# Barriers to social enterprises' adoption of social media marketing in developing countries

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**Abstract**

*Marketing safeguards sustainability through supporting cooperative and collaborative interactions between businesses and stakeholders. Social media (SM) marketing can be described as an innovative and ground-breaking business practice. Adopting SM marketing is one of the vital strategic challenges facing the social enterprise (SE) sector to access the international market, improve networking, gain competitive advantage, and obtain valuable global market intelligence. There has been almost no research into SM usage in social types of enterprises.*

*This research aims to shed light on the issues that influence Bangladeshi SEs in their adoption of SM for business purposes. The aim is to understand why they*

*need to adopt this relatively new technological phenomenon. This is achieved by recognising the difficulties and challenges that SEs face and the benefits they experience once they have embraced SM. Using the technology–organisation–environment framework and a social constructionist perspective, 22 in-depth interviews were conducted with individuals from SEs.*

*The emergent data were analysed using thematic analysis. Analysis suggests there is a low level of SM marketing engagement among SEs. Lack of technological knowledge, security, trust, and support, and a deficiency in resources are among the main challenges. One interesting finding was that all participants were aware of the benefits that SM can provide, but the challenges hinder adoption. This study's conceptual model can improve stakeholders' considerations of why some SEs prefer to implement SM technologies, while others have not.*

## 1. Introduction

Diverse modifications in the online environment have compelled entrepreneurs to re-evaluate their business strategies, mainly when marketing and trading products and services (Kumar and Pradhan, 2015; Muninger et al., 2019). Organisations increasingly use the internet for business activities and communications at different levels. Social media (SM) marketing is a modern idea that uses the internet. It permits businesses from all over the world to advertise their products with the option to connect and share thoughts or opinions on a single platform (Winter et al., 2021; Islam and Chitran, 2019; Islam et al., 2021).

In recent decades, people have become increasingly aware of social issues that challenge regular problem-solving methods. As arbitrated by present-day media reports, popular examples include environmental problems, such as pollution and climate change, worldwide poverty, and health care. According to Shaw and Carter (2007), some problems can cross borders and, generally, they entail multiple stakeholders, making them extremely challenging to address using a consistent and comprehensive approach. It is clear that governments alone cannot tackle the issues posed by various problems because of the cost and resources required. However, the borders between government, not-for-profit, and commercial sectors have become increasingly blurred. Until now, capitalist markets have not directly engaged in fulfilling various social requirements. However, ground-breaking and profitable ways of addressing social problems have emerged. Thus, there has been a greater

focus on how ideas like social entrepreneurship can address critical social issues (Spieth et al., 2019; Barraket et al., 2017; Tykkylainen and Ritala, 2020).

This research aims to shed light on the issues that influence Bangladeshi social enterprises (SEs) in the adoption of SM for business purposes. The aim is to understand why they need to adopt this relatively new technological phenomenon. This research also investigates how SM implementation affects SE operations. This is achieved by recognising the difficulties and challenges that SEs face and the benefits they experience once they have embraced SM.

## 2. Theoretical Underpinnings
### 2.1 SM Marketing

Organisational responses towards SM platforms have emerged as an effective and efficient alternative to conventional marketing strategies (Daries et al., 2020; Ozuem et al., 2019a). Alves et al. (2016) explained that SM platforms have enabled business entities to respond to market efficiency. According to Al Tawara and Gide (2016), market efficiency has increased through SM-based marketing strategies in which business entities have taken the lead with customer communication; SM-based marketing can ensure customer engagement (Ananda et al., 2017; Li et al., 2020; Ozuem et al., 2008). Additionally, competitive pressure impacts businesses and encourages them to exist on different SM platforms (Chaudhary and Aggrawal, 2017). However, using SM marketing or having an existence on SM platforms is not

enough; companies often have to work hard to employ SM marketing efficiently (Ozuem et al., 2019b).

SM is a platform that allows users to publish and observe diverse forms of information. Kim and Ko (2012) and Winter et al. (2021) defined SM as a two-way direct communication medium where marketers and consumers evaluate a new way of trading, servicing, and generating corporate models and standards. SM is a platform for businesses to inspire others and create a sense of intimacy with the customer (Felix et al., 2017; Ozuem et al., 2017; Swani et al., 2014).

Atwong (2016) suggested that the term "strategy" should be understood before conceptualising SM-based marketing. According to Ananda et al. (2017), the term "strategy" has an enduring radical perspective and requires a vast amount of resources and commitment. Brink (2017) stated that a marketing strategy is considered an integral part of developing an effective and efficient business strategy. The marketing strategy determines organisational efforts towards developing customer engagement within the organisational value chain. The strategic aim of any marketing strategy is to create customer awareness of the organisational value chain and to develop an integrated customer relationship (Chaudhary and Aggrawal, 2017; Islam et al., 2021; Tayeb et al., 2019; Ozuem et al., 2016). SM-based marketing is the use of SM to promote a product or service.

Social interactions via SM can be used to communicate with similarly minded individuals and to

establish networks with the public in the same industry or field. Partnerships can be formed on SM with potential corporate allies internationally (Drummond et al., 2018; Michaelidou et al., 2011).

## *2.2 SEs*

SEs are organisations that use commercial strategies to meet a social objective. According to Trivedi and Stokols (2011), cooperative movements are possibly the primary origin of entrepreneurial activities in the social segment. There is a lack of consensus in the literature on a definition of social entrepreneurship (Beaton and Dowin, 2021; Dato-on and Kalakay, 2016). Indeed, Hossain et al. (2017) stated that conceptualisation of social entrepreneurship remains vague, although it has grown in importance among researchers.

Scholarly consideration of SEs has been notable in many fields over the last few decades (Widjojo and Gunawan, 2019; Bansal et al., 2019; Saebi et al., 2019); in particular, the fields of management, entrepreneurship, non-profit, economic development, and public policy (Duarte et al., 2019; Yang and Wu, 2016; Short et al., 2009). However, the literature on social entrepreneurship is unfocused (Edobor and Kyaruzi, 2018). Roberts and Woods (2005, p.46) stated in their research on social entrepreneurship that "there is no proven method, code of practice or core business model to follow". In addition, academics are still unable to fully link social entrepreneurship with the concept of entrepreneurial knowledge (Abu-Saifan, 2012; Islam et al., 2021). Although a significant number of SEs continue to create social value, the framework in which this value is created

requires closer examination (Bansal et al., 2019; Sigala 2016; Widjojo and Gunawan, 2019).

### 2.3 SEs and Marketing

SEs must engage in marketing to bring about value for their target communities (Srivetbodee et al., 2017; Chiweshe and Ellis, 2019; Mitchell et al., 2016) and to make their mission appealing (Bandyopadhyay and Ray, 2019). Where appropriately implemented, marketing can increase the efficacy and competency of SEs by recognising opportunities and dispersing innovative solutions to problems (Glaveli and Geormas, 2018; Chung et al., 2016).

In the UK, 471,000 SEs operate very successfully (Sharman, 2017). For any business, whatever the strategy it adopts, the main aim is to sell its product for a return, whether for stakeholders or for stakeholders and society. Thus, choosing an effective marketing option, such as SM, is key for SEs (Powell and Osborne, 2015). Digital marketing strategies for SEs that use SM will vary depending on the product, target market, and how the product or service meets the needs of their target market (Bajrami and Fejza, 2020; Azemi et al., 2019). A SM marketing strategy should be part of an overall digital strategy for any business (Azemi et al., 2019; Islam et al., 2021). Preparing a SM marketing strategy can benefit social businesses and help them to develop a sensible approach to digital advertising (Della Corte et al., 2015). By embracing SM marketing strategies, businesses are trained to identify and concentrate on market demands and to transmit real-time information to clients (Winter et al., 2021). SM marketing approaches should be built on

the goals of the business and where it envisions itself in the future. This contrasts with conventional approaches to mass media marketing since digital advertising (SM) can expand the extent of the marketing arena. Integrating digital and conventional approaches is a vital component of SM marketing strategies (Chryssoula and Evangelos, 2020).

## 2.4 Theoretical Models of Technology Adoption

Researchers have reviewed literature on businesses' use and adoption of technologies (e.g., Fonseka et al., 2020; Doe et al., 2019; Lai, 2017). They found five widely used models and theories: the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), the Diffusion of Innovation (DoI) theory, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), and the Technology–Organisation–Environment (TOE) framework. These theories and frameworks vary in their application and emphasis: TAM, UTAUT, and TPB focus on users' intentions towards, acceptance of, and usage of, new technology, whereas TOE and DoI have organisational-led conjectural standpoints (Oliveira et al., 2019). For example, Chao (2019) applied UTAUT to assess customers' views concerning mobile learning, whereas Zhang and Xiao (2017) used the TOE framework to explore elements that control SM acceptance within the Chinese government.

Since its introduction in 1990, TOE has been employed from various perspectives to investigate the implementation and application of different technologies. For example, it has been used to study the acceptance of cloud computing (Al-Hujran et al., 2018), e-commerce

(Mohtaramzadeh et al., 2017; Abed, 2020; Govinnage and Sachitra, 2019), e-business (Govinnage and Sachitra, 2019), and information and communications technology (ICT) (Leung et al., 2015).

The TOE framework has emerged as a well-established and robust framework to analyse different internal (technological and organisational) and external (environmental) factors that influence the adoption of different types of ICT in the small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) setting. The TOE framework is best described as an organisational-level theory that comprises three main contexts: technology, organisation, and environment (Awa and Ojiabo, 2016). Each context has a set of determinants that are thought to impact the adoption of innovation in organisations. The technological determinants that have been explored are ICT infrastructure, relative advantage, compatibility, application and tools, complexity, and trust (Awa and Ojiabo, 2016; Awa et al., 2015; Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990). Organisational determinants pertain to resources, size, structure, and prior experiences (Awa et al., 2015; Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990). Finally, environmental determinants encompass competitive intensity, customer pressure, competitive pressure, market scope, and support needed (Awa et al., 2015; Tornatzky and Fleischer, 1990).

The TOE framework is well suited to study SM adoption in socially oriented organisations (Oliveira et al., 2019). The goal of this research is to develop a conceptual framework for SM adoption. SEs can use the multiple theoretical viewpoints of the TOE framework to rationalise adoption of SM. In addition, despite the

abundance of enterprise adoption studies (Eze et al., 2019; Govinnage and Sachitra, 2019; Abed, 2020), only a tiny percentage of research has examined disruptive organisational technologies like SM (Zhang and Xiao, 2017). Given the growing importance of SM marketing, it is thus critical to determine whether existing models can be applied to SEs' adoption of SM marketing, and, if not, to consider how they can be modified or extended.

From the above discussion and earlier literature on SEs, SM marketing, and the convergence of these subjects, it can be concluded that SM marketing approaches are advantageous for socially oriented organisations. It is an indisputable fact that SEs are a very important part of the economy. Also, it is true that marketing is an important function in any type of organisation. Surprisingly, very little research exists on how SEs carry out marketing activities. In this study, the process of developing a marketing strategy is considered with the aim to shed light on the issues that influence Bangladeshi SEs' adoption of SM for marketing purposes. This is achieved through in-depth interviews with 22 individuals from SEs.

## 3. Methodology and Methods
### 3.1 Research Strategy

From an epistemological point of view, the research paradigm chosen for this research was interpretivism. Interpretivism holds that people's differences need to be respected; therefore, a researcher needs to understand social action (Bryman, and Bell , 2011). A subjective approach was suitable for the current study because it

allowed the researchers to use a structured analytical approach to the differing views of employees and owners who represented the participating organisations. This study can apprehend the differences and similarities between cases by adopting a multiple case study strategy. This study evaluates data equally within each situation and across situations by adopting this approach. As such, the researcher can make clear whether the findings are effective or not. The authors of this study adopted a qualitative research design and an inductive approach; they sought to interpret the subjective experiences of individuals from SEs.

### 3.2 Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling was selected as the most appropriate sampling technique for this study. Purposive sampling is the most commonly used technique in qualitative studies where the sample size is small. In purposive sampling, researchers use their own judgement to select a sample that meets the objectives of the research. This works well where the researcher thinks the participants are the ideal people to provide appropriate information (Patton, 2002). There is no standard rule for an ideal sample size for qualitative interviews (Saunders et al., 2012). However, Guest et al.'s (2006) concept of data saturation is a useful guideline for the number of interviews that need to be conducted. If the same themes keep appearing during interviews (data saturation), a sample of as little as six interviews would be enough to develop themes and useful explanations. However, in observing previous studies and available themes, a target of 30 participants was set; 22 interviews (11 manger, 7

employee and 4 owner) were conducted because 8 of the targeted participants refused to take part in an interview.

### 3.3 Data Collection Method

Interviewing was chosen as the most suitable data collection method to gain insights and understand the attitudes, opinions, and behaviours of employees and owners of SEs in Bangladesh. The semi-structured interview style is a good fit when the researcher needs to understand how a specific phenomenon developed (Robson, 2002). According to Gopaldas (2016) and Mohajan (2018), semi-structured open-ended interviews are preferable for qualitative studies. Semi-structured interview questions were developed to gather data. The interviews were conducted in the main offices and operational areas of selected SE's and lasted between 20 and 30 minutes. One of the researchers started the interview with some general questions about the organisation and its activities. Commencing with a general question is identified as one of the gold standards of the interview process (Myers and Newman, 2007). After going over some general questions, participants were taken through the pre-planned questions. The interview questions were derived from the research objectives and guided by the literature review. Field notes were taken during the interviews to capture observational data. Indeed, field notes represent an opportunity to have a direct observation plan at the researcher's fingertips.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

There are many data analysis methods, such as narrative analysis, discourse analysis, semiotic analysis, content analysis, and thematic analysis (TA). Researchers

can use these methods to conduct qualitative data analysis (Bennett et al., 2018; Braun et al., 2014). Content analysis and TA are the two most popular and frequently used methods in qualitative research. In TA, data are systematically examined to determine, explain, document, and report any clusters of data that form part of a pattern (Creswell, 2013). Miles and Huberman (1994) proposed a three-step process for analysing qualitative interview data. On the other hand, Braun and Clarke (2006) provided a comprehensive and popular six-step guide for conducting TA: familiarisation, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming, and writing up. This research adopted a hybrid model that combined Miles and Huberman's (1994) model and
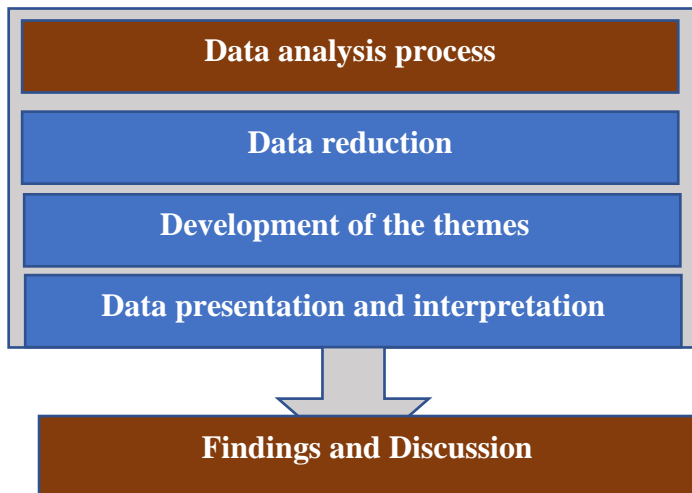


Braun and Clarke's (2006) model. The hybrid TA model consists of four steps (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The thematic analysis process

### 3.5 Theme Development

Braun and Clarke (2006) argued that there are no fixed guidelines for deciding what counts as a theme. Indeed, a theme is a pattern that depicts something important or interesting about the data. For this study, the researcher adopted the TOE framework and determined three main themes. The three themes are Technological context, Organisational context, and Environmental context. Table 1 presents the themes that emerged from the collected data and each of these themes is discussed in the Results section.

| Main Theme | Sub-Theme | Keywords |
|---|---|---|
| **Technological Context** | ICT infrastructure | ICT Infrastructure System Security Network Strategy |
| | Applications and tools | Upgrade Share Trust and security Measurement Hardware |

| | | Facebook |
|---|---|---|
| **Organisational Context** | Relative advantages | Simplicity Ease of use Popularity Compatibility Faster Cost-efficient |
| | Resources | Size Structure Time Human Experience |
| **Environmental Context** | Stakeholder pressure | Customer pressure Competitor pressure Industry Market scope |
| | Support | Organisation Scope Support Government |

Table 1: Themes of the analysis

## 4. Results

### *4.1 Main Theme 1: Technological Context*

*4.1.1 Sub-Theme 1: ICT Infrastructure*

The readiness of ICT infrastructure is a key aspect in appraising SM-based marketing and communications systems within SEs. Most participants understood ICT and its importance. While describing the importance of ICT usage, Participant SE8P2 explained that, "*Business organisations can ensure 24-hour connections with clients through the internet or SM with the help of Information Communications Technology*".

Participant SE4P1 noted that, "*Information technology creates great challenges for business development. IT provides problem-solving tools that solve many critical business problems, such as remote communication, which is one of the most difficult business problems. This has been solved by using email, VOIP phone etc*".

Most participants admitted that the present ICT infrastructure in Bangladesh is not sufficient. SE9P1 commented that, "*In comparison to other developed countries our ICT system is lagging. It is not well structured and equipped. It needs an advanced level of development to be used for business-related activity*". Similarly, Participant SE9P1 posited that, "*Our ICT sector requires further development. We need to compare our ICT sector with other developed countries to realise how far behind we are. We do not have any security in terms of online payments. There are no rules, regulations,*

*or laws regarding online transactions*". This statement highlights the issue concerning online payment systems in Bangladesh.

Some participants (SE6P1, SE8P2, SE12P1, SE5P1) mentioned that ICT had not been as well implemented in the SE environment as it had in commercial and other types of organisation. For instance, SE12P1 stated that, "*Commercial business is well ahead of us in terms of ICT usage because the environment they operate in is very easy to accept, and it is easy to practice new technologies. But I should admit that we are not taking ICT seriously and thus we do not feel its benefits*". Participant SE2P1 expressed that, "*in the context of Bangladeshi SEs, there is a lot of work to do and ICT investment is required*".

On the other hand, SE6P1 pointed out, "*I don't think many of our kind of social-related business use ICT at an advanced level. Commercial businesses can use it as they are concerned with profit, and they have enough money to invest. Still, for us, it is difficult as we have financial limitations*". Participants also cited some examples to evidence poor ICT infrastructure, such as "*inconsistent power supply*" (SE3P2, SE8P1), "*shortage of advanced level of devices such as tablets*" (SE6P1, SE11), "*lack of consistent internet service*" (SE10P1, SE9P1), *"high-priced Wi-Fi connection*" (SE5P1), "*unpredictable networks and telecommunications*" (SE7P1, SE12P1), and "*unregulated online payment system*" (SE1P1, SE4P1, SE9P1, SE7P1).

*4.1.2 Sub-Theme 2: Applications and Tools*

Some participants who had adopted SM were asked which SM tools they used the most and why. SE4P1 replied, "*we mainly use Facebook and Twitter for marketing. Besides these two platforms, we use Skype, WhatsApp, and IMO for internal communication*". SE1P2 stated, "*We mostly use Facebook to post our activity. Technically, we are on other platforms as well, such as Twitter, LinkedIn, and Google+. The reason I say 'technically' is because, although we have an account and some posts on other platforms, we are not as active there as we are on Facebook*".

Analysis suggested that Facebook was the dominant SM network used by social businesses in this study. Alongside Facebook, WhatsApp was a robust platform for internal communications processes. Most of the SEs did not use SM for marketing purposes, but they used some internal communications applications. Participant SE7P1 noted, "*We have a WhatsApp group, and we use it mostly for communications purposes. Sometimes we have to arrange meetings on Skype or WhatsApp with other branches*". SE9P1 stated, "*we don't have any SM accounts for marketing purposes. However, we do use WhatsApp for internal communications with other staff. We do use email, but WhatsApp is more convenient to use*".

Further analysis suggested an issue concerning security and trust regarding the use of SM applications. Although none of the enterprises had experienced any issues, they were all very aware of security issues. "*Until now, we have not come across any serious problem. Yet,*

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*I have heard about troubles, such as online hacking, bullying, and privacy breaches*" (SE4P1).

Besides, many participants indicated that, overall, Bangladesh's online purchasing and delivery systems were not trustworthy. The absence of a unified address system made it difficult, risky, and costly to complete delivery. As identified in earlier research, the delivery system in Bangladesh is still considered to be at its initial developmental phase compared to developed countries (Hossain et al., 2018).

### 4.2 Main Theme 2: Organisational Context
*4.2.1 Sub-Theme 1: Relative Advantages*

Analysis indicated that all SEs (whether they adopted SM or not) were aware of the relative advantages of SM. The participants said that the advantages of SM were simplicity, ease of use, popularity, wider audiences, successful growth rates, complexity, compatibility, and cost-efficiency. This suggests that the benefits of SM are an important factor in SEs' acceptance of SM platforms. For example, Participants SE1P3 and SE4P2 remarked that SM empowered their enterprises to arrive at faster, more extensive, and more frequent ways to reach customers, which would lead to a better market capacity: "*Via our Facebook page, we could reach a large group of people in a short time span. Many people can see our brand activity, and thus we are familiar to many people through this platform*" (SE4P2).

The participants who did not use SM in their organisation agreed that SM is simple to use and popular. SE6P1, for example, noted, "*SM is currently one of the*

*most popular means of communication and recreation. There is no doubt about their familiarity among all ages of people, and this is because of their simplicity. The simple usage method makes this media popular worldwide, and SM can spread information quicker than any other recreational tool*".

SM platforms are more cost-efficient than traditional forms of advertising. SE3P1 asserted that, "*Most of the SM platforms are free to use. Also, it is free to advertise on them. Though you might need to pay for an advert at the outset, and after your content is up to a certain level, Facebook will not charge for advertising. It is effective for us as other options* [such as newspaper ad, tv ad, radio promotion] *are costly*". Similarly, SE7P1 commented, "*Using SM platforms is free. The expense related to SM marketing is only about content creation and promotion*".

### 4.2.2 Sub-Theme 2: Resources

Organisations need conversant employees in marketing to design new innovative strategies that are readily accessible to potential customers. In addition, staff must be knowledgeable about workplace procedures in order to increase market demand and create cost efficiencies through innovation. Many participants assumed that outsourcing expertise could help them employ SM marketing realistically regarding various viable strategies for circumventing SM marketing difficulties. They also had other ideas in this regard. For example, SE2P2 noted that "*Enterprises should appoint an expert to manage SM sites appropriately*". Participant SE2P4 added, "*Doing all the work yourself, especially if*

*you don't have proper knowledge of digital marketing or ICT will not bring about an actual outcome and may give you adverse results*".

Some adopters in this study had access to information technology (IT) specialists and an IT department. SE1P1 stated that, "*We have an IT department that is separate, and their IT specialist works. It is their duty to assess and test new technology or systems before implementing them*". Similarly, SE4P3 mentioned, *"Our enterprise has professionals who take care of our ICT. They monitor and try to develop systems all the time. Thus, you can see we are using modern devices and systems*".

However, from direct observation, it was seen that most SEs have no IT professionals/experts. A few had no employees with an elementary knowledge of IT. For instance, among the non-adopters, SE9P1 pointed out that, "*The people who work in our enterprise do not know much about technology. They are mostly poor and unschooled*". SE12P1 stated that, "*We can't recruit an employee who has good knowledge of technology. This is because we can't afford them*".

Many business proprietors had no formal SM marketing systems and approaches, but they were more likely to implement important tactics for the use of SM. A lack of adequate knowledge and prior experience among business owners is one of the documented reasons behind a decision not to use SM platforms for marketing purposes. Adopters of SM in this study explained that prior experience is important. For example, Participant

SE7P1 noted that *"We have prior experience of adopting various types of technological tools and options, such as websites and email. We know that advanced tactics, such as SM, have the potential to increase our organisational efficiency"*.

Participants also pointed out that all business owners and managers have to be proactive and need to be a step ahead in their operative sectors via dynamic learning and a working knowledge of using technology for SM marketing purposes. Some participants also stated that they lacked the confidence to use SM since they had no prior technological expertise in using SM as a marketing option. For example, Participant SE8P2 stated, "*As I said earlier, our enterprise does not have a moderate level of IT infrastructure; thus, we are not thinking of using SM*". Participant SE11P1 stated that *"Our experience of technology is not at the level that we can use SM in our marketing activities. The effective use of new technology necessitates training and development"*.

### 4.3 Main Theme 3: Environmental Context
*4.3.1 Sub-Theme 1: Stakeholder Pressure*

Based on the data, two types of stakeholder pressure were identified: customer and competitor pressure. Analysis suggested that customer pressure, also known as intimidating pressure, was a persuasive influence on SEs to implement SM. Literally, all the SM adopters testified that customer pressure directly influenced their decision to adopt SM. One participant noted, "*If you want to make your business profitable, you have to understand how today's people learn and which technology suits this*

*generation. Undoubtedly this is the time of social interaction, and this generation enjoys and uses SM more than any other interactional way*" (SE1P3).

Participant SE6P1 reported that, "*Nowadays, customers are very aware, and search on the internet a lot, especially SM platforms. As a social business, we need to make sure that we are promoting our products over SM to provide enough information to our customers. So, from this angle, I should say that the influence of customer demand makes us use SM*".

Participants had mixed views about competitor pressure in terms of adopting SM. In terms of adopters, some respondents recognised a positive impact. SE1P1 reported that, "*As we sell* confectionary, *we have many competitors, including commercial ones. For this reason, we do need to promote our product in the market. As many of our competitors use different marketing strategies, we need to adapt to be more competitive and unique, and thus we choose SM*".

On the other hand, some participants stated that competitor pressure had no impact on their decision to implement SM. For instance, SE5P1 noted, "*I do not feel any competitive pressure that makes our decision to adopt SM mandatory*". In terms of the non-adopters, SE10P1 pointed out that, "*Competitive pressure does exist in the market but not in our type of enterprise. We are an NGO and we do not feel competitive pressure as our service is not consumable. We aim to help the needy. Thus, I don't think there is any competitive pressure that will make us adopt SM*".

*4.3.2 Sub Theme 2: Support*

Analysis indicated insufficient government support for SEs to adopt and implement SM as a new marketing and communications option. The findings suggest that the government supports SE's by connecting or linking them to other organisations with the right skills to help them carry out an evaluation exercise. For instance, Participant SE2P3 mentioned that "*We have limited technological support from the government. The training programme from the government can be a good idea to teach about technology for organisations. They can link our organisation with some other training organisation such as IT firms to enable us to use new strategies in businesses like SM*".

Most SEs lack the skills necessary to comprehend the new technology they intend to adopt. The findings suggested that research is a role that the government and most associated agencies could conduct to support SEs. SE11P1 pointed out that, "*We, as a social business, can't afford to research new technology [SM] adoption, although this is one of the effective methods to see whether new technology is beneficial or not. Government and its agencies should come forward and investigate on our behalf*". Support from top management or owners is important in order to engage in SM marketing. Top management or owners play a central role in adopting new technologies. Understanding how top managers use their IT resources is critical and vital to the effective use of IT.

Analysis suggested there are no clear guidelines or procedures for controlling and evaluating ICT performance. As a result, owners or top management lack

information on which to base decisions on whether to approve or continue to invest in ICT in the face of a progressively sophisticated SE context. One of the SE owners (SE5P1) noted that, "*Personally, I feel hesitant to make new technology usage decisions. I infrequently use traditional financial measures to assess the devices' performance or technology. Thus, there are no clear criteria for non-financial benefits*". This comment reveals the importance of suitable project assessment actions to bring about top management's confidence in ICT adoption. This would suggest that, if an SE is directed by a proprietor or manager who has too little knowledge and awareness of ICT, then the potential gains that could be enjoyed from new technology implementation will not be realised. For example, SE7P1 mentioned that, "*In our country, lots of social businesses are run by people who have limited knowledge or experience of ICT or new technology. They do not apply modern technological options in their business which prevents them from enjoying the advantages that could come from these new technological options*".

## 5. Discussion and Conceptual Framework

In terms of this study, although all participants understood that ICT infrastructure was a prerequisite for the adoption of new technology-based marketing like SM, they feared that the current ICT infrastructure was insufficient and required development. Analysis of the collected data clearly showed that access to technology in social businesses is not as wide as in other organisations.

Among the examples the participants cited to demonstrate the inadequacy of ICT infrastructure in Bangladesh were the erratic power supply, the restricted and high-priced internet service, and poor telecommunications. Previous studies highlighted that the adoption of new technological systems in a business context depends on internal and external technology resources (Larasati, 2017; Webster and Gardner, 2019; Ozuem et al., 2016). ICT infrastructure should be available to SEs despite their location and size. Most SEs in fact, cannot afford to invest in order to obtain high-end computing or electronic devices. Also, there are few reputable online transactional services. Moreover, existing network standards in most SEs are unsatisfactory and not suited to SM adoption. Some SEs complained that there was no suitable network to perform their communications and marketing operations, while others were more able to do so because they had adopted an appropriate network. Aside from the deficient ICT infrastructure in Bangladesh, some concerns were raised about the security and trustworthiness of internal data, and this was seen as a barrier to the adoption of new marketing systems like SM. Analysis also revealed that owners and managers of the SEs struggled to measure the performance of their SM activity. There are many reasons this, including an unplanned approach and inadequate resources.

The explorative research described in this paper found a clear connection between relative advantage and SM adoption in SEs. This outcome is consistent with earlier studies on SM adoption. For example, Sharif et al. (2015) found that relative advantage is a guiding force for

SM acceptance, and Ahmad and Siraj (2018) demonstrated that the greater the relative advantage of a new technology, the higher the probability that an entrepreneur would adopt the new technology. Some of the key relative advantages in the research of Sharif et al. (2015) and Chatterjee and Kar (2020) were low cost, faster communication, ease of use, and simplicity. Low resource commitment, ease of implementation, and simplicity of use are key IT characteristics for entrepreneurial ventures. In line with earlier SM-based studies (i.e., Lacho and Marinello, 2010), the findings of our study suggest that SM applications are generally free and easy to use. Analysis suggests that SM applications are a suitable platform for marketing and communications purposes for SEs.

SM platforms are extensively popular and widespread all over the world. A report published by Clement (2019) noted that in 2018 an estimated 2.65 billion people worldwide were using SM. Further, the report projected that this number would increase to 3.1 billion in 2021 (Clement, 2019). The spectacular rise of the popularity of SM applications has influenced to a significant extent how businesses reach and engage with their target customers to publicise their products or services and to brand their businesses. Moreover, the cost-effectiveness of SM, which has been recognised as a potential benefit for its adoption, was identified in previous studies (see Odoom et al., 2017; Sari and Hidayatulloh, 2019). Odoom et al. (2017) and Sari and Hidayatulloh (2019) found that SM effectively reduced the operational costs of SEs, such as advertising,

marketing, and inbound marketing. Besides, many companies confirmed that SM increased their sales, returns, customer engagement, position, and search engines profile. SM content is easy to manage and the cost is marginal (He et al., 2017). Researchers such as Margiono et al. (2018) also reasoned that the financial restrictions inflicted on SEs (e.g., access to capital) restricts their strategic options. Ahmed et al. (2019) and He et al. (2017) found that financial resource allocation is a critical element of successful SM adoption. Previous literature (see Bouchard and Rousselière, 2016; He et al., 2017) suggests that businesses with more financial resources are more likely to embrace new technologies. The income of most SEs usually comes from donations, charity, grants, or personal capital rather than from formal funding sources (Thompson and Williams, 2014).

The findings underscore the importance of two environmental elements: customer intimidation pressure and competitor pressure, in terms of SM acceptance and implementation. Customers and competitors can be categorised as influencers of SM adoption. More precisely, the findings suggest that coercive customer pressure and mimetic competitor pressure constructively manipulate SM application in enterprises. Customer pressure is clearly related to SM adoption because a lack of presence on social networking sites might create reputational damage. On the other hand, competitive pressure exerted a considerable influence on SM adoption intentions. Analysis of the data suggests that there is some pressure on Bangladeshi SEs from customers and competitors to adopt SM. This result accords with earlier

e-business research articulated by Wu (2016). Based on their research, it is clear that these two influential stakeholders (customers and competitors) of SM adoption catalyse SEs' legitimacy in the market environment. Initially, this occurs via access to information and SEs' capability to generate and share content. Previous studies suggested that the pressures applied by customers and competitors have played a part in e-business transformation (Wu, 2016). Analysis suggests that adopters are aware of pressure from customers to a greater degree than non-adopters. This finding indicates the importance of environmental factors in relation to the adoption of SM. This research supports earlier research findings (see Maduku et al., 2016) that indicate that an enterprise is more likely to embrace new technologies if their customers are users of these technologies (Chatzoglou and Chatzoudes, 2016; Kumar et al., 2019). There are, however, inconsistent findings in this area. For example, Rahayu and Day (2015) found that Indonesian SMEs' decisions to adopt IS innovations were not influenced by customer pressure. The lessening of customer pressure in this context might be ascribed to customers' aversion to e-commerce in Indonesia, where customers were found to use traditional approaches (telephone or face-to-face). Therefore, Indonesian SEs did not view customer pressure as central to the development of digital capabilities or the adoption of advanced marketing tactics.

The data analysis in this paper suggests that a lack of government and organisational support are two of influential factors that lead to rejection of advanced

marketing tactics like SM. Pinch and Sunley (2015) researched SEs in four major UK cities and found a lack of support from local authorities constrained SE networks' potential. This study found that local authorities were not regarded as important in this sense, but lack of government assistance was recognised as a key constraint. From the organisational perspective, owners and managers should arrange suitable training on how to use SM as a marketing tool within their organisation. Two critical responsibilities are identified in our study in terms of the effective adoption and utilisation of SM. The first is the role of government and the other is the role of owners or managers. Government and owners or managers need to support and bring sustainable solutions to the adoption of SM, and make infrastructure ready so that SEs of Bangladesh can effectively adopt/use SM as a business option. Chatterjee and Kar (2020) suggested that leaders who have updated knowledge about potential technologies can persuade subordinates to contemplate their use. Owners of SEs must take critical steps towards the adoption of SM and recognise suitable types of devices and applications that meet strategic objectives. SEs should organise an SM adoption strategy based on a sound plan; otherwise, SM may not produce the expected benefits and may even fail. Any such strategy could be as simple as a "checklist" that considers this research's findings. Many small business owners have no proper strategy because the preliminary costs of launching a SM page are relatively low compared to other digital marketing. In reality, the tangible cost of SM acceptance occurs after adoption. This is known as regular utilisation cost of SM, such as continuing to publish content requires

more digital devices and software (professional camera, video editing software). In terms of payment and transactional problems, SEs can follow the suggestion given by Rahman et al. (2018) who recommended that managers or owners of businesses must keep the cash payment option in online business to gain trust among customers. This is because online payment arrangements through debit and credit cards are not currently free in Bangladesh. It is also recommended that SEs develop metrics to measure SM use. This will help to ascertain whether efforts on SM achieve the expected outcomes. Forming these metrics will also help SEs to develop better insights into the impact of SM on business activity. The government should establish rules and guidelines to subsidise SEs, offer financial inducements and loan agreements to SEs to obtain new technological devices, support ICT training centres, and take action to encourage the adoption of SM within all types of businesses. Crucially, the government should make sure owners of SEs have access to consistent infrastructure, including reliable sources of energy, consistent telecommunication lines, and other IT-related infrastructural resources that will reduce the cost of adopting new technology.

Government and social entrepreneurs can play a vital role in delivering support to SEs and establishing awareness of the value of SM marketing. Governments can also organise workshops and develop programmes on SM marketing so that owners and employees of SEs can realise the importance of such technology for marketing. Our study also suggests that governments and other stakeholders should encourage social entrepreneurs. This

can be achieved by granting access to credit and by sponsoring training. In having easy access to finance, SEs will be able to fix their ICT infrastructure and reap the benefits of contemporary marketing tools, such as SM. This can help businesses to expand their operations. On the other hand, by offering adequate training, SEs will be able to comprehend and learn how to leverage SM marketing to capitalise fully on SM as a marketing option.

By integrating all the elements from the above discussion, this study proposes a conceptual framework for the adoption of SM in Bangladeshi SEs (Figure 2).
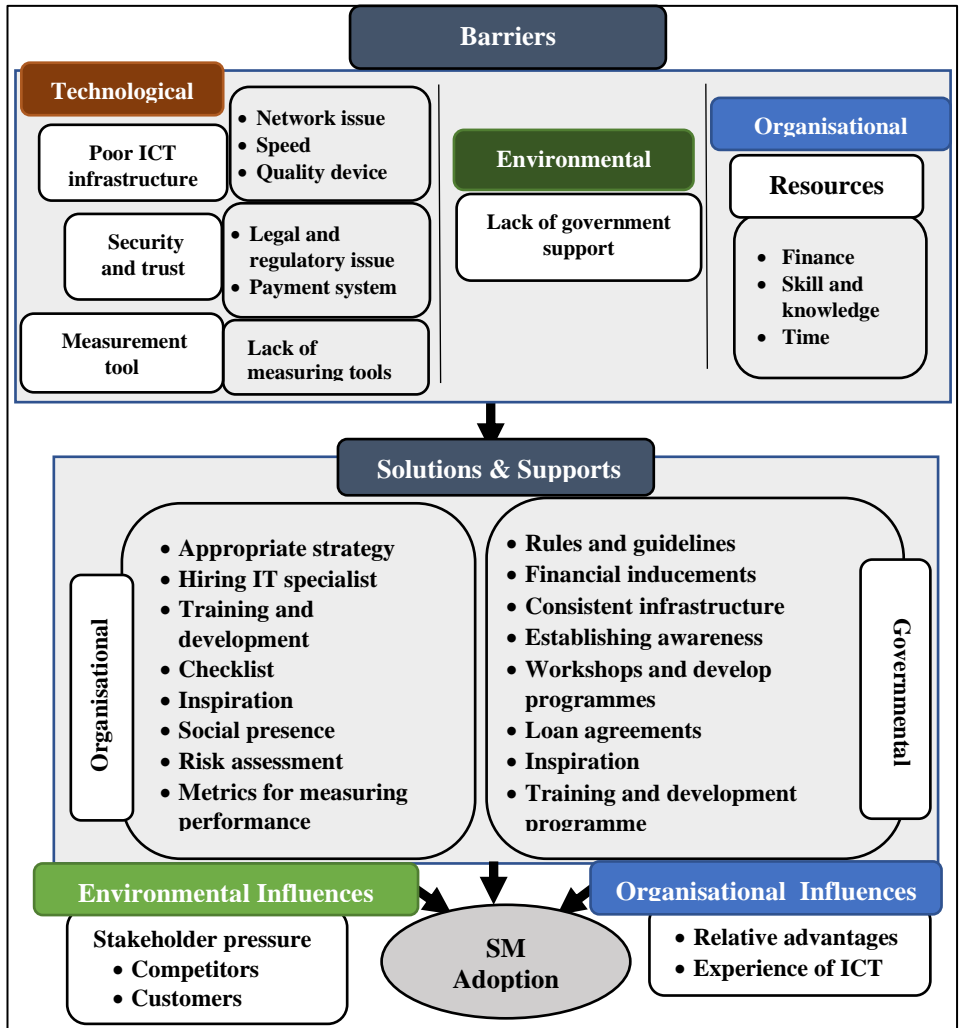
**Technological**

Poor ICT infrastructure

- Network issue
- Speed
- Quality device

Security and trust

- Legal and regulatory issue
- Payment system

Measurement tool

Lack of measuring tools

**Environmental**

Lack of government support

**Organisational**

**Resources**

- Finance
- Skill and knowledge
- Time

**Solutions & Supports**

Organisational

- Appropriate strategy
- Hiring IT specialist
- Training and development
- Checklist
- Inspiration
- Social presence
- Risk assessment
- Metrics for measuring performance

- Rules and guidelines
- Financial inducements
- Consistent infrastructure
- Establishing awareness
- Workshops and develop programmes
- Loan agreements
- Inspiration
- Training and development programme

Governmental

**Environmental Influences**

Stakeholder pressure
- Competitors
- Customers

**SM Adoption**

**Organisational Influences**

- Relative advantages
- Experience of ICT

Figure 2: Conceptual framework for the adoption of social media in social enterprises

## 6. Conclusion

The results obtained from this investigation might benefit SEs and other enterprises, including large organisations, struggling with the same problems and intending to adopt SM. The research might help such businesses to overcome the complications that most companies face when advancing SM as a key marketing strategy or communications means. The findings might provide a diverse viewpoint to other businesses that are not yet certain about implementing SM. Consideration of the complications that SEs face when employing SM tactics might aid government associations seeking to develop essential guidelines so that the operations of social businesses can progress. The major novel contribution of this research is a conceptual framework that highlights the barriers to SEs' adoption of SM and how they can be overcome. Earlier research into social entrepreneurship has overlooked the inductive research required to explain what the term social entrepreneurship "means" in context and has been based on case development, impact studies, finding social entrepreneurial intentions, or studying social innovation. There is no doubt that these are vital areas of investigation, but is it sensible to explore the phenomenon without investigating what it implies, especially in its own context. For example, the majority of the literature on SEs is based on Western contexts, so it is appropriate to examine SEs from an Asian perspective. The significance

of this study is that it examines the social constructions of individuals from SEs in an Asian (Bangladeshi) social entrepreneurship context. Considering this study's limitations, future investigations could substantiate its outcomes by performing quantitative research and/or other qualitative research methods. Additionally, researchers could perform future research on a larger population.

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