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Adoption of Social Media Marketing for Sustainable Business Growth of SMEs in Emerging Economies: The Moderating Role of Leadership Support

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Abstract: Social media marketing (SMM) plays an important role in business communication, marketing, operations, and other activities. There is a growing interest among researchers, academicians, and practitioners to understand the role of SMM in business sustainability in small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in an emerging economy, like India. Few studies have attempted to understand this role. Thus, the aim of this study is to examine the impact of adopting social media marketing for sustainable business growth of SMEs in an emerging economy. The study also investigates the moderating role of SME leadership support on the relationship between SMM usage and sustainable business growth of SMEs. After reviewing the existing literature and technology adoption model, a theoretical model is developed, which is then validated using a structural equation modeling technique to analyze 304 samples of Indian SMEs that use different social media marketing applications in their enterprises. This study confirmed that SMM tools significantly and positively improve the sustainable growth of SMEs in an emerging economy. Additionally, the study also found that SME leadership team plays a vital role in supporting actual usage of SMM tools that accelerate sustainable business growth of SMEs.

Keywords: social media marketing; SMEs; technology acceptance model; leadership support; perceived usefulness; perceived ease of use; behavioral intention

1. Introduction

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are found to act as important suppliers of semi-finished and/or, in some cases, finished raw materials to large organizations and as such they are considered amongst the most vital organizational suppliers [1–3]. SMEs, which are both diversified and heterogeneous, are also considered as the economic backbone of the country of their operations [4,5]. In the last decade, SMEs used to mainly operate in traditional markets; however, to date, they are interested in expanding their operations in emerging markets [6]. Despite their merits, SMEs across the world, and specifically those operating (or attempting to operate) in emerging economies, often suffer from constraints in vital resources and have to deal with even less availability of technological applications.

However, SMEs' successful internationalization often depends more and more on new technologies [7,8]. Superior marketing practices, known for their cost-effectiveness, might help SMEs to achieve successful sustainable business growth and development [9,10]. Such practices require SMEs to embed new technologies into already existing and well-established business practices [11], thus rendering the use of ICT in their daily business activities as an important and promising tool for marketing their offerings and enabling further sustainable business growth [12,13].

Social media has emerged as a critical tool for SMEs to establish close relations with customers [14]. As such, it may interrelate with "a secured generation of web development and design that aims to facilitate communication, sources, information sharing, interoperability and collaboration on the World Wide Web" [15] (p. 531). However, those who are involved in SMEs' growth and development would be motivated to use SMM only if they feel the tools are useful and not hazardous in their applicability. Therefore, SMEs make decisions regarding the use of SMM only when they evaluate their applicability as conducive [16–18]. Such reservations are supported by the construct of technology acceptance model (TAM) [19] and are not studied yet in the context of SMEs operating in emerging economies that use social media marketing (SMM) [20].

The existing literature provides adequate data in support of how SMM could help SMEs to accept new technologies; however, the majority of current research applies to Western economies and their relevant unique needs, demands, and perspectives [21]. In emerging economies, such as India, SMEs are also considered as a prolific source of economic growth [22–24]. However, they often suffer from low technological competence and scarce resources. Nevertheless, the applicability of information and communication technology (ICT) is perceived to be indispensable for their sustainable growth in this context [12]. From the variety of ICT applications driving businesses to sustainable business growth, SMM, i.e., doing business on social media [25] is perceived as an appropriate tool to help SMEs of emerging economies to achieve that goal for many reasons [26,27]. For instance, and perhaps most important, social media platforms and applications could equally help consumers to easily connect with brands, products, and services [28–30]. Although SMEs can achieve sustainable business growth with the effective and efficient use of SMMs, few studies discuss how SMEs in emerging economies yield beneficial outcomes using SMM applications, as well as how underlined mechanisms, such as appropriate leadership support, may help them to benefit further from SMM applications [31].

In addition, as leadership of SMEs is actively progressive, the role of leadership support of SMEs in the effective use of SMM cannot be ignored. Therefore, it is not possible to establish a conducive environment that helps all employees to embrace and adopt new technologies, such as SMM, for their day-to-day routine tasks and activities without including the role of leadership in such organizational efforts [32].

With this background, the aim of this study is to address the following objectives:

- [i] To investigate the impact of SMM on the sustainable business growth of SMEs of emerging economies.
- [ii] To examine the factors which can predict the implementation of SMM in SMEs in emerging economies.
- [iii] To understand how leadership support could help SMEs to apply SMM in the emerging economies to achieve better sustainable business growth.

The study contributes to the existing literature in the following ways: First, it contributes to the literature of SME growth in emerging economies by identifying that the effective use of SMM may direct SMEs to achieve sustainable growth and development, as well as achieve internationalization. Second, the study contributes to the organizational behavior literature by empirically investigating behavioral intention in the context of SMEs, and it conceptualizes the TAM in this domain. Last, the study contributes to the literature of leadership by expanding the moderating role of leadership support in new relationships promising sustainable growth and contexts (i.e., in SMEs in emerging markets), which has not been investigated in the past.

2. Theoretical Underpinning

The present study discusses the adoption of SSM by SMEs in emerging economies for sustainable business growth and development, taking leadership support as a moderator in this relationship. The issue of new technology adoption is largely approached using the technology adoption model (TAM), first introduced by Davis [19]. The literature considers it as one of the most accepted models regarding the adoption of new technologies [33,34].

Furthermore, TAM includes a causal chain of attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, as well as intention, which were earlier introduced by social psychologists [35]. TAM is founded on the concept of certain beliefs, such as usefulness and ease of use, that people have when forming attitudes about a specific object. Depending on their attitudes, people develop intentions to behave in certain ways towards particular objects. TAM states that people plan to exhibit their intentions to use a new system when they believe it is “useful” and “easy to use”, which is also considered as a predictor of usefulness. In this study, the authors argue that, apart from employees adopting SMM technology that is useful and easy to use, they will adopt it if they are supported appropriately by leadership.

Therefore, three main reasons can justify the suitability of TAM in the adoption of new technology. First, TAM is considered as an information technology (IT)-specific parsimonious model. This model has been designed and developed to adequately predict and explain how users with diverse levels of expertise and cultures, coming from a wide range of organizational contexts, accept new systems. Second, this model is based on solid fundamental theoretical foundations. It is operationally appealing because it stands on a robust plinth of well-researched and validated inventory possessing psychometric measurement scales. Third, TAM has gained strong empirical support because of its overall high explanatory power. In addition, this model is a preeminent model of a wide range of users’ acceptance of technology [34].

Moreover, status quo bias theory supports that people always adhere to existing systems especially when cognitive and informational limitations exist [36]. People tend to weigh potential losses, as they switch from an existing status quo, as more heavy than their potential gain. Consequently, individuals tend to oppose to any change unless they realize that the derived benefits could outweigh the risks and losses. Subsequently, employees of SMEs would resist to use SMM, feeling uncertainty and considering that the potential benefits would not outweigh the risks. This aligns to the concept of status quo bias theory. It is suggested, therefore, that leaders are responsible to make employees realize the benefits of using SMM. Leaders should also motivate employees to use SMM and not resist such change.

2.1. Development of Hypotheses and Conceptual Model

The theoretical underpinning narrated that both usefulness and ease of use, with leadership support, would motivate SMEs to adopt SMM to achieve sustainable business growth.

2.1.1. Perceived Usefulness (PU)

Perceived usefulness (PU) is a core construct of TAM [19]. PU is conceptualized as an intangible estimation deriving from a user’s belief that by using a technology the overall performance of the user will be improved [37]. Thus, in the context of this study, employees of SMEs should believe that, by using SMM, their performance will be improved [38]. Use of SMM by employees, in turn, is perceived to have an impact on the overall performance and sustainability of the SMEs [39,40]. It has been observed that the concept of usefulness is linked to user intention to make use of technology, which is a core idea behind TAM [41]. It has been also supported that a sense of usefulness is positively associated with the use of the concerned technology [42,43].

Accordingly, the first study hypothesis is formulated as follows:

Hypothesis 1 (H1). *Perceived usefulness (PU) positively impacts SMEs' behavioral intention to use SMM (BIS).*

2.1.2. Perceived Ease of Use (PEOU)

Perceived ease of use (PEOU) is another core construct of TAM [19]. Users would not feel any constraint to use a new technology or a system if they feel that it is not complex [44]. This factor is associated with the concept that it is essential for an individual to exert some effort to use a technology or a system [38]. Employees who feel that their experience with the new technology was easier than they expected are motivated to embrace an innovative system or technology [45]. Furthermore, those who perceive a system relatively easy and not complex to use will be further self-motivated to conceptualize its usefulness [46]. In this study, employees of SMEs will not hesitate to use SMM if they feel that it is not difficult in its implementation and use.

Accordingly, the following hypotheses are prescribed.

Hypothesis 2a (H2a). *Perceived ease of use (PEOU) positively impacts SMEs' behavioral intention to use SMM (BIS).*

Hypothesis 2b (H2b). *Perceived ease of use (PEOU) positively impacts perceived usefulness (PU).*

2.1.3. Behavioral Intention to Use SMM (BIS)

Behavioral intention is considered a motivational factor that influences a specific behavior [39]. If one's intention is strong to perform a certain behavior, the individual is more likely to perform such behavior. Employees' behavioral intention to use SMM is an important factor for comprehending their actions towards using SMM [41,47]. Behavioral intention is divided into two categories, which are favorable intention and unfavorable intention. Favorable intention is associated with loyalty, willingness to do something, and switching intentions [48]. If SMEs believe that using SMM in their enterprises will benefit them, they will arrange to actually use SMM and try to align their employees' intentions to use SMM to derive those benefits [49]. Usefulness and ease of use are perceived to be effective predictors of BIS, and, in such scenario, the employees will be motivated to intend to use SMM in their SMEs [50].

Accordingly, it is hypothesized as follows.

Hypothesis 3 (H3). *Behavioral intention to use SMM (BIS) positively impacts SMEs' actual use of SMM (AUS).*

2.1.4. Actual Use of SMM (AUS) and SME Sustainable Growth (SSG)

Social media platforms are considered as easy instruments for SMEs to communicate online with potential consumers or for customers to exchange views with other customers [51]. Since interactions through social media are not expensive, most SMEs nowadays adopt this practice, as they have limited resources as well as limited technical capability [52]. Even more, use of SMM is expected to help SMEs to improve business activities by building brands [53,54] as well as by acting as a great tool for SMEs to improve their business practices, which, in turn, improves their sustainable growth [55–58].

These inputs help us to develop the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 4 (H4). *Actual use of SMM (AUS) positively impacts SME sustainable growth (SSG).*

2.1.5. Moderating Role of SME Leadership Support (SLS)

The proper application of SMM in SMEs has been considered a new idea for their sustainable growth. However, in the initial stage of SMEs using SMM, employees will be reluctant, as they perceive such technologies as a new concept. Whenever a new technology

or a new system is introduced in an organization, the employees often resist such change, which is supported by the status quo bias theory [36]. As this theory is attributed to a combination of loss aversion as well as the endowment effect, leaders are responsible to motivate employees to align with the use of new technology or the new system. SME leadership could influence employees to narrate different success stories emerging from the effective utilization of SMM in SMEs.

Therefore, employees are required to undertake appropriate training [59] that enables them to switch from the existing status quo. Supportive leadership should design proper training for employees using SMM [60,61]. Leaders are expected to help employees to align with the strategic decisions that SMEs make to implement SMM by eliminating the usual adoption blocker at the embryonic phase [62,63]. Leaders who demonstrate moral attributes, including trustworthiness and fair decision making, can positively influence their employees and at the same time motivate them to participate in innovative work [64]. Therefore, leaders have the ability to encourage the introduction of new technologies within organizations. Leadership plays a fundamental role in the adoption of new communication channels. Considering this, Chatterjee et al. [23] find that supportive leadership helps a company to build a ubiquitous CRM to achieve business benefits. However, in some cases, as Basit et al. [65] point out in their study, carried out in Malaysia, leadership is not a determining factor for the adoption of a new process or system by organizations. Instead, social norms that leaders support are linked to shared standards of behavior and play a crucial role in the implementation of new technologies. Last, according to Brink's study [66], involving top management in the implementation of social media can contribute to the creation of collaborative knowledge in the business processes and improve business performance. Thus, leadership support is perceived as an important enabler to moderate the relationship between actual use of SMM and improvement of sustainable growth of SMEs.

Accordingly, the fifth and last hypothesis of our study is as follows.

Hypothesis 5 (H5). *SME leadership support (SLS) moderates the relationship between actual use of SMM (AUS) and SME sustainable growth (SSG).*

Based on the hypothesized relationships, the study's proposed model is conceptualized as follows (Figure 1).

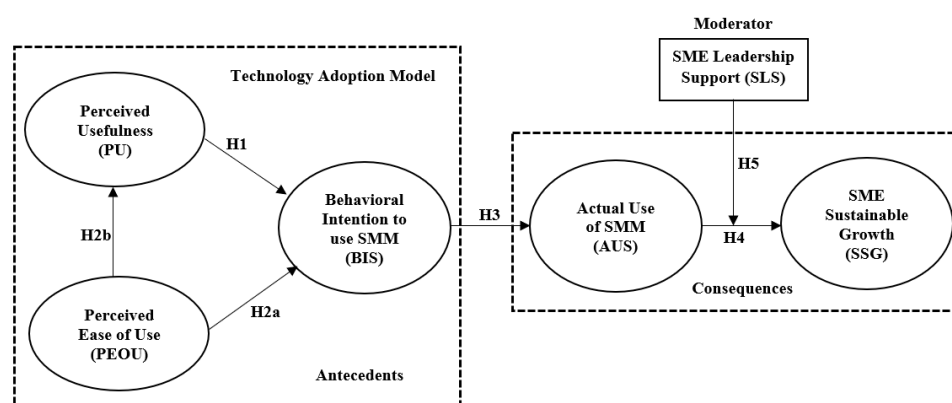


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

3. Research Methodology

To test the study hypotheses as well as validate the conceptual model, we used the structural equation modeling (SEM) technique. This process has been carried out to estimate the predictive powers of different dependent variables and finally assess the predictive power of the goal of this study, i.e., SMEs' sustainable growth (SSG).

3.1. Measurement Instruments

Measures for this study were obtained from the current literature. The questions were pre-tested to rectify items' wording and render it easy for the participants to understand the study questions. The opinions of six experts who have adequate knowledge about the study's domain were taken into consideration aiming at the improvement of the study items regarding their comprehensiveness and readability. Furthermore, the proposed study questions were discussed with the experts to ensure that the questions are understandable, not ambiguous, vague, or difficult to answer in order for the respondents to express their attitudes regarding their prospects of using SMM in SMEs. After the development of the survey instrument, a pilot test was also conducted aiming at the assessment of the probable response rate as well as the confirmation of the scale reliability. The questionnaire was finally shared with a relatively small sample size. The participants' backgrounds and selection criteria in the pilot test were the same as of the main survey. The pilot test resulted in the correction of a few items regarding wordings and improvement of the reliability of the relevant constructs. The residual flaws in the questionnaire were finally eliminated. The survey instruments included 31 items (see Appendix A).

3.2. Data Collection

The study was conducted in India for many reasons. India is an emerging economy, being one of the BRICS countries with a considerable number of SMEs [67]. India is reported to have the largest population of social media users with a very high Internet penetration [68–70]. The study participants were located in three cities of India, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Bangalore, as many SMEs operate in these areas. Last, the study participants were employed in SMEs, which satisfy the criteria enjoined in the Micro, Small & Medium Enterprise Development Act 2006 (India).

We randomly selected 50 SMEs from those three cities and contacted the executives through telephone calls and emails. We explained that the aim of the study was purely academic and requested the executives to allow their employees to participate in the survey. It was also assured that their confidentiality and anonymity of the participants would be strictly preserved. Eventually, executives of 24 SMEs agreed to allow their employees of different ranks to take part in survey.

We selected 600 employees of these 24 SMEs at random and sent them an email with the response sheet that contained the 31 items. Since the quantification of the responses was anchored on a 5-point Likert scale, each item in the response sheet had five options. We informed the respondents to put only one tick mark in one of the five options against each item. All 600 employees (prospective respondents) were requested to reply within two months (January 2020 to February 2020). Within the scheduled time window, 318 responses were obtained. The response rate was 53%. On scrutiny of these 318 responses, 14 responses were found incomplete, and were not considered. Therefore, analysis was done with 304 usable responses against 31 items. The demographic information of 304 respondents is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic information (N = 304).

Particulars	Category	Number	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	216	71
	Female	88	29
Education	High School	64	21
	Graduate	158	52
	Postgraduate	82	27
Working position	Leaders	21	7
	Managers	64	21
	Employees	219	72

4. Data Analysis and Results

4.1. Measurement Properties and Discriminant Validity Test

To detect convergent validity, the factor loading (FL) of each item was estimated. To examine validity, reliability, and internal consistency of each construct, we estimated the average variance extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha (α) of each construct. All the values are within the permissible range. The results are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Measurement properties.

Construct/Item	LF	AVE	CR	α	t-Value
PU		0.84	0.89	0.93	
PU1	0.89				21.17
PU2	0.96				22.14
PU3	0.92				27.29
PU4	0.94				31.27
PU5	0.95				34.18
PU6	0.90				26.01
PU7	0.85				37.11
PEOU		0.85	0.88	0.92	
PEOU1	0.85				28.11
PEOU2	0.90				29.17
PEOU3	0.95				26.22
PEOU4	0.97				34.62
PEOU5	0.96				27.29
PEOU6	0.88				31.04
PEOU7	0.92				35.12
BIS		0.86	0.90	0.94	
BIS1	0.88				26.27
BIS2	0.96				28.31
BIS3	0.90				29.22
BIS4	0.94				32.41
BIS5	0.95				36.17
BIS6	0.92				39.11
AUS		0.84	0.89	0.92	
AUS1	0.89				26.22
AUS2	0.96				24.63
AUS3	0.90				29.33
AUS4	0.87				19.17
AUS5	0.91				24.32
AUS6	0.97				28.11
SSG		0.87	0.91	0.95	
SSG1	0.89				26.11
SSG2	0.94				24.22
SSG3	0.96				25.25
SSG4	0.90				36.12
SSG5	0.95				17.33

The estimated values of AVEs lie between 0.84 and 0.87, which are all greater than the lowest threshold value of 0.50 [70].

It was observed that the square roots of all the AVEs were greater than the bi-factor correlation coefficients. Hence, the Fornell and Larcker criteria [71] are satisfied. The results confirm discriminant validity, which are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Discriminant validity test (Fornell and Larcker criteria).

Construct	PU	PEOU	BIS	AUS	SSG	AVE
PU	0.92					0.84
PEOU	0.28	0.92				0.85
BIS	0.26	0.24	0.94			0.86
AUS	0.35	0.17	0.21	0.92		0.84
SSG	0.33	0.19	0.26	0.22	0.93	0.87

4.2. Moderation Analysis (Multi Group Analysis)

SME leadership support (SLS) has been considered as a moderator acting on the relationship between AUS and SSG. In this study, effects of SLS on the said linkage have been divided into two categories: strong SLS and weak SLS. The *p*-value difference was estimated by multi group analysis (MGA) process considering 5000 bootstrap replications and taking impacts of strong SLS and weak SLS on the linkage AUS→SSG. The *p*-value difference was found to be 0.02 for the present study. Hence, the effects of SLS on AUS→SSG are significant [72].

4.3. Common Method Bias (CMB)

Since this study dealt with survey-based data, there is potential of common method bias (CMB) emerging from the implicit social desirability. The potential of the CMB has been reduced by taking some preemptive measures. First, as mentioned a pilot test was conducted. Second, all prospective participants were assured that their anonymity and confidentiality will be strictly preserved so they can respond in an unbiased way. Third, a post hoc Harman's Single Factor Test (SFT) was conducted. It revealed that the first factor accounts for 29.12% of the variance. This is within the allowable range of 50% [73]. Fourth, for CMB validity check, the marker variable correlation technique was also adopted. The results transpired that the difference between original as well as CMB adjusted correlations were found to be less than 0.06 for all the concerned constructs [74,75]. Hence, CMB could not be a limitation for the study distorting the study outcomes.

4.4. Hypotheses Testing (SEM)

To ascertain whether the model is in order or not, some of the fit indices, like goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker–Lewis Index (TLI), root mean square error (RMSE), and ratio of chi-square and degree of freedom were estimated. The corresponding values were 0.932, 0.864, 0.941, 0.966, 0.042, and 2.014, respectively, which were all within the specified range. Hence, it is confirmed that the model is in order. With this process, the path coefficients of different linkages, *p*-values, and R^2 values could be estimated. The entire results are shown in Table 4.

4.5. Results

The study formulated six hypotheses; one of them postulates moderating effects of SLS on H4. After SEM analysis, all study hypotheses were validated. Specifically, the study outcomes show that the impact of PU on BIS is significant and positive, since the concerned path coefficient is 0.22 with level of significance $p < 0.01$ (**). This corresponds to H1. The results highlight that the impacts of PEOU on BIS (H2a) and on PU (H2b) are both significant and positive, since the path coefficients are 0.29 and 0.26 with levels of significance as $p < 0.001$ (***) and $p < 0.05$ (*), respectively. The impact of BIS on AUS (H3) is significant and positive, since the concerned path coefficient is 0.43 with level of significance $p < 0.001$ (***). The results show that impact of AUS on SSG (H4) is also significant and positive, as the concerned path coefficient is 0.51 with level of significance $p < 0.001$ (***). The effect of the moderator SLS on the linkage of H4 is also found to be significant and positive, since the concerned path coefficient is 0.23 with level of significance as $p < 0.05$ (*). As far as coefficients of determinants (R^2) are concerned, PU and PEOU could explain BIS to the tune of 32% ($R^2 = 0.32$). Moreover, PEOU could explain PU to

the extent of 28% ($R^2 = 0.28$). The results shown that BIS could explain AUS to the tune of 41% ($R^2 = 0.41$), whereas AUS could explain SSG to the extent of 69% ($R^2 = 0.69$), which is the predictive power of model. Indirect effect of the mediation [76] has been calculated. Bootstrapping test at the 95% confidence interval with 10,000 resamples has been performed. Let it be mentioned here that confidence interval is a range of values which are likely to include a population value with a certain degree of confidence. Population mean lies between a lower and upper interval. Bootstrapping results show that there exists significant effect of actual use of SMM on the relationship between behavioral intention to use SMM and SME sustainable growth where the indirect estimate is $0.43 \times 0.51 = 0.22$, $Z = 4.63$, significance = $p < 0.01$ (**), lower interval = 0.18 and upper interval = 0.39.

Table 4. Path coefficients, R^2 values, p -values, remarks.

Linkages	Hypotheses	Path Coefficients/ R^2 Values	p -Values	Remarks
Effects on BIS		$R^2 = 0.32$		
By PU	H1	0.22	$p < 0.01$ (**)	Supported
By PEOU	H2a	0.29	$p < 0.001$ (***)	Supported
Effects on PU		$R^2 = 0.28$		
By PEOU	H2b	0.26	$p < 0.05$ (*)	Supported
Effects on AUS		$R^2 = 0.41$		
By BIS	H3	0.43	$p < 0.001$ (***)	Supported
Effects on SSG		$R^2 = 0.69$		
By AUS	H4	0.51	$p < 0.001$ (***)	Supported
(AUS→SSG) \times SLS	H5	0.23	$p < 0.05$ (*)	Supported

5. Discussion

The study outcomes support that PU impacts BIS (H1), and PEOU impacts both BIS and PU (H2a and H2b). These validated hypotheses are in alignment with TAM [19]. These three linkages not only have been supported by TAM, but they have also received support from other studies [44,77]. This study has shown that behavioral intention to use SMM (BIS) impacts SMEs' actual use of SMM (AUS) (H3). It is implied, therefore, that SMEs' intention to use SMM will motivate them to actually use SMM; therefore, it is supported that the 'intention' leads to 'actual use'. Hence, the study confirms the current literature. Wu et al. [41], for instance, observed that behavioral intention is a motivational factor with effective influence on specific behavior. When employee intention is stronger towards performing a specific behavior, it is very likely that such behavior will be performed. On the same grounds as well as in alignment with the existing research [54], this study hypothesized that actual use of SMM by the SMEs could impact the sustainable business growth of the SMEs (H4).

This study further highlights that in emerging economies a considerable amount of citizens across varied socio-economic classes make use of social media. Social media enables users to share their voices across the globe. SMM provides an effective mechanism enabling SMEs to promote a brand, a service, or a business by establishing intimate connections with potential consumers. SMEs often deal with financial constraints, which disable them to embark on large-scale advertisement campaigns as larger organizations usually do. SMM enables SMEs to advertise their products and services in an easier, as well as a cost-effective, way.

Following existing research [59,61], the present study has also approved that leadership support plays an active role in strengthening the relationship between AUS and SSG.

5.1. Theoretical Contributions

The study provided interesting theoretical contributions. In particular, the study made use of two exogenous variables borrowed from TAM, i.e., perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU). These are the core constructs of TAM. The inclusion of PU in the model may also support the plausible inclusion of a variety of relevant factors, which affect the behavioral intention of SMEs to utilize SMM. These factors might be relevant to SMM performance, people's perception of risk while using SMM, their trust in SMM, and the effectiveness and productivity linked to SMM. Perceived usefulness includes factors such as performance, risk, trust, effectiveness, and productivity [38,77–79]. Equally, perceived ease of use (PEOU) includes simplicity as well as self-efficacy [80].

Hence, by including these two core constructs of TAM (i.e., PU and PEOU), this study has been able to consider many other important factors that motivate SMEs to use SMM for ensuring sustainable business growth and development. Henderson and Divett [78] observed that technology acceptance model could be appropriately and successfully applied in setting an online supermarket. The study empirically supports the capability of TAM to accurately predict actual behavior of the stakeholders who should abandon the traditional supermarket model. Henderson's and Divett's [78] study was extended in the present study supporting that SMEs of emerging economies are motivated to use SMM if they perceive that SMM will enable them to achieve sustainable business growth and development.

Besides this, the study hypothesized that leadership support has an effective moderating impact on the relationship between actual use of SMM and SME sustainable business growth. To the best of our knowledge, there are not similar studies considering the effects of SME leadership support in the context of developing sustainable business growth using SMM in emerging economies, such as India. The moderating effect of SME leadership support has strengthened the explanative power of the proposed theoretical model, which is considered as a special theoretical contribution of this study.

5.2. Implication to Practice

The study focused on how several determinants could motivate SMEs operating in emerging markets to create a congenial environment for adopting SMM, aiming at sustainable business growth and development. It also discussed the role of SMEs' leadership in motivating employees to make effective use of SMM for sustainability purposes. Hence, the study outcomes are expected to provide worthy inputs to the policy makers as well as practitioners to readjust and reconcile existing policies in order to achieve sustainable growth.

Specifically, the study outcomes support the perceived ease of utilizing SMM, and as such it encourages managers to design appropriate training for employees. Well-designed training and development sessions make employees feel more confident to use these new tools. Adequate training would also help them feel that using new technologies in their day-to-day routines, tasks, and activities is relatively easy. Training interventions may also increase the employees' awareness of social media utilization through a deep understanding of the main benefits and on how social media might be used at work and the related risks. In addition, in these courses, trainers should take into account the different levels of previous experience employees have in the use of social media in order to calibrate the training sessions in relation to the detected skill. Furthermore, regular meetings with employees at all levels could also help managers to realize the potential of their efforts, as well as to evaluate the success of their initiatives, to align with organizational targets and goals.

Supportive leadership in this context plays an effective as well as a critical role in the smooth implementation of SMM in existing functions. By constantly consulting and coaching employees at all levels, they may not face any impediment in their efforts to use SMM

applications. However, before encouraging and training employees, companies should examine their current leadership style and organizational culture in order to identify any critical issues and solutions to encourage the adoption of innovative communication tools. Amongst other responsibilities, leadership should also take care of the adequacy of the resources available to employees, such as Internet facilities and other essential infrastructure that is required for the smooth implementation of any chosen SMM application.

5.3. Limitations and Future Scope

As is common in academic research, the study presents limitations, which warrant further attention.

First, the study outcomes depend on cross-sectional data. This alone entails the problems of causality of the relationships between the constructs, thus, enhancing the chances of the defects of endogeneity. It is suggested, therefore, that future scholarly research should focus on longitudinal studies and investigate the relationships under study with the use of econometric analysis.

Second, the survey was conducted in certain geographical areas analyzing inputs from employees at SMEs located in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Bengaluru, India. Therefore, we cannot easily support generalizability of the study outcomes. Scholars in the field may conduct research in other geographical areas, thus considering perspectives from employees who are employed in SMEs operating in cities of India and beyond. To ensure global applicability of the study findings, future scholarly research should be conducted in SMEs dispersed across the world.

Third, the study sample can be considered relatively small ($N = 304$). This cannot be considered as an adequate representative sample of the entire society. Therefore, such lacuna warrants further attention, and an adequate sample representation must be considered in future research. Last, the explanative power of the model is 69%. To ameliorate the explanative power of the model, it is suggested that future researchers consider other boundary conditions.

Fourth, the study fails to ensure equal representation in terms of the demographics of the study participants. Specifically, the inputs of male and female we analyzed hold 71% and 29%, respectively. This might prejudice the results, since there is considerable difference in the representation of male and female employees. So far, as education of the respondents is concerned, the maximum representation (52%) came from graduate respondents compared to high school level (21%) and postgraduate (27%). Besides this, maximum inputs have been obtained from the employees (72%) compared to the leaders (7%) and managers 21%. Future researchers should take into consideration such inequalities and narrow the demographic gap of the study participants.

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Appendix A

Table A1. Summary of Questionnaire.

Items	Source	Statements	Response [SD][D][N][A][SA]
PU1	[19,38]	I believe that social media platform is useful for the business	[1][2][3][4][5]
PU2	[19,39]	I believe that social media platform is a valuable tool for marketing	[1][2][3][4][5]
PU3	[19]	Social media platform helps in superior customer query management	[1][2][3][4][5]
PU4	[19,40,41]	I believe that social media marketing helps in sustainability for the business	[1][2][3][4][5]
PU5	[42,43]	I think usage of social media platform helps improving customer satisfaction	[1][2][3][4][5]
PU6	[19,43]	I believe that social media marketing helps in reaching many customers with less cost	[1][2][3][4][5]
PU7	[42,43]	Social media platform enhances the overall productivity of the business	[1][2][3][4][5]
PEOU1	[19]	I like to use social media platform for connecting with my customers as it is easier to use	[1][2][3][4][5]
PEOU2	[19,46]	I think that social media marketing is easier to learn	[1][2][3][4][5]
PEOU3	[38,44]	I believe that identifying new customers using social media is easier than the traditional marketing process	[1][2][3][4][5]
PEOU4	[19,39,44]	I believe that using social media platform, marketers can quickly understand the customer needs	[1][2][3][4][5]
PEOU5	[19,44]	Using social media platform, it is easier to retrieve information regarding a potential customer	[1][2][3][4][5]
PEOU6	[38,44]	I believe I can efficiently use social media to market my product	[1][2][3][4][5]
PEOU7	[45,46]	Social media platform is cost effective for advertisement	[1][2][3][4][5]
BIS1	[39,41]	I intend to use social media platform for marketing purpose in future	[1][2][3][4][5]
BIS2	[50]	I am planning to learn social media to improve our customer reach	[1][2][3][4][5]
BIS3	[47,48]	I believe that most of the employees in our organization intend to use social media to improve customer interaction	[1][2][3][4][5]
BIS4	[41]	I know social media can help to increase my customer base	[1][2][3][4][5]
BIS5	[49,50]	Social media helps in getting quick customers' feedback to improve the product features and functionalities	[1][2][3][4][5]
BIS6	[50]	There is a plan to integrate social media with our existing marketing tools	[1][2][3][4][5]
AUS1	[51,52]	I everyday use social media to understand my customer needs	[1][2][3][4][5]
AUS2	[53]	Frequent usage of social media helps me to understand my customer opinion about our products	[1][2][3][4][5]
AUS3	[54,55]	I believe that regular usage of social media marketing technique helps improving better revenue generation	[1][2][3][4][5]

Table A1. Cont.

Items	Source	Statements	Response [SD][D][N][A][SA]
AUS4	[57]	We have social media enabled customer relationship management tools which we regularly use	[1][2][3][4][5]
AUS5	[56]	I believe that frequent usage of social media for marketing purpose improves in sustainability of my organization	[1][2][3][4][5]
AUS6	[57,58]	I believe frequent use of social media for marketing purpose helps in improving competitiveness	[1][2][3][4][5]
SSG1	[51,52]	I believe that our organization performance has been improved after using social media platform	[1][2][3][4][5]
SSG2	[57]	I think that organization can improve their sales growth if they frequently use social media platform to interact with the customers	[1][2][3][4][5]
SSG3	[52,53]	I believe that our customers feel more connected with our organization after using social media	[1][2][3][4][5]
SSG4	[54]	I believe that usage of social media to understand the customer requirements is cost effective	[1][2][3][4][5]
SSG5	[57,58]	I believe that usage of social media platform for marketing products or services is the best practice across the industries	[1][2][3][4][5]

SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neither agree nor disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree.

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