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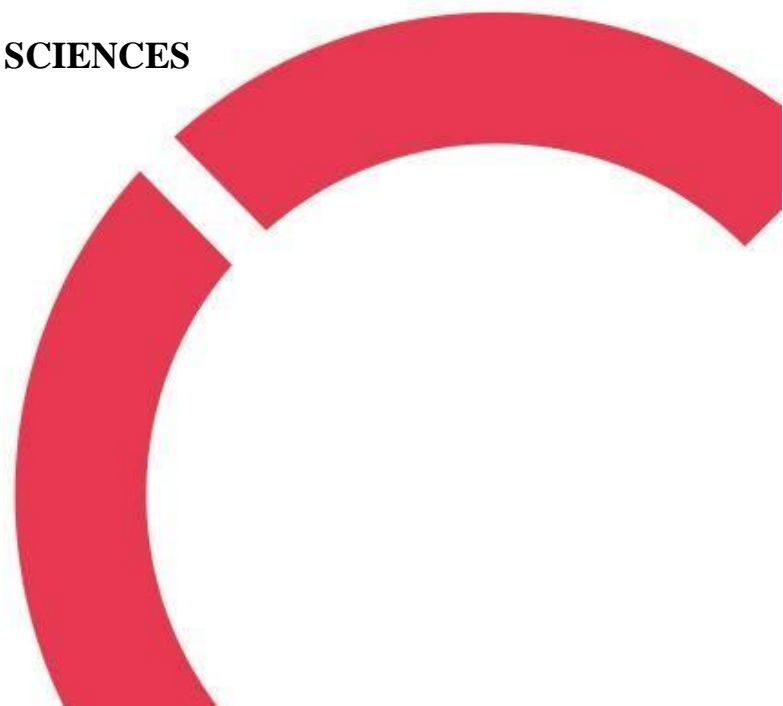
**SOCIAL MEDIA AS A MODERN MARKETING TOOL IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS IN BANGLADESH**

**Thesis**

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**ABSTRACT**

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<p>This thesis aims to explore the potential of social media as a modern marketing tool in international business in Bangladesh. It will focus on the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn as marketing tools to reach international customers. The research will assess the effectiveness of these tools in terms of customer engagement, cost-effectiveness, and brand awareness. It will determine the current social usage and analyze this technology's impact on their operations. The study will also explore the opportunities and challenges companies in Bangladesh face when using social media for marketing.</p> <p>Additionally, the thesis will discuss the importance of social media in today's business world and how companies can best utilize it to their advantage. Ultimately, this research will provide insights into the benefits and challenges of using social media networks as marketing tools in international businesses.</p>		

**Key words**

Brand Awareness, Engagement, Facebook, Instagram, International Business, LinkedIn, Online sectors, Social media, Social media marketing, Twitter, Word of Mouth.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Social media is understood as websites and software programs that serve the purpose of social networking (Social Media 2023). Over the years the definition of social media has evolved because the capabilities of social media channels have also evolved and expanded. One of the latest definitions of social media identifies it as any online platform that allows the engagement of individuals. (Aichner et al. 2021, 5.) Social media platforms nowadays provide numerous options for businesses to boost their operations. The thesis on “Social Media as a Modern Marketing Tool in International Business in Bangladesh” has focused on answering a specific question, and that is how social media helps and impacts a business in Bangladesh that is associated with international business operations. The problem statement of this thesis is to understand the potential of social media for businesses in Bangladesh that are engaged in international business. To elaborate, the problem which is addressed in the thesis aims to explore the potential of social media as a marketing tool for doing international business in Bangladesh. To address this research problem, the thesis has set certain objectives that will help answer the research problem. The thesis has focused on the key social media platforms that are used in international businesses, like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, and the thesis has highlighted the features of these platforms. The thesis has also focused on the opportunities and challenges of applying them in business with the aim of identifying how a business that deals with international business from Bangladesh is impacted by social media. Additionally, the benefits for such business for using social media is also discussed in the thesis.

The objective of the thesis can be broken down into one major objective and also into sub-objectives to address the research problem, which is to understand the potential of social media as a marketing tool for doing international business in Bangladesh. The key objective of this report is to understand how social media is an effective marketing tool for the businesses of Bangladesh which are engaged in international operations. To acquire this information, the thesis has certain sub-objectives, and these are to understand the features of using LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter for international business in Bangladesh. Secondly, the opportunities and threats of using social media platforms for international business in Bangladesh is another sub-objective. Thirdly, the thesis has tried to identify the most ideal social media platform for the international businesses of Bangladesh. Finally, the thesis has tried to understand how the businesses of Bangladesh are using social media as a marketing tool for international operations.

The key question of the thesis is to understand how social media as a marketing tool can impact the international businesses of Bangladesh. Understanding how social media platforms impact the marketing of the international businesses of Bangladesh, the actual potential of the social media platforms can be understood. To address this question, there are some co-related questions that need to be answered as well. For example, what are the published findings on social media's impact on the marketing of the businesses. Secondly, what advantages do Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn offer to the international business of Bangladesh as the most widely renowned social media platforms. Thirdly what are the social media activities of the international businesses of Bangladesh. Finally, what factors do the international businesses of Bangladesh need to consider when using social media platforms for marketing.

Based on the research scope, the null hypothesis for this thesis is that social media is an effective marketing tool for the international businesses of Bangladesh and therefore the null hypothesis for this thesis will be that social media is not an effective marketing tool for the international business of Bangladesh. The thesis has used qualitative data findings and analysis to bring a conclusion regarding the hypothesis, which is that social media marketing tools have a positive impact on the international businesses of Bangladesh. However, there are two drawbacks for such method. Firstly, the researchers believe that if the research had used Return on Investment (ROI) analysis on a number of international businesses in Bangladesh to understand the effectiveness of social media marketing tools, then the research findings would have been much more concrete. In other words, a quantitative analysis would have been much more fruitful for addressing the research objective. Secondly, due to using qualitative data, the research findings have the probability of being subjective and biased. Although the researchers have tried their best to be objective regarding the research findings of the thesis.

The research on analyzing the impact of social media as a marketing tool on the international business of Bangladesh has multiple strengths that make the research findings effective. The data that has been collected from both published journal sources and industry sources and case studies. The study findings have also deeply analyzed the benefits, advantages, disadvantages, and opportunities of using social media as a marketing tool, and this has made the research findings much more effective in helping understand the impact of social media marketing on the international business of Bangladesh. Most importantly, the study on understanding the impact of social media on the international businesses of Bangladesh is unique, and no such research has been done before on Bangladesh, and this makes the research findings even more fruitful.

The thesis has a number of applications. Firstly, the research findings of the report will provide a detailed view of the capabilities, weaknesses, and opportunities of using social media. Secondly, the businesses in Bangladesh which are associated with international business operations will be benefited from this thesis. This is because the international businesses of Bangladesh will be able to understand how social media as a marketing tool can help them in achieving their business goals. The thesis findings can also help the international businesses of Bangladesh to stay competitive because the businesses will be able to better utilize the features of social media. By utilizing the findings of the thesis, international businesses in Bangladesh can devise better strategies. Also, the findings will help in guiding future research in the realm of marketing, international business, and social media in the context of Bangladesh.

## **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section of the study has included the literature review from various published journal. Initially the scope of using social media marketing was discussed and later the major social media platform's features were discussed as a marketing tool. Based on the existing findings, the theoretical framework was formed.

### **2.1 Introduction**

To achieve the core objective of the report, it is vital to establish the existing findings regarding our thesis topic. Within the literature review, the focus will be on gathering information from published literature regarding the definition of social media and the advantages and disadvantages of applying using social media in business. The literature review will also cover separate advantages and disadvantages of using Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn for international business.

International business refers to a business that engages in international trade or investment. To better define international business, it can be identified as a means of commercial transactions undertaken by private or governmental organizations of two or more countries. There are some key traits that are associated with international business. Firstly, in international business, an organization needs to deal with different cultures, politics, economies, and legal systems. Secondly, business operations become far more complex when a domestic business engages in international business. Thirdly, international business involves currency conversion, and an international business also must comply with the varying regulations of other governments as well. (Katsioloudes & Hadjidakis 2007, 9.)

The literature review will further gather published data on customer engagement, cost-effectiveness, and brand awareness capability of the social media platforms Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn. After focusing on the four social media platform's effectiveness, the literature review section will include literature that is associated with discussing the opportunities and challenges of using social media in business in Bangladesh. Finally, the thesis will include literature that will state how social media is shaping international business across the world through various traits.

## 2.2 Social media and social media marketing

Social media refers to the digital technology that allows online communication, networking, and collaboration, and most importantly, it allows the creation and exchange of user-generated content. Another complex definition of social media identifies social media as an infrastructure that allows users to produce and share digital contents where the contents can take the form of messages, ideas, news, and cultural products. (Carr & Hayes 2015, 48.) According to Carr & Hayes (2015), if we take into consideration the characteristics of social media channels and all the definitions that are available across various publications, social media can be defined as an internet-based channel or medium that allows users to interact and portray themselves selectively towards a broad or selective audience. (Carr & Hayes 2015, 50). The definition of social media includes a set of characteristics; for example, social media is an internet-based platform; secondly, social media can be referred to as a disentrained channel which means that the users of social media can participate in communication whenever they want, which is different from communication methods like Skype or other messaging services where the parties of communication need to be present to ensure communication. Thirdly, social media provides its users a sense of interaction with other users through various means like text messages, comments, shares, and reactions. Lastly, in social media, both the users and organizations generate value through content that they create for each other, and most importantly, social media can be defined as a miscommunication channel since it allows its users to communicate with a large number of people. (Carr & Hayes 2015, 52.)

According to the American Marketing Association, marketing is defined as the set of actions, institutions, and processes that is responsible for creating and delivering offerings that are meaningful for customers and society at large (Gundlach & Wilkie 2009, 259). In the traditional marketing approach, a business purchases media to connect to its potential target customer, which is expensive, and also, the business is able to connect with a very small number of customers by investing a lot. This marketing approach is “Push” marketing (Packer 2011, 4). But in terms of social media marketing, a business gets involved in “engagement” marketing, where a business has the option to devise its presence in social media in such a manner that it engages in a conversation with its customer. In this approach, a business has the potential to create trust among its customers, improve its products and service, and also creates a referral network that increases the sale of a business organization. A well-devised social media marketing strategy helps build brand awareness, improves public relations, and also helps to build loyal customers. (Packer 2011, 5.) Social media marketing refers to the dialogue that



gets created over social media channels by consumers, businesses, audiences, products, or services as promotional information (Dwivedi et al. 2015, 291).

There are two ways how social media works as a marketing tool. Firstly, by using social media a customer can share their feedback regarding a product or the activities of a business. Such information helps marketers to understand the needs of the customers, the need of the market, the experience of the customer, and the competitive movements within an industry. For example, if a product or service gets launched into the market with issues that are causing dissatisfaction among customers, the product or service provider learns about this initially from various blog posts on social media. Also, if there are any market opportunities, the business organization is also able to quickly learn from social media regarding it. Secondly, social media is used by marketers as a communication tool to communicate with customers, make direct sales, and retain customers. For example, there are blogs created on social media by business organizations that create a dialog with the customers directly, and through this, organizations are able to respond directly to customer concerns. Another method for businesses to promote themselves and create public relations is through video-sharing sites like YouTube. Such sites allow organizations to reach millions of people in a very budget-friendly manner. (Constantinides 2014, 45.)

Also, there are methods available for marketers to directly promote to target customers through banner ads. A very interesting practice by marketers to use social media as a marketing tool involves influencers or early adopters. In this method, a business organization looks for a person who is an early adopter of a new product or service and who has a public reputation for creating positive word-of-mouth among potential customers. The influencer or the early adopter posts product reviews and informs potential customers about new brands and products as well. (Constantinides 2014, 47.)

There are multiple benefits of utilizing social media marketing for business. Firstly, social media allows businesses to increase their brand recognition. Through social media, a business is able to increase its visibility to existing and new customers. Also, business organizations or brands that have a strong presence on social media through active posting for their target customers have loyal customers who make repeated purchases. Increased engagement on social media with the business also helps an organization to realize more sales. When a business reaches such a state in social media that a vast number of people talk about the brand positively, it easily becomes more appealing to new customers. (DeMers 2014,1.)

Social media assists a business by making the business rank on top of search engine results; in this way, the customers can easily find the product or service they are looking for. Social media is also a great means to acquire market insights easily because, through social media, a business is easily able to learn what people think of the business, the products, and the service as well. (DeMers 2014,3.)

Also, businesses can learn how well their operations are doing by measuring the impact on sales and brand reputation. Perhaps, one of the most important benefits of utilizing social media marketing is that it is a cost-effective way to do marketing. Even if a business chooses to run paid advertisements on social media, it is still cheaper than using traditional marketing channels like using TVC and PVC. (DeMers 2014,2.)

### **2.2.1 Advantages of using social media in businesses**

According to the journal article “Integration of Social Media in Businesses”, different social media platforms have different social media marketing tools that cater to different types of consumers. In order to make social media marketing an effective part of a business to grow, the organization needs to have a clear plan on how it wants to utilize different social media marketing tools. (Abuhashesh 2014, 205.) The article also states that social media can be used for customer service as well. Customer service includes interacting with the customers and providing customers with immediate support, and social media plays a cost-effective solution in this regard. One of the key reasons why social media is considered an effective tool for customer service is because it can be personalized while responding to customers in a very convenient manner. Another advantage of social media marketing is that it provides an opportunity for a business to stay ahead of the competition. It is seen that in the era of high competition, organizations target the same market, and through social media, organizations get the opportunity to connect with customers, which eventually increases the performance of the organization through increased sales. (Abuhashesh 2014, 207.)

According to another article on social media, customers now have higher control over communication regarding an organization and its products and services. Social media helps organizations to understand the needs of their customers and also helps in developing a profitable relationship with the customers. But for social media marketing to be successful, organizations must develop a plan that will help gain the maximum benefit out of social media. There are multiple usages that have been identified in the article regarding social media marketing. For example, organizations can use social media to develop communities around a product or service, and this community tends to be loyal customers of the

organization. Also, the customers of such a community provide testimonials of products and services, which helps organizations to be viral among a large population. (Assaad & Gómez 2011, 19.) Also, such communities are proactive in giving organizations insightful feedback regarding products and services. Social media marketing, according to the article, helps organizations with market research that helps in developing products and services. (Assaad & Gómez 2011, 21.) The articles point out that social media marketing is a very budget-friendly method to execute marketing (Assaad & Gómez 2011, 19).

“Social Media and Its Role in Marketing” by Sajid SI (2016), has identified three key benefits of using social media. Firstly, social media is not just a platform to present new products and services to the customer rather, it also allows organizations to learn about the pain-points and suggestions of the customers. Secondly, organizations can merge with a range of influencers who are available on social media and can use them to promote products. This strategy is helpful because, usually, such influencers are selected based on their influence and suitability on a particular category of product and service. Such influencers eventually help in developing the organic growth of the organization over social media. Thirdly, social media marketing is a far more cost-effective method for marketing compared to conventional methods of marketing. (Sajid 2016, 2.) Along with these mentioned key benefits, the article has also identified some other benefits of using social media, and these include increased exposure to other companies, increased traffic toward the company’s online and offline presence, and improved positioning of the organization on popular search engine results. All of the identified benefits help organizations to realize higher sales and high-profit margins. The article has identified some of the key ways in which social media play the role of marketing. For example, through social media, organizations can introduce themselves and their products and service through social media. Social media can be used to influence customer base that might not have been interested to purchase from an organization otherwise. Social media allows organizations to reach multiple parts of the world easily through marketing tools. Social media can be used to redirect traffic to the organization’s website and most importantly, social media marketing can also be used for branding as well. The literature also identifies social media as a means of giving customer support and a means of addressing and solving negative publicity. (Sajid 2016, 3.)

According to Nadaraja & Yazdanifard (2013), there are some key advantages that have been identified in regard to using social media as a marketing tool. Firstly, marketing in social media is identified to be very cost-effective compared to other traditional marketing practices. This is because social media marketing allows organizations to promote products to niche customers easily with paid features and

also, if an organization wishes it can choose to do free marketing through social media without spending any budget. Secondly, social media is interactive because it allows users to interact with the content on social media. Such power to the consumers allows them to better connect with the organization. Thirdly, social media allows organizations to promote themselves to a specific target market easily, because social media allows the user to select geographical area, age, gender, and other attributes before executing paid promotion. Social media can also function as a means of providing customer service through answering frequently asked questions or by making meaningful interactions with the customer, and this eventually helps to build better customer loyalty.

The article “Marketing Opportunities with Social Networks” has shared that social media works as a tool for providing brand intelligence. In other words, organizations are able to know how their brands are perceived by their consumers by analyzing customers’ actions over social media. The article also states that social media works as a great means for establishing trust with its customers. Social media helps organizations gain global reach and positive word of mouth and also helps to build brand awareness among mass potential target customers through its marketing tools. The author of the article also shares that social media marketing is one of the most cost-effective marketing strategies, and the platform also helps organizations to find new suppliers and resourceful employees as well in the process of marketing. (Bolotaeva & Cata 2010, 3.)

### **2.2.2 Disadvantages of using social media marketing**

According to the article “Social Network in Marketing (Social Media Marketing) Opportunities and Risks,” there are many benefits that social media marketing has; however, there are also numerous disadvantages of using social media. Just like positive news can spread fast on social media, negative news about marketing can also spread fast. Over social media, anyone can spread negative word-of-mouth regarding a product, whether it’s authentic or fake. (Assaad & Gómez 2011, 20.)

According to Rugova & Prenaj, the authors state that if an organization is ineffective in using social media as a marketing tool, then it could create negative publicity for the organization. Such actions involve the overuse of advertisements, representing products and service offerings in a commercial manner, or the inability to handle negative reactions over social media through other customers. (Rugova & Prenaj 2016, 95.)

According to Horn et. al, (2015), social media becomes a threat to businesses because customers have the full right to post about anything over social media. Also, the employees of an organization may also degrade the reputation of the organization by threatening the management of posting inappropriate content over social media. Moreover, when a business engages in social media to connect with the customer and to establish its presence in the online world, the organization must have a strategy for responding to its clients and also must have active employees who will be proactive in findings conversations related to the organization on social media so that proper responses can be given to them. The author also states that if social media becomes responsible for negative publicity of an organization, then it has serious consequences like low-profit margins, low sales, loss of stock price value, and bad relationships with stakeholders. (Horn et al. 2015, 194.)

Nadaraja & Yazdanifard have identified some key disadvantages of using social media as a marketing tool as well. Firstly, in order for organizations to reap the benefits of social media as a marketing tool, they need to accept that a substantial amount of time needs to be invested in social media to ensure a flow of communication with the target audience. Secondly, organizations need to spend extra time and money in monitoring the use of their trademarks and copyrights to ensure that no one is misusing such intellectual property. (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard 2013, 5.) Another key disadvantage according to the article is the ability of anyone to talk ill about an organization and its products and service. Through social media, negative publicity is very easy, and customers can easily post a picture, a negative review, or a comment on social media that might damage the reputation of the organization. (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard 2013, 10.)

## **2.3. Different platforms of social media marketing**

This section has covered journal articles where the advantages, challenges, and scope of popular social media network is discussed. The thesis has focused on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn in this regard.

### **2.3.1. Facebook as a marketing tool for businesses**

Facebook has 1.19 billion active users every day and 2.96 billion active users monthly. Facebook can be used as a marketing tool for any kind of business and the marketing features helps any organization to expand its customer base and achieve business goals. Facebook offers four core features that help an organization with its marketing operations, and these are Facebook Page, Messenger for business, Boosting or paid promotion, and insights on marketing activities. (Grow your business from anywhere with Facebook 2023.)

Facebook proposes various features for any type of organization which can be used for marketing purposes, including businesses that are engaged in international operations. Through a Facebook profile, an organization can introduce itself by stating its mission, vision, activities, and logo. An organization can also create groups on Facebook to have like-minded people listed and to instantly communicate with them. Facebook offers organizations to create a fan page through which an organization can easily communicate with people in general over Facebook regarding its events, activities, products, services, blogs, and so on. Facebook also has a poll option where it can collect information from Facebook users as feedback easily. To communicate with customers, Facebook provides the opportunity for organizations to communicate with their customers in a customized manner through text messages. Most importantly, Facebook allows organizations to promote through paid advertisement and this feature also allows organizations to promote certain content to a specific audience that is defined through age, gender, geographic location, and interest. (Ramsaran & Fowdar 2013, 75.) One of the key unique benefits of using Facebook as a marketing tool is that Facebook has one of the highest users all across the globe and also the highest number of active users as well, which increases the effectiveness of Facebook as a marketing tool for organizations. (Ramsaran & Fowdar 2013, 76.) Although Facebook has a strong influence on branding through word of mouth, its paid

promotion option is not that effective since a study found that 39% of users did not check any ads and 19% of users only checked the ads on Facebook (Ramsaran & Fowdar 2013, 77). Organizations have been found to have a higher success rate with Facebook Marketing which have applied a Facebook strategy and appointed a dedicated person for managing Facebook marketing (Ramsaran & Fowdar 2013, 78).

Facebook is a very effective tool for marketing when it is used as a marketing tool that relies on word of mouth and on viral marketing. Facebook offers both a push marketing option which is the paid option to promote and also a trust-based option which relies on word of mouth. Although trust-based marketing is more successful, push marketing can also be successful if an organization ensures the participation of the audience, personalization of the message, and the feedback of the audience as well. Studies have confirmed that the audience on Facebook tends to purchase something with the most likes and shares and for this reason, trust is a very important factor on Facebook. (Dehghani & Tumer 2015, 600.)

Facebook provides marketing opportunities for businesses where two-way communication exists and this occurs between the brand and the audience. Also, how the audience interacts with a brand over social media significantly impacts how the audience interacts with the brand in reality. (Triantafillidou & Siomkos 2018, 20.) To effectively use Facebook as a marketing tool, an organization needs to evaluate the experience that it is offering to its followers in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the brand experience on social media. The more unique the experience is for the users and the more personalized and emotional appeal a brand has over Facebook, it is more likely to succeed compared to other brands or organizations on Facebook. Another key strategy for businesses to be successful on Facebook is by making the followers on Facebook engage with the content that is posted on Facebook. (Triantafillidou & Siomkos 2018, 22.)

### **2.3.2. Instagram as a marketing tool for businesses**

Instagram is one of the most popular social media platforms that is used by businesses to promote brands (Huey & Yazdanifard 2014, 3). One of the key features of Instagram is that it provides a brand the opportunity to reduce costs in branding because the images that are uploaded on Instagram can be edited and filtered. Especially the hashtag feature of Instagram allows users to see relevant content on Instagram and for this reason, Instagram is identified as a very lucrative branding platform for fashion

companies. Instagram can be stated as one of the most popular platforms to promote the products and services of an organization. (Huey & Yazdanifard 2014, 4.)

Firstly, one of the unique benefits of using Instagram as a marketing tool is that it helps brands to communicate their identity uniquely through various image editing options (Singh 2020, 379). Secondly, Instagram is a mobile device-centric platform, which means it is most appropriate to use on a mobile device and this is why contents are more likely to reach the target customers. Thirdly, a business can promote brands on Instagram in a very cost-effective manner. Fourthly, Instagram has around 2500 brands and the world's 92% of the brands use Instagram as a means of marketing. (Singh 2020, 380). Lastly, Instagram can also be used to acquire feedback from the target market of a brand to bring necessary changes. (Singh 2020, 382.)

In order for businesses to be successful on Instagram in terms of achieving higher sales, it is ideal to choose a regular customer trying a product or service rather than choosing an influencer trying a product or service. This is because study results show that when organizations rely on regular customers to promote their products the effect of positive word of mouth is higher compared to influencers. (Ha 2015, 14.)

### **2.3.3. LinkedIn as a marketing tool for businesses**

LinkedIn has become a platform that is more than about finding jobs, at present, businesses can benefit through LinkedIn through networking opportunities, industry news, and professional groups. (Reis 2019, 13). Businesses that are engaged in B2B sales find LinkedIn as an ideal marketing tool. Organizations use LinkedIn as a tool for ensuring brand awareness, and trust among potential leads through content and direct communication. (Reis 2019, 14). One of the ways through which a business can reach its potential customer is through content marketing and the content can be shared through a personal profile and also from the page of an organization. Contents on LinkedIn could be images, videos, presentations, or texts that can help an organization convert traffic into prospective sales. Having a fully optimized company profile on LinkedIn allows the organization to have a better ranking on search engine results. (Reis 2019, 15). The personal profile of employees of an organization helps in marketing also, because when the employees of an organization share useful information over social media, and provide a good image of the organization, it helps to create a good impression on the prospective client. (Reis 2019, 16).



The process of acquiring potential deals on LinkedIn involves a set of activities like identifying the prospect, searching the key person on LinkedIn, sending an invitation to get connected, and nurturing the relationship to develop a strong rapport (Reis 2019, 16). In terms of paid solutions, LinkedIn has a wide range of tools for executive marketing activities; such options involve paid promotions of status that can be mechanized to reach a certain target market; personalized messages into the mail inbox of a prospect, text ads, sponsored messaging, paid promotion based on marketing objective which could to increase brand awareness, increase lead generation, promoting products and service, and so on. (Reis 2019, 17).

A study by Seth, (2022) confirms that LinkedIn can be used by an organization to increase its brand awareness (Seth 2022, 1036), and eventually, the effect of brand awareness impacts the corporate image of the organization positively too (Seth 2022, 1037). Link In also solely impacts the corporate image of an organization too just like impacting the brand image of an organization. (Seth 2022,1038). The corporate image of an organization is represented by the organization's advertising, public relations, and physical image (Seth 2022,1035.)

### **2.3.4. Twitter as a marketing tool for businesses**

Twitter is used by many organizations as part of the integrated marketing communication strategy. Twitter is an interactive one-to-many interactive communication channel. The platform is also used by organizations as a reactive communication channel which means that organizations can use this platform as a service recovery method where the issues can be identified by reviewing the opinions of customers or from the direct complaints made to the organization. By utilizing a secondary account for addressing service issues an organization can also hold a positive image of its brand strategically. (Burton & Soboleva 2011, 497).

## **2.4. Theoretical framework**

If we analyze the key advantages and features of social media in general, we can see that all the studies in the literature review section have given similar conclusions. The first identified benefit and opportunity of social media is that it allows organizations to promote their identity and its products and services in the most cost-effective manner. (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard 2013, 4). Social media also allows organizations to run their customer service operations in an interactive and personalized manner, which helps to create trust and loyalty among the customers. (Abuhashesh 2014, 207). Organizations are also able to learn how their product and service are performing as well as how the competition is acting out in the market, and this gives the organization the opportunity to create better products and services and also allows the organization to come up with innovative ideas. (Abuhashesh 2014, 207). Social media is also another great tool for spreading positive word of mouth. (Bolotaeva & Cata 2010, 3). Another great advantage of social media is that it helps organizations to create communities that help to spread positive word of mouth about the brand and also stay loyal to a brand. (Assaad & Gómez 2011, 19). If an organization wants to promote over social media through a paid option, then social media allows the organization to choose the target market by selecting geographical area, age, gender, and other attributes, which makes paid advertisement over social media much more effective. (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard 2013, 4). Aside from engaging with customers, social media also allows organizations to get exposure to other suppliers, organizations, and new employees as well. (Bolotaeva & Cata 2010, 3).

However, social media also has its own set of disadvantages as well. For example, social media can easily create negative publicity for an organization which can cost an organization heavily. (Assaad & Gómez 2011, 20). Secondly, a lack of effective communication and strategy may also create negative

word-of-mouth for an organization and can also cost an organization heavily. (Rugova & Prenaj 2016, 5). The benefits of social media marketing do not come instantly, and organizations need to invest a certain amount of time and manpower to stay active and create a positive brand image. (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard 2013, 5).

The thesis proposes that the benefits that social media provides to businesses, in general, are also applicable to the business of Bangladesh that are engaged in international business operations. In other words, when the international businesses of Bangladesh want to use social media to execute their marketing operations, they will be able to utilize similar benefits and opportunities when promoting in international markets. Also, when using social media, the disadvantages that are associated with using it as a marketing tool are also applicable to the international businesses of Bangladesh.

To summarise, the findings from the literature states that different social media platforms offer different opportunities and benefits. But, in general social media marketing helps organizations with creating brand awareness, providing customers service, acquiring intelligence regarding the market, market research, and most importantly it helps with building brands. However, having a presence on social media also creates certain challenges for businesses like dealing with negative publicity, involving human and financial resource, and decreased sales due to reputation damage as well.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

The objective of the thesis is to identify the impact of social media as a marketing tool for international businesses in Bangladesh. The data that will be used in the analysis of the findings, and it will be collected from published journals, thesis, blogs, and from telephonic interviews. For published journals and thesis, the thesis will utilize google scholar to find related articles and for thesis the study has used “theseus”. For identifying related blog posts the researchers have used the Google search engine.

The study has first covered the literature review where the focus was on collecting the existing research findings. After the literature review, the study has focused collecting data on Bangladesh, where the thesis has discussed the demographical, geographical, cultural, and economical data regarding Bangladesh. This has helped the research findings to be easily relatable. Afterward, the thesis acquired literature articles from multiple theses which focused on stating how social media is used as a marketing tool by the business of Bangladesh. As part of the primary data collection, the thesis has collected interview feedback from six participants who are working in organizations that are involved in international marketing from Bangladesh. After completing the data collection stage, the thesis has covered the key findings from the collected data, which will help in developing the discussion and conclusion regarding the research objective. Based on the findings, the research report has proposed insightful recommendations for the businesses in Bangladesh that are associated with international businesses regarding the usage of social media as a marketing tool.

## **4 THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS IN BANGLADESH**

In this chapter, some of the published literature will be discussed which has shed light on how the businesses of Bangladesh engage in international businesses by using social media marketing. The second part of the chapter includes the case study of social media marketing. For this section researchers have performed telephonic interview based on a survey questionnaire which included both open ended and close ended questions. The feedback was acquired from participants who are working in such organizations in Bangladesh which are engaged in international business.

### **4.1. Bangladesh as a country and society**

Bangladesh started its journey as an independent country in 1971. The North and West part of the country is surrounded by Indian territory. On the Southeast is Myanmar and on the southern part is the Bay of Bengal Sea. (Bangladesh 2023.) The territory of the country includes 143,998 km<sup>2</sup> and the country has a population of around 171 million people according to the data of 2021 (Nationsonline.org 2023).

Bangladesh has a strong record of economic growth and Ready Made Garments industry (RMG) exports are one of its economy's biggest strengths. The country is also on its way to shifting from one of the least developed country's lists of the United Nations. (Overview 2023.) The economy of Bangladesh grew steadily by 6.94 percent in the financial year 2020-21. In the financial year 2021-22, the GDP growth was 7.25 percent (Ministry of Finance 2022). In Bangladesh, the agricultural sector remains the primary source of employment, employing the largest share of the workforce at 37.6% and contributing to 13.1% of the country's GDP. The industrial sector employs 21.4% of the workforce and represents 27.8% of the GDP. On the other hand, the services sector contributes significantly to the economy, accounting for 53.5% of the GDP and employing 39.8% of the total workforce. The primary drivers of Bangladesh's economy are the Ready Made Garments industry (RMG) and the financial contributions from overseas workers. RMG accounts for 13% of the country's GDP and employs a predominantly female workforce of approximately 4 million individuals. In the fiscal year 2018-2019, the inflow of remittances reached a record-breaking \$16.4 billion, indicating a growth of 9.47% compared to the previous year when it was \$14.98 billion. Presently, approximately 10 million Bangladeshi citizens are employed and residing abroad. (Embassy of the People's Republic of

Bangladesh 2023.) Nearly half of the population is dependent on agriculture and the key agricultural items include jute, cotton, tea, fish, and hide (Economy of Bangladesh 2023). The predominant religion of Bangladesh is Islam and the predominant race in the country is the Bengalis. The family system in Bangladesh involves extended families instead of nuclear families. (Education of Bangladesh 2023.)

Bangladesh is a multicultural country with a varied heritage that is reflected in many facets of its society. The nation's rich legacy is reflected in architecture, writing, dance, theatre, music, and painting. Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam have had an impact on Bangladeshi cultural traditions, with Islam having the most and longest-lasting influence. With Muslims celebrating Eid-e-Miladunnabi, Eid-ul-Fitr, Eid-ul-Azha, and Muharram, Hindus enjoying Durga Puja, Saraswati Puja, and Kali Puja, and Christians celebrating Christmas, various races celebrate distinct holidays in Bangladesh. The entire nation celebrates national holidays including Pahela Baishakh (the first day of the Bengali year), Independence Day, and Victory Day. Bangladesh is also fortunate enough to have world-renowned writers like Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, and Michael Madhusudan. (Culture 2020.) In Bangladesh Internet, smartphone, and digital marketing usage have rapidly increased in Bangladesh, in fact, 88 percent of the organizations in Bangladesh resort to digital marketing as the primary advertising method (HYPE Dhaka, 2020).

## 4.2. Social media marketing in International Business in Bangladesh

In this sub-chapter, the findings are acquired from various literatures studies which includes journal articles and thesis. Here the key focus was to understand how social media marketing is used for international business operations in Bangladesh. It needs to be noted that only a few studies were found which addressed how social media marketing was used for international business operations. This chapter also discussed about how social media marketing is used in Bangladesh as well.

Social media marketing usage for promoting tourism in foreign countries has increased a lot. However, a large number of marketing budget is still spent on print media (Mojumder 2022, 22). The study on social media and its usage in tourism marketing from Bangladesh shared that, among 50 European foreign respondents social media was used by 37% of the participants for making tour plans (Mojumder 2022, 32). Although the study did not clear what social media sources were used by the participants to acquire tour plan information, but it does show the influence of social media on the tourism industry of Bangladesh. The author of the thesis has also shared that in order to make the tourism industry of Bangladesh more lucrative for foreign travelers necessary initiatives need to be taken to promote the Bengali tradition on social media because this creates a strong impact in attracting more tourists. (Mojumder 2022, 39.)

Among 1060 participants in another study 42.74% of the participants revealed that they acquired information regarding their tour from social media (Karim 2018, 475). The survey findings also stated that Facebook was the most used platform by tourists who used social media as a source of travel guide and it was about 75% of the participants chose Facebook to acquire information (Karim 2018, 476). 97.26% of the participants agreed that social media was responsible for the growth of the tourism industry of Bangladesh (Karim 2018, 477).

Another study that has focused on the opportunities and challenges of using digital marketing in Bangladesh has a study done on 52 Bangladeshi respondents through a survey questionnaire. The study findings reported that 98% of the participants used social media as a digital marketing tool. (Ashraful 2021, 29.) The study also stated that 74.4% of the participants found social media as the most effective paid tool for digital marketing. The study also stated that 72% of the respondents used static content to promote on Facebook (Ashraful 2021, 31).

A study of the impact of social media marketing on the superstore customers in Bangladesh included 291 buyers of five superstores of Bangladesh which are Agora, Shwapno, Mena Bazar, Almas Super Shop, and Nondon. The study findings stated that social media was used by customers to verify information that was showcased by superstores, secondly, social media also helped the customers in saving time by allowing them to order through social media platforms. The superstores in Bangladesh used social media marketing to make people aware about new products and services. These factors are the benefits of social media marketing and are strongly responsible for customer purchase decisions. (Islam 2022, 71.) However, the study only focused on how the purchasing decisions of the customers in Bangladesh changed for social media marketing in regard to super stores. This is why many benefits of social media marketing for businesses was not discussed in the study.

Social media marketing's influence on the banking sector was analyzed in a study where the key focus was to understand how social media marketing influenced the brand equity in regards to the banking sector. The study included survey questionnaire for data collection where the data used feedback from 222 respondents. The criteria in choosing the participants involved clients of banks of Bangladesh who were satisfied with the service of their bank and followed the bank on social media. The major findings of the literature stated that the banks who used social media marketing was successfully able to communicate that the bank provided greater value, and this eventually impacted the brand equity of the bank. Higher brand equity results in better brand awareness, brand loyalty, and brand quality. To summarize social media marketing impacts brand equity positively and high brand equity eventually results in buying behavior. (Hafez 2022, 6.)

Social media marketing is also responsible for creating purchase decisions for fast moving consumer goods products in Bangladesh. In this regard, a study was done on 250 respondents in Bangladesh. The findings of the study states that social media was used by the participants for queries regarding a product. Customer's queries include queries about price, features, discounts, and offers. Social marketing is also responsible for increasing brand awareness and also for creating an emotional attachment with the customers and this eventually helps in strengthening brand equity. However, the study has also pointed out that social media marketing alone is not enough for ensuring brand loyalty from customers. (Saha et. al. 2021, 124.)

Due to the increased usage of social media in Bangladesh, more organizations are building their presence on social media. Due to the increased need of monitoring and utilize social media's benefits, organizations in Bangladesh are recruiting social media managers as well. Social media is used by



businesses to acquire important insights about the target customers. One of the key objectives for businesses of Bangladesh for using social media as a marketing tool is to build a brand. (Chowdhury 2020, 10.)

In the apparel industry of Bangladesh, social media marketing also helps in creating purchase decisions. A study was done to understand the impact of social media marketing on the customers of the apparel industry of Bangladesh and to execute this study 100 questionnaire's data was used. The study findings states that the customer of the apparel industry of Bangladesh is mostly active on Facebook and initially social media helps customers in acquiring information like price, product features. Customers use social media also to make comparison of products of different competitors and also, they check reviews of products by using social media to understand the credibility of the product and the brand. In general, social media is used by the customers for making purchase decisions based on the information they acquire from social media. (Sultana 2018, 6.)

The secondary data findings regarding how the international businesses of Bangladesh use social media marketing as a marketing tool covered the tourism industry of Bangladesh and the usage of social media in Bangladesh. The tourism industry of Bangladesh is greatly benefited by social media marketing because social media helps the foreign tourists with necessary information regarding various tourist spots of Bangladesh. Also, the tourist industry of Bangladesh can also market various tour packages and promote various tourist spots and Bangladeshi culture through social media easily. The tourist industry of Bangladesh is highly dependent upon social media marketing and for this reason, there is an increased demand of social media managers who monitors and executes digital marketing activities for the tourist businesses of Bangladesh. Though there were not many studies available on how the international businesses of Bangladesh used social media marketing, there were many studies available that focused on how the businesses of Bangladesh were using social media for their operations in Bangladesh and the benefits they were able to retain from it. The literature reviews of the studies stated that social media marketing in Bangladesh is widely helpful in creating purchase decisions for customers. Also, social media marketing helps the brands of Bangladesh in increasing their brand awareness, brand association with specific emotions, and brand credibility as well. These benefits help a brand to have higher brand equity and higher brand equity eventually results in higher chance in making a customer to make purchase. In Bangladesh, it is also found that the most popular social media platform for marketing is Facebook. The customers in Bangladesh use social media for acquiring information on product and service features, to make comparison, to know reviews of products and this information eventually helps them in making a purchase decision.



### **4.3. Case study of social media marketing in international business in Bangladesh**

While knowing what features are available for the businesses of Bangladesh, it also needs to be understood how social media is used practically for marketing activities. To understand how international businesses in Bangladesh use social media as a marketing tool, the researchers have interviewed six different persons working in six different companies. The companies were chosen because they represent export-oriented companies, where most of the production goes to export and customers are foreign companies. The interviewed persons are responsible of international marketing at their respective companies. The interview was conducted over the phone and a series of open-ended and close-ended questions were asked to the interviewees. The questionnaire can be found in the appendix section.

#### **4.3.1. Debonair Group Ltd.**

Debonair Group has more than 11 sister concerns and the organization is a 100% export-oriented company. The organization started its journey in 1991 and the textile business is one of its major international operations. (Debonair 2023.) The Assistant Merchandiser named Firoz Morshed shared with interviewers that to perform international marketing through social media, Debonair Group initially ensured their presence on all major social media platforms like Youtube, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Instagram. Their journey in social media marketing started in 2015 through Facebook but soon the organization learned that the target market of the organization is active on Youtube and later they also found LinkedIn and Twitter as lucrative options for branding the organization and its products. Through repeated posts and marketing activities on social media, Debonair Group found multiple positive prospects over Twitter and LinkedIn. Many prospects also approached on Twitter and LinkedIn after seeing videos on Youtube as well. The main intention behind social media marketing for Debonair Group was to communicate the organization's brand value, and the quality of the products of Debonair Group, and to build awareness among potential foreign clients.

Debonair Group's target customers are large foreign corporate clients who order textile products in bulk amounts. Such customers are always on the look for quality textile products for lower prices. Before social media marketing the only option available for the organization to acquire new clients was through positive word of mouth of existing clients and through physical meetings with new prospective clients. The organization's Managing Director, CEO, and CFO were the main source of new sales since

they used to visit foreign countries and performed physical meetings to close business deals.

#### **4.3.2. Renaissance Group Ltd.**

Renaissance Group is engaged in Apparel, health, media, export-import, and other businesses as well. The organization started its operation in 1999 and now the organization is one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh which operates in both local and international markets. (Renaissance Group 2023.)

Mr. Ahmed Ayman Andalib who works as Senior Merchandiser was interviewed. According to him in Renaissance Group for reaching international clients and to perform marketing activities, Renaissance Group heavily relied on word-of-mouth promotion of their existing clients and also on physical meetings with foreign clients. Mr. Andalib says that Renaissance Group finds social media marketing as one of the most low-cost methods to reach the global audience for their apparel products.

Renaissance Group started using social media for marketing in 2012. Initially, they started with Facebook and later the organization established its marketing footprint on all well-renowned marketing channels like Youtube, Twitter, LinkedIn, and on Instagram. While using social media the organization focuses on portraying an aesthetic image of the organization and its products through attractive images and videos. Social media marketing allows the organization to actively engage with the target audience by replying to customer queries, directly messaging prospects, and also by running paid promotions. Social media platform's performance evaluation features are critically analyzed by Renaissance to understand what strategy an activity is working and what is not which allows us to bring constructive change in our initiative regarding the usage of social media.

#### **4.3.3. Southtech Group Ltd.**

Southtech Group is a renowned software company in Bangladesh that started its journey in 1994. The organization sells microfinance software solutions and HR software solutions to international customers. (Southtech 2022.) According to MR. Syed Mahmud Ahsan who is a Senior Executive in the Sales Department of Southtech shares that finding leads, customer support, brand awareness, and creating loyal customers are all relevant goals for the marketing team to use social media marketing for

their international operations. Southtech Group uses Facebook and LinkedIn heavily to attract international customers.

The marketing department is responsible for the social media marketing activities, and they ensure that the Facebook and LinkedIn page is active by sharing various contents related to software. The content posted on Facebook and LinkedIn includes why a business should use an HR software solution or a Microfinance solution. The benefits of Southtech's HR software solution "Scaled" and microfinance software solution "Ascend Financials" are also elaborated through video content and blog articles. The marketing department focuses on using visually attractive images to promote their products and this is how the marketing department performs social media marketing.

On a scale of 1 to 10, MR. Ahsan rated social media marketing as 10 when stating the importance of social media for international marketing. This is because Southtech's sales team does not visit clients internationally to close deals since the organization does not have the budget. Using social media helps the organization to reduce costs in closing a deal.

Among the numerous social media platforms, Southtech has found LinkedIn and Facebook most beneficial when using them for international marketing. This is because they generated more leads, compared to other platforms like YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and others. Mr. Ahsan stated that Southtech's social media marketing started in 2013 through its Facebook page.

Mr. Ahsan also states that for international marketing, Southtech relies heavily on search engine optimization and on their website which illustrates all the features of the software solutions of Southtech. Before using social media marketing, the sales personnel of Southtech used to attend various national and international software exhibitions where they used to generate leads.

#### **4.3.4. Aarong Ltd.**

Aaron was first established in 1978 with the goal to empower rural artisans by removing their poverty. At present Aaron supports 65000 artisans of Bangladesh. The organization is under the Ayesha Abed Foundation which acts as the production hub for Aarong. (Aarong 2023.) Mr. Adib Adnan works at Aarong as a sales associate. Based on the questionnaire, Mr. Adib states that Aarong uses social media marketing for creating brand awareness, to create loyal customers, and to provide support to the

customers.

Aarong uses Facebook, and Instagram for promoting its products internationally. However, Aarong does not execute any paid promotion campaigns on social media for increasing international sales or for marketing. Aarong is also active on LinkedIn and Youtube, but Facebook and Instagram are used mostly for generating sales but LinkedIn and Youtube are used for making people aware of the brand.

According to Mr. Adib Social Media, marketing is rated 9 when it comes to the importance of international marketing by using social media. Mr. Adib also states that for generating sales Instagram and Facebook are equally important and the social media marketing actions are handled by the Brand department of Aarong. Aarong uses its website for international operations, and it is the only tool that Mr. Adib is aware of which is engaged in international marketing. Through the website customers overseas from Australia, Germany, UAE, USA can order the product directly from Bangladesh. International customers can also use the Aarong app to order products according to Mr. Adib.

Mr. Adib states that Aarong started engaging in international shipping in 2021 and before having social media as a marketing tool, Aarong did not have any other means of promoting products internationally.

#### **4.3.5. Nice Denim Mills Ltd.**

Nice Denim Mills Ltd. is Bangladesh's one of the most popular and one of the largest Denim Textile producers. It is a sister concern of Saad Group. Currently, the organization has 3000 employees working under it. (Nice Denim Mills 2023.) Rubel Talukdar from Nice Denim Mills Ltd. works as a Senior Fashion Designer. He shared that social media marketing at Nice Denim Mills is used as a brand awareness tool and also it is used for generating leads for their international market. Social media marketing at Nice Denim Mills is executed by the Sales and Marketing Department. The organization performs social media marketing by following an organic approach where no paid ads are run. The participant also stated that Nice Denim Mills uses Facebook, Youtube, and LinkedIn as its social media marketing platforms. However, the strategy of the organization is to post similar content on Facebook and LinkedIn as well. However, for Youtube, the Nice Denim tries to portray its product quality and organization's competence through various videos.

According to Mr. Rubel no different strategies are set for different social media platforms. Mr. Rubel further stated that aside from using social media as a marketing tool for their international operations the organization mostly focuses on its website for generating leads. The international leads contact the organization by giving contact details to Nice Denim Mills Ltd. Mr. Ruble gave social media marketing 6 points in terms of its importance in international business. The organization did not use social media marketing before 2017 and only recently they are focusing on posting content on Facebook.

#### **4.3.6. Signet Enterprises Ltd.**

Signet Enterprises Ltd. was initially established in 1992. The organization currently exports 25 million garments across a year to more than 30 customers spread across the world. The organization has 150 sourcing professionals and 40 partner factories which are responsible for production. (Signet Enterprises Ltd. 2023.) Mr. Kamrul Islam Shuvo who is working as an Assistant Merchandiser at Signet Enterprises Ltd. has shared that his organization uses social media marketing for achieving brand awareness and to acquire international leads as well. Signet Enterprise is a textile exporting organization. However, the participant shared that initially acquiring leads and brand awareness was the goal to enter into social media marketing. But the organization at present is not actively engaged in social media marketing. In fact, there is no dedicated marketing department for executing such marketing activities. The organization at present has a Facebook page and a LinkedIn page but is not active on these platforms with posts or any kind of engaging content. MR. Shuvo also stated that social media marketing at present is not important for their international business operations because the participant rated social media 3 out of 10. The participant also shared that the organization is heavily dependent upon sending e-mails to prospects and on their websites to acquire new leads for sales. Signet Enterprise first entered into Facebook with a Facebook page in 2011, but there were no noteworthy activities by the organization to engage with the target market by using social media. The participant shared that the key officers of the organizations like the CEO, MD, and other personnel travel overseas to close new deals. Also, emails have been very helpful for them to close new deals before the arrival of social media marketing.

If the key findings from the interview feedback is summarized, it can be stated that not all international businesses of Bangladesh have adopted social media marketing yet. Also, the objective of using social media marketing for the organizations are also not same for every organization. Some might use it only for increasing sales and some might have multiple objectives like increasing brand awareness,

engaging with customers, providing customers and so on. But social media marketing gives organizations a key advantage and that is to reduce cost in marketing in international markets. One finding was common among the organizations who chose social media as an important marketing tool and that is they have a designated marketing department or personnel who is responsible for monitoring and executing the marketing activities on social media.



## 5 KEY FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The aim of this thesis has been to determine how social media is an efficient marketing tool for a Bangladeshi business that operates internationally. The thesis has used qualitative primary and secondary data to achieve this objective.

The summary from the literature findings states that different social media platforms offer different opportunities and benefits. But, in general social media marketing helps organizations with creating brand awareness, providing customers service, acquiring intelligence regarding the market, market research, and most importantly it helps with building brands. However, having a presence on social media also creates certain challenges for businesses like dealing with negative publicity, involving human and financial resource, and decreased sales due to reputation damage as well.

The secondary data findings regarding how the international businesses of Bangladesh use social media marketing as a marketing tool covered the tourism industry of Bangladesh and the usage of social media in Bangladesh. The tourism industry of Bangladesh is greatly benefited by social media marketing because social media helps the foreign tourists with necessary information regarding various tourists spots of Bangladesh. Also, the tourist industry of Bangladesh can also market various tour packages and promote various tourist spots and Bangladeshi culture through social media easily. The tourist industry of Bangladesh is highly dependent upon social media marketing and for this reason, there is an increased demand of social media managers who monitors and executes digital marketing activities for the tourist businesses of Bangladesh. Though there were not many studies available on how the international businesses of Bangladesh used social media marketing, there were many studies available that focused on how the businesses of Bangladesh were using social media for their operations in Bangladesh and the benefits they were able to retain from it. The literature reviews of the studies stated that social media marketing in Bangladesh is widely helpful in creating purchase decisions for customers. Also, social media marketing helps the brands of Bangladesh in increasing their brand awareness, brand association with specific emotions, and brand credibility as well. These benefits help a brand to have higher brand equity and higher brand equity eventually results in higher chance in making a customer to make purchase. In Bangladesh, it is also found that the most popular social media platform for marketing is Facebook and customers use social media for acquiring information on product and service features, to make comparison, to know reviews of products and this information eventually helps them in making a purchase decision.

If we try to relate the findings of how social media marketing is used in Bangladesh (chapter 4) with the literature review (chapter 2), which covered an in general finding regarding the opportunities and challenges of using social media marketing, we could find some strong similarities. For example, social media marketing a very strong tool in spreading a positive word of mouth. Secondly, social media marketing is considered as a very cost-effective marketing tool compared to other marketing mediums. Thirdly to gain success in digital marketing it is vital to employ someone who will be constantly monitoring and initiating necessary marketing activities on social media networks. Social media marketing is confirmed to be effective in creating brand awareness, brand association, brand credibility and these factors enhance brand equity. Higher brand equity eventually creates higher opportunity to make a customer to take a purchase decision.

The summary findings from the case study states that not all international businesses of Bangladesh have adopted social media marketing yet. Also, the objective of using social media marketing for the organizations are also not same for every organization. Some might use it only for increasing sales and some might have multiple objectives like increasing brand awareness, engaging with customers, providing customers and so on. But social media marketing gives organizations a key advantage and that is to reduce cost in marketing in international markets. One finding was common among the organizations who chose social media as an important marketing tool and that is they have a designated marketing department or personnel who is responsible for monitoring and executing the marketing activities on social media.

Aside for the findings from the case study and the literature collected regarding the usage of social media marketing by the businesses of Bangladesh there are some additional findings regarding social media marketing. For example, the purpose of using social media as a marketing tool serves two specific purposes. Firstly, the customers can communicate with the marketer by sharing their opinion, feedback, and preference. The customer's response on social media helps marketers to identify what customers need and bring necessary changes accordingly. The second key purpose that social media serves is to allow marketers to communicate with customers (Constantinides 2014, 45). The process of communication that allows customers and marketers to connect with each other results in some key benefits and also there are some drawbacks for both parties. Social media marketing is an effective tool for businesses that helps organizations to create positive word of mouth (Bolotaeva & Cata 2010, 3) in the most cost-effective manner (Abuhashesh 2014, 207). Through social media organizations can target a specific audience (Nadaraja & Yazdanifard 2013) and also it can be used as a platform to

provide customer support (Sajid 2016, 3). Social media can also be used by businesses to promote new products and services (Sajid 2016, 2) and it can also be used to attract new target markets as well. Just as positive word of mouth can spread across social media negative marketing can also spread through social media since there is no control over what a user can share through Facebook. (Assaad & Gómez 2011, 20.) In fact, if social media is used for marketing in an inappropriate manner which involves over-advertising, over-posting, or handling negative feedback in an inappropriate manner it could also lead to negative marketing for an organization (Horn et al. 2015, 194). In general, social media marketing has both advantages and disadvantages that a business that is engaged in international business in Bangladesh will need to take into account. It is also important to understand which social media platform is the most effective for marketing for businesses in Bangladesh that are engaged in international business. But after analyzing the interview feedback, literature review, and the secondary data collected on the businesses of Bangladesh which are engaged in international business, it could be stated that there is no specific platform that can be identified as the most ideal social media platform for Bangladeshi businesses that are engaged in international business. This is because each social media platform offers a unique proposition that is absent in other platforms. For example, Facebook offers the most advertising tools and also has the greatest number of users compared to other platforms. Instagram is ideal for businesses that want to showcase their brand, and new products or services. LinkedIn is ideal to be used for brand awareness just like any other social media platform and LinkedIn works best for B2B sales instead of B2C sales (Reis 2019, 14). On the other hand, Twitter works best for engaging customers in conversations, service recovery, and creating a positive brand image. (Burton & Soboleva 2011, 497.) Also, it needs to be noted that social media platform's popularity differs for different target markets, and priority on different social media platforms needs to be set accordingly, and this insight was based on the feedback acquired from the interviews in Bangladesh where the marketers found different social media platforms effective based on the country in which they were marketing through social media. Thus, it could be stated that social media is an effective marketing tool for international businesses operating in Bangladesh. But it could not be stated that any particular social media platform is more effective compared to others.

Based on the findings and the analysis, it could be concluded that the null hypothesis is accepted, which means social media marketing is an effective tool for the businesses of Bangladesh that are engaged in international operations.

## 5.1. RECOMMENDATIONS

After analyzing the primary and secondary data on social media marketing some key suggestions can be stated for the businesses in Bangladesh which are engaged in international business operations. Firstly, before using any social media as a marketing tool an organization needs to be clear on what business goal it wants to achieve and what marketing strategy will it use to perform marketing activities. (Packer 2011, 5.) Secondly, after choosing a social media network and after devising a strategy a business needs to stay active by responding to customers' queries and by posting engaging content over social media. This puts an organization's page on top of the search result of a target audience. (DeMers 2014,1.) Thirdly, an organization should have a separate page that will address the service issues faced by customers and this will ensure that the brand image of the organization is not tarnished (Burton & Soboleva 2011, 497). Fourthly, hiring influencers for marketing may not be always wise to promote new products or services, sometimes regular customer reviews are more impactful than influencers, and for this reason, businesses need to research properly before spending money on an influencer. (Ha 2015, 14.) Lastly, the ideal practice for any business to perform social media marketing is to ensure presence on every relevant social media platform but the effort should be on some specific platforms that are preferred by the target market.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The aim of the thesis was to understand how social media is an effective marketing tool for the business of Bangladesh which is engaged in international operations. In order to achieve this objective, the thesis has used qualitative primary and secondary data. The source of primary data was interview which was used on a survey questionnaire and the secondary data was acquired from literature sources like thesis, journal articles, and relevant websites. The thesis is based on the idea that the benefits and features that are provided by numerous social media platforms are applicable also to the business of Bangladesh which is engaged in international business.

Social media marketing is undoubtedly one of the most effective marketing methods for any business, especially for the businesses of Bangladesh which are engaged in international business operations. Creating positive word of mouth, creating brand awareness, giving customer service, showcasing products, and services, acquiring customer feedback and opinions, and promoting to a specific target audience, cutting costs on marketing, helping customers to make purchase decisions are the key features of social media. These benefits are also applicable to the international businesses of Bangladesh based on the findings of the report. However, it also needs to be noted that there is no specific social media platform that is considered the most ideal for marketing through social media rather it depends on the objective of the organization and the nature of the target market on whom marketing activities will be done. Based on these findings it can be concluded that social media is an effective marketing tool for the businesses of Bangladesh that are engaged in international operations.

However, there are also challenges that a business needs to withstand while using social media as a marketing tool. For example, an organization needs to have a designated person who will be monitoring the performance of social media marketing activities and also a clear strategy needs to be devised while using social media marketing. Also, any kind of business using social media as a marketing tool needs to ensure a presence on every popular social media platform for better brand awareness. Most importantly, organizations should perform market research before employing influencers to promote products or to promote a brand because there are numerous cases where customers gain more trust through more reviews of ordinary customers. Finally, organizations need to stay active on social media by responding to customer queries and other engagements because this helps a social media page to rank top of search results.

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## APPENDICES

### Questionnaire

1. What is your organization's main goal for using social media marketing for the international market?
  - Brand Awareness
  - Finding Leads
  - Customer Support
  - Loyal Customers
  
2. How does your organization perform international marketing by using social media?
  
3. How important is the role of social media marketing for your company in international marketing?
 

(Not important at all)1-----5-----10 (Very Important)
  
4. Which social media platform did you find the most effective for executing marketing activities for the international market?
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - LinkedIn
  - Instagram
  - Youtube
  - Others
  
5. Who or which department is responsible for social media marketing in your organization?
  
6. Are there other tools than social media marketing your organization use in international marketing? Which tools?
  
7. When did your organization first started executing social media marketing for the international market?
  
8. How did your organization execute international marketing before using social media marketing?