

## How SMEs are adopting AI tools to Boost Marketing Performance : Evidence from South Korean SMEs in Indian Market

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**How to cite this article:** Angelica Chanu Chingakham, Ibohal Meitei (2024). How SMEs are adopting AI tools to Boost Marketing Performance : Evidence from South Korean SMEs in Indian Market. *Library Progress International*, 44(3), 22416-22426.

### ABSTRACT

This research examines the integration of Artificial Intelligence Marketing (AIM) by South Korean SMEs in the Indian market and its impact on marketing performance. AIM tools such as chatbots, predictive analytics, and personalized marketing techniques have enabled these firms to improve customer satisfaction, streamline operations, and achieve better targeting. The study is based on qualitative data collected from South Korean SMEs with sectors dealing in cosmetics, logistics, and healthcare, all expanding in India.

#### Key findings:

- **AI Integration:** 60% of the surveyed SMEs are in the planning or partial integration stages of AIM.
- **Marketing Efficiency:** 70% of SMEs reported increased marketing efficiency, including time savings and improved campaign management.
- **Sales and ROI:** AI integration resulted in a 10–20% sales increase for 40% of SMEs, with some reporting up to a 50% improvement in conversion rates.
- **Customer Retention:** 66% of SMEs experienced improved customer retention, while 50% reported increased customer engagement through digital platforms.
- **Challenges:** 66% of SMEs identified data accuracy as a major barrier, while 50% pointed to the complexity of AI system integration and high implementation costs.

These findings illustrate how AIM adoption is helping SMEs enter new markets, identify customer segments, and personalize their marketing strategies, enhancing both customer satisfaction and business performance. The findings reveal that AIM adoption significantly improves marketing precision and customer insights, providing a competitive edge in the rapidly growing Indian market. However, SMEs also face challenges such as high costs, data quality issues, and system integration complexities.

**Keywords:** South Korean SMEs, Artificial Intelligence Marketing (AIM), Indian Market, AI integration, personalized marketing, customer satisfaction.

## 1. Introduction

Artificial Intelligence in Marketing (AIM) is a strategic tool that uses technology and data to improve customer experiences. It simplifies the complex task of analyzing large datasets, bridging the gap between data science and real-world marketing efforts. AIM helps marketers reach the right people at the accurate period and location, using targeted channels to maximize impact[18]. Artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming nearly every sector of the economy and area of society. In business sectors, artificial intelligence has been used to meet customer expectations by customizing goods and services[4]. AI has become a crucial tool for SMEs, enabling real-time, data-driven marketing decisions. It offers a practical approach to harness data and optimize performance. Digitally savvy SMEs are adopting AI to enhance customer experiences and gain deeper insights into their target markets. AI-powered solutions help manage large customer datasets, giving SMEs a competitive edge[1]. Globally, SMEs are increasingly adopting AI to enhance operational efficiency, customer engagement, and data analysis. AI tools such as chatbots and predictive analytics help automate tasks, optimize workflows, and provide personalized services, boosting productivity and customers satisfaction. The international AI marketplace is likely to raise from \$208 billion (2023) to almost \$2 trillion by the end of 2030. For SMEs, the development of AI holds great

value: it has also been found that businesses are expected a growth of 6% to 10% revenue increase from implementing AI. However, challenges like high costs, lack of expertise, and data security concerns persist[2,21].

SMEs must focus on critical factors related to customer reception to succeed in external markets. These six main factors include consumer focus, the regional relevance of production, cross-division management, regional adaptation of products or service industries, competitor awareness, and diffident acceptance, with customer reception being the most crucial[9].

In South Korea context, the "Hallyu" or "Korean wave" denotes to the international rise in fame of South Korean culture, including music, TV dramas, movies, fashion, and cuisine. Though it started in the 1990s, digital media and streaming platforms greatly accelerated its growth, now boasting over 81 million fans worldwide. Recognizing the economic and soft power potential, the South Korean government made promoting Hallyu a priority. This cultural phenomenon has boosted tourism and contributed significantly to the economy, with its impact growing from \$1.87 billion in 2004 to \$12.4 billion in 2019. The most gainful spillover effects of the Korean trend is the budding popularity of consumer products including cosmetics, diet and K-food, K-fashion, and many more. in the overseas nations. Lately, Indian consumers has been undergoing a demand for consumer products exports from South Korea and have seen a sharp advancement. [19].

As there is significant increase in the use of AI technology among different organizations, the knowledge obtaining from this study will act as valued references for understanding and adapting to the ever-shifting nature of customer wants and needs, managerial decision-making, and market movements[7]. Artificial Intelligence can expand the impact of digital marketing on consumer behaviour. As India is the third main country in terms of internet community which gives firms an opportunity to upsurge their marketing coamings online. They can also plan to target particular audience based on information gained on customer's preferences gained with AI techniques. Using AI based assistance for the furtherance of their customer associations by providing happy customer interaction digital marketing can be highly effective[17]. Advertising and promoting telecommunications with the usage of search engines indicates the incorporation of AI in successful engagement of customers more effectually. The use of tailored offers for each customer from the comfort of his own place, the way of marketing can change to a great extent[4]. The key objective of this research is to examine the impact of AI adoption and integration in marketing (AIM) on marketing outcomes of South Korean SMEs in Indian market. The goal of this study is to find if AIM tools such as chatbots, predictive analytics, and personalized marketing techniques have enabled these firms to positively improve customer satisfaction, streamline operations, and achieve better targeting.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 AI in Marketing

AI is transforming B2B marketing by turning data into valuable insights that improve decision-making and give businesses a competitive edge. It helps companies understand customers, track product users, and analyze competitors. AI enhances marketing effectiveness, drives innovation through user feedback, and supports brand management by providing deep insights from data. Understanding these AI-driven insights is crucial for improving knowledge management and staying competitive in the B2B space[16].

The amalgamation of AI in trade and business online electronic trade has steered in a fresh period of modernization, prompting market drifts and influencing the technique of industries interaction with consumers. The effect of AI on major trade movements, comprising the function of predictive analytics in enhancing inventory management is profound, the amalgamation of machine learning algorithms in forecasting customer likings and the development of technical tools such as chatbots and virtual assistants to boost user experience optimizes the predictive analysis, and the implementation of data-driven strategies for custom-made advertising and goods endorsements, making a digital environment where industries and companies can boom by crossing the budding potentials of tech-savvy clients[15].

Marketing automation plays a crucial role in identifying and analyzing consumer buying patterns in the digital realm. This research adopts data analysis tool, MATLAB software, to analyze following a proposed a neural network, trained using a memetic algorithm. Initially the analysis, yielded an MSE of 0.004 and an RMSE of 0.03. Subsequently, a memetic neural network was tested, achieving better accuracy with an MSE of 0.00045 and an RMSE of 0.0028., thereby improving customer experience, increases conversion rates, and enhances customer relationships[5].

### 2.2 AIM impact on SMEs

Artificial Intelligence tools being the optimum developments of contemporary data science and has claimed that AI can enhance business and commercial operations and maneuvers. So, this study has suggested the proposal that reception of AI applications will certainly increase the business and trade performance of B2B SMEs[3].

Micro, small, and medium-sized firms (MSMEs) depend on e-commerce and digital marketing tactics to stay in business. These methods provide advantages including reduced mistakes, improved customer satisfaction, and market expansion. E-commerce adoption opens up affordable marketing avenues, which affects SME performance according to workforce and size. Enhanced company image and communication have a beneficial impact on sales. AI-powered procedures improve marketing efficiency by providing tailored content and reducing the effect of e-commerce adoption. Implementing e-commerce also lowers coordination and transportation costs, which enhances marketing results for SMEs[12].

By adopting advanced technologies, SMEs have been able to capitalize on the opportunities brought by COVID-19 and improve their chances of survival through better performance. Researchers are focusing on how AI and e-commerce are impacting marketing for small- and medium-sized businesses. AI-powered marketing, fueled by large amounts of customer data, helps SMEs improve their overall performance. E-commerce also boosts marketing by expanding the market, growing the client base, and improving efficiency, all while cutting costs. However, the success of these technologies largely depends on SMEs' ability to manage them effectively with the right expertise and resources[11].

### 2.3 Ethical Considerations in AI Marketing

Continuing on the literature in ethical consideration of AI, the authors [8] analytically examined the ethical encounters of integrating and using AI in trade and marketing from a multi-shareholder perception. It was found that ethics are interdependent partly, on stakeholders concerned. Predominantly, benevolence and non-debauchery could not be considered risk free, as the developments of AI applications in commercial trade are expected to upsurge specific and cumulative consumption. Ethical concerns and affinity among ethics might rise with increasing heights of intelligence developing a kin resemblance to humanization of AI. The requirement for marketing specialists to form ethics and guidelines for making marketing strategies backed by AI is added issue to be looked into. By adopting ethical principles, marketers could give assurance on the use of AI complies is within legal customs, hence well-suited with their organization's principles[8,13].

## 3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to comprehensively understand how AI adoption boost the marketing performance of South Korean SMEs in Indian market. A descriptive statistical method that combines qualitative and quantitative analysis, mainly practical application research, supplemented by theoretical research, and uses this method to sort out and analyze the recovered survey data. Our research seeks to stir and contribute to hypothetical advancements by enhancing the considering how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can utilize platforms to adopt and integrate artificial intelligence (AI). Given that the integration of AI through platforms by SMEs is a relatively new phenomenon, we aim to explore this emerging area[3,20]. Based on our research objective, we interviewed 20 Korean SMEs headquartered in Gurgaon (Gurugram), India.

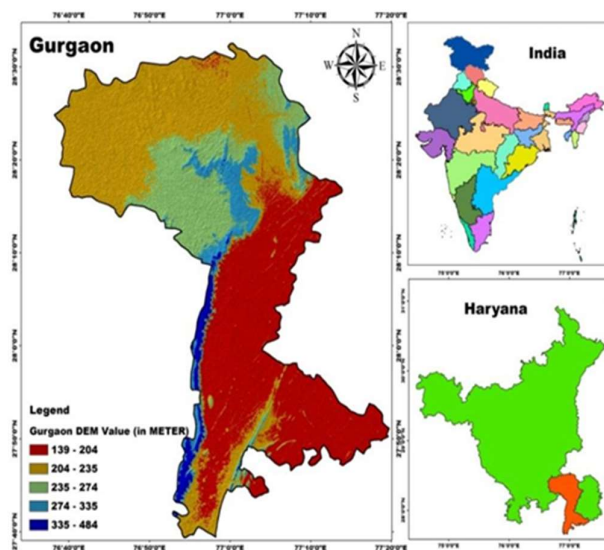


Figure 1 Study Area: Gurugram, India[10]

### 3.1 Data collection

According to our aim and objective, the 12 South Korea based SMEs expanding their market in Indian consumers headquartered in Gurugram, India were interviewed. These SMEs are getting support from a non-profit Korean government organization. The semi-structured interview was also specially designed to interview the Marketing Managers or Marketing Executives to get in-depth insights on how the company is adopting the AIM technologies, what tools and level of integration, etc. The demographic features of the interviewed companies are mentioned in Table 1.

To initiate the interview process, first the

researcher approached the non-profit agency that supports our target SMEs in extending help and permission to interview personnel from our target company. After briefing the head of the organization with the research aim and objectives, then it was proceeded with the interview. Table 1 Interviewee & company demographics

	Type of industry	Position	Experience	Level of AI Integration in marketing
Respondent 1	Medical	Marketing Manager	Above 10 years	Planning stage
Respondent 2	Aggrotech, Smart Farming Solutions	Admin Manager	0-5 years	Partially integrated
Respondent 3	COSMETIC INDUSTRY	Marketing Manager	0-5 years	Planning stage
Respondent 4	Logistics	Marketing Manager	0-5 years	Fully integrated
Respondent 5	Construction	Marketing Manager	0-5 years	Planning stage
Respondent 6	Cosmetic	Marketing Manager	5-10 years	Partially integrated
Respondent 7	Clothing	Marketing Manager	0-5 years	Partially integrated
Respondent 8	Package mineral water	Marketing Executive	0-5 years	Partially integrated
Respondent 9	Health and skincare	Marketing Manager	5-10 years	Partially integrated
Respondent 10	K-food	Marketing and Sales Executive	0-5 years	Planning stage
Respondent 11	Skincare	Finance assistant manager	0-5 years	Partially integrated
Respondent 12	Clothing	Marketing and Sales Executive	0-5 years	Partially integrated

Before the interview, the researcher took time to explain the research objectives and the process to the participants, ensuring they understood how their privacy would be protected throughout. Further, it was asked if the interviewee prefers face-to-face interview or an online questionnaire form of the topics to be discussed. Most of them preferred the online format so, the formulated questionnaire was sent to their emails through Google Forms. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher also asked for their written consent before proceeding. All the interviews' answers were noted down digitally, and later transcribed for analysis.

### 3.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire is formulated in such a way that it would be convenient and less time-consuming for the personnels to fill. The questionnaire includes options i.e. Chatbots & virtual assistants, Predictive analytics, Personalized marketing tools, Automated customer service to understand which AI tools are currently in use or planning to use. Most of the questions were given multiple select answers based on research objective and goals[14,20] ,(the detailed questionnaire is included in **Error! Reference source not found.**).

## 4. Results

### 4.1 AIM tools implementation

According to the responses, it was found that the SME dealing in Logistics have fully integrated with AIM tools, four of the SMEs (dealing in medical, cosmetics, construction and K-foods) were in planning stage. And the remaining six SMEs (Aggrotech Smart Farming, Cosmetic, two Clothing industry, Package mineral water, two health and skincare industry) were partially integrated to AIM.

It was found that ten of the SMEs adopted “personalized marketing digital marketing”, nine of them use “automated customer service”, and eight of them use “chatbots & virtual assistants”.

According to majority of the company (i.e. 8 out of 12), “data availability and quality”, “cost and investment considerations”, “expertise training” plays a major role in incorporating AI into marketing.

#### 4.2 Marketing efficiency and market reach

60-70% of the SMEs studied, that is 7-9 of the SMEs put of the 12 stated AI has improved “targeting” and also increased “time saving” in marketing campaigns.

After AI integration 60% (7 out of 12) of the studied SMEs experienced “content creation” to be more efficient and 50% found “campaign management” and “performance analysis” to have increased the efficiency in marketing operations.

75% of the SMEs have “increased online presence”, 50% of the SMEs have “enhanced localization efforts” and 40% of them have successfully “identified new customer segment” and “entered new markets” after AI integration.

#### 4.3 Sales and ROI

60% of the SMEs found to have “enhanced customer lifetime value” and 30-40% of them found to have increased in “sales” and “improved conversion rates”.

When asked about any specific matrix or percentage increases/decreases in sales/revenue since integrating AI.

*“Can you provide any specific metrics or percentage increases/decreases in sales/revenue since integrating AI?”*

*Example- X% increase in sales, Y% increase in revenue, Z% improvement in conversion rates, W% increase in customer lifetime value.”*

Overall, most of the SMEs found an “increased in sales” and boost in “customer lifetime value.”

Respondent #2 stated “5% increase in sales.”

Respondent #4 stated “10-20% increase in sales 5-20% revenue growth 10-30% improvement in conversion rates 20-30% boost in customer lifetime value 15-20% reduction in operational costs.”

Respondent #6 stated “50% Improvement in conversion rates.”

Respondent #8 stated “50% increase in customer lifetime value.”

#### 4.4 Customer retention and engagement

50% of the studied SMEs have found to have increased in “customer acquisition.” 66% of the SMEs are found to have “improved customer retention” and 33% stated “too early to measure” since their integration with AIM.

58% showed “increased in “customer engagement in various digital platforms” after AIM integration, However, 16% found no change.

In terms of “changes in consumer behaviour or interaction patterns since introduction to AIM”, 66% found “increased frequency of interactions, other 30-40% found “improved customer feedback”, “higher engagement rates”, and more personalized interactions.”

In “targeting different customer segments”, 58% (7 out of 12) of the SMEs experienced “improvement in targeting” and “relevant product recommendations” and “customizing content”, “enhancing customer satisfaction” were found helpful by 40-50% of the studied SMEs.

For “AI-driven personalization on customer satisfaction and experience”, 60% SMEs found “higher satisfaction rates”, 50% SMEs found to have “increased customer loyalty” and “enhanced brand perception.”

75% SMEs also uses AI on “customer review analysis”, 50% SMEs uses AI for “automated surveys” and “social media monitoring.”

60-66% SMEs experienced “improved marketing efficiency” and “better customer insights” in terms of “competitive advantage.”

#### 4.5 Challenges

66% of studied SMEs also experience challenges in “ensuring data accuracy and reliability.”

50% SMEs find “complexity in integrating AI data with existing systems” and “higher cost of implementation for AI measurement tool.”

## 5. Conclusion and discussion

Digital technologies are primarily converting business progressions and strategies. In all of these technologies, AI takes an explicit position with proving companies adaptableness and multiple competitive advantages. The risk associated with it is that certain companies are not capable of accessing these technologies. Predominantly in the case for SMEs as they neither have the monetary resources nor the technical know-how, even though the functions of AI can be remarkably beneficial, there is a risk associated that it is hard for SMEs to access these AI technologies[20]. One of the possibilities to overcome is that SMEs possibly will leverage integration to AI techs and applications. Most of the SMEs studied have AI integration stages either in “planning stage” or “partially integrated stage.” The results focus the transformative impact of AI on SMEs, especially in marketing, sales, and customer relations. The findings demonstrate that AI adoption enhances marketing precision, with 60-70% of the SMEs observing improvements in targeting, timesaving, and content creation efficiency. Many have leveraged AI for personalized marketing, automated customer service, and the use of chatbots, which directly contribute to their operational improvements. Sales and ROI metrics also reflect positive results, with several SMEs reporting increases in sales, conversion rates, and customer lifetime value. For instance, one SME reported a 50% improvement in conversion rates, while others noted significant boosts in customer lifetime value and revenue growth.

AI enables marketers to enhance their understanding of customer behavior by automating the analysis process. By implementing AI across various aspects of their operations, companies can gain a competitive advantage. Integrating AI into a business can streamline core activities, leading to more efficient cost and time management during the adoption process. This is especially beneficial for tasks that involve analyzing large datasets or drawing insights that require expert knowledge, as AI can handle these complex activities with speed and accuracy, allowing businesses to make more informed decisions[6]. The findings suggest that AI is not just a tool for operational efficiency but a driver for broader strategic shifts. By enhancing personalization, targeting, and customer interaction, AI provides a competitive advantage that could prove critical for SMEs striving to differentiate themselves in saturated markets. However, the integration of AI is not without challenges. Many SMEs face hurdles related to data accuracy, system complexity, and the high cost of implementation. A considerable portion of SMEs (66%) cited data availability and quality as key barriers, while 50% mentioned the complexity of AI integration and investment costs as significant obstacles. This indicates that while AI is a powerful tool for business transformation, its successful deployment requires overcoming these operational challenges. AI integration has led to notable improvements, with 66% of SMEs reporting better customer retention and 58% seeing increased engagement across digital platforms. This indicates that AI-driven personalization plays a critical role in improving customer satisfaction and loyalty, which ultimately strengthens brand perception.

## Limitations

The research relies heavily on self-reported data, which may introduce bias. The study also focuses primarily on companies already in the process of AI integration, omitting those which have yet to adopt such technologies. Further research with a grander sample size and a more varied range of SMEs could stipulate deeper insights into the challenges and benefits of AIM adoption.

## Data availability

The data that has been collected and used in this study is confidential.

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#### *Demographics*

1. What type of industry is your enterprise dealing in? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which position are you working in?
3. Years of working experience.
  - 0-3
  - 4-6
  - 6-8
  - 8-10
  - >10

#### *Level of integration and tools implementation analysis*

4. Level of AI Integration in marketing:
  - Fully integrated
  - Partially integrated
  - Planning stage
  - Not considering
5. Types of AI Tools Used (select all that apply):
  - Chatbots and virtual assistants
  - Predictive analytics
  - Personalized marketing tools
  - Automated customer service
  - Other AI-based applications (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
6. What elements play a role in incorporating AI into marketing?
  - Data availability and quality
  - Cost and investment considerations
  - Technological infrastructure
  - Expertise and training
7. What role does AI play in your company's marketing functions?
  - Enhancing customer experience
  - Personalizing marketing campaigns
  - Predicting customer behaviour
  - Automating repetitive tasks

#### *Marketing efficiency analysis*

8. How has AI improved the efficiency of your marketing campaigns?
  - Time savings
  - Cost reductions
  - Increased reach
  - Improved targeting



9. What specific areas of your marketing operations have become more efficient due to AI?
- Campaign management
  - Customer segmentation
  - Content creation
  - Performance analysis

*Market reach and penetration*

10. How has AI expanded your market reach or penetration into new customer segments or geographical areas?
- Identifying new customer segments
  - Entering new markets
  - Increasing online presence
  - Enhancing localization efforts

*Sales and Revenue*

11. How has the implementation of AI in your marketing strategies impacted on your sales and revenue figures?
- Increased sales
  - Higher revenue
  - Improved conversion rates
  - Enhanced customer lifetime value

12. Can you provide any specific metrics or percentage increases/decreases in sales/revenue since integrating AI?  
X% increase in sales, Y% increase in revenue, Z% improvement in conversion rates, W% increase in customer lifetime value

Please fill in the applicable answer in the format provided in the example. \_\_\_\_\_

*Return of Investment*

13. What has been the return on investment for AI applications in your marketing strategies?
- Positive ROI
  - Break-even
  - Negative ROI
  - Not yet measured
14. How do you measure the success of AI in your marketing efforts in terms of ROI?
- Sales growth
  - Revenue increase
  - Customer acquisition cost reduction
  - Enhanced customer retention

*Customer acquisition and Retention*

15. How has AI affected your customer acquisition rates?
- Increased acquisition
  - No change
  - Decreased acquisition
  - Too early to tell
16. Have you noticed any changes in customer retention rates after integrating AI tools into your marketing strategies?
- Improved retention
  - No change
  - Decreased retention
  - Too early to tell

*Consumer Engagement*

17. How has AI impacted consumer engagement with your brand on various digital platforms?
- Increased engagement
  - No change
  - Decreased engagement
  - Too early to tell
18. Have you observed any changes in consumer behaviour or interaction patterns since the introduction of AI in your marketing efforts?
- More personalized interactions
  - Increased frequency of interactions
  - Higher engagement rates
  - Improved customer feedback

*Personalization and Customer Experience*

19. How has AI helped in personalizing marketing messages and campaigns for different customer segments?
- Improved targeting
  - Customized content
  - Relevant product recommendations
  - Enhanced customer satisfaction
20. Can you describe the impact of AI-driven personalization on customer satisfaction and experience?
- Higher satisfaction rates
  - Improved user experience
  - Increased loyalty
  - Enhanced brand perception

*Customer Feedback and Sentiment Analysis*

21. How does your company utilize AI to gather and analyze customer feedback?
- Sentiment analysis
  - Social media monitoring
  - Automated surveys
  - Customer reviews analysis
22. What insights have you gained from AI-driven sentiment analysis regarding your marketing campaigns?
- Customer preferences
  - Areas for improvement
  - Positive feedback trends
  - Negative feedback trends

*Competitive Advantage*

23. How has AI provided a competitive advantage to your SME in the market?
- Better customer insights
  - Faster decision-making
  - Improved marketing efficiency
  - Enhanced customer satisfaction
24. Can you share any instances where AI helped outperform competitors?
- Successful AI-driven campaigns
  - Higher customer retention rates
  - Superior customer experience
  - Increased market share

*Challenges and Improvements*

25. What challenges have you faced in measuring marketing performance after AI integration?

- Difficulty in attributing success directly to AI
- Complexity of integrating AI data with existing systems
- High costs of implementing AI measurement tools
- Ensuring data accuracy and reliability

26. What improvements or adjustments have you made based on the performance data and feedback?

- Refined targeting strategies for better personalization
- Improved customer service processes based on AI insights
- Enhanced content quality and relevance
- Adjusted marketing budgets to focus more on AI-driven initiatives