantiate the conclusion that an agreement percentage rate of 80.54% has been achieved.

Table 3 indicates that the primary component of the independent variable (E-Marketing) is the assertion (X1), which states, “Utilizing e-marketing strategies increases brand awareness among prospective customers.” This outcome is corroborated by an agreement percentage of 84.4, an arithmetic mean of 4.22, and a standard deviation of 0.762. Statement (X8), the fundamental level within this system, achieved consensus from 76.8% of the participants. “Offering digital services, such as live chat, enhances the customer experience and fosters loyalty.” The mean was 3.84, and the standard deviation was 1.018.

4.1.2. Descriptive Statistics about Business Growth

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics about Business Growth

Items	Paragraph	Mean	SD.	Agreement percentage
Y1	Our company has experienced steady revenue growth over the past years.	4.05	0.973	81
Y2	Increased sales have been the key factor in achieving our business growth.	4.24	0.820	84.8
Y3	Our pricing strategies have helped improve profitability and increase returns.	4.04	1.031	80.8
Y4	The demand for our products/services has significantly increased in recent times.	4.04	1.043	80.8
Y5	Our company has successfully entered new markets in the past years.	4.23	0.891	84.6
Y6	Our company's market share has grown as a result of product and service development.	3.76	1.179	75.2
Y7	Market competition has not prevented us from achieving sustainable growth.	3.96	1.006	79.2
Y8	Our risk management strategies contribute to achieving sustainable growth.	3.66	1.186	73.2
Y9	Automating administrative processes has contributed to improving the overall company performance.	4.33	0.796	86.6
Y10	Investment in research and development has helped enhance our business growth.	3.99	1.092	79.8
Y11	Our company is committed to offering new products/services to meet market needs.	4.16	0.833	83.2
Y12	Innovation in business strategies has strengthened our competitive advantage in the market.	4.29	0.819	85.8
Y13	Customer feedback has helped us continuously improve our products and services.	4.14	0.858	82.8
Y14	Modern technology has helped us improve productivity and reduce operational costs.	4.41	0.777	88.2
Y15	Our long-term investments support the continuity of the company's growth.	4.23	0.905	84.6
Overall		4.102	0.947	82.04

Source: Output of SPSS

Table 4 displays the outcomes for (Y1-Y15), representing the dependent variable (Business Growth) obtained from leaders at the chosen private SME in Erbil, Kurdistan Region, Iraq. The overall arithmetic mean (4.102) and standard deviation (0.947) substantiate the assertion that this outcome was attained when the Agreement percentage rate reached (82.04%). Table 4 indicates that the assertion (Y9), which claims “Automating administrative processes has enhanced overall company performance,” is the most significant component of the dependent variable (Business Growth). 86.6% of participants agree with this statement. The arithmetic mean was 4.33, and the standard deviation was 0.796. The assertion (Y8), “Our risk management strategies contribute to achieving sustainable growth,” received agreement from 73.2% of the participants. The mean was 3.66, and the standard deviation was 1.186.

The first hypothesis (H1) asserts a significant difference in respondents' evaluations of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Erbil studied regarding the definition of the variables in this research. H1: The viewpoints of respondents in the surveyed small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Erbil differed about the classification of the variables in the present study.

4.1.3. Correlation and Regression Analysis Results

Correlation analysis was utilized to determine the link between independent and dependent variables. Regression analysis is a statistical method used to illustrate the functional relationship between a response variable and a set of explanatory or predictor variables (Blbas & Kahwachi, 2021). Subsequently, Simple Linear Regression Analysis was employed to identify explanatory variables, including E-Marketing and Business Growth, that predict the response variable (Business Growth). Table 5 below presents the statistical results of the correlation analysis between the main variables of the study, which contributes to testing the hypothesis proposed in this regard and explaining the nature of the correlation between them.

Table 5. Correlation Analysis Results

	Business Growth	
E-Marketing	Pearson Correlation	0.848**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000
	N	79

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: Output of SPSS

Table 5 illustrates a robust positive significant correlation between the independent variable of e-marketing and the dependent variable of business growth (0.848**). The second hypothesis (H2) posits a substantial correlation between e-marketing and business growth in the SEMs examined in this study. The findings in Table 5 corroborate the hypothesis, demonstrating a direct and significant correlation between the independent variable (E-Marketing) and the dependent variable (Business Growth).

Table 6. Simple Linear Regression Analysis Results

	Coefficients			Model Summary		ANOVA
	B	t	p-value	R-square	F	p-value
(Constant)	0.914	3.957	0.000	0.718	196.449	0.000
E-Marketing	0.848	14.016	0.000			

Source: Output of SPSS

Table 6 displays the ANOVA table evaluating the goodness of fit for the independent variable (E-Marketing) concerning the dependent variable (Business Growth), demonstrating model suitability with $F=196.449$ and $P\text{-Value}=0.000$. The table above displays the outcomes for the constant, slope, t-value, and coefficient of determination (R-squared). The Regression Coefficient (B) for E-Marketing is 0.914, signifying that a one-unit increase in E-Marketing will provide a 0.914 increase in Business Growth. The coefficient of determination (R^2) measures the degree to which variation in the dependent variable is explained by the independent variable. The coefficient (R^2) reveals that Business Growth accounts for 71.8% of E-Marketing, with the remaining variation ascribed to other influencing factors. The final hypothesis (H_3) was validated, confirming that E-Marketing substantially impacts business growth among CEOs in the SEM companies in the Erbil region of Kurdistan. This discovery underscores the critical role of E-Marketing Mixes in enhancing Business Growth.

4.2. Discussion

The study results indicate that using e-marketing practices contributes significantly to enhancing business growth, especially in emerging markets. This finding is consistent with the findings of several recent studies that have emphasized the critical role of e-marketing in enabling small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to achieve growth and expansion. For example, Deku et al. (2024) indicated that the application of digital marketing tools, such as social media marketing and search engine optimization, contributes to expanding the customer base and increasing sales in emerging markets.

This study also demonstrated that e-marketing enables organizations to effectively interact with customers and better understand their needs, which contributes to product development and achieving a competitive advantage that leads to business growth. In the same context, Dwivedi et al. (2020) found that shifting to digital marketing has become a strategic necessity in volatile business environments, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital tools have proven their ability to maintain business continuity and increase growth rates even amid economic challenges.

Moreover, the regression analysis results of this study demonstrated the effectiveness of using modern digital tools in enhancing the market performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This is an indication of the strength of the impact of the digital marketing mix on business growth in SMEs in Erbil. These results are consistent with the findings of Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick (2019), which confirmed that the components of the digital marketing mix (product, price, promotion, distribution, people, processes, and physical evidence) directly impact performance and sustainable growth, especially when employed within a strategy based on digital transformation and the adoption of consumer behavioral analysis tools.

The results of this study also support Tiago & Veríssimo (2014), who indicated that the integration of traditional and digital marketing practices is a crucial factor in achieving high levels of customer satisfaction and business growth, especially in changing business environments. Furthermore, a study by Bourdy (2024) showed that SMEs that invest in digital marketing platforms and manage their campaigns based on data and digital behavior analysis achieve tangible positive results in performance indicators such as market expansion, customer acquisition, and sustainable profits.

From a practical perspective, these findings demonstrate that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Erbil can benefit from investing in digital marketing tools and technologies, not only to increase sales but also to strengthen their relationships with the market and achieve sustainable growth. Thus, the strong, positive relationship and effect

revealed by the study underscore the need to integrate digital marketing strategies into overall business growth plans in the region.

5. Conclusion

The objective of this study was to investigate the effect of e-marketing on the growth and competition of local businesses, notably small to medium enterprises (SMEs), in Erbil, Kurdistan Region. In terms of the outlined objectives, results demonstrate that the use of e-marketing is widespread and impactful among SMEs, in addition to having a significant positive correlation with business growth, e-marketing mix usage explains 71.8% of the variance in business growth, suggesting these factors are amongst the most important predictors of SME growth when contrasted with other potential external or operational factors. The study also noted that SEO, social media marketing, email campaigns, and paid advertisements play a considerable role in enhancing brand awareness, customer acquisition, and retention in relation to satisfying the objective of identifying major influencers of e-marketing success and effectiveness. Furthermore, obstacles such as high implementation costs, digital skills shortages, and competition were also noted as challenges to e-marketing adoption and usage, which satisfied the aim of identifying barriers related to e-marketing implementation in SMEs.

From a management viewpoint, the implications of the findings suggest that investment in e-marketing can lead to significant performance improvements, and hence SME leaders should prioritize the development of digital capabilities, the use of data analytics, and the automation of marketing activities as key ingredients for sustainable growth. In further support of the policy-focused objective of the study, the results also emphasize the need for collaboration between government institutions and private stake holders to provide appropriate training, funding support, and digital backbone infrastructure, all of which can enhance SME competitiveness and support regional economic development in Kurdistan. In conclusion, this study shows that e-marketing is more than just a way to promote a company; it is a way to drive growth and competitiveness in a business. It follows that if SMEs work digital marketing into their core function and processes, they will set themselves up for success in a more and more digital economy.

The research outcomes lead to multiple recommendations on how to effectively implement e-marketing and grow the business of SMEs in Erbil, Kurdistan Region. SMEs need to invest in training for their staff on digital marketing in areas such as Search Engine Optimization (SEO), content, and data analytics. I encourage business owners to implement AI-based marketing tools to boost customer interactions and campaign performance. Also, I suggest that banks and governmental bodies consider offering financial incentives or low-interest loans to help SMEs adopt e-marketing technologies. Using social media regularly and working with local influencers will improve brand visibility and engagement. Finally, I recommend SMEs implement customer relationship management (CRM) systems and web analytics applications for a better understanding of consumer behavior that can enhance their marketing strategies, competitiveness, and growth.

6. References

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