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South Asian Journal of Management Research (SAJMR), is a scholarly journal that publishes scientific research on the theory and practice of management. All management, computer science, environmental science related issues relating to strategy, entrepreneurship, innovation, technology, and organizations are covered by the journal, along with all business-related functional areas like accounting, finance, information systems, marketing, and operations. The research presented in these articles contributes to our understanding of critical issues and offers valuable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. Authors are invited to publish novel, original, empirical, and high quality research work pertaining to the recent developments & practices in all areas and disciplines.

Cross-functional, multidisciplinary research that reflects the diversity of the management science professions is also encouraged, the articles are generally based on the core disciplines of computer science, economics, environmental science, mathematics, psychology, sociology, and statistics. The journal's focus includes managerial issues in a variety of organizational contexts, including for profit and nonprofit businesses, organizations from the public and private sectors, and formal and informal networks of people. Theoretical, experimental (in the field or the lab), and empirical contributions are all welcome. The journal will continue to disseminate knowledge and publish high-quality research so that we may all benefit from it.

Dr. Pooja M. Patil
Editor

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Driving Sustainable Growth: Exploring Digital Marketing Adoption among SMEs in Mauritius for Innovation and Resilience

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Abstract

Sustainable development has emerged as a powerful, albeit divisive, idea for business, presenting both advantages and disadvantages. Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) growth in Mauritius is not an archaism to the economy of Mauritius, as it dates back to the 1960s, as a result of a growing interest in building SMEs in recent decades. Undoubtedly, SMEs are important for economic growth and job creation, and it is becoming increasingly clear that fostering SME growth is crucial for reducing poverty. Imperatively, innovation must be the guiding principle since it has the power to transform a company's vulnerability into any type of opportunity. Investigating the difficulties that SMEs are expected to face in this respect is essential given that the concept of sustainability is quickly and increasingly taking importance with customers. The main aim of this study is investigating the extent to which SMEs in Mauritius are utilizing digital marketing tools as innovative tools to sustain their businesses, and the common factors that can undermine the use of digital marketing among entrepreneurs in SMEs. While there has been a growing literature on sustainability for SMEs, little empirical studies were conducted to better understand how technology can support SMEs growth and remain sustainable in the long run. The findings of this study shows that entrepreneurs engaged in sustainable businesses perceived many which can undermine their ability to sustain their businesses. The implications and recommendations are discussed in this study.

Key words: SMEs, Sustainability, Ease of Use, Attitude, Knowledge of Entrepreneurs, Access to Technological Knowledge, Mauritius

Introduction

Remote communication has been transformed by networking technology, making it more affordable and more accessible than ever, opening remarkable accessibility and enormous opportunities intended for exposure for both entities and enterprises. The innovation that began with the web has continuously flourished through many forms of communication, such as phone applications and the social media (SM) platforms, obviously. It is a common to say that digital marketing (DM) has enforced changes upon on operation of the corporate environment. Businesses can use these technologies to have access to opportunities which were previously inaccessible to them. It helps companies improve their dignity, develop strategic relationships, and improve contacts with distributors and consumers.

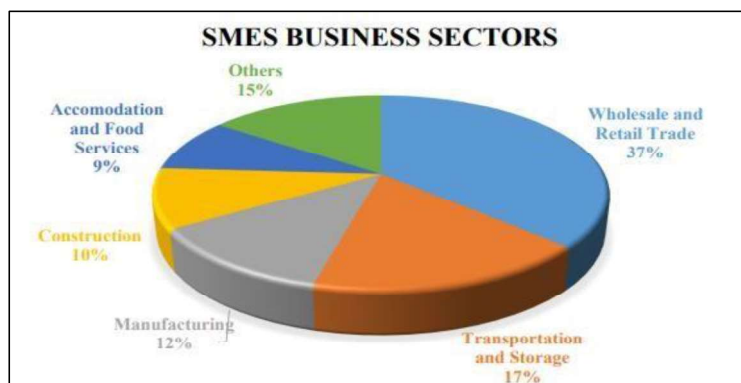
Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Mauritius have a lot of commerce prospects in the digital world, and they have the potential to expand quicker and contribute more to the Mauritian market. Indeed, DM will enable Mauritian businesses to overcome the historic and geographic disadvantage of being far from the marketplace. Throughout the light of mounting electronic expenditure and turbulent economic rivalry, digital engagement is an easy option for SMEs looking to seize market possibilities, gain competitive advantage, and develop creative product line. SMEs who are not yet digitally involved must be aware of the relevance and usefulness of DM, while those who are digitally involved but not yet at higher standard must work to improve their digital engagement. The aim of this study is to investigate the extent to which Mauritian SMEs utilize DM as their marketing tool as a mean to remain sustainable. To achieve this objective, this study investigate the extent to which ease of use, attitude, and knowledge of entrepreneurs as well as on the access of technological knowledge of the company along with digital transformation, has an implication on Mauritius SME success and development. This study also attempts to assess the level of understanding of SMEs on the use of digital marketing tools to help their businesses grow. It is expected that the outcome of this study will improve our understanding of the emerging age of digital connectivity for present and future businesses.

Literature Review

There is no concise description of small and medium-sized companies within Mauritius, but the commonly used is that from the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) Act 2009, distinguishing among micro, small and medium-sized businesses. According to the Act, a micro-enterprise is described as a business with an operating margin of under 2 million rupees. The category small company is attributed to the company with overall revenues of only about Rs 10 million and ultimately a moderate firm with yearly revenue exceeding Rs 10 million but below Rs 50 million.

Some main areas in which SMEs are engaged in Mauritius are illustrated in figure 1 and are mainly concentrated on wholesale and retail trade, transportation and storage, manufacturing, construction, and accommodation and food services.

Figure 1



Source: *Networking and internationalisation of SMEs in SIDS economies (2019)*

Digital marketing has altered the notion of developing technology over decades. New advertisers are confronted with an increasing number of social media platforms and digital resources and a growing emphasis of linked customers. Chaffey (2013) described digital marketing as the process of establishing and sustaining customer relationships across new technology such as e-mail, internet, directories, mobile and online TV, with the goal of facilitating the sharing of thoughts, Products and services which fulfil each party's aims. As a whole, Digital marketing is a known tactics to be accessible digitally. In recent years, the given that most online consumers have increased substantially implies that the company must have an elevated perception on digital marketing. Digital marketing claimed to have benefits over conventional marketing. Firstly, Digital marketing tools are claimed to be more economical than conventional marketing tools. For e.g., an email marketing or social media advertising may send a promotional information to the consumer for a lower cost of a conventional advert while also reaching a larger turnout.

One advantage of digital marketing, as per Faulkner (2013), enables employers actively drive prospective customers to use the channels to research more, evaluate, then review their product, as well as consume plus receive suggestions that is accessible to the target market, which aim to boost the company's profitability. Unlike conventional advertisements, digital marketing enables the firm to observe whatever does and does not functioning for them and subsequently make the necessary adjustments to enhance their efficiency (Chaffey, 2013). The perfect example of this would be companies using Analytics for analysis of online traffic and determine by what means customers visit, browse, and purchase its products online.

According to the author Chaffey (2013), usage of technology to assist promotional operations in gaining consumer information while addressing specific demands is defined as DM. Businesses throughout the established countries have recognised the significance of DM. For enterprises to be sustainable, combination of digital and conventional techniques will have to be amalgamated to better fulfil the requirements of their consumers (Parsons, Zeisser, Waitman 1996). Some of the most prominent marketing tools utilized regarding digital marketing are as follows:

Email Marketing

Emails have consistently been proven as a predominant program online. Email marketing is said to be one of the earliest aspects of online marketing, with information being delivered to the market segment via digital methods. As a matter of fact, one fifth visitors come access these firms' site due to clicking of the contact connection located in the online correspondence (Vo, 2014).

Email marketing is known to be incredibly lucrative, observable, extremely personalized as well as customized on wider gage. These factors combine to make email marketing the highly effective digital marketing tools. This technique is used by businesses to create on-going relations through existing plus future clients. Email marketing ought to be capable of retaining consumers while also assisting a firm towards increasing overall profitability.

Online Publicity

Internet marketing is meant to be shown in the form of digital advertisements, advertising banners and placed on different websites to increase awareness of the company's website (Vo, 2014). Stokes (2013) says that internet publicity may be increased by focusing and placing into specific contexts on certain geographical markets in the region. Online publicity is reachable around many categories, as well as everyone holds its particular benefits and drawbacks. None remains recognized as ideal type of online advertisement since the approach used by the marketer will ultimately rely upon his/her requirements, the style of webpage as well as the targeted audience. Pay-Per-Click marketing, banner ads and Sponsorships are the most common kinds of internet marketing.

Mobile Marketing

Since computers, iPad, and cell phones with Broadband internet acquire prominence and focus, it looks natural for SMEs should investigate mobile marketing techniques that would assist them in fighting aggressively against its rivals. Mobile marketing was described by Kaplan (2012) as "whichever marketing business conducted in via a shared Web toward which clients are always linked by means of a private mobile gadget." Businesses that are experienced regarding digital apps is in a better situation to reduce the likelihood of disaster within mobile initiatives. SMS marketing, user responsive websites, and QR Codes merchandising are highly prevalent types of mobile advertising used by SMEs to create brand awareness.

SEO - Search Engine Optimization

SEO is termed by Davis (2006) as "a skill, art, or science for generating online traffic to websites," while Stoke (2013) stated that such an approach is utilized to help a business to be listed higher on search engine listings. Such marketing strategy entails working utilizing parameters established through different search engines to guarantee that such search results recognize it when consumers input a keyword linked to a product or facility.

SEO plays an important part in acquiring new customers since it ensures that the official website or promotion strategy appears within google search, allowing the organization to achieve its objectives market. It is thought a search engine that a customized homepage is built to provide transparency. Stokes (2013) argued that these characteristics ensure a pleasant customer encounter, which further means the SEO does have a key role towards retaining customers.

Content Marketing

Consumers no longer rely on conventional advertisements and have a tendency to keep away ads by tv along with magazines. These have become so familiar with online browsing that they can browse about any details, and businesses must recognize this shift and look for new ways to reach off toward consumers. This may be accomplished through content promotion. According to Pulizzi (2012), content marketing is a promotional strategy that produces and delivers relevant and useful information with the goal of attracting and retaining a core demographic and putting in place positive consumer behaviour. Such method of marketing approach may be implemented across all marketing channels that is both traditional as well as digital and at every stage of the purchase cycle, from awareness through retention. Large corporations, such as Microsoft and Coca-Cola, as well as small businesses, employ content marketing (Vo, 2014).

Social Media Marketing

Since an era, consumers have been receiving information concerning the company via speaking to the sales representative in person. Through the upswing of the digital era, digital ads and emails have been the predominant way to interact among businesses and their clients. Even though several of these media platform are still essential components of effective marketing tactics, social media should still be considered (Miller, 2013).

The influence of SM in social bodies is as spectacular as the Internet development of the 1990's, as per Durkin et al (2013). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) characterize SM as "a range of Web apps which leverage mostly on technological or conceptual fundamentals underlying web 2.0 and enabling content generated by users to be created and exchanged." Reed (2011) further said that SM is typically any online community and resource that individuals may use free of charge for content exchange and sharing. Official estimates at the beginning of 2017 revealed 2,789 billion operating social media handlers. As such a 21 % rise has been indicated by Chaffey (2017) compared to the previous year.

In the opinion of Solomon (2013) the following components should always be well-thought-out: community, communication channel, and connectivity. It is assumed that the social media will mean different things to different people. The social aspect talks of social media as a way of living the communal lives of the digital groups, i.e., by posting images, likes, comments, review, stories among others as well as freely interacting and engaging publicly with one another (Gongora, 2016).

Social Media Platforms:

As conclusion, several research like Gongora (2016), Newman (2013) and Gligorijevic and Leong (2011) said: small and medium-sized companies tend to embrace social media marketing tactics, such as creating a fan page, handling digital ads and campaigns, improving customer care and feedbacks as well as handling community affairs. Besides, in new environment of today, several social media channels are present for small and medium-sized companies to utilize for a variety of purposes, and the most prominent are as follows:

Facebook

As per latest numbers in January 2017, Facebook is now the world's utmost popular as well as widely visited social media site, having 1,871 billion prominent handlers (Chaffey, 2017). Geoff (2014) states therefore that Facebook seems to be a useful alternative for company since it enables an enterprise to grasp a larger target market and to establish sustainable partnerships. Furthermore, businesses may market or hire to advertise their Fan page and evaluate the performance regarding contents online. (Chitwood, 2014).

Twitter

Twitter remains the popular social media site among organizations who currently wish to meet a target demographic and expect instant replies (Gongora, 2016). To reach the target demographic with the message, the organization should have simple, appropriate, and reliable information. A notable benefit of Twitter is that it permits a firm to formulate as well as distribute the content endlessly as well as to enhance customer engagement in anticipation (Chitwood, 2014).

LinkedIn

Levy (2013) states that LinkedIn is the utmost broadly utilized SM portal among the corporate sector for building connections. Gongora (2016) further claimed that LinkedIn has been providing the finest performance within consumers all around 35 years old. Such SM network is considered to be mostly of significance to service providers and retailers since it is not much a multimedia tool. Chitwood (2014) mentioned that the network of connections of the company is the highly respected information on LinkedIn. LinkedIn gives consumers the ability to explore and consult their preferences.

Pinterest

Pinterest is the "visual" forum that enables individuals to pin or share photos and videos and this social media network differs from others because it adds greater emphasis to latest posts and subject matter. According to the estimation of Geoff (2014), Pinterest possesses nearly 70 million operating handlers, with a majority of 68% females. Furthermore, Levy (2013) mentioned that the SM network remains mainly useful to companies that offer visual imagery, for example, food, graphic construct, as well as apparel. Once operators pin and re-pin the messages, it becomes easier to sort the content into various categories using the necessary key phrases (Chitwood, 2014).

Instagram

Having 400 million involved handlers in year 2016, Instagram remains the largest picture focused SM site on the Internet (Gongora, 2016). Instagram is also a graphic SM site that helps people to upload images and videos. Like Pinterest. It is an SM forum for which creative segments are mainly good and thus not ideal for any field. Instagram's exclusive filters and editing options are popular. Since hashtags are clickable and the combined sharing features for Facebook and Twitter, businesses may use hashtags to render Instagram content more accessible (Chitwood, 2014)

Google +

Google+ is now expected to be the most exponentially growing social media site, and in 2016, it acquired around 400 million users. Gongora, 2016 stated that, it is ideal for organizations in which SEO needs to gain additional consumers. Companies must connect Google+ subject to their websites for rankings boost of search engines, as everything on Google+ helps firms become noticeable on Google (Chitwood, 2014). Honigman (2014) stated Google+'s major benefit is its convergence with other Google sites including Gmail and YouTube.

Empirical Findings on SMEs and DM

Ease of use

Raymond et al (2005) investigated the usage of the Internet and the Browser among e-businesses operation of manufacturing SMEs and to extent to which it could be integrated. They also investigated the extent to which cultural integration of e-business led to SMEs' rise and foreign expansion. They found that generally, compared to large companies, small to medium-sized businesses have little experience and little means to modify their processes to meet emerging market needs flexibly, such as process modifications or new company partners incorporation. Thus, the complexity of Browser marketing applications requires an easy-to-use, self-explanatory business method in SME. Eid, Trueman and Ahmed (2006) investigated B2B businesses, to set the basis for benchmarking and good practice when the best elements of conventional and modern Internet marketing activity are combined. It was concluded in their findings that easy-to-use technology solutions can have a positive impact on SME use of digital Marketing. But businesses and consumers needed elements of "security" as well as "easy-to-use"

Entrepreneur's attitude and Knowledge towards Digital Marketing

Storey (1994) conducted a study to better understand the small business sector on how training could help businesses to grow. It was noted in the study that the evolution in innovative practices in the business world appears to be occurring where sufficient variables, which are the traits of the entrepreneurs and the characteristics of the company were combined. Another study by Rogers (1995) aimed to identify the fundamental properties and meaning of an invention related to its propagation and found that modern spread of technological innovation has defined several features which can decide a person's willingness to innovate and to incorporate for their own motives. In another exploratory study by Poon and Swatman (1999) to investigate small businesses and internet commerce issues, it was found that SME owner was use of internet for their commercial activity depended on their organizational ability and structure. Another study by Jean, Han & Lee (2006) explored the determining factors responsible for competitive e-business acceptance by SMEs and found that the decision- making to adopt digital marketing was mostly made at managerial level of the organization. The more skilled and creative a CEO was, the higher the probability of using digital marketing was most likely especially among small businesses. A variety of factors affecting the implementation of digital marketing depended on ownership type and the level of awareness.

Technical knowledge availability among SMEs

Dennis & Bara (2002) conducted a study to assess bricks to clicks understanding of e-consumers. It was noted that SMEs ought to understand the presence of professional know-how in the company in order to address technological developments. In the study by Jeon, Han, & Lee (2006) it was found that firms with more IT and e-business technologies personnel had a higher diversity of digital marketing applications than firms with low IT awareness. Wagner, Fillis & Johansson (2003) have analysed the e-business and e-supply policies for SMEs and among their findings, it was discussed that the IT experience of the workforce would also have a significant influence on ecommerce acceptance. It was also found that in the case of SMEs, most companies had no budget provision for structured learning of their staff or for recruiting specialists for ITs. This in turned hindered the acceptance in their industry of digital marketing applications.

Use of Digital Media

Yaseen, Al-Adwan & Al-Madadha (2019) conducted a study to determine the level of digital marketing adoption and investigated the essential requirement of digital marketing adoption among SMEs companies. Their finding revealed that digital marketing adoption was still in its early stage of adoption in the Jordanian context. The majority of SMEs limited their usage of social media and email marketing as a common tool for digital marketing. Moreover, lack of human skills, awareness of what digital marketing and technological tools that drives digital marketing were found to be the dominant factors to adopt digital marketing among SMEs companies. Recently, relying on the diffusion of innovation (DOI) framework and Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) theory, Patil, Navalgund & Mahantshetti (2022) conducted an exploratory study to digital marketing adoption by start-ups and SMEs in the context of India, and found that environmental & technological factors have a substantial influence on the digital marketing adoption. Variables such as relative advantage, compatibility, cost, perceived use, competitors and effective communication to customers had a positive impact on the digital marketing adoption by start-ups and SMEs.

The following hypotheses are also examined in the current context of SMEs in Mauritius:

H1: Entrepreneurs who find it difficult to use digital marketing will be less likely to use digital marketing in their businesses

H2: Entrepreneurs who have a positive attitude and knowledge towards digital marketing will more likely use digital marketing in their businesses.

H3: Entrepreneurs who have technical knowledge of digital marketing will be more likely to use digital marketing in their businesses.

Research Methodology

The methods used to reach the aims of this study are outlined in this section. The study focused upon descriptive research, with the dependent variable being the adoption of DM among SMEs, and the independent factors were ease of use, entrepreneurs' knowledge and technical knowledge availability of the firm. It relied on two types of data sources, primary and secondary. Primary data implies to raw data which are directly attained from the very factual experience. In this case, a survey questionnaire was appropriate techniques for gathering reliable data for investigating the issue. Hence, this research focuses on SMEs in Mauritius and involves a formal survey to elicit opinions from the SME owners on the adoption of digital marketing. At the time of the study, the population of SMEs in Mauritius stood to about 124,972 as per the latest census of Economic activities carried out in 2018. A probability sample was used to assure a predetermined possibility of selection for members of the SME population. Random sampling has been utilized to identify the participants. A questionnaire was devised to gather data based on a targeted group of 152 SMEs in Mauritius. The questionnaire was distributed online and consisted of four sections, with a total of 35 questions. The questions were derived from past studies and adopted for this study. A pilot study was the initial phase for the research and it helped to design and modify the major study. As such, a pilot survey was done with a selection of 15 SME to identify any issues with the style or question. Since no relevant problem existed, a comprehensive analysis was carried. The

information gathered was processed and evaluated to aid in the achievement of the study's goals and objectives. Following the analysis of the data, appropriate recommendations and conclusions are provided. Only 152 responses were recoded out of 250 questionnaires submitted to SMEs. This yields a response rate of approximately 60%. The statistical software SPSS version 20 (Statistical Package for Social Science) was utilized to analyse data as well as generate various tests. The initial pilot test was to done to validate the accuracy of the responses to the study. Following this procedure, a descriptive statistical test was performed, including the mean and variances of numerous questions, the correlation coefficient was used to define hypotheses, and test the strength and effect of the association between the use of DM in Mauritius SMEs. However, there were various limitations to the study which ultimately affected the statistical analysis.

Findings

Demographic Profile of SMEs

The questionnaire's initial component focused on the demography of the SME sector. This mainly includes information such as location, position, gender, age, level of education, and business field, among others. With the commercial development in the rural areas around Mauritius, it can be denoted that more entrepreneurs were from rural places. Majority of SMEs are owned and handled by the owners itself, representing a percentage of 71 %. A response rate of 17% was denoted as managers and 12% owners from the sample of 153 SMEs.

Senior respondents among the other categories tend to be lower, since they are the toughest from the other age demographics to approach. Nonetheless, significant survey respondents were the population aged 18-30 representing 30% of the population and 31-40 years representing 52%. The minor percentage of 16% and 2 %, represented the number of those interviewed among 41-50 and over 50, respectively.

It was observed that 55% of respondents are male and 45% female respondents. Male respondents have a higher rate than female responders. This might be related to the fact that women make up a smaller percentage of SMEs personnel and proprietors. However, compare to the past 10 years, women have been actively progressive in the respective sector. Even though man is dominant in the sector, there is relatively no big difference among the female and male entrepreneurs.

Most entrepreneurs are degree holders (45%) followed by diploma holders (21%) and HSC (17%). Minority percentage was that of SC, less that SC and PhD representing 5%, 3% and 1% respectively. As mentioned by Storey (2004), expertise and academic achievement can be indicators of improved capital investment. The more human capital a company has, the more likely it is to develop, expand, and get access to enterprise opportunities.

The highest percentages of participants were from hospitality and food and beverage sector representing 32%. Next was the retail sector representing 24%. The manufacturing sector represented 20% of the sample studied. The lowest responses were from construction and IT sector representing 3 % each.

Awareness about DM

From table 1 below, it can be shown that out of 152 respondents more than three quarter of the populace consider DM to be useful representing a percentage of 89.5%. Moreover, 9.9% opted for ability to operate without DM representing only 15 respondents. This showed that Mauritian SMEs were already DM users and were willing to continue this trend.

Table 1

How do you perceive digital marketing for your business?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Useful	136	89.5	89.5	89.5
	Can operate without	15	9.9	9.9	99.3
	Irrelevant	1	.7	.7	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

The findings showed that a majority of 136 participants out of 152 (89.5 %) SMEs have already recognized DM as being a helpful means to conduct entrepreneurial operation. Remaining 9.9% populace were not able to function without them or irrelevant (1%) to utilize such tools to promote the growth of their organisations. Furthermore, based on table 2 above, which asked respondents about their level of understanding of DM indicated that 129 respondents out of 152 defined DM as promotion through mixture of traditional and DM representing 84.9% whereas 11.8% responded by saying promotion only through SM and 3.3% through the enterprise’s website. This issue was vital to differ substantially between DM enterprises and those not using it to focus on its utilization among SMEs to achieve the research objectives. (See table 2)

Table 2

What do you understand by Digital Marketing?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Promotion using only social media	18	11.8	11.8	11.8
	Promotion over the company’s website	5	3.3	3.3	15.1
	Promotion through SMS, social media, Website, and other digital mediums	129	84.9	84.9	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

It can be denoted that Facebook was the most used DM tool with 54 positive responses. Next was the enterprise’s website yielding a percentage of 15.8. Lastly, the third mostly used tool was social media representing 12.5% out of 152 responses. Facebook is the most common social media tools used by SMEs and in Cesaroni and Consoli (2015) study, it was reported that among the most common reason for this social media choice was because customers were more familiar with the online social media platform.

Digital Marketing Use

From the table 3, it was noted that a minority of respondents did not use digital marketing optimally (15.9%). The majority of respondents felt that they were using digital marketing to its optimal level (84.1%). As mentioned in the digital Mauritius report 2020, net penetration of digital marketing has been growing steadily in Mauritius over the past few years and the report tally well with the findings.

Table 3

Do you think you use digital marketing optimally?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	23	15.1	15.9	15.9
	Yes	122	80.3	84.1	100.0
	Total	145	95.4	100.0	
Missing	System	7	4.6		
Total		152	100.0		

Testing of hypotheses

Ease of Use and Digital Marketing use by SMEs

Table 4 shows the results of hypotheses testing using Pearson’s Correlation. From the statistical result, it can be denoted that there is a negative correlation between ease of use and digital marketing usage since $r = -2.85$ and p value was significant < 0.01 . The finding was in support of Hypothesis 1, which stated that entrepreneurs who find it difficult to use digital marketing would be less likely to use digital marketing in their businesses.

Table 4

		Ease of use	Usage of digital marketing
Ease of use	Pearson Correlation	1	-.285**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	152	152
Usage of digital marketing	Pearson Correlation	-.285**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	152	152

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Attitude and Knowledge and Digital Marketing Use by SMEs

In the second hypothesis testing (see table 5), the result showed a positive correlation between attitude and knowledge of digital marketing and use of digital marketing ($r = 0.452$ and $p < 0.01$). Hence, hypothesis 2 which stated that entrepreneurs who have a positive attitude and knowledge towards digital marketing will more likely use digital marketing in their businesses is supported.

Table 5

		Attitude and knowledge	Usage of digital marketing
Attitude and knowledge	Pearson Correlation	1	.452**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	152	152
Usage of digital marketing	Pearson Correlation	.452**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	152	152

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Technical Availability and Digital Marketing Use by SMEs

Based on table 6, the result showed a positive correlation between technical availability and use of digital marketing ($r = 0.253$ and $p < 0.01$). This denotes that technical availability of a business has an effect on the usage of digital marketing among Mauritian SMEs. Lankford (2000) and Dennis (2002) mentioned that business structural considerations, such as increased IT resource allocation and internal proficiency, have a substantial impact on technology implementation. Hence, hypothesis 3 which stated that entrepreneurs who have technical knowledge of digital marketing will be more likely to use digital marketing in their businesses is supported.

Table 6

		Technical availability	Usage of digital marketing
Technical availability	Pearson Correlation	1	.253**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	152	152
Usage of digital marketing	Pearson Correlation	.253**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	152	152

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Conclusion and Recommendation

In this study it was found that 89.1% SMEs were familiar and using DM tools. This was further supported by 62% of the respondents agreeing upon DM being the easiest tool to use to create brand awareness and visibility. Regarding the small section of non-users of DM, these were companies who were either managed by retired persons or small shops with no aim of expansion. Moreover, the level of awareness of DM has been assessed which revealed that DM tools like Facebook and website were the commonly free used tools for marketing among SMEs in Mauritius. Entrepreneurs initiated that it simpler to interact and handle consumer reviews using DM tools as a result of customer centricity. Moreover, several drawbacks have been numbered

for DM. SMEs have pointed out that lack of time, finance, and resources as well as training are the main reasons for them not investing and applying DM at 100%.

Since the variable 'Ease of use' has a substantial impact on use of DM, entrepreneurs should equip themselves with the right skill training in order to take advantage of the benefits offered by the various digital marketing tools to help their marketing activities. This in turn could have a positive impact on their respective increase in their market share. Sometimes, SMEs lack both information and expertise to modify existing capabilities in order to respond effectively to emerging enterprise needs, hence acquiring those skills would be important for their success. Perhaps, to deal with the complexities of DM, SMEs may require a convenient and self-explanatory marketing instrument to help them utilize online tools more effectively.

Training for SMEs may be an option to promote the usage of DM and hence the worry about the service's simplicity of consumption will not remain an impediment to its usage. Furthermore, numerous suppliers are capable of giving assistance and outsource work for small and medium-sized enterprises. Hernandez, (2008) additionally argue that a person would discard even a smaller technological complexity if it cannot be seen to be beneficial. Therefore, it must be made clear that DM is beneficial or important to respective companies upon a preliminary phase previously it can be implemented in SMEs.

The mindset and expertise of entrepreneurs in Mauritius have an influence on the use of Digital marketing within SMEs. This outcome does not correspond to earlier investigations. This might be because DM infrastructure developments at SMEs are in an exponential phase of deployment compared to big enterprises. Furthermore, the degree of comprehension and DM techniques within SMEs is relatively low, due to a decrease level of technological awareness and expertise. This might prevent the entrepreneurs from adopting or rejecting the innovation.

Likewise, there was a substantial impact on the use of DM by the variable technical expertise of the SMEs. In a study by Koh and Maguire (2004), it was report that a company's capacity to do trade in a challenging situation depends upon its understanding, abilities, and practices. To counter such restrictions, which might prevent DM from being introduced, SMEs can outsource as best alternative in the absence of technological skills.

This study also indicated that if entrepreneurs uphold a positive attitude and knowledge about digital marketing, they would most likely use the digital tools for their businesses. Hence, it could be important for associations which support SMEs development to promote the use and benefits of using those tools. This would help to create greater awareness on their benefits and could change entrepreneurs with negative attitude towards the digital marketing tools.

This report's results cannot be generalized due to the limited random sample of 152 SMEs. It was attributable to the fact that the report's focus remained limited to Mauritius instead of the overall industry. As a result, extreme caution should be taken while extending these findings to the larger population. When measuring the degree of digital marketing utilization, the research did not consider underlying driving reasons. Such stimulating elements may have a significant positive impact on technological utilization that they may even outweigh overall detrimental effect of the restricting aspects.

Technology and digital marketing strategies are always changing. As early-stage startups and entrepreneurs are looking to get the pre-product market fit right, they should not consider product development to be more important than branding and digital marketing. Everything that a customer experience is the product. This is something that both startups and media companies don't always fully understand. Things like creating content, blogging, and building brand awareness around a product are often considered a secondary experience and a secondary part of the company, which is a completely wrong way of thinking. In many instances, what a customer first experiences about your product are on the internet or in the media long before they even get a chance to touch or use it first-hand. If your company does not have both of these aspects working together in alignment, then you could be causing yourself problems with building awareness for your company and product.

This study however contains many limitations in terms of sampling design and strategies. Future studies could focus on same sectors but with larger sample sizes to get an in-depth understanding on the issues discussed in this study. Hence, this study cannot be generalized into the SMEs population in Mauritius. Furthermore, other variables could most likely interplay with the independent variables found in this study, and may require more attention in future studies on SMEs use of digital marketing.

Additional research might incorporate moderating factors to reduce measurement errors. Deeper analysis must also consider all of the driving aspects of digital marketing such that statistics may be further integrative and complete. Furthermore, continued studies will improve the conceptual framework for integrating additional important independent factors and dependent variables. Moreover, the conclusions of this study do not apply to a particular area of the SME business. Additional variables impacting the use of SMEs in the Mauritian SMEs sector in such a given area might be considered as a means of additional investigation.

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