# Social Network Marketing of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in the Province of Tarlac

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*—— Review of ——*
Integrative
Business &
Economics
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## ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine the profile of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs); the participation of owners and consumers in social networking site (SNS); its role in representation, customer engagement, and lead conversion; and the challenges encountered by owners in using SNS. A self-made questionnaire was administered to 268 randomly selected MSME owners and 405 consumers. Results showed that the MSME owners in Tarlac sold items like shirts and bags with an initial investment of P10, 001-P 50, 000, with most respondents operating for 6 months to less than two years. Both consumers and owners prefer Facebook as their SNS as they have been using it for one to three years. Significantly, both show agreement with security concerns posed by the use of SNS. The consumers reported that they mainly visit sites to inquire prices and to shop online while the owners used it to improve marketing. The owners reported that they agree on its benefits on improving social media representation, customer engagement and lead conversion. Despite these benefits, the MSME identified problems in their use of SNS mostly, the amount of time needed in managing the pages and the risk of inappropriate behavior such as harassment.

Keywords: Social Networking Sites, MSME, Marketing

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of technology through the years has brought major changes and advancement in the society. One of these great advancements includes the development of the internet or the World Wide Web. With the connectivity brought by the internet, the world became a global community bound by the instantaneous connections with different places in the world. This caused better inclusion and diversity among people and cultures in the world. Moreover, the most striking effect of globalization fueled by the internet is the development of marketing for different businesses around the world. The emergence of a wider social platform enabled the improvement of business marketing without the need for costly set-up costs and transaction costs. With its intrusion into the business sphere, it is expected to become a powerful tool for any businesses to increase their marketing capacity by reaching a potentially large number of customers.

The rise of various social networking sites or SNS has achieved greater exposure and influence among buyers or consumers. Social networking sites are websites intended for uploading and downloading content meant for socialization or mingling with online or virtual friends (http://www.bbc.co.uk/webwise/guides/about-social-networking). Among the countless examples of SNS, Forbes cites Facebook as the most commonly used social networking site used by Americans followed by Youtube, Snapchat, Twitter, and Instragram (Murnane 2018). In comparison, Filipinos commonly use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and

Snapchat as means to socialize with people all over the world (Camus, 2018). One of the benefits of these sites is the online membership that came indefinitely for the users who wish to be members of their chosen community. Along with the option of free membership, a bigger and wider social platform grants the users' connection and exposure to the whole world, an advantage that common businesses capitalized on in the current market (Bodnar and Cohen 2011). Compared with traditional marketing that includes newspaper ads, radio broadcasts, and television, the rise of various social networking sites has enabled wider, personalized, and relatively cheaper marketing cost for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises or MSMEs.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

There are many reasons that points out why a web-based life is considered an effective marketing tool. These main reasons revolve around improving representation, customer engagement, and lead conversion for the businesses that use social networking sites. Representation refers to the branding and image of the business that is being promoted (Bodnar and Cohen, 2011). In terms of this particular factor, social media marketing can be effective as social media forwards better business representation as it showcases the business brand where it offers another marketing channel, like business websites and email marketing, to name a few. These develop brand awareness and relationship building among customers. Moreover, SNS increases digital exposure. The utilization of different social network accounts boosts social media presence to different potential consumers. Compared with the traditional marketing that rely on expensive flyers, billboards, or TV ads, the reach given by different social networking sites is much wider than the aforementioned marketing strategies.

Another important factor in marketing is customer engagement; a business process commonly used to describe the interaction between business owners and consumers, which also includes word of mouth and other forms of feedback that owners gain from their consumers. With the connectivity brought by the internet, the business owners can develop a loyal community for its consumers. Nowadays, customers want to be part of a business that is proactive in building different online communities. That is fundamental to the long-haul accomplishment of a business. The bridged gap between the distance of each customer to one another and the business owners create better reception and communication regarding the products. By being part of an online community that provides immediate and comprehensive feedback, business owners can now build trust and loyalty among their consumers, thus increasing the business' patronage and earnings. Moreover, social media stands as a great source of information and enables its customers and businesses to communicate freely and increases the business brand's trustworthiness. Lead conversion happens when an advertisement generates increased attention and inquiries from the customers regarding a posted product. Social media can expand sales and audiences because businesses can directly interact with its customers and their specific queries, which can in turn, boost the sales and expand the business customer base. Social networking allows the business owners to advertise their products not only to their target audiences, but also for consumers that may be convinced or interested once they see the offered products or services.

With social media's impact on representation, customer engagement, and lead conversion, it is necessary to picture the current statistics related to technology usage in order. Presently, there are 1.28 billion active users on Facebook alone, not so surprising as it is the world's most common interpersonal interaction site to date. Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and

various other social media sites have hundreds of millions of active users as well (Chedda, 2014). Out of this data, the Philippines is reported to be the leader in social media usage with internet users counting to as many as 67 million in Facebook and 10 million in Instagram which is owned by Facebook with statistics of 63% out of the total 105.7 million population of the country (Camus, 2018). This will be a striking feature of a business environment that would be able not only to thrive on the social media marketing but also to expand its reach overseas potentially. The Filipino citizen's inclination towards using the said social networking sites is a beneficial instance for businesses who has started or planned to start their online marketing strategies.

Hence, the availability of the social media gave an opportunity to MSMEs or micro, small, and medium enterprises. As an overview, MSMEs, or micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, are considered as the backbone of the Philippine economy. As of the 2016 summary of the Department of Trade and Industry, MSMEs occupy 99.57% (911, 768) of the 915,726 business establishments in the Philippines that are registered in the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). Specifically, the percentage is broken down into 89.63% (820,795) microenterprises, 9.50% (86,955) small enterprises, and 0.44% (4,018) medium enterprises. Only 0.43% (3,958) is made up of large enterprises. These MSMEs include restaurants, canteen, groceries, stores, clinics, schools or products centers, market vendors, repair shops, internet café, and much more. Earning the majority of the country's profit, MSME uses social media marketing to expand business opportunities and engagement with customers and clients. Individually, they earn 3,000,000 pesos, almost, annually. Since the MSME group occupies 99.6% of the economy, it contributes 95-98% to the Philippines Gross National Product (GNP).

In line with the locale reports, a recent survey from the Department of Trade and Industry of the MSMEs in the Province of Tarlac stated that there is a total of 6170 MSMEs registered as of 2017. The data summarized states that January had 1286, February had 701, March had 545, April had 435, May had 576, June had 467, July had 482, August had 501, September had 364, October had 341, November had 262, December had 210. Of these, the month of January with 1286 registrants record the highest number of registrations.

As 2018 unfolds, more and more small business units will take hold of social media to market their products and services. Social media marketing will save time and money for the meeting of the minds between customers, and businessmen as it will not require physical interaction.

The continuous growth of MSMEs in the Philippines is a necessary event in the economy as it forwards progress for the country as a whole. The increasing number of business in the Philippines is projected to greatly add to the revenue of many Filipinos in the coming years. This growth can be further catalyzed by the developments of technology, especially the presence of social networking sites which increase representation of the business, customer engagement, and lead conversion of advertisements—all of which are necessary to establishing a stable and successful business. The use of social media, marketing a brand to raise its popularity, word-of-mouth, sales, and social support from consumers, will be some of the best focal points to create a research study. Hence, the researcher will investigate the role of social network marketing in small and medium-sized enterprises.

**OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

With the said effects of various social networking sites and tools to MSMEs, the researcher aimed to identify the social network marketing usage by MSMEs in the Province of Tarlac, a city undergoing substantial business developments. This study aimed to identify the different information on MSMEs, social media, and consumers in order to present a clear picture of the MSME owners and their use of social media marketing, particularly:

1. to identify the business profile of MSMEs in terms of merchandise, initial investment, and years in operation,

2. to determine the consumer and the MSMEs' participation in social network sites such as:

    2.1. social network sites used;

    2.2. log in on social network sites;

    2.3. length of use in social network sites;

    2.4. security and privacy concerns; and

    2.5. purpose of using social networking sites.

3. to evaluate the role of social network sites to MSMEs in terms of:

    3.1 representation,

    3.2 customer engagement/networking; and

    3.3 lead conversion.

4. to categorize challenges encountered by owners of MSMEs using social networking sites.

Consequently, the researcher proposed an action plan that may be used by the MSME owners to improve their social media marketing. The results of this study would be of value to the MSME owners to increase their awareness of the issues and strategies that they may use to flourish their business. Moreover, this may also benefit local government units in planning strategies to help small firms and business progress.

## 3. METHODS

This study utilized a descriptive cross-sectional survey using a structured questionnaire developed by the researcher with the help of three experts in language and business management. In this study, the researcher investigated on the role of social network marketing and on how it is being utilized in the day to day operations among MSME's on clothing and apparel stores in the Province of Tarlac. In the same way, the researcher also aimed to determine the role of social media marketing on the day to day life of consumers of the said businesses.

### 3.1 Respondents

The study utilized MSMEs as primary respondents. The sample frame provided by Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Tarlac included 886 MSMEs that focused on clothing

and apparel as of December 2017. These entities are the primary unit of analysis to be represented by the either the owner or manager. The second set of respondents were consumers of this MSME's on clothing and apparel that uses social networking marketing to further understand the its role on the said entities

## 3.2 Sampling Design

Out of 886 of these MSME's in the DTI's list, 268 of them were chosen as representative through a convenience sampling while the researcher also performed a convenience sampling on 405 respondents from the consumer side. The required numbers to be sampled are based on the following formula for infinite and finite population:

$$ SS = \frac{Z^2(p)(1-p)}{e^2} $$

where,

SS=sample size for infinite population

Z=z value (e.g. 1.96 for 95% confidence interval)

P=percentage of population

e=margin of error; and

$$ NewSS = \frac{SS}{(1 + \frac{SS-1}{Pop})} $$

where,

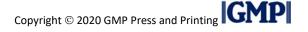NewSS=sample size for finite population

Pop= population size

For a more efficient way in gathering the most optimum data from the owners using social networking sites on their marketing, the researcher distributed the 268 questionnaires to the entire Province of Tarlac using convenience sampling method due to non-participative population since not all of them utilizes social networking sites as a marketing tool.

On the other hand, 405 consumer-respondents were conveniently taken with no specific location since the researcher deemed that distance is no longer a consideration as along as internet is available.

## 3.3 Instrumentation and Data Gathering

The questionnaire used for this study was made by the researcher since there is no available instrument that can be adopted that is suited for the collection of the needed data. To further create valid queries, the researcher sought the help of experts in language and business

and marketing. The items placed in the instrument were also based on the review of related literature and previous studies especially those of Lofjiks (2017) which gave the bases for fields related to the measurement of the role of MSMEs using social network sites in terms of representation, customer engagement and lead conversion. Other significant concepts from other studies include those of Palma, Arthelo (2016), Carma et al. (2017), Assimakopoulos (2017) and Sajjad Husain et al. (2016) were also integrated.

The questionnaire for the owner-respondents is primarily divided into four major sections as follows: (1) Business profile; (2) MSME's Participation in Social Networking Sites; (3) Role of Social networking sites in MSME's which was subdivided into 3 parts which are representation, customer engagement and lead conversion; (4) Problem encountered. Part 1, 2 and 4 were in checklist form and part 3 included a 5-point Likert Scale as follows (1) Strongly disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither agree or disagree, (4) Agree, and (5) Strongly agree.

The questionnaire for the customer-respondents on the other hand contained only two sections which were (1) Consumer Profile and (2) Consumer Participation in Social Networking Sites. In order to achieve the required number of respondents for both owners and consumers, direct distribution using printed copies to locations of MSME's and potential consumers was implemented. Online distribution through emails and social networking sites was also utilized to speed up the data collection.

## 3.4 Validation of the Instrument

The instruments used in this study underwent content validity. Experts coming from several areas looked into this aspect to obtain the best insight to determine its validity. These included a professional marketing specialist, an owner-practitioner and an academician. The instruments were considered valid with some suggestions which were considered and integrated for further improvisation of the instrument.

A pilot study was also conducted on both questionnaires to further check its understandability and acceptability on prospective respondents. 30 respondents each on both MSME owners' and customers' feedback were considered for the appropriateness of each item in the questionnaire to be included and its ability to measure the desired information.

Reliability of the questionnaire was also utilized to determine internal consistency on its items containing Likert scales using Cronbach Alpha which resulted to a 0.837 reliability index. Note that a reliability coefficient of .70 or higher is considered "acceptable" in most social science research situations.

## 3.5 Statistical Treatment

For the analysis on the quantitative aspect of the study, the data was analyzed using the following statistical tools:

1. Frequency and percentage were utilized on the parts of checklists and multiple response part of the data collected which is mainly on the respondents' and business profile and consumer and SMSE's participation and utilization of social networking sites.

2. Mean scores were determined for representation, customer engagement and lead conversion, and a grand mean was also determined to indicate the overall response on a particular aspect in the use of social networking site. The computed means were converted to verbal descriptions using the following Limits of index:

**Table 1**
**Limits of Index and Value**

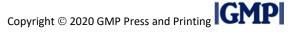| Limits of Index | Equivalent Value | Verbal Description |
|---|---|---|
| 4.50-5.00 | 5 | Strongly Agree |
| 3.50-4.49 | 4 | Agree |
| 2.50-3.49 | 3 | Neutral |
| 1.50-2.49 | 2 | Disagree |
| 1.00-1.49 | 1 | Strongly Disagree |

All of these were processed using the software using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for the assurance that all calculations are true and correct.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Business Profile of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises

#### 4.1.1. Type of Merchandise

Among all of the products included in this data gathered, shirts and tops are the most frequently bought items, implying that it has the greatest demand compared to the rest. Its mean frequency is relatively higher compared to the rest of the other 10 observations. As shown in Table 2, polo shirts, bags, and pants come close with 57%, 55%, 52% frequency respectively. This particular result shows that the top results concentrate on basic clothing more than the accessories.

**Table 2**
**Type of Products in MSME Clothing Stores in the Province of Tarlac**

| Products | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Bags | 228 | 85% |
| Footwear | 150 | 56% |
| Jeans | 148 | 55% |
| Office Uniforms | 142 | 53% |
| Sports Uniforms | 140 | 52% |
| Pants | 124 | 46% |
| Polo Shirts | 113 | 42% |
| School Uniforms | 51 | 19% |
| Shirts and Tops | 37 | 14% |
| Shorts | 36 | 13% |
| Others: | 3 | 1% |

## 4.1.2. Amount of Initial Investment of MSMEs in the Province of Tarlac

Majority (45%) of MSME owners started on an initial investment of P10,001-P50,000. Under this category of initial investment, it can be concluded that the MSMEs in Tarlac belong under the Micro enterprises as determined by the Department of Trade and Industry in their guidelines.

**Table 3**

**Initial Investment of MSME owners in the Province of Tarlac**

| Initial Investment | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| P 1000- P10,000 | 49 | 18.23% |
| P10,001-P50,000 | 131 | 48.8% |
| P50,001-P150,000 | 70 | 26.1% |
| P150,001-P400,000 | 16 | 5.9% |
| P400,000-P500,00 | 2 | 0.7% |
| Total | 268 | 100% |

The results as summarized in Table 3 above imply that small business owners always start with a small initial investment, which may seem to be a very common practice, given that most likely, these small business owners' capitals are small savings or maybe even small bank loans (Dua, 2017). The Department of Trade and Industry further supports this in their government report by claiming that MSMEs do not have access to venture capital funds. Furthermore, Mendoza (2015) cites that MSMEs thrive on the problem of starting with a modest capital as compared with big multinational companies. This particular practice is evident in the presence of sari-sari or retail stores

in the country where the owners would start with a minimum budget of P10,000 and then would start to develop through the years.

Taking these numbers into account, the researcher can conclude that the respondents from the MSME clothing establishments lean towards the middle ground of having an initial investment that could start from P50,000 up to P100, 001.

### 4.1.3. Years of Operation

The length of operation of the selected MSMEs was also taken into consideration as this would be necessary in establishing the credibility and the quality of each enterprise. As Palma (2017) mentioned, the length of the MSME business owners would be a necessary variable in determining the strength and progress of the advertising that they put forward.

**Table 4**
**Years in Operation of MSMEs**

| Years in Operation | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Less than 6 Months | 49 | 18% |
| 6 Months to less than 1 year | 59 | 22% |
| 1 year and 1 day to less than 2 years | 83 | 31% |
| 2 years and 1 day to less than 3 years | 50 | 19% |
| 3 years above | 27 | 10% |
| Total | 268 | 100% |

Data in Table 4 shows that among all of the businesses considered within this study, most of them (31%) have been operating for around 1 to less than 2 years, and 6 months to less than year (22%) of operation, with which only 22% that have been operating for more less than 6 months or half a year. This might imply that there has been a drastic increase of operational small business in the province at a particular point in time a year or two ago.

Majority of MSME owners under this study operate their business at a span of 1 to less than 2 years (31%) while others have been operating for 6 months to less than year (23%) of operation, with which only 12% that have been operating for more less than 6 months or half a year (12%).

### 4.2 Consumers and the MSMEs' participation in social network sites

#### 4.2.1. Social Networking Site Used

Table 5 shows the three major social networking sites commonly used by Filipinos. As seen in the table below, Facebook is one of the highly preferred and used social media networks for the consumers as it gained 100% of responses. Similarly, 98% of the MSME owners chose Facebook in the provided checklist. Instagram is the second option for both the consumers and owners as it garnered 34% and 55% respectively in the provided checklist. Finally, Twitter is the least used SNS for them.
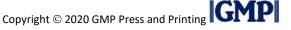
**Table 5**
**Commonly Used Social Networking Sites by MSME Owners and Consumers**

| SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORK | OWNERS OF MSMES | | CONSUMERS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| FACEBOOK | 268 | 100% | 394 | 97% |
| INSTAGRAM | 57 | 21% | 109 | 27% |
| TWITTER | 9 | 3% | 209 | 52% |
| Others | 0 | 0% | 14 | 3% |

### 4.2.2 Log-in on SNS

This reveals the average amount of time that the MSME owners spend within their login on a daily basis. This will be then compared with the amount of time that the consumers spend on social networking sites within a day. The duration of time spent online is a determining factor in this particular study because time spent online is necessary in conducting digital transactions and advertisements.

**Table 6**

**Log-in on SNS for MSME Owners and Consumers**

| Duration of Log Within the Day | OWNERS OF MSMES | | CONSUMERS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| Always | 68 | 25% | 170 | 42% |
| Most of the time | 159 | 59% | 103 | 25% |
| Sometimes | 30 | 11% | 92 | 23% |
| Seldom | 11 | 5% | 6 | 2% |
| Logged at least once within the week | 0 | 0% | 34 | 8% |
| **TOTAL** | 268 | 100% | 405 | 100% |

In terms of the time spent per log-in for the MSME owners, it is revealed that 75% of them spend *most of the time* in visiting their social network page or accounts. In relation with the owners, the consumers spend more time than the owners as 61% of them said that they *always* log-in on their SNS on an average day. This goes to show that consumers spend more time that the MSME owners. This is consistent with We Are Social's Digital 2018 report which states that that Filipinos spent an average of 3 hours and 57 minutes daily on social media sites, particularly on Facebook. Consequently, understanding these specific statistics can be used as tool to help businesses create effective techniques in communicating with their consumers (Whitings & Williams 2013).

### 4.2.3. Length of Use in Social Networking Sites

Ople (2017) states that posting business and sales on social media accounts requires time and knowledgeable effort. In relation with the time that the consumers and MSME owners spend in each visit daily, the third question aimed to gauge the length of time that the respondents have been using their social networking accounts.

**Table 7**

**MSME Owners and Consumers' Length of Use in Social Networking Sites**

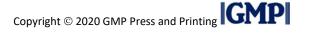| Length of Use in Social Networking Sites | OWNERS OF MSMES | | CONSUMERS | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Frequency | Percent | Frequency | Percent |
| Less than 1 month | 3 | 1.1% | 23 | 6% |
| 1 month to less than 6 months | 40 | 14.9% | 9 | 2% |
| 6months to less than 1 year | 65 | 24.3% | 16 | 4% |
| 1 year and 1 day to less than 2 years | 38 | 14.2% | 34 | 8% |
| 2 years and 1 day to less than 3 years | 41 | 15.3% | 28 | 7% |
| 3 years and above | 81 | 30.2% | 295 | 73% |
| Total | 268 | 100% | 405 | 100% |

As shown from the summary of data in Table 7, the MSME owners responded that 34% of them have been using SNS for three years and more, while consumers reported that 83% of them have been members in various social networking sites for three years and more. Collectively, 53% of MSME owners are exposed to the usage of social media networks for around one year to more than 3 years compared to the accumulated percent of consumers (95%) who have experiences for around one year to more than 3 years.

Significantly, the results suggest that most of the MSME owners have less exposure in social media sites, whereas a lot of consumers have spent more time using social media sites. The results generated by these two sets of data shows a small difference on the concentration of frequencies when it comes to the experience and length of time spent using social media.

## 4.2.4. Security and Privacy Concerns of Respondents

Philippine E-Commerce (2017) states that there are certain hindrances that prevent users of social networking sites from negotiating and transacting their business online. One of the main reasons that they have cited is still the prevalent cases of hacking, identity theft, and phishing.

These particular instances endanger the security of the individual. Once privacy is violated, users tend to withdraw from future online transactions. Table 8 shows the concerns and perceptions of both the consumers and the MSME owners about their personal privacy and business security.
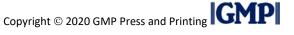
**Table 8**

**Security and Privacy Concerns of MSME Owners and Consumers**

| STATEMENTS | MSME Owners | | Consumers | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Mean** | **Description** | **Mean** | **Description** |
| I am very much concerned with account hacking and impersonation in social networking sites | 4.45 | Strongly Agree | 4.38 | Strongly Agree |
| I feel that I would be very vulnerable from stalking and harassment on my social network account | 4.25 | Strongly Agree | 3.62 | Agree |
| There are social network users who always blackmail other users to compel them to turn over passwords | 3.93 | Agree | 3.65 | Agree |
| There are other social network users who just copy and repost my advertisements for their own benefits. | 3.70 | Agree | 3.99 | Agree |
| **Sub Mean** | **4.08** | **Agree** | **3.91** | **Agree** |

Both MSME owners and consumers share the same concern of the violation of social media privacy such as hacking and impersonation, stalking, harassment, blackmailing, and plagiarism. In terms of their perceived level of concern for their security, the consumers averaged a 3.91 mean which signifies that they strongly agree on the threats posed by their online activities. On the other hand, the MSME owners scored a 4.08 mean which signifies that they agree that they have certain privacy concerns for their interactions online.

### 4.2.5. Purpose of Social Media Engagement

This aimed to gather the consumers and sellers' own purpose in using the said social media accounts. The result for both was compared in order to align the interests and purposes and consumers to see where they are similar and in terms of motivation in using social media.

**Table 9**

**Purpose of MSME Owners in Using Social Networking Sites**

| Purpose of MSME Owners in Using SNS | Frequency | Ranking |
|---|---|---|
| Increase brand awareness & loyalty | 224 | 1 |
| Connect with Your Target Audience. | 175 | 2 |
| It improves networking opportunities with customers and other businesses. | 158 | 3 |
| To participate on your business customer service. | 145 | 4.5 |
| Opportunity to conduct market research about your business. | 145 | 4.5 |
| To inform news to customers about what's new about your business. | 120 | 6 |
| Keep an eye on the competition. | 116 | 7 |
| To promote new gimmicks or deals according to the season of the year. | 114 | 8 |
| Monitor conversations that are relevant to your brand. | 113 | 9 |
| To stay on top of industry news. | 111 | 10 |
| Others e.g. increase likers/followers, respond to inquiries | 7 | 11 |
| | **Total (n) = 1,428** | |

Table 9 illustrates the main purpose of engagement that the MSME owners feel as priority over other motivations. According to the results, the top three respectively are; 1) to increase brand awareness and loyalty, 2) to connect with the target audience. and, 3) to improve networking opportunities with customers and other businesses. Based from these top 3 results, it can be inferred that the MSME owners maximize the use of social media in increasing their target audience through more aggressive advertisements, strengthened customer service with their convenient connection with their target audience. One MSME owner who sell trendy shirts said: "*it is easier post photos and share them on Facebook (mas madaling mag-post ng pictures sa Facebook at mabilis ma-share)*" while another one who sells dresses, pants and cosmetics expressed the same saying: "*I can quickly reply and provide price points for my customers (yu'ng mga nag-iinquire mabilis ako nakakapagreply, nabibigay ko 'rin mga price points para sa kanila)*" lastly, a boutique owner said: "*many customers visit our shops because they get updated with or new stocks (marami'ng customers ang nakakita sa mga new stocks kaya dumadalaw sila sa shop)*".

These responses gave a general impression that the MSME owners see social networking sites as a tool for them to increase their connection and advertising towards their customers. This finding is consistent with a recent study conducted by Fernandez and Uy (2019) that Filipino online business owners and sentiments from the buyers points out that videos, music, and keywords that relates to emotion or inspiring stories commonly makes online ads and products popular. Simply said, the MSME owners see the social networking sites as opportunities to create new connections among their audience and to strengthen patronage and loyalty among their long-standing customers. Significantly, the existence of social media and internet-based connections allow the owners and consumers to contribute to online discussions, reviews, conversations in

communities and groups in the Philippines (Camara, Lim, Natanuan, and Pascual 2017).

**Table 10**
**Purpose of MSME Consumers in Using Social Networking Sites**

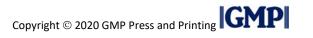| Purpose of MSME Consumers in Using SNS | Frequency | Ranking |
|---|---|---|
| Shop online. | 358 | 1 |
| Visit many sellers for price canvassing. | 259 | 2 |
| Review other buyers' comments about clothes / apparels quality. | 256 | 3 |
| Place an order. | 229 | 4 |
| For online offers and discounts on clothes / apparels and other services. | 223 | 5 |
| Inquire for the availability of the products and pricing. | 219 | 6 |
| Ask for clothes / apparels information. | 213 | 7 |
| Refer some of my friends to the trusted social network seller/s. | 189 | 8 |
| Exchange views about the clothes / apparels and their seller services. | 177 | 9 |
| Meet new social network buyers and get some referrals from them. | 157 | 10 |
| Others e.g. socialize, add friends, share posts | 19 | 11 |
| | **Total (n) = 2,239** | |

For Table 10, the consumers' purpose in using the social media listed the top 3 as 1) Shop online 2) visit many sellers for price canvassing, and 3) place an order. These top three responses speak for the tasks that motivates the consumers in using social media. Ultimately, the shoppers or consumers of the products chose "shopping online" as their priority aside from socialization. This could mean that majority of the consumers come to the social platforms with the goal of buying a product.

In addition to that, it can also be noted that the second top purpose is to visit many sellers for price canvassing and the third one is to place an order, leans forward to the purpose of observing and researching about the product that the consumers wanted to buy or to order from different stores.

Whiting and Williams in a 2013 study cites the major purpose of the social media users in visiting the site with mainly 88% of the respondents saying that they use it for social purposes and for entertainment such as online games, music. With social media, browsing for the best find in the market today is as easy as watching a commercial on TV., only this time, it's at the fingertips of the consumers.

The main purpose of the consumers in using social media platforms is the convenience it offers, which entails that the social media engagement of the respondents is to shop online. This view consumers' engagement to social media as a necessary observation because it is a good way to find out and even set the latest trends in the market, which can be taken advantage of by the MSME owners to boost their sales.

### 4.3. Role of MSMEs in Social Network Sites

This is to determine the utilization and the perceived level of benefits that the MSME owners reap from the use of social networking sites in digital marketing. The data was divided into three namely 1) Representation, 2) Customer Engagement, and 3) Lead Conversion. Each part was composed of statements that the respondents need to rate in a five-point scale with Strongly Disagree as the lowest and the Strongly Agree as the highest.

#### 4.3.1. Social Media Representation

The MSME owners scored an overall mean of 4.11 which signifies that they agree with the questions that asked whether they feel that social networking sites improved their representation in terms of saving money, increasing target audience, improving site professionalism, and editing of ads. Overall, the owners agreed on all the statements except for the maximized advertising which gained a response saying that they strongly agree with SNS' benefits on the efficiency of using social networking sites in terms of cost.
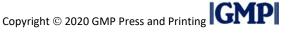
**Table 11**

**Representation of MSME in Social Media Marketing**

| REPRESENTATION | Mean | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 1. I can save more money in advertising by using social network rather than traditional way. | 4.46 | Strongly Agree |
| 2. I can easily reach larger amount of social media users by easily increasing my target market. | 4.13 | Agree |
| 3. My business looks professional by just marketing my products on my different social network accounts | 3.92 | Agree |
| 4. It takes a few clicks to post my business. | 4.17 | Agree |
| 5. I can edit any time my posted ads and also post new ads for my business. | 3.86 | Agree |
| **Sub Mean** | 4.11 | Agree |

#### 4.3.2. Customer Engagement/Networking

Businesses use social networking sites in many ways to monitor conversations about their product, provide feedback, customer service, promotions, and build followers among others (Business.com, 2010).

**Table 12**

**Customer Engagement of MSMEs using Social Media**

| CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT / NETWORKING | Mean | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 1. My clients can easily contact me anytime they want and can easily get customer's feedback about my business | 4.41 | Strongly Agree |
| 2. I can easily target the right group of people for my business by the increase of inquiries of my posted my ads. | 4.12 | Agree |
| 3. I can easily give additional information to those who need more details and easily answer inquiries. | 4.20 | Strongly Agree |
| 4. My number of friends and followers can increase immediately when they like my ads. | 3.99 | Agree |
| 5. I can easily build trust on my brand faster by seeing consumers who likes my business. | 4.10 | Agree |
| **Sub Mean** | 4.16 | Agree |

Table 12 shows that the MSME owners generally agree with the statements that characterize the benefits of social networking sites in engaging with consumers. With a mean of 4.16, the MSME owners generally agreed on the benefits brought by social media in terms of customer engagement/networking such as increasing response rate or contact, targeting the right group of people, providing comprehensive answers to inquiries, and building trust between consumers and owners.

As seen in Table 12, most responses are given to customer connection and communication. Generally, the MSME owners show positive feedback with the benefits of social media in establishing connections among their customers. In a recent study by Parminder et. al (2015), the results suggest that press releases in websites including social networking sites not only increase the publicity of the firm and the brand, but it also increases online presence in third party websites which in turn provides for better communication between consumer and the seller. This shows that social media marketing with the convenience brought wireless connection yield connections that are beneficial for both the consumers and the sellers. Since customers are the most important aspect of any business big or small, customer feedback and well-established communication between the MSME Owners and customers is a must.

### 4.3.3 Lead Conversion

Consumers in this particular study are all prospects, they are potential buyers that may make decisions that will affect the revenue of the enterprise. Lead conversion is the process of turning a lead into an opportunity/deal, as the process

would aim to convert prospects into customers (Bodnar & Cohen, 2011). This determined the perceived level of conversion experienced by the owners of MSMEs in Tarlac.

**Table 13**

**Lead Conversion of MSMEs using Social Media**

| LEAD CONVERSION | Mean | Description |
|---|---|---|
| 1. My customers are willing to order to me directly. | 4.44 | Strongly Agree |
| 2. I get more sales from social media than other traditional ads | 4.12 | Agree |
| 3. I earn better profit when I started to use social media. | 3.69 | Agree |
| 4. I got more visitors in my physical store after using my different social network sites. | 3.65 | Agree |
| 5. More and more customers are referring me to their friends. | 3.80 | Agree |
| **Sub Mean** | 3.94 | Agree |

Table 13 shows that in terms of lead conversion, the MSME owners generally agreed with a mean of 3.94, that the use of social networking sites improved their rate of lead conversion in terms of increasing the number of orders, earning more profit, gaining more visitors and referrals for their business.

In terms of profit, the owners of MSMEs agree that they earned more profit once they started using social media probably because the transactions became more convenient and the consumers increased in number as brought about by social media. As a one shop owner put it, "*We have observed that even people from Angeles City likes our posts and pictures (nakikita naming kahit mga taga-Angeles naglike ng posts and pictures namin.)*" Because of their increased social media and online presence, the respondents generally agreed to the fourth and fifth statements saying that their accounts made the number of visitors in their physical stores and customer referral increase overtime.

**Table 14**

**Role of MSMEs in Social Network Sites**

| ROLE | SUB MEAN | DESCRIPTION |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Representation | 4.11 | Strongly Agree |
| 2. Customer Engagement/Networking | 4.16 | Strongly Agree |
| 3. Lead Conversion | 3.94 | Agree |
| **Grand Mean** | **4.07** | **Strongly Agree** |

Table 14 above shows the summary of the role of MSMEs is in social networking sites. This role is gauged through three factors namely: 1) representation, 2) customer engagement/networking, and 3) lead conversion. The three factors' averaged mean shows that the owners strongly agreed that they have enhanced representation and customer engagement or networking in their use of SNS. On the other hand, the MSME owners agreed that they have increased lead conversion with their use of social media. Overall, the MSME owners deemed that they strongly agree that they have improved role in terms of representation, customer engagement, and lead conversion through their use of social networking sites.

## 4.4. Problems Encountered by MSME Owners

There are challenges and hindrances that are encountered by business owners in every venture. In this part of the study, the researcher opted to contextualize these problems to the challenges that owners encounter in managing their social media accounts in marketing their products.

**Table 15**
**Problems Encountered by MSME Owners in Social Media Marketing**

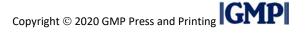| PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED | Frequency | Ranking |
|---|---|---|
| Too much time required to maintain the page / ads. | 220 | 1 |
| Risk of inappropriate behaviour on social networking site, including bullying and harassment. | 141 | 2 |
| It takes a lot of work to maintain my different accounts. | 118 | 3 |
| Not having a humanistic relationship with your audience. | 101 | 4 |
| Not actively managing social network presence, thus there are no real benefits. | 70 | 5 |
| Lack of expertise to use social networking sites. | 55 | 6 |
| Plans to use social media/networking sites in the future. | 52 | 7 |
| My customers are not familiar with social networking sites. | 50 | 8 |
| Not aware of social networking sites. | 44 | 9 |
| I don't think marketing on social networking sites work. | 30 | 10 |
| Social media/networking is not effective for the type of business I run. | 34 | 11 |

The ranking of the problems commonly encountered by the MSME owners in Tarlac are shown in Table 15. The top three in the list are: 1) Too much time required to maintain page/ads, 2) Risk of unwanted or inappropriate behavior in the social networking site, including bullying and harassment, and 3) It takes a lot of work to maintain my different accounts. Primarily, the most commonly encountered problems by the MSME Owners on the use of social media networks is the demand for time of maintaining the businesses' homepage for various updates on the advertisement and product availability.

In support of that, the third common problem states that it takes a lot of work to maintain the site, meaning, aside from time, they also find it much of a problem the idea of maintaining different accounts as high costing, time-wise and energy-wise. MSME owners generally express their common problem saying: *"We need to check our phones and desktops in order*

*to reply to our customers quickly (kailangan palaging i-check yung phone namin or desktop para maka-sagot kami agad sa inquiries)"*, another added: *"Customers do not usually reply when we do not reply immediately to their inquiries (kapag hindi kami nakasagot agad, hindi na commonly nagrereply yung iba),"* another interviewee expressed his opinion on the effort SNS takes saying: *"We need to exert more effort in replying, posting, or commenting but it is worth it once we convince the customers to buy the products (madaming kailangang reply-an, ipost, or i-comment back, pero worth it naman kasi madami sa kanila bumibili once na makita nila yun products)"*. Despite the fact that using the social media in marketing is free, recent studies reveal that it requires time and knowledgeable effort (Ople 2017). This goes to show that despite the benefits that being online grants the business owners, they still need to sacrifice their time, and in business, time is a valuable asset in itself, and some owners deem it necessary to sacrifice it in order for their earning to improve.

The second most common problem that the respondents encounter is the risk of having any negative encounter in the social networking site such as harassments, bullying and others that may include fraud and phishing. Respondents of the study claims that they have heard of stories that include cases of bullying and identify fraud, moreover, one respondent summed this up with his response: *"We have already experienced 'fake accounts' or 'joy reservers' who ask questions or order but would not visit the shop (naka-experience na kami nung mga fake accounts na nagtatanong, minsan mga 'fake buyers' or 'joy reservers' na magtatanong, magre-reserve pero hindi naman dadating sa shop) "* when asked of harassment, the owner said that they have observed nothing yet, but are generally wary of these situations because they have friends who have experienced harassment and bullying in social networking sites. This goes to show that the respondents feel a certain sense of liability of security in terms of the social networking sites that they use, but nevertheless engage in the social networking sites. These particular issues are revealed by a recent study as security breach examples that may destroy the reputation and the earnings of the business. Moreover, the study suggests different ways to combat these problems such as excluding and blocking harmful users in website, balancing freedom of speech and censorship in Facebook (Leitch & Warren, 2009).

## 4.5. Action Plan to Address the Challenges encountered by MSME owners in Using Social Networking Sites

The following action plan is conceptualized and written for the respondents of the study namely the owners of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in Tarlac. The objectives stemmed from the identified issues and challenges from the fourth part survey. Moreover, the strategies and activities include the steps in solving these particular issues as suggested by the different literature in the previous chapters from Chaubey, Husain, & Ghufran's 2016 study, Dua (2017), and Camara, Lim, Natanuan, & Pascual (2017).

**Table 18**

**Action Plan to Address the Challenges encountered by MSME owners in Using Social Networking Sites**

| PROBLEMS AND ISSUES | OBJECTIVES | PROGRAMS / ACTIVITIES | STRATEGIES | PERSONS RESPONSIBLE | MEASURE OF SUCCESS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Too much time required to maintain the page/ads. | 1. To increase time and work efficiency of the online page of the business | Routine Log-ins and Interval Checking of Notifications | a. To establish routine and interval logging in and checking of notifications on Facebook. In order to avoid inefficiency in logging in, the page manager can implement a time interval in checking or answering queries. The page manager can log in every two or three hours to check page. | Business owner or employees who manage the page | The achievement of this plan can be measured through the lesser, but productive use of time and effort of the page managers in managing their social networking accounts. |
| | 2. To schedule a definite time for answering queries and interacting with consumers | Time-Scheduling | b. If interval logging in cannot be done, then the page manager can schedule a definite time for responses for example, in the afternoon. He or she can post this detail on the page regarding his/her scheduled response time so interested consumers can ask their queries during that time. | | |
| | | | c. In order to save time and effort, the page manager should answer each query with | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 3. To provide complete and informative answers | | direct and complete details for the consumer's satisfaction. | | |
| It takes a lot of work to maintain my different accounts. | 1. To link all accounts for easier management | | a. To manage multiple pages, the page manager should install mobile applications for easier and convenient checking.<br><br>b. In order to save work, the page manager can integrate all the applications and link them with each other through a uniform email address, page name, and page contact number.<br><br>c. Providing links that can direct the consumers to the main social networking account should also be posted so as the potential buyers will not be confused with what site they will visit or message. | Business owner or page manager | The achievement of this plan can be measured through the lesser, but productive use of time and effort of the page managers in managing their social networking accounts. |
| Risk of inappropriate behaviour on social | 1. to secure online transactions with customers | Securing private information by keeping it | a. Maintain minimal and necessary information in the page by revealing only basic information such as name of the store, its location, the active contact number or | | |

| networking site, including bullying and harassment. | | private in online accounts | public number of the store. It is important that the page manager should not reveal any personal information that people can use to blackmail or harass the seller of the page.<br><br>b. Curate posts in order to maintain professionalism and to edit out any personal information about the owner of the store or any revealing personal information that the page manager unintentionally gave.<br><br>c. Keep track of dummy accounts and avoid transactions with unreliable-looking consumers through seeking out the accounts and quickly investigating on the veracity of account through pictures uploaded and online interactions.<br><br>d. Avoid bogus buyers and block rude users from the website page. | | |
| Not having a humanistic relationship | 1. To foster better connection | Personalized advertisement | The business owner or page manager can establish personalized interaction for each customer through getting the wants and | Business owners, page managers, and the | The success of this plan can be |

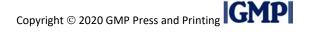| with your audience. | with the online customers<br><br><br>2. To increase measures to invite or entice the customers to visit the physical shop | and interaction through online | needs of the customers according to their questions.<br><br><br>If personalized advertisement does not work, the business owner should aim to make ads that invite the customers to visit their physical shop where they can interact personally. | consumers/users of SNS | assessed by the business owner or the page manager him/herself. This can be assessed once the page manager feels that he is at ease with online interactions and their customers in the physical shop gave positive feedback. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

## 5. CONCLUSION

Owners of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises in Tarlac City generally agreed that social network marketing has greatly helped the development of their business. Although challenges and problems such as privacy concerns, and time and resource management problems brought by the use of these various social networking sites, the MSME owners still acknowledge the benefits that the innovation has brought and is continuously working on improving their overall performance.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

**Appendix A**

**The Survey Questionnaire and**
**(Available from the author on request)**

**Appendix B**

**Letter of Request for DTI's List of MSME Owners Clothing and Apparel**
**(Available from the author on request)**

**Appendix C**

**Cronbach's Alpha and Reliability Statistics**
**Survey Questionnaire**

[DataSet4]

## Scale: ALL VARIABLES

**Case Processing Summary**

|       |           | N  | %     |
|-------|-----------|----|-------|
| Cases | Valid     | 30 | 100.0 |
|       | Excludedª | 0  | .0    |
|       | Total     | 30 | 100.0 |

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

**Reliability Statistics**

| Cronbach's Alpha | N of Items |
|------------------|------------|
| .837             | 15         |

**Item-Total Statistics**

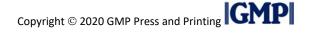|          | Scale Mean if Item Deleted | Scale Variance if Item Deleted | Corrected Item-Total Correlation | Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted |
|----------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| VAR00001 | 56.5000                    | 32.328                         | .164                             | .841                             |
| VAR00002 | 57.0000                    | 28.621                         | .581                             | .820                             |
| VAR00003 | 57.2333                    | 28.599                         | .592                             | .820                             |
| VAR00004 | 57.1000                    | 28.783                         | .565                             | .822                             |
| VAR00005 | 57.3000                    | 30.217                         | .370                             | .833                             |
| VAR00006 | 56.6667                    | 29.540                         | .576                             | .823                             |
| VAR00007 | 57.0000                    | 29.448                         | .426                             | .830                             |
| VAR00008 | 56.9333                    | 30.271                         | .364                             | .833                             |
| VAR00009 | 57.3333                    | 28.644                         | .578                             | .821                             |
| VAR00010 | 57.1667                    | 28.489                         | .482                             | .827                             |
| VAR00011 | 56.5333                    | 31.154                         | .321                             | .835                             |
| VAR00012 | 57.3000                    | 29.528                         | .428                             | .830                             |
| VAR00013 | 57.3333                    | 27.126                         | .692                             | .812                             |
| VAR00014 | 57.5667                    | 29.151                         | .446                             | .829                             |
| VAR00015 | 57.3667                    | 30.309                         | .306                             | .838                             |

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