

REVIEWER'S REPORT

Manuscript No.: IJAR- 57816

Title: Digital Marketing, Service Quality and Performance of SMEs in Machakos County, Kenya.

Recommendation:

Accept after minor revision.

Rating	Excel.	Good	Fair	Poor
Originality	✓			
Techn. Quality	✓			
Clarity	✓			
Significance	✓			

Reviewer Name: Dr. Bishwajit Rout

Reviewer's Comment for Publication.

(To be published with the manuscript in the journal)

The reviewer is requested to provide a brief comment (3-4 lines) highlighting the significance, strengths, or key insights of the manuscript. This comment will be Displayed in the journal publication alongside with the reviewers name.

- Significance:** This study is significant because it investigates how digital marketing influences sales performance through service quality among SMEs in Kenya. The findings contribute to understanding digital transformation in emerging economies where SMEs play a crucial economic role. The research offers evidence supporting digital marketing adoption as a strategic tool for enhancing customer experience, strengthening competitiveness, and improving organizational performance within resource-constrained business environments.
- Strength:** The major strength of the study lies in its examination of both direct and indirect relationships among digital marketing, service quality, and sales performance. The use of PLS-SEM is appropriate for testing mediation effects. Additionally, the focus on SMEs in Machakos County provides valuable contextual insights into digital business practices within Kenya, enhancing the practical relevance of the research findings.
- Key Insight:** The most important insight is that digital marketing not only directly improves sales performance but also enhances service quality, which further strengthens performance outcomes. This finding demonstrates that SMEs should view digital marketing as a strategic capability rather than merely a promotional tool. Integrating digital platforms with customer service initiatives can generate sustainable competitive advantages and long-term business growth.

Reviewer's Comment / Report

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The paper titled “*Digital Marketing, Service Quality and Performance of SMEs in Machakos County, Kenya.*” investigates the relationships between digital marketing, service quality, and sales performance among 100 SMEs in Machakos Town, Kenya, using PLS-SEM analysis. It finds that digital marketing positively influences service quality and sales performance, while service quality significantly impacts performance and partially mediates the digital marketing–performance link. The paper demonstrates sound psychometric validation (reliability, convergent/discriminant validity) and aligns with prior African SME research. However, its small, localized sample and reliance on self-reported data limit generalizability. A practical contribution to understanding digital adoption in Kenyan MSMEs.

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. Strengthen theoretical justification linking variables under investigation.
2. Compare findings from previous international studies to establish inconsistencies motivating the present investigation more effectively.
3. Include dedicated literature review section before methodology.
4. Discuss underpinning theories supporting proposed variable relationships.
5. Critically evaluate contradictory findings from prior studies instead of primarily reporting supportive evidence from literature.
6. Incorporate recent empirical studies demonstrating causal relationships among constructs within comparable emerging market contexts.
7. Provide conceptual arguments explaining how digital marketing enhances service quality and ultimately improves organizational performance.
8. Describe questionnaire development and validation procedures comprehensively.
9. Explain measures taken to minimize common method bias arising from single-source questionnaire responses.
10. Provide detailed demographic characteristics of respondents to enhance sample representativeness and contextual understanding.
11. Report effect sizes alongside significance test results.
12. Explain unexpected coefficient magnitudes and practical implications.

The manuscript addresses an important and contemporary topic with practical relevance for SMEs operating in emerging economies. While the empirical findings are promising, the paper requires

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substantial improvement in theoretical grounding, literature synthesis, methodological justification, reporting of statistical analyses, and discussion of contributions. A dedicated limitations section, stronger hypothesis development, improved presentation of results, and more rigorous engagement with recent literature are necessary before the manuscript can be considered for publication in IJAR. Addressing the identified weaknesses will make it suitable for publication in IJAR.

I recommend this paper for publication after minor revision.