

The Role of Agile Digital Marketing in Achieving Marketing Excellence: A Study of Cellular Companies Customers in Syria

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Abstract

This study presents a field study based on the descriptive analytical approach, to determine the extent of achieving marketing excellence in cellular communications companies based on the application of agile digital marketing from the point of view of its customers to determine the dimensions of agile digital marketing that were positively reflected on customers to achieve a service that suits customers, by distributing (310) questionnaires to Cellular companies customers that were distributed to the company's customers via the WhatsApp application, and aims to determine the role of agile digital marketing in achieving marketing excellence and its dimensions that have an important impact on that. The data were analyzed using the SPSS statistical program by performing a multiple regression test to achieve the research objectives. This study was enhanced by relying on previous studies on the subject so that the research completes what previous studies started to contribute to the academic and practical understanding of agile digital marketing in cellular telecommunications companies within an environment of uncertainty in which companies suffer from environmental threats as a result of emergency conditions of fluctuations in the surrounding environment. It sheds light on the dimensions of agile marketing that were positively and effectively reflected on the customers of the company under study, which may be the most appropriate solution for the company to continue and provide a service that satisfies the customer within the environment of uncertainty surrounding it.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, Agile Digital Marketing, Marketing Excellence, Marketing Agility

1. Introduction

Agile management has been used in industry since 1990, particularly in the software industry [1]. So, agility has attracted the attention of researchers in management and marketing, especially digital marketing, and the term agile digital marketing (ADM) has emerged [1–3]. In a highly competitive digital environment, digital marketing is key to positioning a company. Kotler defined it as the use of digital tools, such as websites, social media sites, and email, to engage customers in marketing activity [5–7]. Organization's marketing excellence (ME) is linked to agility and its dimensions, such as flexibility and administrative capabilities that quickly meet customer desires [1,2]. Researchers have become interested in (ME) due to the development of information and communication technology, and its suitability to the growing needs in the marketing environment [3]. The concept of excellence was first introduced by Peters and Waterman [4]. Companies that embrace technological advancements in their digital strategies are better able to compete and engage with their audiences [9–11]. Companies must remain agile in adapting to the evolving dynamics of the most popular social media platforms. Leveraging best practices to achieve (ME) [5,6].

The current study examines the possibility of achieving marketing excellence in the cellular communications companies in Syria in light of the environment of uncertainty imposed by the Syrian crisis, as the quality of service was greatly affected as a result of the deteriorating economy imposed by the crisis, and customer retention became difficult in light of competing social media as they are considered alternative products for communication service and ICDL lines that provide Internet service, which made the company's ability to continuously improve diminished and increased the difficulty of innovating creative marketing ideas to improve the digital services provided by the company, whether cellular communication service or the Internet in a way that satisfies customers.

All of this negatively affected the marketing excellence of the company under study, which prompted researchers to read previous research that seeks to improve the marketing excellence of companies, and they found that many previous studies used agile digital marketing with the aim of improving marketing excellence that works to achieve the best results with the least digital operations and material costs, including the study [7,8].

As the current research aims to determine the extent of the contribution of agile digital marketing in general and each of its dimensions in achieving marketing excellence to reach practical results that help the company under study to improve its performance in general, therefore, the main research question is:

What role does agile digital marketing play in improving marketing excellence?

The current study expects researchers to focus in future research on agile digital marketing in its dimensions, with a focus on the response dimension, especially since the digital environment receives instant feedback, which also requires an instant response, as it is a

modern strategy that can be applied in various ways that suit the privacy of each company aspiring to achieve its presence in the digital environment, even if its product is not digital.

2. Research Objectives

Determining the impact of agile digital marketing in its dimensions on marketing excellence in the organization under study during the research preparation period.

3. Conceptual Framework

3.1. Digital marketing

Marketing touchpoints in the real environment are increasingly connected to the digital environment [9]. Wifi-enabled devices interactively create new marketing interfaces with consumers [10]. Nowadays, previously non-digital marketing channels have acquired digital dimensions ^x, and the website has become the default presence of companies in the digital environment [11]. Digital transformation has made it necessary for non-digital businesses to restructure their offerings and operations to take advantage of digital technologies in all types of industries [12].

Digital marketing success does not depend on the content that a company officially publishes online, but is influenced by customer comments and interaction with online posts and reviews and social networks [13].

Nowadays, marketers rely heavily on software applications [24]. Especially with the presence of specialized programs to manage advertising campaigns, content, analytics, and relationships with customers [13, 14].

Marketing is affected by the dynamics of digital tools, which achieve digital (ME) through the dimensions of digital agility, which are speed, flexibility, responsiveness, and proactiveness in digital marketing processes [13].

One of the important definitions of (ADM) is that of Wright [27], who defined digital marketing as the process of integrating offline marketing with online marketing to provide an optimal experience for the end user. Mejia-Trejo [29] defined it as the process of selecting a set of digital marketing tools and designing a digital marketing strategy and tactics to implement a predetermined marketing plan and continuously evaluate digital performance.

3.2. Agile digital marketing

In agile digital marketing, digital speed allows companies to quickly access new opportunities and threats and react quickly to them, contributing to changing feedback and conditions [14]. Digital flexibility enables companies to change or modify content and services in the digital environment with precision and ease compared to traditional marketing and respond in real time to customer needs ^x.

To achieve agility, an organization must make tangible changes in its operations [15]. The Scrum Agile methodology is considered one of the most important methodologies used to

implement agility, the Scrum methodology is based on dividing work into short work cycles called sprints [16, 17].

Most researchers agree on four main dimensions of (ADM) that are compatible with the digital environment and applicable across all organizations. These dimensions are as follows [31–33]:

- (1) Responsiveness: It is about strategies for dealing quickly with emergency events that may affect the organization's work [18,19].
- (2) Proactiveness: It expresses the organization's ability to anticipate and stimulate demand for its products in the market, in a proactive manner, to meet changing customer needs promptly [20].
- (3) Flexibility: It expresses the presence of a wide range of options for the organization to conduct business and reduces the cost and time associated with implementing these options [21,22].
- (4) Speed: It expresses the ability to anticipate digital market opportunities and threats respond to them quickly and effectively and make quick decisions based on the best information available at a specific time [23].

3. 3. Marketing Excellence (ME)

The concept of (ME) emerged as a result of marketing managers integrating the idea of (ME) with other concepts of excellence such as operational excellence, administrative excellence, and excellence in mergers and acquisitions, which contributed to the formation of a comprehensive concept of (ME) that focuses on excellence in marketing performance [37–39].

(ME) is a strategy where a company creates marketing campaigns that attract two or more segments of its target audience. It helps companies improve brand recognition, reach a wider audience, meet customer needs, and increase income [24,25].

(ME) is characterized by its bias towards customer satisfaction and the spirit of productive initiative through interaction with customers, quality; and taking appropriate actions according to market conditions [26].Saunders and Wong [49] defined (ME) as the periodic, comprehensive, and objective examination conducted by management to determine the organization's readiness to market products to new and existing customers, as well as to conduct internal marketing for employees [40]. Pitts and Lei [40] stated that (ME) is the organization's exploitation of internal strengths to carry out its activities, creating added value that exceeds that of its competitors.

focusing on (ME) and defining it precisely leads to activities that fall into three categories: the priority of the marketing ecosystem, the priority of marketing, and the priority of the end user. Which is related to the nature of (ME) as a strategy. Achieving (ME) focuses on three basic facts: (1) achieving excellence is difficult, (2) marketing is linked to the growth of the company's core revenues, (3) (ME) is the company's strategy [27, 28].

There is an opposite trend at (ME) that managers consider (ME) as a means to achieve growth in the company through: increased revenues, and reduced costs [29,30].

Finally, the researcher agrees with Strauss and Corbin [44], who defined (ME) as creating superior value for the customer that meets their changing needs in the market and involves developing new solutions. So, (ME) is the great ability to carry out the main tasks that customers must complete, which provides a distinct competitive advantage and a benefit that satisfies customers and suppliers by developing the capacity of internal operations, support, and continuous improvement [31]. It is worth noting that the ideas of (ME) as a strategy are similar to some traditional marketing strategies, such as Porter's differentiation strategy [32], the Mims and Snow prospecting strategy, and the (ME) strategy differs from those strategies by giving the company greater ability to adapt to achieve performance superior [33, 34].

Most researchers consider that the following dimensions of (ME) can be measured (ME) appropriately, they are as follows:

(1) **Service Quality:** Every activity leads to obtaining a unique and distinctive value and gives the customer a positive addition that matches his expectations [48–50].

(2) **Customer Retention:** The organization works to retain current customers because the cost of obtaining new customers represents approximately (6-8) times the cost of retaining current customers [35], the key to retaining customers is achieving satisfaction and happiness for them and providing unique services [36, 37].

(3) **Excellence Abilities:** This refers to a set of organizational capabilities and skills that support the achievement of organizational goals and the creation of added value [51, 52]. It is also considered a source of sustainable competitive advantage and organizational success [53].

(4) **Innovation:** It is a dynamic process aimed at developing and exchanging new ideas about products to achieve (ME). The ability to innovate stems from human and knowledge capital [51, 52].

(5) **Continuous improvement:** It is defined as a series of activities, processes, and marketing efforts aimed at introducing continuous improvements in the quality of goods and services to reduce defects and make all processes effective and highly efficient [38, 39].

4. Literature Review

The current study adopts a proposed model in which Agile Digital Marketing (ADM) is considered a key priority for achieving Marketing Excellence (ME), as outlined by [53]. In that study, the researcher examined the impact of ADM—defined by the dimensions of proactiveness, robustness, and responsiveness—on ME, which included dimensions such as seller-customer exchange, service creativity communication, competitor competence analysis, and market-driving capability. This relationship was analyzed with marketing teams acting as a mediating variable.

In contrast, the present study investigates the **direct impact** of ADM—through its dimensions of responsiveness, speed, flexibility, and proactiveness [54, 55]—on ME, measured using the dimensions of service quality, customer retention, excellence abilities, innovation, and continuous improvement [56], without the inclusion of a mediating factor.

Another study [57] explored the impact of marketing ambidexterity on ME, noting that this concept intersects with ADM's emphasis on continuous innovation and responsiveness to a dynamic environment.

Based on the above, the current study synthesizes the core ADM dimensions identified by previous researchers as critical for achieving ME. It also consolidates the key ME indicators most commonly agreed upon in the literature. To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first study to examine this relationship within the cellular communications sector in Syria. Companies that adopt Agile Digital Marketing (ADM) respond quickly to market requirements, resulting in improved performance and a greater market share. ADM also enables organizations to make more effective use of their assets [40]. Agile Digital Marketing (ADM) helps a company fully exploit its capabilities, leading to unique creative potential and financial benefits, thereby contributing to the achievement of Marketing Excellence (ME) [41]. Therefore, the hypotheses of the research are consistent with those [42] and there are:

H1: There is no significant impact of responsiveness on marketing excellence.

H2: There is no significant impact of proactiveness on marketing excellence.

H3: There is no significant impact of flexibility on marketing excellence.

H4: There is no significant impact of speed on marketing excellence.

The following is Figure No. (1), which expresses the research model and hypotheses:

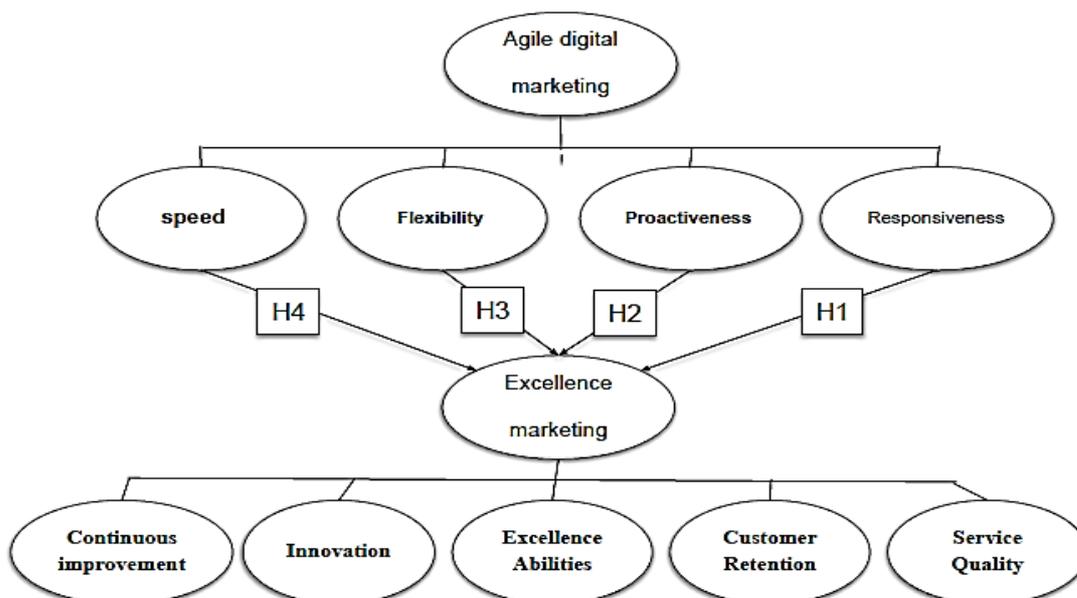


Figure 1. Research Model - Prepared by the Researchers

5. Methodology

5.1. Sample and data collection

This study focuses on the customers of cellular communications companies in Syria. The field of cellular communications in Syria and the whole world has witnessed rapid growth and a rapid rise in the number of consumers, as telecommunications companies represent the best model for the digital marketing environment, which requires the application of a digital marketing strategy that is in line with the digital environment. And the rapid technological changes in the current era. Therefore, (ADM) is crucial for mobile telecommunications companies to achieve their goals and achieve (ME).

The researcher relied on the questionnaire as a basic tool for collecting information.

The questionnaire included three axes. The first axis included general information about the respondent (gender, age, education), Table (1) and the researcher targeted (customers of the cellular communications companies in Syria). The questionnaire was distributed via an electronic questionnaire sent via social media (WhatsApp). The questionnaire was sent by message to (415) customers, of which only (320) respondents responded, while (60) refrained from answering the questionnaire without stating the reasons, in addition to (35) who apologized for participating, and (10) questionnaires that were answered were not valid due to lack of information. Thus, the percentage of questionnaires valid for statistical analysis was (310), out of the questionnaires answered. Therefore, the research sample consisted of (310) customers of cellular communications companies in Syria, who answered the questionnaire in full.

The following is Table (1) which shows the demographic variables of the research sample members

Table 1. Demographics

Variable	Indicator description	Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	208	67 %
	Female	102	33%
Age range (years)	Under 30	68	22%
	31–40	143	46%
	41–50	71	23%
	Above 50	28	9%
Education	Junior high school or below	15	5%
	Junior college	37	12%
	Bachelor	239	77%
	Master's degree or above	19	6%

Source: Prepared by researchers based on the statistical analysis program SPSS

5.2. Measures

the researcher used previously validated scales to study the variables of the study shown in Table No (2).

Table 2. The variables and dimensions in the components of the questionnaire form.

Variable	Dimensions	Questions		Reference
		Number	total	
Agile Digital Marketing ADM	Responsiveness RS	5	19	[43]
	Proactiveness PS	5		[44]
	Flexibility FY	4		[45]
	Speed SD	5		[46]
Marketing Excellence ME	Service Quality SQ	5	23	[47]
	Customer Retention CR	5		[48]
	Excellence Abilities EA	4		[49]
	Innovation IN	5		[50]
	Continuous improvement CI	4		[51]

Source: Prepared by researchers, Based on previous studies.

5. 3. Description of research variables

Table No. (3) shows the mean and standard deviation of the (ADM) and its dimensions variable according to the opinions and answers of the research sample.

Table 3. Description of the (ADM) variable, according to the five-point Likert scale.

Variable & its dimensions	Mean	SD	result
Responsiveness	4.10	0.83	agree
Proactiveness	3.31	0.88	neutral
Flexibility	4.20	0.80	agree
Speed	2.38	0.91	low
Agile digital marketing	3.49	0.85	Agree
Service Quality	3.38	0.82	neutral
Customer Retention	3.42	0.75	agree
Excellence Abilities	3.43	0.73	agree
Innovation	4.10	0.72	agree
Continuous improvement	4.14	0.67	agree
marketing excellence	3.69	0.74	agree

Source: Prepared by researchers based on the statistical analysis program SPSS.

We note from the table NO. (3) that the mean of the sample members' answers to the topic of (ADM) reached (3.49), which indicates that the sample members' answers tend to agree with the positive statements that confirm the importance of (ADM) in improving (ME).

We note from Table No. (3) that the mean of the sample members' answers to the topic of (ME) reached (3.69), which indicates that the sample members' answers tend to agree with the positive statements that confirm the importance of (ME) for the company under study.

6. Results & Discussion

6. 1. Research hypothesis test

The research hypotheses will be tested as follows:

6 1. 1. Correlation hypothesis test

This paragraph includes defining the nature of the relationship between the dimensions of (ADM) and (ME) as follows:

Study correlation at the micro level to delve deeper into understanding the correlation at the level of the dimensions of the variables under research and to indicate the levels of correlation between them, as the table (4) shows the existence of the correlation relationship According to the following:

- (1) There is a positive direct correlation between the (ADM) variable and the dimensions of the (ME) variable, represented by service quality, customer retention, excellence abilities, innovation, and continuous improvement, as the values of the correlation coefficient between them reached (0.676), (0.022), (0.129), (0.171), (0.129) respectively, some of which have significant values at the significance level (0.01), with a degree of confidence reaching (99%), which indicates that the better the levels of reliance on (ADM) in carrying out marketing activities.
- (2) The results indicate that there is a positive, direct correlation between the dimensions of (ADM), represented by responsiveness, proactiveness, flexibility, and speed, and the (ME) variable, as the correlation coefficient values between them reached (0.332), (0.333), (0.417), and (0.350). Consecutively, it is a significant value at the significance level (0.01), and with a degree of confidence (99%).
- (3) At the level of dimensions, all correlations were positive and significant at a significance level of (0.01) and with a degree of confidence (99%). The strongest correlation was between the two dimensions of speed and service quality, with a correlation coefficient of (0.619) a level of significance of (0.01) and a degree of confidence (99%). The lowest correlation was between the two dimensions of responsiveness and customer retention, as the value of the correlation between them reached (0.012) with a significance level of (0.01) and a degree of confidence (99%).

Table 4. Correlation between (ADM) and (ME)

	ADM	Responsiveness	Proactiveness	Flexibility	Speed	Overall index
EM						
Service Quality		0.507**	0.482**	0.659**	0.619**	0.676**
Customer Retention		0.012	0.057	0.040	0.060	0.022
Excellence Abilities		0.113*	0.081	0.134*	0.108	0.129*
Innovation		0.088	0.132*	0.201**	0.153**	0.171**
Continuous Improvement		0.214**	0.103	0.105	0.013	0.129*
Overall index		0.332**	0.333**	0.417**	0.350**	0.428**

Source: Prepared by researchers based on the statistical analysis program SPSS. **P≤0.01

6. 1. 2. Hypothesizes test

The hypotheses of the influence between the research variables will be tested as follows:

It is clear from the data in Table (5) that the results of the multiple regression analysis at the level of the dimensions of the (ADM) variable in the (ME) variable produced a set of regression models as follows:

(1) The first model: This model includes only one dimension, which is flexibility, as the results of the statistical analysis indicated that this dimension has a higher impact than the other dimensions on (ME), as confirmed by the value of (B1), which amounted to (0.417) and in terms of the calculated value of (t), which amounted to (8.107). which is greater than its tabulated value of (1.65) and with a degree of freedom (313). The significance of this impact is confirmed by the calculated (Sig.) value of (0.000), which is less than the hypothetical significance level of the study of (0.05). Also, the explanatory value of the relationship variable, according to the value of (R²), amounting to (0.174), indicates that the flexibility dimension alone explains (17.4%) of the change that occurs in (ME), which is due to the flexibility dimension, and that there is a percentage of (82.6%) due to factors There is another explanatory explanation that is not included in this model. Therefore, the regression equation is:

$$Y_1 = 3.769 + 0.417X_1 \quad (1)$$

(2) The second model: This model includes the dimensions of flexibility and responsiveness, as the results of the statistical analysis indicated that these dimensions have a higher impact on (ME) than the previous model, as indicated by the value of (B1), which amounted to (0.335) and (0.149), respectively, and in terms of the value of (The calculated t) amounted to (5.517) and (2.454), respectively, which is greater than its tabulated value of (1.65) and with a degree of freedom (312). The significance of this impact is confirmed by the calculated (Sig.) value, which amounted to (0.000), which is less than the default level of significance for the study. and adult (0.05). Also, the explanatory value of the two dimensions of flexibility and responsiveness combined, according to the value of (R²), amounting to (0.189), indicates that the two dimensions of flexibility and responsiveness combined explain a percentage of (18.9%) of the change that occurs in (ME), which is due to the two dimensions of flexibility and responsiveness, and that there is a percentage of (81.1%) is due to other explanatory factors that are not included in this model. Therefore, the regression equation is:

$$Y_2 = 3.642 + 0.335X_1 + 0.149X_2 \quad (2)$$

Table 5. Multiple regression analysis between (ADM) and (ME).

Model	Excellence Marketing							
	Dimensions included in the model	B0	B1	R ²	calculated t	Tabular t	Freedom degree	Sig.
The first	Flexibility	3.769	0.417	0.174	8.107	1.65	313	0.000
The	Flexibility	3.642	0.335	0.189	5.517		312	0.000

second	responsiveness	0.149	2.454	0.015
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$$Y_1 = 3.769 + 0.417X_1$$

$$Y_2 = 3.642 + 0.335X_1 + 0.149X_2$$

Y=EM, X1= Flexibility, X2= Responsiveness.

Source: Prepared by researchers based on the statistical analysis program SPSS. $P \leq 0.05$
 Based on the results of the multiple regression analysis to determine the impact of the dimensions of (ADM) on (ME), mentioned in Table No. (5), which indicated the existence of a significant impact of the dimensions of marketing agility (the dimensions of responsiveness and flexibility) on (ME) (with the exception of the dimensions of proactivity and speed in (ME)), which indicates the rejection of the second hypothesis, which states that (there is no significant impact of the dimension of proactivity on the (ME) of the company under study from the point of view of its customers), as well as the rejection of the fourth hypothesis, which states that (there is no significant impact of the dimension of speed on the (ME) of the company under study from the point of view of its customers) and the acceptance of the first hypothesis, which states that (there is a significant impact of the dimension of responsiveness on the (ME) of the company under study from the point of view of its customers), and also the acceptance of the third hypothesis, which states that (there is a significant impact of the dimension of flexibility on the (ME) of the companies under study from the point of view of its customers). Therefore, the most comprehensive multiple regression equation for the second model is:

$$Y = 3.642 + 0.335X_1 + 0.149X_2 \quad (3)$$

It is expressed in the following model, Figure No. (2):

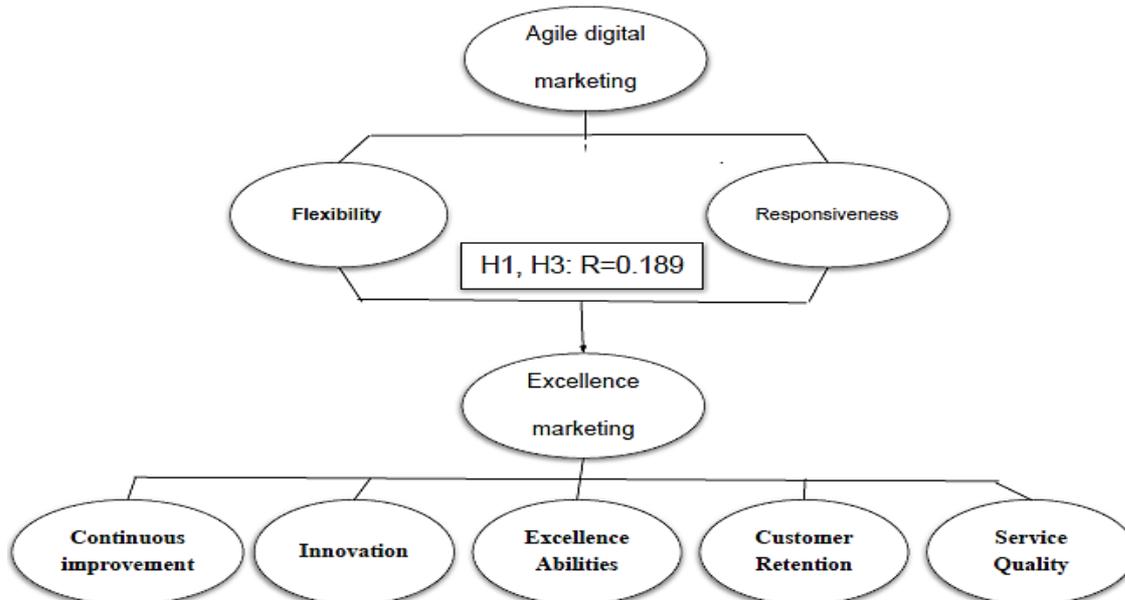


Figure 2. Research Model - Prepared by the Researchers

5. Conclusions

This study examined the role of Agile Digital Marketing (ADM) in achieving Marketing Excellence (ME) within Syrian cellular communications companies, based on customer perspectives. The findings revealed that ADM has a **partial impact** on ME. These results align with the conclusions of a previous study [65], particularly regarding the importance of responsiveness in achieving marketing excellence. However, the current study differed from it in that flexibility first and then response were the factors influencing marketing excellence at Cellular companies, and this may be due to the nature of the company's work in the communications sector, while the previous research was on the restaurant sector, in addition to the economic repercussions resulting from the war, which may differ from Iraq, noting that the current study did not contain an intermediary variable as in study ^x, which was Marketing Teams, due to its importance in the hotel sector. The current study also aligns with the findings of study [65] regarding the overall impact of Agile Digital Marketing (ADM) on financial performance. That study concluded that the influence of ADM on financial performance increases under conditions of low market turbulence. Although the dependent variable differs between the two studies, financial performance remains a critical indicator for assessing an organization's marketing excellence.

Furthermore, it must be noted that Syrian consumer behavior is significantly influenced by the ongoing crisis in Syria [92]. Based on the previous conclusions, attention should be paid to agile digital marketing in the companies under study, especially in terms of flexibility and responsiveness, to achieve marketing excellence.

Future research can focus on agile digital marketing with artificial intelligence, which enables real-time market monitoring and thus flexible agile marketing decisions in response to changes in the digital market in an uncertain environment.

Finally, the researchers note that there was suffering and difficulty in collecting the questionnaire due to the lack of a marketing culture among all segments of Syrian society, and also a psychological fear of answering and participating in a questionnaire among the uneducated, while clarifying that the segments with higher education were very cooperative in participating in the questionnaire.

Author contributions

Mohamed Algharib: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Supervision, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization, Validation, Investigation, Data curation, Project administration, Software, Resources.

Ghada Bakaya: Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Methodology, Formal analysis, Conceptualization, Visualization, Data collection, Software, Data curation, Resources.

Disclosure statement

The author (s) reported no potential conflicts of interest.

Funding

This research did not receive financial support from any party, all expenses were borne by the researchers.

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Data availability statement

Raw data were generated from distributing a questionnaire to Cellular companies' customers using the WhatsApp application. Derived data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author (Syria) on request.

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