

# The Impact of Social Media Adoption on Business Performance among Homepreneurs: A Preliminary Study

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## Abstract

In recent days, Home Based Businesses have become a trend, also known as homepreneurs. Home Based Entrepreneurs (Homepreneurs) face unique challenges and need proper strategies and action steps for their personal growth. There are many studies on the impact of social media on business performance, but not much work has been done on homepreneurs specifically. As technological advancement moves fast and changes the business landscape rapidly, the choice of the digital platforms that are gaining popularity lies within social media, which is significantly important in developing the growth of Homepreneurs. This study seeks to explore the impact of Social Media adoption on Homepreneurs' business performance on a grass-roots level. This article presents a conceptual model involving the roles played by social media adoption for homepreneurs that result in contributing to the growth of business performance. The major theoretical, empirical, and practical contributions of this study are also discussed. The findings of this current study add to the existing body of knowledge in the area of feminist studies and will also be beneficial to academicians and practitioners. Social media platforms are particularly advantageous for homepreneurs, as it is hoped that homepreneurs will grow tremendously, have sustainable competitiveness, and improve the economic growth of the nation.

**Keywords:** Branding, Business Performance, Customer Relationship, Homepreneur, Sales Increment, Social Media.

## Introduction

Homepreneur is a business entrepreneur who operates their business from his or her home (Rout et al., 2021) and in fact, most of the time, they are single owners and enjoy the limited formal structure of the business. In Malaysia, there are various opportunities to start as a homepreneur, which is a simple way to earn money and be self-employed, such as drop-

shipping, care services, content creation, consultancy, accounting, and more. Home-based business has been around for a long time. However, the recent hit of the pandemic gave home-based businesses a surge in popularity. The continuous rise of home-based businesses is looking steady and strong. According to Malaysia Marketing, 2018, home-based businesses represent 52% of all small firms and provide 10% of the total receipts of the economy. These situations indicate that people enjoy the freedom and benefits of owning a home-based business. Advancements in digitalisation also changed the business landscape, which triggered the use of digital platforms in doing business. It also sparked the growth of the adoption of the digital platform by homepreneurs. The most preferred digital platform by homepreneurs is social media like Facebook, Instagram, Business WhatsApp, and Tik Tok. These studies reveal how significant social media is when used by small enterprises in their development and business expansion (Kumar & Ayedee, 2018; Harun et al., 2021). Social media created a vast opportunity to start a home-based business, and it is playing a crucial role in helping homepreneurs to sell products or services online. Furthermore, social media is an important tool for businesses, with over 60% using it to promote their business and 55% using it to communicate with customers (Digital News Asia, 2021).

Indeed, social media strategies boost social interaction between sellers and customers and can significantly increase sales and brand loyalty. Onetiu, 2020 reveals that digital transformation has strong importance on the performance in sales. In addition, larger social media campaigns tend to result in a significantly higher number of orders and sales income, and Facebook emerges as the most effective channel (Dolega et al., 2021). Numerous studies have shown significant relationships between social media activity outcomes with brand equity or brand image (Abd Latif & Safiee, 2015, Tritama, 2016; Bilgin, 2018). Customer engagement through social media is very impactful in enhancing the branding of the company (Hofman-Kohlmeyer, 2017). The adoption of social media in home-based businesses has also been proven to build strong relationships with customers. With the help of social media tools like using an autoresponder, offering a newsletter, and creating a forum, businesses are able to engage their customers in an informal and ongoing way. Another way homepreneurs can use social media to build customer relationships is by rewarding them with giveaways, promotions, coupons, and contests. According to Albert et al (2015) reward for activities through online social networks positively affects brand awareness, which is important in online business strategies. These are the great things that social media offers in helping to build and retain a relationship with customers.

However, few studies have discussed how social media contributed to the success rate of homepreneurs' business performance. Most of them specifically highlighted the factors influencing the success rate, and the merits and demerits of social media to business performance (Sengar, 2021; Tajudeen et al., 2018). Most of the studies highlighted small businesses generally and did not specifically show that the role played by the homepreneurs is significant to the growth of the economic country. Hence, this study investigates the impact on business performance by adopting home-based businesses through social media. The study contributed insight into how social media has a positive impact on the business performance of people who intend to venture into home-based businesses using social media network platforms.

**Literature Review**

People start home-based business ventures for a wide variety of reasons, and whatever the reason, home-based businesses have become a significant trend in recent years. Home-based entrepreneurs are part of the small-medium enterprises (SMEs) sector that make significant contributions to the increase of the national GDP. Adopting information and communication technology plays a crucial role in stimulating the growth of the SME sector, not only in terms of enhancing productivity and efficiency but also in broadening the market reach. However, previous studies lack deep discussion regarding the business performance of home-based entrepreneurs, specifically those that have adopted social media platforms in their businesses. Importantly, it highlights home-based entrepreneurs' performance in ensuring stability and helping their businesses survive for a bright future.

**Homepreneur**

According to Rahim et al (2022), the term homepreneur is new in Malaysia, and it refers to the entrepreneur who operates a small company or business from home. They manage their business and attract their target customer without investing more time in meeting them, using social media. Entrepreneurs can build their businesses even if they run them from their homes since entrepreneurship is essential for promoting individual empowerment, economic progress, and sustainable development. Homepreneur also refers to a business done independently by entrepreneurs at home using various tools, techniques, and methods using the latest technologies such as IoT, smartphones, and social media platforms (Rout et al., 2021). The majority of homepreneurs use social media channels not only to operate their business from home, but also to produce, market, and sell their products (Swami & Naidu, 2020).

Businesses with this concept can be started at home with little startup capital and little risk for those who are just starting a business and who have limited resources, which is a factor that catalyses homepreneurs. The availability and flexibility of time to do business is another factor that promotes the rise of homepreneurs. Home-based business owners can set their working hours and conditions, which also saves time travelling to and from work (Swami & Naidu, 2020). This situation can help entrepreneurs balance their family needs and business work (Kapasi & Gollaway, 2015). Additionally, safety issues like commuting to work or unsafe workplaces, particularly for women, are a reason for the development of homepreneurs (Rahim et al., 2022). Furthermore, due to the effects of post-COVID-19 on the economy and employment options, initiatives to raise family income are also contributing reasons for the growth of homepreneurs (Rahim et al., 2022).

Homepreneurs have great opportunities to expand their business due to the creation and development of social media platforms like Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and more. Users of these applications can conduct cross-border marketing and contact billions of consumers worldwide (Swami & Naidu, 2020). Additionally, the emergence of e-commerce platforms like Lazada and Shopee increases customer exposure to a variety of products and services. Besides, a home-based business is a wise decision to start due to the convenience of financial transactions, which are becoming safer, faster, and easier for committed and determined business owners (Rout et al., 2021).

## Social Media

Social media is a computer-based technology that enables people to share information, ideas, and thoughts by creating online communities and networks. Originally, it was initiated as a tool to connect with family and friends; however, social media was eventually used by the business sector to reach out to customers through a well-liked new communication channel. The ability to connect and share information with anyone or with many people at once is the strength of social media.

Nowadays, social media has become the most common medium for digital marketing, as people are increasingly active using social media. According to Patma et al (2021), people began to adopt social media marketing because of the perceived usefulness and ease of use for users. People believe that social media is useful and easy to use to reach potential customers, market their products, deliver products, and receive payments (Swami & Naidu, 2020).

Many studies have listed the benefits of social media adoption in business for entrepreneurs. Firstly, social media is a customer hub. According to Statista (2022), by January 2022, 89% of the total population in Malaysia used social media, and the highest usage was found for WhatsApp, followed by Facebook and Instagram.

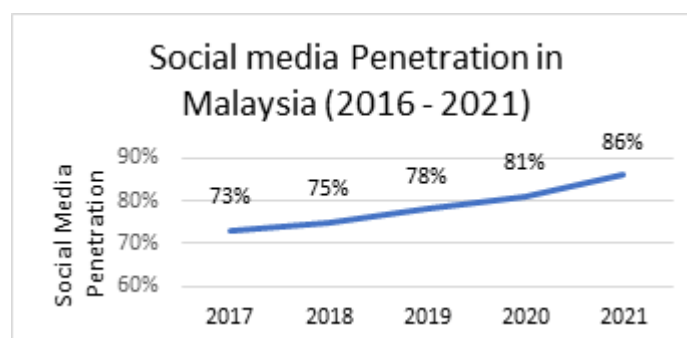


Figure 1: Social Media Penetration in Malaysia from 2016 to 2021.

The figure above shows that there is a positive trend in the usage of social media in Malaysia, and sharp increments have happened from the year 2020 to the year 2021. Therefore, it has become a huge potential for homepreneurs to take and exploit this opportunity to choose the best platform for marketing and adopt social media to capture customers' attention. Next, social media helps entrepreneurs target specific customers at the right moment (Hassan et al., 2015). Social media adoption in marketing targets audiences based on their interests. There is a high level of relevancy because advertising is displayed according to user interests, helping the entrepreneur to identify customers who are interested and considering their product. Lastly, social media is also able to build a good portfolio for entrepreneurs. Customers who are loyal or satisfied with a particular brand will promote and give good reviews for that brand using social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and others. This scenario has created virtual word-of-mouth marketing and may attract new customers. On the other hand, all these good reviews will become an influence and good image for the entrepreneur. Social media has fundamentally altered how marketing is done and elevated online marketing, communication, and advertising to the next level.

**Business Performance**

The rise of homepreneurs is empowered by the digital platform. Social media has gained popularity among small businesses because it is a powerful way to grow a business. It is a tool in a digital platform that contributes much to enhancing business performance. Homepreneurs depend on social media as a business platform, enjoying the low overhead, flexibility, and supporting tools to gauge customer attention. Referring to Emmanuel et al., 2021, firms with social media marketing strategies enjoy better customer relationships and enhance their business performance. Studies by Syaifullah et al (2021), reveal that the use of social media for marketing has a positive effect on the performance of micro-, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), especially in increasing sales, and customer relationships. This was confirmed by Wardati and Mahendrawathi (2019), who stated that social media functionalities are aligned with the social media strategy, which resulted in improving the performance of small-medium enterprises.

**Branding**

Social media has grown in power and influence over consumers, and a negative reputation from inappropriate social media use can have a negative effect on the company's revenue and brand value. This is supported by Horn et al (2015), who said that social media has empowered the public and weakened the position of businesses by exposing them to negative publicity, customer attacks, and reputation damage. According to Aon's 2019 report, damage to reputation or brand is the second top risk out of 15 risks, and it indicates how serious the risk is and how important it is for the company to develop the best policy for businesses to successfully manage their reputation (Horn et al., 2015). However, many benefits are gained from social media adoption for business purposes, and usually, social media not only works for marketing purposes but also helps businesses to develop brands. By definition, branding is an act of making a product, organisation, person, or place easy to recognise as different from others by connecting it with a particular name, design, symbol, set of qualities, etc. According to Abd Latif and Safiee (2015), the social networking site (Instagram) plays an essential role in shaping good branding for home-based businesses to start their business before deciding to venture offline. According to Alraja et al (2020), the company administrators have strong beliefs about adopting Facebook advertisements to increase brand awareness, and improve brand image, preferences, and customer loyalty. Other than that, marketing through social media has an impact on brand awareness and company revenue (Tritama, 2016). Chierici et al (2019), reveals how important social media is in achieving higher brand awareness, and at certain times, it is crucial in enhancing brand loyalty. In addition, Bilgin (2018) found that social media marketing activities are effective factors in brand image and brand loyalty, and it has been determined that the most obvious effect is seen on brand awareness. However, to strengthen the branding of the product, the seller should remain consistent in the dissemination of information through social media.

Based on the above argument, we expect that the intense use of social media by homepreneurs will enhance the branding of their companies. So, the first proposition is;

Proposition 1: There is a positive relationship between social media and branding.

**Sales Increment**

Social media marketing does not necessarily influence the purchase of a product, and Ansari et al., (2019) prove that social media content marketing has a moderate positive significant relationship with the consumer purchase decision. Surprisingly, Les Dolega et al (2021)



revealed that social media leads to increased web traffic, but it does not produce a significant rise in product orders and sale income. However, most of the studies regarding social media adoption proved that social media platforms could improve sales. According to Yao et al (2019), the daily use of social media marketing results in small-sized firms receiving higher returns, in terms of increased sales, compared with larger firms. This is supported by Jones (2016), who revealed that sales could improve over time by using social media marketing. In addition, the right social media platform chosen by homepreneurs will help boost sales. This is because each social media platform has a significant target audience, and homepreneurs should do some research to know which platform has met its goals. Every social media platform gives a choice in how it is run and promotes content. According to Satta (2022); Wardati & Mahendrawathi (2019), in social media there are specific platforms that are great for Businesses to Customers (B2C), and the use of social media depends on the type of industry and the type of social media used in accordance with SMEs business objectives. Even though most social media platforms are significant to the increment in sales performance, Subha (2020), shows that YouTube is a better predictor of company sales among social media platforms. Otherwise, a heavy campaign on social media is needed to encourage a larger number of sales.

Based on the discussion above, we expect that the use of social media by homepreneurs will lead to increased sales. So, the second proposition is;

Proposition 2: There is a positive relationship between social media and sales increments.

### **Customer Relationship**

Social media can be a great way to develop the best marketing strategy for businesses, but it also comes with various challenges. This is especially true in retaining customer relationships from traditional strategy to social media platforms, as it takes time to create the strategy with the appropriate knowledge and skill. According to Chinen-Moore & Joanne (2020), small business leaders are concerned with the lack of proper resources to adopt and implement social media as part of a marketing strategy. Turner and Endras (2017), report that the use of social media platforms was an initial challenge for a small business owner due to a lack of familiarity with social media and needing guidance from friends, family, and younger employees to gain a more technological and competitive advantage. However, Charoensukmongkol and Sasatanun (2017), proved that social media customer relationship management could be implemented at a low cost, while providing great benefits. Thus, it should be considered a powerful marketing tool that helps microenterprises to enhance their business performance. Obviously social media platforms allow businesses to connect with customers and build relationships with them. Having the right social media tools helps businesses to maximise their social media platform. Digital content for marketing purposes is always prioritised by businesses, such as video content, copywriting, and discussion rooms. This content marketing provides opportunities to strengthen customer relationships through fast response, storytelling, and more. Referring to Sufian et al (2020), the use of social media helps small online businesses to build a positive rapport with customers and will give customers a good impression of the business owners. Other than that, Wibowo et al (2020) prove that by utilising social media networks, enterprises can direct communication with customers and significantly influence customer relationship quality, which also leads to a positive impact on customer behavioural outcomes.

Based on the discussion above, we expect that the greater use of social media by homepreneurs will achieve strong customer relationships. So, the third proposition is;  
Proposition 3: There is a positive relationship between social media and customer relationships.

### Conceptual Model and Research Propositions

Figure 2 shows the independent variables of social media adoption that enhance homepreneur business performance as the dependent variable.

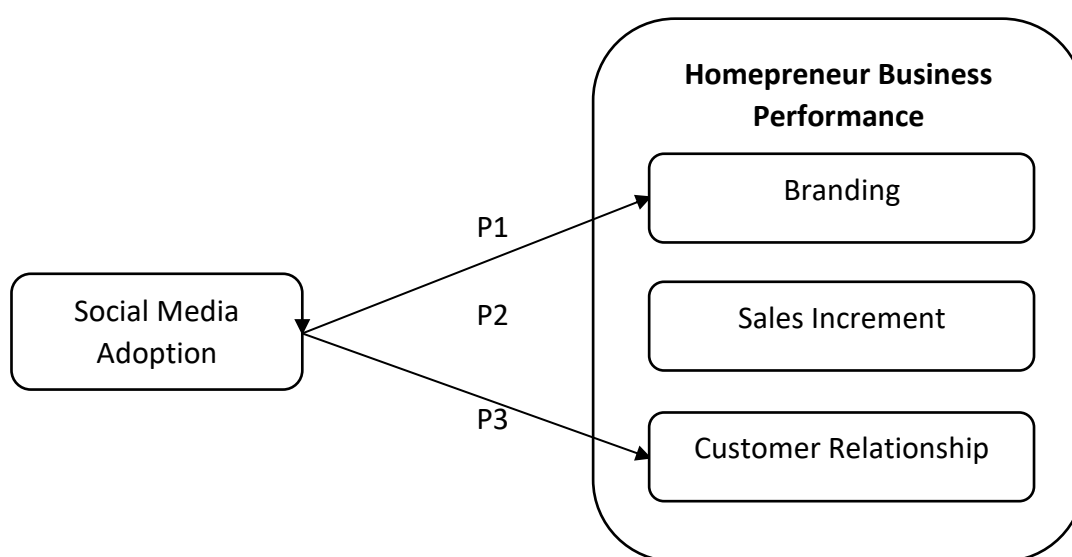


Figure 2: The Conceptual Model

As Figure 2 illustrates, the arrangement of the model suggests that social media adoption by homepreneurs will impact business performance by three variables, namely, sales increment, branding, and customer relationship, that may contribute to the growth of the business. Future empirical studies that apply a qualitative approach could explain the importance of the roles of social media platforms in enhancing homepreneur business performance. A qualitative approach that involves semi-structured interviews may be useful in yielding 'thick' and detailed data. The participants for this research would be chosen based on the purposive and snowball sampling method. The data and information collected will be thematically analysed using ATLAS.ti software. The main source of data for the purpose of future analysis can be obtained from local small business owners of home-based entrepreneurial businesses.

### Conclusion

To note, there are a tremendous number of homepreneurs in Malaysia, and their contribution has been significant to the economic growth of the country. Homepreneurs should be supported by bringing them closer to available resources, such as social media courses provided by the related agency, which are beneficial in enhancing knowledge and skills. The

conceptual framework proposed above would be a starting point for conducting empirical research to further understand the significance of social media platforms in increasing business performance, specifically for homepreneurs. Social media is not only an important factor in promoting and selling homepreneur's services and products. This gives homepreneurs the opportunity to enhance their branding, build customer relationships, and increase sales. This means that all research objectives have been achieved. It will be an important contribution to the field of home-based business literature, as well as assist policymakers in formulating strategies to enhance the growth of business performance for homepreneurs, especially in Malaysia.

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