

**Enablers and Inhibitors
of Social Media
Usage Towards SMEs' Growth:
Evidence from Service-Based
SMEs in Ghana**

John Amoah, Ph.D.

Doctoral Thesis Summary



Tomas Bata University in Zlín
Faculty of Management and Economics

Doctoral Thesis Summary

**Enablers and Inhibitors of Social Media Usage
Towards SMEs' Growth: Evidence from Service-
Based SMEs in Ghana**

**Aktivátory a inhibitory sociálních médií ve vztahu k rozvoji MSP
na příkladu MSP působících v sektoru služeb v Ghaně**

Author: John Amoah, Ph.D.

Degree programme: P6208 Economics and Management

Degree course: 6208V038 Management and Economics

Supervisor: prof. Ing. Jaroslav Belás, PhD.

Examiners: prof. Ing. Aleksandr Ključnikov, Ph.D.

doc. Ing. Katarína Havierniková, PhD.

Zlín, February 2023

© John Amoah

Published by **Tomas Bata University in Zlín** in the Edition **Doctoral Thesis Summary**.

The publication was issued in the year 2023.

Key Words: Enablers, Inhibitors, social media, Small and Medium Enterprise (SMEs), Growth, Advertising tool, Service-Based, Ghana

Klíčová slova: Aktivátoři, inhibitory, sociální média, malé a střední podniky (MSP), vývoj, reklamní nástroj, služby, Ghana

Full text of the doctoral thesis is available in the Library of TBU in Zlín

ISBN 978-80-7678-153-5

ABSTRACT

The fourth industrial revolution (Industry 4.0) has propelled many to focus on interconnectivity and automation while leveraging real-time data for effective decision-making and becoming competitive. This trend has been observed among small and medium enterprises (SMEs), particularly in emerging economies where their contribution to the national Gross Domestic product has been pronounced. This development is apparent among SMEs in both developed and developing countries that have contributed substantially to job creation and other economic indicators. On the hind side, fortifying this growth has been challenging given the need to meet the changing demand of consumers. In pursuit of this, innovative marketing strategies are available to SMEs to meet consumers' demands and become competitive. Nonetheless, social media marketing has become an emerging trend for marketing communication and continuous customer interaction. Even though the affordances of social media adoption towards the growth of businesses transcend political and economic jurisdiction, literature on the subject matter has been apparent among developed economies. More importantly, these studies are mostly concentrated on the impact of social media on customers' intention to patronize a firm's product or service. Ostensibly, the adoption of social media for marketing and advertising goes a long way to draw the attention of prospective customers to a brand (or a company's product/service). However, within a less digitized economy like Ghana, Internet marketing orientation among SMEs is faced with some operational challenges that have a potency to hinder the firm's sustainability and growth. Against this background, the thesis sought to fill in the missing gap by developing a comprehensive research model to examine the enablers and inhibitors of social media application as a marketing communication tool for SMEs' growth among micro-to-medium enterprises in Ghana. Leveraging the uses and gratification and the social media engagement theories, the study explicates the enablers and inhibitors of social media to the growth of SMEs in Ghana. The enablers and inhibitors are described as the operational benefits and challenges respectively. In this thesis, the researcher introduced two new constructs (business motivation and SME growth). The study employs a mixed (qualitative and quantitative) method approach to execute the objectives set. The researcher, therefore, made use of quantitative data analysis through Partial least square and structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) particularly ADANCO version 2.2.1 software as the main statistical technique and used experts and consultative interviews to draw a meaningful conclusion for the qualitative approach. The findings of the study would offer maximum contributions to theory, practice (beneficial to managers/owners of SMEs), governments, and academics on the usage of social media for a sustainable SME.

ABSTRAKT

Čtvrtá průmyslová revoluce (Industry 4.0) přiměla mnohé k tomu, aby se zaměřili na propojitelnost a automatizaci a zároveň využívali data v reálném čase pro efektivní rozhodování a stali se konkurenceschopnými. Tento trend byl pozorován u malých a středních podniků (SMEs), zejména v rozvíjejících se ekonomikách, kde je jejich příspěvek k hrubému domácímu produktu výrazný. Tento vývoj je patrný u malých a středních podniků ve vyspělých i rozvojových zemích, které významně přispěly k tvorbě pracovních míst a dalším ekonomickým ukazatelům. Na druhou stranu bylo posílení tohoto růstu náročné vzhledem k potřebě vyhovět měnící se poptávce spotřebitelů. Za tímto účelem SME využívají inovativní marketingové strategie, aby splnily požadavky spotřebitelů a staly se konkurenceschopnými. Marketing na sociálních sítích se nicméně stal novým trendem marketingové komunikace a neustálé interakce se zákazníky. I když možnosti přijetí sociálních médií směřem k růstu podniků přesahují politickou a ekonomickou jurisdikci, literatura na toto téma je mezi rozvinutými ekonomikami zřejmá. Ještě důležitější je, že tyto studie se většinou zaměřují na dopad sociálních médií na záměr zákazníků propagovat produkt nebo službu firmy. Zdá se, že přijetí sociálních médií pro marketing a reklamu vede dlouhou cestu k upoutání pozornosti potenciálních zákazníků na značku (nebo produkt/službu). V méně digitalizované ekonomice, jako je Ghana, se však orientace na internetový marketing mezi malými a středními podniky potýká s některými provozními problémy, které mohou bránit udržitelnosti a růstu firmy. Na tomto pozadí se práce snažila zaplnit chybějící mezeru vytvořením komplexního výzkumného modelu, který by prozkoumal aktivátory a inhibitory aplikace sociálních médií jako nástroje marketingové komunikace pro růst malých a středních podniků mezi mikro až střední podniky v Ghaně. S využitím teorií využití a uspokojení a zapojení sociálních médií dizertační práce vysvětluje překážky a omezení sociálních médií pro růst malých a středních podniků v Ghaně. Aktivátory a inhibitory jsou popsány jako provozní přínosy a výzvy. V této práci výzkumník představil dva nové konstrukty (podnikatelská motivace a růst MSP). Studie využívá smíšený (kvalitativní a kvantitativní) metodický přístup k dosažení stanovených cílů. Výzkumník jako hlavní statistickou techniku použil kvantitativní analýzu dat prostřednictvím modelování parciálních nejmenších čtverců a strukturních rovnic (PLS-SEM), zejména software ADANCO verze 2.2.1, a také uplatnil konzultační rozhovory s odborníky, aby vyvodil smysluplný závěr pro kvalitativní přístup. Závěry studie by nabídly maximální přínos teorii, praxi (prospěšné pro manažery/vlastníky malých a středních podniků), vládám a akademikům o využívání sociálních médií pro udržitelné malé a střední podniky.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	3
ABSTRAKT.....	4
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	5
1. INTRODUCTION.....	6
1.1 Background of the Study.....	6
1.2 Research Problem.....	8
1.3 Research Questions.....	9
1.4 Research Objectives.....	10
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	10
2.1 Theoretical Background.....	10
2.1.1 <i>Uses and Gratification Theory (U&G)</i>	10
2.1.2 <i>Social Media Engagement Theory (SMET)</i>	11
2.1.3 Justification for the use of the Theories.....	12
2.2 Conceptual framework.....	14
2.3 Enablers of Social Media.....	14
2.4 Inhibitors of Social Media.....	19
2.5 SMEs Growth.....	22
3. METHODOLOGY.....	24
3.1 Research Design.....	24
3.2 Research Design Instruments, Demographics, and Data Collection.....	26
3.3 Data Analysis.....	27
3.4 Hypothesis Testing.....	27
4. DATA ANALYSIS AND EMPIRICAL RESULTS.....	28
4.1 Test of Model.....	28
4.2 Test of structural model: A mediation analysis.....	31
5. DISCUSSIONS OF STUDY FINDINGS.....	33
5.1 Discussions on Qualitative Findings from the Perspective of Experts/Consultants.....	33
6. EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE THESIS.....	35
6.1 Theoretical Relevance.....	36
6.2 Practical Relevance.....	36
6.3 Academic Relevance.....	36
7.1 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.....	37
7.2 Recommendations.....	37
7.3 Limitations and Directions for Further Research.....	38
JOURNAL ARTICLES UNDER REVIEW.....	43
AUTHOR’S CURRICULUM VATAE.....	43

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Social media (SM) usage is gaining increasing popularity as a powerful tool for businesses in all economic sectors such as agriculture, tourism, and health. Transcending from the traditional industrial sectors of the economy, social media is gradually shaping the landscape of the services and manufacturing sectors and making them more competitive. For instance, the affordability of SM is fast changing how Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) operate in contemporary times. This trend has occasioned because of the upsurge in the penetration of the use of mobile phones in societies (Öztamur & Karakadılar, 2014; Wardati & Er, 2019). This increased penetration has positively impacted the improved adoption in the use of social media which has been enabled by smartphones, and a new paradigm in the advertisement of businesses of Small and Medium Enterprises (Wardati & Er, 2019; Bruce et al., 2022). This has improved the general online presence of SMEs. Furthermore, incorporating comprehensive social media marketing into corporate procedures has brought beneficial outcomes (Abbasi et al., 2022; Olanrewaju et al., 2020).

Given that the online presence of SMEs has increased, SM has become a potential medium for marketing communication where variants of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods, or services by an identified sponsor are posted (Armstrong & Kotler, 2000). Social media usage is generally described as the various internet-based platforms that allow users or the public to generate and share ideas, pictures, videos, information, interests, and other expressions to the public (Jibril et al., 2019; Kietzmann et al., 2011). Recently, experts in advertising have begun using social media websites appeals in crafting advertisements to motivate users to share the brand image, as a means of getting attention and meeting the specific needs of customers (Hussain et al., 2022; Waters et al., 2011). Social media has been deemed to have an impact on individuals and SMEs both positively and negatively depending on its usage (Boyd, 2007). Thus, social media can be used by SMEs for advertising purposes or as a promotional tool (Borah et al., 2022; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Although SMEs have limited skills, capacities, and financial resources and are not relatively capable to compete efficiently with large companies (Lekhanya, 2013), the advent of social media has enabled SMEs to carry out advertising activities in an efficient manner. Thus, through social media, SMEs have more prospects to promote their goods or services and market their brands worldwide which is no longer the preserve of large companies with an international presence (Hassan et al., 2015).

Furthermore, the main tools of marketing communication have been through mass communication networks such as radio and television, and print media (Asiedu, 2017). Asiedu (2017) opined that, given the scalability of traditional media, SMEs could reap the benefits since they could not reach their targeted

customers in real-time yet, the SM tools offer a mammoth of opportunities for enterprises to reach their targeted audience without stress. In other words, SMEs can relate with their customers directly, at the right time, and at a lower cost with higher efficiency and returns (Kaplan, 2012). Unlike the traditional means of marketing communication, social media allows consumers/customers to monitor their brands, ask questions, and make comments related to products and services consumed on platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Ainin, Parveen, & Moghavvemi, 2015). Again, businesses can connect directly with consumers and then ascertain discussions about brands through the platforms. Bernhard & Abukar (2012) assessed how SMEs can use social media to communicate. Given this trend, studies (e.g., Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013) investigated the use of social media and Entrepreneurship Growth (a new business communication paradigm among SMEs in Nairobi) and affirmed that social media can be used as a marketing communication tool for SMEs growth yet, potential challenges besetting its adoption and usage fester in most developing countries. In other words, the 'inhibitors' in this study context refer to the factors that constraint (or negatively affect) the optimum application of social media channels in the quest to ensure a profitable and sustainable marketing communication. In other words, the inhibitors of social media application have undoubtedly deterred many young SMEs from using it, particularly in emerging economies, whereas the 'enablers' refer to the potential benefits or importance that SMEs will gain from the adoption or optimal application of social media channels in the quest to ensure their long-term viability and growth.

This research argues that in SME communication processes, the various social media platforms play an important role. A concentrated rapid response to customers, appropriate interactions, and feedback was seen to increase collaborative communication on the social media platforms by SMEs. In the Ghanaian context, SMEs are noted to employ about 70% of the country's total population (Apenteng & Doe, 2014) yet, this critical sector of the Ghanaian economy is unable to rapidly expand due to the lack of the application of innovative marketing communication tools to promote their products and services delivery (Apenteng & Doe, 2014). Furthermore, the traditional way of advertisement has increasingly become obsolete, requiring a replacement in the current era of promotion of products and services (Bernhard & Abukar, 2012; Cardoso et al, 2017). The researcher, therefore, finds it most appropriate to undertake this study since research in this specific area is less, and few works only concentrated on enablers leaving the inhibitors, thus leaving a gap (Asiedu, 2017; Chatterjee et al., 2020; Wardati & Er, 2019). From the foregoing, this current study aims at assessing both enablers and inhibitors of social media usage as a marketing communication tool for SMEs' growth in Ghana. This study, thus, will pragmatically seek to examine the usefulness of integrating this new technological phenomenon (social media) as a marketing communication tool

coupled with its challenges to SME growth in a developing country context. The theoretical benefit of this study will contribute to the body of knowledge on SMEs, specifically, on the usage of social media by SMEs in most developing countries, especially Ghana. Also, this research will enable industry players to make sound policies and strategies that could ensure the relevance, sustainability, and growth of SMEs by using social media as a marketing communication tool. The entire doctoral thesis is structured into seven chapters namely: introduction, literature review, methodology, study results, discussion of the results, expected contribution, and finally the conclusion.

1.2 Research Problem

A developing country like Ghana heavily touts the pivotal roles that SMEs play in the economic growth of the country. According to the Ghana Statistical Service report (2016), SMEs represent about 95% of the services and manufacturing sub-sectors. Their activities span from serving as a key provider of goods and suppliers of services to individuals and large corporations thereby providing more than 85% of employment and contributing to 70% of Ghana's annual GDP (Kwaku Amoah, 2018; Apenteng & Doe, 2014). The increased focus on SMEs is also due to its numerous advantages such as encouraging entrepreneurship among citizens, employment creation, and enhancing and ensuring inter and intra-regional decentralization which becomes a countervailing force against the economic power of larger enterprises (Ahenkorah-Marfo & Akussah, 2016). These indications of the significant contribution of SMEs to the socio-economic growth in Ghana, however, do not translate into their growth due to a steep increase in antiquated legacy traditional marketing tools (Apenteng & Doe, 2014). Social media marketing has seemingly become the new but most preferred means of advertising and marketing products and services by firms. There has been a substitution of an organizational cause for a social cause as companies increasingly discover new and viable ways to connect with their targets via online platforms (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020). Undoubtedly, online presence has become an obligation for contemporary businesses. Apart from a basic website, consumers now explore other aspects of a company such as a blog, a Facebook page, an Instagram page, a shopping cart, and e-brochures, among others (Talal et al., 2018; Bocconcelli et al., 2017; Casaló et al., 2020; Boateng, 2016).

Several studies have been conducted by scholars and researchers considering different perspectives on social media usage (Ndeudjeu, 2021; Merritt, 2021; Asiedu, 2017; Öztamur & Karakadılar, 2014; Wardati & Er, 2019; Hwang & Zhang, 2018; Hajli, 2013; Bocconcelli et al., 2017; Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020). However, comprehensive research has not been done in assessing both enablers and inhibitors of social media usage towards SMEs growth in developing countries particularly Ghana, which provides room for such study to be conducted on social media usage as a marketing communication tool for SMEs growth (Asiedu, 2017; Ahenkorah-Marfo & Akussah, 2016; Boateng, 2016).

Considering the current focus on electronic commerce and the necessity of companies, either large or small, to have an online presence as well as the taste preferences of the current consumer, a research gap has been identified that this study seeks to address. Undoubtedly, extant literature has provided that, Ghana, like its contemporary developing countries, stands to gain immensely from the activities of SMEs. Despite this, there are rising concerns about factors that could catalyze the growth of Ghana's economy through SMEs towards contributing to the development agenda of the nation. Nonetheless, some identified factors such as poor marketing mechanisms amidst poor customer intimacy have been identified as the bane of the underperforming SME sub-sector (Boateng, 2016). Considering the heightened competition among domestic and foreign firms in Ghana, social media marketing plays a significant role in terms of appealing to the target market and ultimately ensuring relationship marketing (Ahenkorah-Marfo & Akussah, 2016; Boateng, 2016). Moreover, Asiedu (2017) found that social media contains various platforms or channels that are important to serve as a digital marketing communication for SMEs' growth in the current era of ICT in sharing information about SMEs bands with its customers, purchasing, and evaluating their customer satisfaction.

However, few studies were done in Ghana on social media usage only concentrated on customers' attitudes toward social media, the firm's performance using social media, and its relevance leaving out the inhibiting factors of social media usage. The current study, therefore, seeks to combine both enablers and inhibitors of social media usage as a marketing communication tool to empirically provide a comprehensive assessment of the adoption of social media for SMEs' growth. The proliferation of smartphones and the increased adoption of social media, thus, provide opportunities for SMEs to advertise their goods and services efficiently and effectively as the SMB Group (2012) has highlighted that most SMEs in developing countries lack the proper way of advertising in modern times. From the foregoing, this research will focus on exploring the dimensions of SMEs' integration of social media as a marketing communication tool for their viability, sustainability, and growth.

1.3 Research Questions

The main research question of this doctoral thesis is: what are the enablers (benefits) and inhibitors (constraints) of social media usage as a marketing communication tool for Small and Medium Enterprises' growth in Ghana?

Under this broad question, are sub-questions the researcher considers critical to providing insight into the various aspects of the research question.

RQ1: What are the main social media channels used as a marketing communication tool by SMEs in Ghana?

RQ2: Does social media usage positively impact the growth of SMEs in Ghana?

RQ3: What are the inhibiting factors of social media usage as a marketing communication tool for SMEs in Ghana?

RQ4: What are the enabling factors of social media usage as a marketing communication tool for SMEs in Ghana?

RQ5: Does social media usage significantly mediate the relationships between the stated “enablers and inhibitors” and SMEs' growth.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main objective of this doctoral thesis is to assess the enablers and inhibitors of social media usage as a marketing communication tool for SMEs' growth in Ghana.

RO1: To identify the major social media channels used as a marketing communication tool by SMEs in Ghana.

RO2: To examine how social media usage positively impacts the growth of SMEs in Ghana

RO3: To identify the inhibiting factors of social media usage as a marketing communication tool for SMEs in Ghana

RO4: To identify the enabling factors of social media usage as a marketing communication tool for SMEs' growth in Ghana.

RO5: To examine the mediating role of social media usage on the relationships between the stated "enablers and inhibitors" and SMEs Growth.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Background

2.1.1 Uses and Gratification Theory (U&G)

The theory of U&G provides a way to understand why and how individuals actively seek specific media to meet their specific needs (Katz et al., 1973). The U&G theory tries to clarify which psychological or social desires influence individuals to choose certain content and media channels and the attitudinal and behavioral outcomes (Eginli & Tas, 2018). People use media to satisfy specific wants and needs, according to the uses and gratifications theory. Unlike many other media theories, which see media users as passive, uses and gratifications see them as active agents in charge of their media consumption. People are characterized as being active and motivated in the selection of the media they choose to consume because of the uses and gratifications they receive from doing so. The theory is predicated on two tenets: first, that individuals who use media are proactive in the selection of the media they consume; second, that individuals are conscious of the reasons behind their preferences regarding various media options (Katz et al., 1973). Because of the increased control and variety of options made available by new media, researchers have been able to explore previously unexplored uses and gratifications, which in turn has led to the identification of previously unknown gratifications, particularly about social media (Ray et al.,

2019). The theory of uses and gratifications, which has its origins in the field of communication, can be used to help social media marketers create better scales and measurement instruments. People are motivated to seek out media that meets their specific needs and provides them with ultimate satisfaction, according to the use and gratification theory.

Despite the relevance of the theory to marketing, its application in social media use for the promotion of goods and services has been nascent. Prior studies have used the theory to explore how individuals and organizations use social media to meet their demands (Ahad & Anshari, 2017; Eginli & Tas, 2018; Ray et al., 2019; Jibril & Adzovie, 2022). Jibril and Adzovie (2022) in their recent study utilize the U&G to examine the antecedent of selecting fast-food joints. The study found that user-generated content, a variant of electronic word of the mouth particularly on social media significantly moderates the interaction between consumer preference and desire to choose a fast-food joint. Similarly, Ray et al. (2019) found eight main gratifications behind the use of social media apps for food delivery: convenience, societal pressure, customer experience, delivery experience, restaurant search, quality control, listing, and ease-of-use. Eginli and Tas (2018) opine that, understanding the psychological factors affecting the use of SM is essential. Thus, conclude that, examining the drivers of SM use help incentivize others, promote broader selection, and access, and foster competitive pricing. Other studies have also highlighted other factors such as hedonic gratification as a delight from a joyful experience. In other words, the aesthetics of deviation, rest, enjoyment, and time spent (Chiang, 2013; Nambisan & Baron, 2007) play a key role in the use and motivation for the use of technology. Extant studies (see, Alhassan, et al., 2020; Azam, 2015; Ifinedo, 2016; Zhang & Leung, 2015) used similar variables of gratification, such as escapism, enjoyment, time passing, and intrinsic enjoyment. Ha et al., (2015) in their study found that hedonic gratifications have a direct influence on users' attitudes toward mobile SM use in Korea.

2.1.2 Social Media Engagement Theory (SMET)

The SMET was originally built to model the interaction between users and organizations and was later extended to focus on the social interaction among users on social media platforms often provided by the organization. Based on Prahalad and Ramaswamy, (2004), Gangi and Wasko (2016) extended the original SMET to incorporate a social-technical systems perspective to the question of why users' experience influences engagement and ultimate usage. According to Gangi & Wasko (2016), the SMET considers the role of technology as the underlying platform required to facilitate social interactions among geographically and temporally dispersed users. The rise of social media is largely attributable to the evolution of technology to provide a unique user experience that enables users to connect in ways that were never possible. The user experience referred to in this study is based on the definition of experience as the

content of direct observation or participation in an event. When experience is defined as a noun, referring to the content resulting from direct participation, the user experience in social media is determined by two crucial factors: the experience derived from social interactions and the experience derived from technical features.

It must be emphasized that the key to the SMET is the concept of user engagement. Albeit, researchers implicitly agree that user engagement is important, defining engagement and distinguishing it from similar concepts such as user experience and actual usage is required to advance research in this area. To that end, the SME theoretical model defines distinctions between the factors that comprise the user experience, user engagement, and usage. Customer engagement is an interactive process that is highly dependent on the environment. To have a comprehensive understanding of customer engagement, it is necessary to investigate the focal objects of engagement. This includes the provision of goods or services, in addition to activities and events. There appear to be leading strands of literature on SMET relative to social media use. For instance, Dolan et al., (2019) provided a theoretical model to explicate the role of SM content in facilitating interaction between organizations and their customers. The model provides an avenue with which businesses could stimulate a positive engagement with their customers. Wong et al. (2022) in their study leveraged the SM engagement theory to understand the exchange mechanism by which tourists engage on SM platforms. The study found a significant mediation mechanism in the techno-exchange engagement process which leads to continuous usage and sharing of product and service information on the internet. Wong et al. (2022) study also highlighted the consequences of using SM in the exchange process. The authors raised issues of trust, privacy, and security as the bane of the use of SM for effective customer engagement.

2.1.3 Justification for the use of the Theories

This study set out to explore the enablers and constraints of using SM to promote the growth of SMEs in Ghana. The study employs the use of two theories: the uses and gratification theory and social media engagement theory. These theories were leveraged since enterprises in recent times rely heavily on SM to promote their business activities. These theories are relevant to the study because first, the U&G theory, which is rooted in the communication literature and is recognized as a relevant framework in mass communication media, has become a formidable metric for assessing SM for promotion and marketing purposes (Eginli & Tas, 2018). Core to the theory is that individuals seek to identify the psychological needs that incentivize individuals and businesses to use a particular medium intended for a gratified need (Jibril & Adzovie, 2022). Given the need for SMEs to gain prominence and capture a relative portion of the market segment, the race to achieve becomes critical. Specifically, issues such as convenience, ease of use, utility, and reach have been identified as motivating factors for the use of SM by

businesses. Nonetheless, the intended risk of using SM by businesses poses a threat to their survival of businesses. For this reason, examining the relevant factors that promote or inhibit the use of SM for the growth of SMEs is of the essence, particularly the post-adoption behavior of users (Alhassan, et al., 2020). Therefore, it is prudent to adopt constructs fit to assess the use and gratification of the SM to examine the functional and non-functional behavior of adopters in this study. Hence, elucidating the importance of the emerging internet communication mechanism and user interaction process, makes the U&G a proficient theory to achieve the underlying objective of this study.

Second, the use of the social media engagement theory was also to give the assumption that there has been extensive engagement with SM by users (Dolan et al., 2019). Since the internet is inherently interactive and user directed, SMET is a methodology that lends itself particularly well to the investigation of consumer internet use. Customer engagement is an inalienable factor in marketing research, particularly so when customers are often viewed as the passive recipient of utility by businesses. Core to the theory is that the customers are the center of attraction given that businesses are progressively moving from product-centered marketing approaches to more service-centric promotions (Wong et al., 2022). Given this, marketing activities that foster, establish, and help to maintain customers using innovative means of interaction become significant. The tenet of the theory is that, while businesses focus on retaining existing customers, aggressive mechanisms are executed to attract prospective ones through community and social media platforms in a bid to increase their market share (Lam and Wong, 2020), Engagement has been described in a variety of ways in marketing literature, including customer engagement, customer engagement behaviors, customer brand engagement, consumer engagement, and simply engagement.

In line with the above, this research argues that customer engagement is a psychological process by which customers move toward brand loyalty, or an ongoing state of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral activation (Yost et al., 2021). As a central tenet of the SMET in relationship marketing (Lam and Wong, 2020), customer engagement begins with customer satisfaction and culminates in customer loyalty (Brodie et al., 2011). The core of this argument focuses on the emergence of customer engagement because of sustained involvement and repeated satisfaction using SM. Nonetheless, in the SME context, social media engagement, according to Mosteller and Poddar (2017) hinges on behavioral engagement intensity, which includes activities such as logging and usage frequency as well as personal data completeness. In this study, however, this assertion is expanded to include affective components, such as positive online attitudes (Yost et al., 2021). Users with high social media engagement are likely to post, share, like, and comment frequently on social networking sites (Huang et al., 2020; Yost et al., 2021). It is in line with the above that this study leans on the

SMET to elucidate the enablers and constraints of SM usage by SMEs growth in Ghana.

2.2 Conceptual framework

According to Fisher et al., (2010), the conceptual framework shows the research study on patterns of elements and the causal relationship with major concepts in research. The conceptual framework diagram provides a detailed understanding of the entire research study. The conceptual framework below explains the relationship between social media usage, its enablers, and inhibitors toward SMEs' Growth. Based on the literature review, this study develops a research model as shown in Figure 4 below.

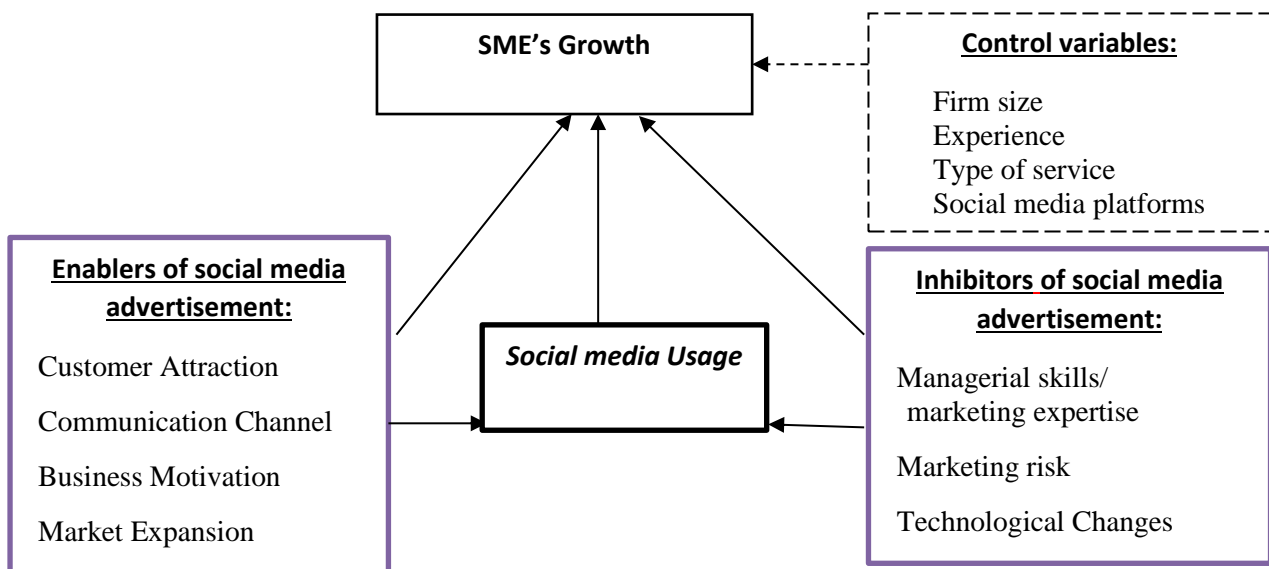


Figure 1. the conceptual model (Source: author's own)

2.3 Enablers of social media

2.3.1 Social Media Usage

Ainin et al., (2015) found that social media usage plays a significant role in SMEs as a marketing communication tool in the 21st century and therefore allows SMEs to consistently engage in communication with their customers, understand customers' needs, and respond completely and proactively to their needs. Extensive research has been conducted on social media usage and results or findings prove that it is a user-friendly marketing communication tool for SMEs' growth and contributes to the promotion of SMEs' products and services delivery, the channel of communication with their customers, supporting firms' internal communications and collaborations (Meske & Stieglitz, 2013; Öztamur & Karakadılar, 2014). Another researcher, Attai et al. (2015) also identified social media usage as a powerful tool that can contribute to SMEs' growth entirely since its adoption brings about a positive relationship and provides information and feedback to both customers and firms. Again, the usage of social media as a marketing communication tool has also enabled SMEs to not only alter their brands to customers but have changed how businesses are conducted (Bianchi

and Andrews 2015; Zhang et al., 2010). Moreover, (Ainin et al., 2015; Attai et al., 2015) suggested that organizational objectives, such as marketing, communication, sales, advertising, innovation, problem resolution, customer service, human resources, information technology, and driving cultural changes which form part of their growth agenda can be achieved through the usage of social media. Similarly, research conducted by (Algharabat et al., 2020) and (Bonsón & Ratkai, 2013) found that social media usage serves the purpose of selling, advertising, and reduces the marketing expenditure of SMEs, and positively promotes products and services through messaging, tagging, commenting, and notifying and again, Muslim et al., (2020) demonstrated that social media usage enhances SMEs to improve upon their products and services brand awareness.

The introduction of social media usage has created opportunities for SMEs to interact with one another, a phenomenon which perpetuates currently due to the existence of the covid-19 pandemic. It is preferably known that consumers of today wish to communicate with firms through social media usage, therefore a central point for marketing and sales functions in business contexts. Eurostat, (2020), revealed that SMEs in the European Union are found to use social media to engage prospects and to create values that might affect their growth positively. Wardati and Mahendrawathi (2019) suggested that social media as a marketing communication offers several opportunities, customer attraction, customer relationship management, and enhancing collaboration with customers, which accelerate firms' innovation and create a digital marketing platform for entrepreneurs not only to be innovative but also becomes more competitive in the marketing environment. According to Cheng et al. (2019) and Abed et al. (2016), social media usage contributes significantly to the improvement of SMEs' market shares in different countries and hence creates more opportunities for the global markets, increases brand loyalty, and awareness and finally reduces marketing costs of SMEs. Also, Algharabat et al., (2020) and Bonsón & Ratkai (2013) maintained that social media usage influences the mutual relationship and business dealings of SMEs and their customers (both internal and external).

2.3.2 Customer Attraction

The attraction of SME products and services in most developing countries has become a topical issue of concern. It is therefore attributed to the kind of marketing communication tools that are usually used by these SMEs. The choice of a particular advertising/marketing communication tool plays a key role in the consumer or customer decision-making process (Atabay & Çizel, 2020; Lee, 2013) to either continue or discontinue the consumption of the firm's products and services while studies have shown that today's consumers or customers want modern advertising tools that are always attractive and easily accessible. The effectiveness of such tools has become a driving force for SMEs to engage their customers' interests and provide them with an opportunity to facilitate a close

relationship. Nevertheless, using the traditional means of marketing communication by SMEs has therefore become obsolete since information communication and technology have changed the interface of products and services consumption. Extant literature is prolific with studies that examined the significant relationship between customers and SMEs' mode of advertising tools (Guo et al.,2017, Mason et al., 2020), which highlights that the attraction of customers has increased in recent times because two parties in an online relationship usually come with mutual benefits, be economic or social. However, it is also imperative to acknowledge the fact that customer attraction largely creates brand awareness and serves as a means for winning customer loyalty (Gamboa & Gonçalves, 2014). It is against this background; we argue in the study that SMEs finding better and modern advertising tools puts the firm in a very competitive advantage for its consumers or customers to subsequently patronized their products and services and create a new opportunity for marketing managers to achieve planned promotional results or targets as compared with the old traditional means of advertisement.

H1: Customer attraction to a firm's product and service will positively affect SMEs' growth.

H2: Social media usage will mediate the relationship between customer attraction and SME growth.

2.3.3 Communication Channel

Communication refers to the means of sending and receiving information and therefore, in a nutshell, communication channels are mediums through which you can send a message to its intended audience (Sabate et al.,2014). The usage of traditional means of advertisement like Radio and Television makes it difficult for proper communication to flow between the firm and its customers. According to Sabate et al., (2014) using the effective promotional tool by SMEs helps in reaching their customers worldwide and creates a channel for SMEs to gather information about their products and services which is not the case in the normal way of marketing communication. It is evident in literature that adopting modern-day advertising tools shapes the ways of interactions, communication, decision making, socialization, collaboration, learning, and above all entertainment in shopping (Gamboa & Gonçalves, 2014). Many researchers have shown that there is a positive relationship between SMEs and communication channels (Sobakinova et al., 2019). SME firms are liable to failure because of poor communication channels and calls for an enhanced proper communication process for customer satisfaction, perceived value, and commitment. Furthermore, the communication channel is the central point and is deemed as a popular medium for disseminating information in a short time and with minimum labor, Guha et al., (2018) whiles Cheng & Shiu, (2019) added that the communication channel reveals enabled both SMEs and customers to develop positive relationship management. Similarly, it is appropriate for SMEs to adopt

credible, attractive, and above all competent promotional tools in facilitating communication between SMEs and their customers and solving customers' complaints within the shortest possible time.

H3: Communication channels will positively affect SME growth.

H4: Social media usage will mediate the relationship between communication channels and SME growth.

2.3.4 Business Motivation

Business Motivation provides a scheme and structure for developing, communicating, and managing business plans in an organized manner. It is defined as the creation of company awareness and promoting the company from different perspectives with or at a minimal cost. This is crucial for the life cycle of the SME industry and can facilitate business motivation. However, the weakness and complexities of the SME industry led to low predictability which does not allow for proper planning of the firm (Sanders et al., 2020). The high economic growth of the SME will compel it to adopt modern advertising tool which will enhance its integration and brings about marketing intelligence. Thus, business motivation through current means of advertising tools affects SMEs to create company awareness and promote the company from different perspectives with minimal cost. Relatedly, the essence of cost in the adoption and utilization of social media has been studied and it has been established that there is a direct and significant relationship between cost and the adoption of technology, especially, social media (Alam & Noor, 2009). The introduction of social media has created opportunities for SMEs to communicate continuously with customers hence promoting their customers' interest in the products and services of the organizations (Majchrzak et al., 2013), while the SMEs can transfer the firm's information to the customer. Customer brand loyalty and trust are gained using social media, which results in business motivation. Customers who become addicted to goods and services through the firm's advertisements maintain brand co-creation and therefore impact positively on the firm. Considering this, because customers become the focal point of the firm, firms can achieve their targets when customer relationship managers are assigned to a group of customers to respond to their challenges in a well-structured and organized way and quickly respond to their challenges which is not in the case of the traditional way of advertisements. By doing so, new customers are attained based on recommendations. As a result, SMEs benefit, and the cost of a marketing campaign is reduced.

H5: Business motivation will positively affect SME growth.

H6: Social media usage will mediate the relationship between business motivation and SME growth.

2.3.5 Market Expansion

A Market Expansion is an approach that helps SMEs grow when they have already expanded as far as possible in their existing channels. The fundamental goal of this strategy is to ensure that all your current markets are already satisfied

with your products and services as they are. Firms rely on markets for survival and the markets in which these SMEs sell their products need to turn their interest into effective demand for supply which leads to market attractiveness (McDonald & Eisenhardt, 2020). The demand in the SME market for products is a key factor influencing the success of an SME. However, low demand for products and services remains the basic challenge limiting SME growth outcomes because of its advertisements (Butkouskaya et al., 2020). Using modern-day advertising tools like social media has become the *modus operandi* that SMEs are using to expand their marketing accessibility in the 21st century and that has influenced the buying behavior of consumers. It is considered that consumers are always in close contact with brands and products by reading, watching, commenting, liking, and sharing causing SMEs to expand their markets to meet the demands of the market. Therefore, business owners now fully use social media for selling, advertising, and marketing at a relatively cheaper cost. As a result, SMEs promote themselves by sharing, tagging, texting, commenting, and notifying others. In recent times, SMEs operate in a global context, and their activities are characterized by intense competition from rivals. Moreover, concentration on competition within a market helps the SME to adopt effective strategies that help SMEs adapt to technological adoption and which change the consumer pattern of consumption hence affecting SMEs positively.

H7: Market expansion will positively affect SME growth.

H8: Social media usage will mediate the relationship between market expansion and SME growth.

2.3.6 Business Marketing Strategy

A marketing strategy is a company's overall plan for reaching out to potential customers and converting them into paying clients for their goods or services. A marketing strategy contains the company's value proposition, key brand messaging, data on target customer demographics, and other high-level elements. SMEs' strategy largely depends on the business opportunities created, improving their incubation and conception ideas as well as modification of their products and services to the satisfaction of their customers and continuing future business operations within the vicinity (Kallier, 2017). Customers' interests are thus always met through regular communication. Also, stable access to the market and meeting consumers through modern advertising media will help SMEs to innovate and meet customers' demands always. Again, SMEs success lies in the adoption of modern technology like social media. As such, although social media was initially rejected by Small Medium Enterprises for several reasons, it has been accepted and adopted based on its business opportunities and strategies (Kallier, 2017). Social media as a strategic advertising tool has facilitated SMEs' sustainability, brand awareness, acquisition of information, purchase behavior, post-purchase communication, and evaluation of consumer decision-making processes (Rahman et al., 2020). Therefore, SMEs are significantly innovating

and intensifying their business strategies. The use of social media for organizational purposes has been deemed strategic. Because SMEs are in constant relationships with their customers, new business strategies are created out of their regular engagements.

H9: Business strategy will positively affect SME growth.

H10: Social media usage will mediate the relationship between business strategy and SME growth.

2.4 Inhibitors of social media

2.4.1 Managerial Skills/Marketing Expertise

Managerial Skills can be defined as the knowledge and ability of the individuals in a managerial position to fulfill some specific management activities or tasks (Lengnick-Hall, 2002). This knowledge and ability are learnable and practicable. They can, however, be obtained through the practical implementation of required activities and tasks. This involves how to run and grow firms' activities on daily basis and how to make both management and the workforce more efficient in running the business and performing complex tasks with ease. Managerial Skills are an internal determinant for a firm's survival because it contributes to the knowledge of employees and makes them productive through the discovery of new methods. Armstrong (2006) suggests that managerial skills are the central overwhelming force that plays a vital role in the growth and survival of the firm which enables the firm to compete with other firms. However, where inexperienced and lack skills or social media experts are not found in top positions of SMEs firms, the adoption of such technology for firm's advertisement becomes a topical issue (Chikandiwa et al., 2013). Odia & Odia (2013) emphasized that training workers for skills and transformation always becomes a burden for SMEs since it requires some capital injection which reduces their profitability. However, when social media is not carefully controlled by management, it may reveal the firm's information publicly which might affect the reputation of the firm hence it's collapsing which is not the case with the traditional system of advertisement. Moreover, Kokkodis and Ipeirotis (2014) emphasized that online marketing requires enough workers' expertise once the SMEs wish to use it for advertisements, which eventually posed a negative marketing strategy for them to adopt. Furthermore, Vernuccio and Ceccotti (2015) concurrently concluded that strategic and organizational challenges prevent SMEs from integrating social media as a new marketing communication tool for a paradigm shift. The study also revealed that there is a high risk of losing brand management control because conversations are normally held online with/by others.

H11: Lack of Managerial/Marketing expertise will negatively affect SME growth.

H12: Social media usage will mediate the relationship between Managerial/marketing expertise and SME development.

2.4.2 Technological Changes

This is referred to as a process where the technology (in this case, social media) continuously changes in its applications, necessitating periodic system or link updates. According to Chege et al. (2020), regular technological changes or updates in the technology as a marketing communication tool ironically affects SMEs in communicating their products and services to their customers, and since more ICT infrastructural and equipment need to be bought to maintain the pace in marketing its products and services. Such a factor limits the decision-making process of regularly using the technology rather than operating with the traditional form of marketing communication. Laar et al., (2015) opined that the regular changes in the technology sometimes make customers feel unhappy with the technology used because of its complexity and the full maintenances of the software packages, hardware requirements of some functions, and finally paying for some additional functions of the application to always meet demands. The smartphone penetration into the market has created a tremendous opportunity for SMEs in prospecting customers but its negativity or challenges of regular changes affects its acceptability by SMEs. The said publication furthermore admonished that ICT infrastructures and services of social media must be constantly being kept running which increases the expenditure of SMEs when adopted for usage but not in the case of using the traditional method of marketing communication like radio, television, etc. In the nutshell, such standards put pressure on SMEs whenever they wish to adopt it as a communication tool. Getahun, (2020) also opined that challenges like ICT personnel need to be employed to help SMEs consistently deal with their customers and help in the system/link upgrade to make the advertisements of firms' products and services both affordable and available for consumption. Such a situation makes customers feel bored by always upgrading certain features from time to time before assessing products and services which has necessitated SMEs to ignore social media usage. Again, this has become an impediment for SMEs to adopt social media in this regard. Furthermore, Mello & Ter-Minassian (2020) in their research publication: digitization challenges and opportunities for Sub-National Governments and firms revealed that apart from the system or link changes, factors like experts and physical environment also contribute negatively to the usage of the technology and makes the technology not attractive for products and services advertisements. Such factor is attributed to the lack of inadequate ICT facilities for technological changes to be kept running, maintenance and upgrades. Technological changes interrupt customers/consumers from accessing and communicating with a firm's products and services.

H13: Technological changes will negatively affect SME growth.

H14: Social media usage will mediate the relationship between technological changes and SME growth.

2.4.3 Financial Constraints

It is defined as the difficulties or limitations that a company faces because of its failure to raise sufficient finances, which restricts the successes of a specific corporation or business. Financial Challenges have been one of the major factors that affect SMEs in their day-to-day activities which invariably affects the adoption or usage of social media as a new technology for the advertisement of its products and services for successful sustainability in developing countries. SMEs usually face financial constraints, which limit their acceptability of postmodern or current advertising tools like social media. This is because they find it difficult to fully access credits and other financial resources from internal and external sources for both the short and long-term Buraiki & Khan (2018). In the light of this, such factor informed their decision on what advertising tools to be used in the advertisements of its products and services based on their financial position. Because of this, SMEs prefer using less and moderate tools that would not require much of their income or financial resources like sophisticated machines in their promotions. Additionally, limited financial resources are a major challenge for SMEs adopting social media as a new technology for advertising purposes. Buraiki & Khan (2018) argued that SMEs lack supportive assistance from the government in the form of finance to purchase modern ICT equipment to operate with. Most SMEs struggle to obtain simple ICT solutions which invariably take a portion of their finance and therefore become a challenge for them. However, Saleh (2012) also suggests that financial challenge must affect SMEs' patronization of social media technology in its promotions despite the opportunities available for them for its growth. They usually see social media as a financial burden than radio and TV which need no installation of ICT equipment.

H15: Financial constraints will negatively affect SME growth.

H16: social media will mediate the relationship between financial constraints and SME growth.

2.4.4 Marketing Risk

This is regarded as a risk that an organization suffers from as a result of introducing its products and services to the market environment through the adoption of a particular medium of communication. Marketing risk, therefore, affects the overall performance of the organization or company markets. Marketing risk is of five types namely: interest rate risk, commodity risk, equity risk, and currency risk (google.com). Wu et al., (2014) suggested that SMEs suffer a lot in using social media as a marketing communication tool since the negative aspect of the technology poses more harm when not used well. Ainin et al., (2015) in their publication argued that firms must be skeptical about the

medium of technology to transfer their products and services. Alam & Noor, (2009) affirmed that risk is highly possible in adopting and utilization of new technology as an advertising and marketing tool by SMEs. Similarly, Ahmad et al., (2017) established that social media is a high-risk technology when not handled well by ICT professionals of SMEs and might cause more harm than good. Such incidence affects the SMEs' growth if the proper flow of marketing communication is not done. Therefore, the risk factor has ironically affected social media as an advertising and marketing communication tool for SMEs. The marketing risk aspects of social media usage highly eliminate the positive aspect of benefits such as revenue generation, new customers' attractions, increased brand awareness, loyalty, brand reputation, etc can be enjoyed by SMEs but rather pushes for the usage of the traditional method of marketing communication which has a little influence than the social media technology. According to Ericson et al., (2016) revealed that social media provides innovations and digital solutions opportunities to SMEs to compete in the global markets, yet marketing risk sometimes slows down the adoption of such technological tools in the 21st century since its control is highly difficult as compared with larger companies or firms. Therefore, the marketing risk of social media usage has intermittently limited the usage of social media for communication purposes as a core concept for providing new products and services. Again, SMEs can achieve success through social media, hence the marketing risk aspects affect its utilization and adaptability as an advertising and marketing communication tool.

H17: Marketing risk will negatively affect SME growth.

H18: Social media usage will mediate the relationship between marketing risk and SME growth.

2.5 SMEs Growth

Growth is a process that creates progress, positive change, or the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social, and demographic components. Growth is a process that creates growth and brings progress and positive changes (Pertuz, & Pérez, 2021). In other terms, SME growth is defined as a process where there is an improvement and positive changes because of the implementation of modern advertising tools affecting customers to patronize a firm's products and services. Pertuz, & Pérez, (2021) argued that SME growth has always been an issue of concern. It is however revealed that such growth can be achieved through the implementation and adoption of modern advertising tools like social media, which is usually less costive, easily accessible, has wide coverage, and affordable as compared with radio and TV where huge sums of money are charged for advertising activities and also how ICT and smartphones introduction has changed the face of consumers' consumption of products and services (Plessis & Pretorius 2017). Also, Tidd & Thuriaux-Alemán (2016) suggest that growth is always the fundamental strategy for the success of every firm and, therefore, calls

for different and modern practices to successfully manage the growth process. However, growth policies that would affect the firm positively must be the heartbeat of the business that is finding out and adopting effective and efficient advertising tools and measures to largely make products and services available to customers or clients. Similarly, Plessis & Pretorius (2017) confirm that most developing countries like Ghana normally lacks SME growth because of how unique advertising tools like social media can be adopted and always depends on the old traditional way like TV and radio due to lack of empirical study been conducted combining both the enablers and inhibitors of social media towards the growth of SMEs.

Table 1: Summary of the definition of constructs and literature sourced

S/N	Constructs	Definition	Source of Literature
1	Social media	Online platforms that serve as a medium to moderate and mediate the engagement and interaction of individuals or groups of individuals are generally referred to as social media. The internet-based platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, etc used for connectivity between SMEs and their clients for the advertisement of their products and services are referred to as social media usage or adoption.	Men et al., (2020) Rauniar et al., (2014), Öztamur & Karakadılar., (2014), Tajudeen et al., (2018).
2	Customer Attraction	This is described as a channel through which social media affects clients to access a company's products and collects sufficient information about a product before purchasing it.	Harrigan et al., (2018),
3	Communication Channel	It is described as the channel through which information is transferred from one location of a company to another, i.e., from the company to its potential consumers.	Rodriguez et al., (2015). Kim et al., (2016), Tajudeen et al., (2018), Lechuga Sancho et al., (2018).
4	Business motivation	Business Motivation lays forth a framework and structure for creating, discussing, and managing business plans in a systematic way. It is described as raising company awareness and promoting the company from several angles for free or at a low cost.	Author's Construct.
5	Market Expansion	Market Expansion is a strategy that helps businesses expand after they've gone as far as they can in their current channels. The fundamental goal of this strategy is to ensure that all of your current markets are already satisfied with your products and services as they are.	Shao et al., (2016), Ainin et al., (2015), Ghezzi & Cavallo, (2020).
6	Business Marketing Strategy	A marketing strategy is a company's overall plan for reaching out to potential customers and converting them into paying clients for their goods or services. The company's value proposition, core brand message, statistics on target customer demographics, and other high-level elements are all included in a marketing plan.	Mutalemwa, (2015), Asongu & Boateng, (2018).

7	SMEs Growth	Growth is a process that involves the addition of physical, economic, environmental, social, and demographic components. This is where SMEs saw improvements and positive changes because of the implementation of modern advertising tools, i.e., massive changes in customer patronage of their products and services because of the newly adopted advertising method.	Author's Construct.
8	Managerial skills/ marketing expertise	It is defined as a company's lack of personnel and organizational skills to effectively adopt and market its products and services through modern means. It is characterized as a company's inability to embrace and market its products and services using current technology due to a lack of personnel and organizational skills.	Odia & Odia, (2013), Vernuccio & Ceccotti, (2015), Chikandiwa et al., (2013).
9	Technological Changes	This is a process in which technology (in this case, social media) is constantly evolving in its uses, necessitating system or link upgrades on a frequent basis.	Ainin et al., (2015), Yadav, (2017), Elena, (2020), Haseeb et al., (2019), Ericson et al., (2016).
10	Financial Constraints	It is defined as the challenges or constraints that a firm face because of its failure to acquire sufficient finances, which limits a firm's or business's successes. Again, it can be defined as the challenges or constraints that a firm face because of its inability to raise adequate funds, which limits a particular firm's or business's achievements.	Ainin et al, (2015), Tajudeen et al., (2018), Pandya, (2012), Schwab et al., (2019), Abor & Quartey, (2010).
11	Marketing Risk	This is regarded as a risk that an organization suffers from as a result of introducing its products and services to the market environment through the adoption of a particular medium of communication.	Ainin et al, 2015; Alam & Noor, 2009

Source: Summary of the definition of constructs and literature sourced

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

Research design is a set of methods and procedures used in collecting and analyzing variables identified in a research problem (Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2014). There are three types of research designs namely qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches (Creswell, 2013). According to Yin (1994), the best method to use for a study depends on the purpose of the study and the accompanying research questions. A research methodology can be descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory. According to Tustin, (2005) descriptive research offers a better understanding of the existing problem but does not consider the cause of the research problem and only describes the characteristics of the people or group. According to Hair et al., (2008), exploratory research provides greater insight and makes a research problem more understandable, while causal research, also known as explanatory research, is a sort of study that determines if two dissimilar conditions have a cause-and-effect relationship. Exploratory research was used in this study. The research design of the dissertation focuses on the validity and reliability of the observations. The dissertation or study begins with theoretical research on “enablers and inhibitors of social media usage towards

SMEs growth”. A conceptual framework has been developed in the literature (see figure 1) which was applied based on the research design. Moreover, the research design presented the methodology procedure to fulfill the aims and objectives of the study. The study used the literature review, in addition to the proposed model and the theoretical concept. Both deductive and inductive approaches, that is, quantitative and qualitative inquiry was employed to achieve the stated objectives of the entire study. The quantitative research method involved the use of statistics, and numbers to explain and interpret social realities (Labaree, 2009). Under this method, data were collected using questionnaires, polls, and surveys to conclude logically. One advantage of using the quantitative research method is that researchers are objective in their findings and produce accurate conclusions (Jones, 2011). Moreover, the researcher also saw the need to adopt the qualitative method in this study to come out with a broad view of the research findings. The findings of the quantitative data were analyzed through the partial least squares (PLS) path modeling method.

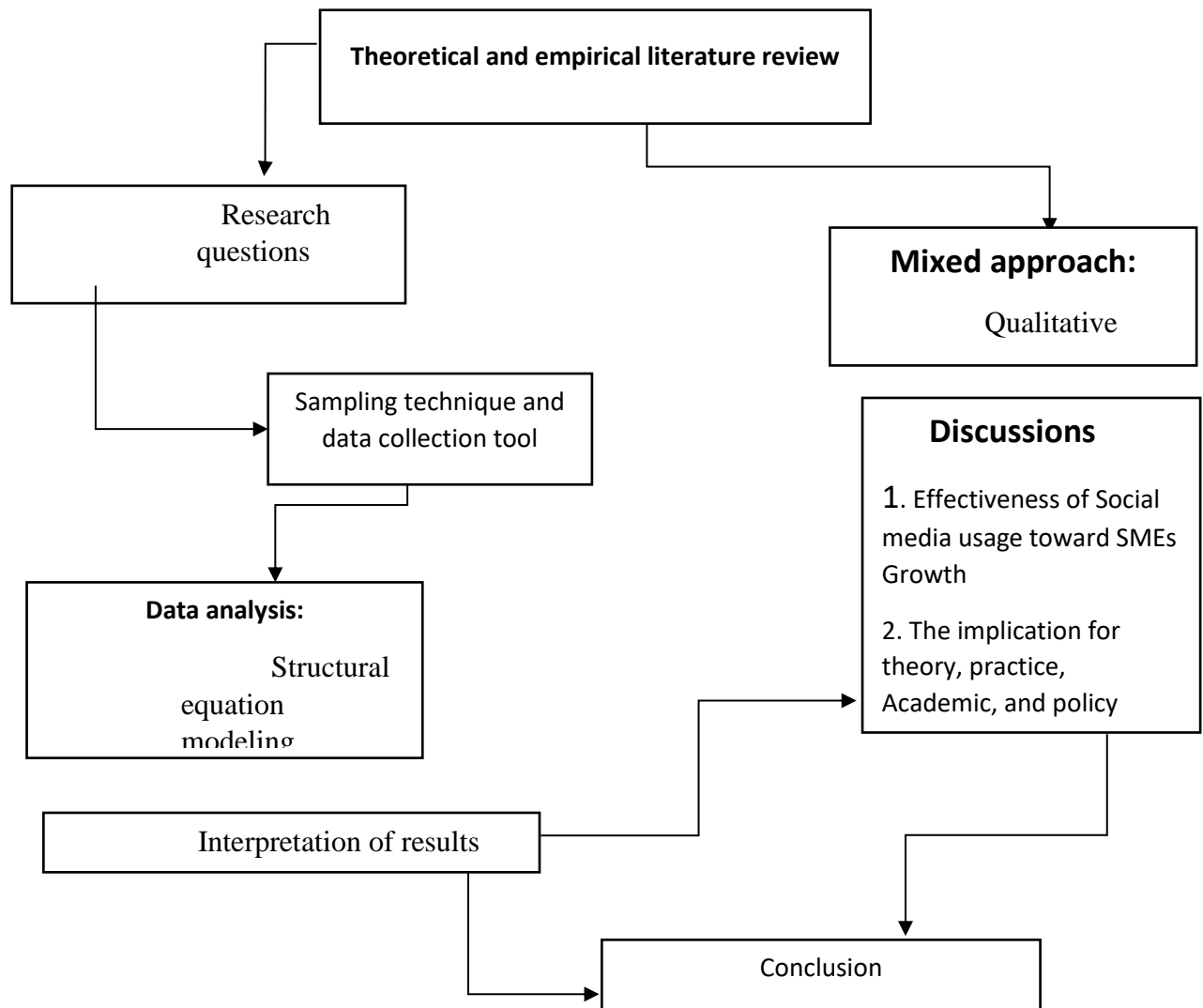


Figure 2. Research design/process (Source: author's own)

3.2 Research Design Instruments, Demographics, and Data Collection

The researcher realized the importance of research design instruments in this dissertation. A structured questionnaire was developed solely based on the proposed model in English and distributed to only respondents of the selected firms who can read and understand its clarity. A questionnaire was the main instrument that was used to collect data from the owner-managers of the various selected SMEs. A questionnaire is a research instrument consisting of a series of questions used in gathering data (McLead, 2018). The researcher adopted this instrument because it is cheap, quick, and an easy way of obtaining information from a large population (Lavrakas, 2008). The data was collected through a structured questionnaire using both online and offline modes. The google forms were used to collect the data online mode and face-face mode was used in collecting data from the respondents where the researcher visited the premises of the various SMEs for the data collection. Saunders et al., (2009) found that using a structured questionnaire will provide empirical evidence and authenticate the hypotheses when the sample size is large (Bhattacharjee 2012). Again, the target for owner-managers was because of their in-depth knowledge, information, experiences, and their involvement in the implementation of marketing communication decisions. The cross-sectional research design was adopted for the data collection process of the study as compared with the longitudinal approach (Haseeb et al. 2019; Bethlehem, 1999; Mann, 2003). According to (Denscombe, 2010; Burns & Bush, 2012; Haydam & Mostert, 2013), self-administered questionnaires or surveys help in eliminating the bias of the interviewer and contribute to obtaining large study populations that produce a satisfactory response rate. Furthermore, to ensure a broad scope of empirical evidence, the researcher further implores qualitative research in addition to quantitative research. The researcher, therefore, contacted the office of the Registrar General's Department which deals with all registrations of the country to seek information on the selection of the experts/consultants who have registered with their agency and other professional institutions relating to the field of the study. Given this, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used in selecting the preferred respondents for both experts/consultants and sales and marketing managers and their deputies of larger SMEs. To add more, the purpose of conducting the qualitative research was to add more meaningful insight to the findings of the study. In doing so, an interview and unstructured questionnaire were used to obtain information from the experts/consultants as well as marketing & sales managers of larger SMEs in Ghana. The interview took the form of a face-to-face approach. The unstructured questionnaire was also distributed to the marketing and sales managers of the larger SMEs. This approach according to Goodman, (1961) is a data collection tool that has been used as a means of improving response rates. The study items used for measuring the constructs were adapted from the existing literature. For clarity, all items were measured

using an ordinal scale in a five-point Likert scale (1= Completely Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4= Agree, and 5 = Completely Agree). A five-point Likert scale was used because it is easier for respondents to complete and takes less time than open-ended questions (Leung, 2011).

3.3 Data Analysis

The researcher employed Partial Least Square and Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) for the data analysis technique. The SEM is a causal modeling statistical technique that includes a diverse range of mathematical models, computer algorithms, and statistical methods that fit the network of constructs to data. Multivariate statistical analysis technique as SEM is used to analyze the statistical relationship that exists between measured variables and latent constructs. This analysis technique can estimate the multiple and interconnected dependence in a single analysis statistical. In the social science domain, the technique is most useful because of its ability to impute the relationship between unobserved constructs (latent variables) from observable variables. The SEM contains sub-techniques such as the Confirmatory Analysis (CFA), Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and Confirmatory Composite Analysis (CCA). These sub-techniques, coupled with others like Path Analysis (PA), as well as the partial least square (PLS), are fully used in the publications of (Chin, 1998; Hair et al., Jr, Hult, 2016; Jöreskog and Sorbom, 2006). Construct reliability of the items loading into a factor was estimated by Cronbach's alpha. According to the rules, all constructs should reflect reasonable scale reliability since Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability values ranged from 0.70 to 0.95 (Hair et al., 2019). Furthermore, measured constructs should reflect sufficient convergent validity, which can be examined by average variance extracted values. Additionally, the measured constructs should be distinct from one another. This is called discriminant analysis and in PLS-SEM it can be investigated by examining the Heterotrait-Monotrait coefficients. They should be below the threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2014). As a result, based on Hair et al.'s (Joseph F. Hair et al., 2019) principles, all PLS-SEM assumptions should satisfy to go further with hypothesis testing. Furthermore, the SEM statistical test is very useful and relevant in testing and validating the constructs being produced from the design science phase object of the research. Both EFA and PLS-SEM were tested statistically to the level of the research because of their usefulness in the growth of its theoretical construct, establishing the relationship between the variables in the theoretical framework, detecting and assessing the unidimensional limits of the theoretical construct, evaluating the construct validity of the scale, and finally, proving/disproving proposed theories (Cloud, & Grandfield, 2008; Iwasaki, & Havitz, 2004).

3.4 Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis is a statement made regarding the study's population. This is to find out if the empirical evidence from the sample does or does not support the

statement concerning the population. According to Neuman, (2003), the hypothesis is a proposition to be tested or a tentative statement of the relationship between two variables. Again, there are four main steps involved in the testing or validating hypotheses: state the null and alternative hypotheses, select the level of significance, compute the test statistic, formulate the decision rule, and validate and decide. The measurement model was analyzed through the partial least squares (PLS) approach, which was employed with SmartPLS 3.0. The Partial Least Square approach is a variance-based Structural Equation Modeling method that was chosen. Furthermore, the Partial Least Square approach allows for the testing of both the measurement and structural models. According to Hair et al., (2017), SEM is among the most statistical techniques used by scholars in the measurement of the effect of institutions on entrepreneurship. PLS-SEM was used to evaluate the variance of the internal cause of the constructs based on the proposed theoretical model and their corresponding manifest variables in turn (Hair et al., 2017). PLS performs a convenient method in testing moderation effects because it indicates a relationship that is like the traditional regression coefficients. All constructs in the current study were modeled as reflective indicators. PLS-SEM was run through SmartPLS 3.0 computer software (Ringle et al., 2015). Firstly, the structural model was designed to assist to define the variables and their relationship. Secondly, the measurement model of the constructs was assessed initially to define the reliability, validity, and discriminant validity to follow up with the demonstration of the relationships between the constructs (Joseph F. Hair et al., 2017). To identify the significance of these relationships the standardized paths was examined. These paths were calculated using the bootstrap procedure.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND EMPIRICAL RESULTS

4.1 Test of Model

Per the recommendation from scholars (Hair et al, 2017), the researcher adopted the PLS-SEM (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair, Risher et al, 2019). As a result, Dijkstra-rho Henseler's and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were used to rigorously analyze the constructs' reliabilities. As indicated in Table 4.0 below, all the values exceeded the threshold of **0.5** indicating how strong coefficients of the construct's reliability as suggested by (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, (2019). The software ADANCO 2.0 version (Henseler & Dijkstra, 2015) was used to evaluate the psychometric properties of the constructs and their underlying items. Concerning the composite reliability of the constructs, Jöreskog's rho (ρ_c) with a minimum threshold of 0.7 and Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (ρ_A) with a threshold of 0.8 were evaluated and our analysis fulfills those requirements. Hence, the result presented by Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (ρ_A) with a minimum reliability coefficient of 0.7239 and a maximum of 0.8805, while convergent validity was presented by average variance extracted (AVE) which also exceeded the minimum threshold of 0.5 (see table 4). Moreover, the indicator

loadings of the latent constructs were assessed and loaded meaningfully to their respective constructs. Per the recommendation of Bagozzi & Yi, (1988), a factor loading above a threshold of **0.6** is the best measure/indicator. The results of the indicator variables show the loading of (0.6357) and (0.8874) for minimum and maximum load respectively. The summary of all the research constructs as well as their items are shown in Table 5.0 with their corresponding loadings (coefficients). The researcher used the variance inflation factor to discover evidence of common method variance (CMV) of the measurement scales again, considering the presence of multicollinearity (VIF). In the quest to ascertain the presence of CMB (common method bias), the researcher followed the research by Bagozzi & Yi, (1988), in which the construct's items were carefully designed with a description on the questionnaire's title page that respondents will be treated with strict confidence. Simply put, the survey was designed to ensure that respondents remained anonymous, such that they could opt out of the research whenever they wanted. Again, to reinforce this argument, the researcher further performed a full multicollinearity test, with emphasis on VIF (variance inflation factor) to assess the evidence of Common method variance (CMV). The results of this post-hoc evaluation showed that CMV is not an issue since the computed VIFs (see table 5) are less than the threshold of ten (10) (see Alin, 2010; Kock & Hadaya, 2018; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003; Salmerón, García, & García, 2020). Finally, the concerns about CMB are minimal, hence, the potential CMB concerns are low.

Table 2: Construct reliability and validity Factor loading and Variance inflation factor (VIF)

Construct	Indicator	Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (ρ_A)	Jöreskog's rho (ρ_c)	Cronbach's alpha(α)	AVE	Loading	VIF
Social media Usage		0.8682	0.9091	0.8666	0.7144		
	SMU1					0.8383	2.0545
	SMU2					0.8703	2.3118
	SMU3					0.8491	2.0575
Customer Attraction	SMU4					0.8225	1.9131
		0.8460	0.8950	0.8435	0.6807		
	CA1					0.8152	1.7949
	CA2					0.8489	2.0422
Communication Channel	CA3					0.8415	2.0200
	CA4					0.7932	1.7149
		0.8805	0.9167	0.8785	0.7337		
	CC1					0.8423	2.1675
Business Marketing Strategy	CC2					0.8790	2.5042
	CC3					0.8874	2.6035
	CC4					0.8155	1.8672
		0.7978	0.8681	0.7976	0.6221		
	BMS1					0.8224	2.2333
	BMS2					0.7877	2.1008
	BMS3					0.7774	1.5591
	BMS4					0.7662	1.5139

Business Motivation		0.8559	0.9003	0.8521	0.6933		
	BM1					0.8601	2.1974
	BM2					0.8512	2.1019
	BM3					0.8424	1.9696
	BM4					0.7742	1.6404
Market Expansion		0.7988	0.8802	0.7954	0.7103		
	ME1					0.8275	1.6378
	ME2					0.8845	2.0102
	ME3					0.8147	1.6310
SME Growth		0.8169	0.8783	0.8152	0.6434		
	SG1					0.8203	1.7726
	SG2					0.8143	1.7681
	SG3					0.7923	1.6115
	SG4					0.7809	1.6240
Managerial Skills		0.7239	0.7905	0.6322	0.5662		
	MS1					0.6357	1.1872
	MS2					0.8235	1.4601
	MS3					0.8565	1.2954
Marketing Risk		0.8136	0.8711	0.8046	0.6285		
	MR1					0.7944	2.0108
	MR2					0.8417	2.1104
	MR3					0.7619	1.5712
	MR4					0.7706	1.3880
Technological Changes		0.7931	0.8742	0.7851	0.6986		
	TC1					0.8052	1.5984
	TC2					0.8562	1.7081
	TC3					0.8453	1.6214
Financial Constraints		0.8053	0.8495	0.7725	0.5858		
	FC1					0.8008	1.5766
	FC2					0.7580	1.7118
	FC3					0.7051	1.5392
	FC44					0.7939	1.4614

Source: Author's processing from ADANCO version 2.0 (2022)

Note SMU= Social Media Usage, CA= Customer Attraction, BM=Business Motivation, CC= Communication Channel, Business Marketing Strategy (BMS), ME= Market Expansion, SG=SME Growth, MS=Managerial Skills, MR= Marketing Risk, TC= Technological Changes, FC= Financial Constraints

Also, Table 6.0 shows the output of the test of discriminant validity inspired by the Fornell-larcker criteria which indicate an extension of the measurement of the model fit. Over here, the researcher used Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio which has been recently used by many scholars and researchers. The Fornell-larcker criterion (Fornell-lacker, 1981) proposes that the estimate of the square root average variance extracted (AVE) should be greater than the correlation shared between every other construct (see Table 6.0). Thus, it is instructive to note that, a cursory look at the inter-construct correlation matrix and the discriminant validity produces the bolded slanting figures which indicate the level of correlation coefficient amongst the observed constructs. The discriminant is established when a construct has a higher value of loaded coefficient beyond other observed variables in a single row or column as indicated in Table 6.0. The test

confirms the results as satisfactory, hence providing a basis for the researcher to proceed with the ensuing inquiry of the study. To be more precise, the details of both discriminant validity and the Fornell-larker criterion can be found in appendix A.

Table 3: Test of discriminant validity – Fornell-Larcker criterion (HTMT)

Construct	SOC_ MEDIA_ USAGE	CUST_ ATTRA CTION	COMM_ CHANN EL	BUSI_ MOTIVA TION	BUS_ MKT_ STR	MKT_ EXPA NSION	SME GROW TH	MANA G_ SKILL S	MKTIN G_ RISK	TECH N CHAN GE	FIN_ CONST RAIN
SOC_MEDIA_USAGE	0.9145										
CUST_ATTRACTION	0.7896	0.8429									
COMM_CHANNEL	0.5790	0.5699	0.6428								
BUSI_MOTIVATION	0.8331	0.7609	0.7960	0.6057							
BUS_MKT_STR	0.6482	0.6644	0.6575	0.8465	0.6533						
MKT_EXPANSION	0.5961	0.5695	0.5777	0.7148	0.7035	0.7833					
SME GROWTH	0.5465	0.4430	0.3970	0.6589	0.4817	0.7255	0.8026				
MANAG_SKILLS	0.1824	0.1540	0.1390	0.3369	0.2935	0.3198	0.5269	0.5790			
MKTING_RISK	0.3682	0.3365	0.2726	0.3654	0.3818	0.4137	0.5819	0.5247	0.6646		
TECHN_CHANNEL	0.2406	0.1873	0.1933	0.3441	0.2761	0.3899	0.4823	0.5693	0.7423	0.6470	0.1195
FIN_CONSTRAIN											

Squared correlations, AVE in the diagonal.

Note: the diagonal (in bold) is the average variance extracted (AVE)

Sources: Author’s processing from ADANCO version 2.0 (2022)

4.2 Test of structural model: A mediation analysis

Baron and Kenny (1986) found that a mediator is a variable that contributes to the effect of the relationship between the predictor and the criterion. The dissertation conceptual model outlines the presence of mediation from the predictor variables to the outcome variable. A study by Hayes (2013) revealed that the significance of the role of mediation or moderation cannot be undervalued. In this regard, it is extremely important to explain what mediation and moderating variables are. Again, Baron & Kenny (1986) defines a moderator as a variable that influences the direction between independent and dependent variables. Hayes (2013) also asserts that moderators ascertain how a specific impact can be expected. The same publication defines mediation or mediators as recognizing causal variables having an impact on the outcome variables. The current dissertation, therefore, used the approach of mediation analysis to establish the relationship between enablers and inhibitors and SMEs' Growth with social media usage serving as a mediator. An evaluation of the model fit and path

analysis is needed. The purpose of this is to reveal the causal-effect (relationship) underlying the research constructs. The findings revealed that; social media usage has a positive and significant effect on the constructs: CA= Customer Attraction, BM=Business Motivation, CC= Communication Channel, Business Marketing Strategy (BMS), ME= Market Expansion, SG=SME Growth, MS=Managerial Skills, MR= Marketing Risk, TC= Technological Changes, FC= Financial Challenges and SMEs Growth. Also, the below table shows the regression coefficients; Beta (β), and the significant values; T-values >1.96 (or P-values < 0.05). Finally, the predictive power (coefficient of determination) of the research model, and the coefficient of determination (R^2) of the regression model were also established. Thus, R^2 of the predictor variable of 46% is also appropriate as shown in Table 5 and Figure 1 respectively. The regression coefficients; Beta (β), and the significant values; T-values >1.96 (or P-values < 0.05) of these constructs are indicated in Table 7.0 below. Furthermore, the structural model shows a controlled variable effect on the predictor variable (i.e., social media usage). Two control variables were examined in this dissertation: (work experience, and the company's website presence). The results of the two control variables are, therefore, shown in table seven and figure 2.0 below. The coefficient of determination R^2 measures the relationship of variation between the dependents and independent variables. Finally, the predictive power (coefficient of determination) of the research model as suggested by (Cohen, 2013), and the coefficient of determination (R^2) of the regression model were also established. Thus, R^2 of the predictor variables (social media usage and SMEs growth) of 66% and 55% are also appropriate as shown in Figure 3 below.

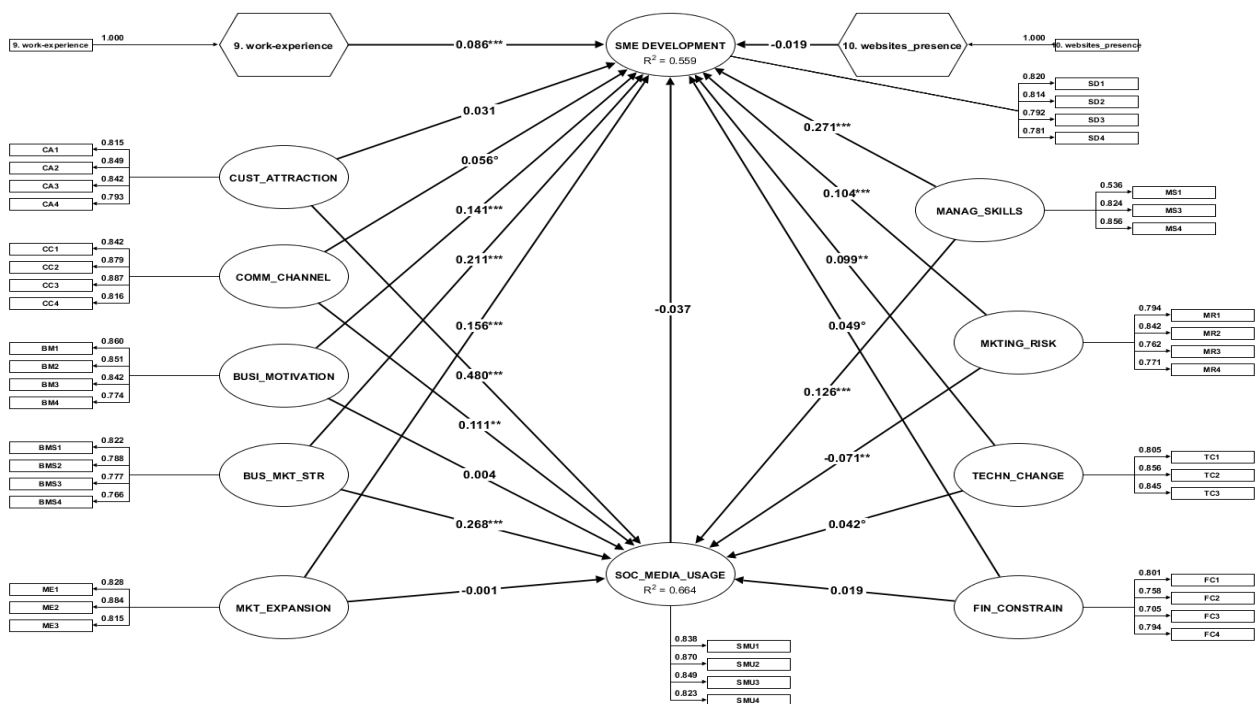


Figure 3: estimated research model. Source: Authors' processing form ADANCO 2.2.1 software

5. DISCUSSIONS OF STUDY FINDINGS

5.1 Discussions on Qualitative Findings from the Perspective of Experts/Consultants

Again, the researcher conducted a qualitative finding from experts/consultants and heads of larger SMEs who are using the technology (social media) to strengthen the findings of the quantitative results obtained. The researcher used the interview guide in soliciting the needed information from the respondents (see the table below for the transcribe of the qualitative interview guide).

1. In your explanation, how does a lack of managerial skills/marketing expertise affect social media towards SME growth?

Summary of Respondents' Comments:

It was made known to the researcher that SME growth continues to be a great challenge. The inexperienced social media experts contribute to how social media can be managed or handled. Management always feels reluctant to incur additional costs on training and skills. This idea eventually affects the firm negatively. Again, since employing social experts becomes a burden on firms based on the salaries and other entitlements that must be paid, SMEs within the context of developing countries still dwell on the utilization of the orthodox methods which eliminate such costs. Relatedly, the researcher found that strategic and organizational challenges (management perspective) prevent small and medium enterprises from integrating social media as a new marketing communication tool for a paradigm shift. Furthermore, since constant training and skills expertise is always needed, because of the regular modifications and maintenance of the technology applications, managers keep rejecting the usage of social media for marketing communication purposes. Therefore, such a challenge usually becomes an obstacle that is intertwined with its usage. Although technology adoption is very costly and again requires vigorous training and other forms of human capital yet cannot be abandoned since most customers today are found using the various platforms (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc) of social media to assess firms' products and services. Given this, the researcher advises that managers must embrace the usage of technology in this era of globalization.

2. How do technological changes affect social media usage by SMEs?

Summary of Respondents' Comments:

In the discussion of the technological changes, the researcher was categorically informed that since social media requires regular modifications and installations of new software and updates/applications for customers to consistently use the app in assessing firms' products and services has been made the technology usage very disturbing. Similarly, social media has brought about a technological change

in the market globalization and created possibilities for SMEs to reinforce their growth yet calls for SMEs to incur additional expenses on technology management which invariably affects both the firm and the consumers. The cost factor enumerates SMEs for the implementation of social media usage. Finally, the human(experts), the physical environment does not make the usage of social media very attractive for the advertisement of goods and services. Although technological changes are required at a regular pace, it is extremely significant to make use of social media by looking at its importance in the current stage of digitalization. Again, since cost factors are always pushed to the final consumer, SMEs must embrace the regular updates of the technology to help them meet the current demands of their customers/clients.

3. How do financial constraints affect SMEs ' adoption of social media usage?

Summary of Respondents' Comments:

Financial constraints were identified as a major concern that is and has crippled most SMEs' growth, especially in the developing countries context during the interview discussions. It was attributed to the fact that access to financial assistance from financial institutions, governments, etc has proved futile and not eager for SMEs to adopt modern technologies in their marketing communications. Because of this, SMEs usually concentrate on using the old traditional form of communication which does not require them to purchase more sophisticated machines for their promotional activities hence causing stress on their financial position. Although, SMEs understand the importance of adopting social media for various reasons, yet the challenge lies in organizing and preparing ICT structures, internal changes like personnel training, expertise, technical assistance, and lack of money. It is quite skeptical that SMEs in the modern days still dwell on the usage of traditional means for marketing communication. The researcher, therefore, opined that the issue of financial constraints can be eliminated through proper bookkeeping on the part of the firms that is having a good accounting record, using qualified accounting personnel to manage the firms' financials, seeking governments assistance by the presentation of proper documents when the need arises for provision of such documents for assistance. Above all, meeting this criterion would motivate both banks and governments to offer financial assistance for them to adopt modern technologies like social media for marketing communication purposes since it has become the order of the day where most customers are being found.

4. In a brief answer, how can social media usage serve as a marketing risk?

Summary of Respondents' Comments:

It was made known that there is a high risk associated with the usage/adoption of social media as compared with the traditional system of marketing communication. Social media requires qualified ICT and social media experts to always manage the page and solve customers' sentiments among others that are displayed during consumption of the firms' products and services. Also, mistakes

on the part of the firm would endanger the firm since the control of social media is very complex when there is an issue to be solved which is not in the case of the normal usage of radio, television, etc. The risk exposure of releasing your marketing strategies to your competitors is very high meaning there is a high risk of losing brand management control because conversations are normally held online with/by others. Scammers can hack into the firms' portal to fraud customers which can create a bad image for the organization. This sometimes reduces the customer's trust in electronic trading. To comment on this, the researcher is of the firm belief that firms must always ensure that better systems are set in place to always monitor their social media pages. Again, qualified social media experts must be employed by the organizations to eliminate the business firm from scammers, control the online platforms of the firm, and finally, SMEs must establish ICT infrastructures and services to maintain the technology in the constant running and motivate staff who are constantly in charge of the technology in order not to lose control to its competitors.

6. EXPECTED CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE THESIS

6.1 Theoretical Relevance

SMEs cannot be exempted because social media has become a frequent tool in the strategic direction of developing sectors. Essentially, this study contributes to knowledge of the key critical dimensions that promote the use of SM for the sustainable growth of enterprises. Thus, the conceptual framework of the study will offer scholars the platform to unravel variables that trigger the intensive application of social media. This work provides new multi-dimensioned evidence to the existing literature on social media and its impact on business performance. Thus, this study contributes to the enrichment of the measurement of usage intensity exclusively in the social media context. Furthermore, the research identifies the core antecedents and inhibiting factors of social media usage intensity on SMEs in terms of their growth in the marketing and communication services, enhanced firm-customer relations, and improved information accessibility and firm product visibility. In theory, the study contributes significantly to the technology adoption and literature concerning the swift and heightened usage of the innovation process in the day-to-day activities in the business environment. In terms of the relevance of the information or data gathered, the study aptly fills the vacuum in literature and contributes to filling the literary gap that has persisted in a developing country setting. The study contributes to developing a technically validated conceptual model or framework in connection with social media usage as a marketing communication tool for SME growth. The study thus makes a theoretical contribution by adding one new construct to the entire body of knowledge of existing studies on social media usage (Business motivation). Adopting the conceptual framework, SMEs in developing countries such as Ghana, will be able to ascertain and optimize social

media as the best communication tool for advertising for SMEs in developing economies. Importantly, the conceptual framework will aid researchers as a fundamental model to be leveraged by further unraveling additional important variables that could strengthen the model's applicability. Finally, since the context of the research is situated in an emerging economy (Ghana), particularly, a low-digitized economy, researchers in other developing country contexts will take a cue to implement a new dimension of this theme.

6.2 Practical Relevance

Practically, this study will significantly contribute to the discourse on the national policies on social media usage and SMEs. This is particularly important as Ghana is pursuing digitalization and integration of technology in its systems and processes across all spheres of the economy. Thus, SME practitioners and industry players will benefit from the study as it will enable informed decision-making on the most appropriate channel for advertising, as well as the marketing communication tool to be adopted in these contemporary competitive markets. Also, the conceptual framework will serve as a pioneer tool for Managers of SMEs, to realistically measure the contribution of social media usage to the firms' growth. Furthermore, the study will help SMEs efficiently transit from traditional communication to the new paradigm of social media usage. This doctoral work will also provide strategic directions to Managers, particularly, Ghanaian SMEs on how best to innovate by incorporating social media as a marketing communication tool given the magnitude of benefits (enablers) and constraints (inhibitors) accompanied using the technology (social media) in the 21st-century market. This is especially critical as SMEs in Ghana strive to enter new markets within the African sub-region and beyond. The study also provides a clear roadmap for Small and Medium Enterprises to formulate a framework combined with the research constructs to achieve the key purpose of how they can effectively and efficiently advertise or use social media as a marketing communication tool for their products and services.

6.3 Academic Relevance

The introduction of smartphones, which has also resulted in the widespread adoption of social media, has evoked several studies and has attracted many scholars to this field. Extant literature in this field has established the relevance of social media usage as a new technological marketing communication tool for SME growth when used effectively and efficiently. In this regard, the study will also provide other dimensions of this phenomenon, within academia, especially concerning developing countries such as Ghana. Also, the study is intended to attract the attention of scholars and researchers, most specifically, on the enablers and demotivating factors or challenges of social media usage which hinder SME growth in a developing country context. Furthermore, since a quantitative method was employed to empirically provide evidence-based results based on predetermined constructs, other aspects of the model and hypotheses under

consideration for this research can be tested for validity and provide a scientific basis for other scholarly interests in this field study. Again, the current study will also advance valuable insight into academia concerning the enablers and inhibiting factors of social media application on a firm's marketing strategies.

7. SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATION

7.1 Overview of the study

The main objective of the study was to assess the enablers and inhibitors of social media usage as a marketing communication tool for SME growth in Ghana. To help address the main objective, five specific objectives were generated: to identify the major social media channels used as a marketing communication tool by SMEs in Ghana; to examine how social media usage positively impacts the growth of SMEs in Ghana; to identify the inhibiting factors of social media usage (as a marketing communication tool) towards SMEs growth in Ghana; to identify the enabling factors of social media usage as a marketing communication tool for SMEs in Ghana, and to examine the mediating role of social media usage on the relationships between the stated "enablers and inhibitors" and SMEs. The dissertation used two theories particularly: Uses and Gratification Theory (U>) and Social Media Engagement Theory (SMET). The study adopted both quantitative and qualitative research approaches to address the objectives of the study. The population for the study consisted of some selected SMEs in the service sector. Both probability (simple random) and non-probability (convenience) sampling techniques were adopted and 992 owner-managers from selected SMEs participated in the study specifically from the marketing and sales department of the selected SMEs. In the qualitative data collection, the non-probability sampling methods such as the purposive and snowball methods were adopted. A structured questionnaire was used to collect the data which was later analyzed using the partial least square structural modeling (ADANCO 2.2.1) version. Descriptive statistics (of percentages, frequencies, the mean, and standard deviation) were then used in interpreting the analyzed data as well as the results from the ADANCO software. Again, the views of participants which were qualitatively obtained were also analyzed case-by-case by the researcher. Thus, the research is premised on a conceptual framework that will eventually fill the knowledge gap and contribute to the body knowledge of literature, practice, and academia regarding the usage of social media as an advertising/marketing communication tool for SMEs from developing countries' perspectives.

7.2 Recommendations

Based on the study findings thus, to assess the enablers and inhibitors of social media usage as a marketing communication tool for SME growth in Ghana, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. Policymakers in developing countries should develop enabling frameworks for an overall economy. Such national strategies, through the provision of the necessary legal environment and digital infrastructure, would compel the increased adoption and use of the digital space by SMEs.
2. There is a need for small businesses in developing countries to develop short to medium-term digital marketing strategic plans to guide their adoption and use of social media as a tool. This should dovetail with the overall business strategy being implemented by the firm.
3. SMEs in developing countries should make deliberate investments targeted at improving their digital presence to favorably compete locally and be able to penetrate other regional and global markets. For instance, this study identified website creation as an integral component of a social media strategy for SMEs. However, not all SMEs have adopted the use of a website as an important tool for gaining more clients or customers for their credibility and sustainability.
4. Further comparative research in this specific area to measure specific indicators on the use of social media and its impact on the firm's viability, considering both the developed and developing contexts will provide a further understanding of the underlying enabling and inhibiting factors, specifically, post COVID-19. Such research will provide recent insights into the nascent paradigms of digitalization and SME sustainability and growth.

7.3 Limitations and Directions for Further Research

The researcher outlines some limitations that can be addressed by other scholars in further studies since the study is only concentrated or limited to SMEs in Ghana. The generalization of the results among developing countries must be done with caution due to the many political, environmental, social, technological, environmental, and legal peculiarities which may require consideration. Moreover, the business dynamism of the various developing countries is different from each other. Again, the study only considered research constructs from the perspectives of SMEs and neglected the responses of customers which could have provided some elements of useful findings. Lastly, ignoring SMEs in other sectors and only concentrating on SMEs in the service sector also posed a limitation to the dissertation. Future research is welcomed in this area of digital marketing. Researchers and scholars can incorporate other variables that will mediate or moderate the relationship between the effectiveness of social media as a marketing communication tool (i.e., customer attraction, communication channel, market expansion, business marketing strategy, business motivation, financial constraints, managerial skills/marketing expertise, technological changes, and marketing risk) and SMEs growth in other developing countries' perspectives. Furthermore, future research can be pursued from the perspective of customers to ascertain the genuine usefulness of social media as a proper

marketing communication tool by considering both (the enablers and inhibitors). This is because, gradually, information and communication technology is gaining a firm root in and across the globe.

REFERENCES

- Abed, S., Dwivedi, Y., & Williams, M. (2016). Social commerce as a business tool in Saudi Arabia's SMEs. *International Journal of Indian Culture and Business Management*, 13(1). DOI: 10.1504/IJICBM.2016.077634
- Adhikari, G. P. (2021). Calculating the Sample Size in Quantitative Studies. *Scholars' Journal*, 14-29.
- Afolabi, I. T., Ezenwoke, A. A., & Ayo, C. K. (2017). Competitive analysis of social media data in the banking industry. *International Journal of Internet Marketing and Advertising*, 11(3), 183-201.
- Ahenkorah-Marfo, M., & Akussah, H. (2016). Changing the face of reference and user services: Adoption of social media in top Ghanaian academic libraries. *Reference Services Review*, 44(3), 219–236. <https://doi.org/10.1108/RSR-01-2016-0001>
- Ainin, S., Parveen, F., & Moghavvemi, S. (2015). *Factors influencing the use of social media by SMEs and its performance outcomes*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMDS-07-2014-0205>
- Ainin, S., Parveen, F., Moghavvemi, S., Jaafar, N. I., & Shuib, N. L. M. (2015). Factors influencing the use of social media by SMEs and its performance outcomes. *Industrial Management and Data Systems*, 115(3), 570–588. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IMDS-07-2014-0205>
- Azam, C., Kerbiriou, C., Vernet, A., Julien, J. F., Bas, Y., Plichard, L., & Le Viol, I. (2015). Is part-night lighting an effective measure to limit the impacts of artificial lighting on bats? *Global Change Biology*, 21(12), 4333-4341.
- Benevenuto, F., Duarte, F., Rodrigues, T., Almeida, V. A., Almeida, J. M., & Ross, K. W. (2008). Understanding video interactions in YouTube. In Proceedings of the 16th ACM international conference on Multimedia 761-764. ACM.
- Bocconcelli, R., Cioppi, M., & Pagano, A. (2017). Social media as a resource in SMEs' sales process. *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 32(5), 693–709. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JBIM-11-2014-0244>
- Boyd, D. (2007). *Why Youth Heart Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life*. 7641. <https://doi.org/10.1162/dmal.9780262524834.119>
- Borah, P. S.; Iqbal, S.; Akhtar, S. Linking social media usage and SME's sustainable performance: The role of digital leadership and innovation capabilities. *Technology in Society*, 2022, 68, 101900. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techsoc.2022.101900>
- Brodie RJ, Ilic A, Juric B, et al. (2011) Consumer engagement in a virtual brand community: an exploratory analysis. *Journal of Business Research*. 66(1): 105–114.
- Bruce E.; Shurong Z.; Akakpo A.; Oppong J. Impact of social media on start-up survival: Qualitative evidence from Ghana. *Journal of Management, Economics, and Industrial Organization*, 2022, 6(2), 48-69. <http://doi.org/10.31039/jomeino.2022.6.2.4>

- Cardoso, S. R. de S. N., Autor, S. E. U., De, I., Dos, A., Vendas, O. D. E., Empresas, D. A. S., Atividades, P. O., Artigo, N., Gest, G. N. R. M. D. E., Para, D. E. F., Miranda, S. F. da R., Ferreira, F. A. A., Oliver, J., Dario, M., Silva, E. M. da E. M., Sacomano Neto, M., Pires, S. R. I., Carvalho, José Crespo, L. E., Soares, L., ... Oliveira, M. D. M. F. de. (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107415324.004>
- Casaló, L. V., Flavián, C., & Ibáñez-Sánchez, S. (2020). Be creative, my friend! Engaging users on Instagram by promoting positive emotions. *Journal of Business Research, February*, 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.02.014>.
- Chiang, J. Y. (2013). Bile acid metabolism and signalling. *Comprehensive Physiology*, 3(3), 1191.
- Civelek, M., Ključnikov, A., Kmeco, E. and Hamarneh, I. (2021). The Influences of the Usage of Marketing Communication Tools on Innovations of the Functional Areas of Businesses: Perspectives for the Mining Industry. *Acta Montanistica Slovaca. Volume 26 (4) 685- 697*
- Chatterjee, S., & Kumar Kar, A. (2020). Why do small and medium enterprises use social media marketing and what is the impact: Empirical insights from India. *International Journal of Information Management*, 53(December 2019), 102103. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102103>
- Cha, M., Kwak, H., Rodriguez, P., Ahn, Y. Y., & Moon, S. (2007). I tube, you tube, and everybody tubes: analyzing the world's largest user generated content video system. In *Proceedings of the 7th ACM SIGCOMM conference on Internet measurement*, 1- 14. ACM.
- Cheng, C. C. J., & Shiu, E. C. (2019). How to enhance SMEs customer involvement using social media: The role of Social CRM. *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, 37(1), 22–42. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0266242618774831>.
- Cheng, R., Lourenço, F., & Resnick, S. (2016). Educating graduates for marketing in SMEs: An update for the traditional marketing curriculum. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 23(2), 495-513. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-09-2014-0153>
- Eşkisü, M., Hoşoğlu, R., & Rasmussen, K. (2017). An investigation of the relationship between Facebook usage, Big Five, self-esteem and narcissism. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 69, 294-301.
- Facebook (2013).“Key facts – statistics”. Retrieved 10th February, 2017, from <http://newsroom.fb.com/>.
- Fisher, B., Kulindwa, K., Mwanyoka, I., Turner, R. K., & Burgess, N. D. (2010). Common pool resource management and PES: lessons and constraints for water PES in Tanzania. *Ecological Economics*, 69(6), 1253-1261.
- Getahun, A. A. (2020). Challenges and opportunities of information and communication technologies for dissemination of agricultural information in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Agricultural Extension*, 8(1), 57-65. <https://doi.org/10.33687/ijae.008.01.3069>
- Globalwebindex (2014). *GWI social summary Q4 2014*. Retrieved: 3rd December, 2016, from <http://www.globalwebindex.net/blog/instagram-still-lags-twitter-as-the-fifth-biggest-social-network>.
- Ghezzi, A., & Cavallo, A. (2020). Agile Business Model Innovation in Digital

- Entrepreneurship: Lean Startup Approaches. *Journal of Business Research*, 110(February 2017), 519–537. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.06.013>
- Goodman, L. A. (1961). Snowball sampling. *The Annals of Mathematical Statistics*, 148–170.
- Gupta, G., & Vohra, A. V. (2019). Social Media Usage Intensity: Impact Assessment on Buyers' Behavioural Traits. *FIIB Business Review*, 8(2), 161-171.
- Ha, Y. W., Kim, J., Libaque-Saenz, C. F., Chang, Y., & Park, M. C. (2015). Use and gratifications of mobile SNSs: Facebook and KakaoTalk in Korea. *Telematics and Informatics*, 32(3), 425-438.
- Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. *European Business Review*, 31(1), 2–24.
- Hair, J., Hollingsworth, C. L., Randolph, A. B., & Chong, A. Y. L. (2017). An updated and expanded assessment of PLS-SEM in information systems research. *Industrial Management & Data Systems*, 117(3), 442–458.
- Hajli, M. N. (2013). *A study of the impact of social media on consumers*. January.
- Haseeb, M., Hussain, H. I., Kot, S., Androniceanu, A., & Jermsittiparsert, K. (2019). Role of social and technological challenges in achieving a sustainable competitive advantage and sustainable business performance. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, 11(14). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11143811>
- Lechuga Sancho, M. P., Martínez-Martínez, D., Larran Jorge, M., & Herrera Madueño, J. (2018). Understanding the link between socially responsible human resource management and competitive performance in SMEs. *Personnel Review*, 47(6), 1215–1247. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-05-2017-0165>.
- Mason, A. N., Narcum, J., & Mason, K. (2021). Social media marketing gains importance after Covid-19. *Cogent Business and Management*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2020.1870797>
- Mello, L. De, & Ter-Minassian, T. (2020). Digitalization Challenges and Opportunities for Subnational Governments (OECD Working Papers on Fiscal Federalism). April, 1-24
- Men, L. R., O'Neil, J., & Ewing, M. (2020). Examining the effects of internal social media usage on employee engagement. *Public Relations Review*, 46(2), 101880. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2020.101880>.
- Risse, T., Peters, W., Senellart, P., & Maynard, D. (2014). Documenting contemporary society by preserving relevant information from Twitter. *Twitter and Society*, 207-219.
- Rodriguez, M., Peterson, R. M., & Ajjan, H. (2015). Crm/Social Media Technology: Impact on Customer Orientation Process and Organizational Sales Performance. *Ideas in Marketing: Finding the New and Polishing the Old*, 8(1), 636–638. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-10951-0_233
- Rusok, N. H. M., Kumar, N., & Ahmed, A. R. (2017). The effect of entrepreneurship education on entrepreneurial competencies. In *International Journal of Applied Business and Economic Research* (Vol. 15, Issue 15).
- Salah, O. H., Yusof, Z. M., & Mohamed, H. (2021). The determinant factors for the adoption of CRM in the Palestinian SMEs: The moderating effect of firm size. *PloS one*, 16(3), e0243355.
- Schwab, L., Gold, S., & Reiner, G. (2019). Exploring financial sustainability of SMEs

- during periods of production growth: A simulation study. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 212(October 2018), 8–18.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpe.2018.12.023>
- Shao, C., Ciampaglia, G. L., Flammini, A., & Menczer, F. (2016). *Hoaxy: A Platform for Tracking Online Misinformation*. 745–750.
<https://doi.org/10.1145/2872518.2890098>
- Wong, I. A., Lin, Z., & Zhang, X. (2022). A techno-exchange engagement model of social Media engagement: A social exchange and engagement theoretical synthesis. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 13567667221101412.
- Yadav, M. (2017). Social media as a marketing tool: Opportunities and challenges. *Indian Journal of Marketing*, 47(3), 16–28.
<https://doi.org/10.17010/ijom/2017/v47/i3/111420>.
- Yost E, Zhang T and Qi R (2021) The power of engagement: understanding active social media engagement and the impact on sales in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management* 46: 83–95.

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

orcid.org/0000-0002-3558-2077

JOURNAL PAPERS

- [1] **Amoah, J.**, Belas, J., Dziwornu, R., & Khan, K. A. (2022). Enhancing SMEs contribution to economic development: A perspective from an emerging economy. *Journal of International Studies*, 15(2), 63-76. doi:10.14254/2071-8330.2022/15-2/5.
- [2] Belás, J., **Amoah, J.**, Dvorský, J., & Šuleř, P. (2021). The importance of social media for management of SMEs. *Economics & Sociology*.
- [3] **Amoah, J.**, & Jibril, A. B. (2021). Social Media as a Promotional Tool Towards SME's Development: Evidence from the Financial Industry in a Developing Economy. *Cogent Business & Management*, 8(1), 1923357.
- [4] **Amoah, J.**, Belás, J., Khan, K. A., & Metzker, Z. (2021). Antecedents of Sustainable SMEs in the Social Media Space: A Partial Least Square-Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) Approach. *Management & Marketing*, 16(1), 26-46.
- [5] **Amoah, J.**, Nutakor, F., Li, J., Jibril, A. B., Sanful, B., & Odei, M. A. (2021). Antecedents of social media usage intensity in the financial sector of an emerging economy: A PLS-SEM Algorithm. *Management & Marketing-Challenges for the Knowledge Society*.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

- [1] **Amoah, J.**, Metzker, Z., & Luki, B. N. (2021, July). The Impact of Social Media on Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in the Service-Based Organizations. In *ECSM 2021 8th European Conference on Social Media* (p. 16). Academic Conferences International.
- [2] **Amoah, J.**, Metzker, Z., Khan, K. A., & Jibril, A. B. (2021, June). Do Management Practices Matter in Sustainable SMEs? A Conceptual Study from a

Developing Country Perspective. In *European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies* (pp. 1-VIII). Academic Conferences International Limited

[3] Amoah, J., & Jibril, A. B. (2020). Social media channel as a strategic advertising tool for small and medium enterprise (SME's) sustainability: Evidence from a developing nation. *Innovative Models to Revive the Global Economy*.

[4] Amoah, J. (2020, July). Social Media and its Impact on the Financial Performance on SMEs in Developing Countries: A Literature Review. In *7th European Conference on Social Media ECSM 2020* (p. 37).

JOURNAL ARTICLES UNDER REVIEW

1. COVID-19, how does it affect an individual's perceived financial behavior and perceived financial knowledge: An introspective analysis (**Accepted for Publication-Scopus**).

2. Comparative study on Entrepreneurial Intention amongst business students in India and UAE (**Accepted for publication- Scopus**).

3. Perceived usefulness of CSR: Differences and similarities among SMEs' entrepreneurs of eastern European nations (**Under Review**).

4. Demographic and Organizational factors as predictors of entrepreneurs perceived usefulness of CSR in SMEs in eastern European nations (**Under Review**).

5. Impact of negative emotions on individuals' risk-averse attitude and improved financial behavior post-covid-19 second wave: an assessment through general strain theory (**Under Review-WoS**).

AUTHOR'S CURRICULUM VATAE

JOHN AMOAH

P. O. Box 160

Apam

0548-079960/+420-775131789/0243-634621/0548-171787

amoah@utb.cz

jamoah29@gmail.com

PERSONAL INFORMATION

DATE OF BIRTH 22nd May, 1984

SEX: Male

NATIONALITY Ghanaian

MARITAL STATUS Married

HOME TOWN Mumford

LANGUAGES Fante, Twi and English

OBJECTIVE

To apply the knowledge, experience and capabilities acquired in any organization that I may be associated with. I am self-motivated, enthusiastic, flexible, co-operative and adaptable to work, Excellent interpersonal and communication skills and also committed to provide high standards and quality services to clients. Accustomed to learn new systems and able to work independently with minimal supervision and ability to work under pressure to an agreed deadline.

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND

- ❖ 2020-2023 **PHD IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (MARKETING)**
INSTITUTION: Tomas Bata University, Zlin, Czech Republic
- ❖ 2016-2018 **MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION-MARKETING**
INSTITUTION: Pentecost University
- ❖ 2012-2014 **BACHELOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION-MARKETING**
INSTITUTION: Perez University College
- ❖ 2008-2011 **DIPLOMA IN MANGEMENT**
INSTITUTION: University of Cape Coast

Key Study Areas Social Media Analysis, SMEs Growth and Development, Service Marketing, Consumer Behavior and Sustainability in an emerging economy.

WORK EXPERIENCE

<u>COMPANY</u>	<u>POSITION</u>
NIB LIMITED (June 2017- Jan. 2020)	Credit/Back Office/ATM
S.A CRENTSIL CONSTRUCTION COMPANY LTD (June 2016-June 2017)	Accountant
AKYEMPIM RURAL BANK LTD.-(2009-2016)	Head of Reconciliation

ACADEMIC RESEARCH WORKS

- ❖ **2022:** Enablers and Inhibitors of Social Media Usage Towards SMEs Growth: Evidence from Service-Based SMEs in Ghana (in progress/pending defence)
- ❖ **2018:** The Use of Social Media as a Promotional Tool: A Case Study of some Selected SMES in Greater Accra (**Masters Dissertation**)
- ❖ **2014:** The Impact of Customer Relationship Management on Banking Industry. A Case study of some selected banks in Kumasi Metropolis (**Degree Dissertation**).

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES ATTENDED WITH PRESENTATIONS

- ❖ International Conference on Sustainable Business Practice 2022
Venue: International University of Rabat, Morocco
Date: 23rd -24th June, 2022
- ❖ International Doctoral Seminar 2022
Venue: Somnolence Castle, Slovakia
Date: 27th-28th April, 2022
- ❖ 4th International Conference On Tourism and Research (**ICTR 2021**)
Venue: The School of Hospitality and Tourism, of Polytechnic Institute of Porto, Portugal (ESHT)
Date: 20th -21st May, 2021
- ❖ 17th International Bata Conference (**DOKBAT 2021**)
Venue: Tomas Bata University, Czech Republic
Date: 20th May 2021

INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS WORKED

Significant factors in the sustainability of economic growth with a focus on the SME segment, IGA/FaME/2021/005

The role of the institutional environment in fostering entrepreneurship, IGA/FaME/2020/002, Tomas Bata University, Zlin, Czech Republic

John Amoah, Ph.D.

**Enablers and Inhibitors of Social Media Usage towards SMEs
Growth: Evidence from Service-Based SMEs in Ghana**

Aktivátory a inhibitory sociálních médií ve vztahu k rozvoji MSP na příkladu
MSP působících v sektoru služeb v Ghaně

Doctoral Thesis Summary

Published by: Tomas Bata University in Zlín,
nám. T. G. Masaryka 5555, 760 01 Zlín.

Edition: published electronically

1st edition

Typesetting by: John Amoah

This publication has not undergone any proofreading or editorial review

Publication year: 2023

ISBN 978-80-7678-153-5

