

# Social media used by different small and medium enterprises during COVID -19 in Njombe Town.

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## **Abstract**

Social media marketing has highly been adopted by many small or huge firms in different parts of the world. Meanwhile during the breakout of COVID-19, many businesses were under crisis due to social distancing put by the Government and the nature of its spread. This tuned firms to find other means to adopt in order to serve their business. The point where business owners to identify marketing strategies and prioritised for cost efficient during the pandemic.

The study used questionnaire, focus group discussion and interview for data collection. The study reached a total of 98 small and medium enterprises through questionnaires guide and 27 through Interview checklist and 15 through focus group discussion. Data was analyzed using Statistical Packages for Social Science version 20, as well as coding of qualitative data. Both qualitative and quantitative data collected from the field were analyzed in the study. Majority of small and medium enterprises used the Whatsap, phone call and messaging to reach customers for their products. The media is simple for use and with efficient to reach customers who are familiar with their business so they use calling and messaging to alert them for the new products at shop. The use of WhatsApp through status views and phone call and messaging are the popular used means of marketing of business in Njombe Town Council during the COVID-19 break out. It is recommended that the Government under the Tanzania Communication Regulatory Authority should impose laws and restriction to control misuse of the social media and increase privacy ownership of information to admins of any social media. The Government need to ensure policies, infrastructures and facilities are favourable to small and medium enterprises especially during the pandemic breakout.

**Key words of the article:** social media, small and medium enterprises, Covid-19.

## **Introduction**

Social media can be described as a way in which people consume and convey information by sharing among each other through the use of internet. Social media has enabled many to many connections of people rather than one to many communication approaches. (Cook, 2008). The success and operation of many businesses is as results of social media and e-commerce technology in today's life (Bennett, 2012). The main indicators of Small and Medium Enterprises growth lie on sales volumes and the total number of employees (Naldi and Melin, 2010). In Tanzania, the first case of COVID-19 was reported on March 16, 2020. It was a case of a 46-year-old Tanzanian woman in Arusha coming back from Belgium and thus led to the increase of cases steadily in the country spreading to and affecting most towns including Njombe. The COVID-19 pandemic caused the Government to suggest social distancing. According to Reluga (2010) social distancing is an aspect of human behaviour to reduce the level of contact with others to reduce the transmission of diseases. Therefore, the effects of COVID-19 have led to the changes in consumer behaviour and the way marketing is carried out during economic downturns accelerated shift from offline to online behaviour. World Health Organization declared the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020 and a pandemic on 11 March 2020. Recent studies (Chatterjee & Karl, 2020) have shown that social media marketing strategy is a workable instrument that can help businesses to attract customers.

## **Literature review**

Social media are interactive computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation or sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. Social media is referred as a set of information technologies that facilitate interactions and networking between parts (Walfet al, 2018). Compared to traditional marketing communication tools such as advertising, sales promotions, public relations, and personal selling, social media or digital marketing has been shown to be more influential in terms of

communication, credibility, price, and control mechanisms (Fill, 2009). This brief discussion clearly indicates that social media is one of the key and essential methods which allow SMEs to lessen the severity of the Covid-19 crisis (Indriastuti & Fuad, 2020). The main reason behind is that internet including social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook and twitter offers the view of familiarity and closeness with virtual interaction (Barnes, 2012). Social media is simply an online social interaction with a distribution and exchange of various contents.

According to Wong et al., (2020). Over the years a variety of social media has emerged such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and a multitude of blogging platforms. But while the pandemic breakout the use of these social media marketing for Small and Media Enterprises in the current crisis has raised and saved a number of business from the risk of losing customers.

### **Research methodology.**

The study conducted in Njombe Town Council and were purposively to Small and Medium Enterprises started their business before and during the pandemic breakout through a case study design. The mixed approach was used data collection which involved quantitative and qualitative research approach. The sampling technique used for the study was stratified random sampling to the Small and Medium Enterprises Owners. The total population of Small and Medium Enterprises in the study area was 7422 and the sample for used for the study was 99 Small and Medium Enterprises who were obtained using the formula  $(n) = N / (1 + N e^2)$  developed by Yamane (1967). The “e” is the standard error (10%) and “N” is the population and “n” is the sample size required for the study. Both primary and secondary data were collected during the study. The data collected through questionnaire guide, interview, focus group discussion and documentary review. Data were analyzed by a statistical package for social sciences and presented in tabular forms through frequencies and percentages.

### **Findings Presentation.**

The results of this study was based on demographic and objective of the study. The results on demographic shows majority of respondents were aged 35-44 years and 57 of 99 were female under the

questionnaire and 17 of 27 female participants under the interview and Focus Group Discussion. Majority (47 of 99) of respondents were primary education level and 11 of 27 university level under the questionnaire guide and interview with Focus Group Discussion respectively. Through the business experience it was found that those established their business before and during the pandemic breakout was 95 of 99 and 26 of 27 respondents through questionnaire guide and interview with Focus Group Discussion respectively.

The results revealed that data collected through questionnaire revealed majority (7 of 19) used WhatsApp, the same number (3 of 19) used Facebook and Instagram. The least were 2 of 19 who used Twitter and others were 4 of 19 who used the other social media include phone call and messaging. Meanwhile in Focus Group Discussion and interview neither used Facebook, Instagram nor used Twitter, 2 of 3 said they used WhatsApp and 1 of 3 said used the other social media said phone call and messaging. The efficient of social media usage were on WhatsApp media where majority responded WhatsApp who were 3 of 19 respondents and 4 of 19 responded other (mentioned phone call and messaging) the social media were very efficient. Majority of respondents said the efficient were to their customers who are familiar with their business so they use calling and messaging to alert them for the new products at shop. More findings are presented in the table below;

### **Social medias used by small and media enterprises during the COVID-19 breakout**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Media</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Through questionnaires</b>	Facebook	3	15.8%
	Instagram	3	15.8%
	WhatsApp	7	36.8%
	Twitter	2	10.5%
	Others (mention)	4	21.1%
<b>Total</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>100.0%</b>
<b>Through FGD and interview</b>	Facebook	0	0.0%
	Instagram	0	0.0%
	WhatsApp	2	66.7%
	Twitter	0	0.0%
	Others (mention)	1	33.3%
<b>Total</b>		<b>3</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Source: Field data (2022)

## **Discussion of results.**

Majority users of the social media marketing are youths aged 15-44 years old and more preferable to those with at least secondary education. Those with primary education and aged above 44 majority use local radio to advertise their business as they believe using this media reaches majority of customers in the region for whole sale of their products. The awareness on social media is the primary determinant of informal scientific communication; it has a significant contribution in small and medium enterprises performance. There is meaningful relationship between social media awareness and social media adoption for business communication and has become a means of diffusion and improvement of information between customers and sellers during the pandemic.

The most used social media is WhatsApp followed by messaging and phone call alert for the new products. Meanwhile the use of local radio is predominantly and mostly used by primary educated aged above 45 years as they believe it reaches many populations in Njombe Urban and semi-urban areas of the region during the pandemic breakout but it is more cost than the social media. Bodaboda were the best means of product home delivery during the COVID-19 in Njombe Town Council which majority adopted and its use increased more and more, the delivery was efficiently communicated through the use of Whatsapp phone call and messaging. Adopting the social media marketing does not increase sales and performance of Small and Medium Enterprises direct in turn you are increasing number of followers thereafter, convincing them to buy your products. Using social media marketing during the COVID-19 breakout increased value and usage of the Information technology to the public. The findings in this objective are similar to that studied by Mason et al. (2021) found the evidence that, since the

beginning of the pandemic, United State consumers have increased their use of social media to express purchase satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Also relate to Artaya & Baktiono (2016) who researched out whether marketing through social media could increase small and medium enterprises sales significantly. The independent variables used in this study were some social media platforms consisting of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube. Therefore, YouTube is the social media not useful in Njombe Town Council during the pandemic breakout.

### **Conclusion.**

The most used social media by small and media enterprises during the COVID-19 were WhatsApp, messaging and phone call to alert customers for the new products. The WhatsApp media emerged to be the most popular and effective for the business during the pandemic breakout. Meanwhile the use of local radio is predominantly as it reached many populations in Njombe Urban and semi-urban areas of the region but it was costful than the social media.

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