

Investigating the Enablers of Social Media Marketing: A DEMATEL Approach

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— *Review of* —
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ABSTRACT

In today's digital business environment, companies increasingly rely on social media marketing (SMM) to reach their target audience. This study examines SMM's critical enablers and their impact on Saudi Arabian and Indian businesses. The study utilized the Decision-Making Trial and Evaluation Laboratory (DEMATEL) methodology to identify and analyze six critical enablers of SMM, including "Simple and easy to use," "Perceived value," "Speed of response," "Customer involvement," "Appropriateness for business," and "Trust in the platform." These enablers were analyzed for causal relationships, taking into account their complex interdependencies and feedback loops. Based on the findings, "Perceived value" and "Speed of response" are the most critical enablers of SMM in India and Saudi Arabia. The two nations differ significantly, with India giving greater importance to "Simple and easy to use" and "Trust in the platform," while Saudi Arabia places greater importance on "Customer involvement." The research provides valuable insights for businesses operating in these markets, allowing them to customize their SMM strategies based on each market's unique characteristics and consumer behavior patterns. A comprehensive understanding of the factors driving successful SMM strategies was achieved using the DEMATEL methodology by analyzing the intricate causal relationships among critical SMM enablers. The findings of this study provide valuable insights into social media marketing, how to adapt to changing consumer preferences and behaviors and laying the foundation for future studies in social media marketing, facilitating the theoretical understanding of scholars and researchers in this area.

Keywords: Business; Consumer behavior; DEMATEL; Social Media Marketing Enablers.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The leverage of social media marketing on companies is a critical area of study in today's digital landscape. Social media platforms have materialized as practical mechanisms for linking businesses with potential customers (Culnan *et al.*, 2010; Hosseini *et al.*, 2019; Chatterjee & Kar, 2020), delivering an adaptable and interactive atmosphere for marketers to engage with their target audiences (Appel *et al.*, 2020). This strategic approach is called Social Media Marketing (SMM) (Shareef *et al.*, 2019). An important question is whether adopting SMM can navigate the expansion and growth of businesses as social media has become an indispensable tool for businesses (Cartwright *et al.*, 2021). With its comprehensive spread and leverage, social media has become a beacon for marketers, permitting them to understand and handle customers' needs (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016; Fraccastoro *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, these platforms offer

companies a unique opportunity to expand their market presence, enhance visibility, and build a robust global brand identity (Fischer & Reuber, 2011; Andzulis *et al.*, 2012; Drummond *et al.*, 2018). However, businesses' adoption of social media is greatly affected by aspects such as perceived usefulness, encompassing image, ease of use, and knowledge barriers (Siamagka *et al.*, 2015; Li *et al.*, 2023). Consequently, it is critical to harness the prospect of social media to facilitate business profits and gain a competitive edge (Schulz & Peltier, 2013). Social media marketing (SMM) is a decisive mechanism for businesses to market their goods and services, entertain customers, and create long-term relationships. With the increasing usage of social media among consumers, companies must incorporate it into their marketing strategies to remain pertinent in today's digital era. Several researchers have underlined the significance of social media marketing for businesses (Chen & Lin, 2019; Fraccastoro *et al.*, 2021; Sohaib *et al.*, 2022; Yu *et al.*, 2022). Nevertheless, a limited understanding of SMM still exists among the Indian and Saudi Arabian business communities despite social media's omnipresence in individuals' lives (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Dolan *et al.*, 2019). Fortunately, Indian companies acknowledge social media's prospect of creating and maintaining solid customer relationships and are slowly integrating it into their marketing plans. However, several critical issues, such as knowledge shortage and limited financial budget, need to be addressed to maximize the benefits of social media as a marketing tool (Bianchi & Andrews, 2015; Brink, 2017; Li *et al.*, 2023). Social media has appeared as a critical communication and marketing component in Saudi Arabia due to its low expenditure, participation barriers, and minimum technical skills requirement (Abed *et al.*, 2017).

Social media provides several opportunities for Saudi Arabian companies to advocate their goods and services, foster brand social media communities, and access separate marketplaces (Guha *et al.*, 2018). By employing the substantial capacity of social media, Saudi Arabian companies can create wide business networks, reach prospective customers, and grow customer trust and loyalty (Ghezzi *et al.*, 2016; Han *et al.*, 2016; Abed, 2017). While prior studies have researched how Saudi Arabian companies have adopted social media applications as their marketing tool (Alhothali, 2020), limited study has explored the characteristics impacting social media adoption among Saudi Arabian companies (Clark & Douglas, 2011). Therefore, it is essential to perform further research to pinpoint the critical issues and enablers of social media adoption among Indian and Saudi Arabian companies and develop effective strategies to maximize the benefits of SMM. Social media marketing adoption to assist business processes has accumulated recognition worldwide, including in India and Saudi Arabia (Abed *et al.*, 2015; Alwan *et al.*, 2017; Tripopsakul, 2018). However, enablers that influence social media marketing's adoption among companies in these countries are still in their beginning stages (Ahmad *et al.*, 2019; Ainin *et al.*, 2015; Chatterjee & Kar, 2020; Qalati *et al.*, 2021; Razak & Latip, 2016; Salo, 2017; Ali Abbasi *et al.*, 2022). Consequently, there is a need for more studies to demarcate and prioritize the critical enablers of social media marketing that can support businesses in accomplishing enriched marketing strategies (Bruce *et al.*, 2022). Several enablers must be in place to confirm the success of social media marketing campaigns, building promising prerequisites for their success (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). However, despite the significance of these enablers, there needs to be more attention among the business community about their substance (Heller Baird & Parasnis, 2011; Salo, 2017). Therefore, recognizing and prioritizing these enablers is crucial for businesses leveraging social media for enhanced marketing strategies.

Various studies have endeavored to recognize the critical enablers of social media marketing, such as social media analytics, social media strategy, and customer engagement

metrics (Li *et al.*, 2021; Järvinen & Taiminen, 2016). However, further research is still needed to study the enablers of social media marketing from academic and industry experts in India and Saudi Arabia (Cenfetelli, 2004; Sullivan & Koh, 2019; Adeola *et al.*, 2020). A comprehensive understanding of these enablers and the factors that prioritize them is vital to enhance the significance of social media marketing campaigns in these regions (Nemati & Weber, 2022; Noguti, 2022). The study has formulated three research questions to address the identified research gaps: **RQ1:** *What are the critical enablers impacting the significance of Social Media Marketing (SMM) in the Indian and Saudi Arabian settings?* **RQ2:** *Among the identified enablers, which one exercises the most significant impact on the success of social media marketing (SMM) initiatives in India and Saudi Arabia?* **RQ3:** *How do Social Media Marketing Enablers (SMME) augment the overall performance and outcomes of businesses operating in the Indian and Saudi Arabian markets?*

This study delves into the critical enablers that affect Social Media Marketing (SMM) in India and Saudi Arabia. This study aims to recognize and prioritize the critical enablers of Social Media Marketing (SMM) through an extensive literature review for developing a validated questionnaire. The data will be gathered from industry and academic experts from India and Saudi Arabia. By pinpointing the critical enablers behind success, this study offers valuable insights to businesses. Moreover, it dissects how SMMEs can heighten their overall performance and results. The results can assist companies in optimizing their SMM strategies and boosting their profitability. The article is well-structured, clearly presenting its contents in different sections and sub-sections. The literature review in section 2 establishes the necessary background, while section 3 outlines the research methodology precisely and concisely. The study's results and discussions in section 4 offer a clear picture of the research outcomes. Furthermore, section 5 offers constructive insights into the implications, limitations, and future research directions of the study. Finally, section 6 provides a concise and constructive summary of the study's key takeaways, which are valuable for marketers and researchers.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND DEMATEL METHOD

The concept of "strategy" has its origins in the Greek word "strategia," which originally referred to "generalship" (Zinkhan & Pereira, 1994). This concept located its route into the business world through the work of Neumann and Morgenstern on game theory in 1947, ultimately ushering in diverse definitions of strategy in business literature. Marketing strategy connects management and competent provision of marketing resources to achieve business objectives within a marketplace (Walker *et al.*, 1992). Furthermore, Porter (1996) emphasized the significance of preferences regarding marketing activities and implementation of strategies. One necessary sub-domain in the area of marketing strategy is social media usage as a marketing tool, leading to "Social Media Marketing (SMM)," which is a relatively underexplored discipline, allowing marketers to gain a competitive edge (Feng *et al.*, 2019). The emergence of social networking platforms has designed a unique pathway for communication, networking, and content sharing, witnessing the engagement of businesses striving for marketing and business prospects (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2011). By harnessing social media data, companies can achieve a deep understanding of consumer needs and choices, eventually ushering in an enriched customer experience and sweetened business results (Trainor, 2012; Wang & Kim, 2017).

The strength of social media to link individuals, facilitate knowledge sharing, and stimulate the exchange of ideas has particularly charmed the marketing industry (Kaplan &

Haenlein, 2010; Patino *et al.*, 2012). As social media use rises, it yields substantial transformations in the market, such as augmented social interaction and leverage, enriched social connectivity, and enhanced decision-making via access to helpful customer data (Rodriguez *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, social media has transformed communication dynamics between companies and customers, transforming them from passive viewers into active participants (Yadav *et al.*, 2016). Customers co-create marketing content with businesses and their brands, directing a reciprocal affinity between companies and consumers in social media. A growing body of research has shown that SMM is a valuable means of streamlining customer engagement and interactions (Muller & Peres, 2019; Ebrahim, 2020; Cheung *et al.*, 2021). Studies have examined diverse dimensions and applications of SMM, underscoring its prospect for contriving business success.

This extensive body of research delivers a thorough understanding of the dimensions of SMM from myriad angles (Felix *et al.*, 2017; Chahal *et al.*, 2020; Tarsakoo & Charoensukmongkol, 2020). The literature on SMM highlights the potential of this marketing tool to streamline customer engagement and navigate business success. Social media has revolutionized how companies and customers interact, making it an indispensable ingredient of marketing strategy. Hence, it became essential to identify and prioritize the critical SMM enablers, which is crucial for marketers seeking a competitive edge in the market. To gain a deeper insight into the enablers contributing to the success of SMM, this study has embarked on a systematic approach. Building on the existing literature, a questionnaire was built to assess the enablers of SMM, which were prioritized based on their importance. Six key enablers essential for effective SMM strategies were identified out of other identified enablers and selected based on their ranking according to their prominence and relevance to SMM. The next step involves the administration of this questionnaire to industry and academic experts who can offer valuable insights into the factors that underpin successful SMM. The gathered data will be further analyzed to provide valuable insights for marketers seeking to harness the power of social media as a marketing tool, thus contributing to the evolving landscape of marketing strategy and SMM. This research aims to provide valuable insights into marketers' quest to relate the power of social media as a marketing tool, thus contributing to the evolving landscape of marketing strategy and SMM.

Table 1. Identification of Social Media Marketing Enablers.

Code	Enabler	Description	Source (s)
SMME1	Simple and Easy to use	It is an easy way to interact with customers, with little to no complicated tasks.	Muller and Peres (2019); Razak and Latip (2016)
SMME2	Perceived Value	Assessing a product's value is determined by weighing the benefits gained against the costs incurred.	Yu <i>et al.</i> (2022); Li <i>et al.</i> (2021)
SMME3	Speed of Response	The rate at which a device or measurement system responds and produces the output.	Feng <i>et al.</i> (2019)
SMME4	Appropriateness for business	The appropriateness and relevance of using social media for a specific purpose or event within a business context.	Dubbelink <i>et al.</i> (2021)
SMME5	Customized Engagement	Providing customized and personalized solutions means catering to each customer's unique needs.	Felix <i>et al.</i> (2017)
SMME6	Trust in the platform	The level of assurance users have in the security of online platforms encompasses people, technology, and processes.	Ebrahim (2020)

Source: Author's own work.

The Grey Decision-Making Trial and Evaluation Laboratory (DEMATEL) method is a powerful technique that utilizes cause-based diagramming to uncover cause-effect correlations between elements (Wu, 2008). This concept has been successfully applied in various circumstances to reveal the structure of complex cause-and-effect interactions. While the DEMATEL method assists in determining factor interactions, experts have noted that it is well-suited to deal with uncertainty and ambiguity. Therefore, Grey DEMATEL was utilized in this study to achieve the desired outcome, as it helps to address this issue. The Grey DEMATEL approach employs Grey numbers to translate the uncertainty reflected in the qualitative comments of the experts into numerical ranges (Julong, 1989). This facilitates the capture of inconsistencies in experts' views during the group decision-making process, offering greater flexibility in decision-making (Li *et al.*, 2016). The application of grey theory can be seen in various problems across different domains, demonstrating its versatility as a valuable tool for decision-making when a problem contains multiple components with intricate relationships. For instance, Bandil *et al.* (2023) applied the DEMATEL method to evaluate kids' behavior regarding social media advertising factors, whereas the impact of social media marketing activities on airline passengers' retention was studied by Abokhoza and Jahmani (2023). However, Tsai and Shyr (2022) utilized this DEMATEL approach to study factors impacting Social media's visual perceptions and video communication. Özdemir and Tüysüz (2015) employed the DEMATEL method for studying and estimating the strategies for universities. Li *et al.* (2014) used the DEMATEL method to detect critical success factors in emergency management. Fu *et al.* (2012) also applied a formalized grey-based DEMATEL method for assessing a telecommunications system provider related to green supplier development programs. Shieh *et al.* (2010) employed this method in studying key critical success factors related to hospital service quality. It was found that the extensive use of the Grey DEMATEL method highlights its popularity as a valuable tool for decision-making. However, there is little or no study on the impact of social media marketing enablers (SMME) on businesses, especially in Saudi Arabia and India. Hence, this study differentiates itself from the existing studies. Overall, using Grey DEMATEL in this study strengthens the rigor and validity of the study's findings (Wu, 2008) and offers valuable insights into the social media marketing landscape in Saudi Arabia.

3. METHODOLOGY

The Grey Decision-Making Trial and Evaluation Laboratory (DEMATEL) method was employed to analyze and assess the SMM enablers based on the responses collected from the Indian and Saudi Arabian experts. The procedure of the DEMATEL method is summarized as follows based on Tzeng *et al.* (2007), Wu (2008), and Shieh *et al.* (2010):

Step 1: Compute the Average Matrix.

In the study, respondents were assigned to assess the direct influence between any two enablers based on an integer score varying from 00 to 03. These scores characterized the levels of influence as 'No influence,' 'Low influence,' 'Medium influence,' and 'High influence,' respectively. The notation x_{ij} was employed to indicate how enabler i affects enabler j . The diagonal elements were set to zero for the case where $i = j$. This method designated an $n \times n$ non-negative matrix $X^k = [x_{ij}^k]$, where k is the number of respondents with $1 \leq k \leq H$, and n is the number of factors. Thus, $X^1, X^2, X^3, \dots, X^H$ are the matrices from H respondents. To confirm that all responses from the H respondents were taken into account, the average matrix $A = [a_{ij}]$ can be constructed as follows:

$$a_{ij} = \frac{1}{H} \sum_{k=1}^H x_{ij}^k. \quad (1)$$

Step 2: Compute the Normalized Initial Direct-Relation Matrix.

The objective is to compute the normalized initial direct-relation matrix. The initial direct-relation matrix D must be normalized by multiplying it with matrix $A \times S$, as illustrated by Equation 2.

$$S = \frac{1}{\max_{1 \leq i \leq n} \sum_{j=1}^n a_{ij}}. \quad (2)$$

This multiplication process assures that each element within the consequent matrix D falls between zero and one, producing a normalized representation of the initial direct-relation matrix. The application of this normalization method is highly pertinent in diverse domains, such as social network analysis, image processing, and machine learning, as it stimulates data analysis.

Step 3: Compute the Total Relation Matrix.

The total relation matrix is a vital tool in understanding the consequences of enablers or factors, both direct and indirect, within a system. Characterizing the total relation matrix as $T = D(I-D)^{-1}$, where I is the identity matrix. One can effectively study the system using vectors r and c , representing the sum of rows and columns of the total relation matrix (T). The value of r_i denotes the sum of the i^{th} row of T , exhibiting the consequences of the total relation matrix as a vital tool in understanding the consequences of enablers or factor i on the other factors. Likewise, the value of c_j depicts the sum of the j^{th} column of T , signifying the consequences of other the total relation matrix in understanding the consequences of enablers or factors on the total relation matrix is a vital tool in understanding the consequences of enabler or factor j . When j equals i , the sum of $(r_i + c_j)$ furnishes an understanding of the total effects given and received by the enabler or factor i , disclosing the degree of significance of the enabler or factor i in the system. Similarly, the difference $(r_i - c_j)$ discloses the net effect of factor i on the system. A positive value of $(r_i - c_j)$ indicates that factor i contributes to the system, while a negative value of $(r_i - c_j)$ implies that factor i is a net receiver or result. Therefore, Lee *et al.* (2008) and Liou *et al.* (2007) have presented an indispensable tool for analyzing and comprehending complex systems.

Step 4: Set up a threshold value to obtain the digraph

Determining a threshold value is a pivotal step for decision-makers when matrix T delivers information on how one enabler or factor impacts another. By selecting only the effects that transcend the threshold value, decision-makers can fetch a better refined and valid digraph. In this research, the threshold value was determined by calculating the average of the elements in matrix T , symbolizing a pragmatic and practical method of data analysis. The digraph was fetched by mapping the dataset of $(r+c, r-c)$, a novel and insightful method that adds value to the study. The present study strived to draw valuable insights from skilled professionals in Saudi Arabia and India's retail, education, pharma, and transportation specializations. The primary purpose was to pinpoint the key enablers contributing to the success of social media marketing (SMM) strategies, which is vital in today's dynamic business atmosphere.

Table 2. Linguistic Scale of Linguistic Variable and Its Grey Values.

Linguistic variable	Grey values
No (N)	00
Low (L)	01
Medium (M)	02
High (H)	03

Source: Author's own work.

The opinions of 21 experts were accumulated through a thorough questionnaire, which utilized a linguistic scale that comprised words such as N/L/M/H, as shown in Table 2 for the Grey number employed in the Grey DEMATEL method. The results of this study can assist decision-makers in developing more practical social media marketing strategies and staying ahead of the competition. Businesses can optimize resources, lower expenses, and improve their market share by pinpointing the key enablers contributing to successful social media marketing strategies. To assess whether the questionnaire's items (enablers) consistently measure what they are intended to measure, Cronbach's alpha (α) was calculated to determine the internal consistency or reliability of a set of related items in the study's questionnaire (Wadkar *et al.*, 2016). The Cronbach alpha score was 0.732, representing an acceptable value ensuring internal consistency and reliability of questionnaire items (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

Table 3. Experts' Profiles highlight the Saudi Arabian respondents' diverse backgrounds and expertise.

Expert Number	Domain	Experience	Country
Experts 01, 02, 11, 14, 18, and 21	Retail	Between 05 to 20 years	Saudi Arabia
Experts 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 09, 13, 15, and 17	Education	Between 05 to 20 years	Saudi Arabia
Experts 10, 12, 16, 19, and 20	Pharma	Between 05 to 25 years	Saudi Arabia
Expert 08	Transportation	06 years	Saudi Arabia

Source: Author's own work.

Table 4. Experts' Profiles highlight the Indian respondents' diverse backgrounds and expertise.

Expert Number	Domain	Experience	Country
Experts 05, 06, 10, 17, 19, and 20	Retail	Between 05 to 20 years	India

Experts 01, 02, 04, 08,12, 15, 16, 18, and 21	Education	Between 05 to 20 years	India
Experts 03, 07, 09, 13, and 14	Pharma	Between 05 to 15 years	India
Expert 11	Transportation	05 years	India

Source: Author's own work.

The study aimed to collect insights from experts in Saudi Arabia and India to pinpoint the key enablers contributing to successful social media marketing strategies. Out of the 40 experts approached in Saudi Arabia, 29 responded and shared their insights, with 21 responses being found to be valid after removing incomplete and invalid responses. Six responses came from the retail domain, nine from the education domain, five from the pharma domain, and one from the transportation domain. A similar process was followed for collecting data from India, with 38 experts responding and sharing their insights. After removing incomplete and invalid responses, 31 were found valid, and 21 were selected from similar domains like Saudi Arabian respondents' profiles. The experts' profiles were tabulated in Tables 3 and 4, underlining their diverse backgrounds and expertise. The insights from skilled professionals furnished a unique and valuable outlook on the social media marketing landscape in Saudi Arabia and India. Companies and marketers can benefit significantly from these understandings to designate a substantial social media presence and accomplish their marketing goals by employing the enablers of SMM.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The average matrix was constructed for the Saudi Arabian and Indian respondents based on Equation 1, as shown in Tables 5 and 6. The study discovered substantial contrasts between the Saudi Arabian and Indian respondents concerning the interdependencies among the enablers of social media marketing (SMM). While the Saudi Arabian respondents showed higher values in interdependencies, the Indian respondents displayed weaker relationships between the SMM enablers. Hence, embracing a region-specific strategy for social media marketing is vital for designing helpful strategies assuming the diverse strengths of interdependencies among SMM enablers.

Table 5. Average Matrix constructed for the Saudi Arabian respondents.

Enablers	SMME 1	SMME 2	SMME 3	SMME 4	SMME 5	SMME 6
SMME1	0.0000	2.4286	2.1429	1.8095	2.2381	2.1429
SMME2	2.7143	0.0000	2.0000	2.0952	2.6667	1.5238
SMME3	2.3333	3.0000	0.0000	2.8095	2.8095	2.2381
SMME4	1.0476	2.0000	2.0000	0.0000	1.0000	1.1905
SMME5	2.3333	2.0000	2.0000	2.0476	0.0000	2.0952
SMME6	2.9048	2.0952	2.0476	1.0000	2.9048	0.0000

Source: Author's own work.

Table 6. Average Matrix constructed for the Indian respondents.

Enablers	SMME 1	SMME 2	SMME 3	SMME 4	SMME 5	SMME 6
SMME1	0.0000	1.4762	1.5714	1.6667	1.3333	1.8571
SMME2	1.9048	0.0000	1.7143	1.5714	1.6190	1.9048
SMME3	1.5238	1.5238	0.0000	1.4286	1.6667	1.8095
SMME4	1.4286	1.5714	1.8571	0.0000	1.5238	1.5238
SMME5	1.8095	1.5714	1.7143	1.4762	0.0000	1.8095
SMME6	1.9524	1.5238	1.7143	1.1429	1.6190	0.0000

Source: Author's own work.

Table 7. Normalized Initial Direct Relation Matrix constructed for the Saudi Arabian respondents.

Enablers	SMME1	SMME2	SMME3	SMME4	SMME5	SMME6
SMME1	0.0000	0.1841	0.1625	0.1372	0.1697	0.1625
SMME2	0.2058	0.0000	0.1516	0.1588	0.2022	0.1155
SMME3	0.1769	0.2274	0.0000	0.2130	0.2130	0.1697
SMME4	0.0794	0.1516	0.1516	0.0000	0.0758	0.0903
SMME5	0.1769	0.1516	0.1516	0.1552	0.0000	0.1588
SMME6	0.2202	0.1588	0.1552	0.0758	0.2202	0.0000

Source: Author's own work.

Table 8. Normalized Initial Direct Relation Matrix constructed for the Indian respondents.

Enablers	SMME1	SMME2	SMME3	SMME4	SMME5	SMME6
SMME1	0.0000	0.1658	0.1765	0.1872	0.1497	0.2086
SMME2	0.2139	0.0000	0.1925	0.1765	0.1818	0.2139
SMME3	0.1711	0.1711	0.0000	0.1604	0.1872	0.2032
SMME4	0.1604	0.1765	0.2086	0.0000	0.1711	0.1711
SMME5	0.2032	0.1765	0.1925	0.1658	0.0000	0.2032
SMME6	0.2193	0.1711	0.1925	0.1283	0.1818	0.0000

Source: Author's own work.

Table 9. Total Relation Matrix constructed for the Saudi Arabian respondents.

Total Relation Matrix (T)	SMME1	SMME2	SMME3	SMME4	SMME5	SMME6
SMME1	0.6199	0.7811	0.7024	0.6663	0.7774	0.6562

SMME2	0.7944	0.6314	0.7001	0.6895	0.8039	0.6262
SMME3	0.8760	0.9216	0.6617	0.8196	0.9162	0.7502
SMME4	0.5131	0.5756	0.5296	0.3893	0.5202	0.4477
SMME5	0.7502	0.7386	0.6779	0.6632	0.6118	0.6381
SMME6	0.8230	0.7805	0.7133	0.6349	0.8355	0.5349

Source: Author's own work.

Table 10. Total Relation Matrix constructed for the Indian respondents.

Total Relation Matrix (T)	SMME1	SMME2	SMME3	SMME4	SMME5	SMME6
SMME1						
SMME1	1.6557	1.6372	1.7915	1.5861	1.6426	1.8733
SMME2						
SMME2	1.9771	1.6251	1.9455	1.7034	1.7973	2.0259
SMME3						
SMME3	1.8142	1.6515	1.6527	1.5767	1.6804	1.8819
SMME4						
SMME4	1.7966	1.6476	1.8172	1.4313	1.6611	1.8500
SMME5						
SMME5	1.9112	1.7224	1.8877	1.6453	1.5903	1.9585
SMME6						
SMME6	1.8479	1.6507	1.8128	1.5539	1.6753	1.7132

Source: Author's own work.

Identifying Cause-Effect among six enablers

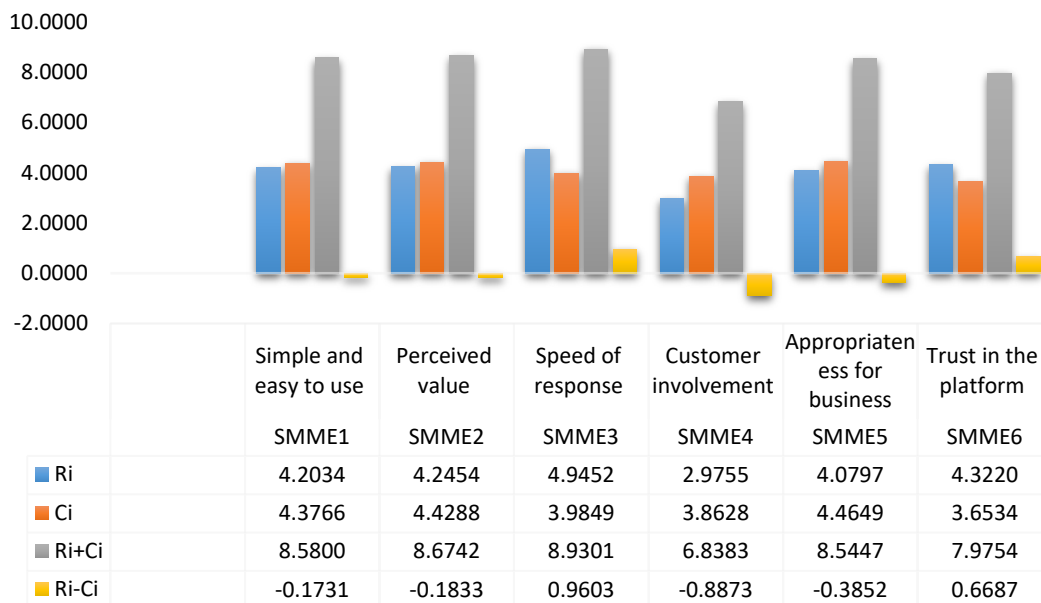


Figure 1. Cause-Effect relations among these six enablers of SMM for the Saudi Arabian respondents.

Source: Author's own work.

Identifying Cause-Effect among six enablers

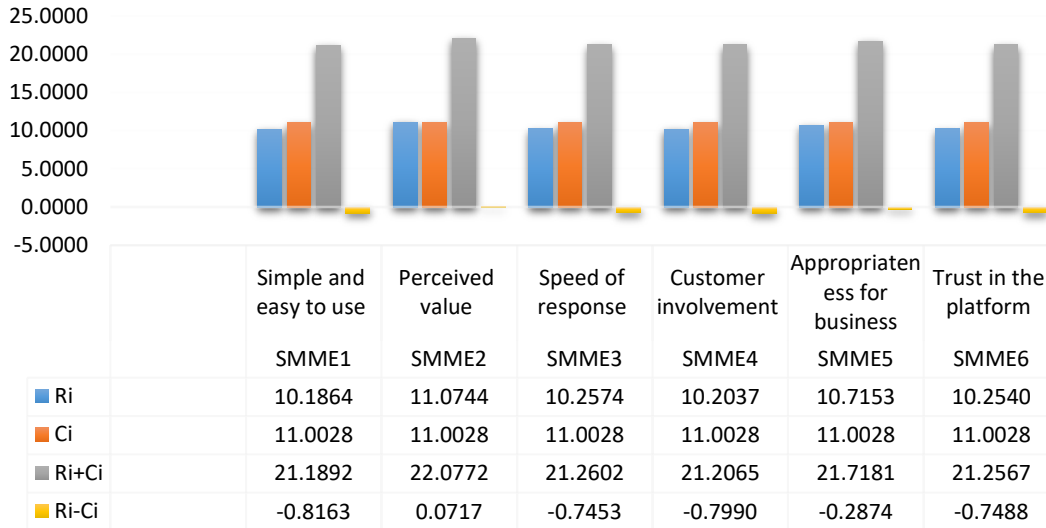


Figure 2. Cause-Effect relations among these six enablers of SMM for the Indian respondents.

Source: Author’s own work.

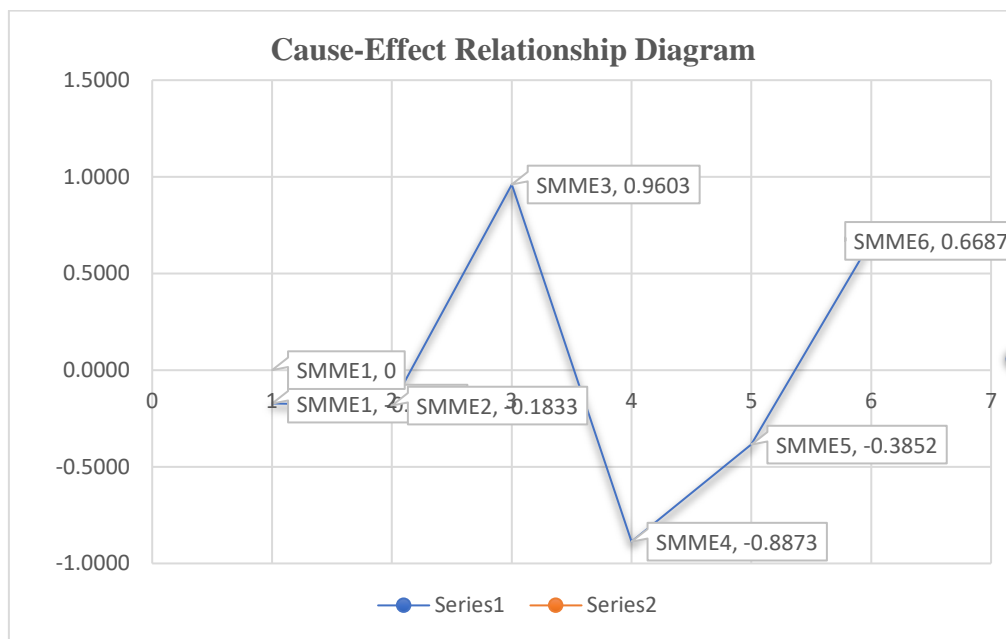


Figure 3. Cause-Effect Relationship Diagram of the SMME for the Saudi Arabian respondents.

Source: Author’s own work.

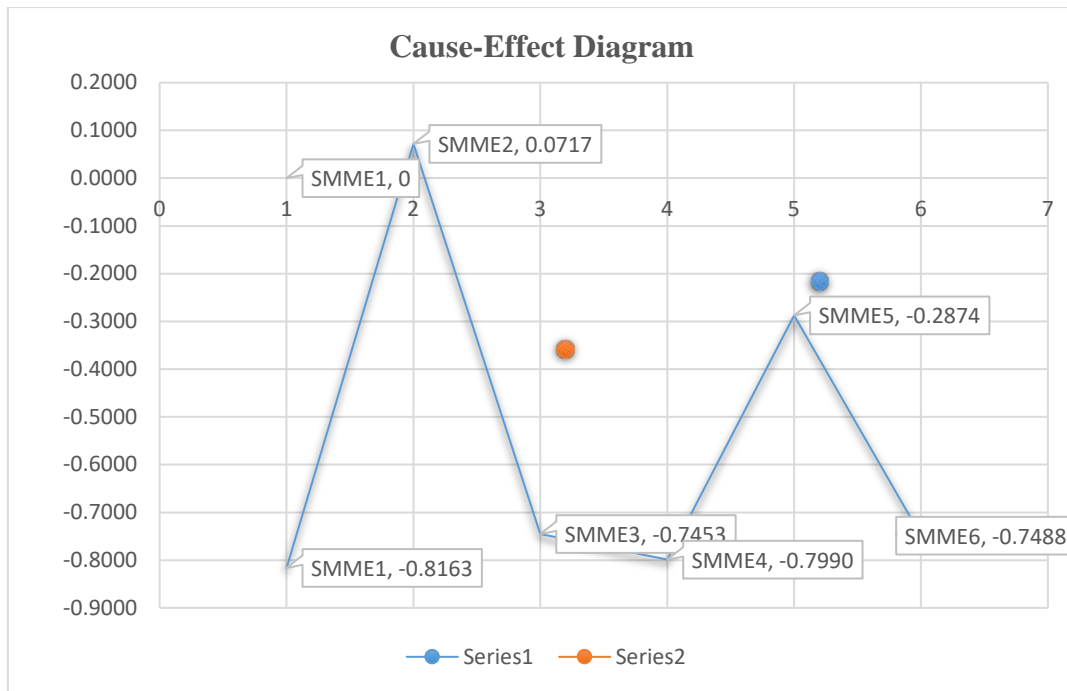


Figure 4. Cause-Effect Relationship Diagram of the SMME for the Indian respondents.
Source: Author's own work.

The normalized initial direct relation matrix (D) normalized the Saudi Arabian respondents, as illustrated in Table 7, reveals substantial direct relationships among the social media marketing (SMM) enablers. In particular, the enabler SMME1, represented by its simplicity and ease of use, reveals noteworthy links with other enablers, thereby strengthening the significance of user-friendliness. Contrarily, the normalized values for Indian respondents in Table 8 exhibit the prevalence of lower interdependencies, necessitating the adoption of tailored SMM strategies. Moreover, the study's results contribute valuable insights into the enablers that impact social media marketing in these markets. The study's findings reveal that the total relation matrix (T) values for Saudi Arabian respondents in Table 9 disclose solid relationships and significant mutual influences between the enablers. However, for Indian respondents, the T values in Table 10 are comparatively lower, pointing to weaker relationships and more inconsequential influence on each other. This result offers an excellent opportunity for marketers to tailor their SMM strategies to the thorough dynamics of each market, bearing into account the distinctive strengths of interrelationships among the SMM enablers. By doing so, companies can devise more convincing and targeted social media marketing campaigns that echo better with their audience and cause more promising results.

Upon examining the data and analyzing the causes and effects in the Indian and Saudi Arabian markets (see Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4), several notable observations can be drawn. In both markets, "Simple and easy to use" (SMME1), "Customer involvement" (SMME4), and "Appropriateness for business" (SMME5) are identified as effects. However, while "Perceived value" (SMME2) is identified as a cause in India, it is categorized as an effect in Saudi Arabia. Surprisingly, "Speed of response" (SMME3) and "Trust in the platform" (SMME6) are identified as "cause" in Saudi Arabia and "effect" in India. "Speed of response" is considered the most critical enabler in social media marketing (Khan, 2022). Haudi *et al.* (2022) have also highlighted the importance of trust in the platform in social media marketing. Moreover, "Simple and easy to use" is among the other essential enablers or factors that can impact the implementation of social media platforms in SMM

(Featherman & Pavlou, 2003). Perceived value is significant in building trust in social media platforms (Palumian *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, building trust in social media platforms is crucial for customer engagement (Zhang *et al.*, 2022). Giakoumaki and Krepapa (2020) suggest that companies must employ social media platforms to engage with customers to build trust in the platforms' content. The results of this research are consistent with existing literature, highlighting the importance of trust in the platform, which is simple and easy to use, resulting in delivering customers' perceived value. The most important enabler of SMM identified in the Indian context with a 22.0772 value was "Perceived value," while "Speed of response" with a 08.9301 value was identified as the most critical enabler of SMM in the Saudi Arabian context (*see Figures 1 and 2*). These findings suggest that the two markets exhibit unique characteristics and consumer behavior patterns, influencing the enablers or factors that make social media marketing effective. In India, businesses must prioritize factors such as "Customer involvement," "Appropriateness for business," and "Trust in the platform" to build a robust foundation for their social media marketing efforts. In contrast, in Saudi Arabia, businesses must establish trust in social media platforms and respond quickly to inquiries while engaging and satisfying the consumer base through user-friendliness, perceived value, customer involvement, and appropriateness.

5. IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1. Implications

This study offers a thorough and analytical outlook on social media marketing enablers (SMME) that has substantial implications for businesses, marketers, researchers, and scholars. This research underscores their potential to augment business performance via practical social media usage by pinpointing six critical social media marketing enablers. For businesses in Saudi Arabia and India, this research delivers a valuable prospect to refine social media marketing strategies and evaluate the current adoption of contemporary marketing practices. By subsidizing personnel training on practical SMME usage, businesses and marketers can leverage social media's full potential and navigate their success. Moreover, this study has critical academic implications, furnishing a theoretical foundation for future research in social media marketing. Researchers can employ the insights of this study to conduct further studies on enablers of SMM in diverse geographical contexts employing different methodologies. Overall, this research furnishes helpful insights that facilitate companies to capitalize on social media marketing opportunities locally and globally. By leveraging the six critical enablers of SMME, businesses can fine-tune their SMM strategies and navigate business expansion. Similarly, pinpointing SMMEs feeds a framework for future research in social media marketing, contributing to the advancement of theoretical knowledge of researchers and scholars.

5.2 Limitations of the Study and Future Research Directions

The research on social media marketing strategies in Saudi Arabia and India presents valuable insights. However, the study's restricted sample size and exclusive emphasis on these two countries limit the generalizability of the results. As such, future research must raise the sample size and incorporate experts from other sectors and regions to deliver a more thorough viewpoint. Further, the study's scope was limited to Social Media Marketing Enablers (SMME) and six substantial enablers or factors, overlooking many other enablers or factors influencing social media marketing. Future research could broaden the scope to

confine a more comprehensive spectrum of enablers or factors, furnishing a deeper understanding of the topic. Lastly, while the DEMATEL approach employed in the study is helpful, more study is needed to grasp the full intricacy of social media marketing strategies. Future studies could also consider the adoption of alternative methodologies, such as a systematic literature review, a case study, or a mixed-method approach. By increasing the sample size, lengthening the research scope, and using diverse methodologies, future studies can confound the study's limitations and contribute to a more thorough understanding of social media marketing enablers in Saudi Arabia, India, and beyond. However, future research themes may revolve around the cultural and geographical nuances influencing social media marketing, the role of emerging digital technologies such as Artificial intelligence, Chatbots, and metaverse, or the examination of distinct industry's social media strategies. The contexts of such studies could range from various countries in the Middle East and South Asia to a global perspective, providing a more thorough and insightful investigation of this vibrant field of study.

6. CONCLUSION

The digital landscape is rapidly maturing, and companies increasingly shift to social media marketing (SMM) to confront their target audience. This study undertook a comprehensive exploration to comprehend better the critical enablers of SMM and their consequence on businesses in two diverse markets, Saudi Arabia and India. The study strived to unravel the intricate web of cause-and-effect relationships among six critical enablers of SMM, including "Simple and easy to use (SMME1)," "Perceived value (SMME2)," "Speed of response (SMME3)," "Customer involvement (SMME4)," "Appropriateness for business (SMME5)," and "Trust in the platform (SMME6)." The study attempted to unearth multifaceted understandings, disclosing SMM's vibrant and distinctive nature in both countries. Key observations from the study illustrate that, in both Saudi Arabia and India, explicit critical enablers occur as influential effects. However, a substantial divergence covers "Perceived value," classified as a cause in India and an effect in Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, "Speed of response" and "Trust in the platform" indicate inconsistent roles, with the former identified as a cause in Saudi Arabia and an effect in India. The study underlines the consequence of "Speed of response" in the Saudi Arabian context, a result aligned with previous research highlighting its crucial role in SMM (Khan, 2022). Likewise, the significance of designating trust in social media platforms and the interconnectedness of user-friendliness, perceived value, and customer engagement echo existing literature (Zhang *et al.*, 2022; Haudi *et al.*, 2022; Palumian *et al.*, 2021; Giakoumaki & Kreppa, 2020; Featherman & Pavlou, 2003). Differentiation between the two markets underscores the unique attributes and consumer behavior patterns shaping convincing SMM strategies. By comprehending the critical enablers, companies can refine their SMM strategies and drive their route to success. Despite the study's limitations, including the limited sample size, only focusing on two countries, and the restricted coverage of critical enablers, the results are a valuable aid to help businesses navigate the complexities of social media marketing and adapt to ever-changing consumer behaviors and preferences. The implications of this study are profound, presenting practical guidance to businesses striving to harness the full potential of SMM. The study's findings lay the groundwork for future studies on SMM, facilitating the theoretical understanding of scholars and researchers. As SMM persists in shaping the marketing landscape, these understandings are a productive resource to help companies navigate social media marketing enablers' vibrant and distinct disposition in diverse markets.

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