

Factors Influencing the Adoption of Interpersonal Communication Media to Maximize Business Competitiveness among Small and Medium Enterprises in Hong Kong: Industry Types and Entrepreneur Characteristics

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Abstract : Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) consist of a broad variety of businesses, ranging from small grocery shops to manufacturing concerns. Some are dynamic and innovative, while others are more traditional. The definition of SMEs varies by country but is most determined by the number of employees, though business assets and sales revenues are alternative measures. There are eight main types of SME industries in Hong Kong: garment, electronics, plastics, metal and machinery, trading and logistics, building, manufacturing, and service industries. Information exchange is a key goal of human communication, and communicators have used a variety of media to maintain relationships through traditional face-to-face interactions and written forms like letters and faxes. With the advancement of mediated-interpersonal communication media from telephone to synchronic online tools like email, instant messaging, voice messaging, and video conferencing for sustaining relationships, particularly enabling geographically distanced relationships. Although these synchronous tools are gaining popularity, they are facilitating relationship maintenance in everyday life and complementing rather than replacing the more conventional face-to-face interactions. This study will test if there are any variances in effects by industry type among Hong Kong SMEs. The competitiveness of the business environment refers to the competition faced by a business within its particular industry. The more intense the competition in a given sector, the greater the potential for strategic uses of specific needs in a business. Both internal organization characteristics and external environments may affect firm performance and financial resources. The level of competitiveness within an industry will be a more reliable indicator to show how Hong Kong SMEs are striving to achieve their business goals using different techniques in their communication media preferences, rather than mere classification by industry type. This study thus divides the competitiveness of the business environment into internal and external: (1) the internal environment competition is the inherent competitiveness of the products or services provided by the SMEs, whereas (2) the external environment competition includes the economic and political realities and competitors joining the market. This study will test various organizational characteristics and competitiveness of the business environment to predict entrepreneurs' communication media preferences.

Keywords : competitiveness of business environment, small- and medium-sized enterprises, organizational characteristics, communication media preference

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