

Technological-Organisational-Environmental Factor Of Adopting Social Media Marketing Among Asnaf Entrepreneurs At Kuala Perlis Rural Tourism Destination

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ABSTRACT

Rural tourism and agrotourism play a crucial role in regional development, with small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) acting as key contributors by attracting tourists through their products and activities, although the accessibility of social media platforms for promoting SMEs may pose challenges for certain marginalized groups such as Asnaf entrepreneurs in rural areas, limiting their visibility and competitiveness. A gap in the study exists regarding the specific challenges and barriers faced by Asnaf entrepreneurs in rural areas when adopting and utilizing social media platforms for their small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the tourism industry, as well as the factors influencing their attitudes, behavioral intention, and overall digital marketing efforts. This study focuses on the adoption of social media among Asnaf entrepreneurs in rural tourism destinations, specifically Kampung Seberang Ramai, Kuala Perlis. The research aims to identify the factors that influence the adoption of social media and the readiness of Asnaf entrepreneurs in utilizing it for business marketing. The study found that the main influencing factor is the technology factor, which includes familiarity with social media. The attitude toward social media also plays a significant role in its adoption. The findings suggest that external agencies, such as MAIPs, should collaborate with SMEs to support Asnaf entrepreneurs in adopting social media and promoting their products. This collaboration can contribute to the growth of rural tourism by attracting visitors through social media marketing. The study emphasizes the need for agencies to address barriers and provide tailored support, including social media training, machinery assistance, and

incentives, to promote social media adoption among Asnaf entrepreneurs who express concerns about meeting future demands.

PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

Rural tourism and agrotourism play a crucial role in promoting regional development (Hudakova et al., 2017). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are important economic activities that contribute to the growth of rural tourism (Hudakova et al., 2017). Social media has become a powerful tool for SMEs to reach a wider customer base and promote their products and services. Malaysia has a high penetration rate of social media usage, making it an effective marketing platform (Malaysia Digital Association, 2016). However, some SMEs, particularly those run by Asnaf entrepreneurs in rural areas, may face challenges in accessing and utilizing social media (Nuryati & Bahri, 2021). This can hinder their visibility and competitiveness compared to other SMEs.

This study focuses on understanding the factors that influence the adoption of social media among Asnaf entrepreneurs in rural areas. It has three main objectives: firstly, to identify the main component within the Technology-Organization-Environment (TOE) factor that influences Asnaf entrepreneurs in adopting social media; secondly, to identify the main component of the attitude toward social media that influences Asnaf entrepreneurs in adopting social media; and finally, to examine how the TOE factor and attitude toward social media collectively influence the behavioral intention of Asnaf entrepreneurs in adopting social media. In examining these factors, the study aims to gain insights into the readiness of Asnaf entrepreneurs to adopt social media and understand the impact of their attitudes toward social media on their adoption decisions. Ultimately, this research aims to contribute to the growth of rural tourism by facilitating the adoption of social media among Asnaf entrepreneurs and leveraging its potential for promoting their SMEs.

METHODOLOGY

The case study method is a popular qualitative research approach used to investigate individuals, groups, communities, or establishments. It involves restricting the study to a specific time or space and collecting data through observation, interviews, and documents. The study utilizes snowball sampling to recruit participants through referrals and purposive sampling to select Asnaf entrepreneurs as respondents. The sample consists of 20 participants involved in food and beverages businesses, with 5 receiving beneficiaries from MAIPs. Reasons for not receiving assistance include lack of knowledge, non-Malaysian status, and ongoing application processes. In this case study focused on Kampung Seberang Ramai in Kuala Perlis, a fisherman's village where Asnaf entrepreneurs operate SMEs, the researcher aims to understand the readiness of Asnaf

entrepreneurs to adopt social media. Interviews have been chosen as the data collection technique. The case study design allows for an in-depth examination of the specific group of Asnaf entrepreneurs within the context of Fakir and Miskin.

FINDINGS

Factors	Findings
Technology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 17 out of 20 respondents recognized the benefits of social media for promoting products, enhancing productivity, communication, learning about competitors, and improving brand image. 2. Some respondents expressed their inability to keep up with the demands of social media and preferred traditional marketing techniques.
Organization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 14 out of 20 respondents were in favor of using new technologies like social media to improve business conditions. 2. Some respondents emphasized the need for support to meet the demands generated by social media adoption. 3. Varying levels of awareness and access to external agency support were observed among respondents.
Environment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Competitive intensity was seen as a driving force for SMEs to adopt social media and survive in a hostile environment. 2. Majority of respondents agreed that social media was a popular tool for business advancement. 3. Competition among SMEs fostered healthy competitiveness and inspired others to excel.
Attitude toward SM	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The overall positive perception among respondents. 2. Need for guidance and assistance in using social media effectively. 3. Some resistance to switching to new social media platforms due to comfort zone and learning curve concerns. 4. Lack of guidance and instructors in managing social media limited respondents to a single platform.
Behavioral Intention	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The majority of respondents expressed interest in using social media. 2. Concerns about lack of guidance, overwhelming demand, and managing viral content were raised. 3. The resolution of these issues could lead to widespread agreement on social media adoption among respondents.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, there are opportunities for Asnaf entrepreneurs in Kampung Seberang Ramai to adopt social media. The study aims to identify the factors influencing their adoption, including the TOE factor and attitude toward social media. Findings show that these factors impact behavioral intention. However, barriers such as lack of support and fear without guidance exist. Agencies can use this information to support Asnaf entrepreneurs and enhance their SMEs' visibility and competitiveness through social media.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The study findings reveal that while SME entrepreneurs have a positive attitude toward social media adoption, Asnaf entrepreneurs express fear about meeting the future demand from social media. This study provides valuable insights for agencies like MAIPs, MADA, FAMA, MITI, SMIDEC, and MATRADE to address the barriers to social media adoption in SMEs. To support Asnaf entrepreneurs, these agencies can offer social media training tailored to their needs, provide machines to enhance the production capacity, and offer incentives as capital for business continuation. The agencies can utilize the research findings to facilitate and promote social media adoption among Asnaf entrepreneurs.

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