

Evolving factors influencing consumers' attitudes toward social media marketing and their impact on social media usage

M Sadiq Sohail*

Ibrahim Al-Jabri**

ABSTRACT

This study aims to increase understanding of the factors affecting consumer attitudes towards social media marketing and the use of social media. By applying the reasoned action and its early variations, the paper proposes a research model, which examines the determinants of consumer attitudes towards the use of social media marketing and consequent impact on social media use. Data for the study was collected from 372 consumers in Saudi Arabia. Using the Partial Least Square method, the model was tested using a two-stage process, model evaluation and testing the significance of the model. The findings support most of the hypotheses. In summary, of the nine hypotheses tested, six were supported, while three were not. The results show that knowledge of social media and its following have positive effects on attitude towards social media marketing and use of social media, while fear and foresight of social media has no effect on attitude towards SMM and use of social media. Attitude toward social media marketing is also an important factor in social media use. The findings broaden and deepen our understanding of the factors affecting consumer attitudes towards marketing with social media and use in Saudi Arabia. The results have useful implications to marketers, who are increasingly using social media as a business strategy. The paper discusses the implications of the finding and provides direction for future research. Marketing through social media particularly in the Arab region is not well understood due to paucity of research in this area. This paper bridges the research and knowledge gap.

Keywords: social media; social media marketing; consumer attitudes; social media use; Saudi Arabia.

* King Fahd University of Petroleum & Minerals, Saudi Arabia. E-mail: ssohail@kfupm.edu.sa

** King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Saudi Arabia. Email: imjabri@kfupm.edu.sa

Received on: 2017.05.16

Approved on: 2017.10.03

Evaluated by a double blind review system

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media (SM) is the invention of Internet-based applications that shape on the technological foundations of Web 2.0. Its content contributes to creation of text, pictures, videos, and networks (Kietzman et al., 2011). SM has extended the medium of communications in the world and the prominent feature that makes it eminent is the interaction and sharing of information. (Papasolomou and Melanthiou, 2012). SM is frequently used to define websites, online tools, and other interactive communication technologies, which permit users to communicate with each other in some way. People share information by sharing knowledge, personal opinions and other information. SM is often synonymously used with social networks like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc. SM is a recently developing phenomenon in marketing. Web 2.0 and SM have neutralized majority of the deficiencies of the traditional advertising and media campaign (i.e. print and broadcast media), such as the traditional one-dimensional nature of communication which was also an expensive medium for message propagation (Stelzner, 2014).

Marketers are increasingly beginning to understand and use SM as a component of their marketing strategies. Promotions, marketing intelligence, public relations, marketing communications, and product and customer management are sub-disciplines of marketing that may use SM. Research that is more recent has examined the use of social media to communicate sustainability themed messages (Tuğrul and Göçer, 2017). The viral nature of SM offers a great opportunity to enhance brand image through electronic word of mouth (eWOM). However, this same word of mouth can damage brand image when consumers are unsatisfied with its performance (Killian and McManus, 2015). With the emergence of SM, companies are now taking measures beyond just creating a website. Firms are searching for finding contemporary ways to stay in touch with customers. SM platform provides a two-way communication with user-generated content which most websites may be restrained to (Berthon et al., 2012).

Increasingly, SM is being used by marketers by incorporating this new communication

medium into the communication strategy as well as in the business marketing strategy (Papasolomou and Melanthiou, 2012). SM ignites communication from the customer and this gives firms an opportunity to interact and engage with their customers. With the advent of SM, the means by which organizations communicate to reach their target audience has transformed. Firms are incorporating SM in their marketing activities (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). SM marketing is turning into an effective marketing technique, with messages through SM intensifying a firm's reach. Despite the increasing attention of marketers towards SM this phenomenon remains new to academia, with papers only being published in the last few years (Ngai et al., 2015). There is a paucity of research on social media marketing (SMM) particularly in the Arabian Gulf region. A recent study surveyed 200 SM users to evaluate the role of SM in brand development in Saudi Arabia (AlSaud and Khan, 2013). This study found that SM is the most effective tool as compared to the other promotional tools for brand development. A more recent study examined the effectiveness of Facebook in particular as a marketing tool in Saudi Arabia (Al-Ghamdi et al., 2014). They found a strong relationship between organizational presence on Facebook and its marketing efficiency. Clearly, we identify gaps in literature, and this study builds on literature and fills this gap.

In the next section, we review relevant literature, formulate hypothesis and present the conceptual framework. This is followed by describing the research method. Results and discussions of the empirical study comprise the next two sections of the paper. We conclude with implications of the results and suggestions for future research.

2. THEORITICAL BACKGROUND AND LITERTURE REVIEW

2.1 Reasoned action approach

The reasoned action model (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010) and its early variations—the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980) and the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1991) are influential models of human behavior in society.

The theory of reasoned action postulates that the immediate antecedent of actual behavior is behavioral intention, which in turn is a function of attitude and subjective norm (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). Attitude towards a given behavior is based on

intentions resulting from attitudes and subjective norms are determined by normative beliefs. Extending this theory, the theory of planned behavior, while retaining the same component of theory of reasoned action, includes perceived behavioral control as additional predictor of behavioral intention and behavior (Ajzen and Madden, 1986; Madden, Ellen, and Ajzen, 1992). The reasoned action model (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010) is the latest development in the reasoned action approach. The new components in the reasoned action model include addition of background factors and introduction of control variables. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) proposed that background factors (individual, social, and information factors) indirectly affect behavioral intention through behavioral, normative, and control beliefs.

Researchers have applied the reasoned action model to predict multitude of consumer behavior across several products and services. For example, it was widely used in predicting multitude of behaviors (Gupta and Arora, 2017; Paul et al., 2016; Han and Kim, 2010; Hsu and Huang, 2012; Wang and Ritchie, 2012; Kim et al., 2011; Quintal et al., 2010). Prayag et al., (2013) evaluated local residents' support for the 2012 Olympic Game using the theory of reasoned action. Han and Kim (2010) used the theory of planned behavior to investigate customer's intention to revisit a green hotel. A recent study applies the uses and gratification theory to understand the usage of social networking sites in Saudi Arabia (Al-Jabri et al., 2015). Further, these theories have been adapted by adding or removing variables to apply them to different research contexts. Some variables that have been included were perceived uncertainty (Quintal et al., 2010) and experience (Wang and Ritchie, 2012). Building on the theoretical underpinnings of the reasoned action approach, we model the predictors of attitude towards SMM and its usage.

2.2 Social Media Marketing (SMM)

By using SM for marketing, a firm increases its visibility on the Internet, which enables them to present products and services and create a channel of communication. These SM sites create social networks, which facilitates an exchange of thoughts and information (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Clearly, using online channels, which create a two-way communication between a firm and community, has been making a significant impact on marketing and communication strategies of firms. As stated earlier, social-media marketing has attracted interest of researchers only in recent times. Early

studies examined the general use of SM for marketing purpose (Sarvanakumar and Suganthilakshmi, 2012). This study investigates the reasons for firms to engage in SMM and concludes that it was to create a marketing buzz and to learn from customers for effective targeting.

From the perspective of individuals and communities, SMM refers to these individuals or communities establishing communication through online social channels to voice their opinion and listen to the community on firms marketing matters. SM has given more opportunities for communities to create and control contents about brands, which marketers needs to be conscious about (Hudson et al., 2016; Heinonen, 2011). All these factors have increased the potential of SMM and firms have made SM an integral part of their marketing. The consequence of this is the increasing engagement of firms with online communities by getting inputs from customers to create customer centric products. Firms have found the SM a way to tune customer attitudes towards a firm and its product by engaging them as co-creators from the purchase of the product to its consumption and after consumption experiences. A study reported that significant 90 percent of marketers said that SM is important to their businesses (Stelzner, 2016).

SMM from customers' perspective is gaining importance with the acceptance of social networking sites reachable through a variety of gadgets like computers, tablets and mobile phones. Further, since consumer behavior on such media is also influenced by cultural nuances, the present study adds to existing literature by examining the effect of SMM from the consumers' perspective in Saudi Arabia, which has hitherto remained unexplored.

2.3 Attitude and use of SMM

Attitude has been described as a "person's enduring favorable or unfavorable evaluation, emotional feeling, and action tendencies toward some object or idea" (Kotler and Keller, 2006, p.194). A positive attitude towards a brand leads to the likelihood of a person's product use and vice -versa (Alhabash, et al., 2015). In the context of SM, if users perceive a blog to be important and valuable, they are likely to use the blog (Shiau and Luo, 2010). Further support was lent by another study, which found that, as people perceive shopping services on social networking sites to be useful they are more likely to shop on these networking sites (Cha, 2009).

Past research into factors affecting consumer's attitude towards the use of SMM provides interesting findings. A study found that that brand consciousness significantly

affects the consumers' attitude towards SM advertising and subsequently affects their behavioral response (Chen et al., 2015; Chu et al., 2013). Another study examining the correlation between age and attitude of SM users towards SMM found that attitude differs across different age groups (Cox, 2010).

With the growing popularity of SM, firms' communication with their target audience has significantly transformed (Guo et al., 2015; Mangold and Faulds, 2009). The use of SM is increasingly becoming an important element of the marketing mix of firms. Studies on SMM have shown that consumers' attitude towards firms marketing efforts is an essential determinant of its effective use (Chu et al., 2013). SM marketers must therefore have a better understanding of the determinants of attitude, as this lead to building closer relationships with users of SM.

3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The main purpose of this study is to identify the factors affecting the attitude of consumers' towards SMM and its usage. In developing a theoretical framework, there is a paucity of research on SMM examining these relationships (Dolan et al., 2016). Literature search did not lead to identifying scales used to study the attitudes of consumers' towards SMM. Using a consumer based scale and undertaking a factor analysis, Akar and Topçu (2011) used seven factors which reflect consumer' attitude, acceptance of SMM, use of SM, SM knowledge, SM monitoring, SM foresight and fears of SMM. A limitation of this study, however was that the sample included population form only the age group of 18 to 24 years.

Drawing from these relationship views and consolidating from relevant studies where most of the identified variables have been examined, this study has extorted some relational variables in a new research setting and developed a theoretical framework (Figure 1) for testing with the hypothesized relationships, which is discussed in the next subsection.

3.1 Hypotheses Development

If people do not know what exists or what is to be learnt, a direct experience is impeded (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Constantinides and Fountain (2008) found that having a knowledge of SM affects the understanding and attitude towards SM usage. Further support is found in another study, which found that use of social networking sites is

related to knowledge and education (Rozental et al., 2010). Anecdotal evidence as well as published research lends support to a positive relationship between SM knowledge and attitude towards SM usage (example, Lewis and Nicholes, 2010). As such, we offer the following hypotheses for testing,

H1a: There is a positive relationship between SM knowledge and attitude towards SMM.

H1b: There is a positive relationship between SM knowledge and SM use.

Prior to purchase, consumers keep an eye on and track SM to seek product information. With the pervasiveness of SM, people do monitor to manage their product and service purchase (Powers, 2012). Monitoring of SM by consumers' significantly affects their attitude and use of SM (Akar and Topçu, 2011). There is also a social influence in a purchase decision. SM provides an ideal platform for consumers to seek advice and track reviews and influence purchase decision (Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012). Firms too are providing informative and engaging contents through SM, which will have an influence on consumers' attitude towards SM / SM usage. The hypotheses below test this assertion.

H2a: There is a positive relationship between monitoring SM and attitude towards SMM.

H2b: There is a positive relationship between monitoring SM and SM use.

Consumer attitude towards SMM might change in future. Some SM sites like Facebook may become insignificant due to user perception of being out dated (Lampe, Ellison, and Steinfield 2008). Some marketers may be slow to adopt to new technologies and meet user expectations due to a negative observation about its usefulness (Buehrer et al., 2005). Firms may lack a creative foresight to connect with new technologies to meet user expectations. These reasons might influence consumers' attitude towards SM / SM usage (Akar and Topcu, 2011). The paper therefore intends to test these hypotheses:

H3a: There is a positive relationship between foresight about SM and attitude towards SMM.

H3b: There is a positive relationship between foresight about SM and SM use.

Fear has become a discourse by Internet blogs promoting risk and danger (Altheide, 2013). Trust is significant in online purchasing, and consumers' lack of confidence builds a main obstacle to the adoption of e-commerce (Cheung et al. 2009). Likewise, Hajli (2014) relates trust as a major direct influence on intention to buy. His study expresses that the social communication of individuals stimulates consumer attitude

towards a product or service. On the contrary negative attitudes toward social advertising influences the behavioral response of consumers (Li et al, 2002), resulting in avoidance of online advertising, perceiving an unpleasant and disturbing nature of online advertising.

Numerous individuals are expected to elude or even fear things they do not understand (Safko and Brake 2009, Akar and Topcu, 2011). Although SM sites allow users to share information, communicate, network, and interact with each other, they carry the risk and security concerns as due to the easy transmission of information among various SM sites, the information supposed to be private information becomes public (Rose 2010). As a result, this paper aims at determining the relation between fear caused by SMM and individuals' attitude towards SM / SM usage

H4a: There is a positive relationship between foresight about SM and attitude towards SMM.

H4b: There is a positive relationship between foresight about SM and SM use.

Sun and Wang (2010) ascertained that if there is a positive relationship between an individual's attitude and a product, then there is a high probability that the individual will use that product. Likewise, if there is an inverse relationship between the individual's attitude and the product, then it is most likely that the individual will not use that product in question. Schiffman and Kanuk (2010) affirm this phenomenon by stating that consumer behavior is highly correlated with consumer's behavioral intentions. Based on this, the paper further intends to determine or confirm if there is a positive relationship between attitude towards SM and SM usage. Thus;

H5: There is a positive relationship between attitude towards SMM and SM use.

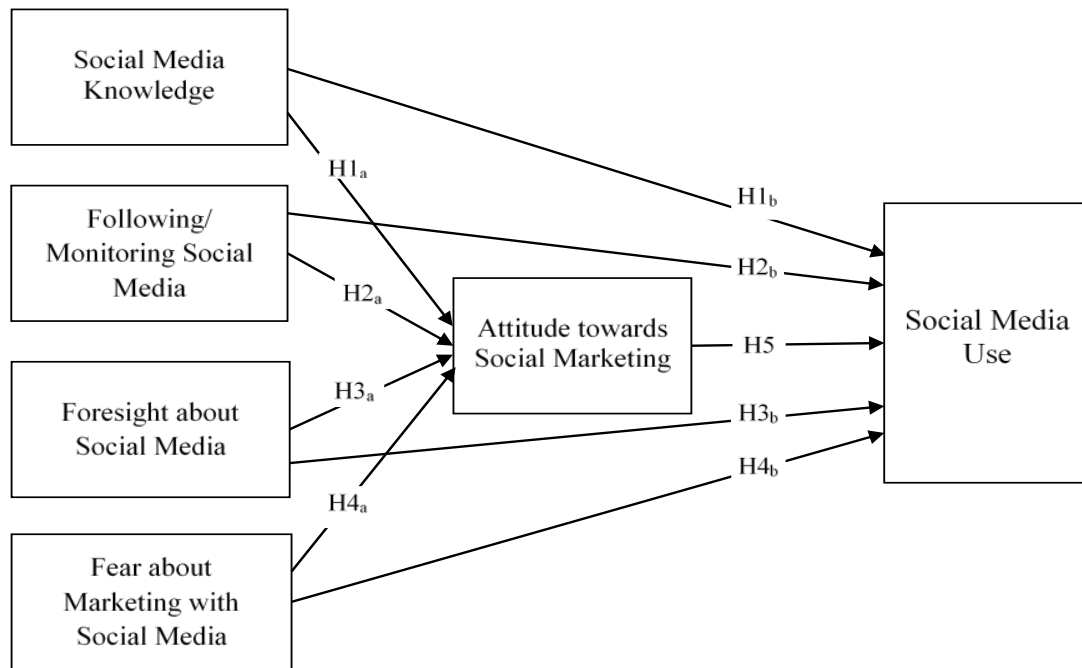


Figure 1: A conceptual framework

Source: By authors

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 The development of measurement scales

As for the operationalization of behavioral intention, our study was based on the argument put forward by Ajzen and Fishbein (1980), which states that the strength of intention- behavior relationship largely depends on the scale of measurement of measurement specificity accomplished in a research design. Applying this views, a study undertaken in the Internet banking context measured behavioral intention by taking the use of Internet banking (Yousafzai et al., 2010) Likewise, in the present study , we measure the intentions and beliefs by considering the use of social media, rather than directing to social media itself. The operationalization of the construct of attitude towards SMM followed the context of TRA, wherein attitude included measures the preference and interest through feelings and interests of SMM outcomes. The pioneering work by Akar and Topcu (2011) served a basis for identifying the scales for the normative beliefs and subjective norms. Six constructs were included in the proposed model. Because the measurement scales were developed in the West and the

surveys were administered in Saudi Arabia, a back translation of the questionnaire was undertaken to ensure the accuracy of translation (Brislin, 1970). Two versions of the questionnaire were used, an English and an Arabic version. The constructs relied on seven-point Likert scales that ranged from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). Prior to the data collection, a pilot study was conducted to ensure that the participants interpreted the questions in a consistent manner. Some of the comments from the Arabic speakers helped to ensure equivalent meanings in English.

4.2 Sample and data collection

The target sample for this research were SM users residing in Saudi Arabia. The data collection method for this study is based on key informant technique (John and Reve, 1982). Data was solicited from SM users, as they have the knowledge of the research issues and are able to provide informed responses. The survey was administered online so we were able to program the survey in order to control the sequence of questions; we made sure that everyone was exposed and responded to all questions. In addition, the program enabled us to measure the time everyone spent on each question. The program did not allow participants to fill out the questionnaire more than once. Given the nature of this study, which is on social networking websites, a Web survey was deemed a good fit for the study.

The link to the survey was sent through WhatsApp, as well as in private emails using the snowball sampling method. Participation was purely voluntary and respondents were duly informed about the anonymity of their responses. After the process of data collection, data cleaning was performed through consistency checks. This process resulted in 372 usable responses. Non-respondent bias was tested by comparing early and later responses across survey items (Armstrong and Overton, 1977). No statistical differences among variables were identified between the groups.

Table 1 outlines the characteristics of the respondents. Over half of the respondents (56.5 percent) were aged between 25 to 34 years, and 37.9 percent were between 18 and 24 years old. A small percentage (5.6) of respondents were together aged over 35 years. This shows that SM users are more of lesser age, which is consistent with SM studies. In terms of gender, 58.6 percent were males and 41.4 percent were females. As for the occupation, 56.2 percent were employed and another 32.8 percent were students. On marital status, 73.9 percent were married and 24.2 were single. Over half of the

respondents (55.4) percent were from Central region, 25.5 percent were from Eastern region and the remaining 19.1 percent resided in Western region.

	Frequency (n=372)	Percent
Age		
18 - 24	141	37.9
25 -34	210	56.5
35 - 44	12	3.2
44 - 54	5	1.3
Above 54	4	1.1
Gender		
Male	218	58.6
Female	154	41.4
Occupation		
Employed	209	56.2
Self-Employed	15	4.0
Out of Work	12	3.2
Student	122	32.8
Homemaker	14	3.8
Marital Status		
Single	275	73.9
Married	90	24.2
Divorced	7	1.9
Region		
Central Region	206	55.4
Eastern Region	95	25.5
Western Region	71	19.1

Table 1: Sample Characteristics

Source: By authors

5. RESULTS

The research hypotheses were tested using the Partial Least Square (PLS) method and used the software application SmartPLS 3.0. (Ringle et al., 2015). The evaluation of the research model follows a two-stage process (Chin 2010). The first stage is the evaluation of the measurement model by calculating the reliability and the convergent and discriminant validity of the research variables. The second stage is the evaluation of the structural model by testing the significance of the path coefficients between the model variables.

5.1 The measurement model

First, we analyzed the factor loadings of the individual items on their hypothesized constructs as shown in Table 2. We noted that some of the measurement items exhibit loadings that are below the recommended minimum value of 0.7 on their hypothesized constructs. Therefore, these items, marked with italic fonts, were dropped. However, two items, namely ASM1 and SMU3, were retained because they were very close to 0.7. Second, after removing items with factor loading less than 0.7, we evaluated the construct reliability and validity by computing Cronbach's Alpha (CA), composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) for all constructs. Table 3 presents the means, standard deviations (SD), Cronbach's Alpha (CA) and composite reliability (CR) coefficients, and average variance extracted (AVE) for all research variables. All CR scores exceeded the recommended value of 0.70 (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994), indicating that all constructs are reliable. The AVE is a commonly applied criterion of convergent and discriminant validity. As proposed by Fornell and Larcker (1981), a construct with an AVE value of 0.500 or more indicates that it explains more than half of the variance of its individual items and, thus, demonstrates sufficient convergent validity.

Factor	Item	Cross Loadings					
		SMK	MSM	SSM	FSM	ASM	SMU
Social Media Knowledge (SMK)	SMK1	0.760	0.380	0.029	-0.132	0.682	0.547
	<i>SMK2</i>	<i>0.585</i>	<i>0.320</i>	<i>-0.061</i>	<i>-0.037</i>	<i>0.285</i>	<i>0.263</i>
	SMK3	0.726	0.275	-0.076	-0.068	0.390	0.363
	SMK4	0.742	0.245	-0.130	-0.162	0.419	0.382
	<i>SMK5</i>	<i>0.472</i>	<i>0.278</i>	<i>-0.148</i>	<i>-0.118</i>	<i>0.227</i>	<i>0.094</i>
Following/Monitoring Social Media (MSM)	<i>MSM1</i>	<i>0.466</i>	0.608	<i>-0.015</i>	<i>-0.145</i>	<i>0.286</i>	<i>0.261</i>
	MSM2	0.284	0.762	0.155	-0.077	0.328	0.199
	MSM3	0.322	0.744	0.149	-0.175	0.289	0.204
	MSM4	0.294	0.731	0.001	-0.112	0.241	0.187
	MSM5	0.238	0.720	0.008	-0.101	0.248	0.336
	<i>MSM6</i>	<i>0.164</i>	0.416	<i>-0.122</i>	<i>-0.110</i>	<i>0.086</i>	<i>0.175</i>
	<i>MSM7</i>	<i>0.109</i>	0.058	<i>-0.058</i>	<i>0.002</i>	<i>-0.051</i>	<i>-0.002</i>
Foresight about Social Media (SSM)	<i>SSM1</i>	<i>-0.067</i>	<i>0.027</i>	0.646	<i>0.104</i>	<i>-0.079</i>	<i>-0.085</i>
	SSM2	-0.095	0.030	0.700	0.164	-0.115	0.019
	SSM3	-0.021	0.075	0.790	0.166	-0.114	-0.056
Fear about Marketing with Social Media (FSM)	FSM1	-0.080	-0.122	0.197	0.719	-0.116	-0.059
	FSM2	-0.163	-0.161	0.161	0.898	-0.164	-0.123
Attitude towards Social Marketing (ASM)	ASM1	0.422	0.289	-0.066	-0.084	0.679	0.367
	ASM2	0.412	0.250	-0.201	-0.193	0.737	0.348
	ASM3	0.451	0.304	-0.097	-0.151	0.806	0.425
	ASM4	0.567	0.290	-0.093	-0.199	0.805	0.416
	ASM5	0.473	0.272	-0.098	-0.159	0.813	0.322
	ASM6	0.594	0.285	-0.123	-0.109	0.775	0.500
	ASM7	0.524	0.351	-0.158	-0.131	0.808	0.370
	<i>ASM8</i>	<i>0.434</i>	<i>0.246</i>	<i>-0.071</i>	<i>-0.023</i>	0.555	<i>0.381</i>
	<i>ASM9</i>	<i>0.273</i>	<i>0.152</i>	<i>0.027</i>	<i>0.023</i>	0.314	<i>0.381</i>
	ASM10	0.507	0.269	-0.094	-0.154	0.703	0.495
Social Media Use (SMU)	SMU1	0.388	0.223	-0.010	-0.040	0.360	0.789
	SMU2	0.540	0.330	0.014	-0.134	0.576	0.885
	SMU3	0.377	0.252	-0.187	-0.093	0.313	0.697

Table 2: Factor loadings and cross loadings***Source:** By authors

*Items with italic font are dropped

All AVEs, shown in Table 4, ranged from 0.590 to 0.685, are higher than the recommended value of 0.500. The discriminant validity is assessed by comparing the

square root of the AVE of each construct with all other inter-construct correlations. As shown in Table 4, the square root of AVEs of all constructs are greater than all other inter-construct correlations, indicating adequate discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Factor	Mean	SD	CA	CR	AVE
Social Media Knowledge	5.3285	0.8817	0.668	0.811	0.590
Following/ Monitoring Social Media	5.4188	0.9315	0.774	0.854	0.594
Foresight about Social Media	5.3435	0.7750	0.542	0.813	0.685
Fear about Marketing with Social Media	5.2579	0.9767	0.507	0.796	0.664
Attitude towards Social Marketing	5.3630	0.9079	0.905	0.924	0.603
Social Media Use	5.3857	0.8054	0.708	0.834	0.629

Table 3: Mean, standard deviation, and reliability scores*

Source: By authors

*AVE: average variance extracted; CA: Cronbach's Alpha; CR: Composite Reliability; SD: Standard Deviation

	SMK	MSM	SSM	FSM	ASM	SMU
Social Media Knowledge (SMK)	0.768					
Following/Monitoring Social Media (MSM)	0.344	0.771				
Foresight about Social Media (SSM)	-0.004	0.110	0.828			
Fear about Marketing with Social Media (FSM)	-0.158	-0.148	0.201	0.815		
Attitude towards Social Marketing (ASM)	0.668	0.350	-0.138	-0.189	0.776	
Social Media Use (SMU)	0.582	0.309	-0.024	-0.119	0.534	0.793

Table 4: Correlation Coefficients and Square Root of the AVEs*

Source: By authors

*Diagonal elements in bold are the Square Root of the AVEs.

5.2 The Structural Model

The proposed research model, depicted in Figure 2, explained 48.7% of the variance in attitudes towards social marketing and 38.4% of the variance in SM use, demonstrating sufficient explanatory power. Hypotheses H_{1a}, H_{1b}, H_{2a}, H_{2b}, H_{3a}, H_{3b}, H_{4a}, and H_{4b} address the structural relationships of SM knowledge, following SM, foresight about SM and fear about marketing with SM with the attitudes towards SM. SM knowledge has positive effects on attitude towards SMM ($b=0.609$, $t=17.79$, $p=0.001$) and on SM use ($b=0.389$, $t=5.76$, $p=0.001$), supporting H_{1a} and H_{1b}. Following SM has a positive effect on attitude towards SMM ($b=0.150$, $t=3.360$, $p=0.001$) and on SM use ($b=0.090$, $t=1.967$, $p=0.05$), supporting H_{2a} and H_{2b}. Foresight about SM has a negative effect on attitude towards SMM ($b=-0.144$, $t=3.455$, $p=0.001$), but has no effect on SM use ($b=0.001$, $t=0.025$, $p=0.98$) thereby supporting H_{3a} but not H_{3b}. Fear about marketing with SM has no effect either on attitude towards SMM ($b=-0.042$, $t=1.073$, $p=0.248$) or on SM use ($b=0.002$, $t=0.045$, $p=0.964$), which does not support H_{4a} or H_{4b}.

Hypothesis H5 addresses the structural relationship between attitudes towards SMM and SM use. H5 is supported, as there is a significant positive effect of attitudes on SM use. In summary H_{1a}, H_{1b}, H_{2a}, H_{2b}, and H_{3a} were supported while H_{3b}, H_{4a} and H_{4b}, were not supported. Table 5 summarizes the hypotheses testing results and Figure 2 shows the path coefficients and the R² values.

Hypothesis	Path	Coefficient	STD	T-Value	p-value	Support
H1 _a	Knowledge ----> Attitude	0.609	0.034	17.790	0.000	Yes
H1 _b	Knowledge ----> Use	0.389	0.067	5.766	0.000	Yes
H2 _a	Follow ----> Attitude	0.150	0.040	3.360	0.000	Yes
H2 _b	Follow ----> Use	0.090	0.046	1.967	0.050	Yes
H3 _a	Foresight ----> Attitude	-0.144	0.042	3.455	0.001	Yes
H3 _b	Foresight ----> Use	0.001	0.057	0.025	0.980	No
H4 _a	Fear ----> Attitude	-0.042	0.039	1.073	0.248	No
H4 _b	Fear ----> Use	0.002	0.040	0.045	0.964	No
H5	Attitude ----> Use	0.244	0.063	3.846	0.000	Yes

Table 5: Results of Hypotheses Testing

Source: By authors

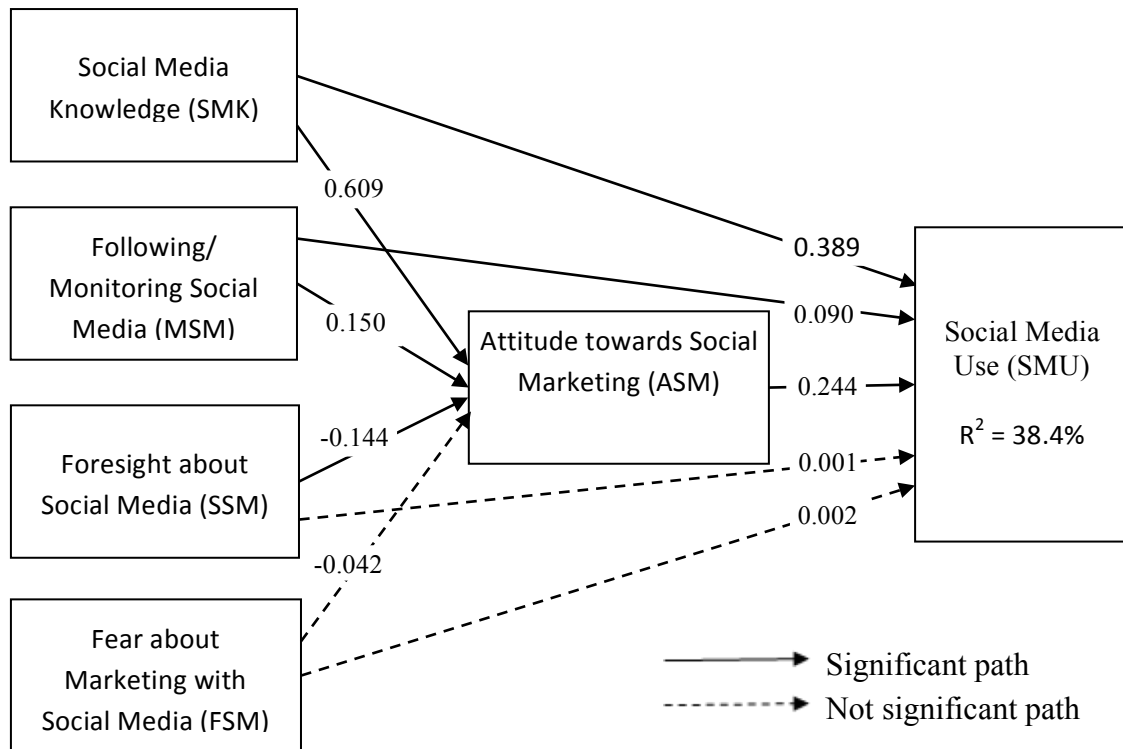


Figure 2: Path Coefficients and R² of the Endogenous Variables

Source: By authors

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study examines the factors affecting the attitudes of customers towards the use of SM for marketing and the SM use. We developed a model and tested the underlying variables, which has an influence on customers' attitude towards SMM. The study makes valuable contribution to research, given that very limited studies have developed scales to present the attitude of customers towards SMM. This study also tests the scales (Akar and Topcu, 2011) and further find generalizability, thereby adding to current literature on marketing through SM by firms in the Gulf countries, specifically Saudi Arabia.

Results of our study reveal that knowledge of SM and its following have positive effects on attitude towards SMM, while fear has no effect and foresight has a negative effect on attitude towards SMM. Knowledge and following of SM also have effect on use of SM while fear and foresight have no effect on use of SM. There is also a significant positive effect of attitudes on SM use. Our results find mixed support from a previous study

which reported consumers' SM use, knowledge, following and fears about marketing has an effect on attitude towards SMM (Akar and Topcu, 2011).

The findings of the present study have some important implications for managerial action. First, considering that SM knowledge has an effect of consumer attitudes and use, it is important for marketers to have a presence in different social forums such as social networking sites, online communities or blogs. Making a presence in these forums, gives an opportunity to share educative and informative contents giving a marketing opportunity to connect directly with customers.

Second, following of SM affects their attitude towards SMM and usage. Marketers can use SM users to follow them and provide an identity about the firm and its product offerings. SM gives an opportunity to reach out to customers, who might be unaware of the company and products. By continually monitoring SM users' opinions on the firm's offerings, the firm will be able to respond, build relationship with customers, and enhance the brand and image of the firm.

Third, there is also a significant positive effect of consumer attitude towards SMM on SM use. The use and reach of SM is far larger than other traditional media channels due to the Internet and web-based technologies. From a marketing perspective, the consumer-generated content in the SM can inspire marketers to create value. The gamut of SM, which is essentially a product of consumers, begins with informal talks on products and services. Further progress is made by creating structured reviews and evaluations through either text messages or videos, which is then followed by consumers getting involved in promotion or demotion of brands through self-created advertising videos (Berthon, et al., 2008). From the point of managerial action, marketers can play a role by influencing and assisting the creative consumers in preparing contents that will help in increasing SM use.

Finally, this study highlights the need for firms to make use of the opportunities of SM for marketing. With the shifts in power of communication towards consumers', marketers must intercalate with social groups and shape marketing activities in SM environment to create a favorable attitude toward marketing in SM.

The study makes several theoretical contributions. The findings of the study lends support to other similar studies examining explanations on marketing and SM. The measurement scales were developed to suit the Saudi context. This can be further extended and tested in other nations in the region. Due considerations of cultural

differences, if any, and the shift in locus of control, power and consumer values must be given.

6.1 Limitations and future directions

This study has tested a model integrating some of the key variables of SMM. However, other variables may also have a direct and indirect association and impact. Some intervening variables like age, gender and frequency of Internet use must be incorporated in the model. Our study needs further extension, replication and critical evaluation in this direction. Future studies with larger sample size, drawn from developing nations will provide more insights into the issues examined in this study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Saudi Arabia supported this study under the KFUPM/SABIC Internal Grants program (Project No. IN141032). The authors thank KFUPM for the financial support provided for the completion of this research.

REFERENCES

- Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 50, 179-211.
- Ajzen, I., & Fishbein, M. (1980). Understanding attitudes and predicting social behavior. *Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall*.
- Ajzen, I., & Madden, T. J. (1986). Prediction of goal-directed behaviour: Attitudes, intentions, and perceived behavioural control. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 22(5), 453–474.
- Akar, E., & Topçu, B. (2011). An examination of the factors influencing consumers' attitudes toward social media marketing. *Journal of Internet Commerce*, 10(1), 35-67.
- Al-Ghamdi, H., Al-Hadban, N., & Al-Hassoun, T. (2014). The Effectiveness of Facebook as a Marketing Tool. *International Journal of Management and Information Technology*, 10(2).
- Alhabash, S., McAlister, A. R., Quilliam, E. T., Richards, J. I., & Lou, C. (2015). Alcohol's getting a bit more social: When alcohol marketing messages on Facebook increase young adults' intentions to imbibe. *Mass Communication and Society*, 18, 350–375.

- Al-Jabri, I. M., Sohail, M. S., & Ndubisi, N. O. (2015). Understanding Global Social Networking Sites Usage by Arabs through the Uses and Gratifications Theory Lens. *Journal of Service Management*, 26(4), 662 – 680.
- Al-Saud, A. A., & Khan, M. R. (2013). The Role of Social Media in Brand Development in Saudi Arabia. *European Journal of Business and Economics*, 1(8).
- Altheide, D. L. (2013). Media Logic, Social Control, and Fear. *Communication Theory*, 23(3), 223–238.
- Armstrong, J. S., & Terry, S. O. (1977). Estimating nonresponse bias in mail surveys. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 14:396-402.
- Berthon, P. R., Pitt, L. F., Plangger, K., & Shapiro, D. (2012). Marketing meets Web 2.0, social media, and creative consumers: *Implications for international marketing strategy*. *Business Horizons*, 55(3), 261–271.
- Berthon, P. R., Pitt, L. F., & Campbell, C. (2008). When customers create the ad. *California Management Review*, 50(4), 6–30.
- Brislin, R. W. (1970). Back-translation for cross-cultural research. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 1(3), 185-216.
- Buehrer, R. E., Senecal, S., & Pullins, B. (2005). Sales force technology usage—Reasons, barriers, and support. *An exploratory investigation Industrial Marketing Management*, 34, 389–398.
- Cha, J. (2009). Shopping on social networking Web sites: Attitudes toward real versus virtual items. *Journal of Interactive Advertising* 10 (1), 77–93.
- Chen, K.-J., Kim, J., & Lin, J.-S. (2015). The effects of affective and cognitive elaborations from Facebook posts on consumer attitude formation. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 14, 208–218.
- Cheung, C. M., Lee, M. K., & Thadani, D. R. (2009, September). The impact of positive electronic word-of-mouth on consumer online purchasing decision. *In World Summit on Knowledge Society (pp. 501-510)*. Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- Chin, W. W., Henseler, J., Vinzi, V. E., & Wang, H. (2010). How to Write Up and Report PLS Analyses. *Handbook of Partial Least Squares: Concepts, Methods and Applications*, 655-690.
- Chu, S. C., Kamal, S., & Kim, Y. (2013). Understanding consumers' responses toward social media advertising and purchase intention toward luxury products. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 4(3), 158-174.
- Chu, S.C., Kamal, S. & Kim, Y. (2013), Understanding consumers' responses toward social media advertising and purchase intention toward luxury products. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, 4(3), 158-174.

- Constantinides, E. & Fountain, S. J. (2008). Web 2.0: conceptual foundations and marketing issues. *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, 9(3) 231-244.
- Cox, S. (2010). Online social network member attitude toward online advertising formats. *MA thesis, The Rochester Institute of Technology*
- Dolan, R., Conduit, J., Fahy, J. & Goodman, S. (2016). Social media engagement behaviour: a uses and gratifications perspective. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 24 (3-4), 1-17.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (2010). Predicting and changing behaviour: The reasoned action approach. *Taylor and Francis*.
- Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). Belief attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to theory and research. *Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley*.
- Fornell, C. G., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18(1), 39–50.
- Gupta, A., & Arora, N. (2017). Consumer adoption of m-banking: a behavioral reasoning theory perspective. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 35(4), 733-747.
- Hajli, M. (2014). A study of the impact of social media on consumers. *International Journal of Market Research*, 56(3), 387-404.
- Heinonen, K. (2011). Consumer activity in social media: Managerial approaches to consumers' social media behavior. *Journal of Consumer Behavior* 10, 356-364.
- Hsu, C. H., & Huang, S. S. (2012). An extension of the theory of planned behaviour model for tourists. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 36(3), 390–417.
- Hudson, S., Huang, L., Roth, M.S., & Madden, T. J. (2016). The influence of social media interactions on consumer–brand relationships: A three-country study of brand perceptions and marketing behaviors. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 33(1), 27-41.
- John, G., & Reve, T. (1982). The reliability and validity of key informant data from dyadic relationships in marketing channels. *Journal of marketing research*, 19(4), 517-524.
- Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2010). Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media. *Business horizons*, 53(1), 59-68.
- Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P., & Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons*, 54(3), 241-251.
- Killian, G., & McManus, K. (2015). A marketing communications approach for the digital era: Managerial guidelines for social media integration. *Business Horizons*, 58(5), 539–549.
- Kim, Y. H., Kim, M., & Goh, B. K. (2011). An examination of food tourist's behavior:

- Using the modified theory of reasoned action. *Tourism Management*, 32(5), 1159–1165.
- Kotler, P., & Keller L. (2006). *Marketing management. 12th ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.*
- Lampe, C., Ellison, N. B., & Steinfield, C. (2008, November). Changes in use and perception of Facebook. *In Proceedings of the 2008 ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work (pp. 721-730). ACM.*
- Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.*
- Lewis, B. K., & Nicholes, C. (2012). Social Media and Strategic Communication: A two-year study of attitudes and perceptions about social media among college students. *Public Relations Journal*, 6(4), 1-20.
- Edwards, S. M., Li, H., & Lee, J. H. (2002). Forced exposure and psychological reactance: Antecedents and consequences of the perceived intrusiveness of pop-up ads. *Journal of Advertising*, 31(3), 83-95.
- Guo, H., Pathak, P., & Cheng, K. H. (2015). Estimating social influences from social networking sites—Articulated friendships. *Decision Sciences*, 46, 135–163.
- Madden, T. J., Ellen, P. S., & Ajzen, I. (1992). A comparison of the theory of planned behaviour and the theory of reasoned action. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 18(1), 3–9.
- Mangold, W. G., & Faulds, D. J. (2009). Social media: The new hybrid element of the promotion mix. *Business horizons*, 52(4), 357-365.
- Ngai, E. W., Tao, S. S., & Moon, K. K. (2015). Social media research: Theories, constructs, and conceptual frameworks. *International Journal of Information Management*, 35(1), 33-44.
- Nunnally, J. C., & Bernstein, I. H. (1994). Validity. *Psychometric theory*, 99-132.
- Papasolomou, I., & Melanthiou, Y. (2012). Social Media: Marketing Public Relations' New Best Friend. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 18(3), 319–328.
- Paul, J., Modi, A., & Patel, J. (2016). Predicting green product consumption using theory of planned behavior and reasoned action. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 29, 123–134.
- Powers, T., Advincula, D., Austin, M. S., Graiko, S., & Snyder, J. (2012). Digital and social media in the purchase decision process. *Journal of advertising research*, 52(4), 479-489.
- Prayag, G., Hosany, S., Nunkoo, R., & Alders, T. (2013). London residents' support for the 2012 Olympic Games: The mediating effect of overall attitude. *Tourism Management*, 36, 629–640.

- Quintal, V. A., Lee, J. A., & Soutar, G. N. (2010). Risk, uncertainty and the theory of planned behaviour: A tourism example. *Tourism Management*, 31(6), 797–805.
- Ramsaran-Fowdar, R. R., & Fowdar, S. (2013). The implications of Facebook marketing for organizations. *Contemporary Management Research*, 9(1).
- Ringle, C. M., Wende, S., & Becker, J. M. (2015). SmartPLS 3. SmartPLS GmbH: Boenningstedt. Retrieved from <http://www.smartpls.com>.
- Rose, C. (2011). The security implications of ubiquitous social media. *International Journal of Management and Information Systems (IJMIS)*, 15(1), 35-40.
- Rozental, T. D., George, T. M., & Chacko, A. T. (2010). Social networking among upper extremity patients. *The Journal of hand surgery*, 35(5), 819-823.
- Safko, L. (2010). The social media bible: tactics, tools, and strategies for business success. *John Wiley & Sons*.
- Saravanakumar, M., & Suganthalakshmi, T. (2012). Social media marketing. *Life Science Journal*, 9(4), 4444-4451.
- Schiffman, L. & Kanuk, L. (2010). Consumer behavior. *Global Edition, 10th ed., Pearson Higher Education, London*.
- Shiau, W. & Luo, M. M. (2010). Continuance intention of blog users: the impact of perceived enjoyment, habit, user involvement and blogging time. *Behaviour and Information Technology*, 32(6), 570-583.
- Singh, S. & Sonnenburg, S. (2012). Brand Performance in Social Media. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26(4) 189–97.
- Stelzner, M. A. (2016). How marketers are using social media to grow their business. Social Media Marketing Industry Report. *Social Media Examiner* Retrieved from <https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/SocialMediaMarketingIndustryReport2016.pdf>
- Stelzner, M. A. (2015). May 2014, Social Media Marketing Industry Report: How marketers are using social media to grow their businesses. *Social Media Examiner*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/SocialMediaMarketingIndustryReport2015.pdf>
- Sun, S. & Wang, Y. (2010). Examining the role of beliefs and attitudes in online advertising: a comparison between the USA and Romania. *International Marketing Review*, 27(1) 87-107.
- Torelli, C. (2013). Globalization, culture, and branding: How to leverage cultural equity for building iconic brands in the era of globalization. *Springer*
- Tuğrul, T. Ö. & Göçer, A. (2017). Communicating Sustainability on Social Media: A study on leading turkish and global brands in Turkey. *International Journal of Marketing, Communication and New Media*. 8(5), 6-27. Retrieved from <http://u3isjournal.isvouga.pt/index.php/ijmcmn>

Wang, J., & Ritchie, B. W. (2012). Understanding accommodation managers' crisis planning intention: An application of the theory of planned behaviour. *Tourism Management*, 33(5), 1057–1067.

Yousafzai, S. Y., Foxall, G. R., & Pallister, J. G (2010). Explaining Internet Banking Behavior: Theory of Reasoned Action, Theory of Planned Behavior, or Technology Acceptance Model? *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 40(5) 1172–1202.

How to cite this article:

Sohail, M. S. & Al-Jabri, I. (2017) Evolving factors influencing consumers' attitudes toward social media marketing and their impact on social media usage. *International Journal of Marketing, Communication and New Media. Special Number 2 – Marketing and Digital Business*, 3-25, Available at <http://u3isjournal.isvouga.pt/index.php/ijmcmn>.