

The Effects of Social Media Platforms to Entrepreneurial Practices and Business Performance of Micro-Enterprises in Cabiao, Nueva Ecija

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Abstract

This study examined social media marketing practices and their relationship with the business performance of home-based micro-enterprises in Cabiao, Nueva Ecija. Anchored on the Technology Acceptance Model, Social Information Processing Theory, and Baumol's Revenue Maximization Theory, the study employed a quantitative descriptive research design incorporating correlational and evaluative approaches. A researcher-made questionnaire was administered to the total population of 287 respondents from registered micro-enterprises, and data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, one-way ANOVA, t-test, and Pearson correlation. Results showed that micro-entrepreneurs often used social media platforms and short-form video content, particularly Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube, while influencer marketing and paid advertisements were used less frequently. Social media marketing was very effective for brand identity and awareness and moderately effective for customer relationships, customer-base expansion, and sales performance. Significant differences in selected marketing practices and business performance indicators were found according to respondent profiles and enterprise characteristics. Short-form video and user-generated content were positively associated with sales performance, while user-generated content was also positively associated with customer relationships and customer-base expansion. The study recommends selecting platforms appropriate to business characteristics and strengthening social media marketing and entrepreneurship education. The study aligns with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure) through its focus on entrepreneurship, local economic activity, and digital technologies. Its sustainability impact lies in supporting the continued development of home-based micro-enterprises through accessible digital marketing practices that can strengthen brand visibility, customer engagement, market expansion, and sales.

Keywords: Business Performance; Digital Marketing; Home-Based Micro-Enterprises; Social Media Marketing; Sustainable Development; User-Generated Content

1. Introduction

Digital technologies have transformed marketing from traditional one-way communication into interactive approaches centered on content creation and customer engagement (Cao & Weerawardena, 2023). With 4.65 billion active social media users worldwide in 2022 (Datareportal, 2022), social media has become an important marketing channel, particularly for small businesses with limited advertising resources. In the Philippines, extensive internet use (Baclig, 2022) and the popularity of Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok (Mark Ford, 2021) provide opportunities for micro-enterprises to promote products, communicate with customers, and expand their

markets. This study examines home-based micro-enterprises in Cabiao, Nueva Ecija, focusing on social media marketing practices involving influencer marketing, social media platforms, short-form video contents, paid advertisements, and user-generated contents. Their business performance is assessed through brand image, customer relationship, and sales performance.

Home-based businesses are small enterprises operated primarily from the owner's residence and often involve family members (Isip, 2021). Their importance increased during the COVID-19 lockdowns as Filipinos increasingly engaged in home-based and online entrepreneurial activities (Isip, 2021). Because these businesses generally operate with limited resources, digital marketing offers opportunities to reach customers and manage interactions efficiently (Qalati et al., 2021). Social media allows small businesses to promote products and establish relationships with customers (Cao & Weerawardena, 2023). Facebook supports business promotion and customer interaction (Lua, 2022), while Instagram provides affordable opportunities for advertising and brand awareness (Borah et al., 2022). TikTok has likewise emerged as a platform for creative marketing, customer engagement, and brand promotion (Kikawa et al., 2022; Hirose, 2021). Paid advertisements and user-generated content further enable businesses to target audiences and use customer-created material to strengthen online promotion.

Business performance may be reflected through sales, profitability, market share, and related indicators (Rodríguez Gutiérrez et al., 2023), as well as customer satisfaction and acquisition (Cao & Weerawardena, 2023). Social media marketing can support brand visibility, customer relationships, and sales by allowing businesses to communicate directly with consumers. Facebook can strengthen corporate identity and brand awareness through regular online content (Cao & Weerawardena, 2023), while TikTok can increase exposure to potential customers (Oehsen and Betancourt's study from 2021). Digital marketing also gives consumers convenient access to product information (Cao & Weerawardena, 2023) and may strengthen customer relationships and attract new customers (Rodríguez Gutiérrez et al., 2023). Social media further provides a relatively inexpensive means of increasing brand exposure and reaching customers (Bhattacharya (2022).

MSMEs contribute substantially to employment, poverty reduction, rural economic activity, and entrepreneurship in the Philippines (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2024). However, small enterprises commonly face resource limitations and competitive uncertainty (Borah et al., 2022; Qalati et al., 2021; Borah et al., 2022). Appropriate marketing strategies and technologies are therefore important to their continued operations (Qalati et al., 2021; Borah et al., 2022). Digital marketing provides small businesses with accessible approaches for product promotion (Kikawa et al., 2022) and can require fewer financial and human resources than traditional marketing (Qalati et al., 2021). Social media also enables customer targeting, flexible communication, and measurable marketing outcomes (Cao & Weerawardena, 2023). These opportunities are particularly relevant to home-based micro-enterprises in Cabiao, Nueva Ecija.

The study is anchored on two theories and one model: Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), Social Information Processing Theory (Walther, 1992), and Baumol's Revenue Maximization Theory (Baumol, 1959). The Technology Acceptance Model explains technology adoption, while Social Information Processing Theory describes how perceptions and relationships develop through online interaction. Baumol's Revenue Maximization Theory connects increased income and sales with longer-term organizational objectives. Together, these perspectives support the examination of social media adoption, online customer interaction, and business performance among home-based micro-enterprises. Conceptually, the study examines influencer marketing, social media platforms, short-form video contents, paid advertisements, and user-generated contents in relation to brand image, customer relationship, and sales performance.

Although literature demonstrates the usefulness of social media for marketing, customer engagement, and business growth, small businesses continue to experience resource constraints and competitive challenges (Borah et al., 2022; Qalati et al., 2021; Borah et al., 2022). Digital marketing may address some of these limitations because it can require fewer resources (Qalati et al., 2021) while providing flexible and measurable marketing opportunities (Cao & Weerawardena, 2023). The study therefore examines how social media marketing practices relate to the business performance of home-based micro-enterprises in Cabiao, Nueva Ecija. It also considers differences according to entrepreneur profiles and enterprise characteristics to provide a basis for recommendations for enhancing micro-enterprise performance.

The study aligns with SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth because MSMEs contribute to employment, entrepreneurship, and local economic development (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2024). It also supports SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure through its focus on the use of digital technologies in business marketing. Digital platforms provide small enterprises with accessible methods for promotion, customer communication, and market expansion (Borah et al., 2022); (Kikawa et al., 2022).

The study contributes to socio-economic, digital, and community sustainability by examining marketing practices that may support the continued operation and development of home-based micro-enterprises. MSMEs contribute to local economic activity and employment (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2024), while social media provides businesses with opportunities to reach wider markets and measure marketing outcomes (Cao & Weerawardena, 2023). Understanding these practices can provide useful information for micro-entrepreneurs seeking to strengthen brand image, customer relationships, and sales performance in Cabiao, Nueva Ecija.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study used a quantitative descriptive research design incorporating correlational and evaluative approaches. Descriptive research systematically characterizes a population, situation, or phenomenon and may examine one or more variables (McCombes, 2022). The correlational approach examined the relationship between social media marketing practices and business performance without manipulating the variables, while the evaluative approach assessed the effects of social media marketing on the performance of HBBs.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted among home-based businesses in Cabiao, Nueva Ecija, a municipality composed of 23 barangays. Based on the 2020 Census, Cabiao had a population of 85,862, representing 3.72% of Nueva Ecija's population and 0.69% of Central Luzon's population, with a population density of 768 inhabitants per square kilometer (philatlas.com, 2022).

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The study involved 287 respondents representing registered micro-enterprises in Cabiao, Nueva Ecija. The population information was obtained from the Business Permits and Licensing Office (BPLO) as of December 2022. Respondents included business owners, partners, and employees, where applicable.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The researcher surveyed the total population of 287 identified respondents from registered micro-enterprises. The respondents were distributed across the barangays of Cabiao, with the largest numbers coming from San Roque, San Juan North, San Fernando Sur, and San Juan South. Thus, the study covered the identified population rather than selecting only a portion of it.

2.5 Research Instrument

A researcher-made questionnaire developed from various related literatures was used for data collection. It consisted of three parts. The first gathered information on the characteristics of the micro-enterprises and respondents' profiles. The second assessed entrepreneurial practices involving social media marketing using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1.00–1.49 (Never) to 3.50–4.00 (Always). The third assessed the effects of social media marketing on business performance using a four-point scale ranging from 1.00–1.49 (No Effect) to 3.50–4.00 (Very Effective). The questionnaire underwent pilot testing with 10 respondents who had characteristics similar to the target population. Its validity and reliability were evaluated with the assistance of three experts: the research adviser with a doctorate degree in business administration, a statistician, and a business expert/practitioner with a doctorate degree in business administration. A Cronbach's alpha of 0.686 or 0.70 was reported, and the instrument was considered good and reliable.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

The researcher prepared the necessary correspondence and sought permission from business owners to conduct the study in their respective homes. Upon approval, questionnaires were distributed to the respondents and retrieved within the designated period. The completed responses were then collated, analyzed, and subjected to appropriate statistical treatment.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. Frequency and percentage distributions described the respondents' profiles and enterprise characteristics, while weighted means assessed social media marketing practices and their effects on business performance. One-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to determine significant differences when respondents' profiles and enterprise characteristics were considered, while the t-test examined significant differences between two groups, including those based on gender. Pearson r was used for correlational analysis to determine relationships between the variables examined in the study.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, and respondents were provided with informed consent before answering the questionnaire. They were informed of their right to decline or withdraw from participation at any time without penalty, and no incentives were provided. The researcher maintained confidentiality by protecting collected information and anonymizing the identities of the micro-enterprises, owners, partners, and employees. Ethical procedures also included securing endorsement from the adviser and graduate school dean, obtaining written approval from business owners or managers, respecting participants' autonomy, avoiding pressure to participate, and maintaining the confidentiality of research results.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Profile and Characteristics of Micro-Entrepreneurs

3.1.1 Demographic Profile

Most respondents were aged 31–35 years (41.1%), followed by those aged 36–40 (19.5%) and 41–45 (17.4%). Females comprised 73.5% of respondents, while 26.5% were males. Most were married (78.7%), and 84.3% had completed vocational courses. The concentration of entrepreneurs aged 31–35 indicates substantial participation of relatively younger adults, although entrepreneurship was also evident among older groups. Social media provides opportunities for entrepreneurs to connect with target markets, particularly through emerging platforms such as TikTok (Kikawa et al., 2022).

3.1.2 Enterprise Characteristics

Micro-enterprises were concentrated in San Roque (22.3%), San Fernando South (19.2%), and San Juan South (14.6%). Most respondents operated food businesses (60.6%), followed by clothing and apparel (26.8%) and agricultural products (10.8%). Most enterprises had operated for 1–5 years (88.5%). Capitalization was primarily PHP 50,000–200,000 (45.6%) or below PHP 50,000 (44.3%), while 50.5% employed 1–2 workers and 42.5% employed 3–5. These findings characterize the respondents largely as small-scale enterprises with relatively low capitalization and few employees. Their concentration in particular locations and business sectors reflects the local entrepreneurial structure, while the predominance of businesses operating for 1–5 years indicates a relatively established group of micro-enterprises.

3.2 Social Media Marketing Practices

3.2.1 Social Media Platforms and Short-Form Video Content

Micro-entrepreneurs often used social media platforms (2.88) and short-form video contents (3.49). Facebook was always used (3.94), while Instagram (3.02), TikTok (3.07), and other platforms (2.88) were often used. Twitter was never used (1.49). For short-form videos, TikTok marketing involving videos, songs, and dances (3.63) and popular sounds and hashtags on TikTok and YouTube (3.64) were always used. YouTube videos (3.20) and live streaming through reels (3.49) were often used. These results demonstrate the preference of micro-entrepreneurs for accessible and highly interactive social media channels. Emerging platforms allow businesses to connect with target audiences and promote brands, products, and services (Mou's research (2020)).

3.2.2 Influencer Marketing, Paid Advertisements, and User-Generated Content

Influencer marketing (1.86) and paid advertisements (1.69) were only sometimes used. Hiring celebrities or online influencers (1.57), seeking endorsements from local officials (2.17), and partnering with large businesses (1.83) were less frequent practices. Paid advertisements, including sponsored messages (1.77) and pay-per-click or influencer-generated advertising (1.62), were likewise sometimes used. In contrast, user-generated contents were often used (3.39), particularly through customer-created content, promotional posts, and encouraging friends and followers to share experiences. The findings indicate greater reliance on organic and user-generated promotional approaches than on paid or influencer-based strategies. This reflects the accessibility of social media for micro-enterprises and its capacity to facilitate direct communication and content sharing without requiring extensive conventional advertising resources.

3.3 Effects of Social Media Marketing on Business Performance

3.3.1 Brand Identity and Awareness

Social media marketing was very effective for brand identity and awareness, with a grand weighted mean of 3.67. Respondents particularly indicated that social media enabled products to establish a presence at relatively low cost (3.70) and generate shares and views (3.64). The result demonstrates the importance of social media in establishing the online presence of micro-enterprises. According to Edmondson (2019), Facebook enables business owners to establish a distinct corporate identity by regularly uploading business-related content, including promotions, limited-time offers, and live streaming.

3.3.2 Customer Relationship and Expanded Customer Base

Social media was moderately effective in strengthening customer relationships (3.08) and expanding the customer base (3.41). It helped customers explore products and services for informed decisions (3.09) and compare products at reasonable prices (3.07). Its strongest effect on customer expansion was attracting customers from different parts of the province and connecting businesses beyond geographic boundaries (3.72). These results indicate that social media facilitates communication and access to product information, although its overall perceived effect on customer relationships was moderate. Online advertising provides customers with opportunities to research products and services before making informed decisions (Nair, 2011).

3.3.3 Sales Performance

Social media marketing was moderately effective in sales performance, with a grand weighted mean of 3.39. Its cost-effectiveness and efficiency in generating profit received a rating of 3.09, while its contribution to generating

sales, revenue, and profit was considered very effective at 3.70. The findings indicate that social media contributes to sales-related activities by connecting businesses with customers and supporting product promotion. Social media provides a relatively inexpensive means of increasing brand exposure and attracting potential customers (Bhattacharya, 2022).

3.4 Differences in Social Media Marketing Practices According to Entrepreneur Profile

3.4.1 Age and Gender

Age showed a significant difference only in paid advertisements ($p=0.011$), while influencer marketing ($p=0.198$), social media platforms ($p=0.096$), short-form video contents ($p=0.194$), and user-generated contents ($p=0.601$) showed no significant differences. Gender likewise showed a significant difference only in paid advertisements ($p=0.018$), with no significant differences in influencer marketing ($p=0.205$), social media platform use ($p=0.134$), short-form videos ($p=0.179$), or user-generated contents ($p=0.636$). The findings suggest that most social media marketing practices were similar across age and gender groups, except for paid advertising. Both male and female entrepreneurs generally used influencer marketing, social media platforms, short-form videos, and user-generated content in comparable ways.

3.4.2 Civil Status and Educational Attainment

Civil status showed significant differences in paid advertisements ($p=0.015$) and user-generated contents ($p=0.000$), but not in influencer marketing ($p=0.403$), social media platforms ($p=0.058$), or short-form videos ($p=0.069$). Educational attainment showed significant differences in social media platform use ($p=0.003$), short-form video contents ($p=0.001$), and user-generated contents ($p=0.001$), but not in influencer marketing ($p=0.415$) or paid advertisements ($p=0.124$). These findings indicate that selected social media practices vary according to civil status and educational attainment. The use of multiple digital marketing channels remains common among businesses, including social media, influencer marketing, email, search engines, and digital content (Dragas et al. (2022).

3.5 Differences in Business Performance According to Enterprise Characteristics

3.5.1 Location and Nature of Business

Location showed significant differences in brand image and awareness ($p=0.000$), sales performance ($p=0.001$), and customer relationship ($p=0.012$), but not in expanded customer base ($p=0.270$). Nature of business showed significant differences in brand image and awareness ($p=0.000$) and sales performance ($p=0.045$), while customer relationship ($p=0.143$) and expanded customer base ($p=0.058$) showed no significant differences. These findings indicate that geographic location and type of enterprise were associated with selected dimensions of business performance. However, their effects were not consistent across all dimensions, particularly customer expansion and customer relationships.

3.5.2 Length of Operation and Number of Employees

Length of operation showed a significant difference only in customer relationship ($p=0.001$). No significant differences were found for brand image and awareness ($p=0.857$), sales performance ($p=0.260$), or expanded customer base ($p=0.295$). Number of employees showed a significant difference in brand image and awareness ($p=0.016$), but not in sales performance ($p=0.752$), customer relationship ($p=0.063$), or expanded customer base ($p=0.131$). The results suggest that length of operation and workforce size are associated with specific aspects of performance rather than business performance as a whole. Length of operation was particularly associated with customer relationships, whereas number of employees was associated with brand image and awareness.

3.6 Relationship Between Social Media Marketing Practices and Business Performance

3.6.1 Brand Image and Awareness

Significant correlations with brand image and awareness were found for influencer marketing ($r=-0.144$, $p=0.014$), social media platforms ($r=-0.150$, $p=0.011$), short-form video contents ($r=0.345$, $p=0.000$), paid advertisements ($r=-0.232$, $p=0.000$), and user-generated contents ($r=0.417$, $p=0.000$). User-generated content showed the strongest positive relationship, followed by short-form video content. The findings indicate that social media marketing practices have varying relationships with brand image and awareness. According to Edmondson (2019), Facebook enables business owners to establish a distinct corporate identity by regularly posting relevant business and product content.

3.6.2 Sales Performance

Short-form video contents ($r=0.234$, $p=0.00$) and user-generated contents ($r=0.293$, $p=0.00$) showed significant positive relationships with sales performance. Influencer marketing ($r=-0.103$, $p=0.08$), social media platforms ($r=-0.055$, $p=0.351$), and paid advertisements ($r=-0.031$, $p=0.603$) showed no significant correlations. The findings indicate that short-form and user-generated content were more closely associated with sales performance than the other social media marketing practices examined. Their relationships were nevertheless weak, indicating that the associations with sales performance were limited in magnitude.

3.6.3 Customer Relationship

User-generated contents showed a significant but very weak positive relationship with customer relationship ($r=0.135$, $p=0.022$). Influencer marketing ($r=-0.028$, $p=0.642$), social media platforms ($r=-0.101$, $p=0.086$), short-form video contents ($r=0.037$, $p=0.536$), and paid advertisements ($r=0.011$, $p=0.846$) showed no significant relationships. The results indicate that user-generated content had a stronger association with customer relationships than the other practices, although the relationship remained weak. Online advertising offers customers opportunities to obtain information about products and services and make knowledgeable decisions (Nair, 2011).

3.6.4 Expanded Customer Base

Short-form video contents ($r=0.173$, $p=0.003$), paid advertisements ($r=-0.186$, $p=0.002$), and user-generated contents ($r=0.320$, $p=0.00$) showed significant relationships with expanded customer base. Influencer marketing ($r=-0.021$, $p=0.722$) and social media platforms ($r=-0.016$, $p=0.782$) showed no significant correlations. User-generated content demonstrated the strongest positive relationship. These results indicate that user-generated content, short-form videos, and paid advertisements were associated with customer-base expansion, although the relationships ranged from very weak to weak. Social media can cross geographic boundaries and connect businesses with customers with relatively limited initial investment (Bhattacharya, 2022).

3.7 Implications for Micro-Enterprise Business Performance

The findings identified platform selection, social media marketing knowledge, and digital marketing education as areas relevant to improving micro-enterprise performance. The study emphasized selecting social media platforms appropriate to products, services, target customers, and location and identified social media marketing training and entrepreneurship education as potential support mechanisms. These findings emphasize the role of appropriate digital marketing practices in supporting micro-enterprises. Strengthening entrepreneurs' understanding of social media may help them use available platforms more strategically for brand visibility, customer engagement, market expansion, and sales.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that micro-entrepreneurs commonly used affordable and accessible social media platforms, particularly Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube, to market their products and services. Social media was effective in improving brand identity and awareness and contributed to customer relationships, market expansion, sales, and profitability. The use of specific social media marketing practices varied according to entrepreneurs' profiles, particularly age, gender, civil status, and educational attainment, while business performance differed according to enterprise characteristics such as location, nature of business, and number of employees. Social media marketing practices generally had a significant relationship with brand image and awareness, while short-form video and user-generated content were significantly related to sales performance. User-generated content was also significantly related to customer relationships and, together with short-form video content and paid advertisements, to an expanded customer base.

Micro-entrepreneurs should select social media platforms that are appropriate to their products and services, location, and capitalization because not all platforms significantly affect business performance. The government should strengthen entrepreneurship programs by providing short courses or orientations on social media marketing and supporting programs such as DigitaltrainingPH to improve MSMEs' online visibility. Senior high school and vocational entrepreneurship courses should also incorporate social media business topics, including Business Marketing Communication, Business Plan Preparation, and Introduction of Social Media Marketing, to develop knowledge and skills in business planning, digital promotion, platform selection, and effective communication.

The study was limited to the micro-entrepreneurs included in the research and focused specifically on their social media marketing practices and corresponding business performance. The analysis was confined to the respondent and enterprise characteristics, selected social media marketing practices, and business performance indicators examined in the study; therefore, other factors or dimensions outside these variables were not covered.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The author declares no conflict of interest. This study received no external funding. The researchers acknowledge the participating micro-enterprises and respondents in Cabiao, Nueva Ecija; participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and data were collected through non-invasive questionnaire methods. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the study, and no identifying information about the enterprises, owners, partners, or employees was disclosed.

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