

The Intersection of Digital Marketing and Business Performance

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Abstract

The COVID-19 epidemic has resulted in unparalleled adversity for businesses worldwide, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. Consequently, the use of digital marketing tactics has become an essential means of ensuring business survival and continuity. This study seeks to examine the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the operational efficacy of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and their utilization of digital marketing strategies. Questionnaires were administered to SME consumers as part of the descriptive technique employed in this study. The data were analyzed utilizing the statistical techniques. The study findings contribute academically and practically by demonstrating the interdependent connection between digital marketing activities and company performance in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) during the COVID-19 era. The research specifically focuses on assessing two important variables - PU and EU. The subsequent discussions elucidated the intricate interplay among these elements and their consequent impacts on performance trajectories. The findings demonstrate varying degrees of digital adoption and its effects on market resiliency, revenue creation, and customer engagement. SMEs that have embraced digital marketing have experienced the advantages of enhanced engagement and adaptable company performance. They have recognized the value of digital marketing and found it effortless to incorporate into their operations. This highlights the transformative impact of digital marketing on social media platforms. Legislators, business support organizations, and business owners can gain valuable insights from the study on the efficacy of digital marketing as a proactive measure in times of crises. With a focus on the future, the research results will ultimately assist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in enhancing their digital marketing endeavors, hence enhancing business performance and adaptability in the midst of uncertainty.

Keywords: *Intelligence marketing, Business environment, TAM model, Social media marketing.*

Introduction

Following the outbreak of the Corona virus, governments implemented guidelines to address this pandemic, particularly in the realm of commerce and economics.

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Consequently, small and medium-sized enterprises played a crucial role in helping businesses within this context. The actions made and the consequences of this epidemic have had a significant effect on various sectors, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (Al-Samirae et al., 2020). Consequently, small and medium-sized enterprises faced several challenges, resulting in the closure of a significant number of them, primarily due to their inadequate capacity to withstand such demands, unlike major corporations that possess abundant resources and ample cash liquidity (Demertzis et al., 2020). The damages incurred by small and medium companies can be attributed to various factors. One of the main reasons is the inadequate utilization of technology in their operations, resulting in disruptions to their business. Additionally, these companies face challenges in procuring the necessary raw materials, which are further compounded by high prices (Alghizzawi, Habes, et al., 2023; Mazzarol, 2015). To address the aforementioned issues in the small and medium-sized firms sector, it was imperative to depend only on government actions. Enhancing business performance in small and medium firms during the epidemic involves diversifying business operations and strengthening digital distribution and marketing channels (Dilham et al., 2018). Utilizing social media platforms for marketing improves business efficacy and fosters constant and accessible channels of engagement with clients (Alnaser et al., 2023; Voramontri & Klieb, 2019).

The advent of social media marketing has revolutionized the way firms engage with their target audience, establish connections with potential consumers, and ultimately enhance their overall performance (Al Mansoori et al., 2023). The rapid and dramatic growth of social media platforms in recent years has created a dynamic and ever-evolving digital environment that presents businesses with unprecedented opportunities to engage with a global audience (J. A. Al-Gasawneh et al., 2022; Stewart & Wilson, 2016). This change has ushered in a new era of marketing that surpasses traditional promotional approaches (Smyth, 2019). Social media platforms have evolved into valuable tools for businesses of all types seeking to enhance website traffic, foster meaningful relationships with their customers, and cultivate brand recognition (J. Al-Gasawneh et al., 2020). Social media marketing provides a versatile and cost-effective means to promote products, services, and content, making its benefits applicable across several sectors (Aljabari et al., 2023). To thrive in the digital era, businesses must adapt and harness the immense potential of social media platforms (Zaki, 2019).

This article will analyze the methods by which social media marketing can enhance business performance by increasing brand visibility, fostering customer engagement, producing potential customers, and providing valuable data and analytics to enhance marketing strategies. In this analysis, we will examine the various strategies via which social media marketing can be leveraged to achieve success and growth in the contemporary business landscape to develop this industry effectively, it is crucial to examine the potential impact of social media platforms on company performance. This study aimed to enhance comprehension of this link by examining the usability of basic social networking platforms and the perceived value users derived from their time investment.

Examination of existing literature

Social media has become a transformative power for (SMEs) in terms of improving their company performance (Badi et al., 2017). Research has consistently emphasized the pivotal significance of social media in enhancing brand awareness and exposure among the intended consumer base. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that have a robust online presence on popular social media platforms are more inclined to get recognition and leave a lasting impression on consumers regarding their offerings (Macarthy, 2021). The improved exposure often leads to increased consumer interest,

hence enhancing the overall efficacy of the organization (Mehdi & Kalim, 2023). The discourse surrounding the impact of social media on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has predominantly centered around customer engagement and the cultivation of relationships. Abundant evidence highlights the use of social media platforms to facilitate direct interaction with clients (Fraccastoro et al., 2021; Habes et al., 2021). By responding to inquiries, resolving issues, and offering personalized interactions, (SMEs) foster a feeling of community and client loyalty. Implementing effective relationship-building strategies results in enhanced connections, increased customer loyalty, and positive referrals, ultimately enhancing the success of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) (Habes et al., 2023).

The effectiveness of social media as a marketing and promotional tool is a crucial factor in its influence on (SMEs). Academics commonly recognize the efficacy of targeted advertising and content promotion on social media platforms (Belew, 2014). These activities enable SMEs to establish connections with specific consumer segments, resulting in higher rates of customer interaction, website traffic, and potentially conversion rates. Consequently, employing social media to bolster marketing efforts promptly enhances company performance metrics (Evangelista et al., 2010). Undoubtedly, the literature unequivocally affirms that social media exerts a significant influence on the business performance of (SMEs), by engaging in face-to-face interactions with customers, it enhances the visibility of the brand, fosters customer engagement, reinforces marketing efforts, drives sales, and facilitates innovation. Despite the presence of obstacles, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can achieve substantial benefits by adopting a methodical approach to social media management in order to enhance their entire business performance in the digital era.

P Ease-of-Use

The concept that the utilization of a system or technological device necessitates exertion is associated with the concept that it is uncomplicated to operate (Alqurashi et al., 2023; Nuseir & Elrefae, 2022). These variables are believed to promote the utilization of social media by SMEs. The (TAM) and similar models incorporate the notion of "Perceived Ease-of-Use" (PEOU) to elucidate the process by which customers embrace and utilize technology (Rahi et al., 2019a). Perceived ease-of-use in the realm of social media pertains to the subjective assessment made by individuals regarding the simplicity and effortlessness of utilizing social media platforms. Users' attitudes and intentions toward the use of social media are shaped by this perception, which then affects the actual adoption and utilization of these platforms by users (Rahi et al., 2019b). Perceived Ease-of-Use is a crucial factor in influencing the attitudes, intentions, and behaviors of SMEs towards social media platforms. Platforms are often regarded as user-friendly tools that can reduce obstacles, encourage acceptance, enhance user satisfaction, and even enhance company effectiveness. Comprehending and dealing with how people perceive the level of simplicity in using social media is crucial for effectively incorporating it into business operations (Belas et al., 2021), especially for small and medium-sized enterprises as they navigate the digital landscape. Based on these data, the following theory is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: (PEOU) positively influences the adoption of (SM) by (SMEs).

P Usefulness

The correlation between the perceived usefulness of social media and its utilization for improving the performance of (SMEs) is a significant topic in the literature on technology adoption and business (Rahi et al., 2019a; Uğur & Turan, 2019). Perceived usefulness refers to the subjective anticipation of (SMEs) owners and personnel that utilizing social media platforms will improve and support their company's operations (Nuseir & Elrefae, 2022; Salloum et al., 2021). This conviction is a crucial factor in the attitudes, intentions, and actions of SMEs when using social media into their strategies (Rahi et al., 2023). The correlation between the adoption of social media and the

perceived utility is intricate. (SMEs) embrace social media with a favorable mindset and purpose when they perceive it as a helpful tool (Maduakolam, 2022). This initial impression establishes the foundation for subsequent examination and engagement with these locations. The notion that social media may assist businesses in accomplishing specific goals, such as enhancing brand recognition, expanding their customer base, or enhancing consumer interaction, encourages (SMEs) to actively invest time and resources in utilizing these platforms (V. Gupta et al., 2022). The correlation between the utilization of social media in (SMEs) and the perceived usefulness is a crucial determinant in promoting the adoption and involvement with technology.

The attitudes, intentions, and behaviors of SMEs towards utilizing and adopting these platforms are influenced by their belief that social media can enhance their company's performance. The relationship between how valuable something is seen to be and the actual outcomes it produces serves as a fundamental basis for integrating social media projects into the broader business operations of (SMEs) (A. Gupta et al., 2018). Based on these data, the following theory is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: The utilization of (SM) by (SMEs) is positively influenced by the presence of (PU).

Social Media platforms

The correlation between social media marketing and the improvement in the performance of (SMEs) encompasses the convergence of digital communication, brand visibility, and consumer engagement (Rahi et al., 2022). Social media marketing has become a potent tool in today's business environment, capable of exerting a substantial influence on the growth and success of (SMEs). The core of this link is in the potential for SMEs to utilize social media platforms as a means to enhance their brand visibility and expand their reach. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) can effectively show case their products, services, and unique value propositions to a wide online audience through the strategic development of content. SMEs have a unique opportunity to expand their reach and engage with potential customers outside their local area through the widespread use and accessibility of social media platforms (Karimi & Naghibi, 2015). Moreover, Social media marketing offers (SMEs) the chance to develop a unique and engaging connection with their target audience.

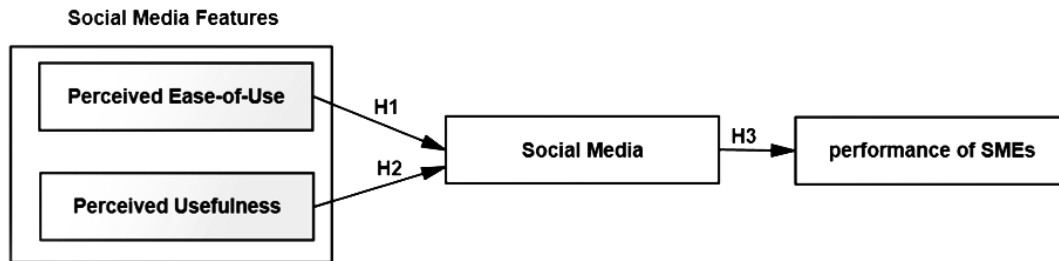
The platforms facilitate direct interaction, enabling SMEs to promptly respond to consumer inquiries, resolve problems, and collect feedback. Furthermore, this bilateral connection not only enhances customer satisfaction but also empowers small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to tailor their offerings according to up-to-date information, facilitating the creation of products or services that align with client preferences (Yu et al., 2022). The relationship between social media marketing and the enhancement of small and medium-sized enterprises' (SMEs) performance is multifaceted, impacting aspects such as brand recognition, customer interaction, brand loyalty, and quantitative metrics, SMEs may utilize effective social media marketing to broaden their audience, establish meaningful connections with them, and foster a culture of continuous enhancement. (SMEs) have a strategic advantage in capitalizing on growth opportunities and achieving success in an increasingly digital business landscape by skillfully navigating the realm of social media marketing. Based on these data, the following theory proposed:

Hypothesis 3. SM has a beneficial influence on the performance of (SMEs).

Research model

This study aims to analyze the influence of social media platforms on the performance of SMEs in the field of digital marketing, with a specific focus on the adverse consequences

caused by the Corona pandemic. The depicted conceptual model in Figure 1 demonstrates the correlation between the characteristics of social media platforms and their usability and perceived value in enhancing the performance of small- and medium-sized businesses.



The model depicted in Figure 1.

Methodology of research

The present study is a quantitative research that employs a specific and well-designed survey to collect data from users of various social media platforms. In order to acquire their feedback with the objective of enhancing the performance of (SMEs) in the context of Jordan. The questionnaire items were prepared based on relevant research in the field of digital marketing and the business performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The exogenous variable in question is the social media feature, which encompasses the components of the (TAM), namely P ease-of-use and PU. The perceived ease-of-use was assessed and quantified using a set of four items (H. Alhanatleh & Akkaya, 2020; H. M. Alhanatleh, 2021).

The perceived usefulness was adopted and evaluated using a set of four items (Ahamat et al., 2017). The mediation construct encompasses the adoption and evaluation of social media variables, which are based on three items (Shareef et al., 2019). Finally, the endogenous variable is the performance of (SMEs) that is being developed and estimated using a set of five questions (Syaifullah et al., 2021). In order to assess the survey items' validity and reliability, a pilot research was conducted by surveying 20 users of digital platforms in Jordan. The outcome of this process was a decrease in the likelihood of errors during the stage of designing survey items. Subsequently, the questionnaire was implemented through an electronic approach, utilizing the Google Drive form tool. When determining the sample size for the recent study, the focus is on the customers who utilize social media applications. However, it is not possible to accurately count the entire population. Therefore, an unfamiliar method was utilized to accurately compute the sample size for this study (Napawut et al., 2022) It has been verified that a total of 385 users of the digital tool are enough to begin the process of gathering data. The Five-Likert measure was scaled, with a numerical encoding ranging from 1 (indicating "strongly disagree") to 5 (indicating "strongly agree"). The electronic surveys were distributed to the target sample of 480 individuals via social media technologies, employing a convenience technique. The number of respondents returned was 443. As per the study conducted by (Hair Jr et al., 2014), the analysis was carried out using a total of 417 valid respondents. This number was arrived at after various data preparation techniques such as cleaning, handling missing values, identifying outliers, and so on. Data collection was conducted between March 12 and April 28, 2023.

Research Findings

In order to ensure accurate results, the researchers have selected SPSS and AMOS 22 software programs as their analysis tools to assess the hypothesized hypotheses in the recent study (Cooley & Parks-Yancy, 2019). Two widely used methods for assessing model validity and obtaining hypothesis outcomes are Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling.

Evaluating CFA

In order to validate the measurements of CFA in the latest study, three specific criteria are applied: convergent validity, composite reliability, and discriminant validity, as highlighted by (Z. Awang, 2014). To assess the model's validity, the constructs of the items have passed the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) stage. The CFA procedures assess two main factors: the factor loading of items (acceptable value: > 0.60) and the covariance correlation values between all constructs (accepted value: ≤ 0.85), as stated by (Raza & Awang, 2021). Based on prior CFA procedures, the adequacy of the model fit indices can be assessed by comparing them to their expected values: The CMIN/DF indication should be less than 5 or 3, while the GFI, NFI, CFI, AGFI, and TLI indicators should be equal to or greater than 85. Additionally, the RMSEA should be less than 0.08, as recommended by the source (P. Awang, 2018). The model used in the current research demonstrated a satisfactory fit, as indicated by the following indices: CMIN/DF= 2.602, GFI= 0.931, NFI= 0.944, CFI= 0.965, AGFI= 0.902, TLI= 0.956, and RMSEA =0.062. In addition, the statistical estimation of composite reliability and convergent validity involves calculating the values of CRs and AVEs for all model elements, using threshold values (CR larger than or equal to 0.60 and AVE greater than or equal to 0.50) as indicated by (Raza & Awang, 2021). Table 1 presents strong evidence for evaluating the reliability and validity of the composite measure.

Table 1 presents an assessment of the composite reliability and convergent validity.

Construct	items/ Factor loading	CR	AVE	Mean	Std
Perceived ease-of-use		0.902	0.697	3.928	0.960
ES1	0.831				
ES2	0.891				
ES3	0.756				
ES4	0.856				
Perceived usefulness		0.870	0.626	3.398	0.804
US1	0.770				
US2	0.822				
US3	0.794				
US4	0.778				
Social Media		0.853	0.659	3.259	0.795
SM1	0.796				
SM2	0.821				
SM3	0.819				

Small and medium-sized enterprises Performance		0.866	0.564	3.342	0.817
PE1	0.782				
PE2	0.675				
PE3	0.719				
PE4	0.795				
PE5	0.780				

Discriminant validity is achieved when the square root of the average variances extracted (AVEs) for perceived EU and PU, social media, and performance of SMEs marketing is more than the absolute value of the correlations with the inner AVEs. Table 2 confirms that the study model under consideration has achieved discriminant validity, which allows us to further utilize structural equation modeling (SEM).

Table 2 displays the measurements of discriminant validity.

	SM	Perceived EU	PU	Performance of SMEs
SM	0.812			
PEU	0.594	0.835		
PU	0.777	0.783	0.791	
Small and medium-sized enterprises Performance	0.536	0.454	0.466	0.751

- Predicting the outcomes of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

The structural equation modeling (SEM) approach has successfully yielded the results of the hypotheses in relation to the latest investigation. The R², which represents the squared multiple correlations, is calculated for the endogenous factors as well. The results indicate that the R² value for social media is 0.754, suggesting that the exogenous variables (perceived ease-of-use and perceived usefulness) account for approximately 75.4% of the variability in the social media variable. Furthermore, the results validate that the R² value for the performance of (SMEs) variable is 0.361, suggesting that the exogenous variable (social media) accounts for approximately 36.1% of the variability in the performance of SMEs. As seen in Figure 2.

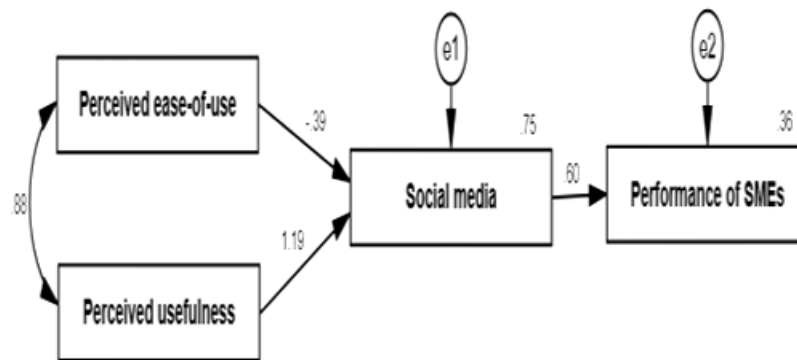


Figure 2 displays the calculated Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) for the study model.

Furthermore, the results of the current study hypotheses are elucidated by Table 3 and Figure 2, affirming that all hypotheses were successfully validated. The results of the present investigation revealed that the perceived ease-of-use of social media has a strong and direct impact ($\beta = -0.325$, $p = 0.000$), confirming the statistical significance of hypothesis H1. Furthermore, the results indicated that the perceived utility of social media has a favorable impact ($\beta = 1.181$, $p = 0.000$), confirming the significance of hypothesis H2. The results conclusively demonstrated that social media has a favorable and direct impact on the performance of SMEs ($\beta = 0.618$, $p = 0.000$), hence confirming the statistical significance of H3. Figure 2: Calculation of the standard error of the mean (SEM) for the study model.

Table 3 presents the results of recent research hypotheses.

Direction of the hypothesis	β	S.E.	C.R.	P
PEU \rightarrow SM	-0.325	0.042	-7.658	***
PU \rightarrow SM	1.181	0.051	23.265	***
social media \rightarrow Small and medium-sized enterprises Performance	0.618	0.04	15.351	***

Conversations

The study focused on examining the intricate relationship between digital marketing efforts, specifically those conducted on social media platforms, and the commercial performance of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) during the challenging period of the Corona pandemic. This investigation focused on evaluating two key variables: perceived utility and simplicity of use. The subsequent discussions elucidated the intricate interplay among these elements and their subsequent impacts on the performance trajectories of (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020; Rugova & Prenaj, 2016; Salloum et al., 2019). The usability of digital marketing tools has become a significant factor in the rapid acceptance and integration of these tools (Al-Okaily et al., 2019, 2023; Alghizzawi, Ahmed, et al., 2023; Alghizzawi, Al-ameer, et al., 2023), within small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). SMEs that perceived these technologies as user-friendly were more capable of harnessing their full potential. The perceived utility of digital marketing channels motivated (SMEs) to explore and allocate resources towards them, viewing them as viable strategies to address the disruptions caused by the pandemic. The

discussions highlight the significant correlation between perceived usefulness, ease of use, and business performance in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) over the Corona period. SMEs that embraced digital marketing and recognized its value saw enhanced engagement and robust corporate performance. They found it easy to integrate digital marketing into their operations, thus validating the transformative impact of digital marketing through social media platforms.

Conclusions - Final findings

The COVID-19 pandemic caused significant disruption in the corporate landscape, necessitating rapid adaptation by (SMEs) to unprecedented challenges. Integrating digital marketing tactics has become crucial for SMEs in order to mitigate risks and sustain business operations in this context. The objective of this study was to examine the correlation between the success of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) during the pandemic and their digital marketing efforts, specifically focusing on social media platforms. The primary characteristics examined were the perceived usefulness and ease of usage.

The study's findings underscore the importance of perceived usefulness and ease of use in motivating (SMEs) to adopt digital marketing strategies, specifically on social media platforms. These elements were essential in SMEs' decision-making processes as they navigated changes to conventional business models. SMEs were motivated to adopt social media platforms due to the projected benefits of digital marketing tools, such as expanding their market reach, enhancing customer engagement, and increasing brand visibility. The ease of use of these tools facilitated their rapid adoption and integration into existing company operations. Amidst the Corona period, the perceived effectiveness and ease of use of digital marketing tools played a vital role in shaping the performance trajectory of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). SMEs relied extensively on social media platforms as a means of digital marketing to overcome challenges and sustain their business operations. Comprehending the impact of these elements on the business environment in the era of digital-first is crucial for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) seeking to endure in a rapidly changing and fiercely competitive setting. The findings of this study have significance for policymakers, business support organizations, and researchers seeking to comprehend the intricate correlation between the utilization of digital marketing and the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) during periods of crisis.

Areas for future investigation and constraints

This study focused on small and medium-sized companies during the Corona period. It aimed to identify determinants that could be used to engage customers and gain a better understanding of their purchasing decisions. The study also considered demographic factors that could have a significant impact on customers' buying behavior. Additionally, it is imperative to Additional research will be undertaken in this domain in the coming years. This is attributed to the increasingly unpredictable purchase patterns of clients, which have become highly volatile. Additionally, with the conclusion of the Corona era, there will be heightened challenges ahead. We can enhance our understanding of the impacts of marketing on social media platforms through many means. Examining the impact of emerging social media platforms and technology on marketing strategy is a viable approach to do this. Researchers can explore how organizations can leverage these breakthroughs to enhance their marketing endeavors, considering the frequent emergence of new platforms and technologies.

These advancements may encompass virtual reality, augmented reality, or other state-of-the-art instruments. To remain at the forefront of digital marketing, it is crucial to understand the effectiveness of marketing on these platforms. Further investigation is

necessary in the development of cross-platform marketing tactics. In the present era, numerous companies employ diverse social media platforms to engage with diverse demographics. To ascertain the most effective methods of integrating platforms for marketing success, research can analyze the complexities of the synergy between multiple platforms and assess how cross-platform tactics can be enhanced to enhance reach and engagement. Investigating the customization of content is a highly interesting area for future research. The ability to effectively customize information while respecting privacy concerns and regulations has the potential to be groundbreaking, considering the vast amount of data available to us. Further inquiries could examine the possibility of using data-driven observations to personalize information according to user preferences and behavior. Additional research is required to tackle the difficulties of precisely establishing attribution models and quantifying return on investment (ROI) in social media marketing. Businesses need to understand the correlation between social media interactions and touchpoints in order to determine their impact on revenue and customer acquisition, given the large number of these interactions. Subsequent investigations might explore advanced methodologies and tools for computing return on investment and assessing the impact of social media marketing.

There are many limitations that affect the effectiveness of social media marketing. It is essential to acknowledge that social media marketing campaigns rely on specific platforms. The visibility and reach of marketing information can be influenced by regular modifications to the algorithms and rules of social media platforms. It is important for scholars to recognize that their findings are specific to a certain platform and that continuous adaption is required. Another limitation pertains to ethical considerations, particularly in relation to privacy and the utilization of data. The collecting and utilization of user data for marketing initiatives raise ethical considerations. Subsequent research endeavors should focus on addressing concerns related to privacy and on the responsible utilization of personal data. Recognizing environmental sustainability as an essential restriction is crucial. The impact of digital marketing methods and data centers on the environment is significant. Subsequent research endeavors should focus on enhancing the sustainability and ecological compatibility of social media marketing. Modifications in user behavior on social media platforms pose further challenges. Subsequent research should consider factors such as ad fatigue, the proliferation of ad-blocking software, and shifts in content consumption patterns. Businesses need to adapt in order to stay abreast of evolving user behaviors. It is crucial to consider the cultural and geographical factors that influence the success of social media marketing. Adapting tactics to account for different geographical and cultural preferences may be essential. Subsequent research can investigate how organizations can adapt their strategy to attract diverse global consumers. In conclusion, social media marketing has shown significant potential and impact on corporate performance. However, in order to ensure its ongoing effectiveness, it is crucial to do research to address emerging challenges, ethical concerns, and shifting user behaviors.

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