



Investigating the impact of Social-media marketing on brand awareness and growth of small businesses in the UK

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Annotation

This article explores the impact of social media marketing on brand awareness and small business growth in the UK. The main areas of social media are analyzed. The importance of the brand for the enterprise has been studied. Scientific proposals for the development of the enterprise's activities have been made.

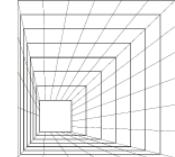
Introduction

Social media channel has showed a boom in context of its popularity across the globe by following the introduction of internet in the current 21st century. It has fundamentally changed the way in which entrepreneurs interact with their target audience, and the manner in which small sector firms promote their goods and services (Manzoor, Baig, Hashim and Sami, 2020). Social media marketing plays a vital role in building better customer relationships and also helps the small businesses to understand the needs and preferences of customers in this dynamic world. Social media platforms have entirely changes the way how people communicate, cooperate, participate and connect with one another. Small scale enterprises make use of social media marketing channels for different purposes including managing customer relationship, entering into new markets, selling products and collecting information from customers. Abbas *et.al.* (2019) describes social media as the virtual platform that users utilised for sharing knowledge and information with online communities. There are different kinds of social networking sites such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter etc. used by small business to promote their product and services. These channels help the small businesses to increase their brand awareness and build large customer network at one platform. The survey indicated that around 75% of SMEs in the UK make use of social media platforms for the purpose of marketing their products and services.

Social media networking is considered as the cheaper, easiest and convenient form of marketing channel for customers as well as company as a whole. This is because it enables the small scale business entities to reach their target customer quickly and easily. It also helps the company in increasing its customer base and wide market share especially for SMEs because of weak financial support and lack of skilled employees. Therefore, Ebrahimi *et.al.* (2021) stated that social media has become an essential aspect in overall organisational development by way of ensuring effective customer relationship management, it has also guided the entrepreneurs in allocating their resources adequately to achieve the set goals effectively and efficiently. Further, social media has been used by small scale entities to increase brand loyalty by way of creating well known brand awareness across the UK and this in turn leads to increase in brand awareness and sales of small organisations (Katare, Marshall and Valdivia, 2021).

Material and methods

It is a system of the researcher's thought that is followed by new, reliable knowledge related to the research object. This in turn helps to determine the choice of strategy, formulation of the problem, and data collection through a process of analysis. That is why it helps the



scholar reach the exact conclusion in order to meet the defined aim. There are two types of research philosophy that have been used by the scholar, which include interpretivism and positivism (Lester, 2023). Under positivism philosophy, scholars test hypotheses and determine the importance of an individual's subjective experience and value so that effective thinking can be identified. Also, it is based on a quantitative study, which produces the best results for the research. On the other side, interpretivism research philosophy is based upon the assumption that it helps determine reality and understand the views of people to get a better outcome so that an effective outcome can be generated.

Justification: For conducting research on the present study, the interpretivism research philosophy has been adopted because it helps determine the views of people related to the impact of social media and its importance for SME. This in turn will assist in creating a better outcome and explain how the views of people differ from each other in order to ascertain the importance of social media for SME growth and brand awareness. However, it has been identified that scholars should adopt this research philosophy in order to understand the social world that can be interpreted in a subjective manner so that an effective outcome can be generated to answer research questions and minimise the issue raise from external world (Al-Ababneh, 2020).

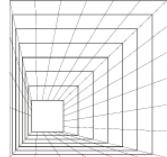
Results

This section represents the responses of participants in form of table and graphical presentation. The analysis provides clear and accurate analysis of the small business's marketing manager view point with regards to the impact of social media marketing on creating brand awareness and growth their business at a global level. This section provides a base for generating conclusion and adequate recommendations in relation to the research issue.

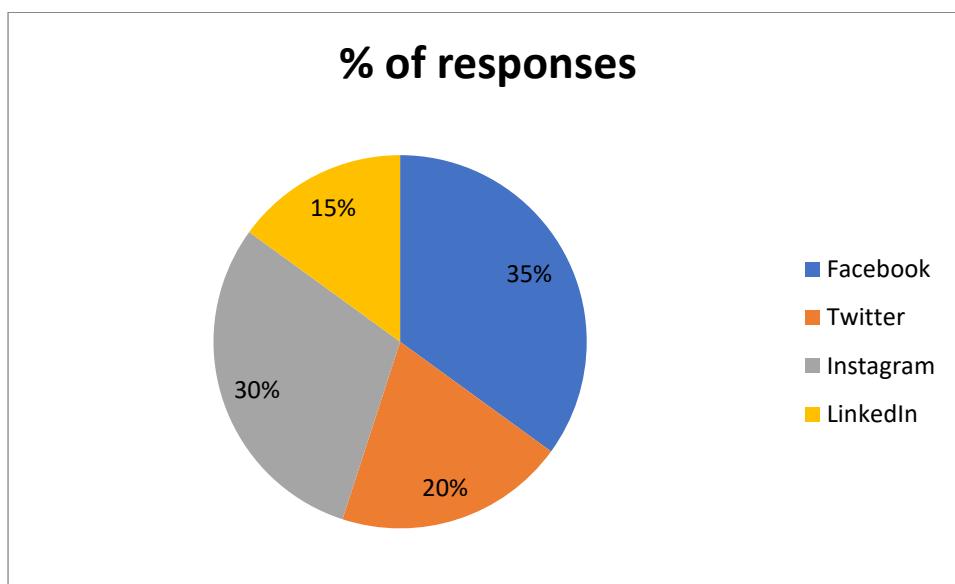
Table 1
Majority of the small business in the UK are using social media to promote their products and services

Responses	No. of responses	% of responses
Yes	18	90%
No	2	10%
Total	20	100%

Interpretation- The analysis shows that around 90% of the small businesses in the UK are making use of social media channels for promoting their products and services. This is because it the most effective and cheapest form of marketing channel that helps small scale enterprises to create a well known brand awareness across the entire UK. The respondents reported that social media helped them in increasing their market reach and attracting large number of customers to purchase the products and services of their brand. Most of the marketing managers highlighted that social media is the most effective tool for small scale business organisations because it is considered as the great medium for them to interact with their target audience, creating a dialogue and sharing the mission and vision of the brand with the entire world (Kurdi *et.al.* 2022). With the use of social networking sites, small firms can easily and quickly spread information about their business effectively and could potentially reach millions of people with their message. However, 10% of the total respondents stated that there are other marketing tools as well which are also found more suitable for promoting purpose than social media platforms. This includes advertisement, search engine optimization, influencer marketing etc. which helps small businesses to increase their brand awareness and client base quickly and efficiently.


Table 2
Different social media platforms used by small businesses to promote and market their products

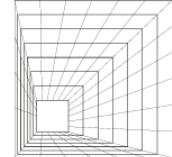
Responses	No. of responses	% of responses
Facebook	7	35%
Twitter	4	20%
Instagram	6	30%
LinkedIn	3	15%
Total	20	100%



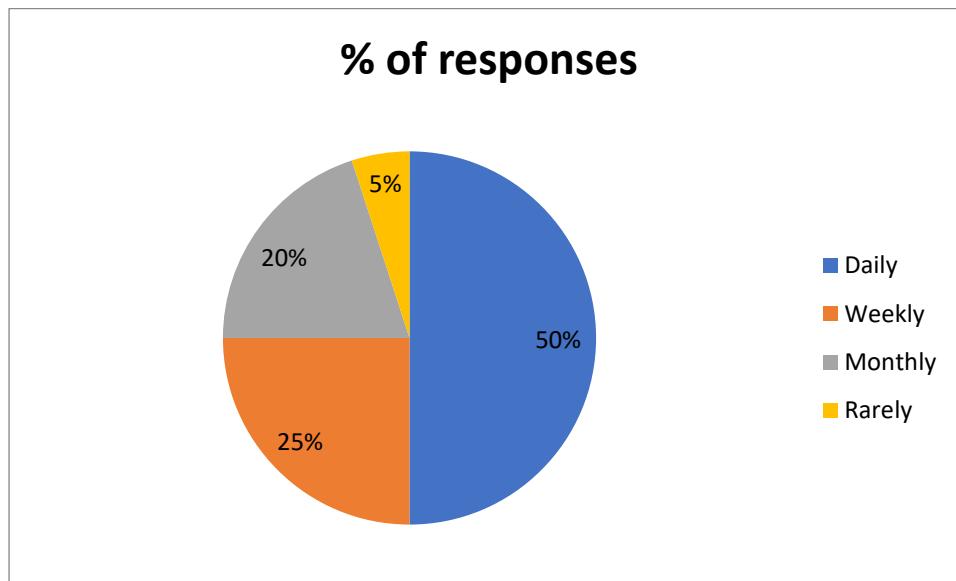
Interpretation- The graph reflects that around 7 out of 20 marketing managers use Facebook to promote or market their small business. This is because Facebook have a mass audience belonging from each and every demographic criteria starting from children to old age people. This digital media platform consists of varied audience of approx more than 3 billion active users on monthly basis in the year 2022. However, 6 out of 20 respondents stated that Instagram as the most popular social networking sites with more than 2.5 billion active users in 2022. This social media channel facilitates Instagram Live to posting stories which help small scale enterprises to promote and sell their products and services. It is a visual channel emphasized on video and photo posts, so it is counted as an excellent tool for small firms with strong sharing of visual content presentation (Ali Abbasi *et.al.* 2022). Meanwhile, 4 participants out of 20 represented Twitter as the great social media platform for providing short updates, connecting with people and sharing links relating to blog posts. However, this digital media is not suitable for all businesses as on this platform the managers can only share short tweets of around 240 characters, images, links and videos etc. On other hand, 3 out 20 participants indicated that they use LinkedIn for promotion purposes having approx 270 million active users per month and is considered as the best channel for professional networking. With the use of this social media platform, marketing managers of small businesses could be able to find skilled staff, position their firm as an industry leader and promote their business on a wider market.

Table 3
Small businesses uses social media network often times to attain a competitive advantage within overall industry across the UK

Responses	No. of responses	% of responses



Daily	10	50%
Weekly	5	25%
Monthly	4	20%
Rarely	1	5%
Total	20	100%

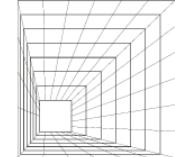


Interpretation- It has been analysed that 10 marketing managers of small sector businesses out of 20 uses social media networking sites on daily basis for more than 2 hours of time. They share content and strategize marketing strategy on social media by revealing their vision and goal to mass audience (Kumar and Sharma, 2022). This helped a lot of companies to increase customer engagement and client base to a greater extent. However, 5 respondents use the social media network more than once in a week to modify their content and to analyse the marketing needs and preferences of customers. On other hand, 4 participants revealed that they use digital media platforms for more than 5 times in a month to review the feedback given by their target audience and to make their website more attracting to grab new customers and retain the existing ones. Moreover, 1 out of 20 marketing managers responded that they review the social media platforms very rarely as their business is to manufacture and process the finished items which do not require effective marketing and promotion strategy to grow and attain success. They only emphasize on developing a quality products at reasonable or nominal price for other business intermediaries so that customers could get the product at affordable price and is useful for them.

Discussion

It is the process through which logical techniques have been systematically applied, which in turn help to describe and condense the data so that an effective outcome can be generated. There are two types of data analysis methods that help scholars evaluate the results: thematic and descriptive. Under thematic analysis, themes and graphs has designed to get the accurate results. This is entirely based upon qualitative study whereas descriptive study has based upon quantitative study. In this, description statistics has used where different numbers, facts and figure used to determine the views related to the study so that accurate results can be generated to get an accurate outcome.

Conclusion



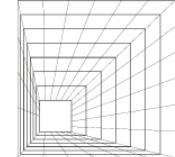
The above analysis concludes that social media marketing is the best and most effective promotional strategy for small businesses to increase their brand awareness and achieve high growth in their business. Further, the assessment highlighted that social media platforms helps small business enterprises to increase their customer base by providing them with wider market reach. However, there are various challenges faced by small entities while marketing or promoting its products and services on social media platform. This includes negative feedback or reviews, competition, difficult to meet the needs and preferences of every customer and frequent update in content. On other side, by using brand advocates and tracking software, small businesses could avoid these challenges and can deal with customer's query in an effective and efficient manner.

Acknowledgement

It has been identified from data analysis that the business make effective steps to grow but small business faces many challenges that might hamper the growth. Therefore, there are many ways through which growth of a business can be improved which are as mentioned below:

- It is to be suggested to the business to plan the content in advance and create a social media content calendar that helps to avoid last-minute scrambling (Ritz, Wolf and McQuitty, 2019). Also, while building out the content calendar, the manager needs to ensure the type of content the company will post, the date, the social media platform that is selected for posting, etc. This helps a business grow because effective planning in social media content posting is essential for growth, which improves business performance and raises the brand's image as well.
- It has been identified that social media marketing helps companies enhance their customer base, but using it in the best way helps companies grow. So, it is suggested to the business to commit to community management, which is the process of building a community with customers through interaction (Quesenberry, 2020). This involves a prompt reply to customer queries, responding to comments online, and interacting with regular customers on social media platforms. This in turn helps a business to improve its brand image because customer interaction always helps a business to contribute positively to sales and brand awareness.
- The majority of the small enterprises use different social media marketing tools, but some of them become successful and some do not. That is why it is to be recommended to the company that the marketing manager pay attention to trends that help understand the customer's requirements. It is also examined that if a company is dedicated to trends, social listening is a highly valuable information gathering tool to generate a better outcome (*How to Do Social Media Marketing for Small Business*, 2020). Therefore, it is a method through which a company can make people understand and then implement innovative ideas to meet customer demand.
- It is further recommended to the company that small businesses need to use analytics to guide future posts. It is also the best way to improve sales and growth for a company because social media analytical tools also help track progress over time and determine which posts generate the most engagement (Fabeil, Pazin and Langgat, 2020). This data helps to create future content and provides the right direction to make a large number of people engage with a business. With the help of analytics, companies come to know which platform is working best for their business, and in the future, the same needs to be implemented to provide better future opportunities.

Small businesses need to hire talented SEOs that help them rank their business at the highest level so that it can be reached by customers. This helps to enhance the growth of a



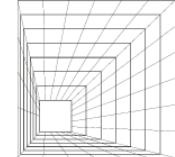
business and generate a better way to enhance business globally. Having an expert and knowledgeable person in a business always helps to create a better outcome and meet the defined aim of the business as well.

Conclusion

The study concludes that social media marketing play an important role for the success and growth of small businesses in the UK. The analysis revealed that small scale entities face challenge in relation to lack of funds and resources whereas social media marketing strategy assist them to reach their target customers more easily and faster, with low entry and low cost barriers (Ibrahim, 2022). The data collected indicated that small businesses use different social networking platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn etc. for promoting their promoting, branding, building better customer relations and sustaining communication channels. The result of this research report highlights that small scale enterprise makes a greater use of Facebook over other social networking channels because it contains mass audience with different demographic profile (Obermayer *et.al.* 2022). However, now-a-days Instagram is also becoming more popular for smooth functioning of small scale entities. Hence, both these platforms play a crucial role for businesses to increase their brand awareness and to attract large customer towards the brand. The outcome of this study facilitate evidence that social media is the best and most effective marketing strategy for small scale entities to grow and achieve success with a high pace. Contrary to it, the analysis highlights social media is not very effective for increasing sales or generating more amount of revenue. It just emphasize on building better customer relations and ensuring wide market reach (Kurdi *et.al.* 2022). On other hand, this in turn leads to improved performance of small entities in terms of their brand awareness and sales.

Further, the survey represented that using social media marketing strategies by small firms come up with various challenges like unfavourable reviews or feedback from customers, data privacy, consumes a lot of time and efforts, require time update of content etc. However, by taking proper measures like making use of tracking statement software and hiring a social media expert or manager, small businesses could be able to overcome these challenges in an effective and efficient way. Furthermore, the study presented that integrating social media marketing tools is much more beneficial for small scale businesses as compared to making use of traditional marketing methods (Ali Abbasi *et.al.* 2022). This is because it offers the small business with better communication and building connection with their target audience at very low cost and with ease. Also, digital media found as the best medium for small scale enterprises to enhance their brand name and creating well-known brand awareness globally at one platform.

Moreover, the findings of the study showed that social media marketing is indirectly linked with growth and financial performance of small businesses in the UK. With implementation of social media marketing technique, small scale enterprises could increase their customer base and create a unique brand image across the globe. This in turn leads to increase in brand awareness and sales of small sector entities. This means that the more number of customers associated with the brand, more sales will be generated as people will buy more from the brand having large audience (Qalati *et.al.* 2022). Thus, it has been analysed from the results that social media marketing is counted as the most attractive promotional tool for small sector entities to enhance their market reach and increase their customer engagement with the brand. This in turn helps in building better and long term relationship with the customers which results to increased customer loyalty and improved financial performance.



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