# THE MODERATING ROLES OF DIGITAL MARKETING AND E- COMMERCE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN IT BUSINESS ALIGNMENT FACTORS AND SMES PERFORMANCE IN BAGHDAD CITY OF IRAQ

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#### **ABSTRACT**

The IT-business alignment factor has been getting increased amounts of attention from researchers and practitioners due to its potential positive impact on digital marketing and e-commerce performances of the Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). This study aims to propose IT-business alignment factors to enhance SME's performances by evaluating the moderating role of digital marketing and e-commerce in the association between IT-business alignment factors and SME's performances sector in Baghdad city of Iraq. To meet these objectives, 18 hypotheses tailored by the resourcebased view (RBV) theoretical lenses were proposed to test the theorized relationship of IT business alignment factors, Digital marketing, e-commerce, and SMEs performance. A quantitative method is applied in which data is collected from a customized survey with 65 SMEs functioning in most industries such as communication, investment, and cosmetics sectors in Iraq. The data analysis was conducted using Smart PLS 3.2.9. The data analysis was conducted using Smart PLS 3.2.9. The findings of the path analysis of partial least squares (PLS) support variables in the hypothesized direct relationships with SME's performances. The relationships between IT-business alignment factors (human factors, communication, governance, partnership, competency, IT investment) and SMEs performance (SP) have been supported. Poor of IT business alignment factors, digital marketing, and e-commerce in Iraqi SMEs performance. The finding of digital marketing and E-commerce moderators were supported. The study advances several recommendations that could be beneficial for researchers to conduct further studies in this area as well for the representatives of organizations in their efforts to enhance the SME's performances in the future. Lastly, this research presents theoretical, empirical, and practical implications as well as limitations and recommendations for future investigation.



#### **ABSTRAK**

Perniagaan yang berlandaskan unsur Teknologi Maklumat mempunyai faktor penyelarasan yang sangat terkesan dan telah mendapat perhatian dunia oleh para penyelidik dan pengamal penyelidikan kerana menarik kesan yang sangat positif terhadap prestasi pemasaran pada platform Digital dan E-Dagang kepada Perusahaan Kecil dan Sederhana Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mencadangkan faktor-faktor penyelarasan tersebut terhadap perniagaan dalam aspek Teknologi Maklumat untuk meningkatkan prestasi PKS itu sendiri dengan menilai peranan kejayaan dan keberkesanan pemasaran ini menggunakan platform Digital dan E-Dagang di bandar Baghdad Iraq. Dalam memenuhi objektif ini, terdapat 18 hipotesis yang disesuaikan dengan lensa teoritis pandangan para penyelidik berasaskan sumber yang dikaji dan diusulkan untuk menguji hubungan teori, faktor penyelarasan berlandaskan perniagaan Teknologi Maklumat, pemasaran Digital, E-Dagang dan prestasi PKS itu sendiri sangat berkesan. Di dalam penyelidikan ini kaedah kuantitatif digunakan di mana data dikumpulkan dari hasil dan tinjauan khusus dengan sejumlah 65 PKS yang berfungsi di kebanyakan industri kini seperti sektor komunikasi, sektor pelaburan dan sektor kosmetik di Baghdad Iraq. Analisis data penyelidikan ini telah dilakukan dengan menggunakan Smart PLS 3.2.9. Terdapat sokongan yang mendokong penemuan analisis penyelidikan ini di dalam hubungan langsung yang dihipotisiskan prestasi PKS yang mempunyai hubung kait antara faktor penyelarasan perniagaan Teknologi Maklumat (faktor kemanusiaan, faktor komunikasi, tadbir urus, perkongsian maklumat, kecekapan digital dan pelaburan). Penemuan peranan pemasaran digital moderator dan E-Dagang turut disokong. Kajian ini mengemukakan beberapa cadangan yang sangat bermanfaat kepada para penyelidik untuk melakukan kajian lanjut di dalam bidang ini dan juga kepada organisasi dalam usaha mereka untuk meningkatkan prestasi PKS di masa hadapan. Pada akhir kaji selidik, penyelidikan ini mengemukakan implikasi teori, empirikal dan praktikal serta batasan dan cadangan



# CONTENT

	DEC	LARAT	TION	ii
	ACK	NOWL	EDGEMENT	iv
	ABS	TRACT		v
	ABSTRAK			vi
	CON	TENT	ITENT	
	LIST	OF TA	BLES	xiv
	LIST	OF FI	GURES	xvii
	LIST	OF SY	MBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS	xviii
CHAPTER 1	INTI	RODUC	TION	1
	1.1	Introdu	ction	1
	1.2	Backgro	ound of Study	1
	1.3	Overvie	ew of SMEs performance in Iraq	6
	1.4	Problen	n Statement	8
	1.5	Researc	ch Questions	11
	1.6	Researc	h Objectives	12
	1.7	Scope of	of study	12
	1.8	Signific	cance of study	13
		1.8.1	Practical	13
		1.8.2	Theoretical	14
	1.9	Operati	onal Definitions of Variables	15
		1.9.1	IT Business Alignment Factors	15
		1.9.2	Electronic Commerce	18
		1.9.3	Digital Marketing	18
		1.9.4	SMEs Performance	18
	1.10	Organiz	cation of Chapters	19
		1.10.1	Chapter 1: Introduction	19

				ix
		1.10.2	Chapter 2: Literature Review	19
		1.10.3	Chapter 3: Research Methodology	19
		1.10.4	Chapter 4: Quantitative Data Analysis and Findings	19
		1.10.5	Chapter 5: Conclusion and Recommendation	20
	1.11	Summa	ry	21
CHAPTER 2	LITI	RATURI	E REVIEW	21
	2.1	Introduc	etion	21
	2.2	Theoret	ical review	22
		2.2.1	The Strategic Alignment Model	22
		2.2.2	Resource-based View (RBV) Theory	25
	2.3	Definiti	ons of IT Business Alignment	30
	2.4	The Fac	etors of IT-Business Alignment	34
		2.4 .1	Human factors	34
		2.4.2	Communication	36
		2.4.3	Governance	37
		2.4.4	IT Competency	38
		2.4.5	Partnership	40
		2.4.6	IT Investments	41
	2.5	Digital 1	Marketing (DM)	46
	2.6	Electron	nic Commerce (E-COM)	47
	2.7	SMEs P	Performance	48
	2.8	Hypothe	esis Development	51
		2.8.1	The relationship between IT business alignment fact	ors
			(ITBAF), and SMEs Performance	52
	2.9	Digital 1	Marketing as a Moderator	61
	2.10	E-comn	nerce as a Moderators	67
	2.11	Concep	tual framework	71
	2.12	The hyp	pothesis of the study	76
	2.13	Summa	ry	78
CHAPTER 3	RES	EARCH	METHODOLOGY	<b>79</b>
	3.1	Introduc	ction	79
	3.2	Researc	h Philosophy	80

3.3	Researc	h Approach	82
3.4	Researc	h Strategy	83
3.5	Research Design 8.		
3.6	Populat	ion of the Study	88
3.7	Samplin	ng Frame and Sample Size	89
3.8	Unit of	Analysis	90
3.9	Reliabil	ity and Validity	90
3.10	Types o	of Variables	92
3.11	Questio	nnaire layout	92
	3.11.1	IT Business Alignment Factors	94
	3.11.2	Digital Marketing	97
	3.11.3	E-commerce	97
	3.11.4	SMEs performance	98
<b>3</b> .12	Pilot St	ud <b>y</b>	99
	3.12.1	Content Validity	99
	3.12.2	Pilot Study Results	101
3.13	Data Co	ollection	103
3.14	Data Ar	nalysis	105
	3.14.1	Justifications for Selecting PLS-SEM as tool of	•
		analysis	106
	3.14.2	PLS-SEM	107
	3.14.3	Reflective and formative constructs	107
3.15	Evaluat	ing Measurement and Structural Models using Pa	artial
	Least So	quare	109
	3.15.1	Measurement Model	109
	3.15.2	Internal Consistency	109
	3.15.3	Indicator Reliability	110
	3.15.4	Convergent Validity	110
	3.15.5	Discriminant Validity	110
3.16	Structur	ral Model	112
3.17	Modera	ting Effects	114
3.18	Initial A	analysis	115

				xi
		3.18.1	Data Screening	116
		3.18.2	Missing Data, Normality and Consistency	116
		3.18.3	Refinement and Validation of Instruments	117
	3.19	Explora	tory Factor Analysis (EFA)	117
	3.20	Confirm	natory Factor Analysis (CFA)	118
	3.21	Model A	Analysis with PLS	118
	3.22	Ethical	Considerations	120
	3.23	Summa	ry	121
CHAPTER 4	DAT	A		123
	4.1	Introduc	ction	123
	4.2	Analysi	s of Survey Response	123
		4.2.1	Response Rate	124
		4.2.2	Profile of the Respondents	125
	4.3	Average	e of Respondent	128
	4.4	Explora	tory Factor Analysis	130
		4.4.1	EFA and Reliability Test on IT Business Alignme	nt
			Factors	130
		4.4.2	EFA and Reliability Test on SMEs Performance	133
		4.4.3	EFA and Reliability Test of Digital Marketing	135
		4.4.4	EFA and Reliability Analysis of E-Commerce	137
	4.5	Data Sc	reening and Cleaning	139
		4.5.1	Treatment of Missing Data	140
		4.5.2	Examntion of outlirs	140
		4.5.3	Normality Test	141
		4.5.4	Non-Response Bias Test	144
		4.4.5	Multicollinearity Test	146
		4.5.6	Common Method Variance Test	147
	4.6	Descrip	tive Analysis of Constructs	148
		4.6.1	IT Business Alignment Factors	149
		4.6.2	Digital Marketing	154
		4.6.3	E-Commerce	156

4.6.4

SMEs Performance

157

				xii
	4.7	Assessn	nent of Measurement Model	159
		4.7.1	Measurement of Validity – Reflective Model	161
	4.8	Conclus	sion of the Measurement Model – Outer Model	169
	4.9	Structur	ral Model Results (Inner Model)	172
		4.9.1	Coefficient of Determination (R2)	174
		4.9.2	The Effect Size (f²)	176
		4.9.3	Predictive Relevance of the Model (Q2)	177
		4.9.4	Lateral Collinearity	178
		4.9.5	Path Analysis	179
		4.9.6	Hypotheses Testing	179
	4.10	Modera	tion Analysis I	182
	4.11	Modera	tion Analysis II	185
	4.12	Summa	ry	188
CHAPTER 5	DISC	CUSSIO	N	192
	5.1	Introduc	etion	192
	5.2	Recapit	ulation of Research Findings	192
	5.3	Discuss	ion of Findings	194
		5.3.1	Objective One: Relationship between IT business	
			alignment factors and SMEs Performance in Bagho	lad
			city of Iraq.	194
		5.3.2	Moderating effect of Digital Marketing (DM) on the	e
			Relationship between ITBAF, and Performance of	
			SMEs in Iraq.	204
		5.3.3.	Moderating Role of E-commerce (EC) on the	
			Relationship between IT Business Alignment Factor	ors
			and Performance of SMEs in Iraq.	208
	5.4	Contrib	utions of the research	210
		5.4.1	Methodological Contributions	210
		5.4.2	Theoretical Contributions	211
		5.4.3	Practical Contribution	212
	5.5	Recomm	nendation and Future research	214
	5.6	Limitati	on of Study	215

		xiii
5.7	Conclusion	216
REFERENCE		218



# LIST OF TABLES

1.1	Results for Small industrial Establishments	0
1.2	Results for Medium Industrial Establishments	7
2.1	Review of Studies on IT Business Alignment factors	40
2.2	Select studies that investigate the relationship between IT- business alignment factors and SMEs performance	59
2.3	Summary of literature review to digital marketing as a moderator variable	63
2.4	Summary of literature review to electronic commerce as a moderator variable	66
3.1	List of Selected SMEs sector of Baghdad	85
3.2	The Alpha Cronbach Value	88
3.3	Dimensions of the Questionnaire	91
3.4	Items for IT business alignment factors	91
3.5	Items for digital marketing	94
3.6	Item for E-Commerce	95
3.7	Items for SMEs performance	95
3.8	Content Validity Participants	97
3.9	Survey Measurement Items	97
3.10	Cronbach's alpha from each research measurement Based on	99
	the pilot test	
3.11	Number and Percentage of Distributed and Collected Questionnaires To Each Industry	101
3.12	Rules of thumb for selecting CB-SEM or PLS-SEM	103
3.13	Validity Guidelines for Assessing Reflective Measurement	108
	Model.	
3.14	Structural Model Assessments Guideline	110
4.1	Response Rate	121

4.2	Profile of Respondents	122
4.3	Example of Calculating the Mean of five Respondents from	126
	the Same Company	
4.4	KMO & Bartlett's Test for IT Business Alignment Factors	128
4.5	Total Variance Explained for IT Business Alignment Factors	128
4.6	Rotated Component Matrix for IT Business Alignment Factors	129
4.7	Reliability Analysis for IT Business Alignment Factors	130
4.8	KMO & Bartlett's Test for SME Performance	131
4.9	Total Variance Explained for SMEs Performance	131
4.10	Rotated Component Matrix for SMEs Performance	132
4.11	Reliability Analysis of SMEs Performance	132
4.12	KMO & Bartlett's Test of Sphericity for DM	133
4.13	Total Variance Explained for Digital Marketing	134
4.14	Rotated Component Matrix for Digital Marketing	134
4.15	Reliability Analysis of Digital Marketing	134
4.16	KMO & Bartlett's Test of Sphericity for E-COM	135
4.17	Total Variance Explained for E-Commerce	135
4.18	Rotated Component Matrix for E-Commerce	136
4.19	Reliability Analysis of E-Commerce	136
4.20	Result of outlier test	138
4.21	Normality Test	139
4.22	Chi-Square Test for Non-Response Bias	142
4.23	T-test Results for Non-Response Bias	143
4.24	Multicollinearity Test Dimension Level	144
4.25	Common Method Variance Test	145
4.26	Intervals of Application Degree	145
4.27	Descriptive Statistics of IT Business Alignment Factors	146
4.28	Descriptive Statistics of Digital Marketing	153
4.29	Descriptive Statistics of E-Commerce	154
4.30	Descriptive Statistics for SMEs Performance	155
4.31	Reliability of Reflective Constructs Summary	161
4.32	Factor Loadings of Items on Constructs	165

		xvi
4.33	Fornell-Larcker Criterion Results	167
4.34	Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio Results	168
4.35	R <sup>2</sup> of the Endogenous Latent Variable	173
4.36	Effect Size of the Exogenous Constructs	175
4.37	Predictive Relevance of the Endogenous Latent Variable	177
4.38	Inner Variance Influence Factor (VIF) Results	178
4.39	Results of Hypotheses Testing (Direct Relationship Results)	180
4.40	Hypothesis Testing for DM as Moderator	182
4.41	Hypothesis Testing for E-COM as Moderator	186
4.42	Summary of the result of the hypotheses	188

# LIST OF FIGURES

1.1	Structure of Thesis	20
2.1	Six Business Alignment Maturity Criteria	22
2.2	Evolutionary Sages of RBV theory	29
2.3	The Henderson and Venkatraman Strategic Alignment Model	31
2.4	Conceptual framework	71
3.1	Philosophical Worldviews	78
3.2	Alternative Strategies of inquiry	81
3.3	Flow of Research Methodology	83
3.4	Moderated Casual Relationship	111
4.1	Research Model	159
4.2	Measurement Model Overall	170
4.3	Structural Model	172
4.4	R <sup>2</sup> for Endogenous Latent Variable	174
4.5	Path Model for DM Moderation Analysis	183
4.6	Path Model for E-COM Moderation Analysis	186

## LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

*CMP* - Contemporary Marketing Practices

*ICT* - Information and Communication Technology

*IP* - Innovation Performance

ITBAF - IT Business Alignment Factors

IT - Information Technology

*DM* - Digital Marketing

*MABs* - Multi-Auther Blogs

*PPC* - Pay-Per-Click Marketing

*PAR* - Partnership

*R&D* - Research and Development

*ROA* - Return On Assets

*ROE* - Return On Equity

*ROCE* - Return On Capital Employed

*ROI* - Return On Investment

*ROS* - Return On Sales

*EC* - E-Commerce

GOV - Governance

SEM - Search Engine Marketing

SEO - Search Engine Optimization

*HF* - Human factors

*SMEs* - Small and Medium Enterprise performance

S-O-R - Stimuli Organism Response

SPSS - Statistical Package for Social Science

*VBP* - Viable Business Plan

*COM* - Communication

COMP - Competency

*ITIV* - IT investment



# LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX	TITLE	PAGE
A	Letter to SMEs Companies of Iraq	285
В	Questionnaire (English)	286
C	Instrument for Expert Review (English)	295
D	Questionnaire (Arabic)	300
E	Instrument for Expert Review (Arabic)	308
F	Experts Information	313
G	List of Publications	314
Н	Vita	315

## **CHAPTER 1**

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

This study seeks to investigate the IT business alignment factors (ITBAF) of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the manufacturing sector in Iraq and its relationship on the development of the performance of the SMEs with a moderating role of digital marketing and electronic commerce. This chapter thus, provides a background to the study, the statement of the problem, the gap in the literature, research objectives, research questions, the significance of the study, and chapter conclusion.

# 1.2 Background of Study

IT-business alignment is the fit between IT strategy and business strategy in organizations (Belete & Hagos, 2020). Strategic alignment helps organizations use their IT resources effectively to support their business strategies, thus enables them to maximize the impact of their IT investments, integrate IT and business processes, and increase competitiveness, revenue growth, and profitability (Belete & Hagos, 2020; Ilmudeen *et al.*,2019; Bhattacharya, 2017; Panda & Rath, 2018).

In an early attempt, Luftman, 2017, noted that organizations spend a high percentage of their budgets on developing IT capabilities, which in turn provide strategic benefits to the organizations. They investigated the alignment between organizations' critical success factors and their IT capabilities, and reported a positive

effect of the alignment on organizational performance (Luftman *et al.*, 2017: Gutierrez *et al.*, 2015). Tallon (2016) also conceptualized strategic alignment as the match between business strategy and IT strategy. Although they did not find any statistical support for the performance effects of the alignment, they reported that firms tend to choose an IT strategy that is consistent with their business strategy. Later, Afandi, (2017) investigated the effect of strategic alignment on the performance of small firms.

While they did not hypothesize a causal direction, their results indicated that firms with higher levels of alignment perform better than those with lower levels of alignment. Recently, Alghazi (2018) used a different approach to study the effect of IT and business alignment on firm performance. Fazal *et al.*, (2020), they conceptualized operations strategy in four dimensions: flexibility strategy, quality strategy, delivery strategy, and cost strategy, and measured alignment based on the perceptions of general managers and operations managers on how IT supports these four dimensions.

Al-Adaileh (2017) further articulates that Business-IT strategic alignment refers to the degree of congruence between Business and IT strategies. While its importance is well researched and documented, no organization can attain maturity without adopting a process within a framework to ensure a measure of success in alignment. Luftman *et al.*, (2017) presented an approach to assess and evaluate the maturity of an organization's business-IT alignment, he had provided a maturity level of alignment called the strategic alignment maturity (SAM) model. Understanding the maturity of its strategic alignment processes and practices would empower the organization to improve or adopt new and additional approaches to its Business-IT alignment (Luftman, 2015).

Enormous revolutions in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) contribute to change the way that business is conducted. The world economy in the present age is moving from the commodity-linked stage only to the stage of value creation, employment, and economic wealth (Qashou, 2017). Marketing is one of these sectors that are affected, leading to the emergence of the so-called Electronic Marketing or E-marketing (Hamad *et al.*, 2018; Akindolire *et al.*, 2015). Marketing in general is all things that an organization does to create and share value with customers and thus it is of valuable value in guiding the enterprise strategy (Silk, 2015). Grönroos

(2016) says that the development of marketing is linked to the development of technology as technological applications enables enterprises to give the consumer what he wants in any way and whenever he wants. E-Marketing is becoming more essential in the present era, which is characterized by global markets, intense competition, and open borders (Ivanauskiene, 2015). In addition, modern and diverse means of communication enabled customers to access each product or service quickly without bothering about time and location (Verma, 2016). All these developments have made it incumbent on the institutions to consider new ways of marketing and reshape the traditional methods. Marketing managers have perceived the Internet as an attractive marketplace where online activities enhance the relationship between buyers and sellers (Kanchan *et al.*, 2015). Marketers had opportunities to have more effective ways to communicate information about goods and services to a targeted audience (Saridakis *et al.*, 2018).

There were numerous studies and developments in which marketers identified novel approaches to Internet marketing strategy and planning (Choudhury, 2019). Online marketing programs have become a premier venue for targeted consumer marketing, presenting enormous potential for revenue growth (Choudhury, 2019). SMEs often used advertising and promotion to help position the goods or services as meeting the desires and needs of the target market. For the purpose of this study, online presence through the Internet was the suggested novel approach for positioning marketing. Social media has become an indispensable part of today's marketing landscape (Liu *et al.*, 2018; Keller & Fay, 2012). Social media has grown enormously since its inception, with substantial impacts on marketing as well. Recent reports indicate that the value of social media marketing worldwide reaches billions (USD).

Digital marketing can be characterized unexpectedly. E-Advertising organizations, for example, describe e-advertising as the use of e-information and programs to launch, distribute, develop, and evaluate ideas, products, and projects for unique and accomplished recognized purposes (Qashou & Saleh, 2018; Ali *et al.*, 2017) characterizes it as a way to use networks with the aim of providing the necessary organizations and management to do business smoothly.

While Shaltoni (2016), 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).

IT is an integral part of support, sustain and grow a business with the rapid development of technology technologies, innovative information technology has become an important topic of research in the era of electronic business (Kasemsap, 2018). Evolving technologies continually present new opportunities and challenges for industry practitioners, business education, and academic research (Royle & Laing 2014). Technological developments have identified new marketing tools or media such as social media. From the outset, this electronic media plays an important and effective role in improving access to consumers through over internet (Mohammadpour *et al.*, 2014).

Web-based media marketing is a buzzword that can be described as the use of online media as a promotional tool, as stated by Khatib (2016), it refers to web-based promotion as the use of social media by the media for organizational elements in general promotion (Prasad & Saigal, 2019). It is a cycle in which people participate in the promotion of their websites, objects and administration through online social channels, to interact with the community and benefit from a much larger network that was not accessible through traditional advertising channels (Alkhoms and Alnsour, 2013). They recommend that future marketing strategy research should consider the impact of marketing on a company's productivity and creativity and how marketing strategy works and how it can be used as a large company (Ozkaya *et al.*, 2015).

E-commerce is a new profitable approach to business management that goes beyond direct data development and improves electronic exchange through retail terms, incorporation guarantee and direct booking through billing, items and receipts (Alley & Emery, 2017). Almost a quarter of a century has passed since businesses have used the Internet and the World Wide Web (Hashim, 2009). Shehata, & Montash

(2019), contended advances in technology such as networking, telecommunications, the Internet, and electronic commerce (e-commerce) have provided businesses with more effective and competitive business tools. Such technological advances are serving to change the way to conduct business. (Zulkiffli *et al.*, 2020).

John (2017), contended advances in technology such as networking, telecommunications, the Internet, and electronic commerce (e-commerce) have provided businesses with more effective and competitive business tools. Such technological advances are serving to change the way to conduct business. Consumer behaviors such as an increase in Internet use to find out about the products or services they are interested in, including the experiences of previous buyers, are changing (Agenda *et al.*, 2015).

Faloye (2014) posited in small businesses, e-commerce technology represents a potential for business growth and expansion. Viio & Grönroos (2016), also defines the inevitable link between innovation and advertising with standardized innovative market technology. Thus, e-commerce is becoming a cornerstone of the current era, shown by companies around the world, unusual competition, and open (Gilmore & Carson, 2018).

All electronic exchanges on both the supply and purchase sides are e-commerce, while exchanges and correspondence on the trade side are electronic exhibition forms (Skudiene *et al.*, 2015). The quality and amount of information that a company sends to customers or uses that information to make choices can determine exactly how competitive the business is (Chaffey *et al.*, 2015). During this time, the business has changed at an alarming rate, with massive global organizations such as Google, Facebook, Amazon, Alibaba, eBay, and Uber 20 years ago being incredible and becoming a major part of our modern economy (Leiner *et al.*, 2018). In 2015, online sales accounted for 7.4% of total US retail spending, the highest percentage since the start of tracking in 1999 (Phillips, 2015).

E-commerce or e-business means better business in correspondence and information exchange is crucial for all companies (Turban *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, online sales promotion allows businesses to adapt to customer needs with lower exchange fees and allows customers to negotiate painlessly over time and region (Watson *et al.*, 2002; Sheth and Sharma, 2005).

In the Iraqi environment, performances are not sufficiently explored. Some experts are examining some of the problems identified in this area. For example, Salem (2016) attempts to analyze the elements that affect the way buyers perceive SMS advertising in Iraq. Many of these studies generally refer to electronic commerce (e-business). Model examples include Ahmed (2018), who discusses the e-commerce of Iraqi SMEs (SMEs). Thabit and Younis (2015), where they explore barriers to choosing e-commerce in independent Iraqi businesses (Sultan 2018). It builds the necessary structure for the productive use of Iraqi e-commerce. The current study would actually fill the gap that previous studies have not done in looking at ITBAF and SMEs performance with digital marketing and e-commerce moderator's variables.

# 1.3 Overview of SMEs performance in Iraq

According to Central Statistical Organization Iraq (CSO), 2018 on Small and Medium Enterprises, the Iraqi SMEs in 2018, the number of industrial SMEs reached a level of 25,945 which accounted for all enterprises in Iraq, and the number of employees in SMEs reached 85,999, which accounted, except SMEs Kurdistan in the north of Iraq. The number of small enterprises started to decline in 2018 compared to 2017, from 27856 to 25747, by (7.6%) percent and a decrease in the number of employees from 93644 to 83375 by (11%) percent, total wages and benefits (Million dinars) decrease from 304412 to 298801 with percent (1.8). The value of production amounted in 2018 was 1939289 million dinars compared to 304412 million dinars for the year 2017, i.e., a decrease of (3.8%).

Table 1.1: Results for Small industrial Establishments for the years (2015-2018) (Central Statistical Organization Iraq, 2018)

Years Indications	2015	2016	2017	2018	Percentage Change (2017- 2018)
Number of SMEs	22480	25966	27856	25747	-7.6

Table 1.1: Results for Small industrial Establishments for the years (2015-2018)

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