## Social Media Marketing Adoption and Usage within the Irish Dairy Sector

#### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Importance and Key Contribution

The agri-food sector in Ireland contributes €24 billion to the national economy, and export values for dairy ingredients and product has surpassed €3 billion. This figure represents a 15% growth on 2012 and indicates Ireland's dairy sector had a strong performance in global markets. Irish butter and cheese manufacturing grew by 4.9% and 3.2% correspondingly in 2013, while whole milk powder and skimmed milk powder declined by 6.5% and 11.9%. (BordBia, 2014; DCMNR, 2013; Teagasc, 2014).

Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) account for 99% of businesses in the enterprise economy in Ireland and almost 70% of people employed (DJEI, 2014). The revolution of the internet as a communication channel has changed the way people conduct business. For SMEs, social media marketing (SMM) has changed the shape and nature of their businesses (Dahnil, Marzuki, Langgat, & Fabeil, 2014; DJEI, 2014). SMEs avail of SMM because of the market opportunities it promises; although, adopting SMM is not without its challenges.

#### 2.0 LITERATURE

## 2.1 SMEs and the Adoption of Social Media Marketing

Consumers use social media to interact with friends, find businesses and brands. Brands are taking advantage of this new promotional dimension to strengthen their consumer relationships. Relationships between consumer contentment and loyalty with the website is together critical components for its success. The more a user interacts with a business, the more loyal the consumer is to the business and its brand, which in turn reaps positive performance results for both. More accurate measures for explaining systems use would benefit users assessing the site as well as employees within the organisation evaluating their offerings (Davis, 1989, p. 320; Kirtiş & Karahan, 2011; Rapp, Beitelspacher, Grewal, & Hughes, 2012; Yoon, Hostler, Guo, & Guimaraes, 2013).

SMEs face many challenges due to the cost of conducting business, limited resources, funding, and poor implementation of technology, which may have a drastic effect on SMEs' performance (Dahnil et al., 2014; DJEI, 2011; Meadows, 2009). More accurate measures for explaining systems use would benefit users assessing the site, as well as employees within the organisation evaluating their offerings (Davis, 1989, p. 320; Kirtiş & Karahan, 2011; Rapp et al., 2012; Yoon et al., 2013). Hence, this paper explores the activities of SMEs in Ireland's dairy sector in order to understand the benefits and limitations they experience by adopting this technology. The research methodology for this pilot study adopted a qualitative approach focusing on six case studies within the dairy sector in Ireland (see Appendix Table 1), focusing on the small businesses. The primary research technique used was in-depth interviews with the small business owners/mangers to understand their adoption and usage of social media marketing. To be eligible for selection, each company had fewer than 50 employees and an annual turnover and/or balance sheet total of less than €10million (Enterprise, 2007).

## 2.2 Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology 2 (UTAUT2)

The UTAUT2 (Venkatesh, L. Thong, & Xu, 2012) embraces four main concepts: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions, which are direct factors of usage intention and behaviour. The key moderators for this model include: gender, age, experience, hedonic motivation, price/value and habit. This paper considers the fundamental aspects of the UTAUT2 (see Appendix Figure 1).

#### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

The interview process for this research was semi-structured in nature and comprised of open ended questions. The interview pool comprised of six business owners who are involved in marketing their dairy products in Ireland (see Appendix Table 1). The small businesses provided insight on how they market their products as well as how they adopt and use SMM. Questions relating to the constructs of the UTAUT2 model were posed in an interview to the businesses in order to evaluate their level of adoption and usage of social media within their business. The main tools used by the small firms are Twitter and Facebook, while one firm is extremely active in SMM availing of Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Vine, and Vimeo.

#### 4.0 FINDINGS

## **4.1 Performance Expectancy**

Performance expectancy relates to the level to which an employee trusts that using the system will aid him or her to reach advances in their job performance (Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, & Davis, 2003). This paper examines whether the employees in the dairy sector believe whether using SMM will help their organisation attain their goals and targets.

# H1 Age and gender will moderate the effect of performance expectancy on behavioural intention to use social media such that the effect will be stronger for younger men.

All businesses have received some gains/benefits by using social media, which involve: publicity, brand awareness and sales, event planning, celebrity endorsements and information (see Appendix Table 2). One business states "Social media has been massive for my business. Through twitter I will have chefs who will order cheese, they will private message me to send their restaurant two or three wheels of cheese, and then he would email them on an invoice. All done electronically that I wouldn't even speak to the person." Social media helps find new customers, connect, and empowered them while also expand the online audience (Hootsuite, 2014; Malthouse, Haenlein, Skiera, Wege, & Zhang, 2013).

## 4.1.1 Publicity, Brand Awareness and Sales

All businesses interviewed agreed social media provided them with an advantage with getting their name recognised and letting people know what they do. One business owner outlines "Butter might not be the trendiest image, it shows that we are there mainly helps with branding and communications." When they post pictures of their product or the manufacturing process on social media, they receive a lot of interest, even internationally, for their products. Social media lets firms increase brand awareness and reach with limited budget expenditure, social media significantly changes the landscape for brand management (Gensler, Völckner, Liu-Thompkins, & Wiertz, 2013; Hootsuite, 2014). Four of the six businesses interviewed had chefs, restaurants owners and customers contact them through private message of social media applications to order their products. Social media has a higher lead-to-close rate than outbound marketing, and a higher number of social media followers improves brand trust and credibility, representing social proof (DeMers, 2014).

## 4.1.2 Event Planning, Celebrity Endorsements and Information

One business employs Facebook as a means to organise cheese making courses. Four businesses were contacted by celebrity chefs and food blogger/journalist, such as Donal Skehan, Nevin Maguire and Lucinda O'Sullivan (i.e., food journalist with the Irish Independent Newspaper), to promote and endorse their products. Endorsements are intended to enhance brand image and equity. Indeed, "Having celebrity chefs commenting about your products on

Twitter and getting a slot on the Irish TV programme nationwide has helped us to get noticed." Celebrities are turning to SMM tools to promote brands and interact with fans (Choi & Rifon, 2012). Another business agrees, stating "It's certainly name awareness and product awareness. If a restaurant is using my cheese, and they post something about it. It is a comfort factors for others to see and buy it. It's almost like an accolade."

## **4.2 Effort Expectancy**

Effort expectancy relates to the level of ease associated with the use of social media (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Hence, whether the SMM technology provide advantages to small business employees in performing certain activities and whether the level of ease linked with the employee's use of the SMM technology.

H2 Age, gender and experience will moderate the effect of effort expectancy on behaviour intention to use SMM technology such that the effect will be stronger for older female employees with limited experience of SMM.

For this research question, age and gender moderate the effect of performance expectancy on behavioural intention to use social media such that the effect will be stronger for younger men. All businesses acknowledged their intention to use social media, as they were aware of its benefits. Hence, it was difficult to evaluate whether the effect is stronger for younger men.

The level was rated from a lot of effort, little effort, some effort or no effort (see Appendix Table 2). All businesses interviewed find social media easy to use. One businesses owner (younger male/person) finds it remarkably easy to use and relies on his smartphone for updating social media. Another (older male) finds social media easy to use, but is not particularly good at it and relies on a family member update social media profiles. This finding confirms that age, gender and experience affects the effort expectancy on behaviour intention to use SMM technology. There is little effort for the younger male/females. This finding confirms age does have an effort of effort expectancy on behaviour intention to use SMM technology, such that the effect is stronger for older males and female employees who have limited experience of SMM.

#### 4.3 Social Influence

Social influence relates to the level to which an employee perceives others trust he or she to use the new system (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Will the employee in the Irish dairy sector perceive they must use a particular SMM technology?

H3 Age, gender and experience will moderate the effect of social influence on behavioural intention to use social media such that the effect will be stronger for older women with limited experience of technology.

The level of social influence was rated from tool never suggested, tool suggested, and self-researched (see Appendix Table 2). When asked if anyone had ever suggested a social media tool, if so which one, only one firm had responded that somebody suggest a tool. This business (older female) had a work experience student who performed an audit of their online presence and suggested Twitter media tool which the firm has since adopted. Another business (older male) expresses "Not really, I did a course on social media and it was mainly about trying to get as many followers rather than how to keep your followers and what information you want to give. I have a lot of people following me that have absolutely no use to my businesses what so ever." For this research age, gender and experience will moderate the effect of social influence on behavioural intention to use social media such that the effect will be stronger for

older women with limited experience of technology, as one female business owner had a tool suggested to her and used it.

## 4.4 Facilitating Conditions

Facilitating conditions relate to the level to which an employee trusts organisational and technical infrastructure exist to maintain the use of the technology. Aspects in an environment that employees agree make a specific task easy to accomplish. (Thompson & Higgins, 1991; Venkatesh et al., 2003).

H4 Age and experience will moderate the effect of facilitating conditions on SMM technology such that the effect will be stronger for older employees with increasing experience of the technology.

The answers relating to facilitating conditions ranged from PC, smartphone, smartphone and PC (see Appendix Table 2). All businesses access their social media accounts via their smartphones. One business owner states "There is no set hours to work on social media. We would use the phone for some posts, but for long thought out content involving images we would use the pc as internet connection can be very slow for updating. Internet connection is not fast, which is a big problem for us." The rest of business owners state they update their profiles at home in the evening time, or if they were at an event. The employees for this case study all trust their business has the technical infrastructure to maintain SMM technology, as all use their smartphones to maintain their profiles.

#### 4.5 Hedonic Motivation

Hedonic motivation relates to the degree to which the employee finds pleasure from using a technology (Brown & Venkatesh, 2005; van der Heijden, 2004). This paper reviews an employee's level of pleasure in using SMM technology.

H5 Age, gender and experience will moderate the effect of hedonic motivation on behavioural intention to use social media such that the effect will be stronger among younger men with limited experience of the technology.

The level of hedonic motivation was rated from a low level of SMM adopted and use, medium level of SMM adopted and used, high level of SMM adopted and used and finally extremely high level of SMM adopted and used (see Appendix Table 2). When asked do you enjoy using social media tools, four out of the six business said they enjoy using social media. "Yes ... I get a great kick when I see the number of interacting with us, and the conversation flowing. It gives you a great buzz to think that people are interested and are giving you feedback". The one business (older male) who did not enjoy using social media stated "I don't mind using it. I could take it or leave it to be honest."

When asked whether they prefer a certain tool over another, one business owner (older male) mentions his preference for using Facebook over Twitter purely because he is not familiar with Twitter. This business owner was informed at a conference "Facebook is for your customers, and Twitter is for your peers". People following him on Twitter are chefs, restaurant owners who are more similar to peers. This hypothesis confirms age, gender and experience does moderate the effect of hedonic motivation on behavioural intention to use social media such that the effect is stronger among younger men with limited experience of the technology.

#### 4.6 Price Value

Price value relates to consumers accepting the financial cost of using a systems, whereas employees do not. The cost and pricing structure have a significant effect on consumers'

technology usage (Venkatesh et al., 2012). This paper explores whether price of SMM is a concern for employees in the dairy sector.

## H6 Do Employees consider the price value of using SMM technology?

The level of price value was rated from SMM considered in price and SMM not considered in price (see Appendix Table 2). All business owners do not see a price value of social media; they agreed time was the price value in using social media. One business states "no don't see a huge cost in it, as there is nobody employed to do it. You will be doing it yourself and it's your time." One business owner (older male) has received messages from customers looking to buy his product on Facebook, or asking where it might be available. This business owner does not record the breakdown of sales according to fairs/social media messages/restaurants. Another business (younger male) states "yes I see a return on investment … sales wise, a woman yesterday from County Wexford found me through Twitter and ordered €500 worth of cheese, and that happens quiet regular." Indeed, all business owners have neglected to include their time as a cost of SMM activities to their business.

## 4.7 Habit/Experience

Habit has been defined as the level to which people tend to perform behaviours automatically because of learning. People's general opinions regarding technology were the strongest determinants of system - specific perceived ease of use, particularly after substantial direct experience with the specific technology (Limayem, Hirt, & Cheung, 2007; Venkatesh, 2000).

## H7 Age Gender and experience will moderate the effect of habit on technology use such that the effect will be stronger for older men with high levels of experience with social media.

The habit/experience level was rated from low, medium and high (see Appendix Table 2). The experience level was rated from low, medium and high. When asked whether they ever tried a SMM tool and never used it; two of the six businesses stated no. When asked whether they stick to the same social media tool because of familiarity or habit, they all agreed they stick to the same social media tool because they are familiar with it. One mentioned "No I am familiar with them all, I just like Twitter at the moment because it is working well for the business, and there is more happening on it and its real time." Another business mentioned they use just two SMM tools, Facebook is where their individual customers are found, and Twitter is where the chefs, restaurants owners and food bloggers are found.

#### 4.8 Age and Gender

Age and gender relate to the employees' technological skills and knowledge and whether the effects of age and gender on employee learning is noteworthy. That is, it tests the readiness older adults to use technologies and to identify the factors that play a role in their acceptance of technology (Peek et al., 2014; Venkatesh et al., 2003).

## H8 Employees' Age/Gender relate to the readiness of using SMM.

The age profile of all interview were in the late thirties to early fifties, three male and three female. The business owner with the highest SMM adoption and usage was male and in his late thirties and the one with the lowest SMM adoption and usage was male and in his late fifties. All businesses believed they would be more inclined to use a social media tool if it is easy to use. They also believed that if the tool is easy to use it will have a positive effect on using social media. From the interviews with the six businesses, the owner who was more willing to adopt and use SMM tool was a younger male. This finding confirms the hypothesis that gender, age

and experience have a combined impact on the link between facilitating conditions and intention.

#### **5.0 IMPLICATIONS**

This paper reviews the literature on technology adoption and usage linking to the UTAUT2 model. This pilot study explains the different levels of experience, adoption and usage and the findings will be relevant to researchers and practitioners. In terms of the theoretical contribution, this paper introduces the need for small firms to adopt and use social media marketing in order to compete globally. In terms of practical implications, this paper highlights the importance of adoption and usage of social media as a means of shaping the employees perception and usage of the technology. All the businesses believed social media has provided them with many benefits; brand awareness, publicity, sales, celebrity endorsements and enhanced customer relations. However, none of the businesses interviewed recorded any of the valuable information communicated through social media.

Three of the six businesses interviewed do not use any form of traditional marketing, "local newspapers are absolutely useless for my business, to be honest. I have never even thought about radio. They are very expensive for one little advert, and people will say oh I saw your ad, and they will have forgotten about it. Where with social media, you are getting it free, so you can keep doing it." One business did a small amount of traditional marketing in the form of paper advertisements, but it was nothing compared to the level of social media they do. All business interviewed had a website, but none had statistics or an easy way of editing their websites. None of the small businesses are recording the breakdown of their sales, so it is hard to gauge the actual emanating from social media.

#### 6. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

This paper reviews the literature on technology adoption and usage linking to the difference stages of experience and the findings will be relevant to researchers and practitioners. In terms of the theoretical contribution, this paper introduces the need for SMEs to adopt and use social media marketing in order to compete globally. In terms of practical implications, this pilot highlights the importance of adoption and usage of social media as a main shaping the employees perception and usage of the technology.

None of the businesses were recording sales through social media, so they are not fully aware of the benefit social media might have on their business. Some businesses understood the different market segments of social media tools. For example, Twitter was identified as for the service industry and Facebook for the retailers. What was quite worrying is that none of the businesses reviewed in detail any statistics on any of the tools they had used, so were unaware of the depth of their target audience.

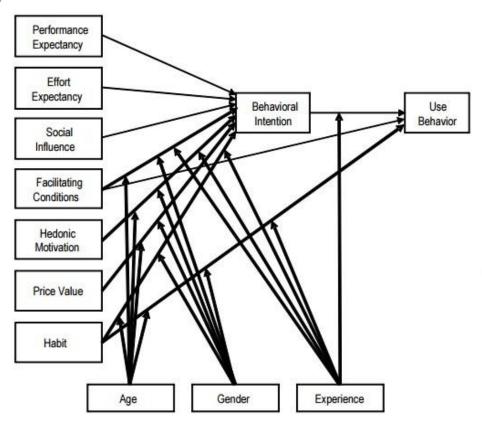
Regarding age and gender, younger people are more active on social media, with the younger males fully adopting numerous social media tools, compared to the older males. The younger females have also embraced social media tools. Men are more influenced by instrumentality, while women were more strongly influenced by social factors and environmental constraints Age and education were found to be significant factor in adoption of technologies (Gloy & Akridge, 2000; Morris, Venkatesh, & Ackerman, 2005). Further research using a wider sample is required to determine whether there is a difference between younger males and females.

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## Appendix



Appendix Figure 1: Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT2)

	Products	Size	SMM tools used	Website (Y/N)	Female/ Male	Age
Carrowholly Cheese	Gouda style farmhouse Cheese	1	Facebook/ Twitter	Y	Male	56
Cuinneog	Natural Butter Milk and farmhouse butter		Facebook/. Twitter	Y	Female	37 and 43
Blast & Wilde	Handmade butter	2	Facebook/ Twitter/blog	Y	Female	46
Mossfield	Milk, Cheese and yoghurts	7	Facebook/Twitter	Y	Male	63
Boyne valley Cheese	Cheese	2	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, vine, Vimeo and four squared	Y	Male	37
Killeen Farmhouse Cheese	Cheese	3	Facebook	Y	Female	42

Appendix Table 1: Small Dairy Business in Ireland Interviewed

Business	Age	Gender	Performa nce	Effort Expectan cy	Social Influence	Facilitating Conditions	Hedonic Motivation	Price Value	Habit / Experience
Cuinneog	37	Female	Agreed	Little effort	Tool never suggested	Smartphone/ PC	High level of SMM Adopted/Usage	Not considere d	Medium habit – 2 SMM tools, Strong experience
(Cuinneog)	43	Female	Agreed	Little effort	Tool never suggested	Smartphone/ PC	High level of SMM Adopted/Usage	Not considere d	Medium habit – 2 SMM tools, Strong experience
Carrowholly Cheese	56	Male	Agreed	A Lot of Effort	Tool never suggested	Smartphone/PC	Low level of SMM Adopted/Usage	Not considere d	Strong habit - 1 SMM tool, Medium experience
Boyne Valley Cheese	37	Male	Agreed	Little Effort	Self- Researche d	Smartphone	Extremely high level of SMM Adopted/Usage	Not considere d	Low habit – 4/5 SMM tools, high experience
Mossfield	63	Male	Agreed	A Lot of Effort	Tool never suggested	Smartphone/PC	Low Level of SMM Adopted/Usage	Not considere d	Strong habit - 1 SMM tool, Medium experience
Killeen	42	Female	Agreed	A Lot of Effort	Tool never suggested	Smartphone	Low Level of SMM Adopted/Usage	Not considere d	Strong habit- 1 SMM tool, Medium experience
Blast and Wilde	46	Female/ Male	Agreed	Some Effort	Tool was suggested and used.	Smartphone/PC	High level of SMM Adopted/Usage	Not considere d	Medium habit – 2 SMM tools, Medium experience

Table 2: Hypotheses Answered