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Social media use among small and medium enterprises: a case of fashion industry growth

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Abstract

This article examines how social identity, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use influence the use of social media in SMEs and whether the use of social media influences the growth of fashion SMEs in Kenya. A survey involving 394 owner-managers of fashion SMEs from Nairobi and Kiambu counties was done, using a structured questionnaire; and multivariate analysis was done through structural equations modelling. Social identity and perceived ease of use bore significant influence on the usage of social media whereas perceived usefulness showed no significance in influencing owner-managers' intention to use social media. The use of social media on the other hand had a significant influence on SME growth. Social media usage is considered useful in business but there is no motivation towards usage by the owner-mangers. Policy makers can therefore provide an enabling environment to encourage use of social media by SMEs. This study sought to find out whether or not the use of social media has a direct effect on growth of SMEs.
Keywords: Social media, SMEs, attitudes, perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness

Introduction

Small and Medium-size Enterprises (SMEs) constitute the most embraced business model in Africa, breathing life to the economy of the majority of developing and emerging economies across the globe (Central Bank of Kenya, 2017). In Kenya, they are considered engines for economic growth as they create over 80% of employment (Republic of Kenya, 2012). Growth of SMEs has been attributed to a number of factors including the use of social media (Pentina, Koh & Le, 2012). Studies show that social media add value to business; however, it has not been established if their use has a direct effect on the growth of SMEs (Kisato, Wakanda & JoAnne, 2016).

Looking at the fashion industry, studies have revealed that textile, apparel and clothing industries in Kenya have recorded slow growth compared to other SME sectors (Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2016). Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2016) further indicates that the fashion industry in Kenya would have grown further if it had embraced the use of ICT in positioning itself in the market. Over the past few years, the fashion industry in Kenya has shown interest in incorporating social media in its business; however, it is important to find out whether

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this has any effect on the industry growth (Business Daily, 2018). The advent of social media has brought new marketing opportunities that can help fashion SMEs increase their visibility in the market and be able to increase their number of transactions and sales (Chaffey, 2008).

Social media is one of the fastest-growing promotion channels in the world (Coremetrics, 2010). This trend reflects a paradigm shift in the way business has been conducted. There is a shift from the use of traditional media such as television, newspapers, radio, and magazines to interactive platforms (Pentina *et al*., 2012). However, while the significance of social media in business is being acknowledged, the decision to use this new promotional technology by SMEs is not automatic (Pentina *et al*., 2012). Abou-Shouk, Megicks and Lim (2013) argue that SMEs, particularly from developing countries, are slow adopters and users of social media.

Research has further shown that attitude is the key factor in analysing ICT usage (Davis, 1989; Davis, Bagozzi & Warshaw, 1989; Kuo & Yen, 2009; Liao, Tsou & Huang, 2007; Lu, Tao & Wang, 2009). The exchange of information on social media platforms has an effect on the attitudes of SMEs owner-mangers, and this greatly shapes their usage of social media for business purposes (Soderlund & Rosegren, 2007). While studying social media, attitude is an important factor in defining their usage and the extent to which users can engage each other by explaining the preference or rejection (Rafael, Carla & Silvia, 2013).

Earlier studies have shown that the Social Identity Theory contributes to the understanding of social media use in various ways because it explains attitude towards usage (Madrigal, 2001). Madrigal (2001) investigated the direct and indirect effects of social identity on the use of social media in a corporate context and found out that customer identification towards a company was reported to contribute to a higher level of desired behavioural outcomes such as customer loyalty and willingness to purchase (Huang, Phau, & Lin, 2010). Although investigations on the direct effect of social identity on SME engagement in social media usage appear to be limited, the reported relationships between attitudes, including emotional support and commitment, support the thinking that social identity plays a key role in driving the intention to use and the actual usage of social media (Gupta, Kim, & Shin, 2010; Liang, Ho, Li, & Turban, 2011).

The perception of owner-managers, on the other hand, has also been identified as a significant predictor of consumer predisposition towards the use of ICT and specifically social media (Chen, 2006; Lubbe, 2007; Kamarulzaman, 2007; Kim, T, Kim, H., & Shim, 2009). Davis (1989) and Davis *et al*. (1989) further explain that people tend to use or not use an application because of the extent they believe it will help them perform their job better (perceived usefulness). Also, even if potential users believe that a given application is useful, they may, at the same time, believe that it is too hard or easy to use and that the performance benefits of usage are out-weighed by the effort of using it (perceived ease of use). Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are key constructs in describing acceptance and usage of ICT. Researchers (e.g. Koufaris, 2002) validated these constructs because they were found to influence ICT usage; however, the study proposed further studies on these constructs regarding their influence on social media usage.

The development and use of social media seem to outpace that in literature and academic research (Elly, 2011). Given the speed of development in ICT in general and social media in particular, social media usage has outpaced the development of current academic research among business in particular the SMEs (Kietzmann *et al*., 2012). Further studies suggest that theory and practice about the use of social media is inadequate (Elly, 2011; Durkin *et al*., 2013). This study therefore sought to bridge this gap in order to match research and the usage of social media among SMEs.

From a theoretical perspective, this study earmarks social identity as a key influencing factor in the usage of social media. Furthermore, existing research suggests that social identity is a key influencing factor in the study of usage of social media, explaining the attitudes towards intention to use and actual usage of the media (Schillewaert, 2010). However, in the study of technology usage and especially the use of social media, attitudinal and behavioural theories; Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), have been extensively used with very high dominance (Lee, Kozar, & Larsen, 2003; Hoof, Groot, & Jonge, 2005). This does not ignore the immense contributions that these theories have brought into such studies. However, the Social Identity Theory, which is another attitudinal theory that explains social media usage as well, seems to have been left out (Wang, 2017).

Theoretical context

The study was guided by the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) and Social Identity Theory (SIT). TAM essentially describes how users of technology come to accept and use the technology. Davis (1989) developed TAM which specifies the causal relationships between system design features, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitude toward using and actual usage behaviour. When users are presented with a new technology, the decision about how and when to use it is influenced by several factors. These include perceived usefulness; the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance their job performance, and perceived ease of use; the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free from effort. TAM has been used in a number of researches in social media use (Sheng & Zolfagharian, 2014; Pavlou, 2003; Pentina *et al*., 2012; Lee *et al*., 2006; Koufaris, 2002). These studies agree that the use of social media is anchored on perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use influence an individual's attitude towards using social media (intention). According to TAM, intentions to use technology will determine whether a person will use the technology or not (behaviour). This theory is significant in this study because the study derives two constructs from TAM: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) extends the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by adding perceived behavioural control as an additional determinant of intention and behaviour. TPB claims that behaviour is a direct function of behavioural intention which is determined by three factors: attitude, subjective norm and perceived behavioural control. Ajzen (1991) reviewed several studies using the TPB model and stated that attitude, subjective norms and perceived behavioural control are usually found to predict behavioural intentions with a high degree of accuracy. TPB has been successfully applied to understand individual acceptance and usage of technologies (Harrison *et al*., 1997).

The Social Identity Theory (SIT) suggests that people define themselves based on personal and social aspects (Tajfel, 1982). Personal identity depicts a person's distinct characteristics, including personal traits and abilities. The social aspect (i.e. social identification) refers to the perception of belonging to a human group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Tajfel (1981) defined social identity as that part of an individual's self-concept, which derives from one's knowledge of their membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership. Social identity therefore supports positive associations with participation behaviour, i.e. the intention to use and actual usage of social media (Dholakia *et al*.,

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2004; Lee *et al*., 2011). This theory therefore supports this study by showcasing individuals' behaviour and attitudes in identifying themselves with the usage of social media.

Attitudes, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness

Attitude refers to an individual's general predisposition towards a given behaviour and is the result of individual beliefs concerning the behaviour and its results and the importance attached to such beliefs. Thus, attitude is an individual's positive or negative evaluation of a given object or behaviour (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and includes feelings or affective responses towards the object or behaviour, behavioural and cognitive components that explain preference or rejection by users. Chuttur (2009) further suggests that attitude in social media usage would make the user feel that the decision to use social media is either good/bad, wise/foolish, favourable/unfavourable, beneficial/harmful or positive/negative.

In the context of this study, attitude can be understood as a user's favourable or unfavourable predisposition towards the use of a social networking site. Studies emphasise that attitude to use information technology is a key factor in the analysis of technology usage behaviour (Davis, 1989; Davis *et al*., 1989; Kuo & Yen, 2009; Liao *et al*., 2007; Lu *et al*., 2009). Users who participate in social networking sites can develop affective ties with other participants (Gruen *et al*., 2006), which in turn influences their attitude. The exchange of information on social networking sites also modifies participants' attitudes (Soderlund & Rosegren, 2007). Lee *et al*. (2008) opine that comments from other users influence participants' attitudes positively or negatively. Positive attitude is therefore important for social media promotion to take place effectively. Most importantly, the owner-mangers need to have the right attitude in order to use social media in their businesses as a promotional tool. The perceived ease of use of a technology should lead to greater usefulness of such technology. Perceived ease of use is specifically conceptualised by Davis (1989) to describe a system that is free of effort; an application that a user can navigate the system easily, while perceived usefulness is associated specifically with an individual improving his/her own job performance. Nevertheless, acceptance of a social networking website tool is very much dependent on ease of use and usefulness.

Growth of SMEs

Growth in small firms can be measured by various levels of sales growth over a defined period (percentage growth or comparison with other firms in the same industry) and/or employee growth. Barkham *et al.* (1996) confirm that a firm's growth may be measured based on its revenue, profits or by the amount of human and physical capital it employs. Revenue may be considered a precise indicator of how a firm is competing within a market and indeed firms themselves tend to use it as a measure of their own performance. Any analysis of company growth should at least be based on changes in turnover (Barkham *et al.*, 1996). However, there are other factors that influence growth of small firms such as founder characteristics, business practices, firm attributes and human resource practices (Barringer *et al.*, 2005). This study considered sales, profitability and employment as indicators of growth because these measures are most widely perceived as measures of growth in empirical growth research (Delmar, 1998). Growth in sales and employees are the most commonly measured factors in studies of growth (Wiklund & Shepherd, 2003).

Hypothesis development

Because social media promotions evolve from social interactions developed in social media platforms, purchase behaviour is less likely to occur without use behaviour being observed (Wang, 2017). Compared with inactive users, active members are more likely to engage in usage behaviour. Earlier research suggests that mere categorisation into a social group is not always accompanied by emotional commitment to the group; thus, in-group behaviour is not a natural outcome. When members emotionally get committed to a social group, they are more likely to perform in-group behaviours, such as patronage to online communities in the social media context. Empirical evidence from a survey of young social media users suggests that users who are emotionally involved with an online group are more likely to actively use social media than those with less emotional involvement (Hadad, 2015).

On the other hand, attitude represents a conscious awareness of one's membership in a social group. Without this membership awareness, individuals have no foundation on which to define their social identities. Once this base is well-established, the desired outcome behaviours may then be observed. The overall effects of social identity and attitude support positive associations with participation behaviour, i.e. the intention to use and the actual usage of social media (Dholakia *et al*., 2004; Lee *et al*., 2011). Therefore, in light of this, the study proposes that social identity exerts a positive effect on both intention to use and actual usage of social media. Thus, the following hypothesis is put forth:

H1: *Social identity elements influence the use of social media in SMEs*

Perceived usefulness defines prospective user's subjective probability that using a specific application improves operations (Lu *et al.*, 2009). It provides diagnostic lenses into how actual use and intention to use are influenced. Perceived usefulness resides in Vroom's Expectancy Theory, as the decision to adopt and use an innovation driven by its near-term and long-term expected results (Triandis, 1977). The near-term results are synonymous with postulates of perceived usefulness; and the long-term consequences refer to the consequential results in one's career or social image, which reflects Rogers' (2003) most important motivation for adoption and use of innovation. The attainment of perceived near-term usefulness paves way for long-term usefulness. Chau (2001) did similar work in decomposing the construct of perceived usefulness into perceived near-term and perceived long-term in his modified TAM and hypothesised that behavioural intentions are dependent on the two variables mentioned above and perceived ease of use.

Decomposing perceived usefulness as Triandis (1977) and Chau (2001) did explicitly provides more specific lenses into understanding user perception of its usefulness. Jiang *et al.* (2000) further expanded perceived usefulness by developing the utilisation of the Internet Technology Model to explore user acceptance of the Internet, and proposed that the Internet is positively related to perceived near-term and perceived long-term usefulness. Therefore, people tend to use or not use an application because of the extent they believe it will help them perform their job better. If social media is perceived useful there will exist a positive use-performance relationship. Perceived usefulness explains the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would enhance his/her job performance (Davis, 1989). Therefore, the following hypothesis is put forth:

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H2: *Perceived usefulness of social media influences the use of social media in SMEs*

Perceived ease of use measures the prospective user's assessment of the mental efforts required of the use of the target application (Davis, 1993). Mental effortlessness demanded by an ICT attracts more adoption behaviour; thus, innovations with perceived complexities of user interface and steep learning curve are thought risky to adopt (Opia, 2008). Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU) is a distinct but related construct to Perceived Usefulness (PU). It impacts on near-term usefulness, as improvement in it contributes positively to outcomes and ultimately defines PU. Studies to assess observed usefulness and ease of use trade-off and to determine the impacts of external variables on these two mental determinants show mixed findings (Davis, 1993; Chau, 2001). Nevertheless, empirical findings confirm the positive relationship between ease of use and attitude towards use and show that PEOU is a proven key determinant of users' intention to accept ICT (Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). Clarke (2000) supported this when his survey of 800 professionals ranked ease of use among the five factors that determined the use of wireless handheld devices. Thus, ease of use is a powerful determinant of the intention to accept innovation. Therefore, if social media is perceived easy to use, it is more likely to be accepted by users (Davis, 1989) and the following hypothesis is put forth:

H3: *Perceived ease of use of social media influences the use of social media in SMEs*

Users of media are habitually active as well as goal-oriented, and are usually motivated to choose a medium that best meets their needs (Roy, 2009). Thus, continual usage of a specific media is premised on the value that comes along with it, generally typified via user satisfaction. According to Burton-Jones and Gallivan (2007), this study operationalised social media usage following the system-centred approach, where the measures of the system usage are based on the growth outcomes for which the system is employed. Social media researchers have enumerated a number of uses for social media by most firms. Notable among the uses are to look for ways to attract new customers, cultivate relationships, increase awareness, communicate the brand online, as well as receive feedback from customers and business partners (Michaelidou *et al*., 2011). Anecdotal evidence suggests that these are implemented as firms create communities, distribute content (Kumar *et al*., 2016) and increase traffic to their websites, in pursuit of identifying new business opportunities and building direct relationships with existing and prospective clients to foster business growth and increase revenues (Breslauer *et al*., 2009; eMarketer, 2013).

The benefits associated with its usage are wide and varied. Empirically, Kwok & Yu (2013) have found that Facebook usage for instance increases sales of businesses. In addition to this, evidence of the benefits of using social media has also been provided by other scholars (Wamba & Carter, 2014; Aladwani, 2015). However, user behaviours vary on social media sites (Hughes *et al*., 2012), suggesting possible differences in outcomes across enterprises. Nevertheless, by synthesising these usage outcomes, it is evident that the overarching goal of social media usage is to enhance organisational performance, in both financial and non-financial terms (Ainin *et al*., 2015). These financial and non-financial outcomes ultimately become the resultant benefits firms obtain from using social media.

The use of social media has been found to improve business competitiveness, providing opportunities for SMEs to compete favourably (Chapman *et al*., 2010). The development of social media in the last ten years globally has involved a growing number of businesses and has

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been used as an important lever to promote business growth (Bianchi & Bivona, 2012). It is important for SMEs to grow steadily, in order to maintain competitive advantage. Social media researchers have enumerated a number of uses of social media by SMEs which include the quest to attract new customers, cultivate relationships with customers, increase brand awareness and receive feedback from customers to stimulate business growth (Ainin *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the following hypothesis is put forth:

H4: *The use of social media in SMEs influences growth*

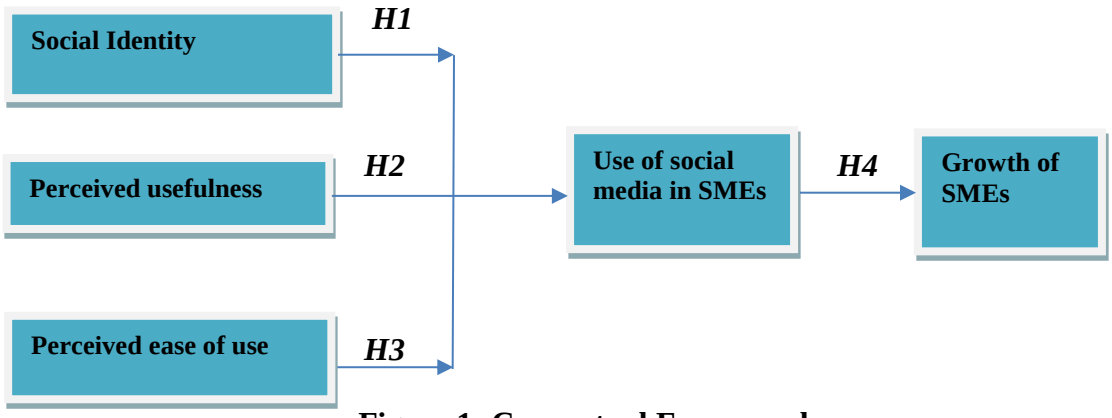


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework
(Source: Literature Review)

Methodology

This research employed quantitative research techniques. A total of 394 owner-managers of fashion SMEs from Nairobi and Kiambu counties were surveyed using a structured questionnaire. From a Kenya National Bureau of Statistics (2016) survey, Kenya had a total of 1.5 million registered SMEs across the 47 counties. Out of these, Nairobi County had 17% of the total registered SMEs. Kiambu County followed with 8%, while the remaining 45 counties had less than 5% each of the registered SMEs. This implies that Nairobi and Kiambu counties hosted 25% of Kenyas' SMEs while 75% of the SMEs were distributed in the other counties.

The study used random sampling after obtaining the sampling frame from the Registrar of Micro and Small Enterprises in Kenya of the said counties. Important information obtained from the Registrar of Micro and Small Enterprises included telephone numbers, names of the business owners and the location of such businesses. This comprehensive list of SMEs was used to generate a sample using rules governing probability sampling whereby every element of the population has an equal chance of being selected to form a study sample. Collected data was analysed mainly through multivariate analysis, using structural equations modelling. Data processing involved data preparation, analysis, presentation and hypothesis testing as shown in the next sections.

Results and Discussion

The study sought to look at the effects of social identity, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use of the SME owner-managers towards the use of social media and the influence of social media use on SME growth. Literature on the questioned relationship reveals mixed findings

(Simpson *et al*., 2006; Chaston, 1997; Pentina *et al*., 2012). Some argue that the use of promotion in SMEs does not have any impact on their growth while others argue that the use of promotion has a very significant impact (Pentina *et al*., 2012). Further, SMEs have started embracing the use of social media in their businesses as a tool that would make their brands visible in the market and thus be able to experience growth.

Reliability and Validity

The degree to which the research captured what it intended to measure, and therefore making findings true representation of what was measured was assessed through convergent validity (Neuman, 2014; Saunders *et al.,* 2016). This measurement in Structural Equations Modelling (SEM) is measured by assessing the factor loading. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was done and the results indicated loadings ranging from 0.42 to 0.84. Loadings should be at least 0.5 but for a good model it should be 0.7 or higher. In this case, constructs that had loadings below 0.60 were deleted. The resulting loadings ranged between 0.67 to 0.84 with two loadings below 0.70 at 0.64 and 0.67. Falk and Miller (1992) recommended that a loading should be at least 0.55, which explains at least 30% of the variance in the variable. The modification indices were also observed and adjusted to improve the model.

Assessment of the hypotheses

Table 1: Structural model assessment results

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label	Standardised Estimate
USM	<---	PU	.066	.108	.605	.545	par_19	0.060
USM	<---	SI	.240	.058	4.148	***	par_21	0.252
USM	<---	PEOU	.571	.109	5.254	***	par_25	0.499
GSME	<---	USM	1.150	.114	10.130	***	par_20	1.167

The first hypothesis of the study was stated as follows:

H1: *Social identity influences the use of social media in SMEs*

The SEM results revealed that there was a significant relationship between social identity and social media usage (β estimate = 0.240; *t*-value = 4.148 and *p*-value = 0.000). Based on these findings, this hypothesis is supported. The standardised results confirm that there is a positive relationship between social identity elements and the use of social media. The standardised coefficient is associated with the critical value, C.R. = 4.148 using significance level of $p < 0.05$, C.R. > 1.96 which indicates that the relationship is significant as summarised in Table 1. The standardised estimate for this relationship is shown to be 0.252. Hoe (2008) indicates that the

standardised path coefficient should be at least 0.2 for it to be considered meaningful and significant for discussing the results.

The results therefore confirm a strong positive relationship between social identity and social media use. In terms of standard deviation, this is a clear indication that when social identity goes up by a standard deviation (one standard deviation), social media use goes up by 0.252 standard deviation. The overall effect of social identity generally supports positive association with participation behaviour, i.e. the intention to use and the actual usage of social media (Dholakia *et al*., 2004; Lee *et al*., 2011).

The second hypothesis of the study was stated as follows:

H2: *Perceived usefulness of social media influences the use of social media in SMEs*

Contrary to the first hypothesis, the SEM results revealed that there was no significant relationship in the second hypothesis (β estimate = 0.066; *t*-value = 0.605 and *p*-value = 0.545). Based on these results, the second hypothesis is not supported. The standardised estimate of this path is indicated as 0.060 with $p > 0.05$ and C.R. = 0.605. With C.R. < 1.96, standardised coefficient estimates of less than 0.2 as discussed earlier and *p*-value greater than 0.05 is a clear indication that there is a negative relationship between perceived usefulness and social media use. The results therefore do not support the second hypothesis. The study shows that users have different reasons for using social media apart from it being perceived as useful. Although most researchers show perceived usefulness to be directly related to ICT usage, there are some findings that show there is no significant effect (Ndubisi, Jantan, & Richardson, 2001) and Igbaria *et al*. (1995). The third hypothesis of the study was stated as follows:

H3: *Perceived ease of use influences the use of social media in SMEs*

The SEM results here confirmed that this relationship was significant (β estimate = 0.571; *t*-value = 5.254 and *p*-value = 0.000). The third hypothesis was therefore supported based on these results. The standardised results show positive path coefficient of 0.499, critical value, C.R. = 5.254 and $p< 0.05$ indicating that there is a positive relationship between perceived ease of use and usage of social media in SMEs. This is indication that when perceived ease of use goes up by a standard deviation (one standard deviation), use of social media goes up by 0.499 standard deviation. Davis (1989) states that perceived ease of use is the degree to which a person believes that using a particular system would be free of effort and thus if social media is perceived easy to use it is more likely to be accepted by users. The study confirms that this is true. The fourth hypothesis was used as a mediator hypothesis since the use of social media was used as a fully mediating variable. The fourth hypothesis of the study was therefore stated as follows:

H4: *The use of social media influences growth of SMEs*

The SEM results confirmed that this, just like the first and the third hypotheses, showed that the relationship was statistically supported (β estimate = 1.150; *t*-value = 10.130 and *p*-value = 0.000). The fourth hypothesis is supported based on the SEM results. A standard coefficient path of 1.167 and $p < 0.001$ indicates a positive relationship between use of social media and growth of SMEs. When social media use goes up by a standard deviation (one standard deviation),

growth of SMEs goes up by 1.167 standard deviations indicating a very strong positive relationship between social media use and growth of SMEs. This supports the fourth hypothesis (*H4*). The study confirms that the use of social media has been found to improve business competitiveness, providing opportunities for SMEs to compete favourably and experience growth (Chapman *et al*., 2010). The development of social media in the last ten years globally has involved a growing number of businesses and has been used as an important lever to promote business growth (Bianchi & Bivona, 2012).

Covariances

The study further examined the covariances between the variables so as to explain whether the relationships between the variables were meaningful. The covariances are summarised in table 2.

Table 2: Covariances

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label	Correlations Estimates
SI	<-->	PU	.241	.026	9.312	***	par_22	0.811
PU	<-->	PEOU	.211	.024	8.863	***	par_23	0.849
SI	<-->	PEOU	.198	.025	8.057	***	par_24	0.692

The results indicate that there were significant relationships between the three independent variables. First, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use had a statistically significant correlation with a C.R. value of 8.863 which is above the accepted limit of 1.96. Secondly, social identity versus perceived usefulness had a statistically significant correlation with a C.R. value of 9.312. Finally, social identity versus perceived ease of use was also statistically significant with an accepted C.R. value of 8.057.

Discussion

The study provides a framework for understanding how social media use brings about growth in SMEs. While understanding that the relationship between social media use and SME growth has been a subject of interest for researchers and practitioners in this area, previous empirical studies have reported mixed findings (Simpson *et al*., 2006). Researchers have been looking at ways through which SMEs could take advantage of modern technological platforms to foster their growth. The findings in the present study show that social identity and perceived ease of use bear significant influence on the usage of social media, whereas perceived usefulness showed no significance. The use of social media on the other hand had significant influence towards the growth of SMEs. These results are consistent with previous studies conducted in other contexts (Ainin *et al*., 2015).

When members get emotionally committed to a social group, they are more likely to perform in-group behaviours, such as patronage to online communities in the social media context. In addition, empirical evidence from a recent survey of social media users suggests that users who are emotionally involved with an online group are more likely to actively use social

media than those with less emotional involvement (Hadad, 2015). However, in the TAM model, a link between perceived usefulness and behavioural intention was incorporated by Davis *et al*. (1989) to suggest that perceived usefulness may impact on behavioural intention to use a technology-based system, irrespective of attitude towards this system, provided that the use of the system is perceived to offer direct benefits to the user. As such, users can adopt and use a particular technology not because they perceive it is useful but because there are particular benefits the users are looking for. Therefore, although most researchers have found perceived usefulness to be directly related to usage, there are some findings that show no significant effect on usage such as what Ndubisi *et al*. (2001) reported. The finding of an insignificant relationship between PU and actual usage is further echoed by Igbaria *et al*. (1995).

Further, previous research has argued that there is a positive relationship between perceived ease of use with acceptance of information technology (Thong *et al*., 2004) and this finding has also been validated in social media use (Pentina *et al*., 2012; Ainin *et al*., 2015). Social media is therefore seen as an emerging technology that can be used as a strategic business tool for SMEs in Kenya and around the world. The study findings show that there is a significant relationship between social media use and growth of SMEs. This is accurate since through social media, SMEs can build better, effective and interactive relationships with customers and prospects by utilising social media platforms. This will in turn increase the chances for making repeated sales. On the other hand, increased online presence increases the visibility of fashion products, which exposes them to prospects. Past research suggests that accessible content on the social media platforms increases the potential of making a sale (Wang, 2017), which in turn translates to business growth.

Conclusion

This article discusses social media use in SMEs and the benefits associated with its usage in terms of business growth. The study examined these relationships grounded on the Social Identity Theory, Technology Acceptance Model and Theory of Planned Behaviour. The research found that social identity, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were factors that consequently resulted in the realisation of growth of SMEs. These results are consistent with results of previous studies conducted in other contexts (Ainin *et al*., 2015). The results of this study however have shown that motivation towards the usage of social media is centred on benefits derived from use and not the positive associations and participation behaviour as proposed by Lee *et al*. (2011). This implies that social media usage is considered useful in business but there is no motivation towards usage by the owner-mangers. Contrary to Simpson *et al*. (2006) who points out that there is little empirical evidence supporting the claim that promotion activities improve business growth, the study strongly suggests that promotion is a very important aspect of SME growth.

As TAM examines the perceptions (perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness) and the attitudes of technology users that affect the behavioural inclination of the users, social identity also examined the perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of the users of technology in categorising them into groups. These two theories merged very well and the study agreed with this merger as social identity proved to have a positive influence on social media usage. Based on the SEM results, the overall effects of social identity generally support positive association

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with participation behaviour, i.e. the intention to use and actual usage of social media, confirming that there is a positive relationship between social identity and the use of social media in SMEs.

This research provides helpful insights about how SMEs could take advantage of social media and efficiently use their resources to make their businesses grow and increase visibility of their products in the market. Social media is a research agenda and its role in sales, support or brand popularity has been researched and found to yield results over time with persistent use (Chen *et al*., 2018). Owner-managers are therefore encouraged to engage in consistent usage of social media platforms so as to realise the benefits that come along with the usage.

According to the study, there is a need to have policy interventions designed to encourage the use of social media and embrace the special characteristics of small firms at government and learning institutions levels. Small firms should therefore be encouraged to share social media experience among themselves and in collaboration with higher learning institutions that are actively conducting research. This will help SMEs to better understand and use social media to foster their growth.

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