



## Feasibility of Using Electronic Marketing in Small and Medium Enterprises in the Industrial Parks of Gilan Province

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<b>Article History</b>	<b>Abstract</b>
Received: 26 March 2023 Revised: 12 July 2023 Accepted: 29 July 2023	<p><i>Given the key role of information technology in business and economics on the one hand and the important role of small and medium-sized enterprises as a converter economic, development and employment in the world, the importance of e-marketing strategy is special, because in today's competitive world of business and technology for all businesses need to use new tools in order to overcome competitive pressures avoiding something new is inevitable. The purpose of this research is based on an applied-development research as well as how to obtain required data from the type of descriptive and survey research. In this study population of all SMEs industrial town in Gilan Province in the company's 635 number and the sample size, equal with 150 persons, is used from formula of restricted society and from random sampling method. In this study a made researcher questionnaire was used for data collection and its validity was confirmed by management and marketing experts and its reliability is used from Cronbach's alpha coefficient by a factor of 0/94. For analysis of software SPSS and EQS were used. The results suggest that organizational factors, technological, governmental, industrial, government agents have a greater impact on compliance.</i></p>
CC License CC-BY-NC-SA 4.0	<b>Keywords:</b> <i>E-marketing, Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), Diffusion of innovations theory, Internet Marketing, Email marketing</i>

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The increasing pace of the internet has enabled the invention of smartphones and other digital technologies, transforming communication. Due to the recent dynamism of the business environment, the internet has become a major hub for marketing goods and services (emmanuel bruce, et.al 2023). In this context, digital technologies are emerging as innovative tools for carrying out business operations and have led to increased competition (Ziółkowska, M.J., 2021).

The requirement for survival in today's competitive economy and changing environment is smarter, harder and faster performance than in the past. The introduction of information technology has caused significant changes in commercial activities, especially activities related to marketing, communication and distribution. Along with globalization, information and communication technologies as the most important factors of change among developed economies and also developing economies and are considered undeveloped (Rostami, 2018: 2). Electronic marketing is one of the concrete manifestations of the information and communication technology

revolution in the field It is economic. The emergence of the Internet and its commercialization in the decade The latest styles It has revolutionized the traditional ways of business and implemented speed and economy. Electronic marketing of advantages and consequences Important economic factors such as expanding the market, reducing the price of production resources, increasing productivity, cost reduction Exchanges, creating employment and reducing inflation have a central role in endogenous economic growth (Behkamal et al., 2018: 23).

Small and medium companies they are very important for the development and economic performance of any country and are an important source of flexibility and innovation. SMEs In most of the member countries of the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (Gilmore et al. 2007: 234) between 96 and 99 percent of the companies (Scopola, 2009: 22) so that today the importance SMEs In the economy of societies, it is well known and it is estimated that about 80% of the growth of the world economy is shaped by these institutions (Jolta And Colleagues, 2002: 139) and generally their main characteristic is the limited volume of their activities (Ramanathan et al., 2012: 934). From the customers' perspective, it has been demonstrated that the usage of technologies has influenced consumers' behavior and decision-making (Chinje, N.B,2015., Voramontri, D.; Klieb, L.2019). Considering the rapid growth of technology and the intensification of competition in the global arena and the role that small and medium-sized companies play in creating 50% of the world's added value and 60-90% of employment (depending on the country's situation) (Abbasi et al.<sup>[9]</sup>, 2008: 261), therefore, the need for a clear understanding of electronic marketing issues as well as the opportunities that exist for such organizations is felt, and how by using these technologies, organizational marketing activities and processes can be made more effective and efficient than traditional methods. He did traditional marketing (Al-Gohari et al., 2012: 1256). Regardless of the growing trend of conducting electronic marketing studies in less developed countries, the research conducted by the researcher showed that in Iran, no study has been conducted to measure the feasibility of using electronic marketing, which makes this issue a gap in the field of electronic marketing in general and marketing. Electronics reflect in small businesses in particular. To cover this gap, there is a great need to conduct research to investigate various aspects of electronic marketing in developing countries including Iran.

Considering that the use of electronic marketing methods is the key factor for the success of companies, and commercial enterprises are forced to use the aforementioned methods to maintain their survival in a competitive environment, therefore, this research aims to determine the measures needed to establish electronic marketing in order to answer this question. The question is, what are the factors influencing the use of electronic marketing in small and medium enterprises in Gilan province?.

## 2. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

### Definition of electronic marketing

Global markets have always been pregnant with extensive and numerous changes and the intensity of competition in them is increasing day by day. Based on this, countries, industries and enterprises (especially in developing countries and their industries and enterprises) should be ready to accept and implement the necessary changes in their system in order to be more competitive in these markets. Among these basic changes is electronic marketing (especially marketing based on information and electronic communication technology) and paying attention to the requirements of using this type of marketing.

Electronic marketing can be seen as an advanced business method related to buying and selling goods, services, information and ideas through the Internet and other electronic tools. Reviewing the relevant literature and published research reveal that the definitions of electronic marketing will be different based on the opinions of each researcher, field and expertise.

Strauss and Frost (2001) define it as follows: "Using electronic data and applications for planning and implementing this concept, distribution and pricing of ideas, goods and services in order to create exchanges that provide individual and organizational goals" (Strauss and Frost, 2001: 454). In this research, Strauss and Frost's (2001) definition of marketing was used as the basis for the definition of electronic marketing, because it includes all the main elements of electronic marketing, as well as types of products, and the main goals of electronic marketing, which are mainly to create exchanges that satisfy customer satisfaction and organizational needs. It also provides this definition by the Electronic Marketing Association has been accepted.

According to this definition, electronic marketing includes any type of use of electronic data or electronic applications to manage the marketing activities of companies. Therefore, electronic marketing includes internet marketing, email marketing, intranet marketing, extranet marketing, mobile marketing, telephone marketing, electronic data exchange.[13] For marketing activities, customer relationship management and so on. In fact, the literature review shows that the most common means of using electronic marketing are: internet marketing,

email marketing, intranet marketing, mobile phone marketing, and extranet marketing. Chaffey et al., 2006; Eid and Truman, 2004 ; Eid and Truman, 2003; Al-Gohari et al., 2008a and 2008b: 10; Evans and king, 1999: 343; Hofacker, 2001 and 1999; Paul, 1996: 27). Therefore, based on the definition of electronic marketing, we will continue to explain and examine the concept of electronic marketing in small and medium-sized companies.

### **Electronic marketing in small and medium companies**

Marketing in SMEs It is very different from marketing in large companies (Gilmore et al., 2007: 234). Marketing in such companies is more operational and based on competitive spirit and competence (Zot et al., 2000: 463). One of the main challenges of using electronic marketing in SMEs Compared to large companies (including digital technologies such as text messages) lack of time, financial and expertise limitations, while the main advantage SMEs Their strength is in providing services to a small part of the market and establishing strong relationships with customers (Gilmore et al., 2007: 234).

Electronic marketing and information technology strengthens small and medium companies in terms of economic and commercial performance. On the one hand, it can improve the innovation power and advantage of these companies in terms of communication. Improving the level of customer service, competitiveness, reducing overhead costs, online payment, improving value chain management and improving efficiency in (B2B) The operation of the organization is one of the effects of the establishment of electronic marketing among small and medium enterprises (APEC), 1999). Another problem is part of the weak points of small and medium companies, which affects their innovation ability compared to large companies. Studies show that small and medium industries accept technology relatively slower; So that in 2001 in Europe, 79% of large companies had access to the Internet, while the same figure for small and medium-sized companies was reported as 25%. Therefore, at the beginning of using electronic marketing, these companies face fixed costs that are very high compared to their size, which causes a large group of them not to associate digital technologies with their business (Saadat, 2008). Therefore, the examination of the support and facilities of small and medium enterprises shows that these businesses must make significant investments in order to use electronic marketing (Fillis et al., 2005: 604).

After stating the theoretical foundations, it is necessary to present the studies that have been carried out in this field.

### **An overview of the research done**

In a study conducted by Aghazadeh et al. in 2013, entitled "Identification of electronic marketing application platforms in Iranian companies from the experts' point of view", the identification of electronic marketing application platforms in the form of component level in two categories, external (related to the government) and internal ( related to companies) and in the form of the nature of the components in two strategic and operational categories. The obtained results indicate that according to marketing experts, all the internal and external platforms of using electronic marketing in Iran's business environment are in an unfavorable situation.

In the study that Hatem Al-Gohari (2012) conducted under the title "Factors affecting the acceptance and implementation of electronic marketing in tourist companies, an empirical study of Egyptian tourist organizations", he investigated and analyzed the different factors affecting the acceptance of electronic marketing in small Egyptian tourist organizations. the payment. The findings show that the internal and external factors of Egyptian tourist organizations have a greater effect on the acceptance of electronic marketing by such organizations. The findings also confirm that the theory of information technology (for example TAM And IDT) are effective in showing the acceptance of electronic marketing by Egyptian tourism organizations. These results reinforce the importance of environmental factors on the acceptance of electronic marketing.

## **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Due to the fact that in this research two quantitative and qualitative approaches have been used to identify the factors affecting acceptance, therefore, we present the research methodology in two quantitative and qualitative parts separately:

### **A) Qualitative research method**

Since this research deals with the identification of effective factors on the adoption of electronic marketing in small and medium companies of Gilan province, it is considered a part of applied-developmental research with an exploratory approach. In this research, semi-structured interviews were used to collect information and

identify factors. The statistical community of the research includes all experts and expert professors who are knowledgeable and knowledgeable about the subject in the field of information technology and electronic marketing, so the size of the community is unlimited. The appropriate sample size in qualitative research for the theory arising from the data is suggested as 20-30 people (Collin et al., 2007: 267). Therefore, the sample size was estimated to be 30 people and the purposeful snowball sampling method was used. After the initial collection of the questionnaires, the raw data was coded and the common codes were conceptualized. At the end, 25 factors were identified and these 25 factors were classified into four categories and analyzed.

#### b) Quantitative research method

The current research is applied-developmental in terms of type and descriptive-surveillance in terms of method. Library sources were used to collect information and theoretical bases.

#### The general framework of the research method

**Table 1: Research framework**

Research orientation	Applied-developmental
Research Philosophy	positivism
Research approach	Deductive-inductive
Research strategy	survey
Time horizons	Cross-sectional
choices	Mixed method
Research data gathering tool	Interview and questionnaire
Data collection method	Field study

#### Population and Statistical Sample

In this The research is the statistical population of all small and medium-sized companies active in the industrial towns of Gilan province, which number is 635 companies. Due to the fact that the size of the research community is limited and any person can be selected as a member of the sample, therefore the random sampling method is simple. In order to choose the appropriate sample size from the statistical sample size formula from a limited population (Momeni and Qayyomi, 2013), which is estimated according to accuracy (d) 0.07 sample volume is equal to:

$$n = \frac{N \times z_{\alpha/2}^2 \times p(1-p)}{\varepsilon^2(N-1) + z_{\alpha/2}^2 \times p(1-p)} = 150$$

According to the sample size, 190 questionnaires were distributed, of which 153 questionnaires were usable and were investigated.

#### 4. RESEARCH TOOL

In this research, the effective factors were first identified through interviews with 30 marketing experts and IT specialists, and then a questionnaire was designed according to the research literature and experts' opinions. The type of questionnaire is researcher-made and a five-choice Likert scale is used to answer the questions. Because the questionnaire was created by the researcher and represents the characteristics that the researcher intends to measure, in fact, the test has content and form validity, which has been confirmed by expert professors and supervisors, consultants and others, as well as to determine the construct validity of the analysis. A factor was used.

Since this researcher-made questionnaire includes three sections, therefore, the validity of the questionnaire has been measured by using Cronbach's alpha coefficient in a section and also in a general way.

**Table 2: Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the questionnaire**

Factors affecting the acceptance of electronic marketing 94%				The current and desirable state of using electronic marketing 94%		Electronic marketing 92%	
System factors 0.90		Environmental factors 0.89		The current situation is 0.92		Favorable condition 0.92	
Organizational 0.84	Technological 0/85	Industrial 0/85	State 0/78				

The results show that this questionnaire has good reliability.

## 5. RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this research, due to the fact that a mixed approach is used and quantitative and qualitative data are analyzed with specific methods. Therefore, according to the priority of the qualitative method, the results of the interview are analyzed first.

### A) Analysis of qualitative findings

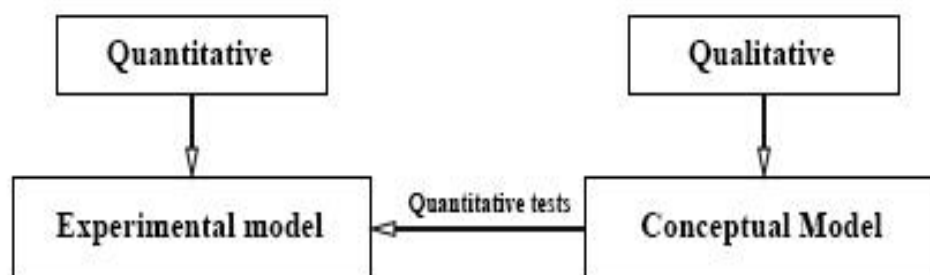
In this research, the factors and components that are effective on the acceptance of electronic marketing have been identified, and after the initial collection of questionnaires, the collected raw data have been conceptualized and then categorized according to what concept they are most similar to, coding and common codes, and finally A theory was compiled. Researcher, validity and strength of data based on the four criteria of acceptability, similarity, determination and transferability; So that in terms of acceptability, by confirming the statements by the participants by referring again and giving feedback to the participants, the ambiguity was resolved and finally the conceptual model was drawn. In the table below, the number of raw data, codes, concepts, categories and theories resulting from the interview is given:

**Table 3: Summary of qualitative procedures**

Item	Code	Concept	Category	Theory
111	25	4	2	1

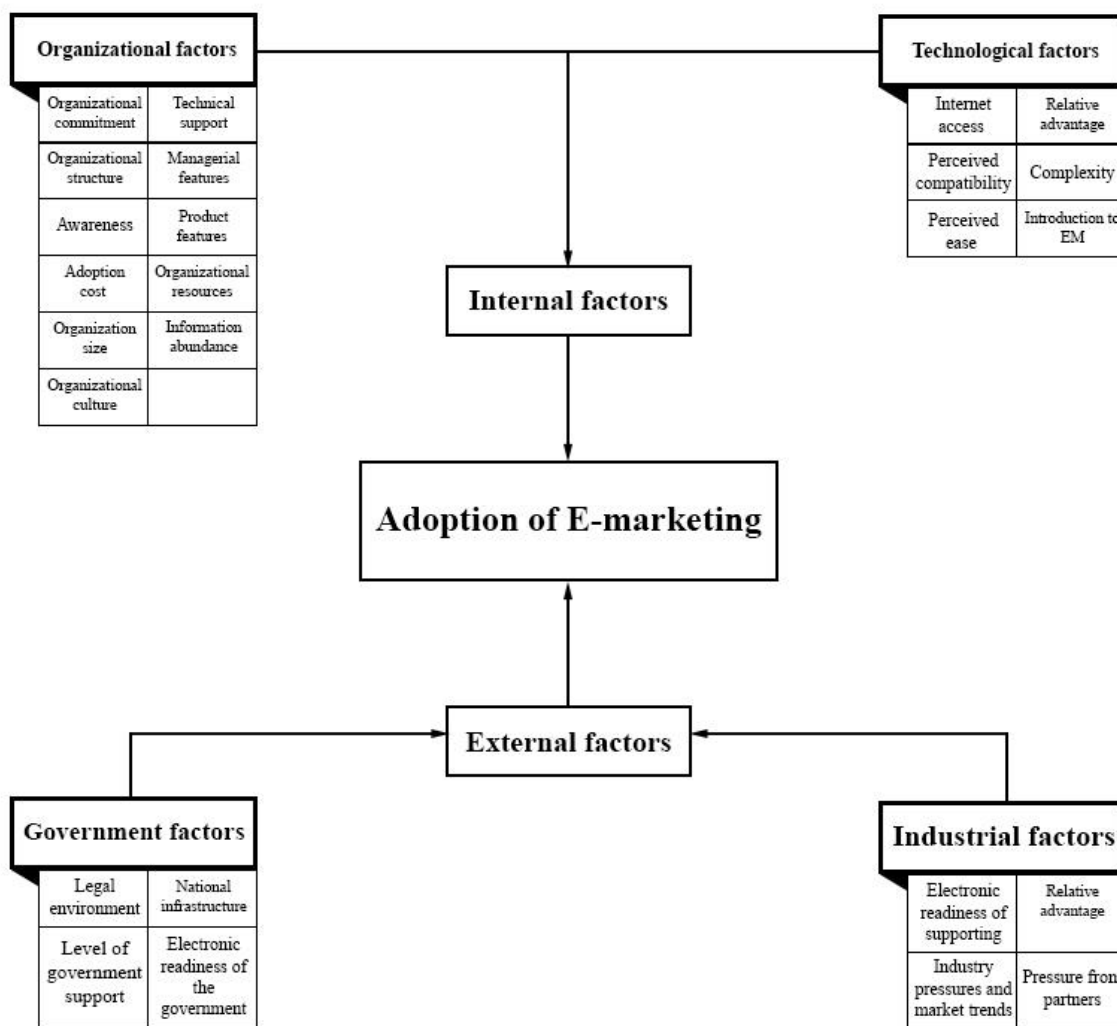
### b) Analysis of quantitative findings

Considering that the researcher identified the effective factors based on the literature and experts' opinions and designed a conceptual model based on the qualitative part and tested the model in a quantitative part to obtain the experimental model, therefore, the process of conducting the research can be summarized presented in the form below:

**Figure 1: The path to reach the empirical research model**

### Conceptual Model of Research

In this research, according to what was presented in the theoretical framework, research literature and the opinions of experts and specialists, the effective factors on the acceptance of electronic marketing were identified and collected by the researcher, as a result, the conceptual model of the research can be based on the qualitative work as follows draw:



**Figure 2: Conceptual model of factors affecting the acceptance of electronic marketing in SMEs**

**Descriptive Statistics**

The table below shows the gender index, education level, organizational position, company type and the frequency of the studied respondents.

**Table 4: Frequency distribution of gender, education level, organizational position and company type**

Percent	Company type	Percent	Organizational position	Percent	Level of education	Percent	gender
6/87	production	5/27	Employee	6/19	diploma	2/71	Man
2/9	commercial	5/72	boss	9/3	Associate Degree	8/28	Female
2/3	other			7/64	Bachelor's degree	0/100	Total
				8/11	Master's degree and more		

According to Table 4, from the entire studied sample, the frequency is higher in the group of men, the highest frequency distribution value according to bachelor's education, in terms of frequency distribution of organizational positions, the highest frequency is related to managers with 72.5% and the highest frequency of type The company is owned by production companies with 87.6%. After examining the demographic characteristics, in the inferential statistics section, the answer to the main problem of the research is addressed.

**Inferential statistics**

In this research, we seek to answer the question, "What are the factors affecting the use of electronic marketing in small and medium-sized companies in Gilan province?" We will answer.

According to the literature and research background as well as the opinion of experts and specialists of electronic marketing, we will test 25 identified factors in small and medium companies of Gilan province in order to determine which of the factors identified in Industrial estates are effective for using electronic marketing. In the first step, factor analysis was used to validate the questions of each of the factors. According to the factor analysis, the factor of perceived compatibility due to the significance level of Bartlett's test being higher than 5%, indicates the lack of a suitable structure for the formation of the factor model and is one of the factors. The analyzed item is deleted. Then, to check the normality of the data, the Klomogrof-Smirnov test was used, therefore, the distribution of the data related to all research factors except for technical support, legal environment, and the characteristics of the manager is abnormal, therefore, for the analysis of abnormal factors, non-parametric tests and for the normal factor, from the test Parametric will be used.

**Table 5: Binomial test to investigate effective factors**

Factor	category	Number	observed proportion	Test proportion	sig
organizational commitment	$\leq 3$	54	0/4	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	99	0/4		
Organizational structure	$\leq 3$	55	0/4	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	98	0/6		
awareness	$\leq 3$	89	0/6	0/6	0/350
	$> 3$	64	0/6		
Acceptance cost	$\leq 3$	41	0/3	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	112	0/7		
Organization size	$\leq 3$	30	0/2	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	123	0/8		
Corporate Culture	$\leq 3$	41	0/3	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	112	0/7		
Product feature	$\leq 3$	64	0/4	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	89	0/6		
Organization resources	$\leq 3$	63	0/4	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	90	0/6		
Plurality of information	$\leq 3$	98	0/6	0/6	0/174
	$> 3$	55	0/4		
complexity	$\leq 3$	62	0/4	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	91	0/6		
Perceived ease	$\leq 3$	25	0/2	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	128	0/8		
comparative advantage	$\leq 3$	61	0/4	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	92	0/6		
Familiarity with electronic marketing	$\leq 3$	23	0/2	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	130	0/8		
Internet access	$\leq 3$	80	0/5	0/6	0/032
	$> 3$	73	0/5		
Industry pressure and market trends	$\leq 3$	28	0/2	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	125	0/8		
Pressure from partners	$\leq 3$	66	0/4	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	87	0/6		
Electronic readiness of the industry	$\leq 3$	43	0/3	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	110	0/7		

E-market readiness	$\leq 3$	49	0/3	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	104	0/7		
Government support	$\leq 3$	31	0/2	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	122	0/8		
Electronic readiness of the government	$\leq 3$	60	0/4	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	93	0/6		
National infrastructure	$\leq 3$	20	0/1	0/6	0/000
	$> 3$	133	0/9		

The value of the significance level of awareness and abundance of information factors is more than 0.05 at the 5% error level, it can be concluded that awareness and abundance of information has no significant difference with the test score of 0.6. Therefore, apart from the above two factors, other factors are effective in accepting the use of electronic marketing.

In order to investigate the effect of technical support factors, the characteristics of the manager and the legal environment due to the normality of the factors from the test Used. It should be noted that we examined the significance of the test at the 5% error level.

**Table 6: The results of the average of a community**

Factor	t	average	Standard deviation	meaning	low limit	upper line
technical support	8762/8	3/5991	0/84584	0/000	0/4640	0/7342
Managers characteristics	7/136	3/5359	0/92893	0/000	0/3876	0/6843
Legal surroundings	10/040	3/6634	0/81733	0/000	0/5329	0/7939

If the upper and lower limits of the test are positive, the test value is higher than the average of the society, the average of the respondents' opinions regarding the technical support, the characteristics of the manager and the legal environment supports the interpretation that the test t- value That is, it is more than 3, so it can be concluded that the level of influence of technical support, manager characteristics and legal environment on the acceptance of electronic marketing in industrial towns of Gilan province is high.

After determining the effective factors on the adoption of electronic marketing and removing the ineffective factors and also determining the importance of the adoption of electronic marketing, we tried to determine the relationship between the identified effective factors on the use of electronic marketing as a linear and effective relationship or not. For this purpose, once the factors were classified separately and once in two categories of systemic and environmental factors, and then the multivariable regression model was used.

The identified effective factors have a significant effect on the use of electronic marketing.

To investigate this hypothesis, the relationship between the variables was measured using the regression test.

**Table 7: The results of the regression test**

Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	sig
	B	standard error	Beta		
Width from the origin	0/247	0/054	*	0/556-	0/000
organizational commitment	*	*	*	*	0/489
Organizational structure	*	*	*	*	0/347
Acceptance cost	*	*	*	*	0/808
Organizational size	0/031	0/006	0/182	0/041	0/000
Organizational Culture	*	*	*	*	0/112
technical support	*	*	*	*	0/497
Features of the manager	*	*	*	*	0/940
Product feature	0/031	0/007	0/185	0/410	0/000
Organization resources	*	*	*	*	0/398
complexity	*	*	*	*	0/929



Perceived ease	0/051	0/010	0/326	0/197	0/000
comparative advantage	0/047	0/012	0/310	0/971	0/000
Familiarity with electronic marketing	*	*	*	*	0/067
Internet access	*	*	*	*	0/257
Industry pressure	*	*	*	*	0/361
Pressure from partners	0/043	0/006	0/294	0/071	0/000
Electronic preparation of the industry	*	*	*	*	0/810
Preparation of electronic market	*	*	*	*	0/359
Legal surroundings	0/030	0/010	0/188	0/072	0/003
Government support	*	*	*	*	0/642
Electronic readiness of the government	*	*	*	*	0/971
National infrastructure	*	*	*	*	0/798

According to the value of the significance level ( $0.000p\text{-value}=\text{}$ ) at the error level of 5% for the width from the origin and the significance level of the regression coefficient of each of the factors, it can be concluded that the factors of organization size, product features, perceived ease, relative advantage, pressure from partners, legal environment, have a significant effect on the use of marketing electronics in the industrial towns of Gilan province and other identified factors do not have a significant effect on the acceptance of electronic marketing in the industrial towns of Gilan province.



**Figure 3: The second part of the research model**

Organizational, technological, governmental and industrial factors have a significant effect on the use of electronic marketing.

**Table 8: The results of the regression test**

Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	sig
	B	standard error	Beta		
Width from the origin	2/526	0/346/0	*	7/297	0/000
organizational	0/441	0/139	0/206	3/179	0/002
technological	0/363	0/103	0/225	3/516	0/001
government	0/435	0/108	0/253	4/012	0/000
industrial	0/451	0/104	0/304	4/340	0/000

According to the value of the significance level ( $0.000p\text{-value}=\text{}$ ) at the error level of 5% for the width from the origin and the significance level of the regression coefficient of organizational, technological, governmental and industrial factors, it can be concluded that these factors have a significant effect on the use of electronic marketing in the industrial towns of Gilan province.

The effect of systemic and environmental factors on the acceptance and use of electronic marketing

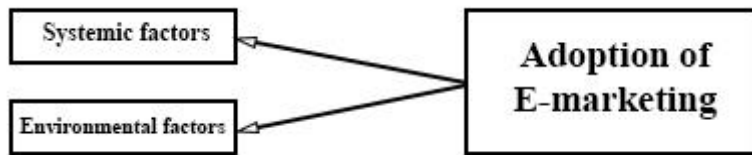


Figure 4: The third part of the research model

Systemic and environmental factors have a significant effect on the use of electronic marketing.

Table 9: The results of the regression test

Model	Unstandardized coefficient		Standardized coefficient	t	sig
	B	standard error	Beta		
intercept elevation	2/487	0/317	*	7/835	0/000
systemic	0/788	0/133	0/390	5/917	0/000
environmental	0/890	0/115	0/513	7/772	000/0

According to the value of the significance level (p-value=0/000) at the error level of 5% for the width from the origin and the significance level of the regression coefficient of systemic and environmental factors, it can be concluded that these factors have a significant effect on the use of electronic marketing in the industrial towns of Gilan province. It was also tried to test the final model designed to confirm the model as a structural model, and the results of this structural model were compared and confirmed with the regression model. For this purpose, in order to measure the structural model of the effect of organizational, technological, industrial and governmental factors, as well as systemic and environmental factors in general, we tested the acceptance rate of electronic marketing.

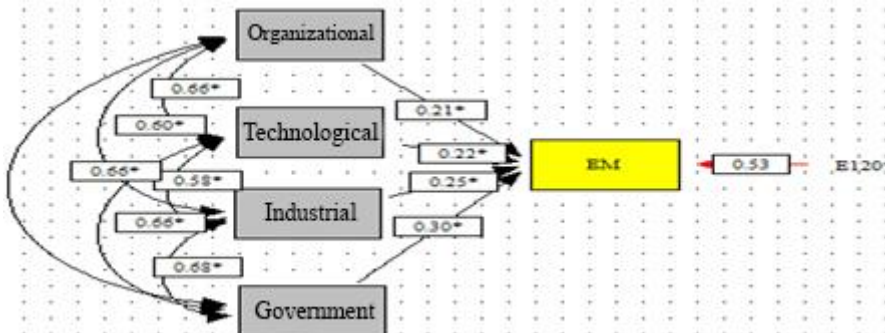


Chart 1: Standardized effect coefficients of EQS structural model

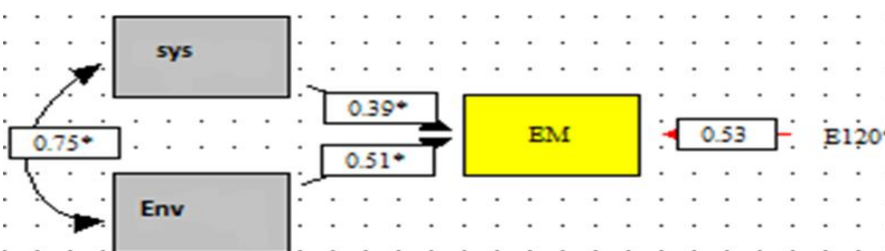


Chart 2: Standardized effect coefficients of EQS structural model

To measure the model designed from the structural equation model (EQS) used. According to chart 1, the standardized effect coefficients of the structural model show that the effect of organizational factors on electronic marketing is 21% (this effect in the regression model b is equal to 0.20), also technological factors with 22%, industrial factors with 25%, governmental factors with 30% have a positive effect on electronic marketing. Also, according to diagram 2, systemic factors have an effect of 0.39 and environmental factors have an effect of 0.51.

6. CONCLUSION

With regard to the application platforms of electronic marketing in small and medium-sized companies, some of which are large and out of management and control. SMEs And mostly they were in the area of authority of the government and related to government organizations, and some others were related to SMEs and were under their management; It seems that in order to provide the bases and requirements for the useful and appropriate use of electronic marketing, both the government and small and medium companies have a serious responsibility and they can play a role as the main players in this matter. In this research, 25 factors affecting Acceptance was identified in the qualitative part of the research, which was tested through quantitative tests. Therefore, after the investigation, the findings show that the factors of awareness and abundance of information do not affect the acceptance of electronic marketing. Also, the results indicate that among organizational, technological, governmental and industrial factors, governmental factors have a greater effect on electronic marketing acceptance.

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