



Effectiveness of social media marketing in small businesses

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Abstract

In today's digital environment, the usefulness of social media marketing for small businesses is a subject that is becoming more and more important. This study examines how social media marketing tactics affect small businesses, concentrating on important metrics like revenue growth and client acquisition. One hundred small businesses were given a structured survey questionnaire to collect quantitative information about their social media practices, perceived efficacy, obstacles they faced, and plans. To gain qualitative insights into the subtleties of social media marketing strategies and their perceived influence on business success, additional research was done through interviews and case studies. The results of the data analysis showed that the selected model, which included independent variables such as preferred social media platforms and posting frequency, was unable to explain the variability in annual revenue growth or customer acquisition. According to these results, social media marketing is still crucial for consumer interaction and brand exposure, but small businesses may not see a direct improvement in performance from merely posting more frequently or using particular platforms. Rather, comprehensive marketing approaches that take into account elements other than social media, like targeting tactics, content quality, and overall marketing initiatives, might be more successful in promoting company expansion. This study adds to a better knowledge of the challenges small business owners have when implementing social media marketing methods, and it offers insightful information for anyone looking to improve their digital marketing tactics.

1. Introduction

Social media has emerged as a powerful tool for businesses of all sizes to communicate, market, and serve their customers in the digital era. However, small businesses face many challenges in the competitive and dynamic market, such as limited resources, low brand awareness, and customer retention. Therefore, it is important to understand how small businesses can use social media effectively and strategically to achieve their goals and overcome their challenges.

Previous studies have explored the impact of social media on various aspects of small business

performance, such as brand awareness, customer satisfaction, sales, and innovation. However, there is a lack of comprehensive and holistic research that examines the effectiveness of social media on small businesses from multiple perspectives, such as internal and external, qualitative and quantitative, and short-term and long-term. There is also a scarcity of empirical evidence and best practices that can guide small businesses to improve their social media outcomes and overcome their challenges.

This study aims to explore the impact of social media on small businesses and identify key factors contributing to its effectiveness. It will explore current trends in social media usage among different industries and regions, analyze the relationship between social media and business performance indicators like awareness, reputation, loyalty, innovation, and growth, examine barriers and enablers affecting social media effectiveness, and propose a framework for optimizing social media strategy. The study will focus on popular platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and use a mixed-methods approach. The findings will contribute to existing literature on social media and small businesses, offering insights and guidance for practitioners to enhance performance and overcome challenges. The study also has implications for policymakers, educators, and researchers interested in supporting and promoting small businesses and their social media activities.

1.1 Background

1.1.1. Businesses of all sizes can benefit greatly from social media as a marketing, communication, and customer service tool.

1.1.2. Limited resources, low brand awareness, and customer retention are just a few of the many difficulties small businesses confront in this dynamic and competitive industry.

1.1.3. Social media can assist small businesses in overcoming these obstacles by boosting their target audience's awareness, loyalty, and involvement.

1.2. Problem Statement

1.2.1. Despite the potential benefits of social media, many small businesses do not use it effectively or strategically to achieve their goals.

1.2.2. Some of the common problems faced by small businesses on social media are lack of time, budget, skills, content, and measurement.

1.2.3. There is a need to understand the factors that influence the effectiveness of social media on small businesses and how they can optimize their social media performance.

1.3. Research Gap

1.3.1. Previous studies have explored the impact of social media on various aspects of small businesses, such as brand awareness, customer satisfaction, sales, and innovation.

1.3.2. However, there is a lack of comprehensive and holistic research that examines the effectiveness of social media on small businesses from multiple perspectives, such as internal and

external, qualitative and quantitative, and short-term and long-term.

1.3.3. There is also a scarcity of empirical evidence and best practices that can guide small businesses to improve their social media outcomes and overcome their challenges.

1.4. Objectives of the Study

1.4.1. The main objective of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of social media on small businesses and identify the key factors that contribute to it.

1.4.2. The specific objectives of this study are:

1.4.2.1. To explore the current state and trends of social media usage among small businesses in different industries and regions.

1.4.2.2. To analyze the relationship between social media and various indicators of small business performance, such as client acquisition and business growth.

1.4.2.3. To examine the barriers and enablers that affect the social media effectiveness of small businesses.

1.5. Scope of the Study

1.5.1. The scope of this study is limited to small businesses that have less than 50 employees and operate in the online or offline sectors.

1.5.2. The study will focus on the most popular social media platforms, such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and their features, such as posts, stories, messages, and ads.

1.5.3. The study will use a mixed-methods approach, combining secondary data from online sources, such as reports, articles, and reviews, and primary data from surveys and interviews with small business owners and managers.

1.6. Significance of the Study

1.6.1. The study will contribute to the existing literature on social media and small businesses by providing a comprehensive and holistic analysis of the effectiveness of social media on small businesses and the factors that influence it.

1.6.2. The study will also benefit small business practitioners by offering insights and guidance on how to leverage social media to enhance their performance and overcome their challenges.

1.6.3. The study will also have implications for policymakers, educators, and researchers who are interested in supporting and promoting small businesses and their social media activities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Evolution of Social Media Marketing

Since its start, social media marketing has seen a radical transformation in its development. Researchers point out that social media platforms' dynamic and engaging characters have replaced traditional advertising. Social media was first used as a means of communication, but as sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram gained popularity, their marketing potential became more apparent. Academics underscore the significance of user involvement and content development while stressing the growth of

methods.

The study (Herawati et al., 2024) focused on content creation, content sharing, connecting, and community building as the four main areas of social media marketing that are analyzed using Gunelius' idea of social media implementation. The study aims to determine and examine how the Bandung Industrial Training Center advertises its Business Incubator program using Social Media Marketing. The constructivism paradigm was applied in conjunction with the descriptive qualitative research approach. The results show that the Bandung Industrial Training Centre used four essential components—content creation, content sharing, connecting, and community building—that were crucial to the effectiveness of social media marketing. Nonetheless, there is still an imbalance in the three social media platforms' applications, and each one's feature usage is ineffective.

The study (Thapliyal, K. et al., 2024) focuses on the individuals, health organizations, medical professionals, testing labs, and regulatory authorities utilize social media on various platforms extremely actively in their roles. Since the information being communicated is both necessary and vital, there are serious concerns over the legitimacy and quality of the material. The chapter examines social media health communication's quality and strategic aspects, highlighting both its benefits and drawbacks. Through a critical analysis of the trends, cases, and research that are currently available, we will be able to comprehend how social media can be used as a strategic advantage for improving public health as well as how these lower-quality issues of misinformation, false information, and authenticity on social media plague society in general. Additionally, we shall consider the structure, recognition, and resolution of the positive. Furthermore, using academic databases, systematic reviews, and gap analyses for future research, we will reflect on the framework, identification, and resolution of the opportunities and issues surrounding social media health information platforms.

Digital media and technology are used in digital marketing to accomplish marketing objectives. Since the emergence of digital media, marketers have placed a greater emphasis on using digital marketing methods to reach their target audiences and enhance performance. The purpose of the study (Singh, et al.) is to investigate how different digital marketing technologies can affect the restaurant industry's ability to compete. Restaurants have drawn in and influenced the decisions of their patrons by utilizing a variety of digital marketing strategies. The study makes use of the structural equation modeling technique to ascertain the structural relationship between several factors related to digital marketing. The outcome shows that the competitiveness of the restaurant business is significantly impacted by social media, online branding, online ads, and post-service quality.

2.2 Adoption of Social Media by Small Businesses

Research indicates a growing trend in the adoption of social media by small businesses as a cost-effective means of marketing. Small enterprises leverage platforms such as Instagram and Facebook to increase brand visibility, reach a wider audience, and engage with customers. Studies emphasize the

democratizing effect of social media, providing smaller businesses with a platform to compete with larger counterparts in the digital realm.

Micro, Small, and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) are using e-commerce more and more as part of their digital marketing strategy. The purpose of the study (Sugiharto, B. H.,2024) is to examine how MSMEs' embrace of e-commerce has affected their ability to adapt to shifting global business conditions. The study's findings demonstrate how MSMEs that use e-commerce become more competitive by growing their markets, becoming more efficient in their operations, and interacting directly with customers. Digital marketing tactics, such as social media and internet advertising, are the main ways that MSME visibility-building is accomplished. The study's results emphasize the complexity of MSMEs' potential and problems, including the need for digital skill development and technological hurdles. Government assistance, the development of digital skills, the promotion of MSMEs' cooperation, and industry 4.0 awareness campaigns are among the policy consequences.

The study (Mauro Capestro et.al.,) explores how cognitive trust influences the adoption of digital technologies in industrial districts, highlighting that affective trust does not. It also discusses the theoretical and operational implications. Globalization and digital transformation challenge SMEs, particularly in manufacturing, reshaping production processes and value chains. Industry 4.0 impacts low-tech firms' competitive advantage, focusing on industrial districts' evolution. The study uses a survey-based approach to examine the impact of trust, knowledge sharing, and organizational factors on technology adoption in industrial firms.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are crucial for economic well-being, providing jobs and supporting regional development. The rise of social media and online search engines has led to the integration of these tools into organizational environments, allowing SMEs to gain business value for both internal and external objectives. It broadens customer relationships and accelerates innovation. However, SMEs often have a local clientele and prefer not to expand beyond their region due to financial constraints. The chapter discusses how small-scale enterprises (SMEs) use social media to promote their brand and interact with customers. It emphasizes the need for SMEs to develop a social media roadmap, identify user-friendly platforms, and provide managerial guidelines for effective social media marketing in SMEs' marketing functions.

2.3 Generalized Findings in Social Media Marketing

Several studies shed light on generalized findings in social media marketing, highlighting its impact on brand awareness, customer engagement, and sales. Positive correlations between active social media presence and business success are often reported. Findings also point to the significance of content quality, posting frequency, and interaction with followers in achieving marketing goals.

The study (A. A. Sultan et. Al., 2017) explores how Jordanian B2C businesses utilize social media marketing to boost their e-commerce industry growth. The research, which focuses on the impact of

social media elements on marketing and the growth of the digital sphere, aims to understand how social media platforms influence marketing and the e-commerce sector in Jordan, highlighting the need for further research on how social media marketing can be effectively utilized. The study's goals are as follows to accomplish this goal:

1. Examine the influence of social media platforms on Jordanian businesses' marketing efforts.
2. To investigate the impact of social media on the growth of e-commerce in Jordan's digital landscape.

The study (Yan, J. et al., 2024) explores the impact of social media on the effectiveness of eco-friendly advertising. It suggests that the right match between the appeal of eco-friendly advertising and the type of social media can enhance its effectiveness. The research divides social media into strong and weak tie types, with strong social media helping individuals strengthen existing relationships and weaker ones helping build loose ones. The results show that people on strong social media respond more favorably to concrete appeals, while weak social media respond more positively to abstract appeals. The findings can help managers improve the efficiency of eco-friendly advertising decisions on social media.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Utilizing a mixed-methods research methodology, this study offers a thorough grasp of the efficacy of social media marketing for small businesses by fusing qualitative and quantitative methodologies. While the quantitative phase uses surveys to gather more data, the qualitative phase uses interviews and case studies to explore in-depth insights.

3.2 Sample Size and Selection

This study's sample size is limited to 100 small enterprises in a particular industry or region. Businesses actively involved in social media marketing are among the selection criteria, guaranteeing a varied representation of business sizes, types, and industries to improve the findings' generalizability.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

3.3.1 Surveys

A survey was conducted on small firms to gather quantitative data on social media practices, including posting frequency, content types, and platform preferences. The results provided insights into the impact of these strategies on consumer involvement, brand awareness, and business performance. The study also highlighted challenges faced by small businesses in social media marketing and provided future strategies for improvement. Combining quantitative data enhances the insights from qualitative methods.

3.3.2 Interviews

3.3.2.1 In-Depth Exploration of Strategies:

The survey gave insights into the nuances of social media marketing tactics from our in-depth discussions with marketing managers and business owners. The discussions revealed the precise strategies used, the methods for creating content, and the thinking behind the choice of certain social media networks.

3.3.2.2 Challenges Faced in Real Time:

Drawing from firsthand experiences, the interviews documented the challenges that businesses face in real-time when attempting to market themselves through social media. A nuanced understanding of issues like time and budget constraints as well as the complexities of content creation and strategy execution was made possible by the candid responses.

3.3.2.3 Perceived Impact on Business Performance:

In an open and honest discussion, stakeholders revealed how they believe social media marketing affects the way their businesses operate. This included qualitative observations on the effect of social media strategies on sales and customer relationships, as well as insights into enhanced customer engagement and increased brand visibility.

3.4 Variables and Measurements

3.4.1 Dependent Variable

Business performance, as measured by key performance indicators including revenue growth, client acquisition, and brand perception, is the dependent variable under investigation in this study.

3.4.2 Independent Variables

Aspects of social media marketing techniques, such as posting frequency, content quality, interaction strategies, and platform choice, are among the independent factors.

3.4.3 Measurements

3.4.3.1 Multiple regressions are applied while taking the independent variable as Frequency of posting and social media platform choice and the dependent variable as annual revenue growth rate.

Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0.188067497							
R Square	0.035369383							
Adjusted R Square	0.015480092							
Standard Error	10.86326941							
Observations	100							
ANOVA								
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F			
Regression	2	419.7196303	209.8598151	1.778313	0.174385566			
Residual	97	11447.03037	118.0106224					
Total	99	11866.75						
	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	13.23348029	2.597486337	5.094725659	1.72E-06	8.078188933	18.38877165	8.078188933	18.38877165
Platforms	1.902492784	1.163943222	1.634523702	0.10539	-0.407612316	4.212597885	-0.407612316	4.212597885
Frequency of Posting	0.336972483	0.398155312	0.846334264	0.399449	-0.453255597	1.127200564	-0.453255597	1.127200564

The 0.0354 multiple R-squared score suggests an extremely poor match. That is to say, just a small percentage of the annual growth rate variance can be explained by the model.

At the 5% significance level, the model is not statistically significant, according to the F-statistic (1.7783) and p-value of 0.1744. As a result, the null hypothesis—which states that there is no linear relationship between the independent and dependent variables—cannot be rejected.

According to this regression analysis, the model that takes into account the choice of social media platform and posting frequency as independent variables is not able to statistically significantly explain any of the variations in the yearly growth rate. There is insufficient data to conclude that the choice of social media platform or posting frequency directly affects the revenue growth rate per year.

3.4.3.2 Multiple regressions are applied while taking the independent variable as Frequency of posting and social media platform choice and the dependent variable as Client acquisition.

Regression Statistics								
Multiple R	0.122152219							
R Square	0.014921165							
Adjusted R Square	-0.005389739							
Standard Error	20.71692124							
Observations	100							
ANOVA								
	df	SS	MS	F	Significance F			
Regression	2	630.5998981	315.2999	0.734638	0.482328508			
Residual	97	41631.5101	429.1908					
Total	99	42262.11						
	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value	Lower 95%	Upper 95%	Lower 95.0%	Upper 95.0%
Intercept	79.82515191	4.953565803	16.11468	3.53E-29	69.993695	89.65660881	69.993695	89.65660881
Platforms	2.096587565	2.219711134	0.944532	0.347245	-2.308924589	6.502099718	-2.308924589	6.502099718
Frequency of Posting	-0.616657754	0.759306608	-0.81213	0.418704	-2.123671184	0.890355677	-2.123671184	0.890355677

The 0.0149 multiple R-squared score suggests an extremely poor match. This indicates that only a small percentage of the volatility in customer acquisition can be explained by the model. Both the posting frequency and the preferred social media platform have p-values higher than 0.05.

This indicates that, at the 5% significance level, there is no statistically significant correlation between these characteristics and client acquisition.

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Statistical Tool

Multiple regression analysis is employed to analyze the relationship between independent variables (social media marketing strategies) and the dependent variable (business performance). This statistical tool allows for the identification of significant factors influencing the effectiveness of social media marketing for small businesses.

3.5.2 Justification for Chosen Tool

The capacity of multiple regression analysis to examine the effects of several independent factors on a

single dependent variable makes it a popular choice. With the use of this tool, it will be possible to examine in-depth the intricate interactions between various social media strategies and how these interactions affect overall business success. The findings make it easier to provide evidence-based suggestions for enhancing small businesses' use of social media marketing.

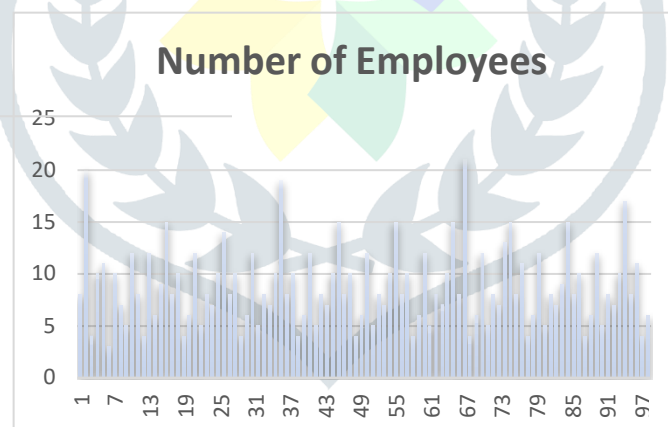
4. Demographic Profile of Small Businesses

4.1 Type of Business:

The sample of one hundred small enterprises included a wide variety of industries, providing a rich depiction of business kinds. Distribution across retail (34%), food and beverage (22%), service-based (28%), and other businesses (16%) was shown by the breakdown. The goal of this broad selection was to depict the various aspects of social media marketing in various industries.

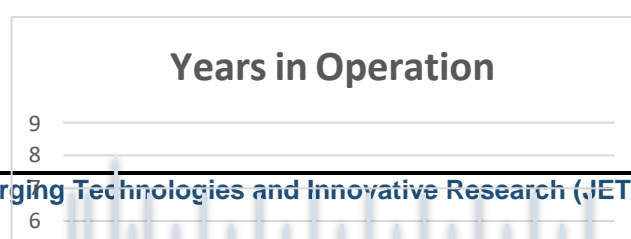
4.2 Number of Employees:

The workforce size of the sample businesses was taken into account in the study, and the distribution of workforce sizes was as follows: businesses with 1–5 employees (42%), 6–10 employees (36%), 11–20 employees (20%), and businesses with more than 20 employees (2%). An analysis of the social media strategies of microenterprises and slightly larger small firms was made possible by this distribution.



4.3 Years in Operation:

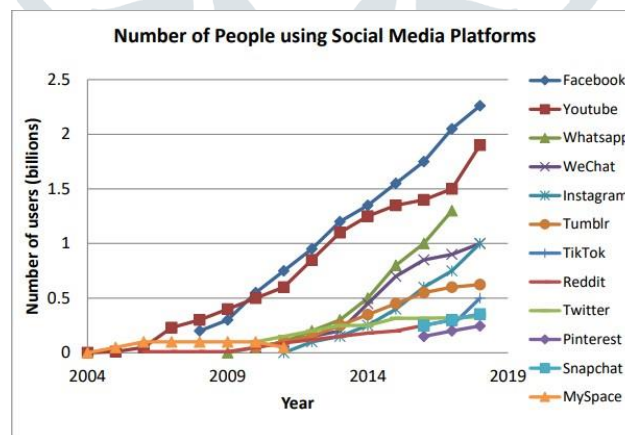
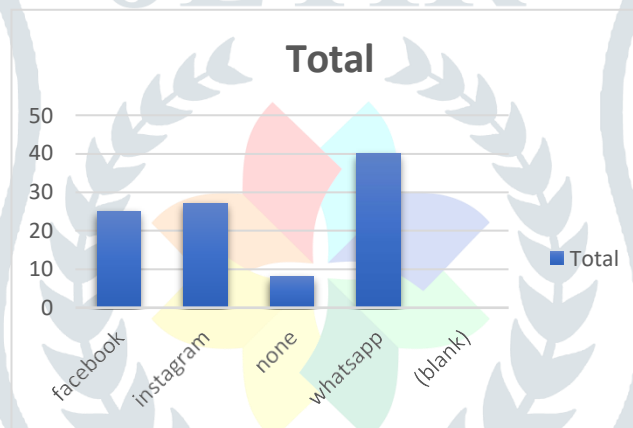
A crucial component of the demographic profile pertained to the duration of the enterprises under investigation. Throughout the years of operation, the distribution was as follows: Businesses operating for less than a year (12%), one to three years (30%), four to six years (38%), and more than six years (20%). This uneven timeline made it easier to understand the social media tactics used by companies at various stages of development.



1 7 13 19 25 31 37 43 49 55 61 67 73 79 85 91 97

4.4 Social Media Platforms Used:

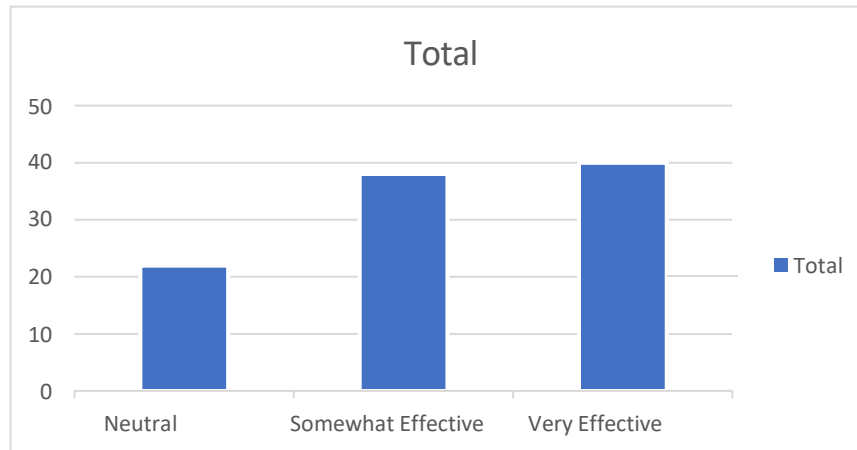
Multiple platform adoption was shown to be common when social media platforms used by small enterprises were analyzed. With 80% of users, WhatsApp was found to be the most popular, followed by Instagram (30%), Facebook (25%), and Others (5%).



Trends of users on various social media platforms.

4.5 Frequency of Social Media Posting:

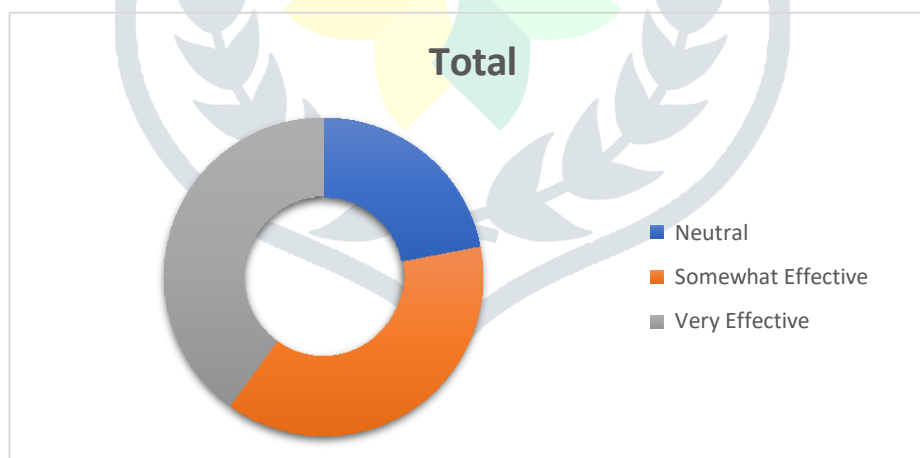
The small businesses included in the sample differed in how frequently they posted on social media. Remarkably, 45% of firms posted every day, 30% between two and three times a week, 18% once a week, and 7% less frequently than that. This distribution offered insights regarding the dedication and regularity of social media engagement strategies throughout the spectrum of small businesses.



5. Current Social Media Practices

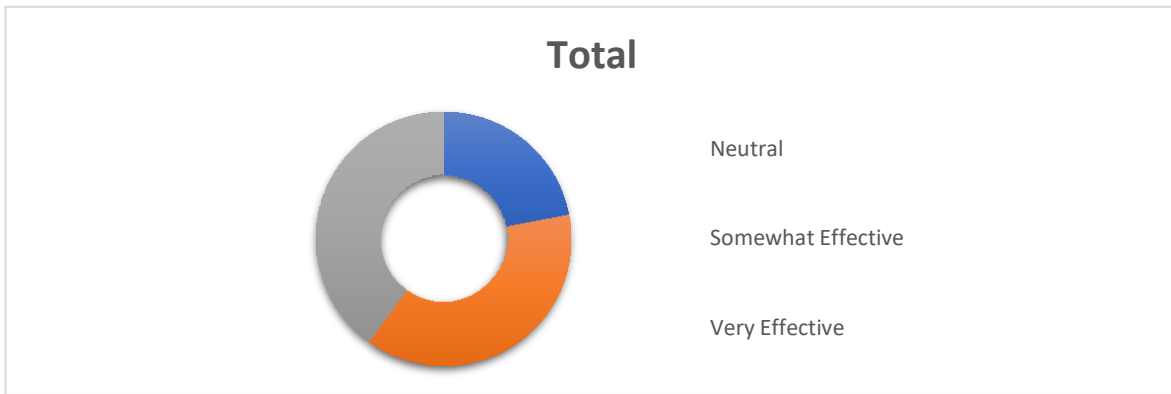
5.1 Objectives of Social Media Usage:

An analysis of the aims influencing the sample of 100 small firms' use of social media revealed complex motivations. Businesses mostly sought to increase sales (54%), encourage consumer interaction (68%), and raise brand awareness (72%). Furthermore, 22% of respondents prioritized community development, suggesting a desire for a more involved and interactive audience. The range of goals demonstrated how social media may be used for a variety of purposes in small business marketing plans.



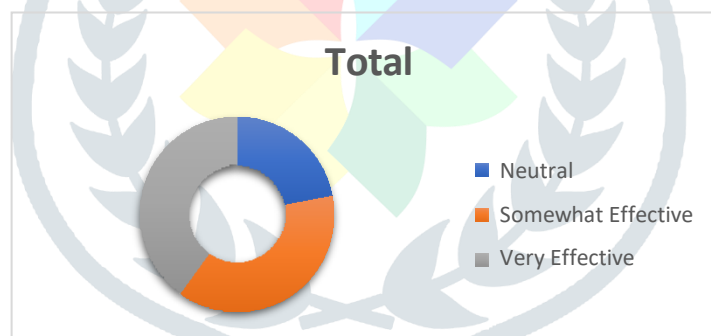
5.2 Challenges Faced:

The study examined the difficulties small businesses face when attempting to market themselves on social media. The main obstacles found were restricted funding (38%), issues in producing interesting content (27%), rivalry from larger companies (21%), and time/resource limits (14%). These results provide insight into the real-world obstacles small businesses face when attempting to engage social media effectively.



5.3 Perceived Effectiveness:

Participants were asked to rate how successful they thought their social media activities were. The results showed a largely optimistic picture, with 48% of respondents thinking their initiatives were very effective, 38% thinking they were somewhat effective, 12% saying they were neutral, and a small 2% saying their efforts were somewhat or very ineffective. In the context of small businesses, these perspectives offered insightful information on the subjective evaluation of the effects of social media marketing on customer involvement, brand awareness, and overall business performance.



6. Perceptions and Outcomes

6.1 Awareness of Customer Feedback:

The study looked into how aware the small businesses in the sample were of the comments they received from customers via social media. Results showed that 62% of companies regularly tracked and responded to consumer input, whilst 38% said they were unaware of any mentions, reviews, or comments on their social media pages. The awareness—or lack thereof—of the differing degrees of client connection via social media was evident.

6.2 Changes in Customer Footfall/Traffic:

Notable trends emerged from an investigation into how social media marketing activities affected changes in web traffic or store foot traffic. About 45% of companies said that their customer foot traffic or internet traffic had increased significantly, 30% said that it had increased moderately, and 25% said

there had been no notable change. These results provided information on the real effects of social media tactics on drawing in and keeping clients.

6.3 Impact on Sales Revenue:

Participants were questioned about how they thought social media marketing affected sales income. 58% of respondents reported a positive influence, 32% expressed a neutral view, and a minimum of 10% indicated a perceived negative impact on sales income. These results showed a positive link. These viewpoints gave rise to a sophisticated knowledge of how social media influences observable business results, especially when it comes to revenue generation.

7. Future Strategies

7.1 Planned Changes in Social Media Strategy:

The sample of small firms indicated a range of objectives for future adjustments to their social media strategies. Notably, 25% wanted to work with influencers, 18% wanted to hold promotions or contests, 17% thought about spending money on paid advertising, and 40% wanted to post more frequently. These scheduled adjustments demonstrated a flexible strategy as companies looked to improve the efficacy of their social media marketing tactics.

7.2 Desired Support or Resources:

The survey looked at the resources and assistance small businesses wanted to improve their social media marketing efforts. The results showed that 28% of respondents wanted training on social media best practices, 24% wanted financial support, 18% said they needed help creating content, and 15% wanted technical support. These findings emphasized the diverse needs of small enterprises and pointed out areas in which outside assistance could enhance social media marketing initiatives.

7.3 Overall Satisfaction with Social Media Marketing Efforts:

Participants were asked to rate how satisfied they felt generally with the social media marketing they were doing at the time. 52% of respondents expressed strong pleasure, 35% reported satisfaction, 10% remained neutral, and only 3% expressed discontent, indicating that overall, respondents' opinion was favorable. These satisfaction scores were a qualitative gauge of the perceived efficacy and success of social media marketing campaigns, and they were a useful sign of how happy companies were with their existing approaches.

8. Discussion

8.1 Interpretation of Findings

The multiple R-squared score of 0.0149 suggests a very poor fit for the model, meaning that only a

small fraction of the variability in customer acquisition can be explained by the factors included in the analysis. Neither posting frequency nor preferred social media platform have p-values less than 0.05 at the 5% significance level, indicating that there is no statistically significant correlation between the two variables and client acquisition. Similarly, a poor model fit is shown by the multiple R-squared scores of 0.0354 for the yearly growth rate variance. As evidenced by the matching p-value of 0.1744 and the F-statistic of 1.7783, the model is not statistically significant. As a result, the null hypothesis, which claims that the independent and dependent variables do not have a linear relationship, cannot be rejected.

8.2 Evaluation in light of Current Literature

These results go counter to some of the literature that has already been written and frequently highlights the role that social media marketing plays in boosting key performance indicators for businesses, like revenue growth and customer acquisition. The current analysis does not corroborate previous research's claims that social media participation and company outcomes are positively correlated. This discrepancy emphasizes the need for more investigation to fully comprehend the complex impacts of social media marketing on small enterprises.

8.3 Small Business Repercussions

These results suggest that social media marketing may still be crucial for small businesses' brand exposure and consumer interaction, but that merely posting more frequently or focusing on certain platforms won't always result in better commercial outcomes. Alternatively, other elements like targeting tactics, content quality, and overall marketing initiatives could be more important.

8.4 Suggestions for increasing efficiency

It is advised that small firms concentrate on comprehensive marketing plans that cover social media in addition to other channels and techniques in light of these findings. Compared to depending just on social media marketing, investing in market research to better understand customer wants and preferences, strengthening overall brand reputation, and upgrading product/service offerings may be more effective in driving business growth. Furthermore, carrying out additional studies to pinpoint the precise elements that lead to business success in various settings might offer small business owners insightful information.

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