

## THE EVOLUTION OF E-MARKETING IN BUSINESS-TO-BUSINESS (B2B) ENVIRONMENT AND ITS IMPACT ON FIRM PERFORMANCE

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**ABSTRACT.** Now a day, E-Marketing has become an essential factor in the development of business-to-business relationship for many organizations. The increasing trend of digital marketing and the role of Millennials generation in buying decision has made a great impact on enterprise sales. Most of the firms are facing the high cost of business and unable to reach to their buyers around the world, this research will be focused on the organizations to check the E-Marketing use. The main purpose of this study is to examine the use of E-Marketing as a mediating on the firm performance. Technology adoption such as E-Marketing and its utilization is increasing with the passage of time, but still this technology is new for many emerging economies who are unaware of the proper implementation of E-Marketing. However, E-commerce, E-Marketing or e-Business has always played a significant role in business-to-business communication process and give support to the firms in order to compete with their regional buyers. In the meantime, E-Marketing (EM) has appeared to be one of the essential factors in achieving the competitive advantage for any firm. Furthermore, in this study TOE (Technology-Organization-Environment) model in linkage with RBV theory has been established to make a strong base of overall conceptual framework. Moreover, this framework can be enhanced by adding other variables and to check firm performance not only by means firm performance, but also for the marketing performance of the particular industry. Further, the researcher will empirically validate this research by administering a survey questionnaire among Firms in a number of developing countries. So that, the research could conclude with several findings, gaps and contributions.

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Nevertheless, this paper will contribute to the existing knowledge and help the firms to work globally and to overcome both internal and external issues which are becoming barriers in their business performance.

**Keywords:** E-Marketing, Globally, B2B, Firm, Performance, Emerging Economies

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## **1. Introduction**

E-Marketing is considered as a new concept and has bring an easy way of communication between the firms. Likewise, delivering a right and consistent message by the suppliers to the buyers through the help of digital marketing is the most significant thing to attain enterprise sales and also for long term relationship, no matter, whether the business is based on manufacturing products or delivering the services (Rahim, Bakar, & Ahmed, 2015). Moreover, it is clarified that, e-marketing technology is starting to come of age, and leading corporations are adopting e-marketing in order to achieve competitive advantage through digital marketing activities. But still, in-spite of rapid developments in new technologies, organizations adopt them at slightly slower degree (Barwise & Farley, 2005; Chen & Lien, 2013). Consistent with this argument, e-marketing technology is still a relatively new idea, specifically for corporations serving in under-developed countries, normally such firms are already facing a lack of resources and high competition (El Gohary, 2012).

### **1.1. Evolution of E-Marketing**

It is stated that, managerial and academic interests in E-Marketing has been growing from last many years. Some researcher mentioned it as new paradigms. Recently, many publishers have shown huge interest

in publishing articles on Electronic Marketing and this concept of EM could be applied in any context, but Still very few empirical studies have been done to support E-Marketing in different contexts and a huge number of companies have applied E-Marketing tools to keep in communication with their trading partners and buyers to grow their businesses for long term basis (Eid & El-Gohary, 2013; Sheikh, Shahzad, & Ishak, 2016). Globally, industry in developing countries are striving for market share and to increase products sales, where E-Marketing has become essential strategy for every firm to become more customer oriented rather sales oriented. Although, digital marketing is becoming more popular for the firms to satisfy their customer needs and expectations because in today's era, ICT and its uses made a lot of changes in social and economic processes like, many previous old processes have totally obsolete or replaced by third world approaches or virtual methods (Taleghani, Akhlagh, Akbar, & Sani, 2013).

### ***1.2. Role of E-Marketing in growth of Business-to-Business industry***

For the last 2 years, there is an interesting shift in the B2B markets and this is a wakeup call for all the firms working in business-to-business environment. Additionally, this is not a secret anymore, that 90% of the b2b researchers are now online and making a buying decision on the basis of digital research techniques because, people who lies in age between 18 to 34 are playing a role of 50% in a buying decision, this generation is also known as a millennial, who was born in early 1980's to 2000. Now, the trend is changing as marketing the products to top management through physical meeting or by simply through a phone call is not enough for the suppliers because the new generation is influencing the decision on a very serious note. In line with the previous discussion, now B2B selling and buying has been strongly influenced by the young generation and the firms must make it sure that, they are reaching to this generation on a continuous basis and providing them their required contents and message. So the easy and cost effective way to reach B2B buyers nowadays is through E-Marketing particularly with the help of videos and mobile phone technology. As it will help the suppliers to present their product and services properly in front of the buyers (Dai & Kauffman, 2002; Snyder & Hilal, 2015).

Moreover, few studies clearly highlights that, a very positive advancements has been incurred in internet access and usage since last decade, it helped the firms to increase their market reach, operational effectiveness, developing the new buyers, vendor contacts, trading partners access and opened up new horizons to sell products that ultimately helped the firms to achieve competitive advantage in local and export markets (Ahmad, Bakar, Mohamed, Faziharudean, & Zaki, 2014; Rahayu & Day, 2015). Further, in line with previous argument by Dai & Kauffman, (2015) express that, E-business, internet marketing and other interlinked technologies have established to be transformational, although these technologies had a great impact on the overall effectiveness of the firms specifically to the marketing functions because today, E-Marketing has become a significant indicator for marketing of global corporation's products. As internet and web access took a huge interest of the businesses and the scope of E-Marketing at international level has been increased drastically.

Furthermore, a study conducted by (Mull, 2013) indicated that, today, potential buyers are using digital communication channels to make any buying decision. Further illustrate that, today's buyers do not contact with their suppliers until they complete 57% of their research through e-marketing, it concludes that, Formation of opinions, learning about technical Specifications, developing requirements lists, and further narrowing down their final options, these are the activities of its own with the help of digital channels and with very little influence from the suppliers. Also a survey conducted by google in 2011 & 2012 on 1500 leaders who were deeply involved in the buying the products for 22 B2B organizations also found that, a new marketing paradigm has taken the place that is digital marketing. So why the suppliers are facing issues in reaching to these global buyers? Because few of them are providing ineffective content, improper digital integration and poorly optimization of their communication channel. On the other hand, still in today's era, top management is giving preference to traditional marketing over e-marketing or digital marketing. But apparently, this approach is no more workable as customers are learning on a continuous basis and are more aware due to high saturation in the markets. All of this, leads to B2B digital communication problem, as the firms which are doing is e-marketing is not providing the right content to the buyers as such content will make hurdle in their buying decision. However, it is better to get digital integration with

the proper mix like to communicate the right message, chose a right format to communicate those messages only then a firm can be on a right track of digital marketing (Ahmad et al., 2014; Mosawi, Shahzad, Golamdin, Pasha, & Sheikh, 2016; Rahayu & Day, 2015).

### ***1.3. E-Marketing trends and comparison among emerging economies***

Several findings and literatures have revealed that, there is still a communication gap between the firms and their customers. Likewise, negative market trends, growing global competition and staff, insufficient ICT skills are another reasons, which companies gives for not adopting the E-Marketing and this non adopting behavior of the firms is effecting the internal and external performance (Morais, 2006; Tandon & Reddy, 2013). On the other side, E-marketing is growing rapidly to cater maximum global market shares, for example in china there is a 120% increase in e-commerce business (Fredriksson, 2013) and India has also progressed in ICT from last few years but on the other hand, businesses in Pakistan, Srilanka and Bangladesh are still reluctant to properly implement e-marketing as it is a cost effective way to do the business in this global era. In line with this statement, cost of doing business in these emerging economies is increasing day by day and firms has limited their thinking on local operations rather approaching to global buyers. So, this is a serious situation, firms must think globally and adopt the digital way of marketing to communicate with their buyers and find a new markets worldwide to compete with their regional competitors to make sure that, they are striving for excellence. Unfortunately, the severe impact will always be faced by SME's or small firms but another hidden fact is that, even large firms has also started the downsizing to cover their costs, which is directly increasing the unemployment in countries and leading the emerging economies towards demolition with an increase in crime rates as well (Mottaleb & Sonobe, 2009; Saeed, 2014).

## **2. Literature Review**

A literature has been established for the use of E-Marketing by firms in both under-developed and in western countries. Even, it was accepted to review commonly used theories and frameworks on E-Marketing adoption

by countries to identify their scope and limitations (Alzougool & Kurnia, 2008). The literature review on E-Marketing is very wide in nature and helps in identifying the right theory and model that has worked out and implemented in number of researches to identify the reason to use E-Marketing technology by corporations. However, the current study has employed TOE (Technology-Organization-Environment) framework (Tornatzky & Fleischer, 1990) linked with RBV theory by (Wernerfelt, 1984) to completely justify the impact of innovative technological factors on performance of the firms.

### ***2.1. Use of E-Marketing in Era of Globalization***

Electronic Marketing or digital marketing has been observed as a modern business practice, which is linked with the buying and selling of goods, information, ideas and services through the internet and other electronic means (Stokes, 2011). In addition to this, a review of the relevant literatures and published research works has revealed that, the definitions of E-Marketing varies according to each researcher's point of view, also background and specialization in the field. The E-Marketing is defined by Chaffey and Smith (2013) as "E-marketing, Internet marketing or digital marketing is at the heart of e-business – getting closer to customers and understanding them better, adding value to products, widening distribution channels and boosting sales through running e-marketing campaigns using digital media channels such as search marketing, online advertising and affiliate marketing". Currently, business practices are more related with marketing products, services, facts and concepts by the use of internet and other additional electronic processes like mobile phones, intranets as well as extranets. A firm who is implementing e-marketing technology can adapt the shape and nature of their business worldwide. However, the increased usage of the internet not only increase the opportunities for the firms, but has also eliminated various threats. Considering all these facts, explained the distribution (from 2003 to 2010) of E-Marketing related published articles in the context of different countries. Great Britain had more than 59 studies, Australia 16 studies and South Africa had 3 studies related to electronic marketing. Clearly, these figures highlight an opportunity to build on this foundation of knowledge. Based on the literature researched within the field of e-marketing and performance, there are clear research

opportunities to be examined in developing countries, which will contribute in the development of digital marketing environment between the firms (El-Gohary, 2010; El Gohary, 2012).

### ***2.2. Technological Orientation relationship with EM and FP***

Technological oriented firms are more focused to use new technologies like E-Marketing to enhance firm performance in terms of customer loyalty, market growth and financial gain, on the other hand, such technology motivation will push the firms to move towards international market in order to avail maximum prevailing opportunities around the world. Apart from this side, a study conducted by (Mutlu & Sürer, 2015) found that, technology orientation has a significant effect on the innovativeness of the firm. Moreover, the usage and implementation of E-Marketing technologies by diversified firms is to interact with their customers and to make a sound dialog with them in order to generate revenue. Therefore, numerous set of technologies plays a vital role in building a strong communication between the firms such as: e-commerce websites that offers customer relationship management systems, sales transactions & extranets, intranets and sales force mechanisms. Moreover, e-business adoption described a firm implementation of such kind of technologies to have a significant impact on the sales performance, profitability of the firm, competitive edge, export firm performance, customer satisfaction and development of relationships with buyers and trade partners as well. Further, technology orientation has a positive significant effect the firm performance particularly in manufacturing sector of emerging country (Do Hyung & Dedahanov, 2014; Trainor et al., 2011).

### ***2.3. Market Orientation relationship with EM and FP***

There is evidence that, firm capabilities influence the innovation adoption (Hult, Hurley, & Knight, 2004). There is also indication that, market orientation positively influence the innovation adoption. For example, (Narver, Slater, & MacLachlan, 2000) argues that, there is a positive relationship between innovation and Market orientation. The current study conceptualizes the E-business adoption or E-Marketing adoption as an innovation. Moreover, Wu, Mahajan and Balasubramanian (2003) define market orientation as “the use of internet technologies that link customers, suppliers, business partners and employees by adopting at

least one of the following activities: (i) websites that offer sales transactions; (ii) customer service websites; (iii) intranets; (iv) extranets; and (v) IP electronic data interchange". Few studies also revealed that, market orientation plays a vital role in making the customer closer to the firm with the help of digital marketing and also helps analyzing the competitor orientation and it was found that, market orientation has a significant positive correlation with E-Business adoption and has a positive impact on the performance of the firm (Mutlu & Sürer, 2015; Voola, Casimir, Carlson, & Anushree Agnihotri, 2012).

#### ***2.4. Competitive pressure relationship with EM and FP***

Several studies explained that, the relationships among players within the same industry also affect the overall industry structure. These relationships determine the extent of competition and rivalry within the industry and play a vital role in e-commerce adoption. Therefore, a company may feel pressure when it sees more and more companies in the industry are adopting e-business and therefore feels the need to adopt it as well, in order to remain competitive (Ahmad et al., 2014; Kuan & Chau, 2001). Furthermore, the influence of key players in the firm's external technological environment such as government, competitors as well as a firm's trading partners have a significant impact on Internet usage and also on the marketing performance of the firm. Therefore, it implies that, competitors continuously affect the operations of its rivals, in order to cater maximum market shares and to increase global reach, firms have to analyze the industry practices on a continuous basis and will look into other firm's to make a comparison regarding their performance. Other than that, digital marketing has pushed the businesses to access their buyers in a more reasonable way rather trying to meet them at their offices because millennial generation has much awareness about the global trends and they normally make online research before buying or making any decision (Djermani, Shahzad, Sheikh, Mohammed, & Alekam, 2016; Snyder & Hilal, 2015).

#### ***2.5. Mediating role of E-Marketing (EM) with Firm Performance (FP)***

Organizations that adopt E-Marketing in their businesses have a view that, implementation of E-Marketing is not an expensive procedure and it helps to communicate with buyers in all around the world to



maintain good business relationships (Mzee, Ogweno, & Irene, 2015). Moreover few studies highlighted that, e-marketing technology adoption and use continues to vary, despite widespread acceptance of the Internet in corporate environments. Additionally, digital marketing or E-Marketing is a recent technology that has received substantial attention in the industry. This argument echoes El-Gohary (2012) who stated that, e-marketing technology is still a relatively new concept, particularly for organizations operating in developing countries that have limited resources and strong competition. Therefore, companies could not afford to make unwise investments or wrong decisions, which resulted in the poor uptake of e-marketing technology among firms and might affect the marketing performance of the firm.

Based on the literature, technology adoption by firms in addition to any new strategic issues is a time anticipated by decision initiators to see a possible impact on the forthcoming organization effectiveness. For instance, corporations only adopt new technology if its existing technology got lapse or new technology has much more benefit likewise new technology resolve existing problems so effectively that, it helps the corporations to be more motivated in order to invest in acquiring the latest technology. Similarly, it has been proved that, each motivation gives organization an opportunity as a driver for success likewise problem for getting internationalization is a basic necessity for every firm irrespective of its size, now an E- technology has developed an awareness among all buyers and trading partners that, they can do electronic business in order to grasp maximum international market share with very low cost. Therefore, it is highlighted that, firms perceived benefits, helps them to adopt new technology without any unnecessary delay (Eid & El-Gohary, 2013; Rahim et al., 2015)

Those companies, which are focusing more on marketing activities must focus on the digital way of doing marketing in order to increase their performance, trend is now changing in all over the world, firms are adopting E-Marketing tools and using them to have a competitive advantage over the other rivals. Further, the use of e-marketing will help in cost reduction of distribution, increase supply chain efficiency, close interaction with buyers and to perform market research for product development purpose or in order to find new customers and also in maintaining the existing buyers as well. Similarly, results highlighted

that, internet marketing is essential for achieving comparative advantage and to reduce the cost of international marketing or commerce. So it is proved by the researcher that, there is a positive relationship with technology adoption and use of internet marketing and export performance of the firm (Taleghani et al., 2013).

The importance of electronic way of doing business was further examined by Voola et al. (2012) that, understanding the effective adoption of technological innovations, such as e-business, is arguably one of the key challenges faced by organizations. The literature indicates that, the relationship between firm capabilities to use resources and firm performance is mediated by the effects of the adopted innovation (e.g., e-business). Additionally, another study of Smits and Mogos (2013) found that, the use of social media (E-Marketing Tool) enhances business capabilities and business performance. So, it implies that, digital marketing or e-marketing is bringing a new business era of communication between the firms, who are ready to accept innovation in their businesses and want to diversify them according to ongoing trends and market requirements.

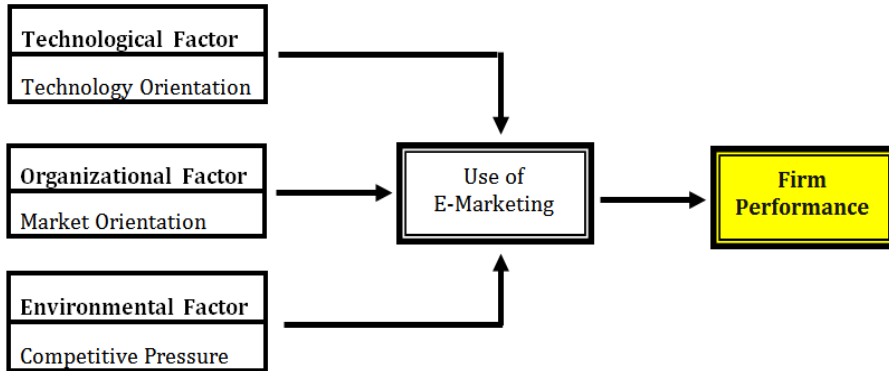
### **3. Methodology**

This paper highlights the important technological related factors that execute from the mediating factor of e-marketing adoption and its influences on firm performance of developing countries. To highlight these variables, the researchers have gone through from different databases, reports, books, thesis, empirical and conceptual papers etc. The literature clearly highlights that, the role of technological orientation, Market orientation, Competitive pressure and use of E-Marketing influence the performance of the firms in developing countries. Using TOE model and Resource based-View theory, this paper explained the importance of these variables in predicting the firm performance operating in emerging economies.

#### ***3.1. Framework Development***

Based on the literature review, a framework has been developed to give a broad view of E-Marketing technology acceptance and its ultimate impact on firm performance as a guide in this research and in later studies as well. After identifying the discussed gaps, this study will contribute to the knowledge of existing literature and give benefits to the overall industry looking for increase performance and innovation.

The conceptual model of this study is drawn on the basis of TOE framework and RBV theory to justify and explain the role of variables in resolving the major problem of performance in developing countries with the adoption of E-marketing and with the help of predictors such as technological, organizational and environmental factors. The conceptual framework for current study has been mentioned below;



**Conceptual Framework:** The Evolution of E-Marketing in Business-to-Business (B2B) Environment and its impact on Business Performance of Emerging Economies

#### 4. Discussions and implications

The research discussed that, the firm's willingness to adopt the technology positively influences e-marketing adoption; thus, the higher the firm's willingness to adopt the technology, the higher will be the probability that the firm would adopt the technology of e-marketing. E-Marketing technology promises that, any firm who will adopt this technology can attain several benefits. E-Marketing provides operational measures to the firms through which they can establish strategies in order to make market expansion and to improve their competitiveness. Several qualitative outcomes revealed that firms normally adopt the technology like E-Marketing in order to minimize the mistakes and to improve their effectiveness through cost reduction and to improve their corporate image through market expansion (Rahim et al., 2015).

Besides, it is evident that, digital way of marketing has become an essential business tool which is growing very rapidly with the passage of time and this paper has tried to examine the connection between internet

marketing usage and firm performance in under-developed countries, research in the area of underdeveloped countries are very limited. The investigation further reveals that E-Marketing adoption to achieve firm performance among developing countries is still on its infancy stage and factors such as technological resources, top management support and pressure from trading partners have yet to be exploited. However, current IT infrastructure is not supportive in developing countries to improve marketing performance, so at the early stage adoption of technology is very important (Mehmood et al., 2013).

The uniqueness of this study is to examine the mediating role of e-marketing uses in the relationship between each variable of technological factors, organizational factors and environmental factors. The reason behind conducting this research is that, technological, organizational and environment related factors doesn't usually affect the firm performance directly, they influence more through innovation or new technology and as suggested by Baker (2011) that, if TOE model is tested with firm performance through innovation process and with the help of RBV theory, it will be a contribution to the existing knowledge of the literatures. So, there is a missing link between independent variables and firm performance that has been explained in this current study. Hence, this study will also provide the evidence regarding the mediating role of e-marketing uses in the relationship between technological factors, organizational factors, environmental factors and firm performance.

Finally, on the practical aspect, this study will provide some insights about some of the technological, organizational and environmental factors, which are vital to increase the use of e-marketing that will eventually lead to increased performance of the firms in developing countries. As such these help the leaders (e.g. Top management, directors, general manager and marketing managers) in the implementation of e-marketing technology and to resolve these prevailing independent factors issues from their organizations in order increase their organizational performance and to reach global markets or export buyers through easy and cost effective way with a long vision of relationship management. Furthermore, this study provides an insight for entrepreneurs, policymakers, practitioners, researchers and educators by providing a clearer view and deep understanding of the issues related to E-Marketing practices and its impact on the firm performance of developing countries with the help of key predictors.

## 5. Future Research and Conclusion

The direction for future research, which emerged from our findings, is to examine the mediating role of E-Marketing uses in the performance of the firms in developing countries by different sizes of companies specifically like micro firms, medium sized firms and large corporations as well. Depending on the same proposed factors generated within this study. Future research may indicate to examine the E-Marketing use and export performance of all types of Firms in other countries depending on the same proposed factors generated within this study. Finally, different predictors could be used to measure the export performance of the Firm likewise perceived usefulness, top management support, government support and trading partners etc. Future research should be simulated to examine whether the relations between variables still hold true on an industry by industry basis because some sectors have more communicating websites than others. So another area for future research is to more focus on export of services rather than products, which can considerably improve the body of information.

This article tried to fill the gap by using the E-Marketing in order to improve firm performance in terms of (global reach, competitive advantage, customer orientation and in making technological infrastructure for the firms) and also enables the suppliers to communicate with their millennial buyers with the help of videos, search engines, mobile phones, electronic advertisement, social media networks etc. As primarily, organizations are only using email technology for correspondence, but in order to explore new markets such technologies should be acknowledged and implemented for long term benefits. Whereas prevailing clarifications have focused on firms in developing countries and also give a comparison to better understand the relationship and impact of rivals. Our research provides significant findings, particularly in the use of e-marketing technology. Our research revealed that understanding the range of technology adoption that affect firm performance is dominant to conduct the adoption procedure.

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