

Social Media Usage and SME Firms in Kuwait

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Abstract

Various company ecosystems are gradually changing because of social media and its nearly infinite capacities. As a result, growing companies worldwide are using this innovation to streamline their processes. The results of previous studies have not been consistent, even though the literature on "SMEs' use of social media is still in its infancy. During this, little observed data has been presented on the 'technology's suitability for SMEs, notably Kuwait. This study aims to close this research vacuum by examining how social media use affects "SMEs' long-term viability, especially in Kuwait.

Keywords: Social Media Usage, SME Firms

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1. Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) always play a vital role in most economies, especially in developing countries such as Kuwait. Kuwait has a thriving social media community where it has become the main marketing tool for any business, small, medium, or even big companies. Social media in Kuwait affects every part of sociocultural life for people and businesses, enforcing technology and modernization. Small and medium-sized businesses have benefited from social media's quick adoption and utilization. Social media can boost business with the opportunities that it provides, SMEs can achieve enduring business growth.

Social 'media's adoption in Kuwait and use have recently had an impact on contemporary commercial activity. Through numerous social media channels, the rise of social media has facilitated communication and idea sharing. In Kuwait, most business is defined and based on the number of employees, assets, and revenue sizes. With that said, this research paper is to determine whether the use of social media in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Kuwait has a positive outcome.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Social Media

The argument by Ali Qalati, Sikandar, et al. pg 7 asserts that social media assists businesses in accelerating commercial growth. Social media offers networks via which individuals may share knowledge and develop connections, according to Kaplan and Haenlein [p 62]. Social media has been deemed a more successful marketing tool compared to more traditional media like television, radio, and newspapers (Felix et al., pg 121). Connectivity, change, and connection development were also recognized as the three pillars of social media by research by (Alkhateeb et al.,). In this way, social media acts as a conduit for developing new concepts, producing value, and successful marketing (Gnizy, 323). SME innovation and competition in the present business climate can be aided by social media (Wardati et al. pg 973).

Additionally, SMEs may employ social media companies to develop creativity to manage the present market conditions (Glover, 14). According to research by Amoah and Abdul, SMEs may utilize social media platforms to draw in clients and, in addition, provide them with sufficient information about the good or service before they decide to buy it. Additionally, Apenteng et al. (pg13) highlighted that companies use social media platforms to engage with a wider audience, new suppliers, and other enterprises. Social media may assist SMEs in gaining consumer feedback and cultivating client connections. From the perspective of developing nations, several researchers have verified that social media has a sizable favorable impact on "SMEs' sustainable performance (Alsharji et al., pg 170) (Borah et al). Thus, the following is the hypothesis of this study:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). Using social media as a tool for advertising would increase SMEs' sustainability.

2.2 Information channel

The use of social media as a route for information for SME development has been thoroughly examined in earlier research (Amoah et al. pg 28) (Barutçu, S., and M. Tomaş pg). Social media can be used as a medium for information to promote SMEs effectively [38].

Social media is a platform that SMEs can use to spread information to clients and the general public in the context of SMEs (Amoah, and Abdul). According to preliminary research by (Amoah, John, et al. pg), SMEs interact, socialize, communicate, and collaborate with firms and possible investors through social media platforms. For instance, a study (Amoah and Abdul pg)looked into social media as a marketing tool for the growth of SMEs.

The study found that social media enhances "SMEs' communication strategies using the financial sector in Ghana as a case study. In a similar study conducted in Kuwait, Alhaimer (2) concluded that there was a need for SMEs to leverage the benefits of using social media as a source of actionable information for their businesses. According to the findings of this study, Kuwaiti businesses could benefit from utilizing social media platforms in addition to other creative and innovative channels to raise awareness about their organizations and achieve optimal levels of performance.

Furthermore, the richness and openness of social media tend to be the determining factors in the supplier selection process most of businesses in Kuwait, which has favorable implications for both the transactional and social aspects of entrepreneurship. Additionally, SMEs in Kuwait can benefit from using social media to develop operations and increase their business profile. In this regard, Alhaimer (4) opines the use of social media by SMEs in Kuwait helps them reap the benefits of increased visibility to potential customers and that it also affords them a cheaper and easier way to reach both their current and potential customers. Therefore, it is vital for those who have not yet established their online presence to do so, failure, to which they risk missing out on the benefits of such a presence.

2.3 Value Creation

Social 'media's interactive capabilities have allowed SMEs to assess and investigate the variables for organizational effectiveness in the external environment (Borah et al.). Numerous studies have validated the link between using social media and producing value (Adikari, Achini, et al.pg) (Ali, Ting and Mazhar pg). Ahmad et al. [14] state that social media helps value generation. According to Sunet al (pg) and Ferm et al (pg), social media enhances value generation by fostering connections with both transferring information to both current and future clients. In a similar research, Hussain, et al (pg) gathered online social media user data that confirmed a favorable correlation between use of social media and the production of value. Additionally, Algharabat, Raed, et al (pg) assert that SMEs customer-driven sales generate value. A study by Laroche et al. (pg)also reported a favorable social media 'use's impact on "SMEs' ability to create value the results The conclusions by Jacobson et al (pg) also claim that organizational learning serves as a mediator between value and social media marketing. Their research verified that the use of social media increases market shares through a learning organization. However, Garrido-Moreno et al. discovered a negligible impact of social 'media's impact on Spanish "SMEs' ability to create value. Finally, research by Chatterjee, and Arpan suggested that SMEs should highlight their efforts to compete and innovate by presenting products, services, and social media can help the business grow.

According to Alzougool, SMEs in Kuwait have realized the benefits that accrue from the use of social media. Since most of these enterprises are constrained by their marketing budgets, social media offers an inexpensive option where they can market and reach their customers (Alsharji, Fauzia and Syed pg). Small and medium businesses now have an equal opportunity to compete with larger corporations for "consumers' attention because of the leveling effect of social media. Small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can reach a larger audience and persuade that audience to make purchases from their brands if they use social media platforms to develop fascinating and engaging content. Increased public awareness of the companies will be the result of a social media marketing strategy that is well-implemented. When small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) produce entertaining and pertinent contententertaining and relevant content, individuals will share it with the followers they already have, enhancing their reach and exposure (Alhaimerpg). When consumers are exposed to the brand more frequently online, there is a greater likelihood that individuals will become familiar with the SME and subsequently make purchases from them.

2.4 Business Connection and Opportunities

Social 'media's development and expansion have increased options for SMEs to connect with clients and possible business partners (Ali et al. pg). Also, Aichner and Frank (pg) claim that the introduction of social media has allowed SMEs to build networks with suppliers and communicate quickly both locally and internationally. According to SMEs, social media use builds networks that result in better performance for SMEs in developing nations, according to Amoah et al. 381. Additionally, SMEs use social media to compete with more prominent companies, giving them a competitive edge(Tiwasing, pg and Olayah pg). Additionally, social media platforms allow the management of SMEs to share expertise, build relationships with customers, and deliver better customer service(Ali, Ghazanfar, et al pg, , Olanrewaju, Temitope et al pg and Bachmann, Isabel and Tessa pg). According to a study by Ladokun, pg , social media has a beneficial impact on establishing commercial relationships for SMEs, especially with clients and other stakeholders. As a result, a study by Palalic, et al (pg)confirmed that developing business relationships with stakeholders increases client loyalty and enhances brand reputation. Recent research on the impact of social media use on the performance of SMEs by Sambo and Musundire (pg)found a favorable correlation between social media use and business performance for SMEs.

Furthermore, Oyewobi et al.'s research noted that social media enables SMEs to keep tabs on "consumers' decision-making processes and make wise choices. Consumers can now provide product reviews, make recommendations to contacts or friends, and connect current purchases to future purchases through status updates and Twitter feeds, one of the most critical aspects of social media from a company perspective (Pookulangara and Kristian 350). In addition, social media provides businesses with a valuable tool in which satisfied customers of a product can promote that product (or any other services or goods) to other customers who might be interested in using it. In essence, the world of social media is gradually becoming an alternative to the product reviews and panels that were previously published in publications such as "Consumer Digest" in earlier generations.

Whereas consumers used to shop at reputable retail establishments and rely on the advice of personnel specialists in each area, modern consumers may frequently rely on the recommendation and expert opinion of a friend or acquaintance located inside their social media network instead. In addition, most customers use social media to make their purchases. Most of those purchases are based on the recommendation of a peer or contact made through social media (Yogesh and Mehta 46). The results of these studies indicate that consumers are purchasing either very inexpensive items or costly items and that they are doing so based on recommendations from people who they would not consider to be opinion influencers or leaders. In addition, the findings point to a gradual transition away from slower, more conventional forms of social media like Facebook and toward faster, more instant forms of social media like Twitter. This research indicates a shift toward that kind of social media which is compatible with the general themes of 'today's social media. Numerous respondents mentioned their want for knowledge now, not even a day or two old, and this research indicates a shift toward that form of social media.

2.5 Sustainability

The sustainability of SMEs depends on their contribution to serving, protecting, and maintaining the community, environment, and economy. According to the report of Duane, and O'Reilly (pg), SMEs should leverage technologies to stay up with rapidly shifting market conditions. As a result, Refs. Ali Qalati et al. (pg), and Oyewobi et al. (pg) showed that SMEs need to invest in cutting-edge tools like social media marketing to create mutually beneficial partnerships with their stakeholders. Because of this, SMEs continuously enhance communication through social media, which ultimately results in commercial success (Khan et al (pg), and Matarazzo, Michela, et al. pg). From the perspective of a developing country, very few research have discovered a substantial connection between social media use and "SMEs' sustainability (Patmaet al. pg Amoah et al pg).

For instance, Borah, Prasad et al. found that using social media boosts "SMEs' productivity and curbs resource shortages. Raut, Rakesh D., et al. also noted that using social media and reduces side effects on the SME environment in which they do their business. This suggests that the efficiency of social media platforms has enabled SMEs to scan, monitor, and evaluate the outside world and develop new business prospects, both of which are crucial for organizational viability (Zhang, Hong, et al. pg).

Additionally, Ancillai, Chiara, et al. (pg) showed that social media use had a favorable impact on SMEs' sustainability and value generation. A sample of SMEs in Kuwait were used for empirical observations by Alkhateeb, Maan and Rania (pg) on the impact of social media use on the sustainability of SMEs. The results of the study demonstrated how social media networks helped SMEs accomplish additional organizational goals such customer engagement, value creation, network building, and business sustainability. We suggest that, based on the literature mentioned above:

Hypothesis 5 (H5). Social media use would increase the viability of small and medium-sized businesses (SMES).

On social media sites, businesses can also market new products and services. Increasingly, consumers use social media to make purchases, interact with vendors, and glean information from other customers. This strategy facilitates consumer participation in corporate innovation. Social media allows people to express their opinions and propose new ideas, which could minimize internal research and development expenses. User-provided innovations are converted into fresh technical knowledge that builds upon the current expertise of business operations.

However, these novel ideas are frequently the subject of controversy. One belief is that innovation results from keeping an open and collaborative mindset by incorporating social media users rather than depending primarily on highly qualified staff (Alzougool 23). Social media provides a forum for enterprises to get global consumers' feedback to build goods that go beyond initial concepts. This strategy enhances entrepreneurial innovation by streamlining coordinated operations and easing knowledge transfer between external and internal sources. Social media can supply firms with worldwide growth plans, and it can be extrapolated that social media has a good effect on entrepreneurial creativity.

3. Methodology

3.1 Problem Theoretical Background

The success and sustainability of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) depend on the use of advanced technologies for growth. However, achieving business development is a challenging and demanding endeavor because it necessitates these entities embedding novel technologies into prevailing and deep-rooted business practices, thus making social media a critical tool for SMEs to forge a practical working relationship with customers (Chatterjee et al. 2). An investigation in this domain becomes essential to validate the importance of social media usage among the SME firms. This research covered findings regarding how social media usage and SME firms have an impact on these entities in Kuwait. While the research area is an emerging context, this study is crucial because it assists in determining how emerging economies could maximize social media usage for SMEs' growth.

3.2 Research Area

The existing literature documents evidence suggesting the efficiency of social media usage to aid SMEs to accept this critical tool and other related technologies. Nevertheless, current studies have concentrated on Western economies and the uniqueness of SMEs in terms of their business needs and perspectives (Chatterjee et al. 2). Furthermore, for the investigations that focus on emerging businesses in developing economies, findings have not been coherent due to limited knowledge about leveraging SMEs' innovation and improved business operations attributed to social media usage (Bruce et al., 1). Emphasizing a quantitative research method for data collection as well as analysis facilitates revealing findings on social media usage improving customer relationships via creating business connections.

3.3 Methods and Rationale

The study utilized a structured questionnaire constructed and distributed randomly using a survey among the chosen respondents. The researcher chose the 'study's participants using a randomized selected technique involving convenience sampling. Moreover, the survey assisted in collecting a set of data; 'respondents' demographics and questions about the study concept. For convenience sampling, different aspects affirm its appropriateness. These characteristics range from the recent works using this sampling technique and 'participants' willingness to produce valid information that aligns with the study objective to other distinctive strengths, for example, low cost, quick data collection, and ease of use (few rules) and reduced time (Bruce et al. 5). Similarly, another work that utilized convenience sampling within the domain of SMEs and influence of social media. Accounting for a survey questionnaire to gather quantitative data was allowing for meaningful data collection and strong 'participants' feelings about the formulated research questions (Khanal et al.pg). Hence, achieving an actual data degree proved essential to theory and practice despite using random people to respond to the questionnaires. The researcher was assured of respondents provided considerable information about their opinions of the study concept.

3.4 Research Design Significance.

The researcher utilized the questionnaire survey research design to gather data since it required processing and analyzing quantitative data. This technique seems vital compared to a research problem that depends on qualitative findings meant to discover both attitudes and opinions of the target audience without focusing on the primary data collection method (Khanal et al. 1923). Similarly, Patma et al. adopted a survey research method to attain an adequate understanding concerning efficiency in social media usage for SMEs' sustainability in Indonesia. The difference in the current work is based on the steps used to conduct the study and report the findings of social media use for the SMEs' survey questions.

The survey employed SurveyMonkey.com characterized by questions relevant to the 'study's anticipated outcomes. The questionnaire comprised 12 questions categorized into demographic details, such as age groups, education level, organizational size, years of service, types of social media usage, and the number of times companies used social media platforms. For the 'study's concept questions, the survey asked the respondents to rate the attraction of customers, whether it is a strategic channel for SMEs, and the social media routine as a channel that obtains feedback on customers. Another response pertained to value creation on firms to practice social media usage to improve customer relationships or firms to understand the customers and their familiarization with the company. The part also involved data collection based on business connections as well as an opportunity. Lastly, the survey questions had a segment to collect data to aid in the discussion of sustainability and its purpose for social media marketing. Furthermore, a five-point Likert scale comprising Completely Disagree (1), Disagree (2), Neutral (3), Agree (4), and Completely Agree (5) was used to quantify the research constructs (sustainability, business opportunities, and social media usage).

3.5 Data Handling and Research Ethics

The current study's data were collected independently, symbolizing a relatively high likelihood of a common method of variance. Yet, this problem was resolved by informing and assuring the participants of data confidentiality and privacy as well as advising them that every response was correct based on the 'survey's questions. Moreover, the respondents benefited from being treated with utmost confidence. Similarly, the 'questionnaire's design was simple consisting of necessary explanations and rationale for participation depending on the choice to provide information or decline to offer responses.

4. Results

4.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses the data collected following the methodological framework laid out in the preceding chapter. A structured questionnaire was used as the research instrument, and the items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale. All in all, three constructs were measured. The data collected comprised 78 cases. The descriptive summaries for the final items and cases were then carried out, and the mean was reported along with the standard deviation. Nine demographic and organizational attributes were considered, including Gender, Age, Educational Level, Organisation Size, Years of Service, Type of Social Media Used, Number of Times the Company has used Social Media, and Social Media Platform Used. They are summarized herein below.

4.2.1 Gender of Participant

The distribution of gender of the respondents is presented in Figure 1. below.

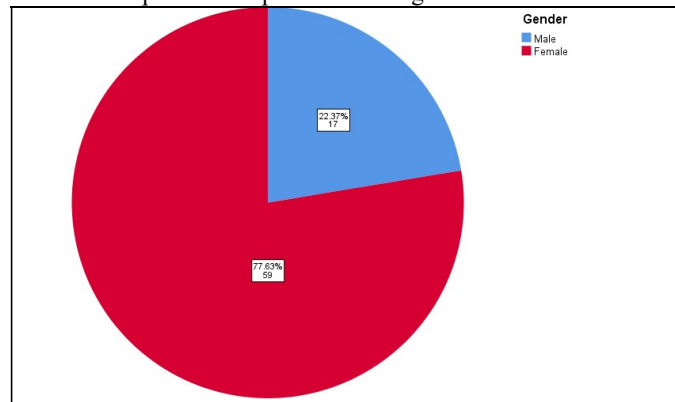


Figure 1.1: Gender of Respondents

The results show that most of the respondents were females (77.63%), while males were 22.37%. There was a statistically significant difference in the proportion of respondents by gender, with females being more dominant over males.

4.2.2 Age Range

The distribution of the respondents by age is illustrated in Figure 1.2 below. From the outcome above, the majority of the managers and owners of the SMEs under study were aged 18-25 years (33.77%), followed by those who were 46-55 years (27.27%).

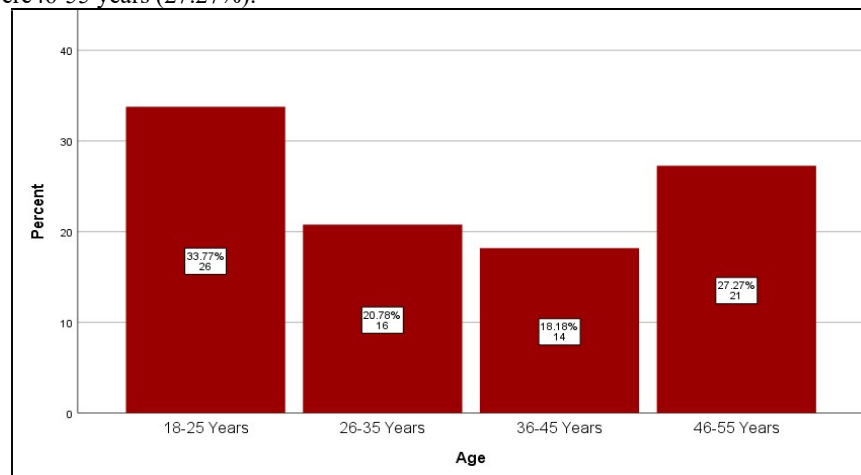


Figure 1.2: Distribution by Age

The third dominant group as those aged 26-35 years, who were 20.78%, while the least dominant age

group was those aged between 36-45 years (18.18%). From this outcome, it is evident that the majority of the respondents were young to middle-aged (72.73%). The relatively low proportion of those who were older was most likely due to the predominance of emerging small-medium-sized SMEs, most of which were young companies.

4.2.3 Highest Qualification

The third demographic attribute measured the highest level of education attained; the findings are illustrated in Figure 1.3 below.

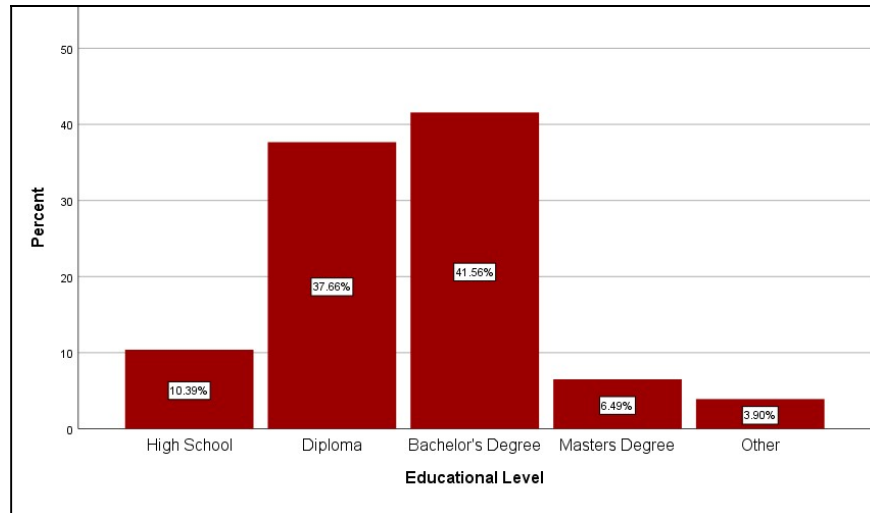


Figure 1.3: Distribution by Education

Most SME owners or managers had attained at least a bachelor's degree as the highest level of education (41.56%). Those with a diploma were 37.66%, while those without a diploma were 10.30%. Further, only 6.49% had attained a master's degree, and the remaining 3.90% had attained other qualifications. The fact that the cumulative total of 85.71% had a diploma or higher tertiary qualification shows that the majority of the respondents had attained a higher qualification. This was very important as this guaranteed that the respondents understood the questionnaire and had a fair theoretical knowledge of some, or all the issues raised in the questionnaire.

4.2.4 Organization Size

Figure 1.4 below presents the distribution of the respondents by organization size.

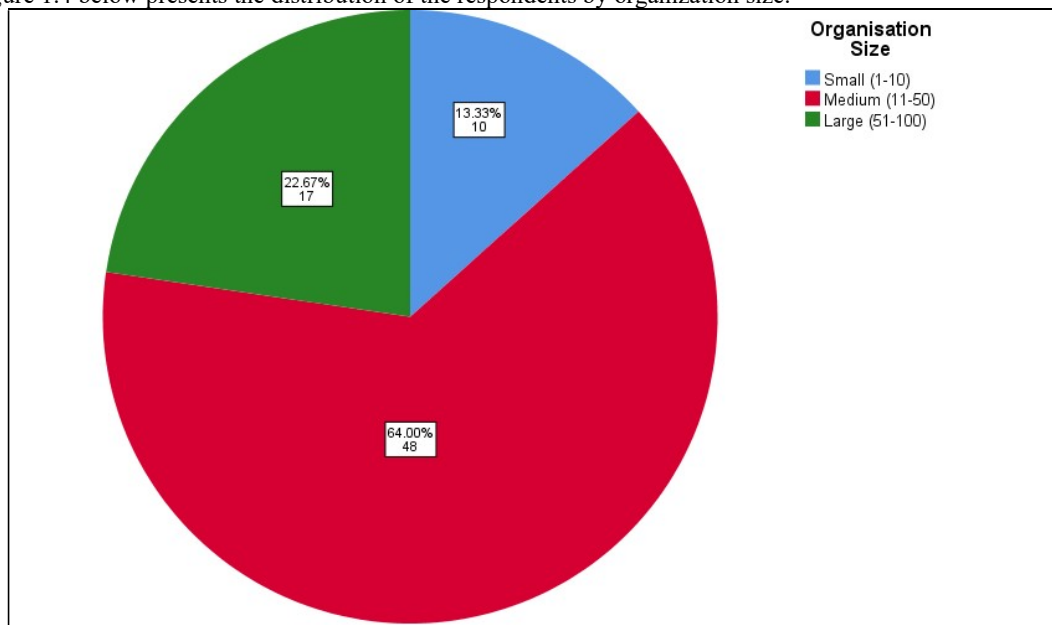


Figure 1.4: Distribution by Organization Size

From the outcome, almost two-thirds of the respondents were from medium SMEs (64.00%), while those

from large SMEs were 22.67%. However, those from small SMEs were 13.33%. These findings do show that the majority of the respondents were from medium to large SMEs. This finding reflected the distribution of businesses at large, which is a key sign of the representativeness of the sample used for the analysis.

4.2.5 Years of Service

The number of years of service was also investigated, and the results are summarized below.

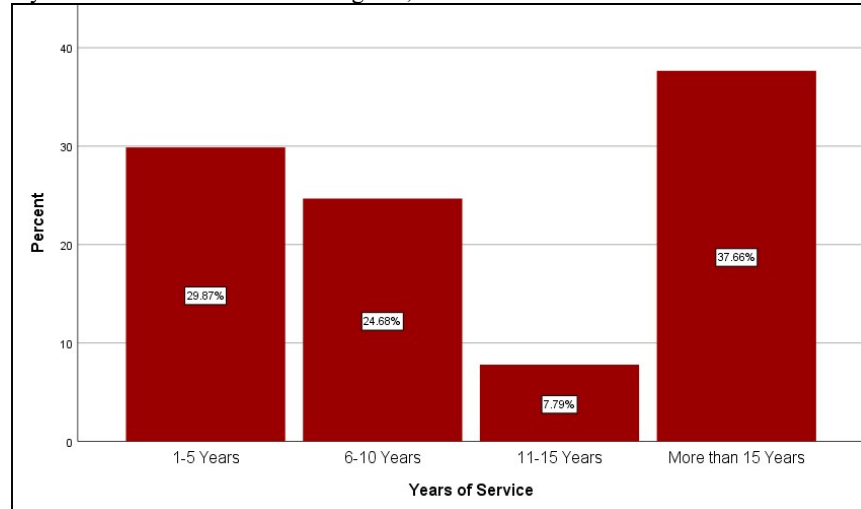


Figure 1.5: Distribution by Years of Service

Most of the respondents had more than 15 years of experience (37.66%), followed by those with 1-5 years of experience (29.87%). The third most frequent had 6-10 years of experience (24.88%), while the least had 11-15 years of experience (7.79%). The fact that the majority had more experience confirms that the majority had more knowledge of the operations of the SMEs. Bryman and Bell (2015) argued that the use of experienced and knowledgeable participants boosted the credibility of the results, ultimately leading to more valid findings.

4.2.6 Type of Social Media Used

The sixth attribute was the type of gadget where social media was frequently used. The results are illustrated in the pie chart in Figure 4.7 below.

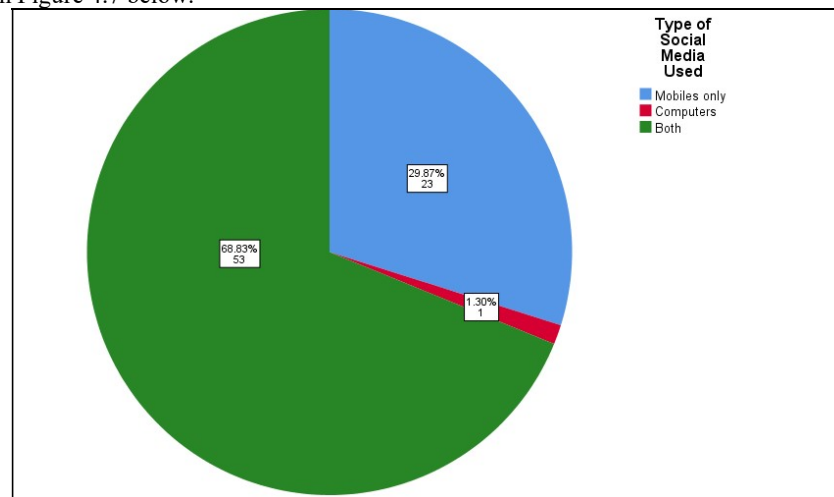


Figure 1.6: Distribution by Type of Social Media

Most of the respondents preferred to use social media on both phones and computers; these were 68.83%, followed by those who preferred using mobiles only who were 29.87%. However, only one respondent preferred using the computers only (1.30%). From this outcome, it is evident that respondents preferred using only a single gadget only computers and phones to using only a single gadget only computers and phones to using only a single gadget computer and phone to using only a single gadget.

4.2.7 Number of Times a Company uses Social Media

The seventh demographic attribute evaluated the frequency of use of Social Media, and the results are summarized in Figure 1.7 below.

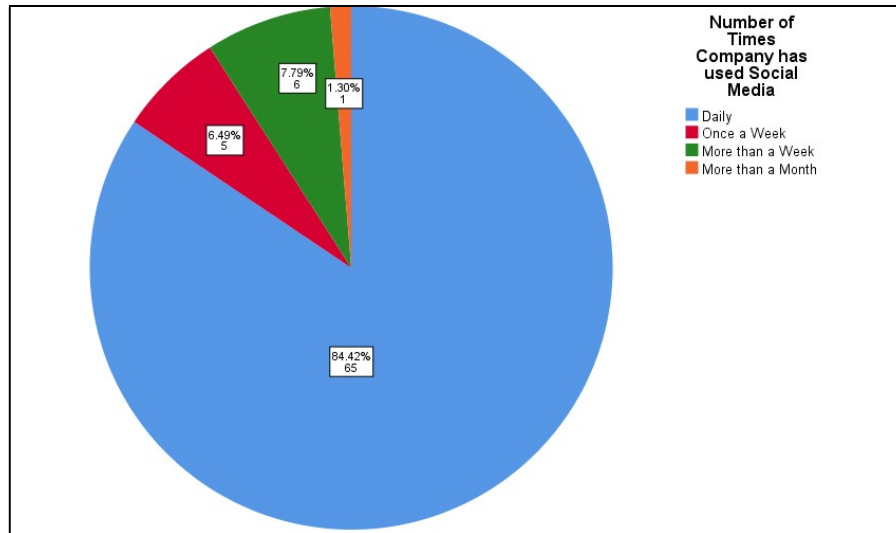


Figure 1.7: Frequency of Use of Social Media

Most of the respondents confirmed that their SMEs used social media daily, and these were 84.42%. The second dominant frequency was more than a week (7.79%), while the third used social media once a week (6.49%). The least used social media at least once a month, and these were only 1.30%. Overall, it is evident that the use of social media among SMEs was more frequent and was done daily by the majority. This confirms that the SMEs had widely embraced social media as a key communication and marketing medium, which SMEs relied upon.

4.2.8 Preferred Social Media Sites

The last aspect was for the respondents to disclose the ir preferred social media platforms. The results are presented in Figure 1.8.

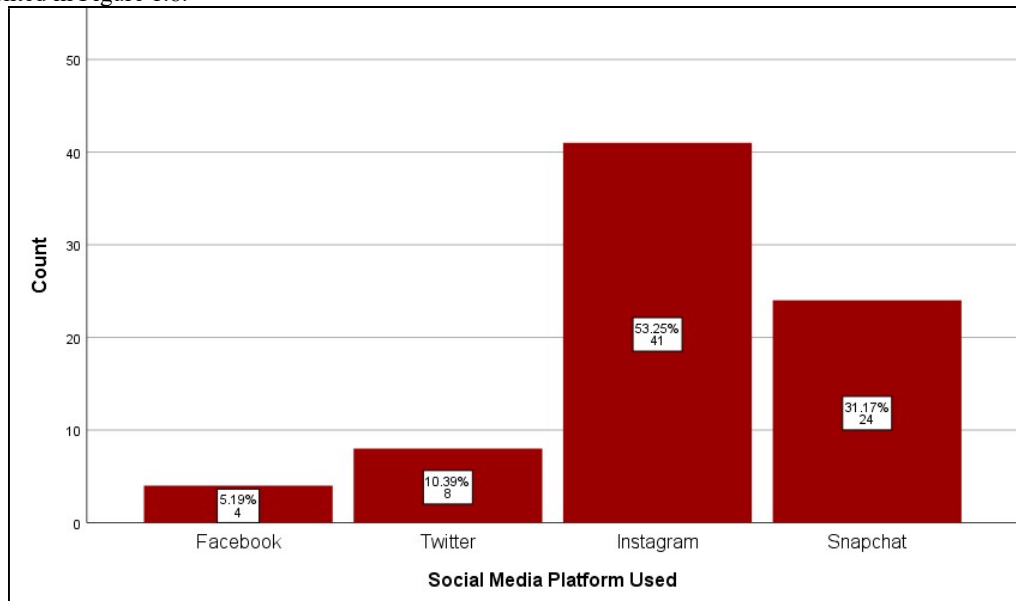


Figure 1.8: Preferred Social Media Sites

The findings do show that the majority of the SMEs preferred Instagram over other social media sites, and these were 53.25%. The second most common was Snapchat (31.17%), followed by Twitter (10.39%), and the least being Facebook (5.19%). By and large, the most dominant social media sites were just two, Instagram and Snapchat, which both contributed a cumulative total of 84.42%.

4.3 Descriptive Summaries

A 5-point Likert scale ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). This section explores the distribution of the responses based on both the mean and standard deviation for each of the research items. The summary statistics of all the constructs are presented in Table 1 below. Since a 5-point Likert scale was used, the

midpoint was, therefore, 3.0.

	N	Mean	SD
Value Creation			
Social media can be used to attract customers and reach the masses	77	4.35	0.855
Social media serve as a strategic informational channel for SMEs	77	4.34	0.736
SMEs use social media as a channel to obtain feedback from customers	77	4.26	0.818
Firms can use social media to improve customer relationships and increase market share	77	4.34	0.718
Social media help firms to know more about customers' perceptions of the company	77	4.29	0.758
Social media lower marketing campaign costs, and helps in awareness creation, creating a meaningful customer-driven product innovation	76	3.97	1.058
Social media usage helps in customer brand loyalty and trust	73	3.93	0.887
<i>Overall</i>	77	4.21	0.64
Business Connection and Opportunities			
Social media facilitate business connections with their customers and other stakeholders via disseminating information at a reduced cost	76	4.25	0.751
SMEs get access to a larger market, thereby expanding the customer base both locally and globally	75	4.27	0.794
Social media platforms directly target customers with marketing campaigns thus promoting new products or services and building brand awareness	76	4.3	0.731
Social media is a strategic online platform for job searching, recruitment, and career growth for SMEs	75	4.04	0.829
Social media helps SMEs to compete with large companies in the area of marketing for competitive advantage	70	4.03	0.851
<i>Overall</i>	76	4.19	0.63
Sustainability			
Social media is a valuable tool for SMEs' marketing	74	4.32	0.724
In my view, social media enhances the productivity of the firm	74	4.16	0.811
Customers are adequately compatible in using social media to patronize the firms' products and services	74	4.12	0.739
In my view, social media makes it possible to identify customer demands and satisfy them accordingly	73	4.21	0.666
Our firm is compatible with using social media for marketing purposes	74	4.12	0.891
<i>Overall</i>	74	4.19	0.6

Table 1: Summary Statistics

From the findings above, all the items had mean ratings greater than the midpoint 3.0, which shows that the respondents tended to agree. However, the highest overall rating was for the construct Value Creation, whose mean rating was 4.21 (SD = 0.644). In contrast, the other two constructs Business Connection and Opportunities and Sustainability, shared the same mean rating of 4.19 respectively. The fact that the overall mean ratings were greater than the mid-point 3.0 is highly indicative that the respondents concur on the efficacy of social media and, most importantly, with respect to their role towards value creation.

5. Discussion

A considerable amount of research has proven the significance SMEs have on economies; however, the factors that drive SMEs to success have varied in different regions, contexts, and literature. Several factors contribute to the growth of an SME, but the main focus of this research paper is social media. The development of social media use in the past decade has resulted in it being a necessity for the success of any business, according to research conducted by the Pew research center, 7 out of 10 American use social media (Atske). Essentially these results suggest that the majority of consumers are online. The GCC region varies significantly from western countries, where most of the research on this matter is concentrated, and thus understanding the local context is worthy of exploring. This study aimed at exploring the impact of social media use on SMEs in Kuwait within three main scopes: Value Creation, Business Connection and Opportunity, and Sustainability.

5.1 Value Creation

Existing literature provides an array of evidence that social media use can lead to value creation for SMEs. Since a considerable number of consumers are online, social media can be an effective communication channel between businesses and consumers. The findings of this paper align with existing literature, specifically regarding value creation, as the highest overall rating was for the construct Value Creation, whose mean rating was 4.21 (SD = 0.644). In other words, local SMEs social media use does, in fact, create value specifically in terms of marketing.

Amongst all elements contributing to value creation, social media as a tool for customer acquisition was the highest, with a mean of 4.35 (SD=0.855). Social media serving as a strategic information channel for SMES came in as a close second with a mean of 4.34 (SD=0.736). Relatively, the least significant factor in the value creation category was the effect social media use has in creating brand loyalty. However, it is worth noting that with the mean rating greater than the midpoint of 3.0, it is still considered significant (Ahmad et al.). Thus, the findings are not surprising, as existing literature has proven the significance of social media use in generating brand loyalty.

5.2 Business Connection and Opportunity

Existing literature supports that the use of social media can provide an opportunity for SMEs to expand in the global market (Aichner and Frank pg). While SMEs are defined as small to medium enterprises, social media provides a competitive advantage to these SMES, allowing them to compete for market share with larger incumbents in the market (Tiwasing pg, and Olayah pg). Social media's connectivity can allow SMEs to meet new suppliers and customers. In turn, these relationships can lead to higher profitability by lowering costs and increasing sales. (Sambo and Austin pg). The results of this research have shown a concurrence with existing literature. The overall mean rating for business connection and opportunity resulted in 4.19 (SD=0.629).

Amongst this category, social media platforms' ability to target the desired customer allowing marketing campaigns to perform better, showed to be a significant factor in providing SMEs lucrative opportunities with a mean rating of 4.30 (SD=0.731). Gaining a competitive advantage by utilizing social media had the lowest mean rating amongst the factors in this category. That said, it is still considerable, with a mean rating of 4.03 (SD=0.731).

5.3 Sustainability

Existing literature proves a strong correlation between the sustainability of SMEs and social media use (Ancillai, Chiara, et al. (pg). That fact aligns with the local context as the findings of this paper show that the overall mean rating of sustainability on SMEs social media use is 4.19 (SD=0.597). Previous studies have shown that customer intimacy generated by communication can positively impact sales (Sambo and Austin pg) One of the components tested in the sustainability category was the effectiveness of social media in identifying consumer demands. While this factor had a relatively lower mean rating, it was still considered significant, with a mean rating of 4.21 (SD=0.666). Understanding consumers leads to customer satisfaction which entails a core ingredient in sustainability (Khan et al (pg), and Matarazzo, Michela, et al. pg). To have a sustainable business, SMEs need to compete by through the usage of using marketing constantly. If utilized properly, social media is instrumental in creating effective marketing expeditors (Amoah and Abdul pg). In this study, the mean for social media serving as a valuable tool for SMEs marketing produced the highest mean rating in the sustainability category with a mean of 4.32 (SD=0.724).

Conclusion

The findings of this study concur with existing literature in that social media use has a significant effect on SMEs. The study investigated the effect of social media use on SMEs within three main categories: Value Creation, Business Connection and Opportunity, and Sustainability. While all factors proved to be significant, value creation resulted in the highest overall mean concurring the efficacy of social media use in creating value for SMEs. This research paper relied on data collected from SMEs on how social media use affected their overall viability; it is recommended for future research to simultaneously explore the perspectives of consumers and suppliers on social media use. By engaging all stakeholders in the equation of social media, a clearer picture of the implications will be available, along with possible valuable contributions to all parties involved.

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