

Social Media Capability Optimization to Achieve Greater Marketing Performance for Local SMEs: A Theoretical Framework

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Abstract. Social media marketing is a strategic approach that leverages social media platforms to enhance brand visibility and engage with consumers, offering significant advantages over traditional marketing methods, including cost-effectiveness and precise targeting. This study explores the concept of Social Media Capability (SMC), which encompasses the competencies necessary for organizations to effectively utilize social media for achieving marketing objectives. Strong SMC enables businesses to create engaging content, interact with customers, analyze data, and align social media strategies with overall business goals. As organizations face rapidly changing market dynamics, possessing robust SMC allows them to adapt to consumer preferences and competitive pressures. The role of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in national economies is well recognized, particularly their contributions to employment and cultural heritage preservation. In Indonesia, Batik SMEs exemplify this dual role, promoting traditional craftsmanship while providing economic benefits to local communities. However, these enterprises encounter challenges, such as limited financial resources and stiff competition from larger brands, which hinder their growth and sustainability. To address these challenges, SMEs must optimize their internal resources, guided by Resource-Based Theory (RBT), which emphasizes the importance of unique, valuable, and organized resources in achieving competitive advantage. This study proposes a theoretical framework that positions SMC as a vital intangible resource for enhancing SMEs' marketing performance, particularly in the fashion industry. By examining the integration of SMC into Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, this framework seeks to clarify how effective management of SMC can translate into improved firm performance. Ultimately, this research aims to provide practical insights for SME owners, highlighting the importance of SMC as an internal resource that can be strategically leveraged to gain a competitive edge in the market. Through a literature review and the development of a comprehensive framework, the study underscores the critical role of SMC in enabling SMEs to navigate the complexities of the modern business landscape and enhance their overall performance.

Keywords: Social Media Capability; Innovation Ambidexterity; Marketing Performance; SMEs

Introduction

Social media marketing is a strategic approach that leverages social media platforms to promote products, services, and brands, aiming to engage with consumers and enhance brand visibility (Koesharijadi, et al. 2022). The effectiveness of social media marketing lies in its ability to foster direct communication between brands and consumers, enabling business to build relationship, gather feedback, and enhance customer loyalty (Leung, et al. 2013). One of the primary benefits of social media marketing is its cost-effectiveness compared to traditional marketing methods. Brands can reach a wide audience without the substantial financial investment typically required for television or print advertising (Pour, et al. 2021). Moreover, social media marketing allows for precise targeting, enabling businesses to tailor their messages to specific

demographics and psychographics, thereby increasing the likelihood of engagement and conversion (Haro, et al. 2020; Fan, 2023).

Organization's ability to effectively utilize social media platforms to achieve its objectives could be referred to Social Media Capability (SMC). This concept encompasses a range of competencies, including the ability to create engaging content, interact with customers, analyze social media data, and integrate social media strategies with overall business goals (Wang, et al. 2017; Tarsakoo & Charoensukmongkol, 2019; Li, et al., 2020). The development of social media capability is critical for organizations seeking to leverage dynamic nature of social media to enhance their marketing performance and foster customer relationships (Mumi & Leemanowarachai, 2023; Ganjeh, et al., 2019). In addition, SMC is closely linked to the concept of dynamic capabilities, which emphasizes the importance of adaptability and responsiveness in a rapidly changing business landscape. Organization that possesses strong SMC can better respond to market trends, consumer preferences, and competitive pressures (Adamik-Szysiak, 2019; Chua & Banarjee, 2013). This adaptability is particularly crucial in the context of digital marketing, where consumer behavior can shift quickly, necessitating timely and relevant responses from business.

The contributions of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to national economies have been widely discussed. SMEs have been recognized as drivers of employment (Oladimeji et al., 2021; Vasile et al., 2021). In addition to their economic contributions, local SMEs are also considered protectors of cultural heritage. One example of a local SME that contributes to the prosperity of cultural heritage is the Batik SMEs in the Java Region of Indonesia. Batik is a traditional Indonesian clothing pattern that has been recognized by UNESCO as part of Indonesia's national identity. These local SMEs, which specialize in Batik through a manual patterning process—more commonly known as “Batik Tulis”—not only provide jobs and support local economies but also help preserve Batik as a national heritage.

Batik clothing offers two distinct values: its intricate patterns and rich cultural heritage. However, in the competitive fashion industry, Batik SMEs face numerous challenges that can impede their growth and sustainability. Mefful (2023) explained that one of the most pressing challenges for SMEs in the fashion industry is access to financial resources. This lack of financial resources limits their ability to invest in essential areas such as inventory, marketing, and technology, which are crucial for competing in a fast-paced fashion market (Hamdan et al., 2021). Furthermore, market competition poses another significant challenge for SMEs in the fashion industry, as it is difficult to compete with larger, well-established brands that have greater resources for marketing and development (Nayak et al., 2019). Sari and Asad (2018) highlighted that in the Indonesian fashion market, innovation is also an issue that could hinder the development of SMEs. Human resource limitations, such as a lack of personnel and operational resources, are considered significant obstacles to innovation in the Indonesian fashion scene.

To address these challenges, optimization of internal resources is an important task that should be prioritized by SMEs owner. The Resource Based Theory (RBT) highlighted the importance of company's internal resources and capabilities as its primary drivers of competitive advantage and superior performance. RBT posits that business could achieve sustainable competitive advantage by effectively leveraging unique resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and organized to capture value (Barney, et al. 2021). Since not all resources could contribute equally to a firm's performance, business owner has to identify which resources has the most contributions toward firm's performance. Wang & Kim (2017) suggested that SMC have emerged as a vital intangible resource for firms, to enable them engage with customers, enhance brand visibility, and foster loyalty. The integration of social media into Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems exemplifies how firms can organize and utilize their resources to improve performance (Kim & Khan, 2018).

This study aims to develop a theoretical framework to highlight the importance of SMC as a competitive advantage to improve SMEs' marketing performance. We adopt RBT as the baseline for framework development, as it highlights how a well-organized competitive advantage can improve a firm's performance (Barney et al., 2019). However, the relationship between competitive advantage and firm performance remains vague if we cannot explain how particular resources lead to better performance. Thus, a literature review on the utilization of SMC across various industries and its role in firm performance will provide a better understanding of how to manage SMC as a competitive advantage. By achieving the goal of

this study, we offer practical contributions to SME owners, especially in the fashion industry, on the importance of SMC as an internal resource that can be optimized to become a competitive advantage.

Literature Review

Resource Based Theory

Resource-Based Theory (RBT) is a strategic management framework that posits a firm's unique resources and capabilities as the primary drivers of its competitive advantage and overall performance. Emerging in the 1980s, RBT has evolved into a dominant paradigm in strategic management, emphasizing the importance of internal factors over external market conditions (Barney et al., 2011; Lockett et al., 2008). The core idea of RBT is that not all resources contribute equally to a firm's performance. A firm's resources can be classified into two categories: tangible and intangible assets. Intangible assets, such as brand reputation, intellectual property, and organizational culture, are often considered to provide a more significant competitive edge compared to tangible ones (Warnier et al., 2013; Nikolau et al., 2010). To determine if an asset can be considered a competitive resource, businesses can utilize the VRIO framework, which stands for Valuable, Rare, Inimitable, and Organized (Barney et al., 2011; Hansson, 2015). This framework highlights that even if a company has a valuable and inimitable resource, it cannot be considered a competitive resource if it is not well organized.

RBT also has important implications for entrepreneurship, as it highlights the importance of resource acquisition and management in the entrepreneurial process (Alvarez & Busenitz, 2001). Entrepreneurs must identify, develop, and leverage their unique resources to create value and achieve success in competitive markets. This focus on internal capabilities aligns with the growing recognition of the role of social media and digital resources in enhancing a firm's performance (Lockett et al., 2008).

Social Media Capability

Social Media Capability (SMC) refers to an organization's ability to effectively utilize social media platforms to enhance its marketing efforts, engage with customers, and ultimately improve business performance. This capability encompasses several dimensions, including creating engaging content, managing customer interactions, analyzing social media data, and integrating social media strategies into overall business operations (Alam, 2023). Since SMC is acknowledged as an organizational ability, it can also be considered a firm's intangible asset according to the Resource-Based Theory (RBT). One of the key advantages of SMC is its cost-effectiveness, making it particularly beneficial for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Unlike traditional marketing channels, social media platforms provide SMEs with affordable avenues to reach a broader audience, allowing them to compete with larger firms despite limited resources.

SMC can help SMEs enhance their visibility, promote products or services, and foster customer loyalty (Tiwasing, 2021). By improving the visibility of their products and services, SMEs can reach a wider audience and increase the possibility of capturing new markets. However, it is also important to address how they will respond to new market demands generated after attracting a new audience for their products and services. SMC is often linked with the ability to analyze social media data, which can help SME owners innovate their products or services to capitalize on new markets. Several studies have also highlighted how social media adoption leads to better customer engagement and increased sales (Khanal et al., 2021; Tajvidi & Karami, 2021). This significantly underscores the importance of SMC in Customer Relationship Management (CRM), as firms can engage with customers, address their concerns, and gather feedback in real time.

Innovation Ambidexterity

Innovation ambidexterity refers to an organization's ability to simultaneously pursue both exploratory and exploitative innovation strategies. This concept is crucial for firms aiming to sustain a competitive advantage in rapidly changing markets. Exploratory innovation involves the development of new products, services, or processes that can lead to significant breakthroughs, while exploitative innovation focuses on refining and enhancing existing offerings to improve efficiency and effectiveness (Chiu et al., 2011). This ability highlights the importance of directing a firm's resources accordingly to achieve greater performance. Thus, leadership plays a critical role in fostering innovation ambidexterity within a firm. Leaders who encourage a culture of experimentation and support risk-taking behaviors can create an environment conducive to exploration.

Simultaneously, these leaders should also ensure that operational efficiencies are maintained through effective management of existing processes (Wu et al., 2020).

The ability to innovate continuously while also leveraging existing capabilities to maximize returns on current investments contributes significantly to a firm's performance (Jin & Zhou, 2021). Moreover, firms that exhibit ambidextrous behavior are often better equipped to respond to environmental changes, thereby enhancing their resilience and adaptability (Hwang et al., 2021). This ability can be improved by having better and quicker access to data and information regarding the market, customer preferences, and competitor dynamics. Firms with strong SMC should perform better in this component since they can use social tools to gather information and determine whether to develop new products or services to capitalize on market opportunities. Meanwhile, if they believe that their current products or services have a strong position in the market, they can focus on refining their current offerings to improve efficiency and effectiveness.

Innovation ambidexterity is also linked with a firm's CRM performance. This ability allows firms to engage customers actively in the innovation process. By leveraging customer insights and feedback, organizations can identify emerging trends and preferences, which can inform both exploratory and exploitative innovation strategies (Khan et al., 2020). With the optimization of social media, customer insights and feedback can be better collected and organized to help the innovation process. By responding quickly to these insights and feedback, businesses can provide better and faster service. Theoretically, this should foster a better relationship between a firm and its customers.

Market Capitalizing Agility

Market Capitalizing Agility (MCA) refers to an organization's ability to swiftly identify and respond to changes in market conditions, customer preferences, and competitive dynamics. This agility is essential for firms aiming to capitalize on emerging opportunities and maintain a competitive edge in rapidly evolving environments. It encompasses two primary components: sensing market changes and executing timely responses to those changes (Li et al., 2020; Krotov et al., 2015). Research indicates that market capitalizing agility is closely linked to a firm's overall performance. Firms that effectively harness their agility can achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction, increased sales, and improved market share (Lu & Ramamurthy, 2011). This ability is particularly crucial in industries characterized by rapid changes in market and customer preferences, such as the fashion industry. The ability to adapt quickly can significantly impact a firm's performance (Krotov et al., 2015; Fernandez et al., 2020).

The ability to sense and interpret market signals involves continuously monitoring external factors such as consumer trends, technological advancements, and competitor actions. Firms that excel in this area can quickly gather and analyze relevant data to identify shifts in market demand or emerging opportunities. For instance, firms that leverage advanced analytics and social media monitoring can gain insights into customer preferences, allowing them to adapt their offerings accordingly (Rachmawati et al., 2019; Lowry & Wilson, 2016). Thus, this ability can also be linked to how well a business organizes its SMC.

The capacity to implement rapid responses to identified opportunities requires not only a flexible organizational structure but also a culture that encourages innovation and quick decision-making. Companies that foster an agile mindset among their employees are better positioned to pivot their strategies, launch new products, or enter new markets in response to changing circumstances (Menon & Suresh, 2020; Robert & Grover, 2012). Thus, companies with a strong exploitative innovation approach are likely to have a better capacity to respond to market changes, customer preferences, and competitive dynamics.

Customer Relationship Management

Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is a strategic approach that organizations use to manage interactions with current and potential customers. The primary goal of CRM is to enhance customer satisfaction, loyalty, and retention by effectively understanding and responding to customer needs and preferences. This can be achieved through the integration of processes, technology, and human capital, which are important for fostering successful customer relationships (Azimi, 2023; Tusell-Rey et al., 2021). CRM involves collecting and analyzing customer data to gain insights into their behaviors, preferences, and purchasing patterns. This data-driven approach allows organizations to tailor their marketing efforts and

service offerings to meet the specific needs of individual customers (Kajwang, 2022). This highlights the significant importance of social media as a tool to gather customer information, helping managers craft the most suitable approach to foster successful relationships with their customers.

One of the key components of CRM is relationship marketing, which focuses on building long-term relationships with customers rather than merely transactional interactions. This approach emphasizes trust, commitment, and effective communication, which are essential for fostering customer loyalty (Akbari, 2016). Research indicates that strong customer relationships can lead to positive word-of-mouth communication, further enhancing a brand's reputation and attracting new customers. An increasing number of customers or market share is one of the indicators that a business has strong marketing performance. In the digital age, CRM has evolved to leverage technological advancements to enhance customer interactions. The utilization of social media platforms to interact with customers not only enables organizations to automate processes, personalize communications, and provide timely responses to customer inquiries, but also helps businesses collect important information related to the dynamics of customer needs and preferences (Mandal, 2023).

Marketing Performance

Marketing performance refers to the effectiveness of marketing activities in achieving organizational goals, particularly in terms of generating sales, enhancing brand awareness, and fostering customer loyalty. It encompasses various metrics and indicators that help organizations assess the impact of their marketing strategies on overall business performance (Shiratina et al., 2023; Homburg et al., 2012). Effective marketing campaigns can lead to increased sales and market share, thereby enhancing a company's financial health (Ishaq & Hussain, 2016). Additionally, businesses often evaluate their marketing performance through customer-centric metrics such as customer acquisition costs, customer lifetime value, and retention rates. These indicators help firms understand the effectiveness of their marketing efforts in attracting and retaining customers (Yohanes, 2023; Crick et al., 2021).

Another critical aspect of marketing performance is the alignment of marketing strategies with overall business objectives. Organizations that adopt a market-oriented approach, which emphasizes understanding and responding to customer needs, are more likely to achieve superior marketing performance. Research indicates that firms with strong market orientation can better adapt to changing market conditions and customer preferences, leading to improved performance outcomes (Zhang & Berhe, 2022; Nadham & Nahid, 2015). This highlights the importance of SMC in marketing strategy, as it helps businesses with a market-oriented approach to collect information and adapt to changes in the market and customers.

Moreover, the role of innovation in marketing performance cannot be overstated. Firms that embrace innovative marketing strategies, such as digital marketing, social media engagement, and personalized customer experiences, often see significant improvements in their marketing performance (Sailors, 2019; Buli, 2017). By leveraging data analytics to gain insights into customer behavior, firms can inform targeted marketing campaigns that resonate with specific segments, ultimately driving higher engagement and conversion rates (Idrus et al., 2019).

Result and Discussion

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) significantly influence national economies by generating employment. Additionally, local SMEs play a crucial role in sustaining cultural heritage products, such as Batik from Indonesia. To address the challenges posed by the competitive fashion industry, local SMEs must develop effective strategies to ensure sustainability and contribute to the protection of local heritage products.

Our review of Resource-Based Theory (RBT) and existing literature identifies Social Media Capability (SMC) as a potential competitive advantage for SMEs. This cost-effective ability is particularly beneficial for SMEs with limited financial resources for effective marketing activities. However, to leverage SMC as a competitive advantage, SMEs need to organize this capability to achieve better marketing performance.

Based on our literature review, we hypothesize that an organized SMC has a strong influence on SMEs' innovation ambidexterity. This concept consists of two components: explorative and exploitative innovation. SMEs that can effectively organize and utilize social media information regarding market trends, customer

preferences, and competitor activities can respond appropriately – either by pursuing explorative innovation in their products or services or by enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of their current offerings. Furthermore, a quicker and more effective response to customer feedback and preferences is hypothesized to significantly enhance the quality of Customer Relationship Management (CRM).

To illustrate our hypothesized process regarding the contributions of SMC to SMEs' marketing performance, we have developed a theoretical framework, as shown in Figure 1.

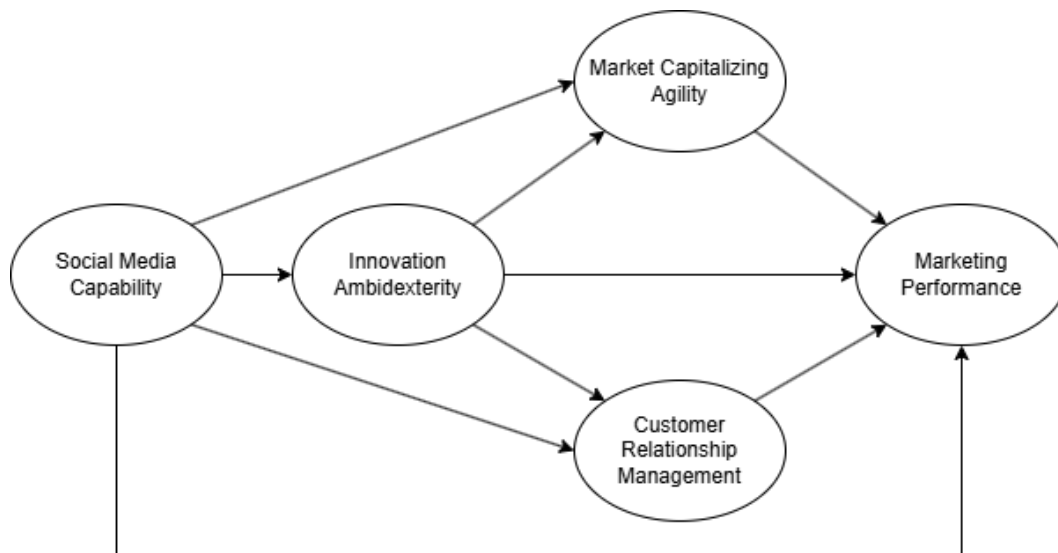


Figure 1. Proposed Theoretical Framework

According to our theoretical framework, Social Media Capability (SMC) plays a crucial role in determining the marketing performance of SMEs. As an intangible asset, we believe that an organized SMC can be optimized to become a key competitive advantage in highly competitive industries like fashion. However, optimizing SMC is not without its challenges. SMEs often encounter barriers such as a lack of expertise, limited technological resources, and insufficient knowledge about effective social media marketing strategies (Ladokun, 2019). To overcome these challenges, SMEs must invest in training and development to enhance their social media competencies, ensuring that their staff is equipped to manage social media effectively (Braojos et al., 2015).

In addition to investing in SMC development, SME owners must also address the challenges of building innovation ambidexterity within their organizations. As leaders of their businesses, SME owners frequently face tensions between the competing demands of exploration and exploitation, which can lead to issues with resource allocation and organizational inertia (Zheng et al., 2016). To mitigate these challenges, firms may adopt structural solutions, such as creating separate teams or units dedicated to exploration while maintaining core operations focused on exploitation (Ceptureanu & Ceptureanu, 2021). However, this is often a difficult task for SMEs, as many do not have a large enough workforce to operate as separate teams.

Moreover, SMEs need to be mindful of developing market-capitalizing agility, which requires investments in building necessary capabilities such as enhancing their information technology infrastructure, fostering a culture of innovation, and training employees to be responsive to market changes (Panda & Rath, 2021; Cai et al., 2017). For some SMEs, these investments may demand not only significant financial resources but also time and commitment from employees to develop such capabilities. Finally, SMEs must navigate issues related to data privacy and security carefully if they wish to foster successful customer relationships by optimizing customer data analytics collected through social media (Tusell-Rey et al., 2021).

Conclusion

Social Media Capability (SMC) is an intangible asset that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) can optimize to achieve better marketing performance due to its cost-effectiveness and potential for significant impact when organized properly. Based on our literature review, we hypothesize that SMC can enhance marketing performance by improving SMEs' innovation ambidexterity, market-capitalizing agility, and the quality of customer relationship management. As an asset, SMC can provide SMEs with a competitive edge against larger competitors.

However, investing in SMC development poses challenges, as it requires not only financial resources but also strong leadership and employee commitment. Therefore, the focus of this study, following the conceptualization of the framework, is to assess the robustness of this framework in explaining the relationships among its constructs. This assessment aims to enhance the reliability of investments in SMC for SME owners, helping them minimize the risks associated with allocating their limited resources.

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