

## BOOSTING DIGITAL MARKETING IN ASIAN SMES THROUGH CULTURAL SENSITIVITY: SYSTEMATIC INSIGHTS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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**Abstract:** *This study presents a systematic literature review on the impact of culture on digital marketing, addressing a crucial gap in understanding how cultural differences shape consumer interactions with brands. Given the increasing globalization of markets and the diverse cultural backgrounds of consumers, understanding culture's impact on marketing is critical for developing effective strategies that resonate across different regions. The study employs the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) model to systematically filter articles indexed by Scopus, utilizing the Publish or Perish tool for initial identification. Out of 1222 articles collected, 62 articles were selected after eliminating those that were not relevant to the research scope. The findings demonstrate that cultural factors significantly influence in digital marketing strategies, consumer behavior, consumer involvement, and the establishment of consumer loyalty. Theoretically, this study expands on existing marketing theories by integrating cultural dimensions into models of consumer behavior and brand engagement, emphasizing the need for culturally adaptive marketing frameworks. Practically, these findings provide marketers with insights into tailoring their strategies to accommodate cultural differences, thereby enhancing brand relevance and fostering long-term consumer loyalty. Additionally, a model framework for a future research agenda is proposed, focusing on integrating cultural variables into marketing decision-making processes. This framework aims to examine specific cultural factors and their impact on marketing at various levels, including strategy formulation, consumer engagement, and loyalty development. By understanding these relationships, marketers can develop more precise strategies that effectively connect with culturally diverse consumer groups, thereby enhancing marketing performance*

**Keywords:** *Consumer Involvement, Consumer Loyalty, Culture, Customer Behavior, Digital Marketing*

## INTRODUCTION

Recently, Given Asia's diverse range of cultures and consumer habits, cultural sensitivity has played a varied and crucial role in improving digital marketing success for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the region. The ability to recognize and comprehend cultural variations and modify marketing methods appropriately is known as cultural sensitivity. This knowledge can have a big impact on how SMEs interact with their target markets, which will eventually change how well they market.

Many previous authors have studied how cultural sensitivity in enhancing performance of digital marketing. For example, [Beard \(2020\)](#) and [Öberseder et al. \(2013\)](#) emphasize how cultural sensitivity enables SMEs to modify their marketing strategies in accordance with the needs and beliefs of regional customers; beside that, it improves consumer engagement but also builds brand loyalty. Furthermore, [Holloway \(2024\)](#) emphasizes that the integration of cultural sensitivity into digital marketing strategies can enhance the perceived authenticity of a brand. In addition to improving consumer engagement and brand loyalty, cultural sensitivity plays a crucial role in effective communication ([Triani et al., 2023](#); [Tüfekci & Akbiyik, 2023](#); and [Šapić et al., 2018](#)). Moreover, cultural sensitivity can enhance the internal capabilities of SMEs, enabling them to better respond to market dynamics ([Bosson et al., 2016](#) and [Nam & Kannan, 2020](#)). Additionally, the role of cultural sensitivity extends to the ethical dimensions of marketing ([Öberseder et al., 2013](#); [Kamila et al., 2023](#); and [Bahera et al., 2022](#)). Furthermore, culturally sensitive influencer campaigns have been shown to increase engagement and conversion rates ([Beard, 2020](#) and [Zhou et al., 2021](#)). Moreover, cultural sensitivity can enhance the effectiveness of content marketing strategies ([Almaghlouth & Almeshal, 2024](#)).

Previous authors have paid great attention to how cultural sensitivity in enhancing performance of digital marketing ([Simenec et al.,](#)

[2023](#) and [Rokka, 2021](#)), but not many have studied it for the SMEs sector, especially in the Asian region. This study a valuable opportunity for authors to delve deeper into this role in their studies. Additionally, it presents a chance for authors to fill the conceptual gap regarding how cultural sensitivity in enhancing performance of digital marketing. For example, [Arsawan et al. \(2020\)](#) highlight the paucity of empirical research explicitly looking at the direct effects of cultural sensitivity on digital marketing performance measures for SMEs in various Asian contexts. Furthermore, [Sawaeen & Ali \(2021\)](#) cite engagement rates, conversion rates, and brand loyalty as key digital marketing performance indicators for SMEs.

Moreover, Existing research frequently ignores the unique opportunities and difficulties encountered by SMEs in Asia's varied cultural contexts ([McKearney et al., 2023](#)). Numerous studies concentrate on big businesses or particular sectors, which leaves a knowledge vacuum regarding how SMEs, which frequently lack the resources and skills necessary to successfully execute culturally sensitive marketing tactics ([Sharabati et al. 2024](#) and [Manyaga et al., 2024](#)). Practitioners looking to improve their digital marketing activities can benefit greatly from research that examines the particular advantages and limitations of SMEs in diverse cultural contexts ([Simarmata et al., 2024](#) and [Cahyono & Ardianto, 2024](#)). Understanding how to operationalize cultural sensitivity within the constraints of limited budgets and personnel is crucial. Additionally, there is a need for more comprehensive frameworks that integrate cultural sensitivity into digital marketing strategies for SMEs. Current literature tends to treat cultural sensitivity as an isolated factor rather than as part of a broader marketing strategy that includes elements such as branding, customer engagement, and content creation ([Jeong et al., 2018](#)).

Moreover, the intersection of cultural sensitivity and technological advancements in digital marketing is another area that requires

further exploration ([Singh & Poorvaja, 2023](#)). For SMEs looking to effectively utilize digital channels, it is essential to comprehend how cultural sensitivity is included into developing digital marketing tools and platforms ([Ghotbifar et al., 2017](#) and [Fuada et al., 2024](#)). Research that examines how cutting-edge technology like artificial intelligence and data analytics might improve culturally sensitive marketing strategies could be helpful for SMEs trying to innovate in their marketing strategies.

Furthermore, the role of cultural sensitivity in crisis management and reputation management for SMEs is an under-researched area. In the context of rapid globalization and the increasing likelihood of cultural missteps in marketing campaigns, understanding how cultural sensitivity can mitigate risks and enhance brand reputation is critical ([Hallam et al., 2018](#)). Research that examines case studies of SMEs that have successfully navigated cultural challenges during crises can offer practical guidance for others in similar situations.

Referring to the description explaining the problem statement in the previous paragraph, this research question can help the author synthesize:

1. RQ1: How frameworks that integrate cultural sensitivity can enhance digital marketing strategies for SMEs?
2. RQ2: How cultural sensitivity directly impacts digital marketing performance metrics for SMEs in different Asian contexts?
3. RQ3: How challenges and opportunities faced by SMEs in diverse cultural environments across Asia can enhance digital marketing strategies for SMEs?
4. RQ4: How cultural sensitivity can be integrated into these technologies is crucial for SMEs aiming to leverage digital channels effectively?

## RESEARCH METHOD

An organized and thorough approach of finding, assessing, and synthesizing research studies on a particular subject is a systematic literature review (SLR). Regarding how cultural sensitivity might improve small and medium-sized businesses' (SMEs') digital marketing success in Asia ([Al Koliby et al., 2024](#)), an SLR serves several critical functions that can advance both academic understanding and practical applications ([Busca & Bertrandias, 2020](#)).

An SLR aims to collate existing studies related to cultural sensitivity and digital marketing performance among SMEs in Asia. This involves systematically searching databases for relevant articles ensuring that the review encompasses a wide range of perspectives and findings. For instance, studies such as [Jadhav et al. \(2023\)](#) analysis of digital marketing impacts on SMEs can provide foundational insights into the current state of research.

An SLR critically assesses the methodologies employed in existing studies. This includes examining how cultural sensitivity has been operationalized, the types of data collected, and the analytical techniques used. Researchers can determine the literature's strengths and shortcomings by assessing these approaches, which can help guide the creation of new studies. For example, examining the qualitative approaches in Liu's analysis of marketing strategies [Al Koliby et al. \(2024\)](#) can highlight gaps in quantitative assessments of cultural sensitivity.

The SLR synthesizes findings from various studies to draw overarching conclusions about how cultural sensitivity in enhancing performance of digital marketing. This synthesis can reveal patterns, trends, and inconsistencies in the literature, providing a clearer picture of how cultural sensitivity impacts SMEs' marketing efforts. For instance, studies that explore the intersection of culture and marketing strategies, such as those by ([Dobbins, 2021](#)) can be

integrated to understand broader implications for SMEs.

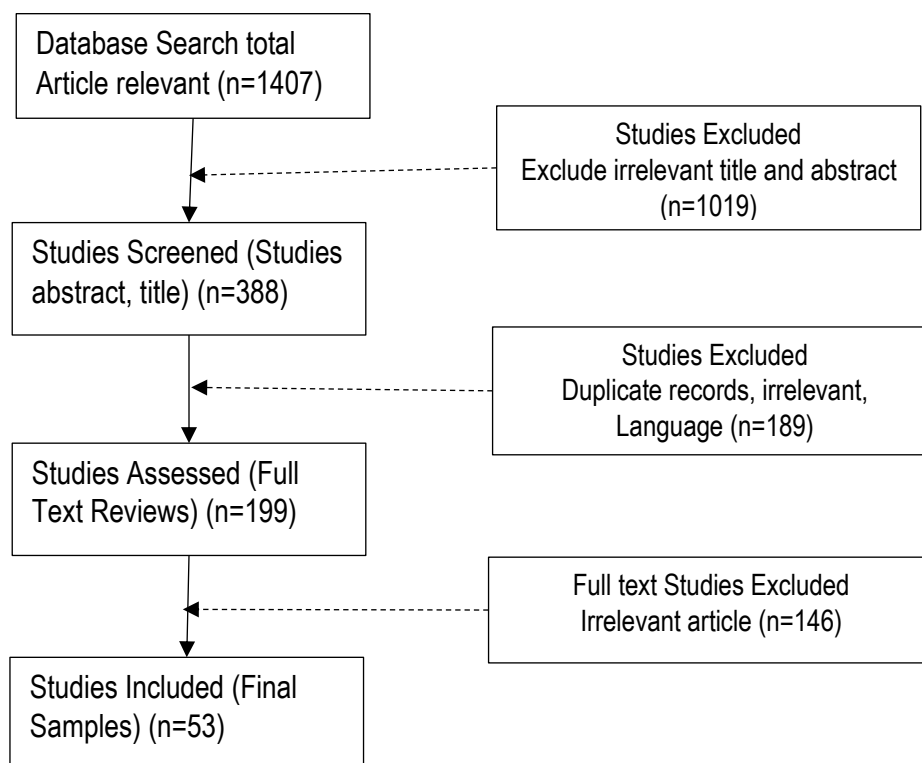
*Process Data Collection*

We looked through the electronic database Scopus for pertinent articles. The broad coverage of this database, which is commonly used in systematic reviews of the literature, is why we chose it. We confined the article type to only books, book chapters, conference proceedings, and other publications, and we only looked for peer-reviewed journal papers written in English in order to be consistent with earlier systematic studies in the marketing sector (MacLure et al., 2016). Journal articles are a source of verified knowledge, which explains why. Additionally, Douros et al. (2023) limited the selection of articles to those published in Scopus indexes to ensure their quality.

Munn et al. (2018), in order to choose the best search keywords, we first conducted a scoping search of papers that were directly

connected to our issue in order to find keyword recurrence patterns in academic research on the function of cultural sensitivity in enhancing digital marketing of SMEs in Asia. Using the query phrase "cultural" AND "digital" AND "marketing" OR "SMEs" OR "Asia" to cover the issue extensively, we first ran a trial search. Next, we chose titles and keywords that were pertinent to the subject of the study.

Titles, keywords, and abstracts were searched, as is customary in systematic literature reviews (Pisani et al., 2017). The Scopus program produced 1,407 articles in this first step. After we excluded articles with irrelevant titles and abstracts 1019, and articles with similarities or duplicates and irrelevant to the topic and not in English 189, and excluded articles that were irrelevant after reading the full text 146. 53 publications in total were chosen due to their relevance to the body of research on how cultural sensitivity might improve digital marketing for SMEs in Asia. (See in Figure 1).



**Fig.1. Process Search**

### Data Extraction

Following their selection of the papers, the authors went over each one in its entirety to collect pertinent data. In order to reduce human error and provide a transparent and repeatable procedure, important data was recorded and summarized using a data extraction form. The following factors were taken into consideration when extracting each article: (1) document by years, (2) document by source, (3) document by authors, (4) document by affiliation, (5) document by field research, (6) document by country, (7) population, and (8) future research (9) independent and dependent variable directions recommended by the authors. A thematic and descriptive study of the literature was made possible by this methodical coding. An extensive evaluation of the research field was made possible by the systematic approach, which also assisted in efficiently organizing the data that was gathered (Williams & Moser, 2019). Figure 1 shows the overall process of the review.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Analysis

Finding patterns, advantages, and disadvantages in the body of research on how cultural sensitivity in enhancing digital marketing SMEs in Asia requires doing a descriptive analysis of the literature (Jadhav et al., 2023). Significant findings on the technical features of

the examined studies are presented in this section, together with information about: (1) document by years, (2) document by source, (3) document by authors, (4) document by affiliation, (5) document by field research, (6) document by country, (7) population, and (8) future research (9) independent and dependent variable. These observations provide important context for comprehending the nature of this field of study and point out any knowledge gaps that need to be filled.

### Document by Years

With the earliest article in the systematic review being from 2015, the field of study is still in its infancy. Research progressed slowly between 2015 (n = 1) and 2016 (n = 1); between them, just 3.7% of all reviewed articles were published. A notable increase in publications over the last seven years can be seen in Figure 2, which includes 2 papers in 2017, 3 in 2018, 1 in 2019, 10 in 2020, 6 in 2021, 9 in 2022, and 11 in 2023—altogether accounting for approximately 83% of the examined articles. Nevertheless, until October 2024, there were fewer articles—1 in 2019, 6 in 2021, and 9 in 2024. The growing trend of SMEs in Asia enhancing their digital marketing is reflected in this increase. The review includes papers published until October 2024; therefore, the data may be incomplete even though scholarly output peaked in 2023.

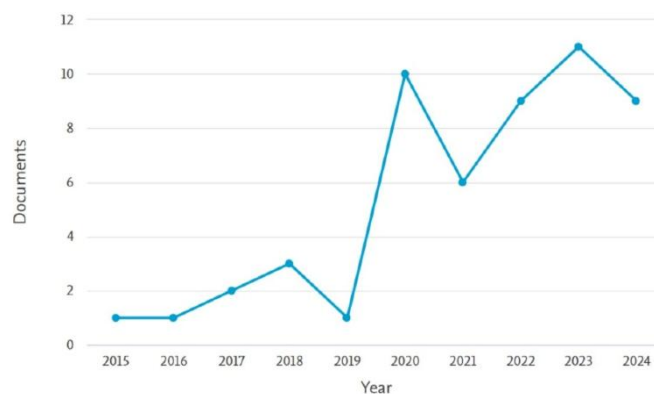
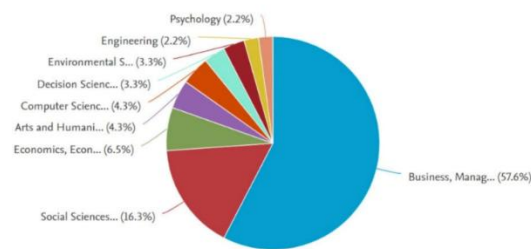


Fig.2. Number of documents by years



**Fig.3. Document by field research**

*Research fields and publication outlet*

The bulk of publications fall into the following topic areas: business, management, accounting (57.6%), social science (16.3%), and economics (6.5%), according to the Scopus Guide subject categories. The remaining 19.6% are published in journals related to art and humanities, computer science, psychology, decision science, engineering, and psychology. It is clear that multidisciplinary cultural and digital marketing research is the focus of this field. This outcome is illustrated in figure 3. Upon closer inspection, the aforementioned research topics have a large number of publications that publish research. Administrative Science, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Digital and Social Media Marketing, Journal of Product and Brand Management, Journal of Tourism Heritage and Services Marketing, Asia Pacific Business Review, International Marketing Review, Journal of Business Research (each journals n=2). The remaining journals listed in the review either released a single paper or several.

*Authors*

To evaluate the impact of prior research, statistics on the number of papers per author were collected from Scopus, focusing on the author with the most publications. Each contributor only wrote one essay that looked at how culture might help SMEs in Asia with their digital marketing; none of the authors wrote more than one. As illustrated in figure 4, there are Alam, Alexis, Algumzi, Almaguer, Almeida-

Santana, Amanatidis, Amin, Anlamlier, Arslan, and Balatska.

*Affiliations*

A lot of the previous author who are connected to universities all over the world are particularly keen to investigate how culture might enhance SMEs' digital marketing. As illustrated in figure 5, University of West Attica, Instituto Politécnico do Cávado e do Ave, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria Iscte – Instituto Universitário de Lisboa, and International Hellenic University (each n=2), University of St. Kliment Ohridski, ESLSCA Business School Paris, VDart Inc, and Central Bank of Solomon Islands (each n=1) are the 10 best institutions that showed the most interest in this subject. The compilation of papers reveals that a large number of writers from Europe and Latin America are investigating how culture may enhance SMEs' digital marketing.

*Country*

In addition, a large number of writers from around the globe—including those from Asian nations—have done a great deal of study on how culture may enhance SME digital marketing. As illustrated in figure 6, the United States (n=10), the UK (n=5), Australia, China, France, Greece, Italy (each n=4), Canada, India, and Portugal (each n=3) are the nations that have given this research issue the greatest attention. These findings suggest that writers from the US and the UK have done extensive

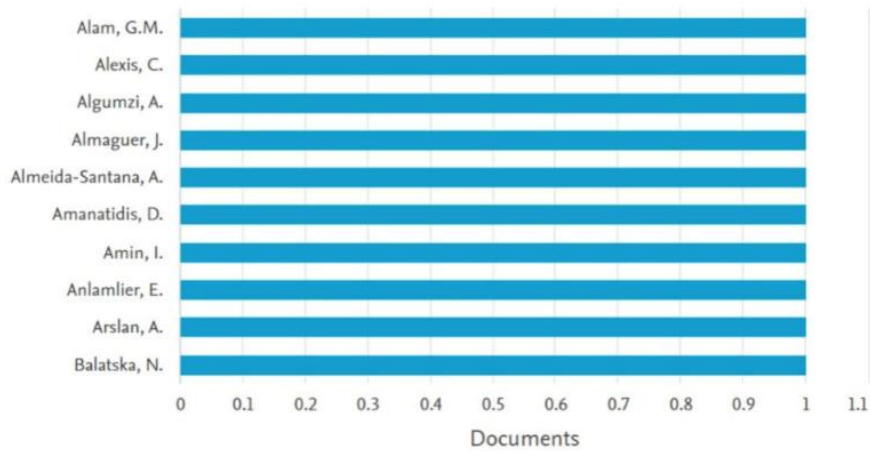


Fig. 4. Document by authors

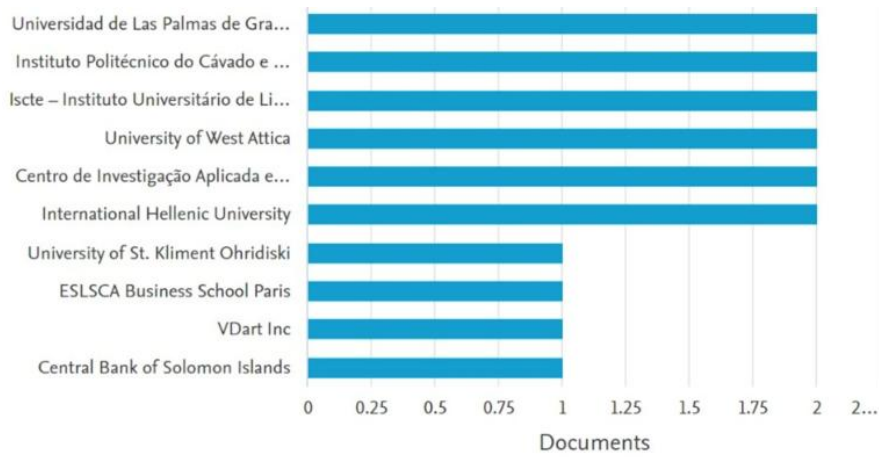


Fig. 5. Document by Affiliations

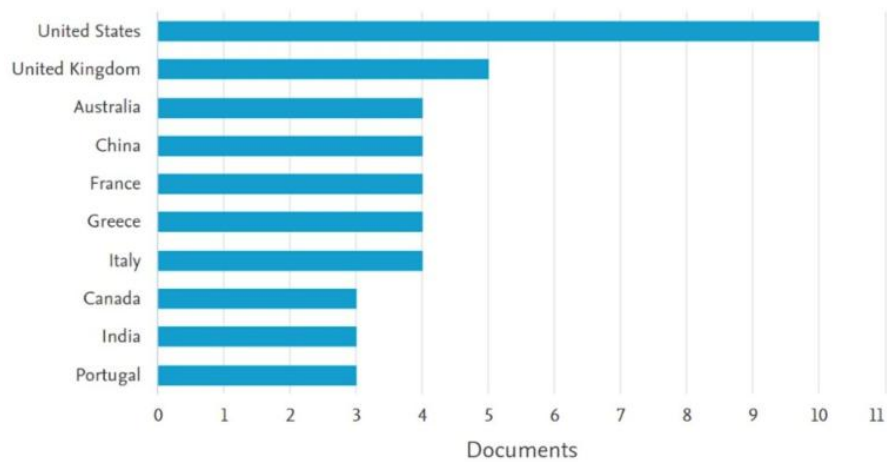


Fig. 6. Document by Country

research on the subject of how culture may enhance SME digital marketing.

*Key Finding*

In order to improve digital marketing for SMEs in Asia, cultural sensitivity considerations are crucial. Better innovation, competitive performance, and market flexibility can result from incorporating cultural sensitivity into digital marketing strategy. This response explores the various ways in which culture sensitivity influences digital marketing in Asian SMEs, drawing insights from the provided research papers. Important findings from several previous researchers will be presented in the Table 1.

Based on these findings, important notes are provided, Entrepreneurial culture (EC) is crucial for fostering innovation capability (IC) and digital marketing capability (DMC) in SMEs. Through the mediating function of IC and the moderating function of DMC, it has been

demonstrated that EC in Malaysia has a beneficial impact on sustainable competitive performance (SCP). This suggests that a strong entrepreneurial culture can enhance digital marketing efforts by promoting innovation and value creation ([Al Koliby et al., 2024](#)). In Pakistan, digital platforms have been found to positively impact innovation culture, which in turn enhances innovation performance (IP). E-commerce marketing capabilities further strengthen this relationship, indicating that a culture of innovation is essential for leveraging digital marketing tools effectively ([Khatak, 2022](#)). One of the most important indicators of digital innovation in SMEs is digital organizational culture. The relationship between digital culture and innovation in Pakistan's ICT sector is mediated by digital capabilities and organizational readiness, underscoring the significance of a positive cultural climate for the success of digital marketing ([Zhen et al., 2021](#)).

**Table 1. Population**

| Author/ Years                           | Article<br><i>Topics</i>   | <i>Finding</i>   |
|---|--|--|
| <a href="#">Al Koliby et al. (2024)</a> | Exposing the connections between manufacturing SMEs' sustainable competitive performance, innovation capacity, digital marketing capabilities, and entrepreneurial culture: evidence from developing nations | The results of the study show that innovation capability (IC), which in turn influences sustainable competitive performance (SCP) in Malaysian SMEs, is positively impacted by entrepreneurial culture (EC). Furthermore, the study shows that the relationship between EC and SCP is moderated by digital marketing capabilities (DMC). |
| <a href="#">Khatak (2022)</a>           | The Innovation Performance Perspective on the Hegemony of Digital Platforms, Innovation Culture, and E-Commerce Marketing Capabilities   | The innovation performance (IP) and innovation culture (IC) of Pakistani SMEs are positively impacted by digital platforms. The study verified that the interaction between digital platforms and IP is mediated by IC.  |
| <a href="#">Zhen et al. (2021)</a>      | Examining SMEs in the Digital Economy at the Intersection of Digital Organizational Culture, Capabilities, Organizational Readiness, and Innovation  | In order to promote innovation in SMEs functioning in the digital economy, the study discovered a strong correlation between digital organisational culture and digital capabilities and digital innovation.   |

## Thematic Analysis

The goal of the theme analysis was to present a thorough summary of academic research on the impact of human capital agility on Asian SMEs' resilience. By taking an inductive approach, the researchers did not rely on a pre-existing coding system, but instead allowed themes to develop directly from the data.

The selection of this methodology was prompted by the recent developments in the field and the growing lexicon surrounding influencer marketing tactics. To determine the phenomena they addressed, 53 publications were first examined for their goal, research questions, main arguments, and structures. Each article was then given a descriptive statement, which produced the first set of theme labels. Thematic categories were formed by repeatedly sorting, comparing, and grouping articles; these categories were then further honed to produce a taxonomic hierarchy. Five primary research themes emerged from this process: frameworks of integrate cultural sensitivity for enhance digital marketing strategies for SMEs; cultural sensitivity directly impacts digital marketing performance metrics for SMEs in different Asian contexts; challenges and opportunities SMEs in diverse cultural environments across Asia can enhance digital marketing strategies for SMEs; cultural sensitivity can be integrated into technologies for SMEs aiming to leverage digital channels effectively.

*RQ1: Frameworks of integrate cultural sensitivity for enhance digital marketing strategies for SMEs*

For small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) hoping to succeed in a variety of marketplaces, incorporating cultural sensitivity into digital marketing tactics is essential. The ability to recognise and comprehend cultural variations and modify marketing techniques appropriately is known as cultural sensitivity (Pires & Stanton, 2014). In addition to increasing marketing campaigns'

efficacy, this strategy builds stronger relationships with customers, which eventually boosts customer loyalty and company performance (Susiang et al., 2023).

Improving online reputation management is a major advantage of integrating cultural sensitivity into digital marketing. Digital platforms, as noted by Holloway, allow customers to share their experiences and shape the public's opinion of businesses (Holloway, 2024). SME marketing and supply chain strategies can better interact with customers and react to online reviews by taking cultural factors into account. In the globally interconnected world of today, where cultural blunders may swiftly result in bad press, this involvement is especially crucial. Businesses that show cultural sensitivity have a greater chance of developing trusting digital connections with customers, which improves their online visibility and reputation (Holloway, 2024).

The effectiveness of communication techniques can be greatly increased by implementing a culturally sensitive marketing approach. In order to account for variations in customer behaviour and preferences, Tüfekci and Akbiyik stress the significance of cross-cultural research methodologies. SMEs can modify their marketing messaging to more successfully connect with a variety of audiences by comprehending the subtle cultural differences that affect consumer perceptions (Tüfekci & Akbiyik, 2023). This customised strategy raises the possibility of getting the intended customer reactions while also making marketing communications more relevant (Tüfekci & Akbiyik, 2023).

In addition to enhancing communication strategies, cultural sensitivity can also inform product development and positioning. Zakaria and Abdul-Talib highlight the necessity of aligning organizational culture with the cultural values of target markets (Kafetzopoulos & Katou, 2024). SMEs can modify their products and marketing methods to better suit these cultural contexts by knowing the unique

requirements and preferences of their international clientele ([Billore & Billore, 2020](#)). Because consumers are more likely to support brands that match their cultural values, this alignment not only improves customer satisfaction but also fortifies the brand's overall image. messages, but also raises the possibility of getting the intended customer reactions ([Sasaki et al., 2021](#)).

*RQ2: Cultural sensitivity directly impacts digital marketing performance metrics for SMEs in different Asian contexts*

Small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) operating in different Asian contexts find that cultural sensitivity is a crucial component that directly affects digital marketing performance metrics. Given the vast cultural diversity of the Asian market, engagement, brand loyalty, and overall marketing efficacy may all be greatly increased by comprehending and incorporating cultural quirks into digital marketing methods. This paper explores how cultural sensitivity influences digital marketing performance metrics, particularly in the context of SMEs across different Asian regions.

First of all, cultural sensitivity can improve customer engagement metrics, which are essential for determining how well digital marketing initiatives are working. While Malesev and Cherry discuss the complexities of the business environment for SMEs in the construction sector, they do not specifically address the impact of cultural sensitivity on engagement metrics. Therefore, this citation is not directly supportive of the claim made regarding engagement rates on digital platforms ([Malesev & Cherry, 2021](#)).

Furthermore, the impact of cultural sensitivity extends to conversion rates, a crucial performance metric for SMEs. Kübler et al. emphasize that consumer behavior varies significantly across different cultural contexts, affecting their sensitivity to pricing and user ratings. This bolsters the idea that modifying marketing messaging to reflect regional cultural

norms can improve attractiveness and boost conversion rates ([Kübler et al., 2018](#)).

In addition to engagement and conversion rates, cultural sensitivity also plays a pivotal role in customer retention metrics. Pandey et al. argue that understanding cultural differences allows SMEs to create more personalized marketing experiences, which can lead to higher customer satisfaction and loyalty. This supports the claim that adding cultural considerations to marketing tactics can increase customer lifetime value (CLV) by encouraging repeat purchase and favorable word-of-mouth recommendations ([Pandey et al., 2020](#)).

*RQ3: Challenges and opportunities SMEs in diverse cultural environments across Asia can enhance digital marketing strategies for SMEs*

The opportunities and difficulties that SMEs encounter in various cultural contexts throughout Asia have a big impact on their digital marketing plans. As SMEs navigate the complexities of varying cultural contexts, they must adapt their marketing approaches to resonate with local consumers while overcoming obstacles unique to each region ([Okonkwoi et al., 2021](#)). This synthesis explores how these challenges and opportunities can enhance digital marketing strategies for SMEs in Asia.

The primary challenges SMEs face in culturally diverse environments is the need for market-sensing capabilities. Tamin and Adis emphasize that firms with strong market-sensing capabilities are better positioned to understand consumer preferences and behaviors, which is essential for effective digital marketing ([Tamin & Adis, 2019](#)). In Asia, where cultural nuances can vary widely, SMEs must invest in understanding local customs and consumer behavior to tailor their marketing strategies effectively. This understanding can lead to improved digital brand performance, as SMEs that align their offerings with cultural expectations are more likely to engage consumers successfully.

Moreover, the rapid changes in consumer tastes and buying behavior present

both challenges and opportunities for SMEs. Budiarto et al. highlight that digital marketing allows SMEs to quickly adapt to these changes through effective communication strategies (Budiarto et al., 2022). By leveraging digital platforms, SMEs can engage in real-time marketing, adjusting their campaigns based on immediate consumer feedback and trends. This agility not only enhances their marketing effectiveness but also fosters a closer connection with consumers, which is crucial in culturally diverse markets.

In addition to market-sensing capabilities, the integration of tool of digital marketing is vital for SMEs to navigate cultural challenges. Taiminen and Karjaluoto (2015) point out that many SMEs struggle with the unplanned nature of their digital marketing activities, which can hinder their effectiveness. By adopting a more structured approach to digital marketing, SMEs can better align their strategies with cultural contexts, ensuring that their messaging resonates with local audiences. This structured approach can lead to improved performance metrics, such as engagement rates and conversion rates, as marketing efforts become more targeted and relevant.

*RQ4: Cultural sensitivity can be integrated into technologies for SMEs aiming to leverage digital channels effectively*

For SMEs looking to efficiently use digital channels, incorporating cultural sensitivity into digital technology is essential (Garzoni et al., 2020). In diverse cultural environments, particularly across Asia, SMEs face unique challenges and opportunities that necessitate a nuanced understanding of local cultures (Naradda et al., 2020). By ensuring that digital marketing tactics connect with target audiences and encourage engagement and loyalty, this knowledge can greatly increase their efficacy (Nuseir, 2016).

Developing Digital Integrated Marketing Communication (DIMC) strategies is the main technique to include cultural sensitivity into

digital marketing technologies. Subaldan emphasizes that DIMC combines various digital marketing activities, such as advertising, personal selling, and public relations, tailored to communicate effectively with culturally diverse audiences (Subaldan, 2023). By employing culturally relevant messaging and visuals, SMEs can create a more relatable brand image, which is essential for building trust and rapport with consumers in different cultural contexts.

Moreover, the alignment of digital strategies with cultural values is critical for SMEs. Canhoto et al. discuss the importance of aligning digital strategies with organizational culture, which can enhance the effectiveness of digital initiatives (Canhoto et al., 2021). For SMEs operating in culturally diverse environments, this alignment means understanding local customs, values, and consumer behaviors. By integrating these cultural insights into their digital strategies, SMEs can improve customer engagement and satisfaction, ultimately leading to better performance metrics.

The digitalization of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs also heavily relies on cultural sensitivity. Ahmad et al. emphasizes how CSR and digital culture integration can improve SMEs' long-term competitive success (Ahmad et al., 2024). SMEs can customize their digital CSR initiatives to connect with local populations by knowing the cultural relevance of CSR in various locales. In addition to improving company reputation, this culturally aware strategy encourages customer loyalty and a sense of community.

Furthermore, the integration of cultural sensitivity into digital marketing technologies can enhance customer experience. Pourmorshed & Durst (2022) argue that a digitalization integration framework can help SMEs develop customer-centric digital supply chains. By understanding cultural preferences and expectations, SMEs can create personalized customer experiences that cater to local tastes. Because customers are more inclined to interact

with firms that recognize and value their cultural backgrounds, personalization plays a critical role in increasing customer happiness and loyalty.

## CONCLUSION

### Theoretical Implication

The importance of cultural sensitivity in improving the digital marketing performance of small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Asia has important and varied theoretical ramifications. As SMEs increasingly engage with diverse cultural contexts, understanding and integrating cultural sensitivity into their digital marketing strategies becomes essential for achieving competitive advantage and optimizing performance metrics (Deku et al., 2024). This conversation synthesizes a number of academic stances that emphasize how crucial cultural sensitivity is to SMEs' digital marketing.

A fundamental framework for comprehending how cultural sensitivity might function as a special resource that strengthens SMEs' competitive advantage is provided by the Resource-Based View (RBV) hypothesis (El Nemar et al., 2022). SMEs may stand out in the market by identifying and utilizing cultural quirks, which will increase consumer engagement and brand loyalty. This is consistent with research by Bahukeling et al., who highlights that when cultural settings are taken into account, digital marketing partnerships between SMEs and larger organizations can have a substantial positive impact (Bahukeling et al., 2024). The ability to adapt marketing strategies to local cultures can be viewed as a valuable resource that SMEs can exploit to enhance their market positioning.

Moreover, the integration of cultural sensitivity into digital marketing strategies can be framed through the lens of theory of dynamic capabilities. Quinton et al. (2018) argue that organizations must possess the capabilities to optimize opportunities presented by the digital era. In this context, Cultural sensitivity develops into a capability of dynamic that helps SMEs adapt successfully to shifting cultural trends and

customer preferences (Quansah et al., 2022). By fostering an organizational culture that values cultural awareness, in digital marketing, SMEs may improve their responsiveness and agility, which will eventually result in improved performance.

Additionally, in order to comprehend the theoretical ramifications of cultural sensitivity in digital marketing, the idea of market orientation is crucial. Pandey et al. (2020) stress how important it is to align marketing strategies with consumer preferences and needs, which are often impacted by cultural factors. SMEs can improve their capacity to satisfy consumer expectations and increase customer satisfaction and retention by implementing a market-oriented strategy that places a high priority on cultural sensitivity (Ngon, 2023). SMEs can use this market orientation as a theoretical framework to create culturally appropriate marketing campaigns that appeal to regional consumers. Furthermore, innovation diffusion theory can be used to analyze the function of cultural sensitivity in digital marketing. The revolutionary potential of digital marketing for SMEs, especially in culturally diverse situations, is highlighted by Ahmad's research (Ahmad & Pandey, 2024). By integrating cultural sensitivity into their digital marketing strategies, SMEs can facilitate the diffusion of innovative marketing practices that align with local cultural values, thereby enhancing their overall marketing effectiveness.

The discipline of consumer culture theory (CCT), which highlights the significance of comprehending consumer behavior within cultural contexts, is likewise affected theoretically. Halik et al. discuss how digital consumer culture shapes marketing practices and consumer interactions (Halik et al., 2021). By incorporating cultural sensitivity into their digital marketing strategies, SMEs can better navigate the complexities of consumer behavior in diverse cultural environments (Huzaizi et al., 2021). This knowledge may guide the creation of advertising campaigns that more deeply connect

with customers, increasing engagement and brand loyalty in the process.

### **Practical Implication**

Cultural sensitivity has important and varied practical ramifications for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) in Asia when it comes to improving digital marketing success. As SMEs operate in diverse cultural environments, integrating cultural sensitivity into their digital marketing strategies can lead to improved performance metrics, enhanced customer engagement, and sustainable competitive advantages (Loku & Havolli, 2024). This discussion outlines several key practical implications based on the integration of cultural sensitivity into digital marketing practices.

One of the most immediate practical implications is the need for SMEs to develop culturally tailored marketing content. Tamin and Adis emphasize that understanding customer preferences and cultural nuances is essential for enhancing digital brand performance (Tamin & Adis, 2019). SMEs can achieve this by conducting thorough market research to identify cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors that influence consumer decision-making. SMEs may build closer relationships with their target consumers and boost engagement and loyalty by crafting marketing messages that speak to local cultures.

Additionally, cultural awareness can improve social media marketing tactics' efficacy (Amegbe et al., 2023 and Kasmoo et al., 2025). emphasizes how social media plays a crucial part in giving SMEs insightful information about their goods and services. SMEs can get immediate feedback and modify their marketing tactics by using social media platforms to interact with audiences from a variety of cultural backgrounds. In addition to increasing customer happiness, this responsiveness helps SMEs establish themselves as culturally sensitive companies, which can boost their market standing (Okeke et al., 2024).

Better customer experiences can also result from incorporating cultural awareness into

digital marketing tactics (Shobeiri et al., 2018). Jeong & Chung (2023) talk about how marketing innovation and social capital may improve SMEs' financial performance and competitive edge in export markets. SMEs can adjust their customer inter-actions and service offerings to match local expectations by knowing cultural preferences. Higher retention rates and favorable word-of-mouth recommendations can result from this tailored strategy, which can also greatly improve the overall customer experience (Haenlein & Libai, 2017).

Furthermore, cultural sensitivity can inform the development of effective pricing strategies. Klučnikov et al. (2022) suggest that SMEs with higher export orientation are more aware of various market conditions, including cultural factors that influence pricing. By understanding local pricing sensitivities and consumer perceptions of value, SMEs can develop pricing strategies that align with cultural expectations, ultimately driving sales and improving financial performance.

The role of cultural sensitivity also extends to the optimization of digital marketing channels. Kamil et al. (2023) suggest that creative concepts have a big influence on company performance. By identifying the most effective digital channels for reaching culturally diverse audiences, SMEs can allocate their marketing resources more efficiently. This targeted approach can enhance the return on investment (ROI) for digital marketing initiatives, as SMEs are more likely to engage consumers through channels that resonate with their cultural preferences.

To give a more thorough examination of the long-term impacts of entrepreneurial culture (EC) on sustainable competitive performance (SCP) in manufacturing SMEs, future research could concentrate on carrying out longitudinal studies (Al Koliby et al., 2024). To generalize the results of this study, future research could examine how digital platforms affect innovation performance and culture in economies other than Pakistan (Khatak, 2022).

**Table 2. Future Research**

| Author/ Years                           | Article Topics  | Future research  |
|---|---|--|
| <a href="#">Al Koliby et al. (2024)</a> | Exposing the connections between the innovative capacity, digital marketing skills, entrepreneurial culture, and long-term competitive success of manufacturing SMEs: evidence from developing nations. | In order to maximise the moderating influence on the relationship between EC and SCP, more research might examine the precise tactics and procedures that SMEs can use to improve their digital marketing capabilities (DMC).                                      |
| <a href="#">Khatak (2022)</a>           | The Innovation Performance Perspective on the Hegemony of Digital Platforms, Innovation Culture, and E-Commerce Marketing Capabilities  | In order to obtain a deeper understanding of these variables beyond quantitative analysis, future study could concentrate on examining the relationship between digital platforms, innovation culture, and innovation performance using qualitative methodologies. |
| <a href="#">Zhen et al. (2021)</a>      | Examining SMEs in the Digital Economy at the Intersection of Digital Organisational Culture, Capabilities, Organisational Readiness, and Innovation   | Future studies could examine the precise processes by which digital organisational culture affects digital innovation in SMEs, possibly revealing more moderating or mediating elements that could improve comprehension of this connection.                       |

Investigating the impact of varying levels of organizational readiness across different sectors within the digital economy could provide insights into how SMEs can better prepare for and implement digital innovations, leading to tailored strategies for different industries ([Zhen et al., 2021](#)). Referring to future research, from the results of the author's research [Al Koliby et al. \(2024\)](#), [Khatak \(2022\)](#), [Zhen et al. \(2021\)](#) several research agendas can be proposed. The research agenda refers to the role of culture in improving digital marketing of SMEs in Asia. Here is a potential research agenda focusing on the future research directions suggested in the articles:

### 1. Digital Marketing Capability in SMEs

Objective: Examine certain tactics and procedures small and medium-sized businesses

(SMEs) can use to improve their DMC (digital marketing capabilities).

Research Questions:

RQ1: Which techniques work best for SMEs looking to enhance their digital marketing plans?

RQ2: What impact does improving DMC have on the connection between sustainable competitive performance (SCP) and entrepreneurial culture (EC)?

Methodology Suggestions: Case studies of SMEs in emerging markets, comparative analysis across different industries, or experimental designs to test specific strategies.

### 2. Innovation Performance and Digital Platforms

Objective: Use qualitative methods to examine the connection between innovation

performance, innovation culture, and digital platforms.

Research Questions:

RQ: How do digital platforms facilitate innovation within companies?

RQ: What role does organizational culture play in driving innovation through digital tools?

Methodology Suggestions: Conduct qualitative studies such as interviews or focus groups with innovation managers, or ethnographic studies within tech companies.

### 3. Innovation in SMEs and Digital Organizational Culture

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Objective: Examine the ways in which SMEs' innovation is impacted by digital organizational culture.

Research Questions:

RQ: What mediating or moderating factors could affect the impact of digital culture on innovation?

RQ: How does organizational readiness influence the adoption of digital innovation practices?

Methodology Suggestions: Structural equation modeling to test mediating/moderating effects, or longitudinal studies to observe changes over time.

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