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Social Media Marketing and Sustainable Business Performance of Small and Medium Enterprises in Bangladesh

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Abstract

Social media marketing (SMM) plays a crucial role in business communication, marketing, operations, and other activities. In the emerging economy such as Bangladesh, there is a growing interest in the researchers, academicians and practitioners to understand the role of SMM on business sustainability in small and medium enterprises (SME). Thus, the aim of this study is to examine the impact of adopting social media marketing for sustainable business growth of SMEs in Bangladesh. There are 292 samples collected from Bangladeshi SMEs using the various social media marketing applications in their business, which are analyzed in IBM SPSS. The results show that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use were important factors that affect the acceptance of social media marketing (SMM) among the SMEs in Bangladesh. The findings also indicate that the use of SMM can positively and moderately influence the sustainable development of SMEs, which can increase market penetration, customer engagement, and competitiveness. Further, the perceived usefulness and ease of use also directly impact sustainable growth, in addition to being mediated by SMM use. The study suggests that the owners of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) should focus on making their social media platforms more user-friendly and invest in training to build their digital skills and use. The government policies should facilitate SMEs by providing better digital literacy initiatives, infrastructure development, and low-cost internet access. Such programs may help to rapidly foster the adoption of SMM, and contribute to SMEs' long-term competitiveness and sustainable growth.

1. Introduction

The Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are regarded as one of the important factors that drive economic growth, employment, industrial development, and poverty alleviation in emerging economies (1). SMEs play an important role in the growth of GDP, job creation and regional economic stability in developing countries like Bangladesh. SMEs however often have to deal with a lack of financial resources, the lack of technological capabilities, strong competition from other mainstream companies and limited access to traditional marketing channels. These restrictions force SMEs to look for cost-effective, innovative ways to keep them growing and more competitive (2).

In today's world, the internet and digital technologies have revolutionized the global business landscape (3). Social networks like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have emerged as vital marketing channels, allowing businesses to engage directly with customers, boost brand awareness, improve customer engagement, and market products or services at a lower cost than conventional marketing channels. Social media marketing (SMM) is a way for SMEs to address resource constraints, expand their reach, and build long-term customer relationships (4).

Social media marketing is the process of focusing on social networking sites to promote products and services, as well as build interactive communication between businesses and consumers, to create and nurture an organizational brand (5). The integration of SMM is becoming more than ever a strategic need for SMEs, as it is essential for gaining customers, enhancing operational efficiency, enabling innovation,

and achieving sustainable business performance. Research has found that social media marketing has a positive impact on the sustainable growth of SMEs by expanding market reach, satisfying customers, and adapting businesses (6).

Factors that affect the adoption of social media marketing in emerging economies include the perceived usefulness, ease of use, leadership support, technological readiness, organizational capability and environmental conditions (7). The evidence shows that using social media marketing strategies can lead to an increase in competitiveness and sustainability for SMEs (8). But uptake and impact of the technology varies widely between countries as a result of the digital infrastructure, technological literacy, institutional support and socio-economic conditions of countries.

In Bangladesh, digital transformation has gained momentum in recent years, as internet connection, the use of smartphones and the government's push for digitalization has increased over the last decade. Platforms of social media, especially Facebook, have become the most prevalent business communication and e-commerce tools (9). Increasingly, many Bangladeshi SMEs rely on social media to sell their products, engage with customers and widen business opportunities. Despite the aforementioned growth, SMEs still face several issues in implementing SMM such as lack of digital skills, financial constraints, insufficient technological infrastructure, cybersecurity issues, and lack of strategic planning (9, 10, 10).

In this era, which is becoming more and more significant for the growth of the business in a sustainable way and the importance of digital marketing, it has become significant to research on how the adoption of social media marketing helps in sustainable growth among the SMEs of Bangladesh. The study thus explores the use of social media marketing as a tool for sustainable growth of SMEs in Bangladesh (11).

While social media marketing has proved to be an effective tool for enhancing business performance, a number of SMEs in Bangladesh face challenges in adopting and using these technologies effectively (12). However, several factors hinder the effective use of social media marketing: Resource Constraints, lack of the Digital Expertise, awareness, resistance of the organization, and lack of adequate technological infrastructure (10, 13). As a result, many SMEs don't realize the potential benefits of customer engagement, market expansion, brand recognition, sustainable competitive advantage, etc.

The previous studies verify that social media marketing and sustainable business development are positively related with SMEs in emerging countries (6, 14). However, empirical evidence specific to Bangladeshi SMEs is still scarce. Furthermore, there is a lack of research that investigates how social media marketing can affect the outcome of sustainability within the Bangladesh SME sector and affect long-term growth. The main aims of this study is to analyze the adoption of social media marketing for sustainable growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Bangladesh in order to mitigate this gape.

This study has theoretical, practical, policy and economic importance. As a theory extension to the digital marketing and digital technology adoption theories in a developing economy context, it

theoretically enriches literature on social media marketing adoption and sustainable growth among the SMEs of Bangladesh. In practice, it empowers SME owners to boost their competitiveness and sustainability by implementing successful digital marketing measures. On the policy level, findings can help shape initiatives and infrastructure for digital transformation of SMEs. Social media adoption can help improve SME sustainability in an economic perspective, which can help bring more jobs to Bangladesh and the overall socio-economic development.

Further, this study is organized into six sections. The first section presents the development of hypothesis and conceptual framework, discussing existing studies and developing the theoretical foundation of the research. The second section explains the methodology, including research design, data collection, and analysis techniques. The third section provides the discussion of findings and their implications. The fourth section present the implication of the study. Finally, the fifth section highlights the limitations of the study and offers directions for future research to extend understanding in this field.

2. Development of Hypothesis and Conceptual Framework

2.1. Perceived Usefulness (PU)

PU is considered as an invisible estimation which comes from a user's perception that the application of a technology will enable him/her to enhance his/her overall performance (15). Therefore, in the perspective of this study, it can be said that the employees in SMEs must have the confidence that if they use SMM, their performance will be enhanced. However, the use of SMM by employees is seen as affecting the overall performance and sustainability of the SMEs (16). It has been noted that the usefulness of the technology is related to user intention to use technology which is a fundamental concept in TAM (17). Also, it was supported that the sense of usefulness is positively related to using the concerned technology (18). Hence, the first study hypothesis is stated as:

Hypothesis (H1): Perceived usefulness (PU) positively influence use of social media marketing (US).

2.2. Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)

If the user feels that the new technology or system is not complicated, then they won't be limited to use it. This is linked with the idea that people need to put in some effort to use a technology or a system. When employees find that the experience with the new technology was easier than they thought, they tend to be motivated to use an innovative system or technology (19). Besides, people who think that a system is relatively easy and not complex to use will be more motivated to conceptualize usefulness of the system on their own. If employees of SMEs feel that SMM does not require much difficulty in implementation and use, then they will not be reluctant to use SMM in this study (4). For this reason, the following hypotheses are set.

Hypothesis (H2): Perceived ease of use (PEU) positively influence use of social media marketing (US).

2.3. Use of SMM (US)

Social media is viewed as an easy-to-use tool for SMEs to reach out to potential customers online, or for customers to get feedback from one another (20). Since interactions through social media are not expensive, most SMEs nowadays adopt this practice, as they have limited resources as well as limited technical capability. Even more, use of SMM is expected to help SMEs to improve business activities by building brands as well as by acting as a great tool for SMEs to improve their business practices, which, in turn, improves their sustainable growth (21). These inputs help us to develop the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis (H3): Use of SMM (US) positively influence SME sustainable growth (SSG).

2.4. SME Sustainable Growth (SSG)

SME sustainable growth means the capacity of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to grow their business in a sustainable manner, while keeping their competitiveness, profitability, and responsiveness to market changes. However, with technology, sustainable growth now relies on digital transformation and the use of cutting-edge technologies (22). Tools like social media marketing, cloud computing, e-commerce solutions, data analytics, and artificial intelligence can help SMEs boost efficiency, cut expenses, and deliver a better customer experience (23). Digital is also the avenue for reaching broader audiences, enabling SMEs to reach beyond geographical limitations. Moreover, technology aids in making informed decisions by analyzing real-time data and customer insights, enabling businesses to adapt swiftly to market shifts. By streamlining processes and improving customer engagement, the integration of digital payment methods, online communication tools, and automation can enhance productivity and customer relationships (24). But some SMEs might face certain barriers to technology adoption including insufficient financial resources, insufficient technological infrastructure, and lack of digital skills. In today's increasingly competitive and technologized business environment, therefore, investing in technological capabilities and digital literacy is crucial for sustainable growth, resilience and long-term success of SMEs (25).

(H4): Use of SMM (US) positively moderate the relationship between perceived usefulness (PU) and SME sustainable growth (SSG).

(H5): Use of SMM (US) positively moderate the relationship between perceived ease of use (PEU) and SME sustainable growth (SSG).

3. Methodology

3.1. Measurement Instruments

Measures for this study were obtained from the current literature. The questions were pre-tested to rectify items' wording and render it easy for the participants to understand the study questions. The opinions of six experts who have sufficient knowledge about the study's domain were considered, in order to improve the items of study in terms of comprehensiveness and readability. Moreover, the research questions were discussed with the experts to make sure that they are understandable, not

ambiguous, vague and difficult to answer so that the respondents can express their attitudes in terms of their prospects of using SMM in SMEs. The survey instrument was developed followed by a pilot test with the objective of estimating the potential response rate and testing the scale reliability. Finally, the questionnaire was disseminated to a relatively small population. The same criteria were used for selecting the participants in the pilot test as in the main survey, with the background of the participants also being identical. The pilot test led to a few changes in the wording of the items and to the enhancement of the reliability of the items of the constructs used. The remaining weaknesses in the questionnaire were finally removed.

3.2. Data Collection

For various reasons this study is done in Bangladesh. Bangladesh is certainly an emerging economy and among the SAARC countries, there are significant number of SMEs (26). Bangladesh is also said to be the most highly socially media-savvy country with a very high penetration of Internet users. The study was conducted in three cities of Bangladesh namely Dhaka, Chitagong and Rajshahi as a large number of SMEs are established here. Finally, the study subjects were working with SMEs which are included in the Micro, Small & Medium Enterprise Development Act 2006 (Bangladesh). A total of 50 SMEs were randomly selected from the three cities and the executives were reached by telephone calls and e-mail. We clarified that the purpose of the study was strictly academic and asked executives to give permission for their workers to participate in the study. Their anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents were also guaranteed. Eventually, executives of 24 SMEs agreed to allow their employees of different ranks to take part it in survey. A sample of 600 employees from these 24 SMEs were randomly selected and sent an email with the response sheet which included the 17 items. The quantification of the responses was based on a Likert scale of 5 points, so there were 5 options on the response sheet. We informed the respondents to put only one tick mark in one of the five options against each item. Within two-months (February 2026 to April 2026), all 600 employees (prospective respondents) were asked to respond. A total of 318 responses were received in the allotted time period. A 53% response rate was obtained. These 318 responses were checked for completeness of the response, 26 responses were incomplete, and not considered. So, 292 valid responses were analyzed with 17 items.

3.3 Analysis

Data obtained were analyzed on IBM SPSS software. Descriptive statistics, correlation and regression analysis were used to analyze relationships between the study variables. The software allowed for the management of accurate data, statistical testing and analysis of the research findings.

3.3.1. Demographic Information of Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents (N = 292) reveals that respondents in the sample are mostly male (71.23%) with strong male representation in the workforce. The majority of the participants belong to the middle age group (31–40 years, 42.47%), followed by 41–50 years (21.58%) and 20–30 years (18.15%), indicating a mature and professionally active group. A significant proportion of the

respondents (43.84%) had completed HSC, and 27.74% had completed graduation; a smaller proportion (11.64%) had postgraduate qualification suggesting moderate level of academic qualification. The experience distribution also indicates an experienced work force with a high number in the middle and higher end experience categories such as 16 to 20 years' experience (27.74%) and the other large experience groups. When it comes to job positions, more than half of the respondents are supervisors (50.68%), while one in five respondents is a junior manager (15.07%) and one in six is an executive (14.38%), and lower numbers of respondents are in top-management positions (11.30%). The demographic information of 292 respondents is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic Information

Variable	Category	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	28.77
	Male	71.23
Age	31–40	42.47
	41–50	21.58
	20–30	18.15
	51–60	11.64
	61+	6.16
Education	HSC	43.84
	Graduation	27.74
	Post-Graduation	11.64
	SSC	9.93
	Other	6.85
Experience	Category 1	34.59
	16–20 years	27.74
	Category 2	19.52
	21–25 years	14.38
	26–30 years	3.77
Job Position	Supervisor	50.68
	Junior Manager	15.07
	Executive	14.38
	Top Management	11.30
	Manager	8.56

3.3.2. Reliability test

The internal consistency is usually calculated using an alpha coefficient, which measures the interrelationship between items in the questionnaire (27). Taber (28) argued that a reliability higher than 0.60 is acceptable. The internal consistency of the constructs of the study was measured using Cronbach's alpha. The results showed that PU (α = 0.608), PUE (α = 0.676), US (α = 0.713), and SSG (α = 0.792) achieved acceptable reliability levels. The constructs showed the highest reliability for SSG, and

the lowest comparative reliability for PU. Given accepted guidelines, constructs with alpha values of more than 0.60 can be retained in exploratory research and measures in this study are, therefore, reliable enough for further analysis. The reliability test result is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Reliability Test

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
PU	0.608
PUE	0.676
US	0.713

3.3.3. Descriptive Analysis

The descriptive statistics showed that the highest mean value (M = 3.543, SD = 0.736) was obtained for SME Sustainable Growth (SSG), which means that the respondents were comparatively strong in their agreement about the outcomes of sustainable growth for SMEs. Social Media Marketing (US) was also found to be of moderate level (M = 3.229, SD = 0.620). The mean values for Perceived Usefulness (PU) and Perceived Ease of Use (PUE) were 3.176 and 3.076 respectively, both with positive moderate perceptions. Finally, all constructs obtained better than the midpoint of the scale indicating positive respondent attitudes towards social media marketing and sustainability of SMs. The result of descriptive analysis in shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Descriptive Analysis

Construct	Mean	SD	Min	Max	Interpretation
PU	3.176	0.674	1.00	5.00	Moderate perception
PUE	3.076	0.727	1.25	4.75	Moderate perception
US	3.229	0.620	1.40	4.60	Moderately high usage
SSG	3.543	0.736	1.00	5.00	Relatively high sustainable growth

3.3.4. Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was used to examine the strength and direction of the linear relationships among the study variables. The results indicate how strongly the variables are associated, with coefficients ranging from − 1 to + 1 (29). High correlation levels were found between all constructs with Pearson correlation analysis. The highest correlation was between PUE and US (r = 0.657), which means the ease of use of the social media marketing is highly correlated with social media marketing use. Furthermore, US had a strong positive correlation with SSG (r = 0.614), which indicates that the more SMEs use social media marketing, the better their sustainable growth is. Multicollinearity was not seen

as a problem as all the correlation coefficients were lower than 0.80. The result of correlation shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Correlation Result

Variables	PU	PUE	US	SSG
PU	1.000	0.374	0.361	0.450
PUE	0.374	1.000	0.657	0.556
US	0.361	0.657	1.000	0.614
SSG	0.450	0.556	0.614	1.000

3.3.5. Regression analysis

This study carried out regression analysis to look at how the independent factors affected the dependent variable. These associations' statistical significance, direction, and strength are all determined by the results. This approach also assesses how well the outcome variable's variation is explained by the predictors (30). The results revealed that Perceived Usefulness (PU) positively influenced the Use of Social Media Marketing (US) ($\beta = 0.123$, $p = 0.005$), which means that the more the SMEs perceived social media marketing as useful for improving the performance of their business, the more likely they were to use it, but the effect was low. Perceived Ease of Use (PUE) has a significant and positive effect on US ($\beta = 0.517$, $p < 0.001$) which shows that ease of understanding and operating social media platforms is a strong factor contributing to its adoption. Moreover, the Use of Social Media Marketing has a significant contribution to SME Sustainable Growth (SSG) ($\beta = 0.466$, $p < 0.001$) and it is the engagement of social media in SMEs that is important for growth. Perceived usefulness (PU) ($\beta = 0.251$, $p < 0.001$) and perceived ease of use (PUE) ($\beta = 0.215$, $p < 0.001$) have significant direct effects on SSG, which means that both constructs directly affect social media marketing usage and sustainable growth. The results validate the importance of ease of use, usefulness and social media marketing adoption for the sustainable growth of SMEs. Table 5 displays the correlation's outcome.

Table 5
Correlation Result

Relationship	β	p-value	Interpretation
PU → US	0.123	0.005	Significant
PUE → US	0.517	< 0.001	Significant
US → SSG	0.466	< 0.001	Significant
PU → SSG (with mediator)	0.251	< 0.001	Significant
PUE → SSG (with mediator)	0.215	< 0.001	Significant

3.3.6. Model Fit

The results of regression indicate that the model accounts for a moderate and statistically significant amount of variation in SSG. The R2 value of 0.462 suggests that the model has an explained variance of 46.2% by the independent variables included in the model (PU, PUE and US). The Adjusted R-squared (0.457) is quite close to the R-squared, indicating that the model provides a good fit and there is no overfitting. The F-statistic (82.53) with a very small Prob (F-statistic = 1.47e-38) confirms that the overall regression model is highly significant, meaning the independent variables jointly have a meaningful impact on SSG. The model is statistically reliable because there are 292 observations and 3 predictors. Furthermore, model "fit" can be estimated using the AIC (475.6) and BIC (490.4), with lower values suggesting a better model fit, as compared to other models. Table 6 displays the correlation result.

Table 6
Model Fit Result

Item	Value
R-squared	0.462
Adjusted R-squared	0.457
F-statistic	82.53
Prob (F-statistic)	1.47e-38
Log-Likelihood	-233.82
AIC	475.6
BIC	490.4
Df Model	3
Df Residuals	288

4. Discussion

In this study, the adoption of social media marketing (SMM) and its impact on sustainable business growth of SMEs in Bangladesh has been explored. The results confirm that perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PUE) have significant effects on the use of social media marketing (US), which in turn positively contributes to sustainable growth of SMEs (SSG). The findings are similar to previous studies indicating the motivation for implementing digital technology in SMEs is mainly the perceived benefits and ease of use (4, 18).

According to the regression analysis, the effect of PU is positive, but the effect is small in size with US. This means that, the more that SMEs view the SMM as a positive factor to enhance performance, competitiveness, and customer engagement, the more likely they are to adopt it. This finding is consistent with Keegan and Rowley (16), who noted that an intention to improve performance was a

social media adoption motivator. The relatively low coefficient, however, indicates that usefulness is not enough to guarantee adoption; other factors influencing behavior may also be important.

Conversely, ease of use, as measured by PUE, has a significantly greater influence on US, suggesting that ease of use is the most important factor in SMM adoption. This relationship is well supported by the strong positive correlation between PUE and US. However, ease of use is crucial to technology acceptance among Bangladeshi SMEs, as their digital skills and technological capabilities can differ (9, 10). In addition, SMM use can significantly affect the SME sustainable growth. This discovery indicates that SMEs that engage in social media marketing positively have more favorable sustainable results which can encompass improved market reach, customer relations and competitive positioning. This aligns with Amoah et al. (6) and Qalati et al. (14) who revealed that using social media boosts SMEs performance and sustainability in emerging economy. The moderate relationship between US and SSG ($r = 0.614$) also indicates that SMM is a strategic tool that can support long-term growth.

Interestingly, both PU and PUE have significant direct effects on SSG after the introduction of US as a mediator. This suggests not only a positive impact on sustainable growth as a result of higher SMM use but also as a result of a general orientation to digitalization and strategic transformation. This is consistent with Kahveci (25), who pointed out that digital transformation competencies directly contribute to the competitiveness and resilience of SMEs.

5. Theoretical and Practical Implication

This research has theoretical, practical and policy implications. In theory it is an extension of the Technology Acceptance Model (15) and the introduction of sustainable growth as an outcome variable in the SME context of developing economy. The study's findings contribute to the digital marketing literature and the field of SME sustainable growth, as it reveals the effects of PU and PUE on SMM use and sustainable growth.

In practice, the findings indicate that ease of use should be the main consideration for SME owners/managers to reflect upon when selecting social media platforms. The use of SMM can be enhanced by training programs and making digital tools easier to use, as they have the greatest impact on PUE. Moreover, SMEs need to take a strategic approach to adopting SMM in their expansion strategies, leveraging its potential to improve customer engagement, brand visibility, and overall competitiveness.

Policy-wise, the government should give attention to digital literacy, technological infrastructure and low-cost Internet connectivity in SME support institutions in Bangladesh. Adoption of SMM can be promoted and help towards national development with targeted digital training and financial incentives. The development of digital ecosystems would contribute to improving SMEs' resilience and sustainable development.

6. Limitation and Future Research Agenda

This study has a number of limitations. The research was conducted in a cross sectional design, which does not allow the assessment of causal relationships over time. Longitudinal studies would give a more in-depth understanding of sustainable growth over time as a result of the adoption of SMM. Second, the data were gathered from SMEs in three major cities of Bangladesh (Dhaka, Chittagong, and Rajshahi), which possibly reduces the generalizability of the results to rural and less developed areas. Third, the study used self-reported data, which can cause common method bias or subjectivity of respondents. Moreover, only PU and PUE were explored for predicting SMM adoption. The other factors like leadership support, technological readiness, competitive pressure and environmental condition were not incorporated into the model. These variables may help to elucidate adoption behavior in a more complete way.

This study could be expanded in a number of ways in the future. The first is to use a longitudinal research design that allows for the study of the effects of continued use of social media marketing on SME growth over time. Second, comparative studies across developing countries could give cross-cultural validation and thus increase generalizability. Other factors could also be included, including top management support, digital readiness, innovation capability and environmental uncertainty, in future studies to create a more comprehensive framework. Furthermore, qualitative methods like interviews, or case studies, could be used to complement the quantitative results and provide a deeper insight into the problems and strategies of SMEs. In conclusion, future studies could explore how new technologies, like artificial intelligence, data analytics, and automation, interact with social media marketing to drive sustainable SME growth.

Declarations

Ethics approval

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from the Institutional Animal, Medical Ethics, Biosafety and Biosecurity Committee (IAMEBBC), Institute of Biological Sciences, University of Rajshahi (Approval Memo No. 331/320(74)/IAMEBBC/IBSc, dated 19 May 2026).

Consent to participate

Informed consent was obtained from all participants before their participation in the study.

Consent to publish

All participants provided informed consent for the publication of anonymized data collected during the study.

Competing Interest

The authors did not report any possible conflict of interest.

Clinical trial number

Not applicable.

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Author Contribution

Md. Sohel Rana served as the lead author and was responsible for the research design, data analysis, interpretation of results, and preparation of the initial manuscript draft. He also coordinated the overall research process and finalized the paper. Md. Shafiullah contributed to the literature review, data collection, and methodological refinement. He provided critical revisions and feedback to improve the intellectual content of the manuscript. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the paper.

Data Availability

The datasets used and/or analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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Figures

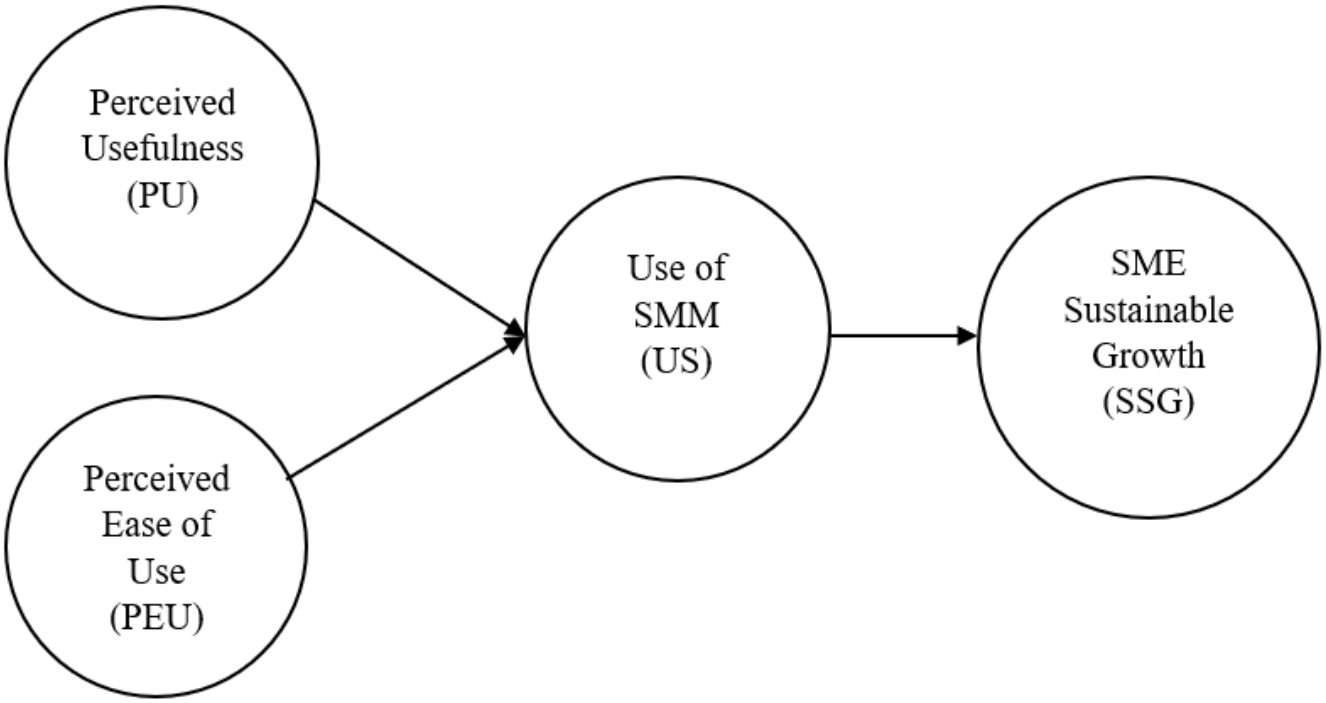


Figure 1

Conceptual Framework