

Report on Doctoral Thesis

Doctoral student:	John Amoah
Title of Doctoral Thesis:	Enablers and Inhibitors of Social Media Usage Towards SMEs' Growth: Evidence from Service-Based SMEs in Ghana
Reviewer:	prof. Ing. Aleksandr Ključnikov, Ph.D.
Place of Doctoral Examination:	Faculty of Management and Economics, Tomas Bata University in Zlín, the Check Republic

Evaluation of the actuality of the topic of the Doctoral Thesis

The doctoral thesis summary deals with the current and attractive problem of the enablers/benefits (Customer Attraction, Communication Channel, Business Motivation, Market Expansion) and inhibitors/constraints (Managerial skills/marketing expertise, Marketing risk, Technological Changes) of social media usage as a marketing communication tool of SMEs in the case of Ghana.

Social media, currently dominating communication and marketing channel, prevail in most SMEs' marketing mix. The advertisement costs in this media channel are continuously growing, and the companies seek ways of their optimal application to ensure their sustainable growth. The research of the enables and inhibitors may bring interesting practical results for SMEs, help them optimize their costs, and make their marketing campaigns more effective. Focus on the developing region of Ghana is well justified, and the results may attract the special attention of local entrepreneurs and policymakers to help develop the economy in this region. The selected research perspective represents a unique approach that can be considered current.

Evaluation of the fulfillment of the objectives set out in the dissertation thesis.

The main goal of the Dissertation Thesis is to assess both enablers and inhibitors of social media usage as a marketing communication tool for SMEs' growth in Ghana and to examine the usefulness of integrating this new technological phenomenon (social media) as a marketing communication tool coupled with its challenges to SME growth in a developing country context (chapter 1.1).

The formulation of the research problem and the main research question limits the scope of the research to the identification of the main social media channels (RQ1) used as a marketing communication tool by SMEs in Ghana, researching the impact of social media usage (RQ2), identification of the inhibiting (RQ3) and enabling (RQ4) factors of social media usage, and finally researching if social media usage significantly mediate the relationships between the stated "enablers and inhibitors" and SMEs' growth (RQ5). Research questions are

accompanied by five partial research objectives (chapter 1.4) and further developed 18 research hypotheses (chapters 2.5 and 2.6) within a conceptual framework (chapter 2.4).

The results of the research are gradually presented in chapters 4 and 5. The author presents the results, evaluates all defined hypotheses in chapter 4, and provides a very well-structured discussion combined with an explanatory description of the results and the answers to the research questions in chapter 5.

The presentation of the results is appropriate. The only minor mistake worth mentioning is the absence of the presentation of the values of regression coefficients (Beta (β), the T-values, and P-values) in Table 7.0, while their presence was declared in the text on page 69. Table 7.0 included only a textual evaluation of the results of the hypotheses testing.

Despite this slight shortage, I would like to appreciate the presentation of the results, which is detailed, very well structured, and very readable.

I consider the objectives of the Dissertation Thesis to be fulfilled.

Evaluation of the procedure of research objectives solvation, results of Doctoral Thesis and the contribution of the student

The doctoral Thesis has a classic structure of a research paper. Therefore, the general design of the Doctoral Thesis is appropriate and includes all necessary parts.

In the introductory part, the author describes the research background and defines the research problem, questions, objectives, study delimitations, and the Thesis's structure. The formulation of the RQ and RO is clear and logical.

The literature review, presented in chapter 2, is well structured and offers an extensive theoretical background based on 158 up-to-date literature sources. In addition, the formulation of 18 research hypotheses, directly linked to the literature and research questions, is shown in the same chapter.

Although this part was significantly improved in comparison with the dissertation project, the formulation of the hypothesis still has some minor shortcomings related to the textual formulation of some hypotheses, for example:

- H3: Communication channels will positively affect SME growth.
- H5: Business motivation will positively affect SME growth.
- H9: Business strategy will positively affect SME growth.

And some of them seem to be quite obvious:

- H7: Market expansion will positively affect SME growth.
- H15: Financial constraints will negatively affect SME growth.

The definition of the hypotheses becomes more apparent only after reading chapter 3, especially part 3.2.1, where the author defines the constructs. However, this minor shortcoming does not lower the general impression of the Thesis.

The methodology is described in chapter 3. The author carefully explains the methodology of the entire doctoral study, including the research design, research constructs, population, sampling, data collection, analytic techniques, the demographic profile of respondents, variables, and their measurements. The statistical methods of hypothesis testing and evaluation are robust and appropriate, and their description is again very detailed and readable. The research combines quantitative and qualitative research methods. The research sample is representative.

Chapters 4 and 5 present the empirical results of the research, their discussion, and answers to the research questions. Chapter 6 describes the expected contribution of the Thesis, and finally, chapter 7 reveals the Thesis's conclusion, recommendations, and limitations, followed by a description of the directions for further research.

I can conclude that the procedure of research objectives solvation is adequate, all the research questions were solved, and hypotheses were evaluated. Furthermore, the students showed a capability to conduct independent research and fulfilled all objectives.

Evaluation of the contribution to the development of the field of study and the practice

The Thesis's contribution can be identified in developing a technically validated conceptual model or framework related to social media usage as a marketing communication tool for SME growth in the case of an emerging low-digitized economy (Ghana). In addition, the theoretical contribution lies in creating a new construct to the entire body of knowledge of existing studies on social media usage.

From a practical point of view, the finding may help SMEs make informed decision-making on the most appropriate channel for advertising and marketing communication tools.

Evaluation of formal and language issues of the Doctoral Thesis

The Doctoral Thesis fulfills all formal requirements for this type of scientific work. The language is at the appropriate level.

Evaluation of the publications of the doctoral candidate

The doctoral candidate presented a list of 13 articles published in peer-reviewed international scientific journals listed in the Web of Science (ESCI) and/or Scopus and/or the Erih+ database and fourteen conference papers. In addition, another 14 papers are under review. Most of the presented publications are related to the field of research. Therefore, the number and the quality of publications fulfill the conditions for proceeding to the defense.

Questions for the student for further discussion

1. The response rate in the data collection in your research is unusually high (1178/1348, 87,39%). Can you please describe how you have reached this outstanding response rate?
2. What is the most important finding of your research?

3. In the presentation of the research contribution, you state that it can contribute to the discourse on the national policies on social media usage and SMEs. Can you think of a specific example of national policy concerning the research issues?

Definite statement of the reviewer of the fulfillment of the Doctoral Thesis evaluation

Based on a comprehensive assessment of the topic, the degree of achievement of goals, results, and benefits of work for the practice and the development of the scientific field, I recommend the Dissertation thesis for the defense. In case of a successful defense, I propose to grant the doctoral candidate the academic title of "Doctor" (abbreviated as "Ph.D.").

In Ostrava, 12.01.2023

prof. Ing. Aleksandr Ključnikov, Ph.D.