

An Attempt to Explore Electronic Marketing Adoption and Implementation Aspects in Developing Countries: The Case of Egypt

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to explore the current aspects related to Electronic Marketing (E-Marketing) adoption and implementation in developing countries through examining and investigating the case Egyptian small business enterprises. The paper methodically reviews E-Marketing adoption and implementation by small business enterprises related literature in general and in developing countries (e.g. Egypt) in particular. Building on the results of such a review, two stages methodology (namely survey and case studies) are used to explore the current aspects related to E-Marketing adoption and implementation by Egyptian small business enterprises. The findings indicated that there is a very few research that was conducted in the related literature to examine and/or investigate E-Marketing adoption and implementation in general and in Egypt in particular. The findings also indicated (although through a small response rate of the Egyptian small business enterprises) that Egyptian small businesses owners, marketing managers and sales managers have an immature and inexperienced knowledge of E-Marketing aspects as well as the different tools or forms related to it. It was found that the size of business, type of products, available resources, the knowledge of the owner and/or manager, customer's orientation towards E-Marketing, and government support are the most important factors that might have a great impact of the decision of adopting E-marketing or at least one of its tools or forms by Egyptian small business enterprises. Meanwhile, international orientation or competing globally was not one of the factors affecting E-Marketing adoption as most of the small business enterprises depended totally on the Egyptian international trade points in conducting E-Marketing without trying to gain the needed experiences to conduct these activities independently. Moreover, Egyptian small business enterprises owners, marketing and sales managers did not find any positive impact for E-Marketing adoption on the marketing performance of their small business enterprises. The findings also reinforced that Egyptian small business enterprises had only conducted partial narrow-minded E-Marketing activities.

KEYWORDS

Case Study, Developing Countries, Egypt, E-Marketing Adoption, E-Marketing Implementation, E-Marketing, Small Business Enterprises, Survey

1. INTRODUCTION

The revolution and advances in computer science, the Internet, information technology (IT), media and communications as well as the drop in its related costs has changed the ways of conducting business is today's world. In the last few decades, growing numbers of businesses and enterprises have been using the Internet and other electronic communication tools to conduct business and/or marketing

efforts and activities, giving the chance for Electronic Marketing practices to grow in an intense and energetic way (El-Gohary, 2009).

Meanwhile, small sized enterprises (small businesses) are socially and economically important for any society as they significantly contribute positively to any society employment, innovations, self-fulfilment, economic growth and GDP. As such, it is distressing to find out that not much is known about the activities of such firms in most third world countries. The main reasons for such a problem are:

- Small sized enterprises do not receive the same kind of attention as large companies do in most developing countries.
- The limited resources of small sized enterprises (financial, managerial, human, innovation and information resources) seem to restrict and decry the number of success stories of such firms, accordingly decreases the interest in researching it.

The importance of small businesses is a reflection of its ability to generate wealth and is predominantly based on their expected role as job-providers for almost every economical sector within any society. Within this regard, small businesses bear the utmost responsibility of employment in the private sector all over the world. As such, the development of small enterprises has long been viewed as a significant reason for the achievement of development objectives, including poverty alleviation, economic development and the promotion of more advanced societies (El-Gohary, 2009; Zaki, Edwards and El-Gohary, 2015; and Shah, El-Gohary, and Hussain, 2015).

1.1. Egypt, an Overview

Egypt is an Arab, Middle Eastern and African country with very significant and strategic economic, political and geographical position. It stands in northern Africa occupying the northeast corner of the continent, bordering the Mediterranean Sea from the north, Libya from the west, Palestine and Red Sea from east and Sudan from the south. With a 995,450 sq km of land space, a population of 91,080,433 (as on the 19th of June 2016 – CAPMAS, 2016a), and 28 governorates (Al Daqahliyah, Al Bahr El Ahmar, Al Baheyr, Al Fayum, Al Gharbyah, Alexandria, Ismailiyah, Al Giza, Al Minufiyah, Al Minya, Al Qalyubiyah, Al Wadi Al Gadid, Al-Suez, Al Sharqiyah, Aswan, Asyut, Bani Sowaf, Port Said, Cairo, Damietta, Helwaan, Kafr Al Shaykh, Matruh, North Sina, Qina, South Sina, Suhaj and 6th of October) in addition to one special self-governing city (Luxor) (El-Gohary, 2009). The capital and most populated city is Cairo with a population of 9,524,888 (as on the 19th of June 2016 – CAPMAS, 2016a).

The Egyptian economy consists of many economic sectors. However, a great percentage of the Egyptian GDP comes from a limited number of economic sectors namely: agriculture, media, Suez Canal, tourism, the transferred income of more than 6 million Egyptians working abroad (mainly in the Gulf area and Europe) and petroleum and gas exports (El-Gohary, 2009). In the last 45 years, the Egyptian government started a process of restructuring the highly centralised economy from the sixties (and to some extent early seventies) era into a market liberalised economy. Hence, the economic conditions for the country started to improve in a significant way after a period of poor economic performance (El-Gohary, 2009; and Ahmed, Hay and El-Gohary, 2015). However, as a result of the latest two Egyptian revolutions as well as the drop in oil prices internationally, the country economy suffered massively as a direct result of political unrest. Tourism revenues dropped massively as a result of political unrest and lack of security safe conditions. Moreover, in what can be seen as a domino effect, the transferred income of Egyptians working abroad dropped as a result of the drop in oil prices and austerity policies in the Gulf area.

Nevertheless, Egyptian small business enterprises have rooted history that goes back to thousands of years as verified by many different evidences. As such, Egypt was one of the earliest civilizations

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