

Ireland's Dairy Sector: SME Adoption and Use of Social Media Marketing

Abstract

This paper addresses the deficit of literature on social media adoption and usage within small businesses in the dairy sector in Ireland. The author avails of an action research methodology through in-depth case analysis of six small businesses. The researcher applies the UTAUT2 (Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology) to evaluate how social media marketing (SMM) is adopted and used. The sample targeted for this pilot paper is the small business in the dairy sector in Ireland. The author examines the opportunities and challenges small business owner's face, as they consider adopting and using social media applications for profitable advantage.

Findings indicate there is an increase in small business engaging with social media. The UTAUT2 confirms that age, gender and experience does affect the adoption and usage of social media. In the many cases, social media is the only marketing activity carried out compared to traditional marketing; more established food brands adopt a more planned approach to social media. Market segmentation occurs as the business identify distinct customers on different social media accounts.

The main conclusion from this research is that small business in the dairy sector receive many benefits by utilising social media. Social Media can assist in driving brand awareness and, more importantly, sales. However, recording of social media sales is required. Businesses believe social media is important, however fail to factor the labour cost of social media in the final product cost.

Keywords: Social media marketing, Technology adoption and usage, SMEs, Agri-business, Dairy sector.

Ireland's Dairy Sector: SME Adoption and Use of Social Media Marketing

Introduction

Importance and Key Contribution

The agri-food sector in Ireland contributes €24 billion to the national economy, and export values for dairy ingredients and product has surpassed €3 billion. This figure represents a 15% growth on 2012 and indicates Ireland's dairy sector had a strong performance in global markets. Irish butter and cheese manufacturing grew by 4.9% and 3.2% correspondingly in 2013, while whole milk powder and skimmed milk powder declined by 6.5% and 11.9%. (BordBia, 2014, Teagasc, 2014, DCMNR, 2013).

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) account for 99% of businesses in the enterprise economy in Ireland and almost 70% of people employed (DJEI, 2014). The revolution of the internet as a communication channel has changed the way people conduct business. For SMEs, social media marketing (SMM) has changed the shape and nature of their businesses (Dahnil et al., 2014, DJEI, 2014). SMEs avail of SMM because of the market opportunities it promises; although, adopting SMM is not without its challenges.

SMEs and the Adoption of Social Media Marketing

Consumers use social media to interact with friends, find businesses and brands. Brands are taking advantage of this new promotional dimension to strengthen their consumer relationships. Relationships between consumer contentment and loyalty with the website is together critical components for its success. The more a user interacts with a business, the more loyal the consumer is to the business and its brand, which in turn reaps positive performance results for both. More accurate measures for explaining systems use would benefit users assessing the site as well as employees within the organisation evaluating their offerings (Yoon et al., 2013, Rapp et al., 2012, Davis, 1989, Kirtiş and Karahan, 2011).

SMEs face many challenges due to the cost of conducting business, limited resources, funding, and poor implementation of technology, which may have a drastic effect on SMEs' performance (Dahnil et al., 2014, Meadows, 2009, DJEI, 2011). Hence, this paper explores the activities of SMEs in Ireland's dairy sector in order to understand the benefits and limitations they experience by adopting this technology. The research methodology for this paper adopted a qualitative approach focusing on six case studies within the dairy sector in Ireland, focusing on the small businesses. The primary research technique used was in-depth interviews with the small business owners/managers to understand their adoption and usage of

social media marketing. To be eligible for selection, each company had to be a small business with fewer than 50 employees and an annual turnover and/or balance sheet total of less than €10million (Enterprise, 2007).

Theories Related to Technology Adoption and Usage

Technology Acceptance Model

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989) was created to clarify computer usage behaviour. The original TAM suggests the purpose for using a technology is subjective to the user's perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of a technology. Perceived usefulness should relate to the adoption of information technology for an extrinsic task, and the user's trust that the technology will increase their job performance. Perceived usefulness was a significant reason in determining whether a user revisits the website. Perceived ease of use can also be stated as the point to which a user trusts a specific technology is effortless to use (Davis et al., 1989, Shang et al., 2005, Davis, 1989, Castañeda et al., 2007). This paper examines TAM and how perceived usefulness and ease of use give rise to SMEs adopting SMM technology.

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) and UTAUT2

Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003) purports to clarify user intentions in employing a particular information system and their usage behaviour. The UTAUT model embraces four main concepts: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions, which are direct factors of usage intention and behaviour. The key moderators for this model include: gender, age, voluntariness, and experience. The UTAUT2 (Venkatesh et al., 2012) incorporates all the constructs and the following moderators of the UTAUT model: gender, age and experience. The UTAUT2 drops the moderator voluntariness, but include three new constructs, namely: hedonic motivation, price/value and habit. The extensions in the UTAUT2 produced considerable improvements in the variance described in behavioural intention and technology use. This paper considers the fundamental aspects of the UTAUT2.

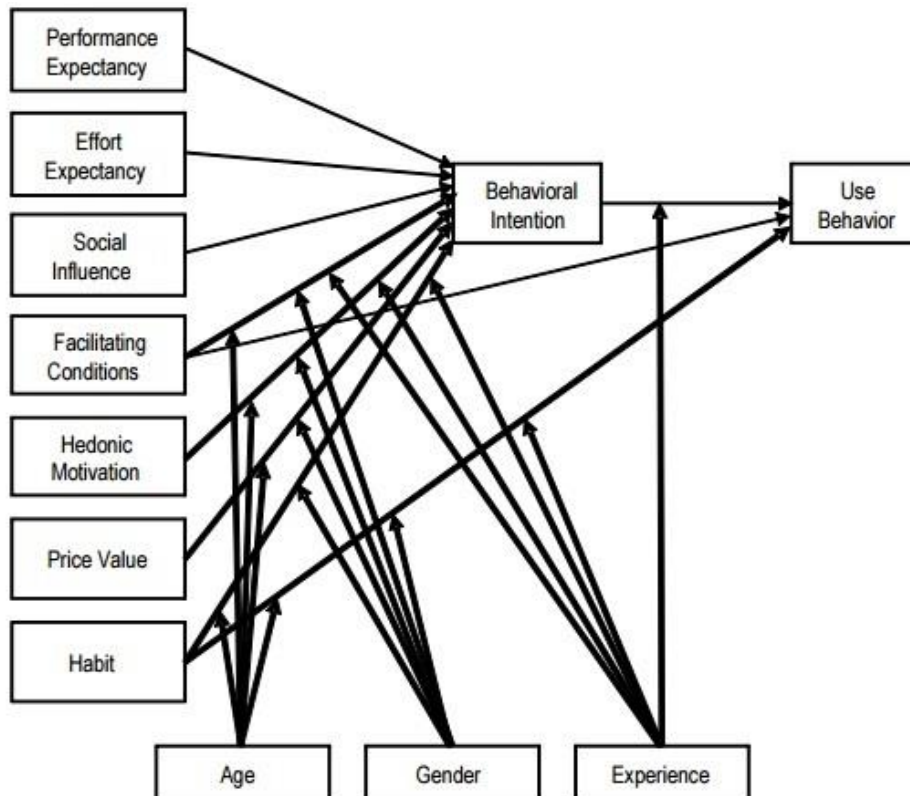


Figure 1: Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2)

Research Hypotheses of UTAUT2 Applied to Ireland’s Dairy Sector SMEs

Performance Expectancy relates to the level to which an employee trusts that using the system will aid him or her to reach advances in their job performance (Venkatesh et al., 2003). This paper examines whether the employees in the dairy sector believe whether using SMM will help their organisation attain their goals and targets.

Effort Expectancy relates to the level of ease associated with the use of social media (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Will the SMM technology provide advantages to small business employees in performing certain activities? Is the level of ease linked with the employee’s use of the SMM technology?

Social Influence relates to the level to which an employee perceives others trust he or she to use the new system (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Will the employee in the Irish dairy sector perceive they must use a particular SMM technology?

Facilitating Conditions relate to the level to which an employee trusts organisational and technical infrastructure exist to maintain the use of the technology. Aspects in an

environment that employees agree make a specific task easy to accomplish. (Venkatesh et al., 2003, Thompson and Higgins, 1991).

Hedonic Motivation relates to the degree to which the employee finds pleasure from using a technology (Brown and Venkatesh, 2005, van der Heijden, 2004). This paper reviews an employee's level of pleasure in using SMM technology.

Price Value relates to consumers accepting the financial cost of using a systems, whereas employees do not. The cost and pricing structure have a significant effect on consumers' technology usage (Venkatesh et al., 2012). This paper explores whether price of SMM is a concern for employees in the dairy sector.

Age/Gender relates to the employees' technological skills and knowledge and whether the effects of age and gender on employee learning is noteworthy. That is, it tests the readiness older adults to use technologies and to identify the factors that play a role in their acceptance of technology (Peek et al., 2014, Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Habit/Experience relates to how people use information system in different ways. Increased system use develops stronger habits with respect to that system. The higher frequency use with a system leads familiarity with the system, which generates positive users. Positive relationships between similar system experience and effort expectancy applies not only the adoption of a system, but also its continued usage. The superior the habit of individuals leads to increased intention and in turn the increased chance of usage (Escobar-Rodríguez and Carvajal-Trujillo, 2013, Andrews and Bianchi, 2013, Limayem et al., 2007). This paper explores whether the level of SMM experience among small business employees and whether this will influences their use and continued use of SMM.

The interview process for this research was semi-structured in nature and comprised of open ended questions. The interview pool comprised of six business owners who are involved in marketing their dairy products in Ireland. The small businesses provided insight not only on how they market their products, but, also on how they adopt and use SMM.

Questions relating to the constructs of the UTAUT2 model were posed in an interview to the businesses in order to evaluate their level of adoption and usage of social media within their business. The main tools used by the small firms are Twitter and Facebook. One of the firms is extremely active on social media and uses all of the following tools Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Vine, and Vimeo.

Business	Products	Established	Size	SMM tools used	Website (Y/N)	Female / Male	Age	Ship (National/International)
Carrowholly Cheese	Gouda style farmhouse Cheese	2000	1	Facebook/ Twitter	Y	Male	56	National
Cuinneog	Natural Butter Milk and farmhouse butter	1990		Facebook/ Twitter	Y	Female	37 and 43	National and International
Blast & Wilde	Handmade butter	2014	2	Facebook/ Twitter/blog	Y	Female	46	National
Mossfield	Milk, Cheese and yoghurts	1970	7		Y	Male	63	National/International
Boyne valley Cheese	Cheese	2010	2	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, vine, Vimeo and four squared	Y	Male	37	National
Killeen Farmhouse Cheese	Cheese	2004	3	Facebook	Y	Female	42	National

Table 1: Small Dairy Business in Ireland Interviewed

Carrowholly Cheese is an award winning Gouda style farmhouse cheese made on the shores of Clew Bay on Ireland’s scenic Atlantic coast line. It is made from raw cow’s milk, collected from local farmers. Each cheese is made by hand by Andrew Pelham-Burn and production is kept intentionally small so as to ensure the outstanding quality of this cheese. Products include; plain, nettle, garlic and chive, cumin and pepper.

Cuinneog has produced the finest quality Irish Farmhouse Country Butter and Natural Buttermilk for the past 25 years. Cuinneog has received many awards for its product over the past few years including “Gold Great Taste Awards” (i.e., 2006, and each year from 2009 to 2014 inclusive) and the “Eirgrid Euro-toques” food award for excellence in quality and traditional production methods in 2010. Cuinneog produces its Irish Farmhouse Country Butter in: A 227g flat bar for Retail and a 227g roll for Restaurants and Food Services. Cuinneog produces its Natural Buttermilk in: one litre size for Retail and a three litre size for Bakeries, Restaurants and Food Services.

Blast and Wilde products are handmade by husband and wife team Bernie and Graham in their home at Monknewtown, Slane, Co. Meath. Products include: wild Irish garlic and pesto, black olive and sun-dried tomato tapenade, zesty lime and chilli and coriander seeds. They have won many awards since they were set up; Supreme Champion Award - Blás na hÉireann 2014, Best in Farmers Market - Blás na hÉireann 2014, Gold, Silver and Bronze Award at Blás na hÉireann 2014.

Mossfield Organic Farm is located six miles from Birr in County Offaly at the foot of the Slieve Bloom Mountains. They have a herd of eighty cows which provides them with their milk for production. The owner Ralph Haslam has been farming at Mossfield since 1970 and in 1999 converted to organic farming. Products include milk, yoghurt, buttermilk, cheese with the following flavours; cheddar, mature, young (i.e., from sixteen weeks), tomato and herbs, garlic and basil and cumin seed.

Boyne Valley Blue is produced on the Finegan family farm comprising of 280 acres in the Boyne Valley including cereals, cattle and goats. The farm has been in the Finegan family since the early 1930s when it was bought by Michael's grandfather. It is the core of what was then 'Mullagha House and Estate', which dates back to the 16th Century. Michael and Jenny Finegan run the goat enterprise at Mullagha farm together; they started in 2007 and have grown the herd of Saanen, Alpine, Toggenburg and Anglo Nubian to around 300 milkers. They have just the one cheese product.

Killeen Farmhouse Cheese is a handmade cheese with the milk from their own goats. They also make cheese from the cow's milk that comes from a local dairy farmer. The goat products they produce are: Killeen goat mild, Killeen goat mature, Killeen goat with fenugreek, and raw goat cheddar. The cow products they produce are: Killeen cow, Killeen cow mature, Kílmóra (Irish 'Emmental'), and flavoured varieties: Cumin, Basil & Garlic, Italian Herbs & olives. Raw goat: Italian Herbs & Olives, Fenugreek (walnut flavour).

Performance Expectancy

Performance expectancy identifies the extent to which an employee believes using the system will benefit him or her to attain advances in their job performance (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

H1 Age and gender will moderate the effect of performance expectancy on behavioural intention to use social media such that the effect will be stronger for younger men.

Table 2 presents the level of performance expectancy of the business interviewed. The businesses either agreed or disagreed that social media is beneficial to their businesses. All businesses interviewed believed social media can help their businesses. One business states "Oh, it defiantly helps the business. It certainly helps getting the name out there." Another agrees, stating "Social media has been massive for my business. Through twitter I will have chefs who will order cheese, they will private message me to send their restaurant two or three wheels of cheese, and then he would email them on an invoice. All done electronically

that I wouldn't even speak to the person." Social media helps find new customers, connect, and empowered them while also expand the online audience (Hootsuite, 2014, Malthouse et al., 2013).

All businesses have received some gains/benefits by using social media, which involve: publicity, brand awareness and sales; event planning, celebrity endorsements and information. This concurs with research; the main outcomes businesses receive by using social media includes; brand building and awareness, community building and engagement, customer satisfaction and loyalty and economic performance (Vlachvei and Notta, 2015, Constantinides and Zinck Stagno, 2011).

Publicity, Brand Awareness and Sales

All businesses interviewed agreed social media provided them with an advantage with getting their name recognised and letting people know what they do. When they post pictures of their product or the manufacturing process on social media, they receive a lot of attention. It also helps them gain interest internationally for their products. Social media lets firms increase brand awareness and reach with limited budget expenditure, social media significantly changes the landscape for brand management (Hootsuite, 2014, Gensler et al., 2013). All businesses have mentioned they receive brand awareness, by employing SMM. It creates awareness of their products and gives them an image. One business owner outlines *"Butter might not be the trendiest image, it shows that we are there. [SMM] mainly helps with branding and communications."* Four of the six businesses interviewed had chefs, restaurants owners and customers contact them through private message of social media applications to order their products. One business owner stated *"Sales have defiantly improved with social media."* Social media has a higher lead-to-close rate than outbound marketing, and a higher number of social media followers improves brand trust and credibility, representing social proof. Building an audience in social media can improve conversion rates on existing traffic (DeMers, 2014).

Event Planning, Celebrity Endorsements and Information

One of the businesses interviewed employs social media to organise cheese making courses; the business uses Facebook as a means of planning the event. Four of the businesses interviewed, had contact from celebrity chefs and food blogger/journalist, such as Donal Skehan, Nevin Maguire and Lucinda O'Sullivan (i.e., food journalist with the Irish Independent Newspaper), regarding promoting and endorsing their products. Endorsements

are intended to enhance brand image and equity. Indeed, *“Having celebrity chefs commenting about your products on Twitter and getting a slot on the Irish TV programme nationwide has helped us to get noticed.”* Celebrities are turning to SMM tools, such as Twitter, to promote brands and interact with fans (Choi and Rifon, 2012). Another business agrees, stating *“It’s certainly name awareness and product awareness. If a restaurant is using my cheese, and they post something about it. It is a comfort factors for others to see and buy it. It’s almost like an accolade.”* Another adds *“It’s great for getting the message to customers.”* One business mentioned that by following other businesses on social media, they can see ways they are *“Learning how to expand the business and gain so much information.”*

Effort Expectancy

Effort expectancy is the amount of ease associated with the use of social media (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

H2 Age, gender and experience will moderate the effect of effort expectancy on behaviour intention to use SMM technology such that the effect will be stronger for older female employees with limited experience of SMM.

For this research question, age and gender moderate the effect of performance expectancy on behavioural intention to use social media such that the effect will be stronger for younger men. All businesses acknowledged their intention to use social media, as they were aware of its benefits. Hence, it was difficult to evaluate whether the effect is stronger for younger men.

Table 2 displays the level of effort expectancy of the business interviewed. The level was rated from a lot of effort, little effort, some effort or no effort. All businesses interviewed find social media easy to use. One businesses owner (younger male/person) finds it remarkably easy to use, and relies on his smartphone for updating social media. Another (older male) finds social media easy to use, but is not particularly good at it and relies on a family member update social media profiles. He does not use Twitter and does not find it particularly easy to use. This finding confirms that age, gender and experience affects the effort expectancy on behaviour intention to use SMM technology.

Business	Age	Gender	Performance	Effort Expectancy	Social Influence	Facilitating Conditions	Hedonic Motivation	Price Value	Habit Experience /
Cuinneog	37	Female	Agreed	Little effort	Tool never suggested	Smartphone/PC	High level of SMM Adopted/Usage	Not considered	Medium habit – 2 SMM tools, Strong experience
(Cuinneog)	43	Female	Agreed	Little effort	Tool never suggested	Smartphone/PC	High level of SMM Adopted/Usage	Not considered	Medium habit – 2 SMM tools, Strong experience
Carrowholly Cheese	56	Male	Agreed	A Lot of Effort	Tool never suggested	Smartphone/PC	Low level of SMM Adopted/Usage	Not considered	Strong habit - 1 SMM tool, Medium experience
Boyne Valley Cheese	37	Male	Agreed	Little Effort	Self-Researched	Smartphone	Extremely high level of SMM Adopted/Usage	Not considered	Low habit – 4/5 SMM tools, high experience
Mossfield	63	Male	Agreed	A Lot of Effort	Tool never suggested	Smartphone/PC	Low Level of SMM Adopted/Usage	Not considered	Strong habit - 1 SMM tool, Medium experience
Killeen	42	Female	Agreed	A Lot of Effort	Tool never suggested	Smartphone	Low Level of SMM Adopted/Usage	Not considered	Strong habit- 1 SMM tool, Medium experience
Blast and Wilde	46	Female/ Male	Agreed	Some Effort	Tool was suggested and used.	Smartphone/PC	High level of SMM Adopted/Usage	Not considered	Medium habit – 2 SMM tools, Medium experience

Table 2: Hypotheses Answered

Another business (younger female) finds social media very easy to use, but notes the only problem is *“Being able to thinking outside the box about information that people want to see, finding content that is unrelated to your product, but in a way trying to bring it back to your business in some way.”* The same company states they are still learning.

When asked whether social media require much effort, four of the six businesses interviewed stated it did. One business expresses, *“Yes it does [require much effort], we are constantly thinking outside of work ways to be creative with their content post. Thinking of posts in the middle of the night, in the spare time.”* One business owner (older male) states *“He has to be reminded to go on twitter, rather than automatically go on to it.”* Another business owner (younger male) feels the opposite and states it does not require much effort, as he does it as he is working.

SMM requires a lot of effort for the older male/female. There is little effort for the younger male/females. This finding confirms age does have an effort of effort expectancy on behaviour intention to use SMM technology, such that the effect is stronger for older males and female employees who have limited experience of SMM.

Social Influence

Social Influence identifies the degree to which an employee perceives important that others believe he or she should use social media (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

H3 Age, gender and experience will moderate the effect of social influence on behavioural intention to use social media such that the effect will be stronger for older women with limited experience of technology.

Table 2 displays the level of social influence of the business interviewed. The level was rated from tool never suggested, tool suggested, and self-researched. When asked if anyone had ever suggested a social media tool, if so which one, only one firm had responded that somebody suggest a tool. This business (older female) had a work experience student who performed an audit of their online presence and suggested Twitter media tool which the firm has since adopted. Another business (older male) expresses *“Not really, I did a course on social media and it was mainly about trying to get as many followers rather than how to keep your followers and what information you want to give. I have a lot of people following me that have absolutely no use to my businesses what so ever.”*

Another business mentioned (younger male) no one suggested a social media tool to him, but he noticed other people using social media so he started to adopt it. By being active on Twitter he noticed someone using Instagram, so he then researched the tool, and realised his business could benefit from the tool. He also mentioned he *“will only use a SMM tool if it is good for the cheese business, and most of them are, I don't use any of them for personal use, only Facebook”*. Another business (younger female) mentioned they realise everyone had started to use SMM, and they had no choice but to start using it. It was an easier way of communicating to customers.

The social influence on behavioural intention to use social media is stronger for older women with limited experience of technology based on this sample. For this research paper age, gender and experience will moderate the effect of social influence on behavioural intention to use social media such that the effect will be stronger for older women with limited experience of technology, as one female business owner had a tool suggested to her and used it.

Facilitating Conditions

Facilitating conditions is defined as the level to which an employee trusts its business and that the technical infrastructure exist to maintain the use of the technology (Venkatesh et al., 2003, Thompson and Higgins, 1991).

H4 Age and experience will moderate the effect of facilitating conditions on SMM technology such that the effect will be stronger for older employees with increasing experience of the technology.

Table 2 displays the level of facilitating conditions of the business interviewed. The answers ranged from PC, smartphone, smartphone and PC. When posed the question have you had any training or support within the company to help you use social media tools? Three out of the six interviewed underwent a one/two day course on social media provided by the Local Enterprise Board/Board Bia. One of the business owners (younger male) is self-taught and has researched social media tools himself.

All of the businesses interviewed access their social media accounts via their smartphones. One business owner states *“There is no set hours to work on social media. We would use the phone for some posts, but for long thought out content involving images we would use the pc as internet connection can be very slow for updating. Internet connection is not fast, which is*

a big problem for us.” The rest of business owners state they update their profiles at home in the evening time, or if they were at an event they would use their smartphones.

The wave of change in how consumers are interacting with brands has continued to gather momentum. With the increased frequency and sophistication in consumer use of mobile devices, social networks and other digital channels have rendered obsolete previous conceptions of how to market to customers. In today’s competitive environment, brands must carry out marketing activities that are not restricted to any one silo. Social Media serves the purpose in better way compared with traditional media (Econsultancy and Oracle, 2014, Kirtiş and Karahan, 2011).

H4 Age and experience will moderate the effect of facilitating conditions on SMM technology such that the effect will be stronger for older employees with increasing experience of the technology.

The employees for this case study all trust their business has the technical infrastructure to maintain the use of SMM technology, as all use their smartphones to maintain their profiles.

Hedonic Motivation

Hedonic motivation is defined as the fun or pleaser resulting from using a technology (Brown and Venkatesh, 2005).

H5 Age, gender and experience will moderate the effect of hedonic motivation on behavioural intention to use social media such that the effect will be stronger among younger men with limited experience of the technology.

Table 2 displays the level of hedonic motivation of the business interviewed. The level was rated from a low level of SMM adopted and use, medium level of SMM adopted and used, high level of SMM adopted and used and finally extremely high level of SMM adopted and used. When asked do you enjoy using social media tools, four out of the six business said they enjoy using social media. *“Yes ... I get a great kick when I see the number of interacting with us, and the conversation flowing. It gives you a great buzz to think that people are interested and are giving you feedback”*. The one business (older male) who did not enjoy using social media stated *“I don’t mind using it. I could take it or leave it to be honest.”*

Four out of the six business said they have never researched a new social media tool. Another mentioned that he has looked at four squared and is not sure if it is of any use, but

will try it out. When asked do you prefer a certain tool over another? One of the business owners (older male) mentions he prefers using Facebook over Twitter purely because he is not familiar with Twitter. He does not understand the posts on Twitter, hashtags and why people send the same message around over and over. This business owner was informed at a conference *"Facebook is for your customers, and Twitter is for your peers"*. People following him on Twitter are chefs, restaurant owners who are more similar to peers. In contrast, another business owner (younger male) states *"Twitter will be the number one (social media tool) by far ... because the restaurants, hotels, food writers and bloggers are on it ... you can create different list and groups ... and keep an eye of what they are doing ... for research alone I find twitter is the best."* The rest of the firms did not have a preference.

When asked what content they post, all businesses interviewed post photos, video, events, recipes, courses and links on their social media accounts. One business created a competition on their account, they explained the *"Competitions were ok, it was time consuming and I think we didn't know a lot about the tool. We did it too soon, we didn't have enough followers for it to take off."* Two of the six businesses interviewed stated *"Posts are dictated on who you want to aim it at. Our retail would be Facebook, and Twitter would be the food services sector [i.e., chefs, restaurants owners and food bloggers]."* Market segmentation is the practice of subdividing a market into particular subsets of customers that act in the same way or have related requirements (Keegan and Schlegelmilch, 2001).

One business interviewed export a product to Dubai, and have posted images of their product ready to be shipped. Content marketing is about providing valuable content to current or potential customers. The aim is to build trust with customers (DeMers, 2013, p. 1).

This hypothesis confirms age, gender and experience does moderate the effect of hedonic motivation on behavioural intention to use social media such that the effect is stronger among younger men with limited experience of the technology.

Price Value

The price value element of the UTAUT was developed as consumers usually bear the monetary cost of such use whereas employees do not. Price value is positive when the benefits of using SMM technology is perceived to be greater than the monetary cost and such price value has a positive impact on intention (Venkatesh et al., 2012).

H6 Do Employees consider the price value of using SMM technology?

Table 2 displays the level of price value of the business interviewed. The level was rated from SMM considered in price and SMM not considered in price. All business owners interviewed do not see a price value of social media; they agreed time was the price value in using social media. One business states *“no don’t see a huge cost in it, as there is nobody employed to do it. You will be doing it yourself and it’s your time.”* Only one of the six businesses paid for a post on social media, stating *“we based the paid post over an Easter weekend, and content we used was outside of the box, it was a knitted chicken. We got about 600 likes. We were happy with using the paid post.”*

Two businesses use social media daily between 1.5 and 3 hours a day. The other businesses use social media between 1 to 3 hours weekly. All businesses update their social media in the evening, with some businesses updating during work around lunch time or while milking in the morning. All agreed it is time consuming updating social media. One business states *“The amount of time used on social media ... I don’t think it is time consuming... it is part of the business.”*

When asked do they see a return on investment by using social media one business states they do not get anything directly, but they had seen a positive impact on their sales. Another business owner (young female) stated they do not track any sales coming through Facebook or Twitter, as they go through an agent for distribution of their products. It would be different if they were going direct to the consumer, where they could track that information.

Another business owner (older male) explained they do not directly see a return on investment, but are confident there is a return, as a lot of people say they viewed his Facebook page; whether they had bought as a direct result or not, he does not know. The business owner (older male) has received messages from customers looking to buy his product on Facebook, or asking where it might be available. This business owner does not record the breakdown of sales according to fairs/social media messages/restaurants. Another business (younger male) states *“yes I see a return on investment ... sales wise, a woman yesterday from County Wexford found me through Twitter and ordered €500 worth of cheese, and that happens quiet regular.”* An important issue for the improvement of social media within a marketing context for small food businesses is to understand the issues of return on investment, how, when, and where to spend their marketing budget (Campbell et al., 2011).

Research suggests SMM technology is successful is because they are about people. SMM buzz words, are people-related and consumer-related (e.g., community, conversations, dialog, sharing). Social media is not entirely about sales, market share and profit (Fisher, 2009).

The price value component of the UTAUT2 model is optimistic when the benefits/gains of using a social media technology are perceived to be superior to the monetary cost and such price value has a positive influence on intention. As the businesses interviewed within this paper does not see price as an issue as the cost of using these SMM technology is free, price value does not lead to the behavioural intention to use SMM technology (Venkatesh et al., 2012).

However, these business owners has neglected to include their time as a cost – they don't discount their own labour in the cost of SMM. When businesses decide the price of their products, it's apparent that they need to charge greater than the total cost of producing it. Before a business can enter the social media arena, it must establish the appropriate goals associated with the social media implementation. Businesses needs to identify and comprehend the value intention for the customer, and for the business. Marketing is considered an indirect cost, and businesses need to factor SMM into the final product price (Arline, 2015, Vlachvei and Notta, 2015).

Habit/Experience

Habit has been defined as the level to which people tend to perform behaviours automatically because of learning. Peoples general opinions regarding technology were the strongest determinants of system- specific perceived ease of use, particularly after substantial direct experience with the specific technology (Limayem et al., 2007, Venkatesh, 2000).

H7 Age Gender and experience will moderate the effect of habit on technology use such that the effect will be stronger for older men with high levels of experience with social media.

Table 2 displays the level of habit/experience of the business interviewed. The habit level was rated from low, medium and high. The experience level was rated from low, medium and high. When asked have you ever tried a SMM tool and never used it; two of the six businesses have stated no. One business outlined he has a LinkedIn account that he never uses. Another business mentions he has a Tumblr account that he does not really use.

When asked whether they stick to the same social media tool because of familiarity or habit, they all agreed they stick to the same social media tool because they are familiar with it. One mentioned *“No I am familiar with them all, I just like Twitter at the moment because it is working well for the business, and there is more happening on it and its real time.”* Another business mentioned they use just two SMM tools, Facebook is where their individual customers are found, and Twitter is where the chefs, restaurants owners and food bloggers are found.

One business rated his experience as great, the rest rated their experience as medium. None of the businesses interviewed had any experience in digital marketing. All the businesses interviewed use the same social media tool consistently because they are experienced in it. One of the businesses mentioned *“If I didn’t use it (Social Media Tool), would be because I’m not familiar with it, the fear of messing up, causing more harm than good, you might damage your reputation. The fear of the unknown ...”* Another business mentioned *“People within companies that are good on social media give a great image of the company, that if they are always on social media, and they are always putting up stuff, - well that company is doing brilliant, but they may not be. But it is important to give a great image that you are doing well”.*

Age and Gender

Gender, age and experience have a combined impact on the link between facilitating conditions and intention. Gender dissimilarities in task orientation and emphasis on instrumentality will become more noticeable with increasing age (Morris et al., 2005).

H11 Employees Age/Gender relates to the readiness of using SMM.

The age profile of all interview were in the late thirties to early fifties, three male and three female. The business owner who had great SMM adoption and usage was male and in his late thirties. The business owner with the least SMM adoption and usage was male and in his late fifties.

All the businesses interviewed believed if a social media tool is easy to use, they would be more inclined to use it. All businesses agreed a person with more experience in internet/digital marketing are more willing to use social media. All the business interviewed believe that if the tool is easy to use it will have a positive effect on using social media. One business did mention *“it could be easy to use, but be of no use to your business”*. Identifying

the correct advertising format for a business is important for allocating resources/ marketing budgets and to plan for each year. Marketers need to select the right tools and technologies, particularly the ones that will provide a distinct business value (Elliott et al., 2013).

From the interviews with the six businesses, the owner who was more willing to adopt and use SMM tool was male and younger in age. This finding answers the hypothesis that gender, age and experience have a combined impact on the link between facilitating conditions and intention.

Implications

This paper reviews the literature on technology adoption and usage linking to the UTAUT model. This pilot paper explains the different levels of experience, adoption and usage and the findings will be relevant to researchers and practitioners. In terms of the theoretical contribution, this paper introduces the need for small firms to adopt social media marketing in order to compete globally. In terms of practical implications, this paper highlights the importance of adoption and usage of social media as a means of shaping the employees perception and usage of the technology.

All the businesses believed social media has provided them with many benefits; brand awareness, publicity, sales, celebrity endorsements and enhanced customer relations. Social customer relationship management has development because of the growing out of the need to attract online users by providing persuasive content. Social media adds a new measurement by recording the interactions and conversations with the customer. Businesses must record the most relevant and valuable information from social media and assimilate this communication with the customer relation management workflow (Krishnan et al., 2012, Leary, 2008). However, none of the businesses interviewed recorded any of the valuable information communicated through social media. Every customer interaction on social media is an opportunity to publicly demonstrate customer service and enrich customer relationships (DeMers, 2014).

Four of the six interviewed indicated if they had more time and money, they would spend it on social media. They would be interested in exploring the tools further, and would be fascinated in understanding how they could accrue more benefits/gains by using social media. However, another business (younger male) mentioned *“I would not spend any more money on social media, as I am already doing a lot around 3 hours a day. I would be interested in*

up scaling production instead and if I expand the business I am going to get physically busier ... at the moment I can do it now....but I will defiantly have to get help with it.”

Three of the six businesses interviewed do not use any form of traditional marketing, *“local newspapers are absolutely useless for my business, to be honest. I have never even thought about radio. They are very expensive for one little advert, and people will say oh I saw your ad, and they will have forgotten about it. Where with social media, you are getting it free, so you can keep doing it.”* One business did a small amount of traditional marketing in the form of paper advertisements, but it was nothing compared to the level of social media they do.

Two businesses mentioned they plan their content around the different SMM tools, one of the business owners stated *“I did use hootsuite for posts, but didn’t like it as some messages I didn’t want posted on certain channels and it’s a different demographic.”* Developing social media campaigns that appeal to certain groups of online users can consequently increase the efficiency and effectiveness of those campaigns (Kotler and Lee, 2008).

Two businesses export their products internationally to England, France, Germany, Holland, Belgium, Dubai, and Singapore. One business mentioned the cost of refrigeration transport as being very expensive. What is quite worrying is that none of the business interviewed provide any forms of digital marketing to international countries of their products, missing on a global sales opportunities.

Most of the businesses have websites and social media accounts, which are not fully integrated. None of the businesses could view or analyse whether any international customers had viewed their social media profiles/websites. All business interviewed had a website, none of them had statistics on their websites, or had an easy way of editing their websites. One business (older male) has a shopping cart on the website, but mentioned *“I have no statistics on my website, I am thinking of taking the shop of the website, because I am not promoting it enough purely because I don’t have the time for it. I also don’t have the product, because anything I produces I sell very quickly. I do think that you need to spend quite a bit of time promoting it.”* Small businesses can take the advantages of opportunities provided by e-commerce to access new and often distant markets or global value-chains (Savrul et al., 2014). However, food and drink brands are at a drawback when associated to other business types because an overwhelming majority of Irish food SMEs do not have commerce functionality.

None of the small business interviewed are recording the breakdown of their sales, so it is hard to gauge how many sales are actually coming from social media. However businesses are using Social Media as a tool for developing their customer base. Social media is an important platform for reaching new buyers and developing deeper relationships with customers. Social media is also challenging the traditional notion of customer relationship management (Krishnan et al., 2012, Malthouse et al., 2013).

Findings and Conclusions

This paper reviews the literature on technology adoption and usage linking to the difference stages of experience and the findings will be relevant to researchers and practitioners. In terms of the theoretical contribution, this paper introduces the need for SMEs to adopt social media marketing in order to compete globally. In terms of practical implications, this paper highlights the importance of adoption and usage of social media as a main shaping the employees perception and usage of the technology.

All businesses are using social media tools, and are aware of the many benefits that social media can provide. There has been a shift in the way customers/business owners are communicating; restaurant owners and chefs find it easier to contact businesses through social media for sales, rather than traditional methods such as telephone and email for purchases. Businesses are looking for more innovative and cost effective ways to market their products and are paying more attention to social media as a powerful survival tool. It seems that the rate of shift change from traditional media to social media (Kirtiş and Karahan, 2011).

None of the businesses were recording sales through social media, so they might not be fully aware of the true benefit social media might have on their business. Some of the businesses understood the different market segments of social media tools, for example Twitter was identified as for the service industry and Facebook for the retailers.

What was quite worrying is that none of the businesses reviewed in detail any statistics on any of the tools they had used, so were unaware of the depth of their target audience. Some of the businesses reviewed their Facebook insights but to little dept. With two of the businesses shipping products internationally there is a huge opportunity for them for growth, but they did not have the statistical online information that could aid them.

All businesses are spending time on social media, however, there is not one dedicated person employed in any of the businesses to work on it, it is undertaken as a task. With small firms, roles and tasks can change daily as the demand for certain activities take centre stage in the businesses. With businesses seeing social media sites are free or have minimal costs, the time employees spend posting status messages, responding to comments, and blogging, represents the biggest cost (Zappe, 2010).

Regarding age and gender, younger people are more active on social media, with the younger males fully adopting numerous social media tools, compared to the older males. The younger females have also embraced social media tools. Men are more influenced by instrumentality, while women were more strongly influenced by social factors and environmental constraints. Age and education were found to be significant factor in adoption of technologies (Gloy and Akridge, 2000, Morris et al., 2005). Further research using a wider sample is required to determine whether there is a difference between younger males and females.

References

- ANDREWS, L. & BIANCHI, C. 2013. Consumer internet purchasing behavior in Chile. *Journal of Business Research*, 66, 1791-1799.
- ARLINE, K. 2015. *Direct Costs vs. Indirect Costs: Understanding Each* [Online]. Available: <http://www.businessnewsdaily.com/5498-direct-costs-indirect-costs.html> [Accessed 16th June 2015].
- BORDBIA. 2014. Irish food and drink exports approach €10 billion for the first time. Available: <http://www.bordbia.ie/corporate/press/2014/pages/ExportPerformanceProspects2014.aspx> [Accessed 21st January 2015].
- BROWN, S. A. & VENKATESH, V. 2005. MODEL OF ADOPTION OF TECHNOLOGY IN HOUSEHOLDS: A BASELINE MODEL TEST AND EXTENSION INCORPORATING HOUSEHOLD LIFE CYCLE. *MIS Quarterly*, 29, 399-426.
- CAMPBELL, C., PITT, L. F., PARENT, M. & BERTHON, P. R. 2011. UNDERSTANDING CONSUMER CONVERSATIONS AROUND ADS IN A WEB 2.0 WORLD. *Journal of Advertising*, 40, 87-102.
- CASTAÑEDA, J. A., MUÑOZ-LEIVA, F. & LUQUE, T. 2007. Web Acceptance Model (WAM): Moderating effects of user experience. *Information & Management*, 44, 384-396.
- CHOI, S. M. & RIFON, N. J. 2012. It Is a Match: The Impact of Congruence between Celebrity Image and Consumer Ideal Self on Endorsement Effectiveness. *Psychology & Marketing*, 29, 639-650.
- CONSTANTINIDES, E. & ZINCK STAGNO, M. C. 2011. Potential of the social media as instruments of higher education marketing: a segmentation study. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, 21, 7-24.
- DAHNIL, M. I., MARZUKI, K. M., LANGGAT, J. & FABEL, N. F. 2014. Factors Influencing SMEs Adoption of Social Media Marketing. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 148, 119-126.
- DAVIS, F. D. 1989. Perceived Usefulness, Perceived Ease of Use, and User Acceptance of Information Technology. *MIS Quarterly*, 13, 319-340.
- DAVIS, F. D., BAGOZZI, R. P. & WARSHAW, P. R. 1989. USER ACCEPTANCE OF COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY: A COMPARISON OF TWO THEORETICAL MODELS. *Management Science*, 35, 982-1003.
- DCMNR, D. O. A. F. A. T. M. 2013. Annual Review & Outlook for Agriculture, Food and the Marine 2013/2014.
- DEMERS, J. 2014. The Top 10 Benefits Of Social Media Marketing. Available: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jaysondemers/2014/08/11/the-top-10-benefits-of-social-media-marketing/>.
- DJEI 2011. The Voice of Small Business: A Plan for Action. In: NOLAN, C. (ed.). Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation.
- DJEI 2014. Government committed to creating competitive business environment for SMEs to support sustainable job creation and competitiveness growth – Minister Perry - In: DEPARTMENT OF JOBS, E. A. I. (ed.). <http://www.enterprise.gov.ie/Djei/en/>.
- ECONSULTANCY & ORACLE, M. C. 2014. Cross Channel Marketing Report 2014. In: ECONSULTANCY (ed.) *Cross Channel Marketing Report 2014*.
- ENTERPRISE, I. 2007. *SME Definition* [Online]. Enterprise Ireland. Available: <http://www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/about-us/our-clients/sme-definition.html> [Accessed 28th May 2015].

- ESCOBAR-RODRÍGUEZ, T. & CARVAJAL-TRUJILLO, E. 2013. Online drivers of consumer purchase of website airline tickets. *Journal of Air Transport Management*, 32, 58-64.
- FISHER, T. 2009. ROI in social media: A look at the arguments. *Journal of Database Marketing & Customer Strategy Management*, 16, 189-195.
- GENSLER, S., VÖLCKNER, F., LIU-THOMPkins, Y. & WIERTZ, C. 2013. Managing Brands in the Social Media Environment. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27, 242-256.
- GLOY, B. A. & AKRIDGE, J. T. 2000. Computer and internet adoption on large U.S. farms. *The International Food and Agribusiness Management Review*, 3, 323-338.
- HOOTSUITE. 2014. 10 benefits of social media for business every skeptic should know. Available from: <http://blog.hootsuite.com/social-media-for-business/> [2015].
- KEEGAN, W. J. & SCHLEGELMILCH, B. B. 2001. *Global Marketing Management: A European Perspective*, England, Prentice-Hall.
- KIRTIŞ, A. K. & KARAHAN, F. 2011. To Be or Not to Be in Social Media Arena as the Most Cost-Efficient Marketing Strategy after the Global Recession. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 24, 260-268.
- KRISHNAN, V., PETERSON, R. M. & RODRIGUEZ, M. 2012. Social Media's Influence on Business-To-Business Sales Performance. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 32, 365-378.
- LEARY, B. 2008. Social CRM: Customer Relationship Management in the Age of the Socially-Empowered Customer. In: WHITEPAPER (ed.) *CRM Essentials*. Atlanta, October.
- LIMAYEM, M., HIRT, S. G. & CHEUNG, C. M. K. 2007. How Habit Limits the Predictive Power of Intention: The Case of Information Systems Continuance. *MIS Quarterly*, 31, 705-737.
- MALTHOUSE, E. C., HAENLEIN, M., SKIERA, B., WEGE, E. & ZHANG, M. 2013. Managing Customer Relationships in the Social Media Era: Introducing the Social CRM House. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27, 270-280.
- MEADOWS, D. K. 2009. Falling in love 2.0: relationship marketing for the Facebook generation. *Journal of Direct, Data and Digital Marketing Practice*, 9, 245-250.
- MORRIS, M. G., VENKATESH, V. & ACKERMAN, P. L. 2005. Gender and age differences in employee decisions about new technology: an extension to the theory of planned behavior. *Engineering Management, IEEE Transactions on*, 52, 69-84.
- PEEK, S. T. M., WOUTERS, E. J. M., VAN HOOFF, J., LUIJKX, K. G., BOEIJE, H. R. & VRIJHOEF, H. J. M. 2014. Factors influencing acceptance of technology for aging in place: A systematic review. *International Journal of Medical Informatics*, 83, 235-248.
- RAPP, A., BEITELSPACHER, S. L., GREWAL, D. & HUGHES, E. D. 2012. Understanding social media effects across seller, retailer, and consumer interactions. *Journal of Academy of Marketing Science* 41, 547 -566.
- SAVRUL, M., INCEKARA, A. & SENER, S. 2014. The Potential of E-commerce for SMEs in a Globalizing Business Environment. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 150, 35-45.
- SHANG, R.-A., CHEN, Y.-C. & SHEN, L. 2005. Extrinsic versus intrinsic motivations for consumers to shop on-line. *Information & Management*, 42, 401-413.
- TEAGASC. 2014. *Agriculture in Ireland* [Online]. Available: <http://www.teagasc.ie/agrifood/> [Accessed 23th January 2015].

- THOMPSON, R. L. & HIGGINS, C. A. 1991. Personal Computing: Toward a Conceptual Model of Utilization. *MIS Quarterly*, 15, 125-143.
- VAN DER HEIJDEN, H. 2004. USER ACCEPTANCE OF HEDONIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS. *MIS Quarterly*, 28, 695-704.
- VENKATESH, V. 2000. Determinants of Perceived Ease of Use: Integrating Control, Intrinsic Motivation, and Emotion into the Technology Acceptance Model. *Information Systems Research*, 11, 342.
- VENKATESH, V., L. THONG, J. Y. & XU, X. 2012. CONSUMER ACCEPTANCE AND USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: EXTENDING THE UNIFIED THEORY OF ACCEPTANCE AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY. *MIS Quarterly*, 36, 157-178.
- VENKATESH, V., MORRIS, M. G., DAVIS, G. B. & DAVIS, F. D. 2003. USER ACCEPTANCE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY: TOWARD A UNIFIED VIEW. *MIS Quarterly*, 27, 425-478.
- VLACHVEI, A. & NOTTA, O. 2015. Understanding Social Media ROI in SMEs. *International Organization for Research and Development – IORD*.
- YOON, V. Y., HOSTLER, R. E., GUO, Z. & GUIMARAES, T. 2013. Assessing the moderating effect of consumer product knowledge and online shopping experience on using recommendation agents for customer loyalty. *Decision Support Systems*, 55, 883-893.
- ZAPPE, J. 2010. The ROI of Social Media. *Journal of Corporate Recruiting Leadership*, 5, 3-6.