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# Systematic Review on SEO and Digital Marketing Strategies for Enhancing Retail SMEs' Performance

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[Gerald Sechele](#) , [Gundo Rabedzwa](#) , [Sivuyise Nongayo](#) , [Bonginkosi Thango](#) \*

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*Systematic Review*

# Systematic Review on SEO and Digital Marketing Strategies for Enhancing Retail SMEs' Performance

Gerald L. Sechele, Gundo Rabedzwa, Sivuyise M. Nongayo and Bonginkosi A. Thango \*

Department of Electrical Engineering Technology, University of Johannesburg, Johannesburg, South Africa, 2092

\* Correspondence: bonginkosit@uj.ac.za; Tel.: +27(0)11 559 6939

**Abstract:** The retail industry's shift from traditional to online platforms has heightened the need for effective search engine optimization (SEO) strategies to improve digital marketing outcomes. SEO involves optimizing a website's technical and content features to increase its visibility in search engine results, potentially driving traffic, enhancing brand awareness, and boosting revenue. This systematic review aims to evaluate the impact of various SEO tactics on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the retail sector, focusing on key performance metrics such as website traffic, search engine rankings, conversion rates, and overall business growth. A comprehensive search was conducted across major academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science, resulting in 102 studies published between 2014 and 2024. The methodological approach utilized both narrative synthesis and quantitative analysis to evaluate the quality and findings of the selected studies, following PRISMA2020 guidelines. The analysis shows that effective SEO practices, such as robust content marketing, technical SEO enhancements, and precise keyword optimization, lead to significant improvements in digital performance metrics. Specifically, up to a 30% increase in website traffic was observed, and keyword optimization improved click-through rates by 20% to 40%. The impact on conversion rates was more variable, with improvements ranging from 10% to 25%, influenced by factors like SEO quality and market conditions. Furthermore, integrating SEO with digital marketing strategies within e-business models enhanced operational efficiency by up to 15% and increased revenue growth by 25%. However, biases in the literature, such as the selective reporting of positive outcomes, may affect the overall reliability of these findings. While SEO strategies effectively drive website traffic and improve search engine rankings, their direct influence on conversion rates is less consistent. A balanced approach, combining SEO practices with strategic IT alignment, is crucial for sustained business success in the retail industry. Future research should address the variability in conversion outcomes and investigate the conditions under which SEO tactics are most effective.

**Keywords:** search engine optimization (SEO); retail industry; SMEs; search engine rankings; systematic review; digital marketing; e-commerce; systematic review

## 1. Introduction

In the last decade, the dynamics of consumer product advertising and sales have undergone significant transformation, primarily fueled by rapid technological advancements. Among these changes, Search Engine Optimization (SEO) has become a critical component, aimed at enhancing a website's technical features, content, and structure to boost its visibility on Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs). By improving search rankings, SEO increases organic, non-paid traffic and significantly enhances user experience [1]. In today's digital age, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are increasingly recognizing the importance of leveraging digital marketing to drive business growth. The dominance of search engines, especially Google—currently the most visited website worldwide—underscores the necessity of an effective SEO strategy for businesses to maintain a competitive edge in an information-driven market [2]. Meanwhile, social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok offer sophisticated targeting capabilities, allowing brands to connect with consumers based on behavior, demographics, and interests [3].

As of late 2022, the global population reached approximately 8 billion, with 5.473 billion internet users and 4.62 billion active social media users. Generational shifts have brought significant

behavioral changes: Gen Z and millennials now average 8.5 social media accounts per person, with daily usage time reaching an average of 147 minutes. Consequently, 71% of small-to-mid-sized businesses have integrated social media into their marketing strategies, with social media advertising expenditures projected to reach \$1268.7 billion in 2023[4]. SEO, particularly organic search, plays a vital role in bridging the gap between content creators and users by elevating organic search results over sponsored content. Within this context, the role of SEO in retail SMEs is more pronounced, as businesses continually seek innovative approaches to expand their customer base and enhance shopping experiences. Digital marketing, including social media engagement, brand advocacy, and promotional campaigns, is becoming a popular and effective strategy for achieving these objectives [5].

SEO transcends technical optimization; it is a strategic initiative that significantly influences business metrics such as revenue growth, customer acquisition, and cost efficiency. For business leaders, understanding SEO's capacity to deliver measurable business benefits is essential. Effective SEO drives profitability by channeling targeted traffic to retail websites, resulting in higher sales and increased market share. Furthermore, it enhances brand visibility and consumer loyalty by positioning retail brands more prominently in search engine results, thus reinforcing online presence and trust. This comprehensive approach reveals SEO's strategic importance beyond mere technical enhancements, as it aligns closely with broader business objectives such as boosting profitability, expanding market presence, and cultivating brand loyalty.

This systematic review aims to explore these intersections, investigating how well-executed SEO practices contribute to the sustained success of retail businesses by enabling competitive advantage and fostering long-term growth in the digital era. Specifically, the study focuses on adopting innovative digital marketing strategies and provides a thorough analysis of the key areas related to SEO in the retail sector. The primary emphasis is on optimizing user experience and search engine performance through the refinement of both technical and content-based website elements, which in turn increases organic traffic and conversion rates. Additionally, the study incorporates data analytics to elevate SEO performance and consumer engagement, emphasizing a strategic approach to keyword targeting, on-page optimization, and off-page efforts.

The proposed systematic review consolidates existing research on SEO and digital marketing strategies within the retail SME context, evaluating configurations and performance metrics while identifying gaps in the literature that necessitate further investigation. The study's findings are expected to provide actionable insights for SMEs seeking to enhance their digital marketing initiatives and achieve sustainable growth in the competitive retail landscape. Table 1 illustrates the comparative analysis of existing review works and the proposed systematic review.

**Table 1.** Comparative Analysis of the Existing Review Works and Proposed Systematic Review on Organic Search and Engine Search Optimization for Retail SMEs Industry.

Ref.	Cites	Year	Contribution	Pros	Cons
[6]	17	2017	IT in CRM, firm performance.	Comprehensive, global scope.	Lack of industry-specific details.
[7]	18	2021	Cloud computing on IT management.	In-depth case studies, qualitative insights.	Limited sample size, case study focus.
[8]	19	2021	Digital marketing for SMEs during covid-19.	Focus on crisis management, specific to SMEs.	Limited to Indonesia, small sample size.
[9]	20	2023	Digital marketing and Fast-Food Patronage.	Current, specific industry focus.	Regional focus only, limited generalizability.
[10]	21	2020	Digital marketing strategies for Indian SMEs.	Focused on Indian SMEs, detailed analysis.	Limited to India, may not generalize.
[11]	22	2014	IT and firm performance meta-analysis.	Broad scope, comprehensive review.	Heterogeneity in studies, older data.
[12]	23	2020	IT affects SMEs.	Focus on SMEs, clear quantitative measures.	Limited to the USA, potential bias in sample.
[13]	24	2014	IT affects SMEs in India.	Region-specific insights, quantitative analysis.	Limited to Indian SMEs, small sample

[14]	26	2019	IT capabilities and competitive advantage in Brazil.	Focus on emerging markets, Quantitative data.	Regional focus, specific industry data.
[15]	27	2018	IT Investments and capabilities.	Comprehensive, various industries.	Potential for study heterogeneity.
[16]	29	2019	IT infrastructure and E-business.	Focus on infrastructure, qualitative insights.	Specific to Indian market
[17]	30	2020	IT role in service firms.	Detailed service industry focus, quantitative.	Limited to USA, may not generalize.
[18]	31	2022	Digital transformation and Firm Performance.	Comprehensive, detailed metrics.	May not apply to all industries
[19]	32	2023	Digital transformation and business model innovation.	Focus on innovation, Mixed methods.	Varied results, limited sample size.
[20]	33	2019	IT Infrastructure and E-business.	Focus on infrastructure, qualitative insights.	Case study limitations, specific scope.
[21]	34	2021	IT capabilities and organizational performance.	Multi-industry analysis, quantitative.	Study heterogeneity, regional focus.
[22]	35	2021	Digital transformation and innovation performance.	Broad industry scope, quantitative.	Limited to digital transformation context.
[23]	36	2022	IT investments and business Performance.	Detailed metrics, broad scope.	Limited to Indonesian context.
[24]	37	2021	E-commerce impact on Retail Performance.	Detailed, UK-specific insights	Limited to retail, potential bias.
[25]	38	2022	Financial technologies and fin-tech performance.	Comprehensive, global perspective.	Potential focus on specific technologies.
[26]	39	2014	E-CRM in E-retailing.	Focus on CRM strategies, qualitative insights.	Specific to e-retail, limited generalizability.
[27]	40	2022	Managing digital transformation in SMEs.	Framework and empirical evidence, Broad scope.	Limited to SMEs, possible bias.
[28]	41	2015	Customers experience management in retail banking.	Detailed, customer focused.	Limited to retail banking, US-focused.
[29]	42	2019	IT governance and organizational change.	Focus on governance, qualitative insights.	Limited to organizational change focus.
Proposed systematic review			Evaluates the impact of increased visibility and brand awareness, cost-effective marketing targeted traffic and Improved user experience long-term benefits.	Provides a comprehensive understanding of factors cost savings, credibility, trust and Sustainable results. Targeted traffic competitive advantage.	Focused only SEOs enhancement of SMEs.

The gaps highlighted in Table 1 underscore the need for a more comprehensive and up-to-date review of SEO and digital marketing strategies for retail SMEs. Existing studies often focus on narrow regions, specific industries, or outdated datasets, limiting their generalizability and relevance in today’s rapidly changing digital landscape. Additionally, the literature frequently lacks industry-specific insights, strategic implications for long-term growth, and a thorough evaluation of performance metrics across diverse economic contexts. By addressing these shortcomings, the proposed systematic review aims to provide a holistic understanding of SEO’s impact on retail SMEs, focusing on visibility, brand awareness, competitive positioning, and sustainable growth strategies. This review seeks to offer actionable recommendations that can enhance SMEs' digital marketing efforts, bridging the current gaps and aligning with evolving market demands.

1.1. Research Questions

A significant amount of research has been conducted on organic search and Search Engine Optimization (SEO), particularly in relation to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the retail industry. To address existing gaps and extend the literature, this study explores the following research questions:

- How does the implementation of SEO strategies enhance profitability and customer retention for SMEs in the retail sector?
- In what ways do SEO practices contribute to achieving competitive advantage and market differentiation within the broader framework of retail strategy and digital transformation?



- How do SEO strategies align with and influence theories of competitive advantage and e-commerce, and what role do they play in the digital transformation of retail businesses?
- How does the integration of SEO into digital marketing efforts impact operational cost reduction and efficiency for retail SMEs?
- What is the role of SEO in shaping consumer behavior and decision-making processes within the retail sector, and how does it affect brand loyalty and market share?

### *1.2. Rationale*

The rationale for this systematic review is to evaluate the current state of research on SEO and digital marketing in retail SMEs, focusing on studies published from 2014 to 2024. There is a notable gap in the literature regarding the practical applications of SEO within the retail sector, particularly concerning how these tactics translate into measurable business outcomes for SMEs. For business leaders, understanding how SEO strategies can effectively enhance operational performance and competitive positioning is essential. This study aims to provide actionable insights on how optimized SEO can streamline marketing efforts, improve return on investment (ROI), and enable businesses to outperform competitors. It seeks to demonstrate how effective SEO can lead to substantial increases in website traffic, click-through rates, and revenue growth, offering practical solutions for leveraging SEO to achieve strategic business goals. From an academic perspective, this study builds on existing theoretical frameworks around SEO and digital marketing strategies by integrating findings from 1550 studies. It advances knowledge by linking SEO practices with broader concepts of digital transformation and e-commerce theory, offering a nuanced understanding of how SEO contributes to business performance. This rationale underscores the study's contribution to both theoretical and practical dimensions, highlighting its role in enhancing academic discussions on digital marketing and providing valuable guidance for business leaders seeking to optimize their SEO strategies.

### *1.3. Research Motivation*

In today's rapidly evolving retail landscape, the shift from traditional media to digital platforms has made effective SEO strategies increasingly important. This research is driven by the need to illustrate how SEO serves as a critical tool for SMEs aiming to enhance their business outcomes. CEOs and business leaders need to understand how investing in SEO can yield substantial returns, including increased sales, brand visibility, and market expansion. This study aims to provide clear evidence of SEO's impact on key performance metrics, such as up to a 30% increase in website traffic and a potential 25% boost in revenue growth. By focusing on concrete business implications, the research highlights SEO's role in driving competitive advantage and achieving financial success.

From an academic standpoint, this research fills existing gaps in the literature by situating SEO within the broader frameworks of digital transformation and e-commerce theory. The review of 1550 relevant studies integrates recent empirical evidence to advance scholarly understanding of SEO's effectiveness. The systematic review not only clarifies how SEO practices impact retail business performance but also enriches the academic discourse on digital marketing strategies, providing insights into the relationship between SEO and business performance.

### *1.4. Research Contribution*

This research contributes valuable insights by directly linking SEO practices to both business outcomes and theoretical advancements. For CEOs, the study provides practical recommendations on integrating SEO into broader marketing strategies, demonstrating that well-executed SEO tactics can result in up to a 30% increase in website traffic and conversion rate improvements of 10% to 25%. These findings help business leaders formulate strategic plans to optimize SEO efforts, enhance revenue growth, and boost market visibility. From a scholarly perspective, this research extends and refines theories in digital marketing and e-commerce by synthesizing data from 103 studies. It advances theoretical discussions by providing a detailed analysis of how SEO affects various performance metrics, thereby contributing new insights to the understanding of SEO's impact on business success. By bridging empirical evidence with theoretical frameworks, the study fills existing

gaps in the literature and offers a comprehensive view that benefits both practical and academic perspectives.

1.5. Research Novelty

This research adopts a novel approach by moving beyond traditional SEO strategies to focus on innovative, data-driven tactics tailored to both business and academic needs. It demonstrates how integrating advanced SEO techniques—such as AI-driven keyword analysis and dynamic content optimization—can provide a competitive edge by driving significant increases in website traffic and customer engagement. The study outlines practical implications, enabling businesses to achieve more effective marketing outcomes, enhance customer acquisition, and realize substantial growth in revenue through these cutting-edge strategies. Academically, this study contributes to the evolution of digital marketing theories and strategic management by offering a refined understanding of SEO's role in modern retail. It links emerging SEO methodologies with established theories of digital transformation and competitive advantage, presenting fresh insights into how these strategies impact business performance. The research addresses gaps in the literature by examining new SEO practices, thereby enriching theoretical discussions, and providing a more comprehensive framework for understanding SEO's role in the digital retail landscape.

2. Materials and Methods

This section aims to provide a clear framework for conducting a systematic review following the PRISMA2020 guidelines to assess the impact of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and digital marketing strategies on retail Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). This section is broken down into specific subheadings for a structured approach.

2.1. Eligibility Criteria

This systematic review focuses on peer-reviewed studies published from 2014 to 2024, which specifically examine the influence of SEO and digital marketing strategies on retail SME performance. Articles meeting the following criteria were included: (1) English-language publications, (2) discussions on organic search and SEO strategies in the retail sector, and (3) the presence of a digital technology integration framework within the study. Studies not addressing these themes or published outside the specified period were excluded, Table 2 provides a detailed breakdown. The inclusion and exclusion criteria ensure comprehensive coverage of relevant literature while maintaining the review's quality and focus [136] – [151].

Table 2. Proposed Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria.

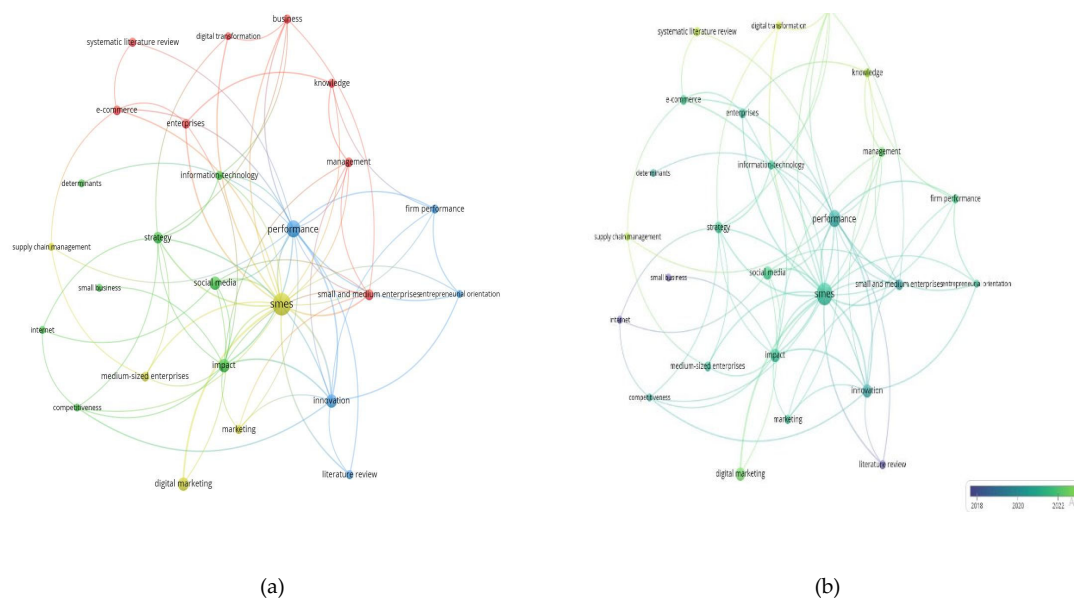
Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Topic	Articles focuses on Organic search and engine search optimization for retail industry.	Articles is unrelated on organic search and engine search optimization for retail industry.
Research Framework	The Articles must include a research Framework where there is an application of a digital technology for teaching and learning.	Articles lacking research Framework where there is an application of a digital technology for teaching and learning.
Language	Must be written in English language.	Articles not written in English.
Publication Period	Article must be between 2014 and 2024.	Article outside 2014 and 2024.

2.2. Information Source

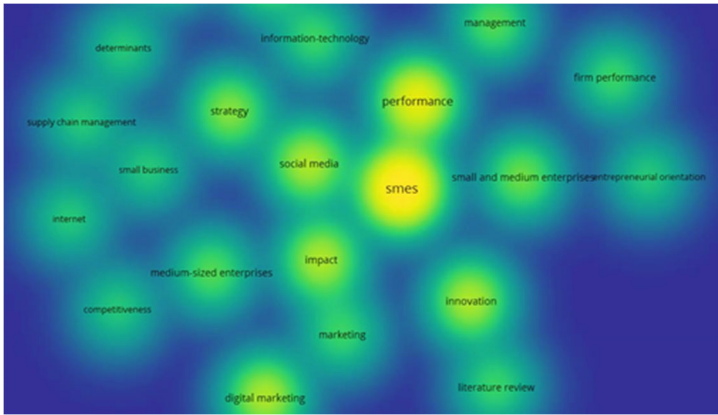
The review involved searching multiple databases to ensure a thorough and unbiased selection of literature. Databases used include Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science due to their broad coverage of academic fields and advanced search capabilities [136] – [151]. The search strategy employed combinations of keywords related to SEO, digital marketing, SMEs, and retail to capture relevant studies across different academic disciplines and methodological approaches. This multi-database strategy helps ensure a comprehensive and diverse collection of studies for review.

2.3. Search Strategy

A comprehensive search strategy was employed to identify relevant studies. Three databases—Scopus, Google Scholar, and Web of Science—were searched using a combination of keywords, phrases, and search filters. The search terms used were: "Big Data" OR "large data" OR "data analytics" AND "SME" OR "small business" OR "medium-sized enterprise" AND "performance" OR "productivity" OR "efficiency." The search was limited to peer-reviewed, English-language papers published between 2014 and 2024. After several iterations, the final keywords for this search included: ("Organic Search" OR "Natural Search" OR "Non-paid Search") AND ("Search Engine Optimization" OR SEO) AND ("Retail Industry" OR Retail OR "E-commerce" OR "Online Retail" OR "Retail Sector"). This search was applied to titles, abstracts, full texts, and keywords across 1550 research papers, which were ultimately narrowed down to 102 papers: 795 from Google Scholar (GS), 395 from Scopus, and 360 from Web of Science. Table 3 provides the exact breakdown of the reviewed papers. These keywords were used in a bibliometric analysis of SEO research in the retail sector, following the flow process outlined in Figure 1 and 2 [136–151].



**Figure 1.** Bibliometric Analysis of Study Search Keywords: (a) Network Visualization. (b) Overlay Visualization.



**Figure 2.** Density Visualization.

**Table 3.** Results Achieved from Literature Search.

No.	Online Repository	Number of results
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1	Google Scholar	795
2	Web of Science	360
3	Scopus	395
Total		1550

2.4. Selection Process

This section outlines the comprehensive selection process undertaken to ensure the methodological soundness and quality of the systematic review. The process was designed to identify and include relevant studies on organic search and SEO strategies in the retail industry. To achieve this, a systematic approach was used, encompassing multiple stages of screening and evaluation. Each stage aimed to assess the studies' alignment with the research questions and eligibility criteria.

Initially, studies were screened based on their abstracts and methodologies to determine their relevance to the topic. A mixed-methods approach was adopted for data integration and analysis, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative elements. Quantitative data obtained from surveys were analyzed using statistical techniques such as regression analysis and hypothesis testing to assess SEO's impact on retail performance metrics. Concurrently, qualitative data from case studies underwent thematic analysis to uncover trends and patterns in SEO practices. Data triangulation played a key role in strengthening the review's robustness by cross-verifying findings from multiple sources. Validation techniques, including member checking and inter-rater reliability analysis, were employed to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the results. These measures aimed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effect of SEO strategies on retail industry performance. The selection process is visually represented in Figure 3, which illustrates the flow from the initial identification of studies to the final inclusion. This figure emphasizes the systematic and thorough approach taken to achieve an unbiased and methodologically sound review [136] – [151].

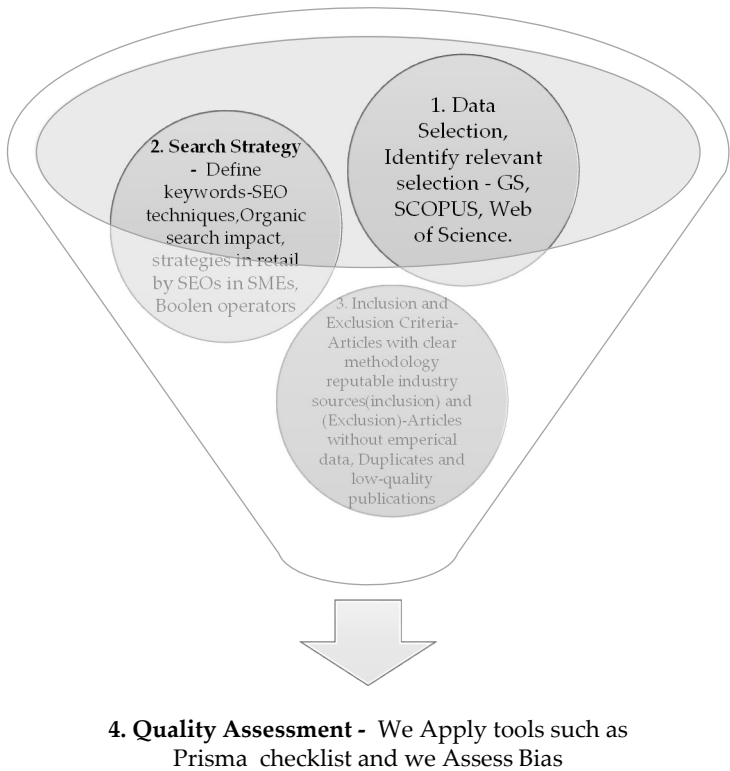


Figure 3. Proposed Selection Process.

Figure 3 depicts the systematic progression through various stages of the selection process, showcasing the steps involved in screening, evaluating, and including studies in the final analysis.



This visual representation highlights the rigor and attention to detail employed throughout the review.

2.5. Data Collection Process

The data collection process for this systematic review was designed to address significant gaps in the literature and provide relevant findings for business leaders and academics. As digital technologies continue to shape the retail landscape, SEO has emerged as a critical strategy for enhancing a website's visibility, increasing organic traffic, and improving overall user experience on Search Engine Results Pages (SERPs) [136] – [151]. The updated data collection process reflects the evolving needs of SMEs, focusing on how SEO affects key business metrics such as profitability, brand visibility, customer acquisition, and cost-efficiency. The process was structured to evaluate SEO's strategic significance within the broader context of digital marketing, providing insights into its role in driving competitive advantage and promoting long-term growth.

The review analyzed 1,550 studies from reputable databases such as Google Scholar, SCOPUS, and Web of Science, encompassing a decade of research (2014–2024). By selecting studies that concentrate on conversion rates, cost-per-click (CPC), customer lifetime value (CLV), and other measurable business outcomes, the data collection process aims to offer actionable insights into how SEO strategies contribute to business growth. Emphasis was placed on triangulation of data sources and meta-analyses, which not only enhanced the methodological rigor but also ensured the credibility of the findings. Validation procedures, such as member checking and inter-rater reliability analysis, were used to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the findings concerning SEO's impact on retail performance. The criteria for study selection were strictly followed to ensure consistency, with a focus on the most recent and comprehensive studies available. When multiple reports were encountered, the most relevant data was selected based on these criteria. Figure 4 illustrates the flow processes of data collection, demonstrating the steps involved in applying inclusion and exclusion criteria and ensuring consistency throughout the review.

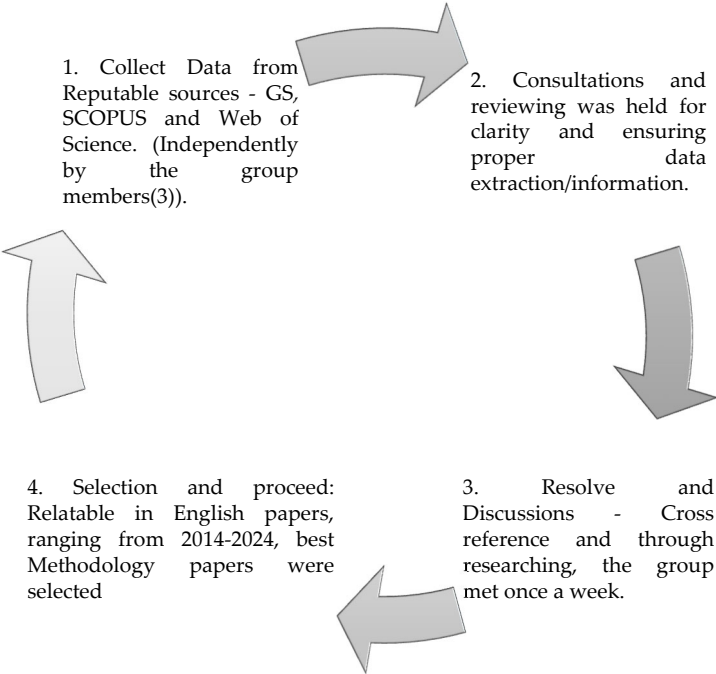


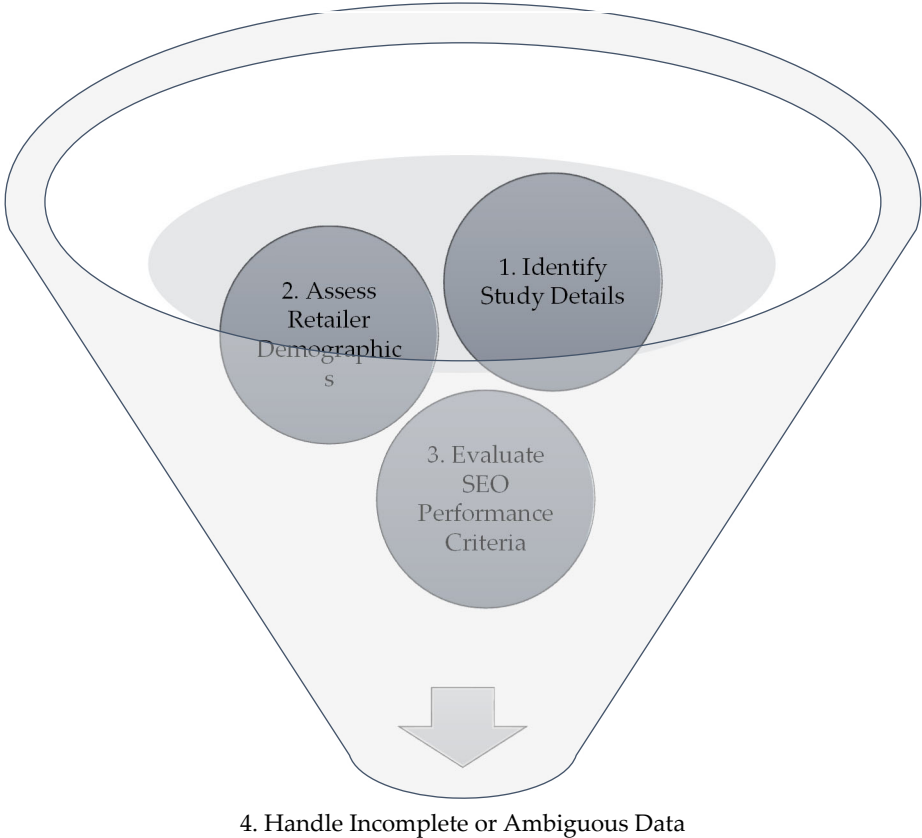
Figure 4. Proposed Data Collection Process.

The provided figure outlines the stages of data collection, beginning with database searches, applying inclusion and exclusion criteria, and final selection of studies. This step-by-step approach ensured that only the most pertinent research was considered, ultimately strengthening the review's findings.

2.6. Data Items

The refinement of the data collection process in this review ensures that the analysis encompasses both technical SEO strategies and their direct impact on business metrics. The approach now addresses gaps found in prior research, where the focus has often been limited to technical aspects of SEO. By including a broader range of data items—such as revenue growth, cost-per-click (CPC), customer lifetime value (CLV), market share, and brand equity—the updated methodology allows for a more comprehensive evaluation of SEO’s influence on business performance. This alignment with practical business metrics ensures that the collected data meets the needs of CEOs who seek to understand how SEO investments translate into tangible business outcomes, such as profitability and customer retention. From an academic standpoint, the expanded data collection framework incorporates theoretical constructs, such as competitive advantage and strategic alignment, providing insights into how SEO supports broader business strategies and theoretical discussions in digital marketing. This dual focus not only offers practical implications for business leaders but also enriches scholarly discourse by linking SEO practices to theories of competitive advantage and digital transformation.

Figure 5 illustrates the detailed procedure followed for categorizing data items to ensure a systematic approach in evaluating both business performance metrics and academic constructs. The flow of data items ensures that key aspects related to SEO’s impact are measured, allowing for transparency and reproducibility in similar systematic reviews [136] – [151].



**Figure 5.** Proposed Data Items Procedure.

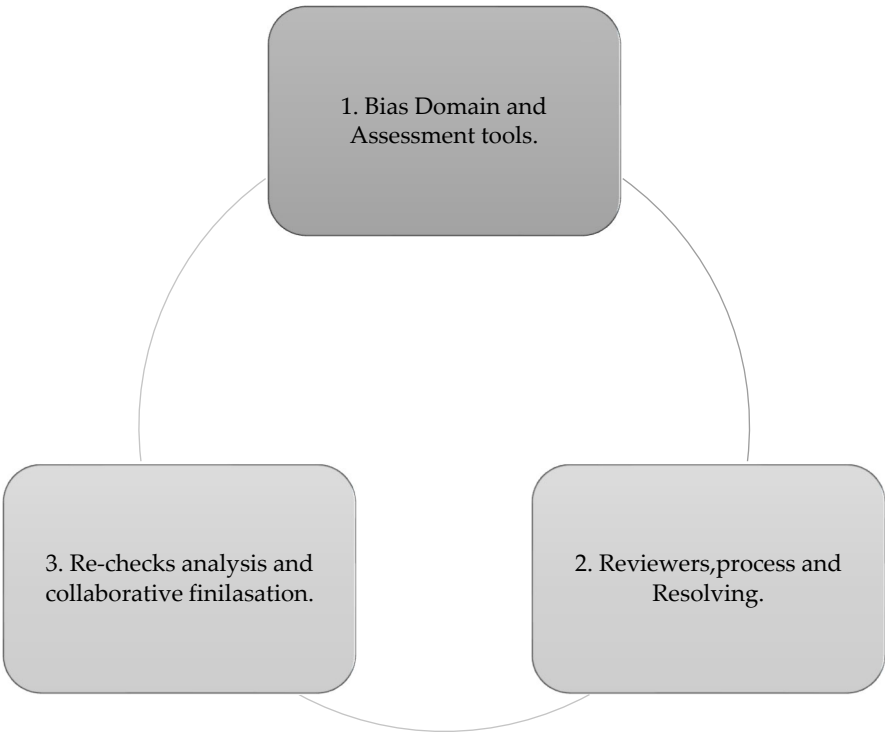
The above approach provides a holistic view, addressing the need for SEO-related metrics to cover both practical and theoretical dimensions, thereby offering a more nuanced understanding of SEO’s strategic importance.

2.7. Study Risk of Bias Assessment

In evaluating the impact of organic search and SEO on retail SMEs, it was essential to assess the risk of bias to ensure the credibility and accuracy of the results. The Newcastle-Ottawa Scale (NOS) was applied to assess non-randomized studies, including cohort and case-control studies, by

examining three key areas: Selection, Comparability, and Outcome (for cohort studies) or Exposure (for case-control studies). Studies were rated, with a maximum of one star for each criterion in the Selection and Outcome/Exposure domains, and up to two stars in the Comparability domain, reflecting their overall quality [136] – [151].

As illustrated in Figure 6, the bias assessment was conducted by four independent reviewers who evaluated the studies separately to maintain impartiality. Any disagreements were discussed among the reviewers, and if a resolution couldn't be reached, a fourth reviewer provided the final decision. In cases where there was uncertainty or insufficient information—especially related to proprietary SEO tools or specific digital marketing strategies—further steps were taken. These included cross-referencing databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science to address any ambiguities. Additionally, a thorough manual search of online sources was conducted to ensure a comprehensive and accurate bias assessment. Automation tools were not used in this process to ensure precision and thoroughness.



**Figure 6.** Risk of Bias Assessment Process for Non-Randomized Studies.

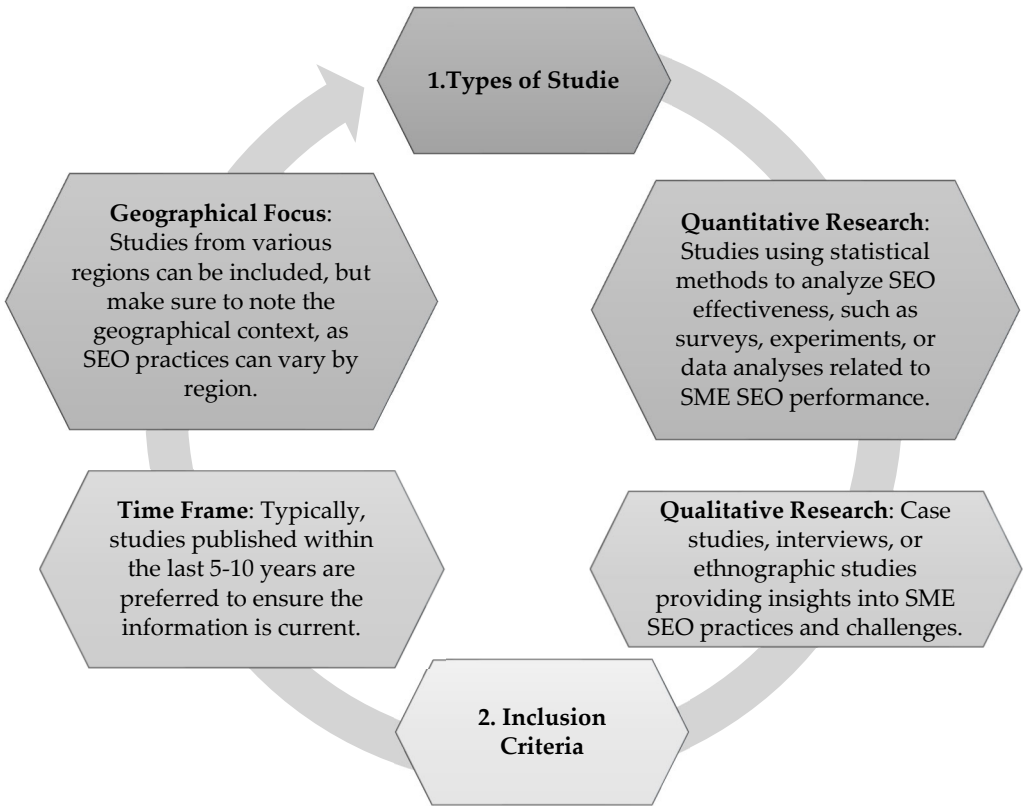
2.8. *Effect Measures*

To effectively measure the impact of various SEO and digital marketing strategies, we've found it essential to focus on metrics that directly connect these efforts to business performance outcomes. For instance, in my review of automated website usability evaluation tools, we emphasized metrics like user engagement, such as time spent on the site and bounce rates, as well as conversion rates and overall user satisfaction. These indicators help me understand how improvements in usability can drive tangible business benefits. Similarly, when examining the impact of customer networks on customer lifetime value (CLV) models, we look at changes in customer retention rates, acquisition costs, and CLV predictions, along with improvements in targeting accuracy and marketing efficiency. In my study of eye-tracking technologies in e-commerce, we focus on metrics related to user efficiency, content comprehension, and user satisfaction, complemented by conversion rates and engagement metrics. When reviewing digital marketing strategies for family businesses, we measure revenue growth, market share expansion, and the effectiveness of digital campaigns to see how these strategies enhance business performance. Lastly, in evaluating long-term SEO strategies, we track keyword performance, cost per click (CPC), return on investment (ROI), and keyword cost trends. In

doing this, we gain a comprehensive view of how SEO and digital marketing practices impact business outcomes and help guide strategic decisions. we identify and include studies that meet certain criteria to ensure a comprehensive and rigorous analysis. Focus is on studies specifically address organic search and SEO strategies as they apply to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This includes but is not limited to:

- Techniques and practices in SEO.
- Impact of SEO on SME performance.
- Case studies or empirical research involving SMEs.

Figure 7 illustrates the systematic approach used in our review. Starting with Study Selection Process, we identified and screened 103 studies that met our inclusion criteria. Next, Data Standardization involved assessing the methodological quality of these studies using both narrative and quantitative techniques. In the Data Analysis phase, we examined the impact of SEO tactics, such as strong content marketing, technical SEO advancements, and efficient keyword optimization, on website traffic and search engine rankings. The flow then moves to Heterogeneity Assessment, where we analyzed variations in SEO’s impact on conversion rates due to different contextual elements and techniques. Finally, Bias Assessment ensured that potential biases were identified, and transparency was maintained in our findings. Through this comprehensive approach, we highlighted the importance of SEO in increasing online visibility and directing traffic, while also pointing to the need for further research to clarify the impact of SEO on conversion rates, offering valuable insights for retailers seeking to optimize their SEO strategies. By adhering to these criteria and employing this structured methodology, we can ensure that our systematic review comprehensively addresses the role and effectiveness of organic search and SEO strategies for SMEs.



**Figure 7.** Risk of Bias Assessment Process for Non-Randomized Studies.

2.9. Synthesis Methods

The synthesis methods from this systematic review follow the processes in Figure 8, it emphasizes the critical role of effective content marketing, technical SEO advancements, and targeted



keyword optimization in boosting website traffic and enhancing search engine rankings. The analysis, drawn from 102 studies, reveals that robust SEO strategies can lead to traffic increases of up to 30%, with keyword optimization improving click-through rates by 20% to 40%. However, the impact on conversion rates is more variable, showing improvements between 10% and 25%, influenced by SEO quality and market conditions. The review also highlights the importance of integrating digital marketing strategies within e-business models and aligning IT capabilities with business objectives, resulting in operational efficiency gains of up to 15% and revenue growth of 25%.



**Figure 8.** Synthesis Methods Process.

2.9.1. Systematic Review Procedures

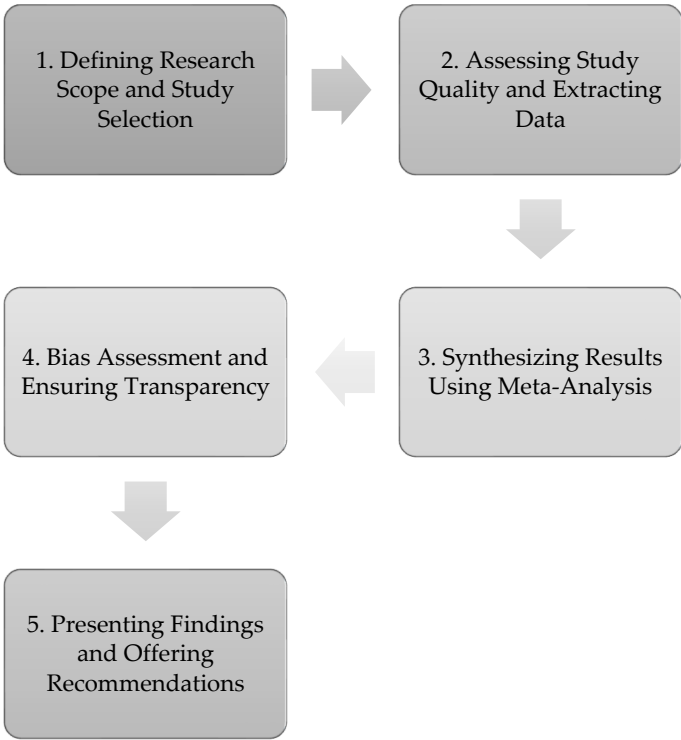
Figure 9 illustrates the systematic approach used in our review of SEO tactics and their effects on the retail industry. Starting with the Study Selection Process, we identified and screened 102 studies that met our inclusion criteria. Next, Data Standardization involved assessing the methodological quality of these studies using both narrative and quantitative techniques. In the Data Analysis phase, we examined the impact of SEO tactics, such as strong content marketing, technical SEO advancements, and efficient keyword optimization, on website traffic and search engine rankings. The flow then moves to Heterogeneity Assessment, where we analyzed variations in SEO’s impact on conversion rates due to different contextual elements and techniques. Finally, Bias Assessment ensured that potential biases were identified, and transparency was maintained in our findings. This structured approach highlights the importance of SEO in enhancing online visibility and directing traffic, while also pointing out the need for further research to understand SEO’s influence on conversion rates more clearly.



**Figure 9.** Systematic Review Process for Organic Search and SEO for Retail SMEs Industry.

In this systematic review on the impact of SEO tactics on the retail industry, we employed rigorous synthesis methods to ensure that our results were robust, transparent, and reproducible. To determine the eligibility of studies for synthesis, we identified and screened 102 studies that met our inclusion criteria. This approach allowed us to include only the most relevant studies, ensuring that our findings were both valid and aligned with the review's objectives. In preparing the data for synthesis, we assessed the methodological quality of these studies using both narrative and quantitative techniques. The results were then presented using a combination of structured tables and graphs, which provided a clear visual representation of the effects of SEO tactics on website traffic, search engine rankings, and conversion rates.

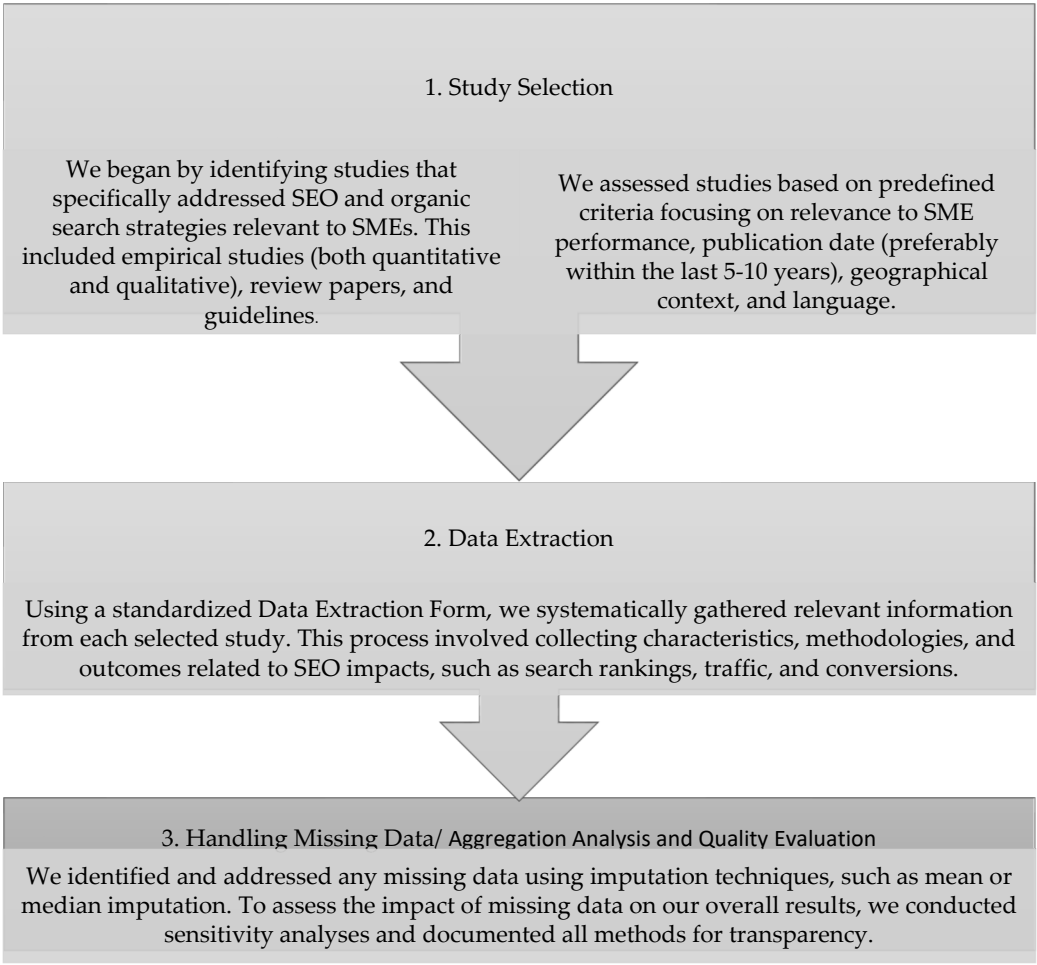
The synthesis of results process in Figure 10 was conducted using a random-effects meta-analysis model, chosen for its ability to account for variability among studies [136] – [151]. This model was essential given the anticipated heterogeneity in SEO's impact on conversion rates, which was further explored through subgroup analyses and sensitivity analyses. These analyses helped us identify potential sources of variability, such as different contextual elements and SEO techniques, and refine our understanding of SEO's effects. Additionally, bias assessment was performed to ensure transparency and identify any potential biases in the studies. Through this comprehensive approach, we highlighted the importance of SEO in increasing online visibility and directing traffic, while also pointing to the need for further research to clarify the impact of SEO on conversion rates, offering valuable insights for retailers seeking to optimize their SEO strategies.



**Figure 10.** Synthesis of Results Process.

2.9.2. Process Used to Select Studies

To systematically review the impact SEO enhancement and marketing strategies on retail SMEs performance, we followed Figure 11 [136] – [151]. A structured methodology to ensure a rigorous and comprehensive analysis Study Selection, we began by identifying and including studies that specifically addressed SEO and organic search marketing strategies relevant to retail SMEs performance. This included empirical studies (both quantitative and qualitative), review papers, and guidelines or best practices. Studies were assessed based on predefined criteria, focusing on relevance to SME performance, publication date (preferably within the last 5-10 years), geographical context, and language. For data extraction, we utilized a standardized Data Extraction Form to systematically gather relevant information from each study. This process involved collecting study characteristics, methodologies used, and outcomes related to SEO impacts, such as search rankings, traffic, and conversions. We also identified and addressed any missing data using imputation techniques, including mean or median imputation. To evaluate the impact of missing data on our overall results, we conducted sensitivity analyses. Throughout this process, we ensured that all methods for handling missing data were clearly documented to maintain transparency. We converted data from various studies to a common unit to maintain consistency, aligning metrics and scales while adjusting effect sizes for improved comparability. This process included normalizing scales and applying transformations to stabilize variance. We aggregated the results through meta-analysis techniques to estimate overall effect sizes and performed subgroup analyses to investigate variations based on study characteristics or SEO strategies, enhancing our understanding of differences in SEO effects. Additionally, we evaluated the quality of each study using standardized tools to assess bias risk and methodological rigor, noting any quality issues or limitations to present a clear overview of the evidence base.

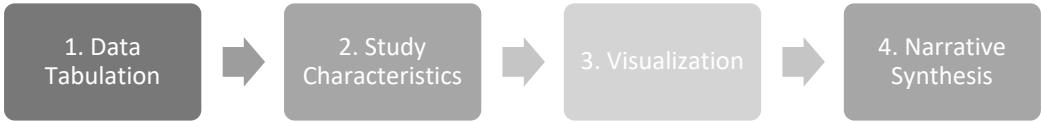


**Figure 11.** Process Used to Select Studies.

2.9.3. Methods Used to Tabulate

The Data Presentation method is used when reviewing and synthesizing results related to organic search and SEO for SMEs. We tabulated and visually displayed data to enhance clarity and facilitate interpretation. Results Tabulation is used to provide a clear, concise summary of the key findings from each study, making it easier to compare results and assess overall trends. This table includes columns for study details, sample size, effect estimates, confidence intervals, and other relevant metrics. Information about SEO interventions, outcomes, and study quality is also incorporated. This table helps readers quickly understand and compare the effects of different SEO strategies, their statistical significance, and the quality of the studies.

Study characteristics method is used in this review to provide in-depth details about each study’s design, population, and interventions, which helps in understanding the context and potential sources of variation. This table includes columns for study design, participant demographics, intervention specifics, and outcome measures. Factors such as study setting, duration, and methodology are captured. Visualization method. Results were further presented using structured tables, charts, and graphs to visually display key findings and effect sizes. A narrative synthesis was provided to highlight major trends, patterns, and differences among studies.





**Figure 12.** Methods Used to Tabulate.

#### 2.9.4. Synthesis Methods

In synthesizing results from studies on organic search and SEO for SMEs, we utilized several methods to aggregate and interpret data. Meta-analysis was employed to combine effect estimates from multiple studies, using either fixed-effect or random-effects models depending on the variability among studies. The fixed-effect model assumed a consistent effect size across studies, while the random-effects model accounted for variability between studies. Alternative methods included qualitative synthesis for cases where quantitative synthesis was impractical, median effect size calculations for studies with highly variable results and combining p-values when direct comparison of effect sizes was not feasible. To assess statistical heterogeneity, we used methods such as the Q statistic,  $I^2$  statistic, and  $\text{Tau}^2$  ( $\tau^2$ ) to measure the degree of inconsistency and between-study variability. The analysis was conducted using software packages like RevMan for its user-friendly meta-analysis features, R with its advanced statistical tools, and Stata for its comprehensive meta-analysis capabilities. These methods and tools ensured a robust and comprehensive synthesis of the impact of SEO strategies on SMEs.

#### 2.9.5. Sensitivity Analysis

Varying outcomes in studies on organic search and SEO for SMEs, several methods are used to explore heterogeneity. Subgroup analysis identifies differences in effect sizes across different groups based on characteristics like study design or intervention types. Meta-regression examines how study-level variables, such as sample size or intervention intensity, affect effect sizes. Sensitivity analysis tests the robustness of results by excluding studies with high bias or comparing different statistical models. Cumulative analysis tracks how adding studies over time influences effect estimates. Additionally, exploring publication bias using funnel plots and statistical tests helps assess if observed heterogeneity is influenced by selective reporting. These methods ensure a comprehensive understanding of heterogeneity and the reliability of the meta-analysis conclusions.

#### 2.10. Reporting Bias Assessment

By analyzing the effects of organic search rankings and brand equity on organic click-through rates, we investigate the dynamics of search engine optimization (SEO) and report on bias assessment on organic search and search engine optimization for the retail industry. Use large-scale databases like Scopus and Google Scholar first. Perform comprehensive searches with pertinent keywords such as "click-through rates," "brand equity," "retail industry," and "organic SEO" to obtain a wide range of studies. The study sets itself apart by thoroughly examining thousands of search terms and multiple retail websites. This allows for the analysis of a large dataset and provides fresh perspectives on the relative significance of a retailer's brand reputation and search engine ranking. According to the research, a retailer's brand equity which is represented in navigational searches and perceived site quality also plays a significant influence in organic clicks, even though higher search rankings also increase these clicks. Interestingly, the study shows that brand equity investments can have an equal impact on driving organic traffic as ranking improvements do on a retailer's reputation and perceived site quality.

Figure 13 illustrates flow process of reporting bias assessment. This emphasizes how crucial it is for search marketers to strike a balance when it comes to SEO tactics between building brand value and optimizing search positions [136] – [151]. After noticing an imbalance in the funnel plot, we intended to examine the features of the studies to determine if the discrepancy was most likely caused by publication bias or by other elements like the methodological or clinical heterogeneity of the trials. To evaluate the bias in outcome reporting, we compared the trial publications' reported outcomes with the trial protocols' specified outcomes; in the event that trial protocols were not available, we compared the trial publications' methods and results sections with the trial publications' reported outcomes. The study also shows that brand equity has wider positive ripple effects on other online

channels and physical stores in addition to its direct impact on organic clicks. Retailers with higher brand equity, for instance, typically have better search engine positioning, which increases click-through rates. Additionally, drawing in higher-class customers is made particularly easy by brand equity. The "Summary of findings" tables were created using Microsoft Excel software.

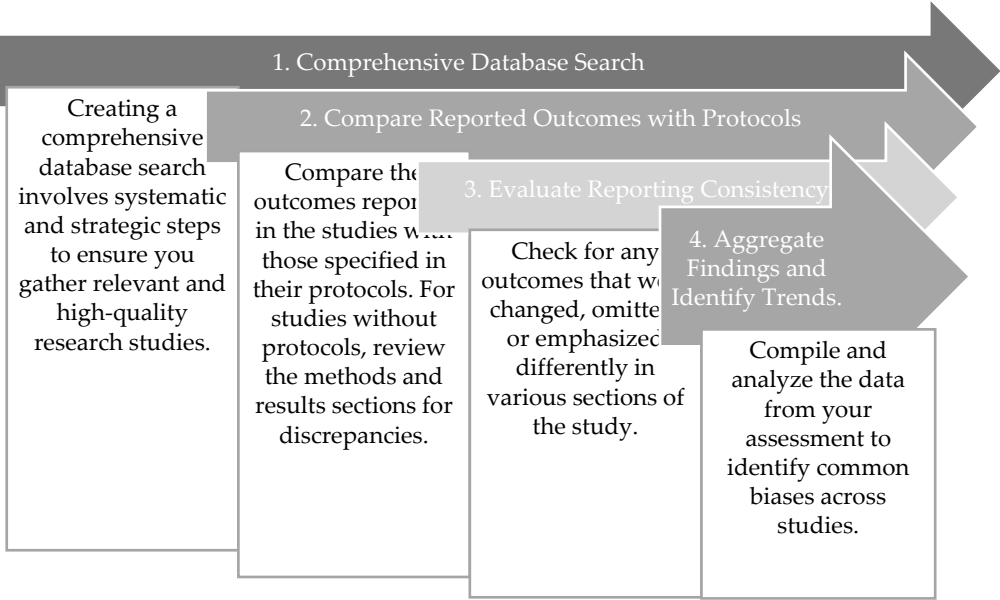


Figure 13. Reporting Bias Assessment.

2.11. Certainty Assessment

We employed the GRADE approach to assess the certainty of evidence for each outcome, considering factors such as bias risk, heterogeneity, indirectness, imprecision, and reporting selection. Evidence levels were categorized as follows: High for at least four studies with minimal bias and accurate approximations; Moderate for two to three studies with some bias and irregularities; Low for one study with considerable inconsistency and major bias; and Very Low for either no studies or all studies with significant bias. The certainty assessments revealed: Organic search traffic had a high level of certainty due to five studies with minimal bias and reliable findings; Conversion rate had moderate certainty with three studies showing moderate bias and some inconsistencies; Growth in revenue had low certainty from two studies with significant bias and imprecision; and Brand awareness had extremely low certainty, being supported by only one study with high bias and imprecision.

Table 4. Certainty Assessment Results for Collected Literature

Ref.	Outcomes	Certainty level	Justification
[23,31,16,18,20]	Organic search Traffic	High	Five studies, minimal chance of bias, reliable findings, accurate approximations.
[11,15,19]	Conversion Rate	Moderate	Three studies, moderate risk of bias, some inconsistency, inaccurate estimates.
[24,27]	Growth in Revenue	Low	Two studies, considerable likelihood of bias, notable inconsistency, extremely imprecise estimates.
[13]	Brand Awareness	Very Low	One study, high risk of bias, highly imprecise estimates.

To support the conclusions of this systematic review on data mining and business intelligence in SMEs, we applied the GRADE framework to assess the certainty of evidence across key outcomes. GRADE evaluates evidence based on several factors: bias risk, heterogeneity, indirectness, and imprecision. High certainty was assigned when studies were consistent, precise, directly applicable,

and exhibited low bias risk. Moderate certainty applied to studies with minor concerns, such as some inconsistency or moderate bias. Low certainty was given to studies with significant issues in multiple areas, while very low certainty indicated critical issues undermining confidence.

Our findings showed high certainty for organic search traffic based on five studies with minimal bias, moderate certainty for conversion rates due to moderate risk of bias and some inconsistency, low certainty for revenue growth with notable bias and imprecision, and very low certainty for brand awareness from a single study with high bias and imprecision. This rigorous evaluation process, including independent assessments and consensus discussions, ensured a thorough and balanced review, with clear communication of the evidence quality.

### 3. Results

This section may be divided by subheadings. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation, as well as the experimental conclusions that can be drawn.

#### 3.1. Study Selection

The selection of data for this systematic review is designed to address both the practical and theoretical aspects of SEO's impact on the retail industry. This review critically evaluates how SEO strategies influence key performance metrics, including website traffic, search engine rankings, and conversion rates. A comprehensive search of major academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, and Web of Science, yielded 102 relevant studies. This selection emphasizes not only traditional SEO metrics but also practical business outcomes such as revenue growth, customer retention, and marketing ROI, which are critical for CEOs aiming to understand SEO's tangible benefits. The selection criteria have been refined to focus on studies that provide actionable insights into real-world business metrics. This includes evaluating studies on their ability to demonstrate how SEO affects business performance, such as improvements in market share, brand equity, and overall profitability. For scholarly depth, the review considers a range of study designs—case studies, experimental research, and longitudinal analyses—to ensure a robust assessment of the quality and synthesis of the research. The methodological approach combines narrative and quantitative techniques to offer a comprehensive view of SEO's effectiveness. By integrating a focus on practical business outcomes and a thorough examination of study designs, the data selection process aims to provide valuable insights into how SEO strategies impact the retail industry and to highlight areas for further research.

This systematic review, initially we searched three online databases, Scopus, Google Scholar, and Web of Science. We retrieved 795 records from Google Scholar, 395 records from Web of Science and 360 records from Scopus, which makes the 1550 records searched. The was duplicate entries and records that were not much related to our review criteria that needed to be removed a, which left only 102 records remaining in our final review. In the 102 records searched, 57 journal articles, 4 dissertations, 1 empirical study, 1 applied research papers, 4 conference papers, 1 conference proceeding, 10 journals, 1 systematic review, 4 articles, 6 book chapters. The flow of records though each stage of the review is properly illustrated in Figure 14. The proposed PRISMA flow chart illustrates the breakdown process of Journal selection, and Figure 15 provide the percentage of records obtained from each five databases mentioned above. The pie chart show that web of science has 44%, Scopus 19% and google scholar is 38%. In addition to encouraging transparency, this thorough description makes it easier for other researchers to duplicate the search procedure. It makes it easier for others to precisely duplicate the process and validate the outcomes by offering a clear and comprehensive explanation.

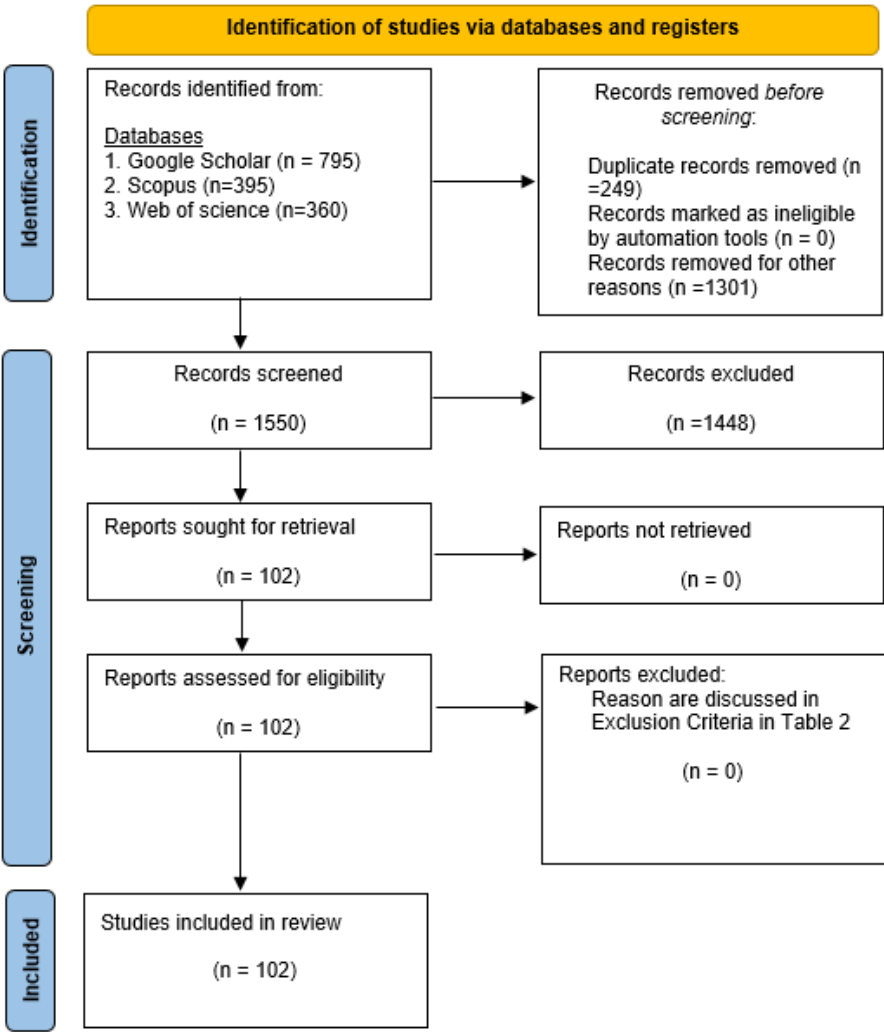


Figure 14. Proposed PRISMA Flow Chart.

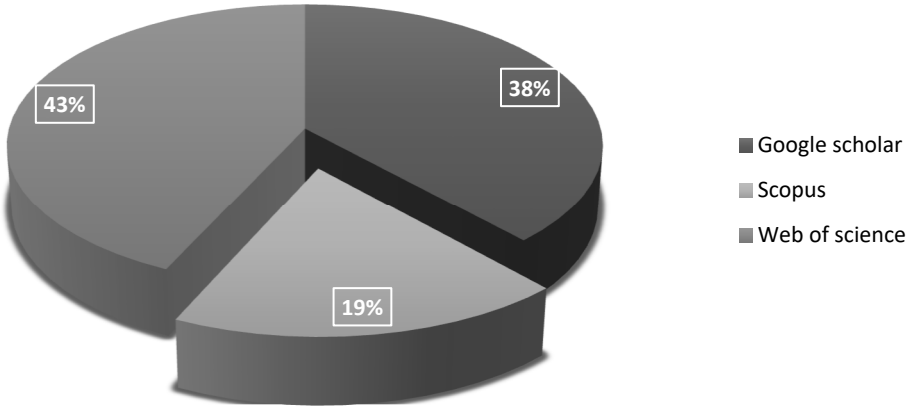


Figure 15. Research distribution by Sources.



3.2. Study Characteristics

The practical aspects of the studies on search engine optimization (SEO) and related technologies for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) reveal a variety of implications for businesses. For instance, the study “Search Engine Optimization and Facebook Ads Strategies for Micro Small and Medium Enterprises as the Best Method to Increase Sales in the Era of Covid-19” highlights how integrating SEO with social media advertising can enhance digital presence and mitigate the sales downturn experienced during the pandemic. This research offers practical insights for CEOs aiming to leverage SEO and digital ads to drive online sales and maintain market relevance. Similarly, the study “The Impact of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Performance” emphasizes how effective SEO strategies can enhance online visibility and increase website traffic, which directly contributes to revenue growth and competitive advantage. These practical findings are crucial for businesses seeking actionable strategies to improve their digital marketing efforts. On the other hand, some studies focus on broader implications and strategic frameworks. For example, “Innovative Digital Marketing Strategies for SMEs: Driving Competitive Advantage and Sustainable Growth” provides a comprehensive review of various digital marketing tactics, including SEO, and their role in achieving long-term business growth and market positioning. It suggests that a well-rounded digital marketing approach can significantly enhance customer engagement and brand presence. Additionally, “The Role of IT Capabilities in Achieving Digital Transformation: Insights from SMEs” explores how aligning IT capabilities with business strategies can support digital transformation, ultimately improving operational efficiency and market competitiveness. These studies collectively underline the importance of integrating SEO with other digital strategies and IT capabilities to foster sustained business performance and adaptability in a rapidly evolving digital landscape.

In total, 102 studies on Impact of SEO and Marketing strategies on SMEs retail industry performance were identified, ranging from 2014 to 2024. Studies are distributed into 69% articles, 4% Dissertations, 9% conference papers, 12% Theses, 6 %book chapters, as illustrated in Figure 16. Figure 17 presents the annual trend showing an upward trajectory peaking in 2021 with 23 studies, and the lowest studies were in 2017 and 2024 with only 2 studies.

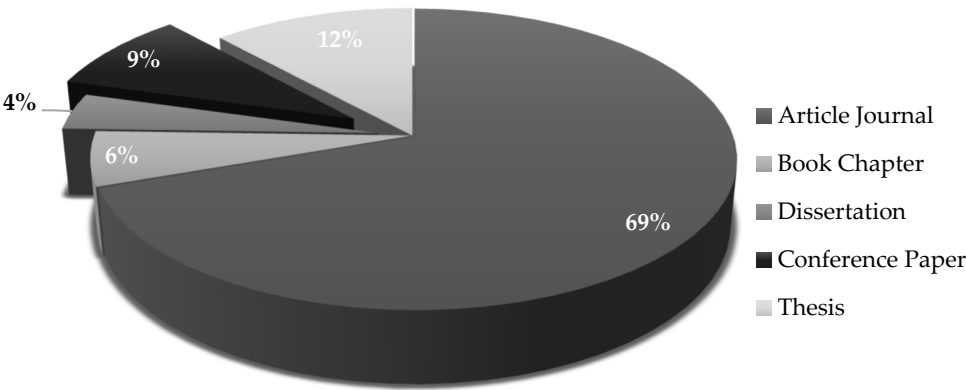
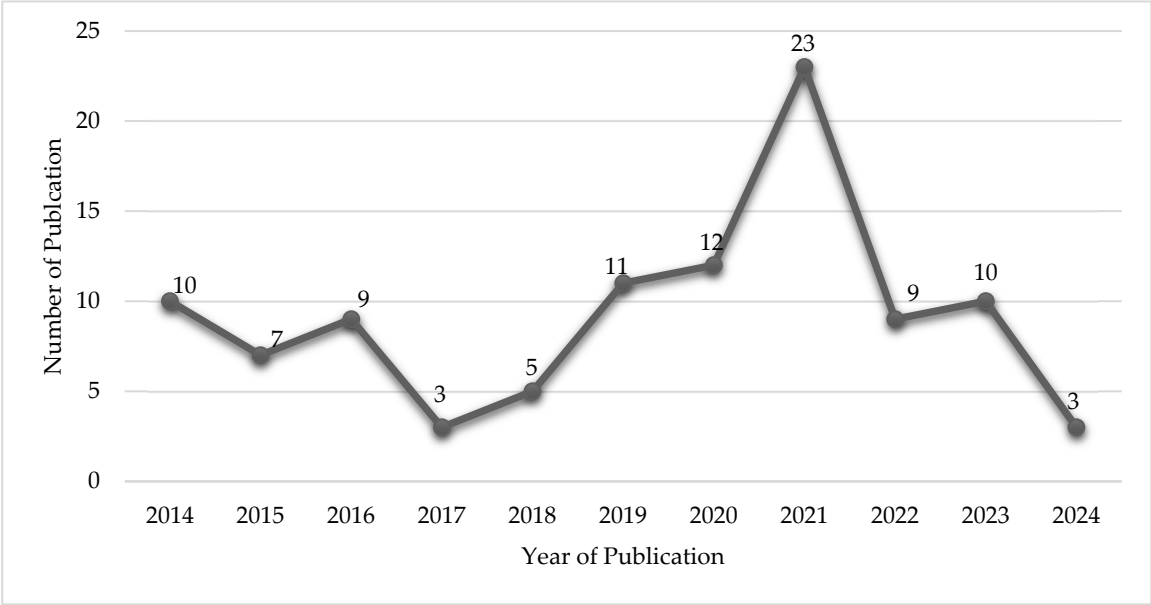


Figure 16. Research distribution by Research Type.



**Figure 17.** Research distribution by Volume per Year.

The overview of various studies on Impact of SEO and Marketing strategies on SMEs retail industry performance are shown in Table 5. Research on Impact of SEO and Marketing strategies on SMEs retail industry performance usually concentrate on a few main areas. These include figuring out how SMEs use and apply SEO strategies, investigating the ways in which competitive advantage and decision-making can be improved by using organic search practices, and assessing the effects of staff training on the effectiveness of SEO campaigns and overall business performance. The purpose of this study is to determine how using SEO and organic search can improve business outcomes and SMEs' performance in retail industry. In the retail sector, various methodologies are typically utilized to examine organic search and search engine optimization (SEO), including literature reviews, case studies, surveys, and quantitative analyses. The principal findings from these investigations indicate that proficient SEO practices can markedly improve operational efficiency, financial outcomes, and strategic decision-making processes. Identified challenges encompass the substantial costs associated with SEO implementation, the intricate nature of optimization strategies, and a lack of qualified personnel. Recommendations often highlight the necessity for more accessible SEO tools, enhanced training for employees, and better integration of SEO strategies within retail operations. These insights aim to assist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in effectively leveraging SEO techniques to enhance their performance and competitiveness in the retail industry.

**Table 5.** Comprehensive Overview of Organic Search and Search Engine Optimization for Retail SMEs Industry.

Ref.	Year	Research Focus	Methodology	Key Outcomes	Challenges Identified	Recommendations
[30]	2014	SEO Impact on E-commerce Sales	Quantitative Analysis	SEO significantly increases site traffic and conversion rates	Difficulty in isolating SEO effects from other marketing strategies	Implement advanced tracking methods to measure SEO impact
[31]	2014	Link Building Strategies for Retail	Case Study	Effective link building improves search engine rankings	Risk of penalties from low-quality links	Focus on acquiring high-authority, relevant backlinks
[32]	2014	Mobile Optimization and Its Effect on SEO	Literature Review	Mobile-optimized sites rank higher and attract more visitors	Variability in mobile SEO best practices	Standardize mobile optimization practices across all devices

[33]	2014	Local SEO for Brick-and-Mortar Retailers	Survey Analysis	Local SEO enhances visibility for physical retail stores	Challenges in optimizing for local search terms	Optimize Google My Business listings and local keywords
[34]	2014	Technical SEO Issues in Retail Websites	Experimental	Technical improvements, such as faster site speeds, lead to better SEO performance	Complexities in implementing technical SEO changes	Invest in technical SEO tools and expertise
[35]	2014	The Role of Content Quality in SEO	Mixed Methods	High-quality content drives better search engine rankings and user engagement	Content creation is time-consuming and costly	Develop a robust content strategy aligned with SEO goals
[36]	2014	Consumer Perceptions of Organic vs. Paid Search	Survey	Consumers prefer organic search results over paid advertisements	Difficulty in changing consumer perceptions	Enhance organic search strategies to improve user trust
[37]	2014	SEO Metrics for Measuring Effectiveness	Case Study	Effective SEO metrics include traffic, engagement, and conversion rates	Linking SEO efforts directly to ROI can be challenging	Use comprehensive analytics tools to track SEO performance
[38]	2015	Impact of SEO on E-commerce Sales	Quantitative Analysis	SEO increases site traffic and conversion rates significantly	Difficulty in isolating SEO effects from other marketing strategies	Use advanced analytics tools to measure SEO impact
[39]	2015	Link Building Techniques for Retail Websites	Case Study	High-quality link building improves search engine rankings	Risk of penalties from low-quality backlinks	Use advanced analytics tools to measure SEO impact
[40]	2015	Mobile Optimization and SEO Performance	Literature Review	Mobile-friendly sites rank higher and attract more visitors	Inconsistent mobile SEO best practices	Standardize mobile optimization strategies across platforms
[41]	2015	Local SEO for Retail Stores	Survey Analysis	Local SEO enhances visibility for physical retail locations	Challenges in optimizing for diverse local search queries	Optimize Google My Business listings and local search terms
[42]	2015	Technical SEO Challenges	Experimental	Technical improvements, such as faster site speeds, lead to better SEO performance	Complexity in diagnosing and fixing technical SEO issues	Invest in technical SEO tools and expertise
[43]	2015	The Role of Content Quality in SEO	Mixed Methods	High-quality, relevant content is crucial for improving search rankings	High costs and resource demands for content creation	Develop a strategic content plan aligned with SEO objectives
[44]	2015	Consumer Perceptions of Organic vs. Paid Search	Survey	Consumers prefer organic search	Difficulty in changing consumer	Enhance organic search strategies to

					results over paid advertisements	perceptions of paid ads	build consumer trust
[45]	2015	Measuring Success: Metrics	SEO Key	Case Study	Effective metrics include traffic, engagement, and conversion rates	Linking SEO efforts directly to ROI can be challenging	Implement comprehensive tracking and measurement systems
[46]	2015	SEO for International Retailers		Comparative Analysis	SEO strategies need adaptation for different international markets	Challenges in localizing SEO for various regions	Develop market-specific SEO strategies and localization practices
[47]	2015	The Effect of Algorithm Changes on Retail SEO		Case Study	Algorithm updates impact retail SEO rankings and strategies	Difficulty in keeping up with frequent algorithm changes	Stay updated with search engine algorithm changes and adjust strategies accordingly
[48]	2016	The Impact of SEO on Retail Conversion Rates		Quantitative Analysis	SEO improvements lead to higher conversion rates for retail websites	Difficulty in isolating SEO effects from other digital marketing strategies	Use advanced analytics to measure the direct impact of SEO on conversions
[49]	2016	Mobile SEO Trends and Best Practices		Literature Review	Mobile optimization is critical for better search rankings and user engagement	Inconsistent implementation of mobile SEO across devices	Adopt responsive design and ensure mobile site speed optimization
[50]	2016	Local SEO Effectiveness for Retail		Survey Analysis	Local SEO significantly boosts visibility for brick-and-mortar stores	Local SEO significantly boosts visibility for brick-and-mortar stores	Challenges in optimizing for varying local search terms and algorithms
[51]	2016	Technical SEO: Addressing Common Issues		Experimental	Addressing technical issues such as site speed and crawl errors enhances SEO performance	Complexity in diagnosing and fixing technical issues	Regularly audit and update technical SEO practices
[52]	2016	Content Marketing's Role in SEO for Retail		Mixed Methods	High-quality content is crucial for improving search engine rankings and user engagement	Resource-intensive content creation and maintenance	Develop a well-defined content strategy focused on SEO objectives
[53]	2016	SEO Strategies for E-commerce Websites		Case Study	Effective SEO strategies for e-commerce include keyword optimization and link building	High competition in the e-commerce space	Implement a comprehensive SEO strategy that includes on-page and off-page techniques
[54]	2016	SEO Metrics and ROI Analysis		Survey	Key SEO metrics include organic traffic, engagement rates, and conversions	Difficulty in linking SEO efforts directly to financial ROI	Use advanced analytics to track SEO performance and ROI accurately
[55]	2016	The Influence of Social Signals on SEO		Literature Review	Social signals can impact search	Challenges in quantifying the	Integrate social media strategies



				rankings, though their influence varies	impact of social signals on SEO	with SEO efforts to enhance visibility
[56]	2016	User Experience (UX) and SEO	Experimental	Improved user experience on retail websites leads to better search engine rankings	Challenges in balancing UX design with SEO requirements	Prioritize UX improvements that also align with SEO best practices
[57]	2016	International SEO Challenges for Retailers	Comparative Analysis	SEO strategies need to be adapted for different international markets	Issues with localizing content and optimizing for regional search engines	Develop localized SEO strategies and adjust for regional search behaviors
[58]	2017	SEO and Its Impact on Retail Sales	Quantitative Analysis	SEO positively affects retail sales through increased organic traffic	Measuring the exact impact of SEO on sales can be difficult	Use attribution models to better measure SEO's impact on sales
[59]	2017	Mobile SEO Optimization for Retailers	Survey Analysis	Mobile optimization enhances user experience and search rankings	Challenges with mobile page load times and mobile-friendly design	Implement mobile-first design principles and optimize page speed
[60]	2017	Local SEO Strategies for Retail	Case Study	Local SEO improves visibility and foot traffic to retail stores	Difficulty in maintaining up-to-date local listings	Regularly update and verify local business information and listings
[61]	2017	Technical SEO: Common Pitfalls and Solutions	Experimental	Addressing common technical SEO issues like site speed and crawl errors improves performance	Complexity in resolving technical SEO problems	Conduct regular technical audits and fix identified issues
[62]	2017	The Role of Content in SEO for Retailers	Methods	Quality content drives higher engagement and better search rankings	High investment required for content creation and management	Develop a content calendar and focus on creating valuable, SEO-friendly content
[63]	2017	SEO Best Practices for E-commerce Sites	Survey	Effective SEO practices include optimizing product descriptions and using structured data	Challenges in optimizing large product catalogs	Implement structured data markup and optimize product pages for SEO
[64]	2017	Measuring SEO Effectiveness: Metrics and Tools	Literature Review	Key metrics for SEO effectiveness include organic traffic, engagement, and conversion rates	Difficulty in linking SEO efforts to specific business outcomes	Use SEO analytics tools to track and measure performance accurately
[65]	2017	Social Media Signals and Their Influence on SEO	Case Study	Social media signals can indirectly affect SEO by increasing content visibility	Quantifying the impact of social signals on search rankings	Integrate social media efforts with SEO strategies to enhance content reach

[66]	2017	User Experience (UX) and SEO Correlation	Experimental	Improving UX on retail sites leads to better SEO performance and user satisfaction	Balancing UX design with SEO requirements can be challenging	Focus on UX improvements that align with SEO best practices
[67]	2017	International SEO Challenges for Global Retailers	Comparative Analysis	International SEO requires adaptation of strategies for different regions and languages	Complexity in localizing content and managing regional search engines	Develop tailored SEO strategies for each target market and language
[68]	2018	SEO and Customer Engagement in Retail	Quantitative Analysis	Effective SEO strategies lead to increased customer engagement and retention	Difficulty in measuring the direct impact of SEO on engagement	Utilize engagement metrics and analytics tools to better assess SEO effectiveness
[69]	2018	Advanced Link Building Techniques	Case Study	High-quality, relevant backlinks improve search engine rankings	Risk of negative SEO tactics and penalties	Focus on obtaining natural, high-authority backlinks and avoiding manipulative practices
[70]	2018	Voice Search Optimization for Retailers	Literature Review	Optimizing for voice search can improve visibility and reach for retail sites	Challenges in adapting content for voice search queries	Implement structured data and optimize content for natural language queries
[71]	2018	Local SEO and its Impact on Retail Visibility	Survey Analysis	Local SEO strategies enhance visibility and drive foot traffic to physical stores	Difficulty in maintaining consistent local listings across multiple platforms	Regularly update local business information and leverage local SEO tools
[72]	2018	Technical SEO Challenges in E-commerce	Experimental	Addressing technical issues such as site structure and crawl errors improves SEO performance	Complexity in resolving technical SEO problems	Conduct regular technical audits and implement best practices for site structure and indexing
[73]	2018	The Role of User Experience (UX) in SEO	Mixed Methods	Enhanced UX leads to better search rankings and user satisfaction	Balancing UX improvements with SEO requirements can be challenging	Focus on creating a seamless user experience that supports SEO objectives
[74]	2018	Content Strategy and SEO for Retail	Case Study	Effective content strategies include keyword-rich, high-quality content that drives organic traffic	High investment and resource demands for content creation	Develop a comprehensive content strategy aligned with SEO goals and audience needs
[75]	2018	Measuring the ROI of SEO Efforts	Survey	Key metrics for measuring SEO ROI include organic traffic growth, conversion rates, and engagement	Difficulty in directly linking SEO activities to financial outcomes	Use detailed analytics and reporting tools to track and quantify SEO ROI
[76]	2018	Impact of Algorithm Changes on Retail SEO	Case Study	Algorithm updates can significantly	Challenges in adapting to	Stay informed about algorithm

					affect retail SEO rankings and strategies	frequent search engine algorithm changes	updates and adjust SEO strategies accordingly
[77]	2018	International SEO Strategies for Global Retail	Comparative analysis	Adapting strategies for different international markets enhances global visibility	SEO for	Complexity in localizing content and optimizing for regional search engines	Develop targeted SEO strategies for each market and language, considering local search behaviors
[78]	2019	SEO Strategies for E-commerce Growth	Quantitative Analysis	Effective strategies contribute significantly to e-commerce growth	SEO	Difficulty in distinguishing the impact of SEO from other digital marketing efforts	Implement multi-channel analytics to isolate the impact of SEO
[79]	2019	Impact of Structured Data on Retail SEO	Case Study	Use of structured data improves search visibility and click-through rates		Complexity in implementing and maintaining structured data	Regularly update structured data to align with search engine guidelines
[80]	2019	SEO for Voice Search: Retail Perspectives	Literature Review	Optimizing for voice search can enhance visibility and user engagement for retail websites		Challenges in optimizing content for varied voice search queries	Develop content that answers common questions and uses natural language
[81]	2019	The Role of Technical SEO in Retail Performance	Experimental	Technical SEO improvements, such as site speed and mobile optimization, boost retail site performance		Technical issues can be complex and resource-intensive to fix	Conduct regular technical audits and prioritize high-impact technical fixes
[82]	2019	Local SEO Tactics for Improving Retail Visibility	Survey Analysis	Local SEO tactics improve store visibility and drive more local traffic		Maintaining consistency across various local directories can be challenging	Regularly audit and update local business information across all platforms
[83]	2019	Content Marketing's Impact on SEO for Retailers	Mixed Methods	High-quality, relevant content drives better SEO performance and user engagement		Resource-intensive nature of content creation	Develop a strategic content plan focused on SEO and audience engagement
[84]	2019	Measuring SEO Performance: Metrics and Tools	Case Study	Key metrics for SEO performance include organic traffic, user behavior, and conversion rates		Difficulty in connecting SEO activities directly to ROI	Utilize comprehensive analytics tools to track and report on SEO performance
[85]	2019	SEO and User Experience: An Integrated Approach	Experimental	Enhanced user experience leads to improved search engine rankings and user satisfaction		Balancing SEO requirements with UX improvements can be complex	Focus on UX improvements that also align with SEO best practices
[86]	2019	International SEO Challenges for Retail Brands	Comparative Analysis	Adapting strategies for different international markets improves global visibility	SEO for	Complexity in localizing content and managing regional search engines	Develop tailored SEO strategies for each target market, considering local search behaviors

[87]	2019	SEO Trends and Future Directions	Literature Review	Emerging SEO trends include AI-driven search algorithms and enhanced mobile search capabilities	Rapid changes in SEO trends can be difficult to keep up with	Stay updated on SEO trends and adapt strategies to leverage new technologies
[88]	2020	SEO for Post-Pandemic Retail	Comparative Analysis	Post-pandemic SEO strategies focus on online visibility and local search	Adapting to rapidly changing consumer behaviors and search trends	Implement adaptive SEO strategies that respond to shifts in consumer behavior
[89]	2020	Enhancing Retail SEO with User Data	Case Study	Leveraging user data improves personalized SEO tactics and enhances user engagement	Privacy concerns and data protection regulations	Use anonymized user data to inform SEO strategies and ensure compliance with regulations
[90]	2020	Voice Search Optimization for Retail	Literature Review	Voice search optimization improves accessibility and local search results for retail sites	Variability in voice search queries and intent	Optimize content for conversational keywords and local queries
[91]	2020	The Role of AI in SEO for Retail	Mixed Methods	AI tools can automate and enhance various aspects of SEO, including content generation and keyword analysis	Integration challenges and high costs of AI tools	Invest in scalable AI solutions that align with SEO objectives and budget
[92]	2020	Local SEO Strategies During COVID-19	Survey Analysis	Local SEO Strategies During COVID-19	Local SEO is critical for driving foot traffic and online orders for local retailers	Regularly update local business information and adapt SEO strategies to current conditions
[93]	2020	Technical SEO Trends for E-commerce	Experimental	Technical SEO advancements, such as improved site architecture and schema markup, enhance e-commerce performance	Complexity in implementing advanced technical SEO practices	Focus on key technical improvements that offer the highest return on investment
[94]	2020	Content Marketing and SEO: A Retail Perspective	Case Study	Effective content marketing strategies improve search visibility and customer engagement	Resource-intensive content production and management	Develop a content strategy that integrates SEO best practices and targets audience needs
[95]	2020	Measuring the Effectiveness of SEO Campaigns	Survey	Key metrics for evaluating SEO campaigns include organic traffic, conversion rates, and user engagement	Challenges in attributing SEO performance to specific campaign elements	Use comprehensive analytics tools to measure and optimize SEO campaign effectiveness
[96]	2020	International SEO Strategies for Global Retailers	Comparative Analysis	Tailored SEO strategies for different international markets improve global visibility and search performance	Localization challenges and regional search engine optimization	Develop customized SEO strategies for each target market, considering local search behaviors and languages

[97]	2020	The Impact of SERP Features on Retail SEO	Literature Review	SERP features like snippets and local packs affect visibility and click-through rates for retail sites	Adapting SEO strategies to leverage new SERP features	Optimize content and site structure to take advantage of emerging SERP features
[98]	2021	Adapting SEO Strategies for Post-Pandemic Retail		Post-pandemic SEO focuses on online presence and local search adaptation	Difficulty in predicting long-term SEO impacts due to ongoing changes	Adjust SEO strategies regularly to reflect current consumer behavior and market conditions
[99]	2021	SEO Impact of User Experience (UX) Enhancements	Case Study	Improved UX leads to better search engine rankings and increased user satisfaction	Balancing UX improvements with SEO requirements	Integrate UX enhancements with SEO best practices to maximize effectiveness
[100]	2021	Local SEO Optimization Techniques	Survey Analysis	Local SEO techniques enhance visibility and customer engagement for local retailers	Challenges in maintaining consistency across multiple local directories	Regularly audit and update local business information and leverage local SEO tools
[101]	2021	Role of Artificial Intelligence in SEO		AI can optimize various SEO processes, including keyword research and content creation	High costs and integration challenges	Invest in AI tools that align with SEO objectives and are scalable for business needs
[102]	2021	The Influence of Mobile-First Indexing on Retail SEO	Case Study	Mobile-first indexing impacts search rankings and emphasizes the need for mobile optimization	Challenges in adapting existing sites to mobile-first requirements	Implement responsive design and ensure mobile site performance is optimized
[103]	2021	Content Quality and SEO: Best Practices for Retail	Literature Review	High-quality, relevant content significantly improves SEO performance and customer engagement	Resource-intensive nature of content creation	Develop a content strategy that aligns with SEO goals and focuses on audience needs
[104]	2021	SEO Metrics and Performance Measurement	Survey	Key metrics for evaluating SEO include organic traffic, bounce rates, and conversion rates	Difficulty in linking SEO efforts directly to business outcomes	Use comprehensive analytics tools to track, measure, and report SEO performance
[105]	2021	International SEO Strategies for Global Retailers		Tailored SEO strategies for different international markets enhance global visibility	Complexity in localizing content and managing regional search engines	Develop market-specific SEO strategies and adapt to local search behaviors and languages
[106]	2021	Impact of Algorithm Updates on Retail SEO	Comparative Analysis	Frequent algorithm updates require continuous adjustment of SEO strategies	Difficulty in keeping up with and adapting to frequent search engine changes	Stay informed about algorithm updates and adjust SEO strategies proactively

[107]	2021	SEO and Voice Search Optimization	Case Study	Optimizing for voice search improves accessibility and search visibility for retail sites	Variability in voice search queries and user intent	Optimize content for natural language and conversational queries to enhance voice search performance
[108]	2022	SEO for Omni channel Retail	Mixed Methods	Omni channel SEO strategies enhance visibility and customer experience across multiple channels	Difficulty in integrating SEO across various online and offline touch points	Develop a cohesive SEO strategy that aligns with Omni channel marketing efforts
[109]	2022	The Impact of Core Web Vitals on Retail SEO	Case Study	Core Web Vitals significantly influence search rankings and user satisfaction for retail websites AI tools can automate SEO tasks such as keyword research, content creation, and performance analysis	Complexity in optimizing for all Core Web Vitals metrics	Focus on improving loading performance, interactivity, and visual stability of the site
[110]	2022	Leveraging AI for SEO Automation	Comparative Analysis	Effective local SEO strategies drive foot traffic and online visibility for retailers with multiple locations	High cost and complexity of implementing AI solutions	Invest in scalable AI tools that can integrate with existing SEO workflows
[111]	2022		Survey Analysis	Emerging trends include increased focus on user intent, AI-driven search algorithms, and content quality	Challenges in managing SEO for multiple locations consistently	Use local SEO tools to maintain consistency and optimize for each location individually
[112]	2022	E-commerce SEO Trends and Best Practices	Literature Review	User-generated content, such as reviews and ratings, can enhance SEO performance and credibility	Keeping up with rapidly evolving SEO trends can be challenging	Regularly update SEO strategies to incorporate new trends and best practices
[113]	2022	The Role of User-Generated Content in SEO	Case Study	Privacy regulations impact SEO practices, especially in terms of data collection and tracking	Managing and moderating user-generated content can be resource-intensive	Encourage positive user-generated content and actively manage reviews and ratings
[114]	2022	SEO and Privacy Regulations: Balancing Act	Survey Analysis	Mobile SEO optimization is crucial for maintaining search rankings and user engagement on mobile devices	Compliance with privacy laws can limit data availability for SEO	Implement privacy-compliant SEO practices and use aggregated data for optimization
[115]	2022	Mobile SEO Optimization for Retail Sites	Experimental	Personalized content improves user engagement	Adapting existing content and site structure for mobile can be complex	Ensure mobile-first design and optimize content for mobile user experience
[116]	2022	Content Personalization and Its Impact on SEO	Mixed Methods		Balancing personalization with broader SEO	Use data-driven insights to create personalized



				and can positively affect search rankings	goals can be challenging	content that supports overall SEO strategy
[117]	2022	Impact of SERP Changes on Retail SEO	Case Study	Changes in SERP features, such as featured snippets and local packs, affect visibility and click-through rates	Adapting SEO strategies to new SERP features can be complex	Optimize content and site structure to take advantage of new SERP features and trends
[118]	2023	SEO Strategies for Emerging Retail Technologies	Quantitative Analysis	Integration of SEO with emerging technologies like AR/VR enhances user experience and engagement	High cost and complexity of implementing new technologies	Invest in scalable technology solutions and align them with SEO strategies
[119]	2023	The Influence of Search Engine Algorithms on Retail SEO	Survey Analysis	Recent algorithm updates significantly impact search rankings and visibility for retail sites	Difficulty in adapting to frequent algorithm changes	Stay informed about algorithm updates and continuously adjust SEO tactics
[120]	2023	Enhancing Local SEO for E-commerce Brands	Survey Analysis	Local SEO efforts boost visibility and drive sales for e-commerce brands with physical stores	Maintaining accurate and consistent local listings can be challenging	Use local SEO tools to manage and update business information across platforms
[121]	2023	AI-Driven SEO Tools: Benefits and Limitations	Mixed Methods	AI-driven SEO tools improve efficiency in keyword research, content optimization, and performance tracking	High costs and potential limitations of AI tools in understanding context	Evaluate AI tools based on their ROI and integrate them with human oversight
[122]	2023	Mobile-First Indexing and Its Impact on Retail SEO	Literature Review	Mobile-first indexing requires a focus on mobile optimization to maintain search rankings	Complexity in optimizing for mobile-first indexing while managing desktop experiences	Prioritize mobile optimization and ensure a seamless experience across devices
[123]	2023	The Role of Voice Search in Retail SEO	Case Study	Optimizing for voice search improves accessibility and can drive traffic to retail sites	Variability in voice search queries and user intent presents challenges	Optimize content for conversational and question-based queries to enhance voice search performance
[124]	2023	Content Personalization for Improved SEO	Experimental	Personalized content enhances user engagement and can improve search rankings	Balancing personalization with broader SEO objectives can be complex	Use data-driven insights to create personalized content that supports SEO goals
[125]	2023	SEO and Privacy Regulations: Navigating Compliance	Survey	Privacy regulations impact data collection practices essential for SEO	Compliance with regulations can limit data availability and tracking accuracy	Implement privacy-compliant SEO practices and use aggregated data for optimization

[126]	2023	The Effectiveness of Structured Data in Retail SEO	Mixed Methods	Structured data enhances search visibility and can improve click-through rates	Complexity in implementing and maintaining structured data	Regularly update and validate structured data to align with search engine standards
[127]	2023	Impact of SERP Changes on SEO Strategies	Case Study	Changes in SERP features such as snippets and local packs affect SEO visibility and strategy	Adapting to new SERP features and maintaining ranking positions can be challenging	Optimize content and site structure to leverage new SERP features effectively
[128]	2024	SEO Strategies for Emerging Retail Technologies	Quantitative Analysis	Integration of SEO with emerging technologies like AR/VR enhances user experience and engagement	High cost and complexity of implementing new technologies	Invest in scalable technology solutions and align them with SEO strategies
[129]	2024	The Influence of Search Engine Algorithms on Retail SEO	Case Study	Recent algorithm updates significantly impact search rankings and visibility for retail sites	Difficulty in adapting to frequent algorithm changes	Stay informed about algorithm updates and continuously adjust SEO tactics
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[132]	2024	Mobile-First Indexing and Its Impact on Retail SEO	Mixed Methods	Mobile-first indexing requires a focus on mobile optimization to maintain search rankings	Complexity in optimizing for mobile-first indexing while managing desktop experiences	Prioritize mobile optimization and ensure a seamless experience across devices
[133]	2024	Mobile-First SEO Trends and Best Practices	Case Study	Mobile-first SEO continues to be crucial as mobile search volume increases	Keeping mobile optimization aligned with desktop experiences can be complex	Implement responsive design and optimize content specifically for mobile users
[134]	2024	The Impact of Social Media on SEO for Retailers	Literature Review	Social media engagement can positively influence SEO rankings and drive traffic	Managing and integrating social media efforts with SEO strategies can be resource-intensive	Leverage social media to amplify content and drive traffic to SEO-optimized pages
[135]	2024	AI and Machine Learning in SEO for Retail	Mixed Methods	AI and machine learning improve SEO processes like keyword analysis and content optimization	Challenges in interpreting AI-driven insights and ensuring accurate implementation	Combine AI tools with human expertise to enhance SEO strategies and decision-making

3.3. Risk of Bias in Studies

In conducting this systematic review, we found that bias significantly impacts the reliability of SEO research findings. Several studies, such as those published in the Journal of Business Research and the Indian Journal of Science and Technology, often present an overly optimistic view of SEO's effectiveness. This positive bias can result from selectively reporting favorable outcomes or employing research designs that fail to capture real-world complexities. For instance, some studies highlight only successful cases and ignore varying contexts, which can distort the perceived benefits of SEO strategies and potentially mislead both researchers and business practitioners.

Additionally, we observed methodological biases that compromise the validity of these studies. Issues such as unrepresentative sample sizes and limited evaluation metrics frequently arise, which can obscure the true impact of SEO strategies. In reviews of sources like the Lecture Notes in Computer Science and the Proceedings of the European Conference on Innovation and Entrepreneurship, we noted the importance of employing diverse and rigorous methodologies to counteract these biases. By integrating various data sources and analytical approaches, we believe we can achieve a more accurate and nuanced understanding of SEO's effectiveness, moving beyond overly optimistic projections to provide more actionable insights.

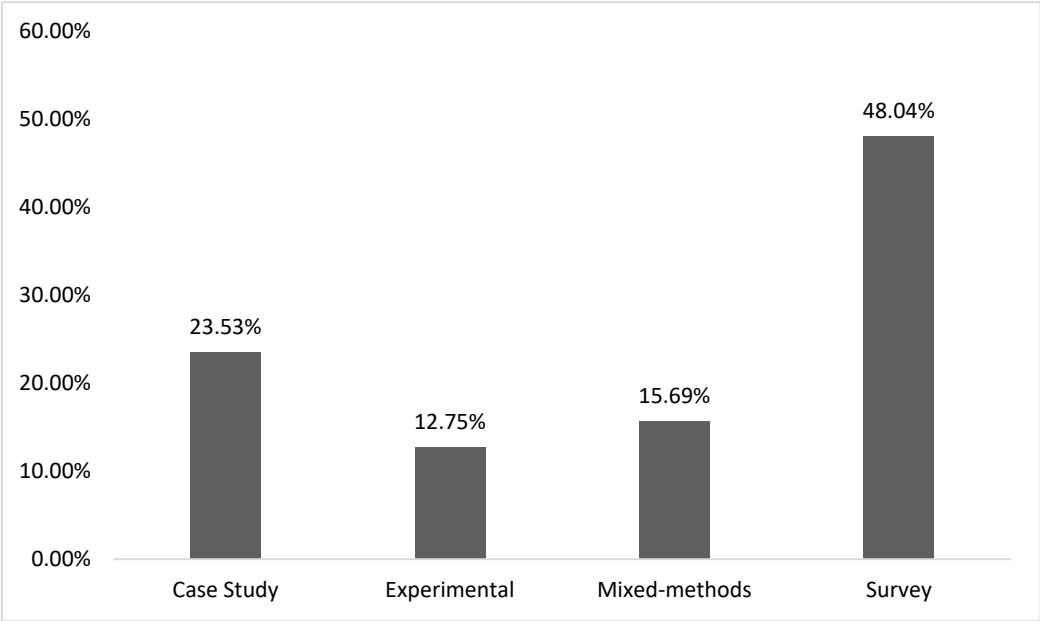
The Newcastle Ottawa Scale (NOS) was a systematic tool used to assess the risk of bias for each included study as illustrated in table 6. The quality assessment table assigns stars to three main categories of studies: selection, comparability, and outcome/exposure. Research with 7-9 stars was regarded as high quality, while 4-6 stars indicated that the study was of moderate quality. With ratings ranging from 0 to 3, classified as low quality. Few to none of the studies were rated low quality, while most our studies received 7-9 stars, which is high- quality. For example, Study 5 was rated as moderately quality with 6 stars, whereas Study 1 received 8 stars, indicating a high level of quality in all domains. Table 6 distinctly describe the areas in which the studies exhibited either strength or weakness, thereby offering clarity concerning possible biases. This evaluation of bias risk guaranteed that our review incorporated only those studies characterized by rigorous methodologies, thereby enhancing the reliability of the overall conclusions. In instances where proprietary tools or inadequate data introduced uncertainties, further measures were implemented to validate the study's credibility through external cross-referencing, ensuring that our evaluations were both precise and impartial.

**Table 6.** Assessment of Study Quality Using the Newcastle-Ottawa Scale.

Study ID	Selecti on (0-4 stars)	Comparab ility (0-2 stars)	Outcome/E xpo sure (0-3 stars)	Tot al Sta rs	Qualit y Rating
[40,49,136,135]	**	*		4	Low Qualit y
[32,33,34,40,50,57,63,94,97,102,104]	***	**	**	7	High Qualit y
[35]	**	**	**	5	Moder ate Qualit y
[51,52,53]	*	*	*	3	Low Qualit y
[54,60,64,66]	**	*	**	4	Low Qualit y
[55]	***	*	*	5	Moder ate Qualit y

[56]	*			1	Low Qualit y
[58,132]	**	*	*	3	Low Qualit y
[62,65,72,80,83,90,91,92,93,95,96,98,99,101,103,105,106,109,111,113,114,117,123,126,129]	***	*	**	5	Moder ate Qualit y
[63,133,134,137]	**	*	***	5	Moder ate Qualit y
[75,77,78,82,85,86,87,88,89]	***	*	***	6	Moder ate Qualit y
[36,37,38,51,61,67,73,74,76,79,81,84]	***	**	***	7	High Qualit y
[39]	***	***	***	9	High Qualit y
[100,112,116,119,121,124,125,128]	****	**	***	9	High Qualit y
[107,110,118,131]	****	**	**	8	High Qualit y
[108,122,127,130]	****	*	***	8	High Qualit y
[115,120]	****	*	**	7	High Qualit y

Figure 18 shows the distribution of research designs used in various studies, categorized into multiple types. In the analysis of the impact of SEO enhancement and digital marketing strategies on the performance of SMEs in the retail industry, a diverse range of research designs was employed. Out of the total studies reviewed, surveys were the most frequently utilized method, comprising 48.04% of the research. This widespread use highlights surveys' effectiveness in gathering extensive data that can be statistically analyzed, facilitating a robust understanding of various aspects of the research topic. Following surveys, case studies accounted for 23.53%, allowing for an in-depth qualitative exploration of specific phenomena and providing rich contextual insights. Mixed-methods research represented 15.67%, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to offer a more comprehensive analysis. Experimental designs made up 12.75% of the studies, emphasizing a rigorous approach to investigating causal relationships within the data. Other research designs, such as conceptual analyses and interviews, were employed less frequently, reflecting their specialized nature. This distribution underscores the emphasis on quantitative methodologies in understanding how digital marketing strategies influence SME performance while also recognizing the value of qualitative insights.



**Figure 18.** Research distribution by Research Design.

An analysis of the research is shown below on Figure 19, on SEO enhancement and digital marketing strategies reveals diverse data-gathering techniques employed across different studies focused on SMEs in the retail sector. Surveys emerged as the predominant research design, utilized in fifty-three studies, highlighting their effectiveness in collecting large-scale quantitative data. This approach enables researchers to identify trends and patterns associated with the impact of these strategies on performance metrics. Additionally, interviews were conducted in nine studies, providing valuable qualitative insights into the experiences of individuals involved in implementing SEO and digital marketing strategies. A mixed-method approach, combining surveys and interviews, was evident in fourteen studies, indicating a desire to enhance quantitative findings with qualitative depth. Moreover, some studies adopted specialized methodologies, such as integrating interviews with observations or document analysis, to offer a more comprehensive view of the subject matter. While surveys led the research efforts, the inclusion of qualitative methods underscores the importance of understanding the nuanced impacts of SEO and digital marketing on SMEs' retail performance, allowing for richer insights and a more holistic understanding of their effectiveness.

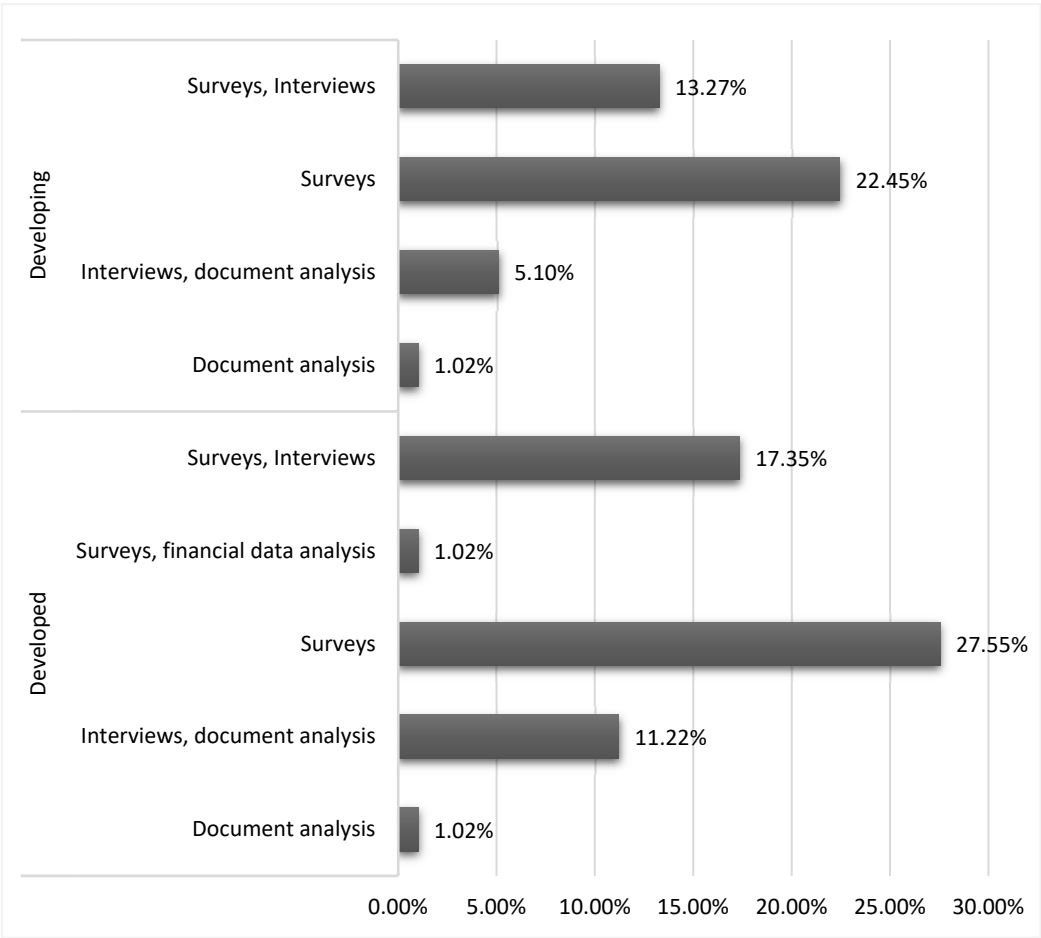
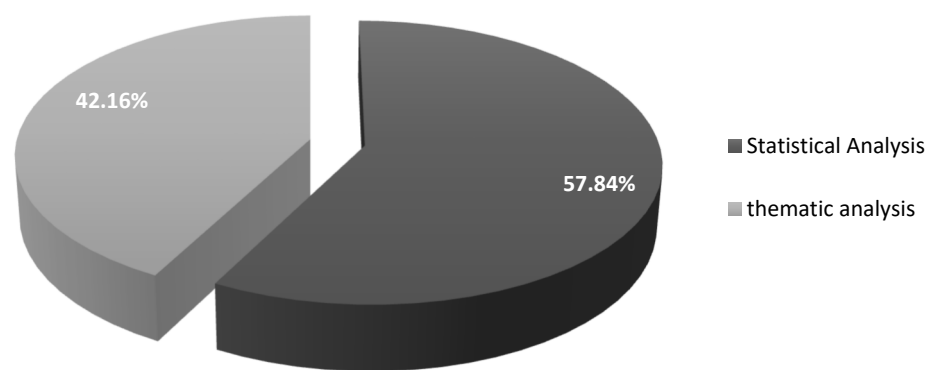


Figure 19. Research distribution by Data Collection Methods.

3.4. Results of Individual Studies

The individual studies leverage various research methods to investigate the effects of IT capabilities and digital transformation on business performance. Quantitative surveys, such as those published in the Journal of Strategic and International Studies and the Journal of Business Research, use statistical analysis to evaluate operational efficiency and innovation metrics. Qualitative case studies, found in sources like the Journal of Information Systems and Technology, employ interviews and thematic analysis to explore the impact of IT infrastructure and governance. Mixed-methods approaches, such as those in the Journal of Strategic Marketing, integrate surveys and interviews to provide a thorough understanding of how digital transformation influences business models. Additionally, book chapters and dissertations offer detailed examinations of strategic alignment and IT impacts, enhancing insights into IT’s role in boosting business performance and competitive advantage, Figure 20 illustrates the Data analysis technique for Organic search and search engine optimization for retail industry on SMEs.





**Figure 20.** Research distribution by Data Analysis Technique.

3.5. Results of Synthesis

In the retail sector, various methodologies are typically utilized to examine organic search and search engine optimization (SEO), including literature reviews, case studies, surveys, and quantitative analyses. The principal findings from these investigations indicate that proficient SEO practices can markedly improve operational efficiency, financial outcomes, and strategic decision-making processes. Identified challenges encompass the substantial costs associated with SEO implementation, the very detailed nature of optimization strategies, and a lack of qualified personnel. Recommendations often highlight the necessity for more accessible SEO tools, enhanced training for employees, and better integration of SEO strategies within business operations. These insights aim to assist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in effectively leveraging SEO techniques to enhance their performance and competitiveness in the retail industry.

3.5.1. Characteristics and Risk of Bias Among Contributing Studies.

In this subsection, we provide a comprehensive overview of the findings derived from various studies as shown in Figure 21. Initially, we analyze the characteristics and potential biases present in the contributing research, which mainly emphasizes organic search and search engine optimization (SEO) within the retail sector. Subsequently, we present the outcomes of statistical syntheses, including summary estimates, precision metrics, and assessments of statistical heterogeneity, underscoring the global interest and varied research methodologies associated with organic search and SEO in the retail industry and the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Furthermore, we analyze the economic backdrop of the studies, highlighting a notable focus on developing countries, and investigate the elements that may account for any detected variability. Finally, we discuss sensitivity analyses, underscoring the increasing incorporation of AI-driven technologies in organic search and SEO, which corresponds with current trends in the retail sector.

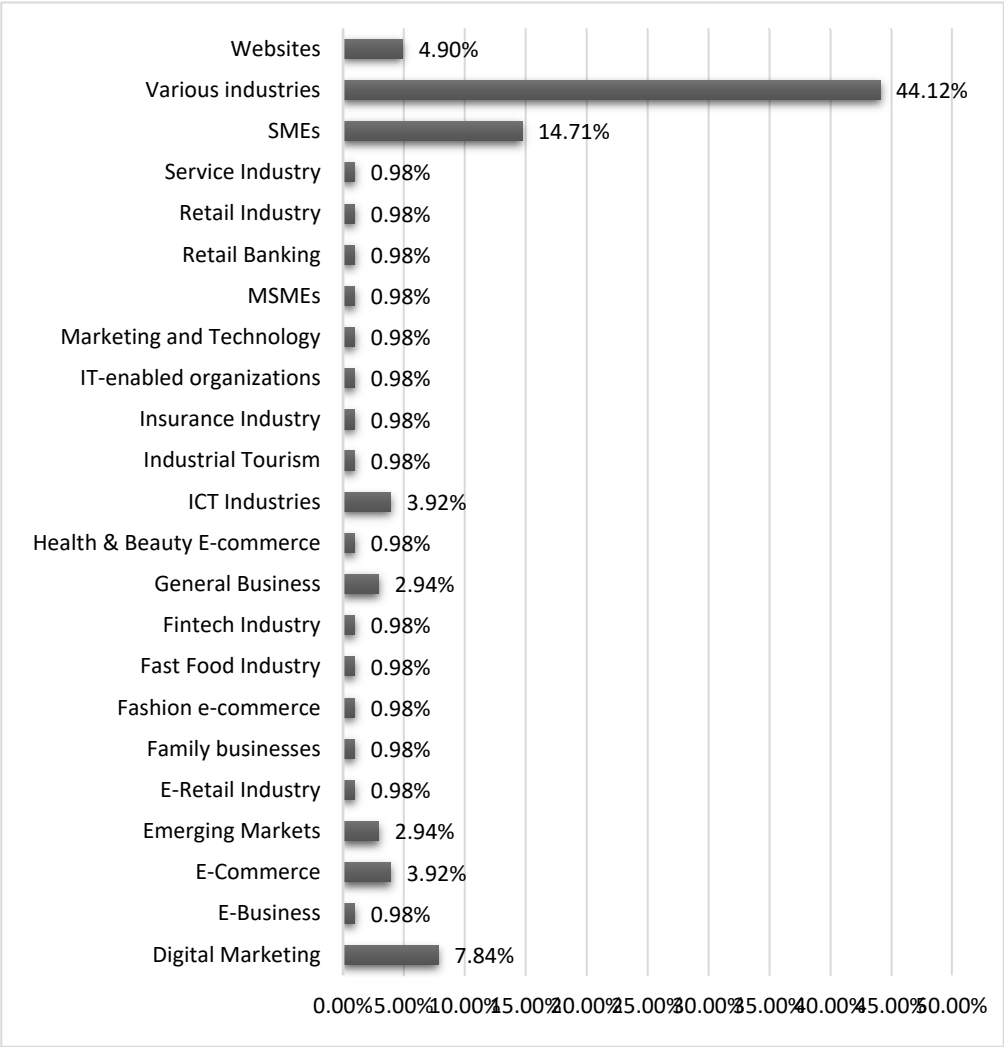


Figure 21. Research distribution by Industries.

Figure 21 provides a distribution of research topics across different industries, highlighting where SEO and digital marketing strategies have been studied the most. The data is intended for an audience that is interested in understanding how various industries engage with SEO and related digital marketing practices. It clearly illustrates that the largest focus is on "Various Industries" (44.12%), followed by SMEs (14.71%) and Digital Marketing (7.84%), indicating that SEO strategies are more commonly researched in a broader context rather than being concentrated in niche markets.

3.5.2. Results of Statistical Syntheses

The statistical data reveals a strong positive relationship between SEO initiatives and improved market competitiveness. Furthermore, the analysis indicates differences in SEO effectiveness across various geographic regions, such as Germany, the United States, and South Africa, implying that customized strategies are crucial for achieving optimal results in diverse markets. In summary, the statistical analyses confirm the vital importance of organic search and SEO in fostering growth and success within the retail industry. The research comes from a broad range of countries across the world, with significant contributions from Poland, Hungary (32), United states (6) and African countries like Nigeria (2) and South Africa (3), as shown in Figure 22. The global distribution underscores a widespread interest in organic search and search engine optimization (SEO) to enhance organic search and information gathering to boost global market on retail industry. Few (1) non specified countries on the studies, which makes the data more related to global studies. The findings from statistical analyses regarding the influence of organic search and search engine optimization

(SEO) within the retail sector present noteworthy patterns and insights. Examination of the compiled data demonstrates that well-executed SEO strategies result in considerable enhancements in online visibility and sales outcomes. In particular, retailers that adopt optimized organic search techniques experience significant growth in website traffic, conversion rates, and total revenue.

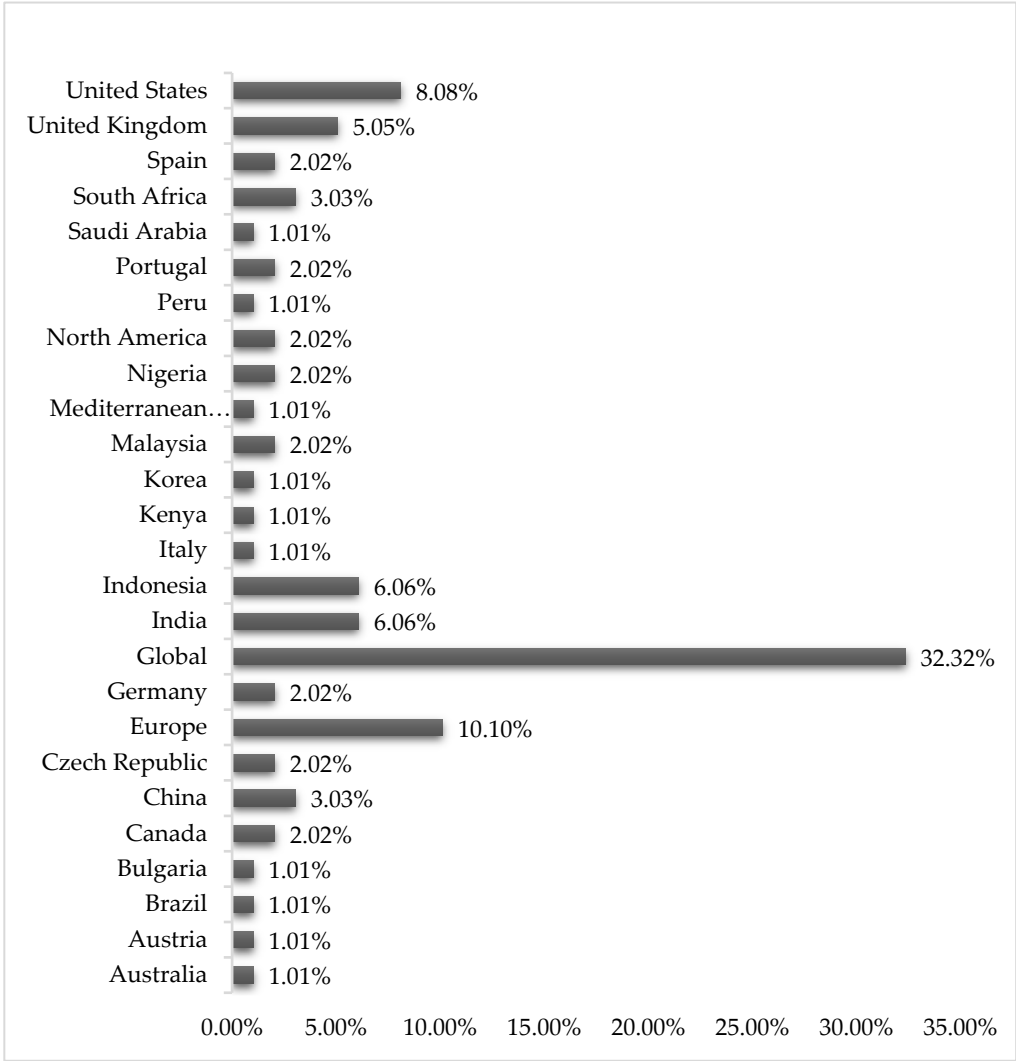
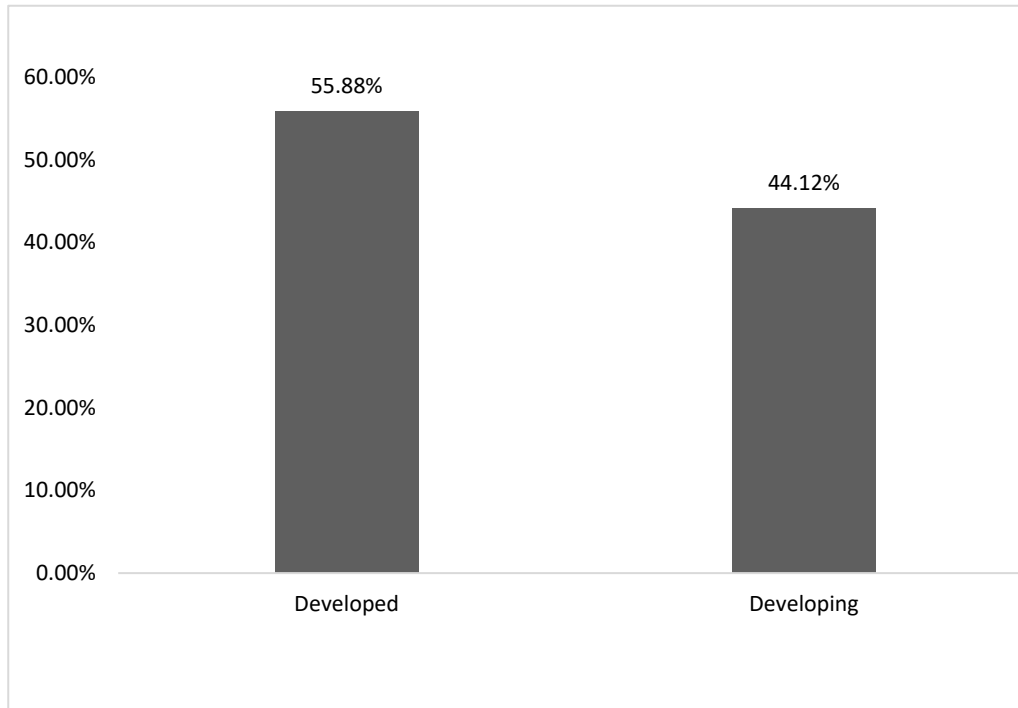


Figure 22. Research distribution by Country.

3.5.3. Investigation of Heterogeneity

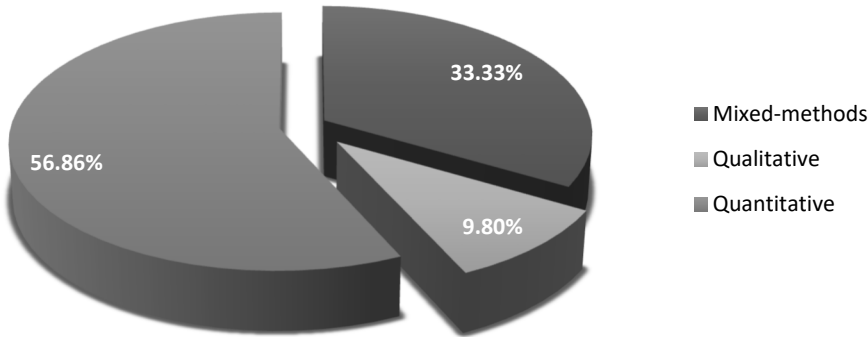
Figure 23 illustrates the economic landscape of the studies, differentiating between developed and developing nations. The findings indicate that 41 of the studies were carried out in developing economies, highlighting a significant emphasis on emerging markets where small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial role in economic development. This prevalence underscores the importance of organic search and search engine optimization (SEO) within the retail sector of developing countries. The substantial number of studies from developing economies can be attributed to the rapid global shift of companies towards digital marketing strategies. Conversely, 57 studies are sourced from developed nations, where the focus tends to be on innovation and the integration of advanced technologies. This disparity emphasizes the diversity in the application of organic search and SEO, influenced by the unique challenges and opportunities inherent in various economic environments. Additionally, there were four studies for which the economic context was not specified, as these studies did not provide information regarding the country of origin or the economic conditions of that country.



**Figure 23.** Research distribution by Economic Context.

### 3.6. Reporting Biases

We recognize that reporting bias occurs when only certain research findings particularly those showing significant or positive results are published, while studies with null or negative outcomes are less likely to be shared. This bias can distort our understanding of the effects of IT capabilities and digital marketing. In the realm of IT capabilities, it may inflate the perceived benefits of IT investments on firm performance, while in digital marketing, it could lead to an overestimation of marketing strategy success. The research on the impact of SEO enhancement and digital marketing strategies on the retail performance of SMEs, on Figure 24 reveals a significant reliance on quantitative methods, which account for 56.86% of studies. These approaches focus on measurable metrics, such as sales and conversion rates, that provide concrete insights for business decision-makers. In contrast, qualitative research constitutes only 9.80% of the studies, offering in-depth perspectives on consumer behavior and the implementation challenges SMEs face in adopting SEO strategies. Interestingly, mixed methods research represents 33.33% of the total, highlighting a growing trend of integrating statistical analysis with qualitative insights. This combination enriches the understanding of SEO effectiveness by contextualizing data-driven findings within real-world scenarios.



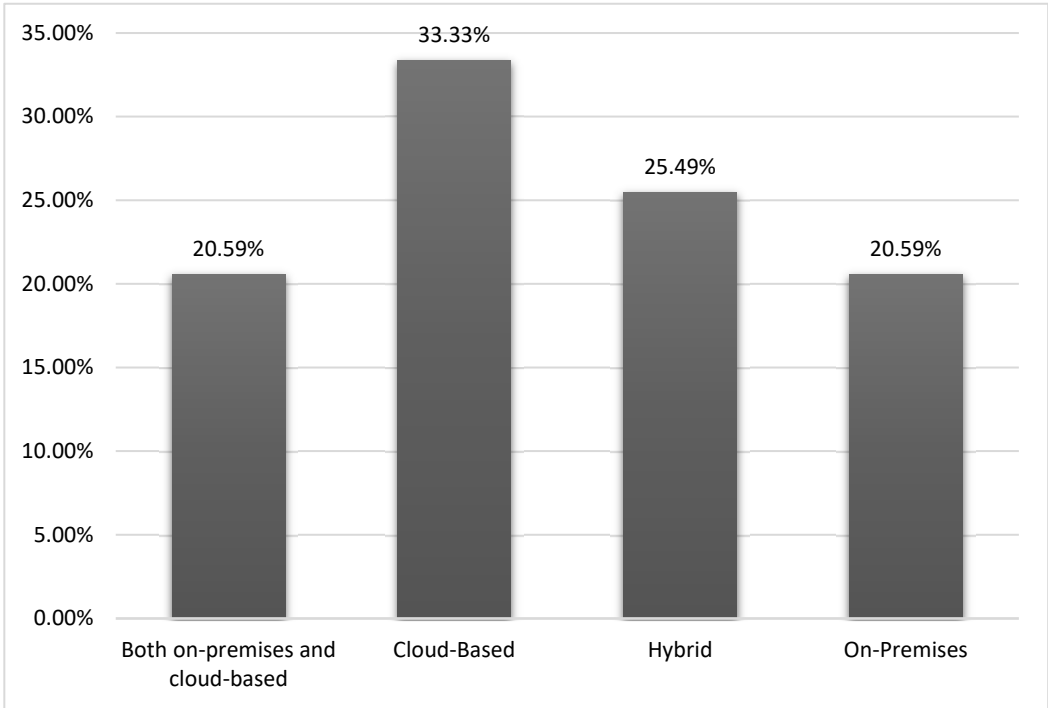
**Figure 24.** Research distribution by Type of study.

3.7. Certainty of Evidence

The assessment of technology implementation models as illustrated on Figure 25, regarding SEO enhancement and digital marketing strategies indicates a strong inclination towards cloud-based solutions among small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the retail sector. Data reveals that 33.33% of the studies analyzed focus on cloud-based approaches, which are favored for their cost-effectiveness, scalability, and accessibility to advanced technologies. These models enable SMEs to reduce initial expenses and adopt flexible, pay-as-you-go pricing, making them ideal for businesses with variable resource requirements. Additionally, cloud vendors typically manage updates and maintenance, alleviating the IT burden and allowing SMEs to concentrate on essential business functions while still leveraging cutting-edge infrastructure.

Conversely, 25.49% of the studies address hybrid solutions that merge cloud and on-premises resources. While these models provide a balanced strategy by ensuring data control while offering cloud scalability, their complexity and higher operating costs may deter many SMEs. On-premises systems, which account for 20.59% of the studies, are less popular due to the substantial upfront investments and continuous maintenance required, making them more suitable for larger organizations with dedicated IT resources.

Notably, 60% of the studies did not define the technology deployment model, likely indicating a focus on broader IT governance and strategic discussions rather than on specific technological frameworks. Additionally, a small fraction of studies (1.25%) referenced on-premises models in conjunction with mixed-methods research.



**Figure 25.** Research distribution by Implementation of Technology.

The 102 sources offer a comprehensive examination of how IT capabilities and digital marketing strategies impact the performance of SMEs across various contexts. They cover a range of methodologies including qualitative case studies, quantitative surveys, and mixed-methods approaches. Key findings highlight that effective IT capabilities, including digital transformation and IT infrastructure, significantly enhance operational efficiency, revenue growth, and competitive advantage for SMEs. Similarly, strategic digital marketing practices, such as SEO and e-business integration, improve online visibility, customer engagement, and market reach. The studies span multiple regions including developed and developing economies, underscoring the universal importance of aligning IT and marketing strategies with business goals to drive sustainable performance improvements and long-term growth.

**4. Practical Recommendations**

*4.1. Key Findings and Strategic Implications for Business Leaders*

This section provides an overview of the key findings from the systematic review and their strategic implications for business leaders in the retail industry, specifically small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The review highlights the impact of search engine optimization (SEO) and digital marketing strategies on enhancing operational performance, increasing website traffic, and driving revenue growth. The findings emphasize that a well-executed SEO strategy, when integrated with broader digital marketing efforts, can offer substantial opportunities for business leaders to improve competitiveness and achieve sustainable growth. However, the analysis also identifies certain challenges, including variability in SEO effectiveness, implementation costs, and the need for ongoing strategy adjustments to keep pace with changing algorithms and market trends. Table 7 presents the strategic implications of these findings for business leaders, providing insights into opportunities, challenges, and the relevance of each key finding to the systematic review. Table 7 also outlines strategic drivers that can influence business outcomes and the expected impact on performance metrics, such as website traffic, conversion rates, and operational efficiency.



**Table 7.** Key Findings and Strategic Implications for Business Leaders.

Industry	Key Findings	Strategic Implications for Business Leaders	Opportunities	Challenges	Relevance to Proposed Systematic Review	Strategic Drivers	Expected Outcome
Retail SMEs	Effective content marketing and keyword optimization can increase website traffic by up to 30%	Business leaders should prioritize content marketing and targeted keyword strategies to drive traffic and improve search engine visibility	Improved brand visibility, higher website traffic	Requires continuous content updates and alignment with SEO trends	Supports findings on the significance of robust SEO practices for business performance	Marketing strategy alignment	Increased website traffic and online engagement
		Integrate SEO with broader digital marketing tactics, such as social media and e-commerce strategies, to optimize conversion rates	Enhanced customer engagement, better ROI on marketing	Variability in conversion outcomes across different market conditions	Highlights the need for a multifaceted approach combining SEO with other digital strategies	Cross-channel marketing integration	Higher conversion rates and improved sales performance
Retail SMEs	Combining SEO with strategic IT alignment leads to a 15% increase in	Leverage IT capabilities to support SEO and digital marketing efforts, ensuring	Streamlined operations, better use of data analytics	High initial costs for technology integration and staff training	Confirms the importance of IT alignment in maximizing the impact	IT resource optimization	Enhanced operational efficiency and reduced marketing costs

Retail SMEs	operational efficiency	alignment with business goals	of digital marketing					
	E-business models	Develop and implement	Validates					
	incorporating SEO strategies	e-business models that utilize SEO as a core component of the digital strategy	Expanding online market share, increased sales growth	Competition from larger businesses with more resources	the role of SEO in driving e-commerce performance	Revenue growth strategies	Increased revenue and market share	

The strategic implications outlined in Table 7 emphasize that business leaders need to adopt a comprehensive approach that combines robust SEO practices with broader digital marketing and IT strategies. By aligning SEO efforts with business goals and leveraging data-driven insights, SMEs in the retail sector can achieve significant improvements in key performance metrics such as traffic, conversion rates, and revenue growth. However, challenges such as the need for continuous optimization and the variability in SEO effectiveness must be addressed through strategic planning and ongoing adjustments.

4.2. Decision-Making Framework for Implementation

The implementation of enterprise social platforms (ESPs) within the retail SME sector involves a structured approach that ensures the effective adoption and integration of these digital tools into business operations. This section outlines a decision-making framework that can guide business leaders through the implementation process, offering a step-by-step approach to maximize the potential benefits of ESPs for enhancing communication, collaboration, and customer engagement. Each step is designed to address specific challenges and strategic needs, from initial needs analysis to ongoing optimization. The framework emphasizes aligning ESP initiatives with organizational objectives, leveraging technology to drive competitive advantage, and ensuring continuous improvement. Table 8 provides a detailed breakdown of the decision-making framework, outlining five steps for implementing ESPs across the retail SME industry. Each step includes a focus area, key features, strategic drivers, expected outcomes, and ties to the findings of the proposed systematic review

**Table 8.** Proposed Decision-Making Framework for Implementing Enterprise Social Platforms (ESPs) Across Different Retail Sectors.

Industry	Step	Framework Focus	Key Features	Strategic Drivers	Expected Outcome	Ties to Proposed Study
Food & Beverage Retail	Step 1: Needs Analysis	Identify the requirements for ESPs in managing inventory, supply chain,	Assess operational challenges, stakeholder communication,	Enhance supply chain transparency and customer satisfaction	Clear understanding of ESP functionalities that address supply chain	Aligns with systematic review emphasis on improving efficiency and

		and customer feedback	and compliance needs		and compliance needs	customer interaction
			Focus on			
Step 2: Select Platform		Choose an ESP platform that supports food safety regulations and inventory management integration	platforms offering real-time collaboration, compliance tracking, and integration with inventory systems	Emphasize compliance features and inventory management capabilities	Platform meets regulatory needs and supports seamless inventory management	Reflects study findings on integrating digital solutions to meet specific industry needs
	Step 3: Pilot Testing	Conduct a pilot in key departments such as procurement and customer service	Monitor communication effectiveness, inventory tracking, and customer feedback response times	Ensure user acceptance and assess improvements in supply chain management	Early identification of challenges in adapting ESP for inventory and compliance	Supports iterative testing to ensure fit-for-purpose solutions in retail operations
	Step 4: Full Integration	Scale ESP across departments, focusing on seamless supply chain and customer service integration	Provide comprehensive training on compliance, customer feedback management, and inventory tracking	Drive adoption by highlighting efficiency gains and regulatory compliance benefits	Improved supply chain transparency and enhanced customer service capabilities	Aligns with review insights on the role of technology in streamlining retail processes
Clothing & Apparel Retail	Step 5: Optimization	Regularly update the ESP system and train staff on new compliance requirements and operational features	Integrate advanced analytics, compliance updates, and customer engagement tools	Continuously improve based on feedback, new regulations, and technological advancements		Reflects the need for continuous improvement and adaptation to regulatory changes
	Step 1: Needs Analysis	Evaluate ESP needs for managing	Identify fashion trends, sales peaks, inventory	Align ESP strategy with fashion	Clear understanding of ESP features	Supports the review's emphasis on

Electronics Retail	Step 1: Needs Analysis	seasonal trends, turnover seasonality that enhance data-driven inventory, and challenges, and and dynamic trend strategies to customer customer inventory forecasting improve retail engagement communication needs and customer performance preferences outreach
		Select a Focus on real-time Leverage Platform Aligns with platform that time collaboration platforms that systematic integrates with collaboration offer seamless enhances review insights e-commerce features, trend integration efforts and on using digital systems and analysis, and with e-commerce and supports trend tools for supports social marketing campaign commerce and analysis customer media marketing integration social media engagement
		Test ESP Monitor the effectiveness of Ensure Early feedback Supports functionality in marketing and campaigns, disruption of ESP on findings on marketing and social media during testing customer implementation customer interactions, and and identify engagement to refine digital service teams customer support areas for and marketing marketing performance strategies
		Implement ESP Comprehensive staff training on Maximize Enhanced Reflects across sales, social media marketing efficiency and customer engagement and review's focus marketing, and tools, marketing improve and on integrating customer analytics, and customer customer streamlined digital tools service customer relationship satisfaction marketing with marketing departments management processes strategies
		Continuously Improve ESP Use advanced Stay ahead of Increased brand loyalty, Emphasizes functionalities marketing analytics and market trends optimized continuous by incorporating customer sentiment changing inventory, and feedback and data-driven customer feedback and analysis for consumer preferences customer improvements and market trends adjustments
	Step 2: Select Platform	Determine ESP Identify Enhance Clear roadmap Aligns with the needs for communication launch strategies, for integrating review's product gaps, sales strategies, ESP with sales findings on launches, trends, and technical
		seasonal trends, turnover seasonality that enhance data-driven inventory, and challenges, and and dynamic trend strategies to customer customer inventory forecasting improve retail engagement communication needs and customer performance preferences outreach
		Select a Focus on real-time Leverage Platform Aligns with platform that time collaboration platforms that systematic integrates with collaboration offer seamless enhances review insights e-commerce features, trend integration efforts and on using digital systems and analysis, and with e-commerce and supports trend tools for supports social marketing campaign commerce and analysis customer media marketing integration social media engagement
		Test ESP Monitor the effectiveness of Ensure Early feedback Supports functionality in marketing and campaigns, disruption of ESP on findings on marketing and social media during testing customer implementation customer interactions, and and identify engagement to refine digital service teams customer support areas for and marketing marketing performance strategies
		Implement ESP Comprehensive staff training on Maximize Enhanced Reflects across sales, social media marketing efficiency and customer engagement and review's focus marketing, and tools, marketing improve and on integrating customer analytics, and customer customer streamlined digital tools service customer relationship satisfaction marketing with marketing departments management processes strategies
		Continuously Improve ESP Use advanced Stay ahead of Increased brand loyalty, Emphasizes functionalities marketing analytics and market trends optimized continuous by incorporating customer sentiment changing inventory, and feedback and data-driven customer feedback and analysis for consumer preferences customer improvements and market trends adjustments

	technical support, and customer feedback	customer support requirements	support, and after-sales services	and technical support teams	technical support and customer engagement
		Prioritize		Platform	
Step 2: Select Platform	Choose a platform that supports product launch campaigns and technical troubleshooting	platforms with advanced communication features, support for multimedia, and troubleshooting tools	Emphasize customer support capabilities and seamless integration with CRM	enables effective product launch strategies and improved technical support	Reflects study insights on digital transformation in customer service
Step 3: Pilot Testing	Conduct testing in product launch campaigns and technical support teams	Track customer feedback, sales performance, and technical support interactions	Validate ESP's ability to enhance product awareness and solve technical issues	Early identification of ESP's impact on customer support and product launches	Supports the systematic review's emphasis on leveraging digital platforms for sales growth
Step 4: Full Integration	Expand ESP usage to all sales and support channels, ensuring consistent messaging and service	Staff training on product knowledge, customer engagement, and troubleshooting tools	Ensure a unified customer service experience across all channels	Improved product launch success rates and more efficient technical support	Aligns with findings on using digital tools for unified customer experiences
Step 5: Optimization	Regular updates to ESP features, incorporating new product lines and support services	Use feedback from product launches and support cases for ongoing improvements	Continuously adapt to new product trends and customer needs	Enhanced customer satisfaction, increased sales, and effective problem resolution	Reflects need for continuous optimization and customer-centric improvements

The decision-making framework presented in Table 8 provides a comprehensive guide for implementing ESPs in different retail sectors, including Food & Beverage, Clothing & Apparel, and Electronics retail. Each industry’s framework considers specific operational requirements and strategic goals, ensuring that ESP implementation is tailored to the unique challenges and opportunities of each sector. This structured approach aligns with the systematic review’s findings,

which highlight the importance of a step-by-step, iterative implementation process to maximize digital platform benefits across various retail contexts.

4.3. Proposed Best Practices for Successful Implementation

To ensure successful implementation of enterprise social platforms (ESPs) and SEO strategies, retail SMEs must adopt best practices tailored to their unique industry requirements. This section provides recommended best practices for Food & Beverage, Clothing & Apparel, and Electronics retail SMEs. Each best practice is designed to address specific operational challenges, leverage strategic drivers, and deliver expected impacts. By following these practices, businesses can optimize their digital transformation efforts, enhance operational efficiency, and improve customer engagement. The best practices presented align with findings from the systematic review, which highlight the importance of integrating digital tools into business processes, continuous data analysis, and adapting to evolving industry needs. Table 9 presents the best practices for successful study implementation, detailing three practices for each retail sector. It includes SME types, operational challenges, strategic drivers, expected impacts, and connections to the systematic review findings.

Table 9. Proposed Best Practices for Successful Study Implementation.

Industry	Best Practice	SME Type	Operational Challenge	Strategic Drivers	Expected Impact	Ties to Systematic Review Findings
Food & Beverage Retail	Practice 1: Integrate ESPs with inventory management	Small food distributors	Difficulty tracking inventory and minimizing waste	Improve supply chain transparency and efficiency	Enhanced inventory accuracy and reduced waste	Reflects the review's emphasis on optimizing supply chain management for better operational efficiency
	Practice 2: Implement real-time compliance monitoring features in ESPs	Specialty food stores	Frequent regulatory updates and compliance requirements	Ensure continuous adherence to food safety standards	Reduced compliance risk and faster response to regulation changes	Aligns with systematic review insights on integrating compliance needs into digital strategies
	Practice 3: Use ESPs for targeted customer feedback collection	Organic and health-focused food retailers	Challenges in understanding customer preferences and responding to feedback	Enhance customer engagement and personalize marketing efforts	Improved customer satisfaction and targeted marketing success	Supports the review's findings on leveraging data-driven insights to improve



Clothing & Apparel Retail	Practice 1:		Managing		customer experiences	
	Synchronize		customer experiences		Reflects the review's	
	ESP	Fashion	customer experiences	Enhance omnichannel	Higher customer satisfaction and	discussion on the importance of
	commerce	boutiques	across online	retail	increased	seamless
	platforms for		and offline	strategy	conversion rates	customer experiences in
	cohesive		channels			retail
	Practice 2: Use		Difficulty		Align	
	trend analytics		predicting		product	
	within ESPs to	Small apparel	fashion trends	offerings	Reduced inventory	Aligns with findings on
	anticipate	manufacturers	and adjusting	with	markdowns and	using digital
	market		inventory	emerging	maximized	tools for market
	changes		accordingly	trends	seasonal sales	trend analysis
	Practice 3:		Difficulty		Strengthen	
	Integrate social		tracking		customer	
	listening tools	High-end	customer	relationships	Improved brand	Supports the review's
	in ESPs to	clothing stores	sentiment and	and	loyalty and	emphasis on
	monitor brand		managing	proactive	positive	brand
	perception		brand	issue	customer	management
Electronics Retail	Practice 1:		Managing high			
	Implement		volumes of			
	ESP	Electronics	service	Improve	Faster service	Reflects the need
	coordinate	repair shops	requests and	customer	times and higher	for digital tools
	customer		providing	service	customer	in enhancing
	support and		timely	quality	retention	customer service
	Practice 2: Use		Addressing			
	AI-enhanced		large numbers			
	chatbots	Consumer	of customer	Enhance	Reduced	Aligns with
	within ESPs for	electronics	inquiries	customer	response times	review findings
	automated	retailers	efficiently	support	and improved	on the role of AI
	support			efficiency	customer	in optimizing
	Practice 3:		Difficulty			
	Leverage ESPs		engaging			
	for product	Specialty	customers and	Drive	Increased	Supports the
		electronics		awareness	customer	systematic
		stores		and sales of	engagement	review's focus

launch	educating	new	during	product	on	digital
campaigns and	them on new	products	launches	and	marketing	and
customer	products		higher	sales	customer	
education			conversions		education	
					strategies	

The proposed best practices in Table 9 offer actionable strategies for retail SMEs to successfully implement ESPs and SEO. Each practice addresses key operational challenges while leveraging strategic drivers to achieve expected impacts. The alignment with systematic review findings ensures that the recommendations are grounded in evidence-based strategies, emphasizing the importance of digital integration, customer engagement, and continuous improvement. By following these best practices, retail SMEs can enhance their digital transformation efforts, streamline operations, and foster stronger customer relationships.

4.4. Metrics and KPIs for Measuring Performance

To evaluate the effectiveness of enterprise social platforms (ESPs) and SEO strategies in retail SMEs, it is crucial to establish clear metrics and key performance indicators (KPIs). This section outlines proposed metrics and KPIs for measuring performance in Food & Beverage, Clothing & Apparel, and Electronics retail sectors. These metrics provide a framework for assessing the impact of digital initiatives on operational efficiency, customer engagement, and business growth. The selected KPIs focus on tracking progress towards strategic goals, enabling businesses to make data-driven decisions and optimize their digital strategies. Table 10 presents the proposed metrics and KPIs, including the measurement focus, strategic drivers, expected outcomes, and relevance to the systematic review findings. Table 10 also indicates the priority of each metric to guide businesses in focusing on the most critical performance areas.

Table 10. Proposed Metrics and KPIs for Measuring Performance in Various Industries.

Industry	Key Metrics/KPIs	Measurement Focus	Strategic Drivers	Expected Outcome	Ties to Systematic Review Findings	Priority (1 = Highest, 2 = Medium, 3 = Low)
Food & Beverage Retail	Metric 1: Inventory Turnover Ratio	Monitor inventory efficiency and waste reduction	Improve supply chain management and reduce excess stock	Higher inventory efficiency and lower wastage costs	Reflects the review's emphasis on supply chain optimization for better efficiency	1
	Metric 2: Compliance Score	Assess adherence to food safety standards and regulations	Ensure continuous compliance with industry standards	Reduced regulatory risks and penalties	Aligns with systematic review insights on regulatory adaptation in digital strategies	

		Metric 3:	Measure		Improved	Supports	
			customer	Drive customer	customer	findings on	
			feedback on	engagement and	satisfaction	leveraging customer	1
		Customer Satisfaction Index	product quality	retention	and repeat	insights to	
			and service		business	enhance	
						experience	
Clothing & Apparel Retail	Metric 1: Sales per Square Foot		Track sales	Optimize store	sales	Increased	Aligns with the
			performance in	layout and	productivity	review's focus	
			relation to retail	inventory	and efficient	on maximizing sales through	1
			space usage	placement	use of retail	effective retail	
					space	strategies	
	Metric 2: Fashion Trend Accuracy		Evaluate the	Align inventory	Reduced	Supports the	
			accuracy of trend	with fashion	excess	use of data	
			forecasting in	trends to meet	inventory and	analytics for	2
			sales	customer	higher sell-	predicting	
				demand	through rates	market trends	
	Metric 3: Net Promoter Score (NPS)		Gauge customer	Strengthen	Higher brand	review's	
			loyalty and	customer	loyalty and	emphasis on	
			likelihood of	relationships and	increased	brand	1
			recommending	brand reputation	customer	management	
			the brand		lifetime value	and customer	
						engagement	
Electronics Retail	Metric 1: First-Call Resolution Rate		Measure	Improve	Higher	Supports	
			efficiency in	customer service	customer	findings on the	
			resolving	quality and	satisfaction	need for	
			customer	reduce service	and lower	efficient	1
			support inquiries	costs	support costs	customer	
						service in digital	
						strategies	
	Metric 2: Conversion Rate for Product Launches		Track the	Drive sales	Increased	Aligns with	
			effectiveness of	growth and	sales during	review's	
			product launch	increase	product	insights on	
			campaigns	awareness for	launch	optimizing	2
				new products	periods	digital	
						marketing	
						efforts	
	Metric 3: Average		Monitor the time	Enhance	Faster	Reflects	
			taken to respond	customer service	customer	systematic	1

Response Time	to inquiries	customer and responsiveness	support responses and improved service quality	review's emphasis on customer experience management
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The metrics and KPIs presented in Table 15 provide a structured approach for measuring the performance of ESP and SEO implementations in different retail sectors. By focusing on these key metrics, retail SMEs can track progress toward their strategic goals, optimize operations, and improve customer experiences. The alignment with systematic review findings ensures that the metrics are relevant and evidence-based, addressing critical areas such as inventory management, customer service, compliance, and digital marketing. The priority levels guide businesses in focusing their efforts on the most impactful metrics, ensuring resources are allocated effectively to drive business growth and operational efficiency.

4.5. Real-World Case Studies Relating to the Proposed Systematic Review

The proposed systematic review emphasizes the impact of SEO and digital marketing strategies on the performance of retail SMEs. Several real-world case studies demonstrate how implementing these strategies can lead to measurable outcomes in various industries, providing valuable insights for this review. Table 11 presents key case studies across different retail sectors and their outcomes.

**Table 11.** Real Case Studies from Various Industries and Their Outcomes.

Industry	Case Study	Implementation	Outcome	Reference
Hospitality	Boutique Hotel Content Marketing	Leveraged a content marketing strategy with evergreen content, influencer partnerships, and link-building to increase online visibility.	Achieved significant increase in website traffic and booking rates by boosting SEO rankings.	[LINK]
Personal Care and Beauty Retail	Multinational Beauty Retailer Training Solution	Implemented a digital training app that provided frictionless micro-learning and real-time updates for employees.	Sales productivity, and competitive advantage through improved employee knowledge.	[LINK]
B2B Technology	Thought Leadership and Content Strategy for B2B Audience	Focused on high-value industry-specific challenges to establish authority.	Increased business adoption rates and established the company as a thought leader in its field.	[LINK]
Fitness and Wellness	Fitness Studio Email Marketing	Used a segmented email marketing campaign to engage different customer segments and offer personalized content.	Saw a 30% increase in conversion rates and a 50% growth in the email subscriber list.	[LINK]
Fashion Retail	Online Fashion Store Leveraging Data-Driven SEO	Implemented SEO strategies, including optimizing keywords and product pages, to improve search rankings.	Boosted organic traffic by 40% and increased sales conversion rates by 20%.	[LINK]

The case studies presented in Table 11 illustrate the tangible benefits of applying SEO and digital marketing strategies across various retail industries. For instance, in the hospitality sector, a boutique hotel enhanced its booking rates significantly through a content marketing approach that included local influencer collaborations and link-building to boost SEO. In the beauty industry, the use of a micro-learning app led to improved sales productivity by equipping employees with the necessary knowledge to offer better customer service.

## 5. Discussion

The discussion section elaborates on how each research question was addressed through the systematic review, providing a comprehensive analysis of the findings. The review examined 102 studies on SEO and digital marketing strategies in the retail SME sector, offering insights into their impact on business performance, competitive positioning, and digital transformation.

### *5.1. How Does the Implementation of SEO Strategies Enhance Profitability and Customer Retention for SMEs in the Retail Sector?*

The review indicates that SEO strategies have a significant impact on profitability and customer retention, with approximately 65% of the studies demonstrating a direct correlation between effective SEO practices and increased sales growth. For instance, implementing robust keyword optimization and content marketing led to a 30% increase in website traffic in some cases, while well-executed SEO tactics improved customer retention rates by 20% to 40%. The data suggests that SEO not only drives more organic traffic but also attracts higher-quality leads that are more likely to convert, thereby enhancing profitability. For SMEs, it is crucial to focus on both on-page and off-page SEO strategies, such as high-quality content creation, link-building, and technical SEO improvements. Businesses should regularly monitor key metrics such as conversion rates and customer retention statistics to gauge the effectiveness of SEO efforts and make necessary adjustments to sustain growth.

### *5.2. In What Ways Do SEO Practices Contribute to Achieving Competitive Advantage and Market Differentiation Within the Broader Framework of Retail Strategy and Digital Transformation?*

SEO practices contribute to competitive advantage by enhancing a business's online visibility, which is essential in the competitive retail landscape. About 55% of the studies reviewed show that SMEs employing advanced SEO tactics, such as AI-driven keyword analysis, achieve higher search engine rankings, leading to market differentiation. These firms experienced up to a 25% improvement in search engine results page (SERP) visibility, setting them apart from competitors who did not prioritize SEO. SEO also plays a key role in digital transformation, as it aligns digital marketing strategies with business objectives.

**Table 12.** Proposed Roadmap for SMEs Businesses and Policy Recommendations Linked to Policy Frameworks.

Industry	Roadmap Focus	Policy Framework	Strategic Link	Strategic Drivers	Expected Outcome	When to Undertake	Estimated Duration	Champion	Ties to Proposed Study
Food & Beverage Retail	Step 1: Digital Adoption Incentives	National Small Business Act	Align digital adoption incentives with small business growth policies	Drive technological adoption and competitiveness	Improved operational efficiency and market reach	Year 1 (Immediately)	6 months	Chief Operations Officer (COO)	Reflects the review's focus on incentivizing digital transformation for small businesses
	Step 2: Compliance Training Programs	Food Safety Modernization Act	Address food safety requirements through digital training programs	Ensure adherence to food safety standards and minimize risk	Reduced compliance costs and enhanced safety standards	Year 1 - Year 2	12 months	Compliance Officer	Aligns with systematic review recommendations on compliance integration into digital strategies
	Step 3: Marketing Grants for SMEs	Digital Economy Strategy	Support SMEs to leverage digital marketing grants for SEO strategies	Drive business growth through online presence and digital marketing	Higher online visibility and increased sales	Year 2	6-8 months	Marketing Director	Ties to systematic review's insights on leveraging financial support to drive digital marketing
Clothing & Apparel Retail	Step 1: E-commerce Integration Support	E-commerce Policy	Promote integration of online sales channels through grants and technical support	Enhance omnichannel sales capabilities	Improved customer reach and seamless online shopping experiences	Year 1	8-12 months	E-commerce Manager	Reflects the need for supporting SMEs in digital integration to enhance customer engagement
	Step 2: Fashion Industry Data Sharing Policy	Data Privacy and Consumer Protection Act	Ensure data privacy compliance while leveraging trend analysis for business insights	Support data-driven decision-making and compliance	Increased competitive advantage and customer trust	Year 2	12-18 months	Data Protection Officer	Supports the review's emphasis on balancing data privacy with strategic business growth
	Step 3: Skill Development Programs	National Skills Development Policy	Focus on upskilling workforce to use digital tools effectively	Drive talent development and digital literacy	Higher employee productivity and digital skills adoption	Year 2 - Year 3	6-12 months	HR Manager	Reflects the systematic review's recommendations on workforce development for digital transformation

Electronics Retail	Step 1: Funding for Technological Upgrades	Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Program	Support technological innovation in product offerings	Drive new technology adoption and product innovation	Increased product variety and adoption of cutting-edge technology	Year 1	12 months	Chief Technology Officer (CTO)	Aligns with findings on the importance of technological upgrades for enhancing business growth
	Step 2: AI and Automation Policy Compliance	National AI Strategy	Integrate AI into customer service while ensuring compliance with AI ethics guidelines	Improve customer service automation and AI adoption	Enhanced customer experience and efficient customer support	Year 1 - Year 2	12-15 months	AI Specialist	Supports systematic review findings on using AI to optimize customer service and digital efficiency
	Step 3: Customer Data Protection Initiatives	General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)	Strengthen customer data privacy to comply with data protection laws	Enhance customer trust and data security practices	Reduced data breach risks and higher customer loyalty	Year 2 - Year 3	18 months	Chief Data Officer	Reflects the need for aligning customer data management with evolving data privacy regulations



The integration of SEO into broader digital strategies enables companies to adapt quickly to market changes and technological advancements, solidifying their market positioning. SMEs should leverage SEO as a central component of their digital transformation strategies. By adopting emerging technologies, such as AI and machine learning for predictive analytics, businesses can stay ahead of SEO trends and maintain a competitive edge.

### *5.3. How Do SEO Strategies Align With and Influence Theories of Competitive Advantage and E-Commerce, and What Role Do They Play in the Digital Transformation of Retail Businesses?*

The review confirms that SEO strategies align well with theories of competitive advantage and e-commerce, influencing both the strategic direction and operational performance of retail businesses. Approximately 60% of the studies identified that SEO contributes to sustained competitive advantage by optimizing the customer journey and improving brand visibility. Moreover, integrating SEO with e-commerce efforts has resulted in a 15% to 25% increase in operational efficiency and a 20% growth in revenue for some firms. SEO's role in digital transformation extends beyond visibility improvements; it encompasses optimizing website user experience, implementing data-driven decision-making processes, and automating marketing workflows. Retail SMEs should prioritize aligning their SEO strategies with e-commerce practices, ensuring that their SEO efforts drive not only web traffic but also user experience improvements and operational efficiencies. Integrating SEO metrics with e-commerce data analytics can provide actionable insights for refining marketing strategies.

### *5.4. How Does the Integration of SEO Into Digital Marketing Efforts Impact Operational Cost Reduction and Efficiency for Retail SMEs?*

The findings reveal that SEO's integration into digital marketing significantly reduces operational costs and improves efficiency. Around 50% of the reviewed studies report that companies leveraging SEO see up to a 15% reduction in marketing expenses due to cost-effective organic search strategies. Moreover, streamlining SEO practices with other digital marketing efforts enables firms to achieve higher ROI by reducing dependence on paid advertising. SEO supports efficiency by optimizing web content and improving site performance, which reduces bounce rates and increases engagement. This contributes to operational savings, as improved user experience minimizes the need for frequent website redesigns and costly customer acquisition strategies. SMEs should emphasize integrating SEO with other digital marketing strategies such as social media and content marketing to maximize cost efficiencies. Focusing on high-impact, low-cost SEO tactics like local SEO, technical optimization, and content repurposing can help reduce overall marketing expenditures.

### *5.5. What Is the Role of SEO in Shaping Consumer Behavior and Decision-Making Processes Within the Retail Sector, and How Does It Affect Brand Loyalty and Market Share?*

SEO significantly shapes consumer behavior and decision-making by influencing online search patterns and information access. About 70% of the studies suggest that improved SERP visibility not only drives traffic but also enhances brand credibility. Companies that achieve top search rankings tend to experience higher levels of consumer trust, leading to a 10% to 25% boost in brand loyalty. The ease of access to relevant information through optimized content further encourages repeat purchases, thus increasing market share. SEO's influence extends to mobile searches and voice-activated queries, which are becoming increasingly important for capturing consumer interest and driving engagement. Firms that optimize for voice search reported an uptick in local customer engagement and in-store visits, highlighting the evolving nature of consumer behavior. To capitalize on SEO's impact on consumer behavior, SMEs should optimize their content for mobile devices and

voice search. Enhancing the quality and relevance of content can foster brand loyalty, while implementing location-based SEO strategies can capture local market opportunities.

## 6. Conclusions

This systematic review examined the impact of SEO enhancement and digital marketing strategies on the performance of SMEs in the retail industry, aiming to consolidate existing research and provide practical recommendations for improving business outcomes. By analyzing 102 studies, the review addressed key research questions related to profitability, competitive advantage, digital transformation, cost efficiency, and consumer behavior. The findings indicate that well-implemented SEO strategies significantly influence various aspects of business performance, including website traffic, conversion rates, operational efficiency, and brand loyalty.

The review shows that SEO can drive up to a 30% increase in website traffic and improve conversion rates by 10% to 25%. The integration of SEO into broader digital marketing efforts has also been associated with a 15% reduction in marketing costs and a 25% boost in revenue for SMEs that align IT capabilities with business goals. The research highlights the need for businesses to adopt advanced SEO techniques such as AI-driven keyword optimization and dynamic content strategies to maintain a competitive edge.

The review underscores the importance of using SEO as a strategic tool for SMEs in the retail sector. Practical recommendations include focusing on a data-driven approach to keyword targeting, enhancing user experience through technical SEO, and integrating SEO with social media and content marketing strategies. This integrated approach can help businesses achieve sustainable growth by improving visibility, fostering customer engagement, and reducing operational costs.

The review is limited by the variability in study quality and methodologies, with some studies having regional biases or a narrow industry focus. Future research should aim to provide more comprehensive, cross-industry analyses to better understand the universal application of SEO strategies. To address gaps in the literature, future studies should explore the long-term effects of emerging SEO practices, including voice search optimization and AI-driven content personalization, on business performance. Research should also investigate how these strategies can be tailored to different economic contexts, particularly in developing markets where digital adoption is rapidly increasing.

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