The influence of B to B firms use of multiple social media platforms on relationship sales performance: an institutional perspective

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Abstract

Purpose

Overwhelmed by the huge rise in the number of social media (SM) platforms, B to B firms have been increasingly using multiple social media (SM) platforms to enhance their relationships with their customers. The purpose of this study in to investigate the influence of the competitive pressure to use SM on B to B firms use of multiple SM platforms, organization and individual SM competences and on relationship sales performance.

Method

An online survey is implemented to collect data from B to B firms from different industries in an emerging market, i.e. Kuwait, to produce 152 usable questionnaires. Structural equation modeling is carried out using Smart PLS 3.

Findings

The main findings show that competitive pressure to use SM fully influences relationship sales performance through individual social media competence. It also influences relationship sales performance through two mediations (1) organizational SM competence, (2) on a less important level, through the use of multiple SM platforms and organizational SM competence. Additionally, both organization and individual SM competence are found to significantly influence relationship sales performance.

Implications

This study uncovers the complex mechanism through which competitive pressures to use social media influences both individual and organization social media competence and their relationship with their customers. It demonstrates that the use of multiple SM platforms significantly increases relationship sales performance, but this influence is weak. Therefore, top managers must choose the right number of SM platforms and design clear SM strategies.

Originality

This study sheds light on the influence of competitive pressure to use SM on B to B firms' relationships with their customers i.e. relationship sales performance. This coercive pressure could potentially spread B to B firms' resources over a large number of SM and lead to poor SM presence. The study also emphasizes the role of top management in choosing the optimal combination of SM platforms and developing their organization SM competence.

Keywords

Institutional theory, Multiple SM platforms use, Relationship sales performance, Individual SM competences, Organizational SM competences

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Introduction

Social media sites (SM) represent "a group of internet-based applications build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content." (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). These applications differ by type, function and purpose (Primack et al., 2017) and include social networking sites e.g. LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and social media platforms e.g. blogs, moblogs, company sponsored chat rooms or discussion boards, and product or service ratings websites (Habibi et al., 2015; Zaki et al., 2018). Social networks are increasingly used worldwide reaching approximately 3.6 billion users (Statista, 2020a) and marketers are required to consistently communicate with their audiences using multiple and shifting sites and to choose appropriate SM platforms for firm's business and brands (Reilley, 2014).

SM provide firms several benefits. SM promote B to B firms' innovation activities and co-creation between stakeholders, enhance relationships in the supply chain and encourage

positive word of mouth from customers (Burrati et al., 2018). SM represent an interesting source of information and updates about firms' services and products (Flanigan and Obermier, 2016) and enable firms to communicate about their products and services (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Marketers use Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to improved traffic, generate leads and enhance consumer loyalty (Statista, 2020b). In addition to diminishing the limitations of time and geographical location (Michaelidou et al., 2011), SM enhance B to B firms' brand image (Rindell and Strandvik, 2010), and increase sales performance, opportunity creation and lead generation (Abu Baker and Ahmad, 2018; Habibi et al., 2015; Rodriguez et al., 2015; Ferrer et al., 2013). Most importantly, SM transform people's thinking about their relationship practices (Grunig, 2009) and enhance the management of customer-supplier interactions which lead to the growth of market share, sales and profitability (Foltean et al., 2019).

In B to B relationships, human interaction and connection through social networks positively influences sales processes and enhances B to B relationship sales performance through leveraging selling organizations' ability to create opportunities and manage relationships (Rodriguez et al., 2012). However, it seems that sales' managers are not fully taking advantage of the many benefits of SM use in sales as indicated by the "discrepancy between the relevance and the usage of social media in sales" (Guesalagua et al., 2015, p.71) and inter-personal interaction between buyers and sellers through SM are still underexplored (Burrati et al., 2018). Such a situation is rather critical because to harness the benefits of SM, businesses must understand the relevance of those networking tools and use them appropriately (Iankova, 2018; Barnes, 2010).

In addition to the small body of literature addressing SM use in B to B firms (Lacka and Chong, 2016, Kooli et al., 2019), studies in the field remain rather fragmented and fail to provide a multi perspective understanding of the antecedents and outcome of SM use in B to B firms (Muller et al. 2018; Pascucci et al., 2018). Previous studies focused on the way organizations use their competences to integrate technologies and develop their capabilities (Savory, 2006; Boisot, 1998). To develop their competences to integrate technology, firm's adoption of innovation must be understood. For instance, factors related to the external environment (e.g. competition) have been found to significantly influence B to B firms' adoption and use of SM (Pascucci et al., 2018; Olivera and Martins, 2011; Scott and Christensen 1995; Scott, 2001). Therefore, to make the best use of SM, it is paramount for B to B firms to understand how external factors intertwine with individual and organizational factors to influence B to B firms' use of SM (Pascucci et al., 2018).

Against this theoretical background, and overwhelmed by the huge number of available SM platforms, B to B firms are increasingly using multiple SM platforms (Mudambi et al., 2019, Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010) to achieve different marketing purposes (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). However, this could potentially overstretch firms' marketing teams and lead firms to have a poor SM presence (Holtman, 2018) or a presence that is "mile wide and an inch deep" (Burdett, 2020).

The synergetic influence of the use of multiple SM platforms is yet to be evidenced i.e. the influence on sales (Nunan et al., 2018, Gruner and Power, 2018). To the best of our knowledge, previous studies did not address the potential synergetic influence of multiple SM platform use on buyer seller. Exiting studies rather investigated the influence of the use of isolated single SM platform (Wang, 2016) or the influence of SM as whole ,with no specific reference to any platform (Lacka and Chong, 2016, Walsh et al., 2016; Tsimonis and Dimitriadis, 2013). Although multiple SM platforms use is a critical issue for businesses because of the potential huge costs involved in setting SM accounts (Flanigan and Obermier, 2016; Michaelidou et al., 2011) and businesses' lack of resources (Jarvinen et al 2012; Jussila et al 2014), none of the prevailing studies attempted to evidence the benefits of salesmen and buyers' interaction through the use of multiple SM platforms and to justify their recourse to a combination of SM platforms in approaching their counterparts in the buying organizations. This study builds on the institutional theory, competences approach and the social capital theory to provide insight into the significance of the influence of B to B firms use of multiple SM platform SM on relationship sales performance by focusing on B to B firms in emerging markets i.e. Kuwait.

Why do B to B firms use multiple social media platforms?

SM and its SM applications and networking sites have been recognized as one of the most important innovations in the broader information technology field and have been increasingly utilized and studied, especially in the business-to-consumer marketing context (De Vries, Gensler and Leeflang, 2012; Nadeem, Andreini, Salo, & Laukkanen, 2015). Even though there has been an increasing interest in better understanding the benefits and uses of SM in business-to-business (B to B) marketing (Agnihotri, Dingus, Hu, and Krush, 2016), research on that area is still limited comparing to the consumer context (Siamagka, Christodoulides, Michaelidou, and Valvi, 2015; Lacka and Chong; 2016Salo, 2017), and so more research is needed (Wiersema, 2013).

SM use in B to B firms helps achieving effective marketing activities and enhances the exchange cycle between sellers and buyers (Buratti et al., 2018; Baggozi, 2010). It also leads

to co-creation and innovation (Brink, 2017). Agnihotri et al. (2012) argued that SM use boosts communication between customers and sellers. This is especially important because salespeople have limited face to face time with their customers and this could be compensated by using SM to continue the connection with customers (Flanigan and Obermier 2016). This continued connection with customers involves various kinds of SM interaction (Tiago and Verıssimo, 2014) which fosters interaction with customers(Ferrer et al., 2013; Wong, 2012) and enhances B to B firms' social capital as well as relationship sales performance by increasing the number of prospects, enhancing the relationship with customers and effectively communicating with them (Rodriguez et al., 2016; 2012). Such a result is also supported by Palmatier and Stenhoff (2019), who stressed the role digital tools in enhancing interpersonal relationships and personal selling.

More recently, businesses have been using multiple SM platforms to communicate with customers that are active on multiple platforms (Greenwood et al., 2016). Rapp et al. (2013, p. 247) claimed that by 2010 " Fortune 100 companies averaged 20 social media accounts each, which they used to interact with customers, corporate partners, end consumers, and other stakeholders". Whilst the benefits derived by B to B firms from using multiple SM platforms are not proved (Nunan et al., 2018), firms should analyze their use of a group of SM and develop SM metrics to appropriately manage, increase or intensify, SM activities to achieve performance, advertising success as well as optimal planning of future SM use (Aichner and Jacob, 2015, p.263).

In view of this, though a few empirical studies took into account a set of SM platforms in measuring SM use by B to B firms, none explicitly identified the potential synergetic influence of multiple SM platform use on relationships sales performance. For example, Guesalagua et al. (2015) investigated the intensity of use of a set of SM and assessed their use in sales. Trainor et al. (2014) examined the use of SM, using a multiple-choice question leading to a single score translating the number of SM used in each organization, and showed that it positively relates to customer relationship performance. Additionally, Tiago and Verıssimo (2014) suggested that firms can be at different levels in their use of digital marketing taking into account their degree of digital marketing use and the perceived benefit from it, as follows: (1) digital users and interactive users extensively use digital marketing and highly perceive its benefits, (2) digital learners extensively use digital marketing and do not perceive its benefits, (3) digital laggards use limited digital marketing and do not perceive its benefit

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between multiple SM use by B to B firms and relationship sales performance. This study covers gaps in the literature by furthering the understanding the influence of SM on developing relationships with customers (Rapp et al., 2013) and the influence of SM use of organizational performance (Muller et al., 2018), this study responds to Nunan et al. (2018) call to examine the derived synergistic effect of the use of multiple SM platforms on sales i.e. relationship sales performance.

Competitive pressure influence on multiple SM platforms

Competitive pressures' influence on firms' SM use has been widely researched (e.g. Bahrathi et al., 2014; Badar et al., 2020). Such studies build on the institutional theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983), suggesting that firms are subject to three types of institutional isomorphism (1) coercive isomorphism exerted stemming from other organizations, firms rely on and from the cultural expectations of the society they belong to. (2) mimetic isomorphism originating from uncertainty linked to a lack of understanding of external environment e.g. technological, forcing organization to choose the safer option which is to imitate other originations; (3) normative isomorphism engendered through a professionalization stimulated by formal education i.e. universities, and professional networks i.e. training institutions, that both contribute to developing organizational norms among professional managers and their staff. Liang et al (2007) claimed that the institutional forces and top management interact to influence organizational assimilation of innovation; in addition to the indirect influence, the authors emphasized a direct influence of mimetic pressures on the on organizational assimilation of IT innovation i.e. ERP, as employees may be directly exposed to isomorphic pressures and coerced to use more ERP functionalities in their work routines and processes because they perceive their competitors are successfully using this technology. Abrahamson and Rosenkopf (1993) also found that firms adopt innovations not only based on an evaluation of the returns on innovation but also on the basis of their assessment of the potential loss they would make in terms of competitive advantage if the innovation is increasingly and successfully adopted by competitors. Foltean et al. (2019) added that B to B firms ensure their legitimacy in the market environment and align their practices (i.e. SM use) to their competitors'. Also, Matikiti et al. (2018) claimed that competitors influence attitude towards SM marketing adoption in South African travel agencies and tour operators.

Sinclaire and Vogus (2011) claimed that firms tend to imitate their competitors in order to protect their competitiveness. Therefore, it is not surprising that in a highly competitive industry, it is usually faster to use and adopt innovative technological systems (Derham et al.,

2011). Other studies confirmed that firms are more innovative when the competitive pressure is high. For instance, in the context of Thai SMEs, competitive intensity has been shown to positively influences organization adoption of e-commerce (Lertwongsatien and Wongpinunwatana, 2003). In the same vein, competitive pressures have been found to be an essential factor influencing Jordanian B to B firms to use digital media for marketing purposes (Shaltoni, 2017) and influenced organizations in the UAE and made develop and intention to use social media (Ahmed et al., 2019). Tiago and Verrissimo (2014) emphasized the primary role of external competitive pressure in driving Portuguese firms' use of SM to establish a direct dialogue with external stakeholders e.g. suppliers and customers. Similarly, Ahani et al. (2017) demonstrated that competitive pressures are an important driver for social CRM adoption in the context of Malaysian SMEs. Such memetic pressures contribute to homogenization of firms' behavior (DiMaggio and Powell 1983), meaning that firms will tend to mimic each other in the use of SM platforms.

In the light of this, B to B firms have been increasingly using multiple SM to interact with internal and external stakeholders (Tiago and Verrissimo, 2014). Smith et al. (2015) claimed that over 80% of Fortune 500 firms driving the American economy and the world economy use in average 3.6 different platforms. Therefore, competitors' use of multiple SM platforms expected to coerce firms to do the same.

The mediation role of the use of multiple SM platform between competitive pressure and organization SM competence

The use of multiple SM enhances an organization's proficiency in using new communication processes and operational routines to develop new products and processes, and this will in turn develop higher SM competence or proficiency in using and leveraging a portfolio of social media capabilities (Braojos-Gomez et al., 2015, p. 450). Organizational SM competence is considered as "the supplier company's knowledge about social media and the expertise in making a productive use of it" (Guesalagua, 2015, p.74). Competences can also be defined as a system of technology, human beings, organizational (formal) and cultural (informal) elements and the interactions of these elements (Drejer, 2000). This system is the result of the collective learning in the organization that requires the integration of multiple streams of technologies (Prahalad and Hamel, 1990). Savory (2006) identified that competences are an organization's intangible assets or knowledge assets and are critical for dynamic capabilities and compared to organizations physical assets, these knowledge assets matures with use. Furthermore, Firms' capabilities are dynamic because of the nature of the linkages between market, technological

environment and the competence base of a firm (Iansiti and Clark, 1994). Teece (2018, p. 23) added that combining "dynamic capabilities of the managers and the organization enable the enterprise to profitably orchestrate its resources, competences, and other assets". Teece et al. (1997) stressed the need to exploit internal and external organizational competences to address changing environments e.g. technological skills. Moreover, Petroni (1998) claimed that the interaction between technological and organizational processes plays a critical role in driving innovation which in turn influences the creation, shape and renewal of a firm's skills and capabilities and the remodeling the firm's competence base, In this vein, Teece (2018; p. 2) argued that little is known about how "*individual firms build and manage capabilities to innovate and grow, causing the zero-profit trap of competitive equilibrium to fade away"*. The author further claimed that for firms to adopt an innovation, there is a need of "appreciative frameworks" that supports firms' resource allocation decisions (Teece, 2018). Day (2011) further argued that developing capabilities for designing and implementing marketing mix decisions is critical for B to B firms. Savory (2006) and Boisot (1998) claimed that organizations use their competences to integrate technologies and by doing so, they develop their capabilities.

Moreover, Barhati et al. (2014) found that firms' assimilation of SM is influenced absorptive capacity which in turn, is influenced by institutional pressures e.g. competitors. This result is also confirmed by other studies showing that competitive pressures influence organization SM competence (Braojos-Gomez et al., 2015); Such pressures have been shown to contribute to homogenization of firms' behavior in terms of behavior and structure (De DiMaggio and Powell, 1983) including firms adoption and use of SM tools (Barhati et a., 2014). Therefore, it is expected that firms will mimic their competitors in the use of multiple SM platforms which will contribute to enhancing their SM competence. Existing studies did not evidence the synergic influence of the use of multiple SM platforms (Nunan, 2018). This study covers this gap and investigates and tests the influence of mimetic pressures i.e. competition, and role of multiple SM use in enhancing organization SM use. Therefore, the following hypothesis is stated:

Hypothesis 1: Multiple SM platform use partially and positively mediates the relationship between competitive pressure to use SM and organization SM competence.

The mediating role of the use of multiple SM platform between competitive pressure and individual SM competence

Burr and Girardi (2002) provided a broad definition of individuals' competence in organizational context taking in consideration individuals' self-efficacy, skills, knowledge, and ability. More specifically, Guesalaga (2015, p.74) defines individual SM competences as "as the individual proficiency and familiarity with social media tools". Hou and Chien (2010) critically emphasized the role individual as a source of knowledge that will in turn nurture organizational capabilities. Bharati et al. (2014, p. 268) claimed that competitor pressures only influence firms' use of SM via top management, meaning that individuals/employees are not exposed to these pressures and their use of SM "grows organically in a bottom-up fashion through initiatives taken by younger and more digitally savvy members of the management community".

In the context of higher education, Xu et al. (2019, p. 738) suggested that students' SM competence relates to "the knowledge and confidence to engage appropriately and effectively with social media". The authors defended that addressing students' SM competence will increase individuals' level of their digital citizenship and their skills in general. In a virtual work context, individual virtual competence is defined as a "new and distinct capability that individuals require in order to perform effectively in their organizations' (Wang and Haggerty, 2011, p. 300). Prior virtual experiences positively influence individual virtual competence by providing individuals more confidence in using it in a virtual workplace (Wang and Haggerty, 2009); In this vein, Walsh et al. (2016) claimed that employees' use of SM leverages employees' SM competence which could positively influence the public perception of the organization. Bharati et al. (2014, p. 22) explained that firms copy competitors and use SM that "grows organically in a bottom-up fashion through initiatives taken by younger and more digitally savvy members of the management community". Therefore, employees' use of SM is not driven by the organization' s managers. Rather, employees that are heavy users of SM in their personal life seem to use SM and develop their SM competence to mimic their competitors.

There is little evidence whether or not competitive pressures influence individual SM competence and if so, how this influence unfolds. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posited:

Hypothesis 2: Multiple SM platform use in B to B firms partially and positively mediates the relationship between competitive pressure to use SM and Individual SM competence

Individual and organizational competences influence on relationship sales performance

A growing trend of knowledge in B to B marketing is acknowledging the influence of both individual and organization SM competences on sales (Rodriguez et al., 2012; Guesalagua, 2015, p.74). Guesalagua (2015) demonstrated that organizational SM competence increase SM usage in sales. Rodriguez et al. (2012) also claimed that such competence contributes to enhanced relationship sales performance by expanding networks and increasing their social capital at both the individual and collective levels.

Furthermore, a study using a sample of knowledge workers representing different firms' context, functional and hierarchical positions, demonstrated that individual virtual competence has a positive influence on individual work outcomes in virtual sites (Wang and Haggerty, 2011). This is also corroborated by Walsh et al. (2016, p. 47) adding that employees' use of SM can support marketing activities and that the level of employees' SM competence determines the way the public perceives the firm.

Wang and Kim (2017) claimed that SM facilitates capabilities development and strengthen the relationship with customers. Therefore, to maximize the benefits of using SM B to B firms, it is essential to understand how both individuals/salespersons and organizations develop SM competences to achieve better relationship sales performance. Therefore, to maximize the benefits of using SM B to B firms, it is essential to understand how both individuals/salespersons and organizations develop SM competences to achieve better relationship sales performance.

This study contributes to improved understanding of how multiple SM use contributes to relationship sales performance, and builds on dynamic capabilities theory (Teece, 2018; Nielsen, 1991, Teece, 1997) as well as on the institutional pressure theory i.e. competitive pressure from industry rules and values and from key competitors (Zhu and Kraemer, 2005), to identify the influence of multiple SM use on individual SM competences, organizational SM competence and their effect on relationship sales performance.

Consequently, the following hypothesis is posited:

Hypothesis 3: Individual SM competence positively influences relationship sales performance
Hypothesis 4: Organization SM competence positively influences relationship sales performance.

Figure 1: Research framework

Research method

The aim of this study is to investigate the influence of competitive pressure on multiple SM use in B to B firms and its consequence on individual and organization competence and on relationship sales performance. A questionnaire was designed and administrated in an emerging market i.e. Kuwait, a country located in the MENA region. Very few studies focused on B to B firms' use of SM in emerging markets and extant studies mainly focused on the USA and Europe (Pascucci et al., 2018). For example, Chinese B to B marketers have been shown to have no expectation about their SM use and do not see its contribution to their marketing activities and to productivity (Lacka and Chong, 2016). This result was also confirmed by Kooli al. (2019) using a sample of B to B firms in Jordan. Therefore, it seems that SM influence on productivity and marketing activities are not well understood by B to B marketers in emerging countries. In their study in Brazil, Vieira et al. (2019) also found a negative association between Facebook, Google AdWords and Instagram campaign and sales. Such evidence does not confirm any rapid rise of SM use in emerging markets (Vieira et al., 2019). This means that the contribution of the SM use is still not understood by B to B marketers in emerging markets. This study further investigates how B to B firms in Kuwait are using multiple SM platforms to achieve better relationships with customers and develop relationship sales performance. It focuses on the influence of competitive pressure on B to B firms use of multiple SM platforms in an emerging market and on the development of individual and organizational SM competences and relationship sales performance.

Sampling

A non-probabilistic convenient sample was adopted. The questionnaire was sent to 700 potential respondents working in B to B firms using LinkedIn. The sample included B to B firms from different industries ranging from manufacturing industry e.g. food producers, to service industry e.g. consultancy and investment.

To eliminate any issue linked to the questions wording, apPilot test was conducted by sending the questionnaire to 10 respondents. No issues were reported, and the survey was sent to 690 more respondents. The questionnaire was created using Google forms and sent to potential respondents. The responses rate reached 17.4% which acceptable compared to what previous authors achieved e.g. Siamagka et al. (2015) achieved a 3% and Guesalagua et al. (2016) achieved 43.7% response rate, both using online surveys.

Measurements

To measure relationship sales performance, a scale is adapted from Rodriguez et al.(2012). The respondents were asked to indicated the level of their agreement on a three-item Likert scale from 1 to 7 (with 1=completely disagree, 2= disagree, 3=slightly agree, 4= neither agree or disagree, 5= slightly agree, 6 = agree and 7= completely disagree) using three statements: " *Compared to last year, new account acquisition has increased", "Compared to last year, the number of qualified opportunities/leads has increased"* and *"Compared to last year, our customer retention rate has increased*".

To measure multiple SM platform use, we based our choice on a discussion of prior literature: first, single item measure, for example, Guesalagua et al. (2015) measured SM use by adopting this question "On a scale from 0 to 10, please choose the number that best describes the intensity of your company's social media usage in the sales organization." The authors also included an explanation of what they mean by SM "web-based applications including LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Google+, and similar media that foster social interaction." Veldeman et al., (2015) used the following question: "which of the following social media does your company use: company blog, Facebook, Flickr, Foursquare, Google+, LinkedIn, Scribd, SlideShare, Twitter, Wikipedia, YouTube. Trainor et al. (2014) measure social media use using a multiple-choice question where respondents were given a list of SM and were asked to indicate whether they are using such technologies in their organizations by ticking a box. This question allowed Trainor et al. (2014) to determine a single score, translating the number of SM used in each organization (3) other measures used a Likert scale question to measure the level of individual SM use (Agnihotri et al., 2009).

For this study, and similarly to Trainor et al. (2019), respondents were given a list of SM and were asked to indicate use in the organization. They were also given the opportunity to provide any other option by including the option "other:…" in the question.

A 7-point Likert scale similar to the one used to measure relationship sales performance is used to measure competitive pressure using the measure developed by Ahmed and Abu Baker (2018).

Individual SM competence and organization SM competence were measured using a formative scale adapted from Guesalaga et al. (2015).

Finally, questions about firm size, age, gender and position in the organization, were also included. (Questionnaire included in appendix 1)

Data analysis

The respondents were drawn from 152 B to B firms in Kuwait. 54.6% are below 35-year-old, 30.3% are aged between 35 and 44, 9.9 % are aged between 45 and 55 and, only 5.3% are aged 55 and above. The firms are of different sizes, from small (8.6%), medium (73.7%) to big companies (17.8%). The number of SM platforms used by these firms varies from 1 platform (26%), 2 platforms (16.4%), 3 platforms (13.8%), 4 platforms (13.8%), 5 platforms (12.5%), 6 platforms (12.5%), 7 platforms (2.6%), to 8 platforms (2%) (Appendices 2,3,4).

To test the reliability, the internal consistency of the constructs and examine the research model, Partial Least Squares (PLS) method is implemented using SmartPLS3.0 software. According to Hair et al. (2013), PLS is increasingly adopted in marketing and management studies because it conciliates issues of non-normality and small to medium sample sizes. The skewness and Kurtosis analyses show. The skewness values varied from -0.386 to −These values exceeded the recommended values of 2 for Skewness and 3 for kurtosis (Kline, 2011). The sample size achieved in this study is rather small. Hence, Partial Least Squares (PLS) method is appropriate (see Table 5).

In PLS-SEM, common method bias is produced "by the measurement method used in an SEM study, and not by the network of causes and effects in the model being studied" (Kock, 2015; p.2). to ensure that the model is free from common bias, the author recommends that all factor level VIFs resulting from a full collinearity test should be equal to or lower than 3.3 (see table 6) show that the inner VIF values are below the cutoff value of 3.3. Hence, there is no common method bias.

Table 6: Inner VIFs

The measurement model was tested for convergent validity. This was assessed through factor loadings, Composite Reliability (CR), and Average Variance Extracted (AVE). Table 7 shows that all item loadings are greater than the cutoff value of 0.6 (Chin, Peterson, & Brown, 2008). Additionally, Composite reliability (CR) is tested to examine how well the construct indicators indicate the latent construct. All CR are shown to be greater than the cutoff value of 0.7; also, the overall amount of variance in the indicators accounted for by the latent construct expressed by the average variance extracted is greater than the threshold value of 0.5 (Hair et al., 2013).

Table 7 Reliability, validity and reliability for constructs.

The discriminant validity was then assessed by examining the correlations between the measure of interest and the measures of other constructs, as recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The square root of the AVE of each construct must be superior to its corresponding correlation coefficients; Table 7 shows that this condition is met, hence ensuring discriminant validity. In addition, the correlation between an indicator and its latent variable it has been assigned to, is higher compared to the correlations with the other constructs (Table B).

Table 8. Discriminant validity.

However, there are claims that the Fornell and Larcker criterion and cross-loadings are insufficiently sensitive to establish discriminant validity issues (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2015). The authors suggest to also examine the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations which they consider as the average hetrotrait-hetromethod correlations relative to the average monotrait-heteromethod. Table 9 , provides the results of the heterotrait-monomethod ratio of correlations which are all below 0.85; hence, indicating discriminant validity according to Kline (2011).

Table 9 : Heterotrait-Monotrait correlations

To test the hypotheses, Hair et al. (2013) recommended a bootstrap procedure and assessing the R2, beta, t-values, the predictive relevance (Q2) and the effect sizes (f2). The use of multiple SM platforms was found to partially and significantly mediate the relationship between competitive pressure to use SM and organization SM competence (β= 0.044; p= 0.022). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is accepted. However, the direct effect of competitive pressure to use SM on organization SM competence is more important (with β=0.653; p=0.000).

Moreover, the multiple use of SM platforms was not found to mediate the relationship between competitive pressure to use SM and individual SM competences because the relationship between the use multiple SM platform and individual SM competence was not established (β = 0.081; p = 0.148). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is rejected.

Additionally, individual SM competence and organization SM competence were both found to influence relationship sales performance (with respectively β = 0.210; p = 0.023; β = 0.508; p = 0.000). Therefore, hypotheses 3 and 4 are accepted.

The data analysis and specifically the mediation analysis revealed other mediation relationships (1) Indeed, individual SM competence was found to mediate the relationship between competitive pressure to use SM and relationship sales performance (with β=0.144; p=0.027); (2) Organization SM competence was found to mediate the relationship between competitive

pressure to use SM and relationship sales performance (with β=0.332; p=0.000); it also mediates the relationship between the use of multiple SM platforms and relationship sales performance (with β=0.08; p=0.008); (3) more interestingly, the data analysis uncovered a double mediation and show that competitive pressure to use SM significantly influences relationship sales performance through the use of multiple SM platforms and organization SM competence (with β=0.022; p=0.032). (See table 10 and table 11).

Table 10: Path coefficients with p value

Table 11: Mediation test

To further evaluate the structural model, R-square (R2) the percentage of the variance explained by the indicated variables was examined. Hair et al. (2017) suggested that the accepted level of R2 depends on the research context. The focus of this study is on predicting relationship sales performance. Individual SM competence is found to explain 47,9% of variance in relationship sales performance (R2 = 0.479) whereas organization SM competence explain 50.9% of variance in relationship sales performance (R2 = 0.509). The R2 values specify that the model is substantial because both values (0.479 and 0.509) are larger than the recommended value of 0.26 (Cohen, 1988) suggests would indicate a substantial model.

After checking the R2, the effect sizes was examined (f2) following Cohen's (1988) recommendations Table 12 presents the f-square values and indicates that the effects of competitive pressure on individual SM competence and organization SM competence are high; and the effect of organization SM competence on relationship sales performance is medium, and the effect of competitive pressure to use SM on the use of multiple SM platforms as well as the effect of the use of multiple SM platforms on organization SM competence are significant but low.

Table 12- F-square values

After examining the f2, a blindfolding technique was implemented to evaluate the predictive relevance of the model accordingly with Chin et al. (2008). This technique recommend to calculate Q2 -generated by using cross-validated redundancy procedures - shows how well data can be reconstructed empirically using the model and the PLS parameters. For this study, Q2 was obtained using cross-validated redundancy procedures. Q2 values of endogenous variables (calculated respectively for relationship sales performance, then for organization SM

competence and then for individual SM competence, see tables 13) are higher than 0 meaning that the model has predictive relevance.

Table 13- Construct cross validated redundancy

Recent studies using smartPLS are more and more considering measuring the goodness of fit indices i.e. the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), the root mean square residual covariance (RMStheta) and the exact model fit test (Dijkstra and Henseler, 2015a; Lohmöller, 1989). Nonetheless, the relevance of these measures is questioned because according to Ali et al. (2017, p. 523) the purpose of PLS-SEM analysis "is not to minimize the divergence between the empirical and model-implied covariance matrices, assessing the fit of the model on the grounds of this divergence seems inappropriate".

Discussion of the results

Hypothesis 1: Multiple SM platform use partially and positively mediates the relationship between competitive pressure to use SM and organization SM competence.

Multiple SM platform use is found to partially mediate the relationship between competitive pressure and organization SM competence, meaning that B to B firms develop their SM competence to copy their competitors and avoid the risk of missing an opportunity if not using multiple SM platforms. However, the results also support that the direct influence of competitive pressure to use SM on organization SM competence is higher than the indirect effect. Indeed, although, the mediating role of the use of multiple SM platforms is low (0.044; p=0.022), especially compared to the direct influence (0.635; p=0.000), it signals the growing importance of using multiple SM platforms but also it questions the effectiveness of the use of a high number of SM platforms in terms of augmenting organization SM competence and relationship sales performance.

Much of the influence of competitive pressure to use SM on relationship sales performance, occurs via organization SM competence as the data uncovered a full mediation of organization SM competence (0.332, p=0.000), between competitive pressure to use SM and relationship sales performance. The results also revealed a double mediation and delineates the mechanism through which competitive pressure to use SM influence relationship sales performance via the use of multiple SM platforms and organization SM competence. However, this double mediation is weaker (0.022, p= 0.032) compared to the former mediation (i.e. organization SM competence mediates the relationship between competitive pressure and relationship sales

performance).To the best of our knowledge, this study is the first to uncover these mediations and constitute a key contribution of this study.

The data analysis revealed a significant but weak (0.08; p=0.008) mediation role of organizational SM competence in the relationship between Multiple SM platforms use and relationship sales performance. If B to B firms increase the number of SM platforms because their competitors are doing so, this might marginally contribute to enhancing the relationship with customers.

This result is in line with previous literature claiming that that firms use SM to copy competitors (Barhati et al., 2014; Braojos-Gomez et al., 2015) and that their absorptive capacity is critical in facilitating this (Barhati et al., 2014). Additionally, this result stresses the role of managers in facilitating the development of organization SM competence but also in choosing the right combination of SM platforms. Using more SM platforms contribute very little to achieving relationship sales performance (0.008; p=). Such a result is in line with Bharati et al. (2014) and Liang et al. (2007) emphasizing the strong role of top management in firms' assimilation of SM. Additionally, this result also point at the role of top managers in choosing the optimal combinations of SM platforms they use in the organizations in order to avoid overextending their brands on too many networks. Moreover, for firms to adopt an innovation, there is a need of "appreciative frameworks" that supports firms' resource allocation decisions (Teece, 2018). Additionally, our results confirm that developing capabilities for designing and implementing marketing mix decisions is critical for B to B firms (Day, 2011).

Hypothesis 2: Multiple SM platform use in B to B firms fully and positively mediates the relationship between competitive pressure to use SM and individual SM competence

This hypothesis is rejected meaning that using multiple SM platform does not mediate the relationship between competitive pressure and individual SM competence. It can be concluded that using a higher number of SM platforms does not increase B to B marketers' individual SM competencies i.e. self-efficacy, skills, knowledge, ability (Burr and Girardi, 2002) and knowledge (Wang and Haggerty, 2009). This result contradicts a previous study carried out by Walsh et al. (2016) showing that employees' use of SM can support the level of their SM competence. However, Walsh et al. (2016) does not focus on the number of SM platforms used by the employees. Our study result could be explained by the fact that using excessive SM for work purposes is negatively associated with employees' intrinsic work motivation (Demircioglu and Chen, 2019).

Moreover, the finding revealed the mediation role of individual SM competence in the relationship between competitive pressure to use SM and relationship sales performance. However, this mediation effect is low - Q2= 0.023 (Chin et al., 2008) (table 13 Construct cross validated redundancy). Hence, individual SM competence role is much less important than organization SM competence in driving relationship sales performance.

To the best of our knowledge this study is the first to uncover this result. In this line, Bharati et al. (2014) claimed that employees are not exposed to competitors' pressure and their use of SM is rather driven by digitally savvy younger generation of employees. Their use of SM "grows organically in a bottom-up fashion through initiatives taken by younger and more digitally savvy members of the management community" (Bharati et al., 2014; p. 22

Hypothesis 3: individual SM competence significantly influence relationship sales performance

Hypothesis 4: organization SM competence significantly influence relationship sales performance

Individual and organization SM competences are found to influence relationship sales performance. These results confirm that firms' use of SM enhances marketing activities (Walsh et al., 2016) and strengthen the relationship with customers (Wang and Kim, 2017). More interestingly, it seems that organization SM competence is a stronger predictor than individual SM competence (0.508 vs 0.210) with Q2 values respectively equal to 1.49 and 0.023. Such result signals the importance of developing SM skills, knowledge and expertise at the organization level, which are according to Savory (2006), critical for dynamic capabilities. Such results support previous studies and highlight the role of both organizational SM competence and individual SM competence in predicting relationship sales performance. For instance, Rodriguez et al. (2012) established that B to B firms' use of SM influences relationship sales performance through expanding networks and increasing their social capital at both the individual and collective levels; However, our study show that individual SM competences seem to be perceived as a weak contributor to relationship sales performance. Previous studies conducted in emerging markets may explain such finding. For instance, Kooli et al. (2019) and Lacka and Chong (2016) both emphasized that individuals do not associate their use of SM at work with an increase of productivity. To some extent, these results provide

some support to Guesalagua (2015) findings according to which only organization SM competence influence the use of social media in sales.

Implications for theory and practice

This study aimed to shed the light on B to B firms use multiple SM platforms and whether and how this behavior helps them achieving better relationship sales performance.

The results revealed that B to B firms mimic their competitors who are increasingly using multiple SM platforms, and therefore, they tend themselves to more SM platforms. The results also show that B to B firms' use of multiple SM platforms does not influence individual SM competence. However, the data analysis uncovered the mediation of competitive pressure to use SM and relationship sales performance. Additionally, the predictive relevance of individual SM competence further emphasize its role as a mediator.

Moreover, the results confirmed that B to B firms' multiple use of SM platforms significantly and partially mediates the relationship between competitive pressure to use SM and organization SM competence. However, this partial mediation is low compared to the direct influence of competitor pressure to use SM on organization SM competence. Additionally, the results revealed complex relationships between competitive pressure to use SM and relationship sales performance. Competitors use of multiple SM platforms seems to influence relationship sales performance via two paths: (1) through organization SM competence and (2) and through the double mediation of the use of multiple SM platforms as well as organization SM competence. However, this double mediation seems to have a minor weight (0.022; p=0.032) compared to the single mediation (0.332; p=0.000). Finally, this study contributes to further the understanding of the influence of mimetic pressures (deMaggio and Powell, 1983) on B to B firms use of SM and provides evidence of a low return on relationship resulting from the use of multiple SM. It also emphasizes the pivotal role of organization SM competence in achieving relationship sales performance.

From a practical perspective, this study demonstrates that using more SM platforms does not lead to an important improvement in relationship sales performance. Therefore, it stresses the need for top management to develop a clear SM strategy and this includes choosing the right combination of SM platforms and optimizing the number of SM platforms they develop in the organization. Rather than spreading their resources over many SM platforms and achieving a weak presence in many SM platforms, B to B firms must develop a strong presence in a few SM platforms. Burdett (2020) suggests that B to B firms must focus on three key SM platforms

i.e. (1) LinkedIn to make contacts and build relationships, build their brands and establish thought leadership, run targeted advertising, introduce the company, share content and increase traffic back to the company's website, (2) Google+ to increase visibility in search engines, engage customers and create opportunities for relationship building; and (3) Twitter to communicate with customers and increase traffic back to the company's website. The study results also suggest that top managers (rather than copying their competitors) must deeply understand how their competitors develop their presence of different SM platforms and consequently develop their SM competence.

This study revealed that B to B firms use of multiple SM platforms does not influence individual SM competence. Indeed, firms could develop individual SM competence by recruiting highly SM competent individual. However, top managers should take into account that encouraging employees to use multiple SM platforms could be negatively perceived and lead to employee demotivation (Demircioglu and Chen, 2019).

Limitations and future research areas

Though the study results provide important insight, some limitations should be addressed.

First, data were collected in an emerging market i.e. Kuwait. B to B firms' use of multiple SM platforms could be perceived differently in developed markets such us the EU, the UK and the USA. Future, studies could replicate this study in developed markets to investigate the influence of B to B firms' mimetic behavior on both their individual and organization SM competences and on their relationship sales performance.

Second, the sample size (152) constitute another limitation. Future studies could test the model by using a larger sample. This could potentially improve the quality of the results, especially, it could improve the results concerning the mediating role of multiple SM platform use.

Third, the mimetic pressures considered in this study stems only from competitors. Other mimetic pressures could also be considered and included in the model such as the pressure to use SM stemming from clients.

Finally, the data analysis revealed a number of new findings. The mediating role of organization SM competence plays a key role in the relationship between competitive pressure to use SM and relationship sales performance. The data analysis also exposed a double mediation and shows that competitive pressure to use SM also significantly influence relationship sales performance through the use of multiple SM platforms and organization SM

competence. Although this mediation is weak, it signals a potential complex influence that could be further investigated in future studies

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Appendices

Table 1: Measurements

Concepts	Items	Authors	Construct type
Consequences of multiple SM use			
Relationship sales performance	1.Compared to last year, new account acquisition has increased. 2.Compared to last year, the number of qualified opportunities/leads has increased 3.Compared to last year, our customer retention rate has increased.	Rodriguez et al., 2012	Reflective
Multiple SM use			
Multiple SM use	Which of the following social media does your company use? ○ A company blog ○ Facebook ○ Flickr ○ Foursquare ○ Google+ ○ LinkedIn ○ Scribd ○ SlideShare ○ Twitter	Trainor et al. 2014	Binary

	○ Wikipedia ○ YouTube ○ Other:___		
Individual antecedents			
Individual competence is SM	1-How would you rate your overall proficiency with general business technology (business software applications, web applications, PCs/tablets/smartphones)? Extremely poor verypoor poor neither poor nor good good very good excellent 2-How familiar/knowledgeable are you with the following social media tools? Average: Twitter-Facebook-LinkedIn-Google + −Youtube (very unfamiliar =1 to very familiar 7) 3-I have a solid understanding of how to use social media in my job. (1=strongly disagree to 7 =strongly agree) 4-I have received sufficient training from my organization on using social media. (1=strongly disagree to 7 =strongly agree)	Guesalagua. 2015	Formative
Competitive factors			
Competitive Pressure	(1=strongly disagree to 7 =strongly agree and 4= neutral) 1.Social media would allow the firm stronger competitive advantage 2.Social media would increase firm ability to outperform competition 3.Social media would allow the firm to generate higher profits	Ahmad and Abu Baker, 2018	Reflective
Organizational antecedents			
Organizational Competence	(1=strongly disagree to 7 =strongly agree and 4= neutral) 1.My organization makes productive use of social media. 2.Our sales organization is innovative and forward-thinking when it comes to adopting productivity-enhancing technology. 3.My organization's senior leadership is knowledgeable about social media. 4.My organization's leadership actively uses social media	Guesalaga, 2015	Formative
Firm Size	How many employees does your company count? How many employees does your company count? ○ 1-9 ○ 10-49 ○ 50-250 ○ ≥251	Veldeman et al., 2015	

Figure 1 : Research model

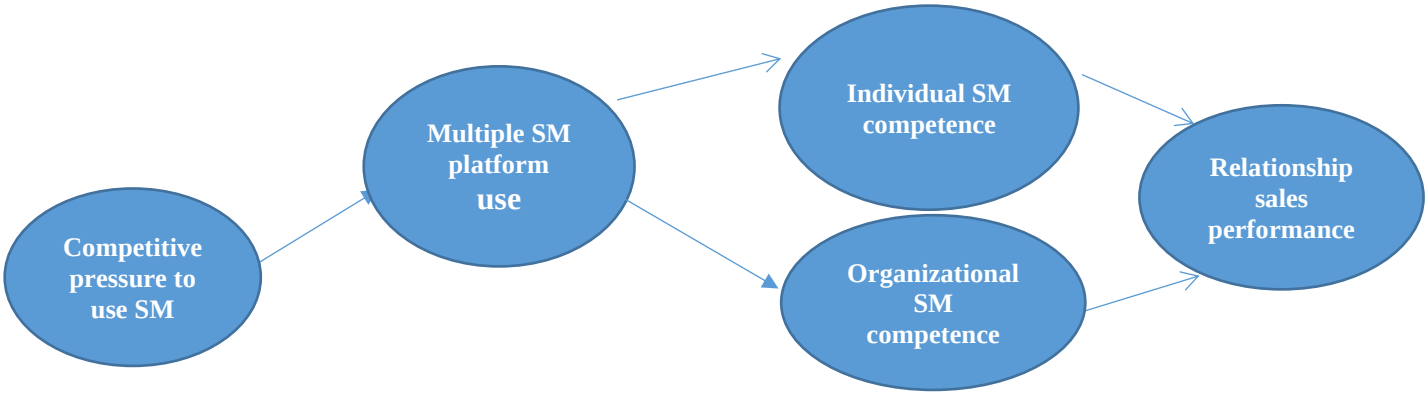

Table 2 : Age of the respondents

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	83	54.6	54.6	54.6
	2	46	30.3	30.3	84.9
	3	15	9.9	9.9	94.7
	4	8	5.3	5.3	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

1= 35<; 2= 35-44; 3= 45-54; 4> 55;

Table 3: Firm size

FIRMS

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	13	8.6	8.6	8.6
	2	67	44.1	44.1	52.6
	3	45	29.6	29.6	82.2
	4	27	17.8	17.8	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

1= 1-9; 2=10-49 ; 3= 50-250; 4=≥251

Table 4: number of platform used / firm

SMIU

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	40	26.3	26.3	26.3
	2	25	16.4	16.4	42.8
	3	21	13.8	13.8	56.6
	4	21	13.8	13.8	70.4

	5	19	12.5	12.5	82.9
	6	19	12.5	12.5	95.4
	7	4	2.6	2.6	98.0
	8	3	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	152	100.0	100.0	

Table 5: Skewness and Kurtosis

		SMIU	COMPP_q1	COMPP_q2	COMPP_q3	ORGC_q1	ORGC_q2	ORGC_q3	ORGC_q4
N	Valid	152	152	152	152	152	152	152	152
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Skewness		.434	-.944	-.884	-.727	-.543	-.562	-.582	-.531
Std. Error of Skewness		.197	.197	.197	.197	.197	.197	.197	.197
Kurtosis		-.905	-.098	-.069	-.078	-.823	-.373	-.362	-.520
Std. Error of Kurtosis		.391	.391	.391	.391	.391	.391	.391	.391

Table 6: Inner VIF values

Inner VIF	COMPP	INDC	MSMU	ORGC	RELSALP
COMPP		1.99	2.179	2.047	2.245
INDC	2.175		2.291	2.152	2.38
MSMU	1.138	1.143		1.098	1.135
ORGC	2.731	2.614	2.857		2.555
RELSALP	1.855	1.817	1.86	1.592	

Table 7. Construct reliability, validity and composite reliability.

Constructs	Items	Loading	AVE	CR	Cronbach Alpha
Competitive pressure to use SM	COMPP_q1	0.935	0.912	0.937	0.898
	COMPP_q2	0.902			
	COMPP_q3	0.898			
Individual SM competence	INDC_q1	0.817	0.821	0.891	0.837
	INDC_q2	0.868			
	INDC_q3	0.902			
	INDC_q4	0.68			
Orgnaisational SM competence	ORGC_q1	0.896	0.894	0.937	0.916
	ORGC_q2	0.906			
	ORGC_q3	0.902			
	ORGC_q4	0.843			

Relationship Sales Performance	RELSALP_q1	0.907	0.894	0.923	0.874
	RELSALP_q2	0.895			
	RELSALP_q3	0.879			
Multiple SM platforms use	SMIU	1	1	1	1

Table 8 : Discriminant validity

Fornell Larcker criteria					
	COMPP	INDC	MSMU	ORGC	RELSALP
COMPP	**0.912**				
INDC	0.687	**0.821**			
MSMU	0.28	0.267	**1**		
ORGC	0.697	0.721	0.341	**0.887**	
RELSALP	0.541	0.576	0.178	0.66	**0.894**

Table 9: Heterotrait-Monotrait

Heterotrait- Monotrait					
	COMPP	INDC	MSMU	ORGC	RELSALP
COMPP					
INDC	0.776				
MSMU	0.295	0.302			
ORGC	0.767	0.815	0.356		
RELSALP	0.606	0.671	0.189	0.735	

Table 10 : Structural Equation Modelling : Path Coefficient and P value after Bootstrap

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
COMPP -> INDC	0.688	0.69	0.06	11.454	0
COMPP -> MSMU	0.281	0.282	0.072	3.904	0
COMPP -> ORGC	0.653	0.653	0.053	12.342	0
INDC -> RELSALP	0.21	0.207	0.092	2.282	0.023
MSMU -> ORGC	0.158	0.159	0.053	2.981	0.003
ORGC -> RELSALP	0.508	0.514	0.089	5.722	0

Table 11 : Mediations test

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
COMPP -> MSMU -> ORGC	0.044	0.045	0.019	2.298	0.022
COMPP -> INDC -> RELSALP	0.144	0.142	0.065	2.221	0.027
COMPP -> ORGC -> RELSALP	0.332	0.336	0.065	5.112	0
MSMU -> ORGC -> RELSALP	0.08	0.081	0.03	2.681	0.008
COMPP -> MSMU -> ORGC -> RELSALP	0.022	0.023	0.01	2.146	0.032

Table 12: F- Square

	COMPP	INDC	MSMU	ORGC	RELSALP

COMPP		0.781	0.085	0.8	0.008
INDC					0.023
MSMU		0.012		0.047	0.006
ORGC					0.172

Table 13: Construct cross validated redundancy

Predictive relevance	Q-SQUARE INCLUDED	Q-SQUARE EXCLUDED	Predictive relevance= (Q2 included-Q2excluded)/(1-Q2included)
ORGC	0.356	0.261	1.49
INDC	0.356	0.341	0.023
PREDICTIVE RELEVANCE ORGC			
MSMU	0.391	0.376	0.024
COMPP	0.391	0.089	0.49
Predictive relevance for INDC			
COMPP	0.308	0	0.44

Figure 2: Validated research model

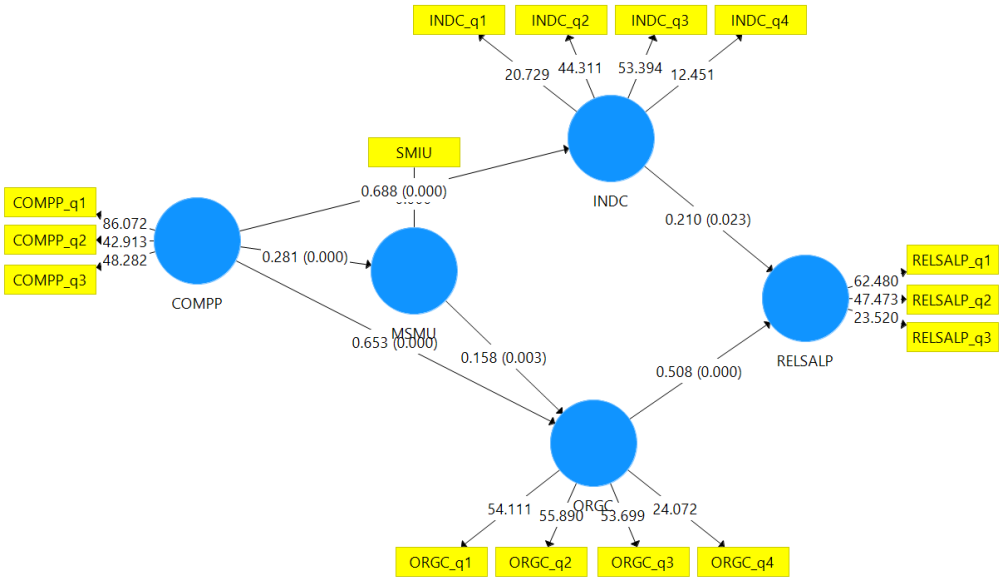

Table 14: Summary of hypotheses testing

Hypotheses	Test outcomes

Multiple SM platform use partially and positively mediates the relationship between competitive pressure to use SM and organization SM competence.	Accepted
Multiple SM platform use in B to B firms fully mediates the relationship between competitive pressure to use SM and Individual SM competence.	Rejected
Organization SM competence significantly influences relationship sales performance.	Accepted
Individual SM competence fully significantly influence relationship sales performance	Accepted