

# The Influence of E-Business Adoption on Business Performance of Micro-entrepreneurs

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## Abstract

*In the recent years, electronic business plays an importance role in increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of a business. However, some entrepreneurs are unwilling to change their conservative mind and accept the challenge in digital business. Hence, this study investigates the use of electronic business in improving business performance among micro-entrepreneurs. The objectives of this study is to investigate the relationship between the e-business and business performance, and to examine the most significant factor that affect such relationship. Quantitative method is used to collect the data among the micro-entrepreneurs in Johor, Malaysia. The questionnaire that consist the questions about the impact of e-business system in business performance is distributed to 248 respondents. The results indicate that there is a significant relationship between independent variable (e-marketing, online customer communication, online order taking system) and dependent variable (business performance). Furthermore, the result of the study shows that e-marketing is the most significant factor that affect business performance. Therefore, e-business adoption plays an important role in improving the business performance in the aspects of market performance, financial performance and customer relationship performance.*

**Keywords:** *electronic business; business performance; micro-entrepreneurs*

## 1. Introduction

E-business or electronic business is becoming a crucial initiative for companies to improve their performance through competitive advantage in this rapidly changing environment [1]. E-business is used to improve business performance through new technology adoption. Micro enterprises that play an important role in the development of economy in a country could also use E-business as a way to increase revenue [2]. Therefore, this study focuses on micro-entrepreneurs who had used e-business as the tools in their business operation. Hence, this study investigates the use of electronic business by micro-entrepreneurs in improving business performance. This research also raises a better understanding of the impact and role of digital technologies in business performance among the micro-entrepreneurs.

In the era of Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR4.0), micro-entrepreneurs face many constraints and challenges with regards to the use of digital technologies in their businesses [3]. The constraints and challenges may affect the micro-enterprises significantly as they contribute to creating job opportunities and generating income for the nation's economy [4]. Organizational resistance to change such as unwilling to take the risk due to the uncertainty in the future becomes one of the challenges that stop business from growing [5]. Thus, micro-entrepreneurs need to change their conservative mind and accept the challenges to grow through the use of digital application.

Technology opens new opportunities by driving the new global economy with the innovation and entrepreneurial initiative that based on new concept, views and strategies in businesses [6]. The digital economy develops the new business perspective on the way firms interact and serve their customers [7]. Hence, companies should be aware of the importance of e-business. E-business provides positive impact by reducing the operation cost, increases productivity and improves customer service of Small and Medium Businesses [8]. As such, it allows businesses to increase their popularity in the market. E-business adoption also could give micro-entrepreneurs opportunities to improve their business operations by facilitating the

process of business transactions. Therefore, this research will examine the influence of e-business adoption on business performance.

### **Research Objectives**

- i. To examine the relationship between the e-business and business performance of online micro-entrepreneurs.
- ii. To examine the most significant factors that may affect the business performance of online micro-entrepreneurs.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Impact of E-business**

E-business adoption is about utilizing Information Communication Technology (ICT) in business approach to create value for the business. E-business adoption enables a company to promote its competitive advantages and allow them to contribute in economic growth. E-business adoption is the method to create value and discover new opportunities using ICT.

According to a study namely “E-business and SMEs Competitive Advantage” [9], E-business is able to improve the competitive advantage of firms if the e-business system is managed effectively. E-business system also enables Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to analyse their products details and information and compare the quality of products and services that meet the customer needs and satisfaction [9]. SMEs can respond quickly to their customer needs and build good relationship with them through e-business application [9]. As a result, e-business adoption has a positive influence on business performance which enables the organization to generate income, reduce the cost, increase level of customer satisfaction and build a long term relationship with their customer [10]. Therefore, this study argues that there is a relationship between e-business and business performance in micro-enterprises.

### **2.2. Electronic Marketing (E-marketing) on Business Performance**

E-marketing enables companies to allocate their resources for better decision making and attracts the attention of new customers as well as maintaining their relations with existing customers [11]. The business should focus on acquiring new customers through e-marketing such as advertisements, publicity and discount packages in order to satisfy customer’s needs and enhance customer loyalty [12]. The E-marketing adoption gives positive impact to small business enterprises’ marketing performance [13]. In a research that study the relationship between website marketing and operational performance of international tourist hotels in Taiwan, e-marketing which was used as a tool for marketing shows positive association with business performance. It further discovers a complementary relationship between internet marketing tool and company performance [14]. Thus, e-marketing can be used as a tool to improve business performance. Based on the statement above, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: The intensity of e-business adoption in the area of e-marketing is positively associated with business performance.

### **2.3. Online Customer Communication on Business Performance**

The evolution of media and new communication technologies initiate new method of communication in a business context which enhance the interactivity between company and customers [15]. Social media has become an example of this emerging context resulting in the change of business model to respond to their audiences. Email has become the most powerful communication tools that lead to new way in business interactions [16].

Internet allows information and messages to spread widely and facilitates the interactions between a company and its customers. This advancement in customer communication

promotes the creation of value propositions of a company [17]. The advancement of internet and mobile telecommunications have developed new communication channels for the banking industry to serve their customers efficiently [18].

Customer communication through business information technology becomes one of the solution to engage and interact with customer in order to meet their expectation. This study highlights the digital transformation focusing on customer experience through customer communications [19]. Thus, technology is important to promote seamless integration of systems and data in order to produce better customer experience. Based on the above discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: The intensity of e-business adoption in the area of customer communication is positively associated with business performance.

#### **2.4. Online Order Taking on Business Performance**

Online ordering system has been widely used in restaurants to improve order accuracy, productivity and customer satisfaction [20]. Online order system allows customers to read and order food easily while the restaurants manage the customers' orders in a more efficient way [21]. A study on the use of internet in the business transaction activities uncovers the intensity of online reservations enhance the business performance in hotel industry [10]. The online order services provide significant benefits to improve and facilitate the transaction process [10]. In contrary, other study reveals less significant relationship between online order taking in e-business adoption and business performance [22]. The result of the study on the other hand indicates that the intensity of e-business adoption in customer communication significantly influence business performance [22]. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is proposed:

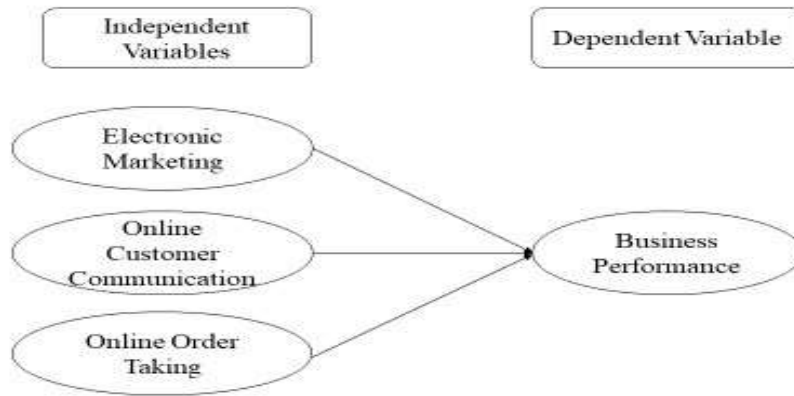
H3: The intensity of e-business adoption in the area of order taking is positively associated with business performance.

#### **2.5. Business Performance**

Accounting measurement of performance is a conventional quantitative approaches that use to measure the business and organization performance. However, there are some performance drivers other than accounting measures which are developed and believed to drive the economic performance in the future. A company developed a set of performance drivers which includes market share, productivity, short-term profitability and personnel development [23]. The analysis of business performance is to discover the opportunities and to better understand the issues that can help the business to improve its outcome [24]. On the other hand, customer satisfaction and customer loyalty are closely related in enhancing the performance of a business [25]. Furthermore, understanding in knowledge management can make the e-business system work more efficiently with sustainable business performance [26].

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

Theoretical framework illustrates the theory to understand the relevant research problem. The research investigates the influence of e-business adoption in improving business performance.



**Figure 1: Proposed Theoretical Framework.**

#### 4. Methodology

Quantitative approach is utilized to collect the data and opinion among the micro-entrepreneurs towards the impact of e-business system on business performance. In this study, a survey was conducted in order to collect the opinion of micro-entrepreneurs towards the influence of e-business adoption on business performance.

The study used questionnaire to collect the primary data. The item in the questionnaire consists only close-ended questions for the ease of filling. The questionnaire form consists of 3 sections, namely section A which contains demographic information while section B and C contains questions related to the e-business adoption factors and business performance. The questionnaire was assessed using five Likert-type items. The 5-point Likert's scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree.

Probability sampling was adopted as the sampling technique to collect the information for the study. Krejcie and Morgan Sampling Method was used to determine a sample size from a general population. Data was collected from the micro-entrepreneurs who had utilized e-business system in their business. According to one of the article from Metro News, there are about 700 micro-entrepreneurs from all over Johor under the Program Galakan Usahawan (Entrepreneur Encouragement Programme) 2018 scheme [27]. Hence, the sample size of the research is 248 which is based on the list of samples size in Krejcie and Morgan table.

Descriptive and inferential analysis were used to analyze the data. Method of analysis such as descriptive analysis, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation coefficient analysis and multiple regression analysis will be used in this research. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to evaluate and analyze the data which was collected from the questionnaire. Descriptive statistic was used to get the frequency distribution of number, percentage and mean. The statistical analysis was used to test hypothesis regression analysis to observe the relationship of e-business adoption and business performance.

#### 5. Results

The questionnaire of this research consists of 21 questions and was distributed to 30 respondents among the microentrepreneurs in Johor area for the reliability test. The reliability result reveals that each of the variables have a good reliability score as the value of Cronbach's Alpha for all variables are more than 0.7.

**Table 1: Reliability Statistic**

Variables	No of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Electronic Marketing	5	0.954
Online Customer Communication	5	0.941
Online Order Taking	5	0.946
Business Performance	6	0.969
Overall	21	0.982

### 5.1. Descriptive Analysis for Demographics

The data was collected from 248 respondents among micro-entrepreneurs in the area of Johor. The general information in part A of the questionnaires was analysed by using frequency analysis. The questions related to the personal information of the respondents includes gender, age, races, marital status, family background and education level.

### 5.2. Descriptive Statistic for Variables

The result of descriptive statistics for variables are shown in table 2. Independent variables includes e-marketing, online customer communication and online order system whereas the dependent variable is business performance. The result states the overall value of means for all independent variables are more than 3.0 which means majority of the respondents agree with the statement of independent variables in the questionnaires. According to table 2, the variable e-marketing show the highest mean among the independent variable which is about 4.05 (Std. Deviation=0.807). Hence, most of the respondents agree with the statement of e-marketing variable in the questionnaire. Whereas the online order system variable has the lowest mean value which is 3.75 (Std. Deviation=0.811). Though majority of the respondents agreed with the statement of order taking system in the questionnaire, the mean value of variable online customer communication is the second highest value which is about 4.00 (Std. Deviation=0.870). Therefore, large number of respondents agree with the statement of online customer communication in the questionnaire. The following variable which is business performance, has the mean value of 3.93 (Std. Deviation=0.792) which depicted that most of the respondents were agreed with the statement of business performance.

**Table 2: Descriptive Analysis**

	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
E-Marketing	248	1.00	5.00	4.0573	.80752
Customer Communication	248	1.00	5.00	4.0048	.87037
Order Taking	248	1.00	5.00	3.7500	.81151
Business Performance	248	1.00	5.00	3.9368	.79234
Valid N (listwise)	248				

### 5.3. Pearson's Correlation Analysis

Table 3 shows the result of correlation between the e-marketing, online customer communication, online order taking system and business performance. Based on the result, all the r values are more than 0.7. This suggests that there are positive relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. In addition, all variables obtained the statistically significant by the Sig.(2-tailed) which p-value equal to 0.000. This means each of the independent variable is directly proportional to dependent variable.

According to table 3, the correlation between e-marketing and business performance is the highest value which is 0.906 while the correlation between online order taking system and business performance is the lowest value which is 0.809. The value of Pearson’s r between e-marketing and online customer communication was 0.857. The correlation between e-marketing and online order system was 0.792. On the other hand, the value of Pearson’s r between online customer communication and business performance was 0.853 while the value of Pearson’s r between online order taking system and business performance was 0.809. The overall value of Pearson’s r for all variables indicated strong and significant relationships.

**Information Correlation of Table 3**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

EM= E-marketing

CC= Online Customer Communication

OT= Online Order Taking System

BP= Business Performance

**Table 3: Correlations**

	<b>EM</b>	<b>CC</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>BP</b>
EM:Pearson Correlation	1	.857**	.792**	.906**
Sig.(2-tailed)		0	0	0
N	248	248	248	248
CC:Pearson Correlation Sig.(2-tailed)	.857** .000	1	.781** .000	.853** .000
N	248	248	248	248
OT:Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.792**	.781**	1	.809**
N	248	248	248	248
BP:Pearson Correlation Sig. (2-tailed)	.906**	.853**	.809**	1
N	248	248	248	248

**5.4. Multiple Regression Analysis**

In this study, multiple regression analysis was used to discover the relevant contribution of all variables. According the model summary in table 4, the result indicates the correlation coefficient (R) value is 0.925. Hence, there were strong relationship between independent variables (e-marketing, online customer communication, online order system) on dependent variable (business performance).

Besides, the value of R square is 0.855 which means 85.5% of the variance such as e-marketing, online customer communication and online order system affect the business performance among micro-entrepreneurs. Whereas, the rest of the percentage was about 30.4% which the result was influenced by other variable which does not considered in this study.

**Table 4: Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.925 <sup>a</sup>	.855	.853	.30384

- a. Predictors: (Constant), Online Order System, Online Customer Communication, E-Marketing  
 b. Dependent Variable: Business Performance

Table 5 shows the result of ANOVA analysis. The value of F-test in this study is 478.560 and the significant value  $p=0.000$ . It indicates that the probability of the relationship between independent variable (e-marketing, online customer communication, online order system) and dependent variable (business performance) is taking place by chance.

The p-value of this study is 0.000 and the result showed the probability of the results to happen was less than 0.05. Therefore, there is significant relationship between the independent variable (e-marketing, online customer communication, online order taking system) and the dependent variable (business performance).

**Table 5: ANOVA**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	132.540	3	44.180	478.560	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	22.526	244	.092		
Total	155.066	247			

- a. Dependent Variable: Business Performance  
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Online Order System, Online Customer Communication, E-Marketing

### 5.5. Hypothesis Test Analysis

The hypothesis testing aims at examining the validity of the results and to find out the impact of the independent variables on the dependent variables. The value of Sig. shows the statistical significance of the variables. The regression model has statistical significantly when the value of p is less than 0.05 and t-value is more than 1.96. In this study, e-marketing, online customer communication and online order taking system as independent variables which affect the business performance as dependent variable. The result of the hypotheses was shown at Table 6 and 7.

**Table 6: Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	0.184	0.101		1.82	0.07

Electronic Marketing	0.562	0.05	0.572	11.18	0
1					
Online Customer Communication	0.2	0.046	0.219	4.384	0
Online Order Taking System	0.18	0.041	0.184	4.364	0

a. Dependent Variable: Business Performance

### 5.6. Hypothesis Testing:

Based on Table 6, Beta value of e-marketing is 0.572 and t-value is 11.183 at significance level of 0.000 which is lower than 0.05. This means e-marketing has a significant relationship with business performance and its t-value is greater than 1.96. Therefore, hypothesis 1 is accepted.

The result of Beta value for online customer communication is 0.219 and t-value is 4.384 at significance level of 0.000 which is lower than 0.05. This means online customer communication has a significant relationship with business performance and its t-value is greater than 1.96. Hence, hypothesis 2 is accepted.

The result of Beta value for online order taking system in Table 6 is 0.184 and t-value is 4.364 at significance level of 0.000 which is lower than 0.05. This means online order taking has a significant relationship with business performance and its t-value is greater than 1.96. Hence, hypothesis 3 is accepted.

**Table 7: Summary of Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis	Result
Hypothesis 1: The intensity of e-business adoption in the area of e-marketing is positively associated with greater business performance.	Supported
Hypothesis 2: The intensity of e-business adoption in the area of customer communication is positively associated with greater business performance.	Supported
Hypothesis 3: The intensity of e-business adoption in the area of order taking is positively associated with greater business performance.	Supported

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1. Objective i

This objective was to analyse the relationship between independent variables (emarketing, online customer communication and online order taking system) and dependent variable (business performance). There are three specific objectives under objective 2. In this study, the first specific objective was to investigate the effect of e-marketing on business performance of



micro-entrepreneurs. The result of the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient indicated there was a strong relationship between e-marketing and business performance in which the  $r$  is 0.906. It means the objective can be reached as the Pearson's  $r$  value is more than 0.7. The findings indicated the used of e-marketing to enable the micro-entrepreneurs to spread the information and boost the sales of products in a shorter time period. It also increases the business profit and increases the popularity of business among the customers. This was supported by Shirazi [28], E-marketing can be used to improve business performance by increasing the market shares and make better positioning of the business. On the other hand, digital marketing such as e-mail marketing and social media marketing provide positive impact on the sales growth of the business [30]. Hence, the first specific objective can be accepted and supported with all the evidence above.

The second specific objective was to investigate the effect of online customer communication on business performance of micro-entrepreneurs. The result of the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient showed there was a strong relationship between the online customer communication and business performance in which the  $r$  is 0.853. It means the objective is achieved as the result showed a positive significant relations between the online customer communication and business performance. This result is consistent with the study of Wu, Mahajan & Balasubramanian [22] which had presented the intensity of e-business adoption in customer communication that give significant influence on the business performance. The evidence from other research was that internet communication affect the development of business relationships [31]. In this study, the result indicated the intensity of e-business adoption in the area of customer communication had a significant influence on the customer relationships and customer satisfactions. Therefore, the second specific objective can be accepted and supported with all the evidence above.

The third specific objective of this study was to investigate the effect of online order taking on business performance of micro-entrepreneurs. The result of the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient showed there was a significant relationship between the online order taking and business performance in which the  $r$  is 0.781. Based on this finding, e-business adoption in the area of order taking improves the order accuracy, transaction process and efficiency of the business operation. This result supports Kimes [20] which found that the online ordering system can increase the order accuracy and productivity of a business. According to Theodosiou & Katsikea [10], the use of e-business in the context of order taking, internal administration and procurement enhance the efficiency and sales performances of a business. Online order taking can improve the customer buying experience and facilitate the transaction process. From all the evidence above, the third specific objective is achieved.

## 6.2. Objective ii

The result of Multiple Regression in Coefficient analysis was used to find the most significant factor in this study. According the result in Table 6, e-marketing had the highest beta value among the independence variables which was 0.572. The analysis showed that e-marketing has the strongest influence on the business performance. It means that e-marketing was the most significance factor that affect the business performance among the micro-entrepreneurs. This result is consistent with the previous findings [32] which revealed the adoption of e-marketing enhance companies' efficiency, effectiveness and overall financial performance.

The following factor that give significant impact to the business performance was online customer communication. The beta value of the online customer communication as shown in table 6 was 0.219 at significant level lower than 0.05. This result supports the previous research that indicates electronic communication create many opportunities and facilitate the way of a company deals with their customers [33].

The factors with the lowest significant value was online order taking system. Based on the result in table 6, the beta value of online order taking system was 0.184 at the significance level lower than 0.05. This result is consistent with existing research that found the used of e-ordering system improve the customer relationship and increase the productivity of a business [34].

The overall result indicated that the e-marketing give the most significant influence on the business performance as it is a simple way to promote the business and increase the business awareness among the micro-entrepreneurs. Thus, research objective 3 is achieved.

## **7. Implication of Study**

The research has found that the e-business adoption in the area of e-marketing, customer communication and order taking influence the business performance among the micro-entrepreneurs. The research focuses on micro-entrepreneurs which can give contribution to the literature for the related topic. Hence, this can be as a theoretical reference on the related research.

This study can be a guidance that provide information about the methods to improve business performance. This research had found the factors such as the application of e-business adoption in the area of e-marketing, customer communication, order taking to enhance the performance of a business. It also increases the awareness of people towards the use of e-business system in improving the business in this fast changing era. The result of the study which indicated the relationship between e-business adoption and business performance will encourage entrepreneurs to introduce e-business system in their business.

## **8. Limitation and Recommendation**

This study only emphasized on the opinions of micro-entrepreneurs towards the adoption of e-business in improving business performance. The respondents of the study only restricted to the micro-entrepreneurs in Johor, Malaysia. Besides that, the item and variables used in the data collection may be bias as the closed-ended questions and limited factors of e-business adoption were selected in creating the questionnaire.

Future research may study about the e-business adoption on different sizes of company such as large or multinational companies. Therefore, it can measure the influence of e-business system and performance outcome in different level of business operation. Furthermore, future research can determine different factors of e-business adoption such as e-procurement, e-trade, e-commerce in order to gain more in-depth understanding in various field of e-business in improving the business performance. Hence, future study can conduct a more holistic assessment on the impact of e-business adoption toward the performance of businesses. In addition, researchers can may choose different type of method to collect the data. The recommended method is to use the qualitative method to collect the data from the entrepreneurs in order to gain more in-depth and incisive opinion from the respondents.

## **9. Conclusion**

In conclusion, all the objectives in this study have been successful achieved. Based on the findings, the research which focus on the impact of e-business adoption in the area of e-marketing, customer communication and order taking system show significant influence on the business performance of the micro-entrepreneurships. The results indicated that the intensity of e-business adoption enables micro-entrepreneurs to increase the popularity, sales volume and revenue of a business. Besides, it also helps micro-entrepreneurs to increase the new and existing customers, increase the level of customer satisfaction and enhance the customer

relationship. As a result, all the hypothesis of the study was accepted. The result also indicated that e-marketing was the most influencing factor that affected the performance of a business. Therefore, e-business adoption plays an important role in improving the performance of a business in the aspects of market performance, financial performance and customer relationship performance.

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