

Social Media Content Creation: A Study of SMEs in Malaysia

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Abstract

In recent years, social media has taken the world by storm in the digital society. Initially, social media was created to eliminate the barriers of time difference and physical distance between individuals. Taking advantage of the situation, especially with the recent COVID-19 pandemic where the physical world was suddenly halted and everything goes online, organisations perceived an opening to exploit the benefits of social media for the advantage of their online businesses. Unfortunately, many Malaysian SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) still lack in awareness of the advantages to be gained from social media adoption and engagement. Given the growing significance of social media in contemporary marketing tactics, it is essential for SMEs to comprehend how to produce compelling content that appeals to their target market. The study intends to investigate the kinds of material Malaysian SMEs should produce for social media, the methods they employ to produce and disseminate information, and the difficulties they encounter along the way. In-depth interviews with SME owners and managers will be used to gather data through qualitative study, and non-probability sampling which is snowball sampling will be used to gather participants. Therefore, this concept paper seeks to comprehend what constitutes good content for social media and how social media content creation impacts a firm's overall performance.

Keywords: Social Media, Content Creation, Online Business, SMEs, Performance

Introduction

When it comes to media broadcasts, the world is rapidly evolving. Before the rise of the Internet, businesses could only advertise through paid media such as television, radio, and newspapers, where they had to pay to print flyers, coupons, membership cards, and other promotional materials. Advertisements on mainstream media are prohibitively expensive, and other supporting media have failed to meet the needs of potential customers.

Increasingly fewer people watch television today. They prefer more personalised content on social media and other streaming platforms, including YouTube, Netflix, TikTok, Instagram, and Facebook. These crowd sourced content platforms, or 'Future Internet', may entice millions of people to watch, re-share, and comment on engaging content. Social media is a widely used platform that connects the entire world with a single click. As a result, businesses, particularly SMEs, must find ways to maximise the benefits gained from using social media for their operations.

Some businesses were quick to recognise this trend, and they created viral content; the rest is history. Nevertheless, many businesses, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs), have yet to take advantage of this new medium. According to Kementerian Pembangunan Usahawan (2019) in the 'Dasar Keusahawanan Negara', the biggest challenge that governments across the globe face is to instil digitalisation among entrepreneurs, to shift from a traditional economy to a new economy. This shift was supported by the Twelfth Malaysia Plan 2021-2025, as the Eleventh Plan only emphasised efforts in strengthening technology adoption. The digital economy still saw slow growth, which widened the digital divide between the rich and the poor (Malaysia Government, 2021). Not only that, The Twelfth Malaysia Plan 2021-2025 also mentioned that Malaysia was ranked 26th out of 63 countries in the Institute for Management Development (IMD) World Digital Competitiveness Ranking 2020, where the report specifically mentioned it was considered low digitalization within industries, due to lack of awareness among Malaysian SMEs (Malaysia Government, 2021).

Meanwhile, according to National Entrepreneur and SME Development Council (2020), in a survey conducted by SME Corporation Malaysia in 2019, which included 1,347 firms, 35.3% of respondents were engaged in online business, surprisingly dropping slightly from 37.9% in the third quarter of 2018. Not only that, only 21.1% of respondents claimed they use social media, websites, and e-commerce platforms to market their products and services. Besides that, Economic Outlook 2022 under Budget 2022 presented by the Ministry of Finance (2021) stated that only 29% of businesses had a web presence, and only 5.2% engaged in e-commerce in 2015. A different survey done by the SME Association of Malaysia showed that only a small fragment of local Malaysia SMEs, 26%, chose to continue using e-commerce platforms post-pandemic (Ministry of Finance, 2021).

With such considerable resistance to change being part of human nature, the Malaysian government is making efforts from multiple angles to ensure that Malaysian entrepreneurs thrive in today's agile and dynamic environment. The most crucial point is free marketing when businesses take the right path with the right moves, which is why our Malaysian government takes social media marketing (SMM) very seriously. In their annual report, SME Corporation Malaysia (2019) mentioned that the government allocated an RM10 million budget to Malaysian Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) to train micro-digital entrepreneurs and technologists to take advantage of e-marketplaces and social media platforms. Besides that, Malaysia's Ministry of Rural Development through Jabatan Kemajuan Masyarakat or KEMAS aims to create knowledgeable and skilled entrepreneurs with social media accounts such as Facebook or Instagram through online marketing courses. A survey done by SME Corporation Malaysia found that social media platforms commonly used among SMEs in Malaysia are Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram.

In addition to that, the Malaysia Digital SME Study 2018 conducted by SME Corp. Malaysia and Huawei Technologies (M) Sdn Bhd proved that SMEs using social media and e-commerce in their business operations saw productivity improvement of between 26% to 27% (National

Entrepreneur and SME Development Council, 2020). This result reaffirms the significance and reason why SMEs should seize the opportunity of social media implementation and utilisation.

The study strives to gain new insights, knowledge, and experience in a relatively new area in today's digital world: social media content creation. Consequently, this study also aims to raise awareness among SME leaders so that they can seize the opportunity to utilise social media phenomena to the fullest extent for the benefit of their businesses. The authors' goal with this study is to investigate what constitutes good social media content and how it impacts business performance. The most important aspect of social media content creation is that it is free marketing if businesses follow the proper path. In the future, it is hoped that the overall performance of Malaysian SMEs will improve as a result of the discovery of the elements that make for good content, the exposure of the obstacles faced by SMEs in creating content for social media and understanding the relevance of creating contents for social media.

Literature Reviews

In today's online world, there are a multitude of social media platforms to choose from. When it comes to social media, as the name implies, it was created to allow people to communicate in the digital world. Social media has made it possible for people around the world to communicate at any time and from any location. Social media is beneficial to businesses as well as the general public. Despite the numerous benefits of social media adoption for business, it is surprising that firms have yet to widely adopt it, particularly among Malaysian SMEs.

Social Media

Social media is a digital environment that allows all users to mix personal and professional information, allowing businesses to gain a new communication channel with their customers (Gustavsson, 2017). Dollarhide (2021), on the other hand, defined social media as a digital platform for exchanging ideas, thoughts, and information via virtual networks and communities. In Malaysia, the most popular and trending social media platforms are TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook. According to Boyd & Ellison (2007), social media was created initially to connect friends, but has since grown into a global phenomenon since the creation of Facebook in 2008, as cited in Kraus et al. (2019). Moreover, according to Mazza & Palermo (2018), Facebook is used as a communication medium by billions of people worldwide, so businesses should leverage it for marketing and consumer engagement.

Another piece of literature, Gustavsson (2017), emphasised the importance of understanding the impact that investing in social media strategy has on businesses. According to Tajudeen et al (2018), social media has helped businesses recognise the needs and desires of customers, proving it to bring benefits as businesses adapt to the latest technology, as cited by Yan & Musika (2018)'s study.

Content Creation

Many sources emphasise the importance of content creation, which is defined as content on social media platforms. Despite this, few studies have been conducted to determine the amount of time and resources required to create content (Kraus et al., 2019). As predicted by Gates (1996) 25 years ago, there will be intense competition as well as a

significant number of failures in creating content in many categories, including sports, directories, classified advertising, online communities, and the most important, entertainment and gaming.

Businesses that keep up with current technology will always thrive faster than their competitors. Creating professional content that addresses current trending issues has a positive impact on brand visibility and business performance (Botha et al., 2011). SMEs can benefit from a free marketing medium by participating in social media marketing, as SMEs typically have fewer resources than larger corporations (Kraus et al., 2019). It is one of the new branches of marketing in which businesses are willing to invest in creating good content for social media in order to better engage with customers (Ferrari, 2016).

The content itself should be the primary focus of businesses in the Internet Age. Previous research found that professional content creation has a significant impact on brand exposure and visibility, resulting in improved business performance and sales (Rezun, 2018). In his article 'Content is King', Gates (1996), co-founder of the software company Microsoft Corporation, predicted that real money could be made with content on the Internet. According to (Kubbernus, 2021), despite the fact that this famous adage was uttered 25 years ago, content is still king. Today, content evolves in numerous formats, such as social media, video and music streaming apps, podcasts, tweets, blogs, and podcasts, and augmented reality (AR) is on the rise. There is a dearth of academic research on the relationship between investing in social media content creation and its positive effects or significant benefits for businesses.

Important Elements

From the study done by Yan & Musika (2018), they identified and evaluated several aspects kept in check by SMEs in implementing social media usage for their business: deciding which platforms to deploy, governance and responsibilities, value metrics, accessibility, risk management, a growing number of followers, content creation and update, incentives strategies, monitoring, comments utilising for future development, message processing rules, customer feedback timelines, and report creating and sharing. These are all important factors that SMEs must consider in order to effectively use social media for business.

Obstacles Faced

Since the entire human population on the planet relies heavily on the Internet in today's world, there are other factors that could obstruct content delivery such as bandwidth, Internet quotas, Internet pricing, the storage capacity of devices, and many more. As a result, there is room for improvement, innovation, and collaboration among telecommunications companies, media, and Internet stakeholders (Gonçalves, 2016). It is critical to understand why firms are hesitant to use social media; perhaps these barriers should first be removed in order to encourage firms to use social media and maximise the benefits of social media for their businesses.

Furthermore, Aleksandrova & Parusheva (2019) agreed that researchers should investigate the benefits and drawbacks that organisations face when using social media. According to the literature, social media usage among public users is still limited, restricted, and poorly adopted (Manca & Ranieri, 2016). However, as mentioned by Tang & Hew (2017), cited in the article written by Aleksandrova & Parusheva (2019), social media could act as a 'push' technology and peer interaction platform that could improve user

engagement. Despite some difficulties, social media facilitates user interaction and communication.

Relevance

Today, society lives in a world that breathes trending and viral issues. Many firms must now be agile in grasping the latest buzz or chitchat among the Internet citizens or netizens in the digital world. As the situation is in the news industry, the press and stations compete to be the first to post or report on the latest news (*6 Key Factors That Influence Your Social Media Engagement*, 2017). The same goes for social media, content should be created in relevance to trending and viral issues. By keeping in check of the latest hashtags or famous current issues, a firm could gain free marketing as consumers will talk about the brand, product, or service related to the firm, thus making them stand out above the rest. The digital crowd will voluntarily share viral contents on their timeline, making the firm the talk of the town. This is the factor or gap to be investigated in this concept paper, as there are currently a limited number of scholars looking into this area.

Performance Trends

Yan & Musika (2018) discovered positive performance trends in interviews with their samples. According to one SME who participated in the study, their advertising costs have decreased while their revenue has increased since the implementation of social media. Furthermore, their customer satisfaction has improved as a result of improved service times, and finally, customer retention has improved as the number of online visitors has increased. Another SME in the same study reported an increase in business performance after using Instagram for social media. The application's report enabled them to track growth on a weekly, monthly, and annual basis. By analysing booking systems on their social media, they were able to see a noticeable increase in the number of clients.

Interestingly, Ainin et al (2015) stated that there is a gap in studies that measure Facebook usage and organizational performance. Their study found that Facebook usage has a very strong positive impact on organizations' performance. Not only that, there was also a study done by Chatterjee & Kumar Kar (2020) that investigated the impact of social media marketing on business, in terms of increased customer, increased employees creativity, increased sales, increased enquiries, positive feedbacks, and better customer relationship.

On another note, several studies cited by Yan & Musika (2018) also agreed that SMEs can transform the use of social media tools into business growth. Wang et al (2016) conducted a study that found that user-generated content could lead to company growth. Furthermore, Yan & Musika (2018) also agreed that social media enabled cheap and easy communication between businesses and customers, thereby facilitating growth.

Conceptual Framework

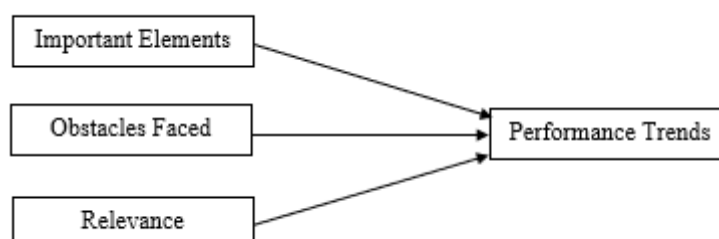


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework for this study. There are three key independent variables to be investigated representing social media content creation; important elements and obstacles faced, which were derived from multiple past studies, while relevance is the new variable introduced in this concept paper. Performance trends acts as the dependent variable, as applied in the study by (Ainin et al., 2015).

Research Methodology

This study will adopt the qualitative approach because it involves primary data analysis and interpretation derived from interviews and observations. This method is used to discover meaningful patterns that can describe the significance of the social media phenomenon and discover content creation advantages that are currently popular in today's digital world. Therefore, the best way to conduct this study is by adapting the phenomenology studies that fall under the inquiry approach. According to Mckenzie (2012), phenomenology studies aim to find common themes or elements and are done by obtaining verbal descriptions through in-depth interviews of samples on perceptions of a phenomenon, which in this case, is content creation for social media.

The research population consists of SME owners or managers from two major industries in Malaysia: food and beverages (F&B) and fashion. As this is qualitative research, non-probability sampling will be applied because social actors are not predictable like objects and randomised events are irrelevant to social life, making probability sampling inefficient and costly to conduct (Ladner, 2008). The snowball sampling method will be used for sample selection. To stay within the boundaries and scope of the study, SMEs chosen must meet the criteria and are limited to those who have implemented social media in their business. The researcher intends to interview easily located and contactable SMEs and then solicit their assistance in introducing their network of other SME acquaintances and friends.

The study will be using phenomenology studies by conducting interviews and observations because it intends to produce findings without using statistical analysis or other quantitative methods. The researcher will produce a set of interview questions that are appropriate for the study's objectives. Interviews were recorded in both video and audio formats to aid in data analysis and extraction. Interviews will also be transcribed and categorised in order to better understand the primary data and answer research questions and achieve objectives (Huotari et al., 2015). Besides that, SME owners will also be requested to provide data on social media traffic and sales patterns to uncover performance trends when they executed social media content creation.

Discussion

Present-day consumers are engrossed in their gadgets and digital devices. Consumers want a new digital shopping experience that will entice them to actively survey, purchase, and post reviews for products and services that they are interested in, in order to play games and browsing the typical social media posts of their friends. In the wake of the recent Covid-19 pandemic that has ravaged the globe over the past two years, everything has abruptly shifted online, necessitating businesses' use of social media to establish a digital presence. Even now, entering the post-pandemic or endemic phase, social media is still such an important tool business could use to communicate and market their products and services swiftly. Those

who fail to quickly adapt to the shifting environment will fall behind. It is essential to comprehend the factors that constitute good social media content for businesses; the important elements, the obstacles they face, and the relevance of it, and finally to see how it all impacts business performance.

Conclusion

By introducing a new variable for the study, it is hoped that it will shed some light on other shady factors, thus, allowing businesses to fully utilise social media to their advantage, and increase their business performance as a whole.

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