



A Study of Digital Marketing for the Unorganized Retail Sector in Jodhpur City

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Abstract: India's unorganized retail sector, comprising kirana shops, local vendors, and micro-retailers, forms the backbone of the economy, especially in Tier-2 cities like Jodhpur. Despite its significance, this sector lags in digital adoption due to socio-economic and infrastructural challenges. This study investigates the use and impact of digital marketing within the unorganized retail sector of Jodhpur city, with a focus on understanding adoption trends, influencing factors, and technological readiness. The primary objective is to assess how digital platforms such as WhatsApp Business, Facebook, Instagram, and UPI-enabled tools are being utilized by small retailers. The study further explores how socio-economic variables (such as education level, age, income, and business type) affect the implementation of digital strategies. It also evaluates the relative effectiveness of traditional versus digital marketing approaches, and analyzes the influence of emerging digital trends, particularly social media marketing, on customer engagement and business growth. Using a mixed-methods approach that includes structured surveys and semi-structured discussion with retailers and digital service providers, the study identifies both the benefits and challenges faced by local businesses. Findings reveal that while awareness of digital tools is increasing, widespread adoption is constrained by digital illiteracy, limited resources, and hesitation toward new technologies. Many retailers require external support to overcome technical barriers and implement effective digital strategies. The study concludes by recommending targeted training programs, local digital marketing partnerships, and policy interventions to bridge the digital divide and empower unorganized retailers in Jodhpur to participate fully in the digital economy.

Keywords : *Unorganized Retail Sector, Digital Marketing, Jodhpur City, Socio-economic Factors, Social Media Marketing, Traditional Marketing, Retail Digitalization, Small Business Adoption, WhatsApp Business, UPI Payments, Digital Divide, Micro-Retailers, Tier-2 Cities, Customer Engagement, Digital Marketing Challenges.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Globally, the rapid advancement of digital technologies and the waves of digital disruption are transforming business functions across various domains, including finance, operations, strategic planning, and organizational design. According to the Statista Digital Market Outlook, the global e-commerce industry saw a 70% increase in revenue between 2019 and 2024, reaching approximately \$3.8 trillion. Despite this growth, small grocery and neighborhood stores remained largely unaffected by digital disruption before the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, recent shifts in consumer behavior and accelerated technological adoption in the post-pandemic era have brought significant changes to small retail businesses worldwide. Digitalization defined as the use of digital technologies to transform business models and create new revenue and value-generating opportunities has become a focal point in post-pandemic research. As digitalization reshapes how businesses and individuals operate and interact, many economies, especially emerging ones, continue to struggle with challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, lack of digital awareness, and limited technological capabilities.

Among the sectors most affected is the unorganized retail and grocery segment, which plays a vital economic role in many developing countries. Globally, the adoption of digital practices by small retailers has varied significantly. For example, countries like Malaysia have proactively promoted digital adoption, while others like the United States have faced hurdles even in small retail digitalization. In India, policy reforms such as demonetization and the implementation of GST helped accelerate digital adoption before the pandemic, which was further intensified during COVID-19.

Despite a growing body of research on digital adoption in the organized sector, there is limited literature addressing the unique challenges faced by small, unorganized retail businesses such as affordability, lack of training, hyper-local customer preferences, and weak infrastructure. This study addresses this research gap by focusing on digitalization within India's unorganized retail sector, using an integrated framework based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2).

The novelty of this research lies in three key areas: (1) its exclusive focus on the unorganized retail segment in India, (2) its acknowledgment of India's diverse geographical and socio-cultural retail environment, and (3) its micro-level analysis of the barriers and enablers affecting digital transformation. The findings contribute to the growing literature on the digital economy by offering insights into the specific needs and challenges of small, neighborhood retailers in emerging markets. These insights also have significant implications for policymakers aiming to support digital transformation in the unorganized sector.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 reviews relevant literature; Section 3 outlines the theoretical model; Sections 4 and 5 describe the methodology and data analysis; and Sections 6 and 7 present the discussion, conclusions, and policy implications.

2. Literature Review

The literature reviewed for this study is divided into two primary sections. The first section focuses on unorganized small businesses, specifically grocery or kirana stores, with a special emphasis on the Indian context. The second section explores the role of digital technologies in shaping the performance of these businesses, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. In emerging economies like India, small businesses such as kirana stores hold a crucial position in both economic and social spheres. These neighborhood stores not only serve as primary suppliers of essential goods but also provide livelihood opportunities for a significant segment of the population. Characterized by personalized services, flexible credit options, and deep-rooted community relationships, kirana stores typically operate in an unorganized retail environment. Unlike large-format retail stores in developed economies, these outlets are hyper-local, often adjusting inventory based on local tastes, cultural preferences, and seasonal needs. Despite the presence of some organized retail formats, the unorganized sector remains dominant in India. Research suggests that this segment largely comprises individuals from low-income groups or the "bottom of the pyramid," highlighting its importance in inclusive economic development. India, one of the world's five largest retail markets, contributes nearly 10% to its GDP and employs about 8% of the total workforce most of which is in the unorganized segment. According to estimates, India's retail sector is poised to reach a valuation of \$2 trillion by 2032, with a projected growth rate of 9% from 2019 to 2030. Furthermore, India has the third-highest number of e-retail consumers globally, and its digital retail ecosystem is growing at an impressive annual rate of 25%. This growth is being propelled by the rising popularity of digital payment systems (e.g., UPI), the shift towards direct-to-consumer (D2C) models, new-age logistics, and evolving consumer behavior patterns. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, digitalization was not a core focus for most unorganized retail stores, both in India and globally. However, the pandemic served as a catalyst for change. Lockdowns and social distancing norms prompted many local stores to adopt digital tools to maintain business continuity. Messaging apps like WhatsApp were widely used to manage customer communication, facilitate home deliveries, and introduce virtual queues. Notably, the adoption largely involved cost-effective and accessible platforms such as UPI (Unified Payments Interface), social media, and basic inventory or billing applications. Recent data indicates a sharp increase in UPI transactions in India from 1,700 crore in 2017 to approximately 13 lakh crore in 2022. Technologies such as QR codes, RFID systems, and handheld scanners have also contributed to smoother adoption of digital payment and inventory processes. Government policies like the implementation of GST have further incentivized digital adoption through tools such as mini-ERP systems and digital tax filing solutions. These developments signal a gradual shift towards a more formalized retail ecosystem. Yet, an important research question remains: To what extent have unorganized neighborhood retail stores, particularly kirana stores in emerging economies like India, adopted digitalization especially in the context of COVID-19 and the evolving post-pandemic business landscape?

3. Research Problem and Gap

Despite growing smartphone penetration and platforms tailored for small businesses, there is little empirical research documenting how unorganized retailers in Jodhpur use digital tools or fail to. While larger firms and organized retail chains have increasingly adopted digital platforms for marketing, payments, and customer engagement, small and unorganized retailers often remain on the margins of this digital transformation. For example, a shopkeeper selling masala chai blends or Bandhej textiles may wish to go digital but lack the skills, knowledge, financial literacy, or reliable connectivity to do so. Many are also hesitant due to perceived risks such as online fraud, lack of trust in digital transactions, or uncertainty about return on investment. Furthermore, socio-cultural factors, limited awareness of government initiatives, and generational gaps in technology adoption exacerbate the digital divide. Existing literature focuses largely on urban metropolitan contexts, e-commerce startups, or digitally enabled SMEs, leaving unorganized retail in tier-2 cities like Jodhpur underexplored. This creates a critical research gap: the need to understand not only the extent of digital adoption but also the barriers technological, infrastructural, educational, and behavioral that hinder participation. The gap between potential and actual digital engagement must be bridged through a nuanced understanding of current practices, limitations, aspirations, and support systems required. Addressing this gap will contribute to policies and interventions that can foster inclusive digital growth and ensure that local retailers are not left behind in India's rapidly evolving digital economy.

4. Proposed Model and Development of Hypothesis

The proposed research model considers that the perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, cost, and compatibility directly impact (positively or negatively) the digitalization intentions of businesses.

Ho1: There is no significant use of digital marketing platforms by the unorganized retail Sector.

Ha1: There is a significant use of Digital marketing platform by the unorganized retail sector.

Ho2: Socio-economic factors (education level, business experience, and monthly turnover) have no significant effect on the implementation of digital marketing.

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Ho3: There is no significant difference between the impact of traditional marketing and digital marketing on the unorganized retail sector in Jodhpur city.

Ha3: There is a significant difference between the impact of traditional marketing and digital marketing on the unorganized retail sector in Jodhpur city.

Ho4: There is no impact of education on effective use of digital marketing by the unorganized retail sector in Jodhpur city.

Ha4: There is impact of education on effective use of digital marketing by the unorganized retail sector in Jodhpur city.

Ho5: There is no impact of emerging trends (social media) in the use of digital marketing within the unorganized retail sector in Jodhpur.

Ha5: There is impact of emerging trends (social media) in the use of digital marketing within the unorganized retail sector in Jodhpur.

Ho6: Retailers and consumers do not require support to overcome technical difficulties in adopting digital marketing platforms in the unorganized retail sector in Jodhpur city.

Ha6: Retailers and consumers do require support to overcome technical difficulties in adopting digital marketing platforms in the unorganized retail sector in Jodhpur city.

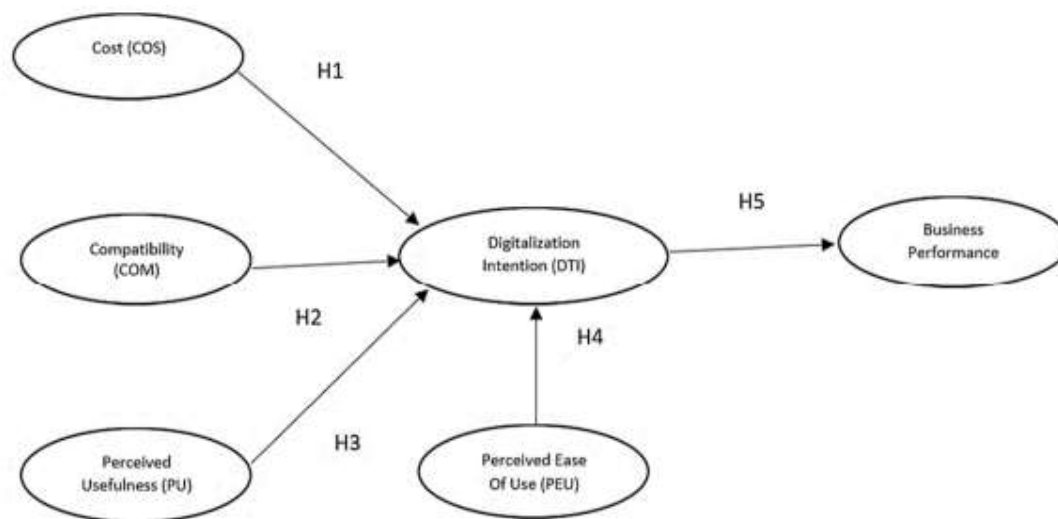


Figure: 1 proposed research model.

5. Methodology (Proposed)

5.1. Sample Size: 247 small retailers across various localities in Jodhpur, including markets like Sojati Gate, Nai Sarak, and Clock Tower.

5.2 Data Collection Tools: Surveys on field capturing platform usage, marketing methods, income level, education, internet access, and technology usage. Data was analyzed with the help of MS-Excel. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Data was represented with the help of tables, cross tables, and various types of charts.

5.3 Analysis Techniques: Descriptive statistics, cross-tabulation to assess relationships between socio-economic factors and digital tool usage, and comparative analysis between traditional and digital marketing results.

6 Data Interpretation And Analysis

It can presents a detailed explanation and understanding of the data collected during the study, with the aim of examining the role and impact of digital marketing on the unorganized retail sector in Jodhpur City. The information shared by the respondents through the survey has been carefully studied and interpreted to draw meaningful conclusions. The analysis is closely connected to the main objectives and hypotheses of the research. Each question in the questionnaire was designed to address a specific aspect of digital marketing such as awareness, usage, benefits, challenges, and future potential and the responses have been analyzed accordingly. This ensures that the results are aligned with the purpose of the study and help in answering the research questions effectively.

6.1. Overall Digital Marketing Adoption Among Respondents

The data collected through this research shows how many businesses have started using digital platforms, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and Google Business, to promote their products and communicate with customers. At the same time, it also highlights how many retailers still rely on traditional methods, like flyers, personal networks, or walk-in customers, and have not yet adopted digital channels. This contrast helps us see which groups of retailers are embracing change and which are lagging behind, and possibly why.

Table: 1Classification of respondents based on Digital Marketing usage

S. No.	Total No. of Respondents	Total No. of Respondents use the Digital Marketing in the Business	Total No. of Respondents not use the Digital Marketing in the Business	Percentage of use of Digital Marketing in the Business
1	247	162	85	65.59

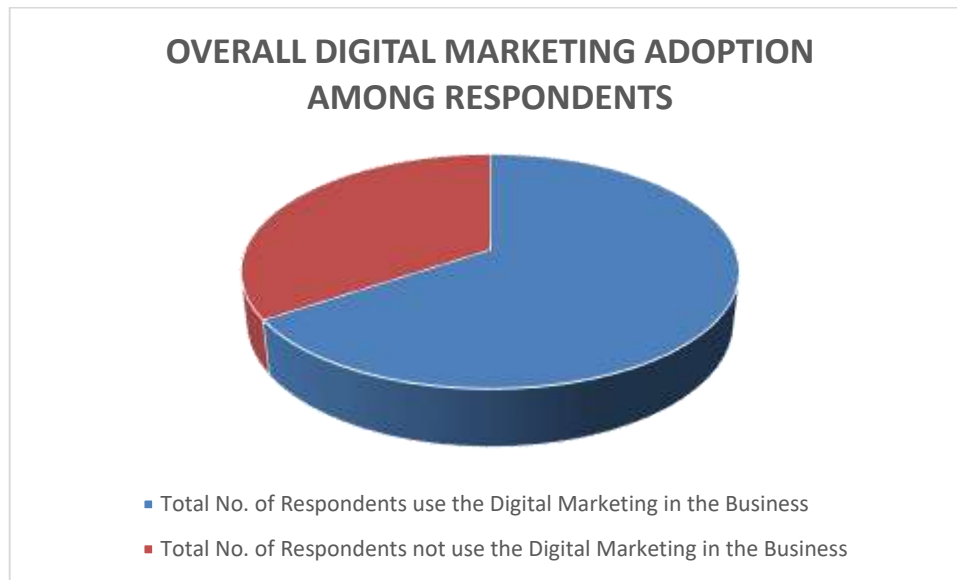


Chart 1 : Overall Digital Marketing Adoption Among Respondents

6.2 Analysis Of Socio-Economic Variables

In today's fast-changing digital landscape, younger individuals are often seen as more comfortable with technology. They are usually more familiar with smartphones, mobile apps, social media platforms, and online communication tools. As a result, younger retailers are commonly perceived to be quicker and more confident in using digital platforms for promoting their businesses, managing customer interactions, and expanding their market reach.

Table. 2 Classification of the respondents according to their age

Age	Total No. of Respondents	Total No. of Respondents use the Digital Marketing in the Business	Total No. of Respondents not use the Digital Marketing in the Business	Percentage of use of Digital Marketing in the Business
Under 20	1	1	0	100.00
21-30	42	38	4	90.48
31-40	113	85	28	75.22
41-50	72	36	36	50.00
Above 50	19	2	17	10.53
Total	247	162	85	65.59

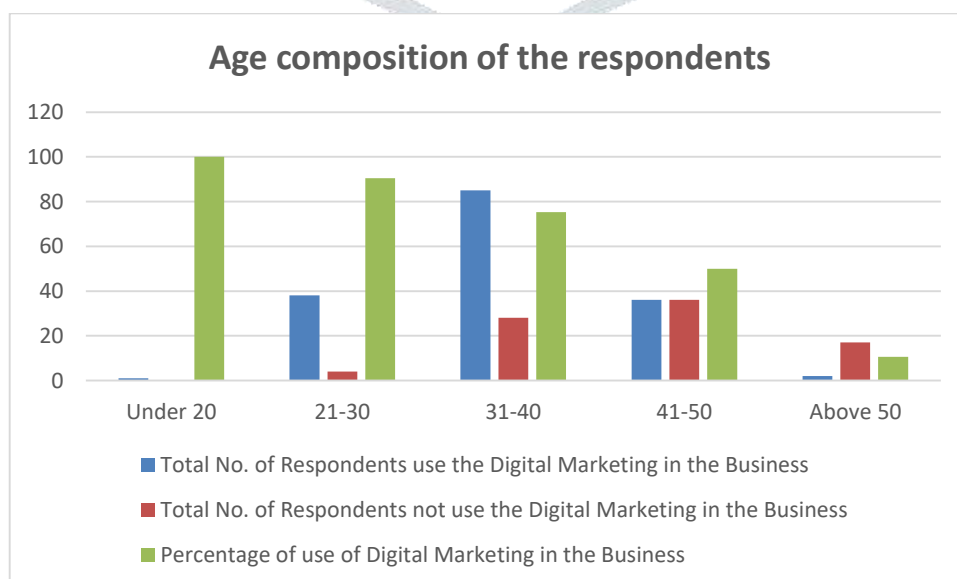


Chart 2 : Age Composition of the Respondents

6.3 Gender

Gender wise analysis is crucial for understanding gender-based trends in digital marketing adoption within the unorganized retail sector. It highlights the varying levels of engagement between male and female respondents, offering insights into their digital literacy and willingness to adapt to modern marketing techniques

Table : 3 Classification of the respondents according to their gender

S. No	Gender	Total No. of Respondents	Total No. of Respondents use the Digital Marketing in the Business	Total No. of Respondents not use the Digital Marketing in the Business	Percentage of use of Digital Marketing in the Business
1	Male	195	123	72	63.08
2	Female	52	39	13	75.00
Total		247	162	85	65.59

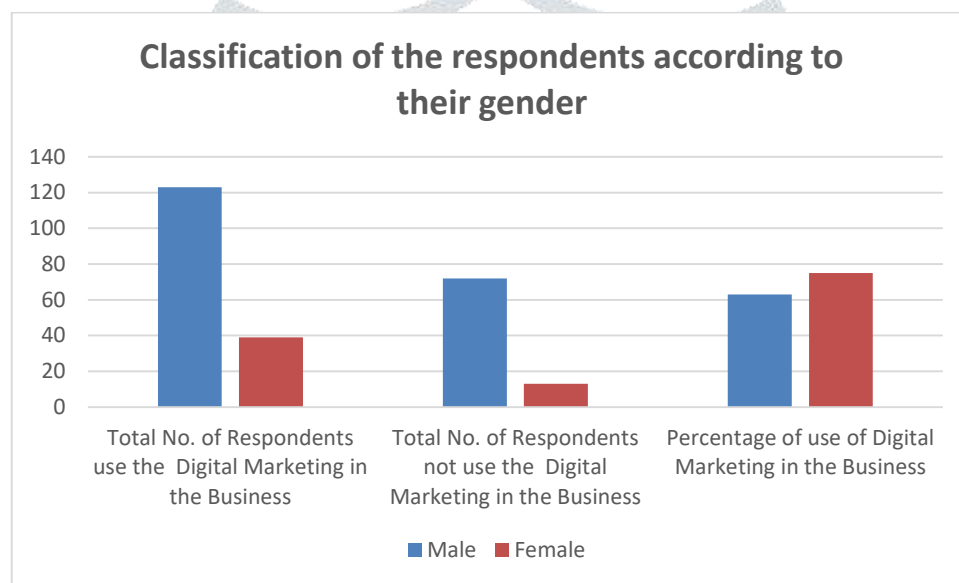


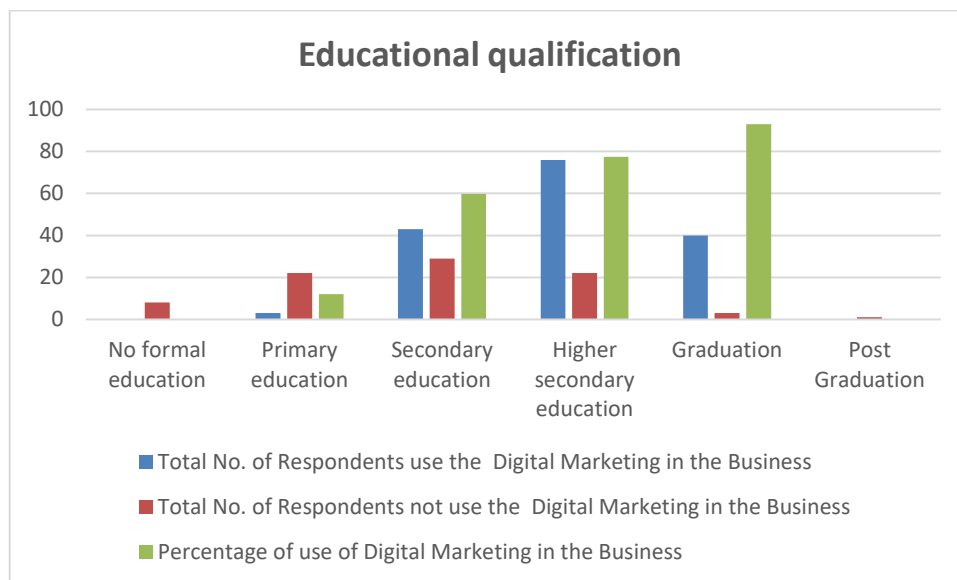
Chart 3 : Classification of the Respondents according to their Gender

6.4 Educational qualification

Education plays an important role in helping individuals think logically and find smart solutions to problems. It also influences how people use digital marketing. Studies show that educated shopkeepers are more likely to use digital marketing tools compared to those with less education. However, this doesn't mean that less-educated shopkeepers don't use digital marketing at all they also adopt it, often learning through practice or help from others.

Table 4 Classification of the respondents according to their educational qualification

S. No.	Category	Total No. of Respondents	Total No. of Respondents use the Digital Marketing in the Business	Total No. of Respondents not use the Digital Marketing in the Business	Percentage of use of Digital Marketing in the Business
1	No formal education	8	0	8	0.00
2	Primary education	25	3	22	12.00
3	Secondary education	72	43	29	59.72
4	Higher secondary education	98	76	22	77.55
5	Graduation	43	40	3	93.02
6	Post Graduation	1	0	1	0.00
Total		247	162	85	65.59

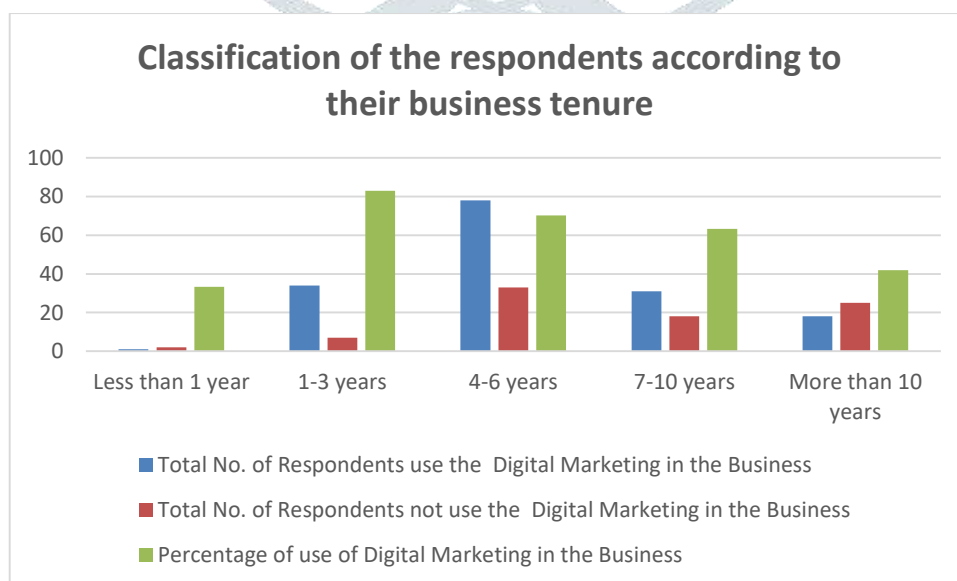
**Chart 4 : Educational Qualification of the Respondents**

6.5 Business Tenure

Analyzing the relationship between business tenure and digital marketing adoption provides valuable insights into how experience influences marketing strategies in the unorganized retail sector

Table 5 :Classification of the respondents according to their business tenure

S. No.	Business Tenure	Total No. of Respondents	Total No. of Respondents use the Digital Marketing in the Business	Total No. of Respondents not use the Digital Marketing in the Business	Percentage of use of Digital Marketing in the Business
1	Less than 1 year	3	1	2	33.33
2	1-3 years	41	34	7	82.93
3	4-6 years	111	78	33	70.27
4	7-10 years	49	31	18	63.27
5	More than 10 years	43	18	25	41.86
Total		247	162	85	65.59

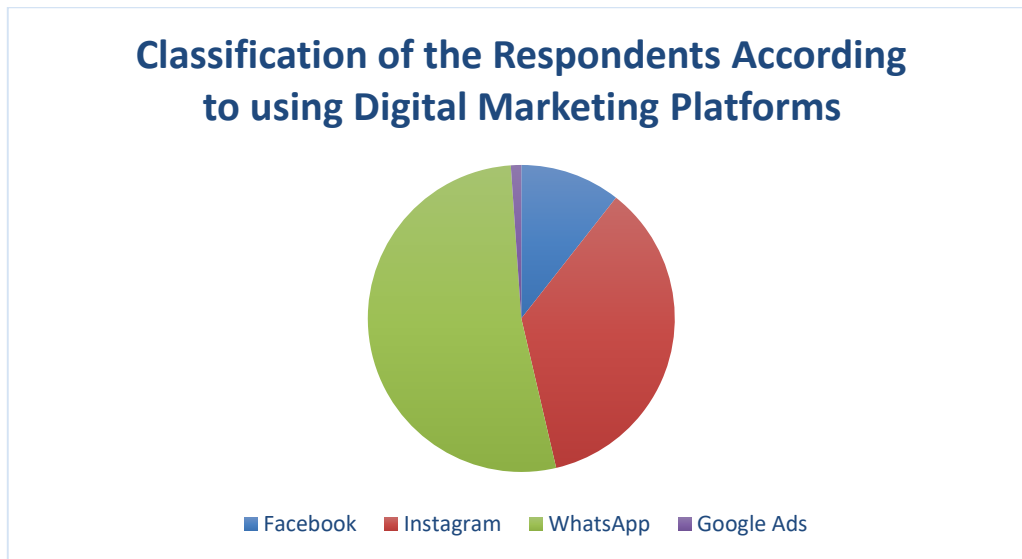
**Chart 5: Classification of the Respondents according to their Business Tenure**

6.6 Analysis Of Awareness Of Digital Marketing

Analyzing awareness of digital marketing in the unorganized retail sector of Jodhpur City is crucial for understanding how well small retailers perceive and adopt digital tools. It helps identify gaps in knowledge, barriers to adoption, and opportunities for training and support.

Table 6: Classification of the Respondents According to using Digital Marketing Platforms

Total No. of Respondents	Platform	Total No. of Responses	Percentage of Responses	Percentage of Responses with respect to Respondents
162	Facebook	29	10.58	17.90
	Instagram	98	35.77	60.49
	WhatsApp	144	52.55	88.89
	Google Ads	3	1.09	1.85
Total		274	100	169.14

Classification of the Respondents According to using Digital Marketing Platforms**Chart 7: Classification of the Respondents according to using Digital Marketing Platforms****6.7 Impact of Digital Marketing Usage in Business**

By identifying these trends, the study offers valuable insights for retailers aiming to leverage digital platforms to enhance their operations and stay competitive in a rapidly evolving market.

Table 7 Classification of the Respondents According to the Impact of Digital Marketing

Total No. of Respondents use the Digital Marketing	Impact of Digital Marketing	Total No. of Responses	Percentage of Responses	Percentage of Responses with respect to Respondents
162	Increased customer reach	128	48.12	79.01
	Increased sales	51	19.17	31.48
	Better customer engagement	79	29.70	48.77
	No significant impact	8	3.01	4.94
Total		266	100	164.20

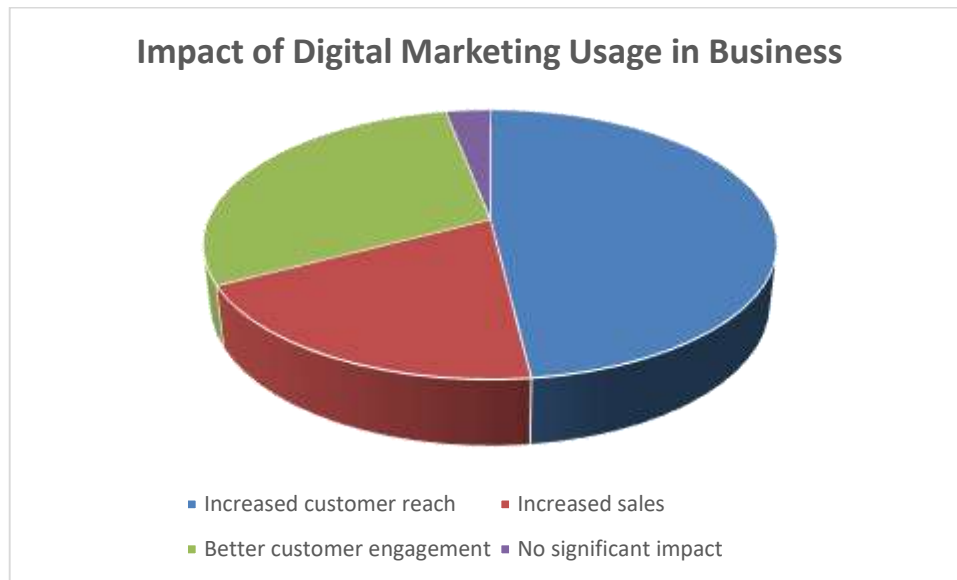


Chart 9: Impact of Digital Marketing Usage in Business

6.8 Challenges of Digital marketing as per respondents

Table 8 Classification of the Respondents According to the Challenges of Digital Marketing

Total No. of Respondents facing challenges using Digital marketing	Challenges	Total No. of Responses	Percentage of Responses	Percentage of Responses with respect to Respondents
195	Lack of knowledge	151	38.42	77.44
	Lack of time	142	36.13	72.82
	Cost of digital marketing	90	22.90	46.15
	Difficulty in measuring results	20	5.09	10.26
Total		403	103	206.67

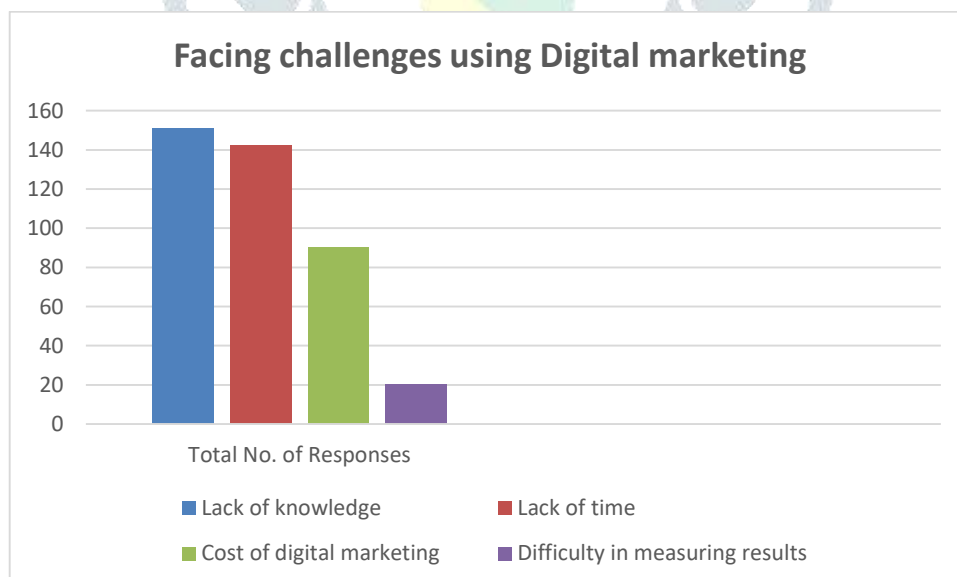


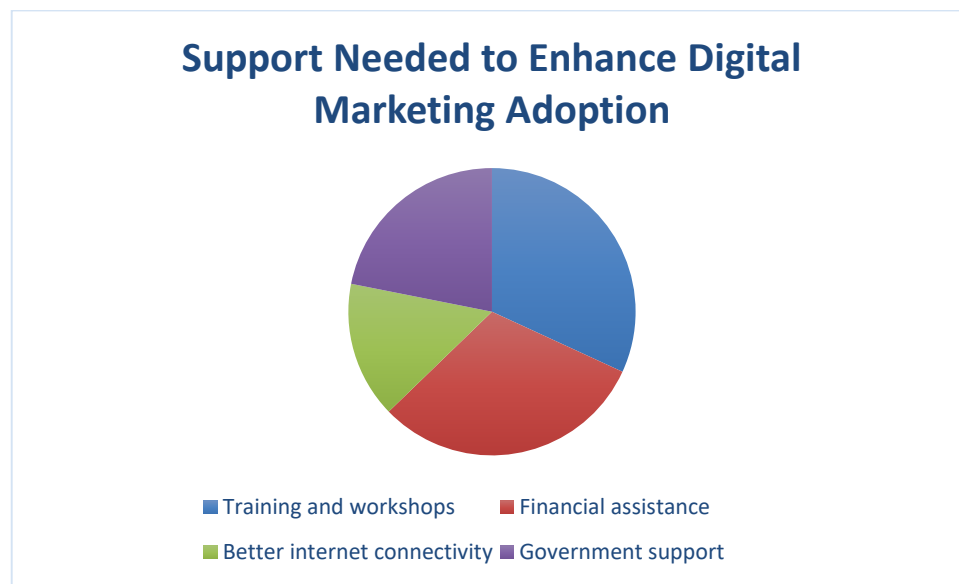
Chart 9: Facing Challenges using Digital Marketing

6.9 Analysis Of Support Required For Digital Marketing Adoption

This analysis helps us understand the key support areas needed to enhance digital marketing adoption in the unorganized retail sector of Jodhpur City. By examining the specific challenges faced by retailers, such as the need for training, financial assistance, better internet connectivity and government support, we can identify the most critical factors that influence digital marketing adoption. The findings highlight the importance of targeted interventions to bridge these gaps, enabling businesses to leverage digital marketing effectively for growth, competitiveness, and long-term sustainability.

Table 9 Classification of the Respondents According to the Support Needed to Enhance Digital Marketing Adoption

Total No. of Respondents	Support Needed to Enhance Digital Marketing Adoption	Total No. of Responses	Percentage of Responses	Percentage of Responses with respect to Respondents
247	Training and workshops	166	31.86	67.21
	Financial assistance	161	30.90	65.18
	Better internet connectivity	80	15.36	32.39
	Government support	114	21.88	46.15
Total		521	100	210.93

**Chart 10: Support Needed to Enhance Digital Marketing Adoption**

7. Key Themes of the Study

7.1 Use of Digital Platforms

Preliminary findings suggest WhatsApp Business is the most accessible platform due to its simplicity. However, awareness and usage of Instagram, Facebook Pages, or listing on Flipkart and Amazon remain low.

7.2 Socio-economic Influences

Shopkeepers with limited income often avoid paid ads or good-quality product photography. Similarly, those with lower education levels struggle to use digital platforms effectively. Older retailers often show reluctance to abandon traditional methods.

7.3 Traditional vs. Digital Marketing

While posters, banners, and personal networks are common, they limit geographic reach. Digital tools promise higher reach at lower cost but require skills and consistency. For instance, a Facebook ad may outperform a local flyer but only if executed well.

7.4 Infrastructure Challenges

Reliable internet remains a barrier in several parts of the city. Retailers report frequent network issues when uploading photos, managing online orders, or responding to customer queries. The lack of dedicated technical support further delays digital adoption.

7.5 Findings (Expected)

- Less than 40% of retailers in the unorganized sector actively use digital marketing.
- WhatsApp Business and UPI (Google Pay, PhonePe) are the most widely adopted tools.
- Income, education, and smartphone access are strongly correlated with digital adoption.
- Traditional methods continue to dominate due to familiarity and trust, but are less scalable.
- Many retailers express interest in learning digital tools but lack guidance or local support networks.

8. Recommendations

- **Training Workshops:** Conduct digital literacy sessions in local languages through chambers of commerce or NGOs.
- **Low-Cost Tools:** Promote use of simple platforms like WhatsApp Business and YouTube Shorts for local promotion.
- **Incentives:** Offer subsidies or tax incentives for small businesses that adopt digital platforms.
- **Digital Help Desks:** Set up local support kiosks to help with onboarding to e-commerce or social media platforms.
- **Improved Connectivity:** Collaborate with telecom providers to enhance internet infrastructure in congested market areas.

9. Conclusion

The unorganized retail sector in Jodhpur has the potential to benefit immensely from digital marketing, but several barriers including lack of digital skills, socio-economic limitations, and weak infrastructure stand in the way. By understanding how these retailers engage with digital tools and the challenges they face, stakeholders can design more inclusive and effective digital transformation strategies. With targeted support, these businesses can not only survive but thrive in the digital economy, preserving the city's cultural commerce while expanding their market reach.

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