

The Impact of Innovation Adoption on Marketing Performance: The Case of SMEs in Developing Countries

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Abstract

While the literature on social media adoption in marketing is growing, a dearth of research specifically examines the impact of social media adoption on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). To address this gap, this study focuses on fast-food SMEs in Pakistan and investigates the impact of Facebook and Instagram adoption on their marketing performance. We adopt a multiple case study approach using the technology-organisation-environment (TOE) framework with the empirical data collected from twenty-seven SMEs. Our study offers a refined conceptual framework that highlights the importance of complexity, compatibility, innovativeness, and government support as critical elements that influence the adoption of Facebook and Instagram for marketing by fast-food SMEs. Our findings indicate that adopting social media platforms can improve customer relations and help SMEs reach their target audience.

INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in a country's overall development (Khan & Zhang, 2022). Information and Communications Technology (ICT) based innovations have become critical to a business's marketing strategy (U.N. Conference on Trade and Development, 2022). Kusumadewi et al. (2022) and Vargo et al. (2022) argue that business marketing is considerably transformed by the adoption of ICT based innovation, such as Facebook and Instagram. However, antecedents in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram and their consequences on the marketing performance of SMEs in developing countries have remained unexplored in the social media adoption literature (Qalati et al., 2020; Qalati et al. 2021).

We attempt to contribute to the extant literature by studying how fast-food SMEs in Pakistan, a developing country, adopted Facebook and Instagram in marketing, what technology, organisation, and environment antecedents influenced the adoption, and whether the adoption impacted their marketing performance.

There is a considerable rise in the fast-food consumption throughout Pakistan (Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform, 2019), which prompts fast-food SMEs to adopt ICT-based innovations in marketing strategies (Herlina et al., 2022; Khamaludin et al., 2022). Furthermore, fast-food SMEs constitute a significant portion of Pakistan's SME landscape (Small & Medium Enterprises Development Authority, 2021; Naveed et al., 2022). However, these SMEs face fluctuating market demand, limited access to credit, a lack of institutional policies, and increasing marketing costs. Djakasaputra et al. (2021) opine that SMEs adopt Facebook and Instagram in marketing due to their incredible capacity to link businesses with potential customers, effectiveness in enhancing brand awareness (Ahmad et al., 2018) and customer buying interest (Erdiyana et al., 2022). Kwon et al. (2021) suggests that there is a lack of research exploring the impact of Facebook and Instagram adoption on the marketing performance of SMEs from a developing country's standpoint.

To explore the impact of Facebook and Instagram adoption in fast-food SMEs in Pakistan, we borrow a widely used framework in ICT-based innovation adoption studies, the technological-organisational-environmental (TOE) framework (Raj & Jeyaraj, 2023). Our study aims to make important contributions to the social media adoption literature by examining the antecedents in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram and their consequences on the marketing performance of fast-food SMEs in Pakistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Innovation Theory & Social Media Marketing

Innovation theory encompasses a comprehensive body of knowledge that aims to elucidate the processes involved in the diffusion of new ideas in business. Barlatier et al. (2023) examine the

impact of innovation theory on social media marketing and find that innovation theory can be used to explain how businesses can adopt social media in their marketing strategies. Hu et al. (2023) opine that social media can accelerate the diffusion of innovation by facilitating the sharing of information about products. Ancillai et al. (2023) opine that social media contributes to the development of new marketing strategies. These studies provide evidence that innovation theory can explain how businesses can leverage social media in their marketing strategies; social media enables rapid information sharing and facilitates viral marketing campaigns, thereby expediting the adoption of new products, services, or technologies. Collectively, these studies provide compelling evidence that innovation theory effectively elucidates the ways in which businesses harness the power of social media in their marketing endeavours.

Facebook and Instagram Adoption in SMEs

The Small and Medium Enterprise Development Authority (SMEDA) in Pakistan defines SMEs as business entities with up to two hundred and fifty employees. Social media platforms, on the other hand, are a group of internet-based applications that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content (Khan & Zhang, 2022; Rahadjeng et al., 2022). Dahnil et al. (2021) and Nyamboli (2021) find that Facebook and Instagram adoption for marketing purposes has led to performance benefits for SMEs. Tajudeen et al. (2018) suggest that Facebook and Instagram adoption helps SMEs in developing countries to reach their target audience. Ananda & Wisudawati (2022) and Borah et al. (2022) opine that SMEs adopt Facebook and Instagram to enhance their performance. In Pakistan, a developing country, consumers are increasingly inclined to use Facebook and Instagram, which has led to changes in the way they perceive product advertisements (Rashid & Ratten, 2021; Saleem et al. 2022). The popularity of Facebook and Instagram among consumers has led fast-food SMEs to adopt these social media platforms for marketing purposes. However, little is known about the antecedents in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram in marketing and their impact on the marketing performance of SMEs (Atique et al., 2021).

Marketing Performance

Purwanto (2023) opine that social media adoption impacts marketing performance of a business. Dwivedi & Pawsey (2023) find a positive association between the adoption of ICT-based innovation in marketing and business performance. Rishi et al. (2023) suggest that Facebook and Instagram adoption enhances the marketing performance of SMEs. Similarly, Abbasi et al. (2022) finds that the adoption of Facebook and Instagram in marketing enhances the performance of SMEs. Overall, these studies suggest that Facebook and Instagram can be a powerful tool for SMEs to drive growth and success, allowing them to enhance their marketing performance (Abbasi et al., 2022). Facebook and Instagram were progressively becoming popular social media platforms among SMEs, providing new mechanisms for communication and customer interaction. These platforms were predominantly free to use, and they were not just used for conveying and sharing information socially, but also for advertising. Given that Facebook and Instagram offered a digital avenue to market their products, SMEs had an exceptional opportunity to capitalise on these platforms. Similarly, adoption of Facebook and Instagram in marketing among SMEs of developing countries was crucial as these platforms

turned into an indispensable piece of marketing strategies to enhance the marketing performance of SMEs.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Technology-Organisation-Environment (TOE) Framework

In order to explore the antecedents in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram as marketing tools among SMEs, we analyse various established theories. These theories include the TOE framework, Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory, Dynamic Capabilities View (DCV), Technology Advancement Model (TAM), Resource Based View (RBV), Institutional Theory, Social Network Theory (SNT), Social Presence Theory (SPT), and Actor-Network Theory (ANT). The TOE framework, in particular, is widely used to understand the underlying antecedents that contribute to the adoption of ICT-based innovations in SMEs (Raj & Jeyaraj, 2023). The three contexts that influence the adoption, according to the TOE framework, are technology, organisation, and environment. In this particular context, the TOE framework stands out as the superior choice due to its comprehensive coverage of various aspects, surpassing other theories. Moreover, it has garnered consistent empirical support across a wide range of technology and information system domains, rendering it highly suitable for studies pertaining to the adoption of social media innovation. Additionally, the TOE framework offers a holistic view of the adoption of ICT-based innovations in business, with the three contexts of the TOE framework—technology, organisation, and environment—offering unique advantages over other theories.

We use the TOE framework to examine the antecedents of Facebook and Instagram adoption, (Eze et al., 2022; Pradifera et al., 2022) including technology context antecedents: complexity (Shahadat et al., 2023) and compatibility (AL-Shboul, 2023); organisation context antecedents: innovativeness (Kusumadewi et al., 2022) and employee skills (Ur Rahman et al., 2020); environment context antecedents: government support (Effendi et al., 2020) and external technology support (Kim & Mackert, 2022). Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework for this study.

Technology Context

Martinez-Caro et al. (2020) opine that technological characteristics influenced SMEs to adopt ICT-based innovations. In light of this, it was expected that the specific technological elements, such as complexity and compatibility, would have an impact on the adoption of Facebook and Instagram among SMEs. These elements, encompassing the technical intricacy and suitability of the platforms, were believed to be influential elements driving SMEs' decisions to embrace these social media platforms for their marketing activities.

Complexity. Complexity is the degree of difficulty in adopting ICT-based innovations in business (Ramdani et al., 2022). Shahadat et al. (2023) investigate the elements influencing the adoption of digital technologies by SMEs in emerging countries. They find that technological complexity is an important element that influences the adoption of digital technology in SMEs. Nguyen et al. (2020) examine the determinants of e-invoice adoption in Vietnam. Their study evidence the complexity of e-invoice technology influences the adoption of e-invoice in business. These studies collectively emphasise the role of technological complexity in shaping the adoption patterns of innovative digital solutions within SMEs.

Compatibility. The extent to which a technology is consistent with an organisation's technological infrastructure and business objectives is referred to as "compatibility" (AL-Shboul, 2023). AL-Shboul (2023) finds that the compatibility of predictive supply chain business analytics with the existing technology infrastructure and practices of SMEs is a key driver in their adoption. Li et al. (2022) find that compatibility is integral in the adoption of mobile payment in China. They show that compatibility with existing payment habits and the compatibility of the mobile payment system with users' mobile devices are important elements influencing adoption. Tajudeen et al. (2018) find that SMEs are more likely to adopt social media technologies that are compatible with their existing resources, such as marketing capabilities and knowledge. The combined findings of these studies underscore the crucial role of compatibility in facilitating the adoption of diverse technologies within the context of SMEs.

Organisation Context

Hashmi & Siddiqui (2020) find evidence of a direct association between organisational elements and ICT-based innovation adoption in SMEs operating in Vietnam. Building upon this finding, it is reasonable to anticipate that certain organisational elements, such as innovativeness and employee skills, play influential roles in shaping the adoption of Facebook and Instagram among SMEs.

Innovativeness. Innovativeness refers to the willingness and flexibility of business owners to adopt ICT-based innovations (Kusumadewi et al., 2022). Upadhyay et al. (2023) examine the influence of digital entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial orientation on family businesses' intention to adopt artificial intelligence and find owner's innovativeness mediates the relationship between digital entrepreneurship and the intention to adopt artificial intelligence. Lone & Baba (2023) find that the owner's innovativeness has a positive effect on entrepreneurial intentions, indicating that farmers who are willing to adopt new technologies are likely to have intentions to start a business. Kusumadewi et al. (2022) find that the owner's innovativeness is crucial in adopting Facebook and Instagram for marketing purposes. The willingness and openness of business owners to embrace and explore new technological advancements are instrumental in fostering organisational growth and competitiveness. Their visionary mindset and proactive approach towards innovation enable them to recognise the potential benefits of adopting cutting-edge technologies such as Facebook and Instagram.

Employee Skills. Employee skills refer to the knowledge, competencies, and abilities an employee possesses to perform their job effectively (Pedota et al., 2023). Pedota et al. (2023)

find that the adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies is associated with employee training and development programs, indicating that organisations that invest in their employees' skills are likely to adopt ICT-based innovations successfully. Ur Rahman et al. (2020) find that in the adoption of ICT-based innovations, having employees with the required ICT skills is important to manage technologies. These findings highlight skilled employees' pivotal role in effectively managing and utilising new technologies within organisations.

Environment Context

The environmental context in which businesses operate encompasses external circumstances that influence the adoption of ICT-based innovations (Srivastava et al., 2022). Cao et al. (2021) opine that environmental elements play a crucial role in shaping the adoption of social media among SMEs. Consequently, it is anticipated that specific environmental elements, such as government support and external technology support, play influential roles in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram among SMEs.

Government Support. The degree of government assistance provided in the form of informational programs, financial incentives, and tax advantages to businesses is commonly known as 'government support' (Ramdani et al., 2022). Hoque et al. (2023) find that government support is a critical element in determining the adoption of sustainable technology. Chen et al. (2023) investigate the government incentives to encourage new technology adoption among businesses and conclude that optimal incentives include subsidies for infrastructure investment or usage. These studies highlight the pivotal role of government support in fostering an environment conducive to Facebook and Instagram adoption among SMEs, providing the necessary resources and incentives.

External Technology Support. The extent of vendor technical help required in the adoption of ICT-based innovation was referred to as external technology support (Kim & Mackert, 2022). Kim & Mackert (2022) find that businesses are likely to adopt ICT-based innovations when external support is available. Jayawardena et al. (2023) examine the importance of external support in ICT-based adoption, including support from technology providers and consultants. Their study finds that external support influences adoption. Wasiq et al. (2023) investigate the elements influencing the adoption of green innovation and its impact on the sustainability performance of SMEs in Saudi Arabia. Specifically, their study find that external support, including government policies and regulations, financial incentives, and technical assistance, influenced the adoption of green innovation by SMEs in Saudi Arabia. The presence of external entities, such as vendors, technology providers and consultants, plays a crucial role in assisting businesses in their technological advancements. Their assistance helps overcome potential barriers and challenges associated with technological adoption, enabling businesses to leverage the full potential of ICT-based innovations.

Marketing Performance

Luthen & Soelaiman (2022) find that the use of TikTok improves SMEs' brand awareness, sales, customer engagement, and reputation. Therefore, it is anticipated that the adoption of Facebook and Instagram in marketing will enhance the marketing performance of SMEs by improving their customer relations (Hu et al., 2023) and reaching their target audience (Denga & Rakshit, 2023). By leveraging the features and functionalities offered by Facebook and Instagram, SMEs can enhance their brand awareness and establish meaningful connections with their target market.

Customer Relations. Customer relations refer to the maintenance and enhancement of long-term relationships with customers by satisfying their needs and expectations (Hu et al., 2023). Hu et al. (2023) opine that SMEs adopt Facebook and Instagram as a strategy to respond to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Lohanda & Berto (2021) suggest that SMEs adopt Facebook and Instagram to enhance their customer relations. These platforms offer a range of interactive tools and functionalities that enable SMEs to foster direct and meaningful interactions with their customers, leading to enhanced customer relations.

Target Audience. The target audience refers to the specific group of people that a company or organisation aims to reach with their marketing and advertising efforts (Luthen & Soelaiman, 2022). Denga & Rakshit (2023) highlight that Facebook and Instagram are effective in reaching specific target audiences, as these allow SMEs to tailor their messaging and advertising to specific groups based on demographic and psychographic data. Farajnezhad, Bodaghi Khajeh Noubar & Fakhimi Azar (2022) found the adoption of Facebook and Instagram in marketing benefits SMEs to target customers.

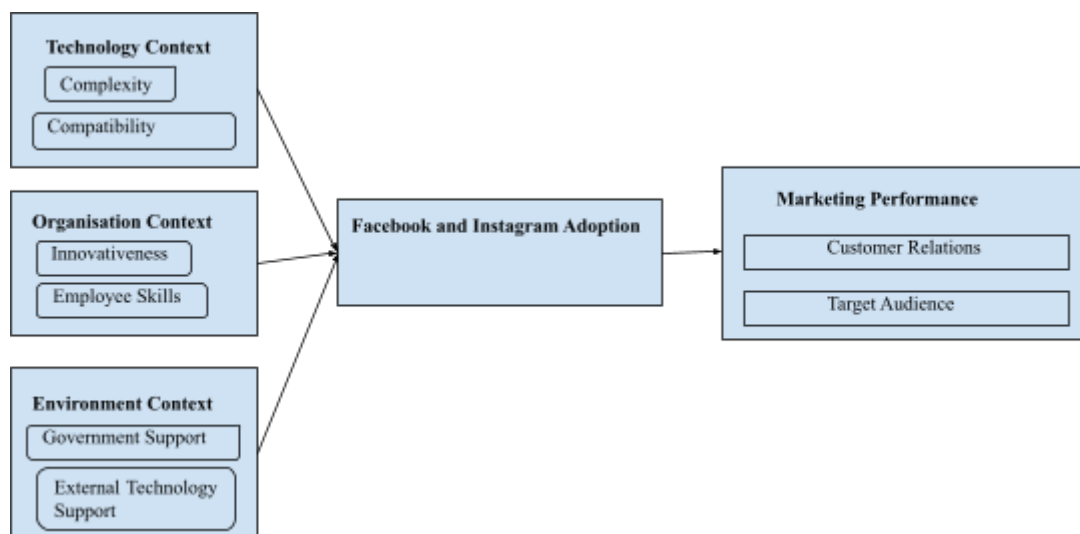


Figure 1: Framework for Facebook and Instagram Adoption Impacting Marketing Performance.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative studies diverge from quantitative studies in their focus and methodology. While quantitative studies prioritise outcomes, generalisation, prediction, and cause-effect relationships through deductive reasoning, qualitative studies prioritise the process, context, interpretation, and understanding through inductive reasoning. The aim is to provide a descriptive and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation by capturing and conveying participants' experiences in their own words through interviews. Semi-structured interviews are frequently employed by qualitative researchers to collect interview data (Tonaka, 2015). This study explores personal accounts and analyses the perspectives of fast-food SME owners. By using semi-structured interviews, we captured detailed and nuanced information directly from the participants. Participants were selected using a purposive sample technique (Kumala & Sijabat, 2022). We selected fast-food SMEs with fewer than two hundred and fifty employees; using Facebook and Instagram for marketing purposes; classified as SMEs with the Public Authority for SMEs Development in Pakistan, SMEDA; registered as SMEs with the Public Authority Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP). This approach allowed us to focus on SMEs that align with the study's focus within the defined context of fast-food SMEs in Pakistan and to gain in-depth insights from their owners, who can provide rich and relevant information. Restricting the sample to fast-food SMEs that specialise in popular fast food, including burgers, biryani, chips, chicken wings, and shawarma, leads to an in-depth analysis of the selected food items and associated businesses, identifying commonalities, differences, and unique characteristics among the selected SMEs, making the study more relevant to the local context and consumer preferences, and providing practical implications for fast food SMEs. Furthermore, the selected outlets represent the most popular local fast-food chains in Pakistan, thus serving as a good representation of the industry and its diversity. Castillo-Montoya (2016) claims that following an interview schedule for semi-structured interviews achieves rigour and dependability. In line with this, we followed an interview schedule (see Appendix B) to conduct the semi-structured interviews. Using a multiple case study approach, we collected the empirical data through semi-structured interviews with twenty-seven fast-food SME owners to examine personal accounts and analyse their perspectives (see Appendix A) (Kallio et al., 2016). According to Gudmundsdottir and Brock-Utne (2010), piloting a study offers several advantages, including enhancing the credibility and dependability of the research. In line with this, we conducted a pilot study involving an academic, a context specialist, and an SME owner. The purpose of the pilot study was to prepare ourselves for effectively managing technical terminology, refining our research questions, and facilitating smooth and productive conversations during the actual data collection phase. Braun & Clarke (2022) adopted a thematic approach to analyse the data collected through interviews. We conducted a thematic analysis to examine the interview data. We used NVivo 12 plus, qualitative software, to identify key themes (see Appendix D) for data analysis (Maher et al., 2018). We coded the interview transcripts (see Appendix C) as potential interpretations and investigated themes to present the findings (Virglerová et al., 2022). We connected each study participant in

member checking to assess the findings to reduce bias, preserve clear and unambiguous data interpretations, and cross-examine the participants' responses for credibility (Levitt et al., 2017).

FINDINGS

The key findings indicate that Facebook and Instagram are not complex platforms for SMEs to adopt for marketing purposes. In this manner, one owner mentioned, *“...Facebook and Instagram are fairly simple to use, starting with logging in, making comments and posting content. There is no need to buy any customised equipment as someone can simply use these platforms from a smartphone...”* The findings elucidate that Facebook and Instagram are compatible with SMEs. In this manner, one owner stated, *“...we use Facebook and Instagram because they are more visually appealing and people prefer visual stuff. Instagram, in my opinion, is the best because it allows us to make reels through which we show the burger preparation. Moreover, these platforms do not require the usage of cutting-edge technology or specific gadgets...”*

The findings indicate that the innovativeness of SME owners is a crucial element in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram for marketing purposes. In this manner, one owner mentioned, *“...you have to be innovative as a small business owner. When I visit a restaurant, I pay close attention to the technologies they use. The first technology I adopted was to introduce digital menus through tablets and after its success, I adopted Facebook and Instagram to enable customers to see advertisements...”* Additionally, the findings elucidate that employee skills are not a crucial element in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram for marketing purposes among SMEs. One owner stated, *“...despite the fact, I am not particularly strong in IT and have little experience with using technologies. I have found Facebook and Instagram to be easy as I educated myself on how to effectively operate these platforms for marketing purposes. Anyone can easily learn these as much information is available on the internet and on the platform itself...”*

The key findings indicate that government support plays a crucial role in driving the adoption of Facebook and Instagram for marketing purposes among SMEs. In this regard, an owner mentioned, *“...if the government introduced free seminars on Facebook and Instagram benefits in marketing for SMEs, will help further in the adoption of these new technologies. The legal framework, which could establish guidelines on the use of tools and technology will also be imperative. An inadequate technology infrastructure will frequently be a barrier to the adoption of Facebook and Instagram. The motivation of SMEs to adopt these platforms depended on the availability of the internet or the network infrastructures invested in by mobile network operators could be directly impacted by the government of the country's information and communication technology infrastructure...”* Additionally, the findings elucidate that external technology support is not important in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram. In this regard, one owner mentioned, *“...my spouse, who is also one of the managers, operates Facebook and Instagram business pages and frequently posts content. I believe that there is no need to have external support or hire someone for that matter, as these platforms are quite easy to use...”*

The findings indicate that the adoption of Facebook and Instagram enhances the relations between SMEs and their customers. In this regard, one SME owner mentioned, *“...customers’ concerns online should be addressed professionally for maintaining good relations with customers. I believe that we are able to improve customer relations by responding to their queries on Facebook and Instagram. In this way, the business could maintain a positive online reputation while still having their social media activity subject to unwanted criticism...”* The key findings elucidate that SMEs are able to reach their target audience with the adoption of Facebook and Instagram. In this regard, one owner stated, *“...if a business did not have a Facebook and Instagram presence, customers would not be able to view its products, which could result in a loss of business....”*

DISCUSSION

We present fresh perspectives on the antecedents in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram relevant to the TOE framework among fast-food SMEs in Pakistan. We find that the adoption of Facebook and Instagram can be a crucial marketing strategy for fast-food SMEs in Pakistan. By enhancing customer relations and reaching the target audience, SMEs can enhance their marketing performance.

Complexity in Facebook and Instagram Adoption

We find that the adoption of Facebook and Instagram for marketing purposes is not a complex process. SME owners believed that the adoption process was straightforward and uncomplicated, and both platforms were easy to use. In particular, SME owners emphasised that platform usability and functionality were important in adoption, and that they chose Facebook and Instagram because they were simple to use. This finding corroborates Shahadat et al. (2023) to reaffirm the simplicity of digital technologies as an important element in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram in SMEs. SMEs are often resource-constrained and lack the necessary technical expertise to implement and manage complex information systems (Ramdani et al., 2022). The user-friendly interface and navigation of Facebook and Instagram, as well as the simplicity of the features and functionalities of these platforms, make them accessible and appealing to SMEs, particularly those with limited resources and expertise in digital marketing.

Compatibility in Facebook and Instagram Adoption

We find that Facebook and Instagram are compatible with SME marketing. SME owners believed that the features of Facebook and Instagram were suitable for their marketing needs. SME owners used these platforms to run product promotions, serving the segment that enjoyed an online response. This finding corroborates AL-Shboul (2023) to reaffirm that SMEs tend to adopt Facebook and Instagram as compatible with their specific marketing requirements. Additionally, the finding corroborates Li et al. (2022) to emphasise the compatibility of Facebook and Instagram with user needs. It is worth noting here the ease of use, targeted marketing features, and large user base of Facebook and Instagram make them compatible with the marketing needs of SMEs to reach a diverse customer base quickly and efficiently.

Innovativeness in Facebook and Instagram Adoption

We find that the innovativeness of SME owners is crucial in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram for marketing purposes. This highlights the importance of SME owners being proactive and forward-thinking in their approach towards the adoption of Facebook and Instagram into their marketing strategies. This finding corroborates Upadhyay et al. (2023) to reaffirm that business owners, who are more innovative and willing to adopt ICT-based innovations, are more likely to adopt Facebook and Instagram in marketing. Additionally, the finding corroborates Lone & Baba (2023) to reaffirm that SME owners who are innovative and open to trying new ideas are more likely to adopt Facebook and Instagram. SME owners who possess an innovative mindset are more willing to take risks and embrace Facebook and Instagram for marketing purposes. By doing so, they may be better equipped to respond to changing market conditions and remain competitive in the fast-paced business environment.

Employee Skills in Facebook and Instagram Adoption

We find that employee skills are not a crucial element in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram for marketing purposes in SMEs. SME owners believed that the key to their success in adopting Facebook and Instagram is not their employees' skills, but their overall understanding of these platforms. This suggests that SMEs placed more emphasis on their personal understanding of Facebook and Instagram rather than on the skills of their employees. These findings indicate a high level of digital literacy among SME owners, as they are able to adopt Facebook and Instagram based on their understanding of these platforms. This finding challenges the assumption that SMEs require technical support and resources in the adoption of ICT-based innovations. Furthermore, this finding contradicts Pedota et al. (2023), suggesting that employee skills are an important element in the adoption of social media in SMEs. Moreover, our findings contradict Ur Rahman et al. (2020), who find that adopting ICT-based innovations depends on employees having the required ICT skills. However, in the current study, SME owners used Facebook and Instagram accounts themselves as these platforms offer user-friendly interfaces and basic functionalities that can be easily navigated by users with minimal information technology skills. The contradiction between the studies may stem from contextual differences, such as varying technological development, cultural norms, and economic conditions. Another element is the type of technology being adopted; Facebook and Instagram require less expertise compared to more complex ICT-based innovations like Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems or Business Intelligence (BI) tools.

Government Support in Facebook and Instagram Adoption

We find that government support is crucial in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram for marketing purposes in SMEs. This finding corroborates Hoque et al. (2023) to reaffirm the critical role of government support in ICT-based innovation adoption among SMEs. Additionally, the finding corroborates Chen et al. (2023) to emphasise government incentives were effective in promoting technological innovation adoption in SMEs. The current study findings highlight the indispensable role of government support in driving the adoption of Facebook and Instagram as marketing tools among SMEs. By providing infrastructure, technical

assistance, and incentives, the government creates an environment that nurtures and supports SMEs in leveraging these platforms effectively.

External Technology Support in Facebook and Instagram Adoption

We find that external technology support is not crucial in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram in SMEs. This finding contradicts Jayawardena et al. (2023) that SMEs require external technology support in the form of consulting services or technical assistance to adopt digital technologies for marketing. However, the current study's findings suggest that fast-food SMEs in Pakistan are able to adopt Facebook and Instagram for marketing purposes without external technology support. This indicates that these SMEs have the necessary knowledge to adopt Facebook and Instagram into their marketing strategies independently. On the other hand, the findings corroborate Wasiq et al. (2023) to emphasise that the influence of external technology support may vary across different technologies. For instance, Facebook and Instagram are widely adopted by businesses, and the process of adoption is relatively straightforward and accessible.

Facebook and Instagram in Enhancing Customer Relations

We found that Facebook and Instagram enhance the relations between SMEs and their customers. According to the SME owners, using these platforms allows them to connect with their customers in a more personalised and meaningful way. This, in turn, enhances the overall customer experience and strengthens the relationship between the customers and the business. This finding corroborates Hu et al. (2023) to reaffirm that Facebook and Instagram help SMEs maintain customer relations. Additionally, the finding corroborates Lohanda & Berto (2021) to highlight that Facebook and Instagram are effective tools for enhancing customer relations. With the adoption of Facebook and Instagram, SMEs experienced enhanced customer relations, as these platforms provided a means for SMEs to communicate with customers and promote their products or services.

Facebook and Instagram in Reaching Target Audience

We find that SMEs are able to reach their target audience with the adoption of Facebook and Instagram. The SME owners believed that these platforms provide quick access to a sizable customer base with diverse ages and income ranges, and the targeted marketing feature of Facebook and Instagram allows SMEs to reach their desired audience by age, location, and interests. This finding corroborates Denga & Rakshit (2023) that Facebook and Instagram are more effective than traditional marketing methods in reaching specific target audiences. Additionally, the finding corroborates Farajnezhad et al. (2022) to emphasise that Facebook and Instagram are powerful tools for SMEs to reach their intended audience. Facebook and Instagram allow SMEs to target their advertisements to specific demographics, interests, and behaviours, ensuring that their messages are seen by the people most likely to be interested in their products or services.

CONCLUSION

The global adoption of Facebook and Instagram in business marketing has made studying this phenomenon increasingly important. As such, there is a growing demand for a deeper knowledge and analysis of Facebook and Instagram adoption to create more useful frameworks that help SMEs in developing countries adopt these platforms and reap marketing performance benefits. In this regard, we focused on the antecedents of Facebook and Instagram adoption in fast-food SMEs in Pakistan, as they are believed to be key in enhancing the marketing performance of SMEs. We utilised the TOE framework, and the findings evidenced that technological, organisational, and environmental elements influence the adoption of Facebook and Instagram in SMEs. Additionally, this study highlighted considerable knowledge gaps related to social media innovation adoption among SMEs in developing countries, particularly in the areas of theory, context, technique, and content. We attempted to expand knowledge from a developing country's SME standpoint and raise critical issues for debate in both research and practice. Ultimately, our study contributed to the social media adoption literature, analysing the phenomenon using the TOE framework.

Contributions and Recommendations

We extended the theoretical base of the TOE framework by analysing the antecedents in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram and their consequences for the marketing performance of fast-food SMEs in Pakistan. Furthermore, we corroborated the conclusions of Eze et al. (2022) and Govinnage & Sachitra (2019) that the TOE framework offers a concise and robust theoretical foundation and has consistently received empirical support in examining social media adoption in SMEs. In the literature on ICT-based innovation adoption in developing countries (Atique et al., 2021; Budiwarman, 2022; Iqbal & Khan, 2021), we contributed by investigating the antecedents in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram among fast-food SMEs in Pakistan. In the marketing performance literature (Luthen & Soelaiman, 2022; Nair et al., 2022; Sedalo et al., 2022), we contributed by examining the impact of Facebook and Instagram on the marketing performance of fast-food SMEs in Pakistan. We presented evidence that Facebook and Instagram are emerging ICT-based innovations with beneficial features and technology for business marketing. This is particularly relevant in Pakistan, where no studies have been conducted, especially with links between SMEs' adoption of Facebook and Instagram and marketing performance. We recommend that fast-food SMEs in Pakistan adopt Facebook and Instagram for marketing to enhance their marketing performance. As a result of this study's implications, it is crucial for SMEDA to take advantage of this study to encourage and expedite the use of Facebook and Instagram for marketing among Pakistani fast-food SMEs.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has some limitations inherent to its focus on a particular geographical area, in this case, Lahore, Pakistan, which restricts the findings to the perspectives of the participants in that specific context. However, limiting the sample to Lahore-city fast-food SMEs has a minimal

impact since fast-food SMEs throughout Pakistan face comparable cultural and economic circumstances. Thus, caution should be taken when extrapolating the study's conclusions to other settings, such as other developing countries or different organisational sizes.

We have contributed valuable insights to the existing body of knowledge on the research topic and have laid the groundwork for additional research and debate in the area of social media adoption in marketing among SMEs in developing countries. To further enhance the understanding of the topic, future research could include a comparative study of the importance of Facebook and Instagram on the marketing performance of fast-food SMEs in other developing countries within the region and, more broadly, across South Asia. Additionally, future studies could explore the antecedents in the adoption of other social media platforms, such as TikTok, in the marketing of fast-food SMEs in developing countries and their potential impact on marketing performance. Furthermore, future research could expand its scope by incorporating different antecedents, and a larger dataset from other developing countries.

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Appendix A

Table A1 Profile of SMEs.

Case Study ID	Number of Employees	Facebook Business Page	Instagram Business Page	Fast Food Products
RAM090	34	Yes	Yes	Burgers, Chicken Wings, Chips
FDA220	21	Yes	Yes	Burgers, Chips
TFI141	15	Yes	Yes	Biryani, Kebabs, Curry
WIK260	12	Yes	Yes	Pizza, Burgers, Chicken Wings
SJO120	10	Yes	Yes	Shawarma, Chips
KMS151	13	Yes	Yes	Sandwiches, Burgers, Chips
RAD251	32	Yes	Yes	Shawarma, Burgers
SIP191	19	Yes	Yes	Chicken Wings
JAI250	9	Yes	Yes	Loaded Chips, Burgers, Biryani, Kababs
BRU110	7	Yes	Yes	Burgers, Shawarma, Sandwiches, Chips
JKG270	10	Yes	Yes	Burgers, Chips
SAH181	25	Yes	Yes	Burgers, Loaded Chips
AFK211	14	Yes	Yes	Burgers, Loaded Chips
FFD111	30	Yes	Yes	Burger, Shawarma
DSA160	26	Yes	Yes	Shawarma, Chips
SSA141	12	Yes	Yes	Burger, Wraps, Chicken Wings
IUO180	10	Yes	Yes	Burgers, Chicken Wings, Chips

PLQ230	15	Yes	Yes	Sandwiches, Burgers, Chips
GHA171	18	Yes	Yes	Biryani, Burgers, Kababs
MHK140	21	Yes	Yes	Burgers, Pizza, Chips
MIY260	19	Yes	Yes	Shawarma, Chips
GTR291	10	Yes	Yes	Burger, Biryani, Chicken Wings
MNB281	8	Yes	Yes	Chicken Wings
CZA211	23	Yes	Yes	Pizza, Loaded Chips
PRT171	21	Yes	Yes	Burgers, Loaded Chips
BTY130	30	Yes	Yes	Burger, Chicken Nuggets, Chips
KKL160	11	Yes	Yes	Burger, Chicken Nuggets, Chips

General Information (SME background)

- 1. Could you please tell me about your enterprise's background?**
 - *How long have you been in the business of fast-food?*
 - *What is your role in the enterprise?*
 - *What are your main products?*
 - *How many employees do you have?*
 - *Who is your target audience (s)?*

General Information (Marketing)

- 2. How do you perceive Facebook and Instagram for business marketing?**
 - *How long have you been using Facebook and Instagram?*
 - *Why did you decide to use Facebook and Instagram in marketing?*
 - *How often do you use Facebook and Instagram for marketing purposes?*
 - *How has the usage of Facebook and Instagram affected your business marketing?*
 - *How effective is Facebook and Instagram in marketing?*

Technology Context

- 3. What technology elements influenced the adoption of Facebook and Instagram in marketing your business?**
 - *Do you think Facebook and Instagram are complex to adopt for marketing? Did it influence the adoption? If so, how?*
 - *Do you think Facebook and Instagram were compatible with your marketing strategies? Did it influence the adoption? If so, how?*

Organisation Context

- 4. What organisation elements influenced the adoption of Facebook and Instagram in marketing your business?**
 - *Do you think your innovativeness as business owner influenced the adoption of Facebook and Instagram in marketing? If so, how?*
 - *Do you think the skills of your employees influenced the adoption of Facebook and Instagram in marketing? If so, how?*

Environment Context

- 5. What environment elements influenced the adoption of Facebook and Instagram in marketing your business?**
 - *Do you think government support influenced the adoption of Facebook and Instagram in marketing? If so, how?*
 - *Do you think external technology support influenced the adoption of Facebook and Instagram in marketing? If so, how?*

Marketing Performance

- 6. Did the adoption of Facebook and Instagram impacted the marketing performance of your business?**
 - *Did the adoption of Facebook and Instagram enhance customer relations? If so, how?*
 - *Did the adoption of Facebook and Instagram help you reach the business target audience? If so, how?*

Appendix C

Table C1 (List of main themes, codes and code abbreviation)

S. No	Main theme	Sub-theme	Code Abbreviation
3	Technology Context (TC)	Complexity	EOU
4		Compatibility	MMR
8	Organisation Context (OC)	Innovativeness	RTA
9		Employee Skills	TKE

12	Environment Context (EC)	Government Support	GSP
13		External Technology Support	EOU
14	Marketing Performance (MP)	Customer Relations	CQU
15		Target Audience	RCT

Appendix D

Table D1 (An example of the coding process being used to generate themes)

Interviewee	Data Extracts	Codes	Sub-theme	Main theme
WIK260	<i>“...Facebook and Instagram are fairly simple to use, starting with logging in, making comments and posting content. There is no need to buy any customised equipment as someone can simply use these platforms from a smartphone...”</i>	Ease of Use (EOU)	Complexity	Technology Context (TC)
TFI141	<i>“...we absolutely believe that Facebook and Instagram are compatible with our business and effective in advertising...”</i>	Matching Marketing Requirements (MMR)	Compatibility	

JKG270	<i>“...taking risks is a part of my personality and I always take risks in business, particularly with regards to adopting new technologies, which I believe could grow my business. This is the reason I adopted Facebook and Instagram for marketing products and I believe I was the first one in this city to do so....”</i>	Risk Taking Approach (RTA)	Innovativeness	Organisation Context (OC)
SAH181	<i>“...despite the fact, I am not particularly strong in IT and have little experience with using technologies. I have found Facebook and Instagram to be easy as I educated myself on how to</i>	Technical Knowledge and Experience (TKE)	Employee Skills	

	<i>effectively operate these platforms for marketing purposes. Anyone can easily learn these as much information is available on the internet and on the platform itself...”</i>			
JKG270	<i>“...if the government introduced free seminars on Facebook and Instagram benefits in marketing for SMEs, will help further in the adoption of these new technologies. The legal framework, which could establish guidelines on the use of tools and technology will also be imperative. An inadequate technology infrastructure will frequently be a</i>	Government Support Programs (GSP)	Government Support	Environment Context (EC)

	<i>barrier in the adoption of Facebook and Instagram.</i> <i>The motivation of SMEs to adopt these platforms depended on the availability of internet or the network infrastructures invested in by mobile network operators could be directly impacted by the government of the country's information and communication technology infrastructure...”</i>			
SJO120	<i>“...my spouse, who is also one of the managers, operates Facebook and Instagram business pages and frequently posts content. I believe that</i>	External Help in Technology Adoption (EHT)	External Technology Support	

	<i>there is no need to have external support or hire someone for that matter; as these platforms are quite easy to use...”</i>			
WIK260	<i>“...customers' concerns online should be addressed professionally for maintaining good relations with customers. I believe that we are able to improve customer relations by responding to their queries on Facebook and Instagram. In this way, the business could maintain a positive online reputation while still having their social media activity subject to unwanted criticism...”</i>	Customer Queries (CQU)	Customer Relations	Marketing Performance (MP)

SJO120	<i>“...Facebook and Instagram Ads. are effective in reaching a larger audience.</i> <i>Moreover, the like, comment and share options on these platforms enable customers to like our products, leave a comment or share with their network...”</i>	Reaching Customers (RCT)	Target Audience	
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