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Digital Marketing Metasynthesis Based on Reducing Financial Threats in Sanctions

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ABSTRACT

The impact of sanctions on the supply chain and how it is reflected in digital marketing strategies. Import and export restrictions, increased logistics costs, and problems with the supply of raw materials can all affect the ability of businesses to provide products and services. Digital marketing can reduce the negative effects of these problems by providing clear information and establishing continuous communication with customers. The purpose of the present study is to synthesize digital marketing based on reducing financial threats in sanctions. The research is applied in terms of purpose and survey in terms of method. The type of research is qualitative-quantitative. The statistical population of the qualitative part of the research includes book articles and master's and doctoral theses between 2015 and 2024 in the field of digital marketing based on reducing financial threats in sanctions. The statistical population of the quantitative part includes expert staff and managers of digital marketing companies. The research instrument is a researcher-made questionnaire. Data analysis was performed using meta-synthesis and DEMATEL. The results of the study indicate that 6 dimensions have been extracted in the proposed model, which include the use of local and regional platforms, increasing the importance of SEO and content marketing, risk management and adaptation to platform changes, the use of open source and alternative tools for digital automation, marketing on social networks without dependence on paid advertising, content localization, and attention to local values. Based on the DEMATEL technique, the components of content localization and attention to local values, the use of local and regional platforms, and risk management and adaptation to platform changes are the absolute influential components, respectively, and marketing on social networks without dependence on paid advertising, the use of open source and alternative tools for digital automation, and increasing the importance of SEO and content marketing are the absolute influential components, respectively.

KEWWORDS: Digital Marketing, Sanctions, Financial Threat, Meta-synthesis.

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1. Introduction

In today's world, digital marketing, as one of the most important tools for business development, plays a pivotal role in strengthening the presence of brands and increasing market share. This approach, by utilizing modern technologies and online platforms, provides access to a wide audience at a relatively low cost. However, in the context of economic sanctions, where many countries, including Iran, are facing financial, trade, and access to international resources restrictions, digital marketing faces unique challenges (Islam et al., 2024). These sanctions not only limit access to global markets and advanced digital tools, but also bring with them numerous financial threats such as currency fluctuations, banking restrictions, and reduced purchasing power of customers. In such circumstances, developing digital marketing strategies that can mitigate these threats has become an inevitable necessity (Salasi et al., 2025). Economic sanctions expose businesses to significant financial risks by creating barriers to financial transfers and access

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to international platforms. These restrictions can affect companies' ability to raise capital, manage advertising costs, and even retain existing customers. In the meantime, digital marketing becomes doubly important as a tool that can help mitigate these threats by utilizing internal resources and creative solutions (Pangban, 2025). However, the lack of coherent and localized strategies to exploit the potential of digital marketing under sanctions is one of the main challenges facing businesses. This highlights the need for targeted research in this area (Zhang et al., 2024). One key aspect that needs to be examined is how to use digital marketing tools to reduce dependence on international financial systems. For example, internal platforms, native social networks, and alternative payment methods can be used as solutions to circumvent financial restrictions. However, the lack of sufficient knowledge about the effectiveness of these tools and how to optimize them in the context of sanctions puts businesses in a weak position (Mariana et al., 2025). Without careful research, companies may resort to inefficient or costly methods that not only do not meet their financial goals but also waste their limited resources. In addition, sanctions have a direct impact on consumer behavior. Reduced purchasing power, changes in consumption patterns, and increased price sensitivity are among the economic consequences of sanctions that digital marketing must respond to. In these circumstances, businesses need strategies that can gain customer trust and maintain their loyalty by providing a strong value proposition and using targeted advertising. Without addressing these behavioral changes, digital marketing efforts may fail because advertising messages will not match the needs and expectations of the audience (Gondozelli, 2025). Another challenge is the inadequate digital infrastructure in countries under sanctions. Restrictions on access to advanced technologies, such as data analysis tools or international advertising platforms, prevent the full exploitation of digital marketing potential (Babis et al., 2024). This forces businesses to look for alternative and creative solutions. However, the lack of comprehensive studies in this field has prevented many companies from effectively utilizing these opportunities. This inadequate infrastructure, coupled with a lack of specialized knowledge, can lead to a decrease in the competitiveness of businesses in domestic and regional markets. In this regard, one of the important issues is to identify the key variables affecting the success of digital marketing under sanctions. These variables include factors such as the type of digital platforms used, content strategies, alternative payment methods, level of internet access, and customer brand awareness (Da Silva et al., 2023). A thorough understanding of these variables and how they interact with each other can lead to the development of strategies that not only reduce financial threats, but also help increase marketing efficiency. Without understanding these variables, digital marketing efforts may be fragmented and without significant impact (Ahmed et al., 2024).

One of the less-considered aspects is the impact of sanctions on the supply chain and how this is reflected in digital marketing strategies. Import and export restrictions, increased logistics costs, and difficulties in sourcing raw materials can all affect the ability of businesses to deliver products and services. Digital marketing can mitigate the negative effects of these problems by providing clear information and establishing continuous communication with customers. However, the lack of sufficient research in this area has prevented many businesses from fully exploiting this potential (Simbrowa et al., 2022). In addition, sanctions can lead to a decrease in public trust in brands and even the economy as a whole. In such circumstances, digital marketing must be able to bridge this gap by using trust-building techniques, such as storytelling marketing or transparent interactions on social networks. The lack of specific strategies in this area can lead to a decrease in customer loyalty and ultimately a loss of market share. Research in this area can provide solutions to increase trust and engagement with customers in times of economic crisis. Another important issue is the inadequacy of reliable data for market analysis under sanctions (Park and Shin, 2025). Many international data analysis tools are not available due to sanctions, which limits the ability of businesses to identify customer needs and predict market trends. In these circumstances, digital marketing must rely on local data and native analysis methods. However, the lack of sufficient knowledge and experience in this field prevents the effective exploitation of available data. This highlights the need for research focused on developing data analysis methods under sanctions (Björktavik, 2025). Along with these issues, one of the main challenges is adapting digital marketing strategies to local culture and values. Under sanctions, when access to global markets is limited, businesses must focus on domestic and regional markets. This requires a deep understanding of consumer culture, local preferences, and behavioral patterns. Without considering these aspects, digital marketing campaigns may encounter audience resistance and lose their effectiveness. Research in this area can help identify localized strategies to increase the adoption of marketing campaigns (Jello et al., 2024).

Finally, conducting research on digital marketing based on reducing financial threats under sanctions not only helps businesses become more resilient to economic challenges, but can also help develop the national economy. Given the increasing dependence of economies on digital technologies, ignoring this area can lead to the loss of competitive opportunities and a decrease in economic power. This research aims to provide practical and localized solutions, which can help fill the gaps in digital marketing knowledge and practice. Therefore, this study seeks to examine how digital marketing can be used as a tool to reduce financial threats under sanctions. By identifying key variables, analyzing consumer behavior, examining digital infrastructure, and providing innovative solutions, this research attempts to help develop a comprehensive framework for digital marketing under economic crisis conditions. The results of this study can help businesses, policymakers, and researchers make more informed and effective decisions.

2. Theoretical foundations and research background

Economic sanctions are often used by countries as a tool in foreign policy. They are not only a means of economic coercion, but also act as a strategic tool that influences the parties to the conflict. Countries use sanctions against target countries for various political goals. As with any foreign policy decision, the imposition of sanctions can pursue multiple goals. The stated and official reasons behind sanctions are considered as the primary goals (Kvalin et al., 2023). However, there may be other goals that go beyond the primary goals. After the Cold War, countries were reluctant to use military force. In an environment where the use of force is not favored, the use of economic instruments has become more important. The high economic and political costs of military spending have reinforced this trend. Sanctions are an important tool to overcome the softness and weakness of diplomacy and the hardness and political difficulties of military force. Sanctions affect the target country in many ways. One of the most important effects is the disruption of the target country's trade relations, which disrupts the activities of the companies involved in these relations. Sanctions can affect the commercial activities of companies in various ways, for example by delaying investment decisions or canceling existing investments (Sagiroglu, 2024). An action can be considered an economic sanction if it is expected to cause economic losses or if the potential economic losses resulting from the action are perceived as a threat by the target country. If the action does not cause sufficient economic losses or if the target country cannot understand the potential losses that it may incur, then it becomes difficult to classify such an action as an economic sanction (Park, 2016). The effectiveness of an economic sanction is assessed based on the extent to which the action influences the diplomatic decision-making of the target country. If the expected or imposed economic losses resulting from the action are significant enough to cause a change in diplomatic decisions, it can be considered an effective economic sanction; therefore, for an action to be considered a type of economic sanction, it must either cause economic losses to the target country or be expected to cause them. According to this framework, the severance of trade relations or the suspension of financial transactions, which directly lead to foreseeable economic losses, has been considered a type of economic sanction (Park and Shin, 2025).

Currently, there is limited research that specifically addresses digital technology sanctions as a distinct category of economic sanctions. However, digital-related measures are implemented in a variety of capacities and pursue both diplomatic and economic objectives. It is also important to consider the extent to which these digital-related measures can impact the economic losses of states undergoing digital transformation. To answer this question, it is necessary to estimate the size of the digital economy (Donlin, 2022).

Park and Shin (2025) conducted a study titled Conceptualizing Digital Sanctions as a New Type of Economic Sanctions in the Digital Age: Digital-Related Sanction Measures Against Russia and Their Implications. In the era of digital transformation, the structure and application of economic sanctions have evolved, expanding from traditional trade sanctions to complex digital and financial sanctions. The recent conflict in Ukraine has provoked a range of responses from Western powers that target Russia's digital sectors. These sanctions include restrictions on quantum computing, IT services, manufacturing, aerospace technology, and other measures that may hinder the country's digital transformation. The aim of this study is to understand whether these emerging digital-related measures can be considered a new form of economic sanctions and to examine their potential economic implications for Russia. This paper addresses two main research questions: First, we ask whether sanctions targeting digital technology and development can be considered an advanced form of economic sanctions and what the subsequent economic losses for Russia will be. As digital transformation continues to transform global economies, this research assumes that digital technology sanctions have significant economic consequences for the targeted countries.

Abdul Aziz et al. (2024) conducted a study titled Conceptualizing Digital Sanctions as a New Type of Economic Sanctions in the Digital Age: Digital-Related Sanctionary Measures Against Russia and Their Implications. Governments have long focused on regulating Internet-based activities within the framework of e-commerce regulation. As there has been so much change in the digital world, the law has been relatively slow to catch up with all of these changes. This has allowed some of the businesses that pioneered these markets to grow exponentially and establish rules that others who want to enter the market must follow. Of course, these rules do not necessarily reflect a balanced view of fair market practices. On the contrary, several cases were brought to court to address anti-competitive market practices adopted by major market players. This era has come to an end since the EU took a bold step to regulate competition in digital markets, as well as content published on the internet from a broader perspective that goes beyond e-commerce. The EU introduced the Digital Markets Act in 2021, which entered into force on 1 November 2022. This law, which should be distinguished from other laws such as the Digital Services Act, introduces specific obligations to be fulfilled by so-called "gatekeepers". Violations of these obligations will trigger a process carried out by the European Commission, following a set of procedures defined in the law. This process can end with the imposition of heavy sanctions on violators.

Saqiqorqlu (2024) conducted a study titled "Economic Sanctions and International Marketing: Models and Practices of Strategic Adaptation of Firms". Economic sanctions are a strategic mechanism used by governments as a foreign policy

tool. Sanctions negatively affect the activities of firms by disrupting trade relations with target countries and require firms to develop new strategies for crisis management. This study examines the processes through which firms adapt to sanctions and focuses on issues such as operational efficiency, resource management, legal sustainability and flexibility. In addition, methods of overcoming sanctions such as innovation, strategic partnerships and customer-oriented approaches were discussed. Firms have adopted methods such as optimizing operational processes, diversifying supply chains, exploring new markets and implementing risk management strategies to reduce the impact of sanctions. Flexible and innovative strategies to deal with international sanctions are increasingly important in the future. This study examines the economic and trade impacts of sanctions and provides recommendations for companies to achieve sustainable growth. Companies' efforts to achieve strategic alignment are crucial to maintaining their competitive advantage in global markets.

3. Materials and Methods

Given that the purpose of this research is to meta-synthesis digital marketing based on reducing financial threats in conditions of sanctions; therefore, the research method is exploratory-applied in terms of purpose; cross-sectional in terms of data collection time; inductive-deductive in terms of philosophy; and survey in terms of data collection method or nature and research method. The meta-synthesis and DEMATEL methods have been used to conduct the research.

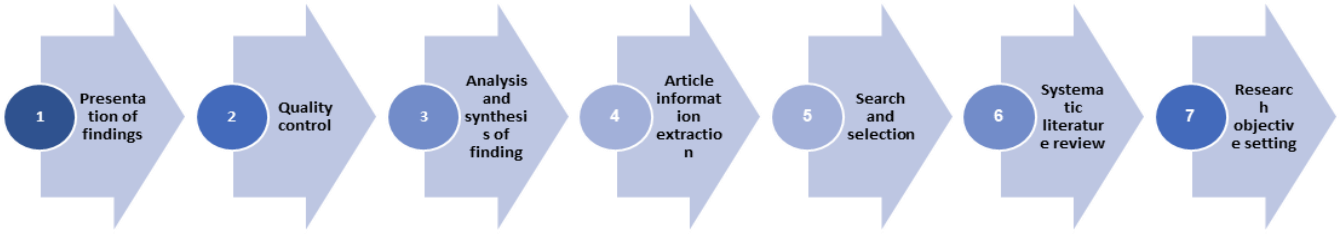


Figure 1 - Steps of the Meta synthesis method

In this study, the statistical population includes books and scientific lectures between 2012 and 2023 in the field of digital marketing under sanctions. Also, research published in reputable scientific research and scientific extension journals between 2012 and 2023 and whose subject is related to digital marketing under sanctions are also considered as the population of this study.

Statistical sample: The following sources were used to find relevant research:

1. Elsevier database (https://www.elsevier.com)

2. Springer database (https://link.springer.com)

3. MDPI database (https://www.mdpi.com)

4. Wiley (https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com)

5. Sage (https://us.sagepub.com)

6. Jihaddaneshgahi (https://sid.com)

The population size in this study is 120 scientific research articles; 9 theses and 6 books in the field of digital harassment under sanctions. Figure 2 shows a diagram of the search strategy and selection of studies.

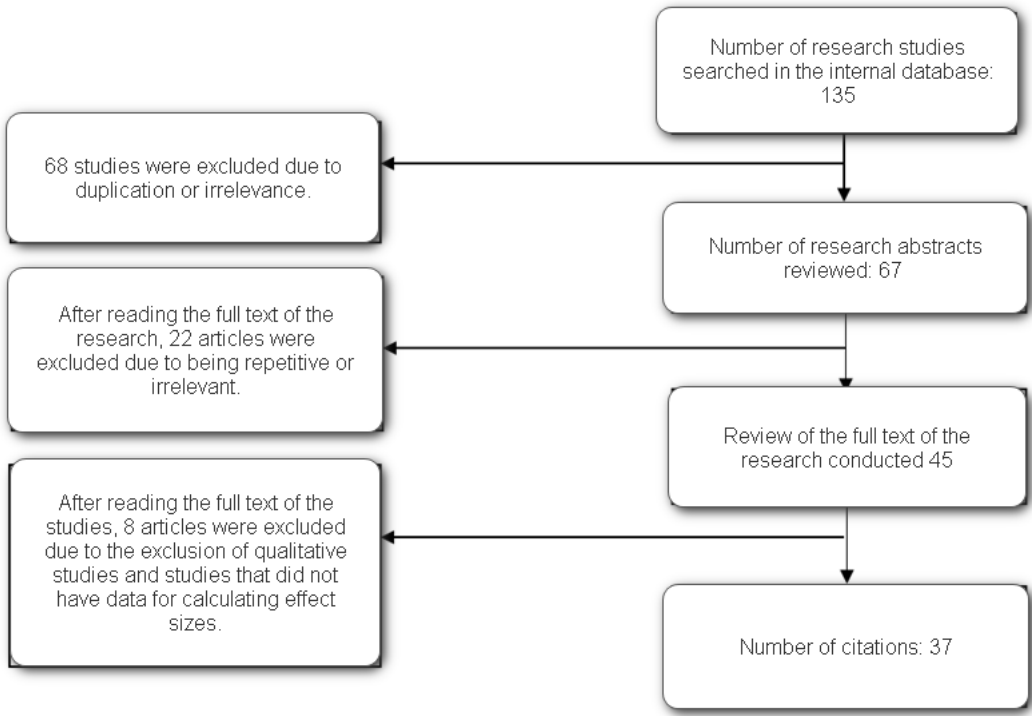


Figure 2: Search strategy and study selection

3. Results

Table 1 presents the components related to marketing under sanctions.

Table 1: Components related to marketing under sanctions in Farmarqib

Component	Description	Source
Using local and regional platforms	Due to limited access to international tools such as Google Ads or Meta Ads, it is essential to use local platforms (such as Sabavision, Yektant, Tapsel).	Ghorbanhosseini, S., & Esfidani, M. (2023),Akberdina, V. I. C. T. O. R. I. A., Kozonogova, E. L. E. N. A., & Dubrovskaya, Y. (2023). Wang, W., Xu, H., & Liu, Y. (2022).
Increasing importance of SEO and content marketing	In the absence of foreign paid advertising, organic traffic becomes more important.	Rezaei, S. & Hanzaee, K.H. (2022). Bubphapant, J., & Brandão, A. (2024). Koob, C. (2021).
Risk management and adaptation to platform changes	Changing international or domestic laws can cut off access to tools. Alternative strategies should always be ready.	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). (2022). Xu, C., & Wang, Y. M. (2022)
Using open source and alternative tools for digital automation	Such as Matomo instead of Google Analytics or Odoo CRM instead of Salesforce.	Esmaeili, A. & Motameni, R. (2023). Raema, I. W., & Faturohman, T.(2023).
Marketing on social networks without dependence on paid advertising	Emphasis on digital public relations, influencer marketing and endogenous branding.	Karimzadeh, M., & Mohammadi, B. (2023). Alzamzami, F., & Saddik, A. E. (2023). Verma, M. (2022).
Localization of content and attention to local values	Content localization and attention to local values	Dehghan, M. (2023). Alzamzami, F., & Saddik, A. E. (2023). Maung, A. Z. M. (2024). Hocutt, D., Ranade, N., & Verhulsdonck, G. (2022).

The proposed research model is shown in Figure 3.

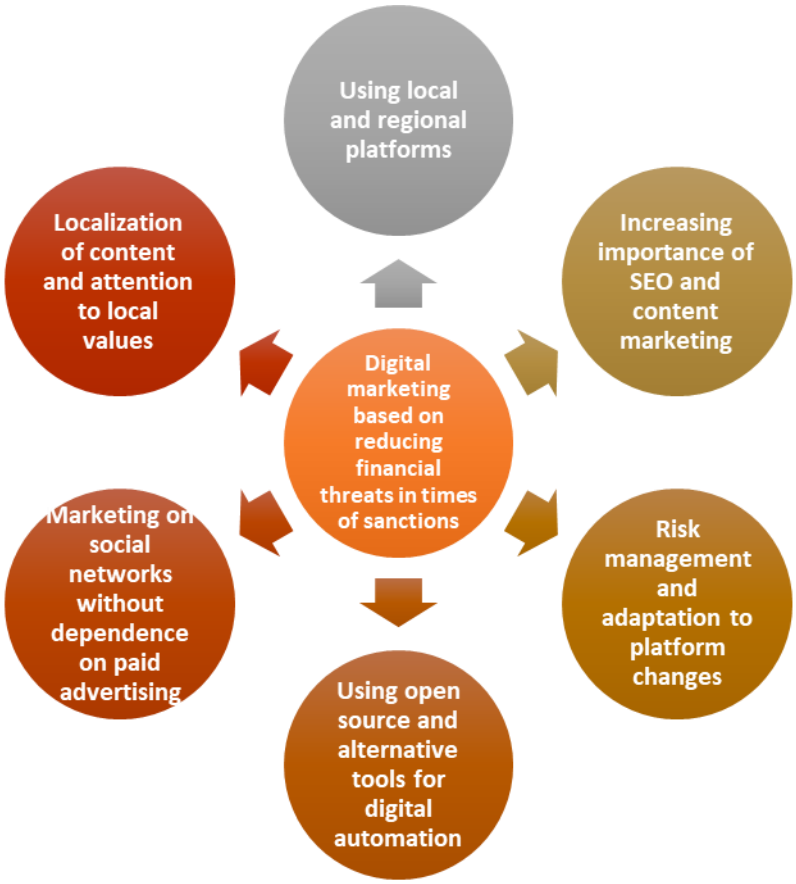


Figure 3: Proposed research model (Source: Research findings)

Demographic Statistics: Table 1 shows the findings related to the demographic characteristics of the study participants, including average age, average work experience, and education in the subject area under study.

Table 2 - Demographic Characteristics of the Experts Questioned

Group	Number	Age Average	Average work experience	Education	
				Master's	PhD
Digital Marketing Company Managers	6	45.13	18.66	50%	50%
University Professors and Experts	4	42.33	15.11	-	100%

(Source: Research data)

In examining the average age of the experts surveyed, it was determined that company managers, with an average age of 33.45, were the oldest, and university professors and experts, with an average age of 33.42, were the youngest. Among the participants in the present study, 5 had a PhD and 5 had a master's degree.

Research components and items: The final components are listed in Table 3. The components are marked with a symbol for tracking.

Table 3. Research dimensions and components

Symbol	Component	Description
c1	Using local and regional platforms	Due to limited access to international tools such as Google Ads or Meta Ads, it is essential to use local platforms (such as Sabavision, Yektant, Tapsel).

Symbol	Component	Description
c2	Increasing importance of SEO and content marketing	In the absence of foreign paid advertising, organic traffic becomes more important.
c3	Risk management and adaptation to platform changes	Changing international or domestic laws can cut off access to tools. Alternative strategies should always be ready.
c4	Using open source and alternative tools for digital automation	Such as Matomo instead of Google Analytics or Odoo CRM instead of Salesforce.
c5	Marketing on social networks without dependence on paid advertising	Emphasis on digital public relations, influencer marketing and endogenous branding.
c6	Localization of content and attention to local values	Content localization and attention to local values

Calculation of the direct correlation matrix (M): When multiple experts are used, the simple arithmetic mean of the opinions is used to form the direct correlation matrix or M. The direct correlation matrix is given in Table 4.

Table 4- Direct correlation matrix (M) Main criteria

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
C1	0	1	2.333	1.833	2.167	2.167
C2	1.333	0	1	1.667	2	1.667
C3	1.333	2.5	0	1.833	1.667	2.167
C4	1.167	1.667	1.333	0	2.167	1.167
C5	1.667	1	1.333	1	0	1.667
C6	2.333	2	2.5	1.833	2.5	0

Display the network relationship map: In this study, the threshold value was obtained as 0.56. Therefore, the pattern of meaningful relationships is as follows in Table 5:

Table 5- Pattern of meaningful relationships of the main criteria of the model

	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6
C1	*	*	0.671	0.613	0.755	0.675
C2	*	*	*	*	0.633	*
C3	*	0.657	*	0.608	0.716	0.666
C4	*	*	*	*	0.628	*
C5	*	*	*	*	*	*
C6	0.701	0.691	0.746	0.677	0.857	0.582

According to the relationship pattern, a causal diagram can be drawn:

Table 6- Causal Relationship Pattern Main Criteria of the Model

	D	R	D+R	D-R
C1	3.739	3.147	6.886	0.592
C2	3.033	3.224	6.256	-0.191
C3	3.697	3.348	7.045	0.348
C4	2.937	3.209	6.147	-0.272

C5	2.766	4.027	6.793	-1.262
C6	4.254	3.469	7.723	0.785

If $R<J \rightarrow R-J<0$ then the factor in question is a definite effector.
If $R>J \rightarrow R-J>0$ then the factor in question is a definite effector.

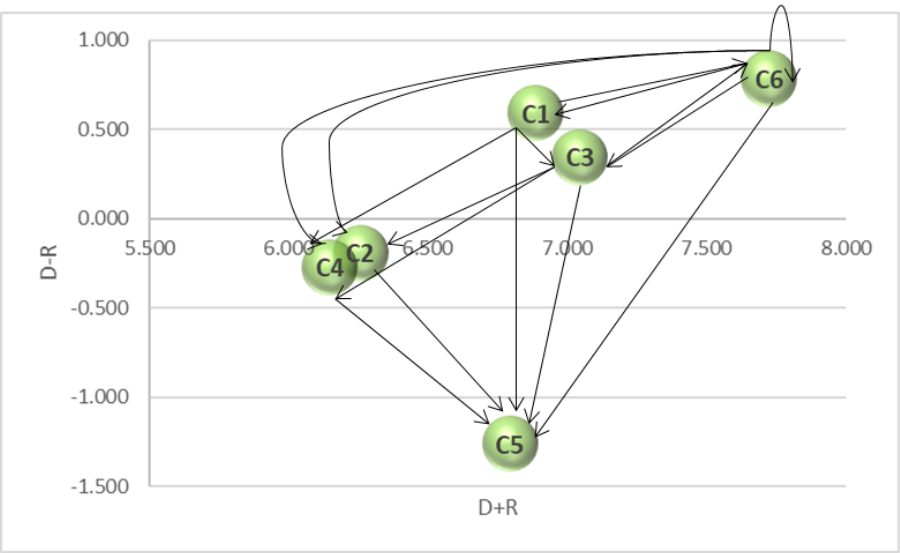


Figure 4 - Cartesian coordinate diagram of DEMATEL output for the main criteria

According to Figure 4: The components of content localization and attention to local values, use of local and regional platforms, and risk management and adaptation to platform changes are the absolute influential components, respectively, and marketing on social networks without dependence on paid advertising, use of open source and alternative tools for digital automation, and increasing the importance of SEO and content marketing are the absolute influential components, respectively.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

This research was conducted with a digital marketing meta-synthesis based on reducing financial threats under sanctions. The research method was qualitative and used the meta-synthesis and DEMATEL techniques. As a result of calculations and browsing related articles, the following results were obtained. In this research, 6 components have been identified, including the use of local and regional platforms, increasing the importance of SEO and content marketing, risk management and adaptation to platform changes, the use of open source and alternative tools for digital automation, marketing on social networks without dependence on paid advertising, content localization, and attention to local values. Based on the DEMATEL technique, the components of content localization and attention to local values, use of local and regional platforms, and risk management and adaptation to platform changes are the absolute influential components, respectively, and marketing on social networks without dependence on paid advertising, use of open source and alternative tools for digital automation, and increasing the importance of SEO and content marketing are the absolute influential components, respectively. In this study, content localization and attention to local values have been identified as the most influential component that affects all components, and according to calculations, it has the greatest impact on the marketing component on social networks without dependence on paid advertising. In explaining this result, it can be said that as long as the content is local and value-oriented, it increases the organic attraction and development of the audience, without the need for advertising costs. Given that risk management and adaptation to platform changes have been identified as an influential variable in this study, this result is in line with the results of Saqiqorqlou (2024) entitled “Economic Sanctions and International Marketing: Models and Strategies for Strategic Adaptation of Companies”. Saqiqorqlou (2024) found that companies have adopted methods such as optimizing operational processes, diversifying supply chains, discovering new markets, and implementing risk management strategies to reduce the impact of sanctions. Based on the results of the study, the following are recommended: Diversifying digital revenue channels: Using multiple digital sales platforms and methods (e.g., online stores, social networks, international markets) to reduce dependence on a single source of income and reduce the risk of business interruption due to sanctions. Improve financial security and transparency: Use encryption technologies and secure international payment systems, as well as create transparency in transactions to reduce the risk of financial problems or

account closures. Performance-based and value-added cost proposals: Design performance-based advertising and marketing strategies (such as CPA or CPC advertising) and focus on loyal customers, to prevent wasted costs and increase flexibility in the face of economic conditions and sanctions.

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