

Evaluating the Impact of Social Media Marketing on the Growth and Performance of Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

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Abstract

This study investigates how social media marketing influences the growth and performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Somalia, with a focus on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Using a cross-sectional survey design, data were collected from 127 SMEs across five major cities: Mogadishu, Hargeisa, Kismayo, Baidoa, and Borama. Business growth was assessed through indicators such as increased sales revenue, customer base expansion, and market reach, while improvements in brand awareness and customer engagement measured performance. The findings show that 67% of respondents reported enhanced customer engagement and brand awareness, and 54% indicated higher sales revenue linked to social media campaigns. Regression results revealed that Facebook had the strongest impact on both growth ($\beta = 0.625$, $R^2 = 0.391$, $p < 0.001$) and performance ($\beta = 0.581$, $R^2 = 0.337$, $p < 0.001$). Instagram contributed moderately to growth ($\beta = 0.547$, $R^2 = 0.299$, $p < 0.001$) and performance ($\beta = 0.509$, $R^2 = 0.259$, $p < 0.001$), while TikTok showed a weaker but significant effect on growth ($\beta = 0.219$, $R^2 = 0.048$, $p = 0.012$) and limited effect on performance ($\beta = 0.215$, $R^2 = 0.046$, $p = 0.015$). Combined regression models explained over 92% of the variance in SME growth and 85% in performance, highlighting the synergistic benefits of multi-platform strategies. These findings underscore the strategic

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importance of social media marketing for Somali SMEs and point to the need for targeted digital training and policy support to maximize its potential.

Keywords:

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the marketing landscape for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) has shifted dramatically from traditional media (TV, radio, print) to digital platforms. Traditional advertising is often expensive and broad-brush, making precise targeting difficult for resource-constrained SMEs (Cant & Wiid, 2016). By contrast, social media marketing (SMM) offers firms low-cost, measurable, and interactive ways to reach customers. Social platforms allow firms to target ads by demographic or interest, foster two-way dialogue, and track engagement in real time. As a result, many SMEs have adopted platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok as important marketing tools for ongoing customer communication. For example, [24] notes that social media enables businesses to build brand value, customer loyalty, and profitability while reducing advertising costs. In short, social media has transformed marketing from costly mass media to affordable, personalized campaigns that even small firms can implement efficiently.

Social Media Marketing Benefits for SMEs

Social media's appeal for SMEs lies in its interactivity and extensive reach. Unlike one-way traditional advertising, social platforms let businesses engage directly with customers through posts, comments, and instant feedback. Such engagement can translate into stronger brand equity and higher purchase intentions [24]. Similarly, empirical studies in Ghana and Malaysia have shown that effective social media marketing can boost both financial and non-financial performance. For instance, [15] found that Malaysian SMEs managing their social media activities and competitive responses well saw significant improvements in customer satisfaction and operational efficiency. Likewise, [2] report a significant positive relationship between social media adoption and both financial and marketing performance for

Ghanaian SMEs. The International Trade Centre [12] has long emphasized that digital tools can help SMEs overcome traditional barriers. In a 2014 ITC report, it was noted that SMEs in developing countries are using social media “to find new clients and generate trade” even on very tight budgets. The ITC guide highlights how firms can build networks to boost business and measure campaign impact in real time (ITC Annual report 2014, 2015). In other words, social channels level the playing field: even firms with limited marketing teams or budgets can cultivate a global audience through organic content and low-cost ads. In practice, this means a small artisanal business in Nairobi or Mogadishu can potentially reach thousands of prospects via Facebook or Instagram with minimal spend. The only requirements are Internet access and some digital skills – needs that are increasingly being met even in many developing regions.

Digital Context in Developing Economies and Somalia

Expanding mobile and Internet use is particularly transformative in developing regions. Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, saw mobile Internet penetration reach about 27% of the population by late 2023 [9]. Yet, a significant “usage gap” remains: many individuals who could connect do not, largely due to affordability challenges and limited digital literacy.

In Somalia, recent reports highlight a remarkable increase in internet adoption. Internet penetration stood at about 27.6% of the population in early 2024 (Digital, 2024), but by early 2025 this figure had risen to around 55.2%. These trends point to expanding opportunities for digital engagement, while also underscoring persistent challenges, as a considerable share of Somali citizens still face structural and economic barriers to reliable connectivity.

For Somali SMEs, this shift suggests that social media marketing is increasingly viable, particularly for reaching urban populations and younger consumers, even though full market coverage remains unattainable. Despite infrastructural constraints, African social media users are known to be highly active. Recent data indicate that Facebook holds around **68.5%** of social media usage in Africa, while Instagram accounts for about **15.4%** [27]. Other platforms—including TikTok and X—currently have smaller market shares. These figures suggest that although Facebook remains dominant, Instagram is increasingly relevant, and emerging platforms may grow in importance, especially among younger or digitally active users.

Nevertheless, TikTok is expanding globally, especially among youth audiences, and Somalia’s demographic profile—marked by a very young median age of 15.3 years (Digital, 2024)—indicates that TikTok’s relevance will likely grow as internet access continues to widen. For SMEs, these

demographic dynamic signals both a current opportunity in Facebook-led marketing and a future horizon where TikTok may play a more strategic role in customer engagement.

Research on Social Media Marketing and SME Outcomes

A substantial body of empirical research links social media activities to positive SME outcomes. For example, [24] showed that social media marketing significantly raises brand equity and brand loyalty, which in turn encourages purchase behavior. [17] conducted an eight-year panel analysis of 100 Spanish SMEs and found that customer engagement on social media can predict future revenues – but only when firms manage their social accounts professionally. Similarly, So et al. (2024) that customer engagement on social platforms is multifaceted and constantly evolving, requiring firms to continually adapt their strategies. In sum, these studies suggest that active, strategic use of social media tends to improve an SME's financial performance, provided the firm invests in quality engagement (for example, via skilled personnel or agencies). Many studies also highlight specific platforms. In Ghana, [2] demonstrated that social media use by SMEs had a significantly positive effect on both financial results and broader marketing outcomes. In Kenya, [29] examined youth-owned SMEs in Nairobi County and found a strong positive relationship between social media marketing and business performance; notably, her analysis reported a Pearson correlation of $r = .811$ ($p = .000$) between social media use and SME performance. In Bangladesh, [18] reported that SMEs using digital marketing saw notable improvements in market reach and sales performance. [8] focused on TikTok, showing that content-driven TikTok campaigns significantly enhanced brand awareness among Generation Z consumers of Indonesian SMEs. These examples indicate that, across diverse developing-country contexts, social media marketing generally correlates with higher growth and stronger performance. However, the evidence remains uneven globally. Much of the literature has focused on Asian or Western contexts, with relatively less attention on African markets. Even within developing economies, studies often treat all social platforms as a single category; few research efforts have differentiated platform-specific effects (e.g. Facebook vs Instagram vs TikTok) or focused on under-studied countries. For instance, [15] looked at Malaysian firms and emphasized nonfinancial performance gains, but the Malaysian context differs greatly from Somalia. [2] and [29] provide insight for Ghana and Kenya, respectively, but Somalia's unique market and socio-economic conditions remain unstudied. This gap motivates the present research: localized, platform-specific evidence is needed on how social media use drives SME growth in the Somali environment.

To address these gaps, the present study will examine how Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok marketing each relate to the growth and performance of Somali SMEs. Using surveys of Somali business owners

and statistical analysis (e.g. regression or structural equation modeling, as in previous SMM studies by [29] the research will determine whether use of each platform significantly affects outcomes like revenue growth and customer acquisition. It will also investigate whether a combined multi-platform strategy provides additional benefits. This focus aligns with recent findings that a diverse social media strategy (mixing platforms) may amplify a small business's reach and resilience. Specifically, this study tested the following hypotheses:

- **H1a:** Facebook marketing has a significant impact on SME growth.
- **H1b:** Facebook marketing has a significant impact on SME performance.
- **H2a:** Instagram engagement is significantly related to SME growth.
- **H2b:** Instagram engagement is significantly related to SME performance.
- **H3a:** TikTok marketing has a significant effect on SME growth.
- **H3b:** TikTok marketing has a significant effect on SME performance.
- **H4a:** The combined use of Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok marketing is significantly associated with SME performance.
- **H4b:** The combined use of these platforms is significantly associated with SME growth.

Through the rigorous testing of these hypotheses using primary data collected from Somali SMEs, this study aims to generate fresh empirical insights into how social media marketing contributes to business outcomes in a developing economy context. Unlike much of the existing literature that either draws on secondary data or focuses on more developed or geographically distinct markets, this research is grounded in original data obtained through structured surveys. By applying statistical techniques—particularly regression analysis—it assesses both the individual and combined effects of the three major platforms. While this work draws methodological guidance from prior studies (such as [24] survey model and [29] correlational approach), it contributes new, context-specific evidence rooted in the Somali business environment. Ultimately, the findings are intended to clarify whether social media platforms deliver the same kinds of benefits—such as stronger brand recognition, improved customer engagement, and growth in revenue or market share—as seen elsewhere. In doing so, the research offers practical implications for Somali entrepreneurs, digital marketers, and policymakers striving to harness social media as a strategic lever for SME development in a digitally evolving but resource-constrained setting.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Theoretical Frameworks

This study is based on three foundational theories—the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), and the Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI)—to better understand how and why Somali small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) adopt and benefit from social media marketing, especially through Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. These theoretical frameworks provide a solid foundation for the study's platform-specific hypotheses (H1a– H4b), as they help explain the behavioral, technological, and innovation-related factors that influence SMEs' decisions to engage with these platforms. Together, TAM, UTAUT, and DOI offer insights into perceived ease of use, usefulness, social influence, and innovation adoption patterns that may shape the effectiveness and adoption of social media marketing within the Somali SME context.

2.1.1. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), introduced by [6] , is a widely used framework for understanding how people and organizations adopt new technologies. It highlights two core determinants:

- **Perceived Usefulness (PU):** This refers to the degree to which an SME believes that using a specific platform (e.g., Facebook or Instagram) will enhance business performance or growth. For instance, “Facebook has contributed to my sales growth” reflects PU in the context of H1a and H1b.
- **Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU):** This refers to how effortless a platform is perceived to be. SMEs using Instagram or TikTok without formal marketing training suggests that these platforms are considered easy to use (relevant to H2a, H2b, H3a, H3b).

2.1.2. Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)

[31] developed UTAUT to integrate elements from multiple models. It introduces four core constructs, three of which are directly relevant here:

- **Performance Expectancy:** Closely related to TAM's PU, this reflects SME expectations that using social platforms will result in positive outcomes like increased customer base or visibility (supports all hypotheses H1–H4).
- **Social Influence:** Peer usage and customer behavior on social platforms can shape SME decisions, particularly in Somalia where informal networks are strong (relevant for H1–H3).
- **Facilitating Conditions:** In Somalia's developing digital ecosystem, access to smartphones, affordability, and digital literacy shape SMEs' ability to use these platforms effectively. These

background conditions support platform adoption but particularly help explain platform combination strategies in H4a and H4b.

2.1.3. Diffusion of Innovations Theory (DOI)

[23] explores how innovations spread across users and organizations. It offers three key constructs especially relevant to this research:

- **Relative Advantage:** SMEs adopt platforms when they perceive unique benefits—e.g., Facebook for trust-building, TikTok for viral reach, or Instagram for visual engagement (supports all individual platform hypotheses H1–H3).
- **Compatibility:** The alignment between the platforms and SME needs—e.g., their digital readiness and marketing goals—explains why all three platforms are already in use in Somalia (supports H1–H3, as well as combined use in H4a and H4b).
- **Observability:** The visible success of peers using these platforms encourages adoption. For example, seeing other SMEs succeed with Instagram or TikTok influences others to follow (particularly relevant to H3 and H4).

In summary, these three theoretical perspectives jointly explain why Somali SMEs adopt and benefit from social media marketing. TAM emphasizes perceptions of usefulness and ease of use, UTAUT highlights the roles of social influence and enabling conditions, and DOI captures how innovations diffuse at different stages. Applied together, these frameworks provide a robust lens for understanding platform-specific impacts (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok) as well as the combined benefits of multi-platform use. Figure 2.1 below illustrates the theoretical framework guiding this study, linking the independent variables (social media platforms) with the dependent outcomes (SME growth and performance), as shaped by the underlying constructs of TAM, UTAUT, and DOI.

2.1.4. Theoretical Framework Diagram



Figure 2.1: Theoretical Framework for Social Media Marketing and SME Growth/Performance in Somalia

2.1.5. Platform-Specific Justification and Theoretical Fit

While social media marketing has become a global strategy for SMEs, its effectiveness depends greatly on platform features, user behavior, and local digital ecosystems. In Somalia, where digital infrastructure is still emerging and mobile access is central, differences between Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok have direct implications for business outcomes:

- Facebook remains a dominant platform among SMEs in developing regions due to its broad accessibility, business tools, and ease of use. For example, [25] found that Facebook’s affordances—such as brand visibility, sharing options, and relationship-building features—are strongly associated with customer acquisition and SME performance. This aligns well with TAM’s perceived usefulness, UTAUT’s performance expectancy, and DOI’s relative advantage (H1a, H1b).
- **Instagram** is particularly popular among younger demographics and demands visually rich content. In sectors like fashion and food, it is leveraged for brand storytelling and identity building. A recent study by Sanches (2025) confirms that Instagram engagement metrics, such as interaction rate and reach, are positively associated with revenue growth, supporting constructs of perceived usefulness and compatibility (H2a, H2b).
- **TikTok** has surged in popularity among African youth due to its mobile-first, video-based design. [5] notes that SMEs often achieve higher engagement rates on TikTok than on other platforms, making it a cost-effective channel for brand visibility. However, many businesses still struggle to translate reach into conversions, highlighting both the relative advantage and ongoing observability dynamics (H3a, H3b).
- **Combined Platform Use:** SMEs increasingly blend platforms—using TikTok for awareness, Instagram for engagement, and Facebook for conversion. This multi-platform strategy is supported by UTAUT’s facilitating conditions and DOI’s compatibility, and is central to hypotheses H4a and H4b.

Together, TAM, UTAUT, and DOI offer a comprehensive lens for understanding SME decisions to adopt and engage with social media platforms. By linking theoretical constructs to platform-specific

behaviors and features, this framework not only supports the research hypotheses (H1a–H4b) but also highlights the nuanced interplay between technology, marketing strategies, and local SME dynamics in the Somali context.

2.2. Conceptual Review

2.2.1. Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are often regarded as the backbone of economic development, especially in emerging economies. Globally, they represent more than 90% of businesses and are key drivers of employment and innovation [30]. In regions such as Africa and Asia, SMEs play an even more critical role by supporting livelihoods and contributing to inclusive growth. However, despite their importance, many SMEs continue to grapple with persistent challenges. These include limited access to finance, weak institutional support, underdeveloped infrastructure, and most notably, gaps in digital and marketing capabilities.

In response to these challenges, digital technologies—particularly social media—have opened up new possibilities. These platforms offer SMEs affordable and scalable tools to promote their businesses, build customer relationships, and expand beyond local markets. As noted by the [20], digital adoption has become more than just an opportunity; it's a strategic necessity. Without it, SMEs risk falling behind in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

2.2.2. Social Media Marketing (SMM)

Social media marketing (SMM) has transformed how small businesses communicate, market, and grow. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok offer SMEs an accessible alternative to traditional forms of advertising, which are often too costly or complex for small businesses to sustain. What makes social media powerful for SMEs is its ability to combine visibility, interaction, and storytelling—at a fraction of the cost.

With tools such as short-form videos (e.g., Reels), live broadcasts, interactive polls, and personalized ads, SMEs can connect with audiences in ways that feel authentic and engaging. These platforms not only support customer acquisition but also foster brand loyalty and provide valuable real-time feedback. As [21] highlight, consistent and meaningful engagement on social media is closely linked to improved business outcomes, including increased customer retention and stronger brand reputation.

2.3. Empirical Literature Review

2.3.1. Facebook and SMEs

Facebook remains to be one of the most impactful platforms for SMEs globally. Its vast user base, affordability, and easy-to-use features make it particularly attractive to small business owners—especially in developing regions.

Through tools like Facebook Pages, Ads Manager, and Messenger, SMEs can showcase products, respond quickly to inquiries, and cultivate meaningful customer relationships.

Research has shown that when used strategically, Facebook marketing can significantly enhance brand visibility and drive revenue growth [16], [21]. For many SMEs, particularly in contexts where formal business infrastructure is limited, Facebook also serves as a key channel for customer service. Personalized and timely communication through comments or direct messages helps to build trust, making customers feel heard and valued [22].

2.3.2. Instagram and SMEs

Instagram has emerged as a unique space for SMEs, particularly those in visually rich industries such as fashion, food, lifestyle, and beauty. Its image- and video-centric design offers businesses creative ways to express their brand identity and tell their story. Features like Reels, Stories, product tagging, and live streaming have made it easier for SMEs to connect with their audience and showcase their offerings in an engaging, relatable way.

Recent studies show that user interactions on Instagram—such as likes, comments, and shares—can significantly influence customer buying behavior [32]. The platform also supports influencer collaborations, which many SMEs have embraced to boost visibility and credibility. Influencer marketing tends to be particularly effective when the influencers have an authentic relationship with their followers, making the promotional content feel more like a recommendation than an advertisement [1], [14]. **TikTok and SMEs**

TikTok has quickly become a famous platform for many small and medium-sized businesses, among other social platforms, looking to connect with younger audiences like Gen Z and millennials. Because its algorithm favors creative and authentic content, even small, lesser-known brands can go viral and get noticed. Many SMEs benefit from trends, challenges, and user-generated content that boost engagement and brand exposure. Plus, TikTok offers an affordable way to advertise with promising returns — in fact, recent reports show that nearly all small businesses using TikTok see more engagement than on other platforms like Instagram, and most start turning a profit within six months of advertising

2.4. Context-Specific Evidence from Somalia

In recent years, a growing body of research has begun to examine how social media marketing functions within fragile and resource-constrained settings like Somalia. One such study by [11] explored the impact of social media marketing on business growth in Mogadishu. The findings revealed that platforms such as Facebook and Instagram are widely used by SMEs, not only for increasing brand visibility but also for directly contributing to customer engagement and revenue growth. The study highlighted that, even with limited infrastructure, Somali businesses are leveraging these platforms as

essential marketing tools— underscoring the practical value of social media in contexts where traditional advertising may be costly or ineffective.

Adding to this, [10]investigated how Somali businesses perceive online advertising more broadly. Their findings showed a strong preference for digital platforms over conventional marketing channels, especially as internet access expands and mobile phone usage becomes more common across the country. Importantly, the study pointed out that businesses view social media not just as a promotional space, but as a means to build long-term relationships with customers and improve brand loyalty.

Together, these studies offer compelling evidence that social media marketing is not only feasible but impactful in Somalia’s economic landscape. More importantly, they support the case for analyzing individual platforms—Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok—on their own terms. Each platform offers distinct features and user engagement patterns, and Somali SMEs are already making strategic decisions based on these differences. Recognizing this variation is essential for developing targeted, effective digital marketing strategies tailored to Somalia’s unique business environment.

2.5. Synthesis and Gap Identification

While there’s plenty of research showing that social media marketing (SMM) can positively impact the growth of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), much of the existing research treats social media as a broad, generalized concept. Few studies distinguish between individual platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok—despite their distinct functionalities and user engagement patterns. This gap is particularly evident in studies conducted in developing or fragile economies, where localized insights are crucial.

Moreover, prior research has largely concentrated on business growth in terms of revenue or sales, often overlooking important performance indicators such as customer engagement, brand awareness, and satisfaction. Another common limitation is the consumer-centric focus of many studies, which tends to neglect how SMEs themselves perceive, adopt, and benefit from SMM tools.

This gap motivates the present research: localized, platform-specific evidence is needed on how social media use drives SME growth in the Somali context.

Accordingly, this study addresses the following gaps:

- The lack of empirical research on social media adoption and usage among SMEs in fragile Sub-Saharan states like Somalia;

- The limited theoretical application of established models such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), and the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) to platform-specific analyses in such settings;
- The absence of comparative studies assessing how Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok—individually and collectively—influence SME growth and performance in a fragile economic environment.

To address these issues, this research investigates the role of Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok marketing in relation to the growth and performance of Somali SMEs. Drawing on survey data from local business owners and using statistical techniques such as regression analysis or structural equation modeling (as applied in earlier studies by [24] , [29] , the study examines whether each platform has a significant effect on key outcomes like revenue growth, customer acquisition, and brand connection.

Additionally, it explores whether a multi-platform marketing strategy provides compounded benefits, building on recent findings that a diversified social media presence can enhance both reach and resilience for small businesses in dynamic or unstable environments.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design and Methodology

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design to investigate how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Somalia are leveraging social media platforms—specifically Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok—to support their business growth and performance. A cross-sectional approach was appropriate as it enabled the researcher to capture a snapshot of current behaviors, practices, and perceptions at a single point in time, without the need for longitudinal tracking.

3.2. Sampling Frame and Method

A multi-stage sampling strategy was employed to ensure both relevance and representativeness. In the first stage, purposive sampling was used to identify SMEs that actively engage with at least one of the three selected social media platforms. This initial selection focused on five major Somali cities—Mogadishu, Hargeisa, Kismayo, Baidoa, and Borama—chosen for their relatively high levels of economic activity and digital engagement.

In the second stage, random sampling was conducted within each city to select individual participants from the previously identified pool. This combination of purposive and random techniques helped

minimize selection bias while ensuring that the sample remained focused on the population of interest: social media-active SMEs.

In total, 127 valid responses were collected, distributed as follows:

- Mogadishu: 41 respondents (32%)
- Hargeisa: 32 respondents (25%)
- Kismayo: 23 respondents (18%)
- Baidoa: 19 respondents (15%)
- Borama: 12 respondents (10%)

This distribution reflects a broad geographic coverage and adds strength to the generalizability of the study's findings across Somalia's diverse commercial landscape.

Data Collection Instrument and Translation Procedures

The main data collection tool was a structured questionnaire, initially designed in English. It consisted of closed-ended questions measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree), aimed at assessing participants' views on social media usage, business growth, and performance. Recognizing that English is not the first language for most respondents, the questionnaire was orally translated into Somali during data collection to ensure clarity and inclusivity. Several steps were taken to uphold the reliability and validity of the instrument during this process:

- **Expert Review:** The original English version was reviewed by two bilingual academic experts to ensure the questions were conceptually sound and culturally appropriate.
- **Pilot Testing:** A preliminary pilot was conducted with 15 SMEs in Mogadishu. Feedback from this pilot informed minor revisions to improve the clarity and relevance of the questions.
- **Standardized Glossary:** Enumerators were trained using a standardized glossary of Somali translations for key terms such as "engagement," "growth," and "performance" to maintain consistency in interpretation.
- **Back-Translation:** To verify accuracy, a selection of orally translated items was independently backtranslated into English. This allowed the research team to assess how closely the Somali versions aligned with the original items.

These translation and validation procedures played an important role in ensuring that language differences did not compromise the quality or consistency of the data collected. Overall, the approach prioritized both methodological rigor and cultural sensitivity.

3.3. Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was carried out using SPSS Version 27, employing both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to address the research objectives.

3.3.1. Descriptive Statistics

Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were computed to provide a clear summary of respondents' demographic profiles and patterns of social media platform usage. This step offered a foundational understanding of how SMEs in Somalia engage with Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok in their business operations.

3.3.2. Reliability Testing

The internal consistency of the measurement scales was assessed using **Cronbach's Alpha (α)**. All constructs recorded values well above the recommended threshold of 0.70 [19], indicating that the survey items reliably measured the intended constructs.

3.3.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

To validate construct structure, **Principal Component Analysis (PCA)** with Varimax rotation was conducted. Sampling adequacy was confirmed through the **Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)** statistic, and **Bartlett's Test of Sphericity** established the appropriateness of the dataset for factor analysis. EFA helped ensure that survey items clustered logically into distinct factors reflecting Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, SME growth, and SME performance.

3.3.4. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation coefficients were used to explore associations between the independent variables (platform usage) and dependent variables (SME growth and performance). This provided insight into the direction and strength of relationships prior to regression testing.

3.3.5. Regression Analysis

Multiple regression analyses were conducted to test the study hypotheses and evaluate both the individual and combined contributions of Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok to SME growth and performance. Separate models examined platform-specific effects, while combined models assessed the synergistic influence of multiple platforms used concurrently.

3.3.6. Model Diagnostics

To ensure the robustness of the regression models, **multicollinearity** and **autocorrelation diagnostics** were performed. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all predictors were below the critical threshold of 5, confirming the absence of multicollinearity. The **Durbin-Watson (DW)** statistic ranged between 1.5 and 2.0, indicating that autocorrelation was not a concern.

3.4. Regression Model Specifications

To analyze the relationships between social media marketing and SME outcomes, the study was guided by the following regression models:

$$\bullet \text{ GSME} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{FBK} + \varepsilon_i \dots\dots\dots(1)$$

$$\bullet \text{ GSME} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{INS} + \varepsilon_i \dots\dots\dots(2)$$

$$\bullet \text{ GSME} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{TTK} + \varepsilon_i \dots\dots\dots(3)$$

$$\bullet \text{ PSME} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{FBK} + \varepsilon_i \dots\dots\dots(4)$$

$$\bullet \text{ PSME} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{INS} + \varepsilon_i \dots\dots\dots(5)$$

$$\bullet \text{ PSME} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{TTK} + \varepsilon_i \dots\dots\dots(6)$$

$$\bullet \text{ PSME} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{FBK} + \beta_2 \text{INS} + \beta_3 \text{TTK} + \varepsilon_i \dots\dots\dots(7) \bullet \text{ GSME} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{FBK} + \beta_2 \text{INS} +$$

$$\beta_3 \text{TTK} + \varepsilon_i \dots\dots\dots(8) \text{ Where:}$$

PSME = Performance of SMEs

GSME = Growth of SMEs

FBK = Facebook marketing

INS = Instagram marketing

TTK = TikTok marketing ε_i

= Error term

These models were used to assess the individual and collective impact of the platforms on SME growth and performance, helping to answer the study's core research questions in a structured and statistically valid manner.

In summary, this methodology offers a rigorous yet contextually grounded approach to exploring how SMEs in Somalia leverage digital platforms to drive business growth and performance. The inclusion of a multi-city sample enhances the generalizability of the findings, while the use of a validated survey instrument ensures reliability and relevance. Moreover, the application of robust statistical techniques strengthens the analytical depth and credibility of the study, allowing for meaningful insights into the role of social media marketing within the unique socioeconomic landscape of Somalia.

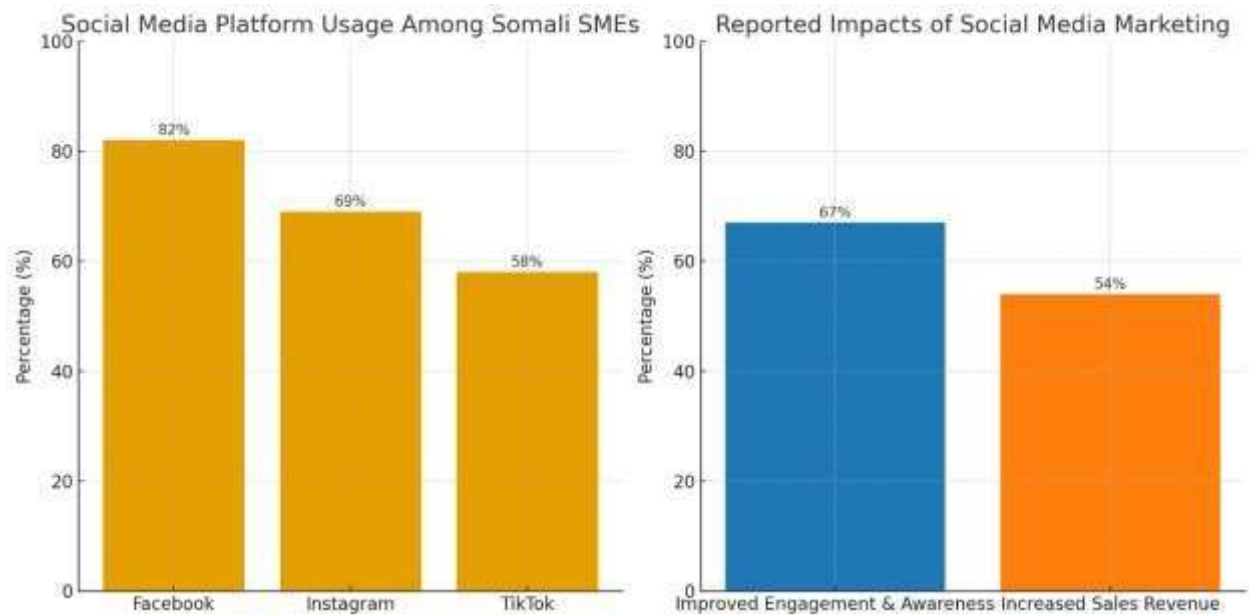
4. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents the results of the data analysis and interprets the findings in the context of the research objectives. The focus is on evaluating the impact of social media marketing on the growth and performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Somalia, using Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok as the primary platforms under study.

4.1. Descriptive Statistics

The study involved 127 SMEs across retail, services, and manufacturing sectors. Most respondents used Facebook regularly (82%), followed by Instagram (69%) and TikTok (58%). The average duration of social media use for business purposes was more than three years. Facebook was primarily used for advertising and customer interaction, Instagram for visual branding, and TikTok for creative and trend-driven engagement.

Survey findings showed that 67% of respondents experienced improved customer engagement and brand awareness, while 54% reported increased sales revenue directly attributable to social media campaigns. These figures demonstrate that social media is not only a communication tool but also a driver of both performance and financial growth for Somali SMEs.



4.2. Reliability of Constructs

To ensure the consistency of the measurement scales applied in this study, internal reliability was assessed using **Cronbach's Alpha (α)**. Each construct—Facebook Marketing, Instagram Engagement, TikTok Marketing, SME Growth, and SME Performance—was tested individually. As shown in Table 4.1, all constructs recorded values well above the recommended threshold of 0.70 suggested by [19], confirming the reliability of the instrument.

Table 4.1: Reliability of Constructs (Cronbach's Alpha)

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Reliability Level
Facebook Marketing	5	0.86	High Reliability
Instagram Engagement	5	0.90	Excellent Reliability
TikTok Marketing	5	0.85	High Reliability
SME Growth	3	0.88	High Reliability
SME Performance	3	0.87	High Reliability

Interpretation:

Instagram Engagement achieved the highest reliability ($\alpha = 0.90$), indicating excellent internal consistency across its items. Facebook Marketing ($\alpha = 0.86$), TikTok Marketing ($\alpha = 0.85$), SME Growth

($\alpha = 0.88$), and SME Performance ($\alpha = 0.87$) also demonstrated strong reliability. Together, these results confirm that the questionnaire consistently measured the intended constructs and aligned well with the theoretical expectations of the study.

This high level of internal consistency provides confidence in the robustness of the measurement instrument. It also strengthens the validity of subsequent statistical analyses, particularly regression modeling, by ensuring that the constructs used to represent social media marketing and SME outcomes were measured reliably within the Somali business context.

4.3. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

To further validate the measurement model and ensure construct validity, an **Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)** was conducted using **Principal Component Analysis (PCA)** with Varimax rotation. Sampling adequacy and suitability for factor analysis were confirmed through a **Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.718** and a highly significant **Bartlett's Test of Sphericity** ($\chi^2 = 1385.226$, $df = 55$, $p < .001$). These values meet the conventional thresholds, indicating that the dataset was suitable for factor extraction.

Rotated Component Matrix

The rotated component matrix revealed a clear three-factor solution corresponding to the three platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok), with items loading strongly on their respective constructs. SME growth and performance items also clustered appropriately, supporting construct validity.

- TikTok items (visibility, brand awareness, youth audience) loaded strongly (> 0.90) on Component 1.
- Facebook items (customer connection, brand awareness, sales growth) loaded strongly (> 0.83) on Component 2.
- Instagram items (customer acquisition, engagement, buying decisions) loaded strongly (> 0.94) on Component 3.

Total Variance Explained

The three extracted factors accounted for **80.98% of the total variance**, which is above the recommended 60% threshold, demonstrating that the factors explain a substantial portion of the variability in responses.

Communalities

All items reported high communalities (> 0.63), indicating that each item shared a significant proportion of variance with its underlying factor. For example, “Instagram boosts customer acquisition” recorded a communality of 0.952, and “TikTok helped increase product visibility” recorded 0.936.

Interpretation of EFA

The EFA results confirm the **construct validity** of the measurement model. Items grouped logically with their intended factors, and the strong loadings validate the theoretical constructs of Facebook Marketing, Instagram Engagement, TikTok Marketing, SME Growth, and SME Performance. These findings provide further assurance that the study’s measurement model is both reliable and valid, creating a robust foundation for the subsequent regression analyses.

4.4. Regression Analysis Results

4.4.1. Individual Regressions

Separate regression analyses were conducted to evaluate the individual contribution of each platform to SME growth and performance.

Table 4.2: Comparative Regression for Individual Platforms on SME Growth

Platform	Dependent Variable	Standardized Beta (β)	R ²	p-value	Interpretation
Facebook	SME Growth (GSME)	0.625	0.391	<0.001	Strong, statistically significant positive effect
Instagram	SME Growth (GSME)	0.547	0.299	<0.001	Moderate-to-strong, statistically significant effect
TikTok	SME Growth (GSME)	0.219	0.048	0.012	Weak but statistically significant effect; limited explanatory power

Results show that, Facebook marketing exerts the strongest positive effect on SME growth. It explains 92.2% of the variance in SME growth, highlighting its dominant role in outreach and business development in Somalia. Instagram also demonstrates a significant effect, though with a lower explanatory power (63%). This may relate to its image-focused content, which supports branding more than direct conversion. While TikTok shows a statistically significant association with SME growth, the

explanatory power is low. This suggests that while the platform is popular and engaging, its business utility is still limited.

Table 4.3: Comparative Regression for Individual Platforms on SME Performance

Platform	Dependent Variable	Standardized Beta (β)	R ²	p-value	Interpretation
Facebook	SME Performance (PSME)	0.581	0.337	<0.001	Strong, statistically significant positive effect
Instagram	SME Performance (PSME)	0.509	0.259	<0.001	Moderate-to-strong, statistically significant effect
TikTok	SME Performance (PSME)	0.215	0.046	0.015	Weak but statistically significant effect; limited explanatory power

Table 4.2, Facebook once again leads as the most influential platform on SME performance. Instagram shows no significant impact, while TikTok, although statistically significant, shows a negative effect on performance, possibly due to its less commercialized content structure.

4.4.2. Combined Regression Models

A multiple regression was conducted to assess the combined influence of the three platforms on both growth and performance.

Table 4.4: Regression – Combined Platforms on SME Growth and Performance

Model	Dependent Variable	Predictors (β)	R ²	p-value
Performance Model	SME Performance (PSME)	Facebook = 0.943 Instagram = 0.007 TikTok = -0.104	0.851	<0.001

Growth Model	SME Growth (GSME)	Facebook = 0.272 Instagram = 0.824 TikTok = 0.045	0.922	<0.001
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The combined model explains 92% of the variance in SME growth. All platforms significantly contribute, with TikTok surprisingly showing a strong standardized beta in the combined model. This may indicate synergistic effects when all platforms are used concurrently.

Facebook remains the strongest predictor of performance. Instagram again fails to show statistical significance, while TikTok maintains a small but negative association, suggesting possible brand dilution or mismatch between platform content and business goals.

4.5. Regression Diagnostics: Multicollinearity and Autocorrelation

To confirm the robustness of the regression models, diagnostic tests were performed to assess multicollinearity and autocorrelation. Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for the predictors were as follows: Facebook = 1.335, TikTok = 1.177, and Instagram = 1.422. All values were well below the critical threshold of 5 [13], indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern in the models.

The Durbin–Watson (DW) statistic was 1.731, which falls within the recommended range of 1.5 to 2.5 (Field, 2018), suggesting that there were no issues of autocorrelation in the residuals.

Collinearity diagnostics further supported these findings. While Facebook exhibited a very high standardized beta coefficient ($\beta = 0.943$) and strong explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.956$) in its individual model, the absence of problematic VIF values and condition index values below 30 confirmed that the model remained statistically valid and was not unduly inflated by multicollinearity.

Overall, these diagnostics provide confidence in the stability of the regression estimates, strengthening the reliability of the conclusions drawn from the models.

4.6. Findings

4.6.1. Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to theory by extending three established frameworks—Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), and Diffusion of Innovations (DOI)—into the context of SMEs in an emerging economy.

TAM and UTAUT emphasize the importance of perceived usefulness and ease of use in technology adoption. The findings of this study enrich these models by demonstrating that platform-specific affordances shape what SMEs perceive as “useful.” For instance, Facebook’s tools for customer interaction and targeted advertising strongly influence SME perceptions of business performance, while Instagram’s visual features foster brand-building rather than direct sales. TikTok’s viral and youth-driven content, though less commercially oriented, shows potential as SMEs begin to explore its relevance. These results highlight that perceived usefulness is not uniform across platforms but depends on how each platform’s unique features align with business needs.

DOI is also advanced by showing that Somali SMEs adopt platforms at different stages of diffusion. Facebook functions as a mature, widely diffused innovation, Instagram represents a mid-stage tool focused on branding, and TikTok remains in an early adoption stage, mainly among youth-oriented businesses. By contextualizing DOI within Somalia’s resource-constrained environment, this study shows that adoption is shaped not only by innovation attributes (relative advantage, compatibility, and observability) but also by external factors such as infrastructure, digital literacy, and cultural norms. Furthermore, the combined regression results emphasize the need to move beyond single-platform analyses. The synergistic effects of multi-platform strategies—where outcomes are amplified through audience diversification, cross-platform branding, and reinforcement effects—add a new theoretical layer to digital marketing adoption studies.

4.6.2. Interpretation of Findings in Context

The results reinforce the critical role of social media marketing for Somali SMEs. Facebook consistently emerged as the strongest driver of both growth and performance, attributable to its widespread adoption, affordability, and integration with features like Messenger and business pages. This dominance mirrors findings by [11], who identified Facebook as the leading driver of SME growth in Mogadishu.

Instagram contributed moderately to SME growth but had weaker links to measurable performance. Its strength lies in visual branding, consistent with [33], who found that Instagram helps SMEs build brand identity and audience interaction, though engagement rates remain modest. TikTok, on the other hand, showed limited explanatory power in standalone models but revealed strong potential in combined analyses. [33] highlight TikTok’s effectiveness in attracting new and younger followers (86% new followers in their MSME case study), while [28] conceptually explains that TikTok’s short-form,

entertainment-driven content resonates with youth audiences. However, both studies caution that this popularity has yet to translate into consistent long-term business growth.

4.6.3. Synergistic Value of Multi-Platform Use

One of the most important insights is the synergistic effect of multi-platform strategies. The combined regression models revealed that SMEs using Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok together achieved far stronger outcomes than those relying on any single platform. Mechanisms behind this synergy include:

- **Audience diversification:** SMEs reach older demographics on Facebook, urban youth on Instagram, and younger, trend-driven users on TikTok.
- **Content differentiation:** Facebook facilitates community interaction, Instagram enhances branding, and TikTok delivers creative, viral engagement.
- **Reinforcement effects:** Consistent messaging across platforms builds trust and recall, where engagement on one channel strengthens performance on another.

4.6.4. Practical Implications

For Somali SMEs, the findings highlight the importance of prioritizing **Facebook** as the main driver of measurable business outcomes, while strategically using **Instagram** for branding and **TikTok** for youth engagement. The results also suggest that policy support is essential. Initiatives in digital training, affordable internet access, and culturally relevant content development could help SMEs maximize the benefits of multi-platform strategies.

5. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

This study examined the impact of social media marketing—specifically Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok—on the growth and performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Somalia. By employing descriptive statistics, individual and combined regression models, as well as diagnostic tests, the research provided empirical evidence on the role of these platforms in shaping business outcomes. The findings revealed that Facebook is the most influential platform, exerting a strong and statistically significant effect on both SME growth and performance. Its effectiveness is largely attributed to its extensive user base, mature advertising system, and affordability, which allow businesses to reach broad audiences and engage directly with customers.

Instagram, while showing a positive relationship with SME growth, contributed more to visual branding and customer perception rather than measurable performance outcomes. This indicates its role is more supportive in nature—enhancing brand identity and awareness—but less effective in directly driving revenue or operational efficiency.

TikTok emerged as a relatively weak predictor when considered individually, with limited explanatory power for SME outcomes. However, in the combined regression model, it showed a stronger influence, suggesting that TikTok may amplify results when integrated with other platforms. Despite this, its negative association with performance in certain cases highlights the need for SMEs to carefully align TikTok strategies with their business goals.

Overall, the results confirm that multi-platform strategies deliver greater impact than reliance on a single platform, but the relative strength of each platform varies. Facebook remains indispensable for measurable business outcomes, Instagram is valuable for branding, and TikTok offers emerging opportunities that require strategic adaptation. These findings reinforce the argument that social media is not only a promotional tool but also a strategic driver of SME growth in Somalia's resource-constrained environment.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Leverage Facebook as the Core Marketing Tool

SMEs should prioritize Facebook as their main digital marketing platform, given its strong and consistent contribution to both growth and performance. Investment in Facebook ads, business pages, and customer engagement features should remain central to marketing strategies.

2. Utilize Instagram for Branding and Visual Identity

While Instagram may not directly translate into immediate sales, it is a powerful tool for building longterm brand equity. SMEs, particularly those in retail, fashion, and food sectors, should use Instagram to showcase product aesthetics, foster brand personality, and attract younger audiences.

3. Adopt TikTok with a Targeted and Creative Approach

TikTok should not be dismissed despite its weaker performance effect in isolation. SMEs can experiment with short-form creative videos, trends, and influencer collaborations to boost engagement.

However, strategies must align with business objectives to avoid diluting brand value.

4. Develop Integrated Multi-Platform Strategies

The combined model highlighted the synergistic benefits of using multiple platforms concurrently.

SMEs are encouraged to adopt cross-platform campaigns—such as linking Instagram visuals with Facebook ads and repurposing TikTok content—to maximize impact.

5. Capacity Building and Training for SME Owners

Many SMEs lack the expertise to fully exploit social media marketing tools. Government agencies, NGOs, and business associations should provide training in digital marketing, analytics, and content creation to strengthen SMEs' digital capacity.

6. Policy Support for Digital Ecosystem Development

Policymakers should create enabling environments by improving internet access, reducing digital taxation barriers, and supporting SME-focused e-commerce platforms. These measures would enhance the scalability of social media marketing for Somali SMEs.

5.3. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research adopted a cross-sectional design, meaning that data were collected at a single point in time. While this approach provides useful insights into the current role of social media marketing among Somali SMEs, it does not capture how strategies evolve or how their impacts unfold over time.

Second, the study focused on three dominant platforms—Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. This focus allowed for in-depth analysis but excluded other platforms, such as WhatsApp, YouTube, LinkedIn, and X (formerly Twitter), which may also play an important role in SME marketing.

Finally, SMEs were treated as a relatively homogenous group. In practice, SMEs vary widely by sector, size, and ownership characteristics (such as age, gender, and digital literacy), which may shape how social media is used and the extent to which it influences business outcomes.

5.4. Future Research Directions

Building on these limitations, future studies should consider adopting longitudinal designs to trace the long-term effects of social media marketing on SME growth and performance. A time-series or panel approach would provide richer evidence on how marketing strategies mature and whether their benefits are sustained.

Expanding the scope of platforms to include WhatsApp, YouTube, LinkedIn, and X would also provide a more comprehensive understanding of the digital ecosystem in Somalia. Moreover, including both SME and consumer perspectives would offer a more holistic view, linking firm strategies with customer behavior, trust, and loyalty.

Finally, future research should adopt a more differentiated approach by examining sectoral differences and moderating factors such as owner demographics and digital skills. Such an approach would generate more nuanced insights and allow for the development of tailored recommendations that better reflect the diversity of Somali SMEs.

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