

# Marketing Strategies in SMEs : A Literature Review on Concepts and New-Age Approaches

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## Abstract

**Purpose :** An in-depth examination of the basic function of marketing strategies as the cornerstone of strategic marketing initiatives is done in this study. Understanding the wide range of marketing techniques used by various company types and industries is essential, given their significance. The field of marketing tactics has changed significantly in the last 20 years, especially when it comes to SMEs. It was also crucial to comprehend how this area has changed over time.

**Methodology :** This study examined the body of research on marketing strategy in the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The study attempted to understand how the dynamics around marketing strategy have evolved by reviewing the research that has been done on the subject over the previous 20 years or more. The study used analytical methods and techniques to examine the literature over the past 20 years via a variety of lenses (themes examined to date).

**Findings :** Marketing strategies and SME performance are linked, as the empirical literature review demonstrated. The literature study was helpful in identifying the main cohorts and subjects that have been the subject of prior research. Digital marketing emerged as the second most popular issue, with marketing strategy appearing to be the theme that garnered the most attention overall. Further research is necessary to understand how this field is changing and what are the important patterns that can be capitalized upon. The data also showed that a lot of work has been done recently in this area.

**Practical Implications :** The study shed light on the ways in which SMEs utilize marketing strategies to enhance their performance. That being said, because the research focuses on FMCG companies, it has limitations in that it did not provide perspectives from other industries. SMEs' marketing approaches and problems vary depending on the industry in which they operate.

**Originality :** This work sheds light on the comparison of conventional and modern approaches using the lenses of different cohorts that have been investigated thus far, in contrast to previous research on marketing strategies and SMEs.

**Keywords :** marketing, marketing strategy, FMCG, consumer behavior, SMEs, small business, small and medium enterprises, consumer goods, digital marketing

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For small organizations like small and medium enterprises (SMEs), creating a marketing strategy that encourages profitability while making efficient use of resources is a major problem. According to Moorman and Day (2016), there seems to be a significant disparity between the marketing methods used by large and small businesses. According to Fiore et al. (2013), the main obstacle seen in SMEs is the implementation of marketing strategies and matching them with budgetary constraints based on customer needs. Finding innovative

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approaches to consumer targeting and marketing can help small and medium-sized businesses stay competitive. It supports their entry into the market, helps them outcompete rivals, and helps spur profitability.

The current SME outlook for SMEs in India appeared promising yet challenging, with several trends and factors shaping their trajectory. Many government programs, including Made in India, Startup India, and Digital India, are aimed at fostering an atmosphere that will enable SMEs to prosper. SMEs in India have been using digital technologies more frequently in order to increase competitiveness, increase efficiency, and reach new markets. Additionally, digital transformation is providing a strong outlook. This covers cloud computing, automation solutions, digital marketing tactics, and e-commerce platform use.

Currently, instead of adhering to traditional methods to get over financial limits, web marketing can be investigated and used efficiently within budgetary constraints. With cash flow being the primary constraint in the SME context, online marketing can be a helpful technique and marketing plan. The advantages of online marketing are (a) low budget, (b) focusing on multiple different geographies, (c) Convenience, and (d) quick review of product availability (Durmaz & Efendioglu, 2016).

The paper is an empirical study of the existing literature on marketing strategy in the context of SMEs. The research explores the available resources around the topic over the last 20 years and tries to understand how the dynamics around marketing strategy have shaped up and what new-age approaches can be undertaken by SMEs.

## Marketing Strategies for SMEs in the Consumer Goods Sector

With the aid of an effective marketing plan, SMEs could achieve better results and gain an advantage over their competitors. According to Simpson et al. (2006), marketing plays a crucial role in providing SMEs with building bricks. The paper discusses in-depth marketing's function, applicability, and appropriate model for SMEs. Chaudhary's (2020) study made the case that SMEs do not have the pertinent and adequate marketing strategies needed to compete in today's highly diplomatic and competitive market. Since SMEs use low-cost pricing techniques, they ought to have an advantage over competitors when it comes to developing new products. Numerous authors have examined the marketing tactics used by small and medium-sized businesses, and it is important to do the same.

↳ Digital Marketing (social media and mobile apps)

↳ Customer Relationship Management

(1) Event Marketing

(2) Webinars/Teleseminars

(3) Feedback Mechanism

## Marketing Strategies and Definitions

A number of authors have somewhat discussed the meaning of marketing tactics. The meanings of “marketing strategy” that many authors have written about are included in Table 1; despite the fact that the definitions date from separate years, they have simultaneously expanded upon and redefined the term throughout time.

**Table 1. Marketing Strategies and Definitions**

Authors	Definition/Term
American Marketing Association	Marketing is an activity and process for delivering value to customers through innovating and communicating.
	There are 4P of marketing which act as a pillar – Product, Price, Place, and Promotion.

Michael E. Porter	<p>Marketing strategy has mainly one aim to cope with competition. Porter's five forces are as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The threat of new entrants.</li> <li>• Bargaining power of customers.</li> <li>• Bargaining power of suppliers.</li> <li>• The threat of substitute products.</li> <li>• The competition among the existing contestants.</li> </ul> <p>All these forces together determine the potential and profitability from an industry point of view. SMEs can look toward building strategies for shielding these forces.</p>
Cundiff et al.	<p>A company's overall marketing strategy essentially reflects its competitive position in the market. Creating such a plan requires integrating every facet of the marketing initiative.</p>
Prof. Philip Kotler	<p>The marketing strategy serves as the fundamental approach employed by a business unit to achieve its goals. It involves detailed decisions (strategies) regarding key markets, market positioning, the marketing mix, and the allocation of marketing expenditures. Additionally, marketers need to consider the other two strategic aspects, namely the anticipated environment and competitive conditions, when formulating the marketing strategy.</p>
David Aaker	<p>A marketing strategy is a method that enables a company to focus its resources on the best prospects in order to boost sales and create a long-lasting competitive advantage.</p>

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## Objectives of the Study

The study examines many papers that are now available on marketing strategy, taking into consideration the significance of doing a review of the literature on marketing strategy and its adoption in SMEs. This type of review was conducted in the primary by Morgan et al. (2019). Many developments have occurred in this field during and during this research, so that a thorough examination will be beneficial.

Hence, with the new approach, the study tries to deal with below key objectives of the research,

- (1) To study the literature based on marketing strategies concerning SMEs.
- (2) To analyze the literature in a manner to focuses on cohorts explored by various researchers to date.
- (3) To comprehend, in light of the completed literature analysis, how marketing techniques affect SME performance.

## Research Design and Methodology

🔗 **Research Type** : The study is exploratory and based on secondary research.

🔗 **Secondary Data** : Data collected using reports, magazines, articles, white papers, research publications, and various websites.

🔗 **Research Methodology** : A total of 200 research papers were examined and reviewed in order to meet the main research objectives concerning marketing strategies and framework. Fifty of the publications that were examined were taken into account for this research and the literature evaluation. Following the selection of literature and the examination of a sizable body of data, the publications were divided into the several cohorts listed below. Based on the shared themes found in different works of literature and the kinds of problems that authors attempted to solve, the categories were assigned.

🔗 Digital Marketing

↳ Marketing strategy in general

↳ Marketing in SMEs

↳ Restraints to the development of SMEs

↳ Marketing communication

↳ **Sampling** : The research delves into over 200 scholarly articles in this domain, selecting approximately 50 articles based on their significance, results, and practical applications.

↳ Snowball sampling was adopted for referencing articles from a similar domain.

↳ The study's duration is January 2023–June 2023 (India).

The classification of the papers aided in determining the relative importance of each of the major topics from these domains in the corpus of current knowledge. Table 2 presents a comprehensive analysis of the articles examined and chosen for the study.

**Table 2. Review of Papers Studied Around Marketing Strategies**

Sr. No.	Year	Authors	Synopsis	Category/Theme
1	1995	Romano & Ratnatunga	The study highlighted the reality that the 4Ps are the foundation of any marketing plan and have a significant role in determining how small and medium-sized businesses demonstrate themselves.	Marketing strategy in general
2	1998	Szmigin & Bourne	The author emphasized the importance of customer understanding and how they perceive before designing marketing strategies.	Marketing strategy in general
3	2009	O'Dwyer et al.	The paper strongly established the customer profile which acts as a key trigger when it comes to developing marketing strategies for SMEs. Moreover, the study also indicates that marketing practices must also "fit" the organization's circumstances.	Marketing in SMEs
4	2000	Gup & Whitehead	The author concluded that strategic marketing involves the process of making decisions to outline the objectives an organization aims to achieve and how managers guide the organization and allocate resources to reach those goals within a defined time frame.	Marketing strategy in general
5	2000	Shimp	The author suggested that marketing communications encompass all elements in a brand's marketing mix to facilitate exchanges by establishing shared meaning with the brand's customers or clients. Additionally, the author emphasizes that marketing communications revolve around ensuring that customers are informed about the products offered by organizations.	Marketing Communication
6	2000	Pavlou & Stewart	The concepts and methods used to change consumers' attitudes, knowledge, and, eventually, behavior were included in the e-marketing strategy. This strategy focuses on how consumers evaluate the significance and efficacy of advertising.	Digital Marketing
7	2000	Pavlou & Stewart	The author depicted the importance of feedback in advertising as it pivots the speed and effectiveness of advertising. It also aids in understanding how consumers assess the advertising and how better the communication can be channeled.	Marketing Communication
8	2011	Gilmore	The paper stated that networking acts as an inherent marketing tool. Conversely,	Marketing

			small businesses can profit from three marketing modalities: market intelligence systems, marketing mix, and marketing strategy.	Communication
9	2001	Hill	The paper focused on marketing competencies and sales orientation of SMEs, networking, and marketing planning.	Marketing in SMEs
10	2018	Belch & Belch	The study discussed the objectives of marketing communications. The primary focus is to allow more customers to buy the product or service or get existing customers to buy more.	Marketing Communication
11	2011	Gilmore	This author advocated on importance of networking, which is an inherent tool of marketing and also quite compatible with SMEs pertaining to marketing activities.	Marketing in SMEs
12	2012	Hill et al.	The author illustrated that marketing practice in SMEs is situation-specific and variable regarding the levels of sophistication and effectiveness.	Marketing in SMEs
13	2003	Kula & Tatoglu	In the context of global competitiveness, SMEs must establish a robust online presence. Despite certain efforts made by SMEs in utilizing the Internet, systematic empirical evidence is deficient concerning the extent of its usage. Moreover, there is a need to understand the role of firm- and industry-specific factors that influence internet adoption by SMEs in emerging market economies.	Restraints to the development of SMEs
14	2003	Kula & Tatoglu	The author illustrated why SMEs should make sure they have a strong online presence in light of the fiercely competitive economy and global vision. Even while SMEs use the internet, empirical data indicates that its use is restricted and that it needs to be enhanced in order to compete with the big players.	Digital Marketing
15	2010	Bryson et al.	The paper defined strategic marketing as a systematic endeavor involving decisive actions to define and direct the identity, activities, and purpose of an organization. The emphasis is on anticipating and planning for the future.	Marketing strategy in general
16	2015	Ajay et al.	The article centered on how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) utilize their marketing networks during periods of operational change. The analysis of SME networking incorporates structural, relational, and usage dimensions, aligning with the frameworks associated with network studies.	Marketing in SMEs
17	2004	O'Donnell et al.	Owner-managers of small businesses are known to engage in marketing initiatives, but little is known about the precise nature of these campaigns.	Marketing strategy in general
18	2004	Beverland & Lockshin	The researcher shed light on the lack of E-marketing literature that is available for SMEs, as the majority of studies tend to focus on huge corporations and mainstream firms. Price and quality are important factors in SMEs' quest for a competitive edge.	Marketing in SMEs
19	2005	Reid et al.	Reid underlined the significance of marketing communications once more in this study. In a competitive environment, businesses must thrive. Business improvement and marketing integration are top priorities.	Marketing Communication
20	2005	Goi	The author defined marketing strategy as a set of marketing tools that firms use to pursue their marketing objectives in the target market.	Marketing strategy in general
21	2006	Simpson et al.	The author concluded that a three-dimensional marketing approach should be considered concerning SMEs. (a) strategic marketing, (b) tactical marketing, and (c) cultural marketing.	Marketing in SMEs
22	2006	Doole et al.	The author studied that the marketing function in SMEs faces impediments due to constraints such as inadequate cash flow, a shortage of marketing expertise,	Restraints for the development

			business size, and strategic issues related to customers. While successful marketing is propelled by innovation, current research on Innovative Marketing has predominantly concentrated on the firm-specific characteristics of innovation or the impact of the external environment.	of SMEs
23	2008	Altinay & Altinay	The research revealed that there is a strong correlation between sector/category and marketing practices; hence, it is essential to consider sector context before developing marketing strategies.	Marketing strategy in general
24	2010	Reijonen & Laukkanen	The paper studied how marketing is perceived in SMEs by promotion, customer relationship management, and sales.	Marketing in SMEs
25	2009	O'Dwyer et al.	The author focused on the impact of the external environment, and firm-specific characteristics are highlighted, with a particular emphasis on the role of innovative marketing.	Marketing strategy in general
26	2010	Gajanayake	The author conducted a study on Sri Lankan SMEs and found that a lack of awareness and limited knowledge about modern tools and techniques is a primary factor contributing to the failure of these SMEs. The research indicates that marketing strategies do not have a significant impact on the business growth of these SMEs. Additionally, there is no discernible influence of entrepreneur behavior on business growth.	Restraints to the development of SMEs
27	2015	Varadarajan	After reviewing the literature on marketing strategy, the author formulated a definition, characterizing it as follows: "Marketing strategy is an organization's integrated pattern of decisions that outlines vital choices regarding products, markets, marketing activities, and marketing resources. This strategy guides the creation, communication, and/or delivery of products that provide value to customers in exchanges with the organization, thereby enabling the organization to achieve specific objectives."	Marketing strategy in general
28	2011	Chavan	The author highlighted the importance of digital marketing. The approach will aid SMEs in tremendous revenue growth through effective automation tools and digital marketing tactics.	Digital Marketing
29	2011	Yan & Chew	The paper unfolded how marketing plays a crucial role in an organization's success. To gain a competitive edge and deliver superior performance, effective marketing plays a crucial role.	Marketing strategy in general
30	2011	Hakimpoor et al.	We investigated the impact of external and internal factors and the moderate relationship between SMEs and marketing practices. The key factors considered are the size, formality, diversity, density, stability, and flexibility of the marketing network.	Marketing in SMEs
31	2012	Lin & Chang	The author suggested that marketing strategy can be categorized into four ways of research as below : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dual-oriented marketing strategy ;</li> <li>• Rational marketing strategy;</li> <li>• Emotional marketing strategy;</li> <li>• Maintenance marketing strategy.</li> </ul> All four strategies deal with some or the other ways emotional and psychological factors of consumer behavior.	Marketing strategy in general
32	2012	Wu et al.	The paper focused on how online promotional strategies have become a very important channel for retailers over the last two decades, driven by quicker delivery, lower prices, and faster purchasing time.	Digital Marketing



33	2012	Pentina & Koh	The study delved into the growing uniformities in how SMEs implement social media marketing, categorizing these recurring trends into a taxonomy of strategically relevant types. We identify three main strategic patterns in social media marketing: proactive strategists, cautious viewers, and calculative pragmatists. We do this by using cluster analysis on data provided by marketing executives. The goals and reasons for implementing social media marketing tactics, as well as the industry sector and company size, are correlated with cluster membership.	SME Marketing
34	2013	Peltier et al.	The paper stated that businesses leverage integrated marketing communication through electronic media to establish relationships with consumers, ensuring consistency in brand messaging across both traditional and non-traditional marketing channels. This approach allows firms to communicate with and connect to their customers on a personal level.	Digital Marketing
35	2010	Eren Erdoğan et al.	The research focused on the effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty. According to this research, marketing is more effective when a brand offers helpful campaigns, relevant content, and popular content. Also, the position of content matters; that is where the content appears. The cost-benefit analysis idea is considered a primary study of perspective while collaborating with a brand on mass media.	Digital Marketing
36	2021	Owomoyela	The objective behind formulating an organization's marketing strategy is to create, strengthen, safeguard, and uphold its competitive advantage. Managerial judgment plays a crucial role in addressing environmental ambiguity and uncertainty within the realm of strategic marketing.	Marketing strategy in general
37	2013	Tan & Sousa	The author stated that contemporary interactive marketing strategies underscore the importance of businesses actively involving consumers to stimulate sales. The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) defines interactive advertising as encompassing various online, wireless, and interactive television advertising methods. This includes banners, sponsorships, email marketing, keyword searches, referrals, slotting fees, classified ads, and interactive television commercials.	Marketing Communication
38	2016	Whiting & Deshpande	The author studied that utilizing digital or internet marketing to reach a target audience eliminates many barriers, simplifying the process of creating and nurturing favor, ultimately increasing purchasing behaviors and building brand loyalty. This approach allows for a more flexible and adaptive strategy compared to traditional marketing or communication channels. According to the author, social media stands out as the most essential marketing tool today, enabling brands to reach their target audiences rapidly.	Digital Marketing
39	2014	Balakrishnan et al.	The author conducted a study examining the repercussions of mass media marketing on brand loyalty and purchase intentions among Generation Y. The authors demonstrated how technology has given rise to various new media, and these platforms prove beneficial for enhancing brand loyalty and influencing product purchase intentions. The study highlights the role of social and brand-sponsored portals in conveying explicit information for this purpose.	Marketing Communication
40	2014	Dzisi & Ofosu	The author observed that SMEs employ non-traditional marketing strategies to connect with both existing and potential customers. In their pursuit of fair competition in the global market, these SMEs integrate modern technological marketing tools into their business operations.	Marketing in SMEs

41	2016	Katsikeas et al.	The author studied that a firm's impact on the marketplace and economic performance is shaped by its marketing efforts, which involve formulating and implementing specific patterns of resource deployments. These strategic actions are designed to achieve marketing objectives within a targeted market.	Marketing strategy in general
42	2017	Hyde et al.	The author concluded that to address the trend of seeking variety, marketers must devise innovative strategies. This could entail implementing loyalty programs aimed at fostering brand loyalty among consumers and presenting information in a concise format to convey that their brand offers the best solution to consumers' needs and concerns. Essentially, in today's consumer landscape, marketers need to adapt their approaches to both retain customer loyalty and influence purchasing decisions.	Marketing strategy in general
43	2012	Al-Weshah & Al-Zubi	The study indicated that while there is a clear connection between the stages of e-business growth and the factors influencing them (enablers and barriers), the extent of this relationship varies and may not always be extremely strong.	Digital Marketing
44	2016	Bolos et al.	The author has introduced the attracting customers model, which identifies several factors influencing the attraction of customers. These factors include (a) understanding target marketing, (b) understanding competitive position, (c) differentiation, (d) comprehension of business, (e) understanding brand, (f) data collection on customers, and (g) the four P's of marketing.	Marketing strategy in general
45	2016	Bolos et al.	The paper identified that there are numerous compelling reasons for businesses to assess the effectiveness of their marketing strategies. Given the substantial financial investments made by companies in one-to-one promotion of their products, measuring the effectiveness of e-marketing becomes crucial. This assessment allows stakeholders to enhance the efficiency of advertising endeavors, bolster the rationale for exploring alternative marketing strategies, and evaluate conceptual models of e-marketing.	Digital Marketing
46	2020	Keshari	The research findings indicate that SME managers continue to depend on traditional marketing methods. However, the article suggests several innovative marketing approaches for SMEs to consider.	Innovative Marketing
47	2023	McCartan	The author explained networking is widely embraced by small businesses of different types, proving its relevance and yielding valuable outcomes that contribute to marketing efforts. The benefits of networking are more pronounced in larger, small firms with dedicated marketing functions. Actively seeking networking opportunities (proactive networking) is more beneficial than passively responding to them (reactive networking). However, the effectiveness of networking in enhancing business performance is contingent upon the level of proactiveness in networking efforts, moderated by factors such as the firm's marketing orientation.	SME Marketing

## Data Analysis and Results

The study focuses on a thorough analysis of the literature that has been published since 1995 about SMEs, marketing strategy, and communication. It begins by examining the conceptual framework that has been developed around marketing strategy. After that, it identifies and examines the literature that has been published about a number of subdomains, including marketing communication, SmetoME marketing, digital marketing, lack of direction, and constraints faced by SMEs.



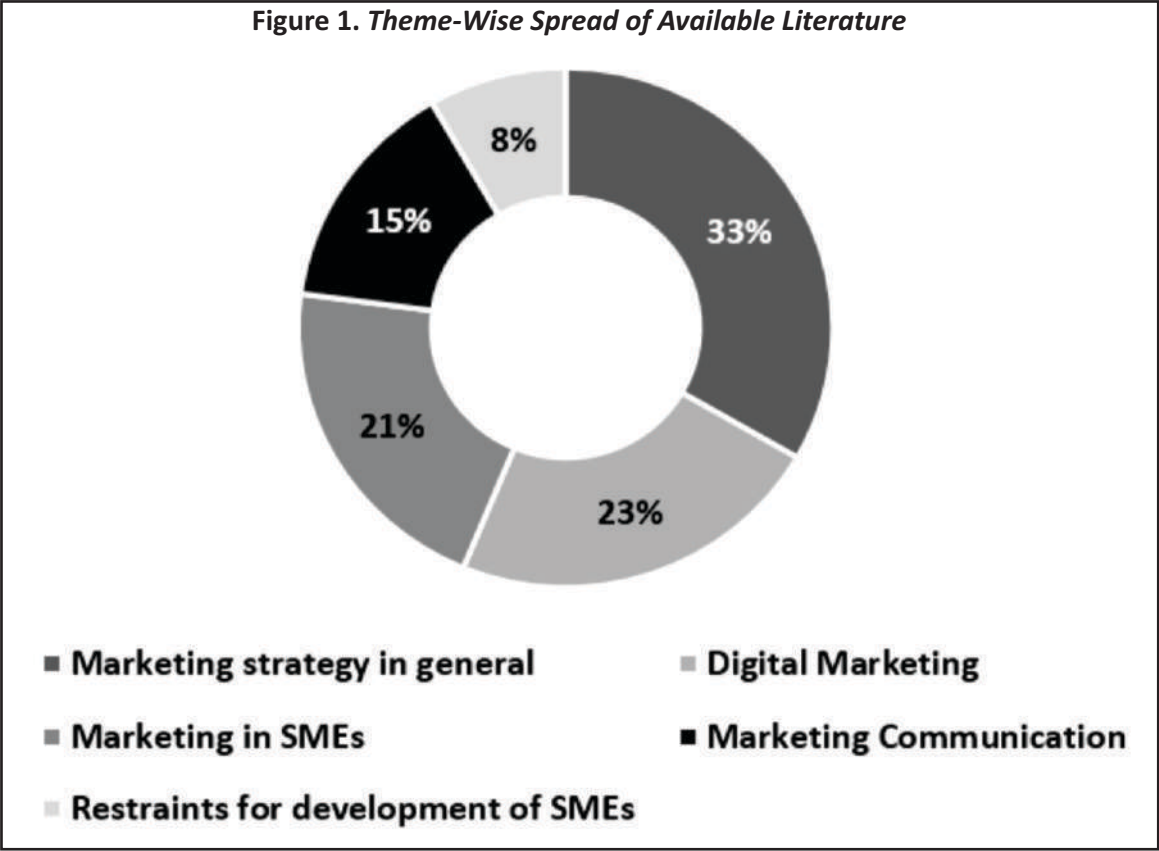
It is important to study the existing body of knowledge on any topic as it aids in building on new insights as well as identifying new research agendas for discovering the domains within marketing strategy. Synthesis of existing knowledge and further exploring new research gaps too are important from the purview of the research domain (Palmatier, 2018).

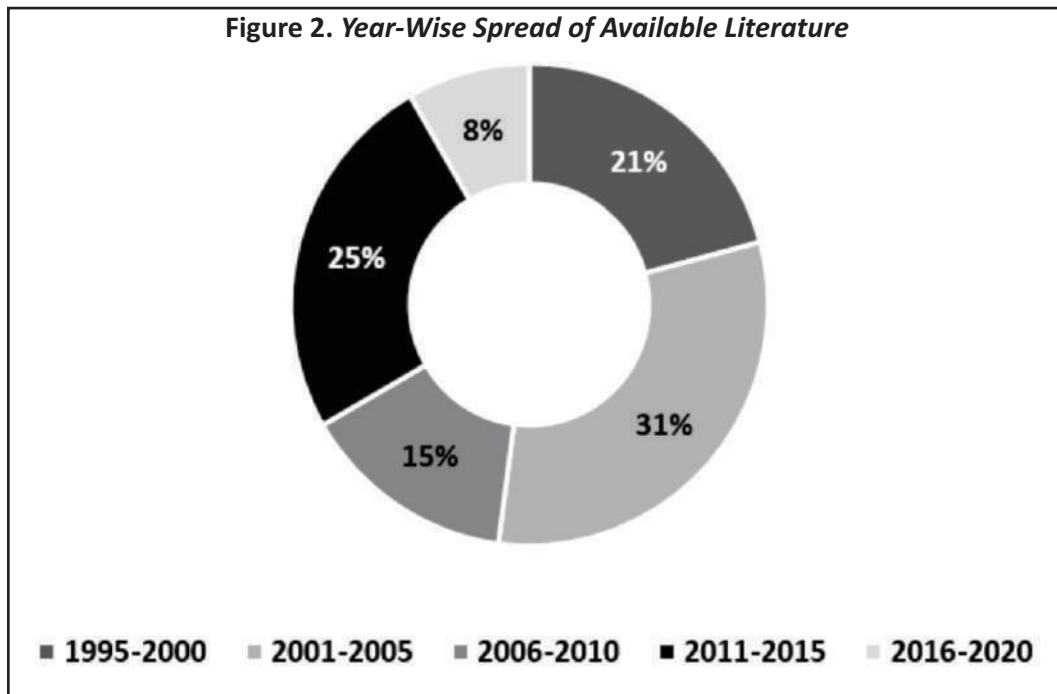
By finding the common subject, the publications are categorized into five groups based on the analysis of the literature. An extensive summary of how the literature is examined and chosen is provided below.

Themes selected for categorizing the existing body of knowledge:

- (1) Marketing strategy in general
- (2) Marketing Communication
- (3) Marketing in SMEs
- (4) Restraints to the development of SMEs
- (5) Digital Marketing

Figure 1 illustrates the spread of each of the themes in the available literature. Figure 2 illustrates the year-wise spread of available literature.





### ***Marketing Strategy in General***

This theme reveals the state of marketing strategy generally today. This article explores the subject from its conceptual inception to modern marketing methods and how companies are coming up with tactics that function in the present environment. The study elaborates on the various definitions of marketing strategy published by authors, the challenges encountered, and the abundance of unexplored opportunities in this subject.

It is crucial to concentrate on how the phrase has changed throughout time before delving into the literature. The term was defined in various ways by a number of well-known marketing legends. For instance, marketing strategy is defined by Professor Philip Kotler as the core methodology used by a business unit to accomplish its objectives. The most important markets, market positioning, marketing mix, and distribution of marketing budgets are all carefully considered in these plans.

On the flip side, Michael E. Porter identified five forces that significantly shape the marketing strategy for any firm. According to Porter, the primary objective of marketing strategy is to address competition effectively. The competition among current competitors, the threat of replacement products, the negotiating power of suppliers, the bargaining power of customers, and the threat of new entrants are these five key forces. The combined influence of these elements determines the entire profit potential of an industry. Finding a place in the market where the business can successfully fend off these forces or perhaps sway them to its advantage is the strategist's goal. In this situation, strategy is viewed as a way to build barriers against rival forces.

Approximately one-third of the papers examined in the study have a marketing strategy focus. As indicated in Figure 2, the research on marketing strategy is conducted across a number of years, from 1995 to the present, demonstrating the concept's continuing relevance over time. It emphasizes that marketing strategy is not only a tried-and-true idea but also an ever-important component of any company's success in the modern era. Having said that, Figure 2 clearly illustrates that less number of research literature has been published in recent years.

The majority of the articles focus mostly on the various definitions of marketing strategy, which, in the end, addresses the sole goal of any business, which is acquiring customers. Among the already reviewed literature, Bryson et al. (2010), Gup and Whitehead (2000), and Goi (2005) attempted to define the word “marketing

strategy” and illustrated its significance for any organization's ability to succeed. For example, The term marketing strategy is defined as a combination of a target market and a related marketing mix. It's a big picture of what a firm will do in some markets. Simultaneously, Owomoyela (2021) stated that the goal of developing a company's marketing strategy is to create, strengthen, protect, and maintain its competitive edge. They draw attention to how crucial managerial discretion is for negotiating ambiguity and uncertainty in the strategic marketing environment.

Another important aspect catered by the present literature is around sector-specific marketing strategy. Altinay and Altinay (2008) stated that it is very important to consider sector context before designing a marketing strategy. Moreover, there is a strong correlation between sector/category and marketing practices; hence, it is essential to consider sector context before developing marketing strategies.

This is vital from two aspects: (a) In terms of analyzing the customer needs in the market and (b) Aligning the firm's marketing strategies with competitor moves and the mainstream market.

### ***Marketing Communication***

The study of marketing communication is becoming more and more common among writers. Marketing communication receives about 15% of the total weight in diverse literary works. Again, the majority of the original research on this subject was conducted before 2005, and papers published subsequently on the subject show the merged research on marketing communication and other important marketing-related themes.

Definition, concept, and evolution are the key topics covered in the articles, with the 4Ps serving as the central idea of this subject. For example, Shimp (2000) put forward the idea that marketing communications encompasses all elements in a brand's marketing mix, aiming to facilitate exchanges and establish shared meaning with the brand's customers or clients. He emphasized that marketing communications is fundamentally about ensuring that customers are aware of the products offered by organizations. Similarly, Belch and Belch (2018) detailed the objectives of marketing communications, with a primary focus on encouraging more customers to purchase the product or service and increasing the buying frequency among existing customers. Reid et al. (2005) highlighted the importance of marketing communications. Companies need to survive in the competitive environment and are focusing on improving management and integration of marketing.

Furthermore, the progression of the term and its usage from digital 20s advertisements to TV, radio, and print commercials is mentioned. It could be challenging for a marketer to get their point across and break through the noise in this little time (Morgan et al., 2019). Additionally, marketing communication has evolved into a crucial endeavor, from message delivery to impact monitoring. Due to the intense battle to get noticed, most of the time, the communication goes unnoticed.

### ***Marketing in SMEs***

The foundation of the Indian economy is made up of small and medium-sized businesses (SME chambers of India). The noteworthy expansion of SMEs can be ascribed to the growing attention that industry bodies, associations, and policymakers have been paying to their development. The creation of jobs in India is largely facilitated by SMEs (IBEF SME Report 2010). A number of variables have influenced the expansion of Indian SMEs. The adoption of new technologies that greatly improve the value proposition of SMEs, the financial support offered by domestic and international investors, and the ease with which various trade directories and portals facilitate trade between suppliers and buyers are noteworthy examples of these factors. All of these factors work together to lower trade barriers and promote the expansion of small and medium-sized businesses in India.

The definition of SMEs has been widened in line with industry suggestions and will help a wider section of companies to avail various benefits announced for the sector. The Government of India launches a number of programs to protect SMEs amid the Corona Pandemic crisis and to raise their spirits. The Ministry of Micro, Small

and Medium Enterprises – COVID-19 relief for the MSME sector 2020 is the plan that the Government of India has established for the long-term strategy for the sustainability of MSMEs.

Ajay et al. (2015) highlighted that the small-scale sector in India has evolved significantly over the years. Initially focused on the production of basic consumer goods, it has now advanced to the manufacturing of sophisticated and precision products. These small and medium-sized businesses are now more competitive on a national and international scale as a result of market reforms and economic liberalization. Change in consumer behavior in the consumer goods sector: With an average daily usage of over six hours, consumers are now more and more digitally savvy.

About 21% of the examined papers had a marketing-related focus for SMEs. SMEs must be prepared with their marketing plan to tackle the competition posed by larger companies. Furthermore, in order to survive, SMEs must first develop innovative strategies and strategic positioning that will help them maintain their position over time.

Since 2005, a lot of studies have been conducted on this subject, highlighting the effective use of marketing strategy as a growth ladder by certain SMEs. For example, Carson and Gilmore (2011) conducted research on how SMEs use their marketing networks when going through an operational transition. Using the structural, relational, and usage characteristics connected to network frameworks, networking in SMEs is examined. Conversely, the author concludes that SMEs should be approached using a three-pronged marketing approach: (a) cultural marketing, (b) tactical marketing, and (c) strategic marketing (Simpson et al., 2006). Hakimpoor et al. (2011) researched the impact of both external and internal elements, as well as the limited interaction between SMEs and marketing strategies.

### ***Restraints for the Development of SMEs***

Despite this theme's relatively low weight, it is crucial to approach this subject from a research perspective. As a result, restrictions on SME development are seen as a distinct topic. Small and medium-sized businesses, or SMEs, face a variety of difficulties due to their size, location, staffing levels, and financial limitations, among other issues. Marketing strategy or marketing budget takes a backseat as it is imperative to solve the difficulties. A few of the challenges facing the marketing department in SMEs are limited cash flow, inexperience in marketing, business size constraints, and strategic customer-related obstacles. Interestingly, most studies on innovative marketing have focused on firm-specific aspects of innovation and/or the influence of the external environment, despite the fact that innovation is frequently the driving force behind successful marketing campaigns (Doole et al., 2006).

Another noteworthy concern from the current research is SMEs' lack of competitiveness. SMEs in India struggle with a lack of competitiveness. The ability of small-scale industries (SSIs) to produce revenue and sustain employment levels in the face of both local and international competition is referred to in this context as competitiveness. Consequently, the absence of competitiveness may lead SSIs to encounter challenges such as financial distress or closure. Furthermore, Kula and Tatoglu (2003) emphasized the importance of a strong internet presence for SMEs due to global competitiveness. The level of Internet technology acceptance by SMEs and the impact of industry- and firm-specific determinants on Internet adoption in developing market economies are not well-established, despite some of these businesses attempting to use these technologies.

Furthermore, it has been noted that modern marketing strategies and new-age tools are not well understood or utilized by SMEs. For instance, Gajanayake (2010) revealed that the primary cause of SMEs' failure is a lack of awareness and expertise regarding modern technologies and processes. The study shows that marketing methods have no discernible effect on the expansion of the company. Furthermore, there was no effect on the conduct of the business owners or the expansion of their enterprises.

### ***Digital Marketing***

The literature highlights the growing prominence of digital marketing as a significant theme following marketing

strategy. About 25% of the papers are dedicated to digital marketing alone, highlighting its growing significance as a cutting-edge marketing technique. Over the past ten years, retailers have found that online promotional methods are essential (Wu et al., 2012).

While a majority (80%) of the research on digital marketing is conducted post-2015, it is essential not to overlook earlier predictions. Pavlou and Stewart (2000) emphasized the electronic marketing (e-marketing) approach, focusing on changing knowledge, attitudes, and consumer behavior through the effects and effectiveness of advertising.

For SMEs, digital marketing emerges as a key tool, considering its return on investment. Tatolglu (2003) highlighted the importance of a strong internet presence for SMEs in the face of stiff competition and a global outlook. The limited use of the internet by SMEs was identified, suggesting the need for strengthening to compete with larger players. Digital or Internet marketing is seen as instrumental in removing barriers, facilitating the creation and nurturing of favor, increasing buying behaviors, and building brand loyalty. This strategy is more adaptive and flexible than conventional marketing or communication avenues. According to a study by Whiting and Deshpande (2016), social media is the most important instrument in contemporary marketing for connecting with target consumers.

Abasin and Huseynov (2020) developed a model around digital marketing, specifically focusing on its impact on brand loyalty in the fast-moving consumer goods market in Turkey. The model incorporates factors such as social media advertisement, electronic word of mouth, online brand communities, and community commitments as independent variables, with brand loyalty as the dependent variable.

## Conclusion

Any marketing plan's core component is its marketing strategy, which serves as its foundation. With reference to current literature, the paper examines how different writers have approached the subject of "Marketing Strategies in SME" and what gaps exist in the body of knowledge and new ideas/concepts that remain to be investigated.

The body of recent research amply demonstrates the importance of marketing strategy to the success of any given company. Over time, the idea of marketing communication has changed. It changed the foundation for the transition in customer behavior from newspaper to radio, TV, and 20s advertisements. In addition, a marketer finds it difficult to adjust to a setting that is so demanding and changing. In response, digital marketing emerged as a cutting-edge idea that is being implemented throughout the company. The adoption of digital marketing has become essential for reaching a large customer base. SMEs must use digital marketing more to attract customers by eliminating any barriers in their path in a competitive market.

## Managerial and Theoretical Implications

The managerial and theoretical implications of the study can be summarized as follows:

↳ **Strategic Decision-Making.** Managers should recognize the importance of considering industry-specific and product-specific strategies rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach. Tailoring marketing strategies to specific contexts can lead to more effective outcomes.

↳ **Resource Allocation.** Understanding the limitations of small sample sizes highlights the importance of allocating resources wisely. Managers should invest in research methods that provide more robust and representative data to make informed decisions.

↳ **Innovation Adoption.** It is suggested that SMEs embrace innovation in their marketing strategy in light of their reliance on conventional marketing techniques. In order to remain competitive in ever-changing markets, managers must be willing to investigate and adopt novel strategies.



↳ **Collaboration and Networking.** Engaging with industry peers and experts can provide valuable insights into effective marketing strategies. Managers should consider networking opportunities and collaboration with other SMEs to share knowledge and best practices.

### **Theoretical Implications**

↳ **Research Methodology.** The study underscores the need for future research to employ larger sample sizes to enhance the reliability and generalizability of findings. We should strive to use rigorous methodologies that yield more robust results.

↳ **Contextualization of Findings.** Recognizing the importance of industry and product specificity suggests that theoretical frameworks should be adapted to accommodate diverse contexts. Future research could explore the nuances of marketing strategies across different industries and product categories.

↳ **Integration of Innovation Theory.** The study highlights the gap between traditional and innovative marketing practices, indicating the need for theoretical frameworks that incorporate innovation theory. We could explore how innovation adoption influences marketing strategies and organizational performance.

↳ **Practical Relevance of Theory.** It is crucial to close the gap that exists between theoretical ideas and real-world applications. Managers must find relevant and applicable theoretical frameworks while attempting to execute successful marketing strategies in practical contexts.

Overall, the managerial and theoretical implications of the study emphasize the importance of context-specific approaches, innovation adoption, and collaboration in enhancing marketing effectiveness for SMEs.

### **Limitations of the Study and Scope for Further Research**

The research carries its limitations of not offering views from all the industries as it focuses on only FMCG companies. The challenges faced by SMEs differ along with marketing strategies based on the industry they are operating. It is commonly known that different businesses have varying degrees of competitiveness, with certain areas experiencing fierce rivalry from both long-standing firms and recent newcomers. Further limiting the future is the fact that the current study only looks at Indian FMCG; customer behavior varies between industries and nations.

The study faces limitations due to its small sample size, as larger samples typically provide more conclusive results. While the study encompasses comprehensive marketing strategies, it may be beneficial to examine each strategy independently. Additionally, further insights could be gained by focusing on industry-specific and product-specific strategies.

The research identified the gaps in the present literature which can be taken forward within further research. This study provides an overview of the way in which marketing strategy and communication are researched independently; on the other hand, it does not create a relationship between the objectives of SMEs and the marketing strategies that are oriented toward achieving those objectives. More studies on goal-based tactics that can serve as creative alternatives are anticipated, and studies on creative marketing strategies will contribute more to the body of information already in existence.

Furthermore, despite digital marketing's increasing significance, the relationships between its adoption and SMEs' success are not well-documented, and it is still unclear how precisely the usage of digital marketing tools influences SMEs' performance. Additionally, considering social media marketing's increasing importance, additional research on its benefits for SMEs is required.



## Authors' Contribution

Priyanka Wani devised the concept and strategy for the study. She identified reputable research papers and used keywords to organize them. She then determined key concepts and research categories. Apoorva Palkar oversaw the study and verified the analytical techniques. Priyanka Wani composed the document and did the computations.

## Conflict of Interest

The authors certify that they have no affiliations with or involvement in any organization or entity with any financial interest or non-financial interest in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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