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Optimising online sales for small and medium-sized businesses: Integrating e-commerce and digital marketing

■ **Abstract.** Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a fundamental role in ensuring the effective development of the country's economy, which is why the analysis of existing problems and challenges for them always remains a relevant issue for each country. Within the framework of this study, it was decided to assess the opportunities to improve the optimisation of e-commerce for SMEs, which became the main goal of the work. The primary research methods used were forecasting and systematic analysis, which made it possible to identify the most promising development strategies and predict the impact of technological integration on SME performance. Using statistical data from national and international sources, the study analysed the current state and projected growth of e-commerce in Kazakhstan. The analysis revealed that the share of SMEs in Kazakhstan's gross domestic product steadily increased, while the volume of e-commerce in retail trade reached 3,156.4 billion tenge in 2024, and 2,443.4 billion tenge in services. The share of e-commerce in total retail trade rose to 16.6%. Social media also plays a growing role in SME marketing strategies, with 76% of the population using social networks in 2024, projected to exceed 90% by 2028. The study proposed a set of optimisation approaches, including establishing customised e-commerce platforms, leveraging social media for direct sales, employing SEO and mobile optimisation, and applying content marketing strategies. While advanced tools such as artificial intelligence and augmented reality were found to offer considerable benefits for customer interaction and personalisation, their implementation is often hindered by financial constraints. Therefore, alternative low-cost strategies were also outlined. The conclusions obtained within the framework of the study can be used to more effectively shape the country's policy in the development of SMEs, as well as for business representatives themselves to more efficiently manage the online sales component in the enterprise

■ **Keywords:** gross domestic product; artificial intelligence; innovation; trading platforms; web technologies

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■ INTRODUCTION

Optimising online sales plays a critically important role in the success of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). It is a process aimed at improving all aspects of a company's online presence to increase sales and enhance user experience. Primarily, it is one of the methods of achieving a higher level of competitive advantage compared to other companies. Optimising online sales is a fairly complex system, which includes increasing the company's visibility among potential customers, improving conversion rates, enhancing user experience with interacting with the company's products, working on social media promotion, etc. Considering the role of this component and its complexity, the formation of recommendations to increase the efficiency of online sales for SMEs remains relevant. In the context of this study, the assessment was conducted based on data from Kazakhstan, where SMEs are very actively developing.

Numerous scholars have been studying enterprise development issues in Kazakhstan. For instance, M. Sadyrova *et al.* (2021) examined the possibilities for SMEs considering the potential implementation of innovative systems. They also noted some problems in the country regarding the development of such companies (underdeveloped business environment, obstacles to the implementation of new technologies, insufficient efforts from the authorities in technology development), yet they provided insufficient recommendations to address all these negative aspects.

T. Bekzhanova *et al.* (2023), on the other hand, assessed the development of SMEs and their impact on unemployment dynamics in Kazakhstan. They emphasised the significant role of SMEs in national economic development, global economic growth, and job creation, as well as described the support measures they need to effectively develop in modern conditions. A. Kireyeva *et al.* (2021) evaluated the factors determining the innovation potential of Kazakhstani enterprises. The analysis showed the limited impact of competition on the development of innovative products, as well as the importance of increasing the level of qualification among enterprise employees. However, no recommendations were provided for enterprises and governmental authorities of the country.

In the study by S. Zamanbekov *et al.* (2020), the formation and functioning of industrial clusters in Kazakhstan were evaluated, emphasising the integration of SMEs with larger businesses to create additional opportunities for the development of both forms of business. Scholars developed practical approaches and recommendations to increase the efficiency of this integration through the use of models such as franchising and outsourcing, yet little attention was paid to examining the downsides of such integration. A. Syzdykova *et al.* (2021) described the positive and negative aspects of SMEs development in Kazakhstan, paying special attention to geopolitical factors and access to financing for such companies.

Thus, a significant number of scholars conducted research related to the analysis of SMEs development in Kazakhstan. In most of them, attention was also paid to assessing the innovative component, which is an integral part of the country's SMEs development. However, taking into account additional factors in the analysis and forming a new perspective on how the development of this sphere should occur, and which aspects deserve special

attention, remains relevant. The aim of this study was to assess the current opportunities for optimising e-commerce for SMEs in Kazakhstan.

■ MATERIALS AND METHODS

Within the framework of the study, a large amount of statistical data was used, which, in one way or another, described the state of SMEs in Kazakhstan. The main source of information for these data was the official website of the Bureau of National Statistics Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2024a). With its help, the share of SMEs in the country's gross domestic product (GDP) was estimated. This source was crucial for analysing the economic contribution of SMEs to the national economy. Additionally, data were assessed that partially characterise the development of e-commerce in the country as a whole, including the volume of retail trade in this sphere and its share in the total volume of trade. These data were sourced from the Bureau of National Statistics Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2024b), which provided insights into the growth and significance of e-commerce for SMEs. Another source of information used in the study was the StatCounter (2024) website. It contains information regarding the prevalence of social networks in Kazakhstan (such as Instagram, Facebook, and others), which was evaluated to draw conclusions about the feasibility of using a particular network in forming a marketing strategy. It is worth noting that the data on the website are presented on a monthly basis. However, quarterly information was used for the purposes of the study. For this, the average value for 3 months was calculated, as shown below:

$$Q_n = \frac{(m_n + m_{n+1} + m_{n+2})}{3}, \quad (1)$$

where Q_n – quarterly value of the indicator; m_n – monthly value of the indicator. Although such calculation does not allow obtaining an exact value (for this, it would be necessary to have the original data), however, it is sufficiently close to reality for conducting analysis. Data regarding the use of social networks in Kazakhstan were also sourced from the Statista (2024a), concerning the percentage of the population using these platforms. It is worth noting that the data on the website are presented for the period from 2018 to 2028, meaning that the data from 2024 are projected. This was also taken into account when forming conclusions in the study. All constructions and calculations were carried out in Microsoft Excel. Additionally, the Kazakhstani inflation rate data, which comes from Statista (2024b), offers a thorough summary of inflation patterns from 1998 to 2028 and is a useful tool for examining the economic environment in which SMEs function.

The study employed a significant number of research methods. Comparison was used to assess different approaches to optimising online sales for SMEs, describing their drawbacks and advantages. Forecasting allowed drawing conclusions about the potential development of SMEs and the e-commerce sector in Kazakhstan in the future, assuming the continuation of current trends observed at the moment and over the past few years. Systematisation, in turn, was used to assess the peculiarities of

e-commerce in Kazakhstan within a unified data system, where they interact with each other. Through abstraction, it was possible to limit the number of factors evaluated in the study to make the conducted analysis more precise. Descriptive method was used to characterise the peculiarities of online sales development among SMEs in Kazakhstan, assessing their main features. The graphic method was used to visualise various types of data through charts. For the same purposes, the tabular method was also used, although it depicted other types of data that would not be as easily understood in graphs.

■ RESULTS

If the role of SMEs is to be generally described, they are of crucial importance for the economic and social

development of countries, contributing significantly to GDP, job creation (including in remote regions), and innovation development. They contribute to sustainable development and improvement of living standards by reducing regional disparities and increasing tax revenues. The adaptability of SMEs allows them to implement innovations faster than large companies, thereby quickly adjusting to new operating conditions. Their growth enhances market competition, the quality of goods and services, as well as production efficiency, making the country more attractive to foreign investors. Therefore, finding new growth points for SMEs is always relevant. The state of SME development as a whole can be assessed using the indicator of the share of SMEs in Kazakhstan. This information is presented within the framework of Figure 1.

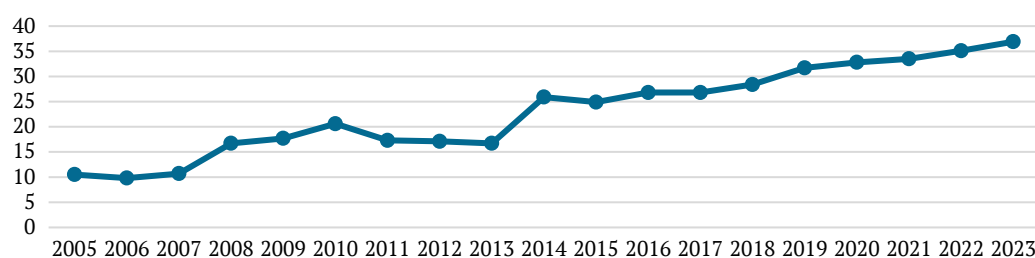


Figure 1. Share of SMEs in Kazakhstan's GDP from 2005 to 2023, %

Source: compiled by the authors based on Bureau of National Statistics Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2024a)

As can be seen, the share of SMEs in GDP is gradually increasing, highlighting their growing role. Such trends are generally beneficial for sustainable economic development, for the reasons already described earlier in the paper. In the process of development of such companies, competition between them is also increasing, hence the need to find new methods to improve

their position in the market. Since e-commerce is also one of these methods, finding ways to optimise it is an important part of the development of this type of companies in current environment (Kryvovyazyuk, 2023). It is also worth considering the data in the context of e-commerce development in Kazakhstan. This information is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Selected data on the development of e-commerce in Kazakhstan from 2015 to 2024

Years	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Change, %
Volume of e-commerce (retail trade), billion tenge	50.9	78.5	106.9	144.6	206.3	476.7	482	1,963.5	2,439.8	3,156.4	6,104.7
Volume of e-commerce (services) billion tenge	39.2	80.2	70.4	136.1	121.2	209.2	349.9	1,186.5	1,602.6	2,443.4	6,133.1
Volume of e-commerce (retail trade), considering inflation, billion tenge	50.9	68.5	86.9	110.8	150.2	325	304.3	1,078.2	1,263.7	1,563.4	2,969.1
Volume of e-commerce (services) taking into account inflation, billion tenge	39.2	70.0	57.2	104.3	88.2	142.6	220.9	651.6	860.2	1,290.1	3,190.5
Share of e-commerce in total retail trade, %	0.8	1	1.2	1.4	1.8	4.1	3.6	12.5	12.7	14.1	1,662.5

Source: compiled by the authors based on Bureau of National Statistics Agency for Strategic Planning and Reforms of the Republic of Kazakhstan (2024b), Statista (2024b)

As shown in Table 1, the volume of e-commerce trading in Kazakhstan has been rapidly increasing. By 2024, this trend has continued with even more notable growth, resulting in the e-commerce share of total retail trade volume rising to 16.6%. Therefore, it is not surprising that the role of e-commerce has been rapidly increasing recently, especially for SMEs. Optimising online sales in SMEs through integrating e-commerce and digital marketing involves several key strategies and technologies. For instance, a store should either create its own e-commerce platform or have a store on a third-party platform. Each of these approaches has its pros and cons. For example, a custom-built platform allows full customisation of design, structure, and user experience to align with the store's brand and values (Savytska *et al.*, 2024). Direct customer interaction enhances understanding of customer needs. Additionally, the website will feature only products or services from one store, potentially increasing sales and customer loyalty when approached correctly. Furthermore, without the need to pay marketplace commissions, higher margins can be maintained, or prices can be lower compared to competitors.

However, this method has its downsides. In particular, developing and launching a custom platform may require significant investments, which SMEs often lack, especially at the initial stage. Costs are also needed for ongoing traffic generation and website technical maintenance, which will occur regularly. Therefore, this approach is not suitable for all SMEs, and they more often choose the marketplace option. Nevertheless, over time, the number of companies

with their own stores is likely to increase as the process of their creation and maintenance becomes streamlined.

An alternative to using an e-commerce platform without creating one is to establish a store on social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and similar ones. Utilising e-commerce on social media opens up wide-ranging opportunities for businesses in sales, marketing, and customer interaction. By sharing content, videos, photos, and reviews, brands can attract attention and stimulate interest among potential buyers. Social media platforms also offer advanced advertising targeting tools, allowing businesses to reach specific consumer groups based on interests, demographics, geographic location, and other parameters. This increases the effectiveness of advertising campaigns and profitability (Hasani *et al.*, 2023). Moreover, many social platforms provide functionality where users can view products and make purchases without leaving the social network; they also offer tools for analysing advertising campaigns and applying some social media-specific features that can also be used for marketing purposes (for example, conducting live streams). All these factors contribute to the high popularity of such platforms among SMEs and individuals who often do not officially register their activities. Therefore, competition on such platforms is also high. Despite this, social media platforms are already perceived as an integral part of marketing strategies for any companies in current realities. It is worth analysing data that evaluates the use of various social media platforms in Kazakhstan. This information is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Use of social networks in Kazakhstan by quarter in the period from 2021 to 2024, %

Period	YouTube	Pinterest	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter	Vkontakte	Other
2021 Q3	16.3	14	12.6	18.6	14.3	14.8	9.4
2021 Q4	22.8	22.7	14.1	10.7	8.8	14	6.9
2022 Q1	23	15.4	25.4	13.9	8.5	9.3	4.5
2022 Q2	25.6	17.1	16.6	14.7	13	9.1	4.0
2022 Q3	22.9	17.5	17	15.7	12.4	10.2	4.4
2022 Q4	21.8	24.4	14	10.6	12.7	10.5	6.2
2023 Q1	23.7	23.6	15.3	10.1	14.1	8.2	5
2023 Q2	20.6	19	19.1	12.3	15.6	8.6	4.9
2023 Q3	16.9	17.2	18.6	17	10.6	15.1	4.7
2023 Q4	17.8	29.5	18.8	8.6	11.3	9.4	4.6
2024 Q1	17.3	27.1	19.3	12.3	9	10.2	4.9

Source: compiled by the authors based on StatCounter (2024)

As can be seen from Table 2, the main social networks that are popular in Kazakhstan are Pinterest, Facebook, and YouTube. However, a more or less adequate marketing campaign can be conducted on Facebook and Instagram, although creating a page on any social network is important. Perhaps an effective option is still also the creation of a YouTube channel, but for this, the type of activity of the company must also be suitable. Also relevant is data on what proportion of the general population uses social media. This data can be seen in Figure 2.

As can be observed from Figure 2, the percentage of the population using social media in Kazakhstan is gradually increasing. The data indicate that by 2028, over 90% of the population will be using social media. Currently, this figure is almost 76%, which is also a significant indicator,

indicating the relevance of using such an approach for product promotion. However, the fact that even greater growth of this value can be expected in the future confirms its relevance. Search engine optimisation (SEO) for an SME's online store is also a key component of a successful digital marketing strategy (in case the SME has its own website). It helps improve the visibility of one's website in search engines, leading to increased traffic and, consequently, sales growth (Sharabati *et al.*, 2024). Optimisation can be achieved through enhancing various functions. One of them is technical optimisation: speeding up page loading, adapting design, increasing website security (Si *et al.*, 2025). Attention should also be paid to content. It is advisable to hire specialists who will use relevant keywords in texts, headings, meta tags, and image attributes, regularly publish useful content

that addresses the queries and needs of one's target audience, and provide detailed descriptions of products and their characteristics. Other important aspects include focusing on

customers from specific regions, analytics, and monitoring of customer behaviour, optimising website performance on mobile devices (Fitriasari *et al.*, 2024).

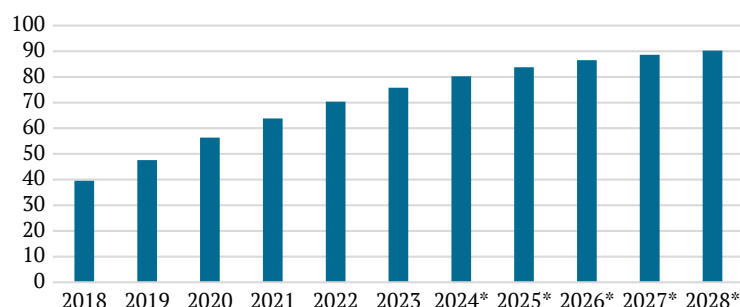


Figure 2. Share of the population using social networks in the period from 2018 to 2028 (forecast), %

Note: * – forecast value generated by representatives of the statistical website Statista

Source: compiled by the authors based on Statista (2024a)

Another important aspect of online sales optimisation is the creation of quality content marketing (Almeida López *et al.*, 2022). Its main role is to attract and retain customers. An effective content marketing strategy can improve brand visibility, build trust, and stimulate sales. Some recommendations for optimising content marketing include assigning a dedicated employee responsible for all aspects of this part of the business. Although this may incur costs, it significantly increases advertising efficiency and thus allows for revenue growth. The content manager should clearly understand the needs of the business's target audience and be able to segment it. Additionally, they should have skills in content creation: both visual and textual components (although content creation components can be outsourced). By using available tools (social media advertising, websites, email newsletters, or even collaboration with influencers), the goal of such an employee should not only be to promote products but also to build a specific community around them. Although achieving such results is quite challenging, it is worth striving for in the long run.

Another aspect is optimising customer relationship management and marketing automation. Implementing and optimising these systems allows automating routine tasks, better understanding customer needs, and increasing their loyalty. In general, there are plenty of opportunities to automate customer interaction. The newest among them is artificial intelligence, which can act as a conversational partner for customers, analyse the information provided by them, and draw appropriate conclusions. This also allows for personalised services or products for each individual customer. Therefore, implementing artificial intelligence in enterprises to solve various tasks is generally quite effective, but it is still a rather expensive solution, which may not be accessible to many enterprises. However, there are other solutions, such as chatbots, which are less effective but can also help address some issues that arise.

Some other tips that can make the process of purchasing goods or services more enjoyable and thus increase sales can be noted. For example, using location data of customers to send them personalised messages and offers when they are near a physical store. The implementation of augmented reality (AR) technology, which allows trying out products before making a purchase, can also be

beneficial. Due to the increasing adoption of cryptocurrencies among the population, enabling payment with them can also be effective. In general, there are quite numerous approaches to make the process of purchasing goods and services more convenient for users. The question often lies in how accessible it actually is for small businesses. Thus, they must make decisions on their own regarding which of these approaches they have the ability to use and which ones they cannot use.

■ DISCUSSION

Overall, recommendations for SMEs have largely been described earlier in the paper. It can be summarised that to increase the efficiency of their operations, companies should pay more attention to the implementation of digital technologies, which can enhance their capabilities in terms of sales growth. It is also worth paying more attention to marketing issues, using different approaches to potential customers to make their interaction with the business as pleasant as possible. Such an approach will help increase SMEs' sales and improve their market position compared to other companies. It is also worth mentioning separately the placement of their company pages on various social networks, building a community around the product or enterprise, and expanding the customer base using these platforms.

The significant role of SMEs in the qualitative development of countries and regions was emphasised by C. Erdin & G. Ozkaya (2020). The study showed that regions with a high level of prosperity often have a higher share of SMEs, indicating their importance for economic development. The authors also emphasise the key role of SMEs in innovation development across the country, considering it a critical aspect for enhancing the competitiveness of national products in the modern world. F. Manzoor *et al.* (2021), in turn, investigated the role of SMEs in the development of rural areas in developing countries, highlighting the need to consider specific factors and rural characteristics. They concluded the importance of analysing the relationship between SME development and improving life in rural areas. Within the framework of this study, the role of SMEs in the development of the country, including their role in the development of rural territories, was described, as such companies have more flexible opportunities to create jobs

in rural areas and provide income opportunities for local populations. This is another reason why stimulating the development of such enterprises is relevant.

E.E. Beaton & E. Dowin Kennedy (2021) discussed how social enterprises can address market failures through strategies like market mending, which SMEs can also adopt in their e-commerce ventures. This concept helps SMEs balance market deficiencies and economic challenges while optimising their market positions. By combining social responsibility with economic engagement, SMEs can foster sustainable growth and contribute to both local and global markets.

S.K. Naradda Gamage *et al.* (2020) highlighted strategic responses SMEs can use to thrive in a competitive, globalised economy. Their focus on adaptability and innovation aligns with this paper's recommendations for SMEs to embrace digital technologies and marketing strategies to improve their market positioning. The adoption of e-commerce platforms is crucial for SMEs to remain competitive and resilient. Further complementing this discussion, R. Stekelorum (2020) emphasised the importance of CSR practices in enhancing SME competitiveness, particularly within supply chains. This study offered a framework for SMEs to integrate CSR with marketing strategies, which can differentiate their brands and build long-term customer trust. In the context of e-commerce, CSR becomes a key component of creating positive brand perceptions and ensuring business sustainability.

The evaluation of the impact of e-commerce and digital marketing implementation strategies on the financial performance and sustainability of micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly during the COVID-19 crisis, was conducted by J. Gao *et al.* (2023). Evaluating preliminary information, they found a significant positive impact of e-commerce usage on the sustainability indicators of companies. Companies that actively began using e-commerce platforms in their operations showed significantly better performance indicators compared to others, indicating the need to transition from traditional business models to e-commerce (Adam & Alarifi, 2021; Sabaih *et al.*, 2021). Similar conclusions were also drawn by B.H. Sugiharto (2024), who concluded that e-commerce has a significant positive impact on companies' sustainability indicators. This study did not focus much on how SMEs use such technologies, but it was also noted that in modern conditions, the use of e-commerce significantly improves their market performance and competitiveness. This trend was echoed by B.H. Sugiharto (2024), who found that SMEs using e-commerce platforms exhibited enhanced competitiveness and market performance. Such findings point to the critical need for SMEs to transition from traditional business models to e-commerce, aligning with the ongoing digital transformation of global economies (Istrefi *et al.*, 2025). In this context, V. Gvozdytskyi (2023) emphasised the importance of digital tools in driving business growth, particularly in response to external challenges such as geopolitical instability and the COVID-19 pandemic. An analysis underlines the necessity for SMEs to adapt their e-commerce strategies to local conditions, a perspective that resonates with the situation in Kazakhstan, where e-commerce is increasingly becoming a key driver of economic resilience.

S. Wahyuni *et al.* (2020) and M. Ihnatenko *et al.* (2023) analysed the implementation of e-commerce in the different sized enterprises. The researchers emphasised the active digitalisation of businesses in the studied region, where the main motives for integrating e-commerce are innovative development, operational optimisation, the need to increase marketing efficiency, and expanding the potential market. The use of e-commerce contributed to increasing the competitiveness of SMEs due to economic efficiency and improving interaction with consumers. However, companies face difficulties, including consumer distrust and internet infrastructure problems. This study also showed that e-commerce usage in Kazakhstan is constantly increasing. The reasons for this are similar to those noted in this work: the need to increase business efficiency and gain a more competitive market position. The main problem in this context often becomes a lack of funding, which, however, can be addressed through government intervention. Therefore, more active implementation of digital technologies and e-commerce is an effective way to increase the efficiency of SMEs' operations in the country as a whole.

The study by Y. Amornkitvikai *et al.* (2022) examined sustainable e-commerce development among SMEs in Thailand, highlighting key trends such as the use of social networks, delivery services, and the increasing significance of the B2B segment. The researchers emphasised the positive impact of e-commerce on the country's sustainable development but also pointed out existing problems. This study did not focus on assessing the impact of e-commerce on sustainable development. However, it is worth noting that due to the more active use of advanced technologies in enterprises, more active use of e-commerce can be observed, thereby positively impacting sustainable development.

The possibilities of optimising the use of e-commerce as a marketing environment for online stores in the city of Medan were studied by F. Safrin & F. Simanjorang (2023). The researchers noted that the most popular e-commerce platforms for marketing in the region were Instagram, Shopee, and TikTok. They identified several factors that are important for attracting users. They highlighted the simplicity of order processing, the effectiveness of payment systems, fast and easy product delivery, and the presence of high-quality visual components of the products being sold. Additionally, communication with customers, conducting promotional activities, and other similar actions were noted to play an important role (Sadeeq *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, it is important to optimise the products created for each market segment, as well as the approach to their advertising. Thus, each product may sell differently on each platform, which should also be taken into account when forming a strategy. This study also mentioned the role of social networks in the development of SMEs. However, such promotion methods have their drawbacks, primarily due to high competition in promoting products on social networks. Therefore, such enterprises should carefully work on their strategies for working on such platforms in order to be able to gain their market share.

The opportunities of using social networks as a marketing strategy for SMEs were also assessed by C.C. Lin (2021). The researcher noted that the main marketing goals for SMEs at the growth stage are brand awareness, online purchases,

and sales potential, which can largely be achieved through social networks. The most effective platform was found to be Facebook, followed by Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Thus, the researcher recommended using social networks to maximise marketing efficiency. This study also mentioned the possibilities of using such technologies to increase marketing effectiveness, and SMEs are indeed recommended to use them in their promotion strategies.

Marketing promotion strategies for SMEs in developing countries were described by S.P. Goldman *et al.* (2020). The researchers concluded that managers of small online stores should prioritise targeting foreign markets to increase business efficiency and sales potential. They recommended studying foreign markets and using their own advantages (primarily lower costs) to gain a share of the external market. This study did not evaluate the possibility of SMEs in Kazakhstan entering foreign markets; however, it should be noted that this strategy could indeed be effective. The main reason for this is the abundance of certain types of resources, as well as comparatively low labour costs. However, there are also challenges in this strategy, particularly the possibility of selling products to foreign markets due to geopolitical instability. Assuming a successful entry into the foreign market, the enterprise can gain a significant advantage over its competitors.

Consumer segmentation based on their relationships with online technologies was conducted in the work of B. Gyenge *et al.* (2021). They noted that understanding the cultural and technical characteristics of consumers is crucial for more effective promotion of new products and services. Therefore, companies should adapt their social networks and other resources to specific types of audiences they intend to interact with (Falihat *et al.*, 2020; Ndubisi *et al.*, 2021). This study also mentioned that optimising content for specific consumer groups is an important part of the marketing strategy. However, caution should be exercised with such experiments, as incorrect interaction with the public can only worsen the situation.

■ CONCLUSIONS

The study justified the role of SMEs in the development of Kazakhstan's economy and described the reasons for the rapid growth of e-commerce. It was shown that adopting a comprehensive approach to e-commerce and digital marketing requires SMEs to develop their own e-commerce platforms. Each of these approaches has its advantages and challenges. On the one hand, creating an individual platform offers full customisation and direct interaction with customers, potentially increasing sales and loyalty. On the other hand, it requires significant investment and

ongoing expenses for attracting and servicing customers, which SMEs often lack.

An alternative approach to e-commerce without creating an independent platform involves using social networks such as Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok. These platforms offer SMEs huge opportunities for sales, marketing, and customer interaction, facilitated by the ability to share content and use tools to promote their own products. Despite high competition, social media platforms have become an integral part of the marketing strategies of almost all companies. It was shown that social networks are becoming increasingly popular in Kazakhstan each year. In the first quarter of 2024, Facebook had a user share of 19.3%, while Instagram remained a popular platform with 12.3% usage. Meanwhile, the general population's social media usage has reached 76%, projected to exceed 90% by 2028. Therefore, using as many platforms as possible to promote products is a quality approach to business development.

The research also indicates that the e-commerce industry is expanding quickly. In 2024, the volume of e-commerce in retail trade reached 3156.4 billion tenge, while for services it amounted to 2443.4 billion tenge. The share of e-commerce in total retail trade rose to 16.6%, confirming its growing significance for SMEs. The study also mentioned other approaches to increasing SME sales. In particular, the need for search engine optimisation, technical improvements to online store functionality, and website design were described. Special attention was paid to creating content to retain and attract customers. It was also concluded that the use of cutting-edge technologies, such as artificial intelligence, for automating and optimising some internal processes is important.

For future research, it is relevant to assess the development characteristics not only of SMEs but also of others, especially those traded on the Kazakhstan Stock Exchange or related to strategically important sectors of the economy (agriculture, pharmaceuticals, engineering). Analysing their condition will allow for important conclusions about which sectors of the country's economy need increased support from the government and what needs to be done to strengthen their positions on the international stage.

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■ CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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Оптимізація онлайн-продажів для малих та середніх підприємств: інтеграція електронної комерції та цифрового маркетингу

■ **Анотація.** Малі та середні підприємства (МСП) відіграють основну роль у забезпеченні ефективного розвитку економіки країни, тому аналіз існуючих проблем та викликів для них завжди залишається актуальним питанням для кожної країни. У рамках цього дослідження було вирішено оцінити можливості покращення оптимізації електронної комерції для МСП, що стало основною метою роботи. Основними методами дослідження були прогнозування та системний аналіз, які дозволили визначити найбільш перспективні стратегії розвитку та спрогнозувати вплив технологічної інтеграції на ефективність МСП. Використовуючи статистичні дані з національних та міжнародних джерел, у дослідженні було проаналізовано поточний стан та очікувані темпи зростання електронної комерції в Казахстані. Аналіз показав, що частка МСП у ВВП Казахстану стабільно зростала, тоді як обсяг електронної комерції в роздрібній торгівлі досягнув 3 156,4 мільярда тенге у 2024 році, а в сфері послуг – 2 443,4 мільярда тенге. Частка електронної комерції у загальному обсязі роздрібною торгівлі зросла до 16,6 %. Соціальні мережі також відіграють зростаючу роль у маркетингових стратегіях МСП, оскільки 76 % населення використовували соціальні мережі у 2024 році, а до 2028 року прогнозується перевищення 90 %. У дослідженні було запропоновано низку підходів до оптимізації, включаючи створення індивідуальних платформ для електронної комерції, використання соціальних мереж для прямого продажу, застосування SEO та мобільної оптимізації, а також впровадження стратегій контент-маркетингу. Хоча передові інструменти, такі як штучний інтелект та доповнена реальність, можуть значно покращити взаємодію з клієнтами та персоналізацію, їх впровадження часто ускладнюється фінансовими обмеженнями. Тому також були визначені альтернативні стратегії з низькими витратами. Отримані висновки можуть бути використані для більш ефективного формування політики країни щодо розвитку МСП, а також для самих підприємств із метою більш ефективного управління онлайн-продажами в підприємствах

■ **Ключові слова:** валовий внутрішній продукт; штучний інтелект; інновації; торгові платформи; веб-технології