



**ONLINE MARKETING BY SMALL AND MEDIUM  
ENTERPRISES IN RETAIL INDUSTRY IN IRELAND**

**by**

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**MSc in International Business**

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## **Abstract**

The current study mainly highlights the importance and benefits of online marketing by the small and medium companies concerned with the retail industry. The study aims to evaluate the impact of online marketing on businesses and discusses how it benefits the companies. The study has provided relevant themes related to online marketing in small and medium companies in the retail industry in the literature review section. In the methodology section, the study has provided an insight of the methods that would be undertaken by the researcher in order to carry out the research effectively and arrive at a successful conclusion. The data analysis section has provided the responses of the participants regarding the current research topic.

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## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

### ***1.1 Introduction:***

Digital market is considered as the marketing approach and the use of the online source of marketing can help the businesses to get the effective marketing potentials that can support the SMEs to increase the sales volume and market share. It is considered as the cost-effective tool that can add the value and it has the positive influence on the small and medium enterprises as the business demands very less amount of money to reach out to the targeted customers. Through this, the enterprise can develop direct contact with the potential and current customers in the market. The study is focused on the online marketing done by the small and medium enterprises in the retail industry. The recent trend of marketing is entirely based on the ways of online marketing and sales rather than physical stores. The entrepreneurs use this way of marketing as this is considered as the fastest means of marketing that can be reached to the massive customer segment within a short span of time. In connection, online marketing highly attracts as well as engage the customers. The online media is highly broad concept that has changed the meaning of marketing in the present business scenario. The online marketing boosts up credibility of the business as it gets higher rank on the search engines whenever any customer clicks on the search engine. Therefore, the online marketing reaches to the targeted market in an effective way. On the other hand, online marketing support in building long-term relationship with the potential customers of the company and the customer's loyalty are also checked by means of various online review forms. Therefore, the research study deals with the advantages and disadvantages of using the online media of marketing by the small and medium industries in the retail sectors.

### ***1.1.1 Background of research:***

Based on the context of the current research topic, the impact of the online marketing over the customers of SMEs in the retail industry is said to be the important aspect related to the organization. The digital marketing can be said as an effective tool to promote some of the SMEs in the retail industry, which are competing against the popular and well recognized companies in the retail industry. The concept of digital marketing is to promote their newly launched products for the targeted customers, who are available in some of the shopping sites. It is quite a cost

effective way to reach out to the targeted customers. The main perception of the digital media network and other social media networks to promote their products. In recent times, the impact of the social media marketing is quite beneficial as financially and by other ways because SMEs are getting recognized through the digital marketing process because the companies got recognized in very short span of time. As most of the SMEs are investing money in their social media marketing, most people started visiting the website that helped to attract more customers. The digital media can help to identify the expert person in the market and they have the chance to change their ongoing campaigns. This benefit can help the research to gather the importance of digital marketing to grow their business. This purchasing behavior of the customers of SMEs of retail industries can also affect the results through the digital media marketing. Digital marketing can be considered as a marketing approach and with the help of the electronic devices, the customers can be focused to the digital world. The consumers can easily compare the products, services and different ways of marketing. Moreover, based on the reviews and

### ***1.1.2 Aim of the research:***

The main aim of the research is to analyze the impact of the online marketing by the SMEs in the retail industry. This marketing method can establish effective customer communication with the usage of the interesting content. The content can be used to attract the targeted customers. The research also aims to change the trends from the traditional to digital media marketing, as the customers are available in the social media networks more than the traditional media. Along with that, the research also aims to identify the benefits of the digital marketing in the society and an organization. It can help to manage the image of the brand in the social media platforms and it can help to develop the traffic of the website of the small and medium enterprises in the retail industry sector.

### ***1.1.3 Objectives of the research:***

- To identify the impact of online marketing by the small and medium enterprises in the retail industry
- To evaluate the impact of the online marketing to boost the sales of the products or services
- To explain the importance of the online marketing for SMEs
- To discuss about the challenges that SMEs face related to the online marketing
- To analyze the impact of the online marketing on the buying behavior of customers
- To find out various strategies and development processes of the digital marketing
- To develop marketing strategies utilized by SMEs

### ***1.1.4 Research questions:***

What is the impact of online marketing by the small and medium enterprises in the retail industry?

#### ***Sub questions:***

*What is the importance of the online marketing?*

*What is the effect of online marketing on SMEs in the retail sector?*

*What is the influence of online marketing on the buying behavior of consumers?*

*What are the recent online marketing strategies utilized by the small and medium enterprises?*

### ***1.2 Significance of the study:***

The techniques of online marketing can enable the business of the SMEs and it can be easily found on the channels that the customers are using most. It can help to enhance the growth of the organization or any types of brand through social media platforms or its online presence more than the traditional marketing. If the people investigate the options that appear first in the search results, therefore, the visibility can be gained online. The digital marketing can change the way

of business that is perceived by potential customers. Different marketing processes including the recent SEO, paid advertising and social media marketing involve the targeting process. It refers to reduce the focus of the efforts of the customers that can attract many audiences to their offered company. The current study can help the researcher to provide better concept of the information of the products and services regarding publishing the innovative contents in the social media. It can also be considered as the marketing strategy that is used by the researcher to share the relevant information about the services and products of the SMEs to achieve the marketing goals of the organization. It can help to reach out to thousands of customers in the cost effective ways. Along with that, the study can help to use the two-way communication technique to share the ample information to the targeted customers, who are using the social media networks.

### ***1.3 Rationale of the study:***

#### ***What is the issue?***

For the online marketing, the SMEs are facing challenges to keep up with the changes that are taking place rapidly and the SMEs cannot materialize the traffic in different websites. The companies cannot be able to use the content marketing in effective ways; therefore, this creates issue of the search engine for not providing demand for the content that is produced by the SMEs in the retail industry. The study aims to provide better understanding about the importance of the online marketing in small and medium retail companies.

#### ***Why it is an issue:***

In the online marketing, the search engine cannot be optimized perfectly, and it can be happened due to improper handling of the content advertising. The traffic cannot be materialized properly. However, in some cases, the organizations fail to use the wide range of tools related to the digital marketing and it can become difficult for the researcher to select the appropriate tool to gain the competitive advantage.

### ***Why is it an issue now?***

As the online advertising is important to gain the marketing goals in the organization, the SMEs can be failed to achieve success, overall marketing process can be hampered, and they cannot gain the competitive advantage.

### ***What could the research shed light on?***

In the context, the research mainly sheds light on the financial barriers and the shortage of the knowledge of using online tools and the lack of proper financial infrastructure can create a barrier to achieve the success in the firm.

The rationale of the research is to solve one specific problem during the digital media marketing in one of the small and medium enterprise in the retail industry. The authentic and relevant information related to the retail sectors and their products and services. It is quite important for the organization to focus on advertising through social media because it is quite cost effective and it can attract more customers by creating the brand awareness in the society. The implication of the research is mainly related to the digital media marketing to gather the attention of the customers regarding gathering data about the newly launched products or services.

## ***1.4 Summary***

This chapter is mainly concerned to understand the research questions and the goals of the current study. The main and effective concept of the current research is introduced by providing ideas regarding conducting the current study.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter reviews the theoretical framework along with the empirical literature related to the use of online marketing by SMEs in the retail industry. The aim of the chapter is to develop a profound understanding of the research issue with the utilization of the relevant models concerning the utilization of the online marketing and its impact on SMEs in the retail industry. The literature review will introduce the concept of online marketing, explain the importance of online marketing for SME, and introduce the main types of online marketing (Bocconcelliet *al.* 2017). It will also discuss about the benefits and challenges related with online marketing that the SME's of Ireland needs to face. This chapter will also emphasize on reviewing previous studies that are relevant in regards of the study.

### **2.2 Online marketing**

Online marketing is the integrated marketing services that are used to attract, engage as well as convert customers online (Suárez *et al.* 2016). Online marketing utilizes various kinds of channels with which the brand connects with the customers and are able to uncover performance of marketing programs in real-time. The concept of online marketing in the current context is very broad. This is because it brings various forms of marketing, operating with the help of different kinds of electronic devices. According to Centobelli *et al.* (2016), online marketing utilization serves the users by increasing traffic in the pages of the advertiser with the use of the tools like pay per click, banner advertisements, targeted emails, pop-ups a well as other means of marketing. The diverse tools and application of online marketing together with the latest technologies can attract the public every day. The value of the tools and techniques in terms of their application is not the same as it depends on their utilization solely (Rowleyand Keegan, 2017). The participants of the online meeting are benefited in one way or another. In the process of the internet networking the benefits are incurred by the organizations as well as the customers. For instance, the SMEs the retail industry gains through deriving monetary value, saving time as well as receiving attention of the customers. Whereas the customers get faster access to the information related to the products and services. According to Kingsnorth (2019), the online marketing has changed the market dramatically and provided power to the consumers

to reach the company in regards of contributing to the product. It also helps organizations of every type to reach a new level of communication with the customers and supports in building effective customer relationship by making it simpler and convenient. According to Khoo *et al.* (2015), 75% of the total marketing budget of the organization will be dedicated to digital marketing. Three-fourths of the budget will be spent on digital marketing over the traditional ones. In the current context the marketers keep around 62% of the budget on online marketing and will increase more in the next 10 years period.

### **2.3 Types of online marketing**

There are different forms of online marketing that are utilized by the SMEs in the retail sector that helps them to grow and develop their business -

- Email marketing is considered to be one of the digital marketing techniques that involve targeted and personalized messages sent to the specific customers at the right time (Scuotto *et al.* 2017). The emails are sent to the customers of the business in order to meet the requirements of the users and provide them with information about the products and services.
- Content marketing another form of online marketing which is utilized by the retail industry SMEs in order to establish durable customer communication with the usage of the interesting and inspiring content (Shaltoni *et al.* 2018). The content is utilized to attract the targeted customers.
- Search Engine Optimization is a general type of online marketing that is used in order to increase visibility of the website of the SMEs in regards of the search engines (Aininet *al.* 2015). Various kinds of techniques are involved with this process that includes on-site technical analysis as well improvement, content creation, and link-building as well as blogging.
- Social media is another form that helps to manage the image of the brand in the platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn etc (Mathew *set al.* 2016). This form is evaluated to be very popular and effective in attracting the customers.
- Online advertising is considered to be a process of marketing of the product and services on the different kinds of websites. This helps in increasing traffic of the website of the SMEs of the retail industry

## **2.4 Importance of online marketing**

According to Mitchell *et al.* (2016), the use of the online marketing helps any kind of organization to incur growth and development. Online marketing provides better visibility to the business. In the current context a well-rounded online marketing strategy plays a crucial role in gaining success in the market. Tactics of online marketing like Search Engine Optimization helps the business to be more visible on the platforms that are used by the targeted customers more often. The result that appears first in regards of the search outcome is preferred by the people and they tend to investigate about that. It is also elated that 93% of online experiences are considered to begin with the search engine and in this context 47% of people click on the first three results of the search list. It also changes the perception of the customers about the business (Suárez *et al.* 2016). This is because online marketing boosts the credibility of the business as it gets high rank in the search engine with the reputed industry authorities. The online marketing is also considered to be important due to the fact that it helps in targeting the customers in a more effective way. With the utilization of social media marketing well as paid advertisement the focus is more narrowed down only to the customers who will be more interested on the products and services provided by the SMEs of the retail industry. Another importance is that it supports in building the long-term relationship with the customers and the business is able to earn loyal customers and repeat sales. It is evaluated that less than 8% of the total product sales that are related with the B2B of the SMEs in the retail industry are closed directly with the use on the internet. The top two digital marketing priorities of the SMEs are considered to driving sales that is 51.3% and building brand awareness that is up to 48.4% (Dahl, 2018).

## **2.5 Digital marketing theories**

The digital marketing theories are analysed to use scientific approach in order to explain the purchasing behaviours and attitudes of the consumers. The information gathered from the application of theories provides guidance to the business to take decisions related with the best ways of communicating the products and services to the customers. Following are the digital marketing theories that help SMEs in the retail industry to analyse the channels in an effective way -

### **Network theory**

This theory studies the relationship of all minds that relate to the people, things or animals. This is considered to be overlapping tool that helps in learning about the pattern that develops within the social networks and the ways that it influences the customer behaviours. The digital marketing channels are important in regards of the theory as it allows the companies to listen as well as understand the requirements and needs of the customers (Karimi and Naghibi, 2015). This enables to take advantage in regards of the power of the influential users in order to spread the messages on the other individuals within the network. The network theory considers the social relationships on the basis of nodes and ties. The nodes are elated to be the players within the network and the ties are the relationship that exists between the players. The theory helps to outline the relevant ties and helps to determine the social capital of individual player. The theory analysed to be very beneficial for SMEs in the retail industry it supports in maximizing the networks that is the customers.

### **Theory of collective intelligence**

Collective intelligence considered to be a process where the large numbers of individuals converges simultaneously in the context of the same point of knowledge and they also achieves intellectual performance at the same time. According to the theory the group is considered to be smarter as well as productive in comparison to the sum of the individuals. One of the internet phenomena that are evaluated to have collective intelligence at its root is crowd sourcing. This is a phenomenon in which the project is segregated into small and individual tasks (Ha *et al.* 2016). The tasks are then distributed to the large number of individuals in regard to its completion. Crowd sourcing is utilized by the companies in order to engage the customers and make then participate in their campaign or other activities. Another phenomenon is evaluated to be openness that is essential for collective intelligence to work efficiently and with full potential. This requires the business to be present as well as candid in regard of their ideas on the internet that helps to improve the products and services.

### **Generational theory**

This theory focuses on the factors that the ear in which an individual was born also has an impact on their perception of the world. It highlights the suspect that the value system of the individual

is shaped in the formative years of their life through various sources that includes family, friends, significant events as well as commitments. Generational theory indicates that the customers born in the same era that is considered to be 20 year of period are analysed to have similar kinds of attitudes and behaviours. The attitude and behaviour are shaped in regards of the experiences they had in their childhood which moulded their view about the world. According to Donnelly *et al.* (2015), this theory is analysed to be relevant to digital marketing as it is based on the factors related to the ways the current generation communicates and the online places where the marketers can access them.

## **2.6 Impact of online marketing on SMEs of retail sector**

The SMEs in the retail industry have seen exponential growth over the last decade. In this context digital marketing has played an important role. According to Dahl, (2018), online marketing is an excellent that help to promote the SMEs that are competing with the business brands and houses that are well established in the retail industry. The use of the online sources of marketing helps the businesses to find flexible marketing potentials that supports in increasing the sales volume. The online marketing is considered to be cost effective that adds to its value and has a positive impact on the SMEs as the business requires less budget to reach out to target potentials as well as establish direct contact with the potential and current customers in the market. The impact of the online marketing is evaluated to be beneficial as it helps SMEs in the retail industry in getting recognized in less amount of time. According to Mitchell *et al.* (2016), 96% of the small and medium businesses are investing in social media marketing. This has helped the SMEs in increasing exposure for their business and 75% have increased their traffic in the websites that helped to attract the customers. The digital marketing also helps to meet the experts of the market. This helps them to know about the development of the market and update their skills and resources accordingly. It is also effective in regards of making changes in their ongoing campaigns in accordance to the changes in the market. This freedom is incurred using the digital marketing and the SMEs in the retail industry achieve the benefits.

## **2.7 Impact of online marketing on consumer buying behaviour**

The online marketing and especially social media marketing are evaluated to change the consumer behaviour and marketing drastically. The behaviour of the consumers is analysed to play an important role for the success of the business. From the previous studies it has been analysed that online marketing is affecting the consumer purchase behaviour as well as decision (Nuseir, 2018). Millions of people are exposed to digital and social media marketing that is motivating their buying habits. The consumers are adapting to the rubric of online marketing in a quicker pace. The digital marketing and the rise of the use of the internet has provided a new channel to the consumers as well as the brands to connect. This also provided consumers with more choices, power and influences. The combination of functionality and information of the products and services are utilized by the markets to influence the consumer decisions (Abed *et al.* 2015). Digital marketing is considered to reach new heights with the boom of the use of smart phones and other electronic devices that makes people stuck with the online world. However, it also provided the consumer the power to set their own benchmark. The consumers can easily compare different companies based on their products and services and the ways of marketing. Word of mouth is an important tool in regards of advertisement. In the digital world the word of mouth is the reviews of the experts and the users of the product and service. This also influences the perspective of other consumers in terms of buying decision. Another impact of digital marketing is that the tolerance level of the consumers has reduced to a great extent. This is because the consumers in the current context want response to the queries and complaints in more clear and fast manner. With digital marketing the consumers are welcoming new products in more effective way (Dutotand Bergeron, 2016). The impact of digital marketing in creating awareness helps the consumers to welcome the new products in easier way and increases the experimenting behaviour of the customers.

## **2.8 Recent strategies and development of the digital marketing**

According to Foroudi *et al.* (2017), online marketing provides enormous amounts of possibilities to the SMEs in the retail industry. It is an evolving world that requires constant development of strategies. The strategies and development of the digital marketing are required to attract the customers in an efficient manner. This important on the part of the SMEs in the retail industry to

emphasize on the online marketing strategies as 71% of the consumers are likely to purchase from the brands they are following on the online platform (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2019). The research also shows that online marketing 3 times more leads than traditional marketing and costs 62% less. The SMEs are adopting the strategies like personalized digital marketing that is effective in improving the click through rates by 14% and the conversion rates by 10%. In this context the companies related to the retail industry are focusing on establishing online department. This helps in increasing the web presence of SMEs in the retail industry. It helps in remaining updated as well as provides opportunities and ways to reach maximum number of customers in the online world that is continuously developing (Chaney *et al.* 2017). The SMEs in this regard are emphasizing on the strategy of creating a clearly defined brand that will support in representing the values and strengths of the SMEs in the retail industry. The strategies adopted to increase the online presence helps in developing the results of digital marketing that in turn supports in the growth of SMEs in the effective manner.

## **2.9 Challenges faced by the SMEs of retail sector on using online marketing**

Digital marketing for SMEs is considered to be uncharted territory for various companies. With the evolving technology the old maps are required to be withdrawn in order to take advantage of the opportunities the retail market in an effective way. From the previous literature it has been evaluate that the SNEs in the current context are facing challenges when it comes to online marketing also struggle to keep up with the changes happening is rapid pace. According to Mitchell *et al.* (2015), the SMEs in the retail industry must face the challenge of bringing traffic as well as new leads. The biggest challenge in this context is analysed to be the struggle of watching the traffic in their website to materialize. The SMEs are not been able to use the content marketing in the proper way. This creates the issue of the search engine not providing enough demand for the content that is produced by the SMEs in the retail industry. The SMEs are also not been able to track the ROI against the spending on digital marketing. The issue of not being able to get a concrete way of proving the ROI for the digital marketing activities is making them lose the opportunity to know which activities are effective in producing the maximum returns and which activities are required to be tweaked. The SMEs are also facing the challenge of choosing from the wide range of tools and options related to digital marketing. It becomes difficult for them to select the appropriate tool to gain the maximum benefit (Kotler *et*

*al.* 2015). This is because of lack of knowledge of the dynamic world of marketing. The lack of knowledge creates the challenge of using the online tools in the effective and efficient way. The SMEs also need to face the challenge of financial barrier. The lack of proper financial infrastructure creates challenge of ensuring proper implementation and up gradation in adopting the proper digital marketing tools.

### **2.10 Current Online marketing strategies utilized by the SMEs**

In today's digital world the SMEs in the retail industry has more marketing options then they had before. The factors like social media platforms as well as low barriers to entry provide massive opportunities to the SMEs. However, it has also increased the complexity in regards of maintaining more channels. The current online strategy of the SMEs in the retail industry needs to be utilizing the analytical data in order to understand the value related to different channels on digital marketing (Makhitha, 2016). The analytical data are also used to evaluate the models for understanding the source of the revenue generation. This current strategy helps SMEs in the retail industry to make decisions regarding investing their resources in the digital marketing tools in order to develop in an efficient way. In the current context 94% of the SMEs conduct online research before making any decision related to the retail business (Soto-Acosta *et al.* 2017). Evaluating the marketing channels in the appropriate ways is another online strategy that helps in targeting their resources and benchmarking their efforts regarding the rest of the sector. It is analysed that about 70% of the SMEs in the retail industry have website set up that is considered to be an online strategy. Social media marketing and digital advertising are preferred next and considered to be the most common form of digital marketing strategy.

### **2.11 Future prospect of digital marketing in business**

There various kinds of future scope for digital marketing that can be utilized to gain advantage in the market. The artificial intelligence will step up that will help in generating more benefits from the paid media. By 2020, it is estimated that 86% of the digital display of advertisements will be initiated by using automation (Ocloo *et al.* 2018). The shift towards AI is evaluated to provide more efficient, effective as well as accurate approach in regards of the paid media. It will also help in lowering the customer acquisition cost. The evolution of the big data and the availability

of information of the customers will help in creating personalizing content that will help in improving the customer relationship. The personalization of the content will help providing customer satisfaction and loyalty as the contents all reflect the preferences of the customers. In the future the customized personalized will dominate the market. The customer centric approach with the help of data insights will support in understanding the needs and expectations of the consumers in a better way (Campaniaris *et al.* 2015). This will help n stargazing for digital marketing. Influencer marketing is another form of digital marketing that is gaining popularity in rapid pace. This can be utilized by the SMEs of the retail industry in order to make the consumers trust their brand. This type of marketing will be effective as the consumers get easily influenced if they hear positive feedback and information about the products from expertise. This holds more credibility and helps in influencing the customers in an effective way. In the digital marketing landscape, the customers are being put on the forefront in regard of the strategy. With the utilization of AI, big data as well as innovative technology the SMEs of the retail industry will be able to communicate with the customers in a more efficient way. The key trends in the future will be the ways in which the brand will position themselves with the utilization of visually engaging, speech accessible and conversational content (Atanassova and Clark, 2015).

## **2.12 Empirical studies and findings**

The empirical studies outline similar studies that are related with the previous literature on the subject matter. According to the study of Stankovska *et al.* (2016), social media marketing plays an important role in SMEs in the retail sector. The study for the research utilized exploratory research in order to identify the tools and techniques related to social media that are incorporated by the SMEs in the retail sector with the purpose of retaining and acquiring customers in an effective way. The study has used judgmental sampling in order to gather data and information from sample size of 50 SMEs. The literature indicates that adopting social media marketing helps in creating a strong impact on brand trust and awareness. This helps in influencing comes in an effective way. The study articulated on evaluating the usage of digital channels that are utilized by the UK SMEs as well as assess the impact caused on their strategic position in the market. The study evaluated that the SMEs in the current context using high level of digital media technology. The research findings focused on the aspect that the use of the digital

technology for marketing supports the SMEs by bringing them close to the large corporations in regards to the global market.

Another study emphasized on the impact of various types of digital marketing tools that helps in increasing the sales of the SMEs products in the retail industry. The study in this context used the process of examining the primary data collected from 50 managers of the SMEs. The sample size was selected readily in order to determine the effectiveness of digital marketing (Schu, 2017). The data that was gathered as evaluated using correlation tests that is a statistical tool. The research emphasized on the aspect that sales increase and digital marketing has positive relationship. This is because the tools and techniques associated with digital marketing helps in optimizing the sales of the SMEs in the retail industry in an effective way. This study also focused on evaluating the impact of online retailing and its effect on the growth of the organizations. In this contemplation the study in order to understand the implications related to retailing in online market in an effective way analyzed the tools and techniques of online marketing. The study has evaluated the factors that online marketing and retailing are associated as both helps in the development and growth of any business. In order to adopt effective online retailing and marketing strategies, it is important on the part of the management of the organizations to focus on researching about the market as it will help in strategizing efficiently.

According to Jinand Hurd, (2018), social media marketing affects the performance of the small-scale businesses. In this context the researchers developed questionnaire to conduct a survey of the managers and employees of the SMEs. For the particular study descriptive statistics as well as correlation tests were incorporated. The result of the study portrayed that networking and relationship establishments helps in promoting the products and services of the SMEs in the proper way. The previous literatures focused on evaluating the use of the tools and techniques on online marketing in the context of Small and Medium Enterprises of retail sector in the global market. However, each paper did not emphasize on increasing the sales for the institutions related to the sector. It also emphasized on analysing the aspect of relationship building with the customers. The study mainly articulated on the entry strategy through the digital platforms to enter the global market. The study also focused on analyzing the impact of the digital platforms on the SMEs of the New Zealand emphasizing on entering the market of China. With the evaluation of study derived the result that digital platforms are efficient in context of easing the

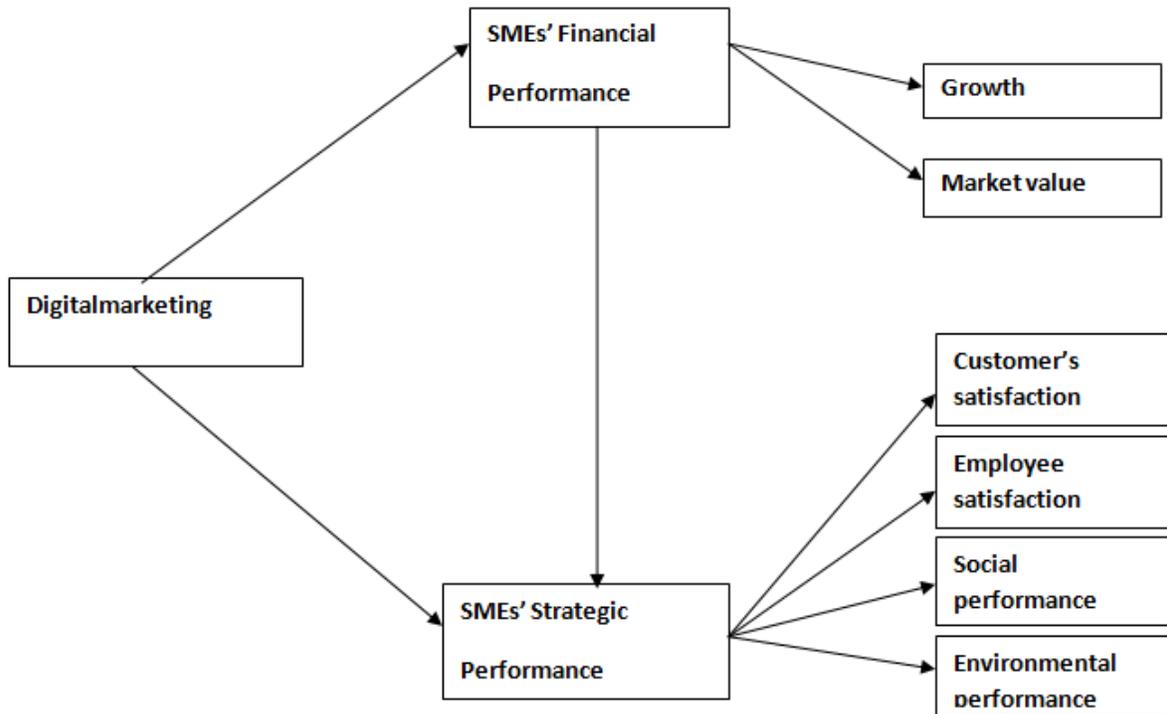
entry barriers to some extent. It mainly supports in facilitating access to networks as well as helps in overcoming resource constraints.

Evaluation of the literatures related to the topic helped to understand the areas where the authors have emphasized to evaluate the subject matter. It also helped in the context of understanding the importance of online marketing in the context of enhancing the performance of the SMEs with the strategies that supports in developing the organizations. It also helped in discovering the areas where more focus is required in terms of research to evaluate the aspects in better way.

### **2.13 Gaps in the literature**

**From the analysis of the previous literature in relevance with the topic it can be analysed that the researchers have emphasized more on the benefits of the utilization of online marketing. It is evaluated that hardly researchers emphasize on the challenges that the SMEs in the retail market faces in terms of adopting the tools and techniques in the most efficient way (O'Connor and Kelly, 2017). This area has wide scope of future research in terms that is required to be addressed. The particular research has emphasized on evaluating the challenges related the use of online marketing tools in the effective manner. This will help to achieve the aims and objectives of the study as evaluating the challenges and benefits of online marketing in regards of the SMEs in the Irish retail market is the purpose of the research. This paper will help the future researchers to explore the area in more extensive way as all the aspects related to online marketing in the Small and Medium Enterprises are evaluated in this study.**

## 2.14 Conceptual framework



With the discussion in this chapter it can be evaluated that online marketing has direct impact on the performance of SMEs in the retail industry in Ireland. The conceptual framework of this particular study focuses on the evaluation of the performance is considered to be a measurement of the effectiveness and efficiencies of the actions adopted by the SMEs in regards to online marketing. The indicators of effectiveness of the activities are divided into two segments that is financial strategies and financial performance. The indicators related to both the segment helps to understand the effectiveness of the online strategies adopted by the SMEs in the retail industry. The indicators include profitability, growth, market value, satisfaction of the customers, satisfaction of the employees, social performance as well as environmental performance of the firms.

### **2.15 Summary**

After reviewing the various existing literature, it is very clear to highlight the aspect that online marketing in the current context is a boom for the SMEs. It is important on the part of the SMEs in the retail industry to adopt proper approaches and strategies order to incur the maximum benefits (Caniëls *et al.* 2015). However, it is also essential to focus on the challenges in order to reduce the disadvantages in an effective way.

## **Chapter 3 Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

For completing the research, it is important to choose an appropriate methodology with a prospect of guiding the pursuit towards a desired path. Methodology is defined as analytical tools that are employed in order to usher underlying pursuit related to the desired horizon. It is imperative to illustrate as well as introduce methodology appropriate in regards of establishing the essence with which the data and information related to the topic of the research has been approached. For the current research the major components of the methodological apparatus research philosophy, research approach as well as research design, has been highlighted in order to lead the research in the appropriate way. Apart from that the method of sampling, data collection and analysis techniques are also discussed and illustrated with the purpose of providing a brief account of the potential respondents and participants related with the study.

### **3.2 Research question**

The chapter has incorporated the research questions developed on the areas of concern, extracted from the problem statement. Moreover, research question refers to the questions that the research has answered throughout the entire study. The main research question is as follows:

1. What are the ways in which the online marketing strategies support the Irish SMEs in the current context in regards of gaining competitive advantage in the retail market?

Concerning the above research question, the sub-questions are:

1. What are the key issues in the online marketing practices of SMEs in Irish retail?
2. Is the digital marketing strategies in Irish retail SMEs apt to develop a wider customer volume?
3. What are the current marketing policies the companies are possessing to address the issues identified?
4. How could the digital marketing policies be improved through developing policies and procedures?

### **3.4 Philosophy of the research**

Research philosophy is considered to be the essence of a study. Research philosophy helps to illustrate the purpose of the study by discussing about the approach that has been adopted to address the information. Research philosophy is also categorized as the guideline to search for the data and information that are embedded with the empirical declaration related with the topic of the study (Huff, 2017). In regards of the academically practices that are considered to be deemed, there are various kinds of research philosophies that are utilized with the purpose of providing the research the right path to reach the desired destination and incur the expected result. The pragmatism philosophy has been selected for the study as it accepts the concepts in accordance to its relevance of supporting the actions in proper manner. This type of philosophy recognizes the aspect that there are various and different kinds of ways to interpret the world as well as undertake the research. It focuses on the factor that only particular point of view cannot help the researcher to evaluate the entire picture it believes on the aspect that there are multiple realities that also needs to be analyzed in an appropriate manner. For conducting the study in coherent manner, the researcher has selected the pragmatism.

#### **3.4.1 Justification for selecting the philosophy**

Pragmatic philosophy is considered to be effective for the particular research as it treats knowledge, value as well as concepts related to the subject matter only if it is true. It will help the researcher to deduce the result as the philosophy emphasizes on the practical function of the knowledge as an instrument that helps the researcher to adapt to the reality and control it (Pheby, 2015). It also helps the researcher to adopt a relative approach that supports in modifying the truth related to the research as discoveries that are associated in regards of time and place. The selected philosophy supports the researcher in deriving timeless abstract truth. The selected philosophy is supportive in obtaining materials methods needed in the context of building the base of the research.

### **3.5 Research approach**

Research approach is determined to be the planning of the procedure that includes the stages that helps in evaluating the assumptions related to the data collection methods. Research approach is

also considered to be the reasoning of the method that is incorporated with the prospect of proceeding with the work of the research (Katz, 2015).

For the current study the researcher has selected quantitative research approach. This research approach is considered to be effective in the context of collecting data and information in proper way that supports in the completion of the study. The adopted approach will be effective in regards of collecting data from knowledgeable source.

### **3.5.1 Justification for selecting the research approach**

The researcher has selected the quantitative research approach in order to gather more informative information that is in accordance to the aim and objective of the study. The selected approach helps in (Flick, 2015) gathering reliable and valid data from valid and authentic sources. The researcher opted for a quantitative research approach as it allows broader scope for study and also supports in involving greater number of subjects that helps in generalization of the results. The researcher has elected this approach as it employs procedures that will help to evaluate the data collected from the owners of the SMEs of Irish retail sector that helps to ensure validity and reliability. The quantitative research helps the researcher in the context of summarizing the vast sources of information gathered from the owners.

### **3.6 Design of the research**

The facet of the research design is considered to be the cumulative method of pounding a definite layout that is related with the areas of the research study. It is also important to note that the components associated with the research design emphasizes on constituting the initial methods. The methods initiated are later used by the researcher with the prospect of two measuring, collecting and analysing the data and information (Bresler and Stake, 2017). There are three types of research design that includes Exploratory, Explanatory as well as Descriptive. The exploratory research design is considered to be the exploration of the research questions. On the other hand, explanatory research design emphasizes on providing a better version of the research models. The descriptive research design for this particular research the researcher has selected the exploratory research design that will help in integrating the factors associated with the study in a coherent manner.

### **3.6.1 Justification for selecting the research design**

The selected research design attempts to lay the groundwork that helps in leading the research in the future. The application of the research design helps the researcher to draw definite conclusions with extreme caution. It helps to understand the subject matter in a more detailed way. It also helps in evaluating the factors associated with the research question and increases the usefulness of the result of the study (Brown and Rhoades, 2019). The objective of selecting the research design is to gather preliminary information that will help in defining the rest problems in an effective way. This research design type is helpful in addressing different types of research question. This helps in evaluating the factors associated with the research questions in effective way. This also helps in deriving the desired result for the study.

### **3.7 Data collection method**

The most important component of the examination process is determined to be information and data. There are various kinds of systems that supports in the context of collecting information and data in order to complete the research in the effective and appropriate manner.

#### **3.7.1 Justification for selecting the data collection method**

The survey method is selected for data collection for the current research. The survey is considered to be a standard tool for empirical research. Survey is evaluated to be providing a broad range of data. With the help of the statistical techniques, analysis of the survey helps to determine the reliability, validity as well as statistical significance (Kaplan, 2017). The method also has the ability to analyse multiple variables in the effective manner. The survey will be conducted with the help of the designed questionnaire. For the current research the primary data collection technique has been selected in order to complete the research in coherent manner. In this regards quantitative data analysis plan have been adopted that incorporates mathematical calculations that are based on the rationale of the research. The data analysing techniques is vital for the research in order to get the proper result.

### **3.8 Data collection tool**

For the particular study the researcher has opted the quantitative data collection tool that is questionnaire. The questionnaire comprises close ended questions and the responses are evaluated with the application of statistical analysis (Mackey and Gass, 2015). The derived data from the responses of the survey will be quantified with the employment of Likert's scale method. Different variables were provided to the respondents that ranged from strongly agree to disagree.

#### **3.8.1 Justification for selecting the data collection tool**

The selected tool that is questionnaire is designed in accordance to the research aims and objectives as well as research issue. It is considered to be effective in regards of the study as it helps in addressing all the areas of the study and collected reliable and vital information and data for the study. The selected tool is considered to be beneficial for the current study as the selected sample size can be reached in relatively easy and economical way. The researcher will be able to collect the data in the limited budget for the study. It is also helpless it provides quantifiable answers in accordance to the research topic and issues.

### **3.9 Method of sampling**

Sampling technique is considered to be the method that is embraced in order to distinguish in regards of the flux of the population. In this contemplation for academic research the researcher relies on two main kinds of sampling techniques that are determined to be academically deemed. The sampling techniques are the probability and non-probability sampling techniques. There are different types of methods associated with the two types of sampling technique. The probability sampling technique includes the random sampling technique, systematic sampling technique and stratified sampling technique (Kumar, 2019). The non-probability sampling technique includes convenience sampling as well as purposive sampling technique. The researcher of the study has selected purposive sampling technique as it creates the opportunity to generalize from the selected sample that is the owners of the Irish SMEs in the retail sector. The process of this sampling technique is adaptive to changing circumstances. It is also helpful in regards to

maintaining the foundation of a singular focal point. The researcher has collected the sampling technique because it involves a shared set of characteristics. It helps the researcher to know the impact of online marketing on the business off the SMEs in the Irish retail market.

### **3.10 Sample size**

Population is determined to be the entire involvement of the people in regard to the research. In this context the owners of SMEs in the retail industry of Ireland is the population for the research. In this regards the sample size is selected on the basis of the purposive sampling method. In order to analyse the data and information that is collected, it is not possible to involve the entire population. In this contemplation it is necessary to select a sample size. For the current research the sample size will be 150 owners of the SME business in the retail industry. The sample size is the number of respondents who participated in the survey. In accordance to the feasibility of the customers of the SMEs in the retail market of Ireland the sample size is selected for the research.

### **3.11 Ethical consideration**

The researcher with the purpose of conducting the research in proper manner needs to make sure that the study is ethically maintained. In this context the researcher needs to follow the NCI ethical guidelines that include minimizing the harm of any kind of risk, obtaining informed consent, protecting confidentiality and anonymity, avoiding practices that are deceptive as well as providing the right to withdraw from the survey (Kumar, 2019). The researcher needs to emphasize on adhering to the regulations related to the Data Protection Act of 1998. Following the regulations are important in regards of gathering the data and information for the research work. This helps in ensuring that the personal information of the respondents is kept confidential and in a safe manner. The researcher also emphasised on the aspect that the respondents are not forced in any way to share any kind of data and information against their consent and will. In this regard the researcher has provided the respondents with a consent form and took their signature on them that portrayed that they are willingly participating in the survey. The researcher also ensured to behave properly with the respondents in order to gather the relevant and valid data (Weber, 2017). The good behaviour of the researcher also made the respondents conformable

that made the process more convenient and easier. The researcher is also aware of the fact that the information and data collected in the process of the research can solely be used for academic purposes. The research needs to make sure that the information collected is not utilized for any kind of official or non-official work. The data used are also needs to be completely natural and not prejudiced or manipulated in any way. The research will also maintain the aspect that personal questions are not asked to the respondents of the survey. If the respondents feel uncomfortable, they are free to stop the survey and in this context the freedom is required to be provided to them.

### **3.12 Summary**

The discussion associated with the research methodology provides detailed understanding about the methods that are involved with the condition of this particular research. This chapter has emphasised on explaining the factors associated with the adopted methodology in the proper manner that will help in the progression of the next chapter of the study in an effective and efficient manner.

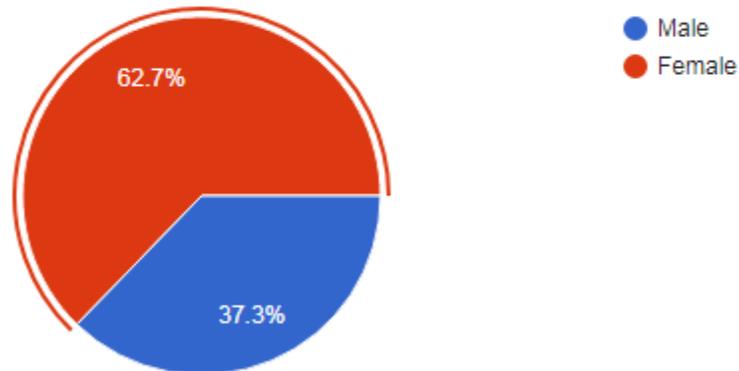
## **Chapter 4 Data Analysis**

This chapter is considered to be an essential part of study as it helps to gather first-hand data directly from the selected respondents. The researcher has conducted online survey by using the questionnaire tool that was sent through email with the customers of the SMEs in the Irish retail industry. The researcher has collected 155 customers buying products for these SMEs in order to understand the effect of online marketing on their buying behaviour as well as their experience in regards to that. Deduced that have been analysed using mathematical as well as statistical method that also has been represented through charts.

## DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:

### Tick your gender

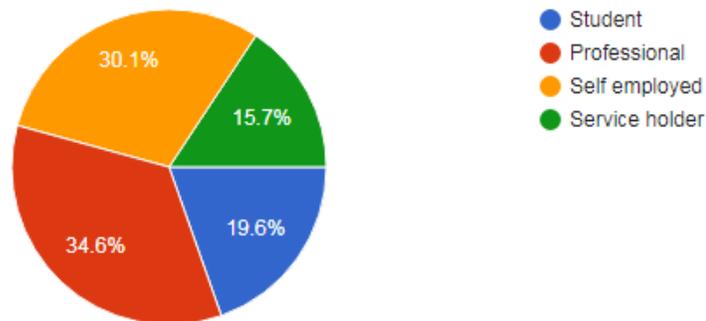
153 responses



The above chart represents the ratio of the female and male customers associated with the SMEs of the Irish retail sector in the current context. As per the result generated in the above chart it can be attributed that the male customers are more associated with the SMEs of Irish retail sector and also keen to take part in the procedure of the survey in comparison to the female customers. It is due to the aspect that around 62% of the total participants were male as in regards of that only around 37% of female customers took part in the process.

## What is your occupation?

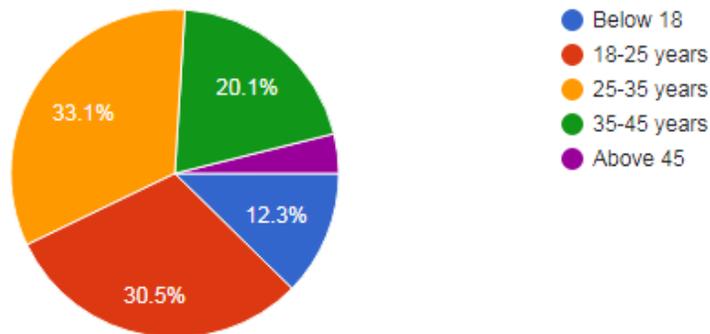
153 responses



The responses that have been gained through the development of the survey in the context of the above chart associated with the occupation of the respondents. It has been analysed from the above chart that around 35% and around 30% are self-employed. The researcher has also selected respondents who are service holders and students and they are around 16% and 19% respectively. The above chart shows that people of different occupations like to buy products from SMEs of the retail sector rather than the larger organizations. From the above generated chart it can be analysed that mostly professional has been chosen for the survey in regards of their high buying power. The researcher has selected respondents from different occupation that helped in regards of collecting data from different sectors. This is considered to be very beneficial for the research as respondents from different occupation helps in gathering data of varied kind that helps in understanding various aspects of the subject matter in an effective way.

Tick the appropriate age group you belong to.

154 responses

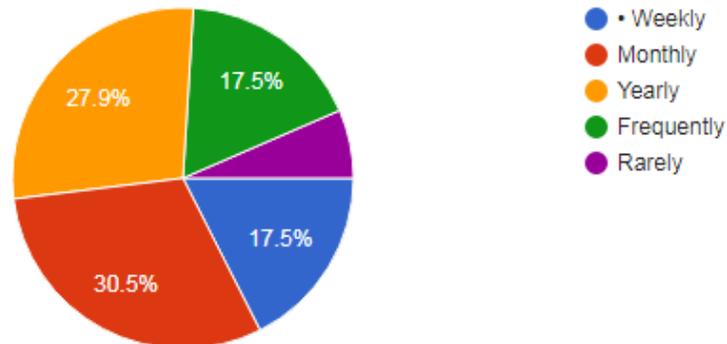


This particular chart reveals the age group of the respondents involved in the survey, it has been evaluated from the above chart that majority of the respondents belong to the age group of 25 to 35 years that is analysed to be 33%. Further 30 % of the respondents who participated in the survey are observed to be belonging to the age group of 18 to 25 years. 20% belongs to the age group of 35 to 45 years and around 12 % belongs to the age group below 18 respectively. Thus the above chart and analysis of the results indicates that majority of the respondents belongs to the lower age groups. However the researcher has emphasised on the aspect that respondent from each group are involved in the process of the survey that helps in the context of gathering different kinds of data based on their ideas, behaviour as well as perspectives.

## MAIN QUESTIONS:

### How frequently do you purchase from retail shops?

154 responses



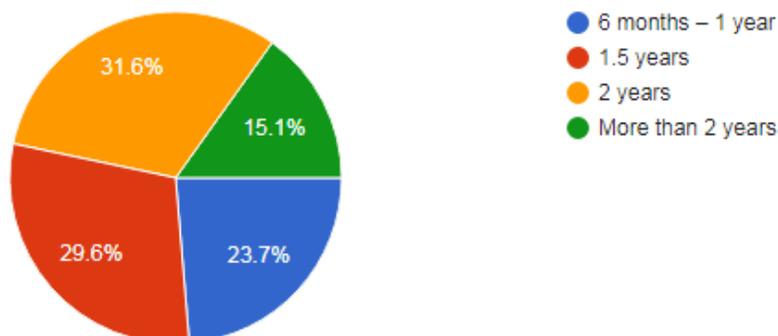
The responses that have been gained through the development of the survey have been evaluated to be liable to ensure to analyse the interests of the consumers in regard to their online shopping frequency. This helped to analyse the inclination of the customers towards the online stores of the SMEs in the Irish retail sector in an effective way. In regards to the responses to the particular question it has been determined that the frequency of the buying the products are mostly on monthly or yearly basis that is represented in the above given chart as 30% and around 28%. The difference in the result of both the option is just around 2% that shows that people like to buy the products online on monthly as well as yearly basis. Rom the above table it has also been evaluated that the frequency of purchasing through the online medium for about 2 years to more than 2 years is minimal.

From the above table it can be attributed that people in the present era are more inclined towards purchasing the products online and not just from the larger brands. This is due to the fact that the respondents are also buying products from the SMEs belonging to the retail industry in Ireland. This shows that the SMEs incur positive result by entering the online world as it helps to grow hair business. It has also been analysed that the increase of the online purchase by the customers

also helps to understand the aspect that online business provides new channel of business for SMEs in the effective manner. The inclination of the consumers towards online business is not only beneficial in regards to increasing the revenue but it also helps in increasing brand awareness among the consumers. Online presence in the current time is considered to be an essential factor for the business. Thus, the SMEs in the retail sector of Ireland need to emphasize on developing their websites that will help them to attract more customers and retain the existing ones. From the analysis it is clear that not only larger organization but SMEs also needs to be actively participating in the online business in order to gain more customer base.

### How many years are purchasing from online stores?

152 responses

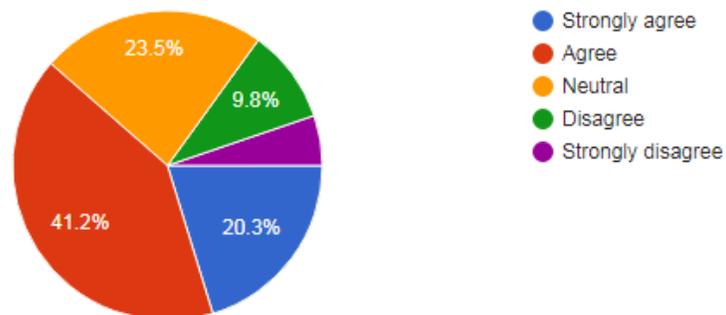


The above chart emphasis on evaluating the duration the respondents are involved with online purchase. From the results generated it can be attributed that most of respondents that is around 32% are associated with online shopping for around 2 years. Around 26% of the respondents are purchasing products online for the past 1.5 years and around 15% for more than 2 years. It has also been elected that around 24% have newly got attracted towards online purchasing as they are associated with the platform for only 6 months to 1 year. From the above chart it can be analysed that the people in the current context are highly influenced in regards of online shipping. The people are getting attracted towards the form of shopping in faster pace and the

online market is increasing or even for the SMEs. In this contemplation it is highly important for SMEs in the retail sector of Ireland to provide better online shopping experience to the customers in order to retain them. This will also help in making them increase their expansion of business and attract new customers.

### Do you agree that small retailers online in Ireland have the capability to satisfy you?

153 responses



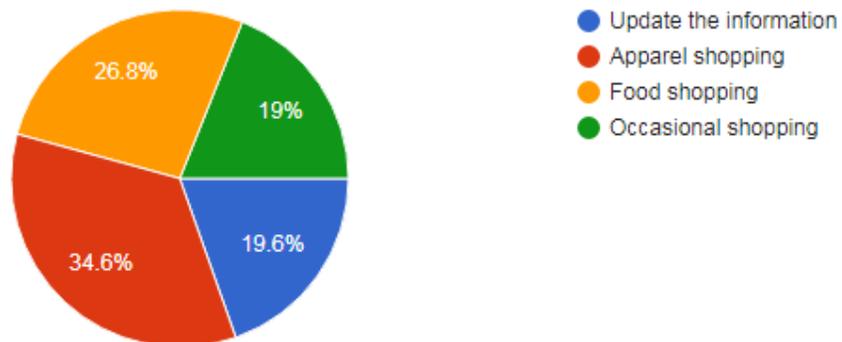
This particular research question has stressed on depicting the stances related to perspective and thoughts of the consumers in regards to the small retailers. The researcher through this question focused on understanding the satisfaction level of the consumer that are the respondents for the survey. Understanding their satisfaction level in regards of the presence as well as service of the small retailers in the online business is very essential. From the above table it has been analysed that near about 41% of the total responses from the respondents has the belief that the small retailers has the capacity of fulfilling their needs and wants through online business. Further around 23.5% are neutral to the aspect. However around 10% of the respondents have the believe that small retailers have the capacity to provide them with the service they expect.

From the chart it is evident that most of the respondents agree with the aspect that small retailers are developing in the online business. This is due to the fact that they are able to reach the customers from the online mediums in order to provide their products and services. The growth in the online business by adopting different kinds of tools and techniques is evaluated to be

beneficial for the small retailers. They have been able to understand the needs and requirements of the consumers in the market that helped them to design their products and services accordingly. Thus it can be attributed with the growth of their service through the online mode the SMEs in the retail sector of Ireland has gained the capacity of fulfilling the wishes and expectations of the consumers in an efficient way. In that context the SMEs needs to emphasize on researching about the trends in the market in order to provide better service and design the products in accordance to the needs of the consumers.

### For what purpose do you visit the website of the retail?

153 responses



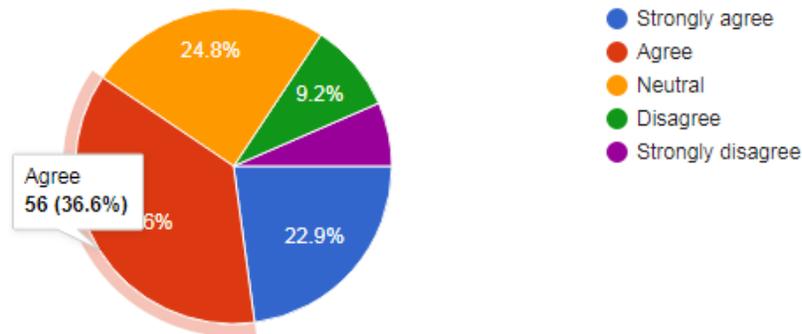
This question has been focused on evaluating the purposes behind the online shopping carried out by the customers in the current context. In regards of this particular research it is very important to gather knowledge about her makes the consumers buy the products from SMEs of the retail sector in Ireland instead of considering the larger brands who have more dominance in the online market. Evaluating the purposes of the customers for buying products from the small retailers helps to understand the factors that attract them towards them. It has been evaluated from the above chart that mostly customers visit the online website of the SMEs for shopping

apparel products that is attributed to be around 35%. Around 26% respondents responded that the purpose of visiting the website is to do food shopping, 19% provided the purpose of occasional shopping and around 19% shared that to update themselves about the variety of products available in the market they tend to visit the websites. This shows that the purposes of different kinds of consumers vary in regards to their requirements.

Thus, it can be attributed that different purposes of the consumers can be determined as various kinds of business opportunities for the SMEs. The varied purposes need to be emphasized by the SMEs by turning them into an opportunity to grow their business. The SMEs need to understand the aspects related to the purposes in order to strategize effectively to attract the consumers in an efficient manner. The website can be developed in accordance to the expectation of the consumers in order to be upfront in regards of their purposes. The SMEs also need to understand for whatever purpose the consumer visit the website they need to be satisfied in order to make them their permanent customers. The data collected in this particular question has been evaluated to be ensuring that the business opportunities developed through the various kinds of purposes of visiting the website by the consumers sets new horizon for the SMEs to be explored. Hence it is very important on the part of the SMEs in the retail industry of Ireland to concentrate on the reasons or purposes of the consumers in regard to visiting the website of the organization in order to enhance the business opportunities in proper manner.

## Do you think online presence of the retail attracts you more than physical presence of the store?

153 responses



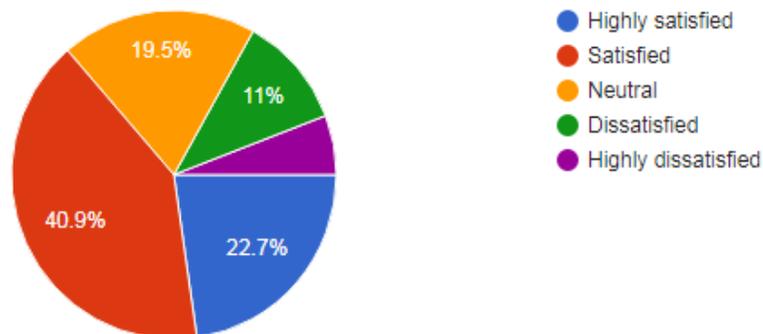
The responses that have been attributed through this particular question stress on the comparison of online presences in regards of the physical presence of the retail store. It has been analysed from the above chart that most of the respondents agree on the factor that online presence attracts them more than the physical presence of the retail store. Around 25% strongly agrees with the aspect that online presence has more capacity of attracting them towards the brand than the physical presence of their store. It has been observed that 56 respondents out of 155 respondents that makes around 40% of the respondents agreed that online presence is successful in the context of attracting them towards the brand in an efficient way. Further it also has been evaluated that around 25% of the respondents are neutral about the aspect and around 23% disagrees with the factor that online presence is more attractive than the physical presence. They believe that physical presence is more important for them and makes easier for them to trust the products of the brand. In this context it can be determined from the generated result that online presence is very important in order to attract the consumers in an appropriate manner.

Thus, from the above analysis it can be comprehended that online business helps the SMEs to break the physical barriers of the world and the whole world becomes open to them. The online

presence makes them free of the factor that the number of people visiting their stores or outlets will only provide them business and that is the only source. The presence in the online world and adopting the tools and techniques in terms of marketing, sales and operations as per the digital business helps them to prosper with faster pace. In this regards the SMEs of the retail sector in Ireland is emphasizing on developing their online presence that will help them in expanding their business to a wide extent. From the outcome of the results presented through the chart it can be attributed that in the present era the customers are more influenced by the online presence. In this context the companies needs to focus on the factor of developing the shopping experience of the customers through the online medium. The SMEs also needs to adopt tools and techniques that will help in contemplation of attracting customers through their online presence in an effective way. Adopting the strategy of online presence also involves lower costs and provides new sales options.

### Are you satisfied with the online display of the products?

154 responses



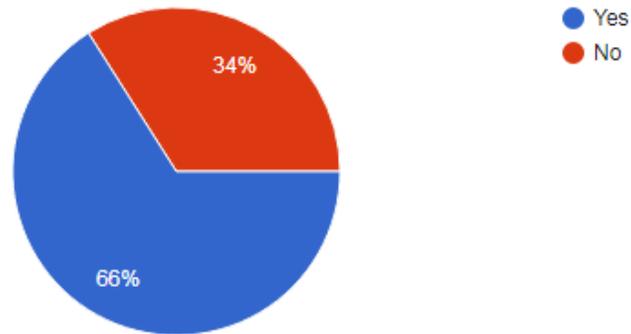
This particular question stressed on the factor of evaluating the effect of online display of products on the satisfaction level of the consumers. It has been analysed that around 38% of the respondents strongly agree that displays of the product is essential for them in regards to buying

the products. Further around 41% of respondents believed that online display highly influences their buying behaviour. However, 11% and 23% of the respondents gets dissatisfied as well as highly dissatisfied with the online display respectively. The online display of the products is considered to be playing an important role in the context of attracting the consumers and making them buy the products. However it has not been able to attract a high range of customers towards the brand and still many customers believes that physical display of the products in the stores are more attractive and trustworthy.

Thus, from the above analysis it can be attributed that online displays helps the retailer in the context of providing customer satisfaction to a great extent. This is due to the fact that online display of the products helps the customer to know the features and characteristics of the particular product. The information related with the product as well as the attractive display helps in raising the sales of the product in an efficient manner. The SMEs in this contemplation needs to emphasize on making the display of the products more attractive that will help in increasing the customer satisfaction as well as customer base. For the retail industry it is an essential factor that the products in physical or online stores are displayed in proper manner. This provides the ease and convenience to the customers in terms of shipping. The ultimate purpose of the organization is to enhance the customer satisfaction and for that the SMEs needs to come up with new strategies that will make the customer satisfaction level higher. The SMEs also need to focus on attracting the customers who believes on the aspect that physical display is only trustworthy and provides the satisfaction of purchase. The strategies of online marketing in this regard needs to be innovative and creative to make people agree that online products and their display are not deceiving. In this context the SMEs can also emphasize on providing quality pictures as well as videos of the products that will make the customers believe that the products are authentic. As the retail industry is considered to be increasing by leaps and bounds in that contemplation the SMEs needs to emphasize in making their online presence more efficient as well as effective.

## Have you found any disparity between online display and actual product?

147 responses

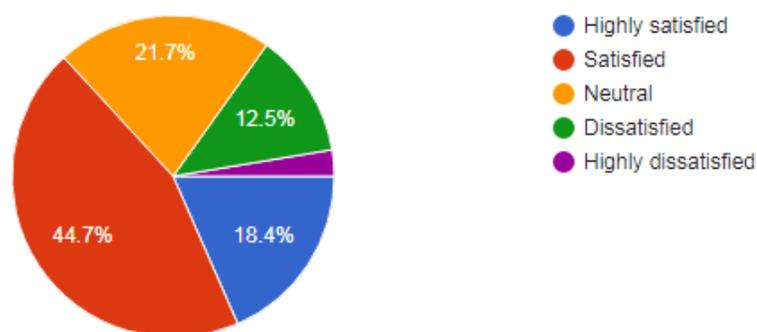


Observing the chart in the aforementioned section, the researcher has found that majority of the respondents have experience online disparity that is evaluated to be 66% of the total respondents. Around 34% have not experienced any kind of disparity in regards of their online purchases. The online disparity of the products creates a bad influence on the mind of the consumers. This has a direct impact on the sales of the product as well as profit generation. Though online shopping of the retail products of the SMEs is increasing day by day but the customer's experience disparity in regard to the product displayed in the website and the one that is delivered to them. The researcher has attributed the aspect that the customer has to experience forgery in regards of online shopping. The frauds in online shopping can be purposefully executed or mistakenly done by the employees. The product name or number can make the person confused and they sometimes pack the wrong product. This makes the shopping experience of the customers bad and directly affects the impression they have about the brand. Sometimes if a product gets out of stock some other product is packed purposefully and the individual who ordered the product gets the wrong item. Fraud in online shopping is considered to be the biggest disadvantages that not only affect the customers but also the brand image. In this regards the SMEs associated with the retail industry in Ireland needs to focus on the factor that the customer does not experience any

kind of disparity in terms of online shopping and emphasize that they get the accrual product that has been displayed in their websites. The authentic online business will help the organization grow more effectively and increase their market share.

### What is your experience regarding return policy of the products after purchasing?

152 responses

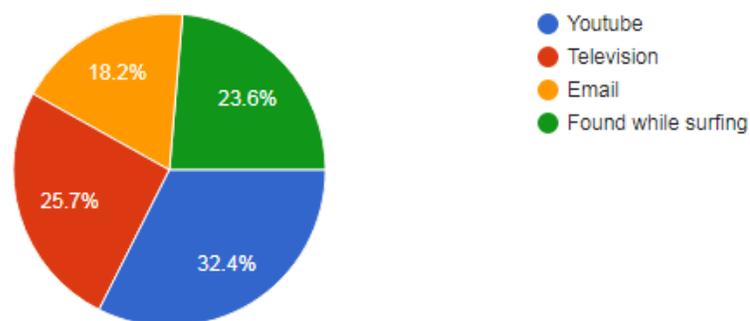


From the above results, it has been evident that majority of the customers are satisfied with the return policy of the products after purchasing. This is completely based on the experience of each of the customers after purchasing the products. This indicates that the company has a good reputation in the market and a good brand image as well. It has been found that 44.7 percent of the total respondents are satisfied with the return policy of the products after purchasing. However, 21.7 percent of the total respondents were neutral regarding the fact. On the other hand, 18.4 percent of the total respondents are highly satisfied with the return policy of the products in ZARA. This shows that most of the responses are positive regarding the return policy of the products in ZARA. Again, 12.5 percent of the respondents said that they are dissatisfied with the return policy of the products. In few cases, the company might have faced issues in regarding this matter. It has been found that majority of the customers are satisfied and highly satisfied with the return policy of ZARA. Return policy is an important factor that helps in

retaining potential customers and in this case, it can be said that the company is successful in retaining customers.

### What is the advertising medium have you attracted to purchase from the brand?

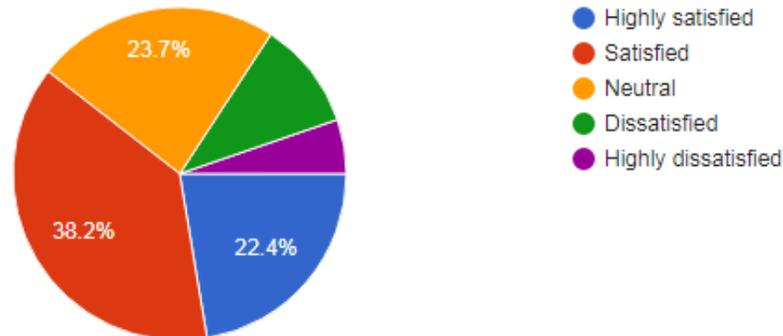
148 responses



From the above results, it has been observed that YouTube attracted the majority of the customers to purchase products from the brand. This is because, the advertisements that are shown on YouTube attracts more customers by creating attractive videos. YouTube is one of the best online marketing platforms that help in the growth and development of a particular brand, as it helps in reaching out to people in an easier way. It has been found that 32.4 percent of the total respondents are influenced by the advertisements that are shown on YouTube. After YouTube, television is another channel that helps to reach out to a number of people. On the other hand, most of the people in their free time surf net in order to get notified about the recent trends in the market. In this survey, it has been observed that 23.6 percent of the total respondents belong to that category, where they got to know about the brand by surfing the net. The rest 18.2 percent of the total respondents were influenced by email. The customers receive email regarding the recent trends that are followed by the brand ZARA. These are some major platforms influence a customer to purchase products from a particular brand.

## Are you satisfied with the current online brand?

152 responses

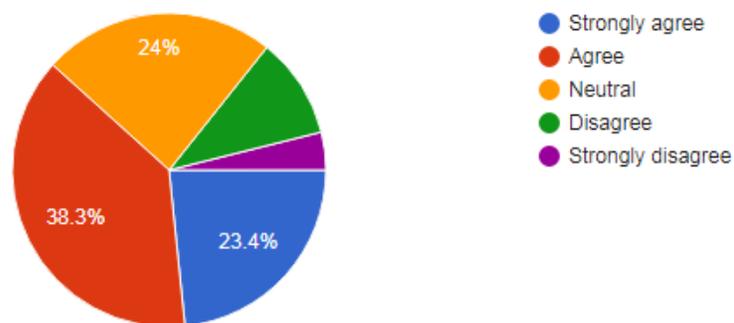


This particular question stressed upon evaluating the opinions of the respondents in regards to shopping with the current online brand. It has been attributed that around 23% strongly agree with the aspect and 38% agrees with the same. However, 24% is neutral about the ideal and mere amount of respondent's degrees with that. It shows that online retail belonging to the SMEs in Ireland. It has been evaluated from the literature review of the previous studies that the online marketing strategies and practices adopted by SMEs are considered to be very effective for them as it helps to provide buying satisfaction to the customers. By entering into the digital world, the SMEs have been able to understand the requirements and needs of the customers in an efficient way. The understanding of the wants helps the SMEs to fulfill their needs and expectations and enhance their satisfaction level that makes them shop gain with the brands. In this contemplation the SMEs have been able to give competition to the larger brands in impressive manner. It was essential on the part of the researcher to evaluate the perspectives of the respondents in regards to shopping with the online brands again as it helped to understand what makes them attracted towards the SMEs. Though the SMEs also needs to emphasize on developing the strategies in

order to make more effective impression on the customers that is essential in the context of retaining them and also to attract the customers who disagrees to shop with them again.

### Would you like to continue your shopping with the online retail shops?

154 responses



It is very important to know about the satisfaction level of the customers in order to understand that the strategies and practices of the organization are working or not. In this context the researcher has emphasized on analyzing the satisfaction level of the customers have included this question in the questionnaire with the prospect of gaining information about the aspect. It has been analyzed from the above chart that most of the customers agree with the factor that they are satisfied with the current online brand. This is clear with the fact that around 22% strongly agree with the aspect and 38% agrees with the aspect. However around 24% is neutral about the satisfaction level in regards of the online brands. The researcher also stressed on highlighting the aspect of customer satisfaction and its implication on the business of SMEs through the analysis of the previous literatures. Through this the researcher has observed that providing customer satisfaction needs to be the ultimate goal for the SMEs operating in the digital world in order to survive in the most effective manner. In this context the companies associated with the retail industry needs to adopt effective strategies that will help in enhancing the customer satisfaction in an efficient way. However, with the analysis of the literature in the section of impact of online marketing it has been observed that the implementation of the online tools and techniques has

proved to be very beneficial to the companies. This is due to the fact that it has made the path of interaction and communication easier that provides the opportunity to cater the needs of the customers in an appropriate manner.

## **Chapter 5 Findings and Discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In the context of the current study, this chapter mainly focuses on the findings and discussion mainly involved with the topic of the research. The previous chapter of the study helped the researcher in identification of the findings related to the research mad also provides a discussion on the basis of the findings. The findings section helps to identify whether the researcher is successful in regards to meeting all the objectives or not. This section mainly focuses on highlighting the results of the entire study and the discussion part emphasizes on providing a clear concept about the current topic.

### **5.2 Findings**

Awareness about online marketing and business has been evaluated to be certainly very high among the SMEs of the retail sector in Ireland. It has been evaluated that the use of the online platform for increasing the visibility of SMEs has been analyzed to be increasing as the respondents monthly reacted positively that they are satisfied with the online display of products and are interested to be associated with the companies. In the section of the literature review the importance of online marketing and online platform has been extensively discussed with the purpose of understanding the implication of the use of the online platform on the performance of SMEs in an effective manner. Based on the methods of collecting as well as analyzing data from the section of data analysis, helps to gain a comprehensive overview of the online marketing for SMEs in the retail sector of Ireland. The researcher conducted a survey in order to gain an inside perspective of the use of online marketing and its effect on SMEs as well as the customers.

In today's times the online platform is used by everyone mad it has been evaluated that majority of the respondents of the study is using the platform from many years and also spent a good

amount of time every day. People of all ages are evaluated to be active in the online platforms. It has been also found that being active in the online platforms also affects their buying decisions. In the section of revenue of the previous literature it has been evaluated that the SMEs uses various types of online marketing strategies in order to engage the customers and gain business from them. However, it has also been evaluated that some SMEs also prefer using a combination of online marketing and traditional marketing as some of the customers still prefer buying products on the basis of the traditional marketing that they are habituated with. In contemplation of the analysis of the demographic details of the respondents has also been observed that male as well as female gender are on equal terms used the online platform that indicates that the platform is being able to attract all types of people and not attributed to any kind of biases.

Most of the respondents also informed that there are various factors that affect their buying decisions in regards of the online platform. In this context the researcher has found that the capacity of the online brands to satisfy the customers plays an important role. The expertise of the SMEs in regards of evaluating the needs and expectations of customers and then strategizing the plan of marketing helps in attractive them in an attractive manner. The researcher also focused on evaluating the strategies adopted by the SMEs in the section of literature review with the purpose of understanding their effectiveness in attracting and retaining the customers. In this consideration the section of data analysis with the incorporation of the questionnaire tool has been able to understand the effects of the online tools in an efficient manner. It has been found by the researcher that most of the respondents have the view that online presence of the brand helps in making their buying decision easier. This is due to the fact that is able to gather the information and features of the products in an easy and convenient way. In this context the customers in the recent world expects the companies to be present in the online world so that they can interact and ask for instant solution if they face any kind of issues.

The researcher with highlighting the benefits of the online involvement of the SMEs focused on evaluating the challenges in order to understand the impacts on the companies as well as the consumers. It has been evaluated that the respondents gets satisfied with online shopping experiences. However, they also have to with the challenges like product disparity. There are various issues that are also faced by SMEs in terms of utilizing the online tools that has been discussed in the section of the literature review. In this context, it is essential to focus on the

issues faced by the companies as well as the customers with the purpose of creating a shopping experience that helps to gain advantage that is more competitive.

The researcher has found from the analysis of the data and review of the previous literature that most of the customers are satisfied with the service provided by the SMEs through the online medium. This shows that the practices, tools, techniques as well as strategies adopted by the SMEs in the retail sector of Ireland have been able to enhance the performance of the organizations. This is due to the fact that most of the respondents agreed with the aspect that they would like to be associated with the brands through the online medium as they have the capacity to satisfy them in an efficient manner.

The result incurred from the analysis of data also highlighted the aspect that respondents are satisfied with the brands in terms of presales and post sales activities that helps in trust building and relationship management. The use of the online medium to gain the loyalty of the customers in the current times is a vital factor that needs to be emphasized. Overall the factors associated with the online platform in terms of marketing and attracting the customers to provide them the best service and also to increase the sales the SMEs needs to understand on the basis of what factors the customers are willing to interact with them on the platform of online medium. In this contemplation the researcher also focused on evaluating the aspects that what makes the customers attracted through the questions in the survey as well as which online channel works in regards to gaining their loyalty. The researcher for this aspect also discusses the factors in the section of online channels that helps to understand the options that SMEs have to attract the customers.

The findings of the survey are inclined with the section 2.5 of the literature section as the impact of the online marketing has been evaluated with the help of the survey. The discussion in this section has clearly attributed about the effects of the online strategies on the customers and the effects of the strategies are evaluated with the help of the survey.

## **5.3 Discussion**

### **Theme 1: Perceived Advantages and benefits of online marketing**

The findings related to the benefits of the online medium in terms of marketing and business is important for providing insights in regards if the ways the owners of the SMEs conceptualize the advantages related with online marketing and business and its impact on the consumers. In section 2.4 of the literature review and section 2.6 it has been clearly attributed that the inclusion of online marketing has brought great benefits to SMEs in the retail industry in Ireland. It has also been evaluated through the data analysis and literature review that the choice of the online marketing methods plays an important role in regard to the proven success as well as customer response. The participants of the survey indicated that they also incur benefits in contemplation of online shopping mad they are highly satisfied with the facilities provided by the SMEs.

### **Theme 2: Utilization of online tools and techniques**

The questions in the questionnaire also emphasized on evaluating the role of the online tools and techniques. Previous studies related to the use of the online tools and platforms has revealed the aspect that the channel of social media is the most common tool because of the low cost involved and also because of high ability to reach a large amount of audience. However it has been also evaluated by the researcher that the changes in the dynamics of the digital world in regards of the evolving tools and changed landscape has direct impact on the strategies of the companies as well as buying behavior of the customers that has been discussed in the section 2.6 of the literature review. With the evaluation of the results of the data analysis it has been clear that the tools, channels and techniques utilized for implementing the strategies on the online platform, the SMEs in the retail sector is being able to satisfy the customers with their increasing productivity and performance.

### **Theme 3: Online marketing strategies**

With the discussion in the section 2.9, it has been attributed that the owners of SMEs in the retail sector of Ireland uses different kinds of strategies that help them to achieve the goals and objectives of the business. Through the evolution of the question s it has been analyzed that the customers are responding positively to the strategies adopted by them this is clear with the fact that they are satisfied with the customer service and reacting evidently to the marketing approaches in the online platforms. However the challenges are not targeted on the data analysis section and it is contradictory as it has been evaluated in the previous studies that the owners needs to face different kinds of challenges in order to implement the online strategies in the effective manner. With this it can be attributed that market research is an essential factor is the context of dealing with the challenges in a proper way.

## **Chapter 6 Conclusions and Recommendations**

### **6.1 Conclusion**

Online marketing in the current context are considered to be important as it aligns the way consumers make purchasing decisions. This study indicates that an increasing number of customers are using internet services as well as carrying out research in regards to the preliminary products as well as price before they are making the final purchasing decisions. It is found from the result of the study that online platform provides various kinds of opportunities to the SMEs in Ireland operating in the retail sector to give competition to the larger organizations in the efficient manner. It provides the opportunity of building relations with the consumers with the prospect of regular and low cost but personalized communication method. It also provides the opportunity to reflect the movie war strategy in regards of mass communication and adopt the social media visibility strategies. The main online marketing products are evaluated to be less in terms of costs in comparison to the traditional marketing products that have been evaluated through the review of the previous literature. The online medium and marketing is used by the SMEs in order to build an online community that involves the other stakeholders like employees and customers and then it is used as a media that helps to spark conversations, spread

awareness about offers and discounts, enhancing brand image as well as increase following in terms of customer base.

From the previous chapters of the study it has been evaluated that the benefits of using the online marketing for business is relay and deep in regards of the benefits incurred from it. The use of the online medium provides the opportunity of social interaction that gives direct value to the business in terms of revenue generation and cost savings. It helps to create a network that is effective in reaching huge numbers of customers, understand their needs and wants, and in accordance to that create the strategies and products.

In this context the SMEs needs to focus on clear strategies for utilizing of the channels and tools of online marketing and platform in an efficient manner. The companies in the retail sector of Ireland also needs to emphasize on unlocking solutions for the challenges they face in regards to implementation and utilization of online marketing platform for their business. The ultimate purpose is to provide customer satisfaction, through that increase the customer base, and gain competitive advantage. In this context the SMEs in the retail sector needs to emphasize on understanding the dynamics of the customer growth as well as activity on online platforms in order to take stock of the consumer attitude ns also triggers that incurs more benefits for the organizations.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

### **Recommendation 1: Understand the digital needs**

In order to increase the growth of the business and incur positive result the SMEs in the retail sector of Ireland needs to understand their digital needs. In this context they can also seek help from expertise in order to save time as well as achieve success in regards of the online business within the budget of the organization. The companies need to understand that in order to provide the value added services to the customers what are the requirements that will help them to achieve the objectives.

**Recommendation 2: Focus on social media channels**

It is evaluated that online search queries are found to be focused on the online business are mostly accelerated through social media channels. In this context it is impressive that the SMEs focus on using the social media channels in a more strategic way. This will help in creating and strengthening personal relationships with current and potential consumers in regards of stronger brand recall.

**Recommendation 3: Tying up with online marketing sites**

Involving third parties in the business is also an effective way to save time and cost. In this context the SMEs can tie up with the online marketing sites in order to increase their visibility. The third party involved it will be effective as they will help in maintaining their websites as well as other social media engagement. They will also help in planning a clear strategy for the utilization of different channels depending on the market situation.

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