

The Marketing Strategies of Online Shop Owners in Qatar: A Guide towards Establishing a Start-Up Business among Entrepreneurs

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Abstract

Introduction: Especially with the past CoVid-19 pandemic, prevalent online business owners have been establishing their shops thus online shopping being on the rise. This situation would mean that there are some new owners who would lack marketing strategy knowledge, which is why this study focuses on analyzing the marketing strategies used by online shop owners in Qatar as a guide to establishing start-up businesses among entrepreneurs. **Methodology:** A self-made survey questionnaire was thoroughly created and validated using the quantitative descriptive research design. One hundred (100) online shop owners in Qatar were selected as the respondents of the study. It discusses the demographic profile of the online shop owners and the utilization of the four marketing strategies following the PESO model, or Paid media strategies, Earned media strategies, Shared media strategies, and Owned media strategies, and which ones were dominantly applied based on the respondent's age, sex, years of business operation, and business scale. **Result:** The results showed that the majority of the online shop owners are 26-30 years old, in the business for less than a year, belong to the micro business scale, and utilize Earned media strategies. Paid media strategies have never been applied, while Earned media strategies, Shared media strategies, and Owned media strategies have been rarely applied. The age group 26-30, male online business owners, in the business for 3 years and above, and belong to the small business scale have the highest level of application of marketing strategies. **Discussion:** The conclusion drawn from this study states that most online shop owners in Qatar deem publicity like press mentions, blogs, and online community posts. However, there was not much of a gap according to their demographic profile. In terms of age, sex, years of business operation, and business scale, it can be seen that the marketing strategies only revolved around Earned media strategies and Shared media strategies. **Recommendation:** It is recommended that online shop owners should learn and employ the best suitable marketing strategy to keep their online business successful and sustainable.

Keywords: Earned media; Marketing strategies; Owned media; Paid media; Shared media;

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

In the world of business, a marketing strategy is commonly defined as the organized plan or direction for marketing management. This is a way of communicating for businesses to reach their audience. A marketing strategy is also considered to be a necessity for businesses since this is commonly recommended by business advisors. Strategies have to be carefully developed and planned to ensure success (Alon et. al., 2020). Moreover, effective and comprehensive marketing strategies should be employed regardless of size (Financier

Worldwide, 2014). In addition, businesses with documented marketing strategies are more likely to be successful, therefore asserting the importance of such strategy implementation (Thompson, 2018).

However, not all businesses employ the documented method, which means ineffective marketing strategies also exist. The lack of effectiveness in these strategies is commonly caused by faulty marketing planning. Thus, budget problems and low customer volume issues would arise and affect the business negatively. A marketing plan chart serves as a crucial guide to operational functions that could either dictate the success or failure of the business operation (Mcquerry, 2012). The faulty marketing planning is discussed further in another research, wherein the research group explained that one of the most common challenges for market strategy formation is the lack of information regarding consumer interests. This leads to the marketing strategy being underdeveloped (NiBusinessinfo, 2010). Since it is established that lack of information is an issue for marketing strategies, more researchers have stressed the need for actual research on marketing strategies. Such topics included the application of digital methods in marketing strategies (Verhoef & Bijmolt, 2019).

Furthermore, ineffective marketing strategies could lead to the lack of an established business presence in the community. The cause of failure in a lot of businesses is the lack of focus on the business and its target market. Understanding the target audience is crucial in a business since it plays a very big part in the exposure of the business. Most marketing campaigns start on the product side without considering the target market, which eventually leads to failure (Van den Beld, 2015). Additionally, the inefficiency of marketing strategies is also one of the reasons why businesses fail. It is incredibly important for marketers to be efficient in their actions. Wasting money on marketing and advertising that are not likely to produce tangible results can sink even the most detailed marketing plans. He also stated that many businesses become over-ambitious and decide to choose unnecessary marketing campaigns. This leads to a loss of funds, which could have been used for other purposes (Lewis, 2020).

An underdeveloped marketing strategy cannot just convince the target consumer. The success of a marketing strategy affects a company's persuasive power. For instance, the use of electronic mail marketing. New insights into electronic mail marketing campaigns; some recipients do not respond to these random marketing messages due to e-mail overload and undelivered emails resulting in loss of interest (Ellis-Chadwick & Doherty, 2012). E-mails sent to the audience's inbox are not guaranteed to reach them (Fariborzi & Zahedifard, 2012). Additionally, it is possible to delete an email from someone who is not listed in the contact list. E-mail marketing has become more problematic due to this fact. Particularly, it was impossible to determine if these campaigns were effective from consumers' or retailers' perspectives.

To avoid the problems that come along with market strategy ineffectiveness, businesses have to perform enough research. However, obtaining such information on the market is not easy. Cost is the main barrier to accessing such information, especially for smaller businesses that cannot simply afford the expense (Ferrell, Hartline, & Hochstein, 2021). Therefore, decreasing the chance of a highly effective marketing strategy. Even still, the effectiveness of such strategies is dependent on three factors. The first factor, which is credibility, is very important in gaining the market's trust. Another factor is the medium of the message from the business. The way the business presents promotional material to the audience also plays a big role. Lastly, the receptiveness of the customers to the advertisement was the final factor the researcher mentioned. Saying that it needs to have a sensory, emotional, and intellectual impact all in one advertisement (Morato, 2016).

To provide background information on the respondents, people living in Qatar are allowed to own online businesses. There is no section that prohibited foreign ownership in Qatar-based e-commerce, therefore allowing all people of all nationalities to own an online shop (Promulgation of the Electronic Commerce and Transactions Law, 2010). There has also been a declaration that businesses done through third-party e-commerce platforms are not required to have the same legal documents that officially established businesses have (Ministry of Transport, 2022). Furthermore, Qatar has been regulating these online businesses through the 13th law of 2016 on Protecting Personal Data Privacy, in which the government continuously protects the data of both the business and its customers.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

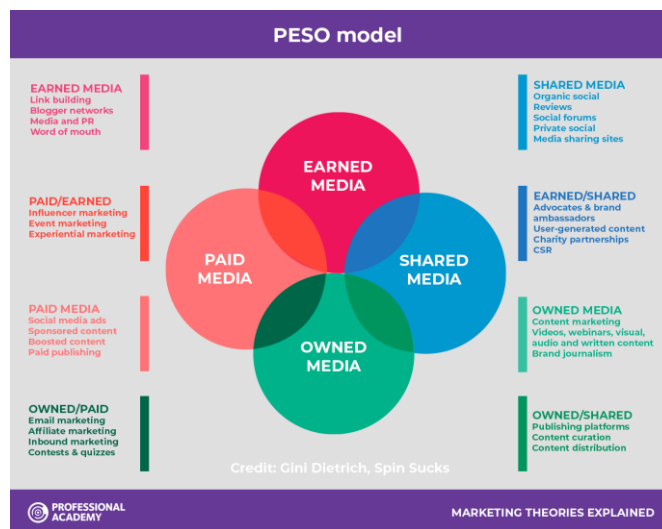


Figure 1: The Paid, Earned, Shared, and Owned (PESO) Media Marketing Model by Gini Dietrich (2014);

Photo credits to Professional Academy (n.d.)

This study is based on the model of Gini Dietrich (2014). The framework shown above served as the basis for the different types of marketing strategies that were used in the research questions and the questionnaire. Since this research revolves around online shops, the paid, earned, shared, and owned media marketing model or PESO model would have an alignment with this study because both the model and the research topic are based on online activities. As illustrated in the diagram above, there are four different components that e-commerce or online shops use. All of which were commonly done by e-commerce companies. Paid media, deals the sponsored events or paid advertisements; Earned media, refers to the unpaid exposure that was voluntarily provided by the public; Shared media, tackles the relationship between the business and social media; and lastly Owned media, is related to the business-produced initiatives, such as the business-made websites.

Paid Media

Paid Media as the category that speaks of social media advertisements, boosted content, sponsored content, and paid-to-publish (Dietrich, 2014). Other researchers used the PESO model and summarized the concept of Paid Media marketing into one word, which is advertising. They indicated that Paid Media is about paid promotions that require the purchase of an advertisement to promote the customer's brand to the audience (Lovett and Staelin, 2016). This brand will pay for Paid Media to create content promotions to extend the message to the audience. Paid media helps the brand by advertising to promote products or services. Some of the common examples mentioned were social media advertisements, sponsorships, and out-of-home advertising. OOH, or out-of-home advertising is a form of advertising that goes beyond the digital world. This includes paid radio agreements.

Earned Media

Earned Media as something that deals with either publicity or media relations (Dietrich, 2014). It is related to a company that is directly generated by other entities such as journalists or customers. Additionally, Earned Media is defined as either publicity or media relations, or any publicity or media generated through organic techniques such as consumers, social media fans, journalists, or bloggers rather than by the merchants or agents of the business owner (Mattke et al., 2019). Earned media comes in various forms such as news coverage or press mentions, interviews, product reviews, and influencer shoutouts.

Shared Media

Shared media refers to platforms that are used for social forums, content curation, and media-sharing sites (Dietrich, 2014). The four well-known examples of these are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Youtube. Since social media has become a hotspot for user interaction, businesses have found a way to utilize this factor, which is why business-related posts, reels, stories, videos, live selling, and public groups exist (Aldous et al., 2019). Concerning the previous statement, recent research has shown that almost 67% of users access the Internet for social networking, therefore strengthening the impact of Shared Media on networking and connection building (Ong, 2009).

Owned Media

Owned media is an online property owned and controlled by a brand, such as a blog, website, or social media channels (Dietrich, 2014). Another researcher defined owned media as anything that the company owns and takes direct control of, such as websites, newsletters, catalogs, and blogs. These owned media also include emails (Bonchek, 2014). Owned media can be the starting point for an efficient online marketing strategy. Because of its capabilities to control advertisements or campaigns, reach various people across online platforms, the longevity of posts, the versatility of content, and the cost-efficiency of making different content for the business (BigCommerce, 2022).

1.3 Research Questions

The objective of this study is to identify the marketing strategies of online shop owners in Qatar to form a guide for establishing a start-up business among entrepreneurs. Specifically, this research aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of the online business owner in terms of:
 - 1.1. age;
 - 1.2. sex;
 - 1.3. years of business operation; and
 - 1.4. business scale?

2. What is the level of application of online shop owners in Qatar in relation to:
 - 2.1. paid media strategies;
 - 2.2. earned media strategies;
 - 2.3. shared media strategies; and
 - 2.4. owned media strategies?
3. Which group of online shop owners has the highest level of application of the paid, earned, shared, and owned media strategies in terms of:
 - 3.1. age;
 - 3.2. sex;
 - 3.3. years of business operation; and
 - 3.4. business scale?

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

This study made use of a descriptive design. This design was described as a method of describing a relevant phenomenon as accurately as possible (Atmowardoyo, 2018). In addition, the study would be using the quantitative method. This a method that involves the use of numerical data which would later be interpreted (Babbie, 2010). It is deemed as an objective and measurable method that would be projected through statistics and mathematics.

2.2 Research Locus and Sample

This study was conducted in Mesaimeer, Doha, Qatar, specifically in Philippine School Doha (PSD). The study utilized the purposive sampling technique, which is a sampling technique used for studying a specific population, to the chosen 100 online shop owners that were picked via quota sampling. The researchers selected the participants based on the following criteria: the online shop owners must have an online business and must be selling in Qatar.

2.3 Research Instrument

To achieve the goal of the study, the researchers developed a self-made questionnaire. Categorized questions were included in the questionnaire, which was based on secondary sources that are aligned with the theoretical framework. The researchers went through a series of processes to use a reliable instrument. The questionnaire is divided into three parts. The first part is the letter to the respondents. The second part is the demographic profile of the respondents, who are online shop owners. The third and last part is a designed and sectioned questionnaire on marketing strategies.

2.4 Development and Validation of the Instrument

STEP 1 – Content Validation

In this stage, a pre-research was conducted to attain the necessary data needed in the formation of questions for online shop owners.

STEP 2 – Face Validation

The survey-questionnaire content was presented to qualified validators. If there are any suggestions and corrections, both are to be followed and applied until the survey questionnaire is final and approved.

STEP 3 – Final Administration

The survey questionnaires were distributed to the selected online business owners in Qatar from March 2022 to December 2022 through the use of Google Forms.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

The following is how the data was gathered: the researchers searched for online shop owners. Second, the respondents were contacted to see if they were willing to participate. Once the Vice Principal approved the distribution of the survey questionnaires, the researchers proceeded to distribute the survey questionnaires to the respondents. After collecting the data, the researchers performed analyses and interpretations of the results.

2.6 Statistical Treatment of Data

In this study, percentage, frequency, and weighted mean were used as statistical tools to analyze the collected data to determine the answers. The demographic profile of the respondents was calculated using percentages and frequencies, while the marketing strategies were analyzed using the weighted mean that would serve as the basis of verbal interpretations. For both the demographic profile and marketing strategies, the frequency and weighted mean of each were ranked from highest to lowest. The higher the frequency among the demographic profile would reflect a higher popularity of a specific demographic group, while higher weighted mean shows the more frequent application of a marketing strategy. The table below shows the weighted mean ranges and their designated verbal interpretations.

Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Explanation
3.26-4.00	Always	At least once a week
2.51-3.25	Often	At least once a month
1.76-2.50	Rarely	At least once a year
1.00-1.75	Never	0 times

Interpretation of Weighted Mean using the Four-Point Likert Scale

3. Results

This chapter presents the data, analysis and interpretation of the findings. The discussion of the topics is arranged in accordance with the order of the research questions. Tables 1-4 answer the first research question, tables 5-9 answer the second research question, and tables 10-13 answer the third research question.

Table 1. *The demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age*

Age	Frequency	Percentage
16-20	19	19%
21-25	20	20%
26-30	22	22%
31-35	18	18%
36 and above	21	21%
Total	100	100%

Table 1 shows the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age.

When ranked according to frequency, 26-30 year old owners are the most common, 36 years old and above owners are the second most common, 21-25 year old owners are third most common, 16-20 year old owners are fourth most common, and lastly 31-35 year old owners are the least common. The ranking implies that the majority of online shop owners in Qatar are 26-30 years old.

Majority of the e-commerce owners in the United States of America are 40 years old and above in age, marking the lead taking up 61% of the respondents. This is followed by 30-40 years old with 29%, and 20-30 years old with only 9% (Zippia, 2022). The statistics from the website are not in accordance with the results of this study. If the same age grouping from the website's data is applied to this study, then online shop owners who are 20-30 years old would take up a huge majority, followed by the rest, which is in contrast to the results of Zippia.

Table 2. *The demographic profile of the respondents in terms of sex*

Sex	Frequency	Percentage
Male	50	50%
Female	50	50%
Total	100	100%

Table 2 shows the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of sex.

Fifty or 50% of the respondents are male, while fifty or 50% of the respondents are female. The ratio of male to female owners shows that they are equal.

There is a statistics website showing the demographic profile of owners of e-commerce companies. The website indicated that 61.1% of the owners were female and 38.9% of the owners were male (Zippia, 2022). Comparisons between the website's survey and this study cannot be made due to this study following the rule of eliminating gender bias.

Table 3. *The demographic profile of the respondents in terms of years of business operation*

Years of Business Operation	Frequency	Percentage
Less than a year	42	42%
1 year	15	15%
2 years	22	22%
3 years and above	21	21%
Total	100	100%

Table 3 shows the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of years of business operation.

Most of the respondents have businesses that have operated for less than a year, since the frequency is 42 or 42%. This is followed by the 2 year old businesses with 22 or 22%, then 3 years and above old businesses with 21 or 21%, and lastly, 1 year old businesses with 15 or 15%. The implication gathered from

the results would be that the majority of the online shops are less than a year old, which means that the popularity of online business is growing at a rapid pace.

The rise of e-commerce businesses could be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic that first surged in 2020 (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2021). Since the responses of this study were gathered during 2022, the online businesses that are 2 years and younger are those businesses that were formed during the pandemic. Businesses 2 years and younger make up the majority of the responses too, therefore proving the rapid growth of e-commerce since the pandemic.

Table 4. *The demographic profile of the respondents in terms of business scale*

Business Scale	Frequency	Percentage
Micro	89	89%
Small	9	9%
Medium	2	2%
Total	100	100%

Table 4 shows the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of the business scale.

The business scale with the highest frequency is micro business scale, which has 89 or 89%. This is followed by small business scale with 9 or 9%. The least frequent business scale is medium business scale, which has 2 or 2%. The data implies that most of the online shop owners in Qatar operate a micro business.

In another portion of the statistics website, it showed that most of the e-commerce businesses have above 250 employees, which is already an indicator that most of the respondents were of the large business scale (Zippia, 2022). That piece of data was already opposed to the demographic data of this study, since the majority of the group's respondents were large, unlike in this study where micro-scaled businesses are dominant.

Table 5. The summary of responses of online shop owners about paid media marketing strategies

Paid Media Strategies	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
I pay social media/non social media websites to promote display ads like pop-up ads, wall paper ads, and video ads.	1.98	Rarely	1
I pay for Search Engine Marketing (SEM) or Pay-Per-Click.	1.43	Never	2
I pay influencers or brand ambassadors to promote my products on social media.	1.38	Never	3
I pay broadcasting businesses to promote my products on the radio.	1.36	Never	4
I pay broadcasting businesses to promote my products on television.	1.09	Never	5
Grand Mean	1.45	Never	

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 5 shows the summary of responses of online shop owners about Paid Media marketing strategies.

The table shows that Paid Media Strategies yielded to a grand mean of 1.45, described as “Never” meaning that online shop owners use Paid Media Strategies under no circumstances. These findings imply that Paid Media Strategies are almost never used, and that even the most popular paid strategy is rarely applied.

The indicators were rated as: one indicator surfaced to be “Rarely” which is “I pay social media/non social media websites to promote display ads like pop-up ads, wall paper ads, and video ads.” with a mean of 1.98. This shows a limited, but more popular, rare usage of this strategy. This is followed by four indicators interpreted as “Never” and when arranged accordingly are as follows: 1.43, 1.38, 1.36, and 1.09. The second and third indicators were “I pay for Search Engine Marketing (SEM) or Pay-Per-Click.” and “I pay influencers or brand ambassadors to promote my products on social media.” respectively, imply a lack of use for these methods as well. On the other hand, the indicators ranked fourth and fifth point out that these traditional methods of marketing are never used.

A study conducted by another researcher may be used as an explanation as to why the means of indicators one, two, and three are significantly higher than indicators four and five (Todor, 2016). Todor’s study focused on the comparison between digital and traditional marketing, enumerating the advantages and disadvantages of each. In accordance with her study, indicators one to three are examples of digital, while four and five are traditional. One particular finding included that digital marketing is more cost-efficient than traditional marketing, which supports the result of this study.

Table 6. The summary of responses of online shop owners about earned media marketing strategies

Earned Media Strategies	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
I follow the product reviews and feedback from my consumers.	3.68	Always	1
I capitalize on the voluntary and unpaid advertisements from my consumers.	2.72	Often	2
I accept or decline interview requests that come from my business success.	2.08	Rarely	3
I capitalize on receiving influencer and ambassador shoutouts.	1.89	Rarely	4
I capitalize on the free mentions in articles made by unaffiliated publishers.	1.88	Rarely	5
Grand Mean	2.45	Rarely	

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 6 shows the summary of responses of online shop owners as they used Earned Media Strategies.

The table shows that Earned Media Strategies received a grand mean of 2.45 suggesting that online shop owners rarely use Earned Media Strategies in their marketing efforts. The indicators under this strategy arranged according to means are as follows: 3.68, 2.72, 2.08, 1.89, and 1.88. These findings imply that specific indicators like the first and second-ranked respectively, “I follow the product reviews and feedback from my consumers.” interpreted as “Always” and “I capitalize on the voluntary and unpaid advertisements from my consumers” interpreted as “Often” are significantly used more frequently than the other Earned Media Strategies.

Meanwhile, strategies like accepting or declining interview requests, capitalizing on influencer and ambassador shoutouts, and free mentions in articles made by unaffiliated publishers were rated less frequently and all being interpreted as rarely.

Generally, the most commonly used strategy under Earned Media is following the product reviews and feedback from the consumer supported by other researchers who have conducted a detailed study on Earned Media Strategies. One of their conclusions is that social earned media, which in this study are indicators one and two, is one of the prerequisites for the traditional Earned Media Strategies to come into action, which in this study are indicators three, four, and five (Stephen & Galak, 2012). This explanation could be linked to why indicators one and two are used more frequently than indicators three, four, and five.

Table 7. The summary of responses of online shop owners about shared media marketing strategies

Shared Media Strategies	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
I advertise my products on Instagram. (posts, reels, stories, videos)	3.35	Always	1
I advertise my products on Facebook. (live selling, posts, stories, groups)	3.32	Always	2
I create videos and advertise my products on Youtube.	1.39	Never	4
I advertise my products on Twitter.	1.30	Never	5
I use other social media platforms that were not stated above. (Tiktok, Pinterest, etc.)	2.61	Often	3
Grand Mean	2.39	Rarely	

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 7 shows the summary of responses of online shop owners as they used Shared Media Strategies.

The table shows that Shared Media Strategies produced a grand mean of 2.39, described as “Rarely” expresses that online shop owners rarely utilize Shared Media Strategies. The findings imply that some social media platforms, specifically Instagram and Facebook are significantly preferred by online shop owners.

The first indicator “I advertise my products on Instagram (posts, reels, stories, videos)” and the second indicator “I advertise my products on Facebook (live selling, posts, stories, groups)” have the means of 3.35 and 3.32 respectively with both classified as “Always”. Then, the third-ranked indicator with a mean of 2.61 “I use other social media platforms that were not stated above (Tiktok, Pinterest, etc.)” is interpreted as “Often”. This is followed by the last two indicators made clear as “Never” and when arranged accordingly are as follows: 1.39 and 1.30.

An online survey was conducted about the leading social media sites used by marketers in businesses. The results showed that marketers commonly use Facebook the most, followed by Instagram, LinkedIn, Youtube, Twitter, and then TikTok (Statista Research Department, 2022). The results are almost aligned with this study seeing that Facebook is just 0.03 away from Instagram in terms of weighted mean, which still means that both Facebook and Instagram are the top-used social media for marketing according to this study and the survey. Even LinkedIn, the third most used, can be classified as part of the fifth indicator which is also the third most frequently used. The same ranking can be applied to Youtube and Twitter.

Table 8. The summary of responses of online shop owners about owned media marketing strategies

Owned Media Strategies	Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
I have an online catalog of my products displayed on my website.	2.90	Often	1
I keep my website updated for my online shop.	2.68	Often	2
I create blogs that are relatable to the consumer.	2.34	Rarely	3
I send out newsletters on the shop's new offerings.	1.78	Rarely	4
I directly email my consumers about my business.	1.68	Never	5
Grand Mean	2.28	Rarely	

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 8 shows the summary of the responses of online shop owners as they used Owned Media Strategies.

The table shows that Owned Media Strategies yielded to a grand mean of 2.28, described as “Rarely” which indicates that online shop owners are rarely likely to use Owned Media Strategies in their marketing endeavors. These findings imply that online shop owners in Qatar prefer Owned Media Strategies that are done by sending it to all possible audiences rather than sending it to individuals.

For instance, the indicators under this strategy arranged according to means are as follows: 2.90, 2.68, 2.34, 1.78, and 1.68. “I have an online catalog of my products displayed on my website.”, “I keep my website updated for my online shop.”, and “I create blogs that are relatable to the consumer.” ranked as first, second, and third correspondingly are those displayed in public and easily accessed by potential consumers rather than indicators fourth and fifth “I send out newsletters on the shop’s new offerings.” and “I directly email my consumers about my business.” correspondingly are only seen on their private newsletter and emails.

The development of websites is important when it comes to online marketing, and in this study, indicators one, two, and three are those that involved own website marketing (Abdallah & Jaleel, 2015). Indicators one, two, and three also scored the highest means in the owned media group, implying that online shop owners also recognize website marketing’s importance. As for newsletter and email marketing, these marketing ways are considered time-consuming, and not easily adoptable by small businesses, therefore the frequency usage of such strategies is less (Mohammadi et al., 2013).

Table 9. The summary of responses of online shop owners on the different marketing media strategies

Media Strategies	Grand Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
Paid Media Strategies	1.45	Never	4
Earned Media Strategies	2.45	Rarely	1
Shared Media Strategies	2.39	Rarely	2
Owned Media Strategies	2.28	Rarely	3
Grand Mean	2.14	Rarely	

Legend: 1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 9 shows the summary of responses of online shop owners on the different marketing media strategies.

Earned Media Strategies has the highest grand mean of 2.45, which means that it is classified as rarely. The second highest is the Shared Media Strategies with 2.39, which is also categorized as rarely. Followed by Owned Media Strategies which has a grand mean of 2.28 and is also interpreted as rarely, while the lowest among the four marketing strategies is the Paid Media Strategies which has 1.45 as its grand mean and is verbally interpreted as never. Lastly, the grand mean of the four media strategies is 2.14, which is verbally interpreted as rarely, meaning online shop owners utilize the media marketing strategies at least once a year. Since Earned Media Strategies had the highest grand mean, the findings imply that online business owners in Qatar rely on publicity as a marketing strategy rather than performing initiatives to improve their marketing presence.

Other researchers made research that also revolves around the PESO model, except in their study advertising credibility was the topic and external stakeholders (mostly consumers) were the respondents (O'Neil & Eisenmann, 2017). When it came to their findings, Earned Media Strategies are considered the strategies that would most likely be believed by the consumer. On the other hand, native advertising, which is classified under Paid Media Strategies, is least likely to be trusted. The two strategy types are again on opposite ends, a piece of information that is similarly aligned to the results in this study, meaning that the online shop owners have a similar way of thinking with consumers.

Table 10. The summary of responses of online shop owners on the different marketing media strategies according to age

Age Groups	Paid Media	VI	R	Earned Media	VI	R	Shared Media	VI	R	Owned Media	VI
20 and below	1.23	Never	4	2.47	Rarely	1	1.98	Rarely	3	2.09	Rarely
21-25	1.40	Never	4	2.39	Rarely	3	2.51	Often	1	2.48	Rarely
26-30	1.69	Never	4	2.42	Rarely	2	2.52	Often	1	2.41	Rarely
31-35	1.43	Never	4	2.50	Rarely	1	2.26	Rarely	2	2.01	Rarely
36 and above	1.53	Never	4	2.55	Often	1	2.52	Often	2	2.35	Rarely
Grand Mean	1.46	Never	4	2.47	Rarely	1	2.36	Rarely	2	2.27	Rarely

Legend: VI (Verbal Interpretation); R (Rank);

1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 10 shows the summary of responses of online shop owners on the different marketing media strategies according to age.

The grand means yielded 2.47 on Earned Media, described as “rarely”, 2.36 on Shared Media and 2.27 on Owned Media, both described as “rarely”, and 1.46 on Paid Media, described as “never”. Across all age groups and media strategies the three most frequently used strategy and its users are: 36 years old and above online shop owners “often” utilizing Earned Media Strategies with a weighted mean of 2.55, 26-30 year old online shop owners “often” utilizing Shared Media Strategies with a weighted mean of 2.52, and 21-25 year old owners also “often” utilizing Shared Media Strategies with a weighted mean of 2.51. This implies that online shop owners who are 36 years old and above rely on publicity as a strategy while online shop owners who are 21-30 years rely on social media activities in promoting their business.

A survey was conducted on the reason why demographic groups follow a business’s social media account. It was revealed that the consumer respondents who were 18-34 years old at the time, follow brands on social media due to the fact that their friends and family follow those brands, as well as some reviews, which are pieces of evidence of Earned Media in action (LaMontagne, 2015). Another information to consider is the fact that the strategy revolves around social media activities, which shows the usage of consumers of social media platforms. It is also important to note that the consumers who were 18-34 years old, are now 26-42 years old by the time this study was conducted. Meaning the mindset of the people from when they were consumers are now being applied to their marketing strategy planning as online shop owners.

Table 11. The summary of responses of online shop owners on the different marketing media strategies according to sex

Sex	Paid Media	VI	R	Earned Media	R	VI	Shared Media	VI	R	Owned Media	VI
Male	1.55	Never	4	2.48	1	Rarely	2.39	Rarely	2	2.39	Rarely
Female	1.35	Never	4	2.42	1	Rarely	2.39	Rarely	2	2.16	Rarely
Grand Mean	1.45	Never	4	2.45	1	Rarely	2.39	Rarely	2	2.28	Rarely

Legend: VI (Verbal Interpretation); R (Rank);

1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 11 displays the summary of responses of online shop owners on the different marketing media strategies according to sex.

The grand means yielded 2.45 on Earned Media, described as “rarely”, 2.39 on Shared Media, and 2.28 on Owned Media, both described as “rarely”, and 1.45 on Paid Media, described as “never”. Based on the results, male online shop owners rarely opt for Earned Media Strategies as shown with a grand mean of 2.48, and they also show that they rarely opt for Shared Media and Owned Media Strategies, seeing that both have an equal weighted mean of 2.39. Similarly, female online shop owners settle for Earned Media Strategies as indicated with a grand mean of 2.42. This is followed by their second preference for Shared Media Strategies with 2.39, and third preference for Owned Media Strategies with 2.16 as the weighted mean. This implies that both male and female shop owners show a preference for Earned Media Strategies as their main strategy, closely followed by Shared Media Strategies as the second main media strategy.

A discussion on the receptiveness of people when it comes to the skepticism towards earned marketing tactics was made, and it showed that women are less skeptical towards the brand information being fed to them, and are more likely to be patrons to brands, therefore increasing the chances of them participating in word of mouth, a form of Earned Media (Amawate & Deb, 2019). However, that mindset did not seem to carry over when it comes to marketing strategies, since the female respondents put a little less focus on Earned Media than the male respondents did.

Table 12. The summary of responses of online shop owners on the different marketing media strategies according to years of business operation

Years of Business Operation	Paid Media	VI	R	Earned Media	VI	R	Shared Media	VI	R	Owned Media	VI
Less than a year	1.32	Never	4	2.34	Rarely	2	2.42	Rarely	1	2.29	Rarely
Between 1-2 years	1.48	Never	4	2.67	Often	1	2.50	Rarely	2	2.21	Rarely
Between 2-3 years	1.36	Never	4	2.27	Rarely	2	2.94	Often	1	2.05	Rarely
3 years and above	1.92	Rarely	4	2.71	Often	1	2.35	Rarely	3	2.52	Often
Grand Mean	1.52	Never	4	2.50	Rarely	2	2.55	Often	1	2.27	Rarely

Legend: VI (Verbal Interpretation); R (Rank);

1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 12 shows the summary of responses of online shop owners on the different marketing media strategies according to the number of years of business operation.

The grand means yielded 2.55 on Shared Media, described as “often”, 2.50 on Earned Media and 2.27 on Owned Media, both described as “rarely”, and 1.52 on Paid Media, described as “never”. Across all businesses’ years of operation and media strategy preferences, the three with the highest weighted means are as follows: businesses operating between 2-3 years often using Shared Media with a weighted mean of 2.94, businesses operating for 3 years and above often utilizing Earned Media with a weighted mean of 2.71, and businesses operating between 1-2 years also often utilizing Earned Media with a weighted mean of 2.67. This implies that businesses operating between 2-3 years prefer using social media in spreading their brand, while businesses operating between 1-2 years and 3 years and above rely on the publicity that the business gets.

Start-up businesses are those businesses that are no more than 5 years old in age as well as those businesses that do not exceed the small business scale (Sanchez, 2021). Since the majority of the respondents’ businesses are below 5 years old, they could be considered start-up businesses. Marketing in start-ups is important, more specifically establishing a digital presence in social media platforms as well as setting up a Public Relations strategy that would sway the Earned Media into the favor of the business, and content marketing, which is very similar to owned marketing (The Hartford, 2023). These three suggested marketing strategies fall under shared, earned, and owned which are all significantly used more in comparison to Paid Media. This means that the online shop owners are in compliance with the recommendations of The Hartford.

Table 13. The summary of responses of online shop owners on the different marketing media strategies according to business scale

Business Scales	Paid Media	VI	R	Earned Media	VI	R	Shared Media	VI	R	Owned Media	VI
Micro	1.34	Never	4	2.41	Rarely	1	2.39	Rarely	2	2.22	Rarely
Small	2.38	Rarely	3	2.93	Often	1	2.24	Rarely	4	2.76	Often
Medium	2.00	Rarely	4	2.20	Rarely	3	2.80	Often	1	2.50	Rarely
Grand Mean	1.91	Rarely	4	2.51	Often	1	2.48	Rarely	3	2.49	Rarely

Legend: VI (Verbal Interpretation); R (Rank);

1.00-1.75 (Never); 1.76-2.50 (Rarely); 2.51-3.25 (Often); 3.26-4.00 (Always)

Table 13 shows the summary of responses of online shop owners on the different marketing media strategies according to business scale.

The grand means yielded to 2.51 on Earned Media, described as “often”, 2.49 on Owned Media, and 2.48 on Shared Media, both described as “rarely”, and 1.91 on Paid Media, also described as “rarely”. Across all business scales and media strategy preferences, the three with the highest weighted means are as follows: small businesses often utilizing Earned Media with a weighted mean of 2.93, medium businesses often utilizing Shared Media with a weighted mean of 2.80, and micro businesses rarely utilizing Earned Media with a weighted mean of 2.41. This implies that micro and small businesses are more likely to rely on organic publicity, while medium businesses rely on social media.

For small and medium businesses, the use of social media platforms would tremendously boost revenue due to these business scales frequently updating on such platforms (Harto et. al., 2019). The findings in this study are somewhat aligned with the other study’s findings since in this study, small businesses rarely update their social media while medium businesses often do updates.

4. Discussions

The core four elements of the PESO model, which are Paid, Earned, Shared, and Owned, all had results of verbal interpretations which are mostly “Rarely” (at least once a year), with the exception of Paid with the “Never” interpretation. This means that when the media strategies are examined as a group rather than per indicator, the results would not be varying in comparison to when it is examined specifically per indicator. For example, in owned media, there is one indicator that is always used while the others are used almost never. This is very different from the general message that Owned Media Strategies are rarely used.

Moving on, the results for Paid Media Strategies are oddly low despite being seen as something that is important. Public relations practitioners believe that advertising and promotional practices heavily rely on paid strategies and ways (Xie, Neill, & Schauster, 2018). A reaffirmation from another source agrees with the aforementioned statement, saying that businesses will reach a point where paid advertising becomes necessary in order to grow (Stabile, 2021). However, these researches do not seem to be applicable to the results of this study.

The study on the application of the PESO model for a campaign argued that shared and owned media should be given the most focus by marketers (Benedek, 2022). In this study, Owned and Shared Media are the

second and third most used types of media strategies. The gap between Earned Media and these two media strategies is not that big, so it can be said that earned, shared, and owned are significantly used a lot more. Technically, the respondents from this study were in compliance with the argument of Benedek when he said that shared and owned media should be given more focus.

The fourth and dominantly employed marketing strategy among online shop owners is Earned media strategies. The reason for Earned Media's key marketing goals is to encourage consumers to spread the positive electronic word of mouth and for owners to listen, learn, and respond to their target market (Penttinen & Ciuchita, 2022). This is in accordance with this study, seeing that online shop owners always following their consumer's product reviews and feedback is the most frequently applied strategy as reflected in the results. Moreover, Earned Media Strategy encompasses publicity like press mentions, blogs, and online community posts (Stephen & Galak, 2012). These can be in the form of non-sponsored content made and shared by real consumers and independent organizations on various social media sites, which are also being received and capitalized by online shop owners.

A study on consumer trust levels in business media tactics showed the least trusted and most trusted by consumers are Paid and Earned media respectively (O'Neil & Eisenmann, 2017). Accordingly, in this study, paid and earned are the least and most frequently applied media marketing strategies by online shop owners. This could lead to the assumption that consumers and online shop owners have similar thinking patterns when it comes to the way in which a business should present itself.

5. Conclusions

The findings based on the statistical analysis of data lead to the following conclusions:

The online shop owners played vital roles in generating reliable sources of information needed for the study. The demographic profiles of the online business owner are as follows, the age of respondents ranges from 16 to 36 and above. The respondents are equally distributed between the male and female sexes producing non-gendered biased data. The years of business operation ranged from less than a year to 3 years and above. The business scales ranged from micro, small, and medium.

Now, to conclude the marketing strategies being employed by the different businesses in terms of age, sex, years of business operation, and business scale. The prominently applied marketing strategy for ages 20 and below, 31-35, and 36 and above is Earned media strategies. While for ages 21-25 and 26-30, the prominently applied marketing strategy is Shared media strategies. Furthermore, both male and female online shop owners principally use Earned media strategies. On top of that, Shared media strategies are principally utilized by businesses operating for less than a year and between 2-3 years. Earned media strategies are mainly utilized by businesses operating between 1-2 years and 3 years and above. In addition, micro and small businesses bear on Earned media strategies while medium-scale businesses bear on Shared media strategies.

Based on the empirical findings of the study, the following are recommended: Online Shop Owners should learn the concept of different marketing strategies in order to keep the business running and successful. By knowing the best suitable marketing strategies for their business, online shop owners will be able to avoid underdeveloped and ineffective marketing strategies, Aspiring Entrepreneurs can use this study as a guide to be well-informed about the different marketing strategies and apply it to their start-up business, and lastly,

Future Researchers can use this study as a guide to assist them with their research if their research problem involves online shop owners and marketing strategies.

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