

## *Chapter 11*

# *Conclusion and Recommendations*

### *11.1 Introduction*

This study is one of extremely few studies to examine and investigate empirically the relationship between E-Marketing adoption and marketing performance and one of the first studies to examine this relationship empirically in a small business context. It is also one of the first studies to explore the different aspects related to E-Marketing practices in Egypt.

This chapter is concerned with illustrating the research contributions to the accumulative knowledge in the field. The chapter starts by illustrating the research objectives and findings as well as the main contributions of the study to both research and theory. Afterwards, the chapter discusses the different academic and managerial implications of the study as well as the different limitations associated to it. By the end of the chapter, some suggestions and direction for future research are presented.

### *11.2 Research objectives*

The major aims of the research was to; develop a theoretical framework to understand and interpret the adoption of E-Marketing by SBEs; explore and analyse the different factors affecting the adoption of E-Marketing by SBEs; explore the different forms, implementation levels and tools of E-Marketing used by SBEs; and finally to investigate the impact of E-Marketing adoption on small businesses marketing performance.

The research adapted an interdisciplinary approach that made use of traditional SBEs marketing, E-Marketing, IT, and information systems literature. Meanwhile as E-Marketing is a field that makes use of IT and IS, the research considered the appropriateness of the various theories that underpin research into IT and IS implementation.

Consequently, the objectives of the research were:-

1. To explore the different factors affecting the adoption of E-Marketing by industrial and trading SBEs.

2. To explore the different forms, implementation levels and tools of E-Marketing used by SBEs.
3. To explore the relationship between E-Marketing adoption and industrial and trading SBEs marketing performance.
4. To develop and clarify a theoretical model that will help to understand and interpret the relationship between E-Marketing adoption and SBEs marketing performance.
5. To use this model to evaluate the potential of E-Marketing for SBEs in developed countries (UK) and developing countries (Egypt).

To achieve these aims a generative research design was selected and employed to integrate the concept of triangulation by using data, method and methodological triangulation.

### **11.3 Contributions of the Study**

This study makes a number of important contributions to both research and theory of E-Marketing which is a relatively new field of knowledge. As the theory in the field of E-Marketing is still in its infancy stage, affected badly by the unclear way of dealing with the concept and definition of E-Marketing, related to many marketing dimensions and exists in a very rapidly changing environment, this study can be considered as a step toward a theory building in the field of E-Marketing.

Within this respect, the study has integrated a considerably large body of relevant marketing literature, small businesses literature, IT and new technology acceptance literature and combined different theories into single integrative perspective. The following part of the chapter illustrates the different contributions of the study.

#### **Contribution 1:-**

#### ***The different factors affecting the adoption of E-Marketing by industrial and trading SBEs:***

Understanding the different factors affecting the adoption of E-Marketing by SBEs is a very important step towards engaging more small businesses in E-Marketing practices which will provide these SBEs with all the benefits associated with E-Marketing. This study provides a contribution to the field by providing an empirically tested investigation related to the factors affecting the adoption of E-Marketing. Moreover, this research represents an important step to

the knowledge in the field by proposing and empirically testing the TAM and IDT constructs in the field of E-Marketing. However, although these constructs (relative advantage, ease of use and compatibility) are conceived as important issues in traditional IS environments, their role as an E-Marketing drivers will increase their usability in the small businesses environment. The results reveal a number of areas for future research.

### ***TAM and IDT factors and the adoption of E-Marketing by SBEs:***

The study extended the theories of TAM and IDT which are two of the most effective theories in predicting and explaining the use and adoption of new technologies (see chapter 3 - sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2). As shown in the literature and the findings of this study, understanding TAM and IDT related factors are critical to understand the adoption of E-Marketing by SBEs. In this context and based on the findings of the study, the SBE perceived ease of use, perceived relative advantage and perceived compatibility have a positive impact on E-Marketing adoption by SBEs. The highest effect on E-Marketing adoption occurred by perceived relative advantage followed by the SBE perceived ease of use and the lowest impact occurred by compatibility. Moreover, SBEs internal factors (namely the SBE owner skills, available resources of the SBE, SBE organisational culture, SBE type of products, international orientation of the SBE and SBE size) are found to have a positive direct impact on the SBE perceived ease of use, perceived relative advantage and perceived compatibility.

Moreover, this research represents a significant and vital step towards proposing and empirically testing the TAM and IDT related factors (relative advantage, ease of use and compatibility) within the field of E-Marketing in general, and the adoption of E-Marketing by SBEs in particular. Nevertheless, although these factors are considered to be important factors in the usual information systems environments, they will also have a high usability potential in a small businesses context, as illustrated by the findings of this study (chapter ten - section 10.2). Moreover, the results of this study expose a number of areas for future research within the field.

### ***SBEs factors affecting the adoption of E-Marketing:***

This study provides some new theoretical grounds for studying SBEs E-Marketing adoption by investigating the impact of small business enterprise related factors on this adoption. The investigation revealed that small business internal factors (namely the SBE owner skills, available resources of the SBE, SBE organisational culture, SBE type of products,

international orientation of the SBE and SBE size) positively and significantly affect E-Marketing adoption both directly and indirectly (chapter ten - section 10.2). Within this context, the indirect impact of the small business internal factors is greater than its direct impact on E-Marketing adoption by SBEs. Surprisingly, the SBE external factors had insignificant impact on E-Marketing adoption. In another words, E-Marketing adoption by SBEs is significantly affected by the SBE owner skills and support, available resources of the SBE, SBE organisational culture, SBE type of products, international orientation of the SBE and SBE size.

### **Contribution 2:- *Different forms, implementation levels and tools of E-Marketing used by SBEs***

This study is one of the first studies to validate empirically the different E-Marketing forms and tools used by SBEs when implementing E-Marketing, as well as the different levels of this implementation. The study focused on investigating the use of different E-Marketing forms (namely Business to Consumer - B2C, Business to Business - B2B and Business to Government - B2G), different E-Marketing tools (namely Internet Marketing, E-Mail Marketing, Mobile Marketing, Intranet Marketing and Extranet Marketing) as well as different levels of E-Marketing implementation by UK industrial and trading small businesses. More specifically, the study examined the relative popularity of these different E-Marketing forms, tools and levels of implementation (see chapter eight - sections 8.3.4.1, 8.3.4.2 and 8.3.4.3).

This study finds that B2B and B2C are the most commonly used E-Marketing forms by SBEs, Internet Marketing and E-Mail Marketing are the most commonly used E-Marketing tools by SBEs and the majority of SBEs are implementing E-Marketing at a medium level and one third of these enterprises are implementing E-Marketing in a high level.

### **Contribution 3:- *The relationship between E-Marketing adoption and industrial and trading SBEs marketing performance***

This study is one of the first studies to validate empirically the impact of E-Marketing adoption by SBEs on the marketing performance of such enterprises. Within this context, the study examined not only the current impact but also the future impact of E-Marketing adoption on SBEs marketing performance. Firstly, with regard to the current impact of E-Marketing

adoption on SBE marketing performance, the study examined the current perceived impact of E-Marketing on gaining new sales, new customers, increased profits, good customer relationships, reduction of sales costs, faster discovery of customer needs, greater customisation of products, new markets, fast communication with customers, increased customer satisfaction, developing new products, faster adaptability of customer needs, providing better service quality, increased market share and increased brand equity. The examination revealed that E-Marketing adoption has a powerful positive impact on current marketing performance of the SBEs (see chapter nine - section 9.5.1).

Secondly, with regard to the future impact of E-Marketing adoption on SBE marketing performance, the study examined the future perceived impact of E-Marketing on gaining new sales, new customers, increased profits, good customer relationships, reduction of sales costs, faster discovery of customer needs, greater customisation of products, new markets, fast communication with customers, increased customer satisfaction, developing new products, faster adaptability of customer needs, providing better service quality, increased market share and increased brand equity. The examination revealed that SBEs owners and managers perceive a positive impact for E-Marketing adoption on the future marketing performance of the SBEs (see chapter nine - section 9.5.2).

#### **Contribution 4:-**

#### ***Contribution to theory: A Model for E-Marketing adoption in SBEs and its impact on marketing performance:***

The study developed a model which examined E-Marketing adoption by SBEs and assessed the impact of this adoption on the small businesses marketing performance. The research framework was developed based on the literature review and the outcomes of the two exploratory studies conducted in Egypt and the UK. It is found from the literature review that a significant number of studies in the field of E-Marketing have been either descriptive or theoretical, and there is a lack of sound research models to guide future research in the area of E-Marketing generally and in the area of E-Marketing in SBEs in particular. Despite this, there have been some attempts to identify the nature and use of E-Marketing by some researchers like Taylor and England 2006; Krishnamurthy and Singh 2005; Sheth and Sharma 2005; Fillis et al 2004 a; De Kervenoael et al., 2006; Hackney et al., 2006; Darby, Jones and Al Madani 2003; Christodoulides and Chernatony 2004; Luck and Lancaster 2003; Singh and Hill 2003; Kim and Kim 2004; and Lee-Kelley et al., 2004, though only few of them can provide a strong

theoretical or statistical support for these studies. Therefore, there was a great need for full scale research that is statistically significant as a need to develop a theoretical model to understand and interpret the use of E-Marketing by SBEs. This study not only provides this model but also validates it both conceptually and empirically.

### **Contribution 5:-**

#### ***Using the model to evaluate the potential of E-Marketing for SBEs in developing countries (Egypt)***

This study is the first to explore the current practices of E-Marketing by Egyptian SBEs. To achieve a deep reflective understanding of the phenomenon under investigation the study attempted to explore the current aspects related to E-Marketing adoption and implementation by Egyptian SBEs depending on semi-structured interviews. Thirty five case studies were conducted depending on in depth semi structured interviews with Egyptian SBEs owners and/or managers, which in turn were investigated and analysed.

The findings showed that Egyptian SBEs owners, marketing managers and sales managers are at a very early stage in using E-Marketing and may have limited knowledge about E-Marketing as well as its different tools or forms. Moreover, it was found that the size of the SBE; type of products; available resources; the knowledge of the owner, marketing manager or sales manager; customers orientation towards E-Marketing; the availability of government support in the form of international trade points; and finally the effect of the small business success are the most important factors that have a great impact on the decision of adopting E-Marketing or at least one of its tools or forms by Egyptian SBEs. It is also found that Egyptian SBEs owners and marketing and sales managers did not find any positive impact for E-Marketing adoption on the marketing performance of their SBEs.

These findings are the first findings to be generated from Egyptian SBEs in relation to their E-Marketing adoption and the impact of this adoption on its marketing performance.

### **Contribution 6:-**

#### ***Methodological Contribution***

This study provides a methodological contribution to the field through employing an empirical and multi-disciplinary approach to E-Marketing research. This approach was chosen because it incorporates the concept of triangulation by combining focus group, in depth

interviews and small and large scale survey questionnaires. Moreover, the proposed framework, as well as the different relationships within it, which was generated from the review of the literature and the outcomes of the two exploratory studies, was tested and validated by rigorous quantitative analysis (e.g. multiple regression analysis, simple regression analysis, Chi square, one sample T-test and path analysis).

To the extent that empirical study of E-Marketing adoption by SBEs is concerned, this study is one of the first studies of E-Marketing (that examined all or most of its components) that combines quantitative and qualitative research into a single research design. Within this context, and based on the review of the literature, only three studies within the field have employed a triangulation approach to investigate Internet marketing usage by SBEs. These are the studies of Brock and Zhou (2005), Adam and Deans (2001) and Poon and Swatman (1999b). All of these studies did not examine E-Marketing or its adoption by SBEs, instead all of them focused only on Internet Marketing usage by small enterprises. Moreover, to the extent that empirical study of the impact of E-Marketing adoption by SBEs on marketing performance of small enterprises is concerned, this study is one of the first studies to investigate such an impact and combines quantitative and qualitative research into a single research design.

Most of the previous empirical studies on E-Marketing employed either survey research strategy (e.g. Dembla, Palvia and Krishnan, 2007; Lympelopoulos and Chaniotakis, 2005; Wong, Chan and Leung, 2005; Okazaki, 2005; Elliott and Boshoff, 2005; Kim and Kim, 2004; Beheshti, 2004; Ghosh et al, 2004; Teo and Tan, 2002; Goldsmith and Lafferty, 2002 and Vlosky, Fontenot and Blalock, 2000) or case study research strategy (e.g. Murphy and Kielgast, 2008; Sinisalo et al, 2007; Gengatharen and Standing, 2005; White and Daniel, 2004; Scupola, 2003; Daniel et al, 2003; Martin and Matlay, 2003 and Darby, 2003) as their main method of research design. Therefore by combining in depth literature review, quantitative survey research and qualitative research, this study overcomes the limitations of previous studies and provides a new perspective for E-Marketing and its implementation.

### **11.4 Research Implications**

This research has theoretical (academic) and managerial (practical) implications. These implications are discussed in the following part of the chapter.

### ***11.4.1 Theoretical (academic) Implications:***

In terms of academic implications, the research can be considered as a unique research in the field of E-Marketing in general and E-Marketing in SBEs in particular. The study has not only made a considerable contribution to the accumulative knowledge in its direct field, but it has also some implications for the wider body of knowledge. The findings discussed in detail in chapter ten have a number of implications for management theorists.

The first significant implication of this research in the E-Marketing field is based on not only validating TAM and IDT in the context of E-Marketing adoption but also the extension of the two models to increase their ability to illustrate this adoption. This study proposed and examined the factors that affect the adoption of E-Marketing by extending TAM and IDT to include factors that are more related to the small businesses environment. Thus, the study helps researchers to have a deep understanding about the different relationships among relative advantage (usefulness), ease of use and compatibility and the adoption of E-Marketing. Consequently, it confirms that the adoption of E-Marketing depends on the perceptions of small businesses owners and marketing managers about its usefulness, ease of use and compatibility. The study also helps to understand the predictors of relative advantage of E-Marketing.

The second significant implication of this research is based on its contribution to the theory of E-Marketing by the examination of the phenomenon under investigation in SBEs context. Through this, the research also contributes to the expansion of the studies on E-Marketing in small businesses. Almost all of the studies in the field are directed at examining the impact of E-Marketing adoption and/or implementation on business performance (e.g. Domke-Damonte and Levsen, 2002; Wu et al, 2003; Drennan and McColl-Kennedy, 2003 and Garbi, 2002). However, this research examines the impact of E-Marketing adoption on marketing performance, which can guide other researchers when examining this impact in other types of enterprises, industries or in other countries.

Thirdly, this study is the first to validate empirically the relationship between E-Marketing adoption and marketing performance among SBEs. The study developed, tested and validated the model both conceptually and empirically. This again provides other researchers with a valid model to be used to investigate the impact of E-Marketing adoption on marketing performance in other types of enterprises, industries or in other countries.

Fourthly, Gatticker et al. (2000) find that there is a limited cross feeding and integration of research results in the fields of marketing, information systems and sociology (Gatticker et al., 2000; P: 138). Unquestionably, such a limited exchange of ideas across these fields will further reduce our understanding of how different companies and enterprises use and adopt E-Marketing. This study aimed to exchange and integrates ideas, concepts and theories among marketing, information systems and IT through testing and expanding TAM and IDT in the context of E-Marketing adoption by SBEs. This was done as an attempt to increase the exchange of ideas across the fields of marketing, information systems and sociology which in turn will lead to better understanding of how different companies and enterprises use and adopt E-Marketing.

Fifthly, this study is possibly one of the first studies to suggest and validate empirically those factors that affect the adoption of E-Marketing by SBEs. Moreover, the study provided the first attempt to explore E-Marketing practices by Egyptian SBEs. Although the findings showed that Egyptian SBEs owners, marketing managers and sales managers have a very early stage of knowledge about E-Marketing, these findings add to the current knowledge in the field and encourage other researchers to conduct more research to investigate the practices of E-Marketing in Egypt in different contexts.

In summary, this research has provide a significant contribution to the advancements of the theory by providing a model that can be used to understand the adoption of E-Marketing by SBEs as well as the impact of this adoption on small businesses marketing performance.

#### ***11.4.2 Managerial (practical) Implications:-***

This study has potential for managerial (practical) applications in the adoption and usage of E-Marketing by SBEs. These implications can be illustrated as follows:-

Firstly, not only does this study provide an empirical evaluation of the most important factors affecting the adoption of E-Marketing by SBEs, but it also measure the importance of such factors which were generated from a comprehensive review of the relevant literature as well as the outcomes of the research exploratory studies. Based on the importance of these factors revealed from the findings of the study, governmental agencies, non governmental organisations (NGO's) and other institutions (not only in the UK but also for all the similar countries) linked with SBEs [e.g. The UK department for business, enterprise and regulatory

reform (BERR) in the UK and the Egyptian Social Fund for Development (SFD), Egyptian small enterprise development organisation (SEDO) and the Arab union for small enterprises (AUSE) in Egypt] will have a better understanding about the different factors affecting the adoption of E-Marketing by small business which then can be used in planning and directing the future policies, plans and strategies of these organisations. This will in turn increase the diffusion of E-Marketing practices by small businesses and might lead to a positive impact on the economy.

Secondly, the study findings confirm that IT theories (namely TAM and IDT) are valid in illustrating the adoption of E-Marketing by SBEs. The findings suggest that usefulness, compatibility and ease of use are among the main factors affecting the adoption of E-Marketing by SBEs. Since perceived relative advantage, perceived ease of use and perceived compatibility are important determinants of E-Marketing adoption, governmental agencies, non governmental organisations and other institutions (e.g. universities, colleges and other educational institutions) linked with SBEs should aim at increasing small business owners and/or marketing managers awareness of these issues and how tasks can be supported by E-Marketing. Moreover, such organisations should aim at reducing apprehensions about the complexity of E-Marketing usage.

Thirdly, employing the same logic and based on the same findings small business owners and/or marketing managers should aim at increasing the awareness of their employees about these issues and how tasks can be supported by E-Marketing, how the use of E-Marketing can create relative advantages for the enterprise and finally how E-Marketing practices can be easy to use and implement. Increasing employees' awareness about these issues will provide a very good supportive organisational culture towards E-Marketing which in turn will lead to a good impact on SBE marketing performance.

Fourthly, the study proves that there is a positive impact for E-Marketing adoption and SBEs marketing performance. Consequently, practitioners can derive a better marketing performance by adopting and implementing E-Marketing within their enterprises or companies. However, this does not mean that competitive advantage, marketing efficiency or marketing effectiveness is automatically achieved with the adoption of E-Marketing. Such benefits of E-Marketing adoption are based on the proactive and knowledgeable use of E-Marketing forms and tools by marketing people within the enterprise which in turn will leverage the enterprise marketing efficiency and effectiveness.

Fifthly, the study findings stress the great role of small business owner skills in the successful adoption and implementation of E-Marketing. This will have some significant implications for the small business owners and practitioners. In light of growing information intensity, the very rapidly changing environment, the global economic problem, hard competition and the endless developments in IT, computers and communications technologies, the new generation of small businesses owners should be extremely skilled, trained, efficient and able to take complete advantages of the benefits related to E-Marketing.

Finally, employing the same logic and based on the same findings, as well as findings related to the current practices of E-Marketing by Egyptian SBEs, the Egyptian government through its ministries, agencies (e.g. the Egyptian Social Fund for Development -SFD, Egyptian small enterprise development organisation – SEDO, and the Arab union for small enterprises - AUSE) can use the E-Marketing adoption model developed within this study as well as its findings to increase the levels of E-Marketing adoption, diffusion and practices by Egyptian small businesses which will lead to a positive impact on Egyptian economy performance in both the short and long term.

### **11.5 Limitations of the study**

A lot of attention has been given and put into the planning of this study as well as the development of the research methodology, exploratory studies, data collection and data analysis. As a result, it is hoped that the research contributes in a significant way to the accumulative knowledge of E-Marketing in general and E-Marketing adoption and the impact of this adoption on small businesses marketing performance in particular. Despite that, as is the case with other research studies, this study also has a number of limitations, the mentioning of which can be valuable to future research. Most of the limitations are principally associated with the broadness of the phenomenon under investigation, lack of measurements and time constraint. Therefore, it is necessary to address these limitations which are discussed in detail in the following subparts of the chapter.

#### ***11.5.1 Time and financial limitations:-***

The duration of the study was relatively limited to conduct all the research processes that the researcher was planning to conduct. The nature of E-Marketing practices suggests that measuring the impact of E-Marketing adoption on SBE marketing performance might be

complicated if measured over a short period of time. As a result, some researchers prefer to choose the longitudinal case study approach, which tends to suitably capture the SBE E-Marketing experience from adoption to completion stages. Nevertheless, time limitations have prevented the researcher from adopting such an approach. Although survey questionnaires were used within the study, the availability of extra time could have allowed the researcher to conduct more than one major survey or to conduct a set of major case studies within the UK after completing the UK major survey. This would allow more in depth understanding about the phenomenon under investigation, confirm the findings of the survey analysis and increase the level of triangulation within the study. However, the level of these discrepancies was kept to a minimum through triangulation of evidence at the data collection level, the comprehensive review of the relevant literature and the conduct of the two exploratory studies in Egypt and the UK.

On the other hand, funds were also relatively limited. The two exploratory studies were conducted in two different countries and one had to be done in Egypt. Travel costs to Egypt, travel costs for the in depth interviews with SBEs owners and/or marketing managers, printing and the postage costs for the mail survey in Egypt, international phone calls to Egypt for the organisation of the data collection processes with Egyptian SBEs as well as the Egyptian international trade points led to enormous expenses. Moreover, the data collection processes for the UK exploratory study and the major UK survey also led to huge expenses. All these expenses constituted some limitations for the researcher on how the research process could be administrated. With the availability of extra funds, the researcher could have conducted more interviews, more than one major survey and a set of major confirmatory case studies within the UK to support the findings of the survey analysis.

### ***11.5.2 Sample and methodological limitations:-***

Regardless of the dominant position held by SBEs in today's economy, defining what an SBE is has been a complicated thing to do. Accordingly, there is very little agreement on what defines a small business enterprise because the term covers a wide range of elements. Therefore it is clear that there is no single unique definition of a small enterprise, which is mainly related to the wide diversity of small businesses. Accordingly and due to the absence of a unique definition for SBEs, the European definition for SBEs was adopted for the purpose of conducting this research.

According to this definition, a small business can be defined according to specific criteria which are: number of employees, annual turnover (or: global balance) and independence. The main problem associated with this definition is related to the second criterion, the SBE annual turnover (or: global balance). According to this definition a small business must have an annual sales or annual turnover that is not more than ten million Euros. This reflects a problem when defining SBEs in the UK as a result of the currency exchange rates between the Euro and Sterling pound. For example, the equivalent of ten million Euros in 2006 or 2007 is different than this equivalent in 2008 or 2009 as a direct result of the changes in exchange rates between the Euro and Sterling pound.

To avoid this problem, when determining the research population the exchange rate announced by the Bank of England and the European Central Bank between the Euro and Sterling pound in the date of data collection was used. As a result, within this study a small business enterprise will be that enterprise that has an annual sales or annual turnover that is not more than 8.5 million sterling pounds (as calculated on the date of data collection and based on the exchange rate announced by the Bank of England and the European Central Bank between the Euro and Sterling pound – 14<sup>th</sup> of November 2008 – 1 € = 0.85985 £).

An extra limitation of this study is associated to its reliance on the subjective, self report and judgmental indicators to measure the research constructs within the survey questionnaire. Although the usage of objective indicators (such as sales volume, E-Marketing sales volume, total cost, E-Marketing cost, profit levels, numbers of customers, etc) might improve accuracy, such measures are considered to be very sensitive and difficult to obtain accurately by survey respondents in general and small business owners and/or managers in particular. Additionally, asking the survey respondents to provide this data can frequently lead to a very low response rate.

As a result, the survey questionnaire relied on self-report indicators by the respondents in relation to the different research dimensions (e.g., the perceived impact of E-Marketing adoption on marketing performance measures that were included in the impact stage was self reported). However, according to Davis (1989) attitudes and beliefs are seen as meaningful variables in their own right. Moreover, the reliability examination for the research measures through the calculation of the values of item-to-total correlation and Cronbach Alpha coefficient are considerably and significantly higher than the reliability acceptable levels suggested by Edgett (1991) and Nunnally (1978). This indicates that the research measures are

satisfactorily acceptable for conducting further data analysis through inferential statistics to test the research hypothesis. Subsequently, the above limitation notwithstanding, the results represent a promising step toward the establishment of good measures for the research variables.

A final limitation of this study within this context is related to the Egyptian exploratory study. When conducting this exploratory study, as a result of the unexpected very low response rate for the Egyptian survey, it was decided to move to the second phase of the exploratory study by conducting case studies. Invitation e-mails as well as invitation letters were sent to 504 preselected SBEs and follow ups were made using e-mails, mailed letters and phone calls to the SBEs owners and marketing managers. As a result of this follow up, only eleven SBEs agreed to participate in the research through an interview. Apparently small business owners and/or marketing managers were unwilling to participate in the research due to their professional commitments. As a result, communication through a third party was used to convincingly get a reasonable number of participants. Based on the researcher experience with Egyptian culture, and the fact that most of the 504 preselected SBEs are highly connected with Egyptian international trade points, the head of the Egyptian international trade points was contacted as well as some other top officials in the Egyptian Ministry of Trade and Industry to gain their support in convincing small business owners to participate in the second stage of the exploratory study. As a result of that, another twenty four SBEs agreed to participate in the research increasing the total number of SBEs agreeing to participate to thirty five SBEs. Thus, for this stage of the Egyptian exploratory study, the semi-structured interviews sample selection is limited and the generalisability of the findings might be skewed.

### ***11.5.3 Broadness of the phenomenon under investigation limitations:-***

As mentioned earlier, E-Marketing is still a relatively new area of research where the theory is still in its infancy stage and affected badly by the unclear way of dealing with the concept and definition of E-Marketing. It also suffers because it is related to many marketing dimensions and exists in a very rapidly changing environment. This motivated the researcher to follow an exploratory and empirical approach in this study to develop a holistic and integrated understanding of E-Marketing. This required increasing the scope of the study by reviewing a large body of appropriate literature and collecting a large set of related data. However, while the researcher has attempted to meet such a requirement by reviewing various literatures in the fields of marketing, SBEs and information technology and seeking different types of data from

both primary and secondary sources, it could not be claimed that the empirical investigation of this study has come from across all the different issues related to this perspective. Within this context, time frame, limited access to funds and SBEs organisational information were the main constraints.

### **11.6 Recommendations for future research**

Since this study covers a wide scope area of research, there are several areas of research which deserve future research attention. The study has several possible implications for future research which relate to both the methodology employed in collecting and analysing the data and to the significant findings of the research. Based on the results of this study, the following directions for future research can be suggested:-

Firstly, through combining and expanding the TAM and IDT models, the study provides a new instrument modified and adapted to E-Marketing. On one hand, researchers can use this modified instrument for the adoption of E-Marketing in other types of enterprises, industries or in other countries. On the other hand, this instrument can motivate researchers to develop better instruments for investigating the adoption of E-Marketing in the future.

Secondly, the study not only expanded TAM and IDT by adding more internal and external environmental factors to the combined model but it also illustrated the different factors that have an effect on E-Marketing adoption by SBEs as well as the importance of these factors on the adoption of E-Marketing. Hence, a further research agenda might draw attention to improving the understanding of these factors in a different setting. Within this context, future research might focus on the following points:-

1. Similar studies could be carried out to investigate E-Marketing adoption by SBEs in other countries depending on the same proposed factors generated within this study (SBE internal factors such as owner skills and support, organisational culture, available resources, type of product, international orientation and size as well as SBE external factors such as competitive pressures, government influences, market trends, cultural orientation towards E-Marketing by the customers).
2. Similar studies could be carried out to investigate E-Marketing adoption by other sizes of enterprises (e.g. micro enterprises, medium sized enterprises or large companies) depending on the same proposed factors generated within this study. Similar studies

could be carried out to investigate E-Marketing adoption by service SBEs depending on the same proposed factors generated within this study.

3. Within this study, the usage of structure equation modeling was for the first order model but future research can look at second order models.
4. Future studies could be carried out to investigate E-Marketing adoption depending on other factors than the ones generated within this study.

Afterwards the results of these studies can be compared with the results of this research.

Thirdly, with regard to research methodology, the usage of triangulation for conducting future research related to E-Marketing in general and E-Marketing in SBEs in particular is highly recommended. Even though triangulation requires a commitment to greater amounts of effort, time and funds it has the advantage of removing the bias that is often associated with the usage of a single technique which in turn will increase the validity and credibility of the research conclusions. Within this context, future researchers can employ data, method and methodological triangulation.

Fourthly, conducting future studies to measure the actual E-Marketing performance of SBEs is highly recommended and the results of such studies can be then compared with the results of this research.

Fifthly, conducting future studies to investigate the relationship between the levels of E-Marketing implementation and SBEs marketing performance is highly recommended. Although the different levels of E-Marketing implementation by SBEs were explored within this study, investigating the relationship between these levels and the SBE marketing performance is highly needed since the review of the relevant literature failed to find a single study to investigate such a relationship from a SBE context. For the same reasons, it is also recommended to conduct future studies to investigate the relationship between: different E-Marketing forms, different E-Marketing tools, type of SBE and industry of the SBE from one side and the SBEs marketing performance from the other.

Finally, although there is a growing trend toward conducting E-Marketing related studies in less developed countries (LDC's), there is still a great need to conduct research studies to investigate the different aspects of E-Marketing in Egypt, the rest of the Arabic world as well as other developing countries since it is less represented in the literature.