

# Qualitative Identification of Intervening Factors Affecting Digital Marketing Strategies in Successful Iranian Startups

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## 1. Round 1

### 1.1. Reviewer 1

Reviewer:

The manuscript could benefit from a more detailed description of the interview questions and how they align with the research objectives. Including a supplementary section or appendix with the interview guide can enhance the reproducibility of the study and aid in validating the research findings.

While the selection of digital marketing experts is justified, the criteria for defining "expertise" and the process of identifying these individuals should be elaborated. Clarifying how participants' expertise was assessed and confirmed will strengthen the credibility of the research.

The use of grounded theory methodology is appropriate; however, the paper would benefit from a deeper explanation of the coding process. Specifically, how were themes derived from the data? Presenting a few examples of the iterative coding process with direct quotes from the interviews could enhance the transparency and understanding of the data analysis.

The concept of saturation in qualitative research, where no new information is observed in the data, should be addressed. Did the study reach saturation, and if so, how was this determined? This addition will strengthen the methodological robustness of the paper.

To enhance the validity of the qualitative analysis, include a measure of inter-coder reliability. This would involve having multiple researchers independently code the data and then comparing the consistency of their coding. Reporting these metrics would significantly strengthen the reliability of the findings.

The findings section could be improved by more explicitly connecting the emergent themes with existing literature on digital marketing and startup innovation. This would not only reinforce the grounding of your theoretical framework but also position your findings within the broader academic discourse.

The manuscript currently underutilizes visual data representations. Including figures or tables summarizing the main themes or showing relationships between different factors could make the results more accessible and easier to digest for readers.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the new document.

## 1.2. Reviewer 2

Reviewer:

The conclusion provides general recommendations for startups; however, these could be more specific. For example, what precise strategies should startups adopt based on the identified factors? Providing specific, actionable recommendations based on the findings can increase the manuscript's practical value.

Discuss the external validity of the findings. Are the identified factors unique to the Iranian context, or are they applicable globally? Acknowledging the geographic and cultural boundaries of the study's applicability enhances its scholarly rigor.

The limitations section should address potential biases in qualitative research, such as interviewer bias or participant bias. Discussing how these were mitigated will improve the trustworthiness of the study.

While the paper suggests future quantitative studies, it could also propose specific qualitative inquiries that could further explore the nuances of digital marketing strategies in different cultural contexts or within specific types of startups.

Consider expanding the discussion on how emerging digital technologies (e.g., AI, big data) could influence the identified factors. This would not only update the manuscript but also expand its relevance to current and future digital marketing landscapes.

Elaborate on the implications of your findings for other stakeholders in the startup ecosystem, such as investors, policy makers, and educational institutions. How can these groups use your findings to support the growth and effectiveness of startups in their digital marketing efforts?

Compare and contrast your findings with existing models of digital marketing effectiveness in startups. This will provide readers with a clear understanding of how your research contributes to existing knowledge and what new insights it offers.

Authors revised the manuscript and uploaded the new document.

## 2. Revised

Editor's decision after revisions: Accepted.

Editor in Chief's decision: Accepted.