

Adoption of Social Media Technology and Impact on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) Competitive Advantage in Federal Capital Territory, Abuja

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ABSTRACT

Many businesses are adopting social media networks to woo potential customers. Social media networks have been reported to help SMEs compete favourably between themselves, and in many instances compete with larger businesses. Notwithstanding its popularity, there is still very limited information on the impact of social media adoption on SMEs competitive advantage especially in developing countries where SMEs are predominantly in the informal sector. Thus, this study examines Social Media Adoption and its Impact on SMEs Competitive advantage in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria. The study adopts a survey research design. The population comprises of 2,825 owner manager SMEs in FCT Abuja. A sample of 338 is drawn using Krejcie and Morgan table. Primary data are collected through the use of questionnaires. However, 326 questionnaires are retrieved from the respondents. Regression analysis is used to analyze the data with the aid of SPSS Version 20. The study reveals that two independent variables (perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use) had a positive significant impact on SMEs competitive advantage in Abuja. It therefore, recommends that there is need for advocacy by the government agencies in charge of SME activities to enlighten SMEs on the importance of social media adoption to their businesses. It equally recommends for the training SMEs on the usage of the various social media platforms and how they can leverage on them to gain competitive advantage.

Keywords: Perceived Ease of Use, Perceived Usefulness, Competitive Advantage, SMEs.

Introduction

Currently, internet diffusion amongst businesses is on the increase. The Internet-driven online technology is regarded as a

vital platform for businesses competitive advantage (Mandal, 2017). Al Mamun, et al., (2018) propose that to be competitive

and satisfy potential customers' needs, Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) must adopt new technologies such as social media (SM).

Social Media is a networking technology that enables people to make more social connections while sharing material, participating in discussions, and controlling content through networks (Voorveld, Van Noort, & Muntinga 2018). Social media websites and corresponding mobile applications like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat and YouTube are among the most common ones (Al-Abdullatif & Aladsani, 2021).

Social Media has overtaken the globe, with more than 3.8 billion users and still counting (Lawrence 2022). Social media has transformed communication, and one part of communication where social media has had a great influence is in SMEs competitive advantage (Nasidi, et al., 2022; Calli & Clark 2015). Companies use social media to identify and engage with customers, enhance sales through advertising and marketing, track consumer trends, and give customer service or support (Nasidi, et. al., 2022).

SMEs are however facing new challenges every day as the global market competition rises (Chen et al., 2016). Studies highlight that SMEs around the globe are

encountering stringent competition from larger enterprises and corporate firms (Kaneko & Yimruan, 2017; Yan & Huang 2021). According to Kaur (2017), traditional marketing strategies are not sufficient and relevant anymore in today's highly competitive business environment. Dinehart (2011), points out that, in order to stay competitive in business, enterprises need to use modern digital marketing techniques of the SM technology.

Among the advantages of using social media is the obtaining of the knowledge of customers' needs and wants (Lacurci 2021). The "purposive inflows of knowledge from customers and competitors and capabilities to efficiently manage internal knowledge are even more relevant for sustainable competitiveness of SMEs" (Pérez-González et. al., 2017). This customer and competitor knowledge obtained from the social media can help businesses gain competitive advantages (Lacurci 2021).

Be that as it may, some SMEs are still hesitant to include social media in their marketing program due to lack of solid information about the social media platforms especially with regards to its effectiveness to (Vaynerchuk 2018). Alam and Noor (2019), buttress that SMEs are being discovered as lacking in the requisite

knowledge about the possible actual advantages of social media.

In Nigeria, SMEs are now investing and showing more interest in the Internet/online social media marketing business (Oyedele, Oworu & Adbulganiyu 2020). These SMEs spans from as industrial/ manufacturing, agricultural, and services. There is however, paucity of studies on how social media technology impacts on SMEs competitive advantage. Scholars propose for further studies on social media technology adoption and its impact on SMEs competitive advantage, as regards to developing countries (Selvanayagam & Rehman, 2019). Thus this study explored the impact of SM adoption on the competitive advantage of SMEs in Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Abuja, Nigeria.

Although, studies have examined social media adoption and its impact on SMEs (Ajum 2018; Kumar et al., 2020; Lawal et al. 2022), but some have however, generally focused on SME performance as a dependent variable (DV). This study examines competitive advantage as the DV. According to Farida, and Setiawan (2022), competitive advantage variable is rarely studied, especially for SMEs and micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The research emphasizes the need for further

studies on SME competitive advantage. Hence this study explores competitive advantage of SMEs as the DV.

Existing studies do not seem to examine the components of technology adoption (perceived usefulness, PU and perceived ease of use, PEOU) and the impact they would have on SMEs competitive advantage. PU is an individual's perception of how technologies or a particular technology are set to improve the individual's tasks or roles in terms of efficiency and effectiveness (Lacurci 2021). PEOU measures one's perception of the technology that is easy to understand, learn and operate (Lacurci 2021).

Thus, this research combines these variables (PU and PEOU) as Independent Variables (IV) and examines their impact on competitive advantage (Dependent Variable, DV) of SMEs in FCT, Abuja, Nigeria.

Its aim is to investigate adoption of social media technology and its impact on SMEs competitive advantage in FCT Abuja. The specific objectives are as follows;

- i. To evaluate the perceived usefulness of social media technology and its impact on SMEs competitive advantage in FCT Abuja.
- ii. To determine, whether or not, the perceived ease of use of social media technology has

impact on SMEs competitive advantage in FCT Abuja.

2.0 Review of Related Literature

Competitive advantage

Competitive advantage is obtained when an organisation develops or acquires a set of attributes (or execution actions) that allow it to outperform its competitors (Wang, 2014). Measurements that show competitive advantage variables are imitability, durability, and ease of matching (Correia, et al., 2020). Competitive advantage is at the heart of a company's performance in a competitive market (Zhang & Zhang 2022; Almulhim 2020). A company's advantage grows from the value or benefits that the company can create for its buyers. Thus, competitive advantage is a position in which the organisation is still working to beat competitors (Farida & Setiawan 2022).

Perceived usefulness (PU)

Davis et. al., (1989) theorize and develop PU in their original Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). PU defines prospective user's subjective probability that using a specific application improves operations (Lu, Tao & Wang 2009). It provides diagnostic lenses into how actual use and intention to use are influenced (Gekombe et al., 2019).

Gekombe, et al., (2019) further state that PU is "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his or her job performance". Given the context of social media, PU is an important factor in determining attitudes toward adoption when managers perceived that social media would streamline their tasks and provide valuable information or insights (Austermann & Mertins, 2014). The hypotheses are thus, developed as follows:

H₁ Perceived usefulness of social media technology has no significant impact on SMEs competitive advantage in FCT Abuja.

Perceived ease of use (PEOU).

Perceived ease of use (PEOU) measures the prospective user's assessment of the mental efforts required of the use of the target application (Davis, 1993). The PEOU variable is also theorized and proven in the original TAM (Davis et. al., 1989). PEOU refers to "the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort" (Gekombe, et al., 2019). Perceived ease of use is the idea that using a system is somewhat free of effort (Efosa, Mahesh & Olusola 2018). This construct measures one's perception of the technology being easy to understand, learn and operate. This study adopts Lacurci's (2021)

definition that PEOU construct measures one's perception of technology being easy to understand, learn and operate.

The hypothesis is thus, developed as follows:

H₂ Perceived ease of use of social media technology has no significant impact on SMEs competitive advantage in FCT Abuja.

Reviews of some specific Studies

Tan, Chong, Lin and Eze (2009), investigate various factors for ICT adoption in Malaysian SMEs by applying a questionnaire-based survey and collecting the data from 406 owners/managers placed in Malaysia's Southern region. The independent variables include competitive advantage, compatible services, complexity, observability, trialability, online cost, security, benefits, and barriers. The results show that the internet's adoption is a low cost but effective solution for the managers/owners. It improves the relationship with customers. The IV was competitive advantage and had dimensions of complexity, observability, trialability. In this present study undergone, competitive advantage is used as the DV and is measured with imitability, durability, and ease of matching (Correia, 2022).

Macharia (2023) explores TAM's perceived usefulness influence on social network site

(SNS) preference for accessing reproductive health information among university students. The study adopts a mix method approach. The findings establish that perceived usefulness influenced the selection of a specific SNS. The key constructs of perceived usefulness are currency (4.083) and relevance (4.034). SNS information can be accessed frequently, and instantly, and is always up to date. This study is different, because it uses the first dimensions of perceived usefulness developed by Davis (1989). Scholars have advocate for the use of these dimensions to measure perceived usefulness of technology.

Moghavvemi, Hakimian and Feissal (2012), in Malaysia, investigate adoption factors and competitive advantage through IT adoption in SME. In the research model, various aspects connected with IT adoption in SMEs were relative advantage, complexity, compatibility, observability, trialability, self-efficacy, and attitude. The results show a significant contribution of information technology in SME's growth. The results further reveal that IT usage can increase companies' competitive strength from process engineering, efficiency, cost reduction, and effectiveness. This study is different in the sense that it uses the Technology Acceptance Theory (TAM) to

test the relationship of TAMs components (perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use) on SMEs competitive advantage.

Utama, Karmagatri, Yustian, (2022) evaluate Analysis of SMEs consideration in adopting new technology using technology adoption model. The study adopts a quantitative approach, the population comprised of 225 respondents. The data are analyzed using Structural Equation Modelling. The findings shows that all the variables including perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, compatibility and cost effectiveness significantly influenced the attitude and intention to use technology. This differs from the others as it employs the use of the traditional variables developed by Davis (1989) (perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use) to measure competitive advantage of SMEs in FCT Abuja.

Gaps Identified from the Reviews

After reviewing past studies, a variable inclusion gap is identified which this study seeks to address. Most of the empirical studies reviewed focus on using performance as the DV, and used growth, productivity, profits to measure performance of social media adoption. This study focuses on using competitive advantage as the DV, as suggested by Lacurci (2021). It further

separates competitive advantage from performance and does not include any characteristics of the performance concept.

Theoretical framework

The study is underpinned by The Technology Acceptance Model by Davis (1986).

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a theory that describes the perception of technology users. Davis (1986) creates this model to explain the effects of system characteristics on users of computer-based Technology Systems. TAM is the most widely used model for identifying factors contributing to technology acceptance. The theory suggests that, when users are presented with a new piece of technology, several factors influence their decision about how and when they will use the technology (Ardiansah, Chariri, Rahardja, & Udin, 2020). TAM identifies fundamental variables (perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use) suggested by other researches and specified the relationships among these variables as the intention to use technology. This model shows that, when users are presented with new technology, some factors influence their decisions about how and when they will use them. The TAM predicts user acceptance of a technology

based upon estimation of three core constructs; perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PeU) and behavioral intention (BI) (Svendsen et al., 2013).

Methodology

The study adopts a survey research design. The population of the study comprises of 2,825 registered SMEs in FCT Abuja. The figure is extracted from National MSMEs survey report (2017). Sample size of 338 is drawn from using Krejcie and Morgan (1975) table.

Primary data is used with the aid questionnaires. The FCT Abuja comprises of 6 area councils of Abaji, Abuja Municipal, Gwagwalada, Kuje, Bwari, and Kwali Abuja. Hence the FCT is divided into six clusters. Simple random technique is used to select respondents from the clusters.

A pilot study is carried out using SMEs in Paiko, Niger State in order to test for the validity and reliability of the instrument. Each scale item is rated by experts in terms of the relevance of its constructs. The items

are rated on 4-point ordinal scale as suggested by Lynn et al., (1981), in Polit and Beck (2006). The authors advocate for the use of a 4-point scale to avoid having a neutral and ambivalent midpoint. Davis (1992), four point's item-rating continuum is used: 1= not relevant, 2= somewhat relevant, 3= quite relevant, 4= highly relevant.

The measures for the dependent variable (competitive advantage) are adopted from the study of the study of Correia, Dias, Teixeira (2022). Responses are adapted on five point likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). Items adapted includes: Innovation, quality, delivery dependability, and time.

Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use measures are adapted from the study of (Davis, 1986, 1989). Responses are also adapted on five point likert scale ranging from strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1).

Table 1 Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha
Perceived ease of use	6	0.792
Perceived usefulness	6	0.867
Competitive advantage	6	0.868

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

From table 1 above, all the measures possess a high reliability standard judging from

Cronbach's alpha, ranging from 0.792 to 0.868 for all the variables and this is

considered reliable. According to Griethuijsen et al., (2014), Cronbach Alpha values above 0.6 are considered reliable.

This is concerned with the presentation of the data. Which consist of descriptive statistics of the respondents, and also inferential data analysis and discussion of findings based on the data collected from the respondents.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Descriptive statistics of respondents

Table 2 demographics of respondents

Demographic variable Percentage (%)	Frequency	
Gender of respondents 76 24 100	Male	249
	Female	77
		326
Age distribution of respondents 19 25 23 14 19 100	18-27	61
	28-37	80
	38-47	75
	48-57	46
	58 and above	64
		326
Sectors of respondents 37 41 22 100	Agriculture	119
	Service	134
	Manufacturing	73
		326

Source: SPSS output 2024

Multiple regression analysis and test of hypotheses

To test the hypotheses formulated in this research, multiple regressions are used to determine the multiple effects of, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use on

competitive advantage of SMEs in FCT Abuja. The assumptions of linear regression like normality, linearity, multicollinearity, homoskedascity are carried out before the test of hypothesis. The outputs are:

Table 3 Regression Output

		Coefficients ^a						
		Unstandardized		Standardized	T	Sig.	Collinearity	
		Coefficients		Coefficients			Statistics	
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	1.312	1.250		1.026	.300		
	Perceived usefulness	.165	.066	.135	2.156	.002	.626	1.367
	Perceived ease of use	.612	.062	0.410	5.465	.000	.651	1.460
a. Dependent Variable: competitive advantage								

a. Dependent Variable: competitive advantage

Source: SPSS Output, 2024

Hypothesis I

H₀₁: Perceived usefulness have no significant effect on the competitive advantage of SMEs in FCT Abuja.

The coefficient of “perceived usefulness” stands at 0.165 which is positive. This implies that an increase in how SMEs perceived that SM is useful to them, would lead to an increase in their competitive advantage.

The *t* statistics of “perceived usefulness” stands at 2.156 with a p-value of 0.002. The p-value is less than 0.05, indicating that the relationship depicted in the model is significant at 95% confidence level. This implies that the study rejects the null hypothesis which states that perceived usefulness does not have a significant impact on the competitive advantage of SMEs in FCT Abuja, and accepts its alternate hypothesis which states that perceived usefulness has a significant effect on the competitive advantage of SMEs in FCT Abuja.

Hypothesis II

H₀₂: Perceived ease of use has no significant effect on the competitive advantage of SMEs in FCT Abuja.

The coefficient of “perceived ease use” stands at 0.612 which is also positive. This implies that an increase in how SMEs perceived the ease in using SM, the more competitive they become. The *t* statistics of “perceived ease of use” stood at 5.465 with a p-value of 0.000. The p-value is less than 0.05, indicating that the relationship depicted in the model is significant at 95% confidence level, the study then rejects the null hypothesis, and accepts its alternate hypothesis, which states that perceived ease of use has a significant impact on the competitive advantage of SMEs in Abuja.

Discussion of findings

The first finding shows that perceived usefulness has significant positive effect on competitive advantage of SMEs in Abuja. This indicates that the more SMEs perceive

the usefulness of social media, the more they adopt it, and the more competitive advantage they become. This finding is supported by Davis *etal* 1989; Yen, 2009) which states that attitude (perceived usefulness) is the key factor in analyzing the usage technology of social media.

On the effect of perceived ease of use; the study reveals that perceived ease of use had a positive and significant impact on SMEs competitive advantage in Abuja. This indicates that the more SMEs perceive the ease of usefulness of social media, the more competitive advantage they have.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are put forward:

- i. The finding establishes that perceived usefulness had a positive significant impact

on SMEs competitive advantage. The study recommends that there should be policy interventions to direct big companies that are grounded in social media to encourage SMEs on the usefulness of social media.

- ii. The findings also indicate that perceived ease of use have positive significant impact on SMEs competitive advantage. The study recommends that government agencies in charge of digital technology like NITDA should help in developing social media platforms that have ease of use, and peculiar to the needs of SMEs. Institutions of learning should also be encouraged to create social media platforms that are unique to SMEs needs. There should be a clear linkage between tertiary institutions and businesses.

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