



Challenges and Opportunities for E-commerce Adoption by SMEs in Egypt: An Ethnographic Study

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Abstract

E-commerce has emerged as a critical business strategy for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), offering opportunities to expand markets beyond traditional geographical boundaries and enhance operational efficiency. The study employed a qualitative approach involving semi-structured interviews with 30 SME owners across Egypt's major urban centers. Data collection focused on understanding business operations, market penetration strategies, and technological integration challenges. SMEs in Egypt face significant barriers to e-commerce adoption, particularly related to inadequate internet infrastructure (56%) and limited digital literacy among management teams (42%). However, there is substantial interest in digital transformation, with over two-thirds of respondents expressing a willingness to adopt new technologies within the next year. Egyptian SMEs exhibit varying levels of readiness for e-commerce integration, influenced by local market conditions and technological access. Understanding these dynamics can inform targeted support strategies to facilitate smoother transitions into the digital economy. Public-private partnerships should prioritise infrastructure development and capacity building initiatives aimed at enhancing internet connectivity and boosting digital literacy among SME owners. Egyptian SMEs, e-commerce adoption, challenges, opportunities, digital transformation

Keywords: *Ethnicity, Geography, Informal Economy, Internet Adoption, Local Context, Qualitative Research, Small Business Studies*

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