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## THE GROWTH OF E-MARKETING UNDER COVID-19 SOCIAL DISTANCING: ANALYTICAL DESCRIPTIVE STUDY IN ALZAIDY COMMERCIAL COMPANY FOR ELECTRONIC MARKETING, IRAQ

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### ABSTRACT

This study shows the social distancing as an independent variable (with its two dimensions: Quarantine and work lockdown), by presenting its effect in growing electronic Marketing, which represents the dependent Variable (with its four dimensions: Social media marketing (SMM) search engine marketing (SEM), E-mail marketing, and internet advertising). The study applied in Alzaidi electronic marketing in Iraq. The researchers used the analytical descriptive method to analyze the case, the sample of the study was (62). The researchers used the (SPSS) package for data analysis through (Sarton, Standard Deviation, Spearman-Brown, value T). the study conclusions approved that the Social distancing under COVID-19 Pandemic had a big impact on growing electronic marketing.

The logo for the International Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities (IJRSSH) is a large, stylized graphic. It features a central figure that resembles a person or a flame, composed of several overlapping, curved shapes in shades of blue, green, yellow, and orange. This central figure is enclosed within a large, light-colored circular arc. Below the graphic, the acronym 'IJRSSH' is written in a bold, orange, sans-serif font.

**IJRSSH**

## INTRODUCTION

E-marketing is one of the modern and popular marketing methods in modern business, it has other names such as (digital marketing) or (network marketing), and e-marketing is an important part of the modern comprehensive marketing strategy, as it is considered an important type of marketing method Who strives to achieve his goals online.

Electronic marketing has been defined as a "mixture of advanced communication technology and traditional methods that are usually applied by marketing men". What is meant by modern communication technology is the electronic media which is known as the Internet (Kotler,2017).

The importance of electronic marketing for the organization is highlighted in enabling it to obtain the largest possible number of customers and customers via the Internet, and to assist these customers for the organization in advertising and promoting its products on the Internet, as well as in the size of the target audience who are Internet users, as the number of Internet users has increased Very significantly and it reached more than three billion users around the world. Because of this significant growth in the use of smartphones and social networking sites, more

companies are turning to these digital channels significantly.

With this growth in the use of channels, some confusion began to appear in the understanding of digital marketing activity, which some think is limited to social media sites only, even though digital marketing includes all digital channels such as smartphones, e-mail, digital content, video, and websites. Search engines, digital ads, and how to use these channels to reach the target audience appropriately, analyze competitors and target markets, in addition to enhancing the reputation of brands and raising the level of product development and innovation.

Below the advantage of E-marketing is listed (Taherdoost,2014)

- The ability to determine the required market through internet search engines.
- The results obtained from electronic marketing are more accurate than traditional marketing.
- Ease of change or suspension of marketing tasks.
- Reduced customer acquisition costs.
- Helps make successful decisions, through the use of realistic data and qualitative results.

- The possibility of immediate access to data and results.
- Accessibility to any business sector in the market.

**STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

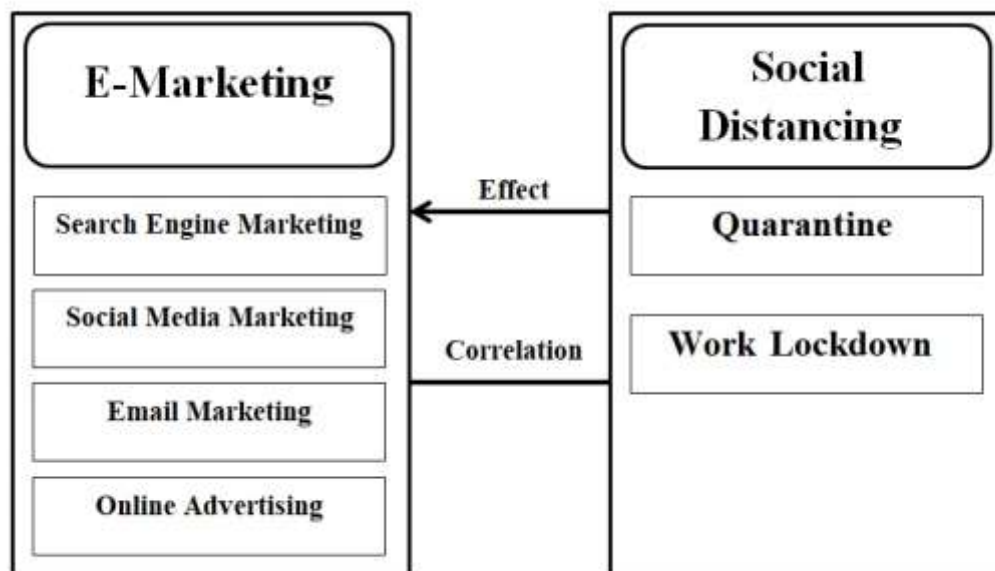
As a result of the outbreak of the Coronavirus and the accompanying closure of most commercial activities, and the use of social distancing measures, this comprehensive ban affected the workflow of companies, which led them to adopt new strategies to maintain a steady level of performance. During the days of social distancing, consumers spend most of their time browsing and using electronic platforms, which required changing the type of activity of companies and became

their focus in developing their brands, developing their websites, and following the best e-marketing strategy that suits the company's private activity. From what was mentioned above, the study problem can be summarized in the following questions:

1. What is the impact of social distancing on electronic commerce under the circumstances of the Coronavirus?
2. How social distancing contributes to creating new trading strategies?

**THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

A chart has been prepared to illustrate the study, which indicates the correlation and influence between the research variables, as shown in the figure below:



*Source: Prepared by the researcher*

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### E-Marketing Dimensions:

E-Marketing classified for (4) dimensions as below figure:

Figure No. 2: E-Marketing dimensions



*Source: Prepared by the researcher*

#### **Search Engine Marketing (SEM):**

It is the process of increasing the traffic of the target customer through the search engines over the Internet, and it consists of two main parts, namely, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Paid Search Ads (PSA).

In this type of e-marketing, it must be taken into account the accuracy and quality of displaying ads, because inaccurate planning may lead to failure of marketing campaigns through the search engine, as well as failure to follow an accurate strategy in using a wrong search engine may harm the reputation of the product on

the Internet, Such as poor advertising campaigns, which negatively affect sales rather than increase them.

This type of electronic marketing is quite common because famous search engines dominate in providing information to Internet users around the world (Minasyan,2012).

#### **Social Media Marketing (SMM):**

Social media is "a group of Internet-based applications that rely on the intellectual and technical bases of the Internet, and allow the creation and exchange of user-posted content." Social media has many advantages, such as helping it connect



business activities with customers, developing and strengthening relationships promptly and at a low cost (Vinerean, et al,2014).

The ideal aspects of social media and its immense popularity have resulted in a revolution in marketing activities such as advertising and promotion, and social media has also affected consumer behavior from information acquisition to post-purchase behavior such as expressions of dissatisfaction or the behaviors and patterns of internet use. We can say that marketing on social networking sites focuses on creating exciting content to attract the largest number of potential customers and readers who share this content with their friends and acquaintances, and thus this process increases the number of visitors and develops the website traffic, as well as these messages that Comes from people who are known to be more confident and secure than the company's marketing messages (Ghoshal, 2019).

#### **Email Marketing:**

Email marketing is known as one of the electronic marketing tools, which is in the form of a commercial or non-commercial message to the recipient list through their e-mail, and the periodic and self-sent newsletter is also considered one of the e-mail marketing tools. Certainly, this type is not wide marketing like the rest of the

tools provided by social networking sites, but in one way or another it has many advantages and great marketing capabilities, for example, marketers can take advantage of the privacy of communication via e-mail by sending detailed offers to all subscribers by using the newsletters periodically to establish the identity of the product Or the company and its promotion. These offers are not available to the public in general, such as viewing content or obtaining exclusive discounts (Hudak,2017:342).

#### **Online Advertising:**

This type of e-marketing helps companies reduce their marketing budget. As its cost is many times lower compared to traditional advertisements, and this type of advertisement is similar to the light panels installed on the walls of websites, and the marketer can determine his marketing budget and place the appropriate advertisement for the product on the targeted sites or applications for these ads to appear.

Internet advertising has become the most common source of income for Google, as it is the pioneer in exploiting advertising space on websites and electronic applications and publishing product ads for marketers.

Often the success of the website in the long term depends on its ability to achieve a balance between what the site contains in

terms of advertising space to earn money and the spaces that users want to visit the site, to keep users satisfied and continue to visit the site (Mishra,2017).

### **SOCIAL DISTANCING IN COVID-19**

When the Covid-19 pandemic occurred in the countries of the world at the beginning of the year 2020, governments faced a serious challenge of stopping the spread of this pandemic, and the best way to contain the epidemic was by closing social and economic activities in countries. To create spacing between people, and not to transmit the disease from one infected person to others, which caused a state of stoppage in commercial activities, and the effect of this on corporate sales and large losses as a result. And social distancing conditions restricted economic activities significantly (Andersen, et. al,2020).

Iraq is considered as one of the countries that adopt the traditional commercial activity in direct selling and buying, and the electronic marketing activity was not important to the consumer, due to the traditional consumer tendencies, who depend on direct and uninterrupted purchase. But due to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Iraqi consumer was forced to purchase his needs in other unconventional ways, as he resorted to electronic purchases through electronic sales platforms or social media to obtain his needs.

Social distancing is the "*preventive measure directed towards reducing interactions within the community, thus restricting infected individuals who have not yet been identified. Social distancing measures include closing some businesses, closing schools and workplaces, and canceling events to avoid mass gatherings*" (Singh, Adhikari, 2020) .

Social distancing is useful in places where there is a spread of the virus in the community, as the restrictive measures imposed exclusively on known cases (quarantine) or the most vulnerable segments of the population are not sufficient to prevent transmission, so social distancing measures have been adopted to reduce the spread of the virus. And also reducing deaths, and creates new business opportunities such as moving to focus entirely on electronic commerce.

Ending social distancing measures is a sensitive issue, because controlling the epidemic until a vaccine is available may require reducing the routine activities of the population in daily life for several months, with the resulting economic effects (Saud et al, 2020:31).

#### **The economic effects:**

*"The economic effects of social distancing applied to limit the spread of the Covid-19 virus depend on the structure of production networks"* (Barrot et al,.2020:2).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the main policy options for governments is to shut down economic activities to slow the spread of the disease. Many types of consumption occur in places with a high concentration of people (such as restaurants and public transportation), or that involve direct physical contact (such as hairdressers and dentists), which contribute to the spread of disease. Other types of consumer spending (such as retail shopping) also involve proximity to store assistants and other consumers, which also poses risks. Most governments have

implemented social distancing laws that restrict some of these economic activities. However, the severity of these restrictions varies greatly between countries. Strict restrictions help contain the virus and reduce the eventual death toll, but they cause more economic pain through lower consumer spending, increased business failures, and higher unemployment, forcing companies to adapt to the changes and move quickly towards electronic commerce to conduct business transactions. (Sherldan et al, 2020:20468).

#### **Dimensions of social distancing:**

Social distancing classified for (2) dimensions as below figure:



#### **A- Quarantine:**

It is the imposition of restrictions on the activities of people who are not sick without being exposed to an infected person or separating them from others. The purpose is to monitor their symptoms and ensure the early detection of cases. Recent research demonstrates that quarantine can be effective in preventing new cases of

COVID-19 infection or deaths from it when implemented in conjunction with other public health interventions (WHO,2020:2).

In most of the countries affected by COVID-19, the approach has been to impose quarantine for a fixed period. The implementation of the quarantine measure affects the general economic policy and



the rise in unemployment. Assuming that the government knows who the virus carriers are, it can simply isolate the exposed people and allow everyone else to work to avoid the cost of production (Piguillem, Shi, 2020).

#### **B- Work Lockdown:**

During the pandemic period, and specifically in its infancy, many business organizations and service institutions were forced to comprehensively close as a result of the spread of the Coronavirus and its threat to the lives of most people, it has become imperative for governments in various countries to take serious measures and draw up a policy that helps mitigate the danger and increase survival rates (Baker et al., 2020).

Under the orders issued by the governments, certain categories of establishments were prohibited from opening their doors to the public except for the trade of foodstuffs and necessities, which led to a reduction in the active workforce (Barrot et al., 2020).

" *COVID-19 crisis will lead to a permanent change in our shopping behavior and business management methods*" (Deloitte, 2020:20), which will push consumers to go shopping online due to their staying longer at home browsing their devices (Abd Elrahim, Elsayed, 2020).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Study Objectives:**

This study aims to clarify the role that social distancing plays and its impact on electronic commerce, as the objectives of the study are as follows:

1. Identifying the dimensions of the social distancing variable due to the spread of the Coronavirus.
2. Clarify the impact of social distancing on the development of electronic commerce.
3. Realization of the study's hypotheses.
4. Providing libraries with a study dealing with the issue of social distancing by linking it to the e-commerce variable.

### **Study Importance:**

The importance of the study revolves around the importance of the topic we are dealing with, which is the impact of social distancing on electronic commerce because it serves the practical and cognitive reality of the sector covered by the study, and it may also be an attempt to fill the knowledge shortage in local studies.

The most prominent justification for doing this study is the need to find an appropriate strategy that enables organizations to resist the threats resulting from the outbreak of the Coronavirus and the use of social distancing in its dimensions (closing workplaces, home quarantine) and its impact on electronic commerce, so it has

become imperative for organizations to search for solutions Quick, quick adaptation and ability to turn threats into profitable opportunities.

### **Study Hypothesis:**

After defining the study problem, a set of hypotheses will be assumed here that may help later in finding satisfactory solutions to the problem, as follows:

The first hypothesis: There is a correlation between e-marketing and social distancing, which it is subdivided into the following hypotheses:

- a) There is a correlation between the search engine marketing dimension and the social distancing variable in its dimensions.
- b) There is a correlation between the social media marketing dimension and the social distancing variable with its dimensions.
- c) There is a correlation between the e-mail marketing dimension and the social distancing variable in its dimensions.
- d) There is a correlation between Internet advertisements and the social distancing variable in its dimensions.

The second hypothesis: There is an impact relationship between e-marketing and social distancing, which it is subdivided into the following hypotheses:

- e) There is an impact of e-marketing on the closure of workplaces.
- f) There is an impact of e-marketing after quarantine.

### **Statistic Methods:**

The researcher used the ready-made statistical package (SPSS) program, in which the standard deviation, arithmetic mean, and Pearson correlation coefficient was extracted, and the simple linear regression.

### **Study Society:**

The study population is summarized by workers in the field of electronic marketing and home delivery representatives at Al-Zaidi Electronic Marketing Company, the researcher sent them a message containing an electronic questionnaire link, the number of answers to the electronic form was (62) out of the total number of employees in the company (109) employees, where the sample represented 57 % of the study population.

### **Description of the research sample:**

Al-Zaidi Shopping Company is a business company that provides customers with many offers of household and office goods, with a quick response through electronic channels to provide products to customers in Iraq.

(62) individuals were tested from the research community of (109) and the coverage rate was (57%).

Table No. (1): Demographic data for the research sample in Al-Zaidi Company

No.	Item	Description	Number	Percentage
1-	Gender	Male	51	82%
		Female	11	18%
Total			62	100%

2-	Age	18-30	19	30.64%
		31-40	22	35.48%
		41-50	17	27.41%
		More than 51	4	06.45%
Total			62	100%

3-	Type of the job	Online sales representative	34	54.83%
		delivery representative	28	45.17%
Total			62	100%

5-	Educational certificate	Higher School	11	17.74%
		Bachelor	46	74.19%
		Master	2	03.22%
		Other	3	4.83%
Total			62	100%

## DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### Results analyzing for the independent variable (Social distancing):

The social distancing dimensions showed the below results:

### Quarantine:

According to the research model, quarantine was adopted as one of the dimensions of social distancing. Table (2) shows the arithmetic mean and the standard deviation of these responses. The mean was (3.93) with a high level and the

standard deviation was 0.50. This confirms a high homogeneity in the responses of the sample. Also, the table shows that all the section arithmetic means were higher than the default mean (3), which indicates that the quarantine halted the wheel of life during a decade characterized by the

acceleration of work towards achieving sustainable development, which was disrupted by a global health threat that caused severe damage to the global community. The focus shifted to emergency action to save lives and repair livelihoods.

Table No. 2 Quarantine Dimension results

No.	Sections	Mean	Std. D.
X1	There is a restriction on human activity and a restriction on business	3.86	0.47
X2	Experiencing home quarantine on a personal level is an opportunity to adjust decisions	4.00	0.44
X3	One of the positive effects of the Corona crisis is raising the level of environmental and health awareness	3.84	0.62
X4	During the home quarantine, the most effective ways to adapt were the Internet and social networking with others	4.02	0.47
The total scale of the dimension		3.93	0.50

### Work lockdown :

As mentioned in Table (3), it is noted that the overall index of the arithmetic mean (3.82) is higher than the default arithmetic mean (3), which indicates the great attention given by the study sample to this dimension and the total standard deviation reached (0.462). From the foregoing, we note that the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on organizations in addition to the welfare of workers and the need to enable remote work. The results were that the complete work lockdown affected the work methods and caused confusion in the business planning of the organizations.



Table No. (3) Work lockdown Dimension results

No.	Sections	Mean	Std. D.
X5	Your current position is working now, but with fewer hours	3.92	0.443
X6	Lockdown impacted negatively on workers	3.81	0.443
X7	Lockdown affects work activities	3.81	0.503
X8	Lockdown confused planning the work of the organization	3.75	0.457
The total scale of the dimension		3.829	0.462

### Analyzing result for the dependent variable (E-Marketing):

#### Search Engine Marketing (SEM):

This dimension is represented by paragraphs (Y1) to (Y4). By looking at the results of the diagnose and statistical analysis of the dimension of the search engine that is shown in Table (4), we find that the mean was 3.795, which is higher than the default arithmetic mean of 3, the standard deviation was 0.595, This explains the importance of properly setting up a company's position in the search engine, as it will enable it to continue to increase profits over time. If you provide strong content and the ranking for keywords is correct, then traffic to the site can increase over time.

Table No. 4 Search engine dimension results

No.	Sections	Mean	Std. D.
Y1	A website is available for your business. The website is easy to shop for and has many options.	3.77	0.470
Y2	The company uses paid search ads to improve the visibility of its site on search engine results pages	3.47	0.636
Y3	There is an electronic work team that follows up on search engines and is prepared to deal with requests	3.91	0.711
Y4	E-marketing through search engines provides a larger market than the traditional market	4.02	0.561
The total scale of the dimension		3.795	0.595

**Social Media Marketing (SMM):**

Social Media Marketing was described in four paragraphs beginning with (Y5) and ending with (Y8). Table (5) shows that the mean of the dimension was (3.76), higher than the default arithmetic mean (3), and the total standard deviation was (0.483) which confirms the existence of high homogeneity in the responses of the study sample. This proves that nothing can be better than social networks where most users spend a greater part of their time during the day and at night especially during the quarantine period.

Table No. 5 Social Media Marketing Dimension results

No.	Sections	Mean	Std. D.
Y5	The company uses social media platforms that have local followers	3.70	0.414
Y6	A dedicated team is available on social media platforms to answer inquiries and requests.	3.74	0.475
Y7	Social media platforms provide a high market share for the company	3.75	0.569
Y8	The promotion policy on social media platforms does not conflict with the privacy policies of the followers.	3.81	0.474
The total scale of the dimension		3.76	0.483

**E-mail Marketing:**

E-mail Marketing Dimension had been defined in paragraphs from (Y9) to (Y12). By looking at Table (6), it is clear that the mean was (3.87), which is higher than the default arithmetic mean (3). as well as the standard deviation was (0.516). These results demonstrate that E-mail marketing is very important as it is preferred by some customers and is widely popular in dealing with them locally.

Table No. 6 Organizational loyalty Dimension results

No.	Sections	Mean	Std. D.
Y9	There is a service to communicate with customers via e-mail	3.94	0.482
Y10	New customers are obtained by publishing the company's email	3.85	0.494
Y11	The method of communicating with the customer via the Internet is popular locally	3.85	0.574
Y12	Important customers prefer to communicate with them (officially) via e-mail to complete the purchase steps from the company	3.84	0.512
The total scale of the dimension		3.87	0.516

**Online Advertising:**

The Online Advertising dimension is summarized in paragraphs (Y13) to (Y16). When looking at the table (7), it is noted that the arithmetic mean (3.87) is higher than the default arithmetic mean (3). The standard deviation was (0.516), which means that the sample of the study agreed in their opinion. It is concluded that that Internet marketing is a successful activity locally, and there is mutual trust between the customer and the company and that the Internet marketing policy does not conflict with government policies, especially after the emergence of the need to provide for the needs of citizens during the health ban period.

Table No. 7 Online Advertising Dimension results

No.	Sections	Mean	Std. D.
Y13	The transition from traditional to electronic marketing was easy for the company's management	3.94	0.482
Y14	Is there confidence in the local customer to buy online	3.85	0.494
Y15	Local customers are trustworthy to deal with online.	3.85	0.574
Y16	Government policies do not contradict Internet marketing activity during the pandemic	3.84	0.512
The total scale of the dimension		3.87	0.516

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION****Discussion:**

(Pearson-Brown) had been used to measure the correlation between the study variables according to the hypotheses, as follows:

The first hypothesis: There is a statistically significant correlation relationship at a significant level (0.05) between e-marketing and social distancing. Looking at table (8), it appears to us that there is a significant and positive correlation between e-marketing and social distancing, which amounted to (0.83), while the correlation coefficient was significant. It is (0.00), it is clear that the correlation is significant, as the results in Table (8) reinforce the first main hypothesis, and thus the hypothesis is accepted as shown below:

Table No.8 Correlation results

		E-Marketing (Y)				
		Search Engine	Social Media	Email	Online Advertising	Dependent Variable (Y)
Social Distancing (X)	Quarantine	0.873	0.834	0.163	0.797	0.835
		0.000	0.000	0.162	0.000	0.000
	Work lockdown	0.797	0.710	0.166	0.920	0.777
		0.000	0.000	0.156	0.000	0.000
		0.008	0.150	0.047	0.028	0.002
	Independent Variable (X)	0.839	0.776	0.219	0.834	<b>0.834</b>
		0.000	0.000	0.062	0.000	<b>0.000</b>

#### Analysis of effect ratios for study variables:

The second hypothesis: There is a statistically significant effect at the level of significance (0.05) between e-marketing and social distancing. As shown in tables No. 9, the results of regression analysis, indicating that the level of significance is (0.00) which is less than (0.05) and means that there is a significant effect at the level (0.05) of the independent variable on the dependent variable. The value of the beta coefficient was (0.834), which means that any change in the value of the independent variable (X) by one unit leads to a change in the value of the dependent variable (Y) by (0.834). The value of calculated T (15.077) which shows the significance of the model, approves the second hypothesis, which says (There is an impact of social distancing in its dimensions on electronic marketing). The R<sup>2</sup> determination factor was (0.753), this means that the independent variable explains to us that the effect ratio was (89.3%) of the changes on the dependent variable and the other percentage belongs to other factors, while (Calculated F) was (247,103), which indicates the significance of the model, and the significance level of the calculated F (0.00), which is less than the level of significance (0.05), and this supports the validity and acceptance of the study hypothesis according to the following equation.

$$Y_i = 0.782 + 0.816 X_i$$



Tables No. 12 the effect results of the analysis

Independent Variable	B Facts	Calculated T	Sig. T
Social distancing	0.834	15.077	0.000
	R <sup>2</sup>	Calculated F	Sig. F
	0.753	247.103	0.000

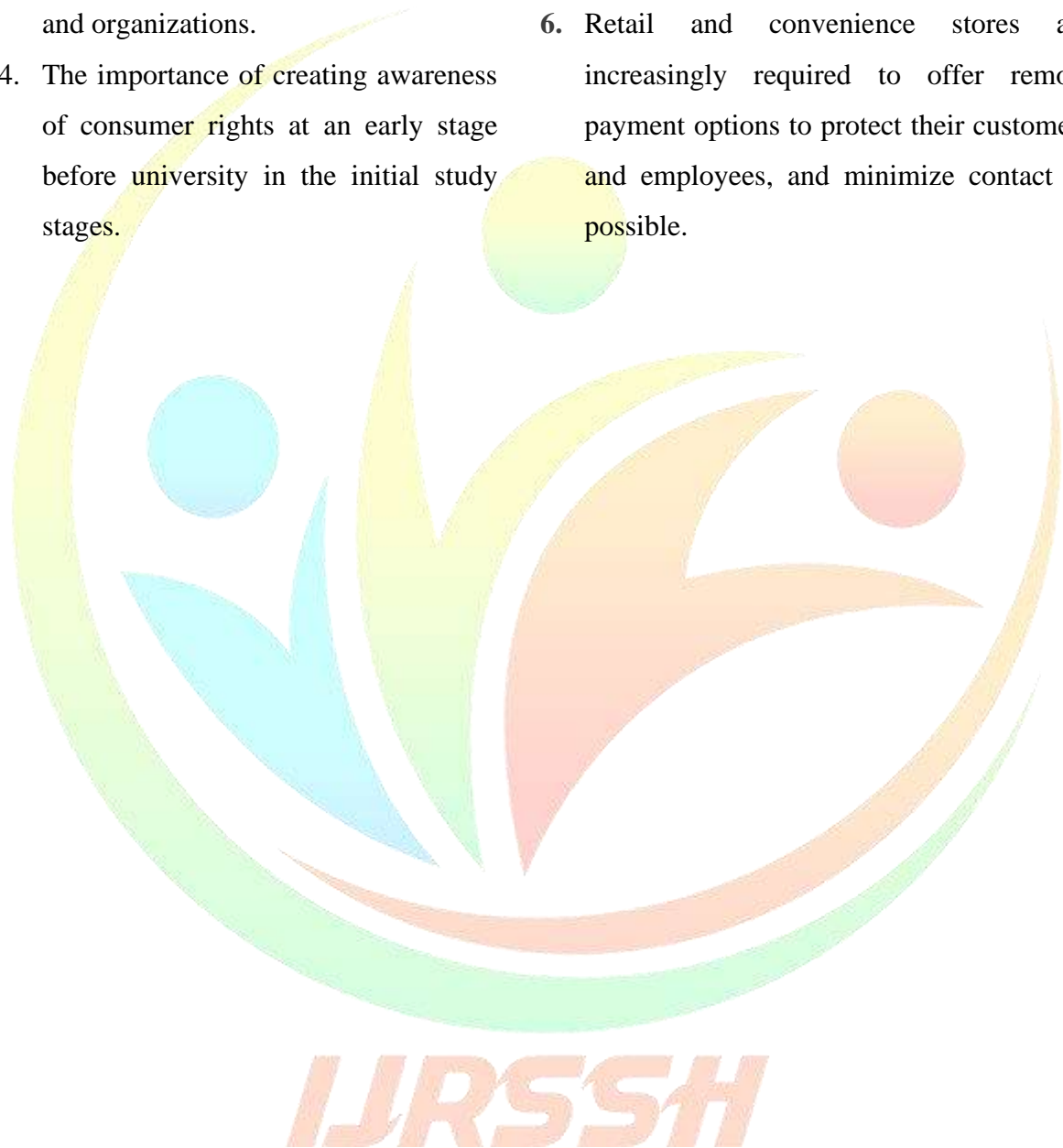
### Conclusions:

1. The expansion of e-marketing activity due to the Corona pandemic and the complete closure, and the mutual trust between the marketer and the customer contributed to the success of this transformation in the marketing style.
2. E-marketing focuses on integrating regular marketing and technological development, as e-marketing is part of e-commerce, and e-marketing requires strategies for companies to reach the consumer.
3. There are major obstacles to e-marketing in the small size of the market and that the local market's products are simple, in addition to logistical problems and the lack of law.
4. E-marketing in Iraq has been present for some time in terms of logistical support and the financial system, but it has flourished remarkably under the Corona pandemic.
5. There is an importance for social networking sites in e-shopping, as most companies today use social media to market their products online.
6. Many companies that offer merchandise and service products have resorted to marketing their products online due to the complete closure and quarantine due to the pandemic.
7. The local customer responds to the change in his purchasing patterns from traditional purchase to electronic purchase.

### IMPLICATIONS

1. Exploiting e-marketing to develop and enhance pioneering projects to keep pace with current developments in business markets.
2. Creating a culture that meets the technological development, and that the Fourth Industrial Revolution requires the development in the telecommunications sector, which solves many problems.

3. E-marketing needs a law, a financial system, and logistical support for its success and continuity, and this requires the development of legislation by the government that guarantees the rights of consumers and organizations.
4. The importance of creating awareness of consumer rights at an early stage before university in the initial study stages.
5. Companies that are facing declining sales, or that are still bound by lockdown measures, should expand the choices for customers to keep them satisfied and encourage them to shop for products.
6. Retail and convenience stores are increasingly required to offer remote payment options to protect their customers and employees, and minimize contact as possible.



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