

## Research Article

### CHALLENGES OF ONLINE MARKETING IN KANDAHAR CITY

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#### ABSTRACT

Increasing accessibility to internet in Afghanistan, creates a number of opportunities for the people including online marketing and e-commerce. By materializing this opportunity an increasing number of people engaged in online marketing and offer a variety of products online in some big cities such as Kandahar city as consumers increasingly use social media for a variety of purposes including consumption related tasks. Though, recently, a great deal of attention has been focused on the tremendous opportunities online marketing presents in the world but, in Afghanistan specifically in Kandahar city no clear development happened in practice, because of some fundamental challenges online marketers faced in this city. In this study, these challenges are present based on results of a survey among a sample of 15 marketing executives in Kandahar city. The results reveal that development of ICT infrastructure and resources, improving the quality of e-banking systems and services, providing cheap and high quality internet, providing income sources for the people, e-business education for consumers and taking appropriate mechanisms into practice to develop and apply strong cyber laws for privacy and security controls, regulating online business and sustaining digital economy are the biggest improvement opportunities for online marketers/e-commerce across sectors in Kandahar city and similar contexts.

**Keywords:** ICT, Internet, Online Marketing Challenges, Kandahar-Afghanistan.

#### INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive definition of online marketing has been given by Chaffey (2007), he defines "online marketing as applying digital technologies which form online channels (web, e-mail, databases, plus mobile/wireless & digital TV) to contribute to marketing activities aimed at achieving profitable acquisition and retention of customers (within a multi-channel buying process and customer lifecycle) through improving our customer knowledge (of their profiles, behavior, value and loyalty drivers), then delivering integrated targeted communications and online services that match their individual needs" (Bostanshirin, 2014). As these relationship concept definitions show online marketing revolve around interaction and building relationship with customers, a point which discriminates it from traditional, offline marketing. It should be noted that, internet marketing often called online marketing or e-marketing is essentially any marketing activity that is conducted online through the use of internet technologies. It comprises not only advertising that is shown on websites, but also other kinds of online activities like email and social networking that relate to buying and selling goods and services (Jones, Malczyk, & Beneke, 2011). The conception of Internet marketing has developed and brought more opportunities for organizations to increase number of consumers at global level. Earlier, the internet was only used as a tool to contact customers and it was a part of direct marketing. Currently, the internet, principally websites are becoming a popular media for any company to introduce its products and services. The Internet is considered as a sovereign and effectual marketing device. In brief, the 1990s being the decade of e-commerce, the early part of the 21st century has become the era of social commerce (Fader & Winer, 2012). The Internet has become one of the most important marketplaces for transactions of goods and services. For example, online consumer spending in the United States surpassed USD 100 billion (already in 2007), and the growth rates of online demands for information goods, such as books,

magazines, and software, are between 25% and 50% (Albuquerque, Pavlidis, Chatow, Chen, & Jamal, 2012). Other anecdotic evidence that stresses the importance of the Internet as a transaction channel comes from Amazon where on the peak day, November 26, 2012, customers ordered more than 26.5 million items worldwide across all product categories, which is a record-breaking 306 items per second (Cheredar, 2012; Clay, 2012). Besides B2C and B2B markets, online C2C markets have emerged with considerable success. Examples are LuLu, eBay, and YouTube. The rise of online use for communication is also quite substantial from around 10% in 2008 to over 20% in 2013 (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeftang, 2012). To recall, by 2016, access to and use of internet in Afghanistan has grown in the past decade to reach approximately 12% of the population (International Communication Union, 2017). Social media users are a homogenous group of primarily young, urban, and educated individuals. Study shows that close to 80% of social media users sampled declare being between 18 and 30 years old, and 96% of them can both read and write in the country and they limit their usage to a few platforms, namely Facebook and instant messaging platforms notably, 95% of social media users sampled have a Facebook account, compared to other platforms such as Twitter with a 6% usage rate, Instagram with a 10% usage rate or Snapchat with 1% usage rate and Instant Messaging platforms also proven very popular (Altai Consulting, 2017). Evidence shows that most of the internet users are living in the five big cities; Kabul, Herat, Mazar, Kandahar, and Jalalabad which are considered the business centers of Afghanistan. Despite the dominance of traditional business models in the marketplace of the country, role and effects of communication and technology are remarkable (Delawari, 2019). The previous and current generation of entrepreneurs and managers are trying to utilize the technology for starting and boosting their businesses. They try to create websites for their businesses and using social media platforms in order to be connected to the customers a mixture of traditional and modern business model. To date, according Delawari, (2019) there are several online-shopping platforms in Afghanistan, from highly professional designed websites managed from inside and outside Afghanistan. According hem, websites are allowing the customers to make the payment online and these websites are mostly managed from outside of the country also most of the websites are using COD

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payment model due to lack of online transaction services in Afghanistan. Though, by the spread of internet and increase in the number of internet as well as social media users in Afghanistan specifically in Kandahar city, online marketing and business activities also increased but, the expand and development of these activities face a number of fundamental challenges that's why there is no meaningful development occurred during the recent two decades. Thus, this research aims to empirically study the challenges of online marketing in Kandahar city. Kandahar city is a second large city in Afghanistan, located in the southeastern area of the country, with approximately 523,259 populations (NSIA, 2021). As this city is a developing market with a rapidly growing number of internet and social media users, which makes it a good opportunity for online marketing development which is cost-effective for both marketers and consumers. The result of this study shows that, in spite of some progress, online marketing in Kandahar city faces with some rout challenges including infrastructural and technical challenges, Economic and social challenges and Internet related challenges, although they are integrated. Based on the findings of this study, proper recommendations are also provided to address the determined challenges.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The expand of online marketing faces fundamental challenges in developing countries particularly in Afghanistan as a least developed country. Evidences show that there is an increasing number of quantitative as well as qualitative studies investigating specific research questions relevant in digital marketing, for example, the effect of user-generated content on shareholder value studied by (Tirunillai & Tellis, 2012 and a special issue of Marketing Science with introduction by Fader and Winer (2012)) or models to analyze new big data (Feit, Wang, Bradlow, & Fader, 2013). A clear understanding on digital marketing, market research, advertisement and sales force management i.e., recruitment, selection and training of sales staff is given by Roy, (2010). Niharika, (2015) explored further improvements and changes in the advertisement, selling and consumer relations necessitated by the introduction of man-made fiber fabrics. There are, however, insufficient studies that indeed aim to quantify the importance of challenges within practice (De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012). In this aspects, Frost and Sullivan, (2010) highlighted that in addition to traditional challenges, the major challenges that could lead to the failure of a social media marketing plan include lack of clarity with respect to ownership, possible disconnect between departments, and a lack of integrated approach. More specifically based on Bae & Zamrudi (2018) lack of clarity regarding which measures or metrics to employ for measuring the success of campaigns, lack of coordination between concerned departments, limited IT resources, alignment of stocks with online offers, and streamlining of brick-and-mortar stores with social media platforms were some of the major challenges of online marketing. Similarly, limitation of internet access, limited consumer link and conversation, high competition of brands, risk of hacking strategies, anti-brand activities and advertisement for limited products are found as the remarkable factors challenging online marketing (Bhojaraja, 2018). In addition, some of the challenges for the, digital marketing and sustainability include customer orientation and value proposition, digital consumer's behavior, digital green marketing, competitive advantage, supply chain and capabilities (Diez-Martin, Blanco - Gonzalez, & Prado-Roman, 2019). In the same way, Anbumani & Sankar (2017) stated that, not getting lost in the volume, driving relevant traffic to the website, targeting the right audience effectively, lead generation using social media, keeping up with the changing trends are the important challenges of online marketing. likewise, the liquefaction of the economy, adjusting to reactive marketing

management, how to manage customer creation and engagement, how to manage multisided Markets, adjusting to the changing customer purchase journey, Understanding the dynamic C2C sender-receiver system, creating compelling and profitable gamified interaction and adjusting to a changing marketing skill set are some of the challenged for online marketing (Hofacker, & Belanche, 2016). Furthermore, Kaur & Sandhu (2017) found that, requirements of customers to use new technologies for e-marketing rather than traditional media, low speed internet connections, the inability of shoppers to touch, smell, taste or try on tangible goods before marketing, return policies, cyber-crime, low marketing education, preferences for foreign products, low patronage for non-essential products and services, high cost of production, few competitive opportunities, over regulations of business by government, unauthentic sites are the major challenges to digital marketing in developing countries. Considering this, Niharika (2015) found that marketing integration, Security and privacy, Impersonal service, improving brand awareness and some other challenges such as dealing with the it department, continuing education, ethical practices, intellectual property and customer expectations are the main challenges faced by online marketers in India. Similarly, Problem of integrity, Lack of face-to-face contact, Security and Privacy and Lack of trust, in accessibility, lack of related infrastructure, budgeted problem, cultural and social barriers, lack of law and regulations and social resistance against new changes are the main challenges of online marketing in Iran (Bostanshirin, 2014 & Tawfiqi Adalatkhah, 2010). In addition, security, contractual and financial, hackers' intervention, lack of IT skilled personnel, privacy, deception problem, issue of globalization, ownership, lack of computers and issue of censorship are the main barriers faced by online marketers in Indonesia (Abd. Mukti, 2000). More specifically, lack of opportunity entrepreneurs, security, low purchasing power, corruption, lack of infrastructure and regulatory initiatives, house addressing, it literacy and social trust as well as internet accessibility are the main challenges of online businesses in Afghanistan (Delawari, 2019). Unfortunately, there are very limited studies about online marketing in Afghanistan and there is no academic and empirical study done on this topic in Kandahar city.

## METHODOLOGY

The present research being descriptive in nature mainly depends upon on primary sources of data. Quantitative research tools have been used to provide an accurate evidence on challenges of online marketing in Kandahar city. Though, very limited related studies have been previously conducted in the country over the past years, which are largely faces serious validity and reliability shortcomings, due to using secondary or official data. However, to explore the root challenges of online marketing and its related aspects in the city; the data was collected through surveys from Kandahar city, Kandahar-Afghanistan and simple random sampling designs is used for data collection. In the process of data collection, the list of online marketers/online marketing centers in the city, as per selected criteria (this includes, having at least one-year experience in online marketing/online business in the city, doing both online and traditional business and being engaged with online marketing activities at the time of surveying), were taken and random number Tables used. In total 20 online marketing/online business centers were selected for the survey. In addition to the tense security situation at the time of the survey, the global epidemic of COVID-19 also potted some limitations upon the surveying. Consent was obtained from the online marketing executives during the survey. The questionnaire that was developed from the review of the literature, includes questions pertained to the online marketers' sociodemographic characteristics, methods of online marketing, Infrastructural, technical, economic, social and

internet related challenges of online marketing in Kandahar city. The questionnaires were administered in the local language (Pashto) by trained interviewers, which latter translated to English. The respondents were assured regarding the confidentiality of the data and instructions were also given about the questionnaire. The questionnaire was pretested for a week upon 7 different online marketers within the city. The interviewed sample consisted of 15 online marketing executives. Quantitative data was managed using a statistical software package. Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) IBM24 Version was used for data entry and analysis of the data. And then through descriptive statistical analyses, the frequency and percentage of the data developed and presented and the related tables was examined.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section, addresses the different proposed research questions.

### Infrastructural and technical challenges of online marketing

Online marketers in Kandahar city faces a wide variety of challenges including Infrastructural, technical, economic, social and internet related challenges. The first objective of this study examines the infrastructural and technical challenges faced by online marketers in the city. The findings are presented as in Table 1.

Table1: Infrastructural and technical challenges faced by online marketers in Kandahar city

Types of Infrastructural and technical challenges	Frequency	Percent
Various (Multiple)	7	46.7
Lack of ICT infrastructure and resources	3	20.0
Low quality of banking systems and services	2	13.3
Problems with managing the websites	1	6.7
Lack of sufficient electricity	1	6.7
Most of people have no Credit card for e-business	1	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Base on the data presented in Table 1, about 46.7% of the online marketers in Kandahar city confirmed that, the multiple types of infrastructural and technical related challenges hampered the development of online marketing in the city. While some of the other selected any of the responsible factors, including lack of ICT infrastructure and resources 20 % and low quality of banking systems and in sufficient services for e-business in the country 13.3% that hindered the development of online marketing in the city. The other barriers fall down in any specific type of factor listed in Table 1. Considering the above findings, internationally, ICTs are viewed as a basic enabler of informal, social and economic discourse, leading to a strengthening of civil society and the promotion of economic activity specifically online marketing and e-commerce (Wentz, Kramer, & Starr 2008). But, Afghanistan lacks far behind in ICT system and related infrastructural development. It's better to be clear that, the term information and communication technologies (ICTs) encompasses the range of technologies for gathering, storing, retrieving, processing, analyzing, and transmitting information that are essential to prospering in a globalized economy. Advances in ICTs have reduced the costs of managing information and introduced innovations in products, processes, and organizational structures that, in turn, have generated new ways of working, market development, and livelihood practices. ICT was also recognized as important to the collection of taxes and customs duties, establishing a national banking system, and enabling other political, security,

governance, judicial, social, and economic recovery actions and overall development and social welfare (Wentz, Kramer, & Starr 2008). Unfortunately, in Afghanistan after decades of conflict, under-investment, and neglect, the ICT infrastructure was left in disrepair with no national or international connectivity. In addition, after 2001 in this country, Interveners consistently do not view ICT as a reconstruction and development priority equal to roads, power, and water or as an enabler of cross-sector reconstruction and development. Therefore, Program development, project coordination, information sharing, and ICT implementation are largely uncoordinated and uncompleted. No agreed and comprehensive architecture or plan is in place for affected nation ICT reconstruction and development (Wentz, Kramer, & Starr 2008). In spite of these, recently, four mobile operators and the state-owned, fixed-line carrier Afghan Telecom form the main building-blocks of the telecom infrastructure and services as well as the national microwave network and fiber optic backbone (the two key infrastructure projects which are under development) are operational in the country (Hamdaard 2012) but, ICT sector is not yet prepared to truly sustain operations on its own without the support and attention of the international community (Wentz, Kramer, & Starr 2008). Observers note that countries that are heavily dependent on the export of commodities have difficulties in "growing" their own ICT capabilities (Hudson, 2000). As a result, in the absence of proper ITC infrastructure overall development processes including online marketing is hindered. Similarly, evidences show that e-banking system and related service and products such as: Master cards, ATM, POS, SMS banking, mobile banking and etc. are a key element of online marketing/ business Karimi, (2016), but such kind of e-banking systems and services are very limited in Afghanistan, mainly due to decades of civil war and social and political unrest in the country. Though, the Afghan banking system started with the establishment of the Bank-e-Millie Afghan (National Bank of Afghanistan) in 1933, the Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) in 1940, and four other banks up to 1975, and then, following decades of conflict, the financial and banking systems of Afghanistan was devastated (Karimi, 2016). During this period informal gray market for transferring and exchanging money developed and this system still dominates financial services in the country (Naseri, & Sharofiddin, 2020). However, Afghanistan banking sector faced huge change since late 2001; new banking laws were passed in 2003 and in early 2004, based largely on international best practices (Karimi, 2016) and currently there are 12 licensed banks, of which three are state-owned, seven are private CBs, and two are foreign banks (Naseri, & Sharofiddin, 2020). But in most of the cases their operations were constrained severely due to deficiencies with regard to inadequate banking laws and regulations, technology limitations, limited knowledge of peoples, inadequate access to internet, poor competitive labor market, minor support of government and due security issues limited the operation of commercial banks in remote areas (Karimi, 2016). Yet, in most recent years the commercial banks are providing some e-banking services and products (Karimi, 2016), but, evidence shows that in spite of this progress in the banking system and its related services in Afghanistan, people specifically in Kandahar city face fundamental challenges and concern especially with e-banking such as, security of bank accounts in online banking, high service charges, documentation process of access to e-banking services and products, huge wait in lines at branches, low awareness of peoples, low access of internet by individual users, low cooperation of banks and illiteracy (Naseri, & Sharofiddin, 2020 & Karimi, 2016). As a result, banking services in general and e-banking and financial services in particular are not available to most adults in this city Naseri & Sharofiddin (2020) which affects the development of online marketing and online business in Kandahar city.

### Economic and social barriers of online marketing

The second objective of this study examines the economic and social challenges of online marketing in Kandahar city. The findings are presented as in Table 2.

Table 2: Economic and social challenges of online marketing in Kandahar city.

Types of economic and social related factors	Frequency	Percent
Various (Multiple)	5	33.4
Costumers low purchasing power	3	20.0
Social and cultural barriers	2	13.3
Lack of trust of consumers upon online marketing	2	13.3
Security problems	1	6.7
Customers' home addressing problems	1	6.7
High prices of goods	1	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 2: Indicates that the largest number of the marketers 26.7% pointed out the various economic and social related factors that challenge the development of online marketing in Kandahar city. While some of the others confirmed any of the barriers of online marketing in the city including problems with costumers' low purchasing power 20%, social and cultural barriers 13.3%, costumers' home addressing problems 13.3%, security problems 13.3%. The rest of the factors in the above table are also important which all needs to be addressed. As the findings of this study shows, costumers' low purchasing power roots to the economic reality and high unemployment rates in Afghanistan that lowered the people purchasing power in this country (TawfiqiAdalatkhah, 2010). So far, many studies also show that poverty and food insecurity are multi-faceted phenomenon in Afghanistan and it exists in accordance with different dimensions such as low income, unemployment, illiteracy, disabilities, lack of basic public services, security problem and unskilled human capital in this country (Rahimi, 2015 & Trani, Kuhlberg, Cannings, & Chakkal, 2016). According to Jackson (2009) 70% of participant in a survey confirmed that they faced unemployment and poverty which according them this problem is also a major cause of the conflict in Afghanistan. This along with the other factors resulted in hampering various development programs and projects including online marketing in Kandahar city. In addition, social and cultural barriers as showed in the above table, are considered one of major challenges of online marketing in Kandahar city. Earlier study also shows that social norms /the socio-cultural barriers are systemic by their very nature in Afghanistan and this include, but not limited to, social expectations, gender discrimination, parents' level of education, and etc. (Save the Children, 2018). Studies further illustrate that social norms can play a crucial part even in decision making as individuals rarely choose their actions in isolation but embedded within their social context (Chamarbagwala, & Tchernis, 2006). For example, a related study in Iran found that in undeveloped and deprived areas mostly people do not feel the needs to Internet or superior technology or credit card to do banking and residents of these areas prefer to do business in the traditional way and with cash (TawfiqiAdalatkhah, 2010). According to this study, secrecy, uncertainty and non-transparent activities were another element of non-acceptance of e-commerce over their because the use of e-commerce records all their transactions and economic activities. This type of culture has made the expansion of e-commerce and the transfer of any type of electronic banking funds difficult Kandahar city. Moreover, lack of trust of consumers upon online marketing is one of another major challenge of online

marketing in Kandahar city. Evidences by Urban et al, (2009). show that, closely related with the problem of security and privacy is the issue of lack of trust on the part of customers which has been recognized a great challenge on the way of online marketing growth (Bostanshirin, 2014). Bart *et al.*, (2005) define trust in virtual environment as follows: "online trust includes consumer perceptions of how the site would deliver on expectations, how believable the site's information is, and how much confidence the site commands". Today despite the rapid growth of online transactions several people still mistrust electronic methods of paying and still have doubt whether the purchased items will be delivered or not. On the other hand, prevalence of online fraught has made costumers hold negative or doubtful attitudes towards online transactions (Bostanshirin, 2014). It should be stressed that unless this trust has not been built, internet marketing cannot be taken advantage from to its fullest potential. So it is imperative for those in charge of online marketing to understand the reality of new virtual world. One of the prominent realities of this new world is that "today trust and customer power have partnered to revolutionize marketing. Marketers and IT managers are challenged with the task of changing the online climate in order to gain retain online costumers. This has generated tremendous interest in learning about online trust and in developing new site designs to respond to the increased power of costumers" (Bostanshirin, 2014). More specifically, according to research in 2016, respondents were asked, "How often are you afraid that you might be the victim of a fraud when buying products and services online?" 40% of the respondents said that they were afraid of e-commerce fraud to the extent of 'always', 'very often', and 'often', 17% of the respondents said that they had been victims of e-commerce fraud (Suk-Joo, Ahn, Song, & Ahn, 2018). Thus, this factor is also viewed as one of rout challenges of online marketing in Kandahar city that need to be addressed in a proper way.

### Internet related challenges of online marketing

The third objective of this study investigates the Internet related factors that challenge the development of online marketing in Kandahar city. The findings are presented as in Table 3.

Table 3: Internet related challenges of online marketing in Kandahar city

Types of Internet related challenges	Frequency	Percent
Various (Multiple)	6	40.0
Low quality and high price of internet	5	33.3
Fake marketing websites and social media accounts	2	13.3
Hacking risks	1	6.7
Problems of keeping up with the changing trends	1	6.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 3: Shows that 27.6% of the online marketers face the various internet related challenges that hinder the development of online marketing in Kandahar city. While a remarkable number of them stated any of the mentioned factors, notably low quality and high price of internet 33.3% and fake marketing websites and social media accounts 13.3%. the rest of the challenges are also important as mentioned in the above table. As the finding of this study shows, low quality and high price of internet is one of another remarkable challenge of online marketing in Kandahar city. earlier study also evidenced that, though the mobile communication sector of Afghanistan and use of internet have had tremendous growth over the last decade but, this growth and progress remains fragile due to the ever-changing security and political environment in the country as well as economic reality in the country (Hamdaard 2012). Specifically,

another related study found that, 33% of end users were complaining from limited coverage area of mobile internet, 27% from Low Data Rate (LDR), 13% from low mobility performance, 24% from Low Signal Strength (LSS), and 4% were not experiencing none of the above events while mobile internet usage in Afghanistan (Habibi, Ulman, Vaněk, & Pavlík, 2017). It should be noted that "satisfaction of end user from an operator is associated with wide and improved network coverage, reasonable pricing policies, efficient customer service, enhanced QoS, fulfilling the expectation of mobile phone user and customer support (Habibi, Ulman, Vaněk, & Pavlík, 2017). Unfortunately, low quality and high price on internet hindered various development efforts including online marketing in this city. In addition, fake marketing websites and social media accounts are one of another notable challenge of online marketing in Kandahar city. previous researches also show that, social media marketing is at least partly based on brand messages gaining objectivity when shared by people on social media. But in order for that de-commercialization to happen, the brand messages need to be trusted by consumers (Hausman 2013). similar study of Allen (2013) also found that, "with fake news running rampant, public trust in the media including social is at an all-time low and consumer trust is still the basis for selling products or services however" (Pesonen, 2018). Furthermore, Rachael Bryson (2017) argues that "trust in social media is synonymous with credibility and reliability." Consumers are more skeptical towards social media than traditional media, and user-generated content platforms such as Twitter and Facebook do not enjoy the same level of legitimacy as sources as television and print. This obviously means that organizations have to employ higher standards if they are to become trusted sources. Every small misstep can make a brand lose a brand followers and provide a beachhead for negative commentary and reactions (Pesonen, 2018). for example, organizations lack control over the negative feedback they receive on social media. Many consumers will search for opinions and sources, legitimate or not, that verify their own stance, and this creates echo chambers. Users who do not agree with a company's social media content or who simply dislike the company in general may join in on negative feedback campaigns that can be very damaging to trust. (Bryson 2017.). thus, this problem should also be addressed by proper policies and programs (Pesonen, 2018). Furthermore, hacking risks is also considered as one of another important challenge of online marketing in Kandahar city. earlier studies also show that, hacking and other kinds of cybercrime are responsible for disrupting the organization networks, stealing valuable data, documents, hacking bank account, stealing passwords, hacking of Wi-Fi Networks and loss/hack of personal information of the users (Kumar, Khera, Sujay, Garg & Jain 2018). For example, as the growing demands of E-commerce sites many E-commerce marketing companies like Flipkart, Amazon and Ebay will demand more the ethical hackers because of their security concerns, many companies like ISRO, Wipro, IBM wanted their databases not to get leaked and spread related to their productions and profits and losses so they are hiring ethical hackers and paying a good some of money which will increase in future to. Even start-ups companies are also demanding more ethical hackers, so that it doesn't lead to their demolition of company (Kumar, Khera, Sujay, Garg & Jain 2018). Though, preventive measures have been taken by the government a lot many times. It should be also noted that, the current study is the first research on this topic conducted specifically in Kandahar city. However, up to a large extent this study was faced with some remarkable limitations, because, only the outlooks of online marketing executives are included in the study, whereas the viewpoints of costumers, as well as related public and nonpublic organizations would have a vital positive impact on enrichment and validity of the results. In addition, we could only fill about 15 questionnaires with online marketing executives, which may not be a very good

representative for the whole population in the city. Up to a large extent, our research limitations were also fueled by global pandemic (COVID-19) and security problems in general.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Online marketing/business has been created in the early 1990s, the global value of e-commerce is increasing as the time goes by. Recently, technological advancement has reached the point where it enables the customers to buy and sell a product only by entering some numbers and pressing a button. Developed and developing countries laid down a reliable infrastructure to develop and support online businesses. But, some regions such as Africa and central Asia specifically Afghanistan is far behind due to some social and economic and political reasons. Of all Asian countries, despite all potentials, Afghanistan is a country which owned one of the weakest economic, social and political foundations for doing online business. Currently, a number of online marketers doing online business/online shopping in Kandahar city by using principally Facebook pages and websites and applying different methods of payments; having different quality. Though some marketers offer online payment but, cash on delivery (COD) is the primary method of payment in online-businesses in this city. based on the findings of this study, In spite of some progress, online marketing in Kandahar city faces with some fundamental challenges including infrastructural and technical challenges, Economic and social challenges and Internet related challenges, although they are integrated. Among these categories, lack of ICT infrastructure and resources, low quality of banking systems and services, people's low purchasing power, social and cultural barriers, people do not trust upon online marketers, low quality and high price of internet, fake marketing websites and fake accounts in social media and hacking risks are some specified aspects online marketing/business in Kandahar city that need to be addressed by taking a proper policy and program. It should also be noted that, there is enormous economic and social potential for converting the telecom and Internet sectors into a fully-fledged ICT industry as well as for e-banking development which are essential for online marketing development. The feasibility of this vision is demonstrated against the backdrop of the remarkable growth of the telecom sector and banking systems in the past decade as well as Afghanistan's largely literate, young population (57.5% below 19 years), who are enthusiastically inclined towards new technology trends as well as the potential of Afghanistan's geographical location as a regional hub of ICT and Internet between central and south Asia. Thus, considering these potentials, to tackle the discussed challenges of online marketing/business in Kandahar city and get benefit from the potentials, first of all, related public and private sectors in Kandahar city with cooperation with national and international related sectors and donors should work together-creating a cooperative approach. This is because everyone should take responsibility; otherwise, the upcoming recommendations will not be helpful. Considering the mentioned condition, to gradually solve the challenges ahead below are some recommendations based on the current situation of Kandahar city, Afghanistan. The government should try to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan and eliminate corruption. considering the socio-economic and geographical potentials of the country, different investment funds- government, foreign investors and public-private partnership should be channeled into infrastructures, especially to ICT, e-banking system and internet. Laws and regulatory frameworks such as electronic transactions, consumer protection, privacy and data protection, and cybercrime acts and etc. should be implemented to regulate and monitor the trends of online marketing/digital business to build trust in the society and protect the parties especially the consumers. Banks in one hand, should activate, develop, and innovate new techniques to encourage

their customers for utility of e-banking services and products and on the other hand, e-banking data and systems should be classified according to their sensitivity and importance and protected accordingly. Appropriate mechanisms, such as encryption, access control and data recovery plans should be used to protect all sensitive and high-risk e-banking systems, servers, databases and applications. Government along with private sectors should create employment and income opportunities to the people to enhance their purchasing power, overall economic development and social welfare. Government along with private sectors should develop and implement appropriate and effective short, medium and long-term educational policies and programs for spreading an entrepreneurial mindset in the society.

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