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To cite this article: Hussam Al Halbusi, Homoud Alhaidan, Fadi Abdelfattah, T. Ramayah & Jun-Hwa Cheah (21 Sep 2022): Exploring social media adoption in small and medium enterprises in Iraq: pivotal role of social media network capability and customer involvement, Technology Analysis & Strategic Management, DOI: [10.1080/09537325.2022.2125374](https://doi.org/10.1080/09537325.2022.2125374)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09537325.2022.2125374>



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Published online: 21 Sep 2022.



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# Exploring social media adoption in small and medium enterprises in Iraq: pivotal role of social media network capability and customer involvement

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## ABSTRACT

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) can communicate with their consumers and provide them with relevant information on cost-effective goods or services with the help of social media technologies. Thus, this study investigated the factors influencing social media technologies on SMEs' performance. In addition, this study also tests the capability of social media networks and customer involvement to enhance the positive effect of social media usage. The data was collected from 253 SMEs. Our results show that cost-effectiveness, compatibility, and interactivity, were positively related to social media usage. However, trust was not significantly related to the use of social media. Notably, the positive effect of social media usage and SMEs' performance was positively moderated by the capability of the social media networks and customer involvement. The relationship was more robust when social media capability and customer involvement were high than low. Therefore, this study has highlighted the role of social media usage, customer involvement, and social media capability and their effect on SMEs' performance.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 28 August 2021  
Revised 18 August 2022  
Accepted 6 September 2022

## KEYWORDS

Small-and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); economic development; social media; social CRM

## 1. Introduction

Firm performance is one of the biggest concerns in strategic management (Obeso et al. 2020; Ardito et al. 2021). To establish and implement behaviours and activities that result in more extraordinary corporate performance. Thus, digital orientation is the strategic decision to digitalise a company's operations (Demartini and Beretta 2020; Arias-Pérez and Vélez-Jaramillo 2022). Consequently, with the emergence of unique and valuable digital technologies, digital orientation is driving the growth and enhancement of a company's business and product offerings (Nambisan, Wright, and Feldman 2019; Demartini and

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Beretta 2020). Environmental orientation is a company's decision to integrate environmental concerns into its tactical, operational, and inventive operations (Danso et al. 2019; Li et al. 2022). This assists the organisation in realising its core values and adapting to external market forces. However, several studies have highlighted the significance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and shown that more robust marketing could help them establish a sustainable competitive advantage (Didonet, Fearné, and Simmons 2020). According to Roffia et al. (2021, 229), SMEs are 'independent firms with fewer than a country-specific threshold number of employees.'

Recent interactive (digital) technology developments have spawned new information-sharing and self-expression platforms (Ardito et al. 2021). Yoo, Gu, and Rabinovich (2019) assert that people increasingly utilise digital media to attain individual and group objectives. As individuals become more familiar with the internet, businesses create online forums to better product design. Many online forums focus on consumption or brand-related topics (Yoo, Gu, and Rabinovich 2019). Thus, the online community is referred to as a consumption community when consumption is the focal point, indicating a group of individuals united by shared emotions, lifestyles, new moral perspectives, feelings of unfairness, and consumption practices (Parveen, Jaafar, and Ainin 2015).

Numerous studies indicate that SMEs that embrace social media networking technologies could be more successful (Ainin et al. 2015; Ndiege 2019). Consequently, previous research concentrated on social media network utilisation (Cao and Yu 2019; Liu and Bakici 2019). However, other studies have also examined the impact of SME social media usage on their success. Nevertheless, very few studies explored interactivity, cost-effectiveness, compatibility, and information trust that influenced SMEs' social media utilisation (Ainin et al. 2015; Odoom, Anning-Dorson, and Acheampong 2017). These factors are significant as they play varied functions; for instance, interactivity refers to the extent to which two or more communication partners, or messages and communication media, interact with one another, as well as the extent to which these effects are integrated (Liu and Shrum 2002; Fattah, Al Halbusi, and Al-Brwani 2022). Similarly, cost-effectiveness enables marketing managers to weigh the preferences of online customers and traditional advertising resources prior to making critical decisions (Fisher 2009). On the other hand, compatibility refers to how well an innovation aligns with a prospective adopter's current values, requirements, and past behaviours (Odoom, Anning-Dorson, and Acheampong 2017). In contrast, trust is a crucial aspect of the social media network that influences users' confidence levels (Seo, Park, and Choi 2020).

Notably, social network competence is an organisation's ability to establish and use customer relationships and obtain better access to various consumer services while focusing on its core capabilities (Ritter and Pedersen 2020; Hassani and Mosconi 2022). Based on this perspective, it might be asserted that the capabilities of a social media network could assist SMEs in communicating and interacting with their customers, particularly in the context of information exchange. According to early research on consumer participation, the customer was viewed as the innovator (Von Hippel 2001). Subsequently, the focus shifted to gathering and analysing groups of customers (Füller, Matzler, and Hoppe 2008), while more recent research has focused on networks in virtual contexts (Hienerth, Von Hippel, and Jensen 2014), where a crowd of firms and customers communicate and so contribute to innovation (Naveed et al. 2022). According to Saldanha, Mithas, and Krishnan (2017), customer involvement is also utilised in firm-to-customer contacts, which are facilitated primarily by the firm's capabilities. Consequently, large and small firms must communicate with and engage their customers. It has become more challenging to interact with clients in recent years. However, recent technical improvements have made this more accessible, enabling organisations to cultivate client relationships (Ritter and Pedersen 2020).

In light of this, we argue that social network capabilities and social Customer Relationship Management (CRM) increased the benefits of social media-based consumer engagement for SMEs. Therefore, these variables can improve social media networking and the customer's information processing capacity (Cheng and Shiu 2019; Naveed et al. 2022). First, based on the preceding debate, we considered '*Social Media Capability*' and '*Customer Engagement*' vital aspects of social media networks, given that the user might improve the capabilities. Consequently, this study contributes to

the body of knowledge by exploring the elements that encourage the use of social media networks to enhance SME performance. Thus, this study can provide substantial evidence for highlighting this relationship when utilising the Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory. This study is essential because it examines how social media network capabilities and consumer involvement function as modifiers of the relationship between SME social media usage and performance (see [Figure 1](#)).

## 2. Theory and hypotheses

### 2.1. Relationship between interactivity and social media usage

Interactivity is how two or more communication partners, or messages and communication mediums, operate on one another and how these effects are integrated (Liu and Shrum 2002). Thus, social media adoption antecedents are significant (Ainin et al. 2015; Odoom, Anning-Dorson, and Acheampong 2017). The positive interaction between technology and humans is considered when designing and implementing different information systems (Aladwani and Dwivedi 2018). This can fulfil the demands of all the other organisations. Sundar, Kalyanaraman, and Brown (2003) have stated that interactivity includes the features present in a social network site that enables the users to interact with one another in many ways. For instance, social media sites like Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube allow interaction between the users, as they offer a communication platform to build relationships lacking on other websites (Odoom, Anning-Dorson, and Acheampong 2017; Gomez, Lopez, and Molina 2019). Thus, based on all these features, we hypothesised the following:

**Hypothesis 1:** Interactivity positively affects SMEs' social media usage.

### 2.2. Relationship between cost-Effectiveness and social media usage

Fisher (2009) states that marketing managers must examine internet clients' preferences and traditional advertising before making judgments. Money has traditionally been used to distribute SME messaging and is often perceived as significant spending (Weinberg and Pehlivan 2011). Social media and other free or cheap marketing options can be effective. This strategy requires fewer resources than traditional media, which depends on advertising (Navimipour and Soltani 2016). Using social media platforms, marketing managers can establish a target consumer base and promote their products cheaply or for free (Chatterjee and Kar 2020). Since most social media networks have no sign-up price, the cost is proportional to posting or blogging status updates or reacting to consumer feedback or concerns (Odoom, Anning-Dorson, and Acheampong 2017). Social media networks help disseminate interactive information far and wide (Korda and Itani 2013; Chatterjee and Kar 2020). Based on the above, we hypothesised:

**Hypothesis 2:** Cost-effectiveness positively affects SMEs' social media usage.

### 2.3. Relationship between compatibility and social media usage

Compatibility is how an innovation aligns with an adopter's present values, needs, past behaviours, and good experiences. Consequently, this encourages the customer to reuse and repeat the experience (Ainin et al. 2015; Odoom, Anning-Dorson, and Acheampong 2017). This is recognised as a critical aspect in the use and adoption of new technology (Wang, Wang, and Yang 2010), especially concerning the traits and properties of the most recent technology (Lai and Chang 2011; Ozturk et al. 2016). The social media platform provides previously unavailable features and functionalities, enabling it to satisfy customer expectations and company requirements more effectively than conventional marketing tactics. In order to remain consistent with their corporate ideals and aims, businesses must integrate social media practices into their operations. This might assist them in

adequately identifying their target market and properly distributing their services and products (Kim and Nam 2004; Fraccastoro, Gabriellson, and Pullins 2021). Even customers believe that these social media sites make it simple to engage with companies. Therefore, in this study, we have hypothesised a positive relationship, as compatibility is crucial for SMEs' usage and adoption of social media. Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 3:** Compatibility positively affects SMEs' social media usage.

#### **2.4. Relationship between information trust and social media usage**

Since the social media network influences the trust levels of its users, it could assist businesses in attracting social capital and converting it into commercial performance, thereby allowing them to use the funds for allocating and regulating their entire social media presence (Paniagua and Sapena 2014; Seo, Park, and Choi 2020). During risk appraisal, many customers regard to trust and faith in the capabilities of the online provider to be essential (Ebrahim 2020). Consequently, information trust is viewed as confidence by users, who feel that the information offered on social networking platforms is dependable, genuine, and accurate. Consequently, it was deemed a crucial element influencing the use and acceptance of social media (Chai, Das, and Rao 2011; Ainin et al. 2015). Consequently, SMEs provide information about their business, services, products, and promotional endeavours on their social media platforms. They can get a great deal of knowledge and data from other sites on social media networks. Therefore, social security and trust are crucial if clients utilise a social media network for business purposes (Jucks and Thon 2017; Michaelidou and Micevski 2019). Based on the mentioned reasons, we propose the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 4:** Informational trust positively affects SMEs' social media usage.

#### **2.5. Impact of social media on SMEs performance**

Business today is highly competitive with the advent of technology (Sainaghi, Phillips, and Corti 2013). Firms should formulate performance metrics because precise detail of indicators will provide valuable information about the processes, outputs, results, competitors, and performance of the industry (Tajvidi and Karami 2021). Therefore, social media is considered to help a system-centered approach, wherein the system usage is determined based on some tasks typically carried out by the system (Parveen, Jaafar, and Ainin 2015). Consequently, the searches for attracting new consumers, cultivating partnerships, growing visibility, communicating the brand online, and receiving input from consumers and business partners are notable among the users (Odoom, Anning-Dorson, and Acheampong 2017; Diebes and Iriqat 2019). These results have highlighted the advantages derived from the various social media organisations. Hence, we theorised as follows:

**Hypothesis 5:** Social media usage positively affects SMEs' performance.

#### **2.6. The role of social media network capability**

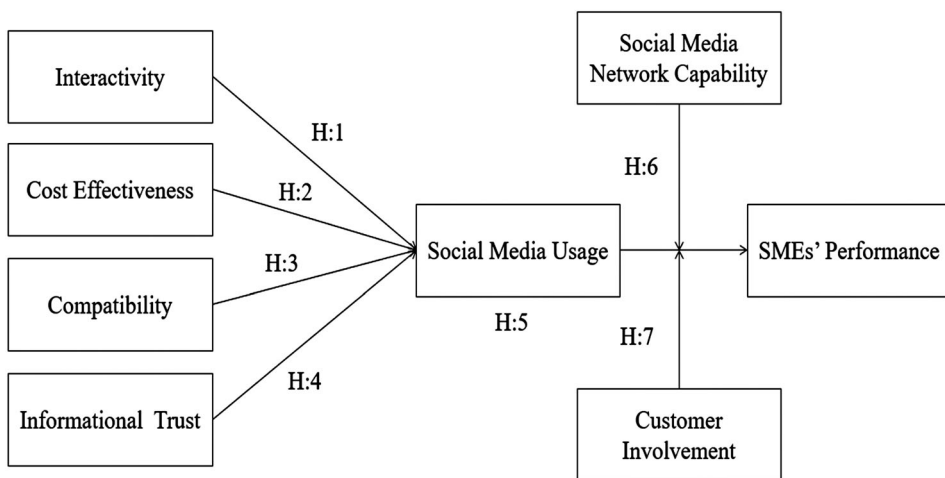
Network capability is built on a company's ability to build and utilise customer relationships and access multiple client resources while maintaining its core competencies (Vesalainen and Hakala 2014). Nonetheless, when this reasoning is applied to social media, SMEs' social media network capabilities should enable them to connect and engage with customers within the context of information exchange. In addition, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with social media network capabilities can create fruitful interactions with clients, granting them access to various information and improving their likelihood of innovation (Cheng and Shiu 2019). Consequently, this study has highlighted the capacity of a social media network as a crucial border condition that could influence the correlation between SME social media usage and performance. In addition, we believe that the

impact of social CRM on customer involvement via social media might be amplified by analysing the capacity of social media platforms (Muninger, Hammedi, and Mahr 2019). This is because the successful engagement of consumer participation via social media and mobile CRM frequently depends on the capacity of social media networks (Saldanha, Mithas, and Krishnan 2017; Zhang et al. 2019). Therefore, social media competence will enhance SMEs' performance by enhancing customer engagement based on social media usage (Cheng and Shiu 2019). Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis was proposed:

**Hypothesis 6:** Social media network capability moderates the relationship between social media usage and SMEs' performance. The relationship is more robust when social media network capability is high than low.

## 2.7. The role of customer involvement

Technology improvements have made this much more accessible in recent years, allowing businesses to create customer relationships (Cheng and Shiu 2019; Ritter and Pedersen 2020). Earlier studies related to customer involvement suggested that every customer is considered an innovator (Cui and Wu 2017; Anning-Dorson 2018). Since then, studies have shifted towards the exploration of customers in-mass (Fernandes and Remelhe 2016), whereas newer studies focus on the networks in a virtual environment, wherein the customers and organisations can interact and contribute towards the development of a high-quality service (Corte, lavazzi, and D'Andrea 2015; Johansson, Raddats, and Witell 2019). Saldanha, Mithas, and Krishnan (2017) stated that customer participation was required in many company-to-customer interactions based on business resources. Nevertheless, customer involvement can be classified into three types: (1) customer involvement as the source of information; (2) customer involvement as a co-developer; and (3) customer involvement as an innovator (Cui and Wu 2016; Wang et al. 2020). Hence, SMEs that use the customer interaction tool via social media networks to collect customer information and include this information before developing new products and services can extend their novel information resources (Cui and Wu 2016; Laage-Hellman, Landqvist, and Lind 2018). This will improve the performance in terms of service, process, and innovation (Tajvidi and Karami 2017; Cheng and Shiu 2019). Therefore, we hypothesise the following:



Notes:

H1-H5 Present the Direct Effect

H6 & H7 Present the Interaction Effect

Figure 1. Research model.

**Hypothesis 7:** customer involvement moderates the relationship between social media usage and SMEs' performance such that the relationship is stronger when the customer involvement is high than low.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Sample and materials

The sample for this study is SMEs in Iraq that have active social media accounts (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram). In terms of size, firms are defined as small enterprises employing no more than 20 workers. In comparison, enterprises employ 21–100 workers, and SMEs are companies with up to 20 million Iraqi dinars (IQD) in exports or sales (Harash, Al-Tamimi, and Al-Timimi 2014). In this study, the SME owner-managers, CEOs, and marketing managers are considered key respondents because they know their firm's environment and performance and the social customer relationship management (CRM) (Ahmad, Ahmad, and Abu Bakar 2018).

To avoid common method bias, we collected data from two different sources: SME owner-managers (or CEOs) and marketing managers, across two time periods (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, and Podsakoff 2012). The two surveys were sent through self-administrative; before conducting the survey, senior human resources were approached in each organisation to ask permission for the study; once permission was granted, the survey was distributed. Survey packets containing the questionnaire, a prestamped envelope, and a covering letter explained the purpose of the survey, assured the confidentiality of their responses, and requested that respondents return the completed survey directly using the prestamped envelope. In the first survey, marketing managers were asked to assess (interactivity, cost-effectiveness, compatibility, informational trust, social media usage, social media network capability, and customer involvement using social media). In the second survey, owner-managers or CEOs were asked to evaluate the enterprise performance and the firms' characteristics or profiles a week later. Out of 285 questionnaires, only 261 responses were returned from the data collection. Subsequently, of the 261 responses, only 253 were valid, with a response rate of 88%. Remarkably, eight of the questionnaires had irregularities and had to be excluded.

#### 3.2. Variables and measurement

The item scales used in this study were adapted from some earlier studies. So, items must be translated into Arabic because the respondents spoke Arabic. Hence, we translated the questionnaire from the English language to Arabic with the help of a back-translation technique (Brislin 1980). Therefore, Table 2 presents all the items. Henceforth, items such as cost-effectiveness, interactivity, compatibility, informational trust, social media usage, and SME's performance (e.g. performance benefits obtained, increase in sales transactions, increase in the number of customers, increase in sales enquiries and improved brand visibility), were adapted from Ainin et al. (2015) and Odoom, Anning-Dorson, and Acheampong (2017). Customer involvement using social media was adapted from the study by Cui and Wu (2016) and Cheng and Shiu (2019). Finally, the researchers also measured the social media network capability as a higher-order construct (i.e. a network initiation with 2-items; network development with 4-items; and network utilisation using 4-items). This variable was designed as a reflective second-order approach from which these items were adopted (Cheng and Shiu 2019).



**Table 1.** Organisations' profiles.

Items	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Number of Employees	20 or below	18	2.9
	21–40	24	4.8
	41–60	57	8.7
	61–80	79	12.6
	81–99	31	5.0
	100 or More	44	6.9
Industry Types	Textile and Clothing	49	8.6
	Pharmaceutical and Medical	8	1.8
	Food Sectors (Beverage, Convenience Food and Fresh Food)	54	36.4
	Household Appliances and Equipment	21	14.7
	Furniture	8	1.6
	Retail and wholesale	34	23.6
	Real Estate Services	32	21.9
	Gold and diamond	3	2.1
	Restaurants and Cafes	29	19.8
	Travel agencies	15	10.4
Years of Experience in Social Media Usage	1–3	49	34.1
	4–6	76	52.2
	7–9	94	67.8
	Ten or More	34	23.6
Type of social media used	Facebook	104	72.8
	Twitter	38	26.1
	YouTube	44	29.10
	Instagram	53	36.9
	Other: (LinkedIn, WhatsApp Google, Pinterest, and Blogs)	14	9.7

**Notes:** ESMU= Experience Social Media Usage; ns = not significant.

## 4. Data analysis strategy

### 4.1. Organisation profile

Table 1 describes the profile of the organisations selected in this study. The researchers considered the following items or characteristics of the organisations, i.e. no. of employees, type of industry, social media usage experience in years, and the preferred social media platform. Regarding the number of employees, the highest score of 61–80 (12.6%) was noted. The food sectors (beverage, convenience food, and fresh food) obtained the highest score (36.4%) in categorising industry types. Furthermore, 67.8% of the companies had 7–9 years of experience in social media usage. Finally, Facebook was seen as the most popular social media platform (72.8%) compared to the other networks.

### 4.2. Measurement model assessment

The measurement model was evaluated and it was achieved as followed: all items exceeded the required value of 0.708 (Hair et al. 2017; Hair, Sarstedt and Ringle 2019). One item, the network development measure (NED-3), had a loading of 0.451 and was maintained because it did not impact the measurement quality criteria (Hair et al. 2017; Hair, Sarstedt, and Ringle 2019). (Table 2). Additionally, Cronbach's alpha and CR values were between 0.721 and 0.912; and 0.809 and 0.952, respectively, which exceeded the 0.70 thresholds (Hair et al. 2017). In addition, AVE, which demonstrated convergent validity, ranged from 0.569 to 0.732, i.e. it was more significant than the 0.50 threshold value (Hair et al. 2017; Hair, Sarstedt and Ringle 2019) (see Table 2). The two applicable techniques (i.e. Fornell and Larcker and the HeteroTrait-MonoTrait ratio (HTMT) criterion) obtained discriminant validity (see Table 3).



**Table 2.** Measurement model, item loadings, construct reliability and convergent validity.

First-Order Constructs	Second-Order Constructs	Items	Loading (> 0.5)	CA (> 0.7)	CR (>0.7)	AVE (>0.5)
Interactivity		IN1	.740			
		IN2	.745			
		IN3	.786			
Cost Effectiveness		CF1	.881			
		CF2	.874			
		CF3	.728			
Compatibility		CO1	.761			
		CO2	.738			
		CO3	.747			
		CO4	.870			
Informational Trust		IT1	.911			
		IT2	.874			
		IT3	.741			
		IT4	.810			
Social Media Usage		SM1	.780			
		SM2	.761			
		SM3	.684			
		SM4	.724			
		SM5	.768			
		SM6	.751			
		SM7	.798			
		SM8	.873			
		SM9	.798			
		SM10	.659			
		SM11	.739			
		SM12	.675			
		SM13	.761			
Network Initiation		NEI1	.719			
		NEI2	.676			
Network Development		ND1	.780			
		ND2	.775			
		ND3	.451			
		ND4	.743			
First-Order Constructs	<b>Second-Order Constructs</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b>Loading (&gt; 0.5)</b>	<b>CA (&gt; 0.7)</b>	<b>CR (&gt;0.7)</b>	<b>AVE (&gt;0.5)</b>
Network utilisation		NU1	.779			
		NU2	.824			
		NU3	.784			
		NU4	.712			
	Social Media Network Capability	Network Initiation	.897			
		Network Development	.747			
		Network utilisation	.881			
Customer Involvement		CUM1	.752			
		CUM2	.810			
		CUM3	.763			
		CUM4	.797			
Organizational (SMEs) Performance		OP1	.846			
		OP2	.754			
		OP3	.819			
		OP4	.859			

Notes: CA = Cronbach's Alpha, CR = Composite Reliability, AVE = Average Variance Extracted.

**Table 3.** Descriptive statistics, correlation matrix, and discriminant validity (AVE in bold and HTMT in italics).

Constructs	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Interactivity	4.112	.540	<b>.571</b>	<i>.707 [.612;.739]</i>	<i>.321 [.324;.481]</i>	<i>.677 [.630;.741]</i>	<i>.194 [.147;.245]</i>	<i>.081 [.077;.128]</i>	<i>.076 [.061;.135]</i>	<i>.062 [.051;.093]</i>
2. Cost Effectiveness	3.931	.441	.316	<b>.841</b>	<i>.544 [.492;.609]</i>	<i>.794 [.758;.827]</i>	<i>.175 [.156;.239]</i>	<i>.084 [.062;.147]</i>	<i>.122 [.103;.175]</i>	<i>.078 [.074;.128]</i>
3. Compatibility	4.206	.709	.339	.164	<b>.446</b>	<i>.570 [.510;.631]</i>	<i>.127 [.103;.203]</i>	<i>.102 [.071;.165]</i>	<i>.057 [.037;.11]</i>	<i>.070 [.036;.139]</i>
4. Informational Trust	1.274	.447	.554	.292	.246	<b>.675</b>	<i>.180 [.152;.247]</i>	<i>.153 [.108;.208]</i>	<i>.089 [.075;.127]</i>	<i>.104 [.096;.139]</i>
5. Social Media Usage	2.811	.767	.049	.074	.454	.074	<b>.423</b>	<i>.087 [.063;.132]</i>	<i>.051 [.030;.122]</i>	<i>.118 [.073;.188]</i>
6. Social Media Network Capability	3.274	.447	.042	.076	.285	.234	.047	<b>.532</b>	<i>.007 [.003;.083]</i>	<i>.015 [.002;.103]</i>
7. Customer Involvement	3.093	.847	.035	.031	.382	.148	.113	.057	<b>.621</b>	<i>.268 [.206;.331]</i>
8. Firms (SMEs) Performance	2.833	3.59	.043	.133	.417	.061	.064	.041	.101	n.a

Notes: SD. = Standard Deviation. n.a = not applicable. Bold values on the diagonal in the correlation matrix are square roots of AVE (variance shared between the constructs and their respective measures). Off-diagonal elements above the diagonal are the heterotrait-monotrait ratios of correlations (HTMT) and their respective confidence intervals at the 95% confidence level.

**4.3. Structural model assessment**

Based on the results from the PLS approach (Ringle, Wende, and Becker 2015), we found that our control variables (i.e. firm size, industry types, and years of experience with social media usage), only firm size showed a non-significant link to SME’s performance (see Figure 2).

Tables 4 and 5 present the findings related to our H<sub>1</sub>–H<sub>7</sub>. Regarding the direct effect, in support of H<sub>1</sub>, interactivity relates significantly and positively to social media usage ( $\beta = 0.170$ ,

**Table 4.** Structural path analysis: direct effect.

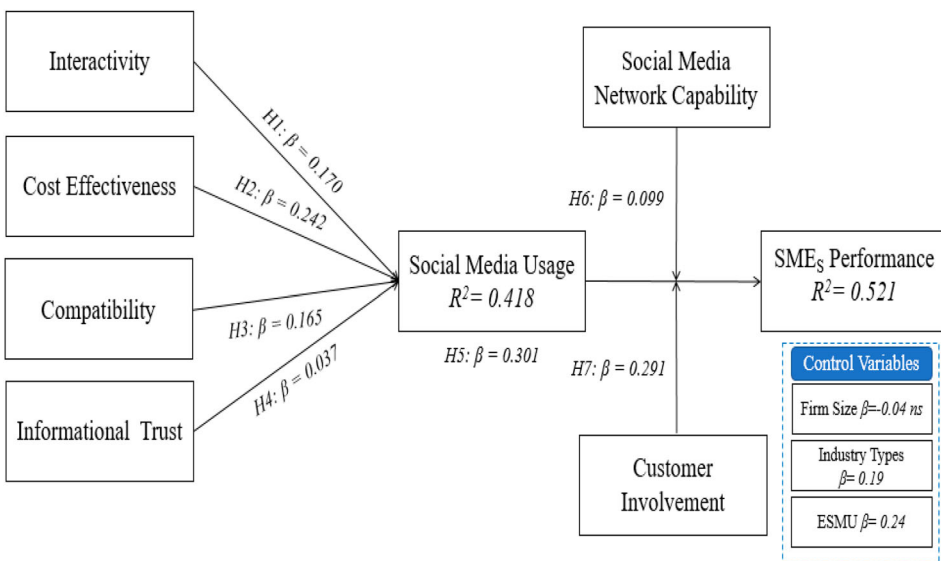
Hypothesis	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	t-value	p-value	Bias and Corrected Bootstrap 95% CI		Decision	VIF
						LL	UL		
H-1	Interactivity-> Social Media Usage	.170	.045	3.817	.000	[.163	.260]	Supported	1.461
H-2	Cost Effectiveness-> Social Media Usage	.242	.054	4.455	.000	[.151	.322]	Supported	2.424
H-3	Compatibility-> Social Media Usage	.165	.043	3.795	.000	[.068	.238]	Supported	1.595
H-4	Informational Trust-> Social Media Usage	.037	.035	1.061	.145	[-.097	.015]	Not Supported	1.816
H-5	Social Media Usage -> Organisations’ Performance	.301	.062	4.881	.000	[.187	.396]	Supported	1.418

Notes: n = 253. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. SE = standard error; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit, CI = confidence interval. VIF = Variance Inflation Factor.

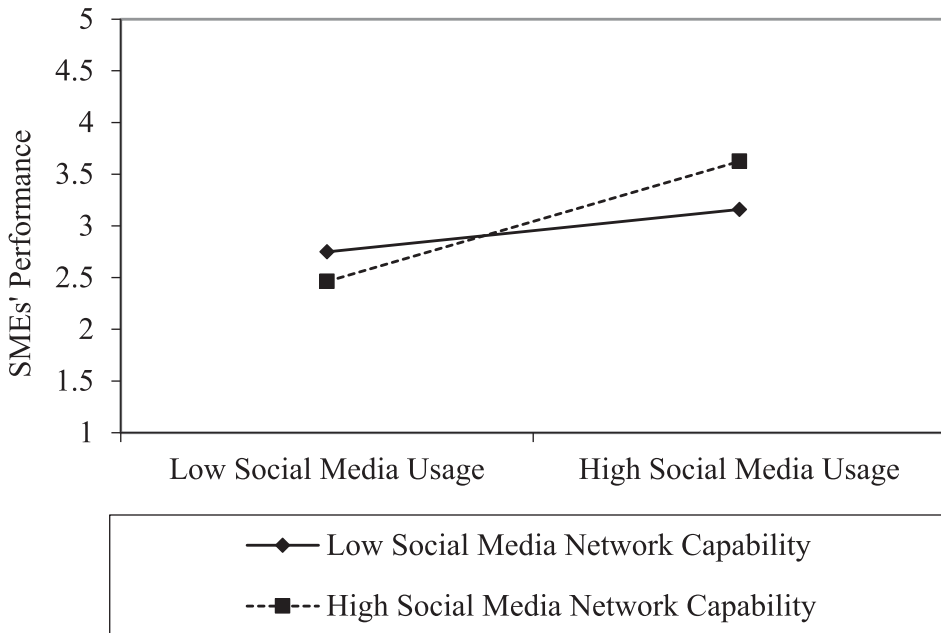
**Table 5.** Structural path analysis: interaction effect.

Hypothesis	Relationship	Std Beta	Std Error	t-value	p-value	Bias and Corrected Bootstrap 95% CI		Decision	VIF
						LL	UL		
H-6	SMU×SMNC->ORP	.099	.046	2.166	.000	[.027	.176]	Supported	1.072
H-7	SMU×CIUSM->ORP	.291	.049	2.316	.001	[.105	.298]	Supported	1.187

Notes: SMU×SMNC->ORP = Social Media Usage × Social Media Network Capability-> Organisations’ Performance. SMU×CIUSM->ORP = Social Media Usage× Customer Involvement Using Social Media -> Organisations’ Performance.

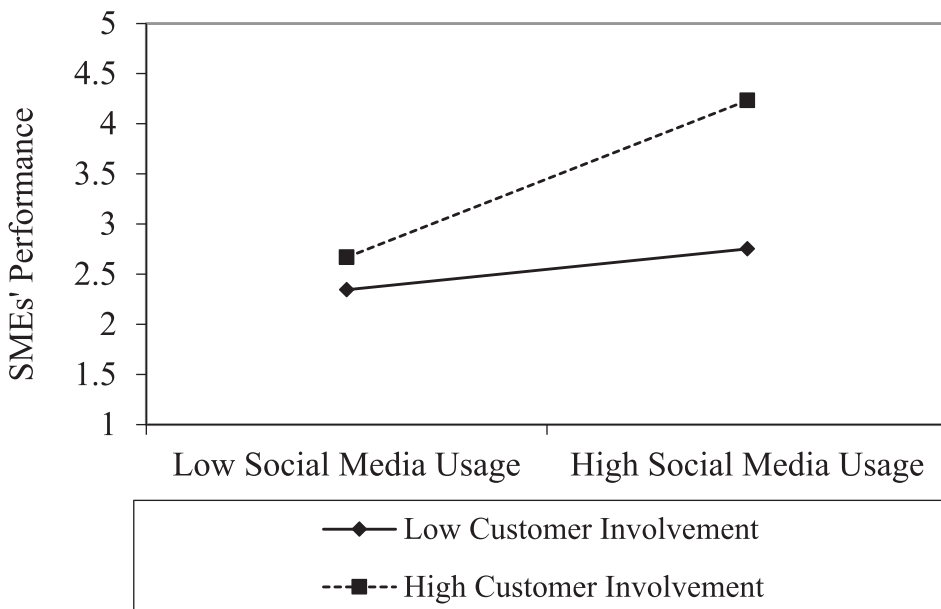


**Figure 2.** Research model: hypothesis testing.



**Figure 3.** Interaction of social media usage and social media network capability towards organisations' performance.

$t=3.817$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). For the second hypothesis, cost-effectiveness was significantly related to social media usage ( $\beta=0.242$ ;  $t=4.455$ ;  $p<0.01$ ), so  $H_2$  was also supported. Hypothesis 3 presented the relationship between compatibility and social media usage. This relationship was seen to be statistically significant ( $\beta=0.165$ ;  $t=3.795$ ;  $p<0.01$ ), thus,  $H_3$  could be supported. On the other hand, the relationship between the informational trust and the social media usage showed insignificant results ( $\beta=0.037$ ;  $t=1.061$ ;  $p>0.05$ ). Hence,  $H_4$  is not supported.



**Figure 4.** Interaction of social media usage and customer involvement towards organisations'.

H<sub>5</sub>, which presented the relationship between social media usage and organisational performance, was statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.301$ ;  $t = 4.881$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ); hence it was supported. Table 4 and Figure 2 present these results.

For testing the moderating predictions in H<sub>6</sub> and H<sub>7</sub>, thus, as shown in Table 5, a significant interaction occurred between social media usage and the social media network capability towards organisational performance ( $\beta = 0.099$ ;  $t = 2.166$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Hence, H<sub>6</sub> was supported. Furthermore, the interaction between social media usage and customer involvement in organisational performance was statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.291$ ;  $t = 2.316$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, H<sub>7</sub> could be supported. Table 5 and Figure 3 presents these results. Thus, based on the plotting, both interactions

**Table 6.** PLS-predict assessment.

Indicators	PLS-SEM			Indicators	LM			Indicators	PLS-LM		
	RMSE	MAE	Q <sup>2</sup>		RMSE	MAE	Q <sup>2</sup>		RMSE	MAE	Q <sup>2</sup>
INT1	.577	.470	.373	INT1	.608	.517	.303	INT1	-.031	-.047	.070
INT2	.579	.483	.257	INT2	.591	.496	.224	INT2	-.012	-.013	.033
INT3	.519	.437	.404	INT3	.598	.518	.210	INT3	-.079	-.081	.194
COF1	.610	.510	.260	COF1	.634	.546	.199	COF1	-.024	-.036	.061
COF2	.614	.521	.248	COF2	.649	.556	.159	COF2	-.035	-.035	.089
COF3	.679	.552	.176	COF3	.718	.583	.079	COF3	-.039	-.031	.097
COM1	.601	.496	.355	COM1	.644	.537	.260	COM1	-.043	-.041	.095
COM2	.592	.486	.282	COM2	.621	.525	.210	COM2	-.029	-.039	.072
COM3	.618	.515	.247	COM3	.649	.562	.169	COM3	-.031	-.047	.078
COM4	.602	.487	.348	COM4	.632	.515	.282	COM4	-.030	-.028	.066
TRS1	.675	.523	.207	TRS1	.711	.542	.118	TRS1	-.036	-.019	.089
TRS2	.552	.447	.209	TRS2	.569	.482	.158	TRS2	-.017	-.035	.051
TRS3	.610	.505	.383	TRS3	.669	.562	.259	TRS3	-.059	-.057	.124
TRS4	.664	.558	.241	TRS4	.728	.620	.088	TRS4	-.064	-.062	.153
SMU1	.740	.598	.263	SMU1	.774	.641	.194	SMU1	-.034	-.043	.069
SMU2	.609	.508	.342	SMU2	.646	.547	.260	SMU2	-.037	-.039	.082
SMU3	.711	.563	.368	SMU3	.740	.592	.316	SMU3	-.029	-.029	.052
SMU4	.624	.508	.296	SMU4	.633	.521	.277	SMU4	-.009	-.013	.019
SMU5	.687	.528	.328	SMU5	.752	.584	.196	SMU5	-.065	-.056	.132
SMU6	.612	.514	.341	SMU6	.644	.523	.271	SMU6	-.032	-.009	.070
SMU7	.519	.437	.404	SMU7	.598	.518	.210	SMU7	-.079	-.081	.194
SMU8	.954	.778	.248	SMU8	1.055	.878	.081	SMU8	-.101	-.100	.167
SMU9	.672	.535	.285	SMU9	.687	.545	.253	SMU9	-.015	-.010	.032
SMU10	.584	.466	.301	SMU10	.630	.528	.186	SMU10	-.046	-.062	.115
SMU11	.622	.513	.352	SMU11	.644	.548	.305	SMU11	-.022	-.035	.047
SMU12	.614	.521	.248	SMU12	.648	.555	.160	SMU12	-.034	-.034	.088
SMU13	.982	.795	.169	SMU13	1.042	.875	.065	SMU13	-.060	-.080	.104
NEI1	.632	.513	.148	NEI1	.664	.550	.060	NEI1	-.032	-.037	.088
NEI2	.982	.795	.169	NEI2	1.042	.875	.065	NEI2	-.060	-.080	.104
NED1	.632	.513	.148	NED1	.664	.550	.060	NED1	-.032	-.037	.088
NED2	.577	.470	.373	NED2	.609	.518	.301	NED2	-.032	-.048	.072
NED3	.610	.510	.260	NED3	.635	.546	.198	NED3	-.025	-.036	.062
NED4	.579	.483	.257	NED4	.591	.496	.223	NED4	-.012	-.013	.034
NEU1	.983	.829	.173	NEU1	1.049	.880	.060	NEU1	-.066	-.051	.113
NEU2	.626	.516	.318	NEU2	.649	.552	.268	NEU2	-.023	-.036	.050
NEU3	.685	.569	.183	NEU3	.748	.639	.027	NEU3	-.063	-.070	.156
NEU4	.632	.513	.148	NEU4	.664	.551	.059	NEU4	-.032	-.038	.089
CIUSM1	.584	.466	.301	CIUSM1	.630	.528	.186	CIUSM1	-.046	-.062	.115
CIUSM2	.982	.795	.169	CIUSM2	1.036	.863	.074	CIUSM2	-.054	-.068	.095
CIUSM3	.697	.571	.249	CIUSM3	.760	.639	.107	CIUSM3	-.063	-.068	.142
CIUSM4	.686	.575	.146	CIUSM4	.692	.581	.132	CIUSM4	-.006	-.006	.014
ORP1	.679	.552	.176	ORP1	.718	.583	.079	ORP1	-.039	-.031	.097
ORP2	.673	.554	.220	ORP2	.705	.574	.144	ORP2	-.032	-.020	.076
ORP3	.772	.591	.157	ORP3	.809	.619	.074	ORP3	-.037	-.028	.083
ORP4	.686	.575	.146	ORP4	.692	.581	.132	ORP4	-.006	-.006	.014

Notes: PLS-SEM = Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling, LM = Linear Regression Model, RMSE = Root Mean Squared Error, MAE = Mean Absolute Error, Q<sup>2</sup> = Q<sup>2</sup> Predict.

Key: Interactivity, Cost Effectiveness, Compatibility, Informational Trust, Social Media Usage, Network Initiation, Network Development, Network utilisation, Customer Involvement and Firms (SMEs) Performance.

(i.e. social media network capability and customer involvement) strengthened the positive relationship between social media usage and SME's performance was powerful (slope was pronounced) as shown in Figures 3 and 4 (Dawson 2014).

The model's explanatory power explains  $R^2 = 0.544$  for SME performance, classified as a moderate to substantial variance (Hair et al. 2017). Also, the Stone-Geisser blindfolding sample reuse technique revealed  $Q^2$  values larger than zero, thus indicating that the research model in this study is good at predicting both social media usage ( $Q^2 = 0.151$ ) and SMEs performance ( $Q^2 = 0.224$ ) (Hair et al. 2017).

Additionally, we employed holdout samples to test predictive validity, which means that a group of evaluations of a single idea may predict a single end variable using the PLS prediction algorithm (Shmueli et al. 2019). To illustrate the interpretation, we focus our analysis on the model's fundamental target construct (SMEs Performance) and report the prediction statistics of all the other endogenous constructs' indicators. Therefore, based on the (Hair et al. 2019) criteria, we can conclude that our model has high predictive power as shown in Table 6.

## 5. Discussion and conclusions

In this study, we aimed to determine the factors (i.e. interactivity, cost-effectiveness, compatibility, and information trust) that influenced SMEs' social media usage and its subsequent effect on the performance of these SMEs in Iraq. Furthermore, we also investigated two significant moderators, i.e. social media capability and customer involvement while using social media networks, and their effect on the SME's performance. The results revealed that interactivity, cost-effectiveness and compatibility were strongly associated with social media usage. This study showed that social media usage was significantly related to SMEs' performance. Thus, small businesses' use of social media had a considerable impact on their performance. For better results, organisations should employ social media platforms as a marketing tool consistent with the prior indication (e.g. Odoom, Anning-Dorson, and Acheampong 2017). Notably, the capability of social media networks was found to moderate the positive association between social media usage and SMEs' performance. When the social networking platform demonstrated more excellent power, the relationship strengthened. The involvement of customers positively moderated the association between social media usage and SME performance. Therefore, SMEs that use social media networks to communicate directly with their customers perform better and produce better results because it helps reduce companies' market-related uncertainty and risk, aids organisations' understanding of customer expectations or demands, and assists in the resolution of various other competitive issues.

### 5.1. Theoretical implications

This paper has made several significant contributions to the existing literature related to the effect of social media usage. First, the researchers have examined the factors which influence social media usage and its impact on the SME's performance. Thus, this study advances research that analyses the elements (i.e. interactivity, cost-effectiveness, compatibility, and information trust) necessary for social media usage. To the best of our knowledge, very few studies have identified and demonstrated this relationship (Ainin et al. 2015; Odoom, Anning-Dorson, and Acheampong 2017). Hence, in expanding this little stream of research, our findings support this relationship in a previously unstudied context. Second, this study has further contributed to the existing literature since we have introduced two moderators which moderated the relationship between social media usage and the SME's performance, i.e. (1) *Social Media Network Capability* and (2) *Customer Involvement Using social media*. Hence, based on the knowledge-based perspectives, social networking, and the network capacity presumptions, the researchers have addressed this issue by stating that the social CRM improved the effect of the social network-related customer interaction on SME's performance. Also, using social media like successful businesses, consumer engagement depends on multifactorial, developing a

customer experience that is integrated across platforms, including the use of social media involvement as a means to reach customers (Wang et al. 2020).

### **5.2. Practical implications**

This study also made some practical contributions, which could be implemented by SME management. First, interactivity, cost-effectiveness, and compatibility are the primary factor for businesses that may organise their marketing campaigns on these platforms. However, this allows the companies to acquire input using the 2-way communication system on social network platforms. This study also showed how social media platforms could fit the needs and assist the organisations' daily activities (Ainin et al. 2015). Thus, this exhibits that SMEs' social media platforms could improve SMEs' performance efficiency. Hence, many companies use their social media platforms as a marketing tool for enhancing their performance. With the advent of digital advertising, primarily social media, companies can decrease their advertisement costs, an essential factor for the SMEs affected by their financial constraint (Odoom, Anning-Dorson, and Acheampong 2017).

Interestingly, this study showed that the SMEs involved in the social CRM often aim to explore better and new tools (social media network capabilities). Earlier studies also indicated that large organisations exploit the existing capabilities (i.e. social CRM capabilities). The social CRM affects the managerial decisions for assigning resources to develop new capabilities and use current capabilities (Trainor et al. 2014). This study also showed that the managers were likely to develop new capabilities if they faced a novel market scenario (like the social media environment) (Battisti and Deakins 2017). At the same time, the result of this study has shown customer involvement in a virtual environment as it presented implications for SME managers. It was seen that the SMEs use social media platforms for using customer involvement effectively, especially if it is aligned with their social CRM. This could also significantly improve their performance.

### **5.3. Limitations and future research**

First, the social media involvement of consumers is a complex phenomenon. This study showed that the social media networks and participation of the customers using social media networks allowed the social CRM to offer benefits to SMEs. The researchers did not determine the potential causes that influenced customer interaction effectiveness. Further research needs to be carried out to determine the adverse effects of social CRM. Second, these results have opened the debate regarding the potential difference between service-based and product-based SMEs. To advance the existing theory, it is necessary to undertake a comparison study that incorporates responses from both small and large enterprises.

## **Acknowledgments**

We would like to thank the Qatar National Library (QNL) for providing the Open Access funding for this work.

## **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

## **Ethical approval**

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

## **Informed consent**

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.



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