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## Research Article

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# *Accelerating Social Enterprises' Growth through Business Innovations: The Case of GK Enchanted Farm*

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### ABSTRACT

Social enterprises are community change agents that contribute significantly to the economy, yet they confront obstacles such as scaling-up and receiving insufficient assistance. An evidence-based case study concentrating on the case of Gawad Kalinga Enchanted Farm, its residents, and the social entrepreneurs in the area was conducted to determine the support needed by social enterprises in accelerating their growth through business innovations.

The qualitative research method was employed in this study because it allowed the researcher to acquire a better understanding of how innovation contributes to each social enterprise's dimension and why each is important to success. The findings reveal that social enterprise's value proposition, key resources, key activities, key partners, and cost structure are the features that set it apart from other businesses. As a result, social entrepreneurs should employ innovative approaches to continuously improve their products and processes, with a focus on the aforementioned aspects that are crucial to attaining their objectives. To aid the establishment and expansion of social enterprises, business support services and infrastructure, as well as a network of social entrepreneurs who can offer greater options for impact, could be offered.

The support of a social enterprise's partner institution, whether public or private, and how the social entrepreneur uses innovative methods to improve their value proposition, key resources, key activities, key partners, and cost structure are all important factors in accelerating social enterprise's growth. As a result, an innovative social enterprise model with a support system is determined to be critical in achieving its goal.

### KEYWORDS

*Business Dimensions, Business Innovation, Business Model, Social Enterprise Model, Social Enterprises, Support System*

### CITE THIS ARTICLE AS:

Galang, M. C. (2022). Accelerating Social Enterprises' Growth through Business Innovations: The Case of GK Enchanted Farm. *ASEAN Multidisciplinary Research Journal*, Vol 10(1)

## INTRODUCTION

Poverty, hunger, and unemployment are just a few of the socio-economic issues that the society is currently dealing with. These can potentially be solved by communities themselves but often require outside support such as funding by governments or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or engaging people to different businesses. Businesses can be a primary contributor in solving these social problems. A social enterprise, in particular, is a new organizational model that focuses on creating social impact as a way to address the different social issues that exist in today's *world* (Ashraf *et al.*, 2019). Though they are directed towards social value propagation, social enterprises have the same operating structure as traditional enterprises, with an emphasis on generating profit in any way possible (Yunus *et al.*, 2010).

Though social enterprises are community change agents who can make a substantial contribution to the economy, they face challenges such as scaling up and inadequate funding or assistance. Social networks or social environment factors, which include aspects such as support, funding, education for the formation of social entrepreneurial skills, and other regional aspects that can boost the formation of a social enterprise from the local reality, are a well-known factor for the success of social enterprise activities (Jiao, 2011). This practice is adapted in Bulacan, and in particular in the community of *Gawad Kalinga* Enchanted Farm (GKEF).

GKEF takes its name from Bulacan's Barangay Encanto, which in Filipino brings to mind thoughts of the mysterious and mystical. It is the starting point for Gawad Kalinga's 2024 road map to end poverty in the Philippines.. The area, which was once vacant and unproductive, is now being turned into a landscape with enormous potential that will support communities for the future. The Philippines' first of 24 Center for Social Innovation (CSI) facilities.

Bulacan's Enchanted Farm follows a framework that combines three basic concepts. The first is a Village University for long-term community development, including classrooms that are linked to communities. The Enchanted Farm will teach students how to develop social enterprises, and the communities will be built from the ground up, attracting students from all disciplines, making it an excellent environment for any university student. Through explorer parties and camps, young children will come to the farm to learn about and appreciate the growth of plant and animal life. Residents of the GK village will also be introduced to social entrepreneurship, which has the potential to open up a world of opportunities both locally and globally.

The second is a social entrepreneurship Silicon Valley, where young entrepreneurs are provided with a supporting business ecosystem and an enabling environment to assist them in launching Filipino products. Fifty of the Philippines' most innovative social enterprises will not only have a convenient location on the Enchanted Farm to promote their brands, but will also have access to the farm's resources and infrastructure.

The third is a social tourism Disneyland, where tourists from all over the Philippines and the world may receive a firsthand experience at the Gawad Kalinga community and learn about the social issues that millions of Filipinos endure. Tourists can see how dreams can become a reality in a community where its people were once provoked to seek solutions and greener pastures elsewhere through the Enchanted Farm's magical stories, which enchant not only through stories of fairy tales about *duwendes* (Filipino for elf) but also through real life experiences (<https://www.gk1world.com>).

This study described the operations of social enterprises focusing on the different dimensions such as customer segments, value proposition, channels, customer relationships, revenue stream, key resources, key activities, key partners, and cost structure. These dimensions are also known as the nine (9) building blocks of the Business Model Canvas. The Business Model Canvas is a strategic management template that may be used to create new business models as well as document existing ones. It provides a visual chart that includes aspects that describe a firm's or product's value proposition, infrastructure, customers, and finances, supporting firms in aligning their activities by demonstrating potential trade-offs ([Osterwalder et al., 2010](#)). These building blocks of the Business Model Canvas served as the framework of this study in mapping out the essential components of a social enterprise and determining how innovation contributes to the different dimensions significant to social enterprise leading to its growth.

Lastly, to determine the support and assistance needed by social enterprises in accelerating their growth through business innovations, an evidence-based case study has been conducted, focusing on the case of Gawad Kalinga Enchanted farm, its residents and the social enterprises in the area. As a result, an innovative social enterprise model was established, which specifies the support system to provide to social enterprises in order to assist them in scaling up and becoming a community change agent that enhances people's quality of life.

## METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research is the method appropriate in this study since it has allowed the researcher to develop an in-depth understanding on how innovation contributes to each dimension of social enterprise and why each of its dimensions is essential to its success. Also, the use of qualitative research provided strength to unfold the concepts of social enterprise and its dimensions and allowed enormous possibilities to open up new ideas.

This study utilized Qualitative Descriptive Research which is a broad inquiry method that has used unstructured data-collection methods such as focus groups, observations and documents to describe how social enterprises operate in terms of their different dimensions. Also, a case study type of qualitative research was utilized to make an in-depth investigation of the different social enterprises located in GK Enchanted Farm to explore the underlying concerns of this study.

The researcher has chosen the social enterprises in GK Enchanted Farm located in Angat Bulacan as the locale of this study in order to draw a more precise conclusion and recommendations which are applicable and beneficial to the people, and the different organizations and communities of the said locality and province, and may be adapted by other communities as well.

This study utilized purposeful or judgmental sampling technique in selecting the informants where informants were chosen because of their competence in the subject and their ability to provide important information on the research topic, as determined by the researcher. It is composed of one representative from the GK Enchanted Farm Management, five social entrepreneurs, and six employees/residents who work in the different social enterprises in GK Enchanted Farm and who are also residents of the said community.



There were three sets of semi-structured key informants interview guide questions in this study: (a) for the management of GK Enchanted Farm; (b) for top management of social enterprises; and (c) for members of GK Community whose lives were influenced by social enterprises in the area.

The interview guide questions for the management of GK Enchanted Farm focused on the assistance and support they provide to social enterprises in the area while the interview guide questions for top management of social enterprises consisted of three parts: (a) the profile of the informants; (b) the informants' perception on the different dimensions of the social enterprise; and (c) the informants' perception on how innovation contributes to each dimension. On the other hand, the interview guide questions for the members of the GK Enchanted Farm community consisted of two parts: (a) the profile of the informants; and (b) the informants' experiences on how the social enterprises influenced their lives.

The researcher used content analysis as a research technique, in which the collected data was transcribed and examined. Content analysis is a research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences from the text. In addition, it is the process of summarizing and interpreting written data; a strict and systematic set of procedures for rigorous analysis, examination, and verification of the contents of written data (*Triad 3, 2016*).

In the analysis of the interview transcript, the researcher utilized thematic presentation, emerging themes, and data saturation where the information was independently categorized and coded through line-by-line analysis and consolidated such into salient themes.

## **RESULTS**

The business operations of social enterprises were described according to their different dimensions. In terms of customer segments, the social status of the customers of social enterprises are mostly individuals from middle to upper classes, and those who are health-conscious, with a purchasing behavior of building brand loyalty. As to the value proposition, social enterprises make use of extraordinary resources, and healthier and natural alternatives to be distinct and to add value to their product offering. With regard to channels, social enterprises reach customers through different channels, such as the use of social media and websites while also not forgetting traditional marketing. Also, they prefer business to business channel for a long term partnership with customers and they also make use of different platforms to sell their products and employ web analytics and cooking tracking to obtain vital information about customers. They also maintain their own logistics to ensure that products will be delivered to customers as scheduled. But some prefer to hire a logistics company so that they can deliver their products to a bigger number of customers to different locations around the country.

In terms of customer relationships, communicating often with customers through social media is critical in creating customer relationships for social enterprises. As to revenue stream, the primary source of revenue for social enterprises is through selling of their products from a single product line with several variations. In addition, they also generate revenue through a project-based agreement by providing their services to another business entity. With regard to key resources, to create innovative and long-lasting products while maintaining consistency in their value proposition, human, physical and financial resources are considered valuable to them. In terms of key activities, talent management is seen as a significant activity for

social enterprises. Another key activities are to ensure that they have the materials needed to manufacture their products and to employ a variety of techniques in the production of their goods. As to key partners, the most significant for them is the community which is often the main source of their raw materials and labor. Lastly, with regard to cost structure, social enterprises are cost-driven because they seek to maximize both profit and social benefits.

To operate and accelerate their growth and success through business innovations, social entrepreneurs receive assistance and support from GK Enchanted Farm. Business support services and infrastructure, which include a wide range of activities and institutions related to innovation, such as consultancy and R&D services for start-up entrepreneurs, as well as access to physical facilities, are provided to support their establishment and growth. Due to the restricted capability to scale of individual social enterprises, a network of social entrepreneurs can also generate greater opportunities for influence.

Innovation also contributes to accelerate the growth of social enterprises. Among the nine aforementioned dimensions, five of which were found significant to their growth and success. First is the value proposition, social enterprises use natural materials and methods as an innovative way to add value to their product offerings. Also, continuous improvement of one of their processes is an innovative approach that aids them in delivering their promises to customers. Second is the key resources, social entrepreneurs believe in the importance of raw materials in developing innovative solutions to meet customers' demands. Also, hiring competent and talented employees, as well as allocating equipment or technology, can also help their business to develop creative solutions and progressive ideas. Third is the key activities where continuous improvement to their processes is found to be a crucial activity in producing new designs, remaining productive, and adapting to the current situation. Another important activity for social enterprises is obtaining the raw materials necessary to create innovative solutions with the help of their partner community. Fourth is their key partners, social enterprises develop innovative solutions in collaboration with their supplier, who is often their partner community. They also believe that collaborating with competitors or businesses in the same industry allows them to be more innovative. Furthermore, in order to adapt to the current situation, technology platforms play an important role in developing innovative solutions. Lastly, the cost structure, social enterprises use technology that boosts manufacturing capability and lowers costs, cutting product prices and encouraging customers to buy from them. Using software and the internet in their operations also saves money while preserving efficiency. Also, they invest money in obtaining resources from partner communities, even if it is more expensive, because it helps them achieve their goal of making a positive social impact.

Social enterprises contribute significantly to improving people's quality of life. From a life of struggle over what to put on each plate, how to deal with the sadness of being away from their families to work in other places, the costs of transportation and rent, and how to provide for their children's education, to a worry-free life that exceeds their greatest aspirations. Furthermore, with the knowledge and skills gained from social enterprises, everyone can now meet their daily needs without the hardships they previously faced. They were also aware of how to make more competent products as a result of the abilities they had acquired.

Based on the above findings, an Innovative Social Enterprise Model with a Support System (The ISEMSS Model) that is also established through the support of a public or private institution, similar to *Gawad Kalinga*, and whose ultimate purpose is to help a community is introduced (shown on Figure 1). To establish its own identity, the researcher decides to use practical terms on some of the variables used in the conduct of

the study which the researcher called as integrants of social enterprises, to wit: differentiators, essential assets, core activities, major players, and expenditure pattern, in lieu of value proposition, key resources, key activities, key partners, and cost structure, respectively.

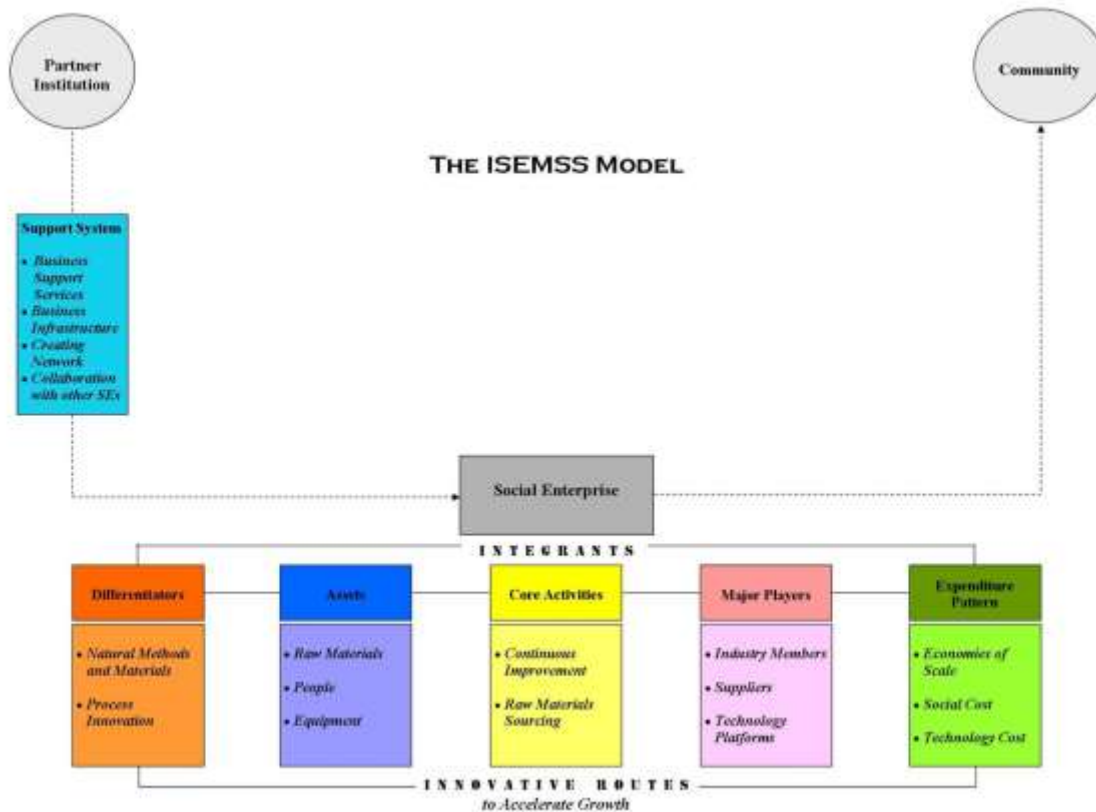


Figure 1. Innovative Social Enterprise Model with a Support System

(<https://drive.google.com/file/d/17-O6piWudEhUPhsfDrwq6fTJwbkIhS5p/view?usp=sharing>)

## CONCLUSION

The government, non-governmental organizations, and other institutions work together to improve the poor's living conditions and provide suitable shelter through housing projects. Housing has a tremendous impact on people's lives. However, due to inaccessibility of workplaces and poor transportation, it can also operate as a barrier to employment. To address this problem, these institutions may encourage social entrepreneurs to start social enterprises in the neighborhood that would create jobs for the residents. They can act as a business incubator by providing a support system that includes business support services, infrastructure, networking, and collaboration with other social enterprises, allowing start-ups or social entrepreneurs to easily navigate the early stages of their development and expand their businesses.

Social enterprises seek to maximize profits while also trying to maximize benefits to society and the environment. The ISSEMS Model can assist in this endeavor, as well as in accelerating its growth through the five integrants of a social enterprise and the innovative routes introduced in this model.



The differentiator is the first integrant of a social enterprise. It enables businesses to obtain a competitive advantage by producing value that is distinct from that of their competitors, resulting in customers' willingness to pay more for a product offering. The first innovative route in this integrant is to use natural methods and materials. Consumers are increasingly looking for natural, innovative solutions that are both healthier and safer to consume while also being environmentally friendly. The use of natural materials and methods to create new products could spark a surge of innovation. The second route is to use an innovative process, which entails using a specific creative and logical approach to develop something new or to make a major change to a process or product.

The essential assets of the social enterprise, which include money, people, materials, and equipment, are the second integrant. A portion of it should be set aside solely for innovation in order to generate new and progressive ideas, processes, services, and products. The raw materials employed are the first innovative route in this integrant. It should always be a top concern to ensure a consistent supply of raw materials for the manufacturing process. The second route is through people, who are regarded as one of the most valuable assets for innovation, and employees, particularly the highest-performing ones, must be involved in order to successfully make innovation a priority. Businesses that value innovation must understand that investing in talent is crucial because it drives employees to work on initiatives that are essential to the organization. Finally, there is equipment innovation. This is one of the most underutilized resources, but creative ideas cannot be implemented or assessed without it. Regardless of whether it is software or hardware, the equipment is used to perform basic business operations.

The third integrant are the core activities which entails overseeing all aspects of bringing anything new to market, including coming up with ideas, developing, prioritizing, and implementing them, as well as putting them into action, such as releasing new products or establishing new internal processes, all of which are critical in managing innovation. These are activities that can enable a business to not only produce creative solutions to meet the demands of its customers, but also achieve its goals. Continuous improvement is the first innovative route in this integrant, with the goal of not only improving a present value offer by making processes more efficient, but also assisting in the creation of new value even in the lack of fresh creative ideas for new product development. The second route is considerate raw materials sourcing. Securing raw materials for the manufacturing process has long been a top priority for most businesses, especially when it comes to developing innovative products. For social enterprises, procuring materials from the communities they serve allows them to achieve one of their goals of creating social value.

The major players of a social enterprise are the fourth integrant. Innovation is achieved by combining a product's inherent value to customers with the company's capabilities as well as the services and solutions of other organizations. To develop innovation with other major players in order to create value for customers, trust and goodwill are required, as well as the belief that collaboration is a winning strategy. The first innovative route in this integrant is to collaborate with the social enterprise's competitors or industry members. It is a sound and viable business approach that allows both parties to benefit from new trends and resources. Collaboration can also help with finding new sales leads and coordinating marketing activities. The second route is to build supplier relationships, as suppliers play an important role in the development of creative products. As a result of their strong relationships, they become aware of the company's needs and can assist in

the refining of new ideas. Having a strong and healthy relationship with them allows a company to derive more value from its products and services. The final route in this integrant is through technology platforms, which may be utilized to generate a variety of products and services while also facilitating most business operations. They give organizations a tool to keep track of all types of improvements, allowing them to come up with new solutions to meet customer requirements.

The last integrant is a social enterprise's spending pattern, which is strategically essential because it allows the enterprise to determine its level of innovative activity. The first innovative route in this integrant is economies of scale. Economies of scale allow a company's manufacturing to be more efficient and achieve a cost advantage by deploying equipment that allows it to increase output at a cheap cost. It also allows them to lower product prices to make them more accessible to clients and encourage them to purchase more. Social cost is another route under this integrant, as social enterprise incurs costs above and beyond those of conventional enterprises and is set up to accomplish certain obligations that typically incur additional costs. Creating social impact necessitates a willingness to spend more money in exchange for aiding community people, who can then assist social entrepreneurs in finding creative solutions. Finally, there is the cost of technology, which is a major determinant of innovative capability. Many companies invest in it because it helps them innovate faster. Investing in technology raises expenses but increases productivity.

Accelerating the growth of social enterprises through innovation aids them in achieving their ultimate goal of providing a sense of purpose to a community. Most residents of a community turn to social enterprises as a method to supplement their income while also responding to the desire for change in their community. They bring fulfillment to their hearts by participating in this type of social action.

In view of the foregoing findings, these conclusions were drawn: the support of a social enterprise's partner institution, whether public or private, in terms of business support services and infrastructure, as well as how the social entrepreneur uses innovative methods to improve their products and processes on their value proposition (differentiators), key resources (essential assets), key activities (core activities), key partners (major players), and cost structure (spending pattern), are all important factors in accelerating the social enterprise's growth. These social enterprises make a significant contribution to enhancing people's quality of life in their communities. As a result, an innovative social enterprise model with a support system has been determined to be critical in assisting the partner institution, the social enterprises, and the members of the community.

Lastly, the following recommendations were derived based on the findings::

1. Social Enterprises may prioritize value propositions (differentiators), key resources (essential assets), key activities (core activities), key partners (major players) and cost structure (expenditure pattern), which are critical in achieving the organization's goals, namely, profit and social gains. They may focus particularly on sourcing natural materials from their partner community and may continuously nurture those to ensure continuous supply of materials and obtain a value that is distinct from their competitors.



2. Various organizations from the public (e.g. local government unit, provincial government, national housing authority) and private sector (e.g. NGOs, Corporate Foundations) may provide social enterprises with the resources they need to expand their social entrepreneurial ventures, and may serve as a business incubator, providing physical space and services to start-ups and guiding them through the early stages of their development.
3. The activities of social enterprises may be well-understood, as well as their significance to innovation. Social entrepreneurs may rethink and restructure their processes as necessary in order to improve both their operations and their value offering.
4. Social enterprises may act as catalysts for change and play a vital role in community development. They may address major social issues such as providing jobs to community members who have been relocated and have lost their source of income since their old source is now located far outside their new dwellings. They may also allow for an induction process that does not discriminate against persons who were further from the labour market.
5. The partner institutions and social enterprises may embrace the proposed Innovative Social Enterprise Model with a Support System to help improve the economic conditions of the society's marginalized sector.

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