Three Essays on Effective Social Media Marketing: Overcoming Challenges and Maximizing Opportunities in Today's Business Environment

Farnaz Honarmand

A Thesis

In the Department of

Marketing

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Business Administration

at Concordia University

Montréal, Quebec, Canada

May 2023

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By:

Entitled:

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor Of Philosophy

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

_____	Chair
Dr.	
_____	Thesis Supervisor
Dr.	
_____	Thesis Supervisor
Dr.	
_____	Thesis Supervisor
Dr.	
_____	Examiner
Dr.	
_____	Examiner
Dr.	
_____	Examiner
Dr.	
_____	Examiner
Dr.	
_____	External Examiner
Dr.	

Approved by   _____

Dr.   , Graduate Program Director

«Date»   _____

Dr.   , Dean

Abstract for PhD

Three Essays on Effective Social Media Marketing: Overcoming Challenges and Maximizing Opportunities in Today's Business Environment

Farnaz Honarmand, PhD
Concordia University, 2023

The current dissertation is a collection of three essays in the context of social media challenges. As social media (SM) has become an essential tool for businesses, it has also brought new possibilities for marketers to connect with their customers. Social media marketing (SMM) has gained increasing importance in recent years, but it also poses several challenges for individuals and organizations.

Essay 1 presents a comprehensive review of the challenges of SMM by examining more than 80 publications from 2007 to 2021, categorizing them based on different metrics, and extracting a theoretical framework of common SMM challenges. This research highlights the need for decision-makers to identify and assess these challenges to better allocate resources and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of SMM.

Essay 2 focuses on the beauty industry in Iran and identifies the main SMM challenges faced by companies in this sector. Drawing on the theoretical framework developed in essay one, this study uses a Delphi survey to gather data from eight marketing and SMM managers and practitioners from various Iranian beauty companies. The findings highlight the most challenging aspects of SMM in this industry, including coordination across different company functions engaged in SMM, maintaining security and privacy of company channels and customer data, and limited IT resources of some companies in adopting SMM. The results of this study provide practical implications for beauty industry practitioners and contribute to the academic domain of SMM and business marketing practice in the beauty industry.

Essay 3 focuses on the key factors influencing the selection of social media influencers (SMIs) for small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This study uses interviews and survey methodology to identify and evaluate the key factors influencing the selection of desired SMIs for SMEs. The findings indicate that engagement, SMI traits, content relevance, compensation, and SMI workstyle are the most significant factors that positively influence SMEs' choice of SMI. This study provides a framework for future work to assess, compare, and select the most influential SMIs in different organizational contexts and helps marketers choose SMIs who resonate well with designated customers to enhance poFsitive brand association and increase product sales.

Acknowledgements

My PhD journey was long, filled with difficult obstacles, and required immense dedication and perseverance. There were times when I questioned my abilities and whether I could overcome the difficulties that seemed insurmountable. However, with the support of my supervisors and loved ones, I was able to push through and reach this milestone. I am proud of what I have accomplished, and I am grateful for everyone who has helped me along the way. This acknowledgement page is a small way to express my gratitude and appreciation for the support and guidance I have received throughout this journey.

I am truly grateful to my supervisors, Profs. Laroche and Paulin, for their exceptional support, guidance, and mentorship throughout my PhD journey. As highly reputable scholars in marketing, their guidance has been invaluable to my research. They provided unwavering support during the most challenging moments of my life and PhD journey, including the loss of my mother and the birth of my two sons. Their patience, encouragement, and constructive feedback have been instrumental in shaping my research work and personal growth. I am also thankful to my committee member Prof. Harold Boeck for his support in this process by providing insightful feedback on my initial thesis proposal and for continuing to share his perspective and suggestions as the final dissertation was developed.

I extend my sincere appreciation to both Dr. Darlene Walsh and Dr. Jooseop Lim, present and former chairs of the marketing department, for their support throughout my academic journey. The friendly staff of the department of marketing also played a crucial role in making my experience a positive one. I want to express my gratitude to Norma Paradis, Maria Dolores Mosquera, and Beverley Benderoff for their help and support. I would also like to express my appreciation to Cédric Lesage, Graduate Program Director, PhD in Business Administration.

Finally, I would like to thank other amazing friends at Concordia who made this journey an enjoyable one. I also want to acknowledge Courtney Stone, another PhD candidate, for her invaluable support and encouragement, both academically and personally.

I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my husband, my late mother, and my brother for their constant love, encouragement, and support.

I am deeply grateful to the participants of my study, who generously shared their time and knowledge to make my research possible.

Dedication

To the memory of my loving mother, Fakhri.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

General Introduction

Social media (SM) introduced a global customer platform of unprecedented size and scope. In a brief time, it has revolutionized the way that people meet, socialize, relax, work, find information, demand change, and ultimately live their lives (Ortiz-Ospina, 2019). Though today SM is comfortably integrated into the lives of many, even the largest and most ubiquitous of these platforms were only introduced in the past 10-15 years. In this short time, SM has come to be viewed by marketers as critical to reaching current and potential customers alike (Ebrahim, 2020). With the largest platforms hosting billions of monthly users (DataReportal, 2023), SM provides a global panel of consumers of diverse lifestyles and attitudes, as well as the means to serve each user with personally tailored ads. Moreover, users' continual interactions on the platform provide a wealth of information about their needs and interests. This has unlocked an unprecedented marketplace of consumers who can be hyper-targeted with marketing efforts. The scaling nature of digital advertising costs (per click, per impression, etc.) means that social media marketing (SMM) offers access to a large pool of consumers who can be targeted both according to personal interest as well as according to budgetary restrictions and thus can be quite attractive to not only large firms but also small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) who may not have virtually infinite funding. SMM offers an attractive opportunity for marketers through its population, collected personal data, and flexible costing method.

SMM may seem to offer an amplified version of yesteryear's mass marketing, but to take full advantage of SMM's potential benefits it is necessary to understand the complexities that distinguish it from traditional methods. While the accessibility of SM may easily be interpreted as ease of use for marketers, implementing effective SMM is not straightforward. First, SM capabilities create a different environment. The user engagement encouraged by the platform allows branded content to be shared and commented on virtually infinitely but does not guarantee that users will only do this with positive sentiment. Further, SM moves in real time. Not only does it require the time to monitor consumer response, but also a level of environmental awareness and adaptiveness to ensure appropriate content. When it comes to targeted content, the wealth of information provided by consumers is ultimately only valuable insofar as the marketer understands their target consumer profile: too few variables may result in many ineffective impressions, but assumptions or imprecision in identifying relevant traits may lead to reaching the entirely wrong audience. Additionally, there are considerations of technical proficiency and ethical concerns in messaging and reach.

Effective marketing has always required consideration of a number of factors. However, social media presents a markedly more complicated situation than more traditional media channels. The idea of privately-owned media using an ad-based revenue model and offering content free of charge to consumers is not new (McFarlane, 2022). However, unlike other broadcast or published media, social media does not serve its users pre-set programming for passive enjoyment (i.e. television shows, articles) but instead a dynamically responsive environment for the publication of user-generated content (UGC) and user-led engagement. When users engage with social media by posting, "liking," and sharing content, their activity is not only recorded internally (as it would be for, say, a viewer watching a TV show) but also contributes immediately and directly to informing the future content served to the user (commercial or otherwise) in an effort to encourage further engagement. The result is a self-sustaining cycle of the user informing the platform

(directly or passively) of their desired content, and the platform dynamically adapting the content served to the user in order to encourage them to spend more time engaging with the platform, providing more information, and importantly, viewing ads.

The rapid emergence of this new dynamic of customer-business interaction has captured the attention of legislators, marketers, and academics alike. The ongoing discussions surrounding policymaking underscore the tensions and complex relationship between the parties involved. Unprecedented concerns about both political security and consumer privacy have prompted ongoing efforts to regulate the SM industry but also personal and commercial use. Marketers have argued that restricting access to select SM platforms may prevent reach of certain demographics altogether (Suciu, 2023). Meanwhile, the scholarly understanding of how consumers and marketers alike use social media continues to grow but faces challenges. As described above, social media platforms are not incentivized to focus on content itself but instead on infrastructure to support continued engagement. Focusing on optimizing how content is served means that platforms frequently see changes in key features, and private ownership means that these changes can be implemented or phased out quickly. Given an already streamlined engagement process, seemingly small changes may have major influences on how consumers interact with platforms. Because of these reasons, SM presents a complex, dynamically unfolding environment that can be difficult to understand and plan for (Johnston, 2018).

The numerous considerations in SMM coupled with its dynamic nature can render it difficult to comprehensively assess and develop a strategy. A useful lens for examining this situation may be contingency theory. Contingency theory is a managerial perspective which suggests the appropriate course of action in any given scenario is contingent upon the specific characteristics of the situation (Luthans & Stewart, 1977). There are multiple external factors affecting any situation, and their interaction with key internal factors will influence the success of the chosen strategy. Through the lens of contingency theory, success (referred to often as effectiveness) can be achieved in more than one way, and the best path is dependent upon various situational variables. Thus, there is no single best practice or 'rule of thumb' to guide these decisions.

Contingency theory has long been used (though in various iterations) in academia in developing theories relating to business and management. Holding the key assumption that the organizational environment moderates the relationship between organizational design and performance, it provides the underpinning for several key frameworks in the area of organizational design (Van de Ven, Ganco & Hinings, 2013). Ruekert et al. (1985) and Zeithaml et al. (1988) introduced contingency theory to the marketing domain as a means to synthesize traditional perspectives of organizational structure. Under their model, optimal performance results (identified as dimensions of effectiveness, efficiency, and adaptiveness) are contingent upon planning and structuring the task according to macro-environmental conditions and task characteristics. More recently, we have also seen this theory extended to crisis management (Ping, Cui & Pan, 2011), including communication strategy (Cheng, 2016; Cheng & Fisk, 2021) and public response (Wilbur & Myers, 2016). While the relevance of contingency theory has been questioned in light of the global economy of present day, other researchers advocate for its cautious utility with an expanded view of its conditions to more comprehensively address modern service complexities (Van de Ven et al., 2013).

In the spirit of applying contingency theory in a modern context, it provides a lens by which to examine managerial decisions regarding SM. First, the effect of situational variables has been

2

previously investigated to extant the SMM literature. In discussing the relationship between SM and viral marketing, Kaplan and Haenlein (2011) identify three conditions – message, messenger, and environment – that need to be appropriately matched to successfully have a message go viral. Similarly, Johnston et al. (2018) found that effectiveness in SM advertising efforts was contingent on the content-sharing capabilities of the platform as well as the uncertainty avoidance of the consumer's culture. Past work on SMM has also addressed environmental factors that concern marketers, including pressures of legal and socio-ethical concerns of consumer trust and privacy (Appel et al., 2020; Memon et al., 2015) as well as context-specific factors such as navigating competitors on SM (Bae & Zamrudi, 2018). A common theme in extant literature is the difficulty of assessing SMM performance, in part due to different available measures which are not easily comparable. Thus, past findings support a model where specific outcomes are contingent upon the matching of internal strategy with the given environment. Additionally, SM has been used as context in recent applications of contingency theory for crisis management and communication (Cheng, 2016; Cheng & Fisk, 2021; Ping, Cui & Pan, 2011; Wilbur & Myers, 2016), and the big data it provides is seen as key to understanding the contingent relationships between organizations and their publics (Cheng & Fisk, 2021). Furthermore, contrary to past concerns that the scope of contingency theory is too narrow to appropriately consider a globalized marketplace, it is employed in crisis management precisely because of the complex and dynamic environment created by disaster (Ping, Cui & Pan, 2011), traits which also characterize the constantly evolving environment of SM (Johnston et al., 2018). Thus, broadly viewing SMM through the lens of contingency theory, we see managerial concerns regarding strategy as parts of a greater ecosystem that includes consideration of situational influences in achieving the desired outcomes.

Within this framing, this dissertation explores the decisions that marketers make when entering into SMM. Specifically, the goal of the present research is to (a) better grasp the SMM complexity and its evolution, (b) review assumptions in a given sector and see how SMM was effectively integrated or not and what challenges were faced, as suggested by recent academic journals indicating that theory must be verified and seek pertinence in evolutive complexity (e.g., JAMS, AMS), and (c) evaluate SMM complexity with SMEs and assess how the use of SM impacts their business relationships with stakeholders. To this end, the first two essays of this thesis examine the specific challenges that marketers experience in integrating a social media strategy as a part of their marketing plan, including both official brand presence and paid advertising. The third essay looks more specifically at the adoption of influencer marketing, a specific SMM tactic a popular SM user endorses the product to their following. The developed frameworks provide a useful perspective for scholars by identifying common practical issues with SMM and providing structure for future research, as well as for marketers themselves by offering a schema for comprehensively evaluating both internal and external factors when it comes to designing an SMM strategy and selecting an SMI to engage with.

An overview of the essays is provided as follows:

ESSAY 1. First, in an effort to summarize and categorize the extant body of SMM research, Essay 1 provides an overview of the literature on SMM challenges by reviewing more than 80 publications from 2007 to 2021, examining and synthesizing related studies through domain-based systematic review (Paul & Criado, 2020). The categorization is based on different metrics such as publication year, publication database, and research methodology. Ultimately, a framework of common challenges in the adoption, implementation, utilization, and management of SMM from the managerial perspective is developed. This paper identifies observed limitations and

opportunities for future research, making it a valuable resource for policymakers, marketing decision-makers, and academics interested in SMM challenges.

ESSAY 2. This paper concentrates on the beauty industry since it is one of the prominent users of SM for marketing purposes. Beauty companies in Iran face several challenges related to SMM. Answering calls for further investigation of SMM challenges in new contexts (Shen & Bissell, 2013), this study aims to identify and evaluate these challenges by drawing on academic research on the theoretical framework of SMM challenges (please refer to *Essay 1*). This research utilized 57 challenges and 4 dimensions from a review of the literature in *Essay 1*. A questionnaire was designed to collect data from eight marketing and SMM managers and practitioners from various Iranian beauty companies that use SMM approach in marketing their products. The validity of the questionnaire was evaluated and confirmed by face content validity, and the data were gathered through four rounds of a Delphi survey (Chalmers & Armour, 2019; Rubio et al., 2003). The study revealed 41 challenges in 4 dimensions in the SMM of this industry. Among them, three challenges – (a) coordination across different company functions that are engaged in SMM at both staff and manager levels, (b) keeping the security and privacy of company channel, customer, and company data, and (c) limited IT resources of some companies in the adoption of SMM – were the most challenging to the Iranian cosmetic industry. The findings of this study contribute to the academic domain in SMM and business marketing practice in the beauty industry and provide practical implications for beauty industry practitioners.

ESSAY 3. SM has provided possibility for individuals to utilize this media and form a following. Social media influencers (SMIs) are individuals who have developed a distinct online presence and built a substantial following, as noted by previous research (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019; Khamis et al., 2017; Senft, 2013). One of the predominant utilizations of SM by businesses is employing SMIs. Previous studies have highlighted the success of collaborating with SMIs to promote products and services. However, recent research indicates that marketers face challenges in effectively implementing such strategies (Ye et al., 2021). Additionally, for influencer marketing, the primary challenge involves identifying and utilizing more precise methods to manage the process of identifying and selecting SMIs who are aligned with firms' business objectives (de Michele & Marchi, 2018). This study (a) defines the factors that are important for the selection of SMIs, considers the importance of SMIs in promoting brands and improving business performance for SMEs, and (b) identifies and evaluates the key factors influencing the selection of SMIs by SMEs. Following an in-depth literature review, an online semi-structured interview was conducted with eight SME business owners who use SMIs. The purpose was to determine the factors most suitable for the context. Following this exercise, the conceptual model of the SMIs' selection factors was drawn; Finally, an online survey was administered, and data were collected from a group of experts, including 68 business owners and marketing specialists from various SMEs. Subsequently, the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) was applied to fit this model and test the research hypotheses. The study identified five dimensions that significantly positively influence SMEs' choice of SMI, including engagement, SMI traits, content relevance, compensation, and SMI workstyle. The findings suggest that SM managers should carefully select influencers who are in harmony with the brand and have an impact on the firm's desired consumers to enhance outcomes of enhancing positive brand association and subsequently increasing product sales. This study helps to understand further best practices for success in an increasingly unpredictable SM complex and evolving context offering a framework for future studies to assess,

compare, and select the most influential SMIs in different organizational contexts. Hence, the final study of this thesis contributed to resolving one of the SMM challenges.

The outcome of this overall research sheds light on complex phenomena requiring multiple methodological perspectives. This these has made critical steps in this research area to ultimately (a) get a better grasp of the action theory-based literature, (b) review concepts in a specific context which enlightened our understanding as it reviewed assumptions such that we can easily generalize results, and (c) find that the specific link between SMI and SME proved to be critical while using different methodologies and approaches to ensure validity and variability. Further information on the processes can be found in each of the three essays, followed by an overall conclusion to overview the evolution and future impact of SMM challenges (Figure A).

Figure A Visual Relationship of the 3 Essays
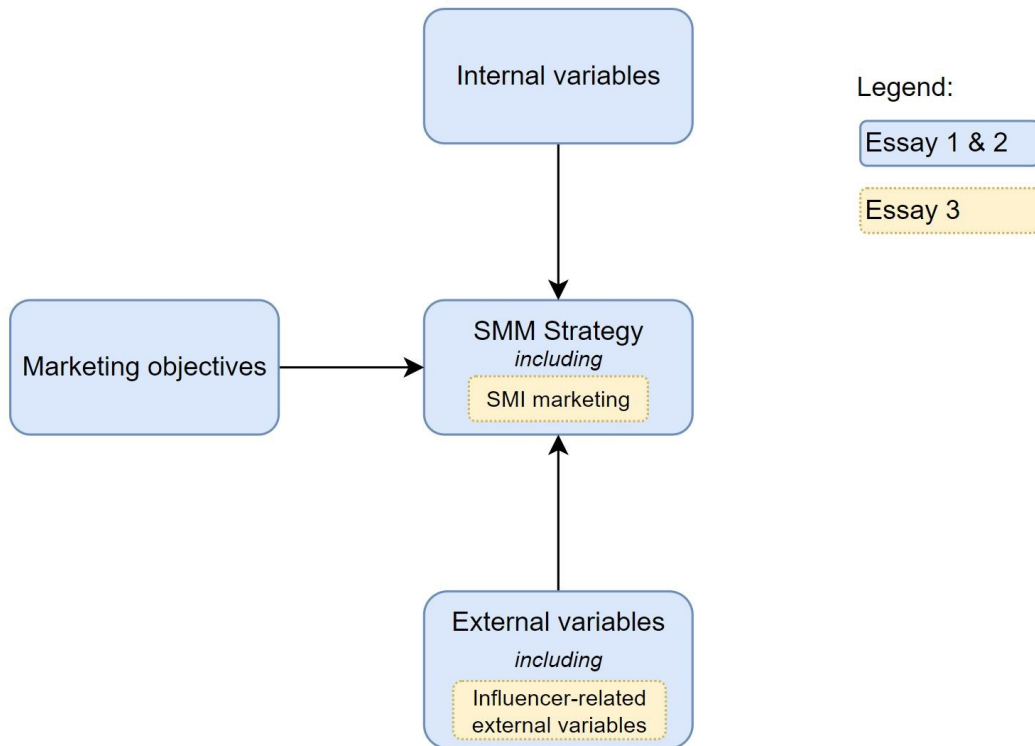
Essay 1: SMM Challenges: A Review of Extant Literature & Future Research Directions

Abstract

Since the advent of SM, marketers have found new possibilities in the ways they can connect with their customers. Recently employing SM as a dynamic medium to interact with customers has been unavoidable for organizations. It enables them to leverage customers' voices to the advantage of individuals and businesses alike. SMM is rapidly growing and has eased the way businesses reach their customers. However, despite being beneficial for stakeholders, SMM has negative impacts. Individuals may suffer from SMM overuse, such as consumerism, fear of security, and data confidentiality breach. Furthermore, businesses face numerous challenges regarding SM, specifically during its implementation and use. Identifying and assessing such challenges is vital to help decision-makers better allocate resources and increase the effectiveness and efficiency of SMM and, ultimately, of marketing performance. This paper reviews the literature on the challenges of SMM to inform academics about current research trends, gaps, and future directions and help policymakers and marketing decision-makers be aware of common SMM challenges in a business environment. By reviewing more than 80 publications from 2007 to 2021 regarding SMM challenges in peer-reviewed journals and international conferences, this paper provides an overview and a classification by examining and synthesizing related studies. The categorization was based on different metrics such as publication year, publication database, and the research methodology. Further, common themes among these studies emerged, and a theoretical framework of common SMM challenges was able to be extracted. Alongside discussing the findings, observed limitations and opportunities for future research have been identified and reported.

Keywords: *Social media marketing; research agenda; literature review; systematic literature review; social media marketing challenges.*

1.1 Introduction

SM is one of the most popular online activities, where a great majority of individuals and organizations exchange information and experiences. In 2020, the global social network has counted more than 3.6 billion users, and the estimated reach is 4.4 billion by 2025 (Statista, 2021b). As citizens can be easily reached online, SM has replaced all traditional means of communication (Brtan, 2021). Decision makers in public and private entities (government, not-for-profit, businesses) adopt an SM strategy to generate information content about a product/service, inform the public about general rules and regulations, and develop awareness (Shareef et al., 2019). More specifically, public institutions engage citizens through SM to offer services, communicate policies, and instruct on national, regional, and local policy changes and unforeseen news and events (Ohio University, 2020). Non-profit organizations share their values and purposes, gain benevolent participants and donors, educate stakeholders, and offer alternative strategies while developing stronger support in the community (Paulin et al., 2014).

Regardless of the size of the organization, most of them strive to promote service/product attention and expose favourable perceptions through viral marketing on social networks (Shareef et al., 2019). Branding, market research, customer relationship management, service provision, and sales promotion (Alves et al., 2016) are among the numerous diverse activities that SM is used for. Alongside various studies that have provided empirical evidence of the SM benefits for firms and positive implications of deploying it in marketing strategies (Alves et al., 2016), there are challenges including that (a) some of the SM data are difficult to analyze and interpret (Hajli & Laroche, 2019), and (b) there are issues of time intensiveness, trademark, copyright, trust, privacy and security, in addition to dealing with a large amount of UGC and negative feedbacks (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2013).

Studying the nature, dynamics, and implications of SM for marketing academics and decision-makers has attracted considerable research attention (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Alves et al. (2016) show that most studies focus on the SM benefits analyzing the consumer perspective or the organization's capacity to extract with efficiency the maximum economic value for their clients. While the challenges and opportunities of SM have received considerable attention looking at both consumers and business, there is a need to explore the organizations' behaviour in engaging in SMM, especially in terms of understanding the key barriers and obstacles with SM. Firms struggle to effectively implement SM to gain concrete strategic marketing actions (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Salo (2017) suggests more academic research on adoption, barriers, and reasons to use SM in a business context. Alves et al. (2016) emphasize the necessity for more studies to explore the companies' perspectives when they engage in SMM and understand their key barriers and obstacles.

Although studies have been conducted on SMM challenges, they have dealt with barriers and risks of SMM in different contexts. The present study aims to summarize and categorize the research in the SMM field with a systematic literature review to determine the status and future direction of research, as well as propose a framework of common challenges in the adoption, implementation, utilization, and management of SMM from the perspective of businesses. The paper presents the research methodology and the literature review. A metadata analysis based on various metrics suggests a theoretical framework of common SMM challenges based on papers logically classified. Conclusions, recommendations, and future research directions are discussed, and opportunities and limitations are identified to offer the basis for *Essay 2*.

1.2 Research Methodology: Domain-based Systematic Review

Paul and Criado (2020) suggest a broad classification of systematic literature review articles as domain-based, theory-based, and method-based. The systematic literature review is a process of identifying, evaluating, and interpreting all available research to develop new research questions and to summarize the evidence about a phenomenon or a method (Tranfield et al., 2003). It provides a new understanding and enables the researcher to map and assess the existing intellectual territory (Paul & Criado, 2020). This study is based on a domain-based systematic literature review analyzing academic SMM research and challenges, classifying related research, and discovering further research direction (Denyer & Tranfield, 2009; Paul & Criado, 2020). We follow these authors' five steps for producing a systematic review, including (a) question formulation, (b) locating studies, (c) study selection/evaluation, (d) analysis/synthesis, and lastly (e) reporting/using results.

1.2.1 Question Formulation

The research scope, research questions, and inclusion/exclusion criteria were established following an initial assessment of the literature (Chen & Huang, 2020; Choi & Joo, 2021; Dwivedi et al., 2021). As a result, the following three research questions were formulated:

RQ1: How are SM and SMM defined in the literature?

RQ2: How is the research regarding SMM challenges classified?

RQ3: What are common SMM challenges for businesses?

1.2.2 Locating Studies

After reading some related articles, checking trusted papers in reputable journals and databases and consulting with experts and supervisors, for our research to be more inclusive and cover all the research related to our topic, we decided to do our search in two categories of keywords. The first category was related to SM and related words. Challenges and related keywords were also covered in the second category (Table 1.1). We utilized the combination of the following keywords to find SMM challenges in the academic literature.

Table 1.1 Keywords used in Data Collection

Social media and related keywords	Challenge and related keywords
• Social media marketing • Web 2.0 • Social media • Over the top marketing • Social network marketing • Digital content marketing	• Challenges • Threat • Issues • Risk • Barrier • Obstacle • Concern

Combining these two categories of keywords yielded 42 searches on 4 selected databases. For completeness, keywords are summarized in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 The Combinations of Keywords Searched in Databases

Keywords	Challenges	Threat	Issues	Risk	Barrier	Obstacle	Concern
Social media marketing	social media marketing challenges	social media marketing threat	social media marketing issues	social media marketing risk	social media marketing barrier	social media marketing obstacle	social media marketing concern
Web 2.0	Web 2.0 challenges	web 2.0 threat	web 2.0 issues	web 2.0 risk	web 2.0 barrier	web 2.0 obstacle	web 2.0 concern
Social media	social media challenges	social media threat	social media issues	social media risk	social media barrier	social media obstacle	social media concern
Over the top marketing	Over the top marketing challenges	Over the top marketing threat	Over the top marketing issues	Over the top marketing risk	Over the top marketing barrier	Over the top marketing obstacle	Over the top marketing concern
Social network marketing	social network marketing challenges	social network marketing threat	social network marketing issues	social network marketing risk	social network marketing barrier	social network marketing obstacle	social network marketing concern
Digital content marketing	digital content marketing challenges	digital content marketing threat	digital content marketing issues	digital content marketing risk	digital content marketing barrier	digital content marketing obstacle	digital content marketing concern

After these initial searches, terms were generated. Further consultation with experts prompted three additional terms to capture the field fully:

- Social media ecosystem marketing;
- Social media ecosystem small business;
- Social media marketing review.

We obtain 45 unique keyword combinations. To identify any relevant studies, each keyword combination was then searched in several academic databases: Business Source Complete, Emerald, ProQuest, and Web of Science. The initial search yielded 306 papers. Appendix A summarizes the distribution of papers based on keywords. We included peer-reviewed articles and conference proceedings, with no limit on specific year ranges, and considered articles published up to July 2021.

1.2.3 Study Selection & Evaluation

We excluded articles that were only focusing on SM challenges, and articles written in English were included as well as two articles in other languages. This research strategy identified 213 articles. The results were streamlined by eliminating overlapping materials, and the remaining articles were screened by reading the title and abstract to ensure the appropriateness of the content. Finally, we reviewed the full text of the remaining articles. As a result, our review's final number

of articles consists of 80 articles (73 published journal articles and 7 conference papers). The search strategy is summarized in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.1 Search Strategy


```
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Database search                  │
│ Business Source complete (n=99)  │
│ Emerald (n=30)                   │
│ ProQuest (n=93)                  │
│ Web of Science (n=84)            │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
                │
                ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Total references found           │        │ Studies excluded                      │
│ (n=306)                          │ ─ ─ ─ >│ (n=93)                                │
└─────────────────────────────────┘        │ - Irrelevant articles                 │
                │                           │ - Repetitive papers                   │
                ▼                           │ - Non-academic Peer-reviewed articles │
┌─────────────────────────────────┐        └──────────────────────────────────────┘
│ Studies screened                 │
│ (Title and Abstract review)      │        ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
│ (n=213)                          │ ─ ─ ─ >│ Studies excluded                      │
└─────────────────────────────────┘        │ (n=101)                               │
                │                           │ - Irrelevant articles                 │
                ▼                           └──────────────────────────────────────┘
┌─────────────────────────────────┐
│ Studies assessed                 │        ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
│ (Full text review)               │ ─ ─ ─ >│ Full-text studies excluded            │
│ (n=112)                          │        │ (n=32)                                │
└─────────────────────────────────┘        │ - Irrelevant articles                 │
                │                           └──────────────────────────────────────┘
                ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────┐        ┌──────────────────────────────────────┐
│ Studies included in Final sample │ ─ ─ ─ >│ Data extracted via data extraction form│
│ (n=80)                           │        └──────────────────────────────────────┘
│ Published Journal article (n=73) │
│ Conference Paper (n=7)           │
└─────────────────────────────────┘
```

1.2.4 Analysis & Synthesis

The data extraction process was realized by carrying out an accurate reading of all the studies. We followed prior literature reviews and systematic review papers (Alalwan et al., 2017; Alves et al., 2016; Appel et al., 2020; Arrigo, 2018; Di Domenico et al., 2021; Lamarre et al., 2012; Lin et al., 2020; Misirlis & Vlachopoulou, 2018; Pant et al., 2020; Salo, 2017). As suggested by Tranfield et al. (2003), we recorded and summarized important data collected from each article; we devised a data extraction form that helped reduce human error and replicability and transparency of the procedure done on documents (Vrontis et al., 2021). We coded each article according to (a) author(s), (b) year of publication, (c) database, (d) journal title, (e) research context and field, (f)

type of article (theoretical, empirical and review), and (g) method (quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods).

1.3 Metadata Analysis & Results

In this section, with an in-depth review of the content of the articles, a metadata analysis was performed based on metrics (e.g., author, year of publication, database, journal title, research context and field, type of article, research method). Consequently, we propose a theoretical framework of common SMM challenges which businesses are faced.

1.3.1 Publication Year

The frequency of published studies on the topic of SMM challenges is summarized in Figure 1.2. The number of publications increased rapidly after 2012, and the publication trends on SMM challenge context between 2007 to 2021 are ascendant. Since the review of articles has been done until July 2021, data from this final year are partial and do not include the whole year. As expected, with the increasing tendency of businesses to use SM as a tool to develop the marketing of their products and services and the emergence of challenges in this area, as well as the attention of researchers to this field of study, the research trend of SMM challenges is on the rise.

Figure 1.2 Number of Articles per Year
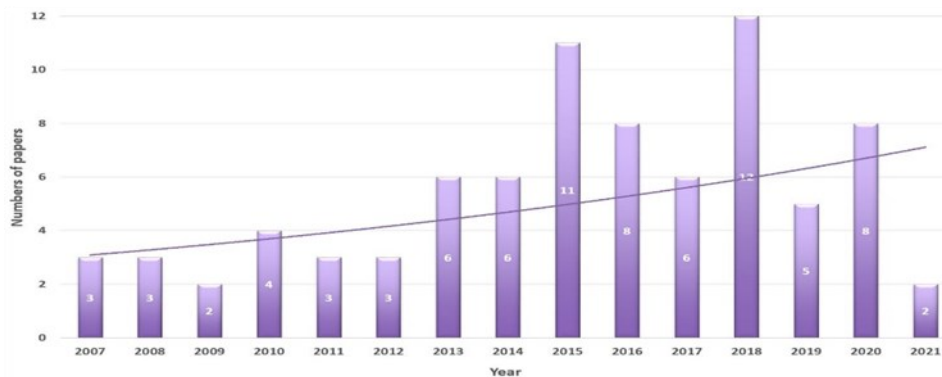
1.3.2 Publication Database

In this study, screened articles were extracted from various journals indexed in Business Source Complete, Emerald, ProQuest, and Web of Science databases. The ratio and number of articles in each of the databases are summarized in Table 1.3.

Table 1.3 Classification of Articles based on Scientific Database

Database	Publications	% of total publications (n=80)
Business Source Complete	(Aichner & Perkmann, 2013; Alves et al., 2016; Appel et al., 2020; Assaad & Marx Gómez, 2011; Bae & Zamrudi, 2018; Beier & Wagner, 2014; Bizzi & Labban, 2019; Coleman et al., 2016; Considine et al., 2020; Derham & Cragg, 2012; Di Domenico et al., 2021; Haynes, 2016; Higgins, 2013; Kaur, 2017; Khaleghi et al., 2019; Koohang et al., 2018; Rathore et al., 2017; Roohani & Attaran, 2014; Salo, 2017; Schyff et al., 2020; Sherer & McLellan, 2015; Zheng, 2013)	(n=22) 28%
Emerald insight	(Arrigo, 2018; Choi & Joo, 2021; Haynes & Robinson, 2015; Koohang et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2020; Rudman, 2010b; Schultz & Peltier, 2013; Zhang & Vos, 2014)	(n=8) 10%
ProQuest	(Aichner & Perkmann, 2013; Ali et al., 2018; Alkhateeb et al., 2008; Alves et al., 2016; Attanasio et al., 2012; Bae & Zamrudi, 2018; Brocato et al., 2015; Carman & Fredericks, 2018; Cecere et al., 2015; Chiţu & Tecău, 2012; Coleman et al., 2016; Constantinides & Fountain, 2008; Horn et al., 2015; Koohang et al., 2018; Kumar, 2019; H.-C. Lin et al., 2020; Maqsood et al., 2016; Michaelidou et al., 2011; Nelson & Simek, 2011; Oehlert, 2010; Okazaki & Taylor, 2013; Osatuyi, 2015; Pant et al., 2020; Ritchie, 2007; Roohani & Attaran, 2014; Rowley & Keegan, 2020; Rudman, 2014; Shah & Shelar, 2018; Short, 2008; Slavica, 2015; Thakur et al., 2019; Valos et al., 2015; Whiting & Deshpande, 2016; Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017)	(n=44) 45%
Web of Science	(Alalwan et al., 2016 ; 2017; Amrita & Mohan, 2016; Arrigo, 2018; Bae & Zamrudi, 2018; Brocato et al., 2015; Fashoro & Barnard, 2017; Högberg, 2016; Humphreys, 2013; Lawton, 2007; H.-C. Lin et al., 2020; Lovari & Bowen, 2020; Lupiáñez-Villanueva et al., 2009; Memon et al., 2015; Misirlis & Vlachopoulou, 2018; Mohamed et al., 2018; Mugari & Chisuvi, 2021; Salisch, 2014; Paluch & Holzmueller, 2015; Reeves, 2009; Roy, et al. 2018; Rudman, 2010a, 2010b; Saboia et al., 2020; Salo, 2017; Soumya & Revahty, 2018; Syed, 2019; Tiwari et al., 2010; Valos et al., 2015)	(n=29) 36%

Some articles appeared in more than one database and thus are represented multiple times in Table 1.3 and resulted in a percentage exceeding 100% (refer to Table 1.3). ProQuest database has the highest number of publications in the SMM challenges domain.

1.3.3 Subject Category
An in-depth review of studies related to the field of SMM revealed that a few studies have directly and some indirectly addressed the challenges of SMM. The research covered various topics such as risks, challenges, concerns, barriers, threats, issues, and obstacles alongside SMM, SM, social media sites, social media networks, and Web 2.0 technology. Besides, some descriptive and review articles have also examined the opportunities and threats of SMM. By searching, reviewing, and aggregating all the articles found, these articles were organized into five subject categories, including SMM, Social Media Marketing Literature Review (SMMLR), Social Media Marketing

Challenge (SMM-Ch), Social Media Challenge (SM-Ch), and Web 2.0 Challenge (Web 2.0-Ch). The percentage of articles that belong to each of the proposed categories (taking into account words equivalent to challenge) is shown in Figure 1.3. We provide this figure to show the limited number of papers that are specific to SMM challenges.

Figure 1.3 Percentage of Papers per Subject Category
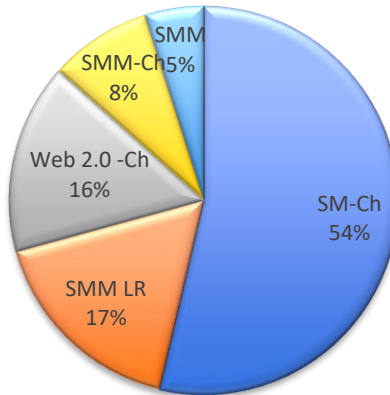
Based on the analysis, the SM Challenge category had the highest number of papers compared to other types. This implies that other than marketing, researchers in different fields are also interested in examining the risks and challenges of SM. We reviewed these papers in detail because of an overlap between some of the challenges introduced in SM and SMM.

1.3.4 Research Methodology
Through an in-depth review of 80 selected articles from the perspective of research methodology, we found out that most of the papers in this field are theoretical (76%). Empirical studies stand for 24% of papers, which shows the need for further empirical studies in this domain. There are descriptive studies under the theoretical category that aimed to explain the concepts of SMM and have only identified the challenges and threats in this area of research.

From our observations, 26.8% of the studies are related to review and theoretical articles, and 20.7% are related to empirical studies. With the maturity of this field of study and over time, the number of empirical research is increasing. The identified empirical research was divided into three categories of quantitative, qualitative, and mixed research, and their ratio was 47.1%, 41.2%, and 11.8%, respectively. By examining qualitative empirical articles (Choi & Joo, 2021; Haynes & Robinson, 2015; Högberg, 2016; Lovari & Bowen, 2020; Lupiáñez-Villanueva et al., 2009; Mugari & Chisuvi, 2021; Syed, 2019), observation methods, interviews, brainstorming and focus group meeting and analysis of texts and documents of case studies were used to collect data. Quantitative empirical articles were also used the survey method with and without questionnaires to collect data (Attanasio et al., 2012; Beier & Wagner, 2014; Cecere et al., 2015; Koohang et al., 2018; Osatuyi, 2015; Schyff et al., 2020; Soumya & Revahty, 2018). The investigation of the articles indicated that 59.2% of the articles were survey studies with questionnaires, 35.3% of the articles were survey studies without questionnaires, and 52.9% of articles consisted of both survey studies with and without questionnaires.

1.3.5 Common SMM Challenges

SM favours risks and cyber-crimes because it has made it easy to get access to numerous information. There is a lack of monitoring and control (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard, 2013). In the leading economies, legislators are debating policy and enforcement of SM websites. Also, several large SM companies were recently embroiled in high-profile accusations of deliberately spreading misinformation, especially in the case of COVID and vaccine issues (Judd et al., 2021). Considering all these facts led people to be more skeptical of some social networking sites and the content on them. There is a growing recognition in the literature about the nature and dynamics of SM and its implications for marketing. The challenge for marketers is to implement SM effectively in ways that advance the firms' strategic marketing goals. Although SMM has huge benefits for consumers and marketers, the negative impact on both parties is evident. Challenges related to SMM implementation are concerned with the decisions and actions taken by firms to put SM to effective marketing use. A group of challenges studied in this study are regarding implementation challenges. Businesses' ultimate goal is driving strategic marketing actions through leveraging the reach, interactivity, and engagement attributes of SM (Tafesse & Wien, 2018). Given the importance of managing and analyzing the challenges of SMM in improving the performance of these platforms, the tendency of researchers to study this context has increased. With the ever-increasing use of SM, academics and practitioners must become aware of different types of challenges and allocate marketing resources effectively. However, the number of these studies remains limited. The following theoretical framework shows the main and common SMM challenges that businesses face (please refer to Table 1.4).

Table 1.4 Theoretical Framework of Common SMM Challenges

Challenges' category	Challenge	(Appel et al., 2020)	(Bae & Zamrudi, 2018)	(Choi & Joo, 2021)	(Khaleghi et al., 2019)	(Kumar & Singh, 2019)	(Memon et al., 2015)	(Michaelidou et al., 2011)	(Roy et al., 2018)	(Valos et al., 2015)	(Whiting & Deshpande, 2016)
SMM Adoption	Concern over leaving out people who do not have access to or use social media			*							
	Concern over security and privacy issues			*	*		*				
	Difficulty in obtaining relevant best practices			*							
	lack of clarity concerning ownership		*								
	Lack of expertise in social media marketing			*							
	Legal and reputation issues								*		
	Negative views about the usefulness of social media marketing							*			
	Staff unwillingness to undertake new learning			*							
SMM Implementation	Cultural challenges									*	
	Cultural challenges (SM requires a new employee culture and a new way of thinking)									*	
	Implementing Marketing Information Systems									*	
	Lack of appropriate training about the usage of SMM systems			*				*			
	Lack of expert human resources								*		
	Marketing information systems that involve the management of greater volumes of information and information flows									*	
	The high cost of producing content on social media				*						
SMM management and control	Alignment of stocks with online offers when conducting online campaigns		*								
	Brand image management through social media										*
	Brand notoriety in the use of social media				*						
	Coordination challenges (in management structure)									*	
	Customer Changing customer purchase journey		*								
	Designing an SM strategy			*							
	Determining the role of SM within the overall marketing strategy			*						*	

Challenges' category	Challenge	(Appel et al., 2020)	(Bae & Zamrudi, 2018)	(Choi & Joo, 2021)	(Khaleghi et al., 2019)	(Kumar & Singh, 2019)	(Memon et al., 2015)	(Michaelidou et al., 2011)	(Roy et al., 2018)	(Valos et al., 2015)	(Whiting & Deshpande, 2016)
SMM management and control (cont' d)	Difficulties in assessing the effectiveness and performance of social media marketing (Measuring the Return on Investment (ROI))	*	*			*		*	*	*	*
	Difficulty in setting up a policy for social media use			*							
	Employee- high skilled employee requirement			*							
	High maintenance cost		*	*				*			
	Law-Trust and privacy concerns of customers	*									
	Managing relations with competitors on social media		*								
	Managing social media content		*							*	
	Relationships with customers can be difficult to develop and maintain										*
	Resource High resource requirement			*							
	SM ownership and accountability		*	*							
SMM utilization	A user's (customer) engagement (reaction) is not obtained									*	
	Content- lack of standard for what time to post content		*								
	Content- lack of standard for what to post		*								
	Content-lack of standard for how often to post content										*
	Cooperation between departments/coordination across functions is difficult		*							*	
	Lack of knowledge and skill in using technology and social media					*			*		
	Law - Ethic issues						*				
	Roles and responsibilities are not clearly assigned		*								
	SMM is very time-consuming			*				*			
	Technology Challenges in Using social media					*					
	The information which sends is insufficient/ Inadequate quality of information on social media					*					

We categorized all the challenges found in these papers into 4 different categories, namely SMM adoption, SMM implementation, SMM management and control, and SMM utilization. This categorization was based on the papers read and the judgement of the researcher.

1.4 Conclusions & Future Research Directions

Information technology and marketing scholars are interested in understanding and using SM platforms, their capabilities, and the data generated in these platforms. In exploiting such benefits, there are many obstacles and challenges. Most of the previous research in the SMM context has been considering mostly the benefits of these mediums (Alves et al., 2016). Given the scarcity of studies systematizing the information conveyed by the research done thus far in the field of SMM challenges, we carried out this systematic review of the literature on this theme. This study performed a systematic literature review of 80 related studies published in SMM challenges from 2007–July 2021. The review was expected to identify the most important relevant phenomena discussed in the past decade. The study made three main contributions to the literature, including (a) identifying and classifying SMM challenges that businesses face; (b) analyzing trends of articles in the context of SMM challenges; and finally (c) classifying mentioned studies based on their research methodology.

The findings of this study indicate that researchers are increasingly paying attention to the SMM challenges, which are derived from the tendency of businesses and academics to study and apply this technology in the field of marketing. Due to the trendiness of this field of study, it was observed that among the reviewed articles, the ratio of descriptive articles (which mostly described the concepts) was the highest, and that of the empirical articles was the lowest. Considering the year of publication of empirical articles, the tendency of researchers to conduct empirical and applied research has increased. However, the gap between analytical studies in quantitative analysis of SMM challenges remains. Therefore, it is suggested that future studies conduct more quantitative research in this field. We recommend contextualizing, reviewing, and identifying common challenges, analyzing, and prioritizing them for various industries. Based on these challenges, practitioners can provide solutions and plans to prevent and correct actions that are related to these challenges with an ethical vision in understanding their corporate responsibilities toward stakeholders. Also, by being more aware of SMM challenges, they can reduce or eliminate their destructive effects. By knowing how to measure the SMM challenges effectively, companies and decision-makers can improve promoting services/products and develop a more coherent discourse in communication with stakeholders. However, more studies are necessary to explore organizations' (public entities, not-for-profit organizations, and businesses) perspectives as they engage in SMM, especially in terms of understanding the key barriers and obstacles in applying SMM in their respective contexts. The main limitation of this study was the limited number of databases and the inclusion of only academic journals and conferences. Business reports and periodicals should be included in the future to better grasp the complex challenges related to SMM. Therefore, complementary analysis, including other databases, would be necessary to confirm this study's conclusions.

In *Essay 2*, we are going to look deeper into the challenges of SMM. For this purpose, the SM literature has been studied, and additional academic articles have been included that were omitted from the present study due to the search strategy. Consequently, a broader list of all SMM challenges has been provided. Finally, through a Delphi study, SMM managers and practitioners in the Iranian beauty industry evaluated the mentioned challenges and found the most challenging ones in their context.

Essay 2: Identifying & Assessing SMM Challenges in the Beauty Industry using the Delphi Method

Abstract

The beauty industry is one of the main and prominent SM users for their marketing purposes. In an effort to help increase the efficiency of such endeavours, this study aims to identify and evaluate the main SMM challenges that beauty companies face in Iran. For this purpose, drawing on academic research regarding the theoretical framework of SMM challenges, we extracted 57 challenges and 4 dimensions from the review study of *Essay 1*. In order to collect the required data, a questionnaire was designed, and its validity was evaluated and confirmed by face content validity. The statistical sample consisted of 8 marketing and SMM managers and practitioners from various Iranian Beauty companies that use an SMM approach in marketing their products. A Delphi survey was utilized, and data were gathered through 4 rounds of data collection and analyzed using the Delphi method. The findings of this study indicated 41 challenges in 4 dimensions in the SMM of this industry. Three challenges in particular include (a) coordination across different company functions that are engaged in SMM at both staff and managers level, (b) keeping security and privacy of company channel, customer, and company data, and (c) limited IT resources of some companies in the adoption of SMM reached the highest score based on experts' consensus and hence are most challenging to the Iranian cosmetic industry. As a novel study regarding the challenges of SMM, the findings of this study contribute to the academic domain of SMM and business marketing practice in the beauty industry. Moreover, practical implications for beauty industry practitioners have been provided where the authors identified and assessed the SMM challenges in Iranian Beauty companies.

Keywords: *Social Media Marketing, Social Media Marketing Challenges, Beauty Industry, Delphi Method, Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance*

2.1 Introduction

SM has changed consumer behaviour and how companies manage their businesses (Dwivedi et al., 2021). It has brought novelty to individuals' life and new business designs that completely revolutionize communications but also the way businesses develop and evolve. SM reach stakeholders in multiple ways, from business to other aspects of our life. For business, it has become ubiquitous and inevitable, resulting in intense, complex, and manifold interactions between firms, other businesses and customers (Li et al., 2021). As indicated by the authors, reaching more buyers in diverse locations, improving brand evaluations, and developing solid connections with customers are some of the benefits of SM for firms.

At the same time, SM has been advantageous for customers as it empowers them to take control of the marketing communication process. They actively create content, collaborate with others, and interact with firms' messages (Hamilton et al., 2016; Li et al., 2021). They can easily and directly connect with one another, as well as participate in new products, services, and brands (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020). While online, people search for information about products and services and also communicate with companies and other consumers regarding products and services (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Organizations have valued and prioritized digital presence and SM as an integral part of their marketing strategy (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Stephen, 2016). However, SM has significant challenges. Identifying and assessing these challenges can help business managers increase the effectiveness and efficiency of SMM and, subsequently, improve business performance.

The beauty industry has greatly leveraged the SMM strategy. With an expected revenue of 95 bn dollars in 2022, this industry is booming (Statista, 2022a). Individuals purchase beauty products and cosmetics to enhance their appearance and change or improve their imperfections (Denton, 2019). These products are used to enhance an individual's appearance, including very diverse and specialized skin care products, hair care products, nail care products, and other personal vanity products (Kaur & Kumar, 2021a). Beauty trends were typically sought through print magazines or television coverage of celebrity events, but the younger customers (as identified by age or felt youth of appearance) want an accessible and interactive experience.

As part of their overall business strategy, the beauty industry spent more than 50% of its advertising expenditure on the internet in 2021 (Zenith, 2019). In fact, both developed and developing countries have shown growth in this sector, adopting novelty in products and services to a point where luxury beauty services are considered necessities for individuals (Kaur & Kumar, 2021a). What makes SMM so special is the possibility of designing the offer to different customer groups while incorporating the knowledge acquired from marketing practices used in traditional media. SM addresses specific communication to niche markets tailoring the offer accordingly. Instagram and YouTube focus on visual content, including pictures and videos, both live and pre-recorded, making it an ideal context to showcase cosmetic products and how to use them. By mixing original commercial ad content with paid influencers, platforms provide expert information absent in mass media marketing, individualizing, demonstrating, and explaining why a specific product is best suited for a specific skin condition (e.g., colour, age, dermatological care, and other complexities, etc.), emphasizing expertise, uniqueness of products in both messages and usages.

Overall, the advantages of SM for businesses have been acknowledged by marketing practitioners highlighting the benefits, but, to our knowledge, however, little academic research has focused on the SM challenges. In particular, despite the widespread adoption of SMM in the beauty industry,

there are few academic studies related to the topic in this industry specifically (Kaur & Kumar, 2021a). Calls for further investigation of this topic have been made by Shen & Bissell (2013). The authors indicated the need to expand research on SM engagement within the beauty market. In *Essay 1*, we reviewed 4 databases and discovered 43 challenges to better understand from an academic perspective the evolution of SMM. However, to grasp the complex evolution of the field, we propose in *Essay 2* to broaden the scope of the challenges (from 43 to 57) and use the Delphi method to identify and evaluate these challenges in a particular context, the beauty industry in Iran. The Iranian context is complex due to many political and social-economic factors leading to greater variance as to why SM is important for customers and marketing managers to fulfil the demand while surpassing obstacles on a day-to-day basis to interact with the customer. In addition, the principal investigator is Iranian, which provides a better understanding of the whole ecosystem with easier access to the business network.

Essay 2 further explores the findings in *Essay 1*. In section 2.2, we clarify the links between each SM, SMM, and the beauty industry, exposing common SMM challenges. Section 2.3 presents the research methodology and the Delphi method to introduce the screening and localizing of SMM challenges in the context of the Iranian beauty industry. Sections 2.4 and 2.5 review the results and discuss the challenges related to a specific context while broadening the scope of SMM dynamic evolution. Section 2.6 concludes, proposing future research and limits of *Essay 2*. From an academic perspective, a better understanding of the SMM context complexity using the Delphi method will provide further insights on what specific aspects of SMM may influence other marketing spheres while addressing issues that would not be possible without a close link at a dynamic ecosystem taking into consideration cultural factors (i.e., individual, collective, industry-specific). The practice-based research will also be beneficial for managers and marketers to comprehend the challenges that accompany SM's constant evolution and increasing complexities, adopt an appropriate response and corrective actions, and ultimately use SM opportunities to better anticipate the market trends while attracting new, engaging, and retaining existing customers.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 SM

One of the top ICT applications, SM is an instrument that has an undeniable effect on firms to improve business strategy and performance (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020). Filo et al. (2015) analyzed SM practices in sports marketing and developed the following definition, "new media technologies facilitating interactivity and co-creation that allow for the development and sharing of UGC among and between organizations (e.g., teams, government agencies, and media groups) and individuals (e.g., customers, athletes, and journalists)" (Arrigo, 2018). The authors emphasize that SM's facilitation of interactivities and co-creation enables organizations and individuals to develop and share UGC. Content is presented in audio, visual, or written format, or a combination of these methods (Alalwan et al., 2017) which offers an engaging experience for users. As technology advanced, internet users increased their SM usage. Today, SM offers a dynamic environment for many activities, and individuals use these platforms for different purposes, including entertainment, communication, shopping, and learning new skills (Qin, 2020).

An exponentially increasing amount of time is spent on the internet and SM. In 2020, internet users worldwide took an average of 145 minutes per day on SM networks (Statista, 2021a). As people spend more time on SM, brands and firms capitalize on this opportunity to convert online users into potential customers (Kaur & Kumar, 2021b). The effect of increased internet usage on consumer behaviour positively influences consumer attitudes towards online shopping (Dwivedi

et al., 2021). Alalwan et al. (2017) indicate that SM can enhance two-way communication between customers and organizations strategically and, therefore, increase customer attachment to organizations. Because it is a tool that aids organizations in marketing strategy, it has also been proven to be useful for a firm's endeavours related to communication, customer relationship management and involvement (Alalwan et al., 2017). SM enables individuals to interact with each other spontaneously; hence, marketers can also reach their specific markets and engage with them easily (Appel et al., 2020). Finally, SM helps firms reduce costs and cultivate closer relationships with customers (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016).

For businesses, SM has diversified its capabilities and usage. It fulfills various functions of customer interaction, such as customer service or promotions, and enhances customers' buying behaviour through SM (Alalwan et al., 2017). It facilitates firm-customer connections, and through this, companies can change consumers' attitudes, receive feedback from customers, and increase sales and brand awareness (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Not limited to specific industries, SM is being used by most firms for communication and for providing services for customers (Alalwan et al., 2017). Like different digital technologies, SM has benefitted firms and customers in various industries and sectors through improved connectivity and, consequently, collaboration (Arrigo, 2018). Firms in different sectors are developing specific practices to improve their brand identity and marketing performance. Hence, attracting more customers through SM in terms of involvement or customer relationships has been at the center of most firms' attention (Alalwan et al., 2017; Filo et al., 2015). Chen & Huang (2020) identified six distinct reasons why firms adopt SM for use in their business, including to (a) act as a platform to share information, (b) increase consumer interactions, (c) build brand reputation and image, (d) find new customers, (e) collect market intelligence and other data, and (f) enhance cost-effectiveness in marketing communication.

SM offers many opportunities for businesses, most of which are applicable and beneficial for marketing efforts. The following section discusses specific marketing applications in the form of SMM.

2.2.2 SMM

SMM has changed the landscape of buyer behaviour and marketing strategy. In fact, most of the offline traditional marketing practices have moved to online strategic marketing approaches (Kaur & Kumar, 2021a). The process of SM interactions provides firms and customers with resource exchange that is now considered a strategic marketing issue (Li et al., 2021). SM is the producer and carrier of massive amounts of data. These diverse types of data include customer opinions, personal data, and potential market offers availability. Companies can benefit from this rich data to make educated marketing decisions. More specifically, data from SM sites provide multifaceted rich information that can improve decision-making (Arrigo, 2018). In fact, SM marketers have recognized SMM as one of their prominent marketing channels (Appel et al., 2020). As of 2022, 58.4% of the world's population use SM (Hootsuite.com, 2022) and spend a considerable amount of their time on a daily basis surfing through various SM platforms, making them potential online customers.

From a researcher standpoint, we adopt Dwivedi et al. (2015)'s definition of SMM as "*a dialogue often triggered by consumers/audiences, or a business/product/service that circulates amongst the stated parties to set in motion a revealing communication on some promotional information so that it allows learning from one another's use and experiences, eventually benefitting all of the*

involved parties" (Dwivedi et al., 2015, p. 291). This definition is shared by many researchers specialized in this area (Alalwan et al., 2017; Dwivedi et al., 2015). In order to achieve high-level engagements, it is essential to have customer-to-customer interactions (Li et al., 2021). SMM strategies have higher chances of success if they are made based on consumers' interactions through SM (Dwivedi et al., 2021). SM provides interactions and interconnectedness that are crucial parts of marketing and become strategic resources that ultimately develop into marketing competencies (Li et al., 2021). For creating, communicating, providing, and exchanging an organization's valuable offerings, a firm uses SM technologies, channels and software (Alalwan et al., 2017). Through this, the organization is seeking to achieve marketing goals such as consumer information, customer relationship management, and sales improvement (Chen & Huang, 2020). Achieving marketing objectives at a low cost is one of the benefits of SMM (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Kaur & Kumar, 2021a). Integrating SM as a vital part of the overall marketing and business strategy is highly beneficial for any organization (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

SM is a complex research domain. While SM sites are used by consumers as a means to facilitate social networking, they present an opportunity for strengthening brand-consumer relationships; for example, by having a positive effect on brand loyalty (Arrigo, 2018). This has been demonstrated by Laroche et al. (2013), who found that SM-based brand communities enhance customer relationships with the brand, other customers, the firm, and the firm's products, which in turn improves brand trust and loyalty. Multiple studies have tested the impact of social interactions on SM on different marketing outcomes, such as sales and new customer acquisitions (Appel et al., 2020). In addition, a number of topics have been studied in the academic literature to date, including advertising of SM, interaction via SM and other media advertising, and the impact of diffusion of information on SM on marketing outcomes such as new product adoption (Appel et al., 2020; Gordon et al., 2019).

As indicated above, SM has transformed itself from a marketing tool to a full-fledged marketing intelligence source through which firms can predict consumer behaviours (Li et al., 2021). Consequently, firms must leverage SM and its offerings to reach competitive advantages and desired outcomes (Li et al., 2021). SM is an essential medium for effective marketing activities in many consumer brands (Tajvidi et al., 2020), such as new product development or customer service (Di Domenico et al., 2021). As mentioned by Dwivedi et al. (2021), the opportunities provided by SMM are plentiful for organizations, namely, increased sales, decreased costs, and enhanced brand awareness. However, significant challenges such as negative electronic word-of-mouth and invasive online brand presence should not be overlooked (Dwivedi et al., 2021). Hence, SM has become a double-edged sword for marketers. The consumers available to be reached by these platforms are abundant and diverse. On the other end, their presence can result in the spontaneous spread of negative electronic word-of-mouth, resulting in unfavourable outcomes for firms and stakeholders (Dwivedi et al., 2021). To prevent reputation damage to the company, marketers using SM should be aware of the potential harm that may arise from different improper reactions they have, such as responding promptly to negative content regarding the focal brand/product online (Dwivedi et al., 2021; Lappeman et al., 2018). It has been demonstrated that if unskilled practitioners engage in digital marketing without proper planning, it can have adverse effects. Therefore, marketing development and management should be done with care in order to avoid negative outcomes such as failure to provide benefits, decrease in value, increased transaction costs, unnecessary coordination costs, potential loss of non-contractible value, and more (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

2.2.3 SMM Challenges

For businesses, SM has the potential to be both beneficial and problematic. As stated by Tuten and Perotti (2019), positive conversation on SM helps the brand; at the same time, negative word of mouth destroys the brand image. Hence consumers are empowered to use it to support businesses, but they can also weaponize it to harm brands (Kaur & Kumar, 2021a). Diverse SM platforms emerge frequently. There are no validated scales to measure SM endeavours and outcomes, and assessing the effectiveness and performance of SMM is a challenge, especially the return on investment (ROI) (Bae & Zamrudi, 2018; Choi & Joo, 2021; Choi & Thoeni, 2016; Elawadi, 2016; Huppertz, 2018; Keegan & Rowley, 2017; Paliwal, 2015; Rugova & Prenaj, 2016; Tanimoto et al., 2016; Valos et al., 2015). Additionally, one cannot neglect the speed of message spread in SM; hence if there is a complaint or negative word of mouth, it will be communicated instantly to millions of individuals, which is very problematic for the business involved (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

SMM can cause challenges such as: finding the right customer group, trusting the information transmitted or its inaccuracy (Abeza et al., 2013; Alalwan et al., 2017), controlling the communication content and its distribution, weighting resource allocation and distribution (Abeza et al., 2013). Differentiating customer groups on SM is also a challenge for marketers (Alalwan et al., 2017). SM has shifted from a social networking platform to connect with friends to a source of information generation, consumption, and exchange for users (Di Domenico et al., 2021). Some misinformation can circulate due to the abundance of online information, which might impact consumers' subsequent relationship with a brand, adversely affecting attitudes toward the company and its corporate reputation (Di Domenico et al., 2021). A few of these mentioned challenges indicate how it is complex for practitioners and academic researchers to understand the evolving broad perspective of SMM while observing and experiencing the different shapes SMM takes within a given industry or more specific spheric context (e.g., time, space, speed, rhythm, culture specificities, communication or language used).

In conclusion, SMM can present downsides depending on the business type, size, and maturity. Therefore, it is crucially important for every firm to understand the issues and challenges of using SMM. It is vital for managers to understand how to identify and analyze such SMM challenges. In *Essay 1*, we began to address this important area through a systematic literature review. We extracted all SMM challenges from studies in four of the top academic databases, namely, Business Source Complete, Emerald Insight, ProQuest, and Web of Science. In *Essay 2*, we reviewed additional studies and merged them with the findings of the in-depth review conducted in *Essay 1*. Consequently, a list of 57 common SMM challenges was developed, divided into four dimensions: SMM adoption, SMM implementation, SMM utilization, and SMM management and control. These challenges have been identified with references for each SMM challenge cited. Most of these challenges have more than one citation and have been underlined by different scholars. For a detailed list of challenges, please refer to Appendix A: The Common Social Media Marketing Challenges for Businesses.

In most of the research papers related to SMM challenges, we identified that few of the listed challenges have been covered. Most studies have looked at the challenges from a very specific perspective. In this study, we bring all the challenges together and use a detailed assessment of these challenges to understand managerial concerns to better allocate resources and help managers better address their unique challenges. In the following sections, we screen and localize these SMM challenges in the Iranian beauty industry to provide both a better understanding of the SMM complexities and how it has its specific morphology given the context analyzed.

2.2.4 SM: Beauty Industry Context

There are five interrelated points that are elaborated in this section. They provide the rationale for the *Essay 2* method and results sections and include (a) the beauty industry is progressing towards embracing SMM, (b) SMM is beneficial for the beauty industry, (c) influencers affect the design of the beauty industry with customers, (d) SM platforms offer different benefits to the beauty industry, and (e) SMM challenges prevent the beauty industry from reaching full potential.

First, the beauty industry is progressing towards embracing SMM. Recently the beauty industry has expanded, and its focus has expanded to include different genders, races, and age groups. As a result, firms make use of diverse marketing tactics and strategies to appeal to their various markets and customer groups. At the same time, consumers' tastes and acceptance of marketing practices changed, and they are not as readily accepting of advertisements that promise surreal results (Denton, 2019). The younger generation is fascinated with the beauty industry; they spend substantial money on beauty products and services, a trend also followed by older generations (Kaur & Kumar, 2021a). The revenue of the cosmetic market worldwide is 94.3 bn USD annually (Statista, 2022a). This industry is predicted to reach an annual value of 758 bn USD by 2025 (Statista, 2022b). These forecasts demonstrate both the popularity and the influence of the beauty industry, with consumers using SM and businesses developing complex SMM strategies (Denton, 2019). In particular, companies have shifted the way they view and design consumption patterns, especially in the beauty industry, concentrating their efforts on people's expertise, experience, and accurate, transparent information exchange (Shen & Bissell, 2013).

Second, SMM is beneficial for the beauty industry. In the past decade, SM has changed the way businesses are run for most industries, and in particular, the beauty industry (Denton, 2019). The interconnections allowed the customers and the companies to develop a better dialogue of what one desires and what the other can offer and how it presents its products and services (Kaur & Kumar, 2021a). SM is an effective tool for beauty marketers as it is an influential tool to reach and communicate with diverse audiences across regions that are otherwise hard to reach in order to share content, foster connections, and entertain participants (Kaur & Kumar, 2021a; Voorveld et al., 2018). SM has facilitated a merger between the consumer community and businesses; hence beauty firms are more responsive to products that match consumers' needs (Denton, 2019).

Overall, changes brought on by SM platforms have affected industry practices from big cosmetic manufacturers to local small businesses, such as salons, specialized boutiques, and so on. In other words, beauty industry marketers are adopting SM strategies to be able to compete in fierce competition and achieve growth (Kaur & Kumar, 2021b). Before visiting a website or store, consumers search online and acquire information on SM platforms (Kaur & Kumar, 2021a). Also, SM is a convenient tool to help customer retention. Stokinger & Ozuem (2018) studied the impact of SMM on the cosmetic industry and found that if SM is applied effectively in the domain of the luxury beauty industry, then market share and customer retention can be achieved. Organizations use SM for diverse purposes, such as creating consumer awareness, maintaining customer connections, and retaining customers (Stokinger & Ozuem, 2018). SMM provides active engagement and brand experience for luxury beauty brands (Stokinger & Ozuem, 2018). Beauty brands use SM to create brand awareness and strengthen brand loyalty (Kaur & Kumar, 2021a; Shen & Bissell, 2013). The buying behaviour of beauty products can be influenced by the use of SM and e-WOM (Kaur & Kumar, 2021a; Manan et al., 2020). In conclusion, SM provides a powerful tool for organizations in the cosmetic sector to improve their performance (Dodokh & Al-Maaitah, 2019).

Third, influencers affect the design of the beauty industry with customers. Due to the digital medium and SM, consumers are aware of extensive information regarding cosmetic products and take part in products' conceptualization through user-generated platforms. Additionally, some consumers are using this opportunity for themselves; they find abundant beauty information online and provide it to buyers of these products in different ways. These producer-consumers, called *influencers*, have mediated the communication between buyers and sellers of beauty products (Roux, 2020). Companies in this industry utilize these content creators. Influencers are changing the face of the beauty industry, attracting cult-like followings on SM, particularly Instagram and YouTube (Gerdeman, 2019). Influential marketing is also becoming more prevalent in the beauty industry due to an increase in blogs, vlogs and influential reviewers and content creators on SM.

Fourth, SM platforms offer different benefits to the beauty industry. Due to differences in preference of firms in the beauty sector, each one of them is using different strategies and patterns to employ SM (Kaur & Kumar, 2021a). The content analysis of six beauty brands revealed that there is a difference in Facebook utilization for marketing high-end brands when compared with department store brands (Shen & Bissell, 2013). The majority of beauty industry marketers utilize multiple SMM platforms simultaneously. Within India, prominent SM platforms used by the beauty industry are Facebook and Instagram, followed by Snapchat, YouTube, and LinkedIn (K. Kaur & Kumar, 2021b). All SM platforms have some similar practices and notable differences. Facebook can be used for diverse marketing tasks, ranging from selling products and services to understanding customers' tastes and distributing desired information to the public, including current and potential customers. Facebook marketing is successful as companies enter a friendly relationship with customers, and hence, they form trust with them (Kaur & Kumar, 2021a; Ramsaran-Fowdar & Fowdar, 2013). Additionally, YouTube and Instagram are among the many SM platforms that have seen increased popularity in recent years. Platforms have been beneficial for the beauty industry, creating more demand for beauty products while enhancing consumer-brand relationships (Denton, 2019). To better understand the use of SM platforms in the beauty industry and their advantages and drawbacks, Kaur & Kumar (2021a) conducted in-depth interviews with owners and marketing practitioners of beauty salons to learn about their experiences in marketing to consumers. Respondents were satisfied with the outcome of their SMM use and planned to increase their usage irrespective of the challenges they faced. Consequently, the researchers concluded that, from the owners' perspective, SM is considered to have net benefits for the beauty industry (Kaur & Kumar, 2021a).

Fifth, SMM challenges prevent the beauty industry from reaching its full potential. Despite the advantages offered by the transformation of the beauty industry through SMM, it also represents risks for the firms (Kaur & Kumar, 2021a). The use of SM by luxury beauty brands has been criticized as lessening the exclusivity factor that is key to branding, a result of the heightened accessibility that inevitably accompanies SMM. Moreover, SM with features such as comments, ratings, and reviews enables customers to share both their positive and negative experiences (Whiting et al., 2019), which is one of the challenges of SMM for practitioners. Despite the existence of such challenges, beauty brands are increasingly using SM to reap its benefits (Stokinger & Ozuem, 2018). On the other hand, SMM and influencer marketing are shaping the beauty industry (Kaur & Kumar, 2021b). Although the beauty industry is one of the primary users of SMM, extant academic research in this field is lacking. In this study, we address this research gap and find SMM challenges related to the beauty industry. We expect to contribute to the body

of academic research on this topic and help marketing practitioners to better allocate their resources while using SMM in their business.

2.3 Research Methodology

This study aims to use the Delphi technique for data collection and generation of SMM challenges. The data has been collected through a survey, and accordingly, the nature of this research is descriptive. The purpose of this study is to get a better understanding; hence, this study is applied research: "Applied research refers to investigation undertaken to discover the applications and uses of theories, knowledge and principles in actual work or in solving problems" (Sreejesh et al., 2014, p. 4). Furthermore, this study is cross-sectional as "most cross-sectional surveys gather information at a single point in time" (Sreejesh et al., 2014).

2.3.1 Questionnaire

Based on the common SMM challenges (please refer to Section 2.2), we designed a questionnaire that addresses these issues. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of 57 questions related to SMM challenges to measure how challenging each item of SMM was perceived by marketers in their company. Participants had to choose items based on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "1" very low to "5" very high. Additionally, there was an item with the "0" value used for not applicable challenges (please refer to Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Proposed Likert Scale

Value	Meaning
0	Not a challenge at all
1	Very low Challenging
2	Low Challenging
3	Medium Challenging
4	Highly challenging
5	Very high Challenging

The second part of the questionnaire focused on the demographic information of participants. The data set was collected from September to December 2021.

2.3.2 Sample Composition

There can be a huge difference in the number of participants in a Delphi study (Chalmers & Armour, 2019). Thangaratinam and Redman (2005) considered 4 participants as acceptable for a Delphi study. In this study, we completed a conventional Delphi method. The sample is homogeneous, based on smaller groups, and sufficient to form a panel size. For this study, the sample includes eight experienced experts in SMM, digital marketing, internet marketing, and SMM fields in the Iranian beauty industry. Respondents were selected using the snowball method. They were selected based on their SMM in the beauty industry. As they are considered experts in their field, they are reasonably expected to have both theoretical knowledge and practical experience with the types of challenges that evolve and constantly arise in this domain.

2.3.3 Delphi Survey

We used the Delphi method to analyze the collected data. This method is a renowned and accurate technique in expert judgment studies. This scientific method uses a questionnaire to collect the desired information and ultimately unite and achieve a common standpoint from the different experts (Msibi et al., 2018). The Delphi method is used in various disciplines, such as business (Beiderbeck et al., 2021), program planning and resource utilization, and many more (Fink-Hafner et al., 2019). It is used as a means to find all possible alternatives to "explore or expose underlying assumptions" (Fink-Hafner et al., 2019, p. 1) and correlate judgments on issues in different disciplines (Fink-Hafner et al., 2019). Through the Delphi method, a group of experts discuss the topic of the study, and through the different analyses, their individual responses are synthesized and discussed to reach a consensus. This conversation is done through a questionnaire. Respondents are unaware of each other's identity and answers to each of the questions. Hence, bias and group pressure are avoided (Torrecilla-Salinas et al., 2019). The Delphi technique is a unique method to manage group interactions because (a) the interaction between group members and the responses they provide are anonymous, (b) it is possible to run various rounds of questioning, and finally (c) feedback of each round is provided to group members between rounds (Chalmers & Armour, 2019).

We used this method as it is the most suitable method to reach a consensus on challenges between marketing experts. We avoided bias and group pressure and ultimately reached a consensus on the different challenges identified. We ran four (4) Delphi rounds. This decision is supported by (Erffmeyer et al., 1986). The optimal number of Delphi rounds is "the minimum number of rounds necessary to reach an acceptable level of accuracy" (Erffmeyer et al., 1986, p. 121).

2.3.4 Kendall's W Coefficient

In Delphi studies, the opinion of the group will be aggregated and sent back to each respondent in multiple rounds to review the same set of items. The rounds will be done sequentially (Beiderbeck et al., 2021). Based on (Chalmers & Armour, 2019), we completed the data collection when the Delphi study reached stability. Stability is reached when changes distribution of the responses from one round to the other is considered minimum.

Kendall's W accentuates the order (relative importance) of the ranks rather than the distance between them. Compared to other coefficients like the Spearman rank order coefficient, Kendall's W is a preferred coefficient for Delphi surveys (Syoufi, 2018). We use Kendall's W coefficient of concordance as a statistical method to determine stability, which is suitable for this study. When evaluating a certain number of items on an ordinal scale, Kendall's W coefficient is a measure to evaluate the level of consensus (Torrecilla-Salinas et al., 2019).

In the following part, we calculate Kendall's W by using the following assumptions. If the rater j gives rank r_{ij} to item i, and we have n as the total number of items and m as the number of raters.

Rank of item R_i will be calculated as:

$$R_i = \sum_{j=1}^{m} r_{ij}$$

Later we calculate the mean value of ranks $\bar{R}$:

$$\bar{R} = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i}^{n} R_i$$

To reach the sum of squared deviations, we calculate S:

$$S = \sum_{i=1}^{n} (R_i - R)^2$$

Ultimately, Kendall's W is calculated by considering the squared deviation S, the total number of items n, and the number of respondents m:

$$W = \frac{12S}{m^2(n^3 - n)}$$

This value is a measure to decide if data collected from respondents had enough consensus between raters or not. W around 0.9 shows unusually strong agreement. For W higher than or equal to 0.7, we conclude that there is a strong consensus between raters. For W around 0.5, we conclude that there is a moderate consensus between raters. Any W below 0.3 is interpreted as a weak consensus (Syoufi, 2018). If the value of W is closer to 1, the raters have reached a consensus. On the other hand, the closer the value of W to 0 displays a lack of agreement among panellists.

2.3.5 Ranking

We ranked the items through two separate methods. First, we ranked them based on the average of the experts' opinions in the final round of Delphi data collection. Each item with an average value of less than 3 was categorized as not very challenging. The number 3 was chosen as the cutoff value of the Likert scale of 1 to 5. Furthermore, the top challenges were found from this type of ranking. Next, we used the Friedman test to calculate the mean rank of each SMM challenge and ranked all challenges based on the resultant value. For each of the four challenge dimensions we ran the Friedman test and subsequently ranked the challenges.

Ethics approval for this study was obtained from Concordia University's Research Ethics Board. For all statistical analyses in this study, we ran descriptive statistics using Kendall's W. The data analysis process was performed using SPSS v.28. The data process flowchart was schematically organized in four steps (please refer to Figure 2.1). A sample of the questionnaire which was sent to respondents is available in Appendix G.

Figure 2.1 Phases of Essay 2 Research
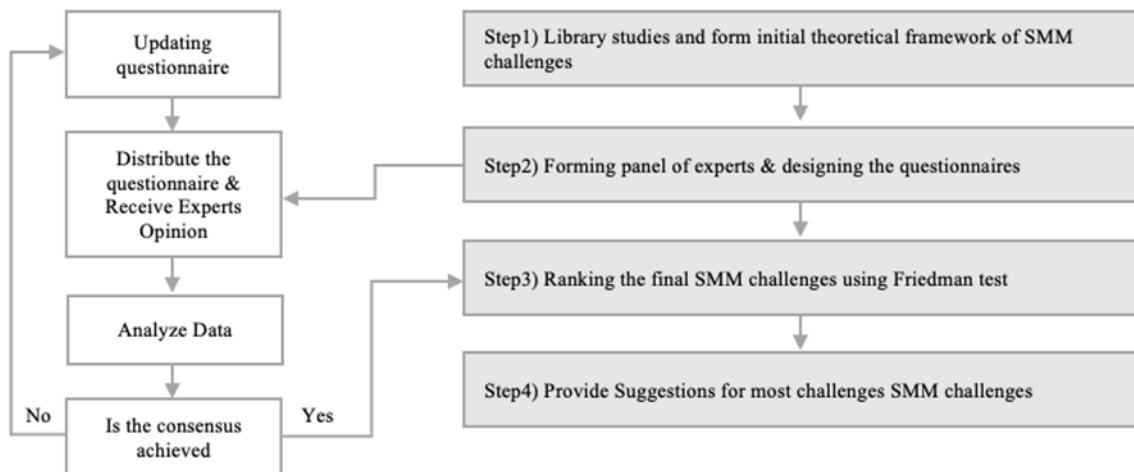
2.4 Results

In the following section, results are presented for (a) description of participants, (b) findings of Round 1 of the data collection, (c) findings of Round 2 of the data collection, (d) findings of Round 3 of the data collection, (e) findings of Round 4 of the data collection, and lastly (f) finalizing and ranking the challenges.

2.4.1 Description of Participants

After extracting the common SMM challenges from the literature, with eight (8) members forming a panel of SMM professionals in the industry, we analyzed the challenges in the context of the Iranian beauty industry. These experts had professional experience as marketing managers using SM for brand marketing either in their current role or in their former marketing role (please refer to Table 2.2). In order to collect data from these panellists, a questionnaire was designed using the Delphi method. This questionnaire was distributed to all members of the panel (please refer to Appendix G.).

Table 2.2 Characteristics of the Experts

Expert[a]	Occupation	Years of experience	Education
AK	Marketing Manager	10	MBA
IS	Digital Marketing Manager	8	Bachelor of English literature
HRM	Area Manager	9	MBA
HRGH	Content Creator	15	Master of Metallurgy
AHM	Marketing Manager	5	Bachelor of Management
AP	Marketing Strategy Expert	6	Master of English literature
AR	Area Manager	8	MBA
ST	Marketing Manager	9	Bachelor of Graphic Design

[a] Participants have been identified here by their initials.

To measure the consensus of experts on the proposed challenges, we formed the following hypotheses:

$$H0: P > 0.05$$

$$H1: P \leq 0.05$$

2.4.2 Findings of Round 1 of Data Collection

The respondents filled in the questionnaires that were sent to them. For each SMM challenge listed in the questionnaire, experts indicated the perceived severity of the challenge by selecting a value from 1 to 5 on the Likert scale. An alternative option, 0, was selected to indicate the non-existence of such challenges in their practice. The data collected through round one of the Delphi studies are presented in Appendix C., Table C.1. By entering the data in the SPSS V.28 software and analyzing the data, the coefficient Kendall's W was calculated. Results are summarized in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (W): First Round of Delphi Data Collection

Test Statistics	
N	8
Kendall's Wᵃ	.287
Chi-Square	128.636
df	56
Asymp. Sig.	<.001

ᵃ Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance

As we can see from the above table, the significant value (*p*-value) result is less than 0.05, so the null hypothesis was rejected. On the other hand, the value of Kendall's W was equal to 0.287, which was less than 0.5. This value shows a weak consensus of respondents. Therefore, we continued the survey to the second round to reach a better consensus among participants.

2.4.3 Findings of Round 2 of Data Collection

For the second round of data collection, we provided the same list of items along with the average value that all respondents had indicated in the first round. Respondents were asked to provide a second rating for each item, given the added information of the average value. The respondent's own previous rating for each item was not indicated on the survey; however, given the nature of the data collection exchanged via e-mail, respondents would have had the opportunity to access and review their past responses, if desired. The data collected in the second round of the Delphi method are displayed in Appendix C, Table C.2. The coefficient Kendall's W was calculated, and the results are summarized in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (W): Second Round of Delphi Data Collection

Test Statistics	
N	8
Kendall's Wᵃ	.365
Chi-Square	163.386
df	56
Asymp. Sig.	<.001

ᵃ Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance

As can be seen, the *p*-value is still less than 0.05 in this round, which indicates the rejection of the null hypothesis. On the other hand, the value of Kendall's W is still less than 0.5, which suggests that we continue the Delphi survey process to the third round. We updated the questionnaire of the second round of Delphi and provided the new average for the third questionnaire.

2.4.4 Findings of Round 3 of Data Collection

Experts were given the round three questionnaire with the average from round two. In this round, again, they had the opportunity to revisit each item with the added context of the average rating given to each item. Data for this round were collected from experts and have been presented in Appendix C, Table C.3. According to the collected data, the coefficient Kendall's W was calculated for the third round and the obtained results are shown in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5 Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (W): Third Round of Delphi Data Collection

Test Statistics	
N	8
Kendall's W[a]	.509
Chi-Square	228.172
df	56
Asymp. Sig.	<.001

[a] Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance

The *p*-value is less than 0.05, which indicates the rejection of the null hypothesis. On the other hand, the value of Kendall's W is 0.509, which confirms the relative consensus of experts on the challenges; however, to be able to see a higher significant value, we did a fourth round of data collection. The threshold of 0.509 is considered to be a moderated consensus. We could have stopped collecting data. However, to reach a higher stronger consensus, we continued the data collection process. Like the previous rounds, we updated the third-round questionnaire presenting the average opinions of all experts. Each expert was known to have average opinions on each of the challenges exposed and was given an additional opportunity to review their results. The data of the fourth round of Delphi are presented in Appendix C, Table C.4.

2.4.5 Findings of Round 4 of Data Collection

The data collected in round four are presented in Table 2.6. Ultimately, this proved to be the final round of data collection. The collected data were analyzed, and the value of the coefficient Kendall's W was calculated.

Table 2.6 Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance (W): Fourth Round of Delphi Data Collection

Test Statistics	
N	8
Kendall's W[a]	.734

Chi-Square	328.987
df	56
Asymp. Sig.	<.001

^a Kendall's Coefficient of Concordance

We observe the *p*-value to be less than 0.05, which indicates the rejection of the null hypothesis. The value of Kendall's W is 0.734, confirming a high level of consensus between experts. Consequently, by reaching a consensus and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis, we completed the data collection and proceeded to reviewing the results ranking the challenges.

2.4.6 Ranking Challenges

As discussed in the Methodology section, two different methods were used to rank the challenges. The first approach was based on the average of our panellist experts' opinions in round four. The second approach uses the Friedman test.

2.4.6.1 Ranking Challenges based on Average of Experts' Opinions in Round 4 of Data Collection

First, we ranked challenges based on the average of experts' opinions in round four of Delphi data collection, as presented in Table 2.6. Results of the analysis are summarized in Appendix D, Table D.1. Through this analysis, we found the following challenges as the most important to all marketers interviewed in the Iranian beauty industry:

1. Coordinating across different company functions that are engaged in SMM at both staff and managers level (SMM implementation)

2. Keeping security and privacy of company channel, customer, and company data (SMM utilization)

3. Constraints of limited IT resources of some companies to adopt SMM strategies (SMM adoption)

2.4.6.2 Challenge Reduction based on Average of Experts' Opinions in Round 4 of Data Collection

We reduced the number of challenges based on the average of the experts' opinions in round 4 of the Delphi survey. Through this ranking, we found that 16 of the challenges received an average rating of less than 3.0, so we categorized them as "not very challenging." The value 3.0 was chosen as the cutoff value of the Likert scale of very low "1" to very high "5"; these challenges did not meet this threshold and were not among the acceptable/applicable challenges of SMM in the Iranian beauty industry. The four major items (and their specificities) should be removed from the challenges list because they are not applicable to Iranian beauty marketing practitioners.

1. SMM adoption dimension: "Reaching customers is hard on SM and the company might leave out people who do not have access to or use SM" had a value of less than 3 and was omitted.

2. SMM implementation dimension: "Appropriate training about the usage of SMM is not available" was evaluated as not very challenging in this particular context and hence can be omitted from the list.

3. SMM management and control dimension, a couple of challenges were omitted as our experts did not consider them to be "very challenging":
   - Alignment of stocks with online offers when conducting online campaigns
   - High resource requirement for SMM
   - Customer-to-customer relationships through SM
   - Generating and designing appropriate reports based on SM analysis
   - Setting up a policy for SM use
   - High maintenance cost of SMM
   - Customers create content online at the same time as companies
   - Less control over SMM content
   - SM changes Customer purchase journey
4. SMM utilization dimension, the following items were omitted as our experts did not consider them to be "very challenging":
   - Managing ethical issues related to SMM
   - Harass SM contacts and business accounts of followers
   - Communicating in two languages
   - Lack of a standard for how often to post on SM
   - Lack of a standard for what time to post content on SM

2.4.6.3 Ranking Challenges based on Friedman's Mean Rank

We used the Friedman test and calculated the mean rank of each SMM challenge to rank the items.

2.4.6.3.1 Ranking All Challenges based on Friedman's Mean Rank

All items have been analyzed through the Friedman test, and the results are presented in Appendix E, Table E.1; please refer to this table for a detailed list of challenges and their degree of importance. Through this ranking, we found the following items to be most challenging from the experts' judgment point of view. The top three challenges with the highest mean rank included (a) "Coordination across different company functions that are engaged in SMM at both staff and managers level" (C12) from the SMM implementation dimension with the highest ranking; (b) "Keeping security and privacy of company channel, customer, and company data" (C19) from the SMM utilization dimension with the second highest ranking; and (c) "Limited IT resources of some companies in the adoption of SMM" (C5) from SMM adoption dimension with the third highest score and importance. Hence, these items had the highest priority in taking preventive strategies and corrective actions to deal with.

Through this ranking review, we found top challenges compatible with results in previous rankings based on the average of the experts' opinions. The 16 challenges with the least mean rank are the same as the mean of items of round 4. Hence, they should be removed from the priority list. However, we observe that the order of the remaining challenges is not necessarily the same through the two ranking methods.

For each of the four challenge dimensions, namely SMM adoption, implementation, utilization, and management and control dimensions, we identified the top challenging items and presented them in the following sections.

2.4.6.3.2 Ranking Challenges in SMM Adoption Dimension according to the Friedman Test

In the SMM adoption dimensions, limited IT resources for some companies in the adoption of SMM is the most challenging factor considered by Iranian SMM experts. The rankings for this dimension can be summarized as (a) Limited IT resources of some companies in the adoption of SMM; (b) Choosing the right platform for SMM; and (c) Some businesses and employees do not consider SM as a marketing channel (please refer to Appendix F, Table F.1).

2.4.6.3.3. Ranking Challenges in SMM Implementation Dimension according to the Friedman Test

With regards to the ranking challenges of the SMM implementation dimension, according to the Friedman test, the most important dimensions of SMM implementation when considering the highest values in that dimension and the challenge itself include (a) Coordination across different company functions that are engaged in SMM at both staff and managers level is the most important challenge agreed upon by the experts in our study; (b) The high cost of producing content on SM; and (c) Lack of expert human resources regarding SM. Marketing practitioners and managers should be more attentive to challenges during the implementation of SMM (please refer to Appendix F, Table F.2).

2.4.6.3.4 Ranking Challenges in SMM Utilization Dimension according to the Friedman Test

The mean rank of each SMM challenge for the SMM utilization dimension was calculated by the Friedman test and indicated the items (a) Keeping security and privacy of company channel, customer, and company data; (b) The difficulty of cooperation between different departments; and (c) Overt marketing or advertising techniques on SM might turn off the customers. The practitioners should be aware of these challenges, especially in terms of the security and privacy of company and customer data (please refer to Appendix F, Table F.3).

2.4.6.3.5 Ranking Challenges in SMM Management & Control Dimension according to the Friedman Test

The mean rank of each SMM challenge for SMM management and control dimension, according to the Friedman test, provided three (3) top challenges for the SMM management and control dimension, according to practitioners in the Iranian beauty industry. These included (a) In the SMM context, customers have privacy concerns, and achieving their trust is a challenge; (b) customers interact with companies on SM, answering and reacting to a customer and managing this relation; and (c) designing an SM strategy (please refer to Appendix F, Table F.4).

2.5 Discussion of Findings

This study screened and ranked SMM challenges in the context of the beauty industry in Iran. SM, due to its visual aesthetic and video capabilities, is a perfect medium for different players in the beauty industry. SM and internet technologies have become more advanced. As a result, the effectiveness of marketing through SM has increased, and firms have reached a level of trust with stakeholders such that it has become a seemingly irresistible marketing strategy for many companies and organizations in various sectors. The benefit of SMM is evident for marketers, and they are using it to achieve numerous marketing objectives such as attracting new customers or retaining current customers.

Although SMM is fruitful for businesses, there are challenges and downsides in developing and implementing this marketing strategy. Although the beauty industry has huge growth potential, the

34

research in this industry is highly fragmented and insufficient. This is partly due to the lack of industry regulation and also due to the structure of the industry, which is fragmented into sub-divisions (K. Kaur & Kumar, 2021b). This study focused on grasping the dynamics of the SMM in the beauty industry, particularly in the Iranian cultural context, while shedding light on the SMM literature and discovering under-addressed areas. The comprehensive literature covered a broad range of SMM definitions and challenges. The 57 key SMM challenges identified through the four rounds of the Delphi method helped to better organize the field into four broad categories that are somewhat interrelated and dynamic. These four categories can be addressed simultaneously in the academic and the business domains and can be further be scrutinized according to specific industries that may have their individual particularities, including (a) broad macroeconomic to cultural challenges, (b) meso-level industry-specific infrastructure to legal challenges (regional and global), (c) micro-management to the broader macro impact of the security challenges indicating the interrelated and multidimensionality of these challenges, and (d) a comprehensive attention to the various challenging aspects of SMM tool at different levels of the ecosystem.

Taking a contextual approach, we demonstrated that there are specific challenging SMM for forms in the beauty industry in Iran. Proper SM adoption, implementation, utilization, and management of SMM tools is contingent on awareness of SM by the marketing managers and their ability to undertake appropriate corrective actions. Through this study, we provided a list of challenges that managers can implement to correct or undertake preventive actions in a specific area. We observed that companies operating in the beauty industry are facing diverse limitations, such as financial, human, knowledge and so on. Hence, their capabilities to deal with all the challenges are limited and providing the most useful ones may allow them to be more efficient. By carrying out the Friedman test on the final round data of the Delphi method, we found the following challenges as the most important ones in each of the following dimensions:

- In the Iranian beauty industry, when companies are adopting SM, their limited IT resources are the most challenging dimension;
- Experts indicated that during the process of SMM implementation, the most important challenge is providing coordination across the different functions within the company that are engaged in SMM. This has been seen both at staff and management levels;
- In terms of the SMM utilization dimension, keeping the security and privacy of company channels, customers, and company data is the most important challenge in the Iranian beauty industry;
- Regarding the SMM management and control dimension, the experts believe that in the SMM context, customers have privacy concerns, and achieving their trust is the most challenging item.

In an aggregated Friedman test on the final round data of the Delphi study, it was observed that the three challenges received the highest score and priority, including (a) "coordination across different company functions that are engaged in SMM at both staff and managers level"; (b) "keeping security and privacy of company channel, customer, and company data," and (c) "limited IT resources of some companies in the adoption of SMM." These items require special attention from the marketing managers, and decision-makers. The selection of each of these challenges as the most important one, however, does not imply that the other dimensions and challenges are not important. Each challenge has a special level of importance depending on its mean rank. The ranks

of some other items are close to mentioned challenges, and managers should consider them and be wary of them as well.

2.6 Conclusion & Recommendations

In this study, we screened SMM challenges in the Iranian beauty industry. We conducted the Delphi method. There are limitations out of the researcher's control. These limitations include but are not limited to (a) the panel of experts in this study included managers and marketing experts from highly respected beauty companies in Iran; (b) collecting the required data from them was problematic, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic as most of them were working remotely and under time constraints; and (c) considering the data acquired in this study was from Iranian companies and in the beauty industry, generalizing the determined rank of challenges to other industries may need to be reviewed. Consequently, future research should address these limitations and improve the robustness of the findings.

For future research avenues, first, we suggest that other researchers implement the study in new countries and industries of interest. The usage of SMM in other countries might be different than in Iran due to cultural and sociopolitical differences, government policies and control over SM use, in addition to distinctive customer tastes. Second, while expanding the research domain in SMM, it is also important to review many perspectives (marketing managers), other decision-makers in the organization, and customer interactions as well considering experts and influencers. In this study, marketing practitioners were asked for their perspectives and to rank SMM challenges. It is desirable that in future research, scholars seek the SMM challenges from the customers and other online users. These challenges range from trust issues with companies (Huppertz, 2018), to feelings regarding the intrusion of their privacy, to their lack of desire to face multiple SMM messages during their online experience. It would also be valuable to see a comparative study on the challenges of other types of digital marketing to SMM in the beauty sector or other sectors as well.

After a comprehensive study of SMM challenges, we expanded our research further by concentrating our new perspective on one of the most ubiquitous applications of SM in the current business era, the use of SMIs, which is applicable to diverse types of businesses. Continuing our line of inquiry through the lens of contingency theory (Luthans & Stewart, 1977), we endeavoured to study these challenges in different contexts with different perspectives. *Essay 2* examined challenges from the viewpoint of those operating in the beauty product industry and specifically within Iran's cultural context. In *Essay 3*, we expand on these views by shifting our focus to the broader context of SMEs. SMEs comprise approximately 90% of business globally (World Bank Group, 2023), operating within and across various regions and industries. SMEs are a critical component of the economy yet have vastly different resources and competencies than larger corporations and, in turn, different attitudes and approaches towards SMM. Thus, the perspective of these practitioners is incredibly valuable to capture.

Essay 3: Identification and Assessment of Key Factors in SMI Selection for SMEs

Abstract

SMEs are pivotal in the modern business era. The importance of SMEs in the global economy is reflected in most countries' economies, as more than 90 percent of businesses are SMEs globally, representing more than 50 percent of all jobs. To increase marketing efficiency, SMEs have used SM and SMIs to promote their brands and improve their business sales and performance. Marketing managers must carefully select influencers who are well in harmony with the brand and have an impact on the firm's desired consumers to achieve the desired outcome of enhancing positive brand association and subsequently increasing product sales. To do so, marketers should know the key factors influencing the selection of the right SMIs. This study used interviews and survey methodology to identify and evaluate the key factors influencing the selection of desired SMIs for SMEs. After an in-depth literature review and extraction of the factors, an online semi-structured interview was conducted with eight SME business owners who use SMIs to refine the factors and find the most suitable ones. Then, the conceptual model of the SMIs' selection factors was drawn. Finally, the partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) approach has been applied to fit this model and test the research hypotheses. Later, an online survey was administered through MTurk, and data were collected from a group of experts, including 68 business owners and marketing specialists from various SMEs. The findings indicated five dimensions that significantly positively influence SME choice of SMI, though to varying degrees of importance, including engagement, SMI traits, content relevance, compensation, and SMI workstyle. SM managers should choose influencers who resonate well with designated consumers to enhance positive brand association and increase product sales. This study helps to understand further best practices for success in an increasingly unpredictable SM environment and offers a framework for future work to assess, compare, and select the most influential SMIs in different organizational contexts (public and private entities).

Keywords: *Social Media Marketing; Influencer Marketing; Social Media Influencers; Structural Equation Modeling; Partial Least Squares Approach.*

3.1 Introduction

Consumer behaviour has shifted and changed due to the rise of the internet, increasing number of consumers are turning to online shopping as their preferred method of purchasing (Novitasari et al., 2022). Due to the increasing accessibility of the internet to global users, SM platforms initially offered ways for individuals to connect and cultivate personal networks online. Currently, SM allows billions of individuals globally to connect and seek information in a convenient and accessible manner (Litvin et al., 2018). As a result, SM has truly transformed the way people communicate, interact, and impact one another. It follows that in the early 21st century, the use of SM has become a prevalent business strategy (Ali Abbasi et al., 2022). However, initially, many organizations did not fully grasp how to effectively utilize SM, taking it at face value as a platform for personal communication rather than a powerful tool that can significantly enhance their business operations (Bitiktas & Tuna, 2020; Hidavat et al., 2020). However, this has dramatically changed in recent years (Ali Abbasi et al., 2022).

With the onset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the year 2020 saw an uptick in the use of social networks for both socializing and commerce. With regional lockdown measures limiting face-to-face interactions, individuals relied on virtual platforms to remotely carry out various day-to-day activities, such as connecting with loved ones, online shopping, and selling goods and services (Mabkhot et al., 2022). Regardless of size or industry, businesses often had limited options but to move operations to a virtual space, resulting in a migration to online retailing (Bartik et al., 2020). SMEs were not an exception, with those who had already invested in an online marketing strategy being pushed to further their digital presence to assert their space in a saturated landscape. Hence, they started utilizing the full potential of SM, which provides ample opportunities for SMEs to thrive and expand (Hidavat et al., 2020).

Currently, a rising trend in SM is the rise of SMIs. The concept of SMI is believed to have emerged around 2015-2016, as noted in an article on the British Independent news website called "Meet the Influencers" (Giles, 2018; Saul, 2016), and refers to individuals who have built a large SM following and are considered trusted experts in one or multiple niches, thus having the ability to influence their followers (de Veirman et al., 2017; Ki & Kim, 2019; Ki et al., 2020). Here, influence is the ability to inspire action and garner engagement through posts shared by a strong influencer on SM or real life (Freberg et al., 2011). There are three crucial components of the SMI definition, including (a) a large number of followers, (b) active engagement with followers, and (c) promotion of products or brands (Jin et al., 2019). For businesses looking for a marketing partnership, SMIs offer a new type of independent third-party endorser who can shape audience attitudes and perceptions through SM (Freberg et al., 2011).

Influencer marketing, or online influencer marketing (OIM), is a marketing approach wherein a business identifies and incentivizes online influencers to advertise the company's products and services through interactions with their followers on SM, taking advantage of the influencer's exceptional resources and improving the company's overall effectiveness (Leung, Gu, Li et al., 2022). As described by scholars, OIM is a form of viral marketing in which an online personality affects consumers' attitudes through various forms of communication on SM, such as posts (Facebook), Tweets (Twitter), or blog posts (Childers et al., 2019; Xiao et al., 2018). These "micro-celebrities" are not as famous as popular figures from mainstream pop culture. Still, they have a dedicated and passionate following on SM, with anywhere from thousands to millions of followers on their platform of choice. OIM leverages this following by integrating the brand into the influencer's content and creating endorsement (tacit or explicit) to a selective audience who not

only actively experience the content but also have an established affinity for the influencer (Mabkhot et al., 2022). Hence, OIM has become a popular strategy for companies and organizations looking to improve performance and increase their reach with different audiences simultaneously performance (Hodijah et al., 2021). An increasing number of companies are employing it to better reach their target audience (Masuda et al., 2022). Different types of businesses, including retailers, are forming partnerships with SMIs to attract consumers and increase traffic to their online stores (Ki et al., 2020; Ryu & Park, 2020).

Influencers often have more followers than the brands they market, but benefits surpass the number of viewers. Firms that can reach a broad audience through SMIs are more credible than traditional celebrities and are just as effective in an endorsement role (Xu & Pratt, 2018; Ki et al., 2020). Companies highly value SMIs as they offer direct communication to specific audiences, including customers that may be hard to reach through traditional media (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017; Lin et al., 2018) or are less receptive to other SMM efforts (Childers et al., 2019). By leveraging the trust relationship between customers and the SMI, brands connect with various online audiences selecting smaller specialized groups who may need to be more receptive to more conventional commercial efforts (Childers et al., 2019). In marketing, endorsements are crucial in building a company's reputation and achieving its objectives (Knoll & Matthes, 2017). The influencer-follower relationship dynamic is critical to the effectiveness of OIM. SMIs are perceived as both more trustworthy and more authentic when compared to traditional celebrities (Appel et al., 2020). They have high credibility in different industries, a large following, and a trustworthy reputation due to their authenticity and position (Lou & Yuan, 2019). They impact their followers by providing issue-relevant opinion leadership that satisfies followers' information and emotional needs on specific issues (Lin et al., 2018). The influence that SMIs have on consumer purchasing behaviour is significant and surpasses that of traditional marketing channels (Masuda et al., 2022).

The trend of OIM can be seen on the rise in the industry recently as an increasing number of companies are partnering with influencers to improve marketing performance (Hodijah et al., 2021). A significant percentage of online marketers (80%) have reported that SMIs are reliable endorsers who have helped boost their businesses to new heights (Al Kurdi et al., 2022). A vast majority of marketers (93%) have employed influencer marketing to endorse their brands (Kanaveedu & Kalapurackal, 2022). The global influencer marketing market size has more than doubled since 2019 (Statista Research Department, 2023a); The trend is expected to continue to grow, with over 75% of marketers planning to allocate resources towards influencer marketing, with expenditures recorded value of 16.4 billion US dollars in 2022 (Leung, Gu, Li et al., 2022; Statista Research Department, 2023a).

Despite clear benefits and growing adoption, the endorsement of SMIs can be a costly marketing strategy, particularly depending on the desired influencer. This can be a stark contrast when compared to the internal production of an SMM campaign, where free or low-cost SM platform tools present an attractive alternative to the estimated spend for OMI. Further, according to industry data, companies often collaborate with several influencers, further increasing the costs involved. This conflict is particularly salient for SME business owners, who have fewer resources than larger organizations and thus less margin for risk and error. As a result, the choice of the correct group of influencers is of critical importance in the success of an OIM (Mallipeddi et al., 2018). To effectively allocate their marketing budget and take full advantage of the benefits of influencer marketing, marketers must identify the most suitable SMIs to collaborate with for the focal brand or product (Arora et al., 2019; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Ki et al., 2020). The

critical process in influencer marketing is identifying and assessing the appropriate SMIs across SM platforms to enhance the brand's impact on the selected audience and advertise the organization's products and services through their influencer partners (Lou & Yuan, 2019). The identification process involves adopting the beliefs or actions of another person due to a desire to imitate or become like them. Consumers' imitation of celebrities is often driven by their desire to be like them. When choosing SMIs as endorsers, their image must align with the customers' ideal self-image. This means the endorsers should embody the values and characteristics the selected customers aspire to possess (Xu & Pratt, 2018). After identifying the right SMIs, organizations can partner with them to expand their reach and promote messages aligned with shared communication objectives (Pang et al., 2016). Hence, the selection of SMIs by SMM managers should be taken very seriously, as the ideal SMI can connect with the brand's target consumers and enhance brand association, consequently leading to increased product sales (Nance, 2021).

Companies' ability to hire SMIs is limited due to financial concerns, and the expected return from the views and interactions with influencer advertisements is highly variable (Mallipeddi et al., 2018). Despite the significance of identifying appropriate SMIs, the relevant questions have received little attention thus far. To address this issue, various researchers have proposed and applied quantitative methods for detecting influential users in online social networks. These methods consider factors such as influencers' positioning and engagement (Sundermann & Raabe, 2019). Although some studies have applied quantitative metrics, there is no research on the factors that could assist in the identification of potential influencers (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sundermann & Raabe, 2019). Additionally, despite the recognition of influencer engagement as a valuable marketing communication tool by companies, there is a lack of understanding of how to properly choose and collaborate with influencers and integrate the campaigns into their marketing plan (Ye et al., 2021).

The existing research on SMI has primarily examined the impact that SMIs have on their followers. However, more must be understood about how followers view their favourite SMIs (Malik et al., 2022). de Michele and Marchi (2018) called for more theoretical and methodological studies in the domain of the influencer selection process. Hence, the current study has been designed to answer the call by further research between the firm's selection process for influencers and its recruitment strategy. This study has contributed to the current SMI literature by de Michele & Marchi (2018), providing essential factors that firms use in selecting ideal SMIs and thus providing businesses and marketers with a deeper understanding of SMI selection. According to what was mentioned about the critical role of SMIs and influencer marketing, as well as the research gap, this study aims to answer the main question, "What are key factors in the selection of desired SMIs, and how important are they?". The structure of *Essay* 3 is organized as follows: In the next section, the background of the research on SMM and SMIs in SMEs is described, and influencer selection factors are derived. Then the research methodology and proposed framework are described in detail. In the fourth section, the proposed methodological framework is implemented to identify the key evaluating factors and assess each of them. The final section will be devoted to conclusions and suggestions.

3.2 Research Background
3.2.1 Marketing in SMEs
3.2.1.1 The Role of SMEs

 SMEs comprise almost 90% of businesses globally (World Bank Group, 2023). The legal definition of an SME varies by jurisdiction. The European Union recognizes SMEs as companies with less than 250 personnel, an annual yield of less than €50 million or a total balance of less than €43 million (Atanassova & Clark, 2015). SMEs are crucial to the flourishing economy (Adla et al., 2020; Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020; Ng et al., 2020), playing a significant role in economic development by introducing new products (Bruce et al., 2022; Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020), creating numerous employment opportunities at a low cost (Adla et al., 2020; Bruce et al., 2022), reducing socioeconomic disparities (Bruce et al., 2022) and promoting domestic productivity and export agendas (Bruce et al., 2022; Hashim, 2015). SMEs enhance inventions and innovation as they provide an opportunity for entrepreneurs to foster their creativity and develop new ideas (Stieglitz et al., 2018) and are considered a crucial and dynamic sector for a thriving economy (Adal et al., 2020; Ng et al., 2020). Cultivating successful SMEs is critical to the country's overall economic development (Ali Abbasi et al., 2022). With SMEs being the cornerstone of a developing country's economy, their success is crucial to the growth of countries in national and regional terms (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020). SMEs Managers will be more inclined to support changes whose implementation will bring strategic and operational benefits to the company (Ali Abbasi et al., 2022).

3.2.1.2 SME Marketing

The business style of SMEs is fundamentally different from the style of large companies, and consequently, their marketing practices deviate entirely from conventional marketing theories. SMEs are characterized by high heterogeneity, high flexibility, and a considerable potential for innovative entrepreneurship (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020). Their marketing executions are simple, effective, spontaneous, and consistent with their company's culture (Harrigan, 2013). Instead of the classic "top-down" strategy, small businesses often implement an interactive "bottom-up" approach without long-term planning for their marketing efforts. This interactive "bottom-up" strategy leads to a better understanding of customers and markets and better market positioning (Atanassova & Clark, 2015). As a result, the authors suggest that SMEs often have informal and unstructured marketing plans that can change and are flexible. These plans rely heavily on personal connections and word-of-mouth promotion. The personable marketing strategies of SMEs can be costly and require significant resources. However, building networks and relationships can help SMEs overcome these limitations by increasing their customer base, improving their capabilities, acquiring resources, fostering innovation, expanding suppliers, and forming strategic partnerships (Atanassova & Clark, 2015).

With limited resources, SMEs often cannot afford the time, resources or grounding required for strategic advancement. Moreover, they have difficulty executing their brand and marketing communications strategies and are often not sufficiently organized to carry through their marketing efforts or predict demand (Atanassova & Clark, 2015). Therefore, the alteration of mentality (perception) and culture and the exploration of new perspectives concerning market information are required to expedite and promote partnership spirit and freedom among SME personnel (Atanassova & Clark, 2015).

The quick adoption and utilization of SM have greatly helped SMEs by addressing the long-standing challenge of effectively promoting their products and services. Therefore, by embracing SM and taking advantage of its benefits, SMEs can achieve sustainable business growth (Bruce et al., 2022). The growing success of SMEs that have incorporated SM into their marketing strategies has sparked the interest of other SMEs in utilizing SM to promote their businesses (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016).

3.2.2 SM & Influencer Marketing

3.2.2.1 SM

SM is a widely used medium that enables consumers to connect with one another virtually and share various forms of information, such as text, images, videos, and sound (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Many SM platforms are available, with some of the more popular options, such as Facebook and WeChat hosting more than a billion monthly active users globally (DataReportal, 2023). Each platform has its own features that enable creating, sharing, and engaging with content. For instance, LinkedIn positions itself for professional networking, YouTube hosts video content of varying styles and purposes, and Instagram focuses on engaging photo content. Notably, SM platforms attract highly attentive audiences that have self-selected their networks and associations based on their interests and are thus easily reachable, making them extremely valuable for marketers and businesses.

SM usage has seen a significant increase in the past decade. In 2005, only 5% of US adults used at least one SM site, which increased to 72% in 2021 (Pew Research Center, 2021.). This customer growth has also increased businesses' interest in this type of advertising. The global SM advertising market was worth 181.2 billion U.S. dollars in 2021, with desktop contributing about 35 billion and mobile contributing around 146 billion. The market's overall value is predicted to rise to 358 billion U.S. dollars by 2026 (Statista Research Department, 2023b). Indeed, in recent times, businesses have embraced SM for many purposes. The uses of SM are numerous and diverse, and widely applicable, including attracting customers (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), recruiting skilled employees (Kietzmann et al., 2011), reaching untapped markets (Gensler et al., 2013), monitoring competitors (Kietzmann et al., 2011), and ultimately increasing revenue (Tajvidi & Karami, 2021). Businesses can leverage different SM platforms to achieve different goals and maximize the potential of SM for their operations.

One marketplace phenomenon that SM facilitates is electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM). eWOM is similar to traditional word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing, which entails the informal exchange of information among consumers regarding ownership, features, and usage of a specific product or service (Li & Du, 2011). People tend to be more interested in obtaining information from people they trust (Lee & Watkins, 2016), and consumers consider information received via WOM to be subjective and independent because there is no perceived commercial relationship between the informant and the focal brand, making it more credible than other forms of marketing (Li & Du, 2011). WOM changes the flow of information to the customer from a linear company-to-customer instead to a networked customer-to-customer (Li & Du, 2011), which has been amplified in power by the virtual connection of SM. It should be mentioned that the availability of various SM platforms with different capabilities to cater to diverse audiences with varying interests and needs presents various opportunities and challenges. Despite the numerous benefits of SM, many business challenges arise from it (please refer to *Essays 1*, *Essay 2*).

3.2.2.2 SMIs & Marketing

An essential advantage of SM is the rise of its influencers, SMIs. With the growth of SM, it has become possible for individuals to cultivate a large following and attain some level of fame as an SMI. As a form of opinion leaders, SMIs display themselves on SM by crafting their online persona by sharing detailed accounts of their personal and daily lives. This helps them attract attention and gain a large following (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019; Khamis et al., 2017; Senft, 2013). SMIs act as micro-celebrities with a smaller following than traditional celebrities, are active on multiple platforms and have a variety of backgrounds (Masuda et al., 2022). Followers of SMIs have developed (parasocial) relationships with them, trusting the SMI and allowing them to impact purchase decisions positively. This makes SMIs a crucial component of marketing strategies (Mabkhot et al., 2022).

Influencer marketing is a communication tactic where companies collaborate with popular SMI personalities. This tactic involves leveraging the influence of SMIs to promote a brand or product to a wider audience and ultimately affect consumers' brand awareness and purchasing decisions (Fill & Turnbull, 2019; Mabkhot et al., 2022; Scott, 2015; Ye et al., 2021). Influencer marketing works with SM content creators to provide branded content for the brand on their page (Newberry, 2022). This marketing method – sometimes referred to as "seeding," has become a widely used strategy and made its place in firms' marketing practices (Mallipeddi et al., 2018; Phung & Qin, 2018). The strategy is both an art and a science, where businesses work with SMI to share brand messaging with their audiences (Sammis et al., 2015).

This strategy involves a company selecting and incentivizing online influencers to interact with their followers and advertise their brands and products on SM platforms (e.g., Instagram, Facebook, or Weibo) to promote the company's offerings (Leung, Gu, Li et al., 2022). It uses influential figures to communicate the brand messages and reach the message to their desired target audience (Lou & Yuan, 2019). The main advantage of using SMIs is that once a business identifies and connects with influential community members, the message will spread naturally and be highly regarded by members (Phung & Qin, 2018). Influencer marketing includes various forms of collaborations, such as the company creating content together with influence, the firm using the influencer's name or image for use in marketing campaigns of the company, being a brand ambassador, hosting competitions for audiences with SMI collaboration, working together on different SM platforms, and organizing events, trips, and workshops. It can also take the form of widgets and display advertising (Biaudet, 2017).

The use of influencers to promote brands and products on SM has seen a surge in popularity in recent years (Childers et al., 2019). A study by Influencer Marketing Hub that surveyed marketing industry professionals found that more than 80% intended to have a dedicated influencer marketing budget in 2023, with more than two-thirds of respondents specifying that they would be increasing this budget over previous years (Geyser, 2023). Furthermore, 23% of respondents intended to spend more than 40% of their overall marketing budget solely on influencer marketing. In all, more than 83% found influencer marketing to be effective in achieving their (various) desired objectives (Geyser, 2023) as they turn away from traditional marketing methods and rely on influencer marketing to reach their target audience (Nascimento et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2021). The growing popularity of influencer marketing is driven by the unique characteristics of SM and research showing that consumers are more likely to trust advertisements from influencers rather than traditional advertisements (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). One of the significant objectives of marketing is making an emotional connection between the brand and the consumer (Malik et al.,

2022). Influencer marketing achieves this by blurring the line between classified ads and genuine content (Xiao et al., 2018). Being less likely to be perceived as a formal advertising effort by consumers paves the way for a wide range of audience engagement (Fill & Turnbull, 2019). Research suggests that consumers fond of reading reviews usually tend to do the same for several product categories. Because they genuinely trust the reviews and suggestions of influencers, they are more likely to buy more from influencers' suggestions (Phung & Qin, 2018). For instance, many Twitter users have reported purchasing due to a Tweet from an influencer (Mallipeddi et al., 2018).

Influencer marketing is seen as a cost-effective alternative to traditional advertising methods and a way for companies to communicate their brand messages to reach a broad and engaged audience (Lou & Yuan, 2019) through eWOM communication (Phung & Qin, 2018) to influence consumers' brand awareness and purchasing decisions (Mabkhot et al., 2022).

3.2.2.2.1 Current State of Research

Influencer marketing is a developing field in the marketing domain, and there is interest in both academia and industry. There is a wealth of documents regarding the power of influencers (Main, 2017; Smith, 2014). For instance, an industry report indicates that influencers are far more favoured and admired than conventional celebrities among US young adults (Geyser, 2022). The video content that SMIs publish is also considered more credible (Xiao et al., 2018). Further, academic research on this topic has been growing in recent years (Kanaveedu & Kalapurackal, 2022). A bibliometric analysis by Ye et al. (2021) found that the number of publications related to influencer marketing has rapidly grown, with the first academic research on influencer marketing published in 2003. In this growing body of research, most studies are focusing on basic topics such as identifying and categorizing influencers and examining the benefits of using them in marketing strategies (Fill & Turnbull, 2019), identifying and categorizing SMIs (Khamis et al., 2017; Wiedmann et al., 2010), and exploring the benefits of influencer marketing in the SM era (Khamis et al., 2017). Some studies have also delved into how SMIs can expand their follower network and how to exploit it (More & Lingam, 2019). Research on how companies can effectively use influencer marketing for their benefit and how to maximize influencer marketing efforts is still desired (Phung & Qin, 2018).

A thematic content evaluation of the entire collected literature was carried out by Ye et al. (2021) to identify significant research topics in the field of influencer marketing. They identified five major themes, including (a) influencer marketing persuasiveness; (b) perspective of stakeholders regarding influencer marketing; (c) influencer marketing for product categories and diverse sectors; (d) studies about how to identify, select and activate influencers; and (e) influencer marketing disclosure impacts and ethical concerns. It should be noted that the research on all five themes is getting increased attention; specifically, since 2007, most research has been centred upon the first three themes (Ye et al., 2021). With its growing attractiveness and significance as a hot topic, influencer marketing research is predicted to receive more attention in the coming years as more marketers expand their use of SMIs. Additionally, the themes of influencer identification, selection, and activation require more attention, as there is a need to find the most suitable SMIs. Previously employed SMIs should always be carefully evaluated to allocate resources to the best SMIs.

However, despite its growing popularity, influencer marketing still needs to be considered a relatively under-researched area compared to other established marketing strategies (Phung & Qin,

2018). According to Ye et al. (2021), businesses often implement influencer marketing without clearly understanding how to incorporate it into their company's overall marketing strategy. Influencer marketing can be resource-intensive (Arora et al., 2019) and challenging to implement and measure. Therefore, it is crucial to identify the factors that companies can use to improve the effectiveness of their influencer marketing efforts. According to recent studies, certain influencer marketing aspects, such as the source's and the post's characteristics, impact outcomes such as consumer engagement, brand and influencer attitudes, purchase intentions, and sales (Leung, Gu, & Palmatier, 2022). The characteristics that describe SMIs are crucial in determining their effectiveness as a marketing tool and are a critical factor in why brands and marketers seek out their partnerships (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

3.2.2.2.2 Platforms & Instagram

Many SM channels and influencers are available for companies to work with, regardless of the content they want to promote (Phung & Qin, 2018; Sammis et al., 2015). Instagram, the preferred SM platform for influencer marketing, launched in 2010. Initially intended for photo sharing, Instagram has also expanded to support videos. Instagram is primarily used, and its content is searchable via 'hashtags,' making posts easily searchable by other users (Haenlein et al., 2020). The main page of each user has a personalized feed that includes uploads of followed users, followed hashtags, and sponsored posts (Haenlein et al., 2020), delivering the desired content directly to the consumer.

Instagram is desirable because people can easily connect with each other and update each other about their information and interests (Huang & Su, 2018). It also offers a range of useful features for commercial activity, including the ability to add links to stories, tag products in posts, and pay for sponsored posts to reach a wider audience as a part of their curated personal feed (Haenlein et al., 2020). Instagram's features are ideal for consumers and businesses alike, providing an opportunity for users to build a network of followers, promote social interactions around a focal subject, and ultimately engage with one another on a more intimate level (Jin et al., 2019). Further, the emphasis on visual content makes it an ideal platform for strong brand aesthetics, leading to a growing influencer population who are 'instafamous' (Jin et al., 2019).

According to research by Djafarova and Rushworth (2017), Instagram is continuously advancing, and its expansion is still ongoing, with most of its users being young women. Their study found that source reliability, consumer purchase intention, and social identification with various types of celebrities are the significant influences of Instagram. They conducted in-depth interviews with 18 female Instagram users aged between 18 and 30 and discovered that young women's purchase behaviour on Instagram is directly influenced by Instagram celebrities. These consumers assume that relating and associating with SMIs, such as Instagram influencers who deliberately depict positive images and deliver inspiring reviews, is much easier (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017).

Other platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter also saw an increase in influencer marketing in 2020, but Instagram is the most popular influencer marketing platform (Lin, 2023). YouTube is also considered an ideal option for carrying out this marketing tactic. YouTube influencers/personalities are people who create videos and upload them on YouTube; they have a group of followers who watch the uploaded videos regularly. Expert video uploads, which come from a brand's YouTube channel, aren't taken into consideration as influencers (Xiao et al., 2018). When identifying and selecting marketing platforms, marketers are advised to select those SM

platforms that are mostly visited and used by their specific audience; this will result in abundant engagement and interaction from desired customers (Xu & Pratt, 2018).

3.2.3 SMIs and their Role in SMEs

3.2.3.1 SMM in SMEs

In the global framework, the benefits of SM to improve SMEs have been emphasized by several different studies (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020). SMEs are highly diverse and characterized as highly adaptable and entrepreneurial. Implementing new technologies and marketing techniques, such as SM, can be highly beneficial for SMEs that often need more marketing resources (Ali Abbasi et al., 2022). SM platforms are accessible and user-friendly for SMEs, as they do not require significant technical expertise or financial resources, unlike other forms of technology (Atanassova & Clark, 2015; Zeiller & Schauer, 2011). Furthermore, SM allows SMEs to expand their reach and connect with a broader network of customers and partners beyond their geographic location, making it a cost-effective way to expand their business (Atanassova & Clark, 2015).

In the last decade, SM has played a significant role in boosting and enhancing the performance of SMEs. Though SMEs were early adopters of Web 2.0 technology, knowledge concerning SME-specific utilization still needs improvement (Atanassova & Clark, 2015). SM has been shown to influence businesses (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) directly. The study of literature on SMM and the dynamic capabilities of SMEs showed that these businesses could gain market intelligence through their use of SM and subsequently modify, adjust, and enhance their marketing efforts; for instance, the conceptual model put forth by Atanassova and Clark (2015) can serve as a guide for SMEs when they are refining their online and/or offline marketing strategies. The use of SM as a marketing tool by Ekanem and Erukusin (2017) studied the rise of SM and its effect on the performance of SMEs. They employed a qualitative method for gathering information, which allowed for a deeper understanding and rich and high-quality data directly from the source. Their chosen approach was more effective than previous studies using quantitative data collection methods. The authors suggested a correlation between a company's market share growth and their adoption of SM. They also demonstrated that SM improves communication between companies and customers, improving performance (Ekanem & Erukusin, 2017). SMEs in competitive industries must invest more in SMM to keep up with their rivals and gain a competitive edge.

Specifically, SMEs' use of SMM and the challenges encountered are crucial areas of study. It provides SMEs with a cost-effective marketing option with numerous opportunities (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016) (please refer to *Essay 1*). Therefore, it is crucial to understand the SM practices of SMEs in the context of their marketing activities development (Atanassova & Clark, 2015).

Other benefits of SM for SMEs include marketing and learning capabilities. SM use has also been effective in increasing sales, leading to more interest among other SMEs in using SM for their marketing efforts (Atanassova & Clark, 2015; Zeiller & Schauer, 2011). As business promotion moves increasingly online, new and unconventional promotional methods have emerged in society, made possible by the growing number of SM users (Erwin et al., 2022). Furthermore, SM can provide valuable data and information about marketing, so SMEs' resource gap is filled. In addition, SM reduces unpredictability for SMEs by providing real-time market knowledge and resource-matching abilities. Regarding brand management, SM would help SMEs receive consumer feedback and reactions (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020).

Specifically, SM offers SMEs the opportunity for better communication. It is a given that SMEs have plenty of inherent capabilities and strong points so they can tackle challenges in communication, and by employing promotional content, which is persuasive enough, they can easily recover in the face of communication issues. When SM eWOM is incorporated into the SMEs' marketing mix, the business has a better chance of competing against larger companies because they can directly impact followers' buying behaviour. Consequently, the marketing managers of SMEs would better carefully handle positive reviews. If these reviews do not contain facts and real data, they cannot be effective enough (Konstantopoulou et al., 2019; Sparks & Browning, 2011).

The availability of financial resources may motivate SMEs to prioritize SMM, particularly in competitive industries. In contrast, businesses and organizations in non-competitive markets are less likely to use such resources for SMM, even when they are readily available. Small businesses may adopt SMM if they perceive it to be less expensive, easier to use, and compatible. Furthermore, the extensive integration of SM into business operations has led to new business models, such as social commerce (Ali Abbasi et al., 2022). Providing that SMEs come to believe that SM is inexpensive, user-friendly, and convenient, they would utilize it for their own objectives (Chatterjee & Kumar Kar, 2020).

3.2.3.2 Benefits of SMI Marketing in SMEs

Influencer marketing has been demonstrated to be an effective use of SMM for SMEs. In recent years, many organizations and companies have made use of SMIs to promote and review their products in the hopes of maximizing their utilization of all SM potential (Evans et al., 2017; Stubb et al., 2019) and ultimately improving their performance through these activities (Hodijah et al., 2021). Many institutes and organizations have recognized that the success of their new products is linked to the impact and impression that digital influencers have on consumers (Jin & Phua, 2014; Lyons & Henderson, 2005). The use of SMI marketing is rapidly expanding, and it allows marketers to reach a wider audience by purchasing access to an influencer's followers (Mabkhot et al., 2022). Thus, to achieve their goals, organizations are increasingly incorporating SMIs into their communication and marketing efforts (Bakker, 2018; de Veirman et al., 2017).

Further, the current market landscape offers many opportunities for collaboration. Hidavat et al. (2020) conducted a study exploring celebrity endorsements' role in supporting SMEs through SM, specifically Instagram, during the Covid-19 pandemic. They analyzed 65 celebrities' endorsement activities on Instagram and surveyed 809 SME entrepreneurs whose products were endorsed by the celebrities. They discovered that, on average, each celebrity endorsed more than ten products per week, offering SME entrepreneurs ample opportunities to utilize their services through SM. And SM (Instagram) makes this possible to happen. The study results also confirmed previous research findings on the most commonly endorsed SME products, which were food, fashion, and cosmetics (Hidavat et al., 2020).

Influencer marketing in the context of SMEs has been demonstrated to be beneficial to marketing performance. (Erwin et al., 2022) studied the impact of using influencers' accounts on the marketing performance of SMEs. They surveyed 226 SME actors who use SM, using a questionnaire and a Likert 5-point scale. Data were analyzed using PLS-SEM. They found that using influencers' accounts on SM had a positive impact on the marketing performance of SMEs. They found that influencers could directly improve marketing performance. Additionally, their findings indicated that when mediated by customizing positioning for certain types of products,

the use of influencers also positively impacted the marketing performance of SMEs (Erwin et al., 2022). The key to SMIs' success in impacting their audience lies in the relationship between their personal brand and followers, which is the foundation for their potential to have a profound impact and influence (Abidin & Ots, 2015; Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019). Influencer marketing has a significant fundamental power to harmonize the needs of each SMI, the contracting firm/brand, and the SMI's followers (Stubb et al., 2019). It offers several benefits to SMEs.

3.2.3.2.1 Advantages over Traditional Celebrities

The main advantage of SMI marketing over traditional celebrity endorsements in mass media is having more content-focused interactions and a higher level of engagement with the audience (Masuda et al., 2022).

Historically, celebrity endorsement exclusively involved famous individuals who established their public image through sports, music, or movies before participating in advertising (Kamins et al., 1989). However, the modern celebrity landscape includes figures from outside mainstream pop culture, a trend believed to have begun with the popularity of reality TV stars. Research has shown that these 'new' celebrities have a closer connection to consumers (Tran & Strutton, 2014), that they are perceived as more genuine (Jin et al., 2019), and that they have greater credibility and influence (Stubb et al., 2019; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). That is to say that it has been shown that with respect to source reliability and consumer tendency for purchase, new types of influencers like bloggers, YouTubers, and Instafamous personalities are considered to be more efficient since they are believed to be more trustworthy and relatable than traditional celebrities (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017). According to Djafarova & Rushworth (2017), bloggers, YouTube personalities, and "Instafamous" individuals (a term for those who gained popularity on the Instagram platform itself) are more influential and more appealing to users compared to traditional celebrities. This is further supported by Sun et al. (2021), who found SMI endorsements more appealing to customers because SMIs maintain a closer relationship with their followers, unlike conventional celebrities. Further, consumers perceive them as more trustworthy and relatable, which increases their buying intentions (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Stubb et al., 2019). As a result, companies prefer to work with SMIs as they cost less and are more effective in influencing audiences compared to traditional advertising methods (Mabkhot et al., 2022).

Given that the definitions and interpretations of SMIs and influencer communication are diverse and perplexing (Bakker, 2018; Sundermann & Raabe, 2019), there are some distinctive features that set them apart from typical celebrities and celebrity endorsement strategies. These include:

1. SMIs have achieved distinction only through their activity on SM platforms (Evans et al., 2017).
2. Consumers view SMIs as friendlier and more agreeable than celebrities (Sundermann & Raabe, 2019).
3. Unlike celebrities, SMIs can generate content – in other words, SMIs can present an organization's promotional message in a way that followers consider genuine (Booth & Matic, 2011; Kozinets et al., 2010).
4. Because SMIs are not directly employed by the organization, they can function independently as a third-party contributor (Freberg et al., 2011) and exercise their freedom to produce creative content. This absence of authority from the organizations differentiates influencer communication from celebrity endorsements (Archer & Harrigan, 2016). It emphasizes the need for a strong

relationship and trust between SMI and the organizations they act for (Pang et al., 2016; Uzunoğlu & Misci Kip, 2014).

3.2.3.2.2 Influencers are Credible & Trustworthy

The most important reason brands are significantly drawn to influencer marketing is that they are regarded as more trustworthy than conventional celebrities, as demonstrated by recent research (Appel et al., 2020; Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017; Shan et al., 2020). More broadly than just endorsement, SMIs have a significant impact on their followers because they are perceived as more trustworthy than traditional advertising campaigns (Mabkhot et al., 2022). A study by Twitter demonstrated that consumers might regard SMIs as being at least as trustworthy as their own friends (Lou & Yuan, 2019).

In the literature reviewed, the focus was primarily on examining the attributes of SMIs as a factor contributing to the credibility of the source. The credibility of a source is determined by three dimensions: expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness (Pornpitakpan, 2004; Sundermann & Raabe, 2019). SMIs are viewed as trustworthy, inspiring experts and opinion leaders by their followers. They have gained popularity by accumulating a significant following on various SM platforms (Carter, 2016; Pang et al., 2016).

3.2.3.2.3 Influencers Shape Consumer Attitudes & Behaviours

Influencers' messages are likely to influence consumers to make purchase decisions (Hodijah et al., 2021; Lou & Yuan, 2019). There is a strong positive association between SMIs and the intention to purchase, as they play a crucial role in consumer buying decisions (Mabkhot et al., 2022). The success of SMI endorsement in advancing travel destinations was investigated by Xu and Pratt (2018). Through a lens of self-congruity theory, their study found that SMI-consumer congruence and SMI-destination congruence both contribute to higher intentions to visit endorsed destinations (Lou & Yuan, 2019; Sun et al., 2021). By choosing brands and products which are advocated by SMIs and fit with their ideal image of self, consumers achieve key meanings and associations that influencers embody. Consumers can absorb these for the process of constructing, maintaining, and boosting their own self-concept (Escalas & Bettman, 2017). Sun et al. (2021) studied the impact of an SMI endorsement on a follower's attitude towards an event and their intended behaviour. They also analyzed the role of a follower's gender in the effectiveness of event SMI marketing. Using the congruity theory of attitude change, the researchers constructed a framework for SMI marketing. Through 335 online surveys, they employed partial least squares structural equation modelling and multi-group analysis to test their hypotheses. Their findings revealed that a follower's attitude towards an event is influenced by their influencer's attitude, and the follower's SM post attitude acts as a mediator (Sun et al., 2021).

To better understand the impact and role of SMIs on consumer behaviour and product acceptance business performance, Nafees et al. (2021) found that the power and perceived credibility of SMIs is both crucial in shaping consumer attitudes towards a brand, and their expertise and trustworthiness contribute to this relationship. Similarly, by studying 131 SME owners, Hodijah et al. (2021) suggested that influencers have a significant positive effect on organizational performance and purchasing decisions. Additionally, influencers had a positive effect on organizational performance through the mediation of purchasing decisions (Hodijah et al., 2021). To effectively reach and influence a vast target audience, destination marketers can invite SMIs to endorse their location by sharing their experiences and opinions online (Xu & Pratt, 2018).

3.2.3.2.4 Achieve Strategic Goals

Beyond the goals of a singular marketing campaign, influencer marketing is also a tool by which firms can achieve greater strategic objectives. The performance indicators used to measure success will vary between organizations according to their individual mission and values, with SMEs generally focusing on sales volume (Hodijah et al., 2021). Influencer marketing may be implemented by the marketing unit in pursuit of specific short-term objectives, but these effects can extend long-term as they might from any partnership. For example, understanding the firm and SMI to have positioning in their own competitive landscapes, Leung, Gu, and Palmatier (2022) identify the processes by which SMIs can be leveraged to enhance or pivot the brand's own firm-led positioning. Key to the unique capabilities of SMI is both the large following they have cultivated and the connection they have nourished with these fans (Mabkhot et al., 2022). SMIs use their platforms to shape an intimate psychological relationship with their followers by sharing content that aligns with their lifestyles and interests (Audrezet et al., 2020). SMIs are third parties who provide recommendations, give descriptions, and disseminate information to influence the attitudes of their followers (Mabkhot et al., 2022). Because of their unique positioning and attributes, SMIs are valuable to organizations as they can reach consumers in particular age groups who are more difficult to target through traditional media – for example, Millennials (Chatzigeorgiou, 2017; Lin et al., 2018). Traditional media and advertising normally cannot find any connection with these young customers, but SMIs easily can. For consumers who avoid or are not as receptive to the messaging of anticipated advertisements, influencer marketing allows for the creation of authentic content and increased engagement with the target audience, resulting in more impactful results and a targeted audience (Childers et al., 2019).

Key to the success of this objective is that the production and sharing of online content is the very activity that attracts and intrigues followers (Sokolova & Kefi, 2020). Traditionally, advertising is placed for the consumer to encounter, whether that is offline (e.g., print ads or billboards) or online (e.g., banner ads or pop-up ads). However, in the case of SMI marketing, the endorsement is made as a part of the very content that followers have expressed interest in and keep up to date on. Further, many SM platforms allow for content to persist long-term, with posted content typically being added to an archive for the user who posted it. This means that any branded content is likely to persist beyond any official marketing campaign and will remain at the very least accessible to new users at a later date, or possibly even promoted through the platform's algorithm for continued reach, with little to no maintenance from either the firm or focal SMI.

Another strategic objective that SMI marketing can assist with is competitiveness. (Konstantopoulou et al., 2019) investigated the use of beauty influencers on Instagram as a means of enhancing competitiveness for SMEs. Through an exploratory research design and in-depth interviews, they gained insight into the perceptions of young female adults in Saudi Arabia regarding trust in Instagram influencers, electronic word of mouth (eWOM), and advertising. The results showed that SMEs could significantly benefit from eWOM to boost their competitiveness. The authors found that when a beauty influencer on Instagram promotes a product to their followers, it raises awareness and purchase intent. Additionally, they emphasized that trustworthiness, honesty, and authenticity play a significant role in the effectiveness of eWOM (Konstantopoulou et al., 2019). Hence, companies are turning away from traditional marketing methods and are using influencer marketing to advertise their products and services (Nascimento et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2021).

Despite the significant presence and impact of SMIs on consumer brand attitudes, academic research on the topic is still being developed (Nafees et al., 2021). While SMI marketing has become widely adopted in practice and a popular subject in business media, there still needs to be more academic research on influencer communication (Bakker, 2018; Sundermann & Raabe, 2019). Previous researchers have looked at the element of motivation for consumer involvement with a brand (Bernritter et al., 2017; Chu et al., 2019; Song et al., 2019), the impact of an influencer's credibility on the assessment of a product (Djafarova & Rushworth, 2017), and the impact of various types of endorsement content (Kim & Song, 2018). The extant research on SMIs has neglected SMEs' usage of SMIs, particularly outside of their use for promotional activities (Hodijah et al., 2021). Though, there hasn't been much focus on the selection process for deserving SMIs, particularly concerning the role of influencers in SMEs. In an effort to fill this gap, the current work explores the research background connected to selecting the appropriate SMIs.

3.2.4 Influencer Selection Process

3.2.4.1 The Importance of Choosing the Right Influencer

The influencer marketing process can be broken down into two stages: interactions between the company and the influencer and interactions between the influencer and the end customer (Fill & Turnbull, 2019). Companies only directly have control in the first stage of influencer marketing; however, the effectiveness of the marketing strategy is measured by the number and engagement of customers reached (Phung & Qin, 2018), which is an interaction between the influencer and the consumer. This means that the chosen SMI will be responsible for representing the firm and brand to the consumer by playing two important roles, including co-producing marketing messages and acting as an intermediary and transferring the messages (Carter, 2016; Kozinets et al., 2010; Uzunoğlu & Misci Kip, 2014). Given their established position as influential figures, the SMI is charged with a powerful role as a brand ambassador, and their execution of the second stage is critical to meeting marketing objectives. This is why SMI selection is one of the main considerations in SMI management. The other factors to consider in managing influencer marketing are perceived high costs, legal considerations, agency structure, influencer selection process, and content development (Childers et al., 2019).

To optimize the effectiveness of their campaigns, SMEs must carefully select a set of influencers who can share their promotional messages, such as advertisements, with their followers. The success of the campaign depends on the level of engagement between the followers and the ad. Given the budget constraints faced by SMEs, they can only engage a limited number of influencers who will be contracted to share product-related content a certain number of times during the campaign period, as agreed upon between the SMEs and the influencers (Mallipeddi et al., 2018).

In order to carry out influencer marketing, the first steps include detecting influencers and selecting them. This task must be carried out correctly because, in theory, there are many things that could become problematic. Finding influencers is a difficult activity that needs the experience and persistence of marketing managers and executives (Brown & Hayes, 2015). When the appropriate influencer for a company is found and selected, it is crucial to remember that the person selected should influence and impact the decisions made by consumers (Biaudet, 2017). Brands can increase their reach and attraction to their intended audiences by working with the proper influencers, which generally will increase the effectiveness of their campaigns (Forbes, 2016). First, organizations define the core topics and themes for the influencers' activities (product and advertising). Then, the SMI is chosen. Afterward, organizations do their best to create and enforce

a binding framework. Through this framework, the SMI communicates with some extent of independence and requires freedom of design (Walden et al., 2015).

While some smaller influencers may be willing to promote brands at no cost (Mabkhot et al., 2022), more established figures typically negotiate formal contracts. For SMEs, budget is a universal concern; the latter may be beneficial for organizations for several reasons. First, a professional agreement outlining the brand and influencer collaboration helps SMEs lower the involved risk. An informal agreement without clear specifications for brand use and content could result in an influencer misrepresenting the brand, which could cause damage beyond the marketing campaign itself. A paid contract further helps to eliminate risk by clarifying the relationship between the influencer and the brand. SM is global, but legislation can vary by region regarding advertising standards, including disclosure of sponsored content. A formal agreement between the brand and influencer identifies the relationship as commercial and informs the development of the branded content, mitigating the risk of legal concerns. Even though SMIs may come at a high cost, they can be effective enough to justify the expense for SMEs (Sands et al., 2022).

There have been some recent challenges with this type of marketing strategy. To mitigate these issues, companies should be cautious when using SMIs. They should work with SMIs who provide accurate information on the product they endorse or review in detail and are transparent about their views (Mabkhot et al., 2022). A company faces a challenge in selecting influencers and planning the timing and content of its posts over the entire planning period. In addition to selecting influencers, scheduling the ads to be posted by them is crucial due to the limited budgets that firms have and to maximize the efficiency of the influencer marketing campaign (Mallipeddi et al., 2018).

An influencer's primary role is to leverage their platform by promoting a specific brand or service. Influencers can be classified into various categories based on their areas of expertise, such as technology, food, travel, gaming, and fashion. Companies can select the most suitable influencer that aligns with their target goals and has a background related to the product or service they will be advertising. These influencers typically have many followers on SM networks.

3.2.4.2 Frameworks to Compare Influencers
Several frameworks have been suggested with which to analyze and compare influencers. Selecting influencers on SM is a topic that researchers have just recently become interested in. Now many writers focus their analysis on the distinctions between offline and online settings when it comes to finding and choosing influencers (de Michele & Marchi, 2018). The number of users an influencer can reach is the first factor of distinction. Unlike offline settings, this number is much greater on SM (de Michele & Marchi, 2018). According to Trusov et al. (2010), about one-fifth of a user's friends or followers can affect how other users behave on social networking sites. As a result, in an SM setting, it is essential for businesses to find the individuals who have the biggest influence on other users and use them as a part of their communication strategy.

SMIs truly vary significantly from each other, and there are more diverse categories compared to offline influencers (de Michele & Marchi, 2018). There are different categorizations for SMIs. de Michele and Marchi (2018) considered the number and types of followers, the types of content they produce, and the "incentive systems" they want in return for their work with the brand as a few categorization criteria for SMIs. One type of influencer categorization includes celebrities, micro-celebs, and famous bloggers whose endorsement would attract the attention of a high number of followers. These influencers require an expensive compensation system to engage with

brands (de Michele & Marchi, 2018). Ordinary users are another type of SMI. They may be useful in influencing a small number of followers, but the compensation rate, if there is one, is near zero. Many other regular users are based somewhere in between these two ends, establishing themselves as influencers through their ability to involve a substantial number of users in conversations about products and services (de Michele & Marchi, 2018). Another type of influencer is called a micro-influencer. These influencers are not as famous as celebrities, yet they enjoy having many eager followers. Easily impressed by the influencers, micro-influencers' follower numbers range from a few thousand to hundreds of thousands (Main, 2017). Some researchers have categorized SMIs as a form of micro-celebrity (Senft, 2013), who use SM to showcase themselves through the creation of an online image and attract and interact with a large follower base using created image (Dhanesh & Duthler, 2019; Khamis et al., 2017). Peer-to-peer recommendations would help firms by providing them with credibility and trustworthiness. Unlike celebrities and famous bloggers, the other two groups can have a significant effect on groups of consumers, and it should be noted that it is inexpensive, unlike other ways (de Michele & Marchi, 2018).

To identify figures who can help firms spread the word through eWOM, Wiedmann et al. (2010) put forth a framework of 9 different influencer types as defined by their individual capital (i.e., knowledge, motivation) and social capital (i.e., reach, appeal). Of particular interest to firms are the *top influencers* (high-high), *narrative experts* (high-medium), and *superspreaders* (low-high). *Top influentials* have a lot of knowledge about their field as well as many followers. They commonly interact with followers, make recommendations, and lead tutorials based on their expertise and involvement. *Narrative experts* are highly knowledgeable in their field but have fewer followers.

In contrast to these first two, *superspreaders* may specialize in something other than a particular subject but have amassed a large following with which they are willing to share endorsed content based on trust or reputation. As the types of influencers are different, the impact they have on consumers and audience is diverse, but they can all benefit firms. For instance, a well-known specialist endorsing an item is likely to have a different impact than a pop culture celebrity endorsing the same item. Both will likely have a different effect than an endorsement from a close personal friend. Due to these other impacts, it is crucial to distinguish between various categories of influencers (Vollenbroek et al., 2014). Notably, each of the personas mentioned above has at least a moderate level of social reach. Phung and Qin (2018) furthered this work to answer the question, "How can a firm identify relevant influencers and use them for the right product in a successful way?"

In order to ensure economic and cost efficiency, some academics have put in much work to develop algorithms for assisting businesses in selecting the best candidates based on how relatable they are to the influencer and brand audience (Forbes, 2016). Additionally, Goodman et al. (2011) classified influencer blogs into three levels based on the size of their readership, concentration on a topic, and degree of influencer authority. Personal characteristics and distinct techniques used by firms are evaluated in another stream of literature, with factors for choosing influencers often depending on their individual traits, such as their capability for setting trends, skills in communication, and professional expertise.

In pursuit of an organizational perspective, Childers et al. (2019) interviewed marketing agency executives with previous experience with influencer marketing. Participants talked about choosing an influencer, screening the individual, supervising the content creation and development, and how

influencer marketing fits into the agency structure (Childers et al., 2019). Selecting an influencer to represent the brand is the first part of the process. Participants believed that brand alignment and budget are the most critical aspects of influencer utilization for marketing after selection. A thorough screening procedure is of secondary importance. Agencies have detailed screening methods to ensure the chosen influencer is a good match. Brand alignment and budget are the most critical factors in choosing influencers. The process of selecting small agencies is as follows: A small agency's digital and SM manager discussed the "pillars of decision-making" the company applies to check out potential influencers. She explained that to determine whether an influencer is a good match, the agency first considers how well the influencer aligns with the brand. This fit will be measured through current and historical sponsorships. The agency also looks back to two years of background of the influencer and their worth of past SM posts to evaluate the posts' content, sentiment, and engagement. The final pillar of decision-making is related to legal concerns. The agency "deep dives" to tackle the legal concerns of posting and sponsorship in this final stage (Childers et al., 2019).

One of the most prominent characteristics of SMI is reaching. A positive indirect effect between the number of followers and likeability is illustrated by de Veirman et al. (2017). This effect is mediated by perceived popularity by ascribed opinion leadership. On the other hand, Chatzigeorgiou (2017) indicates a strong negative correlation between attitude towards SMI and high numbers of followers and respect (Leung, Gu, & Palmatier, 2022; Sundermann & Raabe, 2019). de Veirman et al. (2017) also found that the number of followers and followees on Instagram shaped users' perception of an influencer's fame and position as an opinion leader, with more followers adding to an influencer's perceived popularity and likability of his/her influencer's profile. Similar findings by Jin and Phua (2014) have shown that consumers have stronger product involvement and purchase intentions when exposed to brand Tweets from endorsers with a large number of followers, while Ing and Ming (2018) reported a direct positive influence of the number of followers on trustworthiness.

Expanding upon the sole consideration of viewer metrics, Goodman et al. (2011) propose an influencer index, an algorithm intended to help brand managers identify SM figures who are key in influencing brand stories. The influencer index posits that value is found in "the number and relevance of [SMIs] extended or indirect connections" (Pang et al., 2016) and generally offers a measurable approach with weighted criteria for assessing and ranking an SM player's influence. While this index score offers a way to compare networked influence directly, studies have observed that various SM strategies reflect business strategy goals, which necessarily influence the identification and choice of influential users (de Veirman et al., 2017; Rydén et al., 2015). Another critical factor is the social capabilities of the influencer, which can be measured through indicators such as shared interests, commencing follow-up activities, and the number of friends. Another consideration may be the approach taken by the SMI. Influencers who use personalized methods to demonstrate how the advertised product integrates into their daily lives are perceived as more trustworthy by consumers. In addition, this customized approach makes them more likely to be observed and trusted by consumers, thus making them more efficient message transmitters (Leung, Gu & Palmatier, 2022).

3.2.5 Influencer Selection Factors
Influencer selection is an important aspect of influencer marketing campaigns. There are various factors that companies should consider when selecting influencers for their marketing campaigns. Based on previous studies, several factors should be considered when evaluating the competency

of SMIs. Some of the factors that have been commonly used to analyze the use of SMIs include confidence, authenticity, and interactivity (cooperation with followers to interact in the form of response or feedback) (Erwin et al., 2022). de Veirman et al. (2017) studied the effect of the number of followers and product diversity of Instagram influencers on brand attitudes. They concluded the number of followers, the ratio of followers to followees, and the type of product were impactful.

Shan et al. (2020) identified engagement with brand content and attitude toward brand content as the main criteria for evaluating SMIs. Biaudet (2017) suggests that five factors of relevance, engagement, reach, frequency, and authenticity should be considered when identifying potential influencers for a brand. Some research focuses more on metrics. Arora et al. (2019) emphasized the criteria of Facebook People Talk About (PTA), Facebook likes, Twitter followers, Instagram followers, the maximum engagement rate on Twitter, the average engagement rate on Twitter, the maximum engagement rate on Facebook, and the average engagement rate on Facebook to assess the competency of SMIs. Mallipeddi et al. (2018) considered the number of retweeters, followers, percentage of followers who retweeted, probability of retweeting, and followers of users who retweeted. Other metrics, like "measures of indegree" and "retweets and mentions," respectively, were used by Cha et al. (2010) and Bakshy et al. (2011). Jin and Phua (2014) looked at the "number of followers" and "valence of brand tweets."

In order to identify who truly influences customers, Brown and Hayes (2015) proposed a four-dimensional metric that includes (a) market reach (the level of influence that a player has in their specific market), (b) frequency of impact (how often the player's voice is likely to be heard by potential decision-makers, which may be different from how often they speak on the subject), (c) quality of impact (how independent and authoritative is the player's opinion?), and (d) closeness to the decision (how close in terms of timing and physical proximity is the player to the final decision maker?). Pang et al. (2016) used the rank on the Smartlocal.com list and the number of followers as the main criteria for evaluating SMIs. At the same time, posting frequency, engagement rates with readers/viewers, and the number of referral links also contribute to an influencer's effectiveness for a brand. Personal anecdotes and experiences (which create a relatable connection with their peers), knowledge (the influencer has expertise in the industry they are representing and can provide clear and accurate information about products to the consumer audience), helpfulness (the influencer offers advice and useful opinions that can influence consumer decisions about a product), confidence (the influencer has trust in their own words and is self-assured), and articulation (the influencer clearly and effectively communicates information, both verbally and visually, to help audiences understand the product) as key traits for an effective influencer (Gerdeman, 2019).

It is common for industry practitioners to select influencers solely based on single metrics, such as the number of followers or engagement rate, but this may not be the best approach. This strategy has been demonstrated to be sub-optimal (Mallipeddi et al., 2018). Overall, using a combination of metrics rather than relying solely on the number of followers can provide a more comprehensive assessment of an influencer's suitability for a campaign (Navarro et al., 2020). For instance, the number of followers should be used in combination with other criteria (de Veirman et al., 2017); confidence, authenticity, relevance to the brand, engagement level, reach, frequency, attitude towards brand content, and interactivity should be considered when selecting influencers for a marketing campaign (Navarro et al., 2020). The SMI's congruency with the brand is also an important factor to consider. When non-suitable and non-congruent influencers were used, they

harmed the brand image and organizational reputation (Freberg et al., 2011; Kozinets et al., 2010). Congruency can be achieved by considering several factors. Firstly, influencers and brands should have the same target audience. Some influencers position themselves as experts in a specific niche, which can be of particular interest to brands in specific product categories as these influencers can directly address their shared audience (Lee & Eastin, 2021; Lin et al., 2018). Furthermore, image, value, and goal congruency between influencers and brands should be considered. A lack of match in this regard can result in consumers thinking that the endorsement is solely for financial gain, which is undesirable for both brand and influencer (Ye et al., 2021). Factors such as shared target audience and image, value, and goal congruency should be considered when choosing a suitable and congruent influence (Ye et al., 2021).

Zhang et al. (2013) proposed that the number of strong interactions a user has is more effective in identifying influencers than the total number of interactions. Other metrics, such as the relevance of topics, content quality, and content-based comment sentiment, are also important, and their importance is highlighted by Navarro et al. (2020). These scholars found that these content-based metrics are more important than quantitative metrics when assessing a user's influence. Therefore, companies should consider various metrics when identifying influential users (Ye et al., 2021).

Other considerations should be used while considering the same measure to evaluate SMIs. For instance, de Veirman et al. (2017) suggested that influencers with a high number of followers but a low number of followees may be perceived as less likable. Interestingly, Phung and Qin (2018) proposed that the characteristics of SMIs are valued differently. They believe that honesty and trustworthiness are highly valued traits; therefore, companies should give extra consideration to them when choosing influencers to partner with. Another consideration is that having more followers does not necessarily lead to more interactions. Interactions between influencers and followers not only increase the size of the network but also strengthen the connections within it(Wang et al., 2020). The influencer and brand match should also be considered when selecting influencers. Breves et al. (2019) and Kim and Kim (2021) found that a suitable and congruent influencer can improve the influencer's image and increase consumers' brand attitudes and purchase intentions.

Source credibility and its dimensions have been succinctly studied in academic literature. It can be determined by evaluating a source's expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness as dimensions of source credibility (McCracken, 1989; Ohanian, 1990; Tzoumaka et al., 2016). A source's perceived ability to know the subject is called expertise; a source's amount of perceived honesty and believability is called trustworthiness; a source's amount of perceived familiarity and likeability is called attractiveness (Lee & Kim, 2020; McCracken, 1989). Additionally, source credibility has been defined by four dimensions: the source's expertise, trustworthiness, likability, and homophily, which are experiential information cues that affect an individual's evaluation of information credibility (Chen & Chaiken, 1999; Metzger & Flanagin, 2013). A high number of followers positively affects trustworthiness (Ing & Ming, 2018). Few researchers have developed various models and techniques to assist companies in identifying influential SM users (Bamakan et al., 2019). Implementing quantitative methods to identify influential users in online social networks has been considered by different scholars. For instance, Bakshy et al. (2011), Bokunewicz and Shulman (2017), and Litterio et al. (2017) propose different frameworks and approaches to identify influential users on online social networks by considering factors such as the positioning and engagement of these users. However, few practitioners use specific methods to locate and connect with influencers (Navarro et al., 2020) because these methods are considered

incomplete. Hence, in this research, we have tried to locate all the factors in the extant research. Therefore, we reviewed and summarized the SMI selection factors from previous studies in the literature (Table 3.1). Later, we adapted these factors and used a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to find the factors that are important for SMEs when selecting which SMI to work with.

Table 3.1 Summary of desired SMIs' Key Selection Factors in SMEs gathered through Literature Review

Dimension	Factor	References
SMIs' account insights	The number of followers Average engagement rate The average number of comments The average number of likes The average number of posts Average earning per post	(Arora et al., 2019) (Mallipeddi et al., 2018) (de Veirman et al., 2017) (Jin & Phua, 2014)
SMIs' endorser credibility	Expertise Trustworthiness Attractiveness	(Lee & Kim, 2020) (McCracken, 1989) (Ohanian, 1990)
SMIs' content-driven attributes	Informativeness Visual aesthetics Relevance of topics Quality of content Comment sentiment	(Navarro et al., 2020) (Ki et al., 2020)
SMIs' persona-driven attributes	Inspiration Similarity Physical attractiveness Authenticity Goodwill Opinion leadership Parasocial relationship Likability Homophily	(Nafees et al., 2021) (Farivar et al., 2021) (Ki et al., 2020) (de Veirman et al., 2017) (Metzger & Flanagin, 2013)

3.3 Methodology

This research is applied in terms of purpose, and we used both a survey and semi-structured interviews as data collection methods. Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods have been used.

In terms of time, this cross-sectional study has been done in two phases. The qualitative data were collected from June 2021 to August 2021. Later, a survey was administered on the MTurk platform in September 2021.

The statistical population of this article includes business owners and marketing professionals working in SMEs that have used SMIs for their marketing purpose and have been involved in selecting the right SMI for their brand/business. For the qualitative data collection, eight samples were selected based on the purposive sampling method; we selected respondents who were business owners or marketing managers of SMEs and had experience in using SMI for their respective brands. During the qualitative stage, an online semi-structured interview was conducted. In the later phase, the statistical sample consisted of 68 respondents selected based on the purposive sampling method for the qualitative data collection. The number of respondents was 68, as the maximum number of workers available on MTurk could pass the screening of our study for three weeks that our research was on the MTurk website.

All the questionnaires should be tested on validity before testing them. The extent to which that measure items assess the same content as they are intended or how well a sample of content material was formed in a measure is called content validity (Rubio et al., 2003). Content validity was used to pretest the validity of the questionnaire in this study. Content validity can be measured through both face and logical validity (Rubio et al., 2003). The amount to which the measure appears to be valid on its face is called Face validity (Rubio et al., 2003). Between face validity and logical validity, we chose face validity (Rubio et al., 2003), as it needs to be more rigorous and sufficient for our study. Content validity is subjective because it depends on the extent to which the expert believes the item and/or measure is content valid. Although content validity is subjective to expert feedback, it is highly valuable as it limits the number of redevelopments of the measure after collecting the data. Hence, the content validity of the questionnaire for the quantitative part of this study was achieved by submitting them to influencer marketing specialists and university professors. They all confirmed the components and structure and verified the face validity of the formal content of the questionnaire used in the MTurk survey.

In the model fitting stage, validity assessments were done through convergent and divergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). Additionally, as an indicator of the internal consistency of the measuring instrument, Cronbach's alpha coefficient is used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire.

In fitting the model and testing the research hypotheses, we applied Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. This method was used between different methods of SEM modelling, such as AMOS and LISREL, because it is robust in terms of small sample size and abnormal data. Figure 3.1 illustrates the steps of our proposed methodological framework.

Figure 3.1 Proposed Methodological Framework
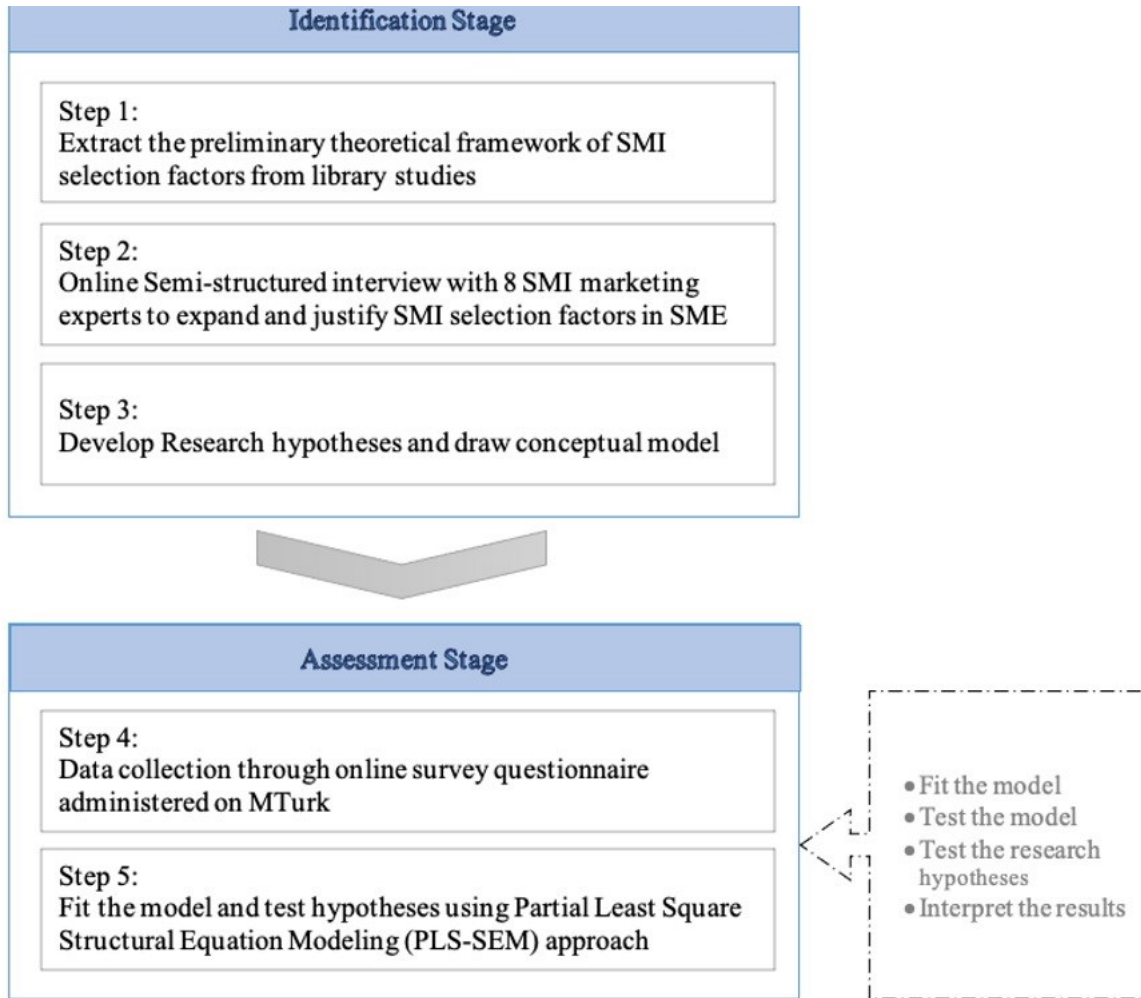
3.4 Data Analysis & Results

Following our methodological framework proposed in Figure 3.1, in the next sections, we provide the data collection, analysis, and interpretation to find the factors important for SMEs in selecting their ideal SMI.

3.4.1 Phase I. Identification of SMI Selection Factors

To identify SMI selection factors, we went through 3 steps. First, through library studies explained in section 3.2.5, we found the items that have been listed in Table 3.1. The special nature of SME businesses and the different economic, social, and political nature of these businesses make them different from other businesses; Hence, we needed to adjust SMI selection factors for their special

business type. Consequently, in the second step, we asked 8 SMI selection experts in the SME context to evaluate the factors we found in step one through library studies (Table 3.1). Demographic information of qualitative study participants has been provided in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2 Demographic Information of SME Influencer Marketing Specialists

Expert	Industry	Job Title	Education level	Years of work experience
Ex1-SM	Fashion/Clothing	Co-founder	MSc	5 years
Ex 2-NN	Personal Care	Marketing Director	MSc	7 years
Ex 3-VS	Cooking	Fonder	BSc	2 years
Ex 4-SY	Carpet	Co-founder	MSc	4 years
Ex 5-Se.Ta	Fashion/Clothing	Marketing Director	BA	8 Years
Ex 6-EZ	Home Décor	Co-founder	PhD	6 years
Ex 7-Sa.Teh	Jewelry	Co-founder	BA	6 years
Ex 8-PM	Construction	Marketing Director	MBA	6 years

Table 3.3 Descriptive Statistics of Qualitative Respondents' Variable

Demographic Variables	Sex		Years of experience		Types of SME's Industry		The last academic degree		
Group	M	F	< 5	5 to 10	Product Manufacturer	Service	BSc	MSc	PhD
Frequency	2	6	2	6	6	2	3	4	1
% Frequency	25%	75%	25%	75%	75%	25%	37%	50%	12%

Later, we asked them to provide us with the factors that they have been using but are not mentioned in the factors we found in the literature. Through this section of interviews and further probing respondents about their answers, we found 53 items. Hence, semi-structured interviews resulted in more items and dimensions offered by SMI selection specialists in the SME context. We summarized, aggregated, and presented them in Table 3.4, the final list of 53 items in 7 dimensions. The items have been checked with another researcher. These items were later used as the basis for the questionnaire in our quantitative study to find SMI selection factors.

Table 3.4 The Final Theoretical Framework of Factors Influencing the Selection of SMIs

Dimensions	Factors
Engagement	Number of followers of influencer's Instagram account
	Number of posts of influencer's Instagram account
	Average number of views of influencer's video posts on Instagram

	Average number of comments of influencer's Instagram posts
	Average number of likes of influencer's Instagram posts
	Average engagement rate of influencer's posts (if they share it)
	Average amount of replies that influencer writes in response to followers' comments
	Sentiment of comments that followers write for influencer's posts
	Sentiment of influencer's replies to the comments that followers write for their posts
	Online AI-powered machines that measure the engagement
	Engagement measured through screenshot of followers' messages, replies, and interactions that influencers share on their stories
SMIs traits	Influencer is a social person
	Influencer is an expert
	Influencer is trustworthy
	Influencer is attractive
	Influencer is competent
	Influencer is useful
	Influencer is accurate
	Influencer is consistent
	Influencer is inspirational
	Influencer is physically attractive
	Influencer is authentic
	Influencer has goodwill toward others
	Influencer is a Likable person
	Followers feel they are similar to influencer
	Influencer is an opinion leader
	The Parasocial relationship that followers have with the influencer
SMI's content relevance	Relevance of your business to the subject matter of influencer's content
	Similarity of your business to the style and layout of influencer's content
	Quality of influencer's content
	Entertainment of influencer's content
	Informativeness of influencer's content
	Visual aesthetics of influencer's content

Dimensions	Factors
SMI's followers profile	Followers' social, economic class
	Followers' personality type
	The age group of the majority of followers
	The geographic location of majority of followers
SMI's compensation	Price that influencer charges business owner for post/story/competition
	How reasonable the price is when considering the number of sales expected to be made through the influencer

	How reasonable the price is when considering the number of followers the influencer would bring for our business
	Influencer's requested compensation package (i.e. fees, product, both, etc.)
	Influencer offers lower prices and specific pricing packages for small businesses to support them
SMI's personal life	Whether influencer is going through some sad events in their life, including divorce, death of dear one, etc.
	Influencer's lifecycle/ Marital Status
	Whether it is around a specific time around influencer's life (i.e. birthday, changing house, wedding, etc.)
SMI's work style	Influencer's target follower (luxury vs. normal)
	Type of businesses that influencer has advertised for previously
	Ease of working with them/If they accept to work with small businesses
	Policies that influencer has for working with businesses
	Influencer's work history: feedback from other business owners that have worked with him/her
	Results from past collaborations that influencer has done (i.e., apparent positive changes in metrics for other business clients)
	Past work experiences that SMEs had with the influencer (followers/sales/engagement rate)
	Type of SMI (Sales blogger/Follower increaser)

The final items from the interviews were used to make a list of 53 items for the quantitative survey (Table 3.4). Each of the 53 factors that have been identified through interviews is considered an observed variable for the respecting dimension. Dimensions also play the role of dependent and latent variables, which affect the independent variable, the SMI's selection factors. Consequently, the conceptual model has been drawn in the SmartPLS software and presented in Figure 3.2.

Dimensions are shown as D1 to D7 with the following naming:

- D1: Engagement (11items)
- D2: SMI's Traits (16 items)
- D3: Content Relevance (6 items)
- D4: Follower's Profile (4 items)
- D5: Compensation (5 items)
- D6: SMI Personal life (3 items)
- D7: SMI Work Style (8 items)

Figure 3.2 The Research Conceptual Model
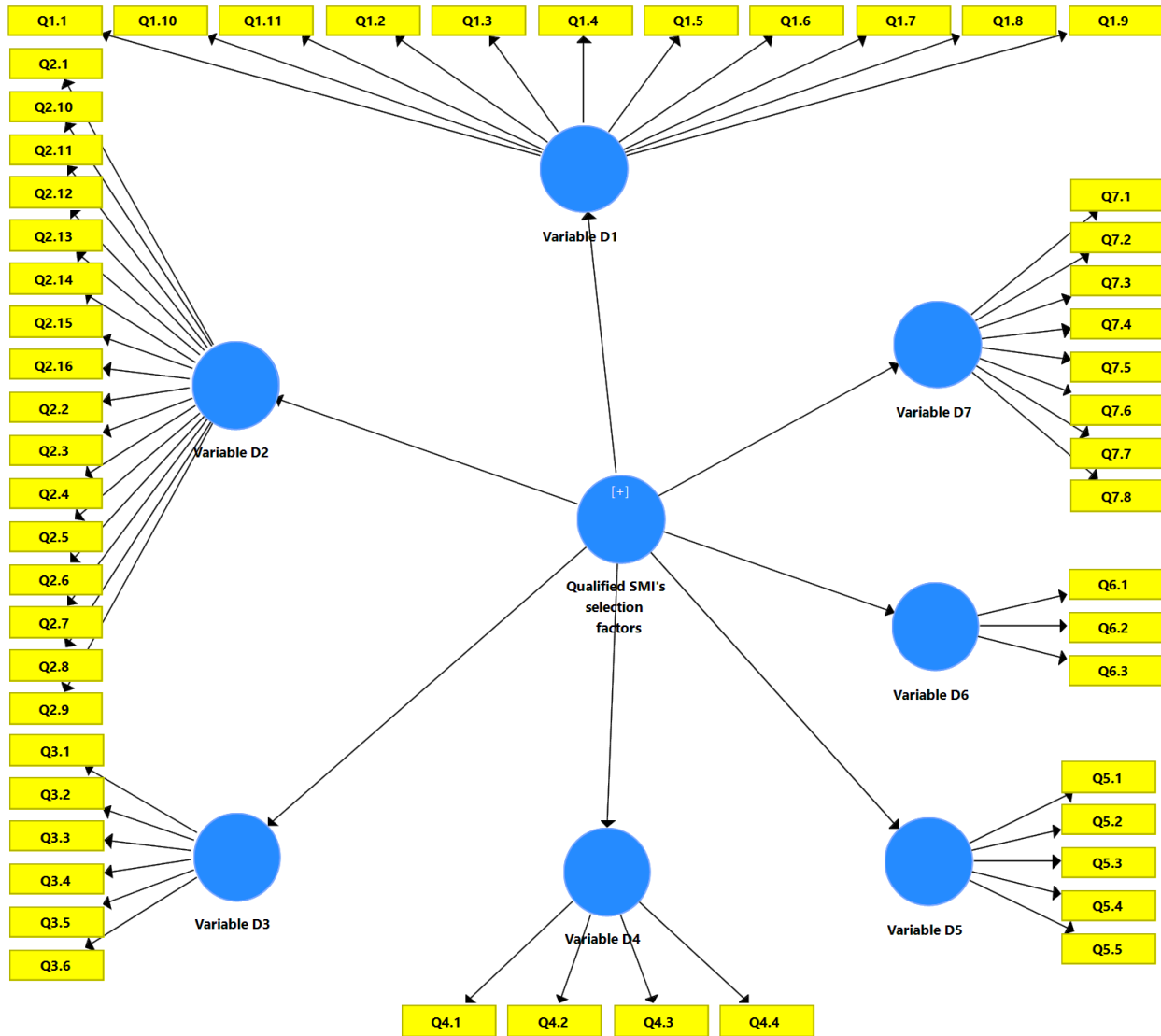
The structure of our conceptual model confirms that we should analyze data in second-order confirmatory factor analysis (Figure 3.2). Therefore, in the third stage of identification of SMI selection factors, we formed the hypotheses and drew the model. According to our conceptual model and the relationships between independent and dependent variables, seven main hypotheses can be developed as follows:

H1: The variable Engagement is one of the influential dimensions in selecting SMI for SMEs.

H2: The variable SMI's Traits is one of the influential dimensions in selecting SMI for SMEs.

H3: The variable Content Relevance is one of the influential dimensions in selecting SMI for SMEs.

H4: The variable Follower's Profile is one of the influential dimensions in selecting SMI for SMEs.

H5: The variable Compensation is one of the influential dimensions in selecting SMI for SMEs.

H6: The variable SMI Personal life is one of the influential dimensions in selecting SMI for SMEs.

H7: The variable SMI work style is one of the influential dimensions in selecting SMI for SMEs.

3.4.2 Phase II. Assessment of SMI Selection Factors

To assess the SMI selection factors that we found from the interviews in the previous stage, we designed an online questionnaire and tested the 53 items found in Table 3.4. The online questionnaire was distributed on MTurk to 68 individuals who were responsible for SMI selection in their respective SMEs. Descriptive statistic of the sample of MTurk respondents has been presented in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Descriptive Statistics of Quantitative Respondents' Demographic Variables

Demographic Variables	Gender		Work Experience (years)			Education				
Group	Male	Female	< 5	$5 < x < 10$	$x > 10$	High school	College	Bachelors	Masters	Higher
Frequency	39	29	14	36	18	2	8	32	18	8
%	57%	43%	21%	53%	26%	3%	12%	47%	26%	12%

After analyzing the online survey results, to test the accuracy of the models that we formed, we need to analyze the data obtained through a survey at this stage. We used the PLS-SEM approach in 3 consecutive parts to test the following models:

1. The fit of measurement models
2. The fit of structural models
3. The fit of overall models

Overall model = Structural model + Measurement model.

Through this sequence of analysis, we have first ensured that the relationship in measurement models is accurate by checking the reliability and validity criteria related to the measurement model. Later, we examine and interpret the fit of structural models. In the final step, we ensure the overall model fit.

Table 3.6 Test of Normality

Factors	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Q1.1	0.325	68	0.000	0.775	68	0.000
Q1.2	0.267	68	0.000	0.807	68	0.000
Q1.3	0.242	68	0.000	0.811	68	0.000
Q1.4	0.258	68	0.000	0.770	68	0.000
Q1.5	0.251	68	0.000	0.835	68	0.000
Q1.6	0.261	68	0.000	0.813	68	0.000
Q1.7	0.230	68	0.000	0.838	68	0.000
Q1.8	0.239	68	0.000	0.822	68	0.000

Factors	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Q1.9	0.285	68	0.000	0.822	68	0.000
Q1.10	0.295	68	0.000	0.800	68	0.000
Q1.11	0.244	68	0.000	0.822	68	0.000
Q2.1	0.316	68	0.000	0.777	68	0.000
Q2.2	0.252	68	0.000	0.831	68	0.000
Q2.3	0.255	68	0.000	0.819	68	0.000
Q2.4	0.244	68	0.000	0.834	68	0.000
Q2.5	0.260	68	0.000	0.804	68	0.000
Q2.6	0.248	68	0.000	0.813	68	0.000
Q2.7	0.231	68	0.000	0.816	68	0.000
Q2.8	0.229	68	0.000	0.826	68	0.000
Q2.9	0.286	68	0.000	0.821	68	0.000
Q2.10	0.293	68	0.000	0.827	68	0.000
Q2.11	0.255	68	0.000	0.819	68	0.000
Q2.12	0.267	68	0.000	0.818	68	0.000
Q2.13	0.247	68	0.000	0.827	68	0.000
Q2.14	0.272	68	0.000	0.823	68	0.000
Q2.15	0.251	68	0.000	0.841	68	0.000
Q2.16	0.285	68	0.000	0.806	68	0.000
Q3.1	0.335	68	0.000	0.771	68	0.000
Q3.2	0.302	68	0.000	0.774	68	0.000
Q3.3	0.296	68	0.000	0.798	68	0.000
Q3.4	0.246	68	0.000	0.823	68	0.000
Q3.5	0.243	68	0.000	0.812	68	0.000
Q3.6	0.264	68	0.000	0.785	68	0.000
Q4.1	0.247	68	0.000	0.876	68	0.000
Q4.2	0.221	68	0.000	0.859	68	0.000
Q4.3	0.217	68	0.000	0.886	68	0.000
Q4.4	0.236	68	0.000	0.873	68	0.000
Q5.1	0.333	68	0.000	0.780	68	0.000
Q5.2	0.236	68	0.000	0.820	68	0.000
Q5.3	0.254	68	0.000	0.806	68	0.000
Q5.4	0.294	68	0.000	0.819	68	0.000
Q5.5	0.248	68	0.000	0.815	68	0.000
Q6.1	0.197	68	0.000	0.889	68	0.000
Q6.2	0.176	68	0.000	0.914	68	0.000
Q6.3	0.197	68	0.000	0.910	68	0.000
Q7.1	0.271	68	0.000	0.830	68	0.000
Q7.2	0.266	68	0.000	0.829	68	0.000
Q7.3	0.244	68	0.000	0.839	68	0.000
Q7.4	0.233	68	0.000	0.831	68	0.000
Q7.5	0.258	68	0.000	0.846	68	0.000
Q7.6	0.268	68	0.000	0.813	68	0.000

Factors	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Q7.7	0.224	68	0.000	0.827	68	0.000
Q7.8	0.254	68	0.000	0.815	68	0.000

[a] Lilliefors Significance Correction

As we can see from the data in Table 3.6, all significant values for all factors (items) in both tests are less than 0.05. hence, the null hypothesis of data normality has been rejected, and data are not normally distributed.

3.4.2.1 Fit of the Model

3.4.2.1.1 Fit of Measurement Models

The fitting of measurement models includes examining the reliability and validity of research structures. The reliability of a test depends on the precision and consistency of the measurements taken. Fornell and Larcker (1981) developed three criteria for assessing the reliability of structures, including (a) reliability of individual items, (b) Composite Reliability (CR), and (c) AVE (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). In accordance with the PLS-SEM algorithm, to evaluate the fit of the measurement model's reliability, convergent validity and divergent validity were assessed, and the following findings have resulted:

We should restate that PLS has been chosen over other SEM models because Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is especially valuable when working with small sample sizes, typically those with less than 200 observations or when analyzing non-normal data (Hair et al., 2014). To assess the normality of the data obtained through the survey, we conducted Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests and presented them in Table 3.6.

3.4.2.1.1.1 Reliability

To evaluate the reliability of measurement models, we should test Factor loads, Cronbach's alpha, and Composite Reliability (Hair et al., 2019) in the following format:

3.4.2.1.1.1.1 Factor Loads

Measurement of factor loadings: The factor loadings measurement involves assessing the reliability of each item based on the value assigned to each observed variable. This value determines how latent variables are measured by the use of observed variables. The minimum acceptable criterion for this assessment is 0.3, and the average level of significance for factor loadings is 0.4 (Hair et al., 2014). In Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), factor loadings greater than 0.5 indicate a strong level of significance and high correlation between observed variables and factors, indicating a well-defined structure showed that the structure is well defined. However, as the sample size and the number of variables increase, factor loadings less than 0.25 can still be significant. In samples of 100, factor loadings of at least 0.19 and 0.26 are considered significant at the 5% and 1% levels, respectively, whereas in samples of 200, values of 0.14 and 0.18 are significant at the 5% level. The CFA and factor loading coefficients results in Table 3.7 show that most of the observed variables (items) with a high correlation level and a few with a moderate to high correlation level measure the latent variables well.

Table 3.7 Factor Load Values of Observed Variables (Items) in the Measurement Model

Factors	Variable D1	Variable D2_	Variable D3_	Variable D4_	Variable D5_	Variable D6	Variable D7
Q1.1	0.837	…	…	…	…	…	…
Q1.10	0.857	…	…	…	…	…	…
Q1.11	0.877	…	…	…	…	…	…
Q1.2	0.833	…	…	…	…	…	…
Q1.3	0.868	…	…	…	…	…	…
Q1.4	0.802	…	…	…	…	…	…
Q1.5	0.858	…	…	…	…	…	…
Q1.6	0.830	…	…	…	…	…	…
Q1.7	0.877	…	…	…	…	…	…
Q1.8	0.861	…	…	…	…	…	…
Q1.9	0.871	…	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.1	…	0.812	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.10	…	0.892	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.11	…	0.820	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.12	…	0.875	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.13	…	0.840	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.14	…	0.834	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.15	…	0.907	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.16	…	0.860	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.2	…	0.878	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.3	…	0.851	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.4	…	0.859	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.5	…	0.801	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.6	…	0.851	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.7	…	0.864	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.8	…	0.816	…	…	…	…	…
Q2.9	…	0.878	…	…	…	…	…
Q3.1	…	…	0.830	…	…	…	…
Q3.2	…	…	0.860	…	…	…	…
Q3.3	…	…	0.845	…	…	…	…
Q3.4	…	…	0.795	…	…	…	…
Q3.5	…	…	0.838	…	…	…	…
Q3.6	…	…	0.848	…	…	…	…
Q4.1	…	…	…	0.950	…	…	…
Q4.2	…	…	…	0.909	…	…	…
Q4.3	…	…	…	0.968	…	…	…
Q4.4	…	…	…	0.925	…	…	…
Q5.1	…	…	…	…	0.841	…	…
Q5.2	…	…	…	…	0.871	…	…
Q5.3	…	…	…	…	0.829	…	…
Q5.4	…	…	…	…	0.882	…	…

Factors	Variable D1	Variable D2_	Variable D3_	Variable D4_	Variable D5_	Variable D6	Variable D7
Q5.5	…	…	…	…	0.865	…	…
Q6.1	…	…	…	…	…	0.932	…
Q6.2	…	…	…	…	…	0.963	…
Q6.3	…	…	…	…	…	0.927	…
Q7.1	…	…	…	…	…	…	0.846
Q7.2	…	…	…	…	…	…	0.869
Q7.3	…	…	…	…	…	…	0.863
Q7.4	…	…	…	…	…	…	0.883
Q7.5	…	…	…	…	…	…	0.865
Q7.6	…	…	…	…	…	…	0.893
Q7.7	…	…	…	…	…	…	0.823
Q7.8	…	…	…	…	…	…	0.884

3.4.2.1.1.1.2 Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's alpha is a widely used measure for evaluating the internal reliability of a structure or set of indicators. It indicates the degree of correlation between the constructs of a conceptual model and their corresponding observed variables (a structure and its indicators). The calculations of Cronbach's alpha revealed a high correlation between the model constructs and their observed variables (Table 3.8).

3.4.2.1.1.1.3 Composite Reliability

In addition to the conventional use of Cronbach's alpha as a reliability criterion, a more contemporary hybrid reliability criterion is also employed to assess the reliability of each structure. This alternative criterion offers an advantage over the Cronbach's alpha coefficient by calculating the reliability of structures based on the correlation of their indicators with each other rather than relying solely on absolute calculations. As a result, both criteria are utilized to better measure reliability. A composite reliability value greater than 0.7 for each structure is indicative of good internal consistency within the measurement models, while a value lower than 0.6 suggests a lack of reliability. The composite reliability values for the structures in the conceptual model are higher than 0.8 (Table 3.8).

3.4.2.1.1.1 Convergent Validity

Once the reliability criterion has been assessed, the next step in fitting the measurement models is to examine convergent validity. Convergent validity is represented by the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) criterion, which means the degree of correlation between each construct of the conceptual model and its corresponding observed variables (related items). A value of 0.4 or greater for AVE is generally considered acceptable, according to the recommendations of experts and researchers (Table 3.8).

Table 3.8 General Quality Criteria of Fit of the Measurement Model

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Qualified SMI's selection factors	0.974	0.982	0.977	0.475
Variable D1	0.962	0.963	0.967	0.726
Variable D2	0.975	0.976	0.977	0.728
Variable D3	0.914	0.916	0.933	0.699
Variable D4	0.961	1.233	0.967	0.880
Variable D5	0.910	0.916	0.933	0.735
Variable D6	0.941	1.189	0.959	0.885
Variable D7	0.952	0.953	0.960	0.750

The results of factor load values, Cronbach's alpha coefficients, composite reliability, and AVE criterion that has been provided through software analysis. Since the values of these criteria for each latent variable are more than the threshold level, the convergent reliability and validity of the research model can be confirmed.

3.4.2.1.1.2 Divergent Validity (Discriminant)

The third criterion for evaluating the fit of measurement models in PLS analyses is divergent validity, which is assessed using both cross-factor loadings and the Fornell-Larcker (1981) method. The cross-factor loading method compares the correlation between the items of a structure with that same structure to the correlation between those items and other structures. If the correlation between an item of a structure with another structure is greater than its correlation with its own structure, then the validity is not established. The appropriate level of divergent validity for a model is indicated by a greater correlation between the factor loads of most of the items related to each structure with each other than the correlation of those items with other structures, as determined by the first method. In the second method of examining divergent validity, the Fornell-Larcker (1981) method, the relationship between a structure and its items is compared to that structure's relationship with other structures. The acceptable level of divergent validity indicates that a structure in the model has more interaction with its own items than with those of other structures, as shown by a matrix that displays the correlation coefficient values between the structures and the square root of the AVE values for each structure. By examining the cases, the measurement model's divergent validity is confirmed (Table 3.9).

Table 3.9 Discriminant Validity

	D1	D2	D3	D4	D5	D6	D7
Variable D1	0.852						
Variable D2	0.722	0.853					
Variable D3	0.599	0.670	0.836				
Variable D4	0.101	0.001	0.104	0.938			
Variable D5	0.535	0.625	0.515	-0.023	0.858		
Variable D6	0.057	0.071	0.167	0.080	0.122	0.941	
Variable D7	0.695	0.697	0.694	0.054	0.784	0.034	0.866

3.4.2.1.2 Fit of Structural Models

According to the PLS data analysis algorithm in the PLS method, once the measurement models have been fitted, the structural model will be evaluated. The structural model examines the relationships between the latent variables, in contrast to the measurement models which focus on the relationships between the latent and observed variables. Significant coefficient criteria such as t-values, R^2, Stone-Geisser (Q2), and redundancy are analyzed to determine the fit of the structural model.

3.4.2.1.2.1 Significant Values (t)

Several criteria are utilized to assess the fit of the structural model. The primary criterion is significant coefficients or t-values, which are depicted on the paths by executing the bootstrap command. A t-value greater than 1.96 signifies the correctness of the relationship between structures and confirms research hypotheses with a 95% confidence level. In Figure 3.3, the t-values displayed evaluate the structures of the model. All significant t-values are greater than 1.96, except for the (D4) Follower's Profile and (D6) SMI Personal Life dimensions. This indicates the significance of the paths, the adequacy of the structural model, and the confirmation of five research hypotheses.

Figure 3.3 Significance of t-values to Evaluate the Structures of the Conceptual Model

3.4.2.1.2.2 The R^2 Coefficient

The second criterion for evaluating the fit of the structural model is the R^2 coefficients related to the latent endogenous (dependant) variables of the model. This criterion measures the effect of an exogenous variable on an endogenous variable and connects the measurement and structural parts of SEM. The R^2 values are displayed within the model circles and are only calculated for endogenous structures, with exogenous structures having a value of zero. To assess the strength of the R^2 coefficients, (Chin Wynne, 1998) proposed criteria of 0.19, 0.33, and 0.67 for weak, medium, and strong R^2, respectively. Higher values indicate a better fit of the model. Figure 3.4 displays the R^2 coefficients for the model.

Figure 3.4 Path Coefficients, Factor Load Values, and R^2

3.4.2.1.2.3 Stone-Geisser Criterion (Q2)

This criterion evaluates the model's ability to predict the items related to the endogenous structures and is indicative of the model's predictive power. A well-defined relationship between structures in a model should lead to the successful testing of hypotheses, meaning that if in a model, the relationships between structures are properly defined, the hypotheses are properly tested. The strength of the predictive power is determined based on three values: 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, representing weak, medium, and strong predictive power of the model for endogenous structures, respectively (Henseler et al., 2009). A Q2 value of zero or less than zero for an endogenous structure indicates an inadequate explanation of the relationship between that structure and the

71

other structures in the model. Table 3.10 shows the Q2 values for the variables in this study. The results confirm the appropriate relationships between the endogenous structures, as indicated by the high values, which demonstrate the strong predictive power of the model for these structures and further confirm the proper fit of the structural model.

Table 3.10 Construct Cross-validated Communality

Variables	SSO	SSE	Q² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Qualified SMI's selection factors	3021.000	1681.522	0.443
Variable D1	627.000	215.075	0.657
Variable D2	912.000	294.452	0.677
Variable D3	342.000	149.694	0.562
Variable D4	228.000	71.350	0.687
Variable D5	285.000	115.739	0.594
Variable D6	171.000	54.632	0.681
Variable D7	456.000	152.113	0.666

3.4.2.1.2.4 Redundancy Criterion

The redundancy criterion is calculated by multiplying the R^2 values with the communality values of the structures and represents the amount of variability in the items of an endogenous structure that is influenced by one or more exogenous structures. It is a comprehensive measure of the quality of the structural model for all endogenous structures and is used to calculate the overall model fit criterion, namely the Goodness of Fit (GoF). The redundancy criterion values are summarized in Table 3.11.

Table 3.11 Redundancy Criterion

Variables	Communality	R^2	Redundancy
Qualified SMI's selection factors	0.475	…	…
Variable D1	0.726	0.743	0.539
Variable D2	0.728	0.848	0.617
Variable D3	0.699	0.621	0.434
Variable D4	0.880	0.004	0.004
Variable D5	0.735	0.579	0.426
Variable D6	0.885	0.011	0.010
Variable D7	0.750	0.773	0.580

3.4.2.1.3 Fit of Overall Models (Goodness of Fit Criterion)

To evaluate the fitness of the entire model, which encompasses both the measurement and structural models, the Goodness of Fit (GoF) criterion is computed using the following formula:

$$GoF = \sqrt{\overline{(communality)} \times \overline{(R^2)}}$$

After calculating the GoF criterion for the conceptual model, it was found to be 0.573. Based on the three threshold values proposed by (Hair et al., 2014) of 0.01, 0.25, and 0.36 for weak, medium, and strong GoF, respectively. Akter et al. (2011) considered a cutoff value of 0.36; hence, this indicates a strong overall fit of our model.

3.4.2.2 Test of the Research Hypotheses and Interpretation of the Results

After examining the fit of measurement, structural and overall models, the research hypotheses are tested. In the PLS method, the research hypotheses are tested by analyzing the significant coefficients Z (*t*-values) of each path and the standardized factor load coefficients related to the paths. If the significance coefficient of each path is greater than 1.96, the corresponding path is confirmed at a 95% confidence level, and the related hypothesis is supported. The conceptual model of this paper is tested, and the numbers in Figure 3.4 show the path coefficient and the relationship between the latent variables.

To be able to check the significance of the path coefficient, it is necessary to consider the *t*-value of each path. As mentioned before, according to this figure and all resulting t-values, the relations in five paths got significant at the 95% confidence level. Table 3.12 shows the results of the hypotheses test in the structural model. According to the results, hypotheses H1, H2, H3, H5, and H7, which respectively described the significance of the role of dimensions (D1) Engagement, (D2) SMI's Traits, (D3) Content Relevance, (D5) Compensation, (D7) SMI Work Style in selecting qualified SMIs at the level 95% are confirmed. However, the effect of the two dimensions (D4) Follower's Profile and (D6) SMI Personal Life in selecting qualified SMIs from the perspective of experts at the level of 95% is negligible and the related hypotheses H4 and H6 were rejected. The results of hypotheses testing in the structural model are summarized in Table 3.12.

Table 3.12 Results of the Test of the Structural Model

Hypotheses	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Results
Qualified SMI's selection factors -> Variable D1	0.862	0.853	0.054	15.906	0.000	Confirmed
Qualified SMI's selection factors -> Variable D2	0.921	0.921	0.027	33.925	0.000	Confirmed
Qualified SMI's selection factors -> Variable D3	0.788	0.780	0.076	10.325	0.000	Confirmed
Qualified SMI's selection factors -> Variable D4	0.061	0.089	0.166	**0.367**	**0.713**	Rejected
Qualified SMI's selection factors -> Variable D5	0.761	0.763	0.059	12.797	0.000	Confirmed
Qualified SMI's selection factors -> Variable D6	0.103	0.130	0.127	**0.808**	**0.419**	Rejected

Hypotheses	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values	Results
Qualified SMI's selection factors -> Variable D7	0.879	0.876	0.038	23.358	0.000	Confirmed

3.5 Contribution

3.5.1 Practical Contribution

There are several practical contributions of the current study that could be used by SM marketers, influencers and businesses. This study provides a comprehensive and valuable understanding of the factors that SMEs consider while employing SMIs. SMEs can use this understanding to make informed decisions when selecting influencers for their marketing campaigns. By viewing the factors identified in the current study, SMEs can choose influencers who cultivate a high level of engagement, possess desirable traits, create relevant content, and have followers who align with the target audience for their product or service. Secondly, the findings can help influencers improve their chances of being employed by SMEs by identifying the factors that SMEs consider when employing influencers. Influencers interested in brand collaborations can use this information to focus on improving their engagement levels, enhancing their personal branding, and tailoring their content to their followers' interests and preferences. Finally, this study contributes to our understanding of marketing best practices by demonstrating how Instagram influencers can be used effectively in achieving marketing objectives. By understanding the factors SMEs consider when employing influencers, businesses can select the most appropriate influencers for their marketing campaigns, optimize their content and promotions, and maximize their return on investment. Overall, the practical contributions of this study can benefit SM marketers, influencers, and businesses by providing them with a better understanding of the factors that influence the success of Instagram influencer marketing campaigns.

3.5.2 Literature Contribution

The current study has several academic contributions that can benefit the field of marketing research. It comprehensively examines the factors that SEMs consider when employing Instagram influencers. By testing multiple hypotheses using the PLS-SEM method, this study provides a robust analysis of the underlying dimensions that influence the use of Instagram influencers in marketing campaigns. Additionally, it adds to the growing literature on SMI marketing. This study contributes to understanding the unique characteristics of Instagram influencers who are active on this SM platform. Furthermore, the findings can inform future research on the effectiveness of Instagram influencer marketing campaigns. By identifying the key factors that influence SEMs' decisions when employing Instagram influencers, this research provides a foundation for future research on the relationship between these factors and the effectiveness of influencer marketing campaigns.

3.6 Discussion, Future Research & Conclusion

3.6.1 Discussion & Conclusion

The results of this study elaborate that there are various factors that firms utilize while employing SMIs. More specifically, these factors include engagement, SMI's traits, content relevance, compensation, and SMI work style were significant factors that SMEs consider when employing

SMIs. In the dimension of engagement, different engagement metrics, such as likes, comments, and followers, were the most significant factor that SMEs consider when employing SMIs. This sheds light on the importance of the amount of engagement that followers and SMIs have. This importance originates from the fact that high engagement is a sign of a well-received message that has a strong impact on the audience.

Other than engagement, SMI's traits, such as trustworthiness, expertise, and attractiveness, were significant factors that SMEs consider when employing SMIs. This offers evidence that SMIs with a positive image who can effectively promote a product or service to their followers are valued by SMEs. Moreover, compensation and content relevance of SMIs are crucial factors in their chance of getting employed by SMEs. Content relevance is of special interest here because SMIs with high content relevance are aware of their audience's interests and create content that is relevant and appreciated by them. Additionally, the compensation style and number of fees that SMI charge for their service are determinants in their chances of becoming hired by SMEs. As SMEs don't often have a large marketing budget, compensation is a highly important factor for them. Contrary to the previous factors, the study found that SMI's personal life and followers' profiles were not significant factors in employing SMIs. This suggests that SMEs do not give much importance to an influencer's personal life or follower's socio-economic class or personality types when considering SMIs for employment.

It is worthwhile to mention that according to contingency theory (Luthans & Stewart, 1977), there is no one best way to manage an SME organization. Hence, the use of SMIs in marketing efforts by SMEs depends on the specific situation and context of the SME. The factors to consider by SMEs can range widely, including marketing goals, target audience, and allocated budget. Furthermore, contingency theory suggests that SME owners should be flexible and adaptable to new developments and circumstances. One of these circumstances can be the needs and wants of the SMIs, including their compensation and pricing structure, personal interests and lifestyle, audience composition, and the platform(s) they operate on. This is compatible with the findings of *Essay 3*. Moreover, contingency theory suggests that management styles should be tailored to the strengths and weaknesses of the SME in question. Hence, in the context of using SMIs, a SWOT of the SME should be performed, and SMIs should be utilized in a way that strengthens the SME's strength and overcomes their marketing weaknesses.

3.6.2 Future Research
SMIs are quickly becoming leaders in shaping consumer behaviours (Faverio & Anderson, 2022). They are one of the most influential players in the market. A study in 2021 found that 58% of consumers had made a purchase based on influencers' recommendations in the past 6 months (Moore, 2021). Although they are one of the players in business ecosystems, their actions and extent of authority should be audited and controlled by other stakeholders in the system. This calls for extended studies in this domain from the perspectives of marketers and policymakers. Based on the findings of this Essay, there are several future avenues that can be suggested. One future avenue is studying the role of SMIs in different industries. The factors that SMEs consider when employing SMIs may vary depending on the industry. Other future studies could investigate the relationship between the factors identified in this study and the effectiveness of SMI marketing campaigns. The results of such studies could provide valuable insights into how SMEs can optimize their influencer marketing strategies for better outcomes. Moreover, more studies can cross-examine SM platforms' influence on the factors SMEs consider when employing SMIs. The

current study was limited to Instagram influencers. Future research can further probe the factors SMEs consider when employing influencers on different platforms, such as YouTube or TikTok. These factors may differ on another platform. Another avenue for future studies could explore cultural perspectives. Those studies can explore the impact of cultural differences on the factors that SMEs consider when employing SMIs. This could help SMEs working in different cultures tailor their influencer marketing strategies to their respective cultural contexts and effectively reach diverse audiences.

Finally, considering the contingency theory (Luthans & Stewart, 1977), we emphasize that businesses should consider the extent of involvement with SMIs. They must tailor their SM strategy around choosing influencers who are the "persona" influencing stakeholders. More specifically, businesses must select SMIs who resonate well with their SMM targets and strategies and simultaneously don't involve in unethical utilization of their follower base. Ethical considerations such as transparency, authenticity, and disclosure (Kuzminov, 2023) are important as well. They have not appeared in this Essay because previous research didn't explore them for selecting influencers, nor did our respondents consider them in their selection factors. To this end, it is an interesting topic to further probe the impact of ethical considerations of SMIs on their selection by firms (specifically, SMEs). Through such a study, researchers can scrutinize ways that SMEs can maintain trust and credibility with their target audience while utilizing SMIs for their marketing campaigns. The findings of the current Essay provide a foundation for future research on SMI marketing, and these directions could help expand the current understanding of the factors that SMEs consider when employing SMIs.

General Discussion and Conclusion

The rapid growth of SM has presented businesses with new opportunities. Concurrently, SM features are changing rapidly; the things that we were witnessing 10 years ago are becoming very outdated and even obsolete now (Hollingsworth, 2019; Johnston, 2018). Due to these changes, SMM challenges abound. Firms are facing many challenges to solve, specifically in the ever-changing paradigm of SM. For this reason, the current thesis used marketing as a lens to examine SM challenges. The first step in this effort was to collect and synthesize relevant research in *Essay 1*. The findings identify various challenges faced by marketers in SMM. Technological challenges, managing brand reputation, and measuring the return on investment (ROI) of SMM campaigns were among the challenges found to be most critical to marketers that have been studied in previous research. The results of this study elaborated that SMM challenges are multifaceted and require careful consideration of various factors, such as technological, organizational, and cultural aspects.

In the context of contingency theory, the findings of *Essay 1* indicate that there is a need to find specific SMM challenges that are domain-relevant. These challenges, either internal or external, can be examined and minimized more effectively if they are specific to an identified domain. Hence, in *Essay 2*, we concentrated on finding SMM challenges in the Iran beauty industry due to the heavy consumption of SMM in this industry. The results of this Delphi study elaborated that (a) "coordination across different company functions that are engaged in SMM at both staff and managers level"; (b) "keeping security and privacy of company channel, customer, and company data," and (c) "limited IT resources of some companies in the adoption of SMM" received the highest score; hence they are the most pressing challenges that require more resources and attention from marketing and SMM managers.

To assess the challenges of SMM tactics, we expanded the context of our research in *Essay 3*. Hence, we studied SMI selection factors. The results of *Essay 3* have found that engagement, SMI's traits, content relevance, compensation, and SMI work style were significant factors that SMEs consider when employing SMIs. This suggests that internal and external factors are critical to consider when managing SMM, which is consistent with contingency theory. Further, given this close inspection of a single SMM tactic, these findings emphasize the potential breadth of key factors that may be needed to define a comprehensive model in a contemporary setting.

This thesis has provided significant contributions to the field of SMM by exploring the challenges faced by businesses and developing a framework for tackling one of the most interesting and challenging concerns at the current time. The three essays in this thesis have also highlighted the complexity of the SM landscape and the importance of developing effective marketing strategies that align with firms' internal challenges as well as external factors such as the preferences and behaviours of firms' audiences and partners (e.g., SMI). In developing a theory based on contingency theory, Zeithaml, Varadarajan and Zeithaml (1988) suggest that contributions can be achieved by identifying the important variables that distinguish between contexts, grouping similar contexts based on these contingency variables, and finally determining the most effective responses for each major group. Through this lens, the present work makes advances in identifying the situational variables from the managerial perspective. The findings of this research will be valuable to marketing practitioners, academics, and policymakers in enhancing their marketing

practices and strategies. Further research can be conducted to examine the dynamic nature of SMM and the emerging trends and challenges that may arise in the future.

The advancement in technology is quite large. For instance, the vast utilization of augmented reality or the employment of virtual influencers (Conti et al., 2022) by brands will blur the line between the physical and digital worlds. These technologies and digitalisations will surely change how businesses would achieve their desired impact on customers. Specifically, these changes would range from entertainment, social interactions and communication to content creation and impacting audiences. The mentioned evolutions would definitely impact all domains of SM, SMM, SMM challenges and SMI utilizations.

References

Abeza, G., O'Reilly, N., & Reid, I. (2013). Relationship marketing and social media in sport. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, *6*(2), 120–142.

Adla, L., Gallego-Roquelaure, V., & Calamel, L. (2020). Human resource management and innovation in SMEs. *Personnel Review*, *49*(8), 1519–1535. https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-09-2018-0328

Aichner, T., & Perkmann, U. (2013). Social media: Opportunities and risks for regional market research. *International Journal of Market Research*, *55*(5), 609–610. https://doi.org/10.2501/ijmr-2013-055

Akter, S., Ambra, J. D., & Ray, P. (2011). *An evaluation of PLS based complex models: The roles of power analysis, predictive relevance and GoF index predictive relevance and GoF index*. https://ro.uow.edu.au/commpapers

Alalwan, A. A., Rana, N. P., Algharabat, R., & Tarhini, A. (2016). A systematic review of extant literature in social media in the marketing perspective. *Lecture Notes in Computer Science (Including Subseries Lecture Notes in Artificial Intelligence and Lecture Notes in Bioinformatics)*, *9844 LNCS*, 79–89. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-45234-0_8

Alalwan, A. A., Rana, N. P., Dwivedi, Y. K., & Algharabat, R. (2017). Social media in marketing: A review and analysis of the existing literature. *Telematics and Informatics*, *34*(7), 1177–1190. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tele.2017.05.008

Ali, S., Islam, N., Rauf, A., Din, I. U., Guizani, M., & Rodrigues, J. J. P. C. (2018). Privacy and security issues in online social networks. *Future Internet*, *12*, 1–12. https://doi.org/10.3390/fi10120114

Ali Abbasi, G., Abdul Rahim, N. F., Wu, H., Iranmanesh, M., & Keong, B. N. (2022). Determinants of SME's Social Media Marketing Adoption: Competitive industry as a moderator. *SAGE Open*, *12*(1). https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211067220

Alkhateeb, F. M., Clauson, K. A., Khanfar, N. M., & Latif, D. A. (2008). Legal and regulatory risk associated with Web 2.0 adoption by pharmaceutical companies. *Journal of Medical Marketing*, *8*(4), 311–318. https://doi.org/10.1057/jmm.2008.20

Al Kurdi, B., Alshurideh, M., Akour, I., Tariq, E., Alhamad, A., & Alzoubi, H. M. (2022). The effect of social media influencers' characteristics on consumer intention and attitude toward Keto products purchase intention. *International Journal of Data and Network Science*, *6*(4), 1135–1146. https://doi.org/10.5267/j.ijdns.2022.7.006

Alves, H., Fernandes, C., & Raposo, M. (2016). Social media marketing: A literature review and implications. *Psychology & Marketing*, *33*(12), 1029–1038. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20936

Amrita, S. M., & Mohan, R. (2016). Application of social media as a marketing promotion tool: A review. *2016 IEEE International Conference on Computational Intelligence and Computing Research, ICCIC 2016*, 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1109/ICCIC.2016.7919587

Appel, G., Grewal, L., Hadi, R., & Stephen, A. T. (2020). The future of social media in marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *48*(1), 79–95. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00695-1

Archer, C., & Harrigan, P. (2016). Show me the money: How bloggers as stakeholders are challenging theories of relationship building in public relations. *Media International Australia*, *160*(1), 67–77. https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X16651139

Arora, A., Bansal, S., Kandpal, C., Aswani, R., & Dwivedi, Y. (2019). Measuring social media influencer index- insights from facebook, Twitter and Instagram. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *49*, 86–101. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.03.012

Arrigo, E. (2018). Social media marketing in luxury brands: A systematic literature review and implications for management research. *Management Research Review*, *41*(6), 657–679. https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-04-2017-0134

Assaad, W., & Marx Gómez, J. (2011). Social network in marketing (social media marketing) opportunities and risks. *International Journal of Managing Public Sector Information and Communication Technologies (IJMPICT)*, *2*(1), 13–22. https://doi.org/10.5121/ijmpict.2011.2102

Atanassova, I., & Clark, L. (2015). Social media practices in SME marketing activities: A theoretical framework and research agenda. *Journal of Customer Behaviour*, *14*(2), 163–183.

Attanasio, O., Barr, A., Cardenas, J. C., Genicot, G., & Meghir, C. (2012). Risk pooling, risk preferences, and social networks. *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, *4*(2), 134–167. https://doi.org/10.1257/app.4.2.134

Audrezet, A., de Kerviler, G., & Guidry Moulard, J. (2020). Authenticity under threat: When social media influencers need to go beyond self-presentation. *Journal of Business Research*, *117*(July), 557–569. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2018.07.008

Bae, I.-H., & Zamrudi, M. F. Y. (2018). Challenge of social media marketing and effective strategies to engage more customers: Selected retailer case study. *International Journal of Business and Society*, *19*(3), 851–869.

Bakker, D. (2018). Conceptualising influencer marketing. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Marketing and Management*, *1*(1), 79–87. www.etimm.ase.ro

Bakshy, E., Mason, W. A., Hofman, J. M., & Watts, D. J. (2011). Everyone's an influencer: Quantifying influence on twitter. *Proceedings of the 4th ACM International Conference on Web Search and Data Mining, WSDM 2011*, 65–74. https://doi.org/10.1145/1935826.1935845

Bamakan, S. M. H., Nurgaliev, I., & Qu, Q. (2019). Opinion leader detection: A methodological review. *Expert Systems with Applications*, *115*, 200–222. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eswa.2018.07.069

Bartik, A. W., Bertrand, M., Cullen, Z., Glaeser, E. L., Luca, M., & Stanton, C. (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on small business outcomes and expectations. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *117*(30), 17656–17666. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2006991117

Beiderbeck, D., Frevel, N., von der Gracht, H. A., Schmidt, S. L., & Schweitzer, V. M. (2021). Preparing, conducting, and analyzing Delphi surveys: Cross-disciplinary practices, new directions, and advancements. *Methods X*, *8*, 101401. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mex.2021.101401

Beier, M., & Wagner, K. (2014). The decision of small firms to adopt social media: Perception of risks and benefits. *Proceeding of Academy of Management*, *November*, *1*, 17196.

Bernritter, S. F., Loermans, A. C., Verlegh, P. W. J., & Smit, E. G. (2017). 'We' are more likely to endorse than 'I': The effects of self-construal and brand symbolism on consumers' online brand endorsements. *International Journal of Advertising*, *36*(1), 107–120. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2016.1186950

Biaudet, S. (2017). *Influencer Marketing as a Marketing Tool the Process of Creating an Influencer Marketing Campaign on Instagram*. Degree Programme in International Business. Yrkeshögskolan Arcada. https://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/134139?show=full

Bitiktas, F., & Tuna, O. (2020). Social media usage in container shipping companies: Analysis of Facebook messages. *Research in Transportation Business & Management*, *34*, 100454. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rtbm.2020.100454

Bizzi, L., & Labban, A. (2019). The double-edged impact of social media on online trading: Opportunities, threats, and recommendations for organizations. *Business Horizons*, *62*(4), 509–519. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2019.03.003

Bokunewicz, J. F., & Shulman, J. (2017). Influencer identification in Twitter networks of destination marketing organizations. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, *8*(2), 205–219. https://doi.org/10.1108/JHTT-09-2016-0057

Booth, N., & Matic, J. A. (2011). Mapping and leveraging influencers in social media to shape corporate brand perceptions. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, *16*(3), 184–191.

Breves, P. L., Liebers, N., Abt, M., & Kunze, A. (2019). The perceived fit between Instagram influencers and the endorsed brand: How influencer–brand fit affects source credibility and persuasive effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising Research*, *59*(4), 440–454. https://doi.org/10.2501/JAR-2019-030

Brocato, E. D., White, N. J., Bartkus, K., & Brocato, A. A. (2015). Social media and marketing education: A review of current practices in curriculum development. *Journal of Marketing Education*, *37*(2), 76–87. https://doi.org/10.1177/0273475315588110

Brown, D., & Hayes, N. (2015). *Influencer Marketing*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780080557700

Brtan, I. (2021). Social media marketing in Croatian consumerism. *ST-OPEN*, *2*(e2021), 1–12.

Bruce, E., Shurong, Z., Egala, S. B., Amoah, J., Ying, D., Rui, H., & Lyu, T. (2022). Social media usage and SME firms' sustainability: An introspective analysis from Ghana. *Sustainability (Switzerland)*, *14*(15). https://doi.org/10.3390/su14159433

Carman, J. G., & Fredericks, K. A. (2018). Applications of social network analysis in evaluation: Challenges, suggestions, and opportunities for the future. *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation*, *33*(2), 175–187. https://doi.org/10.3138/cjpe.31156

Carter, D. (2016). Hustle and brand: The sociotechnical shaping of influence. *Social Media and Society*, *2*(3). https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305116666305

Cecere, G., Guel, F. Le, & Soulié, N. (2015). Perceived Internet privacy concerns on social network in Europe. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, *96*, 277–287.

Cha, M., Haddadi, H., Benevenuto, F., & Gummadi, K. P. (2010). Measuring user influence in twitter: The million-follower fallacy. *Fourth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*, 10–17.

Chalmers, J., & Armour, M. (2019). The Delphi technique. *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences*, 715–735. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-5251-4_99

Chatterjee, S., & Kumar Kar, A. (2020). Why do small and medium enterprises use social media marketing and what is the impact: Empirical insights from India. *International Journal of Information Management*, *53*, 102103.

Chatzigeorgiou, C. (2017). Modelling the impact of social media influencers on behavioural intentions of millennials: The case of tourism in rural areas in Greece. *Journal of Tourism, Heritage & Services Marketing*, *3*(2), 25–29. https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3747699

Chen, L.-C., & Huang, L.-C. (2020). The motivation, strategies, and barriers for adopting social media marketing in the flower retailing business. *Horticulturae*, *6*(4), 1–21.

Chen, S., & Chaiken, S. (1999). The heuristic-systematic model in its broader context. In *Dual-Process Theories in Social Psychology: Vol. In S. Cha* (pp. 73–96). http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=psyh&AN=1999-02377-003&site=ehost-live&scope=site

Cheng, Y. (2016). Social media keep buzzing! A test of the contingency theory in China's Red Cross credibility crisis. *International Journal of Communication*, *10*, 20.

Cheng, Y., & Fisk, A. (2021). Toward a contingency theory of relating management: Exploring organization-public relationships (OPRs) in conflicts. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research*, *15*(1), 32-51.

Childers, C. C., Lemon, L. L., & Hoy, M. G. (2019). #Sponsored #Ad: Agency perspective on influencer marketing campaigns. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, *40*(3), 258–274. https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2018.1521113

Chin Wynne W. (1998). The partial least squares approach to structural equation modeling. *Modern Methods for Business Research*, 295–336. https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2018.1468851

Chițu, I. B., & Tecău, A. S. (2012). Issues related to social network advertising. *Bulletin of the Transilvania University of Brasov. Series V: Economic Sciences*, *5*(1), 31–36.

Choi, N., & Joo, S. (2021). Understanding public libraries' challenges, motivators, and perceptions toward the use of social media for marketing. *Library Hi Tech*, *39*(2), 352–367. https://doi.org/10.1108/LHT-11-2017-0237

Choi, Y., & Thoeni, A. (2016). Social media: Is this the new organizational stepchild? *European Business Review*, *28*(1), 21–38. https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-05-2015-0048

Chu, S. C., Lien, C. H., & Cao, Y. (2019). Electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) on WeChat: Examining the influence of sense of belonging, need for self-enhancement, and consumer engagement on Chinese travellers' eWOM. *International Journal of Advertising*, *38*(1), 26–49. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2018.1470917

Coleman, L. J., Manago, S. M., & Cote, L. (2016). Challenges and opportunities for social media in emerging markets. *Journal of Marketing Development and Competitiveness*, *10*(3), 26–31.

Colicev, A., Kumar, A., & O'Connor, P. (2019). Modeling the relationship between firm and user generated content and the stages of the marketing funnel. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *36*(1), 100–116. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2018.09.005

Considine, B., Lenk, M., Krahel, J. P., & Janvrin, D. (2020). Social media and enterprise risk. *Strategic Finance*, *102*(5), 32–37.

Constantinides, E., & Fountain, S. J. (2008). Web 2.0: Conceptual foundations and marketing issues. *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, *9*(3), 231–244. https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.dddmp.4350098

Conti, M., Gathani, J., & Tricomi, P. P. (2022). Virtual influencers in online social media. *IEEE Communications Magazine, 60*(8), 86–91.

DataReportal. (2023). *Digital 2023: Global Overview Report*. https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/

de Michele, R., & Marchi, G. (2018). Influencer identification and selection on social networking sites: An analysis on Instagram. *Mercati & Competitività*, *4*, 129–153. https://doi.org/10.3280/mc2018-004008

de Veirman, M., Cauberghe, V., & Hudders, L. (2017). Marketing through Instagram influencers: The impact of number of followers and product divergence on brand attitude. *International Journal of Advertising*, *36*(5), 798–828. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1348035

Denton, K. (2019). How social media uses the psychology of persuasion to influence the purchase of beauty products to the young generations. *Social Media*, *May*, 1–26.

Denyer, D., & Tranfield, D. (2009). Producing a systematic review. In D. A. Buchanan & A. Bryman (Eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Organizational Research Methods*. (pp. 671–689). SAGE Publications Ltd.

Derham, R., & Cragg, P. (2012). Social media: Goals, challenges and value to small firms sum. *ICSB World Conference Proceedings*, 1.

Dhanesh, G. S., & Duthler, G. (2019). Relationship management through social media influencers: Effects of followers' awareness of paid endorsement. *Public Relations Review*, *45*(3). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.03.002

Di Domenico, G., Sit, J., Ishizaka, A., & Nunan, D. (2021). Fake news, social media and marketing: A systematic review. *Journal of Business Research*, *124*(November 2020), 329–341. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.11.037

Djafarova, E., & Rushworth, C. (2017). Exploring the credibility of online celebrities' Instagram profiles in influencing the purchase decisions of young female users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *68*, 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.11.009

Dodokh, A., & Al-Maaitah, M. A. (2019). Impact of social media usage on organizational performance in the Jordanian Dead Sea cosmetic sector. *European Journal of Business and Management*, *11*(2). https://doi.org/10.7176/EJBM

Dwivedi, Y. K., Ismagilova, E., Hughes, D. L., Carlson, J., Filieri, R., Jacobson, J., Jain, V., Karjaluoto, H., Kefi, H., Krishen, A. S., Kumar, V., Rahman, M. M., Raman, R., Rauschnabel, P. A., Rowley, J., Salo, J., Tran, G. A., & Wang, Y. (2021). Setting the future of digital and social media marketing research: Perspectives and research propositions. *International Journal of Information Management*, *59*(June), Article 102168. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2020.102168

Dwivedi, Y. K., Kapoor, K. K., & Chen, H. (2015). Social media marketing and advertising. *The Marketing Review*, *15*(3), 289–309. https://doi.org/10.1362/146934715x14441363377999

Ebrahim, R. S. (2020). The role of trust in understanding the impact of social media marketing on Brand Equity and brand loyalty. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, *19*(4), 287–308. https://doi.org/10.1080/15332667.2019.1705742

Ekanem, I., & Erukusin, K. (2017). The emergence of social media and its impact on SME performance. *Technological Integration as a Catalyst for Industrial Development and Economic Growth*, 132–150.

Elawadi, I. (2016). Digital marketing and social media: Challenges and solutions. *Principles and Practice of Marketing*, *August*, 668–704.

Erffmeyer, R. C., Erffmeyer, E. S., & Lane., I. M. (1986). The Delphi technique: An empirical evaluation of the optimal number of rounds. *Group & Organization Studies*, *11*(1–2), 120–128.

Erwin, Ardyan, E., & Dharmayana Putra, S. (2022). Social media marketing trends: Influencers' accounts for SMEs product marketing. *International Journal of Economics, Business and Accounting Research*, *6*(3), 1293–1305. https://jurnal.stie-aas.ac.id/index.php/IJEBAR

Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2017). Connecting with celebrities: How consumers appropriate celebrity meanings for a sense of belonging. *Journal of Advertising*, *46*(2), 297–308. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2016.1274925

Evans, N. J., Phua, J., Lim, J., & Jun, H. (2017). Disclosing Instagram influencer advertising: The effects of disclosure language on advertising recognition, attitudes, and behavioral intent. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, *17*(2), 138–149. https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2017.1366885

Faverio, M., & Anderson, M. (2022, November 21). *For Shopping, Phones Are Common and Influencers Have Become A Factor – Especially For Young Adults*. Pew Research Center. Retrieved March 24, 2023, from https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/11/21/for-shopping-phones-are-common-and-influencers-have-become-a-factor-especially-for-young-adults/

Farivar, S., Wang, F., & Yuan, Y. (2021). Opinion leadership vs. para-social relationship: Key factors in influencer marketing. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *59*(October 2020), 102371. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102371

Fashoro, I., & Barnard, L. (2017). Challenges to the successful implementation of social media in a South African municipality. *South African Institute of Computer Scientist and Information Technologists*, 1–9.

Fill, C., & Turnbull, S. (2019). *Marketing Communications. Pearson UK.* Pearson UK.

Filo, K., Lock, D., & Karg, A. (2015). Sport and social media research: A review. *Sport Management Review*, *18*(2), 166–181.

Fink-Hafner, D., Dagen, T., Doušak, M., Novak, M., & Hafner-Fink, M. (2019). Delphi method: Strengths and weaknesses. *Metodološki Zvezki*, *16*(2), 1–19.

Forbes, K. (2016). Examining the beauty industry's use of social influencers. *Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, *7*(2), 78–87.

Fornell, C., & Larcker, D. F. (1981). Evaluating structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *18*(1), 39–50. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224378101800104

Freberg, K., Graham, K., McGaughey, K., & Freberg, L. A. (2011). Who are the social media influencers? A study of public perceptions of personality. *Public Relations Review*, *37*(1), 90–92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.11.001

Gensler, S., Volckner, F., Liu-thompkins, Y., & Wiertz, C. (2013). Managing brands in social media environment. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *27*, 242–256.

Gerdeman, D. (2019, December 13). How influencers are making over the beauty industry. *Forbes*. https://www.forbes.com/sites/hbsworkingknowledge/2019/12/13/how-influencers-are-making-over-beauty-marketing/?sh=2820b091203e

Geyser, W. (2022, February 8). *The State of Influencer Marketing 2020: Benchmark Report*. InfluencerMarketingHub.

Geyser, W. (2023, February 7). *The State of Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report 2023*. https://influencermarketinghub.com/influencer-marketing-benchmark-report/#toc-7

Giles, D. C. (2018). *Twenty-First Century Celebrity: Fame in Digital Culture*. Emerald Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1108/9781787437081

Goodman, M. B., Booth, N., & Matic, J. A. (2011). Mapping and leveraging influencers in social media to shape corporate brand perceptions. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, *16*(3), 184–191. https://doi.org/10.1108/13563281111156853

Gordon, B. R., Zettelmeyer, F., Bhargava, N., & Chapsky, D. (2019). A comparison of approaches to advertising measurement: Evidence from big field experiments at Facebook. *Marketing Science*, *38*(2), 193–225. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3033144

Haenlein, M., Anadol, E., Farnsworth, T., Hugo, H., Hunichen, J., & Welte, D. (2020). Navigating the new era of influencer marketing: How to be successful on Instagram. TikTok, & Co. *California Management Review*, *63*(1), 5–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/0008125620958166

Hair, J. F., Black, W. C., Babin, B. J., & Anderson, R. E. (2014). *Multivariate Data Analysis* (7th ed.). Pearson Education.

Hair, J. F., Risher, J. J., Sarstedt, M., & Ringle, C. M. (2019). When to use and how to report the results of PLS-SEM. In *European Business Review, 31*(1), 2–24. Emerald Group Publishing Ltd. https://doi.org/10.1108/EBR-11-2018-0203

Hajli, N., & Laroche, M. (2019). Applications of business intelligence and analytics in social media marketing. *International Journal of Information Management*, *48*, 226–227. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2018.12.014

Hamilton, M., Kaltcheva, V. D., & Rohm, A. J. (2016). Social media and value creation: The role of interaction satisfaction and interaction immersion. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *36*, 121–133. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.INTMAR.2016.07.001

Harrigan, P. (2013). Social media, customer relationship management, and SMEs. In *Entrepreneurial marketing: Global perspectives* (pp. 221–241). Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Hashim, J. (2015). Information Communication Technology (ICT) Adoption Among SME Owners in Malaysia. *International Journal of Business and Information*, *2*(2), 221–240.

Haynes, D. (2016). Social media, risk and information governance. *Business Information Review*, *33*(2), 90–93. https://doi.org/10.1177/0266382116651781

Haynes, D., & Robinson, L. (2015). Defining user risk in social networking services. *Aslib Journal of Information Management*, *67*(1), 94–115. https://doi.org/10.1108/AJIM-07-2014-0087

Hidavat, S., Erika Ananda Fatimah, C., Patriana, E., Ulfa, M., Rahmawati, Y., & Maryani, A. (2020). Celebrity endorser in supporting SMEs through social media in pandemic situation. *2020 8th International Conference on Cyber and IT Service Management, CITSM 2020*, 1–5. https://doi.org/10.1109/CITSM50537.2020.9268836

Higgins, R. (2013). Social media and risk management for listed companies. *Keeping Good Companies*, *65*(8), 504-506.

Hodijah, C., Intan, A. J. M., Solihah, R., & Maria, S. (2021). The role of influencer marketing to improve organizational performance and its impact on purchasing decisions. *Budapest International Research and Critics Institute-Journal (BIRCI-Journal)*, *4*(3), 4380–4390. https://doi.org/10.33258/birci.v4i3.2214

Högberg, K. (2016). The Interpretation of social media: Challenges of adopting social media in organizations. *Proceedings of the 3Rd European Conference on Social Media*, *July*, 465.

Hollingsworth, S. (2019, April 25). *R.I.P. to the top 10 failed social media sites*. Search Engine Journal. Retrieved March 24, 2023, from https://www.searchenginejournal.com/failed-social-media-sites/303421/

Hootsuite.com. (2022). *Digital 2020 Global Overview Report*. https://www.hootsuite.com/resources/digital-trends

Horn, I. S., Taros, T., Dirkes, S., Hüer, L., Rose, M., Tietmeyer, R., & Constantinides, E. (2015). Business reputation and social media: A primer on threats and responses. *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, *16*(3), 193–208. https://doi.org/10.1057/dddmp.2015.1

Huang, Y. T., & Su, S. F. (2018). Motives for Instagram use and topics of interest among young adults. *Future Internet*, *10*(8). https://doi.org/10.3390/fi10080077

Humphreys, L. (2013). Mobile social media: Future challenges and opportunities. *Mobile Media and Communication*, *1*(1), 20–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/2050157912459499

Huppertz, C. (2018). *The Use of Social Media by Walloon Non-Profit Organizations: What Are Their Reasons, Issues and Opportunities? HEC-École de gestion de l'Université de Liège.* Université de Liège, Liège, Belgique.

Ing, G. P., & Ming, T. (2018). Antecedents of consumer attitude towards blogger recommendations and its impact on purchase intention. *Asian Journal of Business and Accounting*, *11*(1), 293-323.

Jin, S.-A. A., & Phua, J. (2014). Following celebrities' tweets about brands: The impact of Twitter-based electronic word-of-mouth on consumers source credibility perception, buying intention, and social identification with celebrities. *Journal of Advertising*, *43*(2), 181–195. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2013.827606

Jin, S. V., Muqaddam, A., & Ryu, E. (2019). Instafamous and social media influencer marketing. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, *37*(5), 567–579. https://doi.org/10.1108/MIP-09-2018-0375

Johnston, W. J., Khalil, S., Nhat Hanh Le, A., & Cheng, J. M. S. (2018). Behavioral implications of international social media advertising: an investigation of intervening and contingency factors. *Journal of International Marketing*, *26*(2), 43–61.

Judd, D., Vazquez, M., & O'Sullivan, D. (2021). Biden says platforms like Facebook are "killing people" with Covid misinformation. *CNN*.

Kamins, M. A., Brand, M. J., Hoeke, S. A., & Moe, J. C. (1989). Two-sided versus one-sided celebrity endorsements: The impact on advertising. *Journal of Advertising*, *18*(2), 4–10.

Kanaveedu, A., & Kalapurackal, J. J. (2022). Influencer marketing and consumer behaviour: A systematic literature review. *Vision*. https://doi.org/10.1177/09722629221114607

Kaplan, A. M., & Haenlein, M. (2011). Two hearts in three-quarter time: How to waltz the social media/viral marketing dance. *Business Horizons*, *54*(3), 253–263.

Kaur, H. (2017). Social media usage: Barriers and predictors in promotion of social capital. *Media Watch*, *8*(2), 258–269. https://doi.org/10.15655/mw/2017/v8i2/49009

Kaur, K., & Kumar, P. (2021a). Social media: A blessing or a curse? Voice of owners in the beauty and wellness industry. *TQM Journal*, *August*. https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-03-2021-0074

Kaur, K., & Kumar, P. (2021b). Social media usage in Indian beauty and wellness industry: A qualitative study. *TQM Journal*, *33*(1), 17–32. https://doi.org/10.1108/TQM-09-2019-0216

Keegan, B. J., & Rowley, J. (2017). Management decision evaluation and decision making in social media marketing. *Management Decision Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, *55*(4), 15–31.

Khaleghi, A., Moeini, H., & Pour, M. J. (2019). Identifying and ranking the challenges and opportunities of social media marketing. *New Marketing Research Journal*, *9*(1), 69–88.

Khamis, S., Ang, L., & Welling, R. (2017). Self-branding, 'micro-celebrity' and the rise of Social Media Influencers. *Celebrity Studies*, *8*(2), 191–208. https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2016.1218292

Ki, C. W. 'Chloe,' Cuevas, L. M., Chong, S. M., & Lim, H. (2020). Influencer marketing: Social media influencers as human brands attaching to followers and yielding positive marketing results by fulfilling needs. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *55*(April), 102133. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102133

Ki, C. W. 'Chloe,' & Kim, Y. K. (2019). The mechanism by which social media influencers persuade consumers: The role of consumers' desire to mimic. *Psychology & Marketing*, *36*(10), 905–922. https://doi.org/10.1002/MAR.21244

Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P., & Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business Horizons*, *54*(3), 241–251. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2011.01.005

Kim, D.-Y., & Kim, H.-Y. (2021). Influencer advertising on social media: The multiple inference model on influencer-product congruence and sponsorship disclosure. *Journal of Business Research*, *130*, 405–415. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.02.020

Kim, M., & Song, D. (2018). When brand-related UGC induces effectiveness on social media: The role of content sponsorship and content type. *International Journal of Advertising*, *37*(1), 105–124. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2017.1349031

Knoll, J., & Matthes, J. (2017). The effectiveness of celebrity endorsements: A meta-analysis. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *45*(1), 55–75. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-016-0503-8

Konstantopoulou, A., Rizomyliotis, I., Konstantoulaki, K., & Badahdah, R. (2019). Improving SMEs' competitiveness with the use of Instagram influencer advertising and eWOM. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*, *27*(2), 308–321. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-04-2018-1406

Koohang, A., Paliszkiewicz, J., & Goluchowski, J. (2018). Social media privacy concerns: Trusting beliefs and risk beliefs. *Industrial Management and Data Systems*, *118*(6), 1209–1228. https://doi.org/10.1108/IMDS-12-2017-0558

Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (2016). *Marketing Management, Global Edition.* Edisi 15e. England: Pearson.

Kozinets, R. v, de Valck, K., Wojnicki, A. C., & Wilner, S. J. S. (2010). Networked narratives: Understanding word-of-mouth marketing in online communities. *Journal of Marketing*, *74*, 71–89.

Kumar, M., & Singh, N. (2019). Digital and social media marketing: A brief study of challenges posed towards Indian advertising industry. *AAYAM: AKGIM Journal of Management*, *9*(2), 16–20.

Kuzminov, M. (2023, January 30). *Council post: Social Responsibility and Ethics in Influencer Marketing*. Forbes. Retrieved March 24, 2023, from https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesagencycouncil/2023/01/30/social-responsibility-and-ethics-in-influencer-marketing/?sh=3c2d6342685c

Laeder, J. (2018). *Social Media and Consumer Culture: Addicted to the Idealized Consumer*. https://scholarcommons.scu.edu/engl_176

Lamarre, A., Galarneau, S., & Boeck, H. (2012). Mobile marketing and consumer behaviour current research trend. *Latest Trends Computing*, *3*(1), 1–9.

Lappeman, J., Mukund, P., & Appalraju, R. (2018). Firestorm response: Managing brand reputation during an nWOM firestorm by responding to online complaints individually or as a cluster. *South African Journal for Communication Theory and Research*, *44*(2), 67–87.

Laroche, M., Habibi, M. R., & Richard, M. O. (2013). To be or not to be in social media: How brand loyalty is affected by social media? *International Journal of Information Management*, *33*(1), 76–82. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2012.07.003

Lawton, G. (2007). Web 2.0 creates security challenges. *Computer*, *40*(10), 13–16. https://doi.org/10.1109/MC.2007.367

Lee, J. A., & Eastin, M. S. (2021). Perceived authenticity of social media influencers: Scale development and validation. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, *15*(4), 822–841. https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-12-2020-0253

Lee, J. E., & Watkins, B. (2016). YouTube vloggers' influence on consumer luxury brand perceptions and intentions. *Journal of Business Research*, *69*(12), 5753–5760. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.171

Lee, S., & Kim, E. (2020). Influencer marketing on Instagram: How sponsorship disclosure, influencer credibility, and brand credibility impact the effectiveness of Instagram

promotional post. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, *11*(3), 232–249. https://doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2020.1752766

Leung, F. F., Gu, F. F., Li, Y., Zhang, J. Z., & Palmatier, R. W. (2022). Influencer marketing effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing*. https://doi.org/10.1177/00222429221102889

Leung, F. F., Gu, F. F., & Palmatier, R. W. (2022). Online influencer marketing. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *50*(2), 226–251. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-021-00829-4

Li, F., & Du, T. C. (2011). Who is talking? An ontology-based opinion leader identification framework for word-of-mouth marketing in online social blogs. *Decision Support Systems*, *51*(1), 190–197. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dss.2010.12.007

Li, F., Larimo, J., & Leonidou, L. C. (2021). Social media marketing strategy: Definition, conceptualization, taxonomy, validation, and future agenda. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *49*(1), 51–70. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-020-00733-3

Lin, H.-C., Bruning, P. F., & Swarna, H. (2018). Using online opinion leaders to promote the hedonic and utilitarian value of products and services. *Business Horizons*, *61*(3), 431–442. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2018.01.010

Lin, H.-C., Han, X., Lyu, T., Ho, W. H., Xu, Y., Hsieh, T. C., Zhu, L., & Zhang, L. (2020). Task-technology fit analysis of social media use for marketing in the tourism and hospitality industry: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *32*(8), 2677–2715. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-12-2019-1031

Lin, Y. (2023, January 13). *10 Influencer Marketing Statistics You Need to Know In 2023*. https://www.oberlo.ca/blog/influencer-marketing-statistics

Litterio, A. M., Nantes, E. A., Larrosa, J. M., & Gómez, L. J. (2017). Marketing and social networks: A criterion for detecting opinion leaders. *European Journal of Management and Business Economics*, *26*(3), 347–366. https://doi.org/10.1108/ejmbe-10-2017-020

Litvin, S. W., Goldsmith, R. E., & Pan, B. (2018). A retrospective view of electronic word-of-mouth in hospitality and tourism management. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *30*(1), 313–325. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-08-2016-0461

Lou, C., & Yuan, S. (2019). Influencer marketing: How message value and credibility affect consumer trust of branded content on social media. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, *19*(1), 58–73. https://doi.org/10.1080/15252019.2018.1533501

Lovari, A., & Bowen, S. A. (2020). Social media in disaster communication: A case study of strategies, barriers, and ethical implications. *Journal of Public Affairs*, *20*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1002/pa.1967

Lupiáñez-Villanueva, F., Mayer, M. Á., & Torrent, J. (2009). Opportunities and challenges of Web 2.0 within the health care systems: An empirical exploration. *Informatics for Health and Social Care*, *34*(3), 117–126. https://doi.org/10.1080/17538150903102265

Luthans, F., & Stewart, T. I. (1977). A general contingency theory of management. *Academy of Management Review*, *2*(2), 181–195.

Lyons, B., & Henderson, K. (2005). Opinion leadership in acomputer-mediated environment. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, *4*(5), 319–329.

Mabkhot, H., Isa, N. M., & Mabkhot, A. (2022). The influence of the credibility of social media influencers SMIs on the consumers' purchase intentions: Evidence from Saudi Arabia. *Sustainability, 14*(19), 12323. https://doi.org/10.3390/SU141912323

Main, S. (2017). *Micro-Influencers Are More Effective With Marketing Campaigns Than Highly Popular Accounts.* Adweek. Com: Http://Www. Adweek. Com/Digital/Micro-Influencers-Are-More-Effective-Withmarketing-Campaigns-than-Highly-Popular-Accounts.

Malik, A. Z., Thapa, S., & Paswan, A. K. (2022). Social media influencer (SMI) as a human brand – a need fulfillment perspective. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-07-2021-3546

Mallipeddi, R., Kumar, S., Sriskandarajah, C., & Zhu, Y. (2018). A framework for analyzing influencer marketing in social networks: Selection and scheduling of influencers. *SSRN Electronic Journal*, *February 2021*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3255198

Manan, H. A., Ariffin, S., Sharifeleani, T., & Maknu, R. (2020). Effects of social media advertisements on intention to purchase health and beauty products. *Journal of International Business, Economics and Entrepreneurship*, *5*(June), 59–68.

Maqsood, T., Khalid, O., Irfan, R., Madani, S. A., & Khan, S. U. (2016). Scalability issues in online social networks. *ACM Computing Surveys*, *49*(2). https://doi.org/10.1145/2968216

Masuda, H., Han, S. H., & Lee, J. (2022). Impacts of influencer attributes on purchase intentions in social media influencer marketing: Mediating roles of characterizations. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, *174*, 121246. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.TECHFORE.2021.121246

McCracken, G. (1989). Who is the celebrity endorser? Cultural foundations of the endorsement process. *Journal of Consumer Research*, *16*(3), 310. https://doi.org/10.1086/209217

McFarlane, G. (2022, December 19). *How Facebook (Meta), Twitter, Social Media Make Money From You*. Investopedia. Retrieved March 22, 2023, from https://www.investopedia.com/stock-analysis/032114/how-facebook-twitter-social-media-make-money-you-twtr-lnkd-fb-goog.aspx

Memon, S., Mahar, S., Das Dhomeja, L., & Pirzado, F. (2015). Prospects and challenges for social media in Pakistan. *2015 International Conference on Cyber Situational Awareness, Data Analytics and Assessment, CyberSA 2015*. https://doi.org/10.1109/CyberSA.2015.7166124

Metzger, M. J., & Flanagin, A. J. (2013). Credibility and trust of information in online environments: The use of cognitive heuristics. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *59*, 210–220. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.07.012

Michaelidou, N., Siamagka, N. T., & Christodoulides, G. (2011). Usage, barriers and measurement of social media marketing: An exploratory investigation of small and medium B2B brands. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *40*(7), 1153–1159. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2011.09.009

Misirlis, N., & Vlachopoulou, M. (2018). Social media metrics and analytics in marketing – S3M: A mapping literature review. *International Journal of Information Management*, *38*(1), 270–276. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2017.10.005

Mohamed, H., Marzukhi, S., Zainol, Z., Sembok, T. M. T., & Zakaria, O. (2018). Semantic-based social media threats detection. *ACM International Conference Proceeding Series*, *January 2019*. https://doi.org/10.1145/3164541.3164620

More, J. S., & Lingam, C. (2019). A SI model for social media influencer maximization. *Applied Computing and Informatics*, *15*(2), 102–108. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aci.2017.11.001

Moore, L. (2021, May 6). *The Rise of Influencer Marketing*. LinkedIn. Retrieved March 24, 2023, from https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/rise-influencer-marketing-lisa-moore

Msibi, P. N., Mogale, R., De Waal, M., & Ngcobo, N. (2018). Using e-Delphi to formulate and appraise the guidelines for women's health concerns at a coal mine: A case study. *Curationis*, *41*(1), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.4102/curationis.v41i1.1934

Mugari, I., & Chisuvi, R. (2021). Social media and national security in Zimbabwe: Embracing social media for national security and addressing social media threats. *African Security Review*, *30*(1), 86–101. https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2020.1857806

Nadaraja, R., & Yazdanifard, R. (2013). Social media marketing: Advantages and social media marketing. *Center of Southern New Hampshire University*, 1–10.

Nafees, L., Cook, C. M., Nikolov, A. N., & Stoddard, J. E. (2021). Can social media influencer (SMI) power influence consumer brand attitudes? The mediating role of perceived SMI credibility. *Digital Business*, *1*(2), 100008. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.digbus.2021.100008

Nance, D. R. (2021). *Entrepreneurship Through the Use of Social Media: An Exploration of the Blogger-Turned-Entrepreneur Phenomenon in the Fashion Industry*. *North Carolina State University*, Dissertations Publishing, 28392956.

Nascimento, T. C. do, Campos, R. D., & Suarez, M. (2020). Experimenting, partnering and bonding: A framework for the digital influencer-brand endorsement relationship. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 1009–1030. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2020.1791933

Navarro, C., Moreno, A., Molleda, J. C., Khalil, N., & Verhoeven, P. (2020). The challenge of new gatekeepers for public relations. A comparative analysis of the role of social media influencers for European and Latin American professionals. *Public Relations Review*, *46*(2), 101881. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2020.101881

Nelson, S. D., & Simek, J. W. (2011). Mitigating legal risks of using social media. *Information Management Journal*, *45*(5), HT8–HT12.

Ng, H. S., Kee, D. M. H., & Ramayah, T. (2020). Examining the mediating role of innovativeness in the link between core competencies and SME performance. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, *27*(1), 103–129. https://doi.org/10.1108/JSBED-12-2018-0379

Novitasari, D., Napitupulu, B. B. J., Abadiyah, S., Silitonga, N., & Asbari, M. (2022). Linking between brand leadership, customer satisfaction, and repurchase intention in the e-

commerce industry. *International Journal of Social and Management Studies*, *3*(1), 280–289. https://doi.org/10.5555/ijosmas.v3i1.109

Oehlert, M. (2010). Technology corner: The real challenge of Web 2.0. *Defense AR Journal*, *17*(1), 141–147.

Ohanian, R. (1990). Construction and validation of a scale to measure celebrity endorsers' perceived expertise, trustworthiness, and attractiveness. *Journal of Advertising*, *19*(3), 39–52.

Ohio University. (2020, October 22). Social media in government: Benefits, challenges and impact on social perception. *Online Master of Public Administration*. https://onlinemasters.ohio.edu/blog/social-media-in-government/

Okazaki, S., & Taylor, C. R. (2013). Social media and international advertising: Theoretical challenges and future directions. *International Marketing Review*, *30*(1), 56–71. https://doi.org/10.1108/02651331311298573

Ortiz-Ospina, E. (2019, September 18). *The Rise of Social Media*. Our World in Data. Retrieved March 22, 2023, from https://ourworldindata.org/rise-of-social-media

Osatuyi, B. (2015). Empirical examination of information privacy concerns instrument in the social media context. *AIS Transactions on Replication Research*, *1*(June), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.17705/1atrr.00003

Paliwal, G. (2015). *Social Media Marketing: Opportunities and Challenges* [Doctoral dissertation, Sloan School of Management]. Department of Distinctive Collections, MIT Libraries. https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/98997

Paluch, S., & Holzmueller, H. H. (2015). Social media marketing in B2B-companies - an empirical investigation of the actual usage, challenges, and future expectations of B2B social network activities. In *Robinson, Jr. L. (eds) Marketing Dynamism & Sustainability: Things Change, Things Stay the Same…. Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science* (p. 697). Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/https://doi-org.lib-ezproxy.concordia.ca/10.1007/978-3-319-10912-1_222

Pang, A., Yingzhi Tan, E., Song-Qi Lim, R., Yue-Ming Kwan, T., & Bhardwaj Lakhanpal, P. (2016). Building effective relations with social media influencers in Singapore. *Media Asia*, *43*(1), 56–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2016.1177962

Pant, R., Negia, A., & Kishor, N. (2020). A multidimensional role of social media as marketing tool: A review of literature. *International Journal of Technology Transfer & Commercialisation*, *17*(2–3), 265–285.

Paul, J., & Criado, A. R. (2020). The art of writing literature review: What do we know and what do we need to know? *International Business Review*, *29*(4), 101717. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ibusrev.2020.101717

Paulin, M., Ferguson, R. J., Jost, N., & Fallu, J. M. (2014). Motivating millennials to engage in charitable causes through social media. *Journal of Service Management*, *25*(3), 334–348. https://doi.org/10.1108/JOSM-05-2013-0122

Pew Research Center. (2021, April 7). *Social Media Fact Sheet*. Retrieved February 25, 2023, from https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/fact-sheet/social-media/

Phung, L., & Qin, L. (2018). *Perception of social media influencers: A study on evaluation of Social Media Influencer types for different beauty categories* [Bachelors thesis, Jönköping International Business School]. Digitala Vetenskapliga Arkivet. https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:1213878

Ping, J. W., Cui, T., & Pan, S. L. (2011). Strategies of crisis management from contingent perspective. *Pacific Asia Conference on Information Systems*, *150*. https://aisel.aisnet.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1149&context=pacis2011

Pornpitakpan, C. (2004). The persuasiveness of source credibility: A critical review of five decades' evidence. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *34*(2), 243–281.

Qin, Y. S. (2020). Fostering brand–consumer interactions in social media: the role of social media uses and gratifications. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, *14*(3), 337–354.

Ramsaran-Fowdar, R. R., & Fowdar, S. (2013). The implications of Facebook marketing for organizations. *Contemporary Management Research*, *9*(1), 73–84. https://doi.org/10.7903/cmr.9710

Rathore, S., Sharma, P. K., Loia, V., Jeong, Y. S., & Park, J. H. (2017). Social network security: Issues, challenges, threats, and solutions. *Information Sciences*, *421*, 43–69. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ins.2017.08.063

Reeves, D. B. (2009). Three challenges of web 2.0. *Educational Leadership*, *66*(6), 87–90.

Ritchie, P. (2007). The security risks of AJAX/web 2.0 applications. *Network Security*, *2007*(3), 4–8. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1353-4858(07)70025-9

Roohani, S., & Attaran, S. (2014). Social media: New challenges and opportunities for corporate governance. *International Journal of Disclosure and Governance*, *11*(4), 366–379. https://doi.org/10.1057/jdg.2013.30

Roux, J. (2020). *How Social Media Democratized Beauty: South African Influencers Experiences of The Transformation of Cosmetics and Work in The Beauty Industry* [Masters thesis, Stellenbosch University]. Stellenbosch University Library. http://hdl.handle.net/10019.1/107842

Rowley, J., & Keegan, B. J. (2020). An overview of systematic literature reviews in social media marketing. *Journal of Information Science*, *46*(6), 725–738. https://doi.org/10.1177/0165551519866544

Roy, A., Dionne, C., Maxwell, L., Carson, M., & Sosa, O. (2018). Barriers to social media and how SMEs can overcome them. *Proceedings of the 5th European Conference on Social Media, ECSM 2018*, 255–263.

Rubio, D. M., Berg-Weger, M., Tebb, S. S., Lee, E. S., & Rauch, S. (2003). Objectifying content validity: Conducting a content validity study in social work research. *Social Work Research*, *27*(2), 94–104.

Rudman, R. J. (2010a). Framework to identify and manage risks in Web 2.0 applications. *African Journal of Business Management*, *4*(15), 3251–3264.

Rudman, R. J. (2010b). Incremental risks in Web 2.0 applications. *Electronic Library*, *28*(2), 210–230. https://doi.org/10.1108/02640471011033585

Rudman, R. J. (2014). The influence of knowing Web 2.0 risks and controls on Web 2.0 usage and security practices of online users. *Journal of Applied Business Research*, *30*(1), 105–116. https://doi.org/10.19030/jabr.v30i1.8287

Ruekert, R. W., Walker, O. C., & Roering, K. J. (1985b). The organization of marketing activities: A contingency theory of structure and performance. *Journal of Marketing*, *49*(1), 13–25. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224298504900102

Rugova, B., & Prenaj, B. (2016). Social media as marketing tool for SMEs: Opportunities and challenges. *Academic Journal of Business*, *2*(3), 85–97.

Rydén, P., Ringberg, T., & Wilke, R. (2015). How managers' shared mental models of business-customer interactions create different sensemaking of social media. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *31*, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intmar.2015.03.001

Ryu, S., & Park, J. (2020). The effects of benefit-driven commitment on usage of social media for shopping and positive word-of-mouth. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *55*, 102094. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2020.102094

Saboia, I., Almeida, A. M. P., Sousa, P., & Pernencar, C. (2020). Are you ready for the challenge? Social media health challenges for behaviour change. In *Perspectives on Behavior Science*, *43*(3), 543–578. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40614-020-00261-z

Salisch, M. V. (2014). Adolescents in Web 2.0: risks and chances. *Praxis Der Kinderpsychologie Und Kinderpsychiatrie*, *63*(5), 338–342.

Salo, J. (2017). Social media research in the industrial marketing field: Review of literature and future research directions. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *66*(April), 115–129. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2017.07.013

Sammis Kristy, Lincoln Cat, & Pomponi Stefania. (2015). *Influencer Marketing for Dummies*. John Wiley & Sons.

Sands, S., Campbell, C. L., Plangger, K., & Ferraro, C. (2022). Unreal influence: Leveraging AI in influencer marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, *56*(6), 1721–1747. https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-12-2019-0949

Saul, H. (2016). Instafamous: Meet the social media influencers redefining celebrity. In *The Independent*. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/instagram-model-natasha-oakley-iskra-lawrence-kayla-itsines-kendall-jenner-jordyn-woods-a6907551.html

Schultz, D. E., & Peltier, J. J. (2013). Social media's slippery slope: Challenges, opportunities and future research directions. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, *7*(2), 86–99. https://doi.org/10.1108/JRIM-12-2012-0054

Scott, D. M. (2015). *The New Rules of Marketing & PR: How to Use Social Media, Online Video, Mobile Applications, Blogs, News Releases, and Viral Marketing to Reach Buyers Directly.* John Wiley & Sons. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119172499

Senft, T. M. (2013). Microcelebrity and the Branded Self. *A Companion to New Media Dynamics*, 346–354. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bostoncollege-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3422436.

Shah, R., & Shelar, P. (2018). Challenges and opportunities in social media. *Sansmaran Research Journal*, 1–5.

Shareef, M. A., Mukerji, B., Dwivedi, Y. K., Rana, N. P., & Islam, R. (2019). Social media marketing: Comparative effect of advertisement sources. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *46*, 58-69.

Shen, B., & Bissell, K. (2013). Social media, social me: A content analysis of beauty companies' use of Facebook in marketing and branding. *Journal of Promotion Management*, *19*(5), 629–651. https://doi.org/10.1080/10496491.2013.829160

Sherer, J., & McLellan, M. (2015). Like this, not that-mitigating corporate social media engagement risks. *The Computer and Internet Lawyer*, *32*(8), 1–5.

Short, J. (2008). Risks in a Web 2.0 world. *Risk Management*, *55*(10), 28–31.

Slavica, K. (2015). Cultivating relationships with customers: The social media challenge. *Journal of Leadership, Accountability and Ethics*, *12*(2), 81–91.

Smith, D. (2014). Charlie is so 'English'-like: Nationality and the branded celebrity person in the age of YouTube. *Celebrity Studies*, *5*(3), 256–274. https://doi.org/10.1080/19392397.2014.903160

Sokolova, K., & Kefi, H. (2020). Instagram and YouTube bloggers promote it, why should I buy? How credibility and parasocial interaction influence purchase intentions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *53*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretconser.2019.01.011

Song, Y. A., Lee, S. Y., & Kim, Y. (2019). Does mindset matter for using social networking sites? Understanding motivations for and uses of Instagram with growth versus fixed mindset. *International Journal of Advertising*, *38*(6), 886–904. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2019.1637614

Soumya, T., & Revahty, S. (2018). Survey on threats in online social media. *International Conference on Communication and Signal Processing (ICCSP)*, 0077–0081.

Sparks, B. A., & Browning, V. (2011). The impact of online reviews on hotel booking intentions and perception of trust. *Tourism Management*, *32*(6), 1310–1323. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2010.12.011

Sreejesh, S., Mohapatra, S., & Anusree, M. (2014). Business research methods: An applied orientation. *Business Research Methods*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.22573/spg.020.bk/s/026

Statista. (2021a). *Daily time spent on social networking by internet users worldwide from 2012 to 2020*.

Statista. (2021b). *Number of social network users worldwide from 2017 to 2025*.

Statista. (2022a, January). Cosmetics Industry - Statistics & Facts. *Statista*.

Statista. (2022b, January). *Value of the cosmetics market worldwide from 2018 to 2025*.

Statista Research Department. (2023a). *Influencer marketing market size worldwide from 2016 to 2022*. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1092819/global-influencer-market-size/

Statista Research Department. (2023b). *Social media advertising spending worldwide from 2017 to 2026, by device*.

Stephen, A. T. (2016). The role of digital and social media marketing in consumer behavior. *Current Opinion In Psychology*, *10*, 17–21.

Stieglitz, S., Mirbabaie, M., Ross, B., & Neuberger, C. (2018). Social media analytics – Challenges in topic discovery, data collection, and data preparation. *International Journal of Information Management*, *39*, 156–168. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2017.12.002

Stokinger, E., & Ozuem, W. (2018). Social media and customer retention: Implications for the luxury beauty industry. In *In Social Media Marketing: Breakthroughs in Research and Practice*. IGI Global.

Stubb, C., Nyström, A. G., & Colliander, J. (2019). Influencer marketing: The impact of disclosing sponsorship compensation justification on sponsored content effectiveness. *Journal of Communication Management*, *23*(2), 109–122. https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-11-2018-0119

Suciu, P. (2023, March 10). *Tiktok may be a 'security threat,' but it is social media marketers and influencers who feel threaten by potential ban*. Forbes. Retrieved March 22, 2023, from https://www.forbes.com/sites/petersuciu/2023/03/08/tiktok-may-be-a-security-threat-but-it-is-social-media-marketers-and-influencers-who-feel-threaten-by-ban/?sh=5958f9c46886

Sun, J., Leung, X. Y., & Bai, B. (2021). How social media influencer's event endorsement changes attitudes of followers: The moderating effect of followers' gender. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, *33*(7), 2337–2351. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-09-2020-0959

Sundermann, G., & Raabe, T. (2019). Strategic communication through social media influencers: Current state of research and desiderata. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, *13*(4), 278–300. https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2019.1618306

Syed, R. (2019). Enterprise reputation threats on social media: A case of data breach framing. *Journal of Strategic Information Systems*, *28*(3), 257–274. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsis.2018.12.001

Syoufi, M. (2018). *An Exploratory Assessment of IT Management Issues in Ontario Hospitals*. MSc. dissertation, Université d'Ottawa/University of Ottawa.

Tafesse, W., & Wien, A. (2018). Implementing social media marketing strategically: An empirical assessment. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *34*(9–10), 732–749. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2018.1482365

Tajvidi, R., & Karami, A. (2021). The effect of social media on firm performance. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *115*, 105174. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.09.026

Tajvidi, M., Richard, M. O., Wang, Y., & Hajli, N. (2020). Brand co-creation through social commerce information sharing: The role of social media. *Journal of Business Research*, *121*, 476–486.

Tanimoto, S., Iwashita, M., Seki, Y., Sato, H., & Kanai, A. (2016). Risk assessment quantification of social-media utilization in enterprise. *IEEE/ACIS 15th International Conference on Computer and Information Science (ICIS)*, 1–6.

Thakur, K., Hayajneh, T., & Tseng, J. (2019). Cyber security in social media: Challenges and the way forward. *IT Professional*, *21*(2), 41–49. https://doi.org/10.1109/MITP.2018.2881373

Thangaratinam, S., & Redman, C. W. (2005). The Delphi technique. *The Obstetrician & Gynaecologist*, *7*(2), 120–125.

Tiwari, A., Fontestad, R. N., & Turner, C. J. (2010). Drivers and barriers to the adoption of Web 2.0. *WEBIST 2010 - Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Web Information Systems and Technology*, *2*(Webist), 375–378. https://doi.org/10.5220/0002711803750378

Torrecilla-Salinas, C. J., De Troyer, O., Escalona, M. J., & Mejías, M. (2019). A Delphi-based expert judgment method applied to the validation of a mature agile framework for Web development projects. *Information Technology and Management*, *20*(1), 9–40. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10799-018-0290-7

Tran, G. A., & Strutton, D. (2014). Has reality television come of age as a promotional platform? Modeling the endorsement effectiveness of celebreality and reality stars. *Psychology and Marketing*, *31*(4), 294–305. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20695

Tranfield, D., Denyer, D., & Smart, P. (2003). Towards a Methodology for developing evidence-informed management knowledge by means of systematic review. *British Journal of Management*, *14*(3), 207–222. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-8551.00375

Trusov, M., Bodapati, A. v, Bucklin, R. E., & Mullin, P. W. (2010). Determining influential users in internet social networks. *Journal of Marketing Research*, *47*(4), 643–658. http://ssrn.com/abstract=1479689Electroniccopyavailableat:http://ssrn.com/abstract=1479689

Tuten, T., & Perotti., V. (2019). Lies, brands and social media. *Qualitative Market Research*, *22*(1), 5-13.

Tzoumaka, E., Tsiotsou, R. H., & Siomkos, G. (2016). Delineating the role of endorser's perceived qualities and consumer characteristics on celebrity endorsement effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *22*(3), 307–326. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2014.894931

Uzunoğlu, E., & Misci Kip, S. (2014). Brand communication through digital influencers: Leveraging blogger engagement. *International Journal of Information Management*, *34*(5), 592–602. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2014.04.007

Valos, M., Polonsky, M. J., Mavondo, F., & Lipscomb, J. (2015). Senior marketers' insights into the challenges of social media implementation in large organisations: Assessing generic and electronic orientation models as potential solutions. *Journal of Marketing Management*, *31*(7–8), 713–746. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2014.977931

Van de Ven, A. H., Ganco, M., & Hinings, C. R. (2013). Returning to the frontier of contingency theory of organizational and institutional designs. *Academy of Management Annals*, *7*(1), 393–440.

Van der Schyff, K., Flowerday, S., & Furnell, S. (2020). Duplicitous social media and data surveillance: An evaluation of privacy risk. *Computers & Security, 94*, 101822.

Vollenbroek, W., de Vries, S., Constantinides, E., & Kommers, P. (2014). Identification of influence in social media communities. *International Journal of Web Based Communities*, *10*(3), 280–297. https://doi.org/10.1504/IJWBC.2014.062943

Voorveld, H. A. M., van Noort, G., Muntinga, D. G., & Bronner, F. (2018). Engagement with social media and social media advertising: The differentiating role of platform type. *Journal of Advertising*, *47*(1), 38–54. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2017.1405754

Vrontis, D., Makrides, A., Christofi, M., & Thrassou, A. (2021). Social media influencer marketing: A systematic review, integrative framework and future research agenda. *International Journal of Consumer Studies*, *January 2021*, 617–644. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12647

Walden, J., Bortree, D., & DiStaso, M. (2015). This blog brought to you by … exploring blogger perceptions of a product endorsement policy and reviews. *Journal of Communication Management*, *19*(3), 254–269. https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-08-2013-0065

Wang, Z., Liu, H., Liu, W., & Wang, S. (2020). Understanding the power of opinion leaders' influence on the diffusion process of popular mobile games: Travel Frog on Sina Weibo. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *109*, Article 106354. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2020.106354

Whiting, A., & Deshpande, A. (2016). Towards Greater Understanding of Social Media Marketing: A Review. *Journal of Applied Business and Economics*, *18*(4), 82–91.

Whiting, A., Williams, D. L., & Hair, J. (2019). Praise or revenge: Why do consumers post about organizations on social media. *Qualitative Market Research*, *22*(2), 133–160.

Wiedmann, K.-P., Hennigs, N., & Langner, S. (2010). Spreading the word of fashion: Identifying social influencers in fashion marketing. *Journal of Global Fashion Marketing*, *1*(3), 142–153. https://doi.org/10.1080/20932685.2010.10593066

Wilbur, D., & Myers, D. (2016). The NFL and its concussion crisis: Adapting the contingency theory to examine shifts in publics' stances. *Journal of US-China Public Administration*, *13*(3), 181–188.

World Bank Group. (2023). *World Bank SME finance: Development news, research, Data*. World Bank. Retrieved March 24, 2023, from https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/smefinance

Xiao, M., Wang, R., & Chan-Olmsted, S. (2018). Factors affecting YouTube influencer marketing credibility: A heuristic-systematic model. *Https://Doi.Org/10.1080/16522354.2018.1501146*, *15*(3), 188–213. https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2018.1501146

Xu (Rinka), X., & Pratt, S. (2018). Social media influencers as endorsers to promote travel destinations: An application of self-congruence theory to the Chinese Generation Y. *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, *35*(7), 958–972. https://doi.org/10.1080/10548408.2018.1468851

Ye, G., Hudders, L., de Jans, S., & de Veirman, M. (2021). The value of influencer marketing for business: a bibliometric analysis and managerial implications. *Journal of Advertising*, *50*(2), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2020.1857888

Zahoor, S. Z., & Qureshi, I. H. (2017). Social media marketing and brand equity: A literature review. *IUP Journal of Marketing Management*, *16*(1), 47–64.

Zeiller, M., & Schauer, B. (2011). Adoption, motivation and success factors of social media for team collaboration in SMEs. *ACM International Conference Proceeding Series*. https://doi.org/10.1145/2024288.2024294

Zeithaml, V. A., "Rajan" Varadarajan, P., & Zeithaml, C. P. (1988). The contingency approach: Its foundations and relevance to theory building and research in marketing. *European Journal of Marketing*, *22*(7), 37-64.

Zenith. (2019). *E-commerce and Premium Digital Media to Drive beauty Ad Spend Recovery*. https://www.zenithmedia.com/e-commerce-and-premium-digital-media-to-drive-beauty-adspend-recovery/

Zhang, B., & Vos, M. (2014). Social media monitoring: Aims, methods, and challenges for international companies. *Corporate Communications*, *19*(4), 371–383. https://doi.org/10.1108/CCIJ-07-2013-0044

Zhang, Y., Li, X., & Wang, T. W. (2013). Identifying influencers in online social networks: The role of tie strength. In *International Journal of Intelligent Information Technologies, 9*(1), 11–20. https://doi.org/10.4018/jiit.2013010101

Zheng, L. (2013). Social media in Chinese government: Drivers, challenges and capabilities. *Government Information Quarterly*, *30*(4), 369–376.

Appendix A: The Common Social Media Marketing Challenges for Businesses

Table A.1 Distribution of Papers based on Keywords Searched

Keyword	Total number of studies found
social media marketing challenges	12
social media marketing threat	2
social media marketing issues	1
social media marketing risk	6
social media marketing barrier	1
social media marketing obstacle	0
social media marketing concern	1
web 2.0 challenges	14
web 2.0 threat	0
web 2.0 issues	9
web 2.0 risk	10
web 2.0 barrier	2
web 2.0 obstacle	0
web 2.0 concern	0
social media challenges	49
social media threat	8
social media issues	2
social media risk	96
social media barrier	14
social media obstacle	3
social media concern	8
social media marketing review	32
social network marketing challenges	9
social network marketing threat	3
social network marketing issues	5
social network marketing risk	7
social network marketing barrier	1
social network marketing obstacle	0
social network marketing concern	5
Over the top marketing challenges	0
Over the top marketing threat	0
Over the top marketing issues	0
Over the top marketing risk	0
Over the top marketing barrier	0
Over the top marketing obstacle	0
Over the top marketing concern	0
digital content marketing challenges	0
digital content marketing threat	0
digital content marketing issues	0
digital content marketing risk	0
digital content marketing barrier	0
digital content marketing obstacle	0
digital content marketing concern	0
social media ecosystem marketing	4
social media ecosystem small business	2

Appendix B: List of Common Social Media Challenges

Table B.1 Common Social Media Marketing Challenges for Businesses

Dimension	Social media marketing challenges	Indicator	References
SMM adoption	Probable business model changes due to the use of social media	C1	(Bae & Zamrudi, 2018; Y. Choi & Thoeni, 2016; Hofacker & Belanche, 2016; Leeflang et al., 2014; Michaelidou et al., 2011)
	Some businesses and employees do not consider social media as a marketing channel	C2	(Keegan & Rowley, 2017)
	Legal and reputation issues resulting from the use of social media marketing	C3	(Huppertz, 2018; Roy et al., 2018; Rugova & Prenaj, 2016)
	Operational risk during the adoption of social media marketing	C4	(Rugova & Prenaj, 2016)
	Limited IT resources of some companies in the adoption of social media marketing	C5	(Bae & Zamrudi, 2018; N. Choi & Joo, 2021; Michaelidou et al., 2011)
	Reaching customers is hard on social media and the company might leave out people who do not have access to or use social media	C6	(N. Choi & Joo, 2021; Leeflang et al., 2014; Paliwal, 2015)
	Obtaining relevant best practices in social media marketing	C7	(N. Choi & Joo, 2021)
	Lack of employees' expertise in social media marketing	C8	(N. Choi & Joo, 2021; Elawadi, 2016; Rugova & Prenaj, 2016)
	Choosing the right platform for social media marketing	C9	(Hofacker & Belanche, 2016; Paliwal, 2015)
	The ability to generate and leverage deep customer insights from social media marketing	C10	(Elawadi, 2016)
	Staff unwillingness to undertake new learning regarding social media	C11	(N. Choi & Joo, 2021)

Dimension	Social media marketing challenges	Indicator	References
SMM implementation	Coordination across different company functions that are engaged in social media marketing at both staff and managers level	C12	(Bae & Zamrudi, 2018; Valos et al., 2015)
	Social Media requires a new way of thinking and employee culture	C13	(Valos et al., 2015)
	Making employees and customers engaged in social media marketing	C14	(Hofacker & Belanche, 2016; Valos et al., 2015)
	Implementing Marketing Information Systems required for social media marketing	C15	(Valos et al., 2015)
	Appropriate training about the usage of SMM is not available	C16	(N. Choi & Joo, 2021; Michaelidou et al., 2011)
	Lack of expert human resources regarding social media	C17	(Roy et al., 2018)
	The high cost of producing content on social media	C18	(Khaleghi et al., 2019)
SMM utilization	Keeping Security and privacy of company channel, customer, and company data	C19	(Bae & Zamrudi, 2018)
	Obtaining Customer engagement in social media	C20	(Bae & Zamrudi, 2018; Hofacker & Belanche, 2016)
	Communicating in two languages	C21	(Hofacker & Belanche, 2016)
	The difficulty of cooperation between different departments	C22	(Elawadi, 2016; Hofacker & Belanche, 2016; Paliwal, 2015)
	Overt marketing or advertising techniques on social media might turn off the customers	C23	(Y. Choi & Thoeni, 2016; Hofacker & Belanche, 2016)

Dimension	Social media marketing challenges	Indicator	References
SMM utilization (cont' d)	Managing Ethic issues related to social media marketing	C24	(N. Choi & Joo, 2021; Y. Choi & Thoeni, 2016; Keegan & Rowley, 2017; Paliwal, 2015; Rugova & Prenaj, 2016)
	Harass social media contacts and business account of followers	C25	(Valos et al., 2015) (Paliwal, 2015)
	Infringe on copyright when posting on social media	C26	(Bae & Zamrudi, 2018; N. Choi & Joo, 2021; Y. Choi & Thoeni, 2016; Elawadi, 2016; Huppertz, 2018; Keegan & Rowley, 2017; Leeflang et al., 2014; Michaelidou et al., 2011; Paliwal, 2015; Rugova & Prenaj, 2016; Tanimoto et al., 2016; Valos et al., 2015)
	Managing intellectual property of the post	C27	(N. Choi & Joo, 2021)
	Intentional or unprepared Leak of information by an employee on social media	C28	(N. Choi & Joo, 2021; Elawadi, 2016; Hofacker & Belanche, 2016; Leeflang et al., 2014)
	Finding highly Knowledgeable and skilled staff in using technology and social media	C29	(Keegan & Rowley, 2017)
	Lack of a standard for what to post on social media	C30	(N. Choi & Joo, 2021; Huppertz, 2018; Rugova & Prenaj, 2016; Tanimoto et al., 2016)
	Lack of a standard for how often to post on social media	C31	(Bae & Zamrudi, 2018; N. Choi & Joo, 2021; Michaelidou et al., 2011)
	Lack of a standard for what time to post content on social media	C32	(Valos et al., 2015)
	Potential damage for companies' reputation and brand health by ineffectively using social media	C33	(Elawadi, 2016; Leeflang et al., 2014; Valos et al., 2015)

Dimension	Social media marketing challenges	Indicator	References
SMM utilization (cont' d)	Assigning roles, responsibilities, ownership, and accountability between employees regarding social media	C34	(Bae & Zamrudi, 2018; Michaelidou et al., 2011)
	social media marketing is very time consuming	C35	(Appel et al., 2020)
	Spread of enterprise scandal to social media	C36	(N. Choi & Joo, 2021; Hofacker & Belanche, 2016; Huppertz, 2018; Khaleghi et al., 2019; Memon et al., 2015; Rugova & Prenaj, 2016)
	There are Technology related Challenges in Using social media	C37	(Tanimoto et al., 2016)
	Inadequate quality of information on social media	C38	(Huppertz, 2018)
	The number of followers on social media does not increase	C39	(Bae & Zamrudi, 2018; Tanimoto et al., 2016)
	High workload when using social media for marketing	C40	(Anne Whiting & Deshpande, 2016)
SMM management and control	Alignment of stocks with online offers when conducting online campaigns	C41	(Memon et al., 2015)
	Social Media changes Customer purchase journey	C42	(Khaleghi et al., 2019)
	Customers create content online at the same time with companies	C43	(Tanimoto et al., 2016)
	Customers interact with companies on social media, answering and reacting to a customer and managing this relation	C44	(Huppertz, 2018)
	Customer to customer relationships through social media	C45	(Tanimoto et al., 2016)
	Designing a Social Media strategy	C46	(Khaleghi et al., 2019; Roy et al., 2018)

Dimension	Social media marketing challenges	Indicator	References
SMM management and control (cont' d)	Determining the role of social media within the overall marketing strategy	C47	(Bae & Zamrudi, 2018; Hofacker & Belanche, 2016; Paliwal, 2015; Rugova & Prenaj, 2016; Tanimoto et al., 2016)
	Assessing the effectiveness and performance of social media marketing (Measuring the Return of Investment (ROI))	C48	(Huppertz, 2018)
	Setting up a policy for social media use	C49	(Bae & Zamrudi, 2018)
	Highly skilled employees are required for working in social media	C50	(Elawadi, 2016; Rugova & Prenaj, 2016)
	Generating and designing appropriate reports based on social media analysis	C51	(Bae & Zamrudi, 2018)
	High resource requirement for social media marketing	C52	(N. Choi & Joo, 2021; Huppertz, 2018; Michaelidou et al., 2011)
	High maintenance cost of social media marketing	C53	(Tanimoto et al., 2016)
	Less control over social media marketing content	C54	(Khaleghi et al., 2019)
	Managing the great volume of data generated through social media	C55	(Khaleghi et al., 2019; Tanimoto et al., 2016)
	Managing relation with competitors that are on social media	C56	(Tanimoto et al., 2016)
	In the SMM context, Customers have privacy concerns, and achieving their trust is a challenge	C57	(Huppertz, 2018)

Appendix C: Answers by Experts in each Round of Data Collection

Table C.1 Results of Round 1 of Data Collection

Dimensions	Challenges	Ex 1	Ex 2	Ex 3	Ex 4	Ex 5	Ex 6	Ex 7	Ex 8	Mean
SMM adoption	C1	5	5	5	4	3	3	3	4	4.0
	C2	4	3	5	4	4	5	4	3	4.0
	C3	4	2	3	3	5	3	5	3	3.5
	C4	5	5	2	2	2	3	4	3	3.3
	C5	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4.4
	C6	4	1	5	1	3	5	4	3	3.3
	C7	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4.1
	C8	5	5	4	5	5	2	5	4	4.4
	C9	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4.1
	C10	4	4	5	2	3	5	5	4	4.0
	C11	4	4	3	5	4	4	5	3	4.0
SMM implementation	C12	5	4	4	3	5	4	5	4	4.3
	C13	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	4	3.6
	C14	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	3.6
	C15	3	3	5	3	3	5	5	3	3.8
	C16	3	3	1	0	3	3	4	3	2.5
	C17	3	4	2	5	5	3	5	3	3.8
	C18	3	2	2	3	4	4	5	2	3.1
SMM utilization	C19	4	3	3	4	2	5	5	3	3.6
	C20	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	4.5
	C21	3	2	2	3	3	0	4	2	2.4
	C22	5	3	5	4	4	4	4	3	4.0

Dimensions	Challenges	Experts								Mean
		Ex 1	Ex 2	Ex 3	Ex 4	Ex 5	Ex 6	Ex 7	Ex 8	
SMM utilization (cont'd)	C23	4	4	3	4	4	5	3	4	3.9
	C24	2	3	2	5	3	3	3	3	3.0
	C25	2	2	2	5	3	3	3	2	2.8
	C26	3	2	2	5	2	3	5	2	3.0
	C27	4	2	3	4	5	3	4	3	3.5
	C28	3	1	2	5	4	4	4	1	3.0
	C29	3	4	3	3	4	5	4	3	3.6
	C30	3	2	2	4	4	3	3	2	2.9
	C31	3	2	2	5	3	3	3	2	2.9
	C32	4	2	1	5	4	3	3	2	3.0
	C33	4	3	4	4	5	4	5	3	4.0
	C34	4	4	3	5	4	3	3	3	3.6
	C35	4	5	5	0	4	1	2	4	3.1
	C36	5	3	4	5	3	5	2	1	3.5
	C37	2	3	3	3	4	4	3	1	2.9
	C38	4	4	5	4	3	5	4	3	4.0
	C39	5	4	5	3	3	0	3	3	3.3
	C40	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	4	4.1
SMM management and control	C41	4	2	3	3	2	1	4	3	2.8
	C42	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	1	2.6
	C43	3	1	1	4	2	4	3	2	2.5
	C44	5	3	4	3	5	3	4	4	3.9
	C45	1	2	3	4	5	1	4	2	2.8
	C46	3	2	5	3	5	3	4	2	3.4
	C47	5	3	5	4	4	3	3	3	3.8

Dimensions	Challenges	Experts								Mean
		Ex 1	Ex 2	Ex 3	Ex 4	Ex 5	Ex 6	Ex 7	Ex 8	
SMM management and control (cont'd)	C48	4	5	5	4	3	3	3	4	3.9
	C49	4	2	2	0	4	3	3	3	2.6
	C50	3	3	5	1	4	3	3	2	3.0
	C51	3	1	4	3	2	5	4	1	2.9
	C52	4	2	5	4	3	1	3	2	3.0
	C53	2	3	4	0	3	3	3	2	2.5
	C54	3	4	4	1	2	3	1	3	2.6
	C55	4	5	3	1	4	2	3	2	3.0
	C56	5	4	5	1	4	5	4	3	3.9
	C57	4	3	5	5	3	4	5	2	3.9

Table C.2 Results of Round 2 of Data Collection

| Dimensions | Challenges | Experts | | | | | | | | Mean |
		Ex 1	Ex 2	Ex 3	Ex 4	Ex 5	Ex 6	Ex 7	Ex 8	
SMM adoption	C1	5	5	5	2	3	3	4	4	3.9
	C2	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	3.5
	C3	3	3	3	3	5	3	4	3	3.4
	C4	4	4	2	3	2	4	3	2	3.0
	C5	5	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	4.1
	C6	1	1	4	4	3	1	3	1	2.3
	C7	3	4	4	5	5	2	4	4	3.9
	C8	4	5	5	2	5	4	5	4	4.3
	C9	4	4	3	3	4	3	5	3	3.6
	C10	4	4	5	2	3	4	4	3	3.6
	C11	3	4	4	4	4	3	5	4	3.9
SMM implementation	C12	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	4.4
	C13	4	4	3	5	4	4	3	4	3.9
	C14	4	4	5	4	4	3	3	4	3.9
	C15	5	3	4	4	3	2	4	4	3.6
	C16	0	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	2.8
	C17	3	4	3	4	5	4	4	4	3.9
	C18	4	3	3	4	4	4	5	3	3.8
SMM utilization	C19	4	3	3	5	2	3	4	3	3.4
	C20	5	4	5	4	5	3	4	5	4.4
	C21	3	2	1	3	3	2	3	2	2.4
	C22	4	3	5	3	4	3	4	3	3.6
	C23	4	4	5	2	4	4	4	4	3.9

Dimensions	Challenges	Experts								Mean
		Ex 1	Ex 2	Ex 3	Ex 4	Ex 5	Ex 6	Ex 7	Ex 8	
SMM utilization (cont'd)	C24	1	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	2.9
	C25	1	2	1	3	3	3	3	2	2.3
	C26	3	3	3	5	2	1	4	3	3.0
	C27	3	2	3	5	5	2	4	4	3.5
	C28	2	3	3	4	4	3	4	3	3.3
	C29	3	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	3.6
	C30	2	2	1	5	4	3	3	2	2.8
	C31	0	2	1	4	3	4	3	2	2.4
	C32	0	2	1	3	4	3	3	2	2.3
	C33	4	3	4	4	5	3	4	4	3.9
	C34	4	4	5	3	4	3	3	4	3.8
	C35	3	5	4	4	4	4	3	5	4.0
	C36	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3.1
	C37	3	3	3	4	4	3	3	3	3.3
	C38	4	4	5	3	4	0	4	4	3.5
	C39	4	4	4	0	3	1	3	3	2.8
	C40	4	5	5	1	4	3	4	4	3.8
SMM management and control	C41	2	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3.0
	C42	1	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	2.6
	C43	1	2	1	4	2	3	2	2	2.1
	C44	5	3	5	3	5	1	4	4	3.8
	C45	2	2	2	3	5	4	3	2	2.9
	C46	4	3	4	5	2	3	3	4	3.5
	C47	3	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	3.5
	C48	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	4	3.5

Dimensions	Challenges	Experts								Mean
		Ex 1	Ex 2	Ex 3	Ex 4	Ex 5	Ex 6	Ex 7	Ex 8	
SMM management and controls (cont'd)	C49	1	2	2	3	4	2	3	2	2.4
	C50	2	3	4	2	4	0	3	3	2.6
	C51	3	2	4	3	3	2	3	3	2.9
	C52	3	2	3	4	4	3	3	3	3.1
	C53	2	3	3	2	4	1	3	2	2.5
	C54	2	3	2	3	3	4	2	2	2.6
	C55	3	4	2	2	4	3	4	3	3.1
	C56	4	4	2	3	4	2	4	4	3.4
	C57	4	3	4	5	3	4	5	4	4.0

Table C.3 Results of Round 3 of Data Collection

Dimensions	Challenges	Experts								Mean
		Ex 1	Ex 2	Ex 3	Ex 4	Ex 5	Ex 6	Ex 7	Ex 8	
SMM adoption	C1	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.3
	C2	4	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	4.0
	C3	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	3	3.3
	C4	4	4	3	2	3	3	3	3	3.1
	C5	5	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	4.1
	C6	3	2	2	3	3	4	3	2	2.8
	C7	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.9
	C8	4	4	5	4	5	2	4	4	4.0
	C9	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.0
	C10	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	3.8
	C11	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	3.6
SMM implementation	C12	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	4.4
	C13	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	3	3.5
	C14	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	3.6
	C15	5	2	4	3	4	5	4	3	3.8
	C16	0	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2.5
	C17	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	3.5
	C18	4	3	4	3	4	4	5	3	3.8
SMM utilization	C19	4	3	3	4	5	5	4	4	4.0
	C20	5	3	5	4	5	5	4	5	4.5
	C21	2	2	2	3	2	3	3	3	2.5
	C22	4	3	5	4	4	4	4	4	4.0
	C23	4	3	4	4	4	5	4	3	3.9
	C24	2	3	3	5	3	4	3	2	3.1

Dimensions	Challenges	Experts								Mean
		Ex 1	Ex 2	Ex 3	Ex 4	Ex 5	Ex 6	Ex 7	Ex 8	
SMM utilization (cont'd)	C25	4	4	1	5	4	3	3	4	3.5
	C26	3	3	3	5	4	3	4	3	3.5
	C27	3	3	3	5	4	3	4	3	3.5
	C28	2	3	3	4	3	4	4	3	3.3
	C29	3	4	3	4	4	5	4	4	3.9
	C30	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	2.5
	C31	1	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	1.6
	C32	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	2.4
	C33	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3.9
	C34	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	3.6
	C35	3	5	4	4	5	4	3	3	3.9
	C36	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3	3.1
	C37	3	3	3	3	2	4	3	2	2.9
	C38	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	3.8
	C39	4	3	4	3	3	0	3	4	3.0
	C40	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	4	3.6
SMM management and control	C41	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0
	C42	2	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	2.8
	C43	2	2	2	3	3	4	2	2	2.5
	C44	4	3	5	4	3	3	4	4	3.8
	C45	3	2	3	4	3	2	3	2	2.8
	C46	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	3.6
	C47	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	3.6
	C48	4	4	4	4	5	4	3	4	4.0
	C49	2	2	2	2	5	4	2	2	2.6

Dimensions	Challenges	Experts								Mean
		Ex 1	Ex 2	Ex 3	Ex 4	Ex 5	Ex 6	Ex 7	Ex 8	
SMM management and control (cont'd)	C50	3	3	4	2	4	3	3	4	3.3
	C51	3	4	4	3	4	3	3	3	3.4
	C52	3	2	3	3	3	4	3	3	3.0
	C53	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2.8
	C54	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0
	C55	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	3	3.3
	C56	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	3.4
	C57	4	3	4	5	3	4	5	3	3.9

Table C.4 Results of Round 4 of Data Collection

Dimensions	Challenges	Experts								Mean
		Ex 1	Ex 2	Ex 3	Ex 4	Ex 5	Ex 6	Ex 7	Ex 8	
SMM adoption	C1	5	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4.0
	C2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.0
	C3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	3	3.4
	C4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.1
	C5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4.3
	C6	2	2	2	2	3	3	3	2	2.4
	C7	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	3.8
	C8	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.0
	C9	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	4.1
	C10	4	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	3.5
	C11	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	3.4
SMM implementation	C12	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	4.6
	C13	4	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3.3
	C14	4	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	3.6
	C15	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	3	3.4
	C16	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2.1
	C17	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3.9
	C18	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	4	4.0
SMM utilization	C19	4	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	4.6
	C20	5	3	4	3	4	3	4	4	3.8
	C21	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	2.4
	C22	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4.1
	C23	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.0
	C24	2	3	3	4	3	3	3	2	2.9

Dimensions	Challenges	Experts								Mean
		Ex 1	Ex 2	Ex 3	Ex 4	Ex 5	Ex 6	Ex 7	Ex 8	
SMM utilization (cont'd)	C25	2	2	2	3	3	3	3	2	2.5
	C26	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	3.1
	C27	3	3	3	4	4	2	4	3	3.3
	C28	3	3	3	4	3	3	4	2	3.1
	C29	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.0
	C30	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0
	C31	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2.1
	C32	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0
	C33	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.0
	C34	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	3.6
	C35	3	4	4	3	3	3	3	3	3.3
	C36	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0
	C37	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3.0
	C38	4	3	4	3	4	2	4	4	3.5
	C39	4	3	4	4	3	3	3	4	3.5
	C40	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	3.8
SMM management and control	C41	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2.9
	C42	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2.0
	C43	2	2	2	3	2	3	2	2	2.3
	C44	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4.0
	C45	3	2	3	3	2	3	3	3	2.8
	C46	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3.9
	C47	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3.8
	C48	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	3	3.9
	C49	2	2	3	3	3	2	2	3	2.5

Dimensions	Challenges	Experts								Mean
		Ex 1	Ex 2	Ex 3	Ex 4	Ex 5	Ex 6	Ex 7	Ex 8	
SMM management and control (cont'd)	C50	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3.1
	C51	3	2	4	3	3	2	3	2	2.8
	C52	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2.9
	C53	2	2	3	3	2	3	3	2	2.5
	C54	2	2	2	2	2	3	2	2	2.1
	C55	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	3.5
	C56	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	3	3.3
	C57	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	4.3

Appendix D: Ranking Challenges based on Average of Experts' Opinions in Round 4

Table D.1 Ranking Challenges Based on Average of Experts' Opinions in Round 4 of Delphi

Dimension	Social Media Marketing Challenges	Challenge	Mean
SMM implementation	Coordination across different company functions that are engaged in social media marketing at both staff and managers level	C12	4.6
SMM utilization	Keeping Security and privacy of company channel, customer, and company data	C19	4.6
SMM adoption	Limited IT resources of some companies in the adoption of social media marketing	C5	4.3
SMM management and control	In the SMM context, Customers have privacy concerns, and achieving their trust is a challenge	C57	4.3
SMM adoption	Choosing the right platform for social media marketing	C9	4.1
SMM utilization	The difficulty of cooperation between different departments	C22	4.1
SMM adoption	Probable business model changes due to the use of social media	C1	4.0
SMM adoption	Some businesses and employees do not consider social media as a marketing channel	C2	4.0
SMM adoption	Lack of employees' expertise in social media marketing	C8	4.0
SMM implementation	The high cost of producing content on social media	C18	4.0
SMM utilization	Overt marketing or advertising techniques on social media might turn off the customers	C23	4.0
SMM utilization	Finding highly Knowledgeable and skilled staff in using technology and social media	C29	4.0
SMM utilization	Potential damage for companies' reputation and brand health by ineffectively using social media	C33	4.0
SMM management and control	Customers interact with companies on social media, answering and reacting to a customer and managing this relation	C44	4.0
SMM implementation	Lack of expert human resources regarding social media	C17	3.9
SMM management and control	Designing a Social Media strategy	C46	3.9
SMM management and control	Assessing the effectiveness and performance of social media marketing (Measuring the Return of Investment (ROI))	C48	3.9
SMM adoption	Obtaining relevant best practices in social media marketing	C7	3.8
SMM utilization	Obtaining Customer engagement in social media	C20	3.8
SMM utilization	High workload when using social media for marketing	C40	3.8
SMM management and control	Determining the role of social media within the overall marketing strategy	C47	3.8
SMM implementation	Making employees and customers engaged in social media marketing	C14	3.6

Dimension	Social Media Marketing Challenges	Challenge	Mean
SMM utilization	Assigning roles, responsibilities, ownership, and accountability between employees regarding social media	C34	3.6
SMM adoption	The ability to generate and leverage deep customer insights from social media marketing	C10	3.5
SMM utilization	Inadequate quality of information on social media	C38	3.5
SMM utilization	The number of followers on social media does not increase	C39	3.5
SMM management and control	Managing the great volume of data generated through social media	C55	3.5
SMM adoption	Legal and reputation issues resulting from the use of social media marketing	C3	3.4
SMM adoption	Staff unwillingness to undertake new learning regarding social media	C11	3.4
SMM implementation	Implementing Marketing Information Systems required for social media marketing	C15	3.4
SMM implementation	Social Media requires a new way of thinking and employee culture	C13	3.3
SMM utilization	Managing intellectual property of the post	C27	3.3
SMM utilization	social media marketing is very time consuming	C35	3.3
SMM management and control	Managing relation with competitors that are on social media	C56	3.3
SMM adoption	Operational risk during the adoption of social media marketing	C4	3.1
SMM utilization	Infringe on copyright when posting on social media	C26	3.1
SMM utilization	Intentional or unprepared Leak of information by an employee on social media	C28	3.1
SMM management and control	Highly skilled employees are required for working in social media	C50	3.1
SMM utilization	Lack of a standard for what to post on social media	C30	3.0
SMM utilization	Spread of enterprise scandal to social media	C36	3.0
SMM utilization	There are Technology related Challenges in Using social media	C37	3.0
SMM utilization	Managing Ethic issues related to social media marketing	C24	2.9
SMM management and control	Alignment of stocks with online offers when conducting online campaigns	C41	2.9
SMM management and control	High resource requirement for social media marketing	C52	2.9
SMM management and control	Customer to customer relationships through social media	C45	2.8

Dimension	Social Media Marketing Challenges	Challenge	Mean
SMM management and control	Generating and designing appropriate reports based on social media analysis	C51	2.8
SMM utilization	Harass social media contacts and business account of followers	C25	2.5
SMM management and control	Setting up a policy for social media use	C49	2.5
SMM management and control	High maintenance cost of social media marketing	C53	2.5
SMM adoption	Reaching customers is hard on social media and the company might leave out people who do not have access to or use social media	C6	2.4
SMM utilization	Communicating in two languages	C21	2.4
SMM management and control	Customers create content online at the same time with companies	C43	2.3
SMM implementation	Appropriate training about the usage of SMM is not available	C16	2.1
SMM utilization	Lack of a standard for how often to post on social media	C31	2.1
SMM management and control	Less control over social media marketing content	C54	2.1
SMM utilization	Lack of a standard for what time to post content on social media	C32	2.0
SMM management and control	Social Media changes Customer purchase journey	C42	2.0

Appendix E: Mean Rank of all SMM Challenges according to the Friedman Test

Table E.1 The Mean Rank of each SMM Challenge according to the Friedman Test

Dimension	Social Media Marketing Challenges	Indicator	Mean Rank
SMM Implementation	Coordination across different company functions that are engaged in social media marketing at both staff and managers level	C12	51.1
SMM utilization	Keeping Security and privacy of company channel, customer, and company data	C19	50.8
SMM Adoption	Limited IT resources of some companies in the adoption of social media marketing	C5	47.2
SMM management and control	In the SMM context, Customers have privacy concerns, and achieving their trust is a challenge	C57	47.0
SMM utilization	The difficulty of cooperation between different departments	C22	45.4
SMM Adoption	Choosing the right platform for social media marketing	C9	45.0
SMM Adoption	Some businesses and employees do not consider social media as a marketing channel	C2	43.4
SMM Adoption	Lack of employees' expertise in social media marketing	C8	43.4
SMM utilization	Overt marketing or advertising techniques on social media might turn off the customers	C23	43.4
SMM utilization	Finding highly Knowledgeable and skilled staff in using technology and social media	C29	43.4
SMM utilization	Potential damage for companies' reputation and brand health by ineffectively using social media	C33	43.4
SMM management and control	Customers interact with companies on social media, answering and reacting to a customer and managing this relation	C44	43.4
SMM Implementation	The high cost of producing content on social media	C18	42.8
SMM Adoption	Probable business model changes due to the use of social media	C1	42.3
SMM Implementation	Lack of expert human resources regarding social media	C17	40.9
SMM management and control	Designing a Social Media strategy	C46	40.4
SMM management and control	Assessing the effectiveness and performance of social media marketing (Measuring the Return of Investment (ROI))	C48	39.4
SMM management and control	Determining the role of social media within the overall marketing strategy	C47	37.9
SMM Adoption	Obtaining relevant best practices in social media marketing	C7	37.7
SMM utilization	High workload when using social media for marketing	C40	37.3
SMM utilization	Obtaining Customer engagement in social media	C20	36.5

Dimension	Social Media Marketing Challenges	Indicator	Mean Rank
SMM Implementation	Making employees and customers engaged in social media marketing	C14	35.1
SMM utilization	Assigning roles, responsibilities, ownership, and accountability between employees regarding social media	C34	34.7
SMM management and control	Managing the great volume of data generated through social media	C55	32.3
SMM utilization	Inadequate quality of information on social media	C38	32.2
SMM Adoption	The ability to generate and leverage deep customer insights from social media marketing	C10	32.1
SMM utilization	The number of followers on social media does not increase	C39	32.1
SMM Adoption	Legal and reputation issues resulting from the use of social media marketing	C3	29.8
SMM Adoption	Staff unwillingness to undertake new learning regarding social media	C11	29.8
SMM Implementation	Implementing Marketing Information Systems required for social media marketing	C15	29.8
SMM utilization	Managing intellectual property of the post	C27	27.4
SMM Implementation	Social Media requires a new way of thinking and employee culture	C13	26.8
SMM management and control	Managing relation with competitors that are on social media	C56	26.8
SMM utilization	social media marketing is very time consuming	C35	26.4
SMM utilization	Intentional or unprepared Leak of information by an employee on social media	C28	25.0
SMM utilization	Infringe on copyright when posting on social media	C26	24.0
SMM management and control	Highly skilled employees are required for working in social media	C50	23.8
SMM Adoption	Operational risk during the adoption of social media marketing	C4	23.6
SMM utilization	Lack of a standard for what to post on social media	C30	21.0
SMM utilization	Spread of enterprise scandal to social media	C36	21.0
SMM utilization	There are Technology related Challenges in Using social media	C37	21.0
SMM utilization	Managing Ethic issues related to social media marketing	C24	20.3
SMM management and control	Alignment of stocks with online offers when conducting online campaigns	C41	18.9
SMM management and control	High resource requirement for social media marketing	C52	18.8

Dimension	Social Media Marketing Challenges	Indicator	Mean Rank
SMM management and control	Generating and designing appropriate reports based on social media analysis	C51	16.9
SMM management and control	Customer to customer relationships through social media	C45	16.8
SMM utilization	Harass social media contacts and business account of followers	C25	13.3
SMM management and control	Setting up a policy for social media use	C49	12.9
SMM management and control	High maintenance cost of social media marketing	C53	12.9
SMM Adoption	Reaching customers is hard on social media and the company might leave out people who do not have access to or use social media	C6	11.4
SMM utilization	Communicating in two languages	C21	10.8
SMM management and control	Customers create content online at the same time with companies	C43	9.7
SMM Implementation	Appropriate training about the usage of SMM is not available	C16	7.8
SMM utilization	Lack of a standard for how often to post on social media	C31	7.8
SMM management and control	Less control over social media marketing content	C54	7.8
SMM utilization	Lack of a standard for what time to post content on social media	C32	5.3
SMM management and control	Social Media changes Customer purchase journey	C42	5.3

Appendix F: Friedman Mean Rank for each Dimension.

Table F.1 The Mean Rank of Each SMM Challenge for SMM Adoption Dimension According to the Friedman Test

Dimension	Social Media Marketing Challenges	Indicator	Mean Rank
SMM Adoption	Limited IT resources of some companies in the adoption of social media marketing	C5	47.2
SMM Adoption	Choosing the right platform for social media marketing	C9	45.0
SMM Adoption	Some businesses and employees do not consider social media as a marketing channel	C2	43.4
SMM Adoption	Lack of employees' expertise in social media marketing	C8	43.4
SMM Adoption	Probable business model changes due to the use of social media	C1	42.3
SMM Adoption	Obtaining relevant best practices in social media marketing	C7	37.7
SMM Adoption	The ability to generate and leverage deep customer insights from social media marketing	C10	32.1
SMM Adoption	Legal and reputation issues resulting from the use of social media marketing	C3	29.8
SMM Adoption	Staff unwillingness to undertake new learning regarding social media	C11	29.8
SMM Adoption	Operational risk during the adoption of social media marketing	C4	23.6
SMM Adoption	Reaching customers is hard on social media and the company might leave out people who do not have access to or use social media	C6	11.4

Table F.2 The Mean Rank of Each SMM Challenge for SMM Implementation Dimension According to the Friedman Test

Dimension	Social Media Marketing Challenges	Indicator	Mean Rank
SMM Implementation	Coordination across different company functions that are engaged in social media marketing at both staff and managers level	C12	51.1
SMM Implementation	The high cost of producing content on social media	C18	42.8
SMM Implementation	Lack of expert human resources regarding social media	C17	40.9
SMM Implementation	Making employees and customers engaged in social media marketing	C14	35.1
SMM Implementation	Implementing Marketing Information Systems required for social media marketing	C15	29.8
SMM Implementation	Social Media requires a new way of thinking and employee culture	C13	26.8
SMM Implementation	Appropriate training about the usage of SMM is not available	C16	7.8

Table F.3 The Mean Rank of Each SMM Challenge for SMM Utilization Dimension According to the Friedman Test

Dimension	Social Media Marketing Challenges	Indicator	Mean Rank
SMM utilization	Keeping Security and privacy of company channel, customer, and company data	C19	50.75
SMM utilization	The difficulty of cooperation between different departments	C22	45.38
SMM utilization	Overt marketing or advertising techniques on social media might turn off the customers	C23	43.44
SMM utilization	Finding highly Knowledgeable and skilled staff in using technology and social media	C29	43.44
SMM utilization	Potential damage for companies' reputation and brand health by ineffectively using social media	C33	43.44
SMM utilization	High workload when using social media for marketing	C40	37.31
SMM utilization	Obtaining Customer engagement in social media	C20	36.5
SMM utilization	Assigning roles, responsibilities, ownership, and accountability between employees regarding social media	C34	34.69
SMM utilization	Inadequate quality of information on social media	C38	32.19
SMM utilization	The number of followers on social media does not increase	C39	32.06
SMM utilization	Managing intellectual property of the post	C27	27.38
SMM utilization	social media marketing is very time consuming	C35	26.38
SMM utilization	Intentional or unprepared Leak of information by an employee on social media	C28	25
SMM utilization	Infringe on copyright when posting on social media	C26	24
SMM utilization	Lack of a standard for what to post on social media	C30	21
SMM utilization	Spread of enterprise scandal to social media	C36	21
SMM utilization	There are Technology related Challenges in Using social media	C37	21
SMM utilization	Managing Ethic issues related to social media marketing	C24	20.25
SMM utilization	Harass social media contacts and business account of followers	C25	13.25
SMM utilization	Communicating in two languages	C21	10.75
SMM utilization	Lack of a standard for how often to post on social media	C31	7.81
SMM utilization	Lack of a standard for what time to post content on social media	C32	5.31

Table F.4 The Mean Rank of Each SMM Challenge for SMM Management and Control Dimension According to the Friedman Test

Dimension	Social Media Marketing Challenges	Indicator	Mean Rank
SMM management and control	In the SMM context, Customers have privacy concerns, and achieving their trust is a challenge	C57	47
SMM management and control	Customers interact with companies on social media, answering and reacting to a customer and managing this relation	C44	43.4
SMM management and control	Designing a Social Media strategy	C46	40.4
SMM management and control	Assessing the effectiveness and performance of social media marketing (Measuring the Return of Investment (ROI))	C48	39.4
SMM management and control	Determining the role of social media within the overall marketing strategy	C47	37.9
SMM management and control	Managing the great volume of data generated through social media	C55	32.3
SMM management and control	Managing relation with competitors that are on social media	C56	26.8
SMM management and control	Highly skilled employees are required for working in social media	C50	23.8
SMM management and control	Alignment of stocks with online offers when conducting online campaigns	C41	18.9
SMM management and control	High resource requirement for social media marketing	C52	18.8
SMM management and control	Generating and designing appropriate reports based on social media analysis	C51	16.9
SMM management and control	Customer to customer relationships through social media	C45	16.8
SMM management and control	Setting up a policy for social media use	C49	12.9
SMM management and control	High maintenance cost of social media marketing	C53	12.9

Dimension	Social Media Marketing Challenges	Indicator	Mean Rank
SMM management and control	Customers create content online at the same time with companies	C43	9.7
SMM management and control	Less control over social media marketing content	C54	7.8
SMM management and control	Social Media changes Customer purchase journey	C42	5.3

Appendix G: Questionnaire

Questionnaire for identification and determination of Social Media Marketing (SMM)

challenges in the beauty industry - (Round 1)

Dear respondent,

The present questionnaire has been designed to collect the required data for a research article entitled "An integrated framework for identifying the key challenges of Social Media Marketing". The purpose of this questionnaire is to identify and determine the most influential Social Media Marketing challenges from the perspective of marketing staff in companies. The questionnaire has been designed in the form of a five-part Likert scale. Your opinion is important in identifying the challenges; please help us by answering the questions correctly.

Question 1) Table G.1 is a list of some Social Media Marketing Challenges. Please indicate your level of agreement on the existence and impact of each SMM challenges in firm (you have experienced) using the terms "very low" to "very high"; also, if the mentioned challenge does not exist where you work, kindly choose not a challenge at all.

Table G.1 Identifying SMM Challenges in Organizations

Challenge categories	SMM Challenges	How challenging is this point in SMM in your company					
		Not challenging at it 0	Very Low Challenging 1	Low Challenging 2	Middle Challenging 3	High Challenging 4	Very High Challenging 5
Social Media Marketing Adoption	Probable business model changes due to use of SM is a challenge						
	Some businesses and employees do not consider SM as a marketing channel, and this is a challenge						
	Legal and reputation issues resulting from use of SMM is a challenge						
	Operational risk during adoption of SMM is a challenge						
	Limited IT resources of some companies is a challenge in adoption of SMM						
	Reaching customers is hard on social media AND company might leave out people who do not have access to or use social media; this is a challenge						
	Obtaining relevant best practices is a challenge						
	Lack of employees' expertise in social media marketing is a challenge						
	Choosing the right platform for social media marketing is a challenge						
	The ability to generate and leverage deep customer insights from SMM is a challenge						

Challenge categories	SMM Challenges	How challenging is this point in SMM in your company					
		Not challenging at it 0	Very Low Challenging 1	Low Challenging 2	Middle Challenging 3	High Challenging 4	Very High Challenging 5
Adoption (cont'd)	Staff unwillingness to undertake new learning regarding SM is a challenge						
Social Media Marketing Implement-ation	Coordination across different company functions that are engaged in SMM at both staff and managers level is a challenge						
	SM requires a new way of thinking and employee culture which is a challenge						
	Making employees and customers engaged in SMM is a challenge						
	Implementing Marketing Information Systems required for SMM is a challenge						
	Appropriate training about the usage of SMM is not available and this is a challenge						
	Lack of expert human resources regarding SMM is a challenge						
	The high cost of producing content on social media is a challenge						
Social Media Marketing Utilization	Security and privacy for company channel and customer and company data are challenges						
	Obtaining Customer engagement in SM is a challenge						
	Communicating in two languages is a challenge						

Challenge categories	SMM Challenges	How challenging is this point in SMM in your company					
		Not challenging at it 0	Very Low Challenging 1	Low Challenging 2	Middle Challenging 3	High Challenging 4	Very High Challenging 5
Social Media Marketing Utilization (cont'd)	Cooperation between different departments is difficult and a challenge						
	overt marketing or advertising techniques on SM might turn off the customers and this is a challenge						
	Managing SMM Ethic issues is a challenge						
	Harass social media contacts and business account followers is a challenge						
	Infringe on copyright when posting on SM is a challenge						
	Managing intellectual property of the post is a challenge						
	Intentional or unprepared Leak of information by an employee on SM is a challenge						
	finding highly Knowledgeable and skilled staff in using technology and SM is a challenge						
	lack of standard for what to post on SM is a challenge						
	lack of standard for how often to post on SM is a challenge						
	Finding a standard for what time to post content on SM is a challenge						
	Potential damage for companies' reputation and brand health by ineffectively using SM is a challenge						

133

Challenge categories	SMM Challenges	How challenging is this point in SMM in your company					
		Not challenging at it 0	Very Low Challenging 1	Low Challenging 2	Middle Challenging 3	High Challenging 4	Very High Challenging 5
Social Media Marketing Utilization (cont'd)	assigning roles, responsibilities, ownership, and accountability between employees regarding SM is a challenge						
	SMM is very time consuming, and this is a challenge						
	Spread of enterprise scandal to SM is a challenge						
	There are Technology related Challenges in Using SM						
	Inadequate Quality of information on SM is a challenge						
	The number of followers on SM does not increase is a challenge						
	High workload when using SM for marketing is a challenge						
Social Media Marketing Management and Control	Alignment of stocks with online offers when conducting online campaigns is a challenge						
	SM changes Customer purchase journey which is a challenge						
	Customers create content online at the sometime with companies and this is a challenge						
	Customers interact with companies on SM; answering and reacting to customer and managing this relation is a challenge						
	Customer to customer relation through SM which is a challenge						

Challenge categories	SMM Challenges	How challenging is this point in SMM in your company					
		Not challenging at it	Very Low Challenging	Low Challenging	Middle Challenging	High Challenging	Very High Challenging
		0	1	2	3	4	5
Social Media Marketing Management and Control (cont'd)	Designing a SM strategy is a challenge						
	Determining the role of SM within the overall marketing strategy is a challenge						
	assessing the effectiveness and performance of social media marketing (Measuring the Return of Investment (ROI)) is a challenge						
	Setting up a policy for social media use is a challenge						
	Highly skilled employees are required for working in SM and this is a challenge						
	Generating and designing appropriate reports based on social media analysis is a challenge						
	High resource requirement for SMM is a challenge						
	high maintenance cost of SMM is a challenge						
	Less control over SM content is a challenge						
	Managing great volume of data generated through SM is a challenge						
	Managing relation with competitors that are on SM is a challenge						
	in SMM context, Customers have privacy concerns and achieving their trust is a challenge						

Question 2) your demographics information for analysis of the relation.

Table G.2 Demographic Information

Demographics	
First and Last name	
Job title and organizational position	
The field of the organization activity	
Years of work Experience in marketing role	
Level of Education	
Field of study/specialty	
Age	

After analysis of the result from all respondents in this round of survey a new similar survey will be sent to you.

Thanks for your cooperation and time.

Appendix H: Recruitment Material

Recruitment material

Hello,

Good day

As you are a marketing expert, I invite you to participate in the "Social Media Marketing Challenges" survey.

This survey includes 4 questionnaires that take about 20 minutes to complete each questionnaire.

To appreciate the participants who, complete all 4 stages of the research, a gift card of 10.000.000 Tomans will be presented.

At the end of each questionnaire, the researcher will review the information and send you a new questionnaire.

If you wish to the participate, please complete the following link.

Name and email would be asked in the form.

https://forms.gle/tT14sXg6gJbNMjq39

Appendix I: Items of Questionnaire

Table I.1 Items of the Questionnaire for SMI Selection Factors

Dimension	#	Question
D1: Engagement (11 items)	Q.4_1	Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Number of followers of influencer's Instagram account
	Q.4_2	Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Number of posts of the influencer's Instagram account
	Q.4_3	Please provide the importance of each of the following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Average number of views of influencer's video posts on Instagram
	Q.4_4	Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Average number of comments of influencer's Instagram posts
	Q.4_5	Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Average number of likes of influencer's Instagram posts
	Q.4_6	Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Average engagement rate of influencer's posts (if they share it)
	Q.4_7	Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Average amount of replies that influencer writes in response to followers' comments
	Q.4_8	Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Sentiment of comments that followers write for influencer's posts
	Q.4_9	Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Sentiment of influencer's replies to the comments that followers write for their posts
	Q.4_10	Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Online AI-powered machines that measure the engagement
	Q.4_11	Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Engagement measured through Screenshot of Followers' messages, replies, and interactions that influencers share on their stories

Dimension	#	Question
D2: SMI's traits (16 items)	Q.5_1	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer is a social person
	Q.5_2	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer is an expert
	Q.5_3	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer is trustworthy
	Q.5_4	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer is attractive
	Q.5_5	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer is competent
	Q.5_6	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer is useful
	Q.5_7	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer is accurate
	Q.5_8	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer is consistent
	Q.5_9	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer is inspirational

Dimension	#	Question
D2: SMI's traits (16 items)	Q.5_10	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer is physically attractive
(cont'd)	Q.5_11	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer is authentic
	Q.5_12	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer has goodwill toward others
	Q.5_13	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer is a Likable person
	Q.5_14	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Followers feel they are similar to influencer
	Q.5_15	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/ Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer is an opinion leader
	Q.5_16	You mentioned that you have worked with a social media influencer to market your product/ Service. Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - The Parasocial relationship that followers have with the influencer: a kind of psychological relationship experienced by members of an audience in their mediated encounters with particular performers in the mass media, particularly on television

Dimension	#	Question
D3: Content Relevance (6 items)	Q.6_1	Content Relevance: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Relevance of your business to the subject matter of influencer's content
	Q.6_2	Content Relevance: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Similarity of your business to the style and layout of influencer's content
	Q.6_3	Content Relevance: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Quality of influencer's content
	Q.6_4	Content Relevance: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Entertainment of influencer's content
	Q.6_5	Content Relevance: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Informativeness of influencer's content
	Q.6_6	Content Relevance: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Visual aesthetics of influencer's content
D4: Follower Profile (4 items)	Q.7_1	Followers' profile: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Followers' social, economic class
	Q.7_2	Followers' profile: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Followers' personality type
	Q.7_3	Followers' profile: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - The age group of the majority of followers
	Q.7_4	Followers' profile: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - The geographic location of majority of followers

Dimension	#	Question
D5: **Compen-** **sation** **(5 items)**	Q.8_1	Compensation: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Price that influencer charges business owner for post/story/competition
	Q.8_2	Compensation: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - How reasonable the price is when considering the number of sales expected to be made through the influencer
	Q.8_3	Compensation: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - How reasonable the price is when considering the number of followers, the influencer would bring for our business
	Q.8_4	Compensation: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer's requested compensation package (i.e., fees, product, both, etc.)
	Q.8_5	Compensation: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer offers lower prices and specific pricing packages for small businesses to support them
D6: **SMI** **Personal** **life** **(3items)**	Q.9_1	Personal life: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Whether influencer is going through some sad events in their life, including divorce, death of dear one, etc.
	Q.9_2	Personal life: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer's lifecycle/ Marital Status
	Q.9_3	Personal life: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Whether it is around a specific time around influencer's life (i.e., birthday, changing house, wedding, etc.)

Dimension	#	Question
D7: SMI work style (8 items)	Q.10_1	Work style: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer's target follower (luxury vs. normal)
	Q.10_2	Work style: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Type of businesses that influencer has advertised for previously
	Q.10_3	Work style: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Ease of working with them/If they accept to work with small businesses
	Q.10_4	Work style: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Policies that influencer has for working with businesses
	Q.10_5	Work style: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Influencer's work history: Feedback from other business owners that have worked with him/her
	Q.10_6	Work style: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Results from past collaborations that influencer has done (i.e., apparent positive changes in metrics for other business clients)
	Q.10_7	Work style: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Past work experiences I had with the influencer (followers/sales/engagement rate)
	Q.10_8	Work style: Please provide the importance of each of following factors when choosing which influencer to work with. - Type of SMI (Sales blogger/Follower increaser)