“Antecedents of Facebook advertising usage amongst South African SMME owners/managers”

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ANTECEDENTS OF FACEBOOK ADVERTISING USAGE AMONGST SOUTH AFRICAN SMME OWNERS/MANAGERS

Abstract

The growing prevalence of social media marketing, particularly Facebook advertising, offers SMMEs a cost-effective, flexible, and far-reaching promotional tool. Despite its potential, South African SMMEs have been slow to adopt Facebook advertising. This study seeks to investigate the antecedents of Facebook advertising usage amongst South African SMME owners/managers. The study employed a quantitative approach to collect data from a convenience sample of 400 SMME owners/managers from various sectors in 2024 across South Africa. Convenience sampling was selected due to time and cost constraints. Participants either completed a hand-delivered or online questionnaire, and the data were analyzed using structural equation modelling. The structural model reveals that perceived ease of use ($\beta = 0.22$, $p < .001$) and external pressure ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < .001$) influence behavioral intention to use Facebook advertising, and that perceived usefulness ($\beta = 0.38$, $p < .001$) and perceived compatibility ($\beta = 0.57$, $p < .001$) influence perceived value. Perceived value ($\beta = 0.57$, $p < .001$) together with perceived relative advantage ($\beta = 0.43$, $p < .001$) influence attitudes toward Facebook advertising. Attitude ($\beta = 0.54$, $p < .001$), in turn, predicts behavioral intention to use Facebook advertising. The model satisfied all specified model fit criteria (SRMR = 0.038, CFI = 0.911, GFI = 0.929), suggesting acceptable fit and accurate representation of the data.

Keywords technology acceptance, SMMEs, South Africa, social media marketing, structural equation modelling

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INTRODUCTION

The intersection between SMMEs and social media marketing has attracted increasing attention from both scholars and practitioners (Urban & Maphathe, 2021; Hamouda, 2018; Matikiti et al., 2018). Despite this, there remains a critical gap in understanding the antecedents of Facebook advertising usage amongst SMME owners and managers in emerging markets such as South Africa. Most existing studies have concentrated on social media marketing adoption in developed economies (AlShawabkeh et al., 2021; Gascoyne et al., 2021; Mason et al., 2021; Morimoto, 2021; Wang & McCarthy, 2021), while only a handful have examined developing contexts such as Kuwait (Alzougool, 2019), India (Chatterjee & Kar, 2020), Tunisia (Hamouda, 2018), and the United Arab Emirates (Jose, 2018). As a result, South Africa remains significantly under-researched, despite its unique market dynamics.

This research gap is concerning because Facebook advertising offers SMMEs affordable, accessible marketing opportunities that can help them overcome resource constraints and enhance competitiveness (Cant & Wiid, 2020). It supports customer engagement, real-time

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feedback, and relationship building (Hamouda, 2018), as well as data-driven decision-making and innovation (Crammond et al., 2018). However, studies indicate that the adoption of Facebook advertising by SMMEs remains slow (Eid et al., 2020; Matikiti et al., 2018), particularly in emerging markets such as South Africa, when compared to developed economies (Hanaysha, 2018). This lag in adoption poses risks to the sustainability and growth of South African SMMEs, which play a vital role in job creation and economic development (Strydom, 2017).

Therefore, the problem this study addresses is the limited understanding of the antecedents of Facebook advertising usage among South African SMMEs, despite its potential to support their survival, growth, and contribution to the national economy.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

Small, medium, and micro enterprises (SMMEs) are key contributors to economic development and job creation across both low- and high-income countries (Khoase et al., 2020), contributing significantly to an economy's gross domestic product (GDP) (Nieuwenhuizen, 2019). In South Africa, a prominent emerging economy, around 91% of all businesses are classified as SMMEs, responsible for nearly 60% of total employment (Cant & Wiid, 2020) and contribute between 35% and 45% to the national GDP (Khoase et al., 2020). Despite their importance, many SMMEs face high failure rates due to limited access to funding (Abbasi et al., 2021), burdensome government regulations (Nieuwenhuizen, 2019), and a lack of marketing expertise (Strydom, 2017).

Marketing, especially through digital platforms, has become important to SMME growth (Cant & Wiid, 2020). Social media marketing offers an affordable and effective solution, allowing businesses to reach wider audiences and engage customers in real time (Dahl, 2021). Facebook, the largest social media platform with 3.07 billion monthly active users (Kumar, 2025), is particularly appealing due to its advanced targeting capabilities (Baglione & Tucci, 2019), cost-effectiveness (Hamouda, 2018), and potential to enhance brand visibility (Cant & Wiid, 2020). As such, investigating the factors that influence SMME owners' and managers' behavioral intention to adopt Facebook advertising is important.

This study leverages two well-established theoretical frameworks, namely the technology acceptance model (TAM) and the innovation diffusion theory (IDT). The TAM, developed by Davis (1989), offers insights into individuals' acceptance of new technologies, whereas the IDT explains how innovations spread within societies (Yuen et al., 2019). Taken together, this study investigates the factors of perceived usefulness, ease of use, attitude, external pressure, perceived value, relative advantage, and compatibility as antecedents of behavioral usage intention of Facebook advertising.

Comprehending users' attitude and usage intention is key to the successful adoption of technology-based services (ElSayad, 2024) and is a significant factor in predicting future actions and actual usage. Attitude refers to an individual's positive or negative evaluation of performing a specific behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980), and it significantly influences their intention to engage in that behavior (Kim & Cichy, 2017). Studies show that a positive attitude significantly influences behavioral intention to use online advertising platforms, particularly Facebook, due to its interactive features (Sarfraz & Bano, 2023; Lee et al., 2017; Wiese et al., 2020). Kim and Cichy (2017) and Wang and Genc (2019) further confirm that favorable attitudes correlate with higher intentions to engage with social media advertising. Based on the TAM, Lin and Kim (2016) also found that attitude strongly predicts intention to use Facebook advertising. Accordingly, this study posits that South African SMME owners/managers' attitude towards Facebook advertising directly and positively influences their behavioral intention to use it.

The TAM suggests that perceived usefulness and ease of use are significant predictors of technology adoption. According to TAM, when users believe that technology enhances their performance and find it easy to use, they are more likely to adopt and use the technology (Gavino et al., 2019).

Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which an individual believes that using a specific system will improve their productivity (Davis, 1989) and help achieve desired outcomes (Nath et al., 2016), while perceived ease of use refers to how much an individual believes that using a specific system will require minimal effort (Davis, 1989).

Studies show that perceived ease of use positively influences behavioral intention to adopt technologies (Pai & Huang, 2011; Barua & Urme, 2025) like Facebook advertising, whereas perceived usefulness was found to be an important predictor of perceived value (Guerra, 2015). Similarly, Sae-tae and Wang (2024) posit that consumers' perceived value of an innovation is influenced by their perceived usefulness of the innovation. Based on these findings, this study hypothesizes that perceived ease of use of Facebook advertising positively affects SMME owners/managers' behavioral intention to use it, and perceived usefulness positively influences their perceived value of Facebook advertising.

External pressure, as an extension of the TAM, shapes perceptions of social media's usefulness, influencing adoption decisions (Kwon et al., 2021). Empirical evidence confirms that competitive pressure significantly drives innovation and e-commerce adoption (Sin et al., 2016).

In addition, advertising value, a further extension of the TAM, reflects how beneficial advertisements are. For SMMEs, Facebook advertising provides cost-effective ways to reach customers, while consumers benefit from relevant and informative advertisements (Aiolfi et al., 2021). Research confirms that perceived value significantly influences user attitudes toward technology (Hsu & Lin, 2016).

To further enhance the explanatory power of the model, this study also integrates key constructs from the IDT, namely relative advantage and perceived compatibility. Relative advantage refers to the perceived benefits of an innovation compared to existing methods (Shin et al., 2021). According to the diffusion of innovation theory, SMMEs are more likely to adopt Facebook advertising if they see it as more beneficial than traditional marketing. Rogers (2003), Häggman (2009), and Lin (2011) consistently demonstrate that relative advantage is the most significant factor shaping attitudes toward and intention to adopt online services and other innovations.

Compatibility, which explains how well Facebook advertising aligns with existing business values, needs, and practices, plays a crucial role in its adoption. When a platform integrates smoothly with current systems, businesses are more likely to adopt it, leading to improved financial and operational performance (Anin et al., 2015; Shaltoni, 2017). Compatibility also enhances the perceived value by meeting user expectations and facilitating easy use (Cheng, 2017).

By integrating TAM and IDT, this study offers a more comprehensive and context-sensitive framework for understanding the behavioral intention of SMMEs in adopting Facebook advertising. Ultimately, this understanding will support more effective marketing practices, stronger customer engagement, and enhanced business performance, which are critical outcomes for the sustainability and growth of SMMEs in South Africa. Accordingly, the purpose of this study is to investigate the antecedents of Facebook advertising usage amongst South African SMME owners/managers.

2. METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research approach. The research design was descriptive, single cross-sectional, and causal in nature. The target population consisted of a convenience sample of 400 South African SMME owners/managers from various sectors (the study did not classify them by economic sector, because this was not part of the research questionnaire) who actively use a business Facebook account for advertising purposes. These SMMEs include micro enterprises that employ 0 to 10 employees, medium enterprises that employ between 11 and 50 employees, and medium enterprises that employ between 51 and 250 employees (Department of Small Business Development, 2019). Convenience sampling was specifically selected due to time and cost constraints and the exploratory nature of the study.

Primary data were gathered in 2024 using a self-administered questionnaire (hand-delivered or online) that included a cover letter and nine sections.

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The cover letter outlined the study's purpose, how the data would be used, and provided our contact details. Section A collected demographic, business, and Facebook usage information. Sections B to I measured different factors using three items each, adapted from previous studies: perceived usefulness (Kwon et al., 2021; Alsaleh et al., 2019), perceived ease of use (Rauniar et al., 2014), relative advantage (Lin, 2011), compatibility (Rauniar et al., 2014; Jia et al., 2022), attitude (Alsaleh et al., 2019), behavioral intention (Kwon et al., 2021; Lin, 2011), external pressure (Ifinedo, 2011), and perceived value (Yuen et al., 2019; Jia et al., 2021). The scale items are summarized in Appendix A. All items were rated on a six-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree).

We distributed the questionnaires to SMME owners and managers, Monday through Friday, via email and/or WhatsApp, with a link to the questionnaire provided, as well as through telephone calls and, in some cases, in-person visits. We used publicly available information to contact SMMEs and always sought permission before administering the survey. Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout to ensure the data collection process was conducted appropriately.

Prior to undertaking the survey, ethical clearance (NWU-00690-22-A4) from NWU's Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Economic and Management Science (EMS-REC) was requested and obtained. Before partaking, participants were asked to give consent to participate. The informed consent statement was the following: 'I have read the above description of this research study. I have been informed that it is a low-risk study, and I am aware of the purpose of the study. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study, and by continuing and completing this questionnaire, I consent to the information being used in aggregate form.' We ensured that participation in the study was strictly done on a voluntary basis. The participant's right of anonymity was rigorously maintained throughout the study, and information obtained was treated as confidential. Participants were informed that it was within their right to withdraw from the study should they feel the need to stop for foreseen or unforeseen reasons.

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) and Analysis of Moment Structures (AMOS), Version 28 for Windows, were used to analyze the collected data. The statistical methods that were used on the data sets included frequency, descriptive, reliability and validity, correlation and multicollinearity analysis, as well as structural equation modelling, including path analysis.

3. RESULTS

A total of 520 questionnaires were distributed to obtain the study's specified sample size of 400 completed and valid questionnaires. Table 1 presents a summary of the demographic characteristics, business background, and Facebook advertising usage of the sample.

According to Table 1, the sample is fairly balanced in gender (53% female, 47% male) and diverse in language, with English (27.25%) and Afrikaans (21%) being the most spoken. Participants primarily operate in Gauteng (28.75%) and Limpopo (18.75%), and the racial distribution is evenly split between Black (36%) and Asian (36%) participants. The majority fall within the 25-29 (30%) and 30–40 (29%) age groups. Most businesses are micro, with 76% employing 0–10 people and 62.25% having been in operation for less than five years. In terms of Facebook use, 35% spend less than 2 hours per day on the platform, while 42.5% use Facebook advertising weekly. Most spend minimally on advertising, with 60.5% spending between R0-R50 monthly.

Following the frequency analysis of the sample, reliability and descriptive analysis were undertaken. To assess the internal-consistency reliability of each factor, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated. For excellent reliability, the alpha coefficient should be greater than 0.80 (Hair et al., 2018). For the descriptive analysis, each factor's mean, standard deviation, skewness, and kurtosis value were calculated. In addition, a one-sample *t*-test was conducted to assess the statistical significance of the calculated means, while Cohen's *d* was used to evaluate the practical significance of these means. Table 2 reports the results.

The evidence in Table 2 shows that each factor's Cronbach's alpha exceeded 0.80, suggesting excel-

Table 1. Demographics

Language	Business location	Race
Sesotho: 7.5%	Gauteng: 28.75%	Black: 36%
isiZulu: 6.75%	Limpopo: 18.75%	White: 14%
Sepedi: 4%	Free State: 10%	Colored: 14%
Setswana: 5%	Mpumalanga: 4.25%	Asian: 36%
Afrikaans: 21%	North West: 3.75%	**Age**
Tshivenda: 3.75%	KwaZulu-Natal: 10%	18-24: 13%
isiXhosa: 4.75%	Cape (Western): 11%	25-29: 30%
English: 27.25%	Cape (Eastern): 7.75%	30-40: 29%
IsiNdebele: 0.25%	Cape (Northern): 6%	41-50: 11%
Other: 19.75%	**Number of employees**	51-65: 12%
Gender	0–10 employees: 76%	66-80: 5%
Female: 53%	11–50 employees: 22%	**Business in operation**
Male: 47%	51–250 employees: 2%	0–5 years: 62.25%
Time spent on Facebook	**Facebook advertising usage**	> 5 years: 38.75%
< 2 hours: 35%	Once a week: 42.5%	**Monthly spending on Facebook**
3–6 hours: 31.75%	Once a month: 23.75%	0–R50: 60.5%
7–10 hours: 22.75%	> Once a month: 33.75%	R51–R150: 18.75%
> 10 hours: 10.5%	–	R151–R250: 12.75%
–	–	> R250: 8%

Table 2. Reliability analysis and descriptive statistics

Factor	α	$\bar{X}$	σ	Skewness	Kurtosis	t-statistic	p-value	Cohen's d
PU	0.881	4.54	1.08	–1.65	3.19	84.2	<.001*	1.079
PEOU	0.845	4.50	0.97	–1.72	3.26	92.6	<.001*	0.973
PRA	0.910	4.70	1.06	–1.71	2.86	88.5	<.001*	1.063
PCO	0.904	4.45	1.01	–1.57	2.60	88.0	<.001*	1.012
ATT	0.915	4.71	1.05	–1.70	3.00	89.4	<.001*	1.055
BI	0.944	4.66	1.14	–1.56	2.32	81.8	<.001*	1.139
EP	0.895	4.42	1.09	–1.45	1.96	81.2	<.001*	1.090
PV	0.924	4.61	1.05	–1.90	3.82	87.5	<.001*	1.055

Note: * Statistically significant at $p < 0.001$; PU = Perceived usefulness; PEOU = Perceived ease of use; PRA = Perceived relative advantage; PCO = Perceived compatibility; ATT = Attitude; BI = Behavioral intention; EP = External pressure; PV = Perceived value.

lent internal-consistency reliability. The use of a six-point Likert-type scale in this study, along with all factors recording mean values above 4.4, indicates that SMME owners and managers generally hold positive perceptions of the measured items. Specifically, participants find Facebook advertising useful ($\bar{X}$ = 4.54) and agree that it is easy to use ($\bar{X}$ = 4.50). They also perceive Facebook advertising as more advantageous ($\bar{X}$ = 4.70), compatible with their business needs ($\bar{X}$ = 4.45), and report a favorable attitude toward Facebook advertising ($\bar{X}$ = 4.71). Additionally, they express a likelihood of adopting Facebook advertising ($\bar{X}$ = 4.66), feel influenced by external pressure to adopt it ($\bar{X}$ = 4.42), and believe it adds value to their business ($\bar{X}$ = 4.61).

While all calculated standard deviations were relatively high, the greatest standard deviation (σ = 1.14) was observed for behavioral intention, indicating a relatively narrow dispersion of responses for this factor. Conversely, the smallest standard deviation (σ = 0.97) was found for perceived ease of use.

To verify if the assumptions of normality were violated, the skewness and kurtosis values were calculated. Table 2 indicates that the skewness values ranged from –1.45 to –1.90, suggesting that all factors have negative skewness, indicating that most responses are above the mean and generally favorable. In addition, the kurtosis values indicate that the data set is relatively more peaked than normal, as most of the variables differed from zero.

Finally, the one-sample *t*-test results show that all the calculated means were statistically significant

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Table 3. Correlation analysis

Factor	PU	PEOU	PRA	PCO	ATT	BI	EP	PV
PU	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
PEOU	0.482*	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
PRA	0.549*	0.569*	1	–	–	–	–	–
PCO	0.528*	0.684*	0.616*	1	–	–	–	–
ATT	0.486*	0.553*	0.696*	0.628*	1	–	–	–
BI	0.374*	0.527*	0.667*	0.651*	0.801*	1	–	–
EP	0.471*	0.332*	0.464*	0.572*	0.518*	0.563*	1	–
PV	0.398*	0.509*	0.564*	0.623*	0.681*	0.638*	0.613*	1

Note: * Statistically significant at $p < 0.001$; PU = Perceived usefulness; PEOU = Perceived ease of use; PRA = Perceived relative advantage; PCO = Perceived compatibility; ATT = Attitude; BI = Behavioral intention; EP = External pressure; PV = Perceived value.

($p < 0.001$). To assess the practical significance of these significant means, Cohen's *d* was calculated for each factor. The results in Table 2 show that all the factors had a significantly large practical effect (Cohen, 1992).

Spearman's rho correlation coefficients (ρ) were then calculated to examine whether the relationships between the factors were statistically significant. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 3.

As shown in Table 3, a significant positive correlation was found between each pair of factors at a significance level of $p = 0.001$. This finding supports nomological validity, meaning the relationships between the factors align with theoretical expectations (Malhotra, 2020), further reinforcing the robustness of the study's measurements and the coherence of the factors in the context of this study. Furthermore, only positive correlations were observed across all pairs of inter-factor relationships, indicating a direct and consistent association between the factors.

All correlation coefficients were below 0.90, indicating no serious multicollinearity among the factors (Pallant, 2020). To identify any subtler multicollinearity issues, further collinearity diagnostics were conducted by calculating the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance values. The multicollinearity results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 indicates that the tolerance levels are all above 0.10, ranging from 0.114 to 0.308. Additionally, the average variance inflation factor (VIF) is 5.88, which is significantly below the threshold of 10. These results strongly suggest that there are no significant multicollinearity issues among the factors (Hair et al., 2019).

Next, the study proceeded with structural equation modelling and path analysis. The initial step involves assessing the measurement model in terms of reliability, validity, and model fit. The standardized coefficients of the measurement model are reported in Table 5.

The model was reviewed for any problematic estimates, such as negative error variances or standardized factor loadings exceeding 1.0 or falling below 0. As shown in Table 5, no issues were found, and all item loadings on the eight factors yielded values above 0.50, inferring convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). The R^2 values, which represent

Table 4. Collinearity statistics

Factor	Collinearity diagnostics	
	Tolerance	VIF
Perceived usefulness	0.308	3.25
Perceived ease of use	0.222	4.50
Perceived relative advantage	0.162	6.16
Perceived compatibility	0.155	6.44
Attitude	0.114	8.79
Behavioral intention	0.128	7.81
External pressure	0.246	4.06
Perceived value	0.166	6.03

Table 5. Standardized coefficients of the measurement model

Latent factor	Factor loading	R^2	CR	AVE	MaxR(H)
Perceived usefulness	0.804	0.647	0.881	0.712	0.900
	0.918	0.843			
	0.804	0.646			
Perceived ease of use	0.767	0.588	0.847	0.649	0.850
	0.830	0.689			
	0.819	0.670			
Perceived relative advantage	0.903	0.816	0.911	0.773	0.915
	0.892	0.795			
	0.842	0.709			
Perceived compatibility	0.866	0749	0.904	0.759	0.905
	0.864	0.747			
	0.884	0.782			
Attitude	0.864	0.747	0.915	0.783	0.918
	0.910	0.828			
	0.880	0.774			
Behavioral intention	0.925	0.856	0.944	0.850	0.945
	0.914	0.835			
	0.927	0.859			
External pressure	0.885	0.784	0.894	0.737	0.898
	0.874	0.764			
	0.814	0.663			
Perceived value	0.862	0.743	0.926	0.806	0.930
	0.910	0.829			
	0.921	0.848			

the proportion of variance explained by each factor, are also high, ranging from 0.588 to 0.859. In addition, all factors in the measurement model have CR values exceeding the 0.70 threshold, confirming their reliability (Malhotra, 2020). Each of the AVE values also exceeded 0.50, indicating convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019). Lastly, all the factors report a MaxR[H] above the 0.70 threshold and exceed each factor's CR value. These statistics are indicative of acceptable reliability and contribute to construct and discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

To further assess the discriminant validity of the measurement model, the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations was computed. The results are outlined in Table 6.

The results in Table 6 indicate that all the HTMT correlations are smaller than 0.90, thereby suggesting further evidence of discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

Following the establishment of measurement model reliability and validity, the fit to the mod-

Table 6. HTMT correlations

Factor	PU	PEOU	PRA	PCO	ATT	BI	EP	PV
PU	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
PEOU	0.663	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
PRA	0.746	0.839	1	–	–	–	–	–
PCO	0.743	0.847	0.842	1	–	–	–	–
ATT	0.775	0.776	0.849	0.842	1	–	–	–
BI	0.699	0.773	0.859	0.851	0.899	1	–	–
EP	0.714	0.663	0.758	0.794	0.769	0.807	1	–
PV	0.786	0.703	0.775	0.803	0.879	0.830	0.816	1

Note: PU = Perceived usefulness; PEOU = Perceived ease of use; PRA = Perceived relative advantage; PCO = Perceived compatibility; ATT = Attitude; BI = Behavioral intention; EP = External pressure; PV = Perceived value.

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el was assessed using several fit indices, namely the standardized root mean residual (SRMR), the normed fit index (NFI), the relative fit index (RFI), the relative noncentrality index (RNI), the incremental fit index (IFI), the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) and the comparative fit index (CFI), all of which should have a value equal of greater than 0.90, except for the SRMR, where a value below 0.08 is acceptable (Malhotra, 2020). A summary of these fit indices for the measurement model is presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Model fit summary of the measurement model

Fit index	Recommended value	Measurement model
SRMR	≤ 0.08	0.034
NFI	≥ 0.90	0.900
RNI	≥ 0.90	0.917
IFI	≥ 0.90	0.917
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.900
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.917
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.933

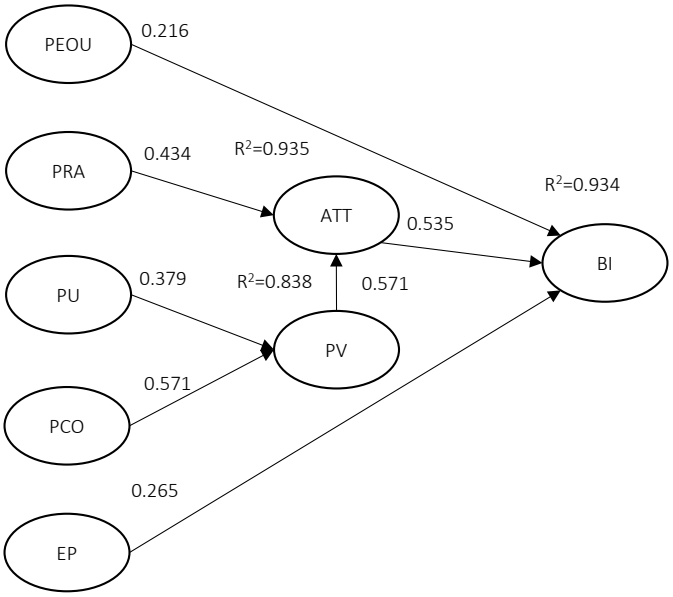
Table 7 shows that the measurement model demonstrates acceptable fit, with all fit indices meeting or exceeding their respective threshold values. Thus, the measurement model demonstrates acceptable model fit, along with composite reliability, convergent validity, construct validity, and discriminant validity, making it appropriate for path analysis.

As per the literature, this study hypothesizes that the SMME owners/managers' perceived ease of use of Facebook advertising and external pressure to use Facebook advertising have a statistically significant direct influence on their behavioral intention to use Facebook advertising. Both perceived usefulness and perceived compatibility were hypothesized to have a direct influence on perceived value, which, along with perceived relative advantage, has a statistically significant direct influence on attitude. Attitude toward Facebook advertising, in turn, predicts behavioral intention to use Facebook advertising. Table 8 reports path analysis results.

Table 8. Path analysis

Path	β	p-value
BI ← PEOU	0.216	0.001*
ATT ← PRA	0.434	0.001*
PV ← PU	0.379	0.001*
BI ← EP	0.265	0.001*
PV ← PCO	0.571	0.001*
ATT ← PV	0.571	0.001*
BI ← ATT	0.535	0.001*

Note: * Statistically significant at $p < 0.001$; PU = Perceived usefulness; PEOU = Perceived ease of use; PRA = Perceived relative advantage; PCO = Perceived compatibility; ATT = Attitude; BI = Behavioral intention; EP = External pressure; PV = Perceived value.



Note: PU = Perceived usefulness; PEOU = Perceived ease of use; PRA = Perceived relative advantage; PCO = Perceived compatibility; ATT = Attitude; BI = Behavioral intention; EP = External pressure; PV = Perceived value.

Figure 1. Hypothesized structural model

Table 8 shows that each of the hypothesized paths was statistically significant. With an R^2 value of 0.935 for attitude toward Facebook advertising, 0.838 for perceived value of Facebook advertising, and 0.934 for behavioral intention to use Facebook advertising, the independent variables explain approximately 94%, 84% and 93% of the variance in attitude, perceived value, and behavioral intention to use Facebook advertising, respectively. Figure 1 presents the hypothesized model.

The same model fit indices that were used to assess the model fit of the measurement model were used to assess the model fit of the structural model, namely the SRMR, NFI, RFI, RNI, IFI, TLI, and CFI. Table 9 summarizes the structural model's model fit.

Table 9. Structural model fit summary

Fit index	Recommended value	Structural model
SRMR	≤ 0.08	0.038
NFI	≥ 0.90	0.900
RNI	≥ 0.90	0.910
IFI	≥ 0.90	0.911
TLI	≥ 0.90	0.900
CFI	≥ 0.90	0.911
GFI	≥ 0.90	0.929

As indicated in Table 9, the structural model exceeded the recommended thresholds, indicating a well-fitting model and suggesting that the structural model accurately represents the underlying data structure.

4. DISCUSSION

This study primarily aimed to empirically examine a model of factors influencing the behavioral intention of SMME owners/managers to use Facebook advertising in South Africa. The results show that perceived ease of use of Facebook advertising significantly and positively affects SMME owners/managers' intention to utilize Facebook advertising. This implies that when SMME owners/managers view Facebook advertising as user-friendly, they are more inclined to adopt it as a primary tool for advertising and promotional purposes. This finding aligns with Pai and Huang's (2011) findings, which demonstrate that perceived ease of use positively impacts the intention to adopt information communication technologies. In addition, the results suggest that the perceived relative advantage of Facebook advertising has a statistically significant positive effect on SMME owners/managers' attitudes toward the platform. This suggests that when SMME owners/managers view Facebook advertising as a superior option to traditional marketing methods, they are more likely to hold a positive attitude toward using it for promotional activities. This finding is in accordance with Van Deventer et al. (2017), who found that perceived relative advantage influences individuals' attitudes toward using a technology.

Furthermore, the results indicated that the perceived usefulness of Facebook advertising has a statistically significant positive influence on SMME owners/managers' perceived value of Facebook advertising. This suggests that when SMME owners/managers see Facebook advertising as effective, for example, in building brand awareness, they are more likely to view it as valuable for their business. This finding supported Lin and Kim (2016), who demonstrated the significant influence of perceived usefulness in enhancing the value of promotional tools. These results also highlighted that external pressure predicts SMME owners/managers' behavioral intention to use Facebook advertising. This suggests that when SMME owners/managers perceive factors like competitive pressure, customer expectations, industry trends, and supplier influence as encouraging them to adopt Facebook advertising, they are more likely to do so. This result is consistent with the findings of Kwon et al. (2021), who observe that external pressure positively impacts SMMEs' adoption of social media. Moreover, perceived compatibility with Facebook advertising has a statistically significant positive impact on SMME owners/managers' perceived value of the platform. This indicates that when SMME owners/managers view Facebook advertising as aligned with their business values, goals, and practices, they are more likely to consider it valuable. This aligns with findings by Anin et al. (2015), who report that Facebook advertising enhances SMME revenues and positively influences non-financial performance by reducing marketing and customer service costs, strengthening customer relationships, and expanding access to brand information.

Additionally, the results show that the perceived value of Facebook advertising has a statistically significant positive influence on SMME owners/managers' attitude toward Facebook advertising. This finding suggests that when SMME owners and managers perceive Facebook advertising as valuable, they tend

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to develop a more positive attitude toward using it. The perceived value, whether in terms of effectiveness, cost efficiency, or alignment with business goals, reinforces their favorable view of Facebook advertising, making them more inclined to use it as part of their promotional strategies. This finding is in line with those of Dootson et al. (2016), who suggest that perceived value plays a crucial role in shaping both attitudes toward and intention to adopt Facebook advertising. Additionally, their research indicates that Facebook advertising serves as an effective communication conduit between businesses and consumers.

Finally, the results infer that attitude toward Facebook advertising has a statistically significant positive effect on SMME owners/managers' intention to use the platform. This implies that when SMME owners/managers have a favorable attitude toward Facebook advertising, they are more inclined to incorporate it into their promotional strategy. This finding aligns with Lee et al. (2017), who conclude that attitude is a crucial factor influencing behavioral intentions toward adopting online advertising on platforms like Facebook.

The independent variables account for about 94% of the variance in attitude toward Facebook advertising (R^2 = 0.935), 84% of the variance in perceived value of Facebook advertising (R^2 = 0.838), and 93% of the variance in behavioral intention to use Facebook advertising (R^2 = 0.934). This finding infers that the independent variables included in the model are highly effective in explaining SMME owners/managers' attitudes toward Facebook advertising, perceived value of Facebook advertising, and ultimately their behavioral intention to use Facebook advertising.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the study is to investigate the antecedents of Facebook advertising usage amongst South African SMME owners/managers. The study found that perceived ease of use and external pressure predict behavioral intention to use Facebook advertising, and that perceived usefulness and compatibility affect value. Perceived value as well as relative advantage were found to predict attitudes toward Facebook advertising, whereas attitude, in turn, influenced behavioral intention to use Facebook advertising. By uncovering these antecedents, the study seeks to provide valuable insights that could help optimize the adoption of Facebook advertising among SMMEs, thereby enhancing their ability to reach broader audiences, strengthen brand visibility, and contribute to overall economic growth.

Future research could explore Facebook advertising adoption among SMMEs using longitudinal designs to track behavioral intention over time, compare adoption patterns across different social media platforms, and examine sector-specific differences. Studies in other emerging economies could also provide valuable comparative insights and enhance the generalizability of the findings.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

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APPENDIX A

Table A1. Scale items

Construct	Items
Perceived usefulness	Using Facebook advertising enhances business effectiveness. Facebook advertising is a useful tool for business marketing. Facebook advertising makes it easier to stay connected to customers.
Perceived ease of use	Facebook advertising allows me to easily achieve what I want to achieve. I find Facebook advertising easy to use. Interaction with Facebook advertising is clear and understandable.
Perceived relative advantage	Facebook advertising allows me to market the business more efficiently. Facebook advertising enables me to promote the business more quickly. Facebook advertising is a convenient way to promote the business.
Perceived compatibility	Facebook advertising is compatible with my promotional needs. Facebook advertising fits well with the way I like to promote the business. Facebook advertising is compatible with how I like to market my business.
Attitude	Using Facebook advertising is a good idea. My attitude towards Facebook advertising is positive. Using Facebook advertising is pleasant.
Behavioral intention	I intend to use Facebook advertising in the near future. I intend to invest in Facebook advertising in the near future. I plan to use Facebook advertising in the future.
External pressure	Some of our competitors/suppliers have started using Facebook advertising to market their business. Our competitors/suppliers know the importance of Facebook advertising and are using it for their promotional activities. Our customers prefer that we use Facebook advertising when we market our business.
Perceived value	Using Facebook advertising for promotional purposes is effective. Facebook advertising is value for money. Facebook advertising has positive effects on my business.