

FROM LIKES TO SALES: STUDY ON ENHANCING SOCIAL MEDIA PERFORMANCE FOR INDONESIAN SMES

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ABSTRACT

Since 2010, social media use for business purposes has seen tremendous expansion. Businesses that implement a solid social media marketing plan may see enhanced results through improved performance on these channels. Though businesses increasingly rely on intuitive and trial-and-error techniques when developing their social media marketing strategy, we identify effective marketing strategies designed for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) to optimize social media performance. As part of their marketing strategies, SMEs should moderate social media-based customer engagement to achieve maximum leverage. Our study employed quantitative purposive sampling to collect and analyze data from 265 food and beverage SMEs located in Solo, Semarang, Kudus and Jepara. Afterward, we utilized Structural Equation Modelling AMOS data collected through a questionnaire to test our empirical model and validate its prediction capabilities. Our findings demonstrate how effective social media marketing strategies can increase customer engagement with social media-based customer interactions and positively affect performance on these channels. Furthermore, SMEs should utilize brand exposure strategies through social media marketing in order to further boost social media-based customer interactions.

Keywords: social media marketing strategy, social media-based customer engagement, brand exposure, social media performance, small and medium enterprises

Submission: 29th March 2023

Accepted: 7th October 2023

<https://doi.org/10.33736/ijbs.6407.2023>

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade, social media usage among businesses and their customers has steadily increased; yet many organizations struggle with developing effective social media marketing strategies due to limited guidelines Effing and Spil (2016).

According to Effing and Spil (2016), an absence of guidelines for implementing social media marketing strategies could result in practices that waste resources or miss opportunities. Ananda et al. (2016) stress the significance of designing an action plan aligning with business goals when using social media marketing; also, Dahnil et al. (2014) emphasize the need for an established approach for measuring technology adoption within media marketing campaigns.

Recent research indicates that social media marketing can have a powerful and positive influence on a company's overall performance Wiwoho et al. (2020). Furthermore, its use has proven its ability to build brand trust and loyalty within technology firms Ebrahim (2020). SMEs have also found benefits from using social media in their business operations and taking advantage of social media marketing Chatterjee and Kar (2020). Social media marketing has been identified to significantly influence brand experience and consumer-based brand equity Zollo et al. (2020). Indonesian SMEs were able to weather the COVID-19 pandemic through the effective implementation of social media marketing initiatives; universities must assist these small and medium enterprises (SMEs) by mentoring them on using such techniques Patma et al. (2021).

Many micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) seek to adopt social media marketing quickly; however, some need more knowledge despite acknowledging its potential impact on company performance Dahnil et al. (2014). Many MSMEs remain unaware of all its possibilities (Vasquez et al., 2014), while 53% of existing MSMEs already implementing it state their inability to understand its effectiveness due to insufficient knowledge Michaelidou et al. (2011).

Tafesse and Wien (2018) found that social media marketing strategy had an indirect yet direct, positive influence on performance, while Marchand et al. (2021) found no impact. This research proposes social media-based customer engagement as an avenue for augmenting the impact of a social media marketing strategy on performance on social media platforms. Valos et al. (2019), Dutot et al. (2016) and Marchand et al. (2021). Furthermore, these studies recognize strategic orientation as important, sales/business development emphasis as paramount, social media resources/capabilities as potential influencers on the performance of social media presence, etc. However, prior research needs to address various contradicting outcomes seen from prior studies, which has left this researcher with significant gaps of evidence regarding these contradictions in findings of prior studies and gaps of evidence surrounding contradicting outcomes seen from prior studies that have arisen due to evidence gaps left by prior research findings regarding various findings found within prior studies findings which is significant due to various contradicting outcomes seen within these findings of prior studies that have left significant gaps of evidence regarding these contradictory outcomes which arise due to lack of sufficient supporting evidence due to lack of available data which cannot explain them accurately enough; as such he identified significant gap in evidence regarding these contradictory outcomes as identified relating directly.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Social Media Marketing Strategy

Prior research has explored the concept of social media marketing strategy; however, no universal definition has been reached. Instead, different scholars have utilized this construct in diverse environments in order to assess its impacts on commercial entities. Choi and Thoeni (2016) conducted their investigation to explore organizational practices that help companies effectively use social media channels as strategic marketing tools in meeting their social media goals. Their research indicates that social media marketing strategies involve using various platforms like Twitter to accomplish specific business, marketing, or communication goals - the ultimate aim being audience engagement, building relationships, and driving revenue growth.

According to V Kumar et al. (2013), social media marketing strategy plays an integral part in increasing referrals and influencers, thus helping the business achieve its business objectives. They defined it as using social media channels such as Facebook to facilitate marketing communication while stimulating customer engagement, thereby meeting business goals; furthermore, they noted a positive association between this form of promotion and brand awareness as well as customer loyalty.

Micu et al. (2017) conducted research pertaining to the restaurant industry using social media marketing strategy as an online marketing approach that analyzes customer reviews on social media platforms to boost sales. To be effective and boost business image and reputation, they suggested monitoring online conversations as well as engaging directly with customers for optimal brand image building strategies on social media.

Zhang et al. (2017) noted the necessity for companies to align user-generated content with their social media marketing strategy. According to them, user-generated content offers social proof for product/service quality while significantly impacting customer decisions and loyalty to a brand or business. Their study concluded that social media marketing strategy positively affects customer loyalty and brand advocacy.

W. Y. Wang et al. (2016) study investigated the efficacy of social media marketing tactics used in B2B firms; their study demonstrated how organizations utilize these techniques to interact and cultivate relationships with both existing and prospective clients while shaping brand image, strengthening recognition, and cultivating customer loyalty. Their research highlights its significance.

Li et al. (2021) and Ananda et al. (2016) offer two distinct yet related definitions of social media marketing strategy. According to (Liu et al., 2021), this involves orchestrating company activities around an understanding of customer motivations for using brand-based social media and leveraging those connections and interactions toward desired marketing outcomes. On the other hand, Ananda et al. (2016) define it as deliberate actions taken by companies or organizations with marketing goals to meet target market needs via various social media tools.

McCarthy et al. (2022) assert that successfully executing a social media marketing strategy requires managing customer interactions, fan engagement, and content monetization. Ananda et al. (2016)

have proposed an all-encompassing framework encompassing three primary stages for social media marketing - strategic decision-making; tactical implementation, and concrete steps taken by companies for carrying out strategic decisions across platforms (content creation across them, etc). Furthermore, they identify four benefits of having such strategies, such as content production across platforms as well as interaction, community, and revenue source sources as sources.

2.2. Social Media Based Customer Engagement

In recent years, there has been a noticeable trend towards the widespread adoption of technology in marketing practices. It has been established through scholarly research that technology now plays an indispensable role in all aspects of the marketing process, encompassing market segmentation, targeting, positioning, and the marketing mix Hollebeek et al. (2014). Notably, customer engagement has emerged as a critical area in which technology has made a significant impact. Researchers have identified virtual reality-based games on social media platforms as a promising tool for achieving higher levels of customer engagement Carlson et al. (2019).

Effective social media-based customer engagement is critical for brands seeking to create co-creation and innovative ideas Harmeling et al. (2017). However, creating effective engagement strategies on social media platforms can be a challenge. It requires brands to understand how technology is changing the way customers interact with them and to develop new strategies that take advantage of these changes Hollebeek et al. (2019). The implications of these trends are significant. Brands that fail to adapt to the changing technological landscape risk losing customers to competitors who are more adept at using technology to engage with customers. Conversely, brands that are successful in creating effective social media-based customer engagement strategies stand to benefit from increased customer loyalty and brand advocacy.

The concept of engagement in marketing was first introduced by Kahn (1990) and later by Brodie et al. (2011). Since then, several studies and approaches have emerged in the field of engagement, particularly with a focus on brand and the development of new concepts and measurement variables (Dessart et al. (2016); Hollebeek et al. (2014)). Researchers have found that customer engagement through social media is of significant value to companies, particularly in increasing behavioral intention and word-of-mouth de Oliveira Santini et al. (2020). Moreover, customer engagement through social media has been proven to enhance a company's brand equity, leading to positive impacts on its performance Lee et al. (2021). Furthermore, social media-based customer engagement strategies have been shown to increase customer intimacy with the company T. Wang and Lee (2020), customer loyalty, satisfaction, and retention Arora et al. (2021).

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) tend to utilize social media platforms primarily for brand awareness purposes rather than generating direct sales and profit growth. This is corroborated by research conducted by Guha et al. (2018). In addition, SMEs may need to be more fully utilizing the data from social media to calculate key metrics such as customer lifetime value and customer information sharing, as reported by Viswanathan Kumar et al. (2010). Furthermore, SMEs tend to focus more on building their own online communities rather than actively participating in customer online communities. This, in turn, hinders the development of social media-based customer engagement, as highlighted in the study conducted by Harrigan and Miles (2014).

2.3. Brand Exposure

The emergence of social media platforms in the early 2000s, including MySpace, LinkedIn, and Facebook, created opportunities for businesses to establish brand pages and connect with users. Prior research has focused on the use of these platforms by businesses to increase brand exposure Andzulis et al. (2012). Brand exposure is a crucial factor in online marketing, as it helps to improve click-through rates on company promotions Fang et al. (2007). To achieve this, companies must ensure that their target audience receives maximum exposure on their social media platforms. In addition, research by Humphrey Jr et al. (2017) has found that sustained brand exposure on social media can influence prospects' brand choices. Therefore, it is essential for companies to continually engage with their audience through social media platforms and establish substantial brand exposure to achieve effective online marketing.

2.4. Social Media Performance

Scholarly inquiry on social media performance delves into the efficient management and customization of the marketing mix in response to the contemporary business landscape. One approach involves developing social media strategies that bolster customer relationship management A. Kumar et al. (2016), while also monitoring user-generated brand narratives to sustain the brand's competitiveness in the market Gensler et al. (2013).

The evaluation of social media performance is integral to assessing an organization's marketing mix effectiveness. Measuring social media performance entails examining factors such as the size of social media fans, followers, or subscribers Marchand et al. (2021). However, this process poses a significant challenge in adapting conventional measurement approaches to the unique features of social media Fisher and management (2009).

Academic research has shown that social media has a positive impact on a company's performance Tajvidi and Karami (2021). Utilizing social media to transform CRM strategies has also been found to improve a company's performance Trainor and Management (2012). In the service industry, companies that effectively respond to negative comments on social media are seen to have a positive impact on their performance Kim et al. (2015).

Optimizing social media resources and capabilities, coupled with the strategic implementation of social media strategies, enhancing customer engagement, and monitoring social media performance through analytics are critical factors that bolster social media performance Tafesse and Wien (2018) Marchand et al. (2021). To achieve maximum social media performance, an organization must manage its social media strategy with robustness and efficiency.

2.5. The Effects of Social Media Marketing Strategy on Social Media-based Customer Engagement

The primary goal of social media marketing is to attain favorable marketing results for firms. Previous research has demonstrated a strong link between social media marketing strategy and customer engagement on social media platforms. Liu et al. (2021) reported that the use of social media marketing strategies can significantly enhance customer engagement. This finding is

supported by Mora Cortez *et al.* (2023), who noted that employing a social media marketing strategy can increase followership and positively impact customer engagement.

Hypothesis 1: Social Media Marketing Strategy has a positive and significant impact on Social Media-based Customer Engagement.

2.6. The Effects of Social Media Marketing Strategy on Brand Exposure

The implementation of social media marketing strategies by companies can lead to several benefits. These include increased customer attention and maximized brand exposure Ananda *et al.* (2017). It is also essential for companies to balance customers' desire for their brand and ease of finding their brand through brand exposure Phan *et al.* (2011).

(H2) Social Media Marketing Strategy has a positive and significant impact on Brand Exposure.

2.7. The Effect of Brand Exposure on Social Media-based Customer Engagement

Humphrey Jr *et al.* (2017) assert that a firm's continuous efforts to present its brand to potential customers could increase the likelihood of these prospects choosing the brand. In a similar vein, Helal *et al.* (2018) demonstrate that brand exposure on social media could shape brand perception and ultimately lead to greater brand engagement. Further research by Dijkmans *et al.* (2015) establishes that an intensive social media brand exposure strategy could enhance the company's reputation and foster greater engagement with the company.

(H3) Brand exposure has a positive and significant impact on social media-based customer engagement.

2.8. The Effect of Social Media-based Customer Engagement on Social Media Performance

The research in the realm of Social Media-based Customer Engagement has revealed a positive correlation between customer engagement on Facebook and user-generated content as well as customer involvement, both of which are vital constituents of Social Media Performance. Hinson *et al.* (2019) have reported these findings. Additional studies have corroborated these results, including de Oliveira Santini *et al.* (2020) discovery that social media-based customer engagement significantly and positively impacts social media performance.

(H4) Social Media-based Customer Engagement has a positive and significant impact on Social Media Performance.

2.9. The Effect of Social Media Marketing Strategy on Social Media Performance

Previous studies suggest that the Social Media Marketing Strategy has a notable influence on a company's social media performance, as shown by Tafesse and Wien (2018) and Oberoi *et al.* (2017). Nevertheless, Marchand *et al.* (2021) conducted a recent study that contradicts the aforementioned findings by indicating that the Social Media Marketing Strategy does not have a significant effect on social media performance. As a result, the following hypothesis is posited:

H5: Social Media Marketing Strategy has a positive and significant effect on social media performance.

Table 1: Measurement Items

Constructs	Items	Statement Item	Coefficient Correlation
Social Media Marketing Strategy	SMM1	This business's social media provides a platform for customers to share content.	Adopted from Tarsakoo and Charoensukmongkol (2019)
	SMM2	This business's social media regularly interacts with customers and other users.	
	SMM3	This business's social media personalizes its service to meet customer preferences.	
	SMM4	We use this business's social media to monitor competitor prices.	
	SMM5	We use this business's social media to develop new products.	
	SMM6	We use this business's social media to quickly introduce new products.	
	SMM7	We use this business's social media to develop our business's brand.	
Social Media Based Customer Engagement	CE1	I assess that more users are visiting this business's social media.	Adopted from Garg <i>et al.</i> (2020)
	CE3	I assess that more users are liking this business's social media posts.	
	CE4	I assess that more users are commenting on this business's social media posts.	
	CE5	I assess that more customers are asking about product-related issues on social media.	
	SMP1	I assess that more users are following this business's social media.	
Social Media Performance	SMP2	I assess that more users are contacting this business through social media.	Adopted from Tafesse and Wien (2018)
	SMP4	I assess that more customers can be served by this business through social media.	
	SMP5	I assess that more customers can be served by this business through social media.	

I assess that more customers can be maintained by this business through social media.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employs a causal research design aimed at testing hypotheses about the cause-and-effect relationship between one variable and another. The research model is developed through a hypothetical approach and tested based on specific principles. The study focuses on small and medium-sized food and beverage businesses (UMKM) located in Solo, Semarang, Kudus, and Jepara. The data sources for this research include primary and secondary data.

The population for this study is comprised of food and beverage UMKM in Central Java, while the sample consists of 265 UMKM entrepreneurs from Solo, Semarang, Kudus, and Jepara. The study was conducted over a period of three months, spanning from December 2022 to February 2023. Primary data is collected through a survey method using a questionnaire with a list of questions presented directly to respondents. The data analysis technique for this study employs structural equation modeling (SEM) using AMOS software. Data collection and hypothesis testing are carried out using a Likert scale questionnaire with ten answer alternatives.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research findings will be presented in two sections: descriptive analysis and inferential analysis. Descriptive analysis will be conducted using index values, while inferential analysis will be performed using the Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) approach.

4.1. Descriptive Analytic

The respondent's evaluation of social media marketing strategy, social media-based customer engagement, brand exposure, and social media performance was measured using an index value approach. The following are the index calculation results for each variable.

Table 2: Tendencies of Respondents' Answers to Research Variables

Constructs	Index	Remark
Social Media Marketing Strategy	77.5	High
Social Media Bases Customer Engagement	73.9	High
Brand Exposure	75.5	High
Social Media Performance	76.3	High

Based on the calculated index values above, it can be categorized that the respondents' answers show a high tendency for each research variable.

4.2. Inferential Analytic

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was utilized in conducting inferential analysis to examine the research model and the interrelationships among variables.

4.3. Confirmatory Analytic

Confirmatory analysis is employed to verify whether the indicators utilized as measures accurately reflect the observed variables. The criteria required for confirmatory analysis include Standardized Estimate values greater than 0.5, CR values greater than 1.98 (at $\alpha = 5\%$ significance level), and significance values below 0.05.

Table 3: Results of Research Model Analysis

	Std Estimate	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
SMMS1 <--- SMMS	,805	1,626	,198	8,225	***
SMMS2 <--- SMMS	,717	1,524	,195	7,798	***
SMMS3 <--- SMMS	,860	1,800	,212	8,510	***
SMMS4 <--- SMMS	,822	2,084	,251	8,294	***
SMMS5 <--- SMMS	,653	1,233	,167	7,398	***
SMMS6 <--- SMMS	,726	1,502	,191	7,861	***
SMMS7 <--- SMMS	,525	1,000			
CE1 <--- SMBCE	,718	,650	,050	12,925	***
CE3 <--- SMBCE	,757	,788	,056	14,097	***
CE4 <--- SMBCE	,889	1,028	,055	18,712	***
CE5 <--- SMBCE	,859	1,000			
BE1 <--- BE	,767	1,000			
BE2 <--- BE	,938	1,687	,103	16,448	***
BE3 <--- BE	,978	1,984	,115	17,222	***
BE4 <--- BE	,892	1,378	,089	15,404	***
SMP1 <--- SMP	,634	1,000			
SMP2 <--- SMP	,865	2,037	,185	11,032	***
SMP4 <--- SMP	,936	2,557	,221	11,589	***
SMP5 <--- SMP	,924	2,468	,215	11,468	***

Based on the findings of this study, indicators can reflect the observed variables.

4.4. SEM Assumption

The criteria for testing normality is the multivariate CR value within the range of ± 2.58 . Univariate normality indicates typical values (± 2.58), while multivariate normality indicates a score of 6.501. Although the multivariate normality score still exceeds the recommended cut-off value, it does not exceed the threshold of 8.0. Therefore, the analysis can still proceed Ferdinand (2014). Thus, it can be concluded that the data used in this analysis has met the assumption of adequate normality, allowing the analysis to proceed to the next stage.

Multicollinearity and singularity were performed to determine the closeness of the relationship between exogenous variables. However, in this model, there is only one exogenous variable, so this assumption was not performed in this study.

Residual analysis was performed to observe the errors generated from the testing of the research model, allowing for the determination of whether model modification is necessary or not. The required residual value is ≤ 2.58 . The results of the model calculation did not produce residual values greater than 2.58, indicating that there are no residual problems. The requirements for Construct Reliability value are >0.5 and Variance Extracted >0.5 . The following are the calculation results for Construct Reliability and Variance Extracted.

Table 4: Reliability Construct and Variance Extracted

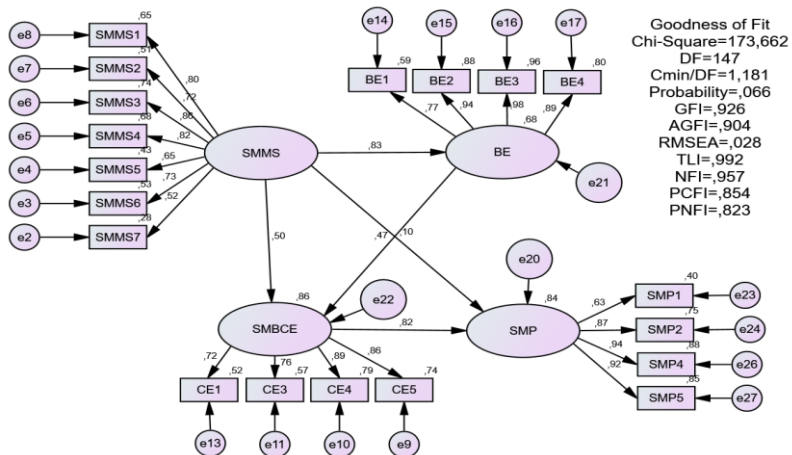
Variable	Reliability Construct	Variance Extracted
Social Media Marketing Strategy	0.544	0.587
Social Media Based Customer Engagement	0.654	0.782
Brand Exposure	0.744	0.894
Social Media Performance	0.720	0.869

The results of the Construct Reliability and Variance Extracted calculations for each variable meet the required criteria, leading to the conclusion that the assumptions of Construct Reliability and Variance Extracted have been met.

4.5. Goodness of Fit Model

This study develops a research model that illustrates the impact of social media marketing strategies on social media performance, which will be tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis techniques. The initial step taken to test the research model is outlined below.

Figure 1: SEM Structural Model



The goodness of fit results for this model are presented in the following table:

Table 5: Result of Goodness of Fit Test

Goodness of Fit Index	Cut off Value	Result	Model Evaluation
Chi-Square (df = 147)	< 179,880	173.662	Good
Probability	≥ 0.05	0.066	Good
CMIN/DF	≤ 2.00	1.181	Good
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.926	Good
AGFI	≥ 0.90	0.904	Good
TLI	≥ 0.95	0.992	Good
CFI	≥ 0.95	0.993	Good
RMSEA	≤ 0.08	0.028	Good

Based on the calculated Chi-Square value (173.662) being less than the critical Chi-Square value from the table (179.880) and the probability value (0.066) being more significant than 0.05, it can be concluded that the model under study has the capability to explain the population estimate.

4.6. Hypothesis Test

The hypothesis testing process involves analyzing the probability values using a significance level of < 0.05.

Table 6: Hypothesis Test Results

Hypothesis Testing Results				Std Estima	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
H ₁	SMB	<--	SMM	,505	1,097	,203	5,416	***
	CE	-	S					
H ₂	BE	<--	SMM	,827	1,169	,156	7,494	***
		-	S					
H ₃	SMB	<--	BE	,465	,715	,115	6,230	***
	CE	-						
H ₄	SMP	<--	SMBC	,823	,362	,064	5,683	***
		-	E					
H ₅	SMP	<--	SMM	,102	,098	,120	,820	,412
		-	S					

The study reveals that Social Media Marketing Strategies exert a noteworthy positive influence on both Social Media Based Customer Engagement and Brand Exposure. Further, the findings demonstrate that Brand Exposure significantly enhances Social Media Based Customer Engagement, and Social Media Based Customer Engagement significantly augments Social Media Performance. Nonetheless, the results also indicate that while Social Media Marketing Strategy positively impacts Social Media Performance, its statistical significance still needs to be determined.

5. CONCLUSION

This study sought to investigate how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) employ Social Media Marketing Strategies in their marketing endeavors. Our results suggested that using solely Social Media Marketing Strategy alone did not result in substantial improvements to Social Media Performance as evidenced by positive but statistically insignificant H5 results; however, coupling Social Media Based Customer Engagement with Social Media Marketing Strategy had an impressive positive effect that directly contributed to higher Social Media Based Customer Engagement scores (H1) that, ultimately influenced positively upon Social Media Performance scores (H4).

Research findings reveal that integrating Social Media Marketing Strategy and Brand Exposure together can enhance Social Media Customer Engagement. More specifically, this study found a statistically significant positive relationship between Social Media Marketing Strategy and Brand Exposure (H2) and Social Media Based Customer Engagement (H3), leading to improved Social Media Performance overall.

This empirical research seeks to advance theory by exploring the relationship between Social Media Marketing Strategy and Performance. According to Marchand et al. (2021) study, our results confirm that Social Media Marketing Strategy does not have a direct influence on Social Media Performance - in stark contrast with findings by Tafesse and Wien (2018) research, which discovered a strong positive correlation. Our research offers new insight into this relationship while contributing to ongoing scholarly discourse. Furthermore, using Social Media Based Customer Engagement as a mediator variable could increase its positive effect on Social Media Performance. The practical implications of this research extend to small and midsized food and beverage enterprises (SMEs). By harnessing social media for business development purposes, they can maximize their marketing strategies while expanding customer interactions on various channels - including providing customers a platform where they can share content they like, interact with users on an intimate level, and serve their preferences directly. They should also utilize it for monitoring competitor prices quickly, introducing new products swiftly, as well as brand building purposes.

Conclusion This research emphasizes the significance of Social Media-based Customer Engagement to enhance Social Media Performance for food and beverage SMEs in the food and beverage sector. Instead of solely relying on their Social Media Marketing Strategy to improve Social Media Performance, SMEs in this sector could leverage Customer Engagement strategies as part of a comprehensive Social Media Performance improvement initiative. Furthermore, this study offers theoretical and practical implications to researchers and practitioners who investigate the further impact of their Social Media Marketing Strategies on performance.

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