Finance and Business Economics Review

Vol. 10, No. 3,September 2026, pp. 69-78
DOI : 10.58205/fber.v10i3.2144

The Role of Digital Marketing in Achieving Sustainable Growth for Algerian Startups: A Field Study of a Sample of Entrepreneurial Companies

Khaled Touazit
Faculty of Economic, Commercial, and Management Sciences, University of Mila, Algeria, kh.touazit@centre-univ-mila.dz

Article Information

Article history
Received: 30 August 2026
Accepted: 28 September 2026
Published: 30 September 2026

Corresponding Author
Khaled Touazit
Email: kh.touazit@centre-univ-mila.dz

Copyright© 2026, University of Abdelhafid Boussof, Mila. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license.

Suggested Citation
Khaled Touazit, (2026). The Role of Digital Marketing in Achieving Sustainable Growth for Algerian Startups: A Field Study of a Sample of Entrepreneurial Companies, Finance and Business Economics Review, Vol. 10, No. 3, pp. A-B.

DOI : 10.58205/fber.v10i3.2144

Abstract: This study investigates the role of digital marketing in achieving sustainable growth for Algerian startups. Drawing on a quantitative field survey administered to a purposive sample of 107 entrepreneurial firms operating across multiple sectors in Algeria, the research employs descriptive-analytical methods, reliability analysis (Cronbach's alpha), and multiple linear regression to test the proposed hypotheses. The findings reveal that digital marketing practices — encompassing social media marketing, content marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), and data-driven customer analytics — exert a statistically significant positive effect on the sustainable growth of the sampled startups. The results further indicate that social media marketing constitutes the most influential digital marketing dimension, followed by content marketing, SEO, and customer analytics. The study concludes that Algerian startups that strategically integrate digital marketing into their business models achieve superior market penetration, customer retention, and revenue diversification, thereby reinforcing long-term viability. Practical and policy implications for entrepreneurs, investors, and governmental bodies are discussed.

Keywords: digital marketing; sustainable growth; Algerian startups; entrepreneurship; social media marketing; SEO; content marketing

1. Introduction

The global digital revolution has fundamentally transformed the competitive landscape for businesses of all sizes, but its impact is particularly pronounced for startups and small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) operating in emerging economies. In Algeria, a country experiencing a dynamic wave of entrepreneurial activity supported by national policies such as the National Agency for the Support and Development of Entrepreneurship (ANADE) and the National Agency for Entrepreneurship Support (ANSEJ), startups face simultaneous opportunities and structural challenges. Among these challenges, the ability to reach target markets cost-effectively, build brand equity, and sustain growth over time stands as a primary determinant of long-term success.

Digital marketing — broadly defined as the use of internet-based and technology-enabled channels to promote products, services, and brands — has emerged as a transformative force for startups worldwide (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). Unlike traditional marketing approaches, digital marketing offers measurable, scalable, and resource-efficient tools that align with the financial and operational constraints typical of early-stage ventures (Kingsnorth, 2022). Social media platforms, search engine optimization, email campaigns, content marketing, and data analytics collectively enable startups to compete with larger incumbents on a more level playing field (Ryan, 2021).

In the Algerian context, however, the uptake of sophisticated digital marketing strategies among startups remains uneven. While internet penetration has increased considerably — reaching approximately 71% of the population by 2023 (ITU, 2023) — many nascent enterprises continue to rely on fragmented or informal digital practices, limiting their growth potential. The relationship between systematic digital marketing adoption and measurable sustainable growth outcomes has yet to be rigorously examined through empirical fieldwork in the Algerian startup ecosystem.

This study seeks to bridge this research gap by empirically investigating the extent to which digital marketing dimensions predict sustainable growth among Algerian startups. Using a sample of 107 entrepreneurial companies drawn from multiple sectors, the research applies a quantitative hypothetico-deductive design to test the proposed relationships. The study contributes theoretically by extending the Resource-Based View (RBV) and the Dynamic Capabilities Framework to the digital marketing–growth nexus in a developing-country context, and practically by providing actionable insights for Algerian entrepreneurs, policy makers, and support institutions.

1.1 Research Problem

Despite the proliferation of digital technologies and the increasing strategic importance of digital marketing, little empirical evidence exists regarding its specific contribution to sustainable growth outcomes for Algerian startups. This study therefore addresses the following central research question:

-To what extent does digital marketing contribute to the achievement of sustainable growth for Algerian startups, and which digital marketing dimensions exert the most significant influence?

1.2 Research Objectives

1. To examine the theoretical relationship between digital marketing and sustainable growth within the entrepreneurship literature.
2. To identify the prevailing digital marketing practices adopted by Algerian startups.
3. To measure the impact of each digital marketing dimension on the sustainable growth of the sampled firms.
4. To formulate recommendations for improving digital marketing adoption among Algerian startups.

1.3 Research Hypotheses

Based on a synthesis of the literature, the following hypotheses are proposed:

- H1: Social media marketing has a statistically significant positive effect on the sustainable growth of Algerian startups.
- H2: Content marketing has a statistically significant positive effect on the sustainable growth of Algerian startups.
- H3: Search engine optimization (SEO) has a statistically significant positive effect on the sustainable growth of Algerian startups.
- H4: Data-driven customer analytics has a statistically significant positive effect on the sustainable growth of Algerian startups.
- H5: Digital marketing as a composite construct has a statistically significant positive effect on the sustainable growth of Algerian startups.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Framework of Digital Marketing

Digital marketing encompasses all marketing activities that leverage digital technologies and internet-connected platforms to attract, engage, and convert customers (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). The discipline has evolved significantly over the past two decades, transitioning from basic website presence and email campaigns toward sophisticated, data-driven ecosystems that integrate artificial intelligence, machine learning, and real-time analytics (Kingsnorth, 2022). Key dimensions examined in the contemporary literature include:

Social Media Marketing (SMM): The strategic use of platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, and Twitter to build brand communities, disseminate content, and engage customers (Tuten & Solomon, 2021). SMM has gained particular relevance for startups given its relatively low entry costs and high reach potential (Kaur et al., 2020).

Content Marketing: A strategic approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience (Pulizzi, 2014). Content marketing supports organic growth by improving brand authority, search visibility, and customer trust (Holliman & Rowley, 2014).

Search Engine Optimization (SEO): The practice of optimizing digital content and technical website architecture to improve organic search engine rankings, thereby increasing visibility and inbound traffic (Patel, 2019). For startups with limited advertising budgets, SEO represents a high-return investment over the medium to long term (Ryan, 2021).

Data-Driven Customer Analytics: The systematic collection, analysis, and application of customer data to inform marketing decisions, personalize experiences, and measure campaign effectiveness (Camilleri, 2018). The proliferation of big data and marketing technology (MarTech) has elevated analytics from a supplementary function to a core competitive capability.

2.2 Sustainable Growth in the Startup Context

Sustainable growth, in the context of entrepreneurial ventures, is defined as the capacity of a firm to expand its operations, market share, and revenue streams in a manner that is financially viable, strategically consistent, and environmentally and socially responsible over the long run (Porter & Kramer, 2011; Bocken et al., 2014). Within the startup literature,

sustainable growth is commonly operationalized through indicators such as revenue growth rate, customer acquisition and retention, market penetration, brand equity development, and operational scalability (Ries, 2011).

The nexus between digital capabilities and startup growth has been theorized through multiple frameworks. The Resource-Based View (RBV) positions digital marketing competencies as rare, valuable, and inimitable resources that generate sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). The Dynamic Capabilities Framework (Teece et al., 1997) further argues that startups able to sense market opportunities, seize them through digital channels, and reconfigure their marketing assets continuously are better positioned for sustained performance. More recently, the Entrepreneurial Marketing (EM) paradigm has integrated digital tools as core instruments of opportunity-driven market creation (Morris et al., 2002; Hills et al., 2008).

2.3 Digital Marketing and Startup Growth: Empirical Evidence

A growing body of empirical research documents the positive relationship between digital marketing adoption and firm performance. Kaur et al. (2020) demonstrated that SMM intensity is positively associated with brand equity and sales growth among Indian SMEs. Tuten and Solomon (2021) reported that firms leveraging integrated digital marketing strategies outperform their peers on customer acquisition costs and lifetime value metrics. Ryan (2021) provided practitioner-oriented evidence that startups investing in SEO and content marketing achieve significantly higher organic traffic and conversion rates compared to those relying solely on paid media.

In the African and MENA regional contexts, however, empirical research remains sparse. Camilleri (2018) noted that digital marketing adoption in North African SMEs is constrained by infrastructural deficits, regulatory ambiguity, and limited digital literacy. Holliman and Rowley (2014) similarly highlighted that content marketing effectiveness is contingent on organizational capabilities and managerial commitment — factors that vary considerably across the Algerian startup landscape. The present study positions itself within this gap, offering context-specific evidence from a sample of 107 Algerian entrepreneurial firms.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a quantitative, cross-sectional, descriptive-analytical research design. The positivist epistemological orientation of the study is consistent with the hypothetico-deductive approach, wherein empirically testable hypotheses are derived from theoretical propositions and subjected to statistical scrutiny. The deductive logic underlying the design enables generalization from the sample to the broader population of Algerian startups sharing similar structural characteristics.

3.2 Population and Sampling

The target population comprises all formally registered startups in Algeria recognized under the national startup label issued by the Algerian Ministry of Knowledge Economy, Startups, and Micro-enterprises. Given the absence of a publicly available, exhaustive sampling frame, a purposive (judgment) sampling strategy was employed. The final usable sample consisted of 107 entrepreneurial companies operating across technology, e-commerce, agri-tech,

fintech, and services sectors, distributed across the provinces of Algiers, Oran, Constantine, and Annaba. This sample size satisfies the minimum threshold recommended for structural equation and regression analyses (Hair et al., 2019), specifically the rule-of-thumb of a minimum of 5–10 observations per predictor variable.

3.3 Data Collection Instrument

Data were collected via a structured self-administered questionnaire developed in English and Arabic, distributed electronically through Google Forms and, where necessary, in hard copy during in-person visits to incubators and startup hubs. The questionnaire comprised three sections: (1) demographic and firm-level profile questions (7 items); (2) digital marketing practices scale (20 items across four dimensions: SMM — 5 items, content marketing — 5 items, SEO — 5 items, and customer analytics — 5 items); and (3) sustainable growth scale (10 items). All attitudinal items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The measurement scales were adapted from validated instruments in the extant literature (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022; Tuten & Solomon, 2021; Hair et al., 2019).

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Content validity was ensured through an expert review panel comprising five academics specializing in marketing and entrepreneurship, who evaluated item relevance, clarity, and coverage. Construct validity was assessed via exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirming the expected factor structure. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. As presented in Table 1, all alpha values exceeded the widely accepted threshold of 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978; Hair et al., 2019), indicating satisfactory reliability

Table 1: ***Reliability Statistics of the Measurement Scales***

Scale / Dimension	No. of Items	Cronbach's α	Interpretation
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	5	0.891	Excellent
Content Marketing	5	0.874	Good
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	5	0.862	Good
Customer Analytics	5	0.853	Good
Digital Marketing (Overall)	20	0.934	Excellent
Sustainable Growth	10	0.907	Excellent

Source: Authors' elaboration based on field survey data (n = 107).

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27). The following analytical procedures were applied sequentially: (1) descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations) to characterize the sample and assess central tendencies; (2) Pearson's correlation analysis to examine bivariate relationships between the study variables; (3) multiple linear regression analysis to test the directional hypotheses, with digital

marketing dimensions as independent variables and sustainable growth as the dependent variable; and (4) robustness checks including normality tests (Shapiro-Wilk), multicollinearity diagnostics (Variance Inflation Factor — VIF), and homoscedasticity tests (Breusch-Pagan). The significance level was set at $p < .05$.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1 Sample Characteristics

Of the 107 responding firms, 68.2% were founded within the preceding five years, reflecting the early-stage nature of the sample. In terms of sector distribution, 32.7% operated in the technology and ICT sector, 21.5% in e-commerce and retail, 16.8% in agri-tech and food services, 14.0% in fintech and financial services, and 15.0% across other service sectors. The majority of respondents held managerial roles (founders, co-founders, or marketing directors), ensuring that responses reflected strategic decision-making perspectives. Regarding firm size, 74.8% employed fewer than 20 persons, categorizing them as micro-enterprises consistent with the OECD definition of early-stage startups.

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for each study variable. All digital marketing dimensions recorded mean scores above the neutral midpoint of 3.00 on the Likert scale, suggesting moderate-to-high levels of digital marketing adoption. Sustainable growth similarly registered a mean score indicative of moderate performance progress.

Table 2: ***Descriptive Statistics for Study Variables (n = 107)***

Variable	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Social Media Marketing (SMM)	1.20	5.00	3.87	0.74
Content Marketing	1.40	5.00	3.72	0.79
Search Engine Optimization (SEO)	1.00	5.00	3.54	0.83
Customer Analytics	1.20	5.00	3.48	0.86
Digital Marketing (Overall)	1.30	5.00	3.65	0.68
Sustainable Growth	1.50	5.00	3.59	0.72

Note: SD = Standard Deviation. Scores based on 5-point Likert scale.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Pearson's bivariate correlation coefficients were computed to assess the preliminary associations between the study variables. Table 3 reveals that all digital marketing dimensions are positively and significantly correlated with sustainable growth at $p < .01$. SMM exhibits the strongest correlation with sustainable growth ($r = .712$), followed by content marketing ($r = .684$), SEO ($r = .651$), and customer analytics ($r = .628$). Inter-dimension correlations are moderate, ranging from .512 to .639, indicating conceptual distinctiveness while acknowledging shared variance — a pattern consistent with the broader digital marketing literature (Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022).

4.4 Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

A multiple linear regression model was estimated with sustainable growth as the dependent variable and the four digital marketing dimensions as independent variables. Prior to interpretation, the OLS assumptions were verified: the Shapiro-Wilk test confirmed normality of residuals ($W = 0.983$, $p = .214$); VIF values for all predictors fell below 3.0 (range: 1.82–2.41), confirming the absence of problematic multicollinearity; and the Breusch-Pagan test returned a non-significant result ($\chi^2 = 5.34$, $p = .254$), supporting homoscedasticity. Table 3 presents the full regression output.

Table 3: ***Multiple Linear Regression: Impact of Digital Marketing on Sustainable Growth***

Predictor Variable	B	SE(B)	β	t-value	p-value	VIF
(Constant)	0.418	0.213	—	1.962	.052	—
Social Media Marketing	0.341	**0.061**	**0.352**	**5.590**	**< .001**	**2.12**
Content Marketing	**0.294**	**0.058**	**0.313**	**5.069**	**< .001**	**2.41**
SEO	**0.237**	**0.054**	**0.261**	**4.389**	**< .001**	**1.97**
Customer Analytics	**0.198**	**0.052**	**0.219**	**3.808**	**< .001**	**1.82**

Note: $R = .803$; $R^2 = .645$; Adjusted $R^2 = .632$; $F(4, 102) = 46.37$, $p < .001$; DW = 1.97.

Dependent variable: Sustainable Growth. B = unstandardized coefficient; SE(B) = standard error; β = standardized coefficient.

The overall regression model is statistically significant ($F(4, 102) = 46.37$, $p < .001$), with a coefficient of determination $R^2 = .645$, indicating that the four digital marketing dimensions collectively explain 64.5% of the variance in sustainable growth — a finding that underscores the substantive explanatory power of digital marketing in this context. Social media marketing exhibits the largest standardized coefficient ($\beta = .352$, $p < .001$), followed by content marketing ($\beta = .313$, $p < .001$), SEO ($\beta = .261$, $p < .001$), and customer analytics ($\beta = .219$, $p < .001$). All four hypotheses (H1 through H4) are therefore supported, as is the omnibus hypothesis H5.

5. Discussion

The empirical findings of this study provide robust support for the proposition that digital marketing is a significant driver of sustainable growth among Algerian startups. The observed R^2 of .645 compares favorably with estimates reported in analogous studies conducted in other developing-economy contexts, such as Kaur et al. (2020) who reported R^2 values between .52 and .61 for Indian SMEs, and Holliman and Rowley (2014) whose qualitative evidence from UK B2B firms corroborates the centrality of content marketing in building customer relationships.

The primacy of social media marketing in explaining sustainable growth is consistent with the structural characteristics of the Algerian digital landscape, where Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn constitute the dominant communication channels for consumer-facing and B2B startups alike. Algeria's relatively young demographic profile — approximately 45% of the population is under 25 (ONS, 2023) — and the high smartphone penetration rate position

social media as a cost-effective and culturally resonant marketing channel. These findings echo those of Tuten and Solomon (2021), who identified SMM as the highest-ROI digital channel for resource-constrained firms.

The significant contribution of content marketing (β = .313) aligns with the argument advanced by Pulizzi (2014) that brands which consistently produce educational, entertaining, or informative content build lasting consumer trust and organic growth loops. For Algerian startups — many of which operate in markets with limited brand awareness — content marketing appears to serve as a foundational tool for differentiation and credibility building.

The moderate but significant effect of SEO (β = .261) reflects the growing importance of search visibility in a context where Arabic-language and French-language search queries are increasing rapidly on Google Algeria. The relatively lower coefficient compared to SMM and content marketing may reflect the technical complexity of SEO implementation and the shortage of specialized SEO talent within the Algerian startup ecosystem — a human capital constraint noted by Camilleri (2018) in his analysis of North African digital adoption.

Finally, the significant effect of customer analytics (β = .219) indicates that data-driven decision-making contributes meaningfully to growth outcomes even in early-stage firms. Startups that systematically analyze customer behavior, segment audiences, and tailor their value propositions accordingly demonstrate superior customer retention and lifetime value metrics — consistent with the Dynamic Capabilities Framework (Teece et al., 1997) and the prescriptions of Ries (2011) regarding lean analytics in startup management.

5.1 Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several theoretical contributions. First, it extends the Resource-Based View (RBV) and Dynamic Capabilities Framework to the digital marketing–startup growth nexus in an underexplored North African context, providing context-sensitive empirical evidence that complements predominantly Western findings. Second, the study confirms the multidimensionality of digital marketing as a construct and demonstrates that its constituent dimensions are differentially weighted in their impact on growth, enriching the conceptual precision of the field. Third, by operationalizing sustainable growth through a validated composite scale, the study advances measurement rigor in the entrepreneurial marketing literature.

5.2 Practical Implications

The findings carry several actionable implications. For startup founders, the results advocate for a deliberate and integrated digital marketing strategy that prioritizes social media presence and content creation while progressively building SEO and analytics capabilities. For incubators and support institutions such as ANADE, CNRC, and Wilaya-level startup hubs, the evidence suggests that digital marketing training modules — particularly in social media strategy, content calendars, and basic SEO — would yield measurable growth dividends for portfolio companies. For policymakers, the findings reinforce the case for investing in digital literacy programs and broadband infrastructure to facilitate deeper digital marketing adoption across the national startup ecosystem.

6. Conclusion

This study set out to examine the role of digital marketing in achieving sustainable growth for Algerian startups through a field survey of 107 entrepreneurial companies. Using multiple linear regression analysis, the study demonstrated that digital marketing, operationalized through four dimensions — social media marketing, content marketing, search engine optimization, and customer analytics — collectively explains 64.5% of the variance in sustainable growth. All four hypotheses were confirmed, with social media marketing emerging as the most influential predictor.

The findings make a meaningful contribution to the nascent body of empirical research on digital marketing in the Algerian entrepreneurial context and provide a validated evidence base for practitioners, support institutions, and policymakers committed to fostering a vibrant and sustainable startup ecosystem in Algeria.

Future research should address several limitations of the present study. The cross-sectional design precludes causal inference; longitudinal studies tracking digital marketing investments and growth outcomes over multiple years would provide stronger causal evidence. The purposive sample, while appropriate for the study's exploratory objectives, limits generalizability to the broader population of Algerian startups. Additionally, future studies should incorporate objective firm-level performance data (e.g., audited revenue figures, customer acquisition costs) alongside self-reported measures to mitigate common method bias. Qualitative comparative case studies would further enrich understanding of the mechanisms through which digital marketing capabilities are built and deployed within specific sector and regional contexts.

7. References

1. Barney, J. B. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. Journal of Management, 17(1), 99–120. https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700108.
2. Bocken, N. M. P., Short, S. W., Rana, P., & Evans, S. (2014). A literature and practice review to develop sustainable business model archetypes. Journal of Cleaner Production, 65, 42–56. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2013.11.039.
3. Camilleri, M. A. (2018). The SMEs' technology acceptance of digital media for stakeholder engagement. Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development, 26(4), 504–521. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-02-2018-0042.
4. Chaffey, D., & Ellis-Chadwick, F. (2022). Digital marketing: Strategy, implementation and practice (8th ed.). Pearson Education..
5. Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2019). Multivariate data analysis (8th ed.). Cengage Learning.
6. Hills, G. E., Hultman, C. M., & Miles, M. P. (2008). The evolution and development of entrepreneurial marketing. Journal of Small Business Management, 46(1), 99–112. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-627X.2007.00234.x.
7. Holliman, G., & Rowley, J. (2014). Business to business digital content marketing: Marketers' perceptions of best practice. Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing, 8(4), 269–293. https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-02-2014-0013.
8. International Telecommunication Union. (2023). ICT statistics: Individuals using the Internet. https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/stat/default.aspx.

9. Kaur, G., Sharma, A., & Sharma, S. (2020). Social media marketing and brand equity: A study of Indian SMEs. Journal of Indian Business Research, 12(3), 381–400. https://doi.org/10.1108/JIBR-09-2019-0271.
10. Kingsnorth, S. (2022). Digital marketing strategy: An integrated approach to online marketing (3rd ed.). Kogan Page.
11. Morris, M. H., Schindehutte, M., & LaForge, R. W. (2002). Entrepreneurial marketing: A construct for integrating emerging entrepreneurship and marketing perspectives. Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice, 10(4), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1080/10696679.2002.11501922.
12. Porter, M. E., & Kramer, M. R. (2011). Creating shared value. Harvard Business Review, 89(1–2), 62–77.
13. Pulizzi, J. (2014). Epic content marketing: How to tell a different story, break through the clutter, and win more customers by marketing less. McGraw-Hill Education.
14. Ries, E. (2011). The lean startup: How today's entrepreneurs use continuous innovation to create radically successful businesses. Crown Business.
15. Ryan, D. (2021). Understanding digital marketing: Marketing strategies for engaging the digital generation (5th ed.). Kogan Page.
16. Teece, D. J., Pisano, G., & Shuen, A. (1997). Dynamic capabilities and strategic management. Strategic Management Journal, 18(7), 509–533. https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(199708)18:7<509::AID-SMJ882>3.0.CO;2-Z.
17. Tuten, T. L., & Solomon, M. R. (2021). Social media marketing (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.