Factors Influencing the Adoption of Social Media Marketing in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

The COVID-19 outbreak led to a global economic slowdown that affected many countries including Saudi Arabia where trade, investment, employment, and travel have all been impacted by the lockdown, especially on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The main purpose of the current study is to examine the factors that influence the adoption and use of social media marketing (SMM) in SMEs during the lockdown in Saudi Arabia. This study has used a combined developed model from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2) to examine whether SMEs in Saudi Arabia accept and use SMM effectively in the case such as COVID-19 pandemic, and to test its impact on improving the business performance through attracting new customers, sales, improved communication with customers, identifying customers' needs, and utilizing employees' creativity. This model succeeded to explain the Impact On Business (IOB) to a degree of 81%, since the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.81. This study used a quantitative method by applying the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) technique to validate the conceptual model. The data was collected by using an online questionnaire of 146 participants from small and medium-sized enterprises. The results highlight that perceived usefulness (PEU), low cost (LCOS), and compatibility (COM) had a significant positive impact on SMEs to adopt and use SMM. The facilitating conditions and perceived ease of use had a non-significant impact on the adoption and use of SMM by SMEs. This study also found that small enterprises have been affected by the factors more than medium-sized ones. Another finding is that enterprises that were forced to close were more significantly affected by the factors (Low Cost and Compatibility) than the non-closed ones during the first lockdown starting from March 2020. In the same context, Facilitating Conditions (FCO) was not significant as 63 % of the participated enterprises were closed during the lockdown and could not use their infrastructure.

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List of Abbreviations

AGFI	Adjusted Goodness of Fit Model
AU	Actual Use
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
BI	Behaviour Intention
CFI	Comparative Fit Index
CMV	Common Method Variance
COM	Compatibility
LCOS	Low Cost
COS	Cost
CR	Composite Reliability
CSF	Critical Success Factors
df	Degrees of Freedom
DSMM	Digital Social Media and Mobile
FCO	Facilitating Conditions
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GFI	Goodness of Fit Model
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IDT	Innovation Diffusion Theory
IOB	Impact On Business
IS	Information Systems
IT	Information Technology
IU	Intention to Use
LF	Loading Factor
O2O	Online To Offline
PEOU	Perceived Ease Of Use
PEU	Perceived Usefulness
RMR	Root Mean Square Residual
RMSEA	Root Mean Square Error
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SMEs	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
SMM	Social Media Marketing
TAM	Technology Acceptance Model
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
UTAUT	Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology

Chapter 1. Introduction

This thesis provides an overview of how small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Saudi Arabia have been coping with the COVID-19 pandemic. It commences with background information regarding social media, SMEs in Saudi Arabia and the pandemic, focussing on a marketing perspective. The problem statement outlined in this chapter allows the purpose and the objectives of the research to be articulated, together with the formulated research question. Following that, the research contribution discovers and confirms the effectiveness of the use of social media marketing (SMM) in SMEs in Saudi Arabia during the COVID-19 pandemic by studying its influential factors. Theoretical foundations and the conceptual framework will be illustrated in this chapter. This chapter will conclude with an outline of the thesis along with the thesis structure.

1.1 Background

Businesses are presently operating in a highly interconnected international business world (Salman et al., 2017). Therefore, businesses are more exposed to unexpected and abnormal events like crises and pandemics, since they comprise new risks and create a volatile business environment. For businesses that are not prepared to adapt during a crisis, they can face difficult challenges to achieve sustainable revenue or even survive (Salman et al., 2017). This thesis is written at a time when the globe is faced by an economic crisis arising from the COVID-19 pandemic that has affected businesses both small and big across the world.

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared officially coronavirus as a pandemic in March 2020, though the first case in Saudi was reported in February 2020 (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). The pandemic has resulted in a sequence of events that has led to

businesses in many sectors in Saudi Arabia facing economic challenges. The driving force has been that the Saudi government, like many other governments across the world, had to pass some restrictions as a way of controlling the spread of the coronavirus. For example, the Saudi government on 25th March 2020 announced its first lockdown, allowing only essential services and goods to be accessed. The lockdown saw restaurants only allowed to offer take-away services, while pharmacies and grocery stores were allowed to operate online. Transport, airline and hospitality sectors were also affected as domestic and international flights were banned. Trains, buses and taxi services were also suspended as the government enforced a curfew entirely (Hassounah et al., 2020). All these measures had a net effect of reducing household consumption. As a result, many businesses were affected by declined sales.

A report by KPMG (2020) revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic caused considerable damage to businesses in Saudi Arabia. The report further noted that more than 70% of businesses took measures to lower their costs. In addition, the report indicated that small and medium-sized businesses were worse hit by the pandemic. Nonetheless, this study will adopt the definition applied by the Saudi Arabia government, which defines SMEs as firms that have between 6 and 49 employees, while those with between 50 and 249 employees are grouped as medium-sized (Monsha'at, 2020). Based on this definition, over 80% of SMEs in Saudi Arabia have been affected in one way or another by the COVID-19 pandemic. KPMG (2020) underlined that demand has declined for 60% of SMEs, and over 50% of the SMEs reported negative cash-flows in 2020.

Decker et al. (2014) agree that SMEs are an important element in market economies as they are significant sources of economic growth of a country. Yet again, as noted by Cesaroni et al. (2020), SMEs suffer the most negative impact when crises occur. This arises from the fact that they generally have limited human, financial and even technological resources, which hinders them to respond as effectively to crises as big companies and multinationals.

Naidoo (2010) suggested that an effective tool for businesses with limited resources (usually SMEs) is adopting marketing innovation. According to Varadarajan (2018), marketing innovation entails using new marketing strategies with changes in pricing strategy, product design, product placement and packing. Varadarajan (2018) adds that being innovative implies using new marketing tools such as social media, to create an integrated marketing strategy. However, Karlsson and Tavassoli (2016) underscored that businesses should remember that implementing new approaches of marketing does not imply reducing the marketing budget. A good starting point could be evaluating the marketing strategy and realigning it to meet customers' changed behaviour arising from the crisis. Nieves and Diaz-Meneses (2016) underlines that empirical studies reveal that marketing innovation activities influence the profitability of a business in positive way.

Karlsson and Tavassoli (2016) have argued that SMEs have to implement more innovative strategies for them to succeed during a crisis or pandemic. For instance, SMEs are encouraged to offer their products through online platforms, not only to reduce their operations costs, but also to reach a wider market. In the present case of the COVID-19 pandemic, where public health measures such as social distancing are being taken, it makes a business case to use social media as an imperative and effective marketing tool to enable business continuity. Masa'deh et al. (2018) affirm that one aspect that businesses should not compromise during a crisis is marketing activities, though businesses that increase their marketing activating in the course of pandemic may not increase their revenues, they usually post high revenues quickly once the pandemic ends. Roberts (2003) underlined that empirical evidence reveals that businesses that focused or maintained a certain level of marketing during a crisis reported an increase in market share once the economic crises was over. Grundey (2009) underlines that it is easier to retain customers (by engaging them) than trying to get new customers. Therefore, during an economic

crisis, it is necessary for businesses to use innovative marketing tools such as social media to retain their loyal customers and attract new customers once the crisis is over.

According to Jobs and Gilfoil (2014), the success factors in adopting social media marketing entail getting the right people to carry out the strategy. Many SMEs are unable to overcome this challenge or barrier because they are unable to attract the right people with the right flexibility and skills to understand social media and how it can be used to create positive experience among customers. In addition, Jobs and Gilfoil (2014) underlined that the existing technological infrastructure has also been cited as both a success factor and a barrier. For those SMEs that have the required technology infrastructure, they will be successful in the social media marketing, but those that lack this necessary technological infrastructure, will find difficulty in exploiting the advantages available through social media marketing.

On their part, Alanine et al. (2018) established that the success of social marketing in a country like Saudi Arabia, which is still developing, depends on creative promotion, formulating effective messages and products, and adjusting the marketing programmes based on feedback received from customers. Indeed, during the COVID-19 pandemic, customer behaviour has changed, and it is necessary to respond to these changes when SMEs in Saudi Arabia plan their social media marketing. Alzahrani (2019) has observed that success factors in social media depends on marketing mix elements, customer research, targeting and competition. Customer orientation has also been emphasised as an important success factor in any form of marketing activity. SMEs should train their marketing team to better understand how they will successfully implement social marketing activities. Alzahrani (2019) underscored that social marketing should be carried out based on the needs of customers. Certainly, the current COVID-19 pandemic has presented a unique challenge to SMEs in Saudi Arabia, and the needs and demands of customers have changed (Nurunnabi, 2020). SMEs have to consider this aspect as they roll-out their social media marketing to achieve the desired results.

1.1.1 Explaining the role of Social Media

There are a number of definitions for social media. One of them is online technologies, communities or practices used by people for content generation and opinion, perspectives, experience and insights sharing with each other (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Social media content needs to be constantly refreshed in order to keep people engaged in the social media activities like collaboration, sharing and discussions (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Boyd and Ellison (2007) stated that generally social media is used for sharing, participation, collaboration and interaction with the use of online technologies. Common social media types include: blogs and microblogs such as twitter; collaborative projects such as Wikipedia; content communities such as YouTube; virtual social worlds; social networking such as Facebook; and virtual game worlds (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010); Facebook and Twitter are the most widely used social media tools by business as compared to the others. These two platforms have been used by a number of large companies like Papa John's Pizza and Wal-Mart to assist customers, interact with them, and share specials. In terms of Saudi Arabia, large corporations such as SACO, Panda, and AlOthaim Markets are using these platforms for interacting with customers and offering the latest deals.

According to Weinberg and Pehlivan (2011) certain marketing strategies are better suited for some social media networks than others. Twitter enables engagements and conversations which are brief and fast while Facebook enables deep conversations for the users with the help of various features and is best for building relationships that are lasting (Cox, 2014), while at the same time can track attitudes and beliefs of consumers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). As reported by Culnan et al. (2020) in the retail industry, Facebook is dominant for customer attraction and retaining them. Small business relies a lot on word of mouth in acquiring new clients. The study conducted by Stokes and Lomax (2002) showed that the most important source of new

customers for small businesses is existing customers' recommendations. The usage of social media is an attractive avenue for small business in customer outreach and enhancing marketing, since the cost will be manageable, as necessary given their resource constraints. The structure in small businesses is usually flat and the management style is organic, free-floating which encourages innovation and entrepreneurship (Durst & Edvardsson, 2012). According to SMB Group (2012), there is little understanding on how social media can be adopted effectively by small businesses even though more and more of them are exploring it. There has been little investigation on how social media platforms can be used as a survival tool amid crises, such as Covid-19, rather than just an instrument for business development (Trawnih et al., 2021). However, it is necessary for the SMEs to understand the success factors that they need to implement, and the barriers that they need to overcome when adopting social media marketing strategies. For example, an obvious barrier for many SMEs would lack of resources in terms of finances, technology, and skills.

1.1.2 Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in Saudi Arabia

Alzahrani A. (2018) underlined that Saudi has been steadily abandoning its long-lasting dependence on oil-associated income in the recent past, and thus has turned to its SMEs to achieve sustainable economic growth and development. Accordingly, the government has taken measures to enhance the SMEs environment. Even before the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Saudi government had set the groundwork for this part by implementing various policies and regulations to attract investors in the sector (Monsha'at, 2020). Similarly, the government had updated the legal system, employment laws, and banking laws with the objective of attracting more foreign investors.

SMEs' role in economic development and growth support is widely acknowledged in both developed and emerging economies, by harnessing resources and promoting development of talents, increasing job opportunities in return. More than 95% of companies in the private sector

in Saudi Arabia are SMEs. Even though the sector is behind its peers regionally and globally in size and value, SMEs in Saudi contribute almost 20% of the GDP (whereas in UAE it is 53%, and in countries worldwide they contribute 45% of GDP). SMEs are expected to play a big role in diversifying the Saudi economy from oil and help nascent industries like manufacturing, entertainment, tourism and Islamic finance to grow. In turn, these sectors are expected to become an important employment source for the young population in the country (Thompson, 2020). The government granted large financial aid to the sector in March 2020 given its importance to the objectives of Saudi Vision 2030. This will help the SMEs in the kingdom weather the business activities slump caused by the Coronavirus pandemic as well as a decline in oil prices.

With considerations as to how SMEs are growing in significance to Saudi Arabia's economy and the larger Middle East, the main question now becomes how to make them more profitable and marketing is an integral part of the question itself (Al-Tit et al., 2019). SMEs in Saudi Arabia have moved to using information and mobile technology. They use them for e-commerce purposes and advertising even though they still fall behind the uptake of bigger corporations and businesses (Al-Tit et al., 2019). Aldayel et al. (2011) in their study found a positive correlation between use of social media and how effective SMEs are in their marketing and advertisements. The study shows that businesses place advertisements on social media which are intelligent and able to attract very high traffic to the businesses' web pages. The high traffic enables these businesses to market their services and products to these customers in return.

Also, Al-Mahrouq (2010) established that SMEs get benefit from the use of digital marketing but little research exists on how the benefits they get are different from the ones that bigger businesses usually get even though there are different digital footprints as well as adoption speeds of technology between the two. Additionally, the smaller businesses don't have the

strength in resources enjoyed by the bigger businesses and most of the time need to do their marketing themselves instead of using the marketing firms like the bigger businesses do. This could be the reason social media is attractive to smaller business, as it is less expensive as compared to the traditional media which is utilised by the bigger businesses. An important question arises asking if the Saudi Arabia SMEs adapted the use of social media and using them for their marketing strategies. In a related study by Alfaadhel (2011), he found that there is still a long way for the SMEs in the country to go before full adoption of mobile based marketing and social media, even though the government is supporting them in the adoption processes of the technology-based marketing in the country. According to the study, there is only a small portion of the small businesses which have actually achieved digital transformation. This is one of the biggest challenges for SMEs to boost their competitive advantage in the market as they don't have the resource muscle like the big businesses to carry out marketing operations.

In the same context, Alzahrani (2018) restates that the SME sector has become a crucial element of Saudi economy. Therefore, it is essential to help the SMEs to successfully compete with large and established businesses. Achieving this requires cost reduction measures and sustainable growth, which SMEs are trying to achieve to continue being competitive. The use of social media offers the SMEs operating in Saudi Arabia an opportunity to change from traditional business model to new methods that use modern technology. Consequently, costs may be reduced.

In the survey carried out by Alhawal et al. (2020) they concluded that SMEs indeed play a significant role in the Saudi economic growth and development. However, the survey affirms the fact that the SMEs are deeply affected by the current COVID-19 pandemic, and many of the SMEs are going through financial difficulties (Alhawal et al., 2020). The majority of the affected SMEs had to temporarily lay-off their staff, though the government stepped in and

paid 60% of the salaries of local employees still working in the private sector albeit only for three months (Alhawal et al., 2020). Still, many of SMEs continued to find it difficult to continue operating as the crisis continued. Concerning e-business model, 79% of SMEs had not embraced electronic services prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, underlining the need for these SMEs to adopt the e-business model. Social media marketing would be a good starting point for the SMEs to adopting e-business model. Hence, the need to undertake this study and establish the success factors and the potential challenges that come with adopting and using social media marketing.

1.2 Problem statement

The coronavirus outbreak led to a global economic slowdown and health emergencies that affected many countries including Saudi Arabia. Trade, investment, employment and travel have all been impacted and the pandemic will have a great impact on SMEs. As mentioned by WHO (2020) the coronavirus outbreak has affected almost all the sectors, with the most affected being tourism, education, health, transport and trade. Effendi et al. (2020) agree that the SMEs are the most threatened category owing to the fact that they have limited resources to handle the crisis.

As underscored by Yazdanfar et al. (2019), when an economic or pandemic crisis hits businesses and the turnover drops, it could result in bankruptcies. The declining turnover as well contributes to reduced innovative and marketing activities because these activities are costly. However, social media can be an attractive innovative marketing tool that could be used by cash-strapped SMEs in Saudi Arabia to survive the current COVID-19 pandemic, that has created a clear financial crisis for many business organisations. Still, there barriers and challenges that these SMEs have to overcome to successfully adopt the use of social media.

As mentioned earlier, the Saudi government, like many other governments across the world, implemented several restrictions as measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus (Nurunnabi, 2020). These measures have resulted in the changed customer behaviour and preferences. For example, restricting movement of people, could result to customers preferring to buy online instead of offline. Since social media is a marketing tool that is used by businesses to reach and engage consumers through advertisements, direct selling, content sharing and promotion, successful adoption and implementation of social media by SMEs will assist them to continue engaging with customers, know their preferences and gain a competitive advantage. It is worth noting, social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, and Google Plus have been accepted by many businesses as an effective marketing tool for marketing and creating customer relationships. Many big companies in Saudi Arabia and other parts of the world have integrated social media in their marketing strategy. However, SMEs with their limited resources have lacked behind in this area. The COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the importance and need of SMEs adopting social media. Indeed, in a survey carried out by Alhawal et al. (2020) on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on businesses in Saudi Arabia, 99.5% the businesses that took part reported that they were affected negatively by coronavirus. Most of the businesses stopped or scaled down their operations when the government announced a lockdown and curfews, which naturally led to a decline in revenues. Accordingly, the use of social media can help these businesses to continue with their operation, and possibly post an increase in revenues. Though many marketers agree that social media is an effective market tool, some businesses have failed to achieve the benefits of social media despite having used this platform. In Saudi Arabia, few studies have been carried out on the success factors and barriers of social media adoption by SMEs in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, this study seeks to address this gap, carrying out this research by investigating the success factors and barriers of social media marketing adoption and use in SMEs in Saudi Arabia.

1.3 Purpose

The main purpose of the current study is to examine success factors and barriers of social media marketing adoption and use in SMEs during the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia. As mentioned, Effendi et al. (2020) reported the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic resulted in population-wide measures that included lockdown and curfews, which were taken simultaneously across the world to slowdown and prevent the spread of the coronavirus. Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the daily life of people and businesses owing to the mitigating measures that have been taken by the Saudi government. Some of these measures have been social distancing and lockdown as ways of containing the pandemic. As such, technology has been necessary to maintain business and individual aspects of life. Consequently, businesses, particularly SMEs have been encouraged to adopt and use social media to continue their interaction with their customers as a new and innovative way of marketing.

Also, the study is important because it will help in understanding the extent at which SMEs in Saudi have been affected by COVID-19 pandemic, bearing in mind that many of them operate with tight budgets and are therefore unable to effectively respond to the crisis. Along the same lines, the study will help marketers and business managers to understand the success factors that need to be followed when integrating social media in their marketing activities, and the barriers they are likely to face. Nurunnabi (2020) noted that in spite of the widespread use of social media in Saudi Arabia, the consumer change in behaviour and preferences is likely to create new challenges for SMEs as they try to mitigate the pandemic. Therefore, it is important to carry out this study to try and understand how the new norms and emerging digital dynamics (including use of social media) would impact SMEs in Saudi Arabia.

1.4 Research Question

Technology is growing at a very fast pace in the Middle East region, particularly in Saudi Arabia. Potential market growth awaits those businesses that are able to formulate appropriate marketing and sales strategies. While the COVID-19 pandemic still presents challenges to many SMEs, it has also opened up new opportunities that can be exploited. Social media marketing can help the SMEs to unlock these opportunities. Hence, SMEs should change their informational marketing strategies and adapt new technologies and new consumer behaviour arising from the COVID-19 pandemic (Alhawal et al., 2020). Accordingly, the main research objective of this study is to examine success factors and barriers of social media marketing adoption and use in SMEs during the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia. This primary objective is supported by the following research question:

1. Which factors influence the adoption and use of Social Media Marketing as a marketing tool in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises during COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia?

1.5 Significance of the Study

Essentially, the study's contribution is to confirm the involvement and effectiveness of the use of social media marketing in influencing small and medium-sized enterprises in Saudi Arabia in terms of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic and its restrictions. The study also evaluated five factors that are impacting the adoption and use of social media effectively as a marketing tool and the effects of perceived usefulness (PEU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), compatibility (COM), facilitating conditions (FCO), and low cost (LCOS) on SMEs' use of SMM during the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, SMM can also be beneficial for SMEs in terms of impact on business (IOB) which is the core of this study. To that end, this study examines the benefits that SMEs in Saudi Arabia can derive from SMM by investigating it is a necessity in the COVID-19 pandemic and similar crises. Besides validating theories about technology

acceptance, the study also indicates that marketing through social media is a dependable tool in the future and is able to increase business performance. This study adopted a model of research that was derived from established theories of the acceptance of new technologies. The theories of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) have been validated in this study within the context of using SMM. Specifically, this study has used the TAM and UTAUT to examine whether SMEs in Saudi Arabia accept and use SMM in the case such as COVID-19 pandemic. Also, the theoretical model has been tested while the factors were appropriately taken into account. The contribution of this study is to assist businesses in their efforts to transform their marketing approach adequately to digital by applying and examining the factors of, i.e., PEU, PEOU, LCOS, COM, and FCO, which can improve their ability to operate amongst market changes. The study is of value for SME owners and managers in Saudi Arabia. The study contributes to their ability to make informed decisions on adopting SMM. In particular, it aids managers and marketers in deciding if the use of SMM is going to bring the expected benefits in terms of attracting new customers, increasing sales, improved communication with customers, identifying customers' needs, and utilizing the employees' creativity.

1.6 Theoretical framework

In this study, quantitative methods have been used to examine and evaluate the adoption and use of social media marketing as a marketing tool by SMEs in Saudi Arabia during COVID-19. A questionnaire was conducted online and sent to all targeted participants using their own personal email accounts as well as social media platform accounts (as explained in Chapter 3). To test the study hypotheses and determine whether SMM adoption by SMEs is effective, the study used a TAM model that takes into account five factors: perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, compatibility, low cost, and facilitation conditions (Chapter 2). Structural Equation

Modelling (SEM) was applied to the data collected in the survey to test the model as well as fit it to the survey data, with results shown in Chapter 4. Thus, Chapter 2 explores the theoretical issues underlying this research; then, the research hypotheses are outlined; and in Chapter 3, the methodological details of this research are discussed.

1.7 Conceptual framework

A significant number of studies have been written on user technology acceptance. Model TAM, formulated by Davis et al. (1989), has highly been adopted owing to its simplicity, robustness and applicability in predicting and explaining the attributes that impact user's adoption behaviour regarding new technologies. The model is described in Figure 1. It is founded on the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), to comprehend the causal relationships of user's internal beliefs, intention, attitudes and to predict and explain their acceptance of information technology (Davis et al., 1989). For clarification, this model argues that a user's actual usage behaviour (AU or Actual Use) is directly impacted by behavioural intention (IU or intention to use). Consequently, behaviour intention (BI) is established the user's attitude and the perception of usefulness. Davis et al. (1989) consider that user's attitude to be highly impacted by two main beliefs, (a) perceived usefulness (PEU) and, (b) perceived ease of use (PEOU). The two beliefs mediate between external variables (for example design features, past usage and experience, and computer self-efficacy), and the intention to use. More so, TAM proposes that PEOU also indirectly influences IU basing on PEU (Davis et al., 1989).

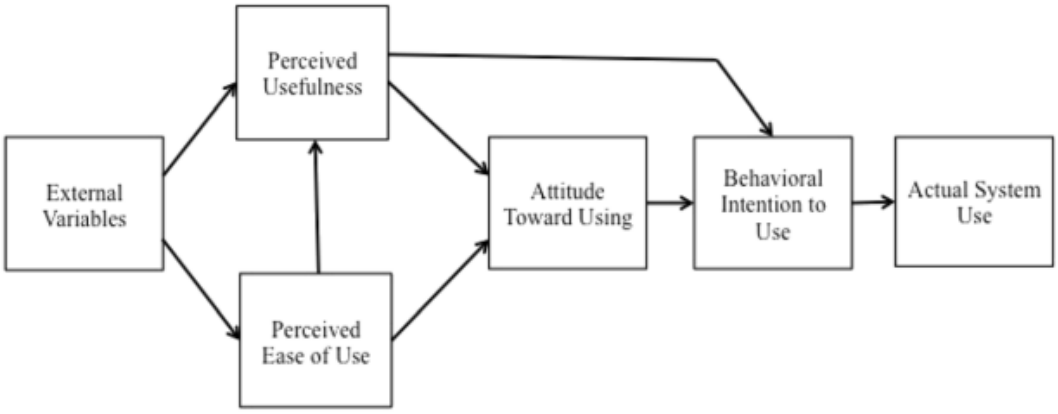

Figure 1 TAM model (Davis et al., 1989)

TAM has been applied in different technological fields and sectors that include wireless internet, multimedia-on-demand, collaborative technologies among others (Jobs & Gilfoil, 2014). However, a good number of these studies have modified the TAM model to enhance its predictive, applicability and validity to different technologies. Accordingly, for this study, the initial TAM model will be modified to suit its application on social media adoption.

Social networks like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, WeChat, and Snapchat have highly transformed the daily life of people. Kwon et al. (2011) carried out a comparative evaluation of user acceptance of Twitter and Facebook by extended TAM model to establish the primary motivating factors for individuals to use social network sites. Similarly, Rosen and Sherman (2006) extended the TAM model to include flow experience to allow them explain users' intention of using social sites. Lin and Lu (2011) established that the leading factor that affects users in signing up on social networks is enjoyment, though it is followed by the need to join peers and the usefulness of the site. The findings of Lin and Lu (2011) further indicate that gender difference as well plays a role in influencing social media usage.

Also, Kwon and Wen (2010) applied the TAM model to create a modified model that showed three unique differences, which include social identity, tele-presence and altruism. On their part, Rauniar et al. (2014) came up with elements of the user's critical mass, trustworthiness and social site capabilities to extend the TAM model. Their results offered evidence for the

significance of additional key variable to TAM taking into account user engagement on social media networks and other associated business strategies. Likewise, Kim et al. (2011) confirmed that the main reasons for the use of social network sites are seeking entertainment, seeking friends, information, convenience, and social support.

In a review of the literature available, Venkatesh et al. (2003) devised UTAUT based on a comprehensive synthesis of previous technology acceptance research studies. UTAUT is composed of four main constructs (i.e., facilitating conditions, effort expectancy, performance expectancy, and social influence) that influence behavioural intentions to use a technology and/or the use of the technology (Venkatesh et al., 2008). UTAUT 2 has been proposed as a UTAUT extension from an organisational perspective to the context of an individual consumer, with the new constructs; habit, experience, hedonic motivation and price value.

The model used for this study is a combination of the traditional TAM model and UTAUT 2 with other factors (Figure 2). Thus, the hypotheses of the belief-attitude-intention causal chain are applied in the environment of social media. Since SMEs' main objective of adopting social media marketing is informational and offering online purchase, the model uses the PEOU to represent the efforts a user thinking before engaging with SMEs. Therefore, a high PEOU score or ranking demonstrates that an SME has a good social site that the user can easily access and understand.

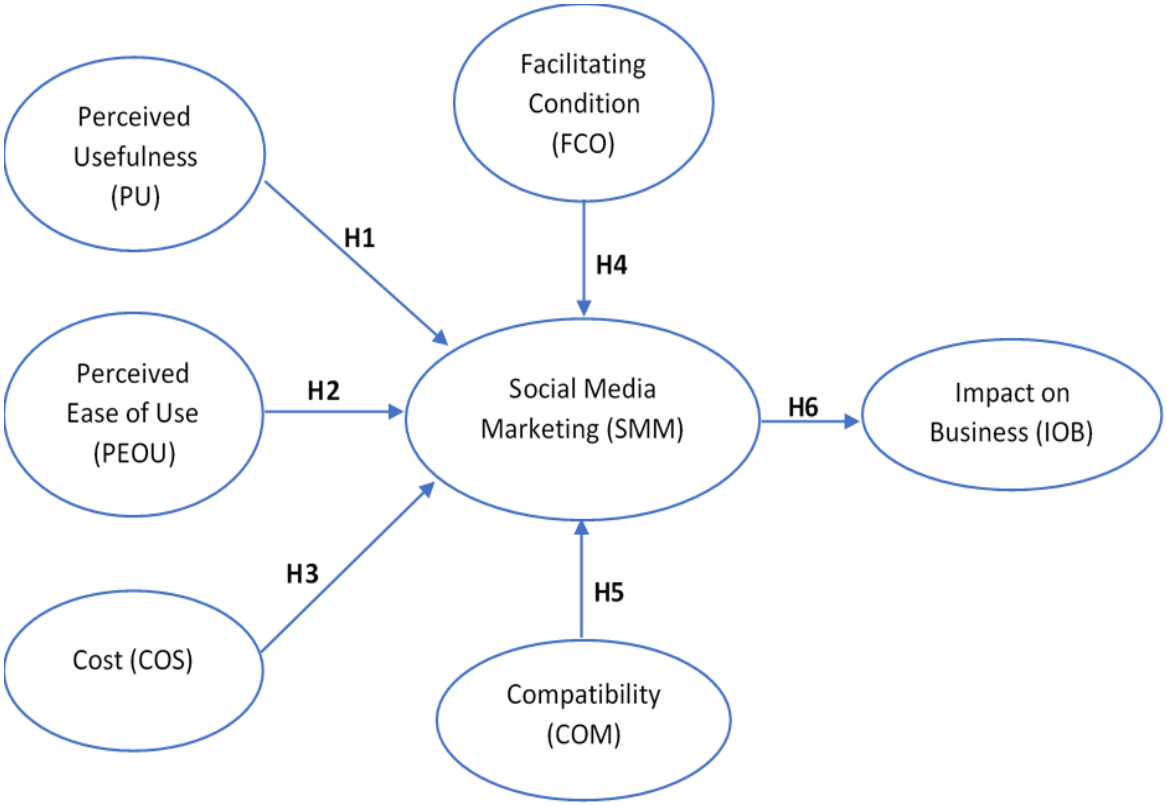

Figure 2 Proposed TAM model (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020)

Perceived usefulness is an important aspect of TAM model and has been modified and extended in different innovations such as improved job performance, to evaluate innovation performance of life or job. However, for the present study, the perceived usefulness is viewed as the perceived improvement of consumers' experience based on the experiences of the SMEs (as users) of social media.

More, new attributes such as low cost benefits (LCOS), compatibility (COM), and impact on business (IOB) are included since they are suitable in the present study. These attributes explain why an SME will adopt and use social media marketing.

1.8 Thesis outline

The present study is divided into five chapters, with each of them covering a specific aspect. The first chapter is the introduction, and it provides the background of the study, the problem statement, the purpose or significant of the study, and the research question that has been

formulated for the study. This chapter also presents the theoretical and conceptual framework that will be used for the study. Chapter two is the literature review, and it provides theoretical understanding of the social media, and its use as marketing tool by SMEs. The concepts discussed in this section are equally important in answering the research question. Then it illustrates the six hypotheses with their literature review. Chapter three follows, and it provides methodology part of the study. It discusses the research design that has been adopted, data collection tools and how data analysis will be carried out. The next is chapter four, will present the findings and the results. Chapter five is the final chapter, and it gives discussion of both the literature review, and primary data, presenting common themes that have been obtained and presents the conclusion, and recommendations of the study.

1.9 Summary

This chapter has underlined the topic of the research that seeks to examine factors influencing the adoption and use of social media marketing in small and mid-size enterprises during Coronavirus restrictions in Saudi Arabia. COVID-19 pandemic certainly disrupted businesses and individual's lives, causing a serious economic crisis that affected many countries across the world including Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by implementing public health measures such as curfews and lockdowns with the objective of controlling the spread of the virus. However, these measures hit SMEs badly because of their limited resources. Still, in time of crisis, businesses both big and small are required to be more innovative and resilient to remain afloat. Accordingly, SMEs in Saudi Arabia have been encouraged to adopt and use social media marketing as an innovative way of continuing to market their products and engage with their customers. Bearing in mind the high mobile penetration in the country, and the high accessibility and usage of mobile devices by the Saudi population, this suggestion can highly help the SMEs sector. The study has adopted the TAM model to guide in understanding how SMEs can successfully adopt and implement

social media marketing in relation to understanding their beliefs and intentions, and the beliefs of their customers. This chapter presented an introduction of the study.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1.Introduction

2.1.1. Brief explanation of the problem

The focus of most of the previous studies has been on investigating the use of social media as a marketing tool and recommending the use an integrated marketing approach (using a mixture of both digital media and traditional media) to connect with the audience (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016; Ritz et al., 2019). There is a lack of studies concerned with using social media marketing in a specific situation. This study is distinctive in the sense that it explores the ways social media can be used by businesses for connecting with the audience in a specific situation. This study is also distinct as it focuses on a specific sector - the SMEs; and a specific situation - Coronavirus restrictions in Saudi Arabia; and how the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) can help us to understand the factors responsible for why SMEs adopt certain technologies or reject them at this time. The researcher attempts to contribute to the existing literature by exploring various aspects of social media which can be used by SMEs in Saudi Arabia to develop their marketing strategies. Additionally, it will also increase the knowledge and literature of social media adoption as strategic marketing and business concepts. This research contributes to the area of knowledge by exploring how businesses can change their marketing approach and strategy during and after lockdown. The study also addressed the question regarding the challenges that SMEs in Saudi Arabia faced by the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, the success factors and barriers facing SMEs in Saudi Arabia in their quest to use social media to successfully proceed their social media marketing plans. The focus of the research study is on SMEs in Saudi Arabia, which is one of the considerable contributors to the economy of the country; as such, the success of SMEs is crucial for the business environment in Saudi Arabia.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been quick in responding to the pandemic by taking swift community actions and preparing the health care system for the battle against the pandemic (Barry, et al., 2020). A number of other actions have also been taken by the Saudi Arabia government to fight against this disease, such as suspending operations in the majority of government agencies, closing educational institutions, malls and markets, and prohibiting gatherings in public places, such as resorts, parks, and beaches. However, lockdowns were not particular to Saudi Arabia. This exceptional and overwhelming situation has greatly affected the businesses in Saudi Arabia, specifically SMEs, which are not only highly vulnerable to unforeseen challenges like natural calamities but also have low resilience, being small in size. In other words, the pandemic has severely affected SMEs by making it difficult for them to connect with their audience and customers.

This chapter covers four main points of this research; firstly, how are small and medium enterprises defined in general and in Saudi Arabia; secondly, what is the history of SMM usage in Saudi Arabia, and its relationship with SMEs; thirdly, how has the corona pandemic changed the rules of economic work and added a new dimension that had imposed itself on the financial and business arena especially in Saudi Arabia, and how SMEs used SMM during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fourthly, it reviews the theory of technology acceptance models (TAM, UTAUT 2) and the used model in this study.

2.2.SMEs

The term SME is a classification of small and medium-sized enterprises, and it means the businesses with fewer than a definite number of workers. For instance, in the European Union, a small and medium-sized business is interpreted as a firm that employs fewer than 250 individuals and that generates less than $50 million in revenue (European Commission, 2003). However, The World Bank defines SMEs as the following: small enterprises are businesses

that employ 10 – 49 employees while medium-sized enterprises employ 50 – 249 employees (The World Bank, 2021). However, in some countries, businesses with more employees could also be categorized as small; for instance, in the United States, small firms are defined as having fewer than 500 employees (Ritz et al., 2019). Small to medium-sized firms have a small number of employees and the managers are often the owners of the business (Sadi & Iftikhar, 2011). SMEs are a significant origin of job creation and economic development globally which represent most of the businesses around the globe. Further, the contribution of small and medium businesses (SMEs) to most economies is considerable, especially in developing countries. SMEs account for about 90% of businesses and over half of employment are based on them all over the world. In emerging economies, formal SMEs account for 40% of national income (GDP) (The World Bank, 2021). "According to our estimates, 600 million jobs will be needed by 2030 to absorb the growing global workforce, which makes SME development a high priority for many governments around the world" (The World Bank, 2021, SMEs Finance section). Most formal jobs are produced by (SMEs), which account for 7 out of 10 jobs in emerging markets.

SMEs is the most part would be impacted by any crisis that may occur (Cesaroni et al., 2020). To maintain a competitive edge, businesses with limited resources may be able to benefit from marketing innovation (Naidoo, 2010). In order to achieve the most from marketing innovation, businesses need to employ new marketing plans by involving a modification for pricing strategies, design and way of placement of the products (Varadarajan, 2018). The better method to start would be to evaluate the marketing strategy and realign it to meet the changed behaviour of customers caused by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis. It has been proven that marketing innovation has a positive impact on an organisation's profitability (Nieves & Diaz-Meneses, 2016). Therefore, and to respond to the COVID-19 lockdown and other shopping restrictions, it made sense to use social media as a powerful marketing tool to ensure business continuity.

Marketing activities are a critical aspect of a business's operations that should not be overlooked during a crisis (Masa'deh et al., 2018).

Saudi Arabia's SMEs are facing a change in customers' expectations and needs resulting from the current COVID-19 pandemic (Nurunnabi, 2020). According to KPMG (2020), 60 per cent of SMEs have reported decreased demand, and over half of the SMEs had negative cash flow. As a result of the new restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, customer behaviour and anticipation has altered. SMEs in Saudi Arabia need to reconsider adopting and using social media effectively in order to respond to these changes.

Like many other countries, Saudi Arabia has witnessed an uptick in the use of information technology (IT) and mobile technologies, which also has implications for businesses in Saudi Arabia; as more people use IT and mobile technologies in Saudi Arabia, there is scope for businesses to leverage social media and information technologies for business (Ali et al., 2018). In Saudi Arabia, SMEs has been defined as 6-49 employees for small enterprises, and 50-249 categorised as medium businesses (Monsha'at, 2020). Small and medium enterprises in Saudi Arabia have adopted to use of information and mobile technology, both for advertising and e-commerce purposes although they lag behind bigger businesses and corporations (Ali et al., 2018). There is limited adoption of e-commerce by the Saudi Arabian government, which can also signal a possible need for the adoption of technology in general by the government as well as enterprises (Ali et al., 2018).

SMEs that operate in Saudi Arabia are estimated at around 95% of all business, so they have a major role to play in the development of the economy of the Kingdom through the creation of employment and contribute to rising in the local economy (Al-Mutairi, 2018). Sadi and Iftikhar (2011) note that SMEs are an important part of the economy of Saudi Arabia, as is the case with most countries in the Middle East. Their study argues that because SMEs are increasingly becoming important in the Saudi Arabian economy both as a significant component of the

economy and as a creator of jobs, the issue of how the SMEs are able to become more profitable through marketing becomes important. The study by Sadi and Iftikhar (2011) also finds that there is a deficiency of internet marketing by SMEs in Saudi Arabia and that this has implications for customer orientation and market planning. This is despite research that marketing can have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the SMEs and their success rates (Sadi & Iftikhar, 2011). In Saudi Arabia, many SMEs are in the tourism sector, and the absence of a marketing strategy can have a significant leverage on the effectiveness and success of the business of the SMEs (Sadi & Iftikhar, 2011). This is an older research study, and while some of its findings may not be applicable now, the link between SMEs and marketing strategy is an important point that is made out in this study which is still relevant at this point and has implications for the present research study as well.

SMEs are an important aspect of the Saudi Arabian economy, especially now when the Kingdom is moving away from the oil-based economy. The Saudi Arabia had already embarked on an ambitious program, Vision 2030, of national-level change management triggered by adopting digital initiatives rapidly. The demographic base of Saudi Arabia is young, and digital transformation can help in unlocking the potential across different sectors by harnessing the talent of the youth (EYGM Limited, 2019).

Alzahrani (2019) brings out this point well where he notes that as Saudi Arabia gradually moves away from dependence on oil-related income and turns to SMEs, the development of the SMEs becomes a priority for the Saudi Arabia government. This makes the question of how the SMEs in Saudi Arabia are adopting technology-based marketing and business strategies a relevant question. Importantly, it is noted that the Middle Eastern region is experiencing rapid technological development, and there is obviously a market waiting for companies that can develop effective marketing and sales strategies (Alzahrani, 2019). The COVID-19 situation has however placed some challenges before the SMEs as lockdowns have impacted the

businesses. In this context, the use of social media by businesses to remain engaged with their customers could be an essential point to consider for the SMEs in Saudi Arabia to address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.3.Social Media Marketing

With the ever-changing technology landscape, small and medium sized businesses are given the opportunity to reach a wide range of consumers through social media platforms. Further, social media has greatly changed the tools and approaches that businesses employ to communicate with their customers, consequently businesses in need to develop a wider comprehension in regards to how to use social media in a method that is harmonious with their business strategies and goals. This is very important for organisations that are actively striving to achieve successes, through which they hope to obtain status and a competitive advantage that will enable them to continue and keep pace with future challenges.

Despite the fact that marketing through social media is a widely researched topic, but there is still a need for theoretical and empirical research. Besides, the benefits that organisations may derive from this marketing approach are not adequately described by most studies. After reviewing a wide range of multi-disciplinary literature, it is clear that there is an emphasis on describing how marketing through social media works and considering what factors influence consumer behaviour on social media networks. In spite of the fact that researchers have made the initial advancement in such a topic, slight progress has been made in this area of study and there is still a need for more research on the long-term benefits SMEs can obtain from marketing using social media. Theoretical or predicted outcomes do not always translate into actual results, which illustrates the need for more progress in academic studies in order to better understand real-life applications.

Indeed, small and medium-sized enterprises need to understand all of the aspects of social media when considering it as a marketing tool. Web 2.0 is crucial to understanding social media: it describes a new way in which end users utilize to interact with the Internet, where content is continually shared and collaborated and constantly tweaked by all operators (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Technology is associated with the interaction of users with it more than the technology itself. In the websites that allow users to interact, users can add and update information instead of receiving information only, which adds value to these sites (Campbell et al., 2011). In a study conducted by (Campbell et al., 2011) explains how Web 2.0 has evolved from simple information retrieval into collaborating, interactivity, and interoperating. In the same context, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as the applications that are based on Web 2.0 technology and lay the theoretical foundations (ideological and technological) for creating and exchanging user-generated content. However, social media is considered more interactive since participants are allowed to be a unify and can create and share personal profiles together with their friends and colleagues (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

The more people who perceive shopping through social networks as easy to use and useful places to shop, therefore they are more likely to purchase items (Cha, 2009). SMEs are able to grow their businesses by providing shopping services on social media platforms due to the diversity of consumers who use these sites. Almost all target markets can be reached through social networks due to their wide range of users (Cha, 2009). Hence, SMEs can use these platforms to promote their brands, goods, and services to potential consumers.

2.3.1. The prevalence of Social Media Marketing

Digital marketing has been noted to be one of the ways in which businesses and companies can advertise their products and services (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). The growth of what is called digital social media and mobile (DSMM) marketing over the last two decades is already

established in the literature as a phenomenon that has increased with the rise in the penetration of the Internet, affordable high-speed broadband connections, and development of social media (Lamberton & Stephen, 2016). Due to these technological advancements, there is an increase in the use of DSMM marketing by businesses around the world; however, for this, it is imperative that there is a penetration of home Internet and access to affordable broadband.

An argument for adopting social media technologies can also be made on the basis of the shift that consumers have made from the traditional purchase funnel to omni-channel approaches to both informational searches for purchase decisions as well as purchases. The trends that signify this shift to omni-channel approaches are noted by Deloitte (2015) and Google (2016). So much so that the Deloitte Point of View report had noted in 2015 itself that omni-channel retailing is the future (Deloitte, 2015).

Omni-channel retailing and marketing can be relevant to the SMEs in specific ways as it can allow them to get a competitive advantage because while they may not be able to compete with the bigger businesses in terms of marketing budgets, the consumers' shift to omni-channel approaches allows the smaller businesses to compete. A research study based on SMEs in Indonesia argues that as there is a digital transformation of consumers' needs and expectations, the traditional bricks-and-mortar business models will not be able to compete unless they improve their digital online to offline (O2O) capabilities (Pertiwi et al., 2016). Applying the same principle to Saudi Arabia, it can be argued that unless the SMEs in Saudi Arabia improve their digital capabilities and reach out to customers through omni-channel approaches, they will not be able to compete. With omni-channel retailing, SMEs can provide an integrated shopping across all marketing channels and respond to the need for an extensive shopping experience that consumers today have (Pertiwi et al., 2016; Deloitte, 2015).

In Saudi Arabia, there is a proliferation of the Internet and outstandingly increased access to information and communication technologies (ICT) in the previous decade (Omidinia et al.,

2011). There is also an increase in the use of mobile technology in Saudi Arabia (Reyaee & Ahmed, 2015). Internet penetration stands at 87 per cent in 2020 and is expected to grow to 97 per cent by 2025 (Statista Research Department, 2020).

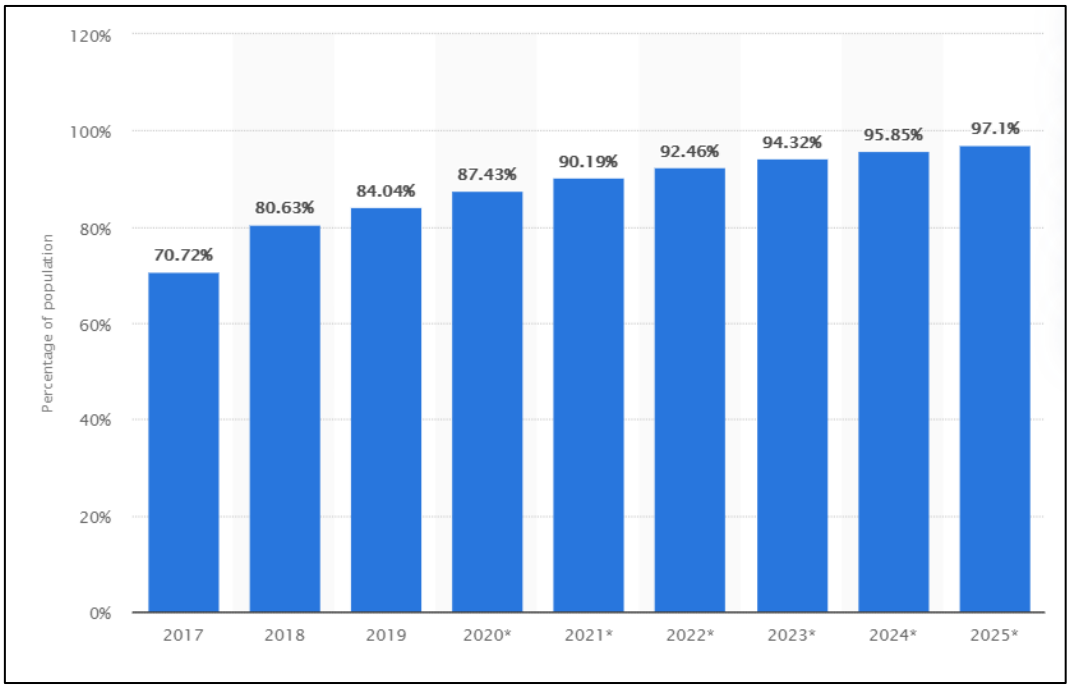

Figure 3 Mobile internet user penetration rate in Saudi Arabia from 2017 to 2025, where from 2020 and above are forecasts (Statista Research Department, 2020)

2.3.2. Social Media Marketing for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

The link between small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and social media marketing (SMM) has been brought up in research studies before. Bulearca and Bulearca (2010) conducted research using a combination of qualitative-interpretivist exploratory approaches in relation to the use of social media by Romanian and British SMEs, and they found that social media, particularly Twitter, is useful for SMEs for networking and online branding opportunities. This study was limited to the use of social media for countering negative E-word of mouth, which was a specific situation being addressed through the use of social media, much

like the present research relates to the specific situation of the use of social media by SMEs during a pandemic.

The use of social media in specific business or service areas has also been explored in literature; for instance, one study explored the use of social media by multi-unit restaurants (Jiang & Erdem, 2017). The outcomes of this study are especially related to the present research, which explored SMEs' use of social media. The study found that 69.4% of the multi-unit restaurant companies used marketing on Twitter and those small restaurants are more likely to use marketing on Twitter as compared to bigger or multi-unit restaurants (Jiang & Erdem, 2017).

Businesses are increasingly using social media to link to their customers because of a number of factors. One of the factors that are involved here is the effectiveness of social media like Facebook to enhance purchase intentions as reported via research by Dehghani and Tumer (2015). Their study explored the effectiveness of Facebook advertisements in enhancing consumers' purchasing intentions with 100 participants in Cyprus and found that Facebook advertising had significant impacts on enhancing brand image and equity thereby leading to enhanced purchase intentions (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015). This research shows a positive link between Facebook advertising and purchase decisions. However, this finding cannot be generalized in all situations like the present one, where countries around the world are in the middle of a pandemic, which has also impacted SMEs.

Another factor for using social media by businesses is that it allows enhanced customer engagement, which is a critical point for the present research because of the pandemic. Lee, et al. (2018) conducted research on the effect of social media advertising content on customer engagement where they used data for 782 companies from Facebook which was content-coded. The study found that there is a positive link between social media advertising and the enhancement of consumer engagement (Lee et al., 2018). The study also found that posting informative content on Facebook, like information on price and deals and promotions, can

improve the engagement with the customers (Lee et al., 2018). With respect to the present research, the important finding from this research is that investment in social media can be viable for smaller businesses as the costs of advertising are lower as compared to traditional media.

In general, however, social media has a positive correlation with SMEs' effectiveness of advertising and marketing as noted by Dwivedi, et al. (2015), who undertook a scientific literature review of 71 articles and studies on social media marketing. The collating of the literature in this study led to the findings that businesses are able to place intelligent advertisements on social media to attract a high load of traffic to their web pages, which then allows them to market their products and services to the customers visiting their websites (Dwivedi et al., 2015). The study also revealed that businesses are now required to carefully monitor their posts and pages on social media sites because customers are constantly posting negative and positive comments and also making recommendations that they should respond to (Dwivedi et al., 2015).

Research indicates that small businesses can benefit from digital marketing but there is little research into how these benefits can be different from those experienced by bigger businesses, although there are different digital footprints and technology adoption speeds of the two (Ritz et al., 2019). Indeed, smaller businesses may not have the resource strength of the bigger businesses, and they may be required to do much of their marketing on their own instead of deploying marketing firms. This may make social media a more viable form of marketing for smaller firms.

2.3.3. Social Media Marketing for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises in Saudi Arabia

The question is whether SMEs in Saudi Arabia are adapted or already using social media for their marketing strategy. In a research study exploring this issue, Faridi and Malik (2019) found that while SMEs are receiving some support from the government in Saudi Arabia so as to enable them to adapt to technology-based marketing, there is still some way to go for SMEs to achieve more adaptation to social media and mobile-based marketing. The authors have particularly noted that only a small portion of SMEs have achieved digital transformation, and this is one of the challenges for them to increase their competitive edge as they do not have the volume of resources for marketing as larger corporations do (Faridi & Malik, 2019).

As more people use IT and mobile technologies in Saudi Arabia, there is scope for businesses to leverage social media and information technologies for business (Ali et al., 2018). However, there is not enough research on why social media is adopted by SMEs and the reasons why social media adoption may be impeded or encouraged in SMEs in Saudi Arabia especially during the period of the pandemic.

Considering the growing significance of the SMEs in the economy of Saudi Arabia and the Middle East in general, the question of how the SMEs will be able to become more profitable becomes important, and marketing is an important component of that question (Sadi & Iftikhar, 2011). Ali et al. (2018) suggest that SMEs in Saudi Arabia have adopted the use of information and mobile technology, both for advertising and e-commerce purposes, although they lag behind bigger businesses and corporations.

2.4.COVID-19 pandemic

2.4.1. COVID-19 pandemic with economy

The 2019 coronavirus disease (COVID-19) was first reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) on December 31, 2019. On January 30, 2020, WHO declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a global health emergency (WHO, 2020). On March 11, 2020, WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic (WHO, 2020). Early news reports revealed that the pandemic was straining some supply chains and directly touching society's consumption around the globe. At the same time, schools, restaurants, malls, hotels and air traffic were temporarily closed due to broad efforts to control the spread of the virus, and many farmers and food producers were forced to destroy unused food products due to the paralysis that affected the supply chains at the international and local levels for most countries (Binder, 2020). Transportation and tourism industries are affected more severely due to lack of consumer confidence. The pandemic has also affected people or consumers causing loss of income and jobs, heightening uncertainty and fear of contagion, leading to reduction in consumption and spending.

The pandemic has negatively influenced SMEs across the world and many of them are reportedly on the verge of collapse (The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2020). SMEs badly need the support of governmental agencies as well as financial organisations for their survival because of the lack of resources and the limitation of their capital. They depend on the individuals' funds like family and friends (The World Bank, 2020). They also need to redesign their marketing strategies to keep moving in this difficult situation. The coronavirus pandemic greatly affected both demand and supply sides of the SMEs, triggered by reduction in supply of labour, dearth of intermediate goods and parts, loss of revenue and demand, liquidity shortage, and so on. These impacts of the pandemic are making the situation worse as SMEs are becoming unable to pay salaries and workers are being

laid off. It is essential for the SMEs to brainstorm and develop efficient strategies to deal with this discouraging situation.

2.4.2. COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia

In the current days, the global economy is still convulsed by a world of COVID-19 pandemic that has affected almost everything, including economics and businesses of all sizes around the globe. At the same time, Saudi Arabia reported its first case in February 2020 (WHO, 2020). In a time of crisis, businesses that are not prepared to deal with the situation are often faced with complicated challenges for an extended period of time before generating even the smallest amount of revenue or achieving financial break-even (Salman et al., 2017). In Saudi Arabia, a succession of events has led to economic challenges in many sectors due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A first lockdown was declared by the Saudi government on 25th March 2020, except for essential services and goods. Saudi Arabia and many other governments across the world passed some restrictions in an effort to control the prevalence of the Coronavirus/COVID-19.

A number of other actions have also been taken by the Saudi Arabia government to fight against this disease, such as suspending operations in the majority of the government agencies, closing educational institutions, malls and markets, and prohibiting gatherings in public places such as resorts, parks, and beaches. Only essential products and services are open for the people. For instance, restaurants are open for take-away service, grocery stores and pharmacies are open but their services are available through online delivery systems and/or government assigned applications. Additionally, every international and domestic flight, inter-urban train, bus, and taxi transportation are suspended. The Saudi Arabia government also imposed a nationwide curfew for different durations and with limited exceptions to ensure safety and life (Barry et al., 2020).

Due to this, many businesses suffered declines in sales. A number of sectors have been impacted by the lockdown caused by the COVID-19 outbreak, including important and essential sectors such as the aviation sector (both internal and international), public transport, taxis and hospitality. The Saudi Arabia government has imposed a total curfew, which influenced many sectors such as trains, buses, and taxis (Hassounah et al., 2020). According to KPMG's (2020) report, 70 per cent of businesses lowered their costs in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and SME's were the most brutally hit; in addition to that, all enterprises in Saudi Arabia suffered considerable losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. SMEs can be regarded as a cornerstone of all economies, it is considered as a vital component of economic growth and job creation.

SMEs play a vital role in the economy of Saudi Arabia as there are about 950,000 registered SMEs in Saudi Arabia and they employ over one million people (Khan & Alsharif, 2019). It is essential for the SMEs to develop efficient strategies to deal with this discouraging situation. A number of scholars have suggested different strategies for the SMEs to fight against this pandemic. One of the ways of connecting with customers and providing them products and services is the online trading channels but establishing an online trading channel requires substantial financial and technical support (Bahaddad et al., 2014). Another strategy of coming out of this hardship is through using social media platforms to connect with the audience (Algaissi et al., 2020). There are a number of substantial success factors (CSFs) for SMEs, such as use of e-commerce, technology transfer, resource planning, business marketing, computer technology acceptance, and so on (Al-Tit et al., 2019). Most of the CSFs can be managed efficiently by use of the available technology including the smart use of social media platforms. One of the CSFs, which can be managed by using social media platforms, is the business marketing. Business marketing is considered the backbone of a business, and it is essential to a company's success. Hence, in this pandemic period, SMEs in Saudi Arabia can use social

media for business marketing. However, effective and efficient use of social media platforms also requires adequate infrastructure and trained workers.

2.4.3. Using Social Media Marketing by Small and Medium-sized Enterprises during COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia

Diffusion theory may be relevant to this research study because the new circumstances that are resultant of the COVID-19 pandemic may require SMEs to resort to innovations for engaging with their consumers (Robertson, 1967). At the same time, the success of these innovations by the SMEs, be these in the field of marketing or e-commerce opportunities, will also depend on the diffusion of these innovations within the social ecosystem in Saudi Arabia. In other words, the matter of whether the consumers within the social ecosystem of Saudi Arabia will adopt social media for learning more about the products and services offered by the SMEs in Saudi Arabia will also depend on whether they are exposed to the processes of communication through which they learn of the social media and the products and services offered by the SMEs. In Saudi Arabia, one research study has found that there is a variety of social media platforms at a larger scale, and SMEs and new ventures in Saudi Arabia have established their businesses and organisational profiles on social media websites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter or other similar sites (Sheikha et al., 2017). Therefore, there is a possibility for the SMEs to use social media for advertising their products and use Internet for e-commerce.

The reasoned action theory has also been used to understand the reasons for consumers to adopt new technology or new products (Alzahrani et al., 2019). The theory of reasoned action is able to describe the intention of the consumers to adopt a new product or technology from a subjective perspective; in a study involving Saudi Arabian consumers and the adoption of the new electric vehicles it was found that subjective norms have three times as strong an effect as attitudes (Alzahrani et al., 2019). Small businesses may have certain factors that affect their

adoption of technology for the purposes of digital marketing or e-commerce. Some of these factors include the possibility of the businesses having owners as manager with multiple responsibilities including the overseeing of electronic marketing activities; limited resources that can mean that there is uncertainty regarding the use of technology (Ritz et al., 2019). Due to these reasons, small businesses or SMEs may have low technology adoption rate due to absence of internal and external digital resources, supplier relations, and customer relations (Ritz et al., 2019).

2.5. Theory relevant to Technology Acceptance Model

Numerous studies have examined the determinants that influence the acceptance and utilization of information technology between users. The reason for this is that technology acceptance is essential for success, thus, the acquisition of technology will not result in any return if it is not used and employed in an effective manner. Technology acceptance theories or models describe the factors that lead to a user's acceptance of a particular technology or adoption (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). There is a variety of disciplines that have offered explanations for the adoption of information technology, including sociology, psychology, and information systems. In this section, we examine the theories that are especially relevant to this study, especially as they relate to the factors likely to influence the acceptance of the technology in terms of adopting and using social media platforms effectively as a marketing tool in SMEs. They include the TAM, and the UTAUT (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

2.5.1. Technology acceptance model (TAM)

The technology acceptance model (TAM) is considered as another theory explaining user acceptance of information technology (Davis et al., 1989). Researchers have used the TAM to understand the factors responsible for why consumers adopt certain technologies or reject them.

TAM was developed in order to predict and explain computer usage among the users (Davis et al., 1989). It was adapted from the Theory of Reasoned Action which was used to understand human behaviour determinants (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). TAM examines two beliefs: perceived usefulness and ease of use. It is argued that these two beliefs may have significant influence on attitudes, intentions, and actual usage of computer technologies by individuals. According to Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) theory of reasoned action, perceived usefulness (PU/PEU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) are the two main factors where they are playing a vital role in determining technology acceptance.

The effects of external variables are explored on the development process and intention to use of the user as mediated by perceived usefulness and perceive ease of use (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). In several studies, including those conducted by Ajzen (1991) and Agarwal and Karahanna (2000), behavioural intentions to use (BI) are used as a substitute for actual behaviour in TAM studies. Most later studies did not include Attitude Toward Using a Technology as a mediating variable such as (Hong et al., 2002) which assumed that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use mediated the effect of any other variables.

Perceived usefulness is interpreted by how much the person believes that using the system will improve their performance. Basically, it refers to the users' belief that the system will help them sufficiently in order to achieve their goals. In contrast, perceived ease of use defines as the degree to which users believe that using a particular system will be easy and free from physical and mental effort. User acceptance of word processors has been validated by TAM across a range of contexts (Davis et al., 1989), e-mail (Szajna, 1996), telemedicine technology (Hu & Bentler, 1999), spreadsheet applications (Mathieson, 1991), web-based learning systems (Ngai et al., 2007), and commercial web sites (Koufaris, 2002). Several studies have shown that perceived ease of use performs as an antecedent to perceived usefulness but does not directly affect intention to use (Mathieson et al., 2001; Hu et al., 2005; Chau & Hu, 2002; Amoako-

Gyampah & Salam, 2004). Nevertheless, there are also studies that indicate the exact opposite. Studies conducted by Moon and Kim (2001), Shih (2004), and Gong et al. (2004) determined that perceived ease of use directly influences intention to use. Mainly, studies are intended to explain and predict technology use often considered instead of simply validating TAM. It is typically examining other direct determinants that influence intention to use or actual usage but is not assume that these factors get effect mediated of the perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

TAM was applied in a research study on factors that affect attitude towards the use of marketing through social media by tour operators and travel agencies in South Africa wherein the researchers found that managerial assistance and managers' level of education influence attitude towards the use of social media marketing as internal factors whereas pressure from competitors, perceived benefits and perceived ease of use were external factors influencing the use of social media marketing (Matikiti et al., 2018). This study related to small tourism firms and for that reason the findings of that study are also relevant to this one because Saudi Arabia also has a sizeable number of small firms that are involved in tourism. Matikiti et al. (2018) recommended that the South African government should support the use of social media marketing by small tourism businesses by enabling their employees' skills by providing training and workshops on social media marketing.

In other research related to Saudi Arabia and users' acceptance of cloud computing, TAM was used by the researcher to explore the factors that play a role in the success of the emerging technologies in Saudi Arabia (Alharbi, 2012). The researcher used TAM with five additional factors that may affect users' acceptance of new technology, these being gender, age, education level, job domain, and nationality (Alharbi, 2012). The researcher found that there is a high level of acceptance of cloud computing and the factors of age, education, job domain, and nationality (but not gender) have a considerable impact on users' attitudes to the adoption of

cloud computing (Alharbi, 2012). An important finding of this study in the context of the present research is that the users' attitude towards adopting cloud computing is affected by perceived usefulness and ease of use (Alharbi, 2012). This could mean that consumers of SMEs in Saudi Arabia would be affected by the perceived usefulness and ease of use for adopting social media which can be used by the SMEs for advertising.

In another research study related to technology acceptance in Saudi Arabia, the concept of social commerce was explored (Sheikha et al., 2017). Social commerce relates to the focus on one-to-one interactions and on creating value by individuals for products and services and it relates to the use of social media for sharing experiences about products and services by the users (Huang & Benyoucef, 2013). The relevance of the concept of social commerce is that it explains the social experience of buying and purchasing for many people; consumers usually want suggestions before purchasing a product and they would like to hear about other consumers' experiences due to which there is now integration of social media in e-commerce websites (Sheikha et al., 2017). As social media provides such consumers with the social experience of shopping, there is an increase in the use of social media and internet for understanding more about the products or services that consumers are interested in, as noted by Sheikha et al. (2017), who also note there is an increase of social commerce in Saudi Arabia. This finding is relevant to the present research because as consumers are already exposed to social commerce and are using social media and Internet to explore other consumers' experiences about products and services, this would provide an opportunity to the SMEs to use the medium of social media and Internet for digital marketing and mobile marketing.

Another issue that is important in this research is that of the concept of diffusion of social media platforms, because SMEs will be able to use Internet and social media only where there is wide-spread usage of social media platforms. Social media is an innovation and the diffusion theory explains how innovation spreads between individuals within a social system; diffusion is

related to processes through which individuals within a social system start adopting the innovation (Kapoor et al., 2014). There is a process of communication that is involved in the process of diffusion wherein individuals learn of innovation through communication channels within a social system (Kapoor et al., 2014).

2.5.2. Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT and UTAUT2)

In today's information age, research in the field of information systems is increasingly focused on determining how individuals accept and use technology (Venkatesh et al., 2008). Assuring user acceptance of technology is a continual duty for management (Schwarz & Chin, 2007), which has so captivated the interest of information systems (IS) and information technology (IT) researchers that technology adoption research is now considered to among the more mature areas of inquiry (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Through this substantial amount of activity, many different systems and technologies were explored in various contexts using a range of exploratory methods. It is obvious even from a cursory glance at the already existing literature that there are a diversity of points of view, units of analysis, technologies, contexts, research methods and theories (Williams et al., 2009). A number of theoretical models have been suggested to explain technology acceptance and use, which are drawn primarily from psychological and social theories (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Due to this situation, researchers have become confused, as they are compelled to pick out and select which characteristics through the assortment of theories and models available (Williams et al., 2015). Aware of this confusing situation, Venkatesh et al. (2003) developed a consolidated model that encompasses the different views on innovation acceptance and user together – The unified theory of acceptance and use of technology (UTAUT). Venkatesh et al. (2003) found that, according to the UTAUT (Figure 4), four key constructs (facilitating

conditions, effort expectancy, social influence, and performance expectancy) are direct factors that determine intentions and behaviour, and yet, these constructs are moderated by factors such as gender, age, experience, and voluntariness of use.

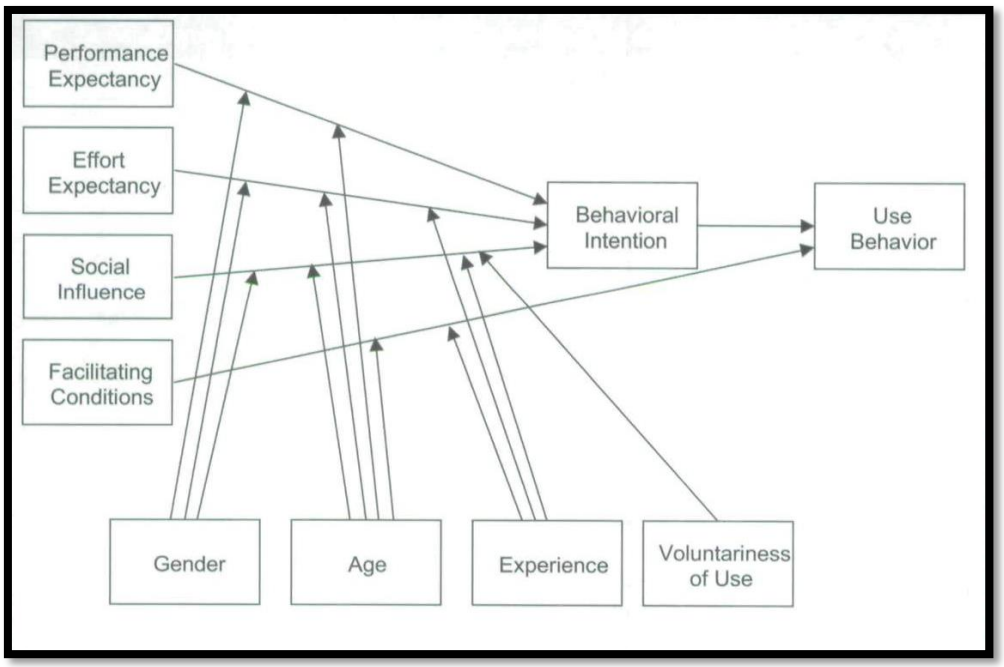

Figure 4 UTAUT Model (Venkatesh et al., 2003)

The theory was evolved by reviewing and integrating eight models, which are: the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), a combined TPB/TAM, the Model of PC Utilization, Innovation Diffusion Theory (IDT), and the Motivational Model (Williams et al., 2015). Besides, there have been numerous studies that have used these theories and models successfully on technology or innovation adoption and have been published in many disciplines, such as marketing, management, information systems, and social psychology (Williams et al., 2015). Despite this, the UTAUT model had an adjusted R^2 of 69 per cent, outperforming all eight individual models (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Furthermore, the researchers conducting empirical research of user intention and behaviour have widely employed the UTAUT model in technology adoption and diffusion studies. At the time of

writing, Venkatesh et al.'s (2003) original article has been cited above 35,000 times, in which UTAUT is discussed in relation to a variety of technologies (including web sites, Mobile Technology, internet, Tax Payment Systems, Mobile Technology and Hospital Information Systems among others) depending on a diversity of factors such as education, experience, voluntariness to use, gender, age, and income.

In this context, expected performance is defined as the degree to which consumers performing certain activities are able to benefit from using a technology. Also, an effort expectancy is a degree of easiness related to the consumers' usage of the technology. Social influence is referred to the extent to which consumers' believe that important others, like family and friends, endorse and shall use a particular technology. The facilitating conditions indicate the perceptions of consumers' regarding resources and the support that is considered as available in order to carry out a particular behaviour (Brown and Venkatesh 2005; Venkatesh et al. 2003). Based on UTAUT, it is theorized to influence behavioural intention to use a technology by performance expectancy, effort expectancy, and social influence while technology use is determined by behavioural intention and facilitating conditions. There are also UTAUT relationships that are moderated by differences in individual characteristics, such as age, gender, and experience.

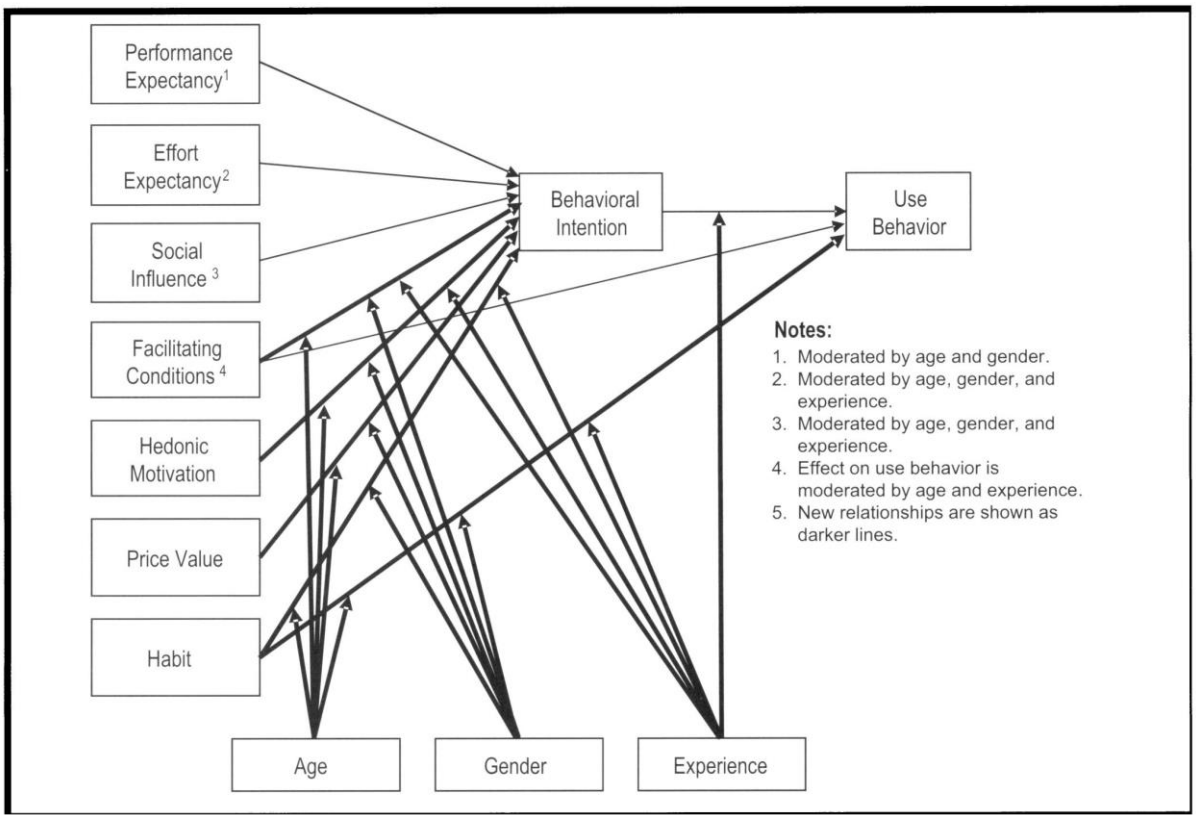

Figure 5 UTAUT 2 Model (Venkatesh et al., 2012)

UTAUT 2 is the extended version of the UTAUT model with additional constructs: habit, experience, hedonic motivation and price value (Figure 5) (Venkatesh et al., 2012). Hedonic motivation refers to the entertainment or enjoyment obtained from using a technology, and studies have shown that it plays a crucial role in determining the acceptance and use of a technology (Brown & Venkatesh, 2005). The price value is the cognitive trade-off between perceived benefits of the applications and monetary costs associated with using them by consumers' (Dodds et al., 1991). In terms of habit, it is defined as the extent to which individuals tend to carry out behaviours spontaneously as a result of their learning (Limayem et al. 2007). According to Fishbein and Ajzen (2005), the feedback and opinion from past experiences would affect others with different beliefs and, therefore, behavioural performance in the future, which explain the definition of experience construct.

The hedonic motivation was deemed an important predictor in regards to this prediction model, and as such was integrated into the UTAUT 2. A price value construct was included in the

UTAUT 2 model since the quality, the cost, and the price of a product often influence adoption decisions (Hennigs et al., 2013). In addition, Venkatesh et al. (2012) emphasized that recent studies had highlighted the importance of behaviour intention; they, therefore, integrated an additional new construct of habit into the UTAUT 2. There were two reasons for the introduction of the habit construct; in the first place was that a habit could be considered a previous behaviour (Kim & Malhotra, 2005). In the second place, a habit might be described as the tendency people believe to view a behaviour as automatic (Limayem et al., 2007). In the previous literature, newly inserted constructs had been confirmed as essential determinants in users' technology adoption. For that reason, users' adoption of new technologies can be examined by using such incorporated constructs. In an organisational context, users' behaviour in terms of technology adoption has been described by the UTAUT model (Venkatesh et al., 2003). The UTAUT 2 has, however, been developed as an extension of the UTAUT, which has been designed to focus specifically on the perspectives of individuals when it comes to adopting technology. Yet, it provided a substantially better explanation of variations in users' technology intentions. There have been multiple studies that have incorporated some or all of the UTAUT 2 constructs and investigated how they may influence such phenomena as performance expectancy, hedonic motivation, effort expectancy, facilitating conditions, habit, social influence, and price value on mobile smartphones acceptance (Ally & Gardiner, 2012). The prevalence of broadband Internet in inner-cities (Larose et al., 2010), e-governance technology usage (Krishnaraju et al., 2013; Vinodh & Mathew, 2012), adoption of mobile social networking services (Nikou & Bouwman, 2013), and acceptance of e-prescribing technology (Cohen et al., 2013).

2.5.3. The Proposed Conceptual model (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020) and previous studies

There are some technological and financial obstacles that need to be considered when adopting SMM in SMEs. Chatterjee and Kumar Kar (2020) developed and combined two significant models TAM and UTAUT 2, besides testing both models' effectiveness in order to reduce marketing errors through joining factors to know the strength and weakness points and thus achieve the maximum possible benefit that may raise marketing efficiency through social media.

Chatterjee and Kumar Kar (2020) have employed the adopted models; TAM (PEU and PEOU) and UTAUT 2 (FCO, Price value). These variables offered by TAM and UTAUT 2 included almost all psychological traits besides the technological part. Adding to that, compatibility can be considered as another factor that driving SMEs' motivation to adopt SMM to ameliorate business performance (Derham et al., 2011). Venkatesh et al. (2012) deem compatibility as a substantial variable for SMM adoption by SMEs. Venkatesh et al. (2003) and Venkatesh et al. (2012) confirm that having well-trained employees on the new SMM technology besides providing suitable environmental working conditions may play an important role to encourage SMEs to adopt the SMM.

Based on the forgoing, Chatterjee and Kumar Kar (2020) consider the following factors (perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, facilitating conditions, cost, and compatibility) as important variables that affect SMEs to adopt SMM. The SMEs business performance may be positively impacted by the SMM adoption (Consoli, 2012; Shi et al., 2019).

There are several studies that applied the Chatterjee combined TAM and UTAUT 2 models in different places and showed the relationships of SMM adoption by SMEs (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020; Pranoto & Lumbantobing, 2021; Syaifullah et al., 2021). The results of the model

identified by Chatterjee and Kumar Kar (2020) when testing it on SMM adoption by SMEs in India to measure its impact on the business performance, found; perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and compatibility, have a positive effect impact, whereas the facilitating conditions have an insignificant impact. In contrast, cost has a significant impact but is negative on the use of SMM by SMEs. Pranoto and Lumbantobing (2021) show the impact on the adoption of SMM by SMEs. The results were that the SMM positively influences business, and it positively mediates the relationship between PEU and IOB, COM and IOB, COS and IOB. In contrast, SMM negatively mediates the relationship between FCO and IOB. Another study tests the impact of social media marketing on SME performance in Indonesia during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results show that adoption of SMM has been affected by the COM, PEU, and PEOU, and SMM has a positive impact on the business (Syaifullah et al., 2021). Based on the above, it is clear that the previous studies' results supported and confirmed the theory of integrating variables in TAM and UTAUT 2, and further because the studies were in different regions and different conditions, so the model mentioned above has been chosen to be applied to study the impact of SMM adoption and use by SMEs in Saudi Arabia during the COVID-19 pandemic, with the object that it will enhance the position of digital marketing.

2.6. Research Hypotheses

SMEs using social media are likely to experience great success with SMM. Studies on literature suggest there are some important factors that would motivate them to adopt and use SMM. This section will discuss each of these outstanding factors separately to elaborate on the

hypotheses and provide a conceptual model. The hypotheses and conceptual models will be developed by debating each of these factors in this section.

2.6.1. Development of hypotheses and conceptual model

2.6.1.1. H1 Perceived Usefulness (PEU)

Researchers have consecrated considerable effort to understand how perceived usefulness is used in order to generate system utilization (Davis et al., 1989). According to the original representation of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) as well as the modified versions of the model, perceived usefulness is considered the main construct of the conducted model. Various factors have been predicted using this construct, which includes; telecommuting technology, word processing and spreadsheet system acceptance, continual system use, measuring web and wireless site, and measuring web and wireless site usability (Alrafi, 2007). Perceived usefulness was defined by Davis et al. (1989) as the degree that individuals consider about whether using a certain system will aid their job performance. According to Davis et al. (1989) perceived usefulness was emphasized to be valid and reliable and was considered as a predictor of intention to utilize information technology.

According to Davis et al. (1989), perceived usefulness (PEU) is the basis of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), as a theoretical framework to perceive user acceptance of technology. SME investors will not hesitate to adopt SMM technologies if they perceive that the SMM technology will greatly enhance the SME's productivity (Park, 2009). The concept of PEU can be achieved by SMEs who believe that the engagement of an internal quality management system will boost their chances of achieving success (Davis et al., 1989). Sullivan and Koh (2019) and Fatima and Bilal (2009) proposed that SMM will enhance the performance of SMEs. It is evident that SMEs will adopt SMM when they see how it will lead to better productivity (Kraus et al., 2019). It has been noted in many studies that PEU has an important

role in influencing the user's intention to use the new technology (Wu et al., 2011), or that PEU contributes to the ultimate use of the new technology (Kim & Chiu, 2019). According to Chatterjee and Kumar Kar (2020) and Qalati et al. (2021), utilizing SMM will improve SMEs' performance. It has been described by other studies that the adoption of smartphone technology through PEU has a positive relationship with the use of social media (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020; Kim & Chiu, 2019). Turner et al. (2010) have identified that SMM can provide considerable advantages to SMEs if privacy and security are protected. A number of beliefs can be found in the Perceived Usefulness (PEU), including performance, effectiveness, risk and trust (Aggelidis & Chatzoglou, 2009; Henderson & Divett, 2003; Turner et al., 2010). Also, a number of preliminary studies have suggested that users' intentions to adopt new technologies are significantly associated with PEU (Akinwale & Kyari, 2020). SMEs appear to be significantly affected by PEU when using SMM (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020; Pranoto & Lumbantobing, 2021; Kraus et al., 2019, and Patma et al., 2021). The term "adoption" is used in this study to describe the increase in the use of SMM by SMEs who have already started using it. Based on these inputs, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H_1: ***Perceived Usefulness (PEU) has a positive impact on SME use of SMM.***

2.6.1.2. H2 Perceived Ease-of-Use (PEOU)

Perceived ease of use (PEOU) is a conceptual structure developed by Davis et al. (1989) to examine how businesses and other relevant fields adopt new technologies. According to the literature on information technology (IT), perceived ease of use has been identified as a key construct for testing and evaluating user acceptance of a specific technology. Consumers' intention to use technology is affected by perceived ease of use, which is an important motivational factor (Revels et al., 2010). Further, perceived ease of use usually refers to whether the user believes that a specific task will demand an intellectual effort on his or her part to accomplish (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Al-Mahrouq, 2010). In addition, the

innovativeness of personnel directly contributes to the perceived ease of use of 3G mobile services (Du et al., 2012). Consumers' initial intentions to use technology are affected by perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness (Montazemi & Saremi, 2013), these factors are the core determinants of the attitudes of users (Martins et al., 2014).

As a result of this concept, a person may need to make some effort in order to utilize technology or a system (Henderson & Divett, 2003; Park, 2009) . Technology users tend to be less reluctant to use systems if they perceive their use is not complex but can be worthwhile (Kuo & Yen, 2009; Venkatesh et al., 2012). Yi et al. (2009) cited components such as self-efficacy and simplicity as elements of this reliance. The technology adoption of the internet and e-business is presumably linked to perceived ease of use (Taherdoost, 2018; Tripopsakul, 2018). According to Momani and Jamous (2017), the anxiety in adopting new technologies leads to avoiding new uses, while the friendly use of new technologies will earn the user many advantages. By utilizing social media in an effective manner, the technology can help achieve a better result. Due to this, companies have begun to engage in social media in order to run their business (Sunday & Vera, 2018). Thus, innovation becomes more obtainable to users, which leads to a trend of users adopting technologies (Bankole & Bankole, 2017). There has been some prior evidence of this positive relationship by Chatterjee and Kumar Kar (2020), Kraus et al. (2019) and Patma et al. (2021) on adopting SMM by SMEs. The following hypotheses can be suggested from this description:

H_2: ***Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) has a positive impact on SME use of SMM.***

2.6.1.3. H3 Compatibility (COM)

As regards compatibility, it refers to the degree to which the innovative technology interacts with the earlier practices and current needs that are compatible with the existing aims of the SME (Rogers, 1983). Researchers have shown that compatibility between existing and new

technology products is regarded as an important and effective determinant of the end user's opinion concerning a particular service (Yoon & Cho, 2016). Researchers have consistently demonstrated that regardless of the aspect of compatibility, the greater the perception of compatibility by the consumer, the more affirmative the effects of the approaches on consumer response (Rifon et al., 2004). Cooper and Zmud (1990) consider compatibility is a fundamental factor for the adoption of innovation. Businesses would benefit most from social media integration in order to niche their target audience more effectively, and it would allow them to share their content without difficulty (Derham et al., 2011).

Small and medium companies will adopt the use of modern tools and technologies without hesitation that may help them in the conduct of business if this is consistent with the mechanism used in the organisation (Brown & Russell, 2007; Hsu et al., 2007). Incorporating SMM into SMEs has been identified as a preferable concept because such a strategy will be able to reach the potential clients appropriately and improve the organisation's overall performance (Derham et al., 2011). Based on Chatterjee and Kumar Kar (2020), due to the employees' pre-existing knowledge of the technology when they begin using SMM, the processes and tasks within an organisation can be done without any constraint. Pranoto and Lumbantobing (2021) supported that COM has a positive impact on the SMEs when using SMM. The hypothesis below can be formulated based on this description:

H_3: ***Compatibility (COM) has a positive impact on SME use of SMM.***

2.6.1.4. H4 Facilitating conditions (FCO)

Facilitating Conditions (FCOs) are the conditions in which people believe they can use a new system when the technical infrastructure and top management support are existing (Venkatesh et al., 2003). A study conducted by Taylor and Todd (1995) that facilitating conditions plays an important role in determining a behaviour intention of a person to perform a particular

behaviour. Various factors, such as users' knowledge, resources and availability of assistance from marketers or peers, can be measured to determine facilitating conditions (Venkatesh & Morris, 2003). Venkatesh et al. (2008) show that facilitating conditions play a vital role in influencing a person's behavioural expectation and intention estimations when it comes to adopting/using new technology. Studies have found that a variety of factors can prevent individuals from adopting web-based technology, such as a lack of support, insufficient resources, and incomplete data (Kamaghe et al., 2020). The considerable development of Internet connectivity and social media sites has occurred in all regions of the world, with social networking applications and sites changing the way people communicate steadily and rapidly. Mobile phones are currently one of the most popular connected devices among individuals, so electronic communication roughly reduces the face-to-face way (Lee, 2017). Currently, it may be difficult for older consumers to adapt to some social media and learn new technologies due to their less interest in interacting with the latest technology. Consumers who are older may find it challenging to adapt to new technologies because of their limited ability to respond to complex information (Halili & Sulaiman, 2019; Paul et al., 2015). The ageing process can result in a decline in cognitive abilities and memories, resulting in reasons related to such cases (Liu et al., 2015). Therefore, older consumers often prioritize having access to adequate support more than younger consumers (Pimmer et al., 2019). On the other hand, most women tend to give further attention to the amount of effort and the process involved in order to accomplish their objective (Venkatesh et al., 2005). A greater amount of experience can result in increased familiarity with technology and a greater ability to facilitate learning, thereby decreasing dependence on external help (Kamaghe et al., 2020; Masadeh et al., 2016). Additionally, high-level technologies produce data useful for optimizing economic development, the production of goods, and corporate networking (Choi et al., 2019). The facilitating conditions are more important for users with little or no technological experience (Paul et al., 2015). Based on

previous research in this area, innovative technology adoption is significantly affected by the facilitation conditions. The cultural issues have to be considered in using SMM in such an environment (Hofsted, 1997). According to Venkatesh et al. (2003) various factors, such as user knowledge, resources, and availability of marketing or peer advice, contribute to measuring facilitating conditions. As stated by Hung and Lai (2015), small and medium-sized businesses will adopt social media marketing as long as their employees are properly trained to use social media and the enterprise has affordable access to the Internet. The following hypothesis is provided based on the above discussion:

H_4: ***Facilitating Conditions (FCO) have a positive impact on SME use of SMM.***

2.6.1.5. H5 Low Cost (LCOS)

A number of earlier studies have indicated that cost and technology adoption have a causal relationship where the second action is a result of the first (Acquity Group, 2014; Alam & Noor, 2009; Kim & Shin, 2015). Ernst and Young (2001) demonstrate that cost is an important factor in the utilization of technology by an enterprise for its growth. A technology's cost-effectiveness can be summarized as the degree to which it is more useful and has advantages when compared to its cost. In the available literature, this characteristic of technology adoption is regarded as one of the most important and widespread (Olanrewaju et al., 2020). Cost is an important factor that influences an enterprise's adoption of new technologies (Chong & Chan, 2012; Premkumar & Roberts, 1999). Since technology use requires a significant investment of capital, Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) decision-makers assess the benefits they will gain before being approved (Wang et al., 2020).

Social media offers organisations a low-cost method of engaging in direct contact with consumers, and the level of efficiency can be higher than traditional forms of communication (Tajudeen et al., 2018). On the other hand, low barriers along with low costs and a reduction of technology skills requirements that make SMM attractive to MSMEs are notable reasons for

adopting SMM by MSMEs (Derham et al., 2011). The fact that social media helps MSME businesses communicate with their customers is another reason that social media is cost-effective (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Zhang et al., 2019).

The results of the study proposed that there is a positive correlation between the advertising costs and the adoption of the social media methods by the SMEs because the study showed that the adoption of social media platforms such as Facebook led to the positive financial performance of SMEs and also led to the reduction in costs of marketing and customer service (Ainin et al., 2015). In contrast, SMEs' adoption of social media was not affected by compatibility, but the adoption was affected by cost (Qalati, et al., 2020). With regard to return on investment and cost, it is challenging to identify sales obtained from the technology (Gilmore et al., 2007). Indeed, in many studies, the cost is included as an essential variable to identify whether such a factor is impacting an adoption (El-Gohary, 2012; Gilmore et al., 2007). Even though it was evident through many studies that user acceptance of the internet has increased, there are still some apprehensions and anticipation concerning the financial viability and credibility of technology (Curtis, et al., 2010; Stockdale & Standing, 2006). Besides, since social media applications are widely spread and technologically advanced, adoption is rather less complicated and less expensive (Geurin & Burch, 2017). In another study, the authors use a method of measuring the impact of the adoption of social media for advertising purposes through ROI, which is described as a success metric that can show the tangible profit from investment (Vlachvei & Notta, 2015). In the context of social media adoption, the use of ROI can be useful for assessing the costs of marketing actions (Vlachvei & Notta, 2015). Advertising costs are related to the final goal, which is economic performance as a consequence of social media adoption. However, when ROI is seen in a larger perspective, it would also include other benefits that the firm derives from the adoption of social media. The following hypothesis for this study is motivated by these reasons:

H_5*: Low Cost (LCOS) has a positive impact on SME use of SMM.*

2.6.1.6. H6 Social Media Marketing (SMM)

Social media has emerged as a new communication tool, where people create content, share it, engage with it, and network with each other at an ever-growing rate. People can nowadays introduce themselves and present their products to the community and individuals who are interested in those goods (Roberts & Kraynak 2008). Because of its ease of use, speed, and reach, social media has established itself as a trendsetter in various topics, including those related to the technology, environment, recruitment, entertainment, and the business industry many others. Users of social media essentially can promote themselves as well as provide goods and services by sharing content. Businesses find social media an attractive tool to market products and services because of its quality of viral (Xiang & Gretzel 2010). Social media marketing (SMM) means employers use social media and social networks to promote their products and services (Hayes, 2021). In addition, marketers can track the success of social media marketing campaigns with the help of data analytics tools. Thus, businesses have taken notice of how social media has changed how we function as a society, including how we connect with one another. Marketers can employ a variety of tactics and strategies on social media sites to engage people with content. A number of social networking sites allow users to provide detailed demographic, geographic, and personal information, allowing marketers to personalize their messages with the most relevant content. Marketing subdisciplines such as product management, marketing intelligence, sentiment research, promotions, public relations, and marketing communications may utilize social media (Tanuri, 2010). It is essential to understand the relative importance and the inter-relatedness of the various social media platforms and their effects on the performance of marketing like online argumentation forums, blogs, and online communities (Stephen & Galak 2009). Recently, social media users have become highly stimulated web consumers. According to (Nielsen, 2011) approximately 70%

of social media users engage in online shopping. Marketing within this type encompasses a subset of online marketing techniques and activities such as e-mail newsletters and advertising campaigns online that complement traditional website-based promotion strategies (Barefoot & Szabo, 2010). A new term of exponential dissemination and trust has been injected into mass marketing and mass communication by encouraging users to spread messages to their personal contacts (Hafele, 2011). As a result of this new approach to outreach and marketing, new tools are being sophisticated and available for businesses to use. SMEs are well suited to utilizing social media platforms since they have limited resources, including funds and technical knowledge (Rana et al., 2019). The use of social media marketing helps to increase the trust and loyalty of a brand, in addition to supplying consumers with more details about a brand's products (Puspaningrum, 2020). Thus, small and medium-sized enterprises can benefit from social media marketing and adopt it as beneficial marketing tools in their businesses. A hypothesis can be constructed as follows:

H_6: *Social media marketing (SMM) has a positive influence on the impact on business (IOB).*

2.7.Summary

This chapter started by discussing the small and medium enterprises and their definition globally and detailed their exact meaning in Saudi Arabia, followed by explaining the social media and marketing in Saudi Arabia and its benefits when be used in SMEs marketing particularly. In addition to that, the researcher expounds on the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and its beginning and effects on businesses in general, also the interplayed implications between the supply chains and small and medium-sized enterprises around the world. Then, this chapter has discussed the selected theoretical framework used in this study: the TAM and UTAUT 2 models. This chapter ends with addressing the hypotheses from H1 to H6 under research

question 1 under section 1.4 related to the factors that influence the adoption of SMM as a marketing tool in SMEs during the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia. The next chapter will display the research design and methodology.

Chapter 3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This research has adopted quantitative methodology to examine and evaluate the ways small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have used social media marketing as a marketing tool to adapt to Coronavirus restrictions in Saudi Arabia. Research design and the methodological approach is the main focus of this chapter, with details regarding some common paradigms and the chosen approach (Section 3.2), selection of survey procedures (Section 3.3), human ethics (Section 3.4), the academic approach used in the pilot study have discussed (Section 3.5), research participants (Section 3.6), data analysis strategies (Section 3.7), and this chapter concludes with a summary.

3.2. Choosing the research Paradigm

This section presents a rationale for adopting a positivist paradigm as the underlying paradigm for this study. The present subsection introduces the dominant research paradigms: positivist, and interpretivist, before offering an argument for using the selected paradigm in light of the problem undertaken in this research and in the research question.

Bryman and Bell (2003) posit that the ideal way of positivism is to formulate theories by testing and fitting them via data analysis. Research theories are considered objective, generalizable, and valid for a number of circumstances, regardless of the researchers' or participants' individual opinions. Generally, a quantitative research strategy is used to implement a positivist paradigm; theories are tested by forming relationships between variables and testing them by applying statistical analysis.

The majority of scientific or quantitative researchers use positivism as an approach or a research paradigm (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000). The positivist paradigm analysis is

based on the ability to generalize the outcomes of one study to a similar one that is conducted in a different environment or situation.

On the other hand, the interpretivist paradigm is most commonly used as a research approach in qualitative social sciences. Interpretivists consider that human behaviour is multi-layered, and pre-defined probabilistic models cannot determine it for the reason that situations and environmental factors play a role in determining human behaviour. There are numerous things about human behaviour that are different from those of a scientific variable that can be easily controlled. There are several factors that affect human behaviour and predominantly are subjective in nature. As such, interpretivists prefer to observe human behaviour in daily life and in the real world as opposed to the controlled environment (Cohen et al., 2000).

The differences between positivism and interpretivism can be summarized as follows: positivism is defined by measurement, predictability, probability, controllability, and control laws that are able to predict the behaviour of humans. On the other hand, interpretivism is managed by subjective reasoning and examining human behaviour in the context of reality

(Neuman, 2003).

This study attempts to evaluate the effectiveness of social media as a marketing tool for SMEs during the lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic and to assess the effect of factors potentially affecting the acceptance of technology (social media) as a marketing tool. The aim is to conduct an objective assessment rather than to explore subjective meaning. Therefore, the study builds on the positivist research paradigm and on quantitative research.

3.3.Survey Procedure

The objective of this section is to address surveys as a research method. Study designs that involve surveys usually involve gathering data via questionnaires or interviews without exposing participants to treatments coordinated by researchers. In addition, the importance of

survey data analysis lies in understanding the relevant variable relationships, distributions, and incidence (Weathington et al., 2010).

In general, survey designs can be classified as longitudinal or cross-sectional. In terms of the longitudinal design, the research involves gathering data over time and at particular points in time. A longitudinal study or survey is a research design in which the same variables are observed repeatedly over a relatively long or short-term period of time. Although it is usually an observational study, it can also be designed as a longitudinal randomized trial (Shadish et al., 2002).

At the same time, cross-sectional designs focus on collecting data based on a random sample representing the population of a given time period (Weathington et al., 2010). Research methods in businesses are utilized to compile analyse raw data so that they can be converted into the vital information that businesses required for making useful business decisions. Even though all small business proprietors should strive to develop their business research skills, many find that the most effective methods are also the simplest. For such, surveys, questionnaires, or other structured responses are often incorporated into cross-sectional designs designed to form presumptions in business research (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Furthermore, in a cross-sectional study, data is collected for a specific period of time and used to gather information. A collection of data is gathered from a group of participants with a range of characteristics and demographics recognized as variables. Age, gender, income, qualifications, geographic location, and ethnicity are all considered variables (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Each study uses variables or demographics, depending on what type of research is being carried out and what is being proved or validated. As a result of the cross-sectional study, assumptions are removed and replaced with actual data on variables studied during the time period included in the cross-sectional study. The application of this design can be found in a wide range of fields, including business, psychology, social science, retail, medicine, education, and government.

Among other uses in business marketing, this technique is used to analyse target markets with the goal of selling to or introducing products and services to them based on a variety of demographics (Bryman & Bell, 2003). Based on what has been explained above, a cross-sectional design was chosen for this research. The survey includes close-ended questions of the 5-point Likert Scale (Strongly disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neither Agree nor Disagree =3, Agree=4 and Strongly agree=5). It was used to collect responses for analysing the TAM model. The used items in this survey have been adopted from a previous study (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020) (see Appendix). Moreover, the questionnaire contains some open questions for collecting participants opinions that will be used to discuss some findings.

Since the location of the study is located in Saudi Arabia, the questionnaire was translated into Arabic to spread to the target audiences of the study there, which are small and medium-sized enterprises. A back translation, also known as reverse translation, is retranslating content from the target language to the source in literal words (Smartling, 2021). Back translating allows you to ensure the accuracy and quality of the translations by comparing both texts. Based on the foregoing, the reverse translation into Arabic was adopted as a method to ensure its accuracy and quality.

3.4.Human Ethics

Henn et al. (2005) write that all research involves certain ethical issues, which relate to the "issues that concern the behaviour of the social researchers and the consequences that their research brings to the people they study" (p.68). The ethical issues raised in this study are related both to the researcher's behaviour during the research and to the participants' implications. Consideration of ethics enables the respect for the participants and also affects the validity of the research because a study that does not consider ethics is compromised (Henn et al., 2005). Because of the quantitative nature of the research and the fact that the questionnaires will be answered by participants, confidentiality concerns are raised about the

information they provide. This issue can be addressed by informing the participants that their information is confidential. Also, the questionnaire was clear when it came to privacy, and no personal information was requested from the entities or individuals participating in the survey. Moreover, participants should be aware of the details of the study, in terms of the purpose of the study and the goals.

It is part of the academic protocol that human ethics approval needs to be obtained before the research can begin in order to ensure that participants and the research setting are not harmed while undergoing the research. This study involved three steps in the application process in obtaining permission to conduct the research. The first step in the process was to fill out a screening questionnaire in order to determine the approval procedure. The current study did not require Massey University's Human Ethics Committee permission since the questionnaire fell into a low-risk category. During the second step, the research was peer-reviewed by the supervisor after submitting the low-risk notification document. Peer review involves reviewing the research objectives, the research methodology, and other relevant documents, such as research instruments, questionnaires, and consent forms. The third and last step, the application document was sent to the Massey University Ethics committee after the peer review process was completed, where it was reviewed and accepted.

3.5. Pilot Study

In general, before undertaking real research, it is advisable to test the research instruments and procedures with a few sample respondents from the target population (Bryman & Bell, 2003). To ensure the research procedure would be functional and within the advocated time frame, a pilot survey version was launched before the final version was approved and published. In terms of the pilot study, there were ten participants to ensure the accuracy of the questionnaire items. The participants examined the readability of questionnaire instructions, understandability scale items, how the questionnaire is formatted and assuring that the time

frame proposed is considered reasonable. The responses received from the participants were positive; they noted that they felt that the amount of time given was convenient to complete the survey, that the questionnaire was easy to understand, and therefore there were no fundamental modifications needed to the survey questions and its procedures. The pilot study confirmed the feasibility of the research.

3.6. Research participants

This study targeted the small and medium-sized enterprises in Saudi Arabia that have been affected by the coronavirus pandemic and the business lockdown. The accuracy and the power of the statistical analysis are affected by the sample size (Hair et al., 2010; Jackson, 2003; Kline, 2011). A larger sample size is generally more reliable, although the sample size requirements of different methods differ. This study was most appropriately analysed using a large-sample technique known as structural equation modelling (SEM) (Kline, 2011). SEM analyses require larger sample sizes as models become more complex, i.e. more indicators, constructs, and parameters are included included (Kline, 2011; MacCallum et al., 1996; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In this study, the independent variables include facilitating conditions (FCO), low cost (LCOS), compatibility (COM), perceived usefulness (PEU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), social media marketing is a mediation variable, while the dependent variable is Impact On Business (IOB). The instruments utilized in this study were: Based upon this source (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020), the total number of items used was 33 (to be analysed in Chapter 4). In terms of researchers' recommendations, they advise that indicators to sample ratios should be between 1:4 and 1:10. (Deb & David, 2014; Hinkin, 1996). As the number of indicators of this study is thirty-three (33), thus the responses should be between 132 to 330 participants. An online survey was distributed through e-mails using open data from (MODON - Saudi Authority for Industrial Cities and Technology Zones) (MODON, 2021). The survey was distributed for about 2 months during April and May of

2021. The survey involved 256 respondents from small and medium-sized enterprises that had been affected by the closure, but only 146 complete samples were accepted and used. 110 participants were excluded due to the incompletion of the questionnaire and the lack of data provided, which does not serve the purpose of the research.

3.7. Methods of Data Analysis

3.7.1. Structural Equation Modelling

In this study, the proposed constructs were analysed using structural equation modelling (SEM), which comprises latent and manifest variables. The SEM is a method used to test more than one hypothesis (which is represented by cause-effect relationships between the latent variables on a model), as well as to measure these latent variables (constructs). Diamantopoulos et al. (2008) interpret constructs as phenomena that are of theoretical interest but cannot be directly observed, and they can only be evaluated via observable indicators (e.g., the items of the questions in a survey). There are two different models of the SEM: a measurement model and a structural model (Kline, 2005). The term structural model refers to a model that analyses relationships between constructs, whilst a model that tests the relationships between constructs and their associated indicators may be referred to as a measurement model. The latent variables, or constructs, are variables that cannot be directly measured (unobservable), therefore, they are inferred from a set of variables called manifest variables, and those variables can be observable. Researchers obtain and measure them using tests, surveys, and other methods (Schumacker & Lomax, 2004).

Prior to examining a structural model (i.e., the relationships between constructs), measurement models should be analysed for the specifications of causality. Additionally, erroneous specifications of causality can lead to a wrong (or biased) assessment of measurement and

structural model parameters and/or erroneous explanation of relationships between research constructs (Jarvis et al., 2003; MacCallum & Browne, 1993). Observing a phenomenon can be achieved with two indicators: reflective or formative (Diamantopoulos et al., 2008; Jarvis et al., 2003; MacCallum & Browne, 1993). Reflective indicators describe the theoretical interest phenomena, which is measured by the dependent latent constructs. In other words, the indicators demonstrate the effectiveness of the constructs. In contrast, the formative indicators measure the phenomena that can shape the construct of theoretical interest.

The SEM test can be performed in two diverse ways: covariance-based analysis, which needs software such as AMOS and Mplus and component-based analysis, which needs software such as Smart PLS (Falk & Miller, 1992; Barclay et al., 1995). Covariance based analyses work better with large samples and need multivariate normal data. If a theory is well established, the use of covariance analysis is recommended (Henseler et al., 2009), whereas component-based analysis is best suited to smaller samples, large SEM models, and non-normal data. If a theory is not well established, the use of component-based analysis is recommended (Henseler et al., 2009). Taking these recommendations into account, this study uses covariance-based analysis to analyse and fit the research model and test the relationships.

3.7.2. Reliability and Validity

According to Bollen and Lennox (1991), for measurements to be valid, items used to evaluate the same construct should be internally consistent. In terms of measuring the reliability coefficient, several tests are available to measure items within a construct: Cronbach's alpha, alternate-forms reliability, inter-rater reliability and test-retest (Kline , 2011). Cronbach's alpha measure is an index used to assess the internal consistency or reliability of a set of test items or a scale. Cronbach's alpha is therefore a function of both the number of items in a test, as well as the average of the covariance between each item pair, plus the variance of the score as a whole (Cronbach, 1951). This research considers 0.6 as the lower limit of Cronbach's alpha

based on Hair et al. (2010). There should be a moderate or higher correlation between the indicators on the same scale. Similarly, convergent validity will accomplish if the loading factors for the indicators of the same latent variables are various from zero. For this study, AMOS was used to examine the relationships between the constructs and the indicators (i.e., the latent variables) as Arbuckle (2011) recommended. AMOS program uses structural equation modelling (SEM) techniques to support research and theories by extending regression, correlation, factor analysis, and analysis of variance. Adding to this, it develops modelling tools based on either intuitive graphical or programmatic interfaces (IBM, n.d.).

3.7.3. Common Method Variance/Bias

Each measuring instrument used for data collection will produce both the construct's variance and the error variance depending on the measurement method used (Baumgartner & Weijters, 2012; MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012; Podsakoff et al., 2003). Data collected will therefore contain not only features of the constructs but also variances from the measuring instruments, which are not indicative of the constructs. It is referred to as common method variance (CMV) which can cause bias/biases when it comes to data analysis and interpretation. As a result of CMV, the items (i.e., reliability and/or validity of the constructed measures) as well as their covariation can be affected. So, potential issues need to be addressed in order to reduce the potential imperfection/error of the data. In this context, measurement methods encompass both instruments adopted for collecting the data and data analysis strategies (MacKenzie & Podsakoff, 2012; Podsakoff et al., 2003). Designing the instrument is relatively more important than the methodology of data analysis as it defines the quality of the data, i.e., the capabilities of the data to represent the construct of interest (Baumgartner & Weijters, 2012).

Multiple ways can be taken to minimize the potential bias associated with common methods. As suggested by Podsakoff et al. (2003), researchers are advised to reassure respondents that there are no correct or incorrect answers and protect respondents' identities, and ensure the

scale items are clear and the questions items are easy to understand. It has been suggested by Baumgartner and Weijters (2012) that adopting items from prior studies and pre-testing surveys can help deal with common method variance CMV.

Data were collected online using a cross-sectional and self-administered quantitative survey in the current study, so a good questionnaire design was essential. Survey items have been adopted from a previous study (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020) (see Chapter 4). To ensure that the questionnaire was understandable to respondents and the questionnaire was not overly long, the questionnaire was reviewed by the thesis supervisor and followed by a pre-test before its release. (See Section 3.5). Based on the available data and the questionnaire being designed and pre-tested in line with the recommended quality-check procedure, identifying and controlling the effects of the unmeasured latent method factors was deemed appropriate for the present study.

3.8.Summary

The methodology of this study was discussed in this chapter. Discussions have taken place about the research paradigm and survey procedure (including the pilot study and participants). Also included were the methods of data analysis and the human ethics approval process explained in the chapter.

Chapter 4. Result

4.1.Introduction

The chapter discusses the cross-sectional survey results used to measure factors that can influence small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Saudi Arabia and the extent of their acceptance of social media marketing (SMM). This chapter starts with SMEs use of SMM (section 4.2). The measurement model was evaluated by estimating the reliability as well as the convergent and discriminant validity of the model's constructs prior to assessing its fit with the structural model (section 4.3.1 & section 4.3.2). The evaluation of the measurement model led to the acceptance of all indicators. Next, results from the structural model were evaluated and found to provide a result for testing the hypotheses (section 4.3.3). The analysis of both the measurement model and the structural model was conducted by using SPSS, Excel and AMOS (covariance-based techniques were applied).

4.2. SMEs use of SMM

The pie chart in (Figure 6) demonstrates the educational level of the survey respondents, the proportion of participants with a bachelor’s degree was about 68 per cent. in addition, the percentages for the Master's degree and above, the Undergraduate degree or diploma, and the High school qualifications are 18, 12, and 2 per cent, respectively.

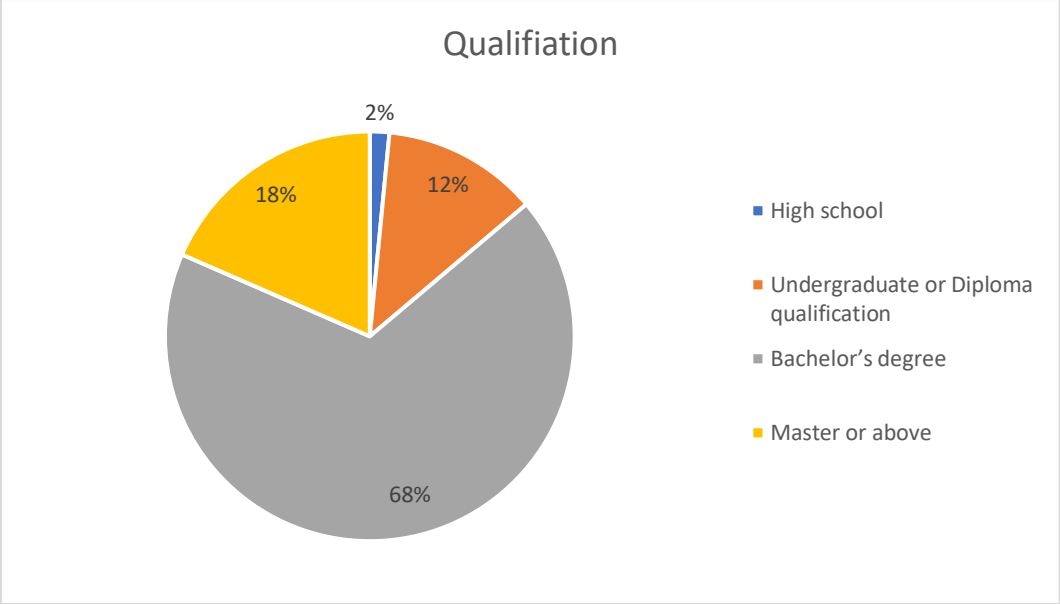

Figure 6 Qualification chart

Figure 7 shows the participants' positions, 32 per cent shared between owners and supervisors, whereas managers represent 25 per cent and 11 per cent for other positions.

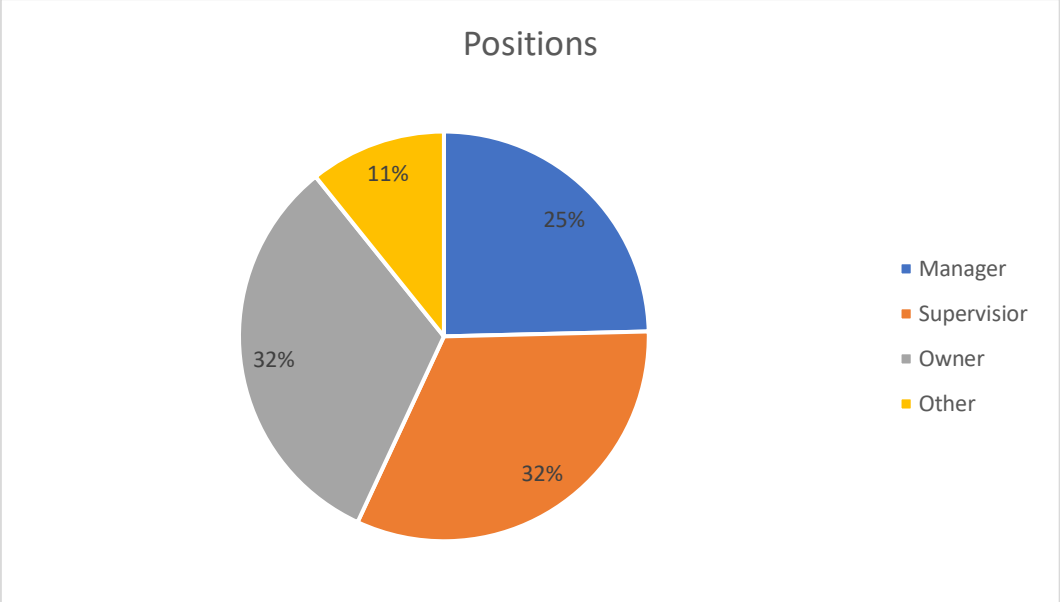

Figure 7 Positions chart

Figure 8 shows the percentage of advertising on social media by participated SMEs before COVID-19. The results showed that 59% of the SMEs spent less than 25% of ad budget on SMM before COVID-19 first lockdown. In addition, 10% of SMEs spent between a quarter to

half of their ad budget on SMM, whereas 8% of SMEs spent between 50% and 75% of their ad budget on SMM. Further, 24% of SMEs spent more than 75% of their ad budget on marketing through social media.

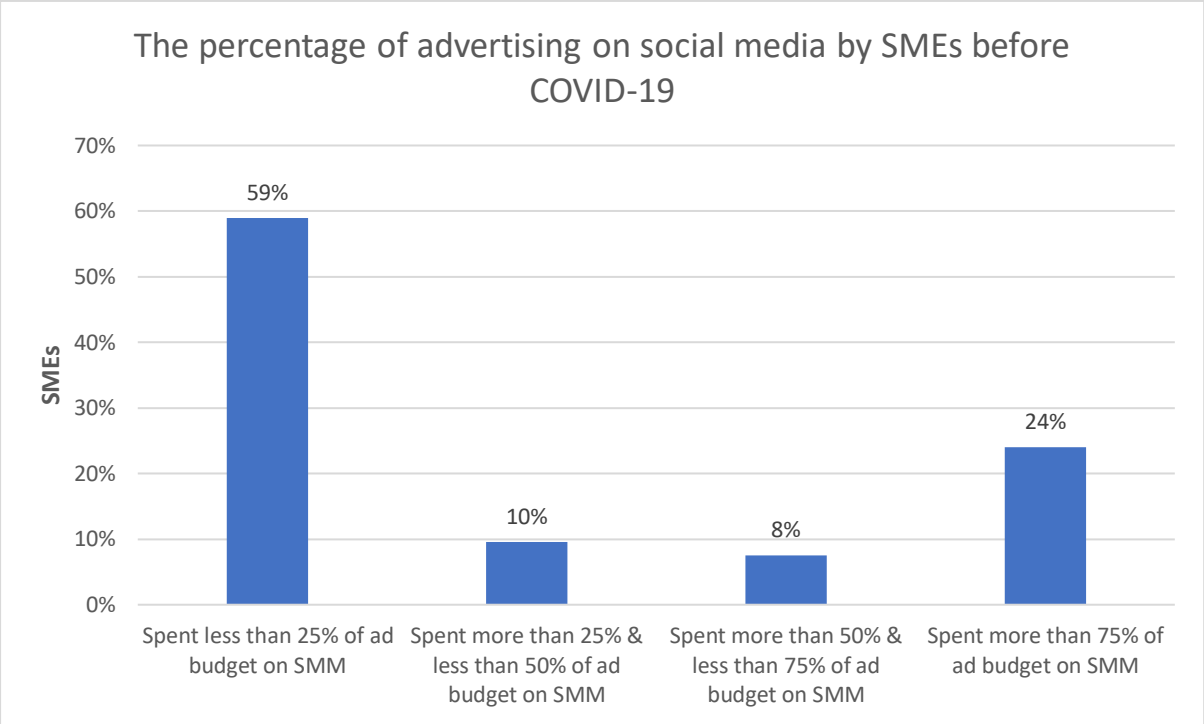

Figure 8 The percentage of advertising through social media by SMEs before COVID-19

Figure 9 demonstrates the type of social media platforms that SMEs use. The WhatsApp platform was the most important platform that has been used as a tool in digital marketing in the Saudi Arabia by about 23.5 per cent of small and medium-sized companies. While Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat have a large convergence in the number of users with about 22.8, 22.3, 21.1, per cent respectively. In addition, the Facebook platform was less popular than its peers, as it occupied the last place with about 5 per cent.

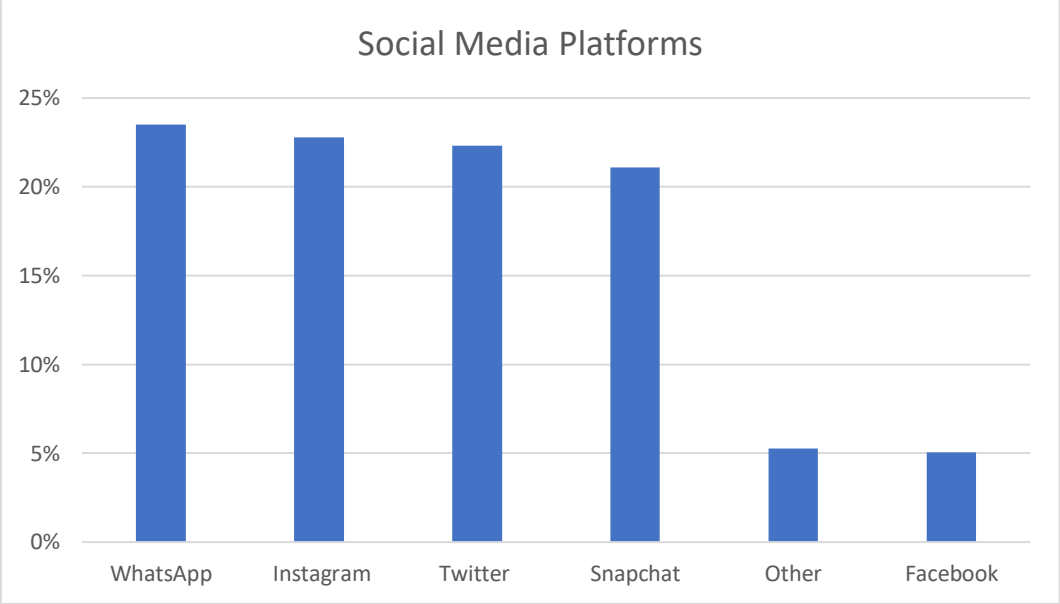

Figure 9 Social Media Platform Chart

Figure 10 shows the respondents who participated in the questionnaire were from different sectors. The dominant sector is wholesale/retail with about 59 per cent. At the same time, the real estate and construction sector were very close to each other at about 16 and 15 per cent respectively, while the manufacturing sector was the least participating among others by about 10 per cent.

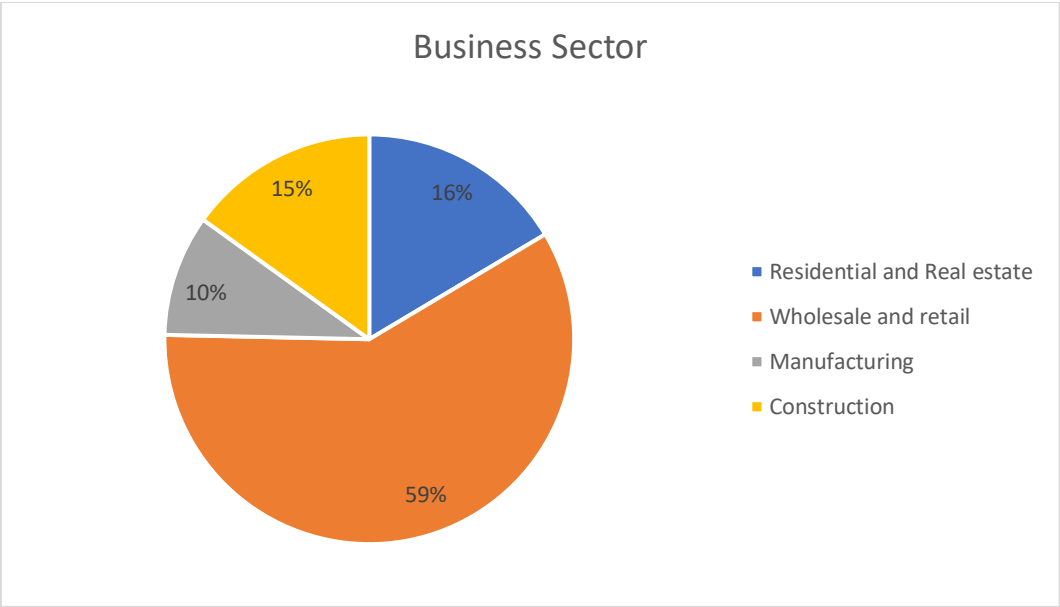

Figure 10 Business Sector Chart

Figure 11 presents the number of employees. 81.6 per cent of the small and medium-sized enterprises that responded to the questionnaire employed fewer than 50 employees.

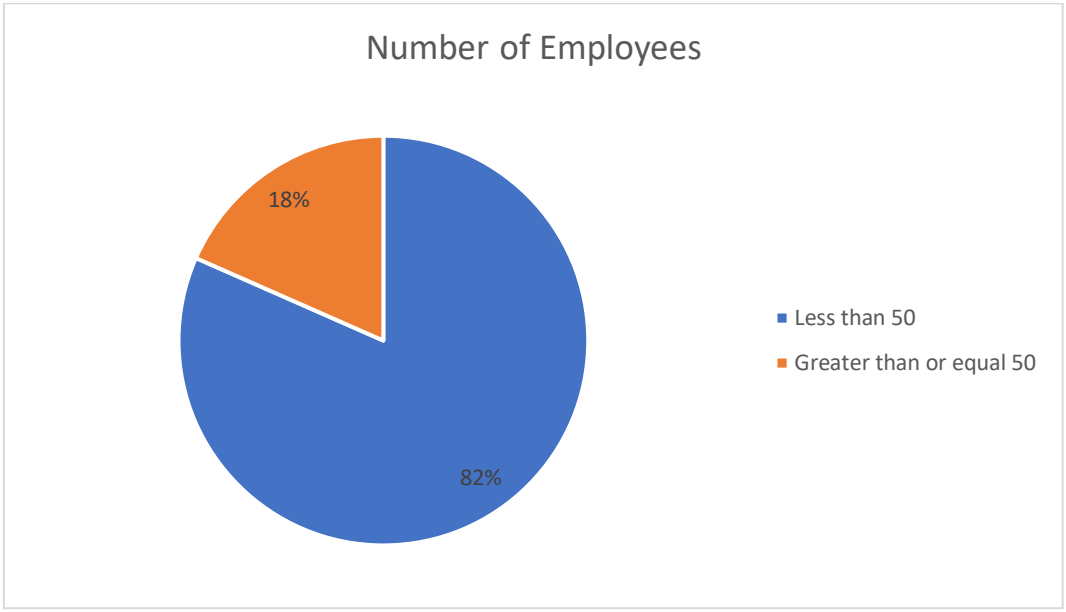

Figure 11 Number of Employees Chart

4.3.Testing the research model using SPSS, Excel, and AMOS

4.3.1. Reliability and validity

Convergent validity describes how much the indicators from the same construct are similar. The convergent validity of each construct was evaluated by (a) computing the reliability of indicators (loading factor of each item), (b) Cronbach's alpha, (c) composite reliability of each construct, and (d) average variance extracted by the variable (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 1998). Each indicator has a loading factor onto its construct, which can be used to evaluate the item's reliability. We have used 7 constructs with 33 items. During this study, each item of the questionnaire was tested for reliability. This is done by estimating each item's Loading Factor (LF) based on its own construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The convergent validity is confirmed if the loading factor value for each item is greater than the passable lowest value of 0.5 (Ahire & Devaraj, 2001; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

The conceptual model indicates that seven constructs have been identified. We consider Cronbach's alpha at 0.6 as the lower limit for this study (Hair et al., 2010). As displayed in Table 1, the Cronbach's alpha score of each construct has been estimated. For the same factor, Cronbach's alpha usually has a lower value than composite reliability. According to Cronbach's alpha criterion, all constructs were reliable. Therefore, it can be concluded that all of the constructs used in this study are reliable and consistent.

In evaluating the validity of each construct, the Composite Reliability (CR) and its Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should be estimated (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). The AVE refers to the volume of variance of the indicators represented via a latent construct. AVE can be considered as another way to measure internal consistency reliability (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Based on the results of the analysis, the constructs' identification is valid, since all the

values of CR and AVE for each construct are greater than their least acceptable values, 0.6 for CR (Urbach & Ahlemann, 2010) and 0.5 for AVE (Gefen & Straub, 2005; Hair J. et al., 2010).

The internal consistency and reliability of the items used in this study provide strong evidence that the data are valid when assessed by Cronbach's alpha, AVE, and CR (Table 1).

		Loading Factor	Cronbach alpha >0.6	CR >0.6	AVE >0.5
PU			0.78	0.85	0.54
	PU1	0.71			
	PU2	0.79			
	PU3	0.82			
	PU4	0.70			
	PU5	0.64			
PEOU			0.75	0.83	0.50
	PEOU1	0.73			
	PEOU2	0.80			
	PEOU3	0.69			
	PEOU4	0.65			
	PEOU5	0.66			
COM			0.76	0.85	0.58
	COM1	0.82			
	COM2	0.80			
	COM3	0.69			
	COM4	0.75			
FCO			0.84	0.89	0.56
	FCO1	0.70			
	FCO2	0.72			
	FCO3	0.76			
	FCO4	0.72			
	FCO5	0.87			
	FCO6	0.74			
LCOS			0.85	0.90	0.69
	LCOS1	0.83			
	LCOS2	0.84			
	LCOS3	0.90			
	LCOS4	0.75			
SMM			0.64	0.81	0.58
	SMM1	0.76			
	SMM2	0.80			
	SMM3	0.73			
IOB			0.89	0.92	0.66
	IOB1	0.84			
	IOB2	0.86			
	IOB3	0.78			
	IOB4	0.83			
	IOB5	0.82			
	IOB6	0.75			

Table 1 Reliability & Validity

4.3.2. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity indicates whether the two variables were different from each other (Hu & Liden, 2015). To assess the discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE for a construct should be compared with the correlations between this construct with all the other constructs. In Table 2, the values represent the correlation for the constructs, while the diagonal cells (in bold) are indicating to a square root of an (AVE). To achieve the discriminant validity, the diagonal cells' values (square root of the AVE) should be greater than the other cells' values in the correlation table (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). From Table 2, for all constructs in the model, the discriminant validity was achieved. If the correlation exceeds 0.85, the discriminant validity weakens (Gefen & Straub, 2005). In this study, all the correlation values from Table 2 are less than 0.85. Based on the preceding, the convergent and discriminant validity tests were achieved. By achieving the reliability and discriminant validity for all constructs in this study, the model does not need any editing or modifying. For any other analysis, attaining reliability and validity are prerequisites for the completion of the study (DeVellis, 1991).

	PU	PEOU	COM	FCO	LCOS	SMM	IOB
PU	**0.734486**	0.587105	0.293121	0.471137	0.301063	0.383226	0.006745
PEOU	0.587105	**0.709972**	0.426041	0.44313	0.46355	0.471008	0.188419
COM	0.293121	0.426041	**0.763575**	0.224776	0.287157	0.169111	0.245974
FCO	0.471137	0.44313	0.224776	**0.751153**	0.3651	0.317574	0.145999
LCOS	0.301063	0.46355	0.287157	0.3651	**0.83245**	0.498646	0.191718
SMM	0.383226	0.471008	0.169111	0.317574	0.498646	**0.762678**	0.175005
IOB	0.006745	0.188419	0.245974	0.145999	0.191718	0.175005	**0.81289**

Table 2 Discriminant Validity

Model Fit (AMOS)

The structural model in AMOS was defined in (Figure 12). The double-headed arrows in the model indicate the correlation relationships between the construct in the model. There is no presumption for the correlation relationships between the constructs in the CFA model that to ensure the quality of the measurement model. There are some different fit indices that should

be estimated such as (chi-square/df), GFI, AGFI, CFI, RMR and RMSE to test if the conceptual model is in order. All these fit indices are presented in Table 3.

Fit index	Value in the model	Recommended value
Chi-square / Degrees of freedom (df)	1.773	<=3.0 (Kline, 2005)
Goodness of Fit model (GFI)	0.951	>=0.900 (Hoyle, 1995)
Adjusted Goodness of Fit model (AGFI)	0.942	>=0.800 (Segars & Grover, 1993)
Comparative fit index (CFI)	0.841	>=0.93 (Hair J. et al., 2006)
Root mean square Error (RMSEA)	0.041	<=0.07 (Steiger, 2007)
Root mean square residual (RMR)	0.063	< 0.8 acceptable (Hu & Bentler, 1999)

Table 3 Model Fit Indices

From Table 3, all the estimated values are within the acceptable domain except the CFI, which will be explained below. This proves that the model is fitted. AMOS 27 has been used to analyse and estimate the conceptual model. In terms of the measurement (Chi-square / Degrees of freedom), the value of Chi-square = 831.689 divided by df = 469, which equals 1.773. This value would be considered less than the recommended maximum value of 3.0 (Kline, 2005). Another two indices have been considered for testing the structure model: The goodness of Fit model (GFI) and the Adjusted Goodness of Fit model (AGFI). The GFI indicating to 0.951 and that is greater than the recommended value of 0.900 (Hoyle, 1995). In addition, the value of the Adjusted Goodness of Fit model (AGFI) indicated to 0.942, which meant this value is acceptable and is considered greater than or equal to the passable value 0.800 (Segars & Grover, 1993). The sample size is not too important for the Comparative fit index (CFI) (Fan et al., 1999). Nevertheless, CFI is ineffective when most of the correlations between variables

are close to zero, as there is less covariance to explain. Further, Raykov (2005) suggests that the CFI is biased due to the fact it is a non-centrality. Based on the above, the CFI is not that accurate to test the model fit used in this study, and that is due to most of the correlations are close to zero (Table 4). Additionally, Root Mean Square Error (RMSEA) and Root mean square residual (RMR) have both been measured to examine the model fit as well. The estimation of RMSEA is 0.041, and that is considered within the acceptable range (lower than or equal to 0.07) as conducted by (Steiger, 2007). As well as the RMR where it has been (0.063) in the passable point as a lower than 0.8 (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

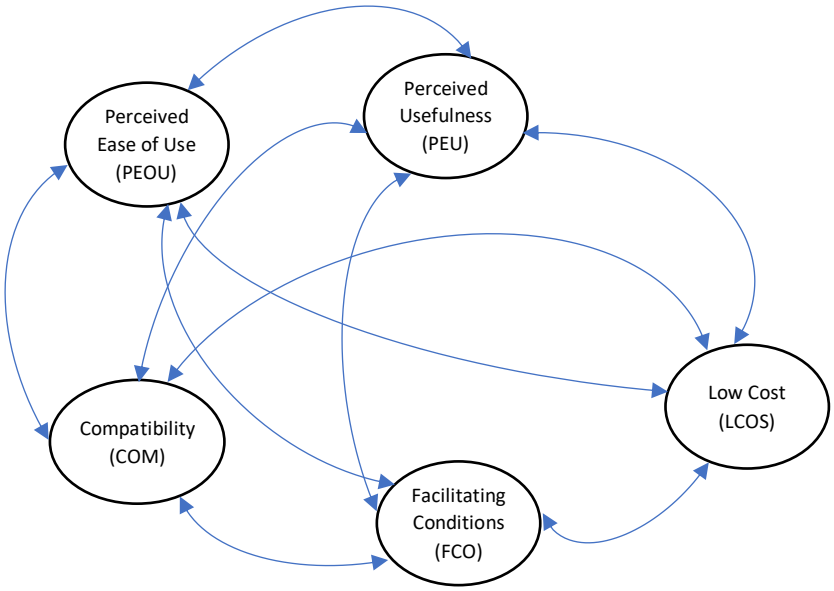

Figure 12 Structural Model

Correlation between constructs			**Estimate**	**P**
PU	<-->	PEOU	0.082	0.002
PU	<-->	COM	0.155	***
PU	<-->	LCOS	0.089	0.007
FCO	<-->	PU	0.129	0.003
PEOU	<-->	COM	0.142	***
PEOU	<-->	LCOS	0.116	0.002
FCO	<-->	PEOU	0.167	***
COM	<-->	LCOS	0.159	0.002
FCO	<-->	COM	0.424	***
FCO	<-->	LCOS	0.275	***

Table 4 Correlation between constructs

Common method Bias

This study confirmed that the data were free from common method bias by examining the single factor test of Harman (Harman, 1976). The 33 items of 7 constructs have been tested with SPSS using the unrotated factor solution which was able to explain 31.5% of the variance. This value is less than the cut-off value recommended by Podsakoff et al. (2003) which was 50%. Based on the above, the data used in this study is free from common method bias.

4.3.3. Test of the structural model – Testing Hypothesis H1 – H6

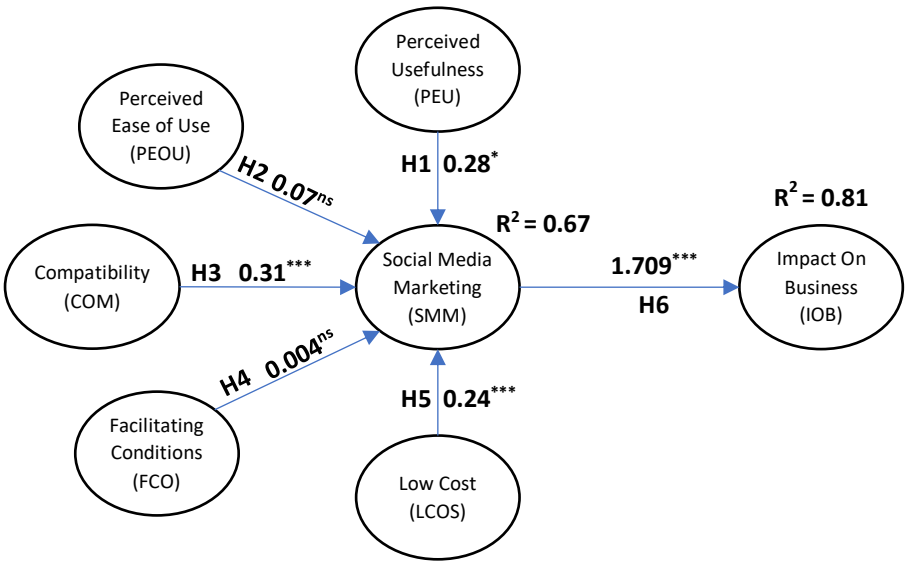

Figure 13 Testing Hypothesis Model

				Path Coefficient	P value	Label	Hypothesis	Result
H1	SMM	<---	PU	0.276	0.008	**	positive	supported
H2	SMM	<---	PEOU	0.072	0.355	ns	positive	Not supported
H3	SMM	<---	COM	0.308	***	***	positive	supported
H4	SMM	<---	FCO	0.004	0.886	ns	positive	Not supported
H5	SMM	<---	LCOS	0.242	***	***	positive	supported
H6	IOB	<---	SMM	1.709	***	***	positive	supported

Table 5 Results of Hypothesis Testing

Based on the literature, a conceptual model has been used for developing 6 hypotheses which has 7 constructs with 33 items (questions). SEM method has been used to validate the conceptual model. Based on the validation results, out of the 6 hypotheses developed conceptually, two hypotheses have not been supported: that is (H2), the impact of PEOU on SMM, and (H4) the impact of FCO on SMM. The assessment of coefficient of determinant (R^2) appears that PEU, PEOU, COM, FCO, and LCOS can explain and demonstrate Social Media Marketing (SMM) to the range of 67 % as the coefficient of determinant is 0. 67 (R^2).

The highest path coefficient from the independent variables (PEU, PEOU, COM, FCO and LCOS) was 0.308, which is the impact of COM on SMM (H3) with significance p-value ***($P < 0.001$). In contrast, the lowest path coefficient was 0.004, which is the impact of FCO on SMM (H4) with significance level ns ($p > 0.05$). Since the estimation of the coefficient of determinant (R^2) for IOB is 0.81, SMM can explain IOB (H6) to the value of 81 %. The model has an explanatory power of 81%.

Hypothesis one suggests that PEU on SMM has a significantly positive impact, which is in line with the results of this study. According to hypothesis two, the PEOU has a positive influence on SMM, whilst the study outcome reveals that the PEOU has no significant influence on SMM thus, the hypothesis two is not supported. However, most of the respondents of the survey agree that it is easy to learn social media marketing, it is easy to identify new customers using social media, it is easy to identify customer demand using social media, information retrieval about a customer is easy using social media, and advertising products and services on social media platforms are easy. Moreover, there is a significant and positive impact of COM on SMM, the facts of which support hypothesis three. These study results prove that SMM is not significantly influenced by FCO, which is not supported by the literature in hypothesis four. The results show a significant positive relationship of LCOS on SMM. The impact of LCOS on SMM is supported by hypothesis five (H5) which is validated by the literature that shows a positive impact from LCOS to SMM. To conclude, SMM has a considerable influence on the IOB, and this supports the hypothesis literature (H6).

The participants in this study have been categorised using two variables; the enterprises' size (Small – Medium) and by their state during the lockdown (closed – not closed). The enterprises with 50 employees or less have been labelled as ‘Small’ with the results on Table 6, and the ones with more than 50 are ‘Medium’ which are Table 7. On the other hand, the enterprises that had to close their offices during the lockdown are labelled as ‘Closed’ which represents

63% as reported in Table 8, and the ones that continued to open their offices during the lockdown are labelled as 'Not closed' which are 37% reported in Table 9. These categories have been used to test the impact of the hypothesis relationships in each different situation.

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
SMM	<---	PU	0.646	0.282	2.288	0.022	*
SMM	<---	PEOU	0.151	0.104	1.456	0.145	ns
SMM	<---	COM	0.278	0.078	3.584	***	***
SMM	<---	FCO	-0.066	0.033	-2.024	0.043	*
SMM	<---	LCOS	0.238	0.065	3.685	***	***
IOB	<---	SMM	1.961	0.385	5.097	***	***

Table 6 Small enterprises categorised.

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
SMM	<---	PU	0.059	0.097	0.608	0.543	ns
SMM	<---	PEOU	0.666	0.346	1.921	0.055	ns
SMM	<---	COM	0.071	0.09	0.789	0.43	ns
SMM	<---	FCO	0.06	0.054	1.11	0.267	ns
SMM	<---	LCOS	0.297	0.118	2.511	0.012	**
IOB	<---	SMM	1.072	0.468	2.292	0.022	*

Table 7 Medium enterprises categorised.

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
SMM	<---	PU	0.459	0.227	2.024	0.043	*
SMM	<---	PEOU	0.308	0.204	1.513	0.13	ns
SMM	<---	COM	0.374	0.11	3.407	***	***
SMM	<---	FCO	-0.062	0.039	-1.592	0.111	ns
SMM	<---	LCOS	0.265	0.078	3.388	***	***
IOB	<---	SMM	1.912	0.421	4.545	***	***

Table 8 Closed enterprises categorised

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
SMM	<---	PU	0.158	0.081	1.962	0.05	*
SMM	<---	PEOU	0.088	0.074	1.201	0.23	ns
SMM	<---	COM	0.136	0.067	2.046	0.041	*
SMM	<---	FCO	0.027	0.03	0.903	0.367	ns
SMM	<---	LCOS	0.29	0.095	3.065	0.002	**
IOB	<---	SMM	1.3	0.492	2.643	0.008	**

Table 9 Not Closed enterprises categorised

	Small		Medium		Closed		Not Closed		All	
	Estimate	P value	Estimate	P value	Estimate	P value	Estimate	P value	Estimate	P value
SMM <--- PEU	0.646	*	0.059	ns	0.459	*	0.158	*	0.276	**
SMM <--- PEOU	0.151	ns	0.666	ns	0.308	ns	0.088	ns	0.072	ns
SMM <--- COM	0.278	***	0.071	ns	0.374	***	0.136	*	0.308	***
SMM <--- FCO	-0.066	*	0.06	ns	-0.062	ns	0.027	ns	0.004	ns
SMM <--- LCOS	0.238	***	0.297	**	0.265	***	0.29	**	0.242	***
IOB <--- SMM	1.961	***	1.072	*	1.912	***	1.3	**	1.709	***

Table 10 All enterprises categories

Table 10 shows that all the categories have a significant relationship between SMM and IOB. In addition to that, all categories have an insignificant relationship between PEOU and impact on business. Also, all categories have a significant relationship between LCOS and impact on business. From the table, it can be seen that small enterprises have been affected by the factors more than the medium ones. Also, the enterprises closed during the lockdown were more significantly affected by the factors Low Cost and Compatibility than the non-closed enterprises. The table also shows that the effect of using SMM on the Impact On Business was more significant in small enterprises than in the medium; on the other hand, its impact in closed enterprises was more significant than in non-closed ones. Another observation from the table is that Facilitating Conditions was not significant due to the lockdown where 63 per cent of the participated enterprises were closed and could not use their infrastructure. Finally, the table shows that only medium enterprises have insignificant results while others have a significant relationship between COM and Impact On Business (IOB) and PEU and Impact On Business which proves that the smaller businesses are more greatly impacted by these factors.

4.4. Summary

This chapter analyses the data from the questionnaire regarding the effectiveness of the factors on the SMM by SMEs. This chapter starts with analysing data for SMEs that responded to the questionnaire. Then the chapter introduced the analysis of the data obtained in the Likert scale style survey of factors affecting SMM acceptance by SMEs in Saudi Arabia. Reliability and validity issues for analysing the data were addressed. The results of survey data analysis using AMOS and SPSS software were confirmed by using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) techniques.

Chapter 5. Discussion and Conclusion

5.1. Introduction

A brief summary of the study is presented followed by a discussion of the findings while taking into account existing literature. There is then an analysis of the implications of the study as well as the limitations of the study, followed by recommendations for further investigation and future work. A conclusion for the entire thesis is presented at the end of the chapter.

5.2. Summary of the Study

This thesis has examined the topic of this study, which is to examine factors impacting the adoption and use of social media marketing in small and medium-sized businesses in Saudi Arabia during COVID-19 restrictions.

This study answered the following research question.

1. Which factors influence the adoption and use of Social Media Marketing as a marketing tool in SMEs during COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia?

Based on the previous literature, six hypotheses were developed to answer the research question, they are as follows:

H1: Perceived Usefulness (PEU) has a positive impact on the SME use of Social Media Marketing (SMM).

H2: Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) has a positive impact on the SME use of Social Media Marketing (SMM).

H3: Compatibility (COM) has a positive impact on the SME use of Social Media Marketing (SMM).

H4: Facilitating Conditions (FCO) has a positive impact on the SME use of Social Media Marketing (SMM).

H5: Low Cost (LCOS) has a positive impact on the SME use of Social Media Marketing (SMM).

H6: Social Media Marketing (SMM) has a positive influence on the impact on business (IOB).

The study has adapted the TAM model to examine the six hypotheses and the effectiveness of adopting and use of SMM by SMEs in relation to five factors: Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, Compatibility, Low Cost, and Facilitating Conditions.

This research employed a quantitative methodology approach to test and analyse the data based on the available studies. A questionnaire was conducted online and distributed to the targeted business participants in Saudi Arabia through their own emails and social media accounts.

5.3. Discussion of Finding

Based on the data analysis, this section discusses the findings for the hypothesis.

H1: Perceived Usefulness (PEU) has a positive impact on the SME use of SMM.

(H1) was supported: perceived usefulness (PEU) has a significant positive impact on the adoption of Social Media Marketing (SMM) by SMEs. The relationship between these two variables confirms with finding in earlier research studies.

H2: Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) has a positive impact on the SME use of SMM.

Earlier studies conducted by Setiawan et al. (2018) and Pranoto and Lumbantobing (2021) found that there is an insignificant relationship between PEOU and SMM. This is also the case in the current study, as H2 was not supported. It is apparent that many employees are reluctant to change the basic nature of their work or to move to digital technology in its entirety or even partially and that was mentioned as well in some of the participants' opinions in the questionnaire. In addition, the lack of knowledge in technology usage played an important role

here, as such SMEs were suffering during the closure due to a lack of experience in dealing with such rapid transformation. One of the participants mentioned that Saudi Arabia is not self-sufficient in many professions and specialties; in some professions it depends on people coming to work from abroad. Most of the employees who come to work in SMEs from abroad prior to the lockdown have different cultures and limited local knowledge and thus it is difficult to communicate with them effectively in terms of involving them as such in marketing through social media because a large number of them are simply non-Arabic speakers.

Regarding (H2), a positive and significant effect of PEOU on SMM is supposition, in spite of the fact that this hypothesis was not supported by the empirical study, which has been conflicted with earlier studies.

H3: Compatibility (COM) has a positive impact on the SME use of SMM.

There is a significant and positive relationship between compatibility (COM) and social media marketing (SMM), supporting hypothesis three (H3), which is validated by the literature (Pranoto & Lumbantobing, 2021; Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020).

H4: Facilitating Conditions (FCO) has a positive impact on the SME use of SMM.

In terms of hypothesis four (H4), as demonstrated in the results the FCO has resulted in no significant negative impact on SMM, which does not support the hypothesis (H4). However, a

study conducted by Pranoto and Lumbantobing (2021) indicated that FCO and SMM have no significant relationship.

Indeed, management support from decision makers in the SMEs is an integral part of the concept of facilitating conditions based on the literature. There were some opinions in the questionnaire indicate that most decision makers in the business are not aware of the importance of digital marketing on their business, and the management does not provide much training to employees or involve them in digital marketing. Another dilemma arose in the same context; many of the targeted enterprises have a small number of employees. As a result, it is difficult to mandate them to attend SMM training courses. Moreover, a number of study participants mentioned that the problem lies in the absence of interest of SMEs owners in adopting technology more and more effectively, as many of them do not allocate a full-time expert marketer on social media platforms. On the other hand, most respondents agree that they have adequate infrastructure for using social media, their enterprise promotes social media for business, and their organisation invests adequately in social media marketing. It seems that the lack of awareness among some of the SMEs about the importance of digital marketing using social media as a marketing tool is a matter of controversy.

H5: Low Cost (LCOS) has a positive impact on the SME use of SMM.

The results contain a significant positive relationship effect from the Low Cost (LCOS) on the SMEs to use social media marketing (SMM) which is supported by the literature (Chong & Chan, 2012; Premkumar & Roberts, 1999).

H6: Social media marketing (SMM) has a positive influence on the impact on business (IOB).

There is a significant positive influence of Social Media Marketing (SMM) on the Impact On Business (IOB), which supports the hypothesis literature (Ancillai et al. 2019; Agnihotri et al. 2016).

5.4. Contribution to knowledge

This study contributes to confirming the effectiveness of involving the use of the SMM in SMEs in Saudi Arabia during the COVID-19 pandemic. Also, this study evaluated five factors that influenced SMEs in Saudi Arabia to use SMM during the COVID-19 pandemic, including PEU, PEOU, COM, FCO, and LCOS. SMEs will benefit from this use of SMM in terms of Impact on Business (IOB), which is the focus of this study. For this reason, this study examines the necessity of SMM use by SMEs in Saudi Arabia to improve their business performance during COVID-19 pandemic. As well as validating theories of technology acceptance, it also provided further evidence that SMM is capable of improving business performance. This study has adopted a research model derived from established theories of technology acceptance, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), therefore these theories have been validated within the case of using social media marketing (SMM). Specifically, the study has been the first to investigate whether SMEs in Saudi Arabia accepted SMM usage in terms of the COVID-19 pandemic using the Model of Technology Acceptance and Use of Technology along with the Technology Acceptance Model. The theoretical model has been tested and it appears that the factors have been appropriately considered. Therefore, this theoretical model is able to explain IOB to the tune of 81%, which indicates that the R^2 for this model was 0.81. According to the study, usefulness, compatibility, and low cost are all factors that encourage SMEs to use and adopt social media marketing.

This study found that small enterprises have been affected by the factors more than the medium-sized ones. Another finding is that the enterprises that closed during the lockdown

were more significantly affected by the factors (Low Cost and Compatibility) than the non-closed enterprises. Also, Facilitating Conditions (FCO) was not significant due to the lockdown where 63 per cent of the participated enterprises were closed and could not use their infrastructure. To increase productivity and performance, SMEs must provide their employees with the necessary technical infrastructure and training in digital marketing (in this case social media), besides encouraging them to enhance their ability to use it effectively. Additionally, finding and activating the position of a digital marketer in the administrative structure of SMEs has become an urgent necessity to keep pace with the changes of modern marketing that will be reflected in the future on the overall performance of the organisations. This research contributed to the present studies regarding Saudi Arabian SMEs, predominately to persuade businesses to involve the SMM as a way to digitalise their marketing processes.

5.5. Limitation of the Study

There were some limits to this study where this research received 146 completed responses which were collected over a period of two months. Since Saudi Arabia is such a vast country, 146 entrepreneurs can't be considered as a general reflection of small and medium-sized businesses. Naturally, the geographical distance and the significant difference in time between the country of study (New Zealand) and the place where the study was applied (Saudi Arabia) has limited this study from obtaining a comprehensive view and dealing with the study objective more closely. In addition, the COVID-19 restrictions imposed by governments to restrict the spread of the disease also have limited this study from gaining better communication and including a larger number of participants, which may help to apply it more widely. In

conclusion, there are still factors that can be taken into consideration in future studies, which will be presented in the future work section.

5.6. Suggestions for the Future Research

Because the study is based on a survey, it would be useful if experiments were conducted or expanded research was conducted to verify the findings. In future research, it is essential to examine the interaction effects of marketing through social media in different types of organisations and with other characteristics. The primary variables that were studied were SME owners' opinions about SMM and their perceptions of its effectiveness. In light of this, we suggest incorporating more variables that capture external perspectives in future research, such as trust, organisational support, technological support, and government support.

5.7. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that SMEs may be able to reap more business benefits by activating the role of social media as an effective marketing tool. In fact, some of Saudi Arabian's SMEs do not possess the technical proficiency and/or infrastructure needed to use social media for business, as well as the lack of management support to this important method of marketing and yet facilitating conditions (FCO) have a non-significant negative effect on SMEs to use SMM. Similarly, the factor of perceived ease of use (PEOU), did not impact the results, where the result shows that an insignificant impact non-significant negative effect on SMEs to use and adopt marketing through social media. These findings have been confirmed following the completion of the statistical validation process. The results of this in-depth study have provided them with some strategies in order to improve their growth and gain an edge against competitive corporations by improving their management mechanisms in such a way that introduces a favourable environment to implementing the marketing through social media. This research has shown that SMEs are increasingly using SMM to promote themselves. Saudi

Arabian SMEs have been able to increase their revenue growth and income through SMM. Using social media as a marketing tool contributes to stimulating and strengthening the business of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

In terms of perceived usefulness, compatibility, and low cost, the results of this study found that these factors have a significant positive effect on SMEs to use and adopt marketing through social media. SMEs and potential customers together will benefit from using social media in various ways, which may offer a valuable opportunity for both. Utilizing SMM, SMEs can improve their performance, whereas potential customers can come closer to them to gain their personal and business advantages. Recently, SMEs have a better understanding to learn more about products and services by consolidating the relationship between the use of SMM and business growth. Due to this reason, the newly developed technology known as social customer relationship management is becoming more popular in firms to create value by interacting with stakeholders over social media (Harrigan et al., 2015; Kar, 2015; Rathore et al., 2017). The SMEs have become motivated to use social media as a marketing tool due to its simplicity, lower cost and effectiveness.

In other words, SMEs that can afford to use social media as a marketing tool in comparison with more expensive conventional marketing methods, and would be more inclined to use it. Further, by providing adequate training to the staff of SMEs, motivating them effectively with the encouragement of the top management of SMEs, will promote them to adopt and use SMM, leading to better business health. Consequently, an appropriate initiative and incentive program by the government to SMEs in Saudi Arabia might be able to make the circumstances of businesses better, which would ultimately lead to economic growth for the country (Singh et al., 2010; Srinivasan et al., 2015). Finally, the perceived ease of use and the facilitating conditions will not be an obstacle if the situations like infrastructure, adequate support from SMEs management, and acceptance of the new technology are all ensured. Increasing the

awareness among entrepreneurs and knowledge about adopting and using SMM effectively, a lack of FCO and PEOU will not hinder the use of SMM by SMEs.

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Appendix questionnaire

QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to investigate the use of social media as marketing tool for SMEs in the current COVID-19 crisis. If your company have no existence on the social media platform, you are not intended to this questionnaire.

You are asked to participate in this study by filling in the questionnaire. Kindly answer all the questions provided as honestly as possible, to the best of your knowledge. Information collected will only be used for the current study.

Which social media platforms does your company use? (you can choose more than one).

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- WhatsApp
- Other _____

Section 1 Social media marketing

Answer the following by ticking on the appropriate response as per this Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, 5 = strongly agree)

TO what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Social media marketing benefits	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Usefulness of social media					
1. Social media is useful for business					
2. Social media is a valuable tool for marketing					
3. Social media enhances the productivity of the business					

4. Social media helps better query management					
5. Social media helps more customer satisfaction					
Ease of use of social media					
6. Overall, it is easy to learn social media marketing					
7. It is easy to identify new customers using social media					
8. It is easy to identify customer demand using social media					
9. Information retrieval about a customer is easy using social media					
10. Advertising products and services on social media platforms are easy					
Compatibility					
11. Our enterprise is compatible with using social media for different purposes					
12. I use social media regularly for business purposes					
13. My organization provides me support for getting training on social media					
14. Our business is compatible with using social media for marketing purpose					
Facilitating Condition					
15. We have adequate infrastructure for using social media					
16. Our enterprise promotes social media for business					

17. Our organization invest adequately for social media marketing					
18. We have enough trained manpower dealing with social media marketing					
19. All our employees are provided training to use social media marketing					
20. We have inhouse training facility to learn about different aspects of social media					
Low Cost					
21. My cost of dealing with customer enquiries has been reduced using SMM					
22. Cost of identifying new customer has been reduced through use of SMM					
23. Customer awareness and training cost have been diminished by use of SMM					
24. The overall advertising and promotion cost have gone down using SMM					
Social Media Marketing					
25. For advertising my products and services social media marketing is helpful					
26. Because my competitors are using social media for marketing, I should use it					
27. Usage of social media marketing technique is good for my business					

Impact on business					
28. My business has attracted new customers using social media marketing					
29. My business performance has been increased using social media platform					
30. My sales are above average compared to others not using social media platform					
31. My customers feel more connected with my business after using social media					
32. My efficiency to identify the customers' need has been increased using SMM					
33. Creativity of my employees has been enhanced through use of SMM					

Section 2 information about business/company

34. What is your business sector?

- Residential and Real estate
- Wholesale and retail
- Manufacturing
- Construction
- Other _____

35. What is the range of your annual turnover of your business/company currently?

- Less than 5 million SR
- Between 1 - 5 million SR
- Over 5 million SR

36. How many employees work in the business/company?

- Less than 50
- Greater than or equal 50

37. Has the Corona crisis negatively affected your business?

- Yes If Yes, please answer the sub questions (a – d):
- No Move to question number 38.

a. Since the government announced its lockdown measures in March 2020, did your business/company operations close for at least 5 days?
   - Yes, How many days in total? And how many occasions?
   - No

b. Did your business company lay off any employees during COVID-19 pandemic?
   - Yes, how many employees were laid off because of COVID-19?
   - No

c. How was your business/company impacted by the economic challenges created by the COVID-19 outbreak?
   - 100% affected
   - More than 50%

- More than 25%
- Less than 25%

d. Did your business change its marketing strategies in response to COVID-19 lockdown measures?

- Yes, How?
- No

38. What type of marketing strategies did you use in your company before COVID-19? Please indicate the percentage of advertising expenditure allocated to the following media channels.

- TV ----------
- Radio ----------
- Magazine ----------
- Newspaper ----------
- Billboard ----------
- Social media
  - Facebook ----------
  - Twitter ----------
  - Instagram ----------
  - Snapchat ----------
  - WhatsApp ----------
- Google Ad ----------
- Other Website ----------
-

39. Are your marketing strategies still the same after the first lockdown?

- Yes
- No

40. What type of marketing strategies have you used after the first lock down? Please indicate the percentage of advertising expenditure allocated to the following media channels.

- TV ----------
- Radio ----------

- Magazine ----------
- Newspaper ----------
- Billboard ----------
- Social media
    - Facebook ----------
    - Twitter ----------
    - Instagram ----------
    - Snapchat ----------
    - WhatsApp ----------
- Google Ad ----------
- Other Website ----------

41. To what extent do you believe that social media marketing approach will be used more, even after this pandemic? Or your business/company will resort to traditional marketing strategies?

_____

_____

42. What do you think are the main success factors if any in adopting social media marketing strategy?

_____

_____

43. List the main barriers that you have experienced towards adopting social media marketing strategies

_____

_____

44. Which government interventions would you recommend to help SMEs in Saudi Arabia adopt digital marketing?

_____

_____

SECTION 3: BIODATA

45. What is your position in business/company?
    - Manager
    - Supervisor
    - Owner
    - Other _____

46. What is your qualification?
    - High School.
    - Undergraduate or Diploma qualification
    - Bachelor's degree
    - Master or above

	Items	Source	Statements English	Response [SD] [D] [N] [A] [SA]
1	PEU1	(Abed et al., 2015a), (Abed et al., 2015b), (Abed et al., 2016)	Social media is useful for business	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
2	PEU2	(Alalwan et al., 2017)	Social media is a valuable tool for marketing	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
3	PEU3	(Aral et al., 2013), (Chung et al., 2017)	Social media enhances the productivity of the business	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
4	PEU4	(Culnan et al., 2010), (Chung et al., 2017)	Social media helps better query management	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
5	PEU5	(Dwivedi et al., 2015), (Elbanna et al., 2019)	Social media helps more customer satisfaction	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
6	PEOU1	(Park, 2009), (Ware, 2018)	Overall, it is easy to learn social media marketing	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
7	PEOU2	(Kuo & Yen, 2009), (Venkatesh et al., 2012)	It is easy to identify new customers using social media	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
8	PEOU3	(Alam & Noor, 2009), (Hung & Lai, 2015)	It is easy to identify customer demand using social media	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
9	PEOU4	(Harris et al., 2008), (Rana et al., 2019)	Information retrieval about a customer is easy using social media	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
10	PEOU5	(Aral et al., 2013), (Chung et al., 2017)	Advertising products and services on social media platforms are easy	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
11	COM1	(Derham et al., 2011), (Yoon & Cho, 2016)	Our enterprise is compatible for using social media for different purposes	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
12	COM2	(Dwivedi et al., 2015)	I use social media regularly for business purposes	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
13	COM3	(Mangold & Faulds, 2009), (Misirlis & Vlachopoulou, 2018)	My organization provides me support for getting training on social media	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
14	COM4	(Wang et al., 2010), (Derham et al., 2011)	Our business is compatible using social media for marketing purpose	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
15	FCO1	(Hung & Lai, 2015), (Ng et al., 2019)	We have adequate infrastructure for using social media	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
16	FCO2	(Harris et al., 2008), (Rana et al., 2019), (Alhakimi & Mahmoud, 2020)	Our enterprise promotes social media for business	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
17	FCO3	(Sykes et al., 2009), (Venkatesh et al., 2012)	Our organization invest adequately for social media marketing	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
18	FCO4	(Hung & Lai, 2015), (Aral et al., 2013)	We have enough trained manpower dealing with social media marketing	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
19	FCO5	(Venkatesh et al., 2003), (Hung & Lai, 2015)	All our employees are provided training to use social media marketing	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
20	FCO6	(Venkatesh et al., 2003), (Zhang et al., 2019);	We have inhouse training facility to learn about different aspects of social media	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
21	LCOS1	(Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), (Dwivedi et al., 2015)	My cost of dealing with customer enquiries has been reduced using SMM	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
22	LCOS2	(Zhang et al., 2019), (Acquity Group, 2014)	Cost of identifying new customer has been reduced through use of SMM	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
23	LCOS3	(Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), (Kim & Shin, 2015)	Customer awareness and training cost have been diminished by use of SMM	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
24	LCOS4	(Acquity Group, 2014), (Chung et al., 2017)	The overall advertising and promotion cost have gone down using SMM	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
25	SMM1	(Dwivedi et al., 2015), (Shareef et al., 2019)	For advertising my products and services social media marketing is helpful	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
26	SMM2	(Aral et al., 2013), (Abed et al., 2015a), (Abed et al., 2015b)	Because my competitors are using social media for marketing, I should use it	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
27	SMM3	(Culnan et al., 2010), (Shareef et al., 2019)	Usage of social media marketing technique is good for my business	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
28	IOB1	(Michaelidou et al., 2011), (Roumieh et al., 2018)	My business has attracted new customers using social media marketing	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
29	IOB2	(Sullivan & Koh, 2019), (Fatima & Bilal, 2019)	My business performance has been increased using social media platform	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
30	IOB3	(Aral et al., 2013), (Chung et al., 2017)	My sales are above average compared to others using social media platform	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
31	IOB4	(Aral et al., 2013), (Elbanna et al., 2019)	My customers feel more connected with my business after using social media	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
32	IOB5	(Dwivedi et al., 2017), (Abed et al., 2015a), (Abed et al., 2015b)	My efficiency to identify the customers' need has been increased using SMM	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]
33	IOB6	(Chung et al., 2017), (Shareef et al., 2019)	Creativity of my employees has been enhanced through use of SMM	[1] [2] [3] [4] [5]