

THE MODERATING EFFECT OF DIGITAL MARKETING BETWEEN IT BUSINESS ALIGNMENT FACTORS AND SMEs PERFORMANCE IN IRAQ

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Abstract

The rapid changes in the business environment have made organizations consider the implementation of various strategies to face the fierce competition in the worldwide market. Such a competitive situation has become increasingly challenging for many organizations and SMEs in particular. This paper sets out to investigate the collaborative impact of digital marketing and small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) sector alignment influences on the success of Iraq's IT companies. To achieve this aim, seven particular hypotheses suggested by the RBV theoretical view (Human factor, communication, governance, competency, collaboration, and IT investment) were seamstress to determine the theorised relationship between applying IT business alignment factors (Human factor, communication, governance, competency, partnership, and IT investment) and the digital marketing and SMEs results. The research allows the use of a quantitative method to collect data from a survey (questionnaire) of 60 objects and a five-point Likert scale. A total of 228 SME-sector members, executives, and IT workers (84% response rate) took part in the report. Data processing was done using Smart PLS 3.2.9. The findings of the path analysis of partial least squares (PLS) support variables in their hypothesized direct relationships with a SMEs performance. The analysis results suggest that digital marketing partially moderator the relationship between IT business alignment factors (Human factor, communication, Governance, competency, partnership, and IT investment), and the SMEs performance. The paper advances several recommendations that can be beneficial for researchers to conduct further research in this area as well as to policymakers and managers in their efforts to enhance the SMEs performance in the future. Lastly, this research presents the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications as well as limitations and recommendations for future investigations.

Keywords: SMEs performance, IT-business alignment factors, digital marketing

1. Introduction

Digital marketing is often called web-based advertising, web promotion or web viewing, the term-automated promotion has dominated in the end, especially in certain countries, and progress is still rapid with automatic redirects becoming stronger (Key et al., 2019).

Information technology organizations have influenced sales development through advanced digital network organizations, increasing productivity in terms of response time and personalized administrations relative to customer needs (Yu et al., 2017). The IT business agreement refers to how well IT and business systems complement each other when they do it effectively. IT is used in a more engaged way, which improves the performance of the exhibition (Baker et al., 2011). E-marketing, also known as electronic exhibition uses advanced innovations and web innovations and involves the development of products or administrations through

techniques or electronic means and media (Baubonienė and Gulevičiūtė, 2015).

While Shaltoni (2016) define E marketing as the Information Technology (IT) recruitment in a meaningful way for the institution and its shareholders, where the technology is used in the management of the institution's relations with its customers, creating and delivering benefit for them. The use of numerous electronic data or electronic applications to direct advertising exercises creates clear E-marketing devices. These devices include internet demonstration, email advertising, intranet advertising, and extranet advertising, mobile marketing, etc. (Waheed & Yang, 2017; El-Gohary & El-Gohary, 2016). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are businesses that play an important role in the economies of many countries, and they are fundamental to the Iraqi economy. It is important for success of new SMEs programs are available for Iraqi SMEs, as new

advancements are a way to promote projects that connect companies around the world to get them interested in financing in Iraqi companies (Ahmed, 2018).

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Ideally, to be competitive, SMEs in Iraq are expected to hire people those experts and experienced in e-commerce and digital marketing so that he/she can guide other staffs to develop skills in IT (Ahmed, 2018). Skills and competencies are inevitable to ensure companies growth and to be competitive advantage compared to the other. Besides, having their own established website would make the business run smoothly because the customer can reach the company and learn about their products online. The government of Iraq should improve the payment system so that all the transactions can be done online because it is easier and fast. Nevertheless, according to the current situation of SMEs in Iraq, most non-industrial projects have not yet selected a number of mechanical advances on a regular basis. It is due to lack of funds but also due to policies and traditional culture of those involved in these businesses (Thabit et al., 2016; Al-Janabi and Mhaibes, 2019), many people may or may not recognize the danger posed by changing work methods.

In Iraq, there is no online banking and all transactions must be done by cash or cheque. Most of the companies in Iraq have no website, this is because they don't have a designer to create a website; also, it will not work in Baghdad, because everything needs to pay by cash (Mohammed& Abdulrahman, 2014; Ahmed, 2018). Recognizing the above-mentioned problems it is therefore important to investigate computerized promotion and e-business and its impact on the Iraq SME exhibition. Correspondence is one of the main factors linking the coordination of the IT market and firm implementation, but in Baghdad, Iraq, there are still a few concerns about correspondence in SMEs. There is no channel for communication for industry IT chiefs and the absence of structured organizations to impart their meetings to various units, as per Hussein (2012) in Iraq. Certainty and data around corporate regions and IT

branches are accounted for by the lack of cooperation between IT staff and leaders in the company, yet only top management overwhelms (Ahmed et al., 2016). This can be noticed, as certain companies do not provide a page or platform to post their goods or provide details on their organization's experience. As compared to IT prices, IT competence is now the lower perception of IT confidence. Most SMEs in the state of Baghdad, Iraq was worried about the cost rather than the results that they might get back on the off chance that they might submit IT business arrangements via their agency or corporation, despite that internal and rethought IT might set off substantially fewer profitability measures (Alkhaffaf, 2018). They do not ceaselessly use a company and IT measurements in Baghdad Iraq, lack of clear relation between the enterprise and IT measurements, no steady internal and external benchmarking. This is because they simply use the traditional system, which is often generated from their monetary method, that they do not get assistance from the public authority in IT, Little or No Implemented IT and Market Point of View conversely with different nations. Alkhaffaf (2018), Al-lamy (2018) and Altalib et al. have underlined it (2018).

Recognizing the concerns mentioned above, it is important, along these lines, to examine Competence and its effect on the implementation of small and medium-sized enterprises in Iraq. In Baghdad, Iraq's capital, small and medium-sized companies have faced troubles sustaining their organisations, as fragile IT-Non-IT provides an image of client needs. Only IT workers will be presented on the value of IT in industry, for various offices they will only concentrate on their job without understanding that they additionally ought to implement IT in their duty to develop their organisation and skills (Abbas, 2019). Associate in industry, the accomplice often has a key role to play in the achievement of business, but the questionable responsibility and status between organisations and IT staff at home is often the problem they have faced, especially among small and medium-sized enterprises in Bagdad (Bandiera et al., 2019). Such innumerable debates and concerns emerge between the organisation and the IT administrators and, in the preparation and implementation cycle, the expense and benefit of the separation between the organisation and the IT are segregated. They do not treat IT as a business associate. This was mirrored in Harash et al. (2014), acknowledging the problems mentioned. In this way, it is essential for the research organisation and its

influence on the exhibition of SMEs in Iraq. The purpose of this study is to analyse the components of (correspondence, management, expertise, and association) and their work as an IT Business Alignment Element in Iraqi organisations.

The original purpose of this paper is to explore how digital marketing moderator the association between IT-business alignment factors and SME's performance of Iraq. Until now, researchers have not investigated such an influence. It is regarded in the literature as a noticeable gap. Consequently, the objective of this paper is to fill this gap by contributing significantly to the body of knowledge. The problem is crystallized in the light of the need for SMEs to a more profound philosophy and more comprehensive vision for understanding the concept of between IT business alignment factors (Human factor, communication, Governance, competency, partnership, and IT investment), and digital marketing and the SMEs performance and improving competition, which leads to competitive advantage. On this basis, the research problem was formulated in response to the knowledge gap.

2. Literature Review

2.1 There is relationship between human factor and SMEs performance

Several studies have shown that HR is overwhelmed by two current competing regulatory schools: Universalist and contingency. Universalist researchers have argued that various HR practices are reliable in a way that is better than relative practice, arguing that all associations that don't pay much to value, industry or business practices should adopt these procedures in a way that (Delery Doty, 1996). In any case, the question remains whether human resources should be systematically identified with the performance of SMEs. Contingency scholars have different perspectives, arguing that the basic interface of assumptions for performing procedures is appropriate only in elevated conditions outside of physical fitness (Bamberger & Meshoulam, 2000), which is called the best school of cure (Boxall & Purcell, 2000). Globally researchers thought of society when (HR) explicitly affected business performance (Martell & Carroll, 1995). They expected human resources to help companies improve the benefits of HR savings, promote professional skills, increase

development and discontinue capacity, and increase the benefits of hierarchical performance (Junni, et al., 2015).

The most convincing set of good practices concerns the 16 practices of (Pfeffer and Jeffrey, 1998), especially since the end of these 16 practices summarized in seven books on: in particular the safety of companies, in particular employment, the group independent, the organization's implementation regime, general preparation, reduction of state conflicts and data exchange. In addition to this (Keino, et al., 2017) stated that human resources are a skillful skill that adapts to environmental changes. (Huang, 1998) has shown that the Society for Human resource (HR) directly and on a roundabout benefits organizations, as it transforms into business remotely, naturally directing the hierarchical goals and energy that connects the association hierarchical superiors.

Welbourne and Andrews (1996) use the natural population hypothesis to argue that SHRM certainly has an impact on smooth execution because it creates an underlying connectivity, a representationally produced collaboration that drives an organization and keeps the business running.

Over the past decade, value of (HF) has appeared (Schuler and Jackson, 2014). Misa and Stein (1983) found that the primary direction of human resources in high-profit firms was opposite to that in low-efficiency firms. Cook and Ferris (1986) studied corporate HR practices in declining companies and found that most top-tier SME projects were receiving HR metrics. On the other hand, poor performing companies generally use regular strategies. Huselid (1993) found a positive correlation between HR best practices and SME performance.

2.2 The Relationship between Communication and SMEs Performance

Important evidence is given by the literature that communication affects the firm implementation of performance. This appears to be both optimistic and negative. On analysis of the degree to which the calculation of correspondence of the party participates in the execution, one exploration was closed. It is necessary to remember that when the exhibition of interfacing and non-cooperating or free-conversation and restricted conversation groups are considered, the findings were mixed, with stronger choices provided for both

associating groups and restricted conversation groups (Hassall et al., 2013; Borisoff and McMahan, 2017). Taking a glance at how immense the importance of inspiration on the execution of workers in an organisation is, founders or revolutionaries need to preserve and encourage their members to be willing to show their strongest display for the company. Numerous factors will affect job inspiration; one of them is appropriate correspondence within the association.

Rajhans (2012) has suggested, inward communication plays an extraordinarily imperative role in the implementation of all these ideal inspiring activities in the organisation. Viable correspondence also helped to boost the inspiration and implementation of staff in the company. Supporting this articulation, Rukmana (2018) explained, communication also offered encouragement by revealing to the delegate the things they need to do, how they need to do, and items that should be possible to expand their presence. Another Theory from Linkert makes it evident that on the off possibility that we (leaders) would have great correspondence with the leader, they would be stimulated and helpful (Littlejohn et al., 2005). In another sense, a great correspondence between the company and the worker will motivate the job that promotes a superior show. As Sopiah (2008) put it, this communication has the power to motivate staff. This ability is retained, as supervisors need to extend the representative implementation.

2.3 The relationship between partnership and firm performance

Collaboration relates to the link between companies and IT associations. This calls for the characteristics of the IT functions of business technologies, the level of trust between two partnerships. For IT capability, it is important to connect directly to the business capability, which can create shared trust, formulate acceptable expectations, and create successful connections. Along these lines, it is easier to reach agreement with utilitarian groups that maintain functional relationships that help understand and resolve common systems when they lead to a sharing of dangers and rewards (Luftman et al., 1999). Both IT and business leaders need to realize the demand for participation and a broader assessment of more personal relationships (Keen, 2007; Luftman et al., 1999; Bassellier and Benbasat, 2007). (Wen-Chih et al., 2017) recommended that organizations are a key factor in determining the basis for organizational arrangements.

The activities of the association proposed by Grove (2018) help improve the exposure of organizations. Closing relationships between partners have a positive impact on the implementation of participation (Rezaei et al., 2018).

2.4 The relationship between governance and SMEs performance

In general, large business management is ensured to improve the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (Buallay et al., 2017). Leaving aside the generally accepted recognition that effective business administration improves business activity; some studies have shown a negative link between business administration and small and medium-sized enterprise practices (Hutchinson and Gul, 2004) found that there is no connection between business and the practice of small and medium-sized enterprises (Young and Thyil, 2008).

The explanations for this disorder are rare and volatile, and some argue that the prohibited use of open access or review information may contribute to the problem (Ward et al., 2009).

It has also been argued that hypothetical and experimental business writing reflects the relationship between the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises and the ownership, which typically use only two of these factors simultaneously (Mashayekhi and Bazaz, 2008). Hermalin and Weisbach (1991) considered e.g. the connection between organizational planning and implementation, while Himmelberg et al. 1999; Demsetz and Villalonga, 2001) examined the relationship between governance and the foreclosure of small and medium-sized enterprises. In order to address some of these issues, it is therefore proposed to consider these issues when looking at business administration and its relationship to the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises.

2.5 There is relationship between IT competency and SMEs performance

Information technology research within the organization has been successful over the past decade. IT experts generally do not understand whether speculation in information technology can bring significant benefits to organizations. Modern research has focused on how and to what extent IT companies change the performance of IT organizations. From these perspectives, its ability

to develop is seen as a fundamental and fundamental condition for a successful business in very serious situations (Benitez-Amado et al., 2010; Bhatt and Grover, 2005; Patrakosol and Lee, 2009). The imaginative competencies of the organization in particular are envisioned, providing fuel that can be immediately ignited in a high performance capacity, thus severely limiting the limits of the company (Crawford et al., 2011; Mithas et al., 2011).

Information technology skills combined with other hierarchical abilities can create a positive synergistic effect that is much more difficult for opponents to copy or get a replacement (Alvarez-Suescun, 2007; Sher and Lee, 2004). Therefore, the IT department suggested the need to identify opportunities that can control the link with the implementation of information technology (Tippins & Sohi, 2003).

Given the importance of IT skills as a fundamental reinforcing effect on the information measured by the board and how the measurement of information managers related to company behavior (Mills & Smith, 2011), we expect IT skills to have an impact on trade shows. Organization not directly, but by recommending the information proposed by the Board. In particular, SMEs generally do not have the capacity to build their presentations by investing in information technologies where they can produce and replicate (Tippins & Sohi, 2003). It is interesting to note that the company will have the opportunity to develop marketing tips and therefore monetary applications if it is unlikely that it will be able to generate solid information that the government recommends using its IT base.

2. 6 There is relationship between IT investment and SMEs performance

The paradox was studied, especially Brynjolfsson (1993), where he showed that there is a difference between the development of the IT computer company and the level of profitability and favorable results of society. However, it falls on the fact that efficiency could be the problem. Problems assess particularly intangible assets such as consumer loyalty. Bakos & Brynjolfsson, (1993) mention several reasons for the productivity paradox, in particular; Problems with underestimation, the time elapses between the moment of hypothesis and the time of rise and flight problems.

Several ways of thinking about the profitability of information technology have been introduced. One way of thinking contributes to the work of building an institution and the other way of thinking is that hypothesis about information technology is relevant and examines the relationship between the implementation of results, including efficiency and quality, and other information factors at different levels, such as utilization limits, inventory turnover, relative costs, and objectivity (Melville et al., 2004). These ways of thinking contradict the fact that internet hypothesis has a positive effect on the profitability of organizations (Mahmood & Mann, 2005).

The impact of online hypothesis on an organization's performance and profitability depends on the size of the organization, as choices depend on different expectations and dimensions of the organization (Dozier & Chang, 2006; Black et Lynch, 2001) when they are closed. The response indicated that areas with large organizations spend more of their operating expenditure on data innovation than smaller organizations and with a higher level of information technology, which has fewer employees, which is more efficient and effective.

The reasons given were that developed countries have more IT investment competitiveness than underdeveloped nations; growing economies lacked additional assets such as human resources and telecommunications networks, which were used to maintain the use of information technology and had less information technology experience and therefore did not explore the use of IT (Ayres et al., 2013). The other explanation was the lack of appropriate optimization methods to capture the impact of information technology on profitability in ordinary creative work models (Hajli, et al., 2015). The government's response to the global economy also has an impact on the profitability of information technology. Global openness can provide access to a broad range of technical and managerial knowledge that exists beyond its borders (Sabherwal & Jeyaraj, 2015).

2.7 Digital Marketing as a Moderator

The moderating role of digital marketing variable in the relationships between the IT business alignment factors and SMEs performance has not been examined so far. Therefore, the present study focused on digital marketing as a moderator between six dimensions for IT business

alignment outlined and SMEs performance. The moderator variable refers to a variable associated with investigating variables that effect the dependent variable (Salkind, 2009). In fact, previous studies have provided evidence that digital marketing has played role as indented, depended and moderator (Ramdani et al. 2013; El-Gohary, 2010; Bayo-Moriones et al., 2013).

Rahayu and Day (2015) found a positiv impact on small and medium-sized enterprises' choice of e-commerce. Ramdani et al. (2013) argue that this is an important decision factor in the decision of small and medium-sized enterprises on enterprise applications (EA).

El-Gohary (2010) also argues that the position of authority has a decisive and fundamental effect on the reception of an electronic exhibition and proves that this effect is direct or curved. Bayo-Moriones, et al., 2013) studied the effect of ICT adoption on the representation of small and medium-sized enterprises. The idea of the presentation changed with the development of the internet. It has brought buyers from magazines, newspapers and even some TV and radio issues to the internet (Hermawan, 2018).

As reflected in the Internet World Stats (2013), in 2012 the Internet was used by 2.4 billion users worldwide and the figure is increasing every year (Hemann and Burbary, 2013) was 273.8 million consumers and in Europe 518.5 million Internet is not only accessible via PCs but also by mobile phones, laptops, gaming consoles and other online contraptions (Narkiniemi, 2013).

There is a positive relationship between business and its use (Del Aguila-Obra and Padilla-Melendez, 2006; Oliveira and Martins, 2010). In this sense, the new promotion has an advanced structure, computerized promotion could be defined as a subdivision of the traditional advertising that uses advanced channels to achieve a goal similar to a regular promotion, that is, attracting new and old customers with Promising values (Kannan, 2017).

3. Methodology

an attempt was made to study the relationship of IT business alignment factors, digital marketing, and the SMEs performance within the sector of SMEs in Iraq. A quantitative methodology was taken in which the data collected were separated into two sections by asurvey. The first section focusses on the general features of the subjects,including gender, age, and level of job, agency, and level of education, marital status, size of companies and years of employment.. In the second section, measuring the components of IT business alignment factors, digital marketing, and the SMEs performance was our interest. According to (Husien, 2012; Aziz, 2012) a representative sample is crucial if evidence from the sample is being used to make generalizations about the larger population from which the sample was selected. The study was applied to a sample of (228) owners, managers and IT staff departments from the Iraqi SMEs. The participants were invited to give their opinions on a Likert-scale (1-5) ranged from "Extreme Disagreement" to "High Agreement to analyze data obtained using a Smart pls 3. To explore the hypothesis, a form of partial least squares structural equational modelling is used. The PLS-SEM technique has a variety of benefits over other statistical approaches. These include the opportunity to use the technique for statistical model construction while still using it for forecasting, there are no sample size limitations, and it is sufficient for moderation and fine-tuned precision in estimation. Additionally, the soft modelling assumptions are not as important for the PLS-SEM technique, because the assumptions aren't usually distributed in results (Hair Jr. et al.,2017).

3.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of (Gutierrez et al., 2009;Luftman, 1999) has an essential part in research to explain the methodology used for the study. Thus, to direct this research into its aim, a conceptual framework is necessary. As can be seen in "Fig. 1", the author has developed a clear conceptual framework for this paper.

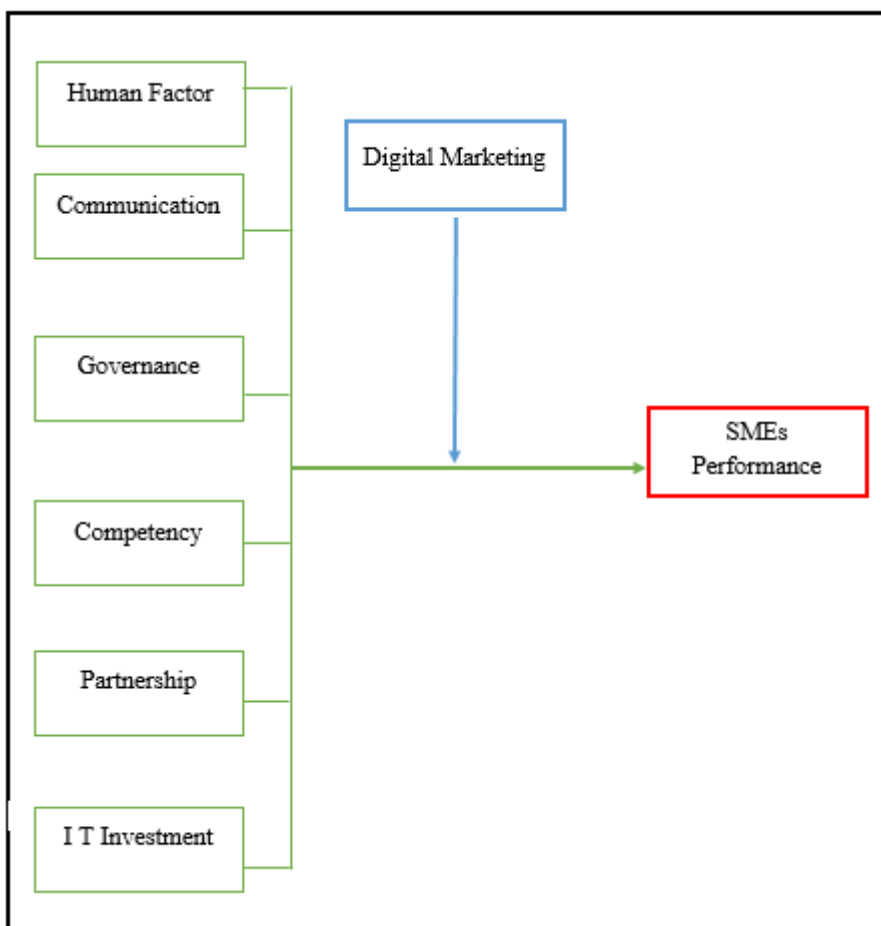


Figure 1: Conceptual framework (Researcher, 2019)

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Demographic profile

Table 1 shows the general characteristics of respondents, including respondents' gender, age, and level of job, agency, and level of education, marital status, size of companies and years of employment.

Table 1: Profile of Respondents

No	Item	Frequency	Percentage of Respondents (%)
1.	Gender		
	Male	186	81.6
	Female	42	18.4
2.	Age		
	Less than 25	18	7.9
	25 to 34	35	15.4
	35 to 44	45	19.7

	45 to 55	73	32.0
	More than 55	57	25.0
3.	Level of Position		
	owner	50	21.9
	Mangers	54	23.7
	IT staff	124	54.4
4.	companies business sectors		
	communication	160	70.18
	Investment	46	20.17
	Cosmetics	22	9.65
5.	Education Level		
	Secondary School	22	9.7
	Certificate/Diploma	56	24.6
	Bachelor Degree	142	62.2
	Master Degree	3	1.3
	Phd	5	2.2
6.	Marital Status		
	Married	195	85.5
	Single	30	13.2
	Divorced	3	1.3
	Widow	0	0
7.	Years of Working		
	0 to 5 years	21	9.2
	6 to 10 years	54	23.7
	11 to 15 years	71	31.1
	16 to 20 years	68	29.8
	20 years and above	14	6.1

In order to assess the profiles of the 228 participants, the values for each group of the profiles were totaled, and the frequency and percentage results were obtained. It was noticed that about 81.6% of respondents were male, and only 18.4% were female. In addition, the age of the respondents was taken into account, and the results showed that the plurality of respondents with a proportion of 32% were between the ages of 45 and 55. The second-largest grouping comprises of respondents with an age period of more than 55 years and a proportion of 25 percent, who are joined by the third-highest number of respondents with an age range of between 35 and 44 years, 15.4 percent have an age range of between 25 and 34 years, whilst the final party, with a minimum percentage of 7.9 percent, have an age range of between 35 and 44 years. When it came to determining the respondents' position, the degree of the position was also taken into account. Managers (who work as employers) gathered the greater portion of

23.7% of the respondents, along with IT employees (who also work as employers) who reported a total proportion of 54.4% of the participants, and, lastly, a minority with a lower percentage of 21.9%. After this, the researcher showed details regarding the organisation of which the participants were present, and continued to conduct a survey item to determine the department. In comparison to the overall size of companies assessed, the composition of the respondents was analysed and it was discovered that most respondents were 46 contact firms with a cumulative number of 70.18% who belong to the category of 46 contact firms, while 20.17% of the respondents belong to the community of 20.17% who are in the finance industry, and 9.65% belong to the group of 9.65% that operate in the cosmetics sector. It also has to be taken into account that the educational and character comparison points included, as well as the criteria used to test the respondents, were taken into consideration. As seen by the data, nearly one-third of the respondents have

a Master's degree or higher while the remainder have a Bachelor's degree or higher. This category consists of Master's degree holders, who make up 62.2% of respondents, and Bachelor's degree holders, who make up 24.6% of respondents. However, a total of 2.2% of respondents are Ph.D. holders. As the outcome of a survey conducted by Holders, Inc., only 9.7% of respondents recorded getting only a high school diploma or GED as their educational history. Furthermore, the marital status of the respondents was also monitored and it was found that the bulk of the respondents were married with a net sum of 85.5% of the respondents who reported they were married. 13.2% of the respondents who stated they were single, and 1.3% of the respondents who stated they were separated or widows. It was discovered in the last part of the analysis that the respondents' working years had an impact on their profile. When it comes to the amount of time a company has been in service, over 31% of respondents who are operating a business report they have spent between 11 and 15 years running a business, as compared to 29.8% of respondents who have been in business for 16 to 20 years, and only 9.2% of respondents who are in business for 5 years. However, 23.7% of respondents have worked for 6 to 10 years, and a handful of respondents (6.1%) have 1 year of job experience.

4.2: Measurement of Validity – Reflective Model

Convergent validity is classified as 'construct validity subcategories' and is evaluated to validate the measurement model. The average extracted variance (AVE) is used to measure the proportion of the variance defined by the measurement error metrics. The lowest suggested reliability level is 0.7 based on the PLS study (Hair et al., 2017), and the lowest acceptable Average Variance Extracted (AVE) level is 0.5. As shown in Table 2, composite reliability and Cronbach's Alpha are used to measure the internal reliability of each dimension's accuracy. If the average alpha coefficient of Cronbach of all the construction products reaches 0.7, the items are known to be extremely accurate (Kannan & Tan, 2005). The objects were deemed extremely accurate since the alpha build coefficients of the individual Cronbach were both greater than 0.7. Therefore, if the values produced were greater than 0.70, this proved that the accuracy between the calculation of constructs was greater. Parallel to Hair et al. (2014) guidelines, loadings of 0.70 to 0.90 and greater were reported in each of the item loadings as seen in Table 4.2 above

Table 2: Reliability of Reflective Constructs Summary

Latent Variable	Indicators	Internal Consistency Reliability	Convergent Validity		
		Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha	Loadings	AVE
		0.60-0.90	0.60-0.90	>0.708	>0.50
Human Factor	HUM1	0.957	0.871	0.921	0.736
	HUM2			0.917	
	HUM3			0.917	
	HUM4			0.806	
	HUM5			0.836	
	HUM6			0.881	
	HUM7			0.744	

	HUM8			0.826	
Communication	COM1	0.944	0.892	0.806	0.681
	COM2			0.749	
	COM3			0.843	
	COM4			0.782	
	COM5			0.819	
	COM6			0.881	
	COM7			0.888	
	COM8			0.822	
Governance	GOV1	0.946	0.891	0.876	0.716
	GOV2			0.873	
	GOV3			0.842	
	GOV4			0.870	
	GOV5			0.875	
	GOV6			0.770	
	GOV7			0.811	
Competency	COMP1	0.944	0.944	0.867	0.679
	COMP2			0.823	
	COMP3			0.889	
	COMP4			0.890	
	COMP5			0.803	
	COMP6			0.777	
	COMP7			0.763	
	COMP8			0.766	
Partnership	PAR1	0.949	0.910	0.801	0.727
	PAR2			0.788	
	PAR3			0.854	
	PAR4			0.804	
	PAR5			0.738	
	PAR6			0.811	
IT Investment	ITIV1	0.982	0.922	0.832	0.756
	ITIV2			0.839	
	ITIV3			0.847	
	ITIV4			0.840	
	ITIV5			0.799	
	ITIV6			0.715	

The squared association between the influences in Table 3 as seen in Table 3, which shows that the correlation of latent variables and discriminant validity (Fornell-Larcker) is lower than the corresponding AVE figures.

The findings seen here demonstrate that the metrics and definitions have closer connection to one another; these results indicate that the test has sufficient discriminant validity.

Table 3: Fornell-Larcker Criterion Results

Construct	COM	COMP	GOV	HUM	ITIV	PAR	SMEP
COM	0.955						
COMP	0.825	0.913					
GOV	0.937	0.824	0.990				
HUM	0.434	0.422	0.398	0.858			
ITIV	0.808	0.852	0.883	0.451	0.893		
PAR	0.905	0.855	0.937	0.338	0.868	0.946	
SMEP	0.834	0.705	0.868	0.411	0.839	0.752	0.842

4.3 Coefficient of Determination (R2)

The coefficient of determination or what is known as R² is one of the central criteria in the evaluation of the structural model by PLS-SEM. R² value represents the portion of the variation in the endogenous variable(s) that can be explained by one or more exogenous variables. Hair *et al.* (2017) suggested that values of R² of 0.75 as substantial, 0.50 is indicated as moderated

whilst 0.25 is considered weak. Hence, it was known that the quality of the structural model depends on the values of R², which displayed the ability of the exogenous variables in explaining the endogenous variables. Thus, based on the results of this study, it was found out that all values obtained for R² had achieved Hair *et al.* (2017) suggested criteria. Table 4.4 and Figure 4.1 presented the R² result of the endogenous latent variables.

Table 4: R² of the Endogenous Latent Variable

Latent Construct	R ² value	Result
SMEs Performance	0.938	Substantial

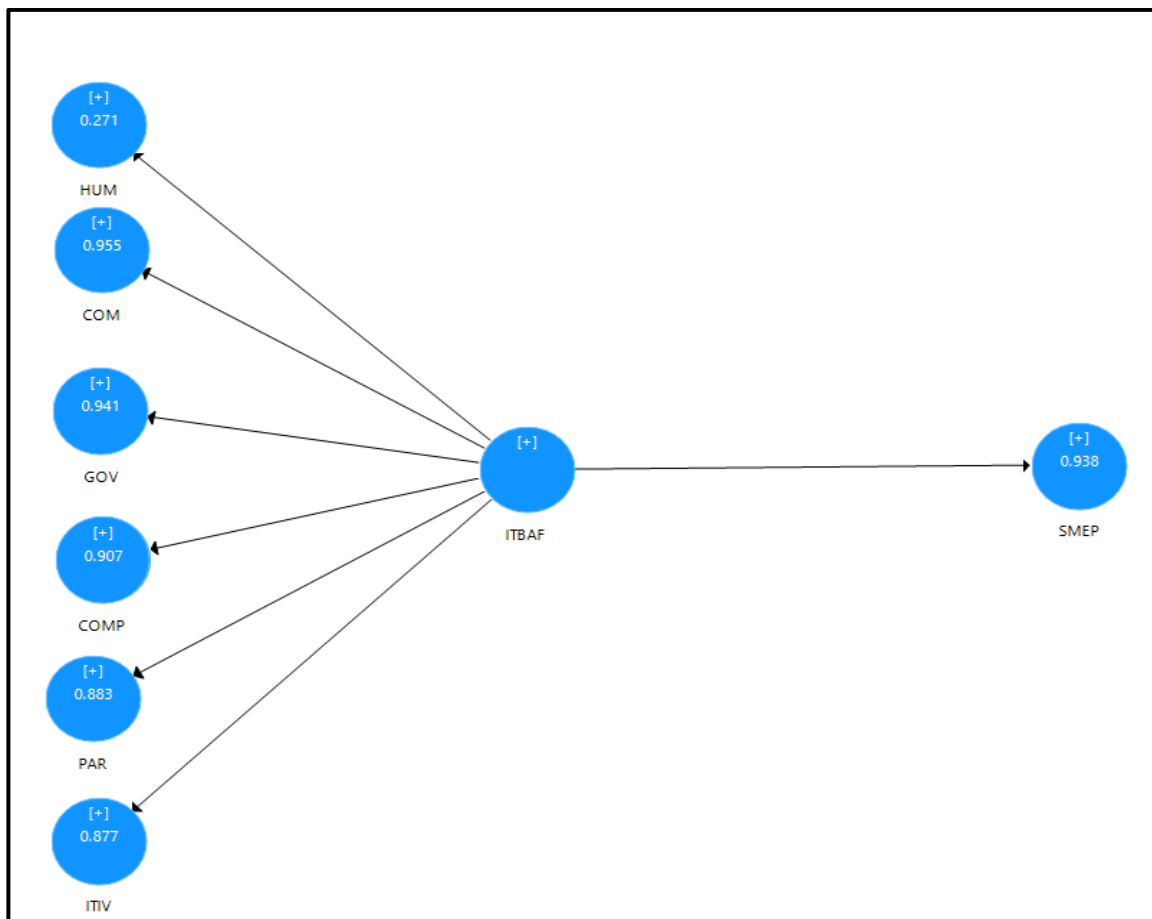


Figure 4.1: R² for Endogenous Latent Variable

The organisational definition for multiple regressions, according to Cohen's(1998) suggestions, represents parameters for deciding whether the exogenous variables of a predictor have no, weak, medium, or significant f². Therefore, values of f² greater than 0.35 are considered to be significant f², while values

varying from 0.15 to 0.35 are considered to be medium, values ranging from 0.02 to 0.15 are considered to be minimal and, ultimately, values smaller than 0.02 are deemed not to be impacted. For the present analysis, the effect sizes are determined according to the above formula and are given in Table 5.

Table 5: Effect Sizes of the Latent Variables

Constructs	F Square	Effect Size
ITBAF - SMEP	0.355	Substantial
ITBAF – HUM	0.372	Substantial
ITBAF –COM	0.555	Substantial
ITBAF –GOV	0.892	Substantial
ITBAF –COMP	0.800	Substantial
ITBAF –PAR	0.569	Substantial
ITBAF –ITIV	0.152	Medium

4.5 Predictive Relevance of the Model (Q²)

Another criterion for determining the consistency of the structural model for prediction is the predictive

significance (Q2) (Hair et al., 2017). If the value of cross-validity redundancy is above zero, according to Saunders et al. (2016) recommendation, this means that predictive relevance and a value of Q2 smaller than

zero suggest that predictive relevance is missing in the model. The Q2 effects of the endogenous latent variables are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6: Predictive Relevance of the Endogenous Latent Variable

Construct	Validated Redundancy	Result
SME Performance	0.657	Q ² >0: Explanatory variable provide predictive relevance

4.6 Hypotheses Testing (Path Coefficient)

By assessing the path coefficient, the final move in evaluating the structural model is to test the study hypotheses. The lower the p-value, the higher the

relationship is (Hair et al., 2017). Table 7 displays below the structural model's direct interaction findings, the relationship between hypotheses such as H1a, H1b, H1c, H1d, H1e, H1f.

Table 7: Results of Hypotheses Testing (Direct Relationship Results)

No.	Relationship	β	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	Decision
H1	ITBAF - SMEP	0.969	0.007	148.389	0.000	Supported
H1a	HUM - SMEP	0.521	0.064	8.125	0.000	Supported
H1b	COM- SMEP	0.977	0.004	231.145	0.000	Supported
H1c	GOV- SMEP	0.970	0.006	165.170	0.000	Supported
H1d	COMP- SMEP	0.953	0.009	101.485	0.000	Supported
H1e	PAR- SMEP	0.940	0.012	79.885	0.000	Supported
H1f	ITIV- SMEP	0.936	0.013	72.186	0.000	Supported

4.7 Testing the moderation Relationship

A moderation analysis was performed to determine the moderating role of digital marketing (DM) on the relationship between ITBAF and SME performance. For moderation analysis, a bootstrapping procedure was performed as well. For the bootstrapping procedure, the analysis had been tabulated in Table 8. According to the results, the author was able to interpret the interaction effect. The cut off value for the moderator's obtained

was (t-value=1.645, p-value<0.05) and (t-value=2.33, p-value<0.01), Table 8, displayed the hypothesis testing on the moderation effect and the output recorded for the t-value was (2.502) and p-value (<0.001). This result indicated that the t-value and p-value had met the required cut-off values recommended by Hair *et al.* (2017). On the other hand, Figure 2 displayed the path model that included the t-values for DM moderation analysis towards SME performance.

Table 8: Hypothesis Testing for DM as Moderator

	Path Coefficient (β)	Std. Error	t-value	P-value	Significance	Effect size	
						f ²	Result
ITBAF*DM – SMEP	0.046	0.018	2.502	0.000	Significant	0.026	medium

The important information presented in Tables 7,8 of transactions is the statistical significance of each dependent variable. The value of t and the value of p tell us if the coefficients of the variables are zero in the population. If p is less than 0.005, We may conclude that the variables are statistically significant. In our case, we may see from the table that all independent variables have a positive effect and that the p-values for all independent variables are less than 0.05. Hence, a reasonable conclusion can state that a significant and positive impact, and we reject our empty assumptions and thus support the assumptions:

H1a: There is significant and positive relationship between human factor and SMEs performance in Baghdad City Iraq.

H1b: There is significant and positive relationship between communication and SMEs Performance in Baghdad City Iraq.

H1c: There is significant and positive relationship between governance and SMEs performance in Baghdad City Iraq.

H1d: There is significant and positive relationship between competency and SMEs performance in Baghdad City Iraq.

H1e: There is significant and positive relationship between partnership and SMEs performance in Baghdad City Iraq.

H1f: There is significant and positive relationship between IT investment and SMEs performance in Baghdad City Iraq.

H2: Digital Marketing moderates the relationship between IT business Alignment and SMEs Performance in Baghdad City Iraq.

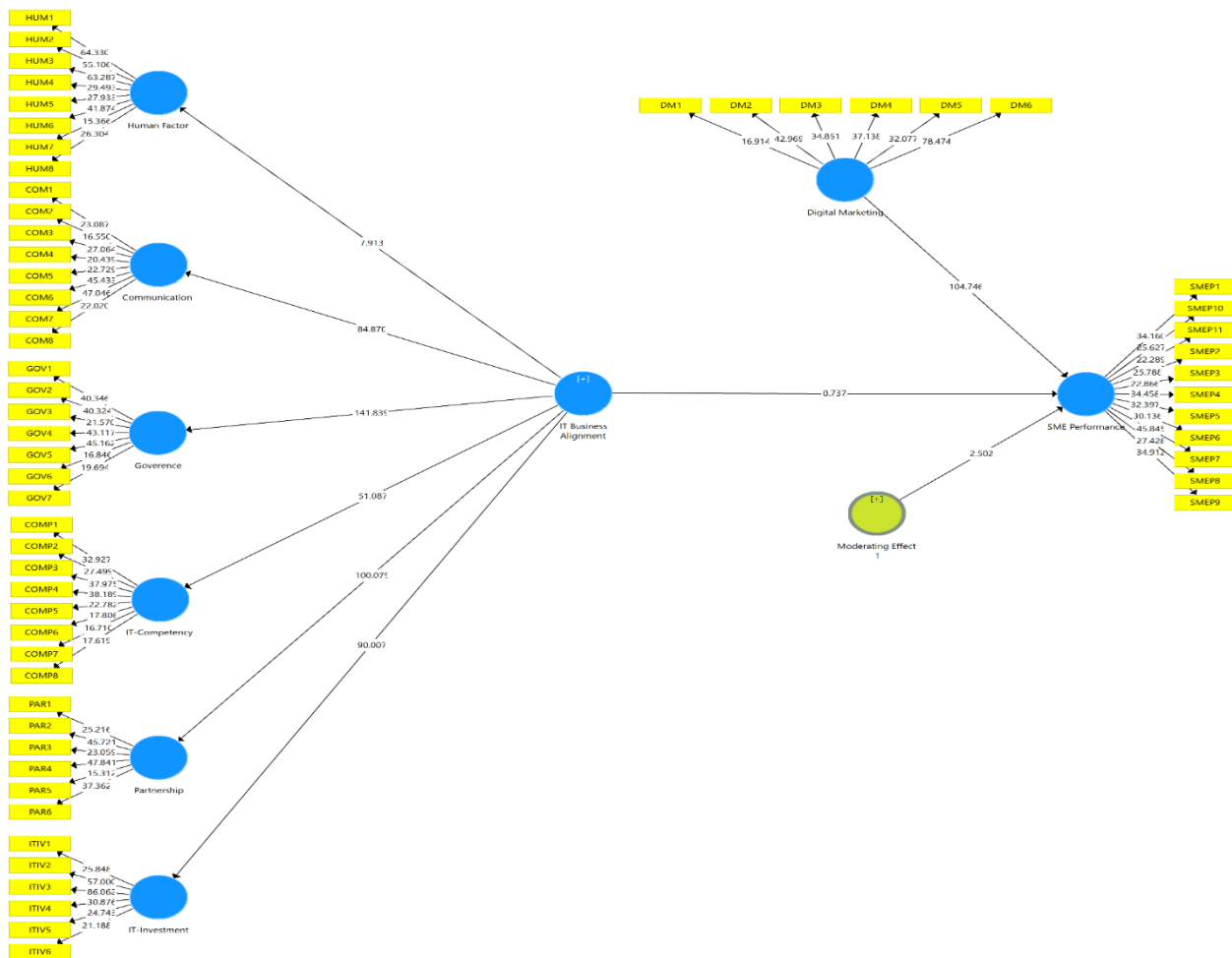


Figure 2: Path Model for DM Moderation Analysis

5. Conclusion

It is concluded that SME's performance development is a crucial element for the country's economic development. Directing the attention towards the SMEs performance sector's enhances the performance of individuals, organizations, and the financial and product aspect as well. The develop SME's performance can enhance the customer's satisfaction which is crucial in the Iraqi SME sector. The findings revealed that IT business alignment factors (Human factor, communication, Governance, competency, partnership, and IT investment) and digital marketing play a key role in improving SMEs performance. Additionally, digital marketing positively contributes to improving the SME's performance. More importantly, digital marketing moderator the relationship between IT business alignment factors (Human factor, communication, Governance, competency, partnership, and IT investment) and the SMEs performance, in which direct and effects do exist and point in the same direction (i.e., denoting a positive

relationship). Hence, the higher the digital marketing implementation, the higher the IT-business alignment factors (Human factor, communication, Governance, competency, partnership, and IT investment) and SME's performance. Digital marketing is useful and vital resource management for maintaining a competitive advantage in the Iraqi context. Consequently, managing digital marketing can solve the problems of Iraqi SME's Competitive advantage by providing information about future events and the dynamic environment, reducing the negative impact of those events. According to the aims of this study, researchers also confirm that both IT-business alignment factors and digital marketing influence the SME's performance positively which, in turn, supports the study Hypotheses. In summary, the current study used existing literature and an analytical survey to find reasonable answers to research questions and, based on the results of the survey, it can be concluded that digital marketing and IT business alignment factors have a positive impact on SMEs performance. It is recommended that senior management in SMEs enhance the SMEs performance by utilizing IT

business alignment factors (Human factor, communication, Governance, competency, partnership, and IT investment) and supporting the digital marketing by providing resources (both tangible and intangible). These resources are harnessed to serve customer needs and are sources of improving the competitive advantage. It is not enough now for SMEs to adhere to the competitive advantage only through the existing tools as senior management in SMEs can explore other contemporary practices that can have a significant impact development of the SME's performance sector in Baghdad.

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