



Developing a digital marketing competitive strategic framework for Pakistan's textile manufacturing SMEs

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Developing a Digital Marketing Competitive Strategic Framework For Pakistan's Textile Manufacturing SMEs

Nauman Moazam Ali

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
and
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December 2022

Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.
2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
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5. The word count of the thesis is 60,000.

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Nauman Moazam Ali

Abstract

The current study was conducted to understand the importance and development of a competitive strategic framework based on digital marketing for SMEs in the developing economy (Pakistan), which could help the companies to gain competitiveness through organisational development and growth. The aim of the study is to develop a competitive strategic framework for small and medium-sized manufacturing firms functioning in the textile manufacturing industry of the developing country. In addition to this, the research study aims to recommend categorization model that small and medium-sized manufacturers in the textile manufacturing industry make use for the digital marketing tools and strategies implementation.

The literature review for this research identified the main components linked with the three core areas: competitive strategy, digital marketing (tools and techniques) / application, and SMEs' strategic fit. Due to the dynamic nature of digital marketing tools and techniques, there is the continuous development of literature, and the literature review is based on the specific context, mainly focusing on SMEs from the manufacturing sector in Pakistan. There is a significantly important factor in a lack of empirical research in this specific area, and the availability of the literature related to that region that can identify digital marketing with SMEs is limited. It allowed the development of a categorization model along with the conceptual framework based on the identified variables, which identified a lack of exposure for the manufacturing SMEs to get the complete understanding and outcome based on the technology-driven digital marketing tools for better overall development and growth. Developing a competitive strategy framework specific to the context can contribute effectively to developing sustainable growth and contribute towards competitiveness.

The research methodology for this research was based on the mixed method. The quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (interview) data collected from the sample of textile manufacturing SMEs (10 companies selected – category 'A' companies) from the developing economy (Pakistan). An institution (SMEDA) of the Government of Pakistan under the Ministry of Industries & Production is responsible for SMEs development in Pakistan and was responsible to provide

the information related to the SMEs. The sample was identified based on non-probability sampling, and the sample was selected based on available information related to SMEs, which belong to different textile manufacturing sectors. The data was collected between April 2017 and February 2018. The statistical and thematic analysis was proposed for the comprehensive data analysis.

The findings based on the collected data and relevant discussion demonstrated that there is a potential requirement for the competitive strategic framework which can be presented as an effective tool to contribute effectively towards the organisational goals, which is more critical in the case of SMEs for their survival within the dynamic global economy. The findings demonstrated the relationship between the identified latent variables and the achievement of the research objectives. The research suggested that the strategic framework using the digital marketing tools can add value while the strategic framework presented through lean management tool (House of Lean). The use of literature-based categorization model can support the implementation of the strategic framework. The study contributes towards literature by providing specific research contribution for the SMEs in developing economies. The study contributed towards the development of the theoretical approach by testing the latent variables and their relevance with reference to the SMEs in developing economy. It can help to expand the prospect of future research in other industries and bigger sample size can be used. The contribution towards the practice is based on applying the framework in the SMEs context, enabling the companies to use reach, relevance, and speed-related key attributes through digital marketing tools to develop sustainable growth and competitiveness.

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List of key words, abbreviations and definitions

- Acquisition, Conversion, Retention (ACR)
- Commercialisation
- Competitive Strategic framework
- Competitive Strategy (CS)
- Competitiveness
- Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM)
- Email marketing
- Emerging digital trends
- House of Lean (HOL)
- Innovation
- Knowledge development
- KM (Knowledge Management) framework
- Manufacturing
- Market based view (MBV)
- Marketing Orientation
- Mixed Methods
- Reach, Act, Convert, Engage (RACE)
- Resource based view (RBV)
- Search Engine Marketing (SEM)
- Search Engine Optimisation (SEO)
- Small and Medium Enterprise (SME)
- Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA)
- Social media platforms
- Statistical Analysis
- Strategic Fit
- Structural equation modelling (SEM)
- Sustainable competitive advantage (SCA)
- Transformation, Assimilation, Prediction Exceptionality (TAPE) framework
- VRIN (Value, Rare, Inimitable, non-substitutable)

Definitions:

SMEDA: Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority - Premier institution of the Government of Pakistan under Ministry of Industries & Production. SMEDA was established in October 1998 to take on the challenge of developing Small & Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Pakistan (SMEDA, 2007).

SME: Small & Medium Enterprises are defined as follows, as approved in SME Policy 2007

Enterprise Category	Employment Size (a)	Paid Up Capital (b)	Annual Sales (c)
Small & Medium Enterprise (SME)	Up to 250	Up to Rs. 25 Million (Rs.)	Up to Rs. 250 Million (Rs.)

GDP: “Gross domestic product or GDP is a measure of the size and health of a country’s economy over a period of time (usually one quarter or one year). It is also used to compare the size of different economies at a different point in time.” (Bank Of England, 2020)

Account Balance: “An account balance is the amount of money present in a financial repository during the current accounting period. It is the net difference between the credits and debits posted in any given accounting cycle, added to the balance carried forward from the previous month.” (Corporate Finance Institute, 2020)

Budget Balance: “The overall difference between government revenues and spending. A positive balance is called a government budget surplus, and a negative balance is a government budget deficit.” (UNESCWA, 2020)

Public Debit: “The public debt is how much a country owes to lenders outside of itself. These can include individuals, businesses, and even other governments.” (the balance, 2020)

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1: Introduction

The current research is intended to assess and develop a competitive strategic framework through the implication of digital marketing for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the developing economy. It is a considerable fact that in today's world, each organisation, regardless of its size, is determined to attain a competitive advantage in its respective industry. Additionally, it has also been noticed that the concept of development greatly enthralls small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as they are determined to expand and grow their business in order to compete with the large-sized firms (Brunswick and Vanhaverbeke, 2014)

The establishment and development of the strategic framework play a significant role in assisting the companies to attain a competitive advantage over their competitors. The significance of the strategic framework development can be judged by reviewing that it supports the organisational structure, business policies, and management processes. Hence, it could be considered that a competitive strategic framework development program tends to increase effectiveness, productivity, and profitability by forcing companies to make the required changes in their organisational and management processes.

It is also noticeable that a strategic framework alone cannot be practical enough to bring significant changes in the organisational setup. In this regard, the latest strategies, tactics, and approaches are commonly applied to attain a competitive advantage. A study conducted by Lovelock and Patterson (2015) further indicates that in recent times, organisations of all sizes are determined to enhance their marketing strategies to reach, acquire and retain the target segment. Moreover, the study also specifies that the traditional marketing approach has become obsolete or too expensive (Lovelock and Patterson, 2015). Therefore, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) cannot afford that traditional type of marketing. In this regard, a current study emphasising the implication of digital marketing has turned out to be significantly beneficial for small and medium-sized businesses.

On the other hand, it is also a notable fact that digital marketing in the manufacturing industry has become significantly vital. It has been assessed that currently, there are 1000s of manufacturing firms functioning in developing countries, which require support and development to demonstrate their competitiveness (Strauss and Frost, 2016) independently. One of the most critical industries in manufacturing is the textile industry which requires demonstrating the value it creates and delivers to the target customers. It has been observed that many small and medium-sized textile manufacturing firms are determined to attain globalisation in order to compete with the globally acclaimed (large-sized) textile manufacturing firms in the world (Memon, 2015).

Pakistan, a developing economy, is currently growing in the field of the textile manufacturing industry. In this regard, the researcher is principally determined to assess the notion of developing a competitive strategic framework based on the strategic fit to bring development and sustainable growth. A study conducted by Nazir & Zhu (2018) determined that lack of entrepreneurship approach, availability of e-commerce skills, absence of innovation awareness among the society, lower literacy rate and owner-managers characteristics are the major factors that influence the adoption of electronic commerce within the SMEs of Pakistan as a developing economy. According to another study by Nuseir (2018), digital media adaptation had been assessed as lower among the SMEs in the Middle East Region (neighbouring region) than other regions. Digital marketing adoption by SMEs can enhance marketing effectiveness and performance (Avlonitis & Karayanni, 2000; Ivanauskiene et al., 2015). According to Erum et al. (2017), digital marketing adoption affects the marketing activities positively where effectively employed strategic framework can create a difference. SMEs in Pakistan have some key issues, as previously mentioned in the study by Nazir & Zhu (2018), and this study focuses on the Textile manufacturing industry of Pakistan to suggest a framework to resolve the issues identified. The textile manufacturing industry of Pakistan provides value addition through the SMEs in the textile sector, and the use of digital marketing tools and techniques will benefit the overall development. Abrar et al. (2016) mentioned that most of the marketing and digital marketing actions are carried out by the knitting and weaving units in Pakistan, and they convert the fabrics into finishing units (performing dyeing and finishing activities) to add value. The finished product is exported in bed ware

(Not a very high value-added product), one of the main exported items from Pakistan. Most companies use the internet for everyday communication purposes, while digital marketing activities are imperative for SMEs to promote their products in international markets, which will bring development and growth. There are specific digital marketing tools used by the different textile companies, including E-Market places, Email, Websites, Banners, Sponsored Links etc., although they are randomly selected due to the lack of basic understanding and know-how related to these tools. In addition to this, the current research study is also determined to focus on evaluating the factors of digital marketing which can assist the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the textile manufacturing industry to attain competitive growth. Furthermore, the researcher will also assess the latest trends in digital marketing with the focus on developing the economy to assist small and medium-sized textile manufacturing in attaining a competitive advantage.

Apart from this, the introductory chapter of the respective study is intended to provide practical information on the concept of strategic framework development and digital marketing in the textile manufacturing industry. The problem statement will be formulated to understand the challenges and issues in the strategic framework development for the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) functioning in the textile manufacturing industry. The research question and objectives will also be crafted in the introductory chapter of the research study to highlight the researcher's structure to research the development of the competitive strategic framework through digital marketing for manufacturing small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in developing economies like Pakistan. Lastly, a brief description of the research approach and significance has also been entailed to help readers and researchers understand the impact and applicability of the current research study.

1.2: Research background and problem area

The focus of current research is Pakistani based SMEs from the textile manufacturing sector. A significant proportion of the GDP in Pakistan is based on textile-based products from Weaving to Apparel. Many previous studies focus on

developed economies, and the studies related to digital marketing adoption in developing economies are insufficient (Nazir, 2018). Technology has an integral role while considering a digital marketing-based framework due to the diversity and accessibility of digital marketing tools. Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication in Pakistan has established Advisory Committee for 5G Planning in Pakistan (5G Pakistan Plan Committee) to define a roadmap and finalise recommendations for 5G Technology readiness in Pakistan.

In comparison, a mobile network provider (Zong) tested 5G on a trial basis in August 2019. (Shah, 2020). A previously conducted research demonstrated the lack of appropriate skills in market research, service development and marketing management in the small and medium enterprises of the sample organisations from the SME sector in Pakistan. There is also lacking innovative ideas from upper management, the use of similar strategies to the competitors and inadequate response to the dynamic market conditions result in the downfall of SMEs. (Ghouri, 2013). A previously conducted empirical research based on the Resource-Based View (RBV) Theory analysed the performance of SMEs in the textile sector based on Innovation capability and Absorptive capacity. (Arshad & Arshad, 2019)

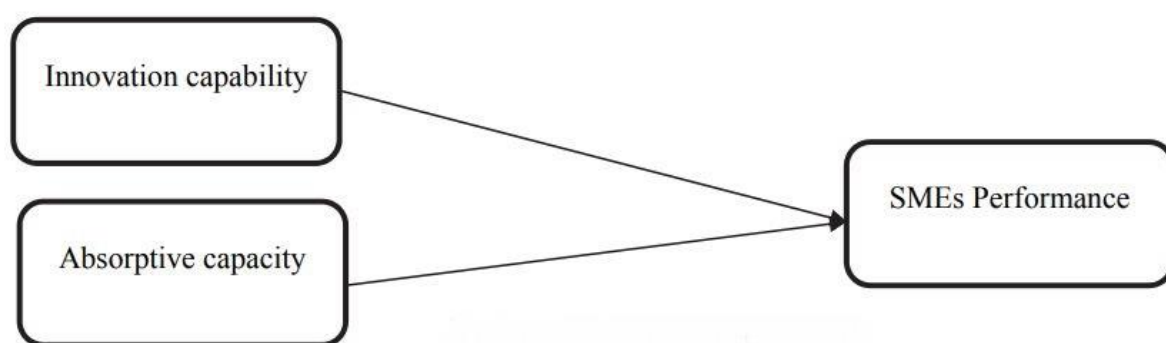


Figure 1.1: SMEs performance framework in Pakistan textile sector

(Source: Author)

This study has empirically authenticated that the innovation capability had a substantial consequence on SMEs performance and revealed that innovation capability plays a vital role in enhancing SMEs performance. This study validated that the Textile SMEs lack behind because of external knowledge absorption due to the lack in their internal processes. The research mentioned that Pakistan is

an Agro-based economy where textile is a big part of GDP, but the textile sector is not progressing in the right way due to the uncertain environmental factors and lack of internal strategic approach and lacking the use of strategic fit. SMEs should consider recognising the importance of gaining the internal resources and capabilities to attain the relevant high performance and competitive advantage (Arshad & Arshad, 2019).

There are specific vital contributions that authors and researchers made. Also, some specific frameworks and models serve as the basis for researching strategic management and digital marketing to date. There are specific frameworks that are included in this research. The RACE model has been used for this research to discuss the competitive strategic framework that is important for businesses considering digital marketing (Chaffey, 2017). The framework of strategic innovation that has been taken into consideration focuses on the long-term approach of the businesses that urges a firm towards forming a competitive strategic framework rather than market-driven forces (Palmer and Kaplan, 2005). In the view of Ocampo and Clark (2015), there is a great deal of importance to carrying out a practical strategic framework for the SMEs in dealing with their respective businesses. Furthermore, another framework considered is related to the strategy implementation for SMEs proposed by Nyamwezi and Mavhiki (2014).

1.2.1: The problem area

The manufacturing firms, particularly in the textile industry, need to adopt an efficient strategy framework. The strategic framework will help the organisation's key strategy to achieve the overall development. A framework provides the foundation for internal and external messaging, organising all priorities and initiatives into strategic drivers that lead to achieving high-level goals or purposes (Valdes, 2019). SMEs have considerably more marketing options due to the changing environment. Low entry barriers linked with marketing automation and social media platforms provide specific enhanced opportunities for smaller businesses. Although there is increased complexity and high variability in the digital channels, diversified tools to help remain at the top also create a big

problem for smaller marketing departments and quickly become overwhelmed (*Allen, 2017*). A study previously conducted by Erum, Rafique and Ali (2017) within the SMEs from Pakistan in sectors like textile, leather, medical and surgical goods and services sectors identified the Effect of E-Marketing Adoption Strategy on Export Performance of SMEs. This study finds the positive impact of the allocation of e-marketing resources for marketing activities, and also SMEs export performance is positively influenced by allocation of e-marketing budget, adoption of e-marketing tools and after-sales activities. It identified that using digital marketing in a more specific and structured way would contribute towards a more sustainable outcome, but adoption is not consistent, and there are gaps. In addition to this, a study conducted by Chaffey (2016) further reveals that countries with developing economies also believe that the cost of implicating digital media is excessively high. As a result, small and medium-sized companies in a country with a developing economy face a massive issue in adopting digital marketing in their business to promote the product because cost remains the main focal point for them to consider. It has also been observed that another critical issue that exists in the application of digital marketing in small and medium-sized enterprises is based on the lack of knowledge and awareness that's why the selection of a suitable platform can be a significant initiation for the SMEs (Atanassova and Clark, 2015)

In most cases, small and medium-sized (SMEs) in emerging developing countries tend to believe that the cost of digital marketing is high, whereas they are entirely unaware of the fact that social media marketing, which is a crucial aspect of digital marketing, is cost-effective (Abrar et al., 2016). Research conducted by Pradhan et al. (2018) about the comparatively better economy of the region (India) identifies that there is a lack of structured research studies to use digital marketing in small businesses in India. The study covers many associated areas, including electronic commerce, electronic platforms, Mobile marketing, E-marketing and many other research areas. There is a clear research gap in digital marketing, and there is a need to research to investigate the opportunities created by digital marketing for Indian SMEs. The same issue applies to other comparatively smaller economies of the region due to the lack of factors previously identified in the study by Nazir & Zhu (2018). Khaskheli and Jun (2016) mentioned that SMEs are businesses with comparatively fewer resources than

big organisations, and it is difficult for them to reach the mass markets and provide colossal advertising and marketing budgets. This problem of SMEs can be overcome through digital marketing, enabling SMEs to compete effectively and efficiently through the strategic fit approach. The study also mentioned the gap to explore the potential development of a digital marketing framework based on the tools in Pakistan's context. Research conducted by Taiminen and Karjaluo (2015) reveals that SMEs do not use the vast potential of digital tools, resulting in not benefiting from the opportunities these tools provide. It also identified that it is the case that SMEs can understand the fundamental change like communication brought about by digitisation. Tedder (2018) mentioned that there are four components to a strategic framework including:

- Business objective
- Approach
- Measurement
- Target

The strategic framework must be based on the organisation's mission, vision, and goals (MVG). It should also be able to answer the stakeholder group's question, "What Is In It For Me?" (WIIFM). Recent research by Dumitriu et al. (2019) focusing on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from the European Union (Romania) identified that these SMEs have identified their primary goal as building a stronger brand. In order to achieve this, an integrated framework for managing the continuous development of their brand equity by adopting digital marketing tools and techniques (DMTTs), has progressively become a necessity for most of the modern SMEs. However, this approach provides many advantages, including better targeting the audience, reducing traditional marketing expenses, etc. Implementing these complex practices in their business models presents many challenges, like choosing the best selection of DMTTs. It indicates that digital marketing tools and techniques can facilitate many development-related areas, and through the adoption of a strategic framework, they can optimise the outcome and gain the benefits associated with it.

In order to resolve all these concerns, issues, and problems associated with digital marketing in SMEs, the current research will focus on increasing the understanding of digital marketing to the small and medium-sized companies in the textile manufacturing industry of emerging developing country (Pakistan). By

suggesting a conceptual, strategic framework to encourage them to adopt cost-effective digital marketing approaches that can help them gain the strategic fit-based competitive advantage.

1.3: Practical need for this study

This section of the research will address the primary vision and motivation behind the research study. This research has been carried out to have managerial implications beneficial for small manufacturing firms in the textile sector. Furthermore, the vision and mission of the research study are also originated on giving an overview to the small and medium-sized companies in the emerging developing country to understand how they can attain competitive advantage with the implication of digital marketing tools and techniques. The scope of digital marketing/e-marketing is very limited in Pakistan (targeted developing economy). Figure 1.2 demonstrates the scope of digital marketing in Pakistan based on the research conducted by Abrar et al. (2016) to demonstrate the digital marketing / E-Marketing in the textile value chain in Pakistan.

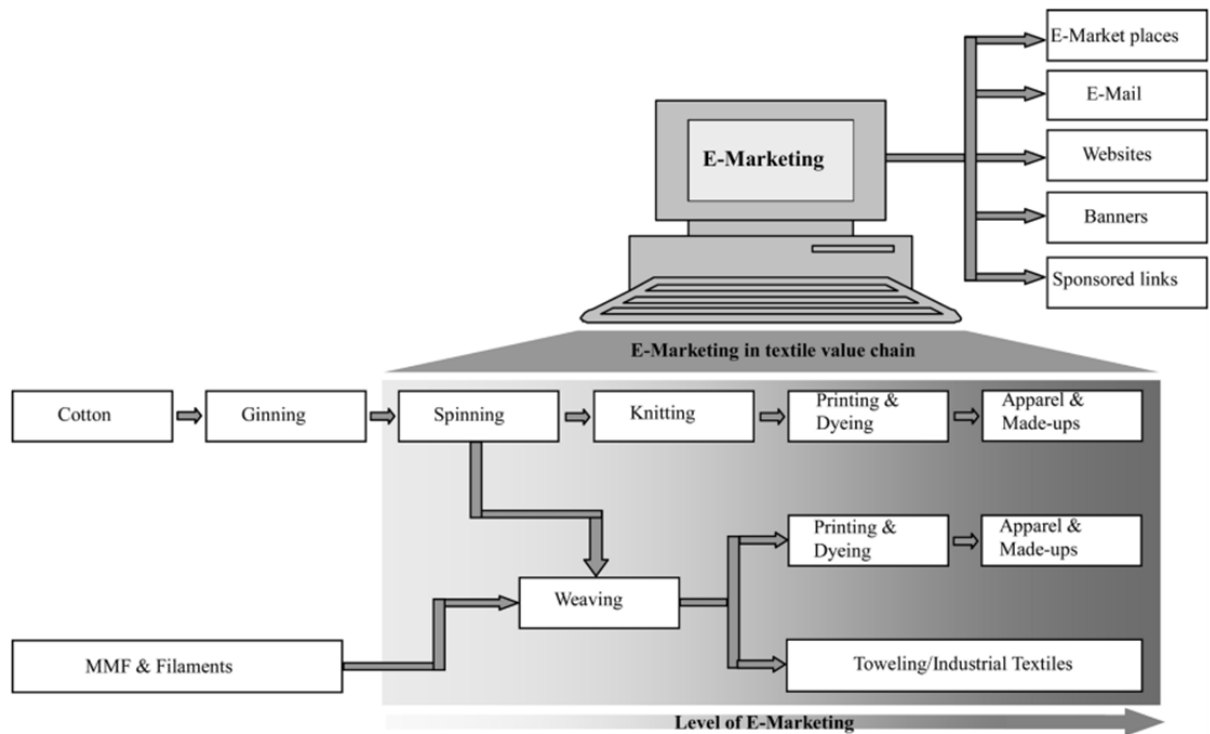


Figure 1.2: E-Marketing in the textile sector of Pakistan

(Source: adapted from Abrar et al. 2016)

Sheikh, Shahzad and Ishak (2017) mentioned a lack of empirical studies that can demonstrate the use of digital marketing in Pakistan's small and medium businesses (Specifically in the textile sector) and their effects on organisational growth and development. On the other hand, it is also important to note that several motivational factors forced the researcher to research the strategic framework development for small and medium-sized enterprises in the textile manufacturing industry of the developing country, where he has a background in textile manufacturing and worked as textile processing head in the textile wet processing unit of SME in Pakistan. The main motivational factors behind the instigation of this research study are defined below.

1.3.1: Challenges faced by the Pakistani textile industry

The Pakistan textile industry is facing many threats at a country level and in the form of global competition, which creates many problems and hinders the sustainability issues for the small player in the industry.

Research conducted by Kazi et al. (2012) identified the main challenges faced by the textile industry in Pakistan are energy crises, fluctuating yarn prices, shortage of gas supply, law and order situation, devaluation of Pakistani currency, lack of research and development (R&D) institutions, lack of modern equipment and machinery, modern skilled labour and production cost.

Another study conducted by Ejaz (2021) for the “The National Frontier” news identified that:

- Pakistan’s textile industry is contributing 60% to the country’s exports.
- Accounting for almost 8.5 per cent of the GDP of the country.
- Pakistan is the 8th largest exporter of textile products in Asia.
- The country is also the fourth-largest producer and 3rd largest consumer of cotton.
- It comprises 46% of the total manufacturing sector and employs 40% of the production labour workforce.

The study identified the challenges faced by the Pakistani textile industry. It identified the challenges, including the cotton yarn crisis, energy crisis, strong competitors, lack of R&D institutions and lack of investment.

It shows that even after 10 years, the issues are very same, and a different and more cost-effective and targeted approach can be more beneficial. According to a report published by UNCTAD (2020) identified that wages gradually rose in China and Chinese plants moved to produce higher-value goods; countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan and Vietnam, with lower wages costs, started attracting factories to relocate their production from China which is providing an opportunity for the manufacturing of textile goods to attracts more customers by using the suitable platforms. It means there is potential for growth available, but the better projection of their capabilities and modern marketing approaches based on competitiveness can be beneficial.

1.3.2: Contribution towards the growth and development of the organisation

The main factor which motivated the researcher to conduct this research was that the results obtained from this research study could be reviewed, interpreted, and used by the management and marketing teams of the organisations to attain growth in the respective industry while there could be the scope to expand it across other industries as well. It has been appraised that a simple theoretical framework used for conducting the research study can play a vital role in allowing the companies (small and medium-sized enterprises) to introduce new features and strategies that could enhance their business development and growth (Kannan & Li, 2017). Furthermore, the overall emphasis of the research study is to increase the operational excellence of the organisation in the marketing area. Therefore, it could be stated that the main intention behind this research study was to assist the organisation in getting an overview regarding the development and growth-related excellence in the specific digital marketing areas, which the organisation can quickly achieve if it uses appropriate digital marketing approaches.

It is a known fact that the digital marketing approach is provided with the credibility to support the company in attaining development and growth. It can have an overall impact on brand development as most organisations today need to promote or advertise their brands globally (Brown, 2016). In such conditions, it could be considered that the primary motivation behind the proposed research is to study and analyse the existing digital marketing tactics, practices, and strategies that could be applied to small and medium-sized companies. Within developing economies, businesses must formulate a competitive strategic framework, which can assist the company/organisation in developing brand equity. It can do it by addressing the issues previously identified in areas related to the lack of entrepreneurship approach, availability of digital marketing skills, absence of innovation awareness, lower literacy rate and owner-managers characteristics which influence the adoption of electronic commerce within the SMEs of Pakistan.

1.3.3: Knowledge development

It has already been defined above that most small and medium-sized companies functioning in the textile industry of developing countries are unable to use digital technologies due to a lack of knowledge and awareness (Chaffey, 2016). The management team of small and medium-sized company usually believe that digital marketing is costly. In this regard, the primary motivation of this research is to increase the knowledge of the management teams of small and medium-sized enterprises, referring to the development of strategies related to dynamic digital marketing. With this knowledge, the organisations' management teams will get an idea that it is not much costly to use digital marketing, and thus the teams will apply digital marketing tools and techniques to attain a competitive advantage in the textile manufacturing industry.

1.3.4: Management

The management process is termed as one of the most critical aspects of the business. In this regard, the primary motivation behind the investigation of the current research was also based on improving and enhancing the management process within small and medium-sized enterprises. It has been noted that the research will significantly enhance the company's management process by increasing the knowledge of internal stakeholders, which will directly increase the professionalism of employees to manage and handle different strategic management and marketing-related processes more effectively and efficiently.

1.3.5: Modern marketing approach

It is a known fact that the primary intention of the current research study is to increase the overall marketing performance of small and medium-sized enterprises. In this regard, the particular research study will play a vital role in enhancing the professional adaptability and capability of the marketing team of the small and medium-sized companies to promote and advertise products and services. In this regard, it has been considered that the primary motivation of the research study is based on the fact that it will play a significant role in increasing

the basic understanding of digital marketing strategies with the help of a digital marketing-based framework.

1.3.6: Increased popularity and practicability of digital marketing

Another critical factor that has motivated the researcher is the immense popularity and growth of the SME sector in the global economy (Kannan & Li, 2017). For SMEs to have a sustainable position in the market, they need to focus on their development and growth; thus, this research provides an overview regarding performance excellence and change, which the organisation can quickly achieve if it uses digital marketing approaches.

1.4: Aim of the research

Based on the above-identified vision and motivation, the research's primary aim is to develop a competitive strategic framework for small and medium-sized manufacturing firms functioning in the textile manufacturing industry of the developing country. In addition to this, the research study aims to recommend categorization model that small and medium-sized manufacturers in the textile manufacturing industry make use for the digital marketing tools and strategies implementation. The implication of digital marketing will initiate competitiveness (internally and externally). It can allow small and medium-sized manufacturing firms functioning in the textile manufacturing industry of the developing country to attain a competitive advantage in the global environment (Taiminen and Karjaluo, 2015). In order to achieve the identified aim, several objectives have been formulated. These crafted and formulated objectives are listed below.

1.5: Objectives of the research

Following are the objectives of the study,

1. To identify the role of digital marketing in the development of SMEs' competitiveness.
2. To identify the factors that influence the adoption of digital marketing strategies in developing country's SMEs.
3. To understand how digital marketing facilitates the performance of developing country SMEs in the textile industry through the strategic framework.

1.6: Research questions

The research study will address the following questions.

1. What is the primary role of digital marketing in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the effectiveness of the digital marketing framework for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the manufacturing sector to develop competitiveness?
2. Which key factors can significantly influence small and medium-sized enterprises to use digital marketing tools effectively in the developing economy?
3. How can digital marketing-based strategic framework enable small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the textile manufacturing industry to achieve overall growth and development?

1.7: Structure of the thesis

In this section of the research, the structure followed in the current research study will be defined. In addition, the chapter-wise division will be made to illustrate the main contents of each chapter of the research study.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The chapter provided an introductory chapter in which the contextual background of the research study was addressed. In addition to this, the main objectives/ research questions were determined to depict the primary intention of the research study. Moreover, the central vision and motivation behind the execution of the research study are also addressed in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The second chapter will be based on the literature review in which the relationship between strategic framework, digital marketing, and small and medium-sized enterprises will be discussed. In addition to this, the data from secondary sources such as books, peer-reviewed articles, and journal articles will be used. Mainly,

the literature review has been conducted regarding emerging market manufacturing firms.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

The methodology section of this research describes the philosophy, strategy, design, data collection method, strategy, research instrument, and data collection method used in the study, along with the relevant justification. This chapter has also shed light on ethical considerations and research limitations.

Chapter 4: Data Finding & Analysis

In this chapter of the research study, the obtained data will be analysed with the help of supportive analysis. In this section, the results obtained from the statistical analysis have been analysed. Apart from this, figures and charts will be presented to display the study's outcome and the thematic analysis to support the discussion.

Chapter 5: Conclusion & Implications

In this section of the research study, the outcome of the research study will be entailed. In addition, the strategies through which the recommended strategies can be implicated will be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1: Introduction

This chapter deals with the literature review section of this research. In this chapter, past researches have been compared and contrasted based on specific criteria linked with digital marketing and textile manufacturing SMEs in the developing economy. The structure of this chapter is initially based on the concept of digital marketing and its importance for SMEs in developing economies. The next section of this chapter deals with the current digital marketing strategy framework being deployed in SMEs around the globe and discusses the importance of the competitive strategic framework. The last section of this chapter discusses research gaps and outlines the conceptual framework.

2.1.1: What is digital marketing?

Digital marketing can be defined as “Achieving marketing objectives through applying digital technologies and media”(Chaffey & Chadwick, 2019, p24).

The aim of digital marketing is simple, to support Marketing aims and activities.

Digital marketing helps:

- to clarify the scope and methods used for running digital marketing.
- applying technologies which form online channels to market.
- achieve objectives through support marketing activities aimed at achieving profitable acquisition conversion and retention of customers within a multichannel buying process and customer lifecycle.

Some advantages of digital marketing to gaining competitive advantage including:

1. Global reach
2. Traceable and measurable results
3. Lower marketing costs
4. Improved conversion rates

5. Transparency

2.1.2: Sustainable competitive advantage through Digital Marketing

Digital marketing facilitates a business to discover new target markets by evaluating how its rivals perform and knowing about online customers. It helps to optimize its key performance indicators through digital marketing strategies to sustain a good competitive advantage. Some of the ways to build a sustainable competitive advantage in digital marketing includes:

1. Builds and maintains a good brand image/reputation
2. Using digital platforms to keep in touch with your customers
3. Creating user experience
4. Developing competitive content
5. Building a loyal customer audience

In order to develop the sustainable competitive advantage, it is important that there is an effective business model. A strong relationship between the business models and the competitive advantage. is a combination of deliberate arrangement of resources and capabilities to bring competitive advantage. (Ranjith, 2016)

2.1.3: Importance of Business models

Numerous components could become involved or considered in an organisation's business model; subsequently, the term business model differs vastly in meaning from one corporation to the other. It is a noticeable fact that in the current dynamic business setting, there are several business models, strategies, and tactics that have been proposed or suggested by scholars, business experts, and economists. Osterwalder and Pigneur's (2010) suggests nine building blocks framework.

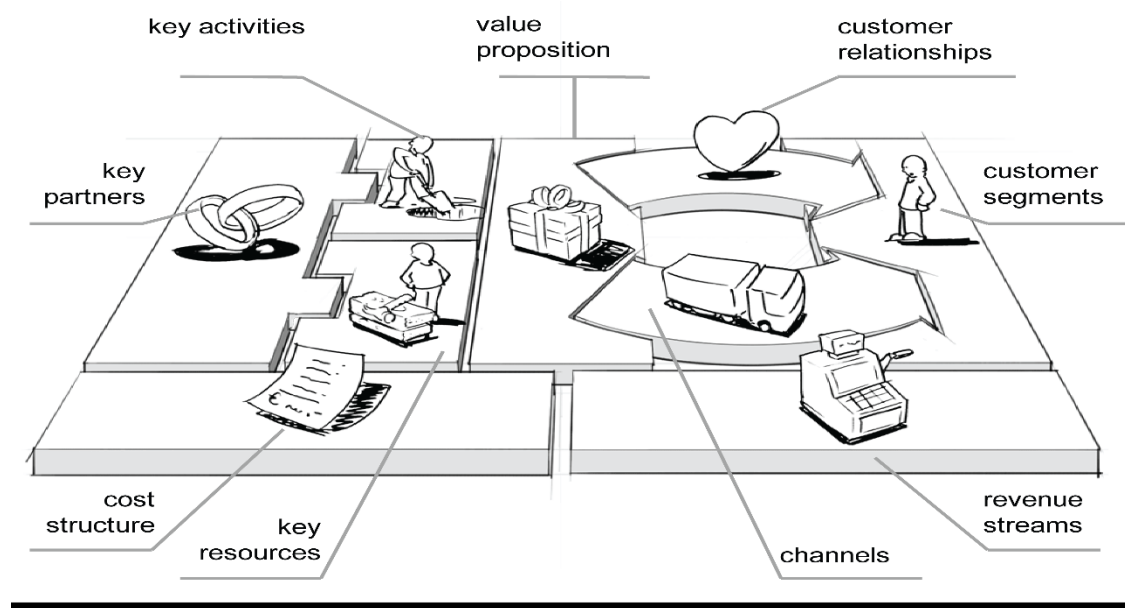


Figure 2.1: Osterwalder's nine building blocks

(Source: Osterwalder & Pigneur 2010)

The primary purposes of business models and strategies are to assist the companies in attaining competitive advantage and provide a level of optimisation. However, Brown (2016) highlights that the main drawback of these models is that they are only critically applicable to large-sized companies. Hence, small and medium enterprises (SME) usually find the application of these models too complicated or expensive (Todor, 2016). In this way, it becomes evident that these models are inadequate to comply with the attributes and characteristics of small and medium-sized enterprises, especially in emerging developing economies where small and medium-sized enterprises do not have enough resources, training, and mandatory time for structured strategic development

(Atanassova and Clark, 2015). The basic understanding of these blocks will help develop the specific strategic framework suitable for the SMEs, demonstrating the overall strategic fit. All these blocks present value towards achieving the competitive advantage, and by considering these carefully, the suitability of the strategic framework can be more evident.

2.2: Overview of the application of digital marketing by SMEs in developing countries

Rahayu and Day (2017) identify that the adoption of digital marketing by SMEs provide the cost-effective choices to reach their ideal prospective target segments within a developing economy like Indonesia. This study identifies that SMEs are able to get diversified benefits which include extending market reach, increased sales, improved external communication, improved company image, improved speed of

processing, and increased employee productivity. Djakasaputra et al, (2021) conclude that digital marketing significantly affects sales performance through quality service in the digital era. For example, businesses established in India and the Philippines can offer their local products and remote B2B (business to business) services and content to target prospects in the developed countries and the similar by using the right set of digital marketing tactics (TalkingAds, 2018). The economic outlook for South Asia is highly different across countries. Some economies, including Bangladesh and India, are primarily positive, with GDP growth projected to remain robust in the closer term.

It is important to understand the effect of digital marketing adoption on some important parameter like export. Erum et al (2017) finds through the quantitative analysis on different SMEs sectors including textile in Pakistan and there is positive influence of digital marketing resources on export performance of SMEs. The export performance contributes towards the macroeconomics indicators. Some major current macroeconomic indicators related to the Pakistan economy presenting a comparatively good picture. However, there is potential in the market with the prospect of local market growth and the change in the geopolitical

environment demonstrating the vast potential opportunities for the local producers to expand and explore the potential.

2022	
GDP growth (%)	4.0%
Inflation (yearly average, %)	11.0%
GDP per capita (% per year) *	2.0%
Current account balance (% GDP)	-3.5%
Public debt (% GDP)	67.0

(Note: Forecast. *Fiscal year 2022)

Table 2.1: Major macroeconomic indicators (Pakistan)

(Source: adapted from ADB, 2022)

The use of these macroeconomic indicators shows the current economic condition of Pakistan. A study conducted by Zafar & Mustafa (2017) states SME segment is the crucial foundation of Pakistan's economy concerning its commitment towards GDP, work era and fare improvement. The study signifies that SMEs constitute about 90% of the substantial number of ventures in Pakistan; employ 80% of the non-rural workforce, and their contribution to the yearly GDP is up to 40%, roughly it has the proportion of 30% in Pakistan's all exports (Zafar & Mustafa, 2017). It is essential to consider that SMEs not only influence GDP but also help improve the livelihood of people of the country by creating more economic opportunities. It means that the development of the SME sector will have a significant impact on the Economic and Socio-Economic development of Pakistan. By identifying the macroeconomic factors, it is easy to gauge the current economic condition, and the improvement in SMEs will have significant improvement in economic condition.

2.2.1: Importance of digital marketing for SMEs

Makrides, et al., (2020) demonstrate that digital marketing is recognized for its transformative impact on companies and for its comprehensive effect on relationship between brand and consumer. It enables the interactions with customers at any time and in any place. With more consumers searching and buying online than before, digital marketing has been developed decisively. In particular, it allows SMEs to effectively put their brand to their target audience at the right time and in the right place cost-effectively and measurably (Martin, 2019). This approach of cost-effectiveness and measurability is more critical for SMEs due to the size and limited resources. Most global firms have tried hard to achieve the desired objectives by utilising multiple platforms for their marketing activities. A survey on 1000 SMEs conducted by Infusionsoft and Leadpages (2017) across different sectors identified that there are majority of the business owners in SMEs who are not concerned with all the digital marketing tools available to them; however, the most common form of digital marketing platform utilised by SME owners is the website and social media marketing due to its cheap nature and ease of use for both the entities (Allen, 2017).

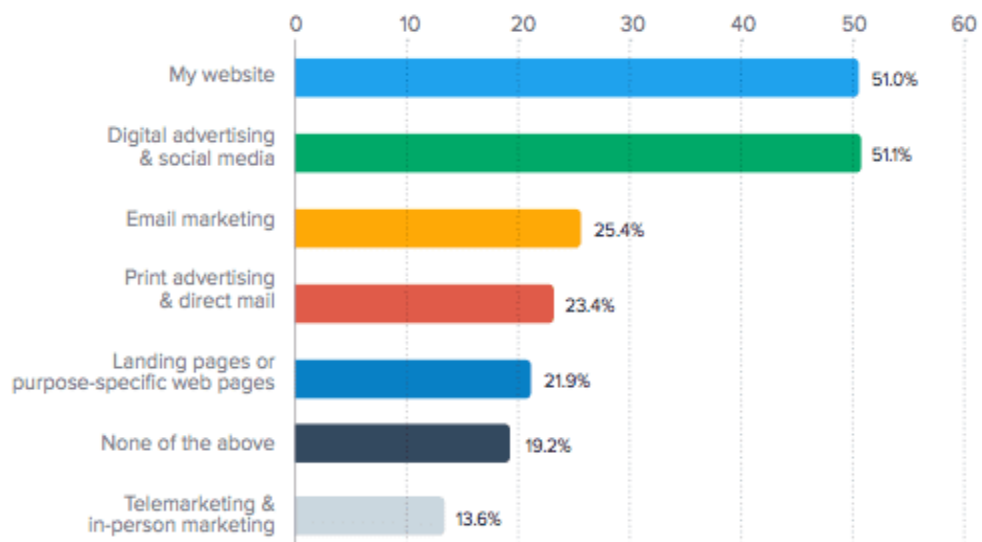
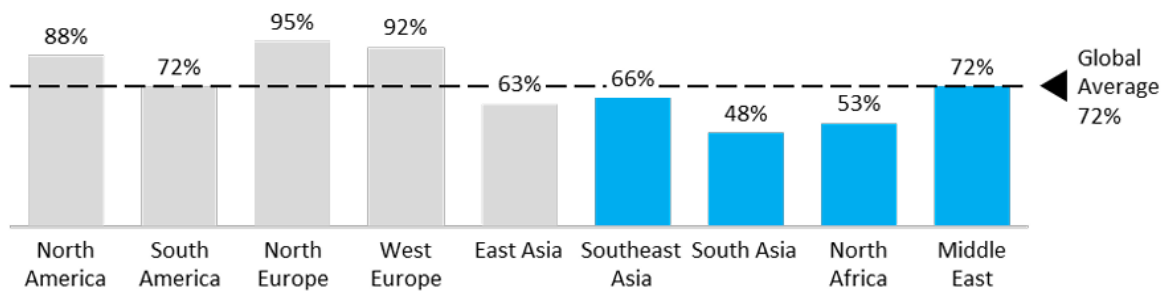


Figure 2.2: Key areas of digital marketing for SMEs

(Source: Adapted from Allen, 2017)

2.2.2: Future trends in digital marketing

Brand success in the coming months and years means switching to a dynamic digital marketing strategy that continues to evolve to the consumer's first approach and to that embraces the customer's journey as a whole, providing what people want, which includes personal experience, valuable, and contextualisation of relevant information (Chaffey, 2022). The technical capability will be a vital component of this transformation, especially customer identity resolution and integrated data. Equally important is the customer-centric strategy throughout the company. The major factor to consider here is whether the marketing techniques used by the organisations in the emerging markets are the same as advanced economies or not (Sheth, 2011). Internet access in emerging markets is limited which is making it difficult for companies to reach



out to their target market with the help of digital campaigns and adverts. A report written by Frost & Sullivan which was published by World Bank (2019) demonstrates that internet penetration in certain regions is low which includes the South Asian region (Pakistan) having lowest 48% penetration.

Figure 2.3: Internet penetration rates in selected regions (%), 2019)

(Source: Frost & Sullivan, 2019)

Irrespective of the limited internet penetration, social media access in the countries with emerging markets has been increasing According to Frost & Sullivan's report. The report identified that the global live social market which refers to social networking applications is expected to show a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 26.6% to more than triple in size

from 19.7 billion USD in 2019 to 64.1 billion USD in 2024. This increase is mainly attributed to the introduction of smartphones and the availability of the internet at cheaper rates. It provides marketers with an opportunity to connect with a wider market where the population size is big.

From a marketing perspective, it can be said that the trend of wide mobile usage, which is presented in most of the large emerging markets, provides the organisation with opportunities. One specific aspect of marketing requires the company to know each market (local and international). All the different emerging markets are growing distinctively. The most widely used digital marketing trends present in the emerging markets are mobile marketing and social media marketing (Chowdhury et al., 2006 and Admitad, 2019). As mentioned, mobile and tablets have increased in the emerging markets, which is seen as a major opportunity, and marketers are finding ways to optimise the brand's user experience on mobile devices first (Bruker, 2018). Companies in emerging markets are adapting to the first-hand effects of this mobile shift. The importance of this kind of digital market can be understood because in today's market, there is more traffic on mobile devices than desktops, and alongside this, the mobile wallet is emerging as well. Hence the marketers in emerging markets need to focus on the specific behaviour of the customers. An empirical study conducted by Hassan et al. (2017), mainly focusing on technological developments and open innovation, showed that online marketing and social media are compelling and diverse, providing the better capability to reach more customers. The study also identified that open innovation is an effective and emerging tool in the success of SMEs.

2.2.3: Limited adoption approach of digital marketing by SMEs

Recent research conducted by Pollák & Markovič (2021) states that company size does not contribute significantly towards the adoption of online marketing tools. Most organizations, irrespective of their size have reservations about investing in digital marketing. The previous research in 2019 on Jordanian SMEs demonstrated that digital marketing implementation is still in its early stage of

acceptance. The majority of SMEs are limited in their use while specific to social media and email marketing as a common tool for digital marketing (Yaseen, et al., 2019). SMEs that intend to reach an extensive geographical range of customers are more likely to utilise digital marketing. Another reason behind this assessment is related to the fact that SMEs have a minimal financial base as compared to multinationals, so this aspect results in nullifying the effect of traditional marketing tactics. Firms engage with digital marketing tools and techniques because it is cheaper and promises to reach a wide range of customers than other traditional forms of marketing. If the company intends to minimise its expenses keeping in mind that the company is carrying out business as an SME, then the adoption of digital marketing tactics is more likely to happen. Research carried out by Balamurugan et al. (2014) show that the majority of the SMEs do not prefer to implement online marketing techniques as a part of their marketing plan because of different factors such as limited financial sources, limited support online activities, low computer literacy, qualified staff and lack of technological advancement. However, the researchers also conclude that the SMEs that have used online marketing strategies had accomplished several advantages, including higher global reach, increased customer awareness, increased sales, etc.

According to Taiminen and Karjaluo (2015), SMEs across the globe have not yet established a distinctive name in the market because they have less knowledge regarding digital marketing tactics, and it is not different in the emerging economies. It means that effective utilisation of company-based and market-based knowledge is essential for SMEs to comprehensively address the market's needs. It means that the importance of digital marketing tools for SMEs has not reached the optimum level. SMEs are unable to utilise the aspect of digitisation which raises the question of digital marketing efficiency. On the other hand, Öztamur and Karakadila (2014) demonstrate that the effectiveness and importance of digital marketing for SMEs varies from country to country. As the qualitative research conducted on mainly four American and Turkish SMEs as the comparative analysis approach, to analyse that companies can effectively use digital marketing to enhance their approach in the market. SMEs in Turkey have used Facebook and Twitter as a rich source of revenue generation and customer attraction for their businesses. Hence, the concept of

digital marketing mainly relies on creating relationships and networks with the customers. The SMEs operating in the emerging markets aim to maintain long term strategic relationships with their customers and expected to use the tools which can add better value towards the final results SMEs expecting.

2.2.4: Modern management approaches – Pakistan

The modern approach has three streams, specifically:

1. System approach: A system is a set of interacting subsystems (i.e., components) that constitute a united whole. Organization is composed of elements that are dependent on one another.
2. Contingency approach: Management techniques that are effective in one situation may not be effective in another situation.
3. Operation research approach: It is based on the approach of scientific management. It offers a systematic and scientific analysis and solution to the problems faced by managers. It aims at achieving a high degree of precision, perfection, and objectivity in solving a managerial problem.

Research conducted by Lemos (2016) in collaboration with State Bank of Pakistan and the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics conclude the following points which are able to identify three key points identifying the management approaches in Pakistan.:

- Data-driven performance monitoring practices for the collection and use of information to improve production processes.
- The design, integration and realism of production targets.
- Incentives for employees, including bonuses and procedures for promotion, reassignment and dismissal.

The above-mentioned points demonstrating the widely used approach in Pakistan is closer to the operation research approach, but it did not work in isolation from other approach. All the approaches work in collaboration.

Although the textile sector of Pakistan is seen as one of the most significant sectors from an economic perspective, the supply chain for this sector is troubled by significant environmental and social issues. Pakistani textile firms

are constantly struggling hard to adopt Sustainable Business Practices. One of the examples is Net Zero Pakistan.

According to Aptma (2022) companies that were under intense competitive pressure were more likely to implement their competitors' business models in order to retain or even increase their competitive advantage. Pakistan accounts for a sizeable portion of worldwide textile exports, and in order to compete in the market, textile producers must satisfy customers' environmental demands.

Textile firms are influenced by market competition to enhance their environmental performance. Pakistani textile companies are just beginning to incorporate Sustainable Business Practices. A lagging behind status is also a result of the different economic and institutional challenges that businesses in developing countries, such as Pakistan - face compared to those in developed economies.

2.3: Concepts and theories – digital marketing

2.3.1: Digital marketing fundamentals

As mentioned by Chaffey (2019) digital marketing involves achieving the marketing objectives through applying these technologies which form online channels to market: web, social media, e-mail, databases, plus mobile and digital TV etc. In order to understand what is the best way to manage digital marketing in a business, it is important to scope out what digital marketing involves, which activities are required and how they relate to other marketing activities to demonstrate the synergetic impact.

Although, before success can be measured, there are fundamental aspects a digital marketing strategy should cover, which includes clearly defining the goals, research before creating content, choosing the right digital platforms for brand and audience, and clearly defining how going to manage campaigns for the continuous improvement (Charlesworth, 2014).

Further, with regards to the drivers of digital marketing in emerging markets identified by Frost & Sullivan (2021) in the report where the following considerations have been made.

- Growing demand for combined recreation and social networking
- Increasing internet penetration rate
- Rapid internet technology upgrades
- Fast-growing emerging markets
- High customer interaction throughout the customer journey
- Data driven customised communication
- Engaging platforms / channels, e.g., social media, email automation, websites and blogs etc.
- Opportunity of analysis and adjustment as progress

A systematic mapping study comprises of 121 studies identified that digital marketing have impact on SMEs (Thaha, et al., 2021). Digital marketing is considered to have a positive relationship with the sustainability of SMEs (Rahman et al., 2016). The study examines the effect of digital marketing applications such as online advertising, affiliate marketing, email marketing, SMM, and SEO on business performance (Nuseira & Aljumahb, 2020). The study mentioned that there is a supply and demand gap that restricts SMEs from adopting digital marketing channels and ecommerce (Thaha, et al., 2021). A recent study under the McKinsey & company conducted by Davies, et al., (2021) demonstrates that in a world where growth is increasingly hard to come, digital marketing provides an opportunity to capture the next level of growth within ASEAN countries. It is important for the companies to capture the critical growth level as the pandemic accelerates consumer behaviour while companies will need to undertake bold and decisive moves. It has become evident that digital marketing trends have a constructive impact on SMEs overall development. Digital marketing is driving the performance of the company throughout the customer journey funnel. The study by McKinsey & Company (2021) demonstrated that the digital marketing tools act as the performance lever related to the customer journey which enhance the customer experience which result into improved organisational development. The term performance lever refers to a condition, strategy, or capability that enables long-term, ethical, and exceptional performance to occur.

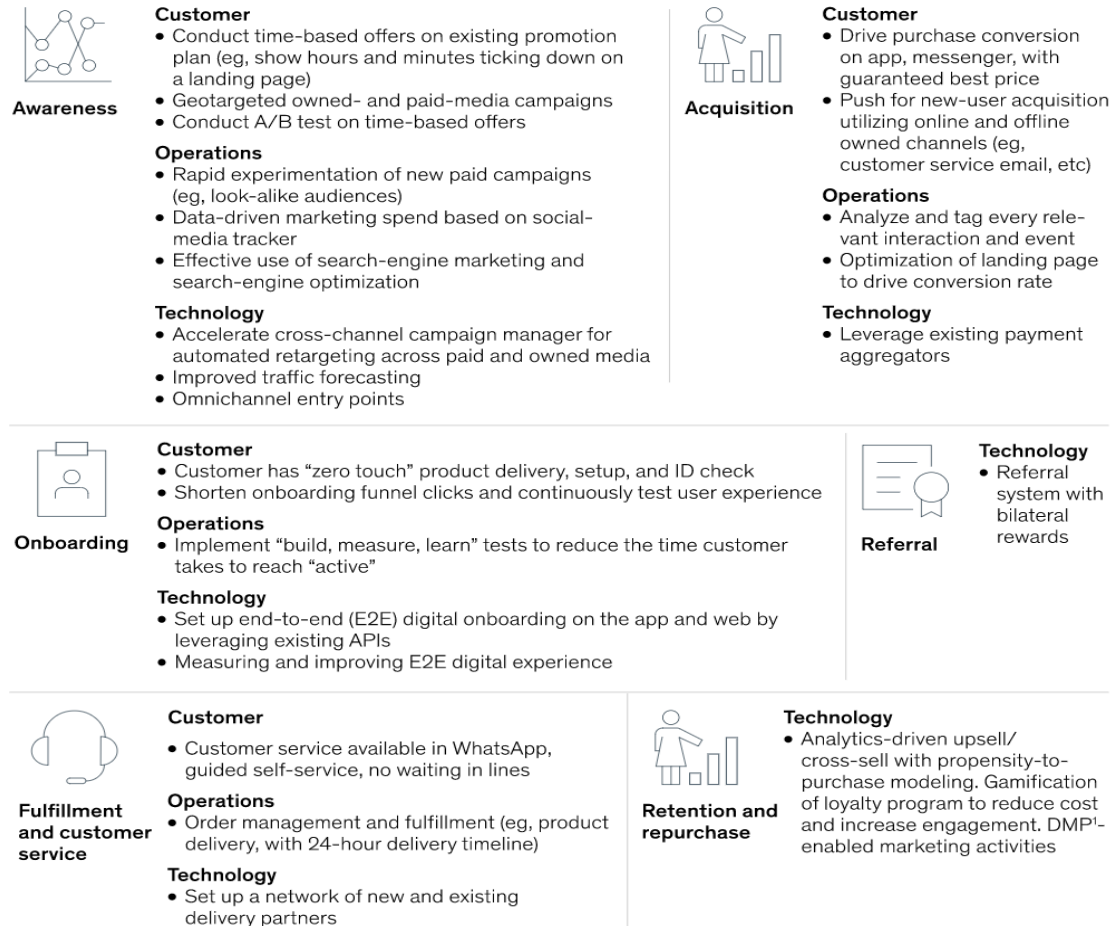


Figure 2.4: Performance levers along customer journey funnel

(Source: McKinsey&Company, 2021)

2.3.2: Digital marketing technology for SMEs

Qualitative study based on 22 senior managers conducted by Kalaignanam, et al. (2020) suggest that acceptance of technology for marketing with a focus on digital marketing approaches has increased evidently in recent years. The previously identified study mentioned that there is a clear appreciation of these opportunities towards developing stronger market orientation and more agile marketing, which is based on the successful application of digital marketing tools. Although, the constraints in place with reference to the adoption of digital marketing tools were linked to the lack of knowledge related to tools and, in

particular, an incapability to measure the return on investment (Alford & Page, 2014 Ritz, et al., 2019).

Some of the critical benefits drawn out from the previously discussed literature summarised through figure 2.5 are mentioned below:



Figure 2.5: Key digital marketing benefits – SME focused

(Source: Alford & Page, 2014)

2.3.3: Digital marketing tools

The customer awareness parameter is essential to address, and as a result, organisations have mainly utilised some critical elements of digital marketing tools to enhance their customer base and presence in the market (Altinkemer and Akcura, 2010). In support, Hudson et al. (2012) elaborated that organisation need to maintain a solid customer base in order to enhance the concept of word to mouth marketing. Some companies tend to rely on direct marketing channels, while others seem to be reluctant towards conventional reaching the customers.

These conventional methods are mostly offline modes of communication for an organisation and fall under the integrated communication approaches. Moreover, as identified by Klimis (2010), the use of digital marketing tools enables an organisation to enhance the spectrum and scope. As per the author, social media platforms tend to present relevant information regarding the product/service offering of a particular brand and tend to attract customers that are not yet associated with the company's value proposition.

2.3.3.1: Customer relationship management – Digital context

Customer relationship management (CRM) is becoming a critical strategy for large and small companies. Specifically, SMEs have to devise CRM approaches into their business operations which can help to develop high performance and value bearing, technical and innovative capabilities, and competitive advantages over rivals (Mohamad et al., 2014). Firms tend to generate and enhance their sales figures through opting for marketing tools like blogs to first create an image in the minds of the customer regarding product and then attract them through different advertisement mechanics. A quantitative study conducted by Lekhanya (2015) based on 134 SMEs in South African region found that business owners in the region have neglected the use of blogs and podcasting to enhance their brand image.

2.3.3.2: Social media marketing tools

According to a study conducted by Moghavvemi (2015) on 259 SMEs in Malaysia exhibited that the usage of social media tools (e.g., Facebook etc.) has a positive and robust influence on SMEs financial performance. Within the same context, it revealed that the usage positively influences the SMEs non-financial performance on marketing and customer service through improved customer relations and improved information available within the SMEs in emerging market (Malaysia). In support of the argument, a qualitative study conducted by Royle and Laing (2014) in communication industry presented that SMEs across the globe realised that there is a skill gap in their approach to adopt the digital marketing while the challenge of integrating digital marketing approaches with

established marketing practice emerges as the main skills gap.. This skill gap restricts the companies' approach to reaching their desired customers effectively. Moreover, it has been determined that integrated digital marketing approaches are vital to the cause of a company (Cindy and Hatem, 2011). For this purpose, companies have focused on the adoption of comprehensive marketing tools. Social media platforms have been considered the most effective tools for sales traffic generation out of those marketing tools. It means that the importance and suitability of marketing tools vary from company to company and market to market. A quantitative study conducted by Qalati, et al., (2020) observed 423 responses through structural equation modelling while the findings of the study indicate that technology, organization, and the environment play effective roles for SME performance. The study demonstrates that social media adoption positively facilitates the relationship between technology, organization, environment, and SME performance. It states that these elements vary within different organisations and the impact will vary accordingly. This point is supported by Oztamur and Karakadilar (2014) that digital marketing tactics cannot be fruitful for a business if they do not analyse the market and country, they are serving with the availability of the resources linked with the specific market. This aspect concludes the above assessment that the choice of digital marketing tool is dependent on the skill gap that exists in the internal environment of an organisation. The previous point comprehensively concluded by Herhausena, et al, (2020) through the study related to the digital marketing capabilities in industrial firms. The study identified four themes: channels, social media, digital relationships, and digital technologies which test this knowledge with managerial practices through the online survey of 169 managers. It was designed to establish the range of current and future marketing capability needs of industrial firms. The results indicate two marketing capabilities gaps which effecting the industrial companies' capabilities to adopt digital marketing: the practice gap, which identifies the deficit between managers' 'current' practices and their 'ideal' digital marketing capabilities. The knowledge gap, which reveals a substantial divide between the digital marketing transformations in industrial firms and the extant scholarly knowledge that underpins this. Additionally, companies need to enhance their decision-making dimension to select the most appropriate digital marketing tool for their business.

2.3.3.3: SME e-commerce-based platforms

According to the evaluation of Mata and Quesada (2014), e-commerce-based platforms are a better source for conforming to an organisation's marketing needs. A critical aspect of the adoption of e-commerce-based platforms is that it encourages the use of social media. On the contrary, the firms that intend towards combining the e-commerce-based platforms with social media mediums are more likely to enhance their presence in the market by successive marketing strategies (Strauss and Frost, 2012). This point is supported by Lekhanya (2015) in a way that social media intends to present the company's current value proposition. Another purpose of the SME e-commerce platform is to enable SMEs to share information that is of direct significance to small business owners and entrepreneurs and enable networking and sales between SMEs. *E-commerce* is defined as distributing business information, maintaining business relationships, and conducting business transactions by digital means over telecommunications networks. Holland and Gutiérrez-Leefmans (2018) term these social media systems as "SME e-commerce platforms" and define them as:

"The use of Web 2.0 technologies and social media designed specifically to support SMEs in the formation, development, and management of commercial and social relationships with each other, with their economic partners, and with their SME customers for information dissemination and sharing, knowledge creation, networking, and sales."

The significance of E-commerce platforms has become more critical for manufacturing-based SMEs because by using these platforms, they can improve their direct access to the customer, which will be regarded as the new distribution channel.

In the view of Wang and Chang (2014), companies tend to focus on adopting a suitable marketing platform to present a better picture of their value proposition in the market they are serving. In relation to the below figure 2.4, the alternatives available for businesses to devise a comprehensive strategic framework is visible.



Figure 2.6: Marketing platform proposed in the study

(Source: Wang and Chang, 2014)



Figure 2.7: Digital marketing framework

(Source: Wang and Chang, 2014)

In relation to above figure 2.5, a digital marketing strategy framework has been proposed by Wang and Chang (2014) through which SMEs can enhance their approach in the market. Moreover, this framework is aligned with the above-displayed platforms but lacks the comprehensive adoption approach and cannot

demonstrate the lean management (no waste) approach. One of the most influential phases of this integrative relationship is that firms tend to gather relevant feedback from their customers through the dedicated approach of data pre-processing. The data pre-processing involves steps to clean the raw data to get it ready for the machine learning activities because real world data can be incomplete, noisy and not suitable for the models (Abhishek, 2020). The central theme of this framework is related to the effective utilisation of marketing databases. This approach enables the firm to match the requirements of the business comprehensively, but it is unable to present if that approach will bring a comprehensive strategic fit. In support, Flores (2014) suggests that customer feedback is vital for the outcomes generated by the companies. Some companies rely heavily on the information extracted from customers, while others tend to avoid this kind of information.

2.3.3.4: Development of m-commerce

As per the views of Rezwani and Rahman (2012), mobile marketing has been utilised by firms to reach a wide range of customers. As the growing ratio of mobile phone users across the globe and easier access to customers has emerged, companies tend to focus on mobile marketing as an effective tool for revenue generation. In broader terms, mobile marketing tends to enhance the core competency of the firms that intend to achieve competitive advantage through their marketing techniques.

2.3.3.5: Development of email marketing

The conventional means of marketing accounted for utilising direct marketing through approaching the customers with direct calls; however, as per the recent shift in the marketing trends, companies have started approaching the customers through emails and working on the feedback attained through the customers regarding the value proposition (Chaffey, 2009). In contrast, Venpin and Islam (2011) portrayed that the internet itself is not an effective marketing tool to conform to marketers' needs; however, if used with other mediums, it can be effectively utilised. So, this means that the effectiveness of the internet (at its own) as a marketing tool is not as significant as other marketing tools. This aspect

is that companies tend to focus on the internet without focusing on the aspect of innovation and other technological dimensions.

2.3.3.6: Internet as an effective overall development tool

According to Aghazadeh and Esfidani (2007), the internet is a strategic tool for an organisation to adopt. Most of the firms have realised this as an opportunity and revised their marketing strategies. Moreover, firms have focused on knowledge management initiatives to enhance their information base so that it can contribute to research and development (Hanafizadeh, Behboudi, Ahadi and Varkani, 2012).

2.3.3.7: Advantages of digital marketing tools

According to Veleva & Tsvetanova, (2019) key advantages linked with the digital marketing which include:

- High interactivity level
- Overcoming geographical barriers and limitations in marketing activities
- Quick and flexible response to the users' expectations
- High degree of measurability
- Customised segmentation and targeting based advertisement
- Improve customer convenience
- Improved communication and interaction with customer
- Competitive intelligence

Most of the companies nowadays are motivated towards many to many or one to many communication dynamics. This aspect has enabled the firms to integrate multiple contents in one particular medium suitable for their interest.

According to Taiminen and Karajaluoto (2015), there is no particular method of adopting digital marketing tools that is essential for the corporation at the time of strategy formulation. It varies with the level of competency and market trends that prevail in the business environment. The research has illustrated that the current digital marketing strategy should be well aligned with the corporate and business objectives. As a result, the role of social media marketing tool is not to enhance corporate sales of an organisation; however, it is closely related to enhancing the

corporate brand image and reach of the company to the market in which it is serving and improving its overall performance.

According to Alexander (2022) companies are re-designing their marketing strategies to incorporate the digital marketing trends. The companies in emerging markets are utilising advanced technologies and communication methods to gain and retain customers and sustain a position in the highly competitive and contemporary marketplace.

2.3.3.8: Critical role of digital marketing tools

It has been identified that digital media tools cannot function without effective strategic frameworks because strategy framework features how the marketing plan will work and deliver marketing content to target audiences in ways that will help achieve marketing goals (Green, 2022). In this regard, it has been considered that the digital media tools, with the help of a strategic framework, function so that it initially gathers information regarding the business. Later on, it evaluates the strength and weaknesses of the business in relation to the trends in the market (Zakeri and Nouri, 2015). If the business is complying with the social trends, it is projected that the businesses must quickly adapt to digitalisation. In case if the company does not tend to cope with the marketing trends, then in such a condition, it is considered that the company's marketing team must further improve their business structure to increase their efficacy to implicate the digital tools. In addition, the digital media tools themselves play a crucial role in improving and enhancing the overall systematic structure of the business. It becomes evident that the digital tools work with the help of strategic frameworks, which helps the organisation improve the business digitalisation and networking process.

While digital marketing could be considered a practical approach to promote their offerings, it could now be considered highly competitive in an increasingly cluttered space. With this particular marketing technique bringing a revolution in the way companies market their products, organisations gradually become reliant and dependent on their users to carry out their respective activities (Chaffey and Smith, 2017). It has become difficult for companies to create a unique position in the digital marketing world as every other firm is involved in the relative activity.

Customising the user experience is not an easy task but can lead to tremendous success when executed correctly.

For the SMEs operating in emerging markets, it is necessary to make the digital marketing strategies focus on the needs of the customers of specific markets. It will allow the marketers to send their message to their target audiences in an efficient manner. It should be noted that the customers use social media platforms to connect with other users and brands; hence the digital marketing strategies should be designed interactively and engagingly (Gangi and Wasko, 2016).

2.4: Digital marketing – Categorization model

2.4.1: Concept of categorization

It demonstrates the capability and action of identifying shared features or similarities between the elements of the experience of the group, while organizing and classifying experience by associating them to a more abstract group on the basis of their traits, features, similarities etc. that are universal to the group. (Croft & Cruse, 2004): (Pothos & Wills, 2011) Categorization is important in learning, prediction, reasoning, decision making, language, and many forms of organisms' interaction with their environments.

2.4.2: Categorisation model for SMEs – Digital marketing

Category is a dynamic concept. Categories evolve, grow, divide, fade, etc. while the category strategy will require complete overhaul based on the business environment including external and internal factors.

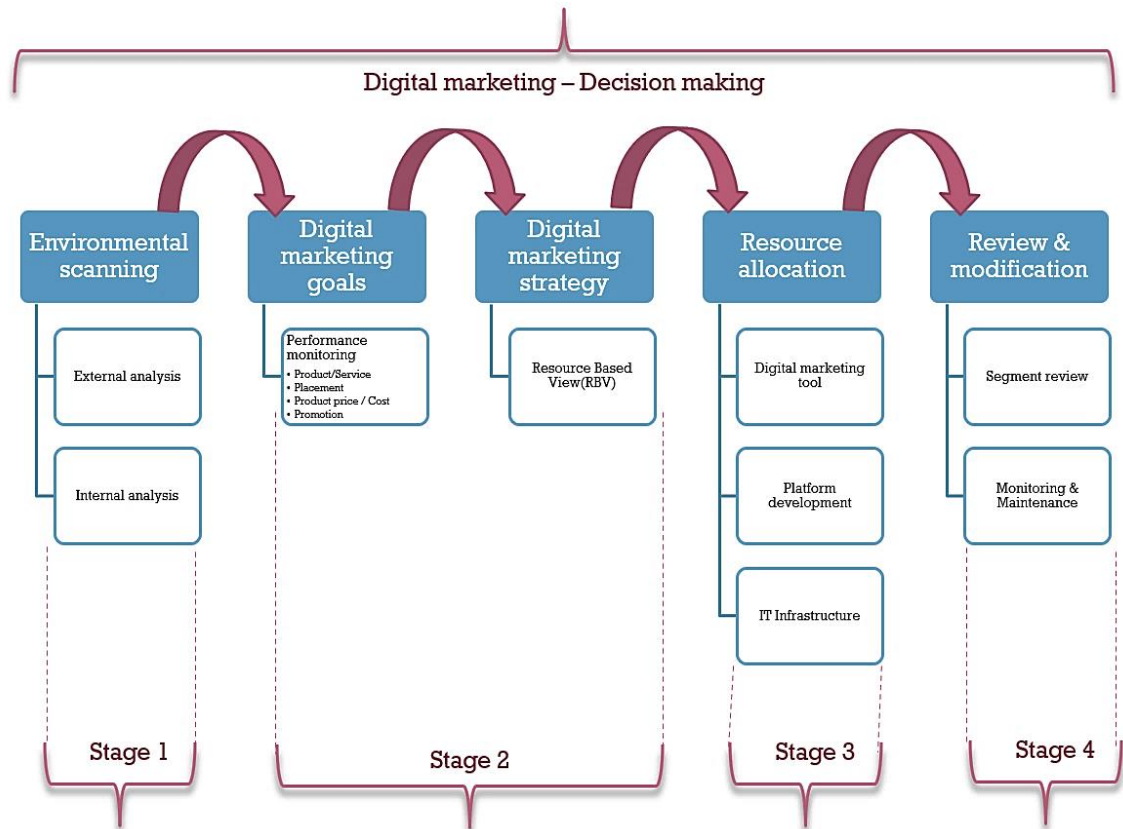


Figure 2.8: Categorization model

(Source: Author)

The above-mentioned category model related to the digital marketing is based on 4 stages which covers the overall application of the digital marketing framework for the SMEs. The application of categorisation model is linked with the 7Ds or pillars of digital marketing mentioned by Dave Chaffey (2019). The 7Ds models provide the core information related to the tools / techniques / instruments available in relation to the application through of the different stages.

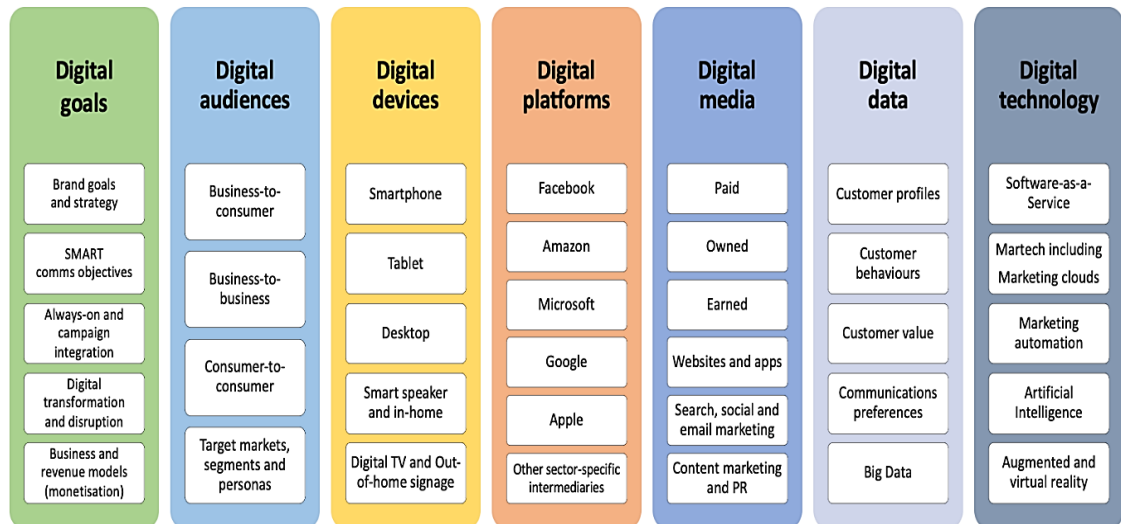


Figure 2.9: Digital marketing 7Ds model

(Source: Adapted from Chaffey, 2019)

The 7Ds model is able to facilitate the different dynamic areas including digital platforms, audience, data, technology etc. related information which are dynamic in nature and continuously change. It is important for any organisation to understand these elements and develop their sustainable strategy accordingly. In case of SMEs, it is more important that they are able to use the apply the tools comprehensively to get the overall benefit and optimum level of outcome.

It is important to understand that digital marketing is technology-based approach and due to the changing nature of technology it is expected that it should be able to facilitate the maturity approach. The combination of previously identified categorisation model and 7Ds of digital marketing combinedly able to support / facilitate the Capability Maturity Model (CMM). The CMM establishes a framework for continuous process improvement which can be applied through the categorisation model of digital marketing. According to Ben Lutkevich (2022), there are five levels to the CMM development process.

- Initial. At the initial level, processes are disorganized, ad hoc and even chaotic.
- Repeatable. At the repeatable level, requisite processes are established, defined and documented.

- Defined. At the defined level, an organization develops its own standard process development approach.
- Managed. At the managed level, an organization monitors and controls its own processes through data collection and analysis.
- Optimizing. At the optimizing level, processes are constantly improved through monitoring feedback from processes and introducing innovative processes and functionality.

2.4.3: Digital marketing tools for competitiveness

In the view of Smith (2010), companies have targeted customers that fall in the category of millennials. According to Statista (2020) 60.83% of Pakistani population is between the age of 15-64 while 25.1% are millennials while the current study is linked back to Pakistan and the user demographics is an important factor. The modern-day digital marketing strategies are based on the age group of people that have reached adulthood by the end of the year 2000, although the spectrum of customer segment is enhancing. The organisation's perception regarding strategy formulation is based on the modern concept of studying the target market before implementing a particular strategy. This digital marketing strategy dynamic is closely related to external organisational competitiveness because the company comprehensively addresses the external environment's needs while considering the external stakeholders carefully. In order to justify this concept, a theory has been related to the scenario. In the view of Moscardo and Pendergast (2010), the generational theory is based on the concept of a generation cycle that carries the same kind of values and norms. Individuals who possess the same generation cycle are more likely to react to a similar pattern when exposed to a particular situation. In broader terms, this theory can be related to the marketing perspective in a way that companies tend to target generations when it comes to formulating a comprehensive strategy that can be applied to a wide range of the market. However, Schwarzl and Grabowska (2015) presented that digital marketing strategies have transformed to a different level. Companies have focused on the development of strategies through the adoption of the principle of affiliate marketing while 3 basic principles identified as play the long game, find and focus on your playing field and focus on

relationships (McWilliams, 2021). The basics of affiliate marketing urge stakeholders from the external environment to promote the products or services of the company on an online platform where the role of internal stakeholders is also very significant. It is a modern digital marketing strategy, which organisations also carry out with offline businesses but through a different medium. This modern concept urges an organisation to develop a comprehensive corporate connection with its external stakeholder. As associated with affiliate marketing, it is closely related to external organisational competitiveness rather than internal organisational competitiveness.

As per the research conducted by Anumolu, Prasad, Gopalkrishna and Adarsh (2015), digital marketing strategies are essential when a company intends to form a new business venture. The authors believe that conventional means of marketing strategies can serve as the basis for the organisation to enhance its presence in the market. Incorporating digital marketing strategies in terms of the new venture is important because it accounts for a strategic move undertaken by an organisation. When a company undergoes a new business venture, it has a considerable opportunity to formulate a new strategy. It can be less risky than other forms of marketing strategies being implemented in a business setting.

Moreover, this kind of intervention is essential for building an organisation's internal and external competitiveness due to the aspect of a new strategy being deployed. As per Fowdar (2013) theoretical assessment, Facebook marketing serves as a comprehensive approach towards business enhancement. The positive consequences generated through Facebook marketing (as social media marketing) cannot be neglected as it provides easier access to the organisation's social media content. Due to the feasibility of Facebook, it can serve as a better digital marketing strategy for an organisation because it accounts for a higher level of collaboration among the individuals that are associated with the organisation. This kind of strategic move deployed by an organisation enhances its internal competitiveness and can serve the organisation in the long run. In addition, according to Harris and Rae (2009), the use of digital marketing strategies towards the development of modern business is based on the aspect that companies have focused on replacing customer intolerance and annoyance with customer engagement. It has been achieved by successfully deploying social media marketing strategies that are essential to match customers'

perceptions. Digital marketing strategies about social media are essential towards covering the firm's internal and external competitiveness.

According to Neti (2011), small to medium enterprises have focused on utilising social media marketing as their digital marketing strategy considerably in the recent era, and the adoption in developing markets is significant.

Figure 2.8 demonstrate the social media usage around the world.

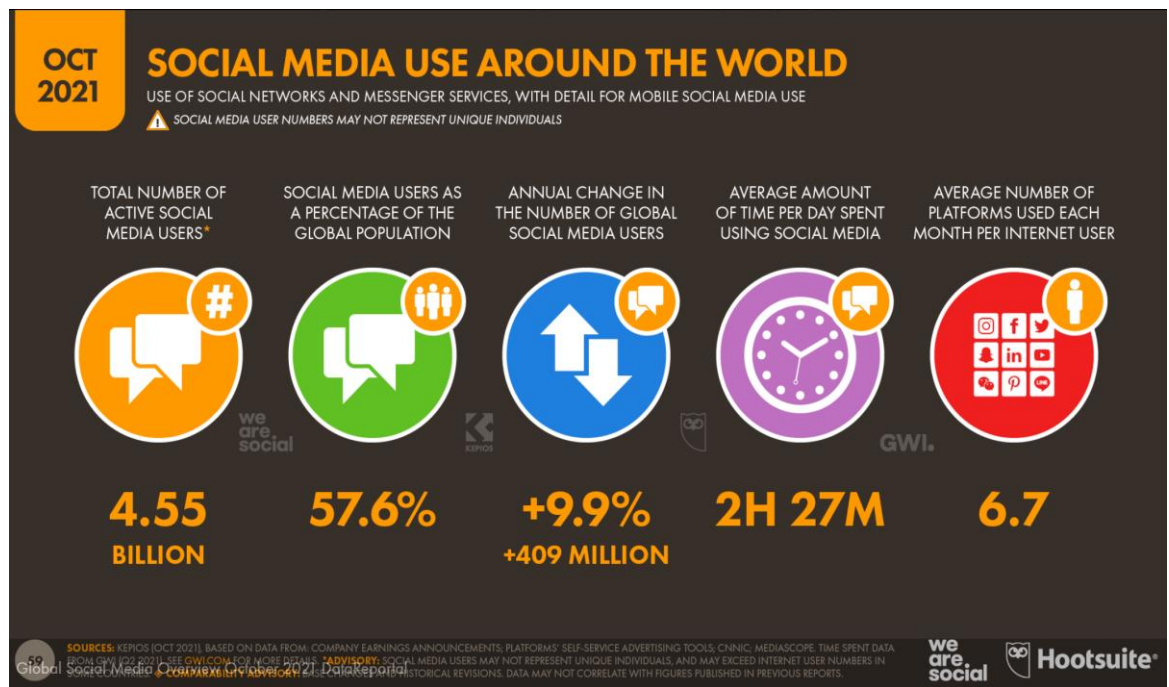


Figure 2.10: Social Media Statistics

(Source: Adapted from DATAREPORTAL, 2021)

It suggests that this is a lucrative strategy for business enhancement for businesses in the modern era. It is important to understand that social media marketing tends to enhance the internal competence level of the organisation and makes the organisation capable of addressing the need of a wide range of the market. It is also essential in maintaining a higher level of interaction with the target market.

Another research was carried out to assess the role of different social media platforms as digital marketing tools for SMEs (Oztamur and Karakadilar, 2014). For this research, the sample size was SMEs from the USA and Turkey operating

in fashion and healthy bakeries. The research results depicted that in the case of SMEs from the USA, the Facebook pages were more interactive than their Twitter handles. Similar were findings regarding the SMEs of Turkey as their Twitter pages were mostly neglected compared to their Facebook page. Hence, from the overview of the different researches carried out to analyse the social media websites as digital marketing tools, Facebook is the most used social media platform.

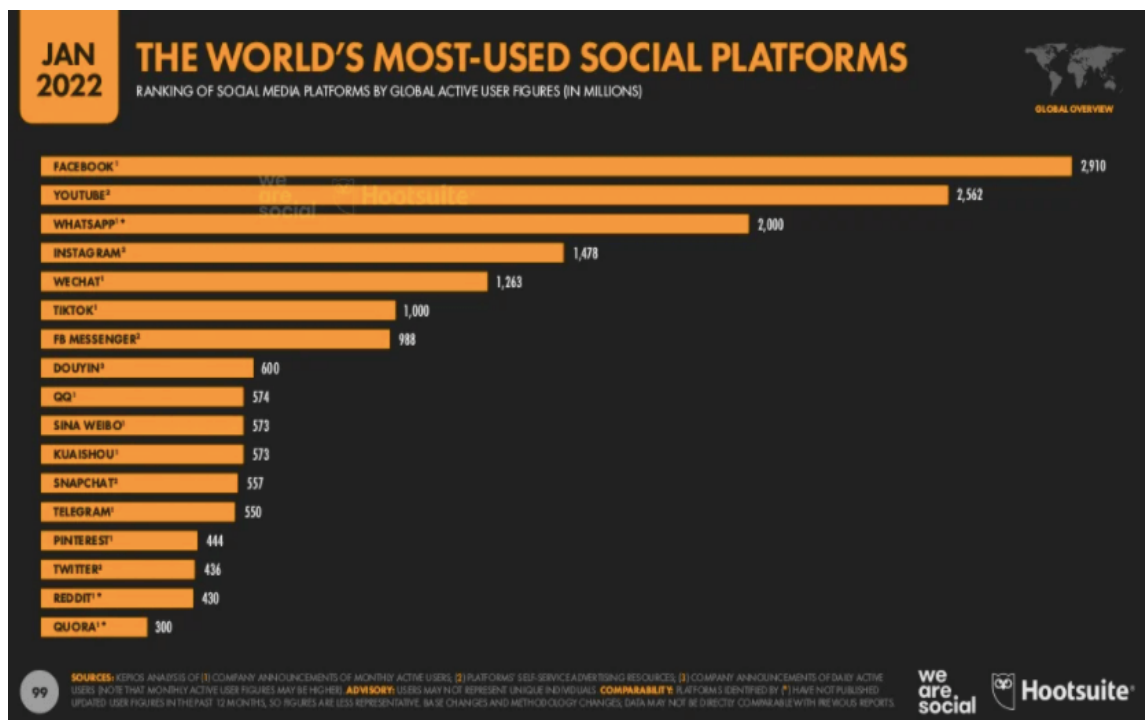


Figure 2.11: The world's most used social platform

(Source: adapted from www.hootsuite.com)

2.5: Role of the external environment in digital strategy formulation

Another critical aspect illustrated by Ghemawat (2002) is based on the fact that the strategic framework varies from industry to industry. Furthermore, in terms of industry, every company follows a different strategic structure, and there is no uniformity when it comes to following a single strategy to address the market's needs.

According to the research conducted by Furrer and Alexandre (2007), there usually are two kinds of strategies adopted by firms. For instance, firms have different strategies for enhancing marketing and financial performance, and it is impossible to conform to the principles of adopting a single strategy for both. Furrer and Alexandre (2007) believe that it is difficult for the firm to follow one competitive strategy in order to enhance the profitability, brand image and reach towards the customers. Although it depends on the firm's resources and whether they are capable enough to follow a single strategy or a different strategy for different aspects.

2.5.1: Influence of distinctive cultures, ethnic groups and regions on the acceptance of digital marketing

Pakistan is comprised of 4 provinces that have their distinctive cultures. A quantitative study based on 557 questionnaires conducted by Shah and Amjad (2011) on 'Cultural Diversity in Pakistan' demonstrates the existence of Power distance culture (PDI by GreetHofstede, 1971), Individualism Index (IDV) show a notably low rank on the Individualism scale, which demonstrate the existence of strong collectivism while Masculinity (MAS) where roles are defined on gender basis. Language, religion and lifestyle are all very significant and must be considered in any type of marketing activities, so marketers have to be familiarised with the things to which customers can relate. Cultural diversity exists, so companies operating in Pakistan should consider cultural differences while searching for appropriate approaches in different regions. In contrast, companies need to think big but are required to comply with the local customer

expectation, making it difficult for the companies to adopt standard strategies among different regions (Amir et al., 2016). Saleem (2019) mentioned in the research that there is a lack of knowledge about what role culture plays in the use and effectiveness of several innovative digital marketing tools, which includes consumer-generated advertising (CGA), consumer-generated brand communication (CGBC), firm-created advertising and branding in digital space etc.

It is important to consider that the variability in these areas makes the digital marketing-based strategic framework more suitable, which can facilitate diversity by introducing customisation within the marketing activities. Through the lean management approach in position, the maximum benefit can be gained with limited resources.

2.6: Digital marketing orientation (DMO)

Businesses need first to analyse their strengths and weaknesses to establish the firm's competencies so that they may be used in the long run to meet the firm's objectives (Davenport and Harris, 2017). On the other hand, firms must essentially consider the scope of the business and how the competencies could be used most effectively to enhance the business scope and attain the desired aims with the clear identification of the specific business orientation, the role of business orientations concerning why organisations differ in e-marketing or digital marketing adoption. However, there is still limited evidence on Digital Marketing Orientation (DMO) within the SMEs context (Shaltoni et al., 2018). The latest study conducted by Herhausena et al. (2020) through the qualitative method based on 169 interviews from managers of industrial organisations, identified that digitalisation had revolutionised not only consumer marketing but also industrial marketing. The study identified two marketing capabilities gaps which include: the practice gap and the knowledge gap. The practice gap identifies the shortfall between managers' 'current' practices and their 'ideal' digital marketing capabilities. The knowledge gap demonstrates a substantial divide between the digital marketing transformations in industrial firms and the extant scholarly knowledge that underpins this. Through conceptualising DMO and enabling its

measurement, the prospective activities can be identified by the marketers. It can help to identify adoption of activities, evaluation of efforts, and the focus of resource allocation which a result into the development and improvement of digital marketing processes. The organisation should focus on the available resources and lead towards performing activities that lead towards profitability, which can be based on the strategic framework to demonstrate a strategic fit approach. For instance, companies that are more effective in the business function of marketing may optimise their operations and add value to the firm by using effective marketing techniques (Taiminen and Karjaluto, 2015). It is said, the next focus must be towards the external factors determining industry attractiveness. Every industry may differ from others in several ways, and marketing considerations need to be made per the industry's structure. While SMEs are highly focused on achieving short term goals, the external environment must be assessed and analysed critically to facilitate any strategic framework.

2.6.1: Resource based view (RBV)

Barney (1991) presents the resource-based view (RBV) that *“firms can earn sustainable supra-normal returns if and only if they have superior resources and those resources are protected by some form of isolating mechanism preventing their diffusion throughout industry”*.

Cross-sectional qualitative research conducted by Assensoh-Kodua (2019) based on 20 different literature sources explores the role of resource-based view (RBV) in creating a sustainable competitive advantage and key competencies while the findings indicate that RBV plays a significant role and supports organizations to create, nurture, and maintain competitive advantage. In support of this argument, Bridoux (2004) argues that a resource-based view is (RBV) is essential for a company to adapt to one strategy. The reason behind this assessment is that when firms identify their internal resources, they can set long-term vision and strategies and follow one dedicated approach towards addressing the market irrespective of the fact that it is related to marketing or financial perspective.



(Note: RBV = resource-based view; SCA = sustained competitive advantage)

Figure 2.12: RBV critique

(Source: Author)

According to Dagnino (2012), three broader concepts align the strategic dimension, namely competitive advantage, competitive strategy, and core competency. A firm intends to attain a competitive advantage in the market when the competitive strategy has been attained. The basis through which competitive strategy is attained is related to the core competencies of the firm. So, these three aspects are essential for the growth of the firm in the business arena. If the first step keeps up to the mark, then the remaining approach of the firm is automatically in favour of the company.

On the other hand, Rugman (2008) presented that it is necessary to adopt the contingency framework for a brand intending towards digitisation. IN this regard, adopting the digital marketing-based strategic framework can help obtain that competitive advantage based on RBV. This framework is based on the competitive positioning of the organisation in the market. Proactive measures undertaken by the firm are the basis through which long term organisational growth can be achieved (Yadav et al., 2013). So, it becomes evident that firms intending to adopt online mediums, competitive positioning cannot be neglected, and it can be termed an essential part of their strategy (Al-Somali and Gholami, 2011). In addition, Robbins, Bergman and Stagg (2015) reviewed that some firms intend to adopt direct selling channels while others rely heavily upon digital marketing channels to attract and retain a wide range of customers for achieving competitive advantage. It means that if an organisation is sure about the strategic step, it is undergoing, the strategy is more likely to present a better outcome. In comparison, Grishikashvili et al. (2014) presented that it is the responsibility of modern business firms to attract and retain customers by utilising effective mediums. This aspect can be achieved by incorporating a dedicated digital strategic framework (Olatokun and Bankole, 2011).

2.6.2: Digital marketing as Lean management tool

The fundamental idea behind lean management/thinking is to maximise the value provided to the customer while minimising waste or creating comparatively more value for customers with significantly fewer resources. The basic idea comes from the manufacturing industry in the early 20th century, curbing from Toyota's innovations, which are now applied to many industries worldwide. The development of the digital marketing related strategic framework is based on the strategic fit where SMEs in developing economies are lacking in many areas (as previously mentioned), and by using the limited resources, SMEs can overcome those areas. The critical starting point here is value. In digital marketing, what does "value" mean to each customer? which varies considerably based on the specific customer segment.

Alessandro Martemucci (2020) identifies that lean marketing involves the 4Ps in Kotler's marketing model and adds a fifth P – which stands for Problem. The 5Ps relate to the five objectives that all innovative companies need to achieve and can be a competitive advantage development approach.

5P - LEAN MARKETING	ADVANTAGES	LEAN THINKING	GLOBAL DISRUPTOR
1. PROBLEM/DELIGHT	<i>Create value and usefulness and delight customers by solving their problems.</i>	1. Value – Crating value and solving problems.	Be useful <i>Demonstrate the real usefulness of the product, beyond promotions and “what sells”</i>
2. PROCESS/PRICE	<i>Don't waste the client's time. Reduce mistakes and wastes with lower costs.</i>	2. Mapping – Visually representing flow, reducing errors and waste.	Simplify <i>Identify and eliminate weak points in the customer journey.</i>
3. PROMOTION/DISTRIBUTION	<i>Provide the essential digitally and more rapidly, at the right price.</i>	3. Flow – Letting value flow uninterrupted.	Save customer time <i>Provide service when and where people need them, show respect for their time.</i>
4. AUGMENTED PRODUCT	<i>Distribute value and products where and when the clients want it.</i>	4. Pull – Internal processes prompted by customer's order.	Empower people <i>Give more control to customers, even if that means to deviate from industry standards.</i>
5. PERSONALIZATION/EXCELLENCE	<i>Unique, personal, memorable experiences that enhance our brand's reputation. Promotion.</i>	5. Perfection - PDCA	Reimaging experiences <i>Turning the worst customer experiences in memorable, delightful ones.</i>

Table 2.1: 5Ps in lean marketing

(Source: Reproduced from Martemucci, 2020)

Introducing the lean management-based strategic framework will allow the manufacturing SMEs in developing economies to use the digital marketing tools and techniques to effectively use the strategic fit approach.

2.6.2.1: Relevance to this research

Qualitative research conducted by Viinikka (2019) concludes that lean agile organization model can provide SME a better foundation in serving their small and medium sized customers. Through this model SME can create even greater customer relationships through better communication and teamwork that extends outside the borders of their own inhouse teams. The focus of this study is to provide the opportunities to SMEs through digital marketing to grow with the optimise utilisation of the available resources.

The digital marketing-based strategic framework developed in this study uses an existing framework linked with lean management," House of Lean". There is no evidence of a framework that includes contextual factors (identified in the study by (Nazir & Zhu, 2018) and caters for the need of the textile manufacturing-based SMEs in developing economies (Pakistan).

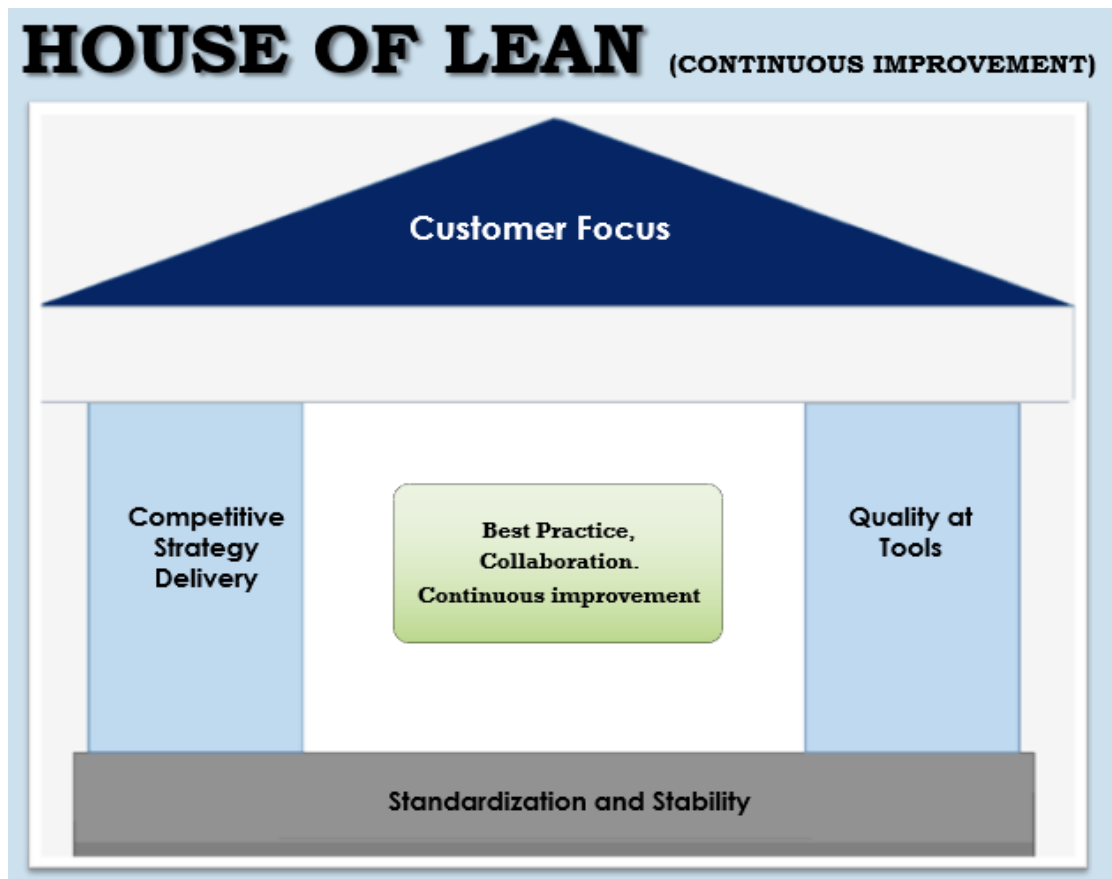


Figure 2.13: House of Lean

(Source: Author)

A "house" is applied because it demonstrates how to build a structure (strategic framework) that will support itself to get the desired outcome. The foundation comes first, and the walls must be built before the roof can be put on.

2.7: Business model and strategy – Digital marketing

2.7.1: SME evolution and Growth Model

Evolution of small companies is a systematic process according to Churchill & Lewis (1983). they demonstrated the small business evolution in stages and each stage is characterized by an index of size, diversity, and complexity and described by five management factors: managerial style, organizational structure, extent of formal systems, major strategic goals, and the owner's involvement in the business.






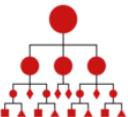






	Stage I Existence	Stage II Survival	Stage III-D Success- Disengagement	Stage III-G Success- Growth	Stage IV Take-off	Stage V Resource maturity
MANAGEMENT STYLE	Direct supervision	Supervised supervision	Functional	Functional	Divisional	Line and staff
ORGANIZATION						
EXTENT OF FORMAL SYSTEMS	Minimal to nonexistent	Minimal	Basic	Developing	Maturing	Extensive
MAJOR STRATEGY	Existence	Survival	Maintaining profitable status quo	Get resources for growth	Growth	Return on investment
BUSINESS AND OWNER*						
*Smaller circle represents owner. Larger circle represents business.						

Figure 2.14: Characteristics of mall business at each stage of growth

(Source: Adapted from HBR <https://hbr.org/1983/05/the-five-stages-of-small-business-growth>)

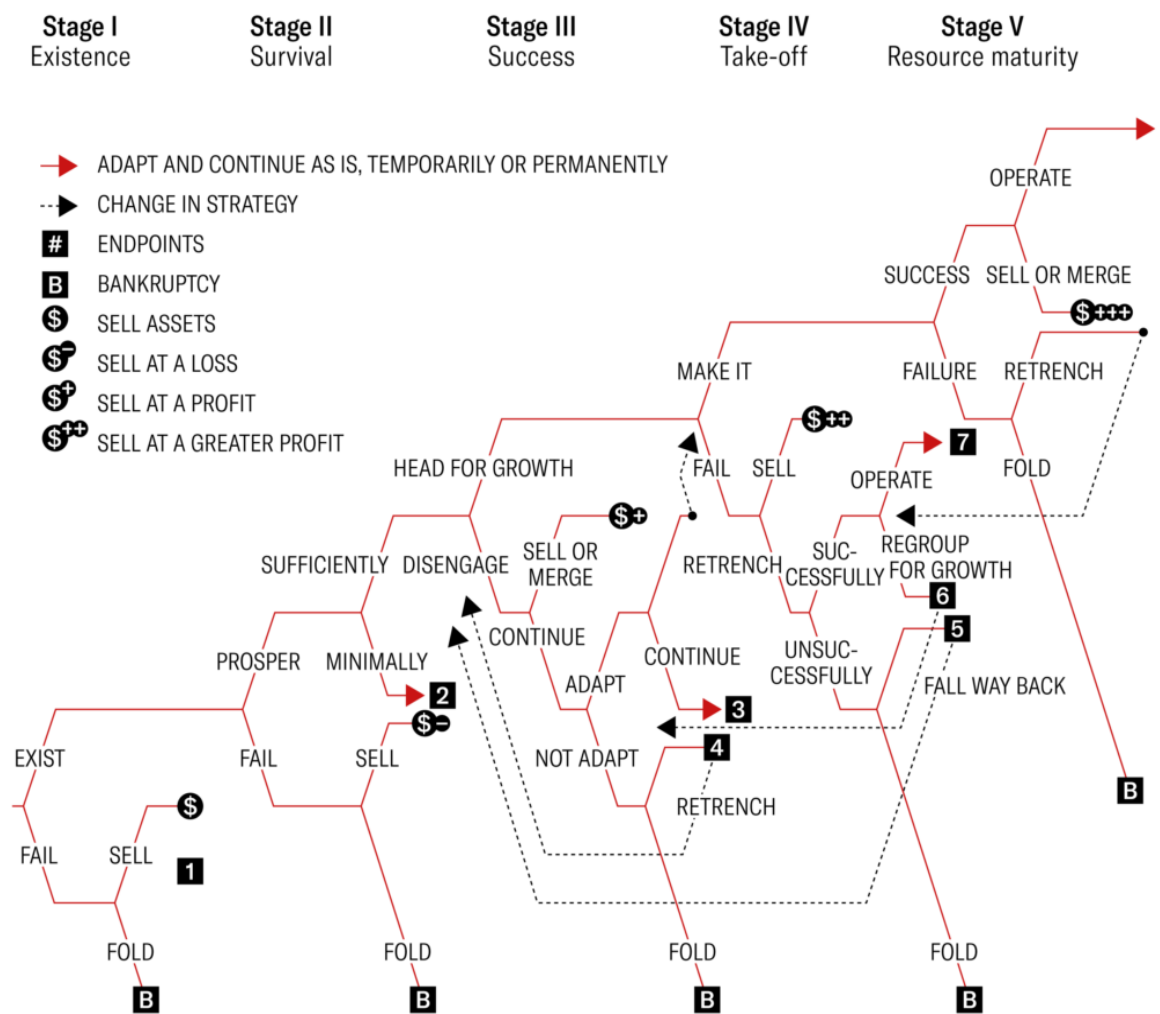


Figure 2.15: Evolution of small companies

(Source: Adapted from HBR <https://hbr.org/1983/05/the-five-stages-of-small-business-growth>)

As a business shift from one stage to another, the importance of the variable factors changes. Factors as alternating among three levels of importance: first, key variables that are absolutely essential for success and must receive high priority; second, factors that are clearly necessary for the enterprise's success and must receive some attention; and third, factors of little immediate concern to top management. If we categorize all the factors, based on their importance at each stage of the company's development, we get a clear picture of changing management demands.

2.7.1.1: Growth model in digital marketing - Two-sided marketplaces

“A growth model is a representation of users, from acquisition and activation to retention and referral, which shows how they interact with different parts of product/ service over time.” (Butterfield, 2021)

SMEs are getting benefit from the two-sided marketplace model which is becoming more and more popular, as technology helps buyers and sellers transact more easily with one another. For example, Uber, Etsy etc. all represent marketplaces.

Growth in a two-sided marketplace relies heavily on the increasing value one side gets from the other. What value do drivers get from more riders and riders from more drivers? Each network effect can be modelled out. If you want to dive deeper in how we do marketplace growth analysis at Segment.

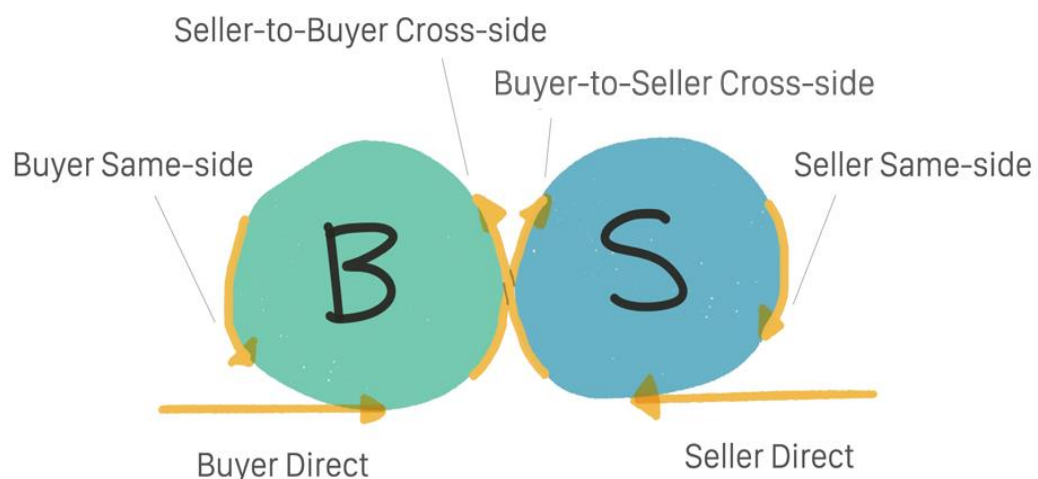


Figure 2.16: Two-sided marketplace

(Source: Adapted from www.segment.com)

There are set of the six key growth dynamics (Eisenmann, et al 2006), which includes:

- **Buyer-to-seller cross-side:** Prospective buyers tell prospective sellers that they prefer to do business on the platform.

- **Seller-to-buyer cross-side:** Prospective sellers expose prospective buyers to the platform.
- **Buyer same side:** Buyers love the new transaction experience, and tell other prospective buyers to use the platform.
- **Seller same side:** Sellers love the new transaction experience, and tell other prospective sellers to use the platform.
- **Direct to buyers:** The marketplace tells buyers about itself directly.
- **Direct to sellers:** The marketplace tells sellers about itself directly.

This growth model should encourage SMEs to identify the characteristics of their actual digital marketing phase based on the actions and the possible impact and results of further implementations and innovation of digitalization through the identification of next category to move. The two-sided marketplace functions as an intermediary, allowing buyers and sellers to connect, identify products and transact. The marketplace owner receives a commission for every transaction performed on the platform. The marketplace does not have to maintain or manage the inventory, own property, or take care of production.

2.7.2: Growth model phases in digital marketing

There are 4 key phases / stages which demonstrates the overall marketing activity (including digital marketing) activity in any organisation.

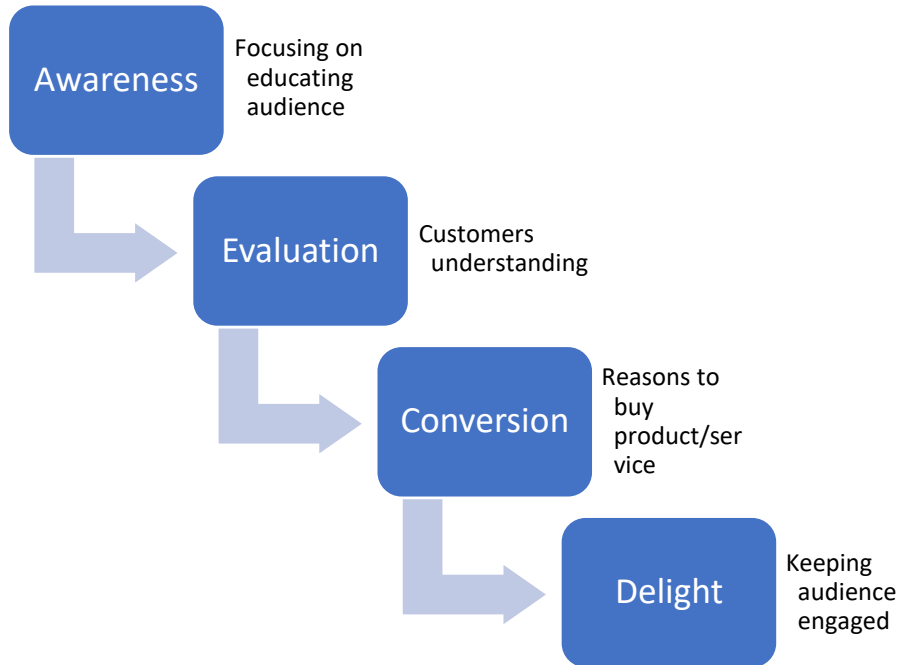


Figure 2.17: Suggested growth model

(Source: Author)

The above-mentioned phases also describe the customer journey with which an organisation can achieve the overall ACR (Acquisition, Conversion, Retention) of the target customer.

2.7.3: Current digital marketing strategy framework for SMEs

Several different frameworks are mentioned in the literature review which SMEs can use to design their digital marketing strategies. It should be noted that the frameworks are theoretical, but they can be applied practically as well. In the following section, the relevant digital marketing strategies framework is discussed in accordance with the SMEs. As per the theoretical framework analysed by Mokhtar (2015), home shopping has emerged as a modern concept behind businesses. Customers tend to engage in shopping from home, and at the same

time, it has been determined that internet marketing tends to provide a more straightforward solution to consumers across the globe (Chou and Hsu, 2008). The framework caters to the needs of technological-based firms. This framework has been specifically designed for manufacturing industries intending to make a mark in the retail industry.

Moreover, this framework is linked to the acceptance of customers in manufacturing firms. It can be assessed that business tends to respond to changes in the market and preferences of the customers (Chaffey, 2006). It should be noted that SMEs should consider the importance of changing market needs and develop digital marketing strategies that comply with their requirements.

It is why digital marketing serves as an essential base for usefulness for the customers and ease of use.

A qualitative study of 24 owner-managed small businesses operating in the visitor economy conducted by Alford and Page (2014) identified that majority of the SMEs tend to adopt towards business-driven model; however, modern-day businesses are based on the incorporation of the user-driven model. According to this model, companies in the SMEs business category tend to prepare and adjust their marketing strategies by aligning the customer needs with the marketing objectives. This assessment is related to the fact that companies believe that it is essential to conform to the customer needs to align the business model with the company requirements. It has been elaborated that desired objectives must be achieved if the company can identify the customer needs.

According to the digital marketing framework presented by Dyke (2020) it has been identified that there are five features tend to align with the digital marketing framework of a firm. These include relate, attract, engage, retain and learn.

- The initial phase of the firms' strategy is related to learning the marketing dynamics that are a requirement of the business, and then firms tend to relate this learning with the marketing and business objectives of the firm.
- The next phase is related to the attraction of the target market and engagement of the customers. It is achieved through successfully aligning the online parameters of the firm with the business needs (Parkin, 2009).
- Lastly, firms tend to retain the customers through successive customer relationship management techniques ((Harrigan et al., 2008).

In support of this assessment, Öztamur & Karakadıla (2014) presented that SMEs tend to adopt such digital marketing strategies related to knowledge management derived from valued customers. Moreover, it has been ascertained that proactive SMEs tend to utilise social media to attract and engage a wide range of customers towards their corporate setup. It means that the medium through which customers are reached is quite important to achieve the desired outcomes.

According to Narkiniemi (2013), some SMEs tend to adopt the strategy of utilising the pay click technique to enhance the reach of the company towards its customers. As per the working principle of PPC, firms tend to place sponsored ads on a particular platform that makes it easier for the customers to approach the value proposition. Moreover, as Charlesworth (2014) demonstrate, social media tactics are cheap, but sometimes the risk associated with their intervention is on a higher side. In return, some SMEs across the globe tend to fail in utilising different social media mechanics, specifically PPC, for their target market. In contrast, Borangiu et al. (2016) presented that SMEs rely on organisational learning rather than social media content to generate higher traffic on their dedicated platforms. It means that companies tend to emphasise knowledge management attributes in order to enhance their learning skills. However, in the current world of advanced technology and competition, SMEs need to step up their digital marketing strategies to comply with their customers' changing needs and requirements. Furthermore, SMEs should adopt efficient and competitive digital marketing strategies to make a sustainable position in the market.

In the view of Chaffey et al. (2021), SMEs' digital marketing strategy comprises of elements that are closely related which can be helpful to extract relevant information which is required to take any decision.

SMEs tend to collect information through market research which can be online or offline. The next step is related to the integration of the market research with the current product information. The next phase is related to the alignment of the information with the strategic mindset of the company. If the customers' perception matches the requirements of the market, then a comprehensive digital marketing strategy can be constructed. However, Çizmeçi & Ercan (2015) denied the views of the previous author based on the development of brand awareness among desired customers. The authors believe that it is necessary to establish a distinctive name of the firm in the mind of the customers rather than focusing

initially on market research. This framework is particularly efficient in terms of ensuring the organisational development of SMEs. The SME will take informed decisions with the help of the available information, which can further help increase their customers.

According to literature-based study conducted by Paquette (2013), SMEs in manufacturing across the globe tend to focus on adopting the innovation adoption process (IAP) before indulging in forming a comprehensive strategy for digital marketing. This aspect is related to the fact that if the customers are unable to adopt the innovative mechanics associated with digital marketing, then the company is more likely to face issues in addressing the needs of the target market (Vrgovic et al., 2012). Moreover, SMEs have utilised social media as an extension towards their current strategy of marketing (Wind and Mahajan, 2001). The reason behind this fact is that social media is an easily approachable medium through which both entities can enjoy a higher level of association and communication.

In contrast, Hemann and Burbary (2013) presented a slightly different concept of digital marketing strategy. As the authors believe, the role of the customer life cycle is vital in establishing a distinctive digital marketing strategy. Most of the research carried out in the past have restricted their approach towards aligning the mission of the firm with the processes of digital marketing through which desired outcomes can be achieved, which is essential for the development of the strategic framework. As per the framework presented by the authors, the company can establish distinctive strengths through assessing the customer life cycle. If the company has studied the customer life cycle, it is more likely to enhance the parameter of the growing lifetime value of the firm by introducing the value proposition. In support of this argument, Chaffey et al. (2009) reviewed that the role of market research in which customers are a major concern tends to provide a company with the basis through which they can enhance long term relationships with the customers. So, it can be ascertained that the digital marketing strategy framework is essential towards achieving long term and short-term performance optimisation for the firm. This framework can be applied to the business dynamics of SMEs because of its viability and applicability to different businesses.

Based on the framework presented by Hemann and Burbary (2013), it has turned out to be evident that marketing activities related to any market can be different because there are different characteristics and attributes of each market. Moreover, it is essential to understand how marketers tend to implicate different models and trends to make their business more productive and profitable in their respective markets.

It is identified by the case study-based research which comprises of 8 SMEs conducted by Gilmore and Carson (2009), it is ascertained that the framework of TAPE (transformation, assimilation, prediction and exceptionality) has been transformed to TAP (transformation, assimilation, prediction). This aspect is related to the fact that exceptionality is not the desired element in modern-day business and is inconclusive in terms of its significance to innovative marketing required in SMEs. According to the principles of exceptionality, it can be determined that innovation in digital technologies has no exception and firms are bound to focus on a true path when it comes to strategy creation. This framework is related explicitly to firms in online retail businesses that fall in the category of SMEs. The central theme associated with this framework is based on integrating the organisational objectives with the digital marketing strategy. The elements of transformation, assimilation and prediction serve the purpose of setting up a comprehensive digital marketing strategy and neglect the view of any kind of exceptionality.

In contrast, Njau and Karugu (2014) presented that any digital marketing strategy is expected to fail when the stakeholders are unaware of the consequences. So, it can be elaborated that most SMEs across the globe, including emerging /developing markets, are unaware of the benefits associated with social media marketing and other digital marketing tools and techniques. It results in a lack of coherence in forming the desired strategy for the company, and firms tend to lag behind the modern trends in the business.

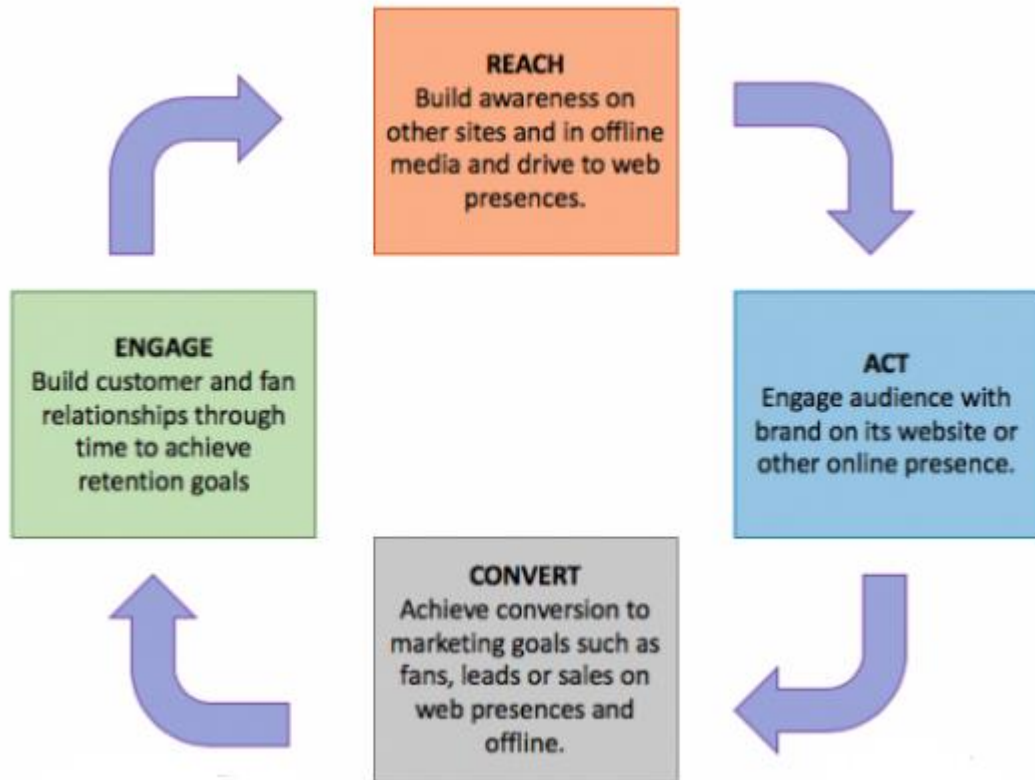


Figure 2.18: RACE model

(Source: SmartInsights, 2019)

Regarding the RACE model, the digital marketing strategy is divided into four main stages that the company is keenly focused on attaining during the operational span. While the business may have specific control over the first three aspects, it may depend on the fourth aspect of the engagement. Businesses need to keep the customers engaged through the business offerings and attain high loyalty (Benz & Tanner, 2018). Through this way, the firm may further be able to retain its existing customers and attract new ones through the developed digital marketing strategy. Regardless of the industry type, the manufacturers and service providers are highly focused on attaining greater customer engagement by satisfying them according to their needs and requirements.

In the view of Chaffey (SmartInsights, 2016), the RACE framework is essential to cover 360-degree aspects of a company's digital marketing strategy. The principle of this model shows that the first three phases, as displayed in figure

2.10 above, are associated with internal company affairs, namely reach, act and convert. However, the last engagement phase is related to the external market, i.e., stakeholders being served. This framework addresses the needs of online businesses across the globe, specifically which fall in the category of SMEs. The central theme associated with this model is based on the fact that it provides an easier path for the practical application of marketing strategies of the company. According to Chaffey (2019), by careful implementation of the steps identified by the RACE model, SMEs working in the manufacturing sector can significantly improve their performance and revenue. The key to success in the RACE model is to develop strong relationships with customers by engaging them through different digital media platforms and informing them about the benefits related to the use of products and services offered. It will also help the SME regarding organisational development and maintaining long-term relationships with their customers.

2.8: Competitive strategy framework

2.8.1: Need of the strategic framework

The view presented by West, Ford and Ibrahim (2015) states that a competitive strategic framework is required to align the company's internal and external resources with the business's requirements. Moreover, firms tend to extract the Resource-Based View (RBV) of all the resources available to them and then prepare for a comprehensive strategic framework. The use of a practical strategic framework tends to portray the internal and external environment comprehensively. Firms that intend towards aligning the firm's capabilities are more likely to devise a better strategy for the company. In terms of the strategic framework, firms tend to increase their market approach by analysing their internal competencies with market compatibility. In contrast, Palmer and Kaplan (2005) presented that it is the company's long-term approach that urges a firm towards the formation of a competitive strategic framework rather than market-driven forces.

Moreover, it has been viewed that organisational readiness is an important aspect that's why firms should create a strategic framework. If a company has adopted a comprehensive strategic framework, it is more likely to respond to any changes or risks in the market. It is the responsibility of an organisation to organise the innovation process in a way that can make it easier for the company to utilise their competitive advantage. The processes adopted by the firm are crucial to maintaining a comprehensive strategic framework.

In the view of Baroto and Wan (2012), the modern business dynamics require firms to rely upon the customers' expectations towards the desired product or service. It is mandatory for the companies to make sure that such mediums are utilised to make the customers' approach easier and affordable. It allows businesses to understand the importance of introducing relevant digital elements as part of the overall product package. The companies associated with the above framework are IT firms falling in the SME category, although the application within the Textile manufacturing can also be considered because they look for the strategic fit approach. The central theme of consideration with this framework is based on organisational readiness.

2.8.2: Importance of practical strategy framework for SMEs

In the view of Ocampo and Clark (2015), there is a great deal of importance to carrying out a practical strategic framework for the SMEs in dealing with their respective businesses. The first level of importance is related to the fact that it supports the firm's business strategy, and the second, how the firm intends to enhance its business in current and future business prospects (Weber, 2011). On the other hand, the importance of the strategic framework is related to developing a competitive market position. SMEs willing to enhance their position in the market intend to adopt a competitive strategic framework that fulfils the above two criteria (Morgan and Hastings, 2012). The framework will help to improve the cost, quality, dependability and flexibility of the organisation in the market it is serving.

2.8.3: Constraint identification in competitive strategic framework

In the view of Hong and Sabouri (2012), majority of the SMEs are focusing on adoption of internet-based models in order to revitalize their competitive strategic framework. However, in the process there are certain hurdles that tend to restrict the approach of the SME to formulate a competitive strategy. These hurdles have been presented in figure (2.15) below to provide the prospect of digital marketing adoption approach. As per the framework, the most common and influential hurdle the SMEs tend to face is related to firm's resources (Strategic fit) (Alam, 2009). Here the concept of strategic fit is important to be considered because it deals with the resources and capabilities of the company that are available in hand. It has been illustrated by Balamurugan et al (2014) that an SME seems to be reluctant in investing great deal of finances towards a technological based intervention. The reason behind this aspect is that they tend to avoid such interventions which contain higher level of risk. The financial situation of an SME in comparison with that of a large firm is quite different and it accounts for higher level of decision-making skills when such initiative is undertaken. So, this means that SMEs tend to be reluctant in approaching their target market through internet based initiatives due to certain reasons which have been displayed below.

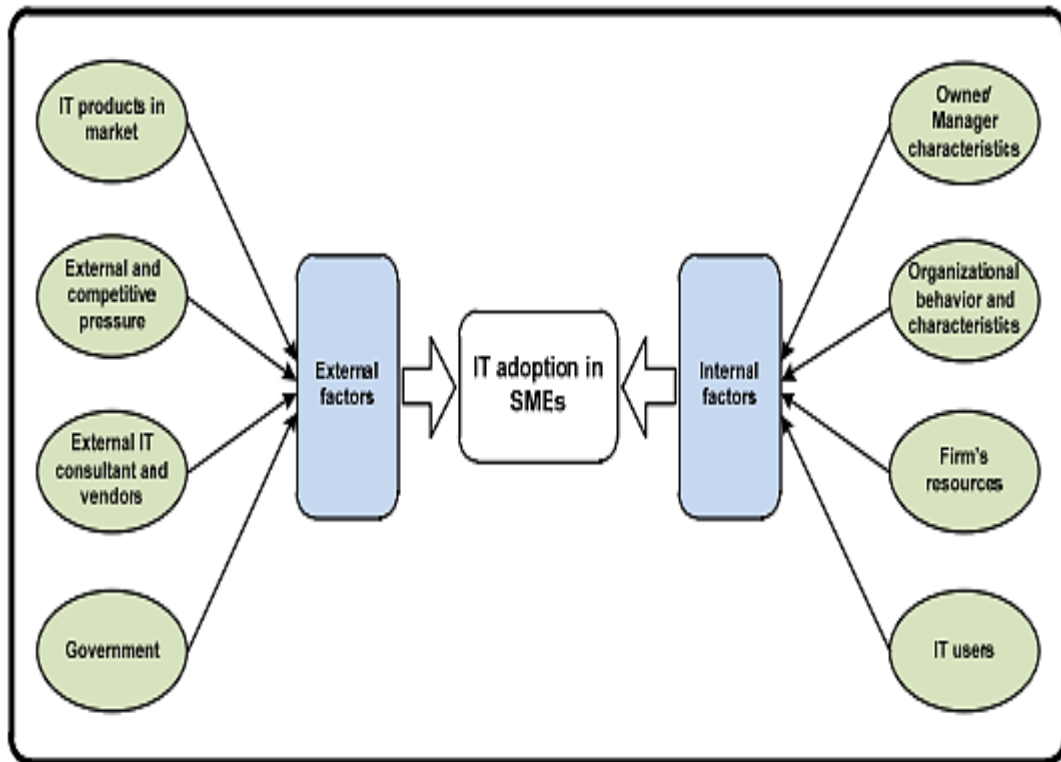


Figure 2.19: Framework for adoption of it based technology in SMEs

(Source: Hong and Sabouri, 2012)

As per the research conducted by Ferrari (2013), a competitive strategic framework is dependent on the competence areas of a firm. If a firm possesses higher level of competency, then they are more likely to focus on creation of a strategic framework through effective utilization of digital marketing tools.

2.9: Conceptual framework

The organisational factor of communication has been addressed along with the strategic aim of extracting two-way feedback from the customers (Kumar and Mishra, 2015). As per the technology acceptance framework, the organisational factor under consideration is based on the behavioural characteristics of employees working in an organisation. This aspect serves as a central strategic area because, to incorporate any framework or model in a work setting, a company must focus on its impact on the behavioural attributes of the employees (Dahnil and Marzuki, 2014). By KM (Knowledge Management) framework, the main organisational factor and the strategic area being addressed are based on effective utilisation derived from digital marketing techniques (Grishikashvili et al., 2014), which can add to the organisation's knowledge about the customers whom the organisation want to target. Knowledge management encompasses all the different areas in relation to a company, including data management related to customer interactions, product/service-based approaches, and its ways of working. Regarding the TAPE framework, the main strategic area is combining corporate and business objectives to enhance the digital marketing approach towards a wide range of markets (Hemann and Burbary, 2013). As per the framework for adapting IT-based technology, the organisational factors considered are specifically related to the firm's internal competency and resources (Hong and Sabouri, 2012).

All these frameworks are directly linked with the development of the strategic framework because addressing the stakeholder's involvement, strategic intervention and technology adoption.

The comprehensive literature review and the overall analysis lead towards identifying three key variables to develop the conceptual framework related to this research. These include Competitive Strategy, Digital marketing (tools and techniques) and SMEs' strategic fit in developing economies.

Research conducted by Lorenzo et al. (2018) associated with the SMEs in manufacturing identified that resources and capabilities along with competitive strategies define the competitive advantage. However, the study identified the competitive strategy as the independent variable and linked it directly with the organisation's value proposition and management capability.

The following variable identified as part of the literature review is SMEs Strategic fit which enables the SMEs to explore the enterprise capabilities (Resource availability) and the sustainability triggers to facilitate the opportunities in the external environment. A study conducted by Diez-Martin et al. (2019) identified the sustainability triggers in business: innovation, technological capability, development, and research.

The following specific variable identified is digital marketing (tools and techniques) as the levers which can improve the organisations' overall development and bring sustainable competitive advantage. Literature can discuss a variety of tools and techniques which demonstrate the variability if selecting the specific tools and techniques. The selection of tools depends on the strategic fit and competitive strategy while the categorization model enables the organisation to move from capability maturity model to capability maturity model with continuous improvement.

The development of the overall conceptual framework will help to develop and utilise the contextualised information and data analysis. The critical contribution of the study is based on 'categorization model' and a framework, "House of Lean," that consider the characteristics of textile manufacturing-based SMEs in developing economy (Pakistan) to bring the optimization approach (continuous improvement) through areas linked with the SMEs' Strategic fit, Competitive Strategy and Digital marketing (tools and techniques).

As earlier mentioned in the chapter, there is no evidence of a framework that can cater mentioned contextual factors and support the need for textile manufacturing-based SMEs in developing economies (Pakistan). In contrast, the development of the strategic framework based will help to gain the overall organisational development.

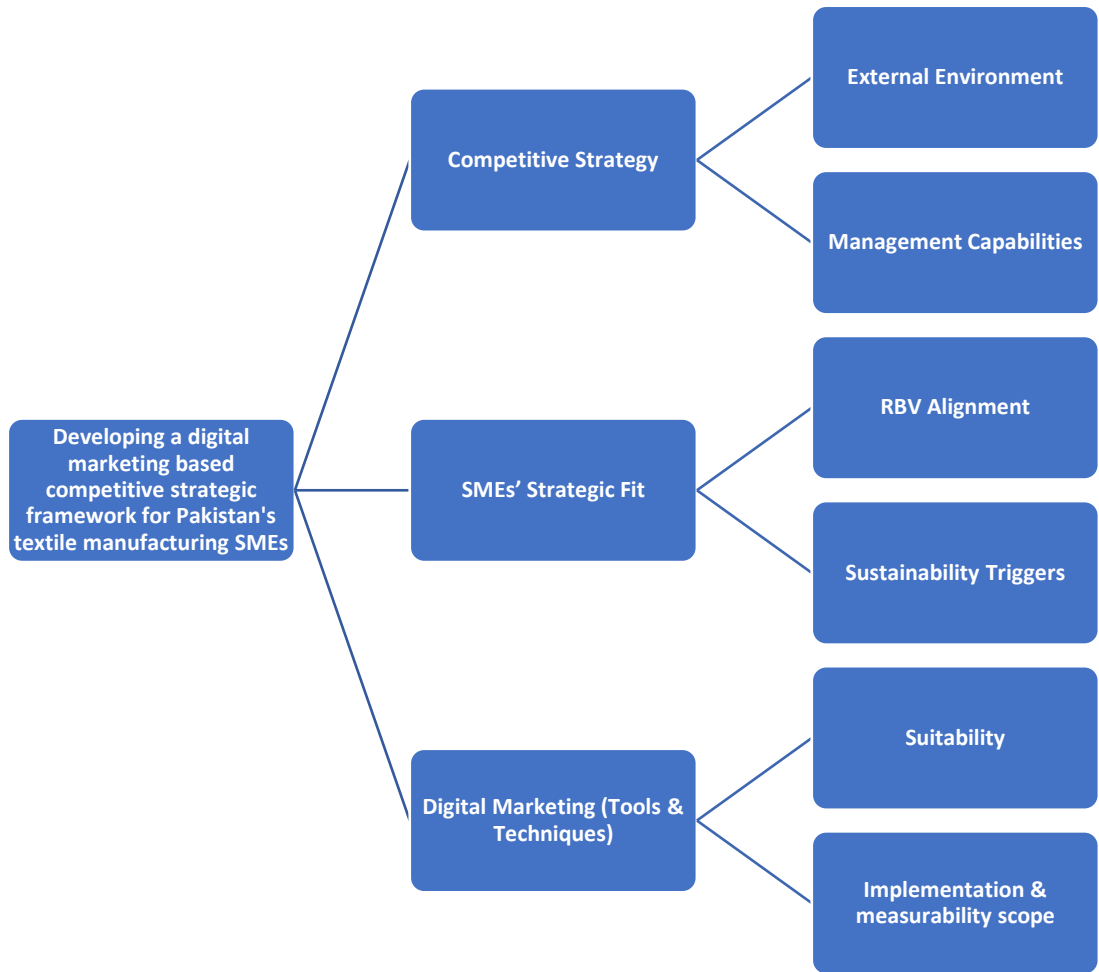


Figure 2.20: Conceptual framework

(Source: Author)

2.10: Chapter summary

As per the successful completion of this chapter, it has been identified that the concept of digital marketing is not new, and it has emerged in the recent past due to the effective use of different strategies. It has been determined that digital marketing is an integral tool for SMEs to develop themselves effectively because the world of online business is emerging considerably and there is extensive change in the external business environment. Businesses are bound towards shifting to online base businesses in order to remain competitive in the market. The current strategic framework adopted by firms in the vicinity of the SME sector is more or less based on push and pull mechanics. It has been identified that traditional marketing techniques relied heavily upon push strategies, while digital marketing strategies have focused on developing two-way communication between the organisation's stakeholders. The literature is able to provide the specific support to develop categorization model and growth model phases in relation to the implementation of the strategic framework for the SMEs.

It has been evaluated that social media serves as the most appropriate marketing tool to address the needs of modern businesses because it is easier to approach and accounts for a limited number of financial resources. However, some researchers have confirmed that SMEs across the globe remain reluctant to develop digital marketing strategies because they believe that the internal personnel are not competitive and does not have the effective knowledge to utilise this modern concept. Most SMEs tend to avoid measuring the competitiveness of digital marketing tools; however, it varies from country to country. In some European countries, businesses tend to focus on measuring the competitiveness of digital marketing tools. With reference to the research gaps, it has been evaluated that there is limited presence of literature linked with the digital marketing within the context of manufacturing SMEs which can provide the strategic fit option through a growth model; however, some of the research is based on a diversified group of SMEs, including many sectors. In terms of organisational cultural contribution towards adopting technological-based initiatives, it has been ascertained that employee perception and employee willingness are the two most important features through which an organisation can easily approach the technological perspective. As per the successful

evaluation of the past literature, it has been concluded that the structure of the organisation is crucial to meet the standards of a competitive organisational culture.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1: Introduction

This chapter presents the methods for conducting the study effectively that enable the researcher to achieve the study's aims and objectives. The study aims to develop a competitive strategic framework through digital marketing for Manufacturing SMEs in developing countries. For developing the methods and strategies in conducting this study, the chapter provides a detailed explanation and discussion on each method, approach and technique in the following chapter.

3.1.1: Research context

There is a growing trend in the developing economies to adopt digitalisation at a larger scale, and due to the large population size, the customer segment are considered to be significant. The growth opportunities for the SMEs are considered high through the use of the internet-based tools and techniques. With that prospect, the below-mentioned information can demonstrate the current statistics linked with the use of the internet and digital marketing tools application and adoption in the targeted market.

3.1.1.1: Digital statistical indicators

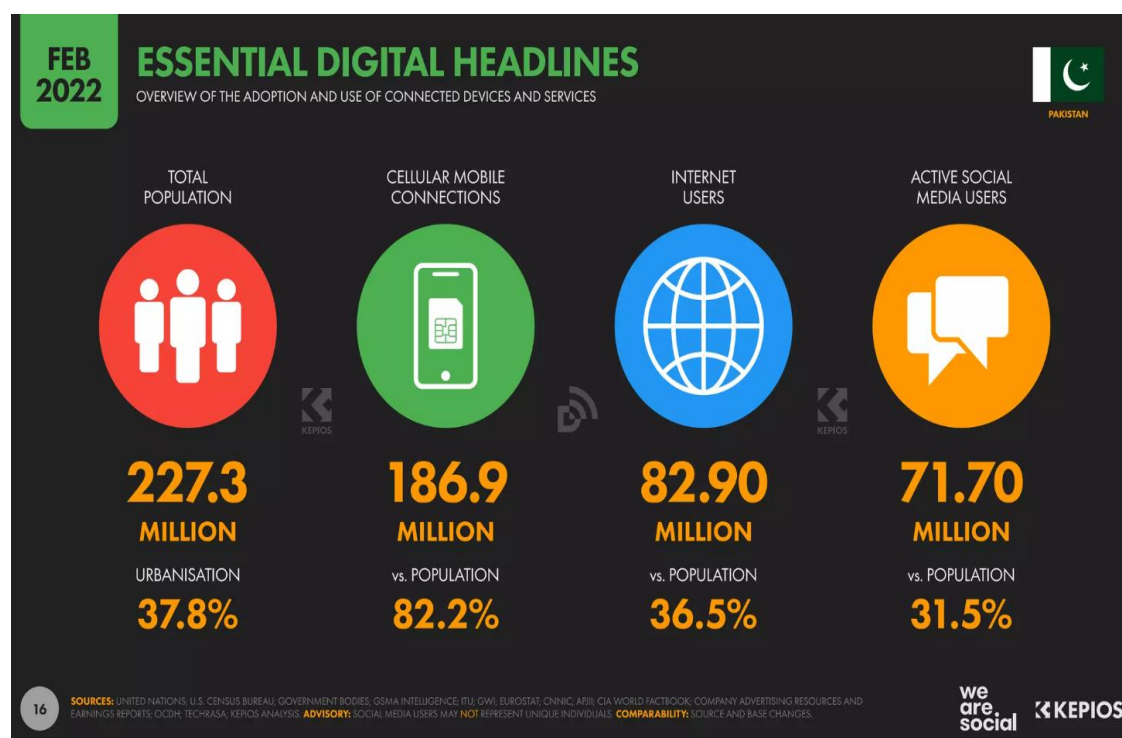


Figure 3.1: Digital statistical indicators

(Source: reproduced from KEPIOS, 2022)

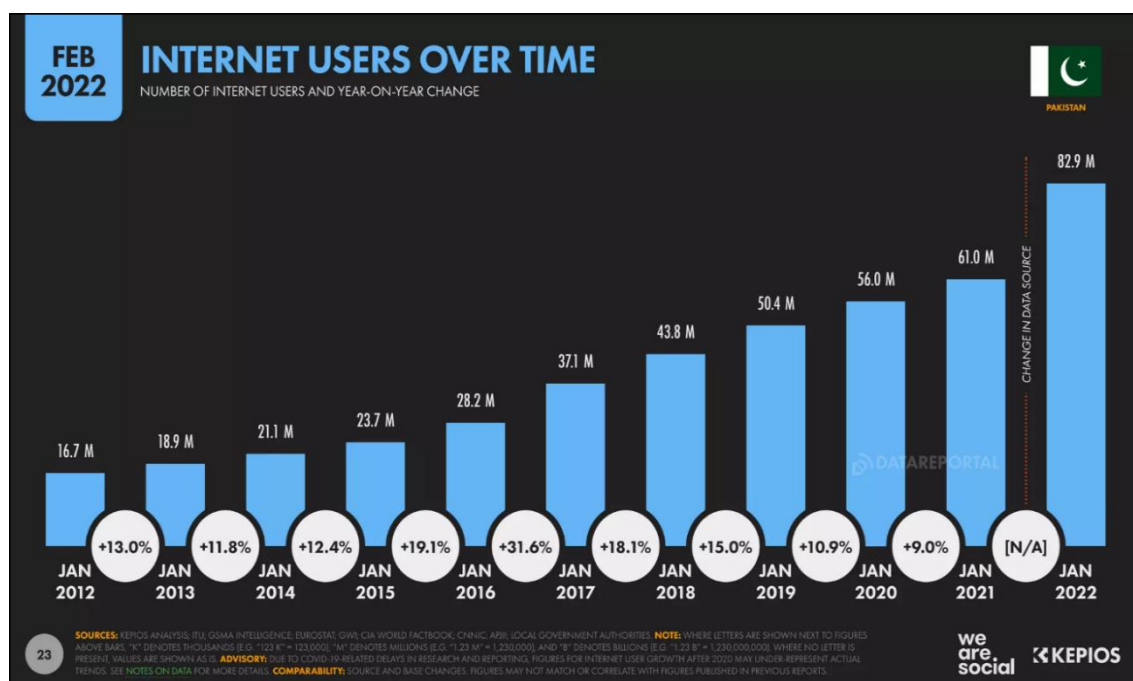


Figure 3.2: Internet users

(Source: reproduced from KEPIOS, 2022)

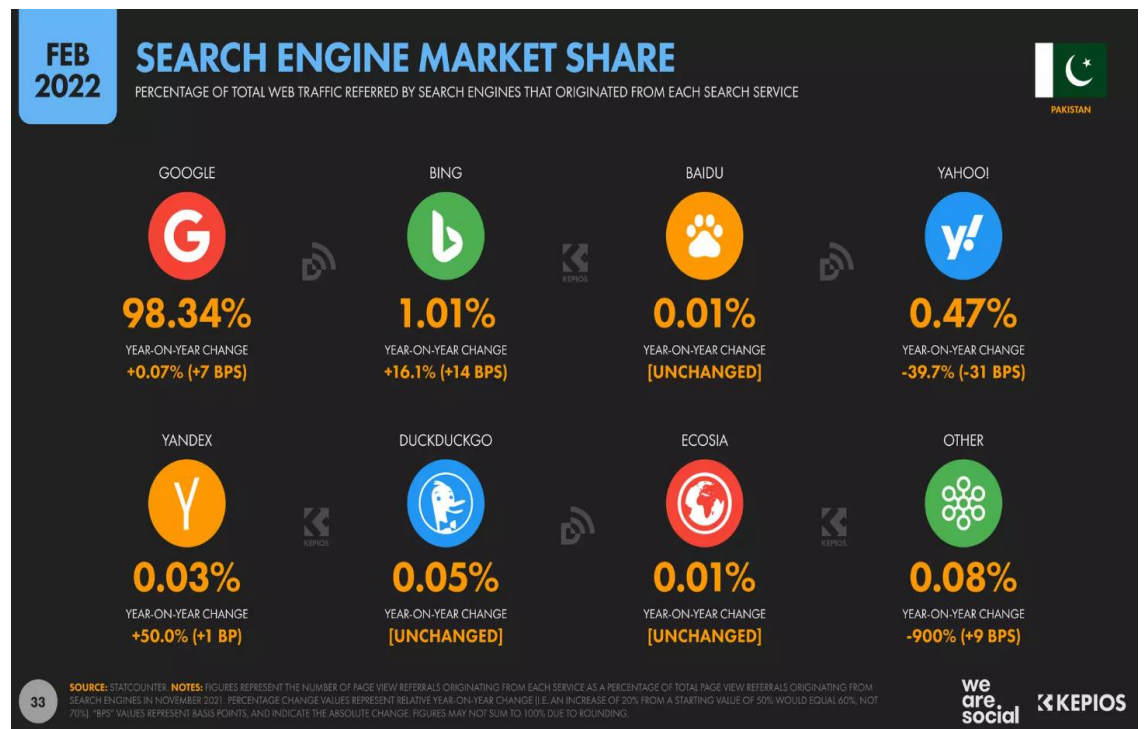


Figure 3.3: Search engine market share

(Source: reproduced from KEPIOS, 2022)

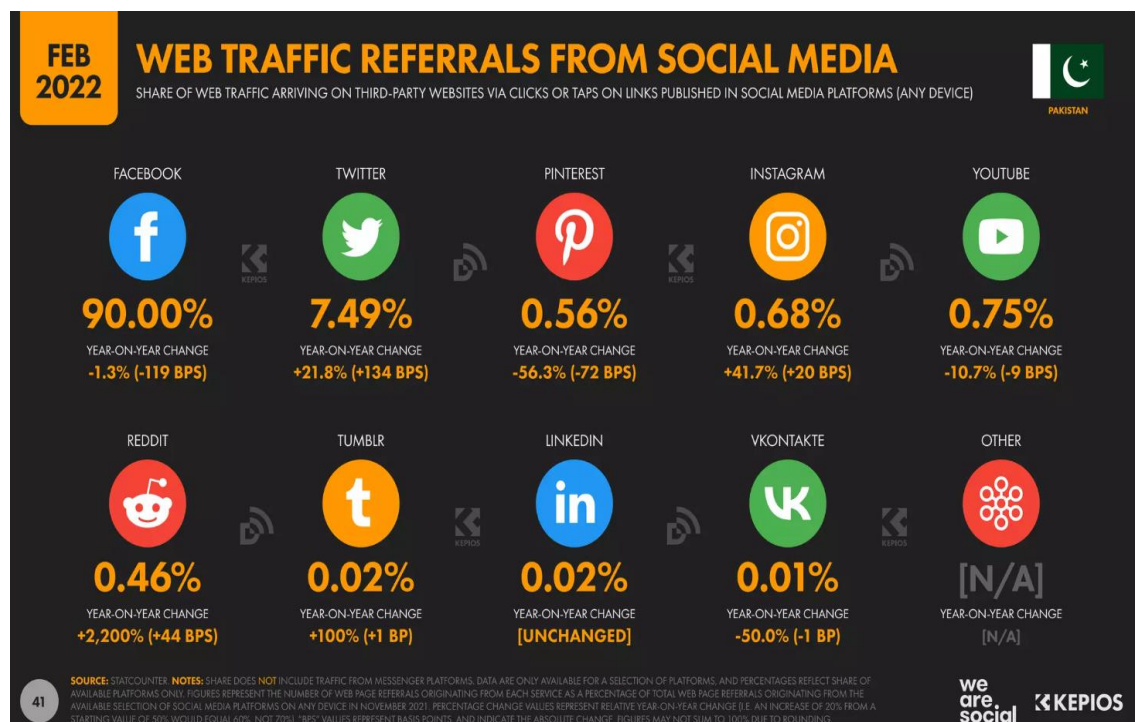


Figure 3.4: Social media stats in Pakistan

(Source: reproduced from KEPIOS, 2022)

The six most popular Pakistani social media websites are Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram and YouTube. The information chart above clearly shows how social media platforms used. People in Pakistan, most commonly use Facebook, with 90.00% of the population having active internet access using Facebook.



Figure 3.3: Ecommerce - Consumer goods categories

(Source: adapted from KEPIOS, 2022)

Statistics show that people fashion is 2nd highest category of generating revenue. The statistics have been systematically examined to achieve these results, showing that internet based activities linked with the fashion industry generating high interest and revenue.

3.2: Research paradigm

Understanding and setting the research paradigm is one of the crucial parts of any study; setting the right paradigm for the study should increase the quality of

research and enable the researcher to meet the study's main objectives. The central concept of the research paradigm can be explained in terms of the fundamental beliefs that an individual has and how they can impact the way research is conducted (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017). Moreover, according to Migiro and Magangi (2011) study, the research paradigm consists of four elements: ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology.

According to Kawulich (2012), the ontology paradigm determines the individual's underlying beliefs about the nature of existence and what is around us. Therefore, these philosophical assumptions about reality and nature are essential for creating meaning from the research data. In the current study, the ontology is 'subjectivism' which is directly linked with the availability of resources for SMEs, competitive strategies, and digital marketing tools that can support the different organisational contexts.

The epistemology paradigm is intended to explain how we know something about the reality or truth, and it is mainly concerned with the knowledge base, forms, and nature and how knowledge can be obtained and communicated (Shah and Al-Bargi 2013). It focuses on the nature of comprehension and knowledge that the researcher can obtain to understand the research topic. In this research, the epistemological stance taken into consideration is 'interpretivism'. The factors identified in the epistemology will be considered to develop a suitable strategic framework that can be used by manufacturing SMEs in the developing economy. In contrast, the Axiology paradigm is concerned with the ethical issues linked with the research and needs to be considered by the researcher while conducting the research. It focuses on understanding and evaluating the right and wrong behaviours and conducting the research ethically (Aliyu et al., 2014). Through the axiology paradigm, the researcher tends to maintain the dignity of participants and take care of other ethical aspects linked with the research. In this research, the axiology component used and the participant's anonymity been considered to support the individual's beliefs and attitude.

The methodology is mainly concerned with identifying the appropriate procedures, designs, and methods to conduct the study to enable the researcher to meet the primary goal of the research. Reason (1994) mentioned that methodology is a participatory component of the research paradigm that can help develop a specific model/framework for practice.

Halcomb and Hickman (2015) have defined the research paradigm as a way of thinking developed and shared by the researchers and scientists to solve problems in a specific field. Similarly, it is also stated that it is a view of the world representing views, beliefs, and assumptions in a specific discipline that guides how a particular problem should be addressed and how problems should be resolved. However, as per Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017), it is the first or initial part of formulating the research methodology, which mainly depends on the study's objectives and research questions. Since the philosophical assumptions are different for each paradigm, the following study also holds a unique position for which a different methodology needs to be formulated considering the questions under study. Therefore, the methodological position of the following study is based on the adoption of methods, procedures, and processes to achieve the objectives. Furthermore, the study is based on the mixed-method research design given that it holds a view to get multi-dimensional views and opinions to draw practical implications applicable in today's complex working environment.

3.3: Research philosophy

The research philosophy is concerned with developing knowledge or a model that provides guidelines for the research. Developing the research philosophy is crucial in the methodology as it provides instruction to the researcher regarding the collection, analysis and utilisation of the data. According to Converse (2012), research philosophy supports the researcher in understanding and exploring everyday life experiences.

There are various types of research philosophy in which the researcher must select the philosophy that is suitable for the collection and analysis of the data (Miller and Tsand, 2011). There are generally three types of common philosophies in which the researcher must select for conducting its research. The three philosophies consist of Positivism, Interpretivism and Pragmatism. Each of these philosophies has its own unique set of assumptions and implications. These philosophies are based on the research paradigm of ontological, epistemological, methodological and axiological components. The ontological

paradigm is concerned with reality and its nature. Epistemological is concerned with clarifying and explaining the reality as "How do you know something", methodological is concerned with strategy, planning, process or design of using effective methods for achieving the desired outcome, and axiological is related to the values and ethics.

Positivism philosophy is based on the quantitative analysis or numerical values in which the researcher converts the data to numerical and applies statistical techniques for determining the findings. The deductive approach is followed with Positivism as the researcher confirms the nature of the study through developing hypotheses from the existing theories and concepts. Other than that, Positivism avoids the viewpoints and arguments of other people as it is dependent on the numerical and its results. Due to this, positivists do not rely on logic, observation, or experience to examine and understand the concepts. According to Taylor and Medina (2013), positivist philosophy involves quantitative analysis using experimental methods to measure the scores and results.

Interpretivism is another philosophy that is entirely different from Positivism and is based on qualitative analysis. The researcher analyses the viewpoints, opinions and arguments of other people for providing the findings according to the aims and objective of the study. It provides reasons and more profound meaning through exploring the behaviours of other people. The interpretive belief is that reality is significantly correlated with people's experience and is constructed on ontological belief. Interpretivist follows the inductive approach as it helps collect data through interviews. Based on Leitch, Hill and Harrison (2010), Interpretivism is subjective and is based on the study of ontology that investigates the social world for knowledge creation.

Lastly, Pragmatism is another research philosophy that combines both Positivism and Interpretivism in which it analyses the opinion of others and identifies the findings through numerical analysis. Based on Feilzer (2010) study, Pragmatism offers the researcher a combination of different methods in conducting the study and the constraints of Positivism and Interpretivism. Moreover, Pragmatism provides a good understanding of the qualitative and quantitative analysis that leads to good-quality social research. Other than that, Pragmatism is followed with the abductive approach as it tries to balance between inductive and deductive approaches.

3.3.1: Suitable philosophy for this research

Pragmatism is the best suitable philosophy for carrying out the research. Pragmatism helps support the mixed research methods as it aims to produce relevant findings that enable the researcher to achieve the aims and objectives. The selection of the philosophy is supported by the description provided by Saunders et al. (2016, p. 146), stating that pragmatist research starts with a problem and aim to contribute practical solutions that inform future practises. In this regard, researcher values drive the automatic process of inquiry initiated by doubt and a sense that something is wrong or out of place.

Furthermore, the researcher can adopt both objective and subjective views on this research through Pragmatism. According to Goldkuhl (2012), Pragmatism contributes to broadening the research alternatives and highlighting factors of the research. Pragmatism allows the researcher to focus on digital marketing factors and their influence on SMEs manufacturers in developing economies to bring competitiveness through organisational development.

Besides that, pragmatism philosophy has also helped the researcher apply the multiple techniques conducted in the research, which consist of interviews and surveys within the qualitative and quantitative research. Pragmatism has been applied to avoid biased results as interviews are conducted to answer the research questions, and questionnaire survey was analysed through statistical techniques.

According to Feilzer (2010), most academic and research work conducted by researchers fall under positivism and interpretivism philosophies. Each philosophy has its concept, theory and approach to the research problem and is accompanied by different methodological techniques based on the theoretical perspective or other means. Hence, Positivism and Interpretivism cannot provide an entire problem because there may be multiple realities; thus, a single point of view cannot provide the entire picture (Taylor and Medina, 2013). Therefore, pragmatism philosophy holds significant value in terms of flexible nature and exclusive paradigm than others regarding the research problem. Hence, it allows the researcher to combine two different philosophies within the scope of study and by the research questions.

3.4: Research Approach

The research approach is considered an essential part of the research methodology that enables the research in planning the required steps for the data collection, evaluation, analysis, and interpretation. According to Walter and Andersen (2013), the research approach holds a significant value for conducting qualitative and quantitative analysis. The selection of the research approach is based on the nature of the study that would enable the researcher in addressing the research question and problem. The primary purpose of developing the research approach is that it helps the researcher in developing the research path or direction for collecting the necessary data. Similarly, Gregory and Muntermann (2011) study has highlighted that the research approach provides a platform to the researcher for analysing and evaluating the processes of the conducted research.

There are generally three research approaches that the researcher could adopt in conducting the study. The three research approaches consist of inductive, deductive or Abductive approaches. The deductive approach refers to the approach in which the researcher would first develop the hypothesis based on the existing theory and develop respective strategies for testing the hypothesis whether it is rejected or accepted. Moreover, it has been identified that the deductive approach emphasises the causality of the research rather than exploring new phenomena. The deductive approach ignores other people's viewpoints and perspectives as it is wholly based on numerical value, which is quantitative. The deductive approach usually follows the philosophy of Positivism as it enables the researcher in determining the relationship of the research based on the theories and concepts through which the researcher develops the hypothesis for empirical examination.

Other than that, the inductive approach is used in the qualitative nature in which the viewpoints and perspectives of other people are analysed to achieve the aims and objectives of the study and answer the research questions. There are no hypotheses developed in the inductive approach in the initial phase of the research as the inductive approach is mainly based on the assumptions. However, the hypotheses are created in the ending stage of the research. Based on Jebreem (2012) study, the inductive approach is considered a rigorous and

credible approach for exploring the viewpoints and interactions between the users and analysts. Moreover, the organisational analyst and research commonly use the inductive approach to conduct the study on the organisation to address the issues and provide suggestions for enhancing organisational operations. Such organisation studies are conducted on the decision-making process, employee performance and satisfaction, risk management, and other related organisational areas.

Another approach used in the study is the abductive approach, in which the researcher would utilise both the inductive and deductive approach in a single study that is determined through the nature of the study. The abductive approach enables the researcher to double-check and analyse the research phenomena from different angles. Other than that, the abductive approach helps in measuring the correlation or relationship between the variables.

3.4.1: Suitable approach for this research

Based on the aims and objective of the study, the research approach that is best suited with the research is the abductive approach for understanding the importance of digital marketing for SMEs and identifying the factors for enhancing its effectiveness through the development of the framework. The motive for selecting the abductive approach for this study is as it enables the researcher to analyse the perspective and viewpoints of the people and conduct the quantitative analysis in which the findings would be determined by analysing the numerical. Furthermore, it would enable the researcher in developing a competitive strategic framework on digital marketing for Manufacturing SMEs. The study of Bosch-Rekvelde et al. (2011) highlighted that using the abductive approach presented the elements for developing a practical framework that led to better managing the manufacturing projects.

Furthermore, the abductive approach is similar to the pragmatism philosophy, which tries to fill the gap within other approaches in the research work. As discussed earlier, the deductive and inductive approaches both have limitations and have been criticised in the academic literature such as Atieno (2009); Rahman (2016); Anderson (2010), which can be summarised as there is a lack

of clarity in the deductive approach about the selection of theory which is about to be tested through developing hypothesis. Similarly, it is also criticised for the inductive approach that uses empirical data to develop a theory, which is not necessary to enable theory building.

Meanwhile, when the academic literature criticises the inductive and deductive approaches due to their limitations, a third alternate emerges, which is the abductive approach that can facilitate the limitations and weaknesses through a pragmatic perspective. Hence, the implementation of pragmatism philosophy and abductive approach does not restrict the researcher between the approaches and philosophies but gives away between the lines to approach the problem from different dimensions to view multiple realities. Furthermore, research philosophy is an initial aspect of the research design, which directs other potential aspects such as research approach, strategy, and overall design. However, these methods and processes should also be aligned with each other to develop the best philosophy, which considers the questions under study and aligns with the other methodological aspects. Therefore, since the study adopts a mixed-method research design, it needs to adopt the pragmatism philosophy.

The Abductive approach provides an alternative to inductive and deductive approaches, which have been criticised for weaknesses and limitations associated with other approaches separately. Meanwhile, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) discuss that applying both methods has gotten the great attention of researchers, specifically in social sciences and business management. Thus, cognitive reasoning and numerical perspective can be combined to approach the most suitable answers among alternatives. Hence, the abductive approach is preferred over others due to the limitations and weaknesses of approaches, and the pragmatism paradigm is adopted.

Furthermore, the abductive approach played a significant role in converting the raw data gathered through the primary sources in descriptive and numerical analysis. Other than that, the abductive approach has also helped develop a link or relationship with the research objectives and questions. As a result, the best-suited approach for carrying out the study is the abductive approach that has allowed the researcher to clear the concepts of Digital marketing and its frameworks and adopt a new competitive strategic framework of Digital Marketing for Manufacturing SMEs in developing economies.

3.5: Research design (Specific to the research)

3.5.1: Research strategy

For this study, multi-case study research was used as a suitable strategy for obtaining insights into the digital marketing framework. The case study research method described by Yin (2009) was adopted. According to Dubois and Godde (2002), case study research consists of design, data collection and analysis phases based on the interaction between phenomenon and its context through case study-based analysis. Through comparison of similarities and differences of the individual cases embedded within the research. Evidence arising from multiple-case studies is often stronger and more reliable than from single-case research. IN the current study the case study organisations selected from the textile industries with similarity of being SMEs but all the cases present the different sub sector from the textile industry. The companies were from the same geographical location and have the availability of same skill labour and strategic opportunities to adopt any strategic option.

Specific research conducted by Taiminen & Karjaluoto (2015) around the usage of digital marketing channels in SMEs signifies that if the main focus is not on generalisations but on obtaining in-depth knowledge of a specific phenomenon, the multiple case study can be beneficial. According to Saunders et al. (2019), the case study strategy supports the mixed method. The literature previous reviewed includes Abrar et al. (2016), (Makasi & Govender (2017), Tsikirayi et al. (2013), Sanchez-Gutierrez and Gonzalez-Urbe, (2013) administered the research based on the multiple case study strategy.

The current study is based on multiple cases with a cross-sectional design. The rationale for using the multiple cases focused on the findings that can be replicated across the cases because they belong to the same textile industry and represent the same organisation type (SME). The companies have prospectively same opportunities available to use the digital marketing capabilities to demonstrate the development. Similar cases were chosen based on the dimensions linked with the geographical location, access of information and availability of resources, concluding that similar results are expected to be gained while Yin (2018) term this literal replication.

3.5.2: Research method / choice

The research design refers to the methods and techniques for collecting the data and evaluating the direct and indirect variables. There are commonly three methods for implementing the research strategy in carrying out the research, including qualitative, quantitative, and the combination of both qualitative and quantitative that is referred to as mixed design. The factor that makes the research strategy effective is that it enables the researcher to address the research questions and provide a path or guidelines for the procedures in the research. Many researchers have been implementing new procedures and processes for data gathering and analysis through computer-based technology (Inan and Lowther, 2010).

The qualitative research design refers to collecting the data through open-ended questions, conducting interviews, focus group and other related methods. The qualitative data are also gathered through secondary sources by analysing and critically evaluating the literature reviews related to the research topic and design. Once the data had been collected through the qualitative design, the data are further analysed and evaluated through thematic, treatment or content analysis. According to Turner (2010), qualitative research design provides in-depth information regarding the experience and opinions of other people.

On the other hand, the quantitative research design is another method to gather the data through primary or secondary sources and convert those data to numerical. The strategies that are employed in quantitative research design are through the approaches of surveys and experiments. The primary purpose of the quantitative analysis is to analyse the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The quantitative research analysis is usually conducted through statistical tools and procedures that help develop the findings of the research. It also enables the researcher in testing the hypothesis whether to reject or accept based on the finding. According to Trotter (2012), Quantitative analysis focuses on the statistical representation, central tendency and variations.

Another research design for conducting the study is the mixture of qualitative and quantitative, which is referred to as mixed research design that can also be labelled as pragmatic perspective design. The mixed research design is

conducted by utilising both the qualitative and quantitative methods in a single study. The benefit of mixed research design is that it overcomes the biases and insufficiencies that could occur using a single research method. Furthermore, using the mixed research design allows the researcher to use multiple approaches and techniques for conducting the study.

3.5.2.1: Suitable method for this research

According to the study conducted by Harrison and Reilly (2011) found that various authors conducted research through mixed-method research design, which they find more feasible and justified under their objectives, while the methods used by the study conducted by Taiminen & Karjaluoto (2015) concerning the usage of digital marketing channels in SMEs support the use of mixed methods. It also enables the researcher to combine the methods pragmatically, often termed as blend-research or multi-method research. Another study by Schoonenboom and Johnson (2017) states that mixed method can be integrated with different methods, approaches, and techniques; therefore, it can add insights from both methods combined.

Based on the arguments, the selection of a mixed-method approach (qualitative and quantitative) provides multiple dimensions of a single problem. Similarly, the selection of the abductive approach is also based on the mixed-method design that is similar to the pragmatism philosophy, which is discussed in detail. The mixed-method and abductive approach enable the researcher to design a study with two different methods; qualitative means in which participants' opinions are recorded, and, secondly, quantifiable measures are used to investigate relationships of variables of the study. Similarly, Mitchell (2018) has argued that the application of mixed methods is justified based on the design, enabling the researcher to answer the questions in the best way, and the best way can be developed when the researcher has multiple aspects of problems/issues.

Based on the study of Feilzer (2010), mixed-method research is followed by the pragmatism philosophy. It is because the concept of the mixed method is also similar to the pragmatism philosophy, that one research design might not effectively enable the researcher to address the research problem and assist in achieving the objective; hence approaching a single problem from two different

designs will eliminate weaknesses and limitations associated with other research designs separately. Secondly, since pragmatism philosophy is adopted, the mixed-method design must also be adapted to comply with the philosophy.

Meanwhile, quantitative research will be conducted initially to come up with empirical evidence. Then, qualitative research will be conducted through interviews to ensure that the quantitative study's limitations, weaknesses, and areas not addressed are highly focused in the qualitative study. This sequence is derived from the concept of Pragmatism which gives flexibility to the researcher and does not restrict him in one way. However, about the justification of sequence, it can be stated that quantitative research design only measures how much respondents agree on the statements initially designed by the researcher concerning the research questions and objectives.

It means the quantitative research design measures the respondent's satisfaction level rather than his/her opinion and complete perspective on the statement. It is a weakness of the quantitative research design, which is also highlighted and discussed by Atieno (2009) in his work. Hence, when qualitative research was conducted after quantitative, it enabled the researcher to focus on areas in which the quantitative method failed.

The best suitable research design with the study is the mixed research design that would enable the researcher to conduct qualitative and quantitative research to identify the completeness of digital marketing tools and develop a framework based on digital marketing for the manufacturing SMEs. There were the limitations with reference to the use of single method combining quantitative and qualitative approaches can balance out the limitations of each method. It can provide stronger evidence and more confidence in findings. The single method usage was likely limited the accessibility and availability of the data while the use of mixed method allowed to support more comprehensive data collection.

The literature demonstrates that the previous studies were primarily based on the mono method while specific to the deductive or inductive approach. Empirical studies conducted in Pakistan and India focused on the mono method. In this research, the qualitative study had been conducted through the interviews in which the results were analysed through the thematic analysis. Similarly, quantitative analysis was conducted through the survey in which statistical tools and procedures were applied to determine the research findings. The

combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis allowed the researcher to conduct an in-depth study on understanding digital marketing for Manufacturing SMEs in Pakistan.

3.6: Sampling strategies

The term population refers to the overall group of people through which reliable data is collected. Due to being impossible to cover the entire population in the research, samples are drawn from the target population to assess and measure the entire population's characteristics. As a result, small groups are drawn from the entire population referred to as samples by applying appropriate sampling techniques. The results that are drawn from the selected sample represent the opinion and views of the entire population. According to the study of Palinkas et al. (2015), effective sampling strategies enable the researcher to generate reliable data that would enable answering the research question and concluding the study. The sampling method assists the researcher in gathering the primary data for both the qualitative and quantitative nature of the study. The literature studied through this research demonstrates the use of probability and non-probability sampling techniques.

The two standard methods for developing samples are probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is based on the random selection of the participants in which every individual has an equal probability of being selected. To conduct the probability sampling, the researcher must establish a process or plan that ensures that the data obtained is reliable. The probability sampling method includes simple sampling, stratified sampling, systematic sampling and Cluster sampling based on random probability. Based on Yang and Banamah (2013) study, statisticians have widely accepted probability sampling and is being significantly studied in statistical textbooks.

Non-probability sampling is another effective sampling strategy in which the entire population does not have an equal chance of being selected as the researcher would include the samples that are easier to access. The type of non-probability sampling consists of convenience sampling, snowball sampling, judgmental sampling and other related sampling methods. Based on Miller et al.

(2010) study, non-probability sampling attracts those representative groups that would contribute to gaining reliable and valid data.

3.6.1: Suitable sampling for this research

Multi-stage sampling was adopted for this research. The non-probability sampling technique was used due to some limitations faced by the researcher, which restricted the researcher to the non-probability sampling technique concerning the selection of the SMEs. These limitations were lack of time, lack of resources, lack of human resources, lack of budget, and companies may not have helped in the probability sampling technique. Another important aspect was that the main focus of the research is SMEs in textile manufacturing in developing economies (Pakistan).

In this study, the researcher had decided to use non-probability sampling through the process of convenience sampling. Convenience sampling has allowed the researchers to access the SME group in textile manufacturing (from subcategories) that are easier to reach and provide reliable data for the study since the data had been collected through the use of questionnaire survey and interviews, which demonstrated through the second stage of sampling. The selection of the sample was based on the specific SMEs which had some digital presence to support the basic understanding and use of digital marketing tools.

Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA): The primary role of SMEDA is to provide Business Development services to the SMEs in Pakistan, which include business counselling, financial guidance, marketing development and support the technical skills, technology acquisition, business planning development and export markets penetration etc. (SMEDA, 2020). The institution of the Government of Pakistan under the Ministry of Industries & Production provided the list of all SMEs in Pakistan within different industries. According to the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, the SME is defined as follows, as approved in SME Policy 2007.

SME Definition			
Enterprise Category	Employment Size (a)	Paid Up Capital (b)	Annual Sales (c)
Small & Medium Enterprise (SME)	Up to 250	Up to Rs. 25 Million	Up to Rs. 250 Million

Table 3.1: SME description

(Source: SMEDA, 2019)

10 Pakistani textiles manufacturing category/membership 'A' companies have been selected from the list provided by Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA) in the textile categories of:

- Textile Made-Ups
- Sports Goods
- Knitted Garments
- Garments Diverse
- Readymade Garment
- Fabric and Weaving

The membership/category 'A' defined by SMEDA is linked with the manufacturing SMEs conducting any form of export activity. Based on these categories, the total population size is 133, while the sampling was conducted from the 10 SMEs from these categories. These categories were selected due to the convenience sampling approach, including the geographical location and accessibility. The geographical location was Punjab (biggest providence in Pakistan). There are 423 textile industries working in the country. Punjab has the biggest share in the textile sector and around 70% of the textile industry is based in the province of Punjab and Faisalabad city is believed to be the hub. Pakistan is the 8th largest exporter of textile products in Asia. It is 4th largest producer and 3rd largest consumer of cotton. Textile sector is the backbone of Pakistan's economy. It is the single largest sector, which contributes 60 % to Pakistan's total exports. It comprises 46% of total manufacturing sector and provides employment to 40% of total labour force. It is worthy to mention that textile sector contributes 8.5 % to

gross domestic product of the country. (Punjab Board of Investment & Trade, 2022)

3.6.2: Justification linked with the sample size

It is expected that within the selected category those companies will be selected which have some experience and multiple digital presence in digital space in form of website and social media presence etc. There were mainly 28 companies from the available category 'A' list which were able to satisfy the selected criteria. The companies responded upon the contact are 10. The category 'A' companies are the ones having some export activity and expected to use some digital marketing activity. The selected 10 companies had some form of digital presence in the form of website etc.

The sample size for the questionnaire survey was 250 employees working in the 10 Pakistani textile companies. Furthermore, the selection of 250 employees was based on having two years of working experience in Textile Company (Sales and Marketing and Operations department) to ensure that employees know about the company's operations, which can help meet the study's main objectives. There are different numbers of employees working within each organisations' marketing department and have different experience levels while dealing with the customers and usage of the digital tools. The selection of a large number of employees enables to get different prospects from the application point. A total of 165 employees responded, and the analysis is based on 165 responses. These 250 employees were selected randomly from each organisation because the management practices and the organisation structure in these companies were very similar as the employees within one functional area are expected to know a lot of core information related to that functional area. In the current case, all the employees in the marketing department are expected to be involved in marketing activities and will have the sense of understanding related to the digital marketing activities conducted by the company or practices within the industry. These employees are expected to have different experience levels that's why set the basic selection criteria of 2 year experience but their exposure to the digital marketing activities varies not necessarily based on the years of experience. With the variation in

experience and exposure to the digital marketing activities the possibility of getting the comprehensive data can be high which allow to approach the research questions more comprehensively.

The qualitative data collection sample was based on the 10 managers/ assistant managers working in the selected companies (as explained previously) and individual interviews conducted with each individual. One marketing/assistant manager from each textile company was interviewed, and employees from the sales, marketing, and operations department were selected for the quantitative data collection. Moreover, marketing managers were selected based on having experience of at least five years in Pakistani textile to share some valuable insight and knowledge about the research topic. Meanwhile, see the table below for the role of selected employees and the total number of employees in the company. The reason of selecting only 1 manager was directly linked with the exposure and experience. Employees working in the SMEs in Pakistan normally involve in diversified activities and in most of the time not specific to a one specific job description which allow them to have comprehensive understanding and exposure to the functional area they mainly work and provide the exposure to the other relevant factors which includes different management practices.

S. No.	Respondents	Company Identification	Textile Category (SMEDA Based)	Role in company	Company Size	Digital Marketing Strategies used
1	Respondent A	Company A	Textile Made-Ups	General Manager	150	Pay per click, Email marketing
2	Respondent B	Company B	Sports Goods	Assistant Manager, Operations	170	Pay per click, SEO, Content Marketing
3	Respondent C	Company C	Knitted Garments	Manager, Operations and Marketing	165	Content marketing, SEO
4	Respondent D	Company D	Garments Diverse	Assistant Manager, Marketing	240	Social Media Marketing, Email Marketing, Content Marketing
5	Respondent E	Company E	Readymade Garment	Manager, Marketing	210	Social Media Marketing, Email Marketing, Content Marketing, SEO
6	Respondent F	Company F	Garments Diverse	Manager, Communications and Marketing	180	Content marketing, SEO

7	Respondent G	Company G	Fabric and Weaving	Manager, Operations	90	Email Marketing
8	Respondent H	Company H	Fabric and Weaving	Manager, Marketing	110	Email Marketing, Pay per click
9	Respondent I	Company I	Textile Made-Ups	Assistant Manager, Marketing	235	Social Media Marketing, Email Marketing, Content Marketing, Pay per click
10	Respondent J	Company J	Readymade Garment	Manager, Marketing	120	SEO, SEM, pay per click

Table 3.2: Respondent role (Qualitative data) and SME details

The sampled organisations remain anonymous due to their business preferences, and the selection was from the different textile manufacturing categories based on the SMEDA's categorisation.

Based on the population and sampling information following details were drawn to demonstrate the sample size and the second stage sampling technique adopted for the sampling:

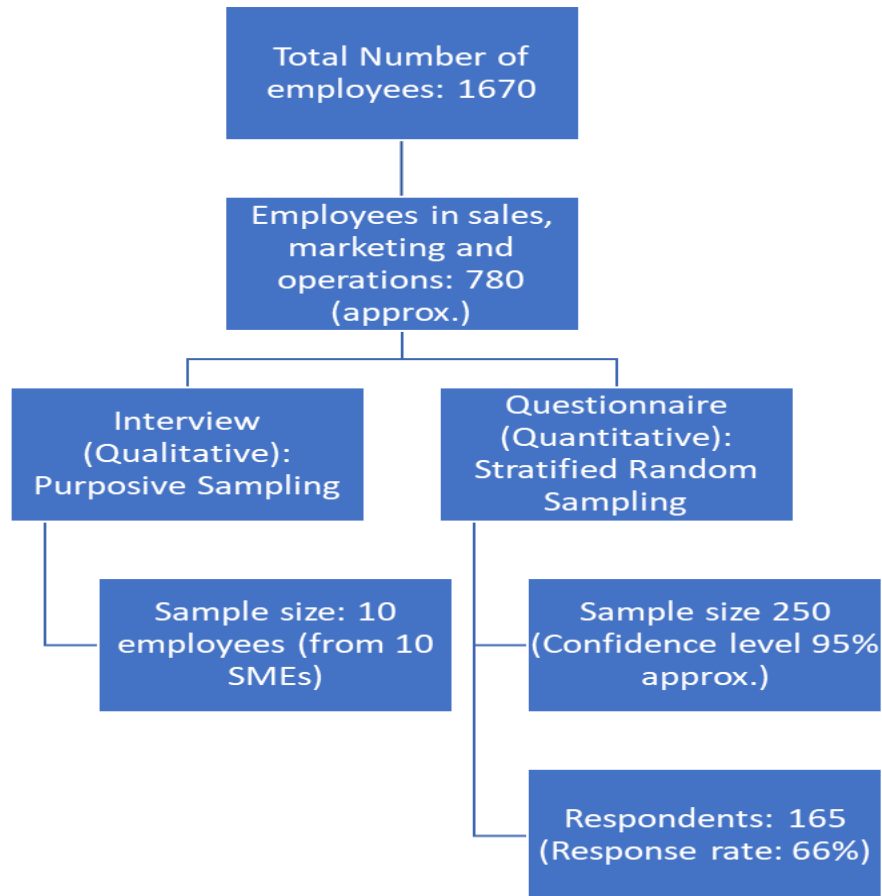


Figure 3.4: Sampling details

(Source: Author)

S. No.	Company Identification	Total employees	Marketing employees	Respondent	% of marketing employees responded
1	Company A	150	20	15	75
2	Company B	170	33	22	67
3	Company C	165	26	15	58
4	Company D	240	35	23	66
5	Company E	210	40	20	50
6	Company F	180	21	10	48
7	Company G	90	18	10	56
8	Company H	110	20	12	60
9	Company I	235	30	22	73
10	Company J	120	22	16	73
		1670	265	165	

Table 3.3: Employee details (Quantitative data) and SME details

The above table is able to demonstrate the overall percentage of employees from different organisations who responded the quantitative data collection tool questionnaire.

3.6.3: Suitability of the data collection tools

The data was collected through questionnaires and interviews. As mentioned in the previous section, the respondents for both data collection methods were selected through the appropriate sampling method. The focus of quantitative data is to quantify the attitudes/opinions of the individuals involved with the specific digital marketing tools, which can demonstrate the importance of digital marketing based strategic framework for competitiveness. The quantification of the data is important because:

- It will allow to develop the relevance to the common understanding associated with the digital marketing tools
- It will allow the understanding towards the readiness of the workers towards the adoption of the digital marketing practices.

The focus of the qualitative data collection tool was to understand the three critical areas linked with the research, which included the role of digital marketing to develop competitiveness, factors that influence the adoption of digital marketing strategies and the importance of strategic framework to facilitate organisational development and growth.

Questions used in the quantitative data collection tool can serve the purposes mentioned in the table below and are aligned with the multiple research objectives.

Qualitative data collection questions	Main purpose	Research Objective
Q1 – Q8	To understand the organisation's current position to develop a basic understanding of the specific industry sector.	RO1
Q9 – Q13	To understand the importance of a competitive strategic framework to develop the overall competitiveness.	RO2
Q14 – Q18	To understand the importance of applicability and suitability of digital marketing tools in the organisational context.	RO1, RO2
Q19 – Q23	To understand the factors affecting the organisation's development and growth.	RO2, RO3

Table 3.4: Quantitative data collection tool mapping

Questions used in qualitative data collection tool (interview) can facilitate the above mentioned three key areas (including the role of digital marketing to develop competitiveness, factors that influence the adoption of digital marketing strategies and importance of strategic framework to facilitate organisational development and

growth). In the below-mentioned table, all questions are aligned with the multiple research objectives.

Qualitative data collection questions	Main purpose	Research Objective
Q1, Q2, Q3, Q9	To understand the role of digital marketing to develop competitiveness	RO1
Q4, Q5, Q10, Q11	To understand the factors that influence the adoption of digital marketing strategies.	RO2
Q6, Q7, Q8, Q12	To understand the importance of a strategic framework to facilitate organisational development and growth.	RO 3

Table 3.5: Qualitative data collection tool mapping

3.7: Data collection methods and procedure

3.7.1: Data collection methods

Data collection methods refer to the use of tools to gather information from participants of the study (Kothari, 2004). There are two methods of data collection: primary data collection method and secondary data collection method. Primary data collection methods include surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and observations (Marczyk, DeMatteo and Festinger, 2005). On the other hand, secondary data collection procedures are collected from already published documents, research studies, and reports. The following research has utilised a primary data collection method because digital marketing is a dynamic business area and due to the nature of the digital marketing and involvement of technology there is expected rapid change in the tools and techniques which can shift the growth spectrum of any organisation from external and internal environment prospect.

3.7.2: Data collection procedures

Primary data collection methods include surveys, questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions, and observations. A survey questionnaire is developed, and the questionnaire contains different types of questions such as dichotomous, multiple-choice, and some of the questions are based on the Likert response scale to measure respondents' agreement with the statement. Each question is designed with a specific purpose and goal to gather information from participants regarding the study. However, respondents are given options to choose from available options and Likert scale questions to choose their agreement level with the statement, and they are limited to it.

The interview data collection method is referred to as the method by which the researcher conducted interviews with participants with open-ended questions that allow participants to provide their opinion, views, and feelings on the question and answer with their knowledge and experience during the interview (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007). Similarly, all participants are interviewed in this manner, and their opinions and views are recorded or written either by themselves or by the researcher.

3.7.3: Suitable data collection for this research

The researcher has used two methods in the following research: survey and interviews. The survey was selected because it allowed to help gauge the representativeness of individual views and experiences. The survey selection was also affected by the element of cost (relatively inexpensive), flexibility (can be administered easily) and dependability (anonymity of surveys). The interview was selected because it allowed to explain, better understand, and explore respondents' opinions, behaviour, experiences, phenomenon, etc. There was need to provide some clarification with reference to some of the information and interview allowed to do it to bring more comprehensive understanding.

For the survey, the questionnaire was designed by using different questions type including multiple choice, five-point Likert scale etc. Since the survey participants were employees of various small and medium enterprises (SME) textile manufacturing companies from Pakistan. The study's sample size was 250 respondents to the survey and 10 respondents from 10 textile manufacturing companies under the tag of small and medium enterprises from SMEDA (as explained previously). The researcher had

approached the relevant department of all the companies based on the data provided by SMEDA to conduct surveys and interviews with the employee.

Face to face interviews took average 20-25 minutes each, and all answers from all respondents were recorded. Before starting the survey and interviews, all participants were briefed on the study's topic and aims and objectives. Furthermore, it is also important to mention that some of the respondents were not able to understand questions, and terminology and some were unaware of such matters before; so, in this regard, both questionnaires were developed in English and Urdu because the participants of the study were not native English speaker, and Urdu was the native language of participants. Meanwhile, some of the respondents could not understand the questionnaire, so the researcher explained the questions to them with appropriate examples to help them respond.

3.7.4: Link between quantitative and qualitative analysis

The link between the quantitative and qualitative analysis is that the quantitative study has been conducted through a questionnaire survey, whereas the qualitative analysis was conducted among the interviews' responses. In general, the qualitative analysis results had helped generate detailed, rich and valid data that supported understanding the topic in-depth. On the other hand, quantitative analysis has supported generating reliable and generalisable data and determining the cause-and-effect relationship. The reason for conducting the quantitative and qualitative analysis is to increase the reliability and validity of the results. The questions asked in the interviews and the surveys were somewhat interlinked in which the responses had helped generate reliable and valid results.

3.7.5: Collection of secondary data

Other than the primary sources, the data of the Pakistani textile company had also been collected through secondary sources (e.g. information from SMEDA, open source web analytics etc.). It consists of exploring their digital presence through analysing their digital platforms and various other digital marketing activities. Some other information is also administered from open sources.

3.7.6: Collection of data (Approach and Timeline)

Primary data was collected through the questionnaire and interview and from the SMEs in the textile manufacturing sector selected from SMEDA (as previously mentioned). Approach the SMEDA directly to access the data related to the SMEs in the textile manufacturing sector.

Contacted the organisation to collect the data while approached the participants through their relevant organisations. Conducted the interviews face-to-face and through the telephone while physically present in Pakistan. Shared the questionnaire with the relevant managers of each organisation who collected the data from the relevant employees.

The main issues were related to the culture, time management, logistics, communication due to the limited accessibility.

The data was collected between April 2017 and February 2018, while it was difficult to track the individuals and organisations because the communication options are not suitable within most organisations.

3.8: Data analysis methods (Specific to this research)

The data analysis method applies various statistical and non-statistical techniques to analyse the data collected (Kothari, 2004). The quantitative data collected from participants was analysed with descriptive analysis, diagnostic analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM) to understand the suitability of the model and the collected data. The qualitative data analysed through thematic analysis on the data collected through interviews. Statistical tests descriptive analysis, diagnostic analysis and Sem conducted through statistical package for social science (SPSS), modelling software SPSS AMOS and interviews were analysed through thematical analysis without the help of any qualitative analysis software.

Survey questions objectives alignment with literature identification

Observant variable code reference:

- Digital marketing (Tools & techniques): DM
- Competitive Strategy: CS
- Strategic Fit: SF

Objective 1

To identify the role of digital marketing in the development of SMEs competitiveness.

Survey Questions	Literature Sources	Observant variable code
Q15: SMEs currently capitalise heavily upon social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to effectively communicate with the customers irrespective of their location.	(Fowdar, 2013)	DM1
Q16: SMEs have focused on development of digital strategies through use of the techniques of affiliate marketing.	(Schwarzl and Grabowska, 2015)	DM2
Q18: Social media marketing is an effective digital platform for creating awareness for SMEs.	(Atanassova and Clark, 2015)	DM3
Q23: The creativity in digital marketing tools adoption such as use of social media, email marketing, SEM etc. is influencing the customers to change their attitude towards SMEs in developing economy.	(Narkiniemi, 2013)	DM4

Objective 2

To identify the factors that influence the adoption of digital marketing strategies in developing country's SMEs.

Survey Questions	Literature Sources	Observant variable code
Q9. Competitive strategy is required to align and understand the relevance of internal and external factors linked with SMEs in the developing economy.	(West, Ford, and Ibrahim, 2015)	CS1
Q10. Competitive strategy allows SMEs to effectively align resources with projects and entrepreneurial activities.	(Palmer and Kaplan, 2005)	CS2
Q11. Competitive Strategy helps in enhancing the capabilities such as innovation, research and development, and technological advancement of the organisation specifically for SMEs.	(Lewis and Boyer, 2007)	CS3
Q12. Competitive Strategy helps in responding to risk factors including meeting demands of customers, balancing supply and demand and operational effectiveness.	(Chaffey, 2016)	CS4
Q13: Competitive Strategy assists SMEs in aligning their economic interest with that of their capabilities and strategies.	(Abdallah and Jaleel, 2014)	CS5
Q14: Digital Marketing helps SMEs to increase their exposure while understanding demands and trends in the market.	(Ashworth, 2012)	CS6

<u>Objective 3:</u>		
To understand how digital marketing facilitates the performance of developing country SMEs in the textile industry through the strategic framework.		
Survey Questions	Literature Sources	Observant variable code
Q17. Digital Marketing helps in building a sustainable competitive advantage for SMEs.	(Dumitriu et al., 2019).	SF1
Q19: SMEs in developing countries require effective digital marketing platforms for promoting the business.	(Atanassova and Clark, 2015)	SF2
Q20. SMEs in developing countries require effective competitive strategy aligned with digital marketing tools and techniques for promoting the business.	(Dasgupta and Gupta, 2012)	SF3
Q21: Digital marketing adoption as competitive strategy, provide a path for entrepreneurs who utilise different digital marketing tools for promoting the business.	(Dzisi and Ofosu, 2014)	SF4
Q22: The innovation creation (based on technology) by entrepreneurs in developing countries have helped SMEs to play an influential role in economic growth and development.	(Dasgupta and Gupta, 2012)	SF5

Table 3.6: Survey questions alignment

3.8.1: Descriptive analysis

Descriptive analysis refers to using statistics summary to use, describe, and present data that becomes meaningful and easy to understand. A descriptive test was used to assess the participants' responses through the mean of responses because the survey was conducted on Likert scale responses to measure the respondents' agreement on a statement. Mean and standard deviation responses were checked for unusual answers, and minimum-maximum was analysed to ensure that data was correctly entered into the software. It helped the researcher go through an error in the responses entered into the statistical software (SPSS).

According to Dowdy, Wearden and Chilko (2011), data is considered symmetry, meaning data is equally between the mean centre. So, skewness value near zero indicates symmetry data, and if the value is negative, it indicates that data is left-skewed; in contrast, the positive value of skewness indicates data is rightly skewed. Furthermore, kurtosis measures the tailedness of the data that either data has a long tail or short tail, or positive value of kurtosis indicates that data is with a heavy tail, and a negative value indicates that data is with a light tail. According to Lomax and Hahs-Vaughn (2012), if the values of skewness and kurtosis fall between +2 and -2, data is considered normally distributed. So, the results of the descriptive tests are presented in the results chapter.

The descriptive analysis based on Mean, Mode, Medan and Standard deviation conducted within current research to identify the suitability of the data suitable although the data set has limitation with reference to the data size

3.8.2: Diagnostic analysis: Correlation analysis overview

Correlation, also known as correlation coefficient, is a statistical relationship or association between two or more variables irrespective of their nature, either dependent or independent. According to Dowdy, Wearden and Chilko (2011), correlation measures how closely variables in the study are associated with each other and what relationship exists between variables, either positive or negative. Furthermore, the correlation answer always remains within the range of +1 and -1, and a positive value indicates a positive relationship between variables, and a negative value indicates a negative or inverse relationship between variables. For this purpose, Pearson's correlation coefficient analysis was performed on the main variables of the study to assess the strength and nature of their relationship with each other.

3.8.3: Structural Equation Modelling (SEM)

Structural equation modelling is a multivariate statistical analysis technique that is used to analyse structural relationships. This technique is the combination of factor analysis and multiple regression analysis, and it is used to analyse the structural relationship between measured variables and latent constructs. (Hair et al, 2014)

There are two types of models:

- **Measurement model:** The measurement model represents the theory that specifies how measured variables come together to represent the theory.
- **Structural model:** Represents the theory that shows how constructs are related to other constructs.

In current research the purpose of using the SEM is to understand the relationship between the latent variable including competitive strategy, strategic fit and digital marketing (Tools & techniques) through the use of 15 observant variables. SPSS AMOS software used to develop the measurement and structural model and to understand the relationship between the latent variables.

3.8.4 Thematic analysis overview

Qualitative research involves analysing transcribed responses recorded during interviews with the participants or recorded in focus group discussion. It intends to generate knowledge from experience and valuable information possessed by the participants (Moules et al., 2017). Because research always tries to address a specific problem, identify causes and explore something in-depth, and most probably explicit knowledge is one of the easiest ways to transfer and gather from one person (Moules et al., 2017). Qualitative analysis is considered, recognised, and valued as a methodical process to gain valuable and meaningful results from the research (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Demscombe (2010) discusses a few principles by which qualitative analyses are conducted, and the author also claims that following these principles would provide an efficient outcome. The first principle of the qualitative is to compress and compact the extensive and diverse raw data into a precise and brief structure in themes. It could be achieved through organising data into charts and tables. Similarly, it will enable the researcher to identify, compare and determine the data that must be focused on to achieve the objective of the data. Furthermore, the second principle of qualitative analysis is creating and making the relationship between research objectives and a

clear summary. Since objectives of the qualitative study are considered clear drivers that are responsible for research and analytical methodologies. Lastly, the third objective of the study is to develop a model or improve the conceptual basis of the research.

As is discussed by (Moules et al., 2017) that qualitative data analysis is not the most straightforward way as many researchers think it because the data analysis method is one of the most complicated processes in which research has to comply with what has been practised and what literature has been suggesting towards qualitative analysis. Therefore, it needs to be clear to researchers what they will do and what methodical process they had to choose concerning the type of data and responses in the study. If a researcher is not clear on what, how and why he is going to do something, then authenticity, trust, and transparency of the results would be comprised, and readers of the results would lose trust in the research, and there is a high probability that research is being considered unprofessional, unauthentic, and lack transparency (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Qualitative research involves the researcher directly into the data analysis, so there is a high chance of manipulation that could drive research from one direction to another. Therefore, for this purpose, thematic analysis is conducted by researchers that help to create insightful, rich, sensitive, and trustworthy findings from the data collected.

According to Moules et al. (2017), thematic analysis is how patterns and themes are identified, analysed, and reported from within the data. It is one of the most widely used qualitative data analysis methods in which the researcher examines, reads, and analyses the transcribed responses of participants to find and identify the themes and patterns repeated mainly through the respondents. Meanwhile, according to these themes and patterns, responses are analysed, discussed, and reported in the result of the study. Furthermore, it is also argued by Braun and Clarke (2006) that thematic analysis is one most effective way to identify, analyse, organise, describe, and report the themes and patterns found in the data on which further analysis and discussion are conducted. Hence, the following study follows a mixed method in which surveys and interviews were conducted; thus, for qualitative data analysis, the thematic analysis method was utilised by the researcher. The thematic analysis was conducted manually by following the steps which include Step 1: Become familiar with the data, Step 2: Generate initial codes, Step 3: Search for themes, Step 4: Review themes, Step 5: Define themes.

Furthermore, it is also considered one of the most appropriate ways of study that seeks to discover using explanations. It provides a systematic element to data analysis that enables the researcher to associate the frequency of the theme with the whole content. Furthermore, Marks and Yardley (2004) state that qualitative data analysis makes data analysis a complex procedure since qualitative research requires understanding and collecting diverse aspects and data. However, the thematic analysis makes this process easier and valuable since it allows one to understand the potential or any issue more widely.

Interview questions objectives alignment with literature identification

<u>Objective 1</u>	
To identify the role of digital marketing in the development of SMEs' competitiveness.	
Interview Questions	Literature Sources
Why SMEs need to use digital marketing	Ashworth, 2012
How effective is the digital marketing strategies carried out through different social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for SMEs in manufacturing	Forward, 2013
What are the major influences associated with digital media marketing platforms have on SMEs in the manufacturing sector?	Chaffey, 2010
In your opinion, what are the factors affecting SMEs in developing economies to adopt the digital marketing strategy?	Ngah et al., 2016

Objective 2

To identify the factors that influence the adoption of digital marketing strategies in developing country's SMEs.

Interview Questions

Literature Sources

What kind of feedback do you get on product sales through online channels? (Probe Question)

In your opinion, what are some of the challenges faced by managers in effectively implementing digital marketing strategy?

Palmer and Kaplan, 2005

What are the challenges faced by managers in devising effective competitive strategies for SMEs?

Lewis and Boyer, 2007

Do digital marketing campaigns for SMEs bring competitiveness to the manufacturing business?

Chaffey, 2016

Objective 3:

To understand how digital marketing facilitates the performance of developing country SMEs in the textile industry through the strategic framework.

Interview Questions

Literature Sources

Are you of the opinion that a strategy should be designed to give you an edge over the competitors?

Dholakia and Kshetri, 2004

Do you think that a digital marketing strategy can help in achieving company goals? If yes, then to what extent?

Chaffey, 2016

Are you of the opinion that SMEs in textile manufacturing in developing economies can promote their

Daisy and Ofosu, 2014

business significantly through social media marketing?	
Is there any specific digital marketing platform that is important for SMEs in developing countries?	Daisy and Ofosu, 2014

Table 3.7: Interview questions alignment

3.8.5: Specific to this research

It is essential to mention that the researcher belongs to Pakistan, and participants were also from Pakistan, and their mutual understanding, culture, background, and sharing values and rituals might have affected the study's trustworthiness. It was a potential barrier in the following study. In order to avoid reflection of the researcher's feelings into the research and to increase the trustworthiness of the research, the researcher had continuously avoided his own opinions, views, and personal reflection. At the same time, results were purely generated from the data collected, and the researcher had strictly focused on research findings and had considered concerns discussed above throughout this research. Hence, only objectives and research questions focused on analysing the data collected; no unique ideas and experiences were incorporated into Pragmatism and mixed methods.

3.9: Reliability and validity analysis (Specific to this research)

For accurate, trustworthy, valid and reliable results of the study, the data collected must also be accurate, authentic, valid and reliable. Researchers always worry about examining the data collection instrument and whether the instrument measures what it was intended to measure and whether the instrument generates stable or consist of responses from the survey or not (Bolarinwa, 2015). In order to measure consistency in responses and validity of the instrument, reliability analysis and validity analysis were conducted by the researcher. Reliability analysis is used to measure the consistency or repeatability in data responses, so higher consistency implies that

instruments successfully collected data from the respondents, and instruments effectively provided consistent responses.

There are three most widely used reliability tests: Interrater, Internal consistency, and Test-retest, and also there are four most widely used validity test techniques: face validity, construct validity, content validity and criterion validity (Bolarinwa, 2015, Bardhoshi and Erford, 2017).

For the reliability test, the internal consistency reliability test technique used correlation coefficient to compare scaled items to measure how consistent responses from each item came. It measures whether the instrument has generated stable and consistent results or not. For survey responses, Cronbach's alpha was used to measure internal consistency in the responses. It is stated by Tavakol and Dennick (2011) that if a person is surveyed twice under the same conditions, situation and environment with the same questionnaire, then his/her responses must be consistent means same. It is further argued by Silervman (2016) that the reliability of the survey responses varies categorically based on the type of data. However, the role of time is crucial in increasing the chances of error in the response. Therefore, it is stated by Bolarinwa (2015) that inconsistent responses can be attributed to the type of data such as retrospective data, amount of time elapsed within an event occurred and time of survey or interview.

For this purpose, Cronbach's alpha was utilised to measure internal consistency in responses; in which results of Cronbach's alpha ranges from 0 to 1, so a result near to 1 is considered reliable, and result near to 0 is considered no internal consistency in responses, and unreliable data (Tavakol and Dennick, 2011). According to Scott-Ladd, Travaglione and Marshall (2006), Cronbach's alpha is more significant than 0.7, evident to the existence of internal consistency responses and that data collected is reliable. On the other hand, the researcher uses the validity content validity technique, also known as logical validity. In this type of validity, items in instruments mean questions are assessed and analysed to examine whether respondents have responded to what they were asked to respond to and that items in the scale were designed as per the variables and objectives (Bolarinwa, 2015).

There are other parameters used to determine the model fit with the identified latent variables.

- P-value defines the probability of getting a result that is either the same or more extreme than the other actual observations. Suitable P-value > 0.05 (Meyers et al, 2005)

- CMIN/DF (Minimum Discrepancy Function by Degrees of Freedom divided) which represents the chi-square. If the determined value < 3.0 its considered Good (Hair et al, 2009)
- Parameters including RFI, CFI, NFI and IFI is between zero to one.
- A good model is indicated by RMSEA value of less than or equal to 0.05 (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004).

The detail confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) conducted in chapter 4 (Quantitative data analysis section 4.3.2.1).

The Cronbach's Alpha is one of the reliability analysis tests for measuring the instrument's internal consistency or questionnaire analysis. The measurement that had referred in the Cronbach's alpha was the questions developed for the questionnaire survey, which consisted of 23 questions. The responses to these questions had been analysed through Cronbach's alpha in determining its internal consistency. The main objective of using Cronbach's alpha is to determine whether the instrument has measured the intended data. The constructs referred to in the Cronbach's Alpha are based on the questionnaire where the three defined variables were tested, which was gained from the literature. These variables consist of the competitive strategy, digital marketing (tools and techniques), and SMEs' strategic fit in developing countries. The question drawn on these variables had been gained from the literature. The results of Cronbach's Alpha are usually 0 – 1, in which if the value is 0 or nearby 0 would indicate that the data is not internally consistent, which highlights that the instrument has failed. However, if the Cronbach's alpha is near 1 would indicate that the data obtained from the instrument is internally consistent, meaning that the data obtained is repetitive. According to Tavakoland Dennick (2011) study, the standard benchmark of Cronbach's Alpha is 0.7. The result of Cronbach's Alpha has been provided below:

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	165	100.0
	Excluded ^a	0	.0
	Total	165	100.0

Table 3.8: Reliability Summary

The above table represents the reliability summary of the collected data in which the total number of participants was 165 that had provided with 100% completion of the survey.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.842	23

Table 3.9: Cronbach's Alpha

The above table represents the results of Cronbach's alpha in which the total number of questions was 23 in the questionnaire survey, and the Cronbach's alpha was 0.842, which is near 1 and above 0.7. It indicates that the data obtained from the questionnaire survey has internal consistency.

3.10: Research limitations

According to Simon and Goes (2013), research limitations are influences, shortcomings, and conditions that the researcher cannot control. It is usual for studies to have limitations, so all conditions, situations, influences, or shortcomings that could have negatively affected the results are known as research limitations. During the following study, the researcher has faced four limitations: limited budget, limited accessibility (sector defined), interviewees capability, limited availability of journal articles, and other supporting material online related to the specific industry within the defined geographical location. Limited budget and limited accessibility (sector defined) for the following study were significant constraints that also led towards the time limitation and limited the movement from one place to another, and manage expenses in the limited budget was a problem that restricted researcher to the specific areas, and did not allow to travel from one city to another for research purpose to gather diverse responses from employees of manufacturing textile companies belonging to small and medium enterprises.

Another important limitation is directly linked with the quantitative research design and the overall sample size of the study. Sample size depends on the nature of the research problem. If sample size is small, statistical tests might not be able to identify significant relationships. The selection of research participant in questionnaire survey is inappropriate and inadequate. The survey was conducted on employees from only 10 firms. Basically, the research sample consists of 10 firms/observations, not 165 observations. The serious drawback is the survey questions asking the staff's perception of their firm's situation rather than the fact about what their firms did in relation to digital marketing, competitiveness, and strategic fit. Staff from same company may have different ideas/views on their firm's digital marketing, competitive strategy and strategic fit subject to their knowledge about their company activities. The research could have conducted a survey using only one knowledgeable key informant respondent (e.g. key person in marketing) from one firm and surveyed more firms to increase the number of firm in the research sample. In order to support the limitations, the quantitative data analysed through the statistical equation modelling analysis. The absolute identification of appropriate sample size is a critical issue in SEM, unfortunately, there is no consensus in the literature regarding what would be the appropriate sample size for SEM. Some evidence exists that simple SEM models could be implicitly tested even if sample size is quite small (Hoyle, 1999; Hoyle and Kenny, 1999; Marsh and Hau, 1999), but usually, $N = 100 - 150$ is considered the minimum sample size for conducting SEM (Tinsley and Tinsley, 1987; Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Ding, Velicer, and Harlow, 1995; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2001). Some researchers suggest an even larger sample size for SEM, for example, $N = 200$ (Hoogland and Boomsma 1998; Boomsma and Hoogland, 2001; Kline, 2005). Studies show that with normally distributed indicator variables and no missing data, a sufficient sample size for a simple CFA model is almost $N = 150$ (Muthén and Muthén, 2002). Sample size is frequently considered in light of the number of observed variables. For normally distributed data, Bentler and Chou (1987) recommend a ratio as low as 5 cases per variable would be sufficient when latent variables have multiple indicators. A commonly approach is 10 cases/observations per indicator variable in setting a lower bound of an adequate sample size (Nunnally, 1967). According to Kline (1998), an adequate sample size should always be 10 times the amount of the parameters in path analysis. In current research the latent variables (Competitive strategy, digital marketing and strategic fit) have multiple variables able to support most of the suggested sample size recommendations, but a bigger and more specific sample will

be more beneficial. The limitation is due to the limited accessibility, although there is potential of using bigger sample size through cross industry data collection approach. In addition to this, many of the participants were reluctant to participate in the survey and interviews, and they did not take an interest to participate, and it was felt like they were forced towards something. They did not have interest in the study while it took longer to access them, and also some were not conversant with the English language, although the translation was provided in Urdu as explained previously. In this regard, a study conducted by Williams and Walter (2015) states that people are paid for their time in Western societies even when they participate in the research processes since they value their time. Thus, they get paid for the time they devote to the research purpose. However, some compensation in another social setting might be considered unethical practice or may not be liked. Since it is argued by the author that compensating the research participants seem to influence the respondents to get desired outcomes.

Research conducted by Reeves & Deimler (2011), Jassim (1998) and Papulova & Papulova (2006) identified that employee plays a vital role in strategic competitiveness. The respondents who responded to the questionnaire were nearly 50% employees, while the remaining were considered senior positions. Due to the nature of their responsibilities and organisational culture that exist in most SMEs in Pakistan, these employees have a better understanding of the application and suitability of digital marketing tools. The knowledge related to this is helpful to develop the strategic framework. However, the employee type can be considered as a limitation.

SHU research ethics code was followed where provided participants with Participant Consent Form and Participant Information Sheet. The interviews were administered based on the guidelines provided by SHU guidelines for qualitative data where:

- participant has a unique identifier
- have a uniform and consistent layout throughout the data collection
- have an information sheet with interview details such as date, place, interviewee details (anonymised appropriately)
- speaker tags to indicate the question/answer sequence

SHU ethical codes do not allow; thus, it can be stated that compensation cannot be attributed to manipulating and moulding research findings to the desired outcome.

3.11: Research sample profile

The data collected from the participants was analysed and presented below to demonstrate the profile of the participants within the quantitative data collection process.

Question 1: Gender Demographics

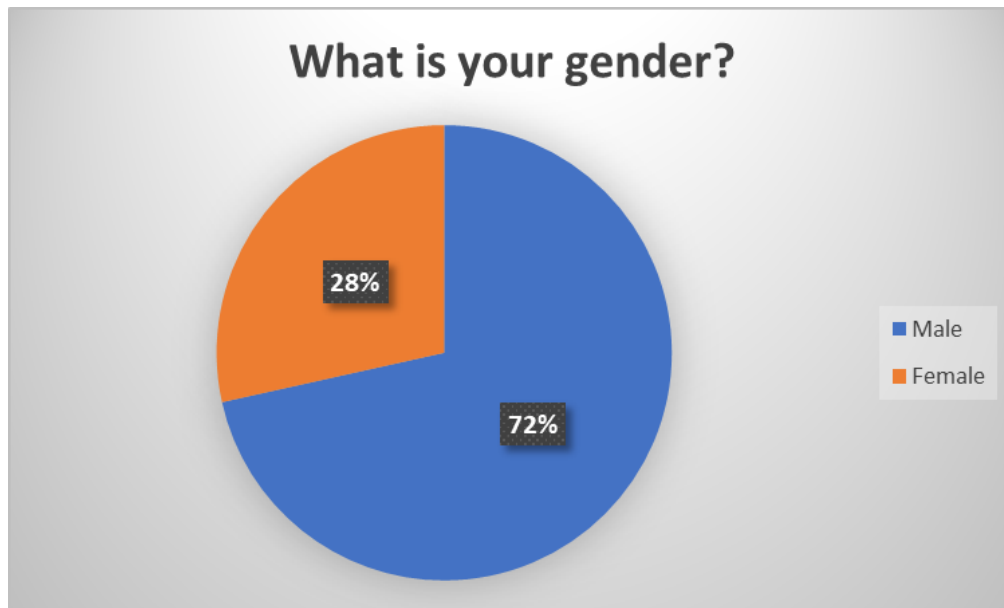


Figure 3.5: Gender demographics

The above table and chart represent the gender demographics of the participants that had contributed to the questionnaire analysis. The total respondents were 165, of which 71.5% were male, and 28.5% were female. It indicates that the majority of the respondents were male. There is no direct significance of this information as the decision making is not a gender specific attribute here.

Question 2: Age Demographics

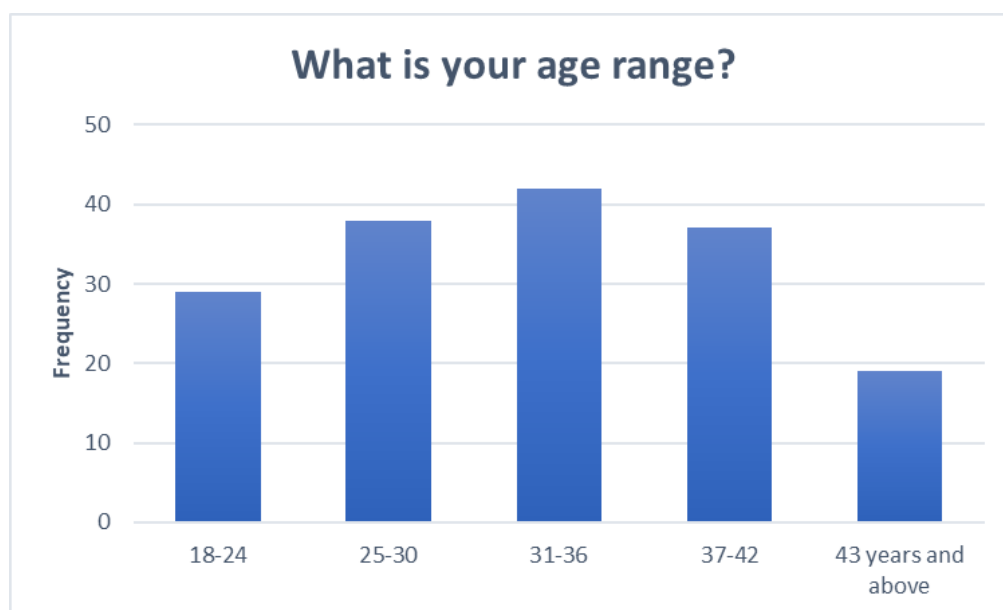


Figure 3.6: Age demographics

The above graph and table represent the age demographics of the respondents in where there were two main age groups 23.0% were at the age of 25 – 30 years, 25.5% were at the age of 31 – 36 years. The majority of the participants were between the ages of 31 – 36 years. As literature also previously demonstrated that users of the digital marketing are the individuals who born before year 2000.

Question 3: Job Role

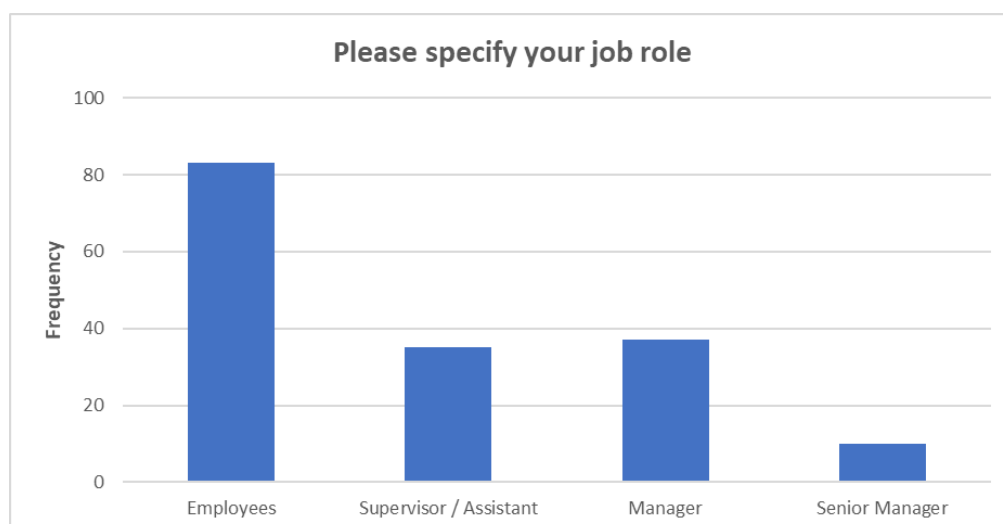


Figure 3.7: Job role

The above table and chart indicate the job role of the participants from which the questionnaire survey data has been collected. Based on the table results, 50.3% were employees, 21.2% were supervisors, 22.4% were managers, and 6.1% were senior managers. It indicates that most of the participants who filled the questionnaire survey were employees in Pakistani Textile companies. Even though most of the participants were employees, many of them were aware of its competitive strategy, while many of them did not know about it. Therefore, these participants had selected neutral in the questionnaire survey.

3.11.1: Organisation analysis

The significance of the analysis is that it helps determine the essential information and approach adopted by the SMEs in question. The analysis of the below-mentioned questions based on the primary data can provide the current position of the selected SMEs. These questions are directly linked with the sustainability triggers mentioned in the conceptual framework and address the multiple aspects, including SMEs strategic fit.

Question 4: Research and development department or activity

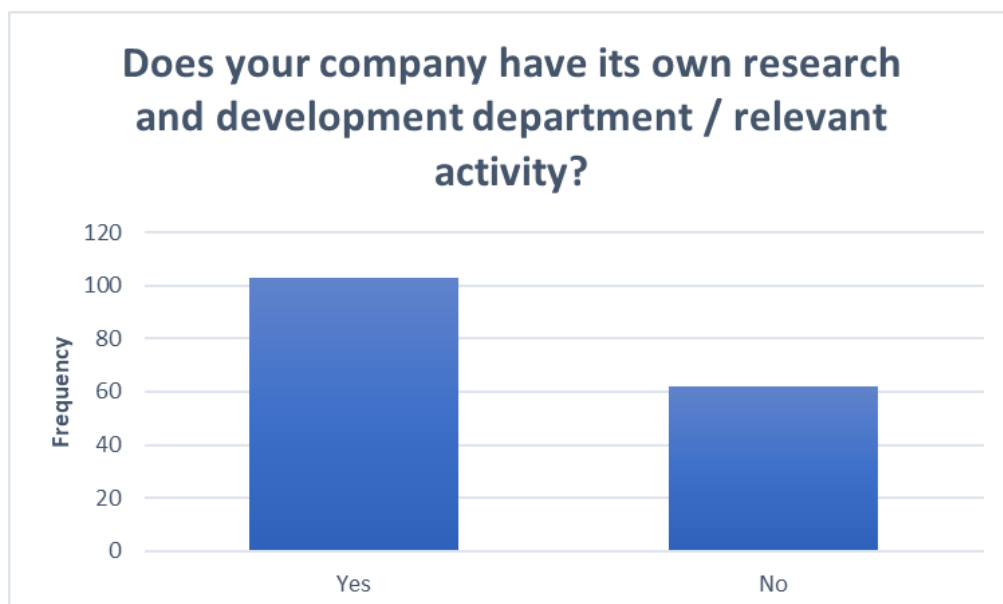


Figure 3.8: Research department (Based on 10 companies)

The results provided in the above table and chart shows whether the company has its research and development department or activity linked with the research and development. Out of 165 participants, 62.4% agreed on having their research and development, while 37.6% did not agree to have a research and development department. It is critical for determining whether the organisation has a research approach to demonstrate the relevance of the specific digital tools in association with the target customers, as it plays a significant role in developing a competitive strategic framework.

Question 5: Staff dedicated to marketing innovation

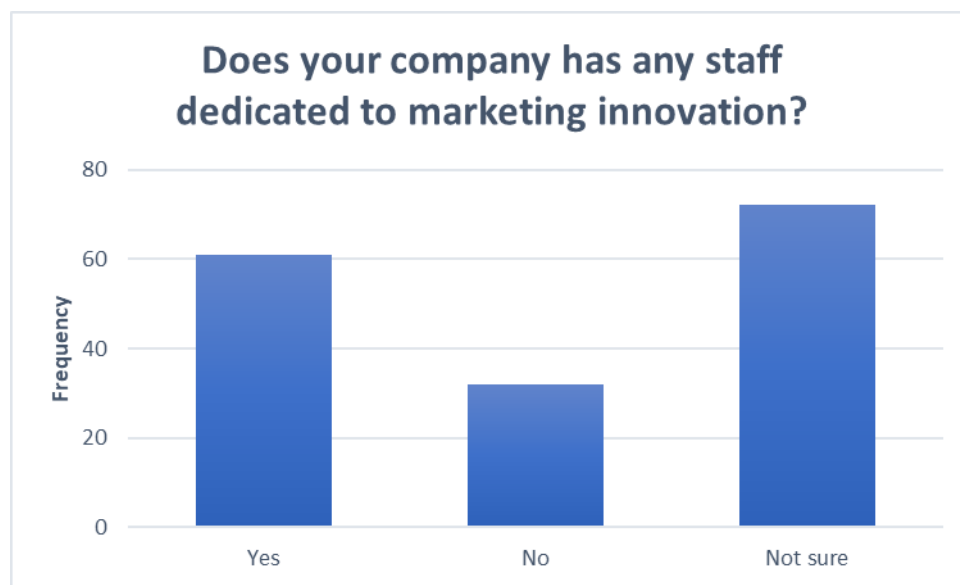


Figure 3.9: Marketing innovation delegation (Based on 10 companies)

This question is directly linked with the organisation's commitment towards innovation in marketing, and another area is communication commitment. According to the data collected, only 37% of respondents said yes, which means they are aware of the individual/(s) responsible for the innovation in introducing new tools and techniques, while 19.4% said no and 43.6% mentioned that they are not sure. These 2 responses demonstrate the organisation's lack of commitment or lack of communication with reference to the specific individual.

Love and Roper (2013), in the white paper related to the SMEs innovation approach, mentioned stated that on national competitiveness, there is also broad agreement that SME firms require distinctly different skill sets to pursue different market strategies where the critical elements of which are innovation and development where the innovation considered as being creative and have the commercial value. According to

Ganotakis & Love (2012), the skills required for innovation and development at various stages of the value chain change accordingly. For example, technical or creative staff can play an essential role in the initial and development phase, but marketing staff is more critical to the trade, and they should demonstrate that innovation as part of the leading job role can be beneficial.

Question 6: Non-financial problem faced by the business

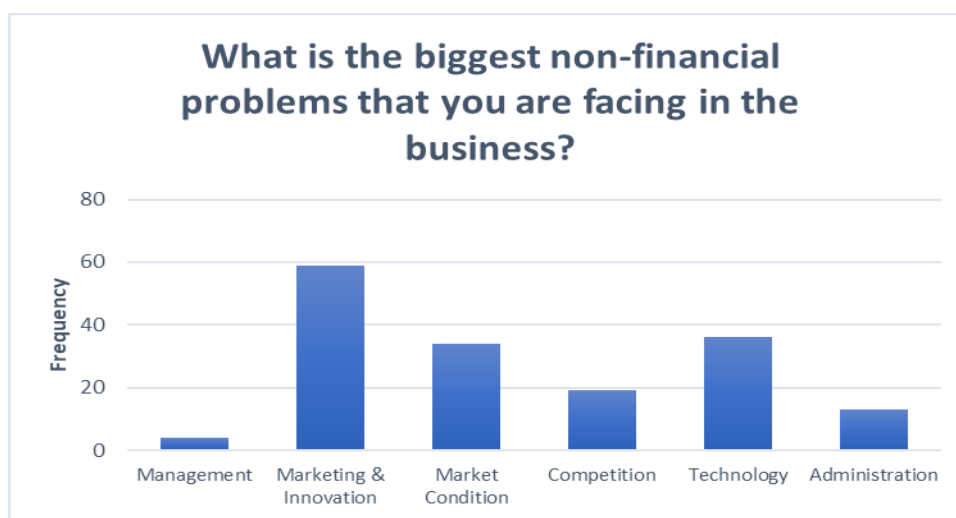


Figure 3.10: Non-financial problem (Based on 10 companies)

The above table and chart are linked with the identification of non-financial problems faced by the business. Based on the results, it is clear that according to the respondents, Marketing and Innovation contain the highest percentage of 35.8% followed by, Technology 21.8%, Market Condition 20.6%, market condition 20.6, competition 11.5%, administration 7.9% and management 2.4%. The point of consideration is that the most significant issue faced by the business in respondents' prospect is internal with the marketing process and innovation development to attract the market requirements; this argument supports the literature that has discussed the importance of relevance of Resource-Based View (RBV). Subsequently, the other 3 factors (Market conditions, competition and technology) are considered the external factors that impact market-based view (MBV) in SMEs context, and the focus on both RBV and MBV create an impact on the organisation's organisation overall strategic approach.

Question 7: Progress of digital marketing activities in business?

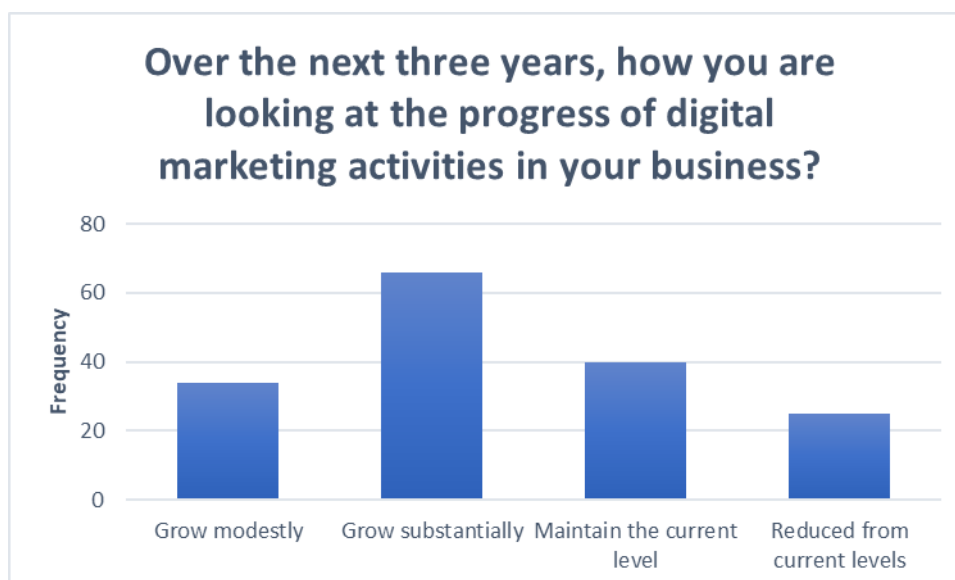


Figure 3.11: Digital marketing progression

The discussion in literature review around the potential of Pakistan as a developing economy and the use of digital tools demonstrated the significance of this question, and the presented data demonstrated that the large proportion of respondents have the same view in terms of progress in digital marketing activities where 40% and 26.5% mentioned the substantial and modest growth in that area within the business. However, 24.2% of respondents believe that the business will demonstrate a consistent level of maturity at the level where they currently exist in terms of digital marketing activities. A significant percentage of respondents mentioned the expected reduction in the activities from the current level. There is no significant indicator appearing in the literature or during the research in the context of the Pakistan textile sector, which can support this argument.

Question 8: Digital Platform Utilization

A specific question linked with the type of digital platform used by the SME was asked, and because the question was open, based on the responses, a few essential digital marketing tools were identified as the significant contributor towards the SMEs overall digital strategy. These platforms include:

- SEM (Include aspects related to the Website)
- Pay per click
- Email marketing

- SEO
- Content Marketing
- Social Media Marketing

Due to the lack of empirical research in the specific region, there is no clear literature to support specific digital marketing tools in Pakistan. A previous study in relation to E-commerce tools by Khaskheli and Jun (2016) states that there is a growing trend in Pakistan regarding the SMEs using the E-commerce tools; the study mentioned that primarily the scholarly literature is based on the developed areas while the socio-cultural, economic, political and technological factors are very different from those of developing regions. It does not mean that studies can generalise based on various country-specific factors, such as the shape of government economic conditions and other factors, at the same economic and regional development level. Another study conducted by Manley, (2015) in relation to the SMEs in the South African region mentioned the use of specific digital marketing tools including Social, SMS, Website, Blogs, Email at developing phase with more significant impact and reach.

The data also demonstrate the use of some specific tools where most of the tools are combined to demonstrate more effective outcomes and the better acquisition, conversion and retention approach.

Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

4.1: Introduction

This chapter aims to provide the study's findings by analysing the collected data through the use of appropriate methods mentioned in the previous chapter. The purpose of analysing the findings is to link the results with the study's objectives in successfully achieving them. As discussed in the previous chapter, the data was collected through interviews and questionnaire surveys, which made the study qualitative and quantitative. Therefore, the analysis was conducted using statistical methods to analyse the questionnaire survey and apply the thematic analysis to the interviews. The frequency analysis had been conducted in determining the responses to the questions.

The quantitative analysis had been conducted through descriptive statistical analysis, diagnostic statistical analysis and structural equation modelling (SEM), which had supported in determining the impact of the variables. Other than that, the interviews conducted from the managers of Pakistani Textile Companies had been analysed through thematic analysis in which similar themes and patterns had been established. By conducting these analyses, the researcher gains relevant findings that support achieving the study's overall objective. The following chapter comprises the demographic analysis, reliability analysis, frequency analysis, descriptive statistics, correlation and thematic analysis. The demographic analysis focuses on determining the respondent's age, gender, job role and research department. The frequency analysis had been focused on analysing the responses that had been provided in the survey. The descriptive statistics emphasise examining the central tendency of the data. Moreover, the correlation analysis was conducted to analyse the association and impact. Lastly, the findings obtained from the collected data were discussed by linking it with the literature and research objectives.

4.2: Findings from the questionnaire (Quantitative data)

Alignment of survey questions with objectives observant variable coding.

Objective 1: To identify the role of digital marketing in the development of SMEs competitiveness.

- Latent variable: Digital marketing (Tools & Techniques)

Survey Questions	Observant variable code
Q15: SMEs currently capitalise heavily upon social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to effectively communicate with the customers irrespective of their location.	DM1
Q16: SMEs have focused on development of digital strategies through use of the techniques of affiliate marketing.	DM2
Q18: Social media marketing is an effective digital platform for creating awareness for SMEs.	DM3
Q23: The creativity in digital marketing tools adoption such as use of social media, email marketing, SEM etc. is influencing the customers to change their attitude towards SMEs in developing economy.	DM4

Objective 2: To identify the factors that influence the adoption of digital marketing strategies in developing country's SMEs.

- Latent variable: Competitive strategy

Survey Questions	Observant variable code
Q9. Competitive strategy is required to align and understand the relevance of internal and external factors linked with SMEs in the developing economy.	CS1
Q10. Competitive strategy allows SMEs to effectively align resources with projects and entrepreneurial activities.	CS2
Q11. Competitive Strategy helps in enhancing the capabilities such as innovation, research and development, and technological advancement of the organisation specifically for SMEs.	CS3
Q12. Competitive Strategy helps in responding to risk factors including meeting demands of customers, balancing supply and demand and operational effectiveness.	CS4
Q13: Competitive Strategy assists SMEs in aligning their economic interest with that of their capabilities and strategies.	CS5
Q14: Digital Marketing helps SMEs to increase their exposure while understanding demands and trends in the market.	CS6

Objective 3:

To understand how digital marketing facilitates the performance of developing country SMEs in the textile industry through the strategic framework.

- Latent variable: Strategic Fit

Survey Questions	Observant variable code
Q17. Digital Marketing helps in building a sustainable competitive advantage for SMEs.	SF1
Q19: SMEs in developing countries require effective digital marketing platforms for promoting the business.	SF2
Q20. SMEs in developing countries require effective competitive strategy aligned with digital marketing tools and techniques for promoting the business.	SF3
Q21: Digital marketing adoption as competitive strategy, provide a path for entrepreneurs who utilise different digital marketing tools for promoting the business.	SF4
Q22: The innovation creation (based on technology) by entrepreneurs in developing countries have helped SMEs to play an influential role in economic growth and development.	SF5

Table 4.1: Survey questions alignment

4.2.1: Competitive strategy

Question 9: Competitive strategy is required to align and understand the relevance of internal and external factors

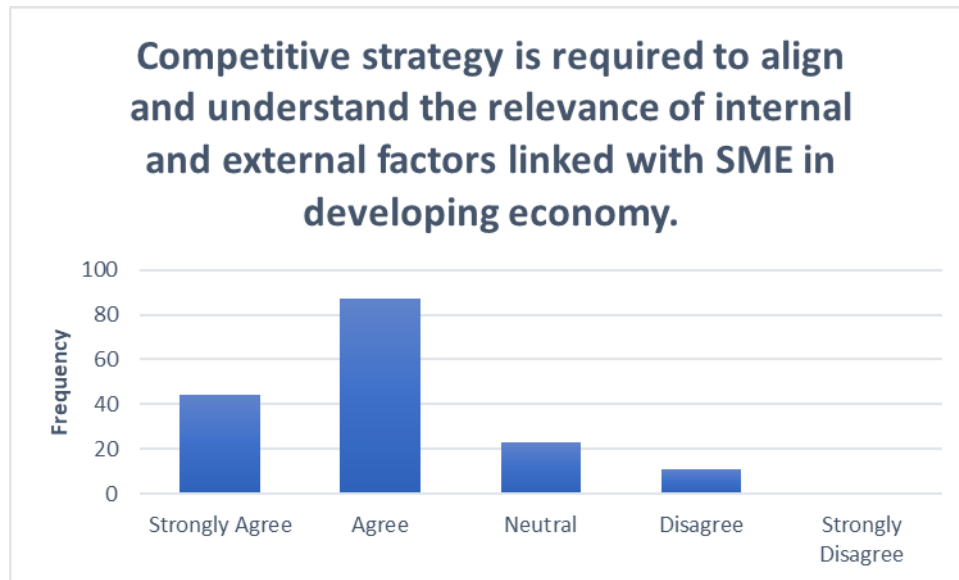


Figure 4.1: Internal and external resources alignment

The data provided in the table above can identify the comprehensive information related to the alignment of internal and external sources for the overall competitive outcome. The data demonstrates that 26.7% and 52.7% of the respondents are agreed with the statement which demonstrates that it is important to adjust the strategic option to optimise the outcome from internal and external resources.

The outcome demonstrates that understanding environmental and organisational understanding is vital for the comprehensive alignment of getting resource-based and market-based view alignment because understanding the role of market conditions in developing strategy is essential. However, in the case of SMEs, it is vital to keep in view the firm's resources and capabilities. According to the literature analysis West, Ford and Ibrahim (2015) state that a competitive strategic framework is required to align the internal and external resources of the company with the requirement of the business and the data presented supports the argument.

Question 10: Competitive strategy enables SMEs to align resources.



Figure 4.2: Competitive strategy enables SMEs to align resources

The above table illustrates the statement results that competitive strategy enables SMEs to align resources with projects and entrepreneurial activities. Based on the results, 38.8% had strongly agreed with the statement, 32.7% had agreed with the statement, 21.8% were neutral, 6.1% had disagreed, and 0.6% had strongly disagreed. Based on the results, it has been found that competitive strategy enables SMEs to align their resources with projects and entrepreneurial activities. Similarly, the study of Palmer and Kaplan (2005) has indicated that through competitive strategy, SMEs are able to align the resources with the projects.

Question 11: Competitive Strategy helps enhance the capabilities

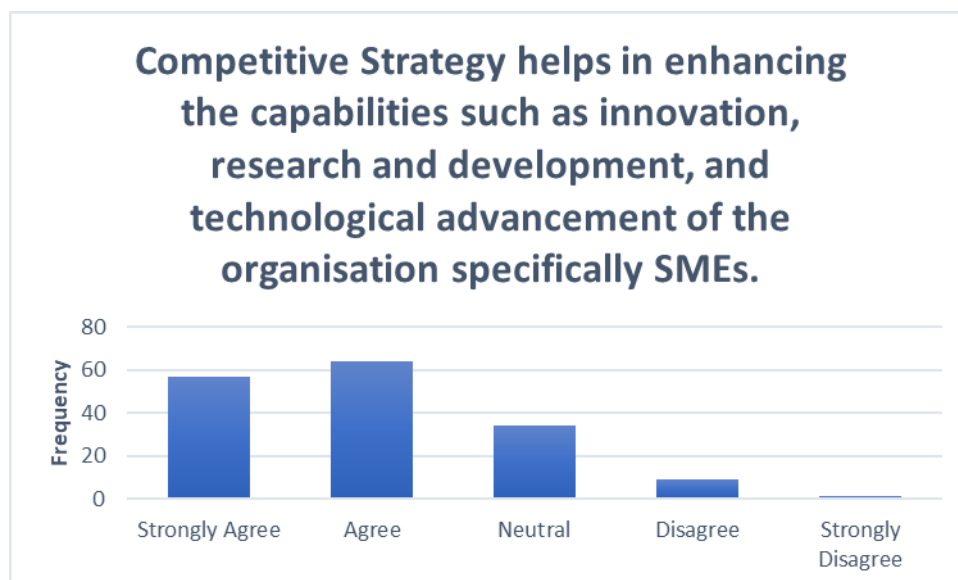


Figure 4.3: Competitive strategy enhances capabilities

The above table indicates the statement results that competitive strategy enhances capabilities such as innovation, research and development and technological advancement in the SMEs. Based on the results, 34.5% of the respondents had strongly agreed, 38.8% had agreed with the statement, 20.6% were neutral 6.1% had disagreed with the statement. The majority of the participants had indicated that competitive strategy enhances the overall capabilities of the SMEs. Similarly, the study of Cordeiro and Vieira (2012) has indicated that the comprehensive strategy framework in SMEs consists of three dimensions: research, innovation, and development.

Question 12: Competitive Strategy helps in responding to risk associated with the internal and external environment.



Figure 4.4: Competitive strategy as risk facilitator

According to literature where Chaffey (2006) mentioned that the competitive strategy framework is linked towards acceptance of customers in manufacturing firms which demonstrates that the appropriate response to the changes in the market and preferences of the customers' expectations can reduce the risk of business' losing its competitive position. The collected data demonstrates that. 50.9% and 20% of the respondents agree that the factors involved in the competitive strategy can help respond to risk linked with internal and external triggers. Although 13.3% and 4.2% disagree or strongly disagree that there will be any contribution. 11.5% of respondents are not sure about the area of consideration.

Question 13: Competitive Strategy assist in aligning the economic interest.

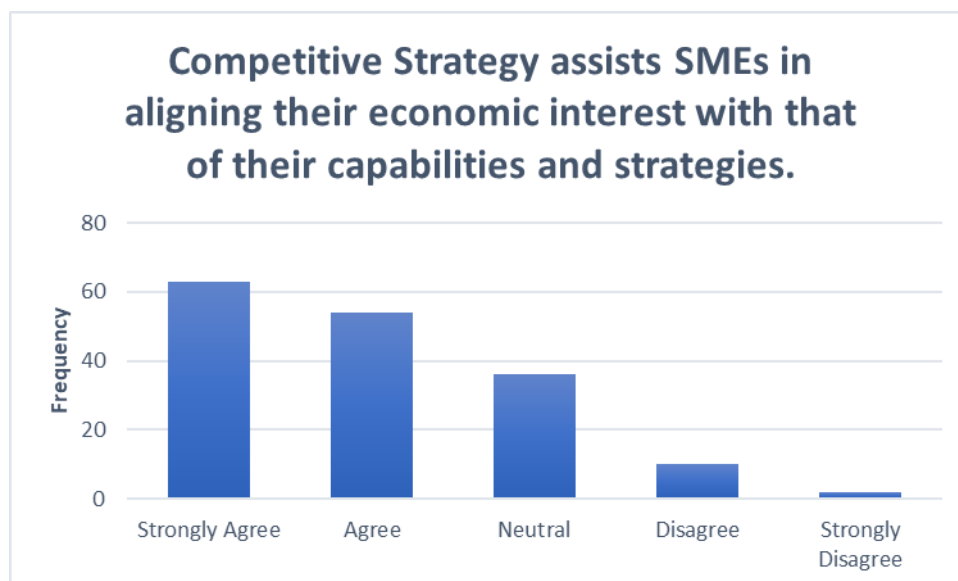


Figure 4.5: Competitive strategy assists in aligning the economic interest

The above table and chart represent the results of the statement that competitive strategy assists SMEs in aligning the economic interest with their capabilities and strategy. Based on the results, 38.2% had strongly agreed with the statement, 32.7% had agreed, 21.8% were neutral, 6.1% had disagreed, and 1.2% had strongly disagreed. Based on the analysis, it had been found that competitive strategy supports the SMEs in aligning with economic interest. As Abdallah and Jaleel (2014) illustrated, the competitive strategy helps the SMEs align with the economic interest based on the capabilities and strategies.

Question 14: Digital marketing helps SMEs to increase exposure

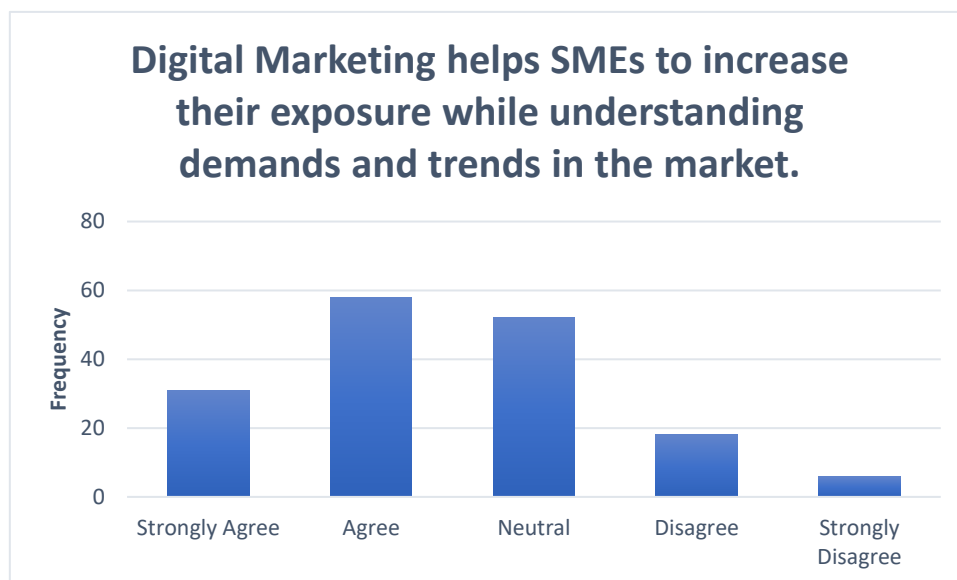


Figure 4.6: Digital marketing helps SMEs to increase exposure

One of the critical questions presented in the questionnaire survey was whether digital marketing helps SMEs increase exposure while also comprehending the demands and trends in the market. Based on the analysis, 18.8% had strongly agreed, 35.5% had agreed with the statement, 31.5% were neutral, 18% had disagreed, and 3.6% had strongly disagreed. The majority of the respondents have indicated that digital marketing support SMEs in increasing exposure and comprehending the demands and trends in the market. Similarly, Ashworth (2012) has highlighted that the digital framework has become an essential component for SMEs in increasing exposure because it allows them to expand based on RBV and MBV where the best combined suitable approach can help gain the maximum advantage.

4.2.2: Digital marketing (Tools & Techniques)

Question 15: Social media platforms effectiveness for SMEs

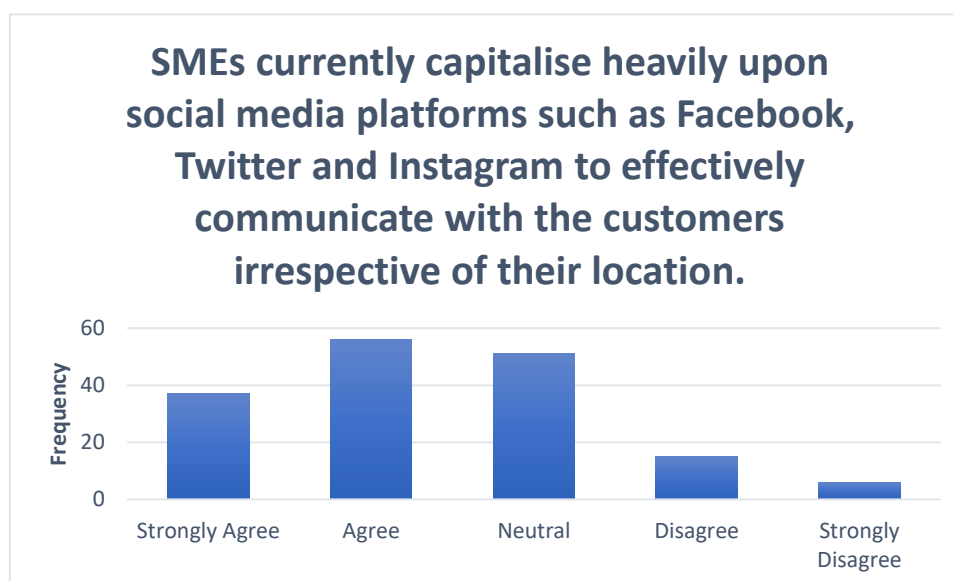


Figure 4.7: Social media platforms' effectiveness for SMEs

The above table indicates that the social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram provide an effective method for communicating to the customer regardless of their location to the SMEs. Based on the results, 22.4% had strongly agreed with the statement, 33.9% had agreed, 30.9% were neutral, 9.1% had disagreed, and 3.6% had strongly disagreed. The majority of the respondents had considered social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to provide an effective method for communicating with the customer. The results match with the study of Fowdar (2013), as it had been found that social media platforms provide business enhancement opportunities for increasing exposure and communicating with the customers. The literature also demonstrated the strong growth of these platforms in Pakistan.

Question 16: Focus of SMEs on the development of digital strategies through the adoption of the affiliate marketing.

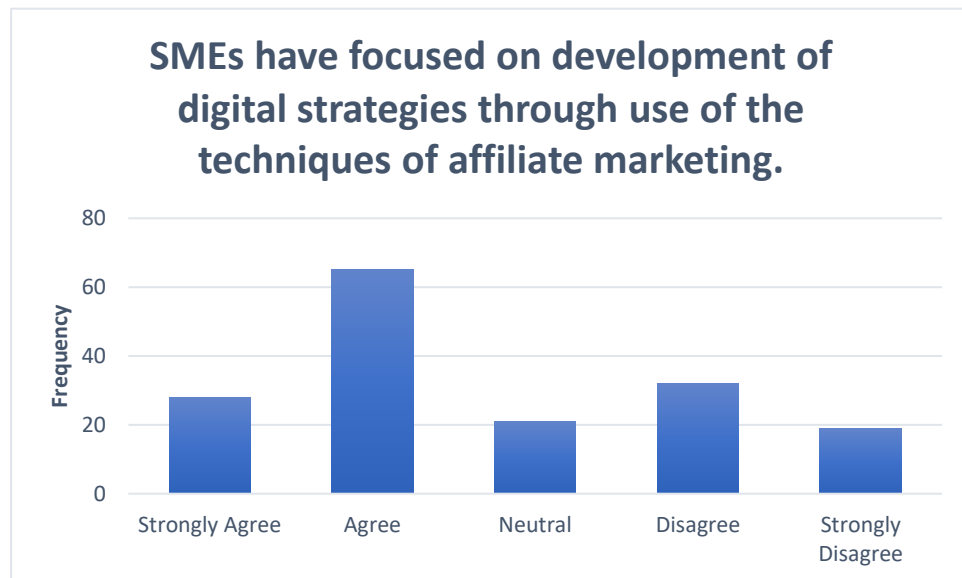


Figure 4.8: Development through digital strategies adoption

Schwarzl and Grabowska (2015) presented that digital marketing strategies have transformed to a different level and the primary reason behind it is the way the consumer is acting within the digital context. Companies have focused on the development of strategies through the adoption of the principle of affiliate marketing where the basic principle support that number of different stakeholders involved in the affiliate marketing efforts, which include, advertiser, publisher and customer etc. it is vital to consider that in affiliate marketing, the efforts directed by the advertiser to communicate something towards the publisher where the information communicated through the settable approach. The data demonstrate that with the basic understanding of the principles of affiliate marketing, the delegation is a comprehensive attempt which certainly digital marketing can help develop, and it is evident that 17% and 39.4% of respondents strongly agree or agree with the statement. Although 19.4% and 11.5% disagree or strongly disagree that it creates any supportive benefit, while 12.7% are not sure about the impact.

Question 18: Social media marketing is an effective digital platform for creating awareness for SMEs.

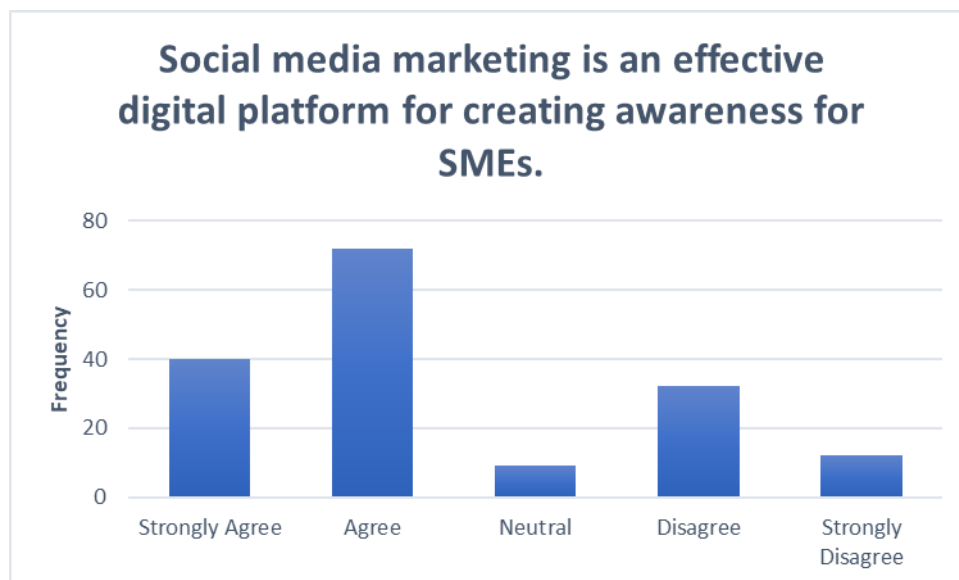


Figure 4.9: Effectiveness of social media marketing

According to Atanassova and Clark (2015), small and medium sizes companies in a country with a developing economy face a significant issue in adopting digital marketing in their business to promote the product that is why the critical issue which exists in the application of digital marketing in small and medium-sized enterprises is based on the lack of knowledge and awareness that's why the selection of suitable platform like social media can be a big trigger for the SMEs. The collected data is able to demonstrate the relevant effects of the platform with reference to individuals' perceptions within the context. A combined 67.8% of respondents agree or strongly agree with this approach, demonstrating the effectiveness and growing popularity within the business context. Although the combined 26.7% of respondents do not agree with the approach, it can be due to the number of factors supported by the literature, which could include the generality and accessibility, etc., with the perception of more specific and proper tools, can add more value. The 5.5% of respondents are also unclear about the effectiveness of the too within the context, although it is still considered the cost-beneficial tool.

Question 23: Creativity in digital marketing tools adoption influencing the customers' attitude.

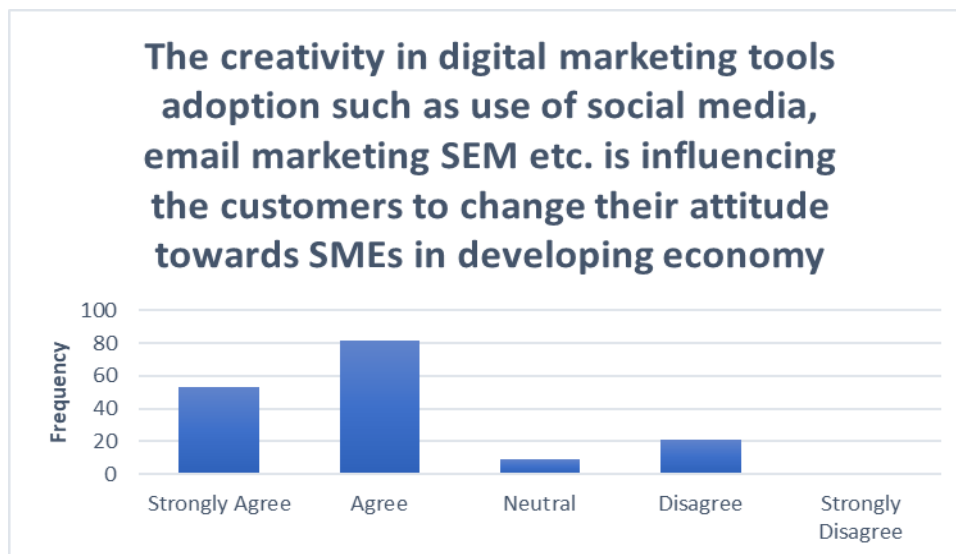


Figure 4.10: digital marketing tools adoption

According to the research of Narkiniemi (2013), SMEs are using rigorous SEM techniques (e.g. Pay Per Click – PPC) techniques to get the accessibility, and the adoption of any technique is primarily based on the innovation approach previously described (Innovation = Creativity + Commercialisation). The data collected through this research is able to support the argument comprehensively where combined 81.8% of the respondents are agreed or strongly agree with the development of more creativity across the development and implementation of the digital marketing tools to influence the customer behaviours through the impact on the customer journey with reference to the products offered by SMEs in developing economy. 12.7% of respondents have disagreed, and 5.5% are not sure about the expected outcome.

4.2.3: SMEs' strategic fit

Question 17: Digital Marketing helps in building sustainable competitive advantage for SMEs

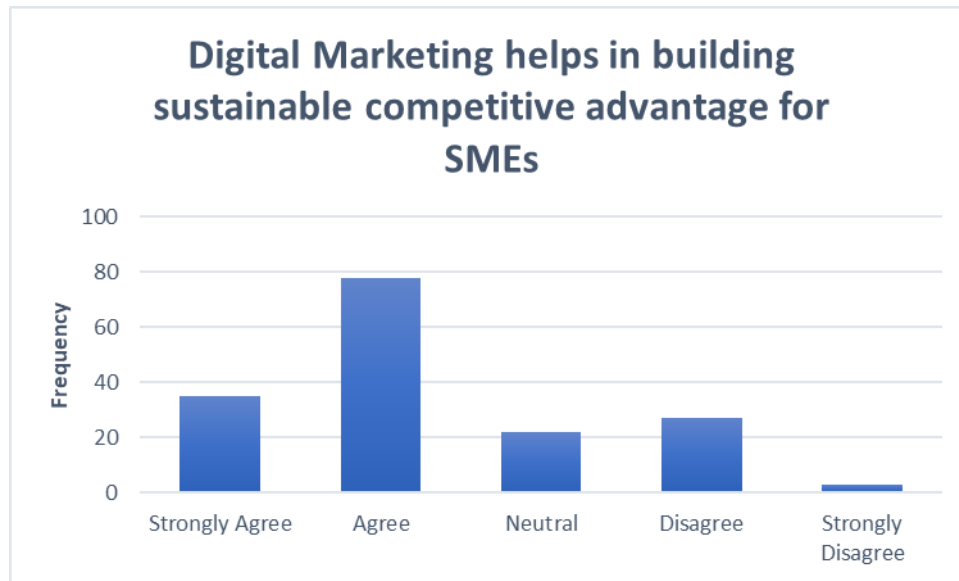


Figure 4.11: Use of digital marketing to build sustainable competitive advantage

The literature demonstrated that many modern small and medium enterprises (SMEs) had developed a solid brand as a critical objective to enhance growth and long-term sustainability. Dumitriu et al. (2019) argued that to achieve the previously identified approach, an integrated framework for adopting digital marketing tools and techniques to manage their brand equity level must be adopted for a sustainable competitive advantage. It demonstrates the role and importance of digital marketing as an integral part of the organisation's positioning in the specific market segment. 21.2% and 47.3% of respondents strongly agree with the approach, which demonstrates the prospective perceptual approach within the industry about digital marketing and its effectiveness. 13.3% of respondents are not sure about the approach. In comparison, 16.4% have disagreed, and 1.8% only strongly disagreed, demonstrating the level of confidence that digital marketing tools and techniques are gaining in the developing economy for the SMEs to contextualise and consider it for sustainable competitive advantage.

Question 19: SMEs in developing countries require effective digital marketing platforms.

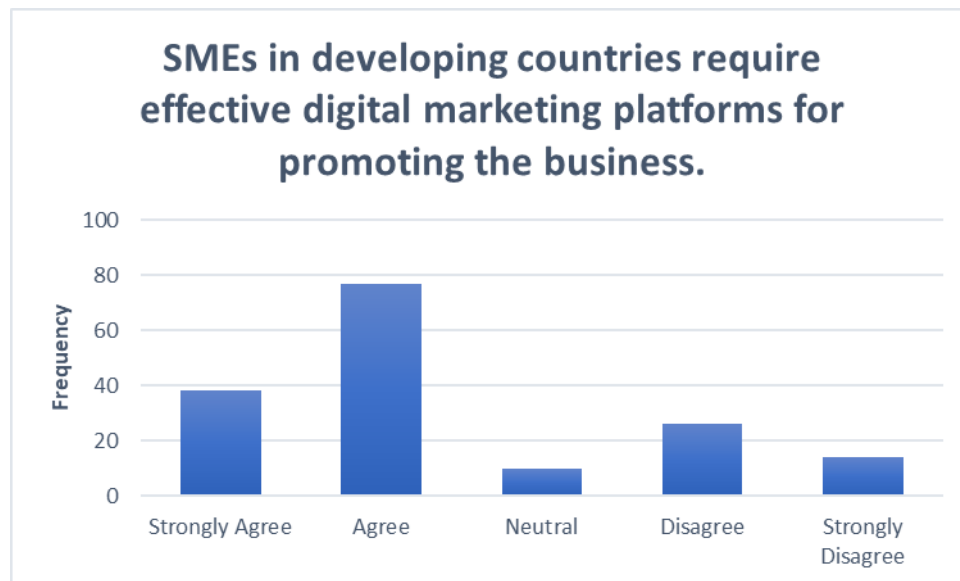


Figure 4.12: Requirement for effective digital platforms

Literature evidence from the previous question (Atanassova and Clark, 2015) support the outcome presented through the data. The main focus of the question is directly linked with using social media platforms as promotional tools within the communication approach while using digital marketing. 23% are strongly agreed, and 46.7% agrees with the development of this approach, and the most significant consideration is linked with the cost, where it considered as the cost-effective medium to use for the promotion while cost already mentioned as the integral driving force in the selection of the relevant platform. Similar to the responses in the previous question, many respondents do not agree with this approach, including 15.8% have disagreed, and 8.5% strongly disagree. 6.1% are not sure about the prospective decision making in relation to this approach.

Question 20: SMEs in developing countries require effective competitive strategy aligned with digital tools and techniques.

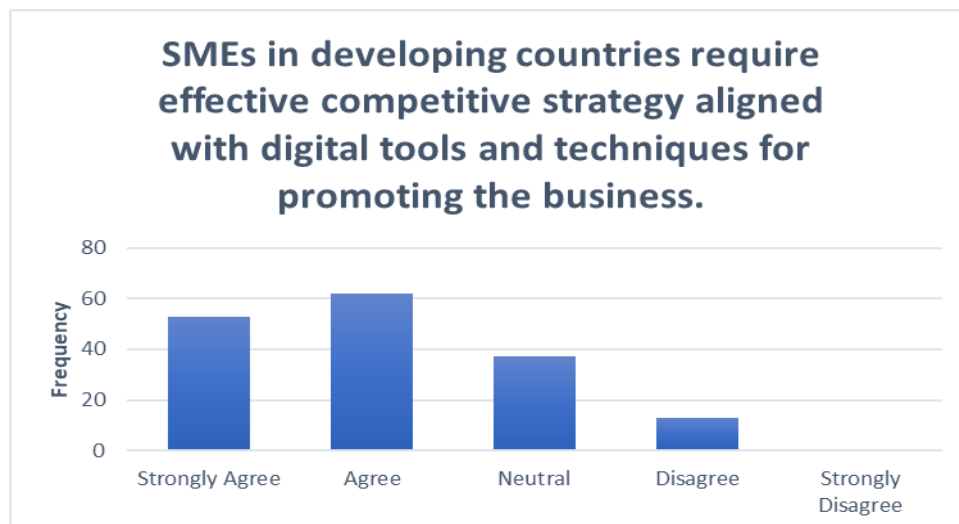


Figure 4.13: SMEs in developing countries require effective digital marketing platforms

The above table illustrates that SMEs in developing countries require an effective competitive strategy aligned with digital marketing tools and techniques in promoting the business. Based on the results, 32.1% had strongly agreed with the statement, 37.6% had agreed, 22.4% were neutral, and 7.9% had disagreed. The majority of the participants agreed that SMEs need to have an effective competitive strategy aligned with digital marketing tools and techniques in promoting the business in developing countries. Similarly, Lovelock and Patterson (2015) have highlighted that organisations of all sizes are required to enhance their promotion activities through marketing and advertising, specifically within the digital context.

Question 21: Digital marketing a competitive strategy path for entrepreneurs.



Figure 4.14: Digital marketing - a creative path for entrepreneurs

The above table examines whether different social media marketing tool provides a creative path to the entrepreneurs of SMEs in promoting the business. The analysis results had highlighted that 29.1% of the respondents had strongly agreed with the statement, 37.0% had agreed, 23% were neutral, and 10.9% had disagreed. Based on the results, entrepreneurs of SMEs are provided with a creative path by utilising different social media marketing tools in promoting the business. The results are linked with the study of Dzisi and Oforu (2014), as the results indicated that social media marketing tools bring creativity and innovation to business promotion.

Question 22: The innovation creation path (technology-based) helped SMEs play a role in economic growth and development.

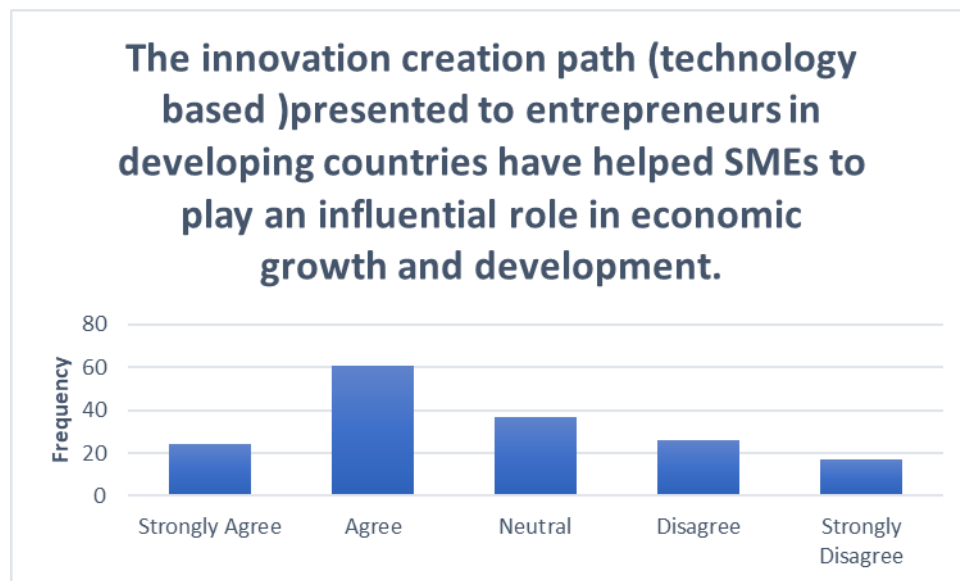


Figure 4.15: Innovation creation path (technology-based)

According to the literature previously analysed, Dasgupta and Gupta (2012), governments across the globe tend to play a vital part in order to enhance the adoption of technology among the organisation, and the research was focused on companies in India where the government intervention directed the companies more towards the activities related to the adoption of technology included in different functional areas. The core idea is to optimise the required outcome in terms of development and growth based on the innovative approaches through the introduction of technology to the entrepreneurs. The data presented an interesting outcome because a combined 51.5% of respondents agree or strongly agree with this approach while a combined 26.1% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree while 22.4% are not sure about it. It means that more clarity about the context and the type of innovation can add more value, although the context in which the innovation is described is business where the entrepreneurs consider the factors or creativity and Commercialisation.

4.3: Quantitative data analysis

4.3.1: Descriptive statistical analysis – based on competitive strategy, digital marketing (tools & techniques), strategic fit

The development of analysis is based on the responses from all 10 companies where the categorisation of the variables determined through the parameters of descriptive statistics.

1. Competitive strategy

	CS1	CS2	CS3	CS4	CS5	CS6
STDV	0.305637	0.465398	0.194558	0.28294	0.203166	0.2380747
Average	3.03	4.02	4.01	3.69	4.00	3.56

Table 4.2: Company (A-J) based Statistics – Competitive strategy

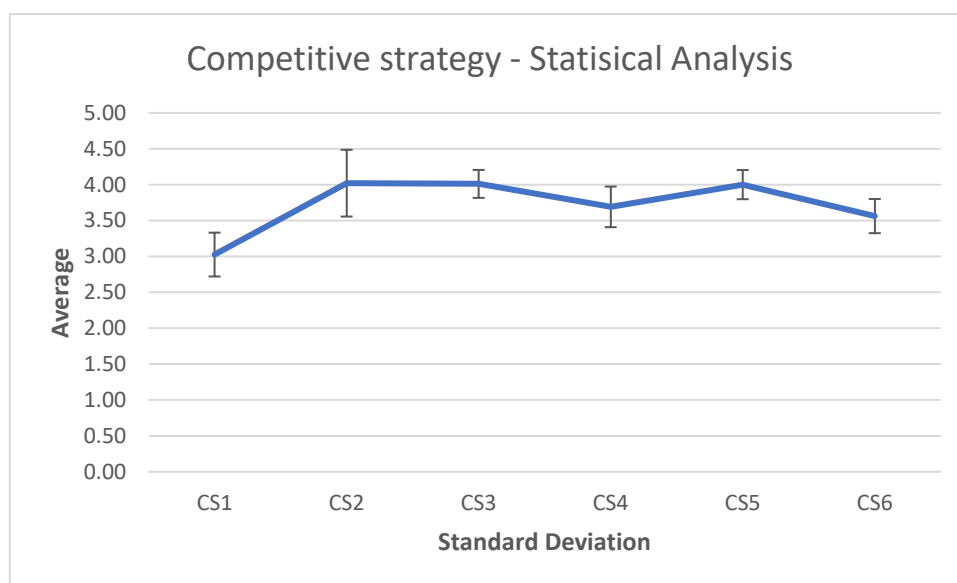


Figure 4.16: Competitive strategy (Standard Deviation plotting)

2. Digital marketing (Tools & Techniques)

Company	DM1	DM2	DM3	DM4
STDV	0.282144	0.261798	0.271046	0.179892
Average	3.61	3.35	3.58	4.02

Table 4.3: Company (A-J) based Statistics – Digital marketing

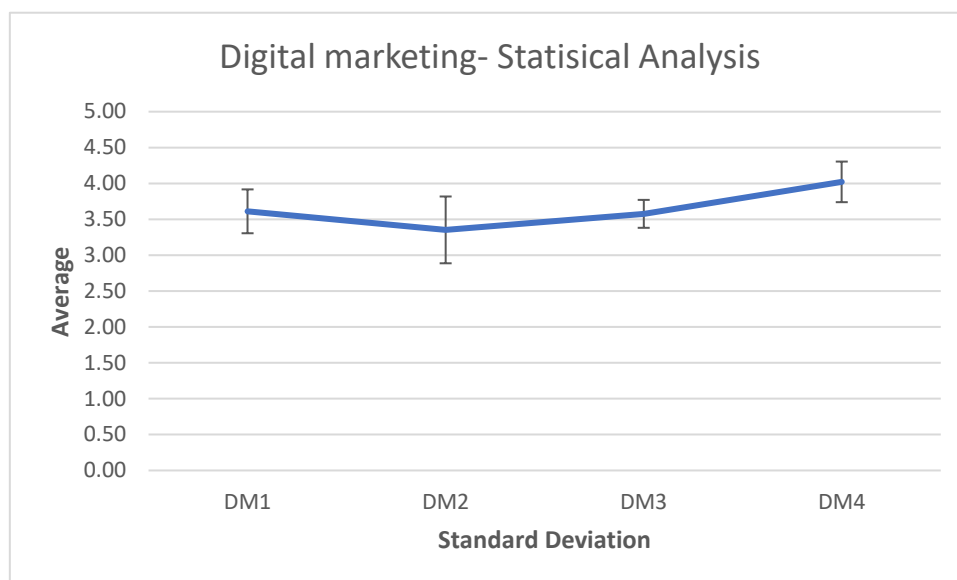


Figure 4.17: Digital marketing (Standard Deviation plotting)

3. Strategic fit

Company	SF1	SF2	SF3	SF4	SF5
STDV	0.237999	0.380293	0.118194	0.24709	0.313862
Average	3.68	3.55	3.92	3.82	3.26

Table 4.4: Company (A-J) based Statistics – Strategic fit

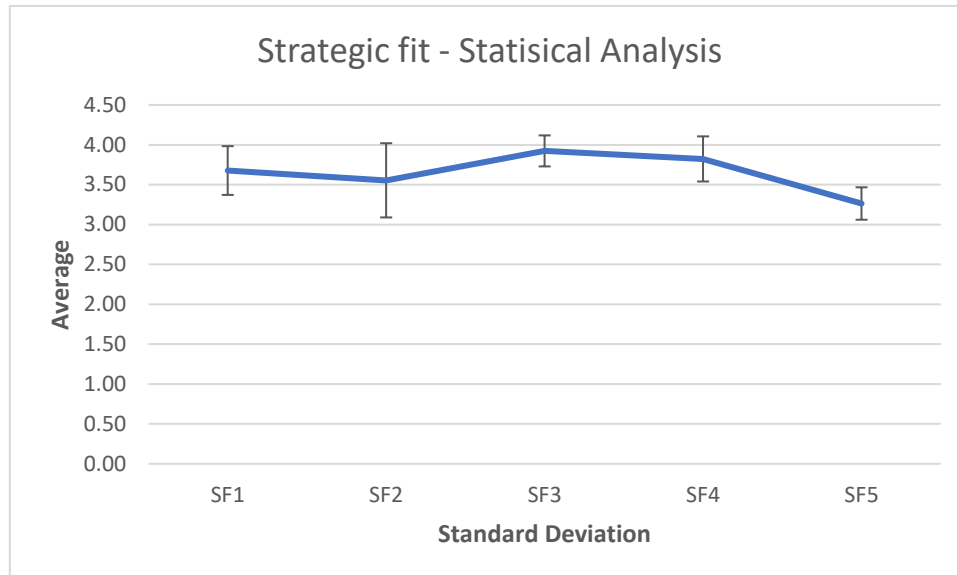


Figure 4.18: Strategic fit (Standard Deviation plotting)

In above mentioned table # 4.2, 4.3 & 4.4, the standard deviation and average data related to the competitive strategy, digital marketing and strategic fit is demonstrating the variation within the data set which was collected from the 10 different companies. The standard deviation values are within the $\pm 2SD$ which demonstrate that the variation from mean value is acceptable.

4.3.1.1: Descriptive statistics

	Mean	Median	Standard deviation	Excess kurtosis	Skewness
CompetitiveStrategy	3.73	3.81	0.64	0.07	-0.31
DigitalMarketing	4.48	4.43	1.87	-0.44	-0.15
StrategicFit	3.73	3.88	0.68	-0.25	-0.72

Table 4.5: Company (A-J) based Descriptive statistics measures

The above table shows that the mean value related to the 3 latent variables collected from the 10 different companies with the overall calculated sample size of 165 is towards the higher side of the scale.

Statisticians have determined that values no greater than plus or minus 2 SD represent measurements that are closer to the true value than those that fall in the area greater than $\pm 2SD$. The above standard deviation values in table showing that they are within the range, The standard deviation related to the 'DigitalMarketing' is closer to the +2SD value range and the possible reason is the variability of the tools

and techniques related to the digital marketing used by the selected sample organisations.

Skewness assesses the extent to which a variable's distribution is symmetrical. If the distribution of responses for a variable stretches toward the right or left tail of the distribution, then the distribution is referred to as skewed. Kurtosis is a measure of whether the distribution is too peaked (a very narrow distribution with most of the responses in the centre)." (Hair et al., 2017, p. 61).

"When both skewness and kurtosis are zero, the pattern of responses is considered a normal distribution. A general guideline for skewness is that if the number is greater than +1 or lower than -1, this is an indication of a substantially skewed distribution. The above table shows that the skewness is 'negative' but not far from the good, skewed data.

For kurtosis, if the number is greater than +1, the distribution is too peaked.

Likewise, a kurtosis of less than -1 indicates a distribution that is too flat. The above table shows the kurtosis values within the range.

Distributions exhibiting skewness and/or kurtosis that exceed these guidelines are considered nonnormal. (Hair et al., 2017, p. 61). Although the current table shows the values remain within the range and that is why the data is considered normal.

4.3.2: Diagnostic statistical analysis - based on competitive strategy, digital marketing (tools & techniques), strategic fit

Correlation analysis is also referred to by many names such as Pearson correlation or correlation coefficient, is one of the statistical tools used in the quantitative analysis. The main objective of the correlation analysis is to evaluate the association (not causation) between two or more variables. Cohen, West and Aiken (2014) have indicated that correlation analysis is often used for determining the strength of the relationship, type and significance. The results of correlation analysis consist of various coefficients, which are indicated by negative or absence of a negative sign. The coefficient with the negative sign would indicate a negative relationship. On the other hand, the absence of the negative sign would show a positive sign.

The coefficients with a value of between 0 – 0.5 indicate a weak positive relationship, whereas the coefficient with 0.5 – 1 shows a positive, strong relationship. Moreover,

the significance of the relationship has also been evaluated in which if the significance value is less than 0.05, it would indicate that the relationship is statistically significant. The results of the correlation analysis for the study have been indicated below:

Correlation Analysis				
		Competitive strategy	Digital marketing)	SMEs' strategic fit
CompetitiveStrategy	Pearson Correlation	1	0.15**	0.20**
	Sig. (2 tailed)		0.000	0.000
DigitalMarketing	Pearson Correlation	0.15**	1	0.24**
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0.000		0.000
StrategicFit	Pearson Correlation	0.20**	0.24**	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	0.000	0.000	
	N	165	165	165
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Table 4.6: Correlation Analysis

The above table indicates the results for the correlation analysis in which the variables are examined, which are a competitive strategy, digital marketing (tool & techniques) and SMEs' strategic fit in developing countries. The values for competitive strategy and Digital marketing have been found 0.20 and 0.24 with the SMEs' strategic fit, respectively. Therefore, the competitive, digital marketing (tools & techniques) has been found to have a weak positive relationship with the SMEs' strategic fit in Pakistan. The significance level of both competitive strategy and digital marketing (tools & techniques) is 0.000, less than 0.05, indicating a good relationship with the SMEs' strategic fit. It also demonstrates a weak positive relationship between digital marketing and competitive strategy with the SMEs' (tools & techniques) in the developing country.

4.3.3: Structural equation modelling (SEM) - based on competitive strategy, digital marketing (tools & techniques), strategic fit

4.3.3.1: Confirmatory factors analysis (CFA)

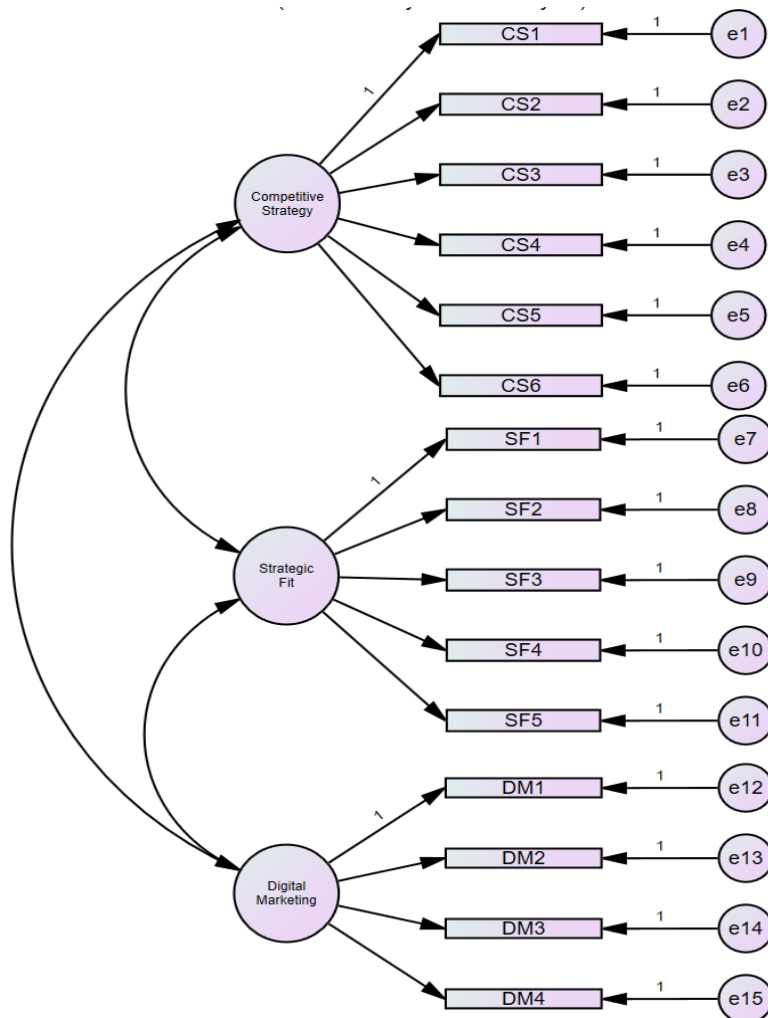


Figure 4.19: Measurement model

(Source: Author)

The confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) conducted to determine the factors' measurement. It conducted through the software to get the value of the parameter. The suitable values identified in the above section. There are parameters used to determine the model fit with the identified latent variables.

- P-value defines the probability of getting a result that is either the same or more extreme than the other actual observations. Suitable P-value > 0.05 (Meyers et al, 2005)
- CMIN/DF (Minimum Discrepancy Function by Degrees of Freedom divided) which represents the chi-square. If the determined value < 3.0 its considered Good (Hair et al, 2009)
- Parameters including RFI, CFI, NFI and IFI is between zero to one.
- A good model is indicated by RMSEA value of less than or equal to 0.05 (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004).

The below mentioned tables demonstrate the values with reference to the suitable values identified in the previous section.

CMIN

Model	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	83.376	90	.676	.926

Table 4.7: CMIN analysis

The current results showing that the P-value is higher than 0.05 strong effect on the dependent variable. while CMIN/DF value is less than 3.0 which also considered that it is good fit.

Baseline Comparisons

Model	NFI	RFI	IFI	CFI
Default model	.570	.499	1.064	1.000

Table 4.8: Baseline comparison

The above values demonstrating that the very good fit through the

- RFI - relative fit index closer to 1.
- NFI – normed fit index, results in values between 0 and 1. The closer the NFI to 1, the better the fit.

- IFI - incremental fit index value closed to 1 indicates a very good fit while 1 indicates a perfect fit.
- CFI is a normed fit index in the sense that it ranges between 0 and 1, with higher values indicating a better fit. The most commonly used criterion for a good fit is $CFI \geq 0.95$ (Hu & Bentler, 1999; West et al., 2012). The above table demonstrating the very good fit.

RMSEA

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.000	.000	.035	.996

Table 4.9: RMSEA analysis

It has been suggested that RMSEA values less than 0.05 are good, values between 0.05 and 0.08 are acceptable, values between 0.08 and 0.1 are marginal, and values greater than 0.1 are poor [8]. Therefore, the RMSEA value of 0.000 in this sample indicates a good fit.

4.3.3.2: Structural model analysis

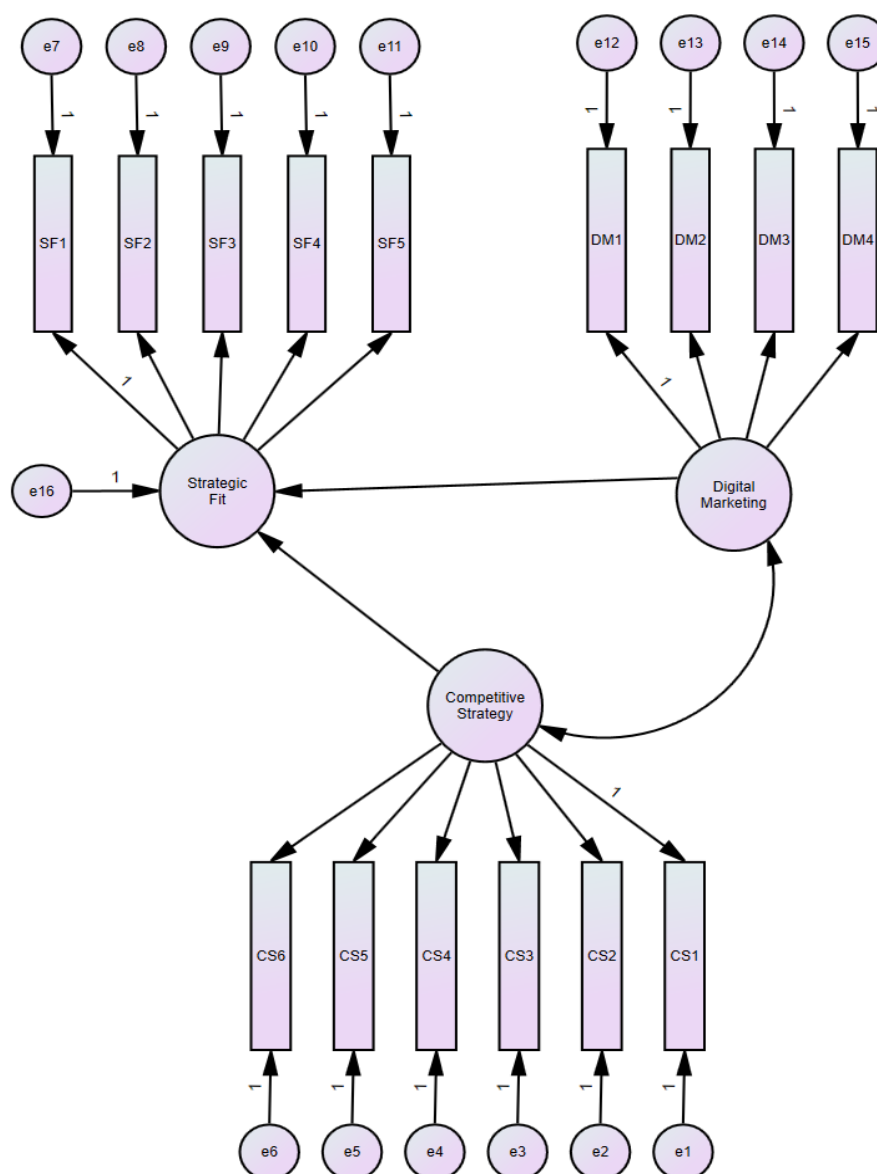


Figure 4.20: Measurement model

(Source: Author)

Regression Weights: (Default model)

	Estimate	S.E	C.R	PLabel
StrategicFit <--- CompetitiveStrategy	1.985	.714	2.779	.005
StrategicFit <--- DigitalMarketing	1.800	.628	2.865	.004

Table 4.10: Regression weight (SEM)

It is expected that while reporting the structural model parameters the value of PLabel should be not more than 0.05. According to above mentioned table:

- StrategicFit <--- CompetitiveStrategy: The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 2.779 in absolute value is .005. In other words, the regression weight for CompetitiveStrategy in the prediction of StrategicFit is significantly different from zero at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).
- StrategicFit <--- DigitalMarketing: The probability of getting a critical ratio as large as 2.865 in absolute value is .004. In other words, the regression weight for DigitalMarketing in the prediction of StrategicFit is significantly different from zero at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

Construct validity

Construct validity is about how well a test measures the concept it was designed to evaluate. It's crucial to establishing the overall validity of a method. Discriminant and convergent validity help to establish construct validity.

Discriminant validity shows you that two tests that are not supposed to be related are, in fact, unrelated. A novel approach for assessing discriminant validity was introduced by Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt (2015): the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT). The HTMT is a measure of similarity between latent variables. HTMT values close to 1 indicates a lack of discriminant validity. Using the HTMT as a criterion involves comparing it to a predefined threshold. If the value of the HTMT is higher than this threshold, one can conclude that there is a lack of discriminant validity. Some authors suggest a threshold of 0.85. (Kline, 2011)

Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)	
DigitalMarketing <-> CompetitiveStrategy	0.54
StrategicFit <-> CompetitiveStrategy	0.49
StrategicFit <-> DigitalMarketing	0.35

Table 4.11: HTMT ratio (SEM)

From the HTMT results, the values in table indicated no discriminant validity problem

according to the HTMT0.85 criterions. This implied that the HTMT criterion detect no collinearity problems among the latent constructs (multicollinearity). It shows the construct validity.

Convergent validity shows you that two tests that are supposed to be related to each other are, in fact, related. To measure the convergent validity of test, it must demonstrate that there is a positive correlation between measures of related constructs (in current research, the latent variables). Through the diagnostic analysis correlation for the latent variables (competitive strategy, digital marketing and strategic fit) is estimated which is showing positive correlation based on the Person's correlation (r). There's no hard and fast rule, an r value of >0.50 is generally considered sufficient to suggest convergent validity. The correlations with related constructs should be higher than those of unrelated constructs. Although there is positive correlation exists between the latest variables, but correlation is weak and limitation in data collection can improve the correlation and the construct validity accordingly as well.

4.4: Findings from interviews (Qualitative data)

4.4.1: Thematic analysis

The thematic analysis was conducted by reading through transcripts from interviews from 10 managers/ assistant marketing in Pakistani textile manufacturing SMEs to gain their insight and knowledge about competitive strategy, digital marketing (tools & techniques), and SMEs' strategic fit. It is able to identify patterns in meaning across the data to derive themes. among the responses gathered. For conducting the thematic analysis, several themes were formulated based on the questions asked among the marketing managers in Pakistani textile manufacturing SMEs. The below-mentioned information is able to provide the information in relation to this while followed by the information linked with each question based on the responses provided by the respondents.

S. No	Quotes	Keywords	Themes / Codes	Frequency (Total respondents)
1	<i>As you may have noticed, many manufacturing firms are operating in the country, which has increased the competition level in the entire manufacturing sector. To survive in the industry, we need to develop a competitive strategy to gain the upper hand among the competitors.</i>	<i>Competition level, competition strategy and factors of competition</i>	<i>Conceptualising the competitive strategy for giving the edge over the competition.</i>	5
2	<i>The advancement of technology has driven digital marketing that has become an</i>	<i>Advancement of technology, digital marketing, and</i>	<i>Significance of using digital marketing in SMEs to achieve lean.</i>	5

	<p><i>important trend in recent years among SMEs worldwide.</i></p> <p><i>Digital marketing is a cost-effective method that enables us, managers, to efficiently conduct marketing activities.</i></p>	<p><i>cost-effective method.</i></p>		
3	<p><i>It has become one of the biggest media for marketers in promoting products and services. Our company has been using Facebook and other instruments for showing our products and the operations for creating awareness and attracting prominent clients.</i></p>	<p><i>Significance of social media platforms, Facebook and advertisements.</i></p>	<p><i>Effectiveness of using different social media platforms for SMEs in manufacturing.</i></p>	4
4	<p><i>Internet is everywhere and, in every field, it has been impacting how operations are run. Marketing using digital media platforms is efficient and yields instant results, which help us in terms of increased awareness, leading to higher sales and effective utilisation of resources.</i></p>	<p><i>Impacting operations, efficient yields, increasing awareness and higher outcomes.</i></p>	<p><i>Influence of digital media marketing platforms on SMEs in the manufacturing sector</i></p>	3
5	<p><i>The primary factor is the increased usage of social media platforms, and generally, mobile phones have contributed a lot in terms of companies</i></p>	<p><i>Mobile phones increased usage of social media and marketing strategies alignment.</i></p>	<p><i>Factors affecting SMEs in developing economy for the adoption of effective digital marketing strategy</i></p>	4

	<i>going for a digital marketing strategy</i>			
6	<i>Digital marketing strategies help the company in various ways, such as reaching out to the customers and increasing awareness, which helps us achieve our sales target; hence the company goals are achieved.</i>	<i>Increasing awareness, reaching sales targets, achieving goals</i>	<i>Role of digital marketing strategy in the achievement of company goals.</i>	3
7	<i>I have already explained the importance of digital marketing strategies for SMEs in the manufacturing sector. The promotion of the business is also possible, but only if social media marketing is done in an efficient manner social media campaigns they are able to gain the attention of their target marketing and potential, which means increased awareness and it consequently leads to increased sales and revenue</i>	<i>Marketing strategies, promotion, gaining attention and increasing awareness</i>	<i>Use of the effective strategy based on strategic fit to gain outcome.</i>	4
8	<i>The most effective digital marketing platform is LinkedIn which I think is a B2B advertising platform. Most of the SMEs in the developing country</i>	<i>Linked, B2B advertising platform, Facebook, Instagram and others.</i>	<i>Specific digital marketing platform for SMEs in a developing country.</i>	5

	utilise LinkedIn primarily as its ads can target professional people. It also supports the SMEs in developing the perception among the customers, investors, and shareholders as what the executives aim to target.			
9	The cost of digital marketing campaigns is low compared to other mediums; therefore, many SMEs have been utilising digital marketing for their advertising campaigns. This has ultimately resulted in causing high competitiveness in the market.	Low Costs, high competition in digital marketing and advantages of digital marketing	Competitiveness of digital marketing based on lean-to reaches optimum development.	5
10	The use of Facebook allows us to share our products with the customers	Facebook, Online support and others	Effective use of digital marketing tools.	4
11	There is a number of challenges that are faced during the implementation of digital marketing strategy as the main problem is to determine what specific digital marketing platform to use as there is a high range of platforms available; therefore, it causes a significant	Variability, suitability, and feasibility	Challenges faced in effectively implementing a digital marketing strategy	4

	<i>challenge for us as selecting an improper can result in wastage of time and resources.</i>			
12	<i>The common challenges that are faced in the textile industry are to differentiate ourselves from the competitors. It has become a priority for SMEs in devising effective competitive strategies, but due to the changing environment caused by technology, there are high numbers of challenges being faced in developing an effective competitive strategy.</i>	<i>Differentiating, changing environment and product quality</i>	<i>Challenges faced in devising an effective competitive strategy. Framework for SMEs.</i>	3

Table 4.12: Thematic analysis

Theme1: Conceptualising the competitive strategy for giving the edge over the competition.

The researcher had asked the marketing manager to design the strategy to provide an edge over the competitor. In this regard, a few responses have been indicated below, in which one of the respondents had answered the question.

"As you may have noticed, many manufacturing firms are operating in the country, which has resulted in increasing the competition level in the entire manufacturing sector. To survive in the industry, we need to develop a competitive strategy to gain the upper hand among the competitors (Respondent A, General Manager)."

Similarly, another respondent had stated that:

"Competition is getting tough in the manufacturing sector, the factors that influence the competitiveness are the prices, product quality, target segment and especially promotion. We are required to give special attention to these factors, mainly promotion for designing a strategy in gaining the competitive edge (Respondent B, Assistant Manager, Operations)."

Based on the above responses, it could be stated that the competition level among the manufacturing sector in Pakistan has been significantly rising. The elements that affect the competition in the country are the prices, product quality, place and promotion. The strategy for gaining the competitive edge is by focusing on a promotion that helps create awareness among the clients and customers.

The other contradicting results that the other marketing managers had provided were provided below. Based on the question, one participant had stated that:

"We try to differentiate ourselves from the competitors by manufacturing the products at lower costs as well as reducing the wastage; therefore, our differentiation lies within our internal factors (Respondent F, Manager, Communication and Marketing)."

Another manager had stated that:

"Competitive strategy... Our competitive strategy lies within our workforce ...our company consist of highly skilled labour, which affects our overall performance and productivity (Respondent J. Manager Marketing)."

Similarly, the seventh respondent had stated that:

"We mainly focus on reducing the costs which enable us in recovering huge profits through minimising the expenses and costs. The enables in gaining competitive edge amongst the competitors (Respondent J, Manager Marketing)."

The above quotes illustrated mainly focus on the functions of the operations that enable the firms in gaining a competitive advantage amongst the competitors. The

responses indicated that their strategy for gaining competitive advantage is through cost leadership, which is the critical aspect of lean management and previously discussed in the literature. Other responses had illustrated that their success lies in the skilled and talented employees. It supports the literature, which identifies that the element of the digital marketing tools can be successfully implemented if the skilled workforce is available, which provides a comprehensive management capability to the SMEs. The responses from this question support SMEs' strategic fit, which identifies the areas related to the sustainability triggers.

Theme 2: Significance of using digital marketing in SMEs to achieve lean.

One of the crucial questions asked among the respondents by the researcher was to determine the importance of digital marketing in SMEs. Following are a few of the key answers provided by the participants. One of the participants had highlighted that.

"The advancement of technology has brought significant changes to both the businesses and society. The advancement of technology has driven digital marketing that has become an important trend in recent years among SMEs worldwide. Digital marketing has resulted in bringing improvement to the business's overall operations, such as promotions can be easily conducted through the internet that enables us to create awareness all over the globe (Respondent I, Assistant Manager Marketing)."

Similarly, another participant replied to the question:

"Digital marketing has enabled the SMEs to easily gather information and attract more customers that have influenced improving the overall sales. Digital marketing is a cost-effective method that enables us, managers, to easily conduct marketing activities (Respondent B, Assistant Manager Operations)."

Based on the above discussion, digital marketing demonstrated as the integral element for SMEs in surviving in the competitive market. As mentioned in the literature that digital marketing enables businesses to overall improve their marketing operations as well as reduce the overall costs of the marketing activities. The responses provided by the interviews highlighted that digital marketing in these times is significant for SMEs as it enables the firm to attract customers, increase the reach to the target customers, enhance awareness through the development of relevant content, and gain the relevant advantage.

On the other hand, few contradicting responses had been provided by the other respondents in which one participant had indicated that:

"Digital marketing may have a significant impact on many other SMEs, but it is not an effective marketing strategy for the textile industry. We believe that the most effective strategy for marketing is through television advertisement or sometimes through email marketing which allows us to reach our targeted customers (Respondent G, Manager Operations)."

Another participant had similarly indicated that:

"We have been focusing much towards digital marketing as our capital and time is only invested on improving the quality of the product as we think that product quality wins the war in this market, not digital marketing (Respondent H, Manager Marketing)."

Another different response provided by the participant had indicated that:

"I don't think digital marketing has not been much effective for us in creating brand awareness as we had been working on digital marketing for years and we had only gained few responses, and low traffics (Respondent J, Manager Marketing)."

The responses above stated that digital marketing is not much an effective strategy for the textile industry. Those responses highlighted were low traffic, unable to reach the target market, and not being influential. However, there is potential for the development of it as an effective tool for comprehensive organisational development. It is essential to consider that if there is an appropriate strategic approach adopted by the organisation and use the specific digital marketing tools for the implementation of the strategic approach, the value can be delivered. There is a possibility that organisations that are unable to achieve that outcome are lacking in areas mentioned during the literature review, including lack of resources, management capability and basic understanding of the digital marketing tools and techniques.

Theme 3: Effectiveness of using different social media platforms for SMEs in manufacturing.

The researcher had further asked the interviewees regarding the effectiveness of using social media platforms for SMEs in the manufacturing sectors such as Facebook, Instagram, and others. The following is the response from one of the respondents:

"Social media platforms... It has become one of the biggest media for marketers in promoting products and services. Our company has been using Facebook and other instruments for showing our products and the operations for creating awareness and attracting big clients. It has become an effective method for SMEs, and in my opinion,

every company has been using social media platforms for advertising (Respondent F, manager, communication and marketing)."

Another participant had indicated that.

"We have been using multiple social media platforms for promoting the products and business as using social media is cost-effective, and these multiple social media platforms help in reaching our distant customers (Respondent D, Assistant Marketing Manager)."

Based on the above responses, the individuals provided a mixed response regarding the use of social media platforms in the SMEs in the manufacturing sector. One of the participants responded by indicating that the platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and others have provided the opportunity in providing videos and photos regarding the products and operations. It is essential to consider that literature comprehensively identifies social media platforms' suitability due to the low functionality cost and reach. It is essential to consider that using an independent strategy focusing solely on implementation through social media will not be able to provide the desired outcomes. Organisations must consider implementing integrated communication approaches. There were a few different responses that had been provided and had been discussed below in which one of the participants had stated that:

"As I mentioned earlier, we haven't been focusing much on digital marketing. However, we do use digital marketing to some extent as it is free. We had been using only one channel, for now, that is Facebook in which we have very few followers, and the majority of them are the company's people (Respondent E, Manager Marketing)."

Another response is provided below:

"I don't think there is not much difference in using different social media platforms for SMEs as every social media platform has one objective, which is connecting (Respondent H, Assistant Manager Marketing)."

Another of the respondent had criticised the social media platform by stating that:

"Even though social media platform has become a great social network that provides an opportunity to the businesses, it is not considered an effective platform for the manufacturing company. The reason is that many people only use social media platforms for communicating with one another, such as posting, commenting and others. Therefore, it is not an effective medium for the manufacturing sector (Respondent G, Manager, Operations)."

Based on the above response, the participants have criticised social media by indicating that it is not an effective medium for manufacturing firms. One of the

participants did not consider digital marketing as an effective tool as he perceived that the medial social platforms are only used for communication with one another. It demonstrates the lack of basic know-how about social media, which restricts the basic understanding social media can provide to gain a competitive advantage. The vital factor of consideration here is the individual's perception towards the use of the tools, although the literature supports the evidence that social media is gaining momentum and becoming the integral tool linked with the digital marketing tool options.

Theme 4: Influence of digital media marketing platforms on SMEs in the manufacturing sector.

The managers working in the textile industries of Pakistan asked the question related to the influence of digital media marketing on the manufacturing sector. Considering that all the managers belonged to the SME sector, some valuable and specific responses were obtained. One of the respondents who was working in Company D for more than five years said:

"Internet is everywhere, and, in every field, it has been impacting how operations are run. Marketing using digital media platforms is efficient and yields instant results that help us increase awareness, leading to higher sales".

This response indicates digital marketing platforms have helped the textile companies operating in the SME sector of Pakistan. They influenced the target segment in terms of increased awareness which also helped them increase their conversion. The comparable response was obtained from a manager belonging to the company I said: *"You see, it is not difficult for the big textile companies to market their products and processes for their target market because they have the right time and a designated budget for such activities. However, we find it difficult for textile companies such as those that belong to small scale companies because of the restricted budgets. Digital media marketing platforms help us carry out marketing activities with a significantly lower cost and higher reach."*

It is clear from this response that while comparing the small-scale textile companies with the large textile companies, it can be said that the digital marketing platforms help the former to market their products to their target market at a relatively lower cost and higher reach as they do not have large budgets for marketing activities. Another respondent has said that:

"Digital media marketing platforms help in terms of increasing the brand awareness, but another thing is that it also helps companies like us to increase customer

satisfaction with the help of one-on-one interaction (Respondent G, Manager, Operations)."

The different responses obtained from the managers of textile companies in Pakistan belonging to the SME sector have shown that the majority of the states that it influences the company by increasing awareness, sales, and customer satisfaction. This indicates that digital marketing platforms have been supporting such companies in terms of carrying out their marketing activities in an efficient manner. Literature can also identify that there is a comprehensive strategic fit available for the companies based on their objectives which can facilitate the use of digital marketing tools. Important consideration should be given to the fact that there is variability among the different organisations in relation to the available strategic fit, which also impacts getting the desired outcome. If any company wants to gain that strategic competitiveness, they have to provide clear goals they want to achieve through digital marketing.

Theme 5: Factors affecting SMEs in developing economy for the adoption of effective digital marketing strategy.

This question was asked from the respondents to evaluate the factors that have contributed to the adoption of digital marketing strategies by SMEs in the developing economy such as Pakistan. By asking this question, there were specific helpful answers which the interviewer obtained. One of the managers working with Company A for more than six years now said:

"I guess the major factor is the increased usage of social media platforms and generally mobile phones has contributed a lot in terms of companies going for a digital marketing strategy."

From this response, it can be said that the increase in internet usage and mobile phone usage has helped in allowing SMEs to use digital marketing to raise awareness among the customers. Literature can support this argument that developing economies have comparatively higher usage of digital devices to access these are platforms while cheaper Internet Accessibility is also a trigger.

Similar responses are obtained from other participants as well. One of the participants said:

"Oh! Many factors have contributed towards small companies adopting digital marketing strategies; however, one of the massive ones is the popularity of the internet and social media (Respondent E, Manager, Marketing)."

This response has also indicated that popularity and acceptance of increased use of the internet and different kinds of social media have been a significant factor in helping SMEs adopt digital marketing strategies for their business. The literature analysed in chapter 2 is able to support this argument comprehensively and also able to provide the reasoning which is directly linked with the mass market penetration.

The manager of Company H has highlighted another factor:

"Other than the generic factors that contribute towards the adoption of digital marketing strategy, one of the major reasons because of which our company has adopted it is that it has a lower cost attached to it as compared to the other traditional marketing strategies."

This response indicates that lower cost is one of the factors that has influenced the manufacturing companies in the developing economy to adopt digital marketing strategy because it allows them to be able to save their cost. Similarly, another respondent has stated:

"There are many. Cost, increased awareness, increased reach, and many more (Respondent J, Manager, Marketing)."

This response has highlighted some of the factors that contribute to adopting the digital marketing strategy by manufacturing SMEs working in a developing economy such as Pakistan. Most of the common factors are cost, awareness, and reach. From the overall analysis of the responses that have been obtained from this theme, it can be said that the companies operating in the textile manufacturing sector of Pakistan have switched towards digital marketing strategies because it allows them to be able to reach out to a broader audience with a lower cost attached to it and provides more agility with flexibility.

Theme 6: Role of digital marketing strategy in the achievement of company goals.

The rationale behind asking the respondents this question was to know about the role that the digital marketing strategy plays in achieving their goals. Different responses were obtained. One of the respondents who was employed as a manager in Company E said:

"Of course, it does! I mean, there is no doubt about it. You see, digital marketing strategies help the company in various ways such as reaching out to the customers, and increasing awareness which helps us achieve our sales target hence the company goals are achieved".

It is evident that the digital marketing strategy implementation through the use of appropriate tools is vital in creating awareness among the customers regarding the product, which helps the company achieve their short-term and long-term goals. The literature previously analysed demonstrates that effective strategy implementation can help the organisation achieve its goals based on the development of a resource-based value proposition.

Another manager belonging to Company F said:

"Agree with what you just said. The ultimate goal of our company is to increase our profitability which can be done by increasing the recognition among the customers. So you see that it helps the company in achieving their goals."

This response has also agreed that the correct digital marketing strategy can play a vital role in achieving the company's goals and objectives. One of the respondents has connected the digital marketing strategy with the overall strategy of the company:

"Yes, I do agree! The digital marketing strategy employed by our company is a little part of the company's overall strategy. So, if our digital strategy will be successful, it will contribute towards the productivity of our overall strategy (Respondent I, Assistant Manager, Marketing)"

From the response mentioned above, it can be said that a digital marketing strategy can be a part of the overall strategy; hence it plays a vital role in terms of helping the company achieve its goals such as high profitability, lowering of cost, and maintaining a sustainable position in the market.

Theme 7: Use of the effective strategy based on strategic fit to gain outcome.

The respondents asked this question to know if social media marketing plays a vital role in terms of the promotion of business. All the responses which were obtained were positive. One respondent said:

"I already explained the importance of digital marketing strategies for the SMEs in the manufacturing sector. The promotion of the business is also possible but only if social media marketing is done in an efficient manner (Respondent F, Manager, Operations)."

From this response, it can be said that the manager was in favour that with the help of efficient social media marketing by the manufacturing companies in the SME sector, can promote their business. Although it is essential to consider that an

appropriate approach to develop through the strategic framework will provide the desired outcome. Similarly, another respondent has said:

"When a company launches their social media campaign, they are able to gain the attention of their target marketing and potential, which means increased awareness, and it consequently leads to increased sales and revenue (Respondent A, General Manager)."

This respondent has said that through effective social media campaigns, the company can increase its awareness, which ultimately leads to increased conversion. However, a manager was working in Company C who said:

"I know that there are various advantages of social media marketing; however, I won't say that it directly promotes the business because it aims towards increasing awareness and communication. For a manufacturing company, the production process is more important, and it contributes towards the promotion of business".

From the analysis of this response, it can be said that this manager believed that social media strategy is aimed towards increasing communication and recognition among the customers. However, production and manufacturing are the crucial aspects that contribute to the success and promotion of the company. Overall, the responses obtained from the managers of the textile SMEs in Pakistan show that most of them agreed that social media marketing contributes towards the promotion of business, while a few managers said that it could only be a part of the awareness and recognition campaign.

Theme 8: Specific digital marketing platform for SMEs in a developing country.

The rationale for asking the question was to determine any specific digital marketing platform important for SMEs in developing countries. There were various responses provided by the managers in which one of the managers had stated that:

"In my opinion, the most effective digital marketing platform is LinkedIn which I think is a B2B advertising platform. Most of the SMEs in the developing country utilise LinkedIn mostly as its ads can target professional people. It also supports the SMEs in developing the perception among the customers, investors, and shareholders as what the executives aim to target (Respondent C, Manager, Operations)."

Another participant had stated that:

"I think the only specific digital marketing tool that was effective for the awareness of the companies is LinkedIn. Through LinkedIn, we can share the number of employees

working along with their skills and talent. Furthermore, we share our vision and mission with the public through LinkedIn (Respondent F, Manager, communication and marketing)."

Based on the responses provided by the managers, it can be understood that many of the marketers of SMEs consider using LinkedIn for providing a professional look about the companies in the marketing. In contrast, many of the participants had disagreed with having a specified digital marketing platform. It can be considered that responses can demonstrate the individuals thinking, although literature demonstrates against these responses and shows that Facebook is the highly used platform in Pakistan, and reasonable adjustment in the strategy can probably benefit more.

Other contradicting responses provided by the different managers belonging to different textile companies had been provided below in which another respondent who is the assistant manager had stated that:

"I think there is no specified digital marketing platform for SMEs, as the businesses are required to use a mixture of digital marketing platforms for effectively reaching the target market as well as creating awareness in the market (Respondent I, Assistant Manager, Marketing)."

Another participant had indicated:

"For reaching to our targeted customer, we mainly focus on email marketing in which we provide any new related news, product or others to our targeted customers through the email marketing (Respondent G, Manager and Operations)."

Another manager had indicated:

"We had been focusing on various digital marketing rather than a specific type of advertisement, such as focusing on SEO, SEM and websites (Respondent J, Manager and Marketing)."

Based on the above responses, it can be stated that there is not a specific type of digital marketing platform for SMEs as some intend to use websites while others focus on email marketing. The literature reviewed previously can also demonstrate the suitability of the platform based on the target audience and relevant variability. It is essential to consider that the main focus can be linked with the resource-based or market-based view, which can determine the use of a particular platform to develop total value to the customer throughout the customer journey. Literature is able to identify the variability which exists due to the change exist within each organisation.

Theme 9: Competitiveness of digital marketing based on lean-to reach optimum development.

Another question raised among the marketing managers of Pakistani textile companies 'Do digital marketing campaigns for SMEs bring competitiveness to the manufacturing business? Based on the question, one of the participants had responded that.

"Since the cost of digital marketing campaigns is low compared to the other medium; therefore, many of the SMEs had been utilising digital marketing for its advertising campaigns. This has ultimately resulted in causing high competitiveness in the market (Respondent B, Assistant Manager Operations)."

Another participant stated that:

"Yes! I agree that digital marketing campaign supports SMEs manufacturing in being competitive. In these times, it is important to have strong marketing activities for differentiating itself from the competitor as well as increasing the number of sales (Respondent I, Assistant Manager Marketing)."

The responses provided by the managers clearly state that digital marketing campaigns can be highly important for SMEs in bringing competitiveness. The rationale is linked with the changing technologies, innovation and market orientation brought by the digital era. The literature demonstrates the importance of market orientation compared to the product /production orientation, which brings consistent development for the organisations. It is essential to consider that the factor of innovation within the campaigns will bring a sustainable outcome.

Other contradicting responses had been provided below in which one of the managers had indicated that:

"I don't know that whether a digital marketing campaign provides competitiveness to the business as we have never conducted a digital marketing campaign. We are only using email marketing for creating awareness about the company (Respondent G, Manager, Operations)"

The above statement is able to demonstrate that not every organisation is using a structured and comprehensive approach towards digital marketing campaigns. The usability of digital tools is limited, which entirely depends on the individual scenario of the organisations. There could be several reasons behind this, including lacking basic know-how to the myth around digital marketing tools, which says that organisations can only use it with more extensive resources. The capability of the organisation as discussed in literature through RBV.

Another participant had indicated that:

"As stated earlier, the digital marketing activities are conducted at many channels such as Facebook, Instagram ... our website. These campaigns have helped us out in increasing our global reach and thus improving our sales margin (Respondent D, Assistant Marketing manager)."

As per the above statement, it can be stated that a digital marketing campaign can increase competitiveness as it increases global reach. The other competitiveness that the digital marketing campaign could bring is an increase in sales and profits. As most organisations are looking to achieve the optimum level in terms of their development and looking to utilise the resources at their best, they have to consider the overall synergy created by the digital marketing tools and require improving any possibly lacking areas.

Theme10: Effective use of digital marketing tools.

The rationale for asking the question was to determine whether the SMEs are able to obtain proper feedback on product sales through online channels. Based on the question, the following are positive responses provided by the participant in which one respondent had stated that:

"Our company is mainly focusing on the use of Facebook, which not only allows us to share our products with the customers but also gain their feedback. The feedback we usually gain from the customers are positive; however, we often had received negative feedback on Facebook, which had enabled us to further improve our product through focusing on those negative feedback (Respondent D, Assistant Management of Marketing)."

Another participant had indicated that:

"We had been using Facebook for many years on receiving the concerns of our loyal customers as well as the posts provided by the customer allows us to further enhance the quality of our product and Service (Respondent E, Manager Marketing)".

Based on the above responses and data analysed in literature review, it can be identified that Facebook can be considered as an effective social media platform for gaining the customers' reviews and feedback that also support the organisation in further enhancing its products and services reach. It also demonstrates that digital marketing tools can be useful retention tools to connect with the existing customers, improving brand loyalty. On the other hand, a contradictory response had been provided below:

One of the managers had said that:

"I don't believe that digital marketing is an effective tool for receiving feedback as in most cases we usually receive direct emails or phone calls from our client that provides feedback regarding the product sold (Respondent G, Manager and Operation)."

Another manager had stated that:

"Our website feature, which is online customer support, had helped us in gaining the relevant feedback from gaining responses from the customers. We are giving close attention to our online customer support as it helps in creating long term customers (Respondent J, Manager of Marketing)"

The responses had been provided by the participants in which some of the participants had outlined that they immediately gain feedback on the product sold regarding their product quality from online customer support through the website. At the same time, one of the managers was disagreed to consider digital marketing an effective tool for receiving feedback. Although the literature demonstrates that digital marketing is able to provide a customised approach toward specific target audiences and in response, organisations can expect to get detailed feedback that can help them develop their continuous improvement approach and get the optimum outcome.

Theme 11: Challenges faced in effectively implementing a digital marketing strategy.

The rationale for asking the question was to determine the challenges managers face in implementing a digital marketing strategy. One of the managers said that.

"There are numbers of challenges that are faced during the implementation of digital marketing strategy as the main problem is to determine what specific digital marketing platform to use as there is a high range of platforms available; therefore, it causes a major challenge for us as selecting an improper can result in wastage of time and resources (Respondent D, Assistant Manager)."

Similarly, the respondent had indicated that:

"The most difficult challenge for us textile industry is to select the effective content to advertise that would lead towards creating awareness and attracting the customers (Respondent I, Manager Marketing)."

Based on the participants' responses, there are a number of challenges faced by the marketing managers, such as selecting digital marketing channels, content to post in digital marketing, and increasing visibility. The literature previously reviewed is able to identify that SMEs seem not to be keeping pace with digital developments, primarily

because of the lack of knowledge of digital marketing. Most of the time, SMEs are unable to apply the maximum capacity of the diversified digital marketing tools available, resulting in not benefiting fully from them.

Other contradictory responses provided from the respondents had been illustrated below:

"We have been focusing on only email marketing, which isn't much of a challenge for us as we are only required to send emails to our loyal customers regarding new announcements (Respondent H, Manager of marketing)"

Another participant had indicated that:

"Well, one of the challenges for us is having skilled employees that can effectively use social media marketing for raising followers and increasing traffics on our website and Facebook (Respondent C, Manager of Operations)."

The responses above provide a different challenge. One of the participants indicated that skilled employees conducting social media marketing had become a challenge that can effectively increase followers and traffics on the website and social media platforms if they could tackle this challenge. The literature is also able to identify the lack of skilled professional in digital marketing as a challenge across the world that restrict the full potential of digital marketing tools and techniques.

Theme 12: Challenges faced in devising a practical competitive strategy framework for SMEs.

Another question raised among the participant was 'what are the challenges faced by managers in devising an effective competitive strategy for SMEs?' A few of the related challenges have been provided below:

"As I mentioned before, the competition among the textile industry in Pakistan is strong; it is difficult for us to devise an effective competitive strategy. The common challenges that are faced in the textile industry are to differentiate ourselves from the competitors. We provide almost similar products; however, the only things that enable us to differentiate ourselves are through the product quality; therefore, high investments are made to improve the overall quality (Respondent C, Manager of Operations)."

Similarly, another participant had indicated that:

"Well, there are a number of factors that need to overlook when devising an effective competitive strategy, such as what strategy are the competitors using to promote the product? What kind of prices had they set for their product? How better is their quality"

compared to ours? These factors are highly needed to consider when developing the strategy (Respondent A, General Manager).

Based on the responses provided by the managers, it is identified that the competition level is significantly high in the textile industry; therefore, the marketing managers must conduct heavy research among the competitors in designing successful strategies while requiring a lean strategic framework that can help to optimise the benefits of digital marketing for the overall development.

Another participant had highlighted that:

"It has become a priority for the SMEs in devising effective competitive strategy, but due to the changing environment caused by technology, there are high numbers of challenges faced in developing an effective competitive strategy (Respondent B, Assistant Manager, Operations).

Based on the responses, the competition level in the textile industry had significantly increased, which had mainly resulted from the dynamic changing environment and variability among the stakeholders. The companies must develop effective strategies such as differentiating themselves from the competitors by focusing on the 4Ps of the marketing mix and implementing new technologies for reducing its cost and improving the quality of the product.

4.5: Discussions of research findings

Objective 1: To identify the role of digital marketing in the development of SMEs' competitiveness.

The study's first objective was to identify the role of digital marketing in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) concerning organisational development to bring competitiveness. Based on the study of Smith (2010), many SMEs have started to adopt digital marketing strategies for reaching their potential customers, which brings a lot of variabilities in the way approaching the target segments while using the diversified tools and techniques. Similarly, the study by Jones and Alford (n.d.) indicated that digital marketing for SMEs plays a vital role as it enables the firms to increase their geographical range, minimises expenses, increase customer awareness, and increase conversion. From the literature analysis, it has been determined that digital marketing has played a vital role in promoting small and medium-sized enterprises. Through the secondary findings, it has been obtained that various advantages are associated with using digital marketing tools. Pawar (2014) presented that firms tend to focus on digital marketing tools because of the associated benefits. The benefits include reduction of expenses and improvisation of customer service. It is also evident from the conceptual framework of this research that SMEs' strategic fit tends to bring sustainability while the findings are able to demonstrate the positive relationship between digital marketing (tools and techniques) and SMEs strategic fit.

The comprehensive and successful implementation of digital marketing strategies for small and medium firms can enhance the presence in the market while also helping the SMEs to gain overall development, which also addresses the external growth and internal transformation in processes. Due to the feasibility of digital marketing, it can result in causing significant positive impacts such as accessing the content and gaining information regarding the customers to deliver the customised experience. In this regard, the use of modern disruptive technologies as mentioned in the literature (e.g. IoT, AI, AR etc.) can add value. According to the model presented by Rettie (2003), it has been found that due to the emergence of the internet, the traditional marketing dynamics have been replaced comprehensively. Companies nowadays are striving towards many to many communication dynamics, as mentioned in the literature by Rettie (2003). Similar to the results obtained from the literature analysis, this research has also indicated that digital marketing tools play a significant role in

the organisation's overall development depending on the objectives identified by the organisation and the availability of the implementation framework. Therefore, digital marketing has a positive impact on the organisation as it covers internal and external competitiveness.

Objective 2: To identify the factors that influence the adoption of digital marketing strategies in developing country's SMEs.

The second objective that the researcher had proposed was to highlight the key factors which can significantly influence small and medium-sized enterprises in the developing economy to adopt digital marketing strategies and make use of digital marketing strategic models. Based on the study of Ekhlassi, Maghsoodi and Mehrmanesh (2012), many of the SMEs in the developing economy had been adopting digital marketing strategies for customer relationship management. The use of digital marketing has provided a medium to the organisation in managing the customer across the globe easily irrespective of the geographic location. Another factor that influences SMEs to adopt a digital marketing strategy is the social media marketing tool, as it helps the owners and management meet the needs of the customers and marketing on the market. It is considered an effective tool for sales traffic generation (Cindy and Hatem, 2011). The last factor to influence the adoption of digital marketing is the e-commerce-based platform, as it enhances the organisation's presence in the market.

The literature review analysis has pointed out that several factors are responsible for influencing SMEs in regard to the adoption of digital marketing strategies. The organisational structure is found to be an essential factor that influences digital marketing strategy adoption. It has been inferred by the findings of Sosiawani and Mustafa (2015) contributed that it is the duty of the organisation to engage itself with the employees in a way that their perception is changed for the company's benefit. The literature has also indicated that organisational culture and structure cannot be neglected when an organisation focuses on achieving long term strategic outcomes. Several researchers have come in support of the stance mentioned above. Ghemawat (2002) has pointed out through his research that the hierarchical level of the companies tends to influence their outcomes rather than the number of resources they use. Another theoretical model referred to in this case is the one proposed by Lewis and Boyer (2007), which has pointed out that organisational values contribute significantly towards building positive consensus among the stakeholders of an

organisation. This means that if the organisation focuses on matching the optimum level of organisational culture, it must focus on granting the appropriate level of organisational value. The analysis of literature indicates that corporate image also plays an important role. The primary findings of this research have also pointed out that culture, structure, and organisation values play an essential role in shaping the adoption of strategies such as digital marketing strategies.

A specific study conducted by Nazir & Zhu (2018) analysed as part of the literature analysis previously determined that lack of entrepreneurship approach, availability of professional e-commerce skills, absence of innovation awareness among the society (innovation culture), lower literacy rate and owner-managers characteristics are the major factors that influence the adoption of electronic commerce within the SMEs of Pakistan as a developing economy. This research demonstrates that the factors mentioned above playing an integral role in the successful adoption and a structured strategy adoption framework will benefit the SMEs specific to that region because most of these factors can be resolved with the lean-approach.

Objective 3: To understand how digital marketing facilitates the performance of developing country SMEs in the textile industry through the strategic framework.

The last objective of the study was to analyse how a digital marketing strategy framework can enable small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the textile manufacturing industry to accomplish the overall organisational development and growth. The objective was successfully achieved by conducting a questionnaire survey with the employees and interviews with the management. The primary research results indicated that digital marketing can be vital for SMEs for accomplishing the overall organisational development, which is linked to 3 key variables determined from the analyses of the literature SMEs' strategic fit, Competitive strategy and Digital marketing (tools and techniques).

Here, it is also essential to understand the literature because the literature has been the basis of the development of the data collection tools and the variable identification. Literature review had helped in terms of triangulating the primary findings of this research. The current framework of digital marketing strategies that SMEs use is fragile and fundamental. Some of the SMEs across the globe tend to adopt the pay-per-click technique (one of the digital marketing tools) only to enhance the company's reach towards its customers. As per the working principle of PPC, firms tend to place

sponsored ads on a specific platform that makes it easier for the customers to approach the value proposition. The conceptual framework identified the role of SMEs strategic fit, which focuses on the external environment by using the enterprise capabilities. The literature can also identify the sustainability triggers in the form of technology and innovation, which can help the SMEs gain overall successful development by using an effective digital marketing-based strategic framework.

Digital marketing has a significant influence on the competitive strategy development, which enables the firm to differentiate itself from the competitors and increase awareness and reach to the customers by using the Resource-based or Market-based approach. The responses gained from the participants and respondents had highlighted that digital marketing is critical in the digital era while the overall management capabilities also play an essential role to ring the competitive strategy implementation. The role of digital marketing is important as it supports creating awareness while also achieving short term and long-term goals.

The organisational development of any SME can improve if it can achieve a number of advantages, such as increased performance and productivity (Church and Oliver, 2002). The detailed analysis of the conceptual framework also coincides with the primary and secondary results because it shows the Digital marketing's (tools and techniques) suitability based on the organisation's overall goals. It can also identify the implementation and measurability of these tools and techniques to achieve the optimum level outcome. One of the biggest concerns for any SME worldwide is the cost factor while adopting and implementing any strategy. Literature can provide a consistent solution in the form of a continuous improvement approach through lean, as mentioned in the literature. Using a digital marketing-based strategic framework can support the SMEs to tackle this fear of cost and enable them to achieve the advantages mentioned above. The findings based on the primary data collected can interpret this outcome and support the development of a strategic framework.

The findings demonstrate the variability of digital marketing tools selected by the companies based on the competitive strategy approach. The literature is able to identify the factors including environmental factors and management approach which are the key attributes of competitive strategy are the drivers of the tool and techniques selection in digital marketing. The literature related to the growth models also demonstrating that the impact of these factors is high.

4.6: The proposed strategic framework

4.6.1: Link with a conceptual framework

The business environment, along with the customer preferences and requirements, has been evolving over the years. The change in such a volatile scenario has made it daunting for firms to establish a sustainable position in the industry and lead to comprehensive development. In this regard, digital marketing has been considered one of the major revolutions that impacted the way firms carry out their operations. Through digital marketing (tools and techniques), companies have been able to approach and attract a vast number of customers towards them, which eventually leads to higher revenues and profits.

The conceptual frame developed in chapter 2 based on the identified literature and the comprehensive analysis, addressed the three key variables which allowed to draw the competitive strategic framework based on the digital marketing linked with lean management in the context of SMEs in the textile manufacturing sector in developing economy (Pakistan). The strategic framework developed is based on the literature and data analysis which facilitate the identified variables:

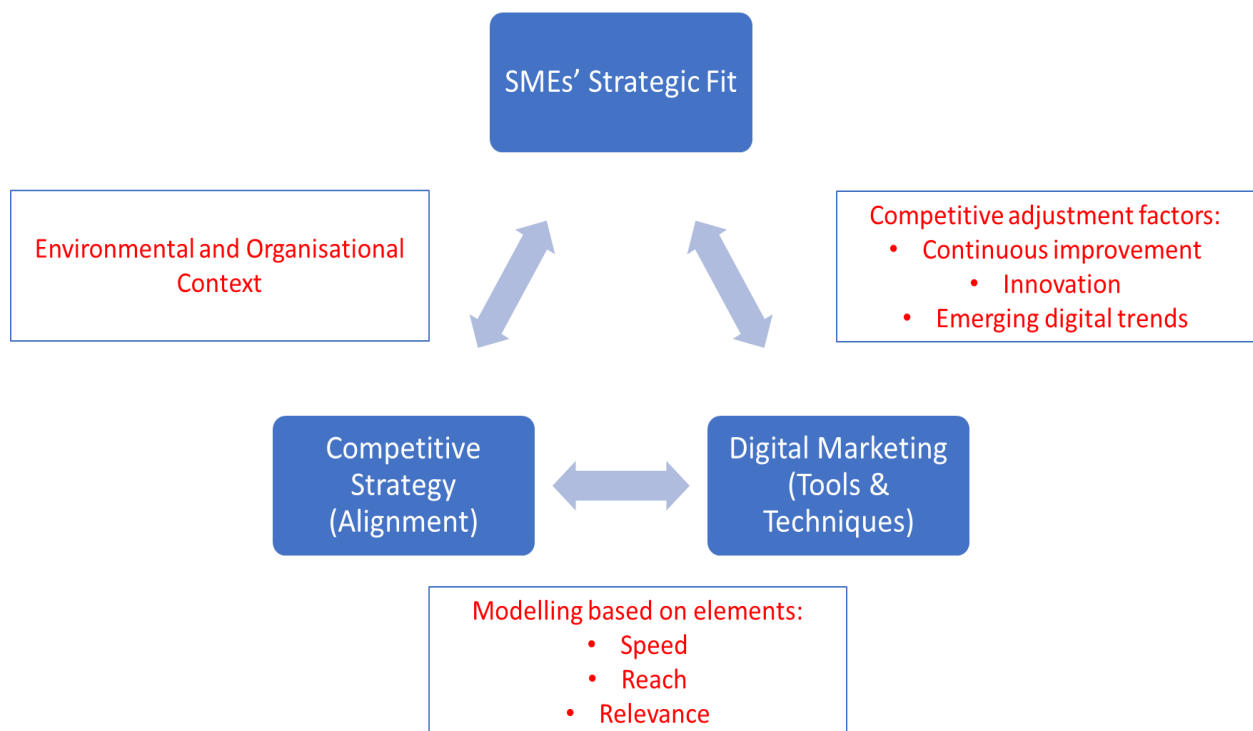


Figure 4.21: Elements of Strategic Framework

(Source: Author)

The elements of the strategic framework identified above can demonstrate the context-specific approaches, which in this study is manufacturing SMEs in developing economies. It is based on the comprehensively discussed variables through the literature and the data collected to understand the best-fit approach. It is essential to understand that it is vital to keep the research context, specifically where the selected context was based on the SMEs in the textile manufacturing industry in a developing economy (Pakistan).

There is consistent and comprehensive relationship exists between all three variables. The relation between SMEs' strategic fit and competitive strategy required a total alignment based on the clear understanding of factors linked with the organisational and environmental context. It is essential that previously it is identified as part of the conceptual framework (Chapter 2) that the alignment of RBV and MBV is required, providing the supportive approach towards the development, and understanding of the strategic framework. Its means organisation resource availability and market expectations are considered to support the relevant development and should be aligned with the external environment, including customers, competitors, etc.

The elements of the strategic framework demonstrate the relationship between the competitive strategy and digital marketing (tools and techniques); due to the dynamic nature of the market environment, it is essential that any tool or technique selected to support the competitive strategy should be able to demonstrate the agility to demonstrate suitability based on the internal and external factors. The literature identified and mentioned in the conceptual framework that the factors are based on innovation, development, and technology. These are interpreted for the strategic framework as innovation where creativity and commercial value exist while applying any digital marketing tool and technique. In the same context, the development is interpreted as the continuous improvement (growth and transformation, etc.), which adopting the tool and technique can bring within the specific organisational context. Due to the dynamic environment, the technology is described as emerging trends to support stakeholders' expectations. It is essential to recognise that the context is specific to the textile manufacturing SMEs and they require specific approach/support due to the existing organisational culture and the processes within these SMEs in the developing economy. Although selected organisations for this research were considered based on the criteria defined by SMEDA to be categorised as an SME and collected data represented that importance of innovation, development, and

technology is integral to support and achievement of the organisational objectives, which indeed identified as overall customer value (based on acquisition, conversion and retention). At the same time, digital marketing tools and techniques can provide the support to obtain all those approaches. The strategic framework can interpret the aspects as mentioned above through the elements of speed (demonstrated through the agility of the digital marketing to make it feasible for the SMEs to adopt), reach (accessibility of digital marketing tools and techniques for the SMEs and specific customer segment) and relevance (suitability of the digital marketing to the specific customer segment). The elements are overall able to demonstrate the SAF (suitability, acceptability, feasibility) criteria.

The third relationship is demonstrated between the SMEs strategic fit and the digital marketing (tools and techniques). As defined previously, the context is manufacturing SMEs, and the processes are expected to be aligned with the objective of optimisation because SMEs expect to gain optimisation due to the limited availability of resources. In this regard, the concept of lean management identified in the literature, which is according to Dewell (2007) based on two main aspects:

- Eliminate waste and non-value-activity (NVA) within the process
- Have respect for people, which means holding people accountable to the system, following it and improving it (the idea of continuous improvement).

4.6.2: Strategic framework development

The categorisation model presented through the literature which is demonstrating the steps involved in the application of the strategic framework,

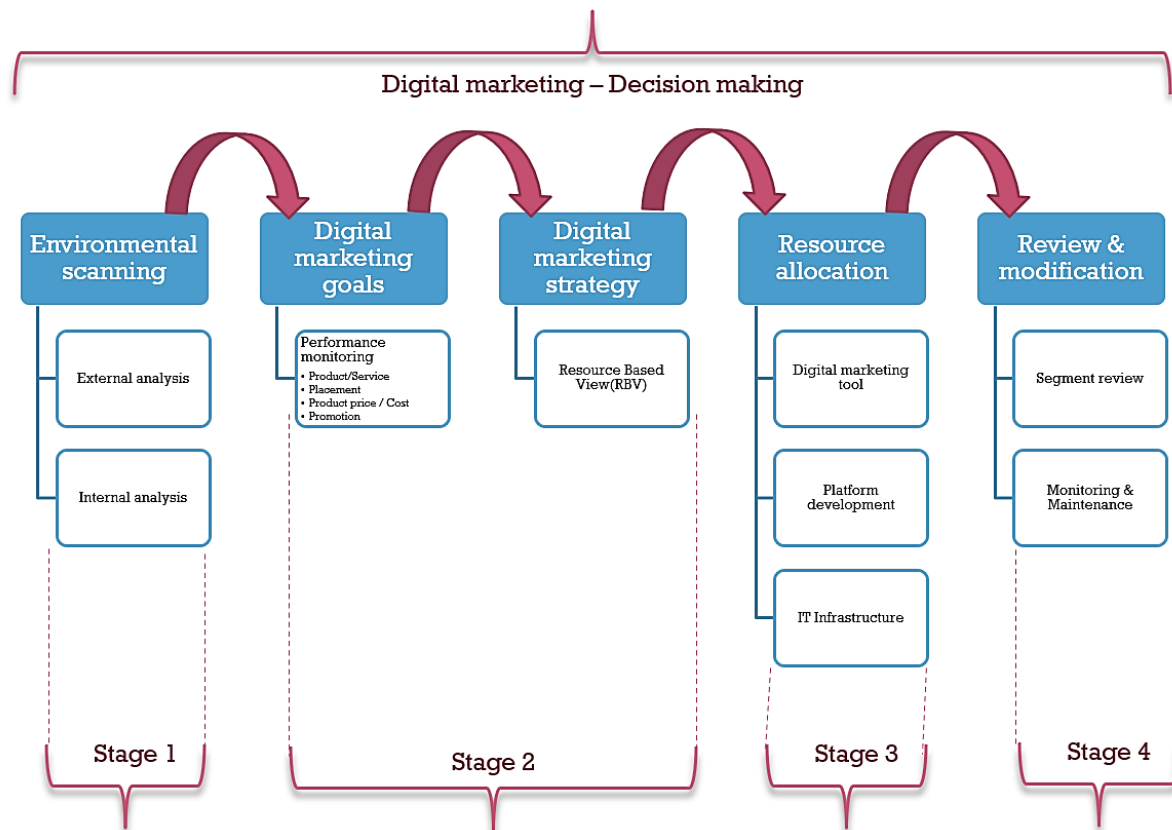


Figure 4.22: Literature based - Categorization model

(Source: Author)

The above-mentioned model will be supportive approach toward the application of the framework.

By introducing the lean management approach within the context of developing economy and specifically the manufacturing SME, it is something only for the big organisation that can be improved. For the effective implementation of this approach, another supportive model was developed, which is based on the "Toyota Production System house" (also known as House of Lean (HOL). At the same time (Womack, Jones and Roos, (1990) identified the fundamental lean principles in the book "The Machine That Changed the World", and the collected data in this research represents

the use of digital marketing categorisation based on these principles to demonstrate the competitiveness.



Figure 4.23: Lean Principles

(Source: Lean Enterprise Institute, 2019)

- The context regarding the first principle interprets that in the case of SMEs, the stakeholder can identify the value digital marketing tools and techniques can bring within the organisation and effectiveness of them can be interpreted through the literature linked with the use of the digital platform in Pakistan (identified the statistics related to Pakistan). It mentioned that a significant customer segment uses digital marketing platforms to access information.
- The application of the second principle is directly linked with the value streams each tool and technique provide and the relevant customisation of it based on the identified customer segment, which can challenge any non-value-added activity/step, which could create barrier towards the creation of competitiveness and value.
- The third principle is linked with the flow of the consistent outcome based on the specific sequencing towards the target stakeholder. The tools available through digital marketing can provide a consistent outcome towards the target stakeholder and can demonstrate the continuous value addition with the relevant flexibility to adjust it as per the dynamic internal/external environment.

- The fourth principle, which is linked with the pull between all steps, can also be satisfied through digital marketing tools. Each tool and technique contain individualistic value creation. The value development is linked with the stakeholder's perception of the specific tool the target stakeholder can pull.
- The fifth principle is linked with continuous improvement to reach the level of perfection. The speciality of digital marketing tools and techniques is that they are linked with the technology, and there is continuous development and emergent approaches within the technology which allow the use of the suitable model for continuous improvement.

A suggested House of Lean model (HOL) specifically with the context of manufacturing SMEs in developing economies is mentioned to demonstrate the Strategic framework with the basic approach linked with the development of competitiveness. At the same time, digital marketing (tools and techniques) is used.

The House of Lean model identified in the literature mentioned below:

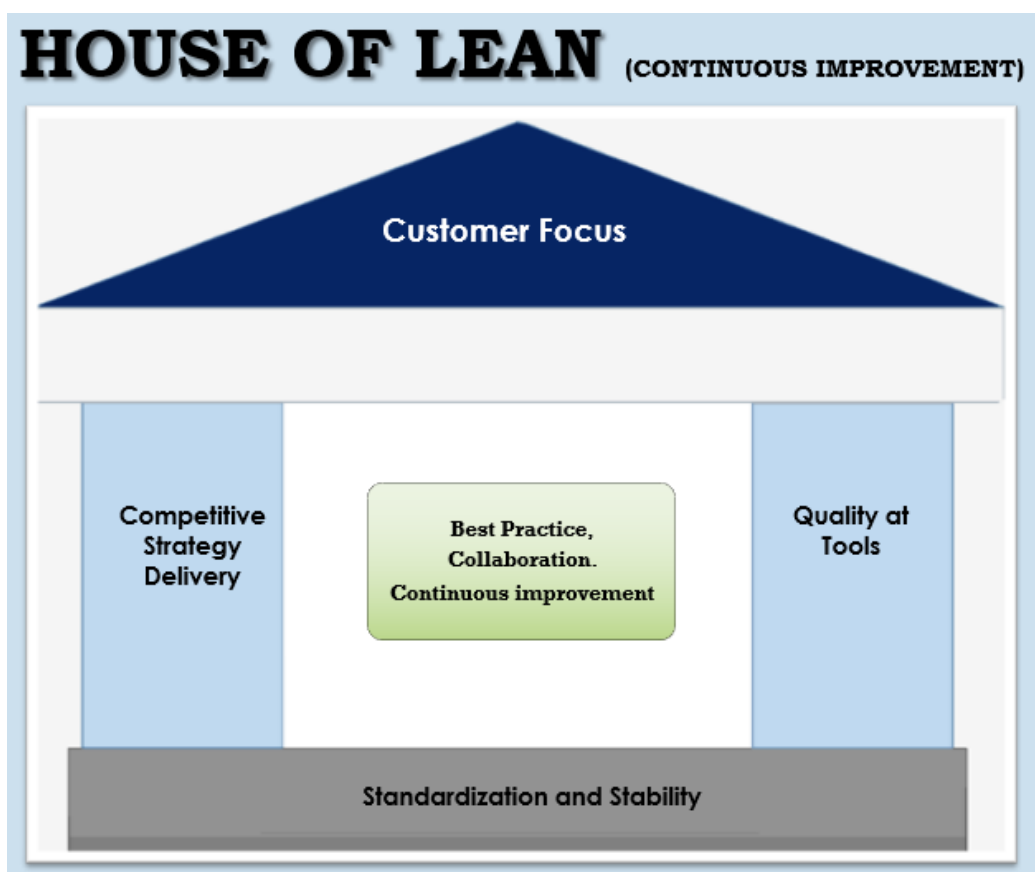


Figure 4.24: House of Lean (Framework)

(Source: Author)

The textile manufacturing SMEs in Pakistan have been facing several issues regarding overall development, including sustainability and growth, which leads to the need for practical, sustainable marketing strategies. Through digital marketing, firms have been able to reach out to a more extensive set of customers and enhance their impact on target segments. People tend to spend most of their free time on the internet; promotions made through such mediums may be highly impactful.

On the other hand, one of the other significant benefits of digital marketing has been identified as cost-effectiveness. Through the use of the internet and digital platforms, firms have been allowed to reach out to large audiences and make a significant impact, along with incurring lower costs related to marketing activities. This cost-saving element has turned out to be highly beneficial for SMEs as they have financial and non-financial resources with a high need to market their products and services.

Consequently, cost-saving aspects and reduced overhead costs could assist the brand in charging lower prices for their products, which may further establish a competitive advantage. SME manufacturing companies have further been observed using the digital marketing technique to approach the customers, resulting in varied benefits to businesses in this sector. With digital marketing platforms, brand awareness among customers also augments, leading to higher attraction towards the company.

Understanding that digital marketing has been highly beneficial for companies, it must also be realised that firms face several challenges and issues in ensuring effective implementation. While developing a digital market-based strategy, firms must decide the platforms used to reach out to the customers. Various platforms have been established in digital marketing tools and selecting the most appropriate approach could be highly critical for companies.

Regarding the textile industry, another major challenge is related to selecting content that will be used for the customer to get the customer attention and make sure that ample information is available to the number of customers for them to be attracted towards the brand. On the other hand, it has also been observed that businesses must have the right set of skilled employees who can carry out the required activities effectively to develop and implement effective digital marketing strategies. These employees may turn out to be significantly adding value towards the efficiency of marketing strategy, and so keen attention and focus must be given towards it.

On the other hand, developing an effective competitive strategy is also highly imperative and critical for businesses in the textile industry. Competition has been

increasing over the years, making it challenging for companies to establish a unique and significant position in the industry. The fact that every company is striving to develop a good market share and attract customers may get highly daunting for firms to ensure optimum efficiency and results. By combining digital marketing models and quality, digital marketing tools can create total value.

It has further been understood that price, quality, marketing, and other elements are considered the most critical aspects for firms that wish to attain a competitive edge. Price and quality could be regarded as the core elements which may allow customers to either get attracted towards a particular brand or leave it. Having said this, firms must give keen attention and focus on these two aspects to augment their performance where the digital marketing tools can help the SMEs project it comprehensively for the overall comprehensive outcome. Consequently, marketing in the contemporary environment has also been regarded as equally essential to companies as effective marketing may attract a higher set of consumers.

HOUSE OF LEAN (CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT)

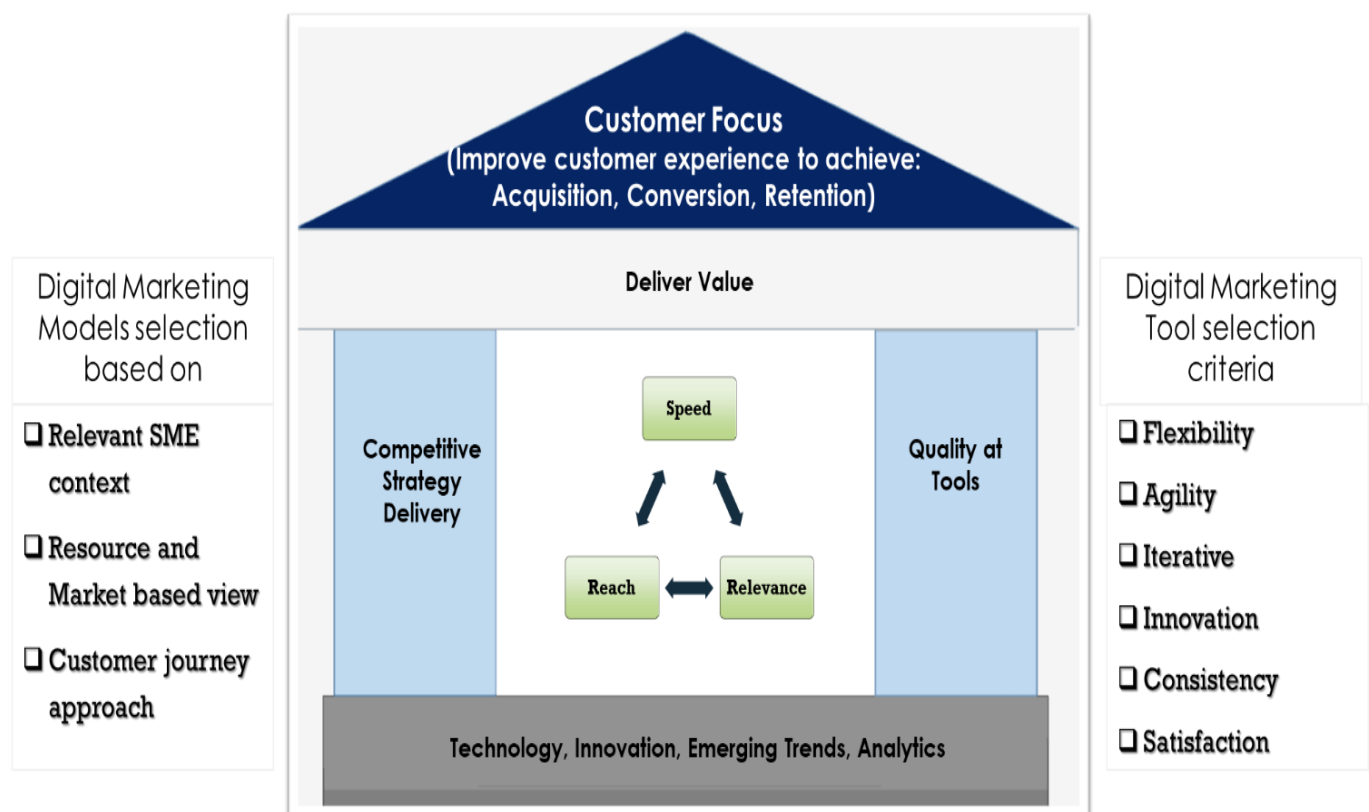


Figure 4.25: House of Lean (Proposed strategic framework)

(Source: Author)

The proposed HOL Strategic Framework considered the above explanation compressively and supported the overall competitiveness. The floor is based on initial analysis linked with the technology, innovation, emerging trends and analytics, which can provide the firm basis to establish a comprehensive competitive outcome.

The walls of HOL present the competitive strategy delivery by selecting suitable digital marketing models based on SME context. The SME context can be focused on Resource-based and/or market-based alignment, while the overall customer journey must be considered. The other wall signifies the importance of quality based digital marketing tools where there is suggested tool selection criteria identified which includes:

- Flexibility
- Agility
- Iterative
- Innovation
- Consistency
- Satisfaction

These walls get the strength from the elements of speed, reach and relevance to support the first layer of the roof, demonstrating the value delivery for the target customer. The value identification varies based on customer value; speed, reach, and relevance are more important.

Finally, the roof of HOL focuses on a comprehensive customer experience. The experience can be transferred into the acquisition, conversion or retention based on the identified objective of the organisation. It is essential to consider that the successful use of this framework is directly linked with the correct identification of the target segment.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of the research

This thesis examines the development of a competitive strategic framework for small and medium-sized manufacturing firms functioning in the textile manufacturing industry of the developing country. In addition to this, the research study recommends that small and medium-sized manufacturers in the textile manufacturing industry use digital marketing tools and strategies to develop competitiveness for sustainable organisation development and growth. The implication of digital marketing will initiate competitiveness (internally and externally). Thus it can allow small and medium-sized manufacturing firms functioning in the textile manufacturing industry of the developing country to attain a competitive advantage in the global environment (Taiminen and Karjaluoto, 2015).

This research uses the mixed method where the primary data is collected through the survey questionnaire and interview, the data collected from the individuals working in SMEs of the textile manufacturing industry. The SMEs were selected from the database provided by the SMEDA (Small and Medium Enterprise Authority) in Pakistan. Data was collected between 2017 & 2018.

The main findings had been mainly concentrated on developing the competitive strategic framework through digital marketing for the manufacturing SMEs in the developing economy with the context of lean management. The main focus of SMEs is to gain a competitive advantage and bring sustainability with which they can be in better position to explore the global opportunities.

5.2: Contributions to the literature

In addition to practical implications, the study also contributed to existing literature. This study contributed to the current understanding of how different organisational environment factors can lead to identifying latent variables associated with SMEs within the developing economy. The holistic analysis of this study added to existing research by identifying three critical variables that are integral for developing a specific

strategic framework to facilitate overall organisational development, the variables include competitive strategy, strategic fit and digital marketing. There was limitation in relation to the analysis of the variables and their suitability while the information was not considered previously, specifically for the specific region and within the SME context. The study confirmed the relationship exists between the variables although it is weak relationship, and it allowed to use of a traditional manufacturing-based model (HOL) to be used as the strategic framework for manufacturing SMEs for the adoption of digital marketing-based tools and techniques to gain competitive advantage where the consideration given to the lean management concept. The application of the framework can be through the categorisation model presented through the existing literature.

It has been understood that developing and understanding the elements of a competitive strategy is essential for organisations to sustain their position in the industry and lead to growth and overall development. It could be observed that SMEs can align their resources with management activities and capabilities through the development of competitive strategy. Resource allocation could be considered one of the most critical and imperative approaches through which organisations establish sustainability for an extended period. The fact that competition and work complexities have been augmenting continuously due to the dynamic business environment has become increasingly difficult for firms to allocate their available resources in the best possible manner. Furthermore, it has also been assessed that competitive strategy assists in increasing the capabilities such as innovation, research and development, and technological advancement of the organisation, particularly SMEs. This statement becomes clearer and clearer to understand how the alignment of an effective competitive strategy may positively impact organisations.

On the other hand, the significance of digital marketing has also been assessed. It has been identified that digital marketing (tools and techniques) assists SMEs to enhance their exposure while comprehending trends and demands in the market. There is variability demonstrated through the quantitative and qualitative data analysis in relation to the selection of the tools by the relevant organisations. The variation can be because of the number of other factors which can be based on environmental factors and management approaches. Through digital marketing, organisations have been allowed to explore and understand the dynamics of marketing and consumer changing behaviour. It is fact that firms can approach and interact with a large audience from one platform augments the firm's exposure and understanding of their

market. On the other hand, this leads to providing large sets of data that could be converted into useful information related to demands and trends in the market with the identification of emerging technology and trends in the specific market and can lead towards the supportive approach in the decision-making process.

Furthermore, many employees agree that SMEs currently are capitalising upon social media and email as prime channels to communicate with customers although there is potential to explore at broader spectrum and look for the possibilities. Through these platforms, the customers interact with the company and conveyed their concerns and reviews. This leads to satisfying the customers and turns out to be beneficial for organisations as they remain aware of the preferences and problems of customers. The ability to effectively communicate with the customers has allowed firms to develop good relations with the customers and develop a sense of loyalty. This further could be regarded as one of the significant benefits to firms functioning in such a dynamic environment. The digital marketing tools can enable to enhance the reach of the SMEs and can enable them to explore the global opportunities as few mentioned in chapter 1 for the textile manufacturing SMEs in Pakistan.

While competition is increasing for most industries, numerous SMEs go through immense competition for most of their operating years. Not only the competitions are fierce, but they also tend to last for a considerably long time. Understanding this, it could further be concluded that effective strategy development is critical for organisations falling under this category. This further leads to understanding a related concept that defines the need of SMEs in developing countries to have an effective competitive strategy to promote business and practical implementation with evaluation. Markets in developing countries are very complicated with many drivers, and they may be regarded as having a more challenging competitive situation. As consumer buying power is a supportive force, firms often have to strive forwards and hard to attract customers and be involved in business activities to gain market competitiveness. Moreover, it has been identified that SMEs provide a creative path for entrepreneurs who utilise digital marketing tools to promote their businesses. Digital marketing has opened new dynamics to business, which has further enabled organisations to establish different strategies under this approach to attain maximum benefits.

Considering the relationship of variables, the competitive strategy has been found to have a strong positive relationship with SMEs' strategic fit in a developing country. In contrast, digital marketing has been found to have a weak positive relationship with

the SMEs' strategic fit in Pakistan with the number of driving factors involved in it which considered as internal and external factors related to the organisation. The significance level of both competitive strategy and digital marketing is 0.000, which indicates a good relationship with the SMEs strategic fit. Therefore, it could be deduced that both digital marketing and competitive strategy play an imperative role in the manufacturing SMEs' strategic fit in developing countries.

Designing a strategic framework has been observed to be highly significant and imperative in gaining an edge over competitors. The particular industry has been found to have great competition at national and global level while it is the driving force of the country. Therefore, it has been considered highly critical for firms to use the strategic framework to implement a competitive strategy through which a considerable position in the market could be established. It has further been explored which factors and specific strategies allow the firm to gain a competitive advantage. In this regard, mixed responses were received, but the most common were regarding reducing the operational cost and minimising waste; that is why the lean management approach introduced in literature and the "House of Lean" framework was used to develop a new framework. Price has been identified as one of the most important factors along with promotion that contributes to the organisation's performance, so businesses have been observed optimising on these two significant elements globally. Through reducing costs, the firm gets the opportunity to charge lower prices for its products and this, as a result, leads to providing a benefit to the company in terms of its competitive positioning in the market.

On the other hand, one of the most imperative aspects to be explored was regarding the importance of digital marketing tools and techniques) / application in SMEs. In this regard, it has been understood that digital marketing has been highly beneficial for manufacturing organisations as it has allowed connecting with the customers more effectively and directly along with developing positive relationships with them. This can lead to the development of a new direct relationship channel. Through digital marketing, companies have expanded their approach and reached out to customers on a broader scale. Companies can effectively connect with their customers and address their concerns and issues using an integrated platform selection approach.

Through the opportunity to effectively communicate with the customers, businesses have also been able to bring in the required changes and amends in a short-term period that demonstrate the agile approach. In this regard, social media networks have gained the most importance as firms have identified them as the most effective way to

connect with customers. The prevalence of social media has attracted a vast number of individuals towards it, and this has led to providing an opportunity for companies to use the medium and promote their offerings for positive outcomes. The main issues are factors like lack of infrastructure, government support, lack of R & D and not main focus on investment result into significant decrease in the support and benefit which digital marketing can provide.

Literature is able to identify the importance of competitiveness for the sustainable growth and effective use of the digital marketing can provide the SMEs in developing economies that support while acting as a catalyst to enhance their growth.

5.3: Implications for practice

It has been understood how digital media has taken over businesses' marketing and promotional activities and how it has led to a drastic change in the way businesses perform their operations. The business environment, along with customer preferences and requirements, has constantly been changing, resulting in an evident challenge for organisations aiming to operate at the optimum level of efficiency. Further, the rising competition could also be regarded as one of the other major concerns due to which businesses are required to adopt a competitive strategic framework based on digital marketing to demonstrate agility. While these frameworks may be challenging to develop, an effective establishment and implementation may significantly impact and improve organisational development. Organisations with diversified resources and capabilities have been employing different techniques and methods to enhance their overall image and performance in the industry. Some of these approaches have turned out to be highly useful, others have not been equally impactful. In this regard, a few recommendations that may positively affect firms and their developed frameworks are as follows.

- The manufacturing SMEs in developing economies may be exposed to numerous challenges simultaneously (as mentioned in chapter 1 and 2), and it may at times become very challenging to sustain the developed position in the market. The fact that customers' exposure has increased, and they now have more comprehensive options to choose from. Firms may have to strive hard to grow and attract a maximum number of individuals towards them. In this regard, the use of social media could be considered highly beneficial for businesses. While organisations

could use various marketing activities and approaches to promote their offerings and carry out the techniques to satisfy the acquisition, conversion and retention approach, the use of social media could be considered as the most effective one based on the literature related to the presence and reach of social media platforms in Pakistan. The outcome from the collected data also interprets it as an essential tool. By developing an increased social media presence, firms can reach out to a vast number of customers under one platform and cater to their concerns effectively. Among various other advantages, the firm would indulge in a two-way communication process with the customers. No other means of marketing and advertising provides the opportunity to interact with customers similarly effectively, so that this approach may be highly beneficial.

- Development of the categorization model and identified strategic framework will allow the organisations in textile and other industries to apply the tools and techniques associated with the digital marketing based on the competitiveness development approach.
- Through establishing teams that work towards the development of digital marketing tools suitable to the organisations' requirement, businesses would be able to cater to various concerns of customers and respond to their issues within no time. This practical and immediate response to the queries and concerns of individuals would further allow firms to retain the customers for a more extended period. Social media marketing provides the opportunity of eWOM (electronic word of mouth), and this could further be considered as another helpful approach that may add value to the firm and its image.
- If a business can adequately manage their customers and provide good services to them, eWOM may be highly useful for them and may further augment increased conversion and retention with an impact on revenues. In this regard, the organisation has to make sure that all the queries and issues of the customers are responded to well, and they are provided with adequate services, which could lead to enhance their overall experience with the firm and internally business internal stakeholders are also aware of the importance and significance of different digital marketing tools and techniques.
- Furthermore, the manufacturing SMEs must also focus on continuous research and development, which may allow them to establish new means and methods of bringing improvements in the business processes. It has been understood that the business environment has constantly been evolving along with the preferences and

behaviour of customers. Also, the rising competition has been regarded as another major threat to the existing businesses. Keeping all such aspects in mind, practical research and development may be beneficial for the same firms. Through R&D, organisations may be able to develop new ideas and approaches that they can implement through social media. While the prevalence of social media has not been long, several changes and amendments have taken place that could be worked upon and optimised. Remaining within the capacity of social media marketing, new approaches and techniques could be developed, which may all lead to the enhanced overall performance of the firms.

- The current pandemic (Covid-19) is able to demonstrate the importance of reach and suitability of digital marketing tools to reach the target segments. The fact is that the marketplace is highly competitive while word of mouth and customer recommendations can help drive traffic. The most important part is to reach them or let them find you even if they are at global level customers will struggle to find the business unless it shows up in the place they explore more. After all, 4.6 billion people use the internet for many reasons and there is always the opportunity for different type of businesses to find their fair share and it is open for business from any part of the world (True Global). By using the digital marketing SMEs can transform their capabilities and get more exposure.

5.4: Limitations

It could be observed that the working conditions and complexities are increasing rapidly, and it has become highly challenging for organisations to ensure an optimum level of efficiency. In this regard, several organisations have become keen and focused on activities that could assist them in increasing their performance to gain related benefits on a large scale. This research has focused on developing a strategic framework through digital marketing for manufacturing SMEs in the developing economy (Pakistan).

The main limitation discussed in chapter 3 (detail information available in chapter 3 – section 3.10) is directly linked with the design of the quantitative research and data analysis linked with the quantitative data. The focus of the questionnaire can be more specific and the data collection could be from one individual who could be more informed. The limitation addressed through additional and more sophisticated data

analysis approach including structural equation modelling (SEM). Although the limitation related to the quantitative research design remain which effect the specific parameters within the analysis. The development of the qualitative data although also support the quantitative data collected to support the limitation identified.

Another limitation was the type of respondents, who responded the survey. They provided their personal prospect to provide the data related to the latent variables. Due to the nature of their job role, they can provide limited contribution towards the strategic decision of the organisation.

Accessibility was one of the main limitations of the research where the organisations and management have particular mindset/culture which is very closed. It is difficult to break the barrier because it is considered part of the business secret to talk about the strategy/application in that part of the world (Pakistan).

Lack of acceptability for organisations' forensic analysis. The researcher had to be careful while asking the questions while not asking the questions, which can fall in the domain of confidentiality and can create a barrier between the respondent and researcher. Due to that reason, the detailed current situation analysis audit was not a clear option to understand the selected organisations' current position, which could be more helpful to understand the other elements linked with the research.

Another limitation was respondents' disengagement, which created logistic and communication issues and made the sample selection and data collection difficult. Specific research conducted by Yaseen et al. (2018) identified the issues resulting in low accessibility and response.

5.5: Suggestions for future research

Various dynamics related to developing a competitive strategic framework through digital marketing for manufacturing SMEs in the developing economy have been explored through this research. While this has added immense value and significance, further research may include the implementations in varied countries, and the SMEs in different industries can be considered. The focus here is on Pakistan and its textile industry with a specific sector-based approach, whereas future studies may cover other manufacturing industries such as Petroleum, Food, Metal, Wood, Paper, and a few more. The same aspects must be implemented in all such industries to assess if the findings and outcomes differ from the current study. Moreover, other developing

countries must also be considered regarding assessing the development of a competitive strategic framework through digital marketing for manufacturing SMEs to explore related dynamics.

The study could be considered helpful in varied regards, and its benefits might be taken on different levels. Firstly, this research provides information about Pakistan's textile industry and depicts how the particular sector has been operating and what other dynamics are associated with it. Through this information, other researchers would be able to carry out further research related to the development of digital marketing based competitive strategy framework and how it could be used in the most optimum manner to attain numerous benefits. As a result, this study will benefit all the related researchers who wish to explore the related dynamics.

Furthermore, considering the implications of this study, various organisations in the textile and other manufacturing sectors would understand how they may benefit and optimise through digital marketing and the linked framework. The implications of digital marketing tools and techniques may vary from company to company, so that these findings may contribute significantly to the strategic development of all such firms. Further, through the findings of this research, it may also become more accessible for firms in the related industry to understand how specific approaches may not be equally beneficial and must be avoided to maintain efficiency in operations. Varied aspects of digital marketing and strategy optimisation have been discussed in this research to explore the related dynamics further.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Survey Questionnaire (Template)

Title: Study to Develop Digital Marketing Based Competitive Strategic Framework For SMEs In Developing Economy (Pakistani Textile Manufacturing Sector)”

Name (Optional):

Q1. What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

Q2. What is your age range?

- 18- 24 years
- 25-30 years
- 31-36 years
- 37-42 years
- 43 years and above

Q3. Please specify your Job Role

- Senior manager
- Manager
- Supervisor
- Employee

Q4. Does your company have its own research and development department / relevant activity?

- Yes
- No

Q 5: Does your company has any staff dedicated to marketing innovation?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Q6. What is the biggest non-financial problems that you are facing in the business?

- Management
- Marketing & Innovation
- Market Condition
- Competition

Technology

Administration

Q7: Over the next three years, how you are looking at the progress of digital marketing activities in your business?

Grow modestly

Grow substantially

Maintain the current level

Reduced from current levels

Q8. What kind of online communication platform you use to communicate with customers?

Please rate your responses by ✓ the value that you think is more appropriate:

<i>Strongly Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Strongly Agree</i>
1	2	3	4	5

Questions	1	2	3	4	5
Competitive strategy for competitiveness					
Q9. Competitive strategy allows SMEs to effectively align resources with projects and entrepreneurial activities.					
Q10. Competitive strategy allows SMEs to effectively align resources with projects and entrepreneurial activities.					
Q11. Competitive Strategy helps in enhancing the capabilities such as innovation, research and development, and technological advancement of the organisation specifically for SMEs.					
Q12. Competitive Strategy helps in responding to risk factors including meeting demands of customers, balancing supply and demand and operational effectiveness.					

Q13: Competitive Strategy assists SMEs in aligning their economic interest with that of their capabilities and strategies.					
Q14: Digital Marketing helps SMEs to increase their exposure while understanding demands and trends in the market.					
Digital marketing (Tools & Techniques)					
Q15: SMEs currently capitalise heavily upon social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to effectively communicate with the customers irrespective of their location.					
Q16: SMEs have focused on development of digital strategies through use of the techniques of affiliate marketing.					
Q17: Digital Marketing helps in building sustainable competitive advantage for SMEs.					
Q18: Social media marketing is an effective digital platform for creating awareness for SMEs.					
SMEs' strategic fit					
Q19: SMEs in developing countries require effective digital marketing platforms for promoting the business.					
Q20: SMEs in developing countries require effective competitive strategy aligned with digital marketing tools and techniques for promoting the business.					
Q21: Digital marketing adoption as competitive strategy, provide a path for entrepreneurs who utilise different digital marketing tools for promoting the business.					
Q22: The innovation creation (based on technology) by entrepreneurs in developing countries have helped SMEs to play an influential role in economic growth and development.					

Q23: The creativity in digital marketing tools adoption such as use of social media, email marketing, SEM etc. is influencing the customers to change their attitude towards SMEs in developing economy.					
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Appendix B

Interview Questions

- Q1. Are you of the opinion that a strategy should be designed which can give you an edge over the competitors?
- Q2. Why it is important for the SMEs to use digital marketing?
- Q3. How effective is the digital marketing strategies carried out through different social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for SMEs in manufacturing?
- Q4. What are the major influences associated with digital media marketing platforms have on SMEs in manufacturing sector?
- Q5. In your opinion, what are the factors effecting SMEs in developing economy to adopt the digital marketing strategy?
- Q6. Do you think that digital marketing strategy can help in achieving company goals? If yes, then to what extent?
- Q7. Are you of the opinion that SMEs in textile manufacturing in developing economy can promote their business significantly through the use of social media marketing?
- Q8. Is there any specific digital marketing platform which is important for the SMEs in developing countries?
- Q9. Do digital marketing campaigns for SMEs bring competitiveness to the manufacturing business?
- Q10. What kind of feedback you get on product sales through online channels?
(Probe Question)
- Q11. In your opinion, what are some of the challenges faced by managers in effectively implementing digital marketing strategy?
- Q12. What are challenges faced by managers in devising an effective competitive strategy for SMEs?'