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Leveraging Social Media Information for Small Tourism Enterprises: A Digital Marketing Framework Approach in Arusha Municipality, Tanzania

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Abstract

The use of social media allows people and businesses to share information in various forms such as through pictures, videos, and messages online, and has been expanding to a larger audience in the past 10 years. This study attempts to bridge a gap by examining the relationship between social media use and Small Tourism Enterprises' marketing performance in Tanzania's tourist city, Arusha. A self-administered structured questionnaire was used in data collection where 133 Small Tourism Enterprises were part of our unit of analysis participating in this study. Using a cross-sectional survey design, quantitative data were collected and analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling with the aid of Smart-PLS3 software. The study revealed that the five stages of the Digital Marketing Framework (DMF) influence the Marketing Performances of Small Tourism Enterprises based on attracting, engaging, retaining, and learning about customers. The adoption and exploitation of DMF by Small Tourism Enterprises have managed to increase customer acquisition level, have customer retention, they have increased their sales and profitability also the product demand has been improved extensively. This research contributes immensely to theory, management, and methodology because the adoption and engaging DMF based on the use of SM creates performance in marketing offerings from Small Tourism Enterprises in developing countries like Tanzania.

Keywords: Social Media Information, Small Tourism Enterprises, Digital Marketing Framework, Performance

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Introduction

The relationship between social media (SM) use and firm marketing performance (MP) extensively continues to attract scholarly attention from various contexts. As a part of internet applications, SM has broadly changed the way marketing activities are being conducted

(Tafesse & Wien, 2018). SM being one of the most used internet applications in business in the recent decade has attracted the interest of marketers, by applying them as one of their marketing platforms. With SM, marketers with the opportunity to access and use mobile phones or computers connected to the internet can share marketing information including images, video, and details of their products and services in a wider range as compared to traditional communication channels. On the other hand, social media (SM) facilitates customer engagement by allowing previous customers to share their service experiences, which are then referenced by the firm for new customers. This two-way communication model enables a meaningful use of SM in tourism-related businesses, including Small Tourism Enterprises (Swallehe, 2022; Wang & Gao, 2019).

The competitiveness in marketing performance in this era where internet growth has altered how: offerings are delivered to customers, requires the adoption of SM (Swallehe, 2022). Prior studies consider SM marketing strategy to cover individual platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and the like which are too often stand-alone rather than integrated concepts forming the totality of all SM platforms (Ravaonorohanta & Sayumwe, 2020; Safa, Bayat, & Moghtader, 2021). More to that, SM embodies a fast-growing landscape with a growing emphasis on holistic perception, but great attention in literature appears to be on matters such as branded SM contents (Engeln, Loach, Imundo, & Zola, 2020; Ravaonorohanta & Sayumwe, 2020). More studies are based on customer engagement on value-co-creation (Cheung, Pires, Philip, Leung, & Ting, 2021), brand community (Göttel, Wirtz, & Langer, 2021) and the role of SM in the marketing mix (Othman, Harun, De Almeida, & Sadq, 2020). Conversely, the extent findings are basically deprived from a strategic standpoint including the influence of SM for the MP of Small Tourism Enterprises in developing context.

For other factors that may determine firm growth, marketing performance is crucial for business success; based on the fact that such performance directly impacts firm investment which further results in profitability (Stoldt, Wellman, Ekdale, & Tully, 2019). Apart from such scholarly work on the importance of marketing performance to firms, the growing use of internet applications such as SM has been a challenge to many businesses from developing countries including Tanzania. Although such applications offer a reduced market cost and simplify information flow to a wider range of audiences, firms from developing countries do not seem to be aware of the marketing potential that may be available with the application of these new channels. Building on the Digital Marketing Framework (DMF) stages proposed by Kierzkowski, McQuade, Waitman, and Zeisser (1996), the current study adopts these five marketing-related stages to assess their impact on the marketing performance (MP) of Small Tourism Enterprises. Matikiti, Roberts-Lombard, and Mpinganjira (2016) Identified these five stages as crucial for the success of digital marketing efforts. The first stage involves attracting customers by creating and sharing engaging content on social media (SM), which is designed to capture their attention and encourage frequent visits to the firm. Therefore, the primary input for this study was to conceptualize SM as part of the organisation process to leverage its strategic use such as marketing actions. Previous scholars have argued that marketing performance is a crucial indicator for a firm sustainable growth in a particular context at a certain time (Appel, Grewal, Hadi, & Stephen, 2020). Marketing performance has been defined based on marketing goals that are expected to be attained by the marketing department of a firm (Appel et al., 2020). The application of social media (SM) across the five stages of the Digital Marketing Framework (DMF) was expected to influence the marketing performance (MP) of Small Tourism Enterprises. This, in turn, was assumed to be

University of Dar es Salaam Library Journal
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a key objective for these enterprises in securing a competitive position in the marketplace. Key indicators of marketing performance include customer acquisition, customer retention, sales growth, profitability, and product demand—factors essential for measuring business sustainability and providing valuable insights into the achievement of marketing goals (Ariffin, 2021).

The second stage in DMF is to engage customers, where marketers are supposed to encourage them in the creation and enrichment of the products and services offered. When customers are engaged, they trust the products or services since they were part of their creation, but also, they also feel valued and can recommend such services to their friends and relatives. Engaging customers in the product creation will make it easy to retain them, which is the third stage in DMF that helps in creating a firm customer base. The retained customer may buy again from the firm but also stands in a position to recommend firm products and services since they have used them (Matikiti et al., 2016). The fourth stage in DMF is learning about your customers' interests and desires through interaction with SM which helps in improving services and products that lead to the provision of offerings that meet customers' interests. The last stage is to relate to the customer which may be done through SM because it provides an opportunity for two-way communication. Such opportunity assists in the provision of self-expression where customers can express clearly to the marketer and the acquired information may be useful to firms by creating offerings in line with customers' expectations.

Many researchers relate SM use with business performance, however, the research model that explains the relationship between SM and the marketing performance of Small Tourism Enterprises in Tanzania is extensively missing. The Small Tourism Enterprises are considered in this study because they possess knowledge and distribution channels that make them meet Small Tourism customers and influence their buying decisions (Nanda, 2019). Given their importance in the marketing of Small Tourism products, the adoption of internet marketing technologies such as SM is important. SM are internet platforms considered essential channels to firms including those in Small Tourism businesses since they are small with inadequate financial power to promote their products (Nanda, 2019). While previous studies have indicated the relevance of SM use in business little information is available as regards SM use and the MP of Small Tourism Enterprises, thus posing an inadequate understanding of the opportunities of SM marketing strategy by Small Tourism Enterprises in Arusha.

Theory and Hypotheses

Researchers on SM use and firm performance have noted that the Digital Marketing Framework (DMF) stages provide a fundamental base for understanding performance based on customer perspective (Matikiti et al., 2016; Saura, 2021). Instead of using the generic 5Ps marketing model, this study followed the Kierzkowski et al. (1996) suggestion as a founder of the framework with five stages that a business firm should consider while marketing its offerings in digital systems such as SM. Those five stages in this study are related to the use of SM to attract customers, engage in their desire and increase their participation, retain customers, and ensure they will prefer to buy again from your firm. Use SM to learn about customer interests and use such interests to provide customized services that will help the firm gain more customer engagement. The first stage in DMF is "attract", which is a stage, which emphasises the use of digital systems such as SM to attract customers to the firm's marketing platforms in a voluntary nature. Apart from using the proper tools for attracting customers, a business should ensure that the right channels are used to deliver information relating to its

products and services. Regarding SM, scholars have argued that well-designed marketing content on social media stands as a pull factor for customers who regularly visit firms' SM platforms. Once regular visits have been implemented firm offerings are introduced to firms SM channels for customers to view. Such action may influence positively offered goods and services and in so doing influence firm MP.

The second stage in DMF is to engage customers in firms' marketing activities by providing user-friendly channels, interactive that create value for customers, which may stimulate interest in interacting with the firm or previous customers who consumed products or services from that firm. The engaged customer may easily be retained to formulate a customer base which is important for the reason that, such type of customer trusts the firm's offerings and may buy again from the firm (Castillo, Benitez, Llorens, & Luo, 2021). The customers retained as a third stage in DMF morph into a firm's ambassadors and loyal assets, who may recommend their friends and family members to buy from the firms since they know and have used goods from that firm (Yost, Zhang, & Qi, 2021). According to Yost et al. (2021) engaging customer in designing, modifying and creation (co-creation) of their products make them feel part of the quality of such product and in so doing customer satisfaction may easily be attained and such kind of customer are knowledgeable about the contents of the products.

The fourth stage just after retaining customer in the firm SM channel, firms must learn from them since SM provides the firm with opportunity to learn and acquire customer insights. (Hosen et al., 2021). Firms with customer insight beforehand is in a position to provide goods that meet the preferences of their customer which will help the firm to create competitive position in the marketplace. (Varadarajan, 2020). At this stage, a firm should make use of SM to scrutinize customer preferences from their reviews, opinions, and comments given, but also ask for the customer's feedback about their offerings. The last stage in DMF is to relate to the customer since the interactive nature of SM use supports such activity. With this option, firms such as Small Tourism Enterprises could make maximum utilisation of that interactive media since they are applicable in marketing practices. Thus, based on theoretical and empirical literature as well as the influence of DMF stages on the MP of small tourism enterprises, the study developed the following hypotheses:

H1: The use of SM to attract customers influences the marketing performance
H2: The use of SM to engage customers influences the marketing performance
H3: The use of SM to retain customers influences the marketing performance
H4: The use of SM to learn customers influences the marketing performance
H5: The use of SM to relate to customers influences the marketing performance

Research Model

Based on the theoretical and empirical literature reviewed and the stated hypotheses, figure 1 demonstrates a research model that was proposed for this study:

University of Dar es Salaam Library Journal
Vol 19, No 2 (2024), pp 115 - 129
ISSN: 0856-1818

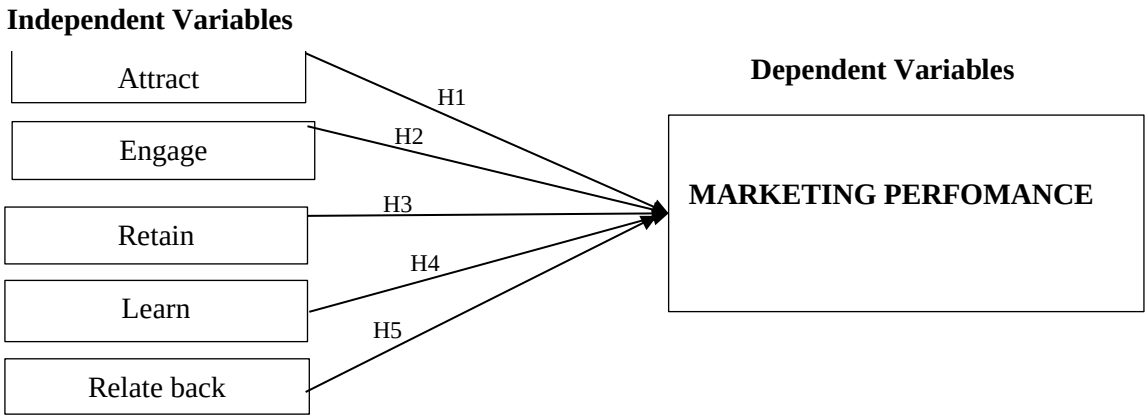

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Developed from the literature reviewed (2022)

Research Methodology

The study was built upon the positivism paradigm relying on the hypothetical deductive method to verify the hypothesized relationship between concepts derived from the reviewed literature. In Tanzania, there are about 278 registered and licensed Small Tourism Enterprises out of which majority of them namely 202 (73%) are based in Arusha (Batinoluho & Basera, 2022). Previous scholars indicate that at least a sample size of 100 respondents is required when using structural equation modelling (SEM) (Hair, Howard, & Nitzl, 2020; Tinali, 2021). Due to cost and time constraints, the cross-sectional strategy was opted to collect data from 133 registered and licensed Small Tourism Enterprises in Arusha Tanzania. The decision to use this size was complemented by Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) formula. To prevent interviewer from interrupting respondents and ensure self-confidence and objectivity, quantitative primary data was collected through self-administered questionnaires adopted from Matikiti et al. (2016) and Kamboj, Kumar, and Rahman (2017), but slightly modified to match the context of this study.

The study instruments were reviewed by three academicians who are professionals in the area of social media marketing and the three partitioners who have been practically involved in SM marketing for more than five years. Recommendations obtained from reviewers were used to modify the study instrument. Finally, based on Abdi's (2022) pilot study was conducted on 30 Small Tourism Enterprises aiming to identify any problem related to the study instrument to ensure validity and reliability. Information acquired from the pilot study was inspected and the observed contribution was used to improve the final research instrument. The study instruments were distributed and collected back in a few weeks in person from all respondents,

where more than 133 cases were duly answered and collected for analysis. After data screening all 133 well-attended cases were chosen for data analysis through Smart-PLS3 software, marking a response rate of 100 percent.

The collected data was checked before analysis to ensure no missing values, suspicious response patterns, outliers, or normality, but also the issue of common method bias which in the end ensured correct data entry for credible results toward analysis (Hair et al., 2020; Kock, Berbekova, & Assaf, 2021). The study applied Partial least squares structural modelling (PLS-SEM) for data analysis since it may analyse smaller sample size than other SEM techniques (Tarsakoo & Charoensukmongkol, 2019). Moreover, PLS is a non-parametric tool that requires fewer statistical specifications as compared to covariance-based SEM which requires normal data distribution. (Dash & Paul, 2021). Since the result from normality test show that two variables were not normally distributed the use of PLS-SEM in the data analysis was mandatory.

Conceptualisation and Operationalisation of the study concepts

The five stages in DMF as proposed by Kierzkowski et al. (1996) were adopted as independent latent variables featuring the concept of SM use and their relationship to the MP of Small Tourism Enterprises. The adopted stages are namely; attract (AT), engage (EG), retain (RT), learn (LC), and relate back (RB). These latent variable DMF were translated into measurable items by adopting and slightly modifying the instrument from Matikiti et al. (2016) and Kamboj et al. (2017) As shown in Table 1. Scholars further propose criteria to be used while setting the direction of the relationship which are co-variation among items, nomologic of the measurement indicators of the constructs, interchanging nature of the items, and the causal relationship (Tinali, 2021). Thus, based in these criteria the study variables were measured reflectively demanding respondent to rate their views on 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "strongly agree". The scale provides a finer level of granularity, allowing respondents to express clearer opinions and enhancing the reliability and sensitivity of the measurement.

The dependent variable was the marketing performance (MP) of Small Tourism Enterprises conceptualized as performance competitiveness due to marketing activities executed through SM based on the five stages in DMF. The items used to measure the MP of Small Tourism Enterprises in this study are five adopted from Tafesse and Wien (2018) whose work focused on the implementation of SM marketing strategy. These items covered the key aspects for a customer-oriented outcome such as customer acquisition, services, satisfaction and sales. The study employed reflective measurement approach on the MP variable and respondents were required to rate their views as regards to the MP based on 7-point Likert scale starting from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "strongly agree".

University of Dar es Salaam Library Journal
Vol 19, No 2 (2024), pp 115 - 129
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Table 1. Measurements and Operationalization of the concepts

Concept	Measurements	Source	Scale	No of items
Attract (AT)	Profile page (AT1) Website (AT2) Discounted services (AT3) Services Pictures (AT4) Phone number (AT5)	Matikiti et al. (2016) and Tafesse and Wien (2018)	7-point-Likert scale	5
Engage (EG)	Inquiry (EG1) Complaints (EG2) New service (EG3) Discussion wall (EG4) Luck draw (EG5)	Matikiti et al. (2016) and Tafesse and Wien (2018)	7-point-Likert scale	5
Retain (RT)	Games (RT1) Hyperlink (RT2) Security features (RT3) More posts (RT4) Listen and respond (RT5)	Matikiti et al. (2016) and Tafesse and Wien (2018)	7-point-Likert scale	5
Learn (LC)	Information (LC1) Chart groups (LC2) Feedback (LC3) Understand behaviour (LC4) Research (LC5)	Matikiti et al. (2016) and Tafesse and Wien (2018)	7-point-Likert scale	5
Relate back (RB)	Update customer (RB1) Engage in real time (RB2) Personalize response (RB3) Provision of linkage (RB4) Frequency posting (RB5)	Matikiti et al. (2016) and Tafesse and Wien (2018)	7-point-Likert scale	5
Marketing Performance (MP)	Customer Acquisition (MP1) Customer Retention (MP2) Sales Increase (MP3) Profitability (MP4) Product Demand (MP5)	Kierzkowski *et al.,* (1996) and Matikiti et al. (2016)	7-point-Likert scale	5

Source: Stages and items adapted from Kierzkowski et al. (1996) and Matikiti et al. (2016)**.**

Analysis of the Measurement and Structural Models in Smart-PLS

In PLS-SEM studies, evaluation of the study model focuses on the assessment of the items and their underlying construct (measurement model), but also between construct to construct (structural model) (Hair et al., 2020). Assessment of the measurement model evaluates whether data matches exactly with theories applied in the study. (Chierici, Del Bosco, Mazzucchelli, & Chiacchierini, 2019), based on reliability and validity. On reliability, the study focused on indicator level (indicator reliability) and construct level (internal consistency reliability). Findings for reliability in Table 2 reveal that loadings of the retained items are greater than 0.5 while composite reliability (CR) values are greater than 0.7 indicating that indicator and internal consistency reliability were ensured in this study.

Table 2: Measurement and Structural Models Summary (Reliability and Validity)

Variables	Indicator	Reliability: Indicator Loadings Reliability	Reliability: Internal Consistency Reliability (CR)	Convergent validity AVE
LC	LC2	0.804	0.808	0.583
	LC3	0.800		
	LC4	0.839		
AT	AT2	0.804	0.855	0.664
	AT3	0.800		
	AT4	0.839		
EG	EG1	0.702	0.811	0.521
	EG2	0.821		
	EG3	0.611		
	EG4	0.738		
RT	RT1	0.833	0.890	0.670
	RT3	0.888		
	RT4	0.790		
	RT5	0.756		
RB	RB1	0.677	0.785	0.551
	RB3	0.746		
	RB4	0.798		
MP	MP1	0.641	0.861	0.556
	MP2	0.840		
	MP3	0.659		
	MP4	0.759		
	MP5	0.808		

Source: Field data extracted from Smart-PLS3 (2021): Notes: Convergent validity – AVE values are > 0.5; indicator reliability – indicator loadings are > 0.5; internal consistency reliability – CR values are > 0.7.

The convergent validity was attained since value for average variance extracted (AVE) were greater than 0.5, providing a conclusion that each concept in the study explains more than half of the variance of its factors. (Hair, 2019). The discriminant validity was also assured because values for the Heterotrait - Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) of correlation for the five concepts are less than 0.85 (Webber, Critchfield, & Soble, 2020). In reflective variables, HTMT indices bellow 0.85 when the path model is distinct demonstrate discriminant validity among variables (Hair, 2019). 2 shows that the highest HTMT index is 0.337 indicating that constructs discriminant validity is at acceptable level, and therefore the quality of the measurement model is satisfactory.

Table 3: Discriminant Validity on Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

Constructs	AT	EG	LC	MP	RB	RT
AT						
EG	0.232					
LC	0.182	0.134				
MP	0.188	0.299	0.337			

University of Dar es Salaam Library Journal
Vol 19, No 2 (2024), pp 115 - 129
ISSN: 0856-1818

RB	0.236	0.228	0.144	0.124	
RT	0.081	0.251	0.318	0.289	0.131

Notes: The HTMT indices are less than 0.85, indicating that discriminant validity was established.

The assessment of collinearity was mandatory since its presence may result in biases of the path coefficient. Thus, based on the coercion results in table 3 shows the highest value for inner VIF 1.099 which is less than the threshold of 3, indicating that there was no multicollinearity issue, then further analysis could take place. (Hair et al., 2020). Table 3 and Figure 2 show that four hypothesized relations (AT, EG, RT and LC) significantly supported the predicted hypothesis in this study while one (RB) was insignificant. The use of SM to engage the customer in Small Tourism Enterprises indicate the strongest relationship with the MP (0.238) followed by learning from customers (0.237), attracting customers (0.195), relate to customers (0.152). In totality, the four variables explain more than 19% of the variance in the MP of Small Tourism Enterprises ($R^2 = 0.197$). The lowest value for the effect size (f^2) is 0.026 (retain customer) which is above the threshold of (0.02) small effect size, which is an indication that, despite the significance shown by the four variables to the MP, they are also relevant. The Q^2 of the four hypothesized relationships (AT, EG, RT, and LC) are greater than zero indicating the existence of the hypotheses' predictive relevance for these four independent variables while RB acquired a value of -0.028 showing no predictive relevance. Values for the four significant relationships indicate that their relevance level is minimal since they are less than a threshold of 0.2.

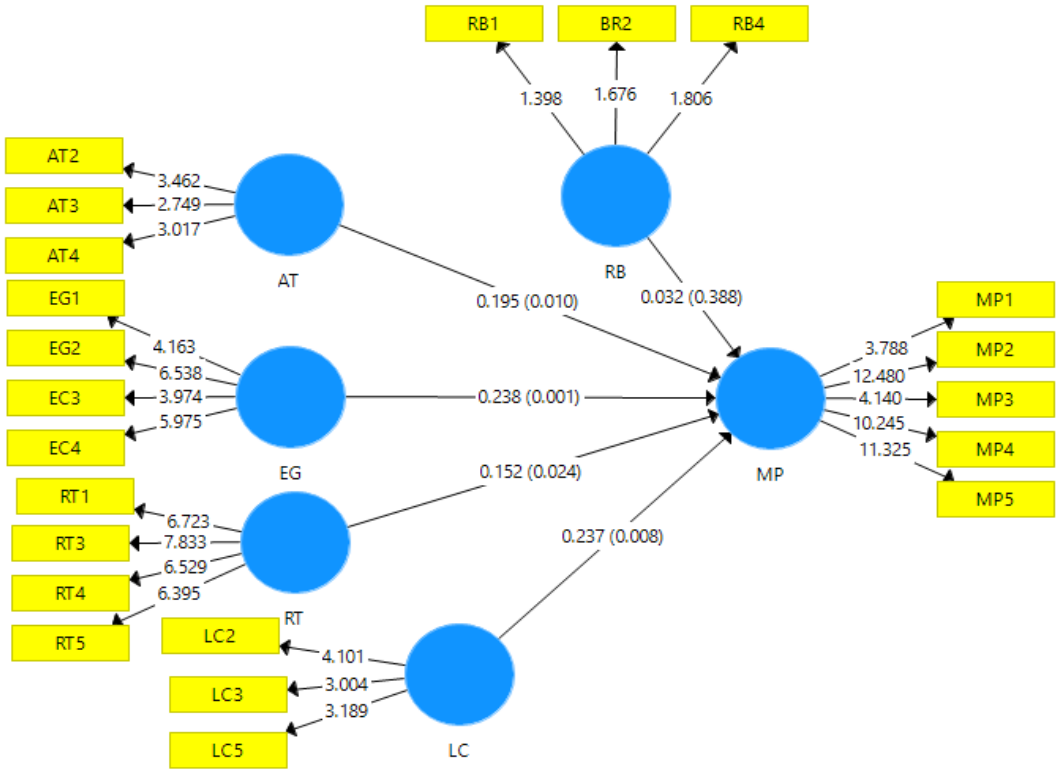

Figure 2: PLS Path Model Results

Table 4: Hypotheses Testing for Direct Relationship

Relationships	Beta (β)	p-value	t-value	Q^2	f^2	95%	VIF
AT -> MP	0.195	0.013	2.224	0.019	0.045	0.326	1.049
EG -> MP	0.238	0.001	3.094	0.096	0.066	0.364	1.064
LC -> MP	0.237	0.009	2.356	0.105	0.066	0.419	1.065
RB -> MP	0.032	0.388	0.286	-0.028	0.001	0.181	1.033
RT -> MP	0.152	0.021	2.035	0.011	0.026	0.284	1.099

Notes: The AT, EG, LC, and RT have f^2 (effect size) values > than the threshold of small effect 0.02, p-values < than 0.05, t-values > 1.65, VIF<3 (no multicollinearity issue), Q^2 values are > zero indicating the existence of model predictive relevance (Cohen, 1988; Hair & Ringle, 2019).

Importance of Performance Map Analysis in PLS-SEM

The Importance Performance Map Analysis (IPMA) provides readers with information relating to the significance of individual independent variables on the target variable (dependent variable). By focusing on the key construct, the IPMA identifies constructs that should receive the highest priority for performance improvement, thereby performance of the key target construct also improves. For instance, figure 2 indicates that the hypothesis with the highest beta coefficient is EG (0.241) followed by LC (0.239), AT (0.197), RT (0.155), and lastly RB (0.028). This information may also be verified in the below IPMA figure 3 whereby the key target variable of the analysis was selected and the combination of importance and performance information in the importance and performance map. On the x-axis is the importance and on the y-axis is the performance of the latent variable on the scale from zero to one hundred.

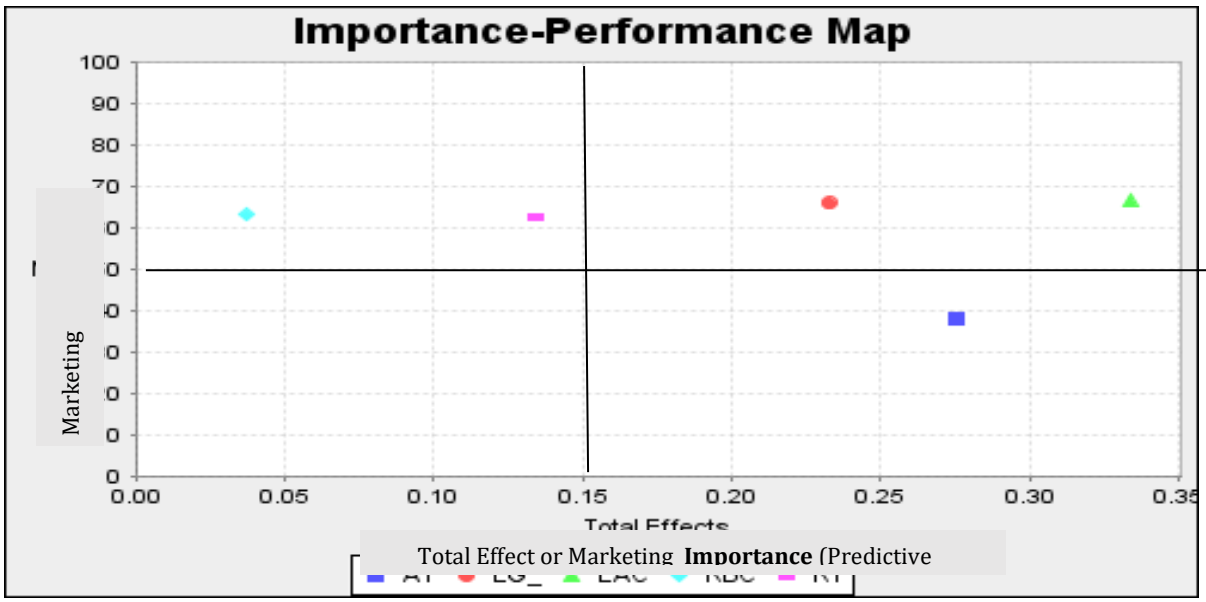

Figure 3: IPMA at Construct Level

Results in Figure 3 indicates that learning from customers (LC) on social media is highly important and creates more performance than any other dependent variable in this study. This

University of Dar es Salaam Library Journal
Vol 19, No 2 (2024), pp 115 - 129
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is to say that an increase in a unit in LC will increase the MP of Small Tourism Enterprises. Thus owners-managers or managers should LC in their SM platforms to improve their MP by the size of the unstandardized which is above 0.3 as shown in Figure 3. However, while SM's use to attract customers (AC) indicates a reasonable effect/importance which is above 0.25, its application offers low performance as compared to engage customers that had seasonable importance of more than 0.2 but also with higher performance. This means the use of SM for attracting customers should receive low priority due to its low performance. More to that, the last two variables used to explain MP in this study were RB and RT which are indicated of minimal importance but higher performance. In this case, Small Tourism Enterprises are supposed to rework their marketing strategies to ensure that content offered on their SM platforms retains customers and the relating back reveals importance in their business.

More specifically, areas for improvement may also be centred at the indicator level as in Figure 4. The indicator for learning customer (LC) that is chart indicates LC2 with both higher importance and higher performance, followed by LA5 and EG3. Thus, higher attention must be given to LC2 but also LA5 and EG3. Additionally, LA3, EG1, EG4, RC3, EG3, RC4, RC5, RC1, RB4, RB1, and RB2 are all with less importance but have the highest performance, which is an indication that managers should increase the importance of these items by refining their marketing contents on SM platforms. The refined content will attract, engage, retain, relate, and thus encourage learning from customers leading the MP of Small Tourism Enterprises. The AC3 (discounted services) is an indicator from AC that is not at all desirable because of its lower performance as well as importance whereby keeping it a firm will not achieve the desirable results. Although AC2 is slightly important with less performance they may be reshaped to improve their performance.

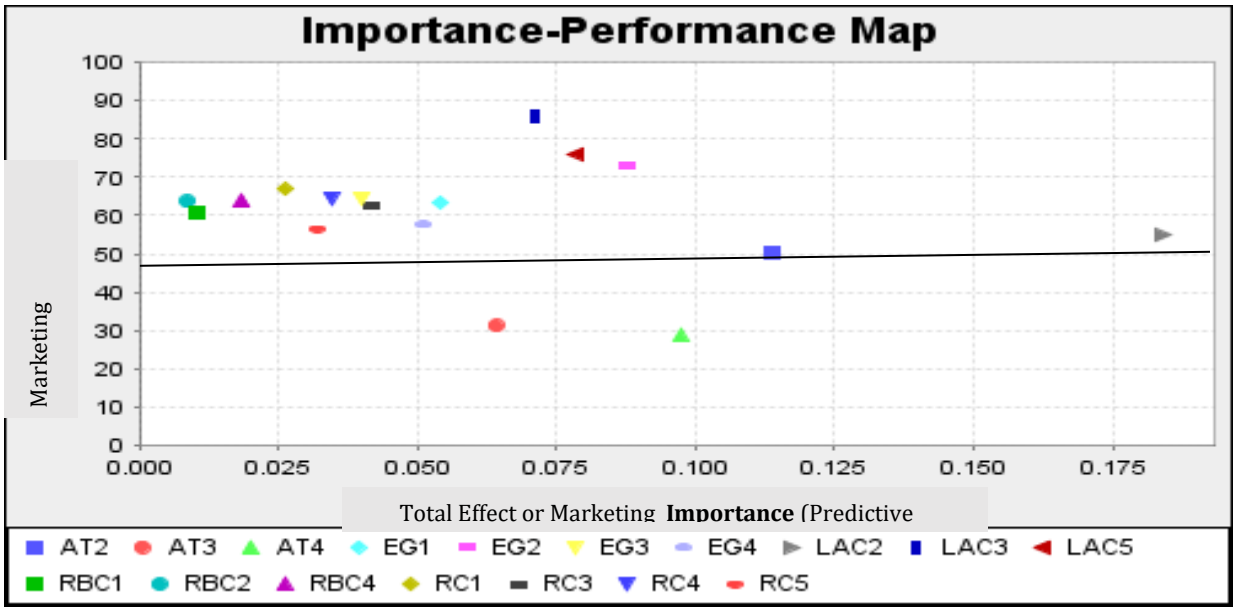

Figure 4: IPMA at Indicator Level

Discussion of Findings and Theoretical Implication

This article sought to ascertain the influence of SM use on the MP of Small Tourism Enterprises based on the five stages of DMF. The study used five stages in DMF to examine the extent to which the use of those stages in SM influences the MP of Small Tourism Enterprises in Arusha Tanzania. Findings in Table 4 reveals that SM use for customer attraction (AT) positively and significantly influences the MP of Small Tourism Enterprises

(β=0.195, $p < 0.05$, t > 1.65 one-tail test) at a significant level of 5%. This result is similar to the previous scholarly work of Dong (2020) who based on DMF to assess the use and effect of online marketing tools between businesses and customers. Based on these findings, it is recommended to focus on enhancing customer attraction strategies, as they have a positive and significant impact on the marketing performance of Small Tourism Enterprises. The second hypothesized relation (EG) was also supported by revealing that the use of SM to engage customers positively and significantly influences the MP (β=0.238, $p < 0.05$, t > 1.65 one-tail test). In this case, Small Tourism Enterprises should focus on actively engaging customers through personalized interactions, responsive communication, and interactive content, as these efforts positively and significantly impact their marketing performance. This hypothesis shares similar results with previous findings by Matikiti et al. (2016) whose study applied DMF to assess the influence of SM marketing performance on travel and tour operators.

Moreover, the two hypotheses that were supported are hypothesis three (LC) with (β =0.237, $p < 0.05$, t > 1.65 one tail test). The findings suggest that Small Tourism Enterprises should leverage social media as a tool for learning about customer preferences and behaviours, as this insight according to Islam (2023)is crucial for tailoring marketing strategies, improving customer satisfaction, and staying competitive in the market. However, the use of social media to retain customers (RT) was found to be positive and significant with (β =0.152, $p < 0.05$, t > 1.65 one tail test). Findings for this hypothesis also support the previous findings that similarly delivered evidence on the proposed positive relationship between SM use of RT and the MP (Dong, 2020; Matikiti et al., 2016). In this case, firms should prioritize social media strategies for customer retention by maintaining regular communication, delivering personalized content that aligns with customer interests, and promptly responding to feedback. Furthermore, cultivating a sense of community through interactive posts, user-generated content, and loyalty programs can enhance customer relationships and drive repeat business.

However, when the findings of the four hypotheses (i.e., LC, RT, AT, and EG) align with the Digital Marketing Framework (DMF), it suggests that a firm following the five stages of DMF is more likely to market itself successfully, as each stage supports key aspects of customer engagement and performance enhancement. This alignment underscores the importance of a structured, comprehensive approach to digital marketing for achieving sustained business growth and competitiveness. Contrarily, the hypothesis relating to social media use for relating to customer (RB) towards MP was not found to have a positive and significant relationship. One possible reason for the lack of a significant relationship between social media use for "relating back" to customers (RB) and marketing performance (MP) could be that the interaction on social media did not effectively encourage customers to reconnect or re-engage with the brand and thus limiting its impact. Additionally, the concept of "relating back" may not have been clear or compelling enough to motivate firms and customers to re-engage, reducing its effectiveness in driving improvements in marketing performance.

Managerial Implication

Based on the importance-performance map Figure 3 the study highlights key factors in DMF that need to be considered to improve the MP of Small Tourism Enterprises. The positive results acquired in Table 4, which also was verified in the IPMA emphasise that learning from customers (LC) and engaging customers (EG) are the most important concepts that must acquire higher attention from the owners of Small Tourism Enterprises in their SM marketing

activities since they reveal higher importance and offers higher MP. That means higher MP for Small Tourism Enterprises depends heavily on the higher level of SM application to LC and EG. Although our findings reveal that the use of SM for AC positively and significantly influences the MP of Small Tourism Enterprises, the IPMA report shows that such activity is important but with less MP. For Small Tourism Enterprises there must be attractive profiles and home pages that provide a website link where customers may access discounted packages, services images, and communication means to improve their MP through AC.

Similarly, when the use of SM to RT and RB seems to have higher performance, such use relatively was of less importance which implies that Small Tourism Enterprises need to improve the importance of these factors by providing attractive games, and security features, but also responding to customers negative remarks to retain customers. Additionally, improving the importance of RB requires the provision of up-to-date content, engagement with the customer in real-time interaction, response directly to the customer, and provision of linkage to the core business to the customer in their platforms. Specifically, based on the IPMA items in Figure 4, attention should be given to LC2, LC5, and EG2, which are highly important but also provide the firm with the highest MP. While some improvement may be required on AC4 to performance because it reveals relatively satisfactory importance but less performance. Equally, when LA5, LA3, EG1, EG4, RC3, EG3, RC4, RC5, RC1, RB4, RB1 and RB2 their importance may be improved, AC3 is not impressive.

Methodological Implication

The study develops methodological issues which are slightly addressed in the previous findings. It applied reflective variables based on a variance-based Structural Equation Model (SEM) that is Partial Least Square (PLS) as opposed to many related studies that applied covariance-based (SEM) (Mehboob & Khan, 2021; Zubielqui & Jones, 2022). Also, the study illustrates the usefulness of applying with a small sample size commonly conducted in studies involving senior management levels. Moreover, the Data collection was done through a structured self-administered questionnaire which was different compared to previous scholars who mainly used interviews and focus groups. Thus, this study provides a significant contribution to managerial and methodological towards the use of five stages of DMF in social media and the marketing performance of Small Tourism Enterprises.

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