

# **Can Social Media Marketing Adoption Lead to Relative Competitiveness and Improved Sales Performance? A Study of SME Suppliers in The Zambian Mining Sector**

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## **Abstract**

Globally, SMEs play a vital role in a country's economic growth through employment creation, contributing to GDP and fostering competition and innovation. However, these SMEs face a plethora of challenges which threaten their stability and continued existence. Worldwide, mortality rate of SMEs is high, with the situation in Zambia being no different. The case is worse among SMEs suppliers in the Zambian mining sector, whose sole dependency is on the mines. These SMEs risk failure to obtain regular business contracts due to competitive pressures with international suppliers, possible mine closures, low mining activities and unstable international market prices. Scholars suggest that SMEs can improve their relative competitiveness and sales performance by enhancing their visibility and building customer relations through adoption of social media platforms such as Facebook. Surprisingly, there has been inconclusive findings, some reveal a positive relationship, others a negative one while others suggest a zero relationship between social media (Facebook) adoption, relative competitiveness and sales performance. In light of the mixed findings, this study seeks to examine this in the context of SME suppliers in the Zambian Mining sector where research on the subject is non-existent. Mixed method approach of data collection will be employed. Findings of this study will help decision making among SME managers and policy makers.

## **Keywords**

Social Media Marketing Adoption, Relative Competitive Advantage, Sales Performance, SME suppliers and Zambian Mining Sector.

## **Biographies**

**Beenzu Siachinji** is a PhD student at the Copperbelt University in Zambia. She holds a Masters in Management with Marketing from Bournemouth University in United Kingdom, and a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration from The Copperbelt University(CBU) in Zambia. She joined CBU as a full time lecturer from 2013 to date. In addition to her Lecturing experience at the Copperbelt University, Beenzu has held various positions and responsibilities in the University such as Department Research Coordinator, Acting Director for Center for Academic Development, Acting School Research Coordinator, Marketing Committee member in World Bank CBU African Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Mining (CBU ACESM) and the CBU Quality Assurance Coordinator under CAD. She has also Lead a team in the development of the Open Distance Learning (ODL) Quality Assurance Framework and development of University Quality Assurance Framework. Beenzu has also been part of the Team that facilitated the University's registration and Affiliation with Zambia Qualifications Authority (ZAQA) and

Higher Education Authority (HEA) among many other quality related issues in the University in her capacity as the University Quality Assurance Coordinator. She is currently on leave as she pursues her PhD. Beenzu has published in renowned Journals and presented at conferences both at National and International level where she won various awards. Her areas of research interest are: Service quality, Branding, Corporate Social Responsibility, Strategy and Entrepreneurship among many other areas in Marketing, Management and Human Resource Management (HRM).

**Stella Zulu-Chisanga** is a certified Start and Improve Your Business –ILO trainer with over ten years teaching and research experience in business strategy, SME growth and performance, marketing and entrepreneurship at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. She holds a PhD in Business and Economic Studies (Marketing) from the University of Leeds, United Kingdom, MSc in International Business Management from the University of Kent, United Kingdom and a Bachelor of Business Administration from the Copperbelt University of Zambia. Currently, Stella is a Senior Lecturer and Head of Department at the Copperbelt University, Zambia in the School of Business, Department of Business Administration and Marketing. She is also the Program Chair of the Academy of African Business and Development. Stella has hands-on experience in citizens empowerment and inclusive growth Programmes and has served as a Board member and the Chairperson for the Empowerment Committee of the Citizens Economic and Empowerment Commission of Zambia. In addition, Stella is a Steering Committee member of the Accelerated growth for Small and Medium-sized Enterprise, a Finish funded project. As a researcher, Stella has presented her work at renowned conferences including at the United States Association for Small Business and Entrepreneurship, 2016 San Diego, California and the Strategic Management Society Special conference, 2016 Rome, Italy and at the Academy of African Business Development, 2022 Accra Ghana. Her research interests revolve around interfirm relationships, small business management, marketing and strategy.

**Bruce Mwiya** has Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Small Business Management and Entrepreneurship from the University of Wolverhampton in the United Kingdom (UK), Master of Intellectual Property (MIP) from Africa University in conjunction with the WIPO Academy, as well as Bachelor and Master of Business Administration (BBA, MBA) degrees from the Copperbelt University (Zambia). Furthermore, he has two Advanced Certificates in Innovation and Intellectual Property Management for Business Success from the World Intellectual Property (WIPO) academy, Geneva, Switzerland and Seoul, South Korea. He has over 20 years of teaching, research, consultancy and practice in strategy, finance, entrepreneurship, innovation, research methods and research data analyses. He worked in the private sector in leasing finance, Unilever, a water utility company and the Zambia Revenue Authority for over 7 years before joining academia. He has been a senior lecturer at Copperbelt University since 2006.

**Yvonne Saini-Kabeya** Yvonne Kabeya Saini is a marketing lecturer at Witwatersrand (Wits) University in South Africa. She holds a BA, in Development Studies from University of Zambia, an MSc. in Business Administration from University of Illinois in USA, and a PhD in Marketing from Witwatersrand University in South Africa. She also holds a certificate in e-marketing offered by the New Zealand Direct Marketing Association and the Direct Marketing Association of South Africa. She joined the Wits Business School as a lecturer in 2006. She has published in local and international journals. Some of her marketing research interests include: Consumer Choice, Consumer Decision Making, Factors Influencing Online Consumer Choice, Effects of Fluency Processing in Consumer Decision Making, Effects of Social Media and Consumer Behaviour and Exploring the Effectiveness of Mobile Advertising. Before she joined Wits, Yvonne also lectured at Monash University (South Africa campus) and the University of Cape Town. Prior joining academia, Yvonne worked as an economist for the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry in Zambia and as a business analyst for the Zambia Privatisation Agency. She also worked as a business and information specialist at Mckinsey & Company in Johannesburg.