SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THE SUCCESS OF SMES IN MEDIA IN-DUSTRIES

Sima Sarafi Zanjani[1], Abdolreza Gholamali[2], Dariush Abbasi[1]

[1]Islamic Azad University, Tehran, Iran
[2]Faculty of Entrepreneurship, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran
E-mails: gholamali_a110@yahoo.com *(corresponding author)*

Abstract

Purpose- *Nowadays, media is an integral part of the daily life of human beings. SMEs in this industry use their potentials to succeed. On the other hand, social networks are becoming a key to success for these companies. In this sense, the authors investigate the effect of social networks on the customer's alertness and then on the success of these firms.*

Design/methodology/approach- *To do so, among a hundred and four managers in media enterprises in different levels, forty ones were selected and a questionnaire was distributed among them. In fact a quantitative approach was used to test the research hypotheses.*

Findings- *The results show that social network has an influence on the success of media SMEs. Moreover, one could conclude that network ties' strength, networking activities, network ties' type, and customer's alertness influence the success of media SMEs.*

Research Implications- *SMEs in media industries could take advantage of social networks to reach a more effective and efficient level of performance. Indeed, stronger network ties could help them in acting more efficiently. Moreover, customer's alertness could be affected through the characteristics of social networks.*

Originality/value- *The present study is among the first studies in the country which highlights the realities in the SMEs of media industries in developing countries. However, future research could deal with other aspects of such firms.*

Research paper

Keywords: *Social Networks, Media Industries, Customer's Alertness*

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Introduction

Networks and networking activities play a unique role in different societies. Among different types of networks, social networks are of paramount importance due to the human side of their nature. In recent years, media industries have seen firm declines in usage, and in trust, by the newspaper readers to whom they offer services (Hochheimer, 2001; Ahmadi et al., 2013). On the other hand, there are no indications that the crisis now experienced by the established media industries in many nations will abate significantly at any point in the short or medium term (Bruns, 2011). For instance, as Salmon et al. (2007) pointed out, the growing use of podcasts is a supplementary or alternative means of delivering content by media, entertainment and media industries (Carvalho et al., 2008). Although the media industries are still dominated by the state sectors, they have become more open and transparent to provide a more accessible record of significant events and diverse opinion than before (Xiong, 2009).

However, in a media context that is quickly evolving and bringing ever greater pressures and dilemmas, the media industry is starting to look in on itself and engage in a dialogue about standards and responsibilities (Niblock, 2007). Concentration on traditional ideas about media also impacted strongly on the media industry, emphasizing the need for classrooms and newsrooms to reflect the social and cultural diversity of modern-day societies, while simultaneously meeting the diverse needs of readers (Steyn & De Beer, 2004; Joshi, 2013). Moreover, the interests of media owners, the social-cultural environment, changes in the media industry, internationalization, and the media strategies of organizational leaders impacted how an individual agent in media might cover a story or comment on an issue (Anderson, 2001). Now, what happens when this one person becomes a social network? What if a group of individuals make social networks? For instance, when social entrepreneurs create social networks? (see, Salamzadeh et al., 2013). In this paper, first the authors try to provide a precise review of the existing literature. Then, the methodological issues and conceptual frameworks are discussed, and findings are elaborated afterwards. Finally, the authors propose some suggestions and the paper concludes.

Literature review

The word "media" has been defined in many ways to accommodate different criteria or settings- in different contexts. For instance, media is defined as a contraction of the term media of communication, referring to those organized means of dissemination of fact, opinion, and entertainment such as journals, magazines, cinema films, radio, television, and the World Wide Web. Moreover, it is also defined as "a generic term for systems of production and dissemination of information and

entertainment and of exertion of various kinds of social controls. Unlike a channel which is limited to a contiguous physical medium between the sender and a receiver of communications, media include the institutions which determine the nature, programming and form of distribution" (Krippendorff, 1986). Most often, the media are lumped together as a single entity, while the media actually refers to many forms of communication (Hang & van Weezel, 2005; Lis et al., 2012).

On the other hand, studying networks goes back to early 1930s in organizational research studies. The root to this phenomenon lies in three fields, which are: (i) sociology, (ii) anthropology, and (iii) role theory (Tichy et al., 1979; Nohria and Eccles, 1992; Salamzadeh et al., 2011). In recent years, emphasize was significantly on networks, interpersonal relations, group and organizational relations (Nohria & Eccles, 1992; Parkhe et al., 2006; Mansouri et al., 2011). Social networks provide financial support, control, resources, data, and information. Social networks, especially entrepreneurial ones, are like a set of opportunities that provide entrepreneurs with access to intangible information and tangible resources. Opportunity recognition and success is more probable to be developed through social networks (Parkhe et al., 2006). Opportunity recognition is a result of individual-environment performance (Singh, 1999). Individual-environment interaction leads to evolution of ideas. In other words, individual factors, individual relations and social interactions play an important role in recognizing success (Baron, 2004).

Elyasi et al. (2011) investigated the role of the entrepreneurs' social networks in recognizing entrepreneurial opportunities and the success of SMEs. Their findings show that the entrepreneurs' social networks have a positive relationship with opportunity recognition, and between different dimensions of social networks, the content of social relations has the most significant role. Other scholars also investigated this relationship and showed the relationship (Granovetter, 1973; Hills, 1997; Ardichivili, 2000; Singh, 1999). Some authors, such as Ardichivili (2000), and Singh (1999) mention the significance of weak ties in opportunity recognition and the success of SMEs. In addition, Singh (1999) argues that network size has a significant positive relation with the success of SMEs. Ardichivili (2000) argues that entrepreneurs' social network includes weak ties and internal circles (a set of individuals with whom an entrepreneur has long term and consistent relations), which lead to better opportunity recognition and the success of the entrepreneurs.

Network ties are also studies in the existing literature. Official and unofficial ties are considered as a categorization of these networks. While official networks are more formal, unofficial ones are mostly those networks which are shaped among friends, colleagues, etc. Moreover, these ties could be active or passive (Hansen, 1999). In studies of media industries, too much attention has been paid to providers and firms, too little to consumers and markets (Hartley, 2009). Moreover, recent research on the media industries has been centrally concerned with the blurring of boundaries between production and reception in an era of digitalization (Sundet & Ytreberg, 2009). In this research, the authors investigate the effect of social networks on the customer's alertness and then on the success of these firms.

Methodology

In this study, a survey was conducted to test the research hypotheses. Figure 1 shows the research model of the present study, which roots from the literature. The principal hypothesis of this study is as follows:

H:"Social network has an influence on the success of media SMEs".

Secondary hypothesis of the study are as follows:

H_1:"Network ties' strength influences customer's alertness".

H_2:"Networking activities influences customer's alertness".

H_3:"Network ties' type influences customer's alertness".

H_4:"Customer's alertness influences the success of media SMEs".

In this research a self-elaborated questionnaire was used to measure the influence of social networks on the success of media SMEs. To do so, thirty one questions were used, using Likert scale. The questionnaire was distributed among forty of about a hundred and four managers media enterprises in different levels. The sample size was calculated based on Cochran's formula.

(1) $n= (z^2 pqN) /d^2 (N-1) + z^2 pq,$

in which:

P=q=50%,

Significance level equals to 95%, and

d= 0.8

Figure 1 *Research Model*
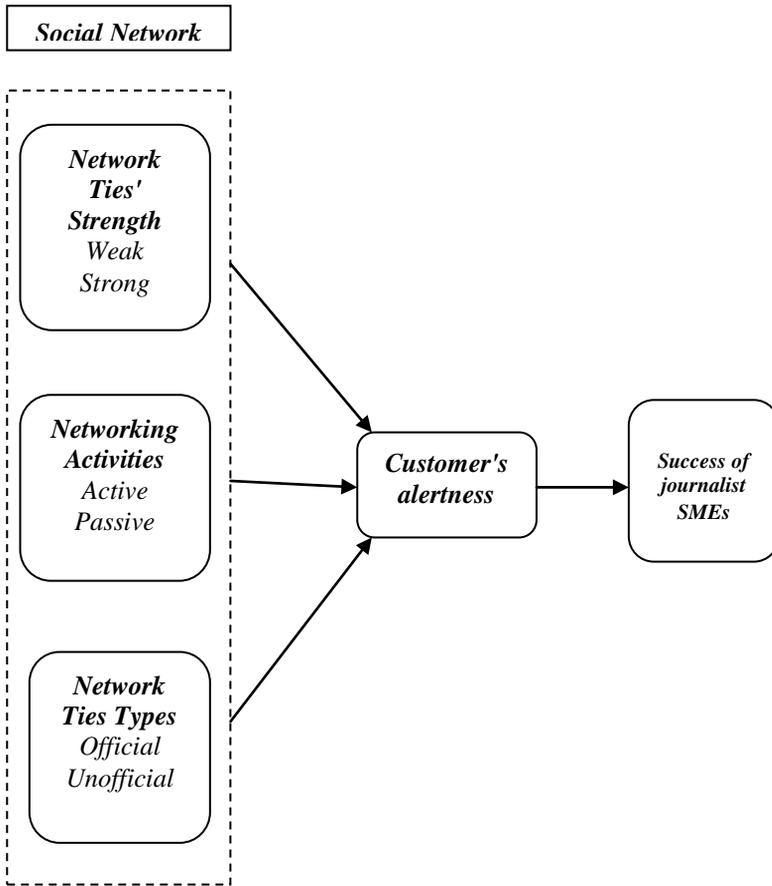
Findings and Discussion

The gathered data from our survey was analyzed using SPSS software. Table 2 shows the descriptive data of the respondents.

Table 2 *Descriptive data of the respondents*

Gender	Male		Female	
	23		17	
Level of Education	Major	BA/BSc	MA/MSc	PhD
	3	16	12	9

Experience	Less than 5 yrs	5-10 yrs	10-15 yrs	15-20 yrs	More than 20yrs
	1	13	9	12	5

In order to answer the research question, and investigating the relationship between conceptual model variables, one way analysis of variance test were done. Also, the proposed hypotheses were tested. Principal hypothesis were tested, and the following tables show the test results.

H_0: $\beta=0$ Social network does not have any influence on the success of media SMEs.
H_1: $\beta\neq0$ Social network has an influence on the success of media SMEs.

Table 3. Test results for principal hypothesis

Variables Entered/Removed[b]			
Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	Social network	0	Enter
a. All requested variables entered.			
b. Dependent Variable: success of media SMEs			
Model Summary			
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.205[a]	.442	.017	.37814
a. Predictors: (Constant) ،Social network			

ANOVA[b]						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.239	1	.239	1.671	.004[a]
	Residual	5.434	38	.143		
	Total	5.673	39			
a. Predictors: (Constant) ،Social network						
b. Dependent Variable: success of media SMEs						

Coefficients[a]					
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Er-	Beta		

			ror			
1	*(Constant)*	*4.673*	*.504*		*9.280*	*.000*
	Social network	*.544*	*.189*	*.505*	*1.293*	*.004*
a. Dependent Variable: success of media SMEs						

In the 95% confidence interval, the significance level is less than the error rate, then H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. This reveals that social network influences on the success of media SMEs. Some authors also confirm this relationship. For instance, Kwak et al. (2010), and Wu and Leung (2005) make the same statements and found the same relationships. Lin and Zhang (2005) found the same relationship and elaborated it in a more detailed way. Here, the regression formula is as follows:

(2) Y= 4.673 + (0.544) X

The first secondary hypothesis was tested as follows. Table 4 shows the test results.
H_0: β=0 Network ties' strength does not influence customer's alertness
H_1: β≠0 Network ties' strength influences customer's alertness

Table 4 Test results for first secondary hypothesis

Variables Entered/Removed[b]			
Model	*Variables Entered*	*Variables Removed*	*Method*
1	*Strength of network ties*	*.*	*Enter*
a. All requested variables entered.			
b. Dependent Variable: Customer's Alertness			
Model Summary			
Model	*R*	*R Square*	*Adjusted R Square*	*Std. Error of the Estimate*
1	*.438[a]*	*.492*	*.171*	*.79927*
a. Predictors: (Constant) ، Strength of network ties			

ANOVA[b]						
Model		*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
1	*Regression*	*5.769*	*1*	*5.769*	*9.031*	*.005[a]*
	Residual	*24.275*	*38*	*.639*		
	Total	*30.044*	*39*			
a. Predictors: (Constant) ، Strength of net-						

work ties					
b. Dependent Variable: Customer's Alertness					

Coefficients[a]					
Model		*Unstandardized Coefficients*		*Standardized Coefficients*	*T*	*Sig.*

Model		*B*	*Std. Error*	*Beta*	*T*	*Sig.*
1	*(Constant)*	4.392	.448		9.801	.000
	Strength of network ties	.451	.150	.438	3.005	.005
a. Dependent Variable: Customer's Alertness						

In the 95% confidence interval, the significance level is less than the error rate, then H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. This reveals that network ties' strength influences on customer's alertness. Ardichvili et al. (2003) argue that social networking affects customer's alertness and when the ties are stronger, the customers' alertness will be higher. Kogut (2000) also argues the same relation. Some authors indicate that entrepreneurs' networks are important to opportunity recognition. They base their argument on classic articles on the strength of weak ties, which argues that weak ties (including casual acquaintances) are ''bridges'' to information sources not necessarily contained within an individual's strong-tie network (including friends and family) (Ardichvili et al., 2003). Here, the regression formula is as follows:

(1) Y= 4.392 + (0.451) X

The second secondary hypothesis was tested as follows. Table 5 shows the test results.

H_0: $\beta=0$ Network activities do not influence customer's alertness
H_1: $\beta\neq0$ Network activities influences customer's alertness

Table 5 *Test results for second secondary hypothesis*

Variables Entered/Removed[b]			
Model	*Variables Entered*	*Variables Removed*	*Method*
1	*Networking Activity*	.	*Enter*
a. All requested variables entered.			
b. Dependent Variable: Customer's Alertness			

Model Summary				
Model	*R*	*R Square*	*Adjusted R Square*	*Std. Error of the Estimate*
1	.046[a]	.502	.024	.82165

a. Predictors: (Constant): Networking Activity						
ANOVA[b]						
Model		*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
1	*Regression*	*.054*	*1*	*.054*	*.080*	*.008[a]*
	Residual	*25.654*	*38*	*.675*		
	Total	*25.708*	*39*			
a. Predictors: (Constant) Networking Activity						
b. Dependent Variable: Customer's Alertness						
Coefficients[a]						
Model		*Unstandardized Coefficients*		*Standardized Coefficients*	*t*	*Sig.*
		B	*Std. Error*	*Beta*		
1	*(Constant)*	*3.007*	*.483*		*6.232*	*.000*
	Networking Activity	*.543*	*.150*	*.046*	*-.284*	*.008*
a. Dependent Variable: Customer's Alertness						

In the 95% confidence interval, the significance level is less than the error rate, then H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. This reveals that networking activity influences on customer's alertness. As Vanhaverbeke (2001) argues, networking strategies are unlikely to emerge because SMEs are locked into their traditional competencies and they lack the financial and strategic resources to develop interactive strategies covering the entire value system (Johannisson, 2008). Some authors believe that Networking actions of companies- i.e. collective contracts, conventions, social customs or public intervention- is a possible solution to fully reap these potential benefits (Sawyerr et al., 2003; Liljenberg, 2001). Here, the regression formula is as follows:

(4) Y= 3.007 + (0.543) X

The third secondary hypothesis was tested as follows. Table 6 shows the test results.

H_0: β=0 Network ties' type does not influence customer's alertness

H_1: $\beta\neq0$ Network ties' type influences customer's alertness

Table 6 *Test results for third secondary hypothesis*

Variables Entered/Removed[b]			
Model	*Variables Entered*	*Variables Removed*	*Method*
1	*Types of network ties*	.	*Enter*
a. All requested variables entered.			
b. Dependent Variable: Customer's Alertness			

Model Summary				
Model	*R*	*R Square*	*Adjusted R Square*	*Std. Error of the Estimate*
1	*.204[a]*	*.542*	*.016*	*.69103*
a. Predictors: (Constant) ،Types of network ties				

ANOVA[b]						
Model		*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
1	*Regression*	*.788*	*1*	*.788*	*1.650*	*.007[a]*
	Residual	*18.146*	*38*	*.478*		
	Total	*18.933*	*39*			
a. Predictors: (Constant) ، Types of network ties						
b. Dependent Variable: Customer's Alertness						

Coefficients[a]					
Model	*Unstandardized Coefficients*		*Standardized Coefficients*	*T*	*Sig.*
	B	*Std. Error*	*Beta*		
(Constant)	*3.070*	*.407*		*7.547*	*.000*
Types of network ties	*.175*	*.136*	*.204*	*-1.284*	*.007*
a. Dependent Variable: Customer's Alertness					

In the 95% confidence interval, the significance level is less than the error rate, then H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. This reveals that network ties' type influences on customer's alertness. Abimbola (2001) believes that the network ties affect the customer's alertness. Some other authors also confirm our findings (see, Manesh, 2012; Taylor and Murphy, 2004; Keh et al., 2007). Here is the estimated regression formula:
(5)Y= 3.07 + (0.175) X

The fourth secondary hypothesis was tested as follows. Table 7 shows the test results.

H_0: $\beta=0$ Customer's alertness does not influence on the success of media SMEs.

H_1 : $\beta \neq 0$ Customer's alertness influences on the success of media SMEs.

Table 7 Test results for fourth secondary hypothesis

Variables Entered/Removed[b]			
Model	*Variables Entered*	*Variables Removed*	*Method*
1	*Customer's Alertness*	*.*	*Enter*
a. All requested variables entered.			
b. Dependent Variable: success of media SMEs			

Model Summary			
Model	*R*	*R Square*	*Adjusted R Square*	*Std. Error of the Estimate*
1	*.164[a]*	*.527*	*.001*	*.69632*
a. Predictors: (Constant) ،Customer's Alertness				

ANOVA[b]					
Model		*Sum of Squares*	*df*	*Mean Square*	*F*	*Sig.*
1	*Regression*	*.508*	*1*	*.508*	*1.049*	*.012[a]*
	Residual	*18.425*	*38*	*.485*		
	Total	*18.933*	*39*			
a. Predictors: (Constant) ،Customer's Alertness					
b. Dependent Variable: success of media SMEs					

Coefficients[a]						
Model		*Unstandardized Coefficients*		*Standardized Coefficients*	*T*	*Sig.*
		B	*Std. Error*	*Beta*		
1	*(Constant)*	*2.183*	*.390*		*5.592*	*.000*
	Customer's Alertness	*.134*	*.131*	*.164*	*1.024*	*.012*
a. Dependent Variable: success of media SMEs						

In the 95% confidence interval, the significance level is less than the error rate, then H0 is rejected and H1 is accepted. This reveals that customer's alertness influences on the success of media SMEs. The literature also supports this hypothesis (see Hills, 1997; Ardichivili, 2000; Singh, 1999). Here, the regression formula is as follows:

(6) Y= 2.183 + (0.134)X

Conclusion

Today, social networks play a paramount role in the success of small and medium sized enterprises. This success is realized through several means, among which customer's alertness is considered as a critical factor. In this sense, in the present study, the authors investigated the effect of social networks and networking on the customer's alertness and then on the success of media SMEs. To do so, among a hundred and four managers in media enterprises in different levels, forty ones were selected and a questionnaire was distributed among them. The results show that all the hypothesis are accepted, i.e. social networks affect the success of SMEs in media industries. The literature shows that the entrepreneurs' social networks have a positive relationship with opportunity recognition, and between different dimensions of social networks, the content of social relations has the most significant role. Some scholars also investigated this relationship and showed the relationship (Granovetter, 1973; Hills, 1997; Ardichivili, 2000; Singh, 1999). Some authors, such as Ardichivili (2000), and Singh (1999) mention the significance of weak ties in opportunity recognition and the success of SMEs. In addition, Singh (1999) argues that network size has a significant positive relation with the success of SMEs. Yet, in this study, there were some limitations. For instance, the authors mainly focused on some concepts and future studies could take the contextual elements into account to be more precise. Moreover, there were some limitations for finding experts in this filed, as the topic is new. To handle this limitation, one might use snowball sampling to find the experts.

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***Sima SARRAFI ZANJANI** is a researcher in economics and media field. She studied literature and media in bachelor and master levels in two famous universities of Iran (Shahid Beheshti University and IAU) and passed the courses in A level. Her enthusiasm in study and job as a journalist caused that she had many international trips for comparing the ways of developing the society and business. She worked hardly for 20 years in various newspapers and recently was selected as a chief editor in Iran Daily economic and world economic news paper. Sarrafi Zanjani is a well known journalist who tries to help the society for standard behaviors in every aspect especially economic field. Sarrafi Zanjani wrote many articles in SME filed in Iran press. She was also awarded in reporting the worst problems in Iran business.*

***Abdolreza GHOLAMALI** is an instructor in Civil Aviation Technology Collage (CATC) and management universities. He Cooperates with private sector companies and SMEs in Iran as a Consultant in management systems. He has educated with Master of Art in Entrepreneurship Management (Business Creation) from University of Tehran Faculty of Entrepreneurship. He has studied on the causes of success and failure of Iranian SMEs. His researches focus on SMEs in tourism industry, media and biotechnology. He has also researched in growth strategies, internationalization, globalization of business, e-business, innovation and Entrepreneurship, and published some papers.*

***Dariush ABBASI** is a famous journalist in Iran economic press. He studied journalism (bachelor) and took his masters degree in mass media from Islamic Azad University in Tehran. He wrote several articles and reports in Iran daily, weekly and monthly press and was awarded for his writings in Iranian national festivals. Also, he was the chief editor of IAU magazine for 3 years. Recently he changed his approach and focused on research in short and medium sized businesses. Dariush has written 3 books in Iran and published them in more than 20,000 issues. He participated in many international conferences in economics, business and media, and warded certificates. In addition, he teaches media and mass communication in Journalism College. He is currently the manager of special issues and commerce chamber department of donyaye eqtesad (the most well-known news paper in economics in Iran- 2008 till now).*