
An Exploration into the Drivers of Social Media Usage among MSME Handicraft Entrepreneurs

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Abstract Being an essential component of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), the emergence of social media in marketing is critical in attempting to make handicraft product businesses more financially viable. This study aims to explore the adoption of social media marketing by MSME handicraft entrepreneurs in the state of Sarawak, Malaysia. Using a purposive sampling technique, qualitative data were collected from 15 participants comprising MSME handicraft entrepreneurs via in-depth interviews. Data were transcribed and analysed using NVIVO 12.0 software. Findings revealed the following identification of themes: performance, effort expectancy, social relationship quality, social influence, and facilitating conditions. Further discussions were subsequently deliberated.

Keywords - Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), Social Commerce, Social Media Marketing, Adoption, Performance, Handicraft Entrepreneurs, Sarawak

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I. INTRODUCTION

Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have become more important than large scale enterprises in many of today's developed and developing countries. According to Zain, Jusoh, Munir, and Putit (2020), developing countries benefit from the SME sector's contributions, which include employment opportunities, use of domestic capital, poverty eradication, income distribution, local participation, and enhancement of other commercial development. Almost every industry has started to investigate and take advantage of digital technologies. The adoption of digital technologies affects an organization's processes, marketing channels, and production chains (Hasan, Abd Rahim, Ahmad, and Meliza, 2022). MSMEs can financially benefit from technological innovations at all phases of the process of their business, including financially viable standing,

international market availability (Ibrahim, Abdullah, & Ismail, 2016), information sharing exchange with stakeholders, and payment services (Raj & Khan 2020). Even though the internet and communication technologies revolution have altered the way businesses conduct business on virtual platforms, businesses in the MSMEs sector face greater barriers towards adopting new technology due to a lack of financial capability, insufficient resources, a lack of organisational resources, and employees with limited technical knowledge (Martono, Putit, Yulianto & Ridloah, 2021).

II. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to the Economic Census 2016, the goods and services sectors accounted for 89.2 percent (809,126 out of a total of 907,065) of Malaysian SMEs, with Sarawak accounting for 61,036 SMEs, including MSMEs (Economic Census, 2016). Malaysia's SMEs GDP increased by 6.2 percent in 2018, compared to Malaysia's GDP, which increased by only 4.7 percent, representing a 38.3 percent increase over the previous year. Furthermore, Malaysia has made incremental progress toward its digital economy path since 2018 and as reported by the World Bank (2021), Malaysian government had identified an opportunity, as well as the challenging problem, provided by the digital economy to serve as a new determinant of economic development and a potential source of government revenues particularly for SMEs.

In this regard, Sarawak's state government would be working to elevate and develop Sarawak (one of the 14 states within Malaysia and is situated in the Borneo Island) by 2030 (Ten, 2020). The state would be expected to join the global stage in embracing the digital age. Sarawak's economic growth would be boosted in close collaboration with progress, shifting from complete reliance on tangible bodies to the effectiveness and efficiency of assistance from advanced digitalization technologies. Ten (2020) mentioned that the establishment of Sarawak Digital Economy Policy 2018-2022 was aimed to carry out this agenda and retain a configuration of advanced digitalization technologies that equalises both areas and intends to expand the various sectors in a complementary manner. With the emergence of social media in marketing, it has now become particularly crucial in attempting to make handicraft product producers and businesses more financially viable, as it is an essential component of any MSME business, whether at either the traditional or modern, small or large level (Chen and Lin, 2019; Kamaghe, Luhanga & Kisangiri, 2020.; Zhang, Guo, and Liu, 2017; Shanahan, Tran and Taylor, 2019; Shareef, Mukerji, Alryalat, Wright and Dwivedi, 2018; Martono et al., 2021.).

III. RESEARCH PROBLEM

In comparison to the year 2019, the proportion of internet users aged 15 and over has increased significantly, rising from 84.2 percent in 2019 to 89.6 percent in 2020. (MCMC Report, 2021). Telecommunications and Internet penetration have greatly facilitated internet users' ability to locate goods and services in Malaysia (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2020). Furthermore, the popularity of using the internet as a platform for researching goods and services and ordering goods and services has increased from 22.5 percent in 2019 to 54.4 percent in 2020. As a result, this should have been an excellent opportunity for Sarawak's handicraft makers to market their products (Liang and Turban, 2011; Garg, Dzever, Sivarajah & Kumar, 2020; Ahmad et al., 2019).

The use of social media marketing is not only regarded as critical in entrepreneurship, but it has also enabled entrepreneurs to maintain their competitive position by reinforcing customer relationships, which has a positive impact on sales performance (Wardati & Mahendrawathi, 2019), consumer purchasing decisions (Sohn, & Kim, 2020), as well as its impact on brand promotion, positioning, and electronic commerce (Ahmad, et al., 2019). Few researchers have investigated the use of social media marketing to advance business management, its impact on organisational performance, and its mediating roles, particularly among MSMEs (Busalim et al., 2021; Garg et al, 2020; Ahmad et al., 2019). Many areas, however, remain unexplored, such as the adoption and use of social media marketing among handicraft entrepreneurs in Sarawak particularly, as well as the mediation of social media marketing and its interaction between business representatives and customers (Faisol, Astuti & Winarko, 2021).

With the recent global Coronavirus (or COVID 19) pandemic, it has also witnessed a shift in entrepreneurial businesses, amongst the MSMEs who were badly affected during these trying times. Mohamad (2020) stated that for many developing countries, the crisis might have barely begun, and the human toll of a major COVID-19 outbreak would be much larger than in any advanced economy. There is a potential opportunity to explore alternative forms of online businesses, shopping and payment mechanisms considering the rising concern of COVID 19 pandemic (Putit, Suki, Abdullah, Ahmad, Salleh and Asmawi, 2021; Star Online, 2020; Chin, 2020), and MSME entrepreneurs could leverage on these pandemic circumstances. Following the above concerns, the main objective of this paper is to explore the extent to which social media facilitates MSME entrepreneurs in Sarawak's handicraft industry.

IV. LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Commerce

Kim and Park (2013) and Busalim (2016; 2019) stated that social commerce reflects an e-commerce subset that uses social networking for social interactions and user contributions to facilitate both online purchasing and selling of various products as well as services. Customers have been identified as the primary driving force in the social commerce movement by the researchers. Electronic commerce, also known as E-commerce, exists in a variety of forms. The advancement of technology used for business transactions over the internet has led entrepreneurs to carry out business activities electronically and exchange value where both consumers and entrepreneurs interact virtually, and this has contributed to a significant proportion of the business's revenues (Amit and Zott, 2001).

Yadav et al (2013) on the other hand, defines social commerce as exchange-related activities taking place in, or are influenced by, an individual's social network in computer-mediated social environments, and to which the activities correspond to the need for recognition, pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase stages of a focal exchange. The use of social media has gradually evolved, and many social media-based businesses have emerged, giving rise to social commerce. As a result, social commerce is a subset of e-commerce that involves the use of social media to aid in e-commerce transactions and activities" (Liang and Turban, 2011, p. 6). SNSs are characterised as a "category of Internet applications that help connect friends, business partners, or individuals with specific interests by offering free services such as photo presentation, e-mail, blogging, and so on using a variety of tools." Moreover, Kim and Park (2013) also stated that reputation, size, information quality, transaction safety, communication, economic feasibility, and word-of-mouth referrals are the key antecedents of trust.

Social Media Marketing as a strategic tool for MSMEs

The utilization of marketing tools via online digital platforms such as social media marketing (SMM), pay per click advertisement and search engine optimization (SEO) are rapidly on the increase. In Malaysia, many companies are leveraging these technological platforms to market their business for sustainability amid the current global COVID 19 pandemic crisis (The Star,2020). On the other hand, the use of SMM is still on a slow increase (Syaifullah et al, 2021). Social media is a communication facility, a source of information sharing, a medium for self-actualization and collaboration in cyberspace (Elbanna, Bunker, Levine, & Giring, 2019). The use of this platform is very appropriate for SMEs because they have limited resources such as funds, technical knowledge and so on (Rana, Barnard, Baabdullah, Rees, & Roderick, 2019). Alom et al. (2016) mentioned that microenterprises are the lowest form of enterprises in terms of size, measured by either investment or employment or total assets of the firm, having the flexibility of easy start and exit.

V. RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study used an inductive approach as this study was conducted to explore factors determining social media marketing adoption in the context of MSMEs. Also, the researchers decided that qualitative data collection through in-depth interviews were more appropriate. Qualitative research applies a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in a specific context setting, where the research is not conducted in an orderly manner and no attempt is made to manipulate the phenomenon of interest (Köhler, Smith & Bhakoo, 2022). Thus, this research did not generate a statistical finding or other means of quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Köhler et al., 2022) and it also produced findings that naturally emerged from the real-world setting where "phenomena of interest unfold naturally" (Patton, 2001).

Sampling Design

The sample elements of this study were handicraft entrepreneurs of MSMEs in Sarawak, Malaysia. Using a non-probability sampling technique, a purposive sampling approach was applied to select the participants from the study population. The researchers have selected 15 participants who are full-time and part-time MSME handicraft entrepreneurs and were given code names from U1 until U15. This study was conducted from the months of November 2020 to February 2021.

Research Instrument, Data Collection and Data Analysis

A semi-structured interview with key questions were initially developed to gain in-depth insights into the said research. Several follow-up questions were also further developed upon interviewing the targeted respondents. The study was conducted in-depth via face to face and telephone interviews with them. Each interview took 45 minutes, was recorded, and then transcribed, which contributed to a solid qualitative data

collection for further analysis. In data collection procedure, the researchers' field notes and the interview transcripts were gathered. Both were analysed to define the community being understood. Then, the process of coding the data at the first stage of analysis acted as to refine and categorise the data according to the aim of the study. In this study, the coding processing was undertaken using the NVivo 12, which is a time saving factor, and it also produces higher quality of analysis of raw and coded data beneficial due to the digital search-and-retrieval systems (Healy, 2012). Not only using NVivo 12 specialises to analyse various qualitative data such as social media data, video and web pages, but this helps in assisting qualitative data analysis (Kozinets, 2002). A thematic analysis was applied to analyse the qualitative data in this study. In any qualitative study, a hermeneutic approach has been used to interpret the primary narrative data. The concept is to interpret the stories that respondents reveal about their lives. This approach is founded on a set of assumptions derived from a hermeneutic perspective on the narrative structuring of cognition and human understanding and the respondents' self-perceptions can be considered in determining situational variability (Somers & Gibson, 1994; Andermann & Zizek, 2022; Kohler et al., 2022).

VI. FINDINGS

Demographic Profile

In this study, the participants consisted of full-time and part-time MSMEs handicraft entrepreneurs who were selected from different districts in the state of Sarawak.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents (District Gender)

Division	Gender	
	Male	Female
Kuching	0	1
Sri Aman	0	7
Miri	0	2
Sibu	0	2
Bintulu	1	1
Limbang	0	1

Based on the interview results, the researchers have analysed, interpreted, and coded the raw data into encapsulated meaning and developed themes which are aligned with the primary research objectives. The findings of this study explored and developed the following themes which are performance, effort expectancy, social relationship quality, social Influence, and facilitating conditions.

Performance

Performance is the usefulness of using social media for the user's capital value. It could be the monetary gain benefits or the foreseen potential revenue gains in the future (Liang and Turban, 2011, p. 6). In the perceived performance, respondents believe that using social media will substantially improve sales process implementation and enchantment with their customer. Furthermore, Turan and Kara (2018) and Gatautisaa and Medziausiene (2015) stated that performance expectancy is not only related to entrepreneurs' perceptions of whether using social media will help them achieve better business performance, but companies or individuals perceive in deploying this environment as sales, believe of its profitable nature execute from the social commerce ecosystems. Although the literature contains a variety of models for performance expectancy, such as extrinsic motivation and relative advantage, the researchers primarily focused on a performance expectation construct in terms of effectiveness, achieving outcomes, and completing tasks. Although using online social media can be very beneficial for handicraft entrepreneurs, there are also many challenges and barriers that influence the entrepreneurial use of online social media. In these regards, the entrepreneurs' attitudes and motivations toward social media use could play significant roles.

The following comment from U3 and U5 presented these points: U3: *"I'm not very confident dealing with customers using Facebook especially for deposit payments"*. U6: *"The constraints are putting prices on my handicraft products for fear of them being too high or too low in comparison to my competitors."* Meanwhile, U8 has mentioned that: *"I am able to generate more sales from participating in events, bazaars, workshops and road shows than using social media"*. However, U1 and U2 both expressed that *"When I use social media applications, my handicraft sales increase."*

Effort Expectancy

Perceive effort focuses on how users use social media platforms effortlessly, timeless, and with less complexity in the perceived effort expectancy toward social media. According to Park, Sung, and Im (2017) in order for the entrepreneurs to capitalise on the benefits of using social media in facilitating their business performance, they need to understand that efforts (i.e., time commitment and active engagement) are needed and they have to build positive attitudes toward social media. According to Nurfazlina, Rogayah, Natrah, and Rozianawaty (2014), users' perceived effort as the ease with which they operate and use social media when they post about a specific status or article, use the functionality by messaging or chatting in the social media commerce, search and browse into the contents with simpler functionality effortlessly without experiencing difficulties.

This study also found that the entrepreneurs' feelings, perceptions, and efforts need to be nurtured through support from online social media providers, educational institutions, and local chapters of business organisations (i.e., Sarawak Craft Council, Malaysian Handicraft Development Council (PKKM) Sarawak) alike. Entrepreneurship classes or training can focus on emphasising the importance of social media use and demonstrate potential tangible benefits to entrepreneurs. Such efforts should contribute to developing positive entrepreneurial attitudes towards social media use. However, this study also found that the entrepreneurs were not easily related with the social media usage, thus can be developed. U5 has mentioned: *"I don't have time to upload photos and interact in social media because my time is very limited as I am busy with other affairs."* In addition, U3 and U5 also highlighted similar sentiments on their time commitment that restricted them from using social media: *"I don't have time to actively interact on Facebook with customers."* Moreover, although some of the entrepreneurs had attended such courses or training, they still have no intention to use social media. For example, U8 revealed that: *"The courses held are quite expensive and I still find it difficult to implement the use of the taught applications"*. On the other hand, U11 stated that: *"My knowledge is still very shallow in the use of social media applications."*

Social Relationship Quality

According to Hennig-Thurau (2000), social relationship quality is determined when individuals believe that network relationships are beneficial because they represent the user's customer or potential customer on the use of social media to measure the reliable information received from both user and customer communications. Users believe that using social media promotes more than just purchasing systems, but also the development and maintenance of customer relationships and loyalty. Non-transactional activities such as word of mouth, ratings, comments, and recommendations, as well as referral systems in social commerce systems, are included. U4 claimed, for example, that *"I received a lot of constructive views and suggestions from followers or potential customers on my Facebook and Instagram."* Furthermore, U2 stated that *"when using social media platforms, there are more customers who are aware of my product and my company."* This indicated that users' behaviour outcomes are generated by their interactive value co-created experience based on the level of engagement between the customer's level of motivation and context-dependent state of mind characterised by specific levels of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural activity in products such as the uniqueness of handicrafts.

In addition, Clark, Melissa, and Scott Bacon (2018) insisted that social media marketing is a perfect fit with relationship quality because the most effective social media strategies focus on building trust and communicating a clear and relevant customer benefit (Barwise and Meehan, 2010). Through networking, conversation, and community building, social media lends itself to the development of high-quality brand relationships (Habibi et al., 2016). Entrepreneur's value social relationship quality because engaged, satisfied customers are more likely to be retained as customers and to stay in touch with them. This satisfaction is a comparison of actual performance with expectations. This study discovered that most of the entrepreneurs believed that network relationships through utilising social media provide benefits to them. For example, U1 expressed that: *"I rely heavily on social media especially WhatsApp and Facebook to communicate with customers."* Moreover, U2 explained further that by using social media, it expands her business horizon, for instance: *"My business is better known, and my customers now are from outside of my area (Bandar Simanggang) such as from Miri, Kuching, Sibiu, and even from the Peninsula."*

Social Influence

The findings also revealed that social media influence is one of the driving factors for handicraft entrepreneurs' marketing strategies, as social media usage directly impacts an individual's ability to influence other people's thinking in a social online community. The greater a person's influence, the more appealing that person is to businesses or other individuals looking to promote an idea or sell a product (Kwahk and Ge, 2012). According to the study's findings, respondents believed that using social media was a sign of social acceptance by the user's trustee parties and helped to shape the user's perception or desire to be a part of the social circle. For example, U4 revealed that *"When I use Facebook, more customers know about my products and company."*

This theme denoted the user's psychological state as a result of interacting with the platform. Furthermore, U2 stated, *"I need to follow the current trend to promote my handicraft products by using social media platforms because I have more followers and potential customers."* This demonstrates that when consumers recognize that their peer group is using such a social network, they are more likely to develop an online relationship. The rise of social media usage has altered the business landscape, allowing customers to select a specific type of technology based on personal preferences, as well as the opinions and recommendations of other users (Wokkie & Rodennjis, 2018; M.H. A Naqvi, Y. Jiang, M.Miao, M.H. Naqvi and Y-C. J. Wu, 2020).

Facilitating Conditions

According to Chan, Thong, Venkatesh, Brown, Hu, and Tam (2010), and Neslin and Shankar (2009), facilitating conditions refer to a person's belief that the existing organisational and technical infrastructure can support the use of technology and are related to the availability of sufficient resources and support for individuals to use technology. The researchers discovered that the respondents lacked knowledge of how to use the applications and social media systems in this study. U9 stated, for example, *"I have no self-confidence despite having attended a social commerce course."*

Meanwhile, U8 stated, *"The courses held are expensive, and I am still having difficulty implementing the use of the taught applications."* Furthermore, Kamaghe, Luhanga, and Kisangiri (2020) state that a lack of assistance, a lack of timely support, incomplete information, and limited resources will prevent individuals from accepting web-based technology. According to the findings of the study, entrepreneurs were unable to decide on the price of their product online. U3, U5, U8, and U11, for example, expressed their concerns about the issue: *"The constraint I face is to put a price (for fear of the price being too high or too low)".* The entrepreneurs believed that using social media encourages people to copy other people's work that goes "viral," rather than creating something truly unique. U3, U5, U8, U10, and U11, for example, expressed their concerns by stating, *"My design/idea is easily stolen by others on Facebook."*

VII. CONCLUSION

In essence, this paper has attempted to nurture MSME handicraft entrepreneurs by capturing a paradigm shift from the conventional physical market into new norms of social media business practices. The recent Covid-19 pandemic has been affecting the global socio-economic activities severely. In a smaller nucleus, these handicraft entrepreneurs are forced to actively initiate a new business norm to ensure their business sustainability. Hence, social media and practice is fought to represent an innovative strategy in business and commercial management as remedies to the pandemic vulnerability. This paper basically aims to comprehend the facilitation of social media on the business survival among entrepreneurs specifically in the handicraft industry. A naturalistic approach of the qualitative enquiry adopted in this paper has clustering the findings into the five thoughts of understanding.

The focus group discussion of 15 MSME entrepreneurs yielded an intriguing conclusion. Most entrepreneurs value social media as a tool for marketing their products, but their feelings, perceptions, and efforts must be nurtured through assistance from online social media providers, educational institutions, and local chapters of business organisations. These key findings filled the knowledge gap on how the handicraft entrepreneurs are surviving over pandemic vulnerability. Future researchers are summoned to initiate a comprehensive empirical investigation in crafting a social media business canvas especially within the handicraft industry.

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