



Drivers of Social Media Marketing Continuance among MSMEs in Emerging Economies

Lennora Putit¹, Muhammad Iskandar Hamzah¹, Mohamad Fariz Abdullah^{1*},
Sharifah Nurafizah Syed Annuar², Arief Yulianto³

¹Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Puncak Alam, Selangor Malaysia

²Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia

³Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Negeri Semarang (UNNESS), Semarang, Indonesia

* Corresponding author e-mail: farizabdullah@uitm.edu.my

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 2 September 2025

Accepted 15 October 2025

Published 20 October 2025

Keywords:

Entrepreneurs

Micro, Small and Medium sized

Perceived ease of use

Perceived usefulness

Social Media Marketing

Technology Acceptance Model

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.24191/jibe.v10i2.8743>

ABSTRACT

Entrepreneurial activities in many business sectors nowadays are immensely significant for economic growth and national development. The utilization of marketing tools via online digital platforms such as social media marketing, pay-per-click advertisements, and search engine optimization is also rapidly growing for many business activities. This study aims to examine micro, small and medium sized (MSMEs) entrepreneurs' continued usage intention of social media marketing (SMM) within the gastronomic business sector. Drawing from the Technology Acceptance Model, it attempts to investigate whether perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, facilitating conditions, and cost may influence their SMM usage. By using a non-probability sampling technique, 122 usable online survey questionnaire feedback were collected from MSME entrepreneurs in Malaysia. Data was analysed via SPSS version 26.0 to undertake both descriptive and multivariate analyses. Results demonstrate significant findings on all hypotheses. Perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, cost, and facilitating conditions significantly influence MSMEs' usage of SMM in enhancing their business performance. Several managerial contributions are further discussed.

1. Introduction

Nowadays, entrepreneurial activities in both the formal and informal sectors play a crucial role in driving economic growth and national development (Al-Mamun, Fazal, & Muniady, 2019; Moksin et al., 2023). Small and medium enterprises (SMEs), along with micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), contribute significantly at both domestic and global levels by providing diverse goods and services, creating employment opportunities, developing market segments, stimulating competitive markets, and enhancing technological advancement (Khaleque, 2018). In Malaysia, the economic contribution of micro-enterprises has been particularly notable, with nearly 1.3 million individuals actively

engaged in micro-economic activities (Al-Mamun et al., 2016). These businesses, which account for 75% of SMEs, are typically small-scale operations such as food stalls, night market vendors, grocery shops, construction, and service contractors often characterized by limited capital, fewer than five full-time employees, and an annual turnover below RM 300,000 (Wahid, Aziz, & Halim, 2017).

Despite their contribution, MSMEs continue to face challenges in diversifying their products and strengthening their marketing capabilities, particularly through social media platforms (Jahid et al., 2021). Prior research has shown that adopting social media technologies can significantly enhance enterprise performance by expanding market reach, showcasing products, and improving customer engagement (Anggriani & Purnama, 2024; Loo, Ramchandran, & Raja Yusof, 2023). For instance, Chatterjee and Kumar Kar (2020) found that perceptions of use, convenience, and compatibility strongly influenced MSMEs' social media marketing (SMM) practices in India. Similarly, Cheung et al. (2020) demonstrated that SMM promotes value co-creation and engagement among consumers in China and Hong Kong, while Rasheed and Nafiz (2022) reported its effectiveness in building repurchase intention and future behavior among MSMEs in the Maldives. Ainin et al. (2015) further highlighted the rise of Facebook as a marketing tool that facilitates multi-party conversations, with adoption influenced by perceived usefulness and convenience. Although the benefits of SMM such as improved sales, stronger customer relations, and enhanced productivity are well established (Ellyawati & Kusumatriawan, 2024; Syaifullah et al., 2021), research gaps remain concerning the factors driving MSMEs' sustained use of these platforms. Limited empirical evidence exists on how strategic decision-making, particularly in relation to platform selection and evaluation, influences long-term engagement (Velempini & Kabanda, 2024; Chan & Kumar, 2017).

Factors such as expected business value, managerial demographics, and digital literacy have been acknowledged but remain underexplored (Velempini & Kabanda, 2024). Moreover, while studies have examined the positive effects of SMM during the COVID-19 pandemic, the sustainability of these benefits and the role of innovation capability in strengthening outcomes warrant further investigation (Ellyawati & Kusumatriawan, 2024; Syaifullah et al., 2021; Ariadi et al., 2025). Additionally, MSMEs in the gastronomic sector face specific challenges, including resource limitations and the ongoing demand for customer engagement. Resource constraints often hinder the effective management of social media, thereby reducing the potential benefits of these platforms (Chan & Kumar, 2017; Oji et al., 2017). Given the dynamic evolution of digital marketing, MSMEs must also continuously adapt to new trends and practices to maintain competitiveness (Vatanasakdakul et al., 2019; Pentina & Koh, 2015).

In view of the above, this study attempts to examine MSMEs' potential continued usage of social media marketing as a platform in enhancing their business activities. Drawing from The Technology Acceptance Model (Davis et al., 1989), the study attempts to investigate the extent to which perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, facilitating conditions, and cost influence MSMEs' intention to continue using SMM in promoting their food business activities.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Behavioural Intention

Ajzen (1985, 1991) stated that behavioural adoption is a cognitive representation of an individual's readiness to perform a given behaviour, and it is an immediate antecedent of actual behaviour. Following earlier studies of Theory of Reasoned Action (or TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (or TPB) (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980) on adoption of individual behaviours, other seminal models came into light, to which scholars have extended adoption studies to technology-related behaviours. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) by Davis, Bagozzi and Warsaw (1989), for example, initiated the technology behavioural adoption studies, by extending the initial work of TRA. Whilst TRA and TPB

focus on human behaviour, Davis et al. (1989) proposed an alternative to these models via TAM. In this study, the need to continue using SMM is crucial in examining the underlying motives for such an adoption by MSMEs in the gastronomic business.

2.2 Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is one of the most extensively applied frameworks for examining individual acceptance of information and communication technologies (Granić & Marangunić, 2019; Kim & Shin, 2015). Developed from the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), a well-established theory in behavioural psychology (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), TAM was initially introduced to explain user adoption of computer information systems in organisational contexts (Davis, 1989). Empirical research consistently demonstrates its robustness, practical applicability, and explanatory power in predicting technology usage intentions and behaviours. Meta-analyses further confirm its predictive validity (Granić & Marangunić, 2019; King & He, 2006), while Venkatesh and Davis (2000) emphasise the substantial accumulation of theoretical and empirical support. Because of its robustness and adaptability, TAM has been widely applied across multiple disciplines. Studies have explored its relevance in understanding user acceptance of diverse mobile and smart technologies and services, including mobile cloud services (Park & Kim, 2014), smartwatches (Hsiao & Chen, 2018), smart glasses (Rauschnabel & Ro, 2016). The following sub-section reviews the relevant literature on the identified constructs, providing the foundation for the development of hypotheses in this study.

2.3 Social Media Marketing

Today, the utilization of marketing tools via online digital platforms such as social media marketing (SMM), pay per click advertisement and search engine optimization (SEO) are rapidly on the increase. In Malaysia, many companies are leveraging on these technological platforms to market their business for sustainability amid the current global COVID 19 pandemic crisis (DataStar, 2021). Manning (2014) defines social media as a new form of media that encourages interactive engagement. In Malaysia, the use of social media reached 28 million users as in January 2021 with an increase by 2 million compared to the previous year (Kemp, 2021). Iannova et al. (2019) mentioned that the usage of social media platforms as marketing channels has increased in recent years, driven by the potential to connect and engage with millions of customers. In other words, many businesses have used SMM to connect with their customers. Hence, it can be considered an advantage if MSMEs are able to continue using this platform for their business. Rasheed and Nafiz (2022) and Dwivedi, Kapoor, and Chen (2020) stated that MSMEs could leverage on use of social media to engage with their customers, raise brand awareness, influence consumer attitudes, gather feedback, improve current products and services, and increase sales. This gives an indication that by adopting social media marketing (SMM), it will give many benefits to the MSMEs towards increasing their overall business performance.

2.4 Perceived Usefulness

Perceived usefulness (PEU) refers to a potential user's subjective likelihood, which gives a probability that the technology used will further improve the individual or team's performance from an organizational perspective (Malik & Anuar, 2021). TAM postulates that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are two cognitive belief dimensions that shape potential users' attitude, which then determines intention to use and actual use (Davis et al, 1989). Additionally, TAM proposes that technologies are perceived as more useful when they are easier to use, and that usefulness also directly influences usage intention. Traditionally, perceived usefulness is defined as "the extent to which a person believes that using particular technology will enhance his/her job performance" (Davis, 1989). Furthermore, a recent study by Lenz et al. (2023) also indicates that perceived usefulness act as a "pull factor" and significantly influence consumer adoption towards technology. PEU can be realized when MSMEs believe that the involvement of a quality

management system will help them improve performance (Patma, Wadana, & Farida, 2021). In addition, when MSMEs see the benefits of using SMM to produce better productivity, they would be more likely to adopt this method in their business (Lenz et al., 2023; Patma et al., 2021). In this study, PEU is considered because most of the respondents are already familiar with technology to a certain extent, hence justifying the need to focus on one variable only.

H1: Perceived usefulness significantly influences MSMEs' continued usage of SMM.

2.5 Perceived Ease of Use

Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) has been extensively used in an attempt to appreciate new technological adoption in business and other relevant fields (e.g.: Ikwanto & Irawan, 2024). In a business context, MSMEs entrepreneurs are more likely to adopt new technologies for company development and are easy to implement (Fadhillah, Suyanto, & Goniah, 2022). Social media marketing has emerged as one of the key drivers in sustaining an organization's competitive advantage (Hassan & Shazad, 2022). Social media is being widely used by almost all and even the companies, despite their size, have started using social media to advertise and promote themselves (Rashid et al., 2021). PEOU for social media marketing has a positive impact on the MSMEs business performance (Rasheed & Nafiz, 2022). Qashou and Saleh (2018) mentioned that modern and diverse means of communication enabled customers to access each product or service quickly without bothering about time and location. In this research, the MSMEs have no limitations in using SMM to increase business performance. Nowadays, the food gastronomic sector is about delivery to any place with time limitation. By using SMM, it will assist MSMEs in the food sector.

H2: Perceived ease-of-use (PEO) significantly influences continued usage of SMM for MSMEs.

2.6 Cost

Cost is a monetary value of all efforts, materials, resources, time, utilities consumed, risk encountered, and opportunities forgone in creation and delivery of goods and services in the business world (Nwokoye & Ilechukwu, 2018). Lim and Kesumahati (2023) and Chatterjee and Kumar Kar (2020) mentioned that by using social media marketing, MSMEs would be able to communicate with their valued consumers at a lower cost. In other words, if MSMEs use and optimize social media marketing, they would be able to reduce relevant costs such as advertisements, promotional tools, and others (Halim et al., 2025). Nevertheless, if the cost of using SMM is higher than using traditional techniques, MSMEs will be hesitant to use it (Syaifullah et al., 2021).

H3: Cost significantly influences MSMEs' continued usage of SMM

2.7 Facilitating Conditions

Facilitating conditions refer to the support from the top management in innovative technology adoption (Effendi et al., 2020). Earlier studies have shown that facilitating conditions have substantial impact on innovative technology's adoption behaviour (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2019). In other words, MSMEs will have easier adoption of innovative technology as existence of facilitating conditions such as the right facilities, and support could assist them in making the decision to use the technology.

H4: Facilitating Conditions (FCO) significantly influences MSMEs' usage of SMM.

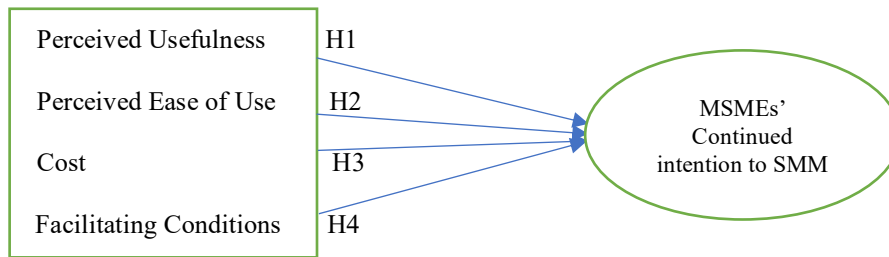


Figure 2. Theoretical Framework

3. Research Methodology

This study adopted a quantitative research design. Measurement items were adapted from relevant prior studies to operationalize the constructs in the proposed model, using a 5-point Likert scale. A total of 300 online survey questionnaires were distributed to targeted respondents across Malaysia through a snowball sampling technique. Snowball sampling was chosen due to the absence of a comprehensive database of food service MSMEs and the difficulty of reaching this population using probability-based methods. By leveraging existing networks of MSME owners, the study was able to identify suitable respondents actively engaged in social media marketing practices. Although this non-probability approach limits the generalizability of the findings, it was deemed appropriate given the exploratory nature of the study and the practical challenges of data collection. Out of the 300 questionnaires distributed, 122 usable responses were collected and analysed using SPSS 23.0 statistical software. Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, where values of 0.6–0.7 are generally considered acceptable, and values above 0.8 indicate strong reliability (Hair et al., 2017). Extremely high values (above 0.95), however, may suggest redundancy among items (Ursachi et al., 2015). As all constructs in this study recorded Cronbach's alpha values above 0.70, they were considered reliable within the requisite threshold.

4. Data Analysis and Findings

4.1 Demographic characteristics

Of the 122 business owners, 71.3 percent were females. Similar gender composition was also observed in other technology acceptance studies involving social media use. More than half of the samples (58.2%) constitute younger generations, while the rest are aged 30 years old and above. Many of the businesses were formed via sole proprietorship (63.9%). This is followed by partnership (19.7%), and private limited (16.4%). In terms of business type, food and beverages industry makes up the highest portion (49.2%), followed by retail and trade (20.5%), and services (18.9%). Meta-based social network sites namely Facebook (54.1%) and Instagram (36.9%) are popularly used as the main social media platforms used by the business owners. Nearly half of the businesses have been operating for the past 1 to 2 years (48.3%). A bulk of them have a workforce size of not more than 5 employees (92.6%), and a revenue generation of less than RM250,000 (85.2%). Table 1 below summarizes these demographic characteristics.

Table 1. Demographic Profile

Profile	Descriptive Profile	Percent	Frequency (N=122)
Gender	Female	71.3	35
	Male	28.7	87

Profile	Descriptive Profile	Percent	Frequency (N=122)
Age	20-25	44.3	54
	26-30	13.9	17
	31-35	15.6	19
	36-40	10.7	13
	41-45	4.1	5
	46-50	5.7	7
	51-55	4.9	6
	56-60	.8	1
Business Ownership	Sole proprietorship	63.9	78
	Partnership	19.7	24
	Private limited	16.4	20
Business Sectors	Services	18.9	23
	Food & Beverages	49.2	60
	Retail & Trade	20.5	25
	Cottage	3.3	4
	Apparel	4.9	6
	Fashion Craft	.8	1
	Others	2.4	3
Social Media Platforms	Facebook	54.1	66
	Instagram	36.9	45
	TikTok	1.6	2
	Others	7.4	9
SMM usage frequency	0-6	76.2	93
	7-12	17.2	21
	13-18	3.3	4
	19-24	3.3	4

4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 summarises the survey's continuous variables' findings in the form of descriptive statistics. The survey gathered responses from 122 respondents on four continuous variables covering perceived usefulness (PEU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), cost, and facilitating condition (FC). For PEU, the mean obtained was 4.69 with a standard deviation 0.521 and for PEOU, the mean value was 4.51 with a standard deviation 0.603. Meanwhile, for Cost, the mean value was 4.29 with a standard deviation 0.773, and for FC, the mean was 4.58 with a standard deviation 0.573. SMM continued usage's mean value was at 4.55 with a standard deviation of .56630.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

No.	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
1	PU	4.6926	.52103	122
2	PEOU	4.5164	.60365	122

No.	Variable	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
3	Cost	4.2930	.77319	122
4	FC	4.5874	.57345	122
5	SMM Continued Usage	4.5519	.62804	122

4.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression was used to predict the continued usage of SMM amongst MSME entrepreneurs in the Malaysian food service sector. As shown in Table 3, the R-square value is 0.659. This indicates that 65.9% of the variation in SMM continued usage as a dependent variable, was explained by independent variables such as PEU, PEOU, FC and cost respectively.

Table 3. Summary Table of R Square

MODEL SUMMARY				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.812 ^a	.659	.643	.30183

4.4 Hypotheses Testing Results

Table 4. Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses	Hypothesized Paths	Beta	t-value	Sig. value	Decisions
H1	PU → SMM usage	.430	5.022	.001*	Supported
H2	PEOU → SMM usage	.273	2.979	.004*	Supported
H3	Cost → SMM usage	.171	2.400	.018**	Supported
H4	Facilitating Conditions → SMM continued usage	.145	1.978	.050**	Supported

Note: Significant at $\leq .005^*$; $\leq .05^{**}$

As illustrated in Table 4, all the 5 hypotheses were supported and proven that perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, cost and facilitating condition significantly influenced MSMEs in continuing to use SMM to increase their business performance.

5. Discussion

Several discussions are further elaborated. H1 findings ($p = 0.001^*$; $\beta = .430$) revealed that perceived usefulness (PEU) has significantly influenced MSMEs' continued usage of SMM as a way to boost their food business performance. This supports past findings such that the usefulness of social media has provided benefits and advantages to their business (Lenz et al., 2023; Patma et al., 2021). Furthermore,

usage of social media in business would be able to provide and create satisfaction to customers who receive the services offered, thus creating loyal customers to each business (Auliandri et al., 2025). Also, Syaifullah et al. (2021) found that perceived ease-of-use of social media include ease of learning, ease of identifying new consumers and consumer demand, this supporting findings in this study.

H2 was also supported ($p = 0.004^*$; $\beta = .273$), such that perceived ease-of-use (PEO) has significantly influenced MSMES' continued use of social media marketing (SMM) in the food service sector. The findings supports recent research (Mokhtar & Hasan, 2023) that social media enables MSMEs to continue using SMM for their business growth. In other words, if social media technology are easier to use, then more MSMEs would use these platforms as a marketing tool, hence indicating that the greater the benefits of using social media for business, the greater the use of social media (Syaifullah et al., 2021). Further to that, the adoption of a new technology is more effective in promoting the business through social media marketing (Kim & Chiu, 2019) and found that Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) has a positive relationship with the use of new technology.

H3 was further supported ($p = 0.050^{**}$; $\beta = .430$), to which Cost significantly influenced MSME owners on their continued usage of social media marketing (SMM) in the food service sector. Although it is significant, cost however, plays a minimal role since MSMEs did not have to utilize any form of paid advertising offered by social media platforms as it could be expensive. This result also supported Syaifullah et al., (2021), to which cost of social media marketing could be exorbitant, and it was during Covid 19 pandemic that most companies were having dire financial issues. As such, they would not prioritise paid marketing in their company budget, particularly among MSMEs.

However, since majority of MSMEs owners did not have any specific budget allocation for social media programmes, it may potentially hinder the future effectiveness of leveraging on these platforms to boost their businesses. Having a social media programme budget is of equal importance as it could boost MSMEs' business performance. This is because having a specific budget is equivalent to social media investments for paid advertisement, relevant technical equipment purchase for social media marketing campaigns, and provide the necessary SMM skills training programmes for the owners and employees alike (Moksin et al, 2023).

Finally, H4 was also supported ($p = 0.018^{**}$; $\beta = .145$), to which facilitating conditions (FC) has a significant effect on the continued use of SMM amongst food service MSMEs in Malaysia. Past studies have shown that facilitating conditions have substantial impact on innovative technology's adoption behaviour (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2019). In other words, MSMEs will have easier adoption of innovative technology as existence of facilitating conditions such as the right facilities, and support could assist them in making the decision to use the technology.

6. Conclusion

In essence, this study was aimed at examining whether perceived usefulness (PEU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), cost (Cost), and facilitating conditions (FC) significantly influenced food service MSMEs' continued usage of social media marketing campaigns. Several limitations were observed. First, the study employed non-probability sampling, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to the broader MSME population. Second, the sample was limited to food service MSMEs, thereby narrowing the applicability of the results to other sectors that may have different operational dynamics and marketing practices. Third, this study only examined the direct relationship between the independent and dependent variables; future research could investigate the mediating or moderating effects of SMM on the relationship between PEU, PEOU, Cost, FC, and overall business performance. In addition, qualitative research could be undertaken to explore other potentially significant factors influencing MSMEs' willingness to continue using SMM as part of their business campaigns to enhance business performance.

Funding Declaration

This research was successfully funded by the Research management Centre, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam, Selangor, MALAYSIA [Grant 600-RMC/SRP-UNNESS/5/3(008/2020)].

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Research Management Centre, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and the Faculty of Business and Management for their generous support and funding provided through the UiTM SRP Grant [Grant 600-RMC/SRP-UNNESS/5/3(008/2020)]. This grant has been instrumental in enabling the successful execution of this research.

Conflict of interest statement

The authors agree that this research was conducted in the absence of any self-benefits, commercial or financial conflicts and declare the absence of conflicting interests with the funders.

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