

Assessing the Perceptions of Respondents Regarding the Influencing Factors in the Application of Digital Marketing by Albanian Businesses, Case Study - Tirana

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Abstract

Owners/managers of small and medium-sized businesses are usually constrained by their financial resources and may perceive solutions for digital marketing in the market as unavailable or lacking in quality. Expanding the "Do It Yourself" (DIY) behavior model to owners or managers in using digital marketing activities is crucial because they often have to take on a variety of business activities with little or no training.

The application of digital marketing depends heavily on the skills of owners and managers to perform such tasks successfully. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the individual characteristics of owners/managers, such as education, training, etc., in the application of technology and digital marketing. The research is quantitative and has been conducted through a structured questionnaire. The research takes a proactive approach to the development of small and medium-sized businesses by applying digital marketing. Thus, through this study, we have analyzed the influencing factors on Albanian businesses in the field of digital marketing. The research was conducted through a questionnaire distributed via Google Forms to the official email addresses of small and medium-sized businesses in Albania.

Keywords: managers, SME (small and medium-sized enterprises), application, digital marketing.

1. Introduction

The competitive environment is the same for all businesses, regardless of their size. In a digital world, small and mid-size businesses have equal opportunities. Many companies invest in search engine optimization (SEO) to boost their search engine rankings. Small and large companies can use this practice to attract and reach more valuable traffic.

Digital marketing's role also focuses on helping companies make more money from the marketing efforts. In comparison to traditional marketing, online marketing is extremely cost-effective, offering an impressive return on investment (ROI).

Digital marketing, however, allows you to focus on the people interested in your products or services. With digital marketing, you're reaching people interested in your business. These marketing methods allow you to target the people that want your products or services.

The aim of this paper is to measure on a 5-level scale the factors of acceptance and dimensions of digital marketing by SMEs in Tirana. The dependent variable is the use of digital marketing, while the independent variables to test the influence will be: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, the level of entertainment awareness, the level of control awareness, the level of perceived product quality, the intention to discontinue the use of digital marketing, and perception from the DIY (Do It Yourself) model (Wolf & Mcquitty, 2013).

In most cases, responses are in the format 1 - strongly disagree and 5 - strongly agree. In addition to variables related to measuring aspects of digital marketing use, we also use some control variables, such as the entrepreneur's education, sector, business size, business age, owner's age, gender, and economic benefit

2. Metodology

The research was conducted through Google Forms, sending the questionnaire to companies at their official email addresses. Managers and owners of small and medium-sized businesses in Albania were the designated contacts. The sample was random, and the data were distributed and collected by the authors personally. Initially, the data were numerically encoded in Excel and then transferred to SPSS (version 25).

2.1 Sample

The overall sample size was 230, with 20 not completing the questionnaire, and out of the 220 collected responses, 10 were excluded due to missing data in their answers. The sample was random. Therefore, valid data for processing and analysis were assessed from 200 respondents. The number 200 is representative in relation to the number of small and medium-sized businesses in Tirana. The sample size was determined based on the number of businesses operating in Tirana since there is no precise figure for the number of managers. Instrumenti I kerkimit dhe kriteret e përzgjedhjes

2.2 The research instrument and selection criteria

The research instrument used for data collection is a questionnaire, including questions about digital marketing in general and the use of digital marketing in respondents' companies. Additionally, the questionnaire includes questions related to respondents' perceptions of the application of digital marketing. In the third section, other factors such as the level of awareness, feeling, perception, and dimensions are presented, including the perceived ease of use (PEU) scale and the perceived usefulness (PU) scale, along with other questions related to digital marketing.

3. Findings

Regarding the level of respondents' knowledge about the application of digital marketing, we see that 88.0% claim to have knowledge about marketing in general, while 10.7% state the opposite. The majority of respondents highly value the use of technology in presenting the services or products of the business, with 76.4% considering it very beneficial, 23.1% beneficial, and 0.4% harmful. Over 88.9% of respondents have spent on marketing in recent years, with 28.4% stating they have spent over 7000 euros. Additionally, 63.1% claim to use public opinion measurement methods for their products or services (Table 1).

Table 1: The level of information about marketing

Do you have knowledge about marketing in general?	N	%
Yes	176	88.0%
No	24	12.0%
How do you evaluate the use of technology in presenting the services or products that your business offers?	N	%
Harmful	1	0.5%
Beneficial	28	14.0%
Very beneficial	171	85.5%
Have you spent on marketing in recent years to develop your business?	N	%
Yes	180	90.0%
No	20	10.0%
If yes, please tell us how much you have spent?	N	%
Up to 1000 euros	56	38.0%
1001-3000 euros	18	9.0%
3001-5000 euros	22	11.0%
5001-7000 euros	14	7.0%
Up to 7000 euros	90	45.0%
Do you use public opinion measurement methods for a product or service that you decide to promote to your business customers/consumers?	N	%
Yes	142	71.0%
No	58	29.0%

Source: Authors

Regarding the level of application of digital marketing, the results from Table 22 indicate that the majority of respondents believe that digital marketing should be applied because it facilitates communication with customers. Additionally, most respondents express that they will continue to implement digital marketing.

Table 2: The application of digital marketing

Do you implement digital marketing in your company?	N	%
Yes	185	92.5%
No	15	7.5%
Do you think the application of digital marketing would enable cost savings for your company dedicated to promotion?	N	%
Yes	215	95.6%
No	10	4.4%

Source: Authors

In Table 3 below and also in Figure 1, visually, it can be seen that 34.20% of respondents completely agree that digital marketing should be applied in our company, while 24.40% agree to some extent. Those with a neutral stance make up 28.90% of respondents. Combining the respondents who completely disagree (3.10%) and those who disagree to some extent (9.30%) with this stance, 12.40% do not agree that digital marketing should be applied in our company. The column of percentages of respondents who completely agree that digital marketing should be implemented in our company dominates, indicating the importance they attribute to the use of digital technology during various marketing activities in their business.

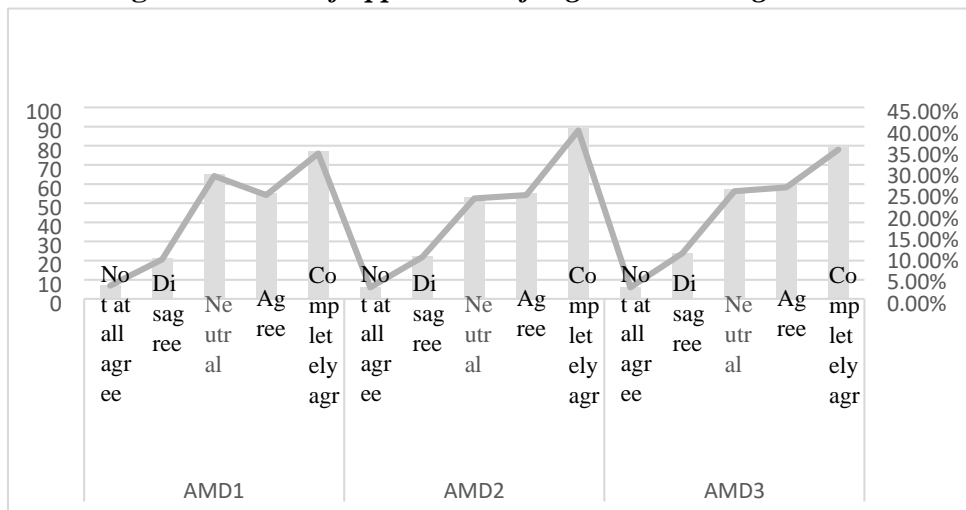
Table 3: The level of application of digital marketing

Variable	Level	Counts	Total	Proportion
AMD 1I think digital marketing should be applied in our company.	Not at all agree	5	200	2.50%
	Disagree	18	200	9.00%
	Neutral	60	200	30.00%
	Agree	50	200	25.00%
	Completely agree.	67	200	33.50%
AMD 2Digital marketing facilitates marketing communication.	Not at all agree	4	200	2.00%
	Disagree	18	200	9.00%
	Neutral	48	200	24.00%
	Agree	50	200	25.00%
	Completely agree.	80	200	40.00%

AMD 3 We plan to continue communicating with our customers through the internet.	Not at all agree	4	200	2.00%
	Disagree	20	200	10.00%
	Neutral	50	200	25.00%
	Agree	54	200	27.00%
	Completely agree.	72	200	36.00%

Source: Authors

Fig 1: The level of application of digital marketing



Source: Authors

Table 4: The reasons for the application of marketing

	Not important at all		Slightly important		Neutral		Important		Very important	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Increase in the number of customers	3	1.5%	10	5.0%	33	16.5%	54	37.0%	100	50.0%
Promotion of a specific product/service	2	1.0%	6	3.0%	0	0.0%	30	15.0%	162	80.1%
	30	15.0%	20	10.0%	0	0.0%	50	25.0%	110	55.5%

Promotion of the way of working	10	5.0%	30	15.0%	0	0.0%	50	25.0%	110	55.0%
Promotion of the primary material	50	25.0%	30	15.0%	0	0.0%	40	20.0%	80	40.0%

Source: Authors

According to our research, 92.4% of respondents state that they apply digital marketing in their company, while 95.6% express that the application of digital marketing influences the cost savings of the company. Our respondents have emphasized several reasons that lead them to implement digital marketing. They were given a scale of agreement or disagreement in the statements about the reasons for the application of digital marketing, ranging from "not important at all" (maximum disagreement) to "very important" (maximum agreement). The reasons for applying digital marketing are considered to be: promotion of products or services, promotion of the way of working, followed by the promotion of discounts, increase in the number of customers, and promotion of the primary material (Table 4).

Table 5: The aim of discontinuing the use/application of DM

Question	Answer	Frequency	Total	%
SNP1. I intend to discontinue the use of internet marketing, even though I am not particularly dissatisfied with it, because I have found another technology that is superior to my needs..	Disagree	26	200	13.0%
	Neutral	52	200	26.0%
	Agree	116	200	58.0%
SNP2. I anticipate that I will no longer use internet marketing, even if I cannot find something else to replace it, because it does not suit my needs	Completely agree	6	200	3.0%
	Disagree	130	200	65.0%
	Neutral	48s	200	24.00%
SNP3. I plan to stop using internet marketing and find something else because I am dissatisfied with it..	Agree	10	200	5.0%
	Completely agree	12	200	6.0%
	Disagree	130	200	65.0%
	Neutral	50	200	25.0%

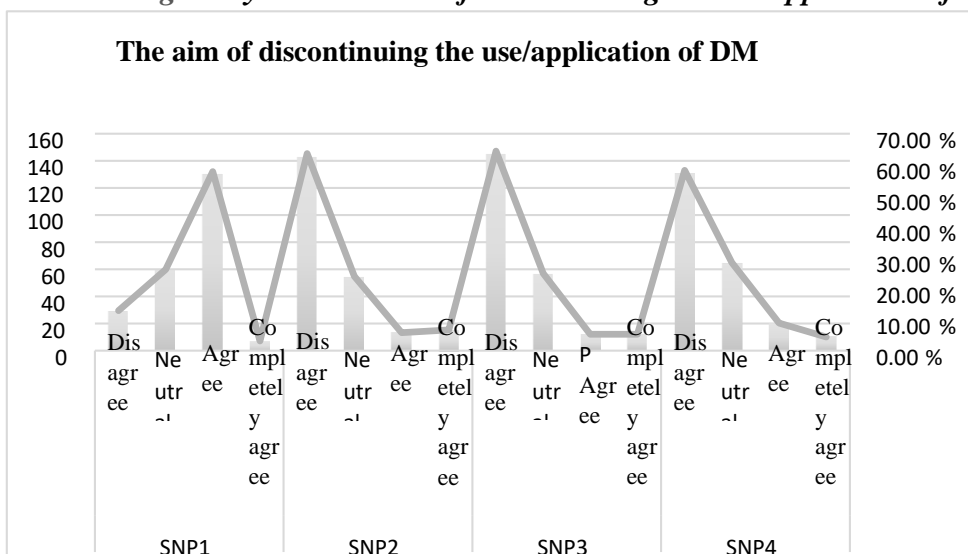
	Agree	10	200	5.0%
	Completely agree	10	200	5.0%
SNP4. I plan to stop using Facebook, using something superior in its place.	Disagree	118	200	59.0%
	Neutral	60	200	30.0%
	Agree	16	200	8.0%
	Completely agree	6	200	3.0%

Source: Authors

The respondents disagree with discontinuing the application of marketing and see it as a good opportunity for promoting the business. They express in other cases as well that they will not stop using digital marketing methods, including social networks and other forms of digital communication (Table 5).

As we can see in the visual presentation below, in the following bar chart, the majority of respondents do not aim to stop the use of digital marketing, with attitudes toward disagreeing with discontinuing the use of digital advertising dominating (see Fig. 2). Respondents highly value the application of digital marketing, as they not only consider this type of marketing important for their current business but also have strong projections for the future use of digital marketing. The number of those who completely disagree is negligible compared to those who agree not to discontinue the application of digital marketing. The overwhelming majority of respondents do not plan to discontinue digital marketing because they have not found another more suitable form (SNP1), nor do they consider this type of marketing not suitable for their needs (SNP2), nor are they dissatisfied with digital marketing (SNP3), nor do they aim to discontinue the use of social media like Facebook (SNP4) for digital marketing.

Fig. 2: Synimi The aim of discontinuing the use/application of DM



Source: Authors

Regarding the level of quality with which the creation of promotions is assessed in relation to the development of websites, respondents consider the assistance provided by marketing professionals to be very important. They also see it as an opportunity to create or promote their business themselves, without the need for marketing professionals (Table 6).

Based on the table below and the visual representation in Fig. 3, we understand that the majority of respondents have shown more neutral attitudes toward the statements in MCP1, MCP2, MCP3, MCP4, and MCP5. Their opinions are divided across the scale from complete disagreement to moderate disagreement, and up to moderate to complete agreement.

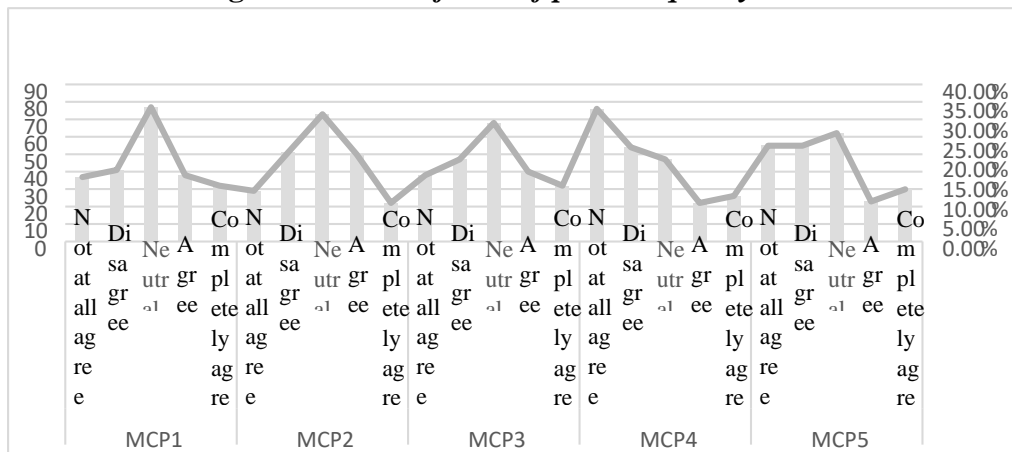
Table 6: The level of lack of product/promotion quality

Variable	Level	Counts	Total	Proportion
MCP1. Creating your own internet promotions is good because website developers are not reliable.	Not at all agree	32	200	16.0%
	Disagree	40	200	20.0%
	Neutral	70	200	35.0%
	Agree	38	200	19.0%
	Completely agree.	30	200	15.0%
MCP2. Creating your own internet promotions makes sense because internet marketing professionals do not do what I want.	Not at all agree	26	200	13.0%
	Disagree	46	200	23.0%
	Neutral	64	200	32.0%
	Agree	50	200	25.0%
	Completely agree.	22	200	11.0%
MCP3. Creating your own internet promotions is good because I can do a better job than professional website developers.	Not at all agree	32	250	16.0%
	Disagree	40	200	20.0%
	Neutral	60	200	30.0%
	Agree	40	200	20.0%
	Completely agree.	30	200	15.0%
MCP4. Hiring an internet marketing professional results in worse work than when I do it myself.	Not at all agree	66	200	33.0%

	Disagree	50	200	25.00%
	Neutral	36	200	18.00%
	Agree	22	200	11.00%
	Completely agree.	26	200	13.00%
MCP5. The work of people I could hire is not of good quality, so I have to do the job myself.	Not at all agree	48	200	24.0%
	Disagree	50	200	25/0%
	Neutral	50	200	25.0%
	Agree	22	200	11.0%
	Completely agree.	30	200	15.0%

Source: Authors

Fig. 3: The level of lack of product quality



Source: Authors

Table 7: The importance of social networks in DM

	Not important at all		Slightly important		Neutral		Important		Very important	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Facebook	25	10.7%	8	3.4%	20	8.5%	60	25.6%	121	51.7%
Twitter	34	22.5%	40	26.5%	41	27.2%	20	13.2%	16	10.6%
Instagram	19	8.7%	6	2.7%	7	3.2%	59	26.9%	128	58.4%
Snapchat	44	28.6%	39	25.3%	30	19.5%	21	13.6%	20	13.0%

Google Ads	25	15.2%	14	8.5%	24	14.5%	48	29.1%	54	32.7%
Other	28	26.7%	10	9.5%	18	17.1%	23	21.9%	26	24.8%

Source: Authors

From the respondents' answers, we see that the majority of social networks are favored, but the ones with the most access and seen as most suitable for digital marketing are Facebook and Instagram. On the other hand, Google Ads, Snapchat, and Twitter have less interest (Table 7).

The feelings or inner experiences that arise and develop during the use of digital marketing play a very important role. Even in the aspect of the sense of entertainment and enjoyment, the majority of respondents have neutral attitudes regarding DIY internet marketing projects, stating that the use of digital marketing can be exciting, entertaining, interesting, and enjoyable. This influences the proactive approach to the use of digital marketing. Subsequently, respondents fully agree with the impact of the sense of entertainment on the application of digital marketing (Table 8).

Table 8: The level of entertainment and enjoyment

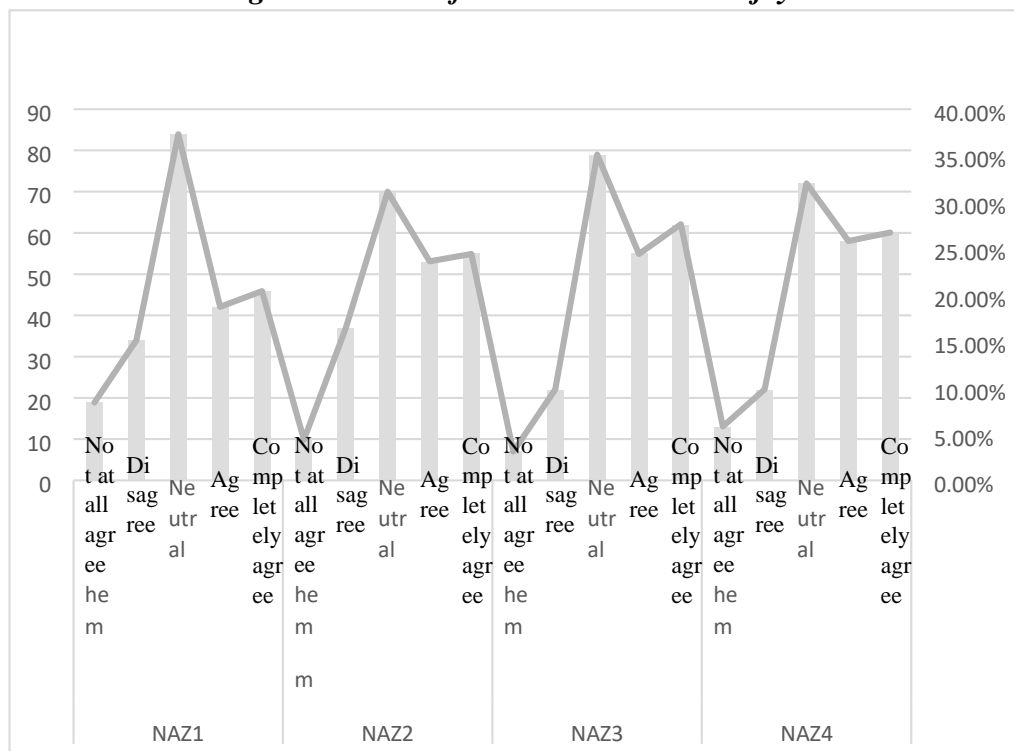
Variable	Level	Counts	Total	Proportion
NAZ1. DIY internet marketing projects can be exciting.	Not at all agree	14	200	7.00%
	Disagree	30	200	15.00%
	Neutral	76	200	.38.00%
	Agree	40	200	20.00%
NAZ2. DIY internet marketing projects can be entertaining	Completely agree.	40	200	20.90%
	Not at all agree	8	200	4.00%
	Disagree	32	200	16.40%
	Neutral	64	200	33.00%
NAZ3. DIY internet marketing projects can be interesting.	Agree	50	200	25.00%
	Completely agree.	46	200	28.00%
	Not at all agree	2	200	1.00%
	Disagree	18	200	9.00%
	Neutral	60	200	30.00%
	Agree	52	200	26.0%

	Completely agree.	68	200	32.00%
NAZ4. DIY internet marketing projects can be enjoyable.	Not at all agree	10	200	5.00%
	Disagree	20	200	10.00%
	Neutral	62	200	31.00%
	Agree	50	200	25.00%
	Completely agree.	58	200	29.00%

Source: Authors

Expressed graphically, as in Fig. 4, it is shown that the overwhelming majority of respondents tend towards neutral attitudes, with the highest percentage in NAZ1, followed by NAZ3, NAZ3, and the least in NAZ4.

Fig 4: The level of entertainment and enjoyment



Source: Authors

The scale of perceived control as a factor in the DIY model also shows a significant influence on the implementation of digital marketing. According to the results, the majority of respondents express that DIY internet marketing projects help a person manage business goals. They believe that DIY internet marketing projects help a person better control the project, as well as being responsible for the project situation. On the other hand, they instill confidence in the person about the project situation (Tab.9)

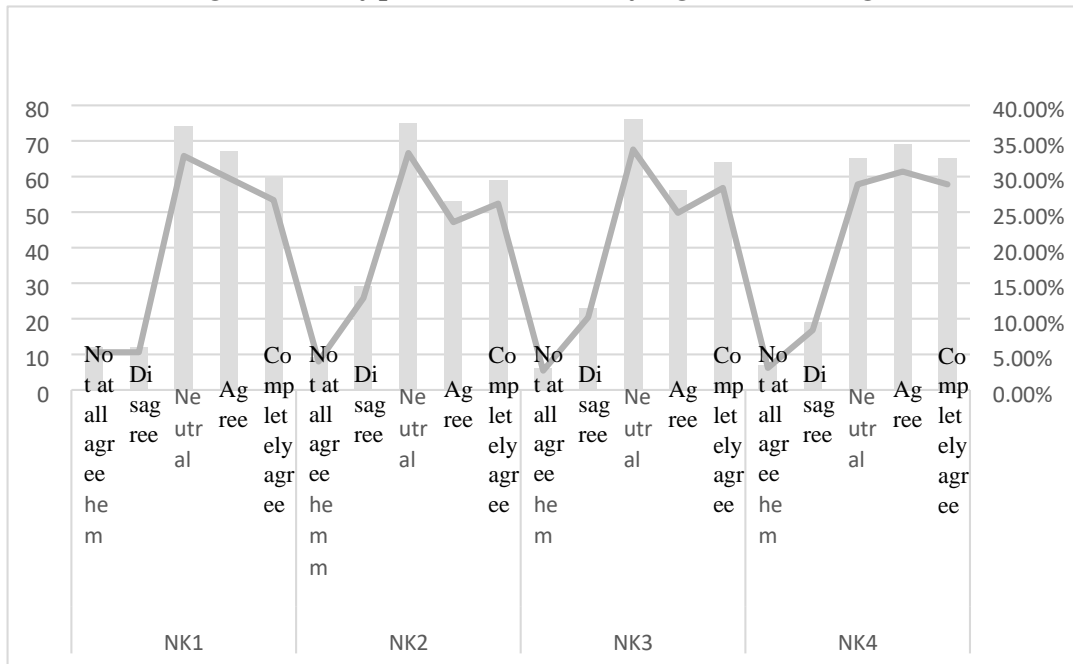
Table 9: Scale of perceived control of digital marketing

Variable	Level	Counts	Total	Proportion
NK1. DIY internet marketing projects help a person manage business goals.	Not at all agree	10	200	5.00%
	Disagree	10	200	5.00%
	Neutral	64	200	32.90%
	Agree	60	200	29.80%
	Completely agree.	56	200	26.70%
NK2. DIY internet marketing projects help a person better control the project	Not at all agree	9	200	4.00%
	Disagree	29	200	12.90%
	Neutral	75	200	33.30%
	Agree	53	200	23.60%
	Completely agree.	59	200	26.20%
NK3. DIY internet marketing projects help a person be responsible for the project situation.	Not at all agree	6	200	2.70%
	Disagree	23	200	10.20%
	Neutral	76	200	33.80%
	Agree	56	200	24.90%
	Completely agree.	64	200	28.40%
NK4. DIY internet marketing projects give a person confidence in the project situation.	Not at all agree	7	200	3.10%
	Disagree	19	200	8.40%
	Neutral	65	200	28.90%
	Agree	69	200	30.70%

	Completely agree.	65	200	28.90%
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Source: Authors

Fig 5: Scale of perceived control of digital marketing



Source: Authors

In the table below, we have presented the factors representing one of the variables of the TAM model, describing the dominance of the factors descriptively. We observe that the majority of respondents consider the use of the internet to promote products or services as either completely important or important, and most of them also use the internet to promote products or services in order to improve business performance (Table 10).

Tab.10: The scale of usefulness

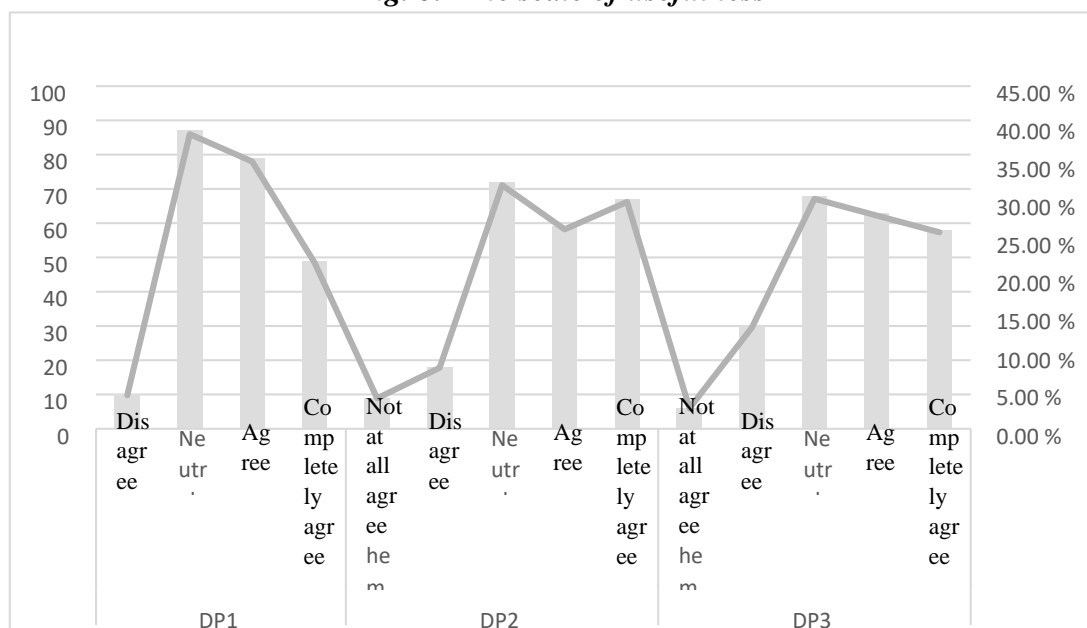
Variable	Level	Counts	Total	Proportion
DP1 The use of the internet to promote our products or services would enhance the performance of the business.	Disagree	10	200	5.00 %
	Neutral	66	200	28.00%
	Agree	70	200	35.00%
	Completely agree.	54	200	27.00%
DP2 The use of the internet to promote our products or services would increase the company's	Not at all agree	6	200	3.00%

efficiency to enhance customer engagement in the business.				
	Disagree	14	200	7.00%
	Neutral	62	200	31.00%
	Agree	54	200	27.00%
	Completely agree.	64	200	32.00%
DP3 I believe that having promotions on the internet would make our products or services beneficial for the business.	Not at all agree	4	200	2.00%
	Disagree	24	200	12.00%
	Neutral	58	200	29.00%
	Agree	60	200	30.00%
	Completely agree.	54	200	27.00%

Source: Authors

Regarding the usefulness scale, as shown in the table above (Table 10) and in Figure 6, it is visually evident that respondents mostly exhibit neutral attitudes. However, they also have a predominantly moderate agreement on three of the presented factors: DP1, DP2, and DP3. Overall, the majority considers the use of the internet to increase business efficiency and identify business consumers as very important. Most of them affirm that internet application is a highly crucial factor for promoting their business, enabling business direction, and facilitating a more beneficial business.

Fig. 6: The scale of usefulness



Source: Authors

Regarding the ease scale, which is also part of the TAM model, we understand that the majority of respondents consider it very important or important to learn to create online promotions for their products or services. They also value it as an opportunity to achieve promotion objectives. They mention online promotion as very important, expressing that it would be clear and understandable, and then the majority say it would be an opportunity to develop skills for business promotion. On the other hand, they consider it easy to develop online promotions for their products or services (Tab. 11).

Table 11: The scale of ease use of technology

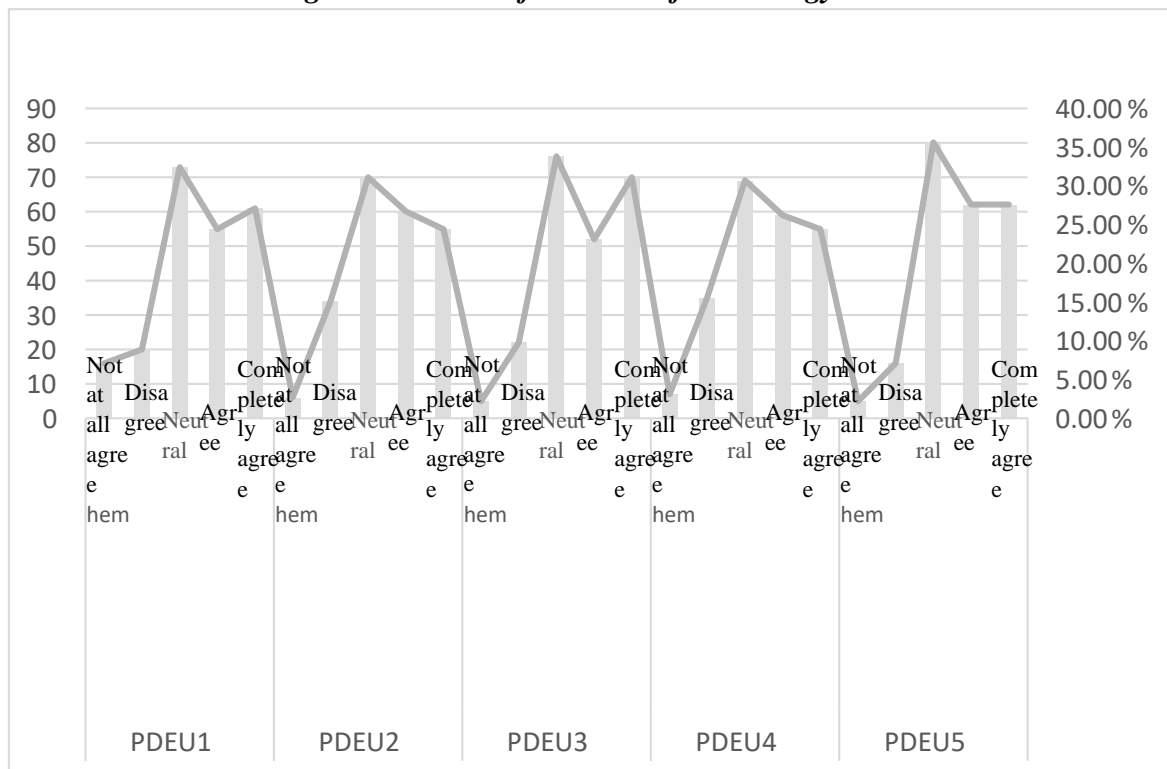
Variable	Level	Counts	Total	Proportion
PDEU1. Learning to create online promotions for our products or services would be easy for me	Not at all agree	10	200	5.00%
	Disagree	14	200	7.00%
	Neutral	62	200	31.00%
	Agree	50	200	25.00%
PDEU2. I would find it easy to achieve online promotion objectives.	Completely agree.	64	200	32.00%
	Not at all agree	4	200	2.00%
	Disagree	24	200	12.00%
	Neutral	60	200	30.00%
PDEU3. My interaction with the promotion of products or services online would be clear and understandable.	Agree	56	200	28.00%
	Completely agree.	56	200	28.00%
	Not at all agree	2	200	1.00%
	Disagree	12	200	6.00%
PDEU4. It would be easy for me to become skilled at online promotions for our products or services.	Neutral	66	200	33.00%
	Agree	50	200	25.00%
	Completely agree.	70	200	35.00%
	Not at all agree	5	200	2.50%
PDEU5. I see the development of online promotions for our products or services as easy.	Disagree	25	200	12.50%
	Neutral	60	200	30.00%
	Agree	55	200	27.50%
	Completely agree.	55	200	27.50%

	Disagree	10	200	5.00%
	Neutral	70	200	35.00%
	Agree	56	200	28.00%
	Completely agree.	60	200	30.00%

Source: Authors

As shown in the table above (Table 11) and in the following Figure 7, it can be visually observed that the majority of respondents agree on the ease of using the internet to promote their business products and services. However, in PDEU1, neutrality dominates with 31.00%, and in PDEU2, it increases slightly to 30.00%. The percentage then rises a bit in PDEU3 to 33.00% but decreases in PDEU4 to 30.00%, and in PDEU5, the neutral stance increases the most to 35.00%. However, overall, the percentage of respondents in the maximum and moderate disagreement stance with the factors of the TAM model mentioned above is lower.

Fig. 7: The scale of ease use of technology



Source: Authors

4. Conclusion

Konkluzione In our study, we aimed to identify the reasons for the use of digital marketing by business owners and managers in Albania. We measured the ease of use, perceived usefulness, the sense of entertainment and enjoyment, the feeling of control, intention, and quality, where the application of digital marketing was the dependent variable.

We can conclude that the majority of respondents apply digital marketing in their companies, with 92.4% of them, while 95.6% express that the application of digital marketing influences the cost savings of the company (as mentioned in the tables within the paper).

The reasons for the application of digital marketing are considered to be: promoting the product or services, promoting the way of work, promoting discounts, increasing the number of customers (as presented in the tables within the paper).

It is important to note that through this scientific study, significant data related to digital marketing have been presented, as well as its applicability level in practice by business organizations in Albania. To be more specific, this research has reflected the attitudes of businesses in Albania towards digital marketing, their expectations regarding digital marketing, how businesses in the country apply digital marketing, and the characteristics of businesses in Albania that influence the application of digital marketing.

5. Recommendations

The use of social media is very user-friendly even for individuals. Therefore, in the absence of budgets from companies, opening accounts and using social networks for the benefit of companies is one of the opportunities that can be used by leaders of small and medium-sized enterprises in Albania.

- Recruitment of staff in the digital marketing department should be based on professional backgrounds and specialization in digital fields.
- Despite the current investments of businesses in social networks to promote their products or services, it is recommended that investments and digital marketing be carried out based on a previous marketing strategy. Through this strategy, the potential effect on business development, potential impact on consumer behavior, as well as the acceptance of orders for the distribution of products or services to consumers would be analyzed.
- Combining useful online tools and platforms for creating content for private posts, in function of creating content for private enterprises, would shift the speed and simplicity of digital marketing perception to another level.
- Monitoring trends through search engines, evaluating clicks for specific content, and other reactions to content would make it very easy to calculate specific effects during the analysis of the marketing strategy.
- To follow certain trends for products or services offered by businesses, it is recommended to increase public opinion measurements because this scientific methodology allows citizens to express their opinions on quality, price, or similar questions. In case their expectations are matched with the offers of businesses, they may eventually become new consumers of those businesses. The analysis of consumer behavior, carried out through regular measurements, leads to the comparison of consumer attitudes and business opportunities within the sales relationship.
- Based on previous campaigns to sensitize public opinion (consumers) about the quality and origin of goods, useful information should be provided for specific products or services. This, in addition to educating consumers, increases their interest in being users or recipients of certain products or services for various reasons, such as health improvement, easing the use of certain elements, saving financial resources, etc., or other individual reasons, depending on the type of offer presented by businesses.
- To intensify the proper treatment of consumers, it is recommended that businesses, through various communication channels, especially online communication channels, raise the level of processing of complaints from consumers, with the aim of providing an opportunity for consumers to feel valued

and well-treated. The eventual correction of certain cases would serve as good marketing for other potential consumers, appreciating the business for the professionalism shown and their dedication to consumers.

- Training and designing professional development programs to increase the level of workforce qualification in Albania.

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