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Antecedents of the adoption of Social Media Marketing by micro and small enterprises

Antecedentes da adoção de Social Media Marketing por micro e pequenas empresas

Antecedentes de la adopción del Social Media Marketing por micro y pequeñas empresas

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ABSTRACT

The adoption of Social Media Marketing (SMM) is increasingly present in the daily life of companies. However, little is known about this phenomenon in the context of micro and small businesses (MSEs). The research aimed to analyze the SMM adoption process by MSEs, based on a study with 338 entrepreneurs linked to the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support System (Sebrae), using Structural Equation Modeling. It was found that technical knowledge, cost reduction, and pressure from customers and competitors generate benefits perceived by entrepreneurs concerning the use of the tool, leading to a higher level of use. The work contributes to the step in which it brings evidence that helps to understand the determinants of adopting SMM in the context of MSEs.

Keywords: antecedents; adoption of Social Media Marketing; micro and small enterprises; structural equation modeling; entrepreneurs.

RESUMO

A adoção de Social Media Marketing (SMM) está cada vez mais presente no cotidiano das empresas. Entretanto, ainda pouco se sabe com relação a este fenômeno no contexto de micro e pequenas (MPEs). A pesquisa teve por objetivo analisar o processo de adoção de SMM por MPEs, a partir de um estudo junto a 338 empreendedores vinculados ao Sistema Brasileiro de Apoio às Micro e Pequenas Empresas (Sebrae), com uso de Modelagem por Equações Estruturais. Verificou-se que conhecimento técnico, redução de custos, pressão de clientes e concorrentes geram benefícios percebidos pelos empreendedores com relação ao uso da ferramenta, levando a um maior nível de uso. O trabalho contribui ao passo em que traz evidências que ajudam a compreender determinantes da adoção de SMM no contexto de MPEs.

Palavras-chave: antecedentes; adoção de Social Media Marketing; micro e pequenas empresas; modelagem por equações estruturais; empreendedores.

RESUMEN

La adopción del Social Media Marketing (SMM) está cada vez más presente en las empresas. Sin embargo, poco se sabe sobre este fenómeno en el contexto de las micro y pequeñas empresas (MYPEs). La investigación analizó el proceso de adopción del SMM por las MYPEs, con 338 emprendedores vinculados al Sistema Brasileño de Apoyo a la Micro y Pequeña Empresa, utilizando el Modelado de Ecuaciones Estructurales. Se encontró que el conocimiento técnico, la reducción de costos, la presión de los clientes y competidores generan beneficios percibidos por los empresarios en relación al uso de la herramienta, lo que lleva a un mayor nivel de uso. El trabajo mostró el papel de los factores determinantes en la adopción por las MYPEs.

Palabras clave: antecedentes; adopción de Social Media Marketing; micro y pequeñas empresas; modelado de ecuaciones estructurales; empresarios.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The use of social media has increased in recent years, especially for marketing purposes (Eid, Abdelmoety & Agag, 2020; Li et al., 2023; Pandey et al., 2020). It is argued that organizations are expanding their presence on Web 2.0 platforms, such as social networks, to communicate and interact with their audience, promote products and brands, and generate sales (Eid, Abdelmoety & Agag, 2020; Eze et al., 2021).

It is within this context that Social Media Marketing (SMM) is defined, corresponding to the use of social media technologies, channels, and software to create, communicate, and deliver offers to customers (Eze et al., 2021; Li et al., 2023; Sarin et al., 2021).

Choi and Thoeni (2016) found that one of the main advantages lies in its low cost and relative ease of use. Supporting these researchers, Kumar and Möller (2018) add that using traditional media in marketing activities is expensive, so companies are increasingly adopting SMM as a more economical solution. Yao et al. (2019) further emphasize that the literature classifies SMM as a low-cost marketing tool; however, attention must be paid to the potential costs of outsourcing and labor.

The study by Chatterjee and Kar (2020) demonstrated that SMM can be considered a connection bridge between SMEs and potential consumers, serving as a tool to enhance their businesses. Therefore, companies of all sizes and types are progressively integrating SMM into their marketing activities to leverage their advantages and benefits in attracting new customers, maintaining close relationships with existing ones, and engaging with new products, services, and brands easily.

Studies show that to effectively realize the advantages and benefits that SMM brings to SMEs, several factors beyond technical knowledge, engagement, and low cost also contribute to this, namely: company size, manager's age, resource issues, entrepreneur's interest and knowledge (Alford & Page, 2015; Eze et al., 2021; Tarsakoo & Charoensukmongkol, 2019; Yao et al., 2019).

On the other hand, despite the advantages and benefits, some studies highlight specific barriers or factors that hinder or even complicate the use of SMM, such as task complexity, labor, resource issues, entrepreneur's interest and technology knowledge, among others (Alford & Page, 2015; Eze et al., 2021; Gutierrez-Leefmans et al., 2019; Tarsakoo & Charoensukmongkol, 2019; Yao et al., 2019).

The study by Eze et al. (2021) examined, in a qualitative study using interviews, that the inability of entrepreneurs or managers of SMEs to comprehend the potential application of technology hinders the recruitment of workforce with comparable skills during implementation. In the same vein, the observations made by Kumar (2021) highlight that while SMEs have begun using the tool, there are more challenges in adopting the technology. Thus, it is understood that both entrepreneurs and employees working

in SMEs require further training in technological tools to yield better results.

Despite literature in the field suggesting factors that contribute to and inhibit the adoption of SMM, empirical evidence remains limited in the context of Micro and Small Enterprises (Alford & Page, 2015). The work by Patma et al. (2020) demonstrates that perceived benefits and external pressure positively affect the adoption of Social Media Marketing. According to Tarsakoo and Charoensukmongkol (2019), SMM can be a manageable investment, providing more opportunities for small businesses to access a large customer base with limited budgets if used effectively. Therefore, understanding the factors influencing intentions to use social media for marketing purposes has become an area of interest for both scholars and practitioners (Alalwan et al., 2017; Alsaleh et al., 2019; Chatterjee & Kar, 2020; Matikiti et al., 2018b; Ratnasingam et al., 2021).

Furthermore, SMEs are pivotal in the country's economic growth (Sebrae, 2020). In this regard, considering the role that SMEs undertake, the research aimed to analyze the adoption process of SMM, considering factors such as technical knowledge, cost reduction, and competitive and customer pressures. Given the aforementioned, this article examines the process of adopting Social Media Marketing by micro and small enterprises, considering certain conditioning factors and inherent barriers.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Technology, Organization, and Environment (TOE)

The Technology, Organization, and Environment Theory is an organizational-level approach originally proposed by Tornatzky and Fleischer (1990) used to understand the role of three crucial components within a company that can impact decisions regarding the implementation of new technologies (Souza et al., 2017; Matikiti et al., 2018). These are the technological, organizational, and environmental contexts (Eze et al., 2021; Matikiti et al., 2018; Picoto et al., 2021).

This theory is one of the most commonly used models to explain the adoption and implementation of Internet technologies (Gonçalves et al., 2016; Matikiti et al., 2018; Melo et al., 2021), focusing on studying adoption within companies where each individual plays a different role, necessitating adaptation both within the organization and regarding the innovation itself (Souza et al., 2017). In the context of SMEs, many adoption models are centered on the entrepreneur's perception, attitude, or beliefs and are often user-centric. However, it is necessary to consider organizational factors and the external environment (Souza et al., 2017; Eze et al., 2021).

The technological context refers to internal and external technologies relevant to the company. It can also denote the necessary skills required to use that specific technology. The organizational context includes the company's resources, the linkages between employees,

company size, and available resources. The environmental context encompasses external factors influencing a company's decision to adopt new technologies, including competitors, customers, and government involvement (Matikiti et al., 2018; Picoto et al., 2021).

Thus, authors Eze et al. (2021) highlight that the TOE theory provides a framework for assessing the adoption of SMM; as it emphasizes both internal aspects (e.g., technical knowledge and cost reduction) and external aspects (e.g., competitive pressure and customer pressure) of an organization that can influence the adoption of new technologies. In this way, the theory has proven useful in analyzing technology adoption by companies. And in the case of SMM adoption by micro and small enterprises, it proves to be pertinent.

2.2 Adoption of SMM

SMM uses technologies, social media platforms, channels, and software to create, communicate, and deliver value-laden exchange offerings for the company and customers (Yao et al., 2019). From a marketing perspective, SMM is reshaping traditional marketing methods that involve a one-way flow of information and high production and distribution costs (Tarsakoo & Charoensukmongkol, 2019).

It is understood that whenever an individual perceives that using a particular technology will enhance performance or benefit the company, they will be eager to adopt it. Likewise, if the new technology is considered easy to implement, people will not hesitate to adopt it. Therefore, if SMEs comprehend the advantages of utilizing Social Media Marketing and can use it without challenges, they can more readily accept the adoption and use of Social Media Marketing (Almeida et al., 2017; Matikiti et al., 2018).

It is observed that the use of SMM does not require significant investments and, if used effectively, can provide opportunities for micro and small enterprises to access a large customer base (Ashish Kumar & Möller, 2018; Silva et al., 2020; Tarsakoo & Charoensukmongkol, 2019). Furthermore, it enables customers to directly connect with new products, services, and brands easily, making micro and small businesses more competitive (Pandey et al., 2020), more profitable, and increasing the company's overall value (Patma et al., 2020).

However, in the context of SMEs, which is still underexplored, SMM needs to consider various factors contributing to or inhibiting their adoption. Despite the advantages of SMM adoption, company size, the manager's age, and the extent of the company's innovation capacity are essential factors and positively affect the likelihood of adoption (Gutierrez-Leefmans et al., 2019). Furthermore, Yao et al. (2019) corroborate that geographical and demographic characteristics of companies have a significant effect on adoption.

Additionally, according to Chatterjee and Kar (2020), SMM is a viable tool that can help businesses attract customers; nevertheless, the adoption rates of SMM by

SMEs have remained low due to factors that inhibit or hinder adoption. They mention that a lack of knowledge about utilizing the technology's benefits is a significant barrier to adoption. Alford and Page (2015) highlight that factors such as cost, lack of time, and difficulty in integrating information can inhibit the adoption of such technologies.

Thus, this study examines constructs' roles concerning perceived benefits when adopting and using SMM.

2.2.1 Technical Knowledge (TK)

Most digital marketing channels have their own analytical tools that allow marketing metrics to be analyzed. However, a combination of lack of time and knowledge about how to use these tools and integrate the information they provide into one's marketing represents a barrier to the adoption of technology for marketing by entrepreneurs (Alford & Page, 2015; Silva et al., 2020; Tarsakoo & Charoensukmongkol, 2019).

Thus, consumers significantly influence SMM adoption among SMEs, facilitating the transfer of necessary knowledge to use new tools while shaping workers' attitudes toward technological change (Dahnil et al., 2014). Accordingly, according to Arantes et al. (2021), using new technologies in connections between individuals and businesses can also generate high levels of knowledge complexity, which may compromise business outcomes.

The studies by Patma et al. (2020) and Tarsakoo and Charoensukmongkol (2019) have shown that technical knowledge or technical know-how is directly related to the use of Social Media Marketing. Thus, it is understood that insufficient technical knowledge is one of the main inhibitors of SMM adoption among SMEs. Therefore, in this study, the following hypothesis is posited:

H₁: Entrepreneur's technical knowledge is positively related to perceived benefits.

2.2.2 Cost Reduction (COS)

Marketing literature categorizes SMM as a low-cost strategic marketing tool, one of the major benefits for SMEs (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020; Kumar & Möller, 2018; Silva et al., 2020; Yao et al., 2019). Additionally, according to the work by Yao et al. (2019), companies wouldn't adopt the SMM mechanism if the initial implementation expenses were high.

The study by Chatterjee and Kar (2020) highlights that a trade-off between benefits and sacrifices is considered when evaluating costs. Furthermore, the cost is significant in the context of a company's adoption of a technology for its growth. Thus, it is understood that a low participation barrier, low cost, and low demand for technical skills motivate companies, especially micro and small ones, to utilize SMM as a tool (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020; Kumar & Möller, 2018).

Based on this, it is reasonable to assume that the higher the perception of cost reduction through the use of SMM, the greater the interest of entrepreneurs, and

consequently, the greater the perceived benefits. In terms of the above discussion, the following hypothesis is postulated.

H₂: The perception of cost reduction is positively related to perceived benefits.

2.2.3 External Pressure (EP)

The literature acknowledges three main external pressures, including competition, supplier pressure, and customer pressure (Eid, Abdelmoety & Agag, 2020; Patma et al., 2020). SMEs perceive new technology as a competitive tool that, when competitors adopt technologies to stay ahead, allows them to quickly adapt and make use of the technology (Almeida et al., 2017; Dos Santos et al., 2020; Matikiti et al., 2018b). The study by Patma et al. (2020) provides practical insights into how micro and small entrepreneurs are impacted by certain factors, particularly the external pressure regarding the use of SMM in businesses.

Therefore, it is likely that companies are induced to adopt SMM due to external pressure exerted by competitors and customers, especially during the pandemic period when SMEs were compelled to engage in social media for competitive advantage and survival. Accordingly, the following hypotheses are formulated:

H₃: Customer pressure is positively related to perceived benefits.

H₄: Competitive pressure is positively related to perceived benefits.

2.2.4 Perceived Benefits (PB)

The primary objective of companies is to maximize profits and financial gains (Patma et al., 2020). The study by Matikiti et al. (2018b) highlights that if a company believes that SMM possesses desirable attributes that can enhance performance, it is more likely to adopt and use it. Moreover, benefits have been considered the most prominent external factors influencing the use of social media marketing.

In this regard, the work of Patma et al. (2020) yields one of its results indicating that perceived benefits positively affect the adoption of the tool. Thus, it is understood that the adoption of SMM will be enhanced if entrepreneurs can identify and perceive the benefits achieved through this strategic tool. This study proposes that:

H₅: The perception of benefits is positively related to the level of tool usage.

As seen in Figure 1, in light of the literature, the argument put forth here is that the constructs "technical knowledge," "cost reduction," "customer pressure," and "competitive pressure" play a role as antecedents to the attitude of adoption, encompassing technological, organizational, and environmental aspects, which in turn relate to the perceived benefits of using SMM.

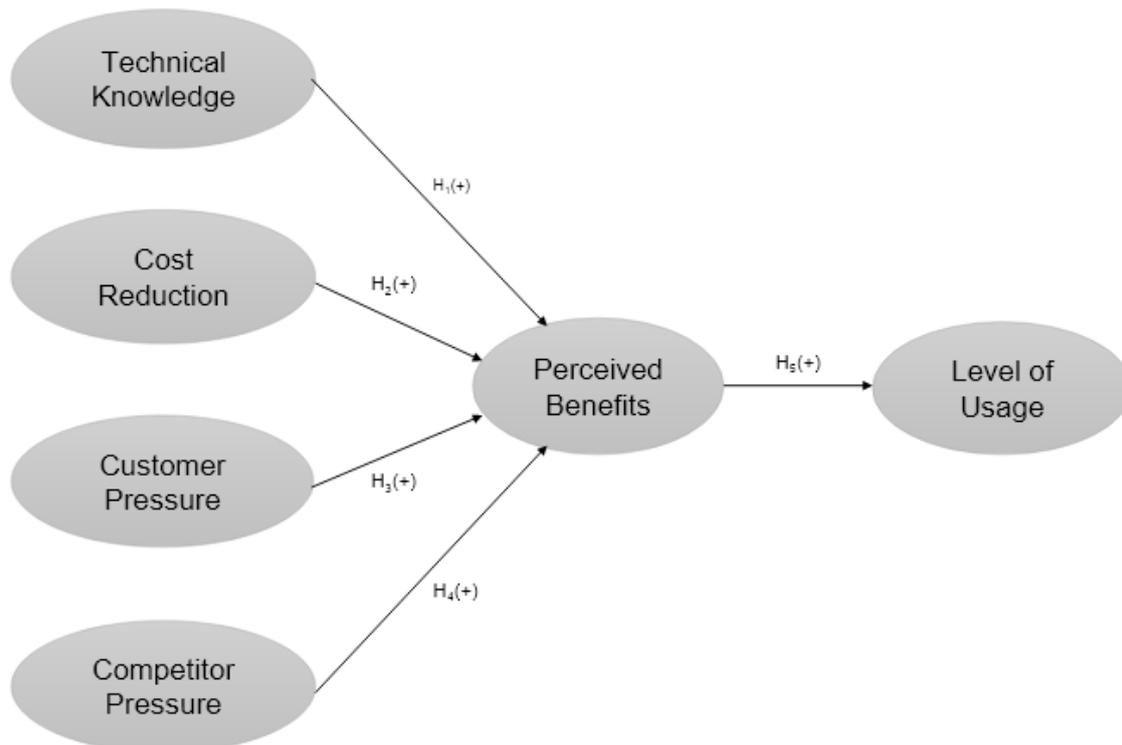


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Model.

Source: Author's own elaboration.

3 METHODOLOGY

The present study is a cross-sectional correlational study in which the adopted method was the survey. The data

collection process involved the completion of online questionnaires provided to entrepreneurs associated with the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support System (Sebrae) from the following cities: Campina Grande and

surrounding cities - Lagoa Seca, Lagoa de Roça, Esperança, Queimadas, Boqueirão. Specific criteria were established for respondent selection: respondents aged 18 years or older, being micro or small entrepreneur, operating in the commerce sector, and using social media for communication, sales, and/or marketing purposes. The data were collected through online questionnaires made available to a Sebrae database of micro and small businesses.

3.1 Data Collection Procedures

The research instrument consisted of a demographic data section: gender, age, and level of education, as well as information regarding sectorization, years of existence, number of employees, and technical knowledge, for sample characterization purposes.

The questionnaire contained measurement scales for each construct: technical knowledge (TK), cost reduction (CUS), customer pressure (CUP), competitive pressure (COP), perceived benefits (PB), and level of usage (LU), as presented in Table 1. The scales were 7-point Likert-type scales, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree with the statements.

The second part of the questionnaire comprised questions aimed at gathering information about the entrepreneurs' characteristics and their businesses. A pre-test of the instrument was conducted to enhance the questionnaire's comprehensibility from the respondents' perspective. In the pilot study using this pre-test, 20 respondents meeting the criteria for the target audience of the main sample were obtained. After considering their feedback, some changes were made to the final questionnaires.

Table 1
Measurement Scale of the Proposed Constructs

Construct	Items	Technical Knowledge (TK)
Technical Knowledge (TK)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •We have adequate experience for SMM; •We have qualified individuals in SMM; •We have people with knowledge of SMM usage. 	Salwani et al. (2009)
Cost Reduction (COS)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •My cost of handling customer inquiries has been reduced using SMM; •The cost of identifying new customers has been reduced through the use of Social Media Marketing; •Customer awareness and training costs have been reduced through SMM usage. 	Kaplan & Haenlein (2010)
Customer Pressure (CUP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Our customers expect us to use social networks; •Our customers demand that we use social media marketing; •The use of social media marketing is something that would make our customers happy. 	Wainyoi et al. (2012); Zhu and Kraemer (2005)
Competitive Pressure (COP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Our competitors have adopted social media marketing; •Our competitors are doing well in social media marketing; •Customers prefer companies that use social media marketing. •Social media marketing can help a company easily reach many customers; 	Salwani et al. (2009); Wainyoi et al. (2012)
Perceived Benefits (PB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Social media marketing helps companies improve customer service; •The use of social media marketing increases the company's ability to compete with others. 	Porter and Donthu (2006)
Level of Usage (LU)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Our company has a comprehensive social media marketing policy; •Our company has specific social media marketing guidelines; •Our company monitors the use of social media marketing; •Our company measures key performance indicators of social media marketing. 	Zhu and Kraemer (2005)

Source: Author's elaboration.

The study focused on the process of adopting SMM. In other words, the relationships between variables (model structure) according to the theoretical foundation (literature review) that supported the construction of hypotheses. Based on this, the sample size required for this study was calculated based on Hair et al.'s (2018) recommendation for a desired level of 15-20 observations per parameter in Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The initial sample consisted of 338 respondents with six constructs measured by 19 psychometric items deemed sufficient ($338 > 15 \cdot 19 = 285$) and well above the recommended threshold.

Therefore, to reach this desired research audience, a non-probability and convenience sampling method was adopted, as Malhotra (2019) suggested, which relied on clients' availability and interest to participate in the research.

The online questionnaires were sent to entrepreneurs via WhatsApp, and the assistance of Local Innovation Agents duly registered by Sebrae, who supported businesses with this profile, was also utilized.

3.2 Analysis Procedure

Before the actual analysis, data screening was conducted (Tukey, 1977). The aim was to identify inconsistencies among responses. Once this process was completed, the database contained 338 valid observations (Table 2).

Next, the subsequent step was to assess the reliability and validity of the scales employed. The following indicators were analyzed: Cronbach's alpha coefficient (CA), composite reliability (CR), average variance extracted

(AVE), and convergent and discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2018; Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Cronbach, 1951).

The study used covariance-based Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for data analysis. Following Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) approach, this statistical procedure involves two stages. First, a measurement model is developed to assess model fit. Then, structural modeling is used to determine the best-fitting model for testing causal relationships between independent and dependent variables. Statistical software R, version 4.2.0 for Windows, was employed to conduct the analysis.

4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Sample Characterization

A total of 338 respondents' data were collected, with the majority being female (53.85%) and having completed a bachelor's or postgraduate degree (58.28%). All interviewees used some form of social media in their businesses, with the primary platforms being Instagram and WhatsApp (95.86%), used on average 5.22 times per week with a median of 4.81, indicating active engagement by the respondents.

The mean age among the interviewees is 38.06 years, with a median of 37.51, and the mean business existence duration is 10.81 years, with a median of 7. Overall, the entrepreneurs are mature and experienced, yet this cannot be considered a criterion directly affecting tool usage. Furthermore, the average number of employees in the companies is 6.39, with a median of 4.39, signifying that most entrepreneurs have employees contributing to business growth. These data are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
Sample Characterization

Variables	Categories	Descriptive Statistics	
		N	%
Age	Mean	38.06	
	Median	37.51	
	Standard Deviation	9.22	
Business Existence Time	Mean	10.81	
	Median	7	
	Standard Deviation	11.36	
Employees	Mean	6.39	
	Median	4.39	
	Standard Deviation	9.51	
Primary Social Media Platform	Facebook	6	1.78
	Google	1	0.3
	Instagram	228	67.46
	LinkedIn	1	0.3
	Pinterest	1	0.3
	TikTok	1	0.3
	WhatsApp	96	28.4
YouTube	4	1.18	
Weekly Usage Frequency	Mean	5.22	
	Median	4.81	
	Standard Deviation	5	

Source: Author's elaboration.

Thus, the sample proved suitable for the study. Most respondents utilize only Instagram and WhatsApp,

indicating that these two social media platforms primarily drive the adoption of Social Media Marketing. At the same time, Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, Pinterest, TikTok, and YouTube do not hold significant relevance for entrepreneurs, collectively representing 4.16%.

Furthermore, despite most entrepreneurs possessing a high level of education, this does not necessarily imply adequate technical knowledge for tool utilization. Only 5.62% of entrepreneurs have incomplete secondary education, and 36.09% have completed secondary education or have incomplete higher education, categorizing them as having intermediate education levels.

4.2 Validation of Scales and Measurement of Constructs

Considering the criterion for convergent validity analysis set by Fornell and Larcker (1981), the average variance extracted (AVE) values should be greater than 0.50. Thus, based on the information in Table 3, a satisfactory result was obtained for the analyzed model.

Regarding the reliability and internal consistency of the model, the values of Cronbach's Alpha demonstrated satisfactory values (all values are > 0.7), confirming the internal validity of the utilized scale. On the other hand, composite reliability (CR) assesses whether the indicators of each construct truly represent them (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988), and values between 0.7 and 0.9 are considered good indicators.

The assessment of collinearity involved calculating the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for each construct (TK = 1.34, COS = 1.44, PC = 1.49, PB = 1.18, LU = 2.02). All indicators met the collinearity criteria with VIF values below five (Hair et al., 2018).

Thus, all indicators displayed values that meet the established criteria, demonstrating the construct validity, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Measurement Model: Reliability and Validity

Construct	Factor Loadings	CA	CR	AVE	VIF
Technical Knowledge (TK)		0.9	0.91	0.77	1.34
TK1	0.753				
TK2	0.950				
TK3	0.899				
Cost Reduction (COS)		0.83	0.83	0.62	1.44
COS1	0.768				
COS2	0.772				
COS3	0.819				
Customer Pressure (CUP)		0.7	0.7	0.52	1.49
CUP1	0.632				
CUP2	0.891				
Competitive Pressure (COP)		0.75	0.75	0.61	1.18
COP1	0.902				
COP2	0.678				
Perceived Benefits (PB)		0.72	0.72	0.5	1.71
PB1	0.702				
PB2	0.685				
PB3	0.669				
Level of Usage (LU)		0.95	0.95	0.81	2.02
LU1	0.900				
LU2	0.920				
LU3	0.890				
LU4	0.901				

Source: Author's elaboration.

The items PCL3 and PCO3 were excluded as their factor loadings were low and did not contribute to the formation of the construct.

Considering the Fornell & Larcker (1981) criterion, discriminant validity was assessed, as the square roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each construct are more significant than the correlations between the constructs, as can be observed in Table 4:

Table 4

Discriminant validity and means and standard deviations of responses on the constructs

Variable	TK	COS	CP	CP	PB	LU
Technical Knowledge (TK)	0.88					
Cost Reduction (COS)	0.25	0.79				
Customer Pressure (CUP)	0.10	0.18	0.72			
Competitive Pressure (COP)	0.01	0.04	0.17	0.78		
Perceived Benefits (PB)	0.18	0.30	0.58	0.21	0.71	
Level of Usage (LU)	0.03	0.27	0.14	0.03	0.20	0.90
Mean	4.92	4.99	5.93	5.65	6.29	4.62
Standard Deviation	1.46	1.41	1.14	1.18	0.85	1.66
Median	5.00	5.00	6.00	6.00	6.67	4.88

Source: Author's elaboration.

4.3 Model Analysis

To assess the fit of the proposed model to the collected data, the method proposed by Byrne (2013) was applied to analyze fit indices for evaluating the adequacy of the proposed model to the sample data.

Thus, various indicators were used for estimation analysis and fit quality evaluation: χ^2 (chi-square), Df (degrees of freedom), χ^2/Df (chi-square divided by degrees of freedom), NFI (normed fit index), IFI (incremental fit index), TLI (Tucker-Lewis index), CFI (comparative fit index), GFI (goodness-of-fit index), RFI (relative fit index), RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation), and SRMR (standardized root mean square residual).

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GFI and RFI should have values between 0 and 1, which allows GFI to represent the covariance between observed and model-calculated variables. For this, the indices need to exceed the value of 0.90 (Yilmaz, 2018). Therefore, the model met the criteria and is considered a good fit (GFI = 0.912 and RFI = 0.910). As for the population approximation error, RMSEA, the obtained value of 0.083 is considered acceptable. While the lower the SRMR value, the better the model fit (Yilmaz, 2018). Thus, the model indicates a good fit, as the SRMR value is 0.048, which is acceptable.

All indices were found to be appropriate, indicating model fit, see Table 5. Thus, the values yielded satisfactory results, demonstrating the adequacy of the proposed model for the collected data. Subsequently, the analysis

proceeded to the structural model, namely, hypothesis verification.

Table 5

Model Fit Indexes

Index	Criterion	Structural Model
χ^2	-	322.833
DF	-	153.000
χ^2/DF	2 - 5	2.11
NFI	≥ 0.900	0.927
IFI	≥ 0.900	0.960
TLI	≥ 0.900	0.950
CFI	≥ 0.900	0.960
GFI	≥ 0.900	0.912
RFI	≥ 0.900	0.910
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.083
SRMR	≤ 0.05	0.048

Source: Author's elaboration.

4.4 Hypotheses Testing

As Anderson and Gerbing (1988) suggested, the research hypotheses are tested in this stage. Thus, technical knowledge and cost reduction were significantly related to perceived benefits ($\beta = 0.167$, $t = 5.568$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.091$, $t = 3.425$, $p < 0.05$), supporting hypotheses H₁, H₂.

Customer pressure and competitive pressure are also related to perceived benefits ($\beta = 0.271$, $t = 6.175$, $p < 0.05$; $\beta = 0.068$, $t = 2.230$, $p < 0.05$), supporting hypotheses H₃, H₄. Table 6 presents the results concerning the postulated hypotheses.

Table 6

Hypotheses of the Final Model

Hypotheses	β	Standard Error	t-test	p-value	Status
H ₁ . TK → PB	0.167	0.030	5.568	0.000	Supported
H ₂ . COS → PB	0.091	0.027	3.425	0.001	Supported
H ₃ . CUP → PB	0.271	0.044	6.175	0.000	Supported
H ₄ . COP → PB	0.068	0.031	2.230	0.026	Supported
H ₅ . PB → LU	1.971	0.226	8.727	0.000	Supported

Source: Author's elaboration.

It can be observed that technical knowledge and customer pressure are the constructs with the most vital relationship with perceived benefits, obtaining the highest beta values (0.167 and 0.271). However, competitive pressure has a weaker influence on the relationship with perceived benefits.

Furthermore, another analysis concerns the evaluation of Pearson's coefficient of determination (R²), which indicates the percentage of variation in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables. According to Cohen (1988), R² is considered a small effect when the value is 2%, a medium effect when the value is 13%, and a significant effect when R² is equal to or greater than 26%.

It was observed that technical knowledge, cost reduction, customer pressure, and competitive pressure explain about 88% (p-value < 0.001) of the perceived benefits by entrepreneurs. In addition, perceived benefits explain about 44% (p-value < 0.001) of the Social Media Marketing usage level in micro and small enterprises, indicating a large effect.

4.5 Discussion of Results

In line with the literature, the research highlighted that the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) model identifies three contexts that influence the process through which an organization adopts and implements the SMM (Social Media Marketing) technological tool: technological, organizational, and environmental. Based on these contexts, variables were selected to analyze the adoption process of Social Media Marketing by micro and small enterprises in Paraíba, considering certain conditioning factors and inherent barriers.

The findings of this study demonstrate that the entrepreneur's technical knowledge is positively related to the perceived benefits of adopting Social Media Marketing. This implies that the greater the entrepreneur's technical knowledge, the higher the perception of the benefits of utilizing SMM as a strategic tool. This finding aligns with the outcomes from the studies of Dahnil et al. (2014), Patma et al. (2020), and Tarsakoo and Charoensukmongkol (2019). This suggests that higher technical knowledge leads to a heightened perception of the benefits associated with tool usage. Specifically, regarding micro and small enterprises (MSEs), inadequate technical knowledge could hinder the effective implementation of SMM, highlighting it as a significant barrier.

An essential aspect of SMM adoption is costs (Chatterjee & Kumar, 2020). Kumar and Möller (2018) add that traditional media usage in marketing activities is expensive, so companies increasingly embrace SMM for its cost-effective solution. Furthermore, companies would not adopt SMM if the initial adoption expenses were high (Yao et al., 2019).

In this sense, the current research corroborates the literature. This suggests that cost reduction plays a conditioning role in using SMM by MSEs, meaning that cost reduction is positively related to the perceived benefits of adopting Social Media Marketing. This implies that the higher the perception of low costs, the greater the perception of benefits in utilizing SMM as a strategic tool.

Furthermore, this study revealed that customer pressure positively relates to the perceived benefits of adopting Social Media Marketing. In other words, the greater the customer pressure, the higher the perception of the benefits of using SMM as a strategic tool. This is consistent with other studies: Patma et al. (2020) demonstrated that external pressure positively affects SMM adoption. However, Matikiti et al. (2018) couldn't establish a relationship between customer pressure and attitude toward SMM adoption; although it is not the same related variable, it holds significance in the theme.

Within external pressure, beyond customer pressure, the pressure from competitors is also included (Dahnil et al., 2014). This study further confirmed that competitive pressure positively relates to the perceived benefits of adopting Social Media Marketing. Thus, it can be asserted that the greater the pressure from competitors, the higher the perception of the benefits of utilizing SMM as a strategic tool.

Based on this, Patma et al. (2020) concluded that due to external pressure on MSEs, some competitors have adopted SMM in their companies to reach new customers, greater profitability, and competitive advantage. This is because competitors recognize the importance of SMM and use it in their business activities. They also perceive that MSE customers are ready to conduct business online through social media applications and are becoming increasingly demanding and quick in their interactions and purchasing processes.

The results also demonstrate that perceived benefits influence entrepreneurs' adoption and use of SMM. Suppose individuals perceive that using SMM will benefit or provide a competitive advantage to their business. In that case, their attitude toward social media adoption will be positive, as well as their continued usage.

According to researchers Praveena and Thomas (2014) and Shen (2015), if an organization has a positive attitude toward SMM adoption, it will want to continue using it.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to analyze the Social Media Marketing (SMM) adoption process by micro and small enterprises, considering various influencing factors and inherent barriers. It was observed that greater recognition of these factors led to higher perceived benefits of adoption and an increased interest in continuing to use the strategic tool. Consequently, the results shed light on how SMM usage has brought opportunities for MSEs, as micro and small entrepreneurs have enhanced their businesses and become more competitive.

The research found that technical knowledge, cost reduction, customer pressure, and competitive pressure influence entrepreneurs' perception of the benefits of adopting SMM and continuing its usage.

Hence, this work holds both academic and managerial implications. From an academic perspective, this study explains how micro and small enterprises utilize SMM. Moreover, the study validates the applicability of the TOE theory in analyzing SMM usage by these enterprises. On the managerial front, this study provides entrepreneurs with a comprehensive view of what can contribute to or hinder the adoption and sustained usage of SMM. It underscores that SMM is a tool that provides a competitive advantage and an area needing further development.

Furthermore, this research could inform policies to support micro and small enterprises using social media. The Brazilian Support Service for Micro and Small Enterprises (Sebrae) (2020) reports that most small business entities comprise micro and small enterprises, recognized as critical contributors to economic growth, development, and employment.

Moreover, this work offers valuable insights that can assist businesses adopting social media as a marketing tool, particularly micro and small enterprises. Therefore, this

understanding enables the co-creation of commercial activities for MSEs to harness opportunities, knowledge, and results.

One limitation of this research is its exclusive sample composition of entrepreneurs from Paraíba. The study also focused solely on the commerce sector. Hence, future research is suggested to diversify the sample to include entrepreneurs from other states and sectors, enabling a comparative analysis to identify regional and sectoral differences and similarities.

The research provided the model with a 44% explanatory power. As a suggestion for future research, exploring other factors that could act as moderators or mediators to improve this result would be interesting. This study did not explore the impact of cultural dispositions on entrepreneurs from different regions regarding their adoption behavior. The extent to which such considerations might affect the outcomes remains unknown.

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