

Influence of Engagement Social Media and Customer Satisfaction: Evidence from Small Business Growth in Unitar

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Abstract

Social media has become an essential marketing tool for small businesses, enabling direct interaction with customers while offering cost-effective communication channels. In university environments such as UNITAR International University, small businesses serve a diverse and dynamic customer base comprising students, staff, and visitors, making effective social media engagement increasingly critical. Despite the widespread adoption of social media platforms, limited empirical attention has been given to understanding how specific social media engagement strategies influence customer satisfaction within academic-based business settings. Guided by prior literature on social media marketing and customer engagement, this study examines the influence of social media engagement on customer satisfaction among small businesses operating at UNITAR. Specifically, the study focuses on three key dimensions of social media engagement: content quality, targeted advertising, and pricing transparency. Through a comprehensive review of existing studies, the paper proposes that relevant and high-quality content, personalized advertising strategies, and transparent pricing communication positively shape customer perceptions, trust, and satisfaction. By addressing this research gap, the study contributes to a clearer understanding of how social media engagement mechanisms affect customer satisfaction in a university context. The findings offer practical insights for small businesses within academic institutions to optimize their social media strategies, enhance customer satisfaction, and support sustainable business growth. The proposed conceptual framework also provides a foundation for future empirical research on social media marketing in similar educational and small business environments.

Keywords: Social Media Engagement, Customer Satisfaction, Content Quality, Small Businesses

Introduction

Marketing through the social media becomes important to those companies which examining for growth especially for those small business people who strive to change the image of their companies and educate their customers to gain recognition in the market full of competitors. This paper examines the role played by social media engagement as the independent variable on customer satisfaction as the dependent variable and their relationship with behavioural intention and loyalty in the context of academic institutions in general and UNITAR in particular. Most of the large organisations around the world still use traditional word of mouth and business cards but have embraced digital media and platforms, thereby acknowledging the more active role that social media plays for customer engagement (Alias et al., 2022; Hassan & Shahzad, 2022). technology improvement in this generation has seen the availability of cheap communication interface hence seeing small business adopting the cheap medium in communicating with the customers. This allows the increase in the market share, and the competition with mid-market and large businesses without requiring significant capital investment.

In regard to the adopted research questions, this study has established that students, staff, and the local community at UNITAR can benefit from social media as a platform for accessing business opportunities in small businesses within universities, improving customer satisfaction, and the overall growth with sustainability. Hence social media is an independent variable which directly connects the owners with the users and the direct marketing tools for products and services and feedback. According to Nagaraj and Gopal (2022), this kind of interaction allows firms to quickly adapt because they are informing the target market about changes in their products and services that are more satisfactory to the customer, the dependent variable. This tendency is especially relevant when market is represented by students in a university environment this market expects and demands flexibility and quick response to the offered goods and services.

Having a company's social media account is not guaranteeing the improved customer satisfaction level. The aspects of shared content, its relevance, frequency of updates and how effectively social media managers engage with customers especially in live means such as through real-time response are important to consider. The factors used therefore stress the role of social media to influence customer satisfaction. In this study, Alias et al. (2022) show that the well-developed and planned social media content improve brand image and customers' requirements and satisfaction.

This work presents a systematic approach for dissecting the variables under study, setting the background, identifying the research issue, and formulating the research questions, aims, and importance. This research aims to understand the two aspects more closely, which will help small business to effectively use social media, in order to enhance customer satisfaction.

Problem Statement

This societal trend has been greatly embraced and has immensely transformed the way small business organizations function to embrace the technological advances in the marketing and building of relationships through the use of social media. However, within academic institutions such as the UNITAR, there is a lack of research done on how social media can be

leveraged in order to ensure customer satisfaction. Although business applications of social media platforms are seen across Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and WhatsApp to display products, as well as create awareness and interactivity with customers, the precise link between direct social media operational activities such as content quality, targeted promotional ads, and optimal pricing and customer satisfaction remains unclear (Ahmad & Guerrero, 2020; Alias et al., 2022).

Small businesses using social media at the UNITAR also experience limited knowledge of best practices. From the study by Alias et al. (2022), it has emerged that small enterprises allocate their resources to social media marketing but without definite plans, thus attracting fluctuations in the amount of customer attention and little overall enterprise development. This factor is further aggravated by the fact that UNITAR is an academic institution, which means that the users that use it will always have different tastes, preferences, and aspirations. Furthermore, enterprises do not include aspects like content relevance and update frequency as well as timely responses into their plans, ultimately resulting in a lower level of customer satisfaction (Shafiq et al., 2023; Kong, 2022).

Customer satisfaction is an important driver for the small business organization since it has a direct impact on the level of repeat patronage. Indeed, the strategic application of social media marketing can contribute to the improvement of customers' satisfaction due to relevant content, advertising, and involving promotions (Hassan & Shahzad, 2022). However, if small businesses do not plan for the use of social media, it will lead to customer estrangement and failure to harness the benefits offered by social media for business growth (Jones et al., 2015). This disparity between the money that is spent on the operation of social media tools and tangible customer satisfaction demands further research.

Therefore, the case of UNITAR offers a beneficial platform through which small businesses can analyse how they can utilize social media in order to accommodate a cross-section of consumers. In their study, Nagaraj and Gopal (2022) provide an understanding that it is critical to develop segment-specific content and interaction methods, especially in a university environment. Furthermore, the knowledge gained from the study may be useful to enrich the existing body of knowledge by providing insight on how small businesses within learning institutions can realize sustainable growth through optimum use of social media platforms (Hassan et al., 2019).

This research is therefore intended to help address the existing gap in literature by analysing the impact of social media on customer satisfaction with specific reference to critical factors including content quality, targeted advertising, and pricing.

Literature Review

In today marketing landscape social media has become a game changer by revolutionizing how businesses interact with customers and impacting factors, like customer satisfaction, loyalty and business growth (Ahmad & Guerrero 2020). Specifically for businesses such as those at UNITAR social media provides an opportunity, for reaching broader audiences and staying competitive even with limited resources (Kong, 2022). Platforms such, as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter provide an environment for users to engage directly with businesses and offer feedback insights while enabling customized

marketing approaches tailored to preferences (Shafiq et al., 2023). By connecting with consumers through content sharing and personalized advertising initiatives that focus on value propositions and competitive pricing strategies, on media platforms go beyond communication channels to drive business expansion and foster active customer participation.

The content shared on media plays a role, in how effectively businesses engage with their audience. When businesses share top notch content that's relevant and authentic while also being creative and consistent in their approach (Shafiq et al., 2023) it helps build connections and trust with customers over time. This is particularly significant, for businesses as it enables them to stand out from the crowd and carve a brand identity in a competitive landscape (Alias et al., 2022). Creating content that captivates and informs while being visually attractive can boost levels. Transform passive onlookers into committed patrons. Tailoring content to align with customer preferences and desires not boosts satisfaction. Also establishes businesses as trustworthy and invaluable fountains of knowledge (De Vries et al., 2012).

Small businesses have the option to utilize social media advertisements tailored to deliver personalized messages that align with the preferences and requirements of their target audience (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). By tailoring social media campaigns, for groups based on information and behaviour businesses can ensure that their message reaches the right individuals at the optimal time enhancing its relevance and effectiveness. This level of customization not increases the relevance of ads. Also enhances the overall customer experience by improving satisfaction levels and increasing engagement (Nagaraj & Gopal, 2022). Advertising, through media channels isn't about promoting products; it's about establishing authentic connections that cultivate brand loyalty and enhance customer relationships (Ahmad & Guerrero, 2020). Striking a balance, between ads and respecting customer privacy is essential because intrusive advertising can influence perceptions (Tucker, 2014).

The way prices are shared on media can really shape how customers see the value and fairness of a product or service (Alias et al., 2022). Small businesses can use media to try out pricing tactics like deals and discounts to draw in and keep customers interested. When businesses are open, about their prices and share them well on media platforms it helps build trust with customers and keeps them coming happy (Nagaraj & Gopal, 2022). Studies suggest that clients tend to stick with companies that provide value for money and offer prices along, with social media promotions (Shafiq et al., 2023). This leads to a loop where customers. Thanks to the perceived value and reasonable pricing. Lead to higher involvement levels, in terms of repeat buying and word of mouth promotion.

The main area of this research is to understand how well small businesses are meeting or surpassing their customers' expectations. Customer satisfaction, on media is influenced by factors such as the quality of content shared by businesses and how personalized the advertisements feel to users. Additionally, the perceived fairness of pricing strategies also plays a role, in shaping customer satisfaction levels. Happy customers tend to show support through actions, like coming for purchases and spreading the word about their favourite brands which helps small businesses thrive in the long run (Shafiq et al., 2023). This study

delves into how media factors and customer contentment interact, with each other. Sheds light on how small enterprises can use online tactics to boost their influence and attain lasting prosperity.

In this study, the connection between media factors and customer contentment is complex and diverse. The main focus is on how social media influences customer views and actions through factors such, as content quality advertising methods and pricing strategies. The impact of these factors, on enhancing contentment is determined by how companies utilize the features of social media platforms to promote genuine and value focused interactions (Alias et al., 2022).

The key discoveries Shafiq et al. (2023), Alias et al. (2022), and De Vries et al. (2012) underscore the important impact of top-notch content on improving customer happiness via social media marketing efforts. Shafiq et al. in their research 2023 highlighted the importance of developing innovative content that's pertinent to boosting customer interaction and building trust and loyalty. Alias and colleagues, in a study discovered that creating content that resonates with the audiences' preferences and beliefs can encourage conversations and enhance customer happiness levels significantly. Additionally, De Vries and team showed in their research that sharing articles entertaining videos and interactive surveys can help solidify the connection, between companies and their customers.

Thus, this study brings us to the following propositions:

Propositions 1: The quality of social media content plays a role, in enhancing customer satisfaction among businesses affiliated with UNITAR indicating a strong positive correlation, between the two factors.

Propositions 2: Targeted social media ads greatly boost customer satisfaction, for businesses, at UNITAR.

Propositions 3: Transparent and value focused pricing tactics shared via platforms greatly improve customer happiness for businesses at UNITAR.

Social media plays a role, as a factor that small businesses rely on to connect with their customers effectively and create meaningful interactions with them. The impact of social media tactics directly affects how customers perceive and experience a business offering and influences their satisfaction levels. Popular social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Twitter offer opportunities for communication, tailored interactions and immediate feedback which are valuable, in cultivating customer loyalty and contentment (Ahmad & Guerrero 2020; Kaplan & Haenlein 2010).

Creating top notch posts, on media sites is essential, for attracting and keeping customers engaged. Valuable content that connects with the intended audience helps establish trust and loyalty while also boosting customer satisfaction (Shafiq et al., 2023). The quality of content significantly impacts how customers view a brand and their eagerness to engage with it (Alias et al., 2022).

Social media ads help small businesses connect with customer groups using messages. Tailored ads that match customers' needs boost engagement and drive conversion rates for

a satisfying experience (Nagaraj & Gopal 2022). Yet much or overly invasive advertising can backfire; finding the right balance and strategic approach is key (Tucker 2014).

The way prices are set on media can impact how customers view the value and fairness of products or services being offered. Openly communicating prices and using promotions and tailored deals can enhance customer satisfaction. Establish trust (Alias et al., 2022). Customers sensitivity, to pricing and their perception of value are factors that influence their satisfaction with businesses, in small scale settings (Nagaraj & Gopal 2022).

The level of customer happiness is determined by how small businesses engage with customers through media to meet or surpass their expectations. When customers are highly satisfied, with a business services or products online it often leads to increased loyalty from them as positive recommendations and overall business growth in the long run (Kotler & Keller 2016). This research delves into how social media strategies such as content quality, content strategy targeting advertising and pricing tactics all play a role together in shaping customer satisfaction for companies, at UNITAR (Shafiq et al. 2023).

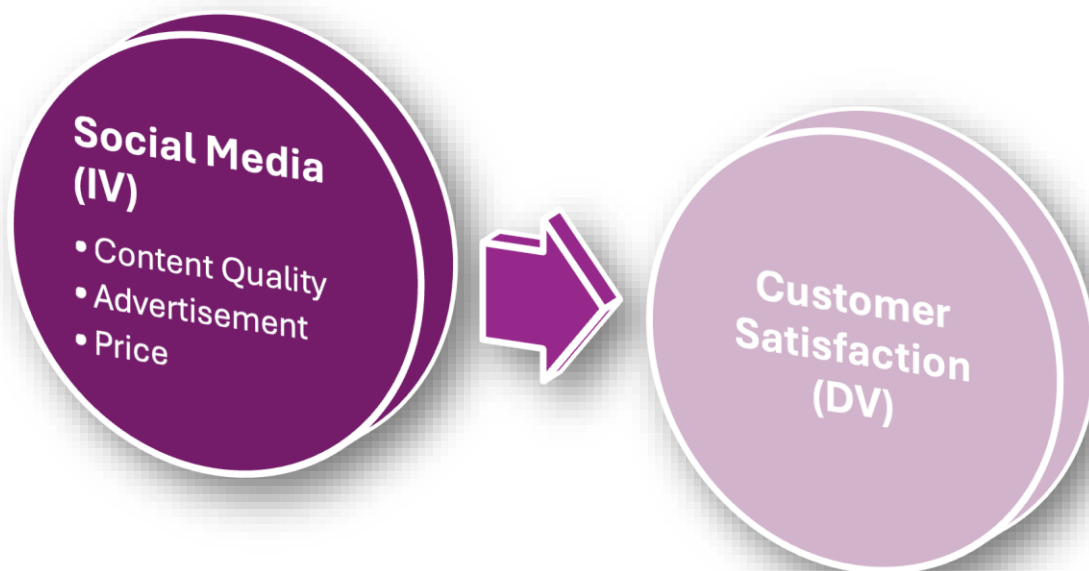


Figure 2.1 Proposed Conceptual Framework

Conclusion and Conceptual Framework

This study set out to examine how social media engagement influences customer satisfaction among small businesses operating within UNITAR. The findings from the literature indicate that social media has become more than a communication tool; it is now a strategic platform that shapes customer perceptions, strengthens relationships, and supports long-term business growth. The review shows that three core dimensions content quality, targeted advertising, and transparent pricing strategies play a significant role in driving satisfaction, trust, and behavioural intention among customers in university settings.

High-quality content that is relevant, visually appealing, consistently updated, and aligned with customer needs has been shown to build positive brand perceptions and increase satisfaction. Targeted advertising similarly provides value by offering personalized

information to specific customer segments, increasing the likelihood of engagement and repeat patronage. Transparent pricing strategies further shape customers' perceptions of fairness and value, contributing to stronger loyalty and trust.

In the context of UNITAR, where the customer base is diverse and dynamic, these social media elements become even more essential. Students and staff expect quick updates, real-time responses, and content that reflects their lifestyle needs. Small businesses that understand and strategically deploy these social media practices are more likely to improve customer experience and achieve sustainable growth.

Based on the reviewed literature, this study concludes that social media engagement directly influences customer satisfaction, with content quality, targeted advertising, and pricing transparency serving as key predictors. These insights lay the foundation for the proposed conceptual framework and provide a useful reference for future empirical testing within academic institutions.

The conceptual framework for this study is grounded in the understanding that social media engagement acts as the primary independent variable influencing customer satisfaction among small businesses at UNITAR. Drawing from existing literature, three key dimensions of social media engagement content quality, targeted advertising, and pricing transparency are proposed as sub-constructs that shape customer perceptions and behaviours.

i. Content Quality

High-quality, relevant, creative, and consistently updated content enhances customer trust, improves brand perception, and increases satisfaction.

ii. Targeted Advertising

Personalised ads tailored to customer interests improve engagement, perceived relevance, and overall satisfaction.

iii. Pricing Transparency

Clear, fair, and value-oriented pricing communicated through social media influences customer trust, perceived fairness, and loyalty.

All three predictors are proposed to have direct positive relationships with customer satisfaction, which serves as the dependent variable.

Research Contributions

Theoretical and Contextual Contributions

This study offers several important theoretical and contextual contributions to the existing literature on social media marketing and customer satisfaction. From a theoretical perspective, the study extends prior research by consolidating social media engagement into three key dimensions content quality, targeted advertising, and pricing transparency and positioning them as direct predictors of customer satisfaction. While previous studies have often examined these elements independently, this research integrates them into a single conceptual framework, thereby providing a more holistic understanding of how social media

engagement mechanisms influence customer perceptions and satisfaction in small business settings.

From a contextual perspective, this study contributes empirical insights within the underexplored setting of small businesses operating in a university environment, specifically UNITAR. Unlike conventional retail or SME contexts, university based businesses serve a highly diverse and dynamic customer base consisting of students, staff, and visitors with varying expectations and consumption behaviours. By focusing on this unique context, the study highlights how social media engagement strategies must be tailored to meet the expectations of academic communities, offering practical relevance for small businesses operating within educational institutions. These contributions enrich the existing body of knowledge by demonstrating the relevance of social media engagement strategies in niche organisational contexts and provide a foundation for future empirical research in similar academic environments.

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