

The Review of TOE Factors Influencing Sales Performance Among SMEs and Mediated By The Online Platform Adoption

Muhammad Ameer Syafiq Mohamad Nizam, *Yasmin Kamall Khan, Nur Atiqah Rochin Demong
Faculty of Business Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Shah Alam, Malaysia
Email: 2024903585@student.uitm.edu.my, *yasmin@uitm.edu.my, rochin@uitm.edu.my
Corresponding Author: Yasmin Kamall Khan

Abstract: Sales performance is important for companies to measure their current stability and ability to grow or sustain in the competitive market. In fact, for businesses to continue to face significant challenges in identifying the factors that would affect sales outcomes, technology will be a component of a growing presence. This research aims to explore these trends within retail sectors among Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Malaysia. This study uses the Technology-Organization-Environment (T-O-E) framework as a base model; meanwhile Attention-Based View (ABV) provides additional theoretical support. In this conceptual framework, sales performance is positioned as a dependent variable with online platform adoption serving as a mediating factor. Independent variables in this study are perceived compatibility, relative advantage, perceived cost, top management support, and government support, which these components derived from the T-O-E framework. Moreover, this research seeks to identify the technology adoption process and to boost sales performance through digital integration, and deliver practical insight that will be utilized. Quantitative research method applied in this research with a sample of 384 respondents, according to Krejcie and Morgan's sample size table and targeted specifically at retail sectors in Malaysia. SME Corp Malaysia, the Ministry of Entrepreneur Development and Cooperatives (MEDC) and Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) are government agencies sources of data for this paper. The end of this research seeks to emphasize the critical role of online platform adoption by enhancing sales performance and shedding light on the digital transformation of SMEs in Malaysia, thus offering strategic insights for key stakeholders.

Keywords: *Sales Performance, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs), Online platforms adoption, Technology-Organization-Environment (T-O-E), Attention-Based View (ABV)*

1. Introduction and Background

One of the metrics that the corporation has measured to show how well its business is doing is sales performance. Sales performance is a crucial metric for assessing small and medium-sized businesses' (SMEs') competitiveness and economic impact. 97% of Malaysian enterprises are SMEs, according to The Star (2023). SMEs serve as the biggest contribution towards Malaysia's economy which significantly contributing towards employment and GDP in Malaysia. Additionally, as technology advances, the business environment is changing, with internet platforms serving as tools for companies looking to improve sales performance. Due to Malaysia's desire to play a major role in the global digital economy, SMEs in the country are unable to implement online platforms into their operations. According to Muzellec et al. (2015), online platforms are crucial, particularly in the age of Industry 4.0, since they give companies the means to reach new clients, grow their market, and achieve long-term viability. For SMEs to enhance sales performance, there are many opportunities, especially the advancement of digital technologies, specifically online platforms, which presents as a trend today. Research by Hanim Abu Bakar et al. (2023) finds that the majority of SME still acknowledge the benefits of implementing an online platform into their business, but SMEs face insufficient resources to adapt online platform. The adoption of online platforms among SME in Malaysia remains limited and inconsistent despite the growing recognition of digital technologies in business operations. Perceived high cost, lack of top management support, and limited awareness of government support incentives are barriers that face SMEs in adopting online platforms in SMEs (SME Corp, 2023). Moreover, by using the Technology-Organization-Environment (T-O-E) framework and interpreted through the Attention-Based View (ABV), this research systematically categorized these variables from these frameworks and theories. Impacts on sales performance among SMEs in Malaysia can be seen through this review systematically examines the literature review.

2. Sales Performance and Online Platforms Adoption in SMEs

Sales Performance: Sales performance in this research investigates how online platforms can influence sales

performance among SMEs in Malaysia. Several studies identify how this factor could affect sales performance. The importance of technology, work-related support, and strategic activities in determining sales for success are factor that could affect sales performance, according to Chawla et al. (2020). Over the past decades, the sales environment has undergone significant involved due to the advancement in technology, increased competition, and shifting consumer preferences. Chawla et al. (2020) suggest that organizational support and market dynamics have shaped sales performance than individual capabilities alone.

In business, sales performance has an impact that can generate revenue, customer satisfaction, and market competitiveness. By increasing revenue streams through strong sales performance, businesses can drive their expansion (Faster Capital, 2024). Furthermore, as businesses become more attuned to customer needs and preferences, they can effectively sell and contribute to customer satisfaction. A study by Yulisa et al. (2022), found that a key role in building brand loyalty is by found that customer satisfaction. By informing marketing strategy and product development, ultimately promoting innovation and long-term business growth, satisfied customers are also more likely to provide valuable feedback.

For Malaysian SMEs, their business can grow and achieve market sustainability by achieving effective sales performance. One of the strategies to enhance sales is to adopt an online platform in the business. The Technology-Organization-Environment (T-O-E) framework and Attention-Based View (ABV) these key factors in this research (perceived compatibility, relative advantage, perceived cost, top management support, and government support) that can drive overall sales performance.

Online Platforms Adoption: The adoption of online platforms has become an essential technological advancement for SMEs today. Enhance operation efficiency, expand market reach, and improve overall business performance, which these platforms can give to businesses. SMEs can also increase their growth potential can tap into an unlimited customer base across wide geographical areas through online platforms. SMEs with leverage with online platforms such as e-commerce and social media can increase visibility and customer engagement, which affects a high volume of sales (Shanmugam et al., 2021).

Furthermore, businesses can improve by adopting online platforms, which leads to business efficiency and cost reduction. The adoption of online platforms can facilitate automation and streamline various businesses, as suggested by Faiz (2023). SMEs can improve resource allocation at the right place if the adoption process is implemented through such areas as inventory management, customer relationship management (CRM), and sales tracking. Studies by Liu et al. (2022) and Balk (2024) suggest that the implementation of online platforms can reduce costs. Different from traditional methods, SMEs use online platforms for digital marketing to promote their business in the market. Online platforms can reach and engage prospects of customers widely, meanwhile traditional methods require a high cost to reach customers.

During the world turned into pandemic, many businesses were affected, which forced this business to turn to digitalization. For SMEs, turning business into digitalization is because to survive and grow in the market. This shift has created opportunities for jobs and business, increasing demand especially in the gig economy and increasing e-commerce activities. E-commerce platforms in Malaysia, such as Lazada, Shopee, and Mudah and social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook, give unlimited potential customers to merchants. Although, as stated by Elhusseiny & Crispim (2021), SMEs face several challenges to adopt technology into the business, such as limited digital skills and financial constrain. MDEC is one of the government agencies that provides training programs and financial assistance towards SMEs, especially SMEs that are turning into digitalization.

Relative Advantage: Relative advantage can be described as to which the new technology offers better solutions than traditional methods. SMEs in Malaysia realize with potential and benefits such as improved market sales and operational efficiency when they adopt online platforms (Razali et al., 2018; Shanmugam et al., 2021). For example, high sales performance with great accessibility towards customers and streamlined operations that the business can utilize. Studies by Razali et al. (2018), SMEs may be underutilized compared to large companies. These facts may hinder SMEs from utilizing their resources to perform overall business.

Perceived Cost: Perceived cost can be defined as the financial or non-financial implications when someone or an entity wants to use products, services, etc. Finance is one of the barriers that SMEs face in adopting new

technologies due to the high cost that has been surveyed by SME Corp, 2024). The causes that enhance sales performance are due to the perception that implementing technology requires a high cost. As today's technology plays a crucial role in customer engagement and operational efficiency, underinvestment in digital business hinders business growth. The limitation of cost in the business with a tight budget forces SMEs to abandon technology in their business (Kechik et al., 2023). Limitations of worker skills and financial resources to utilize online platforms other issues faced by SMEs when they try to integrate technology into the business. This gap among SMEs shows that there is a need for innovation for SMEs to integrate financial and skills problems.

Top Management Support: Top management support is one indicator to measure technology adoption in the business. For SMEs to contribute to innovation and embrace online platforms, leadership and commitment to adopt online platforms are also important. SMEs in Malaysia still lack to implement adoption of online platforms, which affects their ability to implement online sales strategies (SME Corp, 2023). Leaders are the people who influence to adoption of online platforms into organizations by determining resources in the company, as a study conducted by Amoah et al. (2023). This study found inconsistent support for gaps in this variable which there are not all SMEs have consistent support from top management to adopt online platforms into the business.

Government Support: Government support is important for SMEs to adopt online platforms into their business. Under the Government, several initiatives for SMEs have been introduced to help SMEs in terms of the cost of implementing technology adoption. Government also helps in terms of skill and development under agencies such as Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC), which this agency helps SMEs in terms of empowerment for digital business and helps Malaysia with a model of digital economy. However, with grants and initiatives by the government to help SMEs in digitalizing their business, there is research by Priya Terumalay (2024), which indicates that only 32% of respondents are aware of this initiative by the government.

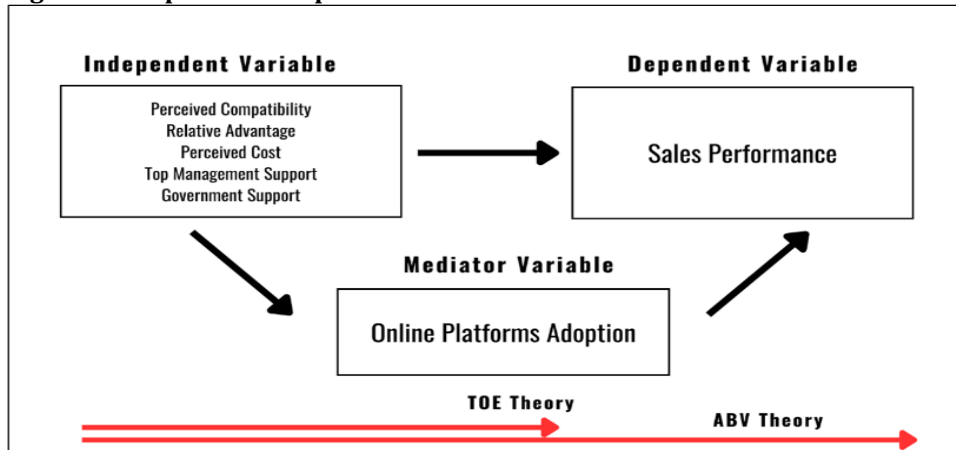
T-O-E Framework: The T-O-E framework has been widely utilized to comprehend the elements that impact an organization's adoption of technology. T-O-E was employed in this study to identify the variables influencing Malaysian SMEs' adoption of online platforms for sales. T-O-E is divided into three categories: environment, organization, and technology.

T-O-E frameworks offer SMEs in Malaysia a thorough lens that takes into account both internal and external factors influencing the adoption of online platforms. Government support was used in this study's context, which is pertinent to Malaysian SMEs. Financial assistants and government programs that support digital literacy under MDEC can have a considerable influence on SMEs' adoption of online platforms. T-O-E was also in line with the study's research goal, which was to assess sales performance and perceived compatibility, analyze relative advantage in relation to technology variables, look at top management support in relation to organizational dimensions, and align the environment with government support. Technology, Organization, and Environment (T-O-E) factors enable thorough analysis. T-O-E is in line with these aspects when it decides to utilize online platforms.

Attention-Based View: According to Brielmaier& Friesl (2023), the Attention-Based View (ABV) is a concept theory that focuses on a thorough analysis of organizational behavior and its approach to include it. The notions of ABV should be viewed as limited resources, as individuals or organizations have limited capacity to process information. Effective management of competitive advantages requires decision-makers to concentrate on particular problems and options. According to BAĞIŞ et al. (2020), ABV doctrines emphasize that the organization and external environment receive more attention than the individual. The ABV idea places a strong emphasis on structure and culture to influence decision-makers' distribution.

As explained by Angelshaug (2022), ABV frameworks comprehend how leaders' attention affects the business model, and they may be applied to business model innovation (BMI). Managerial priorities can have a significant impact on a company's strategic orientation. ABV can also be used to measure an organization's performance, which is what this study is aiming for. ABV focuses on how behaviors and resource investment can be driven by attentional concentration to satisfy performance standards.

Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework



3. Development of Hypothesis

Perceived compatibility and Sales Performance: The degree to which online platforms mesh nicely with company operations or processes is known as perceived compatibility. Technology is appropriate for company practices and procedures when SMEs are compatible with online platforms and existing systems. When SMEs switch from traditional methods to new technology for their operations and company, compatibility is a key factor. According to Shanmugam et al. (2021), SMEs that experiment with integrating new technology into their operations see gains of 26% to 60%. According to Shanmugam et al. (2021) and Alkateeb et al. (2021), perceived compatibility has a significant impact on how online platforms are adopted and how well sales performance is affected. As a result, the hypothesis can be expanded by:

H1: There is a significant positive relationship between perceived compatibility on adoption online platforms and sales performance among SMEs in Malaysia.

Relative Advantage and Sales Performance: Relative advantage refers to the new technology that replaced traditional or already technology to improve business. When SMEs adopted online platforms, new technologies offer an increase in market reach, an increase in sales performance, and streamlined operations by Razali et al., 2018; Shanmugam et al., 2021). By utilizing online platforms such as e-commerce, SMEs can gain higher sales volume, better engagement with customers, and maximize operational efficiency according to Razali et al. (2018). Nevertheless, the evolution of a hypothesis could resemble this:

H2: There is a significant positive relationship between perceived relative advantage and sales performance among SMEs in Malaysia.

Perceived Cost and Sales Performance: The financial burden that SMEs should bear while implementing new technology is known as perceived cost. According to SME Corp (2023), one of the things that prevents SMEs from embracing new technology, particularly online platforms, is cost. SMEs may find it difficult to afford the high costs of adopting an online platform, particularly if they lack the resources necessary to run their operations. According to Kechik et al. (2023), SMEs' low financial resources, inability to invest in skilled labor, and technological infrastructure are factors that contribute to the greater cost of implementing an online platform in their operations. According to Kechik et al. (2023), SMEs' insufficient investment restricts their capacity to integrate internet platforms into their operations. The following hypothesis will be developed:

H3: There is a significant relationship between perceived cost and sales performance among SMEs in Malaysia.

Top Management Support and Sales Performance: One definition of top management support is an organization's dedication to assisting and participating in the integration of new technology into the company. The adoption process is greatly aided by top management, whose job it is to distribute resources and develop business-use strategies. According to research by SME Corp (2023), a lack of support from upper management prevented many Malaysians, particularly SMEs, from implementing online platforms. According to earlier

research by Amoah et al. (2023), senior management is essential to facilitating, allocating, and maximizing resources. Amoah et al. (2023) also discovered that senior management is inconsistent in providing their resources, which makes it difficult for the company to adopt and benefit from online platforms by increasing sales performance. According to studies by Prokop & Hajek (2023) and Scott Stiver (2021), senior management has a significant impact on sales performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis will be developed:

H4: Strong support from top management positively influences sales performances in Malaysian SMEs.

Government Support and Sales Performance: Support from the government might take the shape of initiatives, grants, and programs designed to encourage and assist SMEs in implementing online platforms. The government typically provides infrastructure, training programs, and financial assistance to SMEs. Organizations that assist and encourage SMEs to digitize their businesses include the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC). Additionally, MDEC helps SMEs take the lead in Malaysia's digital economy. According to SME Corp (2024), only 32% of respondents are aware of government programs and assistance. Less exposure to SMEs on the adoption of online platforms and, ultimately, sales success, as well as a lack of understanding, particularly among SMEs, may prevent them from taking advantage of government assistance. Government support may be helpful in terms of policies, incentives, and training, according to a number of studies (e.g., Ismail & Othman, 2014; Mary Hall, 2024; Songling et al., 2018). To formulate the hypothesis:

H5: Government support significantly enhances sales performance among SMEs in Malaysia.

T-O-E and Sales Performance: Support from the government might take the shape of initiatives, grants, and programs designed to encourage and assist SMEs in implementing online platforms. The government typically provides infrastructure, training programs, and financial assistance to SMEs. Organizations that assist and encourage SMEs to digitize their businesses include the Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC). Additionally, MDEC helps SMEs take the lead in Malaysia's digital economy. According to SME Corp (2024), only 32% of respondents are aware of government programs and assistance. Less exposure to SMEs on the adoption of online platforms and, ultimately, sales success, as well as a lack of understanding, particularly among SMEs, may prevent them from taking advantage of government assistance. To formulate the hypothesis:

H6: T-O-E has a positive association with sales performance mediated by online platforms adoption.

4. Proposed Method

This research used a quantitative research method by using a survey questionnaire to collect data from SMEs in Malaysia. Through the lens of the T-O-E framework and ABV, this research seeks to examine the relationship between online platform adoption and sales performance. Quantitative often focuses on broader aspects of digital transformation or limited technological variables without integrating organizational attention factors like ABV, which previous studies, such as Razali et al. (2018) and Shanmugam et al. (2021), approach same way. However, these studies primarily focused on external and technical variables such as the benefits of technology, perceived ease of use, or technological readiness. These approaches did not integrate models or frameworks that explain how organizational attention and decision-making priorities influence adoption outcomes. Cross sectional survey will be applied in this study to collect data in a single period. A poll of the population is SMEs that use online platforms as their business operation. With a total number of SMEs 382 based on Krejcie and Morgan table, this research aims to broader context and valuable insights into SMEs in Malaysia.

5. Conclusion

This study used two theories, which are T-O-E and ABV, with the purpose of investigating the factors influencing sales performance by adopting online platforms among SMEs in Malaysia. This study proposed three dimensions of T-O-E which Technology, perceived compatibility, and relative advantage; Organization, perceived cost, and top management support; and Environment, government support. This study also examines how these factors influence the adoption of online platforms and their impact on SMEs' sales performance as a foundation for the subsequent empirical analysis. Finally, a well-developed literature review enhances academic discourse, linking past insights with contemporary inquiries to advance scholarly understanding in the field.

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