

THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SMALL BUSINESS PROMOTION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND THE PRACTICE OF UZBEKISTAN

Maripova Shahlo Akramovna

Researcher, Namangan State University

Senior Student Support Officer at

Westminster International University in Tashkent

Republic of Uzbekistan

maripovamaripova@gmail.com

+998998904713

Abstract - In the context of the rapid development of digital technologies, social media has become one of the most effective tools for promoting small businesses. For small enterprises, the use of platforms such as Instagram, Telegram, Facebook, TikTok, and other social networks significantly reduces marketing costs, expands the customer base, and increases competitiveness. This article examines the role of social media in the development of small businesses, analyzes international experience in the application of digital tools, and explores the specific features of social media use among entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan. The findings demonstrate that social media has a substantial impact on brand awareness, customer trust, and sales growth. At the same time, digital marketing in Uzbekistan continues to develop actively; however, entrepreneurs still face several limitations related to digital literacy, a shortage of qualified specialists, and limited marketing strategies.

Keywords: social media, small business, digital marketing, entrepreneurship, Instagram, Telegram, Uzbekistan, business promotion, online communication.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, social media has evolved not only into a means of communication between individuals but also into a fully developed business platform. Today, millions of companies worldwide use social media to promote products and services, interact with customers, and build brand identity. These platforms play a particularly important role for small businesses, which often lack sufficient financial resources for traditional advertising. Small businesses constitute a significant part of the economy in most countries. They contribute to job creation, the development of competition, and the enhancement of economic activity. However, small enterprises frequently face challenges associated with limited budgets, intense competition, and insufficient marketing opportunities. In this context, social media has become an accessible and relatively inexpensive promotional tool.

Currently, platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Telegram, and YouTube exert a considerable influence on consumer behavior. Users increasingly make purchasing decisions based on the content they encounter on social media.

According to Statista, the number of social media users worldwide has already exceeded 5 billion and continues to grow.[1]

For Uzbekistan, the issue of digital promotion of small businesses is also becoming increasingly relevant. The development of internet infrastructure, the growing popularity of mobile devices, and the increasing number of social media users create new opportunities for entrepreneurs. Many small enterprises in the country actively use Telegram and Instagram as their primary channels for sales and customer communication. The purpose of this article is to examine the role of social media in small business promotion and to conduct a comparative analysis of international experience and the practice of Uzbekistan.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The growing role of social media in business development has attracted significant attention from researchers in the fields of marketing, entrepreneurship, and digital communication. Over the past two decades, scholars have increasingly emphasized that social media platforms are no longer limited to interpersonal communication but have become strategic instruments for business growth and consumer engagement.

One of the foundational studies in this field was conducted by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), who defined social media as internet-based applications that enable the creation and exchange of user-generated content [1]. The authors argued that social media transformed traditional communication models by allowing businesses and consumers to interact directly and more dynamically.

Kotler and Keller (2016) highlighted that digital marketing has fundamentally changed the relationship between companies and customers [2]. According to their research, businesses are now expected not only to advertise products but also to establish long-term relationships with consumers through interactive communication and personalized content.

Tuten and Solomon (2017) examined the role of social media marketing in consumer behavior and brand development [3]. Their study demonstrated that visual platforms such as Instagram and TikTok significantly influence purchasing decisions, particularly among younger audiences. The authors also emphasized that user-generated content and online communities increase consumer trust toward brands.

Chaffey (2022) noted that social media provides small businesses with opportunities that were previously available mainly to large corporations [4]. Through targeted advertising, analytics, and audience segmentation, small enterprises can now compete more effectively in both local and international markets.

A number of scholars have specifically explored the relationship between social media and entrepreneurship. Safko (2019) argued that social media enables entrepreneurs to create low-cost marketing strategies and establish direct communication channels with customers [5]. Similarly, Scott (2020) stated that modern marketing increasingly relies on storytelling, audience engagement, and authentic communication rather than traditional advertising [6].

Several studies have also focused on the economic impact of social media on small businesses. According to OECD Digital Economy Outlook (2023), digital platforms contribute significantly to business sustainability, innovation, and employment generation [10]. The report emphasizes that digital transformation has become particularly important after the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated the shift toward online business models.

Research conducted by HubSpot and DataReportal indicates that consumer behavior has become increasingly dependent on social media interaction [7]. Customers now expect businesses to maintain active online communication, respond quickly to feedback, and provide visually engaging content.

In Asian countries, scholars have paid particular attention to the integration of e-commerce and social media. Studies on China’s digital economy demonstrate that livestream commerce and integrated payment systems substantially increase customer engagement and sales performance. South Korean researchers emphasize the importance of visual branding and emotional marketing in social media promotion. In the context of Central Asia, academic research on digital entrepreneurship remains relatively limited. However, recent studies indicate a growing interest in social media marketing and online business development. Karimov (2023) analyzed the development of digital entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan and noted that Telegram and Instagram have become the dominant platforms for small business promotion [12]. Rasulov (2022) emphasized that social media contributes to the accessibility of entrepreneurship for young people and individuals with limited financial resources [8].

Despite the increasing number of studies on social media marketing, there remains a lack of comprehensive comparative research focusing specifically on small business promotion in Uzbekistan within the broader international context. This article seeks to address this gap by comparing international practices with the current state of digital entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan.

METHODOLOGY

The study employed qualitative and comparative research methods. The research is based on academic articles, statistical data from international organizations, analytical reports, and studies in the field of digital marketing. The following methods were applied during the research process:

1. Literature analysis — examination of existing studies on social media and small business development.
2. Comparative analysis — comparison of different countries’ experiences in using social media for business promotion.
3. Content analysis — analysis of small business activity on social media platforms, including Instagram and Telegram.
4. Descriptive method — description of the current state of digital marketing in Uzbekistan.

The choice of the IMRAD structure is explained by the need for a systematic presentation of research findings and their academic interpretation.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Social media has significantly transformed approaches to marketing and customer interaction. In the past, small businesses had to spend substantial amounts on television, outdoor advertising, or printed promotional materials. Today, many entrepreneurs are able to promote their brands with minimal financial investment. The main advantage of social media lies in its accessibility. Creating a business page requires relatively low costs, while the opportunity for direct communication with customers makes interaction more effective. The most popular business platforms today include (Table 1):

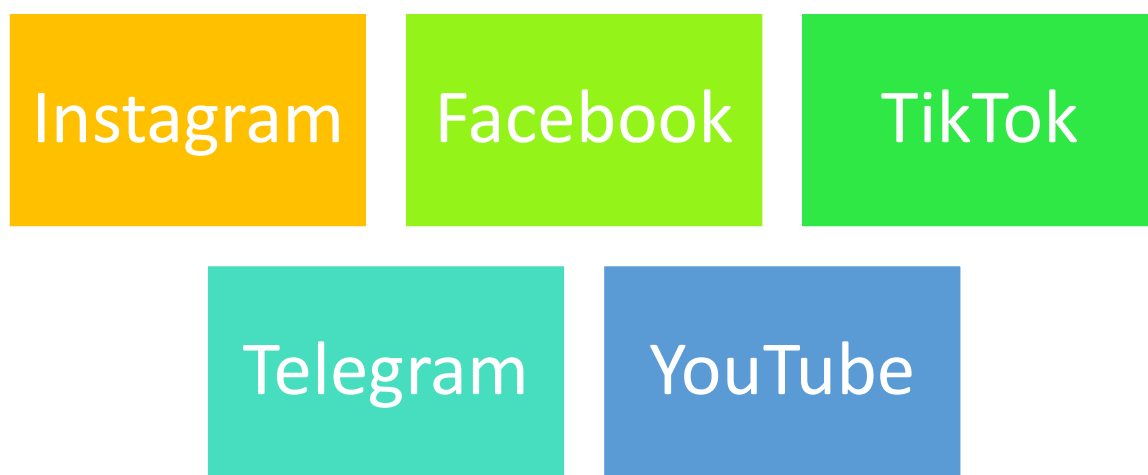


Table 1. The most popular Social Media Platforms nowadays.

- ✓ Instagram is popular for visual promotion of products and services;
- ✓ Facebook is recognized for business communities and targeted advertising;
- ✓ TikTok is mostly used for promotion through short-form video content;
- ✓ Telegram is common for communication and sales through channels and bots;
- ✓ YouTube — video marketing and educational content.

Many entrepreneurs note that social media not only helps increase sales but also creates an emotional connection with customers. Consumers tend to trust brands that actively interact with their audience, respond to comments, and demonstrate openness. Furthermore, social media allows businesses to receive feedback almost instantly. This is particularly important for small enterprises, as it enables them to adapt quickly to customer needs.

In developed countries, social media has long become an integral part of business strategy. In the United States, for example, small enterprises actively use Instagram and Facebook Ads to promote products and services. Many companies operate entirely online and do not maintain physical stores. American entrepreneurs widely apply

influencer marketing through collaboration with bloggers and opinion leaders. According to HubSpot research, approximately 80% of marketers consider influencer marketing one of the most effective promotional tools.[2] A particularly illustrative case is the American cosmetics brand Glossier, which initially developed almost entirely through Instagram and its online community. The company focused not on traditional advertising but on audience engagement, user-generated content, and visual brand identity. As a result, the brand successfully built a loyal customer base and entered the international market.

In South Korea and China, digital commerce has reached an even higher level of integration. Chinese platforms such as WeChat and Douyin (the Chinese version of TikTok) allow users not only to consume content but also to make purchases directly within the application. This integration of social media and e-commerce considerably simplifies the sales process. The Chinese market is especially notable because livestream commerce has become a fully developed part of the economy. Many entrepreneurs conduct live broadcasts during which they demonstrate products and sell them directly to viewers. According to McKinsey, livestream shopping in China demonstrates higher customer engagement compared to traditional online stores. In South Korea, entrepreneurs actively use visual storytelling and personalized content. Small businesses emphasize brand aesthetics, visual quality, and emotional interaction with consumers. As a result, Korean cosmetic and fashion brands successfully promote themselves internationally through Instagram and TikTok.

In Europe, social media also plays an important role in the development of small businesses. In Germany and France, entrepreneurs actively use digital marketing to promote local brands. Particular attention is paid to sustainability, business transparency, and customer trust. For example, many local coffee shops, farmers' markets, and handmade brands in Germany use social media not only for direct sales but also for community building. Entrepreneurs publish content about production processes, product origins, and corporate values. In France, small fashion brands focused on slow fashion and sustainable consumption have gained popularity. Such companies actively promote their values through Instagram, enabling them to compete with large international brands.

The experience of Turkey is also noteworthy, where Instagram has become one of the primary tools for online sales among small businesses. Many Turkish entrepreneurs conduct sales through direct messages and use live broadcasts to present products. The Turkish market is particularly comparable to Uzbekistan in terms of small family entrepreneurship. In both countries, a significant proportion of businesses are family-oriented. However, digital marketing in Turkey is more structured, with entrepreneurs making greater use of targeted advertising, collaborations with bloggers, and visual branding.

In India, social media has become an important instrument for supporting women's entrepreneurship. Many women establish small home-based businesses and sell products through WhatsApp, Instagram, and Facebook Marketplace. Social media enables them to enter the market without renting physical commercial spaces.

In Central Asian countries, the situation develops unevenly. In Kazakhstan, small businesses more actively integrate marketplaces and online payment systems into social media, whereas entrepreneurs in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan primarily use Telegram and Instagram as communication channels.

When comparing Uzbekistan with other countries, several distinctive features can be identified:

- entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan more frequently use Telegram as the main sales channel;
- the level of influencer marketing remains lower than in the United States, Turkey, or South Korea;
- small businesses in Uzbekistan less frequently use analytics and targeted advertising;
- visual content is developing rapidly, particularly on Instagram and TikTok;
- many businesses remain informal and operate exclusively through social media platforms.

Nevertheless, recent years have witnessed rapid growth in digital entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan. More local clothing brands, cosmetic companies, educational projects, and delivery services are being promoted primarily through social media.

Thus, international experience demonstrates that successful use of social media requires not only presence on digital platforms but also a well-developed marketing strategy, understanding of the audience, and continuous adaptation to digital trends. The results of the study indicate that social media has become one of the key factors in the development of small businesses worldwide. International experience demonstrates the high effectiveness of digital marketing when combined with a strategic approach.

A comparison between foreign countries and Uzbekistan shows that the Uzbek market is currently undergoing an active stage of development. The country is experiencing rapid growth in online entrepreneurship; however, the level of professional digital marketing remains lower than in developed economies. Unlike the United States, China, or South Korea, where social media platforms are integrated with e-commerce systems and analytical tools, many entrepreneurs in Uzbekistan still use these platforms mainly as showcases for products. Nevertheless, the country demonstrates considerable development potential. Uzbekistan's young population actively uses the internet and social media, creating favorable conditions for further growth of digital entrepreneurship.

It is also important to note that social media gradually transforms the structure of small business itself. Today, entrepreneurs no longer necessarily require physical stores or substantial starting capital. Many brands begin operating entirely within the online environment. Furthermore, the expansion of social media contributes to increased competition, which ultimately has a positive impact on the quality of products and services. For the further development of small businesses in Uzbekistan, the following measures are necessary:

- improving entrepreneurs' digital literacy;

- supporting educational programs in SMM and digital marketing;
- expanding access to modern technologies;
- stimulating the development of e-commerce.

CONCLUSION

Social media plays a crucial role in the promotion of small businesses in the modern world. It enables entrepreneurs to interact effectively with audiences, build brands, and increase sales while maintaining relatively low costs. The study demonstrates that international experience confirms the high effectiveness of digital marketing, particularly when various platforms and analytical tools are used comprehensively. In Uzbekistan, the use of social media for business purposes is developing rapidly. Telegram and Instagram have already become important components of the entrepreneurial environment, particularly among young entrepreneurs and small businesses. Despite existing challenges related to limited professional skills and underdeveloped marketing strategies, Uzbekistan’s digital environment possesses substantial potential.

In the coming years, the role of social media in the country’s economy will most likely continue to grow due to the development of internet technologies, the increasing number of users, and changing consumer behavior. Therefore, social media is becoming not merely an additional promotional instrument but an essential component of the modern small business model.

REFERENCES:

1. Kaplan A. M., Haenlein M. Users of the world, unite! The challenges and opportunities of Social Media // Business Horizons. — 2010. — Vol. 53, № 1. — P. 59–68.
2. Kotler P., Keller K. Marketing Management. — 15th ed. — Harlow : Pearson Education, 2016. — 714 p.
3. Tuten T., Solomon M. Social Media Marketing. — Los Angeles : Sage Publications, 2017. — 352 p.
4. Chaffey D. Digital Marketing: Strategy, Implementation and Practice. — Harlow : Pearson, 2022. — 576 p.
5. [Statista](#) Global social media statistics and trends [Electronic resource]. — Access mode: free. — Accessed: 24.05.2026.
6. [HubSpot](#) Research. State of Marketing Report 2024 [Electronic resource]. — Access mode: free. — Accessed: 24.05.2026.
7. Kietzmann J., Hermkens K., McCarthy I., Silvestre B. Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media // Business Horizons. — 2011. — Vol. 54, № 3. — P. 241–251.
8. Safko L. The Social Media Bible: Tactics, Tools and Strategies for Business Success. — Hoboken : Wiley, 2019. — 624 p.
9. Smith A. Small Business and Digital Marketing Trends // Journal of Entrepreneurship. — 2021. — Vol. 12, № 4. — P. 45–58.

10. OECD OECD Digital Economy Outlook 2023. — Paris : OECD Publishing, 2023. — 332 p.
11. [DataReportal](#) Digital 2024 Global Overview Report [Electronic resource]. — Access mode: free. — Accessed: 24.05.2026.
12. Karimov B. Development of Digital Entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan // Economics and Innovative Technologies. — 2023. — № 5. — P. 122–131.
13. Rasulov S. The Role of Social Media in Uzbek Entrepreneurship // International Journal of Management and Economics. — 2022. — Vol. 8, № 2. — P. 78–84.
14. Castells M. The Rise of the Network Society. — Oxford : Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. — 597 p.
15. Scott D. The New Rules of Marketing and PR. — Hoboken : Wiley, 2020. — 448 p.