

The use of digital marketing for sales growth in women-owned Small, Medium and Micro-Enterprises in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Women are an important part of the entrepreneurial economy. In the 4th industrial revolution, incorporating the latest available tools was an important part of growth and business sustainability. The purpose of this study is to understand the digital marketing usage by women-owned SMMEs in South Africa.

The research method utilised was interviews using a convenience sample from 15 participants. The participants were drawn from women-owned businesses and comprised of business owners and employees responsible for marketing within the organisation.

The findings show that women-owned SMMEs are aware of and do use some of the available digital platforms. However, their knowledge of how to fully leverage these platforms and take advantage of them is limited. The study highlighted that there are challenges faced by the WO businesses in leveraging digital marketing in their businesses this can be attributed to a deeply entrenched inequality in society or from the fact that women entrepreneurs start off from a worse of position versus men. Interestingly the digital world reflects what happens in the real world.

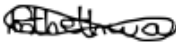
Recommendations include an establishment of a woman representation body that will represent women-owned SMMEs in the public and private sectors, training that will provide easy to implement measures and quantifiable outcomes for SMMEs to use in their strategies or in cases of outsourcing digital marketing implementation to a third party

KEYWORDS: digital marketing, social media marketing, women-owned businesses, small business

DECLARATION

I, Pumza Mthethwa, declare that this research report is my own work except as indicated in the references and acknowledgements. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management in the field of Digital Business at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in this or any other university.

Name: Pumza Mthethwa

Signature: 

Signed at Fourways, Johannesburg

On the 31st day of March 20.22.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate my study to the countless women entrepreneurs who are committed to growing the economy through creating jobs and contributing positively to South Africa. I would also like to dedicate this study to my family who are my ever-present support structure, especially my lovely husband Khaya for the encouragement, the prayers and for stepping in when I just could not do some things for the Triolet. To my three treasures Okwethu, Lukhona and Hlelol; I would like to say thank you for your understanding when mommy needed your help of an extra cup of coffee or tea with two sugars, and for everything you did.

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Firstly, I would like to thank God for His presence in my life and for being there throughout this journey, I owe my being to Him.

Secondly, I would also like to thank my supervisor Dr Jabulile Msimango-Galawe, for always being there to provide guidance, feedback, and valuable insights into developing my research.

To my mom, sisters, brother, nephews, and nieces; Ndiyabulela Kakhulu for all your prayers and for just always stepping in. You guys' rock!

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

SMME	Small Micro Medium Enterprises
SMS	Short Messaging Services
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
TAM	Technology Acceptance
UATUT	Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology
WO	Women-owned
DIY	Do-it-your-self
DM	Digital Marketing
DMT	Digital Marketing Tools
B2B	Business-to-business
B2C	Business-to-consumer

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The chapter comprises various sections namely: the purpose of the study; the context of the study; and the research objectives. This section will further detail the significance of the study, provide the definition of terms, and the assumptions that have been made in developing this research proposal.

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the use of digital marketing for sales growth in women-owned SMMEs in South Africa.

1.2 Context of the study

Small business in South Africa has shown an increase in contribution to overall turnover in South Africa: small business reported a R2.3 trillion turnover (a 22% increase from the 16% contribution in 2013); medium business reported R1,05 trillion (10% contribution); while large business contributed R7 trillion (68%) (STATSSA, 2020). Therefore, the importance of a focused approach to small business development cannot be denied as there are huge benefits in terms of economic growth, poverty eradication, job creation, and overall development of South Africa as a country. SMMEs are necessary for boosting economies worldwide as we navigate the Covid-19 pandemic, which has negatively affected the performance of small and medium businesses (Penzel & Gauthier, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic that impacted the globe in 2020 has highlighted the importance of digital inclusion and access in different aspects of life and these digital technologies are key to achieving success for every SMME. To further exacerbate the situation, the coronavirus pandemic highlighted the rampant digital gender inequality faced by women. According to a Mastercard report, women are 43% less likely to engage on digital platforms and 14% less likely to own a mobile phone (Mastercard Index, 2020). In South Africa, 43% of SMMEs mentioned being 'able to maintain and grow their business', while 24% are worried about staying in business or going bankrupt. More than three-quarters (77%) of respondents said the rising cost of doing business, 61 percent said red

tape and regulations, and 50 percent said getting access to capital are their top business concerns for the coming year (Mastercard MEA SME Index, 2021).

The importance of SMMEs and digital technology in driving the economy cannot be disputed, especially in uplifting women and their businesses. The SME Landscape Report, a study of 4,000 SMMEs from around the world, undertaken by the Boston Consulting Group, and commissioned by Microsoft in 2013, found that early technology adopters increased their annual revenues 15% faster than their competitors (Oxford, 2015). Numerous success stories have been shared on how SMMEs have overcome various business challenges using technology e.g., reduction in costs, access to market, expansion, etc. However, according to Xerox's (2018) study, 45% of small businesses interviewed indicated that they could be doing more when it comes to technology adoption, while 52% say they are just keeping up.

Louw (2020) posits that R175 billion could be added to the South African economy by 2022 on condition that female entrepreneurs launched business ventures at an equal rate to men. In 2016, there were 176,333 micro-companies (66% of the total), 68,494 small companies (26% of the total), and 17,397 medium-sized companies (6.5% of the total) (Small Business Institute, 2018). Women make up 72% of microenterprises and 40% of small enterprises (SEDA, 2016). However, there seems to be insufficient support for women-owned SMMEs with the financing gap estimated at \$42 billion for African women across business value chains, including \$15.6 billion in agriculture alone (African Development Bank, 2022). The financing gap presents challenges when it comes to growing women-owned businesses like acquiring productive resources and incorporating the latest tools e.g., digital marketing tools, equipment, hardware, and software needed to drive sales growth and ultimately business success and continuity. The financing gap indicates the pervasive general social-cultural attitudes towards women and shows how this translates into challenges when venturing into business for women and in driving sustainable growth by incorporating the latest (digital) tools and resources in their businesses.

Lastly, other challenges faced by the women-owned SMMEs is that they lag their male counterparts in networking, skills, and technology. This affects their usage of digital marketing tools, which then impacts their business trajectories (The

World Bank, 2019). This lag can be attributed to several reasons, among which are the multiple roles women play in society, the risk-averse nature of women especially when it comes to exploring new things, and limited technical skills. Mariscal et al. (2019) further argues that gender inequality still exists when it comes to the access to and possession of digital equipment, digital fluency, and the ability to use technology in a meaningful way.

To drive the women empowerment agenda, it is crucial to incorporate digital financial inclusion as one of the policies and interventions when it comes to SMME development. The Internet, digital platforms, mobile phones, and digital financial services provide "leapfrog" opportunities for everyone, allowing women to earn more money, expand their employment (and business) opportunities, and gain access to knowledge and general information. (OECD, 2018).

1.3 Research problem

SMMEs have been touted as the crucial contributors to growing the global economy; this is the case in the South African context as well, so much so that in 2014 a new Ministry of Small Business Development was launched by the South African government (SEDA, 2016). There have been research studies and reports that have highlighted the challenges faced by SMMEs as well as some limited studies focusing on the influence of gender on business success (Ogujiuba, Olamide, & Oguijiuba, 2021). Some of the highlighted challenges to growth in women-owned businesses include restrictive labour laws, education/know-how, technology, access to funding, market access, and products/services offered/industry (SEDA, 2016; Ogujiuba et al., 2021). Add to that, there are other reasons that contribute to limited success in women-owned businesses, and these include women having a relatively higher fear of failure to venture into their businesses therefore they might not have the correct entrepreneurial mindset or self-belief, perceived high cost, and limited know-how all serving as the primary obstacles to the incorporation of digital technologies by female traders as highlighted by Okeke-Uzodike and Ndinda (2018). Lastly, Kamberidou (2020) emphasises the fact that, in addition to the challenges they face in business, women entrepreneurs face a variety of responsibilities at home, which include funding, necessary communication, and branding skills, and

support services (difficulty in accessing business networks, technology, and digital markets). As indicated above amongst the problems identified, education/know-how (Hilbert, 2011) and technology seem to come up in several studies of SMMEs in South Africa. Women-owned enterprises being on the back foot compared to their male counterparts are affected by these even more, therefore they are not able to compete effectively which further contributes to stunted business growth. In a highly digital-driven economy, this could be contributing to the reported 20% of female small businesses failing in the first year, and 50% failing to survive past five years (Stiles, 2018).

New means of marketing using various digital technologies across numerous mediums do promote sales, and these have an impact on social capital (personal networks), end-user involvement, and social business networks (Paniagua & Sapena, 2014).

The problem faced by women-owned businesses pertains to effective participation in the economy while creating jobs and alleviating poverty, by getting their businesses on par with their male counterparts when it comes to sourcing marketing budget availability, consummate skills, and access and use of digital tools amongst others. The digital marketing tools use, and adoption gap experienced by females is likely to widen if it is not identified and addressed through necessary interventions and enablement of women-owned businesses for sales growth.

1.4 Research questions and objective

The objective of this qualitative study was to explore the use of digital marketing for sales growth in women-owned SMMEs in South Africa by answering the following questions:

1. How do women-owned SMMEs use digital marketing tools?
2. What are the key factors that facilitate and/or constrain women-owned SMMEs in leveraging digital marketing tools for their businesses?
3. What is the perceived sales impact of properly leveraging and understanding digital marketing tools? How can female entrepreneurs be enabled to use digital marketing tools?

The research methodology used was a qualitative interview, and an interview guide was developed and used to gain an understanding of the usage of digital marketing tools in women-owned businesses. One-on-one virtual interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed. This information was then captured, coded, and recorded for each interview. The interviewer was very clear on the nature of the research and the importance of the participants' honest views and feedback. The data analysis was then done using Atlas Ti.

1.5 Significance of the study

This research seeks to contribute to the body of knowledge, focusing on women-owned SMMEs, to provide a better understanding of how digital marketing is used for sales growth, to unpack opportunities and/or challenges for women-owned SMMEs, and to understand the role gender plays in marketing women-owned businesses.

Firstly, much of the literature is focused on the limitations faced by female entrepreneurs; these include economic, societal, and psychological factors (Mastercard Index, 2020, Mariscal et al., 2019, Ogujiuba et al., 2021).

Secondly, the available literature focuses on the linkages of female entrepreneurs with social development (incubators, training), economic development, and poverty alleviation initiatives (Okeke-Uzodike et al., 2018; Dalimunthe, 2019, & Mastercard Index, 2020). These support initiatives are crucial in building an environment that is conducive for the women-owned SMMEs to thrive. Moreover, it is important for women entrepreneurs to translate these into internal triggers that drive business sales growth.

Lastly, available research in South Africa focuses on the digital marketing adoption by all SMMEs — male and female — (Oji, Iwu, & Tengeh, 2017) and also highlights the impact of inequality which pushes women-owned businesses to adopt guerrilla marketing (low-cost, unconventional tools i.e., websites, blogs, etc.) out of desperation, due to limited funding available (Ramasobana, Fatoki, & Oni, 2017). A systematic mapping study was conducted by Rahim, Maulina, & Benny (2021) which showed that from a total of 121 research papers focusing on SME adoption of digital marketing worldwide, only eight were from South Africa

(just 6.8% of the total 121 research papers) and these were mainly focused on SMEs in general.

This research will contribute to the body of literature related to digital marketing use for sales growth in women-owned SMMEs. Compared to large businesses, the availability of information on women-owned businesses' usage of digital marketing in South Africa is limited. This contrasts with well-documented research and the high resource availability of large companies (Jarvinen, Tollinen, Karjaluo, & Jayawardhena, 2012 Michaelidou & Siamagka, 2011), and male-owned entities (Ramasobana, Fatoki, & Oni, 2017).

This study is expected to contribute to the body of research focused on SMMEs with a specific emphasis on women-owned enterprises in South Africa. It aims at closing the gap when it comes to how women-owned businesses leverage digital marketing for growth in sales. In essence, the research study seeks to provide insights for application by women business owners, various women support bodies, incubators, public policies, and networks as they develop marketing strategies and business support programmes.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

Women-owned businesses are the key focus of this study. The businesses participating in the study have a majority of 51% plus women ownership. The study focuses on urban-based businesses with none of the participants being based in rural areas. Any businesses with no marketing activity are not a part of this study. The study also excludes team members who are not directly involved with the marketing of the business. The study focuses on women-owned businesses in general and did not focus on the race or age of the business owners. The study participants are female owners or employees. The Information and Communications Technology (ICT) including hardware, software, security, etc., of the business, did not form part of the study.

1.7 Definition of terms

Digital marketing tools refer to marketing using digital technology tools. Some channels related to digital marketing are SMS marketing, digital print advertising, television marketing, and radio advertising (Atshaya & Rungta, 2016). Similarly, Smith (2012) describes digital marketing tools as digital distribution channels to drive product and service practices.

Social media marketing refers to the use of social media platforms and websites to promote products or services (Shamsudeen, 2018).

Small and Medium Enterprises Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are businesses that maintain revenues, assets, or a number of employees below a certain threshold. Each country has its own definition of what constitutes a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME). Certain size criteria must be met and occasionally the industry in which the company operates, is considered as well (Liberto, 2020).

According to Cenfed Consulting Agency in South Africa (2016), SMMEs are categorised into 3 namely: EMEs, which are the smallest entities with an annual turnover of R10 million or less; QSEs, are those with an annual turnover between R10 million and R50 million; and GENs which are the largest entities with an annual turnover more than R50 million.

Women-owned enterprises or women-owned SMEs refers to a business concern that is at least 51% owned by one or more women, or in the case of a corporation, at least 51% of the stock is owned by one or more women and the management and daily business operations are controlled by one or more of the women who own it (Lawinsider Dictionary, 2013-2022). For the purposes of this study, the focus was on women-owned SMMEs".

1.8 Assumptions

Various assumptions were made regarding the different aspects of the study. These included the following:

- The research participants answered with honesty and truthfulness.

- All participants have access to and use the internet on an ongoing basis.
- The sample participants have knowledge of and are responsible for the company's marketing activities, and they can provide meaningful insights into the study.

1.9 Chapter outline

Chapter 1 introduces the study context, background, and problem statement. In this chapter research questions that guide the study are stated and the terms used in this study are defined.

Chapter 2 focuses on providing a review and analysis of available literature. The schools of thought surrounding the use of digital marketing are then discussed. Key concepts and the theoretical foundations are then established, and lastly, a conceptual framework is presented.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology undertaken, including the research design, type of research, population, and sample size. The procedure for data collection, analysis, reporting, and ethical considerations are also covered in this chapter.

Chapter 4 covers the research results and findings and illustrates key outcomes supported by participants' verbatim quotes and detailed analyses of the interviews conducted.

Chapter 5 focuses on the discussion of the research results and explores digital marketing usage in women-owned SMMEs. This is followed by a deep dive into research participants' characteristics and lastly discusses each of the four research propositions identified in the study.

Chapter 6 centres on the research conclusions, offer recommendations based on each proposition and provides suggestions for future research studies.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is aimed at presenting the conceptual framework and reviewing literature related to the study. The literature review connects different pieces of research while expanding, juxtaposing, and evaluating key debates, discussions, themes, methods, approaches, and controversies in the academic literature on a topic (Andersson & Beviridge, 2007). The literature was reviewed to draw on the knowledge and ideas of other scholars who are established in the field of the utilisation of digital marketing platforms for sales growth in women-owned SMMEs in South Africa, while also allowing for the exploration of academic opinion and disagreements on the topic.

The first part of this literature review provides the background for the study that covers women-owned businesses, the gender digital divide, and the theoretical foundation. The last part of the literature review explores each research question in detail and outlines propositions related to each research question.

2.2 Gender Digital Divide as an inhibitor to digital tool usage

2.2.1 Understanding digital gender inequality

This recognises the impact of gender inequality and how it affects the digital divide. The economic development of a country is incumbent on both men and women entrepreneurs. Kamberidou (2020) examines how far women have come in their careers and entrepreneurial endeavours, as well as some of the behavioural characteristics that have dominated the male/female entrepreneur debate since the twentieth century. Most studies done compared male and female entrepreneurs, with findings concluding that there are more similarities than differences between the genders. According to Kamberidou (2020), other factors that contribute to women's entrepreneurial success are misrepresented by this belief. Kamberidou (2020) further argues that there are other factors, she

claims, that are at play because of women becoming trapped in what she calls "the multitasking whirlpool." She argues that for women entrepreneurs to become "the distinguished entrepreneur" a term introduced by Carayannis and Stewart (2013), there are digital and innovative skills in addition to behavioural characteristics that are crucial to this being achieved, and this was based on an empirically evidenced study of 33 founding entrepreneurs. Kamberidou (2020) highlights the digital skills crisis which results in the digital exclusion of women, as becoming an essential consideration in entrepreneurial activity over and above other key entrepreneurial imperatives which include leadership, financial, and operations skills.

In the recent past women, entrepreneurs had an opportunity to make significant contributions to the South African economy (Akhawaya & Havenga, 2012). Over the years there have been several programmes and activities that have been put in place to drive women in fields that they were not part of, as well as in business. Education has been an important part of this and is in line with Hilbert (2011) who argued that education and literacy play a role in ICT usage and adoption of digital technologies.

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SELECTED CONTEXTUAL DATA

General Indicators	female	male	value	Education and skills	female	male	value
GDP, US\$ billions	–	–	368.1	STFMS, attainment %	12.94	27.51	0.47
GDP per capita, constant '11, intl. \$ 1000	–	–	12.11	Agri., Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary, attainment %	1.70	2.48	0.69
Total population, million people	29.30	28.50	57.80	Arts & Humanities, attainment %	5.17	5.04	1.03
Population growth rate, %	1.37	1.28	1.32	Business, Admin. & Law, attainment %	30.10	35.64	0.84
Population sex ratio (female/male), female/male ratio	49.31	50.69	0.97	Education, attainment %	23.96	11.93	2.01
				Engineering, Manuf. & Construction, attainment %	4.25	14.18	0.30
Work participation and leadership	female	male	value	Health & Welfare, attainment %	8.17	4.35	1.88
Labour force, million people	10.20	12.31	0.45	Information & Comm. Technologies, attainment %	2.00	5.10	0.39
Unemployed adults, % of labour force (15-64)	29.32	25.36	1.16	Natural Sci., Mathematics & Statistics, attainment %	6.69	8.22	0.81
Workers employed part-time, % of employed people	12.80	5.90	2.17	Services, attainment %	0.55	0.24	2.30
Gender pay gap (OECD only), %	–	–	n/a	Social Sci., Journalism & Information, attainment %	17.26	12.71	1.36
Proportion of unpaid work per day, female/male ratio	15.56	6.46	2.41	Vocational training, attainment %	5.84	4.72	1.24
Advancement of women to leadership roles, 1-7 (best)	–	–	4.06	PhD graduates, attainment %	0.26	0.36	0.71

Figure 1: South African Global Gender Gap Index, p315 (Global Gender Gap Report 2020, 2019)

Despite the focus on upskilling and educating women, Figure 1 above shows the disparities that still exist between men and women in South Africa when it comes to education and skills and other general indicators that have an influence on women. It is evident from the table that in South Africa, women have less well-rounded skillsets compared to men when it comes to ICT. South Africa with a global world ranking of 67 when it comes to the gender gap index and attainment scores of 2.00 for women compared to 5.10 for men when it comes to Information, communication, and technologies (Global Gender Gap Report 2020, 2019). The focus in South Africa has shifted from only material access and is now on skills and opportunities that are important for the effective use and incorporation of ICTs (Mishra & Aneja, 2017). This is aligned with studies done in the Global South which highlight that more men have access to ICT than women (Gillwald, Milek, & Stork, 2010). Possessing the necessary digital skillset and understanding is important for women as this will enable them to easily incorporate digital marketing tools into their businesses should they decide to venture into entrepreneurship. There is however a remarkable gap as illustrated in the above table in terms of these skills which could translate into low participation in digital marketing technology usage within women-owned businesses.

Over and above the gender STEM skills disparity various other factors can be attributed to lower participation of women in the digital economy, these include traditional responsibilities, societal expectations, and juggling of roles resulting in women spending less time focusing on business development and exploring growth strategies which within those digital marketing is an important component. According to the 2016 Global Entrepreneurship Monitoring Report, there are 252 million female entrepreneurs in the world. Despite this, the document points out that the treatment of female entrepreneurs is different from that of male entrepreneurs, because the online space has been integrated into an offline space, and gender inequality still exists (Scuotto, Serravelle, Murray, & Viassone, 2019). In South Africa, for example, men are nearly twice as likely as women to be online (20.2 percent of men vs. 11.3 percent of women), while the gap narrows to just 5% when men and women are on equal footing when it comes to access

of technology and are exposed to similar conditions and have similar levels of access to technology. (Hilbert, 2011)

Kamberidou (2020) emphasises that the digital divide between genders becomes even more relevant for women entrepreneurs and especially those who reside in South Africa. It is evident that the role of ICT in women empowerment is critical. Therefore, the use of ICT as a direct selling channel should be promoted among women entrepreneurs. This improvement would not only benefit women financially, but it will also improve the overall fabric of society. These disparities create curiosity and interest to understand the impact of inequality in the digital economy that could result in women not fully leveraging available technologies/digital marketing tools.

2.2.2 Women-owned businesses

Marketing has evolved over the past couple of years and digital marketing has become an important part of any marketing strategy, as noted by Kotler et al. (2017) who said that connectivity is the most important game-changer in recent years in marketing.

There are traits inherent in women which enable them to lead an organisation in unique and effective ways. According to Ukpere et al. (2014), based on the diverse socio-cultural and economic environment in which the business is located, global women entrepreneurs adopt and absorb useful methods and improve other areas of business. Hassan et al. (2014) argued that businesswomen make important contributions to social and economic development. In the same manner, women's entrepreneurship plays a vital role in improving the overall fabric of society. However, this could be better achieved if the issues of gender inequalities and the digital divide are addressed (Vossenbergh, 2013). Furthermore, women in managerial positions tend to be more interactive and are team players (Schaap, Stedham, & Yamamura, 2008), therefore, developing women-owned businesses will create jobs and enhance the

overall economic system of a country. The successful integration and use of digital marketing tools cannot be left to chance when considering interventions to drive the success of women-owned businesses today and this needs to be carefully explored and analysed to ensure that women are not left behind in developing a strong economy where everyone is part of a thriving SMME ecosystem.

2.3 Digital marketing tools usage by women-owned SMMEs

A tool as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary is anything that helps you to do something you want to do (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). Digital marketing tools, therefore, assist business owners in marketing their businesses and they also allow the owner/marketer to analyse and monitor business performance to improve and adjust to ensure success. Therefore, digital marketing entails applying technology to marketing activities to increase customer knowledge and then match their needs (Chaffey & Smith, 2013). To understand how women-owned businesses use digital marketing tools it is important to first understand the digital dynamics at play in the business world today. South Africa has about 25 million active social media users and experienced a 13.6million growth in the 2020/2021 period with about 98.5% accessing social media platforms via mobile phones (Ornico, 2021).

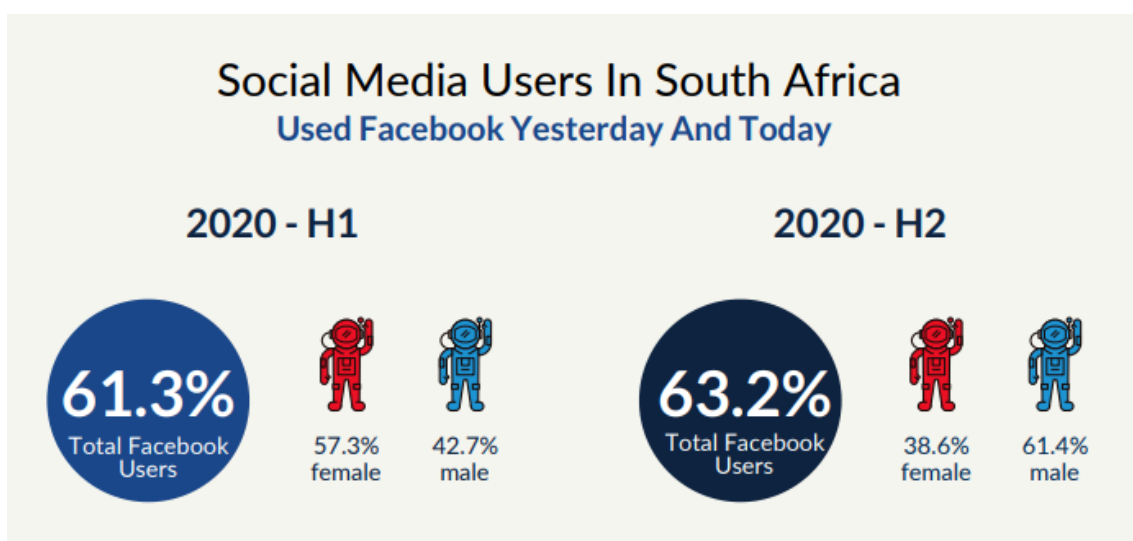


Figure 2: Social Media Users in South Africa (pg. 66); Ornico Report 2021

Figure 2 above shows the gender usage split in South Africa when it comes to usage of one of the biggest platforms in the country; male users at 61.4% vs females at 38.6% (Ornico, 2021) a drop in the second half of 2020. Similar patterns highlighted on the above chart are noted across major digital platforms except for Snapchat where the female audience sits at 78.5% vs. the male audience at 18.6% as reported by Ornico (2021). The observation of usage patterns could influence the general usage of digital platforms by women-owned businesses. The prevalence and significance of digital media in the twenty-first century cannot be overstated, as it has brought about a "massive transformation" in how people communicate, conduct business, and use it for pleasure and social interaction. (De Abreau, 2010). Anyone and any business with the intention of driving long-term continuity must adopt digital marketing as part of driving sales. Haddix & Sealy-Ruiz (2012) suggest that the availability and use of digital media could greatly empower [female] youth to become knowledge and vital information producers in society. The rise in user-generated content, individual-owned blogging channels, podcasts, and personal pages attest to the importance of digital media in information production worldwide.

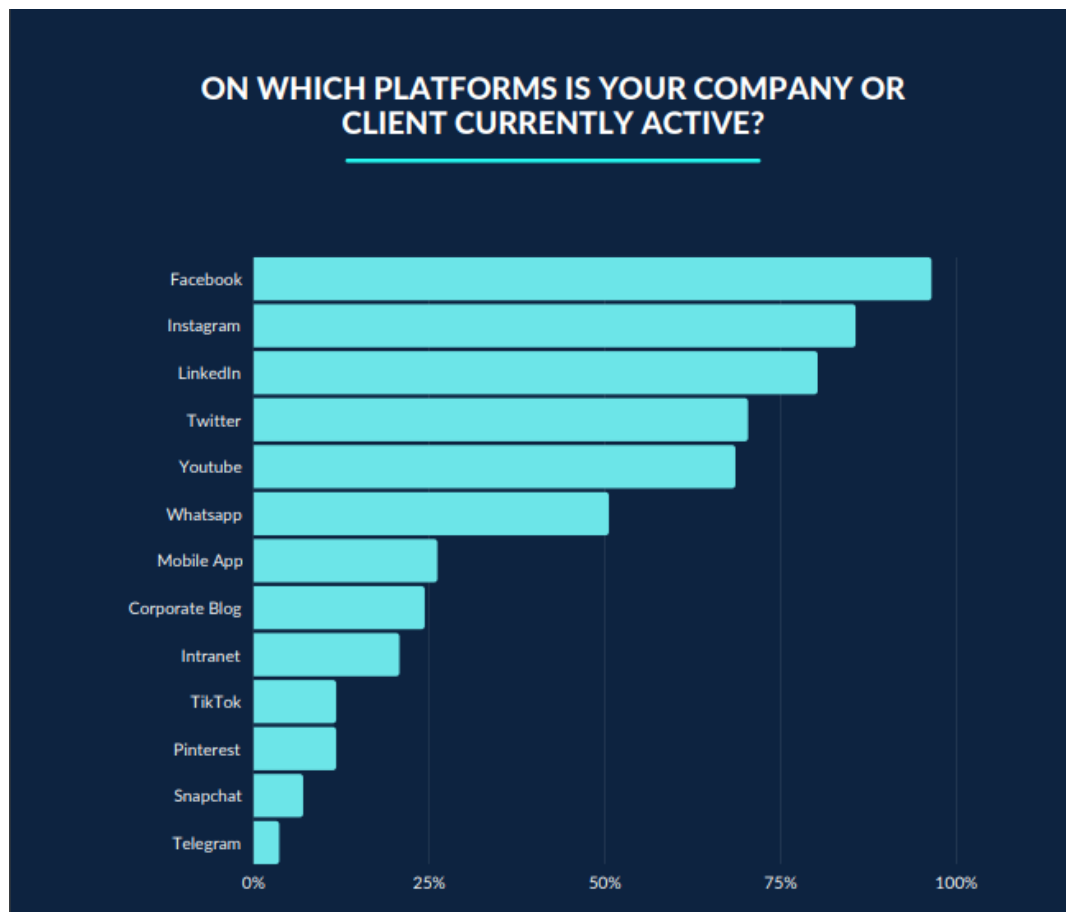


Figure 3: The Social Media Landscape by Platform (p23); Ornico report 2021

The figure above shows different platform usage as reported in the South Africa Social Media Landscape study; the study was conducted across different industries and mainly brand owners in large organisations. The above confirms that there are several digital marketing tools available to businesses today and these include Websites, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, LinkedIn, Google, e-Mails, Short Messaging Services, Digital Billboards, Banners, Blogs, etc. In the South African context Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn are in the top 3 of the digital marketing platforms (Ornico, 2021). According to the Ornico (2021) report, the bulk of social media advertising spend is on Facebook (65.8%), LinkedIn (18%), Twitter, and YouTube (both at 5.4%). 63.1% of respondents indicated that their social media advertising spend has remained the same in the period 2019/2020; this can be attributed to the coronavirus crisis in 2020 (Ornico, 2021). The choice is wide for any business owner and amongst the biggest considerations that any [women] business owner has is which of the tools to use and how to use them to drive their business forward.

2.3.1. Schools of thought on digital tools' usage by women

In exploring prior studies, research, theories, reviews, and papers, various themes and trends were identified. However, the ones emerging strongly from the literature reviewed are two contradictory schools of thought.

This section explores the two schools of thought.

1. The first school of thought believes that there are no fundamental differences between women and male-owned businesses and that they are on an equal footing when it comes to digital use in their businesses.
2. The second school of thought argues that there are fundamental differences between male and female-owned businesses when it comes to the use of technology and that women are in a disadvantaged position.

a. School of Thought 1: Women entrepreneurs on an equal footing with male counterparts in digital marketing usage

Traditional media has been surpassed by digital media with technology taking over almost every facet of our life. Businesses have been exploiting digital technologies to full effect because they have access to the resources, and they can implement the digital ways and techniques that digital media offers. However, there are small and medium-sized businesses, and businesses owned by women, which are struggling with scarce resources. These types of businesses not only face different economic and human resource issues but also limiting social constructs. The advent of digital media has become an important tool in strategic marketing and has offered women-owned businesses (like any other businesses) opportunities for driving their business growth (Ukpere et al., 2014). According to Welsh et al. (2017), effective marketing techniques and strategies encourage entrepreneurs to seize opportunities with both hands, thereby increasing their entrepreneurial capabilities. Having digital identities is an option provided by digital marketing and it is viewed as a huge asset (Chetty, 2015). Tools including electronic messaging, content, and social media marketing make

it easier for female businesses to thrive and compete in male-dominated industries.

Kotler et al.,(2005) argued that digital tools in marketing are a new way in which proactive female entrepreneurs are embracing social platforms such as WhatsApp, Pinterest, Facebook, and others. This gives women the opportunity to promote their products and expand and develop their businesses. Moreover, public relations with clients are now developed through digital media platforms. The utilisation of social media by female entrepreneurs in advanced economies encourages female entrepreneurs in emerging economies to embrace technology and digital tools through social media platforms, as the key to unlocking business potential (Ukpere et al., 2014). Online social platforms are also used to drive service offerings and goods, and online orders and payment transactions are carried out through mobile commerce. Additionally, female entrepreneurs with formal businesses use e-commerce, mobile commerce, and social media platforms, including online payments, online banking, and e-marketing to advertise and reach a wider range of customers and enter new markets (Ukpere et al., 2014). According to Hilbert (2011), When placed on an equal footing (similar conditions and resources), men and women have equal access to ICT; nevertheless, when recognizing bigger social context women are generally disadvantaged (viz., education, income, and literacy), women's ICT usage is limited. This school of thought postulates that women are indeed proactive players in the digital space, and they leverage various platforms to drive their businesses. Nzama & Ezeuduji (2021) in their research on the subtle gender concept in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and its impact on tourism-related businesses and operations, found that gender, management skills, and marketing skills are the top three factors affecting productivity. Nzama and Ezeuduji (2021) further concluded that gender is not a factor that decides the productivity of a business but rather the marketing capability of the entrepreneurs to influence the performance of the business. Ukpere et al. (2014) conducted a study on the role of technology in business ventures of women entrepreneurs in Kenya, which emphasised the importance of technology to entrepreneurship and the business world, especially on a continent like Africa. The results shed light on how technology helped these women entrepreneurs. In essence, the study recommended that empowering women entrepreneurs in technological

adaptation is a key strategic step in the digital world. Mobile commerce, defined as commodities trading and, service provision via mobile wireless technologies (Tech Target, 2019), has a lot of potential. Women benefit the most from this new technology because it allows them to shop and sell online, as well as access information and data from the comfort of their own homes. (Ukpere et al., 2014).

An example in support of this point, details how in Polokwane, Limpopo province, South Africa, a women's initiative used technology to increase poultry sales to a more affluent and nearby area known as Pietersburg. This is a good illustration of how rural women are using e-commerce to their advantage. In underdeveloped nations, many women entrepreneurs use e-commerce for wholesale distribution, particularly over the internet (Padmannayar, 2011). A further example is Rekindle Learning, a South African innovative tech-driven education start-up by Rapelang Rabana, which offers e-learning applications for schools and businesses (Du Besse, 2021). Due to a lack of budget women business owners frequently engage in guerrilla marketing using tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and WhatsApp (Ramasobana, Fatoki, & Oni, 2017). The lack of budget emanates from the fact that it is difficult for women entrepreneurs to gain access to debt finance, and this necessitates the creative use of available and usually more affordable digital platforms.

In summary, the dominant view from this school of thought is that women-owned SMMEs do indeed use digital marketing tools in business as their male counterparts. However, based on the literature reviewed, the factors behind this usage are more a result of a desperate need to drive their businesses with limited funds. The ease of access and affordability of digital marketing tools encourages their use in this space. Based on the available literature, it is unclear whether these enterprises are fully exploiting digital marketing tools as they are experiencing various challenges including limited access to funding which limits the marketing budget available.

b. ***School of Thought 2: The digital space mirrors the real world, and therefore women are at a disadvantage***

Women-owned SMMEs grow at a slower rate than men's, which can be attributed to a variety of factors including a stage in life, lower goals and growth aspirations, and women's low-risk disposition. (Carranza, Dhakal, & Love, 2018), and possibly technology integration. The adaptation of technology will play a major role in reversing gender-biased growth in most businesses, thus promoting general economic improvement, gender equity, and empowering women. One of the main outcomes of the study by Carranza et al. (2018) was the focus on reversing constraints through having various policies that address training, business planning, and business sector choice. Women should be encouraged to integrate technology and computing into their lives.

Younger females enjoy using technology, but this early excitement and interest does not necessarily seem to translate into curiosity about the ongoing integration of digital technologies and inspiration to branch into digital fields later in life (Ukpere et al., 2014). This could result in lower usage of technology later in life for economic advancement. Various factors can be attributed to women's exclusion in the digital economy. This comprises roles and responsibilities; societal expectations; family and financial problems (Witbooi & Ukpere, 2011)

Women's inequality generally is not a nascent topic, and this situation can be much improved with the adaptation of ICT. According to Shepard (2015), gender mainstreaming should be prioritised as this will lead to gender equality.

To conclude, the second school of thought acknowledges the importance of ICT integration in every business but highlights the long-standing digital gender divide which has negatively impacted women-owned businesses. The dominant view is that women-owned enterprises are experiencing what women in real life experience; the glaring disadvantage that women find themselves in society in general.

Proposition 1: Women-owned SMMEs incorporate digital marketing tools based on their personal digital platform use and understanding.

2.4 Factors that facilitate or constrain women-owned SMMEs

The theme of gender inequality and the digital divide could be closely linked with the objective of factors that inhibit small and medium women-owned enterprises from using digital marketing tools for business. SEDA (2016) recognises that gender inequality, both nationally and globally, is at the forefront of explaining disparities in women-owned SMME development, and they further note that this exacerbates the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs which include employment legislation and policies, technology, and infrastructure, poor access to financial institutions to get credit amongst others.

The low technology usage and awareness by small businesses affect the already disadvantaged women-owned businesses as it adds another layer to challenges faced by women-owned businesses who are already facing discrimination in other aspects of social life namely employment, literacy, and income (Hilbert, 2011). Entrepreneurial women's access to resources or collateral to access funding to grow their businesses is influenced by these three social life aspects: employment, literacy, and income. (Ramasobana et al., 2017).

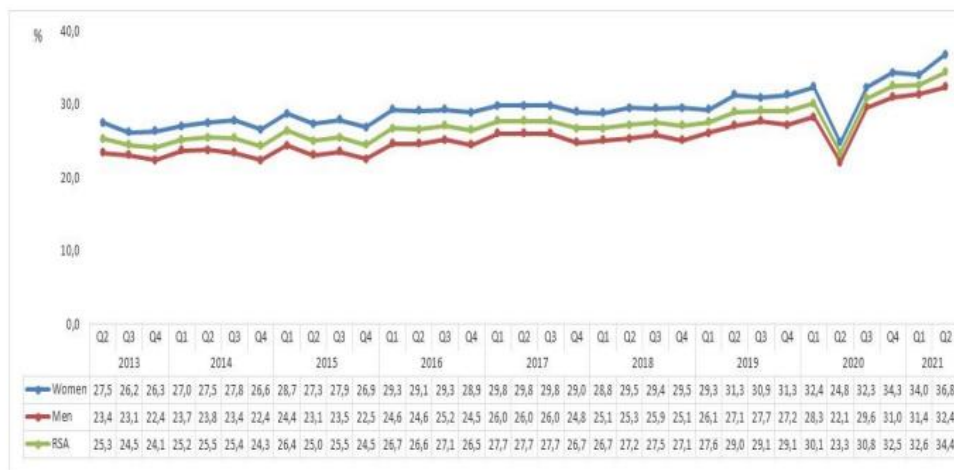


Figure 4: Trends in unemployment rate by sex p21., Q2:2013 to Q2:2021 (STATS SA, 2021)

Figure 4 shows the current unemployment rate in South Africa with women having the highest unemployment rate over the past nine years. 36.8% of women are

unemployed compared to 32.4% of women in South Africa. This affects women's earning ability and their creditworthiness and has a direct impact on having collateral that can be used to access credit to invest in starting and growing their business ventures through investing in digital marketing. Women's unemployment therefore ultimately affects women-owned businesses' ability to have funding to start or grow their businesses. The ability to earn income at younger stages of life assists one in accumulating assets that can be used as collateral for access to finance from financial institutions, this then can be used to access credit/ funding that could be used to invest behind digital marketing to grow women-owned businesses.

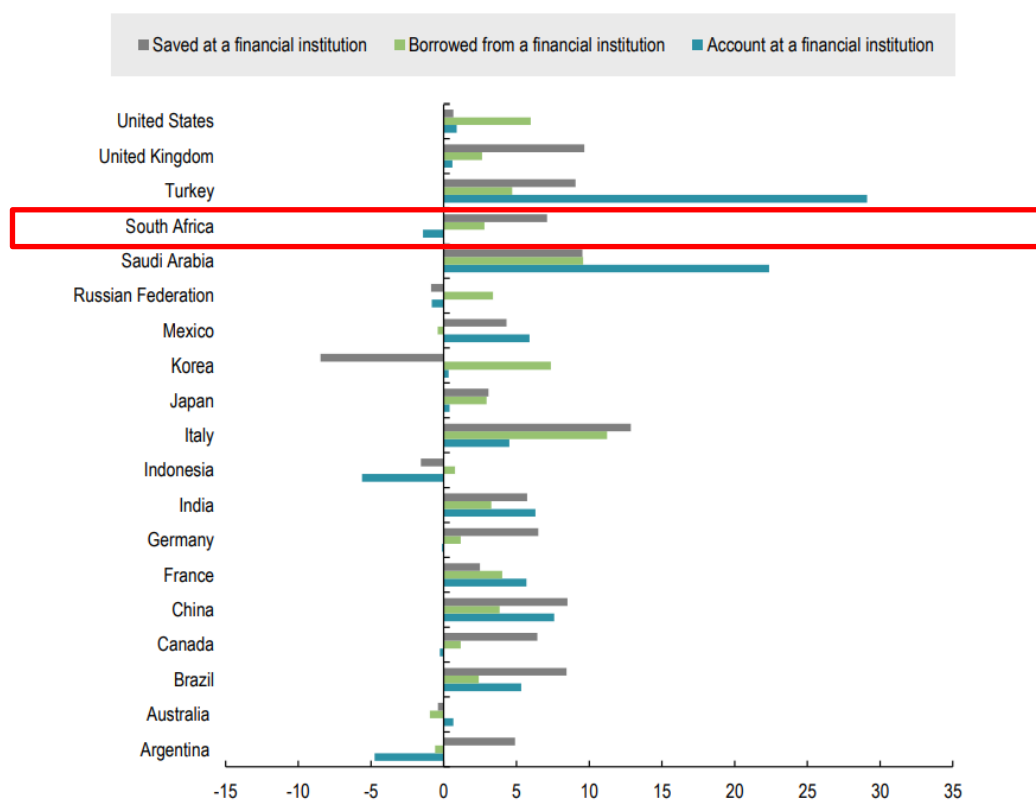


Figure 5: Difference in men and women financial activities p33., 2017 (OECD, 2018)

Figure 5 above shows women in South Africa have a high rate of savings accounts at financial institutions however this is in contradiction to their access to funding, they are less likely to have received funding from banks. Women's savings to funding ratio shows how women are not accessing the available resources, this can be attributed to various factors namely lack of information, risk-averse nature of women, or lack of necessary security to secure lending

products. Several reports further highlight the challenges that affect women in accessing funding to grow their businesses and these range from low asset ownership (Kimaru, 2021), risk-averse nature of women (Carranza et al., 2018), lack of awareness of available funding (SEDA, 2016), and high interest rates because of high-risk profiling by financial institutions (OECD, 2018). No funding or low access to funding affects women in using and adopting technological tools and other important resources (namely employee salaries, training costs, equipment, and software licensing) needed for their business advancement. This is in contrast to a developed country like the United States of America (USA) which shows higher lending versus savings/account ownership ratio. The disparity in the South African context could be signifying the challenges that women business owners are faced with in accessing money to grow their businesses.

Proposition 2 -There are fundamentals that facilitate or constrain small & medium sized women-owned enterprises from leveraging digital marketing tools in their businesses.

2.5 Perceived impact on sales growth

According to Liberto (2020), the definition of a sale is a transaction between two or more parties in which the buyer receives tangible or intangible goods, services, or assets in exchange for money. The use of digital marketing tools, like any digital tool, has business value and improves productivity (Brynjolfsson, 1993). Digital marketing activity facilitates Reach, Act, Convert and Engage (Chaffey, Smart Insights, 2022). These are necessary for bringing awareness to the business, attracting new leads, and converting these into buying customers and later advocates for the business. Having digital marketing activities will be a benefit to the business in the form of reduced costs and improved revenues or economic gain (Wolf & McQuitty, 2013). Promotional activities and advertisements are necessary to boost revenue and in building long-term business relationships. (Angel & Sexsmith, 2011). Therefore, digital marketing does play a role in driving sales growth. Nine out of ten participants in the Ornico

study agreed that social media has the potential to help businesses grow (Ornico, 2021). According to the Ornico study, 77.5% felt that using social media has brought about brand returns of that; 64% felt that brand awareness was the number one return received from social media followed by sales return at 35.1%, and lastly customer insights at 16.2%. These stats are encouraging as reported by large and more established brands and could be used as an indicator of the importance of digital marketing, especially for SMMEs. Online media offers lower costs and easier accessibility for all business sizes (Korzynski, 2012).

Technological factors and social factors are important considerations in PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal) analysis and have a key influence on industries, markets, and firms (Armstrong & Lee, 2021). As such, the use of digital marketing tools influences large businesses and SMMEs alike. Resources in women-owned SMMEs are limited and there are various factors that have been identified that further exacerbate the situation e.g., lack of access to funding (SEDA, 2016), unlike the large corporates. These limitations result in focusing on driving short-term sales and tactical efforts with a limited understanding of the impact of digital marketing use on sales growth. A more structured approach when it comes to marketing analytics and understanding of conversion per digital marketing effort is required to optimise digital activity (Chaffey & Pattron, 2012). According to Chaffey and Patron, lack of structure when it comes to managing and optimising web and digital analytics was found to be a challenge across different sizes of business. This limitation when it comes to analytics understanding poses a challenge for optimisation of the digital marketing efforts.

Proposition 3 – Properly leveraging and understanding digital marketing tools is perceived to have a positive impact on sales growth.

2.6 Women-owned SMME enablement in using digital tools

Various factors can be attributed to women's exclusion in the digital economy, and these include juggling roles and responsibilities; societal expectations; and family and financial pressures which results in them spending less time focusing on business development and exploring growth strategies (Witbooi & Ukpere,

2011). Globally, the challenge of balancing time between life and work seems to be heavily biased towards women, as it is reported that women spend 2.6 times more hours than men on unpaid care and domestic work and this restricts the time they can spend on paid work or to upskill themselves (UN Women, 2018a).

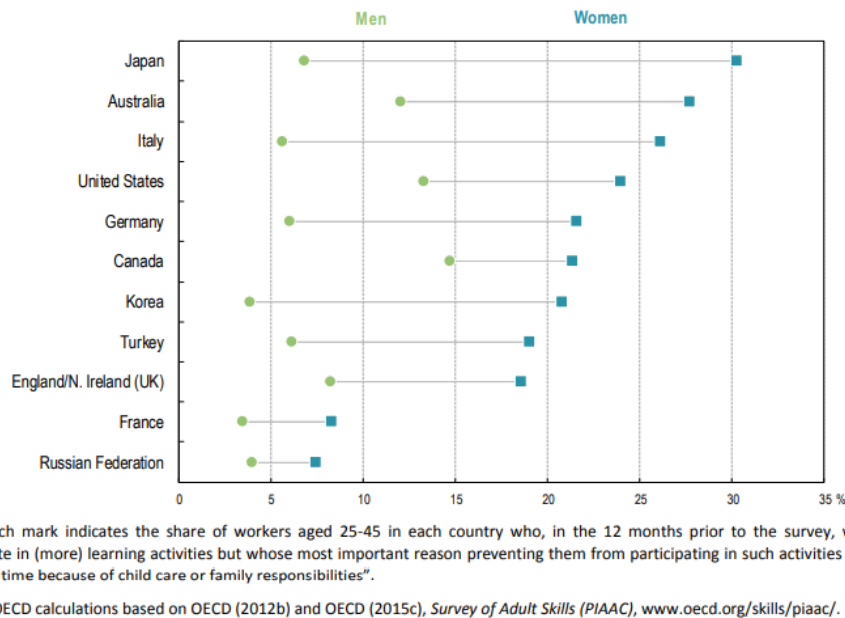


Figure 6: Share of workers reporting family responsibilities as main barrier to participation in education and training p56, (OECD, 2018)

The figure above shows the challenges that women are faced with globally in trying to upskill and immerse themselves in learning and development with the hope of self-improvement. Focus on education and training is an important part of upskilling oneself to better economic participation (OECD, 2018).

Several interventions and policies have been put in place to drive women-owned SMME development and the following outlines some of these interventions that were outlined by the researcher in the Digital Government module: 2021. The Ministry of Small Business Development is still in its infancy as it was formed in 2014 but has resulted in the establishment of the Department of Small Business (DSBD) (Department of Small Business Development, 2021). DSBD has several programmes that have been implemented together with other agencies, namely Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA), and Small Enterprise Finance Agency (SEFA). These programmes include the recent SMME Relief Scheme,

SMME Support plan, SHEtradesZA, Township and Rural Entrepreneurship programmes, and Small Enterprise Manufacturing Support (Department of Small Business Development, 2021 and SEDA, 2016). These programmes run independently from one another and are based on the key performance indicators of each initiative and different target markets within the SMME space e.g., Covid relief, and Youth, Women, Rural businesses. At face value it could be seen as the right way of implementing these initiatives, however, there seems to be a lack of integration and coordination between all different support programmes. The DTI established the South African Women Entrepreneurship's Network (SAWEN) and Technology for Women in Business (TWIB). TWIB's main goal is to recognise technology-based business applications and systems to accelerate women's economic empowerment and the development of women-owned businesses, as well as to remove barriers to enterprise innovation, growth, and global competitiveness (Career Planet, 2021).

The women-owned SMME support programmes are from both the public and private sectors. Due to the lack of proper management, there exists a high likelihood of the same businesses receiving support from different initiatives, while other women-owned SMMEs, especially from marginalised areas, get by without receiving the necessary support from both government and the private sector. This phenomenon was highlighted in a Business Day article, which noted that there are many different ESD initiatives, some of which are more established while others are fly-by-nights, and that it is not unusual for SMMEs to jump from one to the next without seeing any results. (Brotman & MacChambers, 2019).

It is imperative that women-owned business support goes beyond general business workshops, basic training, and skill development. Women's training programs must shine the spotlight on the deeper psychological and sociological constraints they face to achieve transformational change (Kanayo, 2021). This study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of challenges faced by women businesses when it comes to digital marketing tool usage and to gain insights on practical interventions in addressing these.

Proposition 4 – Solution focused stakeholder interventions and policy frameworks are important to the development of women-owned businesses.

The next section introduces the conceptual framework that was developed based on the literature reviewed.

2.7 Theoretical foundation

There are various models that have been developed over the years which can be applied to understanding digital marketing usage by women-owned SMMEs. Amongst the key models considered for this study are the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model developed by Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis (2003), the Do-it-Yourself (DIY) Model of Wolf & McQuitty (2013) and TAM Model (Davis, 1989).

2.7.1 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

The UTAUT model has four key elements namely Performance Expectancy, Effort Expectancy, Social Influence, and Facilitating Conditions. These are adjusted by gender, age, experience, and voluntary use. (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

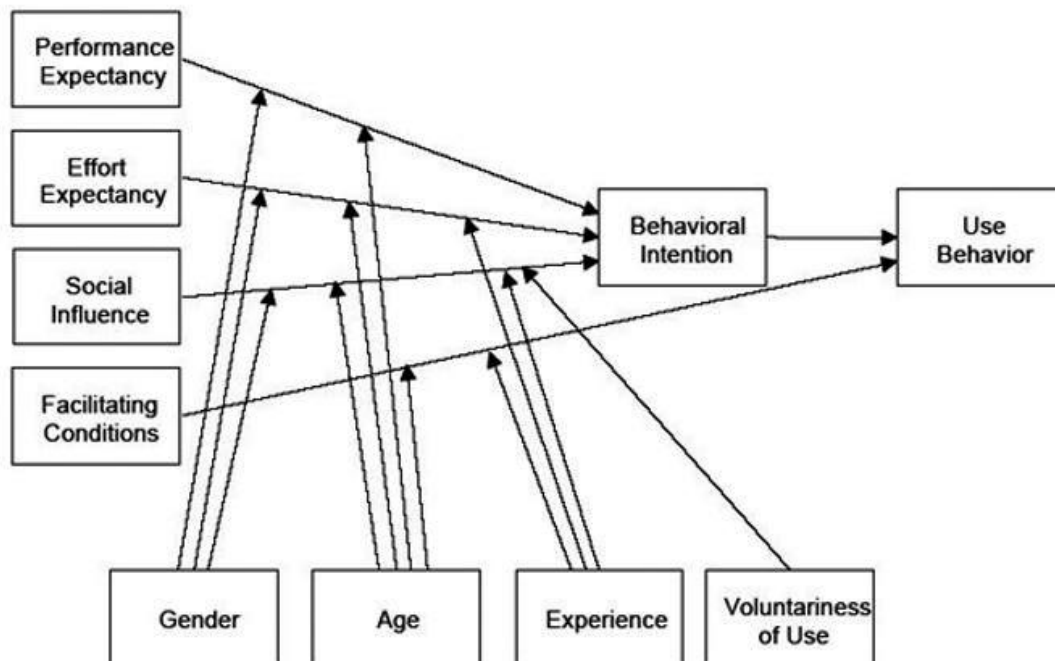


Figure 7: Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003)

According to the model, as demonstrated in figure 7, Performance Expectancy is the degree to which an individual perceives the technology and the digital tool to be of assistance in attaining a gain in job performance. This is a perception that provides trust of an available system or tool to deliver results for the organisation. When it comes to digital marketing tools this alludes to a perception that the various available digital tools will provide gains for the organisation. The use of digital marketing tools, like most marketing tools, are used with the aim of delivering long-term competitiveness (Chen & Liu, 2017) and is an important source of competitiveness in both business-to-consumer and business-to-business marketing (Leeflang, Verhoef, Dahlstrom, & Freundt, 2014) for delivering desired outcomes like an increase in leads, which is connected to growth and performance (Taiminen & Karjaluo, 2015).

Effort expectancy refers to the ease of use of a system or tool and implies simplicity of understanding and using digital marketing tools (Cheng-Min, 2019). Cheng (2019) further explains it as a predictor of technology adoption and behavioural intentions for technology use and behaviour. The easier it is for women-owned businesses to perceive and use a tool and the lower the required effort, the more likely it is that they will implement the various available tools in their businesses.

Social Influence plays a major role in the decisions of various individuals, thus the importance of an individual believing they should use a new technological tool is based on what others say (Brata & Amalia, 2018). Women by nature are more social and enjoy the internet for human connections, as opposed to men who like the internet for the experiences it offers (Hilbert, 2011). Therefore, social influence criteria within the selected group of participants for this study played a major role in the use of digital marketing tools.

Facilitating Conditions refers to the perception of the user that there is the availability of adequate technical and organisational infrastructure to enable the use of a particular technology (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003). These are the conditions that are important in facilitating digital marketing tool usage and include hardware, availability of resources with necessary technical skills in digital marketing, and relevant software availability to be able to extract and understand the insights behind various platforms (i.e., Facebook Business

Manager, Google Analytics, Website analytics, and other software) and relevant campaign performance. Facilitating Conditions, according to Venkatesh et al., (2003), are necessary for technological adoption which leads to behavioural intentions that ultimately result in use behaviour

According to the UTAUT model, gender has a moderating effect on performance, effort, expectancy, and social influence. “Subsequent studies that examined the adoption and use of social media marketing by small and medium-sized enterprises in the United States, UK, and Australia have shown, by contrast, that the firm size, the manager’s age, the extent of firm innovativeness, and the industry sector were all important factors of adoption” (Carter & Fosso, 2016). Several research findings support the key role of perceived ease-of-use and perceived utility in the adoption of new media marketing in the retail and tourism industries and emphasise the need for more research support in this field. (Lorenzo-Romero, Alarcón-del-Amo, & Constantinides, 2013; El-Gohary, 2012; Sago, 2013).

The theory of innovation diffusion hopes to discover how, why, and at what speed new advances and ideas are being diffused (Armstrong & Lee, 2021). The theory puts the social system into different groupings and organises them according to the speed at which the innovation spreads and is adopted. In this study, the diffusion of innovation theory was explored as a guide in determining whether women business owners feature prominently in any of the categories as defined by Rogers in his 1995 model. This theory, though important, was however noted but not used for further development of this research.

2.7.2 DIY and TAM Digital Marketing Model

The following model was developed by combining the DIY and TAM models to understand technology adoption and usage.

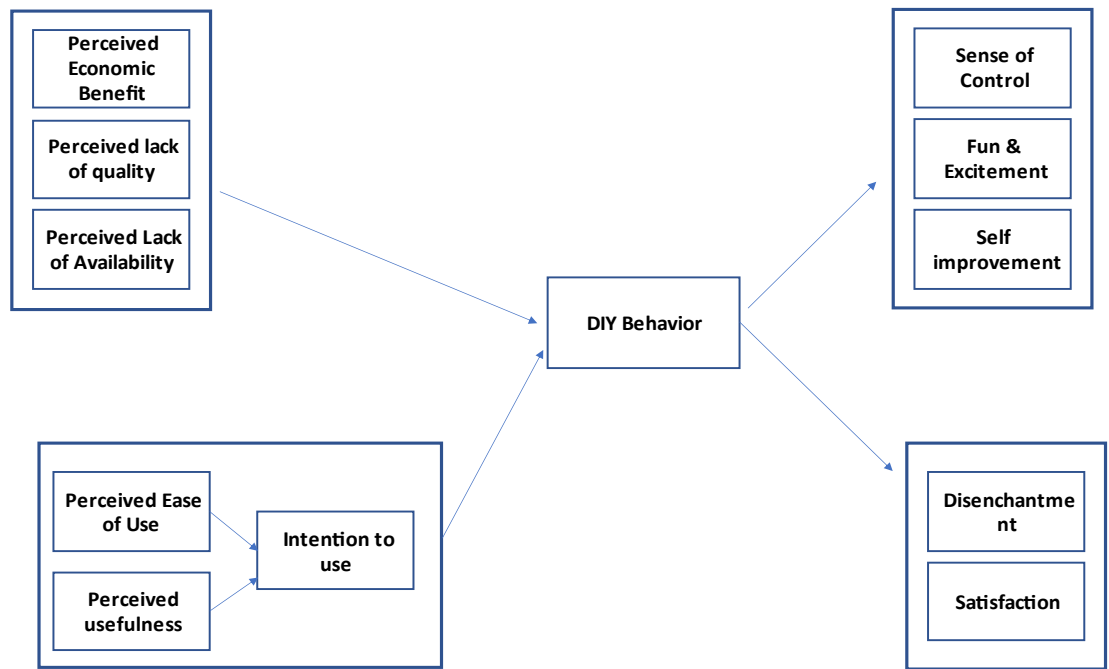


Figure 8: DIY and adapted TAM Digital Marketing Model p188 (Wolf & McQuitty (2013), Davis (1989))

This study, in pursuit of understanding how SMMEs use digital marketing tools, utilised the Do-it-yourself (DIY) model developed by Wolf & McQuitty (2013) based on the home improvement DIY model and the adapted Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) developed by Davis (1989) as depicted in Figure 3. This is an adapted model as attitude has been removed from the model. The TAM model presupposes that an individual's technology ease of use and its usefulness determine intentions to use the tool (Ritz, Wolf, & Mcquitty, 2018). In the case of digital marketing, this would mean the easier it is to use a digital marketing tool and its perceived usefulness, which could result in intention to use. This can be likened to UTAUT effort expectancy which also purports that effort is a predictor of technology use that influences behavioral intention and therefore influences use behavior.

Small businesses have limited resources by their very nature and online marketing tools are therefore not used to their fullest (Wilson & Makau, 2018 and Bhagwat & Sharma, 2007). Due to limited finances and resource challenges, small businesses end up opting to run digital marketing activities themselves. The DIY model features motivations such as economic benefits, lack of quality, and

product availability as key drivers for adoption with the outcomes being a sense of control, fun and excitement, and self-improvement. According to the DIY model by Wolf & McQuitty (2013) business owners are motivated to run digital marketing activities themselves, due to the perceived economic benefit of avoiding the additional costs of outsourcing the functions, and thus increasing revenue for the business. Concerning the lack of quality, this relates to perceived market options as unreliable or not meeting quality standards. Lastly, in reference to the lack of a suitable product, or in this case digital marketing service, this results in business owners handling Digital Marketing activities themselves.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

To investigate how WO SMMEs use digital marketing tools, a conceptual framework was developed. The development of women-owned businesses is an ongoing focus worldwide and to make sure that women are on par with their male counterparts' studies that illustrate the challenges and opportunities faced by these entities, contribute to the entrepreneurship ecosystem. The framework provided the necessary guide in developing the learnings and outcomes of this research.

A conceptual framework as Jabareen (2009) plainly puts it, is like a plane with interlinked concepts that provides a comprehensive understanding of a phenomenon.

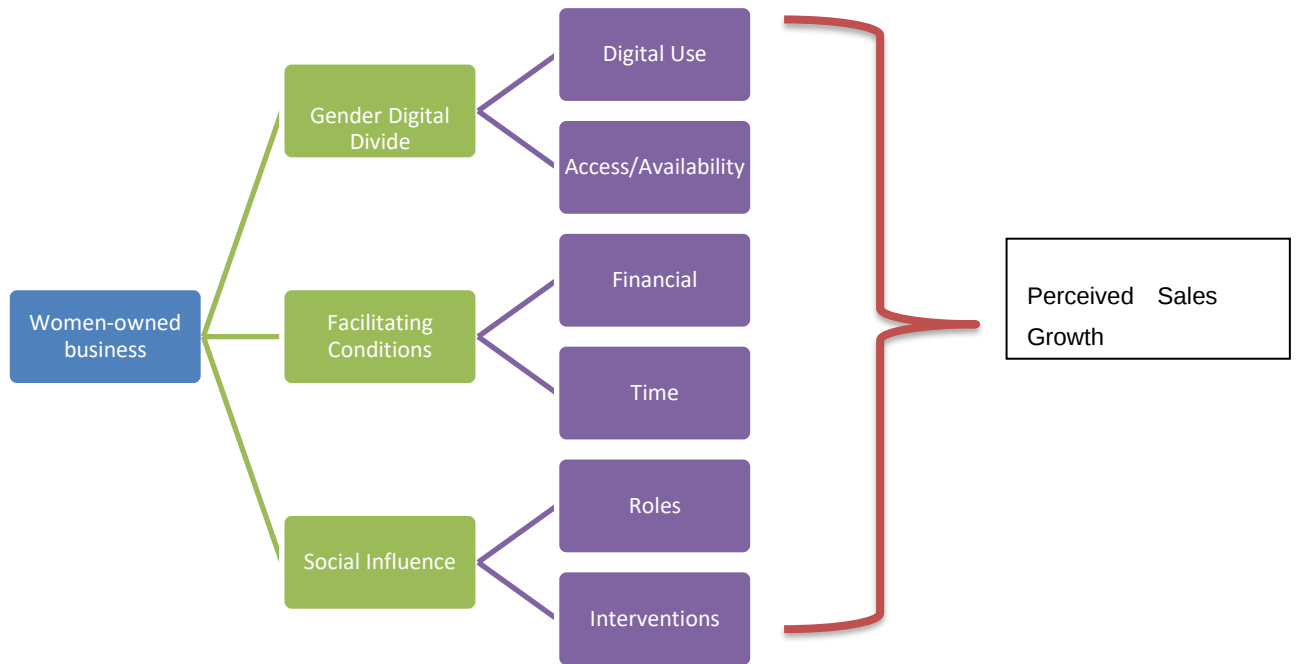


Figure 9: Factors contributing to or hindering women entrepreneurship in the use of digital marketing tools developed by the researcher

The above conceptual framework was developed as the basis on which the study was conducted after a comprehensive review of the relevant literature and the foundational theories review. Three key components were identified to understand the usage of digital marketing tools for sales growth in women-owned businesses and these were: Gender Digital Divide, Facilitating Conditions, and Social Influence. As an elaboration, these were then expanded on to determine the overall path to perceived sales growth/economic benefit for the women-owned SMMEs. In developing the framework, some constructs from the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology Acceptance model by Venkatesh et.al (2003), DIY and TAM Model (Wolf & McQuitty, 2013) were adapted.

This part of the research seeks to gain a deeper understanding of the digital tools used in women-owned businesses, the relationship between having the right conditions (resources, skills, and understanding of societal norms, and the roles and responsibilities which affect women-owned businesses), and how these contribute to sales growth. This framework was used as a guide aimed at distilling how the three elements within the framework have an impact on perceived sales by women-run SMMEs. These include the digital divide experienced by women-

owned businesses, having sufficient conditions, and social influence experienced by women-owned businesses.

2.9 Conclusion of Literature Review

Gender inequality is an ongoing challenge faced globally with a developing country like South Africa affected by this inequality. Available literature focuses on gender inequality as it affects society in general and there is limited literature available when it comes to specific topics on how it affects other aspects in this case digital marketing technology use by women-owned businesses in South Africa. There is a seeming disconnect between the various efforts in place geared towards supporting and enabling women-owned businesses when it comes to digital enablement which translates to the use of digital marketing tools to drive sales in their businesses. The fundamental of providing access to and capacitating these women-owned businesses are in place in South Africa, however, it is unclear how these translate into women fully adopting digital marketing tools.

To conclude the following section provides a summary of the consistency matrix that reflects the research questions explored in the research and propositions that have been identified in relation to the questions the study seeks to answer. Secondly, a summary of the literature review chapter is provided.

Table 1: Research Questions and Propositions

Research Questions	Propositions
1. How do women-owned SMMEs use digital marketing tools?	Proposition 1 - Women-owned SMMEs incorporate digital marketing tools based on their personal digital platform use and understanding.

2. What are the fundamentals that facilitate or constrain women-owned SMMEs in leveraging digital marketing tools in their businesses?	Proposition 2 - There are fundamentals that facilitate or constrain small & medium sized women-owned enterprises from leveraging digital marketing tools in their businesses.
3. What is the perceived sales impact of properly leveraging and understanding digital marketing tools?	Proposition 3 - Properly leveraging and understanding digital marketing tools is perceived to have a positive impact on sales growth.
4. What interventions are needed to enable women entrepreneurs to use digital marketing tools?	Proposition 4 – Solution focused stakeholder interventions and policy frameworks are important to the development of women-owned businesses.

In summary, the use of digital marketing tools by global female entrepreneurs is seen as an incredibly positive and progressive step in negotiating business activities. It is well known that female entrepreneurs manage multiple tasks in many roles that are integrated into daily life, such as female entrepreneurs who run their own businesses and have families to take care of. Modern female entrepreneurs around the world find it necessary to adopt and adapt technology and use digital media as a marketing tool in their daily business activities. Compared to women who are not proactive enough to understand the benefits of technology, the inclusion of digital media in their businesses by other female entrepreneurs provides an advantage for the women who adopt it.

Observed on a global scale, women entrepreneurs appear to have actively embraced digital media to unleash their potential for business success. The literature reviewed highlighted two emerging views around the use of digital

marketing for sales growth in women-owned SMMEs; on the one hand, was the proactiveness of women owners in incorporating digital marketing tools into their organisations, while the second school of thought highlights the glaring digital divide that mirrors real life. This research will contribute to this debate by seeking further understanding and insights into the use of digital marketing by women-owned SMEs in the South African context, and how this relates to establishing sustainable women-owned SMMEs. The dynamics in women's entrepreneurship, specifically in South Africa, were the basis on which this research is based. The study intends to contribute to this debate by investigating the real-life experience of South African women business owners. This study explored the experiences of women-owned SMMEs to identify how they use digital marketing tools for sales growth in their businesses.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Following on from the literature review and the establishment of the research framework in Chapter 2, this section provides an outline of the research methodology adopted. The chapter focuses specifically on the research design, population and sampling method, data collection, research instruments, and measurements of the study. The potential limitations as well as the research quality evaluation criteria are also covered in this chapter.

According to Buckley, Buckley and Chiang (1976), research methodology is defined as a strategy or architectural design that lays out a plan for problem-solving or problem finding. The research approach is important because it aims to improve the reliability of findings or the basis of theory in terms of research participants' perceptions and experiences with digital marketing in women-owned businesses. Silverman (2016) classified methodology into two types: quantitative data collection tools and qualitative data collection tools. Quantitative data collection tools rely on numbers and are partially supported by words in data collection; examples include questionnaires, observations, and official figures such as census, whereas qualitative data collection tools rely on words in data collection, with examples including diaries, interviews, and focus groups (Weber, 2017).

This research was conducted using the qualitative research method. The research was exploratory in nature to gain a deeper understanding of how the women-owned enterprises incorporate digital marketing tools for sales growth in their businesses. An interpretivist approach was used to gain a true understanding of how these digital tools are used by identifying and grouping patterns while attempting to understand lived experiences, understandings, and perceptions (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). It was believed that the qualitative interpretivist approach would give more meaningful insights into the experiences of the participants as opposed to the quantitative approach which would offer reliable data but limited contextual understanding. Despite its many advantages, the quantitative positivism approach was deemed unsuitable for this study

because it would be unable to provide details about human attitudes, ideas, concepts, and thoughts which were the areas of interest in this study (Hammersley, 2012). The very nature of the qualitative methodology chosen has limited the number of participants, however rich insights based on participants' experiences were gathered during the study this will provide a strong foundation for further the development of women-owned SMMEs.

3.2 Research design

The research design in qualitative research as defined by Creswell (2007) begins with philosophical assumptions made by the investigators in deciding to conduct a qualitative study. Creswell and others posit that a research design is the research structure that holds all the components of a research project together. Akhtar (2016) argues that research design is the glue that holds all research elements together and highlights some of its characteristics as a plan that specifies sources and types of information and a strategy that defines the approach to be used in data collection and analysis. Research design can therefore be defined as a pattern to be followed, an action plan to be adhered to during the research study. This research used qualitative methods to gain in-depth insights from participants and to elicit responses to 'How' and 'What'. The study concentrated on generating ideas, classifying, and summarising them using open ended questions withing a selected sample.

The issue of digital marketing in women-owned businesses cannot be restricted to a mere textbook exercise or unfounded speculation, especially when considering the various stakeholders that are affected by the small business sector. As such it is important to get first-hand information about their perceptions and their experiences at a more practical level. Identifying, selecting, and interviewing participants from women-owned businesses was important in getting first-hand experience into the use of digital marketing tools in these businesses. This resulted in the selection of one-on-one interviews to get more comprehensive feedback to gain a deeper understanding of these businesses.

One-on-one interviews were conducted to understand the use of digital marketing tools in women-owned businesses through exploring experiences within these

women-owned SMMEs. This is an attempt to see reality in a way that neither influence it with other available concepts nor reduces it to just elements (Tymieniecka, 2002), a science of the essence of consciousness (Husserl, 1970) with a focus on the lived experience of an individual removing any conscious or unconscious biasness of the researcher.

3.3 Data collection methods

Data collection is intricately linked to ethical considerations. The process involves data gathering from the population sample for the study to answer research questions (Bryman, 2016). Data was collected using the qualitative interview method. One-on-one interviews were conducted virtually. Semi-structured questions were used, and this was chosen because it was versatile and flexible (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, & Kangasniemi, 2016) as it allows the interviewer to adapt questions based on the discussion. To allow for a free flow of information and discussion, open-ended questions were used.

One-on-one interviews were conducted with business owners or managers responsible for driving the SMME marketing initiatives. The choice of one-on-one interviews allowed enough time to be given to each entity and participant under the study, one on one interviews provided an opportunity to understand nuances of each business industry, operation, and approach to marketing. Interviews were chosen because they offered a deeper understanding of each business context compared to focus groups which tend to have dominant voices that can influence discussion direction and cause biasness as more outspoken members of a focus group dominate conversations based on their experience. The study used data collection criteria that are relevant to research objectives as it was important that the research participants are familiar with the business and are responsible for its marketing activities.

3.4 Population and sample

Population target and sample are important elements of any research study since they help in focusing the study on a specific audience. The following section

details the population and provides sample information details and the sampling method used for this research study.

3.4.1 *Population*

The total membership of a defined set of subjects from which study subjects are chosen is referred to as the target population (Ingham-Broomfield, 2014). Robinson (2014) goes on to say that the homogeneity of the sample universe can be sought using a variety of parameters, including population homogeneity, geographical homogeneity, physical homogeneity, psychological homogeneity, and life history homogeneity. The target population was made up of women business owners residing in South Africa, who as of 2021 comprised 19.4% of business owners in South Africa (Mastercard Index, 2020). In particular, the study population included women entrepreneurs and employees with businesses that are ranked as small and medium sized businesses by the South African Revenue Service (SARS). Moreover, the study exclusively targeted women in urban areas aged between 25 and 60 years, and in enterprises that have been operating for between three and ten years. This time frame enabled the study to obtain the most competent data based on long-term lived experiences by the participants.

3.4.2 *Sample and sampling method*

Kumar (2019) defines sampling as the process of selecting research participants. Silverman (2016) assumes that the sample is a set of individual elements selected from the research population as its representative. The sample must contain all attributes of the research population. If the entire research population is used, the sample can save the researcher time and money that should have been spent. In phenomenology, Creswell (2007) quotes Polkinghorne who recommended the number of participants to be between 5 to 25. Determining a sample size can be based on the study requirements and 10 participants may be seen as adequate depending on the complexity of the research (Sandelowski, 1995). Professional judgement was used to identify the participants. This study included a convenience sample of fifteen study participants, this number was informed by the need to achieve a deeper knowledge of a select sample while gaining a new and richly textured

understanding of the phenomenon that underpins the research (Vasileiou, Barnett, Thorpe, & Young, 2018). The size was sufficient to alleviate the amplitude constraint and reduce the risk of bias while offering enough variation in responses (Mason, 2010).

The qualitative nature of the study lent itself to using a purposive sample for this study and consisted of the women business owners including present management and staff of women-owned businesses who are responsible for the marketing of the businesses. The target participants' size provided enough data and insights into the subject under study. The research participants were anonymous, and they came from a variety of SMMEs. The sample consisted of female participants to understand the experiences that are faced by women who own, run, and managed women-owned businesses. The study focused on major metropolises including Johannesburg, Pretoria, Durban, and Cape Town since businesses in these areas are more developed and are likely to be exposed to the latest and variety of digital marketing tools.

Once the research participants were identified a letter refer to Appendix A was sent via electronic mail requesting participation in the study. Twenty-five letters were sent requesting an interview out of those, seventeen agreed to the interview, and two interviews were cancelled due to last minutes unavailability of the participants. The fifteen participants who agreed to be part of the interviews were then sent a consent form (refer to Appendix B) to provide a formal consent to the interviews. A standard interview guide (refer to Appendix C) was used for all interviews. Interviews were conducted virtually, and the data was collected and securely stored in a password-protected computer to which only the interviewer has access.

The following table below shows the sectors of the participants' companies and the positions of the participants within the organisations they operated in.

Table 2: Company Type and Participants' Position

Company	Positions
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B2B Professional Service Companies such as accounting firms, Construction, Information Technology, Engineering Services, and Architectural services.	Business owners
	Management
	Administration/Office Support

Out of the 15 interviews, there were 11 Black participants, 2 Whites, 1 Coloured, and 1 Indian female participant.

To ensure that correct data is gathered the selected research participant needed to be responsible for marketing within their organisations. The question around marketing responsibility was included in the pre-screening phase of the sample selection.

3.5 The research instrument

According to Kumar (2011), the research instrument refers to the way in which the research data is collected, and it is either developed or adapted from previous research. For this study, a structured interview guide was developed.

3.5.1 Interview Guide

An interview guide was developed to provide the structure of the interview. The guide's method was designed to ensure that the same general areas of information are collected from each research participant. This is more focused than the conversational approach but allows for freedom of interview and adaptability of access to information (Mcnamara, 2009). The interview guide was divided into four sections. The first portion focused on demographic statistics and company foundations, the second on digital marketing strategy, the third on problems and/or challenges faced by the women-owned businesses, and the fourth on women-owned businesses' performance in South Africa.

The interview guide was shared for review with two experienced business leaders in the South African SMME industry to read, modify, add, or delete irrelevant items. The two leaders had an interest in the results of this study to improve digital marketing in their organisations and were not part of the survey sample of research participants. This helped in improving and fine-tuning the interview guidelines for better results.

3.5.2 Interviews

Weber (2017) defines interviews as a data collection technique in which interviewees are asked questions to discover their views on specific topics. This research used personal interviews, and the interview questions comprised of structured and semi-structured questions. Semi-structured questions helped to get a comprehensive answer from the interviewee. The interview was made up of three parts. Part A contained basic interviewee information. Closed-ended questions and open-ended questions (parts B, C, and D) were used during the interview. First, the interviewer asked the research participant a question, and the research participant's answer determined the course of the interview. Due to current Covid19 restrictions, this study was conducted virtually. The style of the interview allowed the exploration of topics that required further explanation. Questions that the interviewer did not understand were explained during the interview.

3.6 Procedure for data collection

To obtain the sample for the research, various businesses were picked out through desktop research, by identifying organisations companies, and networks that were 51% women-owned. Once these were identified, further research was done by looking at the owner profiles and activity on various platforms such as company websites and LinkedIn. To gather more information on the business, the website's last updated date was noted as it was important to ensure that the sample included current and active businesses. The activity on digital assets was used partly as a verification however this was not the only criteria applied as some activities happen away from public platforms namely WhatsApp, email, SMS campaigns, etc.

The identified key personnel within the business were then contacted via social media platforms, and others were contacted through women-owned business networks, incubators, and supplier/enterprise development programs. It was important to interview individuals from the organisation who were involved in and/or aware of the marketing activities of the business.

Once the communication was opened, a formal request letter was sent to the companies with clear research objectives, the background of the research, and information on how the research was to be conducted. This was sent via electronic communication, in strict compliance with the POPI act regarding the use of personal information and data.

On accepting the request to conduct the interview, an official consent form was shared with participants which they needed to fill in before official date scheduling was done. A date was set in collaboration with the identified research participants. The interviews were conducted virtually using Zoom and thirteen out of the fifteen interviews were conducted using MS Teams meeting platform. After initially running Zoom meetings, the interviewer tested MS teams and realised that it has a better recording and transcribing functionality, resulting in most of the interviews being conducted on the MS Teams platform. Whilst the transcription facility assisted, interviewer notes were important since the MS Teams program did not always pick up local language nuances. The interviews were conducted on agreed dates and times, 3 participants requested re-scheduling due to work and family commitments, and this was agreed on to accommodate the participants. The interviews were conducted over the December 2021 period which was an ideal time as most of the business owners and leaders had fewer engagements and limited work demands.

On the date of the interviews, at the beginning of every interview, the interviewer explained and reiterated the research objectives, background, and approach, and requested permission to record the interview. The participants were advised to stop the interview at any time when they no longer want to participate or advise or refuse to respond to any questions, they feel uncomfortable with. Once the approval was received the interview commenced. The interviewer led the interview with questions guided by the interview guide, however free flow of discussion was allowed to pick up any thoughts that might not have been covered

by the interview guide. The interviews were recorded (voice and transcribed) and this together with the notes from the interviewer was then used to report on the findings.

On completion of the interviews, the recordings and transcripts were downloaded. The transcribing and editing of the research transcripts were done using interviewer notes and recordings. These were then loaded onto Atlas Ti. where coding and analysis were completed. The following section details data analysis and the interpretation approach. The recordings and transcriptions are stored securely on a private computer device that is password protected with strong cyber security software. The researcher is the only one with access to this secure device

3.7 Data analysis and interpretation

The data was coded and analysed using Atlas TI. Next, a subject analysis as described by Grbich (2013) was developed from these codes. This type of data analysis can be defined as a method of identifying, analysing, and reporting themes or patterns of collected data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Bryman (2016) further adds that the goal of subject data analysis is to screen the data to identify iterative patterns. Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that involves reading a set of data, including in-depth surveys and questionnaire records, and looking for meaningful patterns. Thematic analysis is a versatile qualitative analysis method that allows researchers to come up with novel new ideas from data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). One of the many advantages of topic analysis is that it can be used by inexperienced scholars who are still studying how to examine qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

According to Saldana (2015), a themes analytic function is an extended expression or clause that specifies the content or meaning of a data item. Thematic analysis identified key issues and secondary data from digital marketing research of women-owned businesses in South Africa. Since thematic

analysis is indeed a popular method, there are many possible ways to interpret the contents of the data set. Interpreting which data is important and which is not can be difficult. In addition, because thematic analysis focuses on finding patterns in interviews, events that only occur in one story may be overlooked. The following steps were followed, as adapted from Grbich (2013):

- Wrote and developed the theme or main code manually or by using a computer program.
- Developed a topic through topic analysis.
- Coded the data around the topic.
- Summarised and presented data with minimal coding and used research questions to explore a wide range of topics.

3.8 Limitations of the study

- The study focused on the selected number of research participants. This presented a limitation in that observations cannot be guaranteed to be 100% representative of all women-owned businesses.
- The survey was limited to business owners and or people working in a women-owned business for a period longer than 3 months.
- The nature of the survey limited the ability to better interrogate and understand the responses.
- The responses may have been subject to bias because research participants are not always truthful, and some responses may have been influenced by what they would have liked to see happening.

3.9 Trustworthiness

Kumar (2019) points out that research can never be 100% correct or accurate, but you need to be very careful and take steps to limit these inaccuracies and make the research more reliable or trustworthy. In qualitative research, credibility refers to transferability, credibility, reliability, and consistency.

3.9.1 Transferability

Transferability refers to the extent to which results can be applied to a different setting apart from the original study they were gained from (Bitsch, 2005). The interview guide and key findings from the study can be applied in other research studies looking at other topics. A representative sample was put together and this was made up of target participants which consisted of women business owners or managers within women-owned businesses with at least 3 months working in the women-owned small and medium enterprises. This together with identified delimitations of this study promoted the transferability of the study.

3.9.2 Credibility

Data triangulation is performed to reduce the risk of linkage and systematic bias (Maxwell, 2012). According to Guion (2002), an important strategy is to categorize each stakeholder group to check the reliability of the data. Different stakeholder representatives within each research participant group were identified and interviewed including business owners and managers /marketing managers, and this was then compared to overall group responses. Initial interviews were conducted to establish the ease of flow and understanding of the questions with stakeholder representatives, once these were done adaptations of the guide were needed to ensure that the discussion flows. To get clarity and to ensure that correct information was given by the participants, the interviewer sought clarifying points during and at the end of the interviews.

3.9.3 Dependability

Auditability capabilities require the adoption of a robust system for data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Daniel, 2019). An audit trail where records of the research instruments and recordings of the interviews (with research participants' consent) were filed and clearly coded, has been kept. These are securely kept in a secure folder on a password-protected device with the interviewer being the only person with access to the device

3.9.4 Confirmability

It is imperative that the researcher always maintains objectivity therefore data analysis and findings were based on research participants' views and responses (Bitsch, 2005). The interviewer provided the interviewee with the opportunity to ask clarifying points, and the records were kept for reference.

Sample interviews were done which assisted in checking the flow of the interview and in identifying any challenges with the interview questions. Minor adjustments were made to the research questions. The interviewer sought clarity where answers were not as clear and to double-check answers and dug deeper to gain more insights. Some questions were asked twice or in two different ways to check the validity of the provided answers. Keynotes were manually captured during the interviews, and these were used in conjunction with the interview recordings to ensure the reliability of the data. Upon completion of the interviews, the interviewer summarised responses back to the participants to ensure that the data was correctly captured. The results from different interviews were also checked as more data was gathered for consistency and theme identification.

3.10 Ethical considerations

All researchers are bound by the moral norms they must obey. (Silverman, 2016). The researcher upheld the ethical guidelines during the study. As part of the University requirement the interviewer filled in an Ethics application form with indications on how ethical integrity will be maintained throughout the interview. The application clearly stated the type of interview to be conducted, how data will be collected and stored, and the targeted group for the study. This was then submitted to the ethics committee for review and once the review was done an ethical clearance certificate was received with a clearance certificate number. On receiving a clearance to commence with the study, the research participants were sought out based on the identified target group. A written consent form was part of the consent and maintaining the anonymity, and confidentiality of the research participants was key. Informed consent was sort from all research participants. The information is kept confidential in a secure and password-protected device and the information was used strictly for this research purpose and will not be

shared with any other organisation or entity. The findings have been reported truthfully. Permission was sought from all authorities for data collection within the organisations before research commencement. Also, it was necessary to conduct the study in such a way that participant involvement caused no or minimal disruption to the everyday operations of the research participants and organisations. The researcher considered any possible harm that could be done, and strict measures were put in place to avoid any harm or damage to any individual or organisation.

CHAPTER 4. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This section of the study presents the findings of the qualitative data collected from interviewing fifteen participants, selected through convenience sampling, in which each participant reported information on their characteristics and business type, the various forms of digital marketing tools they used, the impact of digital marketing on sales, and possible factors that facilitated or served as a constraint of leveraging on the use of digital marketing. The study examines some pieces of information on the use of digital marketing in businesses, the common tools used, and how these tools have impacted sales in their businesses. It also elicits information on possible interventions and policies that can aid the development of women-owned SMMEs. The data were collected according to the emerging context and subsequently classified under different research questions.

3.2 Data gathering approach

The systematic procedures through which the qualitative data were analysed are presented in this section. This was followed by the presentation of key findings and/or themes extracted as part of the study.

Step 1: A total of 15 participants were interviewed and consequently information was gathered on the use of digital marketing tools, the impact of digital marketing on sales, and factors influencing the women-owned SMMEs from leveraging digital marketing tools in their businesses.

Step 2: The qualitative data collected through the interviews were imported into and coded using ATLAS Ti qualitative analysis software. Similar and related quotations were categorised in a code and codes were further categorised into group codes. This step consumed the bulk of the effort spent on the study, as a line-by-line coding was done to capture all key messages.

Step 3: The codebook and the interview transcripts were analysed to capture the themes relevant to this study. The themes similitude to the code group serves as the main concepts that contain similar codes and related ideas/ quotations.

Step 4: Regarding each theme, a thematic content analysis was conducted to examine some pieces of information on the use of digital marketing tools, the impact of digital marketing on sales, and factors influencing the women-owned SMMEs from leveraging digital marketing tools in their businesses in South Africa. Four themes were identified:

1. Women-owned SMMEs incorporate digital marketing tools based on their personal digital platform use and understanding.
2. There are fundamentals that facilitate/ constrain small & medium sized women-owned enterprises from leveraging digital marketing tools in their businesses.
3. Properly leveraging and understanding digital marketing tools is perceived to have a positive impact on sales growth.
4. Solution focused stakeholder interventions and policy frameworks are important to the development of women-owned businesses.

These themes serve as the main concepts that contain similar codes. They are represented in the table below.

Preliminary themes:

Table 3: Objectives and codes

Objectives	Codes
Digital marketing as a tool for overall marketing strategy	Specific Marketing activities in companies, digital marketing in companies, tools/platforms used for digital marketing
There are fundamentals that facilitate/ constrain small & medium sized women-owned enterprises from	Opportunities in digital marketing, limitations of digital marketing, inability to focus on other responsibilities,

leveraging digital marketing tools in their businesses.	advantages, and disadvantages in the use of digital marketing
Properly leveraging and understanding digital marketing tools is perceived to have a positive impact on sales growth.	Sales improvement, digital marketing tools that worked, and digital marketing tools that did not work
Solution focused stakeholder interventions and policy frameworks are important to the development of women-owned businesses.	Experiences to enhance digital marketing, practical interventions

This section covers findings from the study and is divided based on the research propositions identified. Summary findings are presented in word clouds, network analysis, and direct quotations from the participants are shared to highlight key discussion points and responses from the interviews.

4.3 How do women-owned SMMEs use digital marketing tools?

The concept of digital marketing has become a major part of marketing for every business activity including large, small, and medium sized businesses, digital marketing has its root in the use of online digital technologies to promote and develop a business and improve the scope of the business at hand. The main reason for employing digital marketing is to create awareness of a particular business or brand and ultimately improve sales. Long before the advent of digital marketing, business enterprises had means of advertising their businesses and creating awareness for their businesses. Different mediums were employed, and these ranged from traditional face-to-face meetings, newspaper adverts,

distribution of flyers, use of billboards, and other media. How businesses implement marketing, varies from one organisation to another.

Evidence from the study reported the specific marketing activities in various companies and it was found that several companies used digital tools for marketing. These include social media platforms and other digital platforms. Being a woman-owned business, in general, had some negative associations with some participants and this is aligned to the observation by Scuotto et al.(2019) that the online space mirrors or is integrated into the real world and therefore the experiences of women online can be seen as a close reflection of the offline space.

“Women business owner can have a negative connotation; you play multiple roles and there is so much expected from you vs. men. It helps that there are programs for women business owners however I do not want to be seen as a lesser businessperson.” ¶ 184 Interview 14

“Kind of, you know, just ticking the boxes. OK, so we had, you know 20 women in our training course, but then you go ask for business. OK, I'm trained now. Can I get business in there? So, no we've got enough engineers. We don't need you kind of thing so that's my frustration because it's still there's still this barrier to overcome.” ¶ 17 Interview 12

The above quotes show general sentiments about being women business owners and when it came to exploiting digital platforms as women, there was no significant difference picked up from the discussion feedback with the general feeling being that the more training and exposure they can have in using digital tools, the better enabled they will be to integrate these into their organisations.

Some of the organisations also reported having moved from the non-digital forms of marketing to the digital forms and this for some was necessitated by Covid-19. Some of the responses gathered relating to marketing activities in different organisations are below:

“We own Facebook Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. I have my personal page and the company has its own page, so we only started this year like before

when it was like I only got this guy like seven months ago and with him then he only started posting”- ¶ 52 – 54 in Interview 14

“Recently more focus on LinkedIn. Boosting profile on LinkedIn, lots of media positioning, written articles, focus on blogs, Facebook profile (need to focus more on it). Execution of it. Started online shop doing sustainable gifting selling small artisanal products through Instagram” ¶ 7 in Interview 12

“We are on Facebook and Instagram. So that's where I do most of my advertising and sometimes or now. Once this app called WhatsApp. So those are the two that I'm basically, using now” ¶ 16 – 18 in Interview 10

“Promotion on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, get clients Face to Face. Through webinars and we follow up, Facebook mainly referral, Networking platforms e.g. We connect for collaborations” ¶ 20 – 23 in Interview 5

“Website, Facebook, LinkedIn has changed the ball game in energy. Exports gave us so much businesses” ¶ 6 in Interview 4

“I think in the past we've looked at the option of running ads in newspapers. That turned out to be a very costly exercise. We've also looked at. Using community radio stations to broadcast some of our other services. That one was slightly better. We are on online social media platforms which we don't again because we don't have a dedicated resource. We're not paying enough attention to that, and we have a web presence in the form of our websites as well where people can go to get information quickly up on their business and what we offer. I think that's that I think we've moved away from way back when we started when we printed Flyers to be handed out, so we no longer do anything like that.” 11 in Interview 8

The above responses show that the participants interviewed employed digital tools for their specific marketing activities. The level and magnitude of using these tools varied from one company to another and were determined by a range of factors including availability and access, resourcing, and what other people within

the business circle were doing. However, other organisations still employed old and non-digital marketing mediums. Based on the interviews conducted the use of old and dated methods can be attributed to preference or inadequate knowledge on how to implement digital marketing activities. Some of the non-digital means of marketing activities in organisations are given in the responses below:

“General marketing includes going around to schools. No online marketing as such” ¶ 7 in Interview 3

“Traditional meetings, professional members, networks, profile” ¶ 9 in Interview 6

“Marketing activities – direct contact, networks, conferences, meetings.” ¶ 7 in Interview 12

“Marketing activities include visiting schools as they are our main customers. Husband does this. Introduce products to learners on a face-to-face basis.” ¶ 12 in Interview 13

Just as the specific marketing activities are important, the type of digital marketing employed is important. It has been observed that when implementing digital marketing among the women-owned businesses in South Africa, there is always a need to try more than one platform. This has enabled some participants to determine which of the platforms suits the organization and how well can they benefit from it. Accessing the digital platforms or making use of the digital tool is not the major concern as there is wide and free access to the various tools of digital marketing. However, identifying the right tool for the overall improvement of the organisation should be the top priority.

“... but I'm excited about Google marketing because I saw those that you can do a lot with it.” ¶ 22 – 23 in Interview 2

“A lot of Facebook and Instagram tailored to what is required at the time – we are targeting schools for now” ¶ 8 in Interview 3

“Cold calling sales department, WhatsApp (business) and people inbox me from there” ¶ 24 – 25 in Interview 5

Digital – email, Instagram, LinkedIn ¶ 10 in Interview 6

Just WhatsApp campaigns and Facebook and a bit on Instagram. ¶ 13
in Interview 8

LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, and Shopify website ¶ 8 in Interview 12

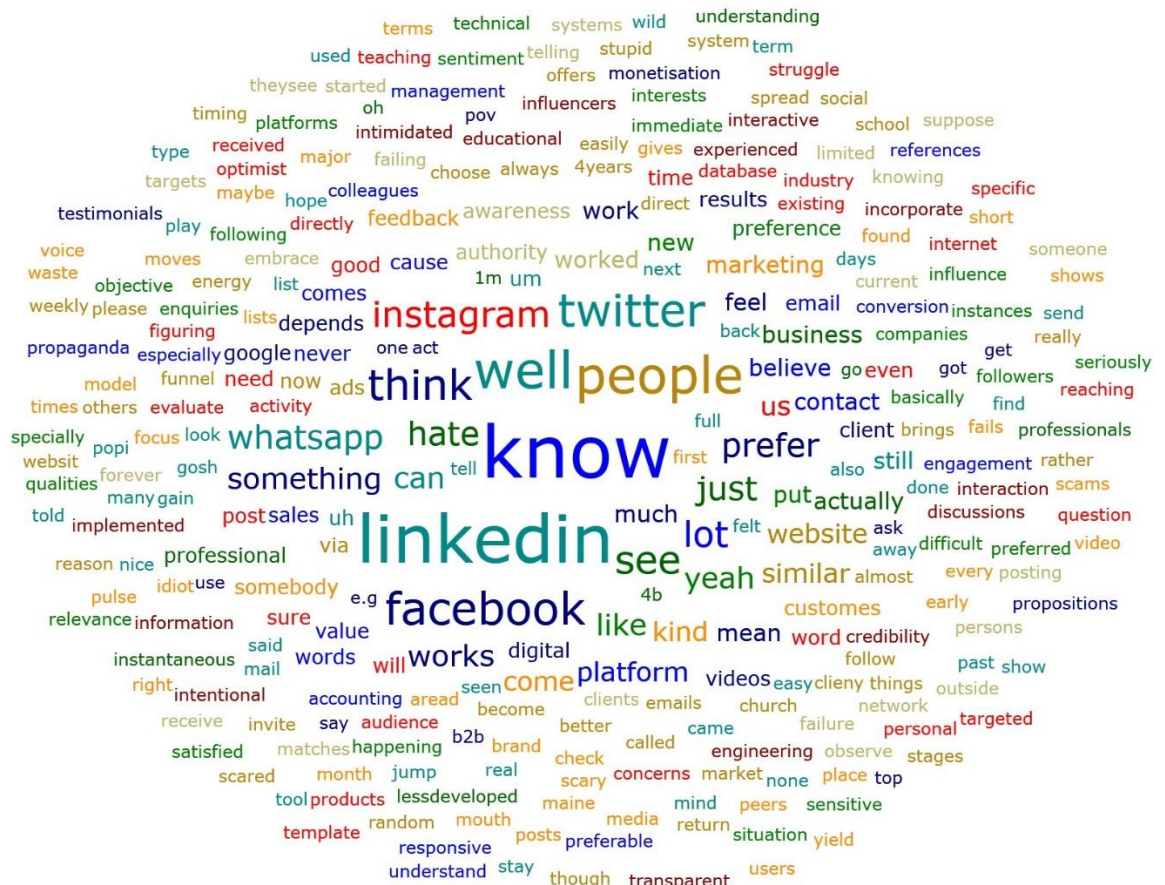


Figure 10: Word Cloud Showing Digital Marketing as A Tool for Overall Marketing Strategy

The word cloud above highlights the key focus areas when it came to digital marketing tools use. The businesses interviewed which were mainly focused on Business to Business highlight the importance of B2B platforms like LinkedIn, and knowledge and understanding which came up as important in being able to use these platforms.

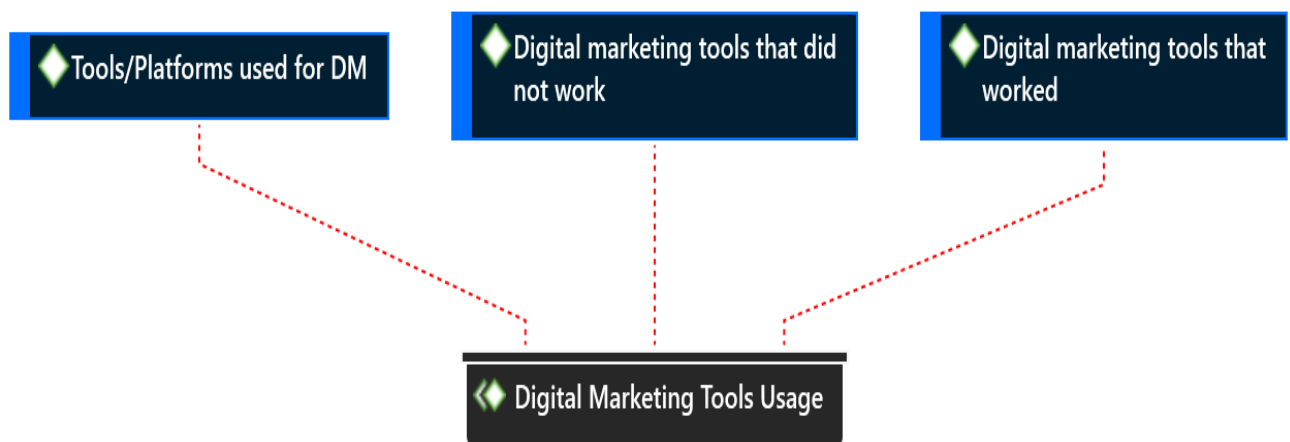


Figure 11: Network Analysis of Digital Marketing as A Tool for Overall Marketing Strategy

The network analysis above emphasises the use of digital marketing tools with various businesses using different available platforms at their disposal, with the key big platforms namely LinkedIn and Facebook being mentioned more frequently than others.

It is encouraging to see that these women-owned businesses were able to demonstrate the usage of available digital marketing tools and were able to share anecdotes of their usage journey with some of them listing a long list of platforms they are on. On the other hand, there was a strong sense of resources needed to be able to manage these endless platforms. This begged a question of whether these tools were used effectively, or they were merely a tick box in their long list of to-dos within their organisations. Familiarity with certain digital platforms led most participants to focus on those platforms whether they worked on them or not. This can be a good thing, but it can also be limiting these businesses.

4.4 What are the fundamentals that facilitate/constrain women-owned SMMEs in leveraging digital marketing tools in their businesses?

Organisations are using digital marketing to improve the overall conditions of the company. The desire to get results and stand out in the global space are contributing factors to using digital marketing. In addition, most organisations employ the use of digital marketing to create awareness and widen the reach of their businesses. However, in achieving these forms of excellence, there are fundamentals that can either facilitate or constrain the use of digital marketing tools in businesses. As mentioned earlier, one of the major factors that can facilitate or function as a constraint to women-owned SMMEs from leveraging digital marketing tools is the knowledge and understanding of these tools. The knowledge of various digital tools and platforms, how they work, and the one that suits the organisation's goals, needs to be thoroughly understood before embarking on the use of any digital tools. With this properly taken care of, women-owned SMMEs will be able to leverage digital tools for women-owned businesses.

“Do not know technicalities and how things work, no idea how much has been paid, I feel I do not have control. On SEO I need to control the spending, you get promises that are oversold by the Marketing agency, need an understanding of how 1st page works, need an understanding of what it means” ¶ 41 – 44 in Interview 1

“Limitation mainly are training which we are focusing on. Have not used an agency, I am stingy like that if I don't know something properly it's difficult for me to ask someone else.” ¶ 179 in Interview 14

Furthermore, the use of digital marketing has a high effort expectancy. As reported by most participants, there is a high level of technical knowledge, resources and time required. This is one of the critical components of the UTAUT model in influencing the use behavior. Human resources are imperative to leverage digital tools, especially for women who do not have experience in using these tools. Evidence from the report shows that most women tend to conduct all

marketing activities as well as other organisational duties all by themselves. This contributes to improper and inadequate use of digital marketing tools.

“Because I was mainly a one-man show and also those who are new. So that’s why the limiting factor...” ¶ 55 in Interview 2

“Limitations is always trying to control things myself. And then not getting. The necessary resources. And you know, which then limits my expansion”

¶ 104 – 106 in Interview 9

However, some factors have been identified to have a positive influence on how SMMEs leverage digital marketing tools. These include the opportunities digital tools provide for making a business well known. It was discovered that digital marketing has provided an avenue for exploring beyond the scope of the business to connecting to an organisation with similar views, meeting new people, and enjoying other benefits attached to the market. With digital marketing tools, women-owned SMMEs can connect to other women-owned SMMEs, share ideas and opportunities, and enjoy the benefits of operating in the digital market. Subsequently, this will improve the overall business conditions of women-owned SMMEs.

“I think the opportunities are in when you connect to woman-owned organisations like we connect right. Specifically, and only for women. I think there are several opportunities there, the platform it just provides for women to be, you know, for training for sharing of skills and sharing of knowledge and access to resources. As a woman-owned business may not have, I think in general, and you know, business domain and public domain.” ¶ 77 in Interview 7

“Digital Marketing allows you to advertise anything and you sometimes you need to present yourself as a consultant in the company to get business” ¶ 24 in Interview 3

growth. This is in line with the SEDA report of 2016, OECD (2018), and various other articles reviewed, which highlighted access to funding for women-owned businesses as a challenge. Ramasobana et.al., (2017) noted that limited or lack of funds contribute to women-owned SMMEs using guerrilla marketing tactics. Lack of funding can also be attributed to the DIY approach and more ad hoc execution of digital marketing versus a fully developed and planned strategic approach.

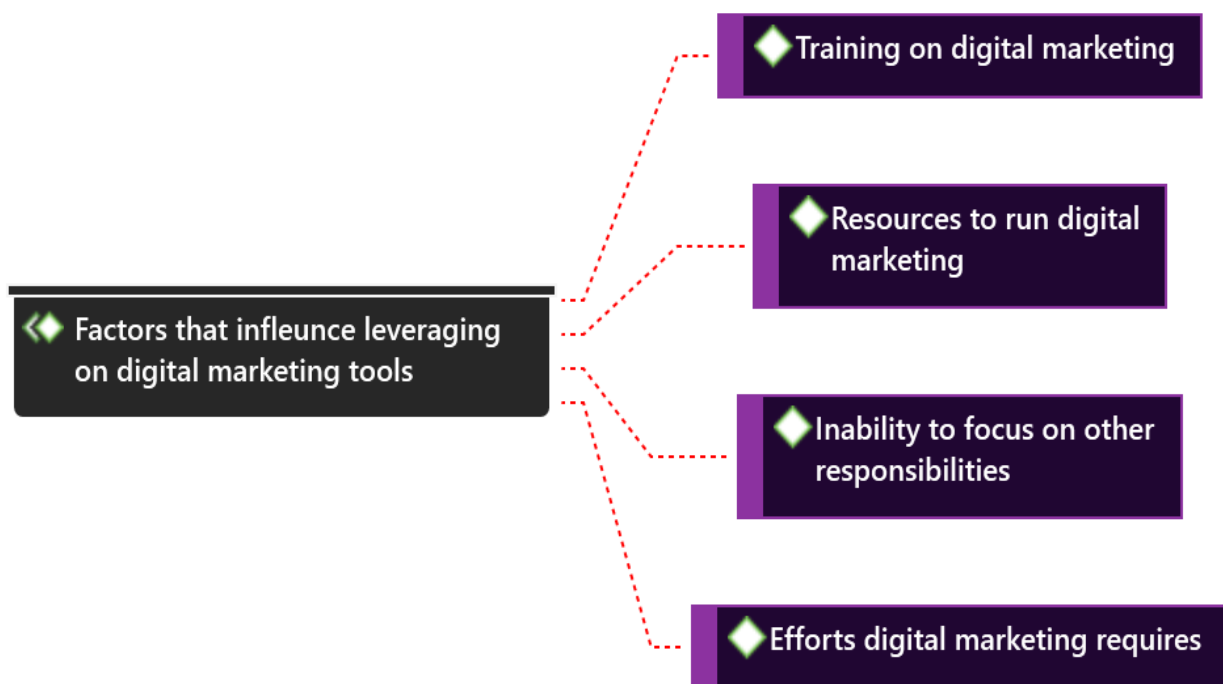


Figure 13: Network Analysis of Factors That Influence SMMEs Women-owned Enterprises from Leveraging Digital Marketing Tools

The above network analysis emphasises the importance that was placed on training. Even though 14 out of 15 participants had attended some form of training, availability of resources financial investment, and human resources were highlighted as key, time and effort were also some of the factors that were highlighted that influence the WO SMMEs in the use of DMT.

4.5 What is the perceived sales impact of properly leveraging and understanding digital marketing tools?

This study's focus was on perceived sales growth, where participants were asked to share insights and experiences with the aim of picking up any identified movements in sales because of the digital marketing tools used. The qualitative nature of the research allowed for exploration and identification of any emerging themes and offered deeper insights and understandings into the adoption and usage of digital marketing tools for sales growth in women-owned SMMEs.

Digital marketing tools are mainly used to improve the sales performance of an organisation. They are also used to increase the number of customers that patronize the business which subsequently has an impact on the sales of the business. In addition, to the impact of digital tools on sales, digital tools help to identify the services that are required by customers and provide insights into ways business organisations can increase their sales. However, the impact of digital tools on sales can be positive or negative. This is because not all business enterprises find digital tools useful when it comes to impact in sales. While some have experienced a significant increase because of the use of digital tools, there are others who feel that digital tools have not had a significant positive effect on their sales performance. Also, those who have failed to use digital tools believe that with the aid of digital tools, business sales will achieve positive results. Evidence from the study shows the diverse opinions of the research participants on whether they had experienced a change in their sales with the use of digital marketing.

"It's a tricky question, I cannot say yes or no. It definitely works, it's a Yes but cannot directly quantify" ¶ 34 – 35 in Interview 1

"No sales picked up yet" ¶ 19 in Interview 3

"I am getting leads some not yet converted, engineering, engineering space takes time to convert. Positive response" ¶ 36 – 37 in Interview 5

"Did not see any changes in sales that could be attributed to direct marketing. Sorry for digital marketing. I do not see any new requests for quotations and no movement in that sense. All the business we get is

from, you know, our normal sources for business. I haven't them. If they've seen us on social media at all because they are normally kind of tend to come from the same references.” ¶ 41 – 42 in Interview 8

“There was a change in sales. It wasn't just like sometimes, you know, we just get in. Nothing comes of it. But I think since I've opened my LinkedIn page. I've had quite a positive Quite good positive response ended up being able to.” ¶ 56 – 57 in Interview 10

“On LinkedIn, I have been approached by about 5 companies asking for opinion or consultation and these were as far afield as Ireland, Hong Kong, London. I need to revive all my platforms. LinkedIn is a good way to attract customers” ¶ 19 in Interview 12

“There is a change as we are now getting new customers because of our website. WhatsApp also helps as people see products on offer and the come to the shop” ¶ 25 in Interview 13

“Yes, we have seen movements in sales however I cannot pinpoint or attribute it to one specific digital marketing tool.” ¶ 174 in Interview 14

As noted earlier, not all digital tools work for all businesses. Some businesses will find specific digital tools especially useful for their business while others will find them not useful. This explains the importance of being able to identify the type of digital tool that will work best for the business. The quotes below illustrate responses relating to digital tools that work for some of the businesses interviewed and the ones that did not work.

“Twitter, I do not understand how it works, you see people with 1m followers and there are influencers” ¶ 39 in Interview 1

“Facebook doesn't yield results for me. I think it's just a place to you know, kind of voice concerns and just see who's it's. Almost. For me, it's like I go to Facebook to check what's happening, ... I think Facebook doesn't work as well as LinkedIn and Twitter do for me. Or rather LinkedIn, more modern especially” ¶ 74 – 75 in Interview 7

“That is Facebook. Because I do ask my clients where they got my information from. And then they told me about Instagram. In a few

instances, it's being the word of mouth to maybe somebody did. I did something to somebody. Email template it with someone.” ¶ 67 in Interview 10

“Facebook has not worked we have not received direct inquiries from them” ¶ 27 in Interview 13

The following responses illustrate the digital tools that women-owned SMMEs found to be useful for their respective businesses. Even though these tools have their shortcomings, women-owned SMMEs mentioned them as particularly useful in their businesses:

“WhatsApp worked well but the audience is limited” ¶ 37 – 38 in Interview 1

“Website works well for us” ¶ 20 in Interview 3

“And LinkedIn and Twitter work well for me” ¶ 72 in Interview 7

“...LinkedIn has been my major platform” ¶ 20 in Interview 12

“Instagram has been a good platform in terms of engagement” ¶ 175 in Interview 14

In addition, some participants felt using digital marketing was a waste of time and that the tools were not effective when implemented.

“Well, none of them work. I mean well for me, I’m sure they work, but they haven’t done much for us as a business. And yeah, that’s where I’m at.” ¶ 44 in Interview 8

“I think these things are also about timing, you know. I feel I need. I don’t know what it’s called. But do you know it’s not every social media platform where you can find your client? Yeah, so I think it’s about figuring out which one.” ¶ 59 – 61



Figure 14: Word Cloud Showing the Impact of Use and Non-Use of Digital Marketing on Sales

The above figure illustrates the keywords that came up when probing around the use or non-use of digital marketing tools and their perceived impact on sales. Some of the respondents found it hard to link any of the digital marketing efforts to sales growth. This can be attributed to limited knowledge on how to pull back-end data and leverage it to maximise lead conversions. However, there was a view that some of the leads received could be due to their digital marketing activities

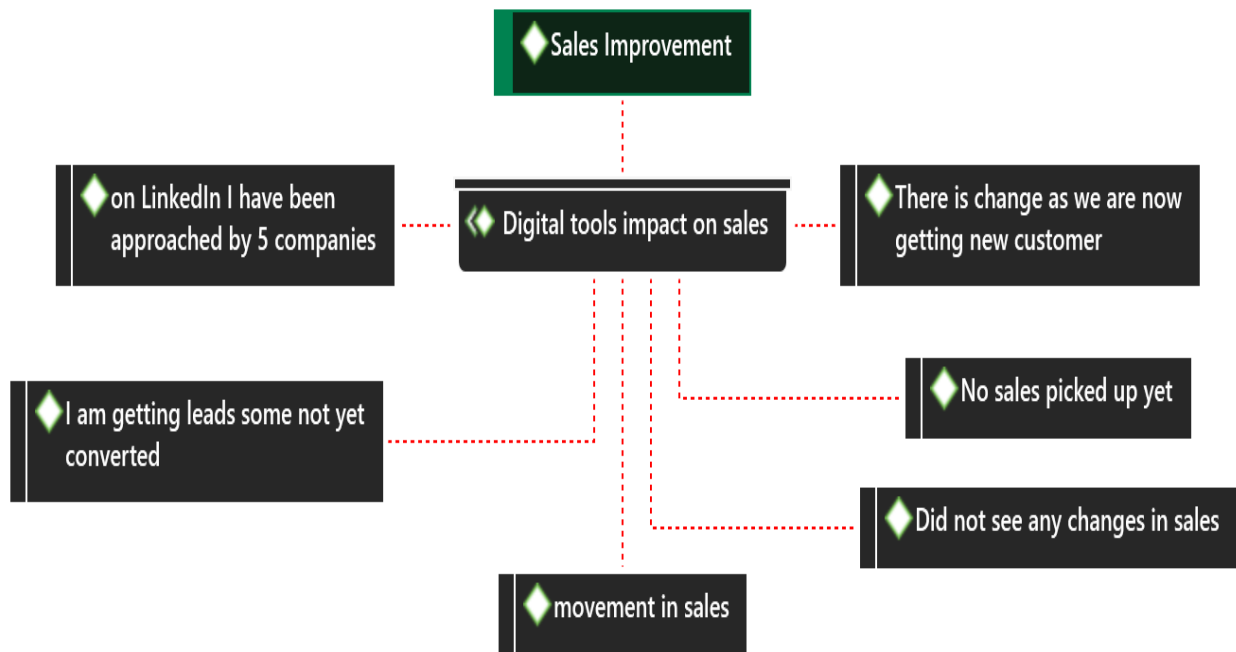


Figure 15: Network Analysis showing the Impact of Use and Non-Use of Digital Marketing on Sales

The above network analysis shows the perceived impact on sales due to digital marketing tools usage. There was a mix of results received. However, as noted above, this was not necessarily based on analysis or reporting that was pulled from various platforms as most respondents found it hard to directly link the implementation of a digital marketing strategy resulting in definite sales.

4.6 How can female entrepreneurs be enabled to use digital marketing tools?

The development of women-owned businesses is dependent on certain interventions and frameworks built based on previous experiences of women in the SMME sector. Several interventions can be established that will act as a means of developing women-owned businesses. An instance is the development of an organisation that will comprise women-owned SMMEs to have a collective voice in the business and public sector. A business network organisation for women-owned SMMEs will assist in fighting against discrimination and biases

experienced by women-owned businesses in general, while focusing on enhancing the necessary skills and knowledge required in these businesses. This is a result of evidence found in the data collected where a respondent specified that a negative connotation is formed against women, and they are expected to give the same level of service if not more than men, thereby suggesting programs for business owners with a need for them to be seen as a lot more than just the female gender.

“Women business owner can have a negative connotation; you play multiple roles and there is so much expected from you vs men. It helps that there are programs for women business owners however I do not want to be seen as a lesser businessperson.” ¶ 184 in Interview 14

Besides business network organisations for women-owned businesses, there should be several training programs for women-owned SMMEs with a focus on digital marketing tools. This will not only develop their businesses but also improve the status of women in the business sector. Women should be educated and enlightened on various forms of digital marketing strategies and tools as well as their effective use. It was discovered that most women lack comprehensive training in digital marketing which influenced their marketing function.

“I feel we need more training and specific training on Digital Marketing. Get buy-in and the rest of the team must be trained” ¶ 41 in Interview 13

Furthermore, collective efforts and collaboration are other interventions that could foster the development of women-owned businesses. Having a group of women with similar goals and motivations can help to boost women’s confidence and can assist them in building a strong and successful businesses. Collective efforts and collaborations will prove particularly useful because digital marketing requires concerted human efforts to implement the activities.

“Well, I think the last point would be collaborations that I'd like to also say gotta be where people don't expect you to be. So, you know if we could collaborate and then I could be on your platform, and you know you can be on my platform and that's how you get noticed. Cause if you always saying blue, blue, blue, blue, blue suddenly there's red and

someone will pay attention. So maybe that would be the final word on it.”

¶ 33 in Interview 12

“I think we need to, you know. Kind of have more of a collective voice like a woman, right? That and I and I will say this proudly. I think we have. I'm not. I think I know for a fact that we are better digital marketers.” ¶ 132 – 133 in Interview

To develop women-owned SMMEs, there is a need to change the perception of women. Women should be given opportunities in the digital space and be allowed to display what they have to offer. Women are usually at their best when it comes to advertising products, therefore, they should be offered an opportunity to hone their advertising skills, particularly in the digital space. Other facilitating conditions for the success of women-owned businesses in digital marketing are the availability of financial resources to conduct digital marketing activities, access to funding, and challenges faced by women which can have a negative effect on the use of digital marketing activities. The report indicates that some women have tried outsourcing the function. However, financial limitations and, in some instances, limited knowledge of digital marketing meant that they were finding difficulties when it came to digital marketing.

The above network analyses illustrate that there are definite opportunities in the digital marketing space and there is a recognition of the need to focus on skills development for these women-owned businesses. However, it is necessary that the interventions are suitable and practical for women business owners to realise the desired economic benefits in their business.

4.7 Chapter Conclusion

The aim of this study was to determine how women-owned SMMEs use digital marketing tools to understand fundamentals that facilitate or constrain women-owned SMMEs in using digital marketing tools. It also aimed to examine the impact of the use of digital marketing tools on sales and how female entrepreneurs could enable the use of digital marketing tools.

It was discovered from the study that digital tools for marketing are common among the women-owned SMMEs as most of these women used at least one of the digital marketing tools. It was further identified that not all these women enjoy the use of a particular digital tool, reflecting that the tools that work for a particular business do not necessarily work for another. The most common digital tools used among the participants were LinkedIn and Instagram. LinkedIn has been regarded as a professional digital platform where various business experts meet, share ideas, and advertise their products and services. The same applies to Instagram, the only difference being in the type of audience that can be reached on either platform. Another useful tool mentioned is Facebook, but most women stated that the platform did not yield a positive result in terms of the organisation's performance.

An interesting observation from the study is that some businesswomen still use the traditional means of marketing including flyer distribution, word-of-mouth advertising, and traditional meetings among other methods.

Furthermore, the factors that serve as constraints to leveraging digital tools by women in SMMEs range from lack of training or inadequate training, inadequate knowledge on the use of these tools, inaccessible to resources both financial and human resources, to the inability to maintain a balance between the business and other personal responsibilities. These factors, as observed in the study, have

influenced the implementation of digital marketing strategies and the use of digital marketing execution. Meanwhile, the opportunities digital marketing creates in terms of improving sales, increasing networking, and the development, of business, happens to be the major factors that facilitate women's use of digital marketing tools.

In addition, not all women had been able to experience improvement in sales using digital tools. This resulted from the improper use of tools or the inability to identify the right digital tool for the business. Meanwhile, most of the participants reported having seen a significant change in business sales because of digital marketing implementation.

It was also discovered from the analysis that in developing women-owned businesses, particularly for SMMEs, there is a need to create an intervention program that will educate the women on the importance of digital marketing and its tools. Training on these subjects will enlighten and widen the horizon of the women thereby allowing them to explore opportunities that could lead to an improvement in their overall businesses. Also, there is a need for a body that will serve as the mouthpiece of women-owned SMMEs against any biased and prejudiced behaviour towards women in the business world, and to come together and brainstorm on various ways they can improve their respective businesses.

In conclusion, women-owned SMMEs in South Africa are aware of the various digital marketing tools and they tend to have a basic idea of how these tools work. They are also aware of various opportunities in digital marketing, one of which is that when implemented properly, it can help boost the overall performance of the business. It was also discovered that some SMMEs tend to combine their digital marketing with other traditional means of marketing as a way of improving their business. Furthermore, it was discovered that to improve sales in general for these SMMEs, there was a need for the adoption of digital marketing strategies which revealed itself to be one of the most common constraints to the utilisation of digital marketing. This, therefore, calls for the need to adopt practical intervention training on the various ways of effectively utilising digital tools, collaboration, and the collective efforts among the women-owned SMMEs and policies directed towards the development of SMMEs among the women in South Africa.

Table 4: Summary of Findings

Research Questions	Propositions	Findings
1. How do women-owned SMMEs use digital marketing tools?	Proposition 1 - Women-owned SMMEs incorporate digital marketing tools based on their personal digital platform use and understanding.	Women-owned businesses do use digital marketing tools in their businesses based on the tools they are familiar with. These businesses however do not necessarily take full advantage of the reporting and data generated by these platforms. A more ad hoc approach is taken versus a clearly defined strategy-based approach
2. What are the key fundamentals that facilitate/constrain women-owned SMMEs in leveraging digital marketing tools in their businesses?	Proposition 2 -There are fundamentals that facilitate/ constrain small & medium sized women-owned enterprises from leveraging digital marketing tools in their businesses.	Unfair treatment of women-owned businesses was noted in general. When it comes to digital tools usage these women however felt that their biggest challenges are training, availability of funding, availability of services to suit their SMME needs, and lastly having time and or people to effectively manage Digital Marketing
3. What is the perceived sales impact of properly	Proposition 3 - Properly leveraging and understanding digital	Due to not being fully immersed in the back end of the different platforms, these women-owned businesses were not always able to link their digital marketing efforts to sales. However, there was a positive view that the tools could result in sales, or in the past some of the women mentioned that being on the platform has connected them or exposed their businesses

leveraging and understanding digital marketing tools?	marketing tools is perceived to have a positive impact on sales growth.	
4. What interventions are needed to enable women entrepreneurs to use digital marketing tools?	Proposition 4 – Solution focused stakeholder interventions and policy frameworks are important to the development of women-owned businesses.	This was seen as an important part of driving WO business success. This included the importance of training and linkages with big business and government for opportunities. Creating forums that are aimed at supporting women but also at addressing systemic biasness and prejudice that women are faced with in general.

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The conceptual framework of this study was developed using insights from the UTAUT, DIY, and TAM model, and the literature reviewed. Findings were presented in a format that revealed the experiences of the research participants specifically focusing on their use of digital marketing, perceived sales impact, the constraints and/or facilitating conditions, interventions, and social influences that the research participants were faced with. This section covers a discussion of the findings from the interviews, pertaining to the digital marketing tool used by women-owned businesses as recorded. The discussion is broken down according to the four research questions.

5.2 Discussion on digital marketing tools used by women-owned businesses

The study revealed that women-owned SMMEs do use the available digital marketing tools. Most of the women-owned businesses use digital marketing, mainly focusing on community management versus focusing on paid advertising and related back-end tools within the platform. This is aligned with what Dumitriu et al. (2019) postulated, saying that SMMEs do use digital media with the hope of increasing their brand equity. It however emerged from the study that some participants were not aware of the available tools for businesses viz., Facebook Business Manager, LinkedIn Premium, Google advertising etcetera. Their usage is mainly influenced by their personal social media use and partly by the training they have been exposed to.

There have been mixed results in terms of the effectiveness of these tools to attract leads and converting said leads into paying customers (sales). Most of these women-owned businesses could not clearly attribute business performance to digital marketing tool usage. There was a general feeling of

inadequate knowledge and understanding of how these tools work to yield meaningful results. The mention of more practical training and application came up from several participants. Time was also frequently mentioned by most participants as a prohibitive factor because these women wear many hats – within the business and at home – referred to as the ‘multitasking whirlpool’ by Kamberidou (2020). This means that there is not enough time or resources dedicated to learning and understanding digital marketing tools since they must juggle other responsibilities from home in conjunction with those within the business.

Based on the feedback from the study participants, it is evident that there is a high level of awareness of the importance of utilising digital marketing for economic benefit and therefore there is a high level of expectancy when it comes to the performance of the available tools. According to the UTAUT model, Performance Expectancy is a critical element that influences usage behaviour (Venkatesh et al., 2003). This study confirmed that women-owned businesses use digital marketing tools with the hope of them delivering on their business sales objectives. This is in line with the DMT models explored in the literature review as there was strong perceived usefulness of the digital marketing tools (Davis, 1989), an expectation that these tools will deliver desired performance (Venkatesh et al., 2003), and lastly that the tools will yield perceived economic benefit (Wolf & McQuitty, 2013).

It is evident that women-owned businesses in this study have some form of digital identities as they are using at least one or more digital marketing tools as part of their marketing activities. The main tools mostly mentioned were LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, with Twitter being mentioned with a more negative association. The use of these digital marketing tools is encouraging and does signify the adoption of digital media by women for long-term business continuity and their importance in empowering female youth to become producers of vital information in society (Haddix & Sealy-Ruiz, 2012).

The participants shared a level of disappointment that has been noted when it comes to fully understanding these tools and how they work. Kamberidou(2020)

and Hilbert (2011) noted that the lack of necessary digital skills does contribute to the digital exclusion of women, which in this day and age affects their business growth.

Different businesses in the study had differing approaches when it came to the management of digital marketing usage, and this varied from having a junior resource handling the function to having the business owner or a business development resource responsible for digital marketing. Two of the participants mentioned disappointment after outsourcing the responsibility for their digital marketing. This disappointment included not knowing how to evaluate the campaigns, and the marketing agency not being upfront and open enough about what they are doing and what outcomes can be expected by the businesses from the digital marketing efforts. Having dedicated resources handling marketing is contrary to the DIY model by Wolf & McQuitty (2013), which is based on entrepreneurs running their own digital marketing due to the lack of product or service availability.

Understanding of the back end, reporting, and analytics within each platform also came up as something which these women-owned businesses did not leverage, or in some instances, the participants were not even aware of. Only one business mentioned having used reporting tools on Facebook.

Choosing an adequate DMT is always a challenge for enterprises (Dumitriu et al., 2019). It was encouraging to see that these businesses had digital identities, however, the responses received from participants cast a new light on how these WO SMMEs approached digital strategy. The digital marketing strategic thinking did not come through strongly in selecting the digital marketing tools that could be relevant for their businesses. This supports the notion that SMEs tend to be reactive when it comes to technological changes affecting their marketing (Centobelli, Cerchione, Esposito, & Rapha, 2016). Brand marketing strategies require intelligence, expertise, careful market research, and constant feedback (Dumitriu et al., 2019), and it usually requires putting enough resources (skills, financial resources) into achieving this. With limitations faced by WO SMMEs,

strategy development does not receive enough focus as reported by these enterprises.

5.3 Discussion on the fundamentals that constrain or facilitate WO SMMEs in utilising digital marketing tools

Women embody distinct roles in society ranging from those with responsibilities for families and those with no family or children. Participants with younger children mentioned the challenges faced when trying to juggle everything, from understanding digital marketing tools, applying them to their businesses, running their businesses, and still maintaining a functional home. The 'multitasking whirlpool' (Kamberidou, 2020) phenomenon came through very strongly for most women. An interesting finding was noted, even among the women with no children or empty nesters mentioning that they do not necessarily have time or the necessary resources to dedicate to digital marketing. The responses received from the interviews additionally highlighted that some participants who were the business owners also managed the marketing part of the business themselves, and this is aligned to the DIY model by Wolf & McQuitty (2013) of digital marketing tool used by SMMEs. The majority of these business owners claimed that they had little to no time to focus on digital marketing as they have many other responsibilities, and this is consistent with the family-work conflict phenomenon and role pressures that have a negative impact on women as identified by Boz et al. (2015).

Most of the participants felt that digital marketing requires a lot of effort, and this seems to cause them to feel overwhelmed and anxious since there is a perceived high effort expectancy (Venkatesh et al., 2003). A single mother of one teenager mentioned that they have embraced digital ways of doing things as part of their day-to-day living. This has helped to somewhat navigate the 4th Industrial Revolution for them, however, really applying digital marketing and navigating this world has been a challenge.

SMMEs do not always have clearly defined roles and responsibilities. In most cases due to resourcing, the vision owner who is also the business owner drives most functions and parts of the business. This is aligned with what Taiminen & Karjaluoto (2015) and Centobelli et.al. (2016) highlighted, where the lack of resources impacts small businesses' adoption of digital technologies. In the case of women-owned businesses, these women wear many hats (within the business and at home) and they are reported to be 2.6 times more likely than men to have domestic duties at home (OECD, 2018). Questions on outsourcing to an agency or a Marketing specialist received various views ranging from the prohibitive costs involved, wanting to first understand how to use DMT so that they know what an agency is doing, to feelings of having tried an agency before and being disappointed with the services received. These reasons for low outsourcing of the DMT activities confirm the motivations behind the DIY approach, from lack of quality and/or suitable service at an acceptable price (Wolf & McQuitty, 2013).

5.4 Discussion on the perceived sales impact of properly leveraging and understanding digital marketing tools

Rahim et.al. (2021) posits that the use of social media by both SMEs and potential customers has brought about opportunities and profit growth for SMEs. According to the study, mixed feelings were noted when it came to the use or non-use of digital marketing tools and the perceived impact on sales. Paniagua & Sapena (2014) and Chaffey & Smith (2013) argue that digital marketing does drive sales and has an influence on social capital and getting closer to the customer, however, based on the findings from this study it seems like most of the participants could not pinpoint the exact impact of digital marketing use on business sales. Chaffey & Patron (2012) highlighted limited use of digital analytics and based on their study lack of resources, budget and strategy were the most common reasons mentioned for low adoption from companies surveyed. This can be expected to affect SMMEs even more as they are faced with more resource challenges. This was in line with some respondents who felt like there was an impact, however, it was a challenge to always show a direct relationship between digital marketing tool usage and sales. The low usage of platform-based

analytical tools can also be to the fact that digital marketing tools were used as part of a bigger marketing mix and the impact of DMT usage was not always easy to isolate. It was noticed that the lack of knowledge and full understanding of the available tools also limited the ability to decipher the analytics behind the tools used. There were however some participants who mentioned that digital marketing did work or contributed to creating awareness and positive associations with their business.

The feedback on the use or non-use showed ambivalence as there were participants on one end feeling positive, while others felt like it had been a waste of time. Some of the underlying reasons for the mixed feelings can be attributed to the existence of facilitating conditions as per the UTAUT model – in the case of digital marketing, these would include finance, resource, training, technical know-how, etc.

The women-owned businesses which seemed to have more financial resources available for digital marketing efforts reported more positive results when it came to digital marketing usage, while businesses on the opposite end of the resource availability scale had more negative views towards the use of digital marketing tools. This supports The Resource-Based View (RBV) of strategy which states that attributes, resources, and capabilities are critical to the attainment of competitive advantage (Armstrong & Lee, 2021) and is in line with Msimango-Galawe's (2017) assertion that the higher the financial resources available, the higher the entrepreneur's confidence is in growing the company, and the higher the likelihood of the SME to succeed. The access to funding challenges faced by women-owned businesses affected the business functioning in general which also had a negative impact on digital marketing usage since the lack of finance to invest in digital marketing restricted the ability to source the right skills, resources, software, and equipment. This is in line with small business resource constraints as highlighted by Wilson & Makau (2018) and Bhagwat & Sharma (2007) but due to bias against the financing of women-owned businesses by various financial institutions (OECD, 2018), it has a far more significant impact on these WO SMMEs and therefore their sales growth and sustainability.

5.5 Discussion on female entrepreneurs' enablement for DMT tools use

Outside interventions have been identified as important in growing SMMEs by various players and are seen as a welcome necessity in growing businesses. Globally it has become a necessity to have women-owned SMMEs in organised and recognised structures that will lobby both the private and public sectors. Mbonyane & Ladzani (2011) identified a gap in communication between SMMEs and the government. Orpha & Strydom (2016) noted that for women-owned businesses to succeed, bidirectional or two-way communication between SMMEs and other support organizations is critical. Most participants mentioned collaborations and support as being important in driving their businesses. These collaborations can be both formalised and informal through the establishment of support organisations that advocate for women's businesses.

Other interventions mentioned by the research participants also included training, skills development, and coaching. It is interesting to note that the very same women have been part of different digital marketing training programs in one way or the other. Kanayo (2021) affirms the importance of business support programmes, however, he argues the importance of going beyond just training and focusing on other social constructs and psychological factors that need to be addressed in women-owned SMMEs. Going beyond just training could assist in gaining a deeper understanding of why 20% of women-owned businesses fail in their first year, with a 50% failure rate within the first 5 years globally (Stiles, 2018). It is crucial to consider this to ensure that the women-owned SMMEs grow toward an equal footing with their male counterparts.

The findings revealed that the women-owned businesses were exposed to some form of training or digital skills enhancement. While most women highlight training as a requirement, there seems to be a fundamental feeling of inadequacy when it comes to digital tool usage. This is called self-examination which means experiences of inadequacy, low self-efficacy, low self-confidence, and a tendency for women to impose higher demands on themselves than men. (Dearkins & Freel, 2009 and Martin & Barnard 2013). As the literature review highlighted

younger women have a high interest in technology, however, this does not necessarily translate into them choosing technical fields in later life (Ukpere et al., 2014). It is therefore important for the training and support provided to address digital marketing gaps, and not only introduce the front-end of the various tools but also expose these SMMEs to business tools.

Bias in business was highlighted as one of the reasons why women business owners struggle with fully embracing digital marketing tools in their businesses. This is in line with the SEDA (2016) and OECD (2018) reports which highlighted how bias affects access to funding, business opportunities that could help women business owners fund digital marketing efforts, and having a bigger resource pool to support digital marketing efforts. Policies and interventions to remove these biases were highlighted as necessary for creating a business ecosystem that put women and men-owned businesses on an equal footing.

One of the participants mentioned that currently, available digital marketing tools are also not locally developed and that there was a huge oversight when it came to addressing local nuances, insights, and language. This could be a necessary intervention required to facilitate the use and embracing of digital marketing tools in their fullness, to drive women-owned businesses. A truly local digital marketing policy intervention that addresses the unique needs of a South African business owner could resolve some of the challenges.

All in all, interventions are deemed necessary for these businesses to succeed and most of the participants mentioned various interventions, collaborations, and networks that they have been a part of. They spoke of these with high regard in terms of how they positively contribute to their organisations. It is however important to develop these interventions in being cognizant of the realities that women-owned SMMEs face, including the time challenges in attending training since women, hold a lot more responsibilities in the home, in addition to their responsibilities in their businesses as detailed by UN Women (2018a) and Kamberidou (2020).

5.6 Chapter Conclusion

The success of every business is currently driven by the availability of necessary resources, capability, and awareness of the product/service that the business offers in the market. Digital marketing tool usage is critical for most businesses today and it is encouraging to see that women-owned businesses are leveraging opportunities presented by this not only to achieve short-term results but also for long-term sustainability. There are, however, challenges faced by the WO businesses in executing this which stem from a deeply entrenched inequality or being on a back foot when woman entrepreneurs start from. Interestingly the digital world reflects what happens in the real world. Factors like income inequality, availability of assets, access to funding, resources, training, and access to opportunities are interlinked and do have an impact on digital marketing use and how this affects perceived sales growth.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

It is known that digital marketing tools are here to grow and drive businesses into the future. This is true for all types of businesses whether big or small. The following section will include concluding remarks on the study conducted and will also provide practical recommendations on how the findings can be applied by various stakeholders, namely business owners, policymakers, incubators, ESD/ED supporters, women networks, and support organisations.

- The woman business owners can apply the findings for improving their digital marketing initiatives.
- Policymakers will be able to use the findings in developing new policies and in guidelines for women-owned SMME development.
- Incubators and ESD/ED providers will be able to use the findings in establishing intervention initiatives for their partners.
- Women networks and support bodies will be able to use these recommendations in their support and guidance for women-owned businesses.

The study was aimed at exploring the use of digital marketing for sales growth in women-owned SMMEs in South Africa. The findings indicated that women-owned SMMEs do use digital marketing tools to derive economic benefit i.e., to drive sales growth in their businesses. These businesses faced various challenges in being able to fully utilise and identify the right tools including having the correct measures the ability to understand the impact of the digital marketing efforts on sales growth, setting a well-articulated digital strategy, having the necessary resources to support the digital strategy execution, and operating in a supportive environment that is conducive to women-owned enterprise success. It is encouraging to see the adoption of these tools; however, a deeper

understanding and use of the available digital marketing tools appear to be very limited, and this could be limiting the growth of these WO SMMEs.

6.2 Recommendations for the use of digital marketing by women-owned businesses

The women-owned businesses in the study showed awareness and use of various digital platforms. However, this knowledge seemed to be at a superficial level when it came to leveraging the business management tools within the different digital marketing platforms. It is important to offer practical training over time which will help enhance the team skills and enhance understanding of the back end of various digital marketing tools.

(Hilbert, 2011) suggests that women are more social and utilise digital tools more for human connections. This is contrary to the second school of thought mentioned earlier that purported decreased interest in digital tools usage in adult life. However, collaborations between different businesses and networking came up as one of the unique traits that women business owners possess. This was mentioned as a unique trait that these women business owners have and could capitalise on. Leveraging this strength to share knowledge and insights amongst these businesses can assist in the acceleration and full adoption of digital marketing tools. This can be achieved through the organisations that support women's business owners and networks. The establishment of an independent body or organisation which represents women-owned businesses is recommended to facilitate and represent women in various business forums and organisations, both in the public and private sectors.

It is recommended that women business owners not only get training but collaborations with other WO SMMEs is crucial while being part of an independent body that constantly drives the interest of women when it comes to driving growth in their businesses through marketing. To fully utilise the digital marketing platforms for sales growth these WO SMMEs need not only to be

aware of the platforms but also to understand the back end of these systems. To ensure sustainable digital presence a well-constructed digital strategy that outlines the digital approach to creating awareness, generating leads, and converting these leads into customers is necessary for the WO SMMEs.

6.3 Recommendations on fundamentals that facilitate women-owned business digital marketing use

There are various factors that came up during the research as main constraints for WO SMMEs and these included resourcing, skills availability, and time. To fully encourage the use of digital marketing tools in these businesses, it is important to find solutions that match the available skills to WO businesses. For example, programmes that match unemployed digital marketing and communications graduates to women-owned SMMEs can help alleviate the human resource pressures faced by these businesses pertaining to digital marketing while providing training opportunities for the unemployed graduates.

To further facilitate the growth of women-owned businesses, different organisations (Incubators, Enterprise Supplier Development programmes, and Enterprise Development programmes) need to assist these businesses not only in enhancing skills but also in implementation by identifying implementation partners in the form of marketing agencies or specialists who can tailor offerings to SMMEs. These partners or agencies should work closely with the SMMEs to bring about meaningful change and impact in their digital marketing approach.

When it comes to financial investment behind digital marketing, the evidence from the research clearly showed how lack of finances or access to finance limited these, WO SMMEs. It is therefore recommended that financial institutions, Enterprise Supplier Development, Enterprise Development programmes, and related organs of state put together programmes that are focused on driving the implementation of fair access to funding marketing, and more specifically digital marketing within these businesses.

6.4 Recommendation for the perceived impact of DMT use on sales

In conclusion in these times of big data, AI, and analytics, enormous amounts of data are generated every moment businesses interact on any platform, women-owned businesses must capitalise on this. In line with Chaffey & Smith (2012), the WO SMMEs did not utilise the marketing analytics generated by various digital marketing tools; this presents an opportunity for these businesses to optimise the digital activities on these platforms by utilising marketing analytics.

A recommendation is that training is developed that is targeted at bringing awareness and introducing women-owned businesses to the back end of the different platforms and assisting them in understanding and developing key metrics for their businesses, which is very important. This could be done by the different digital platform owners or key stakeholders within the women's business development space in collaboration with the women-owned businesses. WO SMMEs need to develop clearly defined dashboards that can be used to track various metrics. Getting the marketing analytics understanding will ensure clear goal-setting and the management of Return on Investment (ROI) from the digital marketing efforts.

6.5 Recommendation for female entrepreneurs DMT enablement

The focus of this study was not on understanding the prejudice that women face in general but rather was about understanding digital marketing usage within WO SMMEs. However, the prejudice and unfair treatment that these women-owned businesses faced negatively influenced other parts of their business operations and could not be ignored. This can be remedied by:

- providing ease of access to funding that could assist in skills training and in investing in digital marketing initiatives,

- financial service providers offering different risk products to cater to the varying needs of these businesses,
- formalised structures and organisations driving access to funding,
- implementing policies and frameworks that will drive fair access to funding, targeted at different levels of business from Exempted Micro Enterprises to Qualifying Small Enterprises, general entrepreneurship management to support women needs to be put in place under the Department of Small Business.

6.6 Limitations and further research

Future studies should focus on understanding how the inequality that is found in society, large businesses, and other walks of life affect women's businesses. Women are still underrepresented in most boardrooms and these prejudices are also found in SMMEs. The current study has several limitations when it comes to sampling size, the participants' location, etc. The following are the recommendations for further research:

- Convenience sampling was used for this research and therefore might not be a true universal representation.
- The sample size was made up of 15 participants and is acceptable for a qualitative study. However, it would be beneficial to extend this to a bigger and more randomised sample.
- The research participants were concentrated in more developed cities like Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban. Extending the research and getting more understanding of experiences in less developed provinces like Limpopo and the Eastern Cape, would provide more insights for a larger-scale application.
- The findings highlighted a lack of confidence and constant need for training by these WO SMMEs. It would be beneficial for further studies to probe deeper into this and get a better understanding of these socio-psychological challenges.

- A comparative study against men-owned SMMEs usage of digital marketing for sales growth could provide validation and a benchmark for the findings.
- The study focused on perceived sales impact; an opportunity exists to investigate a more quantitative understanding of sales performance and variables at play for women-owned businesses

6.7 Conclusions

The study explored the use of digital marketing for sales growth in women-owned SMMEs. The findings from the study revealed the lived experiences of women business owners and their staff when it comes to digital marketing and showed that women-owned SMMEs do use digital marketing to drive awareness and create leads for their businesses. The study however highlighted the complex environment that women-owned businesses operate in, the challenges they face, and how these enterprises, despite all the challenges faced, continue looking for ways of driving their businesses forward. The importance of collaborations and networks was highlighted in the study, family and environmental influence came through strongly, and lastly, training and learning were other key aspects these SMMEs highlighted. Some of the challenges these businesses faced were having the right resources and skills, access to finance, feelings of not being treated fairly or equally to male counterparts, and a general lack of understanding and knowledge on how to truly leverage digital marketing to yield measurable results. The study further revealed that most business owners used digital marketing based on their personal usage and were not necessarily aware of or fully exploiting the big data and analytics which the tools generate on an ongoing basis. It was noted that these businesses have in some way been exposed to training, however, there was a finding of more training being required to get a better and more comprehensive understanding of digital marketing concepts.

This study revealed various interlinked and critical success factors that are needed to be in place to ensure that women-owned businesses are a force to be reckoned with in the South African economy. These could be both internal (inside

the SMME) and external (environment the SMME operates in) factors at play that are influencing women-owned business usage of digital marketing in South Africa. There is no single quick solution to ensuring that women-owned businesses in South Africa are fully leveraging digital marketing for sales growth but there is a need to develop multi-disciplinary interventions from different organisations and at different levels. This will ensure that these businesses grow, and future female entrepreneurs are developed from a well-established and supportive system to ensure that their businesses thrive.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Cover Letter

Dear Madam,

Re: Permission to conduct research.

My name is Pumza Mthethwa.

I am studying for a Masters in Digital Business at the Wits Business School at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am seeking permission to do research at [insert organisation name]. I am conducting research on the use of digital marketing for sales growth in women-owned SMMEs in South Africa. The importance of SMMEs in driving the economy cannot be disputed, more especially women-owned enterprises. The objective of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the usage of digital marketing tools and perceived sales growth in women-owned businesses. The world is advancing at a fast pace with use of digital tools being an integral part of running a successful business.

There are several challenges faced by SMMEs and this presents challenges when it comes to incorporating the latest digital tools needed to drive sales growth and ultimately business success and continuity. To further exacerbate the situation, the coronavirus pandemic has once again highlighted the rampant digital gender inequality. For example, according to Mastercard report, women are 43% less likely to engage on digital platforms and 14% less likely to own a mobile phone (Mastercard Index, 2020) . This contributes to the digital divide and puts women at a disadvantage in accessing and subsequent use of digital products.

The study will be performed amongst women business owners and women managers responsible for driving marketing efforts within the SMMEs. One on one interviews will be conducted within the select sample using an interview guide which will consist of both structured and semi-structured questions.

I would like to invite you or individuals from your organization responsible for marketing and business development to participate in this study. If they agree, they will be asked to answer interview questions. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes and the responses will be audio recorded.

Participants will be asked to give their written or verbal consent before the research begins. Their responses will be treated confidentially, and identities (their names and the name of the organisation) will be anonymous unless otherwise expressly indicated. Individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

The results will be communicated through the research dissertation.

The research participants will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. They will be reassured that they can withdraw their permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this study. The participants will not be paid for this study.

All research data will be destroyed.

I therefore request permission in writing to conduct my research at your organisation. The permission letter should be on your organisation's headed paper, signed and dated, and specifically referring to myself by name and the title of my study.

Please let me know if you require any further information. I look forward to your response as soon as is convenient.

Yours sincerely,

Pumza Mthethwa

083 256 7273

2454198@students.wits.ac.za

Dr. Jabulile Msimango - Galawe

076 477 2788

jabulile.galawe@wits.ac.za

Appendix B: Consent Form

Title of project: The use of digital marketing for sales growth in women-owned SMMEs in South Africa

Name of researcher Pumza Mthethwa

I,, agree to participate in this research project. The research has been explained to me and I understand what my participation will involve. I agree to the following:

(Please circle the relevant options below).

I agree that my participation will remain anonymous	YES	NO
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I agree that the researcher may use anonymous quotes in his / her research report	YES	NO
---	-----	----

I agree that the interview may be audio recorded YES NO

I agree that the information I provide may be used anonymously after this project has ended, for academic purposes by other researchers, subject to their own ethics clearance being obtained. YES NO

.....

..... (signature)

..... (name of participant)

..... (date)

P. Mthethwa (signature)

PUMZA MTHETHWA (name of person seeking consent)

01 December 2020 (date)

Appendix C: Interview Guide

Interview Guide – Business Owner/Manager responsible for digital marketing

Section A - Getting to know the respondent

1. Please tell me about your organisation, and the role you play within the business
2. Who handles your marketing campaigns?
3. What is your educational background?

Section B - To explore the use of digital marketing tools by women-owned SMMEs in South Africa.

1. What marketing activities does your company do (specific examples)?
2. What digital marketing activities do you do in your business/organisation? By digital marketing I mean do you run marketing efforts using digital tools e.g., Social Media Platforms, Google, Mobile, or any other
3. What process/planning approach do you follow in implementing your marketing activities?
4. Tell me about the tools/ platforms you use? (If yes)
 - a. Please expand more on the digital platforms you use which one do you prefer and why?
 - b. Please share on how satisfied you are with the frequency of the digital marketing activity you run
5. Understanding the organisational technical abilities and infrastructure (facilitating conditions)
 - a. Have you had any training?
 - b. Do you have the resources to run Digital Marketing?
 - c. Is your knowledge based on your personal social media use?
 - d. Do you use and understand the reporting and analytics tools on various digital platforms?

- e. How much effort do you feel Digital Marketing require from you?

Section C - To examine the perceived sales impact of properly leveraging and understanding digital marketing tools in WO businesses (Performance expectancy)

1. Based on your experience with running the marketing activities please tell me about any changes you might have picked up in sales
2. Is there any specific digital marketing tool would you say works well?
3. Which of the tools you have used did not result in sales growth?

Section D - To determine fundamentals that constrain women-owned SMMEs from leveraging digital marketing tools in their businesses. (Social Influence)

1. Looking back please share on any opportunities/limitations identified in your use of digital marketing tools for your business
2. How do you view your ability to manage and focus on digital marketing tools considering your other responsibilities e.g., family, time, funding/income?
3. Are there any advantaged/disadvantages you feel exists when it comes to your use of digital marketing tools?
4. Is there anything else you would like to share on your experience when it comes to marketing your business and what you think would assist in enhancing your efforts
5. What interventions would you say would assist you in your use of digital marketing tools?
6. What influenced use of Digital Marketing (trend, peers, etc.)

Appendix D: University Clearance Certificate



APPENDIX 2

UNIVERSITY CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE⁵

Name:.....Pumza Mthethwa.....candidate for the
degree of.....Master of Management in Digital Business.....
has today submitted her/his thesis/dissertation/research report/project for examination.

a) Has this thesis/dissertation/research report/project been submitted with the consent of the supervisor?

YES NO

b) To the best of your knowledge are you able to confirm that the candidate has acknowledged all information used in the thesis, dissertation or research report/project?

YES NO

c) To the best of your knowledge are you able to confirm that the candidate has not used any confidential information without the required permission in the thesis, dissertation or research report/project?

YES NO

If No, please provide an explanation in the supervisor's report.

d) Did the candidate's research involve any engagement with people, animals, or the environment?

YES NO

e) If Yes, did the candidate obtain ethical clearance by the relevant, approved ethics committee of the University before the research was conducted?

YES NO

f) If Yes, please state the ethics certificate number

WBS/DB2454198/899

(If No, the degree may not be awarded.)

Name of Supervisor.....Dr. Jabulile Msimango-Galawe.....
Signature of the Supervisor.....
Date.....