

Extent of Social Media Marketing Use by MSMEs in the Construction Industry in Harare. Case Study of CIFOZ and SMEA Members

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Abstract

The study examined the extent of social media usage by construction industry MSMEs in Harare guided by Chaffey's theory. A sample of 119 was drawn from CIFOZ and SMEA, using systematic and purposive sampling techniques. Questionnaires and interviews were used for collection of data which was analysed using SPSS and Nvivo. The instruments had a Cronbach alpha index of 0.72 implying validity. The findings showed that there was greater appreciation and motivation towards adopting social media tools among the participants and the MSMEs in the construction sector in Harare. The study, therefore, concludes that knowledge, skills and motivation towards social media marketing tools are abundant among MSMEs in the construction sector contrary to a priori expectations. The results also show that social media marketing offers the opportunity for a high number of social interactions for businesses to expand product/brand awareness as well as offer a feedback mechanism. The study, therefore, concludes that social media has a diverse and plethora of benefits that can be enjoyed by construction MSMEs in accentuating and perpetuating the growth of MSMEs in the construction sector in Zimbabwe. It is recommended that firms invest in the training of their staff on social media skills as well as in the acquisition of technology infrastructure for the adoption of social media marketing. It is further recommended that MSMEs take the next step in digital use by creating measuring tools to enable them to measure the contribution of social media marketing to the growth of their businesses.

Keywords

Social Media Marketing, MSMEs, Technology Adoption

1. Introduction

Effective communication is one of the pillars of success within the construction industry (Azhar & Abeln, 2014). Collaborating and effectively connecting people and information in construction projects provides the biggest potential for cost savings in the industry today (Pepper, 2013). This has seen the rise in the use of social media marketing to grow and strengthen businesses. In order to stay competitive, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs¹) are increasingly adopting social media marketing. The role of MSMEs in economic growth and development of countries has been emphasized over the past years (Ackah & Vuvor, 2011). As such, intellectual interest with regard to MSMEs' strategies for marketing their products and services has been growing with social media marketing occupying a place among those strategies. Kajongwe, Chinyena, Mugutso, and Mambo (2020) observe that this is especially so given that, compared to bigger and more established firms, MSMEs are 'less resource-endowed' hence, require to be more inventive in their business orientation including the adoption of social media marketing tools.

Social media has been identified as the most visible technology in use by many businesses (Icha & Agwu, 2015). The use of social media has been spreading across the world in light of the development of the internet in the 21st century, particularly in relation to the manner and ways in which businesses interact with their clients and customers as well as in their promotional activities (Dutot & Bergeron, 2016; Ahmad, Bakar, & Musa, 2017). Essentially, social media has been credited for transforming communications, participation and connectivity among organizations and their customers and other stakeholders (Odoom, Anning-Dorson, & Acheampong, 2017). In support, Rugova and Prenaj (2016) posit that social media has offered opportunities for entities to influence business outcomes such as customer reach and satisfaction, profitability and improved market share. This notion is buttressed by Jagongo and Kinyua (2013), noting that firms make use of social media for diverse intentions that include customer relationship management (CRM), product marketing, engaging in nascent markets and the collection of customer information. The foregoing views demonstrate the various and growing significance of social media to business since its inception.

The construction industry globally is not generally associated with internet technology, as much of its work is done far away from computers. Although marketing may seem tautologies in the industrial and service sector, it is still misunderstood in the construction industry (Naranjo et al., 2011). But due to technological changes, the construction industry has been forced to join the social media marketing drive. The central focus of this study was to investigate the extent of social media marketing use by MSMEs in construction sector in Harare with an emphasis on members of the Construction Industry Federation of Zimbabwe (CIFOZ) and Small and Medium Enterprise Association (SMEA) both

¹The definition of small and medium enterprises differs from country to country. In Zimbabwe, Micro, small and medium enterprises are defined as enterprises with less than 5, 40 and 75 employees respectively on an annual calendar, *Small and Medium Enterprise Act (Chapter 24:12, 6/2011)*.

with an approximated 800 members. The focus on MSMEs is motivated by the fact that they contribute 60% of the country's GDP (World Bank Group, 2012) and the National Development Strategy 1 of Zimbabwe intends to grow the economy on an average GDP growth rate of above 5% (Government of Zimbabwe, 2020). As the highest contributor, they become an essential target group. CIFOZ and SMEA were chosen because of availability and accessibility. CIFOZ is an umbrella body for registered construction companies whereas SMEA is an association for MSMEs. The study was driven by the realization that there has been a dearth of studies on the subject matter within the Zimbabwean context in general and the MSME construction sector in particular,

2. Background

There has been a recorded increase in the number of social media users over the years. For instance, Yan and Musika (2018) cites that in March of 2014, Facebook reported to have over 1.28 billion active users per month, among them, over 802 million users logged daily, and 1.01 billion users getting on board monthly on mobile platforms (p. 6). The increase in the use of social media has been attributed to the perception that it is less costly and that it brings convenience for businesses as well as their customers compared to other modes of communication (Yan & Musika, 2018). Other authors argue that social media facilitates ease of access to target customers by businesses albeit quicker than the traditional channels and modes, allowing firms to increase their clientele base and market share (Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013). It is this value that social media brings to businesses that researchers have investigated on the use of social media among MSMEs given their deficiency of financial support and a workforce that is skilled as common obstacles (Jagongo & Kinyua, 2013; Odoom, Anning-Dorson, & Acheampong, 2017).

The interaction between social media marketing and MSMEs has been deliberated over the past years (Ahamat, Ali, & Hamid, 2017). The authors further state that "Social media is developing the opportunities to the growth of MSMEs industry and offers many benefits as well as problems that MSME's need to be aware of and to deal with in an efficient way" (Ahamat, Ali, & Hamid, 2017). However, while the role of MSMEs in both the national and global economies has been significant, there has been an under-exploitation of the potential of social media marketing by MSMEs (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016). "In today's business environment, the centre of activities of customers is more and more going virtual, located within social media or social networking sites" (Ahamat, Ali, & Hamid, 2017). Hence, businesspersons increase prospects by adopting technology, and obtaining signals that offer them appropriate, practical, substantial and reasonable information (Ahamat & Chong, 2014), an aspect which MSMEs have continued to lag behind on.

As of 2019, there were about 830,000 construction companies in the United States. Most of them are experiencing the same struggle: crafting a successful online marketing strategy for contractors. Due to technological changes, the

construction industry has been forced to join the social media marketing drive. In fact, according to a recent study by Service Titan, only 45% of businesses in the contracting and construction industries are growing (Blue Corona, 2019). The study by Service Titan also shows that, according to Google Ads, there are more than 1.2 million online searches for roofing services each month and more than 4.2 million online searches for home builders and design-build firms each month (Blue Corona, 2019). The statistics point to the need for MSMEs to adopt social media marketing to increase their market base by tapping into the 4.2 million searches on Google.

According to a Finscope Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Survey (2012), in Zimbabwe there are 2,8 million MSME owners employing 2,9 million people, translating into 5,7 million people dependent on the sector, contributing more than 60 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (Chundu, 2021). Given the number of MSMEs in the country, it is important for them to adopt social media marketing in-order to try and maximise their potential in the market space. The number of social media users in Zimbabwe increased by 320 thousand (+33%) between 2020 and 2021 (Kemp, 2021) which translates to 8.7% of the total population (Kemp, 2021). However, the disaggregation per sector of usage is not known. Zimbabwe has one of its national development objectives anchored on modernising the economy using digital technology, hence setting the tone for the need to use social media marketing. This, therefore, necessitated the need for this current study to ascertain the benefits of social media marketing among MSMEs in the construction sector and to determine the level of MSMEs' appreciation and usage of social media marketing tools.

3. Literature Review

The study was hinged on Chaffey's (2002) theory which postulates that social media marketing affects the organizational performance positively. The theory looks at social media functions in relation to the marketing strategy of an organization. As indicated by the theory, communication and human interaction are critical in the survival of an organization. Theory centres on social media as a relationship-building apparatus. Heinze et al. (2016) allude that by setting up a long run relationship with customers, there will be advantages of social media marketing. The theory is especially, significant for this study as it facilitates an understanding of the possible influences among MSMEs towards the adoption of social media marketing given its emphasis on the function of social media in line with the marketing strategies of the firms. Furthermore, Chaffey's theory is of great importance to this study owing to its call for an assessment of the short-term benefits of social media marketing adoption by firms as well as overseeing the long-term gains of social media marketing. The theory is fundamental to the study as it offers an alternative and new dimension of the impact of social media marketing to businesses including MSMEs in the construction industry.

3.1. MSMEs' Appreciation of Social Media Marketing Tools

There has been a general criticism that has been levelled against MSMEs in the construction sector and the broader sector in terms of the combative nature, the adoption of nascent technologies and procedures and matters related to organisational administration (Miller et al., 2002). Stewart et al. (2003) observes that from the times past, the greater construction organizations have made endeavours to limit the impacts of reduced incomes and financial declines through diverse measures like conservation and disinvestment. Consequently, there is a view that MSMEs are not normally proficient at marketing and monetary control (Storey, 1994).

A study conducted by O'Farrell and Hitchins (1988) made observations that a number of craftsmen-entrepreneurs want to remain doing their own exchange abilities and are to some degree reluctant to be overwhelmed in the running, the executing and structure filling committed by mechanical involvement. In another investigation by Cooper et al. (1989), it was recognized that there was an apparent lower insight in marketing and deals among craftspeople and free entrepreneurs. The situation is worse with regards to experience and abilities in social media marketing apparatuses. Such regions are seen as central in the recent scholarly deduction as they impact the achievement of MSMEs in the current business environment. Stewart et al. (2003) note that there has been an overall acknowledgment in the MSME area that the drive of the proprietor director is the central standard towards the accomplishment of hierarchical objectives.

3.2. Role and Functions of Social Media Marketing among MSMEs in the Construction Sector

There have been documented roles and functions (benefits) of social media marketing in both large and small firms. Social media offers the chance for a high number of social associations for organizations (Fischer & Reuber, 2011). MSMEs are said to be slower in embracing social media than buyers (Ashworth, 2011). At present, most basic social media marketing rehearses among MSMEs include making and working an organization's fan page, overseeing advancements, keeping up advertising, and directing statistical surveying. These days, there is a wide assortment of social media platforms, every one of them having some specific highlights that permit MSMEs to use them contrastingly and for various purposes.

Social media use including such platforms as Twitter (for writing and for a blog administrations), Facebook (for online social systems administration), LinkedIn (for professional systems administration), Google Plus (for social systems administration) have led to a beginning type of marketing procedures among MSMEs (Kazungu et al., 2014). This is upheld by Mahmoodan et al. (2014) who believe that social media marketing gives apparatuses that are savvy and offer practical returns given that the objective market is promptly open through the various platforms. Likewise, Constantine (2013) argues that social

media marketing is inserted with imperative ideas, intended to set up and keep an elaborate online local area of intrigued devotees. Social media marketing has appeared to expand item/brand mindfulness and motivate the market to recognize, acquire, devour, and re-obtain the item being advanced online hence, building brand loyalty.

Social media offers the opportunity for a high number of social interactions for businesses (Fischer & Reuber, 2011). Ashworth (2011) found that the most common social media marketing practices among MSMEs involve creating and operating a company's fan page, managing promotions, maintaining public relations, and conducting market research. Other activities include providing customer support and encouraging customer reviews and discussions (Bettiol, Di Maria, & Finotto, 2012; Newman, 2013). In addition, Constantine (2013) point out that social media marketing has been shown to augment product/brand awareness and inspire the market to detect, procure, consume and re-procure the product being promoted online hence, building brand loyalty.

Because of their simplicity and accessibility, MSMEs can acquire extraordinary advantages from executing social media apparatuses (Zeiller & Schauer, 2011). MSMEs enjoy the benefit, despite being typically characterised by restricted assets, of appreciating a complimentary chain of command than enormous associations, making them more fit to use social media, because of their more prominent adaptability and higher need to contain marketing correspondences costs (Pentina, Koh, & Le, 2012). Social Media can give numerous advantages to MSME proprietors: they work with correspondences over long distances effortlessly, separating topographical obstructions, and beating time imperatives for data and communication purposes (Chen & Wellman, 2009).

Social Media can likewise straightforwardly profit the business if it is used accurately. In an investigation created by Nobre and Silva (2014), every one of the organizations utilizing social media devices expressed that they had noticed an increased traffic in their site, and three out of four organizations expressed that they had encountered increased information about their organization. Even though social media is often seen as a method for deals and marketing, a few investigations have discovered that MSMEs also like the advantages of utilizing social media for other business purposes, like consumer loyalty (Kietzmann et al., 2011). In an investigation into social media use by little retailers, Ashworth (2011) found that acquiring information through get-together data on clients and building more grounded connections was viewed as one of the main benefits of social media use. Facebook was found to empower organizations to centre publicizing towards a particular gathering of users whenever they had become fanatics of the firm. The force of social media lies in its viral nature: one customer identifies with another, and in the long run, the marketing message rapidly spreads all through the internet verbal. As a marketing means, MSMEs can benefit greatly from easy-to-use and easy-to-implement social media applications (Zeiller & Schauer, 2011).

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Research Philosophy and Design

The pragmatist philosophy anchored on the epistemological standpoint was used given the intention by the researchers to utilize triangulation of methods. The pragmatist philosophy was chosen for its ability to offer manifold realities (Leavy, 2017). In line with the pragmatist philosophy, both the inductive and deductive research approaches were adopted for this current study. Given that this study adopted a pragmatist research paradigm allowing for the use of the inductive and deductive approaches, both the quantitative and qualitative methods were used. An embedded mixed methods design was used involving the convergent or sequential use of data to integrate quantitative or qualitative data into a larger design and the data source is in the overall design, (Creswell, 2015). The questionnaire designed by the researchers had both closed and open-ended questions to establish extent of social media marketing use by MSMEs in the construction industry. The embedded design incorporated the case study strategy using CIFOZ and SMEA as case studies. While the case study strategy has been noted for its lack of generalizability, it was deemed the most appropriate for this study given that it dispenses with particular circumstances as they obtain (Yin, 2015). Thus, the strengths of the case study design far outweighed its weaknesses hence its choice for this study.

4.2. Study Population and Sample

For this study, the population encompassed all MSMEs in the construction sector under CIFOZ and SMEA, their owners, management and their staff members located in Harare. The population also included experts in the field of social media marketing with a bias towards construction and experts in the construction sector under CIFOZ as they have the proficient knowledge on the subject matter. The target population was estimated to be around 800 participants. Both the probability and non-probability sampling techniques were used for this study. Specifically, the systematic sampling technique was used as a probability sampling technique to select participants for the questionnaires as the seventh company was used to pick respondents. Systematic sampling was advantageous for the researcher as the subjects were fragmented over the different companies (which in the case of this study are the different MSMEs) as it saved time and money (Davis, 2005). It also enabled each company an opportunity to be selected. The 800 companies were numbered, and the number seven was randomly picked from a selection of numbers from one to ten. For the non-probability sampling, the purposive/judgmental sampling techniques were used. This method of sampling was used given that it allowed the researchers to only select people involved in the social media, marketing and MSMEs sectors to take part in the study given their proficiency and involvement in the MSMEs respectively. Thus, the purposive sampling technique allowed the researchers to access key informants for the study so that the most relevant people were used in turn enabling

validation of the study outcomes.

The study purposefully selected a sample of senior management and middle management, for MSMEs and experts who have a deep knowledge of the use of and factors influencing the adoption of social media marketing by MSMEs in the construction industry. The choice for this sample population was that it was significantly conversant, well qualified, experienced and accessible without great difficulty. The sample population was further representative of the entire study population (Saunders et al., 2015). For this study, a determination of the sample size was done making use of the acceptable Yamane Formulae of sample size determination giving a sample size of 115 participants for the questionnaires and five participants for the in-depth interviews. The formula is given below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

where:

n = sample size;

N = size of the population = 800;

e = acceptable sampling error = 0.05;

The sample size was determined at 95% level of significance.

4.3. Data Analysis Tools

Quantitative data collected through a semi-structured questionnaire were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Questionnaires used were pre-coded and the responses were entered on a 5.0 Likert Scale. Qualitative data collected through in-depth interviews was analysed using thematic analysis and Nvivo where a list of common themes from the interviews were extracted and then grouped to express common elements emerging through participants' voices. Finally, for the purpose of data interpretation, data were presented in the form of frequency tables, bar charts, pie charts as well as supportive narratives in the light of the emerging themes from the interviews as well as word tree diagrams. The triangulation of methods was used to ensure internal validity of the data collection instruments. In addition, validity was achieved through pilot-testing the research instruments on the un-sampled population to pre-test the research instruments.

4.4. Ethical Considerations

The research complied with the key tenets of ethical considerations which include informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, and privacy of the participants. Before administering the questionnaire and carrying out the interviews, the researcher solicited for the informed consent of the participants. Informed consent was obtained through highlighting the study purpose and objectives as well as assuring the participants that their right to confidentiality and privacy was guaranteed. The participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time they felt they could no longer take part in the study. The researchers sought for authority to conduct the research from the relevant

organizations, institutions and individuals before commencing data collection.

5. Research Findings

5.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Study Participants

Most of the study participants were male who constituted 84.2% of the sample while women were 15.8%. This depicts that the construction sector is largely dominated by men, and this is supported by [Amaratunga et al. \(2006\)](#) who attributed this pattern to the labor-intensive nature of the industry which is physically taxing hence women tend to shy away from the sector. The youths dominated the industry where 40.5% of the participants fell in the 31 - 40 years age range, followed by the 18 - 30 years age group at 25%, whilst the 41 - 50 years constituted 18.1% with the balance of 16.4% in the over 50 years age range. The majority (32.4%) of the participants had attained diploma level education whilst 21.8% had certificates followed by those with secondary education at 16.5%. The degreed followed with a frequency of 13.2% whilst master's degree holder constituted 10.7% of the participants. Thus, participants were vastly knowledgeable people who were viewed as educated enough to respond to the questionnaire and interview questions as well as appreciative of the social media marketing aspects fundamental to the study.

5.2. Diagnostic and Reliability Test

From the 115 questionnaires distributed, 114 were returned completed showing a response rate of 91.1%. The high rate of response was attributed to the fact that the questionnaires were distributed first to CIFOZ then SMEA to ensure the desired number was reached. For the interviews, the researcher managed to conduct all the interviews that were scheduled hence a 100% response. The high response rate thus has positive implications on the validity of the study findings.

Reliability test was performed on each of the questionnaire sections which are MSMEs' appreciation of social media marketing tools, and roles and functions of social media marketing among MSMEs in the construction sector. The results indicate that each of the two sections of the questionnaire have a Cronbach's Alpha index of 0.776 that is acceptable i.e. beyond 70% and below 90%. The high index means that the questionnaire is valid for conducting research to answer the research questions. All the variables which made up the questionnaire were tested using the Cronbach's Alpha test. Cronbach's Alpha values range from 0 to 1. In this study, a Cronbach's Alpha index of 0.720 was obtained. This high index reflects that highly reliable data, hence the results of this study, can be inferred to MSMEs in construction industry in general as there is internal consistency. Recommendations from existing literature suggest that Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.7 and above indicate a highly reliable questionnaire.

5.3. Research Findings and Discussion

The results are presented to answer each of the key research objectives being to

determine the level of MSMEs' appreciation of social media marketing tools and to ascertain the role and functions of social media marketing among MSMEs in the construction sector.

5.3.1. MSMEs' Appreciation of Social Media Marketing Tools

1) *Knowledge about social media*

Asked on whether the respondents had knowledge about social media, all the questionnaire respondents indicated that they had knowledge about it. The same views were raised in the interviews as all the participants reflected that they had a deep appreciation of the social media phenomenon. This strengthened the study in that the respondents were knowledgeable about the concept under study.

2) *Awareness of social media tools*

The highest number of participants noted that they were aware of the various social media marketing tools available as shown in **Table 1** below. WhatsApp was the most prominent among the participants with 26.3% noting they were aware of it and 57.0% were greatly aware. Facebook had 31.5% who were aware and 51.7% greatly aware, the website 34.6% aware, 48.2% greatly aware, YouTube 28.9% and 50.0% aware and greatly aware respectively and Twitter 35.9% aware and 40.3% greatly aware. The large numbers reflected in relation to awareness of WhatsApp as compared to Twitter and others is likely because of its appeal to a wider group and does not require one to have followers as is the case with Twitter. The website knowledge could reflect awareness campaigns on the need for websites that is being promoted through CIFOZ and SMEA. Generally, therefore, all the participants reflected greater awareness of the different social media tools that are available for organisations to use in marketing, albeit in varying degrees.

3) *Use of social media tools by construction MSMEs*

In terms of usage, WhatsApp is the most used social media marketing by MSMEs in Zimbabwe's construction sector with the highest frequency of 88.6%,

Table 1. Awareness of social media tools.

Social media tools	1. Aware	2. Greatly aware	3. Neutral	4. Unaware	5. Greatly unaware
Facebook	31.5%	51.7%	2.6%	3.5%	10.5%
Twitter	35.9%	40.3%	14.0%	2.6%	6.14%
Instagram	39.4%	32.4%	16.6%	3.5%	7.0%
WhatsApp	26.3%	57.0%	2.6%	3.5%	10.5%
YouTube	28.9%	50.0%	5.2%	5.2%	10.5%
LinkedIn	32.4%	43.8%	9.7%	1.7%	11.4%
Snapchat	34.6%	11.4%	17.5%	15.7%	15.7%
Website	34.6%	48.2%	3.5%	3.5%	11.4%

followed by Facebook at 84.2%, Website (78%), LinkedIn (56.1%), twitter (52.6%), Instagram (35.1%), YouTube (29.8%) and the least was Snapchat with a frequency of 3.5%. Thus, most of the participants were highly aware of the various social media marketing tools that can be used by MSMEs in the construction sector in Zimbabwe. The appeal of WhatsApp in relation to Twitter maybe related to the wider reach of WhatsApp and the ease of use by the public. Facebook and WhatsApp are user friendly as they do not require additional equipment and are easily accessed on the mobile phone, hence their high usage.

4) *Existence of Social media marketing skills within MSMEs:*

Participants agreed and strongly agreed to the existence of social media marketing skills within MSMEs in the construction sector given frequencies of 33.6% and 18.6% respectively. The highest percentage (34.6%) was neither in agreement nor disagreement as to the existence of social media marketing skills within the MSMEs in the construction sector. There were 9.7% and 3.5% who disagreed and strongly disagreed respectively. The finding here points to the lack of leadership direction towards training staff on social media marketing skills. This neutrality on the existence of social media marketing skills within the construction industry could support the lack of statistics on the use of social media marketing by the construction industry, hence supporting the gap on literature on the adoption of social media marketing by MSMEs in this sector.

5) *MSMEs motivation to use social media marketing*

On whether MSMEs were motivated to use social media marketing, the findings revealed that 38.6% of the respondents agreed and 21.1% strongly agreed that they were motivated. Those that were neutral were 21.1% whilst 14% disagreed and 5.3% strongly disagreed. This suggests that MSMEs in the construction sector are motivated to use social media marketing. Such motivation is founded on the levels of social media marketing appreciation by the construction sector MSMEs. Such results dovetail with the assumptions of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which is anchored on the conviction that it is behavioural intention that determines the use of the computer and its antecedent technologies (Davis, 1989). The TAM recognises that attitude toward making use of the computer system is conjointly determined by utility and the ease of use relative to being conjointly decided by the individual's stance with regards the use of the system (Al-Gahtani & King, 1999).

6) *Leadership support for social media marketing in MSMEs in construction sector:*

The respondents were generally in agreement that the management in the MSMEs were supportive of social media marketing. This support can be explained from the perspective of the managerial characteristics as those that appreciate social media marketing are more likely to adopt it within their organisations. They explained that the support came in the form of availing of funds for data bundles, updates and paying up for the website upkeep, allowing the brand to be subjected to social media, encouraging it on strategic marketing plan, hav-

ing digital strategies and employing social media managers. The findings correspond with research by Yu & Tao (2009) who found that as a business comprises a group of individuals, business behaviour is collective behaviours of individuals.

7) *Training on social media skills:*

The participants were asked to indicate if they had received any training on social media skills. The results indicate that from the 114 responses got, 51.7% said that they had not got any form of training on social media skills. Only 43.8% said that they had attained some form of training on social media skills. The lower figures of those that have not attained any training on social media skills may reflect barriers to the adoption of social media marketing as such people are likely to resist any changes that may be brought by adopting social media marketing.

8) *Source of social media skills training:*

Most of the participants (51.9%) said that they acquired social media skills on their own, followed by 25.8% who had been trained by the company, 9.1% by other means and the least was 6% who had been trained through donor/partner initiatives. The implication of this finding is that most firms in the construction sector are not investing in training their staff on social media marketing and this will negatively impact on any drive towards its adoption by the firms.

Table 2 shows two critical components extracted out of the data using factor analysis to measure the MSMEs appreciation of social media marketing in the construction sector in Zimbabwe.

The results of factor analysis show that there are two components that is leadership support and awareness of social media tools influencing the adoption of social media marketing as given by the 43.97% of the total variance. These two factors, thus help to explain the high levels of appreciation of social media marketing

Table 2. Total variance: MSMEs appreciation of social media marketing.

Com- ponent	Total Variance Explained								
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	2.499	31.235	31.235	2.499	31.235	31.235	1.782	22.273	22.273
2	1.019	12.733	43.968	1.019	12.733	43.968	1.736	21.695	43.968
3	.967	12.092	56.060						
4	.860	10.752	66.813						
5	.801	10.013	76.826						
6	.675	8.436	85.262						
7	.598	7.474	92.736						
8	.581	7.264	100.000						

among the participants.

Thus, generally, the findings of the study challenge the views from past literature. The findings indicated a greater appreciation and motivation towards adopting social media tools among the participants. This is contrary to the findings of a study by [Ahamat et al. \(2017\)](#) who argued that a number of craftsmen-entrepreneurs have a desire to remain carrying out their own trade skills and are somewhat unwilling to be engulfed in the running, management and form-filling obligated by technological involvement. In another study by [Ahamat and Chong \(2014\)](#) it was acknowledged that there was a visible lower experience in marketing and sales among craftspeople and independent entrepreneurs.

5.3.2. Benefits of Social Media Marketing among MSMEs in the Construction Sector

The study's second objective was aimed at ascertaining the benefits of social media marketing among MSMEs in the construction sector. The participants were required to show their level of agreement with three sub-variables that encompassed: *Does social media marketing offer the opportunity for a high number of social interactions for businesses? Is social media marketing a credible tool for accessing the target market via the different platforms?; and can social media marketing augment product/brand awareness?* Collected data was analysed through SPSS and thematic analysis and the results are summarised in [Figure 1](#).

From the results, the majority of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed to the fact that social media marketing offer the opportunity for a high number of social interactions for businesses given a frequency of 54 (47.3%) and 31 (27.1%) respectively giving a combined agreement frequency of 74.4%. The participants also strongly agreed and agreed to the notion that social media marketing is a credible tool for accessing the target market via the different platforms with scores of 46 (40.3%) and 41 (35.9%) respectively. Social media marketing was deemed to have the potential to expand product/brand awareness as 59.6% strongly agreed and 21.9% agreed. The results indicate that social media marketing is indeed beneficial to the MSMEs in the construction sector as it can facilitate business interactions, help in accessing target customers as well as

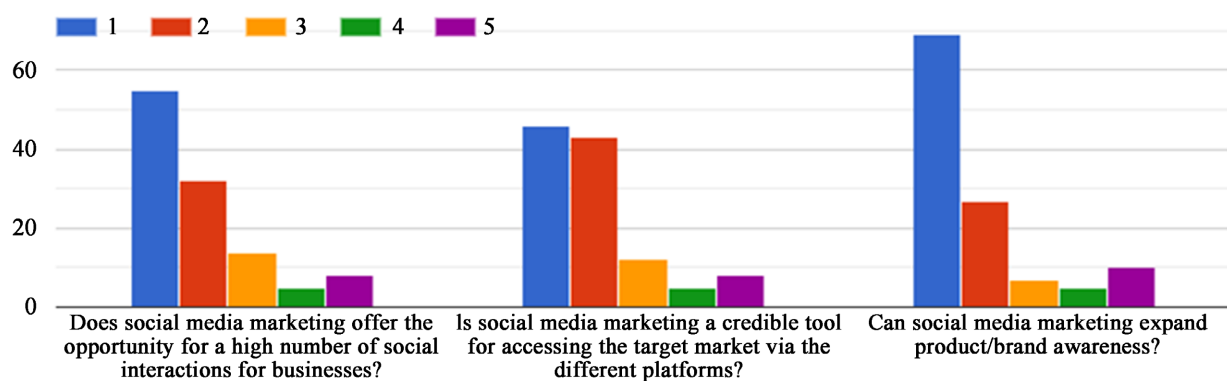


Figure 1. Benefits of social media marketing.

expand product/brand awareness.

Key informants from the interviews further noted that there were other roles and functions of social media marketing that include facilitating seeking for new recruits, idea sharing, market penetration given that it reaches even the people outside the country which allows for a wide range of customers and potential customers. Others said that social media was significant because it offered a feedback mechanism as well as being a form of online archiving of goods, products and services in cases where the client is not in a position to engage with the company for services and products therefore a historical timeline can be traced via social media updates done by the company for a certain period of time. The benefits of social media have been noted to also help in increasing sales and revenue as well as engagement with other stakeholders outside the industry and customer relationship management.

Table 3 points to the existence of 4 vital components (i.e. product/brand awareness, market penetration, increased social interactions for business and accessing the target market) drawn from the collected data which measures the benefits of social media marketing among MSMEs in the construction sector. There was an aggregate contribution to the variance described of 67.49% among the 4 components. This, thus, supports the view that social media marketing has numerous benefits in construction sector MSMEs.

The interviewed participants echoed views that social media marketing facilitate brand building, brand marketing and promote stakeholder engagement among others. Nvivo text search also pointed to the fact that social media marketing creates brand awareness, allow for speedy identification of organisation's location as illustrated in **Figure 2**.

The findings of this study are in tandem with the **Chaffey's theory (2002)**, which asserts that that social media marketing affects the organizational performance positively. The theory suggested that social media functions in relation

Table 3. Variance Benefits of Social media marketing.

Component	<i>Total Variance Explained</i>								
	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	1.424	20.336	20.336	1.424	20.336	20.336	1.363	19.474	19.474
2	1.174	16.779	37.115	1.174	16.779	37.115	1.169	16.705	36.179
3	1.074	15.348	52.463	1.074	15.348	52.463	1.123	16.042	52.221
4	1.052	15.025	67.488	1.052	15.025	67.488	1.069	15.267	67.488
5	.865	12.359	79.847						
6	.785	11.209	91.056						
7	.626	8.944	100.000						

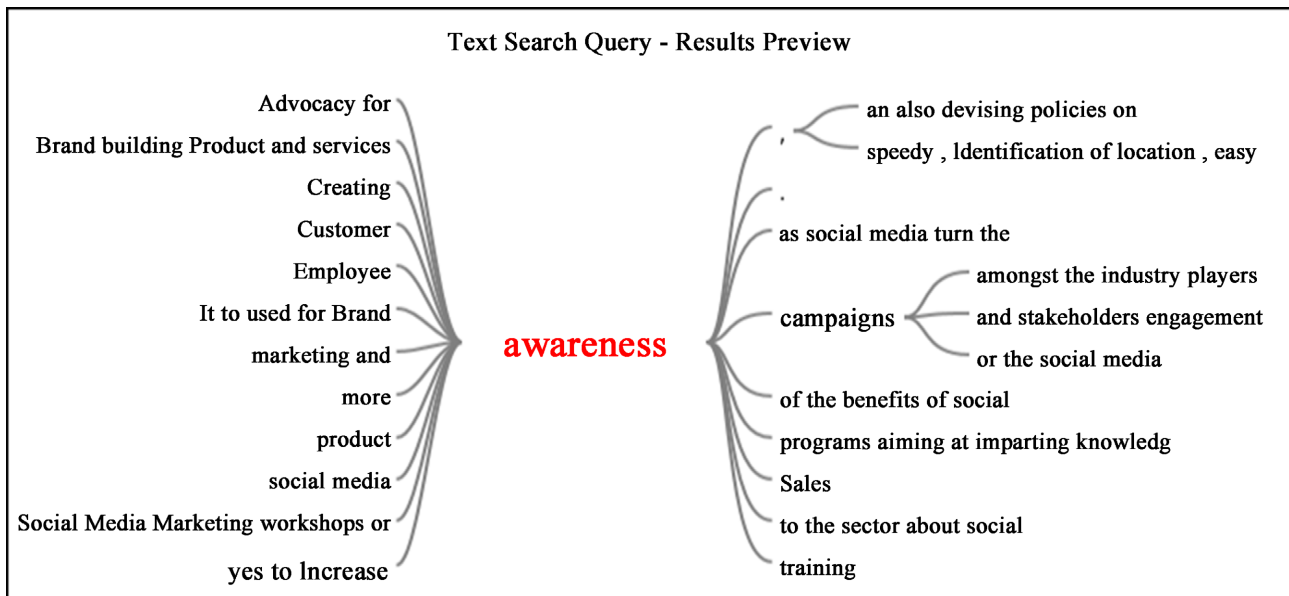


Figure 2. Interview perception on social media benefits.

to the marketing strategy of an organization are critical in the survival of an organization. The theory accentuates the role of social media as a relationship-building apparatus. Heinze et al. (2016) alludes that by setting up a long run relationship with customers, there will be advantages of social media marketing. Chaffey's theory thus helps in assessing the short-term benefits of social media marketing adoption by firms as well as overseeing the long-term gains of social media marketing.

6. Summary and Conclusion

The study was guided by the pragmatist research philosophy that allowed for the use of the mixed methods. Systematic and purposive sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 120 participants from the MSMEs construction sector. The study utilised questionnaires and interviews in the collection of research data which subsequent data was analysed using SPSS version 25 for and thematic analysis as well as Nvivo.

The study results pointed to the existence of significant social media marketing appreciation by employees of MSMEs in the construction sector in Zimbabwe. The findings showed that there was greater appreciation and motivation towards adopting social media tools among the participants and the MSMEs. The study, therefore, concludes that knowledge, skills and motivation towards social media marketing tools are abundant among MSMEs in the construction sector contrary to apriori expectations. The results also show that social media marketing offers the opportunity for a high number of social interactions for businesses, that it is a credible tool for accessing the target market via the different platforms and has the potential to expand product/brand awareness as well as offer a feedback mechanism. The study, therefore, concludes that social media

has a diverse and plethora of benefits that can be enjoyed by construction MSMEs in accentuating and perpetuating the growth of MSMEs in the construction sector in Zimbabwe.

The study results have practical implications for MSMEs. The platforms for social media pose numerous prospects for MSMEs to spawn business benefits such as increasing brand awareness and enhancing customer relationships as well as communication with firm interested parties. Nevertheless, the contribution of social media marketing can only be realised if senior managers appreciate how to strategically integrate social media initiatives into their business activities. There is a need for the adoption of a strategy driven approach which begins by establishing solid goals and objectives compared to a technology driven approach. It is from the business model of the company that the social media marketing strategy should be derived.

In as much as the findings revealed that there was an appreciation of social media marketing tools and skills among staff, this appreciation was largely acquired individually by the staff. Hence, it is recommended that firms invest in the training of their staff on social media skills as well as on the acquisition of technology infrastructure for the adoption of social media marketing. It is further recommended that MSMEs take the next step in the digital use by creating measuring tools to enable them to measure the contribution of social media marketing to the growth of the business

The study sample was drawn from the construction MSMEs operating in Harare hence may not be a very accurate representation of the population. This study, therefore, recommends that further research be conducted to cover other parts of Zimbabwe to gain more empirical evidence on the factors influencing the adoption of social media marketing by MSMEs in the construction sector as literature suggests that location may influence adoption of social media marketing. Furthermore, among MSMEs in Harare, the impact of social media marketing has not been measured. Key informant (KI1) who is a digital marketing agency indicated that as much as people concur that social media marketing offers positive benefits, the results are yet to translate into figures in-particular in the construction industry.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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