

# Applying E-Commerce on Small Medium Enterprise: A Case Study for Saudi Perfumes & Cosmetics Retailer in KSA

Raed Alshaddadi



**Abstract:** Electronic commerce has been reshaping the aspects of businesses and social life over this period of years. This is made possible with the constant innovation of information system (e.g. website, mobile application) and the global computer network (i.e. internet). There are a number of studies that emphasize on the benefits of adapting this strategy. However, though the benefits of this strategy may well overshadow the issues. The adoption of this strategy is not widely used for the small medium enterprise, opposed to large enterprise. Hence, this research study aims to underline the value and provide recommended guide for applying e-commerce for an small medium enterprise (SME) company. Saudi Perfumes & Cosmetics company located in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) was adapted as the case study. Quantitative research methodology was adopted as the primary techniques using online survey, alongside sources from books, articles, journals and web contents are used as the secondary data. It was found that the company is facing various issues when using direct selling method (e.g. time consuming, difficulty to understand) and the respondents from this survey believes that applying e-commerce would help to resolve this issues. It was concluded that using an off the shelf application provided by Shopify service is the best option. This is given the rationale of having the software provided by the service provider to support both web and mobile application in a single developed application. Therefore, saving cost and development time.

**Keywords:** The Adoption Of This Strategy Is Not Widely Used For The Small Medium Enterprise, Opposed To Large Enterprise.

## I. INTRODUCTION

There are various methods for making sales and advertising products (e.g. media advertising, kiosk machine, etc.). However, for this research the ecommerce technology being emphasized upon. This is because there are increasing number of online consumers over the past years. Therefore, being a part of the e-commerce community is believed to benefit the company towards targeting more consumers (figure 1) and improve efficiency for providing service (e.g. automated functionality provided by the e-commerce application for checking stock availability).



Figure I: sales growth of e-commerce in the USA by KineticGrowth[1].

Electronic commerce (EC) has been reshaping the aspects of businesses and social life over this period of years. This is made possible with the constant innovation of information system (e.g. website, mobile application) and the global computer network (i.e. internet). There are a number of studies [2],[3] and articles [4],[5] that emphasize on the benefits of adapting this strategy (e.g. competitive market), with believe it to be a new way for conducting businesses within the 20th century [6].

Though, the benefits of this strategy may well overshadow the issues. The adoption of this strategy is not widely used for the small medium enterprise (SME), opposed to large enterprise [7]. This is due to present issues: lack of awareness, uncertainty about the benefits, lack of human resources and skills, costly set-up costs and security [8],[9]. These issues are mitigated or resolved easily by large enterprise with having a better capital formation and technological progress [10].

There are various number of businesses operated by SMEs all around the world (e.g. retail, service). However, this research focuses on retailing operated by an SME (Saudi Perfumes & Cosmetics) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), which applied traditional method for selling perfumes (e.g. selling in shops). This adopted method may well have been a safe strategy and profitable for businesses in the short term. However, as large organization or competitors (e.g. other SMEs) continuously being savvy and proactive in seeking different strategy for expanding their businesses. It is undeniable, that the adoption of e-commerce technology would be an option. Therefore, affecting businesses that rely on selling their products manually to be jeopardized (e.g. less profit, business close).

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\* Correspondence Author

Raed Alshaddadi\*, General Manager of Intelligent Services of Elevators EST. Makkah State, Saudi Arabia

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Two factors formed the rationale for this research. Firstly, is to gain a better understanding of e-commerce strategy for SMEs (e.g. benefits, adoption strategy). Secondly, the research literature shows that there are a small number of studies that review the application of e-commerce for SMEs in KSA (9 studies in total). Therefore, it is hoped that this research serves to develop preliminary data (i.e. Primary: Questionnaire; Secondary: Systematic review) that will shed some light on the current state of the application of e-commerce for an SME business, alongside recommending an appropriate adoption strategy.

The aim of this research is to underline the value and provide recommended guide for applying e-commerce for an SME.

The important objectives to support the aim of this research as follows:

1. To build an understanding of the perfume industry, its position and its important in Saudi's market.
2. To build an understanding of e-commerce strategy.
3. To review previous practices of e-commerce strategy in SMEs for retailing in Saudi.
4. To collect required data that are relevant to build an understanding of the current approach and issues for adopting the manual approach for retailing within the selected case study.
5. To recommend a feasible strategy of applying e-commerce strategy within the selected case study.

Figure 2 shows the research map applied within this research study. This are categories by its phases, objectives, key tasks and methods.

PHASES	OBJECTIVES	KEY TASKS	METHOD
Phase 1: Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To build an understanding of the perfume industry, its position and its important in Saudi's market.</li> <li>To build an understanding of e-commerce strategy.</li> <li>To review previous practices of e-commerce strategy in SMEs for retailing in Saudi.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reviewing past literature to identify the definition, development and progression, type, and the benefits of applying e-commerce.</li> <li>• Mini systematic review.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literature review</li> <li>• Case study</li> </ul>
Phase 2: Data collection and result analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To collect required data that are relevant to build an understanding of the current approach and issues for adopting the manual approach for retailing within the selected case study.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect data from various staffs working in the company.</li> <li>• Analyse the result collected from the survey.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Survey</li> <li>• Result analysis</li> </ul>
Phase 3: Recommendation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To recommend a feasible strategy of applying e-commerce strategy within the selected case study.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide detail recommendation of the functionality and recommended alternatives for developing the applications (mobile and website).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present recommended functions</li> <li>• Priorities functions</li> <li>• Use case diagram</li> </ul>

Figure 1: Research map



In order to meet the research objectives, 3 research questions were developed:

1. What is e-commerce?
2. What is the state of e-commerce in SMEs for retailing in Saudi (perfume industry)?
3. What is the recommended approach to applying e-commerce strategy for the selected case study?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Background of the Perfume Industry and E-Commerce in KSA

#### 2.2.1 Perfume Industry in KSA

The cosmetics definition is any substance or preparation use or contact with a human body or any part of that or with an oral parts or an external genital exclusively or mainly to changing their appearance, cleaning them, perfuming them, keeping them in a good condition and/or correcting body smell [11].

Human being used perfumes as far back as the ancient time in Egypt and China for religious ceremonies. The application of perfume has been integral in the society up till now, making it a must use cosmetic wear for daily life [12].

Today the survival of the perfume industry came from Islamic civilizations, since it was the center of science and culture in the middle ages of Europe.

The perfumery craft entered Europe from Venice, because it was the center of glasses making and its strategic position on the Mediterranean trade route for extracting essential oils from plants for making perfume. At that time perfumes are widespread and by the second half of seventeenth century, the perfume industry was strongly developed in France as the biggest market [13].

The perfumery market changed by the world wars, as people were concerned about the dangerous situation, After the time of war, the center moved to be in United State as the new center of perfumery with the largest market in the world [13].

Today the Middle East is seen as the most attractive market to the cosmetics industry with a high income and growth rate especially targeting to the young population. Most of the Middle East countries increased their sales by double digit in 2013. The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) the cosmetics sales increased +9% in 2013 driven by make up at more than +11%, but the fragrances still have the lion's share of business with 19% rate in Middle East and north Africa according to data presented by BW Confidential [14].

The Clarins Group Middle East president, Osama Rinno believed that the internet access made the social media to be a game changer particularly in conservative markets like Saudi Arabia by allowing consumers, especially the young generations to be more involve and interactive with cosmetics society.

### Middle East beauty and personal care sales\* by main country 2013

Country	2013 sales* \$bn	% change 2013/2012
Saudi Arabia	4.13	+12.0
Iran	3.56	+39.3
Israel	1.48	+6.5
UAE	1.32	+7.3
Egypt	0.87	+10.6
Kuwait	0.37	+10.6
Yemen (modelled)	0.24	+12.0
Qatar (modelled)	0.19	+5.9
Iraq (modelled)	0.11	+12.6
Bahrain (modelled)	0.11	+10.4

Source: Euromonitor international  
\*retail sales price

Figure 3: Sales of personal care (PC) product in middle east [14]

### Saudi Arabia beauty & personal care sales by category\* 2013

Category	2013 sales \$bn	% change 2013/2012
Fragrance	1.29	+14.1
Haircare	0.56	+12.0
Skincare	0.54	+10.1
Color cosmetics	0.42	+11.7
Men's grooming	0.19	+14.5
Suncare	0.12	+10.5
<b>Mass</b>	<b>2.04</b>	<b>+11.2</b>
<b>Premium</b>	<b>1.67</b>	<b>+13.4</b>
<b>Total market**</b>	<b>4.13</b>	<b>+12.0</b>

Source: Euromonitor international;  
\* retail sales price  
\*\*total includes additional categories not listed

Figure 4: Sales of personal care product in middle east [14]

Saudi Arabia is one of the top local markets with cosmetics sales in this country worth over 4.1 billion dollars of 2013 (figure 3) and perfume sales over 1.29 billion dollars as of 2013 (figure 4). Therefore, making 31% of the country's personal care (PC) market and total beauty within that year. By 2018, this it is forecasted to grow by 9.4% annually up to 2 billion dollars.



The perfume industry primarily deals with firms dealing with the production of oil, alcoholic, and non-alcoholic perfumes that are mainly aimed at the Arab and local market segments in the UAE [14].

It is undeniable that the retail businesses has grown rapidly in the Middle East within the last few years, by obtaining an increase of income with the development of new malls (e.g. Dubai Mall). These malls sell various perfume brands, by having major western players opening luxury departmental stores in these malls. Doing so enables them to improve profit gain with the increase of customers. Example of stores include Galeries Lafayette, Harvey Nichols, Bloomingdale's and House of Fraser.

### 2.2.2 E-commerce in KSA

The application of e-commerce has grown rapidly in Saudi Arabia of having an increase of online stores and investments in this sector. Pay fort indicated the e-commerce profits by \$2.25 billion in 2015 and expected to reach \$8.35 billion by 2020, giving an increase of 250%, meaning it's the most highly growing businesses in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) [15]. The reason may have been due to the high percentage of users using smart devices in KSA. Therefore, signified a great opportunity for retailers to take advantage of applying this business channel.

In addition, it should be pointed out that it takes less effort and investment to start an e-commerce business given by examples from JARIR and SACO companies [15]. In addition, e-commerce is highlighted as an important tool in Saudi Arabia for a positive investment plan (e.g. forecast trend) [16].

### 2.2.3 Applying E-Commerce for Selling Perfume in KSA

Therefore, all the information proves that the application of e-commerce is a great opportunity when exploit in KSA, and would benefit if implemented in the perfume industry. This will help increase sales and increase profits, hence, giving a fighting chance to compete head on with the large western companies, else they are doom to failure. This is an undeniable issue if not implemented, due to the increase of major players coming into the country, SME's selling perfume is directly affected with the decrease of profit growth. As customers prefer to go to well-known stores (e.g. Sephora) or buy their product online.

## 2.2 Background of Saudi Perfumes & Cosmetics Retailer

Saudi Perfume & Cosmetics Co. Ltd based in Saudi Arabia. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of the MSTC Ltd, Saudi Perfume & Cosmetics Co. Ltd is one of the largest company of its kind for selling perfume in the whole of Middle East [17]. This company was first established in 1982, with fully integrated production for facilitating perfumes and cosmetics products. In addition, their organisation runs of six manufacturing operating units running under one roof.

The company sold various cosmetic brands for example J. Casanova (Personal Care (PC), Hair Care (HC), Color Cosmetics (CC) & High Quality (HQ) Perf), J. Casanova Blue (Personal Care (PC) & Hair Care (HC)), LV Beethoven (Medium Market Perfume (Mid Perf)), Rimbrand (Mass Market Perfume (Mas Perf)), Prophecy (Cologne & Deodorant ), and others.

The average sales of the company decrease tremendously in 2013 with the increase of western products competing with theirs. Therefore, they spend more on promoting their products using pamphlets and advertisement in the TV or radio. This strategy enables them to gradually grow from the year 2013 to 2015, and forecasted to increase further on the future.

The company applied an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, known as 'BAAN ERP' to facilitate their warehouse management process. Though, they recognize the benefits of applying an information system. They still focus on selling their products manually (e.g. direct selling).

The processes for selling their products are by using direct distribution (e.g. Blue Line & through distributor like Mahmood Saeed Trading Co., Aasali & export) to export their products to various shops or thru more than 50 showrooms in the Saudi Arabia. In addition, they include direct sales team to export their products in all major cities in KSA and around the world (e.g. Algeria, Indonesia, Malaysia, Qatar, Kwait, Liyba, Iraq, Yeman, Oman, UAE, and Egypt).

Although the company production lines are working on more than 75 - 80% capacity. However, the cost for transferring this product is high and the profits gained may not be enough to compete with large enterprise that had administered e-commerce (e.g. website) for selling their products.

The organisation focused on their future plan to approach new market, such as in Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Jordon and Morocco. Therefore, it will be an effective strategy to apply e-commerce to help achieve their goal effectively.

## 2.3 Definition of E-Commerce

Electronic Commerce (EC) or e-commerce have the same definition, which is defined as the transaction over an electronic system (e.g. internet and other computer network) for buying or selling products, while transferring funds online (e.g. PayPal) [18]. This technology focuses of the use of digital information to understand customer preference and needs to provide them with or suggestion of products or services (e.g. data mining) to be delivered as soon as possible. That automated and personalized service offer for business to increase the potential revenue, lower costs and improve customer good relationship with the customers [19].

## 2.4 Development and Progression of E-Commerce

The ability to conduct commercial transaction electronically, started back in the early 1970s with Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) and Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT). This application provides users the ability to send documents, exchange information and transmit funds electronically. Within the year 1980s, new technology appeared which allowed to introduced the online banking services to replace automated teller machines (ATMs). Further on the 1990s the ERP systems, data warehousing and data mining were also introduced, which enhance the application e-commerce for business till up to date [18].

In addition, it should be pointed out that the definition of e-commerce also changed from being “an aiding tool for business” to “a business strategy”.

**2.5 Type of E-Commerce**

Having to combined the power of advance digital technology, with enterprise and customers have boost the application of e-commerce up till today [20]. Therefore, Zhou[21] had highlighted the five general type of e-commerce:

1. **Business-to-Business (B2B)**  
This refer to the type of e-commerce activity between businesses, for example when dealing with suppliers or agents (e.g. SAP ERP system). This type of e-commerce is usually conducted using EDI tool, where enables the exchange of information between businesses connected together in a private network. The advantage of this approach enables business to run more transparently as it involved with other businesses, enable businesses to run more efficiently (e.g. supplier has the ability to respond faster as stock diminishes), improve management decision between suppliers and reduce cost (e.g. reducing purchase order cost).
2. **Business-to-Consumer (B2C)**  
This refer to the type of e-commerce application where internet is the main platform for business transaction with consumers, when selling goods and services in a website (e.g. Tesco online, amazon). In addition, Qin [20] highlighted that goods provided by B2C can be divided into tangible and non-tangible goods. Firstly, tangible goods refer to item that is sold in a form of a product (e.g. books, chairs). Secondly, non-tangible good refer a service that is being provided to the consumer (e.g. music service provided by Spotify). The key advantage of this approach helps the business to reach more customer, increase profit and better service interaction, therefore, improving customer satisfaction [22].
3. **Consumer-to-Business (C2B)**  
This type of e-commerce refers to the application of reverse pricing models, where the customer determines the item price which is of interest (e.g. flubit). Therefore, subjected to an increase emphasis on customer empowerment to make the decision [23]. The advantages of this approach to provide competitive advantage of applying an approach that emphasis more on customer satisfaction. Therefore, they'll be satisfied of the purchase made base on their set of budget.
4. **Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C)**  
This refer to the type which uses an auction style model [23]. This model consists of a person-to-person transaction, while the application is just the middle man. For example, 'person A' sells a product on eBay, while 'person B' win and buy the product after bidding it. The advantage of this approach is that it helps to reduce administrative and commission cost for both buyers and sellers, in addition, give customers a low-cost way to sell their product to the public [24].
5. **Business-to-Government (B2G)**  
This type of e-commerce is use by government department (e.g. businesses registering for a license).

These websites applied different government policies, rules and regulation related to their respective department. The advantage of this approach enables to improve service performance (e.g. filling online form) and improve service efficiency (e.g. to find electronic data, oppose to forms being filed manually).

It should be noted that the recommendation of e-commerce for Saudi Perfumes & Cosmetics retailer falls under the B2C category. Therefore, providing the business ability to widen their customer scope. Meanwhile, consumers have the ability to view and make purchases efficiently.

In addition, there are various channels that can be used to access the e-commerce application simultaneously. This include via laptop, desktop computers, mobile devices (e.g. iPhone), e-kiosk, etc. Therefore, having different peripherals, would provide customers the flexibility to use the application from anywhere and at any time.

**2.6 Benefits and Barriers of E-Commerce**

SWOT analysis is known to be one of the most popular form analysis applied for introspective research planning [25]. This analysis assesses of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the strategy or technology being assessed.

The SWOT analysis is applied in this research study, with the aim to understanding the effects of applying e-commerce business (Table 1). A number of secondary sources were used to conduct this analysis [26],[27],[28],[29].

**Table 1: SWOT analysis for applying e-commerce**

	Positive	Negative
Internal	<b><u>STRENGTH</u></b> 1. Low product cost 2. Lower operational cost 3. Global business 4. Improve IT skills 5. 24/7 operation 6. Fast and effective 7. Affordable advertising 8. Fast payment transaction 9. Low investment for start-up	<b><u>WEAKNESSES</u></b> 1. Security 2. Showroom 3. Transportation cost 4. Internet limitation
	<b><u>OPPORTUNITIES</u></b> 1. Competitive advantage 2. Customer satisfaction 3. Internet users increasing	<b><u>THREATS</u></b> 1. Legal and regulatory change 2. Competitors 3. Dishonest users
External		



By reviewing the secondary sources, a number of points were highlighted and used within this SWOT analysis, as follows:

## 1. Strength (Positive/Internal)

- **Low product cost:** Products would be ordered directly from the producer, if the application displays the inventory status, making it accessible by the producer. Therefore, reducing cost of hiring a middle man to make an order.
- **Lower operation cost:** Reduce cost of hiring extra staff, as the application is automated and require a minimum of one or two staff to manage the transaction effectively.
- **Global business:** Expand customer scope, making the sales of perfume to be widely known around the world. In addition, increases maximum profit.
- **Improve IT skills:** Improve workers' skills on using computer and software to manage their daily task effectively.
- **24/7 operation:** Sales can be done at any time, given the application runs entirely on a web platform that is made accessible at any time or anywhere around the world, as long there is an internet connection.
- **Fast and effective:** Improve performance for the staffs to manage orders (e.g. check order status or past transactions made).
- **Affordable advertising:** Advertising can be accessible around the world at a lower cost (e.g. google ads, Facebook advertisement), oppose to using banners or TV advertising.
- **Fast payment transaction:** Transaction can be made easily, therefore, enables the company to get the money faster and in a secure manner (e.g. using PayPal).
- **Low investment for start-up:** The start-up cost is much lower, given the seller only need to register for a website. This could either be free (e.g. Blogspot) or paid (e.g. Wix). However, the cost is lower than setting a physical shop.

## 2. Opportunities (Positive/External)

- **Competitive advantage:** Enables the company to provide a better service and cover a wider coverage of customers, therefore, providing them competitive advantage over other sellers that provide the same service.
- **Customer satisfaction:** Customers have the ability to make order from home and provide them ability to make comparison of the cost, and review their product of interest from other service provider. This would then improve their customer satisfaction, due to the flexibility of service provided.
- **Internet users increasing:** The internet users are increasing over the years. Therefore, providing a wider target of customers for the organization throughout the years.

## 3. Weaknesses (Negative/Internal)

- **Security:** There are risk of security issues if the staffs working in the company is unethical (e.g. selling customers information for additional profit).
- **Showroom:** Limited ability for the organization to present their products effectively in the website, except for using videos or image. This may not be affective, opposed to providing customer the ability to test and feel the product themselves.
- **Transportation cost:** The cost increases base on the location of item being posted to.
- **Internet limitation:** Staff would not have the ability to manage the service without having a stable internet connection.

## 4. Threats (Negative External)

- **Legal and regulatory change:** The rules and regulation provided by the government is different within each country, some may be strict, when compared to others when starting an online business (e.g. tax for online business).
- **Competitors:** Other competitors may copy the idea of selling product online. In addition, big organization (e.g. amazon), would use the information provided in the website, to undercut the price further.
- **Dishonest users:** Unethical users that would lie, with aim to receive free products or get extra privilege (e.g. a customer that lied of the status of product being received).

## 2.7 Examples of Businesses Benefiting From the Impacts of E-Commerce

There a numerous number of companies or case studies that have benefit the application of e-commerce. For example, a sauce company named 'Bees Knees Spicy Honey' managed to earn \$170,000 worth of sales of their sauce within 10 Months [30]; a private couple that earn \$600,000 per Year selling doll clothing online [31]; the growth of ASDA business of applying e-commerce [32]. Therefore, it's undeniable THAT recommending the application of e-commerce for Saudi Perfume & Cosmetics would help them grow to another level.

The researcher believed that applying this strategy would help increase the company revenue per year, as the number of online users increase drastically over the years in Saudi Arabia and expected to double by 2020 [33]. Therefore, applying e-commerce would increase scope of consumers, without having any restriction on geographical location or time (i.e. serve provided 24/7). For example, if the company invest around £2000 for developing this application. They might receive 2x or 3x the current investment as the number of customers increases, compared conducting direct selling, which may be more expensive to cover the labor cost. In addition, online advertising such as google advertising or nuffnang service would help promote the product and link the users to their website effectively.

2.8 Method

A review was conducted to identify studies that highlight the application of e-commerce for retailing in SME in Saudi Arabia. The researcher searched in google scholar being one of the well-known electronic database that includes articles from a wide variety of sources, field of research and countries (e.g. academic publishers, thesis) [34]. Therefore, making searchers via the selected ‘search engine’ beneficial and feasible given the limited time in completing this research (3 months).

The researcher used keyword: “e-commerce” AND retail\* AND “SME” OR “small medium enterprise” AND “Saudi Arabia” to support the searches. Meanwhile, the classification that was used for data extraction: benefit, disadvantage, application and the adoption strategy. These classifications are used, given it contribution when presenting the recommendations for the Saudi Perfumes & Cosmetics retailer, and to identifying the gaps to be use for this research.

2.9 Findings

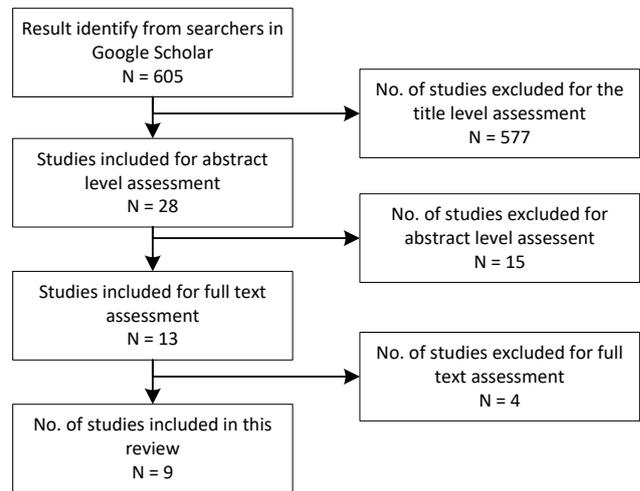


Figure 5: PRISMA diagram

The search conducted in google scholar presented with a total of 605 results. This results were then undergoing 3 level of assessment: excluding base on title, abstract level assessment and full text reading. The outcome of the assessment is presented in figure 5. 9 studies are included for this review and synthesised in table 2.1 to identify the information that is relevant to this research study.

Table 2: Result synthesise of the 9 studies

Background of the case study		Information relevant to the adoption of e-commerce			
Case study	Methodology	Benefit	Disadvantage	Application	Adoption strategy
1 Bahaddad et al. (2014)[35]	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher profits (focused on risk reduction)</li> <li>Improve efficiency</li> <li>Reduce cost for product</li> <li>Effective promotional approach (increase customer target of purchasing reputed global brands that is not available in local markets)</li> <li>Service availability 24/7</li> <li>Reduce business operation costs (e.g. hiring staff)</li> <li>Wide access (i.e. ability to deal with large customers)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Judicial legislation (e.g. protect customers from fraud)</li> <li>Lack of generic tools</li> <li>Bureaucratic system (e.g. getting approve for service takes time)</li> <li>Applicable law (e.g. transactions from different country may use different laws)</li> </ul>	electronic malls (e-Malls)	website
2 Muhannad et al. (2014)[36]	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce business operation costs</li> <li>Reduce business operation lead time</li> <li>Effective promotional approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Required expert (e.g. maintain)</li> <li>Security (online hacking)</li> <li>Issues with online transaction or delivery process</li> </ul>	e-retail	website



3	Almushayt (2015)[37]	Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Effective promotional approach</li> <li>• Reduce business operation costs</li> <li>• Improve customer satisfaction</li> <li>• Improve customer service (e.g. personalized service, support multiple language)</li> <li>• Competitive advantage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• implementation strategy</li> </ul>	e-commerce (general)	website
4	Almoawi (2011)[38]	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce business operation costs</li> <li>• Improve customer satisfaction</li> <li>• Competitive advantage</li> <li>• Effective promotional approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security</li> <li>• Required expert</li> </ul>	e-commerce (general)	website
5	Abid (2010)[39]	Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce business operation costs</li> <li>• Competitive advantage</li> <li>• Improve relationship with partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical issues</li> <li>• Security</li> <li>• Compatibility issues</li> <li>• High cost for development and maintaining</li> </ul>	e-commerce (general)	website
6	Bahaddad et al. (2015)[40]	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce business operation costs</li> <li>• Effective promotional approach</li> <li>• Improve customer satisfaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security</li> <li>• Required expert</li> <li>• Bureaucratic system</li> </ul>	e-Malls	website
7	AlGhamdi et al. (2012)[41]	Questionnaire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce business operation costs</li> <li>• Effective promotional approach</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technical issues</li> <li>• Security</li> </ul>	e-commerce (general)	website
8	AlGhamdi (2011)[42]	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government support</li> <li>• Secure online payment options (e.g. PayPal)</li> <li>• Competitive advantage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security</li> <li>• High cost for development and maintaining</li> </ul>	e-commerce (general)	website
9	Al-hawari et al. (2008)[43]	Interviews	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce business operation costs</li> <li>• Effective promotional approach</li> <li>• Competitive advantage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High cost for development and maintaining</li> <li>• Complex to implement</li> <li>• Required expert</li> <li>• Compatibility issues</li> <li>• Security</li> </ul>	e-commerce (general)	website

By reviewing the synthesis results from the 9 studies in table 2, 5 themes and 2 gaps were identified. The five themes identified, firstly, relates to the various methodologies being applied by past studies. This include reviewing past literatures, interview and the most used is the questionnaire. Therefore, proving that questionnaire is a suitable and feasible approach for analyzing a large population. This is to have an in-depth understanding of participants' experience on using e-commerce, alongside the effectiveness of the technology for this research, if being implemented for the Saudi Perfumes & Cosmetics retailer.

Secondly, there are various benefits of applying e-commerce. However, the ones that is repeated more than once are of it being an effective promotional approach (i.e. increase customer, e.g. by enabling them to purchase reputed global brands that is not available in local markets), reducing business operation costs (e.g. hiring staff) and improving customer satisfaction (e.g. customer have the ability to buy a product from home). It should be pointed out, the one benefit that seems interesting by the researcher is to have the privilege to ask for government support highlighted by AlGhamdi [42]. This provides SME's in Saudi to ask the government for loan or free contribution for establishing an online start-up business. Therefore, giving them a survival opportunity to compete with large enterprise within the cruel business environment.

Thirdly, there are a number of issues presented in table 2.1. The ones that is recurrent by the studies are issues with the government bureaucratic system (e.g. takes a long time to get the business approve), required an expert (e.g. to maintain the service), security issues (e.g. online hacking), technical issues (e.g. bugs within the system), high cost for development and maintaining, and compatibility issues (e.g. the application does not suit the company purpose).

Fourthly, is the various application being highlighted. Three of the studies highlighted either being e-retail Muhannad et al., [36] and e-Malls Bahaddad 2014; Bahaddad 2015[35],[40], whilst the rest six studies focus on e-commerce applications in general.

Fifthly, all of the 9 studies focuses on website being the only adopted strategy.

Meanwhile, it should be pointed out of the two gaps identified by reviewing these 9 studies. Firstly, as presented at the fifth theme discussed above, that all of the studies focus on applying website as the main e-commerce strategy. Though, there are other alternatives, for example using mobile application. Therefore, this research would focus on recommending the application of e-commerce for mobile and web platform.

Secondly, none of the studies explicitly present recommendations of the strategies to implement e-commerce for SME. Therefore, this research would bridge this gap by providing detail recommendation using flow-chart to guide Saudi Perfumes & Cosmetics retailer for implementing this strategy effectively.

## 2.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, the researcher had provided detail descriptions of the background of perfume industry in KSA and Saudi Perfume & Cosmetics company, and e-commerce technology (definition, history, type, benefits and barriers, and examples of businesses benefited of using e-commerce). In addition, the researcher had review past literatures to identify the existence of studies that focuses on reviewing

the application of e-commerce for retailing in SME in Saudi Arabia. This it to identify the benefits, disadvantages, the applied application and adoption strategy used for e-commerce.

## III. METHODOLOGY

The researcher would underline the type of data and techniques being applied for this research project, alongside the reasons behind the adoption. Moreover, description of the project management approach and methods to mitigate ethical issues is also illustrated in this chapter.

### 3.1 Data Collection Approach

Hesse-Biber and Leavy [44] defined research methodology as a term that dictates a theory and analysis on how a research should be proceed. In any research, applying a suitable methodology is the key factor towards completing a successful project. As applying the wrong methodology may well effect in issues arising, from project delay, research outcome being less comprehensive, etc.

The indication of a suitable research methodology, relates to the type of data being applied within the research study. Clark [45] indicate the existence of two categories of data: primary and secondary. The detail elaboration of these data and techniques associated with it, are elaborated below.

#### 3.2.1 Primary Data

In primary data collection, relates to the researcher collecting the required data by him/herself [46]. Therefore, this type of data is usually collected to answer a specific question, usually up-to-date and comes from a trustworthy source (e.g. experts).

There is indication of various methodology that can be conducted to collect this type of data. This methodology can be categorised into two types: qualitative and quantitative research methodology.

#### 1) Qualitative Research Methodology

This methodology is characterised by its research aims that is to understand the aspect of the environment being assessed, and its methods which generate word (opposed to numbers) for data analysis. Example of techniques applied for qualitative research is interview, group discussion and online forums.

The key *advantages* of applying qualitative methodology include:

- Create an openness environment, where it encourages the interviewer and interviewee to expand their response, which can eventually open to new discussions or topics that is not considered before.
- Give respondents the flexibility to answer freely, which reduces comparability or generalizability of data but increases detail [47].
- Capability to highlight hidden motives and actions by analysing the respondents' behavior [48].

The key *disadvantages* of applying qualitative methodology include:

- The effectiveness of the interview depends highly on the researcher communication skills. This is a skill that takes time to master, and if it's not considered properly would affect various negative issues (e.g. interviewee do not understand the question).
- Time consuming, as the researcher can only conduct the interview once the interviewee is made available and it takes longer time, when compared to the quantitative methodology
- Limited number of participants, given the long time taken to conduct this methodology.
- The difficulty to make a systematic comparison, as the response given are highly subjective.

2) **Quantitative Research Methodology**

Unlike qualitative research used for assessing words. The quantitative research methodology provides means of describing and explaining a phenomenon through numerical system (i.e. numbers), before conducting analysis. Therefore, the results gathered is more objective based via numerical findings, opposed to being more subjective when applying qualitative methodology [49]. Example of techniques applied for quantitative research is survey, clinical trial, simulation modelling.

The key *advantages* of applying quantitative methodology include:

- Can be used to test hypothesis of an experiment, given the data is numerical and applicable to measure it using statistics.
- Enable to reduce personal bias when collecting the data, as the researcher is kept within a distance when participant is answering the survey questions.
- Result synthesis is made possible, by comparing numerical results from more than one study to identify the common themes or patterns for discussion.
- Allowing the researcher to conduct a broader study, which involve a large number of participants. Therefore, improving the generalisation of the results.

The key *disadvantages* of applying quantitative methodology include:

- Required a large sample of respondents to provide a more statically accurate result.
- Questions that may lead to structural bias and false representation, where the result options reflect the researcher view opposed to the participants.
- The results are limited given the fixed number of questions and answer being provided in the survey.

**Method Applied for Research**

This research would be conducted using the quantitative research methodology. This is made possible using the survey technique. The reason for selecting this approach, is due to the large number of respondents required to answer the research question effectively (e.g. effectiveness of e-commerce), with the aim to provide a valid research output for this research study.

The Bristol Online Surveys tool is used to design the survey, as it recommended by Coventry university and made accessible for free.

**Table 3: Sample size calculator [50]**

Sample size (N)	Margin of Error (%)
10	31.6
50	14.1
100	10.0
200	7.1
500	4.5

A total of 100 respondents would be given the survey, with having the limited amount of time to complete this research study. Table 3 highlighted that the total number of respondents of 100 would deem with acceptable 10% of margin error, which is small and acceptable for this research study.

**3.2.2 Secondary Data**

In secondary data collection, relates to the researcher collecting data which had been collected in the past for purposes not originally related to this research study [51]. The advantage of using this data is given it being relative easy to find. For example, to identify studies that apply e-commerce for retailing in SME Saudi Arabia (subsection 2.9), which was takes about 3 days. However, the issue of using secondary data relate to the source of the data being identified from an un-trusted source. Therefore, the researcher only use trusted sources to identify the books, articles, journals and web contents to support this research study.

**3.2 Project Management Approach**

Sebastian [52] pointed out project management as a process of decision making about the appropriate alternatives in achieving an integral steering of time, cost and quality when conducting a project. Having to apply this approach within this research study enables the researcher to have an appropriate structure, alongside an in place mitigation plan of preventing negative issues that may impact the research development (e.g. project failure, delay of project completion, low quality research).

Therefore, the researcher acknowledges the importance of project management and integrated this management approach within the research study using these strategies:

- **Gantt chart:** The researcher used a Gantt chart as a guiding tool (table 4), in making sure that the weekly task is coordinated and sufficient enough for achieving the completion of the research project within the time given by the university. In addition, the weekly task is set a milestone, therefore, making the researcher well aware if there is drag of time within any of the task, so the researcher would have to compensate the time loss.



Table 4: Project Gantt chart

Task \ Week	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10	W11	W12
Decide research area												
Determine research topic												
Proposal												
Introduction												
Literature review												
Research Methodologies												
Data collection												
Analysis data												
Conclusion												
Abstract & finishing touches												
Prove read and revision												
Complete project												

- **Regular supervisor meeting:** The researcher had regular supervisor meeting with the main supervisor to gain secondary feedback and in making sure that the project is on track. This helps to manage the time and end quality of this thesis before final submission.

This chapter is separated into 5 parts, in which each part focuses on the goal of this analyses as discussed before. There are a total of 12 survey questions. 11 of this question is stand alone, while the last question is branched into 5 sub questions (i.e. question number 12).

### 3.3 Ethics

Research ethics is a serious issue for any research project. Privitera [53] defined it being an action that a research must take to conduct a responsible and moral research. This require to anticipate what might happen and how to mitigate the issue effectively. For this research project, the researcher had applied an ethics application, which was given approval by the Coventry University ethics community (Project no.: P44214). Having so, help to minimize the risk of avoiding any harm to the participants during data collection for this research (e.g. participant confidentiality). This is by having the ethics community to assess the method applied within this research study (i.e. survey). In addition, for making sure that proper procedure is emplaced before data collection (e.g. request of the design and validation of the documented consent form and participation information sheet, before handing out to the participants).

### 3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter the researcher had pointed out the data being used within the research project (i.e. primary and secondary data), adopted methodology (i.e. quantitative methodology using survey for 100 participants), project management approach (i.e. Gantt chart and regular supervisor meeting), and the method for considering ethical issues (i.e. applied for ethics within Coventry University).

## IV. RESULT

The results from the survey response (100 respondents) would be analyse to identify the common themes to be discuss. The goal is to have an understanding of the current approach use within the company for selling perfume, issues of the applied approach, general e-commerce questions, respondents experience of using e-commerce, and their opinion if the application of e-commerce is a good idea if implemented in the company for selling perfume.

### 4.1 Result Analyses

1. What is your gender?

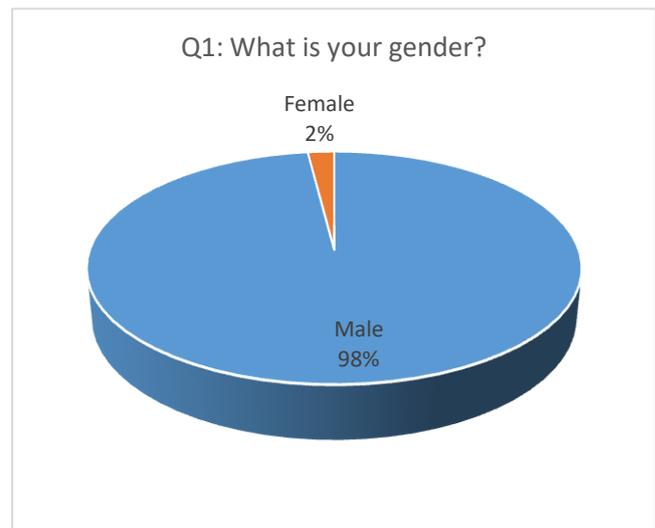


Figure 6: Survey answer for question 1

Figure 6 indicated that within the 100 respondents answering the survey question, 98% of them are male, while 2% are female. This shows that more male is working in the organization. This might have been due to gender segregation involving customs in Saudi, where women are not allowed to do most of the jobs that men can do in Saudi Arabia [54].

2. How old are you?

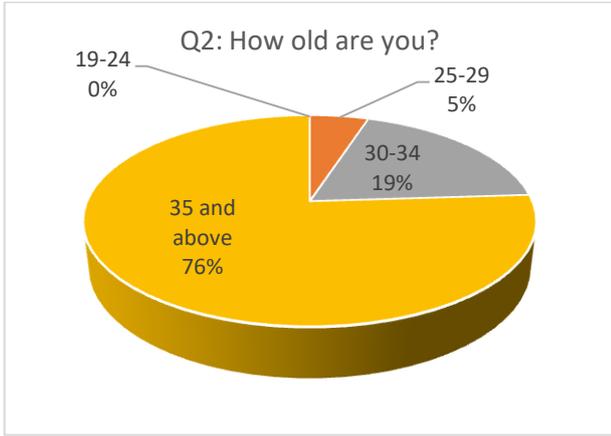


Figure 7: Survey answer for question 2

Figure 7 presents in which more respondents answered the survey is within the age 35 and above (76%). This is then followed by the age of 30-34 (19%) and 25-29 (5%), while none within the range of 19-24 of age. This might have been due to the age restriction imposed by the company of hiring more matured workers or with experience, opposed to the ones that are not.

3. Are you currently working in MSTC in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

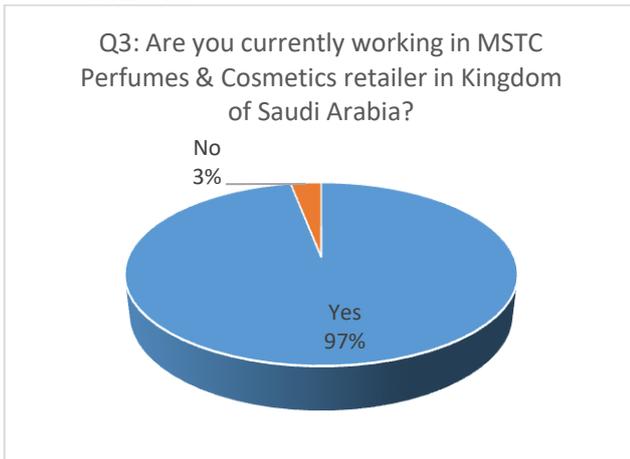


Figure 8: Survey answer for question 3

Figure 8 presents the number of respondents that is working in the MSTC Ltd in Saudi Arabia. Hence, it was found that 97% of the respondents (97 participants) are working in the company, while 3% (3 participants) are not. Therefore, the survey is set to automatically reject the respondents who are not working in the company. This is given one of the first criteria of only accepting participants that is working in the company to answer this survey.

4. What is your current role in the company?

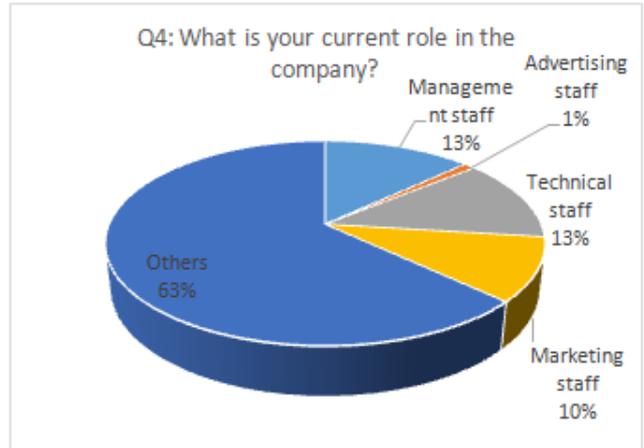


Figure 9: Survey answer for question 4

Figure 9 shows that 63% of the respondents selected others as their role for working in the company, this includes: accountant, finance manager, purchasing staff, sales staff, supply chain staff, sourcing and purchasing team, security, general worker, maintenance staff, production staff, storage staff, and production team. Meanwhile, 13% working as a management staff, 14% technical staff, 10% as a marketing staff, and 1% as an advertising staff. However, it should be emphasized that two of the staff are not sure of their working position. This may have been due to the reason they are still new in the company. Therefore, they do not have a fixed position.

5. What is the current method used for selling perfume in the company?

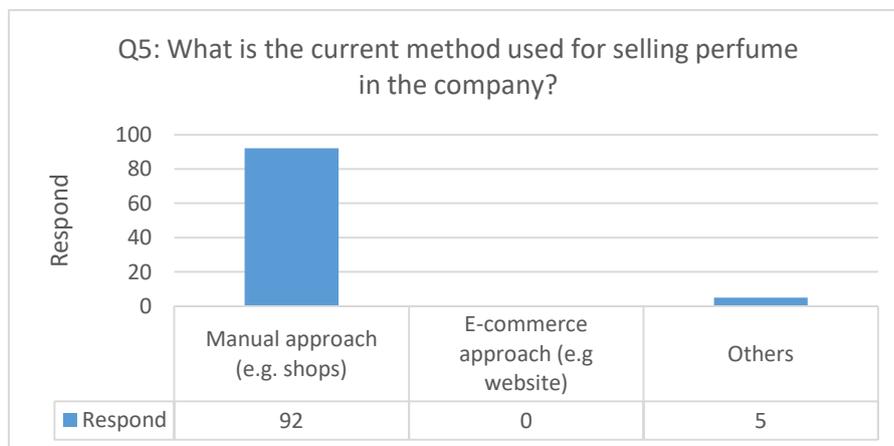


Figure 10: Survey answer for question 5



Figure 10 highlighted that out of the 97 respondents applicable for this part of the survey, 92 believed that the current method used for selling perfume in the company is through the manual approach (i.e. direct selling). Meanwhile, the other 5 respondents answered others, as they

are not sure. This proves that the recommendation of the use of e-commerce for this research is applicable and would benefit them.

6. What are the issues of using the current approach?

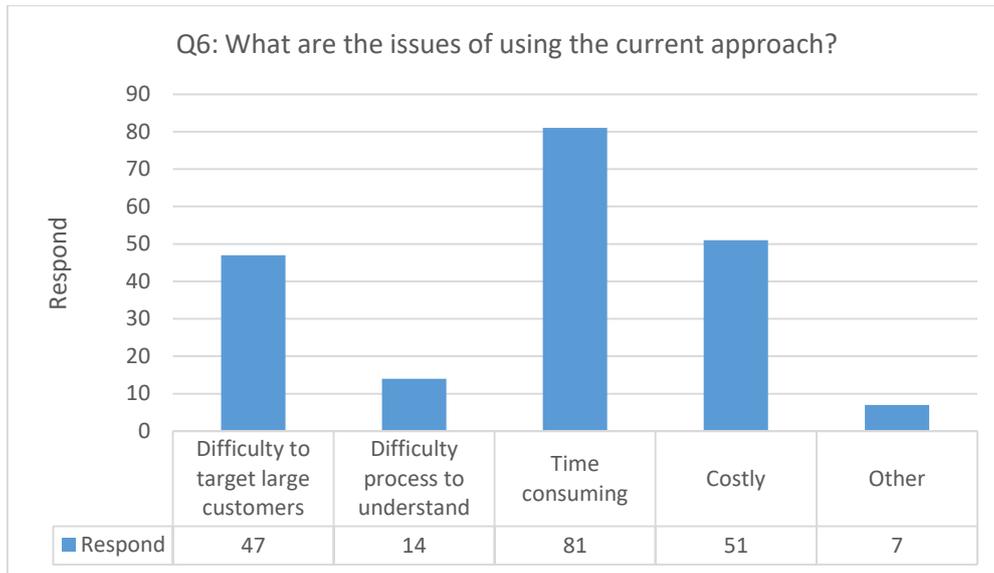


Figure 11: Survey answer for question 6

Figure 11 shows that the upmost issue faced when using the manual approach for selling their products is time consuming. This is then followed by costly, difficult to target large target consumers and difficulty to understand. Meanwhile, 7 respondents answered others, as 6 of them is unsure of this issue, while 1 says none. The respondent that

believed that there may not be an issue, may well disagree and would not accept to change (e.g. fear of change).

7. Are you familiar with e-commerce technology?

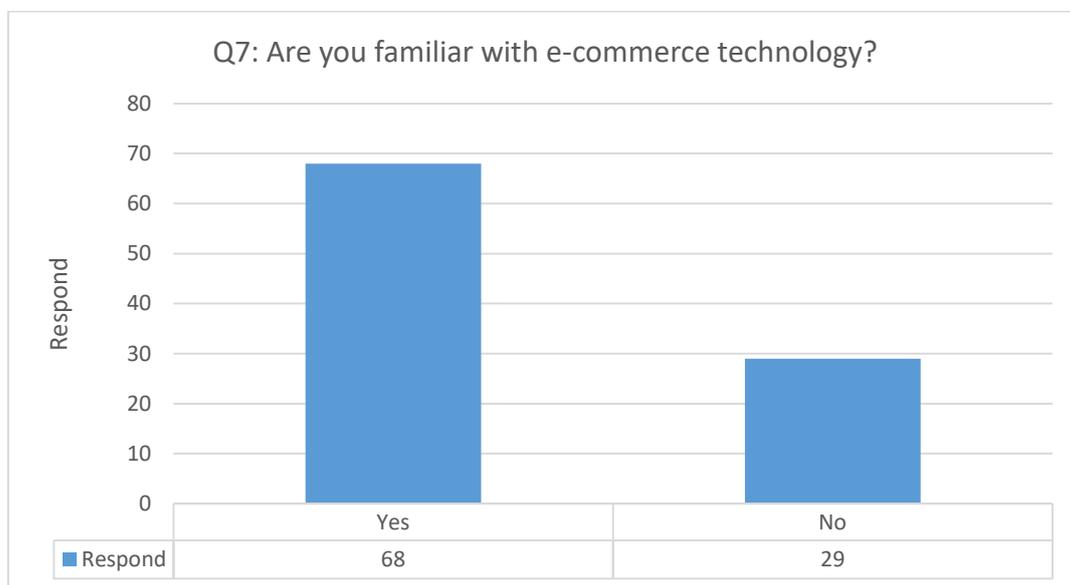


Figure 12: Survey answer for question 7

Figure 12 shows that, out of the 97 respondents applicable to answer this part of the survey. More of them have knowledge (68 participants) on e-commerce technology. However, the 29 respondents that answered no, is removed from the survey. This is given the second main criteria for this survey is only to accept respondents that have knowledge on e-commerce technology.

8. How long have you been using any type of e-commerce technology?

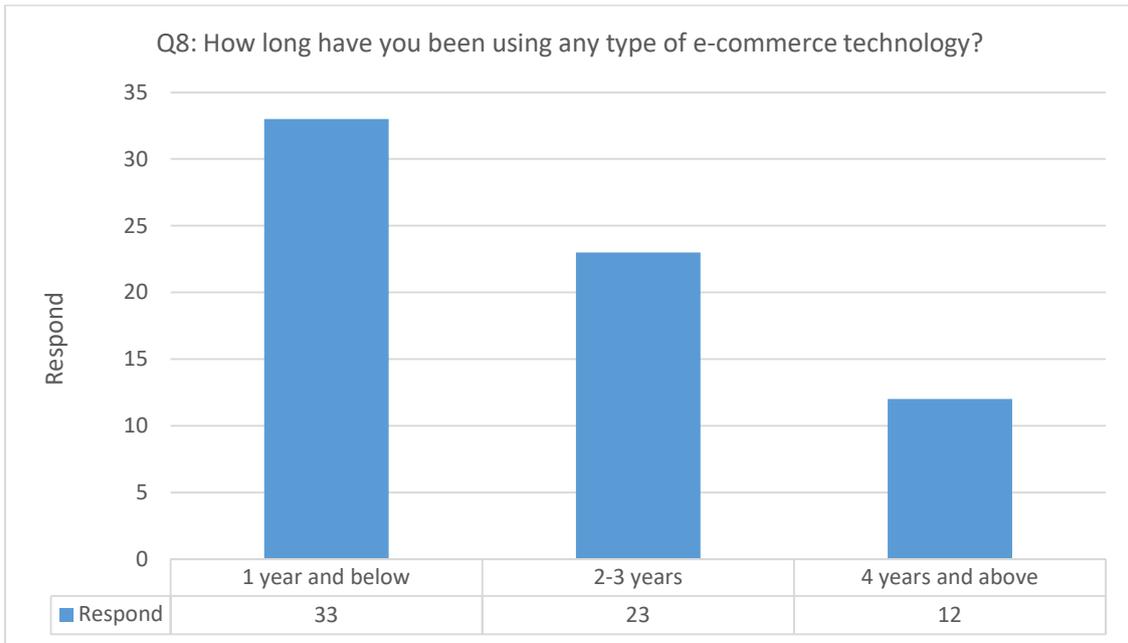


Figure 13: Survey answer for question 8

Figure 13 highlighted that, out of the 68 respondents applicable for this part of the survey. Most of them have been using e-commerce application for a year and below, followed by 2-3 years of range and 4 years and above. Therefore, this shows that most of the staffs may have an idea of its benefits. However, the researcher believed that it would benefit them further, if the company send all of the

staffs for training. This is to improve their IT skills to prepare them for using the new e-commerce application (e.g. improve skills to use the program effectively).

9. What type of e-commerce technology are you familiar for selling product?

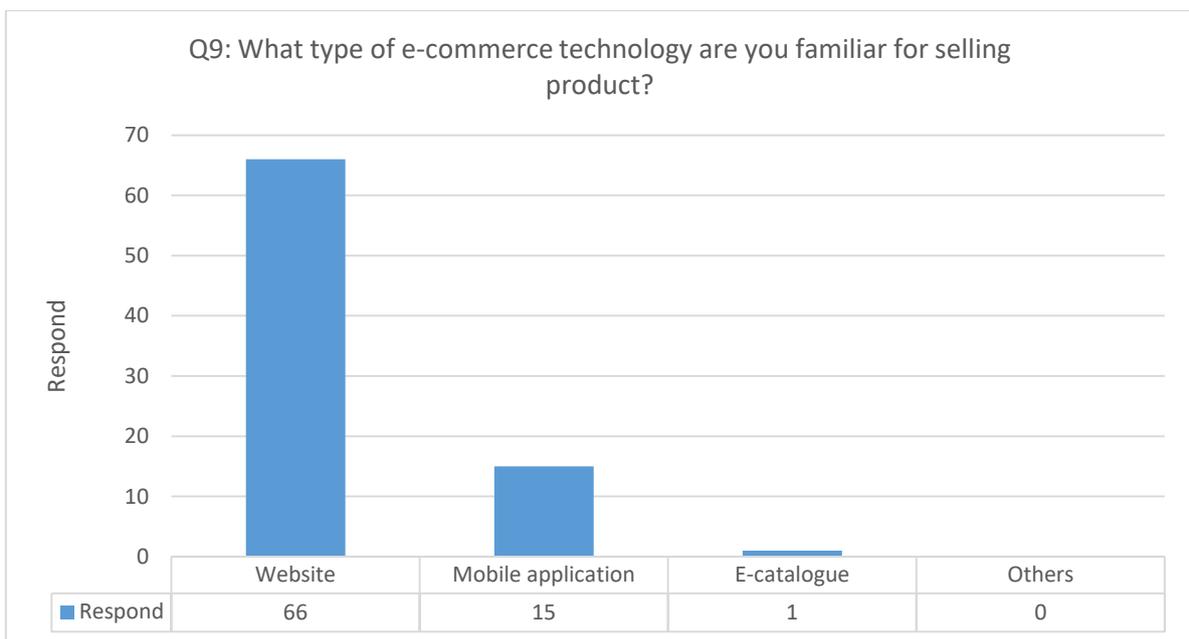


Figure 14: Survey answer for question 9

Figure 14 shows that most of the respondents are familiar with the use of website for selling products (e.g. ebay website, amazon). This is then followed by mobile application (e.g. amazon application on android or IOS) and e-catalogue. Therefore, for this research, the recommendation would focus on the recommendations of a website and a mobile application for promoting the company perfume, given it's the most known application by the respondents for e-commerce.

10. What electronic peripherals do you use to access these e-commerce tools?

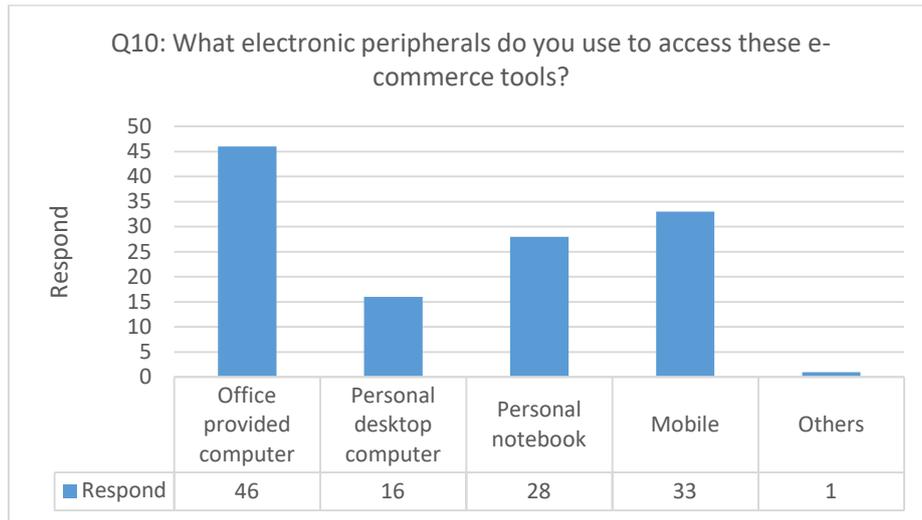


Figure 15: Survey answer for question 10

Figure 15 highlighted that the most used electronic peripherals for accessing the e-commerce application is through the office computer, mobile phone, personal notebook, personal computer, and the least is by using a tablet which answered as others. This shows, that there are

various peripherals that can be used by the staff to manage the e-commerce application when it's being deployed.

11. I AM satisfied with using e-commerce tool for purchasing product?



Figure 16: Survey answer for question 11

Figure 16 signified out of the 68 respondents applicable for this part of the survey, most of them agree with using e-commerce for purchasing their products. This is then followed by strongly agree, undecided and disagree. This shows that the positive response does over shadow the negative responses. Therefore, proving that applying e-commerce application would benefit the company in the long run.

12.1. I BELIEVE, e-commerce is more effective compared to the current method use in the company?

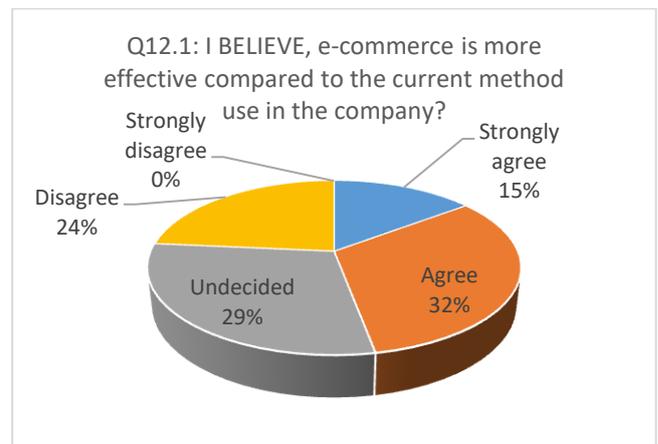


Figure 17: Survey answer for question 12.1

Out of the 68 respondents applicable for this part of the survey, 32% agree that e-commerce application is more effective compared to the manual method being used for selling their perfume (figure 17). This is then followed by respondents that are undecided (29%), disagree (24%) and strongly agree (15%). Therefore, this proves that more staff agree on the idea of migrating the use of manual to e-commerce method for selling perfume.

12.2. I BELIEVE, e-commerce can improve advertising and selling perfume?

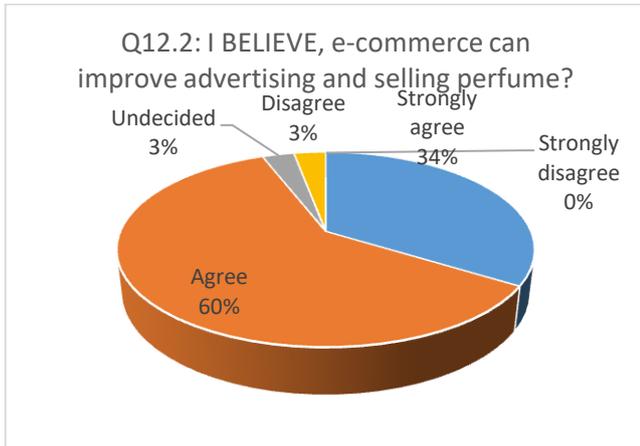


Figure 18: Survey answer for question 12.2

Out of the 68 respondents applicable for this part of the survey, 60% agreed that e-commerce can further improve the process of advertising and selling perfume, 34% strongly agree on the statement, 3% undecided and the other 3% disagree. Hence, its undeniable that e-commerce would greatly benefit for advertising and selling purposes if implemented in the company.

12.3. I BELIEVE, the application of e-commerce is an effective strategy?



Figure 19: Survey answer for question 12.3

Out of the 68 respondents applicable for this part of the survey, most of them agreed that the application of e-commerce is an effective strategy if implemented in the company. This is then followed by strongly agree (32%), undecided (7%) and disagree (2%).

12.4. I BELIEVE, application of e-commerce is a feasible strategy for long term?



Figure 20: Survey answer for question 12.4

Out of the 68 respondents applicable for this part of the survey, most of them agreed that the application of e-commerce is a feasible strategy for long term if being implemented in the company. Meanwhile, this is then followed by strongly agree (34%), and undecided (9%). Therefore, the responds in this questions prove of the staffs believed that adopting this approach would help the company to grow further in the long run, compared using the manual method which seems less effective.

12.5. I BELIEVE, application of e-commerce would bring more benefits then harm?

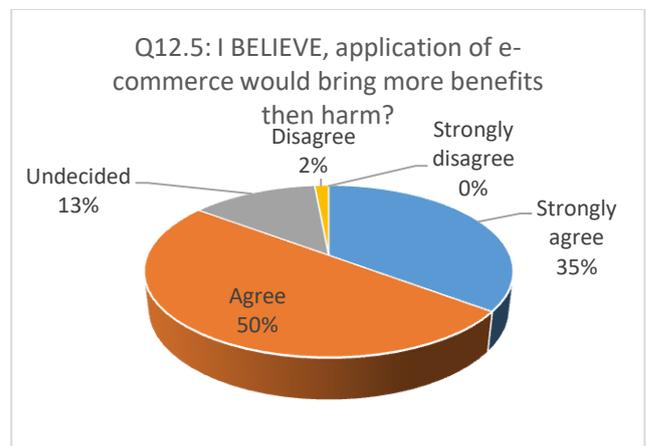


Figure 21: Survey answer for question 12.5

Out of the 68 respondents applicable for this part of the survey, half of the respondents believed that applying e-commerce would bring more benefits then harm towards the company. This is the followed by, 35% having to be strongly agreed, 13 being undecided and 2% having to disagree on the statement.

#### 4.2 Conclusion

Having to analyse the survey results. The researcher had identified five main points:

1. The company is using the manual method for promotional and selling of perfume (i.e. direct selling).



2. There are issues of using the manual method (e.g. time consuming, difficulty to understand).
3. There are more than half of the respondents having to understand the application of e-commerce.
4. There is various application used by the respondents for purchasing products online. The ones that are mostly used are through website and mobile application, which would be the two main application recommended for the company for applying e-commerce.
5. Most of the staffs provide positive answers on the recommendations of applying e-commerce for the company.

## V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK

Conclusion on how each research objectives are being achieved, alongside future work is presented.

1. **To build an understanding of the perfume industry, its position and its important in Saudi's market.**  
The first objective is met for this research by reviewing various literature regards to perfume industry in Saudi Arabia in subsection 2.2.
2. **To build an understanding of e-commerce strategy.**  
The second objective is met for this research by reviewing various literature within the literature review chapter. This is to identify the definition, development and progression, type, and the benefits of applying e-commerce.
3. **To review previous practices of e-commerce strategy in SMEs for retailing in Saudi.**  
The third objective is met for this research by conducting a mini systematic review in subsection 2.9 and 2.10. This mini systematic review is used to review the existence practices of e-commerce strategy in SMEs for retailing in Saudi. In addition, information from this studies were then extracted using four classifications: benefit, disadvantage, application and the adoption strategy. This is enabled the researcher to synthesis the results and identify the gaps.
4. **To collect required data that are relevant to build an understanding of the current approach and issues for adopting the manual approach for retailing within the selected case study.**  
The fourth objective is met for this research by distributing an online survey to the staffs working in the MSTC company. From the analysis of the survey results, it was found that: the company is using the manual method for promotional and selling of perfume (i.e. direct selling); there are issues of using the manual method (e.g. time consuming, difficulty to understand).
5. **To recommend a feasible strategy of applying e-commerce strategy within the selected case study.**  
The fifth objective is met for this research by providing a detail recommendation of the functionality and recommended alternatives for developing the applications (mobile and website). It was concluded that using an off the shelf application provided by Shopify service is the best option. This is given the rationale of having the software provided by the service provider to support both web and mobile application in a single developed application. Therefore, saving cost and development time.

The researcher would be guiding the Saudi Perfume & Cosmetics company on implementing the e-commerce application based on the given recommendation This is to make sure, the process is conducted appropriately and smoothly. Meanwhile, once the application is successfully implemented and used within a week of time. The researcher would hand-out survey to make a comparison on the effectiveness of using the e-commerce application, opposed to the old method. In addition, the survey would gather responder recommendations on ways to improve the application (e.g. functions, design) for future enhancement.

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- %D8%B3%D8%B9%D9%88%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D9%88%D8%B6%D8%B9-%D8%A8%D8%B5%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%87-%D9%81%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A8%D8%B2%D9%86%D8%B3> [3 July 2016].
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## AUTHORS PROFILE



He graduated from King Abdulaziz University Class 2001 with a bachelor in Science in Computer Science, He is extended his academic work by doing his master in Management Information Systems from Coventry University in the United Kingdom with a Merit. He returned to Saudi Arabia and started his professional work and his proceeding with his PhD. In the same major Computer Information Systems at King Abdulaziz University. The author also has an interest in developing business and systems in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and supporting emerging and small businesses, and he works in the private sector as a business developer.