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The Impact of Social Media Usage on the Sales Process in Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

The dramatic growth of the internet has led to the emergence of two important phenomena: social media and online search engines. In business context, social media is a new communication channel between the companies including SMEs and customers, which allows them to interact directly. This study aims to conduct an analysis of the impact of social media usage on the sales process in SMEs. The method used in this study is Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The method is carried out by reviewing several journals that discuss about related research topics. The results of this study identified similar impacts of social media use in SMEs across different countries. The use of social media depends on the type of industry and the type of social media used in accordance with SMEs business objectives. The impact obtained is mostly related to customers, stakeholders, business partners and competitors. However, the impact produced in this study is still general. Therefore, further research needs to be done to gain more insights on the drivers of social media use in SMEs and their impact on the performance of SMEs.

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Keywords: Social Media; Small and Medium Enterprises; Sales; Marketing

1. Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are important components of many countries in the world. This is because of their contribution in creating jobs and facilitating regional development and innovation, which have a positive

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impact on the country's economic status [1]. SMEs face new challenges in the current competitive scenario, which is characterized by the increasing variation and uncertainty in market demand and strong competition brought about by the globalization process. On one hand, SMEs have limitations in terms of finance, human resources, and organizational resources, which makes the company very vulnerable in the market. On the other hand, there are ways that can be used to improve SMEs in terms of expanding networks in new markets to overcome company limitations, pursue access to external resources, and to develop product innovations. This capacity seems to be supported by the adoption of information and communication technology, which affect sales performance [2].

In the past two decades, internet innovation has played an important role in business performance [3]. The dramatic growth of the internet has led to the emergence of two important phenomena: social media and online search engines. In business context, social media is a new communication channel between companies and customers that allows them to interact directly [4]. Social media is an effective virtual world for accessing reliable and updated information [3]. Social media also allows open communication that can help companies in understanding customer needs and motivate them to respond proactively and efficiently to customer needs [5]. The growth and various social media usage have encouraged SMEs to realize their ambitions to market their products, brands or services more easily and widely [6].

The number of social media users continues to increase every year. Furthermore, not only the users, various types of platforms on social media also continue to increase. Social media is a part of daily life to communicate and share information. This has changed consumer behavior and is a concern that must be addressed by companies. Strategies and tools for companies to interact with customers have changed dramatically with the advent of social media. Different social media platforms have become a natural part for the company to carry out marketing strategies, especially in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) [7].

In general, social media offers various benefits and opportunities for companies since it helps in attracting new customers and maintaining relationships with existing customers. In addition, social media can also be used to enhance collaboration with customers, which in turn may accelerate innovation [8]. According to an industry social media report, 86% of marketers believe that social media channels are an important component of their marketing initiatives. Social media allows companies to engage directly with end consumers at relatively low costs and a higher level of efficiency than is achieved by traditional communication tools. Companies have started embracing social media for various marketing purposes; including branding, research, customer relationship management, services, and sales promotions. From these various objectives, most companies use social media for branding. In addition, marketing through social media can positively affect a company's reputation [9]. By using social media, customers have access to various shared information sources from other customers in terms of experience and recommendations [3].

Based on the explanation above, the existence of social media has indeed been acknowledged by various communities, especially for SMEs. Social media can also be classified with various functionalities. This research described seven blocks of classification of social media functionality, including identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups [10]. Each type of social media with its respective functionality certainly has a varied impact if applied to SMEs. So, it needs an in-depth study of what social media has been used by SMEs and how it impacts SMEs. So far, there has been no research that has conducted the study which can be used as a reference for research.

2. Methodology

Research on the impact of social media usage on SMEs is not a new study. Some previous studies examined the factors that influence social media usage in SMEs and how SMEs succeed in utilizing social media for their business interests. However, there have not been a thorough study that examine the current findings related to social media impact on the sales process in SMEs. This study aims to answer the following research question **“What is the impact of social media on the sales process in SMEs?”**

The method used in this literature review is Systematic Literature Review (SLR). The first thing that need to be done in this SLR is to collect previous research literatures as a source in getting research results. Literature search was conducted using two database sources, namely:

- a. Emerald Insight on the link (<https://www.emeraldinsight.com/>)
- b. Science Direct on the link (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/>)

From the two databases the same keywords are used to search for the researches. However, the extraction is different since each database has different search method. Science Direct is more flexible, in which users can freely type keywords according to the coding rules that have been determined by science direct. In addition, in science direct the searches can also be performed based on more than one section, for example, researcher may combine titles, abstracts and keywords. It's different from the search conducted in Emerald Insight database. In this database, expert search can only be performed based on one part such as abstract, title or keyword.

The stages in the literature selection process were carried out are as follows:

- Searching for literature on the database with relevance based on the suitability of keywords with the title, in addition to the conditions specified in the plan.
- Performing literature elimination on those that do not meet inclusion criteria and meet exclusion criteria.
- Reading abstracts from each literature whose title meets the conditions. Elimination was then performed based on abstract relevance.
- Evaluating the literature by reading it in its entirety and evaluating its quality.
- Selecting literatures that pass the evaluation phase.

The literature search stage was carried out by searching using certain keywords in terms of certain sections, according to abstracts, titles or keywords in the journal. Literature search was performed using following keywords:

- In Science Direct database, journals search process used expert search by writing keywords: **“social media” OR “SM” AND “small medium enterprises” OR “SME's” AND “sales” OR “marketing”**.
- In Emerald Insight database, journals search process used Boolean search considering the content of the keywords: **ABSTRACT “social media” OR ABSTRACT “SM” AND ABSTRACT “small medium enterprises” OR ABSTRACT “SME's” AND ABSTRACT “sales” OR ABSTRACT “marketing”**.

The number of journals produced at each search stage and the final journal selection results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The number of journals from search results.

No.	Criteria	Science Direct	Emerald Insight (Abstract)
1	Corresponding with entered keywords	1201	1359
2	Journal/article received	213	545
3	Published in 2017-2018	73	241
4	Keywords correspond with the title, abstract, and keyword	17	19
5	Abstract is appropriate to answer the problem formulation in this study	11	13

The next stage performed to narrow down the review to more relevant literature is application of inclusion and exclusion criteria. Inclusion criteria are criteria for journals that will be used as material for review literature, while the exclusion criteria are the criteria of a journal that will be eliminated as a literature material. The inclusion criteria used in this study are as follows:

- The literature reviewed is a paper journal
- The journal examines the social media usage in SMEs
- The research was published in 2017 until 2018
- The literature is in English
- The paper journal is indexed (Q1 and Q2)

The exclusion criteria used in this study are as follows:

- The literature is not related to the topic of using social media in SMEs and does not correspond with research questions
- The literature is in languages that are not understood by researchers (not in English)
- The journal is published before 2017

After the literature was selected according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria, the next step is to assess each of the literature. The quality of the literature can be assessed based on the following points using the OR operation. The number of journals assessed that have suitable title, abstract and keyword is 36 journals. Of the 36 journals, re-selection would be carried out according to the values obtained. The final stage of journal selection is obtained by 24 journals. The journals were analysed to achieve deeper understanding, whether the journals correspond with the topic or formulation of the problem in this study.

The last step in the methodology is synthesizing. This stage was carried out to answer the formulation of the problem identified in the introduction. The synthesis of Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was carried out with several stages which can be seen in Fig. 1.

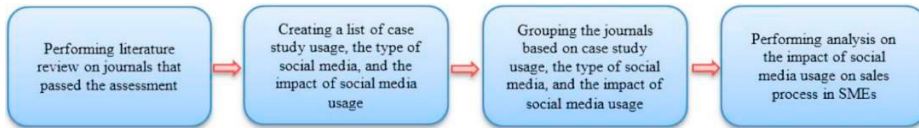


Fig. 1. Stages of synthesis.

The literature review was carried out on the journals accepted or passed the assessment stage. Of the 36 journals that were assessed, there were 24 journals that were accepted. Therefore, this systematic literature review is sourced from the 24 journals. The results of the literature review of 24 accepted journals were then listed and grouped base on the types of social media, types of industries, the impact of social media usage, and the case studies used. It aims to summarize the results of the literature review of 24 journals accepted and make it easier to understand the journals related to the formulation of the problem. The last step in this synthesis was to analyze the impact of social media usage on the sales process of SMEs. From this analysis the problem formulation in this systematic literature review (SLR) can be answered.

3. Results

Based on the synthesis results, there are 24 journals that are used as literature material in this study. The 24 journals used different case studies from various countries. In addition, the types of social media and the types of industries used in each journal also vary. The summary of results based on the type of industry, type of social media, and the case studies used in the 24 journals can be seen in Fig. 2.

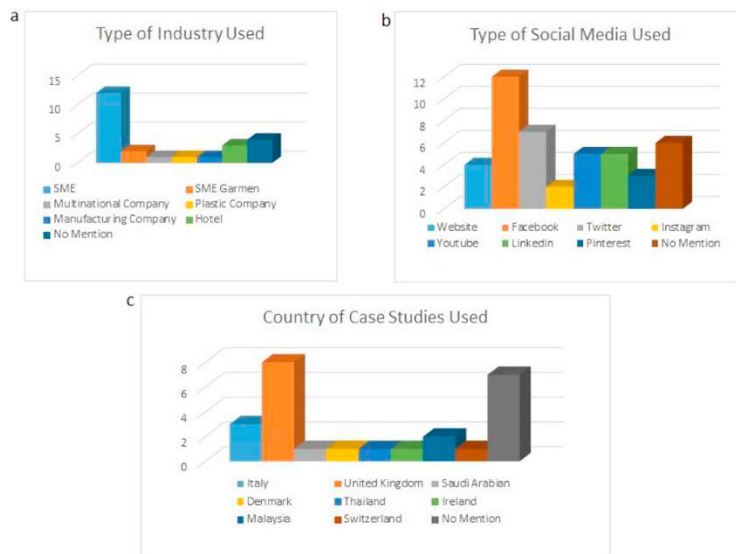


Fig. 2. (a) type of industry; (b) type of social media; (c) country of case studies.

Based on the type of industry (Fig. 2a) used in the study, most journals mention SMEs only and do not specify the specific type of SME. Fig. 2b shows that Facebook is the types of social media that are mostly investigated in the literature. This is because Facebook is a type of social media that is widely used by people and has a platform that is easy to understand. Some case studies in the literature investigated more than one social media, for example Facebook and Twitter. Most of the case studies reported in the literature are from the United Kingdom. This is because the UK has many SMEs and has utilized IT.

Social media as a communication channel helps companies to achieve different organizational goals including marketing, PR, advertising, branding, customer service, human resources and problem solving [3]. Social media is defined as a group of internet-based applications that are built on the foundation of Web 2.0 ideology and technology, which enables the creation and exchange of content created by users [11]. Social media includes various forms of online applications such as social networking sites (SNS), blogs, forums, microblogging, photo sharing, video sharing, product/service reviews, evaluation communities, and social gambling. Social media facilitates the process of sharing information and creating content by individuals. People use different online networks such as Facebook, YouTube, Wikipedia, Twitter, Instagram, TripAdvisor, online forums, rankings, and review forums to share experiences and interact with other users [3]. In social media, the interaction can be done anywhere as long as the location is reachable by the network, which allows users to continue to connect using personal mobile devices such as smartphones or tablets [7].

After performing the grouping of the literature, a more detailed analysis of social media usage on the sales process in SMEs was carried out on 24 journals that were used as research sources. The results of the impact analysis of social media usage on the sales process in SMEs can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. The impact of social media usage on the sales process in SMEs.

Type of Industry	Type of Social Media	Country	The Impact of Social Media Usage in SMEs
SMEs	Website	United Kingdom, Denmark, Ireland, Malaysia, Italy	Improving relationships with customers [2, 5, 14]
			Improving marketing accessibility [2, 6, 8]
			Reach stakeholders [2, 14]
			Minimizing costs [5]
			Improving information accessibility [5, 6, 20, 23]
			Improving creativity [6]
			Gathering feedback from customer [6, 14]
			Expand communication with customers [8]
			Increasing income for SMEs [8, 12]
			Support sales [14]
SMEs	Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube, Instagram	United Kingdom, Ireland, Thailand, Switzerland	Build a corporate brand [14]
			Improving the innovation process [14, 23]
			Improving customer satisfaction [16, 20]
			Improving sales [1]
			Improving marketing [7]
			Attract new customers [7, 22]
			Improving brand satisfaction [9, 22]
Building a network of companies [19]			
Fashion or Garment	Social Network (Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn)	United Kingdom, Italy	Monitor competitors and look for new business partners [19]
			Improving relationship and company ROI [13]
			Gathering feedback from customer [13, 21]

Type of Industry	Type of Social Media	Country	The Impact of Social Media Usage in SMEs
Multinational Company (MNC)	Facebook, Twitter, YouTube	Thailand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get external insights in getting ideas for new product development [15] Improving the quality of existing products and services and add value to products [15] Improving company marketing [11]
Manufacturing Company	Not mentioning the type of Social Media	United Kingdom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving interaction, collaboration and networking between stakeholders [11]
Hotel	Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, LinkedIn, Youtube, Instagram	United Kingdom, Saudi Arabian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improving marketing effectiveness [3, 4, 24] Improving branding and innovation [3, 4, 24]

Based on the study results on the used literature, there are some impacts of social media usage on the sales process in SMEs. In the 24 papers reviewed, not all papers explain impact of social media usage on the sales process in SMEs. Some of these journals explain how to get customers from social media, how to see customer characteristics through social media, and the factors that influence success in adopting social media. Therefore, the impacts were found as results of social media usage on the sales process for SMEs according to different types of industries and different types of social media.

However, if viewed by each country, it can generally be concluded that there are similarities from the use of social media in SMEs. All depends on the type of SMEs and the type of social media used. They use social media according to the company's business goals. The impact obtained is mostly related to the SMEs sales and marketing processes, such as the relationship between the company and customers, the company with stakeholders, the company with business partners, and the company's relationship with competitors.

Social media marketing is divided into several types including social bookmarking, social networks, social streaming, social search, social knowledge, social blogging, social customer service, and social publishing [25]. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Pinterest are part of the social network. While the website is part of social publishing. Most types of industries use social media within the scope of social networks. This is tailored to the strategies and objectives of the industry utilizing social media in the company. Furthermore, most of the industry targets in the use of social media are the wider community, so that the chosen social media is social media that can be used by all groups.

The impact of social media usage on the sales process in SMEs can increase income for SMEs in the intensive information industry (examples of television programs, films, books). However, this is not the case in primary industries (examples of agricultural, plantation, fishery products) characterized by low information intensity both in value chain information and product information [12]. Active application of social media by SMEs enables organizations to gather feedback and new ideas from various stakeholders, such as consumers, suppliers and employees. SMEs must take a more active role, revive organizational settings through online digital, social and transformational technology. With this, organizations can inspire and enhance industrial creativity and bring about the formation of entrepreneurial generations [13, 14]. Based on recent phenomena, SMEs use social media to get feedback from customers or other users. That is, SME explores information obtained through social media for their business interests. This is marketing research by gathering feedback and new ideas from various stakeholders (customers, suppliers, and employees) and turning them into products or services, so that companies can understand customer needs and create new innovations in developing products or service [13, 15]. In addition, social media usage has a very strong positive impact on organizational performance, in terms of reducing costs, improving customer relations, and increasing information accessibility. Extensive marketing through social media does not require large costs [5]. Reaching out and establishing contacts with new customers, distributors and end customers [2, 5], and getting increased visibility are also the impacts of social media usage on SMEs. By entering new markets, SMEs can develop relationships with new customers abroad, as well as reduce constraints in terms of space and time even though SMEs have limited human resources and finance [2]. For manufacturing industries, social media is used to improve marketing, interaction, collaboration, and networking between stakeholders. This kind of company needs more than one and interconnected social media. For example, a website is used to update information about a company, Facebook

is used to build relationships with customers, and online chat groups are used to discuss product or service development [11].

Social media usage implies the introduction of new resources that are used as communication tools and as innovative distribution channels. The process of selling and negotiating has been followed through e-mail and telephone contacts which can reduce the need for physical contact. The ability to use social media helps companies to make a more planned and proactive sales approach. Social media is formed by existing resources as well as by new resources that have a good influence on business relationships. Social media as a resource has displayed its effects in combination with other relevant and interconnected resources, as argued by the The Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) perspective and shown through the 4R model. First, the role of social media usage is played by entrepreneurs and sales managers. Second is the effective use of social media in sales activities. Third is the knowledge of resources regarding social media usage. Fourth is the changes in the features of interconnected resources might have an impact on the actual and potential contribution of social media as a resource [2].

The success of social media usage in the sales process in SMEs depends on the condition of the company itself. Not all SMEs have an interest in using social media. These factors can be caused by social media platforms that are difficult to use, especially by elderly entrepreneurs. This makes them reluctant to use social media and they prefer to use traditional methods [2]. The results of this literature study show that each SMEs has their own goals of social media implementation in the company. The success of social media implementation also depends on how SMEs' resources to manage social media in their business. However, some questions need to be addressed further:

- A good strategy for social media implementation will improve the performance of SMEs.
The implementation of social media in SMEs can be supported by many factors. This depends on the business strategy and the objectives of SMEs to use social media. Analysis of the impact of social media adoption in increasing sales and sales process innovation by SMEs has been carried out by [2]. The study emphasizes that the role and impact of social media depends heavily on the nature and features of social media, as well as other resources within SMEs. Therefore, there is a need to analyse the influence of good social media strategy on the performance of SMEs.
- Alignment between social media functionalities with social media strategy can directly improve the performance of SMEs.
Every social media has different functionalities and strategies. This is confirmed in research about the functionality of social media [10], and research on strategy social media [27]. This relationship analyzed how social media strategies that are aligned with social media used by SMEs can directly improve the performance of SMEs.
- The magnitude of social media impact on the performance of SMEs.
In addition to implementing a good strategy in social media implementation, the results or perceived impact of social media used in SMEs also need to be known and measured. So that it can be seen how much social media contributes to the development of SMEs.

4. Conclusion

This research was conducted to identify the impact of social media usage on the sales process in SMEs through Systematic Literature Review (SLR). Based on the results of studies from 24 journals, there are some impacts of social media usage. Each of these impacts is based on journals that were reviewed according to the research problem formulation. The impacts resulting from social media usage on the sales process in SMEs, among others, can improve customer relations, expand marketing at low cost, improving information accessibility by getting feedback and ideas from stakeholders, and can improve company performance. The impacts resulting from SLR mapping vary, all depending on the type of industry and the type of social media used.

This research only focuses on the impacts resulting from the use of different types of social media for the sales process in SMEs competing in different industries. In general, the impact explains in broad terms the benefits that SMEs obtained. Further research is needed to gain more insights related to the driving factors of the use of social media in several SMEs with the same type of industry and the same type of social media. Another aspect that need to be investigated is the relationship between the alignment of social media functionality and strategies with SMEs performance.

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