

The Influence of Social Media and Perceived Barriers on Formation of Social Entrepreneurial Intention: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

Social entrepreneurship is garnering global attention and emerging as a noteworthy business model. Scholars and practitioners assert that social entrepreneurship is pivotal in addressing and resolving social problems through sustainable solutions. However, evidence suggests that barriers can impede individuals from becoming social entrepreneurs or postpone the decision to initiate a social venture. Furthermore, despite the influential role of social media in shaping general public attitudes and behavior, there is limited attention given to its impact on social entrepreneurship. Consequently, this study employs the theory of planned behavior to create a new framework that incorporates various variables potentially influencing social entrepreneurial intention (SEI). This study contributes to the social entrepreneurship literature by offering new insights into the factors affecting SEI. Beyond advancing theoretical knowledge, it enhances policymakers' understanding of the antecedents of SEI, enabling them to formulate effective policies that encourage suitable individuals to pursue social entrepreneurship.

Keywords: social entrepreneurship, social media, barriers, attitudes, entrepreneurial intention, opportunity recognition

1. Introduction

Social entrepreneurship is recognized as a potent avenue that offers sustainable solutions to societal issues (Mohammadi et al., 2020). In numerous developed and developing nations, the inability of state institutions to ensure welfare for all citizens has led to the emergence of social needs. The existence of these social needs enhances the significance of social enterprises that seek to address and alleviate such needs (Yamini et al., 2020). Therefore, it is crucial to create a reservoir of social entrepreneurs and advance social entrepreneurial activities within the community. Entrepreneurial intentions play a significant role in launching social ventures, subsequently contributing to economic development (Biswas and Verma, 2021). Entrepreneurial intention can be defined as a state of mind that shows the person is inclined to set up a new firm in the future. The person may not have any specific time frame to transform intention into actual action (Thompson, 2009).

According to the theory of planned behavior (TPB), behavior is most accurately anticipated through intention (Ajzen, 1991). As a fundamental principle, the stronger the intention to undertake a particular behavior, the more likely its actual execution. Although efforts have been made to investigate and theorize social entrepreneurial behavior, the understanding of the mechanism through which social entrepreneurial intention is formed is still in its infancy (Claeyé et al., 2022). In fact, there is a lack of studies identifying the antecedents of SEI (Kruse et al., 2018; Mohammadi et al., 2022).

The existing literature has identified several factors influencing social entrepreneurship intentions. For example, Mohammadi et al. (2022) identified proactive personality and social entrepreneurial self-efficacy as drivers of SEI. In another study, Barton et al. (2018) surveyed 364 American business students and found that perceived desirability, perceived feasibility, entrepreneurship experience, entrepreneurship education, and entrepreneurial self-efficacy predict students' intentions to become social entrepreneurs. Additionally, Hashim et al. (2020) acknowledged that personal motivation, social factors, and economic factors are significantly linked to students' intentions to become social entrepreneurs in the future.

A review of the existing literature reveals that certain factors have received less attention. Firstly, evidence suggests that barriers have the potential to deter individuals from pursuing entrepreneurship, or they can slow down the decision to establish a new venture and impede business success (Hwang et al., 2019). Secondly, despite the crucial role of social media in various professional and personal activities and its significant services to entrepreneurs, there is a considerable knowledge gap regarding the influence of social media on shaping attitudes toward entrepreneurship and its effectiveness in enhancing the perceived value of entrepreneurship (Barrera Verdugo and Villarroel Villarroel, 2021). Finally, in this study, opportunity recognition is proposed as a moderating variable that may bridge the

attitude-intention gap. This gap refers to the fact that having positive attitudes does not necessarily translate into intentions or behaviors (Wang et al., 2021). The attitude-intention gap leads to the conclusion that some factors may moderate the attitude-intention link.

In the subsequent sections of the paper, the literature and underlying theory are discussed. This is followed by the development of a theoretical model incorporating identified key variables. The paper concludes with discussions on contributions, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

2. Literature Review and Proposition Development

In recent times, there has been considerable interest in social entrepreneurship from academics, policymakers, and entrepreneurs (Ghatak et al., 2020; Monteiro et al., 2022). Entrepreneurship serves as a catalyst for economic growth. Without active involvement of the entrepreneurial sector, productivity is likely to be restricted, innovation will slow down, and job creation will be limited (Gunawan and Nuringasih, 2022). The history of social entrepreneurship as a business model for social value creation has its academic roots in the 20th century. The concept of “social entrepreneurship” can be comprehensively understood by delineating its “social” and “entrepreneurial” elements separately (Hussain et al., 2022). Social entrepreneurship refers to business entities that pursue new solutions to wicked social problems through the production of goods or services, thereby creating high social value. These entities deliberately align their economic strategies with social priorities, placing the social mission at the forefront of their considerations. The focal points of these social priorities encompass challenges such as poverty, unemployment, education, health, local development, and environmental concerns (Monteiro et al., 2022).

Governments and societies are becoming progressively cognizant of various social and environmental issues, including global warming, rural poverty, an aging population, and public health challenges such as alcohol-related harms, food safety, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy. Significantly, the United Nations has introduced Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that underscore the significance of implementing strategies to address diverse social problems, including poverty eradication, enhancements in health and education, reduction of inequality, and promotion of environmentally sustainable practices (Ip et al., 2022). However, the government is incapable of providing solutions for all problems in society, subsequently leading to the need for a greater number of social entrepreneurs to contribute to addressing social problems (Kimmitt et al., 2022). Social entrepreneurship paves the road for nations’ social and economic progress (Hussain et al., 2022) and is a pivotal element in uplifting society and a noble career choice (Ghatak et al., 2020).

Research on entrepreneurial intention has been a subject of investigation for years (Ghatak et al., 2020). Different models have been used in various studies to assess entrepreneurial intentions, i.e., the theory of planned behavior; the entrepreneurial event mode; theory of reasonable action (Aliedan et al., 2022). The theory of planned behavior has proven its power

to predict and interpret human behavior in particular conditions, assuming that intention is a subject motivational state that inspires behavior (Fayolle et al., 2014; Tiwari et al., 2017; Tuan and Pham, 2022). According to the theory of planned behavior, the key predictors of intention are attitude towards the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. These three attributes are rooted in more precise and prominent beliefs, including behavioral, normative, and control beliefs which represent perceived outcomes related to the target behavior, approval of important others, and barriers and facilitators (Ajzen, 1991). Behavioral intention is a linear function of attitudes representing the positive or negative evaluation of the behavior in question. In other words, if the planned behavior receives a positive evaluation, the likelihood of its occurrence increases, and conversely, if the intended behavior is negatively evaluated, the likelihood decreases (Chipeta et al., 2022). Subjective norms involve the perceived societal pressures from others such as friends, families, or relatives to undertake (or refrain from) a specific action. The term “perceived behavioral control” refers to the perceived ease or difficulty in executing a particular behavior (Aliedan et al., 2022).

Perceived Barriers and attitude toward social entrepreneurship

Perceived barriers to starting a business have been extensively examined in the literature. The perception of entrepreneurship barriers has a negative impact on individuals' intentions to establish their own businesses in the future (Hojnik et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2019; Mohammadi et al., 2019; Aljuwaiber, 2020; Chaturvedi and Karri, 2022). Financial barriers are among the most commonly cited in various contexts. For example, a study conducted by Sana et al. (2021) in India concluded that students generally lack the financial means to invest in social entrepreneurship. Consequently, they often lack the intention to become social entrepreneurs due to financial limitations.

Another significant barrier to entrepreneurship is the lack of skills and experience. According to Vevere (2021), many entrepreneurs lack sufficient business skills, leading to potential challenges in the development of social enterprises. Importantly, social entrepreneurship faces hindrances due to a lack of awareness and clear understanding of the goals of social enterprises among the general public (Vevere et al., 2021). Last but not least, the lack of support is a key factor that may impede social entrepreneurial activities globally. Primary interviews conducted by Abdo and Paris (2017) revealed that a lack of institutional support poses a challenge, emphasizing the need for increased government and institutional support. Therefore, the proposition is developed as follows:

P1. Perceived barriers negatively affect attitudes toward social entrepreneurship.

Social media and attitude

Social media, in the current world, has a significant impact on people's lives by aiding them in discovering and learning new information, exchanging their ideas, and interacting with new organizations and/or individuals (Derdar and Moulai, 2022). According to agenda-setting

theory, media shapes individuals' understanding of much of social reality (Shaw, 1979). It further asserts that media determines for people what to think about and, at the same time, how to think about that. In other words, the media influences individuals' minds when selecting subjects for attention and also frames how to think about those subjects (McCombs and Donald, 1992). In fact, media directs public attention to certain subjects, issues, and events. Additionally, media is capable of determining what is important/unimportant, what deserves attention/neglect, and what people should be aware/unaware of. Empirical evidence confirms a link between social media and attitudes toward entrepreneurship. Shi et al. (2022) found that social media is positively related to entrepreneurial intention. Considering the supporting literature, the following proposition is developed:

P2. Social media has a positive effect on promoting desirable attitudes toward social entrepreneurship.

Attitude and SEI

Attitude refers to the attractiveness or desirability of consequences of a certain action (Esfandiar et al., 2019). Individuals assess the outcomes of a specific behavior (Ajzen, 2005), and if they perceive it as desirable, they will develop a positive attitude; conversely, if deemed undesirable, a negative attitude may ensue (Ajzen, 1991). Thus, it can be concluded that having positive attitudes leads to social entrepreneurial intention. Numerous scholars have investigated the relationship between attitude and intention. The results consistently show a positive, significant, and direct relationship between attitude and entrepreneurial intention (Usman and Yennita, 2019; Aliedan et al., 2022; Khalid et al., 2022). In the context of SEI, similar findings are obtained. Chengalvala and Rentalala (2017) conducted an empirical study and found entrepreneurial attitudes to be one of the major factors that influence social entrepreneurial intention. That is, those who have positive attitudes toward social entrepreneurship are more likely to form SEI. Therefore, this study assumes the following proposition:

P3. Attitude positively affects social entrepreneurial intention.

Opportunity recognition as a moderator

Opportunity recognition plays a pivotal role in entrepreneurship, as a central aspect involves identifying and exploiting profitable opportunities (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). This recognition is not only critical in general or for-profit entrepreneurship but also holds significant importance in the realm of social entrepreneurship. According to Hechavarría and Welter (2015), social entrepreneurship encompasses activities performed with the aim of discovering, defining, and exploiting accessible opportunities to enhance social wealth through the creation of novel ventures or innovative management of existing organizations.

Based on the Model of Action (MAO), positive consumer attitudes lead to desirable behavior only when individuals have the opportunity and ability to perform the expected behavior. In

this study, opportunity recognition is considered a moderating variable to address the attitude-intention gap, which refers to the fact that having positive attitudes does not necessarily translate into intentions or behaviors (Wang et al., 2021; Kurdi et al., 2022). Therefore, certain factors may moderate the connection between attitude and intention. To address this gap, the following hypothesis is proposed:

P4. Opportunity recognition moderates the relationship between attitude and SEI.

3. Conceptual Model

In light of the existing literature and identified gaps, the following conceptual model is presented. This model is underpinned by the theory of planned behavior, which centers on antecedents of intention. The study puts forth perceived barriers, attitudes, and social media as factors that potentially influence social entrepreneurial intention. Conversely, opportunity recognition is considered as a construct that moderates the relationship between attitudes and SEI. The model is illustrated in Figure 1.

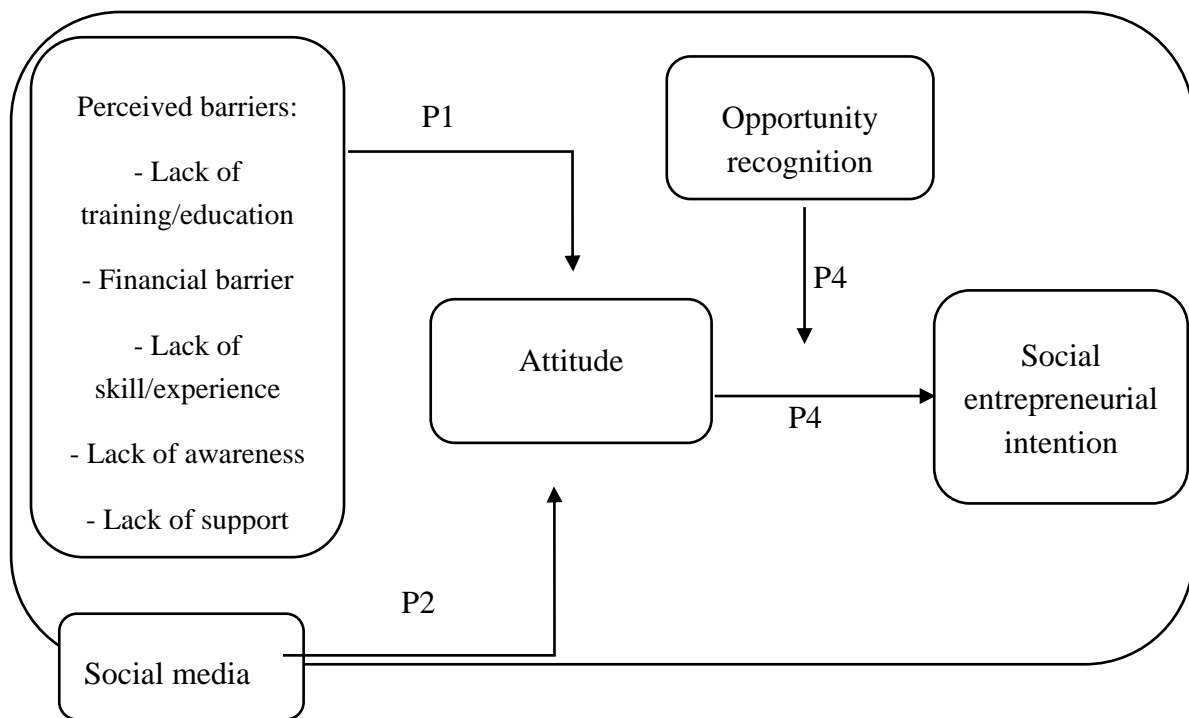


Figure 1. Conceptual Model

4. Conclusion

The global phenomenon of social entrepreneurship is a powerful tool for providing sustainable solutions to societal problems. The rise in social needs amplifies the value of social enterprises, making it imperative to cultivate a pool of social entrepreneurs and promote entrepreneurial activities within communities. Recognizing the pivotal role of entrepreneurial intentions, this study offers a theory-driven approach to social

entrepreneurship research by taking the theory of planned behavior as a basic research framework and extending it by incorporating new variables. Drawing from existing literature and recognizing the gaps in research, this paper introduces a conceptual model. The model is underpinned by the theory of planned behavior, emphasizing the precursors of intention. In this investigation, perceived barriers, attitudes, and social media are posited as influential factors in social entrepreneurial intention. Additionally, the study posits that opportunity recognition serves as a construct moderating the association between attitudes and SEI.

This study contributes to theory by enhancing our understanding of antecedents of SEI and proposes avenues for future research. The model proposed in this paper can be used by researchers to empirically test antecedents of SEI. Additionally, other variables can be incorporated into the model, i.e., sociocultural factors, religious beliefs, and economic conditions. Adding these factors and empirically testing them to the present research framework could potentially bring further clarity to the factors forming SEI. Lastly, as previous studies have demonstrated, intentions do not necessarily result in action. Arguably, not enough studies are linking SEI and behavior. Researching the link between intention and action in the context of SE could be the next step in SE scholarship (Yamini et al., 2020).

Along with theoretical contributions, the study also has implications for policymakers and decision-makers. Setting policies to remove barriers and promoting social entrepreneurship in social media can encourage the right set of people in the right way in choosing social entrepreneurship as a future career.

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