

Chapter 55

The Utilization of Social Media by Small and Medium Food Vendors in Brunei Darussalam

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ABSTRACT

This research examines the factors that contribute to the utilization of social media by the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in the food industry in Brunei Darussalam. It also investigates how social media provides opportunities to SMEs. This research was done using a quantitative method through primary research that was focused on small and medium-sized food vendors in Brunei Darussalam. Survey questions were distributed to food SMEs and vendors, who use social media to assist them in conducting their business, to serve as a guideline to understand how social media networks can lead to positive business outcomes and how understanding key factors may lead to optimizing product portfolios and to discover new opportunities for their business to expand. Based on the authors' research, cost effectiveness was found to influence social media usage among the small and medium food vendors in Brunei. Factors such as trust, interactivity and compatibility, however were not found to be the factors influencing the utilization of social media.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has been globally accepted as effective media for communication and collaboration as it provides many advantages which are not offered by other media such as cost-effective, many-to-many interactivity and rich in information content in various forms (multimedia) (Baruah, 2012). As such, it has become an important part of people's lives to connect and keep updated with their relatives and friends. It also opened up new opportunities for individuals to express their creativity in the virtual community. Not only social media has proven to play an essential part in individuals' lives, it also becomes significantly important for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in running their businesses (Dahnil et al., 2014). Given the limited resources and capacities of SMEs, social media is believed to help improve business performances by bringing in new opportunities.

In Brunei Darussalam, social media utilization for businesses seems to be no longer optional. Bruneians can access the Internet on a daily basis. According to the new Digital in 2017 Global Overview report, with the majority of the total population (86 percent) using the social media, Brunei Darussalam became the third highest in terms of social media penetration globally (Othman, 2017). Particularly in the food industry, there is an evidently growing interest in the adoption of social media. Businesses use social media as an alternative channel to promote and sell their products, to do research for their product development to optimize their product portfolios and to discover new opportunities for their business to expand. In such manner, it is important for SMEs food industry to have knowledge on the success factors on the utilization social media as this may enhance their ability to make decisions accurately. Learning from mistakes is important. Therefore, various factors that may stop some enterprises from utilizing social media in their business despite their potential benefits need to be properly studied.

The aims of this research are to identify and analyze social media adoption among SMEs in the food industry of Brunei Darussalam and to understand what influences the businesses to use social media in their businesses. The research was carried out with a quantitative method to analyze the responses, supported by other researchers' findings. The study focuses mainly on finding out the reasons why SMEs lean more toward social media to attract their customers and how customers respond to the marketing strategies implemented by these businesses especially now that we are in an era where customers prefer honesty and transparency especially when it comes to food as it is directly related to health and hygiene. Finally, this paper will explore the opportunities provided by social media that could be used by these small and medium enterprises for their growth. It also aims to discover the targeted customers and how the use of social networks such as Facebook and Instagram have become the solution to get new customers.

This paper is organized as follows. Literature review is presented in the next section followed by a discussion on the framework and hypotheses development. Next, we describe research methodology employed followed by data analysis and results of hypotheses testing. We then discuss the result and the final section is conclusions made from the study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. SMEs in Brunei

In the context of Brunei, SMEs is defined as enterprises having employees ranging from 1 to 100 (Polsaram et al, 2011). Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play vital part in Brunei Darussalam

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