



# SOCIAL MEDIA USE BY SMES IN GREECE: A USES AND GRATIFICATIONS APPROACH

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## MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

### *Context*

*Social media has been used extensively and very creatively by big brands for marketing purposes. However, it is found to be more useful and suitable for smaller brands, due to their greater flexibility and limited budget for marketing communications. SMEs dominate the European economy and in countries such as Greece, they have borne the brunt of the economic crisis. They state they have a great difficulty in reaching the market and finding customers, in an era that social media offers tremendous benefits in terms of marketing and revenue. As a result, there is a great need for more insights on the use of social media by SMEs, in order for them to rip the benefits they so intensively seek one day. This exploratory study investigates what motivates SMEs social media use in the challenging economy of Greece, how Greek SMEs use social media and the gratifications obtained. It steps on Uses & Gratifications (U&G) theory and develops an SMEs U&G model appropriate to study social media use by SMEs. Moreover, it explores social media uses by small enterprises in typical economies and countries such as Greece.*

### *Methods*

*An online questionnaire collected data about social media use and organizational characteristics from 611 SMEs in Greece. The constructs for motivations and gratifications were further validated with factor analysis. Anova revealed no statistical differences between SMEs in different business sectors. Descriptive statistics and frequency tables explore the actual social media uses of social media by Greek SMEs.*

### *Conclusions*

*Greece consists of mainly micro enterprises (<10 people), with mainly local presence, that outlines a typical environment in which the findings of this study can be applied. 4 constructs were found to motivate Greek SMEs to use social media, information sharing, immediate interaction, brand identity and monetary outcomes. Gratifications were monetary outcomes, interaction and information sharing about their brand. Greek SMEs mainly use facebook, randomly within or outside business hours, to respond to customers questions, distribute content and monitor the brand among there. Lack of time and organization reduces the potential benefits other popular social media may bring to their brand. Detailed conclusions and recommendation are presented in the last part of this paper.*

### *Recommendations*

*Greek SMEs owners are recommend to assign dedicated time and budget to social media, and stop using it randomly and unorganized. In general social media can help SMEs to save time, interact with customers and reach new audiences both in a local and an international level, via targeted advertising, use of popular hashtags locally and internationally, by following/ capitalizing on viral trends and big events, by creating a publishing calendar, scheduling and automating content, as well as reading or seeking help from experts about alternative media and their benefits.*

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## **1. Introduction**

If Facebook were a country it would be the most populous nation on Earth, with its economy most probably dominated by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)! 1.39 billion people log in to Facebook each month, whereas 288 million active Twitter users generate 500 million tweets per day (Facebook, 2015; Twitter, 2015). Numbers are astonishing and social media is no stranger to large brands, on which they connect with million of consumers around the world and take advantage of alternative, more effective and low cost marketing practices. However, smaller brands seem to need social media the most.

SMEs in Europe state they face a great difficulty in reaching the market and cite finding customers as their most pressing issue (Batikas, van Bavel, Martin & Maghiros, 2013). SMEs form the backbone of European economy and have borne the brunt of a severe economic crisis for the last years, with SMEs in Greece being stuck the most by recession. In the meantime, in the US 65% of brands already view social media as a new revenue source (Baird & Parasnis, 2011) and increase both their social media marketing spending and their time spent on social media efforts (Social Media Marketing University, 2014). In Europe, it has been found that social can be more useful for SMEs than larger brands (Batikas, van Bavel, Martin & Maghiros, 2013), especially for marketing purposes due to greater flexibility and higher need to keep marketing communications costs contained (Pentina et al., 2012). However, present research specifically on social media use by SMEs remains limited, with available literature mainly investigating the social media use of large brands and individuals.

This paper aims at filling this research gap by placing SMEs in the center of its research, and explores social media use among SMEs in a small european market, such as Greece. In addition,

considering that Greek social media users have become more mature and Greek e-commerce increased by 25% (European Commission, 2014), investigating how the ordinary, with less fame, budget or resources Greek SMEs use social media in such a promising social media environment also triggers the purpose of this paper. Knowledge of why and how to use social media, the positive results obtained from using it and the barriers behind the reluctance to use it, may significantly improve SMEs decision making on whether or not to use it, and how. The three important research questions raised are:

*RQ1. What motivates SMEs in Greece to use social media?*

*RQ2. What gratifications do SMEs in Greece obtain from social media use?*

*RQ3. What is the actual social media use of SMEs in Greece?*

To address its research purpose, this exploratory study stepped on Uses & Gratifications (U&G) theory and collected data about social media motivations, uses and gratifications from 612 SMEs in Greece. Findings of this paper contribute to scientific research in the following ways. First, this study developed U&G in a way that is appropriate to use for SMEs by expanding the research scope of social media motivations uses and gratifications to SMEs. Factor analysis revealed that among others, monetary outcomes indeed motivate SMEs to use social media, despite being overlooked in previous U&G research. Second, the study adds insights into the usage of social media in specific type of economies such as Greece, where the percentage of SMEs is larger than the EU average and brands act mainly in a local or regional level. As far as perceived use barriers are concerned, the main reason for Greek SMEs not to use social media is that it costs too much of their time, but surprisingly, they expect to use more social media in two years from now. From a societal point of view, the outcomes of this study

help existing and potential SMEs struggling with little or no budget during recession, to see where they stand. SMEs learn from the social media use of similar brands in size, sector and target market, and finally explore ways to revive their marketing efforts, grow an online sustainable business, and harvest the opportunities of social media.

The paper is structured as follows. In the next section, an extensive literature review on social media use, SMEs and U&G theory is presented, resulting in the SMEs U&G model. Section 3 outlines the applied methodology for the survey, followed by the survey results in section 4. Conclusions, further implications and recommendations are discussed in section 5, the last part of this paper.

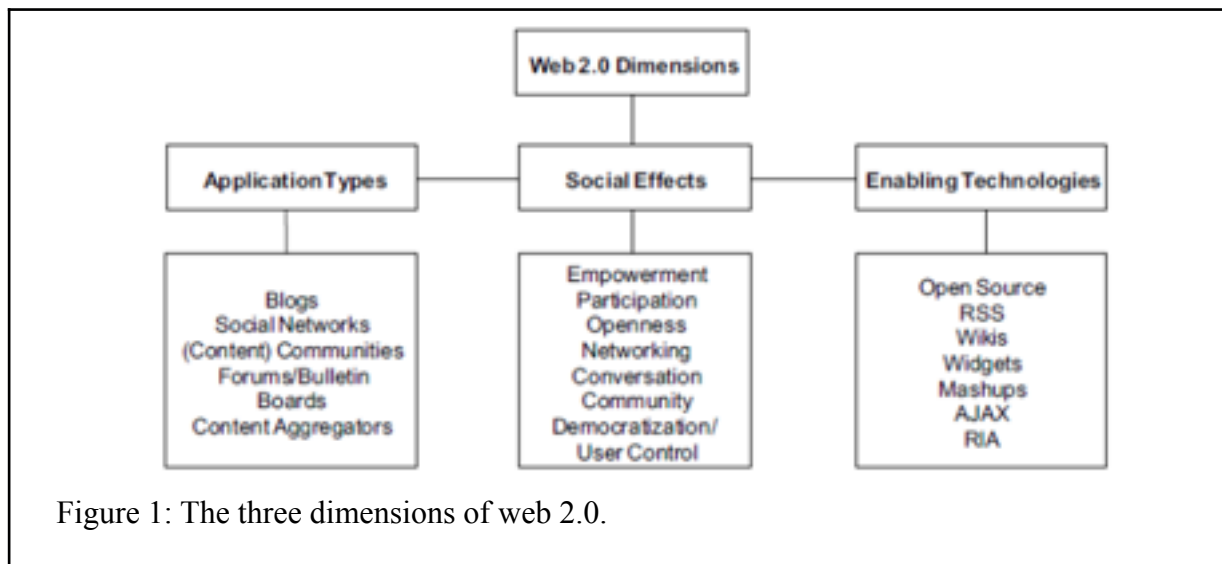
## 2. Theoretical background

The theory part aims at developing an appropriate uses & gratifications model to study the social media uses of SMEs in typical countries such as Greece. In the following sections all important concepts found in existing literature and used in this paper are introduced. The first part develops a definition of SMEs social media use specifically for marketing purposes. The second part highlights the profile of SMEs in Europe and Greece, as well as the particularity of the Greek economy and the significance of social media use by small firms. The third part elaborates on the U&G theory over the years and introduces the SMEs social media motivations and gratifications. Finally, the final model and hypotheses are presented.

### 2.1. A Social media definition for SMEs

Social media definitions adopted by different scholars change over time, following the radical changes in the online technological scene. Blackshaw and Nazzaro (2004) define social media or consumer-generated media as “*a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues*”. On the other hand, Boyd and Ellison (2008) define social networking sites as “*web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system*”. Constantinides, Romero and Boria (2008) use the more complete term Web 2.0, synonym to Social Media or Consumer generated Media. They define Web 2.0 as “*a collection of open-source, interactive and user-controlled online applications expanding the experience, knowledge and market power of the users as participants in business and social*

processes. Web 2.0 applications support the creation of informal users' networks, facilitating the flow of ideas and knowledge by allowing the efficient generation, dissemination, sharing and editing/refining of informational content" (Figure 1.) However, not all social media use targets individuals and consumers, or is initiated by them.



In a business context, social media has a marketing communications role with brands using it to communicate with customers for marketing, branding, and customer relationship management purposes (Leonardi, Huysman & Steinfield, 2013). Social media offers high consumer engagement and allows for viral marketing and word-of-mouth promotion to be just as effective – if not more – than traditional media (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). Social media also enhances a brand's economic value (Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides, 2011). Enterprises of all sizes view it as an essential element of their marketing strategy (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011) in a variety of industries such as tourism and travel, luxury fashion, sports and retail (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010; Kim & Ko, 2012; Williams & Chinn, 2010; Chevalier & Mayzlin,



2006). Thus, using social media technology in order to conduct a brand's marketing activities is referred to as social media marketing (Dahnil, Marzuki, Langgat & Fabeil, 2014).

Social media definition from a brand perspective, as found in literature, refers to a hybrid element of the promotion mix, combining characteristics of traditional integrated marketing communication tools (companies talking to customers), with a highly magnified form of word-of-mouth (customers talking to one another), with marketing managers being unable to control the content and frequency of such information. (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Stepping on the definitions mentioned above, social media in this paper is defined as *“interactive, web-based application types used by Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to communicate with their customers for marketing purposes”*. These application types consist of social networks that allow brands to build personal pages accessible to consumers, (Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn), corporate blogs and corporate forums, corporate online communities and content communities (e.g. video sites such as YouTube), on which brands organize and share specific types of content (Constantinides & Fountain, 2008).

## 2.2. SMEs in Greece

SMEs are defined as businesses employing less than 250 staff, with an annual turnover of less than €50 million and/or a balance sheet of less than €43 million. They form three categories, micro enterprises (less than 10 employees), small (less than 50 employees) and medium enterprises (less than 250) (European Commission, 2014). There were 21.2 million SMEs in the European non-financial business sector in 2013. 99 out of 100 businesses in Europe are SMEs, accounting for 66.8% of total employment, and 58.1% of the value added (Table 1). SMEs form the backbone of Europe's economy.

	Micro	Small	Medium	SMEs	Large	Total
Number (N) of Enterprises						
N	19,969,338	1,378,374	223,648	21,571,360	43,517	21,614,908
%	<b>92.4%</b>	6.4%	1.0%	<b>99.8%</b>	0.2%	100%
Employment						
N	38,629,012	27,353,660	22,860,792	88,843,464	44,053,576	132,897,040
%	<b>29.1%</b>	20.6%	17.2%	<b>66.9%</b>	33.1%	100%
Value added at factor costs						
N	1,362,336	1,147,885	1,156,558	3,666,779	2,643,795	6,310,557
%	21.6%	18.2%	18.3%	58.1%	41.9%	100%

Table 1. SMEs and large enterprises: number of enterprises, value added and employment in the EU28 in 2013.

Focusing on the particularity of the market in Greece, to begin with, Greeks are twice as likely to be self employed with a very high established business ownership rate. Moreover, Greece has one of the highest proportions of micro-firms, around 12.6%, comparing to the EU average of 6.4%. Greek SMEs account for 72% of added value (58% in EU) and 86% of employment (67% in EU). EU SMEs struggling with post crisis effects in 2013 rated finding customers as the most pressing issue for them, whereas Greek SMEs still struggle with crisis in 2016. However, although Greek SMEs have borne most of the brunt of the severe economic crisis effects, starting a small business in Greece might be the only way for Greeks to leave unemployment and avoid poverty (European Commission, 2014).

Social media use can be critical for Greek SMEs survival, and significant in their efforts to compete with larger international brands, as already supported by literature (Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides, 2011). Social media can be especially advantageous for SMEs

marketing communications, since smaller brands tend to encounter greater difficulties in reaching the market, by having less budget and resources for advertising and promotion (Batikas, van Bavel, Martin & Maghiros, 2013; Castronovo & Huang, 2012). With social media, Greek SMEs can enable fast and viral distribution of content or offers, that may reach far beyond what could be done through traditional channels (Baird & Paranis, 2011a). Moreover, it has been found that SMEs that do use social media, appear to be doing better financially than non-users (Batikas, van Bavel, Martin & Maghiros, 2013). However, social media do not necessarily make small companies more competitive, but rather set a new scene by offering a different way of reaching out to consumers, communicating and collaborating (Batikas, van Bavel, Martin & Maghiros, 2013).

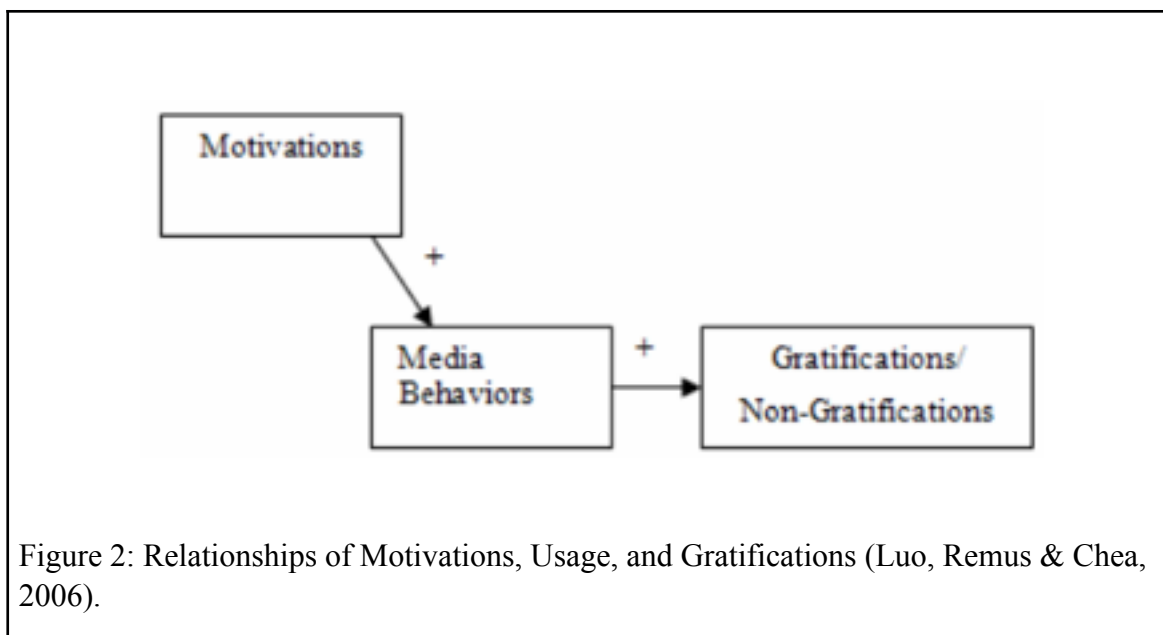
To sum up, Greece has a very high established business ownership rate accounting for 86% of employment in the country, and one of the highest proportions of micro-firms in Europe. Considering that social media can be so beneficial to smaller brands in Greece, this study explores what motivates Greek SMEs to use social media, the ways they use it and the gratifications obtained from it, by stepping on the U&G theory, as described and operationalized in the next section.

### 2.3. U&G Theory

The main objectives of U&G theory are: 1) to explain how people use media to gratify their needs; 2) to understand motives for media behavior; and 3) to identify functions or consequences that flow from needs, motives and behavior (Rubin, 2009). As a theoretical framework, U&G focuses on social and psychological needs, which generate expectations that lead to different patterns of media use to gratify these needs (Katz et al., 1974). Motivations, behavioral usage,

and gratifications (Figure 2) are three major U&G constructs that have been extensively examined in communication research (Luo, Remus & Chea, 2006). Motivations derive from needs that individuals seek to gratify, and different audiences use media messages for different purposes, to satisfy their different needs and goals (Weiwei & Peiyi, 2011).

Motivations are defined in literature as “... *general dispositions that influence people’s actions taken to fulfill a need or want*” (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000), and behavioral usage as “... *patterns of exposure of use (i.e., amount of use, duration of use, and type of use)*.” Media use leads to gratifications (of needs), or to the perceived fulfillment of needs and the confirmation of the individual’s expectations (Wang, Tchernev & Solloway, 2012). Gratifications in literature are often divided in gratifications obtained, which refer to those gratifications of needs that people experience through the actual use of a media (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010), and gratifications sought, which are the gratifications people expect to obtain (motivations) from media before they actually use it.



Before social media, individuals U&G research was focused on motivations to use traditional media, such as newspapers, magazines, television and radio. The motivations dimensions most consistent in literature were found in McQuail's research (1987) and they are: information, personal identity, integration, social interaction, and entertainment (Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2010). Over time, U&G research extended to research on motivations to use mediated communication and the internet.

A first study on internet use from a U&G perspective identified 3 dimensions: Internet process gratifications, meaning gratifications from the actual use of the medium, Internet Content gratifications (from the content e.g. information, entertainment) and Internet Social Gratifications such as interaction and chatting (Stafford & Stafford, 2004). Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) identified in their factor analysis five motivations to use the internet: Convenience: "... easy and cheap access to information or others.", Information Seeking: "... use the Internet as an information tool to learn about people, places, and events.", Interpersonal Utility, Pass [the] time: and, Entertainment (Luo, Remus & Chea, 2006). Finally, as far as websites are concerned, when examining audience reactions from a U&G approach, personal involvement and continuing relationship were the two dimensions identified (Eighme & McCord, 1998).

In recent years, U&G theory has been frequently used to explore motivations of individuals to use social media (Chen, 2011). Authors have mainly used college students for their research, which might be a reason why hedonic gratifications are in the spotlight. Hedonic are considered as pleasure-oriented or emotional gratifications, whereas utilitarian are the rational and goal-

oriented gratifications. (Xu, Ryan, Prybutok & Wen, 2012). In general, most U&G studies identify gratifications such as: entertainment, socialization, information/surveillance, and status seeking (Diddi & LaRose, 2006; Dunne et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2010; Lin et al., 2005; Park et al., 2009). For Facebook, a longitudinal examination of social media use, needs, and gratifications in the US, revealed 4 types of needs: emotional needs (entertainment, relax/kill time), cognitive needs (information, studying), social needs (personal, professional), and habitual needs (Wang, Tchernev & Solloway, 2012). A Chinese research on motivations to use social networks among college students identified 3 dimensions: social interaction, self-image building and information seeking (Weiwei & Peiyi, 2011).

Specifically for Facebook, motivations for students include: pass-time, affection, fashion, share problems, sociability, social information (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010), learn about social events, keep in touch with friends and as a diversion from school work (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Self-expression refers to the expression of one's own identity, and has been also identified as a motivation to use Facebook (Liu, Cheung, & Lee, 2010). For Facebook groups another study identified four needs: socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking, and information seeking (Park, Kee & Valenzuela, 2009). For Facebook brand pages, motivations to use them include: information, self-presentation, relationship to the brand, interaction with the brand, fun and entertainment, and social interaction. Finally, information sharing is also identified as a motivation to use Twitter, stressing the satisfaction gained from providing information to others (Liu, Cheung, & Lee, 2010).

To sum up, U&G theory has been extensively and successfully used in the past to explore the needs motivating individuals to use social media, the effects on media behavior and the

gratifications obtained. The main and most consistent uses and gratifications found in theory are: information, identity, interaction and entertainment. Moving towards a business context, brands also use social media and given that in SMEs individuals can play the dual role of both a consumer and an employee or owner (Xu, Ryan, Prybutok & Wen, 2012) it is interesting, logical and consistent to use U&G theory to investigate SMEs motivations to use social media.

#### 2.4. U&G and SMEs in Greece

To begin with, applying the U&G theory on SMEs social media use becomes more relevant considering that the personality of firm owners and their attitude to do business, influences decision-making in smaller firms. Moreover, the chances of a single individual (employee or CEO) being strongly involved with social media usage is also very high in small brands (Meske & Stieglitz, 2013), the typical size of businesses in Greece. As a result, Greek SMEs successfully satisfy the three basic assumptions of the U&G theory. First, people (in this case SME owner or employee) are active users of media. Second, they select media for intentional communication purposes and their behaviors are goal- directed. Third, they are aware of their motives for selecting a particular type of medium rather than alternatives.

To understand the needs behind Greek SMEs motivations to use social media, the ideal would be to address to existing studies on SMEs needs and gratifications of social media, the same way prior research focuses on individual users and their everyday lives, needs, and motivations for going online (Bechmann & Lomborg, 2012). However, there is little research in literature on SMEs social media use from a U&G theory, and this is the gap this paper addresses. To identify motivations that are most relevant to the context of this paper, a parsimonious approach has been followed and the main dimensions found in literature are presented below.

*Information Sharing.* Information is a dimension that fits ideally SMEs motivation to use social media. Information is identified as a construct in almost every U&G research on individuals internet and social media use, mainly as information seeking. Based on McQuail's (1987) description, information covers three sub-motivations: finding out about what is happening in someone's direct daily environment (surveillance), seeking advice and opinions and satisfying curiosity and interest (knowledge), and risk reduction through gaining pre-purchase information (Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2010).

Information sharing, on the other hand is found in online communities, among information seeking, maintaining interpersonal connectivity and self discovery dimensions (Lampe, Wash, Velasquez & Ozkaya, 2010). Research supports that members of an online community may see it as an organization to which they belong (Lampe, Wash, Velasquez & Ozkaya, 2010), the same way an individual belongs to an organization, and is responsible for its social media marketing. Motivations identified in online communities, especially the goal-driven ones, would be closer to SMEs motivations to use social media, comparing to those of individuals.

Information sharing as a motivation is also in alignment with other studies exploring the reasons why businesses use social media. These information-sharing reasons include for example: providing general and product information in the case of US brands (Baird & Parasnis, 2011b), distributing information in the case of Health related not-for-profit organizations such as the Red Cross (Thackeray, Neiger, Smith & Van Wagenen, 2012) and disseminating information to external stakeholders in the case of global corporations (Vuori, 2012). Therefore, in the context of SMEs the respective motivation would be information sharing. According to U&G



motivations influence media behavior, in our case actual social media use, forming our first hypothesis:

*H1: Information sharing motivates Greek SMEs to use social media*

*Immediate Access.* Utilitarian uses and gratifications are more meaningful for SMEs, considering that even for individuals the role of hedonic gratifications gets less important and predictive in their social media use. According to research, hedonic gratifications are more important when first adopting social media, and get less important as consumers start deriving utilitarian gratifications. Immediate access is such an utilitarian need, with a positive impact on social media use (Xu, Ryan, Prybutok & Wen, 2012).

Considering Immediate access as a motivation for SMEs to use social media, as well as a gratification from its use, is also supported by the fact that businesses want to be where their customers are, with 79% of them having accounts on social networks, and more than half using media sharing (YouTube, Flickr) and microblogging sites such as Twitter (Baird & Parasnis, 2011). Moreover, accessibility (access available whenever desired) has been identified as one of the six dimensions of convenience value, following a U&G approach, at least in the distinct context of mobile technologies and social media (Larivière, Joosten, Malthouse, van Birgelen, Aksoy, Kunz & Huang, 2013). A description of immediate access shows in table 2. Our second hypothesis is formed:

*H2: Immediate access motivates Greek SMEs to use social media*

*Brand Identity.* Identity in research on individuals social media use is identified as personal identity (Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2010), self presentation (Jahn & Kunz, 2012), self-image building (Weiwei & Peiyi, 2011) or self-status seeking (Park, Kee & Valenzuela, 2009). In a

business context, identity is about the ethos, aims and values that present a sense of individuality, differentiating the brand from its competitors (De Chernatony, 1999). A brand can also be used to express and shape its identity and/or personality (Muntinga, Moorman & Smit, 2010), thus in a business context, the equivalent would be brand identity.

Social media allows brands to be closer to their customers, which allows them to create a unique brand identity and differentiate from the competition (Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides, 2011). Considering that basic branding tactics include effectively communicating the brand's identity to stakeholders, and that SMEs are cognizant of the need to deliver such relevant and desirable brands to customers (Berthon, Ewing & Napoli, 2008), it is logical to include brand identity as a motivation for Greek SMEs to use social media. Our third hypothesis is formed:

*H3: Brand Identity motivates Greek SMEs to use social media use*

*Interaction.* Interaction has been identified as a motivation in several papers focused on individuals social media use (Smock, Ellison, Lampe & Wohn, 2011 : Stafford, Stafford & Schkade, 2004 : Ko, Cho & Roberts, 2005 : Haridakis and Hanson, 2009 : Liu, Cheung & Lee, 2010 : Jahn & Kunz, 2012). For individuals, social interaction refers to people's need to communicate and keep in touch with friends and family.

From a business perspective, what mainly motivates brands to use social media is to interact with consumers, with the majority of brands using social media to communicate with their customers and to respond to their questions (Baird & Parasnis, 2012b). The main benefits of social interaction include receiving direct value through revenue from social commerce, and

increasing cost savings when used for customer care or research. (Baird & Paranis, 2011a). Our fourth hypothesis is formed:

*H4: Interaction motivates Greek SMEs to use social media*

*Monetary outcomes.* Monetary outcomes have been overlooked in previous U&G research for individuals, however according LaRose and Eastin (2004) they were significantly related to internet usage. From a SME perspective, additional revenue or cost reduction (Larivière et. al, 2013) are two monetary outcomes that may motivate SMEs to use social media. With SMEs having less resources and lower budget for traditional advertising, monetary outcomes should be a top motivation to compete against large brands for a small slice of the market.

Monetary outcomes, such as attracting new customers (Table 2), rank first among brand reasons to use social media. Literature also confirms that social media use enhances a brand's economic value (Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides, 2011). Other SMEs perceived benefits from social media use include increased connectivity and reduced external communication costs due to better communication (Batikas, van Bavel, Martin & Maghiros, 2013). The fifth hypothesis of this study is formed:

*H5: Monetary outcomes motivates Greek SMEs to use social media*

	Reasons	N (%) <sup>a</sup>
1	To attract new customers	20 (91)
2	To cultivate relationships	19 (86)
3	To increase awareness	18 (82)
4	To communicate the brand online	16 (73)
5	To receive feedback	10 (46)
6	To interact with suppliers	3 (14)

Table 2. *Top reasons for B2B SMEs to use social networks (Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides, 2011).*

To sum up, by stepping on prior research of uses and gratifications and by exploring benefits for brands and especially SMEs, 5 uses and gratifications (Table 3) are identified and explored: information sharing, immediate access, interaction, brand identity and monetary outcomes. For the purposes of this paper, these constructs are used to investigate both motivations for SMEs to use social media, and gratifications obtained by its use.

<b>Motivation/ Gratification</b>	<b>Individuals</b>	<b>SMEs</b>
Information Sharing	Information seeking about what is happening in someone's direct daily environment (surveillance), seeking advice and opinions to satisfy curiosity and interest (knowledge), and risk reduction through gaining pre-purchase information.	A need to provide general and product information, distribute of information, e.g. about offers and content, or disseminate information to external stakeholders.
Immediate Access	People use social networking sites (SNS) to gratify the need to transcend temporal and geographic limitations to get connected with others.	A need to transcend temporal and geographic limitations to get connected with SMEs customers.
Interaction	Social interaction gratifies the need for communication with friends and family.	SMEs use social media to communicate with consumers and their customers, to interact with them and respond to their questions. (customer care)
Brand Identity	Individuals need for personal Identity external communication, self presentation, self-image building or self-status seeking.	SMEs need to communicate their brand's ethos, aims and values that present a sense of individuality, and differentiate the brand from competitors.
Monetary outcomes	Expected monetary outcomes from connecting with brands online by e.g. finding bargains, saving time shopping etc.	SMEs use social media for monetary reasons either by creating additional revenue or by reducing costs.

Table 3. Descriptions of motivations and gratifications for individuals (Xu, Ryan, Prybutok & Wen, 2012) and the respective descriptions for SMEs.

## 2.5. SMEs actual social media use and non-use

To have a full view of how social media is used by SMEs for their marketing purposes, it is essential to capture their actual social media uses. Actual media use for the purposes of this paper is considered to be both, the frequency of SMEs social media use, and what SMEs do with their social media currently. For the former, participants were not only asked about how often they presently use social media, but also how they see their use in two years from today. For the latter, actual uses of social media by brands have been identified from previous research.

Social media marketers access new and efficient ways of reaching deep into the markets they target, in order to communicate their message (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). Brands are **monitoring** online communities, foster customer engagement (for example via promotions or coupons), and increase personal interactions and customer loyalty (van Bavel, 2013). With social media brands talk to their customers, customers talk to brands, and customers talk to one another (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). In the case of popular brands, companies “**listen-in**” to what customers are saying, where exchange of information about the brand and products takes place. Moreover, they **respond to queries, initiate conversations**, engage in dialogue with their customers, **encourage them to interact**, express feelings, make suggestions and comment on brand postings, the company and its products. Furthermore, with social media brands **share content**, and **call for product feedback and ideas, involving customers in product development as co-creators**. (Weinberg & Pehlivan, 2011; Constantinides, Romero & Boria, 2008; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011; Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011).

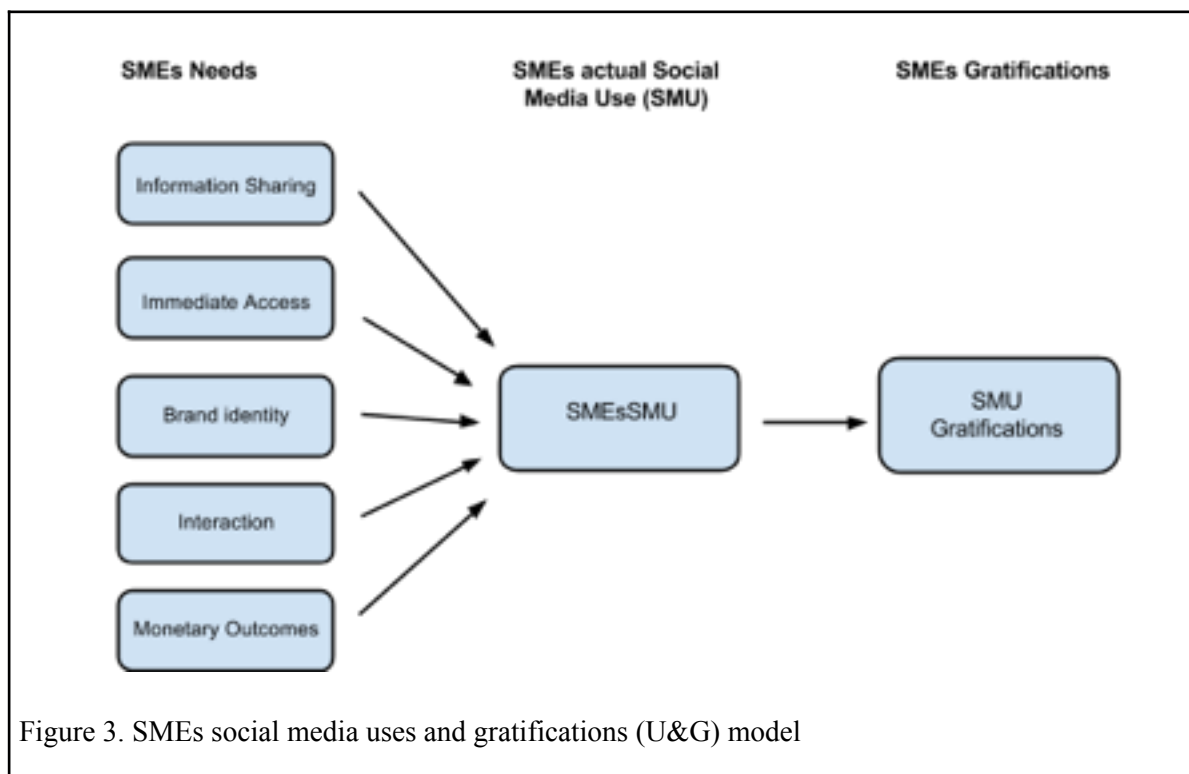
On the other hand, there are brands and SMEs that do not use social media. Surprisingly, according to research most of them choose not to use social media because they see no reason for

it (Batikas, van Bavel, Martin & Maghiros, 2013). Other barriers of using social media for SMEs include uncertainty of how social media can help their brand, unimportance of social media in their industry, lack of expertise and more (Michaelidou, Siamagka & Christodoulides, 2011). To identify the barriers to use social media specifically for SMEs in Greece, participating SMEs marked as non-users were requested to identify the reasons behind their reluctance to use social media.

To sum up, big brands and SMEs use social media in several ways. For the Greek SMEs that do use social media this paper explores their actual use, the ways they use it and the factors or characteristics that influence their use. For the Greek SMEs that do not use social media, it is equally important to know the reasons holding them back. Finally, for both active and inactive Greek SMEs on social media, it is important to explore their social media plans for the near future.

## 2.6. SMEs social media U&G model

SMEs, similarly to individuals, use social media to gratify certain needs. These needs act as motivations to use social media, and their gratification is the perceived fulfillment of these needs through activities (Wang, Tchernev & Solloway, 2012) such as social media use. Building on the U&G theoretical framework, an adjusted model explores the SMEs motivations found in literature, the SMEs social media uses (SMU), and the gratifications obtained (Figure 3).



### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Procedure and data collection**

The research took place in Greece, and an online survey (Appendix A) was sent to email addresses obtained by Papaki's customer database. Papaki is the largest domain names registrant in the country (35% market share with more than 45000 paid customers), and using its customer database is ideal considering that registering a domain name for a company first shows a familiarity with the online world, and second it is the first step towards an online presence. Papaki customers are mainly SMEs, especially micro SMEs from various industries, including e-commerce websites (eShops), freelancers, website owners, hotels etc.

A query of the database filtered out individuals and produced a list of emails belonging to Greek companies with a valid business VAT number, by having received an invoice by Papaki within the last 2 years. 21571 email addresses were selected to receive an email including the link to the online questionnaire. Mailchimp, an online email marketing tool was selected to send the email including the link to the online survey, and clean out bad email addresses. There were 1043 surveys started, from which 614 were completed (around 58% completion rate). Three companies were excluded from the sample as they did not conform to the definition of SMEs, reducing the number of responses to 611.

#### **3.2. Measures**

The questionnaire consists of 2 main parts. The first part is about social media including existing scales and factors from previous literature. To identify social media users from non-users, a first question captured the frequency of use, by asking participants to rate how often they used 8 popular social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Video Sites, Photo Sites, Corporate



Blog, Corporate Forum, Corporate Online Community). They could choose from never, to rarely(monthly basis), regularly (weekly basis), a lot (daily basis), and continuously (24/7).

SMEs who responded with rarely or never for every social media, were marked as non-users and were shown a question investigating the reasons not to use social media. Then, they were directly transferred to the second part of the questionnaire, collecting enterprise characteristics. SMEs responding with regularly or more to at least one social media were marked as users and continued to the part of the survey collecting data about their social media use. Both users and non-users responded to the question related to the intensity of their use in two years from now.

Motivations and gratifications measures were based on prior research scales used for individuals and brands social media use . 5 needs were identified in literature as motivations to use social media: information sharing, immediate access, brand identity, interaction and monetary outcomes. Participants were asked to specify to what extent the shown statements provided sufficient motivation for their company to use social media in a Likert scale from 1 to 5. Items included “*Share information useful to customers*” and “*Present information of product/ services*” for the motivation Information Sharing, and “*Give feedback to customers*” and “*Interact with customers*” for the motivation Interaction. Gratifications were measured with the same constructs, however the question was altered to accurately reflect the context of gratification. Participants were informed that this time they had to mark the extent their company had successfully achieved the statements shown, from social media use. Reliability of scales was tested with Cronbach’s Alpha for every construct (Table 4).

Social media uses were measured with 6 separate Likert items in a scale from 1 to 5, such as: “*We read what others say about our organization and / or our products / services (monitoring)*”

and “We respond to messages about the organization and / or our products / services”. Finally, the second part of the questionnaire collected organizational characteristics, such as business size, location, target market, business sector, level of innovation, transparency and more. The next section presents the analyses and results generated from the collected responses.

<b>Constructs</b>	<b>No of items</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>
Information Sharing Motiv.	3	421	4,339	,764	,793
Information Sharing Gratif.	3	421	4,027	,947	,887
Interaction Motiv.	3	421	4,131	0,905	,783
Interaction Gratif.	3	421	3,644	1,117	,887
Immediate Access Motiv.	4	421	3,933	1,076	,906
Immediate Access Gratif.	4	421	3,675	1,140	,917
Monetary Outcomes Motiv.	4	421	4,079	,874	,759
Monetary Outcomes Gratif.	4	421	3,717	1,020	,811
Brand Identity Motiv.	2	421	4,352	,894	,866
Brand Identity Gratif.	2	421	3,926	1,067	907

Table 4. *Reliability analysis results, with Cronbach's Alpha measurements for every scales.*

## 4. Analysis and results

### 4.1. Greek SMEs descriptive statistics

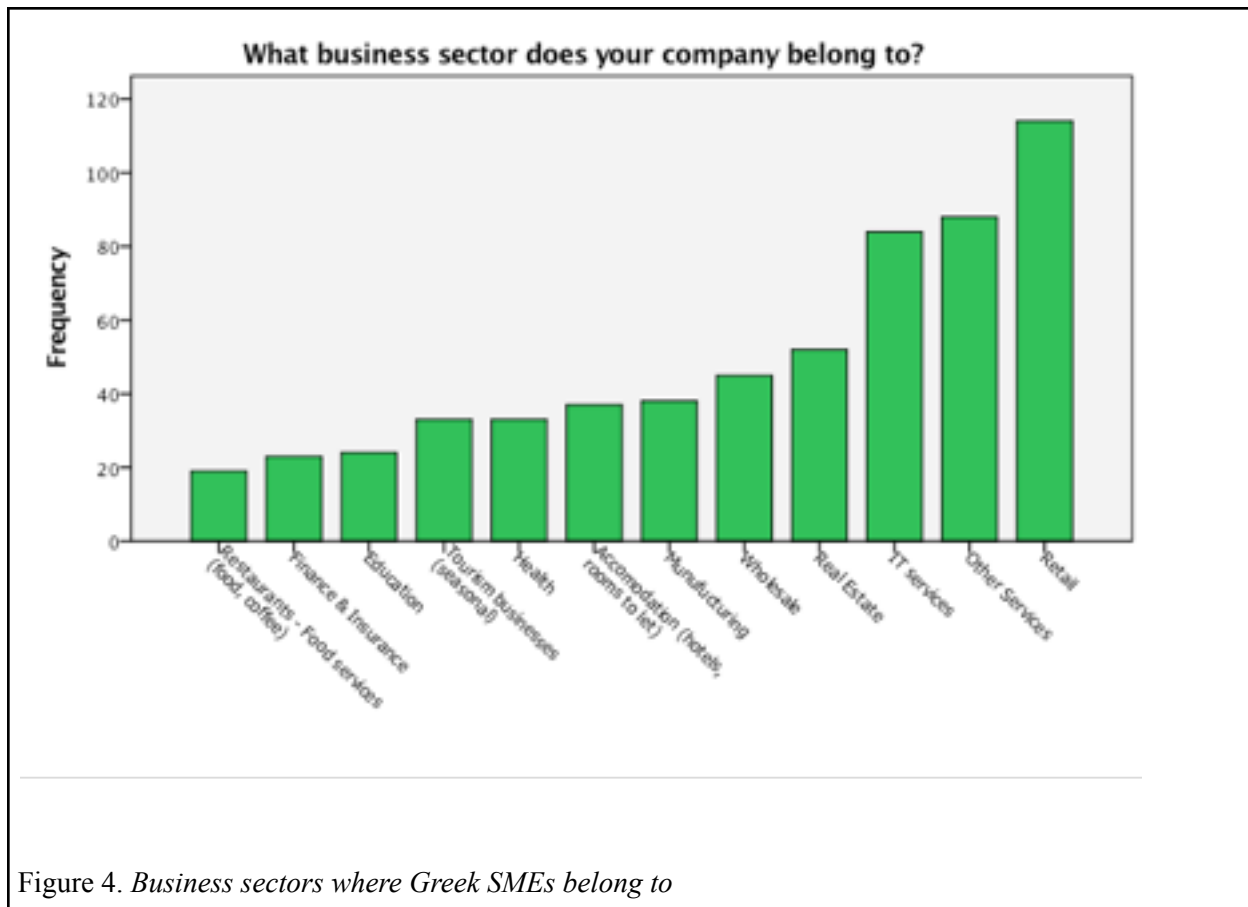
In accordance with data found in literature, 90,5% of Greek SMEs participating in this study are micro enterprises with less than 10 employees including the participants (Table 5), whereas only 8.3% have between 11 and 50 employees, and a barely 1.1% has a medium size. Moreover, these very small Greek enterprises act mainly locally or regionally (48.3 in total%), with 29.3% active nationally, and 22.4% internationally. Almost half of SMEs (53%) are family run, located mainly (46.3%) in Athens and Attica, in the North of Greece (21.8%), and fewer in Crete (16%)

a

No of employees	Frequenc y	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	173	28.3%	28.3%
Less than 10	380	62.2%	90.5%
Less than 50	51	8.3%	98.9%
Less than 250	7	1.1%	100%
Total	611	100%	

Table 5. Size of *participating SMEs*

in central Greece (15.9%). 48.8% of SMEs are both in the consumer (B2C) and the business (B2B) market, 37.5% are B2C only and 13.7% in B2B only. Greek SMEs belong to different business sectors with the majority active in retail and services. The most important sectors (redefined according to received responses to “Other, please specify”) are presented in figure 4 below. The majority of respondents (541 out of 611 or 88,5%) are the owner/manager of the SME, stating also the owner (535 of 611 or 87,6%) is responsible for the communications and/or



Marketing in the company. Furthermore, similarly with prior literature, the owner or general manager of the SME is mainly responsible for managing the (daily) use of social media (65,4%), with only 9.4% of Greek SMEs having a Marketing or Communication department for this role, and a barely 7.5% employing a dedicated social media employee. Finally, Greek SMEs manage their social media accounts mainly randomly within and outside business working hours (26.7%), or randomly within business working hours (18%). 70 out of 611 SMEs responded that they manage their social media accounts 24/7. Besides social media, 90.1% OF Greek SMEs responded they have a website online.

To sum up, results show that very small enterprises (micro enterprises), acting locally, form the backbone of the Greek economy. Social media use occurs randomly, by Greek SMEs owners, who are the main responsible for the social communications of their brand.

#### 4.2. SMEs motivations to use social media

The hypotheses that information sharing ( $M = 4.339$ ,  $SD = .764$ ) interaction ( $M = 4.131$ ,  $SD = .905$ ), immediate access ( $M = 3.933$ ,  $SD = 1.076$ ), brand identity ( $M = 4.352$ ,  $SD = .894$ ) and monetary outcomes ( $M = 4.079$ ,  $SD = .874$ ) act as motivations for Greek SMEs to use social media are supported by the high means scores of the results. However, further analysis is performed to validate the variables derived from literature.

To assess the evaluation of the unidimensionality of the scales found in literature, a principal components factor analysis with Varimax rotation was performed in SPSS, separately for motivations and gratifications. All factors were extracted based on eigenvalues greater than 1. Factors were required to have a significant factor loading greater than 0.5, ensuring convergent validity, and an adequate total variance explained component. Discriminant validity was ensured after a careful examination of the correlation matrix, revealing that correlation between constructs differ significantly from 1.

As far as motivations are concerned, items loaded high in 4 factors, forming 4 new constructs instead of the 5 initial constructs extracted from literature (see Table 6 on next page). Changes occurred in monetary outcomes, with 3 items loading instead of four. The 4th item of monetary outcomes, “attract new customers” loaded in the factor of monetary outcomes among the two items “show the brand’s personality” and “tell other about the brand”. Finally, in factor one all 4 items of immediate access and all 3 items of the construct Interaction loaded with high values,

Item <i>By using social media my company wants to:</i>	Factor Loadings				
	Immediate Interaction	Brand Identity	Information Sharing	Monetary Outcomes	Communalities
access to customers anytime	<b>.852</b>				.784
access customers wherever they are	<b>.833</b>				.772
be available for my customers anytime	<b>.762</b>				.727
communicate with customers	<b>.695</b>				.633
be available to customers no matter where the company is located	<b>.654</b>			.440	.689
give answers to customers questions	<b>.627</b>				.560
interact with customers	<b>.518</b>				.473
show the brand's personality		<b>.874</b>			.840
tell others about the brand		<b>.786</b>			.753
attract new customers		<b>.705</b>			.625
share information useful to customers			<b>.830</b>		.795
provide general information			<b>.806</b>		.720
present information on products/ services			<b>.721</b>		.656
Offer bargains on products and services				<b>.781</b>	.719
Offer information for free that would otherwise cost me money				<b>.716</b>	.647
Save time				<b>.697</b>	.665
% of variance	45.601	10.175	6.973	6.358	
<i>Note:</i> Factor loadings over .50 appear in bold.					
Table 6. <i>Summary of Factor Analysis Results for Greek SMEs motivations to use social media (N = 611). Factor loadings, communality scores and total variance explained.</i>					

showing that being immediate is closely related to interaction for Greek SMEs. A new name, immediate interaction, was assigned to the new construct.

Bartlett's test of Sphericity and 'Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin' (KMO) measures of sampling adequacy are provided for both motivations and gratifications (check table 1 in Appendix B) factor analyses. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity determines whether there is a high enough degree of correlation among the variables. Results for motivations show that test is significant ( $p < .001$ ) and KMO is significantly higher than the minimum of 0.5 indicating a good degree of correlation. The test also reveals a meaningful factor analysis and principal component analysis can be carried out. The total variance explained by the 4 factors of motivations is 69.107%. The determinant for motivations was at 6,631E-5, low but still higher than ,00001 making it acceptable for this research. Reliability was tested again with Cronbach's Alpha (Table 8).

#### 4.3. SMEs gratifications from social media use

Greek SMEs gratifications from social media use were measured using the same constructs, information sharing ( $M = 4.027$ ,  $SD = .947$ ) interaction ( $M = 3.644$ ,  $SD = 1.117$ ), immediate access ( $M = 3.675$ ,  $SD = 1.140$ ), brand identity ( $M = 3.926$ ,  $SD = 1.067$ ) and monetary outcomes ( $M = 3.717$ ,  $SD = 1.020$ ). A factor analysis was performed to further validate the constructs. After a careful examination of the correlation matrix (see table 2 in Appendix B) generated with the factor analysis, several items were correlating too highly (more than 0.8). Items were gradually excluded and factor analysis was rerun until the correlation matrix values were acceptable. Based on the final factor analysis, the remaining items were loading in 3 factors (Table 7), forming 3 constructs instead of the 5 found initially in literature. The new information sharing gratification construct was formed by the 3 initial items and 1 item from brand identity, "With the use of social media my company has managed to successfully tell others about the brand". Talking about the brand is closely related to sharing information about the brand and seems to fit well

Item	Factor Loadings			
	Information Sharing	Interaction	Monetary Outcomes	Communalities
<i>With the use of social media your company has managed to successfully:</i>				
share information useful to customers	<b>.877</b>			.872
provide general information	<b>.834</b>			.765
present information on products/ services	<b>.767</b>			.756
tell others about the brand	<b>.626</b>			.579
interact with customers		<b>.824</b>		.801
give answers to customers questions		<b>.820</b>		.790
communicate with customers		<b>.817</b>		.830
Save time			<b>.820</b>	.761
Offer bargains on products and services			<b>.742</b>	.668
Offer information for free that would otherwise cost me money			<b>.725</b>	.672
be available for my customers anytime		.461	<b>.638</b>	.644
% of variance	54.287	10.488	9.217	
<i>Note:</i> Factor loadings over .50 appear in bold.				
Table 7. <i>Summary of Factor Analysis Results for Greek SMEs gratifications to use social media (N = 611). Factor loadings, communality scores and total variance explained.</i>				

with the gratification of information sharing. The new construct's reliability was .877 tested with Cronbach's Alpha (Table 8).

Bartlett's Test of Sphericity results for gratifications (check table 1 in Appendix B) show that test is significant ( $p < .001$ ), and KMO is significantly higher than the minimum of 0.5 indicating a good degree of correlation. The test reveals a meaningful factor analysis and principal component analysis can be carried out. The total variance explained by the 3 factors of gratifications is 73,992%. The new correlation matrix revealed no items correlating higher than



0.8 indicating multicollinearity or items being too unrelated with the determinant for motivations at ,001 higher than ,00001 making it acceptable for this research. Reliability of every newly formed construct was tested again with Cronbach's Alpha (Table 8). To sum up, factor analysis revealed that motivations are reduced to 4 factors (needs) from the initial 5 constructs derived from literature. Immediate access and interaction loaded in one factor forming immediate interaction, followed by information sharing, monetary outcomes and brand Identity. As far as gratifications are concerned, results revealed that SMEs gratify 3 needs from their social media use, information sharing, interaction and monetary outcomes.

Variable	Type	No of items	M	SD	Cronbach's Alpha
Information Sharing	Motivation	3	4,339	,764	,793
Immediate Interaction	Motivation	7	4,018	,918	,900
Monetary Outcomes	Motivation	3	3,898	1,044	,774
Brand Identity	Motivation	3	4,442	,764	,835
Information Sharing	Gratification	4	3,998	,914	,877
Interaction	Gratification	3	3,644	1,117	,887
Monetary Outcomes	Gratification	4	3,674	1,064	,830

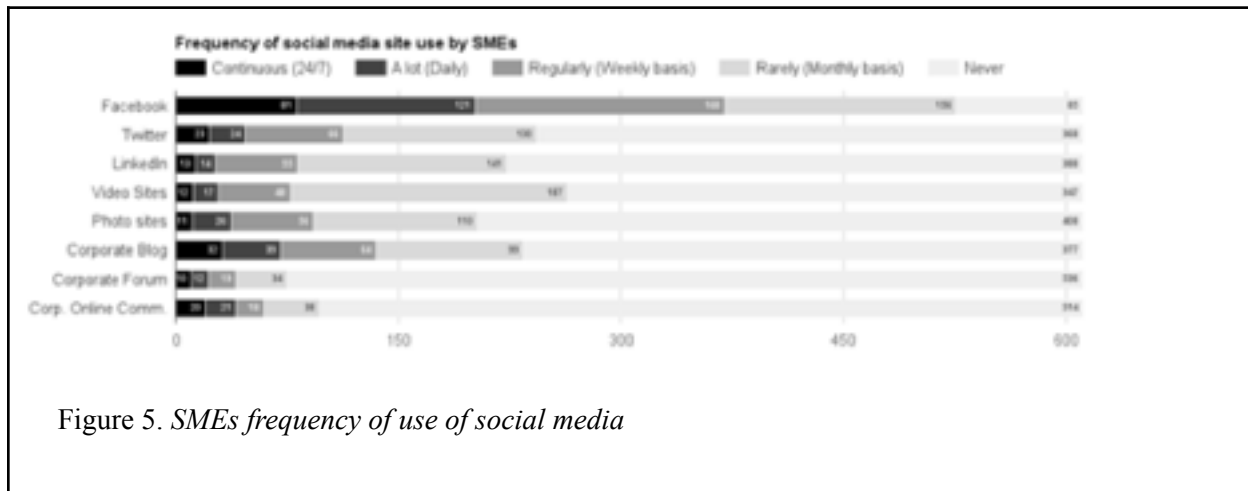
Table 8. *Motivations and gratifications Cronbach's alpha scores for reliability and descriptive statistics of each construct (N=421).*

#### 4.3. SMEs Social Media Use

Stepping on the second research question of this study, "*What is the actual social media use of SMEs in Greece?*" this study explores the ways SMEs use different social media, the frequency of use, as well as differences between uses for SMEs of different characteristics.

*Frequency of use.* To begin with, Greek SMEs frequency of use was measured for 8 different social media (Figure 5). Results showed that Greek SMEs social media use varied significantly

among the social media presented in the survey.



Facebook had the highest frequency of use, 60,06% in total (Table 9), with 27.5% of Greek SMEs using Facebook regularly, 19.8% a lot and 13.3% continuously (24/7). Less than 1/4 of Greek SMEs tend to use Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube, Photo sites, corporate forums or corporate online communities. Among them, corporate blog is slightly more used (22.1% or 135 out of 611 SMEs) than the rest.

	Social Media	SM user (%)
1.	Facebook	60.6%
2.	Twitter	18.5%
3.	Linked In	13.4%
4.	Photo Sites (Pinterest, Flickr etc.)	15.2%
5.	Video Sites (YouTube, Vimeo etc.)	12.6%
6.	Corporate Blog	22.1%
7.	Corporate Forum	6.7%
8.	Corporate Online Community	9.7%

Table 9. *Percentage of total SMEs using each social media (regularly or more), marked as users.*

Greek SMEs using at least one of the social media regularly or more, were considered as social

media users (N=423) and were progressed to the second part of the questionnaire, investigating further the ways they use social media.

*Social media uses.* The second part of the questionnaire explored Greek SMEs actual social media use in terms of what they do with social media presently. Each use was represented in the questionnaire by a single Likert item and was analyzed separately. Descriptive statistics (Table 10) and frequency tables (see table 3 in Appendix B) revealed that the number one use Greek SMEs perform on social media is responding to customer messages. An analysis of variance showed that the effect of business sector on the use responding to customers questions was not significant, ( $F(407) = 1.293, p = .213$ ). The social media uses following were distributing content about the company its products or services, and monitoring what is said about the company. In general there were no statistical differences in social media uses among Greek SMEs in different business sectors (see summary of ANOVA results in table 5 in Appendix B).

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD
read what others say about our organization and / or our products / services say (monitoring)	1	5	4,25	1,057
respond to messages about the organization and / or our products / services	1	5	4,45	0,969
distribute content across the organization and / or our products / services	1	5	4,25	1,136
initiate discussions with our target audience	1	5	3,13	1,377
encourage consumers to publish feedback / reviews on our organization and / or products / services	1	5	3,53	1,333
involve consumers in product / service innovation	1	5	3,39	1,405

Table 10. *Descriptive statistics for each Greek SMEs social media use investigated.*

*Barriers to social media use.* Out of the 611 participating SMEs, 188 never or rarely use any of the social media presented in the survey and were marked as non-users. Non-users were

forwarded to rate the reasons why they did not use social media. The top reason for Greek SMEs not to use social media is that it costs too much of their time (28.5%), in contrary with prior findings in literature mentioning that SMEs simply see no reason for it. The second most important reason is that it is not clear how social media can contribute to the brand, followed by the lack of employee technical skills to use social media (Table 11).

Reasons	Percent
1. Social media costs too much of our time	28.5%
2. It is not clear how social media can contribute to my business	22.8%
3. Our employees lack the technical skills to use social media	18.5%
4. Social media is not important to the industry in which my business operates	8.9%
5. Our staff is not familiar with social media use	6.4%
6. Other (9 out of 12 times was “Lack of time”)	5.7%
7. I do not know	5.3%
8. Our competition also does not use social media	3.9%

Table 11. *Reasons for little or no use social media by Greek SMEs*

The paradox is that when looking in the the future, only a few participants stated they were planning to use social media less or probably less within 2 years from today. More than half of participants stated they were planning to use each social media “probably more” or “most probably more” within the next two years, besides corporate forums & online communities. Facebook, Video sites such as YouTube and Twitter rank the highest (see also detailed percentages per response in table 4 of Appendix B), followed by corporate blogs, Linked In and photo sites such as Instagram and Flickr. For non-users SMEs, “equal to now” could mean they will simply continue not to use in the future, the same social media they do not already use presently. However, the majority of Greek SMEs seem to appreciate the significance of social

media from a business perspective and they wish to increase their activity on it (Figure 6).

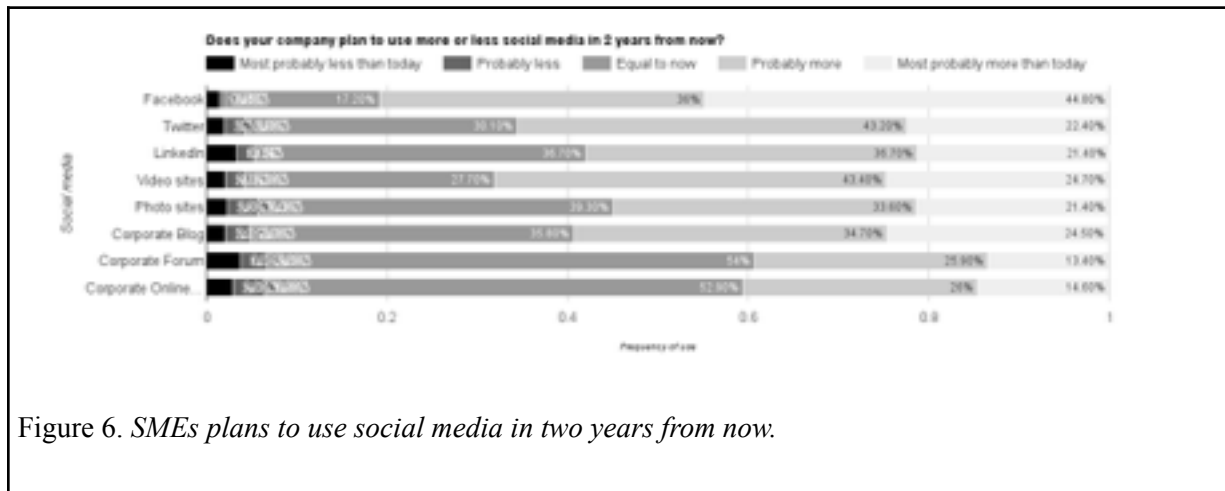


Figure 6. SMEs plans to use social media in two years from now.

To sum up, the study hypothesized that information sharing ( $M = 4.339$ ,  $SD = .764$ ) interaction ( $M = 4.131$ ,  $SD = .905$ ), immediate access ( $M = 3.933$ ,  $SD = 1.076$ ), brand identity ( $M = 4.352$ ,  $SD = .894$ ) and monetary outcomes ( $M = 4.079$ ,  $SD = .874$ ) act as motivations for Greek SMEs to use social media. The high scores reveal that hypotheses are indeed supported. However, further factors analysis revealed that for Greek SMEs several items of the scales load in common factors. As a result Greek SMEs motivations to use social media are found to be 4, information sharing ( $M = 4.339$ ,  $SD = .764$ ), immediate interaction ( $M = 4.018$ ,  $SD = .918$ ), brand identity ( $M = 4.442$ ,  $SD = .764$ ) and monetary outcomes ( $M = 3.898$ ,  $SD = 1.044$ ). As far as gratifications are concerned, factor analysis revealed that items loaded in three factors, information sharing ( $M = 3.998$ ,  $SD = .914$ ), interaction ( $M = 3.644$ ,  $SD = 1.117$ ) and monetary outcomes ( $M = 3.674$ ,  $SD = 1.064$ ), which were the gratifications obtained by Greek SMEs from their social media use. The initial SMEs social media uses and gratifications model is adjusted accordingly, developing U&G theory in a way that is appropriate for SMEs. (Figure 7). The

following section discusses further the above results, as well as the profile of Greek SMEs and their social media use.

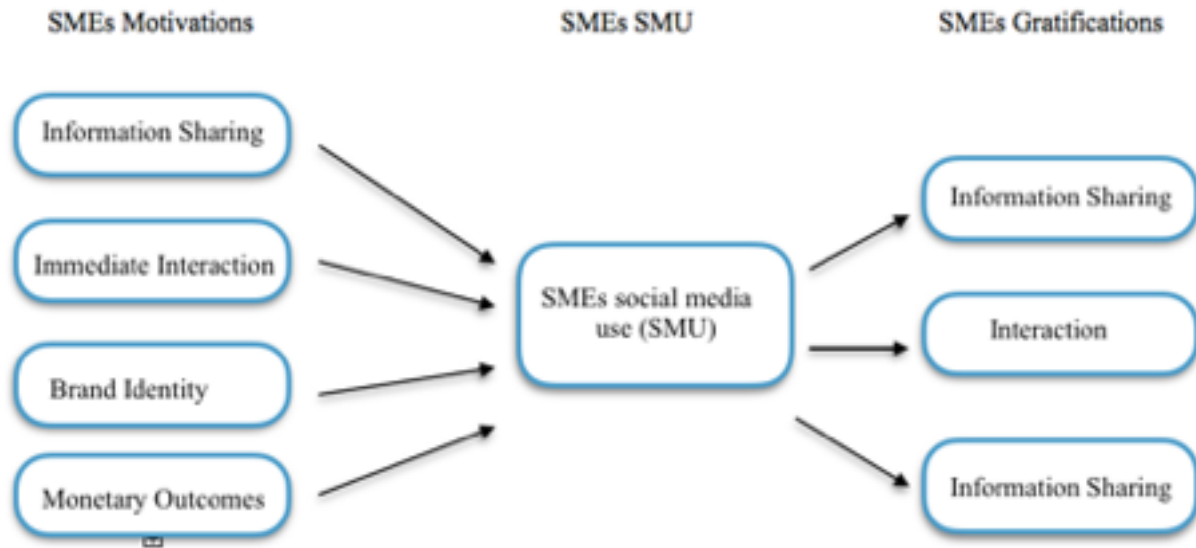


Figure 7. *Adjusted SMEs uses and gratifications model based on the motivations of Greek SMEs to use social media and the gratifications obtained from its use.*

## 5. Discussion

The purpose of this study is to fill an existing research gap in social media use by small and medium enterprises. To accomplish that, the study examines a uses and gratifications (U&G) approach of social media use by SMEs in Greece. The main research questions were a) what motivates SMEs in Greece to use social media, 2) what gratifications do Greek SMEs obtain from social media use, and 3) what is the actual social media use of SMEs in Greece. Conclusion are presented below.

As far as motivations are concerned, results confirm that the need to share information, promote the brand identity and have monetary outcomes, act as motivations to use social media in the specific context of SMEs. ‘Immediate access’ and ‘interaction’ motivations found in literature merged into immediate interaction, which makes more sense in a business context, considering that transcending temporal and geographic limitations (as immediate access) specifically for the purpose of interaction with customers, represents better the need of an SMEs to use social media. As far as gratifications are concerned, through the use of social media Greek SMEs successfully manage to gratify their need for information sharing, interaction with customers and monetary outcomes.

Moving towards a deeper look in SMEs social media uses, we see that Greek SMEs do not use a variety of social media, such as twitter, LinkedIn, photo/video sites or corporate blog/forum/online community. Greek SMEs mainly use Facebook. This can be explained by several reasons, beginning with the type of SMEs found in Greece. The great majority of Greek businesses are family-run, micro enterprises (less than 10 employees), with the owner/manager responsible for both the SME and the social media communications. It is potentially easier to

find your customers on Facebook, rather than twitter or YouTube, especially if you are the owner of a very small business, with local presence, competing with local brands and dealing with customers mainly in your area. These typical characteristics of Greek SMEs potentially affect their social media use, not allowing them to see benefits in alternative social media.

Another reason is that Greek SMEs social media use occurs randomly within and/or outside business hours, mainly to distribute content about the company and to respond to customer messages. There is a very small part of Greek SMEs that actually use social media to initiate discussions and/or involve customers in product innovation. That also explains why videos, corporate forums and online communities are used so little by Greek SMEs. Such social media require more effort to onboard and depend a lot on engaging customers in the form of a community. Moreover, owners of Greek SMEs either have no time to explore such social media platforms and their benefits, or they do not

see the value in doing so. From a scientific perspective, although this paper does not affect the nature of the universe as we know it, it contributes in existing research in two important ways. First, this study develops U&G theory in a way that is appropriate to use for SMEs, where the personality of a single individual, the owner, has been found to affect decision making. This study reveals a uses and gratifications model that allows to study the social media use in this specific context of SMEs, with motivations, uses and gratifications reflecting the needs and actions of such businesses. Second, this study explores the usage of social media in Greece, which can be applied to more countries with similar type of economies, such as having a large percentage of very small enterprises that act and compete locally. Finally, to the best of our



knowledge, it is the first study including the utilitarian constructs of immediate access and monetary outcomes as motivations to use social media by SMEs.

From a societal point of view, the outcomes of this study outline a Greek SME persona and can help existing and potential SMEs struggling with little or no budget, to identify social media ways to achieve their goals. The majority of SMEs in Greece are micro firms, where the owner is also the manager and the responsible person for social media communication. What we could conclude is that managers/owners of SMEs are too busy running their business, to find time for social media. Instead they randomly give attention to social media, inside or outside their business hours mainly to distribute content or respond to customers, as an alternative corporate website, rather than initiate discussions or stimulate interaction. However, monetary outcomes is a gratification successfully obtained from social media use ( $M=3.674$ ), which means that by incorporating social media in their daily business, SMEs can increase their revenue or save time in the long term.

### 5.1. Recommendations and limitations

The number one reason Greek SMEs do not use social media is that it costs too much of their time, followed by lack of understanding on how social media can contribute to the brand and lack of skills. However, social media is known for the exact opposite, which is saving time and money for small firms and assist in attracting customers faster, cheaper and broader. This is also confirmed by the needs found to be gratified by Greek SMEs in this study, monetary outcomes, information sharing and interaction. Greek SMEs owners are recommended to assign dedicated time and budget to social media, and stop using it randomly and unorganized. The fastest way to

see results would be to assign social media to a dedicated employee. Alternatively, an existing employee could dedicated some of his hours in managing social media.

Social media can help SMEs in general to save time, interact with customers and reach new audiences both in a local and an international level. This can be accomplished through targeted advertising, use of popular hashtags (e.g. #geektshirts, #ilovecoffee) used both locally and internationally, and by following/capitalizing on viral trends and big events (e.g. memes, Rio olympics). Other very useful tips consist creating a publishing calendar, scheduling and automating content, as well as reading or seeking help from experts about alternative media and their benefits. It seems that SMEs owners desperately need to receive education about social media use. Such support might be provided by governmental or European entrepreneurship programs aiming at supporting SMEs and startups across Europe. From the institutions perspective, these kind of programs could include budget for social media training depending on the characteristics of the economy and businesses.

As with every study there are several limitations that need to be addressed. Although the internal validity of the present study seems strong, it should be noted that results are limited, in that the Greek SMEs sample was provided by a Greek services provider which operates only online. Further research efforts are called to validate the findings of this study, provide pivotal implications for online SMEs and confirm that U&G can be more appropriate when investigating small companies in similar economies as Greece. Portugal or Cyprus presumably have similar typical characteristics.

Another limitation can be the pre-selection of motivation Likert scales from literature. A qualitative research could reveal additional motivations uses and gratifications that were

neglected by this study, despite the fact that motivations used were confirmed by factor analysis. Finally, given the important role of uses and gratifications theory, future research could extend in exploring its applications in social media advertising and other e-commerce fields. Finally there was a lack of medium enterprises in the sample, which indicates that results may not represent the total of Greek SMEs in Greece, but the smaller ones, the micro enterprises.

The results of this study in general support that the SMES U&G model developed can be successfully used to study social media use among SMEs, and specifically among very small enterprises, not only in Greece but also in other similar economies in the world.

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## Appendix A

### Online questionnaire sent to Greek SMEs

1. What is your role within the company?

Director/owner/self-employed

Communication and / or marketing manager

Communication and / or marketing employee

Other \_\_\_\_\_

2. Who is primarily responsible in your company for the communication and/or PR policy?

Director / owner / self-employed

Manager of the relevant communication and / or marketing department

Communication and/or marketing manager (there is no communication department)

Other \_\_\_\_\_

>>Below follow some questions about social media<< About Social media

3. To what extent does your company use social media to reach its business goals?

[never, rarely (monthly basis), regularly (weekly basis), a lot (daily basis), continuous (24/7)]

Facebook

Twitter

LinkedIn

Video Sites (YouTube etc.)

Photo Sites (Pinterest, Flickr etc.)

Own Blog

Own Forum

Own online community

4. Does your company plan to use more or less social media in 2 years from now?

(equal to now, most probably less, probably less, probably more, most probably more)

Facebook

Twitter

LinkedIn

YouTube (or other video sites)

Flickr (or other photo sites)

Blog

Private Forum

Private online community

Skip if use is  $\geq$  to weekly basis for every social media

5. Why does your company make little or no use of social media? *You can select more than one answers*

Social media is not important to the industry in which my business operates  
It is unclear how social media can contribute to my business  
Our staff is not familiar with social media use  
Social media (costs us too much time)  
Our competition (also) does not use social media  
Our staff does not have the technical skills to use social media,  
I do not really know  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. Who manages the (daily) use of social media within your company?

*You can select more than one answers*

Director/owner/self-employed  
Dedicated social media employee  
Communication and/or marketing department  
Administration department / employee  
All employees  
Intern/trainee  
Third party (eg. Advertising agency)  
Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. When does the company manage its social media accounts?

Random within business hours  
At fixed times within business hours  
Random within and outside company's business hours  
At regular intervals outside business hours  
Managing 24/7

Mark to what extent do you agree with the following statements  
(1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree)

8. To use social media, your company has ...

done research on the use of social media among its customers  
established a social media policy  
created guidelines for employees who use the company's social media  
trained the employees who use the social media  
established evaluation criteria

9. With social media ...

We read what others say about our organization and / or our products / services say  
(monitoring)

We respond to messages about the organization and / or our products / services  
We distribute content about the organization and / or our products / services  
We initiate discussions with our target audience

We encourage consumers to publish feedback/reviews on our organization and/or products/ services

We involve consumers in product / service innovation

10. By using social media my company wants to :

*Please specify to what extend the below reasons provide sufficient motivation for your company to use social media.*

- provide information
- share information useful to customers
- present information on products/services
- meet new people
- participate in discussions
- interact with customers
- communicate with customers
- give feedback to customers
- access customers anytime
- access customers wherever they are
- be available to customers anytime
- be available to customers no matter where the company is
- offer bargains on products and services
- save time
- offer free information that would otherwise cost money to share
- attract new customers
- show the brand's personality
- tell others about the brand

11. With the use of social media my company has managed to successfully:

*Attention: Although questions 9 and 10 look similar, they do not mean the same. For question 10 you need to mark to what extend you company has actually achieved the below from social media use.*

- provide general information
- share information useful to customers
- present information on products/services
- meet new people
- participate in discussions
- interact with customers
- communicate with customers
- give feedback to customers
- access customers anytime
- access customers wherever they are
- be available to customers anytime
- be available to customers no matter where the company is
- offer bargains on products and services

save time  
offer free information that would otherwise cost money to share  
attract new customers  
(show) share the brand's personality  
tell others about the brand

12. Use of social media by your company influences its target audience in terms of...  
the trust in the organization  
a good feeling about the organization  
the respect for the organization  
the appeal of the organization  
the reputation of the organization

**About the company**

13. How many employees are in the company, including you:  
1 (freelancer)  
Less than 10  
Less than 50  
Less than 250  
More than 250

14. What business sector does your company belong to?  
Accommodation (hotels, rooms to let)  
Transfers (passengers, air, land, sea,)  
Tourism businesses (seasonal services)  
Retail  
Wholesale  
Manufacturing  
Restaurants and Food Industry  
IT services  
Constructions (Real estate, Engineers)  
Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries  
Other services  
Other

15. Is your company in the consumer or business market?  
Consumer market (B2C)  
Business Market (B2B)  
Consumer and business market (B2C & B2B)

16. Where is your company located in Greece? (First-level NUTS of the European Union)  
Attica  
Crete and Islands of the Aegean

(North Aegean, South Aegean, Crete)

North Greece

(Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, Central Macedonia, Western Macedonia, Epirus)

Central Greece

(Thessaly, Ionian Islands, Western Greece, Central Greece, Peloponnese)

17. Where is your company active?

Locally

Regionally

Nationally

Internationally

18. Is your company a family business?

yes

no

Do not know/not applicable

19. Your company

is in the forefront of new developments

is transparent (open and accessible)

has lots of competition

dares to take risks

is focused on the future

has a formal work environment

20. Does your company have a website online at the moment?

yes

no

## Appendix B

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's test for motivations and gratifications

<b>Type</b>	<b>KMO and Bartlett's test.</b>		
Motivations	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,891
	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3981,531
		df	120
		sig	,000
Gratifications	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		,901
	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2841,512
		df	55
		sig	,000



Table 2. Correlation Matrix extracted from initial Factor Analysis for Gratifications of SMEs from social media use. Variables with very high correlation >.8 appear in bold

With the use of social media your company has managed to successfully:

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1 provide general information																
2 share information useful to customers	.766															
3 present information on products/ services	.632	.771														
4 interact with customers	.421	.498	.503													
5 communicate with customers	.456	.522	.527	.767												
6 give feedback to customers	.384	.454	.510	.689	.721											
7 access customers anytime	.350	.386	.426	.508	.563	.572										
8 access customers wherever they are	.363	.392	.418	.513	.524	.545	<b>.881</b>									
9 be available to customers anytime	.351	.413	.462	.473	.531	.563	.678	.648								
10 be available to customers no matter where the company is	.352	.411	.501	.510	.546	.561	.654	.709	<b>.839</b>							
11 offer bargains on products and services	.406	.397	.481	.438	.470	.429	.461	.442	.551	.584						

1		.385	.390														
2	save time			$\dot{4}1$	$\dot{4}4$	$\dot{4}8$	$\dot{4}2$	$\dot{5}5$	$\dot{5}4$	$\dot{5}6$	$\dot{5}7$	$\dot{5}9$					
				2	8	2	5	9	3	9	7	6					
	offer free																
1	information that																
3	would otherwise	.452	.490	$\dot{4}4$	$\dot{3}8$	$\dot{3}9$	$\dot{4}0$	$\dot{4}5$	$\dot{4}6$	$\dot{4}6$	$\dot{5}1$	$\dot{5}1$	$\dot{6}0$				
	cost money to			6	3	4	9	9	3	2	8	1	3				
	share																
1	attract new																
4	customers	.494	.507	$\dot{5}1$	$\dot{5}7$	$\dot{6}4$	$\dot{5}4$	$\dot{5}2$	$\dot{5}2$	$\dot{5}1$	$\dot{5}0$	$\dot{4}9$	$\dot{4}8$	$\dot{4}1$			
				8	8	9	0	2	6	1	2	0	5	6			
1	show the brand's																
5	personality	.496	.593	$\dot{5}8$	$\dot{4}2$	$\dot{5}0$	$\dot{4}4$	$\dot{4}4$	$\dot{4}3$	$\dot{4}9$	$\dot{4}9$	$\dot{4}6$	$\dot{4}4$	$\dot{4}4$	$\dot{6}23$		
				9	0	3	9	1	4	0	1	8	0	4			
16	tell others about																
	the brand	.507	.604	$\dot{5}8$	$\dot{4}3$	$\dot{5}1$	$\dot{4}1$	$\dot{4}7$	$\dot{4}2$	$\dot{4}4$	$\dot{4}6$	$\dot{4}4$	$\dot{4}3$	$\dot{4}5$	$\dot{5}61$	$\dot{8}3$	$\dot{0}$
				9	4	3	2	1	2	4	8	3	1	1			

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Table 3. Actual social media uses by Greek SMEs Percentages per score (1 to 5).

	<b>With social media you:</b>				
<i>Mark to what extent do you agree with the following statements. (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).</i>	1	2	3	4	5
read what others say about our organization and/or our products/services say (monitoring)	3.1%	5.2%	12.1%	22.8%	56.8%
respond to messages about the organization and/or our products/services	2.6%	4.3%	5.9%	19.7%	67.5%
distribute content about the organization and/or our products/services	5.9%	3.1%	10%	21.06%	59.4%
initiate discussions with our target audience	15.7 %	18.5%	25.9%	16.6%	23.3%
encourage consumers to publish feedback/reviews on our organization and/or products/services	9.7%	14%	22.4%	20.9%	33.00 %
involve consumers in product/service innovation	13.8 %	13.5%	23.8%	17.3%	31.6%

Table 4. How Greek SMEs plan to use social media in 2 years from today.

Does your company plan to use more or less social media in 2 years from now?			
	Probably less + most probably less	Equal to now	Probably more + most probably more
Facebook	2%	17.2%	<b>80.2%</b>
Twitter	4.3%	30.1%	<b>65.6%</b>
LinkedIn	5.3%	36.7%	<b>58.1%</b>
Video sites	4.2%	27.7%	<b>68.1%</b>
Photo sites	5.7%	39.3%	<b>55 %</b>
Corporate Blog	4.9%	35.8%	<b>59.2%</b>
Corporate Forum	6.7%	<b>54%</b>	39.3%
Corporate Online Community	6.5%	<b>52.9%</b>	40.6%

*Note: With bold percentages >50% are shown.*

Table 5. Summary of ANOVA results for each social media use

Social Media Use		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F
initiate discussions with our target audience	Between Groups	12,194	13	0,938	0,487
	Within Groups	784,358	407	1,927	
	Total	796,551	420		
encourage consumers to publish feedback / reviews on our organization and / or products / services	Between Groups	34,562	13	2,659	1,519
	Within Groups	712,189	407	1,750	
	Total	746,751	420		
involve consumers in product / service innovation	Between Groups	21,539	13	1,657	0,836
	Within Groups	807,007	407	1,983	
	Total	828,546	420		
read what others say about our organization and / or our products / services say (monitoring)	Between Groups	21,437	13	1,649	1,500
	Within Groups	447,375	407	1,099	
	Total	468,812	420		
respond to messages about the organization and / or our products / services	Between Groups	15,642	13	1,203	1,293
	Within Groups	378,610	407	0,930	
	Total	394,252	420		
distribute content across the organization and / or our products / services	Between Groups	24,222	13	1,863	1,465
	Within Groups	517,583	407	1,272	

Total

541,805

420

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