

# **SOCIAL MEDIA AND ENACTMENT OF ENTREPRENEURIAL OPPORTUNITIES: EVIDENCES FROM PAKISTAN**



By

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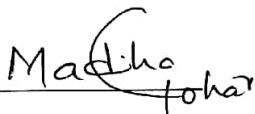
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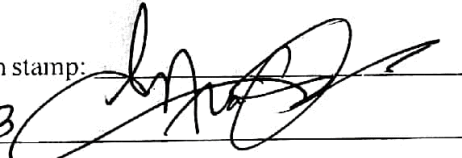
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## Abstract

**Purpose:** The aim of the study was to find out the aspects of social media platforms that either help or create challenges for social media entrepreneurs in actualizing or enacting their respective entrepreneurial opportunities.

**Methodology:** The study is qualitative in nature and uses an exploratory approach. To collect data, semi-structured interviews were conducted from thirty-five social media entrepreneurs. The interviews were conducted in real-time via WhatsApp call and were audio based.

**Findings:** The key findings suggest that social media platforms especially Instagram, play a very vital role in the success of social media businesses. While on one hand, social media provides social media entrepreneurs with an array of helpful features and opportunities of gaining customers and success, there are also a few challenges involved in running a social media business. Consumer trust, fear of online scams, losses being a few of the difficulties. Entrepreneurs however, with experience and time, can learn to minimize the challenges and maximize the benefits of social media. Implementing corrective measures, the most suitable social media marketing tactics and building a connection with the customers can be immensely helpful for a social media entrepreneur in gaining success in the virtual world.

**Originality/Value:** There is a dearth of research when it comes to taking the entrepreneurs' point of view regarding the important/useful/challenging aspects of running a social media business and this study aims to bridge that gap.

**Keywords:** social media, entrepreneurial opportunities, entrepreneur, marketing, social media marketing, Instagram, social media entrepreneur.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

#### **1. Introduction**

In the last decade, social media has seen an exponential growth. This rapid growth has rendered social media very significant for a number of things. In the current times, it has become one of the most important tools for not just connecting with people all around the world but also for conducting and promoting one's business. Bennet (2012), noted that social media network as well as internet technology both are known to have become very important for conducting one's business efficiently and have a significant impact on the success as well as the operations of a business.

The current status of social media has provided many aspiring entrepreneurs with an opportunity to effectively start their own ventures and actualize or enact the entrepreneurial opportunities that they had discovered. Mack, Marie-Pierre & Redican (2017), state that according to the studies that analyze small and medium sized enterprises and use of internet, it is recognized that there is a strong link between entrepreneurial opportunities and internet. Social media provides aspiring entrepreneurs with a platform to enact entrepreneurial opportunities, develop, launch, promote their businesses. According to Constantinides & Fountain (2008), the rapid rise and emergence of social media applications has made it very easy for the users to create and generate useful content, this has changed the way online interactions take place, making it easy carry out marketing and making customers aware of products. Lately, a plethora of new online businesses that use social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, etc., have emerged. Social media has proven to be the much-needed platform that aspiring entrepreneurs can use to enact entrepreneurial opportunities and in doing so, run, market and promote their businesses on social media platforms.

In the last few years, especially in the two years of COVID-19, many entrepreneurs have launched their startups on social media and are currently running them very successfully solely on one or more social media platforms. Prebreza & Shala (2021), note that in today's world especially during the pandemic, online shopping has kept people busy and has been a great solution for people's lack of social life.



Block (2011), suggests that social media has experienced a massive growth in very few years, this has especially rendered social media very important for small businesses and entrepreneurial ventures as social media platforms can be used to form connections with the customers and think out of the box, doing the unique innovative things and reach the customers. Social media helps entrepreneurs in reaching a larger number of target audience as compared to what one gets in a traditional market. Social media platforms as proved by previous evidence, act as the most effective tool one can use to reach a large number to their target audience; on that account, startups work on their social media presence in order to take advantage and exploit markets where word of mouth benefits them the most (Basri & Siam, 2017). Social media not only allows the entrepreneur to work from home, run their business without having to leave the comfort of their home but also allows the customers to save time, energy, commutation money and buy online without the hassle of leaving one's house while also being able to communicate with the vendor or the seller and acquiring all the necessary information the customers need regarding the product or the service provided by the entrepreneur. Using social media to enact entrepreneurial opportunities also accompanies word of mouth marketing, which enhances a venture's reach and allows to get to a maximum number of target audience. Dugan (2016), notes that word of mouth marketing is one of the best ways of carrying out marketing especially for startups with limited budgets. Social media platforms have proved to be a great tool for word-of-mouth marketing, enabling ventures to have a higher customer reach within seconds; social media has completely transformed the entrepreneurship world by presenting and providing the entrepreneurs with a platform that can be used for effective promotion and marketing (Basri & Siam, 2017).

While on one hand, there are benefits of enacting and actualizing entrepreneurial opportunities via social media, there can also be a few drawbacks or challenges of using social media to run their business. Kotler & Armstrong (2004), point out that even though there are many benefits and advantages of online businesses and commerce, there might also be a number of negative aspects and drawbacks associated with online businesses and shopping which are now becoming critical. One of the main factors that can prove to be a challenge for an entrepreneur while running their business solely on social media is the fact that many of the customers have trust issues when it comes to online shopping or shopping from a new venture. While buying something online, every customer doubts the credibility of the social media account or the quality of the product or the service they will receive. There are issues of security involved as well. Customers do not trust the social media pages especially when it comes to

giving them their address and such details. Trust plays a huge role for a business especially when it comes to enacting entrepreneurial opportunities using social media. Grabner-Kraeuter (2002), state that a very important reason that customers are opposed to and hesitant towards online shopping is that there is a major deficit of trust between customers and sellers or vendors of most online businesses. Another thing that can be a challenge for an entrepreneur is the ease of comparing prices of different vendors, customers can compare the quality, price, service of vendors on social media in a minute and go with the one that suits them the most. While this is very beneficial for the customers, it can be a challenge for the entrepreneurs as it puts them in direct competition with multiple other online businesses.

Using social media to enact entrepreneurial opportunities has its own set of pros and cons, which impact the success as well as the performance of the startup. Many entrepreneurs now rely on social media platforms to enact or actualize their chosen entrepreneurial opportunities and run their business solely thorough social media. This opens them up to a variety of advantages while simultaneously putting a few challenges in their way.

This research aims to study the contribution of social media and the key factors involved in enacting entrepreneurial opportunities using social media as the sole platform of running the business. The study aims to explore the advantages and the drawbacks of using social media in enacting or actualizing entrepreneurial opportunities with social media platforms as the sole platform or as an initial entry point into the world of entrepreneurship.

The structure of this study consists of six chapters. The next chapter consists of the review of the existing literature related to the variable factors discussed in this study. The third chapter consists of the methodology used to conduct the study, collect data, analyze the data as well as the procedure used acquire the answers to the research questions. The fourth chapter consists of the analysis of the data collected for the study. The fifth chapter consists of the discussion of the analyzed data. The sixth and the last chapter of the study consists of the conclusion that has been drawn based on the data collected and analyzed for the study.

### **1.1.Problem Statement**

While using social media to enact entrepreneurial opportunities has become a very common practice, the advantages, challenges and the most efficient way of doing it is still not as commonly known. Many aspiring entrepreneurs are not aware of how to efficiently use social media to enact entrepreneurial opportunities to get the maximum results. They also do not know the factors that can present challenges for them while enacting entrepreneurial opportunities

via social media. In addition, entrepreneurs often miss out important features of the social media platforms that may be helpful in running a social media startup. Knowing all the pros and cons of using social media to actualize entrepreneurial opportunities can help aspiring entrepreneurs in making the right choices and yielding maximum benefit for their ventures. While there is a plethora of literature available that takes the customers' point of view, there is a dearth of literature that discusses the forces that shape the entrepreneurs' preferences for starting up venture via social media platforms (Çiçek, 2018).

### **1.2. Research Questions**

1. What characteristics of social media platforms shape the Pakistani entrepreneurs preference for social media startups?
2. What are the forces that become potential (dis)advantages for social media as a marketplace for social media entrepreneurs?
3. What social media practices help in efficiently enhancing the enactment of entrepreneurial opportunity?

### **1.3. Research Objectives**

1. To explore the characteristics of social media platforms that shape the Pakistani entrepreneurs preference for social media startups.
2. To find out the forces that become potential (dis)advantages for social media as a marketplace for social media entrepreneur.
3. To find out the significant social media practices that assist in efficient enactment of entrepreneurial opportunities.

### **1.4. Rationale of the study**

The study aims to present the entrepreneurs' preference and understand their take on the dynamic between social media and entrepreneurial opportunities. The purpose of this study is to bring to light the useful features of social media platforms that are employed by successful social media entrepreneurs to gain customers, enhance their reach, gain customer trust and overcome other disadvantages of using social media for business.

This study aims to find out the various characteristics of social media and the contribution all those factors make in the successful enactment of the entrepreneurial opportunities. The study focuses on the helpful aspects of using social media as well as the drawbacks of using social media to actualize entrepreneurial opportunities. This study will

help aspiring entrepreneurs in choosing the most efficient ways of actualizing entrepreneurial opportunities via social media.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2. Introduction**

This chapter reviews the existing literature; discussing the main definitions, the dynamics between the components and the significant affecting factors. The chapter discusses entrepreneurship, social media, social media entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial opportunities, key factors that affect a social media business, and the conceptual framework of the study.

#### **2.1. Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship can be defined as the process or a concept that refers to the act of developing a business venture or run a business. Ismail (2016), defines it as the pursuit of initiating, developing and running a completely new venture from the scratch all while trying to generate profits. It can be described as the phenomenon that allows people to metamorphosize their business ideas and aspirations into reality. According to Chakraborty, Gohar & Saha (2019), entrepreneurship can be defined as a process that includes developing, crafting and carrying forward a venture or a business idea.

Entrepreneurship has especially widened the horizons for a lot of people who have a creative and an innovative side that needed to be brought into the light. All around the world, entrepreneurship is now gaining a lot of recognition and is being acknowledged as a rather crucial element that can be of help in reducing poverty, eradicating unemployment and is considered a fundamental factor that can aid in the uplifting of a nation's poor economy (Nasir, Iqbal, & Akhtar, 2019). According to Kuratko (2014), entrepreneurship affects all the spheres and every possible level of society especially including but not limited to innovation, competitiveness, productivity, wealth generation, job creation, and formation of new industry.

Entrepreneurship has in the recent years become a well-known and a much sought-after domain and has brought about a visibly huge shift in people's career seeking inclinations and intentions. According to Ali, Soomro & Kumar (2015), entrepreneurship is an asset that can help us in fighting and eradicating the misfortunes associated with economic prosperity, lack of job opportunities and the social inequalities that prevail in our society. Entrepreneurship in

the past few years has seen a considerable amount of growth in Pakistan as well. Audretsch (2012), points out that in the recent times, entrepreneurship has risen to be one of the most “dynamic” fields. Wiklund, Davidsson, Audretsch & Karlsson (2011), argue that entrepreneurship has grown to become one of the most dynamic, relevant and significant field in the academy of management and social sciences, making it rank among the larger divisions of the area.

Almost a generation ago, there was almost no scholarly research taking place on the discipline of entrepreneurship, rendering it insignificant at the time in the research world, with scholars showing no concern over the discipline (Audretsch, 2012). Even though after that, the development of entrepreneurship has been rapid, the concept of entrepreneurship still remains to be relatively new, which is why it does not have a fully developed theoretical or conceptual framework of its own. Kuratko, Morris & Schindehutte (2015), note that entrepreneurship as a field, has grown and emerged in a very random and haphazard way, and the development of this discipline of business has taken place by adapting to, building on and borrowing or taking bits and pieces of the theories and concepts from other fields or disciplines including psychology, marketing, finance, engineering, sociology, anthropology, management and organizational behaviour.

Audretsch (2012), states that the research on entrepreneurship revolves around theoretical themes, methodologies, debates and issues, making the nature of the research theory-driven, the rapid emergence of scholarly interest in the discipline has resulted in the multiplicity of approaches that come from various academic fields and disciplines, making entrepreneurship a complex, heterogenous academic field in terms of methodologies, approaches. as well as the meaning and what constitutes of the discipline. Busenitz, West, Shepherd, Nelson, Chandler, & Zacharakis (2003), note that entrepreneurship as a field and a discipline has now started getting the attention of scholars and has become a legitimate academic discipline attracting scholars to carry out researches in the field. Wiseman & Skilton (1999), state that entrepreneurship is still in the stage of theory-building, and as it consists of theories and approaches from multiple disciplines, it currently resembles a “multidisciplinary jigsaw” (Harrison & Leitch, 1996).

In the current times, entrepreneurship is studied in fragments and consists of multiple views, strands and types. Lackéus (2018), states that according to the arguments of various scholars, there are three strands of research in entrepreneurship namely discovery or creation

of entrepreneurship, creation of new organizations and the third one being the creation of new value. Each of these strands helps in understanding the discipline better and provides a different view making the concept complex and vast. These various strands each have a different criterion as to what constitutes entrepreneurship, making the literature of each of these strands deep, rich, robust and possesses proneness of evolving (Audretsch, 2012).

Over the years, scholars have presented and broken entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial opportunities down into multiple views and types. Diandra & Azmy (2020), while compiling the antecedents of entrepreneurship noted that there are about six sources of entrepreneurship presented by the scholars. The antecedents presented by the scholars include opportunity-based entrepreneurship (Jinjiang, Nazari, Yingqian & Ning, 2020), market-driven entrepreneurship (Ali, Kelly & Levie, 2019), entrepreneurial skill (Nururly, Suryatni, Ilhamudin & Suprayetno, 2018), entrepreneurship and innovation; creation of value (Maritz & Donovan, 2015), entrepreneurship shaped by digital technology and as a result providing entrepreneurial opportunities (Nambisan, 2016) and last source being the entrepreneurship education (Ratten & Usmanij, 2020).

### **2.1.1. Entrepreneurial Opportunity**

Entrepreneurial opportunities as defined by Shane & Venkataraman (2000), are set of circumstances or chances that allow an entrepreneur to introduce or sell new services, products, goods or even raw materials at costs greater than that of their production. Chea (2008), describes an entrepreneurial opportunity as the identified means of generating profits (economic value) that has not yet been taken advantage of and is not currently being taken advantage of by anyone else.

Shane & Venkataraman (2000) note that entrepreneurial opportunities are especially very vital for the entrepreneurs who are looking to start a venture as business creation is mainly a process of recognizing and utilizing potential entrepreneurial opportunities to the fullest. An entrepreneurial opportunity has been deemed as a fundamental necessity in order for entrepreneurs to set up their ventures, gain profits, and succeed while also sustaining their business. Recognizing and seizing the entrepreneurial opportunities is very essential, almost fundamental for the process of entrepreneurship (Park et al, 2017). Ardichvili, Cardozo & Ray (2003), regard entrepreneurial opportunity as a simple and easy phenomenon that becomes more and more complex as an entrepreneur develops it; entrepreneurial opportunity is seen as

a proactive and a fundamental process that assists in forming a business, it is also a continuous process.

Alvarez & Barney (2010) note that there are two major approaches; one favours critical realism and suggests opportunities are discovered while the other one tilts more towards the evolutionary realism suggesting creation of opportunities by the entrepreneurs themselves. Identification methods and processes of entrepreneurial opportunity have been studied and described differently by various researchers. There have been a few prominent research studies that state the nature of entrepreneurial opportunity, what an entrepreneurial opportunity is, how one can identify it and what it does for an entrepreneur differently.

There are conflicting theories regarding entrepreneurial opportunities that have emerged among researchers over the years (Alvarez & Barney, 2007). The most commonly studied views of entrepreneurship come from two scholars namely Schumpeter and Kirzner. These views discuss how entrepreneurs enact, use, realise or create entrepreneurial opportunities.

#### **2.1.1.1. Schumpeter's view**

In his early work, Schumpeter (1911), suggested that entrepreneurial behaviour has two critical elements, the first one being the ability of an entrepreneur to recognize an entrepreneurial opportunity, while the second element is the act of exploiting, utilizing or commercializing an entrepreneurial opportunity. Alvarez, Barney & Young (2010), state that the ability to create an entrepreneurial opportunity can also be considered a variant of recognizing an entrepreneurial opportunity. Entrepreneurs are the driving force of the innovation, their willingness to engage with innovative practices and taking risks is what makes them unique, their main function is revolutionizing and reforming the process and pattern of production, via exploitation of opportunity, trying new technological processes or using inventions (Schumpeter, 1946).

De Jong & Marsili (2010), found that Schumpeterian views argues that entrepreneurial opportunities arise from an entrepreneur's own will to bring about change and set in motion a revolution of some sort in the economy. Schumpeter (1934), states that an entrepreneur can be deemed as an innovator who manages to create a shock wave and disrupts the status-quo of the economic setup in times of uncertainty. An entrepreneur is an individual who creates new combinations and follow through in the market place while simultaneously taking advantage

of the changes and innovations in the social, economic, technological environments and use the changing trends and factors for their profit (Schumpeter, 1934).

#### **2.1.1.2. Kirzner's View**

The Kirznerian view suggests that entrepreneurs practice alertness and take advantage of any entrepreneurial profit using their knowledge and exploiting the information gaps that exist between the customers and the market (Kirzner, 1973; 1997). De Jong & Marsili (2010), note that the Kirznerian view implies that an entrepreneur is an alert individual who discovers the already existing entrepreneurial opportunities, partaking in arbitrage, adjusting prices in the market, taking advantage of the information imbalance and gaps, and the knowledge of the market. Kirzner (1980), asserts that entrepreneurial opportunities can only be found through alertness on the entrepreneur's part and that entrepreneurial alertness can only be triggered by the correctly placed incentives as humans only notice what they are interested in and that works in their favour.

De Jong & Marsili (2010), note that in the Kirznerian view, the concept of innovation and new combinations are not all that necessary as they are in the Schumpeterian view, and neither are the changes in the social, technological, economic factors and social trends required to take advantage of the entrepreneurial opportunities, instead, an entrepreneur is an individual who takes advantage of the asymmetries that exist in the market. The characteristic that defines an entrepreneur and makes a distinction between them and the other agents is the ability to perceive entrepreneurial opportunities for benefits and profits, they have to ability to gauge where goods can be sold and bought at what beneficial prices (Kirzner, 1973). In Kirzner's view, entrepreneurial opportunities exist due to the asymmetry in the knowledge and information of the market players and can be picked up and acted upon by any individual who discovers the existence of those opportunities before others (De Jong & Marsili, 2010).

Park et al (2017), note that the opportunity discovery perspective suggests that the existing conditions of a market is seen as a source of opportunity that motivates entrepreneurial performance and action, entrepreneurs gather data and use various information tools to discover a potential opportunity. This study will focus mainly on the discovery of entrepreneurial



opportunities by aspiring entrepreneurs and the capitalization of those opportunities while bridging the gap between the market and the customers.

## **2.2. Social Media**

In the current times, social media platforms play an indispensable role in most of the entrepreneurial activities. Wang, Liang, Mahto, Deng & Zhang (2020) define social media as online networking platforms which attract billions of users; these platforms connect people with each other and aid in communication. Social media can also be defined as a collection of platforms that have been created using web as well as mobile-based technologies, making the said platforms highly interactive; these platforms allow their users to communicate with one another along with the ability to share, discuss, co-create and modify the user-generated content (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011). According to the definition given by Jumin, Ijab, & Zaman (2017), social media is the collection of communication channels that operate online, working towards making possible interaction, content-sharing, community-based input and collaboration.

Using social media platforms to carry out entrepreneurial activities and practices can help entrepreneurs in coming across better entrepreneurial opportunities. Park et al (2017), argue that building secure and rich relationships and connections is very important in order to be successful, and entrepreneurs use social media to achieve that as it allows them to share information, make connection and discover better more beneficial opportunities.

Mack, Marie-Pierre & Redican (2017), points out that researchers have concluded that entrepreneurial opportunity and internet are connected and most of the research studying the use of internet for business focus on small and medium-sized businesses. Various social networking platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and others have started to change business practices and activities such as advertising, marketing and promotion (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011). Entrepreneurs use various social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and others to connect with their audience and access their target audience; this also gives them a chance to gauge any possibility of an entrepreneurial opportunity. Social media platforms offer the entrepreneurs significant chances to communicate and connect with their customers, partners and suppliers efficiently and effectively to build strong relationships (Turan & Kara, 2018). According to the findings of Mack, Marie-Pierre & Redican (2017), entrepreneurs use internet and specifically social media especially in the initial phase of their business, to gain business visibility, gather information, and marketing their goods.

Constantinides & Fountain (2008), note that the emergence of Web 2.0 and the ability of the new generation users of creating content has brought a major difference in the way online interactions take place, how customers find out about businesses and how marketing is carried out. Basri & Siam (2017), state that in the recent years, social media has become a major source of opportunities for startups, they can use it as a platform to carry out advertising, promotions, marketing of their brands, creating awareness regarding their brands, educating the customers about their offerings and business as a whole.

### **2.2.1. Social Media Entrepreneurship**

ÇİÇEK (2018), defines social media entrepreneurship as the entrepreneurship carried out by an entrepreneur who pursues financially beneficial opportunities via social media, while also initiating and running a business, these entrepreneurs use social media to market and sell their services and products and also gain profit through the content they produce or share on the social media. Olanrewaju, Hossain, Whiteside & Mercieca (2020), state that along with using the social media to market their goods and services, entrepreneurs also use social media for a number of other purposes and reasons that are very important for their business practices for example social media fulfills their need of gathering information and support for setting up and managing a business, it also provides the entrepreneurs with an opportunity to interact and create a network with other entrepreneurs.

Previous studies have shown that social media has a notable impact and influence on entrepreneur behaviour, social media adoption by entrepreneurs is determined by a number of factors broadly put in the technological, individual, environmental and organizational categories of factors (Olanrewaju, Hossain, Whiteside & Mercieca, 2020). Jumin, Ijab, & Zaman (2017), note that social media entrepreneurship and businesses are the businesses that are on the internet selling and marketing their services, goods, products and advertising online, these businesses use the global communication infrastructure of the internet to conduct business, gather information, reaching their audience and gain profits.

Even though Olanrewaju, Hossain, Whiteside & Mercieca (2020), report that a number of researches have taken place that have found a significant proof that there is a positive correlation between the use of social media and better performance of businesses, Secundo, Del Vecchio and Mele (2020), suggest that there is need of a holistic perspective regarding the upcoming research stream of usefulness of social media in terms of entrepreneurship, to study the impact social media have on entrepreneurial practices, activities and process.

Social networks are thought to be significant in entrepreneurial opportunity recognition specifically at the initial stages of a new business venture (Ceptureanu, Ceptureanu, Cristescu, Dhesi, 2020; Yun, Won & Park, 2016). Social networks allow peer to peer flow of information which may include helpful information regarding entrepreneurial opportunity recognition.

Many researchers believe that social media can play a very fundamental role in helping entrepreneurs recognize entrepreneurial opportunities that include various beneficial aspects of entrepreneurship. Olanrewaju, Hossain, Mercieca & Whiteside (2018), state that social media assists aspiring as well as leading entrepreneurs in identifying entrepreneurial opportunities in regards with entering new markets, better customer relationship management, introduction of new products/services, penetrating new markets as well as taking part in entrepreneurial events and occasions.

Secundo, Del Vecchio and Mele (2020), believe that social media platforms facilitate a larger number of stakeholders in engaging in the identifying and recognizing any potential entrepreneurial opportunity and more generally in developing the process of entrepreneurship at various levels including organizational, regional as well as individual. Gupta & Bose (2019), note that social media technologies and platforms are changing the way entrepreneurs and business people interact amongst themselves, engage diverse stakeholders, recognize various potential entrepreneurial opportunities and associate with the external factors and environment. The recognition of an entrepreneurial opportunity through social media can come about through the execution of the various channels as suggested in the study of Mack et al (2017), who pays attention to the new business ventures and gives proofs that changing technological practices influences their choice of accepting social media as the source and tool for identifying, exploring and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities.

### **2.3. Key factors**

As per the confirmation of a number of previous studies, there are a few very specific factors that are involved in the functioning of social media businesses. These factors have a very significant impact on the success of entrepreneurial opportunities enacted using social media and how the customers perceive and shop from online business. Some of these factors serve as advantages of using social media to enact entrepreneurial opportunities while some pose challenges to the ventures as well as the entrepreneurs.

#### **2.3.1. Trust**

Trust has been recognized as one of the most important factors that impact the success of a social media business. Qureshi, Fang, Ramsey, McCole, Ibbotson, & Compeau (2009), suggest that trust, according to the findings of a number of previous studies, has been identified as one of the most crucial enabling factors in e-commerce. According to Mayer, Davis & Schoorman (1995), trust is a concept that relates to the keenness of a party or an individual to show vulnerability against the actions of another party or person on the basis of the expectation that the other party will do or carry out a task or an action which is important to the trustor irrespective of the power to control, monitor or look over the actions of the other party. In other words, trust can also be described as a belief in the other party's ability to deal with integrity, their competence and benevolence; it is a belief held by all the parties involved, that all the actors will not act selfishly and take advantage of the other or a situation in a transactional relationship or one of exchange (Qureshi, Fang, Ramsey, McCole, Ibbotson, & Compeau, 2009). When it comes to online shopping and buying from social media business, Grabner-Kraeuter (2002), states that it has been seen that trust plays a very crucial and a significant role in the action and process of buying, consumers especially focus on experience, credence qualities of the services or the products being sold as well as the trustworthiness of the seller on social media. Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa (2002), also note that previous researches have claimed that trust is a very important factor, that plays a significant role in influencing customer behaviour and participation in web-based e-commerce. Lack of trust among customers has been pointed out as one of the main reasons for not indulging in online shopping (Grabner-Kraeuter & Kaluscha, 2003). Mukherjee & Nath (2007), state that since there is an absence of face-to-face interaction and real life viewing in online and social media buying, commitment from the seller and consumer trust act as the major factors that can help both the parties in forming a long-term successful dynamic that benefits both the parties; ultimately affecting the behavioral and purchase intentions of the customers. The internet and the world of social media, if seen from the customers' perspective, looks like a world of chaos, this increase the chances of risks and the purchase can only be made if the benefits are greater than the risks involved (Tan & Guo, 2005).

The work of Tan & Sutherland (2004), included conceptualization of trust on online businesses as a concept that is has multiple dimensions in its construct; it constitutes of dispositional trust, interpersonal trust and institutional trust. Lack of institutional trust stems from the nature of internet and the apprehensions affiliated with the medium of online shopping, lack of dispositional trust is related to the customers' individual agreeableness,

openness, extroversion, neuroticism, and conscientiousness. Interpersonal trust has to do with the trust between the parties involved in the transaction or business (Tan & Sutherland, 2004). Ganguly, Dash, Cyr & Head (2010), note that when it comes to B2C shopping, the two participants involved are the customer and the online seller or entrepreneur, and this would fall in the category of interpersonal trust; interpersonal trust constitutes of integrity, benevolence, credibility and predictability. While predictability in this context, deals with the reputation of the vendor in terms of offering good service and products, integrity refers to the vendor's ability of practicing honesty, setting, maintaining and following standards as well as remaining consistent, all these characteristics combined add to the credibility of the online seller, so the trust in an online store can be conceptualized as the assessed and interpreted credibility as well as the benevolence of the online seller according to the customers' perception. (Ganguly, Dash, Cyr & Head, 2010). Credibility can be described as the customer's belief in the expertise of the seller, meaning the seller has the ability and is capable of executing the job effectively, whereas benevolence refers to the belief of the customer that the seller has a positive intention when they do business (Ganesan, 1994).

People are usually reluctant to shop online because most of the times they are not certain if the product or goods they ordered will be delivered on time or at all and as promised, the negligence on the seller's part in recognizing this issue and putting in effort to solving it and building trust makes it a more serious issue (Sukma, 2012). If online vendors succeed in invoking customers' trust in the online sellers and stores, the customers' intention and willingness to buy would also increase, their trust and purchase intention are directly proportional in this context (Jarvenpaa & Tractinsky, 1999). Kusumah (2015), states that in order to maintain a business or a transactional relationship, trust must be considered a necessary factor, as it is needed to reach a certain goal between the customers and the entrepreneurs; trust directly relates to keeping promises and fulfilling the demands made during the business transaction. Many empirical studies (Gefen et al., 2003; Kim and Kim, 2005; Salam et al., 2005; Suh and Hun, 2003; Sultan et al., 2005), have concluded that an increase in customers' trust in online shopping also significantly increases their purchase intention.

#### **2.3.1.1. Perceived risk**

Jarvenpaa, Tractinsky & Vitale (2000), describe the concept of perceived risk as a trustor's belief related to the possibility of gains and losses without taking into consideration the relationships with the particular trustees. According to Barnes, Bauer, Neumann & Huber

(2007), state that risk plays a vital role in consumer buying behaviour, the two theoretical perspectives of risk include one which focuses on the uncertain result of a decision and the other focuses on the costs and the consequences of the said results. A greater perception of risk tends to diminish the keenness of the customers to buy and their online purchase intention (Barnes, Bauer, Neumann & Huber, 2007). Kusumah (2015), points out that the greater the perceived risk is, the more the customers' purchase intention falters. In the context of online shopping, the perceived risk can be considered to be a hurdle in the way of successful transactions, because the customers sometimes intentionally and sometimes unintentionally perceive risks while considering online shopping and viewing services and products online (Forsythe & Shi, 2003).

### **2.3.1.2. Absence of face-to-face interaction**

As opposed to the traditional offline shopping, face-to-face interaction is absent in online shopping. This also contributes to the lack of customer trust in the online seller and their intention. According to Yoon (2002), online trust differs from offline trust in about three different ways, first of all, there is a major geographical distance between the customer and the online seller, secondly, there is no salesperson or representative of the store and thirdly, there is a lack of physical contact between the customer and the product; the buyer does not know the exact dimensions and feel of the product. These factors result in more doubts and lesser trust in sellers and the products being sold online among the customers. Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa (2002), note that the lack of face-to-face interaction in online shopping, the virtual nature of the internet and online store as well as the lack of physical outlets of the online stores pose a challenge and become a hurdle in the way of the establishment of customers' trust.

### **2.3.2. Marketing campaigns**

#### **2.3.2.1. Influencer marketing**

The concept of influencer marketing refers to the promotions and marketing done via social media carried out by people who have lots of followers on social media and have the power of influencing or convincing people to buy something. Woods (2016), defines influencer marketing as basically the virtual version of word-of-mouth marketing, where the followers of an influencer are much more likely to receive a message in a positive way and consider the message authentic and genuine since it is being said by a familiar, more trusted individual than the company or brand themselves. The most effective way of getting customers to place their trust in something and convincing them of the quality and worth of a product is to get a third

party to endorse and promote the product or the brand (Mukherjee & Nath, 2007). The empirical evidence from studies indicates that potential customers and consumers who view an influencer's post regarding a brand are more likely to exhibit a more positive attitude towards the post and the brand's message, they consider the source i.e., the influencer to be authentic and trustworthy, consumers feel more inclined towards shopping from the brand while also feeling like their own social media presence would become stronger if they buy the brand; these consumers exposed to influencer posts are more likely to be convinced than those that view a traditional celebrity's sponsored post (Jin, Muqaddam & Ryu, 2018). Constantinides & Fountain (2008), state the users have now become influencers and have changed the concept of marketing communication. The social media influencers due to their popularity have somewhat become social media celebrities that people tend to believe and relate to. While most social media platforms have their own set of social media influencers but most of the more popular ones are present on Instagram, they either only gain their followers and popularity from Instagram or have an Instagram account along with other social media influencing accounts. Woods (2016), also notes that even though social media influencers are present on most if not all the social media platforms, the most commonly used social media platform is Instagram, when the topic of social media influencers is brought up, the first social media platform that comes to mind is Instagram as it has the highest number of social media influencers. Most branded posts done by social media influencers get noticed by their followers and benefit the brands when they are on Instagram. When an influencer tags and mentions a brand or a product in their posts, it allows their followers to check that brand out, follow the brand, get more information regarding the product; this gives the brand a larger number of followers on their page, enhancing their chances of getting a higher audience engagement and more potential customers, increasing the possibility of the brand's posts having more engagement and maybe more audience reach (Woods, 2016). This phenomenon as explained and termed as snowball effect by Woods (2016), also ensures that the ball keeps rolling and the influencers' followers keep liking, sharing and eventually end up amplifying the brand's posts and reach.

#### **2.3.2.2. Social Media Marketing.**

Weinberg (2009), describes social media marketing as the process where sellers promote, market and advertise their offerings, product and/or service using social media platforms, they reach and communicate with customers via social media platforms. With the advancement of internet and the increasing popularity of social media, it has become easier to not just stay connected to one's loved ones but it has also opened a road of communication

between brands, sellers and customers. Berthon, Pitt & Campbell (2008), argue that social media platforms now provide two-way communication between customers and sellers which has resulted in the evolution of the process of marketing communication. So, Xu, Xiong & King (2017), state that in the past few years many businesses have realized the effectiveness of social media marketing and adopted social media as one of the main ways of carrying out communication with customers, encourage their customers to create differing brand entities; increasing seller-customer communication. According to Belanche, Flavián & Pérez-Rueda (2017), online form of advertisement does better than traditional print advertisement due to the vastness, interactive nature and higher audience reach of the internet and social media platforms. Social media marketing increases the chances of creating brand and/or venture awareness; brand awareness is one of the most significant outcomes of using social media for marketing (Tsimonis & Dimitriadis, 2014). Manickam (2014), notes that one of the basic goals of marketing, advertising, communicating with customers and providing information regarding the brand, product, service is creating brand awareness. Fanion (2011), points out that the findings of studies show that social media plays a significant role and is an impressive tool when it comes to creating and increasing brand awareness. Maria, Pusriadi, Hakim, & Darma (2019), state that now brands make special efforts in using social media to run their campaigns and taking part in seller-customer communication and interaction to enhance their reach and awareness. There are many social media platforms that can be and are being used to carry out social media marketing, but in this study only the two main platforms namely Facebook and Instagram are being discussed.

### *Facebook marketing*

Facebook has a feature that allows target marketing, this personal targeting of potential customers with offers, personalized ads via facebook is a big plus point for retailers and sellers (Harris & Dennis, 2011). Yang, Kim & Dhalwani (2008), emphasize that the target marketing by facebook is very beneficial for sellers and one of the biggest advantages of facebook marketing is that it allows retailers to target their potential customers by catering to their personalized interests. Goothuis, Spil & Effing (2020), explain facebook target marketing stating that the facebook users who are potential customers get personalized ads based on their interests, demographic and behaviour data. Marsden (2011), signify that facebook marketing has different purposes such as influencing customers' purchase intentions, creating brand awareness, ensuring customers get a chance to develop trust in the brand making them want to make future purchases, and promoting the brand and products through other customers i.e.,



word of mouth marketing/advertising. Facebook marketing, advertising, has desirable results as it does influence customers' decision making, problem recognition; so, when sellers create ads that cater to the customers' interests, it creates a need for their product in the customers' minds (Goothuis, Spil & Effing, 2020),

### *Instagram marketing*

Instagram is a visual platform, it is based on aesthetics and filters that visually attract the users, this characteristic makes it one of the most suitable platforms for promoting and marketing beauty products, luxurious brands/products and luxurious lifestyles (Djafarova and Rushworth, 2017). Blight, Ruppel & Schoenbauer (2017), note that Instagram is one of those social media platforms that also allows users to get followers, form a connection with brands and enable interactions among customers and between sellers and customers. Woods (2016), signifies that in the present day, brands and businesses pay pages and influencers to post sponsored content on their respective Instagram accounts; Instagram provides greater number of impressions (the number of people who saw the ad) and engagement (the number of interactions an ad had such as likes, comments, shares, save), and with Instagram it is easier to measure the reach and engagement.

### **2.4. Home run business**

Mason, Carter & Tagg (2011), define home-based business as any startup or business entity that is run by a self-employed individual and engages in offering services or selling products in a market, the business could be with or without employees and uses a residential property as the headquarter of where all the operations take place. Home-based business can be categorized as a business that primarily operates from home, irrespective of its size, type, as long as the business activities take place in a home and the office is located in someone's house (Fong et al, 2000). Sulaiman, Sharrif & Ahmad (2009), add that a home-based business can be described as a business that is run from home and is most likely someone's part time job and not the primary source of income.

Alhothali (2020), suggests that the owners of the home-based businesses interact with external sources to gather data, information, to get advice, services to enhance their business, however, the employees of these businesses are most likely to fulfill all these needs from the company itself, while a lot of the owners of home-based businesses carry out transactions at home, some might also opt for outsourcing the transactions. The motivation or the reason of starting a home-based business could be a number of things, and can vary from individual to

individual. According to Peacock (2004), family reasons, low-cost convenience and the relaxation of flexible timings are some of the key reasons as to why people opt for running or starting up a home-based business as well as the use of technology that keeps increasing rapidly plays a huge factor in the growth and success of home-based businesses pushing more people to pursue it.

Sulaiman, Sharrif & Ahmad (2009), further add that the availability and rapid growth of the internet and technology, it has become a lot easier for home-based business with not just the professionals but also aspiring entrepreneurs to utilize the space, applications, websites and carry out their business activities from the comfort of their homes.

With the emergence of internet and technology it has become easy for entrepreneurs that aim to start home-based businesses to discover opportunities and act upon them. Bateman (2000), notes that the development of technology especially internet and web-based technology has allowed the home-based businesses to thrive and has brought in a new trend of home-based startups. Sarasvathy, Dew, Velamuri & Venkataraman (2003), describe opportunity discovery as “If only one side exists – i.e., demand exists, but supply does not, and vice versa then, the non-existent side has to be “discovered” before the match-up can be implemented. This notion of opportunity can be applied to the home-based businesses and how they discover opportunity to start their businesses.

## **2.5. Conceptual framework**

This study draws on multiple concepts and theories of entrepreneurship. The theories mentioned in this part of the study are the ones that suit the narrative of the study the best. These theories help in better explaining the concepts mentioned and researched upon in the study.

### **2.5.1. Bricolage theory**

The concept of bricolage was initially introduced by Lévi-Strauss (1967), and has been used to explain and study various disciplines, phenomena and recently has become a prominent part of the field of entrepreneurship (Philips & Tracey, 2007). Bricolage theory is one of the recent entrepreneurship theories that have come forth in the recent past. Baker & Nelson (2005), describe the term “bricolage” as improvising and exercising one’s making do abilities to finding solutions and opportunities by applying whatever resources one can get. As per Baker & Nelson (2003;2005), bricolage is used in the entrepreneurship literature to explain and

make sense of the concept of market creation and nascent or new firm growth. Fisher (2012), notes that the theory of entrepreneurial bricolage proposes that the dynamic between firm growth and bricolage activities are impacted by the pattern of activities carried out by an entrepreneur to enact, test, and/or counteract limitations in the course. Baker & Nelson (2005), suggest that the concept of bricolage in entrepreneurship refers to the actions carried out by entrepreneurs who end up creating new ventures out of absolutely nothing and unexpectedly, and by doing this they challenge conventional and most commonly considered notions regarding the role of environment in dictating or deciding the fate of an organisation. Senyard, Baker, & Davidsson (2009), note that the concept or the action of bricolage can be described as generation of an approach that is basically action-oriented or one that can be labelled as “hand-on”. While explaining and deriving the foundations of the theory of entrepreneurial bricolage, Baker & Nelson (2005), suggest that when entrepreneurs face environments that pose challenges and no useful resources to find solutions, entrepreneurs have three options, one of which is to put into practice bricolage by improvising and using a combination of resources available at hand to find opportunities and solutions to problems. Out of five domains presented by Baker & Nelson (2005), for the entrepreneurs who choose to enact bricolage, two options relate the most to this study; these are namely (1) customers/markets, referring to delivering or offering of products or services that are otherwise not available, (2) skills inputs, referring to when an entrepreneur encourages or allows the use of skills that are self-taught or amateur and the skills that probably will not be applied or used otherwise.

### **2.5.2. Opportunity-based entrepreneurship**

Brown, Davidsson & Wiklund (2010), describe opportunity-based entrepreneurship as the creation of business that arises from the presence of an entrepreneurial opportunity. Dau & Cuerdo-Cazurra (2014), define opportunity-based entrepreneurship as the kind of activity or action that comprehensively includes entrepreneurial activities with expectations of high growth associated with profitable entrepreneurial opportunities. He, Nazari, Zhang & Cai (2020), note that an opportunity-based entrepreneur discovers an opportunity, utilizes it to its full potential and begins their entrepreneurship journey by playing a part in giving to the environment by engaging in sustainable development by providing environmental value creation. Rui, Karaoz & Mendoca (2014), say that an opportunity-based entrepreneur is the one who because of attractiveness of a business idea and its personal benefits, decides to launch a venture. For opportunity-based entrepreneurship to take place, it is necessary for an entrepreneur to realise and/or discover an entrepreneurial opportunity, use their entrepreneurial

capabilities and accomplish entrepreneurial value (Arenius & Clercq, 2005). Findings from studies suggest that opportunity-based entrepreneurs place most of their focus on the entrepreneurial opportunity, their entrepreneurial capabilities and using them towards establishing their competitive advantage; they focus on trying to find new entrepreneurial opportunities, upgrading their entrepreneurial capabilities to define their competitive advantage in the market, while also keeping the market trends in mind when taking entrepreneurial decisions (He, Nazari, Zhang & Cai, 2020).

Entrepreneurs can use social media to learn more about clients or business opportunities, gather resources to advance their initiatives, and maintain customer relationships after the venture has launched (Cheng & Shiu, 2019; De Zubieta & Jones, 2020; Drummond et al., 2018). A person who uses social media more frequently will be able to build a bigger online social network and amass more social capital, which makes it easier for them to start their own business (Wang et al., 2020). In contrast to offline, face-to-face social networks, social media enables users to create a sizable social network outside of their immediate area without expending a lot of time and money (Pang, 2018; Smith et al., 2017).

The exploitation of a market opportunity by entrepreneurs using a combination of the resources at their disposal constitutes entrepreneurship, a context-dependent social process (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Social media has significantly expanded the ability of individuals to create business and manage from home as social media has expanded the ability of individuals to network by removing geographical, cultural and professional boundaries (Alarcón-del-Amo et al., 2018; Borst et al., 2018). Ease of usage of Social Media posit many entrepreneurial opportunities. By employing the core process of Bricolage (which includes using resources at hand, combining existing resources for new purposes, and negotiating actions and meanings in context) (McKaguea and Oliver, 2016), individuals may exploit such opportunities.

However, these opportunities do not come smoothly. While social media helps people expand their social networks by connecting them to people who live far away from them, detractors of the platform contend that these networks are primarily made up of frail relationships that lack the strength of an offline network (Granovetter, 1973). In such case, establishing trust may be a major issue to deal with for social media business. This may further make the customer retention more problematic. Hence, the entrepreneurs need to find new ways to achieve customer retention which can be done by employing the core process of Bricolage (which

includes using resources at hand, combining existing resources for new purposes, and negotiating actions and meanings in context) (McKaguea and Oliver, 2016).

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **3. Introduction**

This chapter discusses the methodological processes of the study; the qualitative methods that were employed to conduct the study, carry out interviews and process the data to get results. This chapter also includes details about the sample size, the participants, how they were approached, ethical considerations, and the processes of obtaining and analyzing the data for this study.

The study is qualitative in nature and was conducted following the exploratory approach. The study follows subjectivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology. In the light of the available literature, the study aims to gather information and learn about the contribution made by social media in terms of the key factors that influence the success of the entrepreneurial opportunities that have been actualized using social media. The study further aims to gauge the role of two of the most commonly used social media platforms in Pakistan for conducting social media entrepreneurship in the success and promotion of the social media businesses and ventures while also acknowledging the role social media plays in the enactment of entrepreneurial opportunities. The data for the study were collected by conducting one-to-one interviews from thirty-five social media entrepreneurs. These social media entrepreneurs were the people who are running their own online ventures using social media as the main platform they conduct business on. The interviews were conducted via WhatsApp call. The choice of the medium of interview conduction was left to the participants. The decision of the platform or the medium depended on the preference of the participants. The interviews were semi-structured in nature and were recorded with the purpose of data analysis in the next stage. The interviews were recorded with the participants' consent.

#### **3.1.Participants**

The population of the study consisted of the social media entrepreneurs who are currently running their own online businesses using social media platforms as their main site of conducting business. Some of them also use social media as an entry point and plan on developing a website eventually. The participants for this study were selected via purposive sampling (criterion sampling). In order to get access to the most appropriate sample, many social media businesses were looked into and simultaneously approached via Instagram DMs and Facebook Messenger. The entrepreneurs who fit the criterion and the ones who agreed to

give interviews were selected. The participants were then interviewed using the semi-structured interview approach.

### 3.2. Sample Size

The sampling method used for this study was purposive sampling (criterion sampling) for identifying the most appropriate population. The sample was chosen based on the criterion that the participants must only be social media entrepreneurs and must be running their own businesses online using any one or two social media platforms as the only source of business. The participants were approached via Instagram DMs and Facebook Messenger. The potential participants' businesses were also looked into, to gauge if they were suitable to be interviewed for the study. About one-fifty social media businesses were contacted, a large number of businesses did not respond, a few said no and some backed out of giving an interview at the last minute. A total of thirty-five (35) social media entrepreneurs were interviewed for this study. There was no condition set by the researcher for the participants to be of a certain gender or age. It so happened that all the participants were females and ranged from ages seventeen to thirty-eight.

The interviews were conducted until the researchers realized that the information had reached a saturation point and no new responses or information was being received any more. The respondent profile is shown in *Table 1.1* below.

No.	SME #	Venture names	Type of business	No. of years active
1.	SME 01	Treatella	Home-cooked food	4
2.	SME 02	Gigi Statements	Accessories	1
3.	SME 03	Hey Gems	Jewellery items	2.5
4.	SME 04	Chargul	Custom made clothing	3
5.	SME 05	SK Studio	Piercing jewellery	4
6.	SME 06	Mockingjay	Handbags	5
7.	SME 07	Baby Canvas	Canvas painting	4.5
8.	SME 08	Sugar crush	Home-based bakery	3
9.	SME 09	Auralin	Skincare	10 months
10.	SME 10	Trinket Accessories	Accessories	2
11.	SME 11	Bake N Serve	Home-based baked items	3
12.	SME 12	Flare And Fashion	Accessories	2
13.	SME 13	Bubble Love	Personalized balloons and wrappings	2
14.	SME 14	Pearly Pendants	Jewellery items	3.5
15.	SME 15	Sugar beat	Home-based bakery	3
16.	SME 16	Fasana	Clothing	6

17.	SME 17	Nail store by Nailicious	Custom-made clip-on nails	3
18.	SME 18	Lunarya	Accessories	2
19.	SME 19	All Things Mayumi	Jewellery and accessories	2
20.	SME 20	Damsel by Fatima	Jewellery items	2.5
21.	SME 21	Scrunchies.com	Scrunchies	2
22.	SME 22	Embellished accessories	Accessories	3
23.	SME 23	Subtle statements	Accessories	3.5
24.	SME 24	J made Jewellery	Clay jewellery	7 months
25.	SME 25	SK Piercing	Piercing	3
26.	SME 26	Sweet haven	Baked items	3
27.	SME 27	SoArsh Jewels	Jewellery items	5 months
28.	SME 28	Filter de Vie	Filters for snapchat and Instagram	2
29.	SME 29	Mad Batter	Baked items	5
30.	SME 30	Masquerade By NA	Home décor accessories	1.5
31.	SME 31	Bling thing	Jewellery items	4.5 months
32.	SME 32	Made by Anam	Home-based bakery	5.5
33.	SME 33	Hym Bakers	Custom made cakes	5
34.	SME 34	1o3bakershouse	Cakes	6
35.	SME 35	Candle works.co	Candles	2.5

*Table 1.1. Participant Demographics*

### **3.3.Ethical Considerations**

The participants were sent a consent form prior to the interviews, which they read and signed before the interviews commenced. The participants were ensured that there will be no breach of their confidentiality and their identities will remain confidential. The study will use the term “SME (social media entrepreneur)” followed by a number that denotes the turn at which the participants gave the interview to address the entrepreneurs to protect their privacy. The consent to record the interviews was taken from the participants prior to the interviews.

### **3.4.Data Collection**

The instrument that was used in this study to collect the data was semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were selected as a method of data collection to enable the participants to give detailed responses and provide as much necessary information as they could. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to collect extensive data and information that further helped in enhancing the findings of the study.



The researcher conducted one on one audio interviews with the participants. The interview conduction took place in real-time. The participants were given the choice to choose the most convenient medium between Zoom, MS Teams and WhatsApp call. All thirty-five of the participants chose WhatsApp call, as most of them were not aware of MS Teams and they found connecting on Zoom difficult, making WhatsApp the most convenient platform to conduct interviews. Other than slight internet issues on a few of the participants' side, the researcher came across no difficulties while taking the interviews online. While the interviews were conducted on WhatsApp call on one device, they were recorded on another device with the permission of the participants. The average duration of the interviews was thirty to forty minutes. The interviews were conducted in English and Urdu both, depending on the participant's preference. The data was then manually and thoroughly analysed to assign codes to the major themes of the data to step into the stage of data analysis.

### **3.5.Data Analysis**

The data collected via the interviews were analysed thematically. The interview responses were recorded for the future data analysing purposes. The interviews conducted were semi-structured, allowing the participants to share their experiences and give their own opinions and suggestions, along with answering the questions asked by the researcher.

The next step in the study was the transcribing process of the responses. The transcripts of the responses were prepared through careful listening of the recorded interviews. The English part of the data was transcribed verbatim, whereas, the Urdu part of the data was translated and interpreted to obtain the transcript. Next, the transcribed data was carefully analysed to manually generate codes and develop themes to further generate results. To carry out the manual coding, the method used by Belotto (2018), was employed. Belotto (2018), used Microsoft word to code the data, his method included highlighting the text and adding the codes in the margin of the transcripts using the comment function of the application. To ensure an accurate analysis of the data, the tool of interrater reliability was employed. The codes were cross-checked by three separate researchers to ensure their accuracy of the interpretation of the codes and themes.

## Chapter 4

### Data Analysis and Findings

#### 4. Introduction

This chapter discusses the findings of the study in detail. The findings of the study are divided into categories and themes generated from the analysis of the data obtained via interviews. The chapter analyses each category and their themes in detail separately.

The data for this study was collected via interviews. Audio interviews were taken from social media entrepreneurs who run their businesses on Instagram and Facebook. The interviews were semi-structured and an interview guide was used to conduct the interviews. The interviews were taken from thirty-five social media entrepreneurs, who run their businesses solely on social media. The interviews were then transcribed to be analysed by generating codes and identifying themes from the content of the interviews. The data was then analysed to decipher the themes and the codes that were developed during the thematic analysis of the data. The codes were generated manually. During the analysis of the data, ten recurring themes were identified, the said ten themes were then further put into three categories. *Fig 1.1*, shows the process of data analysis employed.

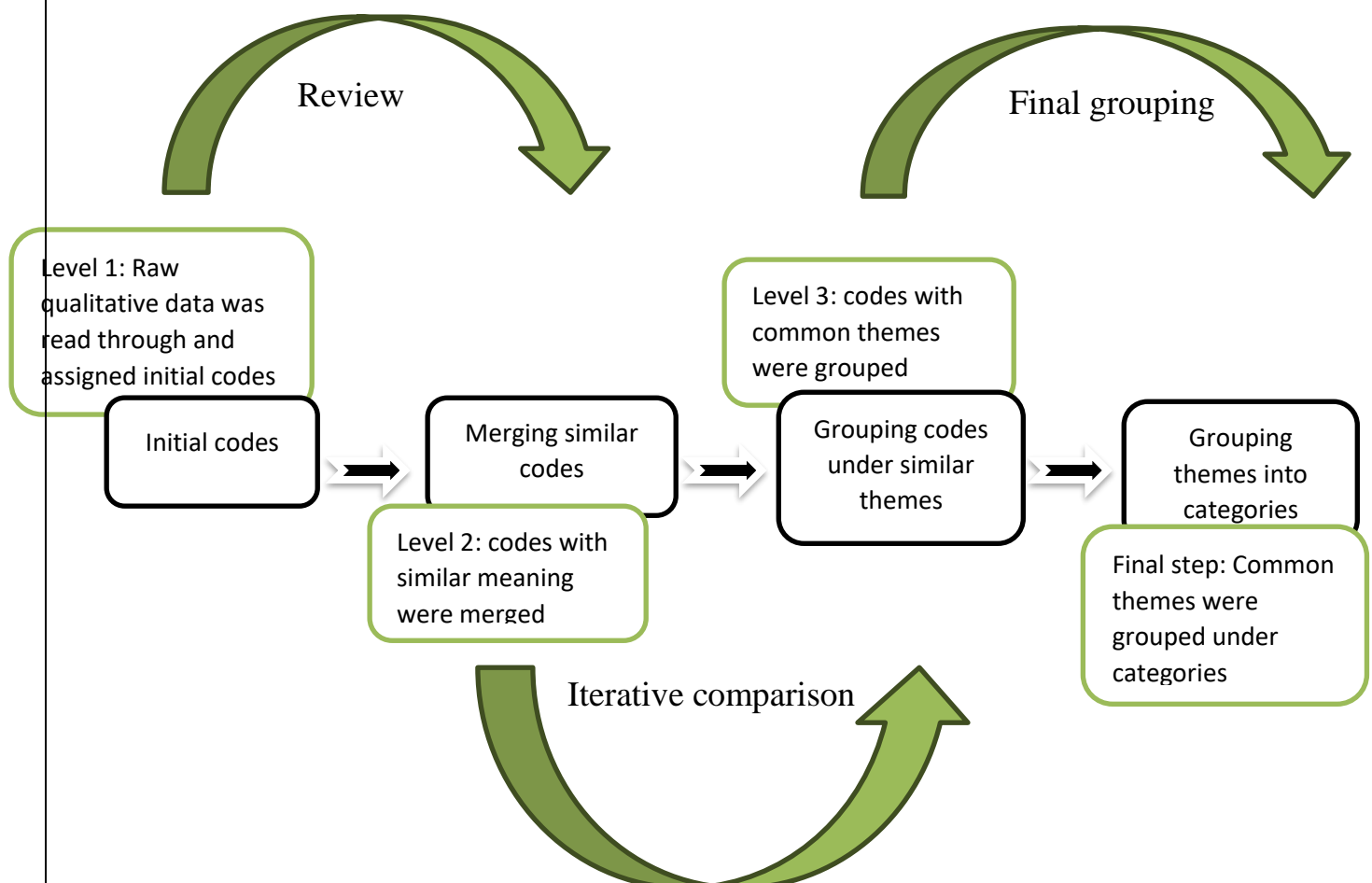


Fig 1.1. Data analysis (Adapted from Hahn,2008)

#### 4.1. Findings

The final categories along with their corresponding themes and codes are presented in *Table 1.2* below.

Categories	Themes	Codes
Preferences for social media business: perceived ease of social media business	Advantages of social media platforms for business activities.	User-friendliness of social media
		Ease of working from home
		Lesser financial resources required
	Reaping the social media platform benefit	Social media as an entry point
		Higher customer reach and engagement
	Higher outreach through social media marketing.	Promotion via social media
		Helpful social media marketing features
		Social media marketing-efficient in reaching the target audience
	Instagram- a platform for building clientele	Visual attraction on Instagram
		Instagram-primary platform for business
Access to target audience on Instagram		
Juggling with the (mis)trust matters in social media business	The persistent chance Online scams	Scams with customers
		Scams with sellers
	Disadvantages of anonymity on social media	Customer concerns and doubts

		Lack of face-to-face interaction
	Customer trust	Trustful relationship with the seller
		Lack of trust on the platform
Taking steps that assist in customer retention	Employing customer retention strategies	Information via highlights on Instagram
		Prioritizing audience engagement
	Employing efficient customer services	Order and delivery update
		Active response to customer queries/complaints
	Social media- a competitive platform	Maintaining competitive advantage
		Quality control

Table 1.2. Categories and themes

Table 1.2, shows the codes, themes and the categories that were developed from the analysis of the data acquired.

## 4.2. Category explanation

### 4.2.1. Preferences for social media business: perceived ease of social media business

Category	Themes	Codes
Preferences for social media business: perceived ease of social media business	Advantages of social media platforms for business activities.	User-friendliness of social media
		Ease of working from home
		Lesser financial resources required
	Reaping the social media platform benefit	Social media as an entry point
		Higher customer reach and engagement
	Higher outreach through social media marketing.	Promotion via social media
Helpful social media marketing features		

	Instagram- a platform for building clientele	Social media marketing-efficient in reaching the target audience
		Visual attraction on Instagram
		Instagram-primary platform for business
		Access to target audience on Instagram

Table 1.2 a

Social media platforms allow their users to sign up and hold accounts on various platforms for free; giving them an easy access to certain tools, features and a chance to communicate and form a community with other users. Entrepreneurs who run their businesses on social media platforms are called Social Media Entrepreneurs and will be referred to as ‘SME’ in the study.

#### 4.2.1.1. Advantages of social media platforms for business activities.

The responses given by the participants suggest that social media platforms specifically Instagram possesses a user-friendly interface making it easy and almost effortless for the users to navigate through the platform. Owing to its easy access and availability, anyone can join social media and create an account without having to pay any money. This allows entrepreneurs to use social media as an entry point into the world of business. Social media’s user-friendliness attributes to it being a go to for many entrepreneurs when it comes to launching their businesses. An entrepreneur (SME 09) shared:-

*“...whereas choosing social media as the business platform goes, one of the biggest factors for choosing it was the fact that social media is user-friendly, most people know how to use it and is easy to browse and surf through.”*

Another entrepreneur (SME 21) noted:-

*“Social media is just easy you know? It allows us to look at pages and save and like things and all in all just easy to use and also reach a maximum number of people without having to make too much of an effort, so that is why I wanted to launch my venture on social media.”*

Entrepreneurs all around the world take the user-friendliness of social media as an opportunity to launch their social media businesses without having to deplete their financial resources in order to start their venture. Entrepreneurs shared that a social media launch is easy

on the pocket and requires much lesser financial resources than starting a conventional business. Talking about this a respondent (SME 02) shared:-

*“I chose to start my venture via social media primarily because I did not need a big amount of money to setup my business as I would have had I opted for conventional ways of business, I did not have the financial resources required to rent a shop and setup my business in a market.”*

Another respondent (SME 33), shared:-

*“Ever since, I decided to launch my own venture, I knew social media would be the way to go. I am a college student and I absolutely do not have the funds to have started a conventional business, I did not want to have to rent or buy a small space and display my products in a market and neither could I afford it.”*

Social media not only requires almost no money to launch a venture using the platform but it also allows entrepreneurs to not have to leave the comfort of their homes, they can very easily work from home and earn money without having to waste resources on conveyance. It saves time and money both. Entrepreneurs believe that the ease of working from home allows the entrepreneurs to use their time and financial resources wisely and gives them time to plan their schedules more efficiently. In the recent times, work from home has become a well-known phenomenon and for some people, a preferred mode of working too. An entrepreneur (SME 12) who runs a home-based bakery stated: -

*“One of the reasons of choosing social media to launch my business was the fact that I could take all the orders and work from home. Having to go for work, in my opinion can sometimes really affect one’s finances and I did not want that especially in the initial stage of building my career, working from the comfort of my home saves my time as well as my money that I would otherwise spend on fuel.”*

Another respondent (SME 05), shared:-

*“The ease of working from home was one of the biggest attractions for me that led me to choose social media for launching my venture. I have young children and not enough finances, so I need the money but I cannot afford to leave my house. Working from home and having my own business gives me the freedom to work whenever and however I like, I get flexible hours, good money and comfort of my home.”*

Figure 1.2, 1.3 and 1.4, depict the overlapping between the themes in categories 1, 2 and 3 respectively.

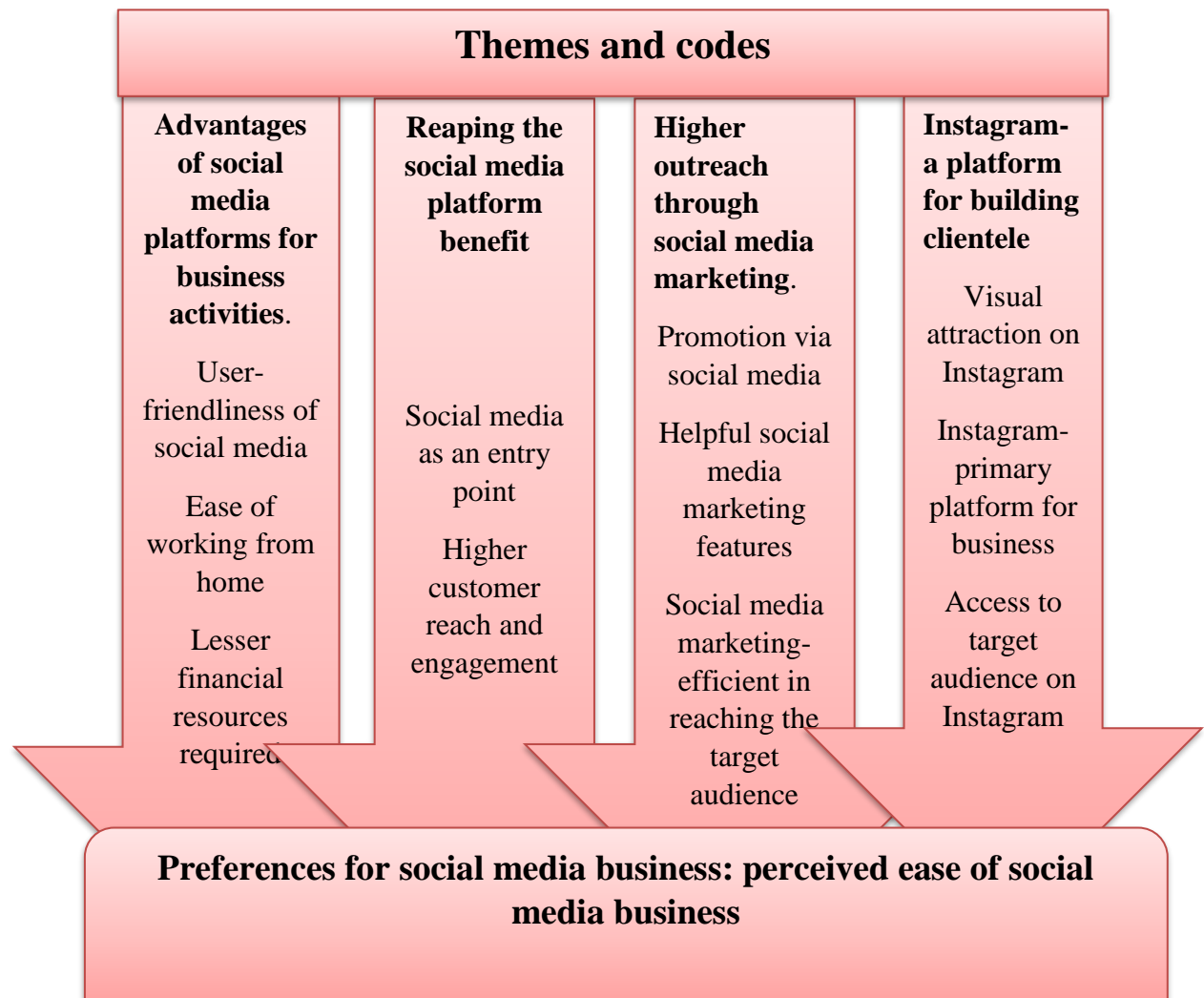


Figure 1.2. Category 1.

#### 4.2.1.2. Reaping the social media platform benefit

The analysis reveals that entrepreneurs use social media as an entry point into the world of business, they prefer to start their venture through social media as it helps them in an easy launch. Talking about using social media to launch a venture, SME 29 shared:-

*“...and social media, for me is an entry point into the world of business. I decided to launch it first via social media, gauge the market, assess the potential of growth and financial gains and then maybe go conventional if need be.”*

SME 32 shared:-

*“Initially, I had decided to use social media as maybe a way of entering the whole entrepreneurship scene as it provides an easy access to people and also gives an idea of what the market is like.”*

Entrepreneurs are not the only ones who think social media is user-friendly, their customers do too. Consumers also generally hold the opinion that social media helps in providing its users with easy access to customers and businesses alike, making it easier for them find each other as well as for the customers to scroll through the business accounts and find what they are looking for. The analysis shows that having an easier access through social media also allows for higher customer reach as well as higher customer engagement, proving social media beneficial for newly launched businesses. Higher customer reach refers to the phenomenon of businesses reaching more targeted potential customers while higher customer engagement refers to businesses creating awareness among customers and customers actively engaging with businesses sometimes even resulting in brand loyalty and business growth. Discussing the benefits of using social media for businesses, SME 33 shared:-

*“...another advantage of social media that attracted me to it is the audience reach. Social media platforms make it easier to reach a larger number of audience in a shorter span of time, assisting in a higher customer reach and engagement, which further helps the business grow.”*

Higher customer reach and customer engagement for social media businesses are achieved by running social media campaigns and using social media marketing. Social media marketing specifically aids businesses in targeting, gaining and retaining customers. It was pointed out by SME 03, that Facebook provides target marketing tools that can help businesses:-

*“...allows you to engage in target marketing, you can get look alike audience and find out about people’s interests and individually target them....Facebook has detailed options that allow you to launch campaigns whereas insta only has options to boost your posts.”*

#### **4.2.1.3. Higher outreach through social media marketing.**

Social media platforms allow entrepreneurs to reach a larger number of audience due to its virtual nature. The findings suggest that social media helps entrepreneurs in promoting their businesses and products using social media marketing features. Promotion via social



media as per the participants costs less and works in their favour, helping them reach more customers. An entrepreneur (SME 16), shared:-

*“Promotion on social media is one of the greater perks of running a social media business, it only requires putting your posts on boost and run ads and social media platforms put your content on potential customers’ homepage or feeds, and that ensures at least a few people checking your page and products out.”*

Another entrepreneur (SME 29), shared:-

*“...as far as promotion is concerned, social media platforms have a special feature where they let you sponsor your posts, the post with the most engagement is usually used as an ad for your page, it really helps with enhancing customer reach and also eventually engagement.”*

Social media assists businesses in carrying out marketing and promotional activities. Every like, save, comment, helps the post to gather engagement and reach more audience. An entrepreneur (SME 06), shared:-

*“Social media marketing has made it very easy for me to grow my audience, social media platforms provide features that can really elevate a business’ reach and growth, one can also pay influencers to post stories and paid content; this, personally has helped me a lot with gaining customers.”*

SME 10, shared:-

*“...one can pay a small amount of money depending on what social media platform you use and sponsor your page, stories, reels and posts, as either stories or posts and it puts you on people’s feeds and stories, making you visible to many more people than before. The features such as these make social media marketing very helpful.”*

Responses revealed that social media marketing not only helps in acquiring new customers and reaching more audience but also helps in reaching the target audience. Social media marketing targets the right, most suitable audience for a business, making it easier for the business to acquire new customers who would actually be interested in the business. An entrepreneur (SME 04), shared:-

*“So, what happens is, social media basically keeps track of your searches and interests and customizes the ads for you, so when a customer sees a particular post and engages with it, they*

*get more ads of that brand or similar ads of similar brands making bringing in effect the target social media marketing, this enhances the chances of businesses to get seen and recognized.”*

Another entrepreneur (SME 17), shared:-

*“Social media lets you target your preferred audience by specifically targeting the ones who have previously shown interest in your or a similar business or product, once someone has visited a certain page, they keep getting sponsored ads from them and more often than not, a customer does end up going back on the page, following it, maybe liking a few posts, receiving regular story updates and eventually buying something from the page.”*

The findings suggest that social media assists businesses in finding their target audience, acquiring new customers and connecting with their clientele.

#### **4.2.1.4. Instagram- a platform for building clientele**

The findings of the study also show that most of the new age entrepreneurs tend to prefer Instagram over Facebook as the primary platform for running their businesses. The analysis reveals that Facebook is being considered as a redundant platform especially by the younger entrepreneurs, and Instagram is considered to be the easier, more viable option. A respondent (SME 14), shared:-

*“I prefer Instagram, I have always received more responses on Instagram. I do have a page for my business on Facebook as well but I have never been approached there, whereas On Instagram, I started getting orders in the very first few days of launching my business.”*

Another respondent (SME 01), shared:-

*“When I started my business, I made a business account on both Instagram and Facebook, while my Facebook page hardly has three or five likes, my Instagram page not only has way more followers but I also regularly get orders and the page and the business is thriving on Instagram. Another factor could be the fact that Facebook has users who are older than us and my target audience is the youth and young girls and most of them are on Instagram.”*

Another respondent (SME 27), shared:-

*“I only launched my business on Instagram, I do not even have a business account of Facebook because most of its users are the older generations and they are not my target audience. Plus, it is easier to scroll through and instagram page to look for something than it is to scroll facebook.”*

While all the social media platforms can be used to conduct marketing activities, entrepreneurs seemed to prefer Instagram over other social media platforms, be it for running their businesses or for marketing due to the presence of most of their target audience on that platform. Instagram allows its users to easily surf through the platform and get information and various details regarding products and businesses; this aids social media businesses in attracting and gaining customers. Social media marketing specifically Instagram marketing makes it easier for business accounts to boost their most popular or most liked posts or reels, the platform also runs sponsored ads for businesses to help them in achieving higher audience reach and engagement. A respondent (SME 25) while talking about Instagram and its marketing features stated:-

*“...word-of-mouth marketing, influencer marketing, boosting the most engaged with post, all these features of Instagram have made it very easy for me to market my business. I only have a business account on Instagram, due to these very reasons; it facilitates better audience reach and successful marketing activities and campaigns.”*

Narrating her experience of working on Instagram, a respondent (SME 18), shared:-

*“Instagram, in my experience has been the most helpful social media platform, it is easier to use, easier to put out necessary information on, and most definitely helps with carrying out marketing activities. Instagram offers various features that help in marketing and advertising my business and enhance my reach, I use stories, highlights, as well as sponsored posts/ads and boost my most liked reel or post to attract more customers. What this does is, it puts the selected post on people’s timelines with a link that takes them directly to my business’ page and creates awareness about my page.”*

Most of social media, especially Instagram is a visual medium and requires businesses to put up pictures, videos and reels of their products for the potential customers to find the page attractive. While discussing the benefits of using social media and specifically Instagram, a respondent (SME 07) shared:-

*“...especially Instagram, it is very visual, it mostly depends on visuals and pictures and even aesthetics of what you post. With the introduction of reels now, it has become even more of a visual medium; this tends to increase the reach of the posts and more people get attracted to the feed, if the customers see visually appealing posts of your products, I think, in my experience, they tend to make more purchases.”*

The findings of the study suggest that social media provides entrepreneurs with an opportunity to showcase their talents, setup their ventures and actualize their entrepreneurial opportunities in the most efficient way. Social media provides an outlet for the entrepreneurs to take risks and build a community of customers.

#### 4.2.2. Juggling with the (mis)trust matters in social media business

Category	Themes	Codes
Juggling with the (mis)trust matters in social media business	The persistent chance Online scams	Scams with customers
		Scams with sellers
	Disadvantages of anonymity on social media	Customer concerns and doubts
		Lack of face-to-face interaction
	Customer trust	Trustful relationship with the seller
		Lack of trust on the platform

Table 1.2 b

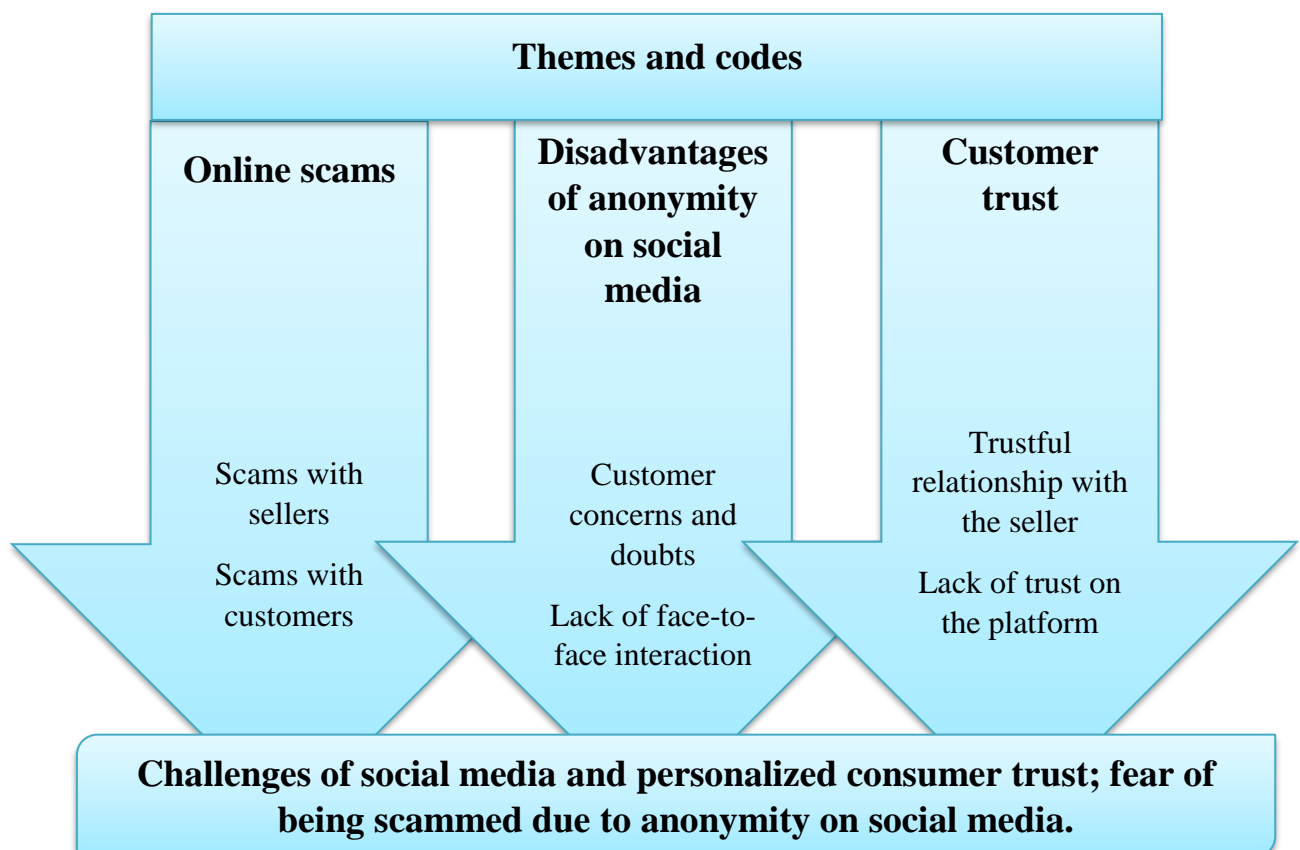
Social media entrepreneurs were also very vocal and open about the challenges they have had to face while running their businesses and their negative experiences of using social media as their primary source of business execution. The responses reveal that social media entrepreneurs and their social media businesses sometimes have to face a few challenges that conventional businesses may usually not.

##### 4.2.2.1. Online scams

Many a times, social media businesses face the a very common and a very genuine issue of either being called a scammer or being scammed by fake customers. While getting the customers to trust a business is a task and a challenge, trust goes both ways and sometimes, entrepreneurs also get scammed. An entrepreneur (SME 17) who runs a business of imported jewellery and bags shared:-

*“I have had a few customers who would order and then at the time of delivery would either have their cell phones switched off or refused to accept the order and pay, once a customer*

*even gave me the wrong address, when such things happen, I have to bear the loss and it becomes very inconvenient for me. A lot of the times, riders call me and tell me that the customer has refused to pay or accept the order or that they are not available. After a while, I realized this is going to happen and now I expect at least three to five parcel returns every month, but it still causes inconvenience is definitely one of the challenges of running a social media business.”*



*Figure 1.3. Category 2.*

An entrepreneur (SME 28), who makes filters for social media websites shared:-

*“...some customers, after asking for specific filters, refused to pay for them after receiving the link of the filter because they said they did not like it, even though, I repeatedly ask my customers about their preferences and send them filters to try before sending them the final link and these customers show satisfaction and contentment over the quality, only then do I finalise a filter and ask for my payment.”*

Scams happen to the customers as well, especially when shopping online, this, according to the respondents adds to the customers' lack of trust or even in some cases, affects their buying intention. An entrepreneur (SME 03), stated:-

*"...this one factor of social media business, I would say, is specifically challenging, especially for a new business, a lot of the customers have faced online scams where they received a really bad quality product, or they paid online and never received a product or were sent a fake product and then the business never responded to their complaints, things like these make it difficult for everyone involved."*

Online scams not only make it difficult for the customers to trust businesses but also cause the businesses losses that impact their businesses negatively and shake the entrepreneurs trust in terms of running a business on social media.

#### **4.2.2.2. Disadvantages of anonymity on social media**

Online businesses, especially businesses that run their show solely on social media can sometimes face an issue with their customers' lack of trust in their authenticity. The analysis shows that specifically new businesses often get accused of either being a fraud page or have to deal with their customers' doubts regarding the quality of their products, services or the material of the products sold by them.

Anonymity on social media causes trust issues and challenges for both the parties, be it the customers or entrepreneurs, however, it is the entrepreneurs that have to face losses and even lesser sales if the trust issues prevail.

As per the point of view of one of the respondents (SME 11):-

*"...the problem is, that since no one knows who is operating an account, it has become easier for people to commit fraud and then delete their account, however, entrepreneurs and businesses still have to suffer the loss, even customers can be sent wrong items and then fraudulent businesses stop responding to their messages, this makes it hard for everyone to put their trust in social media transactions."*

An entrepreneur (SME 07), shared:-

*"Lack of face-to-face interaction, anonymity, not being able to directly see the material of the product, or the colour etc., all of this makes it harder for some customers to believe in the genuineness of the business and the seller. Also raises concerns regarding the product, the*

*seller, if what they order and receive will be the same product, whether they would be sent a fake or a very low-quality product, will it be worth their money etc.”*

#### **4.2.2.3. Customer trust**

While shopping from a social media business, customers' doubts and trust issues also get triggered when they have to choose a payment method. As per Yoon (2002), consumer trust in the online arena differs from their offline trust in three ways. Firstly, in the online world, there is a huge disconnect and distance between the customers and the entrepreneurs; secondly, there is no salesperson in the online dimension, and lastly, there is a lack of physical contact and face-to-face interaction between the buyer and the product as well as the entrepreneur, so trusting automatically becomes a challenge. While discussing the challenges of running a social media business and dealing customers' concerns and lack of trust on social media businesses, a respondent (SME 08) stated:-

*“...so when it comes to the taste of my cakes and baked items, I often get messages from my customers asking if the food will be tasty and made fresh, since they can only see pictures of my food, they think maybe my food only looks good and does not taste that great, some people do express their concerns regarding the taste and the quantity of the food.”*

Kusumah (2015), claims that quality can also be taken as one of the most important factors that a business' competitive advantage depends on. An entrepreneur (SME 20), who runs a business of accessories shared:-

*“Customers often have doubts about the quality of the stuff I sell, or the actual colour. Some even ask if I will deliver the exact same thing that they have ordered or if the quality of my product will be poor as compared to what they saw and ordered on the page. New customers have concerns over the price range, the quality and even bank transfer as a payment method.”*

Payment methods, delivery charges, and delivery timings also tend to make some customers doubt the authenticity of the business, they also have concerns over the honesty of the business owners as well as the delivery personnel. Narrating her experience, a respondent (SME 06), shared:-

*“When it comes to having trust issues, customers have also voiced their concerns over the delivery charges, some people have accused me of telling them a higher rate for delivery or have asked me to forego the delivery charges as they are first time buyers.”*

SME 23 shared:-

*“Customers can sometimes be difficult with prices and delivery charges, they doubt the actual price of the product as well as the actual rate of delivery charges, then some do not want to make an advance payment and cancel their orders because initially, I had not offered cash on delivery and that made me lose potential customers.”*

Another respondent (SME 31) stated:-

*“When I used to tell customers that I only offered money transfer and advance payments as payment method, a lot of the customers used to refuse to pay for their orders because they did not trust my business and my products. People have had experiences of being scammed by online businesses before and many customers wanted to steer clear of taking any risks with a new business like mine.”*

Entrepreneurs do however state, that once customers have had their positive experiences with their business, they begin to trust the seller and begin to become loyal to the business and seller. In other words, customers place their trust in the person behind the business and not the platform. The platform itself still breeds doubts and trust issues, but once the customers have had a good experience or a good interaction with the social media entrepreneur running the business, they begin to have lesser doubts.

#### **4.2.3. Taking steps that assist in customer retention.**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Codes</b>
Taking steps that assist in customer retention	Employing customer retention strategies	Information via highlights on Instagram
		Prioritizing audience engagement
	Employing efficient customer services	Order and delivery update
		Active response to customer queries/complaints
	Social media- a competitive platform	Maintaining competitive advantage



		Quality control
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Table 1.2 c

While gaining customers is a difficult task, retaining them while simultaneously trying to attract and gain more customers is even more challenging. Retaining customers and building a loyal customer base is one of the main goals for any brand or business.

#### 4.2.3.1. Employing customer retention strategies

For social media businesses, retaining a customer can a little bit more challenging than for a conventional business, reason being that there are a lot of social media businesses that deal in the same products, making it easier for the customers to switch to other businesses to get the best, more suitable price deal on the same product. With such cutthroat competition, social media entrepreneurs try to take a few necessary steps that can help them in retaining customers while they also try to gain new ones. These steps range from keeping their business pages active, looking visually attractive to constantly putting up new offers, bringing in or launching new products, coming up with various attractive deals, to posting feedbacks and reviews to personally taking time out to answer their customers' queries and guiding them or helping them etc. A respondent, (SME 08), shared:-

*"I try to post as many stories as I can, regarding the products, the new launches, prices, any other updates to keep the customers engaged and informed. I also have all this information saved in the highlights section of my page to provide the customer an easy access to all of it."*

SME 12, shared:-

*"Posting regularly, whether it is on the feed or on stories and having a well-sorted highlights section for the customers really does make a difference, it not only saves the customers' time but also keeps them engaged with our business page and helps I retaining customers."*

Another respondent (SME 34) who sells custom made clothes shared:-

*"I think one has to keep the page active, I try to keep up with the posting, I plan ahead of time to ensure that I have content that is scheduled to be regularly posted. When customers see that a page does not have recent posts, customers tend to start losing interest as they forget about the business, in order to keep my customers, I have to put up posts and stories every day. This keeps my page on their timeline helping me in enhancing my reach as well."*

#### 4.2.3.2. Employing efficient customer services

Respondents also suggested that posting feedbacks and reviews on the business' account can also be very helpful for businesses. Viewing feedback of other customers can really encourage potential customers or followers of the account to buy from a business and give their products a try. The analysis shows that seeing positive and honest reviews from bloggers, influencers and especially other customers boosts customers' confidence in the business. A respondent (SME 04) while talking about the steps to retain customers stated:-

*“Posting highlights can really help the customer in accessing all the important information about the business and the products as well as the reviews of other customers. I post all the feedbacks, reviews, even price list and the products on the highlights on my Instagram page. It makes it very convenient for both me and my customers to get all the information they need, and if there is anything else that they need to know, I always remain available to answer their questions in the DMs.”*

While posting feedbacks can help, a business' page should not only consist of feedbacks and reviews, instead, the feed should look attractive and should contain other important information regarding the brand and the products. SME 09, stated:-

*“...feedbacks and reviews can most definitely help in gaining customer trust; however, one should not only have feedbacks and reviews on the page. The page should have other posts related to products and packaging etc., as well. The feedbacks should be posted sparingly and should be kept in a separate highlight and every now and then on stories.”*

When a customer knows they can count on the entrepreneur, it becomes easier for the business to retain customers. Keeping them updated on the status of their orders, sharing packaging reels, being available to help and dealing with them respectfully and with humility goes a long way. A respondent (SME 12) shared:-

*“I make and post reels of packing orders, this keeps the customers interested and also gives them a peak into the behind the scenes of things. A few customers even request to have their orders filmed being packed. I also update my customers about the status of their orders, I tell them when I send it to the delivery company then also when it is out for delivery they get a message, I think keeping them in the loop has gained me a few bonus points from my customers.”*

Another respondent (SME 16), who owns a skincare business stated:-

*“I like to post stories of the products being made or being packaged. This keeps things real and customers like to see the behind the scenes of running a skincare business. I show them the products in the raw form and then also when they are being put into their containers, I also show them the textures of all the products separately. In my opinion, when customers see the behind the scenes, it helps them in relating with the entrepreneur and probably helps in building their trust. Once they like you and your business, they become loyal to you. These videos ad posts also keep my feed aesthetically pleasing for the old as well as for the new customers.”*

#### **4.2.3.3. Social media- a competitive platform**

In order to keep the customers loyal to the business, entrepreneurs have to fully commit to the business and to their social media page, as, the moment it seems like the page is inactive, the customers either forget it, assume the entrepreneur has shut the business down or find another substitute for the products rendering it to be a loss for the business in terms of customer base as well as financial loss. Keeping your customers engaged and interested in the business is vital under any circumstances. A respondent (SME 24), who sells jewellery items shared:-

*“I have to keep getting newer, more unique pieces to keep my customers loyal to my business, I also try to offer a sale every now and then or put up a deal on my stories to keep the customers interested. Sometimes, I inform my customers beforehand about the new stock that I will be getting, by doing this, I get more orders as a few of my customers place orders in advance. This not only keeps my old customers interested, but also garners attention from a few new ones.”*

An entrepreneur, (SME 31), shared--

*“Social media, for businesses can be a little competitive, a customer can very easily switch between business, to prevent that from happening, I try to keep up with the trends, and find unique and newer pieces to sell, knowing your unique selling point and providing good quality products also helps.”*

An entrepreneur (SME 15), stated:-

*“I have come to realise that if an entrepreneur wants to make their business successful, it is a must that they keep their account very, very active, make sure you post engaging content regularly and post on stories, save your highlights, put up necessary information, answer your*

*DMs in a timely manner, a customer should never be let to have an impression that a business page is unreliable or inactive, that will make you lose customers.”*

An entrepreneur, SME 18, shared:-

*“Quality matters a lot. Especially when there is already a lack of trust, scams and competition, providing really high-quality products to the customers and maintaining the same quality is necessary for the success of the business and for earning customers’ trust and profits.”*

Earning customer trust and building a loyal customer base takes time, patience and the application of the right, most suitable practices according to the medium the business is being run on.

SME 35, noted:-

*“...running a social media business requires a lot of patience, humility and time. A lot of learning goes into creating a successful social media business, choosing the right influencers to market and advertise your products, planning your posts ahead of time, planning your new launches ahead of time and not rushing the process is very important.”*

Sharing some helpful tips, SME 23, stated:-

*“I have learnt to plan my launches, my posts, edit my posts on time and be very consistent with creating and posting content for this business. Consistency and honesty are the key elements of gaining customers’ trust as well as building a loyal customer base. Providing quality and value for the customers’ time and money along with knowing the right marketing tactics are also essential and play a significant role in establishing customer trust and gaining success.”*

Carrying out the most suitable marketing activities and using the useful features of social media to their full potential can really make a significant difference in how a social media business is perceived by the customers, it also affects the business’ success. In order to run a successful social media business, an entrepreneur must commit to the business and its social media account, updating the inventory, the availability and non-availability of items, and planning posts and launches ahead of time. According to the findings of this study, implementing these practices allows a social media business to grow, reach a wider audience and build a connection with the customers, eventually leading to a larger and a loyal customer base contributing towards the success of the business.

Themes and codes				
<b>Employing customer retention strategies</b>		<b>Employing efficient customer services</b>		<b>Social media- a competitive platform</b>

*Figure 1.3. Category 3.*

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

#### **5. Introduction**

This chapter constitutes of a detailed discussion of the findings in light of the objectives of the study. The findings acquired from the obtained data are explained in this chapter in relation to the existing literature.

The purpose of this study was to find out the key aspects of social media from social media entrepreneurs' perspective that can potentially influence the functioning, the running and the success of businesses that are solely being run on social media. To ensure accuracy and precise research, two of the most commonly used social media platforms namely Facebook and Instagram were chosen for this study.

To better understand and analyse the data, existing literature regarding the recurring themes of the data was also consulted to ensure efficient analysis of the data acquired. A careful review of the existing, most relevant literature was carried out throughout the study.

During the thematic analysis, the theories used to develop the conceptual framework of this study were also consulted to ensure accuracy within the study. The study loosely shares its concepts with three theories namely, bricolage theory, opportunity-based entrepreneurship theory and user entrepreneurship theory. The generation of codes and the development of themes and the final categories were carried out in the light of and in reference to the conceptual framework of the study. The development of the framework, the development of the themes and categories were all done in correspondence to the objectives of the research, the responses of the participants and the relevant, existing literature.

The objectives of this study include exploring the useful aspects of social media that play a helpful role in successful enactment of entrepreneurial opportunities across various social media platforms, finding out the aspects of social media that pose challenges for entrepreneurs and impact their businesses and finding out the practices that are significant in assisting entrepreneurs in efficient enactment of entrepreneurial opportunities.

### **5.1. Discussion of the findings**

Social media in this day and age, has become one of the most widely used platform. It is not only being used for keeping up with friends and family but also to run businesses and earn. Maares, Banjac & Hanusch (2021), state that social media platforms have created an environment within its virtual confines, that allows users to reach a large number of audience and earn money by putting up certain kinds of content. The responses given by the participants suggest that social media is one of the most useful tools when it comes to marketing a business or exploring an entrepreneurial opportunity. Entrepreneurs indicated that social media helped them in actualizing entrepreneurial opportunities and acted as an entry point for them into the world of entrepreneurship. The theory of opportunity-based entrepreneurship relates to this concept as the entrepreneurs participating in this study recognized an opportunity and decided to avail it by starting their own ventures. The theory of opportunity-based entrepreneurship refers to the kind of entrepreneurship that stems from an entrepreneur finding an opportunity, she/he then decides to use it and take advantage of it to its full potential (He, Nazari, Zhang & Cai, 2020). Entrepreneurs involved in this study shared that they realized there was either a market gap or that there was an opportunity of earning and succeeding in a certain market or

that they can utilize and commercialize their talents and interests; social media also provided them with an opportunity of using the platform as a virtual outlet for conducting their businesses.

When asked about the most useful characteristics of social media in their opinion, entrepreneurs identified a number of things that they think are the most helpful aspects in terms of running a business. Social media marketing and the audience reach that can be achieved through social media, was the most common answer. Nummila (2015), claims that social media has emerged as one of the key outlets that can be used for the purpose of reaching customers, it has generated an environment of opportunities for businesses to carry out meaningful communication with their customers and create awareness; using social media platforms has become the fast, most efficient way of increasing a business' audience reach. There are many useful marketing features available on social media platforms that assist in carrying out successful marketing activities for businesses especially social media businesses; they aid in promoting the business and boosting the business account. Many participants were of the view that social media provides a certain convenience to the buyers as well as the sellers, making it one of its most useful characteristics. Some also suggested that since social media is user-friendly and is so frequently and commonly used by everyone that it provides businesses as well as the customers an easy access to whatever they want, therefore broadening the entrepreneurs' horizon by giving them a chance to reach as many people as possible. In addition to reaching a larger number of audience, social media also increases a business' chances of gaining more customers, and creating awareness about the brand, the products and the business.

The responses indicate that social media also gives an entrepreneur the freedom of working from home, working on one's own terms, have flexible hours as well as showcase one's talent, pursue one's interests. Entrepreneurs shared that social media has provided them with the opportunity to convert their interests into a business. Many of the participants narrating their stories shared, the reason how and why they started their social media businesses was because they realized the products, they wanted to use were unavailable in any market, and this made them want to not only get those products for themselves but also be able to provide them for others. The concept of user entrepreneurship relates to the experiences of these entrepreneurs. The concept narrates that the act of commercializing a product, service by someone who also seems to have the same interests and a user of the product is known as user entrepreneurship (Shah & Tripsas, 2007).

Entrepreneurs who participated in this study were of the view that working from home, running a business on social media gives them time to schedule their posting timings, it saves their money and time. Talking about how social media saves money, participants noted that setting up a social media does not require a lot of financial resources, which is very beneficial for entrepreneurs. Social media allows aspiring entrepreneurs to pursue their entrepreneurial opportunities and actualize them even if they do not have a large number of financial resources.

Some of the participants shared that social media gave them a platform to create a nascent market for themselves, allowing them to use social media as their own office and launching a business especially when there was no other outlet to be approached for this purpose. Social media entrepreneurship in itself is a growth of a relatively new market and relates to the concept of bricolage. The bricolage theory in terms of entrepreneurship revolves around the concept of the actions taken by entrepreneurs that result in the creation of new ventures and even markets out of nothing (Baker & Nelson, 2005).

Social media platforms offer a number of marketing features that help in promoting a business and boosting the reach of a business account. Basri & Siam (2017), signify that in the last few years social media has become an opportunity providing outlet or a platform for businesses and entrepreneurs; to be used for advertising, marketing, promoting businesses, creating brand awareness, giving information about the products, services and the businesses to the customers and general social media audience. The entrepreneurs participating in the study were asked about the contributions of social media in the promotion and success of their business, to which they listed a few features of social media platforms that play a very significant role in marketing and promoting their businesses. Social media offers a variety of marketing features that can be used by entrepreneurs to boost their business accounts. Using social media gives entrepreneurs a chance to reach a wider audience and target a larger number of potential customers. A higher customer reach also ensures a better customer engagement. Van Doorn, Lemon, Mittal, Nass, Pick, Pirner & Verhoef (2010), define customer engagement as the behavioural showing up of customers for a business or a brand or a firm, it is more than just about purchasing, it results from various motivations and reasons such as marketing activities, recommendations, word-of-mouth marketing, reviews, feedbacks and from helping other customers. In other words, when customers show up for a business, not just to buy something but to support the business and enhance their growth. Nummila (2015), describes engagement as the likes, comments, share and reshares, between social media profiles and accounts; the act of following a profile, or liking, commenting or sharing a post of another



account. Vivek (2009), notes that the most vital element of achieving higher customer engagement is to exchange knowledge, create awareness, increase communication, as communication and information technologies now provide businesses a huge opportunity to have an exchange of knowledge, engage and communicate with the customers. Marketing activities carried out via social media tend to create a bigger market for the businesses and create more awareness regarding the business. Sponsored ads on social media platforms allows the businesses to boost their audience reach, garner more attention and attract more customers.

Participants of the study, revealed that since social media offers convenience and, in this day and age, used by almost everyone, the probability for social media businesses of gaining more customers and reaching a larger number of audience is greater as compared to the conventional businesses. A larger group of audience viewing content entails a larger number of audience engaging with content and ultimately forming a connection with the business and helping in the business' growth. Farook & Abeysekara (2016), claim that customer engagement can also be described as an emotional connection between a business and the customers; it focuses on the interaction and the relationship between them as well as the participation of the customers.

Since, only two social media platforms i.e., Instagram and Facebook were chosen to be researched upon in this study, the participants were asked to share their experiences with both the social media platforms and which platform in their experience proved to be the most helpful. The responses revealed that most of the new age entrepreneurs prefer Instagram over Facebook. According to the findings, Latiff & Safiee (2015), note that Instagram is the most useful social media platform currently for aspiring entrepreneurs to start their ventures and gauge the market. Participants claimed that most of their business happens on Instagram, they get more responses, have more followers that engage with their business page and get more orders on Instagram. According to the participants, Instagram has a more user-friendly interface, making it more commonly used platform as compared to Facebook, at least by the youth. Instagram has a large number of users who are teenagers or in their youth, this makes it easier for the entrepreneurs to get the right target audience, making Instagram a favourable social media platform for business (Latiff & Safiee, 2015). This finding was corroborated by the participants of this study, as the claimed that Instagram has a younger audience which makes it more convenient for the entrepreneurs to reach their target audience.

The features of Instagram that prove to be helpful in promoting a business include the highlight feature, Instagram stories, pinned posts, sponsored posts, sharing of stories and posts. Nummila (2015), iterates that Instagram is a social media platform that relies on the sharing and posting of visual content, it focuses on taking and posting of pictures and visuals. In order to achieve a higher reach and engagement on their posts, entrepreneurs have to keep their pages visually attractive and keep their feeds pleasant looking in order to make a potential customer want to look at their page, their product and like what they see. All these features enhance the engagement of the business account, making it easier for the business to reach a larger audience and get more orders and build a loyal customer base. The highlights section can be used to post price lists, a list of products available, reviews and feedbacks from other customers, important announcements about the business, any other important information that can be helpful for the customers and the business. Instagram stories can also be used share reviews, important announcements, launch of new products or just to keep audience engaged with the account. Since, Instagram completely relies on visuals, it allows businesses to market and promote their products in a new, more interesting manner (Nummila, 2015). Social media in general and Instagram in particular play a significant role in marketing a business and creating awareness about it, making it one of the most widely used platforms for launching businesses. Influencer marketing, which is also carried out via social media gives businesses a significant boost, if done right. Influencers can be sent PR packages and asked to give their feedback or review or give the business a shoutout on their Instagram handle, this practice usually earns businesses a significant amount of followers, new customers and orders for the same products.

Using social media for enacting and actualizing entrepreneurial opportunities also has its own set of challenges. One of the biggest challenges on social media is the lack of trust due to anonymity. Participants revealed that they have had to face a number of difficulties due to the lack of customers' trust on the business especially in the initial stage of the launch. Customers tend to have a general distrust when it comes to shopping online, making it harder for businesses to sometimes convince the customers of the authenticity of their products and businesses. Tan & Guo (2005), note that in general, customers perceive the internet to be a place of chaos, this includes social media as well. Due to a lack of face-to-face interaction with the seller and the products, customers are bound to have doubts and concerns over the quality of the products being sold and the honesty of the seller running the business page. Koufaris & Hampton-Sosa (2002), signify that due to the lack of face-to-face interaction on the social

media and the nature of the virtual world and a web store, building customer trust and creating an environment of faith can be very difficult.

Entrepreneurs signify that since social media offers pictures and videos to the customers, the lighting or the angles from the pictures of the products are taken can also make a difference and can cause doubts in the minds of the customers. Qureshi, Fang, Ramsey, McCole, Ibbotson, & Compeau (2009), note that as per the findings of various studies, consumer trust can be termed as the most significant and important factor when it comes to the enabling of e-commerce and the success of an online business. Participants while narrating their experiences shared that a lot of the times, the stuff or material of the product, the quality, the colour or the size of the product can be misrepresented due to the lighting, angles or filters on social media, resulting in more trust issues and doubts in the customers' minds. These doubts can sometimes cause customers to back out of buying online or even sharing their doubts with other potential customers and ruining the business' image.

Another challenge faced by social media entrepreneurs is the issue of delivery charges and payment methods. Most customers tend to prefer cash on delivery over advance payment or bank transfer. Owing to the unpredictability and anonymity of the people on social media, customers do not always readily place their trust in the business or the entrepreneur, which can make it harder for some businesses to deal with some customers. Grabner-Kraeuter (2002), note that since, transactions that occur online are usually not simultaneous and do not occur instantly, the presence of a disconnect between the customers and entrepreneurs is very likely and common. Where on one hand, customers do not trust many online or social media businesses due to multiple scams that have been reported or they have personally experienced, sometimes, businesses also get scammed by fraudulent customers. Lack of trust goes both ways in this case, many social media entrepreneurs also get scammed by social media account holders pretending to be customers. The participants of this study revealed that sometimes, even real customers refuse to accept their parcel or become unavailable due to which, the businesses have to bear the loss and give double the amount of delivery charges. Parcel returns also affect the way businesses see their customers and is one of the many causes of lack of seller's trust on the customers.

In the recent times, many new businesses have been launched on social media, this has made it a very competitive market and for some markets a crowded one too. With so many businesses with similar products and services, it can very easily become difficult for social

media entrepreneurs to keep their businesses different from the competitors and build a loyal customer base. So many similar businesses make it easier for customers to switch from one to another and compare the quality, prices and the general pros and cons of buying from various social media businesses. While this can be beneficial for customers, that is not the case for the businesses. The responses suggest that the competition makes it a little difficult sometimes to survive in the market and also requires the social media businesses to continuously reinvent and introduce new products, better quality and interesting offers to keep their customers from switching to another competitor. Building a relationship and a connection with the customers via the business account helps in creating a loyal customer base, establishing stronger word-of-mouth promotion of the business, which aids in the growth of the customer base furthermore (Nummila,2015).

Certain social media practices as claimed by the participants of this study, can really help entrepreneurs in building a loyal customer base, creating a trustworthy image of the business, enhancing their audience reach and getting more engagement on their business account. Entrepreneurs suggest that keeping the business page active at all times and providing the customers with regular content can really help in convincing the customers of the authenticity of the business. Rouhiainen (2015), suggests that in order for instagram marketing to be successful, a business should make a point to be active on the platform, regularly post engaging content, follow interesting, influential people, leave comments, do polls and question sessions, and build a connection with customers and influencers who are a part of that business community. Keeping the customers up to date regarding the status of their orders, and the availability or the non-availability of products allows the customers to see the honesty and commitment of the entrepreneur running the business. Assuring the customers and remaining available to answer and attend to their queries aids in creating an understanding between the seller and the customer, setting a base for customer loyalty. Customers nowadays rely on social media platforms to get information regarding new products and/or services, they also share their experiences, give reviews and feedbacks regarding brands, products etc., and they also very likely to turn to social media platforms to look for the other customers' reviews and feedbacks before they decide to buy from a business (Nummila, 2015).

Being honest to the customers about the quality and characteristics of the products and items as well as being upfront about the charges is also helpful in building trust. Ganguly, Dash, Cyr & Head (2010), suggest that in order for an online or a social media business to be successful, the business must work towards earning consumer trust and build a deep

understanding of how to build trust and what effect it can have on the customers' purchase intentions from a social media business. Respondents further signified the importance of being consistent and remaining committed to the business. Consistency in working hard towards building the business and acquiring customers and their trust, honesty and commitment towards the social media business and taking full advantage of all the useful social media tools ensures successful actualization of entrepreneurial opportunities and builds a loyal customer base, which further grows the business. Choosing the right influencers to market and advertise the business, and finding the right target audience is crucial for the growth of the business.

Since, most of the social media especially Instagram is a visual medium, it is imperative for social media entrepreneurs to keep their business pages visually pleasing and attractive, this helps in attracting more potential customers and keeping the already existing followers and customers interested in the business as well as enhances engagement of the page.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion**

This chapter constitutes of the conclusion of the study based on the previous two chapters of findings and discussion.

The study aimed to find out the contributions including the usefulness as well as the challenges of using social media for the actualization of entrepreneurial opportunities. The study found out that social media like any other outlet, has its advantages as well as challenges.

Social media helps entrepreneurs in reaching the right target audience, exploring and then actualizing the dream entrepreneurial opportunity. Since, social media has no geographical barriers, businesses run on social media do have an advantage of being available to a wider range of audience and attracting customers from various geographical areas, enhancing the reach and engagement of the business. While social media allows entrepreneurs to garner more attention and acquire a larger number of followers and potential customers, it also comes with its own set of challenges. Consumer trust and loyalty is a big obstacle for any social media entrepreneur and acquiring customers requires earning their trust and creating a loyal customer base, both these things a big challenge. However, entrepreneurs have found ways of marketing their businesses and creating a loyal customer base by being honest, using all the advantageous features social media platforms have to offer and by learning the rules, dos and don'ts of running social media businesses.

The study concludes that social media paves way for aspiring entrepreneurs to find their entrepreneurial opportunities and actualize them via social media platforms, giving them access to a variety of marketing features, a larger number of audience to target and many other advantageous features that facilitate growth, success while also making it possible for entrepreneurs to learn, make mistakes and find better ways of running their businesses on social media along the way. While all of this is true, social media platforms, also, like any other medium come with their own set of challenges. Gaining consumer trust and creating an environment of safety and honesty can be hard when dealing with the difficulties of the virtual world. Online scams with customers as well as entrepreneurs and businesses occur very often and are sometimes inevitable. However, social media entrepreneurs can still implement practices that can assist them in gaining their customers' trust and achieving their goals. Establishing customer trust and building a loyal customer base can ensure a social media business' success and growth. Carrying out social media marketing activities and remaining consistent can bring ease for the entrepreneurs and their businesses resulting in consumer trust and a successful social media business.

### **6.1. Limitations and recommendations**

The study, for the purpose of keeping it concise, only focused on two social media platforms i.e., Instagram and Facebook. The study was limited to only studying the contributions of social media platforms in the successful enactment of entrepreneurial opportunities in general. One of the aspects that became the most prominent during the study was social media marketing

and its forms. More studies should be conducted with the purpose of studying the role of social media platforms individually in helping the actualization of entrepreneurial opportunities as well as the various forms of social media marketing and their individual degree of usefulness.

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## APPENDIX

**Respondent Profile *TABLE 1.1:-***

<b>No.</b>	<b>SME #</b>	<b>Venture names</b>	<b>Type of business</b>	<b>No. of years active</b>
1.	SME 01	Treatella	Home-cooked food	4
2.	SME 02	Gigi Statements	Accessories	1
3.	SME 03	Heay Gems	Jewellery items	2.5
4.	SME 04	Chargul	Custom made clothing	3
5.	SME 05	SK Studio	Piercing jewellery	4
6.	SME 06	Mockingjay	Handbags	5
7.	SME 07	Baby Canvas	Canvas painting	4.5

8.	SME 08	Sugar crush	Home-based bakery	3
9.	SME 09	Auralin	Skincare	10 months
10.	SME 10	Trinket Accessories	Accessories	2
11.	SME 11	Bake N Serve	Home-based baked items	3
12.	SME 12	Flare And Fashion	Accessories	2
13.	SME 13	Bubble Love	Personalized balloons and wrappings	2
14.	SME 14	Pearly Pendants	Jewellery items	3.5
15.	SME 15	Sugar beat	Home-based bakery	3
16.	SME 16	Fasana	Clothing	6
17.	SME 17	Nail store by Nailicious	Custom-made clip-on nails	3
18.	SME 18	Lunarya	Accessories	2
19.	SME 19	All Things Mayumi	Jewellery and accessories	2
20.	SME 20	Damsel by Fatima	Jewellery items	2.5
21.	SME 21	Scrunchies.com	Scrunchies	2
22.	SME 22	Embellished accessories	Accessories	3
23.	SME 23	Subtle statements	Accessories	3.5
24.	SME 24	J made Jewellery	Clay jewellery	7 months
25.	SME 25	SK Piercing	Piercing	3
26.	SME 26	Sweet haven	Baked items	3
27.	SME 27	SoArsh Jewels	Jewellery items	5 months
28.	SME 28	Filter de Vie	Filters for snapchat and Instagram	2
29.	SME 29	Mad Batter	Baked items	5
30.	SME 30	Masquerade By NA	Home décor accessories	1.5
31.	SME 31	Bling thing	Jewellery items	4.5 months
32.	SME 32	Made by Anam	Home-based bakery	5.5
33.	SME 33	Hym Bakers	Custom made cakes	5
34.	SME 34	1o3bakershouse	Cakes	6
35.	SME 35	Candle works.co	Candles	2.5

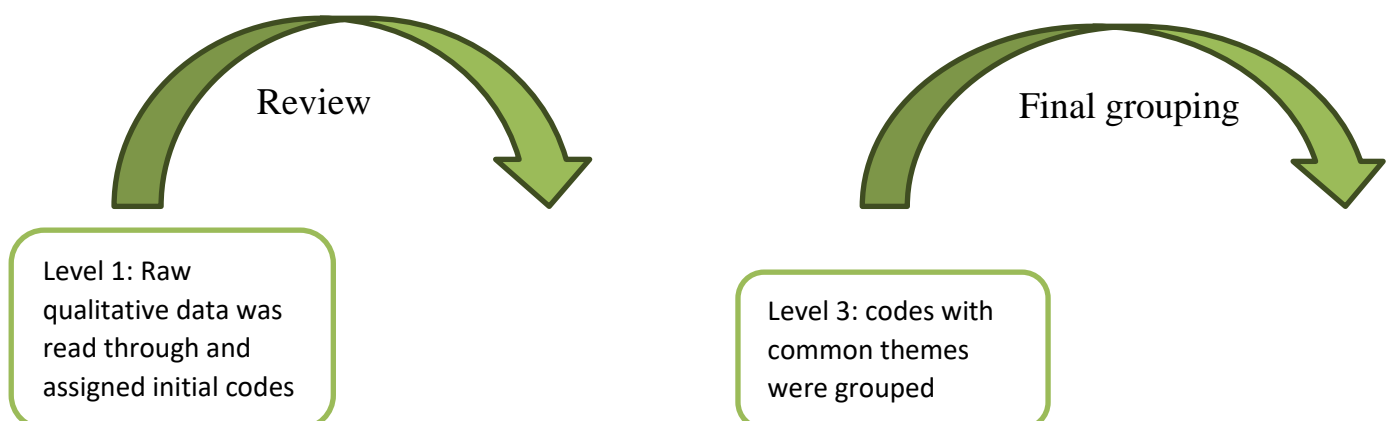
**Category TABLE 1.2:-**

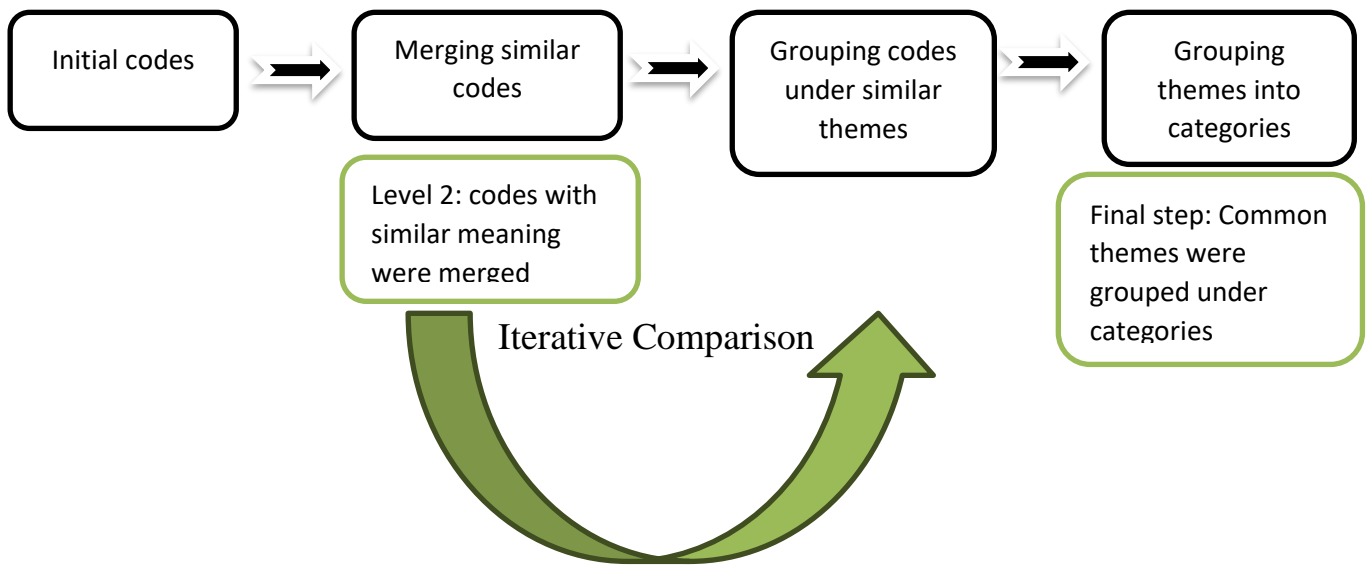
Categories	Themes	Codes
	Advantages of social media platforms for business activities.	User-friendliness of social media
		Ease of working from home

Ease and benefits of social media; social media proving to be helpful in attracting customers especially Instagram in conducting successful marketing activities		Lesser financial resources required
	Reaping the social media platform benefit	Social media as an entry point
		Higher customer reach and engagement
	Higher outreach through social media marketing.	Promotion via social media
		Helpful social media marketing features
		Social media marketing-efficient in reaching the target audience
	Instagram- a platform for building clientele	Visual attraction on Instagram
		Instagram-primary platform for business
		Access to target audience on Instagram
	Challenges of social media and personalized consumer trust; fear of being scammed due to anonymity on social media.	Online scams
Scams with sellers		
Disadvantages of anonymity on social media		Customer concerns and doubts
		Lack of face-to-face interaction
Customer trust		Trustful relationship with the seller
		Lack of trust on the platform
Taking steps that assist in customer retention	Employing customer retention strategies	Information via highlights on Instagram
		Prioritizing audience engagement
		Order and delivery update

	Employing efficient customer services	Active response to customer queries/complaints
	Social media- a competitive platform	Maintaining competitive advantage
		Quality control

**Figure 1.1. Data Analysis Process:-**

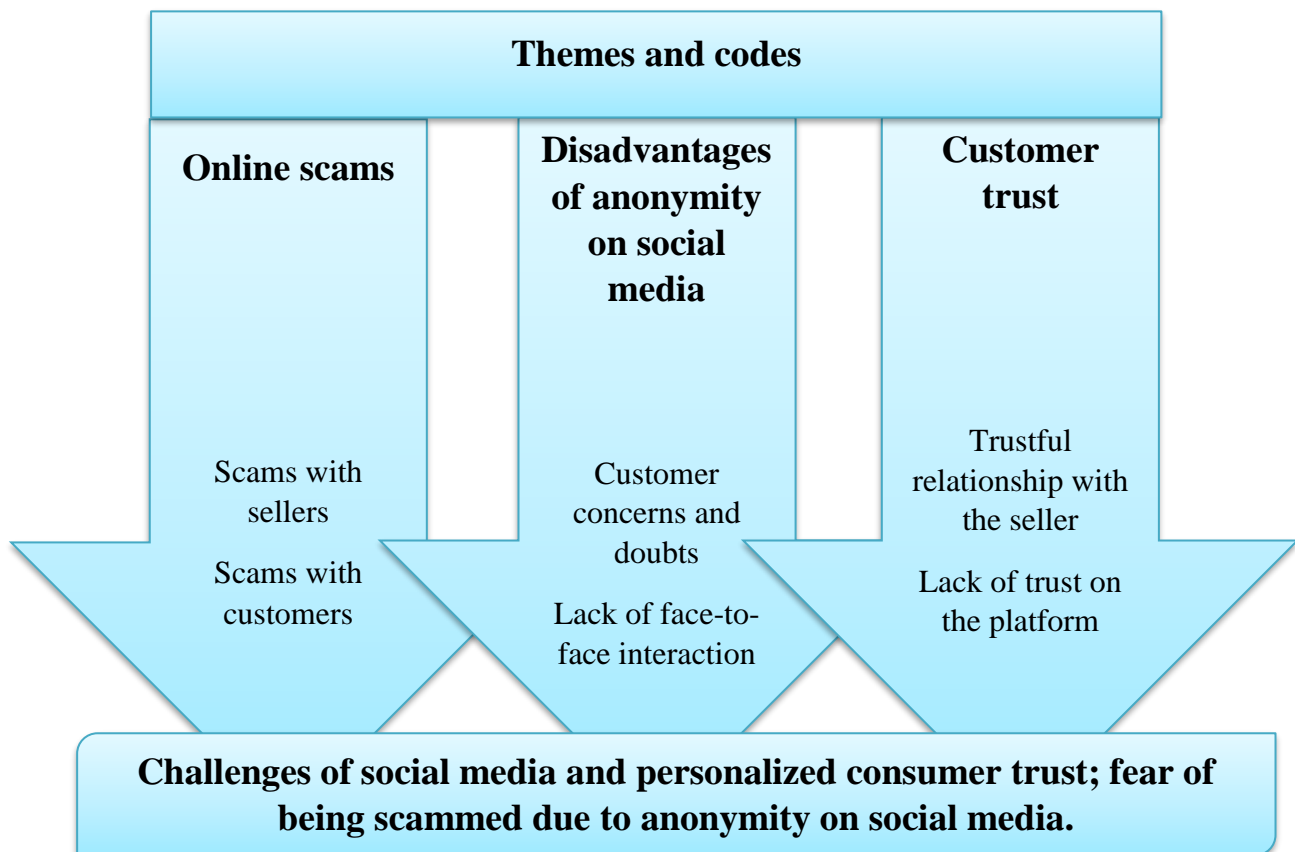




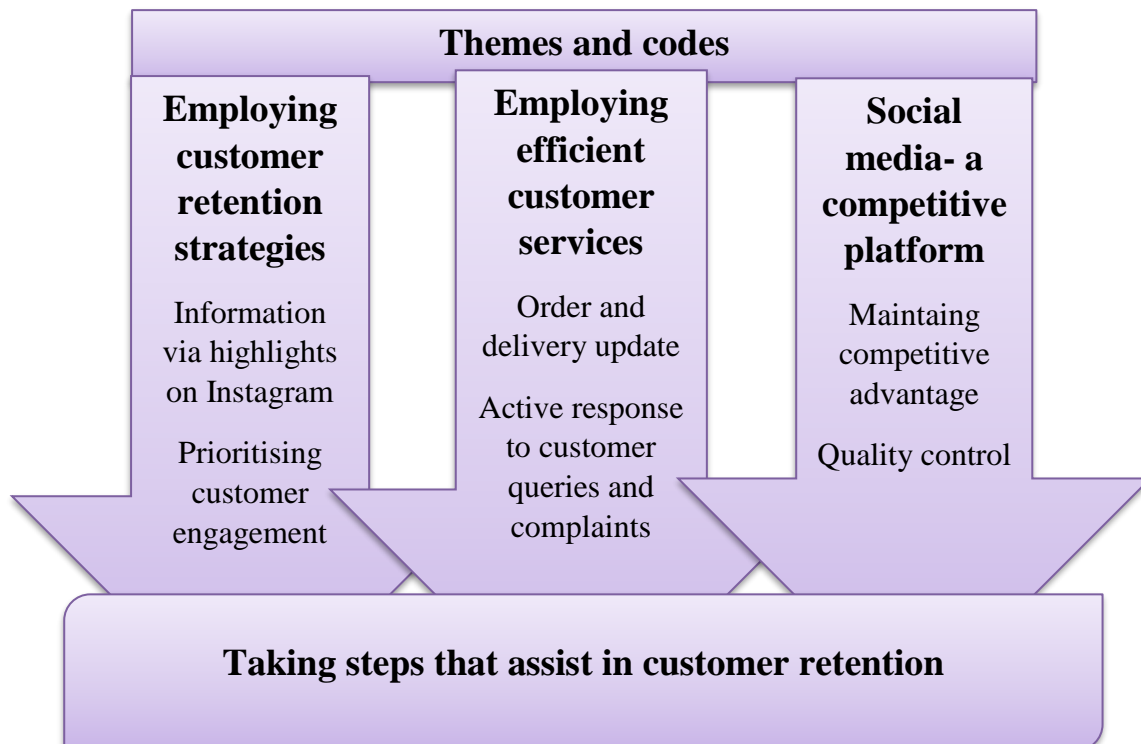
*Figure 1.2. Category 1:-*

Themes and codes			
<p><b>Advantages of social media platforms for business activities.</b></p> <p>User-friendliness of social media</p> <p>Ease of working from home</p> <p>Lesser financial resources required</p>	<p><b>Reaping the social media platform benefit</b></p> <p>Social media as an entry point</p> <p>Higher customer reach and engagement</p>	<p><b>Higher outreach through social media marketing.</b></p> <p>Promotion via social media</p> <p>Helpful social media marketing features</p> <p>Social media marketing-</p>	<p><b>Instagram- a platform for building clientele</b></p> <p>Visual attraction on Instagram</p> <p>Instagram- primary platform for business</p> <p>Access to target</p>

*Figure 1.3. Category 2:-*



*Figure 1.4. Category 3:-*



## Interview Guide

**Date:** Interviewer: **Shanzae Ali** Interview #: \_\_\_\_\_

**Start Time:** **End Time:** \_\_\_\_\_

### **Background?**

- Age:
- Education:
- Business:
- Social media venture name:

Q Tell me how you came upon the market gap and the entrepreneurial opportunity?

Q How did you come upon the decision of starting your own venture?

### **Experience with Social Media Business?**

Q. When did you launch your social media venture?

Q. Describe what attracted you to choose social media?

Probe: What factors or social media's characteristics attracted you the most?

Q. How did you choose the right social media platform to launch your venture?

### **Factors that impact the success or the running of social media business?**

Q. What, according to you are some of the key factors that affect the enactment of EO via social media?

Probe: What would you say are the pros or the advantages of using social media to enact EO?

Prompt: easy marketing, word of mouth, higher audience reach, sponsored ads, ease of working from home.

Probe: Are there any negative aspects of using SM for EO?

Prompt: trust issues, customers' inability to see the product in real life, perceived risk, lack of face-to-face interaction.

### **Role of customers' trust**

Q. Do your potential customers display lack of trust on the quality of your product or any other aspect of your social media venture?

OR

Q. What are the main concerns of the customers that lead them to lack trust?

Probe: payment methods, delivery charges, quality, quantity etc.



**Suggestion/mention of social media strategies or tools that help in enhancing the enactment of entrepreneurial opportunities via social media as well as assist in the success of the venture**

Q. What, in your opinion would be the best tactics/practices that help in successfully launching and running a social media venture?

Q. Is there any particular social media practice or tool that has helped your business?

**General follow-up question**

Would you like to share any additional thoughts regarding social media, entrepreneurial opportunities or the dynamic between them?



## Sample Transcript

### Background

- Age: 22
- Education: BA Literature
- Business: Jewellery items
- Social media venture name: xxxx-xxxx (SME 03).

Q. Tell me how you came upon the market gap and the entrepreneurial opportunity?

SME: Umm, so, I was always interested in owning my own business. I am a big fan of western chic jewellery and to be honest, I could only find traditional jewellery in stores and then, I realised there were hardly any sellers or market that sell that, so, I decided to get myself the jewellery from daraz or get them imported.

Q. How did you come upon the decision of starting your own venture?

SME: Huh, so, once, I started getting my own Jewellery, I realised I can also make this into a business. I thought, this could be a good opportunity of earning and maybe also eventually owning my own business. This is how I started my jewellery business.

### Experience with Social Media Business?

Q. When did you launch your social media venture?

SME: I launched it in 2020.

Q. Describe what attracted you to choose social media? What factors or social media's characteristics attracted you the most?

SME: Oh, umm...I chose social media as the platform to launch and run my business because as a content writer, I have seen the kind of reach social media has, as well as how various brands use it to market their products. I have also noticed how digital media is the next big thing. Many brands such as Nike, also recently closed so many of their stores because their audience is on social media and that is where so many of their sales take place. And you know, umm... another, in fact the most important reason was, that I did not have the kind of resources that are required to rent a shop and hire employees and start a conventional business. Starting a business on social media is convenient, requires almost no money, and provides the ease of working from home.

How did you choose the right social media platform to launch your venture?

SME: Oh, I think, I knew it would be Instagram in my heart. But to be on the safe side I made account on both Instagram and Facebook. However, I get more responses on insta. I mean, obviously, I think, Instagram is more user-friendly, has more audience, especially my target audience so helps in higher audience reach. Instagram has younger users as compared to facebook. I have noticed, that Facebook has older users, older generations are on facebook, whereas, Instagram has people from my age group mostly. Insta provides a feature called highlights, this allows me to keep the reviews, available products, price list etc., in separate highlights, making it easier for customers to view them. however, when it comes to

marketing, facebook is a better option. It allows you to engage in target marketing, you can get look alike audience and find out about people's interests and individually target them. in that sense, insta has fewer options and wouldn't be my go-to for marketing. Facebook has detailed options that allow you to launch campaigns whereas insta only has options to boost your posts. If I spend 500, I get 100 people with insta marketing whereas in the same amount I get 1000 people from facebook if the campaign is well developed and planned, but, you know, if my target audience is not on Facebook, how would all that target marketing work so it is definitely Instagram for me.

### **Factors that impact the success or the running of social media business?**

Q. What, according to you are some of the key factors (useful aspects and drawbacks) of social media that affect the enactment of EO via social media?

SME: Hmm, uh, I think, one of the biggest drawbacks I would say is the fact that customers return their parcels. I expect at least 4 to 5 parcel returns a month. The easess include having a wide range of audience reach and being able to reach people regardless of geographical barriers. I am in Lahore, but my customers can be anywhere in Pakistan. This is one of the biggest advantages of social media business. The drawback is that the customers cannot hold the product or see it in real life before buying and that makes it harder for them trust the seller or make their purchase since they are not sure of what the quality of the product is. They do not know what the material of the product is, what its quality is, what its size or colour is etc. You know, a lot of the times, when I photograph my jewellery to post on the feed, the colours look different than they are in real life. These things matter to the customers when they are buying something online. Umm, one more useful thing is PR marketing, it really helps in making sure the customers know the page and the products on the page are authentic and they will get quality and value from us.

### **Role of customers' trust**

Q. Do your potential customers display lack of trust on the quality of your product or any other aspect of your social media venture?

SME: So, uh, generally speaking, customers have issues with the delivery charges. They also have concerns over the quality, colour, size etc., of the products that see on the page. But to be honest, I think the customers trust the seller once they have had a good experience with them; they place their trust in the person selling the product rather than the platform it is being sold on. I would definitely say that covid and the digitalization of everything in the last two years has definitely put our country ten years ahead in terms of social media and people do tend to trust online buying more than they used to, but they still don't blindly trust the platform. They will only buy from you if they are sure the seller is not a fraud. People still get scammed on social media so it depends on the customers, their previous experiences and the seller.

Q. So what payment methods do you offer?

SME: I keep both the options for the customers, sometimes it is the customers' choice according to their preference. But when it comes to larger orders, I prefer advance payment, this ensures lesser parcel returns and scams. There are a few customers who have concerns over advance payment, they either think they will be scammed or they do not have their own

accounts and have to get their family members to transfer the money. A lot of the times, the family members do not trust the business and refuse to transfer money because they think they will be scammed. One thing with COD is that sometimes the customers become unavailable or refuse to take the parcel and the return charges also have to be paid by us, this becomes a huge problem since that means we pay two-way delivery charges. So, the businesses also get scammed sometimes. Sometimes customers even return the package because they think the delivery charges are too much.

Q. How, would you say, can an entrepreneur earn customers' trust? .

SME: Umm, one of the main ways of gaining customer trust, I think would be by providing quality and value for their money. Provide good quality products at lower costs especially initially. Be humble and polite to the customers. accept your mistakes and make the customer feel valued. Also, definitely, promote your page as much as you can and keep your account looking active. Respond to the customers, answer their questions, respond quickly and stay available at all times. Be flexible with your customers, make them see your authenticity. Be consistent with your posts, stories, reels, marketing etc.

**Suggestion/mention of social media strategies or tools that help in enhancing the enactment of entrepreneurial opportunities via social media as well as assist in the success of the venture**

Q. What, in your opinion would be the best tactics/practices that help in successfully launching and running a social media venture?

SME: : Uh, keep your page active, make sure to keep posting regularly, create interesting content about your products and business and post on your page. Make your page visually attractive and engaging especially Instagram page. Instagram is a visual platform and I mean, I think, pictures and videos garner more attention and are more interesting than words. Post stories, highlights, reels, videos and pictures of your products reviews, and put up deals every now and then. Start working on your website as that helps with better sales.

Q. Is there any particular social media practice or tool that has helped your business?

SME: Umm..., I guess, I try to regularly post the reviews I get, feedbacks, in stock products, price list etc., on stories and then I have saved them in the highlights section so anyone can have access to them. I try to make my page easy to use and information easily accessible. Influencer marketing has really helped me in gaining customers and their trust. The trick however, is to find influencers who have actual and bigger number of followers.

**General follow-up question**

Would you like to share any additional thoughts regarding social media, entrepreneurial opportunities or the dynamic between them?

SME: Nothing really, just that I guess an entrepreneur needs to be consistent and make sure to plan what you will post and create maybe a planner or something and edit posts but also be real. Do not sell damaged goods and be honest about your products and business with the customers.

## Sample transcript with initial codes

### Background

- Age: 22
- Education: BA Literature
- Business: Jewellery items
- Social media venture name: xxxx-xxxx (SME 03).

Q. Tell me how you came upon the market gap and the entrepreneurial opportunity?

SME: Umm, so, I was always interested in owning my own business. I am a big fan of western chic jewellery and to be honest, I could only find traditional jewellery in stores and then, I realised there were hardly any sellers or market that sell that, so, I decided to get myself the jewellery from daraz or get them imported. *→ personal interest*

Q. How did you come upon the decision of starting your own venture?

SME: Huh, so, once, I started getting my own Jewellery, I realised I can also make this into a business. I thought, this could be a good opportunity of earning and maybe also eventually owning my own business. This is how I started my jewellery business. *→ opportunity recognition*  
*→ opportunity to earn.*

### Experience with Social Media Business?

Q. When did you launch your social media venture?

SME: I launched it in 2020.

Q. Describe what attracted you to choose social media? What factors or social media's characteristics attracted you the most?

SME: Oh, umm... I chose social media as the platform to launch and run my business because as a content writer, I have seen the kind of reach social media has, as well as how various brands use it to market their products. I have also noticed how digital media is the next big thing. Many brands such as Nike, also recently closed so many of their stores because their audience is on social media and that is where so many of their sales take place. And you know, umm... another, in fact the most important reason was, that I did not have the kind of resources that are required to rent a shop and hire employees and start a conventional business. Starting a business on social media is convenient, requires almost no money, and provides the ease of working from home. *social media as an entry point*  
*→ using sm for marketing*  
*→ Digital media is the future.*  
*→ audience on social media*  
*→ lack of financial resources.*  
*→ sm does not require*  
*cost of WFH. financial resources.*

How did you choose the right social media platform to launch your venture?

SME: Oh, I think, I knew it would be Instagram in my heart. But to be on the safe side I made account on both Instagram and Facebook. However, I get more responses on insta. I mean, obviously, I think, Instagram is more user-friendly, has more audience, especially my target audience so helps in higher audience reach. Instagram has younger users as compared to facebook. I have noticed, that Facebook has older users, older generations are on facebook, whereas, Instagram has people from my age group mostly. Insta provides a feature called highlights, this allows me to keep the reviews, available products, price list etc., in separate highlights, making it easier for customers to view them. however, when it comes to marketing, facebook is a better option! It allows you to engage in target marketing, you can *target audience on sm*  
*More responses on instagram*  
*→ Insta is user friendly*  
*→ higher audience reach*  
*→ younger audience on insta*  
*→ usefulness of highlights feature*  
*→ easy access for customers*  
*Facebook marketing*  
*Targetted social media marketing*

get look alike audience and find out about people's interests and individually target them. in that sense, insta has fewer options and wouldn't be my go-to for marketing. Facebook has detailed options that allow you to launch campaigns whereas insta only has options to boost your posts. If I spend 500, I get 100 people with insta marketing whereas in the same amount I get 1000 people from facebook if the campaign is well developed and planned, but, you know, if my target audience is not on Facebook, how would all that target marketing work so it is definitely Instagram for me. *Instagram marketing*  
*insta - primary business platform*

#### Factors that impact the success or the running of social media business?

Q. What, according to you are some of the key factors (useful aspects and drawbacks) of social media that affect the enactment of EO via social media?

SME: Hmm, uh, I think, one of the biggest drawbacks I would say is the fact that customers return their parcels. I expect at least 4 to 5 parcel returns a month. The cases include having a wide range of audience reach and being able to reach people regardless of geographical barriers. I am in Lahore, but my customers can be anywhere in Pakistan. This is one of the biggest advantages of social media business. The drawback is that the customers cannot hold the product or see it in real life before buying and that makes it harder for them trust the seller or make their purchase since they are not sure of what the quality of the product is. They do not know what the material of the product is, what its quality is, what its size or colour is etc. You know, a lot of the times, when I photograph my jewellery to post on the feed, the colours look different than they are in real life. These things matter to the customers when they are buying something online. Umm, one more useful thing is PR marketing, it really helps in making sure the customers know the page and the products on the page are authentic and they will get quality and value from us. *parcel returns*  
*greater audience reach*  
*audience reach*  
*lack of face-to-face interaction*  
*customer concerns/doubts*  
*PR marketing*

#### Role of customers' trust

Q. Do your potential customers display lack of trust on the quality of your product or any other aspect of your social media venture?

SME: So, uh, generally speaking, customers have issues with the delivery charges. They also have concerns over the quality, colour, size etc., of the products that see on the page. But to be honest, I think the customers trust the seller once they have had a good experience with them; they place their trust in the person selling the product rather than the platform it is being sold on. I would definitely say that covid and the digitalization of everything in the last two years has definitely put our country ten years ahead in terms of social media and people do tend to trust online buying more than they used to, but they still don't blindly trust the platform. They will only buy from you if they are sure the seller is not a fraud. People still get scammed on social media so it depends on the customers, their previous experiences and the seller. *Screen with DC*  
*trust in the seller*  
*lack of trust in the platform*  
*Advancement*  
*Scams with customers / former scams*

Q. So what payment methods do you offer?

SME: I keep both the options for the customers, sometimes it is the customers' choice according to their preference. But when it comes to larger orders, I prefer advance payment, this ensures lesser parcel returns and scams. There are a few customers who have concerns over advance payment, they either think they will be scammed or they do not have their own accounts and have to get their family members to transfer the money. A lot of the times, the *customer concerns → payment methods*  
*fear of being scammed*



family members do not trust the business and refuse to transfer money because they think they will be scammed. One thing with COD is that sometimes the customers become <sup>consumers</sup> unavailable or refuse to <sup>lack of trust</sup> take the parcel and the return charges also have to be paid by us, this becomes a huge problem since that means we pay two-way delivery charges. So, the businesses also get scammed sometimes. Sometimes customers even return the package <sup>parcel returns</sup> because they think the delivery charges are too much. <sup>deam with deliers</sup>

Q. How, would you say, an entrepreneur earn customers' trust? .

SME: Umm, one of the main ways of gaining customer trust, I think would be by providing quality and value for their money. Provide good quality products at lower costs especially <sup>Quality control</sup> initially. Be humble and polite to the customers. accept your mistakes and make the customer <sup>affordable prices</sup> feel valued. Also, definitely, promote your page as much as you can and keep your account <sup>customer services</sup> looking active. Respond to the customers, answer their questions, respond quickly and stay <sup>Regular posts</sup> available at all times. Be flexible with your customers, make them see your authenticity. Be <sup>Active response to customers</sup> consistent with your posts, stories, reels, marketing etc. <sup>Produce consistency</sup>

**Suggestion/mention of social media strategies or tools that help in enhancing the enactment of entrepreneurial opportunities via social media as well as assist in the success of the venture**

Q. What, in your opinion would be the best tactics/practices that help in successfully launching and running a social media venture?

SME: : Uh, keep your page active, make sure to keep <sup>engaging audience / Prioritizing customer engagement</sup> posting regularly, create interesting content about your products and business and post on your page. Make your page visually <sup>visual attraction for audience engagement</sup> attractive and engaging especially Instagram page. Instagram is a visual platform and I mean, I think, pictures and videos garner more attention and are more interesting than words. Post stories, highlights, reels, videos and pictures of your products reviews, and put up deals every <sup>posts - a visual medium</sup> now and then. Start working on your website as that helps with better sales. <sup>visual attraction on Instagram</sup> <sup>development of website</sup>

Q. Is there any particular social media practice or tool that has helped your business?

SME: Umm..., I guess, I try to regularly <sup>Regular updates</sup> post the reviews I get, feedbacks, in stock products, price list etc., on stories and then I have saved them in the highlights section so anyone can have access to them. I try to make my page easy to use and information easily accessible. <sup>easy access to info.</sup> Influencer marketing has really helped me in gaining customers and their trust. The trick however, is to find influencers who have actual and bigger number of followers. <sup>Influencer marketing.</sup>

**General follow-up question**

Would you like to share any additional thoughts regarding social media, entrepreneurial opportunities or the dynamic between them?

SME: Nothing really, just that I guess an entrepreneur needs to be <sup>Consistency</sup> consistent and make sure to plan what you will post and create maybe a planner or something and edit posts but also be real. Do not sell damaged goods and be honest about your products and business with the customers.

<sup>Quality control</sup>