

Determining Technology Readiness in Adopting Social Media Marketing Among Asnaf Entrepreneurs in Rural Destination Kuala Perlis

Wardina Hani Binti Mohd Sabri*¹, Dr. Nur Shuhadah binti Mohd ², Dr. Nur Hidayah binti Abd Rahman ³, Dr. Lina Munirah binti Kamarudin ⁴, Dr. Athifah Najwani Shahidan ⁵

^{1,2,3}Department of Tourism, Kulliyah of Languages and Management, International Islamic University, Malaysia.

⁴ Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia.

⁵ Universiti Teknologi MARA, Perlis, Malaysia.

*correspondence E-mail: wardihoney@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Rural tourism cannot flourish without small companies (SMEs) to support its operations and long-term viability. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in tourist towns not only handle the main production firm but also function as a tourist attraction. However, it is known that due to their low capacities, lack of money, lack of technical experience, unstable organisational structure, and small number of employees, SMEs are hesitant to adopt new marketing methods. Hence, this study attempts to determine the technology readiness among Asnaf SMEs and entrepreneurs using a TR-based segment derived from the TRI Model by Parasuraman and Colby (2015). The study area is Kampung Seberang Ramai, Kuala Perlis. The research adopted a qualitative approach, in which the snowball and purposive techniques were used to identify 20 respondents from Kampung Seberang Ramai. The findings discovered that Asnaf entrepreneurs have difficulty using social media and are disinterested in it. The lack of resources is what makes them reluctant to adopt social media. This research is expected to understand Asnaf's situation and provide findings regarding the assistance they most need.

RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Rural tourism relies on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as important contributors and attractions (Yusoff, 2018). However, SMEs in rural areas face challenges, including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Social media marketing is an opportunity for SMEs to enhance their presence and sales, but its adoption is still limited among SMEs. The Asnaf community, a lower-income group involved in SMEs, particularly in rural areas, struggles to adapt to new technologies and lacks resources. The COVID-19 pandemic has further highlighted the need for Asnaf entrepreneurs to embrace online business strategies for sustainability. However, they face obstacles due to limited access to technology and a perception that social media is not essential for their business. Despite the topic of technology readiness has been widely researched, there are not many studies that focus on the Asnaf community. Therefore, this study aims to focus on the perception of social media and technology readiness among Asnaf entrepreneurs.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research uses qualitative method and a cross-sectional research method. The case study used is Kampung Seberang Ramai in Kuala Perlis where the respondents are asked a set of questions for a qualitative interview. The respondents were selected via a purposive sampling and purposive sampling method targeting the Asnaf community that operates SME businesses or entrepreneurs and lives in Kampung Seberang Ramai.

RESULTS

The Asnaf entrepreneurs generally have a positive perception of social media and its benefits, but they have low innovativeness and discomfort in adapting to new technologies. They also express insecurity due to a lack of knowledge and guidance in using social media. While they use social media in their daily lives, their motivation to use it for business purposes is low. They find it inconvenient for customer communication and prefer face-to-face interactions. They are not interested in exploring social media deeply and only want to use it with sufficient resources and assistance.

The TRI model, with its dimensions of innovativeness, optimism, discomfort, and insecurity, influences the Asnaf entrepreneurs' adoption of social media. They have low scores in motivators and high scores in inhibitors, indicating their reluctance and discomfort in adopting social media for their businesses. User experience and familiarity with social media platforms are crucial factors in their adoption. Poor user experience and lack of guidance hinder their willingness to continue using social media. The Asnaf entrepreneurs require assistance and confidence to successfully adopt social media in their businesses.

Theme	Result
1. Perception towards social media	The respondents generally have a positive perception of technology and social media and think it is useful for everyday use.
2. Technology Readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Innovativeness : The respondents do not like to try new technology. II. Optimism : The respondents are interested in technology and social media and think they are useful for their daily lives and businesses. III. Discomfort : The respondents also prefer the traditional way of marketing and are reluctant to switch to another social media platform and would rather stick with their current one. IV. Insecurity : The respondents felt daunted by using digital technology and social media as they do not have enough resources, assistance and guidance to use social media.
3. Behavioural Intention for business purposes	The respondents consider social media to be suitable for business use. However, they do not want to further explore social media and they only want to continue using social media if they have enough resources.

CONCLUSION

This research discusses the factors that contribute to the readiness to adopt social media into Asnaf entrepreneurs' businesses. Based on the research conducted, it was discovered that Asnaf entrepreneurs have difficulty using social media and are disinterested in it. The Asnaf entrepreneurs displayed a high inhibitor score, indicating that they are not comfortable using technology, or in this research, social media. They stated that they need assistance and resources in order to adopt social media into their business. Since most Asnaf entrepreneurs do not have the resources or assistance or guidance to use social media, they apparently are not ready to adopt social media into their business marketing. They are much more comfortable with the current method, which is traditional marketing (word-of-mouth and through the supplier).

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