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# From websites to social media: exploring the adoption of internet marketing in emerging industrial markets

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study aims to explore internet marketing adoption in emerging industrial markets across several internet-based technologies (i.e. social media platforms, static and transactional websites).

**Design/methodology/approach** – This study is mainly based on an exploratory research design and investigated the online presence of 570 industrial organizations in terms of their involvement in social media. This study also examines if websites are used for basic marketing communications (brochureware) or for conducting advanced marketing activities. An online survey is used to explore the relationships between several factors and internet marketing adoption.

**Findings** – The study found that half of the investigated organizations are using the internet as a one-way communication vehicle through static websites. The study also revealed that decision-makers in emerging industrial markets are enthusiastic about social media, particularly Facebook. In addition, internet marketing adoption was positively related to perceived relative advantage, compatibility, organizational innovativeness, competitor and customer pressure.

**Practical implications** – From practitioners' perspectives, the findings can help decision-makers identify the current levels of involvement in internet marketing. At the macro level, the high percentage of organizations with minimum involvement in internet marketing calls for conducting awareness initiatives to educate industrial organizations, particularly small- and medium-sized enterprises, about the opportunities offered by the internet.

**Originality/value** – The findings from this study enrich internet marketing research because it focuses on industrial organizations in emerging markets, which is a rarely examined context despite its importance and potential.

**Keywords** Social media, B2B, Internet marketing, Compatibility, Relative advantage, Electronic marketplaces, Emerging industrial market, Organizational innovativeness, Competitor and customer pressure

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Since the mid-1990s, the internet has received growing levels of attention by academics and practitioners because of its commercial potential. According to a recent report from Frost and Sullivan[1], the business-to-business (B2B) market size on the internet is projected to grow to \$6.7 trillion by 2020, which is double the business-to-consumer (B2C) size. Although there are many benefits associated with internet marketing, industrial organizations vary in adopting it. More specifically, one organization may have a state-of-the-art website that allows online transactions with distributors, while another organization in the same sector (e.g. pharmaceuticals) might run a static website that provides basic information about their products. Similarly, some organizations are very active on several social media platforms (i.e. dedicated YouTube channel and daily updated Facebook business

pages). Other organizations neither have websites nor social media accounts.

Several studies were conducted to understand how and why organizations vary in their online presence (Abebe, 2014; Ifinedo, 2011; Levenburg *et al.*, 2015; Simmons *et al.*, 2011; Shah Alam *et al.*, 2011; Tan *et al.*, 2009; Tiago and Maria, 2010; Wymer and Regan, 2005). These studies generally address the B2C context (Siamagka *et al.*, 2015). Yet, a few efforts focused on internet marketing in the B2B context (Michaelidou *et al.*, 2011; Panayiotou and Katimertzoglou, 2015), and none were found to do so in emerging markets. In addition, the relevant previous studies investigated one internet technology (i.e. transactional websites). Exploring more than one technology at the same time provides better insights because it allows for comparison of adoption levels. It is also important to point out that there is a constant need for new research in the domain of internet marketing adoption because the internet never stops evolving, from Web.1 to the

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Semantic Web and from basic internet-enabled devices to the Internet of Things (IoT).

To address these matters, this paper's main research issue is to explore the current status of internet marketing adoption in emerging industrial markets across different internet-based technologies (i.e. social media platforms, static and transactional websites). To shed more light on the main research issue, the paper explores how technological, organizational and environmental factors are related to internet marketing adoption in the context of emerging industrial markets. The following section provides a theoretical framework that discusses internet marketing adoption. This is followed by the methodology, analysis and discussion. Finally, conclusions, limitations and future research are presented.

## Theoretical background

Internet marketing has been generally defined as the use of internet technologies to achieve marketing objectives (Roberts and Zahay, 2012; Strauss and Frost, 2014). Conceptual work has pointed out the impact of the internet on the marketing mix (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016), how the internet differs from traditional media (Michaelidou *et al.*, 2011) and the creation of a new retail channel (Yoo and Lee, 2011). Please note that terms such as "Internet marketing", "e-marketing", "social media marketing" and recently "digital marketing" are used interchangeably by researchers and practitioners (Shaltoni, 2016). In this article, the term internet marketing is preferred, as the technologies investigated are internet based. Other information and communication technologies that could be considered by many to be within the domain of e-marketing (e.g. electronic point of sale, data mining, etc.) are beyond the interest of this study.

The impact of the internet on marketing in the B2B context is thoroughly discussed in the literature. Advantages include, but are not limited to, marketing communications with stakeholders, direct on-line selling, lower search cost, finding more substitutes for products, comparing prices and entry to new markets, addressing competitive pressures, better customer service and improved company image (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016; Roberts and Zahay, 2012; Strauss and Frost, 2014). Moreover, industrial branding through the internet can be boosted by creating relevant and exciting content that is delivered through social media channels (Lipiäinen and Karjaluo, 2015). Overall, the internet continues to offer endless marketing opportunities, which enhances expectations that most organizations will have high levels of involvement in internet marketing. But this is not occurring, organizations vary in their adoption of the internet to achieve marketing objectives, with some using it for communication purposes and others for conducting commercial transactions or even for transforming the whole marketing function. Shaltoni and West (2010) summarized these levels as follows: the communication level, or brochureware, which is simply a one-way communication from the organization to its stakeholders. The transaction level where organizations conduct transactions using internet marketing resources. Finally, the transformation level in which internet marketing strategy drives corporate strategy.

Moreover, organizations in the industrial market, particularly small- and medium-size enterprises (SMEs), tend to start their online journey with electronic marketplaces, which refers to an electronic environment in which buyers and sellers meet to exchange goods, service and information (Turban *et al.*, 2012). Terms such as marketspaces or e-markets were used in the early 1990s. The focus at that time was on inter-organizational information systems to exchange information about prices and product. In the context of emerging economies with weak national systems, Abuhamad and Shaltoni (2013) argue that organizations need latest technologies associated with international collaborations, which is the case with electronic marketplaces, to improve their innovativeness and market penetration. In other words, electronic marketplaces could differentiate winners from losers (Rohm *et al.*, 2004). Researchers (Lee *et al.*, 2011; Sila, 2013) and practitioners are increasingly finding that value creation in the form of time and place utilities is greater in electronic marketplaces than in the traditional marketplaces because geographical constraints and time limitations do not exist.

With regards to social media in the industrial organizations' context, diverse platforms of social media (i.e. blogging, photo sharing, video channels, etc.) have been the subject of increasing interest. In general, social media offers many benefits and opportunities to industrial organizations, as it helps in attracting new customers in addition to cultivating relationships with existing ones (Kho, 2008; Siamagka *et al.*, 2015). Social media can also be used to improve collaborations with customers and consequently accelerate innovation (Wang *et al.*, 2016). Furthermore, Rapp *et al.* (2013) emphasize that B2B marketing professionals can use social media to improve brand loyalty. These benefits to B2B organizations may turn directly into increased revenues and greater return on investment (Lacka and Chong, 2016). To gain such benefits, control over content creation is a critical issue. Huotari *et al.* (2015) suggest that organizations can influence content creation in social media using direct or indirect methods. Examples of the former include adding new content and participating in discussions through corporate user accounts. Examples of indirect methods include training employees to create content and perform activities that influence other users to create favorable content for the company. Such content is not limited to professional networks only (e.g. LinkedIn) but also includes personal ones (e.g. Facebook).

In general, social media business pages/profiles are easy to manage and normally cost nothing to establish. On the other hand, establishing and managing a website requires time and money, although this has been minimized because of the developments in content management systems (CMS) such as Joomla and Drupal (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016). That is why decisions-makers, particularly in small organizations, may tend to prefer social media over having a dedicated website for their business. But social media pages do not ensure absolute marketing success because implementation requires a strategic perspective to ensure the desired outcomes (Hsu, 2012). In the near future, websites will continue to be important for all businesses because they allow better search engine marketing, full control of content and consequently

better branding (Strauss and Frost, 2014). In other words, social media business pages are very important, but not enough.

In the context of B2B, many marketing decision-makers still perceive social media sites as being less important because there is a common perception that social media is more relevant to B2C markets and that they cannot support B2B marketing objectives (Michaelidou *et al.*, 2011). Such a view is further confirmed by the Jussila *et al.* (2014), who found that nearly 60 per cent of business executives in B2B markets perceive social media as being unnecessary. These doubts about the role of social media could be attributed to marketers' poor understanding of how to use social media for B2B marketing purposes (Järvinen *et al.*, 2012) and the fear that marketers are unable to control the exchange of information, which may risk confidential information disclosure (Simula *et al.*, 2013). Interestingly, a recent study by Siamagka *et al.* (2015) observed that some innovative marketers in the UK established B2B firm social media presence, and many of them aim to increase their investment in social media marketing. In other words, decision-makers in developed industrial markets are slowly beginning to recognize the value of social media. Siamagka *et al.* (2015) further add that the most popular social media platforms among B2B organizations is LinkedIn.

Given the benefits of different internet marketing applications discussed above and the variation in its adoption, it is interesting to explore the factors related to internet marketing adoption in the context of emerging industrial markets. Reviewing the literature reveals that several studies were conducted to examine the role of a range of factors that could affect organizational adoption of the internet (Ahmad *et al.*, 2015; Al-Qirim, 2007; Harrison *et al.*, 2005; Levenburg *et al.*, 2015; Lynn *et al.*, 2002; Simmons *et al.*, 2011; Sila, 2013). These studies can help in understanding the factors related to internet marketing adoption in emerging industrial markets. Reviewing the literature also shows that most of the e-business adoption studies use, fully or partially, the Technology Organization Environmental framework (TOE) (Tornatzky and Fischer, 1990) and Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) (Rogers, 2003). A similar conclusion was suggested by Oliveira and Martins (2011), who conducted an extensive analysis of literature and found that the most widely used theories in technology adoption studies are the DOI and the TOE. A possible explanation is that the internet is considered as a technological innovation (Prescott, 1997). More specifically, the internet introduces new methods in most, if not all, marketing functions, including promotion (i.e. search engine marketing), distribution (i.e. cybermediaries), pricing (i.e. dynamic prices), market research (i.e. e-surveys) and customer relationship management (i.e. online live chat).

In brief, the DOI theory addresses the diffusion of an innovation over time and/or space. Everett Rogers introduced the DOI in the early 1960s. Since then, the DOI has become one of the main theories in the innovation literature. According to Rogers (2003), adoption takes place in a singular unit which could be an organization or an individual. When an adoption takes place across a system, then DOI is said to happen. DOI suggests that several attributes of innovations (e.g. relative advantage and compatibility) are important in

explaining whether an innovation is accepted and in determining the rate at which an innovation is adopted. The TOE framework (Tornatzky and Fischer, 1990) addresses the relationship between organizational adoption of technological innovations and the factors associated with the organizational context (e.g. innovativeness), the environmental context (e.g. competitor pressure) and finally the technological context (e.g. complexity). It is noteworthy that although adoption and DOI theories have received considerable interest from marketing scholars, knowledge on how organizations adopt innovations is still considerably less extensive than the sum of its parts (Makkonen and Johnston, 2014). In this study, the TOE framework is chosen as the theoretical basis for the development of hypotheses because it considers various contexts. Most importantly, the TOE framework, as discussed earlier, has been widely recognized as a well-established framework in the field of e-business. Elements from the DOI (i.e. attributes of innovations) are also used.

The technological context in TOE comprises the technologies relevant to organizations (Tornatzky and Fischer, 1990). Reviewing the literature revealed that the most examined factors are those suggested by Rogers (2003), which include: perceived relative advantage, compatibility and complexity of the technological innovation. Other factors suggested by Rogers (2003), such as trialability and observability, are generally associated with adoption at the individual level, which could explain why many organizational adoption studies do not consider them (Abebe, 2014; Ifinedo, 2011; Levenburg *et al.*, 2015; Tiago and Maria, 2010). In general, industrial organizations are more likely to be highly involved in internet marketing if they perceive that doing so will offer new benefits that were not obtained using current methods (Beatty *et al.*, 2001; Scupola, 2009). Perceived relative advantage may, for example, take the form of new markets, reduced transaction costs or better customer service (Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick, 2016; Shaltoni, 2006). The second factor in the technological context is complexity, which refers to an innovation being perceived as relatively difficult to understand and to use (Rogers, 2003). Complex technologies create greater uncertainty about their successful implementation; therefore, they increase the risks inherent in the decision to adopt (Jeon *et al.*, 2006; Lin and Lin, 2008). The third factor is perceived compatibility, which generally reflects the level of IT knowledge and usage within the organization. The adoption of internet marketing can bring about significant changes to work practices and consequently causes resistance to change (El-Gohary, 2012; Grandon and Pearson, 2004). Based on the above:

- H1. Internet marketing adoption level is positively related to perceived relative advantage.
- H2. Internet marketing adoption level is negatively related to perceived complexity.
- H3. Internet marketing adoption level is positively related to perceived compatibility.

The organizational context is related to internal organizational factors, such as available resources and business orientations (Tornatzky and Fischer, 1990). A very relevant and



multi-dimensional factor that was used in several e-business adoption studies (Scupola, 2003; Tarafdar and Vaidya, 2006) is organizational innovativeness, which refers to the degree to which an adopter is relatively early in adopting an innovation compared to other members of a social system (Rogers, 2003). Organizational innovativeness is an important organizational capability for achieving competitive advantage, particularly in emerging markets (Yu *et al.*, 2013). Top management support represents a major dimension of organizational innovativeness because managers who are well-informed about emerging technologies can induce or force employees and other managers to consider such technology use (Sabherwal *et al.*, 2006). Innovation-oriented organizations are more likely to adopt internet marketing than are non-innovative organizations because their priority is to make significant resource commitments to develop new products and because they tend to be early innovation adopters. Thus:

*H4.* Internet marketing adoption level is positively related to organizational innovativeness.

Finally, the external/environmental context is defined by Tornatzky and Fischer (1990, p. 153) as “The arena in which a firm conducts its business”. The most investigated external factors in previous e-business adoption studies (Ahmad *et al.*, 2015; Al-Qirim, 2007; Wymer and Regan, 2005) are competitor and customer pressure. Competitor pressure reflects the level of competition in the industry. In a highly competitive environment, organizations constantly need to keep up with technological advances to avoid losing their competitive advantage. Moreover, when the level of competition is high, organizations may adopt internet marketing, not on account of its actual relative advantage, but rather on account of competitors who have already adopted it (Fang *et al.*, 2003). The last proposed factor that might be related to internet marketing adoption is customer pressure. In general, customers’ demands represent a major source of pressure on organizations (Doherty *et al.*, 1999; Zhu *et al.*, 2003). This common sentiment is even more valid nowadays because the internet and other related technologies are creating powerful customers who have a wealth of accurate and updated information (Strauss and Frost, 2014). Based on the above:

*H5.* Internet marketing adoption level is positively related to competitor pressure.

*H6.* Internet marketing adoption level is positively related to customer pressure.

## Methodology

This study is mainly based on an exploratory research design because it aims to understand internet marketing adoption in a new/unexplored context, which is emerging industrial markets. Elements of explanatory design are also used to test the research hypotheses.

In this study, the exploratory research design played a major role in identifying and analyzing Jordanian industrial organizations in terms of their involvement in internet marketing. In brief, the Jordanian economy is considered to be emerging because while it has some characteristics of a

developed market, it does not meet developed market standards. In other words, Jordan is progressing toward becoming advanced, as it is regarded a safe threshold for an emerging economy. According to the Jordanian investment commission (2016), the industrial sector is a significant contributor to Jordan’s \$38bn gross domestic product (GDP), accounting for over a quarter of Jordan’s economic growth. The main industries include extractive industries (i.e. Calcium carbonate, building stones, oil shale and phosphate), fertilizers, pharmaceuticals, cement, textile, fertilizers, plastic materials, fast-moving consumer goods, information and communication technologies.

Before conducting the main investigation, three unstructured exploratory interviews were performed at the Amman chamber of Industry with the chamber’s CEO, IT manager and industrial development manager. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and lasted for around 45 minutes each. Each interviewee was asked about his/her opinions regarding what drives Jordanian industrial organizations’ involvement in internet marketing; then they were asked about specific platforms (e.g. online marketplaces and social media) and their current usage and potential for industrial organizations in Jordan. It is noteworthy that the interviews were conducted at the early stages of this study for explorative purposes only (i.e. getting better insights into the Jordanian industrial sector). Therefore, basic analytical techniques were used such as looking at patterns in answers and the repetition of phrases (Bernard, 2000). The interviews also helped in getting access to information about industrial organizations and in gaining insights into the factors which could be related to internet marketing adoption in emerging industrial markets.

The main exploratory investigation was conducting a detailed analysis that addressed how industrial organizations are involved in internet marketing. The Amman Chamber of Industry database was used as a sampling frame because it provides updated information about organizations from different industries. The analysis, which was conducted during early October to mid-November 2016, included 570 organizations in several sectors. The organizations were investigated one by one to discover:

- 1 If they have websites; if yes, how they were used (i.e. communication vs transaction). In brief, a website would be classified as basic/communication if it is a one-way communication from the organization to the site visitor. In other words, visitors of the website cannot conduct transactions apart from basic communication through e-mail. A website would be classified as transactional if it offers one or more transactions including customer service (e.g. live chat, forums, etc.), online ordering and partner or distributor login.
- 2 If they have a social media page/presence across the following platforms: Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube. The nature of the social media page was also further investigated. For example, in the case of Facebook, an effort was made to identify if the page is neglected (i.e. no updates, no or little communication with customers, very basic information about the organization) or well-tended (i.e. updated on a daily or at least weekly basis, active communication with customers, plenty of media).

It is noteworthy that the initial plan was to focus on websites analysis, with little attention to social media because many previous studies indicated that social media is less important in the industrial market context (Michaelidou *et al.*, 2011; Jussila *et al.*, 2014). As research progressed, social media importance was clear. Consequently, a decision was made to include them in the main investigation. Also, other social media platforms were considered (i.e. Twitter, Instagram, Flickr, YouTube Channel), but a preliminary analysis showed that they are rarely used. Consequently, these platforms were not further investigated in the full analysis. In an effort to make sure that dropping them was not a problem, YouTube channel were considered in the full analysis and only 7 per cent were found to use it.

The explanatory part of this study was mainly based on self-completion web questionnaire. The rationale behind this choice is that questionnaires serve a number of functions by translating the research constructs into a series of questions and allow the use of larger samples and consequently perform the statistical tests which are required to examine the study's hypotheses. The constructs were measured using multi-item indicators that were adopted or adapted from previous studies (Beatty *et al.*, 2001; Shaltoni and West, 2010; Fang *et al.*, 2003). To strengthen the validity of the result, this research followed Churchill's (1979) recommendations by thoroughly reviewing the literature and conducting an experience survey. Four marketing professors were asked to evaluate the face validity of the items (i.e. representation of the construct and clarity of construction). Only items that were approved by the professors were admitted into the final items pool. It is noteworthy that a pre-test was performed to detect any possible problems. In all, 40 companies were invited to participate in the pre-test. Five invitations bounced back because of what appears to be an error in e-mail address or deleted e-mail. Six responses were received and no major problems were detected, but few modifications were made to the survey design and the invitation letter to better suit the web nature. Please note that the six responses from the pre-test were not included later in the main analysis. After

developing the items, a self-completion online questionnaire was sent to 480 SMEs who provided e-mail address. Marketing managers, or business owner in the case of small and micro organizations, were considered as key informants. The survey focused on SMEs because the variations in internet marketing adoption between them are obvious, which is not the case of larger organizations. The European commission definition of an SME being less than 250 employees was adopted. A summary of the main methods used in this study and the rationale for using them is provided in Table I.

## Findings and discussion

The unstructured exploratory interviews showed that interviewees shared many thoughts, with the IT manager having a natural focus on the technical issues. According to the interviewees, the main inhibitors of internet marketing adoption are related to decision-makers' attitudes toward engaging in e-business. More specifically, most commercial B2B transactions in Jordan are still based on face-to-face communications; consequently, internet marketing is expected to make a limited impact in the near future. The CEO and business development manager highlighted the importance of conducting awareness campaigns and workshops about internet marketing, which helps in changing the knowledge and attitudes of decision-makers. The interviewees also confirmed the need for local online marketplace, as currently there are none. Such marketplaces will better serve the interest of local organizations, particularly SMEs, because it can be tailored to their needs. None of the interviewees provided specific answers regarding industrial organizations involvement in internet marketing (i.e. percentage of organizations that have active Facebook accounts), and they all expressed the need for such research.

As to the current practices of internet marketing, the main exploratory effort showed that half of the organizations use their websites for communication purposes. A small percentage (6 per cent) conducted commercial or business

Table I Summary of the methods used in this study

Method	Description	Rationale	Time/place
1. Analysis of adoption	A detailed analysis that addressed industrial organizations involvement in the web and social media platforms	The analysis generated data that was used to address the main research issue through exploring and comparing industrial organizations involvement in internet marketing	2015-2016 Amman (Jordan)
2. Online survey	Self-completion web questionnaire that was sent to marketing decision-makers in Jordanian industrial organization	The questionnaire enabled the use of large sample to generate data for examining the research hypotheses	
<b>3. Other methods</b>			
3.1 Exploratory unstructured interviews	3.1 Interviews in early stages of the research with Amman chamber of Industry CEO, IT and business development manager	3.1 Explore the views/thoughts of the experts who are directly involved in managing the Jordanian industrial sector	
3.2 Experience survey	3.2 Four marketing professors were asked to evaluate the questionnaire	3.2 Improve face validity of the questionnaire	
3.3 Pretesting the questionnaire	3.3 Questionnaire was sent to 40 organizations	–	

transactions. Only 2 per cent of the investigated organizations were found to run company/enterprise portals that allow business collaboration with partners, distributors and employees. Furthermore, around 80 per cent of communication websites across most sectors were static with four to five main links: about us (including history, visions, mission and management), our products, career, news and contact us. The rest communication websites were dynamic in the sense that they looked professionally designed and included more links/sections, such as comprehensive product catalog in different languages, updated news and career center. Special experiences were found in some specific industries. For example, in the painting industry, links/pages such as “virtual decoration” were established to enrich the website and, perhaps, impress visitors. The analysis also revealed that 57 per cent of small organizations (below 10 employees) did not have websites, while 35 per cent of medium-sized organizations (10–50 employee) and only 3 per cent of large organizations did not have websites, which indicates that organizational size plays a role in industrial organizations’ web presence.

The ACI database did not provide information about the usage of electronic marketplaces. Therefore, the researcher explored ten international electronic marketplaces and found a limited presence of Jordanian organizations in only three of them, namely, tradekey.com, ec21.com and bizbilla.com. More specifically, in the case of tradekey.com, around 250 product listing for Jordanian companies were found, while in the case of ec21.com, the list did not exceed 100. Comparing these numbers to thousands of product listing in industrialized countries of relatively similar population size (e.g. Sweden and Belgium) confirms that electronic marketplaces are underutilized in Jordan.

With regards to social media, Facebook analysis results showed that the majority (71 per cent) has Facebook accounts/pages. However, only 31 per cent of the investigated organization are serious about their Facebook accounts. The rest are neglected in the sense that they are not updated or had little content. In five cases, the pages’ latest posts were created a year before the analysis was conducted (i.e. 2015). On the other hand, the well-tended Facebook accounts had daily or weekly new posts that included media (i.e. videos/photos) in addition to posts dedicated to answering customer questions and complaints. The relatively high percentage of Facebook adoption among Jordanian industrial organizations is in line with the numbers provided by Internet Worlds Stats (2016), which shows that around 62 per cent of Jordanians use Facebook. The results also indicated that the size of the organization played a lesser role in the case of Facebook than it did with websites. In other words, the percentage of well-tended pages were relatively similar for both SMEs and larger organizations.

In the case of LinkedIn, 41 per cent of the investigated organizations did not have accounts, while 59 per cent did. This indicates that LinkedIn is second to Facebook. Comparing this to developed countries context shows some difference, as the most popular social media platforms among B2B organizations in the UK is LinkedIn (Siamagka *et al.*, 2015). There was no need to further investigate if the LinkedIn accounts are neglected or well-tended because 88

per cent of them were simple pages that only included basic information about the organization, contact/addresses, website link, number of employees, etc. Similarly, in the case of YouTube, the analysis was simple, as the type of content to be analyzed was straightforward. More specifically, an organization either has or does not have a YouTube channel. The results indicated that the overwhelming majority of the sample (93 per cent) does not have a YouTube channel; bearing in mind that if an organization has a video or more on YouTube, it does not mean that it has a channel. In other words, an organization needs to have a dedicated YouTube channel to be considered in this analysis as active on YouTube. Regarding organizational size, larger organizations outperformed their SMEs counterparts in their LinkedIn and YouTube presence. Again, the difference is less than what was found in the websites results.

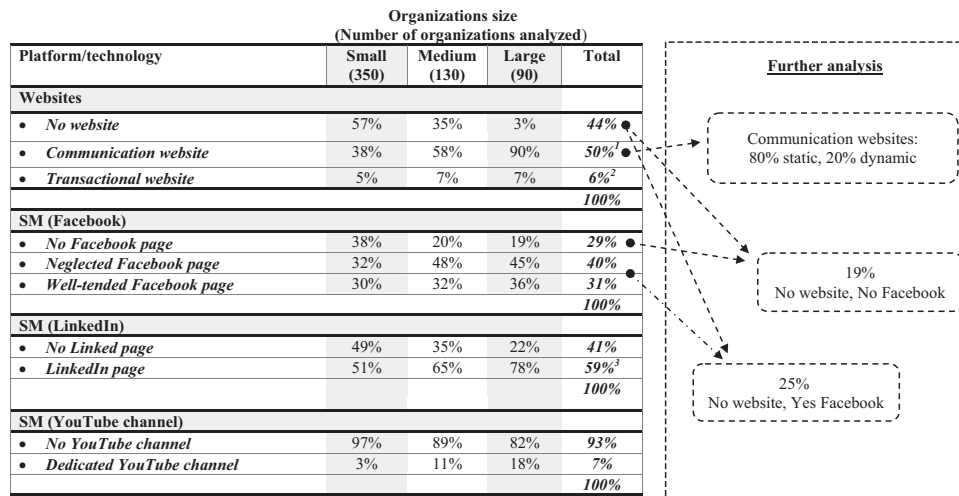
Interestingly, further analysis showed that among the organizations who have websites, 73 per cent are present on Facebook, almost half of this percentage have well-tended Facebook accounts. On the other hand, among those who did not have websites, 57 per cent had social Facebook accounts (25 per cent of the total investigated organization), which indicates that many organizations that do not have websites are still active online using social media platform, particularly Facebook. Most importantly, the investigation showed that around 19 per cent of the total sample are minimally involved or not involved at all in internet marketing (i.e. no Facebook account, no website) (Figure 1).

With regards to the survey, after two reminders, 105 usable responses were received, which represents a response rate of 22 per cent. A chi-square test was performed to compare early and late respondents. The results revealed no significant differences ( $p > 0.05$ ) between the early and late respondents on the tested variables (e.g. adoption levels), which implies that non-response bias is not a problem with this study. Also, Cronbach’s alpha test showed that the reliability coefficients of all the scales met or exceeded the 0.7 cutoff; details are found in Table II.

Internet marketing adoption relationship with each factor was examined using Pearson correlation to identify strength and direction, which is an approach followed by previous studies that examined e-business adoption (Gallear *et al.*, 2008; Sila, 2013). The results showed a statistically significant and positive relationship between adoption and perceived relative advantage, perceived compatibility, organizational innovativeness, customer and competitor pressure. This supports  $H1$ ,  $H3$ ,  $H4$ ,  $H5$  and  $H6$ . Unexpectedly, no significant relationship was found between internet marketing adoption and perceived complexity, which means that  $H2$  cannot be supported. Details are shown in Table III.

The results supported the positive relationship between internet marketing adoption and perceived relative advantage, which is consistent with previous studies that investigated organizational adoption of the internet (Al-Qirim, 2007; Beatty *et al.*, 2001; Lynn *et al.*, 2002; Shah Alam *et al.*, 2011). The negative relationship between perceived complexity and internet marketing adoption was not supported. One explanation of the unexpected results might be that internet marketing resources/technologies are becoming easier to implement. The perceived complexity result is consistent with

Figure 1 Analysis of internet marketing adoption among Jordanian industrial organizations (websites and social media/SM)



Notes: All percentages in the table are based on the total number of investigated organization (570);  
<sup>1</sup>: 80 per cent of the communication websites are static in the sense of having 4-5 main links (i.e. about us, products, news and contact us);  
<sup>2</sup>: Only 2 per cent of investigated organizations have company/enterprise portal;  
<sup>3</sup>: 88 per cent of the organization who had LinkedIn profiles were simple pages that included basic information about the organization

Table II Constructs, items and reliability test of the research construct

Construct	Items*	Alpha
Relative advantage	Internet marketing enables better communication with customers	0.83
	Internet marketing improves our organization's reputation	
	Internet marketing increases our ability to compete	
	Internet marketing enables us to reach new markets	
Complexity	The skills we require to be involved in internet marketing are sophisticated	0.73
	Learning to use internet marketing is difficult for us to do	
Compatibility	Using internet marketing fits with the way we work in our organization	0.86
	Implementing the changes caused by the adoption of the internet is compatible with our organization's culture	
Innovativeness	Our organization is at the leading edge of technological innovation	0.87
	Our organization is first to develop new products	
	Our organization is first to develop new markets	
	We actively seek innovative ideas	
Competition level	In our industry, competition is intense	0.72
	In our organization, we quickly learn about new internet marketing actions taken by our competitors	
	There are frequent price wars in our industry	
Customer pressure	Our customers demand the use of internet marketing in doing business with them	0.74
	We will lose our customers to competitors if we do not adopt internet marketing	
Internet marketing adoption levels	In our organization:	0.71
	We use internet marketing to communicate with stakeholders	
	We use internet marketing to conduct business transactions	

Sources: \* Adapted from Beatty et al. (2001); Fang et al. (2003); Mehrtens et al. (2001); Lynn et al. (2002); Rogers (2003); Shaltoni and West (2010); Fang et al. (2003); Srinivasan et al. (2002)

Table III The relationship between internet marketing adoption and the factors associated with the technological, organizational and environmental contexts (Pearson correlation)

Construct	Relative advantage	Complexity	Compatibility	Innovativeness	Competitor pressure	Customer pressure
Internet marketing adoption	*0.63	-0.14	*0.61	*0.45	*0.42	*0.57

Note: \*Significant at the 0.01 level



some studies (Ahmad *et al.*, 2015; Sila, 2013) and inconsistent with others (El-Gohary, 2012; Jeon *et al.*, 2006). The reasons for such disagreement could be attributed to the methods used by the researchers (i.e. sample type, size, data collection methods, etc.), the time frame and the focus of the study (i.e. technology examined, type of organizations). The hypothesis addressing perceived compatibility was also supported, which is in line with the findings of Grandon and Pearson (2004) and Tan *et al.* (2009).

The results also showed a positive relationship between organizational innovativeness and internet marketing adoption. This finding supports the argument that innovative organizations are more likely to adopt e-business because they tend to be early adopters and because their priority is to devote significant resources to developing new products (Sabherwal *et al.*, 2006; Tarafdar and Vaidya, 2006). The findings are also in line with a recent effort in developed countries by Siamagka *et al.* (2015), who found that perceived usefulness/relative advantage and organizational innovativeness are the main determinants of social media adoption by B2B organizations, while perceived ease of use was found to be insignificant. Concerning the external environment, which included customer and competitor pressure, the correlation results showed that both factors positively impact internet marketing adoption, which is in line with previous studies (Ahmad *et al.*, 2015; Al-Qirim, 2007; Zhu *et al.*, 2003), but the coefficients were slightly lower than those of perceived relative advantage and compatibility, which suggests that the external factors are of less importance. It is noteworthy that the results reported in Table III can be used for exploratory purposes only because according to Hair *et al.* (2010), coefficients below 0.7 cannot be used for confirmatory purposes.

## Conclusions and future research

The main research issue in this study is to explore the current status of internet marketing adoption in emerging industrial markets and the factors related to its adoption. To address this issue, a detailed analysis of how industrial organizations are using websites and social media was conducted. The findings show that half of the industrial organizations in emerging markets are using their websites as brochureware for basic communication purposes. Furthermore, 57 per cent of the small organizations investigated do not have websites, which is surprising given the low cost involved in developing basic websites. This also indicates that many decision-makers in emerging industrial markets still do not value the importance of websites for their businesses. In addition, the findings show that 25 per cent of the investigated organizations do not have websites but are active on Facebook, which indicates that many decision-makers in emerging industrial markets are enthusiastic about social media. However, this conclusion does not reflect the whole picture, as one-third of the organizations analyzed have Facebook pages that involve little interaction with stakeholders. Other social media platforms (i.e. YouTube channels) are rarely used by the organizations investigated in this study.

Interestingly, after nearly 20 years since the internet went mainstream and changed many fundamental marketing practices, around 19 per cent of the organizations investigated are not involved in internet marketing, meaning they have

neither websites nor social media presence. Another contribution of this study concerns the factors related to the adoption of internet marketing. The findings support the hypotheses for relative advantage, compatibility, organizational innovativeness, customer and competitor pressure. Unexpectedly, the perceived complexity hypothesis is not supported. These findings suggest that many decision-makers in industrial organizations still do not perceive internet marketing as beneficial. Perhaps, they think that it is not compatible with the nature of B2B markets.

From a managerial perspective, decision-makers in emerging industrial markets can use the findings of this study to compare their involvement in internet marketing with other industrial organizations of relatively similar size. Decision-makers are also advised to evaluate how their staff, particularly those in marketing, perceive the benefits of the internet and whether it is compatible with their culture and IT infrastructure. The evaluation can later help them take the necessary actions to grasp the benefits of the digital world. Another implication concerns the use of websites. Although social media importance and growth for industrial organizations are obvious, marketing decision-makers are advised not to depend on social media completely and ignore their own company websites, particularly for branding purposes. Furthermore, to enhance internet technologies adoption in emerging industrial markets, it is necessary that governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) introduce awareness initiatives (e.g. projects and workshops) to educate businesses about the opportunities offered by the internet.

The results from this study should be interpreted with caution, primarily because internet marketing is changing rapidly. New disrupting technologies and platforms are constantly introduced into the market, which makes research in this domain time sensitive. Furthermore, governmental and non-governmental initiatives in the fields of B2B e-commerce may change the dynamics of internet marketing in a short time. With regards to data analysis, the results can be used for exploratory purposes only because the analysis conducted for examining the hypotheses did not involve advanced dependency techniques and the correlation coefficients were not high. Another issue to consider is the generalizability. Although Jordan is a good case of an emerging economy because of its political stability and economic growth, having more countries in the analysis would have improved the generalizability of the results. Suggested further research may be targeted toward replicating this study in different countries or using advanced quantitative techniques for confirmatory purposes. Future research may also focus on how business culture (i.e. the importance of personal communication for finalizing a deal) impact the adoption of internet marketing in the industrial sector. Finally, future research may also focus on each major social media platform separately to gain more specific insights into what drives the advanced level of adoption for each of them. Overall, the findings from this study enrich the internet marketing adoption research and offer insights for future researchers and decision-makers in industrial markets.

## Note

- 1 <http://ww2.frost.com/news/press-releases/global-b2b-e-commerce-market-will-reach-67-trillion-usd-2020-finds-frost-sullivan/>, (accessed 29 May 2016).

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