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USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING AND MARKETING PERFORMANCE OF MICRO AND SMALL ENTERPRISES

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1 INTRODUCTION

Social Media Marketing (SMM) use has been investigated regarding advantages, barriers and various benefits. Thus, the works by Alsaleh et al. (2019) and Patma et al. (2020) showed that there had been a growing interest, by academics and practitioners, in companies in recent years, whether due to their ease, agility, usefulness or even low cost.

Chatterjee and Kar (2020) show that using SMM brings benefits through quick information, and reaching new customers and relationships. In addition, it contributes to promoting products and services and has the best engagement with customers (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020; Grover & Kar, 2020; Lepkowska-White, 2017). On the other hand, Tarsakoo and Charoensukmongkol (2019) suggest that barriers to using SMM are generally associated with time, money, and professional qualification.

In this sense, the most various companies' use of SMM as a marketing tool is increasingly evident. The literature suggests the advantages and the benefits and that despite the existing barriers, it is understood that using SMM brings positive results.

The work of Tafesse and Wien (2018) shows that marketing performance captures customer-based market outcomes that result in customer buying, and post-purchase behaviours facilitated by social media include products such as new customer acquisition, satisfaction customer satisfaction service, customer service, sales, and customer loyalty.

Wang and Kim (2017) point out that as entrepreneurs use SMM effectively, questions may increase whether SMM activities can improve the marketing performance of companies. In this regard, in the context of micro and small enterprises (MSEs), only some works still discuss the effectiveness of using the tool in terms of marketing performance associated with billing, sales and customers.

According to Alalwan et al. (2017), different variables can assess the impact of social media on a company's performance. Thus, the work of Tarsakoo and Charoensukmongkol (2019) shows that technical knowledge and level of use, especially in the context of MSEs, can affect marketing performance due to the use of SMM. Both can impact market performance based on the attitude of entrepreneurs regarding adopting and using the strategic tool (Sawy & Bögenhold, 2022).

Matikiti et al. (2018) and Yao et al. (2019), in turn, found that the market performance associated with using SMM is impacted due to technical aspects and individual and enterprise characteristics.

In this sense, they are factors that can be decisive for market performance because the lack of qualification of the entrepreneur himself and the collaborators affects the effectiveness of the use of the SMM in the companies (Alford & Page, 2015; Eid, R; Abdelmoety, Z; Agag, 2020).

Although the literature on SMM has focused on antecedents, there is still little evidence of the effectiveness of the results of its impact on the marketing performance of enterprises, especially micro and small ones. Given the above, the present work proposes to analyse the relationship between the attitude of entrepreneurs with market performance, with the serial mediation model of technical knowledge and the level of use.

2 BACKGROUND THEORY

2.1 Technology, Organization and Environment (TOE)

Different theories have emerged due to the need to extend research and understand and predict adoption factors to decide strategies. These include behavioural and intentional models (Eze *et al.*, 2021).

Thus, one of the most common models used to explain the adoption and implementation of Internet technologies is the Technology – Organization – Environment (TOE) theory (Gonçalves *et al.*, 2016; Matikiti *et al.*, 2018; Melo *et al.*, 2021). This is centred on studying adoption in companies, an environment where each individual plays a different role. It requires adaptation both in the organisation and in user-centred innovation, seeking individual characteristics related to the adoption (De Souza *et al*., 2017).

In this sense, De Souza et a*l.* (2017) e Matikiti *et al.* (2018) found that TOE is an organizational-level theory initially proposed by Tornatzky and Fleischer (1990) used to understand the role of three essential components of a company that can affect decisions to implement new technologies.

Thus, in the context of micro and small enterprises (MSEs), many applications of adoption models are focused on the perception, attitude or beliefs of the entrepreneur, being still at the user level. However, it is necessary to consider the organisational factors and the external environment together (De Souza *et al.* 2017; Eze *et al.* 2021).

From this, the TOE theory identifies three critical aspects of an organisation that influence the adoption and implementation process: technological, organisational and environmental context (Eze *et al.* 2021; Matikiti *et al.* 2018; Picoto *et al.* 2021).

The first, technological context, refers to useful internal and external technologies for the company. It can also denote the relevant skills needed to use that specific technology. The second, organisational context, includes company resources, linking structures between employees, company size and available resources. And lastly, environmental context denotes the external aspects that influence a company's decision to adopt new technologies, which include competitors, customers and government involvement (Matikiti *et al.*, 2018; Picoto *et al.*, 2021).

According to Eze et al. (2021), the TOE model provides a platform to evaluate the adoption of SMM, which helps to understand the impact it brings to the company's performance.

2.2 Social Media Marketing and Marketing Performance

SMM has gained attention in the business domain as it allows for an increase in enterprise value, profitability and competitive advantage (Patma *et al.*, 2020; Sawy & Bögenhold, 2022). And according to Tarsakoo and Charoensukmongkol (2019), using it effectively allows micro and small enterprises to achieve opportunities, even with a limited budget, aimed at customers and billing.

Furthermore, the literature in the area has shown the advantages and benefits of adopting this type of tool because of the relatively low costs and relatively high reach (Alalwan et al., 2017; Lepkowska-White, 2017; Yao et al., 2019).

The marketing performance from the use of Social Media Marketing by micro and small enterprises is a topic of growing interest by academics and practitioners, especially regarding the impacts it brings to companies that use social networks to promote products and services and interact with their customers (Alalwan *et al.,* 2017; Dahnil *et al.,* 2014; Turan & Kara, 2018).

According to Tafesse and Wien (2018), marketing performance captures customer-based market outcomes resulting from customer purchase and post-purchase behaviours facilitated by social media. It includes products such as new customer acquisition, satisfaction customer service, customer service, sales, and customer loyalty.

In the Brazilian context, the study by Dos Santos et al. (2020) analysed the impact of the relationship between the use of social media on the marketing performance of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises. The authors also investigated the role of dynamic capabilities in this relationship. However, this mediating variable did not influence the use of social media and dynamic capabilities.

These findings suggest that the relationship between SMM use, and marketing performance may be influenced by other variables capable of mitigating or even nullifying the effect, especially in the context of micro and small enterprises. This can be explained, in part, by the purpose that companies of this size use social media, such as using it only as a low-cost advertising tool to generate exposure, interest, information and online recommendation (Lepkowska-White, 2017).

In addition, there are some factors that the literature suggests are related to marketing performance due to the use of the SMM, as will be explored in the next section, signalling that these may be decisive for the success of marketing performance in companies (Lepkowska-White, 2017; Matikiti *et al.,* 2018).

In the context of this study, one can refer to the possibility that the use of SMM is related to the marketing performance of companies because it is associated with some factors, including attitude, technical knowledge and level of use (Matikiti *et al.*, 2018). Thus, if a company believes technology has desirable attributes that can improve its performance, it tends to develop a favourable attitude towards its use.

2.3 Attitude (AT)

The attitude variable is the degree to which an individual is favourably or unfavourably inclined toward an object (George *et al.*, 2021). Thus, it refers to the positive or negative individual evaluation of behaviour (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Matikiti et al. (2018) point out that if the entrepreneur has an open mind and vision, he will not hesitate to adopt and implement new Internet technologies.

The work by Alsaleh et al. (2019) shows that in the context of technology adoption, the attitude towards the use of a tool is related to the evaluative judgment of the adoption of this technology and the convenience of using it. In addition, according to Alford and Page (2015), micro and small entrepreneurs have a positive attitude towards adopting technology by associating it with an opportunity to engage customers at a deeper and more interactive level.

Furthermore, to better understand the adoption of SMM by micro and small enterprises, researchers need to initially investigate the attitude of entrepreneurs, which is crucial for responses concerning this technological tool. Therefore, it is understood that attitude is an essential factor that impacts the marketing performance of companies based on the intention to adopt and continue using Social Media Marketing. Thus, it is postulated in this study that:

H_1: The entrepreneur's attitude is positively related to marketing performance.

2.4 Technical Knowledge (CT) and Level of Use (NI)

Silva et al. (2020) show that most digital marketing channels have analytical tools to analyse marketing metrics. However, a combination of lack of time and knowledge on the part of entrepreneurs on how to use these tools and integrate information represents a barrier to their adoption (Alford & Jones, 2020; Silva *et al.,* 2020; Tarsakoo & Charoensukmongkol, 2019).

Thus, according to Dahnil et al. (2014), the consumer significantly influences the SMM adoption process among MSEs. This is because they demand that entrepreneurs acquire adequate knowledge to offer the best technologies in their company (Dahnil *et al.,* 2014).

Technical knowledge or technical know-how directly relates to using the Social Media Marketing (Patma *et al.*, 2020; Tarsakoo & Charoensukmongkol, 2019). Thus, it is understood that insufficient technical knowledge is one of the main inhibitors to adopting Social Media Marketing among micro and small entrepreneurs. Therefore, it is postulated in this study that:

H_2: The technical knowledge of entrepreneurs regarding Social Media Marketing mediates the direct relationship between attitude and marketing performance.

H_3: Entrepreneurs' use of Social Media Marketing mediates the direct relationship between attitude and marketing performance.

The construct, marketing performance (DM), involved five assertions and, on average, indicates that MSEs achieved positive results. Thus, understanding the DM is essential, as it helps entrepreneurs identify threats and opportunities, keep an eye on market changes, and visualise options for business innovation (Dos Santos *et al.*, 2020).

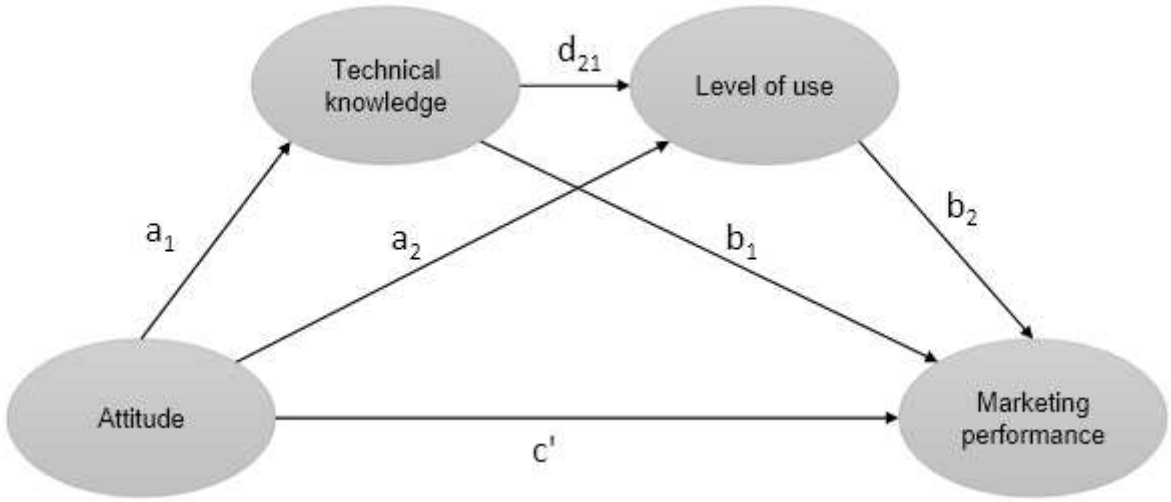
It is understood that some studies have identified attributes to measure the attitude of entrepreneurs, tending to link the attitude dimensions to other constructs or combine the attitude dimensions into an aggregate variable before attaching it to other constructs (George *et al.,* 2021; Matikiti *et al.,* 2018).

This study theorises that entrepreneurs' attitudes are related to marketing performance, first through technical knowledge and then through the level of use of Social Media Marketing. Integrating the two models with mediation through these constructions produces a three-way mediation model, as shown in Figure 6, which uses a reference model to analyse the phenomenon by proposing an adapted conceptual model.

Thus, it is postulated in this study that:

H_4: Technical knowledge and level of use play a mediating role in the direct relationship between attitude and marketing performance.

Figure 1 - Serial Multiple Mediator Model



Source: Adaptation of the model proposed by Hayes (2017).

The present study assumes that attitude, technical knowledge, and level of use contribute to the marketing performance of micro and small enterprises. The argument defended here is that the attitude of entrepreneurs is modelled as affecting market performance in three ways. Thus, a model of two mediators (Hayes, 2017) was used in series.

The first is that the technical knowledge of entrepreneurs regarding Social Media Marketing mediates the direct relationship between attitude and marketing performance. The second is that entrepreneurs' use of Social Media Marketing mediates the direct relationship between attitude and marketing performance. The third is that technical knowledge and level of use play a mediating role in the direct relationship between attitude and marketing performance.

These are all indirect effects between the attitude and market performance variables. And the direct effect is when the entrepreneur's attitude is positively related to marketing performance, that is, the remaining effect of the attitude is direct, that is, without mediation.

3 METHOD

3.1 Nature of research

The present research refers to cross-sectional descriptive quantitative research, in which the adopted method was the survey (Martins & Theóphilo, 2009). Data were collected through online questionnaires made available to a Sebrae database. Some criteria were established for the selection of respondents, namely: respondents aged 18 or over is a micro or small entrepreneurs; operate in the trade sector; make use of social media for communication, sales and/or marketing purposes.

3.2 Collection procedures

The research instrument was composed of demographic data: gender, age, and education level, as well as information on sectors, length of existence (in years), number of employees, and technical knowledge, for sample characterisation purposes.

The measurement scales of the constructs: Attitude (AT), Technical Knowledge (CT), Level of Use (NU) and Marketing Performance (DM) were composed of 17 items, which were adapted from scales already developed and validated by other researchers, see Table 11. The data collection instrument included 7-point Likert-type scales, ranging from (1) I totally disagree to (7) I totally agree.

Table 1 - The proposed construct measurement scale

Construct	Items	Author
Attitude (AT)	AT1: The use of Social Media Marketing is good AT2: Our company has a positive feeling towards Social Media Marketing AT3: The use of Social Media Marketing is worthwhile AT4: The idea of using Social Media Marketing is attractive	Davis (1989)
Technical knowledge (CT)	CT1: We have adequate experience for Social Media Marketing CT2: We have people qualified in Social Media Marketing CT3: We have people with knowledge of using Social Media Marketing CT4: There are experts readily available to carry out Social Media Marketing on our behalf	

Level of use (NU)	NU1: Our company has a broad Social Media Marketing policy NU2: Our company has specific Social Media Marketing guidelines NU3: Our company monitors the use of Social Media Marketing NU4: Our company measures the main performance indicators of Social Media Marketing	Zhu and Kraemer (2005)
Marketing performance (DM)	DM1: Customer satisfaction level DM2: Customer retention level DM3: Number of new customers DM4: Company billing DM5: Company sales volume	Jarvinen and Karjaluoto (2015); Peters *et al.* (2013)

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

At first, the scales used to measure the constructs were adapted to the research context, and the reverse translation was also carried out. In the second, the pre-test of the instrument was conducted to make the questionnaire more understandable from the respondent's point of view. In this pilot study, respondents consistent with the public of the main sample were obtained. Therefore, when considering the recommendations, changes were made to the final questionnaires.

As for the sample size, according to the practical norms of Hair et al. (2015), it is understood that the size proved to be adequate for carrying out the analyses. Thus, the research sample resulted in 338 valid responses with a total of four constructs measured by 17 items, thus being considered sufficient since it was above the minimum required amount.

Therefore, to reach this desired research audience, the non-probabilistic and accessibility sampling method was adopted, as suggested by Malhotra (2019); that is, it relied on the availability and interest of customers in participating in the research.

The online questionnaires were sent to the entrepreneurs' WhatsApp, with the help of Local Innovation Agents duly registered by Sebrae, who provided services to companies with this profile.

3.3 Analysis procedures

In the initial phase, the collected data were inspected to verify inconsistencies in responses, in addition to missing and extreme data. The second step was to verify the reliability and validity of the scales used in the study, using the following indicators: Conbrach's Alpha, Alpha Coefficient, Composite Reliability, Average Variance Extracted, Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity (Hair et al., 2015; Malhotra, 2019; Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Using bootstrapping, the conceptual model was evaluated through a cross-sectional survey and regression analysis. Therefore, to reach the research objective, that is, the verification of the hypotheses, the mediation technique based on the Hayes (2017) models were used, using a computational script called PROCESS V 4.1, developed by this researcher and freely available. As for statistical software, The R Project for Statistical Computing – R, Version 4.2.0 for Windows will be used.

4 RESULTS ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Sample characterisation

Data were collected from 338 respondents, most female (53.85%), with a complete higher education or postgraduate degree (58.28%). All respondents used some social network in their company. The main social networks cited were Instagram and WhatsApp (95.86%), with an average weekly use of 5.22 and a median of 4.81, representing that there is effective work on the part of respondents.

The average age among respondents is 38.06 years, the median is 37.51, the average number of years in the company is 10.81, and the median is 7. Most of the time, entrepreneurs are mature and experienced; however, this cannot be considered a criterion that directly affects the use of the tool.

Furthermore, the average number of employees in enterprises is an average of 6.39 and a median of 4.39, which means that most entrepreneurs have employees to help the company grow. These data are presented in Table 12.

Table 2 - Sample characterisation

Variables	Categories	Descriptive statistics	
		N	%
Gender	Female	182	53.85
	Male	140	41.42
	Rather not answer	16	4.73
Education	Incomplete fundamental	7	2.07
	Complete Elementary	1	030
	Incomplete high school	11	3.25
	Complete high school	72	21.30
	Incomplete higher education	50	14.79
	Graduated college	112	33.14
	Postgraduate	85	25.15
Age	Average	38.06	
	Median	37.51	
	Standard deviation	9.22	
Year MPE	Average	10.81	
	Median	7	
	Standard deviation	11.36	
Collaborators	Average	6.39	
	Median	4.39	
	Standard deviation	9.51	
Main Social Network	Facebook	6	1.78
	Google	1	0.30
	Instagram	228	67.46
	LinkedIn	1	0.30

	Pinterest	1	0.30
	TikTok	1	0.30
	WhatsApp	96	28.4
	YouTube	4	1.18
Frequency of Weekly Use	Average	5.22	
	Median	4.81	
	Standard deviation	5	

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

That said, the sample was suitable for the study. It is noted that most respondents only use Instagram and WhatsApp, showing that these two social networks do the adoption of Social Media Marketing more and that Facebook, Google, LinkedIn, Pinterest, TikTok, and YouTube are not social networks that are significant for entrepreneurs, representing 4.16% in its totality.

And although most entrepreneurs have a high level of education, they still need to gain adequate technical knowledge to use the tool. Only 5.62% of entrepreneurs have an incomplete high school, and 36.09% of entrepreneurs have completed high school and incomplete higher education, which can be categorized as intermediate schooling.

4.2 Validation of scales and measurement of constructs

After characterising the sample, the next step was to verify the dimensionality and reliability of the measurement scales of the constructs involved in the research, such as attitude (AT), technical knowledge (CT), level of use (NU) and marketing performance (DM). Therefore, considering the criterion of Fornell and Larcker (1981), in the analysis of convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted – AVE values must be greater than 0.50. Thus, given the information in Table 13, a satisfactory result was obtained for the analysed model.

As for the reliability and internal consistency of the model, according to Hair (2017), Cronbach's alpha values can vary from 0 to 1, and a value below 0.7 usually indicates marginal to low (unsatisfactory) internal consistency. All presented satisfactory values (all values are > 0.7), confirming the internal validity of the scale used. In addition, the composite reliability (CR) assesses whether the indicators of each construct represent them (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988) good indices between 0.7 and 0.9 are considered.

Thus, all indicators showed values that meet the established criteria, demonstrating the validity of the constructs.

Table 3 - Measurement model: Reliability and validity

Construct	alpha	CR	avevar
Level of use (NU)	0.94	0.94	0.81
Technical Knowledge (CT)	0.89	0.91	0.77
Marketing Performance (DM)	0.83	0.82	0.56
Attitude (AT)	0.85	0.85	0.60

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

Considering the criterion of Fornell & Larcker (1981), the discriminant validity was confirmed since the square roots referring to the AVE values of each of the constructs are greater than the correlations between the constructs, this guarantees the validity of the constructs, as can be seen in Table 14:

Table 4 - Discriminant validity, means and deviations of responses on the constructs

VARIABLE	NU	CT	DM	AT
Level of use (NU)	0.90			
Technical Knowledge (CT)	0.72	0.88		
Marketing Performance (DM)	0.38	0.37	0.77	
Attitude (AT)	0.31	0.17	0.22	0.75
Average	4.62	4.92	84.41	6.47
Standard deviation	1.66	1.46	20.67	0.74
Median	4.88	5.00	90.00	6.75

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

It is also verified that the marketing performance was used in another scale, which obtained an average of 84.41 and a standard deviation of 20.67. In addition, attitude (AT) received the highest mean (6.47) and standard deviation of 0.74, the technical knowledge construct (CT) with a mean (4.92) and standard deviation of 1.46. On the other hand, the lowest mean was the Level of use (NU) with 4.62 and the standard deviation of 1.66, the highest in the sample.

4.3 Verification of Research Hypotheses

After analysing the constructs, we used mediation analysis, which, according to Hayes (2017), consists of a technique to analyse how an independent variable influences a dependent variable through one or more mediating variables.

Table 5 - Regression coefficients and standard errors of multiple serial measurement

Dependent variables												
		Technical Knowledge (CT)				Level of use (NU)				Marketing Performance (DM)		
Independent		β	SE	p		β	SE	p		β	SE	p
Attitude (AT)	a_1	0.72	0.09	<0.001	a_2	0.27	0.09	0.003	c'	4.71	1.53	0.002
Technical Knowledge (CT)					d_{21}	0.73	0.04	<0.001	b_1	-0.44	1.00	0.656
Level of use (NU)									b_2	3.91	0.87	<0.001
		R^2= 0.14 F(1,336)= 53.91 p<0.001				R^2=0.49 F(2,335)=106.49 p<0.001				R^2=0.15 F(3,334)=19.52 p<0.001		

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

Based on the data, only the relationship between Technical Knowledge (CT) and Marketing Performance (DM) was not statistically significant (p=0.656, i.e., p>0.001).

Another result concerns the evaluation of Pearson's coefficients of determination (R^2), that the independent variables explain the percentage of variation of the dependent variable; thus, according to Cohen (1988), the R^2 is considered as a small effect when the value is 2%, as a medium effect when the value is equal to 13%, and as a large effect when the R^2 is equal to or greater than 26%.

It was observed that approximately 14% (R2= 0.138) of Technical Knowledge (CT) can be explained by Attitude (AT), being considered a medium effect, with an index a1=0.72 (p <

0.001). Furthermore, 49% (R2= 0.489) of the Level of use (NU) can be explained by Attitude (AT) and Technical Knowledge (CT) (0.72, $p < 0.001$), (a1 and d21), both of which were statistically significant and with a large effect. In addition, it was possible to verify another average effect, that almost 15% (R2= 0.149) in Marketing Performance (DM) variation can be explained by the constructs Attitude (AT) (4.71, $p<0.002$), statistically significant, Technical Knowledge (CT) (-0.44, $p=0.656$), not statistically significant, and Level of use (NU) (3.91, $p<0.001$), statistically significant.

As described in Table 16, the H_1 analysis verified the direct association of Attitude (AT) with Marketing Performance (DM) (c'), where $C= c' + a_1b_1 + a_2b_2 + a_1d_{21}b_2$. The regression analysis results show that the hypothetical relationship is positive and significant ($p<0.001$); therefore, H_1 is supported.

H_2 says that technical knowledge mediates the path between Attitude (AT) and Marketing Performance (DM), but this hypothesis was not supported ($p>0.656$); this shows that technical knowledge alone will not impact market performance. However, technical knowledge leads to more use and greater marketing performance, represented by hypotheses H_3 and H_4.

For H_3, the NU mediates the relationship between Attitude (AT) and Marketing Performance (DM), and the significance test implied estimating an indirect association of AT, strengthening the Level of use (NU). The test revealed that Attitude (AT) is associated with Level of use (NU) ($\beta = 0.27$, $p=0.003$) and that Level of use (NU) was associated with Marketing Performance (DM) ($\beta = 0.87$, $p<0.001$).

H_4 states that Technical Knowledge (CT) and Level of use (NU) mediate the relationship between Attitude (AT) and Marketing Performance (DM), i.e., the direct effect of Attitude (AT) on Marketing Performance (DM) mediated by Technical Knowledge (CT) and Level of use (NU) was significant ($\beta = 2.09$, $p < 0.001$), which results in the supported hypothesis.

Each of the three models considered the independent variables, in each part of the serial process, with the Attitude (AT) variable as the independent and antecedent of the three variables. To assess the hypotheses effectively, it was verified that the direct and indirect effects were presented briefly in Table 16.

Table 6 - Assumptions of the final model

Hypothesis	Description	Relation	β	LLCI	ULCI	Hypothesis
-	Full effect	C	7.54	4.68	10.42	-
H_1	Direct effect	c'	4.71	1.70	7.72	Supported
H_2	Indirect effect 1	$a_1 \rightarrow b_1$	-0,32	-1.88	1.24	Not supported
H_3	Indirect effect 2	$a_2 \rightarrow b_2$	1.06	0.28	2.23	Supported
H_4	Indirect effect 3	$a_1 \rightarrow d_{21} \rightarrow b_2$	2.09	1.05	3.50	Supported

Source: Own elaboration (2023).

On the direct effect, there is a positive and significant relationship between Attitude (AT) and Marketing Performance (DM); the same happened in the Attitude (AT) variable for the mediating variables. Regarding the mediating variables such as history of Marketing Performance (DM), Table 16 also showed that Level of use (NU) was statistically significant; however, with Technical Knowledge (CT), it was different, suggesting that there is no direct relationship between Technical Knowledge (CT) and Marketing Performance (DM), thus, alone, Technical Knowledge (CT) does not mediate the Attitude (AT) to Marketing Performance (DM) ratio (indirect effect 1), this suggests that Technical Knowledge (CT) will only exert an effect on Level of use (NU) and not directly on Marketing Performance (DM),

unlike Level of use (NU) (indirect effect 2) which becomes the most relevant variable in the model.

Observing the indirect effect 3 that proposes to verify the relationship between Attitude (AT) and Technical Knowledge (CT), which in turn influences the Level of use (NU) and impacts the Marketing Performance (DM), this hypothesis was supported. Thus, Attitude (AT) contributes positively to both mediating variables, but what is more decisive is Level of use (NU), Technical Knowledge (CT), has no direct relationship with Marketing Performance (DM) but indirectly through Level of use (NU).

4.4 Discussion

This work aimed to analyse the relationship between the attitude of entrepreneurs with market performance, with the serial mediation model of technical knowledge and the level of use. From the collection and analysis of data from micro and small entrepreneurs, it was understood that the entrepreneur's attitude is positively related to marketing performance, as well as evidence that the level of use of Social Media Marketing by entrepreneurs mediates the direct relationship between attitude and marketing performance, as well as showing that technical knowledge and level of use play a mediating role in the direct relationship between attitude and marketing performance.

Technical knowledge alone is not a determining factor; it influences the level of use but does not affect market performance. Therefore, the factors that most affect market performance are attitude and level of use. This suggests that although micro and small enterprises need help with infrastructure and personnel, among others, it is evident that to have an effective result in marketing performance using SMM, the technical knowledge must be aligned with the level of use. Therefore, more is needed to have the technical knowledge and not use the tool, which is how to adapt and extract the best results.

5 CONCLUSIONS

The results hold implications for scholars and practitioners. This means that, empirically, the relevance of the work is that taking courses, workshops, and acquiring technologies, among others, is not enough, as it is necessary to put the acquired knowledge into practice; that is, effectively using the tool will generate an impact on performance marketing, in other words, will achieve more expressive results in marketing performance.

It was observed that technical knowledge does not mediate the effect of attitude on market performance, unlike the level of use. In this way, it is understood that technical knowledge is relevant; however, it alone will not generate market performance; it is necessary to link this to the level of use, that is, the frequency of use effectively. And in the context of micro and small enterprises, it can be an even bigger problem because, in general, entrepreneurs are alone; they need a defined team, and often these demands are not prioritised by them, doing so sporadically without constancy.

It is essential to mention that the study has some limitations. The main limitation is related to sample selection. It is necessary to consider that this study focused exclusively on perceptions of micro and small business entrepreneurs who operate in Paraíba, made available by the Sebrae database.

Thus, the motivation for researchers to seek to expand data collection with entrepreneurs from other regions and other sectors is understandable, as well as to include the perception of other company employees, such as managers, with the possibility of using data secondary, on the social media of the researched companies. In addition, it is possible to compare and verify the differences and similarities depending on the region and sector.

And as suggestions for future research, it is observed that micro and small entrepreneurs should better plan actions aimed at this area because if Social Media Marketing is used correctly, it can have a positive impact on marketing performance, just as it is possible to analyse the feasibility of outsourcing the demands of this area. Furthermore, other factors can positively sustain market performance; therefore, more studies are needed to unravel and incorporate more elements through different research methods and use mediating and moderating variables to enrich the analysis.

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